



# In Touch

Festive Edition – December 2017

## In this issue...



The latest news and views from our VIP community members and supporters.



Making the most of festive entertainment!



# Season's Greetings

*A shared message from...*

Lucy Martin SBWO Chief Executive

**AND**

David Hurst SBWO Chair of Trustees



As the festive season approaches and a New Year beckons, it is very much exciting times here at SBWO.

As 2018 begins, it marks an historic year for our organisation as we enter the year of our Diamond Jubilee – 60 years of “supporting people with sight loss since 1958”.

Of course, this is an important time to reflect and look back at how far our charity has developed over this time, from its humble beginnings.

From our SBWO members, we have heard that it has been our ability to adapt to an ever-changing community that has been key to our longevity. Our constant challenge is how to maintain this!

The support and opportunities available to those living with sight loss have changed incredibly in the last 60 years and as an organisation that strives to provide this support, we are determined and passionate about ensuring this continues long into the future.

With the future in mind, 2018 will mark a year of exciting changes for our organisation. Improvements are in progress to our Equipment and Information Centre to allow full access to our extensive range of resources, as well as creating a safe, friendly environment for visually impaired people to gain information and advice.



Although, we understand that any period of change can be unsettling and naturally brings with it, its own “brand of chaos”, we firmly believe that these changes are necessary for us to continue to put visually impaired people at the heart and centre of what we do.

We take this opportunity to also recognise the tireless dedication of our spectacular team of volunteers – an inspiration to every individual and group that they support. As we approach this year of celebration and regeneration, our organisation and our volunteers continue to advocate an “**I can**” culture to support our members – empowering individuals who are experiencing sight loss to remain independent, but included and informed.

We welcome all our members, volunteers and supporters to join us at a very special Jubilee Celebration in March (**full details are on Page 23**), at which our new name, logo design and plans for the future will be unveiled. We look forward to seeing you, but in the meantime, we wish all our SBWO members and supporters the very best for Christmas and the New Year.

## ...From the Editor

It is an absolute privilege to be editor of the ‘In-Touch’ Newsletter. This is now my third edition and there is nothing more inspiring than reading and writing about the lives of our members.

As a 40 year-old, recent addition to the visually impaired community, I am on my own ‘sight loss journey’ and adapting to a new way of life. I hope that you enjoy reading or listening to this Newsletter as much as I enjoy compiling it, and should you have any views, ideas or feedback, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all our readers and listeners, from Clare (SBWO Member and Volunteer).



# News

Here at SBWO, we have been delighted to receive £15,000 from Essex Freemasons. This donation was only achieved as a result of the high number of votes that we received from our spectacular supporters and our faithful Facebook followers.



From the eligible charities across Essex, SBWO achieved the second highest number of votes, qualifying for a share of a total £80,000 fund, distributed between eight different charities.



Photograph above shows:

Left to Right:

<b>Clare</b>	(SBWO Volunteer & Member)
<b>Catherine</b>	(SBWO Fundraising Coordinator)
<b>Rodney Bass</b>	(Essex Freemasons)
<b>Stephanie</b>	(SBWO Trustee)
<b>Lucy</b>	(SBWO Chief Executive)

The money, generously donated via the Masonic Charitable Foundation to mark 300 years of modern freemasonry, was presented at a special ceremony, by Rodney Bass, Provincial Grand Master for Essex Freemasons.

To everyone who took the time to vote for SBWO, we say a MASSIVE MASONIC

## THANK YOU!



## An Alarming Surprise..!

SBWO celebrations were also aplenty when we were recently awarded a £5000 donation from The Screwfix Foundation.

These vital funds are required to install up-to-date fire safety equipment (alarms and doors) at our Centre on Hamlet Court Road.



## Your Views Make the Headlines..!

Our survey, researching the needs of visually impaired people (VIPs) in Southend, has also hit the headlines recently! A press article was published on the front page of news website [My Southend.com](http://MySouthend.com)

‘Seeing the Future – Your Way’ has been our consultation with members and supporters to help shape the future of SBWO and effectively provide support to our VIP community.

