

Dundee Civic Welcome  
Deaf People at War  
Grant's Legal Challenge  
Being a Deaf Interpreter  
New Treks for 2012

# Welcome...

...to our 25th newsletter!

This issue presents a snapshot of the last six months in the life of SCoD.

In October we held our AGM and National Council meetings at the Tayside Deaf Hub in Dundee and were honoured with not only a Civic Reception from Dundee City Council but also two inspiring speakers in Hamish Rosie and Eva Fielding-Jackson. Find out more on page 8.

We launch our new fundraising treks for 2012 - one of which is the exciting John Muir Way - a 45 mile walk



from Musselburgh to Dunglass. Read about Bob Nolan's 1000 mile, 23 island tandem ride on page 4, learn about Grant Ferguson's challenge to become a qualified lawyer on page 12 and find out what it's like to work as a Deaf Interpreter from Clare Canton on page 10.

Happy reading!

Lilian Lawson OBE  
SCoD Director

## BSL Bill: Are We Nearly There Yet?



You could be forgiven for feeling a little impatient with the progress of the BSL Bill. After all, wasn't it round about this time last year that we were consulted on it?

The Statement of Motion was not lodged in the Scottish Parliament before the summer recess as we had expected. Instead, further meetings with the Non Executive Bills Unit (NEBU) were held.

Several legal challenges were identified with the original document, primarily the inability under the Scotland Act to give any language official language status, in law, in Scotland.

NEBU also pointed out that the original document would clash with reserved matters on legislation related to equality.

So, options were discussed and it was agreed that the BSL Bill should follow the format of the Gaelic Language

Act which would involve public bodies developing action plans to increase the accessibility of information for BSL users and raise the awareness of the language.

However, unlike the Gaelic Language Act, no board would be established to guide and manage the process. Instead responsibility would lie within an appropriate Government Minister. In addition, the Bill will propose that family members of deaf babies and toddlers should have access to free BSL classes.

With these changes, a further consultation is now necessary which it is hoped will be held in early 2012. As before, this consultation will run for three months. We will work with the BDA to ensure that the Deaf community is fully consulted and given the opportunity to respond in their preferred language.

## Features

- 3 Deaf Parenting, Deaf History Scotland
- 4-5 Bob and Louise Nolan
- 6 New Treks at SCoD
- 7 Communication and Access
- 8 SCoD @ Tayside Deaf Hub
- 9 New Cinema Captioning Technology
- 10 A Deaf Interpreter's Life for Me
- 11 Deaf in the Story
- 12-13 Legal Challenge for Grant Ferguson
- 16 Join and Support SCoD

### EDITORIAL NOTE

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this newsletter, SCoD disclaims any liability for inaccuracy or omission.

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of SCoD. No endorsement of services, events or products is intended or implied.

This newsletter is prepared in-house by SCoD staff, with contributions from permanent staff, project staff and other interested parties. Articles for future issues are always welcomed and considered. Please contact the editor:

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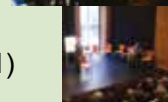
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## Photo Credits



Deaf Parenting UK (p3)  
Bob Nolan (pp4-5)  
Alison Coyle (p8)  
Clare Canton (p10)  
Scottish Storytelling Centre (p11)  
Andy Irvine (p12)





As an Ambassador for Deaf Parenting UK, SCoD Director Lilian Lawson was invited to attend a special Deaf Parenting UK Awards Ceremony in London in October. Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of Deaf Parenting UK, the ceremony took place in the Royal Overseas League – just around the corner from the Ritz Hotel. 150 people attended the event, hosted by Sabina Iqbal, Chair and Founder of Deaf Parenting UK. Seven categories of Awards attracted many nominations but only a handful of lucky winners. Lilian was there to present the Campaigner of Deaf Parents Award to Dr Joanna Davis and the Highly Commended

Award for the same category to Melissa Mostyn-Thomas. The final award, for Lifetime Achievement, sponsored by the Royal Association of Deaf People, is postponed until 2012 to encourage members of the Deaf Community to submit their nominations. Deadline is 2nd March 2012 - more details on the Deaf Parenting website: [www.deafparent.org.uk/](http://www.deafparent.org.uk/).

The event was filmed by Remark! for the Deaf Parenting website and also by the BBC's See Hear team. Congratulations to Deaf Parenting UK for organising such a superb event and good wishes for many more years of success.



Campaigner of Deaf Parents Award, sponsored by TFPL. Winner: Dr Joanne Downes with Darron Chapman (Sponsor) and Lilian Lawson OBE



Campaigner of Deaf Parents Award, sponsored by TFPL. Highly Commended: Melissa Mostyn-Thomas with Darron Chapman (Sponsor) and Lilian Lawson OBE

Deaf History Scotland (DHS) held its third Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Dundee in October. Over 50 people from across Scotland travelled to the hosts, Tayside Deaf Hub.

