



Annual Review 2007



Making a world of difference

“Whoever serves must serve with the strength that God gives, so that in all things praise may be given to God” 1 Peter 4:11 [GNB]

Aims & Scope

The Torch Trust aims to overcome sight loss as a barrier to finding a personal faith in Christ and to living a fulfilling Christian life.

By production and distribution of Christian literature the Torch Trust is playing its part in overcoming the “information gap” experienced by those who are blind or partially sighted. Through the network of Torch Fellowship Groups and the running of Holidays and Retreats,

Christian resources for blind and partially sighted people worldwide

the Torch Trust is responding to the problem of “social exclusion”, the number one issue for blind and partially sighted people.

The Torch Trust is at work throughout the UK and around the world. Magazines are distributed to readers in 100 countries. Specific projects and initiatives are underway in Europe and Africa.

The work of the Torch Trust is motivated and guided by the Christian faith shared by its trustees and leaders, and the large majority of its staff and volunteers. The Trust is non-denominational and enjoys good relationships with churches of many traditions. The products and services of the Torch Trust are available to all blind and partially sighted people, including those of other faiths, or of none.

Some Highlights

- Insight - Torch's weekly radio programme hosted by Marilyn Baker – started broadcasting on Premier Christian Radio in October 2007.
- In the year 196 books were added to the Torch Library collections in braille, in giant print, on audio cassette and on DAISY CD.
- By September 2007 over 700 DAISY New Testaments had been sold, making it by far the best-selling DAISY title.
- 5 new Torch Fellowship Groups started in the year and 18 more are on the way.
- The number of Torch Holidays and the number of people coming to them both grew in 2007.
- A team of 16 volunteers from the UK supported a Summer Camp for 44 blind and partially sighted children from all over Romania.
- A container full of clothes and other aid items was shipped to Malawi and its contents distributed to blind and partially sighted people.
- The Bible is now produced in braille in 8 African languages at Torch's production unit in Malawi.
- Through its magazines and library services Torch directly serves some 11,000 blind and partially sighted people around the world, and many more through the network of Torch Fellowship Groups, the holidays and other activities.

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Connections

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by the Trust is to accelerate the pace at which it makes contact with blind and partially sighted people, in the UK and around the world. In the UK alone 100 people learn they are losing their sight every day. All too many struggle through precious years before they discover all that is available to help them lead productive and fulfilling lives.

For its future health, Torch also needs to make connections with those who will support its vital work in prayer, by volunteering and with finance.

Achievements included:

- Net growth in Library users by 84 to 1,792.
- Net growth in circulation of The Torch magazine by 197 to 9,682 – all in accessible media.
- Net growth in the readership of Torch Family News in print of 141 to 5,434.
- Recruitment of a Council of Reference comprising well-known and respected Christian leaders.

The Council of Reference not only lends credibility to the Trust but also provides the trustees and leadership with expert advice and counsel. The 8 members are invited to an annual meeting with the trustees. The first took place in February 2007.

Values

From its long heritage (the Trust will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2009) the Trust has developed a distinctive system of thoroughly Christian values. We are committed to seeing the core values that have emerged through Torch's journey documented, reinforced, developed and retained.

Torch engaged Rev'd Roy Searle, a member of our newly-formed Council of Reference, to help us identify these values with the result that five core values were identified...

- Belonging to God
- Committed to Community
- Habitually Hospitable
- Invitingly Inclusive
- Purposefully Creative

For 2007 the Torch Trust set four priorities: connections, values, systems and leadership.

Systems

Torch Trust relies heavily on information technology for many of its activities, especially in the area of literature transcription into accessible formats.

Achievements included:

- Acquired 2 massive (4 Terabyte) computer storage servers each capable of holding all Torch's accessible literature, notably including all the audio library content of over 2,500 titles.
- Through the efforts of volunteers many more audiotape masters were converted into digital files ready for inclusion on the storage servers.
- Successfully completed a pilot project to get volunteers who have previously recorded books by conventional means equipped and trained to record directly in the DAISY format, editing their own work as they go.

