

# OCULUS

**2021 EDITION**



**The Partially Sighted Society**  
Seeing the way forward, together

**[WWW.PARTSIGHT.ORG.UK](http://WWW.PARTSIGHT.ORG.UK)**



# OCULUS

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# SEEING THE WAY FORWARD

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The last 18 months have been challenging for our small team at the Society. Along with many other charities, we had to close our doors to visitors, postpone all face-to-face assessments and put on hold our support and social activities.

We were still available at the end of a phone and continued to provide advice, aids and equipment as well as print all our diaries, calendars and school exercise books.

In fact, we printed over 1.6 million pages of diaries, calendars and exercise books in the last 12 months alone!

We also took the time to fully develop our online shop which has been fully functional for a year now. Returning to 'normal' has been wonderful.

Welcoming friends, old and new back into our building again to the Knit and Natter and monthly social and support group meetings. We are back to full speed with our low vision assessments and sight tests.

We also have some exciting new projects in the pipeline so watch this space!

It has been a pleasure to welcome on board new trustees and our new Communications Officer. In this issue of Oculus you get to meet our trustees and new member of staff and the rest of the team at the Society.

Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to all of you for your continued support which has enabled us to remain open and still be here.

**Anita Plant**  
**CEO**

# MEET THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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**Gerald Reed  
Chairman**

**My name is Gerald Reed, and I am the Chairman of the Partially Sighted Trustee Board.**

**In my former life I was Head of the Doncaster Sensory Impairment Education Service, responsible for deaf and blind children in Doncaster.**

**I retired from this post in 2014 after working 34 years for Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council.**

**Following my retirement, I started voluntary work in the**

**Partially Sighted Society's print room, starting in 2015. Shortly after this, Anita, our CEO, suggested I join the board as a trustee which I did later that same year.**

**In 2017 I was elected to the position of the Partially Sighted Society's Chairman and have helped oversee it's progress ever since.**

**My interests are varied and many; I like to run, paint (in watercolour and acrylic), ballroom and sequence dance and play classical guitar.**



# MEET THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



**Keith Binks**  
**Treasurer**

**My name is Keith Binks, I am a former Principal of a large Doncaster Secondary School. Nine months after retirement I had a second Optic Neuropathy resulting in a bilateral visual impairment.**

**When the Hallamshire Eye Hospital discharged me, I sought the support of the Partially Sighted Society.**

**The Partially Sighted Society gave me hope and confidence to rebuild my life and see the way forward. I was delighted to be asked to be a trustee as**

**I feel passionate about helping as many people as possible to lead a fulfilling and purposeful life.**

**I am now using my experience in leadership and management to support an outstanding team to grow and enhance provision to the many thousands of partially sighted people who need our help.**

**I am married to Sue and I am a proud father to my 2 talented boys.**

 **JustGiving** Donate to The Partially Sighted Society

# MEET THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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**Janet Reed**  
**Secretary**

I am Janet Reed and I am a trustee for the Partially Sighted Society. I am a retired teacher of children and young people with physical and medical needs, based in a special school in Doncaster for 35 years.

My husband is Gerald Reed, who is the Chairman of the Partially Sighted Society.

Although being retired was fun, I wanted to do something useful for the community. I became a volunteer for the Society in 2016 when I helped

to develop the Knit and Natter group which, even to this day, has proven to be a huge success. Volunteering at other Partially Sighted Society events soon became a big part of my life, a part of my life I thoroughly enjoy.

In 2020 I became a trustee, helping spread the word of the Partially Sighted Society to a wider community.

My interests include travelling, knitting, ballroom and sequence dancing all of which help me keep fit and healthy!

# MEET THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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**Peter Moore**  
**Trustee**

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From early adulthood I was involved in a variety of organisations. In college I was President of the Students' Union and on joining the City of London Police, I was secretary of the Police Players, a local thespian society.

During my time with the Police, I met and married my Northern Lass, a nurse from Rotherham. We had three children and we moved "up north" to Doncaster. My youngest son showed aptitude in running which led to my

involvement in athletics, specifically coaching where I became senior performance and development coach for England Athletics, Yorkshire.

Nine years ago, as a result of a melanoma, I lost sight in my right eye and in 2017 I suffered a detached retina in my left. This has left me with just considerably blurred vision in my left eye.

I became a trustee to give a little back after the wonderful help and advice I received from the PSS.

