

open hand

The magazine of Deafblind UK - putting **you** in the picture

Autumn 2010



Inside:

- Find out more about our Tele-befriending scheme.
- Spotlight on the new Apple iPad.
- Regional focus on North Wales.



DEAFBLIND
·UK·

What's inside

- 6** News:
Fancy a chat?
Helen hits the headlines.
Number of deafblind people set to explode.
- 17** Health News
- 18** Review of Apple's new iPad
- 39** Remembering Kathleen Maynard
- 41** Focus on the Information and Advice Line

Editor: Rosemary Sandford
Email: rosemary@sandford-dbuk.fsnet.co.uk

Production: Jo Johnson

Email: jo.johnson@deafblind.org.uk
Tel: 01733 358 100

Design: Tina Hall,
Perfect Sky

Printed by: Ken Girvan
Printers

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A word from our editor



Welcome to the autumn edition and I hope you all enjoyed a good summer and managed to have a pleasant holiday. For those of you bold enough to venture abroad I do hope that the volcano, the strike threats and the failure of holiday firms did not give you any disruption. It seems a safer bet to stay in the country and enjoy our many interesting places.

Our Policy, Information and Advice Officer, Bridget Miller, is retiring soon and she writes about her work on the Information and Advice Line. This is a service much appreciated by our Members. As well as thanking our intrepid runners in this year's London Marathon, we hope that people will sign up for our Aerobathon event in October. I must admit the name of this makes me think of people dropping out of planes, or rolling down hills in bathtubs. Read the article

to find out all about this venture.

Like many people I have been wondering about the new Apple iPad, so I am pleased to say that Steve Unwin has an update and report on that.

I am pleased we are hearing again from Victor Shackleton who always has something interesting to say. This time he is writing about the Great Depression, and seems concerned about the impact on peoples' lives of the new coalition government.

Our CEO, Jeff Skipp, outlines the concerns of the disability community on the new policies on Benefit Reform. It seems to me that a major problem has been an increase over time in social exclusion which in turn has led to benefit dependency in some communities which results in some instances in the fit and employable pushed into idleness. Often for two or three generations, yet forces the genuinely sick and the disabled to jump through hoops to obtain quite limited amounts. Let us hope that the government's promises not to target

the most vulnerable are kept. Disabled and elderly people are quite right to be concerned and need to keep up collective pressure where it counts.

With an anticipated rise of 60% of people with dual sensory loss forecast over the next twenty years, according to Sense, action and preparation for this needs to begin now. We have been ignoring the warnings of the implications of a vast increase in the ageing population for over thirty years, despite the best efforts of a few far-sighted individuals.

Bernie Godfrey, one of our Volunteer Befrienders in Essex, writes about the late Ted Haines and his achievements in the Kings Royal Rifle Corps, and his work as a postman after the war.

Do keep writing and telling us about yourselves, your activities and achievements.

Have a good autumn and best wishes,

Rosemary Sandford
Rosemary Sandford.



Chief Executive, Jeff Skipp
updates Members

Cuts for the Public Good or Ideological Austerity

Our new government has now been in place for some months and it is fair to say that many of their policies on Benefit Reform are causing widespread concern across the disability movement. Whilst restoring the link to earnings for pensioners is a welcome move and will benefit many Deafblind UK Members the increase in VAT may well offset any pension increases in the short to medium term.

However, most concerning is the plan to reassess all

Incapacity Benefit claimants on their fitness to work and introduce medical assessments for Disability Living Allowance, which the government estimates will reduce caseloads by 20%. John Knight, Director of Policy & Campaigns at Leonard Cheshire, has said: "the proposed welfare reforms could reverse a decade of relative progress in opportunities for disabled people". Peter Beresford, Professor of Social Work at Brunel University and chair of 'Shaping Our Lives',

a service user organisation goes further: "We are likely to see an end to years of trust-building through user involvement. It's difficult to see what role such information gathering exercises can have when the least powerful have become the prime target for spending cuts, rather than a key voice to be listened to". These comments go to the nub of the issue, we already know that Local Authorities are developing plans for cuts in social care services ranging from 25% to 40% over the next three years, which inevitably will result in some people's care provision being reduced and the potential for eligibility criteria to be raised, meaning less deafblind people may be able to access social care services in the future; So disabled people have the potential for a double whammy, a potential reduction in social care provision and for some a reduction in income.

Deafblind UK is determined to fight these cuts as they target some of the most socially and economically excluded people in society, which will ultimately reduce the chances for some to live

independent and fulfilling lives through reducing or excluding access to appropriate care services and benefits that in part reflect the additional cost associated with having a disability. I would ask all Members who are concerned about cuts to their benefits or who are struggling to get the services they require from Local Authorities to contact the Information and Advice Line. We will be able to support you through the process and offer advocacy support to ensure you receive the benefits and services you are entitled to. Equally, by contacting us we will be able to build up a picture of what is happening nationally and use this information within our campaigning to stop these cuts.

We will be writing a full article on the Government's proposals to reform welfare benefits for disabled people in the next edition of Open Hand.

Best Wishes

Jeff Skipp

Paper Mill Lock boat trips

24th June to 9th July



Members enjoying a pleasant boat trip

Every time we've been on these boat trips at Paper Mill Lock, the weather has been lovely – and this year was no exception. On both days, the sun was shining.

On Thursday 24th June, Braintree, Witham, Basildon & Brentwood Club Members had their trip along the River Chelmer. It is always nice that the Members are able to meet other Members from different clubs on these trips. Sometimes it's a new acquaintance, sometimes it's a reunion from a previous trip. Either way, it's nice to see everyone enjoying their

day and socialising with others.

On Friday 9th, July Colchester East, Colchester West and Clacton Clubs had their trip on the River Chelmer. A lot of these Members had met on different trips before and it was nice to see some of them catching up with each other again. Sadly, this was one of Member Joyce Payne's last few days. Joyce, born in 1925, thoroughly enjoyed her days at the club and on outings with her friends at Colchester West Club. She will be missed by all there.

Fancy a chat?

Did you know that Deafblind UK offer a free Tele-befriending scheme to Members who would like to receive a weekly call from a volunteer? The idea is that the regular contact enjoyed by both parties will reduce the isolation so often encountered when living with a sight and hearing loss and will offer a valuable opportunity to build friendships.

