

Aspects of Deafness in Eighteenth-Century England

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Abstract

With claims that deaf history is a suppressed part of general history, aspects of deafness in eighteenth-century England are uncovered to provide knowledge and understanding of the lives of deaf people and to shape a further understanding of disabilities in this period. Using eighteenth-century primary sources such as the British Newspapers, Historical Texts and records from the Old Bailey Proceedings, we have been able to situate deaf people in eighteenth-century English society and shed light on the attitudes towards and experiences of deaf people in medicine, law and education.

Deaf people were not prevented from living their lives in a similar way to their hearing counterparts: they married, had children and retained employment. Nevertheless, they encountered a common barrier: communication. Eighteenth-century deaf people had different communication needs, were able to communicate verbally and rely on lipreading, others relied on signs and gestures, and only a limited number of people could communicate with them. The extent to which this communication barrier posed restrictions and the adjustments made included writing things down and by using gesture and home signs.

The examination of deaf people in eighteenth-century medicine, law and education reveals that attitudes towards deafness differed in different aspects of life. Medicine viewed it as an illness or disorder to be cured. The legal world, however, was not consistent, differing depending on whether they had the ability to speak, or at least show understanding through other forms of communication, influencing the outcome

of legal matters, particularly criminal trials. The education of deaf children, on the other hand, is not a new area of exploration, and this thesis builds upon what has already been researched and reappraises the education of deaf children before the opening of establishments that focused on them and the changing attitudes as to whether deaf children could indeed be educated.

Declarations and Statements

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed

Date 30 June 2021

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed

Date 30 June 2021

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed

Date 30 June 2021

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Acknowledgements

Having completed a history degree at Cardiff University, I was exasperated deaf people did not get a mention in any of the modules I studied and barely any academic textbooks on such areas considered deaf people. If you pick up a general history textbook on any event in history, there would be very little or no discussion about the experiences of deaf people. Being a deaf person, I naturally wanted to know more about deaf people in the past. In an attempt to gain some knowledge, I completed my BA dissertation on Deaf People in the Holocaust. This only revealed deaf people had a larger role in history than was recognised, fuelling my desire to know more. I went on to complete a Masters degree in Deaf Studies at Bristol University, particularly looking forward to the Deaf History module but it only focused on what deaf history was. I investigated how deaf history as a discipline was developing as part of my assessment for that module, which confirmed my suspicions: deaf history was absent in academia. Filling this gap became my mission, leading me to Swansea University to complete the MRes. For this inspiration and determination, I thank the History department at Cardiff University, and the Deaf Studies department at Bristol University, which unfortunately has now closed. I also thank Swansea University History department for this opportunity.

The journey to completing this thesis has been long, and one I thought I would not complete. Despite being pregnant with my youngest child at the beginning and expecting an interruption to my studies for the period of maternity leave, I still began with the expectation this would be a smooth journey. That could not have been further from the truth! My health and family life forced me to split my priorities: when

researching and writing, I faced several unexpected medical procedures, surgeries and a life changing medical diagnosis. My daughter faced discrimination at school, leading to the lengthy process of transferring her to another school. I sadly lost a close relative to an unexpected and aggressive form of cancer and to top it all off, Covid-19 reared its ugly head! This meant switching to study 100% online, with limited access to the university library, certainly not ideal for history! We also had to take on the bewildering role of teacher to our three children during the home-schooling periods of lockdown, not something I ever envisaged!

I thank my supervisor, Professor David Turner, for this opportunity. The day he agreed to take me on as his student was the day I could finally satisfy my curiosity about deaf people in history. He has seen what a turbulent journey this has been and I am sure there were times he questioned my ability to finish this MRes. His patience, understanding, knowledge, support and guidance has been valuable and for that, I express my sincerest and heartfelt thanks. Lynn Delfosse, my BSL/English interpreter, has been present at every supervision meeting and her ability to see the positive side to every discussion and feedback when I tended to be negative, contributed to my continuance more than she will ever realise and for that, I thank her wholeheartedly.

My three children, Corey, Libby and Emily, deserve a mention. They have been a welcome distraction when I've needed to 'switch off' and take a break from my studies. I am sure they will be glad to see the back of this thesis and for me to no longer use "sorry, I need to work on my thesis" as an excuse not to do things with them. Their acceptance, patience and little words of encouragement gave me the final motivating

boost I needed to reach the finish line. Their interest in my primary source findings has been touching, particularly the girls who are deaf themselves. After looking at my primary sources, Libby, at just 9 years old, is now questioning why her history lessons at school do not cover the experiences of deaf people! My children have convinced me I was right to be stubborn and stick with my research when health and family life needed my focus more. Without realising, they have also highlighted the importance of my research for the deaf community and for younger deaf generations to come. For this, I cannot thank them enough. My friends and members of the deaf community have also shown nothing but enthusiasm about my research and this has given me a boost too – thanks guys!

Finally, last and most certainly not least, my love and deepest gratitude goes to my husband, Rob, who believed in me more than I believed in myself. He has been on the receiving end of all the ups and downs throughout and has borne the brunt of my tantrums, frustration and negativity, which hasn't been easy for him since he's a generally positive guy! He was always open to discussions about my findings, doing so with such interest and enthusiasm and he gave me time to focus on my studies when I needed it. There are just no words to describe the value of his love, continuous support, encouragement, patience and generally putting up with me: without him, this thesis would not exist.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

'Deaf history is a suppressed part of general history'¹ and less than 50 years ago, 'deaf history' did not exist'.² Secondary sources confirm that there are scant records about deaf people, suggesting that inclusion of deaf people has usually not been at the forefront of historians' minds, aside from academics who specifically set out to research and write about deaf people. Indeed, according to Paddy Ladd, the validity of deaf history was only recognised after the publication of Jack R Gannon's *Deaf Heritage, A Narrative History of Deaf America*, in 1981,³ and subsequent work by Lane,⁴ Van Cleve⁵ and Baynton.⁶ Ladd went as far as to suggest that Lane's publication in 1984 in particular 'confirmed for the first time in a century that deaf communities did indeed have a history'.⁷ These academics, however, focus on American deaf history. Other publications involving deaf people have tended to be within the context of specific historical events particularly from the nineteenth century onwards, such as the Holocaust.⁸ There are, nevertheless, a number of publications referring to important figures in the seventeenth century and their contribution to deaf education and communication. Bulwer's work on the treatment of deaf people, his

¹ John Vickrey Van Cleve, *Deaf History Unveiled* (Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2002), p. ix

² Van Cleve, *Deaf History Unveiled*, p. ix

³ Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003), p. 155; Jack R. Gannon, *Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America* (Silver Spring, MD: National Association of the Deaf, 1981)

⁴ Harlan Lane, *When the Mind Hears: A History of the Deaf* (USA: Random House, 1984)

⁵ Van Cleve, *Deaf History Unveiled*; John Vickrey Van Cleve, *The Deaf History Reader* (Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2007)

⁶ Douglas C. Baynton, *Forbidden Signs: American Culture and the Campaign against Sign Language* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996)

⁷ Ladd, p. 155

⁸ Donna F. Ryan and John S. Schuchman, *Deaf People in Hitler's Europe* (Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2002)

main work being *Philocopus*, was published in 1654, but it still has relevance to the eighteenth century (see Chapter Five). Bearden has also explored the idea that Bulwer promoted signed languages as a universal language encouraged and taught in England.⁹ Publications referencing John Wallis, the seventeenth-century pioneer in sign language also exist, including Norman's article in 1943.¹⁰ Both Bulwer and Wallis will be discussed in due course.

This thesis builds on these recent insights, but broadens the focus of research to examine wider social, cultural, medical and legal attitudes to deafness in eighteenth-century England. The main focus of this thesis is the social, educational and legal experiences of deaf people and medical treatment of deafness rather than theological or philosophical debates about hearing and the senses. Therefore, while religious ideas about deafness are discussed where appropriate in relation to the key themes of this thesis, their full consideration lies beyond the scope of this work.

