



Oxfordshire

Association for the Blind

Newsletter

February
2016

He's a good Guy!

Our new Trustee, that is. We'd like to welcome Guy Lawful as our newest Trustee. Many of you will already know Guy, who has been working with us on a number of IT issues and as one of our excellent group of volunteer IT workers. Guy also leads our successful **ActiveEyes** activity group. Guy brings to the board his IT and business acumen and his invaluable experience as a sight impaired person. This brings the board to 8 Trustee/Directors and, with the assistance of our patrons the Countess of Macclesfield and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, Robin Birch, we are back to full strength and keen to meet the challenges of developing our services to sight impaired people in the county and beyond. You may be interested that we

do, quite often, help people from outside the county. We have visitors to the centre from other parts, including someone visiting England from India last year. With electronic communications, we also get occasional requests for information from all over the world.

With just a brief look back I'd just like to thank everyone who helped make 2015 another successful year for OAB. Whether Trustee, Staff Member, Volunteer or Supporter it was great working with you as we continue to develop and try to reach more people. I'd also like to thank all of the helpers and members of the marvellous groups for sight impaired people that I visited over Christmas. I can

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Oxfordshire Association for the Blind

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

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Opening hours 9.00am - 4.00pm weekdays

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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

report back that, in an effort to counter the effects of all those lovely Christmas dinners, I have done lots of cycling and I'm nearly fit enough for my next cycle challenge. More of that next time.

One of our aims this year, is to try to gain more members. As a membership Association our strength lies in our base of support and in the number of signed up members we have. This, gives weight to our voice when we speak up on behalf of sight impaired people. If you are already a member, thank you for signing up. We much appreciate your help. If you are not currently a member, I'd like to ask if you would kindly consider joining? I've enclosed a letter and form which explains more about membership. I hope you feel that you'd like to join us.

Our most exciting news is that Angela Howard, our Advice Worker, is expecting a baby in early February. We wish Angela and Paul all the best and look forward to meeting their new arrival soon.

By the time you read this,

the New Year will already be progressing. I hope that it has started well for you and that you have a fulfilling 2016.

Best wishes, Colin. ■■■

County Council Funding

As many of you will be aware, there is great concern about the pressure on the County Council's budgets and the possible cuts to public services and funding for voluntary agencies.

OAB has joined other local charities in writing to the Oxford Times, local MP's and 10 Downing Street. We have warned of the serious consequences for services to vulnerable people if the anticipated cuts are implemented. At the time of writing, there is still a lot of effort going in to influencing the decision makers. The full meeting of the County Council to decide the final options is on 16th February. We sympathise with the difficult decisions facing the councillors and hope they will find a way to ensure that funding for vital services is maintained. ■■■

A tribute to Dennis Freeman by Daphne Dorman

We have recently heard the sad news that Dennis Freeman died, aged 89, in November 2014. Dennis, who lived in Chipping Norton, developed Macular Degeneration on his retirement as an insurance agent. Since then he devoted much of his time helping others with visual impairment. He was a founder member of the Oxford Macular Group in 1992 and at that time he started the Oxford Blind Support Group. The aim of this group was to acquire as much information as possible about registration, benefits, etc. in order to give advice to those who did not know which way to turn at that time. Dennis will be much missed and our condolences go out to his wife, Dot, and to his family.

Daphne Dorman. ■■■

Tactile paving training work- shop at OAB

Following the success of the last tactile paving training workshop Guide Dogs held at OAB, we are pleased to announce that Guide Dogs will hold another on Monday 7 March 2016 from 10.30 - 1 pm (duration dependent on numbers).

If you are visually impaired or you work with people that have sight loss, this 2 - 3 hour workshop is for you.

The session will not only give you an opportunity to learn about the different meanings of the types of tactile paving found in the built environment to help you get out and about more independently, but it will also help you know how to find out and respond to consultations.

Spaces are limited. To book your place please call Mark Upton on 01865 725595 or email: markupton@oxeyes.org.uk

■■■

Help with transport to OAB

Would you like to come to our Resource Centre, but have difficulty with transport? We hope we have a solution for you.

