

Expanding horizons – Opening doors

Spring 2017

Letter from the editor

Dear Unlimited Members,

The spring brings longer daylight hours, and a little more warmth and colour to cheer us up. A good time then to think about getting out if you can. Of course being disabled means any outing needs research, planning and organisation - you can't just spontaneously go somewhere. And we all know we can't trust what may appear in marketing material but will probably have to phone to check just what is provided. Suddenly that place with a wheelchair symbol on its ad turns out not to be quite as accessible as they say - with gravel paths that wheels get stuck in, 'only a small step' at the entrance and no ramp to assist, poor lighting and signage, toilets in the basement with no lift, and no reserved parking for blue badge holders. Yet many disabled people are very resourceful and with determination do manage to get out and travel despite the obstacles. Included in this newsletter are some items about travel and a few ideas of places to visit.



Did you manage to take any action on Disability Action Day? I spent the morning of March 11th going around the shops, cafés and offices in Headington, where I live, giving out Unlimited's access leaflet to those premises that did not appear to be accessible to me with my small mobility scooter. There were a few pleasant surprises - the fish & chip shop had a portable ramp, as did two independent opticians, and one recently renovated Italian cafe/restaurant had built their own ramp and put in an accessible toilet. But some major estate agent chains did not - 'we'll have to ask Head Office' was not a satisfactory response. I was exhausted after a couple of hours of banging on windows waving my arms madly to get someone's attention - because of course I couldn't get in to talk to anyone and so had to hope they would see me and come to the door. I will follow up soon to see if any of them have finally bought a ramp.

The Editor

Unlimited is getting ready to recruit a new Chair to take over in the autumn

When Peter Hindshaw died last September I was determined that Unlimited would continue to make a difference to disabled people in Oxfordshire as a legacy for all Peter's hard work and commitment to the cause. To help make that happen I have been 'acting' as Chair of the charity, and Don O'Neal has been chairing our committee meetings. However I always intended this to be an arrangement that lasted for just 1 year while we recruited a new Chair to take over at the next AGM (probably in October).

We have a really strong new committee now and we have decided to look both inside and outside Unlimited to find the best person for the job. With national and local cuts and changes to benefits now is a really tough time for disabled people and we want someone who can take on the challenge of making a difference for all us living in Oxfordshire. We have an exciting opportunity with the new developments in Oxford for making the city as accessible as possible for residents and visitors, and there are ways, with the right person, of responding to changes out in the county too.

We will write a simple job description and will advertise as widely (and cheaply!) as possible in May and June. There will be a closing date and we will ask interested people to complete a short form expressing their interest and why they think they will be good at it. We will be looking for people with lived experience of impairments and/or long-term conditions. How can you help? Well you may be interested in being the new Chair so please do apply, or you may know someone who would be good. Please do tell as many people as possible we are looking for a new Chair and if you know somewhere we can advertise for free or very cheaply get in touch.

Joanna Matthews

Digitally Printed Orthotics

The World Health Organisation estimates there are about 30 million people in the world who need prosthetic limbs, braces or other mobility devices, yet less than 20% have them. Prosthetics can involve a lot of work and expertise to produce and fit, and the WHO says there is currently a shortage of 40,000 trained prosthetists in poorer countries. There is also the time and financial cost to patients, who may have to travel long distances for treatment that can take five days to assess their need, produce a prosthesis and fit it to a residual limb. So braces and artificial limbs are the most desperately needed medical devices. But technology may be rushing to the rescue in the form of digital printing. Experts have already developed a whole range of 3D-printed 'parts' from skin for burn victims to dental crowns and bridges, so it is not surprising that interest is stirring in the field of prosthetics.

An American artist, Ivan Owen, who liked to make weird gadgets for use in puppetry and cheap horror movies, made a simple mechanical hand and his video, posted online, was spotted by a South African carpenter who had lost four fingers in an accident. They began discussing plans for a prosthetic hand which came to the attention of the mother of a boy born without fingers on his right hand. She wanted a tiny version of their hand and, realising the boy would rapidly grow out of anything they made, Owen persuaded a printer manufacturer to donate two 3D-printers and developed what has been claimed to be the first 3D-printed mechanical hand. Crucially, rather than trying to patent this hand, Owen published the files as open source (freely available) for anyone to use, thus allowing others to collaborate and improve designs. This has grown into Enabling the Future, a network of 7,000 members in dozens of countries with access to 2,000 digital printers who help to make hands and arms for those in need.

