

BucksVision

Spring 2017 Newsletter

Spring time

Trees blow in the Winter wind
Snow falls slowly as the birds sing
The flowers all withered and the trees all bare
Just waiting for the soft Spring air

Lynn Hetherington

Originally published in 'Before the Dawn Comes' by Poetry Guild, Copyright 1997

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Welcome

I am usually delighted to welcome Spring, coming as it does with the promise of longer and warmer days. However, this Spring I have some sad news to relay.

In December, Patrick Phillips MBE, sadly lost his battle with cancer. As you will know, Patrick was a fantastic supporter of BucksVision, having served as our President for a number of years. All of us were absolutely delighted when Patrick was awarded an MBE last year.

I attended his funeral in January, along with Bob Dean, our Chair, and Deborah Dow, my predecessor. The funeral service was held in Dinton Parish Church which was filled to capacity with people paying their respects, a measure of Patrick's popularity and the high regard in which he was held.

We were also sad to hear of the death of Lynn Hobday who managed BucksVision for many years from the 1970s to 1990. Obituaries for Patrick and for Lynn are on page 14.

Turning to other matters, we continue to expand our range of social events. Our Experience Days go from strength to strength, with recent events such as pizza making proving to be very popular. If you have any ideas for a social outing, or indeed any other services that we might deliver, please do let us know.

As always, I will finish by sending all of our volunteers my sincere thanks; your efforts make a real difference to local people with sight loss and we simply could not provide our services without you.

Steve Naylor

Chief Executive

Meet the Team

Wednesday 5th April 2017

The Meet the Team event will take place on Wednesday 5th April at Gateway conference centre in Aylesbury.

Starting at 10.30 the event will be an opportunity to catch up with the BucksVision team, meeting staff and trustees as well as a chance to meet other members and learn more about the OrCam, equipment featured in our Summer 2016 newsletter.

The full agenda for the day is below. We would love to see as many members and volunteers as possible at the event.

If you would like to come along please book a place by **Friday 24th March**.

Agenda for the day

10.30- 11 Tea & Coffee available on arrival.

11.00 Welcome & Icebreaker

11.15 Progress Review, Chief Executive

11.45 Staff & Trustee update

12.00 Q & A - A chance to ask staff and trustees questions/feedback on current activities

12.30 Lunch (provided)

1.30 Quiz

2.00 Demonstration of OrCam, Tony Fox

3.00 Close

Welcome to our new staff member

This Spring we welcome Anne Mills to the team. Anne will be joining us as our Fundraising Manager from 6 March. Anne comes with a wealth of fundraising experience, most recently Medical Detection Dogs.

Anne writes a little bit about herself here:

I have a background in event management and charity fundraising. Having worked on many high profile weddings, private parties, royal and charity fundraising events and initiatives, I will use this experience to increase funding for BucksVision.

The plan is to develop regional fundraising groups to run alongside the our existing regional social and activity clubs. I also hope to encourage local companies to choose BucksVision as their "Charity of the Year" so they will support and promote the work of this amazing charity and bring in new funding.

I have lots of fundraising ideas but would love to hear from you if you have a fundraising event you would like to run, or if you would like to be part of the new regional fundraising groups.

I live in Wigginton Bottom, near Tring with my family, a cat called Mendes and an ex guide dog called Farley. I am on the village gardeners committee and am currently sowing hundreds of seeds for the spring sale.

I am very excited to join Bucks Vision and I am really looking forward to working with the team and all of the wonderful volunteers.

amills@bucksvision.co.uk

Interview with a Volunteer- Dr Khalid Mansour

Dr Khalid Mansour kindly took time out of his extremely busy working day to speak to Lisa Kennet about being a BucksVision volunteer.

LK: How did you first hear about BucksVision?

KM: On the internet. I was searching for some voluntary work to do in my spare time and I found BucksVision.

LK: And how long have you lived in Aylesbury?

KM: Two years. Before that I was in Loughborough.

LK: Didn't you do a degree in Loughborough?

KM: Yes, I did my PhD in chemical engineering at Loughborough.

LK: Well that certainly paid off as you got a good job in Aylesbury; could you tell us what you do for a living?

KM: It's to do with fire safety; I research fire explosions, mainly related to the oil and gas industry. Part of my job involves co-ordinating a group of about fifteen major oil companies, we meet twice a year to discuss problems and suggest solutions.

