

VISOR

(Visually Impaired Society of Richmond)

SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER



WELCOME TO OUR SUMMER NEWSLETTER

A special welcome to our new members Sue, Bridget and Chris, Lesley and Roy who have joined since our last newsletter.

We are now well settled into our new venue at the Richmond Library Annex where we hold our monthly tea/chat and small quiz session. It is light and airy and all on one level with accessible facilities. We would love to see more members and friends there so please do not be put off if you are not keen on quizzes - it is only a fun quiz with small prizes. It is more of a chance to have a chat and a catch up.

Our volunteer and Trustee, Steve, is making good progress following his ankle surgery and is now weight bearing a little and hopes to return in the Autumn. We all send him our very best wishes for a speedy recovery.

I hope to see you soon, maybe on the trip to Blenheim Palace. As soon as we get dates for our lunch at the View and our Twickenham Rugby Ground Xmas lunch with music, we will be in contact.

I hope you enjoy our new style newsletter.

Best wishes from us all.

Pat

VISOR BOAT TRIP ON THE THAMES

On Wednesday 24th May thirty four Visor members and carers were treated to a wonderful private boat trip funded by a very generous donation from a member. The afternoon tea was kindly paid for by the Kew Cricket Club and the Rollings family.

We met on a very warm and sunny day at St. Helena's Pier, Water Lane, Richmond where we found our private boat which could take a maximum of fifty people. The skipper and crew of two greeted us on arrival and did a wonderful job of helping everyone on board. About half decided to stay on the top deck and the remainder headed for the cabin with a bar and tables and chairs with some shelter from the sun.

We were given a very interesting commentary all the way up to Hampton Court by the skipper, which was both educational and amusing. Amongst the wildlife seen were several swan families with their cygnets and a heron.

We went through Teddington Lock on our way to Hampton Court and our return journey took us further towards Kew and Brentford where we had a great view of rear of the Duke of Northumberland's London residence, Syon House. The whole journey there and back took about four hours.

We would like to pass on a big 'thank you' to the person who kindly paid for the hire of the private boat and to the Kew Cricket Club and the Rollings family for the afternoon tea.

Were all very grateful for the lovely relaxing afternoon on the Thames on such a beautiful day.

Pat

VISOR HOLIDAY VISIT TO THE DONKEY SANCTUARY, SIDMOUTH, DEVON.

On Sunday 18th June we went on a planned trip to revisit the Sidmouth Donkey Sanctuary. Our last visit had been some five years ago. The weather was warm and sunny.

On our arrival we sat down in the yard for a short talk about the history and work of the sanctuary.

It was founded in 1969 by Dr. Elisabeth Svendsen and became a registered charity in 1973. She was on a visit to a market in Exeter and saw seven small donkeys crammed into a small pen. After she tried unsuccessfully to buy the donkey in the worst condition, she decided that instead of breeding donkeys she would try to save them.

By 1973 she was caring for 38 donkeys and in 1974 she received a telephone call from a solicitor who was the Executor of the Estate of the late Miss Violet Philpin who had been running the Helping Hand Animal Welfare League Donkey Sanctuary near Reading, Berkshire. The solicitor explained that Dr. Svendsen had been left a legacy of 208 donkeys.

To cut a long story short, the Charity Commission allowed the two charities to merge. They managed to purchase Slade House Farm, near Sidmouth. Since then more than 14,500 donkeys have passed through their care. They then extended their work to Europe, Africa and Asia. In 1980 Dr. Svendsen was awarded the MBE for her services to animal welfare.

She sadly passed away in 2011 aged 81 years and the sanctuary is now managed by seven Trustees (some of her family members) and they remain responsible for the assets and activities.

At present there are 274 donkeys at Sidmouth grazing in 227 acres.

One of their projects is helping children with special needs interact with the gentle donkeys. Approximately 150 children per week enjoy these free sessions.

After listening to the talk it was time for lunch and we made our way to our reserved tables where we enjoyed fresh homemade soup and sandwiches.

After an extended lunch we visited the donkeys and had a chance to watch them being groomed and being called in for lunch. It was quite amusing to note there was a definite pecking order in the line-up for feeding time. We also witnessed one or two disputes between male donkeys over their particular friends, usually female!

