

# Essex Blind Charity



# Spotlight

**February 2018**

ISSUE 82

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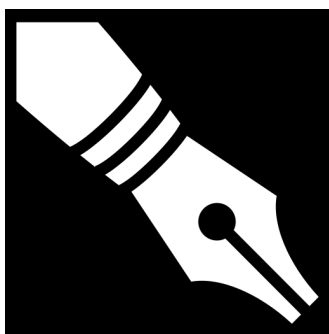
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**Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by Monday 26<sup>th</sup>  
March 2018**



## **The Editor writes:**

### **Hello!**

Welcome to the latest edition of Spotlight brought to you by Essex Blind Charity. We hope you will find articles that are informative and of interest to you and that you will share these with other visually impaired people and their carers. Everyone who is newly registered in Essex will receive a copy of Spotlight and they can request their own copy in large print format, on tape or memory stick or by email. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide Braille copies.

Now the days are starting to draw out we are looking forward to Spring and being able to get outside more. If you are planning your summer activities take a look at the article on the east Anglian Sailing Trust. Our volunteer Darren has written an inspiring account of his experience with them. If you prefer something more cerebral we have information on the RNIB writing competition or you could join one of our book groups.

As a change from Valentine's day our quiz this month focuses on St David's day. Will you be a Welsh wizard? Finally, many thanks to Michelle for her first hand experience of using the latest Seeing AI App.

Jill

# Community Support Team by Inez Davies



**Helpline Number 01206 548196**

Welcome 2018, it's going to be a great one! I see snowdrops and crocuses peeking their way through the ground, shaking off their lengthy slumber, stretching their leaves with gaping petalled yawns. Hello! Spring is coming! and edges my days with excitement of new growth and what's to come next. I feel being part of Essex Sight, is going to be full of new shoots of growth, colour and incredible collectiveness.

I am settling into my new role and soon I won't be saying, new. I'm really getting to know our trusted team of volunteers and staff and have very nearly visited all our sight centres. I want to take this opportunity to publicly express my sincere thanks and gratitude to all, your commitment, enthusiasm and incredible dedication is obvious. Everyone has made me feel very welcome and treated me with warmth and kindness.

We have 2 long-standing volunteers, Barbara Harrison and Rosemary Johnson, who offer information, advice and tons of emotional support to Visually Impaired People attending eye clinics at St Margaret's Hospital, Epping. They are certainly the Lone Rangers in the West for Essex Sight. My mission is to encourage better connectivity to our Community Support Team, sight centres and offer them a sense of comradeship with our band of fellow volunteers. Barbara and Rosemary have been offering amazing attention to patients in crowded waiting areas at outpatient eye clinics at the hospital, signposting local services, providing advice and a much-needed listening ear for reassurance. They are friendly faces greeting anxious patients when often uncertainty lies ahead or when trying to process information about their eye conditions and prognosis. I am so impressed by their work and their attitudes to make a positive difference to patients' lives which they do with such dedication. They are both unbelievable assets to our charity as are all our volunteers. Thank you, Barbara and Rosemary, for giving up your time every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month at St Margaret's eye clinic, outpatients!

My short journey around our services, made me realise that our workforce has remarkable diversity and variety. Staff and Volunteers come from

many walks of life; visually impaired people, professionals, carers, students. You, your partner, friends or family could be reading this, and you might even have had the notion to get involved in community work, wanting to link your passion and never been quite sure of what opportunities are out there? Who knows, perhaps a new volunteer role for you at Essex Sight may fit the bill? We are always looking to recruit new volunteers with some time to spare, if you fancied a challenge.

### **New Befriending Service**

In fact, I have some exciting news to tell you about. We recently secured some funds from iBCF (Intelligent Better Care Fund), a combination of Health and Social Care funding. A key element of our submission to this fund, is to trial some innovative volunteer befriending. Essex Sight has been instrumental in providing home-visiting befriending and continues to offer support at home if required, to complete Attendance Allowance forms, mainly through the wonderful work that Agnes and John our volunteers provide. We would like to reconsider our original home-visiting befriending with an added twist by volunteer befrienders visiting people in their homes and establishing local champions who become 'real' friends. Volunteer befrienders can create friendships that will go beyond the connection of a volunteer. We can match up people with a common interest or who live close by, who are thoughtful and caring and looking for a reciprocal friendship. In addition, we would like to expand on this by offering digital befriending, where a befriender can regularly phone, skype or facetime the VIP for ongoing support – we don't know what this will look like but are very willing to test new waters. We would like to specifically help people who are particularly vulnerable, isolated and perhaps lonely. So, if you know of anyone, please contact me for a chat. I am waiting for that telephone line to be smoking with the heat generated from interested callers!

### **Thank you**

We welcomed several donations over Christmas and New Year, totalling an unbelievable £830, which will be put to good use whether it be equipment to demonstrate or perhaps excursions for VIP and Volunteers. Thank you all who donated, your generosity is overwhelming! We are currently re-vamping our website and wanted to ask if you would be in favour of having your name on our website as a donor? Your feedback is invaluable, so please feel free to chat with one of our team

## Team news

Christine Pratt and Denise Sanders are our qualified ECLOs (Eye Clinic Liaison Officers) who both carry out home visits; give emotional support, information and advice on various subjects and help with registration as sight impaired. They can also signpost and refer to other agencies, promote the importance of eye health and provide important links by bridging health, community and social care. Equally, they can work and support families and carers. Christine is often found at Eye Clinic waiting rooms at Essex County Hospital and Clacton Hospital. She has worked hard at becoming recognised as an ECLO by recently establishing an Honorary Contract with the Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust. This will allow her to work closer with Hospital staff and create a better eye clinic patient pathway through hospital and community support. Quite an achievement and one which we hope to mirror in Mid Essex at Broomfield Hospital.

We have a desire for all our staff to be ECLO trained as a matter of course and feel, we should all be working with an 'ECLO' approach, supporting people in a holistic, all-inclusive manner. Carol Massey and myself are next on the ECLO training hit list and we will let you know how we get on.

Jill is whizzing about Mid Essex, flying the Essex Sight banner at her regular drop-ins at several libraries; Chelmsford, Maldon, Braintree, Brentwood and carries out a supportive function for patients attending the low vision clinic at Broomfield Hospital, run by Sara Porter one of our trustees. Jill gives advice on equipment and lighting and is always stocked up with helpful gadgets and a listening ear.

Carol continues to keep our sight centre at Colchester well stocked with equipment and tea! And is always a friendly face to guide VIP through various pieces of technology and offer them reassurance, face to face or on our helpline. I can feel the energy in our Team of volunteers and staff and think, what a force to be reckoned with. Even if we don't have all the answers, we will find someone who has!

I know that there will be many challenges ahead, especially around funding but feel hopeful and energised, that we will develop a stronger, further reaching service over the next few years and that I will still have my bare-backed horse rider in my thoughts about inclusion.

*"Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass but learning how to dance in the rain"* Anon.

So, I'm off for a twirl and a splash in the puddles!

## **Colchester Sight Centre by Carol Massey**



A belated Happy New Year to everyone. I hope you all had a lovely Christmas.

One of the nicest things about working in the Sight Centre is knowing that you have helped someone, whether it be accessing services, making them aware of any financial help they are entitled to, or just chatting over a cup of tea at our coffee morning. There is a lot of information and resources available for the blind and visually impaired, so please do either pop in or call us. If we don't know the answer, then we can probably find someone who does!

### **RNIB On-Line Today Workshop – Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February**

Don't know your apps from your email? Would you like to get on-line and surf the web? Want to Skype your family in far flung countries?

The RNIB will be in the Sight Centre with iPhones and tablets to show you how to make the most of the internet. This is a real hands-on workshop and you will be able to try out these gadgets with friendly staff and volunteers on hand to help.

We still have some places available, so if you are interested, please contact me as soon as possible. The workshop is free and our Sight Centre is wheelchair accessible.

### **Donated and ex-demo equipment**

We have various ex-demo lights and some donated equipment available at low cost, together with a selection of non-LED light bulbs. These are low energy, daylight bulbs in different wattage. Most are screw-in, but there are a few bayonet also. The light bulbs are priced at £1.50 or £2.

