



NEWSLETTER

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100 YEARS OF ESAB

EAST SUFFOLK ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

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The photo on the front cover shows the fabulous cake that Jill Skinner had made for the centenary celebration summer party in late August at her home for the Southwold District Social members – it was a shame to have to cut it!

MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

Well, what a busy year 2014 has turned out to be. Our centenary year has seen ESAB members sailing along the coast, enjoying celebratory dinners and taking part in several other district based social events to mark this milestone in our organisation's history. I certainly hope all those who took part enjoyed everything on offer and for myself I must say a highlight was making the acquaintance of many more of our members along the way. I think we certainly made ESAB more visible this year and hopefully more people across the County now understand who we are and what we offer to the visually impaired. Whilst organising all these things placed a considerable burden on many people – far too many to personally thank individually here - it did appear that everyone enjoyed the challenge and certainly all involved can reflect upon the events of this year with a feeling of satisfaction and success, thank you all!

Of course whilst all the celebrating was going on we still had the daily tasks to keep going and members to support. On behalf of our membership I'd like to offer thanks to everyone who has supported or organised any of our social activities, fundraising events or helped the Association in other ways; such as giving of their time as Trustees, District committee members, those who tirelessly help out at socials each month and not forgetting our volunteer drivers. Without the combined efforts of this amazing group of people our members would undoubtedly live less fulfilling lives. I'd also like to thank the officers and employees of the Association; their individual and collective effort, commitment and dedication is also vitally important in making ESAB the success it is.

Moving our AGM into July appeared to have been successful and it was good to see a healthy turn out. I must thank everyone who took part for taking the time and trouble to come along and for sharing their views on how we (the Trustees, Officers and myself) are running your organisation. As said previously, the very best services for the membership as a whole can only be provided if people speak up, make known what they like and conversely dislike and share with us their thoughts on what they need and expect from ESAB. So please do keep your comments coming in. We promise to listen and where

possible we will make changes to deliver improvements aligned with the consensus view.

January sees Mike Scott leaving our team after ten years' service as our Hospital Information Officer at Ipswich Hospital. Mike has done a superb job in this role winning the confidence of the whole Hospital eye clinic team and has used his excellent people skills to advise and guide visually impaired people and to often provide a caring and knowledgeable shoulder to lean on, often at very difficult times for them. Invariably he would offer and arrange for a home visit by one of our Community Workers. May I on behalf of all involved with ESAB in any way say a massive thanks and wish him all the very best for the future. He will be sorely missed.

In conclusion, may I take this opportunity to wish you all the best of seasonal greetings and happiness for the coming year.

Stephen W J Hodgkiss, Chairman

LARGE PRINT 2015 CALENDARS

We again this year have a limited number of large print calendars available for our members. The calendars are free of charge although we would encourage a donation of at least £3 if at all possible. To order your calendar please ring the office on **01473 611011**.

THE POIGNANCY OF THE POPPY

With the First World War Centenary now with us, Galloway's resident Military Historian and Chairman of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides, Mike Peters talks about one of the most popular sites in the Ypres Salient - the Essex Farm Advanced Dressing Station.

There are many stories linked to the Advanced Dressing Station and the surrounding area, one story has particular significance at this time of year.

Inspired The story begins at Essex Farm Advanced Dressing Station, the birthplace of one of the most famous war poems to date. The internationally known poem, "In Flanders Fields", was inspired by the death of a Canadian officer close to the dressing station. Many readers will be familiar with the words, as it is frequently recited in schools and at church services, on or around Remembrance Day. The poet who penned these emotive lines served as a

Medical Officer at Essex Farm. At the time of writing, the Advanced Dressing Station looked very different to the concrete bunker that battlefield tourists see today. The hardened shelter was constructed later in preparation for the Third Battle of Ypres in the summer of 1917. In 1915 when the poem was written, the Advanced Dressing Station was a far more temporary and vulnerable affair, it was a dugout built into the side of the canal. Casualties were brought back from the frontline, often under shellfire via an adjacent bridge known as Bridge 4.

Casualties In the spring of 1915, Essex Farm Advanced Dressing Station was manned by Canadian medical staff; they were to witness the Second Battle of Ypres and the casualties of a new and horrific form of warfare. On 22nd April 1915, the Canadians and colonial French troops would bear the brunt of the German army's first large-scale use of chlorine gas on the Western Front. Among the doctors treating the casualties of the attack, was Canadian Colonel John McCrae.

Shocking Although no stranger to war, having previously served in the artillery during the Boer War, the gas attack was nevertheless a shocking development for the Colonel. Just two days after the attack he wrote home describing what he had seen, including hundreds of 'asphyxiated French soldiers' and endless streams of civilian refugees, fleeing the new terror weapon. He later wrote of a large gap of 1,200 -1,500 yards in the Allied line created by the gas attack: *"For 36 hours there was not an infantryman between the enemy and us. God knows why the Germans did not put in a big force to eat us up. We really expected to die."* By 25th April, the original Canadian force had been reduced by German artillery attacks, gas and sniping from 10,000 to 4,000 men capable of fighting, yet still John McCrae witnessed the stream of casualties that passed through Essex Farm, but he was to be affected more personally on 2nd May 1915. News reached him in the Advanced Dressing Station that a friend and protégé, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, had been blasted to pieces by an 8-inch Howitzer shell. There was very little left of the unfortunate Lieutenant to bury and John McCrae was so upset by the loss of his friend, he spoke the committal words at Helmer's burial service. It was this experience that prompted McCrae to write these poignant words:

**In Flanders fields, the poppies blow,
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.**

**We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.**

**Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.**

The poem struck a chord with those that read it and was an almost overnight success, after publication in Punch magazine in December 1915. Towards the end of the war in 1918, an American lady called Moira Michael wrote a poem in response, entitled "*We Shall Keep the Faith*". In the poem she exhorted readers to wear a poppy in honour of the dead.

