

Summer 2017

Newsletter



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Welcome

A colleague reminded me last week that it has been two years since I joined BucksVision. That time has flown by (although I am not sure whether that is a sign of getting older, or whether I have been “having fun”, as the saying goes).

The last two years have been a time of change for BucksVision and I hope that the organisation is in a much stronger position than when I joined two years ago. In that time, we have improved and expanded our range of services significantly, so that we are able to offer more support to local people with sight loss.

Speaking of change, you will probably be aware that we are part of the Action for Blind People/ RNIB Group. In fact, they have recently reorganised

and will be using only “RNIB” from now on. Their aim has been to simplify their structure so that they are able to reach more people across the country with sight loss, and to help them more effectively.

We remain committed to working together so that we provide the best service possible for people across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

I hope that you enjoy this edition of our Newsletter - please let us know any comments, positive or negative, if you have them.

Finally, to all of you who support our work in some way, thank you. We are extremely grateful for your time and dedication.

Steve Naylor
Chief Executive

Meet the Team Review



On the 5th April we held a “Meet the Team” event at the Gateway Conference Centre in Aylesbury. We had 40 participants, comprising volunteers and members.

The event started with an “icebreaker” to give everyone a chance to find out a bit about each other. Steve then gave an overview of our activities from the past year, before handing over to our trustees and staff so that they could introduce and talk about themselves.

There was then a chance to ask questions about BucksVision’s services before breaking for a buffet lunch. During lunch everyone had a chance to play indoor bowls which proved to be very popular.

A quiz followed in which five teams competed; many congratulations to the “A Team” who lived up to their impressive name and won!

We then welcomed Tammie Cooper from OrCam who demonstrated the MyEye camera before postgraduate student Foster Gyamera demonstrated his “clothes identifier” concept.

Meet the Trustees

Bob Dean (*Chair*)

Bob was a member of BucksVision for many years, before joining us as a volunteer, then as a trustee, and then becoming our Chair in 2013.

John Crowther (*Treasurer*)

John was the former Finance Director of Action for Blind People and joined us in 2014.

Ian Laing (*Vice Chair*)

Ian has been involved with BucksVision for nearly ten years, most of that time as a trustee, and is our in-house IT expert.

Andy Shipley

Andy has been involved with BucksVision for over ten years, including as Chair of our Board.

Peter Robbins

Peter has also been involved with BucksVision for ten years and is Chair of our Chalfont Division.

Jan Antosiewicz

Jan joined in 2017. He received help from us in the past and decided to support us by becoming a trustee.

Deborah Dow

Deborah became a trustee in 2017, having previously served as our Chief Executive from 2011 to 2015.

Meet the Staff

Steve Naylor

(Chief Executive)

Steve joined us in 2015 and is responsible for the strategic development of BucksVision.

Alison Deuchars

(Office Manager)

Alison joined us in 2011 and is responsible for overseeing all of BucksVision's services.

Samantha Lah

(Volunteer Manager)

Samantha is responsible for the recruitment, training and

management of our volunteers as well as leading on our Experience Days.

Lisa Kennet

(Volunteer Supervisor)

Lisa joined us in 2016 to manage our new home services but is also involved in other projects such as our Aylesbury walking group.

Carol Banfield

(Database & Finance Administrator)

Carol is our longest serving staff member having joined us in 2001. Carol keeps our database up to date and helps record our financial transactions.

Sally Collier

(Administrator)

Sally joined us in 2016 and is the first point of contact for our members and volunteers.

Anne Mills

(Fundraising Manager)

Anne is our newest team member having joined us in March 2017. Anne is responsible for leading our fundraising work and raising our profile.

Volunteers Week

As you read through this newsletter a key aspect that will stand out is how important our volunteers are, and how we would not be able to deliver our services without them.

1st -7th June each year is **National Volunteers' Week** and we would like to take the time in this issue to thank all of our volunteers; you really are our backbone.

THANK YOU SO MUCH.

