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**Hearing Times**

May 2010

www.hearingtimes.co.uk

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**Research into a cure for deafness causes a buzz**

Fruit flies could hold the key to future research into deafness in humans, and understanding the auditory system of fruit flies could lead us to treatments and cures for deafness and other hearing conditions.

A Deafness Research UK funded scientist at University College London (UCL), is one of the principal authors of a new research paper aiming to answer some of the fundamental questions concerning hearing.

Dr Joerg Albert’s work studying the fruit fly’s auditory system is a key element of this latest research, due to be published on the Nature Communications website today at 14:00 BST in London.

The new paper, “A doublecortin containing microtubule-associated protein is implicated in mechanotransduction in sensory cilia” has been an international effort, with experts throughout Europe taking part, and funding from Deafness Research UK has been critical in aiming at this latest effort, with experts throughout Europe.

As part of Noise Action Week (26-30 April), Cubex Hearing Centre, independent hearing aid audiologists, launched an initiative to educate the generation of music passionate youths about how to protect their hearing.

Teaming up with Sennheiser, AMS Acoustics and Puretone, Cubex’s, ‘Love your Music? Save your Hearing!’ campaign, held a series of activities to help teenagers understand the cost of listening to very loud music on their MP3 players, over prolonged periods.

Adam Shulberg, Cubex Managing Director, is concerned that unless people take steps to protect their hearing they could be risking permanent damage to their ears, resulting in problems such as tinnitus and hearing loss. “Cubex is urging people to be aware of the risks to hearing from over expoed loud music in clubs, at concerts and from their (iPod/MP3) players so they can continue to enjoy their favourite music.”

Throughout the week, the Cubex team measured the volume at which people listened to their MP3 players. For the help of Ed and Edwina, two interactive acoustic mannequins, at the University of the Arts London and at the Cubex premises in New Cavendish Street.

Helen Goddard, AMS Acoustics Managing Director, said, “Quite literally we put our heads together with Cubex, in the guise of ‘Ed the Head’ and his female companion ‘Edwina’, to assess people’s listening levels as generated by their personal stereos and to offer practical advice in order to help them safeguard their hearing for the future.”

Participants in this event were entered in a prize draw to win a FREE iPod touch, matching Sennheiser noise cancelling headphones and custom made ear plugs, especially designed for music lovers.

Mark Andrews, Sennheiser Communications UK, said, “Sennheiser were delighted to support Cubex in Noise-Action Week. We think they are doing a fantastic job in bringing the problem of hearing health to a wider audience and the idea of ‘hitting the streets’ to catch the new generation is really bold and innovative.”

“It’s long been Puretone’s culture to promote the importance of hearing protection, especially when enjoying music. We are more than happy to support the Love Your Music? Save Your Hearing initiative and hope the campaign is a big success in raising awareness of how loud music can damage your hearing” said Baz Choudhry, Managing Director, Puretone.

Noise Action Week is coordinated by Environmental Protection UK. For more information on NAW nationally, email noiseactionweek@environmental-protection.org.uk or call 01273 878770 or visit www.noiseactionweek.org.uk

For more information about the Love your Music? Save your Hearing! campaign, visit www.cubex.co.uk

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**BTA supports Noise Action Week**

To mark Noise Action Week, and International Noise Awareness Day the British Tinnitus Association (BTA), offered six tips on how you can keep ear damage at bay:

1. **Always wear earplugs if you are exposed to high noise levels on a regular basis.**
   - If this is in the workplace, your company is obliged to provide suitable protection for your ears; otherwise a range of companies offer cheap, effective foam earplugs that will protect against damage to the ear canal from loud noise.

2. **When in a noisy environment, try to take some time out.**
   - Constant exposure to high levels of noise is dangerous – and fatiguing – so take regular breaks from a noisy environment. Try to take at least 10 minutes in every hour to go somewhere quiet and literally give your ears a ‘rest’.

3. **Constant exposure from clubs and concerts can accumulate hearing damage over time.**

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**One in ten 30 year olds will wear a hearing aid by 2020**

According to EU scientists, due to irreversible damage to their hearing caused by listening to loud music, one in ten 30 year olds could be wearing a hearing aid if they don’t take measures to protect their hearing now.

Teenagers must understand the cost of listening to loud music on their MP3 players, over prolonged periods.

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**Fruit flies and humans share a common evolutionary history**

Fruit flies are used in the research as their ears are similar, on a molecular level, to humans and easier to study.

The fruit flies and humans share a common evolutionary history, said Dr Albert. “This is, for example, still reflected by a considerable overlap of the molecular machineries that orchestrate the development of their ears.”

When the channels are open, electronically charged molecules called ions flow from the fluid in the cochlea into the hair cell. This process is called mechanotransduction and is the critical point at which mechanical energy gets transformed into an electrical signal. Dr Albert’s work has focused on an ion channel known as NompC, in an attempt to discover whether NompC forms mechanotransducer channels in the fruit fly.

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**Continued on page 2**
Editor’s message

The Hearing Times team has had a lot fun putting this latest issue together and we hope you enjoy the articles and news. Don’t forget you can always contact us with your news and views, email us on editorial@hearingtimes.co.uk

Innovations is the theme for the May issue of Hearing Times and we have had a lot of interesting and useful news and reviews from the use of fruit flies in research to developments in hearing aid technology.

Private Hearing Aid dispenser Neil Charlwood presents a case for private treatment in Reader’s Letters while Charlie Swinbourne tells us why he thinks the simplest innovations were the best. Juliet England tests another product, this one for alerting the owner to phone calls and knocks on the door. In another article, Juliet also tells us why she thinks the political parties are not doing enough to help deaf people.

As the evenings become longer and lighter our next issue will feature festivals and the outdoors. You will be able to read all about Deaffest which is coming outdoors. You will be able to read and lighter our next issue as the evenings become longer and lighter.

Neil Charlwood presents a case for alerting the owner to phone calls and knocks on the door. In another article, Juliet also tells us why she thinks the political parties are not doing enough to help deaf people.

If you have an exciting news story to report, an opinion to express, or an event to promote get in touch with Helen Derrey at editorial@hearingtimes.co.uk


Thank also to: Cubex, SignHealth, Deafness Research, Lighthouse, Deafnet, British Tinnitus Association, BSHAA, Siemens, Signature, Deafinitely Theatre, Gwent Police, UK Deaf Sport and NDCS

Help Hidden Hearing to train a Hearing Dog

Hidden Hearing has announced a national campaign to raise funds to help train a hearing dog with the dedicated charity, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

A fully trained dog plays a vital role in alerting its owner to special sounds such as the door bell. You can find out more about the training of hearing dogs, the role they play, and how you can support Hidden Hearing on their website. You can also come and see us on Facebook!

Helen Derrey
Editor, Hearing Times

Continued from the front page...

Earlier research by Dr Albert and his former colleagues in Cologne has shown that exposure to loud noise is more likely to lead to problems. Along with several other health risks, deafness has a detrimental effect on inner ear function - make sure you drink plenty of fluids.

5. Watch your alcohol consumption!

The consumption of drinking and hot enclosed spaces at clubs, pubs and parties (as well as exposure to the sun at outdoor summer festivals) means that people frequently become dehydrated. Along with several other health risks, dehydration has a detrimental effect on inner ear function - make sure you drink plenty of fluids.

6. Mild hearing damage can cause later complications.

As we age our hearing naturally deteriorates. This means mild or previously unnoticed hearing loss picked up when younger can appear sooner in later life than normal.

A little care now might save years of nuisance and distraction in the future.

Not an illness or disease, tinnitus is a term that describes the sensation of hearing a noise in the absence of an external sound.

The noise can have virtually any quality, ringing, whistling, and buzzing are common, but more complex sounds may also be reported. Troublesome tinnitus can be very distressing for the affected individual, and issues may arise with sleep, concentration and mood. However, in many cases, subtle changes in people’s environment can address these issues, and improve quality of life.

If someone needs a retube or a clean and check of their hearing aids this can be done immediately while they wait.

There are also more than just “cosmetic” reasons for wearing an in the ear hearing aid. For someone who wears glasses and in-the-ear (ITE) can be more practical and they can also be easier to get in and out of the ear. Wearing a CIC can also have the advantages of less wind noise and ease of use with a telephone, as well as a more natural sound quality by utilising the shape and contours of the pinna.