Often aimed at children, who need replacements every couple of years as they grow, the 3D-printed devices cost about £40 as opposed to the thousands of pounds that traditional limbs cost. They can be printed in any colour and look like a cheerful toy, so are far more appealing to children.



The bigger problem in poorer countries is when lower limb disability leads to loss of mobility. Wheelchairs are expensive and can be difficult to use when roads are muddy and potholed and pavements don't exist. People struggle without a prosthetic limb to fetch water, prepare food or work. The British charity Exceed was set up initially to help Cambodia's landmine survivors and now works in five Asian countries training people at schools of prosthetics and orthotics. In Cambodia there are almost 9,000 landmine survivors as well as children in need of braces for conditions such as cerebral palsy and polio. Exceed has begun a seven-month trial of 3D-printed devices in Cambodia with Nia Technologies, a Canadian non-for-profit organisation. Nia is also trialling its 3D-PrintAbility technology in Tanzania and Uganda. They aim to use the technology to fit 8,000 people with 3D-printed mobility devices within five years across 20 sites in poorer countries.

(Abridged from *The Observer* 19/2/17)

Thank you to Cumnor and The Vine!

The Vine is an 18th Century Inn in the village of Cumnor - a traditional public house featuring exposed ceiling beams and open brickwork but with a notable 21st Century addition of a Changing Places toilet - the gold standard of accessible loos. The landlords put in the toilet because there were no accessible toilets locally. Cumnor Village council paid for its construction and the pub takes responsibility for cleaning and maintenance. The toilet is located on the ground floor outside The Vine pub and access is available at any time with a Radar key. It has a height-adjustable, adult-sized, free-standing changing bench, a ceiling track hoist and the toilet is centrally placed with room either side for carers. *It is available for anyone in the area who needs to use it.* The Vine also has a wheelchair ramp at the entrance and is level inside.



The Vine
11 Abingdon Road
Cumnor Village,
Oxford, OX2 9QN
01865 862567

<https://www.vineinncumnor.com/>

Unlimited has been lobbying Oxford City Council to ensure there are Changing Places toilets in the Westgate development and more across the county.

Out and About

University of Oxford Botanic Garden

A lovely place to visit to experience the sights, sounds or smells of spring is the Oxford Botanic Garden. It is the oldest Botanic Garden in Britain and one of the oldest scientific gardens in the world. It was founded in 1621, originally as a physic gardens growing plants for medicinal research. Visitors are very welcome to bring a picnic with them, and there are many benches to use while you are eating. Toilet facilities including an adapted toilet and baby change are available from March to October 7 days a week, but only on weekends during the winter unless by prior arrangement. The Botanic Garden (including the glasshouses) is fully wheelchair accessible. There is also a wheelchair available to borrow. Please call ahead to the ticket office (01865 610300) to reserve the wheelchair. There is no public car parking available at the Botanic Garden but the nearest public car park is the St Clement's car park OX4 1AB which is 5 minutes' walk from the Garden. The nearest onstreet disabled parking is on Merton Street and the High Street.

The borders are fully accessible, but some of the glasshouse areas might be a squeeze for larger wheelchairs, as the paths are quite narrow. There is a step up to the exhibition room, but a portable ramp is available for level access, while some of the areas might be a bit of a tight squeeze.

Admission charge to Botanic Garden: £5 adults, accompanied children under 16 free, disabled people and carers free.



