

COVERED!

Fife Society for the Blind newsletter

Spring 2011



Gordon Brown takes over from Jim Adamson as Honorary President of Fife Society for the Blind.

SEE MAIN STORY In his father's footsteps page 4
on Gordon Brown's visit to Fife Sensory Impairment Centre in Kirkcaldy

A quick word from the Editor...

Hello everyone. I hope that you will find plenty of interest in this spring's new-look newsletter. We have news from Alan Suttie and our regular feature 'Volunteers corner', as well as many more events to look forward to and articles ranging from chocolate to iPods. Turn to page 4 to find out more about the reason for Gordon Brown's recent visit to the Fife Sensory Impairment Centre. From now on we shall produce four issues of Covered! each year, with the next issue arriving during the summer. And special thanks to Fundraising Co-ordinator Ron Oliphant for all the hard work he has put into producing all the previous editions of Covered!

If you have any comments, or ideas for articles then please do get in contact with me by e-mail: [**geoff.barker@fsbinsight.co.uk**](mailto:geoff.barker@fsbinsight.co.uk)

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News from our CEO, Alan Suttie

As I write this short piece we are out — hopefully — of what has been a long and difficult winter. Spring finally appears to be upon us now and with it our planning for the next financial year, which starts in April. I am delighted that because of prudent planning by

the Board and hard work by all the staff and volunteers, we go into the new financial year in good shape.

Whilst most voluntary organisations, together with the public sector, are shedding staff and cutting services we continue to consider how we respond to growing needs — as more people are living longer, there is an increase in instances of age-related sight loss. In the last edition of Covered! we appealed for more volunteers to support our voluntary fundraising initiatives and we have been pleased with the response. Do please talk to your family, friends and neighbours about the important work that Fife Society for the Blind delivers to over 2,000 blind and partially sighted people across Fife. In this way, we can build on our strong family of supporters.

Blind and partially sighted people are at the heart of all we do. We need to closely engage with the users of our services to ensure that we are meeting their needs. Starting in this next financial year we are planning local events to which we will be inviting users to come along, so that they can meet with other users and engage with us about what is important to *them*. We plan to make these fun and informative events, so please do not miss this opportunity when the invitations come out.

Forthcoming events include three user engagement and consultation days in the summer, one in each area of the county. Details of these will be coming to you in the next few months.

Before we finally forget about how this past winter caused travel chaos for a number of services including ours, we are conscious that many blind and partially sighted people will have been very isolated and unable to leave the home. In case we are to have a repeat of this type of weather, we would welcome hearing comments about your concerns and the challenges caused. Let us know your ideas of how we might be able to respond in a positive way in the future.

Alan Suttie

Chief Executive Officer

In his father's footsteps

Gordon Brown formally took over as Honorary President of Fife Society for the Blind on a recent visit to Fife Sensory Impairment Centre in Kirkcaldy. There is a strong family connection between the Brown family and the Society. The Rev John Brown was a member of the Managing Committee of Fife Society for the Blind, while Minister at St Brycedale Kirk in the early 1960s. At this time, Gordon's mother also supported the work of the local Kirkcaldy Ladies' Committee.

In welcoming Gordon Brown to the position as Honorary President of Fife Society for the Blind, the Society's Chairman, Richard Godfrey-McKay commented that 'as a champion of those less fortunate in society, and as someone who is proud of his local roots, we could not find a better person to take over from Jim Adamson and to follow in the tradition started by Sir Michael Nairn (founder of the society in 1865).'

Gordon Brown responded: 'It is a huge honour to be asked to get involved with the Fife Society for the Blind, and I look forward to supporting its crucial work in the months ahead. I extend my congratulations to all the staff and users of the Society for making it such an enormous success story for Fife.'

In thanking Jim Adamson for his many years' service to the Society, Gordon Brown referred to 'the high regard in which the Society is held, particularly by the many older people who lose their sight in later life and rely on specialist services to help them retain independence. The reputation of the Society for unique and innovative work extends well beyond Fife and Scotland.'

