



Oxfordshire
Association for the Blind

Newsletter

November 2018

Director's Message

The exceptional weather smiled on Oxfordshire over the summer but now autumn seems to definitely be with us! The trees around the office seem to glow with wonderful autumnal colours: vibrant reds, browns and fiery orange. With that in mind, our thoughts now turn to preparations for Christmas and the New Year.

But before our plans of eating mince pies and drinking a small glass (or two) of sherry, I'd like to reflect on a busy summer at OAB.

Of course for me, the start of the summer was a busy and exciting time as I joined OAB. For clients and my colleagues at Bradbury Lodge, it was a period of change with Colin moving to pastures new. However, you will be pleased to know that Colin keeps in contact and is continuing to volunteer for us.

A flurry of activity was started in August to free and clear some space within the centre. This activity is ongoing and we hope to finish it in December. We are looking at new technology and updating resources within the centre. So watch this space!

September brought the annual AGM held with the election of the trustees and an interesting talk from Gurjeet Jutley who spoke about his work as a Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon at the Oxford Eye Hospital. He also entertained us on the recent challenging 3 Peaks Trek he completed in aid of OAB. He climbed Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon all in one weekend. If you or your friends or members of your family would like to take part in a fundraising event, please contact Laura or Rosia in the OAB office for more information.

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Telephone: 01865 725 595

Email: admin@oxeyes.org.uk

Website: www.oxeyes.org.uk

Opening Hours: 10am to 3pm Mon-Fri

OAB is a registered charity (No: 1140556) and limited company (No: 07465300)

>>> The summer was brought to a close with a really successful equipment day held at the centre on September 6th and was one of the busiest days I have seen in the centre yet. We had suppliers from Dolphin and Enhanced Vision to help with computer packages, and we also welcomed Calibre Audio Library, Blind Veterans and the Macular Society. Nathan, Laura and Mark were also on hand to help discuss any particular support you required. More dates will be popped in the diary in the New Year.

All seasons bring new trials and tribulations but especially winter. The longer nights and the cold icy weather bring challenges to everyone's way of

life...but rest assured at OAB you will receive a warm welcome and our support on any issues you might have.

Please feel free to drop into Bradbury lodge; however, it's always best to book an appointment if you have a particular need and would like to speak to someone. The Centre's new opening hours are listed below.

On a final note, like many charities, our need for fundraising is greater than ever. If you are able to do so, please do support our Christmas Appeal (please see p. 8 and the enclosed form). I wish you, your friends and family season's greetings and I hope you enjoy the Christmas festivities.

Clare

Opening Hours

Our opening hours are changing! Our helpline and resource centre will be open from **10am-3pm Monday-Friday**, please do remember to book an appointment in advance so we can prepare for your visit.

Christmas Opening

We will be closing the office for Christmas from Friday 21st December 3pm and reopening on Monday 2nd January at 10am.

Children & Young People's News

The last few months have flown by with a busy children and young people's programme and it's been wonderful to meet and get to know some of you! I thought you might be interested in a few of the events that have taken place.

Weds 1st Aug – AT THE SEASIDE!

We had fun making a mess at OAB and it took me a while to get all the margarine and icing off the chairs! But it was of course worth it. We made beach cupcakes and the amazing picture below!

Thurs 9th Aug – COTSWOLDS WILDLIFE PARK

This was a joint event with Look Oxfordshire and we had a beautiful day of sunshine to enjoy the numerous animals. Even the lions and leopard were out on display. We had

great fun at the two hands-on experiences. The first one was with farm animals and you can see below we fed the really cute little goats who were ravenous! The second one was hands-on with reptiles – the tortoise was lovely but I wasn't so convinced by the lizard or snake! A really enjoyable day out!

Fri 31st Aug – MILLETS FARM: FALCONRY AND MEERKATS

Another beautifully sunny day greeted us at Millets where we spent most of our time in the amazing Falconry Centre. They have so many birds of prey on view and other delights such as skunks, raccoons and meerkats. We all held a falcon and watched the flying display where the birds flew so close, we often had to duck! I wasn't so keen on the idea of meerkats but as you can see from the photo below,

Children's artwork



Goats, falcons and meerkats!

they are really cute and it was a real highlight to feed them and touch them.

Sat 15th September – PADDLE SESSION AT THE FALCON CANOE CENTRE

And yes, yet another sunny day and it was beautiful and peaceful on the River Thames – until we came along! The volunteers from the Falcon Centre did a truly amazing job and helped us into canoes or kayaks and came along with us thankfully or who knows where we would have ended up?

