

# Look Out!

## Halifax Society for the Blind Newsletter, Spring 2019

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SOCIETY  
FOR THE BLIND**

Welcome to our new look newsletter, which we hope provides the most important news and information to our readers. We've moved to a 12-page format, and to celebrate this wondrous technical achievement, we've put a photo of our expanded team on the front cover! We intend future editions of Look Out! to draw heavily on the plans our team draws up with readers by working together to build HSB into a charity that thrives on member involvement and does more to support people with sight loss. If you want to receive Look Out! in a different format (e.g. Braille or audio memory stick) then please let us know.



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## Christmas at The Society...

HSB celebrated Christmas 2018 by hosting its first ever Children's Christmas Party! Well in fact we hosted two parties, one for the younger children and one for the teenagers.

The Mayor of Calderdale, Marcus Thompson, came to join the younger children at their party. The children were treated to a party tea consisting of sandwiches, crisps, sausages and buns. A few rounds of Pass the Parcel, followed by some very enthusiastic carol singing, led to a surprise visit from Father Christmas. The children were very excited to see the man himself and spent time chatting with him before receiving a small gift.



Once the younger children had left, the teenagers came to have some fun. This included making their own

pizzas, playing games, listening to music and chatting. The teenagers also received a small gift to end their night. As the children's Christmas Party was such a success, the Board have decided to make this an annual event.

Our group members also celebrated Christmas. The Monday group enjoyed a Christmas buffet, followed the next week by mince pies, sherry and a game of Pick and Pinch. Margaret said, "We had a good time, lovely sandwiches. They treat us very well indeed."

The Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday groups each had a visit to Toby Carvery at Ainley Top, where they were treated to a drink and two delicious courses completed by a Christmas cracker each. Sue said, "The meal was very enjoyable. The staff went above and beyond to look after everybody."

The Friday group took their celebration of the festive season to The Watermill at Salterhebble, where everybody had a three course meal and a nip of something Christmassy!

Time was also found for the staff to celebrate Christmas as a team. Staff gathered at Café Passion for a beautiful meal and then ventured to Percy Shaw's for a few drinks, where they were joined by available trustees. A good night was had by all.

## **Annual Trip to Millstones of Harrogate – Friday 5th April 2019**

We are taking bookings for a trip to Millstones in Harrogate on 4th April. This has always been a popular choice, so you are advised to book early. This year will have a vintage theme.

Coaches will leave HSB at 9.30am and, on request, may pick up at Brighthouse. On arrival, there will be morning coffee with toasted teacakes. You will then be able to explore the farm and gift shops and you will have time to relax.

A two course lunch will then be served at approximately 12.30pm, with a choice of:-

“There will always be an England” - Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pudding

“Roll out The Barrell” - Leg of Lamb with Mint Sauce

“Dame Vera” - Dame of Salmon with Hollandaise Sauce

Followed by...

“Land of Hope and Glory” - Jam Roly-Poly and Custard

“Tipperary” - Peach and Brandy Trifle

“White Cliffs of Dover” - Strawberry Pavlova

An afternoon of entertainment will start at 2pm, with resident entertainer and vintage vocalist Paula Marie performing her unique vocal solo act, bringing tunes from the 1940s, Big Band, Swing, Jazz,

vintage pop and wartime classics to life. Afterwards, there will be an interval for tea, coffee and cakes, with cash prize bingo, before carriages at 4.15pm. You will be back in Halifax for 5.30pm.



The cost of this wonderful day trip is £25, including transport. As this is a popular event, you are advised to book and pay without delay. Any booking is confirmed when payment is made and is on a first come, first served basis. To get your booking form, contact the office or a member of staff.

### **Ten Pin Bowling**

If you have ever been ten pin bowling and want to do it again, or just want to have a go, we are looking to organise an event at Electric Bowl (1 minute from HSB) over the coming months. Interested people please contact Pete at the HSB Office. Look out for our Spring Newsletter for an update on this.

## Volunteering at the Society

Hello everyone, my name is Faye Herbert. I'd like to introduce myself as the Volunteer Manager. I have been in my new position since October, so some of you may have seen me at Clare Road and other locations. I intend to get out and about and meet as many members and supporters of the charity as possible, so if you'd like me to call and see you for a chat please contact the office to arrange this.



The Society is looking to develop new and exciting volunteering opportunities within the organisation. As we move forward with our plans for the future of the Society, we are hoping to increase awareness of the organisation and encourage more people to volunteer with the service.

