Dorset Blind Association

Dorset Link

The Newsletter of Dorset Blind Association
proud recipients of The Queens Award for Voluntary Service

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Vol. 2 Issue 76 Autumn 2026



DBA Low Vision Day 2026

We're excited to announce that our popular Low Vision Day is back on Saturday 21st November, at The Dorford Centre, Dorchester, in partnership with Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and sponsored by Ridgewater Energy. Join us from 10 am to 2 pm for a day packed with expert talks, advice and information.

For full details please see page 6.



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2026 Diary's now in stock.

Please ring Erica on 01202 712869 to place your order. They are also available in our Charity shops. Prices are as follows:

A6 Pocket Diary £6.50

A5 Midi Diary £8.50

A4 Desk Diary £10.50

A3 Portrait Calendar £8.00



Christmas Opening Hours

The Equipment and Advice Centre and office and all our shops will be closed from 4.30 pm on Wednesday 23rd December, 2026. The shops will re-open on Saturday 2nd January, 2027.The Equipment and Advice Centre and offices will re-open on Monday 4th January 2027.



Don't forget to pass me on!

If you receive a printed copy of the Link, this is just to remind you to try and pass it on when you have finished with it yourself. Offer it to a friend, neighbour or work colleague to read. It helps to spread the word about our work and how we help people throughout Dorset and it might encourage someone else to join us as a volunteer or to make a financial donation or other offer of help.

Can we send you the Link by e-mail?

A growing number of members and volunteers chose now to receive their copy of the Link by e-mail. This not only means that they receive this more quickly, but it saves on printing and postage costs, so if you are someone who uses e-mail and you are happy to receive future editions of the Link in this way, please contact Jo at the office on 01202 712869 or e-mail jo@dorsetblind.org.uk to let her know.

Hello and a warm welcome to our latest Link newsletter.



Autumn is definitely with us; I know that not just because the leaves are falling and the nights are longer, but Strictly Come Dancing is back on the television, much to my wife's delight. She is an avid fan, just in case you can't work that out for yourself from my "delight" reference

It's funny, isn't it, how certain things start small, and quietly, but over time grow and develop and ultimately become part of our culture.

I know that Strictly divides opinion – for many it's a bit Marmite, and either loved or hated, but few can deny that it has become part of the autumn furniture now, and (bear with me on this!) there are a few things about the show I recently thought, had some relevance, or similarity, to Dorset Blind Association.

So, I thought I'd randomly share those thoughts with you, and you can decide for yourself if you agree, or not.

First is something factual, so not at all controversial. You may or may not be surprised to know that there is a very close proximity between the life of Strictly and my own personal involvement with DBA. Strictly first aired in May 2004, the path of my life and our charity crossed exactly one year later, in May 2005.

Second is the similarity in both starting small, but over time growing and developing. Strictly definitely started small and almost unnoticed. When I first started with DBA it was doing relatively little, but over the past 20 years there has been enormous growth and development, with a range of services, support and activities now, plus a real community presence through our shops, which is so much greater than the 2005 version of our charity. Like Strictly, we are definitely more noticed now.

Third is the relative importance something plays in your life. I doubt many watching the first Strictly series in 2004 would have imagined how important that show would become to so many. My wife is not alone in being an avid fan, and weekend schedules MUST be based around the time of the Saturday show and the results on Sunday. I think the importance of DBA to many of our members has similarly grown over time and, like Strictly for people like my wife, many would miss us now if we were no longer here.

/contd……..

Fourth is the ability to cope with change, despite people initially fearing that change may be negative. I know the jury's out on the new presenting format for Strictly, (personal view, I don't think 3 presenters is working; at least not yet) but the show has coped over the years with previous changes in presenters, judges and professional dancers, and still thrived, despite people possibly fearing that it wouldn't. The similarity here for us is when we have had changes in staff, both in our community service team and in our shops. I've known now many of those occasions when other staff, volunteers and members have initially worried that the person who is leaving us is irreplaceable, and things will never be quite as good when they have gone, but almost without exception, the person stepping into their shoes has quickly proved themselves more than capable of carrying on the good work of their predecessor. Sometimes they even make things better, by bringing a different personality into our team, and new skills and knowledge and experience, which we can all benefit from.
Fifth, and last, is the relevance of kindness, and how important it is for that to be present. I don't know about you, but I've always thought that judges who are kind are the most effective. Yes, of course, be constructively critical, but there's a right way and a wrong way of doing that and all I am saying is Craig, if you were a part of the Dorset Blind Association team and spoke to people here the way you speak to contestants on Strictly, you and I would be having words, and you wouldn't enjoy it! One of the single most important things I've always tried to make sure features in how DBA operates is kindness. We can't solve many of the problems and challenges which come with sight loss, but if nothing else, we can always be kind to the people we support, and all the volunteers and staff who are part of the charity. I hope that during my time steering our ship, kindness has become part of our culture, is now the experience of everyone who comes into contact with Dorset Blind Association and continues to be that going forward.
So that's it from me this time. Funny, isn't it, the thoughts that sometimes cross your mind – especially when you are watching a light entertainment show, to dutifully keep your wife company on a Saturday evening, even if you'd prefer to be watching something else. Keep that last bit to yourself, please, and definitely don't tell my wife if you ever see her, my marriage is now in its 35th year and I'd like it to keep it going for a few more if possible!
With my best wishes to you all, as always, Jonathan

