

Christmas 2018



# Warwickshire Vision

# Thank You!



## Warwickshire Vision Support



Your Local Charity for Local People

Enhanced Vision invite you to:

# Our Low Vision Event



**18th March 2019**

Chandos Court, Chandos Street, Leamington, CV32 4YU

**19th March 2019**

Christadelphian Church, Rother Street, Stratford, CV37 6LU

**27th March 2019**

Rugby Baptist Church, Regent Street, Rugby, CV21 2AG

**28th March 2019**

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### ***The Meaning of Christmas***



Christmas comes but once a year  
 And that's enough I say.  
 With all the fuss, expense and work  
 I'd rather be away!

Why does everyone go so mad,  
 Spend spend spend, it's all so sad.  
 That's not what Christmas should be like,  
 No need for all this glitz and hype.

Christmas today is gluttony and greed,  
 Buying things we really don't need.  
 Eating and drinking as much as we can  
 Not sparing a thought, it's all such a sham.

Who cares for those who are alone?  
 Who cares for those who have no home?  
 Does anyone care at all today  
 Except for money and who can pay.

Only concerned with Number One,  
 As long as there is lots of fun.

What's happened to Christmas, goodwill and joy,  
 Encouraging children to share their toys.  
 So parents, this year when buying the tree,  
 Show them what Christmas really should be!

**Jackie Saich**





Rosemary Went, Editor



Rosalie Visick, Co-editor



Jackie Saich, Co-editor

## Editorial

Christmas Greetings from your editorial team.

11<sup>th</sup> November 2018 saw the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of the Great War - now known as the First World War. Less well remembered is the fact that 2018 is also the anniversary of the ending of the pandemic known as Spanish Flu.

Estimates of the number of people who died worldwide vary from 50 to 100 million - far higher than the number of those who died in the war. It was believed to be 3 per cent of the world population.

Today, with faster travel, and more people travelling, a virus would spread faster - but medical knowledge and treatments have advanced dramatically. There are teams of scientists searching the animal world for viruses, taking

samples so that the potential for epidemics such as Ebola are reduced.

Our roads should be safer as some police forces are giving drivers roadside eye tests. Drivers at present have to declare that they are able to read a car number plate at a specified distance.

The RNIB has had a number of name and objective changes since it began. However, this year it is celebrating 150 years - congratulations.

This summer we experienced a very hot spell. A recent report has shown that our weather has been more extreme over the last decade than in previous years. And overall our climate is getting slightly warmer.

Please let us have your contributions for a Spring edition by the beginning of February.

We wish you happiness for 2019.

# Warwickshire Vision Support News

## *Phil's Blog*

### **Lottery and Awards for All**

Of course, the big news this edition is our Reaching Communities Grant for more than £177,000 over 3 years to help us to improve support to our volunteers and to develop new services for our members.

However, we have also received a smaller Lottery grant from Awards for All. This grant worth £9,300 will help us to pilot our advocacy project across the county. Many of you may be aware that Vicky is now our lead Support Officer for Advocacy. Her role is to help you to address small issues that have a negative impact on your daily life. This might be to address a street lighting issue, uneven pavement, a need for specialist equipment from the local authority or housing association or any other issue where we can signpost you to the right person who can resolve your problem.

We hope that this pilot project will help us to gather sufficient information to gain a larger grant in the future. But in order to do this, we must record the outcome of every request for help so that we can truly show the value of this work.

So if you have an issue that can be addressed locally, why not call into your local Support Centre to talk to Vicky.

### **Board Members**

We have seen many changes to the Board of Trustees in recent months. I would just like to thank Jeff and Kath for all that they have contributed over the years. We have a huge debt of gratitude to these two committed individuals who have held positions of Chair and Secretary of the charity.

Between them, they have contributed many years of service to the Board of Trustees and have overseen major changes that have strengthened Warwickshire Vision Support and left us better placed to face the challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead.

On a positive note, we have also welcomed Liz, Alan, Christine, Mark, Sheila and David to the Board. Not only do they bring a great deal of professional experience with them, but four members also have experience of living with some level of sight loss. We will draw on their experience and your feedback to help us to design services more suitable to your needs.

I would also like to welcome Keith Eales, our new Secretary to the Board (and Company Secretary). Keith will become a non-voting official of the Board at this time and will take on the responsibilities of compliance to ensure that we are fully meeting our statutory obligations.

## **New Database**

Although the new database is very much a backroom development, I hope that you will start to see its impact quite quickly. In the past, we have relied upon an old Access database backed up by paper records. This was perfectly acceptable when the systems were designed but have become increasingly outmoded as time has progressed.

Our new database will give us all the information we need at the click of a button. This will enable us to deal with your request more efficiently and effectively and at the same time, help us to measure the impact of our work – something that will attract new funding and improve our services. We should be going live at the end of the year.

## **Vision Support Centres**

Just recently, we had to collate our visitor numbers for the Vision Support Centres. I am extremely happy to report a 20 per cent increase in attendance over the last 2 years with many people visiting us for the first time and then choosing to visit on a regular basis.

It is now not uncommon for us to get more than 30 people to any one Support Centre. This really is a great indication of how much you value this service. I would just like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers who make the Centres such a success.

## ***Open Forum - 15<sup>th</sup> October***

It was the turn of Leamington Vision Support Centre in Chandos Court to host this Open Forum. It was a well-attended affair with about 20 VIPs, 11 Trustees, including both those retiring and co-opted, plus of course Volunteers as well as our Vice President, Judy Murdoch. Everyone sat together round the tables.

Phil Arkell, CEO, opened the Forum and introduced the Trustees present. He gave a progress report, informing the group that Jeff Perry and Kath Phelps were retiring from the Board and welcomed Liz Theibe as Acting Chair.

Phil recognised the enormous support we receive from our 250 volunteers. He said that WVS services could not function without their help and that if we had to pay for volunteer time, it would cost the Association almost ¼ million pounds per year.

Phil also mentioned that it had been necessary to introduce a £1 charge for refreshments at the Vision Support Centres as each session costs £200, excluding IT training. Income has since increased by £200 per month which covers the cost of one Support Centre session per month.

Also covered were the efforts to raise our profile across the county. At present WVS has a low profile and this has to be changed to make the general public more aware of

*Merry  
Christmas  
from the team*





the services available to people with sight loss. Information has been given to opticians across Warwickshire to make them aware of the organisation and hopefully support our activities.

The other issues highlighted by Phil are covered in articles of this edition of Warwickshire Vision.

Before retiring Chairman of the Board Jeff Perry spoke, Richard Orme, Vice Chairman, thanked him for taking over the chairmanship.

Jeff Perry took the opportunity to say a few farewells then handed over the reins to Liz Thiebe as Acting Chair.

Liz addressed the meeting and gave the members an insight to her professional background and expressed personal excitement about the year ahead for the charity. With a new Chair at the helm we can look forward some exciting times ahead.

The Forum ended as always with a Question and Answer session.

### ***Our Christmas Cards***

Hilary Roberts is a photographer who regularly displays her artwork in the Jephson Gardens studios, Leamington Spa. We approached Hilary when we were looking for local images for our 2018 Christmas Cards. Hilary has kindly donated four of her images for use on our cards. We would like to thank Hilary for her kind gesture and the support that she has given Warwickshire Vision Support.