The shop was amazing, loads of souvenirs and gifts. Some of us purchased large furry donkeys for ourselves — so cuddly.

We left Sidmouth feeling very tired but glad that we made the pilgrimage again.

Pat

OUR DAY TRIP TO SALTRAM HOUSE

The beginning of our journey was uneventful. Our Driver, Matt, had programmed the Post Code for Saltram House, into the coach's Sat. Nav. When we were about 5 miles from our destination, the route started to become very rural. The Sat Nav's directions took us down overgrown country lanes. At this stage the driver did not appear to be concerned about this development. As we continued on, we became concerned that we had not seen any of the usual brown National Trust signs for the House. Continuing on, the route took us through quaint little villages, along very narrow roads. They were not straight either!

The coach turned down one road which was especially narrow, with cars parked on both sides. On we went until we nearly reached the end of the road, when Matt exclaimed "That's it —I can't get through between these cars!" As the coach edged backwards along the road, householders were watching us out of their windows. The Driver had to reverse between 200 to 300 yards through these cars and then had to perform a 5 to 7 point turn. As we continued, we noticed a small sign for Saltram. Eventually we arrived safely at our destination — Saltram House.

Our party comprised 16 members and we were asked to split into 4 groups of 4. The group I joined went to the Chapel tearoom first, where we enjoyed drinks, sandwiches and crisps. One member asked for a hot chocolate. When it arrived it was in a China "chocolate" pot, - just as tea is served in a teapot — quite unusual.

Once refreshed, we began our tour of the house, starting in the Entrance Hall, then progressing through to the Library, the Dining area and the Card Room. Perhaps one of the most interesting parts was where the food was produced.

This comprised the main Kitchen, where the food was cooked, the food preparation room and finally the scullery, where all the washing up was done.

The Library shelves were filled with 1000's of books. The oldest, dated 1435, was a money ledger.

Here is a further item of trivia — there were paintings and artworks in every room, except, of course, for the Kitchen areas. At an approximate estimate, I think there were well over 1,000 paintings, a number of which included nude men and women. There was a volunteer room-guide in each room, who all seemed very knowledgeable (but as I knew very little about the house that would not be difficult!!).

Once the tour was over, our group returned to the restaurant for ice creams and drinks and then on to the souvenir shop, to spend some money.

On the journey back to the hotel, Matt ensured that we travelled on main roads (such as Dual Carriageways and Motorways), careful to avoid the morning's scenic route. All Members agreed that our Driver, Matt King, was a "Super Hero", managing to get us safely to Saltram House, despite the Coach's Sat Nav! Our sincere thanks to him, for his skill and patience.

Doug - Trustee

FOOD AT THE CLIFFDEN HOTEL
15th- 19th JUNE 2023

Thursday, 15th June

We went to dinner at 6:00 p.m. prompt. We all ordered from the new menu. This first night, we all had a good meal, and a glass of wine.

Friday, 16th June

Breakfast was a buffet menu, with all the usual treats: cereal, fruit juice, yogurt and muffins followed by a 'full English'. If desired, a 'help-yourself' coffee machine was available.

Dinner was very slow tonight, with the same menu (not much else to say).

Saturday, 17th June

Breakfast was as the day before.

Dinner was a disaster; very slow (nearly 2 hours).
It was very disappointing — no ice cream!

Sunday, 18th June

Breakfast — buffet, as before.

Dinner was very poor and slow. We were told when we arrived back from our trip that it was going to be a buffet dinner but to our surprise it was a reduced menu. We all held our breath but were pleased that the restaurant Manager had managed to get cream and ice cream. What a lovely surprise.

Monday, 19th June

Breakfast was the usual buffet, before we departed for home.

Keith

THE TORQUAY WHEEL

On the day of our visit to Torquay, we all stopped at a café to have a cold drink as it was a very hot morning, then some of us walked up to the Torquay Wheel. I wanted to go on because I had been on the London Eye and enjoyed it, and had always wanted to go on the Torquay Wheel too. I went into the pod with Doug and Edward, followed by Pat and Raymond in another pod. It was very high to step into the pod but I managed to get in with my short legs. We went around three times. The view was Torquay beach, and I could see the boats in the sea, and the town. It was a nice slow ride around; it was a relaxing ride. We could see Raymond and Pat when passing the top of the wheel and going back down, and we waved to each other.

