

Distinctions

news from

Seaford Hearing Centre &
Sevenoaks Hearing Care Centre

Nature-based aid helps Sandy hear the birds sing again



Sandy Bryant, from Crowborough, first realised she was experiencing problems with her hearing when it started to become very difficult to follow conversations against background noise. "I needed to really focus on who was talking and if they turned away I lost the conversation. It was becoming really frustrating - making visits to restaurants and parties unpleasant."



Sandy Bryant

Unfortunately noisy environments turned out to be not the only problem for Sandy.

"As a keen bird watcher, I found I could not hear the birds sing anymore. I could see the birds, but I couldn't hear them. So I decided I needed to do something about it."

"It is fantastic to hear the bird songs again... it is little things like this you forget were there."

Sandy made her appointment at Sevenoaks Hearing Care Centre and they were able to discuss the problems she was experiencing and test her hearing. There are so many different options available to people with hearing losses, so they made sure Sandy knew all the possibilities, to enable her to make an informed choice.

In the end Sandy opted for Phonak's binaural microSavia - and she's never looked back. "Things are now excellent. When we go bird watching it's fantastic to hear the bird songs as well as see the different birds. It is little things like this that you forget were there."

Thanks to a process called Digital Bionics which mimic the human ear, as opposed to simply amplifying sounds like most hearing instruments, Sandy has a renewed natural clarity to her hearing. MicroSavia has also offered Sandy an extremely discreet option: "They are so tiny, my friends didn't believe I was wearing a pair of hearing instruments until I took them out to show them!"

The featherlight hearing system only weighs 2 grams and has been designed to disappear behind the ear and possess a virtually invisible micro tube leaving the ear naturally open. Sevenoaks Hearing Care Centre and microSavia have truly been able to take Sandy back to nature.

For when you want to know more...

www.s-hc.co.uk



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Phonak gets it RITE at the AAA Convention

Question: where is the largest shopping mall in the USA? The answer is Minneapolis, which Robert Davies recently visited. But Robert's visit had little to do with the questionable delights of trekking endlessly around the shops - and everything to do with learning about the latest developments in hearing aid technology.

Minneapolis was the venue for this year's American Academy of Audiology convention, regarded as the world's most important showcase for all that's new in the profession.

What set Robert's pulses racing was the preview of Phonak's microPower

instrument - a mini sized hearing aid and one of a new generation of RITE (receiver in the ear) instruments. As the term suggests, the receiver sits well inside the ear canal so as to be almost invisible - whilst the

microphone sits in an ultra small housing behind the ear. The sound is transmitted electronically through a very thin tube.



microPower is designed to give users with more significant hearing loss the benefit of natural sound quality, maximum performance and freedom

from occlusion and feedback, without the negative trade-off in size and visibility.

Weighing in at a mere two grams, microPower is the smallest and most



Minneapolis' largest shopping mall in the USA - a dubious pleasure for those of us who like personal service from an independent

discreet instrument of its type in the world.

Robert noted too that the device was particularly effective in challenging listening situations - for instance where ambient noise is strong or when using the telephone. No prizes for guessing where you can learn more about Phonak's micro-marvel!

All set for return to Kenya

Robert Davies' third mission to Kenya is now set for mid-October. He'll be accompanied for the first time by Matt Cannon of Sevenoaks and they'll be returning to a school for deaf children in a remote settlement.

Robert has successfully tapped manufacturers for donations of hearing aids and diagnostic equipment - including an Aurical unit which tests hearing aids - whilst the last minute search for a clinical audiometer is expected to bear fruit.

This is an ongoing commitment and Robert has now invested in a five-year diary so that he can earmark repeat visits every 18 months!

