

Somerset Insight



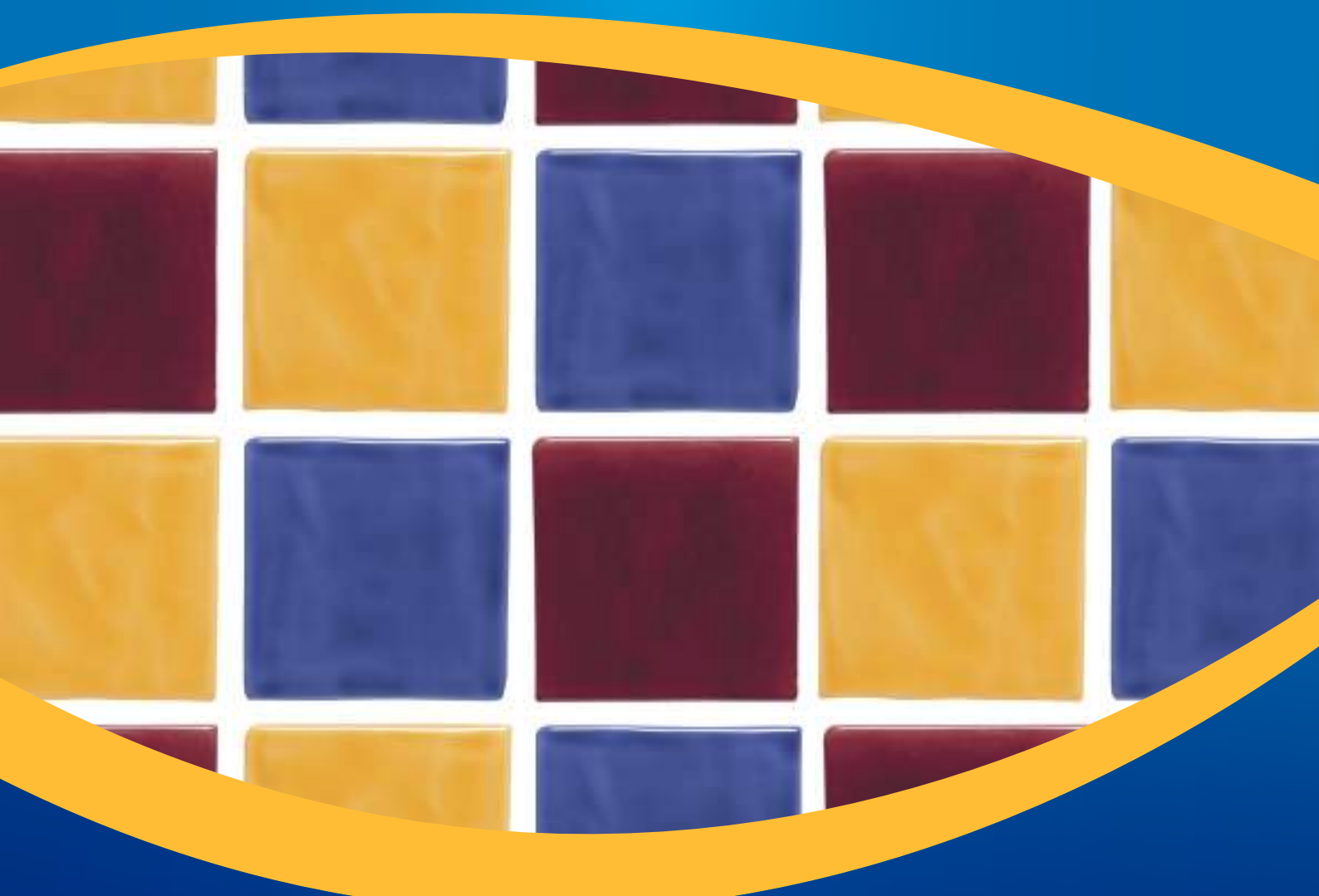
01823 333818

**Somerset
Sight** Working with people
who lack sight, not vision

Registered Charity No: 1154472

Issue 78
December 2023

2024 Tile Appeal - Page 11



Kitchen Improvement Tile Appeal 2024 – Please Help Now



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Somerset Sight
01823 333818

admin@somersetsight.org.uk
www.somersetsight.org.uk

Meeting Rooms and Desks for Hire

Somerset Sight has two Boardrooms, ideal for Team Meetings for 20–30 people
Also desks available for hot desking.
Centrally located and parking nearby.

