

Spring 2019



Warwickshire Vision

Prof. Zbigniew Pelczynski

A close-up portrait of Prof. Zbigniew Pelczynski, an elderly man with short, wavy white hair. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a striped tie in shades of red, blue, and white. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a neutral expression.

Honouring Achievement

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Open Forum

The next Open Forum event will be held in Rugby. This is the perfect opportunity to meet members of the Board of Trustees, ask questions and find out more about your Charity.

There will be a short presentation about the progress we have made and the challenges we face. This will be followed by questions and answers

Date: **Wednesday 10th April 2019**

Venue: **Rugby Baptist Church**

Regent Place

Rugby CV21 2AG

Time: **10.00 am-12.30 pm**

Please join us

If you would like any more information phone the Warwickshire Vision Support office on **01926 411331**



Rosemary Went, Editor



Rosalie Visick, Co-editor

Editorial

Welcome to the Spring edition of Warwickshire Vision, we hope you enjoy it.

A burst of warm weather meant an early start to this Spring season, but cooler and breezier weather followed soon after. Is our climate warming? Concern about climate change is why school children all over the world are leaving their classes each week to raise awareness of the global crisis of climate change.

The contents of this magazine is quite varied. We learn something of the achievements of the gentleman featured on the cover, and some personal recollections from another member. There are also ideas for what to do in the warmer weather.

Today there are commercial establishments that do not accept

cash payments. The use of plastic debit and credit cards makes it quick and easy to spend money - especially with contactless cards. Two out of every five card transactions are contactless. The use of cash is declining, but there is a pledge to continue its availability for some years yet. This certainly seems to be the electronic age.

We are sorry to have lost Jackie Saich as Co-editor, but she has moved from Warwickshire to the coast - rather a long commute. However, we should acknowledge the continued support of Paul Bowler, who contributes articles on a regular basis, for which we are grateful. We are always pleased to receive articles from our readers and listeners. For a summer edition items are needed by 10th May.

News from Warwickshire Vision Support

Phil's Blog

(from the CEO)

Finance and funding

For those of you who are voting members and receive the annual reports, you will already know that the last decade of austerity has severely impacted on the fundraising environment. Each year we have struggled to break even, and more often than not, incurred a deficit in our accounts, which eats away at our reserves.

I am very pleased to report that Warwickshire Vision Support has, in the last financial year, generated a small operating surplus. For the charity to be financially healthy, we must ensure that income at least balances expenditure. I hope that this will be the first of many years when we balance the books - please remember that as your local charity, you too can help to sustain us.

I would also like to say a big Thank You to Rugby Salvation Army who named WVS as beneficiary Charity at their annual Carol Concert, to the residents of Harbury who held a quiz night with proceeds going to WVS and to Delia Button who supported us through her annual Christmas Fayre. These events help us to raise our profile and generate much needed income. Thank you.

Fundraising campaign

I would like to thank everyone who made a donation as part of our fundraising campaign in February. Unfortunately due to the new data protection regulations, we were only able to send out letters to the 660 people who have given permission for us to send fundraising information. This is just 20 per cent of the people whom we used to contact. Despite this, we have raised about £2,500, with a number of people setting up standing orders to support us on a monthly basis. A big Thank You to everyone who supported the campaign.

If you did not receive a letter but want to support your local charity for people living with sight loss then please call the office for more information.

Legacy gifts

Over the last 12 months, Warwickshire Vision Support has received more than £60,000 in legacy gifts left in Wills. In real terms, this represents almost 25 per cent of our charitable income. Without this income, we would not be able to provide the wide range of services to our members across the county.

In order to maintain and develop our activities, we need to grow our legacy income. If you are considering writing a Will and would like to leave Warwickshire Vision Support a legacy,

then to find out more, please call Phil or Louise on **01926 411331**

Leamington Half Marathon

Warwickshire Vision Support has reserved five slots for the Leamington Half Marathon on 7th July to help raise awareness about sight loss and generate some much needed funds. We still have some available slots – if you are interested in participating or know someone who may be interested in running for WVS, then please get in touch.

Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) Training

I am very pleased to report that thanks to a grant from Warwick Private Hospitals (WPH), we were able to send Del and Vicky on the first stage of their ECLO training. This RNIB run course provides more in-depth training for our advice desk services thus ensuring that we are able to give those people newly diagnosed with sight loss the best possible support.

Atherstone Vision Support Centre

Following a 2-month pilot of running the Support Centre separately from the Atherstone Club, we have sadly concluded that there is insufficient interest for a fortnightly Support Centre.

From March onwards, we will be hosting 'pop-up' Support Centres in Coleshill, Kingsbury and Polesworth to supplement our Atherstone presence.

Farewell to Christine Gill

On behalf of the staff and members of WVS I would like to wish Christine Gill well with her future career. Christine was our Vision Support Officer for northern Warwickshire who left WVS in February after almost 2 years. She was a great asset to the team.

Christmas Card Success 2018!

Louise Jelley, Fundraising Officer

As you are all aware, we produced our first range of Christmas cards last year and many of you purchased these at our Vision Support Centres, for which we are grateful.

In total we sold 663 packs, which equates to 6630 cards being distributed, giving information on Warwickshire Vision Support, which raises our profile within our county and beyond. In addition to selling via the Vision Support Centres and clubs, we also sold cards in the Pump Rooms in Leamington Spa, the Quaker Café in Warwick, Maxstoke Golf Club, Edinburgh Woollen Mill in Stratford, the RNLI Charity Shop in Stratford and at an event in Bedworth.

We are planning to produce cards again this year and will be looking to build on the numbers sold previously. We are also looking out for fresh images representing the whole of Warwickshire.