In doing so, this thesis develops further the approaches taken in Cockayne's article, *Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England*¹¹ and Lindgren's chapter on *Deafness: Language and Personhood in the Enlightenment*.¹² While covering the period from 1550 to 1750, Cockayne serves as a useful starting point for the

⁹ Elizabeth Bearden, *Before Normal: John Bulwer, Disability, and Natural Signing in Early Modern England and beyond*, Publications of the Modern Language Association, vol. 132, issue 1, Cambridge 2017, pp. 33-50

¹⁰ Norman, Hubert James. "John Bulwer (fl. 1654) the "Chirosopher" Pioneer in the Treatment of the Deaf and Dumb and in Psychology." (1943): 589-602

¹¹ Emily Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 46:3 (2003), 493-510

¹² Kristin Lindgren, 'Deafness: Language and Personhood in the Enlightenment', in D. Christopher Gabbard and Susannah Mintz (eds.), *A Cultural History of Disability in the Long Eighteenth Century* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020), pp. 87-102

exploration of deaf people in eighteenth-century England. Meanwhile, Lindgren discusses the humanity of deaf people in the age of the Enlightenment, particularly the evolution from oralism to manualism, the role of sign languages and how the education of deaf children and improving levels of literacy throughout the century encouraged philosophers to consider deaf people as something more than ignorant savages.¹³ There are also several brief studies focusing on deaf education. The founding of Thomas Braidwood's school in Edinburgh in 1760 is covered in the *Deaf Studies Encyclopaedia* and the *Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language and Education* and Borsay's publication, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750*, also focuses on education in the context of deaf people.¹⁴ This suggests education is one of the few areas of deaf history in England to have already received attention but apart from Cockayne's article, there have been few attempts to explore other aspects of deaf people's experiences in England prior to the mid-eighteenth century. Cockayne sheds light on further gaps in deaf history stating it does not include:

the experiences of the post-lingual deaf, who would have communicated fairly well through speech, and of the prelingually deaf who did not receive specialist education, thus ignoring the circumstances of the majority of the deaf population.¹⁵

This is what makes deaf history unique. Deaf people, as a collective group, are not all the same; there are varying degrees of hearing loss and differences in communication needs. They are the only disability group that would use a language different to the hearing majority, sign language, with some using it more than others.

¹³ Lindgren, pp. 87-88

¹⁴ Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

¹⁵ Emily J. Cockayne, *Cultural History of Sound in England 1560-1760* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Cambridge University, 2000), p. 58

Therefore, one cannot assume 'the deaf experience' will have been the same for all. This thesis will therefore address both the scarcity of deaf history research and diversity of deaf experiences in this period by first providing a general overview of aspects of life in the eighteenth century, prompted by an initial search of primary sources that provide a snapshot of the lives of deaf people in England.

The main purpose of the thesis to explore attitudes towards deafness and deaf people in various contexts in the eighteenth century. When available, the experiences of individual deaf people are brought into the discussion, although the limitations of both the numbers and types of such sources may not be typical. For example, they may be geared towards certain types of individuals (in terms of class or occupation), or they may focus on particular regions, such as London, depending on the subject matter and the sources available. Therefore, it would be a stretch to state with certainty that these attitudes are prevalent in eighteenth-century England as a whole. Nonetheless, they will, at the very least, provide an indication of what attitudes may have existed towards deafness and deaf people in the eighteenth century.

It should be borne in mind, however, that 'it can be difficult to assess the sentiments of those afflicted by hearing loss, most especially the profoundly congenitally deaf, as they left very few records'.¹⁶ Cockayne's statement has been given some consideration with a possible explanation for limited records being the use of sign language. Sign language is a visual language and unless video recorded, written

¹⁶ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 497

about, or painted, very little can be known about it. The use of sign language in eighteenth-century England will be considered throughout this thesis because as well as serving as a possible explanation for limited records, it can provide some insight into how deaf people communicated.

Methodology

A thorough search for deaf people and deafness in eighteenth-century primary sources, particularly newspapers and historical texts, has been carried out to examine aspects of deafness in eighteenth-century England, with the following key questions in mind: What do representations of deafness tell us about expectations concerning deaf people's lives and experiences in this period? What do they tell us about how deaf people communicated with friends and family? Did attitudes differ according to a deaf person's social background?

When summing up eighteenth-century England, Olsen refers to the famous opening paragraph of Dickens' 1859 novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*: 'it was the best of times, it was the worst of times'.¹⁷ It is sometimes portrayed as the 'best of times' because it was 'populated by fat, boisterous, patriotic squires and tall-haired, witty society matrons; symbolised by foxhunts, roast beef, quaint, peasant pastimes';¹⁸ the general perception that people tend to have of eighteenth-century England. In contrast, Olsen also provides a bleaker picture, describing it as the 'worst of times' because of:

high taxes, riots, wars, regional rivalries, technological changes, brutal public executions, widespread poverty, transportation and branding of criminals,

¹⁷ Kirstin Olsen, *Daily Life in 18th-Century England* (London: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. xii

¹⁸ Olsen, p. xii

anxieties over gender roles, and unsettling changes in trade, communications, transportation, and agriculture.¹⁹

Regardless of society's state of affairs, its members still needed to eat, sleep, marry, have children and work. These basic imperatives continued, whether a child, an adult, rich, poor, disabled and even deaf. There is a wealth of academic texts that focus on the eighteenth century, but references to deaf people, particularly in relation to Dickens' description, are almost non-existent.

As aforementioned, to address this gap, bearing in mind the availability of digital databases that contain eighteenth-century primary sources, an online search for deaf people using the keyword 'deaf' in eighteenth century newspapers and historical texts has been undertaken. This method does not come without its pitfalls. The *Burney Collection of Eighteenth Century Newspapers*, a resource largely relied on for this thesis, has various texts available online utilising a 'methodology for capturing text known as Optical Character Recognition (OCR)'.²⁰ This method is used to quickly make available large amounts of texts online, which works well for prints posted after the 1840s, but is not as reliable for early modern prints, resulting in this method being combined with another method, graphical mapping.²¹ As a result, 'the Burney Collections' OCR has a character accuracy rate of 75.6 per cent ... giving an overall word accuracy of 65 per cent, which drops at a rate of 48.4 per cent when looking at significant words'.²²

¹⁹ Olsen, p. xii

²⁰ Tim Hitchcock, 'Confronting the Digital: or how academic history writing lost the plot', *Cultural and Social History*, 10:1 (2013), 9-23, pp. 12-13

²¹ Hitchcock, p. 13

²² Hitchcock, p. 13

In determining appropriate keywords for online searches, the choices are limited. Dickie explains that the modern understanding of disability as a 'unified category' did not exist in the eighteenth century and further suggests: 'one would be quite wrong to post significant solidarity between different deformed groups - between the blind and deaf, dwarfs, hunchbacks, or the elderly'.²³ A more general search for 'disabled people' in primary sources has therefore not been carried out, particularly as the term 'disabled' was rarely used in the eighteenth century as an inclusive label for different impairment groups. This provides the justification for searching for deaf people in primary sources just by using the term 'deaf,' as it did exist in eighteenth-century vocabulary. 'Deaf and dumb' and 'deafness' are other obvious terms and searching for the more generic 'deaf' would also include these results. Other keywords associated with 'deaf' could also include 'hearing impaired' or 'impaired hearing,' 'hearing loss' or 'hard of hearing' but these were not widely used terms in the eighteenth century and generated little or no search results.

The search for the word 'deaf' often led to articles with the word 'deal', and in other cases led to the idiom 'deaf ears'. Nevertheless, relying on digitised evidence has enabled us to find deaf people across a range of primary sources in ways that would have been very difficult for previous generations of historians and as deaf history is not yet firmly infused in the realms of mainstream history, starting this way works well. We have therefore been able to benefit 'more comprehensively than any other humanist subject from the advent of the infinite archive'.²⁴ Adopting this approach and

²³ Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 46

²⁴ Hitchcock, p. 7

searching the word 'deaf' between 1 January 1700 and 31 December 1799 on Burney's Collections revealed 11,819 results, 40,701 results on Historical Texts and 97 results on the Old Bailey Online. These findings did include words such as 'deal' and 'deaf ears' as discussed above. Some references were also duplicated in multiple sources.