For more information please contact Kate on:
01823 333818 or email admin@somersetsight.org.uk

CEO Report



Photo of Jackie and Dogs

A huge amount of work goes into supporting our service users of which there are currently about 3000, and in welcoming 600 people, new to sight loss, who come to us each year.

The role of Somerset Sight is to provide immediate and life-long practical and emotional support so people suffering sight loss can remain independent and not feel alone.

"I cannot thank you enough for being there for me when I was at a low in my life. I have met many different staff and all have brought their own expertise - I now feel hope for the future and what it holds for me"

I would like to thank our 12 staff, and more than 300 volunteers including our Chair and Trustees, for their dedication and energy over the past year which has enabled us to provide such

extensive and effective support - we bring our services into your local community, within a few miles of the home of each service user.

With your help, 2024 will bring new kitchen and catering facilities at Northfield House and additional cookery classes throughout the county. Our services for children are expanding. We are looking for volunteers to build regular socials in Martock and Cheddar and Burnham, to provide support in eye clinics and diagnostic centres, and to join our expanding volunteer visiting or technology service. If you are feeling willing and able, and want a new and rewarding challenge in your life, please get in touch now.

Please support our **TILE appeal** (Page 11), or start a regular donation using the form provided. Without your help we would be able to achieve only a fraction of what we currently achieve. Thank you to all who have donated, left Gifts in Wills or have raised money for Somerset Sight – your legacy lives on and you can witness the impact of our work every day.

I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a healthy happy and prosperous New Year.

Jackie Sopwith

Yarlington Country House Car Boot and Classic Cars 2023



Photo of Yarlington Country House Car Boot Sale

This year's Yarlington event hosted 30 stalls and several classic and vintage vehicles. The weather was against us but we still raised more than we did in 2019 which is an amazing achievement. Over £3500.

We would like to thank the Count and Countess De Salis who once again very generously provided the lovely backdrop of Yarlington House and gardens. There was also a cake stall, ice cream van and an auction house providing valuations.

The Prize Draw also commenced that day and thank you to everyone who entered. It raised over £1300. The winners have been notified and given their prizes and we are looking forward to hearing about their experiences with photographs.

British Wireless for the Blind Fund

The British Wireless for the Blind Fund (BWBF) provides high quality, easy to use audio equipment which has been specially designed and adapted for listeners living with sight loss. All our radios are made available on free loan to blind and visually impaired people who meet our criteria.

The units are delivered and demonstrated in the comfort of your own home.

If you are interested in knowing more, please call Kate on
**01823 333818 or email:
Kate@somersetsight.org.uk**

Chair of Trustees Report

At the August meeting of the trustees, following the resignation of Bella Flood who was Chair for the past nine years, I was appointed the new Chair, of which I am proud.

On a personal note, I became visually impaired nine years ago and have been a trustee for seven of those. Somerset Sight has done a lot for both myself and my family and I will always be grateful for the support and help I have received.

The charity has grown considerably over the years and many thanks to the staff, volunteers and trustees who offer help and support to many visually impaired people across the county. However, there is always more that can be done and we are always looking for more help to do so and to also raise more funds to enable us to carry out this work.

Two new trustees were appointed at the AGM in October, held in Cheddar this year. John Wright and Richard Barton both have a huge amount of experience and expertise to bring to the charity, and are very welcome additions to the Board.



Photo of Christine and Paul

In 2024, I look forward to helping the charity to grow and with your help in fundraising and kind donations, we can continue to assist and support visually impaired people throughout Somerset

Joined by new Vice-Chair, Christine Briggs and the other Trustees, Staff and Volunteers, I would like to finish by wishing everybody a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Paul Fellingham
Chair of Trustees

Thank You To Everyone



Yeovil community choir

Yeovil Community Choir held a fundraising event singing songs of joy and raised £700.

Kingston St Mary Art Exhibition

Thirty-two talented professional and amateur artists showed and sold their work at Kingston St Mary Village Hall during September. The amount of £500 was raised from sales, commissions and donations.

Crewkerne Lions Club

Are ordinary people who do extraordinary things to help others and support worthy causes. They kindly donated £250 in September.