As always, we appreciate your feedback and support and if anyone

has any suggestions with regards to artists and photographers who we could approach regarding images then we would love to hear from you, also, if you know of a local shop or café who you think would be happy to sell some cards on our behalf, then please send us the details so that we can start making approaches.

Thank you for your continued support, we will publish more information about the 2019 Christmas cards in the Summer edition of Warwickshire Vision. Please, hold off buying your 2019 cards until September.

Advocacy -

What does it mean to you?

Vicky Lewis, Vision Support Officer

I believe every problem has a solution. Advocacy involves finding a solution to a tricky issue or requires support and guidance in resolving the problem. I have been actively supporting clients with advocacy problems since my return to work in April 2018. These problems can range from housing alterations to getting reimbursements on utility overpayments. Here are some stories and outcomes of people I've helped.

Paul was having issues with the lighting in the communal area outside his flat. The light switches were located in an unsuitable position. Paul was unable to reach them because he is a wheelchair user, so needed the lighting to be

left on in the evening; however, the other residents kept turning the lights off leaving Paul in the dark. After several conversations with the council, being passed around different departments, we finally got the issues resolved with the help of the Occupational Therapy Housing Department.

They reviewed the situation and installed push button light switches in a position reachable for Paul. This meant the lights would come on for a period of time and then switch off automatically, meeting the requirements of both Paul and the other residents. While resolving this situation they also installed brighter lighting to ensure Paul was able to see clearly.

Paul said 'Ten out of ten for the help received. Since the lighting has been changed it has been a lot brighter and more accessible, making it easier for me.'

Andre required assistance with acquiring a bus pass. The bus pass application required several forms of ID. Unfortunately, Andre was unable to provide proof of identification. With a quick call to Stagecoach on his behalf, I explained the situation and discussed his concerns regarding being unable to provide all the documentation. They resolved the issue immediately and agreed to use the documentation that was being provided as proof of his ID. He received his bus pass within weeks.

Andre said 'Receiving my bus pass has enabled me to go to new places and challenge myself. It has given me a sense of independence and a greater scope of where I can go.'

Other successes are:

- PIP application extension
- Mental health safeguarding
- Stairway in a block of flats highlighted and painted
- TV License fee reimbursement, over £100 repaid
- Pathway and access alterations to a garden and home for a wheelchair user
- Direct debit problems resolved
- Queries from bus companies regarding paying for seats for a guide dog
- Issues regarding bus companies and route changes
- Parking ticket fines
- PlusNet connection problems and package renewal saving £5 a month
- The position of A-boards for advertising on the street

Unfortunately due to no fault of my own not every problem can be resolved how we would like. Mr. K was having issues with street parking - cars blocking pavements. Despite offering several solutions to the District Council with the support of the Parish Council they were unable to resolve the issue or implement our

suggestions due to the width of the pavement.

If you require any advocacy support please contact the office directly on **01926 411331**

How Your Association Works

Every organization has a structure to enable it to function efficiently and Warwickshire Vision Support is no exception. Since 1911 this Association has been evolving and adapting to meet the needs of visually impaired people in Warwickshire. Today it is a thriving Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee.

Voting Members of the Association elect candidates to the Board each year. The Board of Trustees/Directors decides the strategy, that is the direction, of the Association. The Trustees are all volunteers. They appoint a Chief Executive Officer who is responsible to them for the efficient day-to-day running of the organization.

The Board has four sub-committees that meet to have detailed discussions on specific subjects (which time does not allow in a full Board meeting). The results of these discussions are presented to the Board as recommendations that it can ratify.

Board members have chosen the sub-committees on which they will serve. Here are the sub-committees and their membership

Business Development

- Alan Last
- Heather Fairburn
- David Adams
- Mark Rogers
- Richard Orme
- Sheila Venville

Finance

- Lesley Edwards
- David Adams
- Richard Orme

Human Resources

- Janet Hurrell
- Heather Fairburn
- Alan Last
- Christine Ramble

Profile and Fund Raising

- Richard Orme
- David Adams
- Janet Hurrell
- Sheila Venville
- Rosemary Went

If you would like to be a Voting Member of Warwickshire Vision Support - to be a part of this Charity - contact the office. There's no charge or fee, only the promise to pay the sum of £1 if the charity becomes insolvent. Telephone **01926 411331**

Sight Village Central

Sight Village Central will take place on Tuesday 9th and Wednesday 10th July 2019 at Cranmore Park Conference and Events Centre, Cranmore Avenue, Solihull, B90 4LF. Doors open at 9.30am both days and close at 4 pm on the 9th and 3 pm on the 10th - the event is FREE to visit.

A full programme of seminars and workshops will take place both days and full information will be posted on the website nearer the date.

For information about how to get to the venue, please go to sv@qac.ac.uk, qacsightvillage.org.uk or call one of the team on **0121 428 5041** - they will be happy to help!

Health, Wellbeing and Facts

Restart a Heart Day

Paul Bowler, Coleshill

Each year, October 16th is Restart a Heart Day, a day on which organisations such as St John Ambulance, the Red Cross and British Heart Foundation aim to teach cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) skills to as many people as possible.

It is a sad fact that a lot of people do not know how to respond effectively in an emergency such as a cardiac arrest. We would all be aware that we should call the emergency services, but perhaps not so aware that learning how to perform CPR while waiting for an ambulance to arrive can also help to save a person's life.

In October 2018, St John Ambulance held two training sessions at the Nuneaton Vision Support Centre, giving members a chance to learn how to perform CPR and how to use a defibrillator. The sessions were organised by Tina Jackson who, as well as being a volunteer with Warwickshire Vision Support, also volunteers for St John Ambulance and is a qualified First Aider. Tina led the sessions along with Jean Moore, her boss at the Nuneaton branch of St John Ambulance.

