



**Oxfordshire**  
Association for the Blind

## Newsletter

November 2017

### Coming Home

“If you go anywhere, even paradise, you will miss your home”. Those wise words of Malala Yousafzai, the Nobel Laureate, seem to resonate with me. I had a wonderful nine month sabbatical, but it’s been great to come back to a very warm welcome. I’d like to thank the Trustees for giving me the opportunity, the team for their encouragement and support, and Ana who ably stood in for me while I was away.

I won’t bore you with a long travelog – I spent much of the time catching up with friends and

family – but I did do some exhilarating travelling. I read a marvellous biography of Captain Cook and it was fascinating to stand on some of the beaches in Australia where he and his crew landed over 200 years ago. Ironically, while looking out carefully for snakes on our bushwalks I saw none, but then nearly trod on a very poisonous one, some months later, in the Austrian Tyrol! That was the low point in a very enjoyable one month excursion around Europe on the trains.

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**Dear Reader,**

**We hope that you like this newsletter. It's in a different format to usual, but full of useful information. We plan to return to the previous format for the next edition.**

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**Opening Hours: 9am to 4pm Mon-Fri**

And thank you to those of you who have welcomed me back. It was nice to see such a good turnout at our AGM in September. There's a short article about it further on. I'd like to repeat the thanks that we gave there to our wonderful volunteer workers - over 100 of you. Whether it's helping with administration, home visiting, clubs and groups, fundraising or any of the many other tasks, I'm very grateful to you.

The charity is continuing to move forward to build upon our existing services and develop more activities that people have requested. It's great, for example, to see that so many of you are keen to embrace new technology and we're keen to be there to support you with it.

In order to continue our progress and to try to be as accessible as possible, we've recognised that we need to update our name. Our name has served us well over many years, but we know that we need to find a new name that emphasises our work with all people who have a sight impairment. We'll be asking people's opinions and I'll update you in the next newsletter.

I'd also like to thank all of you who support us with your kind donations. We have included with this newsletter our Annual Christmas Appeal and, if you feel able to do so again, I'd be most grateful to you.

By the time you read this Christmas will be nearly upon us. I do hope that

you have a very enjoyable time.

With best wishes, Colin.

## **Annual General Merriment**

Yes, our AGM this year on 6<sup>th</sup> September was a very enjoyable, perhaps even merry event. It was lovely to see all those friendly faces and great to have such wonderful support for our work. After brief reports from our Chair, David and Treasurer, George, the members kindly elected the Committee for next year. George is stepping down as Treasurer and we thanked him for all his hard work for us. In his place, Katherine Miles has kindly taken up the role.

The Committee of Trustees is therefore:

Adrian Hill, President  
David Warr, Chair  
Guy Lawfull, Vice Chair  
Katherine Miles,  
Treasurer  
Simon Cruden  
Margaret Simpson  
Yvonne Rainey  
Edward Pilling

I'm delighted that we, once again, have such a skilled and experienced group of Trustees to guide us forwards.

We also thanked all of our wonderful volunteer workers and we had the pleasure of awarding Honorary Life Memberships to 5 of them. They are:

Mr Keith Chapman and Mr Andrew Bailey, who have both been long standing, volunteers and drivers for our Chipping Norton Group, and Mrs Elaine Blackie, Mr Ian Belcher, and Mrs Stella Rajandream, who have

been long standing volunteer advisors at our Sight Advisory Desk at the John Radcliffe Hospital.

This was then followed by a very informative talk about support for carers by Kay Francis, Head of Carers Oxfordshire. Then of course came the opportunity for us all to catch up informally over tea, biscuits and some rather lovely cakes and tarts. It was all over in a bit of a flash, but then good things so often are. I'd like to thank everyone who worked so hard to make it such a successful event.

Colin.

### **New £10 notes**

You may have already noticed the new £10 notes have been made accessible for those with a visual impairment. This

is a great step forward for accessible money in the UK.

The notes are made of the same material as the new £5 note, but to help people distinguish the notes, they have added 2 clusters of raised dots at the top left front side of the note. You will now be able to feel the difference in size and texture compared to other notes.

