

Spring 2018



Warwickshire Vision

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Our Patron:

Dame Judi

Warwickshire Vision Support

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Open Forum

Date: 10th April 2018

Venue: Stratford Vision Support Centre
The Christadelphian Church, Rother Street
Stratford upon Avon CV37 6LU

Time: 10.00 am-12.30 pm

- Would you like to learn more about YOUR organisation?
- Do you have ideas that you would like to share?
- We want you to help us to improve our services

Please join us at our Open Forum.

We will make a short presentation on our achievements, challenges and plans and then open the floor to you, our members, to share your thoughts and ideas.

Everyone is welcome. If you live in the Stratford and South Warwickshire area you should have received an agenda.

If you do not live locally but wish to attend, please feel free to request an agenda from the WVS office by telephoning Imogen on **01926 411331**



Rosemary Went, Editor



Rosalie Visick, Co-editor

Editorial

Welcome to the Spring edition of Warwickshire Vision. We hope that you will enjoy reading this magazine and wish to continue receiving it in the future.

The winter started with an early fall of snow and then the temperature became relatively mild. Just when the days were lengthening the 'Beast from the east', a wind from Siberia, arrived, also Storm Emma came to our shores. The east wind was bitterly cold and snow caused disruption in many areas of the country. This took place at the end of winter into the start of meteorological spring, 1st March. We hope to now look forward to warmer and brighter days.

Warmer weather encourages us to go outside more, with fresh air being a health benefit. As we walk along pavements it is harder to be aware of traffic, as modern cars are quieter.

Modern petrol driven cars emit fewer pollutants, with quieter electric cars harming our environment even less. However, we should be aware that in busy traffic situations many pollutants have no odour and can increase our blood pressure and harm our lungs.

We feature the My Sight group. There is a new column - Phil's Blog - written by our CEO; this will keep you up-to-date about what is happening at WVS. Our three new members of staff introduce themselves. There is information on dry eye and one individual's experience of adjustment to his own eye condition.

Work is progressing on the WVS strategy plan, and we expect to give you more information in our next edition.

If you would like to contribute to the summer issue, please send us your article or information by 11th May.

News from Warwickshire Vision Support

Phil's Blog

(from the Chief Executive)

2017 was quite a challenging year - we said farewell to people who had served Warwickshire Vision Support faithfully for many years. This inevitably means an element of disruption, as they pass on the baton, but this also presents an opportunity for change as we look at what we do through fresh eyes and look to the future. You will have seen that we have welcomed three new team members, whom we profile in this edition of the magazine, and you will no doubt hear about our new fundraiser in the next edition. I would like to wish them all a successful career with us.

GDPR

I am sure that by now, you have all received our consent form for the new General Data Protection Regulations. This new law is important because it will reduce the amount of unsolicited junk mail.

I would like to thank everyone who has completed and returned the forms. For those of you who have not returned them, please do so, or call the office and we can complete the form for you. If you do not want to receive information from us, you can call us, or send the form back to us with just your name and address, leaving the boxes empty.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to send you mailers after May 2018 if we do not have your consent. So, if you enjoy this magazine or would like to receive your local Vision Support Centre programme then please contact us.

Volunteer Training

Over the last few months, we have been providing training to our volunteers. We are very fortunate to have 280 dedicated volunteers who support the services you receive.

Last year, we calculated that your volunteers donated more than 20,000 hours providing Home Visitor services, running and driving for your local clubs, supporting the Vision Support Centres, editing and publishing this magazine and helping our admin team. On behalf of the whole team at Warwickshire Vision Support I would like to thank them for donating their time and energy to giving you such wonderful service.

New Database

In the coming months, we will be introducing a new database. We hope that the transition period will be problem free but if we have a few glitches, please bear with us.

The database will help us to manage your information more efficiently. This should mean that we can respond to a query quickly and

make sure that we spend more time supporting you.

Legacy gift

At the end of last year, we received a legacy gift worth more than £90,000. The gentleman concerned chose to leave his estate to the charities and organisations that had supported him and his late wife.

This generous gift means that Warwickshire Vision Support will be able to continue to provide you with the services that you need.

Have you considered leaving a legacy gift to support visually impaired people? Contact us on **01926 411331** for more information.

Vision Support Centres

Some of you will notice that we have made one or two small changes at the Vision Support Centres. The most obvious change is that we are now making a £1 charge for refreshments. Unfortunately, voluntary contributions were not covering our material costs and we still think this is great value for money.

On a staffing level, each Vision Support Centre will have a designated team member who will take responsibility for long-term organisation and planning. We hope that this will give you continuity of service and that any feedback you give can be acted upon.

In April, we will be changing the distribution frequency of the Vision Support Centre programmes from

monthly to quarterly, to those who still want to receive them. We have simplified them so that all events will be on the front page so you can pin up the programme in a convenient place and refer to it easily.

We will keep a stock of spare programmes at our Support Centres should you need a replacement and we will happily send out replacement programmes should you lose your copy.

Nuneaton Vision Support Centre

From May 2018, the Nuneaton Vision Support Centre will be returning to its former venue at the Newtown Community Centre, Newtown Road, Nuneaton CV11 4HG

Have you completed your GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) form?

If not, this could be the last copy of Warwickshire Vision that you receive.

If you have not received or lost your GDPR form and would like to continue receiving this magazine, free of charge, please telephone **01926 411331** and complete your form orally.

Del Hobden



I joined Warwickshire Vision Support as a Community Vision Support Officer early last December, just in time for the Christmas parties!

For most of my career I have worked in the NHS, working with the very elderly to the newborn. The last 18 years I have worked as a Newborn Hearing Screener in between raising my family and moving around the country (and Australia) with my husband's job.