About 20 of us plus the volunteers were on the river somewhere and it was exciting to go through Iffley Lock together and to stop and collect conkers and pick blackberries! Bailey capsized in a kayak of course but I think the rest of us returned dry!

So you can see what a wonderful and enjoyable job I have! A huge thank you to Clare Holmes, Jane Bryant and Beth Penfold for all the great photos! More fun is on its way: in the October half-term, we have 'Spellbound' at the Ashmolean museum for 5 – 11 year olds and the pantomime this year is 'Dick Whittington' on Sun 9th Dec. There will of course be other events so please get in touch with any ideas you have of things to do or if you want to join us or if you need any information. Lastly, I am looking for a volunteer or two to help. Someone who would be able to join us at such events and help me collect forms, money, take photos and just generally assist! If you would like to help call Laura Finnis on 01865 725595



Kayaking along the River Thames

SHOULDERS BACK

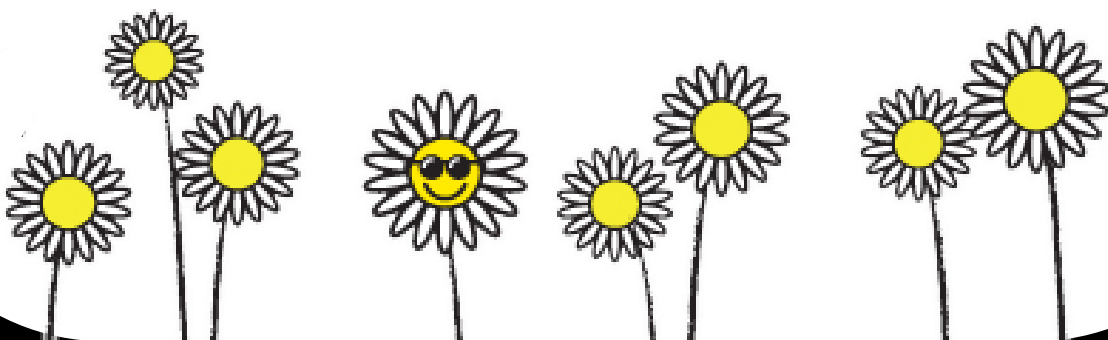
By Bob Gerhardt

When the curtains are drawn against the light
And you finally realise you are losing your sight,
That's not the time to sit and cry
Or make believe you want to die.

Stand up, take heart,

The world's still there and you're a part.
It won't be easy, I must agree,
But show some spirit and soon you'll see
That people won't just pass you by
Afraid to look you in the eye.

When they find you don't need pity,
Just a little help when things get tricky.
There's no way they'll put you on a shelf
To grow old alone or by yourself.
Your brain still works, your legs still move,
So off you go and help to prove
That though your eyes don't work too well,
You'll never be found inside your shell.
The world's your oyster, of that I'm sure,
With a little courage, and nothing more.
Now there's no deep meaning to this simple rhyme,
Just don't give up and you'll be fine.



The end of the Gin-uary Blues....



We are delighted to have teamed up with The Oxford Artisan Distillery (TOAD) and the Oxford Hospitals Charity for a very special and exclusive event.

Join us from 6pm on Thursday **31st January 2019** for a scientific and sensory tour of this 'grain to glass' distillery. Discover how vodka, gin, absinthe and rye whisky are made.

On the edge of South Park lies this hidden gem that is host to our evening - a full distillery where spirits are crafted from grain to glass.

Over the past year the small team at TOAD have been putting a vision of creating the most incredible spirits into practice – and in 12 months they have managed to launch award winning gins, a vodka, and, if you can get your hands on them, some very limited bottlings of unaged rye whisky and absinthe.

Using sustainable heritage grains sourced from fields around Oxford and a bespoke pair of copper stills, this distillery embraces the local community, bringing craft distilling to Oxfordshire.

We are offering you a unique opportunity to join us for a closer look.

Early bird tickets purchased in 2018 are £15 each (price will increase to £20 in 2019). Ticket price includes a complimentary G&T for over 18s. All proceeds will be split between OAB and Oxford Hospitals Charity.

There is limited availability so please call Laura at OAB or e-mail laurahowdill@oxeyes.org.uk to reserve your ticket now.



Can you give a gift to OAB this Christmas?

A massive thank you to all of you who donated to our 2017 appeal. We raised £4,759!!!

2018 has been a BIG year. We've had a busy schedule for children and families – wildlife park visits, canoeing, crafts, and more. Our technology training service continues to grow (demand has risen by 189% since 2016).

Your support helped to enable this!!

We are so proud of the impact that OAB has. Last year, we gave information and advice on **5,580** occasions and helped **420** people to access assistive equipment. We must keep achieving all of this.