We are extremely lucky to have a very dedicated team of 317 volunteers, some of whom have given us their time for over 30 years. We simply could not help local people with sight loss without their brilliant support and dedication.

If there is a volunteer you would like to be recognised for their work, we would love to hear about them.

De Fraine

Since 1965 BucksVision has held an annual arts and crafts competition known as the Ellen Margaret de Fraine competition. Although it recently celebrated its 50th Anniversary, the competition has seen interest decline in recent years.

In order to ensure that the competition continues to be held for another 50 years, we have taken the difficult decision to postpone the competition *this year* so that we can focus on revitalising and re-launching it in 2018. We also wish to ensure that the competition appeals to people of all ages and abilities.

BucksVision will still be running a competition this year, see the page opposite >

To get in touch with us to discuss the competition, or if you are interested in getting involved with launching the new competition we would love to hear from you.

Creative Writing Competition



Reading all of the de Fraine stories and poems submitted over the years, we know there are many talented writers in the county.

So this year we are holding a **Creative Writing Competition** open to all our members in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

We are inviting entries for the following categories:

Adults

Short story: 500 - 1,000 word story, any topic or subject

Poem: No more than 40 verse lines, any topic or subject

Young Person (12 - 17 years)

Short story: 500 words maximum, any topic or subject

Children (5 - 11 years)

Short story: 500 words maximum, any topic or subject

The judges for each of the categories and the prizes will be announced shortly, so keep an eye on our website and social media pages.

If you would like to enter please contact us to request an entry form on 01296 487 556 or adeuchars@bucksvision.co.uk

Deadline for entries is 30th September 2017

So do get your thinking caps on and start writing today!

Samantha and Steve were delighted to be invited to attend North West's AGM on Tuesday 2nd May, as it was a very special occasion.



Sue Thornhill was stepping down as Chair of the Division after an amazing 30 years of service. North West members and volunteers, joined by past Committee members, presented Sue with a beautifully compiled book containing photos of all of the activities and events Sue had taken part in over the years. Samantha and Steve also presented Sue with a certificate and some flowers.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sue for her hard work and dedication over the last 30 years. It is volunteers like Sue who make such a difference to peoples' lives.



Following on from our masterclass at Pizza Express in Aylesbury we held another successful evening in High Wycombe. This time there were even more participants with both members and volunteers getting stuck in.

Marcus and Andreea were on hand to assist us to stretch the dough before adding the tomato sauce and an array of toppings!

Everyone had a fantastic time and we welcomed new members.



Meeting the Dinosaurs

On Wednesday 22nd March a group of intrepid explorers set off from Milton Keynes to journey inside Oxford University's Natural History Museum.

Once we arrived we were split into two groups and the first group set off on an exploration of the museum guided by Susan Griffiths. We were taken on a tour of the many fossils and geological items that are displayed there. We also had special privileges as we were able to touch the dinosaur skeletons and other items that are usually off limits!

The tour was highly interactive with lots of items to feel, many with Braille descriptions. Our guide was very informative and everyone really enjoyed the tour.

The second group were given the opportunity to feel a wide variety of items including snake skin, fossils, taxidermy animals and a polar bear paw. Caroline Cheeseman provided a fascinating commentary

describing the items in detail. After this the groups then swapped over and there was time at the end to ask any additional questions.

"Thank you so much for a very enjoyable day yesterday. I thought the museum was great and I really appreciated your assistance and descriptions of objects that were out of reach."

We would like to thank the museum staff for providing a fascinating and very interactive tour which our members thoroughly enjoyed.



A Model Organisation



Where else can you walk around a castle, a circus, a windmill, a boating lake and lots of houses in a single afternoon? Why, Bekonscot model village of course!

Forty of us visited Bekonscot on the 28th April on one of our increasingly popular Experience Days.

When we arrived we were given a talk in the tea room by Brian Newman-Smith, the Managing Director. The village was created by Roland Callingham in 1929 after he was given an ultimatum by his wife, either his model railways went or she did! We also got a chance to feel and learn about the materials used in the village.