# MEET THE STAFF

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**Anita Plant**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

**I am the CEO of the Partially Sighted Society and have been with the Society since November 2011 when I returned to the UK with my family after living in South Africa for 22 years. My initial plan was to go for two years.**

**I was initially employed at PSS on a part-time basis as a low vision services manager to set up an exemplary low-vision clinic, no pressure! As the clinic grew in popularity, so did my hours. I was invited to take over as CEO in 2014.**

**My career in sight loss began in South Africa in 1990. After working in publishing in the UK, when I moved to South Africa I decided I wanted to make a difference in my working life. I re-trained as an Orientation and Mobility Rehabilitation Officer with South African Guide Dogs Association. This was the start of my career working with people with sight loss. I am constantly learning and I am passionate about helping those with sight loss lead full and independent lives.**

# MEET THE STAFF

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**Andre Plant**  
**Printing Manager**

**My name is Andre Plant. I am married to Anita Plant who is my boss at work and at home.**

**I have led a varied life - head of graphics with the South African Defence Force television studios, flight steward for South African Airways, marketing director for an outdoor and mountaineering equipment retail business, film animator and freelance illustrator of educational books.**

**Anita and I returned to the UK in 2011 and I am enjoying**

**my work at The Partially Sighted society and working with people with sight loss and my colleagues. My job role has enabled the Society to print over a million pages of exercise books, diaries, calendars and bespoke designs for people with sight loss all across the country.**

**My passions in life are motorcycles, travelling, cycling and outdoor pursuits.**

**When you phone in you'll recognise me from my South African accent.**

# MEET THE STAFF

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**Marcus Charles**  
**Executive Assistant**

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I found the PSS when I brought my partially-sighted mother for a low-vision assessment and then support group meetings. I offered to volunteer, then took a part-time job which turned into a full-time role.

I have worked throughout my life in customer service and as an advocate for consumers. At the independent Gas Consumers Council I helped people whose bill was too high or whose stove was wrongly installed. I worked with enquiries at the toy

section of Harrods. Whilst in Canada, I worked as a teller at the Royal Bank of Canada and helped set up a community art gallery in a tiny Canadian town called Horsefly.

All these jobs involved listening carefully to people and suggesting ways to meet their needs, and I am always ready for a laugh. You will most likely talk to me if you ring the Partially Sighted Society, and I eagerly await your call and you can be assured of all the help I can provide.



# MEET THE STAFF

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**Shaun Fowler**  
**Communications Officer**

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**My name is Shaun, I'm the newest member of the Partially Sighted Society and my role is Communications Officer.**

**It's my job to help create content on behalf of the Society to help us grow and get out there to more people who need us.**

**Before joining the Partially Sighted Society I studied Journalism at the University of Sheffield and made many great friends along the way. I hope the same happens whilst**

**I am here. I do have a passion for writing and creating works of journalistic interest, so being assigned to work on this edition of Oculus is an extremely exciting experience.**

**In my spare time I love being active and playing sports (when I'm not injured). Really most of my spare time is taken up by my Yorkshire Terrier, he's a rascal and a handful but probably (and sadly), my best friend.**

**I hope you all enjoy this special edition of Oculus!**

# **PSS Deep Dive - Introducing Robyn Mackay, Our Newest Member of the Board of Trustees**



**Robyn Mackay has lost most of her sight but this doesn't hold her back. From starting her own holistic massage business to performing heavy duty DIY, this article explores how Robyn lost her vision, and what makes her the wonderful success story she is today.**

My name is Robyn, and I was born with a rare genetic condition which has affected my eyesight since birth. I am a typical 30-year-old Millennial who has embraced life to its fullest.

Through this article I will take you through my visual condition, career, life and

other experiences in hopes to give you some perspective on how a life can be lived even with a sight impairment.

I was born with a condition called, Leber's Congenital Amaurosis (LCA). A lot of readers will have probably heard of Retinitis Pigmentosa. This in fact is a term used



to group together lots of conditions, one of which is Leber's Congenital Amaurosis (LCA).

To understand how LCA occurs we first need to understand a little about genetics. Every person has two copies of every gene in their body. When a child is forming in the womb it has one gene from the mother and one from the father which in essence makes a completely new and unique human being.

One of the reasons why we have two copies of each gene is because abnormalities and defects in genetic coding cause faulty genes to be present in our bodies.

As we all have the two genes, having a faulty copy of one gene is generally not a problem. However, if a faulty gene is received from both the mother and father then conditions such as LCA can occur. The chances of two people who have a faulty copy of the same gene is considerably rare and as both

parents also have a working copy of the gene, it is not something which can be detected until a child starts to show signs of the genetic abnormality and begins to develop differently.

LCA is a condition which solely relates to both faulty genes being present in the same retinal gene. For myself this is the RPE65 gene, one of the most common in which this condition occurs and affects around 80 people in the U.K.

