

NoISe

Issue 100
Winter 2017

NoISe (Northumberland Information Service for People with Vision Impairment) is the quarterly newsletter of the Northumberland County Blind Association.

We have hit 100, and so has John!

Congratulations to John Duff on his 100th Birthday

John Duff, a member of Social Eyes Ponteland, recently celebrated his 100th Birthday with members of the group. John was born on the 19th July 1917, at the time King George V was on the throne, a pint of milk and a pint of beer cost one penny, a dozen eggs cost eight pennies and the Battle of Passchendaele started on the 31st July 1917,

only a couple of weeks after John was born.



The photograph above shows John sitting in the centre of the group with a balloon to mark his 100th birthday.

All the best, John!

Goodbye to Two Legends of NCBA



The photograph above shows Ian fundraising

Sadly in September we lost one of our staunchest supporters, Ian Steele. Ian sadly died after a short battle with cancer. He had been involved with NCBA for many years, being a Trustee for over 15 years, a client, a volunteer and fundraiser, a tireless supporter of NCBA and a friend to many here. Ian always said NCBA was his family and for those of us who knew him it certainly felt that way. He was such a lovely man with a unique character and we will miss him immensely.



The photograph above shows Gordon standing on the beach

In August of this year we also sadly said goodbye to former employee Gordon Rendall, who passed away after a year long battle with cancer. Gordon worked for NCBA for almost 12 years and was a key part of the Rehabilitation team. He was well respected by his colleagues and adored by the many clients he helped. Gordon was always cheery and a true gentleman who would do anything for anyone. He was a lovely man and will be sadly missed.



The photograph above shows Ian preparing to abseil

Remembering Ian Steele

Ruth Spiers, NCBA's Finance Officer and longest serving staff member, remembers meeting Ian for the first time and by all accounts it was a memorable experience!

The first time I met Ian, I was pre-warned that he was a very sociable person that took a little getting used to but that there was not a bit of bad in him.

They were right of course - not one morsel....but plenty of mischief.

I got to know Ian on an Activities Day trip to Alnwick. On the bus there, Ian suddenly appeared in the seat next to me and I got his whole life story – and what a story it was! We got off the bus and being a bit unsure of how much sight Ian actually had, when he linked my arm, I was more than happy to be his sighted guide for the day.

I spent the whole day glued to Ian....frightened to death to let him go in case he tripped over something or had an accident. It wasn't until Fran said to me at the end of the day.... "Ruth, you do know Ian's quite independent and manages to get around himself" that I realised I'd been 'had'. Despite a firm shove and sharp telling off, Ian chuckled all the way home.

Ian kept his sense of humour right till the end – his spirit never dampened and I'll always remember him for that.

Great North Run fundraiser, Graeme raises over £400 for NCBA!

In September we were very lucky to have an entrant in the Great North Run fundraiser for us. Graeme Hughes ran on behalf of NCBA and raised over £400. Graeme told us:

“I completed the Great North Run in 2 hours 12 minutes and 34 seconds and enjoyed every step and can recommend the experience to anyone looking

to challenge themselves.”

At the last count Graeme’s fundraising has reached over £400 (not including gift aid).

Well done Graeme, we are all very proud of you!

**If you would like help
fundraise for NCBA please
contact us at
info@ncba.org.uk**



The photograph above shows Graeme running

Tom's legacy



The photograph above shows Tom holding a newly planted tree

Several years ago I agreed to do some voluntary driving for the NCBA. I have enjoyed this work very much, since it helped me to meet a lot of blind and partially sighted people, running back and forward from their homes to various clubs and meetings at Reiver House.

During the time I was doing this voluntary driving we had a serious storm and a good percentage of Morpeth was inundated with flood water from the River Wansbeck. The flooding included Reiver House and its grounds and gardens which surrounded the property. The garden and the grounds were almost destroyed and stood that way until I agreed to try and recover what I could.

This was a job that was going to last me for years. I begged and borrowed all the plants and shrubs that I could. I even managed to obtain a ton or so of rock stone to try and improve the appearance of Reiver House. I also tried to produce as many summer bedding plants as I could

which of course provided a lot of colour during the summer. We also won a few awards when the “Northumbria in Bloom” awards were announced.

