

Founded in 1869

Email wrba@btconnect.com

Tel 01924 215555

www.wrba.org.uk



Parkside Centre
Leeds Road
Outwood
Wakefield
WF1 2PN

NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2010

Welcome to the Summer edition of our members Newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading it and would welcome any feedback or comments you may care to make.

Demonstration Days

Outwood/Wakefield – Parkside Centre, Leeds Road, Outwood, Wakefield WF1 2PN – **10.30am to 3.00pm**
19 July, 16 August, 20 September, 18 October

Castleford – Trinity Methodist Church, Powell Street, Castleford WF10 1EL – **10.30am to 2.30pm**
1 July, 5 August, 2 September, 7 October

South Kirkby – Langthwaite House Business Centre, Langthwaite Grange Ind. Estate, South Kirkby WF9 3AE
10.30am to 3.00pm
13 July, 10 August, 14 September, 12 October

Boom Boxes - What is a Boom Box?

A Boombox is a listening device that allows users to listen to stories and music stored on a memory stick.

This player is now being used by many local talking newspapers who will be offering a memory stick instead of a CD or tape.

The advantage to using a memory stick, is that it can store far more than a CD or tape. It can store both audio and music files.

The Boombox is very easy to use. You simply insert the memory stick into the Boombox, which plays as soon as it is inserted. It can be paused so you do not have to listen to the contents in one sitting. There are four buttons on the Boombox: stop/start, volume, fast forward and rewind. There are 2 speakers and a slot for the memory stick. The Boombox is smaller than a CD player or tape machine. It is particularly useful when going on holiday or staying away from home as it is so compact.

If you already have audio CDs or music on CD, this can easily be changed into MP3 format, which is the format needed to operate the memory stick. Files can be converted from CD to MP3 format by using a computer and Windows Media Player. Files can then be copied onto the memory stick and played on the Boombox.

To find out more and to have a demonstration of the player, please visit us at our Sight Aid Demonstration Days at Castleford, Outwood and South Kirkby (details above). Boomboxes are currently priced at £22 and memory sticks are £5.

This year, **SIGHT VILLAGE** is taking place at Birmingham (13-15 July), but at a different venue, The New Bingley Hall, 1 Hockley Circus, Hockley, Birmingham B18 5BE. Entry is free from 10-4.30pm, and there will be plenty of companies displaying their new equipment and services.

Amazon Audio Description Shopfront

The online retailer Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk) now has a section devoted to DVDs with audio description (listed under 'DVD and VHS'). Over 300 titles are currently available.

British Wireless for the Blind Fund

Has launched some new equipment. The SONATA is a brand new Internet Audio Player that does not rely on having computer access. It simply needs a broadband connection, and after being set up, gives you access to thousands of radio

stations, talking newspapers and magazines (for a subscription), and some supermarket catalogues. It is easy to use, with only 5 large buttons. Selection is by listening to the options and choosing which you want.

BWBF equipment is issued on free loan to anyone who needs it and is on means tested benefits. Otherwise, all their equipment is available to purchase. So if you are a keen radio listener and finding it hard to use your current radio, there may be something here that will be helpful.

Other equipment available are the DUET 2 DAB radio, and the CONCERTO stereo CD radio cassette player.

For those with Internet you can check out their products at **www.blind.org.uk** or ring them on **01622 754757**

Thrive – National Blind Gardeners’ Club New publication – ‘Getting on with growing in containers’

This book shows how using containers can provide exciting, flexible and manageable growing spaces and will be invaluable whether you are new to gardening, or are more experienced. The methods described have also been tried-and-tested by people who have sight loss.

So whether you fancy a few herbs growing on your windowsill, or a profusion of flowering plants and vegetables, fruits, shrubs or trees, containers are ideal growing spaces. The book is available in large print and Braille, as well as on Daisy CD and audio CD. It costs £7.50 to non-members of the NBGC or £5 for members. To order a copy telephone **0118 988 5688**

Government

The new Government has appointed a number of Ministers whose views will have relevance for Visually Impaired people. The new Minister for Eye Care is Ann Milton, MP for Guildford. The new Minister for Social Care is Paul Burstow, and the new Minister for Disabled people is Maria Miller, MP for Basingstoke. The new Secretary of State for Health is Andrew Lansley.

The National Federation of the Blind has taken up the issue of **'shared surfaces'**, to tackle the Government about the increasing difficulty that visually impaired people are having coping with walking in areas that are also used by cafés for their tables, boards and signs, flower tubs, flagpoles and all the rest.

WRBA recently took part in a piece of research about cyclists and their impact on visually impaired walkers. The research shows that visually impaired are increasingly vulnerable as cyclists more and more use pavements instead of roads. The study recommends that the Government look again at the development of cycling routes, and look at using separate pedestrian and cycling paths.

Also on transport, the Guide Dogs Association is campaigning to get audio and visual information mandatory on buses. So talking buses could become standard. Guide Dogs has published a leaflet for bus drivers providing tips on how to help blind and partially sighted passengers use buses more safely and easily. Tips include knowing how and when to give assistance, helping with the fare system and telling the passenger where they'll find a vacant seat.

New laws require trains and trams to have audiovisual information systems but this does not yet apply to coaches or buses.

Readers Page – Eye Conditions

In last years Customer Survey, a couple of people asked if we could put more about eye conditions into our Newsletter.

Bearing in mind that we are not medical or Ophthalmic authorities, we will try to include any new information we come across relating to eye conditions.

Researchers at Moorfields Eye Hospital have just completed some research into a new treatment for short sightedness. A synthetic lens is inserted in front of the eye's natural lens, and it seems that this treatment promises to be much safer than

the present approach, laser treatment. Hopefully this new treatment will become standard in a short time.

