

Walsall Society for the Blind

**Your clear path
to sight loss
support**



**2014 - 2015
Year in Review
Edition 110**

Annual Report

and Summary Financial Statements 2014/2015

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Officers and Members

President: Sir J. A. Hawley KCVO, K.St.J,TD,JP,MA

Vice Presidents The Worshipful The Mayor of Walsall
Peter Smith, The Lord Bishop of
Lichfield, The Rt. Reverend J. Gledhill,
D. J. Mace, D. I. Pepper FCA,
M. L. Griffiths

Chairman J. H. Cooke JP
Vice Chairman D. Smith
Treasurer J. Whitehouse
Chief Executive A. J. Reed

Members *S. Ahmed, M. L. Stanley, *R. Thompson,
*J. E. Harris, *K. Merchant, R. Meere,
C. J. Hawley, MA,ACMA, *I. Pearson.
WALSALL METROPOLITAN BOROUGH
COUNCIL, Councillors: R. Martin (resigned
15.04.2014), T. Jukes, S. Harris
(Education) S. Wood (Adult Social Care)

Board of Directors Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer,
M. L. Stanley, R. Meere, *R. Thompson,
*J. Harris, *Dr. M. Hodgson, A. M. Elliot,
*E. Smith

Joint Management Committee Centre for the Blind and Partially Sighted
J. H. Cooke, M. L. Stanley, K. L. Andrews
Councillors: R. Martin, T. Jukes

Auditors Bakers
Bankers HSBC Plc
Investment Advisors EFG Harris Allday

*Visually Impaired Person

Mission Statement

Founded in 1885, The Mission of Walsall Society for the Blind is to provide information, support and friendship to all visually impaired people in the Borough of Walsall. The Society serves 1,581 Blind and Partially Sighted people resident in the Walsall Metropolitan Borough, to whom we offer the following:

Charitable Services

Social Activities Centre - Offering over 140 places per week
Community Officer - Offering information, advice and home visits
Resource Base - Offering information, equipment and training
Transcription Service - Provision of alternate formats
Talking Newspaper and Magazine Service - Audio entertainment

Contracted Services

Eye Clinic Liaison Service - Based at Walsall Manor Hospital
Registration Officer - Offering information, advice and support

Staff Positions

Chief Executive Officer	Amanda Reed
Personal Assistant to CEO	Jayne Jones
Finance Officer	Sue Thompson
Community Officer	Dilys Chrabaszcz
Social Activity Centre Co-ordinator	Jackie Wilkinson, Joanne Grinsted, Janet Humphreys
Talking Services Manager	Keith Corbett
Registration & Community Eng. Officer	Les White
Befriending & Ops. Support Officer	Claire Evans
WTN Engineer	Barry Moseley
Eye Clinic Liaison Officer	Janet Porter
Transport	Mark Simpson, Pete Wilkinson, Fran Grice
Domestic Assistant	Brian Grace
Brailist	Ruth Gibbons
Personal Assistant to ECLO	Jane Harris

Chief Executive Officer's Report

A year of up's and down's



After a successful 18 month pilot project, our Befriending contract came to an end in June 2014. We submitted a tender application for a new project, sadly losing out to a national charity.

The Befriending pilot had many positive outcomes, matching clients with befrienders, many friendships were formed. As the project ended, we were no longer able to make any further matches, however, most importantly as a volunteer led project, the support and friendships already in place continue into the future.

The creation of 2 new posts saw Claire Evans become Operational Support Officer, ensuring smooth service delivery and Les White became Community Engagement Officer, contacting clients, to ensure they are safe and well and aware of the services available.

Walsall Society for the Blind's minibus transport ceased as of the 1st July 2014, with the loss due to redundancy of our 2 drivers Mark Simpson and Pete Wilkinson.

Following the loss of our own transport, clients attending the centre continued to support us. We were approached by Ring & Ride who offered their help, as a replacement transport service. This involved many difficult changes for clients attending the centre, however things have greatly improved overtime and this has been thanks to the great help and assistance of Claire Evans, who organises and manages the Ring & Ride service at WSB.

Ring & Ride transport costs £1.00 per journey daytime and £2.00 per journey in the evening, costs are paid for by the client.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Our much loved Walsall Talking Newspaper (WTN) and Magazine Service continues to go from strength to strength. Going digital in 2011 opened up a world of material for staff and volunteers to work with. The Talking Newspaper now contains 3 hours of listening per week and the Magazine 12 hours of listening per month.

We have received notification of the termination of our Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) and Registration, Information and Liaison Service (RILS) contract. This is of grave concern, as this is our only and last remaining contract with our Local Authority, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council. We have submitted our Invitation To Tender documents for the contract, with the assistance of Helen Smith from Action For Blind People and now wait to see if we have been successful.