### ***Hilary Roberts***

For the past 30 years or so I have been taking photographs for my own pleasure, being an enthusiastic club photographer, and participating in national and international exhibitions. Starting out as a nature photographer and then, with the advent of digital, turning to my great love of environmental portraiture, I am largely self-taught, but learned from belonging to top photographic clubs which gave me the opportunity to see the best national and international images. Over the years I gained the distinctions of Master of the International Federation of Photographic Art and Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society.

About 10 years ago, a friend persuaded me that it would be a good idea to offer my pictures for sale, and this spurred me to produce a wider range of images. I love to create beautiful pictures of Leamington and Warwick and the surrounding area where I have lived for most of my life and these form the basis of my portfolio. However, I can be enthused by many other subjects, looking for beauty, strangeness, striking colour, amazing texture or the perfect light. I also really enjoy producing amusing or tongue-in-cheek images.

I print my own images on a professional printer, using the manufacturer's archival inks and heavyweight, textured, archival art

paper producing giclée prints, which should last for at least 80 years.

The main reason I sell my pictures is to support a little Cuban boy called Eddy, now 8 years old. Eddy contracted meningitis as a baby. Although he recovered, he was left very severely disabled. I try to visit Cuba every year to take vital medical equipment for Eddy that is not available in Cuba. I travel with a friend, who takes more medical essentials for children in hospital. The money I raise from selling my pictures funds my part of this enterprise.

I am always to be found at 'Art in the Park' in Leamington Spa. I take part in Warwickshire Open Studios and Stratford Art Fair and often exhibit at East Lodge Gallery in the Jephson Gardens and various other local venues. My images are available to view online at [www.hilaryrobertsphotography.com](http://www.hilaryrobertsphotography.com)

And finally, my advice for anyone wanting to take up photography is 'do it for you'. Don't worry about what anyone else thinks - take the pictures that please you. Any phone or camera will do, and if your eyesight is poor, use autofocus and let the camera do the work - it's the eye inside your head that will see the top shots.

### **Editor**

By now, most of the cards have probably sold out, but you may be

able to order a pack by calling the office. (£3.50 for 10 cards)

## ***Reaching Communities Lottery Grant***

Warwickshire  
Vision Support is  
extremely pleased  
to announce that  
it has received a



3-year Reaching Communities Grant from the National Lottery worth a total of £177K to support visually impaired people across the county.

This grant flows from directly from our strategic planning process. One of the key issues you raised was the need for more services for 'Hard to Reach' communities. These are people who are perhaps geographically remote, living in small villages with limited public transport and unable to access our clubs or support centres, or they can be people from minority groups who perhaps feel socially or culturally isolated from our services and want a service that is more tailored to their needs.

We are hopeful that the grant will also help us to offer more volunteering opportunities to you, our members, so that we can draw on your experience and expertise to help people newly diagnosed with sight loss. We know our members have a wealth of untapped talent that could make a significant difference to the life experience of other members.

To achieve these goals, we have recruited a full time Volunteer Co-ordinator. The new team member, is expected to have started work on 1<sup>st</sup> December. They will not only support our existing 250 volunteers but also help us to recruit new people to sustain growth and to support a raft of innovative new services that we hope to introduce.

The second part of the project is what we call our Supersaver service. When we talked to you about new services, many people asked for help to increase personal income and/ or reduce daily living costs. We have therefore designed a service based largely on what our volunteer Sue has been providing at the Nuneaton Support Centre.

We have now recruited a part time 'Supersaver'. This person can offer guidance on how to reduce costs, perhaps by switching utilities or applying for concessions. They will also explore what local grants are available to you to help you manage your sight condition, perhaps providing funds to purchase a piece of equipment.

Our new team member should start working in Nuneaton and Rugby and then gradually move to Leamington and Stratford as the service develops. It is our hope that we will recruit sufficient new volunteers to sustain the service and meet local demand. We believe that the service can save

our members a considerable amount of money each year!

## ***New Nuneaton My Sight Group***

Due to popular demand we are re-running the My Sight group in Nuneaton.

My Sight is a rolling programme of sessions over a 4 week period where we explain eye conditions, discuss specialist equipment, the rehabilitation and registration process and local services and benefits.

The venue and dates will be announced shortly, but in the meantime if you would like to express an interest in joining us, please call **Christine Gill** at Warwickshire Vision Support on **01926 411331** or email [Christine.gill@warwickshire.vision](mailto:Christine.gill@warwickshire.vision)

## ***ASDA***

We are pleased to announce that we have been nominated for the ASDA Green Token scheme at the Nuneaton store. When a shopper pays for their goods at the checkout they are given a Green Token. We hope many of the shoppers will choose to place their tokens in the charity receptacle designated for WVS so that we can benefit from the store's donation.

On Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> November we held a fundraising event in the foyer where we sold our Christmas cards.

## **Business Plan**

Last year we held a strategic review where we consulted widely with the membership on the type and nature of services you want. This has now been distilled into a business plan that is available in full on our website.

Here is a summary of the key elements of the plan that affect our members

### **Rehabilitation Service**

The rehabilitation contract is important to our members and to us as a charity. It brings expertise into the charity and enhances our reputation. It also means that we can offer a holistic service to local people living with sight loss. It is our intention to maintain the contract for as long as it is economically viable to do so.

### **Charitable Services**

- The Home Visitor Service is to be formalised and restructured to offer greater training and support to our volunteers and to increase our reach in remote locations
- Vision Support Centres will continue to be the bedrock of our services. It is our aim to attract new service users, establish pop-up support centres for 'hard to reach' groups and focus more on personal advocacy and support
- IT4U will continue to use the support centres as a base. We need to create a more volunteer-centred training support structure

since staff resources are already stretched. This may include developing a new digital forum if we can identify a volunteer who can co-ordinate this type of activity

- Advice Desks are a fundamental part of our strategy for reaching newly diagnosed people. It is our intention to maintain a presence at each eye clinic but seek to introduce volunteers to support the process. We will also train Vision Support Officers as Eye Clinic Liaison Officers (ECLOs) to help us become more fully integrated at the eye clinics
- My Sight sessions, for people newly diagnosed with sight loss, should be offered across the county on an *ad hoc* basis and be fully integrated into the Support Centre structure
- We will offer more support to our Clubs, including equipment demonstrations for members and local forums for volunteers
- This magazine's circulation has reduced due to GDPR which could impact on income. Although a short term problem, we need to ensure the magazine is sustainable. We also need to recruit new volunteers to support the editorial team as the burden of work is considerable
- Minority communities are under-represented across WVS services.

We must proactively engage with minority communities and develop services that are attractive and relevant.

### **Volunteers**

- Volunteers are our single most important asset. It is essential that through the new post of Volunteer Co-ordinator, we improve volunteer engagement from recruitment, through training to long-term retention.

### **Fundraising**

- Our activities are only possible thanks to the generosity of those who leave legacy gifts, make donations and award grants. It is important that we place fundraising at the centre of all our activities so that we can sustain and develop our services.

### **Profile**

- Warwickshire Vision Support needs to improve its public profile

if we are to reach more people and generate more income to support them. Our members and our volunteers are our greatest ambassadors. We must find a way to promote our services across all platforms so that WVS becomes **THE** local charity for local people.

### ***Nuneaton Club Opening***

On Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October, the new Nuneaton Club welcomed 18 prospective members to its open day. The Mayor, Councillor Chris Watkins, and his wife Collette graced the occasion spending time talking to the members.