### **Knitting Group**

Our friendly knitting group is looking for new members. We knit (a little) and chat (a lot) and you are assured of a friendly welcome to the group. We knit twiddlemuffs and squares for blankets, or you can do your own project if you prefer. Large print patterns, magnifiers and lights are available to help find those dropped stitches. The group meets the first Thursday of each month, 10am – 12noon. All abilities are welcome.

## Colchester Sight Centre Activities

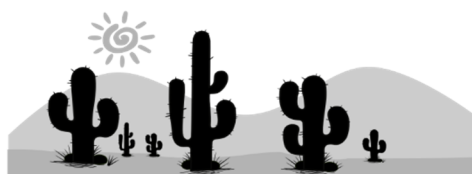
### **Weekly**

Tuesdays	10am-12	Coffee Morning IPad/iPhone sessions (by appointment only)
Wednesdays	10am-12	Correspondence Reading

### **Monthly**

1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday	10am-12n	Knitting Group
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## News from the Midwest by Jill Shakespear



**Braintree      Brentwood**  
**Chelmsford      Maldon**

Everyone has returned refreshed with ideas and plans for the New year. We will be holding demonstration days with Enhanced Vision along with Dolphin computers or Calibre library at Chelmsford, Maldon and Brentwood libraries in May, more details to follow in the April Spotlight.

### Braintree volunteers

We are very sad to say goodbye to Barbara and Jim, two of our volunteers at Braintree Sight Centre who are retiring after over 10 years of service for us. They joined us very soon after we set up the Sight Centre in 2006 in the old Community Hall in Braintree. Barbara has Macular Degeneration herself and has given her understanding support to many worried visitors to the centre. Jim has also been very helpful especially when we moved from the community hall into the library. We wish them all the best for the future, although I know they will still be busy as Barbara also does a lot of work for Guide Dogs.

### Book groups

In February, Brentwood are going for the traditional theme of Valentines day, but with a sinister twist. The Braintree group have decided on a change this month and instead of a theme are reading books from a single author local Essex lady Jojo Moyes. Jojo has written a wide range of books,



the most well know probably being Me Before You which was made into a hit film in 2016.

We are also reading some Muriel Spark to celebrate the centenary of her birth on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1918. Famous for The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie – “Give me a girl at an impressionable age and she is mine for life” - she also wrote several other books and poems.

New members are always welcome at our book groups, just turn up on the day.

### **Ingatestone Library Book Group**

If you live in Ingatestone you might like to join the library audio book group. The group has been going for around 7 years and are now looking for new members. Each month they get in a large selection of audio books and someone reads the synopsis to the group members who each borrow around 6 audio books. The following month they come back and either recommend them to the others or say what they disliked.

If you would like to go to the next meeting it is being run on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February from 10.30-11.30. Contact Carole Slade at Ingatestone Library for more information. Tel: 033301 32674

Upcoming dates for the sight centres are:

Braintree: 21<sup>st</sup> February and March

Brentwood: 12<sup>th</sup> February and March

Maldon: 6<sup>th</sup> February and March and 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Chelmsford: every Friday

### **Tendring Talks by Denise Sanders**



**Brightlingsea Clacton  
Harwich Manningtree**

## **CLACTON SIGHT CENTRE**

It was lovely to see everyone eating, drinking and being merry at our Christmas Buffet in December. Thank you to Chris for his somewhat difficult Christmas Quiz and well done to John and Agnes and to Jeanette for doing so well. I will have to learn the names of all the reindeer by next year!

Unfortunately, some of you have started off the New Year in poor health with these nasty viruses doing the rounds, and some admissions to hospital. We hope people get better soon and that they can attend Thursday afternoons at Cadows again soon.

Wishing Nigel good luck for his day of sailing. Nigel has said that he will write an article for Spotlight following his adventure and we look forward to reading this.

### **Clacton Macular Society**

Just a reminder that everyone is most welcome at Clacton Macular Society; those living with macular disease or indeed living with a different eye condition. The group leader is Peter Bareham, tel: 01255 430386. The group meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month (excluding December) in Sam's Hall, Rosemary Road, Clacton, CO15 1NX.

Upcoming dates for the sight centres are:

Brightlingsea	Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> March 10am – 12.30pm
Clacton	Every Thursday 1 pm - 3.30 pm
Harwich	Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> April 10am – 1pm
Manningtree	Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> March 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

## **Hospital Eye Clinics by Christine – Sight Loss Advisor**

I am very pleased to have finally reached a more formal arrangement with Colchester Hospital University Trust and have now signed an Honorary Contract to work as their ECLO. This should allow me to follow up on patient enquiries much more quickly and work more efficiently to support people in the eye clinic. I can usually be found at Essex County on

Wednesdays although this may change when the eye clinic relocates to the General Hospital sight later in the year.

Following on from this we are in the process of signing similar contracts at Broomfield to provide an interim ECLO service on a Monday while we sort out a longer term more permanent arrangement to support their clinic patients.

If you would like information on an eye condition or some support from me I can be contacted on 01206 548196 or 07770 750108, please leave me a message if I am unavailable.

## **Read House, Frinton on Sea by Janet Plant**



Read House is the residential care home run by Essex Blind Charity in Frinton on Sea. The home specialises in the care of elderly people with sight problems. We offer permanent and respite care (short breaks) by staff who have all been trained in visual awareness. The Home is situated on the seafront at Frinton on Sea, a short distance from the town centre with its friendly local shops.

If you would like to find out more about Read House or to receive our Information Pack, please contact me or Sandra on 01255 673654. We are more than happy to show you round at any time to suit you.

The Christmas festivities now seem a long time ago, but all our residents, including those who joined us for a short break over the Christmas period, had a lovely time with presents, good food (and drink!) and lots of activities. We were pleased to welcome a lot of new clients for a short break as well as some new residents who have now joined us on a permanent basis.

We are now starting to plan our activities for the forthcoming year. We have a regular programme of daily activities, mostly decided by the residents themselves at their monthly meetings. But we like to include some extra special events, like another visit from Gemma's Farm as well as a variety of visiting entertainers. Our residents enjoyed a visit to the theatre for a Christmas Spectacular, so we are planning another theatre trip in the summer.

We are now taking bookings from clubs or groups who are planning their summer outings. Our day centre is separate from the care home, with its own accessible entry, and with access to our garden. The room is generally available on Tuesdays and Fridays. If your group is planning any day trips this year and you would like information about what we can offer please contact us for details – 01255 673654 or email [sandra@essexblind.co.uk](mailto:sandra@essexblind.co.uk).

## **Quiz for St David's Day (March 1<sup>st</sup>)**

1. What is the national flower of Wales?
2. What did the Romans call Wales?
3. What is the capital of Wales?
4. What is the name of the Italian style village in north Wales where the cult TV series The Prisoner was filmed?
5. What is the Welsh national Anthem?
6. What is the highest mountain in Wales?
7. What moved from Tower Hill, London to Llantrisant in Wales in 1968?
8. At which castle was prince Charles made Prince of Wales?
9. What is the seaweed delicacy fried with bacon and eaten at breakfast?
10. What is the name of the annual festival for music and the arts held in August?

# Technology

## **App of the month – Seeing AI Reviewed by Michelle**

Seeing AI is Microsoft's new revolutionary free app for the iPhone and iPad. It is actually 9 apps in one. When you first open the app your device's rear facing camera is activated showing you a full screen image of what its looking at. At the bottom of the screen is a line of large white icons which you scroll through left to right to activate each function. It doesn't matter if you can't read them, the app has its own speech software which announces each icon as it is highlighted. The app always opens with the Short Text icon highlighted. The 9 functions are: Short Text, Document, Product, Person, Currency Preview, Scene Preview, Colour Preview, Hand Writing Preview and Light. The functions marked as Preview are still being perfected although they already work well.

### **SHORT TEXT**

Hold the device up to any short piece of text, a sign or notice and it will instantly read it aloud. You don't have to be close to the text. I read a road sign from the other side of the road. It doesn't cope well with moving text such as an approaching bus or dot matrix scrolling text. Personally, I think this is the app's best function and the one I have used the most.

