



# Oxfordshire

## Association for the Blind

# Newsletter

November  
2015

## A Fascinating Talk

That's what we were treated to at our very enjoyable AGM this year. Katharine Gorick, Head of the Visual Impairment Team of the Special Educational Needs Support Service, was our speaker. With her experience and expertise, she was able to tell us all about services for visually impaired children and some of the specific needs of the children with whom she and her team work, including concept development and the difficulties some children experience with social interaction. That gave plenty to talk about at the refreshments after the formal meeting, where it was

good to meet our friends and supporters.

There were a number of changes in the Executive Committee. Amanda Tilley and Sean Rainey had already stepped down as Trustees during the year and John Hewitt did so from the meeting date. I'd like to put on record my thanks to Amanda, Sean and John who have done so much to help and guide OAB through the years. During the year, Yvonne Rainey and George Little were co-opted to the Committee, George as Treasurer. They were duly elected, Professor Adrian Hill was elected as

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## Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

*Registered Charity No.1140556 and Company Limited by Guarantee No. 07465300*

**Bradbury Lodge, Gordon Woodward Way, Rivermead Park,  
Abingdon Road, Oxford, OX1 4XL.**

**Telephone 01865 725595 Fax 01865 725596**

**E-mail : [information@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:information@oxeyes.org.uk) • Web site : [www.oxeyes.org.uk](http://www.oxeyes.org.uk)**

### **Opening hours 9.00am - 4.00pm weekdays**

**Chair** : Adrian Hill; **Vice-chair** : David Warr; **Treasurer** : George Little;

**Director** : Colin Cure; **Client Services Manager** : Mark Upton;

**Administrator** : Gail Webb; **Accounts** : Michael Ling;

**Group Welfare Officer** : Mary Gregory; **Information Worker** : David Thompson;

**Senior Sight Advisor** : Judith Wood; **Volunteer Co-ordinator** : Caroline Ludden;

**Fundraiser** : Rebecca Benney; **Advice Worker** : Angela Howard;

**Development Worker** : Ana Novakovic;

*Your Newsletter is compiled and edited by David Thompson*

*We are extremely grateful to Neil Stockton at Radio Cherwell*

*for his assistance in producing the audio edition of this Newsletter*



## Director's Article

Chair of Trustees and David Warr, stepping down as Chair, after a very successful tenure, was elected as Vice-Chair. The other Trustees are Edward Pilling, Margaret Simpson and Simon Cruden, giving a very strong range of expertise on the Committee. Professor Hill also had the pleasure of announcing this year's awards of Honorary Life Membership for significant contribution to visually impaired people in Oxfordshire. June Bear was available to receive her award from Robin Birch, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire, one of our generous Patrons, and Carol Constable, Michael Warnock, Anthea Rowley, Veronica Quainton and Verona Harris received their awards at subsequent presentations. As I write, we're looking forward to World Sight Day on 8th October. Along with organisations around the world, we are making

a small contribution to the aim of reducing preventable blindness. We will have a display at the Abingdon branch of the Coventry Building Society, who are our Community Partners this year. We will be encouraging visitors to ensure that they have regular eye tests, as early detection of eye disease can prevent many impairments.

I'm not sure how many "shopping days" it will be until Christmas by the time you are reading this, but I hope that you fare well with the preparations and, above all, have a very enjoyable time. Best wishes, Colin. ■■■

## Travel Costs

May we take this opportunity to remind people living in the Cherwell District of Oxfordshire that OAB has secured funding that enables us to make a contribution to the cost of travel for them when visiting us at Bradbury Lodge in Oxford. For further information call us on 01865 725595. ■■■

# Dodgy signals and faceless students

As usual, this summer, I taught a creative writing class for Oxford University's summer school programme. Unusually, within such an environment, I



Julie Hearn,  
Historical fantasy novelist

could not see my students' faces, or read aloud in class, or use the photocopier.

I have a mutation of the RDS/perioherin gene, causing slow, irreversible retinal dystrophy. It kicked in about fifteen years ago, as a wobble in my left eye. Seeing peoples' noses fusing with their chins, and the fronts of cars tilting, and dragging along the road, marked the progression of the problem to my right eye.