LK: And this job takes you abroad quite often, doesn't it?

KM: Yes, that's right, we travel because most of our clients are overseas.

LK: And you are a family man as well?

KM: I am. I have four children aged between two-and-a-half and twelve.

LK: And you still find time to volunteer?

KM: Yes, I like to make a difference to peoples' lives and I love the chance to gain new skills. Volunteering is a great way to communicate with people and get involved.

LK: You help with the group activities for BucksVision and your first experience was at the Paralympics event last September, wasn't it?

KM: Yes, that was my first task at BucksVision and I was really happy to help out, it was very exciting. I guided Andrew who got to carry the Paralympic Torch and it was great when my children saw the newsletter article about it.

LK: Your main role is a Walking Guide for our Aylesbury Walking Group, how are you finding it?

KM: I am finding it good. It doesn't take up too much of my time and it's at the weekend. I especially enjoyed the last walk because I got to meet some new people, like Michael.

LK: Do you think the walks will benefit people?

KM: Yes. I have heard some people say that they had never been on such a long walk before. I also think it is good to get people together so they have a chance to help and support each other.

LK: And finally, do you have any other hobbies or interests?

KM: I do go to the gym but I tend to spend most weekends with my children; I love being with them, that's my main hobby.

LK: Thanks for your time Khalid.

Online Today

“I was inspired by Davinder and he has given me fresh impetus to try and go forward.” Online Today attendee.

If you would like to find out how you can get online using smartphones and tablets why not come along to one of our Online Today sessions delivered in partnership with RNIB.

The sessions are facilitated by Davinder who is registered as severely sight impaired and is a long time user of smartphones.

The next dates for the sessions are as follows:

Friday 24 March- High Wycombe Library

Monday 24 April- Acorn House, Milton Keynes

Monday 22 May- BucksVision, Aylesbury

Wednesday 28 June- High Wycombe Library

Music at Lunchtime

“It has been such a treat to attend a couple of the lunchtime concerts at St Mary’s. What a thoughtful gesture by the donor. Thank you so much.” SR

Last year the Friends of St Marys Church committee in Aylesbury very kindly donated ‘Music at Lunchtime’ concert tickets to BucksVision.

These events are held each Thursday from 12.45pm – 1.45pm

On 24th November a group of us went along to listen to three beautiful sonatas by Beethoven, Debussy and Prokofiev, followed by refreshments in the church cafe.

A huge Thank You to Graham Aylett and the Friends of St Mary’s for really looking after us. It was a beautiful afternoon and the Friends of St Mary’s have very kindly allowed BucksVision members to continue to use these tickets for the whole of this current season as well. Please contact us if you would like to attend future concerts.

Woman in Black at Aylesbury Waterside Theatre

On Saturday 3rd December a group of BucksVision members had a ghostly experience at Aylesbury Waterside Theatre when they enjoyed an audio described performance of The Woman in Black.

The spooky play was preceded by a Touch Tour where we got to meet the two cast members, feel their costumes and experience the set.

Everyone really enjoyed the performance and found the audio description particularly useful as there were a lot of visual nuances to the play.

“Thank you so much for organising and running our theatre outing last Saturday. My wife Margaret and myself really enjoyed it. I cannot remember when I last went to the theatre. The touch tour, the headphones and in particular meeting with the cast and their précis of the play made it possible for me to follow the story, which otherwise I most certainly would not have been able to do.”

Peter S (Member)

“Thank you for the last minute tickets for Jake to see Women in Black. He really enjoyed it”.

Cathy T (Members mother)

Aylesbury Walking Group

Last November BucksVision set up a Walking Group in Aylesbury.

Thanks to volunteer Alison Roberts (featured in our Spring 2016 newsletter), who is our Group Leader, we have been able to run four walks to date with 25 people coming along to our January walk in Wendover Woods.

The newly fledged group also attracted the attention of BBC South Today- Oxford News with a feature of the group being broadcast on Friday 13th January. You can watch the feature by downloading it from our website.

Walks are organised on a monthly basis and take place on the last Saturday of the month across the Aylesbury Vale and Chilterns. Guides are provided to all walkers who require them (based on availability), but you are also welcome bring along a friend or relative as your guide.