The club will be held on the first Wednesday of the month from 1.30 to 3.30pm at the Newtown Community Centre - the same venue as the Vision Support Centre.

If you are interested in joining the club, please call us on **01926 411331**



**Nuneaton Club Grand Opening**

## ***End of the Chapter for De Montfort Talking Books***

In March 2019, De Montfort Talking Books DMTB (previously known as Warwickshire Talking Book Service) will close its doors after almost 30 years of service to visually impaired people in Warwickshire.

The talking book service was set up as a partnership between Warwickshire Vision Support (WAB as it was then) and the Warwickshire Library Service to provide local access to audio books that were not readily available. The service started in 1991 with the Library Service providing premises at Kenilworth Library and an initial stock of 1,000 audio books. The service proved very popular and grew steadily under the co-ordination of Melanie Langdell initially, followed by Bob Jones and Jenny Almond, and subsequently Sue Morris who with the support of 30 or so volunteers formed five teams to cover the week. At its height the service had more than 600 regular listeners, over 5,000 titles and with up to 1,000 books dispatched per week.

Unfortunately, by the mid-noughties, the service was coming under increasing pressure, first from Calibre and later from RNIB who were offering digital audio book services as an alternative to traditional audio tape. Digital provided improved quality and convenience. Numbers started to decline and by 2007 there were only 200 listeners and the

Board of Trustees decided that it was perhaps time to close Warwickshire Talking Book Service - it was increasingly difficult to justify the costs of supporting the talking book service.

However, our volunteers had a different idea. They did not want to see the service close and asked that they be allowed to carry on serving the existing members for as long as there was reasonable demand. By 2008 they had formed a Community Interest Company called De Montfort Talking Books and WAB released the books on long term loan.

For the last 10 years, DMTB has been run independently by a team of highly committed volunteers, co-ordinated by Val Stene. They have donated thousands of hours providing a wonderful service to mainly older people who have not felt confident in moving across to digital technology. But not stopping there, the team developed a small 300-book digital library to meet the needs of those who enjoyed the clarity and convenience of digital books.

Sadly, by 2018, the numbers of listeners had dropped to less than 100. In 2015 RNIB had stopped charging for their audio book service and with streaming services becoming more accessible and convenient, the writing was on the wall. At a meeting in the summer, the DMTB Committee decided that they

had put off the inevitable for long enough, and agreed that the service should close in March 2019.

Since the listeners were given notice volunteers have been helping them to migrate from analogue tapes to the boom boxes that so many of you use. They will then be able to register with RNIB or Calibre to access their vast library of books and other resources.

Of course, we also need to do something about the 4,000 talking books lining the shelves of Kenilworth Library. Since the books belong to WVS, we asked that once the existing members have been offered the chance to have any books of their choosing, we want to extend the offer to all WVS members.

So if you enjoy listening to talking books and have a cassette player, then you can contact DMTB and request a selection of books from any genre you choose (see list of genres at the end of this article). Sadly, we cannot promise that you will receive a specific book but we are happy to send as many books from a particular, or multiple genres that you would like. Please remember, this is a first come first served offer.

On behalf of everyone at WVS and our members, I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has worked so hard for so many years to sustain De Montfort Talking Books.

## **DMTB Talking Book Categories (fiction and non-fiction)**

General, Classics, Family, Crime, Biography, Thriller/Adventure, Romance, Historical, Country and Travel.

Contact DMTB on **01926 850 749**

## ***Talking Book Services for VIPs***

Both RNIB and Calibre provide a free postal library service.

RNIB offers books over 25,000 books on DAISY CD (one book per disc) or USB stick (three books stick), they are also available by digital download. All books are unabridged and you can borrow up to six books at a time.

For more information phone the RNIB Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or email [helpline@rnib.org.uk](mailto:helpline@rnib.org.uk)

Calibre offers a friendly, personal, quick service with almost 10,000 books available, fiction and non-fiction, read cover to cover by professional actors and broadcasters. Books are available in digital MP3 format on either CD or USB memory stick, with the additional option of streaming online.

The service is free, but there is a joining fee of £35; however, a 3-month trial period is available.

Contact the Calibre Membership Services Team on **01296 432 339** or email:

[membershipservices@calibre.org.uk](mailto:membershipservices@calibre.org.uk)

# Warwickshire Vision Support People

## *Jeff Perry - retiring Chairman*

Richard Orme, Vice Chairman

In October, as the nights draw in, the sun will also set on Jeff Perry's time as Chairman of Warwickshire Vision Support.

All of us

connected

with the charity owe him a debt of gratitude as he took on the daunting task of stepping into the shoes of the redoubtable Peter Soles, and at a time of much change.

Jeff's gentle but firm approach kept a steady ship as we completed a strategic review, appointed new leadership, negotiated a new rehabilitation contract, introduced improvements in the staff structure and secured more fundraised income. Jeff patiently steered our Board meetings (sometimes long after the allotted finish time) and was careful to ensure that everyone had a chance to contribute, especially the new trustees with personal experience of living with sight loss.

Whilst we all know we have so much more to do, Jeff can step down knowing that he leaves the organization in good shape to look to the future under new leadership. And I hope he also knows he has



the gratitude and affection of the members, volunteers, staff and trustees of the charity he has served since becoming a volunteer driver for the Southam Club in 2013.

## *Kath Phelps-retiring Secretary*

After running Warwick Club for a year Kath was recruited as Company Secretary of Warwickshire Association for the Blind in April 2008.



WAB became a Company Limited by Guarantee as well as a Charity and Kath helped with the transition. Later she became a member of the Board.

Kath enabled the smooth running of the Board and the management of the proceedings; together with the formal roles of Company Secretary and Board Secretary, she also had a Compliance role dealing with matters such as ensuring that the Articles of Association and Companies House rules and Charity Commission rules were adhered to and that the Charity followed its Objectives. In addition, Kath dealt with the Postal Voting procedures.

She was active in recruiting new Trustees to refresh the Board (including Jeff Perry).



Kath worked through 100 years of Annual Reports and extracted milestone and interesting events. This information was used in the Centenary edition of WAB Mag (the forerunner of Warwickshire Vision). She also organised a re-enactment of our founding meeting in 1911.

Kath has kept the Board on the straight and narrow with regard to Companies House anything legal relating to the Articles and Memorandum. We will miss her knowledge and advice when it comes to process and timings for elections and AGMs. Kath always asked the questions others didn't, standing up for those who didn't always have a voice and asking for clarification at Board meetings.

Kath retired on 26th September. She will be very much missed by everyone on the Board and by the staff and volunteers that she has known over the years. We wish her a very happy and well-deserved retirement but should mention that she will be continuing an association with the Charity as a Voting Member and volunteer.

### ***Your New Trustees***

In October Voting Members of Warwickshire Vision Support were sent short biographies of six candidates for election to the Board of Trustees. Our new Chair introduces herself to readers of Warwickshire Vision.

### **Liz Thiebe**

I am so grateful to have been introduced to Warwickshire Vision Support. It is a charity that I had no knowledge of until 2018. Over

the past 6 months, I have learned how the charity works by spending time with service users. I have joined along for home visits, attended a Vision Support Centre session and several Board meetings. Along this journey, I have met many dedicated staff, volunteers and trustees who are all committed to improving the lives of those with vision impairment.