The primary focus is to explore how deafness and deaf people were treated within particular social, legal and medical settings, rather than presenting an overarching theory of how attitudes towards deafness changed over time. As we shall see, there are some areas which see distinctive changes over the time period studied, for example in the growing provision of education for deaf children. In other areas, such as social experiences, it is more difficult to identify clear change over time. The focus therefore is to examine the diversity of attitudes towards deafness in this period, and to explore the wider cultural influences that shaped attitudes towards deafness.

The findings from these results unveil eighteenth-century attitudes towards deaf people that date as far back as 355BC, to the time of Socrates and Aristotle. Socrates believed deaf people were incapable of languages and ideas²⁵ and Aristotle held that deaf people were 'senseless and incapable of reason'.²⁶ The fact that these ancient

²⁵ Patricia Scherer, 'History of Deaf Education', *Encyclopaedia of Special Education* (C. R. Reynolds, K. J. Vannest and E. Fletcher Janzen (eds), 2014), <<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118660584.ese0671>> [accessed 20 June 2021]

²⁶ Lennard J. Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 175

philosophers were still being referred to suggests these mindsets towards deaf people continued to persist in the eighteenth century, or at least had some influence over how deaf people were perceived. There are also mentions of deaf people in numerous eighteenth-century newspapers and there are several collections of biographies of deaf people,²⁷ discussed further in Chapter Two. Therefore, it is possible to find deaf history but only if one purposely looks for it. Van Cleve observes:

as historians probe more deeply into the past, as they ask new questions and discover new evidence, it is becoming apparent that deaf people have played a larger role in their own history than has been recognised.²⁸

Disability history is still in its infancy in terms of historical research,²⁹ and the extent to which disability historians have included deaf people is unclear. Apart from Viridi,³⁰ who focuses on deaf people from the nineteenth century onwards, and the pioneering work on deaf history mentioned previously, disability historians have not specifically focused on deaf people, although they have been referred to sporadically.³¹ Deafness is one of several disabilities and for disability historians to focus on the history of each one individually is a mammoth task. Baynton insinuates that 'disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories we write'.³² Even though Baynton talks about disability, we can assume deafness is

²⁷ Chris Mounsey (eds), *The Idea of Disability in the Eighteenth Century* (Maryland: Bucknell University Press, 2014), p. 14

²⁸ Van Cleve, *Deaf History Unveiled*, p. x

²⁹ David M. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 2-3

³⁰ Jaipreet Viridi, *Hearing Happiness: Deafness Cures in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2020)

³¹ Holly Faith Nelson and Sharon Alker 'Perfect According to their Kind', in Chris Mounsey (ed.), *The Idea of Disability in the Eighteenth Century* (Maryland: Bucknell University Press, 2014), pp. 31-47; Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*

³² Douglas C. Baynton, 'Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History' in Lennard J. Davis, *The Disabilities Studies Reader*, 5th edn (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 31

included in that statement since he is the author of *Forbidden Signs*³³ and co-author of *Through Deaf Eyes*,³⁴ both of which focus on American deaf history and culture. When explaining the concept of disability, Borsay explains ‘the concept itself has often been confined to physical impairments that in the past were collectively associated with ‘the crippled’.³⁵ However, she further states that the boundaries of disability history have recently expanded to include the sensory impairments of blindness and deafness.³⁶ This thesis contributes to this growing field.

Labels

It should be borne in mind that deafness and disability are different. Deafness is not a physical impairment, and a deaf person is not always visually obvious. It is more of an invisible disability, with the main issue being communication and the implications that follow, such as lack of awareness of one’s surroundings due to lack of access to audio information. Despite the likelihood of needing constant physical care, those with physical disabilities were, to a certain extent, able to interact with their families and community more easily, unlikely to face the communication barriers in the same way as deaf people. Although there are similarities between the two in terms of the barriers they would have encountered in society and the experience of exclusion in society due to their impairments and stigmatisation of being different, the fact remains that they were nevertheless regarded in different ways because of communication barriers

³³ Baynton, *Forbidden Signs*

³⁴ Douglas Baynton, Jack R. Gannon, and Jean Lindquist Bergey, *Through Deaf Eyes: A Photographic History of an American Community* (Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2007)

³⁵ Borsay, p. 8

³⁶ Borsay, p. 8

which excluded them from the rest of the community, a community that would have included those with other disabilities as far as communication was concerned.

Despite the prevalence of primary sources that mention deaf people, they are still scarce. A reason for this could be how deaf people were labelled. An eighteenth-century dictionary definition of 'deaf' is one who is 'deprived of the power of hearing'³⁷ and 'dumb' is defined as someone who is 'incapable of speech'.³⁸ Particular attention has been paid on the use of the word 'deaf' in primary sources as clarity was sought as to whether references to a deaf person is one who is hard of hearing or profoundly deaf, whether deafened later in life due to age or an accident and whether the deaf person is with or without the ability to speak. Variations have been identified in eighteenth-century newspapers and historical texts. Those identified with some degree of hearing loss have either been labelled 'deaf and dumb', 'deaf', or as someone with 'thickness of hearing'.

For the purposes of this thesis, the term 'deaf and dumb' refers to someone who could not hear nor speak, usually since birth. Conversely, 'deaf' is a reference to a person who could speak and is likely to have been deafened at some point in their life. Although there is no definition for 'thick of hearing' in eighteenth-century dictionaries, this appears to be someone with a partial or temporary hearing loss, or loss of hearing late in life, as illustrated in medical and scientific texts such as *The*

³⁷ Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol. I (London: Thomas Tegg, 1832), p. 471

³⁸ Johnson, p. 587

Philosophical Transactions for the Royal Society.³⁹ The search for deaf people in primary sources does not include those who were 'thick of hearing' because it is likely their experiences did not reflect the experience of deaf persons as a whole. Temporary hearing loss would have meant not experiencing all aspects of life as a deaf person and someone with late onset deafness is likely to have fulfilled the key events in their lives, such as getting married or working, as a hearing person. These terms will be discussed further in Chapter Three when examining deafness in the context of medicine in eighteenth-century England.

It is possible that deaf people were not labelled according to their hearing loss, but how they came across to the observer and writer. For example, communication breakdown and the inability to speak, or at least speak articulately, could have led one to assume the deaf person had a mental impairment. Borsay explains that the term 'disability' only recently included those with sensory impairments that 'were previously described as 'idiocy', 'mental deficiency', 'mental sub-normality' and 'mental handicapped'.⁴⁰ The search for deaf people in eighteenth-century England does not include people with mental impairments because unless otherwise stated, there would be no way of knowing whether the person was deaf. Cases where a deaf person has been referred to as mentally impaired or an 'idiot' will be discussed in Chapter Four, which considers the legal status of deaf people. Chapter Four also emphasises that 'deaf' people were viewed differently to those who were 'deaf and dumb', which was important in determining the experience they had when subject to the strong arm of

³⁹ John Lowthorp, *The Philosophical Transactions and Collections*, Vol. III, 4th edn (London: T.W., 1732)

⁴⁰ Borsay, p. 8

the law. Despite some of the terms being regarded as offensive today, particularly 'deaf and dumb', they do nonetheless provide an insight into the general mindset relating to deafness in the eighteenth century.

Disability history has faced a similar issue regarding the availability of evidence.