Ian Carmichael, the Chair opened the AGM with a warm welcome. An exciting list of speakers awaited attendees; including Eva Fielding-Jackson who discussed her fascinating life history, Pam Bruce on

James Rattray who ran a deaf school in Dundee in the 1800s, British Deaf History Society President Tony Boyce, and Elizabeth Adam who had put together a photo presentation on Dudhope School for the Deaf.

A vote of thanks from Peter Hay closed what everyone agreed had been an excellent day with interesting presentations. DHS's fourth AGM will be held in Falkirk in 2012.

Keep up to date with Deaf History Scotland by visiting their website: [www.deafhistoryscotland.org.uk](http://www.deafhistoryscotland.org.uk)



## Riverside Museum Royal Opening

In November HRH the Princess Royal officially opened the Riverside Transport Museum. Lilian Lawson, SCoD Director was invited to the opening. We were pleased to be involved because SCoD has been represented on the Riverside Transport Museum's access committee for a number of years. We gave advice to ensure that deaf people could enjoy the brilliant array of over 3,000 exhibits in a purpose-built museum with stunning views of the River Clyde. Planners used our advice and have included BSL as one of the languages available on the 36 e-intro points. These points present a touch screen for visitors to explore the information on the many exhibits. We highly recommend that readers pay a visit to Riverside Museum.



The Museum can be found at 100 Pointhouse Place, Glasgow G3 8RS  
Opening hours are:  
10am – 5pm except for Friday and Sunday:  
11am - 5pm  
Entrance is free

# & BOB LOUISE

## On the Road Again



and swimming but it really helped having done our previous 1000 mile ride from Lands End to John O'Groats, so we all knew what to expect this time. It was still very important to train and we started cycling twice a week in February with two 26 mile rides a week, gradually increasing the second weekend ride to 80+ miles a time by mid-May so we could be sure to manage the 70+ miles day after day on the challenge itself. It also meant we had cycled a lot of miles together and got used to riding on the roads before we started.

### **You are deafblind and your wife is deaf. What were the main challenges you faced on these long distance rides?**

The first and most important challenge to overcome was to be able to communicate with each other. We are both deaf and rely heavily on lip-reading and it's important that Louise keeps her eye on the road ahead. We eventually settled on a wing mirror on the front handle-bars which we both use for lip-reading and being a small mirror it suits my very narrow vision very well. Whilst training we both suffered with sore rears (not ears) and that only really went away when we started cycling every day. We had to learn to cycle in traffic and Louise in particular found that hard at first, especially not being able to hear traffic approaching but as with everything practice helps. Hills could be hard work and there is no doubt that some days such as in Cornwall, Devon, Cumbria and almost everywhere in Scotland we spent a lot of time climbing and then going down hills and guess which takes the longer! The wind when it was against us was harder, as unlike hills there is no respite at the top and you just have to keep going. I remember when we were on Shetland our first day was cycling into a 55mph wind (Force 8). This is probably the hardest

In 2008 husband and wife Bob and Louise Nolan cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats. More recently they completed a fifteen day, 1000 mile tandem ride crossing 23 Scottish Islands, raising funds for Deafblind Scotland (DBS) and increasing the awareness of deafblindness.

Planning for their next challenge, in June 2012, is already underway.

### **Why tandem cycling?**

I was knocked off my bike by a car in 1985. That marked my last outing on a bike for 22 years until I persuaded my deaf wife to ride a tandem with me. Sitting on the back of a tandem is the only way blind and partially sighted people can ride a bike safely. The sighted person sits up front and handles the gears, brakes and steering and is responsible for the safety of both riders. Not for nothing is the front rider known as the 'Captain' and the poor hard working rider at the back as the Stoker!

### **Did you train for the challenge or were you already a fit cyclist?**

We're both reasonably fit, Louise through her badminton and dog walking, and me through running



# Deafblindness awareness raising en route

day's cycling we've ever done so far. At one point climbing hills on Yell we were only managing 3.5mph. Conversely, much as Louise loves them, I struggled a little with the big downhills and even towards the end of the challenge I never really saw cresting a big hill and going down the other side at speeds in excess of 40mph as just reward for the climb. My son Josh (16) who followed us loved it - his only ambition was to beat 50mph, which he duly did on the descent into Glen Hope in the north of Scotland!

## **You and Louise have now done two tandem challenges.**

### **Which was the hardest?**

The island ride was harder ... mainly because we had ferries to catch at the end of most days and ferries wait for no man, so that put extra pressure on us particularly when missing a ferry meant waiting 24 hrs for the next one. Apart from Orkney, North Uist and the final ride into Glasgow from Ardrossan we had lots of hill climbing and on two separate days, on Unst and Yell on Shetland and on the Isle of Lewis when strong winds blew Josh off his bike. Having said that we enjoyed both rides in different ways ... with Lands End to John O'Groats the landscape changed every day we were riding whereas with the Island ride we loved being near the sea throughout.