I didn't of course do all the work myself. I had help from our “Bloomers Garden Club” before they moved off to Hepscoth. I also had quite a lot of help from some of the volunteers who were interested – in particular from the “Women's Group” who paid for the plants and shrubs in one of the beds in the “William Turner Garden”. We also had help from the local police.

Now, due to health problems I am no longer able to look after the gardens.

I would like to say that the last twenty years of my retirement, looking after the grounds of Reiver House has given me lots of pleasure and satisfaction and afforded me the opportunity of meeting some of the nicest, most pleasant people I have met in my life.

Thank you all, *Tom Ridley*

Good news! Tom's legacy will live on – The Northumbrian Gardener, Darren Buckley has kindly agreed to give his time to help maintain the grounds at Reiver House.

Croatian Sailing Adventure With Tactile and Talking Charts, by Dr Phil Anderson

I was delighted to be invited to join a group of three VIP and three sighted friends who had planned a two week sailing adventure on board a yacht around the Croatian coast and islands.

As an ex-Master Mariner I was tasked with undertaking

some pre-voyage passage planning which involved identifying some alternative routes we could take – which would be weather dependent – and plotting the possible courses on navigational charts. This exercise involves research using the relevant ‘Pilot Book’ which provides an

enormous amount of information and data about the coastline, islands, possible ports of call, anchorages and much more.

Whilst undertaking this pre-voyage exercise it occurred to me that my VIP sailor friends had little opportunity to become involved in either the passage planning aspects or in the navigation once we joined the yacht – since the charts are visual representations of the coastlines and islands etc. and access to the content of the Pilot Book would be extremely difficult for someone without sight. This would, or so it appeared to me, put an unfair limit on the ability of the VIP sailors to participate fully in the adventure.

I therefore set about trying to source charts which a non-sighted person could use. Unfortunately I drew a complete blank. I discovered that whilst some previous attempts had been made to create tactile charts for some of the more popular sailing areas around the U.K. coast, these were few and far

between, difficult to obtain and there were no such charts for Croatia. Having set the idea in motion, I could not simply let it go. I decided a little lateral thinking was necessary and I started to consider whether I could create my own tactile charts.

The starting point was to obtain copies of the relevant passage planning charts: Imray charts M23 – Adriatic Sea, M25 – Otok Rab to Sibernik and M26 – Split to Dubrovnik. After trying a number of different products, I was led to the RNIB and a pen called ‘Tacti-Mark’ which contains a liquid which, when dry, forms a raised three dimensional coloured mark.

This provided an excellent solution. It was then a matter of finding quite a considerable amount of time, and patience, to draw around the coastline and islands on the charts with the ‘Tacti-Mark’. Although somewhat laborious – it proved to be a most interesting and useful exercise for me to become very familiar with every bay, harbour and islands of Croatia!

Once I had completed that task – and had provided the prototype for feedback and approval to one of my VIP sailor friends – it occurred to me that a tactile chart alone, whilst a good step forward in the right direction, did have severe limitations in its usefulness. I needed to find a way to bring the charts alive and thus provide a much greater level of accessibility to relevant information by non-sighted crew.

Following further research I learned about a labelling device, available from the RNIB, called 'PENfriend' which was used to record information onto self-adhesive voice labels which could be attached to a wide range of items in and around the home, at school and at work. This sounded as though it could provide a solution to my problem. The device is however quite expensive and without any funding and without knowing whether it would actually provide the solution I was looking for – I was faced with something of a dilemma.

However, Mr Trevor Watson, the then Information and Voluntary Services Manager of the Northumberland County Blind Association (NCBA) came to our rescue and agreed to lend to me a 'PENfriend2'.



The photograph above shows a 'PENfriend2' on a map

The instrument proved to be ideal. I could apply 'labels' to the charts in various strategic locations such that onto relevant labels, I could then dictate information from the charts themselves as well as the Imray 'Adriatic Pilot' – which included general detail about weather conditions which could be anticipated in the Adriatic, coastal passages, dangers and hazards to navigation as well as considerable detail about ports and anchorages we might visit during our adventure.