The first session concentrated on CPR, with a demonstration of how to do this using a lifelike training mannequin known as Little Annie. Jean gave us an introductory talk,

before Tina showed us the correct way to resuscitate someone who has stopped breathing. We were then invited to have a go ourselves. It was the first time I'd done something like this, but I quickly picked it up, and I feel now I would know what to do in such a situation.

Our second session involved the defibrillator, and we looked at both a trainee model and a real one. Once again Tina showed us what to do by connecting the defibrillator's pads to the mannequin's chest and going through the procedure. The machine also has audio instructions that talk you through both how to do CPR, including where on the chest to place the hands and the number of compressions to do, as well as the use of the defibrillator itself. This is useful to know because many public buildings and areas now have defibrillators that can be used by members of the public in the event of an emergency.

Afterwards we had a chance to hold both the trainee and live defibrillators, and what was most surprising was the difference in weight between the two. We also received a thank you card from St John Ambulance for attending the sessions, and an information pack to remind us of the skills we'd just been taught.

The sessions were a great success with several people attending on

both occasions, and I later learnt from Tina that it was the first time her branch of St John Ambulance had taught a group of visually impaired people. I feel CPR is something everybody should learn, because you never know when it may be needed. I hope I'll never find myself in a situation where I have to use it, but if I do at least I'm aware of what to do now.

Please get your eyes checked

Sue, Nuneaton

Warwickshire Vision regularly features articles regarding the importance of attending a regular eye test.

So imagine my surprise when one of the service users who attends a weekly Vision Support Centre told me that he last had an eye test over 25 years ago because he had been told 'there isn't anything that can be done to help improve your vision'. He had not known that an eye test is so much more than being given a prescription for glasses.

So let me be very clear. An optometrist not only checks your eye health during the examination but they also check your general health through your eyes. They can give advice and they look for changes in the eye caused by a diagnosed or even an undiagnosed health issue such as diabetes, high blood pressure or high cholesterol (which can cause blockages in the blood vessels in the eyes) also autoimmune disorders,

thyroid disease and even cancer to mention a few.

An optician can detect early signs of changes to the eye before you may even notice them, so please, please go and have regular eye tests.

And remember if you notice any changes in your eyes you can request an eye test, you do not need to wait for your next scheduled appointment.

I myself had a second eye test within 9 months due to my sight being blurred and my eyes very tired, luckily I just needed a stronger prescription in my glasses.

The service user who hadn't had an eye test for over 25 years has just had an eye examination and will be having an eye check regularly in future.



Editor

Medical research is taking place all the time, with diseases and conditions that were fatal for earlier generations now easily curable. Eye conditions once considered progressive can now be treated - who knows what next?

Eye checks are free at your local opticians if there is a close member of your family who has glaucoma and if you are over the age of 40. In addition, some high street opticians do 'special offers' of free eye tests for people who are not normally eligible for a free check up.

Personal Independence

Payments (PIP)

Sue, Nuneaton

Everyone who is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) will be invited to move to the replacement benefit called PIP, unless you had already reached the age of 65 or over on or before 8th April 2013. If you had already reached 65 on this date you will remain on DLA.

If you are not migrating from DLA and are applying for the first time for help taking part in everyday life or perhaps find it difficult to get around because you have a physical or mental disability, then you will apply for PIP. If you are applying for help before you reach your 65th birthday and are successful, you can continue to receive PIP after you've reached 65 years of age.

If you are over 65 years of age then you can apply for Attendance Allowance, but do not delay if you haven't reached your 65th birthday yet as PIP, if awarded the higher component rates, can pay more than AA - as it pays both a daily living component and a mobility component.

Those who are still waiting to be invited to migrate from DLA to PIP will receive a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions asking you to make a claim. If you do nothing at this stage your DLA will stop within 4 weeks of the letter, so please do not delay.

The claim for PIP is completely different from any claim you may have previously submitted for DLA. PIP is not awarded on the basis of you having a disability or medical condition or conditions, but is awarded on the basis of how your disability or ill health affects your day-to-day living and mobility.

When you have returned your PIP claim form your application is usually considered along with a face-to-face interview. The company Capita, which undertakes this assessment, will then make a report to DWP for a decision. However a number of claimants have successfully appealed their decision because they either were awarded no points or not enough points to enable the enhanced component to be paid.

The best way to ensure you get the correct award, without the need to appeal the decision is, in every question response, to give between five and eight examples of how your disability or medical condition impacts you on a day-to-day basis. As the form does not give much room to write your answers it is best to use extra paper and remember to always put the question number you are responding to if you require more space.

Remember, if your visual impairment has caused you to seek medical attention because you couldn't see an obstacle - include as many examples as possible. Here are some examples where a blind or visually impaired person has had to seek medical attention

- Cut my head on a branch overhanging a footpath I was walking along
- Walked into a glass door and required stitches
- Fell off the back doorstep and broke a bone

So, please think about your own experiences, and if you have had to seek medical attention due to your disability, then mention it in your application for PIP.

If you use any gadgets or aids to do with your disability or medical issues - remember to also include these on your application form - even if you use lots, tell them about them all.

If you have a medical issue or disability that you are aware of but haven't had it recorded on your medical records, then go and see your GP who can decide what action needs to be taken.

I helped my husband migrate from DLA to PIP. He had spoken very loudly in recent years, he would always have the radio on so loud that it hurt my ears. He saw his GP who referred him for a hearing test and it showed that my husband has been severely deaf most of his working life. His first job when he left school at age 15 was inside a drop forge foundry. Because he has officially been diagnosed with hearing problems he was given points for not only being registered blind but also for hearing loss.

