



The Torch



Email Newsletter #1

Welcome to our first issue of “The TORCH”. We are very excited to launch this newsletter which will assist in keeping you informed, and hopefully, inspired on a bi-monthly basis with all St Dunstan’s, Ian Fraser, and John and Esther Ellerman Trusts, calendar events, stories and general “goings on” .

We have taken the liberty of signing you up for this newsletter because of our previous connection. If you would like to unsubscribe, it is very easy to do at any time (see link in the footer below). If you would prefer this to be sent in an alternative e-mail format, just send us a note and we will sort that out for you.

A quarter of the year has already passed, but hopefully...often a time for new dreams and goals as well as renewed energy to get things done.

Elaine Lawrence

It is with heavy hearts that we share the news of Elaine Lawrence’s passing over the Easter weekend.

From all of us at St Dunstan’s we wish the family and friends of Elaine, strength and peace at this time



Introduction to the 3 trusts

Established in 1915 by a blind man with a vision, Sir Arthur Pearson established St Dunstan's with the aim of restoring war blinded men and women to being active, independent, empowered members of society, not just recipients of charity.....

[READ MORE](#)

Saint Dunstan's



The Saint Dunstan's Logo represents the light in the dark of the visually impaired.

Our History

Saint Dunstan's was founded in England in 1915 by a blind man with a vision. He was the newspaper proprietor Sir Arthur Pearson, Bt. GBE, and his vision was that blind men and women should be restored from being simply the recipient of charity, to people who could lead independent, useful, contributing and satisfying lives. The idea was revolutionary in its time.

In 1918, after World War I, an after Care Committee was established in South Africa to care for blinded servicemen returning home.

In 1938 the South African organisation became completely autonomous but has continued to maintain a close working relationship with Blind Veterans UK.

Our values

Nationally, we cooperate closely with other organisations of and for the blind. As a private organisation not in receipt of government support we remain grateful to members of the public who continue to support us financially and to those who remember us in their will, thereby enabling us to honour our pledge of life –long care to every Saint Dunstaner.

Our vision

To care to life's end for men and women who have lost their sight in the service of their country in war or warlike operations by offering medical, welfare and other benefits and services. To encourage and assist our beneficiaries to live a full and meaningful life within the context of their blindness.

Our mission

To ensure that every person who has made the sacrifice of sight, because they put country before self, shall have every day, every hour, and every year of life, made not only liveable but as full of happiness in their work and other spheres of life, as the cumulative experience, forethought and material resources of Saint Dunstan's can make it.

Our Core Purpose

To care to life's end for men and women who have lost their sight in the service of their country in war or warlike operations.

To provide rehabilitation, further education and training in employment skills, suited to their desires and ability, so that by their own work they can maintain a satisfactory standard of living for themselves and their families.

To offer medical, welfare and other benefits and services to Saint Dunstaners and their families.

To maintain close personal contact with our Saint Dunstaners and their families.

Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Fund

It's coming up to the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Fund and with each year we celebrate the great successes achieved by the students who have/are assisted by the Bursary Fund [READ MORE](#)



The Ian Fraser Memorial Bursary Fund logo represents the success of a Visually Impaired or Blind Graduate

Organisation History

The Bursary Fund was founded in 1977 by St Dunstan's South Africa in memory of Lord Fraser. William Jocelyn Ian Fraser lost his sight in 1916 just before his 19th birthday. After his training at St Dunstons England, he established and managed the After Care Department of the organisation. When the then chief executive, Sir Arthur Pearson died, Lord Fraser took over the reigns. He remained, for the next 53 years, until his death in December 1974, Chairman of St Dunstons, Great Britain. During his lifetime he excelled in many spheres, for example: Barrister, Member of Parliament for 35 years. Knighted in 1934, Director of companies, Chairman of the board of companies of South Africa and the United Kingdom, sportsman, angler, rider and recipient of numerous awards.

Our vision

To provide bursaries to blind and visually impaired persons enabling them to study at TVET or Higher Education Institution.

Our mission

Assisting blind and visually impaired people financially enabling them to further their studies

Founder's Thoughts:

Lord Fraser believed that, as he himself proved, that given the reality of blindness, with the necessary determination, support and seizing of opportunities as they present themselves, blind and Visual Impaired students can create a better life for themselves through education.

Who can apply?

Undergraduate bursaries for blind and visually impaired students studying towards a completion of a diploma or degree. Preference is given to undergraduate students. Postgraduate students are welcome to apply.

Medical proof of blindness must be furnished.

Note: Certified copies of grade 12 certificates and advices of subsequent university results especially, the previous year's final examination results must also be furnished.

