

Isle of Wight Society for the Blind



May 2017

Welcome to the Summer edition
of the Society's Newsletter

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Lambs have frolicked and Easter Eggs eaten. Roll on Summer!

Firstly, I would like to welcome our new CEO, Miriam Tong, to IWSB. The Directors, and especially the HR Committee, spent many hours vetting information from applicants and interviewed a total of five over a seven hour period. With Miriam's competence, ability and experience, we feel an excellent choice was made. Personally, I am looking forward to working closely with her over the next twelve months.

After the AGM there has been a lot of discussion between the Trustees who were generally upset and surprised by some of the comments directed to the Board and Staff from certain individuals. I can only reiterate that all Board members are also volunteers and all try to do their best for the Society. We all dedicate many hours to ensure that our clients' needs are met.

Our new CEO, Miriam, certainly took note of these comments and, with this in mind, Ruth Hollingshead (trustee and volunteer) is now striving to make a success of the recently formed IWSB Users' Forum. Hopefully this will help to alleviate some of our clients' concerns.

Paul Rutherford

INTRODUCING THE NEW CEO

Having joined Isle of Wight Society for the Blind as Chief Executive Officer on 3rd April, I am delighted to say that, with the warm welcome and support from the team of staff, trustees and award-winning volunteers, I feel that I am settling well into my new role and enjoying meeting IWSB clients and learning more about your views and expectations of what we could or should be doing in the future.

So what will I bring to the Society? Well, as a proven General Manager within the charitable sector, the role of CEO affords the opportunities and challenges that will fully use my broad range of skills, and experience of effective charity governance.

It is very much my mission to ensure that the services we offer remain both valuable to clients and valued by supporters and stakeholders and that we steadily broaden and strengthen our position to better serve our clients and the wider community.

Presently, I am still very much on a learning curve. I'm getting to learn more about the needs of our clients, who currently number around 800 local people, and our 80 volunteers who support various Society activities. I'm also rapidly learning more about the history, governance and administration of the Society and meeting colleagues from various local organisations with whom we have links to further our wider aims and objectives.

An important initiative I am actively working on is the planned IWSB Client Consultation Exercise. Through a variety of means, we plan to survey our current clients with visual impairment and also

aim to reach out to potential clients; Islanders who experience dual sensory loss and those more recently diagnosed with sight loss, an estimated further 800 people of all ages. More details about this will follow in the Society Announcements. On completion of the exercise, the Society will have gathered much valuable information to guide us in our future plans and strategic direction and I will have had the pleasure of getting to know many more of you, our clients, volunteers and colleagues. I trust that we will forge positive relationships and move forward together for the benefit of all of our clients and potential clients.

Miriam Tong

Chief Executive, IWSB

TRUSTEE'S CORNER

I retired from my job in engineering in 2010. The following year I passed the PCV driving licence which enabled me to drive the Island's community buses which I did for three years. I also undertook voluntary work with the Police which I still do.

In 2014 I was asked to pressure wash the large patio at Millbrooke House which is used by clients in the summer. This progressed to helping Alan tidy the gardens. I then became a voluntary driver/escort of the Society's mini-bus, transporting clients to group events like the 'Dolphins' , 'Owls' and the 'Knit and Nattering' clubs.

In 2015 I was asked by the CEO if I would be interested in becoming a Trustee of the Society and in January 2016 I was voted on to the Board. As a driver or escort with the 'Dolphins' or Strollers' I meet

people who are coping with sight loss on a daily basis. I enjoy helping our clients. We had a particularly enjoyable day last year at The Royal Victoria Yacht Club Disability Sailing Day where clients and volunteers were treated to an exhilarating ride in a rib. A day to remember for all.

Last year I helped run the fundraising stall at Havenstreet Steam Fair and hope to be helping at forthcoming fundraising events for the Society. At present I am in the process of decorating the walls and paintwork at Millbrooke House.

John Moore

USERS' FORUM

The Society would like to set up a Users' Forum to get feedback on current services and activities, as well as developing potential new ideas and projects. We are looking for a combination of clients and volunteers who represent a cross section of our service users and who would be willing to meet on a quarterly basis. If you are interested in being part of the forum, please phone or email Millbrooke House on 522205 and leave your name and contact details.

IWSB WEBSITE

For those who access the Internet, please check out our website www.iwsb.org.uk which is updated weekly with IWSB activities, news, videos and information. The weekly Talking News is also available online.