## Have Your Say?

If you would like to share your views as part of our survey, please contact us:



(01702) 342131  
[info@sbw.org.uk](mailto:info@sbw.org.uk)



# Sports News



Regular 'In-Touch' readers and listeners have become familiar with the success of our Tenpin Bowling teams – and this edition holds no exception!

With the Summer Doubles season drawing to a close, both teams, Kursaal Flyers 1 and 2, were in contention to qualify for the National Blind Tenpin Bowling Association (NBTBA) Finals.

Kursaal Flyers 1, consisting of Gary, Russell, Andrew and Kevin, triumphed over the group stages of the competition, ending the season in third place and gaining automatic qualification for the NBTBA Finals.



With only the top three teams in each league group qualifying for the Finals, Kursaal Flyers 2 (Keith, Anne, Jackie and Clare) could not have come any closer - narrowly missing out by finishing fourth in their respective group.



Here at SBWO, we congratulate the Flyers on their continued success and wish them well as the Winter Trios season progresses.



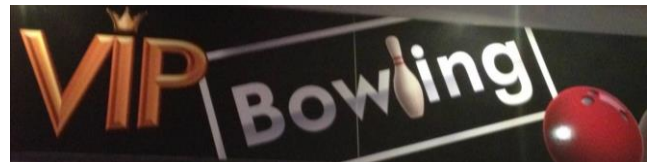


# Seeing Things Differently...

Our avid bowlers were also in action at our recent Tenpin Bowling Challenge, an awareness-raising event held in collaboration with the Kursaal, Southend-on-Sea.

Although the evening offered a great deal of fun, entertainment and competitive spirit, this special event welcomed SBWO supporters to gain a temporary insight into some of the challenges of living with a sight impairment.

Sighted participants were asked to wear simulation spectacles that aim to replicate different eye conditions. And then... play a full game of Tenpin Bowling, competing against sight impaired bowlers – the SBWO Kursaal Flyers teams!



***“A fun and informative evening rolled (and bowled!) into one! I did find wearing the simulation specs very disorientating, making it difficult to focus on what I was supposed to be doing! It did, however give me a better understanding of how my wife and others see things differently”.***

# Special People...

By far, the best part of being involved in the writing of this newsletter is having the opportunity to remember, thank and congratulate so many special people.

One exceptional group of people who certainly deserve a special mention are the committed members of our 'Young at Heart' club.

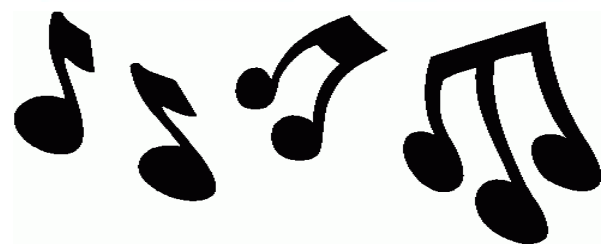


## What a Start!

Formed in early 2017, following the merger of two of our former clubs, our 'Young at Heart' club has continued to be a popular feature of SBWO's work to support visually impaired people in our local community.

Held fortnightly at St. Peter's Church Hall in Westcliff-on-Sea, the 'Young at Heart' club offers members the opportunity for discussion, friendship and to access useful information about living with sight loss.

A busy schedule of recent activities have included the ever-popular 'Ron's Music Quiz', a visit from the local police to discuss personal safety, as well as entertainment provided by the Westward Singers!







Here at SBWO, we would like to thank all the members of the 'Young at Heart' club, who have responded with patience and understanding, while settling into their new venue.

We also take this opportunity to thank our dedicated team of volunteers who support our 'Young at Heart' club members.



As with all our activities and social groups, it is only a result of the tireless commitment demonstrated by our volunteers that enables us to provide companionship, support and laughter for our members.