Leadership

With the recent retirements of some long-serving leaders we have been concerned to strengthen and develop the future leadership of the Trust. During 2007 the process of progressively restructuring the work of the Torch Trust into four "dimensions" began and leaders for each have been appointed.

- Regional: David Palmer
- International: Janet Stafford
- Literature: Lydia Tebbutt
- Holidays: Gail Whitaker

All are supported by a Technical Services department with Paul Wood as Leader.

The search for an Assistant Chief Executive ultimately proved successful with Andrew Nicholson taking up the role in February 2008.

Literature

The audio New Testament, converted into the DAISY CD format by the Torch Trust and offered for sale by both Torch and the RNIB since December 2006, has proved singularly popular. Producing a DAISY Old Testament is an enormous task but with the help of Wycliffe Associates volunteers, we plan to complete it in 2008. The MegaVoice hand-held audio Bible also continues to sell well.

As there are so few books available to blind and partially sighted people through booksellers, postal libraries like the Torch library are vital. Torch's service is free and our librarians provide a personal service. The DAISY CD collection has grown in both content and usage. As well as new recording originated in the DAISY format the stock is being expanded by conversion of titles already in the cassette collection.

Torch produces a growing range of Christian books and booklets to own. The smaller ones are offered free of charge, the larger are charged at prices comparable to standard print editions (though the cost is usually greater). To encourage wider usage, a completely new Resources Catalogue has been produced in various media.

Torch now produces seven Christian magazine titles in a mix of braille, giant print and audio formats. Between them they serve a wide range of ages, interests and readership styles. Torch continues to produce two popular series of audio daily Bible readings and also produces the New Daylight daily Bible readings in braille for St John's Guild.

Torch continues to work towards the aim of providing blind people with the Christian resources they need to enable their inclusion in Christian events, churches and groups. With investment made over recent years in efficient transcription and production facilities, a more responsive service can be offered. Torch also provides braille and giant print versions of programmes and song books for an increasing proportion of the UK's Christian conferences.

The ongoing work of the Torch Trust is now structured into four divisions or "dimensions": Literature, Regional, Holidays and International.

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AUDIO ALTERNATIVES

Though the cassette is still preferred by many blind and partially sighted people it is obsolescent technology and there are now few cassette players on the market.

DAISY CDs bring navigation to audio books, exemplified by Torch's DAISY New Testament. A Bible reference can be found by locating first the book, then the chapter and finally the verse. But the audience for DAISY audio products is limited to those who have the special players.

During 2008, Torch plans to progressively introduce other CD options for audio magazines and books. This will allow readers to use existing or readily available CD players. Torch will continue to offer cassettes for as long as possible but will encourage new readers towards CD options.

As a member of the Reading Through Audio consortium, Torch is working with other organisations to clarify the audio reading options available to blind and partially sighted people, and provide lucid information to those who advise them.



**READING
THROUGH
AUDIO**

Regional – Across the UK

Torch supports a UK-wide network of local Torch Fellowship Groups that are now organised in a way that matches the UK Government's Regional structure, supported by volunteer Regional Coordinators. A Partnership Agreement that documents the relationship between the Groups and the Torch Trust has been developed. To assist the Groups, a model constitution is being prepared. The Groups provide an opportunity for community and fellowship, and to celebrate and share our Christian faith.

New guidance Handbooks for the Groups have been produced – one covering the running of the Group and the other giving ideas for activities. To communicate their content and encourage the Groups a series of "regional days" commenced in 2007, reaching the leadership of every Group by the end of 2008.