Hearing aid jargon

For better or worse (many would argue for the latter) jargon has permeated into our everyday speech - and the world of hearing is no exception. Occasionally we might be guilty of using jargon in our patient consultations. So here is a guide to some of the most common buzz words that you are likely to encounter:

BTE	Behind the ear
ITE	In the ear
CIC	Completely in canal
T Switch	The loop or tele coil system used in theatres, banks etc
Binaural	For both ears
RITE	Receiver in the ear
Open Fit	Unoccluded ear canal
ALD	Assistive listening devices, e.g. TV amplifiers, special phones

If you come across others you would like demystified - or would like more explanation of jargon shown here (or any other hearing aid matter) - just give us a call or send an email, enquiries@s-hc.co.uk. We are always delighted to help.



Gone with the wind

Every now and then we are asked to replace hearing aids for ones that have been lost. Reasons given by patients are usually quite straightforward but Peter Olsen, a patient of Seaford Hearing Centre, presented us with the unique explanation that his had disappeared during a typhoon which struck China recently – forecast as a scale 3 or 4 but after the event judged to be 8!

Peter has lived in Hong Kong for 35 years and runs a plastics mouldings factory on mainland China. Despite the plentiful choice locally, he prefers the professional expertise and personal attention he receives at Seaford Hearing Centre which he is able to visit during his frequent trips to the UK.

So how did this unusual loss come about? His hearing aids – a pair of

Resound Canta 740Ds which he uses as a back-up to his everyday Phonak Perseos – were in his briefcase at the time the typhoon unexpectedly struck. Peter was blown over and the briefcase, together with its contents, were borne on the wind, never to be seen again!

Every cloud has a silver lining and on his next visit to the UK, Peter was able to take advantage of the considerable developments in technology since his Perseo aids were fitted. He has now upgraded to Metrix MX10P power version CIC (completely in the canal) hearing aids which are far less obtrusive. So, next time the wind gets up in China, Peter will be even better placed to hear the oncoming weather system and take evasive action!

A day in the life of...

What does a typical working day hold for Robert Davies at Seaford Hearing Care Centre? A recent peep into his diary reveals a varied range of activities!

- 8.50am** *Open up and Irish or Jen makes the first of many coffees for the day. Check on the day's plans.*
- 9.00am** *Sort through post that has found its way through our filtering system to my desk and self check/calibrate our diagnostic equipment.*
- 9.30am** *Rehab check with new patient – how is he getting on? Make some minor adjustments if necessary.*
- 10.15am** *Clean and check patient's aid. Tell her how important it is to ensure aid is cleaned regularly and properly. Toothbrush dipped in soapy water just won't do!*
- 10.30am** *Hearing assessment – another new patient and he's a bit nervous. Extra helping of TLC needed.*
- 12 noon** *Take impression for custom made ear defenders for motor cyclist.*
- 12.15pm** *Catch up on paperwork. Lunch... if time!*
- 2.00pm** *Hearing aid fitting. Two weeks from assessment to fitting – not bad!*
- 2.45pm** *Re-tube of patient's hearing aid. She's a patient who really understands the importance of regular maintenance.*
- 3.00pm** *Hearing assessment.*
- 4.30pm** *Demonstration of assisted listening devices – wake & shake and door bell, but it could have also included a range of devices such as telephone and smoke alarm, TV neck loop amplifier.*
- 5.00pm** *Tidy up paperwork at the end of the day*

NHS patients still left waiting

In the last issue of *Distinctions* we highlighted the shameful fact that NHS patients were waiting for up to 2½ years for their hearing aids. So what, we hear you ask, has become of the targets of reducing waiting lists that pervade the NHS these days? The simple answer is that audiology patients are well and truly outside this particular loop!

In a debate in the House of Lords recently it was learned that the government had decided to exclude NHS audiology patients from the target of reducing hospital waiting lists to 18 weeks because of 'reduced funding'.

Lord Ashley of Stoke (Jack Ashley), a lifetime champion of issues affecting people with hearing problems was highly critical of the situation. He asked Lord Warner, Minister of State, Department of Health to 'confirm that over 30,000 deaf people have had to wait for over a year to get their first hearing test? Would he not agree that the present position of deaf people waiting is very sad? Would he also not agree that services for deaf people have been very slow in coming forth and that they have been excluded from the 18-week waiting-time target for other people?

