

Chainmail



Bromley Chain

Newsletter

February 2012

a link with deaf people

Registered Charity No. 281051

www.bromleychain.org.uk



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**Honour for
Andrew**



**A Shining Star
- Syd Gibbs**



**Small Steps in
Baby Signing**



**Award for
Alan Roberts**



**Hardest Hit
May March**

All this and more - read on !

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EDITOR EXPLAINS

At last, the return of Chainmail! Quite a Red Letter Day for the charity (and, we hope, for our loyal readers too!)



Due to unexpected circumstances, somewhat beyond our control, we were unable to follow our February 2011 issue with a September one, as planned, and rather than have to chivvy contributors and rush one out in December to swell the Christmas mail we decided 2012 would be a good time to start again.

We are sticking to the high standards we have already set and being printed by Scorpion Press

as usual, although we are no longer sponsored by Deaf Umbrella, who have now relocated to Bexley from Sidcup (see page 8 for new address).

Over the past 10 years they have at first fully and then partially sponsored Chainmail and for this Bromley Chain has been very grateful. We never sought such sponsorship and the fact that it was offered we felt was a sign of faith in what we, as a small local charity, were all about.

As a result of the stoppage and the ever-rising costs of postage, we plan to keep the Newsletter

to 8pp so that we don't enter the "Large" stamp territory which bumps up the price considerably.

Please let us have your comments, tell us if you have missed us, what you would like to see or read on our pages, and whether you would prefer to receive the newsletter as an email. This has been suggested as a possibility but Deaf Access found that their members prefer a hard copy and decided to leave their newsletter, Access Points, as it is.

Happy New Year to all who read this issue - and don't forget to write or email!

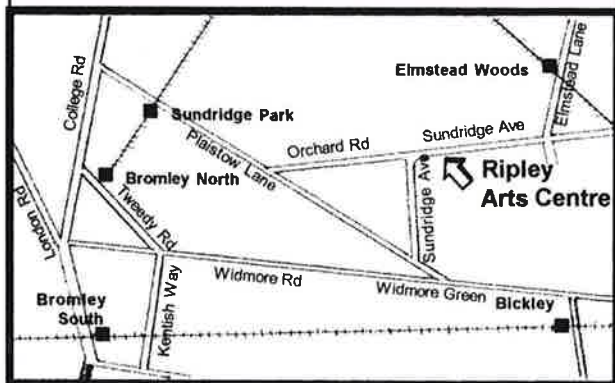
Jenny Froude

RIPLEY ARTS CENTRE

Half a mile from Sundridge Park and Elmstead Woods Stations

From Hayes, Bromley South, Sundridge Park and Elmstead Woods bus route 314 (approx every 20 mins) passes the door

Widmore Green (five minutes' walk) is served by routes 162 Beckenham - Chislehurst, 269 Bromley North - Bexleyheath



BROMLEY CHAIN

Invite you to their
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

Tuesday 12th June, 2012 at 7.30 p.m. at the
Ripley Arts Centre, 24 Sundridge Avenue, Bromley. BR1 2PX
(Sign language interpreters and lipspeaker in attendance)

AGENDA

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Welcome | 6. Treasurer's Report |
| 2. Apologies for absence | 7. Re-election of Committee wishing to stand again |
| 3. Minutes of the 2011 AGM | 8. Nominations and election of new members |
| 4. Matters Arising | 9. AOB (Any Other Business) |
| 5. Chair's Report for year ending 1st June 2012 | |

followed by Refreshments

Nominations for would-be committee members may be sent, with their permission, to Andrew Andreou by 7th June. Please complete enclosed nomination form



Chair's Report & Award

Welcome to the year 2012!

After attending the Hardest Hit protest march (see page 6) against the planned reform to the DLA in the Welfare Reform Bill, I emailed local MP Bob Neill regarding members likely to be affected by the changes. He tells me he is encouraged by the Government's commitment to the principles of DLA which they propose to replace with a new Personal Independence Payment.

Recently the Government has made a commitment to a phased introduction of PIP and agreed to involve people who are affected by the reforms with developing assessments. Currently Deaf and hard of hearing people who qualify can claim the middle rate and lower rate mobility of DLA. Under the proposed PIP rules many would not qualify for the mobility allowance and will receive just the standard rate of the daily living component. Bromley Chain is concerned that their needs must be considered.