GOLF

The Golfers meet once a month at Westridge Golf Club, Ryde. The group go onto the driving ranges and out onto the course. An instructor is available to help out beginners.

OWLS

Our Owls group meet every fortnight at Millbrooke House, on Wednesday afternoons from 2.00pm till 4.00pm. The Owls have different speakers who come to give talks on a variety of subjects. These have ranged from singers to ghost talks. After the talk, the group chat over a cup of tea or coffee before going home.

KNITTING AND NATTERING CLUB

The Knitters and Natterers meet every week on Thursday from 11.00am till 2.00pm at Millbrooke House, where they engage with other visually impaired people - knitting is not compulsory. In the afternoon, the group welcome volunteers who come in to read from various books about local history, general fiction or, a more popular choice, comedy.

STROLLERS

Strollers meet on the second Tuesday of the month. They go for gentle strolls, enjoying the Island's countryside or coastal views. This is followed by lunch at a nearby pub or restaurant. The group is open to all visually impaired people who like a leisurely walk of about a mile.

STRIDERS

Striders meet on the last Friday of every month. They walk on different routes around the Island and then finish off with lunch at a local pub or restaurant. This group is available to all visually impaired people who like longer walks in the countryside.

DOLPHINS

Our swimming group, meet every Tuesday evening from 8pm till 8.45pm at the Waterside Pool, Ryde. They have exclusive use of the pool during this session. The group is open to any visually impaired person who is a keen swimmer or who just enjoys being in the water. The pool's lifeguards are in attendance during the session. **Pre-registering with the Society is essential, otherwise you may be refused admittance.**

BONNIE HARRIS FUND

The Trustees have agreed that, individuals wanting to try out new activities either by attending existing groups in the community or setting up a new group themselves, can apply for a grant from the Society to cover some initial costs. There is an application process and not all applications can be guaranteed. To find out more, contact us on 522205 or email enquiries@iwsb.org.uk

If you are interested in joining any of the activities mentioned in this newsletter, please contact the Society for more information.

Transport may be available to some of the groups.

VOLUNTEER NEWSROUND



Welcome: We are pleased to welcome seven new volunteers to our team. The new members will be joining Dress for Less, minibus driving, Talking News and reception.

Au Revoir: Sadly, we have said goodbye to four volunteers and wish them well for the future. Thanks have been extended for the valuable support and commitment given by these volunteers over the years.

Goodbye but not farewell! A very big thank you to Mel for over 21 years commitment to driving the IWSB minibus. Mel is retiring from his role as minibus driver but continues to support the Society with the Strollers and Striders monthly walking groups. Clients, staff and volunteers will continue to keep in touch with Mel, via these activities, which is good news.

In recognition of Mel's many dedicated years as a volunteer driver, there was an informal thank you at Owls on 26th April. Miriam Tong, CEO, and Paul Rutherford, Chairman, presented Mel with a certificate of thanks from IWSB and celebratory cake followed.

Volunteer vacancies: We have volunteer vacancies in various roles; e.g. minibus driving, minibus escort, home visitors, Talking News, Dress for Less, and fundraising throughout the summer months. Should you know anyone who may be interested please let me know and I will be happy to send an application pack or discuss the various volunteer roles available.

Training: Thirty volunteers attended the recent Safeguarding Adults and Understanding Boundaries training held at Millbrooke House on 25th April facilitated by Dr Emma Sainsbury. The event was fully subscribed and feedback following the training has been extremely positive. A light buffet lunch was served as part of the day and this enabled volunteers to meet socially and chat about their varied roles here at IWSB. A big thank you to Emma for donating her expertise and time to this worthwhile and proactive event. We hope to run a similar event in the future for those who were unable to attend. **Michelle Taylor**

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

I have driven on over 800 occasions, clocking up more than 38,000 miles (equivalent to more than one and one half times around the world), got into the cab at least 2,000 times and I estimate that I have sat in the driver's seat for the equivalent of over 80 full days of my life; some thought I slept in it!

On strollers or handicraft days, I would leave home at 8.20am to get to Millbrooke House, meet the escort and obtain the list showing which clients are to be picked up. After a cursory check of the minibus which included, on occasion, clearing frost from the windscreen etc. we would set off by 8.50am. Whichever event is taking place, the imperative is driving the most economical and shortest route which also ensures clients are picked up on the right side of the road for their safety. The thing I learnt early on was the need to have regard to the length and width of the vehicle and, consequently, now have much more respect for the needs of bus and lorry drivers.