I now live in Warwick with my four children, the eldest of which is currently studying at Bournemouth University, and the others are at school locally. They all make sure my out of work time is used well, mainly as their taxi service, administrator, advisor etc.

In March 2014 I started volunteering with WVS as a home visitor, something I thoroughly enjoyed and which inspired me and gave me

the confidence to move away from working in the NHS.

Despite my busy life I like to find time to go to the gym, socialise with friends and generally do crazy, fun things with my children to give them the best memories I can.

I am looking forward to the challenges ahead and to give the best service possible.

Andrew Baker



I am Andrew and by the time this article goes to press some readers will have already met me in my role as Rehabilitation Officer.

My professional life as a Rehabilitation worker started in the 1990's in the UK, with Guide Dogs, then the Partially Sighted Society and some London Boroughs. In 1998 I moved to take up a post with Irish Guide Dogs in Cork teaching use of the long cane. After 15 years on the emerald isle, I found myself in England studying for a degree

in Psychology at the University of Northampton, graduating in 2016.

As a single fifty something from Northamptonshire and not keen on the gym, a couple of years ago I started running, at first with a local group, rising from couch potato to 5K at a modest pace; now most Saturdays I run a 5 kilometre Park Run. Park runs are organised, free, weekly 5km timed runs that take place in pleasant parkland surroundings. Park runs are open to everyone, free, safe and enjoyable. Warwickshire has runs in Bedworth, Leamington, Rugby and Stratford-upon-Avon. Running for me is a cheap and fun way to keep healthy, get out in the fresh air and meet others.

Thursday evenings find me with the Wheatsheaf Skittles team Braunston, knocking down little wooden pegs with wood cheeses. A great atmosphere, as teams from nearby pubs and clubs contend with one another for position in the local league.

The type of skittles I play is Northamptonshire or 'hood skittles'. The hood skittles table is leather bound and has leather-cushioned rails to the sides and the back, with a curved hood of leather or netting stretched up from the rear like a pram, approximately a metre over the bed of the table.

After the individual games, the scores are totalled and the winning team

declared. My team The Wheatsheaf is full of characters, good humour and sense of fun so even on the nights we come second, I leave with a smile on my face.

As a Rehabilitation Worker, I visit many people at home with the intention of understanding each person's experience and working with them to find imaginative solutions to meet their daily living needs. I look forward to a rewarding time with Warwickshire Vision Support.

Liz Rosewell



Hi, I recently joined Warwickshire Vision Support in January as Technology Officer. My role is to provide support at the Vision Support Centres around Warwickshire for anything relating to technology - this could be smart phones, tablets and laptops or to provide help with access to online services.

My previous role at Age UK Warwickshire was to provide short-term practical assistance and long-term support to elderly people in their homes to enable them to continue to lead independent lives in the community. Much of the work I did was to support day-to-day activities such as shopping, cleaning, offer a friendly ear and a cup of tea. Prior to this, I worked for many years at Severn Trent Water, the most recent role within this organisation as Manager of a Customer Relations Team whose responsibility was to ensure that the I.T. services remained constant and reliable.

I live in Warwickshire with my three children and two cockapoo dogs. Much of my free time is taken up with either my children and their numerous activities or my two dogs, Bella and Cookie. I love walking in the local area and when I have time I am a keen yoga and pilates student and try to practise regularly at home. I love to cook and can always guarantee some form of cake or biscuits are in the tin at home! I'm a keen gardener and have a small veggie patch at home, growing raspberries (my youngest's favourite), blueberries, carrots, beans and courgettes.

This role really appealed to me as it enables me to use my I.T. skills combined with my love of providing support to those who find anything technology related challenging!

Farewell to Steve Plumptre

Richard Orme

After a long and brave battle with cancer, our dear friend and colleague Steve passed away in December.

Steve attended Lickey Grange School in Birmingham, achieved a place at the world-famous college for blind children in Worcester, and went on



to gain a Computer Science degree from Bradford University. He worked at GPT in Coventry and RNIB in Birmingham. Steve was a major force on the board of the British Computer Association of the Blind, and served for many years as a Trustee/Director of Warwickshire Vision Support. In the latter organisation he championed the development of our advocacy and technology services, and he argued successfully for the greater

involvement of people with sight loss in the workings of our charity.

As well as working hard, Steve knew how to have a good time. He loved Leeds United football club, music, his guide dog Questa, and as a member of the Scotch Malt Whisky Society, he also enjoyed a dram with his many friends. He also successfully predicted the winner of the Grand National last year, which I am very grateful for!

I visited Steve a few days before he died. He wanted to share some issues he was having with his iPhone, due to a tremor in his hands. I contacted Apple in California, and they wrote back to thank Steve for the very useful suggestions, and confirmed they had raised them with the product team. Technology was a very positive thing in Steve's life. It formed the basis of his career, and gave him enormous independence and pleasure. It is fitting that one of his last acts was to help Apple make their products easier for people.

Having known this kind and plain-speaking gent for over 20 years, I was privileged to be one of several people representing Warwickshire Vision Support at his funeral service at the Heart of England Cemetery. It was no surprise that there was standing room only, and the ceremony was a perfect mix of sadness at his passing, happy memories, and appreciation of his amazing capacity to help others.

Steve Plumpton, 19/07/62 - 01/12/17

My Sight

Learning to live with sight loss

WVS received funding from the Big Lottery to run a project for a period of three years that we named 'My Sight'. We are now in our second year and going from strength to strength. The project combines an Advice Desk at George Eliot Hospital Eye Clinic and a support group for people diagnosed with sight loss. The Advice Desk where we provide information and support at either the point of diagnosis or during times of change, is staffed for 3 days each week.