I am all for highlighting the great work carried out by the NHS, but the private sector also does great work by offering a choice of product and excellent service. Yes there are exceptions, as there is in any industry and people can have differing experiences of both the private and NHS sector, but ultimately we all want the same thing, to improve the quality of lives of the people we fit hearing aids to.

Regards,
Neil Charlwood
RHAD, FSHA
Ebor Hearing Healthcare, York

Response to the article ‘Why I’ll Never Buy a Hearing Aid’ in the April issue

Dear Hearing Times,

I would like to voice an objection to the article ‘Why I’ll Never Buy a Hearing Aid’ in the April issue of the newspaper. I am a private hearing aid dispenser who takes pride not only in the choice of products I dispense, but also the service I can provide.

The article highlighted the tremendous improvements to NHS provision over the last few years but I wholeheartedly agree with this and recognise how important a step forward this is for NHS patients. However, the article mainly focussed on the cost of purchasing private hearing aids and raised the question of why you would want to buy them when the product and service provided by the NHS is good enough?

There is a counter viewpoint to this article. The vast majority of private hearing aid dispensers would offer the one thing that the NHS cannot; a choice of hearing aids. If a person’s hearing loss and lifestyle is suited to more than one type or style of hearing aid, we can let them choose if they want ITE, BTE, RIC or CIC hearing aids.

However, the most important reason why people should choose to buy private hearing aids is the service they can receive. Yes the NHS waiting times for dispensing services have improved tremendously but if you walk into our shop you can usually be seen within the week. When someone purchases their hearing aids privately they usually require a trial period with a money back guarantee to ensure complete satisfaction.

In our practice we see a client at least 3 times during the trial period. We then make appointments every six months to carry out clean and checks of the instruments, fine tune the hearing aids and retest their hearing is necessary. This aftercare is all included with the purchase of the hearing aids. Most private hearing aid dispensers also provide counselling and rehabilitation to new hearing aid wearers in order to help with the acceptance process.

They can choose whether they want a remote control, Bluetooth connectivity, rechargeable batteries etc.

If you need a retube and check of your hearing aids this can be done immediately while you wait.

There are also more than just “cosmetic” reasons for wearing an in the ear hearing aid. For someone who wears glasses and in-the-ear (ITE) can be more practical and they can also be easier to get in and out of the ear. Wearing a CIC can also have the advantages of less wind noise and ease of use with a telephone, as well as a more natural sound quality by utilising the shape and contours of the pinna.

I am all for highlighting the great work carried out by the NHS, but the private sector also does great work by offering a choice of product and excellent service. Yes there are exceptions, as there is in any industry and people can have differing experiences of both the private and NHS sector, but ultimately we all want the same thing, to improve the quality of lives of the people we fit hearing aids to.

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RHAD, FSHA
Ebor Hearing Healthcare, York

Reader’s letters

Continued from the front page...

One or two visits a week to a loud club or concert is an acceptable level of exposure, but nightly exposure to loud noise is more likely to lead to problems.

4. Keep well hydrated.

The consumption of drinking and hot enclosed spaces at clubs, pubs and parties (as well as exposure to the sun at outdoor summer festivals) means that people frequently become dehydrated. Along with several other health risks, dehydration has a detrimental effect on inner ear function - make sure you drink plenty of fluids.

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Ebor Hearing Healthcare, York
Dr Seeber with his prize, awarded for research which will benefit CI users in environments where reverberation and background noise is an issue impaired,” Seeber said.

It is hoped that the research will improve the understanding of how reverberation is dealt with by cochlear implant users which will aid the design of future implants and of acoustic spaces. The Institute of Hearing Research is seeking volunteers to assist with the research programme and is particularly interested in people with twin cochlear implants.

Amendment from Sign Health

In the February issue of Hearing Times, the article “Breaking the Silence” referred to SignHealth as the only BSL counselling service in the UK. Sign Health would like to make clear that whilst SignHealth is the only national counselling service using Deaf Counsellors, the service is aimed at Primary Care only.

SignHealth does not provide the service in the secondary or tertiary health care setting.

SignHealth counsellors are all Deaf or fluent BSL communicators.
In the News

Hunt is on for deaf communications stars

Nominations for the 2010 Signature Annual Awards for excellence in communication with deaf people are open

People and organisations that have made outstanding contributions to improving communication between deaf and hearing people, can, from today, be nominated for an award on a dedicated website www.signature.org.uk/awards.

The award was inaugurated last year to give recognition to those who, have in their own way, made a special contribution to deaf and deafblind society in which deaf and deafblind people have full access.

“We are looking forward to hearing about more people and organisation that are really making a difference for deaf people.”

Signature is a registered charity that promotes excellence in communication. It offers accredited qualifications in sign language and other forms of communication with deaf and deafblind people. Signature’s members can be found in more than 700 locations throughout the UK, Ireland and the Channel Islands.

The categories for the 2010 Signature Annual Awards are:

• The Joseph Maitland Robinson Award for Outstanding Contribution
• Communication Professional of the Year
• Professional Achievement
• Teacher of the Year

Find full details of the awards at www.signature.org.uk/awards.

Defea People to benefit from translation service in Westminster

A donation from the Hyde Park Place Estate Charity will enable SignHealth, the organisation that runs SignTranslate, to provide free trial sessions of a revolutionary online interpreting service at GP surgeries in Westminster.

When it comes to health issues Deaf people are frequently overlooked. Many have enduring mental or physical health problems but find it extremely difficult to access a GP.

A report from the RNID found almost half of Deaf people left the surgery without the treatment they needed because of communication difficulties.

There is a chronic shortage of sign language interpreters which means it can take the NHS up to three weeks to book a face to face interpreter.

The Centre of the Hyde Park Place Estate Charity said “we are meaning friends and family who may help translate, miscommunication between Deaf people and their health professionals. This is commonly sad, and of course can have serious ramifications.

A Deaf mother mistakenly put liquid oral antibiotics into her baby’s ear for an ear infection and another Deaf person confusingly thought his doctor had said he needed surgery to remove his ear when the doctor had said “you may need surgery”.

SignTranslate, SignHealth’s online interpreting service, provides instant links to remote British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters around the country via webcams on the GP’s computer. This enables the deaf patient to fully explain their symptoms and the doctor can be reassured that the patient fully understands their diagnosis and treatment.

One person who has benefited from the SignTranslate in Westminster and thanks to the 350 grant, SignTranslate were able to provide trial sessions in many of the surgeries to encourage up-take of this vital tool.

Mr Malcolm Lothian, Chairman of the Hyde Park Place Estate Charity says, “I am grateful for the £350 grant. SignTranslate was able to provide trial sessions in many of the surgeries to encourage up-take of this vital tool.

The Hearing Check app for the iPhone and iPod Touch will allow users to check their hearing at the touch of a button for free. It is a new innovative app that will delight our clients and many other people. The Hearing Check will encourage the 40 million iPhone users worldwide to check their hearing.

RNID’s Chief Executive, Jackie Ballard, said, “This is a fantastic new way to encourage people to value their hearing and check it regularly. The Hearing Check application offers quick results and confidential advice online anywhere with a decent phone signal!”

The app is the latest version of RNID’s popular Hearing Check that has seen over half a million people check their hearing so far.

The Hearing Check app for the iPhone and iPod Touch will allow users to check their hearing at the touch of a button for free. It is a new innovative app that will delight our clients and many other people. RNID’s Hearing Check will encourage the 40 million iPhone users worldwide to check their hearing.

The application is available from iTunes and in the App store on your iPhone. It is also available on Facebook and online by visiting www.hearingtimes.co.uk/ckck or by calling 0844 800 3838.

Deafness Research UK awards two new PhD Studentships for 2010

This new joint research project between surgeons and genetic researchers will test not only which genes are raising the risk of otosclerosis but also how this is affecting the bony tissue in the ear to cause deafness.

Dr Andrea Streat from King’s College, London, will be supervising a project aimed at discovering new genes for congenital deafness. Worldwide, nearly two babies per 1,000 births are born deaf, making hearing impairment one of the most prevalent birth defects.

In the last decade, much progress has been made in determining genetic mutations associated with childhood deafness; nevertheless in 25% of the cases the underlying causes remain unknown. This PhD studentship project aims to identify new genes involved in the early development of the ear using the latest molecular biology techniques and computer analysis.

The function of the best candidate genes identified will then be tested in a model system of the ear. This project will provide new insights into how cells in the ear decide to become part of the ear and how they respond to signals from the ear.