It is disappointing to have to report that the part-time Social Worker with Deaf Children employed last summer, a year after the post became vacant, herself left the LBB in December. We are hoping to meet with the Head of the Social Work Team to reinstate our dialogue and relationship with them and discover their vision for the future of deaf and hard of hearing residents. A new website has been set up by LBB called Bromley My Life, focusing on a new way of working to give personalised services.

I was shaken like a leaf and truly astounded when I found out I was going to receive the MBE accolade. I never thought in a million years that I would get this honour, it was as if my greatest dreams were coming true.

I've been a civil servant for ten years and am currently working as a Finance Officer in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. I work in the Finance team which is responsible for looking after around £15 million administrative budget.

My mum Anna, my brother Kyriacos and my sister Maria came to Buckingham Palace for the presentation. As you can imagine we were all really excited. It's not every day you get invited to Buckingham Palace! We were able to walk into the courtyard where we were met by staff who showed us up to the State Ballroom.

The awards were handed out by His Royal Highness Prince Charles, Prince of Wales. He asked how long I had been working for the Department and what were my responsibilities. I explained that I look after the administrative budget. He told me that you make sure that "everyone stays on the straight and narrow", then he shook my hand and pinned on my medal.

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly RNID) published a report called Unlimited Potential which explored the experiences of 27 people who lost some or part of their hearing while of working age. Action on Hearing Loss are calling on employers to end their "uncaring culture" and remove the major barriers that prevent such people from progressing with their careers. The report's shocking findings have led to Action on Hearing Loss recommending a series of solutions to ensure effective support in the workplace.

You can download the Unlimited Potential from their website or contact Laura Matthews on 0207296 8391 or email consultations @hearingloss.org.uk for a hard copy of the report. In welcoming this report Bromley Chain would like to hear about your experiences with your employment or redundancy.

Two years ago Bromley Chain invited Deaflink Lewisham to speak at our AGM and as a result Bromley Police became interested. Bromley Deaflink can be contacted on 07843 065882 (text or talk) or email BromleyDeaflink@met.police.uk for non-emergency matters (not 24 hours) and a card is available for Deaf/deafened/hard of hearing people. Tim Hall tells me that Deaf Access have given basic Deaf Awareness training to over 200 police officers and a further 10 took a more advanced course and fingerspelling for deaf and deaf/blind people. An official launch of Deaflink in this borough is being planned, hopefully during March, and we hope to have a full report in our next Chainmail.

The ceremony ended with the National Anthem, which made the hair stand up on my neck because it highlighted the importance of the event, and a final fanfare played as we left the ballroom. We headed to the courtyard where our photographs were taken. Another highlight for me was that I saw Catherine Zeta Jones with her husband Michael Douglas and their son and daughter as she was there collecting her CBE award.

I would like to thank my previous line manager Jackie Wells and my team leader Christopher Maer and the rest of the previous teams for putting me forward for this amazing honour. I want to reserve a special thanks to my mother Anna for making lots of sacrifices to look after me. I want to say thank you to Kyriacos, Maria and the rest of my big fat Greek Cypriot family members and all my friends for their support and guidance. I also want to dedicate my accolade to my late father, a previous chairman of this charity.

The day will always be very special to me and I can now proudly call myself "Sir Andrew"!!!

Andrew Andreou

A SHINING EXAMPLE TO US ALL

Remembering Syd Gibbs (1920 - 2011)

After a sombre, grey morning it was fitting that the sun burst through in the afternoon to flood Beckenham Crematorium with golden light for the service in memory of Sydney Walter Gibbs who died, approaching his 91st birthday, on 1st September 2011, after suffering a stroke.

Fitting because, in the words of Rev'd Margaret Engler, Syd was a "special person to many, a loved family member and a treasured friend" and, to my mind, a shining example to us all.

Theresa McWhirter's beautiful BSL interpretation throughout was greatly appreciated as Helena Atkinson read a very moving passage entitled "A limb has fallen from the family tree" which ended with the poignant words "I am ok now, goodbye my loves and friends". Clive Ellings paid a lovely tribute to his uncle, talking of his sense of humour and finishing with the poem starting "do not stand at my grave and weep" which Syd had signed at Norah's funeral two years previously.