This was brought home to me on the only time I have had an accident resulting in an insurance claim many years ago when the Society held their Christmas Fair in the Parish Hall, Town Lane, Newport. Access to the parking area is through an arch, then an immediate right turn. My escort said, "there's a parking place" and I looked at the space he was pointing to whilst still turning and caught the bumper of a car which was parked on yellow lines restricting the turn. I learnt a valuable lesson - 100% concentration and to use the rear view mirrors to check clearance when turning.

In addition to the normal weekly activities I have driven the vehicle to Island shows and special events such as The Royal Victoria Yacht Club Sailing Day and on the mainland (that north island) for Society holidays and outings. Some will remember the Gadabouts Group and especially their visits to Lurgashall Vinery, Sussex and the Japanese girl, with us on work experience, who had never had alcohol before!!! There was also the occasion in Sussex when the vehicle lost power and I was driving uphill flat out at 7 mph followed by a mile long trail of unhappy drivers! Another that stands out, which I may have mentioned in an earlier article, was the time I met a Pony and Trap in a narrow lane with very few passing places; it was the longest reverse that I can remember!

Well happy days but sadly because of insurance difficulties, due to my age, they have come to an end. Thank you clients and volunteers for putting up with me at the wheel. At least you won't have to wear Hard-Hats in future!

Mel Barnes

100 CLUB

The 100 Club is a monthly draw where participants pay £2 per month and are allocated a number between 1 and 100. The allocated numbers are placed in the draw and the winner receives 40% of the total funds for that month, with the remainder going to the Society. There are numbers remaining so if you want to be a part of the 100 Club, contact the Society now. Remember, the more people who take part, the bigger the prize! The winning numbers of the most recent 100 club draws are:-

- February RH 28
- March PR 37
- April MT 44

Congratulations to those winners !

OUT WITH THE OLD...

The 'new' £5 note came into circulation on 13th September 2016 and, on 5th May 2017, the old £5 ceased to be legal tender. This means that you may not be able to use the old notes in shops but you should still be able to pass them over a bank or Post Office counter. Similarly, the new £1 coin was released into circulation on 28th March 2017. The old £1 coin ceases to be legal tender on 15th October 2017, after which you will only be able to use the old coin in a bank or Post Office.

If you have been saving the old £5 notes or the old £1 coins but are unable to get out to change them for the new note and coins, panic not as IWSB is here to help. The Society will be happy to help anyone change their old notes to new notes and, once the old £1 coin ceases to be legal tender, to help change old coins for new ones. To start the process, please phone the office on 522205 and speak to us about how much money you need to change. We will do our best to get your money changed for new style notes or coins as quickly as possible.

DRESS FOR LESS



Dress for Less is going from strength to strength. As more and more people find us we have enjoyed some of our best weeks, turnover wise, since we opened nearly two and a half years ago and this is on a five day week. However, this new interest puts an enormous strain on our existing fourteen volunteers and that includes our volunteer managers. It is very tough taking in merchandise, selling and advising our customers and keeping our eyes and wits about us for the light-fingered who steal from our shop, clearly dismissing that we are there for the Isle of Wight Society for the Blind. We have reviewed our security and it appears to be working, however, there must be people out there who could give us three hours of their precious time. Please come in and have a chat with us as it is a very interesting shop to work in.

Since the last Newsletter, we have welcomed five new volunteers: Sue, Angie, Sharon, Shasta and Loretta. Shasta is being trained as a volunteer manager to enable us to re-open on a Monday. We have been extremely busy dressing for weddings and probably have one of the best hat selections on the Island; we have also decked out women for the Royal Garden Party and, of course, the beautiful gowns for cruises at a fraction of their original price. Currently, we have some top designer brands and a great array of shoes and handbags. Our windows remain the talk of the town or even the Island. Our Facebook page remains very popular and never fails to elicit sales.

Julie Clifton

BRADING ROMAN VILLA

On Friday 17th March, Society members were given a conducted tour of Brading Roman Villa. Our guide told us that, in 1879, a local farmer, whilst making holes for a sheep pen, discovered a buried Roman mosaic floor. A visiting Roman antiquarian helped uncover more, including a unique Gallus panel depicting a person with the head of a cockerel. No-one has yet been able to discover the meaning of this piece, but it may represent an ancient Gnostic deity or a satire on a gladiator called *Gallus* - cockerel in Latin.