The My Sight group is a rolling rota of sessions where we talk about the rehabilitation and registration process, explain eye conditions, specialist equipment and local services and benefits. Partners, relatives and carers are also welcome at the My Sight group on Thursday afternoons between 12.30 pm and 2.30 pm at the Methodist Church, Abbey Street, Nuneaton CV11 5BX.

As the Nuneaton group has been so successful we are now looking at running groups at several locations in North Warwickshire. If you think any of these might be of interest I would welcome the opportunity to have a chat with you.

For more information about any My Sight group please call Christine Gill at Warwickshire Vision

Support on **01926 411331** or email Christine.Gill@warwickshire.vision

Anne Robinson, one of the participants, has very kindly agreed to write about her experience of the group and how it has helped improve both her knowledge and confidence.



LOTTERY FUNDED

My Own Little World

Anne Robinson, Nuneaton

Part 1

Someone told me about My Sight which WVS (Warwickshire Vision Support) runs and said I should go to try it out. I said 'Yes, I'll go give it a try'. But then the nerves kicked in.

Before I carry on, I must tell you I have had sight problems from birth as well as learning difficulties. I also suffer from confidence issues and get stress when I can't do something - like think or speak at the right time. With my learning difficulties, I have also got sensitive hearing, so it's hard for me to join into groups, especially if everyone is talking at the same time.

I normally go to a new place with someone because of my confidence issues, but I had to do this on my own because I had no-one to come with me, since the one I take with me is my Mum but she couldn't go.

I won't lie, I could very easily have stopped at home, but I am glad I



didn't and I hope this is the start of the battle with my confidence. On the way, I nearly turned around and went back home. By the time I got there, the tension already had kicked in and that was before I even met anyone.

I sat down and was asked if I wanted a cuppa and I thought that was a good idea 'cuz it might distract my thoughts ... though I don't think it worked. I don't know how, but I had words coming out my mouth. When I am nervous, I tend to talk fast so it takes less time when an audience is watching me. At this point, I would tell you what was said, but it was a bit of a blur. By the second cuppa, things were a bit calmer inside of me. Hey ho! I stopped the whole 2 hours, though I got no confidence to get up to leave.

As I walked home, I had doubts about going back again, even though I enjoyed it. What swayed me to go

back again was Christine, 'cuz she phoned me to check I was ok and to get feedback. I want to say thank you to Christine 'cuz little things like that make a big difference to someone like me.

It is kind of funny talking about disabilities 'cuz the life I lead is a normal life to me. How I see it, my disability is not knowing how to live without any problems. So it is interesting to hear from people who started off with no problems (so called normal people).

I don't know if I will conquer my confidence issues, but it would be nice if I have less of a problem, for me to achieve more in my life.

Part 2

I like My Sight because I have learnt about new equipment, technology and sharing hints and tips.

I now know more about benefits and find that I share what I know with other people in the group and I like discussing the different things.

I prefer My Sight group because it's quieter than the Drop In (now called the Vision Support Centre) and my hearing is sensitive because of Dyspraxia. I feel more comfortable in a quieter environment.

Week 2 about equipment is good because I can actually try out equipment and use different things, which is better than going online. I have no sense of measurement so it helps to try things.

My disability is not only what I was born with, its people's attitudes to me, but I can't correct that, that's their problem. It's been good learning what life is like without any disability.

People judge me on my vocabulary and don't understand that it's part of my Dyspraxia. I am as intelligent as others, but can't write it down and convey it. I feel reluctant to say words which I find difficult as I've been bullied in the past. My Sight has helped my confidence.

Another View

Paul Bowler, Coleshill

When Warwickshire Vision Support launched the My Sight course in January 2017, I was one of the first people to attend. It is a 4-week rolling programme that runs for a couple of hours each Thursday, after the drop in session at Nuneaton. Each week we discussed something different, such as looking at eye conditions, equipment, welfare and benefits, also local services that are available.

After I completed the first 4-week programme, John Davis asked me if I'd like to stay on as a kind of mentor. This would involve talking to and helping other people who'd be attending the course after me, and offering a bit of advice. I liked the idea of that, so I've been going along to the sessions ever since.

I think though that being part of My Sight has helped me more

than anything. I've been able to understand more about my own eye condition, which is optic atrophy, as well as those that affect other people. I've also learnt more about the different services available in the local area and I'm surprised by what is actually out there.

From a practical point of view I've learnt about various pieces of equipment that can make life a bit easier. One of the sessions involves looking at equipment, and after seeing it demonstrated I've even bought one or two things myself. One of them is an MP3 player that has Bluetooth connection, which I use at home.

I think My Sight is a chance to access information and share experiences with other people who are visually impaired, and all in a friendly setting. I've enjoyed being part of it. It's nice to meet different people, and there's always something new to discover there.

A Positive Asset

Are you a Visually Impaired Person or a Very Important Person? To WVS you are both, its raison d'être - and your input is invaluable. Increase your participation by adding voting rights to your lifelong membership by just making a £1 guarantee. Simply complete the WVS form, and you can vote for trustee/directors. They may be your peers, and you can always elect to join the board

yourself. Volunteer and contribute your experience and knowledge as a VIP directly to WVS board meetings in Warwick. Lack of transport or other qualifications are no obstacles, it's all about teamwork.

In addition, since subscriptions are no longer payable, why not join in fundraising for your community, instigate an initiative or join a group if you don't want to make a donation right now? If you're writing or updating your will, legacies are also a tremendous help.

P.S. Remember to 'opt in' if you want to receive the WVS magazine, and nominate your preferred format.

