



Parkside Centre, Leeds Road, Outwood, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF1 2PN
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WELCOME TO OUR CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2011

To all our members, supporters and colleagues, best wishes for a **Happy Christmas** and a more prosperous New Year in 2012, from the Board of Management, our staff and volunteers. A big **thank you** to our President the Lord St Oswald for his kind and generous support, and to all our volunteers who give unstintingly of their time to help us in the office and in our work with our members. Thanks too to the members of Parkside Church, who give us their support here at Parkside Centre.

Some of our members may be on their own at Christmas, or not well, or have lost close friends or relatives: our thoughts are with you.

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS?

We still have a good selection of Large Print diaries, calendars and lined paper available for sale at the office.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR PERIOD OFFICE CLOSURE

The Office will be closed during Christmas week, (from December 26th) and re-opens Tuesday January 3rd 2012

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. What are the names of the Three Wise Men?
2. What are Santa Claus' other two names?
3. When is Twelfth Night?
4. Why is Boxing Day so called?
5. Who looked out on the Feast of Stephen?
6. Who sang the very first 'Noel'?
7. Which three plants are usually associated with Christmas?
8. Who saw the Angels?
9. What is New Year called in Scotland?
10. Which special food is served in Scotland on New Year's Day?

(Answers to the quiz are at the back of the newsletter)

RAFFLE 2011

Thank you to everyone who has purchased tickets for our 2011 raffle and helped us to raise over £1,300 so far. The draw will take place here at Outwood on Tuesday 13th December. Prize winners will be notified immediately by telephone and prizes will be held in the office at Outwood for collection until 31st January, 2012.

OSSETT ROTARY CLUB and HORBURY/OSSETT PHOENIX ROTARY CLUB – HYACINTH BULBS

The above Rotary Clubs are preparing bowls of hyacinth bulbs for members who live in the Ossett and Horbury areas. If you **DO NOT** want your name to be forwarded, please let us know as soon as possible. Please note that the bulbs will be delivered when they are ready, usually February/March time.

SIGHT AID DEMONSTRATION DAYS 2012

Outwood, Wakefield

10.30am to 2.00pm (NB 2.00 not 2.30)

Monday 16th January

Monday 2nd April

Monday 18th June

Monday 17th September

Monday 10th December

Parkside Centre, Leeds Road, Outwood, Wakefield WF1 2PN
(next to Outwood Library)

Castleford

10.30am – 2.00pm (NB 2.00 not 2.30)

Thursday 23rd February

Thursday 17th May

Thursday 2nd August

Thursday 15th November

Trinity Methodist Church, Powell Street, Castleford,
WF10 1EL

Our Demo Days are open to all members of the public, whether visually impaired or not. Our usual range of equipment will be on view and staff available to talk to.

CONTACT THE ELDERLY

Contact the Elderly is a national charity (founded in 1965) which helps relieve loneliness by arranging small group outings one Sunday afternoon a month. Volunteers with cars collect the same one or two members. The group of 6 to 8 elderly guests and their drivers are welcomed by volunteer Hosts who give Sunday afternoon tea in their home once or twice a year.

The service offers a chance to make friends of all ages within the safety of a small group; monthly Sunday afternoon tea, conversation, laughter and friendship. It offers a short drive and opportunity to get away from the four walls and a regular outing to look forward to on what may be, for some, the loneliest day of the week. The afternoon tea lasts from 3.00pm to 5.00pm and there is no charge.

A new group has started in the Ackworth and Pontefract area and it is anticipated that a new group will also be starting in Wakefield next year.

If you would like to join the Sunday Afternoon Tea Group or find out further information, please ring Mary Robinson on **01535 632592** or ring Delia at the office on 01924 215555.

101 IS THE NEW NON-EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBER IN WEST YORKSHIRE

From 17th November West Yorkshire Police has a new contact number for you to ring when it is not an emergency.

101 gives you an easy way to get in touch with the police for calls that do not need an urgent response. **101** is easy to remember and easy to call.

You can call **101** to report a crime that has already happened, ask for crime prevention advice or give the police information.

When you call the 101 number the operator will take down information about what has happened and, if necessary, arrange an appointment for an officer to come round and see you.

All calls to 101 cost just 15p, even from a mobile and no matter how long it lasts for. 101 will in no way replace the 999 emergency number but provide a non-emergency number for the public to easily get in touch with West Yorkshire Police.

CENOTAPH REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

One of our members took part in the Remembrance Sunday parade in London. Mr John Lappin represented St Dunstan's, the Charity that assists ex-servicemen and women who have lost their sight. John travelled down on the Saturday, stayed at the plush Marriott Hotel (where he was indignant to discover that a gin and tonic cost £7.75). Not able to manage the length of the walk, John used a wheelchair and was attended by a Naval Chief Petty Officer. John said the camaraderie was what made the biggest impression on him, meeting people from other areas and sharing experiences. He says he has always been proud of being part of St Dunstan's and is hoping to try out the new St Dunstan's Hotel in Llandudno. So if there are any visually impaired ex-servicemen or women out there, St Dunstan's is a very supportive organisation. We have details if anyone would like to contact them.