Most importantly, identifying new candidate genes for childhood deafness may lead to the development of better diagnostic tools and novel strategies for preventing deafness.
Scientists at the Ear Institute at University College London (UCL) have been looking into the role of the brain in auditory processing in an attempt to overcome the so-called ‘cocktail party’ problem. The term relates to how the brain copes with the hubbub of noise at a social gathering, or other noisy environments, in order to single out a particular speaker from many voices.

The Ear Institute’s work, undertaken with Deafness Research UK, is designed to assist those who suffer most with the problem, namely the hearing impaired.

“The work of the Ear Institute is essential for those with hearing problems and we continue to fund some of its most vital and exciting research,” said Vivienne Michael, Chief Executive of Deafness Research. “We are only just beginning to appreciate the role the brain and this research gives us hope for improving the lives of people with hearing disabilities everywhere.”

Though the ‘cocktail party’ problem has been known of for many years, research has been limited until recently. Early work in the 1950s dealt with specialist areas like the ability of air traffic controllers to deal with multiple messages relayed over a single loud speaker.

The UCL team is using a variety of innovative techniques including brain recordings, psychophysics, computer modelling and human neurophysiology to better understand how the brain works.

Research will centre on the use of cochlear implants and how the brain integrates their signals from the two ears in a meaningful way to maximise performance.

David McAlpine is a Director at the Ear Institute and Professor of Auditory Neuroscience. He said Hearing Times that the multi-disciplinary approach aims to understand brain mechanisms that contribute to the ‘cocktail party’ effect and to improve how technologies might be advanced to help such listeners.

“Much of our research examines binaural hearing,” he explained. “Since it is the brain, not the ears, that provides for binaural hearing it is the brain’s function that we are measuring and obtaining objective measures of the brain’s binaural function is a key goal.”

McAlpine said that research about the brain’s capacity to extract signals from noisy backgrounds has been carried out before but UCL’s work is breaking new ground.

“For instance, we know a lot less about how to recover that ability following damage, or how to build a machine or computer that could effectively pull out speech from background noise,” he told Hearing Times. “This represents a significant challenge for future technologies and therapies.”

Deafness Research agreed that the ongoing work at UCL could assist innovations with current technologies. Vivienne Michael said that a major challenge for hearing research over the next decade will be to improve the performance of hearing aids and implant devices.

A new programme of research aimed at testing children with bilateral implants is underway at the Ear Institute. This research will centre on the use of cochlear implants and how the brain integrates their signals from the two ears in a meaningful way to maximise performance.

“Future research in this field should aim to understand how to match the electronic signals of a cochlear implant with the brain’s requirements,” said Michael.

The research should be of benefit to the hearing impaired, audio-therapists and cocktail party-gorers alike.
**Product reviews - the highs and lows of gadgets & gizmos**

**Amplicom Ring Flash 200**

**Juliet England**

Having experienced the frustration of endless missed phone calls and knocks at the door because of my hearing loss, I was particularly keen to try out this device.

The Ring Flash 200 rings up to your phone, and amplifies the ringer using mains power. It comes with a doorbell which is connected to the same amplifier.

IRNID has been marketing these products from Amplicom since July, and has sold nearly 65 of them. The price tag of £34.03 (without VAT) seems entirely reasonable.

When either the doorbell or the phone goes, the device, which looks as though it should be sitting atop an emergency services vehicle, sends out four separate beams like a lighthouse, and sounds like an emergency services vehicle. It also has a ‘Stop’ button which one has been longed enough to alert anyone but the most profoundly deaf user.

This product is really quite easy to install, even if the diagram in the instructions booklet appeared slightly complicated. And installing the battery-operated doorbell does require the use of a screwdriver, so I got a grown-up to help me.

I walked from room to room with it in action, and could hear it behind a door. It plugs into a BT line, or with very new telephones, a BT line, or with very new telephones, it plugs into the phone itself.

If your home is fancy enough to have two doorbells, you can set it up so you know from the colour of the light on the ‘Stop’ button which one has been pressed.

You can also buy a separate vibrating pad, which you slip under your pillow, to alert you to an incoming call at night-time.

If you find the Ring Flash is not compatible with other local devices, the instruction manual shows you how to sort this out.

This product is not a sleek, stylish-looking addition to your home, although in fairness it’s not intended to be. Equally, it does inevitably add to the wires around your phone.

But it does what it says on the tin. It makes your doorbell and phone louder. It would be unreasonable to expect it to do dinner and dancing as well.

To buy online visit www.mid.org.uk/Ht or call 01733 361199 or textphone 01733 238020.

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**Want to talk to your doctor? No Problem!**

Sometimes you need to see your doctor quickly and there is no time for them to book a face to face interpreter.

**How online interpreting works...**

- The doctor or nurse uses a simple webcam on their computer to link to a BSL interpreter
- The patient signs to the interpreter through the webcam
- The doctor talks to the interpreter over the phone
- The doctor’s surgery pays for the online interpreting

**What are the benefits?**

- The patient has a choice of communicating in their own language rather than having to use scribbled notes
- The service does not need to be booked in advance
- If the patient wants to discuss a private matter with the doctor or nurse, they can do so without having a friend or family member to interpret for them

**Show the card....**

- SignTranslate has small plastic cards that are easily carried in wallets/purses. These cards can be taken to the surgery or hospital to show to staff
- They show that you want to use BSL online interpreting

Some hospitals have had training on using on-line interpreting and also deaf awareness training. You would like us to contact your surgery or hospital about using SignTranslate on-line please e-mail support@signtranslate.com or text 07966 976741.

**CASE STUDIES**

"The doctor sets up SignTranslate on the screen and it’s fantastic. We are able to communicate between the three of us and make sure every-things is clarified with the doctor. It’s brilliant!" Deaf patient, Surrey

"I think on-line interpreting is extremely beneficial to Deaf people. It gives them independence, so they don’t have to rely on family to go the doctors with them all the time. It also gives them the opportunity to build a better relationship with their doctor”. Daughter of Deaf lady

"Before using SignTranslate I found it very difficult to communicate with Deaf patients and often had to write everything down, with mixed results. SignTranslate has been a revelation!" Dr Joe McGilligan, Surrey

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**Do you struggle to hear in certain situations?**

**Even when wearing your hearing aid?**

Busy, noisy environments: With Conversor Pro the user can focus on the desired sound source as a directional microphone greatly reduces unwanted sounds coming from the sides and the rear. This is particularly useful when in bars, restaurants and watching TV.

Quieter sounds: Conversor Pro can enhance the required sounds, allowing users to clearly hear quieter sounds in noisy environments without straining or having to turn up their hearing instrument. Conversor Pro can be used with headphones and all Telecoel enabled hearing aids.

**Benefit from improved listening in a variety of situations with Conversor Pro**

- Background noise reduction: Reduces unwanted background and peripheral sound by up to 30 db.
- Zoom setting: Allows the user to focus on one particular sound amongst a number of sounds.
- Omni-directional setting: Picks up nearby sounds clearly from all around the user, ideal for family dinners or meetings.
- Group settings: The Conversor Pro MultiPack is also available in for use in schools, colleges and groups.

To learn how Conversor can help you can hear with clarity and to find your local stockist of Conversor Pro, visit www.conversorproducts.com or call 08700 663499
Why the simplest innovations were the best

From writing letters to a lip reading phone, technology is always evolving and not always for the best. Innovations freedom of communication and help you sing along to songs but when the phone rings you could end up with flashing lights throughout the house.

Charlie Swinbourne

If I told you that there was once a time when deaf people arranged to meet up by sending a letter - travelling in hope that the other person would meet them - that’d give you an idea of how technology has transformed our lives.

Nowadays we can choose from a range of ways of contacting each other. As a kid I’d have been amazed by the idea of text messages, emails, instant messaging and the web. The innovations that appeared in my childhood seemed amazing enough.

My Dad used to work for the local highways agency, and on frosty winter nights he had to have a road to the nearest needed salting. Being hard of hearing he didn’t always hear the phone ring, so he had a device installed called the ‘Mountcastle Silent Bell’, which meant when the phone rang, every light in our house flashed on and off. We’d be watching TV when everything would suddenly go black, and Dad would dash to the phone through intermittent bursts of light and darkness.

Dad even found a way of reversing the settings at night so all the lights flashed on in the darkness, waking us up in a way it was somewhat - we could all go back to sleep relaxed in the knowledge that the feeling of running down the stairs wasn’t a burglar after all!