Brilliant, I thought. There goes my career. I was happily established, as a writer of historical fantasy novels for teenagers. My

fifth book, *Rowan the Strange*, had just been shortlisted for the prestigious Carnegie Medal. I was visiting schools, speaking at literary festivals, and planning to teach summer school, as usual.

The sun shone that summer, and I blessed it as it streamed into The Morris Room, at Exeter College, illuminating the pages of my books, as I struggled to teach, as normal. Good light, I realised, had become essential.

I bought a portable daylight lamp and took to printing out my readings in bigger and bolder fonts.

Last year, I began hitting all

the wrong keys on my laptop and crashing into tables and lamp posts even though I knew precisely where they were and could still sort of see them. On a school visit, I found myself unable to read even 24 point bold text aloud, as my now kaleidoscopic vision lost track of a line or a wavering word.

I wasn't prepared for any of this – hadn't understood that everything from answering an email to crossing a room would become a screamingly frustrating exercise in trying to double guess, and out-manoeuvre whatever my brain might tell me to do, in response to dodgy signals from my eyes.

I didn't feel like getting out of bed, never mind working, but I had bills to pay, schools to visit, and summer school seminars to plan.

And so the short stories I had been working on went on hold while I got my head round new ways of writing and reading. My musician partner

recorded me reading from books and spent many hours ironing out the stumbles and deleting the pauses, I can now add those sound bites to PowerPoint presentations.

Mark Upton, at OAB, helped me get to grips with a Dolphin reader magnifier, so that I would be able to listen to, and mark, summer school assignments. A friend did my photocopying, reminding me that even fully sighted tutors find the photocopiers at Rewley House a challenge. My “faceless” summer school students were great. We did a lot of talking and a lot of listening and if I wanted anything read aloud, they did the honours. I worked hard – really hard – to make the course work, including into the night to get assignments marked on time.

But it was worth it.

w w w . f a c e b o o k . c o m /  
JulieHearnAuthor



# George Haigh

We'd like to tell you about our dear friend, George Haigh, the oldest member of the Banbury group, who reached his century last June and was invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace.

George was born in Reddish (between Stockport and Manchester). He joined the Ramblers Association at the age of sixteen at Edale and is a remaining founder member.

Before the war he spent three years as a professional footballer with Stockport County and is still contacted by the club and taken to appropriate matches. He has donated a cup (the George Haigh Cup) to be awarded annually to the most promising player and recently presented this year's award. George remembers playing against Stanley Matthews and Tom Finney.

During the war George was a Physical Training instructor in the Royal Air Force and recollects training Bomber Command crews how to upturn a survival dingy after ditching in the sea. On October 2nd he was invited to the inauguration



George Haigh is thought to be the oldest surviving former professional footballer in the World, having played for Stockport County for 3 years before 1939 and the war.

of a memorial near Lincoln to bomber crews who lost their lives in the war.

After the war he was a FA coach and also managed a non league football club who assisted him in learning a trade in engineering. So there you are, you never know who you'll meet, when you join one of the local groups!



## Online today

On Thursday 1st October we held our first Online Today workshop with Davinder Kullar from RNIB. The workshop included ways for visually impaired people to access such devices as smartphones and tablets through speech or magnification, all built in to the device. This was a session for complete beginners and for those wanting to know what a tablet computer can do. Everybody went away feeling they had learnt something new, and they all had a chance to try out an iPad or Android device - some even brought their own tablet along with them. We will be holding another session on Friday 4th December at 11am. If you'd like to book a place please contact Mark Upton on 01865 725595 or email [markupton@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:markupton@oxeyes.org.uk) ■■■

## Audio Book Club!

If you enjoy reading but find accessing print difficult you may like to come along to our new audio book club at OAB. We will be listening to a range of different authors and book titles over the coming months and talking about them during the meetings over tea and biscuits.