University of Oxford Botanic Garden
Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AZ
Tel: 01865 286690
<http://www.botanic-garden.ox.ac.uk>
Open 9am to 5pm

Harcourt Arboretum

Harcourt Arboretum has been part of the University of Oxford since 1963. The site comprises 130 acres containing the best collection of trees in Oxfordshire with some of the oldest redwoods in the UK. Seasonal highlights include wildflower meadows, rhododendrons and bluebell woods. It is open through the year. In 1835 Archbishop Vernon Harcourt of Nuneham House (Nuneham Courtenay) commissioned William Sawrey Gilpin to design and plant an 8 acre pinetum in the parkland associated with the estate. The estate was purchased from the Harcourt family by the University of Oxford following the second world war. Although most of the woodlands of the estate were later sold off, 5 acres were reserved for use by the Botanic Garden.

Over the following 30 years, the Arboretum was extended and totalled 55 acres by 1995, 80 acres by 2005. Most recently in 2006 a further 50 acres of land on the southwest boundary were purchased. 20 acres of this has been planted up with 13,000 British native trees and 30 acres restored as wildflower meadows. Many of the original plantings from the 1830's are still growing today at the Arboretum.



Harcourt Arboretum
01865 343501
Oxford Lodge Peacock Gate
Nuneham Courtenay
Oxford OX44 9PX

Admission charge to the Arboretum: £5 adults, accompanied children under 16 free, disabled people and carers free

Oxford United Football Club

Disabled visitors and supporters can find information on access at:
<http://www.oufc.co.uk/fans/disabled-supporters/>
Ticket office telephone: 01865 337533
Ticket office email: ticketoffice@oufc.co.uk
Online Ticket Office: www.oufctickets.co.uk

Cineworld Witney

A five screen multiplex in the Marriotts Walk Shopping Centre, it has been rated as disability friendly by The Advance & Cottsway Disability Group which covers the Oxfordshire Cotswolds. It has disabled access with facilities which include parking, screenings with sub-titles and audio description.

Marriotts Walk
Witney OX28 6GW
Tel: 0871 200 2000

www.cineworld.co.uk/cinemas/witney

Buses S1 and S2 run between Oxford and Witney.

Cinema Card

The Cinema Exhibitors Association (CEA) offers an ID card for customers wishing to take advantage of the free ticket policy for carers. This card is accepted by all major Cinema chains in the UK. The card entitles the holder to one free ticket for a person accompanying them to the cinema. CEA information leaflets and application forms are available from most large Cinema Box Offices.

To apply for the card you will need to meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Be in receipt of disability living allowance/PIP or attendance allowance
- Be a registered blind person

Tel: 0845 123 1292 Minicom/textphone: 0845 123 1297

www.ceacard.co.uk



Enrych is a voluntary organisation which enables adults in Oxfordshire to enjoy leisure, learning and sporting opportunities. They put volunteers together with disabled people who want to get out and about, or maybe carry on with a hobby or favourite pastime but need the support of someone else to do it. They also organise pub lunches and other social events.

Perhaps you enjoy walking but are a bit nervous to do it because of your medical condition, or you might find yourself a bit isolated because you have been caring for an elderly parent. If you find it difficult to leave your home then Enrych could arrange for a volunteer to visit you and play board games, or perhaps you feel a bit left out because you can't use your computer and a volunteer could spend a couple of hours a week showing you how.

Does this sound like the sort of thing that might help you to carry on enjoying life? Get in touch with the Oxfordshire co-ordinator Lucy Bowley.

Phone – 07706 659 373

Email - lucy.bowler@enrych.org.uk

Office address - Didcot Enterprise Park, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 7PH

Chester

Chester won the 2016 Access City Award, ahead of 42 other cities in 21 European Union countries, partly because of its efforts to improve access across its tourism sector. Among its achievements are ensuring that most of its Roman city walls are now wheelchair-accessible, while the medieval, double-level walkways, balconies and shops known as The Rows now have ramps, lifts, level access and escalators. Information guides point out where those ramps, lifts and escalators can be found.

The Access City Award 'recognises and celebrates cities which proactively support accessibility' for disabled people and "take exemplary steps to improve accessibility in the urban environment".

The European Commission (EC) said that Chester 'proves that ensuring accessible tourism for all and preserving historical and cultural heritage can go hand in hand'. It praised both the public and private sectors, and particularly highlighted measures that have targeted disabled people with the highest support needs.