It was so good to see and hear young and old alike combining to pay their respects to Syd. Sinclair Stayner, who had known Syd since the 1970s, in his moving tribute to his friend, talked of Bromley Deaf Club's early days and what a well-known sight Syd and Norah latterly became in Beckenham, she in her electric wheelchair and Syd walking beside her. Sinclair also referred to the help Kathleen Hankinson had provided to the couple

when Norah's health deteriorated (and no formal support seemed forthcoming via Social Services as Syd himself grew increasingly frail with all the physical and mental responsibility. Editor)

The second eulogy came from young Jonny Nelson who remembered Syd from the thriving Bromley Deaf Club at Robert Whyte Memorial Hall years ago and how the members had eventually dwindled from 100 to just 3, which then increased to 12 at Deaf Access before becoming the Beckenham Deaf Lunch Group at Azelia Hall where Syd's 90th birthday was celebrated last year (see Feb. 2011 Chainmail).

Jonny had appreciated Syd's reminiscences: seeing from his school in Anerley the old-fashioned fire engines flying to the blazing Crystal Palace in 1936, tales of the Blitz, his love of tennis and badminton, and his successful campaigning against the strict "no sport on Sunday" deaf club rules and finally Syd's emotional visit with the Lunch Club to Folkestone which held such special memories of Norah for him. Jonny had been pleased to be involved in his life and the Deaf Lunch Club would always remember him.

Modest and unassuming and always a good friend to Bromley Chain, Syd richly deserves the rewards I hope he is enjoying in Heaven and, as Sinclair said, "we pray he and Norah will rest in peace. We miss them both".

Jenny Froude



Family Memories and Thanks

I wanted to say it was an honour and a pleasure to look after Uncle Syd for three years. He always made my daughter Leila, husband Ali and myself laugh and smile, whenever we went on trips. We as a family would talk about it for days. I asked my daughter which trip she most enjoyed and it was when we went to the War Museum and Uncle Syd telling us about his time in the war. Another was only four days before Uncle Syd's stroke. He played crazy golf. I couldn't keep up with him but it was great seeing him enjoy himself.

We will miss you very much, gone but never forgotten, rest in peace Uncle Syd, you are with your loved ones now. Love Lucy, Ali, Leila. XXXXXX.

I would also like to thank all Uncle Syd's friends for their lovely cards and words of comfort, but the most important thanks to Clive, Jane, Zoe, Laura, and Mark Ellings. They gave a lot of support and help to Uncle Syd on trips, lunches and most of all when he was in hospital. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Lucy Arar

Small Steps in Signing

(This is part of an article I wrote for the Hearing Times which appeared in their July/August issue 2011)

When Hearing Times contributor Charlie Swinbourne wrote *Sign Language is part of our identity* in the Guardian (14.05.11) describing his delight in teaching his firstborn daughter signs, I related to his comments immediately. But Charlie and his partner, Jo, are deaf and their two daughters are hearing, the reverse of our experience 30 years ago, as a hearing family with a baby newly deafened by meningitis. Same scenario but a world of difference.

How I wish the vogue for Baby Signing had been around all those years ago! Instead of the steep and urgent learning curve for us, it could have been a relaxed introduction to the signing which was to become, for us and our infant, not an optional extra but a very real lifeline. I envied the mums and grandparents at the Tiny Talk class (one of several run by Jackie Parsons in Croydon, Surrey) which I visited last summer. Here hearing mums with hearing infants find fun and support as a group learning to sign (and sing) with their small, eager people who will suddenly one day astound and delight them with a sign long before they can speak. When a baby signs *milk* or *Mummy* the early communication empowers the child and a two-way dialogue is born, to the joy of both!

Signing comes naturally to children, of course. They clap and wave from an early age but giving them the means to sign key words that have meaning for them is, quite literally, putting language into their hands, although as one young mum observed, a newly learned sign for *more* can be a very mixed blessing!

Beautifully organised with colourful floor throws, toys and musical instruments, with walls adorned with information and photographs of babies signing, optional materials to purchase and, above all, the sort of welcome that speaks volumes, there was a real family feeling the day my photographer son and I dropped in with 3yr old Zoe.

Far and away the best signer with 36 signs was the 20-month-old who'd been attending since he was 6 months. For the first year, his mother told me, he didn't produce any signs but suddenly started at the age of 17 months and, now there's no stopping him, he is quite a role model for beginners.