### **DOCUMENT**

You can scan a longer piece of text and either magnify it, or use the app or Voice Over to read it aloud, although only Voice Over will let you skip back and forth through the text, the app just reads it from beginning to end. You can save and share the text in the usual way to many formats. I have used this function to read a basic menu and it was reasonably accurate. People with little or no sight find it very difficult to line the camera up with the text as it has to be held some distance away and be able to see the whole page, but audible instructions tell you if it's not lined up correctly. Once it is satisfied it will automatically scan the text and play a tone to let you know it's doing something.

### **PRODUCT**

Unlike other barcode reading apps this one doesn't require you to know where the barcode is located on the product. By carefully scanning the product with the camera a series of beeps increases when you get close.

Once the barcode has been located it will automatically scan it and read the information aloud.

## **PERSON**

In this function the app looks for facial features in the environment to detect if a person is near you. You can add people to the App's database for future recognition. There is a function to guess a person's age, gender and facial expression which is at best fun and at worst embarrassing as it is very inaccurate.

## **CURRENCY PREVIEW**

Simply identifies bank notes: Euros, Dollars and Pounds.

## **SCENE PREVIEW**

This function will try and describe what is in the environment around you. It is not as accurate as TapTapSee as its database isn't as extensive, but as it is still in preview, I think this will improve.

## **COLOUR PREVIEW**

As with the short text function you get an instant announcement of the colour directly in front of the camera. Accuracy is comparable with an older Cobolt Colour Detector but as you don't have to rest the camera directly onto the object your scanning it will detect multicoloured objects such as cushions and clothing.

## **HANDWRITING PREVIEW**

To my knowledge this is the first app that can read hand writing. I managed to read a Christmas card with some success - "Reasons Greetings", but there was other writing it couldn't read.

## **LIGHT**

The higher the tone the more light there is in your environment. Good for when the kids or a visitor leaves the light on.

You need an internet connection for processing documents, people and barcodes and the processing speed depends on your internet speed. Personally, I wouldn't scan sensitive or private documents. Considering the cost of the half a dozen gadgets you would need to perform the same functions as this free app its very impressive and will only improve with each update.

## Entertainment

Don't look now -thrillers are the order of the day at our local theatres this winter. Here's a round-up of the audio described performances:

### Mercury Theatre Colchester

The next audio described performance is for the classic ghost story by Henry James, *Turn of the Screw* on Saturday 10th March, 2.30pm (Touch Tour at 1pm). Set in 1840, a young governess agrees to look after two orphaned children in Bly, a seemingly idyllic country house. But shortly after her arrival, she realises that they are not alone. There are others – the ghosts of Bly's troubled past. The Governess will risk everything to keep the children safe, even if it means giving herself up to The Others. Decades later, confronted by the past she is compelled to revisit the terrifying events of 1840 and account for what actually happened to her and the innocents under her protection.

Ticket Sales 01206 573948 or email [access@mercurytheatre.co.uk](mailto:access@mercurytheatre.co.uk)

### Queens Theatre Hornchurch

*Rope* by Patrick Hamilton from 15<sup>th</sup> February to 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Audio description is available for all performances. Call the theatre to find out about touch tours.

Two well-bred young men murder a fellow Oxford student just for the fun of it. Placing the corpse in a wooden box, they invite a group of friends over to their Mayfair apartment – including the loving mother of the boy they've just killed. Supper is served on the chest holding the gruesome contents. But one of their guests is starting to become suspicious...

Will this daring pair get away with their cat and mouse games?

Based on a 1920's real-life case, this dark classic, brilliantly evoking a jazz age generation, was filmed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1948 and remains to this day one of the most tightly coiled of thrillers.

Ticket sales 01708 443333 or email [access@queens-theatre.co.uk](mailto:access@queens-theatre.co.uk)

### The Docklands at War gallery, Museum of London Docklands

- **Date:** Wednesday 14 March 2018
- **Time:** 2:00 pm
- **Ticket price:** Free but booking essential

Blind and partially sighted visitors can experience a 60-90 minute audio described tour of the Docklands at War gallery. Discover the turbulent events of the Second World War, when the docks were almost destroyed during the Blitz, with a trained guide for blind and partially sighted visitors.

Please note that blind and partially sighted visitors only need to book tickets for themselves and are welcome to bring a friend or carer.  
Box office 020 7001 9844

## **Activities**

### **YACHT SAILING FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE**

Ever thought about sailing? East Anglian Sailing Trust has skippers and sighted crew ready to take you aboard. Here is a personal account of the experience from our volunteer Darren:

A sailor's life for me seemed quite improbable this time last year. I clearly recall tuning into the Discovery channel and becoming inspired hearing about the wonderful adventures others were enjoying. After rationalising my exuberance about climbing mountains or walking along the Great Wall of China, I came to my senses and took a more amenable approach. Both Essex and Suffolk are blessed with numerous bodies of water, rivers and an intriguing coastline. Instinctively, exploring the regions waterways became my focus. And with a simple internet search, I unearthed the East Anglian Sailing Trust (EAST) based at the Suffolk Yacht Harbour in Levington near Ipswich.

Although not necessary, I decided to become a full member as it gave me access to the first draft of sailing dates. Having completed the EAST application form and health questionnaire, which is designed to both inform and identify how EAST can best achieve the most inclusive experience for you, it then seemed sensible to go along for one of the free taster sailing days to test the waters. This took place on a beautiful spring day in May. My skipper met me at Ipswich train station as arranged and kindly drove me to the Suffolk Yacht Harbour in Levington. Once there, I was warmly greeted by the cruise coordinator and our other crew members. It was all very friendly and I was really encouraged by the high level of disability awareness. They all addressed me by name so I knew they were talking to me and they kept me informed about what was happening each step of the way. It was never rushed but always thorough. No assumptions were made but help was always on offer. With my buoyancy aid checked to ensure I had correctly fitted it, we began the few minutes' walk down to the pontoon.

Safely guided into position at the side of the yacht, I used the hand rail to aid me in taking a high step up and aboard. With a bit more shuffling and guidance, I edged my way along the side of the yacht and



was offered a helping hand to step down and then down again to take a seat on deck. Before too long, I was being given a touch tour and descriptions of what was out of reach but equally useful to know. This continued below deck likewise, where both coffee and more orientation were plentiful. The most humorous discovery being the marine toilet. A manual pump action facility you inevitably learn to respect!

Soon enough I was back upstairs on deck and offered opportunities to be involved with preparing to set sail. They were basic jobs such as retrieving fenders and stowing them away. Plus, the chance to release, haul, or coil up rope as instructed. The sun beamed and so did I. None more so than when I later got the chance to take the helm and use the on-board audio compass to steer a course. This was achieved by turning the helm either to port or starboard depending on whether I heard a low or higher pitched beep generated by the audio compass. This was an enjoyable challenge trying not to either under or over steer and felt good when I managed to keep the audio compass quiet, which demonstrated I was keeping the yacht on a true course – in varying bursts! The skipper was a generous host, and with the assistance of the other two sighted crew members, there was a hearty array of food being consumed whilst the helming duties were shared. It all made for a superb days sailing down the river Orwell and out into the North Sea – just as I had imagined it during those cold winter months awaiting this now fulfilled adventure.

I hasten to say that this was the first of three sailing experiences with EAST during 2017. It was followed up by me going back again a few weeks later upon a different yacht for two nights on board cruise. Where following a delicious dinner in the Waterside Community Centre ashore, we later climbed aboard the yacht and settled down for the night. Although not before listening to a cracking thunder storm and the sound of rain drops making unfamiliar noises as they coalesced and hit various parts of the yacht. The second night was in stark contrast. We arrived at Titchmarsh near Walton-on-the-Naze in sunny conditions and indulged in a sumptuous barbeque.

The third of my sailing trips last season was on board a Keelboat. This being a much more basic boat with bench seats, a tiller, and no audio compass. Nor a marine toilet! The technique here being to keep the wind or air flow direction pressing against you in the same spot to try to hold a course. This was great fun and the fact that the boat is sat much lower in the water, really gives a stronger sense of speed. Similarly, using a tiller to steer gave an enhanced connection to the water and the forces acting upon it. Unlike the visually impaired cruising on board the yachts, the Keelboat sailing is offered to a wide-ranging demographic. This is

down to the Keelboats being a simple and open design. Therefore, wheelchair users can be accommodated on board using their shore side lifting hoists to great effect.