By running their finger tips along the raised 'Tacti-Mark' lines along the coast and islands and using the 'PENfriend2' instrument to touch the 'labels' and hear the audio recordings – the VIP sailors would, I hoped, have a new level of access to such an important aspect of the sailing adventure. The proof, however, was going to be in the pudding!

We joined yacht 'Tibitoo' in the Croatian port of Zadar on 29 April 2017. From there we sailed south towards Dubrovnik having stopped off at various harbours and anchorages along the way, arriving on the 3 May. Departing Dubrovnik on 5 May we started making our way north back towards Zadar via some wonderful islands and ports of call – arriving on 10 May. We had sailed a total distance of 391.9 nautical miles.

To my relief our three VIP sailors, all of whom were very experienced and members of the G.B. Blind Sailing squad – Sharon, Sally and Eddie – quickly picked up how to use the tactile / talking charts and were most complementary.

They enthusiastically provided helpful feedback confirming that they found the charts very useful particularly with regard to providing a new level of orientation. Sharon commented: "...it helps make sense of things..."



The photograph above shows four members of the sailing team

As with any prototype – there was certainly 'room for improvement' and my three colleagues provided some very helpful suggestions with regard to additional information they would have found useful, as well as making certain aspects a little more user-friendly.

On the whole, however, I appear to have achieved my goal of enabling my VIP friends to more actively participate in a

range of navigational and passage planning activities which had previously been denied to them.

On behalf of myself and the whole crew of yacht 'Tibitoo' I would like to express our

sincere thanks to NCBA for their kindness in loaning to us the 'PENfriend2' labeller – which proved so very helpful and was very much appreciated.

Dr Phil Anderson
Master Mariner

Fundraising for NCBA

by James Fraser Fundraising Excursions & Tours

On Sunday 13 August, I ran a coach day excursion to Holmfirth & Last Of The Summer Wine, West Yorkshire. All my passengers had a truly fantastic time in this beautiful picturesque market town. It was also very successful in that we generated a grand total amount of £82.40, which we raised in the following six stages:

- By the accumulation of profit from the sales of coach tickets
- By the donation of £12 surplus cash from three Domino Card draws
- By the collection of the participation charges to enter a General Knowledge Quiz

- By the accumulation of ticket sales for our Whopper Prize Raffle
- By the accumulation of ticket sales for our on-board Bingo
- By the accumulation of any voluntary donations generously given

Northumberland County Blind Association was nominated by the majority of passengers, to receive £82.40 raised. So may I take this golden opportunity on behalf of my eighteen passengers, to thank everyone at NCBA for their research, information, development, counselling, advice and all other services as well as to wish them all the best for the future!

James

Northumberland County Blind Association is working in partnership with RNIB to deliver Confidence Building Courses



Photograph showing an activity during a confidence building course

Our community based confidence building courses provide information, advice, support and practical solutions to enable people diagnosed with sight loss maintain their independence.

We understand adapting to sight loss isn't easy. We know it's different for everyone, but whatever your experience we're here for you. If you or someone you know has been diagnosed

with sight loss come along to one of our confidence building courses.

Why attend?

We recognise how important it is for people diagnosed with an eye condition to get practical help and advice, but also learn from others in similar situations. Wherever possible, we invite local people who are blind or partially sighted to run parts of

the course, provide and share knowledge based on their personal experiences.

The course also provides a chance to meet people who are in a similar position to yourself – presenting opportunities to develop friendships that last beyond the length of the programme and enable you to build up support networks.

What's covered?

Confidence building courses are tailored to the needs of each group of attendees – so every course may offer something slightly different; however the core elements of the course are:

- Getting out and making the most of your leisure time
- Coping strategies designed

to address the emotional aspect of being visually impaired

- Practical solutions to overcome challenges to everyday living
- Using technology
- Looking after your eyes and skills for making the most of your vision
- Information may also be provided on Employment, Housing and Welfare rights

What to know more?

