

# Annual Review 2016-2017

The Trust for Deaf  
Studies



The Vassall Centre  
Gill Avenue  
Bristol BS16 2QQ  
Charity Number: 289302

[www.deafstudiestrust.org](http://www.deafstudiestrust.org)

## Community Progress and Action



**Bristol Deaf Worlds Festival:**  
175 years since the opening of the first Deaf School in  
Bristol; 140 years since the Deaf Club was formed: a  
history to celebrate – a special event in November 2016

## Chair Report

Change seems to be the norm these days and although the Trust has had a relatively stable period, this has only been because we greatly reduced our overheads and tried to focus on key areas of work.

One of the concerns over the last year has been the reduction in services to children and Deaf adults. While the Centre for Deaf people has been able to continue with supplying equipment to older people, there has been a great deal of pressure on other work, especially in regard to children. The difficulties of the Family Centre in Bristol (which DST helped to set up in 1993), the closure of the Youth Club and gradual fragmentation of parents' groups, have all contributed to uncertainty for Deaf people.



The Trust has now set one of its priorities as supporting the various groups who have a concern for families with Deaf children and we will now hope to offer workshops and meetings specifically designed to deal with topics of importance for families.

Welcome to our new Trustees, this year: Clark Denmark, Lesley Pender and Mike Gulliver.

A special thank you to Lorna Allsop who stepped down from her role in the Trust, this year. She has been an active researcher in the field since 1980, and has been a key member of the Trust's team for several years. She has contributed a great deal.

Finally our grateful thanks goes to Jim Kyle, our secretary and to the other Trustees for helping us to continue to move forward during this difficult time.

Hilary Sutherland,

Chair, 2017

## Secretary's Report

It has been a significant year for the UK in general and for the Deaf community. One major focus has been on the Referendum on the UK as a member of the EU. DST became involved in the run-up to voting, by providing workshops in BSL which were open to the Deaf community. We offered information on the EU and what it was ..... something which people were quite puzzled about. [Surprisingly, perhaps, there was not a great deal of deaf-friendly information on what the EU actually did or how it was set up]. We also provided video from the European Union of Deaf People, which strongly recommended that Deaf people in the UK should vote to remain. There were also explanations that there were elected, Deaf Members of the European Parliament. However, the Deaf participants seemed to be swayed more by the headlines in the UK which tended to be in favour of leaving.

The Trust has also been called in to assess and support Deaf refugees during this year, although it has to be said there are very few in comparison to the numbers of Deaf refugees in say, Germany. In that country, the local Deaf associations have been helping and meeting up with the refugees and providing courses in German Sign Language.



The Trust has been active in applying for new projects: seven main applications this year but so far only one is successful. This will be developed in the coming year but is designed to make a difference when Deaf people have to make telephone or video calls. More details in next year's report.

The Trust is now 33 years old and continues to be active in looking for new ways to encourage Deaf people's engagement with society. We still believe that there are opportunities and there are contributions which Deaf people can make which will make the community as a whole more rich and effective.

Special thanks as always to Esther Drewe who manages our finances. And finally, a huge thanks to Clive Kittel, who is stepping down after many years of service to the Trust as the "man with the money" – our treasurer. You will be missed.

Jim Kyle, Secretary

# Bristol Deaf Worlds Festival

## 3rd & 4th November 2016



**Carlton Park  
School in late  
1930s**



**Rev. W.J. Mayers, 1874-1888.**



**First Missioner to  
Deaf Community**

The major event of the year took place over two days in November 2016. This was the result of a number of factors which came together in the latter part of 2016. The Lost Spaces project which has been highlighted in previous reports, set aside some funding to support an event for the Deaf community in order to provide feedback on the work of the project. This included a new film made about the loss of the Deaf club and the fragmentation of the Deaf community. The loss of the Deaf Club meant that a great deal of heritage materials became available and was gathered in by the Deaf Studies Trust in order to preserve it. The extent of this material was enormous: artifacts (trophies, plaques, old hearing aids, paintings), photographs (over 1,000 dating back to 1903), books, leaflets, minute books, newspaper cuttings and even more recently, some video.