## **You work for Shell. Did you get full support from your employer for your tandem challenges?**

Shell has supported my work with DBS over the years and in the early years gave me extra leave to attend board meetings and the like, though now these have been re-scheduled for the evenings so I don't use so much leave anymore. Shell has been very supportive, providing technology to help my work, in the form of large dual screens, large fonts and cursors which I can still see for now, and also video-conferencing so I can keep in contact with the teams I manage in Norway and Holland. The quality is so good I can lip-read them which makes such a difference. Together with Access to Work they have also helped with the provision of a micro-port loop and better hearing aids, all of which have helped me overcome my deafness, which is undoubtedly the more critical sensory loss in a work context, when you consider how much information you are missing each and every day in the office. I have had a lot of sponsorship from colleagues at Shell and from the company over the years too and very recently they have recognised my work with DBS by asking me to represent Shell and DBS by carrying the Olympic Torch next summer which is a fantastic honour for me and a great opportunity to do my bit for both organisations.



Leaving Sumburgh, on Shetland

Bob took many photographs on his journey, twelve of which have been chosen for Deafblind Scotland's new Field of Dreams 2012 calendar which is available to buy online from their website:

[www.deafblindscotland.org.uk/](http://www.deafblindscotland.org.uk/)

All proceeds will go towards the proposed Scottish training and resource centre in Lenzie.



Welcomed into Glasgow's George Square by Lord Provost Bob Winter

The Island challenge may be complete - but Bob's still short of his £20k target. Help him get a little closer by visiting [www.justgiving.com/Bobstandemride2](http://www.justgiving.com/Bobstandemride2) and making a donation.

Visit the Deafblind Scotland website to find out more about Bob's forthcoming challenge for 2012.



Bob has Usher Syndrome, which means he was born with a hearing loss and his vision is now deteriorating too; his wife Louise is deaf.

# New for 2012: A 'Feel-Good' Resolution!

Set yourself a challenge for the New Year by exploring some of Scotland's beautiful countryside on one of our treks – raising vital funds for SCoD as you do so.

Isn't walking the West Highland Way on everyone's 'to do' list? Here's your opportunity to tick it off that list with the support of trained Charitytrek guides. Experience some of Scotland's most breathtaking views while supporting SCoD by pledging to raise a minimum £750 to participate. The 95 mile walk from Milngavie to Fort William takes place from Saturday 2nd June until Sunday 9th June 2012.

Ever fancied climbing Britain's highest peak? The Ben Nevis Challenge will take place from Friday 7th September until Sunday 9th September 2012, with experienced Charitytrek guides accompanying you

along the way. Accommodation and transport will be arranged for you, all we ask is that you raise a minimum £375 to participate, with all the profits from the trip going to our charity. The experience of standing on the 'Roof of Britain' will provide the memory of a lifetime.

We are also pleased to introduce our new trek for 2012 – The John Muir Way. This 45 mile walk runs between Musselburgh and Dunglass, forming East Lothian's part of the North Sea Trail, a path that connects seven countries around the North Sea. Taking place from Friday 24 August until Sunday 26 August 2012, we simply ask that you raise a minimum £600 to participate. A mixture of gentle fields and more serious hiking, the serene beauty of the John Muir Way is not to be missed!

Registration packs can be downloaded from our website. Just visit [www.scod.org.uk](http://www.scod.org.uk) and click 'support us'. To secure your place, all you need to do is complete and return your registration form to SCoD along with a deposit of £75. To make it even easier to raise funds, you can start your own personal fundraising page by going to: [www.justgiving.com/scod](http://www.justgiving.com/scod). If you would like more information you can contact either Alison or Linda on 0141 248 2474, email: [trek@scod.org.uk](mailto:trek@scod.org.uk).

In association with Charitytrek – One of Scotland's leading service providers in the organisation and management of fully supported walks and treks.

In the last issue of SCoDNEWS we told you a bit about our Director Lilian Lawson's day to day diary. In that article we mentioned SCoD's three new sub-committees. This time we'd like to give you more information about one of them: the Communication and Access sub-committee.

For many of the general public when they think of access, what comes to mind is physical access to buildings and transport; widened doorways, ramps etc for example. Access for deaf people means something different and this can be difficult to achieve particularly because of the lack of awareness generally of what their needs are.

Deaf people's requirements for communication support are laid out in our information sheet "defining deafness" which is available from our office. Briefly, when we use the term "deaf" we mean this to include Deaf BSL users, hard of hearing people, deafened people and deafblind people. Members of each of these groups are supported in various ways, such as BSL/ English interpreters, Notetakers, Lipspeakers, Deafblind guide/ communicators (Language Service Professionals) or through lipreading classes.

The Communication and Access sub committee comprises

representatives from Donaldson's, NHS Health Scotland, Hearing Link, Lipreading organisations, Communication Support agencies, Audiology and Speech and Language Therapy and is chaired by SCoD's Director.