The best piece of advice, whether applying for help with day-to-day living costs for the first time, or migrating from DLA to PIP, or even if you have been successful and are in receipt of PIP and have an award date, is to keep a health record of

- any new medical condition or disability, with date of diagnosis; include any operations and/or broken bones
- any new gadgets or aids or help from Social Services or Warwickshire Vision Support

Please do not panic, always seek advice immediately from Citizens Advice or similar organisations, especially if you require help in filling

the form in. You can also contact organisations such as RNIB and request some useful notes on help in completing your form.

RNIB helpline **0303 123 9999**

Kettle or Water Dispenser?

Rosalie Visick, Co-Editor

Do you use a kettle for boiling small amounts of water to make a cup of tea or coffee? I used to. If there's only one or two of you at home the kettle can feel heavy being lifted frequently to measure a small quantity of water to boil, then being lifted a second time to pour into the mug or cup.

One Cup Water Dispensers have become very popular lately and they don't have to be lifted to fill with water. I use a 2-pint plastic jug to fill mine. Despite being filled with water, only 1 cup is dispensed at a time. (Make sure you use a large cup or mug to dispense the water into. If you use a small mug you need to switch the machine off manually so it doesn't overflow.) The water heats up to 'hot' very quickly but does not boil.

Water Dispensers come in different sizes - large ones can hold more water. There are quite a few models to choose from, however if you are uncertain what size to purchase, a quick call to WVS will allow you to speak to someone.

WVS can demonstrate a Hot Water Dispenser for you at your nearest Vision Support Centre. Prices can range from £35 to £80.

For advice telephone WVS on **01926 411331** or e-mail enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Editor

Most hot water dispensers do just that, but there are some that can dispense boiling water. Other variations provided by different models include variable quantity dispense (manual control), height adjust and of course water capacity.

Breakthrough Treatment for AMD

The first person has undergone therapy for Age-related Macular Degeneration in Oxford. A synthetic gene was inserted into the left eye of Janet Osborne, aged 80. The operation involved detaching her retina and injecting a solution containing a harmless virus that carries modified DNA which infects cells, correcting genetic defects that cause AMD. The treatment should halt the progress of the condition.

Janet has dry AMD. Until now there has been no treatment for dry AMD.

Features

Prof. Zbigniew Pelczynski OBE

Liz Thiebe, Chair, Board of Trustees

Connections during our lives enrich us with opportunities, experiences and the joy of helping others. When we find new connections these can open doors that we may not have known existed. Or the new connection can open doors that we may have struggled to open on our own. As you are reading this, you will probably have many examples in your own life of the value of connecting to others. People experiencing sight loss gain so much when the right connections are made.

We had the remarkable opportunity earlier this year, to honour and witness the impact of connections on

one of our own Warwickshire service users. This is a story of a man who was born in Grodzisk Mazowiecki, Poland, who fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising where he was taken prisoner by the Germans. After liberation from a camp near Bremen, he joined the Polish First Armoured Division under British command, and because of this was able to receive a grant to study in Britain.

After completing his Doctor of Philosophy thesis at Oxford University on Hegel's minor political works in 1956 he was elected a Fellow of Pembroke College Oxford and lecturer in politics. His subsequent publications made him a world authority on Hegel, and resulted in Visiting Professorships and senior scholarships at six foreign

Prof. Zbigniew Pelczynski OBE and Liz Thiebe



universities, ranging from Harvard to Jerusalem, Australia and Japan.

After 1956, Zbig made regular visits to Poland and was instrumental in developing several programmes for the education of students from communist Europe at Oxford.

In 1982, he established a scholarship programme for Polish students at Oxford. Then in 1986, through collaboration with the Hungarian-American philanthropist George Soros, who earlier had established the Open Society Foundation, scholarships became available for Hungarian students at Oxford and the Stefan Batory Foundation was established in Poland.

In the United States, Zbig is known for having been the politics tutor at Oxford University for the Rhodes Scholar and future President Bill Clinton, among a host of other American politicians and senior business people. Other famous students include prime minister of Hungary, Viktor Orbán, former Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radek Sikorski and journalist and biographer Walter Isaacson.

In 1994 Zbig founded the School for Young Social and Political Leaders in Warsaw. The organization, which subsequently changed its name to the School for Leaders Foundation, states as one of its goals 'creating social capital based on leadership'. The organisation is going to celebrate its 25th anniversary this year. On

Monday 4 March, he received an Honorary Fellowship from Blind Veterans UK. The event was held at his own Pembroke College in Oxford.

Prof Zbig brings the same spirit of the importance of connections to his life now... he values bringing people together to share ideas, learning and experience. He expresses his blindness in the same way he processed the German prison camp... 'as an opportunity to experience a new world.' A remarkable man indeed.

It is a joy to know that in a small way, the connection WVS made for Zbig to Blind Veterans UK has had such a positive impact on this later stage of his life. It is a privilege to have an opportunity to meet him.

If you have an interest in learning more about his life, his biography called Zbigniew Pelczynski - A Life Remembered by David McAvoy may be of interest.

Credit for the biographical information to Blind Veterans UK

Miles to go ...

John E. Hodges, Alcester

The early days of August 1958 were particularly hot and humid. Just one passenger alighted from the 11.10 down train from London Waterloo at Farnborough - a young man, wearing a well-worn sports jacket with leather patches on elbows over a blue open necked shirt. Grey slacks drooped over new black shoes. So new that

they squeaked – open toed sandals had not seemed right to wear when joining for National Service.

He carried a small case in his left hand; an envelope tucked into the jacket top pocket. When the train left and there was no one in sight he walked to a gate and found the ticket collector in deep conversation with a Red Cap MP. A ticket and postcard came from the envelope and without any words being exchanged were viewed by Ticket Collector and Red Cap. The ticket punched and returned, postcard retained by the Red Cap who, with authority, pointed with his left arm down the road.