In 2020 the new £20 note will be released, hopefully this will also be made accessible as well.

### **Frideswide Square**

Have you had difficulty using Frideswide Square in Oxford, or do you completely avoid the area?

OAB, Guide Dogs and RNIB are teaming up to try and make a difference with the inaccessible shared space, if you'd like

to get involved with the campaign, please call OAB and ask for Mark Upton.

### **A View from a Friend**

I'm 82. My dry macular degeneration has recently worsened. I've sent my driving licence back. What matters much more is how hard it is now to read. I'm a historian, researching and writing about how we have dealt with disputes without litigation, by arbitration and mediation. I use my computer all day to get at the sources and create my text.

From the start, the JR Eye Hospital has confirmed my faith in the NHS. The Low Vision Clinic put me on to OAB. Losing sight must be miserable for many but, from the time I first arrived at the Resource

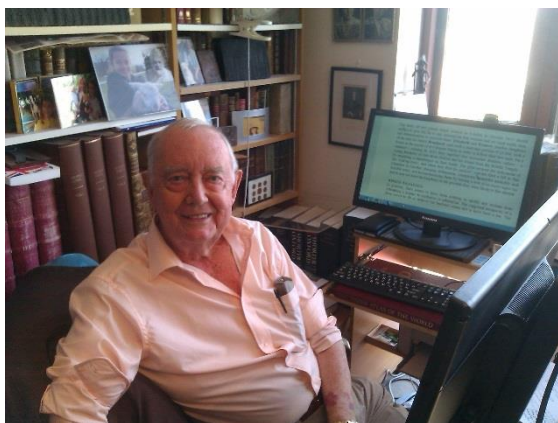
Centre, I have felt boosted. My welcome was so warm and real and human. I felt so cared for just as me, not a client, still less a customer. In my 65 years in universities I have never met anyone more expert and so able to make me understand new technology.

I have bought all the latest magnifying aids and can get on with my work, though I admit it is more of a struggle. My wife, Susanna Hoe, and I will tomorrow send off the manuscript of our book *Women in Disputes*, and I'm working happily with my research team on a book about arbitration and mediation in 18th-century England, for publication next year. OAB has made all this possible.

I think I have met all the staff at the Resource Centre now. We always have a bit of fun. And I come away with a sense of joy at their humanity and willing helpfulness. Strange words - fun and joy - to find in an account of going blind. But that is OAB.

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## **Reclaiming the Sanctuary – decluttering my bedroom, by Abby White**

A decluttered, well-organized home improves wellbeing and personal safety, especially when you have a visual impairment. However, this ideal is not always easy to achieve, especially with sight loss.

For a while now, my bedroom has quietly insisted that it could do with some TLC, but sorting through clothes after losing 3st. organizing shelves and storage space were unappealing tasks. The room functioned well enough, so this goal continued to languish low down on my priority list.

Until I began talking with Lesley Beattie, who



specialises in helping people organize their personal space. She highlighted that a bedroom is a private sanctuary from the world, and well-tended bedroom aids relaxing sleep. I knew I'd run through the tasks faster, and enjoy the process more, if doing so with a friend, so I asked Leslie to help.

My main goal was to tackle my wardrobe, item by item. I wonder if sight loss influences me to act often based on associated memories, thoughts and feelings, rather than a current visual prompt. Having an objective assistant in this process helped me stay focused and make decisions logically.

I identified a large pile of clothing to recycle. Leslie took clothing to a charity shop, ensuring a good cause benefited

from my clear-out. I also identified outfits to be adjusted, and some needing small repairs – these are now in the hands of a seamstress.

My wardrobe was already organized by clothing type (jumpers, jackets, cardigans, blouses, skirts, trousers, dresses).

Lesley and I further organized each section by colour to find items faster and more easily identify which items match with others.

Lesley also suggested looping my scarves over the rail instead of draping them over one hook. This instantly made them all easy to locate.

Several tools are available to help identify coloured clothing, including a handheld electronic colour announcer, and tactile shapes that can be hooked over the coat



hanger. For example, all hangers with a triangle signal blue clothes, all circles signal red.

