



OUR PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends

The first edition of the newsletter in 2009 is a particularly special one for the Wiltshire Blind Association as it is the start of an exciting year to celebrate the 90th Anniversary since the Association was started in 1919. In this edition you will find details of a whole range of activities and fundraising events to celebrate this special year with something for the whole family to enjoy. Whether you prefer brass band and choir music, a specialist lecture or even a picnic in glorious gardens, there's something for everyone.

There's also a very brief questionnaire which we are asking our readers to complete about the services WBA currently provides, and to suggest ways in which we could develop services in the future. In these difficult times we need to be sure that we are providing our members with the services they want and need. The questionnaires are anonymous so, good or bad, we want to hear from you to be sure that we are still providing the best possible services to our members in another 90 years time!



Fiona Lansdowne

<u>CONTENTS:</u>	
ASSOCIATION NEWS	EVENTS.....11-12
News from St Lucy's.....2	ADVICE AND SERVICES
Club News.....3-5	Swan Advocacy Network.....13
WBA Events Diary.....6	RNIB Volunteer Campaign.....14
Spring Concert Booking Form.....7	OTHER NEWS
HEALTH ISSUES	100th Birthday Celebration.....15
Credit Crunch and Eye Health.....8	Salisbury Bowlers Strike Again....15
Charles Bonnet Syndrome.....8	Donations and Gift Aid.....16
Louis Braille Celebration.....9	
David Anthony, Optometrist.....10	

ASSOCIATION NEWS

NEWS FROM ST LUCY'S

Office Opening Hour Changes

Please note that the office will be closed daily from 1 -2 pm. All messages left on the answer phone will be responded to during the afternoon.

From 1st April the Resource Centre at St Lucy's will be closed all day on Wednesdays. We will continue to take calls, however during particularly busy times it may be necessary to put the answer phone on, so please leave a message and your call will be returned.

Tin Foil

The current downturn in the global economy has meant that there is now very little value to recycling aluminium tin foil, particularly for the small amount that we process. It is with regret, therefore, that we can no longer accept tin foil for recycling and we would be grateful if you could put this into your normal doorstep collection. May we take this opportunity to thank all of you for supporting us in this way in the past.

STAFF UPDATE

We are delighted to inform you that Cherryll Edwards is the new Caseworker covering the Chippenham area. Some of you will remember that she used to do this role years ago. She is looking forward to catching up with old friends and to meeting new VIPs in the area.

Cherryll, Lorraine and Cyril will continue to run the Chippenham

Coffee Morning at Munro's Coffee Shop in Chippenham on the second Thursday of every month and they look forward to welcoming new members. The Coffee Morning runs from 10.30-11.30 and a warm welcome is guaranteed.

Maggie will be focusing all her time in the future on the clubs.

WINTER DRAW

Thank you to everyone who entered the Winter Draw, 45 fantastic prizes were won, and a total of £2800 was raised. A further big thank you to all who delivered the prizes to the lucky winners in time for Christmas.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AMESBURY TUESDAY CLUB

This new group was started at Antrobus House Amesbury on January 22nd 2008. The first morning 12 people attended. Now in December 2008 we have up to 40 members, this shows the enthusiasm for the club. We are all pleased to see each other and the room is filled with chatter. Gill or Andy has to bang the table to get our attention!

The organisation for the Club is extremely good thanks to Gill and Andy as they both throw themselves whole heartedly into it. We have had very good speakers such as the Fire Service, Bobby Van and Thrive Gardening Club. We have played games, acoustic shooting, lawn bowls and lunch at the Bustard Pub with skittles. Nobody's birthday is neglected and there is always a cake. When December arrived we had a marvellous Christmas lunch cooked and served by the Amesbury bowlers.

All in all our first year has been excellent, thanks to Gill, thanks to Andy and thanks to the ladies who bring us refreshments. This club is not just a social club to me it is the Super Tuesday Club.

This club has changed my life because of the friendly people I meet each fortnight, and I have met the man of my dreams, Edwin. So, thank you Super Tuesday Club.