Telephone calls will take place on a regular basis and



Enjoy a weekly chat

will typically last between 20 minutes and an hour, depending on the people involved. Volunteers can claim back the cost of the calls so nobody is left out of pocket.

At present, only Members who can hear clear speech will be able to access the service, but the long term aim is to include other communication methods when the scheme is firmly established.

We hope that Members benefiting from this service will consider becoming volunteers themselves, to provide peer support to other deafblind people by sharing experiences and offering advice.

If you would like to know more about the Tele-befriending scheme and how you can get involved, please call the Information and Advice Line on **0800 132320** or email **info@deafblind.org.uk**.



Equipment available

Deafblind UK has two items of equipment which could be useful for Members. The first is an Aladdin Rainbow CCTV or video magnifying machine. It enlarges print for low vision users. It enables you to read information, write letters, fill out forms or view printed photographs when you put the printed information on the viewing table and it then magnifies the document onto the screen.

The second piece of equipment is a hand held Easi Reader. You scroll the hand held device over some text or information and it appears magnified on the attached screen. The Easi

Reader comes packed in a portable case and bag which is the size of a standard laptop.

If you feel the equipment would be useful to you and you would like it, there is no charge for either item but the equipment will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. We do, however, ask that you would pay the postage costs.

To find out more please contact Steve Unwin in our IT team on: Tel: **01733 358100, ext: 224** or email: **steve.unwin@deafblind.org.uk**

Helen hits the headlines during Deafblind Awareness Week



Helen Sellers has been a volunteer for Deafblind UK since 1992. Helen featured in the Braintree and Witham Times and the Halstead, Colchester and Clacton Gazettes in Essex during this year's Deafblind Awareness Week to raise the profile of volunteering by telling her story and recruiting more volunteers to support Deafblind UK. Helen helps out at the Braintree and Witham groups and talked about her experiences. She said: "One of my sisters was born blind, an Aunt went deaf through mastoids and my other sister had Meniere's disease, so I felt some empathy. We have enormous fun at the groups and if I'm honest I think I've always been prepared to do this kind of work, as I feel sure it was something I was meant to do."

Helen admires Members of the deafblind groups for their courage. "I never cease to be amazed at the bravery of some of our Members. When you see their faces and they've made something, like Millie, our oldest Member doing her flower arrangements. She was apprehensive, but when she touched the oasis she knew what to do as she used to do this before she lost some of her sight. Volunteering has been a very worthwhile part of my life. It's exciting watching people come out of their shell and I consider myself fortunate to have been given the opportunity to be able to do what I do".

Everyone at Deafblind UK would like to thank Helen and all our volunteers for the valuable support they give to our Members.

Please contact us on: Tel: **01733 358 100** or email: **info@deafblind.org.uk** if you are interested in being a volunteer.

Sense report that the number of deafblind people is set to explode

The number of deafblind people is set to increase within twenty years reveals the report, 'Sense of Urgency'. Sense has commissioned research to gain an understanding of how many deafblind people there are in the UK. It is the first research of its kind and its key findings are:

- there are currently 356,000 deafblind people in the UK
- this number is set to increase by 60% to 570,000 deafblind people in the UK by 2030

The report sets out the current support for deafblind people and implications if they are not supported adequately. Sense is calling on the Government's Commission on Long Term

Care to recognise and protect the social care needs of deafblind people. They are reinforcing the message that not doing so is not an option as the resultant bill for associated health conditions is unaffordable. Plus many Local Authorities would end up spending much more than the relatively inexpensive support costs in dealing with crisis situations.



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Find out more about the Sense of Urgency report by logging onto: http://www.sense.org.uk/what_is_deafblindness/urgency or calling Tel: **0845 127 0060**

Volunteer for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

Visually impaired people are being invited to volunteer for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the process is being managed by the RNIB.

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympics Games (LOCOG) want to stage an inspirational and memorable Games, where everyone is invited, can take part and get involved in the most exciting event in the world - for volunteers, this will be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

RNIB and LOCOG have been working together to make this happen, opening up opportunities to all. The RNIB wish to showcase how much blind and partially sighted people can contribute to the games. They will be on hand to give you advice and support volunteers with the application process.

If you are interested in



Artists view of the Olympic stadium

finding out more about how you can take part, learn more about the roles available and how RNIB and LOCOG can support you in the application process, contact RNIB on: 01733 375450 or by emailing volunteering@rnib.org.uk

A new commercial age of the Paralympic Games is upon us, and the companies investing in it are staking their claim in it. Time was - and we know this because The Daily Telegraph has had a dedicated correspondent for the last five Paralympiads - when the GB Paralympic team news two years ahead of a Games centred around whether enough money could be raised to send bigger teams of disabled athletes around the world to compete.

Channel 4 makes disability sport its main event

Channel 4 has announced that they have 'Two Years to Change the Perception of Disability Sport'. The Paralympic television rights were sold on the open market for the first time for 2012, and Channel 4 is believed to have paid around £8 million for them.

The broadcaster has committed to over 150 hours of live coverage of the London 2012 Paralympic Games, and announced a weekend of programming dedicated to the Paralympic Games to coincide with 'Two Years to Go'.

They revealed that a bold marketing campaign to challenge public attitudes towards disability sport, and investment of £500,000 in finding and training disabled presenting talent, will bring major change.

The London 2012 Paralympic Games will be the biggest event in Channel 4's



Member, Daniel taking a basketball shot

history. As the official UK broadcaster, Channel 4 will treat the Paralympic Games as the main event, not a sideshow to the Olympic Games.

August will see Channel 4's programming hitting screens, the highlight of which is a documentary to be broadcast called 'Inside Incredible Athletes'. The programme will profile seven athletes, all of whom are hoping to represent Paralympics GB in 2012, and will feature stunning sporting performance sequences, filmed against a backdrop of iconic locations around London showing Paralympic sport as it has never been seen before.

The Despatch is Hatched

The UK-wide registered charity Infosound, in association with British Wireless for the Blind Fund, now produces a free, monthly audio compilation of information that could be of particular interest to blind and partially-sighted people.

Called the Infosound Despatch and usually lasting for about an hour, the monthly selection of audio articles aims to cover a wide variety of different topics about living with sight loss - useful products, leisure, holidays, mobility,

housing, employment, money, consumer issues and support services.

It's totally free and delivered on standard audio CD to listeners' homes every month and it does not have to be returned.

