



SUTTON ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

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CONTACT

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Contributions, suggestions for articles are always most welcome.

This newsletter can come to you in other formats; email, tape or CD.

If you want something changed then please contact me

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Derek Forbes

GREETINGS FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Well here we are again, heading rapidly towards Christmas. Another year virtually gone and a new decade beginning in a matter of days. They say that time passes quickly when you are enjoying yourself. I sincerely hope that all our readers have indeed had a happy and successful year.

You can rest assured that the SAB Board of Trustees, staff and team of volunteers are constantly and diligently working to ensure our clients receive services to their total satisfaction. Of course, that has always been our endeavour. But, as you will all appreciate, circumstances and resources will sometimes challenge that endeavour, as they certainly did last year.

However, in this season of faith and hope, I and my fellow Trustees have no doubt that SAB will continue to build on the stability that has now been achieved. Our heart felt appreciation and gratitude go to each of our staff members and to all our volunteers for their continued support and hard work.

A Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

Eric Kennedy

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Coffee Morning - Saturday 13th February

Mary and Jane Phillips are holding a coffee morning from ten o'clock until twelve at; Flat 2, Cyrillian House, Mulgrave Road, Sutton, SM2 6LA. The entrance is in Bridge Road, between the Post Office and Mulgrave Road. If you were to come by cab then Melville Cars know the way well!

The flat is on the ground floor, there will be a raffle and a sales table. Entrance will cost £1 per person; all proceeds to go to SAB. All are

welcome, and they look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

For those of you coming on foot there is a pedestrian gate just near the Pay and Display machine – if all else fails and you are stuck outside give them a ring on 8652 5893.

Demonstration Day - Thursday January 21st

Sight and Sound are holding a Demonstration Day here of their CCTVs, scanners and software. They try to offer equipment which is uncomplicated in use. To come along you need to book an appointment with Vanessa in the office on 020 8409 7166. There is a large print flyer with more detail accompanying the newsletter.

FUNDRAISING

The simple message is that it all helps; little or large, regular or unexpected it is all helping SAB achieve enough income to carry on with the services we offer.

So please consider a regular monthly contribution by standing order – even a pound or two a month from enough people can make for a steady and helpful contribution to our finances.

The 100 Club is going well – we are actually a 98 club at the moment but we can have as many people in it as wish to join.

Recent winners are for

October

Mr Bert Weeks	no 18	£24-50
Mrs Doris Lindley	no 77	£9-80

November

Mr Mike Pettit no 56 £24-50

Mrs Phyllis Whitbourne no 33 £ 9-80

Our December draw is a special with an extra £100 bonus prize and can I thank Eric Kennedy our chairman for contributing to that bonus amount

Giving talks about the work of the Association have brought in over £100 – and more importantly have spread the word of what we do.

Our quiz nights have been both fun and financially successful so we hope to announce some more for the next year. So just a big thank you to all and please keep it up.

Janice

WHAT WE HAVE BEEN UP TO LATELY

Alison Weir Historical Author

On 2nd November, SAB was very pleased to welcome Alison who kindly attended to give a talk about Henry VIII and his Six Wives. Alison is a globally renowned historian and author who has written many books on famous historical characters such as Eleanor of Aquitaine, Elizabeth I and Mary Queen of Scots to name but a few. These books can also be enjoyed in audio format and indeed are very popular.

Alison talked for an hour about Henry VIII going through the lives of each of his six wives with amazing historical features, bringing characters to life in awe inspiring, compelling detail. Alison clearly researched her subjects most thoroughly and obtained access to many important, historical documents.

Alison then invited questions from the audience which she happily

answered and in conclusion there was a free draw for three audio books that Alison had kindly donated. Alison was very interested in the work of SAB and what services we provide for our visually impaired clients and was very happy to freely offer her time on this occasion.

We are extremely grateful to Alison for coming along to visit SAB and would also like to thank SAB client Paul Cheesman who kindly initiated the invitation to her.

*If any listeners know of anyone who would be prepared to come along to SAB to give a talk of interest to clients, please do get in touch!

Rebekah

Christmas musical evening

It was with a sense of disappointment that we had to announce that the Albert Hall had already sold out of tickets for the concert we traditionally attend. Andrea said to watch this space and she started to cast around for something local for us to go to. In picking an event she has to balance distance, cost, how accessible it is, parking and transport – try as she might nothing seemed to fit the bill. Lorraine, a new volunteer in the office suggested that ‘if you cannot find something out there, why not hold something at home’

So following a suggestion from a couple of our clients who had heard them playing at the Bradbury Hotel we booked ‘Two in Accord’ to come and entertain us. And entertain us they did.