The absence of a healthy copy of the RPE65 gene means that the retinas do not form correctly resulting in sight loss from birth followed by deteriorating vision as the person ages. The condition always presents with night blindness. From speaking to others with the condition, it does not appear that there is a set rule or timeline of vision loss. I have spoken to those who have currently got better vision than me who are in their mid 40's and adults in their early

20's with less vision. To offer some perspective, when I was at infants and junior school, I mostly got by with my worksheets being photocopied from A4 to A3 (doubled in size).

As I got to secondary school, I started receiving specially adapted materials starting at 28pt size fonts working up to 36pt.

During my time at university everything was digital so monitoring font sizes wasn't so straight forward, but I moved solely to reading in negative font style (white or yellow font on a black background).

Sometime in my mid-twenties I started to notice things getting more difficult. I moved to using a screen reader for my phone and tablet and playing my beloved Mario Kart became a thing of the past.

I now describe my vision as having a little more than light perception being able to make out some shapes and objects, especially in familiar settings.

However, this is not the end of my sight journey. The day before my 21st birthday I found out a new gene therapy treatment for my condition was working its way through medical trials in the US.

After nine years patiently waiting and multiple trips to Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, I finally received my first treatment of Luxturna in April 2021 at Manchester Royal Eye Hospital. Luxturna is a gene therapy treatment where they get a working copy of the RPE65W gene and inject it under the retina.

For the body to absorb the gene it is combined with a harmless virus. Based on the sheer number of genetic conditions out there, I feel incredibly privileged that my condition has been one of the first to be researched and a gene therapy has been successfully developed. With this treatment the younger the patient the more effective the results.



**As my cells have had 30 years to degenerate, I have found the improvement has been minimal, however I expect most people with a visual impairment will agree that every scrap of eyesight is precious, and we should do everything we can to treasure what we have.**

**I have spent a lot of time in this article talking about a visual condition and medical breakthroughs. But for me as a person I strongly feel we should not be defined by our disabilities but by our capabilities and passions. This credit should be given to my mother who pushed me to**

**be the best person I could, nothing was impossible, and this is an attitude I believe I carry forward even now. Life holds so many possibilities and exciting opportunities, from zip lining through the rainforest and swimming with dolphins to the more mundane events like learning how to change a toilet seat.**

**From leaving school I went on to complete a Law degree but for several reasons I decided against a career in law and have been working as a self-employed Complementary Therapist. Although I don't have human babies, I have managed to accumulate a husband and**



numerous fur babies in the form of guinea pigs, who I feel can be as demanding as any regular children (that is the guinea pigs, not the husband, he is actually pretty awesome).

I could take time to tell you about the various places I have travelled but based on the current situation I feel that would be like rubbing salt in the wounds, so instead I want to share a bit about my lockdown experience with you.

Although Netflix and audiobooks were great distractions, I spent a chunk of my time extending my drive. This involved digging out 6 ton of soil, spreading and topping it all off with more pebbles than

I needed. This might sound very random, but I wanted to share it as an example of not letting life hold you back. Between that and my own toolkit I got for Christmas I feel like an independent woman and a force to be reckoned with.

**By Robyn Mackay**



  
**ROBYN'S HOLISTICS**  


**Book a Massage or  
 Aromatherapy Session Today!**  
[www.doncastermassage.co.uk](http://www.doncastermassage.co.uk)



# **Coming to terms with sight loss and living life with low vision - an emotional journey you are not alone on.**



**Being diagnosed with a visual impairment has a major impact on your life. Every person's reaction will vary but you may find yourself experiencing feelings of denial, anger and fear. You may be asking yourself many questions.**

What's important to understand is that all of these feelings are normal. Losing sight is similar to a bereavement and the emotions you are feeling are all part of the

healing process, a period of adjustment, that will eventually lead you to adapting to the changes in your life due to your vision loss.

## **SHOCK AND DISBELIEF**

Whether your vision loss comes suddenly or a diagnosis of deteriorating sight loss is given, the immediate reaction is one of shock and disbelief. You may not believe it and look for second and third opinions. You may find yourself

carrying on as normal - as if there has been no significant change in your life.

This is the first stage of the process. It is your mind's way of 'buying time' to allow you to become used to the impact the diagnosis has on your mental and physical wellbeing, like a natural defence mechanism.

## **ANGER AND QUESTIONING**

Anger is another normal response to this unwelcome change in your life. You may find yourself feeling angry and irritable with those around you and with medical providers or institutions. If your cause of vision loss was caused by an accident or the ineffective or inadequate medical treatment then you have a legitimate target for your anger. When this is the case, seeking justice can help you feel you are once again in control. However, sometimes there is no obvious target for the anger. You may ask yourself, 'why me?'. You find yourself searching for

explanations even though they won't make any difference to your situation.

Using this anger to focus your energy on exploring ways of changing the way you view this experience is necessary in order to feel you can move on.