Frome Lions Club

On a sunny day in May, Frome Lions held a successful charity golfing day and raised £4000 for Somerset Sight. Zdenek Gregor, Trustee and marathon runner received the cheque on our behalf. A very big thank you to Frome Lions.



Frome Talking Newspapers

A big thank you for the generous donation for £2500 taken to the Frome Social Group by Jim and Gill, to be used by Somerset Sight for people in the local area. Thank you so much and lovely to meet you.

Runners for Sight

On Sunday 15th October 2023, Ed Herbert, eye surgeon at Musgrove Park Hospital, ran the Bath Half Marathon (13.1 Miles) for the sixth time, in 1 hour 53. Thank you so much Ed - we greatly appreciate your continued support! Over £560 raised.

Liam Harkness, who is blind and his guide Zdenek Gregor, one of our Trustees, also ran the Half Marathon. Zdenek has also run 3 full marathons this year: Brighton, London and New York. Over £8000 raised for Somerset Sight.



**Somerset
Sight** Working with people
who lack sight, not vision

Donation Form - Please make a donation to Somerset Sight, over the phone by calling 01823 333818, donate online at somersetsight.org.uk, or use the form below.

Full Name		Tel	
Address			
Postcode		Email	

Single donation:

I enclose a donation cheque of £..... for Somerset Sight

Multiple donations:

Standing Order Mandate:

Bank (e.g. Lloyds)	
Bank address and Postcode	

Please pay Somerset Sight Ltd: Account Number: 57387068 Sort Code: 77-50-01

I would like to make a standing order of £..... with the first payment on the (Date) of (Month) 20..... (Year)

Account Name							
Account Number							
Sort Code							

Signature		Date	
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If you are not already one of our members, we would like to add your name and contact details to our database so we can occasionally send you an update about our charity and how the funds are used to help the lives of our sight impaired members.

In accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 2018, by signing below you are consenting to Somerset Sight securely storing your data.

Signed.....

Date.....

Please turn over

Charity Registration Number 1154472



We do not pass on any of your information to any other organisation without your permission.
If you wish to withdraw your consent at any time, please contact us and we will remove your records.

Thank-you!

Gift Aid - Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate.

Gift Aid can be reclaimed by Somerset Sight from the tax you pay for the current year. Your address and postcode is needed to identify you as a current taxpayer. **You must tick the box below.**

I want to Gift Aid my donation to Somerset Sight and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years.

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Date

- Please notify us if you want to cancel this donation, change your name or address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.
- If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your gift aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Send this form to:

Fundraising Office, Somerset Sight, Northfield House,
51 Staplegrove Road, Taunton, TA1 1DG

If you are not already one of our members, we would like to add your name and contact details to our database so we can occasionally send you an update about our charity and how the funds are used to help the lives of our sight impaired members to become less isolated, more confident and more active within their communities.

In accordance with the UK Data Protection Act 2018, by signing below you are consenting to Somerset Sight securely storing your data. We do not pass on any of your information to any other organisation without your permission. If you wish to withdraw your consent at any time, please contact us and we will remove your records.

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Charity Registration Number 1154472

Charles Bonnet Syndrome

Charles Bonnet syndrome (CBS) is a common condition among people who have lost their sight and Somerset Sight wishes to raise awareness of this as it could occur during your progressive sight loss journey.

It is named after the 18th century Swiss scientist and philosopher who first described the condition.

People who have CBS may have lost a lot of their vision from an eye condition, such as **age-related macular degeneration, cataract, glaucoma or diabetic eye disease**, and it causes people to see things that aren't really there, known as visual hallucinations.

These can be flashing lights, seeing people in the garden or any other thing that you've not seen before, and they often start after a sudden worsening of vision.

Up to 60 per cent of people who are experiencing serious sight loss may develop it and it is more likely to occur if both eyes are affected by sight loss but can occur with problems in one eye only.

The times the hallucinations are most likely to happen is when a person is quiet and relaxed. Therefore, getting up and moving about can often help to drive the images away temporarily, or by changing activity. Changing the lighting conditions that you are in; making it brighter if it is dark, or dimmer if it is bright, may also help.

CBS can be distressing, but many people find that the visions can get less frequent with time.

If you are someone that is or has experienced this, or know someone who has, then please call into Somerset Sight and ask to speak to someone about CBS.

Or call the office on 01823 333818.

We are here to help and support you, so please contact us.

