

The History of Guildford Hard of Hearing Support Group

The Guildford Hard of Hearing Support Group was initially District 5 of the Middlesex and Surrey League which was itself set up 1947 and registered in accordance with the National Assistance Act in 1948.

After the 1939-1945 war, a large number of returning servicemen had hearing loss due to damage caused by the noise of explosions, shells, bombs and grenades. From the experience of the previous generation who suffered similarly from the effects of the 1914-1918 war a number of self help groups were set up to try to improve the lives of those affected and to make the authorities and society aware of the difficulties that they encountered. The groups in Middlesex and Surrey joined together and formed the Middlesex & Surrey League for the Hard of Hearing. The League joined the British Association of the Hard of Hearing (BAHoH) which was a national organisation which concentrated on the needs of the Hard of Hearing as opposed to the Deaf who were represented by the RNID. The offices of BAHoH were established at Armstrong road West London.

The earliest minutes available for District 5 was a meeting on 4th march 1978, though it is clear from these that there had been previous meetings. Meetings were held on the first and 3rd Monday afternoons at St Nicolas Church Centre with a lip reading session followed by a speaker or social activities. In addition a lipreading class was run on a monthly basis on a Thursday evening. Membership was about 21 people.

At the March 1980 AGM the group commented on a meeting and demonstration held at the Guildford Yvonne Arnaud theatre earlier in the year. This was well attended. However a follow up report indicated that though much appreciated it did not result in a significant increase in membership. It also recorded that as a result of a gift from the Guildford Soroptomists amplifying equipment and an overhead projector was purchased. Reference was also made to the district lipreading contest which was won by two of our members, Mrs Taylor for lipreading in joint first and Mrs Knott winner for clear speech.

There is little detailed information on the activities during 1981 and 1982. However from the minutes of the 1983 AGM it is apparent that membership had expanded to about 50 people. The pattern of fortnightly afternoon lipreading classes and a weekly evening class now on Wednesdays continued. These were combined with social activities. Lipreading teachers over the period were:

- Miss Norman in the Spring
- Mr Paul Green and Mrs Lesley Stonebridge in the autumn

Classes were free.

During this year the Group was instrumental in setting up the loop system in the Crematorium and the infra red system in the Yvonne Arnaud theatre. Financially the Group had an end of year balance of £1007.16

In 1984 the Group continued as before though concern was expressed about the variation in class attendance on Wednesday evening which ranged from 40 to about a dozen.

1985 saw the publication of "have you heard" a booklet to help the Hard of Hearing which, though published independently, had significant input from members of the Group. The Group purchased the Sarabec induction loop system. At this time the league opened a new group at Bookham and was working on opening another at Shepperton. The accounts showed a balance of £1303.18.

1986 saw some significant changes. First due to lack of attendance evening meetings were suspended. Second the area health authority which had financed the lipreading classes withdrew support due to lack of their funding. The Group was able to continue free lipreading courses with Paul Green as tutor but this clearly put a strain on their resources as at year end they only had £416.52 in the accounts. The Group continue its work to encourage loop systems across all public buildings.

In 1987 the group continued to provide free lipreading courses. To do so they were helped by an increase in the grant from the Surrey and Middlesex league which is referred to as "HQ". The Chairman was also representing the league on the BBC research on sound balance and background noise. (Whatever was the outcome of this members still complain in 2018 about speech over music).

1988 indicated that the Group was still vibrant but membership had fallen slightly and the reserves had fallen to £239.00 partly due to a reduction in the grant from the Middlesex and Surrey League.

1989 saw an increase in Group activity with an influx of 13 new members, enlistment of the local MP to help with the reconstitution of the hearing aid council, input into the white paper on the future of broadcasting. More locally the Chairman attended The Surrey Council's reception for the Deafened. It was noted that this was heavily slanted towards the Deaf leaving a need to emphasise the problems of the Hard of Hearing. Additionally the Group provided input to the audiology department of the new hospital. Finances were still tight but were supplemented by table-sales.

1990 Mr Paul Green took over as Chairman. In his report he stated that he thought the County Council were actively seeking to help the Hard of Hearing. In view of this he asked a good attendance at the next meeting at Kingston County Hall. 4 members attended.

