**BucksVision Spring 2019 Newsletter**

We do hope that you look forward to receiving our newsletter and find the articles interesting. If you have any suggestions for improvements, please do let us know.

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# Welcome

Steve Naylor, Chief Executive

In our first edition of 2019, I am particularly delighted to introduce two new members of our team, Lynn Hitchcox and Julian Padmore.

Lynn is responsible for our fundraising and event management, whilst Julian is our ECLO (Eye Clinic Liaison Officer) providing support to patients at Stoke Mandeville Eye Clinic. They have both made an excellent start.

As I type this, we are experiencing some unseasonably warm weather. I hope that this encourages you to get ‘out and about’ whether you wish to enter our photography competition (page 15) or try out a new sport (pages 7-10).

Occasionally, BucksVision receives ‘In Memoriam’ funeral donations or legacies when someone passes away. We recently received over £400 from donations given in memory of Vera Frith.

We are always very grateful and touched to receive these. It is wonderful when someone remembers us at a very difficult time. If you need any further information about ‘In Memoriam’ donations or legacies, please get in touch with us.

I hope that you enjoy our Newsletter. To all of our volunteers and supporters, we are extremely grateful for all of your help and support.

Thank you.

# Welcome to the Team!

We are delighted to welcome Lynn and Julian to our team.

**Lynn Hitchcox**

**Fundraising Manager**

Lynn was previously at The Horse Trust and brings with her a wealth of experience in fundraising and profile raising, including running large scale events.

Lynn has already launched our Photography Competition (see page 15 for more details) and is in the process of arranging lots of other exciting activities (see page 11).

**Julian Padmore**

**Eye Clinic Liaison Officer**

Julian is a qualified counsellor and has personal experience of sight loss as he has Retinitis Pigmentosa. He has volunteered with charities such as Mind and Samaritans, so he has significant experience of supporting people at difficult times.

Julian is based at Stoke Mandeville Hospital in the Eye Clinic and will be available to provide emotional and practical support to patients across Bucks Eye Clinics.

**How to contact Julian**

T: 01296 316 441

M: 07701 393 524

E: julian.padmore@rnib.org.uk

# Save the Date - Low Vision Days

**Tuesday 18 June**

12.30pm – 4.30pm

Risborough Community Centre, Princes Risborough, HP27 9AX

**Wednesday 19 June**

10.00am – 2.00pm

Burnham Park, Windsor Lane, Burnham, SL1 7HR

**Thursday 20 June**

10.00am – 2.00pm

Centrecom Meeting Place, 602 North Row, Milton Keynes MK9 3BJ

At our Low Vision Days, we invite equipment companies and local support organisations to come and showcase their services, including magnification devices.

We are currently compiling a list of attendees but in the meantime please save the date in your diary and look out for a flyer advertising the events nearer the time.

We plan to run other smaller events throughout the year at various locations and will send out invitations for these too. If you would like a day held in your area, please let us know.

# New and Potential Groups

**NEW - Technology Group, Milton Keynes**

Many of you will have read about Padma Cheriyan in our previous newsletters. Padma is a tireless campaigner for people with sight loss and has set up several new groups in Milton Keynes including a successful Ballroom Dancing group.

Padma, with support from BucksVision, is in the process of setting up a monthly technology group which will meet in Milton Keynes.

The group is in its early stages, but the hope is to get it up and running from June.

**How will the group work?**

1. Expert speakers will be invited to talk about technology related topics; give demonstrations; and offer hands on introductions to various high and low tech devices and gadgets.
2. Technology volunteers will help members during drop-in sessions when speakers aren’t attending.
3. Members of the group can exchange their own hints and tips on using technology.

If this group is successful we hope to set up similar ventures in other locations.

**Potential Group- Reading Group, Aylesbury Library**

Staff at the newly refurbished Aylesbury Library are looking into setting up a new reading group, if there is enough interest. (Sadly, the Wendover Reading Group has had to stop meeting due to a lack of members.)

So, if you live in the Aylesbury area and would like to meet with like-minded people to discuss literature why not let us know? The reading group would work with an audio book service so that the book of choice can be enjoyed by all attendees.

If you don’t live in Aylesbury but would like to join a reading group do get in touch. There are existing groups in Marlow and Milton Keynes but if enough interest is shown in other areas we may be able to work with the Library Service to set one up.

**VIP Diners Group**

**Aylesbury**

Based on the successful *Lunch Bunch* club in Milton Keynes, we are looking to launch a VIP Diners Group in the Aylesbury area.

The group will meet monthly at a pub or restaurant in the Aylesbury Vale area to enjoy a hearty lunch, with volunteers providing transport and support at the meal.

If we receive sufficient interest from members, and we recruit enough volunteers, we hope to launch the group this year.