CUSTOMER CARE SURVEY

Many thanks to those who have already completed and returned the forms. In December, we shall record the

information from them, and report back to our members in the next Newsletter. The report will go to the Council, to show the views of our service users.

Many of you have informed us that you find large print difficult or impossible to read. **Please** can we remind you that the newsletter is available on audio cassette, CD, email and Braille. If you would like to receive the newsletter in any of these formats, please ring Delia at the office and tell her your name and which format you prefer.

Please could we ask the person who returned part of the survey letter with the following wording to contact the office. "Mary died in August 2009. This is the fifth time you have been informed. Please stop sending these leaflets." Unfortunately no surname or other details were given and we would like to cease the distress that the sender obviously feels and apologise, but are helpless to do anything further until we have more information.

TELEPHONE CONTACT

Some members in the past have said that they would value having more contact from us. We have long been aware that many people, particularly those who are more isolated, would like this, but funds have never allowed us to undertake more visits. The costs of the staff time, petrol etc are constantly rising. But we are going to try to make more telephone contact where we can, just to say 'hello' and check if there is more that could be done to help. We know that some people are hearing impaired and therefore this may not be ideal for them, but during 2012 we will be seeking to find grants that would help us do more home visits. Clearly we cannot phone everyone, but we can make a start, so Pam Walters, Caroline Barker or Margaret Dodd (whom many of you will remember) may well be giving you a call. (And you can always tell us then if you would rather not be contacted.)

MACULAR DISEASE SOCIETY have launched a new support group in Wakefield for people with Age Related Macular Disease (AMD). It meets on the first Tuesday of each month, from 1.00 pm to 3.00 pm at the Cathedral Centre 8-10 Westmorland Street Wakefield WF1 1PJ. The group is for people to meet and share experiences of living with AMD. There are speakers who will come to talk to the group to keep everyone up to date with developments and services. Friends and family are also welcome.

Please note that the meetings on Tuesday 6th December and Tuesday 3rd January will be held at St. Austin's Church Hall. From then on it will be in the Cathedral Centre. If you would like more information please contact Stella on **01924 369977** or ring Delia here in the office on 01924 215555

The Macular Disease Society is a very helpful organisation to belong to. Apart from a regular newsletter, they have helpful advice and information available from their Helpline on 0845 241 2041 or email info@maculardisease.org Their address is The Macular Disease Society, P.O. Box 1870, Andover, Hampshire SP10 9AD

ECCENTRIC VIEWING CONFERENCE

Eccentric Viewing is a technique for training your eye to use the "periphery" instead of the centre of the eye, to see with. It has been developed especially to help people with Macular Disease make better use of their remaining sight. This Conference, for eye care and health professionals, will be held on March 15th next year at the Aston Conference Centre in Birmingham, and hopefully will increase awareness and skills amongst health care staff. The Macular Disease Society has been a pioneer in this technique, and offers training sessions for people who have AMD. If you are interested, contact the Macular Disease Society on **0845 241 2041**

LOCAL TALKING NEWSPAPERS

For those of our readers who live in the Eastern part of the District (and other parts as well, of course), The Pontefract and Castleford Talking Newspaper is a good read. The weekly talking edition of the Pontefract and Castleford Express keeps you up to date with events, featuring the front page news, the obituaries, the editorial comment, a column by Ian Clayton and as much of the rest of the paper as the recorders feel readers will be interested in. It is recorded onto a USB Memory Stick and plays on a Boombox device that is on permanent loan to everyone on their list. Most of the listeners are local, but they will send the paper to anywhere in the country. It all goes post free through the Royal Mail's "Articles for the Blind" label scheme.

If anyone is interested in receiving this Talking Newspaper, they can contact the Editor, Mary, on **01977 792833**, or ask us at WDSA to help you.

For those of you who enjoy listening to the radio, did you know about the BBC Radio 4 programme called "In Touch". It goes out at 8.40pm on Tuesdays. The programme is designed for blind and visually impaired listeners and has been broadcast for 50 years.

BRITISH WIRELESS FOR THE BLIND LAUNCH THEIR NEW CONCERTO 2 PLAYER

The national charity British Wireless for the Blind Fund have just launched their newly developed Concerto2, a brand new version of the charity's most popular radio. It was officially launched at this year's Sight Village exhibition.

The Concerto2 is a Stereo DAB/FM CD/USB/SDcard Radio/Cassette player. It has all the easy to use features for the previous version, with large yellow buttons,

allowing users to play CD's, cassettes, SD cards and to listen to both digital and analogue radio. However BWBF have responded to feedback from its users and other organisations and have provided the facility to use USB memory sticks as well. The USB facility has a fast forward and rewind function, allowing listeners to skip backwards and forwards within the tracks on the memory stick.