Over time you will find ways to deal with your sight loss, focus on the positives and find ways of moving forward.

## **FEELING VULNERABLE ANXIOUS AND HELPLESS**

Once you begin to come to terms with what lies beyond your power of changing you may begin to feel vulnerable, anxious and helpless. This can be scary. You may find yourself worrying about income, becoming dependent on others and feel embarrassed and anxious when around other people.

However, finding new ways of living with sight loss and gaining new skills in the process can help you

to regain confidence. But, if you find the anxiety and panic overwhelming it is important to seek help from your GP or a counsellor.

## **SADNESS AND GRIEF**

It is completely normal to grieve for a sense that you are now losing or have lost. It is a natural process and takes time. It is okay to cry, scream into a pillow. Allowing yourself space will strengthen your ability to cope.

However, if the sadness goes on for too long it can tip over into depression. If these feelings are stopping you from getting on with life or you have thoughts of harming yourself seek help from your GP or Counsellor.

## **LOSS AND RENEWAL OF IDENTITY**

Our identity is so often tied into the things we do. When one experiences loss of sight you may lose sense of who you are. Perhaps you were the main breadwinner, the aspiring artist or

practical mechanic. With the right kinds of adjustments these roles will not be lost to you. On the positive side, it may be an opportunity to find a new career or interest. You may not feel it, but when you are ready for them, new opportunities may arise that you may otherwise never have been exposed to.

Adjusting to your new sense of self is a gradual process and each person's journey to reaching that point is different. But you will get to a stage when you begin to feel better and able to move on.

## **LEARNING AND ACCEPTANCE**

As you move through your sight loss journey you will find yourself learning about your visual impairment and the challenges it brings.

You will find yourself learning new ways of navigating this strange new world and learning from others is a big part of this journey.

Finding out about what support, aids and adaptations there are to help you is another step towards acceptance. Talking to others about what has benefitted them is part of the learning experience. As you begin to learn about your situation you may begin to find the positives in this seemingly negative situation.

## **MOVING ON**

All of these emotions are normal and part of the process. Everyone's journey is different. Different people will find different ways of adapting. Once acceptance is reached it will make it easier to find ways of adopting a positive aspect towards life with sight loss which will in turn, help make you a stronger and more resilient person.

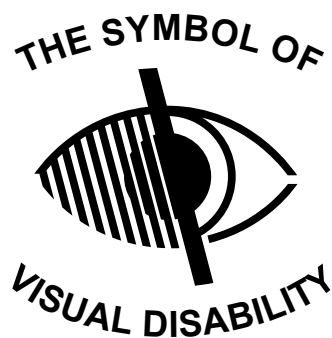
If you or anyone you know is experiencing difficulties with sight loss, The Partially Sighted Society are here to help. Feel free to give us a call, on 01302 965195 and

# **Are We Still Friends?**

It's not too late to become a friend or renew your friendship with the Partially Sighted Society!

For just £20 per year you can enjoy great benefits with us such as free admission to our group sessions and access to our newsletters. You'll also be helping us continue our hard work helping those with low-vision, to improve their quality of life and regain their independence.

To become a friend of the charity or to renew your friendship with us, give us a call on 01302 965195 or email [reception@partights.org.uk](mailto:reception@partights.org.uk)





# Six Foods That Feed Your Eyes



**Eating a healthy diet can benefit our overall health but there are certain foods that are great for our eye health. In this article we discuss six foods that will give your eyes a nutritional boost.**

## **Leafy Greens**

Your mother knew a thing or two when she told you to eat your greens. The no.1 food for feeding our eyes, leafy greens such as kale, spinach, rocket and watercress contain vitamins C and E, which are powerful antioxidants plus carotenoids, lutein and

zeaxanthin which help to protect the macula area of your retina. Studies also show that leafy greens may slow or prevent the development of cataracts.

How about a massaged kale salad with pecans, cranberries and goat cheese?

## **Almonds**

Next time you fancy a nibble reach for the nuts. Almonds contain high levels of vitamin E which make them a perfect snack for eye health. Vitamin E helps reduce the risk of age-related macular degeneration by slowing down the body's

oxygenation process.

Almonds also contain lots of Omega-3 fatty acids and helps the body absorb vitamin A. Pecan, walnuts and macadamia nuts also pack a healthy punch with regards to eye health.

Have a jar of nuts to hand and mix them up with some pumpkin and sunflower seeds for an extra nutrient boost.

### **Eggs**

The egg is such a wonderful, versatile food. In terms of eye health the egg yolk is a powerhouse packed with vitamin A, zeaxanthin, lutein and zinc.