This diverse membership ensures the full range of access issues can be covered.

One item under discussion is training for Language Service Professionals (LSPs) and how to establish pathways which lead to the appropriate qualifications being universally available and recognised throughout Scotland. Additionally, in education many students are supported by Communication Support Workers (CSWs) and at the moment in Scotland there is no established course to train CSWs. This means that there is no proper monitoring of the quality of support deaf students receive in college or university and there is also a lack of support for CSWs themselves.

You will be aware from articles in previous newsletters of our Lipreading Campaign. This was developed by the Communication and Access sub-committee. People who are deafened later in life often struggle with communication and find lipreading particularly difficult. That is why lipreading should be part of their rehabilitation. It is

certainly not a recreational subject like embroidery or Chinese cooking!

There are some specific areas of access that this sub-committee is addressing such as:

- Accessible information, including safety messages on trains and aeroplanes;
- Access to websites through subtitles and video clips;
- Access to Arts and Media for example through captioning and/or interpretation in cinemas and theatres;
- Access to democracy;
- Access to leisure and sports;
- Telecommunications.

Resolving many of these issues depends on increasing the awareness of those working in these areas as well as gauging what it is that deaf people want and need.

The Communication and Access Sub-committee was only set up last year and has made a lot of progress in just four meetings. There is a long way to go however so please look out for any future campaigns and give us your support.

## Deaf Awareness & Communication Tactics with Deaf People

- Terminology & Statistics
- Deafness - truth & myths
- Hearing Aids - benefits & limitations
- Communication Tactics - 'toolbox'
- ... and much more

*Courses specifically aimed at front-line staff dealing with the public or those working with deaf colleagues/people.*

*Half day and full day courses available*



training & development



## Deaf Awareness with Introduction to British Sign Language (BSL) & Work-based Signs

- Terminology & Statistics
- Deafness - truth & myths
- Hearing Aids - benefits & limitations
- Communication Tactics - 'toolbox'
- Fingerspelling
- Introduction to BSL
- Productive and receptive skills
- Work based signs

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It was a beautiful morning – the sun was just rising over the Firth of Forth as I travelled to Dundee for SCoD's AGM. A good start and the day got even better.

We were made very welcome at Tayside Deaf Hub and it was clear everyone had gone out of their way to help make the day a success. Thank you all. We especially appreciate the volunteers who had given up their time to work with us.

It was a day of renewing friendships and forging new ones and it was great to feel the "buzz" as people chatted before the meeting.



In the afternoon, Hamish Rosie (above) spoke of his life as a Deaf artist and showed us some of his beautiful paintings. Again, I'd urge anyone who missed the AGM to see Hamish's work if you get the chance. Many of the audience shared his memories of going away to school at an early age (Hamish is from Orkney and boarded at Aberdeen School for the Deaf) and of studying and working without any communication support. Some of his old Scottish friends were in the audience and we enjoyed their memories of being encouraged by Hamish to take up a paintbrush too.

We would like to thank Dundee City Council for giving us a Civic Reception and Depute Lord Provost Ian Borthwick for his kind words about SCoD.

We had a wonderful lunch and the sunset on the way home was the perfect end to one of the best SCoD AGMs I've been to.



We had two unique speakers who had travelled up from England to be with us. Eva Fielding-Jackson who came to speak about her book "Hava – against all Odds" was a most engaging speaker and had us laughing one minute and in tears the next. Eva was born in Hungary and is the daughter of two Deaf Jewish Holocaust survivors. The family moved to Israel when Eva was 3 and her own deafness went undiagnosed until she was 14. Eva entertained us with stories about her life and family. It is impossible for me to convey here the rapport between Eva and her audience, so if you missed her and you get an opportunity to see her yourself – go!



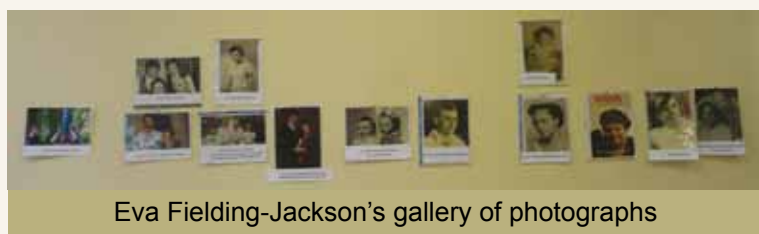
Eva's book -  
available in all  
good bookshops!



Lilian deep in conversation with  
Depute Lord Provost Ian Borthwick



Enjoying a superb lunch at the Hub



Eva Fielding-Jackson's gallery of photographs





# Relive those Sporting Triumphs!

Regular readers and sports fans will be eager to hear further news of our hotly anticipated Deaf Sporting Memories DVD.

We can now confirm that after extensive work interviewing, filming and reviewing the footage, eighteen Deaf Scottish sports men and women have made it into the final cut.