It was then realised that 2016 was a significant year, being 175 years since the first Bristol Deaf School was opened, with a Deaf Headmaster, and which is still referred to in sign, by the name of this headmaster: the "MATTHEW SCHOOL", even though it closed down in 1907 and he had left in 1843.

Also, the first attempts to create a meeting place for Deaf people in Bristol occurred in 1876, 140 years ago.

An event was then planned to showcase the contribution of Deaf people to the life of Bristol and was opened by the Lord Mayor. The event included displays of the artifacts of the old Centre, a sample of several hundred of the 1500 photographs available, video recordings from the club and the Trust along with new programmes produced by VS1, sign language and lip-reading challenges and evening chat shows with well known Deaf participants. Over 250 people attended.



As a result of the collection of resources, the Trust was able to research and describe some of the early developments of the Deaf community.

## Before Deaf Education in Bristol: 1800-1840

There were Deaf people in the community and people profiting from hearing loss. Mr Wright of College Green published an essay in 1817. He explained how to examine ears and mentioned some of the cases he knew.

There was no health service in those days but there were dispensaries

which were private and they often catered for deaf people or others who lost their hearing.

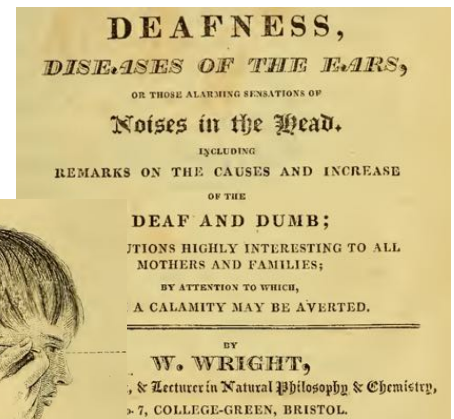
**DR. BOERHAAVE'S RED PILL,**  
No. 2,  
(Sealed with Red Wax),  
**F**AMOUS for the Cure of every Stage and Symptom of a Certain Complaint.—It is a melancholy fact, that thousands fall victims to this horrid disease, owing to the unskilfulness of illiterate men, who, by an improper treatment of this direful calamity, not unfrequently cause those foul Ulcerations and Blotches which so often appear on the Head, Face, and Body, with Dimness in the Sight, Noise in the Ears, Deafness, Strictures, obstinate Gleets, Nodes on the Shin-Bones, ulcerated

although there was no deaf school or club. Some of these “deaf and dumb” people came to the attention of the police and courts.

Mary Johnson was charged with stealing a pocket-handkerchief, a glove, 2s., &c., from the person of James Lewis. The prosecutor, who is deaf and dumb, deposed, by means of an interpreter, that on Sunday night he met the prisoner in Nelson-street, when she induced him to accompany her to a tavern; and afterwards, whilst passing through Cumberland-street, on the way to her house in Wilder-street, she robbed him of the articles in question, a portion of which was found in her possession. Prisoner pleaded that she had been very intimate with the prosecutor several months, which he denied; and as he declined pressing the case against her, she was discharged.

## The beginnings of the School

Bristol was quite late in opening a school for deaf children and there was probably a school in Bath just *before* the citizens of Bristol decided to set up a school. Jacob Willcox Ricketts was a prominent businessman (a partner with



I HAVE also two young ladies now placed under my care, both of whom became deaf from having the hair cut, and being exposed to a draught of cold air. One of them cannot

the Wills family and owner of the Bristol Brewery). When he died in 1839, he left £500 to Bristol to set up a school. By 1841, there was sufficient additional money raised to set up the school at 25 Orchard Street with four pupils, under the tuition of Matthew Robert Burns – the first Deaf head teacher. Unfortunately he left after only two years and subsequent headteachers had problems with the management committee. One interesting account of the discipline problems the teachers faced is mentioned in an account from 1993, by Dan Hershon:

“The ... punishment the Secretary went on to suggest was:

*“stocks, not the modern ladies seminary apparatus and backboard, but the old and nearly obsolete village arrangement...”*

After consulting with Mr. Webster, it was resolved to purchase a pair of moveable stocks, that could also be screwed into the floor. According to the Minutes for February 1844, the stocks were ... installed, and the first pupil who was put in them was heard to remark:

*“that stocks were only for drunkards etc., (and) that he would take care not to be placed in them again.”*

Deaf schools have probably moved on since then.