No doubt there may be some who see baby signing as a gimmick, a fleeting trend for aspirational parents, but in the ten or so years it has been around it is on the increase, with waiting lists for classes and more opening all the time.

Especially brilliant, to me, is that Tiny Talk is grounded on such firm foundations. Katie Mayne who set it up in 2002 was a qualified Teacher of the Deaf and so the signs are BSL (British Sign Language) and Jackie Parsons, whose skills and enthusiasm are legendary, has worked in this Borough as a peripatetic, primary and secondary Teacher of the Deaf.

Already familiar with the benefits of sign language, Katie conceived the idea (seeing it as her second baby!) when her first child, Harry, arrived. In her career she, alongside Jackie, had seen at first hand the clear benefits of introducing signs to deaf children who, even if they had had the best oral education offered, had failed to make progress. Once signing was introduced not only did their language improve but their speech also, and signing had been the key.

It came naturally to Katie to sign with her hearing son and fascinated friends with infants wanted to learn too and from early, informal get-togethers, Tiny Talk was born, with Katie as Founder and Managing Director. Books and DVDs followed and her franchises are now all over the UK.

What are the benefits to the Deaf community and parents of deaf children? It seems to me that if young, hearing children and their parents/carers become familiar with signs they will not be fazed when they see deaf youngsters or adults signing; in fact they are

likely to be fascinated. An interest in signing may be born in them and who knows where it could lead in the future? Deaf mums with hearing babies find a friendly, supportive environment where their expertise in their own language is valued in the company of parents who, like them, have chosen to teach their youngsters to sign. One class also contains a baby whose paternal grandparents are profoundly deaf and another

a speech and language therapist whose inside knowledge motivated her to bring her baby along and also to ensure that her own return to work is scheduled to avoid missing the sessions! A pregnant passerby who spotted the Tiny Talk banner rang to express an interest in her 2-year-old learning to sign, since she herself had just finished her BSL Stage 2 and was ready to add a new dimension to the subject of signing. Hearing parents of newly diagnosed deaf infants, who may be feeling very vulnerable or unsure of themselves, possibly thinking signing could be seen as a stigma that sets their child apart from peers, could be encouraged to learn and use it proudly now it's in the mainstream.

The benefits are there for all to see and Jackie is especially delighted to have a deaf boy in one of her groups. With her natural empathy, as a parent of a deaf daughter herself, she is the perfect person to offer such a lifeline for him.

For more details see www.tinytalk.co.uk or www.tinytalk.co.uk/jackiep

Jenny Froude - Author of *Making Sense in Sign* - a lifeline for a deaf child (Multilingual Matters Ltd.)



Photographer Dan Froude thanks daughter Zoe.



Marching on a May Morning

*“We need support,
We need care,
Don’t take away,
Our Welfare!”*

This was the chant from marchers as they neared the Houses of Parliament, accompanied by a drummer from UNISON. This was Wednesday 11 May which saw the HARDEST HIT march when leading UK disability charities and thousands of disabled people joined together to protest, peacefully, about proposed cuts on what was the 1st birthday of the Coalition Government.



Andrew asking where the interpreters are!

Chair Andrew Andreou and I met on the Embankment and were surprised to find no sign of the then RNID, NDCS or BDA. We had a job to find any interpreters too!

Before moving off, those assembled were addressed by various campaigners, including Dame Anne Begg representing all people and Kirsten Hearn representing deaf organisations and Jane Asher whose particular interests were Arthritis/Parkinsons/Autism.



Jane Asher waiting to be interviewed.

Described as “the largest rally of disabled people in living memory” which was something to be proud of but also tinged with “sorrow that it had come to this”, the proceedings were relayed via a giant screen, and sign-language interpreted. Liam Burn (Labour) paid tribute to the courage of the people attending and their determination to tell people in power the consequences of their actions. The Minister for Disabled People, Maria Miller, had chosen not to attend, preferring, apparently, to stay and listen to the Prime Minister rather than the public.

Two cameo moments will stay with me. The sight of the lithe, young Lycra-clad fitness freaks pounding the pavements alongside the rally which was so full of wheelchairs and mobility scooters and the sound of young passengers on a sightseeing tourist bus cheering and waving at us from the open, upper deck.

All part of life’s rich pattern I suppose!

