

Christmas 2017



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**Vision**

# Farewell Thank you

*John Davis retires after  
15 years at the helm*



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# Contents

<b>Editorial .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>News from Warwickshire Vision Support.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Community Update .....	6
Barbara Main.....	6
Board of Trustees/Directors .....	8
General Meeting - 12 <sup>th</sup> October.....	8
Staff Changes .....	10
New Structure .....	10
John Davis retiring after 15 years.....	11
Board of Trustees appoints Chief Executive .....	14
The New Data Protection Law .....	15
<b>Safety and Security .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Home Security.....	16
Stop Nuisance Calls .....	19
Personal Resilience .....	20
<b>Features .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Honorary Degrees for Fred and Etta .....	22
The Challenge .....	23
Danièle's Story.....	23
Robert Keeps on Swimming .....	24
Fright or Flight.....	25
Our Pride of Warwick District.....	26
The New £10 Note .....	27
Learning from History .....	29
<b>Winters Remembered.....</b>	<b>29</b>



<b>Travel and Leisure.....</b>	<b>30</b>
A Visit to the National Memorial Arboretum.....	30
Rail Travel Assistance Scheme .....	31
Cheaper Rail Travel .....	32
Discounted Rail Fares.....	33
My Calvert Trip 2017 .....	33
A VIP Holiday.....	34
Para Cheer.....	37
Keeping Healthy.....	37
Ten Tips for VIPs .....	38
<b>Acknowledgements .....</b>	<b>38</b>

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

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**Rosemary Went, Editor**



**Rosalie Visick, Co-editor**

## **Editorial**

Season's Greetings from your Editorial Team at Warwickshire Vision  
Welcome to a bumper Christmas edition of your magazine. There are a lot of changes taking place at Warwickshire Vision Support and we keep you up to date in this magazine.

In this issue there is a Safety and Security section. We hear what members have been doing - their experiences and advice. The new Data Protection Law is explained - it has implications for everyone.

A new Certificate of Visual Impairment form was available from August. This new CVI is supposed to be simpler than the old one, but is in fact longer. Although Eye Clinic staff can ensure the forms are fully completed and processed, only a Consultant Ophthalmologist can sign them off.

For someone who is not yet registered as visually impaired but their poor sight means that they are eligible to be certified, it is important that they should have a CVI form completed for them. It is needed if they are to obtain any help they need.

Our Queen celebrated another milestone anniversary this year on 20<sup>th</sup> November. It was the 70<sup>th</sup> (Platinum) anniversary of her wedding to Prince Philip - many congratulations.

Despite having two fairly serious gales, this year is due to be a record mild one.

Please contact us before the start of February if you would like to contribute to the Spring edition of Warwickshire Vision.

We wish you health and happiness for 2018.

# News from Warwickshire Vision Support

## *Community Update*

Felicity has now left the Community Team and we have since appointed a new Community Worker as we have a busy schedule of Vision Support Centres, hospital eye clinics and providing support to our Clubs. In the meantime, Sue and Christine are covering as many services as possible but please do bear this in mind when requesting information or support from them as response times may be a little longer than usual.

### **Nuneaton**

We were delighted to learn that the Nepalese community had come together to support our work and that of another charity, Blind Rocks, in August at a fundraising dinner at Cross Khukris Gurkha Restaurant. They raised an awesome £261.50 for us through the auction of artwork and collected donations from attendees, which is absolutely wonderful! Our Manager John, one of our volunteers from Nuneaton called Andrew and a visually impaired service user named Paul all attended so they were able to experience the generosity of the event first hand.

### **Stratford-upon-Avon**

This year we played host once more to the National Citizens' Service, with the turn of sharing personal stories of sight loss falling to our Stratford Vision Support Centre service users,

who gamely joined in. The young people from NCS were also able to spend some time with our IT Team and explore specialist technology, as well as discovering what their own smart phones could do to increase accessibility for visually impaired users. You can read a service user's story that the NCS participants gathered in this magazine.

### **Countywide**

The Community Team is always on the lookout for affordable, relevant training opportunities to build our knowledge and skills to cater for our wide range of service users. As such, we've been fortunate to attend training on areas including volunteer recruitment, safeguarding, and disability benefits, all of which feed into our day-to-day work. We're regularly asked for advice regarding benefits entitlement and about the process of applying for financial support therefore, a basic understanding of the subject is beneficial to so many.

### **Barbara Main**

On August 27<sup>th</sup> 2017 our dear friend and colleague, Barbara Main, died from cancer at the age of 59.

Barbara had worked for Warwickshire Vision Support, formerly WAB, since 2004. She began as the Administration Assistant and rose to

be the Administration Officer with three staff.

Barbara was one of the most hard-working people I ever met. She had tremendous commitment to the charity and a passion for ensuring that its administration was efficient and effective. There were times when Barbara was on long-term sick leave, due to her cancer, but she insisted on monitoring administration performance through remote access to our databases and telephone conversations with staff.

Warwickshire Vision Support has expanded the services it provides dramatically in the last 13 years. Barbara ensured that the Administration services were always able to meet the challenges this produced.

Barbara was responsible for ensuring that all referrals for services were properly dealt with, for the charity's databases, for all of our computer systems and for managing our Quality Control System (ISO). In addition she insisted that all of her staff received nationally accredited professional qualifications in administration. She relished her responsibilities; she was a consummate professional.

Barbara and her team were known to all of our service users, volunteers and regular professional contacts. This is because they were most likely to be the first people that you spoke to when telephoning Warwickshire

Vision Support. Barbara dealt with many of our suppliers on a day-to-day basis. She took great pleasure in showing me her mail addressed 'For the Manager' or 'Managing Director' because the companies had presumed that was her title. I took no offence because I know I was able to rely on Barbara to take care of our Admin business!

Barbara was a big personality. She was caring and supportive, very witty, very intelligent. She was devoted to her staff and volunteers and the feelings were reciprocated. I can say with confidence that all of our staff and volunteers would tell you that Barbara always made herself available to sort out any problems they might have.

But equally she liked to be at the centre of any office games and entertainment. WVS does not have a 'Dress down Friday' but the Admin Team do have a 'Sweet Treat Friday' that involves cakes, chocolate etc. One Christmas, Barbara organised that every team would dress a door and it would be judged by some of our volunteers. I recall that my door, which I shared with Phil, was magnificent. Unfortunately the judges were got at and the Admin door won. In addition, part of my singing canary was vandalised and batteries were removed. The investigations are still ongoing.

We all miss Barbara but we all have really great and intimate memories

of her, which we treasure. We loved Barbara; she will not be forgotten.

**John Davis, Manager**

**Editor:** Before opening the September Board Meeting Jeff Perry marked Barbara Main's death and said that 'she was held in great affection by all the staff and Board alike. She was a stalwart of the Charity for many years - was known to a great number of service users, volunteers and members - she will be sadly missed by everyone - and is irreplaceable. I have received letters and telephone calls from a number of ex-employees and Board members with messages and condolences.'

### ***Board of Trustees/Directors***

As a result of the recent election process, Rosemary Went was re-elected also Funsho Ajibade and Janet Hurrell were elected to the Board. (Funsho Ajibade is unable to take up his seat at present.)

Jeff Perry and Richard Orme have agreed to continue as chairman and vice-chairman.