It should also be noted that the safety element employed during all three of my sailing trips was reassuring and never underestimated. Everyone wears a buoyancy aid. All boats have a VHF communication radio and safety equipment on board. Plus, the ratio of crew on board and the presence of other EAST boats and safety vessels sailing in close proximity was impressive.

## INTERESTED, WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Contact: Trevor Williams      Mobile: 0787 290 7719

Email: [anneandtrevor@hotmail.com](mailto:anneandtrevor@hotmail.com)

Visit our website [www.e-a-s-t.org.uk](http://www.e-a-s-t.org.uk).      EAST is a registered charity. Our VI Cruising Chairman Simon Daws, who is VI, would be very happy to talk to anybody with questions or in need of reassurance -

Mobile: 07749 714361

### 2018 VI Cruise Dates

- Push the Boat Out taster days: Wed 16th May -Saturday 19th May (Cost: Free)
- May Weekend Cruise: Friday 11th May - Monday 14th May (Cost: £75 plus £6 weekend membership)
- June Taster Cruise: Friday 1st June - Sunday 3rd June (Cost: £50 plus £6 weekend membership)

Sailing is on a variety of yachts from 30' to 40' in length.

All EAST crews are volunteers and skippers are not paid for the use of their boats.

VI crew can attend as individuals or a group (limited numbers). They need to be active and physically able to move on a boat. Sorry, 18 years + only. We cannot accommodate guide dogs.

## Tandem Cycling

Have you ever wanted to try tandem cycling but don't know anyone with a tandem? There is a charity called Charlotte's Tandems that can loan one out free to people with a disability. For more information and an application form see the website: <http://www.charlottestandems.co.uk/>

## RNIB Writing Competition

The theme for RNIB's 2018 writing competition is "Connections". We make different kinds of connections every day, whether we are rushing to change trains or connecting with others in our community. Some might say that through technology, we are more connected than ever before. Get your creative juices flowing on the theme of "Connections" in either 1,000 words of prose or 30 lines of poetry. Prose entries can be fiction, non-fiction or drama.

A panel of expert judges will select a winner and two runners-up in both categories, who will each have their entries read and recorded by professional Talking Book narrators.

You can enter in any format: audio, word document or hard copy, hand written or preferably typed on A4 paper or in braille. Whichever format you choose, make sure your entry clearly states your name, address and phone number.

The deadline for entries is 9 am on Monday 5 March 2018.

To submit your entries, email [writingcomp@rnib.org.uk](mailto:writingcomp@rnib.org.uk) or post it to: RNIB Members Writing Competition, Talk and Support, 105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE.

For more information and full terms, contact Talk and Support on 0207 391 2218 or email [writingcomp@rnib.org.uk](mailto:writingcomp@rnib.org.uk).

## Living Paintings

Have you ever tried the Living Painting service? This is a fun thing to do as a group activity or you can join as an individual. The service is completely free; books are sent through the post by articles for the blind. The group books contain 2-3 raised images, with 10 copies of each one, a CD with audio description, guidance notes with a copy of the script, plus ideas for running a group session. They also include colour copies of the pictures, for those with some sight. The audio description takes you through a journey and describes the raised picture in detail. At present there is a range of 34 titles, examples of these are:

- Whistle stop tour of Scotland
- At the Theatre
- The Blitz

- Famous Teddy Bears
- A Walk Along a River Bank
- Ocean Odyssey
- Mysterious Women

If any group facilitator would like to try out one of our group books, they can register as a member of the library and receive a Touch to See Book Club book within a week. Books can be borrowed for up to 3 months and there is no charge at all for this service.

If any-one would like to join the Living Paintings library as an individual, this is also possible. Please call the Living Paintings office on 01635 299771. Website: [www.livingpaintings.org](http://www.livingpaintings.org)

## **Answers to quiz**

1. daffodil
2. Cambria
3. Cardiff
4. Portmeirion
5. Land of my Fathers
6. Mount Snowdon
7. The Royal Mint
8. Caernarfon
9. Laverbread
10. Eisteddfod

## Contact details

Helpline and office 01206 548196  
(Inez Davies, Jill Shakespear, Carol Massey, Denise Sanders)

Christine Pratt (Colchester + Tendring hospitals) 07770 750108

Read House 01255 673654  
(Janet Plant, General Manager, Sandra Edwards, Admin Assistant)

Essex Blind Charity produces and distributes Spotlight free of charge. However donations in time or money are always welcome. If you are a UK taxpayer please consider filling in our gift aid form so we can claim back the tax paid on your donation, thereby allowing us to make even better use of your donation.

If you are writing or redrafting your will please consider leaving us a gift. Your support will enable us to continue to provide and develop the services we provide for people with sight loss throughout Essex. Thank you.

## Gift Aid Declaration

**On behalf of Essex Blind Charity  
Registered Charity No. 1103732**

The Gift Aid Scheme enables charities to make more of your donation by reclaiming the tax you have already paid. In order for us to make this claim on your donation(s) please complete this form and return it as soon as possible

***Thank you!***

**Please treat the enclosed gift of £.....as a Gift Aid donation.**

I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

Title.....Forename(s).....Surname.....

.

Address.....  
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.....  
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Post Code.....

**I would like Essex Blind Charity to treat all donations I have made since 1 July 2012 as Gift Aid donations until I notify them otherwise.**

Signature..... Date.....

Please return your completed form to:  
Essex Blind Charity  
Read House, 23 The Esplanade  
Frinton on Sea, Essex CO13 9AU.

If you are not already on our mailing list for 'Spotlight' and would like to receive a regular copy, please complete the form below and return it to Carol Massey at Essex Sight, 40 Osborne Street, Colchester CO2 7DB

Name.....

Address.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Tel.....

How would you prefer to receive your copy?

Large Print..... Cassette Tape..... Memory Stick.....

Email.....

We would like to add your contact details to our database so that we may from time to time send you details of developments to our services, events taking place in your area and other information we feel may be of interest to you.

If you would prefer us not to do so, please tick here.....

We will not pass your details to anyone else without your permission.

**You may request us to remove your details from our database at any time.**

# Essex Sight Centres

## **Braintree**

Braintree Library, Fairfield Road  
Braintree CM7 3YL  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month  
10 am to 1pm

## **Colchester**

40 Osborne Street  
Colchester CO2 7ND  
Open Monday to Friday  
10 am to 2 pm  
Wednesday late opening to 4pm

## **Brentwood**

Brentwood Library, New Road  
Brentwood CM14 4BP  
2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month  
10 am to 1 pm

## **Frinton on Sea**

Read House, 23 The Esplanade  
Frinton on Sea, CO13 9AU  
Mon-Fri. 1pm to 4.30 pm  
(by appointment – tel. 01255 673654)

## **Brightlingsea**

Brightlingsea Library, New Street  
Brightlingsea CO7 0BZ  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday alternate months  
10 am to 12.30 pm

## **Harwich**

Harwich Library, Upper Kingsway  
Dovercourt CO12 3JT  
2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday alternate months  
10 am to 1 pm

## **Chelmsford**

Chelmsford Library, Market Road  
Chelmsford CM1 1LH  
Every Friday  
10 am to 2 pm

## **Maldon**

Maldon Library, Carmelite House,  
White Horse Lane  
Maldon, CM9 5FW  
1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month  
10am to 1pm

## **Clacton-on-Sea**

CADOWs, Old Road  
Clacton on Sea CO15 1HX  
Every Thursday  
1 pm to 3.30 pm

## **Manningtree**

Manningtree Library, High Street  
Manningtree, CO11 1AD  
4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday alternate months  
9.30 am to 12.30 pm

**For more information contact Essex Sight Office on 01206 548196.**

**Email: [services@essexblind.co.uk](mailto:services@essexblind.co.uk)**

**For information about permanent or respite residential care, contact:**

**General Manager at Read House, Janet Plant: on 01255 673654**

**Email: [janet@essexblind.co.uk](mailto:janet@essexblind.co.uk)**



# Essex Blind Charity



# Spotlight

**February 2018**

ISSUE 82

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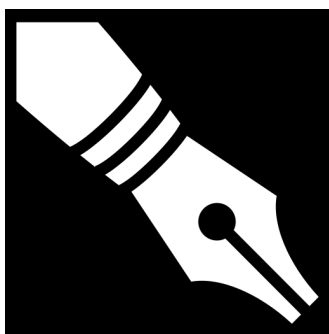
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Please send your articles for inclusion in Spotlight to:

### **The Editor**

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CO2 7DB  
01206 548196  
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**Items for the next issue should reach the Editor by Monday 26<sup>th</sup>  
March 2018**



## **The Editor writes:**

### **Hello!**

Welcome to the latest edition of Spotlight brought to you by Essex Blind Charity. We hope you will find articles that are informative and of interest to you and that you will share these with other visually impaired people and their carers. Everyone who is newly registered in Essex will receive a copy of Spotlight and they can request their own copy in large print format, on tape or memory stick or by email. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide Braille copies.