All the charity's other services are only available on their web site (www.infosound.org.uk), so the new monthly Despatch is specifically for vision-impaired people who do not have access to the internet.



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com/David Phillips

Anyone who would like the free monthly service is asked to phone the number **084 55 55 55 28** and leave their name, address and telephone number or to email audio@infosound.org.uk

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities

A guide for disabled people and disabled people's organisations

If you are a disabled person, the United Nations Convention on the rights of People with Disabilities (the Convention) is for you.

The Convention is a new international human rights agreement that:

- recognises that we are all equal. Disabled people have the same rights as everyone else to freedom, respect, equality and dignity.
- brings together all our basic human rights in one place

The Convention was created because often disabled people's human rights are not respected and they face many barriers to inclusion in society.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is working hard to raise awareness of the Convention

among disabled people, legal advisers and public bodies. The Commission's role is to ensure Britain makes rapid progress towards making the Convention rights a reality for disabled people. They have produced a guide so that people can find out:

- What their human rights are and how they are protected.
- What difference the Convention could make to their life.
- How people can be involved in putting the Convention into practice.
- How people can use the Convention to challenge injustice and improve services.

The guide is for people living in England, Wales and Scotland.

ITV supports special educational needs with signed books

ITV has teamed up with 'Off We Go Publishing' to present three unique books for children with special educational needs, in British Sign Language (BSL) for the first time.

The picture books, which were created by mum of three, Avril Webster, to support her son Stephen who has complex special needs, are available on ITV's website www.signedstories.com and are accessible in BSL, animation, text and sound.

The simple text and clear illustrations are designed to help children with special educational needs including autism and dyslexia, cope with new experiences and develop their language.

Avril said: "Stephen often finds it difficult going to new places and experiences. We found that using picture books with 12 clear pictures in a sequence helped him to manage tasks that previously he had found overwhelming. This is why I created the 'Off We Go!' series of books, to prepare Stephen for a particular experience like going to the dentist or going swimming, so he is less scared and better able to participate."

The Signed Stories website also carries brand new content for parents, carers and teachers on the benefits of sharing stories with children with autism, dyslexia and other special educational needs and bringing stories to life with sign language.



Find out more at www.signedstories.com

Young people take to the sky

A group of young people with disabilities found the sky had no limits this August when they had a free flying lesson at a Bedfordshire airfield. Disabled flying school 'Freedom in the Air' held a 'Freedom Wings' taster day at Cranfield Airport, and invited 23 people aged between nine and 19 to learn how to pilot a plane.

The young people all have some form of disability and attend the Young Inclusive People (YIP) club at the Pemberton Centre in Rushden. Freedom in the Air founder Gautam Lewis, who uses crutches after contracting polio as a child in India, organised the Freedom Wing day to show people disability is not a barrier to achievement.

He said: "I thought maybe I should do something positive about supporting disabled people, help them learn new skills and push them to a new level of confidence so that they can have opportunities. It's trying

to show what we can do regardless of disability."

The young people looked around a light aircraft and airport hangars, learnt how aeroplanes work and then took to the skies for 30 minutes with an instructor, who let them take control if they felt confident enough. Three previous Freedom Wings days at the airport were very successful, and Gautam plans to hold two more in the Autumn.

The YIP club is funded by Northamptonshire County Council and managed by Cultural Community Partnerships (CCP), a sports, leisure and cultural trust.

FITA is a not-for-profit organisation based in London, which is committed to opening horizons for people with disabilities so that they can fly higher socially, physically and professionally. For more information go to www.freedomintheair.org

New publication informs patients and families what standards to expect from the regulation of their NHS hospital

Following the introduction of a new law, all NHS hospitals in England must now be licensed, by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). To be licensed, hospitals must show that they are meeting new essential standards of quality and safety. CQC continuously monitors them to make sure standards are kept or improvement action is taken. Now CQC has published a leaflet which informs patients, their carers and families, what they can expect from the essential standards. The leaflet also explains how important it is that patients or their carers tell the regulator about their experiences, both good and bad, to help CQC make the right decisions. Called 'What standards to expect from the regulation of your NHS hospital' the leaflet can be read or downloaded from the

CQC website.

At the same time, the CQC website publishes an up-to-date directory of all licensed NHS hospitals. You can now look up the current status of any NHS hospital trust in England.

The licensing of NHS hospitals is just the first step in a programme which will see new essential standards of quality and safety gradually rolled out across all health and adult social care services in England. In October this year, all adult social care services must be licensed by CQC and providers must demonstrate they are meeting essential standards of quality and safety; so too must all providers of independent healthcare.

You can find out more about the programme and how it affects the care you and your family receives by visiting CQC's website at www.cqc.org.uk. Or you can contact the Care Quality Commission on **03000 616161**

Technology Today

by Steve Unwin,
Deafblind UK's IT Manager

Without doubt the biggest technology event this year was the launch of the iPad tablet from Apple. About the size of a dinner mat and twice as thick, this device has a full screen with just a couple of switches on its edge for adjusting the volume and switching it on. All input is through the touch sensitive screen and an on screen touch sensitive keyboard appears when required. There are currently 190,000 applications that can be used on the iPad and more are becoming available every day.

So why mention it in this column. The iPad does inherit the accessibility options of the Mac computer and iPhone coming with a screen reader and magnification already built in. Voice Over performs the normal duties of a screen



reader with the addition of touch screen reading.

The zoom gives full screen magnification up to 5x magnification and every iPad can display subtitles and closed captioning for the deaf and hard of hearing when playing films and podcasts that support it. There is a high contrast mode but only white on black which some users may find limiting.

With 51,000 iPads being sold within the first two hours of its release and with Apple expecting to sell six million this year, I can imagine it being a popular item on Santa's list this year, though with prices starting at £429, I am not sure I can be that good for the rest of the year!

So is it a laptop? Well not really, it doesn't come with a

camera as most laptops do now and it doesn't allow multitasking because you can only run one application at a time. There have also been problems with the device with concerns about security and the effectiveness of the wireless system and it doesn't play Flash videos such as those shown on YouTube. If there is an area it may excel, and where Apple is pushing strongly, it is the ebook and newspaper publication market. By turning the tablet you can read publications in either portrait or landscape mode.

Connecting other devices to

the iPad is difficult. However, It does use Bluetooth and with many modern Braille displays now using Bluetooth the opportunity is there for future development, especially as a one-to-one communicator for deafblind people.