Closing Date:

30 September annually – for return of completed forms.

How Can I Apply For A Bursary?

You can download the editable pdf version of our application form below. Complete in full and return as specified in the application form.

To Download the bursary application form (38kb), Click on [Ian Fraser Bursary Application Form](#)

John & Esther Ellerman Memorial Trust

“Helping one, so they can help many”simple words with powerful outcomes. It is through the John and Esther Ellerman Memorial Trust that so many blind men, women and children are empowered through providing Orientation and Mobility skills-enabling them to move independently and safely- to be mobile... [READ MORE](#)



The John and Ester Ellerman Logo represents an independent mobile and orientated visually impaired person.

Organisation History

The trust was founded in 1974 by Saint Dunstan's South Africa to perpetuate the memory of the late Sir John Reeves Ellerman, who was a great benefactor and friend of Saint Dunstan's and a Member of the Board.

Our vision

To have mobility training available to all blind people in South Africa enabling the trainees to be integrated into their community and the sighted world at large, and open doors to job opportunities.

Our mission

To assist organisations of and for the blind, which based throughout the country, in both city and rural areas to provide training which is adapted to suit the needs and locality of trainees. The assistance is in the form of a – subsidy enabling organisations to employ Orientation and Mobility Practitioners

Founder's Thoughts:

John Reeves Ellerman always believed that in order to be able to enjoy a full working and social life, mobility was of vital importance to a blind or visually impaired person.

Getting Your Home Ready For The Visually Impaired

By Jackie Waters

It can happen to just about anyone. Young kids, middle-aged adults, and seniors can all have visual impairment to some degree. Whether it's something they were born with or something they are just now starting to deal with, people with vision problems can have a tough time at home. Some have a tougher time than others and may even be tempted to [abuse substances](#) to cope (luckily there are resources for them if that's the case).



Image Source: Pixabay

As host, you can do everything in your power to make the person's life more comfortable. Few homes are set up with blindness or reduced vision in mind. That does not mean you can't correct things, though. Here are some tips for getting your home ready for visually impaired guests, temporary residents, or homeowners.

Hazard Removal & Lighting Changes

The first things you need to work on is removing hazards. That's because you want your friend, spouse, or guest to be safe in your home first and foremost.

[The goal is to get rid of obstacles that can trip or make it harder to see things.](#)

This can include:

- Making sure area rugs won't slide or move underfoot.
- Taping or covering any cords, especially where people normally move around the home.
- Making clear paths from room to room.
- Keep all chairs pushed in under tables and desks.

Next, take time to evaluate the lighting in your home. This won't affect someone who is blind, but many people with visual impairments can still see — they just have difficulty seeing clearly in certain conditions.

One of those is glare. A strong light near metal appliances or shiny countertops can reduce visibility for those with vision problems. The same is true for any exposed bulbs. You can help make your home more safe by using lampshades, indirect lighting, and blinds or drapes over windows.

Kitchens Need Extra Care

Your kitchen might be the biggest concern for those with visual impairments. There are plenty of shiny surfaces, hard-to-read labels, sharp surfaces, and even cleaning supplies. Someone with problems seeing clearly could be very uncomfortable here — and even unsafe.

To make your kitchen better for the visually impaired, [start by getting organized.](#) Make sure cooking supplies that get used often are easy to find and reach. Put food in cabinets and refrigerators in an organized way (such as all the soup cans on the second shelf to the right). Do the same with utensils. This way, someone with trouble seeing can remember where to find things.

If the vision problem is severe, you can also help them know what they're finding by using rubber bands. For example, a can with one rubber band might mean tomatoes; two bands mean fruit; and so on.

Get Rid Of Certain Products

For the most part, someone with visual impairment can have all the amenities and items that anyone can in the home. However, there are some things that you should probably get rid of to make their lives easier:

- Avoid cleaning products that make things shiny, as that sheen can make glare a problem.
- Keep bleach and ammonia in different rooms so they won't get mixed by accident.
- Skip anything with small text or words that do not contrast well with the background color.
- If you cannot get a shade for an exposed bulb, consider removing it entirely.

A Safe, Comfortable Home For All

Living with someone who is visually impaired can be a challenge. At the very least, it means making some changes to your lifestyle. For example, you really can't kick off your shoes by the front door and let them lie randomly on the floor for days. But by taking care of hazards and lighting, organizing your kitchen, and getting rid of some stuff, you can make a home safe and comfortable for anyone with vision problems. That can even make you feel more comfortable at home.

A GUIDE DOG IN THE MIST

by Neville Clarence

With twin Pratt & Whitney turboprops whining at full throttle the CEM Air Bombardier Dash 8 lifted off the short Margate runway, climbing confidently into the KwaZulu Natal summer skies.