The young man set off alone in that direction, hopeful perhaps of a bus stop? About half an hour later and with shoes losing their squeaks a long fence marked with stencil sign MOD confirmed the direction. Around the corner a further Military Policeman standing directing Traffic confirmed at least there could be no turning back now so young man boldly entered the open arms of the R.A.S.C. Some said it was a mile while others a mile and a half from the station, I was too busy to ever check.

This memory and so many more came back as among over nine thousand ex-service men and women and I mustered on Horseguards on the never to be forgotten morning of 11.11.2018.

Not long after being registered in 2017 Warwickshire Vision Support had helped me from a deep trench of depression and sight loss, especially with long cane training and counselling. I also joined Blind Veterans UK and they all worked together linking me with others encouraging me to not allow sight loss to manage my life but to manage sight loss as part of life. With Blind Veterans I had come to London and was part of the contingent on parade, which included our 103 years old member. My sighted guide for the parade I found was a RN rtd. lady who made sure I kept in step and on route. This was partnership.

I can't forget the amazing emotion and uplift of the cheers and noise of the crowds that surrounded us as we swung right from Horseguards onto Whitehall, or the silence of thousands at the moments of Remembrance. Then the pride of marching as never before to represent the generations of my family who have served on land, sea and in the air.

I think a shopping visit to our local Waitrose and back is about the same distance as my walk into the Army and similarly to that from Horseguards to where HRH Princess Anne took the Salute. In London my sighted guide kept me on course but here my trusty white cane and those who support me make every walk from my home an adventure of hope.

My Story

Paul Barnes, Kenilworth

During my childhood I contracted Spinal Meningitis. I am now a wheelchair user but I do not let that stop me from getting out and about. Whilst I live alone I have a lot of support from family and carers and my home is adapted so that I can use my motorised wheelchair at all times.

My eyesight has deteriorated in the last 4 years and I was registered as Partially Sighted in 2014. I suffer with a lack of peripheral vision. The rehabilitation support I have received from Warwickshire Vision Support has been really helpful and now I have 'bump-ons' on kitchen appliances and for a while I was able to use a cane.

I rely on public transport to get around Warwickshire and regularly take the bus from Kenilworth to Leamington Spa. I attend the Leamington Spa Vision Support Centre at Chandos Court on a Monday and also the Good Companions Club every other Wednesday. I enjoy the social side of the club and the different poets, speakers and presentations we have. I am really looking forward to an outing being planned for June on the Gloucester and Warwickshire Railway. I am not a talker but if it hadn't been for my eyes deteriorating I wouldn't have ever visited the Vision Support Centre at Chandos Court. I do now



**Paul Barnes
and Zak**

and it makes me make the effort to go out. When I am in Leamington Spa I make a day of it and go to Jephson Gardens and Zak gets to have a walk. We have some lunch and then I go home.

Zak is my trusty 'Service Dog'. Zak is a small black and white Jack Russell who has been trained to never leave my side, or more to the point my lap! Zak will ride around with me and will even sometimes nudge my hand on the control if he doesn't like where I am going. Zak is 5 years old and I do not know what I would do without him. He is my companion and looks out for my wellbeing.

BorrowBox becomes available in Warwickshire

Paul Bowler, Coleshill

A digital book lending service that enables users to borrow ebooks and audiobooks free of charge has become available to library users throughout Warwickshire.

BorrowBox is an app that allows library content to be downloaded to a smartphone or mobile device, then read or listened to offline. Developed by Melbourne-based technology firm Bolinda in 2010, it is used by over a million library members throughout Australia, and is becoming available in other parts of the world, including the UK.

Unlike previous apps developed for borrowing books, BorrowBox is easy and straightforward to use, and can be set up in a matter of moments. After downloading it from the app store, all you need to get started is to enter an email address, and your library barcode and PIN number. Once logged in you can borrow titles from any library of which you are a member and that subscribes to BorrowBox. Content can be searched for by author, title, subject and even category, and the app works well with voiceover.

Members of Warwickshire Libraries can have up to eight titles on loan at any time, which can be kept for up to three weeks before they need to be renewed.

I recently downloaded the BorrowBox app to an iPad after being told about it by a friend, and was surprised at how easy it is to use and navigate, even with voiceover. It was set up and ready to go within a couple of minutes, and shortly after that I'd downloaded and started listening to my first book.

What I particularly like about this app is having the option to listen to audiobooks without the need for a CD player, something that makes a bit of holiday reading more of a realistic possibility in future.

The only downside is the number of titles available to Warwickshire library members isn't as extensive as you'd get from a physical library, but Bolinda has a catalogue of half a million ebooks and around 60,000 audiobooks, so hopefully more content will be added over time.

Warwickshire HQ to over 30,000 Assistance Dogs



European Guide Dog Federation

Warwickshire is famous for the state-of-the-art guide dog breeding centre at Bishops Tachbrook and its training school in Leamington Spa. These are part of the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, the world's biggest guide dog school, with 5,000 working guide dogs. However, there

are another 30,000 assistance dogs represented in Warwickshire.

Don't worry, they're not all here! You may not know that Priors Marston, the sleepy village in the south-east corner of Warwickshire, is home to a European charity whose membership includes 40 guide dog and assistance dog organisations in over 25 countries, with dogs working to help their disabled partner to get on with life. As well as guide dogs, other assistance dogs help people who are deaf, a wheelchair user, autistic, epileptic, diabetic or suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The European Guide Dog Federation (EGDF), run by Executive Director Judith Jones and President David Adams, is based at Marston Grange in Priors Marston, with daily contacts throughout Europe and beyond.