After the talk we wandered around the village and we were permitted to touch any models within reach - not a privilege granted to the general public!

The village actually consists of six little towns stuck in a 1930's

timewarp so visitors are able to experience England as it used to be. Many of the exhibits even feature sounds.

Bekonscot also has a light railway with trains leaving every few minutes and BucksVision staff, members and helpers alike sat astride on the miniature locomotive for a tour of the grounds.

We must say a big thank you to Brian, and also to Maura Buckland, Bekonscot's secretary who helped make our visit go so smoothly.

For more information visit: www.bekonscot.co.uk





Aylesbury Walking Group Update

Aylesbury Walking Group has now enjoyed seven walks, our most recent being in Wendover Woods where the bluebells were out in full bloom. We all experienced their delicate perfume and those with some sight appreciated their colour.

Walks take place on the last Saturday of the month, excluding December, and are graded 1-3.

Level 1. *Easy*

Up to 2 hours, with a figure of eight course or interconnections back to the start. Walkers have the choice to walk half way, or complete the circuit. Possibility of mild hills.

Level 2. *Easy/Medium*

Up to 2 hours, no figure of eight course, walkers will need to be able to walk the full circuit. Possibility of mild hills.

Level 3. *Difficult*

Anything between 2 hours and up to half a day. No figure of eight and possibility of steep hills and/or longer length.

The dates and venues for the next two walks are:

24th June, College Lake

(Level 1) Flat all the way

Walk twice around the lake, with option to sit in the café half way. Free car park with an option to give a suggested donation of £3.

29th July, Weston Turville Reservoir and Canal

(Level 1 and 2) Flat all the way

This walk will start at either Weston Turville Reservoir or in Wendover. There will be the chance to return during the walk as the route is easy to follow.

Members are welcome to join us but if you come from further afield (except MK, as they have their own walking groups) you will need to arrange your own transport and sighted guide.

It is very important that you book no later than 5pm on the Monday before the walk and if you need a sighted guide or transport please book promptly.

A

B

Tandem Club

Thanks to a successful recruitment campaign we now have a number of tandem pilots waiting in the wings to take members out cycling.

Our pilots are happy to take out riders with varying levels of experience and you don't need to be Bradley Wiggins to participate! A base level of fitness is recommended though.

So if you would like to get involved please get in touch with us. If you do not live in Milton Keynes or the surrounding area, but would like to get involved in tandem cycling we would be interested to hear from you too.



Alan Matthews, 55

Level of cycling:

I cycle several times a week and I am comfortable on short rides all the way up to 75 - 100 milers. I do love a nice café stop though. Have cycled for over 20 years but more so in the last 7-8 years.

Why I became a pilot:

I love cycling and the freedom of the outdoors it gives you and want to ensure everyone gets a chance to experience it.

Keith Herbert, 53



Level of cycling:

Mostly social cycling, though do around 40 miles per week commuting to and from work, plus some weekend cycling as and when time and weather allows.

Why I became a Pilot:

I saw an item on TV about tandem cycling, and thought it was a great idea. A couple of months later I saw an advert in the local paper looking for volunteers and thought I would give it a go, so here I am.

Interested in Trying a New Sport?



Bowls

Bowls is now recognised as one of the most accessible sports readily available and can be played by almost anyone, with or without a visual impairment.

The object of the game is to get one or more of your bowls closer to the jack than those of your



opponents on each end - one point is scored for each counting bowl.

BucksVision has two fantastic visually impaired Bowls Clubs, **Aylesbury Rollers** and **Wycombe Chestnuts**, who play competitively throughout the year. In the winter months, they play indoors, so you do not need to worry about frozen fingers.

No previous bowls experience is needed, as long as you are reasonably physically fit (there is a lot of bending down), you are guaranteed a warm welcome and lots of fun.

Tennis

At the beginning of May the International Blind Tennis Tournament took place in Spain, and we were delighted to hear that Milton Keynes member Sarah Fortesque took part as a reserve.