Remembrance The secretary of the French YMCA, Madame Guerin, grasped this idea; she began selling artificial poppies to raise funds for soldiers and their families. In the UK, the concept was taken on by the Earl Haig fund and adopted by the newly formed British Legion as a symbol of remembrance of the dead or missing, and as a means of raising funds for wounded and hard-pressed soldiers after the war. The first poppy day was held on 11th November 1921. Today the humble poppy is widely recognised as an international symbol of remembrance. The story began at Essex Farm in the battle scarred fields of Flanders, on broken ground, which is of course where poppies grow best.

BRITISH 10K RUN by Christopher and Jonathan Swayze

We had to rise at 5:30am to get into London for the Sunday morning start of the British 10k London Run on the 13th of July 2014. We met up at a deserted Westminster Underground for the short walk across St. James and Green Parks to the start on Piccadilly outside the Guards and Cavalry club.

With it being 100 years since the end of World War One, there were many hundreds of people raising money for Help for Heroes and we passed many military monuments on the run, including Bomber Command, the Battle of Britain Memorial, and the Cenotaph.

It was a slightly chilly day, with the occasional shower to help us runners and annoy the spectators. So we were surprised by just how many people had turned up, some 20,000 to run and at least the same again watching.

The race itself had a staggered start; with thousands of people starting it took around fifteen minutes just to cross the start line. We headed past St James' Palace, down Pall Mall and around Trafalgar square. This was where we noticed the crowds for the first time.

Then it was down onto the Thames towards St Paul's Cathedral, where we turned and headed back on ourselves towards Westminster. The course was great but because of the doubling back it meant you could see the serious runners that were nearly finished by the time we were just getting into our stride!

We next passed the London Eye on the far bank before momentarily crossing Westminster Bridge, up one side and back the other. This brought us past Westminster Abbey and Big Ben and towards the end of the course. We circled Parliament Square, and headed towards the finish, still having time to run past Downing Street and the Cenotaph.



The finish was on Whitehall, and it is to my eternal shame that I got over excited and put on a burst of speed in the finishing straight to beat my brother by a full second! We had been doing a great job of sticking together up until that point but I ruined it!

Overall though it was a great morning, we were surprised at just how many people were there, both running and cheering. The weather mainly held fine and we completed the course in a few seconds over 50 minutes, which was better than expected, and we were both in one piece with no aches or pains. We had a great day and it was a pleasure to raise funds for such a worthwhile cause.

Many thanks to Christopher and Jonathan Swayze who raised £715 for ESAB

KEEPING ACTIVE HELPS YOU STAY FIT AND INDEPENDENT

Keeping active as you grow older is the key to staying fit, healthy and more energetic. It can also help to keep you more mobile and independent. Key organisations and agencies in Suffolk are working together to help the county become the most active in England. Remember, some activity is better than no activity and you need a blend of aerobic and muscle strengthening exercise each day. Here are some ideas:

Walking is one of the easiest ways to get moving and our county has some of the most beautiful walks in England. The 'Easy Going' trails at www.discoversuffolk.org.uk are well worth a look, but even walking to the shops and back is beneficial.

Swimming is suitable for almost everyone and many of the pools in Suffolk offer sessions exclusively for swimmers aged over 50.

Dancing is probably one of the most social ways to get moving and stay active, and there are dance classes of join-in sessions such as tea dances in many parts of the county.

Gardening and housework are proven ways to help improve your lifestyle, get you moving and are good calorie-burning forms of activity.

Armchair exercise can be very beneficial if you have mobility issues, and we've produced a simple information sheet about it. (www.mostactivecounty.com/downloads)

ActivLives (www.activlives.org.uk) is an initiative that helps motivate, support and inspire people living in areas of deprivation to make positive changes to their lifestyle. ActivAgeing is one of their programmes to improve the health and wellbeing of people who live in and around Ipswich with a specific focus on activities for older adults.

So why not get more active, reap the benefits and play your part in helping to make Suffolk England's most active County. A factsheet with guidelines for older adults can be found at :-www.nhs.uk/Livewell/fitness/Documents/older-adults-65-years.pdf

If you would like any of these information sheets please contact the office on 01473 611011 and we can arrange to send copies to you.

NEW SILVER LINE HELPLINE OFFERS OLDER PEOPLE ADVICE AND FRIENDSHIP

November 2013 saw the launch of “The Silver Line”, the first free 24-hour helpline for older people. It has been set up to offer information, friendship, advice and protection from abuse and neglect. As well as the helpline, trained volunteers will become The Silver Line Friends, providing weekly chats to people who may not speak to another person for days.

According to a survey conducted by The Silver Line, 2.5 million older people (15 per cent of the older population) often feel lonely. This figure is likely to be the tip of the iceberg given stigma is often attached to admitting loneliness.

Esther Rantzen CBE, Chair and Founder of The Silver Line, said: "It is tragic that older people are so undervalued and isolated that they believe life is not worth living and that they are no longer part of the human race. The new Silver Line with its free 24 hour number will be the single memorable number we hope all older people will turn to when they need information, friendship or protection. We will signpost them to the services in their community and by showing them we value them and care about them we will restore their confidence and feelings of self-worth".