The Society's Chief Executive Alan Suttie briefed Gordon Brown on new and exciting developments. These included the planned growth for the

Society's social enterprise company, support from the Scottish Government for its 'One Stop Shop' model of joint provision of services for the sensory impaired and a vision for expanding the Fife Sensory Impairment Centre to reflect the growing needs of the local community.

iPods made more accessible

Are you registered blind or partially sighted?

Have you ever wanted to use an iPod but found it difficult because you could not see the display?

Available from Cobolt Systems, the I-Tell is a device which enables your iPod to announce your stored artists, album and song titles and audio books. Use of the button in the middle of the iPod is not required.

The I-Tell connects to the iPod and simply uses the power of the iPod, so you do not need batteries. Five main control buttons work in a similar way to the iPod (play, pause, back and forward and menu buttons), and there are two separate volume buttons.

Note that the I-Tell works only with the iPod classic or nano ranges. The I-Tell comes with full instructions on audio CD and costs £24.95.

If you would like more information please visit the Cobolt Systems website: www.cobolt.co.uk

or telephone: **01493 700172**

Braille chocolate scoops award

FSB Enterprises has been experimenting with the production of Braille and tactile chocolate. The team recently took part in a Dragons' Den competition at a social enterprise fair held in Dunfermline.

A five-minute presentation about the Braille chocolate concept was followed by ten minutes of questions from a panel of judges. The judges

then selected the three best business ideas and the successful groups then had to give their presentation to everybody in the hall — which was nearly one hundred people! The winner was then decided by public vote.

The FSB Enterprises team was declared joint runner-up and received a cheque for £500 to help further develop the product. We are now hoping to produce bespoke moulds so we can partner with an existing chocolatier to manufacture Braille chocolate on a larger scale.

We will keep everybody up to date with our progress but are hopeful that it won't be long before Braille chocolate will be on sale.

Volunteers corner

We start the spring edition of 'Volunteers corner' of Covered! with an event from the tail end of 2010. No, I won't mention the weather! As part of Celebrate Fife 2010, Volunteering Fife in partnership with CVS Fife and VONEF hosted a glitzy volunteer reward and recognition ceremony in the Rothes Hall.

Nearly 300 people attended and Sarah Brown, wife of Gordon Brown MP, presented the awards. FSB's very own Low Vision Clinic and Fundraising Visually Impaired Volunteer Helen Buchanan, won a most prestigious award in the 'Putting Something Back and Moving On' Category. She got a standing ovation as she made her way onto the stage and was presented with a stained-glass and wooden plaque by Sarah. It was a privilege to accompany Helen and to be in the presence of other volunteers who were also mentioned or given awards. They all help to make our communities better places to live in.

Inspiring stories

FSB Befriending Volunteer Lynn Brady has also received recognition within the voluntary sector recently. Lynn has an engineering background and also volunteered with a local Energy Advice Scheme. She ended up employed on a 12-month contract as a Home Energy Advisor with the same organisation. She describes this opportunity as

‘wonderful’ and a ‘huge confidence boost’. She now combines her paid job with her voluntary visits to a blind client in the St Andrews area. What a great success story.

Blind escort

James O’Shea’s volunteering efforts were also praised in Volunteer Fife’s magazine. Many of you will know James as an escort on the minibus on the St Andrews and Kirkcaldy Thursday Blind Social Group runs and his story is a great example of how volunteering can help someone. I’m sure you’ll agree that he’s always cheery with a joke or a funny story to tell and is often looking for other ways in which to help people — not just getting off and on the bus! But, it wasn’t always like that. James has had his share of health difficulties and his confidence was at an all-time low just before he came to Fife Society for the Blind. However, with support he has become a greatly valued team member, as well as a friend to many. James says, ‘escorting is hard work but I can go home at night to relax in the knowledge that my contribution made a difference to someone’s life’. James, you’re a star!

Thanks too, to Bill

I have to say a big thank you to stalwart volunteer Bill Young. As a regular minibus driver he has recently been backwards and forwards with the bus to the garage for repairs and to the coachworks for quotes. He has managed to sort out big niggles and small niggles and kept me right too! So thanks Bill. It’s a good time to say a big thank you to another regular driver, Bill Ovens. Thanks Bill and stay in touch.

