



# Wakefield District Sight Aid

St. Swithun's Community Centre, Arncliffe Road, Wakefield, WF1 4RR

01924 215555 – [admin@wdsa.org.uk](mailto:admin@wdsa.org.uk) – [www.wdsa.org.uk](http://www.wdsa.org.uk)

President: The Lord St Oswald | Company No. 7432897 | Reg. Charity No. 1140483

## **Hello everyone and welcome to our July 2025 newsletter!**

Firstly, a huge thank you to everyone who came to our AGM and summer celebration! You all enjoyed the meal and games so much that we have organised another similar session for September! Please see details of our Lively Lunch Club later in the newsletter.

We were delighted to be joined by the new Mayor of Wakefield, Cllr. Maureen Tennant-King, who is also on our Board of Trustees and has kindly chosen us as one of her charities of the year, along with Wakefield & District Down's Syndrome Support Group. I am excited (and slightly terrified!) to announce that I will be abseiling down Wakefield Cathedral on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October to raise funds for the Mayor's charity appeal, so if anyone would like to sponsor me, please contact the office!

Now that we are based in the vibrant St. Swithun's Community Centre, we have been thinking of ways to utilise this fantastic facility to run new and improved events for you, our members. However, we know that many of you will never have been to St. Swithun's before and may feel nervous or unsure about how to get here, especially on public transport. We plan to run some orientation and confidence-building sessions to help with this, so please see details later in the newsletter. From September, we are going to be trialling having our regular Wednesday social group here instead of the Ridings, based on a new format, and we'd love to welcome you here and see what you think.

With warm wishes,

**Hayley Grocock (Chief Executive Officer)**

## **What's on at Wakefield District Sight Aid**

All our events up to the end of October 2025 are shown on the calendar on the middle pages (p6-7). Here's a summary of what's coming up:



*People enjoying our Ridings coffee morning.*

**The Ridings coffee morning: 10am – 12 noon on the first Monday and third Wednesday of the month held at The Events Space, Middle Mall, The Ridings, Wakefield, WF1 1DS – outside M&S Food and Poundland. The ground floor of the Blue car park at The Ridings is allocated for disabled visitors, but it is not free of charge. Blue badges can be used for free parking on-street and in nearby**

**Council car parks. *Please note our last Wednesday coffee morning at The Ridings will be on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August. From Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September we are trialling our new Cuppa and Connect session 10.30 – 12.30 at the St. Swithun's Community Centre. We will continue to meet at The Ridings on the first Monday of the month as usual.***

**Horbury coffee morning: 10am – 12 noon on the second Tuesday of the month (The Cluntergate Centre Café, Cluntergate, Horbury WF4 5DA). Our friendly group of Horbury regulars would love to welcome you to our regular gathering in this vibrant community centre!**



*Members of our Horbury group.*

**Pontefract coffee morning: 10am – 12 noon on the fourth Thursday of the month (at The Broken Bridge Wetherspoon, 5 Horse Fair, Pontefract, WF8 1PD). Come and join us for a cuppa and a natter. You can find us towards the back of the pub, near the toilets. If you are not familiar with The Broken Bridge, staff will be happy to help you find us.**



*People enjoying our Pontefract coffee morning.*

**NEW! Cuppa and Connect! 10.30am – 12.30pm on the third Wednesday of the month** (at St. Swithun's Community Centre, Arncliffe Road, Wakefield, WF1 4RR).

From Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> September and on the third Wednesday of the month thereafter, please join us at St. Swithun's Community Centre for a friendly, warm, welcoming group for blind and partially sighted people of all ages. Enjoy tea, coffee and biscuits, plus a range of fun activities including games, quizzes, guest speakers, crafts and more. It's a great chance to relax, connect with others and enjoy some midweek wellbeing together. We will aim for the activities to be a bit different each time so there's always something new to try. Why not stay for a low cost, home cooked lunch in the Community Café afterwards?

*Please note the slightly later start time to allow extra time for travel to Eastmoor. Our last Wednesday coffee morning at The Ridings will be on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> August. The Monday Ridings coffee morning is unaffected.*

**Wakefield evening social group: 5pm – 7pm on the fourth Thursday of the month** (held at Calder & Hops, 60 Northgate, Wakefield, WF1 3AP). This friendly and informal evening meet-up of members of all ages would love for you to join them!

**Pontefract evening social group: 5pm – 8pm on the first Thursday of the month** (held at Iron Dram, 27a Ropergate, Pontefract, WF8 1LG). This small but welcoming social group is looking forward to meeting you!