'Why should deaf people be discriminated against like this?' he asked.

It is our belief that waiting times are set to increase even further.

Instead of suffering in silence for months or even years, we suggest that you visit Seaford or Sevenoaks Hearing Centres where you can arrange a consultation at a time that suits you, usually within a week. You will be tested by an experienced professional who will give you as much time and care as you need – and within two or three weeks, your aid will be fitted.

ROBERT'S COLUMN

If someone fires off a gun 50 miles away from the nearest living thing, does it make a noise?



The answer of course is that firing a gun produces a sound wave travelling at a mere 341 metres a second until it finds a convenient ear or two. It is only then that the sound wave is translated by the inner bits of the ear working in tandem with the brain to produce what we recognise as a sound or a noise.

The real issue is this: at what point does the noise we experience become likely to cause hearing loss? Cue our friend the decibel – the measurement unit of sound. The sound of your snoring partner will rack up about 35 decibels. Annoying it's true, but unlikely to put your hearing at risk. Higher up the scale and you have a car revving up at around 80 decibels. Past the 100 mark and you have a lethal line-up of chainsaws, rock concerts, pneumatic drills - and jet engines topping the scale at 140 decibels.

Many experts believe that continued exposure to more than 85 decibels is asking for trouble. The longer you are exposed to a loud noise and the closer you are to it, the higher the risk of damage.

Open week – free trial and a Christmas promise



Following the success of our open days in the Spring, plans are now afoot for an open week at both Seaford and Sevenoaks from 20th to 24th November. This is a great opportunity to learn about new models on the market, enjoy demonstrations and have your questions answered by manufacturers' representatives – all in a relaxed atmosphere, without a hint of

hard sell! Two tempting incentives are offered for the duration of the open week:

- Free 14 day trial of a behind the ear hearing aid system. If you're not delighted with its performance, just return it with nothing to pay.
- If you order a new hearing aid during the week, we guarantee that it will be ready in time for Christmas.

Keeping up with developments

A visit to the depths of Leicestershire in November may not be to everyone's liking, but Robert Davies and his Sevenoaks-based colleague Matt Cannon can't wait to head up the M1 to Hinckley and the biennial congress of the British Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists (BSHAA).

The event comprises two educational days, with eminent speakers from all over the world, as well a major

exhibition. Robert says, 'Both Matt and I are always keen to keep abreast of cutting-edge technology which is delivering major advances on an almost weekly basis. So for our patients' benefit we need to be conversant with these developments. The event also focuses on improving service delivery to patients generally.'

Both Robert and Matt are Fellows of the BSHAA.

It is a fact that the average age of people with noise-induced hearing loss is getting lower – with an alarming increase among teenagers.

Still it's not all doom and gloom, because there are plenty of products designed to protect your ears from excessive noise in all kinds of situations.

We are experiencing increased sales of ear protectors, ear muffs and so on, to people who recognise the dangers and are concerned with prevention.

This of course gives me the perverse pleasure of knowing that I may never get to sell them a hearing aid!

Seaford Hearing Centre 4 Dane Road, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 1LL Tel. 01323 899655
Sevenoaks Hearing Care Centre 73 London Road, Sevenoaks TN13 1AX Tel. 01732 741486

Services also available at

East Grinstead McIndoe Surgical Centre, Holtye Road Tel: 01342 315111

Hailsham Mark Soper Opticians, 72 High Street Tel: 01323 841699

Goring-by-Sea Bateman's Opticians, 48 Goring Road Tel: 01903 247042

Tunbridge Wells McIndoe Surgical Centre, 6 Mount Ephraim Tel: 01892 616100

Email: enquiries@s-hc.co.uk www.s-hc.co.uk