Therefore, if you live in the Aylesbury Vale area and are interested, please let us know.

**If you have an idea for a group or would be interested in setting up your own club, please do get in touch with us; we would love to hear from you.**

# Anyone for Tennis?

Sarah Fortescue, who has had Stargardt's for 27 years, has been playing visually impaired (VI) tennis since 2014 and has recently been chosen to represent Great Britain in the International VI Tennis Tournament later this year.

During a rare moment between matches our Volunteer Supervisor, Lisa Redford, caught up with her.

**Why did you start playing?**

I heard about taster sessions on Sound News, MK Talking Newspaper. I was keen for a new challenge, so was pleased to discover I could play.

**So how can someone with sight loss play tennis?**

We have a specially-made foam ball, so if it hits you it doesn’t hurt! The ball also travels more slowly than a traditional felt one**.**

**Does it have a bell in it?**

No, but inside is a plastic ball containing a plastic chip which rattles so we can hear it coming.

**Are the rules any different from mainstream tennis?**

They are mostly the same but the rules on the number of times the ball can bounce before it must be returned are determined by the level of sight loss. We also play on a slightly smaller marked-off court and use a smaller racquet.

**Where do you go for coaching?**

I attend a tennis centre in Northampton but there is a VI tennis group in Milton Keynes.

**And are you looking for new members?**

Definitely! We would really like new people to come along to share the fun and enjoyment. Even if you don’t think you will be any good, please give it a try.

**Tell us more about the tournament.**

Well VI tennis is growing; in the last three years I have attended up to 9 regional tournaments each year; meeting someone new each time!

At the regional tournaments you accumulate points and in 2018 I came top of my category. I also came second at the National Championships. I think that’s why I’ve been chosen to represent GB.

**Are you looking forward to it?**

Very much so! Team GB did very well in last year’s tournament, winning mostly silver and gold, so there’s a lot of pressure. I’m very honoured to go and am proud to have reached that standard. I hope I come back with something but just taking part is fantastic.

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

I’d very much like to thank BucksVision Milton Keynes for sponsoring my travel to regional tournaments.

**Thank you, Sarah. Good luck for the international tournament and we look forward to hearing about it later in the year**.

If you are interested in playing VI Tennis there are opportunities available locally.

**Milton Keynes**

The David Lloyd Centre, Newlands, MK15 0DL.

Contact - Justin Brooke

07807 721 810

**Aylesbury**

Halton Tennis Club

Halton Village, HP22 5PD

Contact - Alex Barnes

07582 159 583

# Buckinghamshire Goalball Club

Looking for a new sport to try out this year? Why not try Goalball, a Paralympic Sport which was created specifically for people with sight loss. However, as all players wear eye shields it can also be played by sighted people.

The object of the game is to score a goal by bowling the ball along the floor so that it crosses the goal line of the opposing team. ​All players locate the ball by listening for the bells that are contained within the ball. A team consists of three players with substitutes.

Last year BucksVision, with the help of Goalball UK, set up a club in Buckinghamshire which runs monthly on a Saturday morning at Stoke Mandeville Stadium.

We spoke to Buckinghamshire Goalball Club’s coach, Martyn, to find out more.

**How and why did you get involved with Goalball?**

I was invited to the taster session BucksVision organised last year, with my son and really enjoyed playing it, it surprised me how fast the game can be.

**How do you find being a coach?**

I have always enjoyed coaching, I used to coach Sunday league football and have found the transition into learning and coaching a new sport fun and interesting.

**What's it like seeing players progress as they learn more about the sport?**

It’s great; I really enjoy watching people develop into better players.

**What would you say to people interested in joining the club?**

For people thinking about coming I would say the sport is extremely easy to learn and anyone can play. The fact that everyone is blindfolded is a real leveller, all ages and abilities are welcome and can play.

We also asked Martyn’s son, Kian, who is in his teens and one of the club’s players, what he enjoyed about playing Goalball and whether he would recommend it to other people his age.

“I find the sport fun and like the fact that all players are blindfolded, putting everyone in the same position which is really unique.

I would definitely recommend Goalball because there’s lots of interaction with other people and it helps build confidence.”

So why not come along to a session and give it a try? All new players are warmly welcomed.

# Other sports and activities

**Walking Groups**

Groups meet once a month to enjoy a walk around the Buckinghamshire countryside.

**Aylesbury** – Walks take place on the last Saturday of each month.

**Milton Keynes** - Weekend walks are available during the year.

**Bowls Groups**

Visually impaired bowls is like mainstream bowls but with tactile markings on the green and additional support in the form of markers who describe where an individual’s bowls ends up. We have two groups: **Aylesbury Rollers** and **Wycombe Chestnuts.**

**Tandem Cycling (Milton Keynes)**

We have a tandem group that rides on Monday and Friday mornings in Milton Keynes.