Seeing Life Differently (SLDD)

Somerset Sight is the only local organisation offering practical and emotional support for people experiencing sight loss.

These days are designed to support people recently diagnosed to adapt to their new situation and remain as independent as possible. The course takes place on the same day of the week over three consecutive weeks.

Topics covered include aids to daily living, mobility, transport, technology assistance, keeping healthy and safety in the home. Speakers include the Rehabilitation officer, Fire Safety officer, Technology, Emotional support and Low vision therapist.

You will meet people living in your area and have a safe space to discuss challenges faced, share hints and tips and laugh about amusing incidents that we all experience.

You also get to meet key members of Somerset Sight staff and volunteers, who can assist and support you now and in the future.

Comments from recent attendees:

“Everyone has been so helpful, kind & friendly. It has been great to hear and understand other people's ways of coping with their various degrees of sight loss and realising my own visual impairment is not as life changing as I make out. Learning about the tools that are out there for me if/when I may need them.”

“I have discovered that there is a great deal of help available and this course has been extremely helpful. I have learnt a lot. Just knowing how you all cope with adversity is useful in itself. It gives me hope for the future.”

The next SLD days will be on Wednesdays 14th, 21st and 28th February 2024, at Northfield House, Taunton, TA1 1DG.

If you have not attended this course and wish to do so, please call Somerset Sight on 01823 333818 or email:

joanne@somersetsight.org.uk

Can You Please Help Us Now?

Exciting plans are afoot to upgrade our kitchen catering and training facilities at Northfield House - this will enable us to offer additional cookery classes and increase our income through room lettings.

Many of you will remember the construction of the wonderful Bradbury Wing. Your generosity in 2019 has had a visible ripple effect, spreading joy, happiness and hope whilst reducing loneliness and distress. The building has given so much pleasure to so many of you. Importantly it also generates regular income for the Charity. What a magnificent achievement.

The Bradbury Wing was created with your bricks and key stones; the catering wing will commence with tiles. We need you please, our service users, supporters and volunteers, to purchase, between you, at least 60 tiles of each size to get this project off the ground. Can you please help now?

You can buy any combination or number that you would like.

Large £50

Medium £35

Small £10



Please call the office to donate by card 01823 333818, fill in the enclosed donation form or use the online payment form at **www.somersetsight.org.uk/payments-page**. Select Pay for activity, event or service then Cookery Teaching Room and Kitchen Tiles.

All people who donate will be invited to the Grand Opening and acknowledged on a plaque so please make sure your name is correctly recorded with your donation. Thank you in advance.

The whole cost of this project will be in the region of £55,000.

Please support this new project and donate generously to reap reward. Somerset Sight will leverage on your support to encourage additional income from Trusts and Foundations and businesses, from local to National and International organisations. We can then all enjoy the fulfilment of this project.

Somerset Sight AGM



Thank you to everyone who came along to the 102nd Somerset Sight Annual General Meeting held at Cheddar Parish Council Community Pavilion, on 19th October. It was lovely to see some old faces, and some new ones too.

This was the first meeting held by the new Chair of Trustees, Paul Fellingham and new Vice-Chair, Christine Briggs, and well attended by other Trustees and staff members as well.

The usual agenda format was followed; Introductions, welcomes and thank yous. Finances were discussed and two new trustees elected.

Somerset Sight is growing in numbers of new service users and introducing new services



Photos of Somerset Sight AGM

to assist and support everyone. But more volunteers are needed and people willing to set up Social groups in other areas like Cheddar.

After the meeting people mingled while having a lovely lunch and chatted.

Mobile Advisory Service Dates January 2024 - May 2024

Mendip			
Area	Date	Location	Time
Glastonbury	Wed 10 th Jan	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Wed 21 st Feb	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Wed 24 th Apr	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
Frome	Mon 19 th Feb	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 22 nd Apr	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
Shepton Mallet	Mon 8 th Jan	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 4 th Mar	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
Wells	Mon 29 th Jan	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 29 th Feb	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 11 th Mar	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Mon 15 th Apr	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm

Sedgemoor			
Area	Date	Location	Time
Cheddar	Thurs 18 th Jan	Sainsbury's	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 15 th Feb	Sainsbury's	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 21 st Mar	Sainsbury's	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Wed 10 th Apr	Sainsbury's	10.30am – 3.30pm

**PULL
OUT AND
KEEP!**

Dates may be subject to change if you are making a special journey, please call our office prior to your visit on 01823 333818.