Now the days are starting to draw out we are looking forward to Spring and being able to get outside more. If you are planning your summer activities take a look at the article on the east Anglian Sailing Trust. Our volunteer Darren has written an inspiring account of his experience with them. If you prefer something more cerebral we have information on the RNIB writing competition or you could join one of our book groups.

As a change from Valentine's day our quiz this month focuses on St David's day. Will you be a Welsh wizard? Finally, many thanks to Michelle for her first hand experience of using the latest Seeing AI App.

Jill

# Community Support Team by Inez Davies



**Helpline Number 01206 548196**

Welcome 2018, it's going to be a great one! I see snowdrops and crocuses peeking their way through the ground, shaking off their lengthy slumber, stretching their leaves with gaping petalled yawns. Hello! Spring is coming! and edges my days with excitement of new growth and what's to come next. I feel being part of Essex Sight, is going to be full of new shoots of growth, colour and incredible collectiveness.

I am settling into my new role and soon I won't be saying, new. I'm really getting to know our trusted team of volunteers and staff and have very nearly visited all our sight centres. I want to take this opportunity to publicly express my sincere thanks and gratitude to all, your commitment, enthusiasm and incredible dedication is obvious. Everyone has made me feel very welcome and treated me with warmth and kindness.

We have 2 long-standing volunteers, Barbara Harrison and Rosemary Johnson, who offer information, advice and tons of emotional support to Visually Impaired People attending eye clinics at St Margaret's Hospital, Epping. They are certainly the Lone Rangers in the West for Essex Sight. My mission is to encourage better connectivity to our Community Support Team, sight centres and offer them a sense of comradeship with our band of fellow volunteers. Barbara and Rosemary have been offering amazing attention to patients in crowded waiting areas at outpatient eye clinics at the hospital, signposting local services, providing advice and a much-needed listening ear for reassurance. They are friendly faces greeting anxious patients when often uncertainty lies ahead or when trying to process information about their eye conditions and prognosis. I am so impressed by their work and their attitudes to make a positive difference to patients' lives which they do with such dedication. They are both unbelievable assets to our charity as are all our volunteers. Thank you, Barbara and Rosemary, for giving up your time every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month at St Margaret's eye clinic, outpatients!

My short journey around our services, made me realise that our workforce has remarkable diversity and variety. Staff and Volunteers come from

many walks of life; visually impaired people, professionals, carers, students. You, your partner, friends or family could be reading this, and you might even have had the notion to get involved in community work, wanting to link your passion and never been quite sure of what opportunities are out there? Who knows, perhaps a new volunteer role for you at Essex Sight may fit the bill? We are always looking to recruit new volunteers with some time to spare, if you fancied a challenge.

### **New Befriending Service**

In fact, I have some exciting news to tell you about. We recently secured some funds from iBCF (Intelligent Better Care Fund), a combination of Health and Social Care funding. A key element of our submission to this fund, is to trial some innovative volunteer befriending. Essex Sight has been instrumental in providing home-visiting befriending and continues to offer support at home if required, to complete Attendance Allowance forms, mainly through the wonderful work that Agnes and John our volunteers provide. We would like to reconsider our original home-visiting befriending with an added twist by volunteer befrienders visiting people in their homes and establishing local champions who become 'real' friends. Volunteer befrienders can create friendships that will go beyond the connection of a volunteer. We can match up people with a common interest or who live close by, who are thoughtful and caring and looking for a reciprocal friendship. In addition, we would like to expand on this by offering digital befriending, where a befriender can regularly phone, skype or facetime the VIP for ongoing support – we don't know what this will look like but are very willing to test new waters. We would like to specifically help people who are particularly vulnerable, isolated and perhaps lonely. So, if you know of anyone, please contact me for a chat. I am waiting for that telephone line to be smoking with the heat generated from interested callers!

### **Thank you**

We welcomed several donations over Christmas and New Year, totalling an unbelievable £830, which will be put to good use whether it be equipment to demonstrate or perhaps excursions for VIP and Volunteers. Thank you all who donated, your generosity is overwhelming! We are currently re-vamping our website and wanted to ask if you would be in favour of having your name on our website as a donor? Your feedback is invaluable, so please feel free to chat with one of our team

## Team news

Christine Pratt and Denise Sanders are our qualified ECLOs (Eye Clinic Liaison Officers) who both carry out home visits; give emotional support, information and advice on various subjects and help with registration as sight impaired. They can also signpost and refer to other agencies, promote the importance of eye health and provide important links by bridging health, community and social care. Equally, they can work and support families and carers. Christine is often found at Eye Clinic waiting rooms at Essex County Hospital and Clacton Hospital. She has worked hard at becoming recognised as an ECLO by recently establishing an Honorary Contract with the Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust. This will allow her to work closer with Hospital staff and create a better eye clinic patient pathway through hospital and community support. Quite an achievement and one which we hope to mirror in Mid Essex at Broomfield Hospital.

We have a desire for all our staff to be ECLO trained as a matter of course and feel, we should all be working with an 'ECLO' approach, supporting people in a holistic, all-inclusive manner. Carol Massey and myself are next on the ECLO training hit list and we will let you know how we get on.

Jill is whizzing about Mid Essex, flying the Essex Sight banner at her regular drop-ins at several libraries; Chelmsford, Maldon, Braintree, Brentwood and carries out a supportive function for patients attending the low vision clinic at Broomfield Hospital, run by Sara Porter one of our trustees. Jill gives advice on equipment and lighting and is always stocked up with helpful gadgets and a listening ear.

Carol continues to keep our sight centre at Colchester well stocked with equipment and tea! And is always a friendly face to guide VIP through various pieces of technology and offer them reassurance, face to face or on our helpline. I can feel the energy in our Team of volunteers and staff and think, what a force to be reckoned with. Even if we don't have all the answers, we will find someone who has!

I know that there will be many challenges ahead, especially around funding but feel hopeful and energised, that we will develop a stronger, further reaching service over the next few years and that I will still have my bare-backed horse rider in my thoughts about inclusion.

*"Life is not about waiting for the storm to pass but learning how to dance in the rain"* Anon.

So, I'm off for a twirl and a splash in the puddles!

## **Colchester Sight Centre by Carol Massey**



A belated Happy New Year to everyone. I hope you all had a lovely Christmas.

One of the nicest things about working in the Sight Centre is knowing that you have helped someone, whether it be accessing services, making them aware of any financial help they are entitled to, or just chatting over a cup of tea at our coffee morning. There is a lot of information and resources available for the blind and visually impaired, so please do either pop in or call us. If we don't know the answer, then we can probably find someone who does!

### **RNIB On-Line Today Workshop – Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February**

Don't know your apps from your email? Would you like to get on-line and surf the web? Want to Skype your family in far flung countries?

The RNIB will be in the Sight Centre with iPhones and tablets to show you how to make the most of the internet. This is a real hands-on workshop and you will be able to try out these gadgets with friendly staff and volunteers on hand to help.

We still have some places available, so if you are interested, please contact me as soon as possible. The workshop is free and our Sight Centre is wheelchair accessible.

### **Donated and ex-demo equipment**

We have various ex-demo lights and some donated equipment available at low cost, together with a selection of non-LED light bulbs. These are low energy, daylight bulbs in different wattage. Most are screw-in, but there are a few bayonet also. The light bulbs are priced at £1.50 or £2.