**More Information?**

To find out more about any of our clubs or social activities, please contact us:



(01702) 342131  
[info@sbw.org.uk](mailto:info@sbw.org.uk)

# Special People...



## Oh what fun! Norman's 101

Everyone here at SBWO has been thrilled to have recently celebrated Norman Boughton-Smith's 101<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Norman is held in incredibly high esteem among his 'Young at Heart' friends and companions.

Having been a SBWO member for almost 5 years, we congratulate Norman on his milestone birthday – a special mention for an incredibly special man!

---

## ...Special Memories

### Obituaries

It is with sadness, but with much love that we remember...

### **Betty Manners**

Cherished and dedicated SBWO member of our Friday Club, Betty is greatly missed, but fondly remembered.

Technological developments that could assist visually impaired people with different aspects of everyday living.



**If this symbol means nothing to you..?**



*...Read on to discover a new 'look' at entertainment!*

**In this issue...**



**FEATURE: Audio Description**

"If only someone could tell me what is going on..!"

For our print readers, this is designed to be a "pull-out and keep" section for handy use!





***“It’s not the size of the screen that is important..!”***

## Audio Description (AD)

If you're struggling to see your favourite television programmes or films, then AD may be for you.

AD is commentary that describes body language, expressions and movements, making the programme clear through sound.



### Audio Description on TV

To get audio described TV programmes, you need access to Freeview, satellite or cable television. This is either built into your television or it is a set top box connected to your television. The AD option is normally easy to turn on and off from a single button on the TV's remote control.

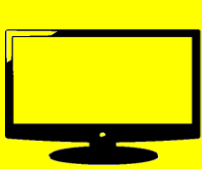
### ***What do our SBWO members say?***

***“I use AD on every programme available! When a conversation stops in a show, I don’t know what is going on. The AD solves this problem and very often, I know more about the storyline and characters than a sighted viewer would, thanks to the AD. There are sometimes small inaccuracies in the descriptions, but the benefits of AD far outweigh this! AD enables me to continue enjoying my favourite soaps, despite my sight loss.”***

***Janice (SBWO Member & Volunteer)***



Broadcasters (like the BBC, Channel 4 and Sky) are required to add AD to at least 20% of their programmes.



## Audio Description in cinemas

Many cinemas, including the Southend Odeon, are equipped with a system that delivers audio description (AD) through a headset, which is provided when you collect your ticket.

The audio description runs each time the film is shown and is undetectable to anyone not wearing a headset.



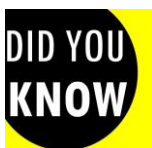
### ***What do our SBWO members say?***

***“I regularly attend the Odeon in Southend, which is fully equipped with up-to-date technology to provide AD. Just like on the television, the cinema AD uses a narrator to describe what is happening on the screen during the natural pauses in the audio.***

***No one else can hear the AD (unless they too have a headset!), which means going to the cinema with family and friends is an activity that I have been able to continue to enjoy.***

***My one bit of advice would be to telephone the cinema prior to your visit, just to check that the film has AD.”***

***Janice (SBWO Member & Volunteer)***



If your sight loss is registered, simply state this when purchasing your ticket and you should receive a FREE ticket for a companion / guide to accompany you.





# AD)))



One of our SBWO members recently had the opportunity to see the West End production of Annie! The Musical, featuring Craig Revel Horwood, star of Strictly Come Dancing!

The Piccadilly Theatre had advertised the performance as 'Audio Described', but also offered a 'Touch Tour' of the set and some of the props, with visually impaired people particularly in mind.

Following a wonderful performance, the theatre also asked our member for feedback to enhance the experience they offer. Here is a copy of the email sent by our member...