The New CVI **Christine Huber**

Senior Rehabilitation Officer

August 2017 saw the launch of the new Certificate of Visual Impairment. This is the certificate issued by the eye clinic when a person is eligible to be registered as partially sighted or severely sight impaired.

Warwickshire Vision Support maintains the Register of Visually Impaired People in Warwickshire for the local authority. This is sometimes the only document we receive about a person and in the past information has been very sparse.

The new CVI is an effort to unify the system across the country and be easier for the medical profession to complete. The form comes with a set of guidance notes that are available

on the Department of Health website.

A problem I have found in the past is that the patient is often not aware of what they are signing or has difficulty taking in information at what can be an emotional time.

The new form should give details of the patient, name, address and NHS number. The Consultant Ophthalmologist completes the

diagnosis section along with visual acuity. The patient completes part three, this consists of some questions about lifestyle and health. It gives the person a chance to highlight any particular concerns. The plus with this part is that the patient is involved with the form filling and will hopefully gain a better understanding of the registration process because of this.

Health and Wellbeing

Learning to live with Hemianopsia

John Ketterhorn, Rugby

It was Sunday 29th January 1995, my wife and I were enjoying a post-lunch siesta, when I was seized by a searing pain in my head. My wife later told me I had tried to stand up but collapsed unconscious back on to the bed. I was to awake two weeks later in the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford. The cause was a brain haemorrhage: a cerebral aneurysm had ruptured. I was 44 years old. At this point I must express my undying gratitude to my local GP, Dr Jonathan Shribman, who's prompt action in recognising the urgency of the situation undoubtedly saved my life.

After an operation to plug the ruptured aneurysm, a procedure called endovascular coiling, I was awoken from my medically induced

coma. Unfortunately, the leaking artery had damaged the left side of my brain, resulting in a loss of right-sided vision. The technical term is homonymous hemianopsia, a loss of half the visual field on the same side of both eyes. This had three principal effects on my life. The loss of depth perception, the tendency to walk in an arc and I lost the ability to read.

When I first awoke I seemed to be seeing the world in 2D, like watching a cartoon on television. Over the next few weeks the perception of depth began to return. I have never had an explanation for this but have always assumed that it was my brain doing some 'remapping' of the now modified images being received from my eyes to existing images in my memory.

I believe the walking in an arc was a response to the darkness that

seemed to occupy the space where my right-hand vision had been. I was forever turning right, trying to see into the darkness. I began to practice walking in a straight line, initially in the corridors of the Radcliffe Infirmary, my right hand resting against the wall as I walked. Later in the street with my wife walking at my right side, preventing me from colliding with any pedestrians approaching from that direction.

The RNIB provided me with a white cane so that I could venture out alone. In reality, colliding with other people or objects was never a serious problem and today I no longer use the white cane. As my confidence improved I took to riding a bicycle and in over 20 years I have never had an accident, although I do admit that I get off and walk at busy junctions, etc. In some countries I would be permitted to drive providing I wore prismatic glasses. I am told that this would not be legal in this country. Perhaps this is something our legislators should reconsider? Today I no longer 'see the darkness of my missing vision', my eyesight seems to me to be completely normal.

For me the most traumatic outcome resulting from the haemorrhage was losing the ability to read. While in hospital I was in denial believing all would be alright once I was home. Of course, it was not, and I admit to sliding into a bit of a depressed state. Fortunately, my wife was not

the sort of person to allow me to wallow in self pity and started to teach me to read again from first principals. I explained my difficulties with reading to a friend. As we read from left to right and I have no right-hand vision I found it hard to read a word in the correct context as the words to the right are invisible to me. He immediately suggested I try reading the book upside down i.e. reading from right to left. It worked, as if by magic I could read. I must have looked a strange sight sitting in my local library or on a train reading a book upside down. Reading upside down seemed to aid reading in the conventional manner and I was able to abandon upside down reading within a few months.

I was able to return to work as a computer programmer after six months. Surprisingly enough the leakage into the brain seemed to have had no adverse effect on my programming capabilities or on my ability to perform complex mathematical computations.

I have never encountered anybody with my brand of visual impairment, so I do not know if my experience is typical. What I can say is that it is possible to come to terms with and overcome this disability. Today if offered a miracle cure to restore my defective vision, I think I would probably say 'no thanks' my life is just fine as it is.

Tears

Human eyes produce three different types of tears.

Basal tears

In healthy mammalian eyes the cornea is continually kept wet and nourished by basal tears. They lubricate the eye, and help to keep it clear of dust.

Reflex tears

These are caused by irritation. One source of irritation is foreign particles, another is the presence of irritant substances. Common examples are onion vapours, perfumes and other fragrances. Less common are irritants such as tear gas or pepper spray in the eye's environment. Reflex tears can also occur with bright light and hot or peppery stimuli to the tongue and mouth. They are also linked to vomiting, coughing and yawning. Reflex tears attempt to wash out irritants that may have come into contact with the eye.

Crying or weeping tears

The eyes produce additional tears at times of strong emotional stress - positive or negative; examples are pleasure, anger, mourning and physical pain. At the same time our faces may redden, our breathing may be convulsive, possibly with spasms affecting the whole of the upper body. Emotional tears have a different composition from those of lubricating tears.



Dry Eye

The symptoms of Dry Eye Syndrome are

- a stinging or burning sensation or feeling scratchy, as if there is something in your eye
- watering
- eyelids heavy and tired at the end of the day or during the day.

What causes Dry Eye Syndrome

- either the eye does not produce enough tears
- or the tears evaporate too quickly.

Our eyes need tears to keep them healthy by lubricating the cornea, which is the clear outer surface of the eye. Every blink of the eyelid causes basal tears to flow across the cornea – nourishing its cells and providing a layer of liquid protection from the environment. These tears make the eye feel comfortable and are essential for sharp vision as they play an important part in focussing light.