Elsewhere in this magazine, you can read about structural changes to the management of the organization. When things have settled down, we hope to co-opt one or more visually impaired trustees.

The Board currently comprises:

- Jeff Perry (Chairman)
- Richard Orme (Vice-Chairman)
- Kath Phelps (Company Secretary)

- Lesley Edwards (Treasurer)
- Heather Fairbairn
- Janet Hurrell
- Rosemary Went

### ***General Meeting - 12<sup>th</sup> October***

Jeff Perry, Chairman, opened the meeting held in Nuneaton and introduced the Trustees present - Lesley Edwards, Janet Hurrell and Rosemary Went. He spoke of the Board vacancies because of the retirement of four Trustees and that all Members should have received voting papers. The attendees included 26 service users or visitors, seven members of staff and two volunteers

He then paid tribute to Barbara Main, Administration Officer, who had died at the end of August. Jo Swann and Imogen Edwards had held a





Macmillan Coffee Morning in her name at the office and raised over £800.

He spoke of the Strategic Review, led by Richard Orme, who was unable to attend. A Strategic Ideas Report had been received and adopted. A Working Party was looking at prioritising the suggestions made and a significant budget provision had been made towards implementing a number of suggestions.

Lottery funding had been applied for, to fund a Economic Empowerment Service and to recruit a Volunteer Co-ordinator to manage the recruitment, induction and placement of volunteers.

Two key themes had emerged from members

- Inclusion of more people with sight loss in the organisation
- A small organization cannot do it all - so we must be open to collaboration with other organisations. Blind and partially sighted people want to use the same services and facilities as everyone else, but can be prevented sometimes by their needs not being accounted for. So let's work with others to make services inclusive.

Insurers in general are becoming more concerned with the observation of safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children

and are becoming very risk averse. In order to continue our existing insurance arrangements we will therefore have to implement more stringent procedures concerning professional training of volunteers, risk analysis of premises, monitoring our volunteer drivers and their cars as well as introducing safeguarding policies and procedures. This will involve a significant amount of time and cost. A small training grant has been obtained from Leamington Town Council and a pilot programme will be held in the area. It is vital that we continue to maintain our insurance cover.

The GDPR - General Data Protection Regulation - is to be implemented by May 2018. It will affect all forms of communication between WVS and our stakeholders and will involve a great deal of work and expense. The complexities would require a new computer system. As a small charity it is becoming more complicated simply to continue providing our existing services.

It has been decided to separate the roles of Senior Rehabilitation Officer and Manager, and that the wider role of Chief Executive Officer should replace that of Manager. John Davis who had carried out the dual role for 15 years had decided to take early retirement. Everyone present applauded to show their appreciation of everything that John had done for the Association.

John Davis gave his Manager's Report. He spoke of the staff - arrivals and departures. He introduced Christine Gill, who spoke on the MySight group in Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire. A programme of monthly group meetings was being held. A successful application had been made to fund the same service in Stratford, Warwick and Rugby.

He also spoke of the Eye Clinic Advice Desks at Rugby and Stratford Hospitals. The latter of which, opened in August with the planned involvement of the local Lions group, displaying some equipment. Incidentally, the Lions support visual impairment and brought the long cane into the UK from the USA.

Members had the opportunity to ask questions and informal chat took place when the meeting closed.

## ***Staff Changes***

**Kelly Sowter**, Rehabilitation Officer

At the end of July, Kelly left to join the Coventry City Council Rehabilitation Team. In the 2 years and 4 months that Kelly was with us, she made a lot of friends and impressed everyone with her hard work and positive attitude. We hope that Kelly enjoys her new job.

A replacement for Kelly will join us at the end of November.

**Felicity Kirby**, Community Worker

At the end of October, Felicity left to take up a post with Warwickshire County Council in one of their front line teams. Felicity will provide support and advice and will be able to use her excellent communication skills to the full. We hope that Felicity stays in touch.

We have appointed a new Community Worker who will join us very soon.

**Rebecca Hunt**, IT Officer

Rebecca left in November to join Blind Veterans in providing their IT service. I know that Rebecca is relishing this new challenge and I feel confident that she will be successful. We are sure to have contact with Rebecca over time.

We all wish all of our colleagues the very best in their future careers and would like to thank them for their hard work and commitment whilst working for Warwickshire Vision Support.

## ***New Structure***

In the light of all these new changes, the Board is taking the opportunity to restructure the charity.

In the coming weeks we will be promoting staff internally to their new roles. These roles include Senior Rehabilitation Officer, Senior Community Worker as well as promoting our Administration Assistants to Administration Officers.



## ***John Davis retiring after 15 years***

After more than 15 years at the helm, John Davis, our Manager and Senior Rehabilitation Officer has decided to take early retirement.

The majority of you will have known John for many years and will be aware of all that he has achieved for Warwickshire Vision Support, but we wanted to take this opportunity to recognise his immense contribution to the charity and say thank you for his commitment and dedication.

John joined what was then Warwickshire Association for the Blind in 2002 and within a couple of years he was promoted to the position of Manager/Senior Rehabilitation Officer.

In those days, the Association was focused mostly upon our clubs and providing rehabilitation across the county. We had also recently sold the George Marshall Centre in Puckering's Lane that had been the centre of our operations, but John turned this challenge into an opportunity to provide local services across the county.

By 2004, John had opened the first Drop-in Centre in Nuneaton and had plans for similar centres across Warwickshire. John's vision was that each visually impaired person would be within just a few miles of a local resource – a venue that provided advice and information, equipment demonstrations and social support.

Within a few years, we had opened seven Drop-in Centres (now called Vision Support Centres) and were welcoming 150 people through our doors each week. The Vision Support Centres have now developed into local platforms offering magnifier sessions, IT training as well as hosting advocacy groups and our new My Sight sessions.

But whilst the Vision Support Centres may be John's most visible achievement, he has worked tirelessly to develop services that support people to retain their independence at home. The Home Visitor Service continues to support about 120 people each year. Thanks to our 100 volunteers we offer support with reading letters and managing correspondence but perhaps most importantly, provide some much-needed social support to people who have difficulty leaving their home.

In 2013 John introduced our IT training programme, IT4U, in response to the increasing marginalisation of people living with sight loss by the digital revolution. IT4U encourages the learner to set personal practical learning objectives on their tablet or smart phone to enable them to use email, do online shopping or keep in contact with friends and family. With more than 300 learners in the last 4 years, IT4U has been elevated from a pilot study to a core activity.

Throughout John's tenure, Warwickshire Vision Support has consistently innovated and explored new approaches. John set up our Eye Clinic Advice Desks some years ago (before it became a core policy of RNIB) to help us reach people newly diagnosed with sight loss. We now have a presence at each clinic across the county and have secured Lottery and other major donor funding to create local My Sight groups to offer peer-to-peer support, mentoring, advice and guidance.

Last year, John successfully spearheaded the bid for the Service Level Agreement with the Local Authority. This was the first time the contract had been put out to public tender and our success was a resounding endorsement of the quality of our rehabilitation service and the charitable services that support it. A clear indication that John is highly respected across the region.

John has chartered a course for Warwickshire Vision Support that has made us more accessible, more relevant and very highly respected. His sense of humour and commitment will be sorely missed.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and the members and staff of Warwickshire Vision Support we wish John every happiness in his retirement and thank him for all that he has done for us.