The charity's aims are to break down barriers that guide dog owners (GDOs) face so they can move around freely with their dogs - and to help other countries develop guide dog organisations as effective as the UK's. In carrying out this vital work, EGDF works hand in glove with Assistance Dogs Europe to prevent the double discrimination which affects so many disabled people with assistance dogs.

While guide dogs are well-accepted here, you might be surprised to learn about some of the problems EGDF has helped solve recently:

- Getting taxi drivers in Brussels, where they make the laws, to take guide dogs
- Correcting a hotel in Berlin that made a conference delegate and her guide dog eat breakfast alone in the hallway
- Persuading the largest supermarket chain in Romania to change its corporate policy that bans guide dogs
- Changing the policy of an airline that would not let GDOs book flights less than 7 days in advance and would not allow two GDOs to travel together, with their dogs, to a meeting
- Informing a minibus service at Charles de Gaulle airport refusing to take GDOs into Paris that they were breaking the law.

By solving problems such as these, we are helping the general acceptance of guide dogs everywhere. Some notable advances:

- One EGDF board member has had seven guide dogs over 50 years. In the early days when she was awarded an MBE for her campaigning work, she was not allowed to take her guide dog into Buckingham Palace; however some years later, when she went to collect her OBE, her dog was by then most welcome.
- Guide dogs can now travel free of charge in the cabin of the aircraft, at their owner's feet, thanks to

standardisation of their training and credentials. David's recently-retired guide dog Zoey has contentedly crossed the Atlantic six times on 10-hour flights.

- Many people are aware of a guide dog's high level of breeding and training. Next time you see one, think also about the GDOs struggle to be accepted like everyone else, wherever they need to go.

David has recently joined the Board of Warwickshire Vision Support, where he attends meetings with his new guide dog Jimbo. Zoey continues to live with David and helps Jimbo to settle in his new home and career.

To find out more about the work of EGDF, visit EGDFed.org or to see how you can support us, call **01327 720027**.

Driverless Cars

Does this sound like Tomorrow's World? On our roads today we already have cars that park themselves at the touch of a button and have lane assist, which means they can change lanes automatically.

The technology companies Uber and Google have been working on driverless cars, also known as autonomous vehicles, for about 10 years. They have been carrying out trials in some of the states in the USA, with varying degrees of success. Trials have also taken place

in a handful of UK towns and cities, including Coventry.

In 2015 the government produced a code of practice for trials. Testers needed a roadworthy vehicle, appropriate insurance and to comply with the rules of the road. In February the Department for Transport updated the code imposing tougher safety standards. Advance notice has to be given to the police. A safety driver or remote operator is also required to be available, either within the vehicle or remotely, to be 'ready and able to override the vehicle'.

Claims have been made that our roads will be safer, since available figures suggest that nine in ten accidents on public roads are caused by human error. It is also claimed traffic flow will improve long-term, as the stop-start of normal vehicles is eliminated.

A management consultant study said congestion could rise by more than 16 per cent while driverless cars share the road with humans. It also said that autonomous vehicles would be too focused on 'obeying the law and not taking risks' when moving between lanes, causing more tailbacks.

If there is to be no human driver 'in charge' of a vehicle, how will car insurance be arranged?

Other countries, including Spain and Italy, have held limited trials

but President Macron wants fully driverless cars on French roads by 2022.

Fully driverless cars are expected to take to Britain's roads by the end of the year under government plans to scrap the requirement for a dedicated safety driver.

The government expects fully self-driving vehicles to be in commercial

operation on British roads by 2021. It is estimated that the technology will be worth £52 billion to Britain by 2035.

Blind Veterans announced the launch of a driverless pods trial in March. When will we see a VIP travelling alone in a driverless car on our roads?

Leisure

Grand Opening and Bowlathon

It might have been a gloomy wet January day, but inside the Avon Valley Bowls Club the temperature was warm and the atmosphere friendly. Jeremy Wright, Secretary of State for Culture and Sport and

Warwickshire MP, together with Cllr Izzi Seccomb, Leader of Warwickshire County Council, carried out the grand opening.

Avon Valley Bowls Club (AVBC) was hosting Visually Impaired Bowls England's (VIBE's) second Bowlathon, the first had been held in Hastings. It was attended by a number of officials including VIBE's President and bowlers came from Hastings, London, Norwich, Weston-super-Mare, Newcastle and the Forest of Dean.

What was the Bowlathon? Visually impaired bowlers bowled against a team from AVBC and surrounding clubs for 12 hours non-stop (10.00-20.00). In addition sighted and visually impaired bowlers joined together to bowl against other teams. VIBE champions played against AVBC champions. In some matches bowlers wore sim specs so



Our Bowlers

they could experience bowling with a visual impairment.

However, the first bowling event was a Spider - a fund raising event. There was quiet in the room and the start was called. Chaos appeared to break out, with about forty woods apparently flying everywhere. Then I saw the picture - with the woods bowled simultaneously across the green from every direction (all sides of the rink) and all aimed towards a single jack - the green did appear to have a huge spider on it. I heard the sharp crack sound as the jack was struck several times - and was moved from its original position.

The jack - a smaller ball - is the target that is aimed for. But its original position on the green had been marked and the winner of that competition was the bowler whose wood was closest to the original position of the jack.

To add to the social atmosphere food and drink were available all day. Let's not forget the helpers, some of whom were from local Lions Clubs (part of their service is to help VIPs).

The whole event was an open day - an opportunity for visitors to try indoor bowling and as a fund-raiser for VIBE - Visually Impaired Bowls England. VIBE raises money to send players, with their helpers and/or guide dogs, to represent England in international competitions such as the Commonwealth Games.