My bedroom has been used at times to store things quickly out of the way. As these random items don't belong, they are easily forgotten, and become potential trip hazards. Lesley quickly identified items that seemed out of place and could be relocated or discarded, saving me a lot of time and energy.

Working through my bedroom with Lesley was very relaxing and enjoyable with Lesley's help. She listened and understood my low vision needs, and was friendly company through the process. I highly recommend reorganizing with an independent person who can observe, identify, be an extra pair

of hands, and help you think objectively.

After just a few hours, I had a more organized, happier room. It isn't perfect yet, but it's well on the way, and the process has inspired me to take other actions around my home too. I've since noticed I'm spending more time in the room, and sleeping better too. Time very much well spent!

### **Disability Active**

The Sport England funded 'Disability Active' project at The Park Club, Milton Park continues to support local adults (16+) with a physical or learning disability to access and sustain participation in physical activity, through supported gym and swim sessions.

Tuesdays - Gym 10:30 - 12:00

Fridays - Swim 10:00 - 11:30

Sessions are charged at £2.50 per session (carers go free).

Venue: Soll Leisure, The Park Club, 17 Milton Park, Abingdon, OX14 4RP

To register your interest for the 'Disability Active' project please contact the Community Development team on

[info@parkclub.co.uk](mailto:info@parkclub.co.uk) or 01235 861289.

Alternatively you can see more information at [www.parkclub.co.uk](http://www.parkclub.co.uk).

## **Why Play VI Cricket? by Adam Solan**

My name is Adam Solan and I am 14 years old, studying at Oxford Spire Academy. I started in year 10 this term and I have also been appointed as a school prefect.

My reason for writing this article is to tell the readers about my interest in VI Cricket, in the hope that it will encourage others to give it a go. I have been playing VI cricket since 2014 as a wicket keeper and middle order batsman.

When I started playing I was looking for a team in Oxford, but unfortunately Oxford does not have any visually impaired cricket available. I contacted the English Cricket Board and they recommended that I play for a team based in Reading, which is a County league team. I have now been playing for Berkshire Stags for almost three years and my future aim is to make it further onto the International level when I turn sixteen. Players on the Berkshire team range in age between 12 and

65+ years old and everyone shares a very special bond because we all have issues which we can relate to.

It is great fun playing VI cricket because it is played with a special ball similar to a soccer ball, which has a bell inside it, which helps the batsman and fielders to keep track of the ball. The game requires determination and physical fitness, because it is not easy when you're out in the field. We get to play tournaments with other league teams and tour various parts of the country and also play against teams such as "Help for Heroes", Thames Valley Police and other local teams in charity events. The team is active most times of the year: I have to attend weekly indoor and

outdoor training sessions between November and April, and then the tournament season is between April and August. It is always a fun day out playing and having a chat with people from all sorts of backgrounds.

I would personally encourage children and adults who are visually impaired to get involved in this sport, as you could have opportunities to get active and involved in other activities with your teammates. And who knows, if you get into the International league you could have a chance to tour the world playing tournaments against other countries, representing England!

If you're interested in being part of an Oxfordshire VI cricket club, please contact

[elliepearce@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:elliepearce@oxeyes.org.uk) or 01865 725 595.



**Adam with the cup he won for Best Player of the Year 2017**

## **New Team Members**

We are thrilled to announce two new team members joining our fundraising team. Nathan Tree was the first to join us from a previous career in campaigns and development management and we can't wait to see how he applies his skills to this

position. He has recently spent time working for a charity in Australia and achieved some really great things. Nathan's normal working days will be a Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Nathan says: "I am very excited to be working at OAB. Having used the services myself and getting to know everyone it feels like a great fit. I am passionate about helping others and hope to achieve some great results going forward. I also have a keen interest in fitness events and am always looking for guides and training partners. If you would be interested, please get in touch."

Laura says: "Nathan is full of enthusiasm already and ideas and I am sure he will charm and inspire our supporters. He is a great advocate of our

work and he tells a very powerful story about what OAB has done to help him turn his life around, following his own sight loss. He is really keen to meet you all so please do say hello to Nathan when you are next at OAB.