Joan Cooper

The Club's activities are planned for members by members. This year looks as if it will continue going from strength to strength so if you would like more details or information on how you could attend, please contact Gill or Andy on 01380 723682.

BRADFORD ON AVON COFFEE MORNING

This friendly coffee morning is held monthly on every second Tuesday at Cedar Court (next to the old hospital site) in Berryfield Road Bradford on Avon from 10am to 12pm. Entry is £1 and 50p for a raffle ticket. Everyone is welcome to come along and this is the

perfect way to meet people living in your area and to make new friends. If you could bring along a raffle prize or donate a small gift that we could use as a raffle prize we would be so grateful. For more information contact Harry on (01380) 723682.

ASSOCIATION CHRISTMAS NEWS

THE ACTIVE BLIND CLUB (ABC)

The Active Blind Club, or ABC was formerly known as the under 60's Blind Club. We are a small and friendly club of various ages that meet in Devizes on the first Friday of each month.

We meet at the Baptist Church Hall in Sheep Street, Devizes (opposite the library) from 10 am to 12 noon.

We are a lively club that likes to have fun. We try to go out on a trip once a month as well as our meeting; outings to date include Longleat, various museums, seaside trips, theatres, stately homes and gardens to name but a few. We also have an annual B-B-Q in August and all go out for a Christmas meal in December.

We did start to play skittles in Devizes once a month but sadly had to give it up as we needed more people to make it worthwhile for the pub where we played. If we get more people who want to play we can maybe start it up again.

As a club we share information and help each other.

So if you are interested in popping in to see us for yourselves just give me a call and/or come along.

My name is Julia and my phone number is 01380 720563. I look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you to the ABC.

SWINDON BATS UPDATE AND INFORMATION

Two events that may be of interest to members are Audio-Described Performances at Oxford Playhouse.

Life & Beth, a comedy by Alan Ayckbourn on Saturday 21st March at 2.30pm

Where There's a Will, a French farce by George Feydean on Saturday 11th April at 2.30pm.

For more information about the Swindon BATS or how you might be able to join them on some of their outings, clubs, quizzes, or special events please contact Derek on (01793) 338415. A warm welcome is guaranteed for fun and lasting friendship.

The group is always looking for drivers, guides and supporters so you don't have to be visually impaired to attend.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

SWINDON BATS DAY OUT

The Swindon Bats had a very enjoyable day out in the autumn. We hired a Dial a Ride bus and went to Hungerford where we had a walk on the common with the guide dogs and then had lunch in a cafe.

After lunch we went on a trip on the canal which was enjoyed by everyone. It was a lovely sunny day which made it all the more pleasurable; I'm sure you can tell from the photograph below that a good time was had by all.

Trevor Johns



HOLIDAY UPDATE

It's never too early to start planning your holiday! Places are still available for our trips to Blackpool (13th to 20th May) and Easbourne (9th to 16th September). We regret that the Activity Holiday is already fully booked.

ASSOCIATION NEWS

WBA EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

<u>MARCH</u>		
Mon 16th, 2pm Mon 30th, 11am	Lecture by Ashmolean Museum Subject to be confirmed	Craven House, Swindon Devizes
<u>APRIL</u>		
Sat 4th, 7.30pm	Aldbourn Band and Kentwood Show Choir	Memorial Hall, Marlborough College
Fri 24th	Bowood Golf Challenge	Bowood
<u>MAY</u>		
Dates to be Advised	Rhododendron Walks	Bowood
<u>JUNE</u>		
Sat 7th	Country Fair and Dog Show	Bowood
Mon 15th	Lecture by Ashmolean Museum	Craven House, Swindon

THANK YOU TO WBA SUPPORTERS

We would like to express our grateful thanks once again to **Haine & Smith Opticians** who recently presented the Association with a cheque for £615 raised by Haine & Smith staff who generously bought tickets for their annual grand draw. The money will be spent on upgrading our audio transcription service as members are increasingly requesting the newsletter on CD. We have also had a few requests from local organisations asking us if we can transfer their promotional material into CD format which we

will now be able to do.