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## ***Board of Trustees appoints Chief Executive***

The Board of Trustees is pleased to announce that it has appointed Phil Arkell, our Fundraising & Business Development Manager, to the newly created position of Chief Executive.

Phil has worked for Warwickshire Vision Support for the last 5 years and has helped us to develop new funding streams, design new initiatives and was instrumental in the rebranding of the Charity in 2014.

Phil's new position will combine the role of Manager with Fundraiser similarly to the way that John's role combined Senior Rehabilitation Officer with managing the charity. In addition to these responsibilities, Phil will take on some of the duties previously carried out by members of the Board to ensure that we comply with Charity Commission guidance on governance and accountability.

Phil brings a wealth of experience to this new and challenging role. He has previously managed a number of residential care homes providing services to people with a learning disability. He also spent 13 years managing participatory development projects in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Combined with his experience working with us, we believe Phil offers an opportunity for continuity whilst also enabling us to approach things in a new and innovative way.



Needless to say, Phil does not, have the Rehabilitation expertise that John brought to the role. John has many decades of experience in the sight loss sector and is highly respected across the field. The Board is therefore proposing to appoint a new Senior Rehabilitation Officer who will manage the day-to-day running of the Rehabilitation contract to ensure that we maintain the high-quality rehabilitation support that you expect.

The Board hopes that you will welcome Phil in this challenging new position as we all work together to implement our Strategic Plan.

## ***The New Data Protection Law***

In May 2018, a new law called the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into force. This is a piece of EU legislation but it is also being enshrined into UK Law.

The purpose of this law is to protect you from unwanted correspondence from organisations with whom you do not wish to have contact. It means that any organisation that wants to send you information as Direct Mail must have your explicit consent to do so. Direct Mail can be a letter or an email that is addressed personally to you but is also sent to many other people. A good example of Direct Mail is our Vision Support Centre Programme that we send to you each month.

The new law wants you to be able to receive the information you want but not to be overwhelmed by unsolicited material. This will be very good for every one of us. However, it does mean that we will need to contact you so that you can confirm what information you would like us to send to you in the future.

We have broken down the types of correspondence you can receive into different categories: Events and Activities, Fundraising Activities and Information from third Parties (these might be equipment suppliers or organisations such as RNIB or the Macular Society).

We are also asking you two specific questions: whether you want to

keep receiving your local Vision Support Centre Programme and/or Warwickshire Vision magazine that you are now reading. Both of these take a substantial amount of time and money to prepare - we know they are highly valued by many, and we just want to confirm that we are making the best use of our resources.

You can also choose in what format you would like to receive the information - large print, audio, email etc. Needless to say, you can change your preferences whenever you like, just give us a call and we can make any changes you want.

We will send you the form and a stamped addressed envelope. Please fill in your name and address and tick the boxes that suit your needs. If you have difficulty completing it, then please call us and we can record your preferences over the phone.

Please note that this new law does not affect personal correspondence sent only to you. You will continue to receive letters about your personal rehabilitation programme or in response to any question you ask.

We fully appreciate that for some of you, this may be an unwelcome burden. But the law makes it very clear that after May 2018 we will be unable to send you any information about our activities, events, campaigns or even this magazine until you have given your explicit consent.

# Safety and Security

## *Home Security*

We all know that a man (or woman's) home is his (or her) castle. Real medieval castles were built with fortifications, so that invaders could be repelled, and the occupants kept secure.

Today, security is still an important issue, if we are to feel safe in our homes. We are advised to have deadlocks on our doors (not the kind of lock that latches), locks on our windows and chains on our front doors. But there is another threat to our security – the unexpected caller.

Callers who are unknown to us and have not made an arrangement to call may be criminals, and this type of crime is called doorstep crime. One type of doorstep crime is distraction burglary.

Criminals involved in distraction burglary usually pose as officials or ask for your help with something. Their intention is to get into your home to steal - and they are very plausible.

Callers can be men, women or children or sometimes a combination, either smartly or casually dressed. The talker will have a convincing excuse to persuade you to let them into your home and keep you occupied whilst others sneak in and search for your cash and valuables.

Genuine callers will happily wait outside while you check on them by calling their organisation or a family member or neighbour.

Rogue traders are also unknown callers. They will offer to do work on your home or garden. This work will be either unnecessary or vastly overpriced or badly done and maybe even unfinished. They have no formal training to carry out the work. Some have links with distraction burglars.

- Don't agree to any work or sign anything on the spot
- Do discuss any work you feel needs carrying out on your property with a relative or friend who can help you find a reputable trader.
- Don't allow anyone to pressure you into agreeing to have work carried out. If you ask them to leave and they don't, call the police - dial 999
- Don't ever go to a bank or cash point with a trader; legitimate traders would never do this.

There is a huge range of lies used by distraction burglars to convince you to let them in.

Here are some of the common ones:

'I'm from the water board, there's a leak down the road and I need to check your water supply'



This will never be true. There are no longer any water boards - your water supplier should be contacted using the phone number on your bill or directory enquiries.

'I need to read your meter'

Check with your utility company before you let them in. Call your electricity, gas or water company direct using the phone number on your bill or directory enquiries.

'We are the police, we've caught a burglar, we think he's stolen your cash and we need to check that your money is safe'

Genuine police officers never do this. If you find someone in your home who says they're from the police - they won't be.

A few tips to keep you safe

- If you're not sure who is at your door, don't open it! Check the identity of the caller by phoning the company they are purporting to be from, such as gas, electricity, water or police. Use the telephone number given by your service provider or listed in your local directory or provided by directory enquiries. Never use any telephone numbers provided by the caller, they may be bogus.
- Telephone a neighbour or friend nearby to come along and check out the caller before you open the door to them.
- Join a Neighbourhood Watch or Nominated Neighbour Scheme

if there is one in your area.

Contact your local police Safer Neighbourhood Team to find out if there is a Scheme in your area.

- Many utility service providers - gas, water and electricity - offer password schemes or hotline numbers for customers to call to check the identity of callers before opening the door. Speak to your utility provider.
- Don't keep large quantities of cash at home, put it in the bank or post office where it is safe.
- Keep doors locked and windows secure at all times. Always put the door chain on before you open the door.
- If somebody asks for your help, needs to make a telephone call, has lost a ball in your garden, needs a drink or requests a pen and paper for example, you can refer them to a younger neighbour or assist them through a closed door. Or call a friend or neighbour to come and assist.
- If you suspect a bogus caller has visited you, even if you didn't let them in, call the police straight away. The police need to know.

## **USEFUL CONTACTS**

### **Victim Support**

If you have been a victim of distraction burglary, the police will give your details to the charity Victim Support (unless you ask them not to). They will call you to find out if

you need any support and explain how they can help. This can include sending a specially trained volunteer to help you come to terms with the crime as well as practical support (e.g. improving home security). If you want to contact them immediately, ring their national Supportline on **0845 30 30 900**

You can also find out more at [victimsupport.org.uk](http://victimsupport.org.uk)

### **Age UK**

(Previously known as Age Concern and Help the Aged)

The aim of this organisation is to promote the well-being of all older people and help make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. For further information and advice call **0800 169 6565** or visit [ageuk.org.uk](http://ageuk.org.uk)

### **Citizens Advice Consumer Service**

If you need help or advice regarding a specific trader or advice on selecting a reputable trader, contact Citizens Advice Consumer Service on **08454 04 05 06**

### **Energy Companies**

These companies offer a Priority Service Register enabling you to set up a Personal Password for gas and electricity staff to use every time they call at your home. This will confirm that these callers are genuine.

