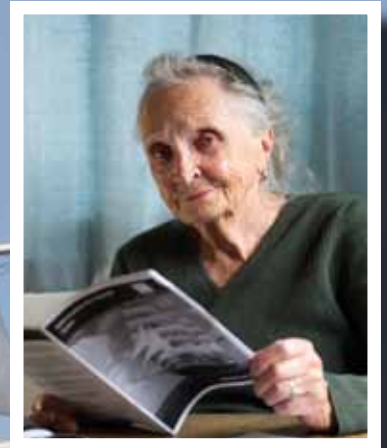


Spring 2015



Warwickshire Vision



SHIP AHOY!

Adventure holidays are not
just for sighted people

Warwickshire Vision Support

Your Local Charity for Local People



Rosemary Went, Editor



Rosalie Visick, Co-editor

Editorial

Already this year we have been reminded of our past by anniversaries and commemorations of historical events. The death of Winston Churchill reminded us of his leadership in the Second World War, Holocaust Memorial Day of the liberation of Auschwitz and Democracy Day for the signing of Magna Carta.

Apparently last year, 2014, was the hottest on record. This year the weather has been rather variable, but there's been little snow this winter.

Three new staff introduce themselves and another team member describes her job. We tell you of a holiday with a difference.

Steve Plumpton (a Board Member) and Questa, his guide dog, have featured in the local media, demonstrating the difficulties faced by Visually Impaired People when

pavements are obstructed. Is this a problem you experience?

Other articles include the Vision Support Advice and Information Help desk, Southam Club and the story of Rugby Talking News.

We didn't have any room in this issue for equipment, but don't forget that there is a wide variety of products that may make your life safer and easier and there are also board games specially for VIPs.

We look forward to receiving your comments on this magazine. Items for the Summer issue - letters to the Editor, equipment for sale, and articles - are needed by the middle of May.

Don't forget that this magazine is also available by e-mail, digital audio (memory stick) and Braille.

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

 **01926 411331**

Email: enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Website: www.warwickshire.vision

Warwickshire Vision Support is the operating name of
Warwickshire Association for the Blind.

A company limited by guarantee.

Registered in England and Wales Number 6511954

Charity Registration Number 1123220

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Leamington/Warwick Courier for providing us with the image of Mrs. Daphne Hinton.

Grateful thanks are expressed to Kenilworth Talking News for producing the digital audio version of Warwickshire Vision and to Phil Arkell for the layout of the printed version.

We acknowledge the use of information from Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph, Leamington Courier, NB, The Times and Vision.

Views expressed in Warwickshire Vision are not necessarily those of the management of Warwickshire Vision Support.

Contents

Editorial	2
Acknowledgements	3
Contents	4
Warwickshire Vision Support's Services and Clubs.....	6
Vision Support Advice and Information Help Desk.....	6
The Rôle of a Rehabilitation Officer.....	6
Southam Club Celebrates its 35th Birthday	8
Birthday Celebrations at Southam.....	9
My Experience with the IT Project	10
Warwickshire Vision Support's Bowls Club	11
Classifieds	11
Health and Wellbeing	12
Spotting Glaucoma	12
Living with Glaucoma.....	12
Recognising Glaucoma	13
Macular Degeneration and Hallucinations.....	14
Be Safe at Home	15
Making your Voice Heard.....	16
Making a Difference	16
Democracy	16
The UK's first Visual Impairment Parliament.....	17
Advocacy for You.....	17
Voting in the General Election	18
Letters to the Editor	18
Raising Awareness	18

Staff News	19
Imogen Edwards	19
Imke Carruthers	19
Staff Changes within the Rehabilitation Service	20
Andrew Harris.....	20
Facts, Figures and Features	22
History and Evolution	22
Fundraiser’s Report.....	23
Rugby and District Talking Newspaper and the Story Behind It.....	25
Street and Store Collections.....	25
Counting the Need.....	27
Credit and Debit Cards.....	27
Travel and Leisure.....	28
Yes you can - Sail	28
The Jubilee Sailing Trust	30
Driverless Cars – a step closer.....	31
A Bicycle Built for Two	32
Gardening Tips.....	33
Thrive.....	33
Leisurely Pursuits.....	33
Holidays	34

Warwickshire Vision Support's Services and Clubs

Vision Support Advice and Information Help Desk

Sue Morris, Vision Support Officer

2014 was a very busy year for the Information desk at Warwick and Stratford Hospitals.

Throughout the year we have spoken to many people and made in excess of 100 referrals for support from our Rehabilitation team and other agencies.

We have been fortunate to receive some funding from Warwickshire County Council that will enable us to attend two further sessions at Warwick Hospital. This will bring the total of sessions to four half days a week.

These additional sessions will coincide with the Low Vision Clinics where we hope to be able to support people to remain independent.

These new sessions will mean we will now be available on Monday and Thursday afternoons and all day Friday. We will still cover Stratford Hospital on alternate Thursday afternoons when there is a clinic.

We have also been invited to take part in the Hospital Health Care Assistants' Induction Training Programme. This will help raise their awareness of the needs of patients with a visual impairment during their stay in hospital.

We attended the first session in January and hope to be able to attend these inductions throughout the year.

The Rôle of a Rehabilitation Officer

Jenny Lane

My name is Jenny, and I have been working as a Rehabilitation Officer for over 25 years. I am one of three Rehabilitation Officers based at Warwickshire Vision Support.

To qualify as a Rehabilitation Officer requires completing a diploma in higher education at University and it is also now possible to study to degree level.

As Rehabilitation Officers, we work alongside Health and Social Services as well as agencies such as Age UK and Volunteer Centres.

We receive referrals from a variety of sources, not only from Health and Social Care but also relatives, friends and indeed the person requiring the support themselves.

When a person is referred to us we very often visit the client at home

and complete what we call a general assessment.

The areas we would explore include:

Mobility

- Can a person be mobile safely within their own home, as well as outdoors?
- Do they need mobility training? Do they need a mobility aid such as a walking stick, symbol cane, guide cane or long cane?
- Do they have any difficulties washing and dressing? Do they require referral to an agency that provides support with aides in the bathroom?

Communication

- Can the person use the telephone?
- Are they able to read their correspondence, pay bills or write letters?
- Are they able to tell the time?