Although there has been a slow decline in the number of Groups meeting in the UK over recent years, in 2007 the overall number remained steady at 126. The strengthening of the Regional team over

that last couple of years is starting to pay dividends. In 2007 new Groups opened in Coventry, Market Harborough, Nottingham and Bedford, with a pilot Group starting in Southwark. There are currently initiatives towards new Groups in 18 other towns and cities right across the UK. Encouraged by this positive outcome, recruitment of at least one Regional Networker is planned for 2008.

We are seeking stronger links with local organisations that work with blind and partially sighted people, and participation in more of the local exhibitions that they organise has proved to be worthwhile in making new connections.

Holidays & Retreats

Torch Holiday & Retreat Centre

The activity level at the Torch Holiday and Retreat Centre continues to grow. Holidays and retreats run for blind and partially sighted guests dominate the use of the Centre but it is also offered to church groups during quieter periods, helping to defray fixed costs.

Whilst located in the bustling Sussex village of Hurstpierpoint, at the end of its long drive the Centre enjoys a peaceful location with uninterrupted views of the South Downs. It's a place where it's normal not to see, and many blind and partially sighted people from all over the UK have enjoyed holidays and breaks through the year. In both the quietness and the activity many experience a fresh encounter with God.

Further Afield

A houseparty in the English Lakes linked with the famous Keswick Convention continues to be a regular feature on the Torch Trust's holiday programme. The group takes over a guest house in the heart of the Lakeland town and supplements the Convention's Bible teaching with outings to local beauty spots and places of interest. For the second year Torch's trustee, Dr Mike Townsend, and wife, Edith, took a group of blind and partially sighted people on a French Houseparty at the Spring Harvest Holiday Park in Western France.

More Holidays – More Destinations

Many blind and partially sighted people live alone and so Torch Trust's holidays always emphasise community and companionship as well

as reflecting a distinctive Christian ethos. Torch holidays make a huge impact on the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of those blind and partially sighted people who go on them.

In 2008 Torch plans 4 new holidays at centres in Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Scotland and Northern Ireland in addition to running a wider choice of holidays at the Torch Holiday and Retreat Centre and the Keswick and French houseparties. The Torch Christmas houseparty is always greatly oversubscribed so we plan to run the 2008 event at High Leigh, a large Christian conference centre.

CHURCHES

By encouraging churches towards more inclusive attitudes and practices Torch can advance its aims. Getting the message through to the entire network of churches in the UK is a massive task and cannot be undertaken alone. Torch is an active partner in the Churches for All campaign (www.churchesforall.org.uk) working alongside other Christian disability organisations.



Torch continues to develop a volunteer network of Torch Church "Reps" to present Torch's mission to churches, to raise awareness of the needs of blind and partially sighted people and to be advocates for them. Work with churches and Torch groups has been supported by an exceptional number of outings made by the Torch Singers, a choir comprising members of Torch staff, both blind and sighted.

For 2008 Torch is launching "**Foursight for the Church**", a new initiative to challenge churches, and to provide imaginative and helpful resources to enable churches to respond.



International – Around the World

The Torch Trust is an international organisation serving blind and partially sighted people in many parts of the world. Approximately one third of all magazines produced are sent to readers outside the UK.

Through the donation of braille books the Torch Trust maintains around 30 sub-libraries abroad. With the support of United Bible Societies, Torch produced sets of giant print Gospels in French for distribution in Haiti.

The Trust's strategy is to develop the international aspects of its work through partnership with organisations and missions that are the point of contact with blind and partially sighted people in their communities. Torch publishes an international directory of Christian organisations working with blind and partially sighted people and plans to update this fully during 2008.

Romania

Over more than 10 years Torch supported the Romanian Christian organisation, Dezna Torch, to build Casa Torch in the village of Dezna in western Romania. The building is complete and practically ready for occupation.

The original vision was of a home for blind and partially sighted orphaned and abandoned children who fared so badly in the notorious; however under pressure from the EU, Romanian childcare has been overhauled and most of these children now have appropriate care.