Turner explains:

it is a common view that there are few primary sources relating to disability, especially prior to the nineteenth century, and those that survive are often geared towards the role of professionals and service providers rather than reflecting the perspectives of disabled people and their families.⁴¹

Research on deaf history has not only been limited, it has also disproportionately focussed on the experiences of deaf children rather than adults. In confirming that references to deaf adults were absent,⁴² Van Cleve acknowledges the 'available sketches of various hearing men, primarily teachers, who were credited with bringing knowledge and enlightenment to generations of deaf children',⁴³ a point further explored in Chapter Five. This suggests the likelihood of finding references to deaf people in primary sources will therefore mainly be about deaf children, which would explain why the study of deaf history in England has to date focused mainly on deaf education. Nevertheless, primary sources exist that present evidence of deaf adults in birth, marriage and death announcements, deaf people in work and notable deaf figures, all of which are discussed in Chapter Two.

⁴¹ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 12

⁴² Van Cleve, *Deaf History Unveiled*, p. ix

⁴³ Van Cleve, *Deaf History Unveiled*, p. ix

Structure of the thesis

Chapter Two focuses primarily on what was reported about deaf people and the role of newspapers in shaping and reflecting the experiences of and attitudes towards deaf people in eighteenth-century England, by identifying what was reported and considering why it was reported. Therefore, Chapter Two serves as an introduction to deaf people in eighteenth-century England and the British Newspapers Online database provides most of the content for this chapter with references to birth, death and marriage announcements about deaf people, as well as reports about the employment of deaf people. This chapter provides a broad social context for experiences of deafness in eighteenth-century England and leads on to chapters with a specific focus on medicine, law and education respectively.

The limited information found in newspaper reports about deaf people provides an impetus to explore deaf history in the eighteenth century in general terms, by way of a notation in a legal document or a reference to a wedding or funeral. For example, an announcement of the marriage of a deaf person and the summary of how the ceremony was conducted, whether verbally or through gesture/sign language already shows deaf people were allowed to get married and they did so; it also provides insight into how deaf people may have communicated. Such reports also raise questions about the newspaper report itself: was this reported because the person was deaf or was it usual to report marriage announcements in this fashion? When discussing disabled people, Turner explains disabled men are more visible than disabled women

and class status is also under-explored.⁴⁴ Whether this is the case for deaf people will be considered too.

Chapter Three also stems from newspaper research following the discovery of several adverts promising cures for deafness and advertising treatments such as ‘The Great and Famous Cephalick Liquid Snuff’⁴⁵ and ‘The Great German Spirit for deafness, Thickness of Hearing’⁴⁶ as well as statements about successful cases.⁴⁷ As a result, we are initially led to believe that deafness was viewed as an illness or a disorder to be cured. However, it transpires that the eighteenth-century medical world gave deafness significant attention and there are ample medical texts in relation to deafness, detailing an understanding of the workings of the ear and suggestions for treatment. ‘Histories of disability have often focused on the causes of impairment and the treatment of disabled people as recipients of medical provision or institutional care’⁴⁸ and as deafness is, put simply, a result of the ear not working properly, the eighteenth-century medical view towards deafness is closely examined in this chapter, with the aim of understanding why it was deemed necessary to treat deafness as well as obtaining an overview of medical perceptions of deafness and whether they differed according to varying degrees of deafness.

Chapter Four focuses on deaf people in the legal system, another angle that stems from newspaper articles. While the number of deaf people tried for criminal offences

⁴⁴ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 9

⁴⁵ *Flying Post*, 13-16 July 1700

⁴⁶ *Flying Post*, issue 1528, 15-17 February 1705

⁴⁷ *General Advertiser*, issue 5212, 4 July 1751

⁴⁸ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 3

was small, these cases offer an insight into the lives and experiences of people on trial. This builds upon the work of early modern social historians that have used court records to shed light on broader aspects of social life in this period, including disability.⁴⁹ It was also a common occurrence to question whether a deaf person was capable of committing a crime or entering a contract when unable to speak; it has been discovered that in western Europe, prior to the eighteenth century, deaf people were generally deemed legally incapable, unless they were able to demonstrate their understanding, meaning that they could neither be punished nor marry or inherit their parents' property and/or wealth.⁵⁰ How much this was the case in eighteenth-century England will be examined.

Chapter Four, therefore, will observe how the legal system regarded deaf people and what impact general eighteenth-century attitudes towards deaf people had on their experiences with the law, particularly with crimes committed. This is particularly interesting as in early English law, a person born deaf and dumb was presumed an idiot.⁵¹ To clarify, an idiot in the early eighteenth century was, as explained in 1607 by legal writer John Cowell, 'a person alien from human society from birth, illiterate, uncommunicating and locked into a private mental world.'⁵² In the eighteenth century,

⁴⁹ Christopher Stone and Bencie Woll, 'Dumb O Jemmy and Others, Deaf People, Interpreters and the London Courts in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Sign Language Studies*, 8:3 (2008), 226-40; David M. Turner, 'Disability and Crime in Eighteenth-Century England: Physical Impairment at the Old Bailey', *Cultural and Social History*, 9:1 (2012), 47-64

⁵⁰ Peter Lovell, *The Law's Disposal of a Person's Estate Who Dies without Will or Testament*, 7th edn (London: T. Whieldon, 1790), pp. 139-141

⁵¹ Albert C. Gaw, *The Legal Status of the Deaf: The Development of the Rights and Responsibilities of Deaf-mutes in the Laws of the Roman Empire, France, England, and America* (Washington DC, Gibson Brothers, 1907), p. 72

⁵² Simon Jarrett, *Those They Called Idiots: The idea of the disabled mind from 1700 to the present day*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2020), p. 23

an idiot was 'conceived as irrational, vulnerable, easily duped, lacking understanding of everyday social commerce'.⁵³ However, legal rights were granted in some cases when deaf people who could express themselves with writing, speech or using sign language were considered capable under certain conditions,⁵⁴ and so deaf people were regarded capable of taking part in legal proceedings. This was particularly true from 1725, as discussed by Stone and Woll.⁵⁵ These legal perceptions of deaf people provide the scope for wider analysis which will be explored in this chapter.

The penultimate chapter of this thesis gives deaf education close attention. Although this chapter will introduce a topic that is not new, it deserves further exploration because the fact a school for deaf children was eventually established contributes to an understanding of positive attitudes towards deaf people: they could be educated. From various publications, it is known that the first school for the deaf was established in Scotland in 1760, but what these secondary sources do not tell us is what educational opportunities deaf people had prior to this. Therefore, the aim of Chapter Five is to create a further understanding of eighteenth-century deaf education, dealing with questions such as: were deaf people taught in the same way as their hearing peers prior to the development of deaf schools and how easy was it to access education prior to the setting up of deaf schools? The educational opportunities of eighteenth-century citizens are also considered to determine whether the deaf experience was typical and if not, why. It must be noted, however, that most of the

⁵³ Jarrett, pp. 30-31

⁵⁴ Gaw, *The Legal Status of the Deaf*, p. 74

⁵⁵ Stone, Christopher and Bencie Woll, 'Deaf People at the Old Bailey from the Eighteenth Century Onward', in Michael Freeman and Fiona Smith, *Law and Language: Current Legal Issues*, Vol. 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

public before the nineteenth century, especially the working class, was illiterate,⁵⁶ so deaf people may have not possessed the literacy skills to leave written records, a point supported by Lane who asserts 'an educated deaf person [was] something akin to a raree show'.⁵⁷ All these variables will be discussed in Chapter Five.

It has been stated that 'so much has been written about society in eighteenth-century England that it is surprising any fields remain unworked'.⁵⁸ Houston, however, argues that despite the vast number of publications regarding eighteenth-century England, the quality of social relations still require further examination, the lives of the lower class need more attention having left scant documentation, and attitudes towards leisure requires further exploration too.⁵⁹

Nonetheless, Houston's argument persists in relation to deaf people. His three categories apply to deaf people, so these questions serve as a guide for further exploration and this thesis will demonstrate how much there is to be uncovered about deaf people, in the process demonstrating that there is indeed more to be discovered about the eighteenth century. It will become clear that the information is available, just not yet received the attention it deserves, and this thesis will provide further insight for the field of deaf history as well as contributing to the wider understanding of disability

⁵⁶ R. S. Schofield, 'Dimensions of illiteracy, 1750-1850', *Explorations in Economic History*, 10:4 (1973), 437-454

⁵⁷ Lane, *When the Mind Hears*, p. 214

⁵⁸ Robert A. Houston, 'British Society in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of British Studies*, 25:4 (1986), 436-466, p. 462

⁵⁹ Houston, 'British Society in the Eighteenth Century', p. 462

in eighteenth-century England and to recognise key developments regarding sign language and modern deaf culture.