Dial West Cheshire (DWC), a Chester-based disabled people's organisation which was involved in shaping the council's competition entry, said the award was 'excellent news'. Keith Roper, chief officer of DWC, suggested one of the reasons for Chester's success was that the council employed a Senior Access Officer, something many councils have dispensed with as a cost-cutting measure. Another was the council's decision to set up – following a suggestion from DWC – a 'corporate' disability access forum to examine strategic issues, which has allowed DWC's access group to feed in its views on future developments across the city.

Cheshire West and Chester Council said that providing accessible information, including a guide to accessible facilities in the city, provided by DisabledGo, also helped disabled residents and visitors. And it pointed to plans to double the number of Changing Places toilets, while all the city's Hackney taxis are wheelchair-accessible, all buses have ramps and wheelchair spaces, and DWC's Shopmobility scheme takes 3,000 annual bookings.

Cllr Angela Claydon, Chester's lord mayor, said: 'Improved accessibility brings not only reassurance and the necessary support to those who struggle with mobility issues, but lasting economic and social benefits to the city and the borough and we will continue to place accessibility at the heart of everything we deliver.'



Meet the Member - Mark Pear

Mark has been a member since a very persuasive Dave Holmes (Unlimited's former membership secretary) collared him when he was about to go for a swim. That was 4 years ago. I interrupted Mark when he was busy writing an essay. Since his retirement Mark has done many courses at Oxford University's Continuing Education Department. 'I really recommend CONTED,' said Mark. 'There have a wide range of courses and if you are on benefits, including DLA/PIP, you can get a 50 per cent discount.'

Mark is a retired English as a Foreign Language teacher. After a career of 28 years he now volunteers for Refugee Resource, on Cowley Road. 'Asylum seekers and refugees are escaping conflict from all over the world and English lessons make a big difference to them.'

You may have seen Mark if you have been to events in Oxford, such as Cowley Road Carnival. 'I have played trumpet since I was a boy, and I am now in 3 different bands, playing music like New Orleans Jazz, Afro beats and Cumbia which is dance music from Columbia.'

Mark was diagnosed with HSP (Hereditary Spastic Paraparesis) in his mid30's, a disorder which causes mobility impairment. To keep his independence Mark is a big fan of the trike style wheelchair. 'I have two versions – a hand cycle with a backup motor which I use for exercise and a powered trike. You need a little bit of upper body strength but I can get around on most surfaces, even a light fall of snow. The trike folds down to go into my car.' Mark drives an adapted car with hand controls.



Mark's biggest issue being a disabled person? 'I still can't get into so many places, cafes and pubs. I can't take it for granted when I go out and this is an unnecessary stress.' Mark says he maintains a lot of independence and he was lucky he could get his home adapted but he does miss cycling and walking.

Mark has two top tips for other disabled people. 'Make sure you get all that you are entitled to – money and other support. Don't give up asking. Also be bold when talking to shop owners– if you point out their access problem it helps you and other people. It is our right to get into places!'

By Joanna Matthews

CONTED 01865 270360 www.conted.ox.ac.uk

To try out a trike ring Ability Matters 01865 242500 shop on Abingdon Road

Battle of the Buses

Disabled campaigner Doug Paulley has claimed 'an important victory' in his legal battle for wheelchair users to have priority use of wheelchair spaces on buses. The Supreme Court unanimously ruled it was not enough for drivers to 'simply request' a non-wheelchair user to vacate the space without taking any further steps. The highest court in the land ruled, if a refusal to move is unreasonable, the driver must consider taking further steps to 'pressurise' the reluctant passenger to leave the space, 'depending on the circumstances'.

FirstGroup had a policy of 'requesting but not requiring' non-disabled travellers, including those with babies and pushchairs, to vacate the space if it was needed by a wheelchair user. In January seven Supreme Court justices ruled FirstGroup's policy should have gone further.