So, should you rush out and get one? Absolutely not, the iPad is spawning a revolution which other suppliers including Dell, are quickly following and other devices will soon be on the market. In the mean time, if you're looking for an ebook reader then look at the 'Kindle' from Amazon. It is a much cheaper option at £143 and has more accessibility features.



Focus on North Wales



Enjoying a days angling

Two Deafblind Cymru Members, Gwyn Williams and Tony Curtis, from our Wrexham Deafblind Group took part in a unique fishing day for people with combined hearing and sight loss at Glasdir Fishery Centre in Holywell on 5th August 2010. The fishing activities for our Members are supported by Environment Agency Wales and coaches from the Federation of Welsh Anglers. Young people under the supervision of the Youth Justice Board which takes part in the scheme were also at the event.

Deafblind Cymru provided deafblindness awareness training in exchange for support from these organizations to make

this fishing day possible. Deafblind Cymru is funded by The National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund.

This unique fishing activity attracted a lot of interest and was attended by Sandy Mewies, Welsh Assembly Member for Delyn and also Chair of the Cross Party Vision Group. Also present were David Hanson, MP for Delyn, Mayor and Mayoress of Holywell and local councillors.

North Wales Group Co-ordinator, Bethan Scriven commented "Our deafblind Members thoroughly enjoyed their fishing experience. We have more Members interested in joining future fishing programmes".

Deafblind Cymru needs more volunteers in North Wales especially volunteer drivers to help us with transporting Deafblind Members to groups and activity programmes such as the fishing. If you know anyone willing to join our growing team of volunteers please ask them to contact us.

Introducing Freda Lane and the Rhyl Craft Group

Deafblind Cymru provide a staff and volunteer supported social group in Rhyl that meets once a month – called the 'Rhyl Look Hear Group'. This is one of many groups throughout Wales provided thanks to Big Lottery funding.

Rhyl also has a monthly Craft Group which is supported by Deafblind Cymru volunteers. Both groups are chaired by Freda Lane who is deafblind.

Martin Griffiths, Project Manager for Deafblind Cymru visited the Craft Group recently and met with Freda. Martin recalls: "Freda who is in her 90's has incredible energy and enthusiasm for crafts – she showed many photographs of her extensive thimble collection and vintage knitting patterns and much more".

Bethan Scriven, North Wales Groups Co-ordinator says "Freda is a lively, enthusiastic Member of the Rhyl, Look

Hear Social Group, and she is a strong driving force in the Craft Group. We feel very lucky to have her as a Member, she is patient and willingly shares her experiences and knowledge to her peers. She helps us identify opportunities for funding and for social outings".

The Craft Group recently turned their hand to making Christmas decorations out of blank CD's. They are planning to hold a coffee morning towards the end of the year to raise awareness and to sell crafts to help raise some money for the group.



The finished decorations!

Contact Deafblind Cymru at Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff, CF24 5TD. Tel: **02920 601 471**, Minicom: **02920 495919** or email: martin.griffiths@deafblind.org.uk



1920's newspaper headlines ©iStockphoto.com/manley099

Member, Victor Shackleton feels memories of the Great Depression are rekindled after seeing the new coalition government in power

As a young boy I was well aware of the poverty and hardships faced daily by hard up families by mass unemployment in the 1930's long before the welfare state. I remember too the great unrest that prevailed as angry and desperate men were forced on means tests in order to be given a miserly amount that would stretch to just enough to buy a loaf of bread and a few shillings to cover their rent. The times were hard enough back then

following the Wall Street crash of 29th October 1929 which thereafter was known as 'Black Tuesday' and the reverberations of the total collapse of the stock markets were soon felt worldwide. In America alone this blackest of days led to 25% of the workforce in the USA being unemployed and as things got worse there was a great deal of frustration and protests as families struggled to cope with the hardship of surviving on practically

nothing in those desperate years.

The unemployed launched vocal tirades on the government accusing them of not caring and they were questioning their valid rights to protest. "Who built the nation?" They cried. "Who built the railroads, the sky scrapers and tilled the earth, who fought in the war and did what the nation asked of them? And now that work is done, we find ourselves on the breadlines".

Even the songwriters got involved in the Great Depression issue and there was one particular song



An American dime

©iStockphoto.com/Kostas Koutsoukos

of the time that topped the charts with its moving lyrics that captured fully the direful situation. Bing Crosby recorded 'Buddy can you spare a dime?' Here are those heart rending lyrics.

'Buddy can you spare a dime?'

They used to tell me I was building a dream, and so I followed the mob, and earth to plough or guns to bear, I was always there right on the job.

They used to tell me I was building a dream with peace and glory ahead, why then should I be standing in line waiting for bread?

Once I built a railroad, I made it run, made it race against time. Once I built a railroad, now its done, Buddy can you spare a dime? Once I built a tower, up to the sun, brick and rivet and lime. Once I built a tower, now its done, say Buddy can you spare a dime?

Once in khaki suits, gee we looked swell, full of that Yankee Doodle Dum. Half a million boots went slogging through hell and I was the

kid with the drum. Say, don't you remember, they called me Al. It was Al all the time. Why don't you remember, I'm your pal? Buddy can you spare a dime?

To their credit, the Hollywood film makers too, took up the rallying cries of the poor and throughout the Depression they produced some films that glowingly defined the human spirit and reached out to the cinema audiences with uplifting 'things will only get better' messages. Films such as 'The Grapes of Wrath' and 'Angels with Dirty Faces' were well received and even as the Depression came to an end and slowly but surely things did get back to normal and people were at last able

to carry on with their lives.

Here in Britain today we are faced with drastic cutbacks that will affect us all. It is worrying that 300,000 jobs may go in the public sector and financial aid for our hospitals and the modernization of railways will now be put on hold. Although one must acknowledge the massive deficit left for the new government to sort out, it is worrying that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has already been forced to resign after milking the public purse of £40,000. This hardly inspires our confidence in this makeshift government. Will my memories of that Great Depression return to haunt my reverie?



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Bernie Godfrey, Volunteer Befriender from Essex remembers his friend Ted Haines



I first met Ted on Tuesday 26th May 2009 when I was introduced to him by Sue Ryder of Deafblind UK. Having been a volunteer befriender for six years Sue had told me about Ted and asked me if I would like to meet him, with the view of becoming his befriender.