As the new Chair, I am pleased to apply my skill set to this charity. I have served on many boards in the past, as a non-executive and executive director. For 5 years, I held a position with The King's Fund, developing leaders in the health, social care and voluntary sector. My husband and I, along with our youngest son, moved to Warwick in 2003 from Massachusetts. Over this period, we have settled into life in Warwickshire, become dual citizens and enjoy being able to give back to this community.

I hope to serve Warwickshire Vision Support by helping the charity implement the new business plan and by fostering relationships with



members, staff, volunteers and other charities and organisations. I am thrilled to be on a board that has trustees who are service users. This will only help to make our strategies and profile stronger.

Over the coming months, you may see me at WVS events. I look forward to 2019 as we work together to support our members.

**Here is a short extract from the biography of each candidate elected**

**David Adams**

He is a qualified accountant with a successful international career, mainly in the motor industry. He has experience in charity governance and fundraising, having been chairman of the Royal National College for the Blind for 10 years and chairman of a local charity that saved his village school when it was closed by the WCC in 1996. He is currently president of the European Guide Dog Federation.



**Alan Last**

I worked for 41 years in the NHS mostly as nurse at a senior level. Since my retirement I have been



a Trustee/Director at a large Warwickshire charity and for a number of years as its Vice Chairman. I have also been Lead Governor for 9 years at a NHS Trust hospital in Birmingham. I enjoy being involved in people facing services.

**Christine Ramble**

My early working career was varied – secretarial, clerical administration, journalism and law. But when my sight began to deteriorate I re-trained in aromatherapy, massage and other natural therapies. On retirement I qualified to teach yoga and exercise for the elderly and disabled and although I had to give up when I could no longer see the students well enough, I still have a great interest in health and well-being.



**Mark Rogers**

I worked in a factory as a machine tool fitter progressing to a tool chaser and pre kitting supervisor. When I was made redundant in 2004, I retrained as an HGV driver in 2007.



I became ill with leukaemia AML. I have been in and out of hospital over the years. I went blind with Glaucoma in 2013 due to complications.

### **Sheila Venville**

Probably known as 'the one who lived in Hong Kong', my twenty odd years working there and travelling, allowed me insights and knowledge which seem to be utilized daily in this increasingly divided, intolerant society. I'm not backwards at coming forward, correcting misconceptions about 'aliens' and minorities where I can.

Management in retail, insurance and publishing plus, with customer service, further study and training to guarantee my own job satisfaction.

### **Editor**

Voting Members influence the way the charity operates, determine who sits on the Board of Trustees and ultimately decide the direction of the charity over the coming years.

If you are not already a Voting Member and want to become one, phone the office for an application form - there's no fee, only the pledge to pay £1 if the Association becomes insolvent.



## **Warwickshire Vision Support Board 2018/19**

Liz Theibe            Chair  
Richard Orme      Vice Chair  
Lesley Edwards    Treasurer  
David Adams  
Heather Fairbairn  
Janet Hurrell  
Alan Last  
Christine Ramble  
Mark Rogers  
Sheila Venville  
Rosemary Went  
Keith Eales        Company Secretary  
(non voting official of the Board)

### **Thank you**

Warwickshire Vision Support would like to thank David Mounsey for over 30 years of service to the Hillmorton Club in Rugby. David joined the club as a driver and then became more involved in the running of the club in 2005.

David is moving out of the area. On behalf of everyone at WVS we wish him well for the future.

### **Farewell to John Staien**

We are sorry to announce that John Staien, who was the leader of the Coleshill Club for many years, passed away on Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> October.

John will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

# Health and Wellbeing

## *Floaters*

Floaters appear in your field of vision and can be in the form of specs, squiggles or small semi-transparent cobwebs. As they are within the eye, they move as the eye moves and seem to dart away when you try to look at them directly. Nearly everyone sees a few floaters at one time or another and they can occur more frequently and become more noticeable as you grow older.

They are small structures of protein or particles of cell debris that have been discarded over the years and are trapped and suspended within the vitreous humour of the eye. The vitreous humour is the gel, the thick fluid that fills the eye, and is transparent.

What the eye sees is shadows projected onto the retina. The particles move within the eye and can be more visible against a plain background, or on bright days can even be seen through closed eyelids. They follow the motion of the eye, but have a tendency to sink towards the bottom of the eyeball.

It is rare for floaters to cause problems. However, a sudden increase in numbers can indicate a problem. It is advisable to have an optometric examination to determine the cause.

## *Signs of Dementia*

Research at Moorfields Eye Hospital has shown that the eye can provide early signs of dementia. Routine scans measured the thickness of the layer of nerve fibres in the retina, the light-sensitive area at the back of the eye. The same 33,000 people took tests on memory and reasoning.

There were five tests; for each extra test that patients failed, their retinal nerve fibre was found to be 1 micrometre thinner. Three years later there was a follow-up on 1,200 of these patients and the researchers found that thinking skills had worsened more quickly in those with the thinnest layer of nerve fibres.

It is recognized that changes in the brain associated with dementia can begin several years before any memory symptoms appear. Now this research suggests that these changes occur in the retina too. The eye is considered to be an 'outpost' of the brain and scientists believe that a loss of nerves there could be a signal of a wider neural decline.

The scans used by the researchers are often used by opticians to test for macular degeneration and glaucoma, and are of course non-invasive. As soon as early signs of dementia are detected treatment can begin, and this can avoid the worst effects of the condition.

## ***The Silver Line***

The Silver Line is the brainchild of Childline founder and renowned journalist, Dame Esther Rantzen. Launched in 2013, The Silver Line provides the UK's only national, free and confidential 24-hour helpline offering information, advice and friendship - or just a chat - to those over 55 every day and night of the year. The helpline advisers can also signpost callers to local organisations or activities in their area providing opportunities to meet people, or offering additional support which may be of benefit to callers.

To date, the helpline has taken over 2 million calls - currently around 10,500 every week - from older people, 90 per cent of whom live alone and the majority of whom speak to no one else, sometimes for days or weeks on end; and demand for the service continues to rise exponentially.

In addition, The Silver Line offers telephone (and letters) friendship schemes (catering to over 3,000 older people every week): the older person is carefully matched to a volunteer 'Silver Line Friend' for a regular weekly call or exchange of letters.

If you or someone you know may enjoy a friendly chat with someone who cares - whatever time of day or night - the telephone number is **0800 470 8090**.

A number of volunteering and fundraising opportunities are also available - please call The Silver Line's head office by dialling **0207 224 2020**.

## ***Winter Health - Vitamins***

So much is written about diet, what we should or should not eat, but how many of us know or understand the vitamin content of our food, or what those vitamins provide? We are all aware of the benefits of eating sensibly, but as the seasons change and cold and flu viruses start to appear, perhaps we should make more effort to boost our immune systems to stay healthier.

Colds and flu are viral infections that spread quickly, especially in warm crowded places such as shops; they can prove to be very unpleasant and in some cases very serious. Infection is more likely to occur if you are run down or under stress, so building up our immunity is an important part of keeping ourselves as healthy as possible. Research has shown that the body uses up more vitamins when under stress, either from illness or daily life, so we need to be more aware of our diet.