We would like everyone to be able to come to our centre in Oxford to try out our range of special equipment, which helps sight impaired people to continue to be independent. We also realise that for many people, transport is a problem. For a trial period, we are offering any sight impaired person a contribution to a return journey to the centre. We are able to pay 45 pence per mile to the person, who can use the money to pay a driver or towards a taxi fare. We also have a list of quite a wide spread of volunteer driving schemes, who may be able to provide a lift.

If you are at all interested, please do give us a call on 01865 725595 and we can discuss this with you. ■■■

RP Research

The diagnosis of Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) is usually associated with the eventual complete loss of sight and the search for a solution has been a priority for researchers. There have been many avenues of investigation with varying degrees of success. At the moment there are 3 major areas of research showing promise. These are stem cell therapy, gene therapy and finally surgical implants. These have already proved beneficial in various different projects around the world, including a famous recent success by a team in Oxford. It may prove in the future that the beating of RP will be a combination of several therapies to give the patient the best possible outcome. Of course we will keep you up to date with events. Our next newsletter will include an interesting article from Peter Jackson of the Oxfordshire RP group. ■■■

Coming up at the Theatre....

The Oxford Playhouse has some great audio described performances coming up.

Flare Path is a Terence Rattigan play, written and set during World War 2. Rattigan was writing about a world he knew well, and the play was a wartime hit. The audio described performance is on 6th February.

Then Toast comes to Oxford. This is a drama from Richard Bean, the writer of the hit comedy One Man, Two Guv'nors. The Telegraph described it as an 'excellent and highly welcome revival' and star Matthew Kelly's performance as 'mesmerising'. For audio description, book for 20th February.

For both these shows, the audio described performance is the Saturday 2.30pm matinee. Tell the box office you're booking for the audio description and you'll get a reduced price ticket for yourself and your companion. Both shows also offer a free touch tour at 1pm – a fabulous opportunity to

go up onto the stage and experience the set close up. You might even meet an actor or two!

Phone the Oxford Playhouse box office on 01865 305305. You can request an audio brochure by phoning 01865 305399. ■■■

Saturday Opening

As you may be aware, we have been having regular Saturday opening for the past few years. We fully intend to continue, if required. However, we have decided to do this on an appointments only basis. 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 March from 9.30am to 12.00pm. Call us on 01865 725595 . ■■■

On a lighter subject

Our resource centre is now a little lighter, writes David Thompson. We have augmented our range of lamps with some new LED versions. LED stands for Light Emitting Diode. For example, the little 13 watt folding desk lamps, both the mains and battery ones, have now got LED versions, which only use 6 watts of electricity. They now have a big brother in the form of an LED desk lamp from a company called Thoughtfully Designed. This 8 watt lamp doesn't have buttons, as it is operated by touch control.

We have an impressive looking floorstanding LED lamp. It has a silvery, chrome finish and gives a very good spread of clear white light from a row of diodes.

Although not to everyone's taste, LED lamps use less power and are safer (as they don't get very hot), than their predecessors. If you would like to see them call us on 01865 725595 to make an appointment. ■■■

Booming Simple

Boom Box Mini



We now have an example of the New Boom Box Mini on display in our demonstration suite. It is a portable USB audio player with FM Radio and a voice recorder. It gives Voice Guidance as you use it and allows you to make voice recordings directly onto the memory stick (so those of you who receive our newsletter on datastick can record feedback and share it with us!)

The Boom Box Mini also has a Smart Book Mark Feature (it automatically remembers the last position played). It plays through built in speakers or headphones and can be used with mains or with its rechargeable battery.

It is a compact device measuring 4.3" by 2.7" by 0.6". ■■■

OAB's Computer Support Service

For people living in Oxfordshire who are visually impaired and would benefit from help adapting their computers

Has your eyesight started making it difficult for you to use your computer?

Would it help if -
The text and icons were larger?

If the contrast on the screen was adjusted?

If the colour scheme was different when you use the internet?

If the answer to any of these questions is 'yes', our Computer Support project might be able to help you...

How does the scheme work?