Mobile Shop and Advisory Service Dates

January 2024 – May 2024

Sedgemoor			
Area	Date	Location	Time
Bridgwater	Fri 5 th Jan	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Thurs 11 th Jan	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Fri 19 th Jan	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Fri 2 nd Feb	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Mon 12 th Feb	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Fri 1 st Mar	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Fri 15 th Mar	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Mon 25 th Mar	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Fri 5 th Apr	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
Fri 19 th Apr	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm	
Tue 23 rd Apr	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm	
Burnham-on-Sea	Thurs 4 th Jan	B & M	1.30pm – 3.30pm
	Wed 7 th Feb	B & M	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Wed 6 th Mar	B & M	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 11 th Apr	B & M	10.30am – 3.30pm
Cannington	Wed 20 th Mar	By the brook	10.30am – 12.30pm
Highbridge	Thurs 1 st Feb	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Wed 3 rd April	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
Nether Stowey	Wed 20 th Mar	St Mary's Church Centre	1.30pm – 3.30pm
N. Petherton	Thurs 8 th Feb	Car Park	10.30am – 1pm
South Somerset			
Area	Date	Location	Time
Chard	Fri 12 th Jan	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Fri 9 th Feb	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Fri 8 th Mar	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Fri 12 th Apr	Hospital	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Fri 10 th May	Hospital	10.30am - 1.30pm

South Somerset			
Area	Date	Location	Time
Crewkerne	Thurs 22 nd Feb	Henhayes Centre	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 4 th Apr	Henhayes Centre	10.30am – 3.30pm
Ilminster	Tue 16 th Jan	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Tue 12 th Mar	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
Martock	Fri 23 rd Feb	Car Park	10.30am – 1.30pm
	Fri 22 nd Mar	Car Park	10.30am – 1.30pm
Langport	Weds 31 st Jan	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 7 th Mar	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
Somerton	Weds 17 th Jan	Cox's Yard	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Weds 14 th Feb	Cox's Yard	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Weds 13 th Mar	Cox's Yard	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Weds 17 th Apr	Cox's Yard	10.30am – 3.30pm
S. Petherton	Tue 27 th Feb	Hospital	10.30am – 12.30pm
Stoke sub Hamdon	Tue 27 th Feb	Car Park	1.30pm – 3.30pm
Wincanton	Mon 5 th Feb	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Tue 19 th Mar	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
Yeovil	Tue 30 th Jan	Hospital	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Wed 28 th Feb	Hospital	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Wed 27 th Mar	Hospital	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 25 th Apr	Hospital	10.30am – 3.30pm
Bruton	Mon 26 th Feb	Budgens	10.30am – 12.30pm
	Mon 8 th Apr	Budgens	10.30am – 12.30pm
Castle Cary	Mon 26 th Feb	Car Park	1.30pm – 3.30pm
	Mon 8 th Apr	Car Park	1.30pm – 3.30pm

Mobile Shop and Advisory Service Dates

Taunton Deane

Area	Date	Location	Time
Wellington	Weds 3 rd Jan	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 28 th Mar	ASDA	10.30am – 3.30pm
Wiveliscombe	Thurs 18 th Apr	Car Park	1.30pm – 3.30pm

West Somerset

Area	Date	Location	Time
Minehead	Mon 15 th Jan	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Tue 13 th Feb	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Thurs 14 th Mar	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Tue 16 th Apr	Morrisons	10.30am – 3.30pm
Dulverton	Thurs 18 th Apr	Car Park	10.30am – 12.30pm
Porlock	Mon 18 th Mar	Car Park (nr the One Stop Shop)	10.30am – 12.30pm
Williton	Mon 18 th Mar	Car Park	1.30pm – 3.30pm
Watchet	Tue 20 th Feb	Coach Park	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Tue 26 th Mar	Coach Park	10.30am – 3.30pm

Devon

Area	Date	Location	Time
Cullompton	Tue 9 th Jan	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
	Tue 5 th Mar	Tesco	10.30am – 3.30pm
Tiverton	Tue 6 th Feb	Tesco	10.30am - 3.30pm
	Tue 9 th Apr	Tesco	10.30am - 3.30pm

Technology Support



Photo of Jenny

Sight loss is challenging, requiring you to adapt to find your new normal, whatever that might be. Somerset Sight is here to help you regain your independence with a variety of services. The newest of which is our Technology support service provided by Jenny, our Technology Officer.