The freephone Silver Line number is **0800 4 70 80 90**. You can also find out more about the confidential service on their website www.thesilverline.org.uk

THE STIGMA ABOUT HEARING LOSS by Karen Finch

One in six people in the UK experience hearing problems, with the figure increasing for the over 75's to one in three! What's even more worrying is the stigma that still looms over the use of hearing aids, and the fact that many people with a hearing loss just don't do anything about it. But why is this? Many hearing-impaired people are subject to much prejudice and misconceptions; “they are old”, “less intelligent”, or “they only hear what they want to hear”. These statements just simply are not true. Many people also think that hearing aids are unsightly, uncomfortable, expensive and do not function optimally. In the past this was true. Hearing instruments did tend to be bulky and obtrusive but new technology of the last few years, the so called ‘digital age’, has brought endless solutions to this problem. There is now a wide range of hearing instruments, some so tiny they fit completely inside your ear and cannot be seen. Even those which sit behind the ear are so small and light they are practically invisible, while others deliberately draw attention to

themselves – becoming trendy and fashionable for the young, or young at heart. After all, when you buy spectacles these days you don't hide them, for many people they are a statement about their personality. Hearing loss is a form of disability and our natural reaction is to shy away from admitting it's actually happening to us. In the majority of cases the degeneration is gradual, so much so that we don't realise how bad the situation has become until someone else points it out for us. It can take up to 15 years from the first signs of hearing loss, to the point when the individual can't take any more and finally seeks professional help. By not admitting that a hearing problem exists, we only hurt ourselves because unsupported hearing loss leads to feelings of depression, anger and social isolation. If people can relate to this problem and haven't sought professional help, then they really should make a point of doing so. Contact your local audiologist and book a simple hearing assessment. The improvement to your quality of life will be dramatic. Karen Finch, the author of this article is the Managing Director and lead audiologist at The Hearing Care Centre in Ipswich. The multi-award winning, family-run company has 18 centres across Suffolk and Norfolk.

For more information call 01473 230330 or visit www.hearingcarecentre.co.uk.

“SKILLS FOR SEEING” TRAINING IS EFFECTIVE

One of the problems for people with central vision loss is that they have to learn to look slightly to one side of the object or person that they are trying to see. They are using their peripheral vision. This technique is known by eye health professionals as eccentric viewing. In 2012, the Macular Society commissioned researchers at Cardiff University to review all of the published evidence regarding the effectiveness of eccentric viewing training. The review found that 34 research studies have been published in this field. Almost all the studies found that reading ability improved after training. There was also some evidence that the ability to perform daily tasks, such as cooking and shopping improved after eccentric viewing training. However, there was very little evidence available regarding the ability of the training to help improve someone's distance vision, or their general quality of life.

The Macular Society offers training to help people learn this way of using their vision through the “Skills for seeing” programme. For details of this free training call the Macular Society on **01264 321975**

SIGHT IMPROVEMENTS FOR THE BLIND AFTER TRANSPLANT OF EMBRYONIC STEM CELLS (published in the Daily Telegraph)

The sight of patients suffering from incurable forms of blindness has shown significant improvement after a single transplant of stem cells, scientists have said. Eighteen patients suffering from age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and Stargardt's macular dystrophy have been taking part in a three year trial to discover whether embryonic stem cells could correct their sight loss. Scientists in America said the transplants had been successful and helped more than half of patients experience improvements in their sight.

The breakthrough, which offer hope to 500,000 people in Britain with AMD, was hailed a "major accomplishment". Prof Steven Schwartz, a study leader from the Jules Stein Eye Institute in Los Angeles said the results proved the "safety and promise" of stem cells in restoring sight to people with degenerative diseases and were an exciting step towards using embryonic stem cells in treating other disorders.

No effective treatments exist for either AMD or Stargardt's which can result in complete blindness caused by the loss of light-receiving photoreceptor cells in the retina. The new treatment uses stem cells to recreate a type of cell in the retina that supports those photoreceptors. Stem cells derived from embryos have the ability to develop into any kind of tissue in the body. By bathing the stem cells in a cocktail of chemicals the scientist stimulated them into becoming mature retinal pigment epithelium cells.

Tests showed substantial improvements in 10 out of 18 patients. Eight patients could read more than 15 additional letters on a sight chart in their first year of treatment.

The transplants are controversial because they use stem cells derived from human embryos left over from IVF treatment. But experts said the announcement showed such therapies could bring real benefits.

Anthony Atale, of Wake Forest Institute of Regenerative Medicine in Winston-Salem, US, said; "Much work remains before stem cell therapies go beyond regulatory trials, but the path is now set in motion". The study is published in The Lancet.

CONTINENCE SERVICE IS HERE TO HELP YOU

The Continence Service is a countywide service which carries out assessments and reassessments for all adults who have a continence problem and are

registered with a Suffolk GP. Based at Eye, the service provides professional advice, support and information to all on the management of incontinence. Clinics are held across the county for those able to attend. Those who are not able to attend clinics will be offered a home visit. The Service does also accept self-referrals. The Continence service would like to emphasise that if problems arise in-between assessment appointments they are there to offer advice and support. They would not wish what may be a small concern to develop into a greater problem for people and encourage you to contact them. At your time of assessment you will be given the name of the nurse undertaking the assessment and their contact number. Don't suffer in silence; help is available. Useful contact details:

Office number for assessment or reassessment**01379 873 762**

To arrange a clinic appointment**01379 873 754**

Euron number (to re-order incontinence products) ...**0800 019 0625**

The Continence Service is based at Hartismere Health and Care, Castleton Way, Eye, Suffolk, IP23 7BH

GUIDELINES FOR NON-EMERGENCY NHS PATIENT TRANSPORT SERVICES

Patients are responsible for their own transport to and from non-emergency NHS healthcare appointments in hospital and community clinics. Transport is provided for patients whose physical or mental condition, or mobility problems mean that they are unable to travel in any other way and who require the skills of staff to support them during their journey. All requests for non-emergency NHS transport are considered against the national eligibility criteria.