Throughout the year, we have had 2,787 enquiries at reception, dealt with 3,505 community cases, offered 2,390 day places and sent out 9,457 publications of our WTN and Magazine. These services were all made available through our charitable activities. We removed the attendance charge for the Social Activity Centre and have seen an increase in numbers of those attending over the year.

As the year came to an end, we were approached by the amazing Graeme Brookes, who said "I am walking from Walsall to Wembley in memory of my Grandfather Ronald Brookes and would like to raise money for Walsall Society for the Blind at the same time, would that be ok?" Wow, the rest is history, Graeme's fantastic achievement is recorded later on in this review, from page 28.

As always I wish to say a special thanks to all the staff, clients and volunteers who have supported the Society over the past year. Ensuring we continue to help and support those affected by sight loss, their families and carers across the Borough of Walsall.

Amanda

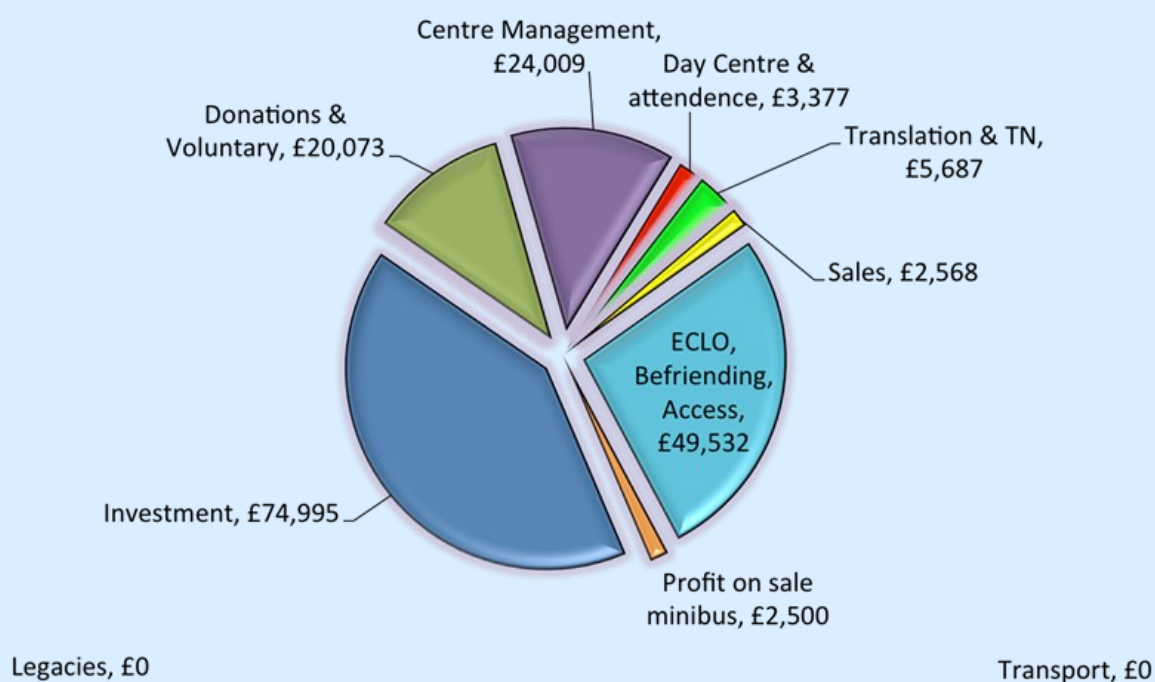
Treasurer's Report

I have pleasure in presenting the Annual Accounts of the Society.

Income

Our total income for the year was £182,953 compared with £243,445 last year. The reduction in income of £60,000 was due to the lower level of donations, legacies and grant income received.