### **Knitting Group**

Our friendly knitting group is looking for new members. We knit (a little) and chat (a lot) and you are assured of a friendly welcome to the group. We knit twiddlemuffs and squares for blankets, or you can do your own project if you prefer. Large print patterns, magnifiers and lights are available to help find those dropped stitches. The group meets the first Thursday of each month, 10am – 12noon. All abilities are welcome.

## Colchester Sight Centre Activities

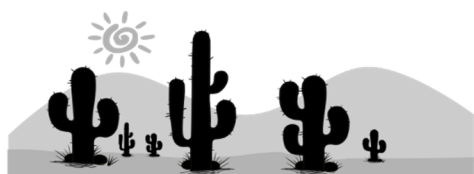
### **Weekly**

Tuesdays	10am-12	Coffee Morning IPad/iPhone sessions (by appointment only)
Wednesdays	10am-12	Correspondence Reading

### **Monthly**

1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday	10am-12n	Knitting Group
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## News from the Midwest by Jill Shakespear



**Braintree      Brentwood**  
**Chelmsford      Maldon**

Everyone has returned refreshed with ideas and plans for the New year. We will be holding demonstration days with Enhanced Vision along with Dolphin computers or Calibre library at Chelmsford, Maldon and Brentwood libraries in May, more details to follow in the April Spotlight.

### Braintree volunteers

We are very sad to say goodbye to Barbara and Jim, two of our volunteers at Braintree Sight Centre who are retiring after over 10 years of service for us. They joined us very soon after we set up the Sight Centre in 2006 in the old Community Hall in Braintree. Barbara has Macular Degeneration herself and has given her understanding support to many worried visitors to the centre. Jim has also been very helpful especially when we moved from the community hall into the library. We wish them all the best for the future, although I know they will still be busy as Barbara also does a lot of work for Guide Dogs.

### Book groups

In February, Brentwood are going for the traditional theme of Valentines day, but with a sinister twist. The Braintree group have decided on a change this month and instead of a theme are reading books from a single author local Essex lady Jojo Moyes. Jojo has written a wide range of books,



the most well know probably being Me Before You which was made into a hit film in 2016.

We are also reading some Muriel Spark to celebrate the centenary of her birth on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1918. Famous for The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie – “Give me a girl at an impressionable age and she is mine for life” - she also wrote several other books and poems.

New members are always welcome at our book groups, just turn up on the day.

### **Ingatestone Library Book Group**

If you live in Ingatestone you might like to join the library audio book group. The group has been going for around 7 years and are now looking for new members. Each month they get in a large selection of audio books and someone reads the synopsis to the group members who each borrow around 6 audio books. The following month they come back and either recommend them to the others or say what they disliked.

If you would like to go to the next meeting it is being run on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February from 10.30-11.30. Contact Carole Slade at Ingatestone Library for more information. Tel: 033301 32674

Upcoming dates for the sight centres are:

Braintree: 21<sup>st</sup> February and March

Brentwood: 12<sup>th</sup> February and March

Maldon: 6<sup>th</sup> February and March and 3<sup>rd</sup> April

Chelmsford: every Friday

### **Tendring Talks by Denise Sanders**



**Brightlingsea Clacton  
Harwich Manningtree**

## **CLACTON SIGHT CENTRE**

It was lovely to see everyone eating, drinking and being merry at our Christmas Buffet in December. Thank you to Chris for his somewhat difficult Christmas Quiz and well done to John and Agnes and to Jeanette for doing so well. I will have to learn the names of all the reindeer by next year!

Unfortunately, some of you have started off the New Year in poor health with these nasty viruses doing the rounds, and some admissions to hospital. We hope people get better soon and that they can attend Thursday afternoons at Cadows again soon.

Wishing Nigel good luck for his day of sailing. Nigel has said that he will write an article for Spotlight following his adventure and we look forward to reading this.

### **Clacton Macular Society**

Just a reminder that everyone is most welcome at Clacton Macular Society; those living with macular disease or indeed living with a different eye condition. The group leader is Peter Bareham, tel: 01255 430386. The group meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month (excluding December) in Sam's Hall, Rosemary Road, Clacton, CO15 1NX.

Upcoming dates for the sight centres are:

Brightlingsea	Wednesday 21 <sup>st</sup> March 10am – 12.30pm
Clacton	Every Thursday 1 pm - 3.30 pm
Harwich	Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup> April 10am – 1pm
Manningtree	Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> March 9.30 am - 12.30 pm

## **Hospital Eye Clinics by Christine – Sight Loss Advisor**

I am very pleased to have finally reached a more formal arrangement with Colchester Hospital University Trust and have now signed an Honorary Contract to work as their ECLO. This should allow me to follow up on patient enquiries much more quickly and work more efficiently to support people in the eye clinic. I can usually be found at Essex County on

Wednesdays although this may change when the eye clinic relocates to the General Hospital sight later in the year.

Following on from this we are in the process of signing similar contracts at Broomfield to provide an interim ECLO service on a Monday while we sort out a longer term more permanent arrangement to support their clinic patients.

If you would like information on an eye condition or some support from me I can be contacted on 01206 548196 or 07770 750108, please leave me a message if I am unavailable.

## **Read House, Frinton on Sea by Janet Plant**



Read House is the residential care home run by Essex Blind Charity in Frinton on Sea. The home specialises in the care of elderly people with sight problems. We offer permanent and respite care (short breaks) by staff who have all been trained in visual awareness. The Home is situated on the seafront at Frinton on Sea, a short distance from the town centre with its friendly local shops.

If you would like to find out more about Read House or to receive our Information Pack, please contact me or Sandra on 01255 673654. We are more than happy to show you round at any time to suit you.

The Christmas festivities now seem a long time ago, but all our residents, including those who joined us for a short break over the Christmas period, had a lovely time with presents, good food (and drink!) and lots of activities. We were pleased to welcome a lot of new clients for a short break as well as some new residents who have now joined us on a permanent basis.

We are now starting to plan our activities for the forthcoming year. We have a regular programme of daily activities, mostly decided by the residents themselves at their monthly meetings. But we like to include some extra special events, like another visit from Gemma's Farm as well as a variety of visiting entertainers. Our residents enjoyed a visit to the theatre for a Christmas Spectacular, so we are planning another theatre trip in the summer.

We are now taking bookings from clubs or groups who are planning their summer outings. Our day centre is separate from the care home, with its own accessible entry, and with access to our garden. The room is generally available on Tuesdays and Fridays. If your group is planning any day trips this year and you would like information about what we can offer please contact us for details – 01255 673654 or email [sandra@essexblind.co.uk](mailto:sandra@essexblind.co.uk).

## **Quiz for St David's Day (March 1<sup>st</sup>)**

1. What is the national flower of Wales?
2. What did the Romans call Wales?
3. What is the capital of Wales?
4. What is the name of the Italian style village in north Wales where the cult TV series The Prisoner was filmed?
5. What is the Welsh national Anthem?
6. What is the highest mountain in Wales?
7. What moved from Tower Hill, London to Llantrisant in Wales in 1968?
8. At which castle was prince Charles made Prince of Wales?
9. What is the seaweed delicacy fried with bacon and eaten at breakfast?
10. What is the name of the annual festival for music and the arts held in August?

# Technology

## **App of the month – Seeing AI Reviewed by Michelle**

Seeing AI is Microsoft's new revolutionary free app for the iPhone and iPad. It is actually 9 apps in one. When you first open the app your device's rear facing camera is activated showing you a full screen image of what its looking at. At the bottom of the screen is a line of large white icons which you scroll through left to right to activate each function. It doesn't matter if you can't read them, the app has its own speech software which announces each icon as it is highlighted. The app always opens with the Short Text icon highlighted. The 9 functions are: Short Text, Document, Product, Person, Currency Preview, Scene Preview, Colour Preview, Hand Writing Preview and Light. The functions marked as Preview are still being perfected although they already work well.

### **SHORT TEXT**

Hold the device up to any short piece of text, a sign or notice and it will instantly read it aloud. You don't have to be close to the text. I read a road sign from the other side of the road. It doesn't cope well with moving text such as an approaching bus or dot matrix scrolling text. Personally, I think this is the app's best function and the one I have used the most.