**If you are interested in any of the above clubs, please give us a call on 01296 487556.**

# 2019 Fundraising and Events

As well as the photography competition (page 15) our Fundraising Manager, Lynn Hitchcox has already booked us a stand at the following events in 2019.

**Bucks Young Farmers Country Show - Saturday 1 June**

Manor House Farm, Bledlow, Princes Risborough HP27 9PE

**Armed Forces Day - Saturday 29 June**

Wycombe Air Park, Marlow SL7 3DP

**Bucks County Show - Thursday 29 August**

Buckingham Road, Weedon, HP224NN

Lynn has also been creating some exciting new ways in which we can raise awareness throughout Bucks and Milton Keynes, so keep an eye on our website or follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

**Outdoor Cinema Evening**

We are currently awaiting confirmation on a venue to hold an outdoor cinema evening in May. This will be available to all, with audio description for blind and partially sighted guests.

We will have hot food and drink vendors along with a licensed bar on the site, but picnics will be welcome! There will be pillows and blankets to hire to enhance your viewing comfort.

More details on this event will follow but, in the meantime, please let us know if you would be interested in attending.

If you are interested in helping at any of our events, please get in contact with Lynn to discuss.

T: 01296 329691

E: lhitchcox@bucksvision.co.uk

**Ways to get involved**

As we don’t receive any government funding we are constantly looking for ways to raise charitable donations to support our essential work. Here are just a few ways in which you could help.

**Collect your stamps**

Simply cut or carefully rip the postage stamp from the used envelope, being careful that you don’t damage the stamp, and send to us.

**Host a money box**

Do you have lots of loose change? Request one of our home money boxes to keep your purse and pockets light while raising money for us.

**Amazon Smile**

If you use Amazon, please logon via smile.amazon.co.uk and select BucksVision as your charity of choice.

Or simply donate to us by cheque, card or bank transfer.

In Memoriam Donations

Donating in memory of a loved one is a wonderful way to celebrate their life and support a local charity.

We can provide special collection envelopes for the funeral, or you may wish to mark the anniversary of someone special by donating.

All money raised goes towards supporting the vital work we do for local blind and partially sighted people.

For further information on any of the above please get in touch with us.

T: 01296 487 556

E: reception@bucksvision.co.uk

# Vera Frith

Vera sadly passed away on 18 January 2019, aged 97.

Vera spent most of her life in Wooburn Green. She was brought up at the “The Steps” (the Queen & Albert pub), which her family ran until the mid-1930s.

Vera was an animal lover who had two beloved dogs, Paddy and Peter, and a pet chicken called Oscar (leading her to never eat poultry again!).

She had a keen interest in sewing and handicrafts and wished to follow this as a career. Sadly, this was not to be as she joined her father at the Soho Paper Mill.

When WWII broke out she found an alternative occupation as an “engineer” producing components for the war effort. After the war she remained at the factory until she retired at 59.

She was still active well into her nineties and continued sewing; creating several tapestries which are still on display at Wincote.

In later life her sight began to fail due to a combination of *Doyne Honeycomb Retinal Dystrophy* which runs in the family, and cataracts. In 2011, she became a member of BucksVision who helped her by providing emotional support and advice on equipment.

***This brief snapshot of Vera’s life was provided by her nephew James.***

Vera’s family very kindly asked guests at the funeral to donate to BucksVision in lieu of flowers. Her family and friends have been incredibly generous with donations amounting to £440 at the time of writing.

Our sincere thanks go to Vera’s family for thinking of us at this very sad time and for sending us this lovely story of her life.

# In Your Pocket

In Your Pocket isthe world’s first totally voice operated smart phone. The phone has large buttons and a great speaker for quality sound. It also has O2 connectivity and interactive speech software.

**What services are included with *In Your Pocket*?**

* Unlimited calls
* A subscription to RNIB Newsagent
* Access to RNIB Talking Books Service
* Downloadable Podcasts
* Weather forecasts
* GPS information
* Be My Eyes app\*

\*Be My Eyes is an app which uses the phone’s camera to connect you to a sighted volunteer who will be able to help you with tasks such as checking sell by dates or finding items.

**Be My Eyes free App can also be downloaded onto Android and Apple devices.**

**What does the *In Your Pocket* package contain?**

* A protective case
* Headset with microphone
* Lanyard
* USB power charger
* Audio CD with user guide

**What does it cost?**

A monthly contract with a minimum term of two years will cost £22 per month.

To purchase it directly it will cost £528. (VAT is applied where applicable to both costs).

For more information contact *In Your Pocket*:

Phone: 0333 772 7708

Email: helpline@realsam.co.uk

Web: [www.inyourpocket.net](http://www.inyourpocket.net)

# Photography Competition

If you are budding photographer, why not enter our 2020 Calendar Photography Competition?