Confidence building courses will begin in February 2018 and will be delivered over four half day sessions. If you would like more information, or would like to reserve a place call NCBA on 01670 514316 or e- mail info@ncba.org.uk

Low Vision Aids Assessments at NCBA

If you are unsure about how to use your Low Vision Aid (LVA) in the most effective way or would like to learn more about the range of LVAs available, such as video magnifiers and

lighting, contact us for a free assessment and demonstration at our Resource Centre in Morpeth. Our telephone number is 01670 514316 and our email address is info@ncba.org.uk

IT Peer Support Sessions

Do you have an iPad, or smartphone that you are struggling to get the most out of using, or perhaps you want to learn more about the different kinds of apps suitable for someone with a visual impairment. If this sounds like you, come along to our friendly and informal drop-in sessions at Reiver House, Morpeth to get hands-on advice and answers to your questions.

“This has improved my day-to-day life tremendously. I can use the calendar, contacts and reminders to name a few. I feel more organised and I’m not afraid of the iPad or iPhone anymore.”

If you don’t have much experience using these devices, or have a particular problem about using your device, these sessions are for you.

If you use a smartphone or a tablet and they have made a difference to your life, we would encourage you to come along and share your knowledge and experience with others.

We look forward to seeing you at any of the following peer support drop-in sessions:

- **Thursday 25 January 2018**
1.30pm – 3.30pm
- **Thursday 22 February 2018**
1.30pm – 3.30pm
- **Thursday 22 March 2018**
1.30pm – 3.30pm
- **Thursday 26 April 2018**
1.30pm – 3.30pm
- **Thursday 24 May 2018**
1.30pm – 3.30pm
- **Thursday 21 June 2018**
1.30pm – 3.30pm
- **Thursday 26 July 2018**
1.30pm – 3.30pm



Volunteer Fundraisers Required

Northumberland County Blind Association are looking for committed and engaged people excited by the opportunity to become involved in our charity as a Volunteer Fundraiser.

What a Volunteer Fundraiser does

As a Volunteer Fundraiser you will be working towards an annual fundraising target which will help the charity continue with its work supporting people living with sight loss in Northumberland.

Through your fundraising activities you will be making a huge impact supporting people who are blind or partially sighted.

We offer a great deal of flexibility within this role and day to day work will be varied. You will be expected to plan and manage your own workload so self-motivation is vital; likewise, personality and aptitude are fundamental to this position.

As a volunteer fundraiser you will support us to:

- Increase our fundraising revenue through individual, community and event fundraising.
- Plan and deliver our local community fundraising activities, to achieve agreed financial targets.
- Inspire and motivate individuals and community groups to undertake fundraising activities to raise money for Northumberland County Blind Association.
- Research new event activity; provide detailed event plans and budgets for proposed events.
- Work closely with staff to help develop your awareness of the work Northumberland County Blind Association undertakes supporting people with sight loss.

- Undertake networking that will positively increase awareness of Northumberland County Blind Association and build links with appropriate organisations and individuals.

What it means to be a volunteer with Northumberland County Blind Association

All sorts of people volunteer for a variety of different reasons – from those currently out of work, students, those who are retired through to employed people who may only have the odd hour to volunteer. One thing that unites all these people is that they find volunteering challenging, rewarding and varied. If you choose to volunteer with Northumberland County Blind Association, you will not only be adding a great deal to your life but also to the lives of those for whom you are supporting – blind and partially sighted people living in Northumberland.

If you are passionate about fundraising or perhaps have lived experience of supporting someone with a visual impairment or you yourself are visually impaired, we would love to give you the opportunity to become involved in our charity. You will meet new and like-minded people and will equip you with new skills and experience which may lead on to new opportunities.

Northumberland County Blind Association benefits massively from the input of our volunteers. Even a small commitment of just one hour a week can have a lasting effect on our charity, the people and communities we represent. You will become part of our small, dedicated team and have the opportunity to participate in various aspects of our work. Without volunteers, Northumberland County Blind Association would not be able to deliver the range of services and support that we do.