What's happening in Your Association!

Another fantastic day out at National Trust Brownsea Island!



Our DBA members enjoyed another fun-filled day exploring the island this week, with plenty of time to enjoy the beautiful surroundings and each other's company.

A huge thank you to Greenslade Pleasure Boats Limited and the National Trust for helping to make the day so enjoyable and welcoming for our members. And of course, to our wonderful volunteers for helping to make the day possible. The photo shows some of our members enjoying the boat trip.

Making a splash with Land & Wave



Ten DBA members took to the water for another fantastic kayaking adventure with our friends at Land & Wave.

The sessions give people living with sight loss the opportunity to experience kayaking in a safe and supportive environment, with the Land & Wave team adapting the activity so everyone can get involved and enjoy being out on the water.

Our partnership has also helped instructors build their experience and confidence in making outdoor activities more accessible to people with visual impairments.

A huge thank you to the Land & Wave team for their continued support and enthusiasm, and a very well done to all our adventurous paddlers!

Low Vision Day returns to Dorchester

We're delighted to be bringing our Low Vision Day back to Dorchester this autumn in collaboration with Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation and kindly sponsored by Ridgewater Energy.

Join us at the Dorford Centre on Saturday 21 November, from 10am–2pm, for a free event designed to help anyone living with sight loss discover the support, technology and practical solutions available to them.

Visitors will be able to meet organisations and specialists, explore useful equipment and technology and speak to our Dorset Blind Association team about the services and support we provide.

We'll also have a programme of talks throughout the day. Vision Express Dorchester will be demonstrating the latest META smart glasses, offering a fascinating look at how new technology can support people with visual impairment. We're also delighted to welcome Lucy Howe, who will be talking about the latest developments in age-related macular degeneration (AMD), followed by an opportunity to ask questions.

Whether you are living with sight loss yourself, supporting a friend or family member, or simply want to find out what help is available, you'll receive a very warm welcome.

Low Vision Day
Saturday 21 November 2026
10am–2pm
Dorford Centre, Dorchester
Free to attend – everyone welcome.



Our thanks to Ridgewater Energy for sponsoring this important community event and helping us bring information and support to people living with sight loss across Dorset.

Our DBA art display is on the move!



We're delighted that our DBA art display has now begun its tour of our 12 charity shops, showcasing some of the wonderful creative work produced by our members.
The pieces were created during our art club sessions led by Deborah from Creative Clay For All, with the project generously funded by the Dorset Arts And Crafts Association. We're so pleased to be able to share the finished work with our wider community!
The artwork is now on display in the windows of our DBA Sturminster Newton shop, so if you're passing, pop by and take a look.

Cooking, confidence and great company in Bridport!



Over the past four weeks, our members in Bridport have been enjoying a fantastic series of cookery sessions with The Friendly Food Club.
These sessions are about so much more than creating something delicious. They give people living with sight loss the opportunity to build confidence in the kitchen, learn and share practical skills, and enjoy cooking safely and independently - all in a relaxed and sociable environment.
A huge thank you to everyone at The Friendly Food Club for another brilliant series of sessions and for making them so welcoming and accessible for our members.

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Club News



Wareham Clubs Summer outing

In August the club members had a delicious lunch at Lakeside, Poole. From the outside it just looked like a normal fish and chip shop. However, when you walked through there was a fantastic restaurant with panoramic views of Poole Harbour.
Rhonda, one of the volunteers at the club said 'Great view and food and I would recommend it to other clubs.' It certainly sounds like everyone had a great time as the photo seems to show.

News from our Swanage Club

Members can be seen here enjoying an excellent afternoon tea at Knoll House Hotel in Studland with views across the fields to Studland Bay. Many thanks to Pam who runs the club and to the staff at Knoll House for looking after us.



Drumming up some fun in Wimborne!