The DVD is in its latter stages of production (editing, captioning, design) but the project is on target to complete by mid December, with final copies arriving in the SCoD office early in the new year.

Our run is limited to only 500 copies. Find out how to secure your own copy of this gem of Deaf sporting history, in addition to learning more about the project by visiting the SCoD website: [www.scod.org.uk](http://www.scod.org.uk).



## CAPTIONING GLASSES FOR THE CINEMA MASSES

Sony is hard at work building a special pair of glasses for cinema-goers that will display captions to the wearer without the words having to appear on the screen.

For deaf or hard of hearing cinephiles, the glasses will enable them to pop down to any screening rather than having to schedule their lives around the scarce special captioned screenings.

"What we do is put the closed captions or the subtitles onto the screen of the glasses, it's super-imposed so it looks like the actual captions are on the cinema screen," explains Sony Digital Cinema, Tim Potter.

Sony reckons the glasses could hit UK cinemas in early 2012, although it's not clear

how well - if at all - the specs would work with a 3D film.

We're not sure even the most dedicated film lover would be on board with donning two (or perhaps even three!) pairs of glasses at once.

Sony is eyeing future possibilities for its glasses technology too - like simultaneous conversation transcription so that deaf people can read what's being said to them during the course of a conversation.



The second DVD in our "Presenting the Past" Deaf History series of six was launched at the AGM. We are limited to a run of only 500 copies per title - so, to secure yourself a copy of each DVD please complete the order form below. This form can also be downloaded from our website: visit [www.scod.org.uk](http://www.scod.org.uk) and look under 'Projects'.



## History DVD Order Form

Name:

Address to send the DVDs:

Postcode:

I wish to order all six titles for £10 ☐

I wish to order single titles at £2 each

Deaf People at Work ☐

Deaf People at War ☐

Deaf People on the Road ☐

Deaf People at Home ☐

Deaf People Socialising ☐

Deaf People at School ☐

I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Scottish Council on Deafness ☐

Once completed, please send with your remittance to:

Scottish Council on Deafness, Central Chambers Suite 62, 93 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 6LD

Please note that only the **at Work** and **at War** DVDs are ready to ship.

If you order all six titles, the others will be sent as soon as they become available.



# Clare Canton: Deaf Interpreter

When I was young I was forever translating for my Deaf siblings when we went to visit our family, the ice cream van or shops. As a competent lipreader, I could translate what was being said into British Sign Language (BSL). When my family signed, I would translate into spoken English to the hearing people. That gave me the confidence to integrate with hearing people. Many times at conferences Deaf people have asked me what was meant by the presenters, as they couldn't follow the hearing interpreters, and I have acted as a relay interpreter to clarify what was being said.

Over the past twenty years I have gained extensive experience presenting, translating and interpreting into British Sign Language (BSL), on video and television for Channel 4, ITV, other major broadcasters and multi-media companies. The move from television to the world of the interpreter was a big step. I have learned so much about interpreting – for example the complexities of going between BSL and English (and back again!) using different registers, depending on the audience.

This sparked my interest in the world of interpreting and having joined the “Building Bridges” Apprentice Interpreting Scheme overseen by SASLI, I successfully completed and graduated from Leeds University in 2010.

I am registered with SASLI, am a Member

of ASLI and am proud to be the first Deaf BSL/English interpreter in Scotland!

My role as an apprentice interpreter allowed me to spend time working with a range of agencies and institutions across Scotland: working with different age groups, modifying the language for Deaf children and adults with varied language skills and dealing with the translation of materials from written English into BSL.

I am also experienced in French Sign Language (LSF), through not only my French husband but also my Deaf sister who lives in Paris. Many of my Deaf and hearing family members are scattered throughout France, Finland, Spain and Iran. This gives me a broad knowledge, understanding and multicultural awareness.

I have travelled extensively throughout Europe, the Middle East and the USA meeting Deaf and hearing people, using different communication methods. A few years ago I worked on a tour for Deaf visitors to Scotland where I was required to use International Sign Language. I attended the EFSLI conference in Estonia in 2009 which introduced me to a broader interpreting sphere. I have now interpreted into International Sign at conferences in Glasgow and Italy. I was also at the World Deaf Golf Championship in St Andrews.

This experience equips me to offer what is very important to many Deaf people: the services of a Deaf interpreter with a deep personal understanding of Deaf culture, Deaf identity and the place of Deaf people in the world.

I enjoy the opportunity to work with different people in many varied environments and look forward to the future.



Deaf interpreters can work from text to sign and vice versa; sign to Deafblind manual and vice versa; and from one sign language to another sign language and vice versa.

So, what kind of work might a Deaf interpreter do? Here are a few ideas: on television (live and pre-recorded), in theatre and on film, at conferences, on websites, on information and educational DVDs, translating text such as video letters, books and documents; sight translation, for example translating a short document to a Deaf person on the spot...