Jenny Froude

CINEMA ROLES REVERSED!

I read in the London Evening Standard that audiences have been walking out of cinemas in disgust when they discover award-winning film *The Artist* has no spoken dialogue. (It’s in black and white with just a few words on the screen as in the days of the early silent movies).

Maybe disappointed hearing cinemagoers who can’t cope with silence will now understand the frustration deaf people feel when they book tickets for a captioned screening only to find the words don’t appear.

Editor

Opinions expressed throughout Chainmail are those of the contributors and not necessarily of BROMLEY CHAIN, which seeks to encompass the full range of hearing loss and all communication methods. Any opinions or statements made may not necessarily reflect our views and should not be taken to imply our endorsement of services/products.

Congratulations



...to **MICHELLE DOGGETT,**

a deaf student we are sponsoring at Hadlow College on Level 3 Diploma for Professional Dog Stylist course, for gaining Distinction and Merit on two papers last year, despite having no formal communication support.



...to ex-Chair **TOM FROUDE** on his engagement to **MARY PEARMAN**. Plans for a summer wedding are well under way and he is happily employed at the new John Lewis in Tunbridge Wells where he has been since it opened in 2010. (Their branch newsletter contained news of the engagement during a holiday in Barbados and they want him to write for it to raise Deaf Awareness and encourage some of the Partners to learn some basic sign language).



...to one-time-Chair **ALAN ROBERTS** on being the second consecutive Bromley resident to win Specsavers' Sound Barrier Star Award last year, following in the footsteps of **ROGER HEWITT**, both nominated by Susan Craney, Director of Deaf Access.



The Rotary Club of Langley Park and Deaf Access Centre

will be holding their twice-yearly

ANTIQUE AND COLLECTORS FAIR

on Saturday 24th March 2012

from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at

Hayes Free Church, Pickhurst Lane, Hayes, Kent

(Entrance £1)

Lunches and refreshments will be available.

Further details from David Connolly,
020 8776 0108

HAVE YOUR SAY!

It's good to have some feedback so please pass your comments about Chainmail on to us.

Here are a few we received last year:

Super Chainmail newsletter, so interesting to catch up on lots of people - a lot of hard work for you! M C

Always a good read TMW

I have just finished reading February's Chainmail and enjoyed it very much. J F

FROM BROMLEY BOROUGH TO BEXLEY

As reported in the Editor's letter, Deaf Umbrella have moved. They are now at the following address and we wish them well at their new venue:

DEAF UMBRELLA EAST LTD

Second Floor,
The Old Mill,
Bexley High Street,
Bexley, Kent
DA5 1JX

Tel/Minicom: 0844 264 0887

Fax: 0844 264 0889

Email: Rachel@deafumbrella.com

TAKING ACTION!

What's in a name? Well, Action seems to be the name of the game at the moment!

First of all there is ACTION ON HEARING LOSS (previously RNID) which has already caused quite a furore and not, it would seem, been generally well received as a new name for a long-lived charity.

But then there is also ACTION ON DEAFNESS (chaired by Roger Hewitt) and also ACTION-DEAFNESSBOOKS (which has a very nice review of my book about Tom on its website!)

Confusing or what? (It reminds me of my favourite cookery writer, Nigel Slater, who has books called Real Fast Puddings, Real Food, Real Cooking, Real Good Food and Real Fast Food. At least he entitled his biography simply Toast (rather than a Real Good Read, which it is!)

Jenny Froude

Scorpion Press (London) Ltd are pleased to once again produce the Chainmail Newsletter.

Did you know that Greenwich is now a Royal Borough as of 3rd February 2012 and Scorpion have produced 5 office suites at their Premises on the Historic Royal Arsenal site.

These are for short and long term Let for startup and established small companies, Transport links via DLR, Main Line and the Crossrail Network which being constructed is on the Arsenal site.

WAITROSE IS DEAF AWARE

Having been delighted to see the Hearing Dogs for Deaf People box at the Beckenham branch full to the brim by the last day of July 2011, I was surprised and delighted to see that in September the Bromley branch had devoted all three of its green token collecting areas to charities relating to deafness - Deaf Access, BDCS (Bromley Deaf Children's Society) and CICS (Cochlear Implanted Children's Society). I hope they all did well and raised awareness among the store's shoppers too.

Editor