Income by Source – year to 31 March 2015



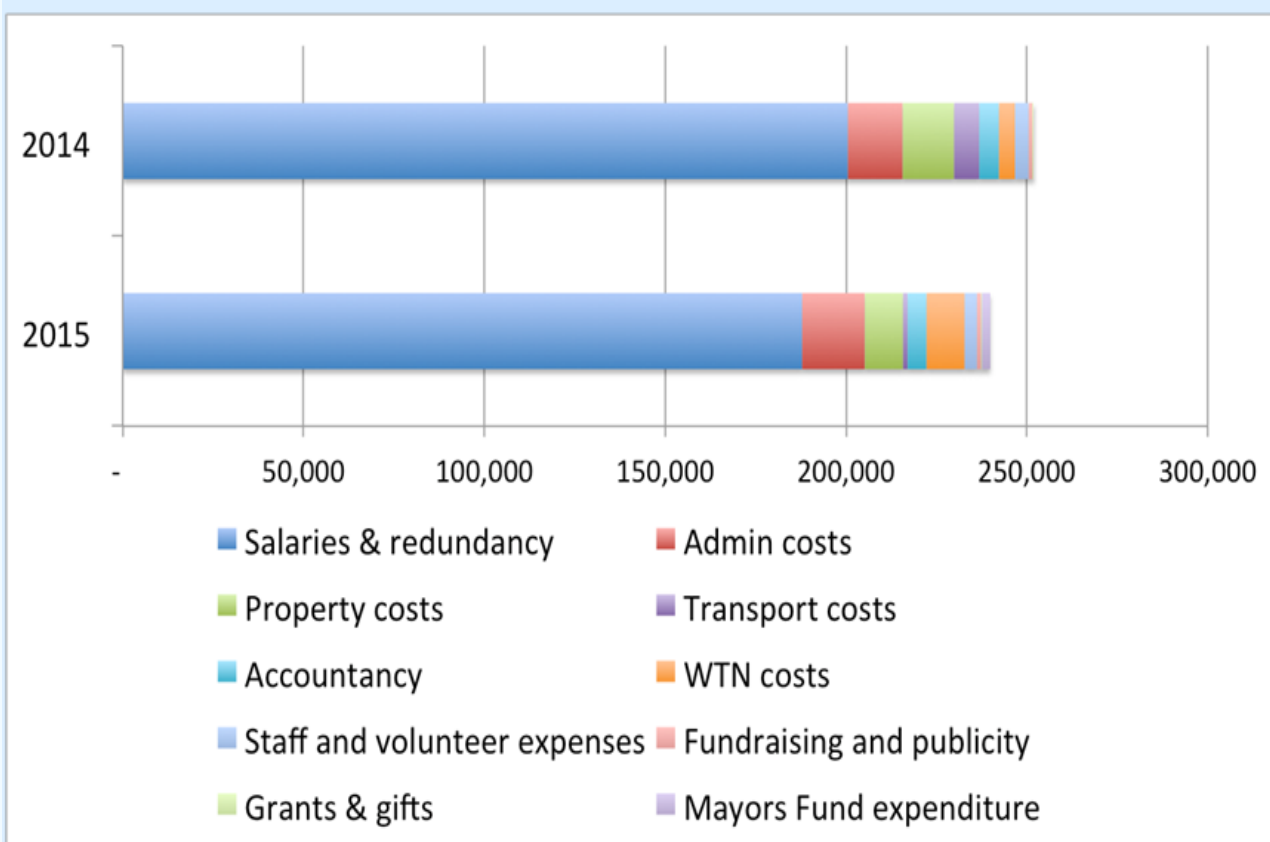
We wish to thank all who support the Society and the families of those who donate to us in memory of their loved ones. Thank you to Walsall Council for their support and we will work with them to try to secure funding for future years.

Treasurer's Report

Expenditure

Costs incurred this year were £243,529 compared with £255,029 in the prior year. Salaries form the largest share of our expenditure which has been reduced again, by nearly £20,000 compared with the prior year.

Expenditure by cost – year to 31 March 2015



Result for the year

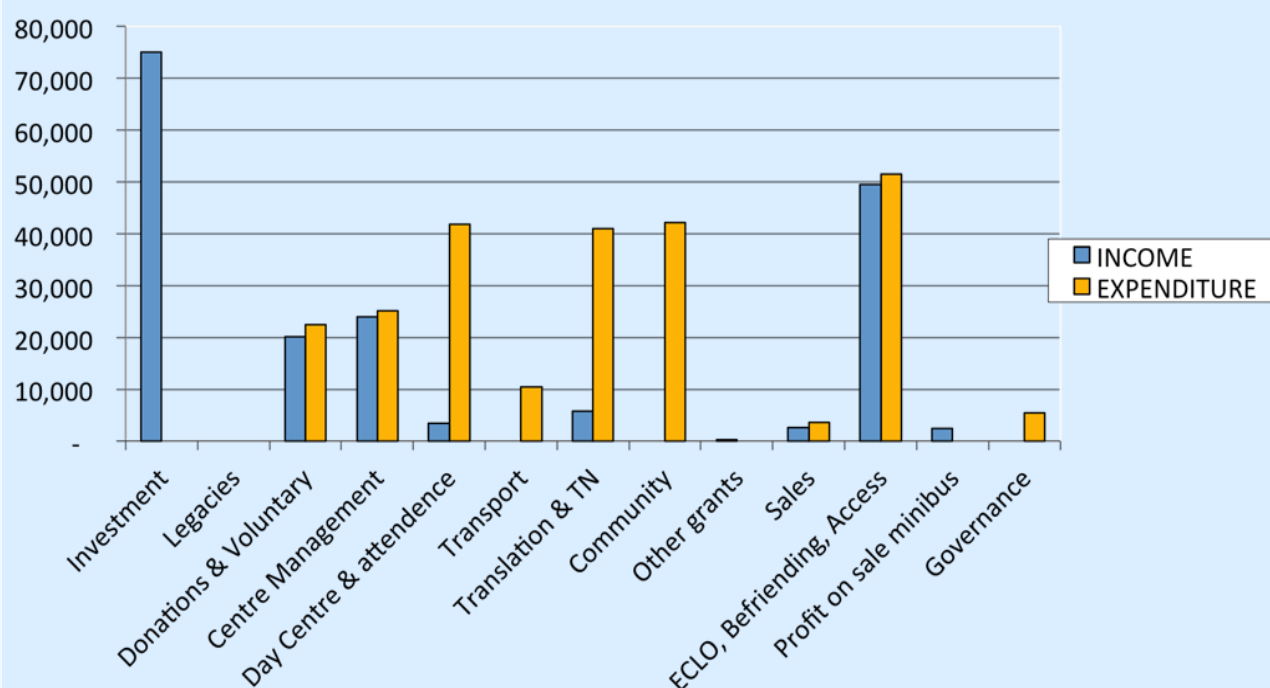
Once again, our expenditure exceeded our income by £60,576 compared with £11,584 last year.