To join the scheme call the (freephone) Home Heat helpline on **0800 33 66 99** or contact your energy supplier directly. Joining the Priority

Service Register entitles you to other free services.

### **Water Companies**

Water company employees expect to wait outside while you check their identity. Use the number on your water bill or telephone directory services to call your water supplier every time. For extra protection you can also call the same number to register a password.

### **Neighbourhood & Home Watch Network**

NHWN represents all Neighbourhood Watch and Home Watch members across England and Wales, telephone **0116 2293 118**. Further information can be found at [ourwatch.org.uk](http://ourwatch.org.uk) or email [enquiries@ourwatch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ourwatch.org.uk)

The police force takes distraction burglary very seriously and works with a national police unit called Operation Liberal, set up to help catch the criminals who carry out these dreadful crimes.

If you suspect a bogus caller is at your door call **999**. The police are never too busy to attend even if it turns out to be a false alarm. Police would rather attend a false alarm than not be called to a distraction burglary.

Don't be a victim.



## **Stop Nuisance Calls**

**Lucy Lambert**

Rural Crime Co-ordinator

If you have received nuisance calls then you are not alone. It is thought that 85 per cent of people are experiencing these unwanted calls, with an average of seven calls being received each month. Whilst most feel that these calls are frustrating, repetitive calls can become distressing particularly early in the morning or late at night.

Firstly if you are receiving these calls, try to stay calm, stop and think before giving away any details to the caller. The old adage, 'if it sounds too good to be true' it often is! Remember to remain sceptical when speaking to callers. Genuine businesses will never telephone you to ask for personal or financial details. Bogus Callers can be very persuasive, make you believe there is an emergency, or claim you have won a competition, in order to obtain your details. There are some quick solutions to prevent these calls.

Firstly ask your telecoms provider to set up 'Caller ID' so you know who is calling you; if it is not a number you recognise then do not answer it, let the caller leave a message.

You could consider changing your telephone to one that has 'Call Blocker' facilities; major telephone manufacturers have a variety of phones with this facility. If you have recently purchased a new handset or do not want to change the one you

have then you could consider buying a stand-alone Call Blocker that filters unwanted calls. These come in a variety of styles, they are smaller than a telephone handset.

Always look for the 'Secured by Design' badge on any Call Blocker you plan to purchase. Call Blockers are pre-programmed with over 200 of the most common 'nuisance numbers' and have a large Block Now button that can be pressed if you answer an unwanted call. Once the button is pressed it will automatically add the caller's number to the built-in storage system and ensure that calls from that number will no longer come through.

The Rural Crime Co ordinators from Stratford District Council have been using the 'CPR V201 Call Blocker' to loan out to residents in South Warwickshire who have received higher than average nuisance calls or those who have been a victim of a scam, with good results. Call Blockers are easy to install and cost around £40, they are available from numerous retail outlets, including Tesco Direct, Amazon and Maplin.

If you have been a victim of a scam then call Warwickshire Police on **101** or the national helpline 'Action Fraud' on **0300 123 2040**

Another supplier of call blockers is RNIB, with models starting from £59.95.

## ***Personal Resilience***

**Sarah Barnett**

CSW Emergency Planning

The outside agencies that respond in the case of an emergency are the Fire, Police and Ambulance services. However, there is a fourth Category 1 Service in terms of emergency response, and that is the Resilience Team.

CSW Resilience is a unified team of Emergency Planning Officers representing the local authorities of Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire. We have a wide range of duties such as putting emergency plans in place, assessing risk, sharing information with other local responders, and responding to incidents when needed. Another important part of what we do is warning and informing the public to encourage personal resilience, making sure that our local communities know what steps to take to keep themselves safe. In October we visited Warwickshire Vision Support's Vision Support Centres to help you plan ahead.

Here at CSW Resilience we're all about being prepared, but we also know that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't always work, and disability is a big factor in personal resilience that can often get overlooked. The good news is that there are loads of resources out there to help those with visual impairments. For starters, you can contact your local fire service to arrange a Safe and Well visit of

your home - they'll come out and do a fire safety assessment with you and advise you on any adaptations you might need to keep safe. If you're particularly reliant on your utilities then you should definitely check out the Priority Services Register.

By signing up you're letting your utility providers know that if there's an outage they should prioritise restoring your service over those more able to wait. They'll also let you know of any planned downtime so you can be prepared. To register phone Western Power Distribution on **0800 096 3080**

We encourage everyone to think about what you'd do if an emergency happened when you were at home. Do you know the best escape route, for example, and have you left your house keys somewhere safe but accessible? A good way to prepare is by completing one of our Home Emergency Plans - this will take you step by step through what you need to think about to keep safe, and signpost further sources of information. You can download a copy from our website at <http://cswprepared.org.uk/be-prepared/home-emergency-plan/> For alternative formats such as large print or braille contact [cswrt@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:cswrt@warwickshire.gov.uk) or call **0121 704 6032** and we'll arrange to send one out to you.

Another great way to prepare is by putting together a grab bag,



pre-packed with the essentials you'll need if you have to leave your home in a hurry. By putting one together in advance and keeping it in a safe place you'll always be ready for an emergency evacuation. The Home Emergency Plan will help you put your grab bag together as it contains a list of suggestions and essentials. If you have a guide dog, don't forget to include the things they'll need like an extra tin of food and some treats!

This doesn't mean you should be sitting at home waiting for disaster to strike, and we definitely don't want you to worry. The idea behind

personal resilience is that it's a few easy steps you can take so that you're prepared just in case, and day to day life can carry on as normal.

Our motto for emergency planning is 'Don't panic - prepare!'

### Editor

Some of our staff, volunteers and members have had personal experience of the work done by a CSW officer. He instructed them to provide refreshments and a 'rest station' for Fire Fighters dealing with a fire in the vicinity of one of our Vision Support Centres.

## *Coleshill Club take up the Fundraising Challenge*



## Features

### *Honorary Degrees for Fred and Etta*

A Kenilworth couple who have both been blind since childhood received honorary degrees from Warwick University at a ceremony on July 19th this year. Fred and Etta Reid were honoured for their significant voluntary service to blind and visually impaired people over many years. The Honorary Doctor of Letters awards are conferred on individuals of high intellectual or cultural distinction and those who have served the university or the community.

Fred and Etta first met when they were teenagers attending the Royal Blind School in Edinburgh. Fred had a double detached retina at the age of fourteen and Etta lost her sight in a traffic accident when she was only six years old. Even at such an early point in their lives they were determined to speak up and act for the rights of blind and partially sighted people.

The couple both went on to pursue highly successful careers as well as marrying and raising a family of three sighted children. Etta obtained her first appointment as a physiotherapist at the Churchill Hospital in Oxford, becoming the first blind physiotherapist employed in the city's hospitals. During this time Fred studied for a Doctorate of Philosophy at Queen's College,

Oxford. Etta's approach to caring for their children led to her being interviewed by BBC Radio 4 and her advice was incorporated



in a BBC self-help book for blind mothers. She also helped to train sighted readers to understand and work with visually impaired clients as part of a team which set up the Kenilworth Readers Service for the Blind in which she and Fred continue to be involved. Etta was very active in influencing the inclusion of blind children in mainstream education, contributing regularly to conferences held by the Association of Blind and Partially Sighted Teachers and Students.