The school continued until 1907 when competing State schools in Bristol reduced the numbers of children attending and the head teacher, Mr Barnes Smith, reached retirement.

## **Deaf Club from 1876 to 2014**

Associations of deaf people in the UK were often formed by old schools friends in conjunction with a local church. The Bristol Deaf Club had its origins in after-church interaction and was for almost all of its history, led by religious figures.

Since Deaf people lived and worked within the mainstream community it was very important to have events and outings where larger groups could come together. The picture on the next page from 1915 is typical of the large groups of Deaf people who continue to meet in a sign language environment.





The missionary who was usually a hearing person had a central role as gate-keeper of the Deaf community and often organised and managed almost all aspects of formal activities. However, there was always a “Deaf way” (Deaf culture) which was separate from the image which was presented to the hearing society.

Drama and performance was always a major part of the community expression and the Deaf club celebrated major events with plays, comedy and games.



1952?



## Deaf Sports

Sport has always played a major role within the Deaf community. It has been a focal point for interaction and a vehicle for contact with other Deaf clubs in the UK and abroad. The Bristol Deaf football club was formed in 1900 but never really had great success when playing in the leagues for hearing teams.



The Bristol Deaf Cricket Club was formed in 1901 (probably with the same individuals as in the football club). The Bristol Leander Deaf Swimming club formed in the 1920s was a well known and an active local organisation until the late 1930s. From the 1930s, Deaf people played tennis, hockey, darts, snooker. Ladies football was formed in the late 1970s and was very successful.

There is a great deal more to research and describe about the community and the trust is actively seeking new funds to repeat and extend these cultural and community celebrations.

## Other activities

Through the year, the Trust has continued to support the new Centre for Deaf People and to seek the funds to carry out new work which will extend the roles of Deaf people in society.

We have provided analysis and reports for different agencies in regard to Deaf refugees and for children and families where language issues have arisen.



Training for medical students continues to expand and we can see the benefits in producing doctors who have much greater deaf awareness.

## **Finance Report**

### **The Statement of Financial Activities for the Year to 31st March 2017**

The best yard-stick of the state of financial health of the Trust is the total of the “unrestricted” funds. This stands at £16,058 - a little down on last year’s figure of £19,441 (see Note 9 in finance statement).

However, with an outstanding payment due of over £7,000 which will become part of the unrestricted funds, the situation is better than last year. In a healthy business, this should be equivalent to at least 3 months “unrestricted” spending. This is clearly exceeded by a healthy margin.

The Trust is able to make investment in future activities and in work which will generate future projects and thereby, repay any financial investments made.

The Trust is in a good financial position at this time.

Clive Kittel,





June 2017

**The Deaf Studies Trust continues to move forward in its work. It succeeds with low overhead margins and does not seek to generate large profits on its work.**

**The Deaf Studies Trust strives continuously to make Deaf people's lives more valued and understood by the society at large.**



The Vassall Centre, Gill Avenue, Fishponds, Bristol BS16 2QQ  
Tel (voice and minicom): 0117 958 3040 [www.deafstudiestrust.org](http://www.deafstudiestrust.org)

			
<b>Chair Hilary Sutherland</b>	<b>Treasurer Clive Kittel</b>	<b>Secretary Jim Kyle</b>	<b>Trustee Lorna Allsop</b>
			
<b>Clark Denmark</b>	<b>Lesley Pender - Lel</b>	<b>Mike Gulliver</b>	