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Drama at the Royal Blind School
Royal Blind is Scotland’s largest visual impairment organisation. We create life-changing opportunities for visually impaired children and adults of all ages.

It costs £1,510 per hour to provide all of the following services:

- The Royal Blind School: Specialist education for young people aged up to 18 years.
- Kidscene: An after school and holiday club for children of all abilities.
- Scottish Braille Press: A leading provider of high quality Braille, large print and audio transcription services.
- Forward Vision: A residential and respite service for young adults aged 17-25.
- Learning Hub: Support, training and resources for education professionals that teach visually impaired pupils.
- Scottish War Blinded: Our sister charity provides assistance to veterans of the armed forces.
- Braeside House: A nursing home specialising in care for visually impaired older people.
- Making a donation to Royal Blind. Every donation makes a difference.

New house for visually impaired adults

For more than five years Forward Vision has provided support for 17-25 year olds with visual impairment and complex support needs at its beautiful purpose-built bungalows in Morningside.

Now Royal Blind is excited to announce the opening of a brand new residence for four visually impaired adults, Allermuir, which will be nestled in a residential neighbourhood in Edinburgh. Opening in August 2016, Allermuir will provide community based supported living with a high quality of care.

The house, named after a hill in the Pentlands, will provide 24-hour individualised care, giving service users the chance to become part of a diverse and thriving community.

The former ten bedroom care home in Glenallan Drive in Edinburgh is less than three miles from Forward Vision’s Morningside base and just one mile from Cameron Toll Shopping Centre. The house is in a peaceful setting adjacent to picturesque parkland with spectacular views of Arthur’s Seat.

Allermuir will undergo a complete renovation and refit to equip it with four fully accessible en suite bedrooms for residents, a staff bedroom, two living spaces, a large kitchen and dining area and a private garden.

Julie Jamieson, Care Services Manager at Royal Blind, said: “We are all incredibly excited about Allermuir. While our current Forward Vision service acts as a transition from school life into adulthood for those aged between 17 and 26, our new residence will provide a home for life for adults with visual impairment who need support.”

Making a donation to Royal Blind. Every donation makes a difference.

You can donate:
Online: www.royalblind.org/donate
Telephone: 0131 229 1456
Cheque: made payable to Royal Blind, 50 Gillespie Crescent, Edinburgh, EH10 4JB.

iSite in alternative formats
To receive iSite in large print, Braille or audio CD please contact Colleen Watt on 0131 229 1456 or colleen.watt@royalblind.org

Royal Blind is a registered charity SC017167 Scottish War Blinded is a registered charity SC002652
Prestigious award for dedicated Scout

It was a difficult year for Royal Blind School student, Robbie Dalgleish, as he has had to come to terms with a genetic disorder which has caused his sight to deteriorate and left him wheelchair bound.

But despite setbacks with his health, the determined teenager has continued to attend his weekly Scout group, the 77th Braid, and now his devotion to duty has been recognised with a prestigious medal.

Robbie, aged 15 of North Berwick, was presented with the medal for meritorious conduct by Chief Commissioner for Scouting Scotland, Graham Haddock, at the school in January.

The award is issued for conduct involving ‘a high degree of courage, endurance, initiative or devotion to duty, often under suffering, without necessarily involving any element of risk.’

Robbie has a genetic disorder called Neurofibromatosis type I and complications from his condition have meant that he now uses a wheelchair. During his time at Scouts he has earned the Climber, Science and Fire Safety badges and he is working on the Creative Challenge Award.

Robbie’s mum, Pam Dalgleish said she is ‘incredibly proud’. It came completely out of the blue that he was getting the award.

“He has been a Scout for a few years and he absolutely loves it. Robbie has had a difficult year and been in and out of hospital since June. But he is still really positive and enthusiastic and I know this means a huge amount to him.”

As the recipient of a medal for meritorious conduct, Robbie and his parents are invited to the National Review of Queen’s Scouts at Windsor Castle where he will meet Chief Scout, Bear Grylls.

Michael Mair, Group Scout Leader of the 77th Braid (pictured left with Robbie), said: “We are incredibly proud of Robbie, who had been part of the group since its inception, and of all he had achieved, particularly in the last few months.

“Robbie never backs down from a challenge and despite his illness has attended meetings with regularity and an attitude all Scouts hope to emulate.”

Scouts PR badge

This term the 77th Braid Scouts are working towards a badge in Public Relations. As part of the group’s work for the PR badge they chose to write this article for iSite to tell our readers what they love about their Scout group.