Court president Lord Neuberger said: 'It was not enough for FirstGroup to instruct its drivers simply to request non-wheelchair users to vacate the space and do nothing if the request was refused.....where the refusal is unreasonable some further step to pressurise the non-wheelchair user to move should be considered. And a refusal to drive on should be considered in appropriate cases.'



Did you know this ruling only applies to wheelchairs and not to mobility scooters? These are only allowed at the driver's discretion. I have a very small mobility scooter and had to apply to Stagecoach for permission to go on their buses in Oxford. They sent an inspector to my home to check the scooter and, having measured it, were satisfied it could safely fit in the wheelchair place. They gave me a small card to carry which has my name and the scooter model. Of course only a small scooter is possible because you have to be able to navigate between the grab handles of the bus and these are not always ideally positioned. My scooter is 104cm/41" long, 55cm/22" wide. And I have steered myself for the 'jokes' from male passengers about women drivers' reversing skills and when, depending on the bus, I neatly reverse park in one move, the applause I sometimes get!

Sadly we will have to wait until 2020 before Tour Operators have to make adaptations to coaches for wheelchairs as required by the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations.

The Editor

Voluntary Donations

Unlimited costs very little to run but at the moment we do not get any external funding. We do want to keep sending out the newsletter and we have to pay expenses for meeting rooms and meetings.

At the last committee meeting we agreed that membership of Unlimited would remain free but that we would ask members if they would like to make a voluntary donation to the charity. We understand that many members are on low incomes. Any donation, however modest, is very welcome but we do want to stress that we do not expect members to pay for being members.

We are putting a donation button on our website to make it easy to give and we can still take cheques made payable to Unlimited Oxfordshire. You can also send up a direct debit to the Charity.

Thank you!

Rail firms ordered to improve provision of accessible toilets



Provision of accessible toilets on trains will be improved, the government has announced, weeks after a Paralympian revealed she had wet herself on a long train journey because the facilities were out of order. The Department for Transport said changes were under way as a result of Anne Wafula Strike going public in the Guardian about her experience on a CrossCountry train journey from Nuneaton to Harlow last December. Wafula Strike said she felt robbed of her dignity after finding the train's accessible toilet out of order.

A crew member advised her to get off at the next stop, but she said she was unable to hold on until they reached a station with staff that could help her disembark. Cross-Country apologised to the athlete, who has an MBE for services to disability sport and charity.

'It was very difficult for me to go public about what happened to me and I'm pleased that less than a month after doing so the government is taking action to improve matters,' she said. 'I'm also happy that since I spoke out so many more disabled people have gone public about their experiences too. It has broken a taboo.'

Maintenance teams will ensure accessible toilets are more reliable and will fix them more quickly when problems arise, ensuring fewer toilets are out of service.

The DfT will publish its accessibility action plan later this year, which will address accessibility across all modes of public transport.

A big hello to Unlimited Oxfordshire readers!



Here at Getting Heard we've been supporting Oxfordshire residents to get their voices heard and rights asserted since 1989. We're based in Barton and offer support across Oxfordshire. Our specially trained and DBS checked volunteers can help you to:

- Research your options
- Read and write letters/emails
- Assist in making telephone calls
- Accompany you to meetings, taking notes and asking questions if helpful
- Reflect with you on meetings that have happened and explore what you want to do next

Our services are free, independent and confidential. We are there to support you to explore your options, to say what you want to say, and to reflect on what you want to do next. We can you support if:

- You are facing a life-impacting issue
- The problem is related to housing, benefits, cancer or access to services
- Your friends or family are not in a position to help right now
- Without our support it would be difficult to get your voice heard?

If you've answered yes to these questions do get in touch on 0300 343 5718 or via

advocacy@gettingheard.org

You can also find out more at www.gettingheard.org (formerly Oxfordshire Advocacy)

Helen Evans, Director

Please note I don't work alternate Thursdays
07554 909 411 and 0300 343 5718

Barton Neighbourhood Centre
Headington, OX3 9LS

Layout by Bob Hundley, Mailing by Lilian Sherwood

Contact details: www.unltdox.org.uk email: info@unltdox.org.uk

Tel: 0800 044 8192 @Unlimited_Ox

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