OAB has a team of volunteers across Oxfordshire who visit visually impaired computer-users at home to make adjustments that will usually make the computer easier to use. The focus is on changes that can be made without paying for expensive software. A typical visit will last a couple of hours; the volunteer will discuss with you what difficulties you are having,

and at the end of the visit will explain what changes have been made. Please contact Caroline at OAB for an initial chat about your requirements on 01865 725 595. ■■■

Sight Impaired People and Carers

OAB and the Visual Impairment Team at Oxfordshire County Council are teaming up to hold another course for sight impaired people and their carers/partners. The course outlines services in Oxfordshire, equipment available, support for carers, sighted guiding technique and most importantly a chance to share with each other your experiences.

The course will be run on 9th March from 10.30am until 2.00pm. A light lunch will also be provided.

If you would like to attend please call Mark Upton on 01865 725595. ■■■

Online Today with RNIB

Smartphones and tablet computers have revolutionised the way visually impaired people can access information and communicate with others. A tablet or smartphone may not be something you've ever considered using, but why not give it a try!

“The experience was so refreshing because it was geared for those of us who can't see. The explanations were verbal and the timing was appropriate for the most inexperienced user.” – Ellen Bassani (Ellen who attended the last Online Today session is now using a smartphone to call, text, email and search the web.)

OAB are teaming up with RNIB to host 4 workshops focused on smartphones and tablets for visually impaired people.

Wednesday 30th March and 20th April 10.30am to 12.30pm – Introduction to smartphones

and tablets for the complete beginner. A chance to find out more about smartphones and tablets, plus have a go.

Wednesday 30th March and 20th April 1.30pm to 3.30pm – Q&A with Davinder Kullar (RNIB Assistive Technology Coordinator) Bring your smartphone or tablet along with you and ask the expert!

There will be limited spaces so please ring ahead to avoid disappointment.

Contact Mark Upton on 01865 725595 or email markupton@oxeyes.org.uk



OAB on Twitter

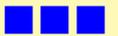
OAB is now on Twitter. If you are too, why not follow us? You can find us at www.twitter.com/OX_Sight. Don't forget we're also on Facebook, just search for Oxfordshire Association for the Blind.



Ready for an adventure in learning?

AddVenture in Learning is a registered charity, which provides residential courses for sight impaired adults. The courses are usually, but not always, led by a professional tutor and held in different parts of the country. Each sight impaired person is assisted by a sighted guide and guide dogs are always welcome. Past courses have included studying the works of Brahms or the authors Arnold Bennett and D. H. Lawrence and various history topics. There have been field trips to Swanage and Suffolk for the more physically active. Accommodation varies from hotels to outdoor educational centres or university halls of residence. Participants must make their own way to the venue, but these are not usually far from a railway station. Courses are not just lectures, but include outings and the chance to socialise. Plans for 2016 currently include an Ecology course in Pembrokeshire in May, Cheltenham Science Festival

in June and Social History in Derbyshire in August. If you are interested in joining any courses as a sight impaired person or a volunteer guide please do look at the website www.addventureinlearning.org.uk for more details. You can also ring Isobell (course administrator) on 07731 867931 or Barbara (publicity) on 01460 281226.



Witney Macular Group

We meet once a month, apart from December, on the 4th Wednesday, in the Bethany Room of the Methodist Church on High Street in Witney.

We have a speaker bi-monthly, covering a variety of topics. We are arranging things to do on our other meetings, for example a quiz, a raffle and hopefully a day trip out in the summer!

To cover costs we charge £3 a meeting for members but carers go for free. For further information contact Sarah Salcombe on 01993 771828.



We are very grateful

In this financial year to date, we have received £73,000 in legacies to OAB from six people who were kind enough to remember us in their Wills. We are most grateful that these people decided to leave us these valuable gifts. Each year, we receive generous payments like this, which help us so much.

These kind payments enable us to run our services to blind and partially sighted people throughout the county. For example, they help us to provide our information and advice service, which we estimate assisted people on over 10,000 occasions last year. Examples of the advice we have given include guiding people to the most cost effective electronic reading aids, often saving the person over £1,000, helping people to find local community transport schemes, which cater for disabled passengers, or signing people up for the free telephone directories

service. If we are fortunate enough to receive future legacies, these will enable us to develop new services, for example developing our work with children, young people and their families.