Independent Living Skills

- Are they able to make themselves a hot drink?
- Can they make themselves a meal or snack?
- Can they use their cooker, microwave and washing machine?
- Can they identify tins or packet foods?
- Can they read cooking instructions?

Benefits

- Are they receiving the appropriate allowances such as AA or PIP (Attendance Allowance or Personal Independence Payment)?
- Are they entitled to Housing or Rent allowance?
- Are they eligible for a Parking Badge or subsidised TV licence?

Low Vision

- We assess and advise regarding appropriate hand held or electronic magnifiers or refer to the appropriate service for support
- We offer information and advice regarding lighting and demonstrate light bulbs and lamps in order to optimise residual vision.
- We discuss the use and benefits of colour contrast around the home as an aid to vision.

Social and Emotional

- Is the person socially isolated? Would they benefit from a Reader/ Visitor, Talking Books or from attending a social club?
- Do they require support coming to terms with their vision loss?
- Does the surrounding family require support, reassurance or advice on how to offer the best support to their relative?

As Rehabilitation Officers it is important that we have an extensive knowledge of a number of eye

conditions, the most common ones being Age related Macular Degeneration, Cataracts, Glaucoma and Diabetic Retinopathy. In addition we must understand how these eye conditions have an impact on vision and the difficulties people can experience as a result.

Very often when dealing with our Service Users, we find that not only is the person visually impaired but often has other health complaints which exacerbate the difficulties as a result of the vision loss, such as arthritis, heart conditions and other sensory loss such as hearing or speech.

Due to the fact that we deal with people who may have quite complex needs, our relationship with other service providers is key to a holistic assessment and the resulting action

follow up. Therefore we often refer a person to other agencies, such as Adult Health, for Care Assessments, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. Age UK offers a number of support services including Home visitors, Gardening and Handyman services. As our service users' age span is from zero upwards, we also work alongside Education Departments, Schools, Colleges and Universities.

Whereas predominantly our rôle is to support our service users in the community, we also have a responsibility to deliver visual impairment awareness training packages to establishments and service providers that support visually impaired people, such as care homes, supermarkets and GP surgeries.

Southam Club Celebrates its 35th Birthday

Kath Phelps

Members of Southam Club were joined by Vice Chairman Howard Burgess, Manager John Davis and Vision Support Officer Sue Morris to celebrate 35 years of activity. We were fortunate to be joined by Betty Mills, who founded the Club along with John Mills on behalf of WAB.

Betty has been involved in many organisations in Southam, including a spell as Mayor. She gave an



impassioned speech on the work of retirees, pointing out how much of life in Southam and elsewhere is driven and organised by retired people. She's certainly done her bit, including working as a funeral minister for 8 years, starting when she was 75.

John Davis followed with an update on the work of Warwickshire Vision Support and Howard Burgess gave a vote of thanks to our Volunteers.

As always, the catering was organised brilliantly by Fiona Perry, our Club Leader.

Birthday Celebrations at Southam

On 18th February Southam Club celebrated a further anniversary when Club Leaders, Fiona and Jeff Perry, both had big birthdays. It happened that the speaker was Sue Drage, who entertained us with her artistic craft works made from recycled materials. We presented the happy couple with a personalised bag each, along with a personalised birthday card portraying their caravan.

Jeff and Fiona Perry



My Experience with the IT Project

My name is Paul Bowler, and I have recently been having some iPhone tuition from Warwickshire Vision Support's IT Project.

I've been visually impaired since birth, so have used various forms of assistive technology throughout my life. However, one thing I had always found challenging was getting to grips with a mobile phone. For several years I'd been using a Nokia 6101, on which a friend had changed the settings to make some of the menus appear larger, but the screen was still quite small and difficult to read, so tasks such as sending a text messages were slow and cumbersome. The phone, bought in 2005, had become outdated and unreliable, but I was unsure how feasible it would be for me to upgrade to something more modern such as an iPhone or smartphone because I did not know whether the technology would be user VIP friendly.

In March 2014 I began attending the Association's Nuneaton Drop-In Centre on a regular basis, and started to get to know some of the people there. I discovered many of them were using iPhones with the help of speech and zoom software, and had received training from the IT Project. Melanie Pritchard, who runs the project, had demonstrated some text-to-speech computer software

to me a few months previously, so I asked her if she could advise me about upgrading to a modern phone.

After having a chat about the type of phone I was looking for, I was shown a selection of smartphones and iPhones that are available, such as the Samsung Galaxy S4, the Apple iPhone 4S and the Motorola Moto G. Over the course of two or three sessions I was given some basic tuition and the opportunity to test out the various features and functions of each phone. Although I have some vision, I quickly realised that using speech would be of greater help to me, and finally decided to go for an iPhone 4S, which I bought at the beginning of June.

With my new phone ready to go, I began having some lessons on how to make the most of it. As well as the



basics such as making and receiving calls and texting, the project has also helped me with more advanced tasks like customising the speech, and appearance of the screen. I have also learnt how to download applications like BBC News and Wikipedia, to surf the internet for information, and even use my phone in other ways, one example being to download an application that turns the camera into a powerful magnifier. This has proved very useful for reading the cooking instructions on food packaging. I was also made aware of a website called AppleViz, which is designed to help visually impaired people who use Apple products.

I think the help I've had from the IT Project has been of great value because it has enabled me to use technology that I may not otherwise have felt was accessible to me as a visually impaired person, and I now feel very confident using my new phone.

Warwickshire Vision Support's Bowls Club

Following the information in the last edition of Warwickshire Vision we have another bowler, who has been coming from Rugby with her husband since the beginning of the year. We still need more people to join us on Friday mornings at the Avon Valley Indoor Bowling Club at Gaydon, so why not 'give it a try'. For more information contact Warwickshire Vision Support.

Classifieds

If there is some equipment that you no longer use that could be of use to another VIP, you can advertise it in Warwickshire Vision at no cost.

For more information please contact the Editors of Warwickshire Vision at Warwickshire Vision Support.

Health and Wellbeing

Spotting Glaucoma

Researchers at City University London asked participants in a study to watch television and film clips on a computer. While they were watching programmes such as Dad's Army their eye movements were tracked and the information fed into a computer. Certain patterns of these eye movements correlated with having glaucoma.

There were 76 participants in the study with an average age of 69, and 44 of them were glaucoma patients. The system accurately identified 79 per cent of those who had the disease. It uses a mathematical technique to find patterns in grids, as the eye movements are faster than heartbeats.