A range of vehicle types and levels of care, appropriate to the needs of individual patients, is provided, ensuring that the patient travels door-to-door as safely and as comfortably as possible; being accompanied is not necessary for the majority of patients. Anyone who has, in the past, accompanied a patient who is not a child may have to make their own way.

Patients in receipt of certain benefits or having to attend more than three times a week for ongoing treatment may be able to reclaim travel costs.

Eligibility for Non-emergency NHS Patient Transport Services

Examples of patients who may be eligible include those:

- Receiving treatments with severe side effects;
- Unable to walk more than a few steps;
- Requiring the skills of patient transport staff to administer oxygen during the journey;
- With severe eyesight problems;
- Who need to travel on a stretcher or in their own specially adapted wheelchair.
- Escorts on NHS Patient Transport Services: An escort (parent, guardian or appropriate adult) must travel with all patients under 16 years of age. Examples of adults who may be eligible to have an escort include those:
 - Requiring the medical and/or other specialised skills of their escort during the journey;
 - With severe communication difficulties or one who may have confusion and requires their escort to ensure a safe journey;
 - Considered to be vulnerable, such as a person who has a mental condition like dementia or a learning disability.

Information on travel to NHS healthcare appointments can be found by telephone as indicated on the appointment letter, accessing the hospital and community clinic website or the “Help with Travel Costs” Leaflet (PT001) available from the Suffolk PALS on **0800 3896819** or **01493 453240** if you live in Waveney.

FOR THOSE WATCHING FREEVIEW TV USING AN EXTERNAL AERIAL

The arrival of Fourth Generation (4G) mobile phone services in your area may cause problems with Freeview TV services, leading to a loss of sound, blotchy images, or loss of some or all TV channels. Only people watching Freeview TV will be affected while those who watch TV via cable or satellite are unlikely to experience any problems.

at800 is the organisation that has been set up to help overcome any problems and may have already sent a postcard to those households which may be affected, warning viewers that Freeview TV reception could be disrupted. Some of these households may be entitled to receive an at800 filter - free of charge.

The at800 filters make the TV less sensitive to 4G transmissions and enable viewers to carry on watching Freeview as normal. They are relatively small, need no batteries or external power supply, and will normally plug into the lead between the TV and the aerial. Each type of at800 filter has been tested

to ensure it works correctly in the UK and all come with instructions on how to fit them.

To enable viewers to find out what support is available and how to access help, at800 have set up a **Contact Centre**. To get in touch, viewers should call **0808 13 13 800** (Free from landlines. Calls from mobiles vary in cost - check with your provider). For more information, please visit www.at800.tv

THE WINTER FUEL PAYMENT

The Winter Fuel Payment is paid by the Government to all households that include someone of pensionable age. This coming winter, households will receive a tax free payment of £200 (or £300 if there is someone aged 80 or over in the household). The payment is made automatically and should be received by January 2015. If you want to find out more, call the Winter Fuel Payments helpline on **0845 915 1515**.

Cold Weather Payments are paid automatically during the winter period to people on Pension Credit, when the weather is exceptionally cold. The Warm Home Discount is a discount paid by your fuel supplier directly into your electricity account between October 2014 and March 2015. This is a one off payment and people that qualify will receive a discount of £140 this year. To qualify automatically for this discount you will need to be in receipt of Pension Guarantee Credit. If you are not on this benefit but still feel your income is low, then you should contact your electricity supplier (on the number at the top of your latest bill) to see if you can qualify. Do this as soon as possible as funds for this payment are limited.

The **Warm Homes Healthy People** project can assist Suffolk householders in a variety of ways. This time of year is perfect to get your home ready for the cold weather. If you are on low income they may be able to help with the following; emergency fuel payments, draught proofing, loan heaters, and financial assistance with boiler repairs. They also have Energy Advisors who can visit you at home to offer advice on how you can make your home more energy efficient. The project has rules on who it can assist, so do give them a ring to find out if they can help you on **08456 037 686**. Finally, please bear in mind that **Age UK Suffolk** is also able to help. One way in which they have helped many people over the past year is by offering a free, confidential benefits check to anyone over retirement age. This may identify extra benefits that can be claimed to help with the costs of winter. Contact their benefits advice service on **01449 674222**. Their Information Help Centres can also help.

DRIVING - WHEN TO STOP

Many people who have Macular Degeneration are not aware of their legal position when it comes to driving.

Optometrists at Opticians and Ophthalmologists at hospitals do not always mention to a patient that they should or should not drive. If they say nothing, don't assume that you are legally OK. Callers to the helpline often say that they are alright to drive as they only use familiar roads near home, and in good daylight. This may appear sensible, but from a legal point of view, if you have been told that you have a sight-affecting condition, such as Macular Degeneration in both your eyes, you are legally obliged to inform the DVLA.

If only one eye is affected and your sight is good in the other eye you will be fine to carry on driving and do not have to tell the DVLA. While you may feel your sight is fine to continue driving, if your sight does not meet DVLA requirements, this is illegal as your car insurance will be invalid. And talking of insurance you may wish to consider the costs of keeping a car on the road and whether alternative arrangements might not serve you better? Using the smallest car when driving an annual figure of 5,000 miles, the AA estimate the total cost at over £3,500 a year. Drive the average car 10,000 miles and your yearly costs will rise to around £9,000. If you were to spend the equivalent amount on taxi fares you might find some surprising results.

Smallest car monthly cost: £291 = 9 x return journeys of £30.

Average car monthly cost: £766 = 21 x return journeys of £35.