Rosia Curtis is the second new team member to join us and her normal working days will be Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. Rosia will be focusing on making applications to charitable trusts. She is a highly skilled writer and has been working in a trust fundraising role for another local charity. We will include more details about Rosia next time.

### **OXVIC (Oxford Visually Impaired Club)**

We are a group of older people who meet

fortnightly. We have a variety of activities: speakers; the police and the natural history museum; quizzes; knowing me knowing you sessions; and trips out for lunch, visits and our Christmas meal.

On Tuesday we went to Chalgrove church to see the 11<sup>th</sup> century building with beautiful fresco paintings, amazing carvings and beautiful tapestry kneelers. We were made most welcome by the church, who are in the process of making all the church accessible for the visually impaired. They have transferred many of the images onto 3D swell paper so the images can be felt. In addition they have an audio described tour of the church itself. This church is stunning and well worth a visit.

One of our group remarked “this will be a special memory for a long time”. Thanks to Chalgrove scouts who helped with the transport and our convivial driver who helped us get on and off the minibus. A great day out was had by all. In the New Year we hope to have a session on magnetic bead making, safety and first aid in the home, as well as a further museum tour. For more information, please contact Mark. We’re a very friendly group who have lots of laughs, fun and friendship. **Ali Carre**

### **Reflections of a sabbatical from Colin**

A number of people have asked if I would write a piece about my sabbatical. It’s kind of them to ask. There’s not room for a long article,

but I looked back at my diary and notes and thought you might be interested in one of my reflections on my Interrail Trip for the month of May, around Europe, with my lovely lady, Diane. I hope this gives a flavour:

The Alps: One of the most special aspects of the trip for me was the ever presence – at least in my mind - of the Alps. Whilst we only spent a relatively short period of our trip actually in the Alps, they always seemed to figure for me. As we set off initially, through France and the Black Forest, I felt that we were “en route” to the Alps and, soon after arriving in the beautiful town of Stein am Rhein, in northern Switzerland, my friend kindly took us to the hillside fortress café, where we gained our first view of the high

mountains in the distance. Subsequently, our 6 train day journey through and over the Alps to Tirano, in Italy, was quite breathtaking (and a highlight in every sense) and even when we arrived further on in Lake Como, the Alps were there completing the spectacular background. Admittedly, we then left the Alpine area to travel in northern Italy and Slovenia, but still the Alps did not seem so far away and always figured in our deliberations on the best route home (ultimately over the Brenner Pass into Austria). They reappeared, in view, once we reached Bled, with its magical lake, in Slovenia, and soon we were in the Dolomites, in Austria, which are part of the Alpine range and we enjoyed some lovely walks amongst the

mountains, including a stunning walk from Zell am See – including the bar café, at 5,000 feet, open on their bank holiday, complete with marvellous views and friendly lederhosen-clad barman. Yet, further in our journey, the city of Salzburg, is beautifully back-dropped (with “a drop of golden sun”) by the not-so-distant mountains. When we arrived in Munich, it was not long before we were angling to get on the train to take us to the Bavarian Alps and even as we left Munich to travel north to Cologne, I was aware that the mighty Rhein, which we were alongside, and then boat tripping on, had risen in the Alps.

I'll leave you with a final thought: I've noticed that the Interrail prices go down for the over 60's.



So I'm looking forward to continuing on in 2021!



Here's a photo of the view from the station at the top of the Bernina Pass.

## **Clubs and Groups**

There are lots of clubs and groups for sight impaired people in Oxfordshire. They are all very welcoming and there's likely to be one near you. If you are interested in trying out visiting a club or group, do give us a call and we'd be delighted to tell you all about them and introduce you to the organiser.

Here's a note from Kevin, the organiser of the

Dreaming Spires Ten Pin Bowling Club:

Why not join us on a Friday afternoon at the bowling alley near the Kassam Stadium? All levels of bowlers are welcome. Why not come along and try a great sport? Contact me: Kevin Pamphilon on 01869 331778

## **Sensory Impairment Team**

The County Council has an excellent team of specially trained staff supporting people of all ages affected by sensory impairment.

Their telephone no. is: 01865 894935.

## **Carers Oxfordshire**

Is a service for anyone who is caring for another person and would like some support. Their no. is: 0845 0507666