Jenny has been a part time staff member since April 2022 and her service has been used over 400 times since joining the charity. Our service users have found her to be “very patient, friendly and knowledgeable”.

Jenny says “I enjoy my job, it can be very challenging and rewarding, requiring me to use knowledge and skills I’ve gained over the years. In particular I use my problem-solving skills all the time, as each service user has unique individual needs.

I love it when I can resolve an issue someone has been struggling with for a long time. There’s no better feeling when you’re told that your help has been life changing! Seeing the smiles on peoples faces, when they discover they have regained some independence, using their

phone, tablet or any other device to assist them in daily life, it really makes my day.

I always start with the free options already built into the devices, and tailor them to the individual’s needs. If the free options are insufficient for their requirements, I will work with them to find a more bespoke solution.”

Currently Jenny can try to help you over the phone, and if you need a face to face appointment you can see her in the office at Northfield House, for a suggested donation of £20 an hour.

Alternatively, if you need a home visit, there is a charge of £50 for up to 2hours (to cover travel costs). Please call the office on 01823 333818

All monies received help keep this valuable Technology service running.

My Friend Den

I joined Somerset Sight as a Volunteer Visitor in 2017 and was introduced to Den, then aged 93 who lived in a flat in Yeovil. Den was ex-RAF and therefore an aircraft enthusiast. We hit it off immediately and I would go for 2 hrs each week and chat, read books to him and help him with anything - often finding things he'd misplaced.

Den was very keen to write his life story, so he chatted to me as I typed into his computer and over about 2 years we wrote from his childhood to about the time his children were grown up. He had seen one of the very first Spitfire planes being tested when he was 14 and had taken a sneaky picture of it, which he still had. He joined the Air Training Corps at 17 and then the RAF. He flew Wellington and Liberator bombers. After the war Den married, had 3 children and continued his love of aircraft, organising an airshow in 1959 at Merryfield, near Ilton.

He said he would have loved to have flown a Spitfire, and after some investigation I found it was possible to fly in a 2 seater Spitfire. So, in April 2018, the day

before his 94th birthday we drove up to Biggin Hill and he flew in the back of a Spitfire and was able to take the controls. The pilot even did a barrel roll where you go upside down! We managed to do some more flying over the next 3 years with the help of a veteran's charity.

During lockdown I visited twice a week but inevitably Den's mobility reduced and he moved to a care home in Burnham-on-Sea. I carried on visiting once a fortnight and would read him WW2 flying stories. Den died in August aged 99, 2 days after I had last visited him. I know how much my visits meant to him as he would always cry out in joy and grab my hand when I arrived.



Photo of Den and Jeff

Officially those gents and ladies we visit are Service Users but to we Volunteer Visitors they become our friends and I think we get as much out of the experience as they do. I miss my visits to my fiend Den.

Jeff Turner



Photo of Den in the Spitfire

Volunteer Visitor Service Users Feedback

For me it is perfect. If it ain't broke don't fix it!(USA President said this!)

On a personal level, I don't think I could ask for anything more or better.

Service is brilliant! It makes a massive difference to my mother.

Very happy with the service that you provide.

I feel very satisfied with the service. Everything as it should be. My volunteer visitor and I get on well with each other. I don't think there is anything to be altered.

It's a fantastic service, I'm very grateful. It makes a great difference to my life.

As can be seen from Jeff's experience, many volunteers get great satisfaction and enjoyment

from their voluntary work, many friendships are formed and the people they support very much look forward to their visits, some of whose comments are above.

We have over 280 volunteers but still need more because we have many visually impaired people in Somerset who would welcome a volunteer visitor, but they are on a waiting list. Full training is provided and we cover all reasonable expenses. We also hold annual get togethers and meetings over the county so volunteers can meet others.

If you, or someone you know, would like to join our team, please call Somerset Sight

01823 333818 or email;
admin@somersetsight.org.uk

Driving at over 80 miles per hour!



Preparing to Drive

On behalf of myself I would like to say what a great day it was on Friday. It was my second attempt at driving and it was just as good as the first time, if not better and as you know I was so keen to get in that car. I spoke to Bernadette White on Saturday just to check that she enjoyed it She's 89 and driven in the past but it was lovely to get back behind the wheel she said. Can't wait til the next time.