There are also many local taxi share and car share schemes across the UK, operating through community organisations, which you can use for shopping or hospital visits. Some of these voluntary care and local service groups provide timetabled routes in addition to 'Book a Ride' style services. And, while bus services in the rural areas have suffered cuts, the national bus pass scheme does offer the over 60s free travel throughout England. It is worth exploring through your local support groups and local authority just what is available in your area. You may be pleasantly surprised at how easy it can be.

When you have a degenerative condition such as macular disease the DVLA may issue you with a temporary licence for 12 or 24 months. But beware; if your sight deteriorates during this period, you must once again tell the DVLA. Remember, if your doctor or optometrist tells you not to drive, then you mustn't.

LONDON TRANSPORT

London Transport have launched a new 'Turn up and Go' assistance service for mobility and sight impaired customers at all London Overground stations. Staff will provide assistance without the need to book in advance. This gives greater choice and flexibility for making spontaneous journeys; the service is already in place on London Underground.

For more information and to view our new 'how to' films featuring Baroness Grey-Thompson, please visit tfl.gov.uk/accessibility

TIME IS ON YOUR SIDE

Keeping track of the time can be difficult with a visual impairment, so here are a few things that may help.

Talking watches are relatively cheap and certainly do the job. They also look just like standard analogue wristwatches. Some, like those in the Lifemax range, have two buttons: one to speak the time; the other the date. The watches synchronise themselves every night and even automatically adjust to daylight saving time.

Talking watches are not the most discreet however, so you may prefer a watch with a tactile dial. Typically these have a hinged cover which can be opened allowing you to feel the watch's hands and tactile markers.

The Meteor vibrating watch is an innovative little gadget. It's a droplet-shaped device that fits into the palm of your hand. The Meteor uses long and short vibrations to indicate hours and minutes.

Other, simpler, portable talking clocks are available, many as key rings. The Portable Talking Vibrating alarm clock, for example, has a loud voice to aid those with hearing loss.

There are numerous talking clock alarms available, some with enlarged time displays, others that just offer auditory feedback triggered by a large, easy-to-locate button. As with the wristwatches, many are able to set the time for you automatically. The Communiclock is one such model, which also has the ability to speak the time in Hindi, Urdu and English.

For smartphone users the "Yocto Alarm Clock" app (iOS devices) is worth a look. You can customize the font, colour and brightness of the digits. The app has lots of other features including sleep timers, alarms, weather forecasts and even a power nap setting.

For those who use Android devices, “Tell Me The Time” is a great app. As with the Yocto alarm, you have full control of the display settings. The time can be announced by pressing a pre-set button or, when in night mode, by simply waving your hand in front of the screen. Tell Me The Time speaks a variety of European languages too.

For any help on this please speak with your Community Worker or call the office on 01473 611011.

ABILITYNET - FREE COMPUTER HELP FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

Looking for friendly computer advice, having trouble with your technology or want to know about staying safe online? Call AbilityNet’s friendly team for any advice about computers and disability on **0800 269 545**

Free Factsheets - AbilityNet’s library of factsheets provide expert advice about how disabled people can use computers and the internet.

Free IT Support at Home - Their network of AbilityNet ITCanHelp disclosure checked volunteers help disabled people with their home computers. They can do this on the phone, online or in your own home.

Free My Computer My Way - A free online tool that helps you use the accessibility features built into every desktop computer, laptop, tablet and smartphone.

Free Online Assessment Tool - Their interactive tool helps to identify your needs and the hardware and software options that could help you use your computer.

For further information, please call AbilityNet on their free helpline **0800 269 545** or email them at enquiries@abilitytnet.org.uk or visit their website at www.abilitynet.org.uk/freeservices

KEEP TAKING THE TABLETS

By Matt Harrison, e-learning Manager at Portland College

If you are unfamiliar with technology, using a tablet computer may seem quite a daunting prospect. You may also wonder how, with a visual impairment you can benefit from using one. Working alongside local libraries however, I have come across an increasing number of visually-impaired people, the majority of them

older, using Apple iPads and other tablet computers. Let's have a look at a few key features that demonstrate why so many people, like me, cannot live without their tablets.

eBooks

Most, if not all tablets, can be used to read electronic books, newspapers or magazines. Some devices, such as the Kindle, are designed mainly for this purpose whereas others, like the Apple iPad, can do this and much more. You can choose your desired font and size, and also the background colour, enabling you to personalise the book to best suit your vision. There are thousands of books from classics to contemporary, and from fiction to reference available from the online stores (iTunes, Google Play, and Amazon) with many free of charge.

Magnification and Screen-Reading

Most tablets have inbuilt accessibility features including the ability to zoom in on the screen and have the tablet read the displayed text aloud. Magnification levels can be personalised, again ensuring that the tablet best meets your needs. On some devices, the accessibility features can be turned on or off using a specific gesture such as tapping twice on an iPad's screen with three fingers. This makes it ideal for those sharing the tablet with a sighted person. The screen-reading capabilities allow you to use a tablet even if totally blind. With this feature enabled the tablet can read out anything under your finger.

Dictation

Most tablets also have the capability to annotate dictated messages. If you find the on-screen keyboard difficult to use then you could always dictate your message and let the tablet do the hard work for you. This is a great feature when writing long messages.

Apps

You can add extra features to your tablet by downloading Apps- small programs that perform particular tasks. There are hundreds of free/cheap magnifier Apps that use the tablet's camera to turn your device into a magnifier.

You can also download Apps that photograph printed text and read it back to you. Again, high-quality Optical Character Recognition equipment is available, but it costs thousands, and it isn't that portable. I use my tablet to read the post and restaurant menus.