Chapter 2 - Deaf in Society

Introduction

Chapter One highlights the references to deaf people in eighteenth-century primary sources, whether a birth, death or marriage announcement, articles reporting a deaf person's occupation, or reviews of a stage performance including a portrayal of deaf characters. Apart from the areas of medicine, law and education, the search for deaf people in eighteenth-century England has uncovered sporadic references and to present these under one coherent theme has proven to be a considerable challenge. When considered in isolation, these are considered somewhat insignificant, but their contribution to deaf history cannot be ignored. They come under the auspices of the 'history of the people' approach to social history.¹ Social history reconstructs 'the lives of all the people in all its aspects, including their economic activities and relationships'² and this approach is appropriate for this chapter as it focuses on the everyday lives of deaf people.

Drawing primarily on representations of deaf people in newspapers, this chapter explores eighteenth-century attitudes towards deafness by examining birth, death and marriage announcements referring to deaf people, how deaf people were portrayed in entertainment, the types of performances deaf people would have enjoyed, and what they did for leisure and in their social lives. Deaf people and their professions or

¹ Adrian Wilson, *Rethinking Social History: English Society 1570-1920 and its Interpretation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 9

² Wilson, *Rethinking Social History*, p. 9

workhouses and asylums will also be explored. These are some facets of everyday life in eighteenth-century England and will assist in an understanding of the lives of deaf people during this period. The chapter then culminates in a consideration of some notable deaf people, and any information of note relevant to the themes throughout this chapter. As we shall see, the achievements of deaf men tended to be reported more widely than those of deaf women, reflecting the fact that deaf women's roles in this society - like those of women in general - were expected to be domestic and therefore less worthy of note. Although limited by the sporadic nature of references in the source material, the chapter nevertheless contributes to a preliminary analysis of eighteenth-century attitudes towards deafness and deaf people.

Polite society is an important subject for historians of eighteenth-century Britain³ and has occupied an important place in recent interpretations of Britain in this period.⁴ It is therefore a subject that cannot be ignored for the purposes of this thesis and has particular relevance for this chapter. The eighteenth century 'saw the emergence of ... social refinement - politeness - practised by and within 'polite society', by which is meant the personnel who sought politeness'.⁵ Therefore, it is expected that deaf individuals within eighteenth-century England, at least those within the elite or middle classes, would have sought politeness, and it is within this context that accounts of deaf people's experiences in the eighteenth century are to be considered. As well as

³ Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1880* (Singapore: Pearson Education, 2001), p. 15

⁴ Lawrence E. Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 45:4 (2002), 869-898, p. 869

⁵ Carter, p. 1

aspiring to be polite, politeness would have also influenced the way people viewed deafness. For example, the ability to engage in 'conversation' was a common way to demonstrate one's politeness, and deaf people would have had some difficulty in engaging in such conversations for obvious reasons, thus influencing whether people viewed them to be polite or not. This will go some way to address Turner's concern that 'the ways in which concepts of civility and politeness found a means for accommodating physical difference ... have received little attention'.⁶ Although Turner makes a distinction between physical and sensory impairments,⁷ his focus being on the former, the message is nonetheless the same: those who were deaf have similarly received little attention.

The overall aim is to illustrate the attitudes prevalent towards deafness and deaf people in eighteenth-century England and, where available, discuss the experiences of any deaf individuals identified. This thesis will also uncover isolated, and possibly neglected, eighteenth-century references to deaf people. Even though most references, particularly in newspapers, 'a vital source of information for the population at large',⁸ state minor facts with little detail, it is possible to ask questions such as why it was reported and explore whether such reports were generally the norm, whether it was because the person was deaf and if the latter, what it shows about attitudes towards deaf people in this time period. As well as contemporaneous texts such as letters and biographies, the role of newspapers in this period will be given some

⁶ David M. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 87

⁷ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 4

⁸ Hannah Barker, *Newspaper, Politics and English Society 1695-1855* (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), p. 28

consideration by way of examining their contribution to the attitudes and experiences of deaf people in eighteenth-century England. As 'newspapers were central instruments in the social production of information, both representing and verifying local experience',⁹ they would have contributed to society's perceptions of deaf people to some degree and are therefore an important source of information for the purposes of this chapter.

Eighteenth-century attitudes towards deaf people and the deaf experience

As a starting point, in 1750, it was remarked that 'Hearing is one of the most valuable Senses, and the Loss of it may be ranked in the Number of the greatest Misfortunes'.¹⁰ A newspaper announcement some sixteen years later declared a man 'had the misfortune to be so very deaf'.¹¹ While enumerating the 'diseases of the Great', deafness is described as one of the worst disorders¹² although whether this source focuses on the 'Great' or other members of society generally is unclear and it raises questions about whether there is a class dimension to the perception of deafness; class background will be taken into consideration when references to deaf people are identified.

References to 'unhappy persons' have included those 'who are born deaf and dumb'¹³ and deaf people have also been considered as 'distressed objects'¹⁴ and 'unhappy

⁹ Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 40

¹⁰ Claude Nicolas Le Cat, *A Physical Essay on the Senses* (London: R. Griffiths, 1750), p. 67

¹¹ *Public Advertiser*, issue 9909, 8 August 1766

¹² *Sun*, issue 1206, 6 August 1796

¹³ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, issue 942, 25 July 1763

¹⁴ *Oracle*, issue 19, 367, 7 July 1796

objects who are a burden to themselves and a loss to society',¹⁵ as well as 'idiots',¹⁶ all of which have negative connotations. While discussing old age, deafness is listed as one of the more damaging effects; according to the doctor William Buchan: 'few things prove more troublesome to persons in the decline of life than deafness'.¹⁷ An experience of deafness is found in 1776, which was described as cutting one off from society, but the person in question compensated for the loss of hearing by making 'his eyes supply the defect of his ears, by amusing himself with his pen and his books; and at this time he contributed largely to the admired papers, intitled, THE WORLD'.¹⁸ It has to be noted, however, that the ability to 'amuse' oneself with writing for publications is somewhat privileged.

Deafness is considered more troubling for individuals because codes of polite conduct in the eighteenth century put a great deal of emphasis on 'conversation' as a way of demonstrating refined manners, that is, a 'polite society'. Politeness was:

the means to acquire a suitably refined, yet virtuous, personality that proved superior to many existing forms of manly virtue which, on account of their association with elitism, violence or boorishness, were judged detrimental to truly polite sociability.¹⁹

Of particular interest here is the word *boorishness*. Would not being able to converse effectively, an obvious issue for deaf people, have been considered boorish? In an attempt to seek further clarification of politeness in the context of deaf people, we turn to Carter's reference to James Boswell's journal detailing his visit to Inveraray Castle

¹⁵ *General Evening Post*, issue 9193, 25-28 August 1792

¹⁶ *Observer*, issue 303, 24 September 1797

¹⁷ William Buchan, *A Letter to the Patentee, Concerning the Medical Properties of the Fleecy Hosiery*, 3rd edn (London: Peterborough-House Press, 1790), p. 20

¹⁸ T. Mortimer, *The British Plutarch*, Vol. VI (London: The Poultry, 1776), p. 195

¹⁹ Carter, p. 1

in Scotland in October 1773, which provides some insight. Boswell refers to Samuel Johnson's 'gentleness, deference, considered and considerate conversation, and careful listening'.²⁰ The reference to conversation and careful listening are particularly relevant; to be considered 'polite', one had to be able to engage in conversation and be able to listen carefully, something that would not have come easily to deaf people.