Sarah Tufton

My driving experience at Henstridge was amazing as it gave me the freedom to do something I will never do.... drive...and at really fast speeds which felt really good and I felt free which is something I don't



Photo of Car Driving

normally feel. The instructor was very friendly and made me feel safe so I could put my pedal to the metal and have a great time. Please count me in for next year too! A huge thank you to Somerset sight!

John Griffin

I just so enjoyed my blind drive I can't wait for the next one.

Lisa

I thoroughly enjoyed my stint behind the wheel, exhilarating & a bit scary to!! All went very well as far as I was concerned & I'd like to say thank you Jo for organising it & all your hard work on the day.

Alex & Homer

Well Joanne, was I originally disappointed that the carriage driving got cancelled, you bet I was but what replaced it was way up there as an experience that I will certainly not forget. To drive a car as a registered blind person is to most people, just plain daft and to say the least, damn dangerous. Well, what they do not realise is that many if not most blind people are always up for challenging their disability and the many doubting Thomas's who think we should just stay at home in front of the telly. When it came to my go, as normal for someone with Parkinson's, my stress levels had risen somewhat but once I was strapped into the drivers' seat, the driving instructor put me at ease sitting as I was in his automatic driving school car. Under soft and positive directions we drove through a set of barriers and out onto the runway. Turning left, I drove quietly down to the end of the runway and slowly started to turn the car around so that we were facing the full length of the runway. The next instruction was to say the least, unexpected

but one that I was pleased to do. "Floor it" said the instructor and so I did, reaching some 70 mph. Turning round at the other end. We repeated the exercise, avoiding slower cars going in the same or in a couple of cases in the opposite direction. 30 minutes later and on my last run before the session was over, I put the pedal to the metal halfway through the turn for my last chance to brake the current record for a visually impaired person, which was 80 MPH, and we did it, leaving the braking to the last possible moment before we ran out of runway. 81 Miles per Hour with your eyes shut is absolutely fantastic to have achieved, and I Did It.

Keith Woolgar



Photo of Keith Woolgar

Upcoming Activities 2024

Dates and details such as costs, timings and the rest to be arranged and will follow. Emails will be sent and posters displayed. However, if you want to know what is coming up, please call the office on 01823 333818 or email joanne@somersetsight.org.uk

Adults

- Driving Experience
- Carriage Driving
- Bread or cake making
- Outdoor activity – sailing or climbing
- Cider Farm or Brewery trip
- Seaside and boat trip
- Hinkley Point C Site Trip
- Pre-Glastonbury Festival Worthy Farm tour
- Visit and tour a Country House and gardens – maybe two
- Theatre trip or two – preferably comedy or music

And don't forget the Social Clubs scattered throughout the County which you can attend. If you would like to start one, it would be much appreciated. Please call the office to discuss.

Children's Activities

We will also be arranging more Children's Activities which starts with the Children's Christmas Party at Northfield House on Monday 18th December 2023. May 29th High Ropes at Vivary Park – price TBC February Half term – Either fire station visit or ten pin bowling - Details TBC



The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

Somerset Sight are liaising with the DofE team to help provide this opportunity to all young people aged 4-24.

Special arrangements can be made for VI children and young carers, including a subsidised cost, to allow them to complete their DofE. Please contact us for further information.

Somerset Sight Activities 2023

During 2023, Somerset Sight arranged a variety of Adult and Children's Activities:

- Ten Pin Bowling in Yeovil
- Haynes Motor Museum
- Rose – The Play at Taunton Brewhouse
- Bread and cake making at Burns The Bread, Glastonbury
- Pizza Making in Taunton
- Forde Abbey house and gardens visit
- North Cadbury Court house tour, gardens and cream tea
- Service users Holiday to Newquay

- Somerset Boat Centre
- Pre-Glastonbury Tour of the festival site
- Hinkley Point C tour
- Driving Experience at Henstridge Airfield
- Frome Boulder Rooms
- Christmas Panto for Children in Yeovil
- Christmas Party for Children
- Annual Summer and Christmas volunteer and service users' parties at Northfield House
- Please see overleaf for some more photos.**



Photo of Child climbing boulder wall



Photo of North Cadbury Court Gardens

Somerset Sight Activities 2023



Photo of Burns the Bread participants with Eccles cakes and Cornish pasties.