Unfortunately, it is becoming harder than ever to secure the **£290,000** needed to run OAB each year. We need your help!



£20 funds a VI equipment demo session



£50 trains a volunteer to support a VI person



£100 runs an activity day for children and families

We have included a donation form with this newsletter.

Please support us if you possibly can.

We are always here to help, so do contact us -

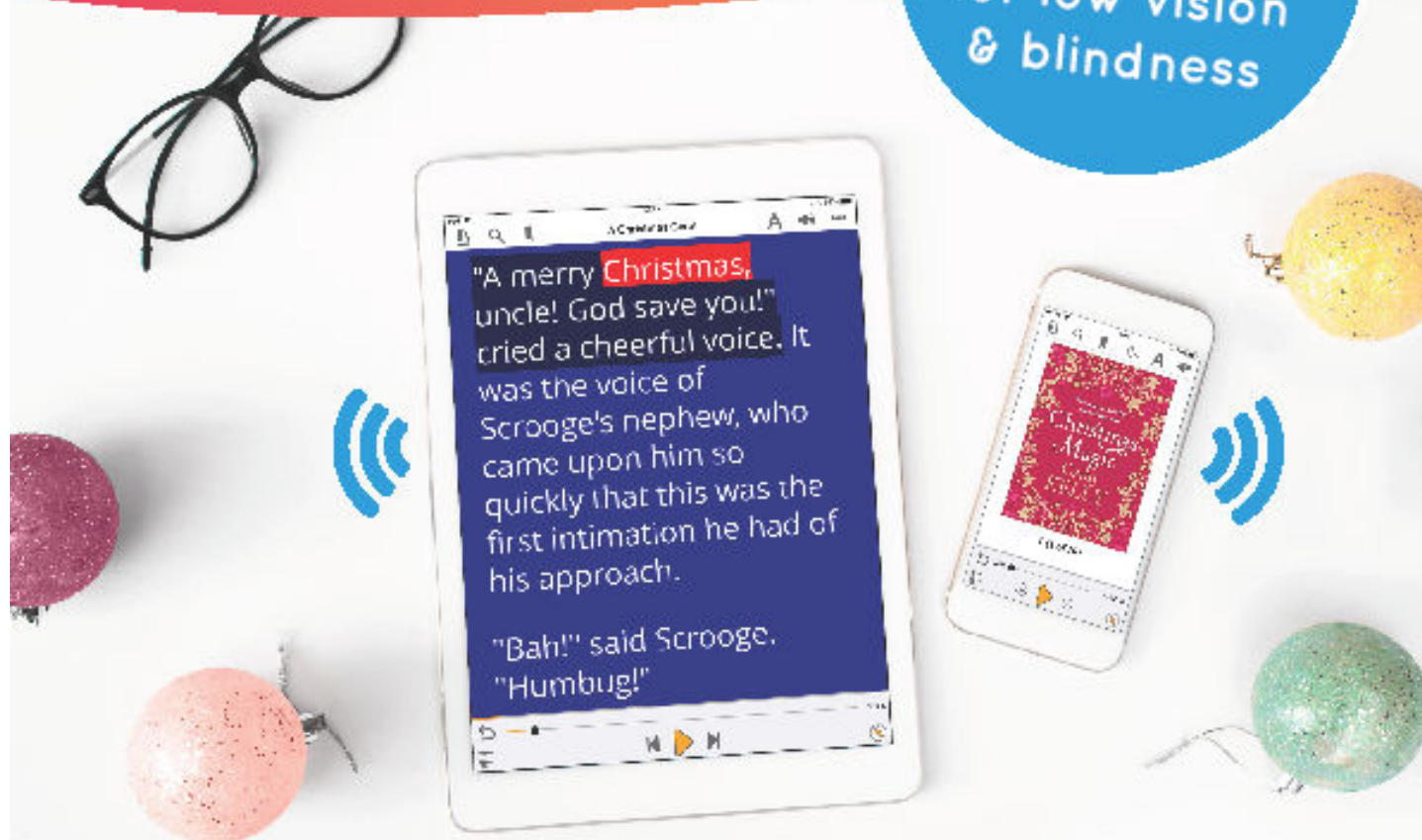
Mark, Nathan and the team will be delighted to assist you.

