



# Oxfordshire

## Association for the Blind

### Newsletter

February 2018

#### **It's behind you!**

Funnily enough, that was about the only cliché that was not used in the Pantomime that we arranged an outing to in late December. There were plenty of cheers and boos and sing-alongs. The children certainly had a great time and, I think, the adults did too.

I enjoyed that and the several Christmas lunches that I was kindly invited to by some of our groups for sight impaired people. Once again, it was lovely to see the group members enjoying the festive cheer. Our groups provide a very warm friendly atmosphere and are particularly welcoming to new members. There is a

group in most areas of the county, so, if you are interested in seeing whether it would suit you, please do give us a call.

I do hope that you had a good Christmas and New Year. I'd like to begin the year, by asking those of you who are not already members of OAB to please consider joining. You can find out more about OAB membership on page 9 of this newsletter. As I mentioned in the last newsletter, this year we are looking into a suitable change of name – one that expresses clearly that we are there for anyone who has a sight impairment and not just people who are registered blind.

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**Dear Reader,**

**We hope that you like this newsletter. Once again it's in a different format to usual, but full of useful information. We plan to return to the previous format soon.**

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

We've received a lot of support for the idea and are keen to continue to seek people's opinions. If you would like to contribute to the discussion, could you please join us on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March at 11am to 12.30pm here at OAB. Tea and biscuits will be available.

I'd like to sign off by thanking everyone who gave their kind help to us last year. Your support for our Christmas Appeal was marvellous, raising over £4,000 in total. We know that without the support of so many people, we could not provide the services that we do.

With best wishes,  
Colin.

## **Children and Young People's update**

Our Creepy Creatures session at the Oxford University Museum of

Natural History the October half term was a roaring success (pictured). We got to explore the museum and touch things that no one else is allowed to, like the T-rex head used in Walking with Dinosaurs. Afterwards we made ingredients for our own spells for Halloween. We also got the chance to handle some huge cockroaches, who had very tickly feet. For some reason not everyone was keen on holding them! We have another **Explore & Make museum session** in February half term, I'm sure we'll tell you all about it next time.

Over the Christmas period 32 of us went on our traditional panto trip. We saw Jack and the Beanstalk at the Oxford Playhouse (oh yes we

did!), with a Touch Tour beforehand. We booed and hissed with the best of them, and look forward to going back next year.

You may already have spotted Ellie at the JR hospital – she'll regularly be at our Sight Desk on the Thursday mornings when the paediatric low vision clinic is running so that she can meet the families attending. Pop by to say hello!

After the success of last year's **Arts Award** held at the Natural History Museum, we're excited to announce that we will be taking part again this year, based at the Ashmolean. This accredited course is offered by the Arts Council and Trinity College London and involves two Saturday sessions (see below for details), which will give

participants a chance to have a go at different forms of art, explore the Ashmolean and handle lots of museum objects. Each child will complete their own portfolio, which will be assessed as part of the project, and which they can then take home at the end. The course is open to **visually impaired children aged between 6 and 11**. A parent/guardian must accompany each child.

**Dates / times for the Arts Award course are as follows:**

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2018 10am - 2pm**

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018 10am - 2pm**

**There will be an additional Family Workshop Day open to everyone on either 17<sup>th</sup> or 24<sup>th</sup> March 2018 (tbc).**

Lunch will be provided by the museum for both parents and children.

**Where:** Ashmolean,  
Beaumont St, Oxford  
OX1 2PH

**Booking contact:**

markupton@oxeyes.org.uk

For questions or suggestions relating to activities and support for children and young people, please contact [markupton@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:markupton@oxeyes.org.uk)



Image: Hanging out with the T-Rex in the museum, practising our roars.

## Oxfordshire RP Group

Many of you reading this will probably wonder 'what on earth is RP'. The letters stand for Retinitis Pigmentosa which put into words of understanding basically means you have a faulty gene which has affected your retina. Consequently you have failing eyesight particularly in poor light and darkness together with a restricted field of view. That is not quite how the doctors would put it, but that is what it amounts to.

Whilst in comparison with say Macular Degeneration, RP is not so well known there are sufficient people with the problem to justify a national organisation based in Buckingham.

I have RP myself and help to run a group which

meets regularly either for musical events and talks also outings. We also raise funds for research into a cure for RP, via bucket collections and token appeals at local supermarkets and elsewhere.

Perhaps you and/or a friend or relative with RP may wish to join our friendly group and I would be delighted to hear from you.

I can be contacted on 01235 511044 or 'optimistic@phonecoop.coop' – I think that e mail address sums up my attitude don't you!?

Article by Chris Turner.

## **Tech Talk**

If you are interested in learning more about the latest technology or would like an update on what's new, come along to one of our Tech Talks. We'll be demonstrating and discussing the latest

apps, gadgets and gizmos for those with a visual impairment. We will be having 2 sessions, one at OAB in Oxford and one at the Didcot Civic Hall.

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> March** -  
OAB Bradbury Lodge,  
Gordon Woodward Way,  
Oxford, OX1 4XL

**Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March** -  
Didcot Civic Hall,  
Northbourne room,  
Britwell Road, Didcot,  
OX11 7JN

Both events are from  
10.30am to 12.30pm.

To book a place on either session please contact Mark Upton on 01865 725595 or email [markupton@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:markupton@oxeyes.org.uk)

## **Get fit and fundraise for OAB!**

Are you, or anyone you know looking for a fitness challenge in 2018? Would you like to join our Bike Oxford team on a single or tandem cycle?



Or could you take on the huge challenge that is Rough Runner in the beautiful Great Tew Park? (travellator image below being one of the activities).