The 77th Braid Scouts spend Wednesday evenings learning new skills, creating music, carrying out messy scientific experiments and going on all sorts of exciting excursions. This session we are challenging ourselves with a PR badge so contributing to iSite seemed like the perfect opportunity.

The Lion and Wolf patrols asked some questions for the Kestrel and Owl patrols to answer the following week. Some of the Scouts helped to interview others and record the answers on camera, and here is what we found out.

We’ve done a lot of badges at Scouts over the years. Matthew’s Creative Challenge badge takes pride of place on his uniform. Daniel enjoyed the Fire Safety badge because that included a visit from firefighters in a fire engine. He blasted the siren! Stefan also enjoyed meeting the firefighters and said it was a very important job to learn about. Junjie is currently working towards his hobbies badge. He brought in his dominos set to shou us and we all got to have a shot.

As for our Scouts trips, what was the favourite? Chantelle recently came along to the Edinburgh Scout Gang Show and enjoyed the singing and music. We have been on lots of trips with Scouts: what was the favourite? Myles, Robbie and Stefan enjoyed the trip to the rock climbing centre where some of our Scouts got their climbing badge— in fact Stefan described it as ‘very mega brill!’— whereas Ben liked the visit to the Scottish Parliament. Emily made her Scout promise to officially become part of the 77th Scouts during that visit.

Andrew and Craig who are in our Wolf and Lion patrols can often be found enjoying a parachute game and Ewen reminded us that when we’d gone to Fountainpark to play bowling, he had been the champion!
The stage is set at the Royal Blind School

Royal Blind School drama teacher, Aine Murphy, speaks to iSite about teaching performing arts to visually impaired pupils.

It wasn’t until she arrived at the Royal Blind School for her job interview that drama teacher, Aine Murphy, realised just how much she wanted to work at the school.

In 1995 as a newly qualified teacher, Aine didn’t know much about the school that she would end up teaching at for more than 20 years, but it took just 10 minutes sitting in the reception area observing interactions between staff and students, including receptionist and former Royal Blind School student, Gavin, for her to know she really wanted to teach at the Royal Blind School.

“Back then I was new to teaching and had a job that I wasn’t really getting on with. I think part of the reason I went for the interview was to have a bit of a day off. And then I came to the Royal Blind School. Looking around and speaking to people, I started to realise how fantastic this school is. Gavin was answering the phone and interacting with the students and staff. Watching everyone I realised that this was a very special place. It was quite a moving moment. For me and I had a real sense of what a lovely school this is. I just knew I had to teach here. I couldn’t believe how much I wanted the job.”

Today, Aine is just as passionate about her role as she always has been – an enthusiasm which clearly shows in the school’s yearly Christmas plays.

Each December every single student at the school, as well as many of the teachers and support staff, take to the stage. This year we had a vibrant performance of C.S. Lewis’ the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.

Aine adapts each play for the individual performers, who all have visual impairments and a variety of complex needs. This makes a rich and emotive show that enables everyone to be included.

“There’s no set way to approach teaching drama to visually impaired people,” said Aine, “but I have found that a visually impaired student can do absolutely anything a sighted student can.”

Drama classes are taken at least once per week and lines are learnt from a DVD, CD, very large print or in Braille.

Aine teaches classes of three to nine pupils with a range of needs and abilities and covers everything from sensory storytelling to Shakespeare and contemporary playwrights. Many of her pupils are currently taking SQA units and qualifications in performing arts.

She added: “Drama is an important tool to support the development of our pupils’ social skills and their understanding of the world around them.”

At a given moment the staff froze and the pupils did not make a sound. Some of the audience told me afterwards that they stopped breathing and it really made the hairs on the backs of their necks stand on end.

“The key, I have found, is filling the show with emotion for the pupils, so they react viscerally to what is going on around them. I think that really makes a difference.”

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She added: “Drama is an important tool to support the development of our pupils’ social skills and their understanding of the world around them.”

“I’m very proud to work here. The reward is the effort that the students – and staff – put into their performances and how much they enjoy themselves.”
Play the name game!

Residents living near to our planned new services in the West of Scotland are invited to come up with locally inspired names for the buildings – and be in with a chance of winning £50 of vouchers.

The competition has been launched as work begins on Royal Blind’s care home for older people and Scottish War Blinded’s centre for visually impaired military veterans, which will be sharing the same site in Paisley.

We are seeking a distinctive name for each of the buildings which could reflect the heritage of the town. The competition was launched in January in partnership with Paisley Central Library, where an architectural model of the new development, information on the plans and a competition entry box are now on display.