We visited Ted and talked for about an hour and a half, telling each other about ourselves, and Sue ran through the guidelines with him. We got on really well, and there was a very relaxed atmosphere. I took an instant liking to Ted.

Sue asked him if he would like me to visit him, he said he would, which pleased me and I arranged my first visit. During my visits we gradually got to know each other. We always had a good old chat and discussed many things

and we always had a laugh. Ted was such an easy man to get along with, it was always a pleasure to go and visit him. Here are some recollections about Ted's life.

Edward Winchworth Haines, or Ted, was born in Bristol on the 10th June 1919, he had two younger sisters. When he was 4 months old his parents emigrated to Vancouver, Canada to start a new life. He was educated in Canada along with his two sisters, Marian and Dorothy. I recall him telling me that it was his ambition to travel and when he left school he became a merchant seaman and travelled to various places throughout the world.

In 1936 he returned to England and on seeing the White Cliffs of Dover he remarked: "So this is England". In 1938 he enlisted for the army and joined the 2nd Battalion Kings Royal

Rifle Corp. During this time he met a young lady named Joyce Blackman and they were married on 30th March 1940. They had three sons Phillip, Richard and Robert.

On the 23rd May 1940 The Kings Royal Rifle Corp were sent, together with other regiments to defend Calais and were asked by Winston Churchill to hang on for as long as possible. They held on for five days until ammunition and water ran out. Ted along with other survivors was taken prisoner and they were marched into Poland. He spent five years as a P.O.W. and it's understandable that he didn't want to talk about it. He spent a lot of time working in the coal mines. His only comment was he'd received better rations. You cannot comprehend what he and his comrades had to endure.

He returned home in 1945 and told me that he spent 12 months on ward B12 in Broomfield Hospital with T.B. On his recovery he settled down with his wife and family and worked as a postman in Braintree for many years. During my visits he told me how

much he enjoyed his job delivering the mail to the villages of Wethersfield and Finchingfield. He also said that in the winter when there was lots of snow, chains had to be attached to the wheels of the vans so that the deliveries could be made, this obviously took much longer but in Ted's own words "The mail always got through". Ted enjoyed gardening and travelling, on one occasion he went on a visit to Canada with his eldest granddaughter. They travelled to Toronto, across the Rockies and to Vancouver where he spent some time with his sisters and their families.

Unfortunately in 1976 he had a brain haemorrhage which left him partially paralyzed and without taste or smell. But life had taught him to take hard knocks and he carried on with determination.

In later years his wife Joyce was taken ill and Ted looked after her until she was taken into a nursing home, sadly she passed away in 2007.

On Monday 10th May 2010 Ted had a fall and broke

his hip. He was taken into Broomfield Hospital and had an operation the following day. I visited him a couple of times, on my second visit I told Ted that I would be going away for a few days on 7th June and that I would go to see him when I got back. But unfortunately that wasn't to be. Ted returned home on 7th June and he left me a message saying how pleased he was to be there. During the early hours of Thursday 10th June there was a horrific gas explosion at Ted's bungalow and very sadly he lost his life. His family, friends and neighbours were devastated. It was his 91st birthday.

Sue and I attended Ted's funeral service which was at

the Chelmsford Crematorium on Wednesday 30th June 2010. The British Legion formed a guard of honour as the coffin was taken from the hearse. The service was most poignant and led by Reverend Beth Bendrey with sincerity. A tribute by Ron Rose was read followed by prayers and the blessing. The music played was 'High on a Hill' by the band of the Royal Green Jackets. A bugler from the Kings Royal Rifle Corp then sounded the Last Post, a minute's silence was observed, followed by Reveille, it was very moving. Ted was proud of his family and also his regiment. I'm sure he would have approved of his send off. It was an honour for me to have known such a wonderful gentleman.



A bugle playing Reveille ©iStockphoto.com/aguirre_mar

Thank you for your stories, letters and articles

Thank you very much for responding to the appeal we made in the Spring issue asking for your stories, letters and articles for Open Hand, our membership publication.

We have received very interesting articles from members about issues you want to raise. Some of the articles and information we have received are featured in this issue of Open Hand.

We would still like to receive even more information. If you have an opinion about recent benefit changes, an issue to raise about

healthcare, an interesting event you have heard about that may interest other members or you would like to comment about any of the articles in Open Hand, we would love to hear from you.

Please send your submissions to our Editor, Rosemary Sandford on email at: rosemary@sandford-dbuk.fsnet.co.uk or by writing to **Open Hand, National Centre for Deafblindness, John and Lucille van Geest Place, Cygnet Road, Hampton, Peterborough, PE7 8FD**

Member, Joseph Ethell told his story in the Summer issue of Open Hand



Enjoying an Autumn morning ©iStockphoto.com/sculpies

Doug Milligan muses about love found in later age

The most exquisite thoughts are those ones of romance. Wondering what could be. Whilst feeling the fluttering of those butterflies of uncertainty. A more mature couple entering the Autumn of their lives, may, and most likely will, reach greater depths of passion, if they were meant to be, far beyond their highest expectations. These same lovers would never have ever dreamt this, or thought it even possible! No one can truly differ with that thought that one's mind is the sensual organ. It is the place where the sensual feelings belong! If the love is

meant to be; it will endure all time to be.

More mature loves will never diminish the memories of one's first love, or any other love they may have had, during their lives, nor should they. We must keep in mind though that a cherished memory is just that! A love as one is entering the golden years of life can unlock those feelings once thought gone forever. A love such as that is often platonic. A true love, in this stage of life, may endure, the time, by remaining as such. Those very loves come from an

even deeper depth than often considered possible. It, the love, like any other love, deserves the time and attention to mature, so it can flourish into something beautiful! After achieving a meeting of the minds on a sensual level the possibilities are endless.

That special one you love can not be that one without the loves and hurts of yesteryear. Everything and everyone has its time, and place, to love, and be loved, on this earth. A memory of a previous love is a personal treasure that's kept in one's heart. It, the lost love, may be of a bitter-sweet nature. The keeper may choose to share it with their new love, or not, to

offer them understanding. Only an ear is necessary when told the bitters, of one's past. No fixing requested! Nor, can you, nor should you, expect one to release one's treasure.

Those memories of the past that are filled with the loves of more youthful innocent times, no matter how vivid in one's mind, they may still exist, those loves of yesteryear can never be brought back, to the present day, to be enjoyed once again. That is why if one is fortunate enough to find a love, a special enduring love, that could take one's soul on out of body experiences. They need to seize that precious gift!