Glaucoma patients have lost part of their peripheral field of vision, and the brain has to move the eyes around to fill in the gaps. It is believed that the same technique could be used to diagnose other eye diseases such as macular degeneration.

Glaucoma is an irreversible condition, caused by progressive damage to the optic nerve and untreated, can lead to blindness. At present one in ten of the people registered as blind in the UK arises from glaucoma. Early diagnosis is vital, so treatment can

begin to prevent progression of the disease.

It is estimated that there are half a million people living with undiagnosed glaucoma in this country.

Living with Glaucoma

Wearing shades, more usually known as sunglasses, is often a celebrity affectation, something they hide behind. One pop star has recently revealed that in his case they are a necessity.

Bono, the frontman for U2 has worn shades for the majority of his public appearances, on stage and indoors for more than 20 years. His eyes are sensitive to light - if someone takes his photograph he will see the flash for the rest of the day. The reason for this sensitivity is glaucoma, and wearing dark glasses is often advised.

It is thought that Bono has the slow developing form of the disease known as chronic open-angle glaucoma. He has had good treatments and expects to be fine.

Another public figure with glaucoma is Andrea Bocelli, the Italian tenor. He suffers from congenital glaucoma and was partially sighted from birth before an accident at the age of 12 destroyed his remaining sight.

In Britain there are 500,000 people affected by glaucoma.

Recognising Glaucoma

Not all glaucoma is the same. The name glaucoma covers a range of different types of this eye condition. This group of conditions is mainly connected to the pressure in your eye, which can cause damage to your optic nerve that connects your eye to your brain.

Diagnosis of the condition is relatively simple. An optometrist checks the eye pressure as part of an eye examination. Three puffs of air are blown into the eye, and this provides an average for your eye pressure. If the pressure is raised two further tests would be to look into your eye and field tests to measure your visual field. A more accurate pressure test can be carried out by anaesthetising the eye so that it can be touched by a machine; this is usually carried out in a hospital.

The groups of people more at risk of developing glaucoma include those who:

- are aged over 40
- are of African origin
- have close blood relatives who have glaucoma
- are very short sighted
- have diabetes

The most common type of glaucoma is primary open angle glaucoma (POAG) and the usual treatment is eye drops, which lower the pressure in the eye. For the eye drops to

be successful in helping to retain remaining sight, they have to be used regularly. Without treatment the pressure in the eye rises slowly over time and damages the optic nerve. This leads to sight loss, starting with peripheral vision.

Acute angle closure glaucoma is less common than POAG. In this condition pressure in the eye rises rapidly because the outer edge of the iris and the front of the eye (cornea) come into contact, which prevents the aqueous fluid from draining away as normal. This can be very painful. It should be treated urgently, usually with medicine and a form of laser surgery in order to save sight.

Secondary glaucoma can be caused by another eye condition affecting the front part of the eye; the anterior chamber which includes the iris and cornea. Another cause could be an operation, injury or medication. Treatment are individual but could include eye drops.

The easiest way to find out if you or anyone else has glaucoma or any eye condition is to have an eye test or check by your local optician.

If you would like to find out more about glaucoma or any other condition visit the eye health section of rnib.org.uk or for a free guide in your preferred format call the RNIB Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or email: [**eyehealth@rnib.org.uk**](mailto:eyehealth@rnib.org.uk)

Macular Degeneration and Hallucinations

Harold Smart, Kenilworth

It was some 6 years ago on a visit to my optician's that he stopped my examination after a short while and told me to go to my doctor's first thing in the morning, as he was sending him a letter. I remarked that the postman would not have delivered it by then, to which he replied that he would be personally delivering it by hand that night. I then realised that the matter was serious. Some 3 weeks later I attended the Machen Clinic at Warwick Hospital and was told that I had Macular Degeneration in both eyes.

For some 5 years I attended for injections and did not notice any hallucinations, but in the sixth year they started quite suddenly. Firstly, a small old lady in a crinoline appeared alongside the television but now varied ones appear. While listening to a talk at a Rotary meeting invariably a head appears alongside the speaker's, sometimes wearing thick black rimmed spectacles! And I often see figures but usually smaller than life-sized.

I had joined the Macular Society several years ago and had read about Charles Bonnet syndrome in the magazine some time before my symptoms started so I wasn't worried or thought I was going insane. In

fact I found them very interesting. When watching television I often suffer a grid of small hexagons over the whole screen, reminding me of a bee's honeycomb. Our downstairs toilet is not well lit, and often when visiting it find that the bowl is filled with small red flowers. However, they don't get in the way!

Perhaps because I used to be an electronics engineer, dealing often with television reception and transmission I was not worried and can compare the brain with a television transmission. I can therefore understand how, when the brain receives the information from the eye with some information missing, it attempts to insert data which it hopes will suit. This happens in some sophisticated television systems involving colour transmission!

Eight months on I very rarely see ghost people. My brain seems to have learnt that this is not a usual occurrence and now places patterns and shapes on walls and other pale items. I still see a 'head' alongside a lecturer. When watching TV almost every face in a close-up will have black thick-rimmed spectacles, but rarely in other circumstances.

Out of doors, moving objects will disappear and then re-appear when significantly closer. This is quite dangerous when crossing the road and an object that might be a car is approaching. The interesting fact is

that the road remains visible. I think that as the road is static the brain gets it right; while the small moving object does not register, larger objects such as buses or lorries do, but the image becomes distorted. Fellow members at my local Vision Support Centre have experienced similar occurrences. The size of the disappearing object seems to depend on the depth of the MD.

I have found narrow objects such as cyclists difficult to locate.

I am now losing my visual perspective. To this end my keys have been fitted with a small bell so that if I drop them the stereo sound will assist location. These bells can be obtained from the local police who issue them to attach to purses for crime prevention, although the fastenings are not very substantial and may need strengthening.

Be Safe at Home

Rosalie Visick (registered Blind)

Last December, after having two falls within two weeks at home, one indoors the other outside, and with my husband in hospital, I decided to contact Lifeline and arrange for their alarm system to be installed in our home as a safeguard. I contacted Warwick District Council who connected me to the Lifeline department. After answering their questions they arranged for the alarm system to be set up in my home the following day.