Two new faces

We welcome two new minibus volunteers. John Laing has stepped in to help out at the Dunfermline club and Bill Campbell, who is well known to lots of you in the many activities he supports. Bill has decided to have a go at driving the bus and has undertaken Midas training — now that’s diversity for you!

New areas of volunteering

It's been a busy start to 2011 and we have recruited volunteers who have experience in areas such as web design, copywriting and photography. This will enable us to maintain a high profile with our website on the internet, help with writing reports, leaflets and promotional material. Volunteer photographers will be able to take photos of clients (with permission of course) at some of the social and recreational activities so that we can build up a portfolio of photos for funders etc. It is great that we are now tapping into the skills of people who have different areas of expertise. We hope that the new volunteers will enjoy the fresh challenge of finding out what we as an organisation are all about too.

Fundraising

This year has been a little slow in the build up of our Fundraising calendar but we have had two successful collections at Tesco, Duloch Park in Dunfermline and Asda at Dalgety Bay. Thanks to all volunteers, clients and staff who helped bring in over £1000 at both these venues. A great effort by all involved.

I make no bones about it — it's going to be really difficult this year to get permission from some of our regular locations so we have to try to make the most of every opportunity in the places that we do get permission. This means putting out strong teams and having a big presence at stores and on streets throughout Fife. If you can help, please, please get in touch. An hour or two is all that it takes. It's a great day out too!

Here are a few dates for your diaries:

Asda, Glenrothes

Sat 7 May 2011

Main St, Dalgety Bay

Sat 14 May 2011

Main St plus Scottish Co-op, Anstruther

Sat 11 June 2011

High St, Dunfermline

Sat 18 June 2011

Dobies Garden Centre
Dulloch Park, Dunfermline

Fri 24 June 2011

Tesco, Rosyth

Fri 19/Sat 20 Aug 2011

These are the dates which are confirmed and we will get a list out to our regular collectors as soon as possible with further dates.

Spring coffee morning fundraiser – Fri 13 May

We are hosting a fundraising coffee morning in aid of funds to help with running our minibus, the volunteer car service and support to the many social activities etc on Friday 13 May 10.00am–12.00 noon here at Fife Sensory Impairment Centre at Wilson Avenue, Kirkcaldy. We would be grateful for any donations of good-quality, unused, unwanted and unloved gifts for our tombola stall. There will of course be the usual delicious home-baking products.

Entry will cost £1.50 at the door. More importantly, we want *you* to come along, fill the centre, meet up with old friends and maybe make some new ones — while we raise a bit of money at the same time. Friday the thirteenth — unlucky for some, I don't think so!

Voluntary minibus escorts...

Priority level – High!

Our Dunfermline blind social group which meets at Baldridgeburn Community Centre on Tuesday mornings is looking for an escort to help the driver on the minibus. This is an important role in making sure our passengers travel in comfort and safety. The group has a lively and interesting programme of activities and is run by a hardworking and happy group of both sighted and non-sighted volunteers who would make you most welcome. Support and training will be given.

As always the work, the need and the desire to help others continues, so if you know someone or you can help out in any way, let us know.

Now... you thought I wasn't going to mention it... the weather! But as I write this article, after the bleakest and wettest four days ever, blue sky

and sunshine have appeared and spring has sprung at last!
Thanks for listening.

Liz Reid

Volunteer Co-ordinator

***Inspired by...* lunchtime talks**

The Museum of the University of St Andrews (MUSA), situated on The Scores in St Andrews, is running a series of free lunchtime talks in the museum. Introducing different fascinating parts of the collection, and entitled *Inspired by...*, these talks are given by people who are inspired by the collection. We hope that they will inspire the audience too.

We would like to make these inspirational talks as accessible as possible, and we are piloting audio described introductions to the objects. The introductions will run half an hour before the talks, allowing visually impaired audience members to learn a bit more about the featured object.