Andy recently attended a celebration evening hosted by the **Amesbury Rotary Club** who presented the WBA with a fabulous cheque for £400. The money will be put towards the activity holiday to Fairthorne Manor in July which this year will include horse riding along with all the other exciting activities.

The ongoing support of these organisations is hugely appreciated.

ALDBOURNE BAND SPRING CONCERT
with the
KENTWOOD SHOW CHOIR

in celebration of
the Wiltshire Blind Association's 90th Anniversary

to be held on
Saturday 4th April 2009 at 7.30pm
at
The Memorial Hall, Marlborough College

Come and join us for an exciting evening of Brass Band music from a Championship Band with the highly renowned Kentwood Show Choir.

Tickets £10, available from:

Wiltshire Blind Association, 1 Commercial Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1EH, Tel : 01380 723682; Aldbourne Post Office; White Horse Bookshop, Marlborough (from 5th March) or Alan Watson Tel : 01672 54058

Booking Form:

I would liketickets for the Concert. Please find enclosed a cheque/postal order made payable to the **Wiltshire Blind Association** for a total of £.....

NAME

ADDRESS

..... POST CODE

Please return your completed form to Wiltshire Blind Association, 1 Commercial Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1EH. Thank you for your support

CREDIT CRUNCH MAY DAMAGE EYE HEALTH

During 2007 / 2008 11 million NHS sight tests took place, however a survey conducted in January 2009 by YouGov, asked 2,350 people about attitudes towards eye tests, and found that over one in four (27 per cent) hadn't had an eye test in over two years, with over a third (30 per cent) of them giving cost as the reason.

It is understandable that people are very worried about their finances in the current economic climate. However, there are many options for those who need financial help. On average an eye test costs around £24. Free, NHS-funded sight tests are available for children under 16 and for young people between 16 and 18 in full time education; people aged 60

and over; those with diabetes or glaucoma; people on a low income; or those requiring complex lenses or registered blind or partially sighted. Those using a computer for a significant part of their work also have a legal right to an eye test paid for by their employer.

Over half of all sight loss is due to preventable or treatable causes. With an estimated two million blind and partially sighted people living in the UK, this means that a million people are currently living with sight loss that could have been prevented. The recommended maximum time between tests is two years, unless otherwise advised by an optician.

CHARLES BONNET SYNDROME (CBS)

A huge public awareness raising campaign has been launched about the disturbing visual hallucinations experienced by people with sight loss, ranging from seeing people or patterns to complex pictures and landscapes. The experience of hallucinations in patients with sight loss can be very frightening and just knowing that it is a recognised and named condition can greatly alleviate anxiety. In the past, medical professionals have even advised

psychiatric treatment and patients fear others will label them as having mental illness or dementia. It is thought that up to 60 per cent of patients with severe vision loss develop the syndrome, which is caused by lack of visual stimulation. New guidance to be released shortly from the Royal College of Ophthalmologists recommends that patients are informed about CBS either at the point of diagnosis or subsequent appointments.

LARGE PRINT COOKERY BOOKS FOR EYE HEALTH

Fruit for Vision and Vegetables for Vision are two large print (16 point) cookery books containing inspiring but easy to use recipes that are packed with nutritional information about eye health.

These beautifully illustrated books are written by Professor Ian Grierson, Head of the Department

of Ophthalmology at Liverpool University. He says "People of all ages need to look after their eyes. A relatively minor change in diet emphasising vitamins and antioxidants can make a profound difference to eye health". **For more information tel: 01264 350 551**

LOUIS BRAILLE BI-CENTENARY CELEBRATION

Louis Braille was born near Paris in a small village called Coupvray on January 4th 1809, the son of a saddle-maker.

He lost his sight completely at the age of four in an accident in his father's workshop. He attended the village school with his sighted friends but as he was not able to read or write he eventually found his way to Paris to a school especially for blind children.