The winners of the competition will receive an invitation to the grand opening event next year and a £25 John Lewis voucher for each centre’s name. Winning entries will be selected by the charity’s management team.

Royal Blind will build a care home providing specialist nursing care to elderly people with visual impairments, like our successful Edinburgh care home, Braeside House. With 54 en-suite bedrooms, our new care home will be bright and airy with open space and access to the outdoors. The layout of the building and lighting will be designed to meet the needs of people with visual impairment.

The Scottish War Blinded centre will be open free of charge to veterans of the armed forces who have a visual impairment, who will be welcomed into a supportive hub of activity. The centre will host a wide range of social and sporting opportunities, as well as training and rehabilitation addressing how to adapt to life with sight loss.

Construction on the now vacant site is due to commence this spring and the centre and home are planned to open in 2017. Around 100 jobs will be created by the charities’ expansion to Paisley.

To enter:
- Pop your entry in the competition box at Paisley Central Library or
- Email your suggested name to events@royalblind.org with the subject heading ‘Paisley’ with your full name and telephone number so you can be contacted if you are a winner.

The winning entries will be announced on www.royalblind.org/paisley by 29 April.

Scottish Braille Press a ‘prime example’ of supported business, says Minister

Since its foundation in 1891, the Scottish Braille Press has prided itself on empowering people with disabilities by giving them the means to read and providing access to work.

Today nearly 50% of the Press’s workforce have a disability, and it is included in the Scottish Government’s directory of supported businesses in Scotland.

In November, Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism, Fergus Ewing MSP, paid a visit to the Scottish Braille Press to find out more about its work.

After seeing how the Scottish Braille Press produces Braille, large print and audio, Mr Ewing was shown the new commercial shredding service, which has begun with a contract from Edinburgh City Council and provides employment for an additional visually impaired worker.

The Scottish Braille Press employs not only visually impaired people but also people with other physical disabilities and mental health issues.

Mr Ewing said: “I was delighted to tour the Scottish Braille Press premises in November last year to learn more about their successful work as a supported business, and to see how they operate in practice.

“They are a prime example of the opportunities supported businesses can provide.

“Supported businesses, such as the Scottish Braille Press, offer valuable opportunities to those with disabilities, and can act as a stepping stone for disabled people to enter and sustain mainstream employment.”

This supported employers programme is currently assisted by funding from a Department of Work and Pensions programme called Work Choice. 96.5% of the Scottish Braille Press’s income comes from commercial activities, and 3.5% from grants for supported employment. This funding programme will be devolved to the Scottish Government this year.
Residents welcome new private family rooms at Braeside House

For many families spending quality time together involves having a meal around the dinner table. Now residents of Braeside House will be able to do just that as they entertain their visitors in the care home’s new private family spaces.

Built 15 years ago, Braeside House was designed to incorporate a large smoking room with a mezzanine floor. But with changes to the law and public attitudes towards smoking since then, the room was taken out of use.

Staff came up with the idea of revamping the space by converting it into two living and dining rooms that will enable residents to enjoy private time and meals with their friends and families in a relaxed setting.

The renovation took place between October and December to give two equal sized lounges with comfortable seating and dining areas.

Braeside House resident Suzanne Henderson, aged 89, uses the new private area to spend time with friends, like Margaret Connon. Suzanne said: “I moved to Braeside House late last year and it’s much better to have these lounges now. The rooms are peaceful and much more private than using a group lounge or dining room.”

Margaret added: “I think the staff have done a really beautiful job. The rooms are so comfy and homely. For many families spending quality time together involves having a meal around the dinner table. Now residents of Braeside House will be able to do just that as they entertain their visitors in the care home’s new private family spaces.

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When asked how old she is Rita Cramb gives the most infectious of smiles and says she has lost count, ‘but around about 90 sounds right’. She said: “My dad had his own bakery, but I never worked in it. He wouldn’t let me. I went into nursing and was expected to help provide for my brothers and sisters as I was the eldest.”

“I put everything into my job. I have lots of lovely memories. When I was young, I used to go into the town with my mum and sister and get a cup of tea and do some shopping. It was a chance for us to get out.”

Now she has reached her 90th year, Rita says she has had a lovely life and is still enjoying herself, and that she has no regrets at all. One of the great loves of her life is music, and Rita enjoys all the concerts they have at Braeside House. “I would have loved to learn to play something,” she said.

“My sister played the piano, but I wasn’t allowed as my dad didn’t approve. I can still listen though. I have always gone to concerts and love music.”

“I enjoy living at Braeside House. I have spent all my life looking after people and now they are looking after me.”