The most exciting device (for me) was the ‘VideoCaption Reader’ that magically made subtitles appear on videos.

The silent bell was a simple invention - but effective. It also told us when Mum had forgotten that someone was at the door - the only trouble was cheeky kids in our street soon cottoned on to the comedy value of ringing the doorbell, sending all the lights in our house on and off, before running away!

Another invention that arrived when I was still at infant school was the Textphone. Plugging it into the phone socket meant Mum could phone relatives or deaf friends who also had the device. It had a keyboard and display and you had to press two buttons in (‘which stood for ‘go ahead’) to show that you’d finished and the other person could start to type - otherwise everything got garbled!

The best thing about the Textphone was that Mum no longer needed to ask Dad to make all her calls, so she was liberated, and Dad got a rest - it suited everyone!

The fax machine wasn’t a deaf invention, but it became a vital part of every deaf household partly because one problem with the Textphone is sometimes deaf people wouldn’t know if the line was engaged, if you’d got the number wrong, if there was a hearing person trying to speak to you, or if it was just taking the other person a while to start typing back. So scribbling out a fax - and crucially, seeing it go through the machine - meant you could be sure your message had got through.

The most exciting device that came into our lives during my childhood wasn’t communication related. It was the ‘VideoCaption Reader’, a small black box about the size of a hardback book, that plugged into our video recorder and magically made subtitles appear on videos.

Cheeky kids in our street soon cottoned on to the comedy value of ringing the doorbell, sending all the lights in our house on and off, before running away!

Until then, we could only watch subtitled programmes on TV. This black box suddenly gave us the chance to pop down to the video shop and hire a video for the evening, like any other family. Then a few years later DVDs came along, with subtitles on nearly every copy (and the around half the videos had captioning), and the world changed again!

I recently read about a new device that allows the hearing impaired to lipread them. This enables them to have ‘silent’ mobile phone calls by silently moving their lips so people won’t overhear what they’re saying.

One thing to be said for the invention is that it could create a lot of deaf jobs - employing deaf people to become private detectives, lipreading confidential conversations (!).

But the device makes people look ridiculous, speaking silently with wires all over their face they look like they’re doing a good impression of an extra from a horror film.

For me the best inventions are also often the simplest. I’ll never forget the excitement of seeing our lights flash on and off, or a fax come through, or subtitles magically appear on a video.

With such a range of new inventions enhancing our lives these days, the trick is not taking them for granted.

Battery Corner

Battery Corner is back: the second in a series of features looking at hearing aid batteries – a critical but often overlooked component of today’s hearing aid technology. Brought to you by Rayovac, its aim is to answer your questions about the small batteries that provide the power we need to hear. Rayovac is the World’s No.1 and is manufactured here in the UK.

In the first article we looked at how batteries work. Here we take a look at some common questions about the life of batteries - looking closely at the factors that can affect lifespan and the best ways to care for them.

Q: Why does the life of a battery vary by its size?

A: It’s quite simple. Battery life varies by size because a larger battery has more room for zinc. More zinc equals more life and power.

Q: But what other factors affect the life of a battery?

A: How quickly you drain the power is influenced by a range of factors including:

• Type of hearing aid: high powered devices like those for people with cochlear implants have more features and drain battery power faster than standard devices
• Background noise: a battery will drain less in a library or at home compared to a restaurant or rock concert
• Volume: if you have your hearing aid ‘muted out’ on this volume this prematurely drains the battery
• Sweat & perspiration: It is important to make sure that your hearing aids remain dry, excess moisture is bad for batteries and can cause shorting out.

Q: Does battery life differ from ear to ear for people with two hearing aids?

A: Yes - it is very uncommon that both ears have equal hearing loss. This means that you shouldn’t expect equal battery life from each battery. Unfortunately, this is often a source of misunderstanding for individuals when they first receive their second hearing aid.

Q: Is there a way of checking how much power is left in the battery?

A: Through practice most people know when to change their batteries. But you can’t say there’s any penalty in using batteries. This takes away the guess work and will prevent you throwing away good ones. This can help you to spot other problems with your device. We will include a battery tester in the prize pack for the best question this month, please see below for details.

Q: Is there anything that can be done to protect the life of my battery?

A: There is nothing you can do to extend the life of your battery. However, storing batteries in hot places since heat shortens the lifespan
• Refrigeration is not recommended
• Batteries should not be carried in your pocket. Metal objects such as coins may short out batteries

Q: Can you recharge hearing aid batteries?

A: There’s no point trying. Hearing aid batteries only have a finite lifespan. Once all the zinc inside the battery has been used up, it is dead and will no longer function.

Q: How can I recycle my hearing aid batteries?

A: The following retailers have collection points in store: Tesco’s, Morrisons, Boots, Argos, John Lewis, Waitrose, Homebase, Robert Dyas, Aldi and Netto. You can deposit your used batteries here, free of charge, regardless of if they are hearing aid batteries, watch batteries or AA batteries from a torch or a remote.

Alternatively, go to the Battery Back website where there is a postcode selector to advise you of collection points in your area. The website has details of over 3,000 collection points in the UK www.tiny.cc/collectionpoints

Rayovac is happy to help Hearing Times readers with any battery questions. Simply send your questions to Rayovac.micropower@uk.spectrumbands.com or Rayovac Europe Ltd, Unit 2a, Stephenson Estate, Washington NE37 3HW and we will do our best to answer. We will feature the best ones in future editions of Battery Corner where there will be a prize for questions featured.

Visit our website to be in with a chance of winning - www.audiologistoftheyear.co.uk
Simon Webbe to join the cast of Sister Act

Whoopi Goldberg and Stage Entertainment, the producers of the hit musical comedy Sister Act have announced that Simon Webbe, a member of the boyband Blue, is to join the cast of the show.

Simon, whose first performance is on Monday 31 May, will play the role of Curtis Shank, the bad-boy lover of the story's heroine Deloris Van Cartier.

Simon will be joined by stage by Sheila Hancock, currently causing a sensation on the BBC's hit Saturday night talent search Over The Rainbow, as Mother Superior, critically acclaimed newcomer Patricia Miller as Deloris and Dads’ Army legend Ian Lavender as the Monsignor.

Sister Act Producer, Whoopi Goldberg said, “What can I say about the delicious and talented Simon Webbe, except that we are honoured to welcome him to the family.”

“We're so fortunate to have one of the most gifted and exciting casts in the West End and the audiences are in for a treat.”

Other new cast members opening on 31 May are Jacqueline Clarke as Sister Mary Lazarus and ensemble members Lauren Appleby, Kiara Jay, Rachel John, Aaron Lambert, Ellie Leah, Amanda Minihan, Grant Murphy, Nathaniel Morrison, Ashley Russell and Carrie Sutton.

“What can I say about the delicious and talented Simon Webbe except that we are honoured to welcome him”

The production was recently nominated in seven categories at this year’s Whatsonstage.com Theatregoer Choice Awards and for four awards at the prestigious Laurence Olivier Awards.

Sister Act is currently showing at The London Palladium, London.

For more information or to book tickets call 0844 412 2704 or visit www.sisteractthemusical.com

Corrie star William Roache breaks silence over hearing trauma

Actors William Roache, has revealed he is partially deaf and requires special treatment on the Coronation Street set.

The 77-year-old, who plays Ken Barlow, is 50 per cent deaf in both ears and requires visual cues to prompt him. “Deafness is extremely isolating,” Roache said. “I live in a cocooned world.”

A founding member of the ITV1 soap's cast, Roache said his hearing was damaged as a young soldier, when a bomb exploded at close range during a training exercise.

“I was 21, I was an officer, it was a training exercise but with live ammunition, and some over-keen guy pulled the bomb up and I got the full blast of the explosion right by my ear.”

The actor did not realise the extent of the damage until he had a hearing test after agreeing to front the Sound Barrier Star Awards, which recognise achievements in people who are hard of hearing.

He has since had a hearing aid fitted, but says his condition can still be “extremely isolating”.

“I could be having a normal conversation and certain things I just won’t hear. I can’t hear watches or alarms, footsteps or the rustling of paper.”

At work, he added, “the floor manager has to give me a visual cue, a hand signal, and it is just something that I have learned to live with.”

Coming soon to a theatre near you...

Donmar Warehouse

Polar Bears by Mark Haddon

Signed performance: Monday 17 - 27 May at 2.30pm
Signed by Mary Connell

John has never met anyone like Kay. When the moon is in the right phase, she is magnetic and amazingly alive. But when the darkness closes in, she is lost to another world, a world in which John does not belong.