Lutein and zeaxanthin are antioxidants that protect the macula and can help delay the formation of cataracts. Vitamin A helps keep the light sensitive cells in the retina functioning, especially those we use to see in the dark, and keeps our cornea hydrated.

### **Salmon**

Wild salmon and other cold water fish contain high amounts of Omega-3 fatty acids which are essential for

a healthy retina. Omega-3 also supports vascular health in the eye and helps reduce the symptoms of dry eye.

If you are not a salmon fan – mackerel, herring or trout are also excellent. Why not try some on toast?

### **Blueberries**

This little berry is full of vitamins A, C and E and zinc. This vitamin combination can help delay the formation of cataracts and macula degeneration as well as help to lower your risk of developing high blood pressure. Add berries to your cereal, yoghurt, muffins or salads.

### **Carrots**

Although they won't necessarily help you to see in the dark, carrots are rich in beta-carotene which our bodies very cleverly turn into vitamin A which is essential for keeping our eyes healthy. Bored with eating carrots in the usual way? Why not mix them into a smoothie with apples and ginger for a refreshing beverage?

# Our Favourite Recipes - Kale Salmon Salad

## Ingredients

- 4 salmon fillets
- 1 tablespoon grapeseed oil
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- dressing
- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard
- 3 tablespoons honey or maple syrup
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon chipotle powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- Salt and Pepper to taste

## Salad

- Bag of pre-prepared baby kale or spinach
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 1 red pepper, chopped

## Directions

1. Heat the oven to 200°C (Gas Mark 6)
2. Heat a large all-metal skillet over medium-high heat. Pat your salmon fillets dry and lightly salt and pepper both sides. Add the grapeseed oil, then the salmon fillets. Sear the salmon for 3 minutes. Flip the salmon and sear 3

minutes more.

3. Turn off the heat and put the skillet in the oven for 5 minutes to finish. While the salmon is baking, prepare the salad dressing.

4. In a small bowl, combine the mustard, honey or maple syrup, olive oil, chipotle powder, garlic powder and salt. Stir together until mixed together.

5. Remove the salmon from the oven and transfer it to a plate. Sprinkle the fillets with the lemon juice and allow to rest while preparing the rest of the salad.

6. Divide the kale between 4 plates and top with the green onions and red pepper. Alternatively, you could massage the dressing into the kale before topping with the onions, peppers and salmon.

7. Drizzle the salads with the dressing. Place 1 salmon fillet on top of each salad.

**SERVE AND ENJOY!**

# What is Retinal Drusen?

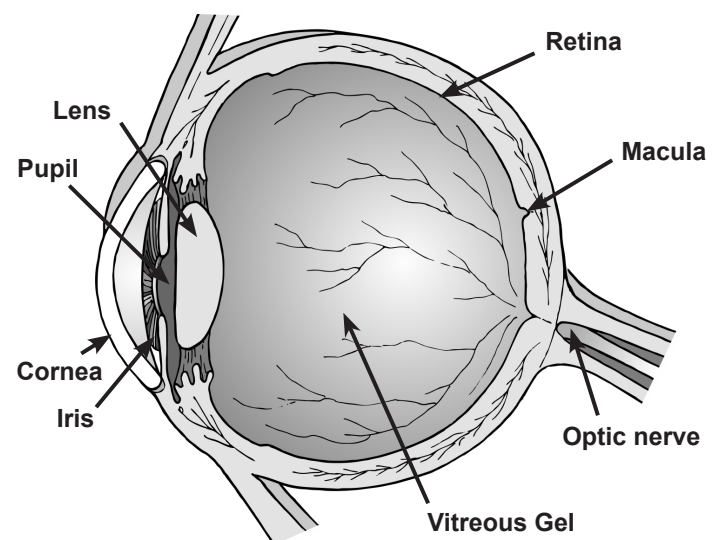
**If you have recently had an eye test or seen an eye specialist, you may have heard them mention the word ‘Drusen’ when examining the back of your eye. So, what are drusen and how do they affect vision?**

Drusen are small yellow deposits of fatty proteins that build up under the retina.

The retina is a thin layer of tissue, about the third of the thickness of a piece of paper, that lines the inside of the eye. The retina contains light-sensing cells that transmit the message from the eye along the optic nerve to the brain.

These light-sensing cells are called rod and cone cells and are essential for vision. Over time, drusen build up like tiny pebbles of debris under the layers of the retina. There are two different types, soft and hard. Soft drusen are associated with age-related macular degeneration (AMD) and as they get larger, they cluster closer together and can cause bleeding and scarring on the macula.

The macula area of our retina is used for all detailed vision.



Over time this causes central vision loss.

