



Sound Seekers

Improving the lives of the hearing impaired



Tribute to Peggy Chalmers

It is with deep regret that we have to report that Peggy Chalmers, our former Vice – Chairman since 2009, technical adviser and the longest serving trustee passed away on November the 18th.

Peggy worked tirelessly for Sound Seekers for over twenty five years. She was known in audiology circles throughout the UK and in many commonwealth countries. Only in October she was asked by her previous students to visit Hong Kong, all paid for by her students.

Peggy was a greater supporter of the hearing impaired, working most of her life in the NHS and at the Institute of Laryngology and Otology. She was chairman of the British Society of Audiologists for a number of years. She developed, managed and taught on many courses including an MSc in Technical Audiology and Diploma in Audiological Sciences. She made many visits to commonwealth countries for Sound Seekers to support the development and maintenance of our projects and our repair and maintenance courses.

Peggy had a wealth of knowledge, experience and skills. She was strong willed, always spoke her mind and was an advocate for fairness for all people. Peggy always greeted you with a smile, she will be sadly missed either as a colleague, fellow trustee and or

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Project news

The Gambia

We are delighted to have recently been granted funding by States of Jersey Overseas Aid Commission to further develop our work in The Gambia. This will mean that we will be equipping and training primary health workers in eight village clinics across the country to carry out basic ear-care screening amongst their patients. We will also be able to further enhance the audiology facilities at the main referral hospital in Banjul. At the time of writing, our CEO, Gary Williams is preparing to visit the country to meet the HARK team and key officials across the country.

Kenya

With the first phase of the building work at Kibarani Secondary Vocational School for Deaf Children now completed, we are delighted that fundraising is now underway that will allow further classrooms, and residential accommodation for children and teachers to be built.

Malawi

Great news about Malawi! We have secured funding that will deliver audiology training and equipment to that country. This will be focussed on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Blantyre, where a Sound Seekers HARK vehicle (transferred from one of our earlier projects, in South Africa) is already based.

Tanzania

At the time of writing the finishing touches are being put to the new earmould laboratory at Muhimbili Hospital, Dar es Salaam. Sound Seekers has paid for the rooms to be fitted out, as well as providing the relevant laboratory equipment. The completion of this aspect of this HARK project had been delayed by the handing over of the suite of rooms from building contractors to the hospital authorities.

Focus on ... Pune

HARK! Pune was launched in June 2008 and here we take a look back at the project.

Maharashtra in West Central India, one of the largest regions in the country is severely hampered by overpopulation. A quarter of Maharashtra's inhabitants are too poor to afford adequate nourishment on a regular basis. Impoverished citizens migrate to industrial cities such as Pune in search of work, creating huge urban slums of inadequate housing, poor sanitation and malnourishment. Located 170 km south of Mumbai (Bombay), Pune is Maharashtra's second largest city and is well connected to all the major towns and cities within the state of Maharashtra by road and rail. However, rural areas are isolated and less accessible, necessitating an off-road vehicle in order to deliver an audiology outreach service.



Fundraising for the project began in 2006, audiology equipment was shipped out in July 2007 and the HARK! was delivered, ready for business, in June 2008. The first HARK! field visits took place during June to August 2008. During this time six sites were visited in the

district of Pune. The closest site was 64 km and the furthest 150km.

The project has now been taken over by the Ministry of Health and provides an example of how projects can be integrated into local health service at the end of their set up phases.

My mother was deaf almost all her life

by Katharine Whitehorn

When you think of someone being deaf, you think of a world of silence - and sometimes that might seem quite attractive, if there's a road drill or the insistent whisper of next door's radio or the noise of a helicopter overhead. But suppose you couldn't hear because there was noise on your head - a road drill or a whisper in your ears, drowning out anything you might want to hear-and that's what tinnitus is. My mother had it for all but the first sixteen years of her life, and was entirely deaf for the last forty; and yet she was a very happy woman.

When Edith Gray was a schoolgirl in Glasgow in the first world war, she caught spinal meningitis. In those days you almost always died of it, but her uncle happened to be a doctor working in London on that very illness; he sent up to Glasgow a new horse serum which saved her life - but couldn't change the aftermath of her hearing.

She had a large and loving family around her; her father, Rev Herbert Gray was a Presbyterian minister (who later founded the Marriage Guidance Council) and they had a cottage in the Scottish highlands. One summer, he brought up to stay with them a young Englishman, Alan Whitehorn; "Well if that's your charming young Englishman", my mother said "Give me a dour old Scot any day". But they were married for 57 years.

She always had "head noises" and was never very strong; but that didn't prevent her taking on the catering of a school house in Mill Hill school when her husband became a housemaster; or having two children whom she adored. She had gone completely deaf when she'd contracted scarlet fever in 1941, during a week she'd spent in Liverpool to be with my brother before he went overseas with the RAF. She resolved to learn to lip-read, but in those days few doctors seemed to know anything about it or how you could find classes to learn it; she became pretty good in the end, and she and I, I've often thought, probably talked more than most mothers and daughters in spite of her having to lip-read everything I said.