Sharing a happy moment ©iStockphoto.com/Steve Cole

Part 2 Robert Smithdas – Early influences

Robert Smithdas has had a love of poetry from an early age. He began writing verse in the third grade but the main influence came from an English teacher at Perkins, Alice Carpenter. She was a remarkable woman who had been a missionary in China, in charge of a school for the blind in Canton.

When Canton was bombed during the 2nd World War, she placed herself and her charges under the protection of a US gun boat. When war broke out between the States and Japan she refused to be evacuated with others, choosing to stay with her blind students as the only white person in Canton.

She experienced weeks of internment and then was forced to board a Swedish liner to return home. There she started a new career at Perkins School. In the winter of 1945-46, after Smithdas left Perkins and went to New York, he and Carpenter would explore landmarks



Dr Smithdas attending a function

dear to the American heart at weekends.

They also visited many restaurants, tasting food from many different countries, including Japan and Italy, and visiting Chinatown in Boston where Smithdas was encouraged to finger ivory, porcelains, silks and exotic wood carvings. This was a continuation of Carpenter's introduction of the literary arts, begun at school, with his beloved Keats and Shelley, and playwrights like Ibsen, James Barry and Shakespeare. It was Shakespeare's love of



An alabaster statue of Venus ©iStockphoto.com/sculpiers

humanity that endeared him to Smithdas.

According to Smithdas autobiography, 'Life at my Fingertips', Carpenter had less success with the Victorian poet, Robert Browning. He found much of Browning's work obscure, she found it exalted, and he remarked that even Browning did not understand Sordello, after he had written it. She had little success with Houseman either, as Smithdas found his work depressing.

A memorable event was a

visit to the former home of the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Craigie House. Situated in Cambridge, the mansion had been the headquarters of Washington during the Revolution. During the visit, Carpenter introduced Smithdas to a Professor Dana, a grandson of Longfellow. The Professor then took them into parts of the house not normally seen by visitors and allowed Smithdas to touch some of the precious treasures usually kept behind glass. These included an agate cup, as thin as finest china ware, supported by gryphons



Harvard in Spring ©iStockphoto.com/sculpiers

as handles, on a golden base, made by the Italian Renaissance master, Cellini.

They were also taken to a hall of statues where Smithdas was asked to indentify some of the statues, which he did, although he blushed when he touched Venus, who was naked. The Professor seemed impressed by Smithdas ability to identify classical representations by touch and later was influential in providing a special treat.

Dana, who was a professor of Russian literature at Harvard, having learned that

Smithdas was devoted to Keats, arranged for him and Carpenter to visit the Keats Room at Harvard's Houghton Library for Rare Manuscripts. There he was able to touch the poet's death mask and the Curator allowed him to hold several manuscripts that were preserved in leather cases.

The Professor was present when Smithdas graduated from Harvard and importantly, told him never to give up his desire to go to college and become a writer.

Why, Why, Why – light hearted fun sent in by Member, David Evans

Why do we press harder on a remote control when we know the batteries are almost dead?

Why do banks charge a fee on 'insufficient funds' when they already know there is not enough money?

Why does someone believe you when you say there are four billion stars; but have to check when you say the paint is still wet?

Why doesn't Tarzan have a beard?

Why does Superman stop bullets with his chest, but ducks when you throw a revolver at him?

Why do Kamikaze pilots wear helmets?

Whose idea was it to put an 'S' in the word 'lisp'?

If people evolved from apes, why are there still apes?

Why is it that no matter what color bubble bath you use the bubbles are always white?

Is there ever a day that mattresses are not on sale?

Why do people constantly return to the refrigerator with hopes that something new to eat will have materialized?

Why do people keep running over a string a dozen times with their vacuum cleaner, then reach down, pick it up, examine it, then put it down to give the vacuum one more chance?

Why is it that no plastic bag will open from the end on your first try?

How do those dead bugs get into those enclosed light fixtures?

When we are in the supermarket and someone rams our ankle with a shopping cart then apologizes for doing so, why do we say, 'It's all right'? Well, it isn't all right, so why don't we say, 'That really hurt, why don't you watch where you're going?'

Why is it that whenever you attempt to catch something that's falling off the table you always manage to knock something else over?

In winter why do we try to keep the house as warm as it was in summer when we complained about the heat?

Finally, how come you never hear father-in-law jokes?





June Bowden relaxing at home

Now I Know by June Bowden

I have always been puzzled as to why sighted people should want to go to great lengths to describe what they consider to be beautiful sights to me especially when I have told them I can't visualise anything. On a bad day this irritates me and on a good day I feel sorry that they are putting such effort into something which has little effect. The description of a rainbow; mountains streams; faces and sunsets all leave me factually wiser but not experientially so. In other words this is great for educational purposes and increases my knowledge but

not my actual understanding of what they look like. This is why I'd rather talk to them about their families; jobs; beliefs; where they grew up and so forth and when they have asked me what appear to be stupid and banal questions I have felt like throttling them though it has to be said I have mellowed since I have aged.

Now something very enlightening has happened, something which has brought me up with a jolt. I have started corresponding with Simon who is deaf and blind. He has always been

hearing impaired and I'm beginning to understand what those sighted people have felt. I have wanted to ask Simon how he makes sense of sound, whether he knows the sound of his own name and although I have felt embarrassed at sighted people's protestations that their hearts ache to think I am missing out on the scenery in this beautiful world of ours, I now see what they mean. Yesterday I heard some of the 'Lark Ascending' by Vaughan Williams and my first thought was: "I wish I could tell Simon how beautiful this music is".

I have heard the birds singing and taken more notice of them in recent days than ever, simply because I am often writing to Simon while they are singing. I would love to 'lend' Simon my ears. I would love him to understand, in the way I do, the power of music to move, delight and uplift. I would like to share with him my plays, recorded since the 1980's until I bought a digital radio which has no cassette facility, to share with him the moral of Priestley's 'An Inspector Calls' or the despair found in Rattigan's

'The Deep Blue Sea'. Now I know what these sighted people mean when they feel sad about the fact that so much beauty is closed off to me. Of course Simon and I have to make the best of what is left to us and to share what we can and that's a lot believe me but perhaps the sighted people who have come into my life realised that I would be the richer for having their knowledge and that I am sensitive and intelligent enough to appreciate it. I certainly feel that about Simon. I have the words to convey the beauty of music but he cannot hear them and even if he could, nothing would speak to him so clearly as the music itself. Perhaps it's the same with visual things. I am sad that there will always be a part of my world that he cannot share and when someone says to me in the future: "It's a shame you can't see the beautiful scenery in the world".