Carter further documents that easiness, conversation and listening were essential behaviours for polite sociability.²¹ Easiness referred to the ways men were expected to behave at sociable encounters such as dinner parties.²² Conversation was recognised as central to politeness and a key requirement of the modern gentleman, and both the *Tatler*²³ and *Spectator*²⁴ provided clear advice on the means by which successful communication could be achieved, with two essential requirements: 'genuine sociability' and 'self-discipline.' In relation to 'genuine sociability,' Richard Steele suggested that 'erudition and wit [should be] subordinate to goodwill or "complaisance"',²⁵ which could be achieved by speaking of 'interesting, respectable subjects ... in a direct, clear, yet pleasing tone'.²⁶ 'Complaisance' could also be achieved by being a good 'Hearer'.²⁷ Finally, 'self-discipline' was about being 'firm' and 'resolute' in conversation, avoiding giving offence, and controlling conversations

²⁰ Carter, p. 3

²¹ Carter, pp. 62-64

²² Carter, p. 62

²³ Richard Steele, *The Tatler*, Donald F. Bond eds, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967)

²⁴ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, Vol. IV (London: Dent and Co, 1714)

²⁵ Carter, p. 63

²⁶ Carter, p. 63

²⁷ Carter, p. 64

so as to show respect while avoiding comments that shocked, embarrassed or intruded into others' privacy.²⁸

On the other hand, conversation is generally regarded to have been of less importance towards the end of the eighteenth century as 'the art of conversation could be increasingly dispensed with, as an unnecessary and alien activity'.²⁹ This implies that the need to actively engage in conversation was not necessarily as much of a requirement to be considered 'polite,' which would have been an advantage for deaf people. In addition, with an emphasis on listening rather than talking, this would have provided deaf individuals who may not have always understood what was being said, to give the impression that they were at least listening. This, however, could have posed the risk of becoming 'trapped with an ignorant or frivolous conversant',³⁰ or giving off the impression of 'unlimited complaisance,' regarded as an 'evil'.³¹ Although no evidence of a deaf person being 'trapped' in a conversation has been uncovered, there is an example of a hearing person being 'trapped' in a conversation with a deaf person:

Dorothy, daughter of Sir Peter Osborne, after spending time with William and Edward Gostwicke, complained that they had 'made such a tedious visit, and I am tired of making signs and tokens for everything I had to say.'³²

²⁸ Carter, p. 64

²⁹ Paul Langford, 'Manners and the Eighteenth-Century State' in John Brewer & Eckhart Hellmuth, *Rethinking Leviathan: The Eighteenth-Century State in Britain and Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 299

³⁰ Carter, p. 64

³¹ Carter, p. 64

³² Emily Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 46:3 (2003), 493-510, p. 510

Within the context of a polite society, accounts from deaf people themselves give an insight into what it can be like to live as a deaf person in eighteenth-century England, such as Jonathan Swift explaining that his deafness rendered him ‘unfit for any conversation’³³ and he is found mourning the loss of his hearing: ‘Deaf, giddy, helpless, left alone: to all my friends a burden grown’.³⁴ In February 1788, the philosopher Thomas Reid wrote to the physician James Gregory explaining that he had become so deaf he can now only ‘converse with one person’ and explained how he found social life disorientating, particularly not knowing ‘when a laugh is raised, whether to laugh at one ... or to be grave when other people laugh’.³⁵

Letters from Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, explaining his experience of hearing loss offers further insight into the experience of deafness:

Cut off from social life by my deafness, as well as other physical ills, and being at best but the ghost of my former self, I walk here in silence and solitude, as becomes a ghost, with this only difference, that I walk by day, whereas, you know, to be sure, that other ghosts only appear by night.³⁶

Some years later, with his hearing showing no signs of improving, Stanhope continued to struggle with the effects of deafness: ‘troubled with deafness, a complaint that pains the mind more than the body ... my deafness continues, and consequently my spirits sink’.³⁷ From the letters by Swift and Stanhope it is clear that they both struggled with

³³ Jonathan Swift, ‘Jonathan Swift to Erasmus Lewis, Saturday 3 August 1737’, *Electronic Enlightenment Scholarly Edition of Correspondence*, ed. Robert McNamee and others, Vers. 3.0. (University of Oxford, 2018), <http://www.e-enlightenment.com/item/swifjoOU0050062b_1key001cor> [accessed 10 January 2020] (para 2 of 4)

³⁴ Simon Dickie, *Cruelty and Laughter: Forgotten Comic Literature and the Unsentimental Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 50-51

³⁵ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 112

³⁶ Philip Dormer Stanhope, *Letters written by the Late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope*, Vol. II (Dublin: E. Lynch and 11 others, 1774), p. 458

³⁷ M. Maty, *Miscellaneous Works of the late Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield*, Vol. III, 2nd edn (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1779), pp. 270-274

the effects of their deafness, probably more so because they went deaf later in life and had to learn to adapt.

The artist Sir Joshua Reynolds also struggled with deafness. He was ‘so remarkably deaf as to be under the necessity of using an ear trumpet in company. His silver ear-trumpet always accompanied him’.³⁸ Reynolds is reported to have lost his hearing due to an accident at the age of 29 and was ‘widely known to be very hard of hearing’.³⁹ The fact he relied on the use of an ear trumpet suggests he could benefit from some degree of hearing and in his *Self-Portrait as a Deaf Man* displayed in London Tate Gallery, he is seen cupping a hand behind his ear noticeably straining to hear.⁴⁰ A further description of Reynolds is one who, during discussions, ‘shifted his trumpet’. Reynolds did not embrace his deafness and was quite dismissive and critical of sign language:

Reynolds dismissed the gestures of the deaf as “extravagant and forced”, arguing rather tortuously from a distinction between mutism and deafness that there were no “dumb” gestures that the artist could learn from.⁴¹

Once deafness became an issue, he relied on the aid of an ear trumpet,

to partake of the conversation of his friends with great facility and address; and such was the serenity of his temper, that what he did not hear he never troubled those with whom he conversed, to repeat.⁴²

³⁸ Samuel Felton, *Testimonies to the Genius and Memory of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (London: J. Walter, 1792), p. 69

³⁹ Nicholas Mirzoeff, *Silent Poetry: Deafness, Sign, and Visual Culture in Modern France* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 28

⁴⁰ TATE, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: Self-Portrait as a Deaf Man* <<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/reynolds-self-portrait-as-a-deaf-man-n04505>> [accessed 8 June 2020]

⁴¹ Mirzoeff, p. 29

⁴² Edmond Malone, *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, Vol. I, 4th edn (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809), p. ixxxix

Reynolds' hostility towards sign language and the fact he did not appear to ask others to repeat suggests he was in denial about his deafness and felt anger with his own acquired deafness, which 'he tried so hard to overcome'.⁴³

It is likely that Reynolds' anger was a result of his struggle to conform with eighteenth-century polite society; his deafness placed him at a disadvantage in doing so, particularly as he would not have been able to be seen to be a 'good Hearer',⁴⁴ a condition of politeness. However, despite such difficulties, Reynolds was:

famous for his affability, an example of how people of comparatively modest origins could be almost universally acknowledged to embody contemporary principles of politeness and amiability once the traditional templates for the 'well-born' or 'well-bred' person had been disseminated within an increasingly public sphere.⁴⁵

Reynolds is not the only deaf person to have been referred to in the context of politeness as found in some death announcements including a Peter Le Neve, Esq: 'though he laboured under the infirmity of being deaf and dumb ... he was Master of several polite sciences'⁴⁶ and Robert Loggin, Esq, who died after a 'lingering illness ... who tho' he had the Misfortune of being deaf and dumb', was remarkable for his Quickness of Apprehension, and genteel Behaviour, which procur'd him the Esteem and Favour of the Polite World.⁴⁷ Therefore, while deafness was considered a social disadvantage, it did not entirely exclude people from politeness.