On Board, and exhibiting less confidence, I sat, stealing a purposeless "blind" glance at the other forty-nine passengers heading at 600km/h for O.R. Tambo International.

For much of the one hour ten minute flight my mind fluctuated from a somewhat anxiety-filled and depressive low, to a nervous yet exuberant, child-like high! - I had last undergone guide-dog training at the age of twenty-four, a mere two years after having lost my eyesight in a bomb explosion - something that I had opted for in hindsight far too soon after having experienced such a traumatic life-changing event. Now, some thirty-four years later, I was once again off to spend two weeks in the caring hands of SAGDA (SA Guide Dogs Association).

I reflected, recalling with fond memories the long conversations I had had those days with the late Ken Lord, then Executive Director of SAGDA. My guide-dog trainer in 1985 had been Malcolm Driver, who I recently heard had gone on to take the helm until his retirement in 2016. I was pleasantly surprised to learn therefore that Malcolm's daughter, Caela, is now a learner guide-dog trainer and had also been instrumental in the training of the dog to be gifted to me.

With some trepidation for what lay ahead I collected my duffel from the baggage carousel and took the elbow of the CEM Air ground assistant. Half a minute later a friendly voice greeted me and Mandlankosi Nxumalo, Head Training and I shook hands. Within a minute or two all elements of self-doubt as to whether I was going to enjoy the next fourteen days in the bustling metropolis dissipated into the hot and dry highveld air.



Neville and Opera in front of his house.

Upon arriving at the training centre Mandla took great pains to show me the three emergency evacuation routes from my comfortable en-suite bedroom to various places of safety. He introduced me to Susan and Pieter van Niekerk. Susan, being the person responsible for the student meals and accommodation and dozens of other tasks too numerous to mention, including ensuring that our rooms were free of undesirable debris, that my dog was returned to me unscathed and with tail wagging after me forgetting to bench her on more than one occasion!

The training presented by SAGDA is split into two phases, the 'residential' phase of two weeks in Johannesburg and 'domicilium' phase at home. The latter lasting between five and ten days depending on one's personal needs and the challenges of the environment. The syllabus has been developed and perfected since the inception of SAGDA in 1953 and is highly acclaimed internationally.

Each day's practical training began with a lecture and group discussion facilitated by one of our two Guide Dog Mobility Instructors, Permit Mncube

or Joel van Stavel. The open, and often humorous banter went a long way to easing one's inner tensions and perceived and real difficulties!

The first two days one is taught basic obedience commands and walks with an instructor who holds a harness handle, emulating typical behaviour of a guide dog, including undisciplined instinctive sniffing of the ground, which had me in stitches.

The instructors use the first two days to confirm their initial matching based on our interviews at the time of our applying for a guide dog. Matching is a arduous process - demanding an accurate assessment of both the physical and psychological characteristics of the available dogs and prospective 'master'. Consideration is also given to the student's choice of dog as indicated during the interview. Guide dogs, like all dogs, vary in size, levels of energy and personality. SAGDA generally use a cross-bred Labrador Retriever / Golden Retriever or pure-bred Labrador. Exceptionally high standards are imposed with puppies being rejected should they be found to have what some might regard as a insignificant genetic flaw.

One of the many emotional highlights during training is of course when one first meets one's allocated dog. I was at a total loss for words upon hearing that Opera" - my beautiful black Labbie cross Golden's birthday is the 20th of May - the same date on which I lost my eyesight! Some might say this is purely coincidental, personally I see a much deeper meaning to this.

Yesterday morning, a misty and overcast day, at approximately 09h20, en route to the boardwalk at Trafalgar beach, Opera suddenly stopped dead in her tracks. We were mid-way down an densely overgrown muddy path depicted somewhat optimistically as "Evans Avenue" on the village street map. Fine drizzle formed tiny droplets on my face and arms.. The two of us stood silently, listening intently. I heard the soft sound of small branches being stealthily pushed aside, then the shuffle of leaves and twigs underfoot. Opera appeared to stare, undoubtedly transfixed and intrigued by the Bushbuck or Waterbuck gracefully strolling past us. I drew in a deep breath, drank in the wonderful mustiness of the damp foliage, and with a somewhat reluctant "Hup hup" we continued on our way.

Ten minutes later we were striding along the grassy verge of Effingham Parade, the roar of the crashing Indian Ocean breakers loud in our ears. Some 900m farther, with Opera having engaged "four x paw" the two of us were "churning up" the golden sand, taking care to skirt the rush of the incoming surf as we headed North towards Marina Beach. According to the Trekker Breeze talking GPS clipped to my waist this was a distance of exactly 1,26Km from Trafalgar Beach.