## Acronym Alert!

**ASLI** is the Association of Sign Language Interpreters



**EFSLI** is the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters



**SASLI** is the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters







# Deaf in the Story

## Firsts for BSL & the Deaf Community at the Scottish Storytelling Centre

Storytelling has always been popular in Deaf culture. For generations the Deaf community has shared and passed on its stories in the Deaf clubs, under the streetlamps after closing time, and in their own homes.

Stories are also important in Scottish history and culture. The Scottish Storytelling Centre in Edinburgh's High Street is dedicated to preserving and continuing Scotland's great storytelling tradition. Now, the Storytelling Centre is determined to include BSL storytelling in its work.

On Saturday 5th November, between 200 and 300 people, both Deaf and hearing, came to the Centre for an event called 'Deaf in the Story: Visual Stories of an Invisible People'. The idea came from the BSL:UPTAKE project at Heriot-Watt University. BSL:UPTAKE has collaborated with Deaf organisations on many projects in the past, such as the

consultation on a BSL Bill for Scotland in 2010.

For 'Deaf in the Story', BSL:UPTAKE worked with the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University to translate two stories from a traditional Scots storyteller into BSL.

The Storytelling Centre's BSL Storyteller, Mark MacQueen, ran BSL storytelling workshops in the Centre's 99-seat Netherbow Theatre.

SCoD, Deaf History Scotland, Donaldson's School and Deaf Action were amongst other organisations who displayed and shared their BSL stories on DVD, websites and in person.

Esther Blackburn of the Scottish Storytelling Centre, said, "What a positive, fantastically forward-looking event. It's really buoyed us up to carry on the BSL storytelling work."

Professor Graham Turner, leader of the BSL:UPTAKE project, said, "One of the most fantastic aspects of 'Deaf in the Story' was the age-range of the visitors – from infants to the most senior citizens... The stories on display captured memories of the past and dreams for the future. They are vital to the continuity of a proud Deaf identity."

*by Bob Duncan*



Two Scots stories translated by Frankie McLean can be found on the BSL:UPTAKE website: [www.bsluptake.org.uk/info/?cat=756](http://www.bsluptake.org.uk/info/?cat=756)



# Ready for the Challenge!

Grant Ferguson recently completed his Law Degree (LLB) at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. We sent Andy Irvine off to find out more.

## **Where were you born and where did you go to school?**

I was born in Glasgow, and attended Parkhouse School for the Deaf, then Burwood Park School from 1980 to 1985 then after that I spent two years at Norfolk House College from 1985 to 1987.

## **What was your first job? And what do you do now?**

My first job was with Glasgow City Council – in fact I'm still there working for a joint venture between the Council and Serco called ACCESS. I'm employed as an Analyst/Programmer in the Application Business Solutions section.

## **What made you first take up further education?**

I felt that there were no opportunities for moving onwards and upwards and few promotion opportunities. Since leaving school I had received no training and gained no additional qualifications, my CV needed a boost, but perhaps more than anything, I wanted to prove to myself that 'I can do this'. I was ready for the challenge.

I started with a HNC in Computing at Glasgow Central College now called City of Glasgow College and then moved on to a HND in Computing Support. By achieving these qualifications I felt ready to go even further. I started a part-time degree course in Networking and Computer Support at Glasgow

Caledonian University on a day release basis over 18 months.

## **What was your experience of your first degree?**

Well, the HND enabled me to join the course in its second year. It was certainly a lot of work over the 18 months with demands of coursework and studying while also working full time. Overall, it was a good course, very practical and hands-on in terms of networking and configuration of routers, although some aspects were theoretical and quite challenging. I still have dreams about internet protocol (IP) addressing and subnetting (horror!).

Most of the course material was not 'deaf-friendly', I felt I was always 'catching up' compared to my fellow hearing students, re-reading or waiting to question lecturers to gain a better understanding, however, working in IT helped with the subject matter. I tend to think rather than keeping my 'head above water' it was more like 'swimming in mud'! This was very challenging, but through perseverance, I attained very good marks in the exams which I was really happy about. I graduated in 2007.

## **You work in IT (information technology) - what made you choose law?**

Well, after Caledonian University, I was going through a separation and while meeting with solicitors

I quickly realised that even with interpreters there was a gap, something missing in the process. It was all quite frustrating but I thought if I'm feeling this, so would other deaf people who also needed access to legal advice or representation in the many areas of law. So with this in mind, I considered that if I could achieve an IT degree, what about law? It could be possible. From then on, I felt determined to go through with it, knowing that it would be completely different from studying IT. Again this would mean forgoing my social life for yet more studying – but again I was ready for the challenge!

## **What was the course like?**

Before applying to the course at the University of Strathclyde I attended an open-day which provided information on the course, content and structure etc. I found out that in addition to the formal and more traditional lecture and tutorial methods a large amount of course material was available on-line via what's called 'web casts' where the lecturer was filmed delivering the lecture and having access to related material on the same screen – it was like a multi-media application. I enquired if these could be subtitled and accessible for deaf students and was assured that these could. This was certainly a new way of teaching and learning. I soon realised that the language used in law was going to be completely different from IT and as a BSL user



I anticipated a great deal of work with the course content.