Tears have three layers. The outer layer is oily, produced by the Meibomian glands situated on

the inside rim of the eyelids. This gland has openings just behind the eyelashes on the upper and lower eyelids. This oily layer of tears acts as a waterproof barrier to prevent the watery tears from evaporating.

The watery middle layer of the tear is produced by the lacrimal glands; these are situated behind the upper eyelid. The inner layer is mucous – produced by mucous cells in the conjunctiva.

There are a number of causes of Dry Eye Syndrome.

As we get older we produce less tears and our eyelids become less effective at spreading the tears across the cornea each time we blink. Dry Eye Syndrome is more common in women and in people over the age of 65.

Another cause is stress and lack of sleep and the use of some medicines such as antihistamines and antidepressants.

Both extended and frequent use of a computer, phone or tablet screen can lead to reduced blinking, which in turn results in the tears not spreading across the eye surface as well as they should.

Additional causes are long term contact lens wear, laser or cosmetic surgery and long-term use of glaucoma eye drops.

To improve the symptoms of dry eye have a daily hot eyelid compress and

lid massage (this will help unblock the meibomian oil glands).

1. Use hot water to heat a small, thin clean flannel to a temperature as hot as you can tolerate, wring out and place it over your closed eyelids
2. Push gently backwards on the upper eyelids for 10 seconds, near where the eyelashes come out
3. Reheat the flannel and repeat the process on the lower eyelids for 10 seconds where the eyelashes come out

This process will express oil tears on the surface of the eye.

Additional advice:

- Drink lots of water
- Get enough sleep
- Avoid alcohol and spicy foods
- Stop smoking and avoid smoky areas
- Wear glasses or sunglasses on windy days
- Avoid air-conditioned environments
- Consider using a humidifier to put more water in the air
- Blink more frequently when using a computer screen, reading or watching TV and close your eyes and look away from the screen every 30 minutes.

Your optometrist or ophthalmologist may suggest the following treatments:

- Artificial tear eye drops (preservative free)
- If you have glaucoma switching to preservative free glaucoma drops
- When there is a lack of watery tears, punctal plugs can be inserted into the tear duct to stop tears draining away and to keep them on the surface of the eye for longer.

Blepharitis

Are the rims of your eyelids red and swollen with a build-up of crusty debris on the eyelashes? If so, it could be Blepharitis. Additional symptoms are a burning, itchy feeling in the eyelids, which is worse in the morning.

Blepharitis is caused when the meibomian glands that produce clear oily tears become blocked with waxy solidified oil. The eyes become dry through rapid tear evaporation because of the lack of oily tears.

Shaving Advice

Shaving is an important part of the daily routine for most men if they have a pride in their appearance (unless of course they have a beard). A sighted man will use a mirror so his reflection will guide his actions. Someone with partial sight may find a magnifying mirror helpful, especially if it has an adjustable arm to enlarge the image of your face and head.

For someone who may not be able to use a magnifying mirror an electric razor may be a good option. Confidence in using it can be gained by practising with it turned off.

However, for many men the only way to get a 'good' shave is with a safety razor. And for someone who has not always had sight problems, this can be a challenge.

Begin by feeling your face to establish the areas that need shaving. Again, you can practise - using an empty razor.

Use your hand that is not holding the razor as a 'guide hand' to explore the area you are about to shave. This hand can also be used to guide the razor, positioning it for a new stroke and to draw the skin tight, pulling the hairs up straight for a closer shave.

Prepare for shaving by collecting all the items you will need to hand. Start by washing the area to be shaved with soap and water and pat dry - this will soften the hair, making it



easier to shave cleanly and safely. Then if you are using a safety razor cover the area with shaving cream or lotion. This will not only help you locate the areas that have already been shaved, but will protect your skin.

If you place the index finger of your guide hand at the base of a sideburn it will act as a starting point. Bring the razor to meet the guide finger then shave downwards at an angle over the cheekbone towards the chin. Succeeding strokes should overlap, and for best coverage shave the area for a second time at a 90-degree angle.

Where the hair growth is heavier, such as the neck and chin, shave against the grain of the whiskers.

In areas where the skin is more sensitive, such as the cheeks and upper lip, use downward strokes - shaving with the grain of the whiskers.

To protect any moles and skin blemishes place a fingertip over the area and shave round it.

Shave one side of your face at a time, which will help you keep track of the areas you have already shaved.

Use your fingertips to check for unshaved areas and for excess shaving cream.

Sideburns and beards can be shaped with a beard trimmer. Use the hand that is not holding the trimmer to explore and lead to the area you are about to trim.

Features

Our Patron

We thought we would remind our readers and listeners of our relationship with Dame Judi Dench. Here we have reproduced Dame Judi's foreword to our Annual Report published a couple of years ago.

'Although I was not born in Warwickshire, my connection to Stratford upon Avon and my love for the Royal Shakespeare Company has meant that Warwickshire has played an enormous part in both by personal and professional life.

I first became associated with Warwickshire Vision Support when I was approached to write a foreword to the Catalogue for the Warwickshire Talking Book Service more than 25 years ago. Like many other people, I knew family members and friends living with sight loss who missed the written word and who felt cut off from so much of our rich culture.

Sight loss changes the way we live. We see proud independent people gradually losing their confidence and withdrawing from life - shopping, visiting family and meeting friends becomes more challenging as our sight deteriorates. This is when we



most need help and support and Warwickshire Vision Support is there to help us.

Today the number of people living with sight loss is increasing at an alarming rate. There are now more than 17,500 people living with permanent and uncorrectable sight loss in Warwickshire. These people need our support to enable them to continue to live full and independent lives.