As we get older, our bodies get less efficient at absorbing nutrients and the immune system is less effective, so more information on what we might need is important. Most people are aware of the more well known vitamins and minerals: for example calcium, found in milk and

dairy products, is good for bones and teeth, but did you know that it is also present in watercress and dried figs? Iron is needed for energy and healthy blood, and can help fight infection, so a bowl of a fortified cereal such as Bran Flakes is good, as is liver, sardines and again some dried fruit. It is also recommended to avoid drinking tea with meals as this can interfere with iron absorption. There are many more useful and effective vitamins and minerals that can help promote good health and alleviate irritating and/or painful conditions.

### **IMPORTANT**

If you are confused about whether you need to take a vitamin or mineral supplement and especially if you are taking any medication, always talk to your pharmacist, doctor or health professional first before taking any supplement.

### ***Eye Clinic Appointments***

For people with conditions such as glaucoma, diabetic eye disease or wet macular degeneration eye clinic visits will be a regular feature on their calendars. These conditions need to be monitored and any necessary treatment be carried out.

There is an increasing demand on eye clinics and this can lead to patient appointments being cancelled or delayed. Patients who are affected can lose sight that cannot be regained. It is believed that up to 22 people are losing their

sight each month by missing regular appointments.

Last year an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Eye Health and Vision Impairment held an inquiry into the capacity of eye clinics. A report 'See the light: Improving capacity in NHS eye care in England' made 16 recommendations. If they are implemented it will help improve capacity in NHS eye care services.

### ***AMD News***

The current treatment for wet Age-related Macular Degeneration is a course of injections delivered directly into the eyeball. This treatment can be uncomfortable for patients.

Fight for Sight is funding a 3-year project at the Universities of Birmingham and Bristol where researchers have begun to develop medicines that could be administered to the eye in drop form. At present standard eye drops are unable to reach the back of the eye.

A recent High Court ruling has approved the use of Avastin to treat wet AMD. This drug was originally developed as a cancer treatment; however, it is much cheaper than the other two drugs licenced to treat the condition. In addition, Avastin can be used much earlier in the progression of the condition and hence is able to save more sight. Unfortunately, the companies producing the other two drugs will be seeking leave to appeal the decision.

## Events

### *A Trip on the Judith Mary II*

Paul Bowler, Coleshill

Once again we've enjoyed a number of fantastic trips this year at the Atherstone Club, and each one has been different. Earlier in the year we attended a production of *The Sound of Music* at the Belgrade Theatre, we spent a day in Stratford-on-Avon during the summer, and in August we had a meal at Marsh Farm in Staffordshire. But I think my favourite trip of this year is a barge cruise along the Peak Forest Canal in Derbyshire, which we made in early September.

On the day of the trip our coach left Atherstone at around 9.40, and it took a little under 2 hours to reach our destination, the small town of Whaley Bridge. The route took us through the Peak District, with its dramatically twisting roads and deep valleys, as well as the spa town of Buxton, which Mick our driver told us is the highest market town in England, with an elevation of 1,000 feet above sea level.

The boat we would be travelling on is called the *Judith Mary II*, and the people who own her have been providing cruises for a number of years. We arrived there shortly before midday, and after climbing aboard we set sail.

The cruise takes about 2 hours, and we slowly made our way along the canal. The Peak Forest is one of the



narrowest canals in the UK, at only 7 feet in width in places, and I was impressed at the skill of our skipper, who navigated his way along it with apparent ease, as sometimes it was not much wider than the boat.

We enjoyed a meal while on board, which was prepared by members of the crew, and there was even a bar, as well as some lively commentary. We learnt a little bit about the area, and also that Princess Diana had taken a trip on the *Judith Mary* in 1990. We passed the famous Carr Swing Bridge, which has to be moved to allow boats to pass by, and the Furness Vale Marina, where there were some boats for sale, and we were told that the average cost of one is £1,800 to £2,000 ... per square foot.

Although we had 2 hours on the boat the time passed quickly, and we were soon beginning the journey back to Atherstone. I think this is probably one of the longest trips we've made in terms of distance, but it was well worth it. On top of which we had great weather too, as it was a warm September day with plenty of sunshine.

Definitely a trip I would take again.

## ***Nuneaton and Bedworth Talking Newspaper AGM***

**Kate Fensome, Nuneaton**

On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018 I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the Nuneaton and Bedworth Talking Newspaper Annual General Meeting. It was held at the United Reform Church, Coton Road, (where WAB held its Drop-in Centre when I first came to live in Nuneaton in March 2004).

The Talking Newspaper Committee greeted the Volunteers and Listeners with a welcome cup of tea, biscuits and home made cake.

The AGM lasted around 2 hours, and we discussed in detail the content of the local weekly news. I explained to the people present that I receive a free Nuneaton News on a Wednesday, which has all the local news on at least the first 10 pages, but very little news about Bedworth. Linda, one of the Volunteers, explained that not everyone in Nuneaton receives Nuneaton News, and that she gets the local news from the daily Nuneaton Telegraph, which has limited local news about Nuneaton. One of the other Listeners asked if any of the teams would consider reading articles from the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's In Touch Magazine, produced three times a year. The Committee have said that any feedback from Listeners about what they would like to hear is

welcome; a short talking news survey would be carried out in January 2019.

Sue Pendleton, the Secretary, explained that each Listener has two pouches and two memory sticks. If both pouches are not returned, then the weekly news is not sent out until at least one of the pouches, and stick, is returned. Sue writes a letter to Listeners who have not returned their pouches, to get the issue resolved.

We then talked about the forthcoming 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the talking newspaper, on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November. It will be celebrated with a lunch with Rosie Goodwin, a local author, the Guest of Honour.

A vote of thanks was then given to the Committee and Volunteers for all their hard work during the past 12 months. The Committee is a seven strong team, as Robert and Dot Liddle are retiring - after serving since the start in 1978.

It was good to meet some of the Committee Members, and Volunteer Readers, and put faces to their voices.

Listeners will be given more notice of next year's AGM, but it is likely to be in December 2019 as it is usually combined with Christmas celebrations. This AGM was brought forward to separate it from the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.





## ***Nuneaton and Bedworth Talking Newspaper - 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary***

**Sue Pendleton**

On Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2018 our Talking Newspaper celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. A buffet lunch was enjoyed by our listeners and volunteers at the Old People's Centre in Newtown Road, Nuneaton. We were pleased to welcome our guest for the lunch, local well-known author Rosie Goodwin, who met many of our listeners and heard their stories of how and when they had become visually impaired.

Our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary coincided with the updating of our recording system from tape to a digital system via USB. This change has been well received by our listeners as the clarity of the recording has improved. The number of listeners has remained fairly constant over the year and we look forward to continuing our service during 2019.

## ***The Lion's Den Award***

**Kate Fensome, Nuneaton**

The charity evening on 19<sup>th</sup> October had been organised by the Bedworth Lions and the Bedworth Round Table and Chris Gill, Tina Jackson, Vicky Lewis, David and Jackie Bosworth and I had been invited.

Warwickshire Vision Support had applied for funding for a project and was one of five charities that had got through the first stage of the application process.

Each charity had set up their stand: Christine put posters on the wall, and a chart with sighted letters and a sight version of the Braille equivalent. The team brought balloons and sweets for the children, plus our Christmas cards to sell. Sim specs were offered to the judges to try, to give them a taste of what living with various sight conditions is like. There was also a tactile board game for people to play. I took my Perkins Brailier, and had the opportunity to write down the Braille alphabet and



**Lion's Den Presentation**

Braille numbers for people, as well as individuals' names.

Each Charity gave a 5-minute presentation about their project, followed by questions from the judges.