We were down stairs in the main room and café area which we use for Social Eyes but with some deft magic and table decoration by the staff and a very willing group of our volunteer helpers the place was transformed into a festive and seasonal setting for the night.

Two in Accord are a Husband and Wife team of Bill and Shirley and they both play the accordion. Just the sound quality of a 'squeeze box' started us on the trip to 'yester year' and by the time we had worked through seasonal favorites, standards of years gone by and joined in with the words we haven't sung in far too long a great time was had by all. It may not have been quite such a prestigious occasion as being up at the Albert Hall but all who came enjoyed themselves thoroughly and there was a lot more joining in, swaying to the music and standing up and dancing than could ever have happened up there. Thanks to all who organised and helped and most especially to Andrea who masterminded it all.

Derek

COULD YOU MAKE BETTER USE OF THE SIGHT YOU HAVE?

Do you have Macular Disease?

Are you experiencing difficulties with reading or other skills due to Macular Disease? Would you like to use your residual vision more effectively or master a new reading technique?

If you answer 'yes' to any of these questions, you may find it useful to attend the newly created training sessions which will begin early in the New Year. Over two training sessions, each lasting two hours, you would be assessed and given help and guidance in Eccentric Viewing and Steady Eye Technique.

The training group will have a maximum of four trainees at each session so in addition to the assessment and training, you will have the opportunity to share your experience with others who have Macular Disease.

The trainers are; Michael Iles, rehabilitation officer for the vision and Hearing Services, and Esmé Green a voluntary trainer from the Macular Disease Society.

If you are interested in attending a session or would like to know more about the training, please telephone SAB on 020 8409 7166 and ask for Vanessa.

Editors Note – In the practice session that Esmé and Michael held recently the effect of lighting was really apparent to all those who took part.

Macular Disease is the biggest cause of vision loss in this country and probably two thirds of the people registered as having sight impairment in Sutton have it. Taking in to account the people who have the disease but have not yet been registered there are around 1,400 people in the Borough who are having to live with its effects. You are far from alone but may never have talked to anyone else in the same situation or had the opportunity to try and make best use of your remaining vision. Esmé and Michael will be pleased to hear from you.

LIGHTING AT HOME

Many people aren't aware of the benefits that good lighting at home can make for someone with a visual impairment. Here are a few ideas of ways to improve the lighting at home which don't have to cost a lot of money:

- Try to avoid lampshades that allow people to look directly at the bulb as they can cause glare. Paper globe lampshades are a low cost option or consider using uplighters which throw light towards the ceiling and can help to make the room brighter.
- Dimmer switches help to control levels of light in a room to your own preference.
- Daylight bulbs can be easier on the eye and give a more natural look

- Try to maintain even lighting throughout the home so as to avoid going from light to dark or dark to light rooms.
- Have good lighting at the top and bottom of stairs as this can help to prevent falls
- Small LED battery lights can be bought for as little as £5 from B&Q or similar shops. They can be easily stuck inside cupboards to lighten up dark corners.
- Under-unit lighting in kitchens can make it easier to see when cooking. Or consider using a task light, for example when chopping vegetables. You can now get portable task lights fitted with rechargeable batteries, which means they have no trailing wires.
- Use a flexible arm desk lamp to help with reading and writing. Make sure the lamp is positioned to the side or in front for maximum benefit but keep the light below eye level to avoid glare.
- Consider a porch light to help with seeing the front door keyhole.

RNIB produce a free leaflet called “Make the most of your sight - Improve the lighting in your home”. Please contact them on **0303 123 9999** to request a copy.

If you are having difficulties on a day-to-day basis because of your sight loss, please contact LBS Vision and Hearing Services on 020 8770 6080.

You will be able to discuss any issues you are having with them, and perhaps arrange for one of the team to visit you at home to discuss your needs further.

SAD FAREWELLS

Our sincere condolences and fond memories to the families and friends of; Dr Laurence Barsey, William Buck, Ivy Cook, Sidney Evans, Violet Gill, Francine Holman, Lillian Kemp, Doris Lindley, Fulabhani Patel and Theresa Swan who have all passed away recently

THE RECREATION AND LEISURE CLUB

We are eagerly awaiting the first results from the survey we have commissioned. Some sixty people have so far responded to the letter we sent to everyone aged 65 or younger. We have all sorts of ideas for things we might want to do but we want to know what some of you out there might wish for first. The New Year should see us meeting people and trying things out – the waiting part of the project is nearly over. The Steering committee sends their seasonal greetings

STEVE'S SEASONAL TRIVIA TRAIL

All of the questions have a seasonal flavour to them. The answers are just one word and the last letter of each answer is the first letter of the next answer.