There was a one-off payment of £150 to the Lifeline charity and a charge of £19.63 to be paid immediately by Direct Debit and then on a quarterly basis.

I was told that the Lifeline Alarm system also covered my husband. I needed to give the names of several contacts for Lifeline to call if I required help in an emergency or they needed to respond themselves.

I wear the Lifeline pendant around my neck and if I fall or need help I press the red button on the pendant. This connects me to the Lifeline Control Centre, which then alerts one of my contacts. If none respond someone from the Lifeline Support Team automatically comes to my home - they also come if a contact cannot deal with the situation and needs more help.

At the same time it was suggested I had a Key Safe with a secret code fitted outside my home to allow a contact or a member of the Lifeline Team to enter my home. Age UK supplied and fitted the Key Safe - the charge being £75.

I feel more independent and safe at home now the alarm system is working. I recommend it to other people.



Making your Voice Heard

Making a Difference

We can all do something to raise awareness of visual impairment to a wider public. It might be something as simple as talking to the person on the seat next to you on a bus, explaining to your grandchildren why you can't join them in some board games, or as Kenilworth Member Harold Smart did by writing to a local newspaper.

Harold, who has advanced Macular Degeneration, recently wrote an article on Charles Bonnet Syndrome. He had also previously drawn the condition to the attention of his GP, who had never heard of it, but appreciated the information Harold provided, which he also passed on to his fellow GPs in the practice.

Democracy

'I have a Dream' were the words that began the famous speech made by Dr Martin Luther King. He led the American Civil Rights Campaign for ethnic equality. 19th January has been designated Martin Luther King Jr. Day; it is listed on some (British) calendars.

Listed on the calendar on 20th January, is Democracy Day in the UK. This is a much older anniversary: the signing of Magna Carta by King John in 1215, 800 years ago. Original copies of this (relatively simple) parchment document still exist.

Magna Carta limited the powers of the king; previously he had ruled the country.

1265, another 50 years, saw the first British Commons meet - Simon de Montfort's Parliament of Barons, Church and Shire representatives.

The Reform Act in 1832 gave middle class men the right to vote. But it was 1884 before the Third Reform Bill gave the vote to all men.

Women had to wait until 1918, and be over the age of 30, before they were given the right to vote.

There was a strong Women's Suffrage Movement. In 1928 the Women's Suffrage Act extended the right to vote to women on the same terms as men. Women, about half the population, had waited 34 years after men had been given voting rights to have that same right.

Today, we have universal suffrage. All adults in this country have the right to vote. Recently, it was made the responsibility of individuals to register to have that right. Previously, the head of a household was responsible for completing the form to register all the eligible occupants in their home.

Do people value this right to vote? Starting with Magna Carta it took a long time for full democracy to be established in this country. Do

we take for granted what is now a right? In some countries the population does not have that right, in others exercising the right can be threatened, perhaps by bloodshed. In yet other countries individuals can be fined if they do not use their democratic right.

In this country we are privileged to have the freedom to decide whether to vote or not. We don't even have to go to a polling station to cast our ballots on the designated day as postal ballots can be used. A democracy needs the participation of its inhabitants to function properly.

Do you have the right to vote in Warwickshire Vision Support's elections, and have a voice in the way it is run? Warwickshire Vision Support is a Registered Charity and needs support to continue to provide its services. Be a participating member by being a Voting Member of Warwickshire Vision Support (if you are not already a Voting Member).

The UK's first Visual Impairment Parliament

The UK's first Visual Impairment parliament was launched at Kingston upon Thames on 1st September 2014. Initially five MPs were recruited and each of them has chosen an area in which to specialise, and for which they will be the first person to approach. The areas are education, employment, health, transport,

also social and leisure activities and events.

The MPs will hold monthly group meetings, quarterly public meetings and run campaigns.

A further five MPs are being elected to enable the Parliament to reach and represent as many people as possible. Potential MPs must be aged over 18, blind or partially sighted and a resident of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames; they must also be prepared to give up to 4 hours of their time per week for 2 years. After 2 years MPs must stand down, but can stand for re-election.

Advocacy for You

On 6th March 2014 a group met at the Nuneaton Drop-in Centre and formed an advocacy group. This Group has now been working for 12 months to promote the needs of visually impaired people within the county to organisations that often ignore the problems of VIP's.

Now that this Group is established in the north of Warwickshire, it is time to start groups in other parts of our county. The first meetings for new Groups are to be held in Rugby on 10th June and Stratford on 16th June and VIP's living in those areas will be sent details nearer the time. Meetings for groups are also planned for Coventry and Leamington later in the year.

Advocacy was one of the issues raised at the Consultations held in

2013, with some of the specific issues being:

Better access to medical services

- Problems with street furniture

There may be many other ideas that you have.

If you live in the Rugby or Stratford area and want to talk about local VIP issues or feel that you would like to get involved and make the visually impaired voice heard locally, go along to the meeting and take part.

Voting in the General Election

All Polling Stations are supposed to have templates to help VIPs vote. It still means that someone has to read the ballot paper, but you can then vote independently, if you are confident enough.

Any person with sight loss would do well to contact their electoral office to make sure the template will be at their Polling Station.

Letters to the Editor

Raising Awareness

I have Macular Degeneration in both eyes, worst in my right eye, but also with a scratch in my right, thus everything is very distorted. For me the MD also causes hallucinations, known as Charles Bonnet Syndrome.

Knowing what life is like I have been doing my best locally to spread the word. I have contacted several doctors and have been alarmed at their ignorance! I also had a word with my local PC and she has promised to bring it to the attention of her sergeant, so hopefully something will come of it.

Harold Smart
Kenilworth



ADVOCACY
Make your
voice heard

Staff News

Imogen Edwards

Trainee Administration Assistant

I studied for my A levels at Coventry City College and during this time I had my first job, which was during the two-month summer break. This was a full-time admin based rôle at a solicitor's. I really enjoyed it and it helped me gain some useful experience.

I then began working part-time in retail at WH Smith when I went back to college. The subjects I studied were Psychology, Sociology, AS Biology and AS English. Psychology was definitely my favourite and the subject I found most interesting!



After I had passed my exams, working at WH Smith became my full time job until I came to Warwickshire Vision Support. This is my third full time job and I am enjoying it a lot so far.