And what was the grand opening? A new access road - Avon Valley Way leading directly from the Banbury Road, the B4100, into the car park of Avon Valley Indoor Bowls Club. Access is now so much easier as it is not through a series of car parks. In addition, the Club also formally signed a new 25-year lease on the Club premises.

Editor

If you are interested in indoor bowling on Friday mornings with other VIPs, no experience is necessary, contact Warwickshire Vision Support on **01926 411331**

Gloucestershire Growlers Visually Impaired Cricket Club

The Gloucestershire Growlers train indoors in Gloucester once a month from January to April. During the summer we are based at Hatherley and Reddings CC in Cheltenham. We train outdoors and play matches from May to September.

There are a number of adaptations to make the game safe and accessible for visually impaired people. The ball is a size 3 football with ball bearings inside, making it audible. Bowlers call 'play' as they release the ball, so the batter knows that the ball is on the way. Teams are composed of 11 blind and partially sighted players with varying levels of sight. When a blind player bats, a partially sighted teammate runs for them.

Games are played in a friendly atmosphere and the sport is very inclusive. We welcome players of all ages, both male and female. Anyone aged 11 and over can join the team, and there is certainly no upper age limit! There are active players in their 70s. We also welcome visually impaired people with additional disabilities. You don't need to know anything about cricket either, as you will get great support from your teammates and our coach. We can also help with transport, if this is a problem.

For more information, contact me, Ed Hastings on **07849615729** or email edwardahastings@gmail.com

P.S.

To the best of Ed's knowledge there is no Warwickshire VI cricket team this year and he says that Cheltenham is easily reachable by train and within an hour's drive of Warwick, Leamington and Stratford.

Gardening

Rosalie Visick, Co-Editor

Gardening is known in this country as one of the main interests in people's lives - no matter what age they are. Some treat it as a hobby, many as a past-time and others are quite happy just dead-heading flowers when necessary, but it can become more difficult when you start having sight problems and for those who are already blind or visually impaired.

This is where the charity Thrive can help you in so many different ways. They have worked with visually impaired people for over 30 years and offered help and support to those going through the stages of sight loss.

They can provide information on how to arrange your garden and many other subjects. This is their introductory letter

'We offer a range of services for people who wish to garden either as a new activity or to continue to enjoy gardening after sight loss. We have information to support you to garden at home and can help to get you together with other blind and partially sighted people who are interested in gardening.

Follow the links to find how Thrive can help you with

- Gardening advice - ideas on how to arrange your garden
- Carry on Gardening - Thrive's sister website, has top tips and tried-and-tested gardening equipment tools to help you start or continue gardening
- Getting Started leaflet - can be downloaded on your computer
- Getting on with gardening - full colour books available in a variety of formats
- Gardening Together - How to set up a local gardening club.

Our work with professionals who support blind and partially sighted people to garden includes

- Information to organisations for their members
- Keeping the garden gate open - an audio CD for professionals to give to people newly diagnosed with sight loss.'

Visit their shop for publications for people with visual impairment.

For more information on their services for professionals who are working with blind and partially sighted people call **0118 988 5688** or e-mail: thrive.org.uk/gardening-for-blind-or-partially-sighted-people

I hope this information will encourage visually impaired people who do not know anything about gardening to become interested, and those who are already gardening will get ideas and find answers to all their questions.

P.S.

Thrive will be able to suggest ways of making gardening easier, from sowing seeds and planting out, growing plants in containers, watering, moving plants in the garden, ideas on gardening design to mowing and lawn maintenance also making tools easier to find by painting their handles white or a bright colour. If you are gardening from a wheelchair or with one hand, advice can be given on ways to make it easier.

Holiday Opportunities

With the weather turning warmer and brighter, our spirits rise and people think of holidays - perhaps even of cooler climes to get away from heat. The range of holidays is enormous.

For some VIPs, perhaps with recent sight deterioration or additional disabilities or health problems, a holiday might seem to be a challenge. However, there is a range of holidays designed specifically for VIPs.

The Cliffden Hotel, Teignmouth

Specialises in catering for visually impaired guests. It is situated in 7 acres of beautifully kept gardens and has a full size indoor swimming pool. The hotel is extremely 'VI friendly' with grab rails in most of the corridors to guide you around the hotel, and a talking lift with all controls duplicated in braille as an additional aid.

It has an indoor spend and two outdoor spends with a grooming room and dog shower if you travel with a guide dog. There are usually two trips out during the week and some themed breaks during the year including walking and activity breaks, which includes access to many activities that would otherwise be totally inaccessible to VIPs.

There is a small band of volunteers who can guide guests out on short trips, usually on foot. Arrangements

can be made for guests to be picked up from Teignmouth station for a small charge.

For more information telephone **01626 770052** or visit the website - cliffdenhotel.com

(This hotel was one of the Vision Hotels but is now run by the Starboard Hotel Group.)

The Windermere Manor Hotel

This former Vision Hotel is also part of the Starboard Hotel Group. This 3 star hotel is set in 3 acres of grounds within the Lake District National Park. They are committed to providing value for money short breaks and holidays for all guests and are proud of their 'access for all' commitment. Visually impaired people and their guide dogs are welcome. They arrange outings three or four times a week and have Theme Weeks throughout the year.

For more information and a brochure: Telephone **01539 445801**
email windermere@manorhotel.com

A short break at a residential home could be a good option if you or your partner need care and attention because of mobility problems or other disabilities.

Healey House

At Healey House (Hastings and Rother Voluntary Association for the Blind), St. Leonards on Sea, East Sussex there is a large garden. Hairdressing, chiropody and other

facilities are available also social activities and outings are arranged.