Thank you so much



Dolphin
EasyReader
for iOS & Android

FREE
accessible
reading app
for low vision
& blindness



A simpler way to read from book and newspaper libraries including **RNIB Overdrive & RNIB Newsagent**



Play human narrated books or 'read aloud' text only books & newspapers



Fully compatible with iOS VoiceOver & Android TalkBack



"Easily one of
the best free
apps for VI
folks."
-Marc Gulwell

For more information visit:
YourDolphin.com/easyreaderapp
or call 01905 754 577

 **Dolphin**
Making a difference

Equipment updates

Orbit 20 Braille Reader

If you are a braille reader and have ever accessed braille through a braille display you'll know that traditional braille displays can cost in excess of £2,000! The new Orbit 20 Braille Reader is an affordable 20 cell braille display that enables you to connect to your smartphone, tablet or PC, or access text or braille documents through an SD card. The display is portable, lightweight and well constructed and for £449 you'd be happy using this on the go! To find out more give us a call on 01865 725595 or go to www.rnib.org.uk/shop



Image: Orbit 20 Braille Reader

Cobolt Touch Talking Watch



This new talking watch is unique as you do not have to touch a button on the side of the watch for it to announce the time, simply touch the watch face once to hear the time and press and hold to hear the date, it comes with the choice of a leather strap or expanding bracelet and it announces the time in a clear female voice. Give us a call to find out more.

2019 diaries and calendars

The 2019 diaries and calendars are now available at OAB, they come in A3 calendar, A4 desk diary, A5 and A6 pocket diaries. Give us a call to make an order.

Lighting

In the Resource Centre we have a range of daylight lamps to suit many needs. Daylight lamps produce a white light which is less strenuous on the eye than standard lights and makes it much easier to see detail.

We display many standard, desktop and portable lamps to fit any price range and we can show you how to use them for the greatest effect. Give Nathan a call on 01865 725595 to make an appointment and find out more.



Image: Daylight twist portable lamp, call for more information.

Staying in Touch

There are many ways you can stay in touch with OAB, you can receive this newsletter in large print, audio memory stick, email or by accessing our website at www.oxeyes.org.uk

Please note: We will no longer be providing audio tapes from 2019, this is due to the quality of the tapes and the lack of demand for them now with new technology. If you would like to discuss changing to USB memory stick, please give us a call.



Facebook: You can follow us on Facebook, simply search Oxfordshire Association for the Blind once you're logged in.



Twitter: You can follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/OX_Sight

If you'd like to change the way you receive your newsletter or cancel your subscription please give us a call on 01865 725595.



Three Peaks Update

On 31st August 2018, Gurjeet Jutley, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon at the Oxford Eye Hospital took part in the Three Peaks Challenge to raise money for OAB. This involved summiting the highest peak in England, Scotland and Wales over 24 hours.

OAB works very closely with Gurjeet and his colleagues at the Oxford Eye Hospital as we have been running a sight advisory desk at the hospital for over twenty years. This service ensures that our help is available to patients at the time of diagnosis and beyond. There are around 600 visitors to the desk annually.

Gurjeet told us why he was inspired to undertake this huge challenge and his delight at successfully completing it:

“The Oxford Eye Hospital is so busy and the number of patients we treat is increasing each year. We have seen at first-hand the wide range of services and support offered by OAB and I am very grateful to

be able to refer on patients to them. OAB is a lifeline for so many people who are struggling to adapt to sight loss and I am committed to doing all I can to ensure the charity is able to continue its invaluable work.

Ben Nevis was fine and I started with a good pace. Scafell Pike in comparison was so difficult; it was raining terribly and this part of the trek took place through the night. It was pitch black, my glasses steamed up and I fell 3 times because of the poor visibility and slippery terrain. It really made me appreciate the cause. The final peak was Snowdon where we experienced 40mph wind and rain!”

Gurjeet’s energy and commitment to helping local people who are visually impaired is incredible and he is already talking about his next fundraising event for us!

If you have been inspired and would like to do something similar for us in 2019 please do get in touch and we will support you however we can.

Dockless Bikes in Oxford

*Article by: Terri Dowty
(Regional Campaigns Officer,
RNIB)*

Judging by the number of complaints we receive, many of you are having problems with the new dockless bikes that have appeared in Oxford over the past year.

These bikes are hired via a mobile phone app until cyclists reach their destination, at which point they log off and leave the bike wherever they happen to be. Some are simply left in the middle of the pavement or in places where they obstruct crossings and entrances. In fact, several times they have been left in front of the entrance to OAB's offices!

Apparently some local councillors are very keen on these bikes, but they obviously haven't taken into account the problems they create for people with visual impairments. We need to change that, and we urgently need your help.

Councillors need to be better informed and the only way of doing that is for everyone to talk to their local councillor. We

can help you every step of the way – we can find the contact details for your councillors, draft a letter and make sure you feel confident in dealing with them.