She always said she was “over-maternal” the way some people are over-sexed, but by the time she had grandchildren - my two sons - she was entirely deaf, she never heard them speak. Yet that didn't stop her being an ace grandmother. When I brought the first baby home from hospital, she did the midnight feed - and how could she hear the baby cry, you might ask? Because a charity supplied us with a marvellous device which turned sound into flashing light.

When we got stuck for a word, we would use, not sign language, which would only have been any use with other people who knew it, but a simple finger-spelling. And when my son was an infant, he knew what did when Danny (as he called her) didn't understand what you'd said: you waggled your fingers. He didn't know any letters, of course but they managed, they adored each other.

We all knew that you had to make sure she could see you, in a good light, or she couldn't read your lips; chewing a mouthful of food or turning away to look out of window was fatal, and I confess I was often furious with her friends who didn't remember and would talk with a hand over their faces or light a cigarette while they were talking. Once when she was a widow one of my father's old pupils, a distinguished civil servant, asked her out to dinner; she was really pleased but he took her to a restaurant so dark she couldn't lip-read him at all, he'd simply never thought.

Too few people understand that the tragedy of deafness in any form is that it cuts you off from people-even well-meaning friends will take the trouble to talk to you for a few sentences, but then turn away to chatter easily with someone else - just as people do with someone who doesn't know much English; deafness can make people foreigners in their own country for ever.

There are more ways of coping with tinnitus these days; and I sometimes ache to think what a blessing fax and e-mail would have been to my mother, who couldn't of course telephone her many friends. But the hard truth remains: if heaven has been described as the place where “all that is not music is silence” a place where there is no music and no silence is still, far too often, hell.

Report from the AGM

This year's AGM was very well attended and enjoyed by all. Our retiring Chairman, John Fincham, welcomed two new Directors to the board - Andrew Smith and Graham Frost - but sadly had to convey the news that our Vice Chairman, Peggy Chalmers, had passed away.

Our Chief Executive, Gary Williams, delivered a summary of the Society's achievements in the past year, particularly highlighting key developments in The Gambia, Kenya, Pune and Tanzania as well as our plans in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Namibia. Gary stressed how faced with conflicting demands and levels of debt repayment that dwarf their health spending, it is imperative that the needs of deaf and hard of hearing people are kept on the agenda in those countries.



Our guest speaker was Malcolm Bruce MP, who stayed not only for the rest of the AGM but was the last to leave our drinks reception!

Mr Bruce has been an MP for the liberal Democrats since 1983 and is the chair of the parliamentary committee on International Development as well as founding the parliamentary group on deafness.

Mr Bruce spoke about his own experiences with deafness, specifically bringing up a daughter who is profoundly deaf. He informed attendees about government plans to give 0.7% of our GDP to International development by 2013, making Britain the first G20 country to fulfil it's obligation to the UN. He also told how the UK's overseas development programme is the best in the world, focussing not just on donating money to other countries, but on supporting and working with them to ensure that governments are able to look after their own people, much in the way that Sound Seekers works with our partner countries.

Latest fundraising news

Merchandise

Sound Seekers have joined forces with the Big Badge Company and Hasbro to produce a limited edition range of Sound Seekers Miffy pin badges. You can purchase one at Specsavers Hearing Centres for just £1!

Climbing to the top - Kilimanjaro challenge

2011 sees Sound Seekers very first overseas fundraising challenges get underway and leading the charge is Donna Hume, an employee of one of our corporate supporters, Arco. Donna will be undertaking the huge challenge of climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania where we currently have a Sound Seekers HARK! project.

If you're feeling inspired and would like to participate in an overseas challenge or find out more about climbing Kilimanjaro or any of our other treks please visit www.skylineevents.co.uk/soundseekers

To support Donna in her challenge please go to www.justgiving.com/Donna-Hume

I would like to help deaf children.

I enclose a donation of £.....

I would like to set up a standing order

Instructions to bank/building society manager:

Bank name _____

Bank address _____

Account holder name _____

Sort code _____

Account number _____

Please pay Sound Seekers the sum of £.....

Per month Quarter Year

Starting date/...../.....

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Signature _____

Date/...../.....

Please Gift Aid my donations

Sound Seekers bank details:

Sort code: 30-98-97

Account number: 01472344

New Logo

We are thrilled to unveil our new logo, kindly designed and donated to us by Ryan Jones, a 20 years old graphic design student in his final year at the University of Central Lancashire.



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Ryan told us, “for a second year project I was given a brief to give any charity a new logo. I was googling several charities and stumbled across Sound Seekers and decided to create a logo for you, as you only had 'Sound Seekers' as your identity. I thought I would try and create an ear with just two letters 's' which would resemble 'Sound Seekers'. I believe that the ear can be quite easily resembled.”

We were all very impressed with Ryan’s design and worked with him to develop a version of the logo using our charity colours and branding.

We have also introduced a new tagline: ‘Improving the lives of the hearing impaired’ which concisely sums up our organisational aims. We would love to hear your thoughts and feedback!

Sound Seekers

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