### **How was this funded?**

As you would expect, studying law on a part-time basis is not cheap, so I wrote to many companies and trusts seeking financial support for my studies. I was extremely lucky and honoured to be awarded the full fees for the five year course from The Clark Foundation for Legal Education. Funding for each successive year was dependant upon passing and then producing a written report. This was fantastic and I will be eternally grateful for the support and the faith put in my ability. Looking back now I can see that this was a huge weight off my shoulders and such a boost to my own confidence.

### **What was the format of your studies?**

The course consisted of a number of subjects, some of which were core with others being elective. Subjects covered included criminal law, evidence, legal theory, family law, legal process and legal methods, contract law etc. As you can see there are many areas of law. Lectures were spread over two evenings per week with tutorials taking place on most Saturday mornings while squeezing in studying, revision and of course, assessed work!

### **Did you take part in university life - socially - the bar - pizza?**

Well no, there was no time really, as I said working full time and studying part time with assessment deadlines and reports etc there was no time for much at all. My social life basically went out the window! But I did look forward to the summer breaks after the exams. That was a time to re-charge ready for the next semester.

### **What did you find most difficult or easy during your studies?**

Studying law was completely different from my previous

university experience. There is a lot of theory, statutes and case law. Coffee certainly helped during the long study nights! But seriously, understanding the theory and principles that make law was not easy. Assessment deadlines were stressful and required a lot of planning around work and home life. The key was prioritising conflicting demands and keeping to a routine.

### **How did you overcome any obstacles?**

Again, as you would expect, materials in law are not deaf friendly and there were many times I had to read, re-read and read again which was the only way to get my head around some of the complex concepts. At times the web casts were not subtitled and I was always on the 'catch-up' compared to others on the course. The provision of transcripts certainly helped but was not ideal and probably not on equal terms to hearing colleagues.

## **THE CLARK FOUNDATION FOR LEGAL EDUCATION**

**Sponsors of Grant's Law Degree**

### **You have your law degree (LLB) so what are you doing now?**

I achieved my LLB within 4 years and not the planned 5 years as the culmination of credits from my previous degree meant I was finished sooner than expected which was excellent news. With the iron still hot so to speak, I applied for a place on the Diploma in Professional Legal Practice - a prerequisite to practice law. So I'm not quite finished yet: this is a one year course, again part time and spread over three evenings per week which is very, very demanding. The diploma is very task and project focused which tries to apply the topics covered in the LLB to real life scenarios.

### **After the diploma in professional legal practice - what doors are open for you and what do you want to do?**

I hope to get a work placement within a legal setting. This is also a prerequisite to practice law. It's never too early to plan and I will start sourcing my options shortly - who knows what lies ahead - another challenge no doubt! As yet I am not sure what area of law I would like to develop, I haven't yet found my niche. I am very interested in discrimination and civil law which takes me back to the deaf community and the gap that I felt from my own experience.

### **Would you recommend studying law to other deaf people?**

Yes I would. Law affects all aspects of life and is truly fascinating. I would like to see other deaf people tread the same path. The legal profession has never really been an option for deaf people to follow. Times change, society changes, deaf people change! Opportunities are there.

### **Now after all that - What do we call you - my learned friend or just good old Grant?**

Hmm... let me think about that ... Mr Ferguson does have a ring to it but I think I'm still the same old Grant that I was when I started my educational journey, perhaps with a few more grey hairs, but still the same.

### **Would you do it all over again?**

To be honest ... no. But in saying that, I wouldn't change what I have done, it's been an exhausting and challenging journey and I'm glad I started on what at the time was a small footpath to what now feels like a four-lane motorway. I am proud of what I have achieved as an individual and as a Deaf person. I have a new insight and respect for the law and for those who work within the profession which, to be honest, I never gave a second thought to before.

**Grant, you certainly rose to the challenge. Well done.**



# Policy & Research

Mandy Reid

Policy work has been particularly intense over the summer and continues to be because of the coalition government's commitment to the welfare reform programme.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has been particularly busy in its publication of consultations which will shape the Welfare Reform Bill that is sitting in Westminster at the moment. The Welfare Reform Bill is the biggest review of the welfare system in the UK since it was introduced sixty years ago. The Scottish Government consultations have been slightly more varied; they have looked at housing, older people, patient rights and the future of the emergency services.