It has 5 one-touch preset buttons to preset your favourite radio stations, large character LCD display and audible tuning.

The Concerto2 is available on free loan to blind and visually impaired people who meet BWBF criteria (in receipt of specific means-tested benefits). But please note that existing users will not be able to upgrade to a new set unless they have had their previous set for 3 years. The Concerto2 is available to purchase. Price £191.67 for Blind or Partially Sighted listeners, £230 +VAT for non registered people. Further details can be found at www.blind.org.uk or telephone 01622 754 757 or contact us at WDSA for advice.

NEW ULTRACANE

A team of British engineers have got together to re-design the UltraCane, the sonic walking cane that warns users of obstacles ahead of them. The newly designed UltraCane has a warning device fitted into the handle, which vibrates when there are obstacles ahead. The rate of vibration indicates how near the obstacle is. It is apparently much more reliable and easier to use than the original UltraCane. Further information from www.ultracane.com or telephone **01423 359711**

NEWS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

October saw the launch of an important initiative from Visionary, the organisation that links together all the sight-loss charities and associations. Their conference published a

set of “outcomes” that are important to visually impaired people, to help build pressure on the Government and local Councils, to develop better services and co-ordinate them better. The paper is called “Seeing it my way” and Visionary ask for feedback from people about the outcomes they set out. Although this newsletter may not be in time for you to meet the deadline for responses,(the closing date is December 16th), WDSA has sent in some feedback.

Sightsavers, an International organisation, is to donate £62 million (to mark World Sight Day that was on October 13th), to fight trachoma, a preventable blindness that affects many adults and children in Africa and Asia. The bacteria of poor sanitary conditions, which cause repeated conjunctivitis, cause trachoma.

The RNIB, Action for Blind People and SeeAbility have appointed David Blunkett as an independent Chairperson to head up their discussions about developing closer collaboration. These three organisations will form a sort of consortium to try to influence the development of better services. We support anything that might help to improve services for visually impaired people. But we hope they remember that it is the small local Associations who usually provide these services and who depend on local fund-raising to do it.

REGISTRATION

An article in this month’s newsletter from the RNIB considers the issue of Registration and asks if it really works.

We get quite a lot of feedback from our members, about Registration, and it is clearly a ‘mixed bag’: it is a useful process both for the local Council (who can refer to it to help with their planning of services), and for individual users, who can obtain certain benefits by being Registered.

Nationally, the Registers are often a bit hit and miss, inconsistent, and sometimes not well maintained. (Despite the rise in the older population, the Registration numbers are falling). But of course much depends on the resources that Government gives to support the work on such Registers. The feedback we get in Wakefield is usually very good. But the process could perhaps be improved, if for example all Eye Consultants remembered to refer their patients for Registration as soon as they are eligible.

Patients themselves do not always know the benefits of Registration. It can be a gateway to getting local services, (such as Blue Disabled Parking Badge), and for those who are registered at the higher level (Severely Sight Impaired/Blind), it enables people to claim the higher level Mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance, and the Blind Person's Allowance (which is a significant amount for those who pay income tax).

The process is of course dependent first of all on the Eye Consultant confirming that your sight is of such a level as to be Registered. He then completes a form, Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI) which you sign, and which then goes to the Visual Impairment Team (VIT) of the Council's Family Services. The VIT then place your name on their Register, and will send you a pack of information along with your Registration card, giving the date of your registration and your registration number. This is the number you quote if you use it for applying for Benefits. They will also check with you to see what support or advice you may need.

So it is important to check with your Eye Consultant whether you are eligible for Registration. If you have not seen an Eye Consultant for several years, and you know your eyesight has deteriorated, we recommend that you go to your GP and ask for a referral to the Eye Consultant to have your eyes re-tested.

And remember too, the Eye Consultant is the only one who can refer you to the Low Vision Clinic, where you can be assessed for necessary reading aids (such as magnifiers), and for sunglasses. These are issued free of charge from the Low Vision Clinic.

REMINDER

The RNIB's National Library Service has Europe's largest collection of Braille books (around 25,000 titles) and a growing range of giant print books in 24 point type. The Braille and giant print services are free. For more information contact the RNIB on **0303 123 9999**, email **library@rnib.org.uk** or visit **www.rnib.org/library**

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. Melchior, Caspar, Balthazar
2. St Nicolas, or Father Christmas
3. 6th January
4. The day when the Poor Box was opened in church and distributed to members of the Church who were in need.
5. Good King Wenceslas
6. The Angels
7. Holly, Ivy and Mistletoe
8. The Shepherds
9. Hogmanay
10. Haggis and Neeps