Warwickshire Vision Support has been providing that support for more than a hundred years. From initial assessments and rehabilitation services, through to advice and information, access to essential resources and, of course that essential social support that so many people living with sight loss need so much - Warwickshire Vision Support

continues to offer an excellent quality service to its members.

On a personal level, many of you will have heard of my own struggle with sight loss. My diagnosis of age-related macular degeneration has brought its own challenges. But I am a firm believer that with the right support we can continue to work, continue to explore our world and continue to live life to the full.

Why not join us at Warwickshire Vision Support and make a real difference?'

Dame Judi Dench

Dame Judi Dench has been the Patron of Warwickshire Vision Support for more than 25 years. She was born in York on 9th December 1934. When she was young she studied at the Central School of

Speech and Drama and - over the years - has performed with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre and the Old Vic.

Dame Judi is a ten-time BAFTA winner and was made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1970 and created Dame of the British Empire (DBE) in 1988. She has also received numerous other awards.

She married actor Michael Williams in February 1971 and later that year they co-starred in a stage production of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. They played other classical and comedy roles and both had roles in *Henry V* in 1989. Their daughter, Flinty, is also an actor. After 30 years of marriage Michael sadly died of cancer.

Dame Judi has starred in many television roles including *A Fine Romance* with her husband Michael, and *As Time Goes By*, with Geoffrey Palmer, (which was repeated at the end of last year on the Drama TV channel and thoroughly enjoyed by me and my husband Arthur). She made her first film in 1977 playing Queen Victoria in the title role of *Mrs Brown*. Other film roles include 'M' in a number of James Bond films (the last being *Skyfall* in 2012 when M was killed). She also starred in *Tea with Mussolini*, *Ladies in Lavender*, both of *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* films, *Philomena*, *Tulip Fever* and her most

recent film *Victoria* and *Abdul* - this being the second film in which she played Queen Victoria.

At the end of last year, Dame Judi was seen on television in a BBC documentary on trees called *My passion for trees*. Every time a loved one in her life dies she plants a tree in remembrance of them, turning part of her six-acre garden into woodland. She said 'My trees aren't just amazing individuals, they are part of an extended family'.

Dame Judi met conservationist David Mills in 2010 when he invited her to a squirrel enclosure at the wildlife centre he runs near her home in Surrey. She has been in a relationship with him since then and refers to him as 'My Chap'.

In 2012, Dame Judi revealed that she had Age-related Macular Degeneration. Since then, she has memorised the lines of her films with the help of a reader. It really is remarkable what can be achieved with dedication, commitment and of course, a great deal of talent.

As Members of Warwickshire Vision Support we should be very proud that Dame Judi Dench is our Patron and applaud her example in not allowing her sight problems to stand in the way of her acting career.

Rosalie Visick

My Reading Experience

Paul Bowler, Coleshill

Towards the end of last year I had a chance to do something that for me is quite a new experience, when I was asked to read to a class of pre-school children.

It was arranged by Balvinder Jandoo, who is my Braille tutor. I've been attending a class at Henley Community Centre on Mondays for the past 3 years, and have slowly been learning to read Braille. Last autumn Access2books, a charity that provides children's books in giant print and Braille, donated several of their titles to the class. In return they wanted us to read them, preferably to their target audience, and to provide some feedback.

The building where we have the class is used for several different things, including a children's nursery, so Bal asked them if we could read to some of the children. They gave her the go-ahead, and I was asked if I would like to go first.

Bal selected Judith Kerr's *The Tiger Who Came to Tea* for me to read, and the following Monday I went along to the nursery just after 2.00 pm. I was accompanied by Lynne, one of our class volunteers. She had a print copy of the book, while I had the large print and Braille version, and the idea was that she could show the children the pictures while I told them the story.

Although I've done some public speaking in the past, reading in public is a new experience, so I was a bit nervous. Fortunately though I managed to do a reasonably good job. I'd read the book in class a bit earlier on that day, and had got hold of a print copy to read at home the previous week, so was reasonably familiar with it. It took about 10 to 15 minutes to read the story. I must admit I got a bit stuck in one or two places. I'm still quite slow at reading Braille, so ended up having to wing it a bit, making some things up as I went along. The kids didn't seem to mind though, and it turned out some of them knew the story quite well, so were able to help out a bit.

I found the whole experience a very rewarding one, and it is something I'd do again. In fact, it turns out this is a skill I may need to develop much more before too long, because a couple of weeks later I learnt that my brother and his wife are expecting a boy this spring. So maybe one day I'll be asked to read to him.

A New Year's Lunch in Coleshill

Paul Bowler, Coleshill

Like the other vision support clubs in Warwickshire, every year the Coleshill Club meets up for a Christmas meal in December. But, because of this winter's heavy snowfall, the 2017 get-together had to be cancelled.

So instead, the meal was rescheduled for January, and became a Happy New Year lunch. Our venue for the occasion was Coleshill Town Hall, where we hired one of the function rooms for the afternoon, and were looked after by Deanna, the town hall's caretaker, who cooked us a fantastic meal.

Even though it was late January, we still enjoyed a turkey dinner, with all the trimmings, and even Christmas pudding and mince pies.

The weeks after Christmas can seem a bit empty once all the festivities have finished, so it was nice to have a little celebration. Hopefully though, this December's weather won't be so bad, and we'll get a chance to celebrate before Christmas.

Your Rights

2018 marks 100 years since any women in the UK were allowed to vote. Before 1918 only men could vote. (Women, paupers and lunatics were denied the franchise.)

When the Representation of the People Act 1918 granted women over the age of 30 the right to vote it also extended the vote to men over the age of 21. It took a further 10 years before women over 21 were given equal voting rights with men.