If you are interested in supporting our work by considering a gift to OAB in your Will, we have a helpful leaflet and a large print version, which we would be happy to send to you. We would also be happy to talk with you about how such a gift could be used. To request a leaflet or for further information, please call Colin on 01865 725595. ■■■

Large Diaries

We still have a 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. For more information about any of our Large Print items please call us on 01865 725595. ■■■

Christmas Appeal

We would like to thank everyone who has made a donation to our 2015 Christmas Appeal. Each year, in lieu of selling charity Christmas cards or other merchandise over the festive season, we simply ask our friends and supporters if they would like to make a donation towards our work for the forthcoming year.

Thanks to your generosity we have received over £3,500 from donations in the post and online. This money 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. ■■■

We need you!

We continue to need the support of individuals and local groups within the community to assist us with raising awareness and funds. This could be through nominating OAB to be the beneficiary of a particular event. For example, back in October the Wanderers Golf Society chose to support OAB at their Charity Golf Day. All of

the proceeds went to OAB. Other events that have helped to support our work include sponsored challenges, collections, raffles, cake sales and activities in schools. All of these events and activities are important in helping to raise funds for our work.

If you, or someone you know, is considering planning a fundraising activity on behalf of OAB in 2016, we can provide you with some ideas, information and resources. Simply contact OAB on 01865 725595 or email fundraising@oxeyes.org.uk ■■■

Bike Oxford

Following the success of last year's event, we will once again be taking part in the annual Bike Oxford sponsored cycle ride in September. Starting and finishing in Oxford, riders can select one of three circular routes of different distances taking in some of Oxfordshire's finest scenery. We are hoping to recruit more people into the OAB team of riders this year. To find out more about taking part email fundraising@oxeyes.org.uk or call 01865 725595. ■■■

Didcot Gateway Development

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

We're really excited about proposals to redevelop the area opposite the station, known as Didcot Gateway.

The new area will include a bar and café, shops, a gym, pleasant open spaces and seating areas, high quality apartments and a much-needed town centre hotel. There will also be much better pedestrian and cycle links, meaning that getting between Didcot Parkway and the Orchard Centre will be an easier and more pleasant experience. ■■■

VIBNO

VIBNO (which stands for Visually Impaired But Not Old) is a group for people aged 18 - 50 to meet socially and have fun.

For more information about VIBNO please contact Nicola Pamphilon 01869 331778 or e-mail flashnp@aol.com ■■■

OxPots

Is a small, friendly pottery group who meet once a week in Oxford, for adults who have little or no eyesight. Would you like to meet others with this condition and experience for yourself what you could achieve with a bit of help from our friendly tutor?

No experience necessary and help and guidance will be given. Come along and join us for cup of tea and cake. Contact – Angie 01865 373251. ■■■

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



supported by

www.oxford.gov.uk



Listening Learning Leading



Oxfordshire
Community Foundation
Local people helping local people

Clubs and groups for VIPs in Oxfordshire

Abingdon & District Macular Group

Eleanor Dangerfield
01235 531857

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

Witney Macular Group

Sarah Salcombe 01993 771828

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 John Fearn-Webster

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

Hearing Impairment Team

Zelda Yarker, Catherine Thurbin,
Ben Smith
Rebecca Nolan,
Mark Cove
Senior : Neelam Ahmed

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



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To listen to Carers' needs

To give information, advice and support to Carers

Please telephone 0845 0507666
Or email carersoxfordshire@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Or go to www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk



Oxfordshire Association
for the Blind
invites you to a
Low Vision Drop-in Day:



Wednesday 23rd March, 2016
10.00 am to 3.00 pm

Oxfordshire Association for the Blind,
Bradbury Lodge, Gordon Woodward Way,
Abingdon Road, Oxford, OX1 4XL

Come along and explore the latest products and technologies for blind and partially sighted people.



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**Come &
meet us**

For further information about this event, call Dolphin
Computer Access on 01905 754 577.