Volunteers are going to play a vital role in the organisation's future, and as such we are hoping to build on the

number of volunteers we already have who offer support as social group assistants, as well as recruiting home visiting volunteers and resource centre assistants. These are just a few of the roles available; we do take a very broad approach to volunteering, so if you have any suggestions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

***“The unselfish effort to bring cheer to others will be the beginning of a happier life for ourselves”*** Helen Keller

We are looking for volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, with a range of different experiences, including anyone with sight loss. The only requirements you need are to be caring, committed, have a friendly manner and time to spare. Comprehensive training will be given to any prospective volunteers and ongoing support will be offered, along with opportunities for further development. If you think you may be interested in becoming a volunteer, you know someone who would or you would like some further information, please feel free to call in, give the office a ring, or email me at: [volunteering@halifaxblindsociety.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@halifaxblindsociety.org.uk).

## **Yoga and Relaxation for People with Sight Loss**

We've had some enquiries about whether HSB could organise sessions for members. Support for people living with a sight condition involves support of the broadest kind, and we want people to be able to access such services to support their own wellbeing.

However, it can be hard for people to take part if they don't know what to do in yoga sessions. That's why we want to hear from you if this is something you would like to try out. Please contact Angie Matthews at HSB, and we will keep you posted.

## **“Technology and You” Information and Advice Days**

In response to a growing request for support around technology, we have arranged (with support from the RNIB) to hold regular information and advice days. These days will be held at the office on the first Monday of each month, with the first being Monday 4th March.

This first session will be a drop-in session where you can come along to get more information about what is available. Dinos from the RNIB will be giving talks on what he can offer and our shared vision for these days. Talks will be held at 10.30am and 12.30pm.

Future “Technology and You” days will be operated on a booking

system. You will be able to book a 50min time slot in advance where you will receive one to one support on any issue you are having with whatever piece of technology.

Technology does not just mean phones and computers; we will also be offering advice around clocks and radios etc., so please feel free to come along with any queries you may have. It doesn't matter if you're just curious or are experienced with technology, all are welcome. Dinos is an expert in helping YOU make some use of technology, and along with support from our volunteers, you will be in capable hands. Please contact the office for details.

**Did you know -  
You can save delivery charges  
by ordering equipment and  
aids directly through HSB?**

## **Birthdays and Celebrations**

Staff, volunteers and members at HSB send best wishes to Jane Sellers, who recently celebrated her 60th birthday with family and friends.

As we go to print, Kitty Beaumont will reach the fantastic age of 100! Everybody at HSB would like to wish Kitty and her family a wonderful time and a memorable celebration.

If you know of anybody connected with HSB who has something to celebrate, let us know, and we'll run a special message.

## Life Hacks:

### From Members... To Members

Kevin from Tuesday group wanted to tell readers about an amazing device which helps in many different ways. Kevin said, "The device is called 'In My Pocket'. It looks like a normal mobile phone, and I use it a lot like a normal phone, but it also provides a service called 'By My Eyes', which is a real-time way of using your phone to find out what an item is, or what colour it is".



Kevin went on to say he recently wanted to know what was in a tin of food. It might have been beans. Anyway, by using the In My Pocket device, he just pointed it at the tin and was told what it said on the tin. This turned out to be really useful as people can't always tell with tins – it could have been rice pudding! Kevin added that because the device has a real person at the other end, this means it can accurately tell you things like the colour of an item of clothing, which will save many people stress and worry.

If you have a Life Hack tip you'd like to share with others, please contact the HSB office.

### HSB Board Update

HSB's board have been busy overseeing HSB's direction, including the building layout and budgeting for refurbishment of 34 Clare Road, and work that will underpin service development in 2019, with the new services and approaches to working around sight loss.

In the meantime we are saying goodbye to Nancy Smith, who has been a HSB Trustee for over 6 years, helping us through some difficult times. Nancy is planning to enjoy more family life and gives the Board her best wishes on taking the Future Focus Strategy forward.

We also say hello to Mark Owen, who has joined our Board. Mark has extensive skills in finance, has worked on many IT projects and currently teaches accountancy to young adults at Bradford College. Mark is enthusiastic about support for people encountering sight issues and has a visual impairment himself.

With all the developments underway, this is an exciting time for people to join HSB's Board members. If you know anybody with relevant experience and enthusiasm then please contact the office and the discussion can be taken from there.

## Llandudno Holiday – 20<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> May 2019

HSB are once again arranging a four night break in Llandudno, between 20<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May. This is the week before the Spring Bank Holiday Monday. We have again arranged accommodation with dinner, bed and breakfast at the Queen's Hotel and entertainment has been arranged by the Queen's. The hotel is conveniently situated on the beautiful promenade which is Victorian in style. The hotel itself is rated 4 out of 5 on the Tripadvisor.com website, and we expect demand to be high.