**Art Beyond Vision: 1pm – 3pm every Thursday during term time** (in the Activity Room at St. Swithun's Community Centre, Arncliffe Road, Wakefield, WF1 4RR). *Dates are shown on the calendar on p6 - 7.*

Our fully accessible group covers a variety of art and craft techniques during our informal and fun sessions. You don't have to come every week, and all techniques are adapted so you can create pieces to be proud of no matter what your level of sight or previous experience. There is always a choice of techniques on offer, so you will always find something that appeals to you!

The group is run by a qualified teacher with support from creative facilitators with living experience of sight loss. All equipment and materials are provided. Come along and learn new skills, meet new friends, and enjoy a cuppa together.

We ask for a voluntary contribution of £3 per session per participant. This helps towards the costs of equipment, materials, tuition, room hire, and refreshments (tea, coffee, biscuits).



*A collage of people making crafts.*

To find out more, please contact Ruth on 07947 836267.

**Living Well with Sight Loss course (LWWSL): 10.30am – 2.30pm on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> and Monday 21<sup>st</sup> July at Lightwaves Leisure Centre, Lower York Street, Wakefield WF1 3LJ (opposite Wakefield Bus Station)**

Are you newly diagnosed, feeling nervous about navigating the world, or want to start getting out and about more? Feeling like you need a boost of confidence?

This free, informal, two-day course focuses on:

- "Out and about" - mobility, transport and concessions
- "In the home" - daily living skills and technology
- "Starting out" - CVI process and main eye care services
- "Looking after ourselves" - eye health, wellbeing, leisure and next steps

A recent course attendee said:

"Very informative, very lovely. It gave me great clarity of what was involved in the sight loss journey and what was available."

Living Well with Sight Loss is a partnership between WDSA and RNIB, made possible with the kind support of Wakefield Council.





*A group of people at a Living Well with Sight Loss course.*

Our next course after this will provisionally be taking place on **Monday 29<sup>th</sup> September and Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October**. Access to Lightwaves is step-free. Places are limited, so please contact the office on 01924 215555 and we will be happy to give you further information and book your place.

### **Jason and the Wakefield Adventure – Audio Described Tours available!**

The brand-new blockbuster exhibition by Wakefield-born disabled artist Jason Wilsher-Mills runs from **Friday 20<sup>th</sup> June until Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September at WX (Wakefield Exchange), Union Street, Wakefield, WF1 3AD** (next to the bus station). Jason was recently awarded an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours List! Many congratulations, Jason!

Jason's first large scale exhibition of work in his hometown features giant inflatables, artworks inspired by local disabled community groups (including Wakefield District Sight Aid), along with sculptures and digital animations influenced by the vibrant history of our Merrie City.

The exhibition is open Wednesday – Sunday during term time and every day during the school summer holidays (21<sup>st</sup> July – 31<sup>st</sup> August). On specific dates, you can explore the Jason and the Wakefield Adventure exhibition through vivid audio description, specially designed for blind and visually impaired visitors. Led by the experienced team at [Mind's Eye](#), these tours bring the story, characters, and artwork to life through rich, sensory detail. The tour is free to attend. Booking is encouraged but not essential. Meet at the Welcome Point in the main hall of Wakefield Exchange. Everyone is welcome, including sighted companions.

The tours will be taking place on:

- Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> August, 10am - 11am
- Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2pm - 3pm
- Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> August, 5pm - 6pm



*Jason Wilsher-Mills MBE.*

Calendar of events July - October 2025				
<u>JULY</u>	<u>AUGUST</u>	<u>SEPTEMBER</u>	<u>OCTOBER</u>	
1 Tu	1 Fr	1 Mo Ridings	1 We	
2 We	2 Sa	2 Tu	2 Th LWWSL / ABV / Pontefract Evening Group	
3 Th ABV / Pontefract Evening Group	3 Su	3 We	3 Fr	
4 Fr	4 Mo Ridings	4 Th ABV / Pontefract Evening Group	4 Sa	
5 Sa	5 Tu Theatre Royal meeting	5 Fr	5 Su	
6 Su	6 We	6 Sa	6 Mo Ridings	
7 Mo Demo Day	7 Th Pontefract Evening Group	7 Su	7 Tu	
8 Tu Horbury	8 Fr	8 Mo	8 We	
9 We	9 Sa	9 Tu Horbury	9 Th Art Beyond Vision	
10 Th Art Beyond Vision	10 Su	10 We	10 Fr	
11 Fr	11 Mo	11 Th Art Beyond Vision	11 Sa	
12 Sa	12 Tu Horbury	12 Fr	12 Su	
13 Su	13 We	13 Sa	13 Mo	
14 Mo LWWSL	14 Th	14 Su	14 Tu Horbury	
15 Tu	15 Fr	15 Mo	15 We Cuppa & Connect	
16 We Ridings	16 Sa	16 Tu	16 Th Art Beyond Vision	