Although Sarah wasn't called upon during the competition, to be selected as a reserve is an amazing achievement.

There are VI tennis clubs in Milton Keynes and Aylesbury and the visually impaired version of tennis is very similar to mainstream tennis with only a few adaptations.

Give it a go, it's great fun!



For more details of the Bowls and Tennis clubs please contact us on 01296 487 556.

Our Year in the SE Working Age Group

Looking back over fifteen events in twelve months makes me realise how fortunate we are to have such a band of committed volunteers who support us in our ventures.

We try to have a new event or project in our schedules and this year we had two:-

Lunch & Skittles

A great afternoon in Eton Wick where we had four teams - some better than others!

Log Robots

Using a selection of large sawn logs along with numerous other items we designed our own robot heads. It was a fun event and amazing to see how 'individual' they all turned out. We displayed the mounted log heads at the Burnham Health Day in May. They were a huge hit and we sold them all to members of the public for £10 each.

Members choose individual names for their designs which

created a talking point with visiting adults as well as children.

This busy public event not only raised awareness but we also raised £788 for our Division.

Walks

Walks are very popular with our members and we had four seasonal events:- Virginia Water during the spring; a historical walk and talk in June around Gray's Monument; a demanding 7 mile autumn hike; and a winter walk in Black Park.

Quizzes

Most of us enjoy quizzes so we had three over the year. Two at Wexham Golf Club, were organised by Jackie, one of our newer members. We entered two teams in April 2016 and six teams in March 2017.

Volunteers, members, friends and family all joined in to make both nights hugely successful. In total we raised £1,142 for our Division, which was much appreciated.



Waltham Place Farm

We have an association with Waltham Place Farm as mentioned in the previous newsletter. Waltham Place are involved with the annual Royal Forestry Show held in Windsor Great Park and we were invited to enter. Six members entered and came away successful. This gave us a real confidence boost, as we were up against members of the public.

Social gatherings

We also had two social gatherings, a summer lunch in August at The Royal Oak, and our Christmas lunch held at The Emperor Pub. The latter was particularly enjoyable as we had a room to ourselves and after lunch teams competed in one of John Warren's music quizzes.

Not to be forgotten amongst these events was our participation in the De Fraine competition. We had slightly fewer entries but still came away with many certificates, individual and Group Cups. The icing on

the cake was winning the De Fraine Shield for coming 1st again; the sixth year in a row! And during August we had a celebration at the Bowls Club for all those who took part and gave out the certificates to all winning members.

As you see from the above our group has had plenty of fun and variety during the year.

If you live in the south east of the county and think this sounds interesting, then please get in touch with us on 01296 487 556.



Textile Showcase

During the course of March PhD student Emilie Giles delivered six craft sessions to seven of our local members. Their task was to create pieces of art using textile fabrics, but with a twist as their art works included sounds as well as textures.

On 21st April their fantastic pieces were showcased to BucksVision staff and their family and friends. Each artist had the opportunity to present their piece to the group and explain what it meant to them.



Ian Miller- *Rainforest Project*

The woven fabric is a mixture of green and multi-coloured strands representing earth colours. The sounds included insects and tropical thunderstorms.



Sigrid Muller - *Touch, Listen and Use Your Imagination*

This piece is all about the sea. Touch the blue in the centre, hear seagulls; touch the lighthouse, hear a foghorn and touch the trawler and hear an SOS call!



Lindy Mooney- *Lovely Noisy Katie*

Katie is Lindy's cockatoo who doesn't like being stroked. Lindy therefore created this image of Katie so she can stroke her. You can also hear Katie if you touch the piece.

RNIB MK Campaign report

Cars parked on pavements is a thorny problem nationwide.

Guide Dogs, RNIB and BucksVision are jointly pushing a major campaign calling for London style pavement parking rules to be rolled out across the country. Pavement parking can cause many vulnerable pedestrians, including people with vision impairments (VI) to have to go into the road. When someone cannot see or hear oncoming traffic it can be very dangerous.