We have organised a coach to take you from HSB at Halifax Bus Station at 11am on Monday 20<sup>th</sup>, and the coach will bring everyone back at 10.30am on Friday 24<sup>th</sup>. You can expect to be back in West Yorkshire for 1pm. Like previous years, the journey will have more than one natural break, so as to make everyone comfortable. For readers in Brighouse, please let us know if you would prefer a local pick-up/drop off point, and we will arrange this.

The cost of the break is £248 for members receiving the usual £50 subsidy and £298 in other cases. Places will be confirmed when booking forms and payments are received and will be offered on a first come, served basis. For further details, please contact us.



As with previous holidays, two team members will be accompanying you to provide advice and/or support. Whilst our staff will try and support you it must be remembered that this trip is designed around the fairly low level needs that independent and physically mobile people with sight loss have. As such, if HSB feel your needs are higher than this, we will need to agree how you plan to manage independently, as we want you and others to enjoy this break. This may mean unless we are convinced otherwise, you will need a guide for this break.

### **Town Centre – Pedestrians and Cycles to share Market Street?**

Some readers may know that Calderdale Council are planning to introduce special zones where pedestrians and cyclists will share the same space. HSB is obtaining detailed information about CMBC's proposals, and we are planning an information meeting for members on Thursday 11th starting at 10.30am.

## Local Eating Out (LEO) – Review of Kashmiri Aroma

At the February session of our LEO Group, six members (and one guide dog) went to Kashmiri Aroma on Broad Street in Halifax.

In order to promote independence, several members checked out the considerable menu on line before going. The website was found to be accessible using a screen reader or magnification software; it is easy to navigate, and the menus nicely laid out. Each dish had enough description to make readers' mouths water with anticipation!



From the start, the staff were exceptional. Polite and friendly is easy, but staff attending our group were also thoughtful and helpful to our needs. Though they may not have had sighted guiding training, they were intuitive and politely asked how they could assist.

One group member said

“One of the things that I judge a curry restaurant on is their poppadums. If they are

greasy, I know that the curries are likely to be similar. The poppadums were light and just the right crispiness. That was promising.”

The service time was good, with starters coming quite quickly and the mains shortly after people had finished them. Everyone agreed that the food was delicious. The group thought it could easily compete with the top Bradford Indian restaurants.

By drawing straws, the next two venues were set as:-

- 7<sup>th</sup> March – Café Passion (Mediterranean-style food) 2, Coleridge Street, Halifax, HX1 2JF 01422355288 [www.cafepassion.co.uk](http://www.cafepassion.co.uk)
- 4<sup>th</sup> April – Catch (Fish and Seafood) Green Lane, Greetland, HX4 8AD 01422 310003 [www.catchseafood.co.uk/catch-seafood-west-vale](http://www.catchseafood.co.uk/catch-seafood-west-vale)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> May—to be decided by whoever draws the short straw during May's meal

All LEO groups are held on the first Thursday of every month at 7pm. Please make your own access and travel arrangements. To book, please contact Angela on 07791 134362.

## **Accessible Smart Meters**

Energy UK, geo (a leading smart meter display manufacturer) and the RNIB have been working with energy suppliers to develop an Accessible In-Home Display (known as an AIHD) for smart meters for blind and partially sighted customers. The new accessible AIHD unit is said to be easy to use and includes colourful tactile buttons and speech output. They should be available for customers from the first half of 2019.

If you or a family member have sight loss or other accessibility needs, contact your energy supplier. They will then discuss the options available and should be able to provide further information on smart metering, including the AIHD. Alternatively, speak to your supplier about accessibility options when they contact you about installing a smart meter. If you ask for or obtain an accessible meter, HSB are keen to know how it goes, so please let us know.

## **DWP Begins Moving Existing PIP Claimants to 10 Year 'Light Touch' Reviews**

In early January, HSB learnt that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced that it has begun deciding which existing Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claimants will be moved to only having a 'light touch' review every 10

years, instead of a more frequent full review.

The new system is intended to reduce the number of unnecessary checks on PIP awards. The 'light touch' reviews will be aimed primarily at claimants who have been awarded the enhanced rates of both components of PIP and whose condition is unlikely to improve.

Sarah Newton, Minister of State for Disabled People, said in a written statement:

*'This is still in the early stages and being dealt with in date order, prioritising claimants whose awards are coming up for an award review, but commencing this activity is a really important step to reducing the number of individuals having to undergo an unnecessary award review where their needs are only likely to deteriorate.'*

The exact nature of the 'light touch' review has not yet been decided. HSB will keep you updated in future newsletters.