One man’s struggle to love, support and live with someone suffering from a psychological condition is beautifully captured with humour and pathos in this extraordinary play, written and directed by Mark Haddon, the author of The Curious Incident of The Dog in the Night-Time and A Spot of Bother.

For further information or to book call 020 7485 5822 or email access@donmarwarehouse.com

Graeae Theatre

Signs of a Star Shaped Diva

by Nora Shephard

in a co-production with Theatre Royal, Stratford East

No one remembers mousey old Sue, the undertaker from Bingley Bridge. No one knows she's a Diva fanatic, until one day she is offered a cabaret spot at Harry's Place. Overnight, Tammy Frascati is born and Sue finds herself hurtling to stardom and Las Vegas, signing the songs of her favourite Divas, Billie Holiday, Dusty Springfield, Ella Fitzgerald and Gloria Gaynor.

Caroline Parker gives a virtuoso performance as Sue and her alter ego Tammy as she takes us on a journey of fame, trophies and false eyelashes battling with true love from Bingley Bridge.

For further information call the Graeae Theatre Company on 020 7613 6900 or email info@graeae.org

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www.hearingtimes.co.uk
Jameson Empire Film Awards 2010

As the film industry's biggest and most respected stars turned out to celebrate the Jameson Empire Awards 2010, Hearing Times' reporter Ellen Dalgairns greeted some of cinema's leading names on the red carpet.

On a grey day in London, the national press, autograph hunters and yours truly gathered outside the Grosvenor Hotel for the Jameson Empire Film Awards, 2010. The atmosphere was electric and anticipation hummed in the air as we waited for the silver screen’s finest to arrive.

Now in its 15th year, the Empire Awards are the only film awards to be voted for by the public. Empire magazine readers cast their votes via the website, making sure the popular magazine readers cast their votes via the website, making sure the popular

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This month I am feeling sad as Fab Friend Who Actually Wears Her Hearing Aids is leaving London... for good!

*sniff*

She fell in love with Country Boy 2 and, as his name suggests, he doesn’t live in London, he lives in the Wild West erms... Country – so that is where she is going. This is fabulous and of course, I am wonderfully happy for her. But a little bit selfishly, and secretly – until now, anyway! – I am sad for me, because not only am I losing a fab friend, I am also losing one of my climbing partners.

Climbing with Fab Friend is always brilliant, as being deaf like me, we’re able to have completely silent, mouthed conversations with each other from our positions at the top and bottom of the wall!

One time, when a gorgeous bloke was climbing nearby, we had a whole gossip about his manly arms without anybody noticing, and when we’re stuck on a climbing move, instead of shouting encouragement like everyone else at the wall, we’re spurred on by the other one silently mouthing, ‘You can’t come down until you reach the top!’

Fab Friend is also fab at knowing how I might be feeling about things – be it work related, boy related, and most importantly deaf related. She knows the lows that I experience, and when I have them, she’s always on hand to offer me practical no-nonsense advice along with a glass of wine and square of Green & Blacks.

And it’s this I will miss the most. You see, with her living just 10 minutes away right now, we are able to catch up at the drop of a hat... in person. But when she moves, that won’t happen. Of course, there’ll be email. But gone will be our frequent chats, the silent conversations about cute guys at the climbing wall and perhaps my best deaf – and one of my best friends in this city.

Of course, changes happen as we get older, but I had never envisaged London without Fab Friend. However, on a positive note, it just gives me one more reason to visit the Wild West erms... Country, which I love. And maybe we can have a silently mouthed conversation about the manly arms of the country boys instead. You never know, maybe I’ll even meet one of my own – and then there’ll be a Country Boy 3!

Phew, I feel much better now.

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**Film Reviews : Kick-Ass**

**Charlie Swinbourne**

I half liked Kick-Ass. I half hated it. That might sound confusing, so let me start by telling you what it’s all about and I’ll explain the 50/50 bit later.

*Kick-Ass* is a story about a teenage boy who becomes a superhero without, er, having a superpower. He simply orders a costume and goes out in it, and duly gets beaten up. But when a video of him in action is uploaded onto YouTube, he becomes an internet star, and after teaming up with ‘Hit Girl’, he takes on a criminal gang in New York City.

The film is based on a comic book, and benefits from a frenetic, colourful visual style. It has two engaging leads in Aaron Johnson (last seen in *Now You See Me*, *Boy*), and Chloe Moretz that help it add up to the kind of nip-roaring, if slightly predictable adrenaline rush I would have enjoyed as a teenager. It also happens to be extremely violent.

This is where the 50/50 comes in. Half of me, the bit that remembers being a teenage boy, guiltily enjoyed the ingenious ways the film found of killing off characters. Bazooka rocket through a window? Check. Exploded to death in an industrial microwave? Check. A couple of kitchen knives flipped into a face? Check.

But it disturbed me that some of the most bloodthirsty moments of knife-slaughtering action (not least an entire lower limb being sliced off) are dished out by ‘Hit Girl’, who happens to be an 11 year old girl, played by an 11 year old girl. So here’s the rub. The other half of me, the person who’s now an adult – and father – feels disturbed by the idea of children acting out extremely violent scenes that seek to entertain through shock value.

So I half liked Kick-Ass. I think a lot of people will like it 50% more than I did. I left the cinema wondering whether the kids who see it will question whether the existence of a film featuring a scene where an 11 year old gets beaten up by a grown man could ever really be thought of as a ‘cool’ thing.

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**Coming soon to a cinema near you...**

**Robin Hood**

14 May

The story of an archer in the army of Richard Coeur de Lion who fights against the Norman invaders and becomes the legendary hero known as Robin Hood.

Directed by Ridley Scott

Starring Russell Crowe, Cate Blanchett

**Our Family Wedding**

14 May

The weeks leading up to a young couple’s wedding is comic and stressful, especially as their respective fathers try to lay to rest their feud.

Directed by Rick Famuyiwa

Starring Forest Whitaker, America Ferrera

**Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time**

21 May

Based on the video game, which follows an adventurous prince who teams up with a rival princess to stop an angry ruler from unleashing a sandstorm that could destroy the world.

Directed by Mike Newell

Starring Gemma Arterton, Jake Gyllenhaal, Sir Ben Kingsley, Alfred Molina

**Sex and the City 2**

28 May

The vivacious ladies return once again for another glitzy romp through New York City high-life living.

Directed by Michael Patrick King

Starring Sarah Jessica Parker, Kim Cattrall, Kristin Davis, Cynthia Nixon, Chris Noth

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**DVD offers crime prevention advice for deaf people**

A DVD offering advice to deaf people on crime prevention has been made by an officer after he realised sections of the community were missing out.

Inspector Kevin Childs from Gwent Police, who have previously sent officers for sign language training in an attempt to improve communications with deaf people, teamed up with the British Deaf Association after working with deaf people in the area.

"The DVD is an ideal solution to the issue of delivering suitably accessible advice."

The film will now be distributed to forces throughout the UK.

Insp Childs said the main challenges were a lack of suitably accessible crime prevention literature and lack of engagement with, and access to, police officers.

"The DVD is an ideal solution to the issue of delivering suitably accessible advice. It will include a number of short scenarios providing simple crime prevention advice to be considered when at home and when out and about."

The DVD offers a variety of visual aid options for users which can be switched on and off as needed, including signing, subtitles in a variety of languages and a facility for lip reading.

In addition to the DVD, Insp Childs has also organised a deaf Police and Community Together (PACT) meetings in the Gwent Police area. "I am hopeful that by implementing the PACT meetings, as well as having officers who use sign language, and the use of the DVD, satisfaction and confidence among the deaf community will improve," Insp Childs said.

**Visual aid options on the DVD include signing, subtitles in a variety of languages and a facility for lip reading**

Jeff Brattan-Wilson, senior deaf advocacy officer for British Deaf Association Wales, said, "British Deaf Association is delighted to see that Gwent Police is actively engaging with the deaf community in Gwent."

"[We are] keen to see similar practice from other forces across Wales and the UK."

For more information about Gwent police visit www.gwent.police.uk
Innovation in language

British Sign Language, or BSL as it is commonly known is the native language of 50,000 – 70,000 Deaf people in the UK.

My name is Anna Herriman and I have been profoundly Deaf from birth. I started signing BSL when I was 13, when I went picking up what people were saying, and was unable to socialise in the hearing world and was unable to pick up what was said in class at school.