Struggling to read books that required him to feel raised letters he set himself a goal to devise an 'alphabet code' to make his finger reading as quick and easy as sighted readers.

In 1821, a soldier named Charles Barbier visited Louis' school and showed him a system of communication used by the French army which was an alphabet code

that was made up of small dots and dashes called 'night writing'. Louis quickly realised that he could adapt the code by only using sequences of raised dots and this he perfected in his father's workshop using an awl (tool of a leather worker's trade). The alphabet made up of just six dots arranged in different positions to represent the letters of the alphabet remains the basis of modern Braille used today.

This spring the RNIB is launching a grade one Braille course for both sighted and touch learners. The kit will contain Braille writing equipment so that learners can immediately start to label things and write short notes. **For more information call RNIB on 0303 123 9999.**

DAVID ANTHONY: SPECIALIST OPTOMETRIST

An interview with - David Anthony (Specialist Optometrist) Great Western Hospital, Swindon

Some of you will already have met David who manages the Low Vision Clinic in the Eye Unit at GWH, but before he took up his current role he worked in private practice in Bath as a Dispensing Optician for sixteen years. David said 'we are pulling out all the stops to ensure that patients face minimum delay and currently new patients are assessed within eight weeks of referral and seen by us within thirteen weeks'.

The Low Vision Clinic does much more than providing magnifiers and other optical aids. Your appointment will include information and advice and practical training and tips:

- (1) Maintaining best vision throughout the day
- (2) Techniques to use peripheral vision to best effect
- (3) Improving lighting
- (4) Dietary Supplements that could improve vision.

I asked David what made him decide to become a Specialist Optometrist? He informed me that he has been passionate about

optics, lenses and telescopes all his life and spends many private hours enjoying his favourite hobby as an amateur astronomer.

So, what can patients expect when they visit the Low Vision Clinic at the GWH? David said 'it is important that we always look at our patients as a whole person rather than just someone with an eye complaint'. He went on to say 'we try to exceed their expectations in everything that we do'.

If you have an old magnifier that you no longer use please ensure that you take it back with you at your next appointment so that it can be recycled. The Low Vision Clinic is currently systematically upgrading all the older mains / bulb magnifiers for magnifiers with more advanced LED lighting.

For more information you can contact the Low Vision Clinic on (01793) 604847.



EVENTS

OPTELEC FOCUS DAY

Wiltshire Blind Association, in association with **Optelec** and **Software Express**, invite you to a Focus Day, showing a wide range of video magnifiers to help with your reading and writing needs.

Thurs, 30th April, 2009: 10.00am-3.00pm
Salisbury United Reformed Church
Fisherton Street, Salisbury SP2 7RG



This is a great opportunity to try out the award-winning **Compact+**, offering a wide magnification range, superior image quality and, is small enough to fit into a pocket or handbag. Also, try out the **ClearView+**, a video magnifier providing powerful magnification in a simple one-button design.

In addition to this, demonstrations of the **CleaReader** will be available - an audio text-reading machine that can scan and read aloud printed letters, newspapers and magazines. **Interested in Computers?** **Software Express** will be demonstrating **GUIDE**, a screen reader/enlarger for your computer.

For further information, contact Freephone 080 8090 8090

WBA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WBA is celebrating its 90th Anniversary and you are cordially invited to attend the WBA Annual General Meeting and Handicraft Exhibition on Wednesday 22nd July 2009 at Dauntsey's School in West Lavington. The afternoon starts at 1.00pm and this year as we are combining our two main events it promises to be bigger and better than ever. The afternoon will include a display of all the club

handicrafts that members have worked so hard to produce throughout the year with all the fun of the Rally with stalls, tombolas, raffle, flowers, home-made produce, live music and much, much more.

Transport will be available so for more information please either contact your local Club Leader or alternatively please call Andy at St Lucy's on (01380) 723682.