From 1966 to 1997 Fred lectured in History at Warwick University. He was also engaged in research and published a biography of Keir Hardie, founding father of the Labour Party. Since retiring, Fred has continued to write and he is the author of 'In Search of Willie Patterson: a Scottish Soldier in the Age of Imperialism' as well as a novel, 'The Panopticon'. His latest book 'Thomas Hardy and History' has been published this year. In addition to and throughout

his academic career, Fred has been a driving force in advocating and furthering the rights of blind people. As a student he had joined the National Federation of the Blind and Partially Sighted and went on to serve as its President in the 1970's. He helped to form the Association of Blind and Partially Sighted Teachers and Students and was a trustee of the Royal National Institute of Blind People for twenty years. Whilst serving on the executive of the Disablement Income Group and the Disability Alliance, Fred was involved in important government programmes which included the disability living allowance, access to work and mainstream education of visually impaired children. He participated in establishing the first inclusive college for visually impaired students based in Loughborough.

Fred and Etta became the 499th and 500th recipients of honorary degrees from Warwick University. The ceremony was a deserved recognition and celebration of their lifetime and continuing commitment, which has not only considerably benefited the rights of blind and partially sighted people but has also helped to educate and inform the wider community.

### **Editor**

Fred's community involvement also included the chairmanship of this charity, Warwickshire Association for the Blind, between 1982 and 1985.

## ***The Challenge***

The Challenge is a UK based charity that runs the government funded National Citizen Service Programmes (NCS). These are 3 week youth development programmes, which run over school holidays for 15-17 year olds. The programmes aim to encourage social mixing on a wide scale with both other young people and different members of our society, teach new practical skills and engage young people in social action work. The young people are paired with local charities to organise a social action project in which they will volunteer on behalf of their organisation, raise awareness of the charity in their local area and fundraise on its behalf. NCS operates across the UK and has worked with over 220,000 young people.

A group of young people on the scheme visited the Stratford Vision Support Centre, where they spoke to attendees.

## ***Danièle's Story***

Meet Danièle! She has a little peripheral vision and is registered as blind. Due to her poor vision, things became more difficult and in 1999 to her dismay, she couldn't carry on with her job. Visual disabilities have made her life a lot harder as she struggles to recognize people she knows as she finds it challenging to make out facial features. This has had a huge social impact on her as

some people may assume that she is ignoring them when she just doesn't see them, because it is not instantly apparent that she is visually impaired.

She came to the realization that her vision was going one morning when she was doing her much-loved crossword puzzles and the picture started to become distorted. She tried to get an appointment with a specialist, however it took her two months to get an appointment to check her eyes and by that point it was too late for any treatment. They performed a scan multiple times and ignored her suspicions, it was not until she insisted there was a problem and a consultant suggested scanning the back of her eyes. They found the bleeding and scar tissue that caused the impediment. She was finally diagnosed with Myopic Macular Disease, which began a whole new world for her.

Now she describes her husband as being 'her eyes'; he is the one who helped her get through this hard stage of life and broke her out of her cocoon of hesitation. As she no longer needed to live in London for work, her son suggested a move to a smaller town in the country and 5 years later, they moved to Stratford. However she struggles to walk around the town as the pavements are uneven and make her nervous. Thanks to the help of Warwickshire Vision Support, she has gadgets to help her read.

Warwickshire Vision Support has helped her a lot and boosted her confidence considerably. She has found that the best thing to do to help other people is to 'just talk about it' as it helps them open up and it comforts them. Without a place like the Vision Support Centres, VIPs are often alone, isolated and it's the only company they ever get. Her only wish is that people could help her in her local community more, for example with crossing the road.

We found that this is not the only example of how visual impairments have hindered people's lives. Danièle and many people like her stand as inspirations to us - the real super humans in our society. Powering on through so many problems and living happy lives. This story touched our hearts and opened our eyes to how much of a problem sight loss can be and how much we, as sighted people, really take our eyesight for granted.

### ***Robert Keeps on Swimming***

Robert Franklin has just completed a 32-length swim at his local pool in Rugby. He did the distance over 2 days and although he is a regular swimmer he found the second day very tough.

Robert has had sight problems since he was 2 years old and is registered as blind. He is now 57 and finds that it is more difficult to swim long distances as his sight has deteriorated.



Nevertheless, Robert was a member of Warwickshire Vision Support's Swimathon team raising funds for our charity and his recent efforts raised £500 for the Macular Society.

## ***Fright or Flight***

**Teresa Levick, Bedworth**

I hadn't seen my brother Peter for 2 years but we spoke on the phone and in June this year he said 'I want to take you out somewhere for your birthday.' 'I fancy a skydive' I said, 'the indoor type which takes place in a vertical wind tunnel'. (It was on Miriam Margoyles Bucket List and if she could do it, so could I.)

So Peter drove up from Abergavenny and off we went to Milton Keynes. Apart from the car's GPS system playing up we arrived safely. When I got out of the car you could hear the sound of the fans and I was filled with a mixture of anticipation and excitement. We entered the huge building and were met by very helpful staff who pointed us in the right direction. But the first thing I had to do was a visit to the ladies room wishing I hadn't had baked beans for breakfast and the friend who had teased me about keeping Tena lady in my handbag left me thinking I should have brought some. The butterflies were already flying, now it was my turn.... Weeeee!

First we were shown a video, explaining tips and instructions on how to do the flight then a lad called

Greg from South Africa escorted us to the chamber (he had been a skydiver for real so I was in good hands).

'Everything alright then' he said, 'Are you ready?'

Hand signals might have an issue because of the fact that I am partially sighted but Greg and his sidekick Blake said they would manhandle me into position. I was a bit concerned about my joints and felt quite nervous at first.

There I was, all dressed in this blue suit, goggles, ear plugs, helmet and laced up shoes, a bit like a huge jelly baby. They asked me if I could lie down on the mat inside the chamber but I said I couldn't so instead as I leaned into the chamber, they switched on the fan, grabbed me by my shoulders and up I went.

Believe it or not each session (called a flight) only lasts a minute, which doesn't give you a lot of time to learn the ropes. You are aware of the strong up-draught of 120 mph (with a bit of added thrust if you know what I mean).





My mouth went dry, I was quite aware of the movement but I didn't feel in control as Greg and Blake kept turning me so I could get lots of photos. My descent was a little more graceful and I was ready for the next flight. I felt a bit more in control this time and was really starting to enjoy it when disaster I felt my hip go. Greg realised there was something wrong and gestured to me to see if I was OK. I did manage to finish the flight but unfortunately wasn't able to complete the other two (I'd booked for four). So what to do next?

On the way out I met a young man who had just been to the Snow Dome. Hmmm, it looks like indoor disabled skiing might be next on my Bucket List.

We ended our remarkable day with a lovely meal and real ale at the Greyhound Pub, Sutton Stop. Despite all my health problems, my Osteoarthritis, the Otpic Neuropathy (which has rendered me partially sighted), and other issues which could restrict my lifestyle, I am determined to live life to the full.