BSL has changed my life! It broke me out of my shell, brought me out of isolation. It has enabled me get through school; achieve my potential at university both for my BA and for my MSC degrees. I now lead a full social life, and can be the life and soul of the party with my Deaf friends and hearing friends who can sign.

It has helped improve my English (by being aware of language) and let me achieve the career I have always wanted and progress upwards in that!

My job involves using the phone lots as well as meeting many of people, who have all been great. They get used to my interpreters being there and treat me as an equal.

Growing up in a hearing family who don’t sign, I missed out so much. We used to go to the theatre, days out as a family, and I never had a clue what went on. Now, thanks to the DDA, when going to the theatre and tourist attractions I am able to have more and more access and learn about things more and more now than ever before.

I have been to BSL interpreted theatre, BSL guided tours at Windsor Castle, BSL interpreted talks, for one of my big interests, in the London Underground at the London Transport Museum. I have been to a few BSL translated talks at art galleries including the Tate Modern. There are more and more tourist attractions organising BSL translated tours and I would like to say thank you to tourist attractions and BSL interpreters and please keep up the good work.

It has helped improve my English (by being aware of language) and let me achieve the career I have always wanted and progress upwards in that!

It has its own grammaticality and is a visual language that uses reference points, mouth patterns, facial expressions, eye and eyebrow movements, body movements, and also a range of hand shapes to convey meaning.

The language does have some borrowings from English as well such as finger spelling.

BSL was officially recognised as a complete language in its own right by the Labour Government in 2003. It is undeniably, a beautiful, rich and complex language.

We asked our friends on Facebook to comment on what innovation has most benefited their lives.

This is what they said:

Laura Jakubowski
“A cochlear implant has benefited my life!”

Nicki Stevenson
“Internet, and my blackberry mobile”

Becky Crook
“Our Team Hearing dog!”

Alison Hicking
“Subtitles on TV and the internet …it opened up to a world of information”

Martin Griffiths
“Captions on TV, cinema and DVD has been fab but also love my audio shoes which clip to my hearing aid giving me fabulous sounds when listening to iPod or other music devices.”

Charlotte New
“Cochlear implant, internet, subtitles, Iphone and and notetakers for college”

Deidre Saffron
“Speech to text reporters (palantypists, stenographers, etc) and electronic notetakers, I couldn’t imagine life without these professionals.”

Penny Pearce
“I think its being able to text on mobile phones! This gave deaf people a whole new sense of independent on the move.”

Tracey Jane Willburn
“Having my first hearings aids at the age of ten what a wonderful difference it makes in my life, I won’t be without them!”

Kathryn Prescott
“Emails mean I can be on an equal footing at work, and texting for keeping in touch with friends and family as Facebook, as it has enabled me to reconnect with so many people that I now keep up with on a daily basis.”

Vikki Nelson
“The key is for all songs on iphone touch, now that has gotta be my latest favourite innovation. I have a dream….one day to sing/dance and read lyrics at music festivals/gigs…one day...”

Deaffest 2010

Deaffest, the UK’s only Deaf-led Film and Television Festival which celebrates the talents of Deaf film makers and media artists, returns on Friday 21 – Sunday 23 May at Light House Media Centre

This dynamic and thrilling festival aims to nurture new talent in the Deaf community and showcase the work of Deaf filmmakers and producers to a wider audience.

Mans Puce, is a fan of Deaffest, “for me it’s watching the Deaf films, that is what I really like. You’ve got all the hearing ones, but watching the Deaf is so much more fun,” he signed.

“It’s like your experience is represented in the film, it’s fantastic. It’s all in sign language as well,” he continued. “When you go home you’re with hearing people day in, day out, every day: it’s nice just to come to Deaffest, you have the Deaf films, it’s meeting people you haven’t seen for a long time.” The weekend of festivities will include screenings of films produced by UK and International Deaf filmmakers and plenty of panel discussions, networking opportunities and social events. Deaffest 2010, with Zebruno, an innovative company specialising in Deaf media and Communication solutions at the helm, will be the twelfth festival to be held in Wolverhampton since 1998.

BLST Chief Executive, Terry Riley attended Deaffest 2009. “Last year I saw some great films from young Deaf filmmakers. When we watch TV as adults it has to be of a high standard, whereas young Deaf filmmakers have more flexibility. They’re not restricted and have more opportunity to be creative and experiment, plus their way of watching TV is totally different from adults.”

For further information contact Light House box office on 01902 716055 or email info@light-house.co.uk or visit www.light-house.co.uk

Eight year old launches website

Sreelakshmi Suresh, aged 8, has become the youngest female web designer and CEO in the world.

Sreelakshmi has won several National and International Awards for her excellence in web designing. Now she has received the National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement, the highest award in India for children given by the Government of India.

Sreelakshmi has already designed and developed 10 websites. Her website for the Deaf community, www.kozhikode deaf.org, was officially launched by Sri. Binoy Viswam, Minister for Forest, State of Kerala.

When she was seven, she was entrusted with developing a website for her school.

The site provides news of events and information about training and opportunities for the deaf community, particularly in Kerala; there is even a special tab to choose a deaf bride or groom.

The Association of American Webmasters honoured her by giving her excellence in web designing. Now she has received the National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement, the highest award in India for children given by the Government of India.

Sreelakshmi Suresh has received the highest award in India for children

Sreelakshmi was very interested in computer studies from her early childhood and used paint programmes when she was three then learned to type the alphabet and gradually started studying web design.

When she was seven, she was entrusted with the work of developing a website for her school.

Why not tell us your opinion?

Hearing Times will publish readers’ letters in future issues!

Email editorial@hearingtimes.co.uk

www.hearingtimes.co.uk  ■  May 2010
Action Deafness launches community project

The project will work with employers, statutory organisations, faith groups, community and voluntary organisations to create an integrated response to the needs of 18,000 deaf people

Action Deafness, a charity based in Leicester City Centre, has been awarded a grant from the Big Lottery Fund to implement a new project aimed at targeting D/deaf people from the Black Minority Ethnic (BME) group within the city of Leicester.

The project which is called “HearNow” will work to deploy two BME Development Officers experienced in D/deaf issues, and has appointed Jaz Mann as the lead Development Officer. Jaz is profoundly D/deaf and being part of the BME community understands fully the difficulties that can be experienced.

Some 39% of the city’s total population are from ethnically diverse backgrounds and Leicester is forecast to become the first UK city with a BME majority population.

Jaz Mann explained “I have been profoundly D/deaf since birth, and had to overcome huge communication barriers whilst growing up. Many of my family still do not communicate using BSL, although it is my first language. As Lead Development Officer for this project, I can use my personal experiences and I have an empathy with people in similar situations to the one I was in.

"HearNow" will give BME D/deaf people realistic tangible opportunities to access a range of communication, advocacy, social services, health, education, training and employment support

“Told you about you, I had rather a bad cold. I was also rather preoccupied with what was on the telly.

It was enough to convince me I needed to sort out something pronto to alert me for the smoke alarm sound too. I contacted some people, they came round and bingo then I had some rather fetching strobe lights fitted.

Just think, how did Deaf people manage all those years ago?

Especially Deaf people living with Deaf partners. I was fortunate on this occasion that my partner had just arrived home; it could have been a lot worse.

Innovation has played a huge part in technology advances for the deaf and hearing impaired, helping our independence soar. Today, I am surrounded by inventions that make my life much easier.

At work, I have a pager that alerts me when the siren sounds. I use email to communicate with colleagues. I also have a mobile phone, which thanks to text messaging, means I can keep in touch with my friends on the go.

I use a vibrating alarm clock to wake me up, a flashing baby monitor for when she cries and a minicom for those all important telephone conversations with my Mum.

Isn’t technology wonderful?

We can easily underestimate how important technology can be in some people’s lives and take it for granted, but we have a lot to be thankful for. Of course, it also helps not to leave the tea towel too close to a burning flame...

Find out more about life with a cochlear implant at www.thedeafone.co.uk

Online subscription is FREE!
Just subscribe using your email address and the password online www.hearingtimes.co.uk

Photo of the Month

Bryony Parkes

Forgiving Spring for arriving so late, is easy after seeing the beautiful blossom on the trees at the moment. Taken with a D90, at 1/250 and f/2.0 blossom bokeh makes the perfect setting for a spring-like photo. I hope everyone enjoys the warmer weather!
Falling on Deaf Ears

Juliet England

Whatever else politicians may want to do, one thing that will not change is the widespread deficiency in commitment and political will to support those affected by hearing loss. A lack of commitment and political will to help those affected by hearing loss is simply not good enough.