So June will be a month of action.

We will be lobbying Councillors and MPs to try navigating around cars parked on pavements with blindfolds. And we also need pictures as evidence; so when you see cars parked on pavements, take a picture and send it to us.

Improving public transport

We have good news to report. Arriva, the major bus operators in Milton Keynes have signed the RNIB Bus Charter and they are getting us involved in their driver training. Unless we report

problems Arriva cannot address them and improve services. We are therefore calling all VI bus users in Milton Keynes to report any problems they experience on the buses to Padma.

Navigation system in MK Shopping centre

On 25 April we successfully tested the Georgie app to enable VI's to navigate through the MK shopping centre. The app will not only guide VI shoppers through the building but also inform them which shop they are in front of and guide them through the shop. As the MK centre is a listed building, installation of a network to make the app function is challenging. However, we have been assured that we shall have a unique navigation system working in a matter of months.

Thank you for your support.

Padma Cheriyan

Volunteer Campaign Coordinator for RNIB MK.

Telephone 01908 377 058

Email pscheriyan@gmail.com

Fundraising Update

Our new Fundraising Manager Anne Mills has introduced a number of initiatives over the last few months including:

Talks

We will be holding monthly talks at our Aylesbury office to raise awareness of what we do and how we can help people with sight loss. They are open to all existing members, their friends and family, and members of the public.

The talks run on Wednesday afternoons from 2.30 - 4.00pm.

28th June
26th July
30th August

Refreshments and a warm welcome are guaranteed.

Collection boxes

We would be delighted if you would consider donating your loose change to us. Please find enclosed a collection box for you to assemble. If you would like any more please get in touch.



Thank You

We would like to say a big Thank You to everyone who has kindly donated to us and to these Donors:

The Anson Charitable Trust
£9,000 over three years

The Shanley Foundation
£5,000

Thomas Hickman's Charity
£2,500

William Harding's Charity
£1,500

Marlow Round Table £1,000

Beaconsfield Lions £250

Argos £100 voucher

From the Archives

In this feature we take a look back into our archives:

1912 - 1st Annual Report

"The first annual report of your committee must of necessity be a history of beginnings, but we venture to hope that real progress has been made amongst the Blind."

In 1912 there were 280 people on the register and basket weaving was a prominent feature.

1965 Seaside Holiday

38 members and volunteers from Mid, North and North West Divisions had a lovely trip to Clacton-on-Sea.

"Those partaking...welcomed the opportunity of making and forming lasting friendships with members from other Divisions."
(51st Annual Review)

1988 New Centre Opens

"On 15th April 1988 the new Resource and Training Centre was officially opened by our Patron Sir Ian Gilmour, which was the culmination of three years hard work to convert a dream into reality."

(1988 - 89 Annual Report Yearbook)



A reminder of the holiday at Clacton-on-Sea. The holiday party of blind people and their guides from the North, North-West and Mid Divisions.

Useful Contacts

Bucks Integrated Sensory Service (BISS) - 01296 479 970

For support dealing with sight loss at home in Buckinghamshire.

Sensory Advice Resource Centre (SARC) - 01908 401 135

For support dealing with sight loss at home in Milton Keynes.

RNIB – 0303 123 9999

Advice and support with all aspects of sight loss.

Macular Society – 0300 3030 111 (Helpline)

Information and support for people with macular conditions.

Age UK Bucks – 01296 431 911

Age UK Milton Keynes – 01908 550 700

Support for older people to help them achieve and maintain independence and wellbeing.

MK Reader Service – 01908 231 123

Support with reading and shopping in Milton Keynes.

Talking News Federation - 01793 497 555

Information on local talking newspapers.

British Wireless for the Blind – 01622 754 757

Radio sets on free loan for people who meet the criteria.

For Sale

Optelec Clearview+ 17inch screen magnifier

Age 3 years old OIRO £150.

Contact Gwynne Lewis on 01494 896594 if interested in purchasing. Collection only from BucksVision office, Aylesbury.