If you are interested in participating please let Lisa know on 01296 487 556 or lkennet@bucksvision.co.uk

Pizza Making Masterclass

On Tuesday 24th January a group of members were invited to participate in a pizza making evening at Pizza Express in Aylesbury

After arriving and donning a fetching plastic apron and paper hat everyone was given a ready rolled pizza base to start their creative process.

After making the crust and spreading the tomato sauce it was time to move on to the toppings. There were a lot to choose from and everyone had fun deciding what they wanted on their pizza. The final step was adding the mozzarella cheese.

While our creations were cooking everyone tucked into some tasty dough balls before enjoying their very own pizza creation! Then for pudding everyone enjoyed a chocolate brownie.

Many thanks to Pizza Express for a fantastic evening.

A little bit of inspiration can go a long way.

Back in 2012 a seed of inspiration was sown when the North West Division invited a group of us from the South East Division, to visit their craft club and exhibition at Stowe. We were impressed and inspired.

Members from North West and their crafts tutors explained their methods and that's when we first heard the term peg loom weaving.

No one in our group had tried a peg loom. So we studied a few Youtube videos and bought one.

Initially we worked on simple mat designs using recycled fabric. Then, becoming more proficient, we started to use wools and braid, creating cushions, scarves, and wall hangings. We are now proudly selling items at local events.

Tarsem, completed a year long project in 2015 to make nine cushions for her granddaughter's wedding present.

In 2016 we decided to combine our members' creative skills with local projects to raise the profile of BucksVision. Our first public weaving event was held in May's Chocolate House in Burnham. Three members; David Reynolds, Susan Silver and Alex Brown, participated in public demonstrations. Visiting customers watched and chatted with us, a few even had a go.

Later in the year at a larger public event in Burnham Park Hall, Alex demonstrated peg loom techniques during a workshop we were invited to perform in the main hall.

We culminated on a high in September, spending a day at Waltham Place Farm (a wonderful beamed barn) demonstrating weaving and exhibiting our crafts. Five members set up looms and worked on their current projects (Susan, Alex, Tarsem, Hilary and Jeremy).

Farm shop customers, estate workers, and walking groups all wandered through the barn for their lunches and teas. Visitors stopped to talk, asking about materials, techniques and watched our

weavers. We met some interesting people, many of whom were interested in us and our projects. It would be nice to think that we have passed on some of that inspiration from Stowe, having nurtured and developed it over the years.

Readers may also be interested to know about the six public weavers featured here. From the names you will have deduced the male/female split, but you may be surprised to learn that the age range is 22 to 68. Their visual impairment also ranges with three partially sighted, two severely sight impaired and one completely blind.

Our group now has nine peg looms and we continue to look for ways to develop our skills and projects.

Thank you North West Division for your inspiration and Niki McCann (Education Officer, Waltham Place) for all your support.

Climbing

On Tuesday 21st February five intrepid members visited The Climb in Amersham to try their hand at rock climbing.

After getting used to the handholds on the horizontal wall the group moved on to some of the vertical walls.

Once they had mastered the smaller ones they tackled the monster 11m walls; two of the group, Shaun and Jackie, made it all the way to the top!

After their exertions the group walked to Amersham high street to enjoy a well deserved hot drink.

Everyone had a fantastic time and were keen to hear about other sporting activities coming up including acoustic shooting and indoor skydiving!

Obituaries

Patrick Phillips

On returning to work in January BucksVision staff were very sad to learn that Patrick Phillips had passed away just before Christmas.

Patrick was involved with BucksVision for over 13 years initially coming on board as a Custodian Trustee before being elected as our President in 2005, a role he stepped down from in June 2016.

During his 10 years as our President Patrick presided over several de Fraine competitions including the 50th Anniversary of the competition in 2015. He also performed official proceedings at our AGMs, as well as supporting BucksVision in many other ways.

We were all very grateful for the support Patrick provided BucksVision over the years and he will be much missed by everyone.

Lynn Hobday

Lynn Hobday, who managed BucksVision (BAB) from the late 1970s to 1990 has sadly passed away at the age of 84.

Lynn worked very hard to develop the organisation in terms of both its voluntary and rehab services. It was her hard work that saw BCC grant BAB the contract to deliver rehabilitation services in Buckinghamshire in the 1990s.