Audio described introductions will take place in MUSA at 12.30pm on the same day as each lunchtime talk. If you are blind or partially sighted you can book a free place at an audio described introduction by calling: tel: **01334 462396** to speak with Rhona, or e-mail: **reh2@st-andrews.ac.uk**

***Inspired by...* the Great Astrolabe**

Thu 26 May 2011, 1pm–1.30pm

(audio described introduction at 12.30pm in MUSA)

Come and join Arianna Carlini in Gallery 3, who is inspired by one of the great treasures of the collections, the Great Astrolabe. In this talk she will look beyond this one magnificent example and focus more generally on astrolabes and how these fascinating scientific instruments would have been used as an early form of a sextant to navigate.

Inspired by... the Medieval Gallery

Thu 23 June 2011, 1pm–1.30pm

(audio described introduction at 12.30pm in MUSA)

Join musician Simon Chadwick in Gallery 1 to hear a recital of medieval music on his reproduction harp. Simon will deliver a short background to the 15th-century harp and will perform in front of the University's medieval maces.

Recreation rambles

'Spring is a time to renew the excitement and zest for life that lives inside' – and signs of spring are finally here.

I have been watching the rooks in the trees close to my house and seven or eight nests have suddenly appeared. Russian artist Savrasov painted *The Rooks Have Come Back* by in 1871 to capture the transition of nature from winter to spring. This is still happening in 2011...

So the return of the rooks is a sign of spring. The rook features prominently in folklore. If a rookery — the colonial resting area of rooks — was abandoned it was said to bring bad fortune to the family that owned the land. Here's hoping that they keep coming back! But enough of my rambling and here's the latest news on all that's happening.

Art therapy

Art therapy continues to be an enjoyable and very worthwhile class. Clients are referred by the Insight team. One client recently thanked me for introducing her to the class and she looks forward to it all week.

Bowling

The bowling season will soon be underway. The Cowdenbeath group meets at Broad Street and would welcome new members as numbers have fallen dramatically. There are groups in St Andrews, Leven,

Kirkcaldy and Abbeyview in Dunfermline. All new members are welcome — even if you have never tried bowling before.

Curling

The curling season is almost over — I passed Lindores Loch when it was iced over this winter and some curlers were preparing to play on it. I wonder how many years it is since that last happened? Thanks to the drivers and coaches for your support all season — enjoy a well-deserved rest.

Social groups

The various social groups have had a very busy year. We have had talks on the history of Fife, beekeeping, Burns, storytelling and lots more. Most of the groups will be having a break for the summer. This allows the volunteers and drivers to recharge their batteries. I know that some clients really miss the friendship and company when the groups stop meeting — and it may be the only social outing of the week — so we are very grateful to all our drivers and volunteers who really do provide a fantastic service. Thank you to all involved.

Groups meet in Glenrothes, Leven, and Lochgelly, St Andrews, Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline, Anstruther and Cupar. All new members are welcome.

Swimming

We have established a swimming group at Cowdenbeath pool which meets every Tuesday. We have had some new volunteers and swimmers in the West of Fife but more would be welcome. There is demand for a group in central Fife — so depending on pool availability we hope to have another swimming group start soon.

Rambling

The Rambles will start again in late April. The programme is almost complete, so it will be great to get out into the wonderful Fife countryside again. Please come along and join us on the following walks:

Sat 21 May Inverkeithing to Aberdour — led by Chris Mercer

Sat 25 June Pitmedden Forest walk (near Perth) — with Boyd Brannan

I am really grateful to our enthusiastic and friendly group of volunteers.

Digital switchover

Do not forget about the digital switchover of TVs in Fife during June.

This will also be an opportunity to receive audio description.

Call RNIB on **0303 123 9999** to find out more about this free service.

Audio Description

The Byre Theatre in St Andrews offers audio description on some productions. Please contact the office for further details.

Holidays

If you require information on specialist holidays please contact me.

Telecare

Telecare is a telephone service from one VIP to another. I would love to hear from you if you think you would like to try this.

Under-60s

This is a group for younger people — if you want to find out more or get involved then please get in touch.