Further cuts in grant and contract income for 2016 will make our coming year even more challenging.

Treasurer's Report

Our investment income, legacies and donations are used primarily to fund the Social Activities Centre, Transcription Service, Talking Newspaper and Magazine Service and the community support work the Society is able to offer to local residents. As we have seen, the level of legacies and general donations has not been sufficient to fully meet the costs of those activities this year, hence the deficit arising for the year.

Income & Expenditure – year to 31 March 2015



Society Assets

The cash and bank balances at the end of the year total £23,401 compared with £31,856 at the start of the year.

The investment income we receive each year is generated from our investment portfolio, managed by an independent broker.

Treasurer's Report

The investment income represents 41% of our annual income. Such income is becoming an increasing proportion of our total income as grants are withdrawn and general donations are on the decline.

The cost of our investments was consistent at £1.3 million and were valued at £2.0 million at the year end.

Society Reserves

We are required to hold sufficient funds to cover between 9 months and 2 years' costs at any time which we hold in a development fund, at £1.2 million.

Restricted funds for use by the Walsall Talking News, stand at £396.

Closing unrestricted funds for use by the Society, stand at £797,261.

Summary

Whilst there is a continued strain on funding, the Trustees believe the Society has sufficient funds to continue to support the visually impaired people of Walsall.

The Trustees also express thanks to the Chief Executive and her dedicated team who have managed to provide support in these challenging times.

A complete set of accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 is available from the Society in various formats, on request.

Jacqui

Statement of Financial Activities

Year to 31 March 2015

2015
£

2014
£

Incoming Resources

Voluntary income – donations	31,637	51,929
Legacies	0	9,904
Grants & contracts	73,753	107,402
Sale of living aids & equipment	2,568	2,549
Investment income	74,995	71,661
<u>Total Incoming Resources</u>	182,953	243,445

Resources Expended

Charitable activities	212,030	225,636
Fundraising trading expenditure	3,668	3,360
Cost of generating voluntary income	22,440	21,061
Governance costs	5,391	4,972
<u>Total Resources Expended</u>	243,529	255,029

Net outgoing/incoming resources	(60,576)	(11,584)
Realised and unrealised gains on investment assets	121,769	104,257
Net Movement of Funds	61,193	92,673
Fund balance transferred	(0)	(0)
Fund Balances at start of the year	1,936,831	1,844,158
<u>Fund Balances at end of the year</u>	1,998,024	1,936,831

Walsall Society for the Blind



Hearing the news that your vision is deteriorating, you have been diagnosed with an eye condition or you are in the process of becoming registered partially sighted or blind, can feel isolating and lonely.

You are not alone

Whenever you need us, our friendly team are here to answer any questions you may have, listen to any worries or concerns and offer you support and assistance. Emotionally you may feel angry, vulnerable, frustrated or confused at this time, we understand those fears and emotions.

Your clear path to sight loss support in Walsall

If you or someone you know is struggling with sight loss, there are many services available to ensure you are well informed, equipped and supported. Over the following pages are some of the services we offer at the Society and some of the possible steps you may take along the sight loss pathway. Whichever step you are at, please be assured that we are here to take each one with you.