I live in Coventry with my Mum and two older brothers. One of my main interests is fitness, and I spend a lot of time either at the gym or doing boxercise classes in Warwick. I enjoy baking though I am now trying to learn to cook more different kinds of food! The rest of my time outside of work is usually spent shopping, babysitting, watching films and seeing my friends and family. I also sell Avon cosmetics, which keeps me busy.

Imke Carruthers

Vision Support Officer

I am really excited to have been taken on as a new Vision Support Officer at Warwickshire Vision Support. Ever since I started as a Volunteer last October I have really enjoyed getting out and meeting new people every day. It really is an interesting and rewarding place to work.

I am currently in my first year at Birmingham City University studying for a foundation degree in Rehabilitation for Visual Impairment, with the eventual aim of becoming a Rehabilitation Officer.



Staff Changes within the Rehabilitation Service

Just to inform everyone that Rachael Ball left at the beginning of January. She has been replaced by Kelly Sowter, who joins us from the Coventry City Council Sensory Impairment Team.

Andrew Harris **Interactive Technology Officer**

I was born in Coventry and attended Whitley Abbey School, leaving with three mediocre CSE passes and a 110-yard breast-stroke swimming certificate. I think my concentration must have been elsewhere.

I joined GEC in Rugby as an apprentice where I really knuckled down to some serious study. I benefitted from some first class training at the company's training school, then at Rugby College of Further Education and Lanchester Polytechnic, gaining my Higher National in Electrical and Electronic Engineering.

After my 5 year apprenticeship I stayed with GEC as a Test Engineer for 2 years, working on a range of large electrical generators and motors and the associated electronic control systems for these products; the sort of equipment you see at power stations or in large generating rooms on ships and submarines.

After GEC I spent a few years in the design of electronic circuits ranging

I live in Solihull with my 7 year old daughter Daisy. I am a quarter Dutch, which is where my rather different-sounding name comes from! However, I have lived all of my life in the West Midlands, apart from a couple of years I spent travelling and working in Australia and New Zealand.

In my spare time I enjoy lots of different sports and I like to take part in mud runs and muddy obstacle courses, which I sometimes do for charity. My next one this spring is the Major Series, which I am currently training for. However, running in the cold is not much fun!

I look forward to meeting those of you I have not already met over the coming months.

from battery chargers to full blown machine tool control systems. I worked for MIRA, Smiths Industries, Staveley Electronic Services and then AGFA for 33 years.

After working with both hardware (the bits of technology you can feel) and software (the programs that make things work) I was accepted as a member of the Institute of Engineering and Technology.

At AGFA I worked on many large commercial and government projects where information needed to be processed and presented in a suitable printed form. There is a good chance that a large number of books and papers you read will have, and are still being produced on AGFA equipment.



I ended up as AGFA's Operations Manager responsible for all of their operations within the UK, Ireland and the Channel Islands.

In my final years at AGFA the company was facing a big swing in technology. People started buying less newspapers and books as the digital revolution took another major step and all of the smart devices we see today enabled people to access information on their phones, Kindles, tablets, etc.

As I have worked with computer hardware and software and many applications for more than 30 years, I am hoping now that I can pass on some of what I have learnt to others.

I also trained as a Further and Adult Education Teacher more years ago than I want to admit. I taught numeracy at various levels during the evening at my local college in Nuneaton. I thoroughly enjoyed teaching mature students, mainly because I was teaching students who wanted to learn, although I disliked the amount of paperwork that needed to be completed.

I live in Nuneaton and I'm married with two children and six grandchildren, so have a busy family life. I attend a small Church of England church where the average age is about 80 but I don't mind because I am often referred to as the young one.

I have far too many hobbies and rarely find time to tend to them all properly. Amongst my interests are watercolour painting, electronics, programming, walking and running, gardening and pretending I can play the guitar.

I started out as a Volunteer for Warwickshire Vision Support and very

soon after that my present position became available. I now work with Melanie Pritchard as an Interactive Technology Officer, which sounds too grand a title to me. I prefer to be known as Melanie's apprentice, as there is still much I need to become proficient in.

Facts, Figures and Features

History and Evolution

The inaugural meeting of Warwickshire Association for the Blind (WAB) was held on 6th June 1911, more than 100 years ago. That was the Edwardian era, and many changes have taken place since then. There have been changes in language and social attitudes, with advances in technology, an increase in life expectancy and our own expectations.

The Association's work began with the identification of adults and children in need who were granted small allowances. By 1917, 92 blind men, 126 blind women and 9 blind children had been identified.

1918 saw WAB placed on the register of Approved Societies and Agencies for the Blind. This was the year that the Register of Blind People was started. It is the duty of each County Council to maintain a Register.

In 1993 Warwickshire County Council delegated responsibility for

keeping the Register to Warwickshire Association for the Blind. WAB was one of the first local charities in the UK to have this responsibility. This service is still provided today by WAB under its new name of Warwickshire Vision Support.

On 28th February 2015 the number of people on the Register of Blind and Partially Sighted People for Warwickshire was 1,100 blind and 1,273 partially sighted, a total of 2,373, with the majority of people losing sight later in life, as the population ages. It is believed that there are a great many more people who are eligible for registration, and for our services.

In Autumn 2005 WAB opened its first Drop-in Centre, in Nuneaton. This venue, open weekly, offered the opportunity for people living in this area of Warwickshire to access our services more easily, providing a venue where Visually Impaired

People could meet other VIPs in a friendly social setting; help and advice were available and ideas shared. This Drop in Centre was the first one in the county, and we believe that it was the first Drop in Centre in the country.

By November 2014 there were Drop-in Centres in towns throughout Warwickshire and in Coventry - a total of seven. With the name change WAB's Drop-in Centres became Warwickshire Vision Support's Vision Support Centres and continue to thrive, providing a friendly local service to VIPs.

In June 2010 WAB opened a Vision Support Desk in the eye clinic at Warwick Hospital in the Machen Unit, where advice and information is provided to hospital patients. It can be an emotional time for anyone who has been certified as Blind or Partially Sighted and we hope that by being there we can make a difference at this difficult time.

Initially the Desk was open for two surgeries each week. Since January the service has been extended to four surgeries weekly.

For the last 103 years Warwickshire Vision Support has adapted to social and technological changes to provide relevant services to improve the lives of visually impaired people in Warwickshire. It plans to continue to evolve to be both innovative and supportive.