Hard drusen are a normal part of aging and most adults will have at least one hard drusen. This type of drusen typically doesn't require any treatment and doesn't result in vision loss. Hard drusen usually do not cause any vision problems, however the higher the number of hard drusen there are the

higher the risk of developing soft drusen.

## **What are the symptoms of drusen?**

Most people are unaware they have drusen. They are usually seen during an eye examination when the pupil has been dilated and the optometrist or ophthalmologist is examining the eye with an ophthalmoscope (a device that allows the eye doctor to see the retina at the back of the eye).

If soft drusen are detected during an eye examination your specialist may want to run additional tests for age-related macular degeneration (AMD) as it is more likely you have begun developing this condition.

## **Are there symptoms associated with AMD?**

Yes, some symptoms include:

- Distortion of straight lines.

Typically, you may notice door frames appear wonky or lines on a page have a 'kink'.

- Taking longer to adapt from bright light to low light. For example, if you come inside from outside on a sunny day.
- Vision may be hazy or blurred.
- Blank spots in your central vision.

## **What are the risk factors for drusen?**

Drusen are a part of the aging process. People over the age of 60 are at the highest risk of having drusen. They are more common in women than men, and those of Caucasian descent. Soft drusen risks associated with AMD include: a family history of macular degeneration; abnormal cholesterol levels and being over 65. There is no treatment for hard drusen. Having regular eye examinations are recommended to monitor



them to make sure the hard drusen do not turn into soft drusen.

If you have soft drusen your eye specialist will also monitor you for signs of AMD. If AMD is suspected early treatment can slow the progression of the disease and minimize any vision loss.

## **What can I do to prevent drusen?**

Having some hard drusen is part of the normal aging process of the eye and is considered harmless and normal. There is nothing you can do to prevent drusen from forming.

However, it is important to have regular eye tests to monitor the drusen and to look out for any signs of macular degeneration. Having said that, not everyone with drusen will go on to develop macular degeneration or other degenerative eye conditions of a similar severity.

If you would like more information about AMD or support or advice on living with sight loss, please call our friendly team on 01302 965195 or email [reception@partsight.org.uk](mailto:reception@partsight.org.uk)

## **New Stock! See Page 31**



# Welcome Back! - 2021 in Pictures

After a long, difficult year we finally were able to welcome back our nearest and dearest for Knit and Natters, Support Groups and Art Therapy sessions! We can't tell you how happy we are to have you all back and as you may have noticed, we had our newest member of staff on photography duty. Here are just some of the pictures from our short time back together.





# **Get Involved! - The Unique Paralympic Sport That Anyone Can Play.**



**Kathryn Fielding works for Goalball UK and has spent over 15 years tirelessly creating sporting opportunities for visually impaired people all over the country.**

**So, what is goalball?  
Goalball is a Paralympic sport that was designed specifically for blind and partially sighted players but, below international level, anyone can play because everyone wears eyeshades - so it doesn't matter what you can or can't see off court, as on court no one can see anything.  
It's then all about using your other senses. Teams therefore**

**play using an audible ball which is similar in size to a basketball but weighing 1.25kg, it is heavier. So, we track using sound rather than sight.**

**We play on an indoor court which is 18m by 9m and marked out with string and tape so that it is a giant tactile map. We therefore orientate (i.e., feel the lines with our fingers and feet) using touch rather than sight.**

**Goalball is a 3-a-side, indoor, non-invasive team game so the ball travels from half to half rather than the players.**



The players still do move, (in their half) and to try and deceive the opposition by changing the angle of attack and taking run ups to generate additional power.

Attacking is like tenpin bowling in that the ball travels along the floor. Whilst defending is like goalkeeping in that you use your body as a barrier (i.e., stretched out along the floor) to block the ball.

The goals are the full 9m width of the court, so every player has responsibility to defend and equally every player can attack. It's fast, furious and

great fun! Goalball UK are the National Governing Body so coordinate every aspect of the sport. This includes delivering taster sessions to community groups and schools.

If you are interested in playing regularly, we have a network of clubs around the country.

Some players aspire to represent Great Britain whereas others just want to get a bit fitter and come along for the social element as much as anything. We have a supportive community around the sport which we refer to as the #GoalballFamily.

We have Regional Leagues at Novice and Intermediate level and a National League at Elite level so players of all ages and abilities participate.

All our tournaments are free to spectators so even if you don't want to play, or just want to find out a bit more before you do, you're welcome to come along!