16 We Ridings	16 Sa	16 Tu	16 Th Art Beyond Vision
17 Th Art Beyond Vision	17 Su	17 We Cuppa & Connect	17 Fr
18 Fr	18 Mo	18 Th Art Beyond Vision	18 Sa
19 Sa	19 Tu Guys & Dolls	19 Fr	19 Su
20 Su	20 We Ridings	20 Sa	20 Mo
21 Mo LWWSL	21 Th	21 Su	21 Tu
22 Tu Beyond Braille workshops	22 Fr	22 Mo Lively Lunch Club	22 We
23 We Scones & Showtunes	23 Sa	23 Tu	23 Th Ponte / ABV/ Wakefield Evening Group
24 Th Ponte / Wakefield Evening Group	24 Su	24 We	24 Fr
25 Fr	25 Bank Holiday Monday	25 Th Ponte / ABV/ Wakefield Evening Group	25 Sa
26 Sa	26 Tu	26 Fr	26 Su
27 Su	27 We	27 Sa	27 Mo
28 Mo	28 Th Ponte / Wakefield Evening Group	28 Su	28 Tu
29 Tu	29 Fr	29 Mo LWWSL	29 We
30 We	30 Sa	30 Tu	30 Th
31 Th	31 Su		31 Fr

***ABV: Art Beyond Vision***

***LWWSL: Living Well with Sight Loss***

**Forgotten Women of Wakefield – Beyond Braille Creative Workshops**  
**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1pm-3pm and 4pm-6pm at CoffeeWrite, 4 Marygate, Wakefield, WF1 1NX.**

Join the Forgotten Women of Wakefield team at one of two workshops to hear about the history of the Wakefield Blind Society, which later became Wakefield District Sight Aid.

Formed in 1869 two influential women, Emily Fennell and Edith Wright, went on to change the course of history locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally with their campaign to make ophthalmia neonatorum a notifiable disease and led the way in establishing nationwide 'Workshops for the Blind'.



*Pieces made from woven paper strips.*

You will learn about the challenges the women faced, the people who supported them (and those who didn't) and will be able to respond to what you are learning with paper weaving, badge making and painting on old records, anything you feel you want to capture from their story whilst sharing yours.

CoffeeWrite has two entrances, one on Marygate and one on Silver Street. Our workshops will take place on the upper level, accessed by Silver Street making them accessible to all. There is no cost to these workshops, but we ask that you buy a coffee from CoffeeWrite to support this small independent business.

There are two opportunities to join us on Tuesday 22 July:

Session 1: 1pm to 3pm

Session 2: 4pm to 6pm

These workshops are offered free of charge, thanks to funding from Historic England. Booking is online via Eventbrite, but if this is difficult, please call the office and we will be happy to book your place for you.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/forgotten-women-of-wakefield-beyond-braille-creative-workshops-tickets-1406332320829>

Be sure to select the correct session at checkout.



**Scones & Showtunes! Afternoon Tea and a screening of Mamma Mia! The Musical from 1pm until 4pm on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July at St. Swithun's Community Centre**

Join us for an afternoon of sweet treats and feel-good entertainment! We'll be serving up a delicious afternoon tea followed by a showing of the smash-hit musical *Mamma Mia!* — full of fun, friendship and all your favourite ABBA tunes. Whether you're singing along or just soaking up the atmosphere, it's the perfect way to relax and enjoy some musical magic together.



*A scone with jam and cream.*

This event is just £10 per person including all refreshments. Please call the office on 01924 215555 to book your place today! Places must be confirmed and paid for by Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> July for catering purposes.

**Bridging the gap – exciting partnership with Theatre Royal Wakefield!**

**First meeting: Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1pm-2pm at St. Swithun's**



*Theatre Royal Wakefield logo.*

At Theatre Royal Wakefield, we want everyone to access our theatre easily and have a brilliant experience from beginning to end. We would love to invite you to join a brand-new group in partnership with WDSA to share your own ideas about what can be done to improve experiences for audience members with vision impairment.