Then we got off the wheel, we set down to have a rest and we spotted the ice cream shop. We decided to have an ice cream, see the view of the sea, and palm trees, enjoying nice weather. I would like to go on the wheel again.

Carol

DAY TRIP TO WIMBLEDON TENNIS

On Tuesday, 11th July, I made my way on the 493 bus to Wimbledon. I joined the queue for an hour and spoke to a number of fellow tennis fans.

On entering Wimbledon I made my way for a coffee and then wandered around the grounds and onto various courts. Later, around 4:00 p.m., we had a rain break, so it was time for strawberries and cream, and the shops. I bought a couple of caps.

I made my way to Henman Hill and watched the ladies' singles before having another walk around. It turned out that I saw the new boys champion playing, Henry Searle - for the U.K, followed by the No.1 men's seeds on Court 3, followed by the No.1 women's seeds, before leaving for home around 7:30 p.m.

Keith

VISOR TRUSTEES AND MEMBERS JOIN PROTEST AT MORTLAKE STATION REGARDING CLOSURE OF TICKET OFFICES

On Monday 21st August Visor members joined MPs Sarah Olney, Munira Wilson and representatives from RUILS (Richmond Users Independent Living Scheme) outside Mortlake Station. The well-known actress, Patricia Hodge, who lives in the area was also present.

The protest was organised by Councillor Julia Cambridge, one of our local councillors. About one hundred people gathered holding banners and placards whilst photographs were taken. A photograph can be seen online in Sarah Olney's Richmond Hub News.

Unfortunately we were not given much notice of the protest otherwise I am sure more Visor members would have joined us. We are very concerned about the problems of ticket office closures and reduction of hours because the totally blind and vision impaired are perhaps the most seriously affected.

Pat

FREE ITEMS AVAILABLE IN OFFICE:

Large button cream telephone

Large label medication dispenser

Braille (stud marked) measuring tape

Various small magnifiers

Sunglasses

Measuring jug

Large desk top Tele sensory magnifier suitable for enlarging newspaper/magazines/letters

THANK YOU

VISOR Trustees would like to thank the following for their assistance and support:

- The London Mayor's Fund (Building Strong Communities)
- The Hampton Fund
- Richmond Parish Lands Charity
- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The Ulverscroft Foundation
- Middlesex Association for the Blind

- Eddie Mears, IT Consultant, for his continued invaluable assistance
- The Complete Office for their assistance with printing and advice with respect to office services and equipment
- Richmond Libraries (Annexe) for providing a venue for our regular meetings
- Kew Cricket Club for advertising us on their website
- Keith Rose — volunteer and Kew CC liaison

VISOR Trustees

FUTURE TRIPS/EVENTS

Thursday	September 14 th	VISOR Quiz afternoon at 2.30p.m.
Wednesday	September 20 th	Blenheim Palace day trip, house and gardens
Thursday	October 12 th	VISOR Quiz afternoon at 2.30p.m.
Friday	October 13 th	FULL OF LIFE FAIR Twickenham Rugby Ground
Thursday	November 9 th	VISOR AGM Meeting + Luxury tea
To be advised	November	Lunch at The View, Twickenham
Thursday	December 14 th	VISOR Quiz afternoon at 2.30p.m. + Xmas raffle
To be advised	December	Lunch at the Twickenham Rugby Ground
Tuesday	January 2 nd 2024	Dick Whittington Pantomime (audio described)

VISOR
CURRENT ELECTED OFFICERS
AND TRUSTEES

Pat McNamee - Chair

Alwyn Wales - Acting Bookkeeper

Trustees:

John Hoschander

Edward Price

Steve Rollins

Doug Smith

Josie Wood

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**Visitors Centre opening hours:
Mondays: 10:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.**

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**This newsletter was compiled by the office volunteers.
Many thanks to our contributors.**