### **DOCUMENT**

You can scan a longer piece of text and either magnify it, or use the app or Voice Over to read it aloud, although only Voice Over will let you skip back and forth through the text, the app just reads it from beginning to end. You can save and share the text in the usual way to many formats. I have used this function to read a basic menu and it was reasonably accurate. People with little or no sight find it very difficult to line the camera up with the text as it has to be held some distance away and be able to see the whole page, but audible instructions tell you if it's not lined up correctly. Once it is satisfied it will automatically scan the text and play a tone to let you know it's doing something.

### **PRODUCT**

Unlike other barcode reading apps this one doesn't require you to know where the barcode is located on the product. By carefully scanning the product with the camera a series of beeps increases when you get close.

Once the barcode has been located it will automatically scan it and read the information aloud.

## **PERSON**

In this function the app looks for facial features in the environment to detect if a person is near you. You can add people to the App's database for future recognition. There is a function to guess a person's age, gender and facial expression which is at best fun and at worst embarrassing as it is very inaccurate.

## **CURRENCY PREVIEW**

Simply identifies bank notes: Euros, Dollars and Pounds.

## **SCENE PREVIEW**

This function will try and describe what is in the environment around you. It is not as accurate as TapTapSee as its database isn't as extensive, but as it is still in preview, I think this will improve.

## **COLOUR PREVIEW**

As with the short text function you get an instant announcement of the colour directly in front of the camera. Accuracy is comparable with an older Cobolt Colour Detector but as you don't have to rest the camera directly onto the object your scanning it will detect multicoloured objects such as cushions and clothing.

## **HANDWRITING PREVIEW**

To my knowledge this is the first app that can read hand writing. I managed to read a Christmas card with some success - "Reasons Greetings", but there was other writing it couldn't read.

## **LIGHT**

The higher the tone the more light there is in your environment. Good for when the kids or a visitor leaves the light on.

You need an internet connection for processing documents, people and barcodes and the processing speed depends on your internet speed. Personally, I wouldn't scan sensitive or private documents. Considering the cost of the half a dozen gadgets you would need to perform the same functions as this free app its very impressive and will only improve with each update.

## Entertainment

Don't look now -thrillers are the order of the day at our local theatres this winter. Here's a round-up of the audio described performances:

### Mercury Theatre Colchester

The next audio described performance is for the classic ghost story by Henry James, Turn of the Screw on Saturday 10th March, 2.30pm (Touch Tour at 1pm). Set in 1840, a young governess agrees to look after two orphaned children in Bly, a seemingly idyllic country house. But shortly after her arrival, she realises that they are not alone. There are others – the ghosts of Bly's troubled past. The Governess will risk everything to keep the children safe, even if it means giving herself up to The Others. Decades later, confronted by the past she is compelled to revisit the terrifying events of 1840 and account for what actually happened to her and the innocents under her protection.

Ticket Sales 01206 573948 or email [access@mercurytheatre.co.uk](mailto:access@mercurytheatre.co.uk)

### Queens Theatre Hornchurch

Rope by Patrick Hamilton from 15<sup>th</sup> February to 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Audio description is available for all performances. Call the theatre to find out about touch tours.

Two well-bred young men murder a fellow Oxford student just for the fun of it. Placing the corpse in a wooden box, they invite a group of friends over to their Mayfair apartment – including the loving mother of the boy they've just killed. Supper is served on the chest holding the gruesome contents. But one of their guests is starting to become suspicious...

Will this daring pair get away with their cat and mouse games?

Based on a 1920's real-life case, this dark classic, brilliantly evoking a jazz age generation, was filmed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1948 and remains to this day one of the most tightly coiled of thrillers.

Ticket sales 01708 443333 or email [access@queens-theatre.co.uk](mailto:access@queens-theatre.co.uk)

### The Docklands at War gallery, Museum of London Docklands

- **Date:** Wednesday 14 March 2018
- **Time:** 2:00 pm
- **Ticket price:** Free but booking essential

Blind and partially sighted visitors can experience a 60-90 minute audio described tour of the Docklands at War gallery. Discover the turbulent events of the Second World War, when the docks were almost destroyed during the Blitz, with a trained guide for blind and partially sighted visitors.

Please note that blind and partially sighted visitors only need to book tickets for themselves and are welcome to bring a friend or carer.  
Box office 020 7001 9844

## **Activities**

### **YACHT SAILING FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED PEOPLE**

Ever thought about sailing? East Anglian Sailing Trust has skippers and sighted crew ready to take you aboard. Here is a personal account of the experience from our volunteer Darren:

A sailor's life for me seemed quite improbable this time last year. I clearly recall tuning into the Discovery channel and becoming inspired hearing about the wonderful adventures others were enjoying. After rationalising my exuberance about climbing mountains or walking along the Great Wall of China, I came to my senses and took a more amenable approach. Both Essex and Suffolk are blessed with numerous bodies of water, rivers and an intriguing coastline. Instinctively, exploring the regions waterways became my focus. And with a simple internet search, I unearthed the East Anglian Sailing Trust (EAST) based at the Suffolk Yacht Harbour in Levington near Ipswich.

Although not necessary, I decided to become a full member as it gave me access to the first draft of sailing dates. Having completed the EAST application form and health questionnaire, which is designed to both inform and identify how EAST can best achieve the most inclusive experience for you, it then seemed sensible to go along for one of the free taster sailing days to test the waters. This took place on a beautiful spring day in May. My skipper met me at Ipswich train station as arranged and kindly drove me to the Suffolk Yacht Harbour in Levington. Once there, I was warmly greeted by the cruise coordinator and our other crew members. It was all very friendly and I was really encouraged by the high level of disability awareness. They all addressed me by name so I knew they were talking to me and they kept me informed about what was happening each step of the way. It was never rushed but always thorough. No assumptions were made but help was always on offer. With my buoyancy aid checked to ensure I had correctly fitted it, we began the few minutes' walk down to the pontoon.

Safely guided into position at the side of the yacht, I used the hand rail to aid me in taking a high step up and aboard. With a bit more shuffling and guidance, I edged my way along the side of the yacht and



was offered a helping hand to step down and then down again to take a seat on deck. Before too long, I was being given a touch tour and descriptions of what was out of reach but equally useful to know. This continued below deck likewise, where both coffee and more orientation were plentiful. The most humorous discovery being the marine toilet. A manual pump action facility you inevitably learn to respect!

Soon enough I was back upstairs on deck and offered opportunities to be involved with preparing to set sail. They were basic jobs such as retrieving fenders and stowing them away. Plus, the chance to release, haul, or coil up rope as instructed. The sun beamed and so did I. None more so than when I later got the chance to take the helm and use the on-board audio compass to steer a course. This was achieved by turning the helm either to port or starboard depending on whether I heard a low or higher pitched beep generated by the audio compass. This was an enjoyable challenge trying not to either under or over steer and felt good when I managed to keep the audio compass quiet, which demonstrated I was keeping the yacht on a true course – in varying bursts! The skipper was a generous host, and with the assistance of the other two sighted crew members, there was a hearty array of food being consumed whilst the helming duties were shared. It all made for a superb days sailing down the river Orwell and out into the North Sea – just as I had imagined it during those cold winter months awaiting this now fulfilled adventure.

I hasten to say that this was the first of three sailing experiences with EAST during 2017. It was followed up by me going back again a few weeks later upon a different yacht for two nights on board cruise. Where following a delicious dinner in the Waterside Community Centre ashore, we later climbed aboard the yacht and settled down for the night. Although not before listening to a cracking thunder storm and the sound of rain drops making unfamiliar noises as they coalesced and hit various parts of the yacht. The second night was in stark contrast. We arrived at Titchmarsh near Walton-on-the-Naze in sunny conditions and indulged in a sumptuous barbeque.

The third of my sailing trips last season was on board a Keelboat. This being a much more basic boat with bench seats, a tiller, and no audio compass. Nor a marine toilet! The technique here being to keep the wind or air flow direction pressing against you in the same spot to try to hold a course. This was great fun and the fact that the boat is sat much lower in the water, really gives a stronger sense of speed. Similarly, using a tiller to steer gave an enhanced connection to the water and the forces acting upon it. Unlike the visually impaired cruising on board the yachts, the Keelboat sailing is offered to a wide-ranging demographic. This is

down to the Keelboats being a simple and open design. Therefore, wheelchair users can be accommodated on board using their shore side lifting hoists to great effect.