## Welfare Reform

There have been a number of DWP consultations over the summer months: the Sayce Review that looked at Access to Work and how this could be made more effective by possibly closing down Remploy and the residential training colleges in England; Housing Benefit for people who live in supported housing provided by social landlords or voluntary sector organisations; and changes to Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

The UK Government has decided to change DLA to Personal Independence Payment (PIP), which will be targeted at the people who have the greatest level of disability. Instead of three levels of payment as there is at present with DLA, it is proposed that PIP will only have a standard rate and an enhanced rate for the mobility and care elements. The DWP has said that genuine claimants will not

miss out and that nobody will be worse off under the new scheme. The first consultation on the criteria for claiming PIP resulted in the DWP having to produce a second draft of the assessment criteria that is significantly different from the initial proposals and most of the changes they have had to make are a direct result of the feedback they received on the first draft. We now have a chance to respond to this second draft before they go out to public consultation again. This is really important if deaf people are not going to lose out under the new payment scheme.

## Scottish Consultations

There has been a number of consultations on the needs of older people including the National Strategy for Housing for Older People and a call from the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sport Committee for papers for the Regulation of Care for Older People. There have also been consultations on the Social Housing Charter; the secondary legislation for the Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011; and the Scottish Breast Screening Programme, which is under review for the first time since it was set up ten years ago.

The government has decided that there should be a single police force and a single fire and rescue service in Scotland and there have been a number of consultation events taking place on various aspects of the proposals. SCoD has been involved in the Equality Impact Assessments for both services.

The Scottish Government is in the process of reviewing the content

and the look of its website. This is an ongoing process that started two years ago. In November, SCoD took part in a focus group to look at the Health and Social Care pages. There are 5000 pages in total in this section on the website. It is planned to try to make the pages more accessible for everyone, including deaf people. SCoD is keeping a "watching brief" on progress.

## Inclusive Communication in Scotland

As reported in the last SCoD News, the work of the ILiS Inclusive Communication Working Group has come to an end and the promotion of the Principles of Inclusive Communication has been taken up by Communication Forum Scotland. I am a member of the Reference Group that is acting as a "critical friend" to the project which is taking the promotion work forward by working with people who have communication support needs at four regional seminars for the strategic planners in public bodies and a conference next March. I am working with Donaldson's School on how deaf people can hold public bodies to account on whether or not they have applied the Principles to the work they do.

Would you like to know more about my work or get involved in our consultation responses?

If so, please contact:  
**mandy@scod.org.uk** or  
tele/textphone:  
**0141 248 1854.**



# BDA Scotland becomes ILA Provider

The BDA Scotland Office was awarded ILA Scotland provider status earlier this year. This means that all BDA's British Sign Language (BSL) Scottish courses are now eligible for Individual Learning Account (ILA) Scotland funding support. ILA Scotland is a Scottish Government scheme that helps you pay for learning that you can do at a time, place, pace and in a way to suit you. It's for people with an income of £22,000 a year or less, or who are on benefits.

If you are 16 or over and living in Scotland, you could get £200 each year towards the cost of learning with a learner account from ILA Scotland.

## The benefits of learning

Learning something new can open doors for you. It can help you to earn more money, get a better job or do something you really enjoy. It can be a way to meet new people - even if you weren't very keen on learning when you were at school, ILA Scotland

can help you find a course you'll enjoy now.

If you are interested in learning something new or brushing up your skills there is a wide range of courses available.

ILA Scotland contact information for learners:

Do you need information, advice or support to help you get back into learning? Why not give the ILA Scotland helpline a call on 0808 100 1090, or check out the ILA website:

[www.ilascotland.org.uk](http://www.ilascotland.org.uk)

## Learning with the BDA

As a major provider of a range of British Sign Language (BSL), Deaf Equality, Frontline BSL and other BSL training in Scotland, the BDA is an important 'bridge' between the Deaf and Hearing worlds.

Classes are enjoyable, rewarding and challenging and if you have any questions or would like to book a course, contact Diane,

the BSL Administrator:

[dianem@bda.org.uk](mailto:dianem@bda.org.uk)

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# Scottish Council on Deafness (SCoD)

Representing the interests of Deaf Sign Language users, Deafblind, Deafened and Hard of Hearing people throughout Scotland for over 80 years

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As the 'Voice of Deaf People', SCoD is the lead organisation for deaf issues in Scotland.

We represent 90 organisations working with and on behalf of Deaf Sign Language users, deafened, deafblind and hard of hearing people. Our membership provides an effective working partnership between the Voluntary Sector, Social Work and Education Departments, NHS Trusts, Health Boards and the Government.

SCoD membership offers excellent benefits, including the opportunity to shape government policy and improve the lives of deaf people in Scotland. Renewable annually, **full membership** runs from April 1st to March 31st of the following year. Full membership is open to organisations only.

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4	up to £500k	£150
5	up to £1million	£200
6	over £1million	£300

## Full SCoD Membership Application Form

Organisation

I wish to become a Band  Member (see above for banding)

Key contact

Voice

Address

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Please invoice me at the address shown ☐

Web

I enclose a cheque or postal order payable to the Scottish Council on Deafness ☐

Once completed, please post or fax this page to SCoD - details below