When one in seven UK voters affects an issue, it’s vital that their voice is heard. When given the right support, and why it’s vital that their voice is heard.

With one in seven UK voters affected by hearing loss, a lack of commitment and political will to support them is simply not good enough.

When I was researching this piece, not only did each of the parties take a long time to supply any information, not one was prepared to put up an interviewee.

Labour emailed quotes from an MP, but that’s not an interview. And the focus was on past achievements rather than future pledges. The Tories said they would ‘try’ and put up someone but didn’t. As for the Liberal Democrats, a discussion with one of their candidates, apparently the father of a deaf son, didn’t. As for the Liberal Democrats, a discussion with one of their candidates, apparently the father of a deaf son, didn’t materialise.

I then turned to manifestos and bland policy statements. None of these documents contained any specific information about what the party would do, if elected, for deaf people. One in seven of all UK voters is affected by hearing loss in some way, and so this lack of commitment and political will to support them is simply not good enough.

A Conservative Party spokesman said, “We will increase NHS spending, while making it more accountable.”

Conservatives

“His plans to invest more in the NHS and get money to the frontline will mean that people waiting for services like hearing aids will get treated more quickly.”

“We will give disabled people more support to live independent lives and extend the use of individual budgets and direct payments to give disabled people greater control over their care and its funding.”

“We will preserve Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance.”

Labour

Chatham and Aylesford MP Jonathan Shaw said, “Fairness and equality are at the heart of what we are about, but this reputation has to be earned.”

He pointed to the Equality Act, and the Access to Work programme, whose budget stood at £81m in 2009/10, and would increase to £138m over the next four years under Labour.

Shaw added, “In last year’s Pre-Budget report, we increased Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance by 1.5%.”

“Through the National Audiology Programme, we funded a major programme of work with audiology services to support provision of both the diagnostic six week milestone and the 18 week referral to treatment target.”

“We recognise the difficulties disabled parents, including deaf parents, face with engaging with their child’s education. Our Parent programme of help get advice and information to all parents, while ParentLine Plus provides a confidential telephone service for parents who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment.”

Labour

“Labour will ensure support is there when it’s needed and that our public services continue to be something we are proud of.”

Liberal Democrats

The party has a disability association, and a policy covering all disabilities. This encompasses accessible public transport, winter fuel payments and social care, as well as education, health and social care.

The policy states, “We will give jobseekers with disabilities better practical help to get work, using voluntary and private sector providers, and JobCentre Plus services. We will promote and reform Access to Work, allowing jobseekers to apply for this grant while they are job hunting.”

In terms of education: “Liberal Democrats will ensure that a child’s special educational needs are always picked up. We will have children take a diagnostic assessment when they start school. By investing an extra £2.5bn into schools to cut class sizes and provide one-to-one tuition, we will make it easier for teachers to support children with disabilities. By scaling back the bureaucracy imposed on teachers from central government, we can free them to spend more time with all their pupils.”

Under a LibDem government, teachers would also have ‘better quality’ training in identifying and responding to children with Special Educational Needs.

Finally, if elected, the party would integrate health and social care, and conduct an independent review of social care.

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Deaf students quiz political candidates

Three deaf students, from Heston Community School in Hounslow, Greater London, have recently put major decision makers on the spot over issues facing deaf children and young people.

Kevin Zammett, 13, Karen Demian, 14, and Maynaka Maheswaran, 17, arrived in Westminster eager to find out what each of the main political parties is proposing to do for young deaf people if it gains power at the general election.

ACAS ambassadors for the National Deaf Children’s Society (NDCCS), a charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people, the students interviewed former education ministers Diana Johnson, Michael Gove and David Laws. They covered a number of important issues, including bullying, the future of sign language in schools, access to technology and special educational needs provision.

"The politicians learnt something from us: we helped them realise there are things they could do better”

The young people also managed to get an opportunity out about what the candidates will do to celebrate if they win the general election. Answers ranged from having a good sleep, enjoying a curry, and playing with Lego.

Maynaka Maheswaran said, “The best thing about the whole experience is the politicians have learnt something new from us. We helped them realise there are things they could do better.”

Jo Campion, Head of Campaigns at NDCCS, said, “Kevin, Karen and Maynaka showed what deaf children can achieve when given the right support, and why it's vital that their voice is heard.

Karen, Kevin and Maynaka questioned representatives from the top three political parties

There are over 45,000 deaf children in the UK, with four babies born deaf every day.

Government figures show deaf children in London are 50% less likely to do as well in their GCSEs as their peers. Deafness is not a learning disability.

With the right support, deaf children should be achieving the same as other children.

"It is important that whoever forms the next Government take action to close the gap," added Ms Campion.

Phil Ward, Headteacher of Heston Community School in Hounslow interviewed: Diana Johnson (Labour), Michael Gove (Conservative), David Laws (Liberal Democrat).

Politics 13
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- **ACROSS**
  3 What company launched the ‘Love your Music? Save your Hearing!’ initiative for Noise Awareness Week? (5)
  4 What has RNID just launched for testing hearing on MP3 players and online? (3,8)
  5 What is the name of the NDCIS challenge in Scotland? (9)
  6 Name the European city where the Lothar Cremer Awards were held (5)
  7 What is the theme of this month’s issue of *Hearing Times*? (10)
  8 Which annual awards are taking place in November? (9)
  9 What sport does deafinitely girl enjoy? (8)
  10 Name the Deafinitely Theatre production currently on tour (6,7)
  11 What is the name of the hospital where the Jameson Awards were held? (7)
  12 What term describes the sensation of hearing a noise in the absence of an external sound? (7)
  13 What is the name of the film reviewed by Charlie Swinbourne this month? (7)
  14 What is the name of the hotel where the Charlie Swinbourne is this month? (7)
  15 What is the theme of this month’s Hearing Times? (4,5)
  16 What is the name of the film reviewed by Charlie Swinbourne this month? (7)
  17 What is the name of the doctor who won an award in Germany for his research? (6)
  18 What is the theme of this month’s issue of *Hearing Times*? (10)

- **DOWN**
  1 Complete this phrase…. Dogs for Deaf People. (7)
  2 Who is this year’s winner of the ‘Outstanding Contribution to British Film’ award? (3,8)
  3 What is the name of the condition involving abnormal growth around a tiny bone in the ear? (12)
  4 What is the name of a well known brand of MP3 player? (4)
  5 What is the name of the door bell amplifier reviewed by Juliet England in this month’s *Hearing Times*? (4,5)
  6 What company is featured in Experts’ Corner this month? (7)
  7 What is the name of the annual awards taking place in September? (6)
  8 What is the name of a well known brand of MP3 player? (4)
  9 Which famous London art gallery is hosting BSL translated talks? (4)
  10 Does battery life differ from ear to ear for hearing aids? (3,8)
  11 Can you recharge hearing aid batteries? (2)

*For the answers, go to www.hearingtimes.co.uk/puzzleanswers!*

**Sudoku**

**Medium**

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**Hard**

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A miscellany of theatre, film, charity and fundraising events to keep readers informed of happenings in deaf and hard of hearing communities

Events Guide

Theatre

May

Saturday 8
2:30 PM Dhi What A Lovely War
Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield
2:30 PM Witness for the Prosecution
Churchill Theatre, Bromley
2:45 PM Pieces
Clwyd Theatre Cyrmu, Mold

Tuesday 11
7:30PM Posh
Royal Court Theatre, London

Wednesday 12
7:30PM The White Guard
National Theatre, London
2:00PM The Hobbit
Royal and Derngate Theatre, Northampton

Thursday 13
7:30PM Salome
Curve Theatre, Leicester
2:30PM A Northern Odyssey
Live Theatre, Newcastle upon Tyne,

Friday 14
7:45PM The Count of Monte Cristo
West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds

Saturday 15
2:00PM Canary
Liverpool Playhouse, Liverpool
3:00PM Ruined
Almeida Theatre, London

Monday 17
7:30PM Spring Storm
National Theatre, London

Tuesday 18
7:45PM Signs Of A Star-Shaped Diva
Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Wednesday 19
7:45PM Signs Of A Star-Shaped Diva
Birmingham Repertory Theatre

Thursday 20
7:30PM The Real Thing
Old Vic Theatre, London
7:30PM The Pirates of Penzance
Theatre Royal, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