Christine spoke about some of the challenges we face on a daily basis living with sight loss, including how isolating it can be, sometimes unable to get out and about on our own. Christine talked about the newly formed Bedworth and Nuneaton VIP Social Club, and some of the activities that the club would like to try, including blind golf, tandem riding and visiting a garden centre. She then read out quotes from two club members, where they expressed what coming to the club means to them. I then outlined what happens at the Nuneaton Vision Support Centre on a weekly basis, telling the audience about the IT and mobility training we receive, as well as some of the guest speakers that come and talk to us on a regular basis.

We were asked what we would do with the funding, and Christine explained that, as the social club is new, we have a lot of set up costs. In addition to this the funding will help our members, enabling them to socialise with each other and access activities and trips.

After the presentations, the judges had 10 minutes to decide how much each charity would be awarded.

The Walking Footballers for ladies and gentlemen over 50 were awarded £1,000, which will go towards subsidising coach trips to walk with other teams.

The 4<sup>th</sup> place and £1,400 was awarded to the Friends of the Nook, who look after wild life and nature reserves. The funds are to go towards getting schools and the local community involved.

Third Place went to St Michaels School, also awarded £1,400. The funds are being used to build a garden, where they can grow their own plants, and have a special tree to remember lost loved pets and relatives.

Second place went to Warwickshire Vision Support. We were awarded £1,700, which will be used to help run the new club (the name of which will be voted on by members at their next meeting).

The first prize of £2,000 was given to Root Branch Autism. The charity is new, and was set up by concerned parents who have children with autism. The money will be used to buy new equipment, and support the youngsters with their social skills, as well as helping their relatives to care for their children.

After the presentation ceremony and raffle we chatted to members of the other charities, the Bedworth Lions and Bedworth Round Table, before packing up after having had

a very interesting and enjoyable evening. I would definitely attend a similar event again next year, if the opportunity presents itself.

Well done to all the team, who helped to make the evening a success for Warwickshire Vision Support.

### **Editor**

Bedworth Lions have expressed an interest in working more closely with us in the future.

### ***Fundraising Fashion***

A big thank you to Levie and her team at Edinburgh Woollen Mill in Stratford. The proceeds of their bi-annual fashion show were given to WVS.

Thank you also to Phyllis Losh who, as a long time model for the fashion shows and a regular at the Stratford Support Centre, asked that at her last show before retiring, the proceeds should go to her chosen charity. An additional model for the show was

Louise Jelley, our Fundraiser, making her first catwalk appearance.

The event raised over £400 whilst also helping to raise our profile across the area.

### ***Sight Village Birmingham 2018***

**Paul Bowler, Coleshill**

It's been about 3 years since I last attended Sight Village, so this year seemed like a good time to put that right, especially as the Birmingham exhibition has now moved to a new venue.

For those who don't know of it, Sight Village is an annual event organised by Birmingham's Queen Alexandra College and that takes place at various venues around the UK.

Companies and charities exhibit the latest products and support available for people who are visually impaired, and the exhibition is attended by thousands of visitors each year.

2018 is the first time the Birmingham event was held in Solihull, at the



**Phyllis and Levie**

Cranmore Conference and Events Centre. As usual it took place in July, although in recent years it has tended to be a two rather than a three-day event.

I went with some friends to the first day of the exhibition on Tuesday 10 July, and after registering our details with the organisers we began looking around. All of the usual exhibitors were there, including Barclays Bank, BT, Guide Dogs, Humanware, Queen Alexandra College, RNIB and Traveleyes, and there were some interesting products and services on show.

A company called GiveVision were displaying a headset capable of very strong magnification that could be used to watch television without the need to sit close to the screen. One of their product users spoke about how it had changed his life, because he could now watch films and do other things that require good sight and had previously presented him with difficulty. I tried the headset on myself and found that it did bring things a lot closer, though I'm afraid at £2,900 it was a bit out of my price range.

At the HumanWare stall I had a go at using a Braille Note, a device similar to an iPad but that was specifically designed to be used by Braille users. England were doing well in the World Cup at the time and I attempted to Braille Football's Coming Home on

the touch screen, but not with great success I'm afraid to say.

At a different stall I was introduced to the Sunu Band, basically a watch that vibrates to warn its wearer when it detects any nearby objects. One of its inventors strapped one onto my wrist and invited me to walk around for a couple of minutes. I did so, and found it worked very well. I was impressed, and think there are situations where it would be quite useful.

Another product I thought was good is a non-spill mug that was being demonstrated by the RNIB. The idea is that you won't knock a mug of tea or coffee over yourself if you accidentally catch it with your arm. I was told to hit it as hard as I could, and I gave it my best shot, but it wouldn't go.

There were a number of seminars being held too. The one I attended was a demonstration of bowls that was being done by someone from British Blind Sport. Three or four of us took turns to bowl at a hoop placed at increasing distances away from us. I was surprised and delighted to discover that I could actually hit the target.

In all I spent about 4 hours at Sight Village, but even if I'd been there for the 2 days there's so many different exhibitors it's impossible to get round to see everything. So perhaps that's a good reason for me to go back in 2019, and not to leave it for another 3 years.

# Features

## *Personal Space*

I've been visually impaired all of my life, and my general experience of the people I meet is a very positive one. For 99.9 per cent of the time they are understanding and extremely helpful. But occasionally a situation occurs that makes life a bit uncomfortable. Such an instance happened earlier this year, when I had a spot of bother with a couple that live locally to me.

I'm quite well known in the town where I live, and I've always been happy to pass the time of day with people. A and B were a couple who used to speak to me occasionally in the street. I'd probably chatted briefly with them on two or three occasions, and was aware from our conversations that they had some involvement with a local church.

All was fine until one Sunday last winter when A (the woman) decided she was going to bless my eyes. I found this action very strange. I hadn't asked her to do it, and to be honest I was quite gob-smacked. I didn't say anything though, mainly because I wasn't entirely sure how to deal with the situation. The couple have some degree of learning difficulties and I felt awkward having to tell them off. I don't have a lot of experience with mentally challenged people and I wasn't sure how they would react if I were to reprimand

them. So I let it go, concluding that the chances were that she probably wouldn't do it again.

But when I met A and B in the town the following Sunday she did do it again. This time I couldn't ignore it so I explained as gently as I could that approaching someone in the street and giving them a blessing isn't appropriate behaviour, and she seemed to accept this.

After that second incident I didn't encounter A and B again for some weeks. Sunday tended to be the day I ran into them, usually when I was on my way to the local convenience store. I think I was disturbed enough by the two episodes to decide I'd do my best to avoid them, so I changed my Sunday shopping habits. We have a supermarket close by so I started to use that instead. But I then began seeing A and B at other times in the week, and they would always try to engage me in conversation.

The third time it happened was on a Friday afternoon. I was waiting to cross the road at a junction that can be busy at certain times of the day. A and B saw me from the other side of the road, and A came over to walk me across. Then, after helping me, she gave me another blessing.

I realised something had to be done to put a stop to this, particularly as when I once again told her that what she'd just done wasn't appropriate,

her response was quite flippant. In fact she was repeating back what I was saying but in quite a derisive manner. She then went on to explain that it was ok for her to give blessings since she had an important role within her church.