Neville and Opera on the beach

Trafalgar is a village comprising approximately four hundred houses interspersed amongst fifty or so hectares of natural unspoilt bush. Whilst most roads are tarred, they're narrow and none have pavements with concrete edges or curbs. This is particularly demanding on a guide dog user as he or she has to frequently check that as a team one is tracking the edge of the road and not wandering into the path of potentially dangerous oncoming traffic. Having said this, "traffic" is perhaps overstating what is more accurately described as "a vehicle which one might encounter once or twice an hour"! More importantly, without proper pavements and curbs, orientation becomes tricky. Fortunately, Opera actually very seldom wanders from the road edge and providing I've good GPS coverage, I'm able to use the Trekker Breeze to determine my position typically accurate to about 3m. Unlike most cell-phone

based GPS systems, the Breeze permits a pedestrian to record a route comprised of waypoints which are not close to mapped roads such as for example "Top of the boardwalk", "Centre rock", "Life-guard hut", "BelleIsle stream" etc. I can then set these waypoints as destinations. Upon reaching a destination by pressing a single button I can then be given instructions to backtrack to my starting point.

As I conclude this article Opera is lying with her head resting on my foot!

Opera's intelligence, ever-friendly, loveable nature, unsurpassed loyalty and eagerness take me well beyond my every expectation!

PS. Did I mention that I no longer need a talking alarm clock? - Every morning I can depend on being woken up at 06h00 sharp by a wet, cold nose touching my cheek!

How Blind Friendly Are you?

To find out, take the quiz. Click the link below

[TAKE THE QUIZ](#)

Thanks again for taking the time to read our story!

The Paper version of "The Review" will now go out only twice a year in February and November.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Birthdays this month – April

George de Nobrega – turning 50 years
Lelethu Mtwana – 18 years

The Long Cane and Guide Dog Rally

28th October 2017 @ the Urban Park Green Point

The National Reunion

7th September – 10th September @ Pumula Beach Hotel

The Annual General Meeting

15th September 2017 @ Kelvin Grove Newlands

Project Gemini UK

20th May – 28th May 2017

Archie Roberts, George de Nobrega and Gareth Morgan have been invited to the UK to attend Project Gemini where they will meet other veterans from the UK and the US.

Click [HERE](#) to view the full calendar of events.



Cathy Wright Farewell

" A kind heart, a soft soul" These are just some of the words that can be used to describe Cathy Wright, the cog in the Financial Engine that kept St Dunstan's on track. With almost 16 years of service to the organisation and many hours spent with Beneficiaries and Widows Cathy draws her career at St Dunstan's to a close, come end of June Cathy will be retiring from St Dunstan's and heading off to put her feet up in the quiet town of Hermanus.

On behalf of all the Directors, Staff and Beneficiaries we would like to take the opportunity to thank Cathy for her dedication and service to St Dunstan's and wish her all the best and many years of health and prosperity.

Les Masterson, our longest serving director, writes:

I have always been full of admiration for the way in which Cathy has handled the finances of St Dunstan's over the last 14 years since she joined us. Few people know or realize the volume of payments flowing, mostly out of St Dunstan's, each month of the year and she handles them with calm efficiency always having time to answer and respond to queries and requests from beneficiaries, staff members or directors.

We are going to miss Cathy's cheerful yet thoughtful efficiency, both in the office and at our reunions, AGMs and other social activities but I hope that she will remain a member of the St Dunstan's family despite having retired as our Financial Officer

From John Langford:

When I joined St Dunstan's as treasurer, I worked closely with Cathy and found that, besides being a competent accountant, she is an interesting person who was always willing to give me the time of day. I was new to St Dunstan's and she was always willing to assist me and passed on a lot of knowledge about the organisation which helped me "get to know the ropes ". No request was too much for her and any request I had for information was responded to quickly and efficiently. She also displayed the "patience of Job" particularly in her dealings with financial intuitions where there were constant requirements for documents, signatures of Directors and the like. Apart from her accounting duties, she had an intimate knowledge of our beneficiaries and showed a lot of empathy and concern. I well remember the first Reunion I attended in Kwazulu-Natal in 2005, which was my first interaction with beneficiaries, where she smoothed the way by patiently explaining the proceedings to me and introduced me to the beneficiaries.

Cathy is always an interesting person to talk to due to her many and varied interests. I always envy her knowledge and ability in photography which is a hobby I also enjoy. She clearly makes good use of her free time with her outdoor activities and time spent at her Hermanus house.

I wish her a long and happy retirement where she will have more time to indulge in these activities as well as to travel and see more of her family.