

# In memory of David Harrison

**Simon Blake** gives an insight into the life of David Harrison, 15-11-1934 to 9-3-2022 (aged 87 years), who retired in 1993

To say that David was a pioneer in his field and a dynamic leader of the Leicestershire Service for Hearing-Impaired Children is an understatement. He was charismatic and believed implicitly in the oral approach. He knew and believed that hearing-impaired children, no matter how profoundly deaf, had the ability to develop language. The Leicestershire peripatetic teaching team was encouraged and trained with these expectations in mind. He knew the extreme importance of early diagnosis in order for this to happen and a lot of energy was invested in preschool clinics many years before neonatal screening took off. He also recognised the importance of close liaison with ear, nose and throat (ENT) colleagues to ensure early diagnosis of permanent hearing loss as well as the debilitating effects of middle ear problems in young children, both with and without deafness. This also led to his involvement in training health visitors and personally conducting early years diagnostic clinics.

Thus, Leicestershire was an exciting and innovative place to work, and all members of staff were particularly stimulated and excited by initiatives pushed quickly forward at staff meetings and within the senior management team. David did not want to hang about. His commitment to deaf education is outlined below in the quite extraordinary numbers of roles in which he participated over and above his day job.

One of his first appointments was as Chairman of the Society of Teachers of the Deaf between 1973 and 1974. He then took on the editorship of the Journal of the Society of Teachers of the Deaf, 1974–1976.

His work with BATOD began in 1976 when he became the editor of the Journal for BATOD (1976 to 1979) and it was then a natural step into the shoes of the second President of BATOD, which he carried out from 1979 to 1981, just after Con Powell and just before Doreen Woodford.

He was a founder member and several times was Chair of



Calcutta 1983

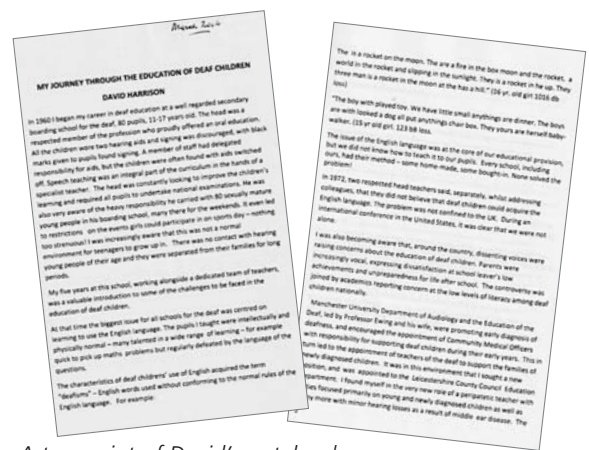
the National Aural Group (NAG) which later became Deaf Education Through Listening and Talking (DELTA). Whilst at DELTA he was the editor of a series of parent guides to speech, language and learning for deaf children – a major work that took many hours of evening work. In 1989 he completed a London to Brighton Charity Cycle race on behalf of NAG as well as a TV interview on behalf of the organisation.

David undertook several trips abroad, funded by the British Council, as part of teams from the UK to educate local Teachers of the Deaf on the techniques used in the UK. The first visit was to Kenya in 1979, Calcutta in January/February 1983 and Pune and Bhavnagar (India) in January 1984.

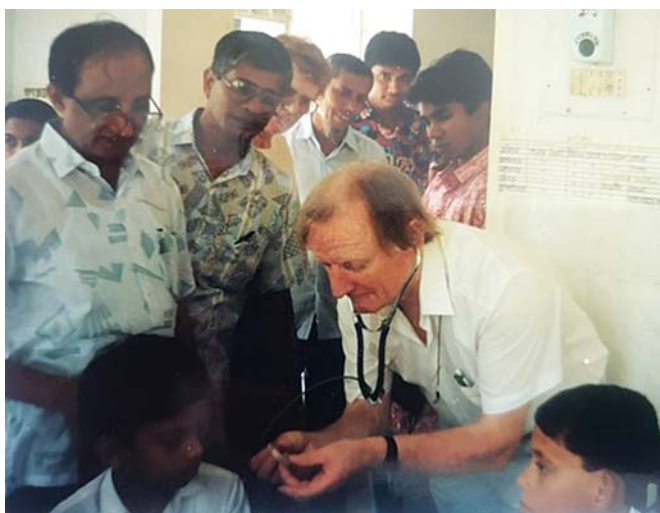
David was part of the Commonwealth Society for the Deaf Working Party visit to Singapore in April/May 1987, then again to Mauritius in 1989. His final overseas visit was to Bangladesh in 1991 to advise on the assessment, care and education of deaf children in Bangladesh. Photos of some of these trips are to be seen overleaf.



Saarland 1985



A transcript of David's notebook is available on the BATOD website



Bangladesh 1991



Bangladesh 1991

During this extremely wide-ranging, illustrious career, David had considerable involvement with the local National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS). When radio systems first became available, he jointly instigated a new charity, Sounds Out Of Silence (SOS), to raise funds to provide Phonic Ear systems for all local profoundly deaf children.

David gradually built up a strong team of professionals and support staff at our base, New Parks House in Leicester, and just before he retired, this numbered about 50 – larger than many teams in the UK at that time – which included specialist sub teams for preschool, school age and further



The boat trip at his retirement in 1993

education (FE) support plus two full time educational audiologists.

When he retired in 1993, he didn't stop and began to become interested in a number of activities. He completed a City & Guilds photography course and then utilised these skills to take and print photographs capturing everyday life, landscapes, holidays and family photos.

He particularly enjoyed coarse and fly fishing.

Once Barbara had also retired, they travelled widely including trips to New Zealand, USA, Tunisia, Egypt, plus a cruise to the Caribbean when they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary.

Later, they sold up their house in Leicestershire to move to France, where they bought a house in Fel in Normandy, which they renovated and where they lived for ten years. David became fluent in French and they both entered wholeheartedly into the local French community – including David giving English lessons to a few private individuals.

They decided to move back to England in 2015 and bought a house in Ledbury, Herefordshire to be close to family.

David entered a Care Home due to dementia in April 2021. Barbara passed away in September 2021, just six months prior to David.

We are immensely grateful to David's daughter Jane for contributing an enormous amount to this obituary and she has these final words:

"He was immensely proud (as we the family are) of his contribution to the field of education of the deaf and the understanding of language development in children." ■

### Acknowledgements

Jane Salt (David's daughter) for her enormous contribution and to Robert Miller, retired Educational Audiologist for Leicester City, for his contribution.

*Simon Blake is a retired Educational Audiologist for Leicestershire and BAEA Membership Secretary and Treasurer.*

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