I know God walks alongside me and he has provided me with things when I have needed them. He knows me inside and out, after all 'He knows every hair on my head'. Luke 12 v7.

**'Tiz the Wiz'**

## ***Our Pride of Warwick District***

We are extremely proud to announce that Rosemary Went, our Editor, won the Touch FM Pride of Warwick District 2017, Long Serving Volunteer Award.

Rosemary has been a volunteer and trustee for Warwickshire Vision Support for the last 21 years, playing an important role in helping the organisation to develop, grow and adapt to a quickly changing society.

Perhaps Rosemary's greatest achievement is this magazine – the first and only county wide magazine for visually impaired people in Warwickshire. Rosemary has been editor of the magazine since its re-launch in 2000. In the last few years, the magazine has increased its circulation from a few hundred to over 2,500 - keeping visually impaired people informed about local services, changes to the benefits system, new technology and local human-interest stories.

Rosemary is totally committed to her charity work. She devotes hundreds of hours each year researching, editing and publishing the magazine. Having produced the large print version, with the help of Rosalie Visick our co-editor, she scripts the audio version, describing adverts and pictures to make sure listeners enjoy a rich experience. Rosemary also led the digitisation of the magazine updating it from audio cassettes to memory sticks thereby improving



## ***The New £10 Note***

Jane Austen (1775-1817) is featured on the reverse of the new £10 note. Jane began to write at the age of 11 and by 23 she had drafted early versions of some of her most famous novels, including *Pride and Prejudice* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

Jane's work was published anonymously (society of the time did not accept female novelists), so although it was well received, she received little recognition until after her death. Women feature less frequently than men on our currency.

The new £10 notes were released on 14<sup>th</sup> September; 2017 marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Jane Austen's death. She is buried at Winchester Cathedral and this is also depicted on the note. And this is where it was unveiled.

This new £10 note is made of polymer, like the new £5 note. Polymer notes are resistant to dirt and moisture so stay cleaner for longer than paper notes. They are not indestructible, but withstand more wear and tear than paper ones and are expected to last 2½ times longer.

On the front of the polymer £10 note (the side with raised print) there are two clusters of raised dots in the top left hand corner. There are no tactile features on the £5 note and the new £20 note (to be launched in 2020) will also have a tactile feature.

sound quality and making it easier for listeners to jump from one article to the next.

In addition to volunteering for us, Rosemary has also been a member of the Leamington and Warwick Soroptimists for 22 years supporting many of their charitable activities. She also volunteers for the Arts Society (previously National Decorative and Fine Arts Society) Church Recording project. This project seeks to create a detailed descriptive and photographic inventory of local church assets to help record and protect our heritage.

We would like to congratulate Rosemary on this wonderful achievement and thank her for everything she has done in support of people living with sight loss in the region.



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The old £10 note will no longer be accepted (except in banks) after Spring 2018.

### ***Learning from History***

Jane Austen was 41 when she died. In her letters she wrote about her weak sight. Tests have been carried out on three pairs of spectacles which she appears to have worn, to establish the prescriptions. They indicate a

considerable deterioration in her sight and that by today's criteria she could have been registered as blind.

It is known that Jane Austen suffered from rheumatism and arsenic could have been included in that medication and this provides additional evidence for the existing theory that she died from arsenic poisoning. Arsenic was common in 19th century medicines.

## **Winters Remembered**

**Sheila Venville, Warwick**

Donning a pair of dark green wellies  
To shovel a path from the front door  
In thigh-high drifts of overnight snow.

A brace of feathered pheasants  
Hanging on the washing line to age,  
Perfectly frozen, solid dead weights.

Warming hands on mugs of red mulled wine,  
Aromas of cinnamon and cloves,  
After a brisk walk in crisp sunshine.

Crowds taking local trains out of town  
For rare sightings of sparkling ground frost,  
Unfamiliar in typhoon climate.

Olive skin and dark brown Asian eyes  
Above fake white beard, red robed Santa  
Smiles, in welcome air conditioning.

Baking dozens of flaky mince pies,  
Contributions to an 'open house',  
Champagne served on high-rise balcony.

Friends creeping upstairs to bed at dawn,  
After convivial evening,  
As offsprings emerge, shouting loudly,

**'Happy Xmas'**



## Travel and Leisure

### *A Visit to the National Memorial Arboretum*

Paul Bowler, Coleshill

I've enjoyed several trips this year with the Atherstone VIP Club, each one memorable for different reasons. We spent a day in Bourton on the Water towards the end of August, and a few weeks before that we were in Nottingham for a boat trip along the River Trent. We also attended a musical performance at Coventry's Belgrade Theatre. But I think the trip that will stay with me the most is one we made in May, to the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire.

For those unfamiliar with it, the Arboretum is the UK's national site of remembrance that honours the fallen. It was opened in 2001, on land north of Lichfield that was once the site of a gravel workings.



Currently it has over 300 memorials commemorating different branches of the armed forces, as well as civilian and voluntary organisations that have played a role in serving the country, and it continues to expand.

On the day we visited, our coach arrived at around 10.30am, and in time for us to attend an act of remembrance that is held there each day. Every morning at 11.00am, the Arboretum's Millennium Chapel of Peace and Reconciliation observes a 2 minutes silence, accompanied by the Last Post and Reveille. This was followed by an introductory talk from one of the many volunteers who help to keep this important site running, and after learning a little of its history, we were invited to walk around the grounds.

The Arboretum is spread over 150 acres of landscaped park and woodland, with memorials to regiments from both the UK and the wider Commonwealth. Its central feature is the Armed Forces memorial, a monument that remembers over 16,000 service personnel who have lost their lives in conflicts since the end of the Second World War. At 11.00am on 11 November the sun shines through two slits on the outer and inner walls of the memorial, casting light on a wreath at its centre.

We had lunch at the Arboretum's restaurant, and afterwards were



taken on a train ride around the grounds. This enabled us to get a better overview of the extent and size of the place, as it would be difficult to cover such a distance on foot in the time we had, and a spoken commentary during the journey also added to the experience.

This was my first visit to the Arboretum, and I think what struck me the most was the Armed Forces memorial, and the sheer volume of people named on it. It certainly makes you think about the extent to which our lives have been touched by conflict, and the number of memorials that can be found there also provides much food for thought. Finally I was surprised to learn that Alrewas is the only place in the UK that holds a daily act of remembrance.

It would be impossible to see everything in one visit, but the Arboretum is a place you can go back to again and again. I hope to make another trip there in the not too distant future.

(Pictured is the Polar Bear Memorial, dedicated to the 49<sup>th</sup> Infantry West Riding Division, stationed in Iceland during World War Two. They were nicknamed the Polar Bears because they were snowed in under twenty feet of snow for most of their campaign.)

## ***Rail Travel Assistance Scheme***

**Harold Smart, Kenilworth**

Due to unforeseen circumstances, I found myself having to make my way from Ipswich to Coventry and decided to try the travel assistance service provided by Virgin. I am registered blind, my sight being limited to some 2-3 feet. I had booked by ticket in advance and had been given a phone number to telephone a few days beforehand to advise them of my journey.