The Equal Pay Act of 1970 prohibited any less favourable treatment between men and women in terms of pay.

Given the time it took for more than half of the population to win voting rights and to be considered in any way equal, it should hardly seem surprising that it is only relatively recently that smaller sections of our society are gaining equality. Disabled access is provided to public buildings; utility companies, banks, councils and hospitals should provide information in an accessible format for visually impaired people.

Legislation takes time and then changes take time to enact and enforcement may have to take place.

Today attitudes are very different from those of 100 years ago. People consider they should be given rights - however, like it or not, most rights have to be earned.

Votes for women came at a price - with lives lost to gain the franchise. This seems to have been forgotten by some people who do not exercise the voting right that has been won for them.

There are a variety of ways for people with disabilities to exercise their vote - the most obvious of which is the postal vote.



Leisure, Travel and Events

In the Dark

It is not possible for anyone who has not experienced a specific event or condition to truly comprehend what it must be like for the person who has, or has to live with it. For a sighted person, wearing a blindfold can provide a degree of simulation of blindness, but it is of course only a limited experience.

Dans le Noir is the name of a restaurant in London that provides a unique experience for diners - it is, literally in the dark. The waiters are blind and when diners arrive they guide them to their table, explain what they can expect and serve them food and drinks. Inevitably, diners often are initially confused and clumsy.

What this restaurant is trying to achieve is to serve good food to its customers and to provide them with a unique sensorial and social experience.

Diners can struggle to find their plates; when they do they taste the food, they cannot see it.

At the end of the meal diners are handed the menu and know exactly what they had for their dinner.

To find out more about Dans le Noir go to danslenoir.com.

Dans le Noir

Edouard de Broglie is a specialist in innovation and social responsibility. As an entrepreneur he owned Trade Connection, an IT company in France that made over a million dollars in profits each year. He wanted to reinvest its profits in a useful idea.

He met a number of foundations throughout Europe, and as a result of meeting blind foundations in France, Germany and Switzerland decided to organise dinner in the dark to raise awareness about disability. He founded Ethnik Investment Group in 2003 with a proposal to set up a profitable company employing a high percentage of visually impaired people; it would be in Paris.

There was huge national and worldwide support for the venture; the Paris restaurant was fully booked for the first 2 months in advance of its opening and their clients spread the word. There are now Dans le Noir restaurants around the world including Barcelona, Auckland and St Petersburg.

The group has around 60 permanent staff members plus franchises and temporary staff. In addition to the restaurants there are sensory shops and a social club. Fifty per cent of the staff have a disability, but they prefer to say a difference. Sales for 2013 reached 6 million Euros, with

a profit of about 8 per cent for the restaurants.

The strapline of Dans le Noir is
- A unique human and sensory
experience - welcome to a world
of meaning!

Access to Warwick Museum **Councillor John Holland**

A plan was agreed for Warwick town centre.

A group of stakeholders spent 4 years considering the future of Warwick town centre and they completed their work in 2013, recommending that the top priority be to refurbish the Market Hall Museum.

It was built in 1670 as a Market Hall. Originally this had open arches on the ground floor for market stalls and a meeting room upstairs. It became a Museum some years ago and was certainly in need of refurbishment.

The problem was that the County Council funding of public services was being cut and there are many priorities for vulnerable people, which come ahead of museums.

The WCC Heritage and Culture staff worked on a bid for lottery funds. Stage one was to secure funding to produce the full bid. Stage two was to write the proposal and secure all of the necessary agreements. This took about 2 years. Stage three was to implement the project and this took nearly 2 years more. The refurbished Museum opened last year.

There were many problems along the way. The building is on three floors and access to the upper floors was available only by stairs. The ground floor and first floor are open to the public and contain all of the exhibits. The second floor is for staff only but museum work could be ideal for someone who uses a wheelchair and cannot manage stairs. As local Councillors we argued strongly that a lift must be included in the project to reach all three floors. I had to attend the County Council Cabinet twice to speak on this point before it was accepted. Then we had the problem of finding the money to pay for the lift and most of this came from private donations.

Finally we had to get permission from Historic England and from Warwick District Council's Conservation Officer to install a lift in such an important historic building. All of this was achieved and a lift was installed and is now available to the public.

People with disabilities have been consulted at all stages of the project. A group of people with disabilities advised the project team during the design stage. Recently a group of visually impaired people visited the museum and all of the comments made have been noted and will be acted on.

In many ways the project has been a model that should be applied to all Council projects. I am now suggesting that the Council should

establish a permanent panel of people with disabilities to advise on all parts of Council service.

I do urge everyone to visit our Museum. There are people to help where assistance is needed. The exhibits are themed and there are knobs to twiddle. Upstairs there are costumes in historic styles for dressing up. The Museum is suitable for all ages and there is plenty for children.

One final point: there is a small colony of bees that lives in the Museum. They come and go through a pipe through the wall. They are still there and thriving.

Editor

Entrance to Warwick Museum is free and it has a café.

Necessity is the Mother of Invention

John Hodges, Alcester

This proverb means 'when the need for something becomes essential, you are forced to find ways of achieving it'. The necessity in this case was that my wife was needed in West Wales to look after our 5 and 7 year old granddaughters. So, with overnight bag she headed off by bus and train. Grandpa would follow if/when needed.

Four days later Grandpa (that's me!) was needed - with suitcase, back pack, etc. So, crunch time - as, over a year since registration as blind I

had not travelled by train without a guide. Long cane training had given me the confidence to get out and about walking and using the local bus. It had also included visits to my two local railway stations.

Having a conversation with a friend from Anglesey she recommended I ring Passenger Assist. Well I did and it was!!