The trustees concluded that in the new circumstances it was best that Dezna Torch now operated independently of Torch with local leadership pursuing the vision to develop Casa Torch as a Christian Rehabilitation Centre for blind and partially sighted young people.

Forty-four blind and partially sighted children came from all over Romania to a summer camp run in association with Dezna Torch. A total of 16 volunteers travelled from the UK to staff the camp, which was hugely enjoyed by children and volunteers alike. Several children testified that they had come to faith in Christ during the camp.

Torch also supports Pro-Lumina, a totally independent Romanian charity with similar aims to those of Torch. Funds provided by Torch supporters have again helped Pro-Lumina to organise holidays for blind and partially sighted people

incarcerated in Romania's asylums. Torch continues to emboss the "plates" necessary for Pro-Lumina's braille production.

SPAIN

Nueva Luz (New Light) is a Spanish organisation doing work similar to the Torch Trust for Spanish speaking peoples, though on a smaller scale. Due principally to the advanced age of the founder, the future of Nueva Luz has become uncertain. Spanish is a critically important international language, spoken by a substantial proportion of the world's population and in many countries. In order to modernise Nueva Luz and secure the future of the services it offers to blind and partially sighted people in Spain and many of the countries of Latin America, Paul Wood, one of Torch's Leaders, has been seconded to Nueva Luz for a period of two years.

Malawi

The headquarters are located in Blantyre. Here Malawian staff produce braille Bibles and other Christian literature in 7 African languages and during the year introduced an eighth: Ndebele. Giant print in the Chichewa language is also produced here. For those who use English as a second language, production of braille easy-English Bible volumes started during the year.

Supported from the Blantyre headquarters and by visits from the UK by Michael and Janet Stafford, over 80 Torch Fellowship Groups now meet regularly across Malawi. Many are located in poor rural communities where blindness is prevalent.

Here the spiritual dimension of the work is supplemented with the provision of practical support to needy blind people and their families under the banner "Aid Africa". Blind people are among the poorest in this the world's tenth poorest country. As in previous years, a container full of aid items was shipped and its contents distributed through the Fellowship Groups network. Items ranged from "blindness aids" like white canes and braille writing frames, to clothes and toiletries.

Donations have allowed many imaginative projects to be undertaken, ranging from building small houses for homeless blind people to the completion of a maize mill serving a community with many blind people.

WEBSITE

The website is now a major source of new contacts, both from the UK and further afield. A major update of the website is planned for 2008. Most Torch Magazines can be downloaded from the website.

People

The Trust continues to regard staff membership as a vocational calling and an adventure of personal as well as corporate faith. Though the basis of pay remains the national minimum wage, the trustees are aware that this was never a policy of choice but purely a consequence of changing employment legislation and have initiated a review of pay policy.

Volunteering is essential to Torch. As well as from those who come to work at Torch's UK premises there are well over a thousand volunteers working from home either with the Torch Trust itself or in running the national network of Torch Fellowship Groups. A staff member has been appointed to encourage and coordinate volunteering.

A Safeguarding Policy for vulnerable adults and children was developed and adopted. During 2008 this will be implemented throughout the organisation, supported by a series of training sessions.

During the year the board of trustees comprised eight members, four of whom are blind and therefore able to appreciate the circumstances of the constituency served by the Torch Trust. Revd Ron Wells stepped down as Chair after 10 years in December 2007 and is superseded by Marilyn Baker, herself blind, as Chair from January 2008. At the same time Dr Clive Dilloway is appointed as Vice-Chair. Ron retires as a Trustee during 2008.