There was plenty of energy at our Wimborne Social Group when Deborah and Georgie from Heathlands Care Home joined us for a fantastic Drum Fit session.
Led brilliantly by Georgie, members got stuck into a lively workout combining music, movement and drumming.
It was wonderful to see everyone joining in and enjoying something a little different, and the energy Deborah and Georgie brought to the group was infectious.A huge thank you to them both, and to Heathlands Care Home, for giving our members such a fun and memorable morning. We're already hoping we can do it again! The members are pictured above enjoying the session

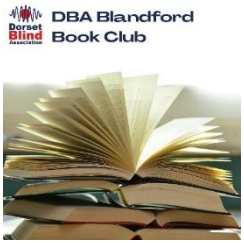
Moving with the times We are now able to send you the Link on a USB stick. If you want to receive the Link in this format in future, please contact Jo on **01202 712865** or email her on **jo@dorsetblind.org.uk**

Sing along with Curly



At their recent meeting our Dorchester Group enjoyed a sing along with Curly the Busker.
They paused for a couple of minutes to remember Charles Clayton and Peter Prior who very sadly passed away recently and were avid supporters of the club. The photo shows the members enjoying the music.

Blandford book club



A fascinating event with author Jon Woolcott!
Last week, our Blandford Book Club enjoyed a successful Zoom meeting with local author Jon Woolcott, who gave us a fascinating talk about Dorset's history and the chalk figures dotted around our county.
A huge thank you to Jon for giving up his time to join us and for such an interesting and enjoyable talk. We really appreciate it!

Update from Bridport Club



At their July meetings the club members and volunteers were entertained by a Martin Maudsley, a professional story teller and by The Bridport Choral Society. Martin Maudsley entertained the members with songs and stories bringing local places and features to life. At their second meeting in July the Bridport Choral Society entertained them with songs from the musicals, The Sound of Music, Oliver and Cats with the members enjoying singing along as can be seen in the photo.

Fundraising Update

Jerry took on the Dorset Doddle!



Huge congratulations to DBA member Jerry Bradley, who took on the gruelling Dorset Doddle in August to raise funds for Dorset Blind Association.

Jerry, accompanied by his guide and DBA volunteer Michael, completed an incredible 33.5 miles along the Dorset coast in 11 hours and 27 minutes. Taking on such a demanding challenge is an impressive achievement in itself, and Jerry also raised a fantastic £242 to support our work with people living with sight loss across Dorset.

A very big well done to Jerry and Michael, and thank you to everyone who supported and sponsored Jerry along the way!

Save the date - The DBA Motor Show 2027.



Following a fantastic 10th anniversary event this year, we're delighted to confirm that the DBA Motor Show will return to Lulworth Castle on Sunday 16 May 2027. This year's show welcomed more than 8,000 visitors and over 300 vehicles and raised a whopping £42k+ making it our biggest and most successful Motor Show yet.

We're also thrilled that our wonderful friends at Blue Sky Financial Planning will once again be supporting the event as our Platinum Sponsor.

Plans for 2027 are already getting underway and we can't wait to share more with you over the coming months.

For now, pop the date in your diary: **Sunday 16 May 2027!**

Celebrating 21 years with Kelly's Eyecare



A big thank you to Kelly's Eyecare in Winton, who selected Dorset Blind Association as their charity partner during their 21st anniversary celebration month.
As part of the celebrations, the team raised a fantastic £128.10 to support our work with people living with sight loss across Dorset.
Partnerships with local businesses are incredibly valuable to us, not only through the funds they raise but by helping more people in our communities learn about the support available through Dorset Blind Association.
Congratulations to everyone at Kelly's Eyecare on 21 years and thank you to the team and their customers for choosing to support us during such a special milestone.

Thank you, SpaMedica Poole

We're very grateful to the team and patients at SpaMedica Poole, whose ongoing collections have raised a wonderful £684.57 for Dorset Blind Association.
As a specialist eye hospital, SpaMedica sees first-hand the impact that changes in vision can have, making their continued support particularly meaningful to us.
Every donation helps us provide practical advice, equipment, social opportunities and community support to people living with sight loss across Dorset.
A heartfelt thank you to everyone at SpaMedica Poole and all those who have contributed to the collections.

SpaMedica

Sam's 80s Night is back!



Get your dancing shoes ready! Sam Cole's ever-popular 80s Night returns to the Centenary Club in Weymouth on Saturday 7 November, from 7.30pm until midnight.

Sam has been organising this fantastic annual fundraiser for Dorset Blind Association for many years, and it's become a firm favourite, regularly selling out. Last year's event raised a brilliant £1,118.60!