## **STOP PRESS!!!**

### **VI Holidaying Documentary**

Heads up! Amar Latif is presenting a brand-new travel documentary for the BBC2. The show – 'Travelling Blind' – is due to air at 8pm on 7th March and will be available on the BBC iPlayer shortly afterwards.

## HSB and the Future – Pete Hoey

It has been great meeting so many members in my first weeks as Chief Officer. Everyone I've met has been so friendly. Having met with a good number of local professionals too, it's clear that HSB is a well respected organisation. In discussing the organisation's future aim of becoming the go-to place for people affected by sight loss, I'm picking up many positive ideas and views from members, professionals and trustees

We want to become a service to which people facing sight loss automatically turn. This means that a big task for myself, our team, and HSB's Board is to reach out to much wider circles within the sight loss community than we currently do.

A first step in doing this is the introduction of technology sessions, which are relevant to all members, but have always drawn in wider numbers. Additionally, recruiting more volunteers – including those with sight problems, will increase our capabilities and impact. Going further, we are investing in team training, to build up HSB's Team skills knowledge, as we head into new territory, and launching whole new support and advice services.

The new Home Visiting Service and a new Resource Centre will be launched by the Summer, with courses and peer groups developing

on the basis of our conversations with members and partners.



I hope to be involved with many newsletter readers in shaping how our services develop, and this applies equally to the exciting plans we have for our premises. The number of people with failing sight is rising, and we have to shape up and be in a position to provide support and advice like never before. I'm confident that our Team and community can achieve this, and will keep you posted in future editions. I can be contacted at [pete.hoey@halifaxblindsociety.org.uk](mailto:pete.hoey@halifaxblindsociety.org.uk)

## Dates for Your Diary

- 4<sup>th</sup> March, 10.30am to 2.30pm RNIB Technology and You session
- 7<sup>th</sup> March, 7pm LEO Group (local eating out), Café Passion.
- 11<sup>th</sup> March, 5.30 to 8pm Working Age Group, HSB, 34 Clare Road.
- 20<sup>th</sup> March, 10.30am British Wireless for the Blind – talk and equipment presentation and help to apply
- 1<sup>st</sup> April, 10.30am to 2.30pm RNIB Technology and You session
- 1<sup>st</sup> April, 12.00pm to 2.30pm Demonstration of Video Magnifiers and CCTV for reading, by Optelec.
- 4<sup>th</sup> April, 7pm LEO Group (The Catch, Elland)
- 5<sup>th</sup> April, 9.30am to 5.30pm, Annual Millstones (Harrogate) coach trip
- 8<sup>th</sup> April, 5.30 to 8pm, Working Age Group, HSB, 34 Clare Road.
- 11<sup>th</sup> April, 10.30am to 1130am Town Centre Planning information meeting, at 34 Clare Road, Halifax
- 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 7pm LEO Group (venue to be set at April meal).
- 13<sup>th</sup> May, 10.30am to 2.30pm RNIB Technology and You session.
- 13<sup>th</sup> May, 10.30am to 2.30pm Free demonstration of OrCam MyEye 2.0 wearable reading device.
- 13<sup>th</sup> May, 5.30 to 8pm, Working Age Group, HSB, 34 Clare Road.
- 20<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May Llandudno trip at the Queens Hotel – see article for full details.
- 6<sup>th</sup> June, 7pm LEO Group – to be chosen at May's meal.

## About Our Newsletter

Look Out! is a quarterly newsletter of the Halifax Society for the Blind (HSB) – a charity registered in England and Wales (No 224258). All information provided by Look Out! at the time of publication is believed to be correct. Views offered, and statements made are not necessarily those of HSB's Board of Trustees.

We welcome contributions from both members and partner organisations, but ask that these do not exceed 300 words. HSB reserves the right to manage the content of Look Out!, in line with the special footprint of the newsletter, and its own policies. Look Out! will allow advertisements on a case by case basis, in line with the above restrictions.

Look Out! is distributed free of charge to any person with sight loss, or family member, or friend of somebody in the same situation. It is also sent to specialist eye services and will be made available on our Website. If you would like to obtain future editions of Look Out! or to let us know if you no longer wish to receive it, please contact us (see below). Anybody making a request to receive Look Out! in Braille or on audio memory stick should again contact our office, and we will record your preference.

## How to Contact Us

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If you intend to visit our office, please note that HSB opening times are 10am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. For further information, please visit [www.halifaxblindsociety.org.uk](http://www.halifaxblindsociety.org.uk)