I needed to talk to someone, but wasn't exactly sure who to approach. I could speak to the police, but I didn't think it was a matter for them or that they'd be that interested. Besides it wasn't like I could give them a very good description of the couple. Indeed, up until our most recent meeting I hadn't even known their names. Finally, I was also embarrassed by the whole thing, both for myself and for them if I'm honest. They were making us all look foolish.

So in the end I spoke to someone at Warwickshire Vision Support, who suggested contacting the Minister of the church A and B attended, and making him aware of the situation. I learnt that what A had done was technically common assault, and I would be fully justified in going to the police, but I still didn't want to do that if it wasn't necessary. Perhaps if their Minister spoke to them the situation could be resolved.

I gave the person at WVS as good a description as I could of the couple, and they contacted the Minister on my behalf. He was very concerned to hear what A had been doing, not least because it reflected badly on his

church, and he said that he'd talk to them both.

I've no idea what was going through A's head. I suppose it's possible she may have believed she could help me in some way through divine intervention. But who's to know? Whatever the case I was relieved that the situation was going to be dealt with, and that I'd feel I was free to shop whenever and wherever I chose. On reflection I should have said something a lot sooner than I did, but sometimes we're not prepared for awkward situations, especially if it's something we haven't encountered before, and it can leave us a little bit stumped.

I was later to discover that A's role within her church is not all that important and wouldn't permit her to give blessings, and that she and B don't even live in the same town as me, but are instead residents of a neighbouring village. However, now I know who they are and where they live, and since they've been told by myself and the Minister not to approach me again, I will be speaking to the police if they trouble me in future.

## ***End of the QWERTY Keyboard?***

The layout of the letters of our alphabet on a keyboard was designed 140 years ago - to overcome typewriter jams.

Technology companies have been working to find a more convenient interface for the devices in use in our modern world - such as smart watches. These small devices do not have the space for a standard keyboard.

Tap Systems, a company based in Los Angeles, has invented a system that resembles a knuckle-duster. Sensors are wrapped around each finger and the thumb to detect how the user is tapping on a surface and translate the pattern into letters. The device costs £137 and David Schick, co-founder of Tap, said there had been a lot of interest from visually impaired people.

### **Editor**

Qwerty has recently been officially approved as a word that can be used in the game of Scrabble.

## ***The Story of Tony the Traveller*** **Paul Bowler, Coleshill**

Setting yourself a goal to visit every country on the earth would be no mean feat for anyone, but imagine doing that as someone without any vision, and with a severe hearing impairment on top of that. You might think it a challenge that was virtually impossible, but this is exactly what Tony Giles has been doing for almost two decades, and presently he's visited around 130 countries and all seven continents.

Born in Weston-super-Mare, Tony was diagnosed with cone dystrophy

and photophobia at the age of nine months, and had lost his sight entirely by the time he was 10. At six he was also found to be hard of hearing, and now has 80 per cent hearing loss in both ears, something that requires him to wear a powerful hearing aid. He attended Exhall Grange School in Coventry and the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford, and says that he first got bitten by the travel bug during the long distance train journeys he made to and from school.

Tony's life as an international traveller began shortly after he graduated from the University of Northampton. His first overseas trip was to the US city of New Orleans in March 2000, and he followed that up with trips to Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and Vietnam the following year. Funded by a private pension left to him by his late father he's been travelling ever since.

He has said that he decided to embark on his adventure because it was 'the biggest challenge possible for a blind person'. But he admits to finding the experience a bit overwhelming when he first arrived in New Orleans. He was alone in a strange city thousands of miles from home. 'But I breathed deeply and told myself to go on. I spent eight or nine days there - exploring and drinking.' Eighteen years later he has accumulated a unique collection of experiences that few of us will ever

match. He's visited all 50 US States, once arrived in the Malian capital during the midst of a military coup, white-water rafted in Australia, and was even once arrested while crossing the Ethiopian border from Kenya. Plus he also met his partner Tatiana - a lady from Greece - during one of his trips. The last year has seen him make trips to Israel and Palestine where he visited the Western Wall and the Church of the Nativity, Greenland where he went whale watching, and Italy where he explored the food and architecture of Sicily.

Tony plans his journeys with the help of the JAWS speech software, but often needs human assistance to book his flights because JAWS is not always compatible with the airline websites. He then stores all his travel plans, documents and research on a portable electronic device that he carries with him. He experiences the places he visits through touch, smell and sound, and enjoys engaging with people. He says that he can usually find someone who speaks a bit of English, but always carries a card with the address of the place where he's staying so he can call a taxi if he becomes lost.

His story has been featured in articles for The Telegraph, and The Independent, while his visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem was the subject of an edition of the BBC World News series The Travel Show.

He has also written two books about his adventures, *Seeing the World My Way*, and *Seeing The Americas My Way*, and has a website, [Tonythetraveller.com](http://Tonythetraveller.com), where he records all of his travels.

Tony reached 40 in September 2018, and you may wonder what are his plans once he's completed his challenge. He already has that worked out. Speaking to the Telegraph in March 2018 he said 'I plan to continue travelling until I've visited every single country in the world, then keep travelling until I die.' Warwickshire Vision magazine would like to wish him many more happy and memorable adventures.

## ***Guide to Warwick Museum***

Access to Warwick Museum has recently been improved by the addition of a lift and other facilities for disabled people. Now there is an information guide in large print and braille. The guide provides information about the museum's history, access, facilities, galleries and interactive activities, along with plans of the ground and first floors and images of some of the important displayed objects. Each image is accompanied by historical information and a detailed description of the object. Large print labels are also a feature of the guide. To request a volunteer guide please contact the Visitor Services and Operations Officer on **01926 418247**





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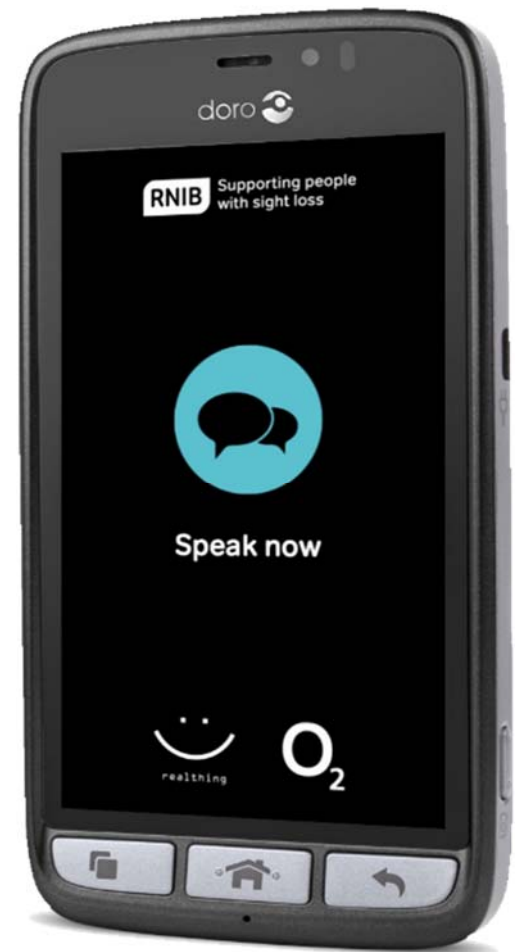
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## ***Information Accessibility***

The use of technology is increasing; it is part of most people's everyday lives, whether they know it or not.

The most obvious use of information technology is for access to the World Wide Web, the internet.