**By Katherine Fielding**



# **Have your say - Exploring Mindful and Mindless Discrimination.**

**Louise Taylor is a writer and photographer with Albinism. Her forthcoming book on living with visual impairment has chapters on harassment and discrimination and offers countless ideas to improve the lives of those affected. Having appeared on BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour, Louise is no stranger to championing the rights of those less fortunate.**

Since lockdown in March 2020, I have only once had my gas meter read, the electric one being accessible to me by using a magnifying glass. I have a so-called first generation Smart Meter but when I changed to a different energy supplier, they couldn't connect to this and so the meter needs to be read and I have nobody to read it for me. (Smart Meters are so called



Louise Taylor (left) on Women's Hour

as they automatically send details of the usage to the energy supplier, thus allaying the need to have the meters read.)

Yet again today, I contacted the supplier having been promised a new Smart Meter a couple of months ago. The person I spoke to told me that it costs the company money to change meters as there is no Government grant for second Smart Meters, which is why I cannot get a new one fitted. They may get permission to use the old Smart Meters at the end of the year. It was at this point that I

exploded on the grounds of discrimination against the blind and partially sighted. I pointed out that Customer Care had constantly told me that I am a preferential customer on their list. It was questionable whether this had any meaning whatsoever and I therefore added that it was no more than lip service being offered as we are being put at a disadvantage compared to sighted customers who can read their own meters. This is no level playing field.

I threatened to raise the issue with the Energy Ombudsman and to broadcast the discrimination by that energy provider on the internet. Within 10 minutes of the conversation, I received a call from the supplier apologising and saying that I can indeed have a new meter fitted. She transferred my call to the meter fitters to make an appointment for the work to be carried out.

Has this got a familiar ring to it? We have all been

discriminated against by individuals, organisations and in society at large. Some discrimination is mindful and some mindless.

The countless instances of me being harassed on trains due to my albinism and the fact that I hold books close to my face in order to read is mindful as the perpetrators want to be offensive and use their mobile phones in order to send photos of me to their friends.

Some might even discuss me aloud. It is hard to control this except by education and more programmes about these issues on television and radio. I am in my sixties, have been partially sighted from birth and have been at the receiving end of mindful discrimination literally thousands of times throughout life.

On the other hand, mindless discrimination is when individuals or organisations, such as the one mentioned above, have not thought





An example of Louise's exceptional photography skills. The Mahabalipuram temple, India (pictured) a part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

things through. They have not even considered how visually impaired people who live alone can manage to read their meters.

In my case, I am reluctant to ask older neighbours and friends to kneel under the stairs to do the job of the energy company. Nevertheless, by me throwing light on their lack of care and duty towards those with low or no vision, they are now going to comply.

We can change things by presenting the facts loud and clear, over and over again and

one day, things will get much better for all of us.

Please make sure that you get a second generation Smart Meter if you have changed supplier since the installation of your first Smart Meter. If you have never had one, get in touch with your energy supplier and demand one on the above grounds. Once fitted, it will alleviate the need to have any meter readers entering your premises.

**By Louise Taylor  
West Sussex**

Find out about Louise's new book soon via our Social Media!

# **NEW STOCK AT THE PARTIALLY SIGHTED SOCIETY**

**[www.partsight.org.uk/shop](http://www.partsight.org.uk/shop)**



**Combining Style With  
Safety and Utility**

**£24.95 excl. VAT**

**Product code: RUC001**

The rucksack is extremely versatile, suitable for school, outdoor activities and commuting. Increased visibility for added safety and signposts that you have an invisible disability.



**Ceremonial Dress for  
Everyday Safety  
£13.50**

**Product code: SB (M, L or XL)**

The Sam Browne Belt is a highly reflective, comfortable belt that draws attention to the wearer. Extremely effective in low light conditions.



# **PSS News - What's Been Going On?**

## **Visual Aids and Books arrive for Children and Young Adults with Sight Loss in Tanzania.**



**We are delighted to be able to announce that our surplus books and visual aids have made their way to Tanzania safe and sound.**

**Aleen Medcalf, who helps run this initiative, said: “I’m happy to tell you Mvumi Secondary School have now received their magnifiers. Ernest asks me to thank you all so much. He tells me, “The students were so excited to see and use the small pocket magnifiers”.**

**Mr Mushi (Deputy Head of the VI Unit at Mvumi) said: “I know you are doing a good job to support people who are partially sighted including our own students.**

**In our school we have been getting good examination results from our partially sighted students. On behalf of my fellow teaching staff and our students we are happy to have you and your team supporting us, thank you very much!”**

## **Reunited with an Old Friend; Mrs Marsland pays us a visit at the Partially Sighted Society.**



**Back in June of this year, the Partially Sighted Society was delighted to welcome a long time friend of the charity, Mrs Marion Marsland, to our Sight Centre in Doncaster.**

**We had a lovely time catching up with her and hearing about the stories from her past and what the society has done for her over the years. Needless to say that we hope that Marion comes down to visit us again in the near future. Also if you are a friend of the charity and wish to come down and see us, please feel free as you are more than**

**welcome through our doors. Coffee mornings are starting every other Thursday from 28th October onwards, so come down and have a cuppa with us.**

### **Charity Shop Now Open!**

**Finally we are delighted to announce that our brand new charity shop is now open to the public 10am to 4pm! With a huge thank you going out to Maureen Smith who has worked diligently over the past few months creating a beautiful and tidy space for you to grab a bargain.**



## **Partially Sighted Society's Audio Revolution - Listen in Today!**

It is with great excitement and a bit of trepidation that we are announcing our brand new audio platform dedicated to bringing you the best reviews, news and interviews on all things partially sighted.