1991 The Chairman reported that the County had called numerous meetings to ascertain the needs of hearing impaired people across the County. This had resulted in the production of a strategy document which he and the previous chairman were involved in drafting. The annual lipreading competition referred to earlier failed to take place due to lack of outside interest. The finances remained steady at a balance of about £300.00

1992 The SCC support appeared to be orientated further towards the profoundly deaf. To redress this the Chairman encouraged members to make themselves known to social services. At this time two activities seem to have been established. The first was an annual garden party at the Mitchell's house and the second was the reintroduction of a Wednesday lipreading session. Reference is also made to the Group support to Hearing Dogs of which 5 were established in the area. Finances remain at break even point thanks to outside donations.

1993 was a very active year. At its annual conference at which we were represented BAHoH changed its name to Hearing Concern. The Group undertook a range of fund raising activities and had a full programme including visiting the BBC's subtitling unit. Unfortunately this year was the last of the annual garden party due to the death of Jack Mitchell. In addition Miss Lillian Hodgson our president

and an early Chairman died. Despite the fund raising activities the Group had a deficit of £58.00 over the year. This was due to the failure of SCC to pay in full the promised Grant. The shortfall "will be paid next year" but there will be no further funding from the Council after that.

1994 There was a slight increase in membership as a result of a determined effort by the Committee. Despite a comment earlier in this history that the lipreading contest had been cancelled, Ted Grimble came second in the competition. Over the years the group have entered into the Arts and Craft exhibition which is held annually. Members were encouraged by the Chairman to make "lots of entries again". Finances are tight and a loss would have been made had the Group not received a donation from Worplesdon Masonic Lodge. SW Surrey Health Authority had agreed to help for this year and 1995 so free lipreading classes could continue also SCC indicated that they might make a grant. Mr Jack Penycate was elected president. In his acceptance speech he reminded members that he was the first Secretary to the Group in 1946. This confirms that the Group was a founder member of the Middlesex and Surrey league though no detailed minutes can be found as yet of meetings prior to 1978.

1995 was a very active year promoting the Group with a coffee morning in Guildford and taking part in the collection for Alexander rose day. As a result membership rose to 64. It was becoming evident that from now on the Group would need to become more self-supporting as demands for funds from outside donors such as SCC and the Municipal Charities were exceeding the funds available to them to distribute. The lipreading instruction which had been undertaken by the Chairman was placing a considerable strain on him so Judith Morgan, a qualified instructor, agreed to take the Wednesday class.

1996 Saw the Group winning the H.B.Read Silver Cup which was presented to the most active group in the league. This had been last won by us in 1967 providing more evidence to the claim that we were a founding member of the league. Due to work on the sales table and other activities the accounts showed a balance of £2335 at year end enabling the continuation of free lipreading classes. It is noted in the minutes that the Club would be 50 in 1997.

1997 Saw a change in lipreading instructors as the Chairman could no longer continue due to ill health. Judith Morgan who looked after the Wednesday course could not manage Mondays. This task was taken over by Jill Plail in September. This was the first time the Group ran its own lipreading and clear speech competition. Apart from that much of the year was spent preparing for the 50th anniversary lunch held at the University. 68 people attended including guests which included the Mayor of Guildford and representatives of the League and other Groups. It was noted in the minutes that the evening classes on Wednesdays was down to 7 members and despite efforts to increase this there appears to be a reluctance to going out on in the evenings. It would seem that the end of year was now celebrated by a Christmas party to which guests were invited.

1998 Due to ill health Judy Morgan resigned as the lipreading teacher for the Wednesday evening class. Tanya Morgan, Speech Therapist at the RSCH, agreed to take over for a short period to determine if she could manage to fit it in with her busy programme. She was very good. The Monday classes are taken by Jill Plail with the backing of Kay Murray when Jill was unable to take the class. Membership was still at the 60's but 20 were over 80 and a further 20 were over 70 which was regarded with some concern. Also the Committee was worried at the continued annual financial loss despite the efforts of the members. As well as lipreading the Group also kept an eye on the welfare

of its members. This had been carried out by Janet Scott who visited the sick and helped with transport.

In July the Group discussed the future of the Middlesex and Surrey league which was to be wound up. The Committee agreed to look at setting the group up as an independent charity.

1999 This Year was the foundation of the Guildford Hard of Hearing Support Group as a charity in its own right. The Middlesex and Surrey League were dissolved and local Groups became independent. Hearing Concern took over as the “flagship” for the Hard of Hearing. As the result of this all the assets of the League were distributed leaving the new independent Guildford Group with a balance of £1999.00. Paul Green remained as Chairman and Kay Murray, a qualified Lipreading Teacher, took all the classes. Membership was 58 including 7 honorary members. At the AGM in March Paul Green said he could no longer continue as Chairman. This appointment was taken over by Dudley Ward. The Group activity remained as before with the exception of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition. This had always been arranged by the League which Hearing Concern had planned to continue. The Epsom Group hosted the National day which was continued even though the league was no longer in existence and Martin Roper took over as editor of Oral News which was to continue so that ex members of the league should remain in touch. The year end was celebrated with a Christmas tea which was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress.