I shall know exactly how they feel and won't find the statement so irksome as I once did for now I truly do know exactly what they mean and why they've said it.

Remembering Member, Kathleen Maynard by Sister Chris CSF



Sister Chris CSF

Kathleen was an only child. She had a hearing and sight impairment for quite a long time, but managed to support her parents as they got older. She didn't go totally blind until she was in her 50's or 60's, and this was why she learned Braille late in life.

She had learned to play the piano as a deafblind person, which is quite incredible. She said she needed to use a piano which locked, so that she could trace upwards

from the keyhole on the piano and find middle C on the piano keys. Her piano teacher had said she had difficulty getting Kathleen to use the foot pedals on the piano, because it meant the piano teacher going on her hands and knees and literally placing Kathleen's feet on the pedals. Kathleen played quite complicated pieces she had never heard, and she played them with such feeling.

In her younger days, Kathleen had been involved with Guides and probably Brownies. She had always been interested in the education of children, and when she was deafblind, she would visit schools and church groups to talk to children about Biblical events and Deafblindness. For years, Kathleen was a Membership Support Worker for Deafblind UK visiting and encouraging deafblind people. She did this with the faithful support of Ann Davis, who for years was her guide, interpreter, secretary, and most of all her very good friend. Kathleen

was also a dedicated member of Deafblind UK's Board of Directors for many years.

In the Summer of 1999, Kathleen moved to a bungalow in Coulsdon and was very well supported by the people from her local church, who drove her to church and took it in turns to interpret for her.

In 2001 Kathleen went onto the sofa on GMTV with her Communicator Guide and was interviewed by Lorraine Kelly. Kathleen represented Deafblind UK for the Get Up and Give Appeal which raised funds for the organisation and increased its profile. Kathleen greatly enjoyed the whole experience. During her

interview she mentioned that she had always wanted to visit New Zealand and meet her cousin and family there, some of whom she had not seen for many years. An anonymous donor saw her interview and sent Deafblind UK a cheque to fund Kathleen's trip to meet her family which she thoroughly enjoyed. GMTV followed up the story.

Early in 2004, Kathleen obtained a Braille computer through Social Services. She was 81 at this stage, so it was quite amazing that she learned how to send and receive emails and she continued to embrace life until her sad passing earlier this year.



Kathleen enjoying her trip to New Zealand

Bridget Miller talks to Open Hand about her experiences

Deafblind UK's free Information and Advice Line offers a valuable source of information and support to deafblind people, their family members, health professionals and carers. In this article, we hear from Bridget Miller, Deafblind UK's Policy, Information and Advice Officer, as she prepares to retire.

Firstly, Bridget explains how she got into working on the Information and Advice Line: 'I had retired and was looking for something useful to do with my time. My mother had been deafblind, but I didn't even know that Deafblind UK existed. I saw an advert in the paper, realised that the job was practically on my doorstep and went for it!'

That was over five years ago, since then Bridget's role as Policy, Information and Advice Officer has really developed: "Things have really transformed since I began working on the Information and Advice Line.



Bridget preparing for her day

For a start, it was known as the Helpline back then, and was operated on a 24 hour basis, seven days a week. About 18 months ago, the Helpline changed so that it now operates during working hours Monday to Friday and is manned by a pool of specially trained volunteers who cover morning and afternoon shifts."

"My role now involves overseeing the pool of

volunteers and putting together an A-Z information spreadsheet, to enable them to find information very quickly when calls come through. I have also been building a database of all the deafblind clubs across the country, so that we can try to match Members up to an appropriate club in their area."

"At first, I was very sceptical when the Helpline changed – but my scepticism has totally turned around. The new

system is working really well; as well as taking incoming calls from Members, we now speak to so many more people, who are genuinely delighted that we're calling them. Because we are proactively contacting them, they feel more connected to the organisation and know they can get in touch for support about small or large issues."

Operators call new Members to welcome them to Deafblind UK and make



Bridget chatting to a Member on the Information and Advice Line

sure they're aware of all the support that is available. Members are also contacted on their birthdays and two or three other times during the year, to check their progress and see whether they require any further assistance.

The Information and Advice Line offers really practical help and if Members call with questions operators cannot answer, they are signposted to appropriate organisations which will be able to help, such as RNIB or Age UK. In some cases, operators will contact the organisation, explain the situation and ask them to contact the Member directly to deal with their enquiry. Members can also access our caseworker service through the Information and Advice Line, this service empowers Members to be able to resolve issues in a wide range of areas of their life. The casework service can also liaise with other professionals to ensure the best possible advice is given to our Members, and can make referrals to other organisations where specialist skills are needed. We regularly hear from

Members who have benefited from this service.

Where needed we make additional follow-up calls to Members to ensure any issues have been resolved, providing reassurance and social interaction. This kind of joined-up approach works both ways, as Bridget explains: "I was recently notified of someone who was coming out of hospital. So we proactively called her, to check on her and offer support following her hospital treatment. It's really vital that we can offer this kind of service to Members recovering from treatment. We want them to feel safe and cared for following their time in hospital, and confident that they can alert us to any problems they may be having, so that we can liaise with appropriate organisations and our case workers as needed. This ensures they can recover more easily and quickly."

Bridget explained that sometimes, the timing of the proactive calls to Members can be very powerful indeed: "I recently called a Member, who immediately started to cry, saying 'God must

have sent you, you were heaven sent'. It became clear that the lady had been terribly depressed when I called. I spent some time just chatting to her, and she later said that the call had helped her to get through that day. This often happens – people are so pleased that we are calling them for a chat, and that we're not pushy salespeople trying to sell them something, just a friendly voice on the other end of the line."

Operators have also actively promoted Deafblind UK's holiday caravan and lots of Members who haven't had a holiday for years have booked and enjoyed a break.

Depending on the Member's communication needs, operators can make contact using the telephone, Textphone, Minicom and Typetalk. In situations when

the Member is unable to take the call, operators can contact a family member or carer to leave a birthday message and check that they are OK.