*...We thoroughly enjoyed the performance, so much so we are already planning a return visit!*

*Since losing my sight 2 years ago, I have attended several West End performances at different theatres. However, this was the first occasion I had the opportunity to access an Audio Described performance.*

*What a brilliant idea! The audio description definitely enhanced my understanding and therefore my enjoyment of the performance.*

*The description being provided was natural and human! This counts for a lot! As an example... At one point, the audience responded with laughter to a facial expression or gesture. The audio descriptor laughed too and then explained the gesture, so I too could get the joke! Small things like this make a big difference!*

*The iPod equipment is a great innovation – easy to use and with clear instructions provided, both written and verbally from staff.*

*In addition, the 'Touch Tour' was superb – again an excellent idea that enhanced my understanding and experience of the performance.*

*Our visit to the Piccadilly Theatre was a completely positive experience and I offer a very special thank you to the staff for making a 'blind' girl and her Mum very happy!*





# Talking Technology..?

If you own (or are thinking of owning) a smartphone or tablet, and would like to find out more about the built-in accessibility options available for visually impaired people, please feel free to contact a member of our 'Tech Team' (details shown below).



Some of the practical ways that we have been able to support our SBWO members include using **verbal** commands on an iPhone or iPad to...

"Set my morning alarm clock"

"Listen to my 'Talking Books' or my favourite music"

"Watch / listen to my favourite TV programmes"

"Zoom-in on text that I was otherwise unable to read"

"Search the internet for information"

"Find videos on topics of interest (e.g. gardening and recipes)"

"Read and send text messages and emails"

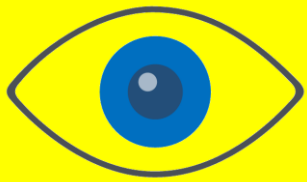
"Set a countdown timer to assist my love of baking"

## More Information?

To find out more about how technology could support you, please contact us:



(01702) 342131  
[info@sbw.org.uk](mailto:info@sbw.org.uk)



# Eye Centre

This section of our newsletter aims to provide useful information on managing sight loss, making the most of the sight you may have, as well as raising awareness of current issues affecting our visually impaired community. In this edition, we focus on...

## The benefits of having your sight loss registered



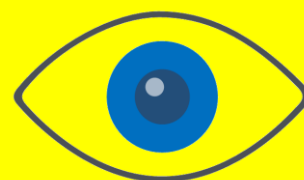
If you are losing or have lost your sight, you might start finding things difficult that you previously took for granted. However, it is important to remember that practical and financial support is available to help you adapt and continue to enjoy life.

Registration of your sight loss is carried out by an eye specialist. A Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI) is issued and 'being registered' simply means being on your local council's register of people who are either:

- ★ **sight impaired** (partially sighted)
- or
- ★ **severely sight impaired** (blind)



***\* Being registered as severely sight impaired does NOT necessarily mean that you are totally without sight or will lose your sight in the future.***

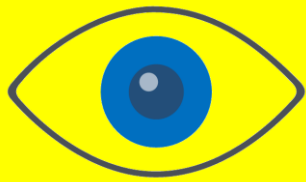


Registration is voluntary and completely confidential. Having your sight loss registered can open up a host of benefits. The table below is a summary of the benefits and concessions that you **may** be entitled to if you are registered Sight Impaired (SI) or Severely Sight Impaired (SSI).

<b><i>Benefit / Concession</i></b>	<b><i>SI</i></b>	<b><i>SSI</i></b>
Free NHS eye examination	✓	✓
Free bus travel	✓	✓
Disabled Person's Railcard	✓	✓
Free directory enquiries	✓	✓
Free postage – "Articles for the blind"	✓	✓
Free ticket for a guide at theatres, galleries or attractions	✓	✓
Assessment by social services	✓	✓
Personal Independence Payment (PIP)	✓	✓
Attendance Allowance	✓	✓
Carer's Allowance	✓	✓
Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)	✓	✓
Tax Credits	✓	✓
Housing Benefit	✓	✓
Council Tax disability reduction	✓	✓
Universal Credit	✓	✓
Pension Credit	✓	✓
Blue Badge Scheme – car parking		✓
Television licence fee reduction		✓
Cinema pass for carer		✓
Blind person's tax allowance		✓

*\* Please note that this information, provided courtesy of RNIB, is for guidance only and is not an authoritative statement of the law.*





# Eye Centre

## *How do I get registered?*

### Step 1

#### **Referral to an eye specialist**

If you are having problems with your sight, visit a high street optician (an optometrist) or your GP for an initial check-up. If necessary, they will then refer you to an eye clinic for an appointment.