The club is held on the last Wednesday of every month from 11am until 12.30pm at Oxfordshire Association for the Blind, Bradbury Lodge, Gordon Woodward Way, Oxford, OX1 4XL. Refreshments are provided. If you would like more information or to book a place, please contact Angela on 01865 725595 or email [angela.howard@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:angela.howard@oxeyes.org.uk). We hope to see you there! ■■■

## Art and Craft for Christmas

We are running a Christmas Art and Crafts Workshop for visually impaired children, aged 5-11, to make some festive decorations on Saturday 5th December 2015 from 10am until 12pm at Oxfordshire Association for the Blind, Bradbury Lodge, Gordon

Woodward Way, Abingdon Road, Oxford, OX1 4XL. All art materials and refreshments provided free. Please contact Angela on 01865 725595 to book your child's place. Limited spaces available. ■■■

## Saturday Opening

As you may be aware, we have been having regular Saturday open days for the past few years. We fully intend to carry this on, if our clients require it! However, we have decided to do this on an appointments only basis. Now this will benefit clients as they will have our undivided attention. Crucially, it is important that we know people are coming in so that we can help you as best we can. So if you would like to come and visit us, please let us know so that we can book a slot for you. Please be aware that if we do not have any appointments booked for an open day, then we may decide not to open. Our Centre will be open on Saturday 12th December from 9.30am to 12.00pm. We will be glad to show you the ever expanding range of equipment and explain what services are available for sight impaired people and their families. For an appointment call us on 01865 725595. ■■■

## ActivEyes Oxfordshire

The last couple of months saw ActivEyes rambling in the Oxfordshire countryside.



Pictured above is a rambler walking up a slope silouetted against a sunset sky

First at Shotover Country Park, then along the Thames path upriver from Sandford Lock. These well-attended events mark the end of outdoor activities for this year. In November, we have a games evening at OAB. In December we will be having an Xmas party involving 10-pin bowling at the Kassam Stadium. In the New Year we will be going indoor rock climbing at Brookes University and visiting a VI tennis club in Milton Keynes. For further details, please call Guy on 01865 725595. ■■■

## Countdown to Christmas

We had a fantastic time at our last baking session making homemade pizza. They all looked great and tasted delicious!

To get us all in the Christmas spirit, our next baking day will be held in our resource centre on Tuesday 8th December from 10.30am until 12.30pm, where we will be cooking up some festive treats!

If you would like to book a place or for more information, please contact Angela on 01865 725595 or email [angela.howard@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:angela.howard@oxeyes.org.uk). We hope you can join us for some festive fun! ■■■

## Next Stop, Thame Library!

If you, or someone you know, has difficulty with their sight, why not come along and talk with one of our representatives who has expertise in special equipment and services. We will be at Thame library, 3 North St, Thame OX9 3BH on Tuesday 24th November from 10.30am until 2pm. We will bring a small selection of special equipment and be pleased to meet you. For further information please contact Angela on 01865 725595 or email [angela.howard@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:angela.howard@oxeyes.org.uk) ■■■

## Look out for the Large Print!

We now have our range of Large Print Diaries 2016 in stock, ranging from a Pocket Size, with a medium A5 Size, a Large A4 Desk Diary and finally an A3 Size Wall Calendar. As well as the annual publications we have A5 and A4 size Address and Telephone Number Books.

We have also just got some more Large Print Puzzle Books in stock including, Soduko, Crosswords and Wordsearches, all of which have proved extremely popular. For more information about any of our Large Print items please call us on 01865 725595. ■■■

# Have you got the time?

As many of you will know we have a number of watches and clocks designed for use by sight impaired people. Well now we have augmented our range of devices with a selection of watches from a company called Lifemax. One of their “stand out” products is pictured opposite. It is a Radio Controlled Talking Calendar Watch with a difference, in that it is light powered! It actually does have an internal battery which is constantly recharged when the watch is exposed to light. It doesn't matter whether it is sunlight or artificial light!



**Light Powered Talking Calendar Watch**

Also we have acquired an example of the “Bradley” Ball Bearing Tactile Watch. Developed for use by blind people this device has become a “Designer” fashion item amongst sighted people. It also allows one to be discreet when finding out the time, ideal for meetings and other functions. The face is Analogue represented by textured, tactile marks. You tell the time by feeling 2 ball bearings which move around the face of the watch. The one on the edge of the watch marks the hours and the one which moves around the central face of the watch marks the minutes.