Friday 21
7:30PM Death of a Salesman
West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds
7:30PM The Sound of Music
Venue Cymru, Llandudno

Saturday 22
2:00PM Hairspray (2010 tour)
The Mayflower, Southampton
2:30PM A Small Family Business
Clwyd Theatre Cyrmu, Mold

Tuesday 25
7:15PM Peter Pan
Barbican Theatre, London
7:30PM Ruined
Almeida Theatre, London

Wednesday 26
7:30PM True West
The Crucible, Sheffield
7:30PM Beyond the Horizon
National Theatre, London

Friday 28
7:30PM Wicked
Apollo Victoria Theatre, London

Saturday 29
2:00PM Noises Off
Birmingham Repertory Theatre
3:00PM Wicked
Apollo Victoria Theatre, London
2:30PM The Woman in Black
Theatre Royal, Plymouth

Sunday 30
2:30PM Laughter in the Rain
Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff

June

Wednesday 2
7:30PM The Hobbit
Norwich Theatre Royal, Norwich
8:00PM Woman in Black
Fortune Theatre, London

Thursday 3
7:30PM Must
Soho Theatre, London

Friday 4
7:15PM King Lear
New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich

Saturday 5
2:00PM The Lion King
Lyceum Theatre, London
2:30PM Calendar Girls
Theatre Royal, Nottingham

Monday 7
8:00PM The Crucible
Open Air Theatre, Regent’s Park, London

Community

BSL Tours of the Royal Courts of Justice, London
13 May 11:00-13:00
Take a tour of the building and discover more about the art, architecture, history and the working of the courts. Further dates for 2010 are 10 June 14:00-16:00, 9 Sept, 14 Oct, 11 Nov, 19 Dec
For more information and to check availability, contact the tour guide, Barry Hartwell, direct via e-mail at barry.hartwell@ntlworld.com

V&A Exhibition: ‘The Rock & The Glory’ photographs by Harry Goodwin
21 May 18:30-19:30
Cromwell Road, London, SW7 2RL
You will meet a curator at The Grand Entrance, who will show you around the exhibition. Photographer Harry Goodwin has taken photos dating back to the 1970s onwards including programmes like Top Of The Pops, celebrities and bands.
For more information visit www.vam.ac.uk/collections

Deaffest 2010
21-23 May
The UK’s only Deaf-led Film and Television Festival which celebrates the talents of Deaf filmmakers and media artists at Light House Media Centre. This dynamic and thrilling festival helps to nurture talent in the Deaf community and showcase the work of Deaf filmmakers and producers. The weekend includes screenings of films produced by UK and international Deaf filmmakers, panel discussions, networking opportunities and social events.
For more information go to www.deaffest.co.uk

Theatre courses

ALRA (The Academy of Live and Recorded Arts) has an established reputation for producing actors and technicians who are highly skilled, creative, self-motivated, confident, knowledgeable, reliable, conscientious, hard working, affable, flexible, passionate and, most of all – employable.

ARLA are currently offering opportunities for deaf/BSL actors:

‘Acting for Camera’ course
This two week course is free to participate for Deaf/BSL actors aged between 17-30. ‘Acting for Camera’ is led by Sam Dore (Burscoughdrum Films), a Deaf filmmaker who uses BSL, which ensures there is direct communication between the tutor and the students in their own language.

This means students become fully immersed in the workshops, gain invaluable experience and have confidence in their skills as Deaf actors.

‘Acting for the Stage’ course
This is a chance to rehearse and perform a play especially commissioned for an ensemble cast of Deaf/BSL actors. A Shotgun Wedding, by Steven Webb, will be directed by David Elliott, from B Roots Theatre Company.

Rehearsals will take place at weekends throughout June, followed by two weeks of rehearsals and performances at ALRA, from 5 - 17 July.

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Deaf UK Athletics Awards 2010

Hearing Times recently attended the prestigious Deaf UK Athletics Awards evening to celebrate the achievements of the UK's deaf athletes and volunteers over the last few years and recognise the contribution they have made to deaf sport in the UK.

The event was held at Stoke-on-Trent Civic Centre, with attendees tuning up in their finest to feast on a delicious five course dinner and be entertained by deaf comedian John Smith. “It was great to see so many deaf athletes and different organisations coming along to support and enjoy the awards with DUKA,” said Guy Finney, DUKA Talent Identification Officer.

Brian Kokoruwe, Director of DUKA and GB Team Manager, welcomed everyone and reviewed the last two years of Great Britain’s athletic achievements before encouraging everyone to enjoy the five course meal. Flowers by Ela at Flores.co.uk decorated the tables and wine was provided by Aldi and Unibon to ensure an enjoyable evening for everyone.

The evening began with drinks at the bar amidst the excitement of athletes catching up with each other, some of whom had not seen each other since the 2009 Deaflympics in Taipei at the end of last year.

Awards were sponsored by Uniltron, AcmeArt, AHHP, Conversor, Doncaster College for the Deaf, dDeaflinks - Staffordshire, Men’s Health, Sign Solutions, Sign Circle, Asics and Mars Refuel, amongst others.

Chris Auty, Director of Unitrion (UK), and main sponsor of the event said “It is with great pride and honour that I stand here in recognition of deaf athletes busying themselves with dedication and achievements of deaf athletes throughout the UK, and those volunteers that make so many dreams become a reality.”

Sandra Campbell (R) Volunteer of the Year holding her award with Lisa Partridge, representing sponsor Conversor

This, as with all the evening’s speeches, was translated into BSL by the hardworking interpreters who were on hand throughout the evening to assist guests and make sure everyone felt included in the function.

Lisa Partridge, a representative from Conversor, presented the Volunteer of the Year award to Sandra Campbell and commented, “It was a great privilege to present the award and celebrate the contribution of the athletes and volunteers who helped make the Deaflympics a success.”

The contribution of Bob Blackwell, DUKA Interpreter and Sponsor Co-ordinator, to the success of the evening was recognised with a special award for his tireless efforts before and during the event all of which contributed to making the awards a very special evening for everyone.

Bobbie Blackwell, DUKA Interpreter and Sponsor Co-ordinator said, “I have seen first-hand how much time, commitment and dedication Brian[Kokoruwe] puts into Deaf UK Athletics.

“It’s been such hard work organising the DUKA awards – lots of sleepless nights - but it was definitely worth it!”

For further information about DUKA go to www.deafukathletics.org.uk

Arsenal Football Club has no barriers

Arsenal Football Club recently hosted its first BSL interpreted tour of the Emirates Stadium for deaf and hard of hearing supporters

The annual initiative, part of the annual ‘Level Playing Field’ campaign run by the National Association of Disabled Supporters (NADS), has the backing of the FA, PFA, Premier League Disability Foundation.

The tour was led by Arsenal Legend Eddie Kelly and the tourlescope, which visited the Arsenal Museum. The visit forms part of Arsenal’s on-going club initiative, ‘Ambassador Club’, which aims to celebrate and embrace equality and diversity and is part of the Club’s work in line with the ‘Kick It Out’ Equality Standard, of which Arsenal achieved the Intermediate Level in May 2009.

Ben Leigh, who is hearing impaired enjoyed the tour, “Many thanks for organising this tour and Thanks to Eddie Kelly for taking time out and for his patience and understanding communication wise whilst on tour.”

For further information on the Club’s facilities and services for disabled supporters and visitors Contact the Disability Liaison Team call 020 7619 5050 or email disability@arsenal.co.uk.

Julie and Andy take up cycle challenge for RAD

Two members of staff from Royal Association for Deaf people (RAD) are training hard for a fundraising challenge

Julie Cartey and Andy Taylor will be taking on a 24 miles charity cycle ride from London to Brighton on 20 June.

Julie is a RAD Youth Worker for East Anglia, taken under Andy, the Project Manager for National Full Potential. Andy and Julie have worked together for over six months and are both passionate that young deaf people have the same access to activities as their hearing peers.

Money raised by the duo will go towards funding residential experiences and activities for young deaf people.

The money will be solely needed as each residential activity costs on average, £4,000.

Andy said, “I’ve known Julie since she first started working at RAD. She has always been a very enthusiastic and determined person and is looking forward to the challenge of successfully completing this bike ride.”

You can sponsor Andy and Julie online at www.justgiving.com/ CYFduo.

For further information about RAD and its services call 0845 688 2525 or email info@royaldeaf.org.uk or visit the website www.royaldeaf.org.uk.