This I did and the clerk looked up my ticket to confirm my journey and told me to report to the booking office at Ipswich. On arrival at the station the clerk at the desk looked up my name on a clipboard and led me to a seat. 'You are a little early, so wait here and I will collect you a little before the train is due.' At the appropriate time we went on the platform and she took me along to where my carriage would stop. The train arrived where she said and I was taken on board. The person in my reserved seat was turned out and I was told that I would be collected at Liverpool Street in London.

On arrival, a Virgin employee collected me and took me into the station to the London Transport tube where I was passed across. (I was beginning to feel like a parcel!) Into the depths we descended and onto the platform; as the train stopped alongside I was placed into the carriage next to the driver.

At the other end another London Underground employee was waiting to escort me up to the street level.

Here things went a little awry. Euston rail station is about half a mile from Euston Underground station and the distance was not covered by the Assistance service. Up 'til now my bag had been carried by the railway staff but for half a mile I was on my own. With my bag and white stick it was not possible for me to walk that distance, so I decided to try to hail a taxi.

It was 18.35 and still rush hour in London and no taxis were around but few minutes later a young lady approached me and said 'Can I help you?' I was taken a little by surprise but told her what I was doing. 'Oh, you'll never get one at this time of night it's rush hour. Come on, I'll help you get there', and with that she picked up my bag as if it was a feather and encouraged me to walk with her.

I explained that I was on the rail travel assistance scheme and she replied that she knew exactly where the desk was and would take me straight there. On the way we engaged in light conversation, I told her my name and found out that hers was Charlie.

At the desk she put down my bag and as I told the Supervisor my name I heard Charlie say 'You'll be all right now, bye bye.' I immediately turned to thank her but to my surprise she

had completely disappeared! The rail staff then took charge and rushed me outside to a buggy as the train was about to depart.

We screamed off to the appropriate platform. Doors were being closed on the train, which was about to leave. We stopped outside a carriage; I was rushed inside with my baggage, the carriage door closed and the train started. If it hadn't been for that young lady I would have missed my train!

On arrival at Coventry the procedure was exactly the same. I was met by a staff member and escorted all the way to the taxi rank. Well done, to the rail travel assistance service. I say to everyone 'Do not be afraid of long distance travel by rail. They really look after us VIPs'.

## ***Cheaper Rail Travel***

The Disabled Persons Railcard gives you and one adult travelling with you 1/3 off most rail fares and provides assistance. Registered visually impaired people qualify to take advantage of this concession.

You can book to get help at any station for any train journey. The train company can organise for someone to:

- Meet you at the entrance or meeting point and accompany you to your train
- Meet you from your train and take you to your next train or to the exit

- Carry your bag (up to three items of luggage)
- You can book help at short notice. Some companies may ask for up to 24 hours' notice.
- Staff will help you if they can, even if you just turn up. Sometimes this might take a bit of time.

Help will be provided with planning your train journey - you only need to contact one train company and they will organise assistance for your whole journey.

The Disabled Persons Railcard gives you and one adult travelling with you 1/3 off most rail fares, which includes:

- All Standard and First Class Anytime, Off-Peak and Advance fares
- London Zones 1-6 Off-Peak Day Travelcards
- Anytime Day Travelcards, when bought as part of your ticket to London from outside London Zones 1-9
- Gatwick Express, Stansted Express, Heathrow Express and Heathrow Connect services
- Oyster pay as you go single fares and daily caps
- Caledonian Sleeper tickets for both the Railcard holder and accompanying adult, including seated and berth tickets
- Rovers and Rangers tickets - please check [nationalrail.co.uk](http://nationalrail.co.uk)

Additional offers such as theatre tickets can be claimed.

A 1-year Disabled Persons Railcard costs £20 or for 3 years £54.

To buy a Disabled Persons Railcard apply on line at: [disabledpersonsrailcard.co.uk](http://disabledpersonsrailcard.co.uk) You will need to scan a copy of your certificate of visual impairment (BD8 or CVI) to upload with your application.

By post: complete the application form in the Disabled Persons Railcard leaflet and post it together with a copy of your BD8 or CVI to the address given. Leaflets are available at stations and contain additional information.

### ***Discounted Rail Fares***

The Disabled Persons Railcard leaflet also describes that discounted rail travel is available to a registered VIP who does not have a Railcard. However, they must produce evidence of their visual impairment - a BD8 or CVI.

### ***My Calvert Trip 2017***

**Hayley Barnes, Leamington Spa**

**What** - Calvert Accessible Outward Bound Centre

**When** - Monday 11<sup>th</sup>-Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September

**Where** - Exmoor

**Who with** - Kenilworth Phab

**What we did** - abseiling, zip wire, kayaking in boats with five of us in,

bush craft, camp-fires, horse-riding and horse-care ... looking after a miniature Shetland pony, crate stacking, king swing, archery and cycling. Then we had the evening activities, which included a film night, disco, a zoo bringing small animals to visit, yoga, swimming in the hydro pool and lots of time to chat.

I loved going with my friends from Kenilworth Phab; we all had the time of our lives. The Centre is in the most beautiful location and is totally accessible in every way!!! Our rooms were lovely.

The Centre had a swimming pool, hydrotherapy pool, sensory room, TV lounge, bar, a big lounge overlooking the lake and a big dining room.

All of the activities were on-site and we all did what we could within our personal capabilities. I had the most amazing time and everyone looked after us so very well. We had mixed weather and experienced proper moors rain, which made it quite exciting too!! My favourite activity was the king swing. I loved it.

## ***A VIP Holiday***

**Paul Bowler, Coleshill**

It's been a few years since I last enjoyed a break by the sea, and much longer than that since I went on holiday as part of a group. But thanks to a relatively new but growing organisation that offers support to people with sight loss, this summer I got the chance to spend a few days

with some other visually impaired people at a hotel in Blackpool.

The holiday was arranged by the VIP Lounge, a peer-to-peer organisation established by and for visually impaired people, and billed as their Summer Break and Party. It is an annual event that brings together people with sight loss from across the UK, allowing many to experience their first trip away from home without other family members. Previous breaks have seen groups visit Media City in Salford, Greater Manchester, and take the Beatles themed Mersey Beat tour around Liverpool.

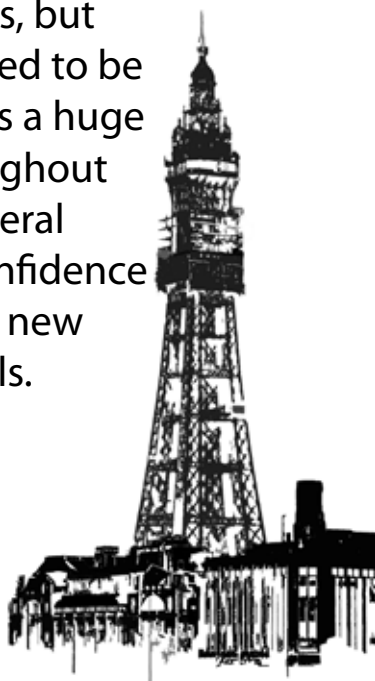
I was invited to go on the Blackpool trip by a friend whose partner is the organisation's CEO, and after some weeks of anticipation, I took the train from Coleshill on the last Monday in June. Changing at Birmingham New Street I journeyed northward aboard a Virgin Pendolino, where I began to meet some of the people I would be spending time with. Then, when we reached our destination I was in for a pleasant surprise, as at our hotel it turned out I would be sharing a room with an old school friend.