This year, expect a live DJ playing your favourite 80s classics, a raffle, retro sweet bar, hula-hoop competition and, of course, a prize for the best dressed.

Tickets are £10, available from our Weymouth and Portland charity shops or call them on 07570 425900 or 07570 498090

These nights always sell out, so don't leave it too late!

A gift for the future

Leaving a gift to Dorset Blind Association in your Will is a very special way to help ensure local people living with sight loss continue to have somewhere to turn in the years ahead.



We understand that family and loved ones come first. But after providing for those closest to you, even a small percentage of your estate can make a lasting difference. Gifts left to us in Wills help us plan for the future and continue providing practical help, advice, friendship and support to people throughout Dorset. There is never any pressure. If you would simply like to find out more about leaving a gift to Dorset Blind Association, please get in touch with our team for an informal conversation.

Christmas Raffle – Tickets on Sale Now!



Our festive Christmas Raffle is back, and tickets are now available! Every ticket helps support Dorset Blind Association's work across Dorset. If you receive this newsletter by post, your paper copy includes a book of tickets. If you receive it by email, please call Jo on 01202 712865 to get your tickets. Tickets are also available at all our charity shops. Don't miss your chance to win some wonderful prizes while supporting a great cause this Christmas!

Donations Needed – Supporting Our 12 Charity Shops

Our network of 12 charity shops across Dorset plays a vital role in funding services for visually impaired people, and your donations keep them going.
We welcome clean, good-quality items including clothing, footwear, books, CDs, DVDs, vinyl, homeware and bric-a-brac. Nothing broken or damaged please. Every item donated helps raise vital funds for our services.
To make donating easy, we can even arrange home collections:

If you live in the BCP & East Dorset area:
Ring: 07849 641149 or email: thehub@dorsetblind.org.uk

If you live in the Sherborne, Weymouth, Portland & Bridport area:
Ring: 07570 425900 or email: weymouthshop@dorsetblind.org.uk

You can also drop items at any of our shops across Dorset: Blandford, Bridport, Broadstone, Christchurch, Ferndown, Parkstone, Portland, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Southbourne, Sturminster Newton and Weymouth.
Full details can be found at www.dorsetblind.org.uk
Every donated item helps fund our support.
Thank you for your generosity.

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Hayley Langley - 07483 191881
Heather McCracken -07936 749502
Gemma Smith - 07729 618303
Kate Dickinson - 07555 057060
Velleta Cracknell - 07761 459997

Community Relations Officer
Sam Baker - 07594 651955

Charity Shops

Ferndown	07849 641086
Christchurch	07570 425690
Southbourne	07849 641063
Parkstone	07471 540336
Broadstone	07849 641062
Weymouth	07570 425900
Portland	07570 498090
Bridport	07849 641070
Blandford	07849 641090
Shaftesbury	07849 641153
Sturminster N.	07849 641073
Sherborne	07484 515071

Useful Numbers:

BCP Adult Social Care
01202 123654

Dorset Social Services:
Helpline
01305 221016

Sight and Hearing Service for Dorset Council residents
033 300 300 10

Bournemouth Eye Unit:
01202 704181

Dorset County Hospital:
01305 251150

Dept Works & Pensions:
01202 858555/01202 858556

AGE UK Dorchester
01305 269444

AGE UK Bournemouth
01202 530530

Blind Veterans UK
0800 389 7979

RNIB: 0303 1239999

NHS Direct: 111

Macular Society
Helpline: 0300 3030111

Nystagmus Network
08456 342630/ 07493324218

sedcat (the BAT Bus and Com. Cars) 01202 534027

Ability Net - 03001 800028

Ocular Melanoma Helpline,
0161 821 5657

Please help us to keep our services going

Dorset Blind Association provides practical help and support, delivered directly into the community, to help people with sight or hearing loss lead full, independent, healthy and socially active lives.

We work hard to fill the increasingly large gap left by the reduction in local health and social care services and for many people we are a valuable lifeline as they struggle to come to terms with their sight loss and learn how to remain independent.

It costs over £800,000 each year to run the Dorset Blind Association and make everything we now do possible.
Any amount you are able to donate will help us to maintain all of our services. Here are just a few examples of what a donation could fund;

- **£20** Will pay for 5 vulnerable people to be visited in their own homes
- **£50** Will pay to keep our mobile equipment vehicle on the road for a week
- **£100** Will pay for staff to run 3 Social-eyes sessions
- **£325** Will support 1 visually impaired individual for a year
- **£500** Will pay for our equipment and advice centre to be open for 2 weeks

Thank You