

The  
Irish  
Hard of  
Hearing  
Association

# HEARSAY!

REGISTERED CHARITY NO. CHY. 10529



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Newsletter for the Hard of Hearing

## 2008 EFHOH CONFERENCE EDITION



### PRESIDENTS LETTER

Firstly I must thank Michael Tighe for his drive, energy and personal commitment to the Presidency last year. His work and involvement with Council business ranged across many areas of our activities, too many to mention. In addition he gave his time assisting in the organisation of The European Federation for Hard of Hearing Conference here in Dublin which some of you will have attended.

There was a great atmosphere at the event. We had a tremendous response from our membership. It was great to see the turnout and support on the day.

As an organisation the IHHA must now build on the momentum generated by this event. I welcome new members to Council who I believe will bring new ideas and energy to our work on behalf of the membership in raising awareness on issues around hearing loss. I also thank retiring members for their commitment over the years.

We have identified a number of objectives for the coming year which include continuing our work on TV Subtitling, promoting the AR support network, lobbying for Access to Buildings and Services, particularly Hotels. The Theatre

Group and NGI Tours will continue to be successful with your valued support. We are also planning a Social Evening in the autumn.

I look forward to a busy twelve months, and trust that we can reach our objectives for the coming year, building on the foundations of past achievements of the IHHA

Peter Derbyshire.

### ALL ABOARD

Above the cacophony of noise the atmosphere in the National Irish Yacht Club was electric! The European & Irish delegation - majority with hearing impairment all chatting animatedly and jostling for space. Amazing how we all do it really.

Watching lips & facial expressions, sipping nicely chilled white wine while making sense of convivial chatter with visitors whose first

language is not English. The dining room an authentic Victorian pile, dark blue walls with marble fireplace, chandeliers sparkling in mirrored reflections, heavy curtains draped back and Dun Laoghaire harbour beyond. Comedian showing some funny tricks unaware of groups gently pressing forward. After all dinner about to be served. The three course meal was really delicious and the company was very friendly and interesting. On my right a woman from Belgium and on my left a gentleman from France and opposite two Irish men whose humour kept the conversation light-hearted and fun. That's what the night was all about.

Ken

### CONFERENCE RECEPTION

Held at Elm Park Golf Club March 27<sup>th</sup> - The Irish Hard of Hearing Association welcomed representatives of the EFHOH to Ireland for the first time for their Conference in 2008.

In a lovely old Georgian setting, many of the conference delegates met for the first time and sampled Irish hospitality as well as wine and other refreshments. It was a great opportunity for Irish members to meet with and exchange experiences with hard of hearing people from other countries. I do think that all members can be proud of the efforts of the IHHA for organising this event but of course, most of the weight of responsibility rested on the firm shoulders of our President Michael Tighe, who gave a short speech of welcome. We may think of the IHHA as being very small and even insignificant, but we were able to meet shoulder to shoulder with all-comers from Europe. One delegate was astonished that our yearly subscription was only €10 when they had to pay €90. Maybe we are not as badly off as we sometimes think

### NOSTALGIA

I was at the EHOH conference in March. During the coffee break I sat in the lecture hall and looked around me generally. Everywhere was hustle and bustle in the foyer, people talking, sipping coffee and looking at brochures and equipment on display.

In the lecture hall there was calm because everyone was elsewhere. It gave me time to look about me. The lecture hall was first class, with individual seats and desks with audio communications so that even questions from the floor could be heard. There was a large screen used for the lectures and a smaller screen for speedtext and some individual screens on desks for people with special difficulties. In the background you could see the separate compartments for interpreters for the different languages. There was a loop system which was the best one I have ever used and it was possible to hear everything. All in all it was excellent and a great credit to the Irish Hard of Hearing Association, especially to our President Michael Tighe and the Vice President Peter Derbyshire who put a tremendous amount of personal effort into all this.

For a moment my mind went back to a small room in Stillorgan and to the fourteen people who sat there every month and whose vision had made all this possible. Without their efforts, none of this would have happened. It's worth thinking about.

Ken

# EFHOH CONFERENCE

Saturday 29th March 2008

## IMPRESSIONS

A relevant and informative programme was kept moving along quietly and efficiently by the Chairman. For me, the most interesting talks were:

### **PATRICK O'LEARY - 'Equality Legislation in Ireland'**

The Equality Authority in Ireland was established in 1999. One of its aims is to train advocates in equality legislation, advocates who will then have the skills to address cases of discrimination. The legislation is there, the advocates are there, but it still requires a person to take a case to the Equality Tribunal.