Any concern I may have had was calmed as a soft Glaswegian accent answered my call. My name and address were quickly entered on the national database meaning that now I can phone any rail company. Suggestions about timing and route for the journey were discussed then all I needed to do was start off!

As had been arranged, I arrived at Redditch booking office with luggage and trusty long cane. Rail staff guided me onto the train saying 'We will ring Birmingham New Street so they know where you are seated'.

En route tickets were checked and I was reassured that the crew knew I was on board and to stay put until I was 'collected'. The train was crowded but at New Street people were jostling to get off when a voice cheerily said, 'Hello, I'll take your case and you take my arm and we'll head off for your train to Wales'. At that moment my guide got an update on platform change. So a steady walk and two lifts took us to platform 2. What a relief, no escalators!

My friendly guide, knowing all about seats with more leg room settled me and my luggage and headed off to his next customer.

Near Wellington I heard a voice calling my name and woke up to find it was ticket time. 'Mr Ticket' said that there would be a train change at Shewsbury but he would look after me. That's exactly what happened and I was handed over to the next crew taking me westward.

At Machynlleth station the train divides and again a member of crew came to reassure me I was in the right carriage.

The Cambrian coastline is very much a local train with request stops. Instead of just checking my ticket I was asked where I was going and in my best Welsh accent I replied 'Tywyn'.

Then so quickly I arrived and was helped off the train with backpack, case and my trusty long cane. I'm not sure what the guard said to the taxi driver waiting for me ... I'd better get some Welsh lessons!

Every part of the journey from 11 am to 3.30 pm I really felt like a VIP.

By the time you read this I will have made this journey and others more times.

As my friend said 'Just one phone call will do it all.'

For me this necessity has opened a door for more adventures.

So I recommend Passenger Assist ... and a long cane!

Improving Access

On some notices that state 'No Dogs' there is the additional information 'except Guide dogs'. Guide dogs are an important mobility aid for visually impaired people. Equality law states that businesses must make 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled people.

However, there are people working to change the legislation that allows VIPs using guide dogs access to a range of areas. They want the word 'dogs' to be amended to 'animals'.

Digby is being trained as an assistance animal and has been given to a visually impaired journalist. The BBC journalist, Mohammed Salim Patel, is afraid of dogs, so he has been provided with an animal that is a common alternative in the US - a guide horse.

Digby is, of course, not a breed of horse that most people are familiar with, one that is large enough to ridden by an adult. He is an American miniature horse - his back is slightly below average waist height.

One additional difference between a guide dog and guide horse is that the horse would wear a device that prevents it from fouling the floor.

Money Matters

The Royal Mint has revealed some special 10 pence coins. This new collection is described as 'quintessentially British'. The coins celebrate Stonehenge, James Bond, fish and chips, an English breakfast, the Loch Ness Monster and even queuing.

Don't forget that paper £10 notes are no longer legal tender. However, they can be exchanged at banks for the new polymer notes that feature Jane Austen.

Sight Village 2017

Rosemary Went

This was my first visit to Sight Village at New Bingley Hall in Birmingham. Every previous year I had managed to miss it for some reason or other. However, at last ...

It was relatively quiet when I arrived. I checked in and started to look around. Some of the names on the stands I knew, others not.

Every stand holder seemed keen to tell me about his or her product, but not pushy. So I looked round the majority of the stands, paused for a coffee and lunch break when I chatted with people I met there from Warwickshire.

What I hadn't appreciated until later was that the identical t-shirts worn by the young people near the check-in point were from Queen Alexandra College and were there to offer assistance. They were acting

as sighted guides for those VIPs who needed them.

When I left I realised that the noise level had increased as the number of attendees had risen. But I'd had an interesting day, learned more about the things to enhance a VIP's life, and collected a few freebies. If you haven't been before, Sight Village is well worth attending.

Sight Village Central 2018

This year's Sight Village Central exhibition will take place at a new venue, in Solihull. It is advertised as having great transport links.

Sight Village is an annual event - a showcase for the latest aids, services, demonstrations and opportunities for visually impaired people and people working with VIPs. Sight Village Central is held in the centre of the country; Sight Village is also held in the South West, South East and North East.

The dates are Tuesday and Wednesday 10th and 11th July, with opening times from 9.30 am to 5 pm and 3.30 pm respectively. The address is Cranmore Park Conference and Events Centre, Cranmore Park, Cranmore Avenue, Shirley, Solihull B90 4LF

The event is free, and there are usually 'special offers' for visitors.

For further information telephone **0121 428 5041** email sv@qac.ac.uk or log on to qacsightvillage.org.uk

Warwickshire Vision is distributed FREE to all members of Warwickshire Vision Support
This publication is also available in digital audio, Braille and by email

For more information, please contact us

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Open Forum (advance notice)

Date: 15th October 2018

Venue: Leamington Vision Support Centre
Chandos Court, Chandos Street
Leamington Spa CV32 5YU

Time: 10.00 am-12.30 pm

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Images of Dame Judi courtesy of Sarah Dunn (sarahdunn.com)

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Atherstone	St Mary's Church Church Street Atherstone CV9 1HH	Alternate Wednesdays 10 am - 11.30 am
Leamington	Chandos Court Chandos Street Leamington Spa CV32 4YU	Every Monday 10 am - 12 noon
Nuneaton (May onwards)	Newtown Community Centre Newtown Road Nuneaton CV11 4HG	Every Thursday 10 am - 12 noon
Rugby	Rugby Baptist Church Regent Place Rugby CV21 2AG	Every Wednesday 10 am - 12 noon
Stratford-upon-Avon	The Christadelphian Church Rother Street Stratford CV37 6LU	Every Tuesday 10 am - 12 noon

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