Step 1

If you have noticed your vision has changed or you are having any problems with your sight, please make an appointment with an Optician or GP for an initial check up. If necessary they will make a referral for an appointment with a Hospital based Consultant Ophthalmologist.

Step 2

When you meet your Consultant, they will take you through your eye test and diagnosis and discuss if any further treatment or medications are required or if your sight is threatened. Dependant on your diagnosis, if you are eligible, the offer of certification as sight impaired (partially sighted) or severely sight impaired (blind), will be given to you by your Consultant.

Walsall Society for the Blind

Here for you

Step 3

If you are eligible for certification, the Consultant will complete an official certificate, this is called a **Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI)**. The CVI contains your name, date of birth, address, telephone number and most importantly your visual function and diagnosis.

The Consultant is the only person that can complete your certification. You cannot become registered as visually impaired without it.

A copy of your CVI will be kept in your medical notes, copies will also be sent to your GP, Moorfields Eye Hospital, Walsall Society for the Blind as your local Society and you will receive your own copy through the post.

Offering patients support at the point of diagnosis, in the Eye Clinic at Walsall Manor Hospital, is the Eye Clinic Liaison Officer (ECLO) Janet Porter.

Janet is available to provide emotional support, advocacy and practical information if required, for people coming to terms with news of their eye condition. This early intervention is crucial, as without it many people may leave the Hospital feeling alone, at an extremely confusing time, unaware of the support networks that are available to them. Janet will also provide information about the process of becoming registered as visually impaired.

**You can contact Janet at Walsall Manor
Hospital Eye Clinic on:**

01922 721172 Extension 4560



Walsall Society for the Blind

Here for you

Step 4

As your local blind Society, when we receive your CVI, our Registration Officer Les White will write to inform you of its receipt.

Being registered as blind or partially sighted is entirely your own decision. If you do choose to become registered you will receive your registration card, which will contain your unique registration number and if you are registered as blind or partially sighted.

Registration can entitle you to certain benefits and concessions such as TV license reductions, parking permits and travel passes and may also make it easier for you to access local services.

Les will contact you by telephone within 5 days, to ask if you would be interested in accessing any of the services we provide. They include our free Talking Newspaper and Magazine Service and our Social Activities Centre where you can enjoy crafts, bingo and quizzes or come along and meet new friends, it is free for you to attend and a warm welcome awaits.

You may feel at this point in time that you are not ready for any contact, advice or services. This again, is entirely your choice.

Les works closely with our Community Officer Dilys and the Sensory Support Team, (Visual Impairment Division of Social Services), you will be offered basic living skills training such as, mobility and kitchen skills. Every new registration in the Borough is automatically referred to Sensory Support and they will contact you in due course.

You can contact Les at the Society
on: 01922 627683



Walsall Society for the Blind

Here for you



Step 5

Offering a vast wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise is our Community Officer Dilys. Dilys offers emotional support, guidance and information to anyone affected by sight loss.

We realise visual impairment not only affects the individual, but their friends, families and carers can be greatly affected too, for any advice Dilys is here to speak with you.

Dilys is available to assist on a whole range of topics, including:

- * Welfare Benefits
- * Aids and equipment
- * Marking up of equipment
- * Adaptations
- * Signpost to relevant agencies and support groups
- * Social groups

If you would like any information, advice or just a chat about any concerns you may have, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

You can contact Dilys at the Society on:

01922 627683

Walsall Society for the Blind

Here for you

Walsall Talking News and Magazine Service

The Talking News service is free to all blind and partially sighted people within the Walsall Borough.

Our services include a weekly memory stick, packed with local community information, news and special features, it also contains the 'Peoples Friend' magazine and the BBC's publication of 'In Touch'.

Our monthly magazine goes out to all listeners and contains features from Country Living, Readers Digest, BBC Gardeners World, Saga, Which and Choice magazines to name just a few, offering over 10 hours of entertainment.

Aids and Equipment

There are many products for sale to assist and improve peoples independent living and we work alongside reputable suppliers and charities such as Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), Cobolt, I.C Vision Ltd, Nulight and the Partially Sighted Society, to order products and equipment for others.

Items available include:

- * Talking watches and clocks
- * Liquid level indicators
- * Penfriend audio labeller
- * Bump ons or high mark
- * The "brick" USB (memory stick) player
- * Large print quiz and puzzle books
- * Board games and bingo cards
- * Daylight light bulbs

If you know someone that would enjoy receiving Walsall Talking News or may have any equipment requirements please do get in touch on: 01922 627683

Social Activities Centre

At the heart of the Society, is our Social Activities Centre, providing a safe and happy environment, where a warm welcome awaits everyone.