We have got to do something about these dockless bikes before a person with a visual impairment trips over and is seriously injured. We can only do it if we get local councillors on board. Please, please help us to do that!

OAB are teaming up with RNIB; if you'd like to get involved, please contact Mark on 01865 725595 or markupton@oxeyes.org.uk

AMD Talk by Dr Gurjeet Jutley

Dr Gurjeet Jutley will be returning to OAB for another ophthalmology talk, this time he'll be looking at Age-related Macular Degeneration: causes, effects and the latest treatments. He'll be coming on **Friday 7th December at 2pm, here at Bradbury Lodge.** Spaces are limited so please do book in advance by calling Mark on 01865 725595.



Smart Speakers

Do you get confused between your Amazon Echoes and your Google Homes?! Do you wonder what on earth a smart speaker is or how it can help you? Or would you like to know what's new or what the future holds for smart speakers? Then come along to our Smart Speaker workshop, this workshop is being jointly run by OAB and RNIB; we will be looking at what a smart speaker is, what it can do and we'll have a chance to try out the different types of smart speakers. This workshop will be held at OAB on **Wednesday 5th December at 10.30am**. To book your place, please contact Mark on 01865 725595 or markupton@oxeyes.org.uk

Schools Fundraising

As part of this year's Eye Health Week, we were delighted to partner with Windmill Primary School in Headington to run a 'blindfold lunch', group workshops and an assembly. The event raised a fantastic £355.

Around 500 pupils welcomed Nathan Tree and his guide dog Maisie to their morning assembly. Pupils then got the chance to learn more about visual

impairment and try out a range of equipment – including simulation spectacles, white canes, and specialist sporting equipment.

Later on, hundreds of pupils had a go at eating lunch in the dark – using blindfolds that they had made and decorated themselves. One year 2 pupil said "I really liked the assembly and the blindfold lunch was fun. It was hard wearing the blindfold; I couldn't find where my fish was!" Lynn Knapp, the Head Teacher of the school, also ate her own lunch blindfolded.

Lynn Knapp said "We are really looking forward to working with Oxfordshire Association for the Blind throughout the coming year. We hope that by hearing from someone who is visually impaired in our assembly, running the morning workshops in which the children will meet a guide dog, and then taking part in the blindfold lunch, that we will raise awareness of what it is like to be visually impaired in a fun and practical way."

The Windmill School have decided to make OAB their local charity of the year for 2018-19 and they have also selected Nathan Tree to be one of their inspirational sports personalities for the year.

We are rolling out this schools programme in primary schools across the county and we would love to speak to any schools that may be interested in participating.



Photos of children wearing handmade blindfolds,
credit: www.karrenvisser.com

VIBNO Group Update

Since the last newsletter we have enjoyed a picnic at one of our member's houses in Hampton Gay, and a visit to Heythrop Zoological Gardens where some of us got to feed penguins, ride camels and attend talks about the different kind of animals they have. In October, we had an Indian meal in one of Oxfordshire's finest restaurants. It has been another fun-filled year and it has gone so quickly. We are looking forward to our 17th year; Nicola Pamphilon was on Radio Oxford discussing how long VIBNO has been going and how it has benefited the members throughout the years.

To join us on one of our exciting days out, contact Nicola Pamphilon on 01869 331778



OAB is assisted by:



Listening Learning Leading



OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL



Henley-on-Thames
Town Council



Local Clubs and Groups

Abingdon & District Macular Group – 01235 531857.

ActivEyes – 01865 725595.

Banbury Macular Group – 01608 685293.

Banbury Society for the Visually Impaired – 01295 269568.

Chipping Norton Group – 01608 810899.

Didcot / Wallingford Visually Impaired Group – 01235 813391.

Dreaming Spires ten pin bowling – 01869 331778.

Goring Macular Group – 01865 725595.

Henley Visually Impaired Group – 01491 628284.

Kidlington Macular Group – 01865 376482 or 01865 373104.

LOOK Oxfordshire – support for families of visually impaired children, 01189 722322.

Oxford Macular Group – 01993 811084.

‘OXVIC’ – Oxford Visually Impaired Club – 01865 725595.

Retinitis Pigmentosa Group - 01235 511044.

Thame & District Society for the Visually Impaired – 01844 212983.

‘VIBNO’ – Visually Impaired But Not Old! - 01869 331778.

Wantage Blind Social Club - 01235 764646 or 01235 765849.

Witney Friends of the Visually Impaired – 01865 725595.

Witney Macular Group – 01993 771828.

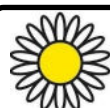
Sensory Impairment Team

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

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



Call OAB on 01865 725 595