OXTALK AUTUMN MEETING 2014

CHAIR’S REPORT

Good afternoon and welcome to this Saturday afternoon Autumn Meeting.

We, the Committee, thought we would hold this year’s meeting at this time in the hope that it was a more attractive time for listeners and volunteers. We are delighted 13 listeners have been able to attend, many more than have attended previous meetings for very many years. So thank you to everyone who is here. We will be very pleased to hear your comments about the afternoon.

The procedures for the referral of new listeners has remained the same with the Oxfordshire County Council’s Visual Impairment Team referring the majority of new listeners regularly through-out the year. This is followed by the small team of OXTALK trainers making home visits. At the home visit the trainer takes one of the BOOMBOX Plus players, this is both a radio and digital player and has been very well received by all who are now using it. Before deciding which player to buy this year we asked Margaret Brinkhurst and Irene Read for their opinions. Margaret and Irene are themselves visually impaired and Committee members. It was on their recommendations that the BoomBox Plus was purchased. Thanks to them for this advice and thank you to the trainers. Many of the younger people referred decide to listen on-line or use whatever digital player they have already. We post out on average 90 memory sticks a week and despite receiving Google Analytics Reports we are not able to find out how many people do listen on-line.

There was another Ashmolean touch tour during the year. Thank you to the volunteer drivers who drove listeners to and from the Ashmolean and thank you to the volunteers who have driven some of the listeners to this meeting – and hopefully they will drive you home again!!

During 2014 Anne and Geoff Ambler spent many a jolly hour completing grant application forms and organising fund raising events. Their hard work has been successful and as you heard from Geoff OXTALK is financially sound for the next year. Thank you to Anne and Geoff.

As many of you will be aware OUHT have decided, that the building RC has used for many years as the home for Oxford Hospital Radio Station, has to close. This has also been the recording and copying base for OXTALK too. [If NS is present ask if he wishes to say anything.] RC have been in negotiations with OUHT for most of the year, the building was going to be taken out of use by OUHT first at the end of June and then the end of September and as of today I cannot let you know when OUHT may close the building. RC has now been offered an alternative building – The Old Gatehouse on the Churchill site. This building is a quarter the size of the current building, is in a very dilapidated state and needs £75,000 spending on it to make it fit for purpose. RC has to find this money and so are desperately fund raising as the money has to be raised as quickly as possible – not an easy task. Because of the reduction in size there will be only 1 recording studio which RC anticipate they will be using every night. It is therefore very probable that OXTALK will have to find a new recording and copying base. A change of venue is going to affect all OXTALK volunteers and I will be liaising with the volunteers in the very near future. If and when OXTALK has to move to new premises then there very probably will be a period of time when we will not be able to produce OXTALK. Hopefully we will have time to let listeners know that OXTALK is going ‘off air’ and for approximately how long. Please be assured we will keep it as short a time as is possible.

At this time of the year I ask all the volunteers if they are available for the next year - 2015. At the end of 2014 5 Copiers are leaving and 6 Readers. I have been able to replace 5 Readers but as yet none of the Copiers. But we have until the end of this year to find replacements and I say we because I am asking you to speak to your friends and family to ask if anyone is interested in joining us. In the Summer Larry Sider joined as a TO, so there are 5 TOs and 1 Reserve TO. Without TOs there would be no OXTALK. Of the 11 volunteers we are saying ‘thank you and good bye to’ some have been connected with OXTALK for many years, Carol Aistrop, Sue and Tamsin Morris and Margaret Croucher. Carol Aistrop in particular is some whose name will be known to you.

At the beginning of September Muriel Wittrick died and for those listeners and volunteers who were involved over 30 years ago you will know that Muriel and Keith Wittrick were the founder members and the driving force in establishing OXTALK. With the anticipated changes to the Recording Studio for RC and therefore the resulting changes for OXTALK, 2015 is going to be the start of a new phase for OXTALK.

Not only do we say ‘thank you’ to the people who are leaving I say ‘thank you’ to all the volunteers who support OXTALK, because without their continuing support there would be no OXTALK. So much goes on unseen and at the AGM I can publically thank the Committee members for their willingness to give the extra that is required. Thank you.

You will be able to say ‘thank you’ yourselves as some of the Committee Members have taken part in the OXTALK bake-off to produce the refreshments we will shortly be enjoying!

Thank you for coming. Please be patient with any ‘break in service’ that might occur in 2015 and remember to change your clocks and watches when you go home tonight – we gain an extra hour tomorrow!

Margaret A Simpson

CHAIR 25 October 2014.