By 1880, half the site had been excavated; the remainder being part of the Oglander estate. Once the Oglander estate owned the whole site, excavations could continue, and the site opened to the public. In 1994, a charitable trust took over the villa and, in 2004, the covering shed was replaced by the current, very attractive building and visitors' centre.

It seems the original owners were wealthy and well educated. We were able to see and handle artefacts and visit the twelve rooms on show, including a large room used for entertainment with a beautiful mosaic, as well as the hypocaust - the central heating system. The mosaics depicted Roman gods and goddesses such as Orpheus, Bacchus and the serpent headed Medusa.

We appreciated having the time to make our way around the interior as slowly as necessary. We were made so welcome by all at the villa. Our guides were incredibly helpful, not only giving descriptions, but answering our questions. We must thank the organisers and drivers for our transport. A very interesting visit.

Ian Davidson

HIGHLIGHTING GOOD PRACTICE

Don't get me wrong, I am the first to grumble and complain when I experience poor customer service, or find an establishment difficult to access, but a recent experience has made me think that, as well as moaning, maybe I should also be giving praise where praise is due.

A few weeks ago I was on a long cane training session and was just leaving Ryde bus station to walk along the sea front. I was minding my own business when a gentleman said, "excuse me Madame, I am from Island Roads, I just need to make you aware that we are doing some work on the pavement". He then went on to ask if I needed assistance and would I like to take his arm. We did a quick shimmy around the obstacles on the pavement and I thanked him and went on my way. I know Island Roads have received a lot of flak but, I have to say that in this instance, their employee got it right. He asked me politely if I needed help and then offered it both efficiently and discretely, 10 out of 10.

If you have had a similarly positive experience in a shop, at a medical appointment, on the bus, or even in the pub, we would love to hear from you. If you would like to say thank you, highlight good practice, or share a positive experience, please get in touch. The Society would love to be able to contact the person, or establishment in question, and let them know they have had a mention in the newsletter or on our website.

Ruth Hollingshead

IN TOUCH

Regulars to our weekly Talking News will already be familiar with the 'In Touch' radio podcast. However, for those of you who have not heard the programme, it is certainly worth a listen. 'In Touch' is broadcast every Tuesday at 8.40pm on Radio 4 and presented by Peter White. It includes news, views and information for visually impaired people. Over the last few months it has covered topics such as the Glastonbury Festival, blind boxing, accessible mobile phones, benefit information, cookery tips, new technology, and guide dog waiting lists. If you are unable to listen to the programme live, it is available online, or at the end of the Talking News produced by IWSB.

ACCESIBLE DOCUMENTS

Thanks to a campaign, all health and adult social care providers in England are now required to provide medical information in a format that blind and partially sighted people can access. This is thanks to NHS England's Accessible Information Standard, which mandates that anyone providing a service on behalf of NHS England or in adult social care must provide information in a format that patients can access. This includes appointment letters, leaflets, and letters regarding treatment and conditions as well as the dispensing labels on prescriptions. If you need your NHS information in an alternative format, such as a text, email, large print, audio recording or braille. Your GP or hospital clinic will need to be officially notified which format is required. You can contact your GP service Practice Manager with your details and the format you require, or call the RNIB on 0303 123 9999

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Summer Fete

Saturday 10th June

The Society will be Holding its annual summer fete at Holy Rood Hall, High street Newport, on Saturday 10th June from 10.00am till 2.30pm. There will be lots of stalls to come and see, as well as tombola raffle and more. Refreshments will be available on the day.

Dolphin Technology Information Day

Monday 3rd July

Dolphin will be coming to Millbrooke House along with Calibre, Enhanced Vision, Orcam, Wireless for the Blind, Blind Veterans and the Macular Society. They will be bringing information and some equipment with them for demonstration. The event will be a drop in from 10.00am till 2.30pm, so no appointments necessary.

Millbrooke House Coffee Morning: 10.30am till 12.00pm, every Wednesday. The Macular Degeneration Society also meets on the first Wednesday of the month at the Millbrooke House Coffee Morning.

Coffee Mornings Across The Island:

- Niton (the Post Office) 10.00am till 11.30am on the first Tuesday of the month.
- Bembridge (the Cloisters) 10.15am till 12.00pm on the last Tuesday of the month.
- Freshwater (End of the Line Café) 10.30am till 12.00pm on the last Tuesday of the month.