Fundraiser's Report

I hope you will agree, the rebranding of Warwickshire Association for the Blind has proved a great success. The feedback we have received regarding Warwickshire Vision Support has been overwhelmingly positive - this is in large part due to the enormous efforts of the admin team under the direction of Barbara Main who meticulously changed every document, letter-head and leaflet in the months leading up to the name change to ensure that the process was as smooth and seamless as possible.

My focus has now returned to fundraising and the pressing need to sustain our services. I am particularly pleased to report that Warwickshire County Council's Joint Healthy Warwick Funding gave us an award of £8,224 to enable us to increase the number of days we can man our Advice and Information Desk at the Machen Eye Clinic in Warwick Hospital.

This service is of particular importance because it enables us to reach more people who are acquiring vision loss and are in need of advice and support. We know that the earlier someone starts to adapt to living with sight loss, the more independence and confidence they can maintain - in this way, our services can have the greatest impact.

We have also attracted £3,000 from the Ulverscroft Foundation, as well as £1,600 from Leamington Spa Town Council and a further £300 from the Harry Payne Trust in support of our IT Training programme. IT training has proved extremely popular over the last few years with more than 200 people registering for the service. To meet this demand, we have now employed Andrew Harris to support Melanie Pritchard so that we can spread the service across the whole county.

I would also like to recognise the third payment of £5,000 made by CHK Charities Ltd in support of our Home Visitor Service. This extremely generous donation of £15,000 in total has made a huge contribution towards helping us sustain and develop the Home Visitor Service, which is now supporting almost 100 people to live at home.

We have also introduced the My Guide Service which complements the Home Visitors by helping people to get out of the house and participate more fully in local community activities or to undertake exercise. We would like to thank the Lillie C Johnson Charitable Trust for their donation of £1,000 towards establishing the My Guide Service.

Our network of clubs is also in need of financial support. I would like to thank Beaudesert and Henley in Arden Parish Council and Henley Co-op for their donations of £150 and £140 respectively towards the newly formed Henley Lunch Club. Of course all our clubs need financial help and thanks to our committed volunteers we once again have a full calendar of collections for 2015 to help sustain their activities.

On a more sombre note, I would like to pay tribute to those members



Cheque presented by ASDA to the Nuneaton "Low Vision - No Vision" Club

who have recently passed away and left a legacy gift in their will to help us continue to provide services to visually impaired people across Warwickshire and Coventry. In the last 3 months, we were honoured to receive more than £25,000 in legacy gifts! Without this generosity, we would not be able to provide you with the wide range of services and activities on offer today.

On behalf of everyone at Warwickshire Vision Support I would like to express my gratitude to these generous souls and encourage any one else who would like to leave a legacy gift to Warwickshire Vision Support to please contact me, Phil Arkell, at the office on **01926 411331**.

Street and Store Collections

Collections for 2014 raised the following amounts:

Rugby, Asda	143.88
Coleshill	117.34
Morrisons, S. Warwicks	243.79
Shipston	409.27
Southam, Sainsurys	283.53
Coleshill, Morrisons	88.70
Leamington, Morrisons	265.00
Total for 2014	£1,551.51

The clubs involved with making these collections benefited by 90 per cent of the funds raised.

Rugby and District Talking Newspaper and the Story Behind It

Bob Arkell

It was in the small town of Aberdare in south Wales in the early 1960s that the idea of allowing blind and partially sighted people to enjoy the local news, as their sighted friends were able to do. And so the first talking newspaper was born.

Sadly it didn't last, in those days equipment was sparse, big and very expensive and it was realised that few residents in town had the necessary equipment to enjoy the new facility. After six months or so the first talking newspaper closed down.

However, about 5 years later, members of the Aberystwyth Rotary Club heard about the demise of the Aberdare trial and so decided to have another go. During those 5 years since the Aberdare newspaper closed, so much more modern equipment had become available with more and more people able to obtain it and enjoy the sounds that came with it.

So on January 1st 1970 the first Aberystwyth Talking Newspaper was born and about twenty audio

tapes went out to the local blind and partially sighted people of the town. News got around quickly and within a short time the number of clients had grown and grown. Not only residents of Aberystwyth but residents of all the small towns and villages in central Wales were enjoying this new facility.

It wasn't long before Rotary members in other towns heard about this new service and decided to start their own. And so it started to spread across the country with town after town getting its own talking newspaper. Today there are approximately 500 newspapers spread across the country.

In 1977 Rugby got its Talking Newspaper with the local Rotary Club joining up with the Rokeby Lions to get the whole thing off the ground. Since that opening edition all those years ago the newspaper has supplied a regular weekly service and is heading for its 2,000th edition.

The newspaper's contents include all the news as provided by the Rugby Advertiser on each Wednesday afternoon prior to general publication. Included are births, marriages and deaths, late chemists, What's On, the weather forecasts, lighting up times and finally the sports news.

The paper is still run purely by volunteers, some are readers, some clean the incoming memory sticks

from the previous week's issue and some arrange for the copying and despatch of the new memory sticks with the current news on them. At the beginning of last year the newspaper switched from the old fashioned audio tapes to the modern memory sticks, giving a much improved sound quality.

The service we offer is completely free. There are no postage charges thanks to the Royal Mail, and any blind or partially sighted person who wishes to partake in our service can have on loan from us all the necessary equipment.

So if anyone knows of someone who might be interested in receiving the news by this means, or if you feel you might like to be involved then just ring me, Bob Arkell, Secretary of Rugby Talking News, on **01788 551258**

Editor

Within Warwickshire there are five local Talking Newspapers, so there is one in your area. Contact Warwickshire Vision Support if you would like to receive your local talking newspaper.



Rugby Talking Newspaper

Counting the Need

Warwickshire Vision Support holds the Register of people who are registered as blind and partially sighted in Warwickshire. It is responsible for registering the visually impaired people in the county, so has a record of the number of people registered.

The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) has recently published The Registered Blind and Partially Sighted People report. This report is published every 3 years; the previous one was published in 2011.

The data shows that over that period of 3 years the number of people aged over 75 who were registered as blind dropped by 7 per cent (from 94,500 to 87,900). There was also a drop in the number of people registered as partially sighted, by 5 per cent (from 99,100 to 94,300).

There was an increase in the number of children under 5 years who were registered, by 17 per cent for partially sighted and by 3 per cent for blind.