If you are interested in any of the above then please contact me at the office. I will be delighted to speak to you.

tel: **01592 644979**

Amanda Graham

Social and Recreation Project Worker

BASE announces events

BASE (Blind Activities Support Events) is a friendly group of visually-impaired folk, operating in and around East Fife. Thanks to the support of sighted guides we enjoy getting out and about. For example, there are opportunities to swim, visit places of interest, or the theatre, take part in a walk, canoe, or tandem cycle accompanied by a ranger or share a meal at Christmas. Transport can usually be provided to visually-impaired in East Fife.

If you'd like to know more or would like to join us as a volunteer please telephone:

Joe Lamb (Chairman) **01334 475909**, or
Morag Stewart (Secretary) **01334 840490**

Alternatively, please visit our website:

www.fifibase.org

Forthcoming BASE events:

Thu 5 May 2011 Lochore Meadows

Thu 2 June 2011 Loch Leven Castle with Forth Pilgrims

NOTE: Swimming resumes during student term time.

Concert

Don't miss the family cabaret concert at the Halfway House, Kingseat on **Sun 6 November 2011** from 2.00pm to 5.00pm.

Full details in the next issue of the newsletter.

IT news

FSB at Elmwood College

The new Karten Room within Elmwood College is proving very popular. A wide range of specialist equipment is available to try. Instead of having to travel from North-East Fife to Kirkcaldy, you now have the opportunity to meet me in Cupar at Elmwood College.

Please contact Hazel on **01592 644979** if you wish to make use of this facility. Access is by appointment only. Alternatively, you can still make appointments with me to discuss magnification/speech software and electronic magnifiers at FSB in Kirkcaldy.

In addition, there are several IT courses available to help familiarise yourself with specialist software. Courses are funded through Learn Direct Scotland. Our newest course and the most popular is 'Using Guide Software'. Dolphin Guide software is simple talking computing for people that are blind or partially sighted and are new to computers.

For further information contact Hazel on **01592 644979**

... and for lovers of YouTube

There is now an accessible web interface for the ever popular YouTube. Search for audio/video material on YouTube effortlessly using Povid's YourTube interface. Povid is offering this service free of charge to everyone!

To try it out, visit: **www.povidi.com/yourtube**

NOTE: you need to type 'yourtube' – with an extra 'r', not 'youtube')

Hazel White

Access Technology Trainer

Watch your step!

In the run up to Falls Awareness Week 2011 beginning Monday 20 June, we are asking readers to ‘watch your step’. This is because vision has been shown to be one of the most important factors in contributing to falls.

Reduced vision can make spotting and navigating hazards, steps and uneven ground more difficult. Reduced vision can also affect balance, co-ordination and mobility, as well as accelerating reduction in muscle strength — all of which increase a person’s risk of falling.

Age-related eye conditions, such as macular degeneration and glaucoma can increase the risk of falling for people of older age. This can occur at a time of life when other health conditions might also be affecting mobility and ease of movement.

We encourage readers, particularly those of older age, to follow three key messages to help reduce the risk of falling:

1 Eye health

Regular eye health checks are essential to looking after ourselves, especially as we get older. Yearly checks are recommended for people over 70.

2 The right glasses

Wearing the right glasses at the right times can reduce our risk of falling. If you have two or more pairs of glasses, make sure you are wearing the appropriate pair, especially when moving around — both in and out of doors.

3 Simple changes

Simple changes to our environment and lifestyle can improve vision and help prevent falls. Remember:

- Remove that piece of loose carpeting — before you trip on it
- Check for loose cables lying in pathways and tidy these away

- Make sure you have sufficient lighting to get the best from your sight
- Ensure you keep your glasses clean!

Falls Awareness Week runs during the week of **20–24 June** this year.

At FSB, supporting visually impaired people to be aware of the risk of falls is part of the work we do every day. However, you may notice a special focus on falls awareness in the run-up to this date. In particular, we would like to hear from people who would be interested in learning more about falls awareness and how to prevent falls.

If you would like to get in touch about falls awareness please contact William at Fife Sensory Impairment Centre on **01592 644979**.

In the meantime, remember that there is a variety of support available in Fife to help make the most of your sight — and to prevent falls. Free eye tests are available to everyone in Scotland. For those that cannot make it to their local optician, there is also help. Insight services are available to anyone with a sight problem in Fife and they can provide information on low-vision services, aids and adaptations.