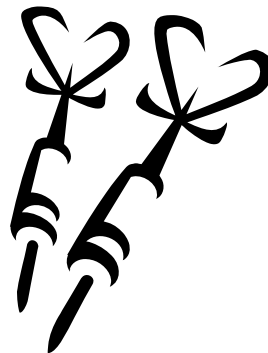
EVENTS

SALISBURY DARTS LEAGUE CHARITY MATCH

Wiltshire Blind Association was one of the beneficiaries of a Charity Match organised by the Salisbury Darts League. Robin Faulkner, Trustee, was invited to the Darts Contest Presentation Evening where he was presented with a cheque for the fantastic sum of £424; we understand that a great fun evening was had by all.

The Salisbury and District Darts League have been such good friends of the WBA that we need a regular column in the newsletter to thank them for their wonderful contributions to the Association.

Our special thanks go to Bob Dunster and Martyn Fry who organised the event and keep us in touch with the Salisbury Darts League's activities. Martyn is a member of the WBA Members Action Committee and is actively involved in overseeing how any money raised is spent locally to benefit members.



MOUSE MARKER

One of the most common complaints for visually impaired people using a computer is 'I can never find the mouse' as it would seem that even the largest, brightest cursors get lost on the screen.

Charles Ely has designed a simple program called the "SLSB Mouse Marker" that helps you find the mouse. It attaches a large coloured square blob to the cursor. You can change the size, colour and transparency of the blob, and it's easily switched off by pressing F11. The program works on

Windows 98SE and later, including Vista, although the transparency option only works on Windows 2000 and later. If you would like a copy of the program please email charles@slsb.org.uk



INTRODUCING SWAN ADVOCACY NETWORK

SWAN is a Wiltshire-based charity providing advocacy services to adults across Wiltshire. We support, empower and encourage individuals to ask for the services and information they need in order to improve their own health and well-being. Advocacy is not about telling someone what to do. It is more about supporting clients to make informed decisions and maintain control of their own life. Advocates work in partnership with the people they support and take their side.

People who use our service usually come to us because they have difficulties such as a physical or sensory impairment, they may be diagnosed with a mental illness or other problems. We also support carers, relatives or friends who are concerned about the well-being of someone who has these difficulties. We provide services to adults who may experience difficulty speaking up about issues affecting their lives.

SWAN works with clients on a whole range of issues, including:

- making wills,
- making someone an appointee or power of attorney,
- making a complaint about health, housing or social care services,

- applying for benefits or finding out what benefits may be available
- housing and residential homes.

Some of the things that our advocates can do for clients include providing support at meetings, reviews, appeals and at appointments; help to write letters, make phone calls and prepare appeals so that clients can make informed decisions about their life.

SWAN is an independent charity providing advocacy support since 1999. We do not charge for our services and are confidential.

We have bases in Salisbury and Devizes enabling us to provide services across the county. We often visit clients in their own home, and work on a one-to-one basis, which means that each client has a dedicated advocacy worker to work on a particular issue.

For any information about SWAN, whether to find out more about our services, or about becoming a volunteer, trustee or advocate, please contact us or visit our website

www.swanadvocacy.org.uk.

If you think you might need our support please contact our head office in Salisbury.

Tel: 01722 341851

Email: mail@swanadvocacy.org.uk

ADVICE AND SERVICES

RNIB VOLUNTEER CAMPAIGN COORDINATORS

If you have ever wanted to become more involved in campaigning for better services or opportunities for blind or partially sighted people, the RNIB would like to hear from you. They are looking for visually impaired people to become Campaign Coordinators in local areas to organise campaigns that involve lobbying MPs, NHS Trusts, local authorities etc and in turn support others wishing to do so. You will work closely with a mentor plus other individuals and

organisations and wherever possible supported to take on roles within your local community such as NHS Trust Boards and Local Involvement Networks. No experience is required and full training is given to support the required six hours per week necessary to undertake this role. All expenses are paid and small grants are possible for equipment that may be essential to assist you with this role. This could suit someone who is looking for work and is keen to develop their skills.