On top of all these features, your tablet will enable you to send and receive emails; take photos; browse the internet; manage a calendar; set reminders and so much more. I would be lost without my iPad - it gives me so much more independence.

JOIN THE SMARTPHONE AND TABLET REVOLUTION!

It's impossible to go anywhere these days and not see or hear someone using a touch-screen Smartphone or Tablet Computer! These thin, light and portable devices have transformed the way people communicate and enjoy TV, Radio and Books - both on the move and when at home.

There are a huge array of differently sized (and priced) devices, including Android Phones, iPhones, iPads, Samsung Galaxy Phones, Android Tablets, Galaxy Tablets, Amazon Kindle tablets, Tesco Hudl tablets and Amazon Fire Smartphones and Tablets.

For someone with a visual impairment, all of these devices have built-in accessibility in the form of voice feedback, voice control and screen magnification. However, the accessibility features are not always that easy to use, with the user having to operate the device with swipes, touches, double taps, triple taps, two finger swipes, two finger scrolls, three finger swipes and various other gestures and actions!

When you add in the extra complication of each function (or App) having its own look and way of working, the prospect of using one of these modern devices can seem quite daunting!

But don't fear - this is where Synapptic comes to the rescue! Developed by Adrian Sach, a champion of easy-to-use technology, Synapptic software allows anyone, with any level of vision and any level of technical ability to effortlessly operate a modern Smartphone or Tablet Computer.

Synapptic is so easy to use that most people manage without the need for any training at all, but a free hour of training is offered with every purchase, just in case.

Through simple menus, voice feedback, voice control and magnification, Synapptic allows Tablets and Smartphones to be operated in an intuitive way. In addition to this, all features have the same look and way of working, so once you've mastered one feature, you've mastered them all!

Synapptic makes all the common features of Smartphones and Tablet computers easy to use, like making and answering calls, sending and receiving text message, sending and



receiving emails, taking and viewing pictures, voice control, dictation, Internet radio, books, music, TV, BBC iPlayer, YouTube, GPS, alarm clock, address book, voice memos, notepad, Websites and much more!

Certain phones and tablets also include a built-in hand-held magnifier, a reading machine and colour Identifier.

The software comes with the ability to change the voice, screen colours, magnification and even add, remove and re-order items on the menus, so can be customised for particular needs.

The Synapptic software works on any Android device and costs just £190. If you don't have an Android device already, a range of Android Smartphones and Tablet Computers are available with the software pre-installed.

For more information, please contact Synapptic by telephone on **0845 576 0 576**, by email at sales@synapptic.com or through their website www.synapptic.com.

KEEP CALM AND HANG UP

The trueCall Call Blocker is like having a home receptionist, who lets calls from your friends and family straight through and blocks unwelcome callers. It also asks unrecognised callers to identify themselves before it puts them through. It's easy to set up – you just plug it in between your phone and the wall socket and it quickly learns who you like to speak to and who you don't. trueCall director Steve Smith says: "For most of us, nuisance callers are just pests, but they can cause anxiety and uncertainty among elderly and vulnerable people, including those suffering from forms of dementia. Many older people are unable to cope with persistent salesmen or are lonely and only too happy to talk to cold callers. Some scammers exploit this, building up their trust before they ask for money or personal details. We regularly hear hair raising stories of these people losing tens of thousands of pounds through telephone scams." Carers however, are learning that they can help to minimise the effect of these calls and protect their relatives. Smith says: "We often speak to people who tell us that they are worried about their elderly parents having to deal with nuisance calls. By blocking 98% of these calls, trueCall Care gives their parents protection and gives them reassurance."

trueCall Care costs £119.99 and is available from **www.trueCall.co.uk**, **Amazon**, **www.home-phones.co.uk** or the Alzheimer's Society website **www.alzheimers.org.uk**

TAX HELP FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Tax Help for Older People is a registered charity with Tax volunteers providing free independent help and advice throughout the UK for older people on lower incomes (£20,000 or less). They can check that:-

- Your tax codes are correct and that you are paying the correct tax
- You are completing the right forms
- You understand the letter that HMRC sent you
- You understand why you have an underpayment and know what you should do next

They can help you to:-

- Put things right
- Talk or write to HMRC and other organisations
- Question why something has happened
- Appeal or complain if necessary

Advice can be given over the phone at local surgeries in a secure environment or with a home visit. If you wish to enquire or use this service please call **0845 601 3321** or **01308 488066** or email taxvol@taxvol.org.uk

BLIND PERSONS TAX ALLOWANCE

All registered blind people are entitled to claim a Special Blind Persons Tax Allowance. This means that an additional income of £2,230 (as of April 2014) can be received without being taxed. To claim this allowance call **0845 366 7887** or **0300 200 3301**

HOLIDAYS WITH CREATIVE TRAVEL

Creative Travel specialise in executive coach holidays for the Visually Impaired. All their holidays are 'escorted' with their own Resort Manager, who along with their coach drivers are all trained to Visual Awareness Level. The majority of their hotels are also suitable for travellers with a visual impairment.

Their holiday packages include travel by executive coach, dinner bed & breakfast accommodation, entertainment most evenings, daily excursions, and

a Resort Manager throughout your stay, who also accompanies you on the excursions giving a light hearted, informative commentary.

They cover a number of resorts around the UK, a few of which are Teignmouth, Weston Super Mare, Ilfracombe, Lytham St Annes and Skegness.

For further information on their holiday resorts and packages for the visually impaired, please contact Neil or Lorraine at Creative Travel on 01503 220422.