For instance, if someone feels discriminated against in the workplace and wishes to do something about it, he/she must begin by taking the matter to the Equality Tribunal. If the case is accepted, the Advocate will investigate and, following correct procedures may resolve the problem. Other instances may be protracted and difficult. Even when a case is taken, victimisation can follow (that in itself is another equality issue) so courage is required and the person taking the case has to show persistence.

### **ANN HEELAN - 'Association of Higher Education Access and Disability'**

The Association aims to improve the transition from second to third level education for students with disabilities, to work with third level institutions and to assist graduates with disabilities into employment.

Where a student with a disability is availing of a school or college course, Ann suggests that the Authorities 'turn around their approach' and think 'what is it in this course that prevents a person with a disability availing of this teaching'. She spoke also of the need for employers to acquaint themselves with necessary adjustments to the work environment (frequently of a simple and modest nature) so as to accommodate an employee with a disability.

### **BRIGID McSWEENEY - 'Aural Rehabilitation in Ireland'**

There are now 32 Graduate Therapists of the Diploma in Aural Rehabilitation. This rehabilitative programme is designed to provide adults with an acquired hearing loss with the skills to get their lives back on track and to regain self-sufficiency – the programme to be delivered countrywide in a 'small group model'.

*The building blocks in this process include:*

**Information:** Providing up to date and comprehensive knowledge of hearing loss and hearing aids.

**Communication:** Coping techniques in everyday situations (dealing with doctor/dentist/bank/hairdresser/work and home situations).

Taking control and thinking ahead Confidence building Conversation techniques in all social situations Lipreading/Speech Reading (a skill which requires attention to the whole person, visual, body language, cognitive skills) Developing a sense of assertiveness Advice and help on relaxation therapy to cope with the stress and strain involved in having a hearing loss.

To involve family group and peer group because "If I have a hearing loss my family have a hearing problem"

For those persons who have moved on from the initial difficulties of a hearing loss there is companionship and stimulation to be shared in the activities of the Irish Hard of Hearing Association e.g. Hill walking, visits to the National Gallery, Play-reading group (where the script of an upcoming production is read and discussed some weeks prior to the performance, and then enjoying a night out at the play with your group proceeded by Dinner), Creative writing (voicing your opinions by submitting articles to the newsletter Hearsay).

The services of Hearing Health professionals in Ireland is lacking in cohesion. The G.P, the ENT Surgeon, the Audiologist, the Hearing Aid Dispenser are all working in isolation. If these services, plus Aural Rehabilitation were integrated into the Health Service Executive (HSE) it would be cost effective and also mean a better life for the 200,000 plus persons in Ireland, who deserve a lot more than isolation and social exclusion.

### **BRIAN SYMINGTON - 'Noise Awareness' (of RNID - N. Ireland)**

It is estimated that 46,000 of the deaf and hard of hearing persons in Northern Ireland were damaged as a result of explosions during the years of the troubles. Brian spoke of the lack of awareness, especially among young persons, of loudness plus the length of time one is exposed to noise.

### **ELIZABETH WARD - 'Hearing Dogs'**

Elizabeth has a hearing dog (Noah) who is highly trained to be her hearing companion both in her home and at her hospital workplace. A hearing dog is not for everybody. There is a 4-hour interview of each applicant, to assess suitability, at the Centre in Buckinghamshire in the UK. Then there is a long process for individual training of dog and applicant in Yorkshire - the dog must be fine-tuned to a person's particular needs. The cost of each dog is Stg. £5,000 but is free to someone who has been assessed and accepted. The dog is checked by a vet every six months and must be clipped regularly.

### **GUIDO GYBELS - 'Technical Advances for the Hard of Hearing'**

It is possible to put a Man on the Moon, yet there is much to be achieved in hearing aid technology. Advances continue to be made and there are now products being manufactured by SIEMENS that are water-proof, rechargeable and come in different colours.

Marie

## MANY THANKS

The President and the Council of the Irish Hard of Hearing Association wish to thank all those who helped to make the EFHOH 2008 AGM and Conference such a success.

There were 120 registered attendees at the conference. In particular they would like to thank DeafHear.ie for significant financial support and services and the Catholic Institute for Deaf People.

They would also like to acknowledge contributions from Bill Hennessy of Bonavox, Dublin; Judy Nugent of Diagnostic Audiology Services, Dublin; Jean Hegarty of Cork Audiology Services, Cork; Richard Egan of Egans, Cork; Peter Ferguson of Ferguson's Hearing Aid Clinic, Limerick; Paul Hussy of Hearing Healthcare, Dublin and Therese Pitt of Therese Pitt Hearing Aids; Wexford.