AMAZON AUDIO DESCRIBED DVDs

If you enjoy DVDs, you may find audio description a useful aid in appreciating the programmes or films you watch. Audio description is an added commentary that tells visually impaired viewers what is happening regarding non-verbal screen information or action. Such elements as facial expression, scenic description or fast action commentary is related, and where appropriate the character speaking at a given time is identified.

Audio description is becoming a more standard feature of DVDs, and now Amazon has made it easier to shop for them. Go to

www.amazon.co.uk and on the screen's left-hand side is the 'Genre' category. Scroll down this to 'Browse by Format' option. The first selection here is 'DVDs with audio description' — there are in excess of 300 titles. Do bear in mind, though, that DVDs are set to play without audio description, so you must enter the menu on start-up when playing a disk, and then find and select the audio description option. This is usually found in the 'Language' setting, but disks do differ, and you may, therefore, need sighted assistance to activate the audio description.

SALISBURY BOWLERS STRIKE AT FINALS

Once again Salisbury's Ten-Pin Bowlers triumphed at BBS Pairs finals at Shawridge Leisure Park Swindon on Sat 22nd November 2008.

After receiving a generous grant from wba that allowed an overnight stay, winning pair Kim Peploe and Roy Collas (aged 80), and team reserve Peter Bailey, came 8th out of 36 very competitive teams.

The trio aptly named "Happy Go Lucky" bowled from 10am till 5pm with just a short lunch break. Spirits were kept high with drinks, sweets and plenty of laughter. Everyone having scrubbed up well at the Holiday Inn, we attended the Presentation Dinner. After a delicious meal in the company of the Mayor of Swindon all three were delighted to have beaten last

year's 12th position. Staying overnight, our triumphant bowlers, swearing they couldn't possibly sleep, had a well-deserved rest. Although Roy and Peter had to be woken by me at 9am –the pre-arranged departure time –after oversleeping!

We are a friendly, happy group seriously committed to BBS league games, but we also have fun and lots of laughter. Playing fortnightly at "*Outburst*" Tollgate Road Salisbury we welcome anyone wanting to have a go, or volunteers who could help with transport.

If you or anyone you know is interested I'd be delighted to hear from you and can be contacted via WBA on 01380 723682.

By Vera Newsham, Area Caseworker Salisbury

100th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Congratulations to Mrs Marsh of Chippenham who recently celebrated her 100th Birthday with her family and friends from all over the country at a large party in Lyneham. Mrs Angela Ross, CEO, said "We are so grateful to Mrs Marsh as she asked that donations were made to the Wiltshire Blind Association instead of presents and Margaret and I were presented with an amazing cheque for £320. This was an incredibly humbling ex-

perience to receive such generosity, particularly in these difficult times."



ADVICE AND SERVICES

DONATIONS AND GIFT AID: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The Wiltshire Blind Association often provide a lifeline for individuals coming to terms with losing their sight. However, we rely almost entirely on the generosity of the general public to fund these vital services. If you've ever wondered how you can help us to continue our work, please consider either adding Gift Aid to a donation, or whether you would like to remember us in your will.

GIFT AID

If you are a UK taxpayer, we would receive an additional 28p for every £1 you donate if you complete and sign the form of declaration below. Just return the form with your donation to The Wiltshire Blind Association, St Lucy's, 1 Commercial Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1EH

I have pleasure in giving a donation to the Association of £.....
to provide services to registered blind and partially sighted people
living in Wiltshire and Swindon.

Name:.....

Address.....

.....Postcode.....

I am a UK taxpayer and wish all my donations after 6th April 2000 to Wiltshire Blind Association to be treated as Gift Aid on which Tax may be reclaimed. I understand that I must pay an amount of Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax in the relevant tax year equal to any tax reclaimed by the Association in that year.

Signed.....Date.....

FOR THE FUTURE: A LEGACY

Leaving us a gift in your Will, however large or small, will help provide a full range of support services to people living in Wiltshire and Swindon who are registered blind and partially sighted. By remembering us in your Will you can ensure that this essential help continues in the future. So once you've remembered the people you care about, please don't forget the Wiltshire Blind Association.