Come along and make new friends, enjoy a chat over cake and a cup of tea, join in the fun with a sing along, play dominoes, bingo and skittles and test your knowledge with our fun quizzes.

You can make a variety of craft items, which are yours to keep and enjoy the excitement and entertainment of our much loved themed weeks, in which we celebrate national events taking place throughout the year.



Refreshments and snacks are available in the centre during the day and a 2 course meal is available on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. We take trips out to restaurants, shops, shows, garden centres and the theatre (all of which are chargeable).

Currently we run 5 groups over 4 days (Tuesday – Friday), offering around 150 places, including an afternoon group on alternate Thursdays and on Tuesday evenings we have a Ladies group.

Places are provided free to anyone with a visual impairment living in the Walsall Borough, subject to assessment and availability.

If you would like to come along and join in the fun, please do get in touch.



Telephone: 01922 627683

Halloween Party

We love the opportunity of dressing up and getting into character for our theme weeks and never more so when it's Halloween, with prizes for the best costume in our fancy dress parade.



Skeletons, ghosts and ghouls lie in wait to surprise you. Dare you play pass the pumpkin and trick or treat?



For laughter and to meet new friends, come along and join in the fun, there really is something for everyone.



Christmas

The Christmas festivities are magical at WSB, each group has their own party, with buffet and entertainment, saved for through the year by group members. We are also very fortunate to have special visitors, as we welcome the staff and children from the Emmanuel School, who kindly provide each group with a Christmas Carol Service, which we all enjoy.



Beach Week

We had fabulous fun in the sun, when the beach came to the centre, during Blackpool theme week.

We enjoyed hook a duck, pin the tail on the donkey, made sandcastles, and tucked into fish and chips, cakes and ice creams as a Tom Jones look-alike thrilled the crowd, we cant wait for next years holiday.

Wish you were here!!

Thoughts from a Group Representative

Dear friends,

My name is Derrick and I have been visiting WSB for 17 years. I am a client and a group representative for Fridays, alongside Brenda and Edna, I am a WTN Committee member also.

Each week on arrival at WSB we are helped from the Ring & Ride transport into the centre, where we are greeted with a nice cup of tea from Janet and a chat with our friends.

Brenda and I collect £1.00 off each client, this is saved through the year and we use the money to go out for meals, visit garden centres, have entertainment and for Christmas parties and buffets. We enjoy the celebrations of theme weeks and taking part in the quizzes and bingo, we have a lovely time.

We would like to thank Amanda and the office staff for their help over the last 12 months and Keith, Sharron and all the volunteer's for doing a great job with the WTN memory stick each week.

Thank you to our lovely Group Co-ordinators Jackie and Joanne for their help in entertaining us and to all the volunteers and clients for their help and their support.

Best wishes, Derrick



Children's New Year Party

Saturday 10th January 2015

Children had the opportunity to meet, socialise and interact with a number of new animal friends, from all different parts of the world, as the animal man came to visit, with an amazing selection of exotic animals.



Creating a unique enjoyable learning experience, the children could get close up and hands on with tarantulas, lizards, snakes, raccoon dogs, cockroaches and owls.

Children enjoyed having their faces painted, a scrummy buffet with sandwiches, sweets and lots of yummy cake and the Mayor of Walsall came to visit and joined in the fun.



Children's New Year Party



Sports News

We all know that keeping fit is good for us and when combined with sport, social interaction and fun, you have the perfect mix.



A mix which Staffordshire Visually Impaired Cricket, through British Blind Sport, is helping to create, by helping blind and partially sighted people get active and play sport.

One of our group members, Gurmail, has done just that and we could not wait to ask him all about it.

“Gurmail, please tell us how you came to join the cricket team and how you are getting on”

“A few members of the team came to the centre to talk about the blind cricket team, it sounded really interesting and I decided I would give it a go. We meet every fortnight on Sundays, 3-5pm. I started to train in the winter when we were at Tettenhall College, but in the warmer months we train at the cricket club.

The club supports you to ensure that you get the most from your sessions. The ball we use to bowl with is the size of a basketball and contains bells, which help you track the direction of the ball, people also clap their hands to indicate direction. When ready to bowl the words “batsman are you ready?” are asked and when the batsman responds “ready”, “play” is shouted to indicate that the ball is being thrown.

I thought I’d never do it, I really enjoy going and more people should try and have a go. We also compete against other teams and are playing Derby in August and Leicester in September”

If you like what you have heard and fancy having a go like Gurmail, please contact the Society and we will gladly provide you with all the information that you need.

Our Volunteers

Our inspirational volunteers give their time, knowledge, assistance and encouragement each and every day to us all, unconditionally.

Without their hard work and devotion, the Society would struggle to function and would be unable to provide the much needed support to our service users.