Financial Review

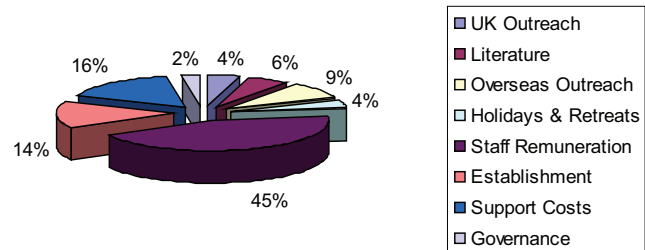
Income

The income of the Torch Trust arises largely from donations and legacies, supplemented by sales of accessible media literature and Torch Holiday and Retreat Centre income. Both of these activities are subsidised from voluntary income.

The Torch Trust does not run fundraising campaigns or appeals but relies on effective communication of

its activities and needs and in faith in God through a commitment to regular prayer.

Though lower than the prior year, income remained substantially higher than typical of previous years, principally because of a continuing flow of legacy income. Taken together with Gift Aid tax recovered, donation income rose by over 10%. Income from literature and holidays and retreats continues to grow encouragingly. Nevertheless total income of £906,000 was insufficient to cover costs and the surplus carried forward from the previous year was depleted by £97,000.

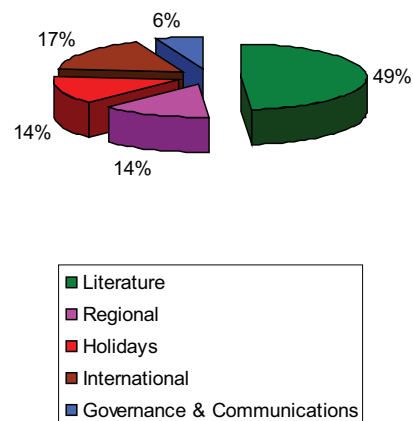


Expenditure

The expenditure of the Torch Trust is prioritised to achieving its aims and objects. Very little is spent on the generation of income, and management and administration costs are kept to a minimum consistent with the proper operation of the charity. Even so the cost of running Torch increased by 17% over the previous year, reflecting the growth in activities and increased staffing.

The aspect of the Trust's work directed to transcribing, producing and distributing accessible media literature is, by its nature, highly labour-intensive. It is in these areas of work that most of the staff are employed and most materials consumed.

It cost a just over £1 million to run Torch for the year, a daily amount of £2,747.



The Torch Trust for the Blind is a registered charity (no. 1095904) and company limited by guarantee (no. 4616526). The full audited Report and Accounts for the year ended 30th September 2005 (from which this Annual Report has been prepared) are available on request from the Chief Executive and also from Companies House or the Charity Commission.

This charitable company was formed in 2002 with aims and objects equivalent to those of the older unincorporated charity of the same name (registered no. 208678). Audited Report and Accounts for this charity are also available. During the year reported the Trust completed the transfer of all assets from the old unincorporated charity to the new incorporated body. There were no other financial activities related to the old charity to report for the year ended 30th September 2005.

Council of Reference

The Venerable Richard Atkinson OBE,
Archdeacon of Leicester

Revd Dr Steve Brady, Principal – Moorlands College

Revd Dr David Coffey OBE, President –
World Baptist Alliance

Revd Malcolm Duncan, Leader of Faithworks

Jonathan Lamb, Langham Preaching

Revd Roy Searle, Leader – Northumbria Community

Dr Elaine Storkey, President – TEARfund

Revd Dr Derek Tidball, Author, former Principal –
London School of Theology

Trustees

Marilyn Baker (Chair)

André Clowes

Dr Clive Dilloway (Vice-Chair)

Revd Glen Graham

Dr Mike Townsend (Technical Director)

Revd Ron Wells (Past Chair)

Heather Williams

Other Officers

John Darby (Company Secretary)

Andrew Nicholson (Assistant Chief Executive)

Dr Gordon Temple (Chief Executive)

Leaders

Gail Millar (Holidays)

David Palmer (Regional)

Janet Stafford (International)

Lydia Tebbutt (Literature)

Paul Wood (Technical Services)

*Torch relies on the commitment of some 40 staff
and over one thousand volunteers*



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