THE CHAIR’S REPORT FOR THE OXTALK AUTUMN MEETING

 25 OCTOBER 2012.

Welcome to everyone and thank you for attending this Autumn Meeting for 2012. I am very pleased to welcome Colin Cure, Director of OAB; Neil Stockton, Chairman of Radio Cherwell and our guest speaker Jude Barrett, Education Officer for Adults and Young People at the Ashmolean Museum.

Reading through last year’s report – checking that I wasn’t going to be writing exactly the same as I wrote last year!!! I noted that I had mentioned we had designed a new information leaflet but as they had not arrived in time for last year’s meeting I had not been able to show them to you, well a year later I can show you the new leaflet!!

I also concluded my report with the following ‘this coming year should be one of fewer changes and more a case of settling into the new regime’. How wrong one can be!

Towards the end of last year I was contacted by Mike Box from the Estates Dept of OUHT/NHS concerning the copying room in the Housekeeping building on the Churchill Hospital site. He said it was very possible we would have to move but he would look for possible alternative sites. In January of this year we were given notice to quit the room by the end of March and no alternative facility was offered but Mike Box did suggest we copied each week in our own homes, which was neither feasible nor realistic! When Neil Stockton learnt of our dilemma he offered OXTALK the use of Radio Cherwell’s lounge space for the copying process and some storage for essential equipment. So preparations began to dispose of some of the equipment and clear the room. During March the copying room was cleared and what usable equipment could be rehomed was, some to volunteers; the cassette copying machines and 100s of tapes went to Oxfordshire Association for the Blind; 2 radio/cassette players are now in Nigeria. The remaining equipment we could not find a home for went into the Churchill skips! My thanks to Anne, Ray, Carol, Colin and Hazel for helping me to clear out the old copying room. My very grateful thanks to Neil and his Committee for offering OXTALK yet more space in Radio Cherwell. All the volunteers find this a much pleasanter environment Neil, thank you.

In March 2012, following a request from a Technical Officer the start time for the reading teams on Tuesday nights was changed; the weekly reading and recording session now start at 7pm. This does seem to be working well.

In May I received the very unexpected and distressing news that Trevor Miles had had a sudden and severe stroke which resulted in his death 2 days later. Trevor had been the lead Technical Officer, a Committee member, copier and OXTALK’s IT problem solver. As requested we provided his family with many photographs showing Trevor as an OXTALK volunteer, as well as audio items. Trevor’s family were understandably devastated by his sudden and unexpected death but never-the-less they asked for donations to be made to OXTALK in memory of Trevor and OXTALK have very gratefully received to date, in excess £1000.00. Of this we have spent £200.00 on the 2 banners which are on display for the first time tonight and will be used mainly by Anne when she gives her OXTALK talks. They will also publicise OXTALK’s presence at future events. We are saving the remainder of the donation as a contingency fund for possible use when we move, hopefully with Radio Cherwell, as and when OUHT/NHS decides it is time for Radio Cherwell to move to a new home! I thank the Technical Officers for their support in covering the inevitable recording gaps and for taking over the extra training required for potential new Technical Officers. No one Technical Officer has taken over Trevor’s IT role but there has been shared IT responsibility. Trevor’s influence on the digital development for OXTALK is his legacy and he will be remembered with gratitude, respect and much pleasure as a fellow volunteer.

OXTALK participated in the Disability Fair held at Oxford Town Hall in May.

Throughout the year there have been new referrals from the Sensory Impairment Team, as well as self-referrals, all of whom require a home visit or sometimes two! I thank the small group of volunteer trainers for following up these referrals, Lesley, Mandy, Ray, Anne, Christine and Colin. For various reasons some listeners have stopped receiving the weekly memory stick. We do not know how many people listen to the news via the website.

I am now preparing the teams and rotas for 2013 and for the first time in a very long time a number of volunteers are resigning, with the reasons given as ‘driving is becoming difficult’ or ‘the car has been sold’; ‘after so many years it is time to retire’; ‘a change of volunteering’. These volunteers have given, collectively, around 100 years of service to OXTALK and for this support we are very grateful and thank them for being OXTALK volunteers. So I am looking to replace 5 readers, 3 Technical Officers, a copier and a news gather, OXTALK has had 13 volunteers resign in total during the year. I will advertise for new volunteers eventually but I hope initially to be able to fill some of the gaps from the current group of reserves, but we will need more volunteers, so if you have a friend or two who you think may be interested in having a new interest please suggest they visit the website and then ring me – [website details on banners]!!! Anne and Leslie Durham, who are retiring, have been volunteers since February 1980. Anne started as a reader when recordings were in the caravan and Leslie designed the first OXTALK logo as well as being a reader from time to time. I met them when I joined Anne’s reading team many years ago and when she stopped reading she collected the weekly news items for me. So I personally am looking for a new newsgatherer who lives in the Headington area!!! Colin Taylor is retiring to follow a new interest, thank you for your support for OXTALK Colin. I will be sending our thanks to all the retiring volunteers and Anne and Leslie in particular for their many years of service. We will continue to produce the weekly OXTALK recording but I give notice now that I may need to ask for just a little more of everyone’s time whilst new recruits are found. Mandy, Margaret and I will be collating the 2013 rotas shortly and these will be sent out to all volunteers during November.

This has been a more in-depth report than usual and I thank you for your patience but I thought you would wish to be informed of the year’s happenings.

I will finish by thanking the very supportive OXTALK Committee members. Having supportive colleagues is a great asset and is very much appreciated. Thank you to them and thank you to you for your attention!

Margaret A Simpson 25 October 2012

Chair of OXTALK