Lynn was also the driving force behind the campaign to open a Resource Centre in Aylesbury. After considering how much more BAB could do with a dedicated space to work and demonstrate equipment in, she launched a successful appeal to raise money for a centre. The Resource Centre, where BucksVision is still based today, was officially opened in April 1988. After retirement Lynn continued to work with people with sight loss as a volunteer.

Macular Society

The Macular Society is a national charity which supports anyone affected by central vision loss.

They provide free information and support and aim to ensure that no one faces macular disease alone. And they also fund research into curing macular disease.

There are around 300 Macular Society support groups around the UK and beyond. In Buckinghamshire there are groups in Amersham, Aylesbury, High Wycombe and Milton Keynes.

Arnold Nayler and Sue Carey of the Wycombe Group tell us what the Macular Society means to them:

“They are very helpful in many ways. Their quarterly journal *SIDEVIEW* is full of news and I like supporting a charity which spreads awareness of macular disease.” **Arnold**

“I find their Helpline very useful and my local group provides me and other members with an opportunity to give each other advice and reassurance; such shared knowledge is a very powerful tool.” **Sue**

Trekker Breeze by Lisa Kennet

The Trekker Breeze (Breeze) is a satellite navigation system which enables visually impaired people to become more confident with getting out and about.

A description of the Breeze.

The Breeze is a portable gadget, approximately 20 cm in length and has nine extremely tactile operational buttons.

What the Breeze will do.

In “Explore” mode the Breeze will tell you where you are e.g. the name of street you are in; names of roads you are passing; and any landmarks you have added. It will do this in pedestrian or motorised mode so you might find it very useful on buses as you can set a landmark to indicate when you are approaching your desired stop. While in pedestrian mode it can also let you know about other points of interest which are around such as shops, banks etc.

What the Breeze will not do.

The Breeze is a sat nav, not a mobility aid: this means that it won't give you much description of your environment. I would not recommend anyone using the Breeze independently in a totally unfamiliar place as it won't let you know things like the road it is advising you to cross is extremely busy. Although you can put all these pieces of info in if you have previously explored the area with someone else. You also won't be warned of trip hazards so it must not be used without mobility aids.

Confidence building and fun.

The Breeze is, however, a fascinating piece of equipment which can really make you aware of your surroundings and give you a lot of reassurance when you are out.

Would I Recommend the Trekker Breeze?

Definitely.

The Trekker Breeze can be purchased from Humanware, for more information call the office on 01296 487556.

RNIB MK Campaigning News

Padma Cheriyan writes:

RNIB MK want to make every day better for blind and partially sighted people in Milton Keynes to live, work and play.

Centre: MK

I have been campaigning for a navigation system for visually impaired people within the Centre MK shopping complex for over a year now. The shopping centre caters to the needs of people with mobility issues, but has ignored the needs of people of sight loss.

The new system will involve people borrowing an easy to use device from the Information Desk which will inform the user which shop they are passing as they walk through the centre. I am waiting for a date for a trial but we have been assured that the system should be operational by the autumn.

Centre Refurbishment

The refurbishment of part of the shopping centre near Marks and Spencer has been causing problems for people with sight loss. The Centre Management have not consulted the Physical Disabilities and Sensory Impairment Consultation Group which exists for this purpose. We have taken the issue up with the Centre Management.

Good news is I have been invited to join the Operations Group of all the businesses in Central Milton Keynes to give feedback on the needs of people with disabilities at their quarterly meetings. The next meeting is expected to be soon.

Bus Stops

After 13 years of campaigning, we have been successful in getting an audio visual bus stop announcement system in place on local buses.

However not all routes have the system and some of the buses that do have it do not use it to its full potential. So watch this space as the campaign goes on.

Donations

We are always grateful to receive donations as they help us to deliver services to blind and partially sighted people across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

If you would like to donate you can do so by:

- Cheque- please make cheques payable to BucksVision
- Credit / Debit Card- please call BucksVision on 01296 487 556.
- Bank Standing Order- please request a Standing Order mandate form from BucksVision.

If you are eligible, please Gift Aid your donation by completing a declaration which can be requested from office or [downloaded from our website](#).

BucksVision

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Registered Charity Number: 1147814

Annual Report

BucksVision's Annual Report and Accounts for the year 2015/16 have been completed. If you would like a copy please contact the office or [download it from our website](#).