Photo of Somerset Sight group at Forde Abbey



Photo of Group with Christmas Wreaths



Photo of Red car at Haynes Motor Museum

Meeting People & Having Fun

Yeovil Social Group

Westlands Entertainment venue on the first Monday of the month, between 10.0am to 12pm, a group of lively and friendly people meet for the Yeovil Social group. They chat over coffee or a drink and arrange trips out. During 2023 they visited the Fleet Air Arm museum, Bovington Tank museum plus seaside trips to Swanage and Weymouth.



Photo of Swanage Seafront

Street Social Group

The Lantokay in Street High Street is the monthly venue for the Street Social Group. On the first Monday of the month between 11am to 1pm, this group meets for a chat, food and drink and to arrange future activities.



Photo of Coffee and Cake

If you are interested in joining any of the Social Groups or would like to start one in your area, please call Somerset Sight on 01823 333818

Social Groups

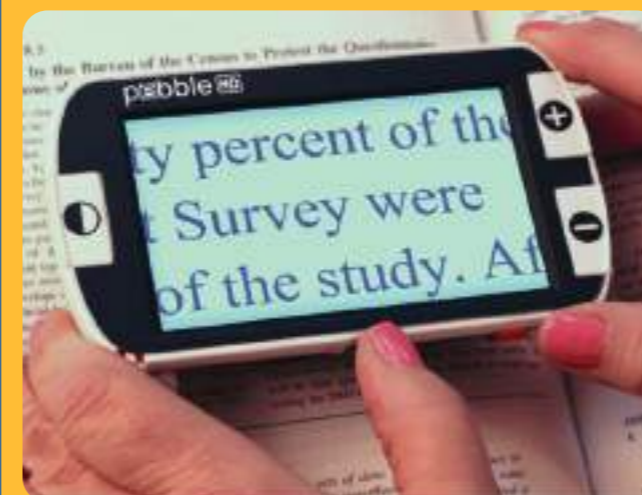
Type	Day	Time	Where
Bridgwater Afternoon Tea	Second Wednesday of each month except January & August.	2.30pm - 4.30pm	St Francis Church Hall. TA6 4JA
Bridgwater Lunch Club Fish and Chips	Second Friday of each month.	12.00pm - 2.00pm	Victoria Park Community Centre, TA6 7AS
Bridgwater Social Evening	Last Friday of each month – Drinks/Buffer	6pm onwards	Admirals Landing/ Quantock Gateway, Bridgwater TA6 3EX
Frome Social	Last Thursday of each month	10.00am - 12.00pm	The Blue House, The Bridge, Frome BA11 2AP
Ilminster Social	First Wednesday of each month	10.30am	Cafe No 57 Ilminster TA19 0AW
Street Activity Group	First Monday of each month	11.00am - 1.00pm	Lantokay Wetherspoons BA16 0EY
Taunton Singing Group	Every other Monday	2.00pm - 3.30pm	Somerset Sight TA1 1DG
Taunton Social Dave's Diner	First Wednesday of each month	12.00pm - 2.00pm	Somerset Sight TA1 1DG
Taunton Tai Chi	Every other Thursday or Monday – please call to check	11.00am - 12.00pm	Somerset Sight TA1 1DG
Taunton VI Bowls Club	Every Wednesday	11.00am - 1.00pm	Blackbrook Pavilion. TA1 2RW

Please contact Somerset Sight prior to attending 01823 333818

Type	Day	Time	Where
Taunton Acoustic Rifle Club	Every Thursday	1.00pm - 4.00pm	Contact Somerset Sight for details
Taunton Craft Group	Every Friday	1.15pm - 3.15pm	Somerset Sight TA1 1DG
Wells Social	Second Friday of each month	10.15am - 12.00pm	The Loft Café, Wells Cathedral BA5 2RB
Yeovil Social Group	First Monday of each month	10.30am - 12.00pm	Westlands Entertainment Centre BA20 2DD
Yeovil VI Bowls Group	Every Tuesday	10.30am - 1.00pm	Yeovil Bowls Club BA21 4AS

Somerset Sight Technology Open Day

Wednesday 5th June 2024 10am - 2pm



Among the attendees are Optelec, Humanware, Professional Vision Services and others. No appointment necessary. This will be a great opportunity for you to learn more about what is available. We look forward to seeing you then!



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