Over the past 3 months, we have been working tirelessly behind the scenes to develop a new product that is more inclusive and more accessible to our client base and friends. Introducing, PSS iTalk. As I mentioned earlier in the

article, we are absolutely buzzing to be able to share this with you all, and we hope you find it as useful as we have found it fun to create.

Whilst the project is still in its infancy, and therefore still taking shape into it's final form, we have a really good idea of what you can expect to come in the very near future. We are working alongside an industry specialist, Rowland Myers with countless years of experience, including working





**Communications Officer, Shaun working on this edition of Oculus and recording items for our brand new audio service! Multi-talented, multi-tasking extraordinaire! (He wrote this).**

**for the BBC. PSS iTalk promises to be a professional platform that represents you!**

**From the get-go we have handy tips for living with low vision, such as how to pour hot drinks safely. There's factual audio items on common and not-so-common eye conditions as well as interviews with members of the Partially Sighted Community.**

**With this in mind, it is important to state that this isn't our project alone. We are always looking for talented contributors from the Partially**

**Sighted and Blind community to get involved with this project so if you feel you have a voice for the radio or just have an interesting story to tell the world, please get in touch with us today!**

**There are many ways for you to listen in to PSS iTalk; if you have an Amazon Alexa ask her to "Play PSS iTalk". It really is that simple. You can also ring into our service by phoning 0300 302 3455.**

**Again I'm so excited to be able to share this with you and look forward to hearing your feedback soon!**

# **Leave a Legacy that will Last a Lifetime**



**We would like to graciously give a heartfelt thank you to all our members, patrons and past legators for all your generosity and backing over the 55 years we've been in operation – it means the world to us.**

**We would also like to thank you for reading this year's edition of Oculus, we hope you've found it entertaining and informative.**

**During the turbulent times of recent years with the ongoing pandemic, The Partially Sighted Society has continued its efforts supporting those who struggle with daily lives due to their reduced eyesight.**

**Despite the conditions we have managed to print over 1.6 million schoolbook pages for children in the UK, with the surplus books and visual aids going to underprivileged children with sight loss in Tanzania. We also continued to provide our specialist low vision advice and support to people living with sight loss all over the UK**

**There are over 2 million people in the UK living with sight loss with that number expected to double to more than 4 million by the year 2050. Meaning whilst we work hard every day to ensure our service users' needs and wants are met, our journey ahead will be evermore challenging. Which in turn means our scope of operations will broaden significantly.**

**Therefore, we at the Partially Sighted Society are always appreciative of legacy gifts in your will after you secure**

the future of those closest to you. In the not-so-distant past, charitable legacies have ensured the survival of the society when financial hardships threatened to end our story before we had achieved our goals. We rely heavily on the generosity of others like yourself, the reader.

If you wish to leave us a legacy gift, you would not only be helping us and all those who use our service, you would also be guaranteeing that less of your inheritance is subject to tax.

We would also love for you to get in touch with us so we can personally thank you, and as our doors reopen, we would like to reiterate how excited we are to have you come visit us.

## **WHAT TO DO NEXT**

If you would like assistance in changing your will or wish to create one with the Partially Sighted Society you can copy the following text below into your documentation.

“I leave my / X share (s) of

my residuary estate for the Partially Sighted Society, 1 Benetthorpe, Doncaster, DN2 6AA, registered charity number 254052 (England and Wales), absolutely for its general charitable purposes and I declare that the receipt of the treasurer or other proper officer for the time being shall be a sufficient discharge to my executors.”

If you would like more information please feel free to reach out to us by email our address is [reception@partisight.org.uk](mailto:reception@partisight.org.uk) or by phone on 01302 965195. We would be more than happy to work together with you to ensure this process is seamless and as pain-free as possible. Once again, on behalf of the whole team at the Partially Sighted Society we wholeheartedly thank you for your continued support, we wouldn't be here without you.

Forever yours,

**The Partially Sighted Society**



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Perfect for those at **home, work and school**. Great for those with moderate **low vision, reading difficulties, including dyslexia and reading fatigue**.



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