When you answered all of the questions, rearrange the first letters of all 13 answers to make something (2 words) regularly seen at this time of year.

1. The type of dove given on the 2nd day of Christmas.
2. These are Santa's little helpers.
3. A glass one could not be worn by the Ugly Sisters.
4. The name of the Reindeer with the red nose.
5. In helping Cinderella to go to the Ball the mice were turned into these animals.
6. The first name of the 'Man with the Presents'.

7. The first name of the 'Man with 40 Thieves.
8. This is formed by the freezing of dripping water.
9. The three Wise Men came from this direction.
10. In 'A Christmas Carol' the name of Bob Cratchit's 'Tiny' son.
11. Fairy Godmothers have this type of Wand
12. This is pulled and usually contains a hat, joke and a novelty gift.
13. There is a White one in Alice in Wonderland.

There is a small prize on offer to the first person to get back to the office with the correct answers.

And if you can cast your mind back to the last quiz here are the answers –

Britain's largest building society until it became a bank in 1997.

- Halifax

1980 film starring Olivia Newton John and Gene Kelly.

- Xanadu

Controversial James Joyce novel fully published for the first time in the USA in 1922.

- Ulysses

The name of a broad rimmed hat, particularly common in Mexico.

- Sombrero

Surname of a very famous UK actor who was married to Jill Esmond, Vivien Leigh and Joan Plowright.

- Olivier

Another name for the plant also known as Turkish Celery, whose leaves are toxic, but whose stalks have a tart flavour and are often cooked in pies which can then be eaten as a dessert.

-Rhubarb

Surname of the singing sisters, one of whom was married to the England football captain, Billy Wright.

- Beverley

Dukedom of Prince Andrew.

- York

London underground station whose name contains 6 consecutive letters which are all consonants.

- Knightsbridge

The capital city of Scotland.

- Edinburgh

Having answered all of the questions, you had to rearrange the first letters of all 10 answers to make 2 breeds of dog.

And these were HUSKY & BOXER.

LOSING PATIENTS – is a nationwide campaign being supported by the RNIB – here is their invitation to get involved.

Losing Patients is all about empowering blind and partially sighted people to secure accessible information from the National Health Service.

Everyone who joins this campaign believes that printed information as it is currently offered is the problem, not having a sight impairment. We each have the right to manage our own health affairs with the same level of speed and privacy, whether we have a sight impairment or not.

What you can do?

Those of us who regularly get our health information in a format we cannot read have a simple task: to tell the NHS services we use that we need accessible information. We have developed a helpful resource pack which you can obtain from you local society or our website.

SAB are working with our neighbours in Merton on this – we share the same health providers. We are looking to hear from any of you who have had difficulty getting medical and health information in a format that suits you and in reasonable time. If all goes to plan there will be a meeting with the local health providers on Friday 26th February and we would like to make sure that your views are heard. If you want to know more, get involved or share you own experiences please give Derek a ring in the office on 020 8409 7166.

FIGHT AGAINST BLINDNESS – FAB

FAB is a charity working in Cambridge, East Anglia and London to support and help find a cure for people with the hereditary eye disease Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). A key objective of the charity is to help those with RP to obtain genetic testing so they know what type of RP they have.

The disease can severely impact the life choices of those with RP because they and their families have to make decisions about education, choice of career, place of residence, reproductive choices etc. Those affected may not know the type of RP they have, how it involves their families, for example if it has been passed on to their children and they may have no information on genetic testing and research. However, genetic testing for RP is not always or consistently funded by the NHS and although some NHS approved tests are available, those seeking to be tested may need to fund themselves.

This is where FAB can help. They can directly pay for genetic tests to be carried out. If you, or anyone, you know would like to find out how to obtain genetic testing or has been refused funding for genetic testing please contact 01763 208045. Email info@fabrp.co.uk

NEXT YEARS OUTINGS

The use of minibuses this year has had a major effect (a good one) on the cost of transport and also opened up the possibility of doing some trips to places of interest. We think that a radius of about 30 miles from Sutton should be about the limit or the time and costs involve start to climb again.