We are looking for twelve beautiful photographs which showcase “*Buckinghamshire Throughout the Seasons*” for our 2020 Calendar.

All proceeds raised from the entries and the sales of the calendar will support the work of BucksVision.

As well as the twelve photos selected for the calendar there at also cash prizes to be won:

1st Prize -£150

2nd Prize - £75

3rd Prize - £50

4th Prize - £25

**Closing Date: 28 April 2019**

**Who can enter?**

Our competition is open to amateur photographers of any age.

**How to enter**

You may enter up to five photos and entries should be sent via the post. There is a small entry fee of £2.50 per photo.

Payment can be made by cheque or by card. Please contact us on 01296 487556 to request an entry form and a copy of the competition guidelines. Alternatively, they can be downloaded from our [website](http://www.bucksvision.co.uk/photographycompetition).

Please enclose a completed [entry form](https://www.bucksvision.co.uk/ClientArea/files/Downloads/BucksVision%20Photographic%20Competition%20Entry%20Form%202019.docx) with your photograph/s and your entry fee. Please write your name on the back of your photograph/s.

Please note, entries will not be returned, and we will need a high-resolution electronic copy of your photo if it is chosen for the calendar. Entrants under the age of 18 will need permission from their parent or guardian to enter.

# Bookstart - Start reading from an early

*Bookstart*, delivered by *Booktrust* the UK’s largest children’s reading charity, gives free books to every child in England.

As the world's first national book-gifting programme, *Bookstart* aims to encourage a love of books, stories and rhymes in children from as young an age as possible.

Each child is entitled to a free *Bookstart* pack before they are 12 months old and again when they are aged 3-4 years.

They also provide free packs for children with additional needs, tips and guidance on reading together, resources and activities, and much more.

**Booktouch**

Bookstart also gifts additional needs packs to families. The **Booktouch** pack has been specifically designed for children who are blind or partially sighted.

There are two packs: **Booktouch Baby** (0-2 years)

**Booktouch Toddler** (3-4 years)

Each pack has two touch-and-feel books and guidance around sharing books with blind and partially sighted children.

Booktrust also produces a leaflet: *Booktouch: A guide to enjoying books and reading with blind and partially sighted children.* Download from [www.booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk).

For more information on Bookstart and Booktouch contact

**Buckinghamshire: Gillian Polding**

Area Manager for Children and Young Persons at Bucks County Council.

T: 01296 382 273

**Milton Keynes : Sharon Gaughan**

Bookstart Administrator at Milton Keynes Council

T: 01908 217135

# From the Archives

Harry Smith lost his sight in 1996 and become a member of BucksVision (formerly BAB).

He was a very active fundraiser for numerous charities in the Aylesbury Vale, including us, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Wheelpower and Dial-a-ride. Consequently, he features several times in our archive.

One of the first articles is from 1994 and is about how “a canine caper had Harry Smith in chuckles – after he and a friend accidently got their guide dogs mixed up”. Judging by the article, showing two light coloured labradors, they were very similar!

In 2004, after two years of campaigning by Harry, the first meeting of the **BAB Computer Group** was officially launched.

In the article Harry explained “The group has been set up to help the visually impaired in Buckinghamshire who wish to work with a computer but would like some assistance and guidance.”

On page 5 of this newsletter you can read how another active member, Padma, is setting up her own technology group much like Harry did 15 years ago.

In 2006 Harry’s efforts were recgnised when he was named Aylesbury Vale District Council’s Volunteer of the Year.

Harry was nominated by Sigrid who stated that “In view of his never ending enthausiasm to give his time…I feel very strongly that Harry desrves some form of recognition for his good work.”

Sadly, Harry died in 2008. His fabulous fundraising efforts over the years meant his sad passing was marked with an article in the Bucks Herald; the headline simply said, “Farewell Harry and thank you.”

# Useful Contacts

**Bucks Integrated Sensory Service – 01296 479970**

(For support dealing with sight loss at home in Buckinghamshire)

**Sensory Advice Resource Centre – 01908 401135**

(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 431911**

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

**Age UK Milton Keynes – 01908 550700**

Support for older people living in Milton Keynes to help them achieve and maintain independence and wellbeing.

**MK Reader Service – 01908 231123**

Support with reading and shopping in Milton Keynes.

**British Wireless for the Blind – 01622 754757**

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

**Esme’s Umbrella – 020 7391 3299**

Support for people experiencing Charles Bonnet Syndrome via RNIB Eye Health Team.

**BucksVision – 01296 487 556**

143 Meadowcroft, Aylesbury HP19 9HH

[www.bucksvision.co.uk](http://www.bucksvision.co.uk)

***Free 12 year old MagniLink 709X Magnifier. Collction from Great Missenden. Contact BucksVision if interested.***