Our hotel, Tiffany's, was right on the seafront, where the sounds and smells of the ocean were our constant companions, and the week was packed with activities. These included a trip to the Sea Life Centre, an evening of tenpin bowling, and a chance to visit Blackpool Tower,

where despite a brisk wind I braved the climb to the highest point open to the public. I also got to ride on the famous tramway that runs along the Fylde Coast, and is one of the oldest in the world.

Tiffany's put on nightly entertainment, and the VIP Lounge also arranged a couple of events. I took part in a quiz one evening, which was being recorded for broadcast on an internet radio station, and a couple of days later attended the VIP Lounge summer party, with the hotel allowing us to use their conference facilities for the occasion.

Having not been to Blackpool before, the holiday was a new experience for me. But it was also a new experience in another way, as it was the first time I'd been away on a break where all but a very small number of the other group members are visually impaired. I have to admit to having had some initial doubts about the practicalities of this, but any concerns proved to be unnecessary. It was a huge success, and throughout the week I saw several people grow in confidence as they developed new independence skills.



The staff at Tiffany's, as well as the various tourist attractions we visited, were very friendly and helpful. Also Blackpool is quite a good place to get around once you've got your bearings, so within a couple of days we were starting to feel at home. Far too quickly it seemed, the holiday was coming to an end, and it was soon time for us all to go our separate ways. But I'm already looking forward to next year's break.

### **About The VIP Lounge**

Founded by Ian Francis, who attended Exhall Grange School during the 1980s, the VIP Lounge was established in 2013 as a voluntary organisation to provide help and support to people with sight loss, and is staffed almost entirely by visually impaired people.

It is largely an internet based organisation where members can seek and offer advice and information on topics such as welfare rights, housing and new products.

The VIP Lounge also operates four internet radio stations, available worldwide and whose presenters are visually impaired.

Worldwide membership has expanded to around 24,000 through social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp.

To learn more about the VIP Lounge visit [www.theviplounge.co.uk](http://www.theviplounge.co.uk)



Wishing you a very  
Merry Christmas!

From everyone at  
Warwickshire Vision Support

Shirley H

John

Jane

Casceta

Joanne ☺

Rebecca

Imogen

Vicky

Tracey

Catherine

Sue

Chris G.

Phil



## ***Para Cheer***

**Paul Bowler, Coleshill**

The 2017 Cheerleading Championships, held in Florida in April and May, were the first ever to feature teams from Para Cheer, a new style of cheerleading that involves teams of both disabled and able-bodied competitors working together to perform routines.

First conceived as an idea in 2010, Para Cheer includes many of the routines that can be found in conventional cheerleading, such as jumps, dancing, tumbling and stunts, but with some adaptations for its disabled participants. It also has its own rules and scoring system which take the athletes needs into account, and teams are scored on how well the disabled athletes are integrated into the routine.

Shortly before England's Para Cheer team was due to depart for Florida, BBC News interviewed one of its members.

Steph is registered blind, but has some residual vision in her right eye that enables her to detect light and dark, as well as bright colours. She is able to complete her stunts with the aid of a person who is known as a baser, who acts as a guide. For example, when she is performing a tumbling routine, her baser stands at the end of the mat with an neon flag meaning she can see the direction she needs to go in. In other stunts the baser may wear reflective pads

to enable her to keep track of her position.

2017 is the first year in which the Para Cheer teams have competed on the world stage, and asked how she felt prior to going to the United States, Steph admitted to being nervous. However, she believes Para Cheer has helped her to improve her confidence as a sportsperson. She told BBC News, 'It has improved me as a cheerleader and it has improved me as a person.'

## ***Keeping Healthy***

Each and every one of us is responsible for our own health; it is part of our quality of life. We don't always recognize that our body is an entity - a physical ailment can affect our mental state. All aspects of our bodies should be maintained in as healthy a state as is possible.

### **Age UK's Top Tips for Good Sleep**

- Get up at the same time every day
- Expose yourself to natural sunlight during the daytime
- Don't drink alcohol to help you to sleep
- Try and eat dinner around 3 hours before going to bed
- Don't drink coffee after lunchtime
- Don't look at an electronic screen of any kind after you get into bed
- Avoid using over the counter sleep preparations
- Wear socks to keep warm in bed

- Keep pets that disturb sleep out of the bedroom
- Avoid arguments with your partner before going to bed
- Limit afternoon naps to 30 minutes.

## ***Ten Tips for VIPs***

(given by VIPs)

1. Never be afraid to ask people for help. (Otherwise how do they know that you need it?)
2. There is no question that is too small to ask.
3. Don't assume the first solution will be right for you. We're all different. If it's not working out, ask again, ask someone else and try something different.
4. Talk to people who are facing, or who have faced, similar experiences.
5. Visit your local Vision Support Centre or attend your local VIP

Club. There is a lot that you can get out of it (such as trying out equipment) and a lot that you can give to it, too.

6. Try to stay healthy and exercise regularly. Find out about how your local leisure centre can support you.
7. Having a visit from a Rehabilitation Officer if you are facing problems can really help.
8. Don't give up on your smart phone or your computer, as most have accessible features already built in. There are lots of packages available that enable everyone to use a computer and don't forget WVS's own IT Officer.
9. Try equipment before you buy it.
10. If you belonged to any organizations, societies or clubs before your sight loss, don't give them up, and stay involved in the things that you enjoy.

## **Acknowledgements**

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

# Introducing SmartVision2 Premium

The SmartVision2 Premium is an easy to use smartphone, thanks to a unique triple interface consisting of a touch screen, a physical keyboard and an advanced vocalisation system (voice synthesis and speech recognition).

Large & clear display



Touchscreen & Keypad

Voice command & Voice recognition



Vocalized user Interface

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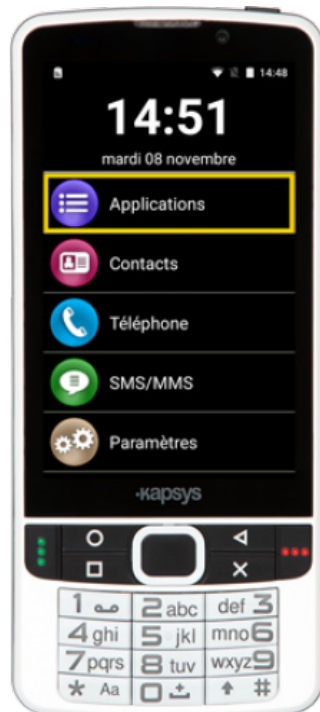
E-book creator & Reader

Optical character Recognition

ABCD



Multiple contrast Video magnifier



The SmartVision2 Premium is more than just a mobile phone with applications such as fully-vocal GPS, colour recogniser, Optical Character Recognition and a multi-format document creator and reader.

SmartVision2 Basic version is also available.

For more information please visit:

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**£599**  
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To request a home demonstration

Call **01604 798070** or

Email [info@sightandsound.co.uk](mailto:info@sightandsound.co.uk)



# Your Local Vision Support Centre is there to help you with all your sight needs



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	The Methodist Church Abbey Street Nuneaton CV11 5BX	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



**01926 411331**

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

**Web: [www.warwickshire.vision](http://www.warwickshire.vision)**



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