The HSCIC Chair Kingsley Manning said 'It is notable that despite our ageing population, there has been a fall in the numbers of people registered as blind or partially sighted in the 75 plus age group.'

Editor

The Register of Blind and Partially Sighted People in Warwickshire shows the same downward trend. In the period from 31st March 2011 to 28th February 2015 there was a drop in the number of people registered blind by 10 per cent, of partially sighted by 14 per cent, and over the whole Register a drop of 12 per cent.

New figures from the Office for National Statistics show that there are now almost 14,000 people over the age of 100 in Britain, a 5 per cent rise in a single year.

Credit and Debit Cards

VIP customers of the Royal Bank of Scotland and NatWest can now apply for redesigned credit and debit cards that should make life easier. The cards have a notch cut in the right end, which will identify how they should be inserted into a reader. They also have tactile markings so that it possible to differentiate between them. In addition, the bank's phone number is printed in a larger font than previously.

These cards can be ordered in all RBS and NatWest bank branches, online or by calling **0345 9000 400**

Travel and Leisure

Yes you can - Sail

Daphne Hinton had nearly reached retirement age when she took her first voyage on a sailing ship. She was Purser on Winston Churchill, looking after young girls who were learning to sail. She was fully sighted at that time.

For her second voyage, in 2000, Daphne flew out to Los Palmas to board the Tenacious on her maiden voyage. She sailed round the Channel Islands.

Last year the third voyage was a little disappointing. Tenacious was due to sail from Southampton (her home port) but bad weather in the Solent curtailed sailing. 'We managed one good sail on the second afternoon then we anchored to ride out the storm.'

Tenacious sailed to Poole in Dorset, where the crew went ashore. 'While we were ashore one evening the tide came in, so on return to the ship the gangway had a steep upward slope. My crew mates were concerned how I might get back aboard, but my agility on rapidly climbing up the gangway astounded them!'

The best part of the holiday for Daphne was when she took her turn on the helm for half an hour using the audio compass.

Daphne has been aloft - 'I went half-way up the mast on my first trip on



Daphne Hinton

Tenacious. The first time the ship was stationary and the second time it was afloat.'

'I think I was the oldest lady on the ship but some of the others were in their 70s and 80s. I would encourage more elderly people to take part.' She finds the rhythm of the sea suits her, 'it's doing something physical' and



says 'the feel of the wind and sea on my face is invigorating'.

Daphne Hinton, who is one of our Members, lives in Warwick and is now 96 years old. She has glaucoma and macular degeneration and is registered as blind.

Daphne, a petite and slight lady, enjoys swimming and is a Member of

Warwickshire Vision Support's Bowls Club. Last December she slipped on ice and broke her right wrist; she was then in plaster up to her right elbow. This did not stop her bowling every Friday morning - she started bowling left-handed.

The Jubilee Sailing Trust

For most people a voyage on the high seas means a holiday on a cruise ship. But there are other ways to take an ocean voyage. On a Jubilee Sailing Trust (JST) voyage everyone is part of the crew and participates fully in life on board a tall ship.

Lord Nelson was purpose built for the JST as the first ship in the world to take both able bodied and disabled travellers to sea, to sail on equal terms. She sailed on her maiden voyage in 1986. Tenacious became the world's second square rigged sailing ship that can be crewed by able-bodied and physically disabled people. Her maiden voyage took place in 2000.

The ship's equipment specifically for visually impaired crew includes a guidance track around most of the upper deck and arrows on most handrails pointing to the bow. There are also tactile strips at the tops of companionways, bright coloured edging and a bright track radar screen. In addition, there is a range of facilities to enable people with other disabilities.

On each voyage there is a permanent crew. The Captain is in command, with a Mate in charge of running the ship. The navigation is the responsibility of the 2nd Mate and the Bosun looks after the rigging and maintenance. The Chief Engineer takes care of the machinery with a 2nd Engineer to assist. Below decks

the Medical Purser is in charge and there is also a Cook.

The Voyage Crew is 40 strong, of whom 20 may be physically disabled, with eight as wheelchair users. On both ships the crew is accommodated in bunks in the fo'c'sle, with eight cabins amidships for wheelchair users and their buddies.

Shortly before sailing the permanent crew decides on the watches and on the pairings of able bodied and disabled people called the 'buddy system'. This system is used to give help and assistance as and when needed; it is a two-way process that has been in operation since JST's first voyage and epitomises the ethos of JST. It has led to many enduring friendships contributing to the Voyage Crew's enjoyment of the voyage.

On board these ships all crew members work as part of a watch and participate in all aspects of crewing, from setting sails to washing dishes, from helming the ship to keeping watch at night. Any physical work undertaken by crew members should be within their own normal capabilities.

With suitable help and encouragement everyone is encouraged, but not compelled, to go aloft. It is an unforgettable experience.

There are four watches, each with a watchleader from the crew. A watch card is given to each crew member on arrival. Every crew member has two watches each day, and the card sets out the different watch times on each day of the voyage for that particular crew member. Each watch has a different name and specific times; the lengths vary, but they are for approximately 4 hours.

Each morning 1 hour is set aside for all voyage crew to help clean the ship (called 'Happy Hour'). One member of each watch is also on mess duty, in rotation, for a 24 hour period. This involves helping the cook to prepare, serve and clear up after meals. Messmen are excused watchkeeping.

Lord Nelson and Tenacious are similar to each other in size. Tenacious has an overall length of 65m (213'), a masthead height (above deck) of nearly 40m (131') and a sail area of 1,200m² (12,9232').

In addition to facilities on board including a lift, to help disabled people, there is a bar and gift shop.

Lord Nelson and Tenacious offer a voyage of adventure: a unique and challenging sailing experience.

The Tall Ships experience provides a wonderful, friendly and life enhancing opportunity for people of all physical abilities to work together on board a JST ship, where they can gain confidence, push individual

boundaries and be valued for what they can do, not what they can't.

To find out more about the Jubilee Sailing Trust telephone **023 8044 9108** email **info@jst.org.uk** or visit **www.jst.org.uk**

Editor

I have seen the joy on the face of a wheelchair user when he was winched up the mast.

Driverless Cars – a step closer

Google has unveiled its first computerised self-driving car; it has no steering wheel or accelerator. Prototypes will be tested in California this year.