To make an appointment to see any of our equipment please call us on 01865 725595. ■■■



**The “Bradley” Ball Bearing Tactile Watch**

# Legacy Pledge Makers Event

Magdalen College in Oxford was the venue for our first Legacy Pledge Makers Event. Despite dire weather warnings, the rain held off, whilst we had a very interesting and informative tour around the college, including the beautiful grounds and the most impressive chapel. The college then laid on a sumptuous afternoon tea. So much, in fact, that we all left with serviettes of uneaten sandwiches and cakes! Sean Rainey, our guide, former Trustee and father of a visually impaired child, gave a short talk on the benefits that future sight impaired people will derive from the legacies which we are kindly given. Our Chair of Trustees, Professor Hill, then thanked everyone for their generosity to our future work.

One of the attendees, Clifford, spoke afterwards about his and his wife's decision to leave OAB a legacy: "OAB helps anyone with sight difficulties from being at the hospital when the specialist has just told them 'I'm sorry there is nothing we can do'. The OAB volunteer will then tell them that this is not the end of the world, but the beginning of a different one and they will help

them in many ways. In view of the above, that is why we have left a legacy to OAB. We have benefitted from the services of OAB and we would like to help OAB to assist other people in the future."

If anyone is interested in leaving a gift to OAB in their Will and would like to talk to us about the benefits that this can bring, please do give Colin a call on 01865 725595. Thank you. ■■■

## Autumn Raffle

The raffle was drawn on World Sight Day (8th October) by OAB Volunteer Ambassador Guy Lawfull.

The winner was Mrs Broadbent from Oxford, who was delighted with the £200 first prize and kindly donated £100 back to OAB.

The second prize of a Sunday lunch at Oxford Spire Four Pillars Hotel, went to Miss Paginton from Banbury and the third prize of £50 was won by Ms Hinton from Reading.

The raffle in total raised £3,356 for our work with blind and partially sighted people in the county and we are most grateful to everyone who supported us. ■■■

# Annual General Meeting 2015

As mentioned by Colin, the Annual General Meeting took place on Wednesday 9th September 2015. We very much enjoyed the talk by our guest speaker Katharine Gorick, from the Special Educational Needs Support Service. We were also delighted with the awards of Honorary Life Membership to six very worthy supporters



Pictured here is June Bear, receiving her Honorary award from Robin Birch, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire.

of OAB. We would like to thank all those who attended in support of our work. ■■■

## World Sight Day 2015

World Sight Day took place on Thursday 8th October. Members of the Low Vision Group including OAB staff and volunteers were at The Coventry Building Society in Abingdon, who have very kindly selected OAB to be their Charity of the Year for

2015. The focus was on the importance of eye health and the need to have your eyes tested regularly. Visitors were encouraged to have a go at reading a sight chart and to find out more about the work of OAB and other local groups. ■■■

# Bike Oxford

**Congratulations to all members of the OAB team who took part in this year's Bike Oxford on Sunday 13th September. The weather was kind, the event was well organised with a great atmosphere and all our riders successfully completed either 20 or 50 miles around the Oxfordshire countryside, whilst raising funds to support our work. So far they have raised nearly £1,500. Two sets of riders rode tandem, John Somaiya and Brian Biggs and Alan Howell who is visually impaired (pictured on the left) and his front rider Paul Hardy (pictured centre).**



**We are keen to take part again next year and recruit more riders. If you, or someone you know, are interested in taking part then please contact us on 01865 725595 or email [fundraising@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@oxeyes.org.uk)**



# Christmas Appeal

**In lieu of selling charity Christmas cards or other merchandise this festive season, we would simply like to ask our supporters if they would consider making a donation to OAB as part of our Christmas Appeal for 2015. If you would like to donate please complete the Appeal form contained as an insert within this newsletter and return it with your donation in the Freepost envelope provided.**

**The money we raise will enable us to continue our work into 2016 to further develop the services we provide from our Resource Centre in Oxford and around the county. Alternatively, if you would like to make a donation online, please visit our appeal page (address on insert letter) or to make a donation over the phone please call 01865 725595. Thank you.**