Telephone **01424 436359/433762**
Website: hrvab.org.uk

Darsdale Home

Darsdale Home (Northamptonshire Association for the Blind), Wellingborough is a residential home with 30 bedrooms (not all en-suite), set in 3 acres of gardens. There are two communal lounges, a conservatory and an enclosed courtyard.

Telephone **01933 622 457**
Website: darsdale.org.uk
Email: info@darsdale.org.uk

Read House

Read House (Essex Blind Charity) Frinton-on-Sea is situated near to the shops, churches, parks and the beach. There is a choice of spacious lounges; chiropody and hairdressing services and all special dietary needs are catered for.

Telephone **01255 673654**
Website: readhouse.org
Email: info@essexblind.co.uk

Calvert Trust

Calvert Trust provides adventurous activity holidays for people with physical, sensory or learning disabilities. It believes that it's what you **can** do that counts and for over 30 years has provided adventurous, outdoor activities for children and adults with disabilities, together with their family, friends and carers. Their visitors tell them that they leave with

renewed confidence and a wonderful sense of achievement at meeting the challenges they faced during their Calvert experience.

There are three centres, situated in some of the most stunning landscapes in England: Kielder Water and Forest Park in Northumberland, the Lake District and North Devon. Each centre offers all-inclusive or self-catered fully accessible facilities and comfortable accommodation in centre rooms, cottages or log cabins. The centres have a hydrotherapy or swimming pool, sensory room sports hall and dining hall, where delicious home cooked meals are served. Adult respite care is available throughout the year at the Kielder centre.

Calvert Trust Kielder

Tel: **01434 250232**

Email: enquiries@calvert-kielder.com

Calvert Trust Lake District

Tel: **01768 772255**

Email: enquiries@lakedistrict.calvert-trust.org.uk

Calvert Trust Exmoor

Tel: **01598 763221**

Website: exmoor@calvert-trust.org.uk

Discover Holidays

Discover Holidays offers cruises for people who are blind or partially sighted. Cruises can be an amazing experience for a person who is blind or partially sighted due to all facilities, entertainment and

restaurants easily accessed on all floors.

Around a cruise ship there are many notices and lifts which display braille on them: menus can be printed in braille if the cruise company is made aware in advance,

An orientation of the ship will be carried out upon arrival, which will include a safety briefing; this is standard on all ships. After the orientation you will be left to explore the ship alone and enjoy your holiday.

When booking a cruise, inform the staff that you are blind or partially sighted so a medical form is sent to you. This will notify the cruise ship of your needs in advance of travelling.

Discover Holidays has been offering tailor-made personal holidays both in Britain and worldwide since 2000. Telephone **0161 804 9721** or **0161 804 9898**

Princess Cruises

Princess Cruises has 18 ships. All televisions on board provide closed captioning and most onboard theatres are equipped with assisted listening devices. The devices are available on a 'first come, first served' basis.

An accessibility questionnaire is available at the time of booking, to see if any adjustments are needed. Lunch and dinner menus are produced in electronic format and can be made available up to

2 weeks prior to sailing. Princess Patter is a newsletter delivered to your stateroom daily with the day's timetable of activities and information, which can also be provided electronically. Alternatively, contact the Guest Services Desk to request items to be read to you, or to arrange an orientation tour.

Tel: **0344 338 8660 ext 2290** email: Katie.Miller@carnivalukgroup.com

Royal Caribbean Cruises

Royal Caribbean Cruises offers large print menus and daily activity planners, orientation tours and provides Qualified Readers onboard ship for guests who are blind or have low vision. Some crewmembers have been trained as qualified readers to read written material such as the daily activity planner and short excursions information. Waiters will also read dining menus upon request.

Contact Royal Caribbean Cruises on **0844 493 4005**

e-mail: nancyjeanrudder@rccl.com

Can Be Done

Can be Done provides tailored holidays for disabled individuals. In Spain Confortel hotels cater for VIPs. The Confortel Islantilla, close to Huelva overlooks the sea with its beautiful areas of fine sand beaches and dunes. Its location is perfect for visiting the mountains of Sierra de Araceba, the Donana National Park as well as the Algarve in Portugal.

The Confortel Fuengirola is a modern and contemporary styled hotel located in Fuengirola's maritime boulevard on the beachfront. It is within walking distance of the harbour and all the main attractions of this town.

Confortel Almirante Barcelona is in the heart of the city's Gothic quarter, surrounded by the cathedral, the Paseo del Borne, the port and the best museums and only 400 yards from La Rambla.

To discuss your requirements with Can be Done call **020 8907 2400** email holidays@canbedone.co.uk

Sightline Directory

Sightline Directory is the directory for services aimed at helping blind or partially sighted people. It is a group of the UK's leading specialist companies offering accessible holidays in the UK and abroad for people with different types of physical disabilities, learning disabilities and sensory impairments.

Sightline Directory provides information on trips and outings, hotels, short breaks and organised holidays.

Telephone **0845 124 9971**



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

For more information, please contact us

 **01926 411331**

Email: enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Website: www.warwickshire.vision

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



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 **Dolphin**
Making a difference

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



Leamington	Chandos Court Chandos Street Leamington Spa CV32 4YU	Every Monday 10 am - 12 noon
Nuneaton	Newtown Community Centre Newtown Road Nuneaton CV11 4HG	Every Thursday 10 am - 12 noon
Rugby	Rugby Baptist Church Regent Place Rugby CV21 2AG	Every Wednesday 10 am - 12 noon
Stratford-upon-Avon	The Christadelphian Church Rother Street Stratford CV37 6LU	Every Tuesday 10 am - 12 noon

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



01926 411331

Email: enquiries@warwickshire.vision

Web: www.warwickshire.vision



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