2000 This year saw a major change in funding. Grants toward lipreading fees and other activities were becoming harder to obtain so giving cause for concern. However with the winding up of the League the Group received £6636.39. It was decided to add to this from our existing surplus so that £7000 could be invested in Charities Official Investment Office (COIF) split equally between the investment fund and the fixed income fund and a further £1000 in the Deposit fund where it could be accessed easily.

2001 Meetings continued to be attended by 25 to 30 people but there had been a fall in membership. However the burden on the Committee was considerable so changes were made:

- The sales table was reduced to books only
- A new way of raising funds was agreed whereby members would sponsor David James on the Rotary run with the funds raised by him returning to the Group.

In addition there was a change in Committee members responsible for arranging the talks and the treasurer.

The Group learnt that Hearing Concern was in financial difficulties and had had to cut back on staff and cancel their plans for a mobile equipment bus.

2002 The Chairman had a severe stroke at the end of last year with the result that both he and his wife, the Secretary, had to resign. Douglas Stephens took over the task as Chairman but made it clear that this was a temporary move as he was suffering from Parkinson’s disease . Overall the year was successful though there was a minor drop in membership to 48. A running theme over the past few years has been the difficulty in raising numbers for the outings, but this was offset by the success of Christmas tea party which has often been attended by the Mayor as our guest. Financially thanks to the run/walk and street collection the Group was breaking even. Meeting attendance had been averaging at 22 people.

It was agreed that the Group should host the National Day for the members of the Middlesex and Surrey League in 2003.

2003

This year was dominated by the urgent need to find a Chairman. Approaches had been made to many people all of whom had had to decline and advertisements were placed with GAVS and all the local Rotary clubs to date without success. Apart from that attendance had held up well, the outing was well attended and the national day which involved some 80 – 90 people was a success.

2004

In February the campaign to find a new Chairman was still unsuccessful. However a chance meeting of the Mayor of Guildford with someone who was hard of hearing and looking for a voluntary job resulted in a possible candidate. As a result Julian Knowles was invited to attend the March committee meeting where he gave his credentials and explained that he was not aware of the work of the Group but was willing to take on the task of Chairman if members considered him suitable. He was duly elected at the AGM. Membership was 51 including 7 honorary members.

In the July Committee Diana Brighton was thanked for arranging a very enjoyable visit to Petworth Park. The meeting decided:

- That future years should continued the previous pattern except we would organise a Christmas lunch as opposed to tea to which the Deputy Mayor should be invited. This was to be held in the Riverside Centre run by Age Concern with the intention of building cooperation between the 2 Charities.
- There was a need to increase our efforts to obtain more members with an emphasis on younger people.

2005

A significant drive was made by members to increase the membership and raise the awareness of the group. This involved visiting lipreading classes run by SCC within the County, placing notices in RSCH and Frimley Park hospital, libraries and Doctors surgeries. This resulted in a small increase in numbers.

The Groups finances showed a small surplus which was to be spent on increasing the number and quality of speakers visiting the Group. This was considered necessary as the entertainment after the lipreading session required a lot of work by Committee members which the Chairman felt was not appreciated by the Group as a whole. As well as the annual Alexandra Rose Day street collection where 90% of the funds accrue to the Group it was planned to undertake a collection at Sainsbury's Burpham as well as sponsoring David Jones on the Surrey Advertiser run.

A Membership form was issued for the first time which, as well as confirming the subscription of £7.00 had been paid, could be used as a hand out to an interested party who might wish to join so that they knew who to contact and the member who had recruited them.

The Outing this year was a mystery tour and year ended with a successful Christmas lunch which was attended by the Mayor. However it was agreed that the numbers attending was at the limit of the capability of the facilities of Age Concern and a new location should be found for 2006.

2006

Membership was now 60. With the exception of the Secretary the Committee remained unchanged. Diana Brighton was elected as Secretary. Attendance at meetings had fallen to about 20 people which was disappointing. Some of this was due to illness but there was a need to increase our efforts to recruit more members particularly in the 60-70 age group.