ESAB DISTRICT COMMITTEE REPORTS

BECCELES

This year saw a welcome increase in membership, and we now number 28. We continue to offer monthly socials, when homemade sandwiches and cakes are provided by our many helpers, or organise outside trips. This year for the first time we enjoyed a fish and chip lunch at the Victoria Hotel in Lowestoft. In June we welcomed Mark, Steve and Alison from Head Office to our annual Strawberry Tea, when we also celebrated the 100 year anniversary of the Association.

After five years of dedicated service, Gordon Knights retired as Treasurer, and was given a very warm send-off. Happily, we were fortunate enough to obtain the services of Sonia Summons, who stepped into the breach and has already made her mark! We simply could not function efficiently without the support of our loyal band of helpers who supervise



the tea, organise entertainment and events, drive or assist on the bus or provide transport in their own cars. We always aim to ensure that anyone wishing to join us does not have to worry about how to get to the meetings.

In September an Exhibition Day for visually impaired people was once again organised at the Blyburgate Hall in Beccles and, once again, we were more than happy to provide refreshments which in turn helped swell our funds.

Jenny Harmer continues to give wonderful service and we were all delighted to be able to wish her well on her wedding on 21 June. She looked fabulous on her Big Day.

Jennifer Langeskov, Chairman

FELIXSTOWE

As ESAB's centenary year draws to a close, Felixstowe Branch reflect on the changes and events of 2014. Our chairman, Norman Thompson retired in June after 22 years involvement with ESAB. We are fortunate that Mike Deacon, a well known figure in the town, agreed to take over the role. We are grateful to the Grove Medical Centre who kindly offered us use of a room for our committee meetings.

Our community worker, Beverley was taken ill in February and we all miss her very much especially for her enthusiasm and ideas for fund-raising and our members miss her advice and friendship. We wish her well in the future.

We continue to hold monthly socials enjoyed by at least 40 members. We have had a varied programme of entertainment this year with singers, musicians, quizzes and humorous poetry readings. Anne, who arranges our entertainment, is stepping down from the role and we thank her for her years of hard work sorting out suitable and interesting acts for us. Anne says she will support ESAB whenever she can and we appreciate her continued involvement.

We celebrated the centenary in June with an afternoon tea party. Hattie and her friends played a variety of music throughout the afternoon and we were pleased the Mayor, Graham Newman, was able to open proceedings. Two of our members celebrated their 101st birthdays in June so the Mayor was delighted to present them with bouquets. It is at this point, we have to thank all our volunteers for making our socials so successful. Thanks go to our transport co-ordinator, Barbara and our volunteer drivers, to Pat Pearson for her catering skills and all those who serve tea and make our members welcome. It is a joy to see the pleasure our members get from these social gatherings.

Our Sound Shooters enjoy bi-monthly meetings at Felixstowe Rifle Club. Again this is only possible due to volunteer helpers and drivers. A competition was held in June when a group of shooters came from the Brighton branch of Blind Veterans UK. A return match has been arranged in November with about 16 members travelling to Brighton. Thanks go to our Treasurer, Pat Durrell for organising this and even roping in her husband to drive the mini-bus!

This year we have held fund-raising stalls at various locations, had a street collection and a concert. We are grateful to the Suffolk Foundation for obtaining grants for us to continue supplying aids to help our members and social activities such as theatre workshops and sailing.

Jane Fox, Secretary

LOWESTOFT

Our Social at the Lowestoft 60+ Club is well attended with members enjoying entertainment, refreshments and a raffle. A special thank you to our volunteers for keeping our social going and to the 60+ Club who always make us feel very welcome.

Our street collection in June raised £431 and other donations from individuals and local charities and businesses all help to support our social. In October our members enjoyed an evening of Old Time Music Hall entertainment in Gt. Yarmouth organised by the Lowestoft Lions. 2014 ends with a pre-Christmas dinner at the Masonic Hall in mid-December.

LOWESTOFT BLIND ACTIVITIES CLUB (LBAC)

A busy year for our members with events throughout the year including: monthly target shooting, darts nights, quiz nights, tenpin bowling and new age kurling with two trips to the Greyhound Races. Additional summer activities included trips to the Yarmouth Potteries museum and an Eerie Tales tour in Gt Yarmouth followed by a fish & chips dinner, with two rambles at Dunwich Forest and canoeing with the Bungay Canoe Club. A very enjoyable year.

The Members of LBAC would like say a special thank you to all their volunteers especially the drivers without whom none of their activities could take place.

LOWESTOFT LIVE ARTS

The club runs from September to the end of May allowing a break in the summer for other activities. Our members have spent the last year knitting (teapot cosies, scarfs and toys) with the majority continuing to make their rugs (either random or pictures like tigers, Labrador puppies and a Shire horse). Other crafts offered include drawing and painting, decorating recycled shopping bags, macramé and basket work. Our members celebrate the end of 2014 at our Xmas party with fish & chips and a raffle.

I would like to finish by saying a very big thank you to our Community worker, Melissa, for all her hard work and all the volunteers who help our members in the various clubs to enjoy so many different activities, without your support we would not be able to take part in them. I would also like to thank all our members who have made donations through the yellow box scheme and to all who have given their time to help me with our collections.

Kathryn Outterside - Secretary

SHOTLEY

This year has been a very busy one for us here at Shotley including major changes on the committee. In March, Bryan and Carol Le Grys announced their retirement after 12 years of loyal service (the picture shows Bryan and Carol cutting the cake at their good-bye meeting). At the same time Dorothy Burgess and Enid Llewellyn both felt it was time to hand over to new blood. We thank them all for their years of hard work. This meant a new committee being formed and we now have a new team, Lorraine Parry – Chairman, Jean Miller – Secretary and Pat Durrell – Treasurer. Barbara McDonald and Teresa McLellan, original committee members, still continue in their roles as Transport Organiser and Social Programme Organiser respectively.