New research has shown that early signs of Glaucoma can be detected in the brain. Glaucoma is usually thought of as an eye disease, where the pressure in the eye causes damage to the retina and optic nerve, but this research shows that it may be damage in the brain that is the real cause of the problem. The eye problems are just the last bit in the process of damage. This discovery could lead to new ways of treating the condition.

Smoking and eye disease

Smoking has been shown to be a clear risk factor in Age Related Macular Disease, and people who smoke are 2 or 3 times more likely to develop AMD than people who do not smoke, (thought that is no consolation to the many people we know who have never smoked and still got AMD!)

Smoking affects the cells in the retina by reducing the blood supply to the blood vessels and nerves. There is also the toxic effects of the nicotine and other chemicals.

Smoking has been shown to contribute to the development of cataracts, and can worsen diabetic retinopathy, the destruction of the retinal cells seen in diabetes. It also impacts on circulation, which is not good for those with a tendency to heart disease and circulation, (which also can affect eyesight), and for women who smoke during pregnancy, smoking is a factor in infants developing squint (strabismus).

By the way, for people with **diabetic retinopathy**, new research at the University of Edinburgh into Diabetes Type 2, indicates that people with this condition seem to have worse memory than those without it, possibly resulting from narrowing or blockage of the blood vessels.

New recording processes in Health and Social Care

If you use Health or Social Care Services, did you know that in April they began to implement a new process of recording details about the work they do on your behalf?

Called "**Outcomes-based**" registration, it requires the professionals to write down the Outcomes of the services they provide to you. Not just the outcome as in 'delivered a white stick', or 'gave you a course of treatment', but the impact of what that service did for you, in a much wider context. For example, the provision of a Long Cane and training to use it, perhaps had the effect of helping you get out and about more, developing your confidence, and making you feel happier, seeing your friends more, and being able to get to the GP more easily, thus giving you better access to health care. Sounds complicated, but is actually good practice. What they record will be based on what **YOU** feel are the benefits of the services you have had. That will determine whether the service was really any good or not. WRBA will also be doing this, because the Council need to know whether the service we provide to you (and for which they give us a small grant), really has any benefit. We know from what you tell us already that it does, but we will need to show it.

An event that some of you may be interested in: Guide Dogs Association and National Blind Children's Society are putting on an event in Birmingham 28-29th October, bringing together visually impaired young people, their families, and different professionals, to share experience and new ideas. If you have things you'd like to say, and put your 2-pennyworth in, you can book a place by ringing **0118 983 8253**

For those of you who tend to hoard your hard-earned cash! The old style **£20** notes (with the picture of Sir Edward Elgar on them), were replaced by a new design in March this year, featuring Adam Smith, and so the old ones will no longer be legal tender at the end of June. If you have been saving any

£20 notes, get your relative or carer to check them, and exchange any old style ones before June 30th.

AGM

WRBA held its Annual General Meeting on May 19th. The opening speech was delivered by our President, the Lord St Oswald, who spoke about the issue of shared surfaces, and the role that WRBA can play in raising public awareness of the problems faced by visually impaired people.

Pam Walters gave a presentation about WRBA's work, the staff and volunteers who do it, and the future work that WRBA will need to do.

One important issue is that, like a lot of other voluntary groups, we need to make ourselves an **'Incorporated'** organisation. This simply means that we put in place some legal processes for ensuring that our Trustees are protected from personal liability for any unexpected costs that might arise. Incorporated status is also a requirement demanded from many potential funders. The process is in effect to become a 'limited company' (while still a registered Charity), and will mean a change of name. It does not change us as an organisation, or the work we do. Whilst we would be sad to see the 'West Riding' bit disappear from our name, many people have expressed their surprise that we still carry a title that does not reflect the area we work in. And 'Blind Association' does not let people know that we help people who are not blind. So since we will have to change our name for this process anyway, we have been considering what might be suitable instead. Quite a lot of people have said they like the name of our project **"Sight Aid"** since this better reflects what we do. So we might consider something like 'Wakefield Sight Aid', or 'Sight Aid Wakefield District'. Whatever we eventually agree upon, we will still be here, providing the services needed by our members. We will keep you posted!

The New Mayfair Hotel, Blackpool

specialises in holiday breaks for people with disabilities and has some special offers for June, July and August. The hotel has a seafront location with patio to front, lots of single rooms with no supplements, 3 lifts to all floors, wheelchair access rooms and level access to all ground floor amenities. Please contact the hotel on **01253 347543** for more information and bookings.

New WRBA Website – July 2010

Our new website is being designed and produced at this very moment. It will be a vast improvement on our present site. It will be easier to access and custom built for those who are visually impaired. A major feature of the new site will be the ability of the user to alter the size of the text and to change the background colour. We are very excited about this development and hope it will increase the quality of our service to visually impaired people of Wakefield District and those involved in the care and support of visually impaired people in this area.

Finally, a big 'thank you' to all of you who have already sent donations towards Steve's **3 Peaks Challenge**. Steve and his daughter Emma will be completing the challenge on July 8th. We have already raised over £850 and hope to increase this substantially by the time he and Emma have completed the walk. His training for the event is well underway and he has bought an Ordnance Survey map to make sure he does not get lost! Read Steve and Emma's training updates on our website **www.wrba.org.uk**.

If you would like to make a donation, please contact the office for a sponsorship form. If you would prefer to send a single donation direct to the office, then please do so. Just add a note to us that it is for Steve's 3 Peaks Challenge. Please make all cheques payable to 'WRBA'.

Best wishes for an enjoyable Summer from all at WRBA.