## NATIONAL CONCERT HALL



In the 07 winter issue of Hearsay I wrote a piece about the National Concert Hall re the installation of a new loop system. I recently received an email from Mr. Barry Walsh to let me know that the new system has been fully installed and - very generously - inviting me, and a friend, to a concert of my choice to check out the new system. My friend Penel and I went to see [or should that be hear] 'Madam Butterfly', a wonderful show, and a most enjoyable evening.

I'm very pleased to report that the new loop system is very good. It is available from every seat in the main auditorium. But on that particular evening it wasn't available from the Reception Desk or Box Office. Mr. Walsh has been in touch to let me know that this will be rectified shortly when some refurbishment work is completed. The concert was also subtitled (captions that appear above the stage translating the text) which was also very helpful. A big vote of thanks is due to Mr. Walsh and everyone else concerned.

The Concert Hall is a national treasure and the new loop makes the wonderful shows put on there far more enjoyable for those of us who are hearing impaired. You should make every effort to go to some of these concerts. If you have a T switch on your hearing aids you will be amazed and delighted.

Peter

## CELEBRATIONS

The night was wet, windy and freezing cold, but that did not deter each and every one of us enjoying a wonderful evening.

Early in December Michael and Marie Tighe opened up their house and invited all those who gave their time and energy voluntarily to the Irish Hard of Hearing Association over the last few years for celebratory drinks. Not only did we enjoy the mulled wine, sumptuous canapés, a roaring fire, but good company and crack as well. Thank you Michael and Marie for a lovely evening.

Jacque

## PAT MCKENNA

After a long illness Pat McKenna died at the end of January and we extend our deepest sympathy to his family and friends.

Pat was President of the I.H.H.A. until fairly recently and did Trojan work for us, particularly in the field of sub-titling on R.T.E. television. It is thanks to him that the sub-titling is as good as it is to-day. Of course that was only one of many things he worked on for us; if something needed attention Pat was right up there doing it. In fact he worked extremely hard for us, something we all appreciate, remember and he will be sadly missed.

Jacque

## MOVIES BY MAIL

Many of us don't go to the cinema any more because of our hearing problems. It's not always our fault of course. So frustrated do we become by our inability to hear the dialogue, whether it's because the cinema's loop system isn't working, the sound in the cinema is too loud or simply because the movie itself has poor sound quality, that we decide cinema-going is just not worth the effort. Subtitles on English language films are seldom or never available, so we don't bother to go at all, voluntarily excluding ourselves entirely from the wonderful world of cinema.

Subtitles are not, however, a problem on DVDs. All have a subtitle option available on the Play menu. Nonetheless we are still left with the task of going to our local video rental shop, looking for a specific DVD and hoping the shop will have a copy available. Then after viewing we must return it on the appointed day, otherwise we will be hit with a late fee for every day it's overdue.

If you have a computer and access to the Internet, you can now rent all your DVDs online, without hassle. Renting online is convenient, saving you a trek to the video shop to collect or return movies. Two of these sites can be found at [www.screenclick.com](http://www.screenclick.com) and [www.moviestar.ie](http://www.moviestar.ie).

A huge range of titles is stocked by these sites, including classics, arthouse, and foreign - more than any local rental shop. You can browse the database at your leisure and pick the movies you want. There are no late fees (usually €4 or €5 per night from a video shop) and you can keep the DVD for as long as you want once your account is funded. However, the sooner you return the DVD, the sooner you will receive your next available choice. You can rent as many movies as you like; there's no limit. All DVDs are sent through the post and once you have finished watching it you simply return it using the pre-paid envelope provided. Different options are available. The cheapest is €7.99 for two DVDs per month and the dearest is €31.99 for an unlimited number per month.

## TV. B. GONE

This has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with being hard of hearing, but I saw an advert for a wonderful little gadget the other day.

Did you ever get fed-up with TV screens blaring at you from all sides in pubs, cafes or even at home when you just want a little bit of peace, or even hear what your friends are saying to you? Well, this is the very gadget for you. It's a pocket size remote that turns off every TV within a 15 metre range. Peace at the flick of a switch. Interested? You can check it out on line at [prezzybox.com](http://prezzybox.com), also I am told it may be available in most electronic shops.

## MAKING A HEARING AID

When Acoustic Technologies Ltd contacted us, Brian Coffey, the managing director invited me, together with our President to visit his factory and see for ourselves how aids were manufactured here in Ireland. I must say, that it was an eye-opener for us and we enjoyed our visit and learned so much. I asked Brian to put down on paper what they actually did and the following article will give you a better idea of the care and attention that each aid receives.