July saw us on our annual outing and this year we went to Hintlesham Golf Club for our meal. At our August Social, a presentation to show our appreciation was made to our two staunch Catering ladies, Pat Haskell and Ann King who are stepping down having worked hard over the last 12 years to ensure everyone was provided with tasty food.

We have also recently set up links with the Felixstowe branch and the two committees have met to discuss the possibility of our members perhaps meeting up and seeing how each other's Socials are organised. Discussions are still underway but in the meantime Felixstowe committee members visited our Social in August and a reciprocal visit is planned.

Lorraine Parry - Chairman

SOUTHWOLD

The centenary dinner back in April was well attended and we welcomed Therese Coffey our M.P. It was the first time many of us had met her. I must express our thanks to Adnams who gave us a lot of wine and beer for the occasion. Adnams are extremely generous to organisations in the Southwold area.

Jill Skinner, has been hosting Bridge drives in her barn for the past ten years each afternoon including a raffle and a mouth-watering delicious tea raising £500-£600 for ESAB. Sadly Jill is retiring. Bridge is popular in Suffolk so can

thoroughly recommend this method of fund raising. Many thanks to Jill from all us for filling our 'coffers' for many years.

Susan Holmes - Chairman

WOODBIDGE

We started 2014 with our New Year tea party where we welcomed past helpers and guests, which gets us off to a good start, then throughout the year we were entertained by talks on Opera, Security, both a Musical and General Knowledge Quiz, Kyson School choir and a very interesting afternoon with Miriam King and her Oddity Theatre and dolls who very kindly donated a doll for our monthly raffle.

We celebrated our Centenary in July with a special tea. The picture shows Janet Kersey and Val Murray cutting a celebration cake alongside Chairman Steve Hodgkiss. There was a "Bring and Buy" sale in June and we enjoyed



a very good lunch as usual at Seckford Hall. Our street collection in August raised £293.23 so a big thanks to Roger Hobson and all of the collectors.

We look forward to November when we will be listening to Woodbridge School Choir and finish off the year in early December with our Christmas lunch at Seckford Hall.

It only remains for me to give a very big thank you to all the committee members and helpful drivers who help me throughout the year, which seems to go quicker each year!! Lastly, but my no means least, thank you to Lesley for all the hard work she puts in each year, it is greatly appreciated.

A very Merry Christmas and happy and healthy New Year to all at ESAB

Val Murray – Chairman

HALESWORTH

Our Halesworth social meet every 3rd Thursday from 2-4pm at the day centre London Road, Halesworth.

We are a small friendly group, but would like to encourage new members so please feel free to contact Jenny the Community Worker if you would like to join us on **01502-717159**

The group is run by our lovely volunteers Mr & Mrs Pye, with home-made cakes made for the members to enjoy with a cup of tea. Roger and Gordon are also our volunteers who help make our group successful.

We have had trips out this year to Dunwich for fish & chips, a meal at the White Hart in Halesworth and we are looking forward to our Christmas meal in December. We have also had entertainment in the day centre hall which includes, Friends in Harmony (singing), Mrs Mop reminiscing about her house keeping days at the big hotels in London, quiz's and much more.

We look forward to hearing from our ESAB members and hope you will join us.

Will Pye, Chairman

A BIT OF HUMOUR – MORE TOMMY COOPER JOKES

A man walked into the doctors.

The doctor said 'I haven't seen you in a long time'

The man replied, 'I know I've been ill'

A man walked into the doctors,

he said 'I've hurt my arm in several places'

The doctor said, 'well don't go to those places'

I went to buy some camouflage trousers the other day but I couldn't find any.

Two blondes walk into a building.....you'd think at least one of them would have seen it.

So I rang up a local building firm, I said 'I want a skip outside my house.'

He said 'I'm not stopping you.'

My friend drowned in a bowl of muesli.

A strong currant pulled him in.

Police arrested two kids yesterday, one was drinking battery acid, and the other was eating fireworks.

They charged one and let the other one off.

You know, somebody actually complimented me on my driving today.

They left a little note on the windscreen; it said 'Parking Fine.'

So that was nice.

EAST SUFFOLK BLIND CONTACT NUMBERS

DON'T FORGET OUR 5 HELPLINES WHERE YOU CAN CONTACT US OR LEAVE A MESSAGE:-

Lowestoft	Melissa	01502 580533
Beccles/Halesworth/Southwold	Jenny	01502 717159
Eye/ Stowmarket/ Leiston/ Woodbridge/ Framlingham	Lesley	01473 611650
Felixstowe/Shotley Peninsula	Beverley	01473 278047
Head Office		01473 611011



RETURNS SLIP FOR THE WINTER 2014 NEWSLETTER

If you require any of the following please tick relevant boxes, fill in your name and postcode below and return to ESAB, The Old Station, Little Bealings, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 6LT:-

I would like to change the format in which I receive the ESAB Newsletter. In future I would like to receive the Newsletter:

In large print

On CD

By email at:

(Insert your email address)

I no longer want to receive the Newsletter

I am interested in a demonstration of computers configured specially for the visually impaired

YOUR NAME:

POSTCODE:

The Super Swing Band at the fund raising Dinner Dance in Felixstowe in October 2014



A full house at the Orwell Hotel enjoyed a wonderful evening's dinner dance, dancing to the Super Swing Band, when £2778 was raised for the work of the Association. Huge thanks go to Ian and Bev Alderton and their wonderful friends who put so much time and effort into the planning, ticketing, table decoration and fund raising aspects of the night and of course a big thank you to Barclays Bank who have pledged £1000 matching grant donation as well.