William Chainey

Social Worker

Support for *you*

WRVS works with local volunteers to provide various services including Community Transport and Good Neighbours within the local Fife community. WRVS can also offer volunteering opportunities throughout the Fife area.

Getting about

WRVS works with volunteer drivers to provide transport for those who cannot use public transport. WRVS can help elderly, frail, or disabled people as well as carers who may not find the public transport convenient to use.

WRVS can assist those who struggle to access transport. WRVS can provide a friendly volunteer driver to take someone to a medical or social appointment. WRVS can also help people to attend to their personal business at the bank, post office, chemist or the local shops.

There is a 40p per mile charge for these services to cover the volunteers' expenses, with a minimum charge of £4. There may also be minor additional costs which you will be advised of when booking a driver — please give at least three days' notice to allow time to contact volunteer drivers.

Free services

WRVS can provide Community Transport free to those registered blind or visually impaired living in the east of Fife (including Levenmouth and East Wemyss). This is possible through funds received from The Lady Margaret Skiffington Trust. WRVS can also subsidise the cost of transport (and in some cases offer free transport) to residents of Elie aged 65 and over, thanks to The Lanchen Greig Trust.

For further information about the service or volunteering opportunities, please contact WRVS on:

01333 730309 (east) or **01592 269654** (central & west)

Coffee morning

FSB would like to say a huge thank you to the following local businesses that supported our Christmas Coffee Morning and helped to raise a fantastic £727.

McDonalds, Retail Park, Kirkcaldy

Greggs, Mercat, Kirkcaldy

Chicken Shop, High Street, Kirkcaldy

Co-op, Kirkcaldy

Asda, Kirkcaldy

Marks & Spencer, Kirkcaldy

David Sands, Lauder Road, Kirkcaldy

We would also like to thank our volunteers and clients who came along on the day and made this event such a success.

Lottery results

And finally, the 200 Club lottery results from 10 Nov to 11 March:

November 2010

1 st Prize	No. 083	Carol Bell	£202.50
2 nd Prize	No. 168	David Pollock	£40.50
2 nd Prize	No. 090	Alice Ednie	£40.50
3 rd Prize	No. 119	Elizabeth Rippon	£24.30
3 rd Prize	No. 013	Alan Suttie	£24.30
3 rd Prize	No. 186	Fiona Fleming	£24.30

December 2010

1 st Prize	No. 140	Hazel White	£790.00
2 nd Prize	No. 074	May Lannan	£39.50
2 nd Prize	No. 117	Eleanor Young	£39.50

3 rd Prize	No. 033	Helen Buchanan	£23.70
3 rd Prize	No. 189	Margaret Bell	£23.70
3 rd Prize	No. 176	Mrs Annie Procter	£23.70

January 2011

1 st Prize	No. 109	Mary Michie	£196.25
2 nd Prize	No. 193	Alison Bavidge	£39.25
2 nd Prize	No. 145	Alexander Reid	£39.25
3 rd Prize	No. 188	Geoffrey Strong	£23.55
3 rd Prize	No. 075	David Birse	£23.55
3 rd Prize	No. 014	Richard Godfrey-McKay	£23.55

February 2011

1 st Prize	No. 055	Teresa Gallagher	£196.25
2 nd Prize	No. 082	Mary S Lannan	£39.25
2 nd Prize	No. 078	Alexander Erskine	£39.25
3 rd Prize	No. 138	Elizabeth Telford	£23.55
3 rd Prize	No. 172	Brian Craig	£23.55
3 rd Prize	No. 100	Ron Oliphant	£23.55

March 2011

1 st Prize	No. 012	Cindy Godfrey-McKay	£201.25
2 nd Prize	No. 114	Margaret Dorward	£40.25
2 nd Prize	No. 175	Marion Jeffery	£40.25
3 rd Prize	No. 004	Judith Barton	£24.15
3 rd Prize	No. 049	Marianne Baird	£24.15
3 rd Prize	No. 194	Violet Langham	£24.15



FIFE SOCIETY FOR THE
BLIND

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