

Distinctions

news from

Seaford Hearing Centre &
Sevenoaks Hearing Care Centre

Robert's aid to Kenya - in a suitcase

When Robert Davies, Managing Director of Seaford and Sevenoaks Hearing Centres, took a flight to Kenya recently, his suitcase was the subject of particularly special attention at the checkout. It was packed full of hearing aids, specialised testing equipment and batteries.

His destination was the Reverend Muhoro School for the Deaf in the remote Mukurwe-ini district, near Nyeri on the slopes of Mount Kenya.

The school, one of only three of its type in Kenya, has 180 deaf and profoundly deaf pupils - aged 16 to 22 with some from as far afield as Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan and Burundi. They integrate with a further 100 pupils with full hearing which helps them to retain their powers of speech.

Robert first heard about the project's needs 18 months ago when he met the district's MP Mutahi Kagwe at a charity event in the UK. He was told that with no welfare system and limited state funding, the school was heavily dependent on charitable support.

Robert said, "When I learned about the wonderful work and the pressing needs - of the school, I was delighted to help. This

Open weeks coming soon

Look out for announcements in your local press soon. Our Open Weeks are always popular events - giving people the opportunity to learn about hearing issues in a relaxed, unpressurised setting. An opportunity to meet Robert Davies at Seaford (16th - 21st May) and Sevenoaks partner Matt Cannon - his event will coincide with Deaf Awareness Week, 2nd to 8th May - see story on page 2.



Robert did not have to travel far to catch sight of big game!

was my second visit, and throughout, the support of our manufacturing colleagues in donating the equipment was magnificent. We took hearing aids from Phonak, teaching aids from Starkey, GN Resound testing equipment, an Oticon Otoscope and batteries from Rayovac. There are plenty of people with hearing aids that are not working, simply because they can't get hold of batteries."

Robert, who funded the visit himself, was kept busy at the school, holding 'clinics' and giving his expertise on many aspects of ear care. He sees his involvement as a long-term commitment and plans to take Matt Cannon, his business partner at Sevenoaks Hearing Centre, on a further visit to the school next year.



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Deaf awareness week



This issue of Distinctions co-incides with the start of Deaf Awareness Week (May 2nd - 8th) which aims to improve understanding of the different types of deafness by highlighting the many different methods of communication used by deaf, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing people, such as sign language and lipreading.

Supported by over 100 deaf charities and organisations under the umbrella of the UK Council on Deafness, Deaf Awareness Week involves a UK wide series of national and local events. The Council will be coordinating the all-inclusive

campaign, promoting the positive aspects of deafness, social inclusion and raising awareness of the huge range of local organisations that support deaf people and their family and friends.

Tying-in with the campaign will be our Open Weeks - Sevenoaks Hearing Centre running from 2nd - 7th May, with Seaford following on 16th - 21st May. This is an ideal opportunity for you to call in and see us 'on spec' to talk about any hearing concerns or issues you may have. If the timing isn't convenient just give us a call and we will arrange a date that is.

Seaford and Sevenoaks Hearing Centres wholeheartedly agree with the aims of the week - but we also like to think of a "Deaf Awareness Year" and wherever possible promote the understanding of the hard of hearing at all times.



If you'd like further information about Deaf Awareness Week, you can visit www.look-at-me.org.uk



Did you know?

- It is estimated that more than 30% of people who need a hearing aid do not have one.
- Hearing loss is on the increase, due primarily to longer life expectancies and increasingly noisy environment.
- Figures from Germany show that 5% of children who start school have a hearing loss.
- More than 50% of hearing problems occur among people who are working.
- Nowadays, most hearing aids are fully automatic and do not need to be adjusted manually.
- A modern hearing aid allows the user to concentrate fully on other things than the hearing aid.

and finally,
a wildlife fact...

a duck's quack has no echo!

To Washington on autopilot

As Distinctions goes to press, Robert Davies' annual pilgrimage to the American Academy of Audiology Convention gets under way.

Top priority at the convention, held this year in Washington DC, will doubtless be a visit to the Phonak stand. The object of his interest and admiration will surely be Savia - the latest in the new generation of 'smart' digital aids - featuring AutoPilot. It doesn't help you to fly planes with your feet up, but it does perform some stunning tricks to transform the hearing experience.

The technology continuously scans the environment for disturbing noise sources and immediately suppresses them. Sound Cleaning ensures excellent final sound quality. And if all that were not enough, Data Logging - another Savia world first - records and stores your personal use and listening preferences. Thanks to this unique information, hearing care professionals can respond to individual needs faster and better than ever.

Also on Robert's 'must see' list, a new product from Siemens called Acuris - and one from GN Resound that is so secret they haven't given it a name yet! All will be revealed in our next issue.



NHS patients suffer in silence

People who are becoming hard of hearing may have to wait up to four years for a National Health Service hearing aid in some parts of the country.

These are some of the startling findings revealed recently in a survey published by the British Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists (BSHAA).

BSHAA contacted over 400 hospitals in the UK and discovered that on average, someone who is hard-of-hearing will wait 47 weeks for a test and to have a hearing aid fitted.

Seaford and Sevenoaks Hearing Centres are members of the BSHAA - and Managing Director Robert Davies was particularly interested to find out what the survey revealed on his patch.