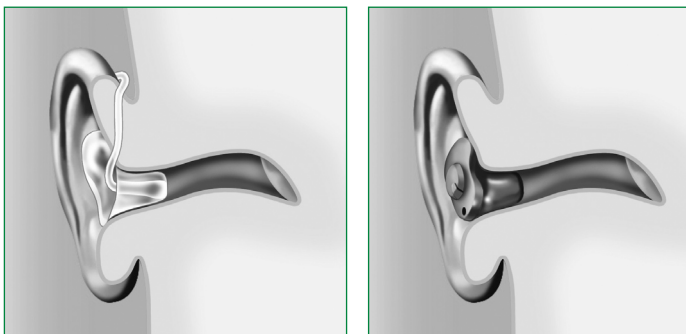
To get a 'Custom Made, in the ear model', the first step is to go to your audiologist or hearing aid dispenser. They will make an impression of your ear and will send this, along with a prescription order form, which includes your audiogram, to Acoustic technologies Ltd.

The design team ensures that each customer gets a custom instrument with the precise amplification characteristics necessary to compensate for the individual hearing loss of the person concerned. A negative is made from the impression, from which a hollow acrylic shell is manufactured which will match the actual ear precisely. Skilled technicians then install microphones, speakers, processors, controls, contacts, telecoils and any other components required into this shell. Test computers are used to test everything and measure the aid's output at 125 different frequencies. The aid is then sealed up and coated with a non-allergic photoplastic coating. They then go through vigorous quality controls before being finally programmed to the details of the particular individuals hearing loss. All are supplied with a two year warranty.

Thank you Brian for allowing us to invade your factory and for the time and help you gave us. I am sure our members and readers will find what you do most interesting. We certainly did.

Ken

## HEARING AIDS



I am sure you have read all the articles and information you can about hearing aids, with all to-days technology they are being up-dated and improved all the time.

Hearing aids now come in many varieties; I have heard of analogue, digital etc. all requiring batteries. However, the other day I came across an advert for a new hearing aid. It had no batteries, no controls and worked automatically the blurb said, easy to use and can be recharged overnight. Makes you wonder doesn't it what the hearing aid of the future will be like in fifty or so year's time. Just look how much they have improved.

My first hearing aid was huge about the size of my hand and was worn in a pocket with a wire extending up to a mould in my ear. It was enormous compared to-days aids.

I came across another advertisement as well recently. This one said the government had increased grants for hearing aids and that anyone requiring can now claim up to €760 per aid (subject to status) and that all purchases are fully tax deductible. Worth checking out if you are considering getting a new aid.

Jacque

## AGM

Our Annual General Meeting this year was held in the Elm Park Golf Club – a beautiful venue, and it was great to see so many attending.

Our President, Michael Tighe, opened the meeting welcoming everyone and asked for a minutes silence for Pat McKenna and Sean Keating, two prominent members who passed away in January this year. He gave us a brief run-down on the year's events,

The EFHOH Conference, Sub-titling, Access, and Hearsay.

Gina Robbins, our Treasurer reported on the years finances, which at present stand at €12,882.77.

The Council for the coming year was elected and a word of thanks is due here to Michael Tighe who is standing down as President, for all the work and effort he put in on our behalf. However he is not leaving the Council and has several projects he wishes to pursue.

*The Council for the coming year is as follows:*

**President:** Peter Derbyshire,

**Vice President:** Freda Keenan

**Hon Sec.** Jarlath Byrne.

**P.R.O.** Gina Robbins.

**Hon. Treasurer:** Michael Tighe.

**Council Members:** Jo Curran, Rita O'Driscoll, Aiden O'Keeffe, Maggie Fitzgerald.

The Meeting was then thrown open for questions and comments. A long and very interesting discussion ensued regarding Hearing Aids, a subject we were all interested in.

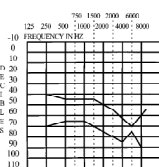
A word of thanks to Emma McAuley (Audiologist) who answered all our many questions, I think each and everyone of us benefited and learnt something. Subjects also covered were Hearsay and access. The meeting closed with a welcome cup of tea/coffee and of course a chat.

## SEAN KEATING

It is with deep regret that we learnt of the death of Sean Keating and we extend our deepest sympathies to his family and Ann in particular.

Sean was a very active, friendly and happy person, who took part in all our outings and activities whenever possible, be it Treasure Hunts, visits to the Botanical Gardens or the Theatre. He loved to travel as well and often went abroad or would go on a cruise. He was a person who enjoyed every second of life and will be sadly missed in the I.H.H.A.

Hearsay Committee



**Please note. Anyone who wants further information, contact the address below.**

**The opinions expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the IHHA.**

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