Also this year, trials of driverless cars will take place in Greenwich, Milton Keynes, Bristol and Coventry.

Driver error is responsible for nine in ten road accidents. Will driverless cars make our roads safer?



A Bicycle Built for Two

Get on your bike this spring – you can, if you take to a tandem!

Coventry VISTA (Vision Impaired and Sighted Tandem Association), which celebrated its 21st birthday last year, runs its tandem riding programme from April to October each year. Not that the members are idle through the winter months, when they meet to enjoy social events such as walks, meals or a light-hearted pub quiz. VISTA owns 12 tandems, and those wishing to ride meet at the Resource Centre in Earlsdon, Coventry, every Tuesday evening at 6.30. At first, the rides are quite short, about 8 miles, but as the evenings lengthen the rides go further afield, but there's always a stop for pub refreshment half way! All the 'pilots' are experienced volunteers, so don't worry if you've never been on a tandem before. New members are

taken out for a short training and assessment ride, and must also complete an application form giving details of their medical history.

Eric Selby, who lives in Coventry, has been an enthusiastic member for the past 15 years. 'There's nothing like it' says Eric.

'It gives you such a sense of freedom. You get all the wonderful seasonal smells and sounds of the countryside, the warmth on your shoulders and the breeze in your face, and your pilot usually describes things for you, especially when you're going through a village.

We always stop off at a pub for a short rest mid-way for soft drinks or a half pint, and we enjoy a chat and a laugh before we're on our way again. Everyone is really friendly. You might not always have the same pilot but I feel confident with whoever I go out with. It's good exercise and it gets you out in the fresh air.'

Membership fee is £13 for a single person, £20 for a couple per year and is open to everyone. Riders also pay £2 each time they go out, towards maintenance of the machines.

So if you want to get out in the open this spring, telephone VISTA Treasurer Joyce Franklin on **02476 412556** for more information about VISTA and their full programme of social and tandem events throughout the year.



Gardening Tips

With spring coming on, Eric Selby will be doing his bit in the garden. Despite being completely blind, Eric still mows the lawn. When asked if he had a special method, Eric paused and said 'Well, I've never really thought about how I do it. I just start at one edge and keep going till I get to the other!'

He uses an electric hover mower, but does take the precaution of putting the cable over his shoulder and using a power breaker at the socket, and hasn't had any disasters. He also trims the edges with long handled shears and, under the directions of his wife Jean, does any heavy digging or composting when required.

Gardening isn't easy when you can't see, but it doesn't mean you have to give up gardening. If you have any tips on what makes gardening easier or more enjoyable for you, send them to us – we can all learn from each other!

Thrive

Thrive will help you carry on gardening, whatever your disability.

Thrive is a national charity that helps people with a disability to start or continue gardening. It can provide practical information to make garden jobs easier, and the equipment and tools that will be particularly helpful. It also gives advice on taking care.

If you want gardening advice, visit Thrive's website
www.carryongardening.org.uk
email info@thrive.org.uk
or telephone **0118 988 5688**

Leisurely Pursuits

Leamington Member Delphine Evans is rarely seen at the Monday Vision Support Centre at Chandos Court without her knitting needles and a soft ball of wool. Delphine knits for premature babies at Warwick Hospital's neo-natal unit – their unexpected arrival means that mums don't have anything small enough to fit them and are very grateful for the tiny cardigans, hats, booties and blankets that flow from Delphine's needles.

She can't see well enough to sew up the little garments, but an 86-year old friend is happy to help out, and when the babies outgrow them they are still good enough to be passed on to charities overseas.

'I like having something to do with my hands instead of just sitting and talking or listening to the radio or TV', says Delphine, who also attends the Good Companions Club (for VIP's) in Leamington on alternate Wednesdays. But she enjoys more active pursuits too: on Fridays she often goes to the Spa Centre where there are classes in tai chi, line dancing and Greek dance. Not many who attend these groups are VIP's but Delphine doesn't feel that she's

at a disadvantage. 'They're all very friendly and helpful if you explain about your sight' she says. 'At tai chi for instance you can stand right in front and the teacher will help you, and with the Greek dancing as you're all holding hands it really doesn't matter whether you can see or not!'

Stan Newby starts his day with at least half an hour of keyboard practice before breakfast. Stan started learning to play the electronic instrument when he lost his sight 5 years ago. Not being able to read music doesn't worry him: he plays entirely by ear, and taught himself by listening to CDs. 'I like light music mostly' says Stan who, with the aid of his wife Val, combs the charity shops for new CDs to add to his collection.

Stan put 'bump-ons' on some of the keys to guide his fingers and has improved so much that he has upgraded himself to his third, more advanced, keyboard, a Yamaha. It can be folded away when not in use, although Stan keeps his permanently up in their front room in Coventry. It has the additional advantage of a 'mute' function - by plugging in earphones Stan can still hear himself without disturbing anyone else. Stan took his keyboard to the Coventry Vision Support Centre to play Carols at Christmas, and also when they celebrated their first birthday party at the Friends Meeting House venue.

What do you enjoy doing in your leisure time? Tell us about

it by writing or e-mailing the Editors of Warwickshire Vision at rosemary.went@gmail.com

Holidays

Action for Blind People runs Vision Hotels which are family friendly and the holidays cater especially for Visually Impaired People – guide dogs are also welcome. They are Cliffden Hotel at Teignmouth, South Devon, the Lauriston Hotel at Weston-super-mare, Somerset and the Windermere Manor Hotel, Windermere in the Lake District.

For more information contact Vision Hotels by telephone: 0845 603 0051 or e-mail: enquiries@visionhotels.co.uk

Traveleyes also offers holidays specifically for VIP's.

Some of the holidays available this year are Greece: Ancient Athens and the Island of Aegina for 8 days from 24th June, costing £1,295 for blind travellers and £699 for sighted guides. On 2nd July there is a 5 day visit to Budapest on the Danube and to Slovenia on 28th July for 8 days.

On 14th July there is an 8-day walking holiday in the Rila Mountains in Bulgaria. This area lies between Romania, Greece and Turkey and is rich in history. Prices are £1,199 and £599.

For more information telephone **08448 040221** or visit www.traveleyes-international.com

Warwickshire Vision Support



**The only county-wide
magazine for visually
impaired people living
in Warwickshire**

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



01926 411331

Email: enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Website: www.warwickshire.vision