⁴³ Mirzoeff, p. 29

⁴⁴ Carter, p. 64

⁴⁵ Klein, p. 881

⁴⁶ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 881, 23-25 October 1766

⁴⁷ *Penny London Morning Advertiser*, issue 137, 12-14 March 1744

In light of the social isolation and unhappiness of deaf people, as highlighted above, eighteenth-century authors engaged in discussions about whether 'blind people or deaf people are the greater objects of compassion', suggesting that the loss of senses were given due consideration in eighteenth-century England.⁴⁸ A deaf person explains in a letter he wrote to one of his friends how his deafness deprived him of the pleasure of conversations and that it would be better to be blind than deaf.⁴⁹ *St. James's Chronicle* highlighted a reflective discussion on this very issue: 'all say it is being blind than deaf, that the latter are vastly more melancholy, low spirited than the former',⁵⁰ and while writing about his own deafness, Swift comments that the loss of hearing was 'the greatest loss of any and more comfortless than even being blind'.⁵¹

Grose went further, stating: 'it is a general observation, that deaf men appear more unhappy and melancholy than those afflicted with blindness; whence it is inferred that deafness is the greater evil'.⁵² He further explains that his observation was made when such persons were in company and he acknowledged that the experiences of a deaf man and a blind man would be different when alone:

...the blind man scarcely feels his deficiency, by which his hearing and attention is often benefited, whereas the deaf man being totally cut off by his disorder from all vocal intercourse, is by company reminded of his misfortune. To judge fairly, one ought to contemplate the deaf man when alone in his study, and compare his enjoyments of those with the blind man in company; of compare the sufferings of the deaf man in company, with those of the blind man when alone. Perhaps blindness may be most tolerable to an illiterate man, and deafness to a learned one.⁵³

⁴⁸ *Whitehall Evening Post*, issue 5590, 22-24 July 1783

⁴⁹ H. R. Fox Bourne, *The Life of John Locke*, Vol. II, (London: Harper and Brothers, 1876), p. 505

⁵⁰ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 1090, 23-25 February 1768

⁵¹ Swift, para 4 of 4

⁵² Francis Grose, *The Olio: Being a Collection of Essays, Dialogues, Letters, Biographical Sketches, Anecdotes, Pieces of Poetry, Parodies, Bon Mots, Epigrams, Epitaphs* (London: S. Hooper, 1792), p. 258

⁵³ Grose, p. 258

Grose discerns here that deaf men are excluded from conversations when in company, and they are reminded of that fact when in company, whereas blind men are not. He establishes a link between this state of affairs and literacy, concluding that literacy is more useful to deaf men than blind for this reason, even though it was not unusual for some to state that those 'blind from birth are more intelligent than those born deaf and dumb'.⁵⁴ The reference to deaf men rather than deaf people also emphasises the focus on men, highlighting gender bias.

The views towards and experiences of educated deaf individuals compared to those who were uneducated differ, as Le Cat refers to in the context of happiness:

To form a right Judgement of his excessive Misery, we need only reflect how valuable to Mankind are the Lights of Education, of which this Species of deaf persons is almost totally deprived.⁵⁵

Le Cat suggests, in the same guise as Grose, that education provides a remedy for deaf people's communication barriers, and in a letter written in 1807, Weeden Butler agrees. He reinforces deaf people's misfortune:

The blind are not half so pitiable' as being deaf, because the pleasures of conversation and the charms of music can much alleviate their want of sight but how truly destitute appear the persons born deaf and speechless!⁵⁶

Armed with eighteenth-century observations, particularly that of the introduction of Braidwood's school for the deaf in the late eighteenth century, Butler advocates education as a remedy for deaf people's communication barriers. While discussing

⁵⁴ W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 24

⁵⁵ Le Cat, p. 69

⁵⁶ Sylvanus Urban, *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, Vol. 77, Part 1 (London: J. Nichols and son, 1807), p. 36

the 'intellectual comfort afforded to Deaf and Dumb', he explains that without the ability to read, deafness is a condition 'mournful in the extreme'.⁵⁷ Elaborating further:

without one ray of intellectual comfort from social intercourses or religious principle, these unhappy objects seem exclusively doomed to pine away existence in ... hopeless misery but then some to their immediate connections as useless, if not troublesome to the community deafness.⁵⁸

Butler also offers an insight into the impact of education on deaf people, making clear that education is important to alleviate the unhappiness and misfortunes of deaf people:

...the Deaf and Dumb may at least be rendered conversable; that they may even be furnished with general knowledge and blest with moral and religious information. Henceforth, the means of happiness in this world and treasures of polite literature are placed within their grasp.⁵⁹

This attitude continued into the nineteenth century with the philanthropist Frederick Wines claiming 'educated deaf people were in better control of their lives than the blind'.⁶⁰ The introduction of the school for the deaf and its important contribution to the lives of deaf people from the late eighteenth century onwards is discussed further in Chapter Five.

So far, it seems generally deaf people in eighteenth-century England were pitied. However, some discoveries of positive attitudes towards deafness have been found: 'the deaf too are infinitely happier than the blind' and 'the loss of sounds can never be

⁵⁷ Urban, p. 36

⁵⁸ Urban, p. 36

⁵⁹ Urban, p. 36

⁶⁰ Y Söderfeldt and P Verstraete, 'From Comparison to Indices. A disabling perspective on the history of happiness', *Health, Culture and Society*, 5:1 (2013), 249-264, p. 255

compared to that of sight'.⁶¹ This was further elaborated on in *The Post Angel* periodical in 1702, the focus on men:

The deaf man hath no sufficient reason to be sad, or to deem himself unhappy, considering through those entries or passages many offensive things make their entrance to the mind ... O! how happy and fortunate were Deaf men if they understand their own good, he is likewise deliver'd from the loud and ridiculous laughter of fools and the imperfect complaints of desperate persons ... Deaf men are safe from many deceits.⁶²

In 1750, *Le Cat* suggests an alternative way of viewing deafness:

I must nevertheless agree with those who look upon Deafness, that is not from one's Birth, as an Accident less grievous than Blindness. There are in the World more Objects of the Sight, than of the Hearing. And besides, Understanding is conveyed by the Eyes, not only by Means of Writing, Books ... but also by Attitudes, Signs and Motions of the Lips, Eyes, and Visage of those one beholds ... it is certain, that the Sight is a Supplement to the Hearing, much more eminently than Hearing is to the Sight.⁶³

The discussion of deafness in relation to blindness also reflect the hierarchy of the senses, which focused on hearing, sight, taste, touch and smell⁶⁴ and determining which is the greatest sense and which is the least important, further elaborated on in Chapter Three.

Having instigated this chapter with a consideration of general attitudes towards deafness, both positive and negative, it has been established eighteenth-century ideals of politeness would have made the inability to hear or speak highly disabling. Having said that, Klein argued 'what made the eighteenth century a polite society was not its horizontal division between polite and non-polite persons but rather the wide access of a range of persons to activities and competencies than contemporaries

⁶¹ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 11375, 27 August 1765

⁶² *Post Angel or Universal Entertainment*, issue 3, March 1702

⁶³ *Le Cat*, p. 68

⁶⁴ Bynum and Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses*, p. 67

considered 'polite'.⁶⁵ This suggests that although on a practical level deaf persons would have found it difficult to maintain 'politeness', particularly in conversation and listening, the fact remains: they would have had access to the activities and competencies available, providing opportunities that perhaps would not have existed prior to the eighteenth century. Deaf people would have been able to express their politeness in ways such as through their clothing⁶⁶ and decorum,⁶⁷ for example, other than through conversation. With that in mind, we now turn our attention to the main themes of this chapter, the 'deaf experience' in other areas of life.