Please consider helping us, to ensure that we are represented at important local events and to raise much needed funds for our free of charge services.

We are looking for participants to join our Bike Oxford and Rough Runner teams over the weekend of the 19 and 20 May. We can support you with finding partners or guides, organising your race entry, setting up an online fundraising page and anything else you may need.

Contact us on [fundraising@oxeyes.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@oxeyes.org.uk) or give Nathan or Rosia a call.

Image: Running on the travellator!



### **Blind Ice Hockey**

A relatively new sport in the blind sports arena, Blind Ice Hockey is only played in Canada and the USA. The sport differs from Ice Hockey as all participants have some degree of visual impairment and it is played non-contact, with different sized goals and a metal puck that makes a lot of noise, making it easier to track.

OAB's own, Nathan Tree, will be going to the Canadian and USA national tournaments later this year and is the first and only European player to participate. Nathan says "It is a great opportunity to continue to

play a sport I have played all my life and I am so happy I get the chance to do so". Nathan will be away for 2 weeks starting in March to go and play. Wish him luck!

### **What does OAB mean to you?**

As Colin mentioned in his introduction, we would like to invite you to a meeting at OAB on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> March from 11am to 12.30pm to give us your views about what our charity means to you, as part of the process of considering a new name to take us forward. Please join us.

### **Dreaming Spires ten pin bowling**

On a cold evening in January the Dreaming Spires tenpin team were short listed in the Oxfordshire Sports Awards and attended a dinner held at the Kassam stadium.

The evening started with a drinks reception, followed by a 3 course meal.

We were nominated in the disability sports category as we are the current British Blind Sports trio's champions, which we won in Sheffield in May.

We all had a great evening and came runners up to a disabled swimmer from Didcot.

I was proud of all the team who looked very smart and this has motivated us to do well in our sport in the future so one year we could go on and win the award!



Image: Laura, Paul, Ken our volunteer, Kevin, and Danny.



## **Technology: It just keeps giving**

The world of assistive technology has been transformed by a new mobile phone app from Microsoft called Seeing AI. The app on its latest release can do the following: quickly detect and read text, scan a full page document and read aloud, scan barcodes and tell you the name of the product plus additional information such as ingredients, identify colours, take a photo of a person and tell you their gender, age and facial expression (be warned technology can lie!), scan a scene and use artificial intelligence to detect what is there, identify colour, detect light and lastly scan hand written text and read aloud. This particular feature is in its

early days, but still a first for assistive technology.

This app is currently only available on the iPhone or iPad. It works best with the newer models of phone or tablet, but is still usable with older versions and here's the best part, it is completely free! If you'd like to find out more about using a smartphone or tablet, give Mark Upton a call on 01865 725595.

## **Reporting on rotating cones**

If you find a rotating cone is not working at a pedestrian crossing call 01865 815775 to report it. What is a rotating cone? Give us a call to find out more.

## **Membership**

Being a member is a great way for people to support OAB and be part of an organisation that strives to improve the

lives of sight impaired people. Each member has the right to vote at our AGM, helping to shape the future of the charity.

You do not have to be a member in order to receive our help. However, having a membership scheme does make OAB stronger and gives us a guaranteed income each year.

You will find a membership form enclosed, along with a standing order form and a gift aid form with a return envelope.

There are 2 types of membership:

- An annual membership of £10 a year
- A, one off, life time membership of £250.

You can pay in a variety of ways. If you'd like to talk this through with us, please don't hesitate to call. And thank you: we much appreciate your support.

## **Clubs and Groups**

For more information on local clubs and groups please call us on the number on page 2.

## **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

## **Summary of OAB Services**

OAB works, in collaboration with the Visual Impairment Team of Social & Community Services, the Oxford Eye Hospital, the Sensory Services Team of the Education Department and the other agencies and groups in Oxfordshire, to support sight impaired people and their carers in Oxfordshire.

### **In summary we provide:**

- Advice and Information – on any matter relating to sight impairment.
- Emotional Support and Professional Counselling - to sight impaired people who are distressed with the situation in which they find themselves.
- Specialist Equipment Demonstration - an opportunity to try out a wide range of specialist equipment, which may help a person to live a more independent life.
- Free 2<sup>nd</sup> hand equipment provision – we are often able to provide free of charge, electronically tested equipment which has been donated to us, to people who would otherwise not be able to afford to purchase the equipment.
- Sight Advisory Service at the Eye Hospital - information and signposting to sight impaired patients who are attending appointments at the Ophthalmology Department of the John Radcliffe Hospital.

- Home Visiting - home visits, by trained volunteers, to offer practical support to people in and around Oxford, Kidlington and Abingdon.
- Social Groups - a chance to meet other people with similar difficulties.
- Technology – information and training sessions in using computers, tablets, smartphones and other technologies, for sight impaired people.
- Radio/CD/Cassette Players – provision of sets to people who meet the criteria of the Wireless for the Blind Fund.
- Practical Sessions – Opportunities for groups to try out specialist equipment with guidance on retaining independence and cooking for fun sessions.
- Children, Young People and Families – individual information and activity programme.
- Newsletter – of useful information in large print and listening versions.
- Training – for organisations whose staff would benefit from being skilled in assisting a sight impaired person.
- Website – of useful information: [www.oxeyes.org.uk](http://www.oxeyes.org.uk)
- Facebook – Please follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Oxfordshire-Association-for-the-Blind/619825344746366>
- Fundraising – of course all of these services have a cost. If you would like to donate to one or all of these services, or assist us with fundraising, please do give us a call. We do not receive any grants from the government or the national charities for sight impairment.