## Make it Local!

We are grateful to South Oxfordshire District Council for this edited article from their Outlook magazine ■■■

We provide hundreds of thousands of pounds of money to support local communities every year. In the past year, Sandford on Thames' village hall had a massive extension and a thorough refurbishment; Sonning Common has a shiny new skate park; and there's no excuses for double faults now that Peppard Tennis club has new floodlights. If you think your community could do with some help like this, get in touch with your parish council, sports club, church or a local charity who'll be able to apply for one of our grants. For more information, visit our website at [www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants](http://www.southoxon.gov.uk/grants), call 01235 5407525 or email [grants@southoxon.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southoxon.gov.uk). ■■■

## Dreaming Spires Tenpin Bowling

An article by Kevin Pamphilon:

In September we entered a BBS tournament held in Coventry. Kevin and Danny played to a very high standard and Paul played some of his best bowling with a few Turkeys. After playing against some excellent players from all over Great Britain we finished in 1st place and picked up the trophy. We are still playing in the BBS Summer Pairs and at the moment we are in 2nd place, trying to qualify to play in the finals held in Swindon in November.

All levels of bowlers are welcome, so, why not come along and play a great team sport and have some fun?! Contact Kevin Pamphilon, club captain. Phone 01869 331778. ■■■

The work of the Oxfordshire Association for the Blind is assisted by funds from

Thame Town Council



# Clubs and groups for VIPs in Oxfordshire

## Abingdon & District Macular Group

Eleanor Dangerfield  
01235 531857

## ActivEyes Oxfordshire

OAB 01865 725595

## Banbury Macular Group

John Critchlow 01608 685293

## Banbury Society for the Visually Impaired

Enid Smith 01295 269568

## Carterton Visual Impairment Group

Rosemary Pearse 01993 841383

## Chipping Norton Friends of the Blind

Mary Gregory 01608 810899

## Didcot/Wallingford

Pam Organ 01235 813391

## Goring Macular Group

OAB 01865 725595

## Henley VIP Group

Mike Pooley 01491 628284

## Look Oxfordshire Support for families of VI children

Julie Hinton 01189 722322

## Kidlington Macular Group

Tom Wright 01865 376482  
Marita Ferrett 01865 373104

## Oxford Macular Group

Daphne Dorman 01993 811084

## Oxfordshire Retinitis Pigmentosa Group

Peter Jackson 01865 873246

## “OXVIC”

## Oxford Visually Impaired Club

OAB 01865 725595

## “Oxpots” Pottery Class

Angie 01865 373251

## Thame and District Society for the Visually Handicapped

Jean Mander 01844 212983

## “VIBNO”

## Visually Impaired But Not Old!

Nicola & Kevin  
Pamphilon 01869 331778

## “VIVA”, North Oxford

Liaison Officer  
Ron Sears 01865 553063

## Wantage Blind Social Club

Mary Greenfield 01235 764646  
*Secretary*  
Hazel Aldred 01235 765849

## Witney Area

## Day Centre (Mon -Fri)

Lynne Pratley 01993 706824

# Oxfordshire Social and Community Services Sensory Impairment Team

A countywide team of specially trained staff supporting people of all ages affected by sensory impairment

Manager: Neelam Ahmed

## Visual Impairment Team

Beverley Downs  
Kate Laybourne  
Meg Jones  
Serena Glister  
Sue Miles  
Jessica Brown

Senior:  
Elizabeth Agar

Telephone 01865 894935

[visual.impairment@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:visual.impairment@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

## Hearing Impairment Team

Zelda Yarker, Catherine Thurbin,  
Ben Smith  
Rebecca Nolan,  
Mark Cove

Telephone 01865 894925  
SMS - 07713329501

Sensory Impairment Team  
Abbey House  
2nd Floor  
Abbey Close  
Abingdon  
OX14 3JD

**Out of hours social services, emergency freephone 0800 833408**



## Carers Oxfordshire

### A service for all carers



To make it easier for Carers to access support

To listen to Carers' needs

To give information, advice and support to Carers

Please telephone 0845 0507666  
Or email [carersoxfordshire@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:carersoxfordshire@oxfordshire.gov.uk)  
Or go to [www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk)