Robert commented, "The situation here in the south east is actually worse than the national average, with total waiting times of 58 weeks. But what staggered me was the performance of the Kent and Sussex Hospital at Tunbridge Wells - jointly the third worst hospital in the survey, with a totally unacceptable 130 weeks!

"Here at Sevenoaks and Seaford Hearing Centres we can set up an appointment within two weeks maximum. After that first consultation, all our patients want to know is how soon will they get their hearing aids. On that score, we're well used to dispensing good news!"

BSHAA believes that a partnership between the NHS and all BSHAA members like Seaford and Sevenoaks Hearing Centres could transform the picture. Their spokesman said, "Our association is ready, willing and able to help the Government bring down their waiting lists, possibly at the rate of 60,000 a year. We offer our services in premises conveniently sited in the high street, which for patients is often far easier than finding a relatively remote hospital clinic."

In harmony with their hearing aids

Julia Watkins and Mabel Brown have fine voices - but they would be the first to admit that quality of hearing is an important factor in their performances with Seaford Choral Society.

Both are patients at Seaford Hearing Centre - and both are delighted with the performance of their hearing aids.

Julia sings tenor and is the only woman to sit with the male choristers. She is thrilled with her Oticon Synchro ITE. She told us, "I can hear everything the conductor says - but most importantly, I can keep my aid in whilst performing. It is very comfortable - and nobody notices that I am wearing it."



Julia - thrilled with her Synchro

Mabel is also learning to play the cello. Her two Oticon Synchro BTE aids are performing equally

impressively. She said, "These are

the first aids that I have been able to wear whilst performing.

Whatever my musical environment, the quality is natural, I can hear every note as well as everything my instructor says". Both agree how well their aids perform in group situations.



Mabel now hears every note

The Synchro is the digital aid that Robert Davies 'discovered' when he visited the American Academy of Audiology Convention in Salt Lake City last year. The instrument uses digital technology to identify the wearer's environment and adapt to the ambient surroundings.

Robert is delighted that this fine product has crossed the Atlantic to find two such appreciative patients. He is even more pleased to learn that Julia and Mabel are encouraging fellow choristers to visit Seaford Hearing Centre, so that they can enjoy the enhanced choral pleasures that can be achieved with Synchro aids.

Advice for first-time hearing aid users

If you have never worn a hearing aid before, the first few days of hearing "new" sounds can be rather strange. This is completely natural, and Seaford and Sevenoaks Hearing Centres recommend you start wearing them for periods of at least an hour a day in as many different listening situations as possible. This will help you get used to your aids more quickly.

You will also need to get used to:

- the physical sensation of having something in the ear
- the slight feeling that the ears are blocked
- hearing the sounds of one's own voice
- speaking at a suitable volume

...it's another part of making sure your hearing loss does not take over and rule your life!

Q. What do Sevenoaks, surf and snow have in common?

A. Ask Matt Cannon



Matt Cannon, Partner at Sevenoaks Hearing Care Centre, has certainly packed in a lot of valuable and highly relevant experience during his 13 year career in audiology.

The man from Devon began his career with the NHS as a physiological measurement technician. He received training in audiology, respiratory medicine, cardiology and neurology - but opted to pursue the audiology trail. Matt said, "The other disciplines were concerned only with measurement. In audiology I saw an opportunity to improve the lives of people of all ages through the diagnostic process."

He trained at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital and, after qualifying, soon became locum audiologist in the prestigious settings of Guys and St Thomas's. Then followed a spell with the London Portland Hospital, which has the country's largest private audiology department. Here he expanded his skills into paediatrics, vestibular conditions (concerned with balance and vertigo) and the hearing aid supply process.

A major change of direction came when he joined the Swiss company Phonak, one of the world's largest hearing aid manufacturers. Matt's role embraced education and training in software and IT, liaising with dispensers and also with NHS audiology departments, schools and teachers. Opportunities to work directly with patients soon developed. Working with the dispenser and NHS audiologists, he would show them how to use hearing aids and give on-going support to adults and children.

Sevenoaks Hearing Care Centre was one of Matt's customers. Such was the impression that he made on Managing Director Robert Davies, that he was invited to join the practice in February 2003 - and became a partner shortly afterwards.

Matt has been central to a number of changes and advances that have taken place at the practice - including the development of the

latest soundproof booths that have transformed the diagnostic processes. He has contributed much to the strong growth of the practice in terms of patient numbers - including referrals from GPs.

In December Matt was admitted to the Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists - the strongest possible acknowledgement of his professional standing, NHS training and significant NHS experience as an audiologist.



Matt hails from Exeter and from an early stage developed a love of surfing on the Devon coast - although he admits that the beaches of Australia hold greater attractions. He is also a keen snowboarder. His sporting interests allow him the opportunity to combine them with his love of travelling.

Matt's career move to Sevenoaks Hearing Care Centre clearly suits him. He told us, "I enjoy the independence of my role. I can look at all products, free of ties to any particular manufacturer, and give totally impartial advice. This enables me to solve problems by selecting the right solution at a price that suits each individual patient."

Ear care services now at East Grinstead & Tunbridge Wells

Our services are now available at McIndoe Surgical Centres. Serviced by Sevenoaks Partner Matt Cannon, patients can arrange for hearing tests, middle ear analysis and hearing aid consultations. Just phone for an appointment.

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