The internet has opened a world of information for people to whom such knowledge would not otherwise be available. What started on computers is now accessible on tablets and smartphones. One advance in technology is high definition screens, giving us better pictures on our televisions and on our computer monitors, allowing designers of web pages to use increasingly thinner fonts, which can be hard to read on smartphones or tablets.

Although the World Wide Web can make finding information easier for most people, some users cannot take full advantage of this benefit without suitable adjustments to ensure accessibility. According to UK law, all UK websites are legally obliged to provide access to their sites for all users including those with disabilities. Despite this law, some website owners have yet to make their websites fully accessible. There is no excuse for this as adjustments to make websites accessible are not expensive or complicated.

When considering the adjustments that may be needed to help you improve your own device, a useful

starting point is the BBC's 'My Web My Way' which offers advice on

- Using the web browser on your computer
- Changing text and background colours
- Changing fonts
- Magnifying your screen
- Making your mouse pointer easier to see
- Making your computer speak text aloud
- Making your text larger

The use of information technology will continue to increase for all of us in our daily lives, so don't be put off by the challenge of accessibility.

You can find 'My Web My Way' at: [bbc.co.uk/accessibility/](http://bbc.co.uk/accessibility/)

## ***Practical Tips from VIPs***

If toothpaste is dispensed directly from the tube into the mouth it avoids using too much or dropping it onto the floor.

Rubber bands have many uses. Wrap them round tins of food in different numbers to identify the contents, also keep tins separate in the cupboard. When staying in a hotel you can identify your room by wrapping rubber bands round the door handle.

## ***Webster and Wally***

**Vaughan Rees, Warwick**

One afternoon when WAB was based in Puckering's Lane, Webster (a golden Labrador) needed to 'spend', so I took him out to the pen at the rear of the building. He sniffed about for a few minutes but I was sure he had not relieved himself. A few minutes later he wanted to go again; he sniffed about but wouldn't go. This happened twice more but suddenly there was a great squawk and something landed on my shoulder giving me a fright, accompanied by barking from Webster. It was a parrot that had been hiding in the dog's pen. The parrot was rather cold and snuggled into my neck for the afternoon and accompanied me to two meetings.

Sheila was dispatched to the pet shop to get some parrot food in case we had to look after him for some time. On arrival at the pet shop she saw a notice in the window reporting that a resident in Theatre Street had lost their parrot.

Parrot and owner were reunited. Webster was the hero of the day. WAB received a welcome donation.

Wally and I were invited to a function at the House of Lords. Having travelled to London by Chiltern Railway, for some reason Wally did not want to avail himself of the facilities at his favourite tree outside Marylebone station.

On arrival at the Lords entrance at the Palace of Westminster, Wally was showing signs of needing to go to the toilet urgently. So I asked the policeman on the gate if there was anywhere that Wally could use.

The policeman said: 'Black Rod quite likes dogs, I am sure he wouldn't mind if Wally went and relieved himself in his garden.'

So Wally has the dubious honour of being one of the few or the only dog who has had a poo in Black Rod's garden.

## ***Glare***

The human eye takes time to react to changing light conditions. To adjust between rapidly changing conditions - darkness and bright light - can take up to 30 seconds. Motorists driving at night can be temporarily blinded by glare from the headlights of oncoming vehicles.

The Department of Transport figures for 2015 show that dazzle from the sun or headlights were a factor in 2,884 road accidents, from which there were 19 deaths.

Technology has been developed by Inoptec Ltd, an eyewear company, and PA Consulting of Cambridge. Smart glasses that filter out glare have been developed using liquid crystals, the technology used in flat-screen televisions. When they detect sudden light changes the electronic controls tint the lens to

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balance the light levels within about 10 milliseconds of the light changing.

The smart glasses work in conjunction with special LED-based headlights. The smart glass wearers can then see the lights from their own car. To fit the headlights is likely to cost £2,500.

## ***The Dangers of Carbon Monoxide***

### **What is Carbon Monoxide?**

- Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, tasteless poisonous gas produced by incomplete burning of carbon-based fuels including gas, oil wood and coal
- Sources can include cookers, heaters and fireplaces
- CO poisoning kills 40 people and injures a further 300 every year in the UK
- You can't see it, taste it or smell it, but CO can kill quickly without warning.

### **What are the symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning?**

- The most common symptoms include headaches, dizziness, tiredness and nausea
- Symptoms can be mistaken for flu, viruses or even food poisoning
- If someone suffers from these symptoms whilst at home but is fine elsewhere, they may be suffering from CO poisoning.

## **How to prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning**

- Make sure appliances are installed and maintained by a professional
- Keep chimney flues free from blockages
- Ensure your home has enough ventilation and airbricks are not blocked
- Protect your family from the silent killer by fitting a CO alarm approved to BS EN 50291.

### **What to do in an emergency?**

- In a CO emergency open the windows to ventilate
- Evacuate everyone outside to fresh air
- Go to your doctor or in an emergency call for an ambulance.

For further information visit [www.COvictim.org](http://www.COvictim.org)

### ***Open Forum***

The next Open Forum will be held at Rugby Vision Support Centre

At: Rugby Baptist Church,  
Regents Place,  
Rugby CV212AG

Date: Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019

Time: 10 am - 12 noon

If you want to learn more about your organisation, please come along.

Warwickshire Vision is available 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

 **01926 411331**

Email: [enquiries@warwickshire.vision](mailto:enquiries@warwickshire.vision)

Website: [www.warwickshire.vision](http://www.warwickshire.vision)

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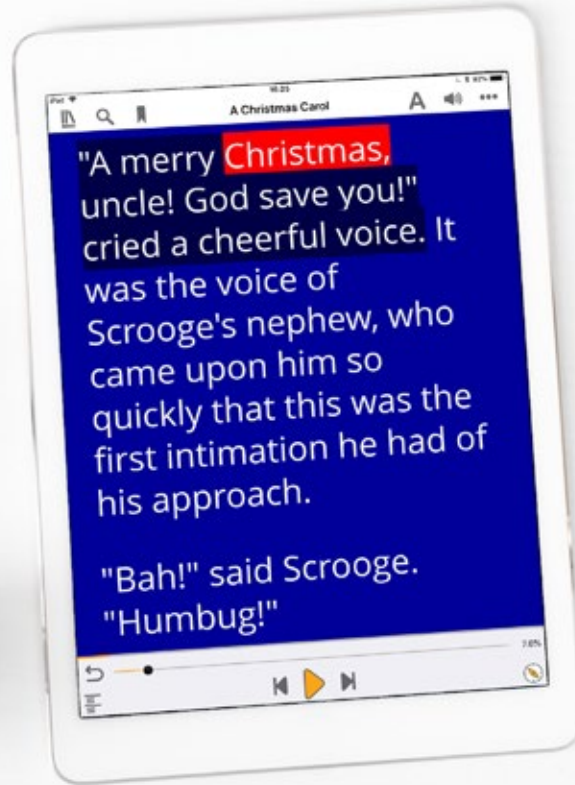
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Atherstone	St Mary's Church Church Street Atherstone CV9 1HH	Alternate Wednesdays 10 am - 11.30 am
Leamington	Chandos Court Chandos Street Leamington Spa CV32 4YU	Every Monday 10 am - 12 noon
Nuneaton	Newtown Community Centre Newtown Road Nuneaton 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

**Warwickshire Vision Support**  
5 Charles Court, Budbrooke Road  
Warwick CV34 5LZ



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