Now she has reached her 90th year, Rita has had a lovely life and is still enjoying herself.
Challenge yourself and raise funds!

Why not take part in a sponsored event for Royal Blind? Here are some of the challenge events you can take part in to raise money for Scotland’s largest visual impairment organisation.

**Kilomathon Scotland 2016**

**What?**
The Kilomathon takes place on Edinburgh’s cycle paths. There are three distances, a 13.1k race for runners aged 16 and above, a 6.55k for aged 15 and above and a 2.62k for children aged 6-14.

**When?**
Sunday 20 March 2016
Edinburgh - Ocean Terminal for the 13.1k; Clerk Road Cycle Path for the 6.55k and BT Murrayfield Stadium for the 2.62k.

**Forth Rail Bridge Abseil 2016**

**What?**
It’s a 165ft drop with a soft landing on the sandy beach below with spectacular panoramic views of the surrounding countryside and the firth of Forth.

**When?**
12 June 2016
The Forth Rail Bridge, Edinburgh.

**Edinburgh Marathon Festival 2016**

**What?**
The Edinburgh Marathon Festival has seven races on offer over two days including the marathon, half marathon, team relay, 10k, 5k and junior races.

**When?**
28 - 29 May 2016
The main Edinburgh marathon starts in London and Regent Road, passing Musselburgh Links, coming to a finish at Pinkie St Peter’s Primary School.

**London to Paris Bike Ride 2016**

**What?**
The Global Adventure Challenges starts in London with the 239 mile, 4 day route through northern France to Paris.

**When?**
20 – 24 July 2016
The race paces stops at Calais, Abbeville and Beauvais before arriving at Paris on the fourth day.

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**Golf Day 2016**

Tickets can be purchased online at www.royalblind.org and are on a first come first served basis.

If you are interested in finding out more about the sponsorship opportunities, please contact Kerrigan Bell at kerrigan.bell@royalblind.org

A major highlight in our fundraising calendar is once again fast approaching.

Building on the success of last year’s event, the eighth annual Royal Blind Celebrity Golf Day will be held on 10 August.

Hosted by DJ Scott Wilson, the annual Golf Day will be held at the exclusive Fidra Links at Archerfield Golf Course and is a fantastic opportunity for people to get together for a fun day, whilst raising funds for charity. A lot of our participants are corporate teams, bringing their clients or staff.

Participants enjoyed stunning weather at last year’s event, which raised more than £38,000 for Royal Blind.

Teams are able to participate in additional challenges such as blind-folded golf and black ball challenges making the day even more special, giving a profound sense of perspective and appreciation of the difficulties that blind and partially sighted people face.

An auction and raffle of exclusive prizes is also offered, helping to raise funds for Royal Blind.

A team of three costs £600. Included are:

- Use of exceptional facilities and golf buggies
- 18 holes of golf in a shotgun start
- An Archerfield crest golf pouch with tees and poker chip marker
- Breakfast role with tea and coffee
- Two course meal post golf

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**Book your place online www.royalblind.org/events**
**A super half-term club**

Youngsters donned capes and costumes for a week of fun-filled super hero-themed activities at Kidscene’s February Holiday Club.

The group looked the part by designing their own superhero cape, making their own Thor helmet and hammer and Captain America’s shield and super hero hand moulds. The budding bakers of the team crafted tasty Thor cupcakes and Spiderman and Wonder Woman cookies. Staff also organised a trip to a trampoline centre, swimming sessions and outdoor group games.

**Royal Blind Learning Hub’s seminar programme under way**

Last Autumn we launched our new service to support mainstream educators who teach visually impaired children. The Royal Blind Learning Hub provides face to face support, online resources and seminars.

Teachers from across Scotland are being invited to experience first-hand what it is like to be a visually impaired student by taking part in a day of seminars and workshops lead by Learning Hub Manager, Sally Paterson.

Sally is a Qualified Teacher of Visually Impaired with over 20 years teaching experience. Now she is taking her expertise on tour as she prepares to lead three days of training and practical exercises in April and May.

Sally said: “Unless you are visually impaired yourself it can be very difficult to imagine what the learning experience is like for a blind student. My hope is that these seminars will give teachers and support staff more of an insight into what it is like to be in a classroom for a blind student, and to enable them to teach those students. The content won’t be subject specific, but it will cover a range of topics and example exercises.”

The seminar days will include a lecture from Sally with an overview of teaching visually impaired students and several workshops. Teachers will take part in mock class exercises whilst wearing simulation glasses.