At your appointment in the eye clinic, an eye specialist (called an ophthalmologist) will examine the health of your eyes and your eyesight.

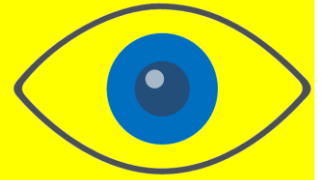
#### **Ophthalmologist registration**

Your eye specialist will measure how good you are at seeing detail at a distance (your visual acuity) and how much you can see from the side of your eye when you're looking straight ahead (your field of vision).

If your ophthalmologist judges that you can be registered, they will complete an official certificate with the results of your eye examination, as well as information about your circumstances.

### Step 2

In England and Wales this certificate is called the Certificate of Vision Impairment (CVI)



## Step 3

### Registration with your local council

After receiving a copy of your certificate, your local council team should contact you to ask if you wish to be included on its register of blind and partially sighted people. If you say “yes” then you become registered.

### ***What happens after you’re registered?***

Your local council’s social services team should contact you to discuss carrying out a needs assessment, also known as a Social Care and Rehabilitation Assessment. The aim of this assessment is for social services to find out what help and advice you would like or may need to remain independent. For example, this could include help with everyday tasks such as cleaning and cooking, keeping in touch with friends and family, or with transport and supportive technology.

**Registration is voluntary and completely confidential.**

**More Information?**

To find out more or if you have any questions, please contact us:



(01702) 342131  
[info@sbwo.org.uk](mailto:info@sbwo.org.uk)

## It's a Family Affair..!

(Article courtesy of Jules Easlea)

Volunteers are the lifeblood of many charities. Here we look at two volunteers for Southend Blind Welfare Organisation who have a very particular reason to support this local, independent charity.

For Lilian Smith, her daughter Ann Woodgate and Ann's daughter, Alleyne Woodgate, SBWO is much more than a friendly local charity that offers help and support to those losing, or who have lost their sight.

For them, it is a real family affair with Ann and Alleyne volunteering for the charity for many years and Lilian living in Elkington House, the organisation's not-for-profit residential care home in Imperial Avenue, Westcliff.

Lilian, who turns 100 on 14th February 2018, has lived at Elkington House for just over three years. She had spent a busy life bringing up three children, running a home and spending time adjudicating exams in London. Originally from Barking, Lilian visited Southend when her children were young and her daughter, Ann moved to Leigh some twenty years ago. Ann became involved with SBWO through her daughter, Alleyne. When the time came for them to find a safe, comfortable place for Lilian to live, Elkington House was top of their list.

Upon leaving the Civil Service where she worked for a number of years, Alleyne began volunteering for the charity in 2005, having spent time helping on the Talking Newspaper in the Castle Point area. She had





always wanted to help blind and partially sighted people: “I wanted to do some good, meet new people and learn new skills. I think that if you are blind, to have someone to help you to know what’s going on around you is so important.”

Alleyne first volunteered for the charity at the Eye Clinic at Southend Hospital, offering advice, support and practical help to those experiencing sight loss. She now helps in the charity’s shop in Hamlet Court Road where her mother, Ann, joins her. Ann began volunteering for SBWO in 2007. As well as working in the shop, she helps at the organisation’s clubs, guiding the members and helping with their errands. She says “It’s such a bundle of fun when we get up and dance and sing.” Alleyne adds “The members are such an example to us all, never letting their loss of sight stop them from joining in and living life to the full. It is very humbling.”