Throughout the year our volunteers dedicated a staggering **3,955 hours** of their time, over many different areas.

The loyalty and dedication of our wonderful volunteers is a gift to us all, we are extremely grateful and thankful for their commitment.

We asked our volunteers if they would share their thoughts and feelings of volunteering.

"I enjoy coming to the blind centre, as I've made friends with volunteers and clients.

I enjoy the company and when I get home, I sometimes laugh about some of the stories and comments made through the day, also I've done something useful."

Irene



"Since first volunteering as a reader, I would like to say it has been such a rewarding experience. To work with a great bunch of people, who make it a pleasure to come in on a Tuesday. Nervous to start with, I was soon put at ease and made welcome. Apart from reading, I enjoy having a few words with each of the clients who attend and hope we all help to make their day a little brighter."

Anon

Our Volunteers

"I have been actively involved with WSB for about 14 years, as a volunteer in the Day Centre and in the last few years as a reader on WTN and all my friends know that Tuesday is my Blind Day.

I have met some lovely people over the years, shared some sadness and had some fun too. Were I for some reason unable to continue my Tuesday stint, I would miss it."

Nuala



"I've been a volunteer for many years. I like to help and care for the young and the elderly and those who are worse off than I am, who cannot walk or see."

Brian

"Volunteering at WTN has been a big part of my life for 21 years. I first became interested in becoming a reader, because I used to read to my Gran who's sight had gone and who I was very close to. I also have a sister in law who is totally blind as a result of having Macular Degeneration.



When my Gran passed away I thought maybe I could read to someone else and by chance saw an article about WSB and the Talking Newspaper and the rest is history!

I have always taken such a lot from volunteering, I enjoy all aspects of WTN and love the idea that people get pleasure from the work I do. I will never think of WTN with anything other than huge affection."

Sharron

Our Volunteers

"I volunteer because I have a little spare time and want to use it to help others at WSB, I find it very rewarding.

I hope with my help, the clients come in and have a good time, that to me is my time well spent".

Janet



"I have been a volunteer for 10 years. It's always a pleasure to spend time on a Tuesday with the lovely clients.

They share their problems and happy news, which is so special, it's a privilege to be there for anyone who needs a listening ear. Jackie and Joanne always make Tuesday's an enjoyable time with theme days, meals and days out, which everyone enjoys.

Volunteering is great and a worthwhile way to spend spare time, it is very rewarding also".

Judith



"Throughout my life I have had a tendency to volunteer. People often ask me why I do voluntary work and I find this a difficult question to answer, because I simply don't know. It must be in my genes.

I certainly get a lot of satisfaction from volunteering and have also volunteered in a junior school, to help with the reading program and as a tour guide for the NT Back to Back property in Birmingham for a number of years.

In September 2011, I saw a sign in the window of WSB, appealing for volunteers and that's how I ended up at WTN. I thoroughly enjoy my role here, the staff, fellow volunteers and clients are a pleasure to be with and I feel very settled here. I would like to think I make a valuable contribution to the running of the Society and I hope to continue working here into the foreseeable future".

Jane

Fundraising and Donations

A Festive Fun Night was organised by Amanda Wilkes, in memory of her Father, Roy Cooper held on 21st November 2014 at Pelsall Community Centre.

We would like to thank Amanda, her family and those that attended the event, for their support of WSB. With their help Amanda raised £2,140.00.

Amanda said "As my Dad got older, his eyesight started to fail and his everyday life started to change, he began to depend on the services of WSB and loved the talking books".

"This charity is very special to me, my parents used to volunteer for WSB and when I was 11, I had the honour of being part of a support team, on a John O' Groats to Lands End walk, to help raise funds for the new building in which WSB still resides".



Amanda and her Father Roy



Claire, Keith and Jayne on the WSB stall at the Festive Fun Night



Fundraising and Donations

There is no way to fully express our thanks and gratitude to those who kindly donate to the Society throughout the year. Donations provide us with the funds to help us continue our services and to fulfil our mission, today and for the future.

At Walsall Society for the Blind we are continually inspired by the dedication and generosity of donors and hardworking fundraisers, their commitment to our work plays a key role in supporting those with sight loss every day.

Thank you

Charity Spectacular

Yates's Walsall, held a night of entertainment Wednesday 26th November 2014 in aid of WSB.

Entertainment was provided by various artists, including an Olly Murs tribute.

Thank you Yates's and to everyone who purchased a ticket and supported the event.



Soup Kitchen Fundraiser

Thank you to our good friend and Rotary Club Member Jim Lee, who on Saturday 6th December 2014, held a charity Christmas soup kitchen for friends and neighbours.