Sally added: “Often, teachers try to accommodate visually impaired students, but their attempts don’t meet the student’s individual needs. A classic example of something teachers often do to try and help their partially sighted student is give them an A4 print-out, enlarged on A3. But this can actually be more problematic because there’s double the area and therefore more space to negotiate.”

Sally will also introduce attendees to Braille and specialist equipment like magnifiers, as well as speaking about large print, adaptation of material and how to approach activities like gluing or colouring.

**Scottish War Blinded donates to Kidscene**

Literature lovers at Kidscene’s after school club are celebrating after receiving dozens of books and toys – donated by Scottish War Blinded members.

Staff at Scottish War Blinded’s Linburn Centre were inspired to collect gifts for Kidscene after visiting the Morningside-based club last year and they invited their members to help.

The members enthusiastically backed the scheme – donating enough cash for the entire Harry Potter collection, books by Michael Murpungo and a collection of classic fairy tales.

They also donated a set of remote control cars and an eight-in-one game table which includes hockey, table football and billiards.

Kidscene provides after-school and holiday care to children with and without disabilities from the ages of 4 to 16.
A grand finale to our centenary year

On a landmark day for Scottish War Blinded, in December a new sports hall and housing for veterans were officially opened at the Linburn Centre by the charity’s president The Duke of Buccleuch, setting the seal on our exciting and momentous centenary year.

The Centenary Hall provides members with a state-of-the-art gymnasium, physiotherapy room and a huge adaptable space for sports and social activities, such as archery and acoustic shooting.

The hall greatly increases the Linburn Centre’s scope to support veterans to be active. It will enable some to take up new sporting pursuits, and others to rediscover an appetite for a hobby they no longer thought possible, after their sight loss.

A bowling green has been constructed next to the hall where members will enjoy regular friendly and competitive matches throughout the summer months. Four new bungalows have been constructed by the hall for members, who will benefit from living in a fully accessible modern home.

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On a landmark day for Scottish War Blinded, in December a new sports hall and housing for veterans were officially opened at the Linburn Centre by the charity’s president The Duke of Buccleuch, setting the seal on our exciting and momentous centenary year.

The Centenary Hall provides members with a state-of-the-art gymnasium, physiotherapy room and a huge adaptable space for sports and social activities, such as archery and acoustic shooting.

The hall greatly increases the Linburn Centre’s scope to support veterans to be active. It will enable some to take up new sporting pursuits, and others to rediscover an appetite for a hobby they no longer thought possible, after their sight loss.

A bowling green has been constructed next to the hall where members will enjoy regular friendly and competitive matches throughout the summer months. Four new bungalows have been constructed by the hall for members, who will benefit from living in a fully accessible modern home.

“Talking about the new facilities, David Johnston, Vice Chair and Convener of the Scottish War Blinded Committee, said: “These tremendous new buildings represent the latest phase of our development here at Linburn. Our Centre was designed for a completely new style of service and we could only guess at the directions our members would take it in. It has served us very well, but something we did not anticipate was the place that sporting activities would take in the life of the centre.”

“Our members of all ages take part in indoor archery, acoustic shooting and bowling, and we clearly needed a space close by where these activities could be done. We are looking forward to this impressive space, the Centenary Hall, becoming well used by our members and, we hope, eventually by other veterans’ groups.

The opening event was attended by Scottish War Blinded members and their families, local councillors, supporters, and the architects of the project. Scottish War Blinded Chair Guen McCreath spoke of the breadth of activities enjoyed by members throughout 2015, and gave an update on the development of the new centre in Paisley.

During the event, several members spoke movingly of the impact their membership has had upon their lives. Finne Maclean, a regular visitor to the Linburn Centre, said how fellow members had ‘become like family’ to her and commented on the difference a hot lunch and companionship made to the lives of those who visited the centre.

Following her short speech Ann commented: “I was delighted to have the opportunity to speak at the event. At the Linburn Centre, you can feel a real sense of family where everyone is supported through rehabilitation, encouraged to participate in activities and engage with fellow members and staff.”

Members and guests had the opportunity to tour new facilities and to view our centenary exhibition.

The event culminated in the unveiling of a plaque by The Duke of Buccleuch, with a spectacular fireworks display providing a dramatic climax to a very special centenary year for Scottish War Blinded.

Would you like to know more about Scottish War Blinded’s history?

Order a free copy of our centenary book by emailing Gary Seath on gary.seath@royalblind.org
Regular donations are crucial to our work. Direct debit donations enable us to plan our work into the future, transforming the lives of blind and partially sighted people of all ages. If you would like to set up a direct debit then please complete this form. Your support is really appreciated.

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