Once Bridget has settled into retirement, she is keen to come back to the Information and Advice Line as a volunteer: "I LOVE it! It's wonderful to go home at the end of the day knowing that you have done some good. I know I am doing something really worthwhile. Yes, there are a few tears sometimes, but there's also a lot of satisfaction for a job well done."

As Bridget explained, the Information and Advice Line is manned by a group of specially trained volunteers, who come from all walks of life and age groups. We continue to recruit more volunteers.

To contact Deafblind UK's Information and Advice Line you can telephone and/or Textphone: **0800 132 320** or send an email to info@deafblind.org.uk



Please address your letters to: **Rosemary Sandford or Jo Johnson, Open Hand Magazine, Deafblind UK, National Centre for Deafblindness, John and Lucille van Geest Place, Cygnet Road, Hampton, Peterborough, PE7 8FD**

Dear Open Hand

Remembering deafblind Member, Patrick Murphy.

As far as I know Pat became deafblind while living away at public school. Prior to becoming deafblind Pat had won a scholarship to a public school, which was a real honour as he came from quite a poor area, Bellingham, near Catford in London. It was while he was away at school, perhaps in his mid-teens, that he contracted Meningitis. At the time this was treated with Streptomycin which saved

his life but left him deaf and blind. This education and the fact that he had hearing and speech in his early life, explains why he could communicate so well.

In the mid 50's a couple in our church, Allerford Chapel, in Bellingham had befriended him and introduced him to the church members. We met Pat at that time but went away to N. Ireland to lead a church for deaf people. On our return in 1960 we began services for deaf people at Allerford Chapel, in the small hall at the back

of the church. For a number of years Pat came to these services and he appeared to enjoy the fellowship and was eventually baptised as a believer. Pat attended a number of the annual holiday Christian conferences that we ran where a number of deaf people befriended him. Pat was often in our home where our three children would freely communicate with him.

His main work was as a proof reader for the Braille library. Through the deaf church he met a hearing nurse, Anne, who eventually became his wife. They lived in Lewisham for a period of time and later moved to Wales because Anne wanted to be nearer her family. They went on to have two children. Unfortunately, the challenges of such a relationship and balancing the needs of the whole family resulted in their eventual separation.

Anne encouraged Pat to attend a residential course in Exeter involving independent living. At the end of this he did not return to the family home and the authorities there helped him to get a placement at Peterborough.

The rest I believe you know and it is from then on that we had less contact with him. We did still meet from time to time and were pleased that he was able to achieve so much in the deafblind world. I enjoyed reading your article which told of all these achievements.

Our daughter Ruth Alley now works for Kent Social Services for deafblind people. She has undertaken considerable training for this and we were all thrilled when her examiner for one of her qualifications turned out to be Pat Murphy.

Bert Barritt

A big thank you to our runners

Six brave runners took the challenge of the London Marathon to raise much needed funds for charity Deafblind UK. Including Lieutenant Colonel Jon Symon and Major Mark Harris of 158 (Royal Anglian) Transport Regiment, The Royal Logistic Corps (Volunteers), who are a Peterborough based Territorial Army unit consisting of over 400 TA soldiers and officers. Jon and Mark completed the 26.2 miles of the London Marathon and raised £3,000 for Deafblind UK – a huge achievement!

Hitting sponsorship targets was a huge hit for all, runner Robbie Meechan raised a staggering £988.50 for Deafblind UK, not only that but the company he is based at, Specsavers, have kindly offered to match Robbie's fundraising amount bringing the grand total to £1,977!!

Robbie managed to finish the marathon in 6 hours and 4 minutes. A big thank you goes out to Robbie and all



A well earned medal!

our runners for taking part in the London Marathon and supporting Deafblind UK.

In total our runners raised £9,957.21!

For further information about taking part in the London Marathon for Deafblind UK visit our website:
<http://www.deafblind.org.uk/fundraising>



They're back!

Deafblind UK Aerobathon instructors Mark Gordon from 'Fitness2Health' and Sonia Cullington from 'WoW Fitness' are back once again for the Aerobathon Challenge raising funds for Deafblind UK!

The Aerobathon Challenge takes place on Wednesday 6th October 6pm – 9pm at Deafblind UK's Conference Centre in Hampton and is aimed at all ages and fitness levels.

The three hour challenge is a great way to kick start that plan to get into your party outfits in time for Christmas! Our superb three hour aerobic challenge aimed at all ages, fitness levels and both males and females. This fun event is split into a variety of sessions with regular breaks for a fun fitness challenge!

The Aerobathon is for men and women and will

Places are limited so get in touch for an entry form. For further information about this event, call Lorraine on **01733 358100**, or visit: www.deafblind.org.uk/fundraising to download an entry form.



Mark and Sonia in action!

include circuits, box-fit and bootcamp style fitness to raise money for Deafblind UK.

Sonia Cullington of 'WoW Fitness' said: "This is a great opportunity to try a different kind of workout with other men and women and have fun. All sizes, levels of ability are welcomed as you work at your own pace and do what you can".

Mark Gordon of 'Fitness2Health' said "Drag a friend along and join us in our campaign to raise money for Deafblind UK – we guarantee that you won't be disappointed".

About Deafblind UK

Who we are

Deafblind UK is a national charity offering specialist services and human support to deafblind people and those with a progressive sight and hearing loss acquired throughout their lives.

Our aim is to enable people living with this unique disability to maintain their independence, quality of life and reduce the isolation Deafblindness creates.

What we do

We achieve this through campaigning, education, the provision of practical and emotional support via independent living teams and a free Information and Advice Line.

Please send submissions to Open Hand using the contact details on Page 2. Postal submissions can be sent to the address below.

Submissions are required for the Winter issue by **11th October**.

The views and opinions expressed in Open Hand are not necessarily those of either Deafblind UK or the editor and we reserve the right to edit submissions. Open Hand is available to all Members of Deafblind UK free of charge and to non-Members at £20 a year. Open Hand is available in Braille, large print, tape, audio cd or via email from Deafblind UK and can be downloaded free from www.deafblind.org.uk

Contact us

Deafblind UK, National Centre for Deafblindness,
John and Lucille van Geest Place, Cygnet Road, Hampton,
Peterborough, PE7 8FD

Tel/Textphone: 01733 358 100, Fax: 01733 358 356
email: info@deafblind.org.uk, www.deafblind.org.uk

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Cover image: Mark Gordon and Sonia Cullington
limber up for the upcoming Aerobathon challenge



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