With plenty of Jim's homemade soup, the event was enjoyed by all and with their support Jim raised a hearty £260.00.

Fundraising and Donations

Walsall to Wembley by Graeme Brookes

On March 22nd 2015, Walsall Football Club will end their 127 year wait to make the trip to Wembley. They're facing Bristol City in the final Johnstones Paint Trophy.

My grandfather Ronald 'Ronaldo' Brookes was a life long Walsall FC fan. He watched his first game in 1922. He was there for every relegation to every promotion for 78 years! The thing that made him that extra bit special was... **he was deaf and blind.**

Born deaf and losing his sight as a teenager, he didn't let it beat him and it certainly didn't stop him watching Walsall as much as possible, both home and away.

He would have the game 'typed' on his hand using deaf/blind manual alphabet by his son (my Dad) Paul and then as I got older, by myself too. However he could hear just about enough that when there was a loud cheer and he got vigorously shook - we had scored!



**Graeme with Amanda
Chief Executive of WSB**

After finally getting to Wembley after 127 years, I felt it only appropriate to do something to represent Ronaldo and make his presence known on Walsall FC's day of days. This is why I am walking 20 miles a day for around 7 ½ consecutive days until I walk down Wembley Way, on Sunday March 22nd to watch the Super Saddlers.

Walsall to Wembley by Graeme Brookes

Due to Ronaldo's condition, he did need help and support throughout his life, particularly in his formative years and being a Walsall man his entire life, he received this from Walsall Society for the Blind.

Therefore to honour my grandfather and his love for Walsall FC and combine it to help raise as much money as possible for charity. I can honour his legacy by supporting a charity and by supporting the football club he loved the most!

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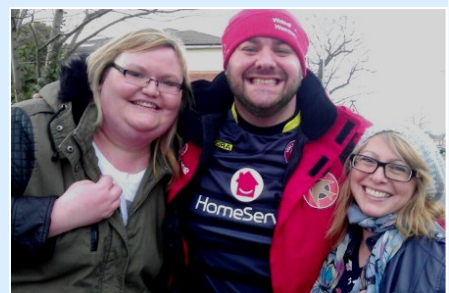
Graeme's Journey

In the weeks before starting his journey, we had the pleasure of spending time with Graeme and his Father, when they visited the Society. They met with friends, sharing many happy memories and stories of when Ronald attended Walsall Society for the Blind.

Graeme started his journey on Saturday March 14th, from the half way line at half time, between the Walsall FC and MK Dons match at Banks's Stadium. To rapturous applause and cheers he spoke of his Grandfather, Walsall Society for the Blind and his journey to come.

Over the next 7 ½ days he walked **143.2 miles**, through rain, sunshine and even an eclipse, to reach Wembley.

Claire and Jayne from WSB were proud to walk the first mile with Graeme, along with family, friends and Graeme's dog Waffle, (although they did have to run for about ½ a mile just to catch up with him!!!).



Graeme, with Claire and Jayne from WSB after the first mile.

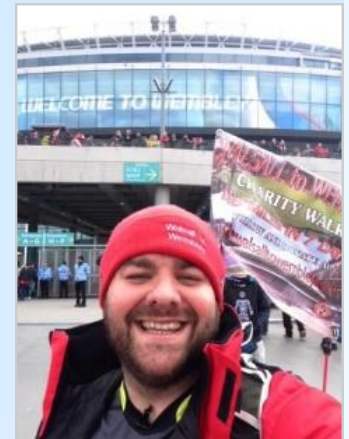
Graeme's Journey

His daily blog kept everyone entertained as he spoke of his trek along the Grand Union Canal, his love of tarmac and Jaffa Cakes and tales of swans, superhero ducks and the huge blisters on his feet.



We are thrilled to announce that Graeme has already raised a spectacular £5,800.00 through online charity donations alone, totally smashing his target of £5,000.00 with more donations still coming through.

Graeme we would like to thank you for all your hard work, dedication and commitment and for choosing us as your charity to support. You are a true inspiration, congratulations on your wonderful achievement, 'Ronaldo' would be so proud.



Thank you to everyone involved for your kind donations, hospitality and your support for Graeme on his journey.



You can visit Graeme's blog or to make a donation please go to www.walsalltowembley.com



With Sadness

Each year, the passing of time brings with it sadness, when we lose friends known to the Society.

It is with sadness that we share the news of the passing of Kate Andrews.

Kate was appointed as Treasurer for WSB on 10th November 2003. She served for 10 years, standing down as Treasurer on the 25th November 2013, due to ill health. She remained on the Board as a Trustee until she passed away on 16th March 2015, after bravely fighting cancer.

Kate will be sadly missed.

Our thoughts and sincere condolences are with Kate's family.



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