**What's involved:**

- Catch-ups to share ideas and opinions to make a difference (with tea/coffee and biscuits, of course!)
- Taking part in two, gentle and fun creative sessions at the theatre, including singing well-known songs from musicals!
- Visits to the theatre to see exciting performances including *Guys and Dolls* and *Jack and the Beanstalk*!

If you'd like to be part of this group, or just come along to find out more, we would love to see you at our first meeting:

**Tuesday 5th August**

**Time: 1:00 – 2:00pm**

**Venue: St Swithun's Community Centre, Eastmoor**

Following the first meeting, our visit to see Guys and Dolls will be on the evening of **Tuesday 19th August at Theatre Royal Wakefield** and will be an exclusive preview as the show does not open to the public until Wednesday 20th! This visit will be completely free of charge.

Please contact the Wakefield District Sight Aid office on 01924 215555 to register your interest in the meeting on 5th August and the Guys and Dolls performance on 19th August.

**Lively lunch club! Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 1pm – 3pm at St. Swithun's Community Centre, Arncliffe Road, Wakefield, WF1 4RR**



*WDSA member Mark enjoys kurling at our AGM.*

Following the success of our AGM and summer celebration, come and join us for a delicious hot vegetarian lunch (lasagne, garlic bread, salad, and coleslaw), followed by scones and an afternoon of friendly, accessible games including kurling and boccia bowls. It's a great way to enjoy good food, gentle activity and great company in a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. Whether you're competitive or just curious, there's something for everyone at the Lively Lunch Club!

Places are just £10 per person including the meal and refreshments and must be booked and paid for by Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September. Call the office to book your place today! Dietary requirements can be catered for.

**Focus on fundraising – collection boxes**

This quarter we would like to thank all the businesses and individuals who have one of our collection boxes.

We would particularly like to celebrate Jean Shorthouse and the Carleton Grange Dance Club, who have been supporting us for many years and typically raise between £350 and £400 every year. Jean will be celebrating her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday in September so everyone at Sight Aid would like to wish Jean a very happy birthday and thank every member of the group who gives so generously to support our work.



*WDSA collection box.*

This quarter, we would also like to give a shout-out to the customers at Crofton Express (especially the young people who attend Crofton Academy), Mr and Mrs Smalley, Mr Richards, and Gem's Bistro.

If you or a business you know would like to request a collection box, please ring the office on 01924 215555. Thank you for your support.

### **St. Swithun's orientation and confidence building sessions**



*St. Swithun's Café on the Moor*

If you'd like to come to St. Swithun's, but you've never been here before and would like some support to plan your journey and familiarise yourself with the relevant buses and routes, please call the office on 01924 215555 and put your name down for one of our orientation and confidence building sessions. Mutually convenient dates will be arranged when we have enough people.

We will meet you at the bus station and show you which buses come to Eastmoor, make the journey with you so you know when to get off, and walk the route to the centre with you.

If you are visiting the centre by car, there is a small free car park behind the centre (off Kilnsey Road) and on-street parking is unrestricted.

Access to St. Swithun's is step-free and an accessible toilet is available.

## **Boom Box/USB player appeal**

If you have a Boom Box/USB player for talking books on loan from us and are no longer using it, please let us know and we will send packaging out for you to return it to us. It can then be issued to someone else. Examples of the players we have issued in recent years include the RNIB Communiplayer, King's Audio Sonic USB player, Kolaura portable wireless speaker, and Cobolt Speechmaster Cube, and are shown in the photographs below:



## **Helpline hours and office cover**

Our helpline number is 01924 215555 and operates 9.30am – 1.30pm Monday to Thursday. An answerphone is in operation out-of-hours and at busy times. Please note, there are only three of us in the staff team and we are all part-time. There will be occasions when there is no-one in the office at St. Swithun's, so visits to the office are by appointment only. Please ring in advance if you need to come to the office.

## **Partner news: Salvation Army Music Man Project**

A fully inclusive FREE musical workshop for adults with disabilities, on the last Monday of the month from 10.30am – 12 noon.

It's a time of interactive music, song and movement delivered through different formats so that everyone can take part. It is totally free and there's time for refreshment and chat too. We have a carpark, and our facilities are all wheelchair accessible. Carers welcome.



*Salvation Army logo.*

Wakefield Salvation Army

4 Vicarage Street South, Wakefield, WF1 1QX

01924 382 430 / [wakefield@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:wakefield@salvationarmy.org.uk)