Asked why they give up so much of their time to help SBWO, Alleyne said “All the volunteers help each other. It’s a real team. We also feel valued. We are listened to, and our comments and suggestions are taken into account. We get lots of praise for our efforts.” Ann added “There’s real camaraderie. The staff are very caring and friendly, and we really enjoy everything we do.”

The Summer Fair at Elkington House is a highlight of the charity’s year and Ann and Alleyne have helped at the fairs for the last few years, before Lilian came to live at the home. To the family, Elkington House is a home from home for their mother. The manager, Sarah Richardson has worked at the home for over 20 years and the family feel that she treats the residents as her own. Ann said “The staff are incredibly friendly and helpful. They all have great patience and a wonderful sense of humour. The residents love a singsong and we spend many happy times singing along with Mum. In fact, we usually start the singing.”

Sarah Richardson, Manager at Elkington House said: 'We have many great families and relatives involved with our residents at Elkington House which makes it a very warm and happy home from home. It's great to have the three generations of Lilian's family involvement with us. Southend Blind Welfare supports our residents and the volunteers are invaluable. When the volunteers are family members of our residents, it makes a very special bond.'

## More Information?



Sarah Richardson (Home Manager)



01702 348200



[sarah@elkingtonhouse.org.uk](mailto:sarah@elkingtonhouse.org.uk)

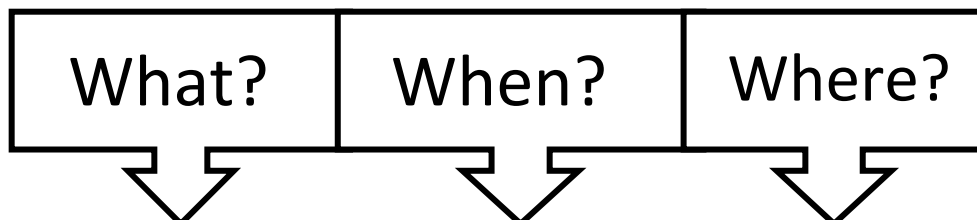


9 Imperial Avenue  
Westcliff-on-Sea, Essex SS0 8NE



[www.elkingtonhouse.org.uk](http://www.elkingtonhouse.org.uk)





Young at Heart Club

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Friday  
each month

St. Peter's  
Church Hall,  
Westcliff



Diskettes  
Reading  
Group

First Tuesday  
each month

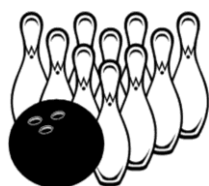
The Forum



Macular  
Support  
Group

First  
Wednesday  
each month

Ekco Social  
& Sports  
Club



Tenpin  
Bowling

Every  
Thursday

Kursaal



Triangle  
Club

Every other  
Monday

St Mary's  
Church Hall  
Benfleet

For further information, including times, of our regular clubs and supportive groups, please contact **Kath** at SBWO on **(01702) 342131**.

# What's New..?



**SOUTHEND BLIND WELFARE ORGANISATION**  
*Supporting people with sight loss since 1958*

**“DIAMOND”  
DINNER AND DANCE  
AT THE BOATYARD**

**RAISING FUNDS FOR SBWO**

Join us for a celebration of 60 years of SBWO at  
The Boatyard Restaurant in Leigh for a sumptuous 3  
course meal followed by music, dancing and a  
Grand Raffle.

**Wednesday 14th March 2018**  
**7.00pm**  
**£30**

Ticket price includes 3 course meal and live  
entertainment.  
Tables of 6, 10 and more are available.  
Drinks are not included.

For further details and/or to book your place,  
please call Catherine on (01702) 342131.



\* A separate schedule of all our Diamond Jubilee celebratory events will be available early in the New Year.





Southend Blind Welfare Organisation  
117 Hamlet Court Road  
Westcliff-on-Sea  
SS0 7ES

**Registered Charity No: 1069765**



01702 342131



[info@sbw.org.uk](mailto:info@sbw.org.uk)



[www.sbw.org.uk](http://www.sbw.org.uk)



© VIP Publications  
*Created by and for VIPs*