So where would you like to go? We (that really means Andrea) will be coming up with a list of suggestions and a draft calendar that will be in the next edition of Contact. We will publicise it as best we can but if you want to make sure you hear about things let Andrea know that you are interested and we will keep you on a list to contact directly.

Some outings may be too active or physical for all but we will make sure that there is a varied programme – so give us your ideas and get yourself on Andrea's list

Your can call her in the office on 020 8409 7166

The use of minibuses is very helpful but we need minibus drivers – if you know anyone who might consider this or go to any group, club, hall or meeting would you find out if we can put out one of our recruitment posters – the more drivers the more is possible. If you can find us somewhere to display a poster we will get it to them they are in A4 or A3 large format and feature Steve who is our first and main volunteer for driving

Transforming Lives – changes to the way ‘Social Care’ is offered

Over the last 12 months a revolution has been taking shape – starting not with stone throwing crowds in the street but with Central Government, the Department of Health and then local authorities working to change the ‘Social Care System’.

Your first question might well be the ‘Social Care System what is it? – it is everything that gets offered or is needed when age, long term illness or disability stops someone living their own independent life as they want to. It also covers the mechanisms by which someone asks for support and what happens next. Local Authorities provide services – day care, residential accommodation, meals on wheels and so on that are there to be of help to many people in different situations and difficulties. But that’s just it; people in very different circumstances and with different wishes can only be offered the services that exist whether or not they best suit their individual needs.

The revolution started with the idea that there shouldn’t be a fixed choice of services but rather that each person should be helped to choose what is right for them. That a person’s idea of what is right for them should be the major deciding factor in what is set up to help maintain their independence and quality of life.

A whole new language is coming into use. It may well be to all our advantages in years to come but getting to understand it and what it might mean for you or a loved one is no mean feat.

Those twelve months of work behind the scenes will start to have a public effect in the New Year when the first pilot will start. The initial contact will be as before – contacting the local authority but then they will be invited to consider their circumstances and complete a self assessment questionnaire – the answers they give will determine the amount of help that they need. That help will be expressed as a budget or sum of money that the Council estimates will be needed to provide service. And no they are not about to start handing out piles of cash instead of actual services. What comes next is Support Planning and Brokerage where that budget is worked on by the person with as much or as little assistance as they wish to produce an individual support plan.

I could go on to fill the entire magazine with a first attempt at an explanation and still leave you not much the wiser. The change and the effect it will have in future is so large – it is part of the biggest shake up since 1948 when the National Assistance Act was introduced that it will be years before it becomes the ‘norm’ that everyone understands as ‘that’s the way things work’.

What SAB intend to do is to be there - to help provide an understanding of the system and how it might relate to you as an individual. Offer assistance with the self assessment process – filling in forms is never an easy task. Should you need or want it; signpost you to the people and organisations – Brokers in the new speak who can help you turn a theoretical financial sum into practical things that help you.

The Council is already starting on a major information and publicity drive to make everyone aware of what is happening. Most of that information, whether as leaflets, adverts and articles in the press and Sutton Scene magazine or on the Council Website will be in written form. Not everyone can access that information if they cannot see and have no-one to relay it to them.

SAB’s be there to be asked any questions you might have and to get an

awareness of the change out into the community. We have a great deal to learn ourselves – as I said before this is the biggest change since 1948 and it will take us a while to understand it all well enough to be helpful rather than confusing if asked a question!

Thank you and our Christmas closing

SAB would like to say “thank you” to SAB clients for their kind generosity in donating items for the Christmas Raffles for the Cuddington Christmas Lunch and the two special “Social Eyes” sessions on 17th December and also, the volunteers for also their kind donations and making up the superb Christmas hampers as prizes from these donations – we really are very grateful – the proceeds generated from these raffles provide significant amounts of funds which are put towards running SAB services – the enthusiasm, as ever, is second to none!

We would also like to say a special thank you to Pam and Jan for organizing the Christmas Shop during recent “Social Eyes” sessions which assists many clients who are not able to get out to the shops to purchase Christmas cards, paper, small gifts etc; this is the 5th year that they have run this service, which continues to be an integral and popular resource provided to clients by SAB.

And I would like to thank everyone who has helped SAB over the year, as well as clients, volunteers and staff other people, organisations and funders have helped us achieve financial stability while we carry on providing the services which our clients want.

We will be closed from lunch time on Christmas Eve until Monday the 4th of January. If you are in need of urgent assistance during that time the Council will have their emergency number of 8770 5000 available during the whole of the season.