Help people with sight loss get out and about



This inspiring session will enable you to safely and confidently guide someone with sight loss

Join us for a Friends & Family session in association with Northumberland County Blind Association

“The training was brilliant, we did lots of practical activities and by the end of it I felt really confident in my guiding skills.”

Our New Year Sessions:

Tues 23rd January

Wed 28th February

Tues 27th March

Session times:

10am -12pm or 1pm – 3pm

To book places on this training, please call Karen on 01670 514316 or email Karen.Stuart@ncba.org.uk



Northumberland County Blind Association

Registered charity in England and Wales (209617) and in Scotland (SC038979) 01/14 7178



How do you get your NoISe?

NCBA issue Noise in a variety of formats:

- Large Print
- USB
- CD
- MP3 Disc
- Braille
- By Email
- On the Website as a PDF
- On the Website as Audio

Are you getting NoISe in the best way for you? If not, please contact NCBA by any of the ways shown at the end of this Newsletter.

If you no longer wish to receive NoISe, please let us know by calling NCBA on 01670 514316 or e-mail info@ncba.org.uk

Letter from Michael Farragher RNIB Tax Advice Service

Blind and partially sighted people often need extra help to understand their tax obligations and claim their entitlements. We ensure customers get the support and advice they need. We regularly speak to people who are not claiming their tax entitlements, so a little regular reminder about the help available will ensure people do not miss out.

One customer we spoke to said: "This call to your tax

helpline elicited the best support I can remember ever having. You were empathetic, which resulted in excellent support and gave me the confidence to discuss my situation with HMRC on quite a daunting subject."

If you would like to receive future updates, please contact us via email: tax@rnib.org.uk or call us on telephone number: 0345 330 4897

Merry Christmas



We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year

Reiver House will be closed from 1pm on Friday 22nd December 2017 and re-open on Tuesday 2nd January 2018

Congratulations to our 100 Club Prize Winners 2017

100 Club	1st Prize	2nd Prize	3rd Prize
July	87 H Patterson	105 L Whittle	111 Mrs M Tiffin
August	86 Mrs V Lashley	94 B Fawcett	13 Mrs H Taylor
September	63 D Hoey	103 L Whittle	100 Miss M Whittle
October	123 Mr & Mrs Davison	134 Iain McCormack	21 D Loader

Make a difference – support our services

The Northumberland County Blind Association is a registered charity and depends on outside help for many of its activities. We are greatly helped by our team of volunteers as well as many people that support us financially.

If you would like to help by: volunteering, fundraising, making a donation, being actively involved with one of our committees, making a bequest, joining our 100 club, please contact us on 01670 514316.

If you pay income tax, your donation can be worth 25% more to us just by completing and enclosing the slip below with your donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____ **Postcode:** _____

I am a taxpayer. Signature _____

Please call **01670 514316** or email **info@ncba.org.uk** if you would like to contribute an article or make a comment on anything you have read in this newsletter.

NoISe stands for “Northumberland Information Service for people with vision impairment”. NoISe is a free publication that is produced in large-print, Braille, audio and via email. We aim to give you news about NCBA and useful general information. To the best of our knowledge all articles are correct at the time of going to print. If you know someone who would be interested in receiving NoISe or if this newsletter is inappropriately addressed please let us know.

Leave a legacy gift in your Will

Leaving us a gift in your Will, however large or small, will help to provide a range of support services to people who are registered blind and partially sighted living in Northumberland. By remembering us in your Will you can help to ensure that our services continue into the future.

We recommend that you seek professional advice when drawing up your Will. We do not provide financial or legal advice. If you wish to find a solicitor please visit the following website: www.lawsociety.org.uk or telephone 0870 606 2555. For further information on how to set up a personal legacy account, visit the following website: www.cafonline.org/my-personal-giving. The Will site provides a complete online service for writing a Will at www.thewillsite.co.uk

Address

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Contact Us

Telephone: 01670 514316
Email: info@ncba.org.uk
Website: www.ncba.org.uk



@ncba_volunteer



www.facebook.com/NcbaReiverhouse



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