It should also be noted that the safety element employed during all three of my sailing trips was reassuring and never underestimated. Everyone wears a buoyancy aid. All boats have a VHF communication radio and safety equipment on board. Plus, the ratio of crew on board and the presence of other EAST boats and safety vessels sailing in close proximity was impressive.

INTERESTED, WANT MORE INFORMATION?

Contact: Trevor Williams      Mobile: 0787 290 7719

Email: [anneandtrevor@hotmail.com](mailto:anneandtrevor@hotmail.com)

Visit our website [www.e-a-s-t.org.uk](http://www.e-a-s-t.org.uk).      EAST is a registered charity. Our VI Cruising Chairman Simon Daws, who is VI, would be very happy to talk to anybody with questions or in need of reassurance -

Mobile: 07749 714361

#### 2018 VI Cruise Dates

- Push the Boat Out taster days: Wed 16th May -Saturday 19th May (Cost: Free)
- May Weekend Cruise: Friday 11th May - Monday 14th May (Cost: £75 plus £6 weekend membership)
- June Taster Cruise: Friday 1st June - Sunday 3rd June (Cost: £50 plus £6 weekend membership)

Sailing is on a variety of yachts from 30' to 40' in length.

All EAST crews are volunteers and skippers are not paid for the use of their boats.

VI crew can attend as individuals or a group (limited numbers). They need to be active and physically able to move on a boat. Sorry, 18 years + only. We cannot accommodate guide dogs.

## **Tandem Cycling**

Have you ever wanted to try tandem cycling but don't know anyone with a tandem? There is a charity called Charlotte's Tandems that can loan one out free to people with a disability. For more information and an application form see the website: <http://www.charlottestandems.co.uk/>

## **RNIB Writing Competition**

The theme for RNIB's 2018 writing competition is "Connections". We make different kinds of connections every day, whether we are rushing to change trains or connecting with others in our community. Some might say that through technology, we are more connected than ever before. Get your creative juices flowing on the theme of "Connections" in either 1,000 words of prose or 30 lines of poetry. Prose entries can be fiction, non-fiction or drama.

A panel of expert judges will select a winner and two runners-up in both categories, who will each have their entries read and recorded by professional Talking Book narrators.

You can enter in any format: audio, word document or hard copy, hand written or preferably typed on A4 paper or in braille. Whichever format you choose, make sure your entry clearly states your name, address and phone number.

The deadline for entries is 9 am on Monday 5 March 2018.

To submit your entries, email [writingcomp@rnib.org.uk](mailto:writingcomp@rnib.org.uk) or post it to: RNIB Members Writing Competition, Talk and Support, 105 Judd Street, London WC1H 9NE.

For more information and full terms, contact Talk and Support on 0207 391 2218 or email [writingcomp@rnib.org.uk](mailto:writingcomp@rnib.org.uk).

## **Living Paintings**

Have you ever tried the Living Painting service? This is a fun thing to do as a group activity or you can join as an individual. The service is completely free; books are sent through the post by articles for the blind. The group books contain 2-3 raised images, with 10 copies of each one, a CD with audio description, guidance notes with a copy of the script, plus ideas for running a group session. They also include colour copies of the pictures, for those with some sight. The audio description takes you through a journey and describes the raised picture in detail. At present there is a range of 34 titles, examples of these are:

- Whistle stop tour of Scotland
- At the Theatre
- The Blitz

- Famous Teddy Bears
- A Walk Along a River Bank
- Ocean Odyssey
- Mysterious Women

If any group facilitator would like to try out one of our group books, they can register as a member of the library and receive a Touch to See Book Club book within a week. Books can be borrowed for up to 3 months and there is no charge at all for this service.

If any-one would like to join the Living Paintings library as an individual, this is also possible. Please call the Living Paintings office on 01635 299771. Website: [www.livingpaintings.org](http://www.livingpaintings.org)

## **Answers to quiz**

1. daffodil
2. Cambria
3. Cardiff
4. Portmeirion
5. Land of my Fathers
6. Mount Snowdon
7. The Royal Mint
8. Caernarfon
9. Laverbread
10. Eisteddfod

## Contact details

Helpline and office 01206 548196  
(Inez Davies, Jill Shakespear, Carol Massey, Denise Sanders)

Christine Pratt (Colchester + Tendring hospitals) 07770 750108

Read House 01255 673654  
(Janet Plant, General Manager, Sandra Edwards, Admin Assistant)

Essex Blind Charity produces and distributes Spotlight free of charge. However donations in time or money are always welcome. If you are a UK taxpayer please consider filling in our gift aid form so we can claim back the tax paid on your donation, thereby allowing us to make even better use of your donation.

If you are writing or redrafting your will please consider leaving us a gift. Your support will enable us to continue to provide and develop the services we provide for people with sight loss throughout Essex. Thank you.

## Gift Aid Declaration

**On behalf of Essex Blind Charity  
Registered Charity No. 1103732**

The Gift Aid Scheme enables charities to make more of your donation by reclaiming the tax you have already paid. In order for us to make this claim on your donation(s) please complete this form and return it as soon as possible

***Thank you!***

**Please treat the enclosed gift of £.....as a Gift Aid donation.**

I confirm that I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for the current tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for the current tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I have given.

Title.....Forename(s).....Surname.....  
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**I would like Essex Blind Charity to treat all donations I have made since 1 July 2012 as Gift Aid donations until I notify them otherwise.**

Signature..... Date.....

Please return your completed form to:  
Essex Blind Charity  
Read House, 23 The Esplanade  
Frinton on Sea, Essex CO13 9AU.

If you are not already on our mailing list for 'Spotlight' and would like to receive a regular copy, please complete the form below and return it to Carol Massey at Essex Sight, 40 Osborne Street, Colchester CO2 7DB

Name.....

Address.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Tel.....

How would you prefer to receive your copy?

Large Print..... Cassette Tape..... Memory Stick.....

Email.....

We would like to add your contact details to our database so that we may from time to time send you details of developments to our services, events taking place in your area and other information we feel may be of interest to you.

If you would prefer us not to do so, please tick here.....

We will not pass your details to anyone else without your permission.

**You may request us to remove your details from our database at any time.**

# Essex Sight Centres

## **Braintree**

Braintree Library, Fairfield Road  
Braintree CM7 3YL  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month  
10 am to 1pm

## **Colchester**

40 Osborne Street  
Colchester CO2 7ND  
Open Monday to Friday  
10 am to 2 pm  
Wednesday late opening to 4pm

## **Brentwood**

Brentwood Library, New Road  
Brentwood CM14 4BP  
2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of each month  
10 am to 1 pm

## **Frinton on Sea**

Read House, 23 The Esplanade  
Frinton on Sea, CO13 9AU  
Mon-Fri. 1pm to 4.30 pm  
(by appointment – tel. 01255 673654)

## **Brightlingsea**

Brightlingsea Library, New Street  
Brightlingsea CO7 0BZ  
3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday alternate months  
10 am to 12.30 pm

## **Harwich**

Harwich Library, Upper Kingsway  
Dovercourt CO12 3JT  
2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday alternate months  
10 am to 1 pm

## **Chelmsford**

Chelmsford Library, Market Road  
Chelmsford CM1 1LH  
Every Friday  
10 am to 2 pm

## **Maldon**

Maldon Library, Carmelite House,  
White Horse Lane  
Maldon, CM9 5FW  
1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of each month  
10am to 1pm

## **Clacton-on-Sea**

CADOWs, Old Road  
Clacton on Sea CO15 1HX  
Every Thursday  
1 pm to 3.30 pm

## **Manningtree**

Manningtree Library, High Street  
Manningtree, CO11 1AD  
4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday alternate months  
9.30 am to 12.30 pm

**For more information contact Essex Sight Office on 01206 548196.**

**Email: [services@essexblind.co.uk](mailto:services@essexblind.co.uk)**

**For information about permanent or respite residential care, contact:**

**General Manager at Read House, Janet Plant: on 01255 673654**

**Email: [janet@essexblind.co.uk](mailto:janet@essexblind.co.uk)**