Finances were in a good shape thanks to the Alexander Rose Day collection, a collection outside Sainsbury's and the Sponsored walk. In addition the Glaxo Foundation indicated that they might give us a donation for a specific requirement. With the change in technology speakers were less likely to use slides so it was proposed that we put up a case to purchase a projector which could work with a lap top. This was successful.

The outing this year was on the Basingstoke Canal and the Christmas lunch attended by the Mayor was at the YMCA. It was most enjoyable but required a significant subsidy from our funds

2007

Membership was now 53 but attendance at meetings increased to a steady 25. It was decided that St Nicolas church was no longer the best location for meeting primarily because of changes in parking regulations. The Group moved to the Mill Mead Centre.

Again we had a good year financially due to unexpected donations and our own efforts at this time outside Tesco, Alexander Rose Day and the walk.

The outing was a visit to West Dean Gardens and the Christmas lunch attended by the Mayor was held in the Cathedral refectory.

2008

Membership remained flat but with the retirement off Diana Brighton as Secretary and David as treasurer the latter due to ill health attendance at meetings dropped to about 20 though 30 attended on one occasion when a particularly good speaker gave us a talk on birds. John Price took over the task as secretary. The group put David's name forward for the Mayors award for Voluntary service which he was duly given.

The way in which we carried out the sponsored walk was changed as David Jones was no longer able to do it for the group. In the end we entered a team some members of which did one leg only. This combined with the Alexander Rose Day collection and another outside TESCO kept our finances in good shape.

The outing this year was to Saville Gardens and the Christmas lunch was again held in the refectory with two members from the Deaf Awareness team as our guests.

2009

This year saw little change. A team entered the sponsored walk as before and the Alexander Rose Day collection was carried out but it was not thought necessary to undertake another collection outside a Super Market partly because the returns were low.

The summer outing was to Cherkley Court the home of Lord Beaverbrook. As per last year this was undertaken using member's cars. The Christmas lunch was held at the Horse and Groom. Though enjoyed by all the facilities did not really lend themselves to hard of hearing people.

2010

The Committee agreed in 2009 the need for a basic course eventually called Managing Hearing Loss as whenever a new member joined they would have to take part in Kay's lesson which had to be at a level to attract all lipreaders regardless of their experience. This meant that basic items like the alphabet and living with hearing loss were picked up over a period. Also if advertised it was thought that it might help recruit new members. The course was run on the 1st and 3rd Monday of the month and lasted 6 weeks commencing in January. It was run by Anita Cooper, a qualified teacher, who had been Kay's pupil as instructor. 10 people attended the course which was well received. We were able to obtain a grant from Grass Roots of Surrey Community Foundation to cover the cost.

The Committee had been discussing the need for a LOGO for use on correspondence and a competition for a design was put out to members. The results were given to the "Brighton's" who, as ex members, would be able to make an impartial selection of the winner. It was also agreed that we should have a formal leaflet to hand out to new members covering basis information about the group.

Finances were in good shape and as we had a small surplus a Donation was made to Tree Tops. However due to the sudden and tragic illness of Barry Conway the treasurer, George Rollo the husband of Helen who was a member, was co-opted to assist the Chairman in running the accounts.

The outing this year was to Parham House and the Christmas lunch was held at the Y. Both were well attended.

2011

The year commenced with another basic course.

The AGM this year was presented in a new format. The idea was to remind members of the Group's objectives and examine how these had been met.

The end of year finances for 2010 showed a small loss so it was decided that all the funds raised from the walk this year should accrue to the Group. Eric Voller agreed to take on the task of Treasurer.

The Group outing was a boat trip on the river Wye and the Christmas lunch was held in the Y.

2012

Once again the year started with the basic course being run alongside normal meetings attendance of which had averaged in the high twenties.

At the AGM it was agreed that

- Due to a significant anonymous donor we were in good financial shape. As a result it was agreed that we should increase money paid to Kay and Anita by £5.00 per lesson to catch up with that paid by other organisations. Also we would continue to subsidise the Christmas lunch.
- As it was the Queen's Jubilee year we should have a celebration Party. This was held at Guildford College on Friday 1st of June once again organised by our social events manager June Purse.

It was agreed to adjust the format of future programmes to introduce a Beetle Drive on two or three occasions so that members had a better opportunity to socialise.

Fund raising this year was confined to the Street Collection in Guildford and the Surrey Advertiser walk.

The Group outing was to Gilbert White's house and the Christmas lunch was held in the Y with Carol Pearson who chaired the Surrey Forum for the Deaf and our two teachers as Guest.

This year saw the issue of an introductory pack for new members.

2013

The programme for the year remained similar to previous years except for the introduction of the Beetle Drive which proved to be very enjoyable. However the basic course was disrupted by bad weather and it was decided that in 2014 the course would be run in the autumn. The Group had a stall at the Older People's networking Conference run by Voluntary Action South west Surrey in October

Finances remained in good shape and the two established fund raising event went ahead as usual.

The summer outing this year was to the Wild life and Motor Museum at Bentley and the Christmas lunch was held at the Y.

It was proposed that we created a dedicated web site.

2014

This year the basic Course was run successfully in the autumn otherwise there was no change to the developed style of the programme.

Despite a donation to the Group a small loss was made in the year 2013. It was decided that no change would be made to our overall activities but members would be asked to contribute £1.00 toward the cost of tea in the break. This decision proved correct as the Group received a bequest from Gwynne Angel of £1000.00. As before we continued to enter a team in the sponsored walk and had a street collection in Guildford High Street.

The outing was to the "Vyne" and the Christmas lunch was again held at the Y.

2015

At the AGM it was agreed that the next annual programme should be adjusted to allow for more social occasions. This was to be achieved by not having a talk at the first meeting in January and having a meeting in August which would not include a lipreading session as Kay would be on holiday. In addition the Basic Course syllabus should include a lipreading session after the break.

The finances would have shown a small loss but for the donation. As a result it was agreed that we should continue our usual pattern of fund raising.

The outing was to Waterbury Gardens, but due to changes within the YMCA policy we were no longer able to have our Christmas lunch there. The Kitchen at Guildford Technical College opened for us.

The initial Website for the Group was set up this year thanks to the work of Dale Mellor.

2016

The Group logo was adjusted this year to show two people facing one another with the caption "look listen learn" written underneath. This was displayed on the reprint of the welcome pack which also was to include a loose leaf page covering finger spelling.

Due to refurbishment at Millmead some of our meetings were held at the URC where though made very welcome members felt that the design of the room made lipreading difficult.

Our outing this year was to Greys Court and due to the Technical College no longer catering the Christmas meal was held at Weybourne House.

Financially we were in good shape due to a grant from the Guildford Borough Council and a private donation.

2017

There were no changes to the style of the programme for the year. The outing was to Hever Castle and the Christmas lunch was held at the Millmead Centre.

The Group benefited financially from a donation from Waitrose's green token scheme thanks to our Deputy Chairman's work.

Changes were made to the Committee as Doreen Shaw our long serving Deputy Chairman stood down and was replaced by Celia Woodward. Anne Collingridge took the roll of Deputy Secretary as John Price felt that he would have to stand down soon due to the increase in Parkinson's illness.

2018

At the AGM the chairman stood down in favour of Celia Woodward but agreed to carry on as Deputy Chairman and programme organiser. He was thanked for his 14 years of service and a presentation from members was made by the Deputy Mayor of Guildford Mike Parsons and his wife. In addition he made a presentation to John Price who now handed over the task of secretary fully to Anne Collingridge. The Group also used the occasion to thank Mavis Archer who had run the teas for the last 6 years.

The new Chairman indicated that there would be no immediate changes of the style to our programme throughout the year but due changes in the law we would have to introduce Data Protection procedures and update our complaints and Risk procedures.

The outing this year was to the Downland Open Museum with some member going to the West Dean gardens. The Christmas lunch was held at the Millmead Centre which was attended by the Mayor Mike Parsons. This celebrated the 70th year of the Guildford Hard of Hearing Support Group.

2019

At the beginning of the year the Committee was faced with two diverse problems.

First due to further refurbishment of the Millmead Centre commencing in the middle of the year the Group would not be able to remain in the same room and would also need to find another venue for the Christmas lunch. Whilst other facilities were available at the Centre none of these were suitable for lipreading. After an extensive search it was decided that after the summer break meetings would be held at St Catherine's Village Hall. Also the Group was advised that after the completion of the refurbishment accommodation at Millmead would cost at least three times that paid now. As a consequence it was decided to increase the membership costs for the first time for some 20 years to £15.00 per annum.

Second was that with the increase in administrative documentation that had to be held and the intention to write the history of the Group we should update and expand the website. Action was put in hand to do this with the intention of running the new site from mid 2020. In the event the move went smoothly with the minimum loss of members and the Christmas lunch was successfully held at the Yvonne Arnaud theatre. Unfortunately the summer outing had to be cancelled due to lack of people.