Birth, death and marriage announcements

To ascertain deaf people's experiences of life in eighteenth-century England, newspapers provide considerable information. The number of newspapers grew exponentially during the eighteenth century, so their importance cannot be understated:

From only a handful of titles at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the newspaper press expanded rapidly until, by the early nineteenth century, newspapers had become part of the everyday life of English men and women. Newspapers were highly prized by a population hungry for news.⁶⁸

Alongside medical adverts advertising cures for deafness and reports of success stories, which are discussed in Chapter Three and the legal status of deaf people as well as announcements of deaf people committing a crime and standing trial, discussed in Chapter Four, birth, death and marriage announcements of deaf people

⁶⁵ Klein, p. 869

⁶⁶ Carter, p. 60

⁶⁷ Carter, p. 21

⁶⁸ Barker, p. 1

were sources of information found in British newspapers throughout the eighteenth century.

Due to difficulty finding secondary sources relating to such announcements in the eighteenth-century, we cannot conclude whether it was the norm for births, deaths and marriages to be announced or whether it was usually when there was something significant about the occasion. Whether such announcements were paid for has not been declared either, although present practices suggest that they would have been. Nonetheless, Adams offers a possible rationalisation for death notices in the context of the twentieth century which could be relevant to the eighteenth century:

Death and In Memoriam notices are inserted in a local newspaper at a time of emotional distress, when the death of a close relative or friend disrupts the continuity of a social and personal life-history threatening the ontological security of the bereaved ... these notices help the bereaved to maintain and re-establish a sense of social and biological continuity in their life-histories.⁶⁹

In addition, Black points out that '[t]he births, celebrations, marriages, and deaths of the members of the landed orders were reported regularly'.⁷⁰ This suggests that such reports depended on class background and family members who wanted to share such news.

The Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Act came into force in 1836 and until then data was collected locally, so it had to be actively sourced to be reported in the

⁶⁹ Sheila Adams, 'Women, Death and In Memoriam Notices in a Local British Newspaper' in Kathy Charmaz, Glennys Howarth and Allan Kellehear (eds), *The Unknown Country: Death in Australia, Britain and the USA* (London: MacMillan Press, 1997), p. 98

⁷⁰ Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 2010), p. 190

newspapers.⁷¹ Considering the number of births, deaths and marriages to have occurred daily, and the presumption that only certain people made announcements, the implication is that announcements referring to deaf people were considered significantly newsworthy to be reported. This is especially so as only a small number of such announcements were found: 14 death announcements and 16 marriage announcements, with the majority reported in the second half of the eighteenth century. Despite the small number, they do provide some insight into attitudes towards deaf people in this period.

Birth announcements relating to deaf individuals are scarce, probably because a child's deafness would not have been identified at birth. There is, however, a reference to a deaf mother giving birth, whereby a 56-year-old deaf and dumb woman gave birth to a little boy, described as a very 'singular circumstance'.⁷² Whether this pronouncement was made because she was deaf and dumb or because of her age is open to interpretation. A death announcement of an 84-year-old man⁷³ has been identified alongside death announcements of 121-year-old Mrs Gray,⁷⁴ 65-year-old Robert Mangle⁷⁵ and 16-year-old Miss Birkdale,⁷⁶ all of whom were reported to have been 'deaf and dumb' either from birth or from infancy. A burial notice of two 80-year-old sisters, both 'deaf and dumb' and buried in one grave is reported.⁷⁷ Some death

⁷¹ David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 3

⁷² *Star and Evening Advertiser* (1788), issue 2811, 9 August 1797

⁷³ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, issue 2007, 14 May 1770

⁷⁴ Anon., *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1770*, (London: J. Dodsley, 1771), p. 168

⁷⁵ *Whitehall Evening Post*, issue 6256, 12 June 1787

⁷⁶ *Whitehall Evening Post*, issue 6488, 6-9 March 1790

⁷⁷ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 16351, 22 May 1781

announcements provide further detail about the deaf person such as 77-year-old Mrs Jane Foster 'who had the misfortune to be deaf from her cradle, (as was her sister ... who died about three years ago), yet she learnt to read, to write perfectly well, and converse familiarly with her acquaintance'.⁷⁸ There are also references to deaf people being left behind after the death of a parent, possibly signalling concern about their vulnerability. For example, a Mr Bennet Bolton 'left a considerable fortune, which devolves to his only daughter, who is both deaf and dumb'⁷⁹ and a man named Britton died and left two daughters, both described to be 'deaf and dumb, and perfect idiots'.⁸⁰

From these announcements, we see some of the negative attitudes towards deafness found in other sources, such as the assumption that deafness was a 'misfortune' or that deaf people were 'idiots', but what is striking is the diversity of experience. As well as illustrating the range of attitudes towards deafness that is also prevalent in other sources, they show the achievements of deaf people and their ability to live 'normal' lives. They confirm, despite not providing much in the way of information, that deaf people were visible in eighteenth-century society and that they did have children. They also suggest that the presence of a deaf person was not disregarded, although it is possible these announcements were made because of curiosity as encounters with deaf people would not have been a common occurrence.

Other death announcements provide further additional information about the deaf person, such as methods of communication. The death announcement of a Thomas

⁷⁸ *Whitehall Evening Post*, issue 6361, 19-21 February 1788

⁷⁹ *London Evening Post*, issue 2863, 21 July 1774

⁸⁰ *Observer*, issue 303, 24 September 1797

Blundell in 1763 stated 'it was remarkable this Gentleman was born both deaf and dumb, yet could converse with his acquaintance by signs'.⁸¹ Other ways of communication are referred to in the *True Briton* with an anecdote about a deaf man:

Charles Fox has a son who is deaf and dumb, but who is a very intelligent and sensible man. He carries a slate in his pocket, by the assistance of which he can hold a ready intercourse with company.⁸²

In summary, these newspaper announcements present a range of views regarding deaf people and indicate a variety of social experiences; on the one hand they are viewed as unfortunate 'idiots' and on the other hand, clearly capable of adopting alternative ways to live their lives.

Regarding marriage, the Hardwick's Marriage Act of 1754 stated that a wedding would not be valid unless recorded in the parish register and signed by the bride and groom and two witnesses, whether it be a signature or a mark.⁸³ So any deaf people who married after 1754 will have been recorded, but whether every deaf person's deafness was noted is unknown. Nor do we know if every deaf person who married before 1754 was recorded. Marriage in eighteenth-century England was considered a social duty, although there were different expectations about marriage, particularly choice of spouse, according to class status.⁸⁴

With the differences in marriage expectations in mind and the social isolation deaf people experienced, evidence of whether deaf people married was sought, revealing

⁸¹ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, issue 983, 28 October 1763

⁸² *True Briton* (1793), issue 549, 1 October 1794

⁸³ Vincent, p. 3

⁸⁴ Douglas Hay and Nicholas Rogers, *Eighteenth Century English Society: Shuttles and Swords* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 45

that deaf people were not denied the opportunity to marry nor was their capacity to marry ever questioned. An

inability upon the part of a deaf-mute to understand others in general, especially strangers, is held to be insufficient to show incapacity to contract marriage ... even totally illiterate deaf-mutes have been permitted to marry when they have furnished evidence of their desire and consent.⁸⁵

Deaf marriage announcements include a Mrs Cave, who was deaf and dumb, married a tradesman,⁸⁶ and a man 'deaf and dumb from his cradle' and 'remarkable for being the most skilful Geometrician in these parts' also married. This ceremony was performed by having the 'Articles drawn up in writing', which the man signed.⁸⁷ In 1743, there is a marriage announcement of Thomas Tilsley who was 'naturally deaf and dumb' and Ursula Russet.⁸⁸ Adjustments were also made on this occasion as Tilsley was reported to have been unable to observe the Order of the Form of Marriage and instead:

for [the] expressing of his mind, instead of words of his own Accord used these signs, first he embraced her with his arms, took her by the hand and put a ring on her finger, and laid his hand upon his heart, and to show his Continuance to dwell with her to his Live's End, he did it by closing his Eyes with his Hands, digging the Earth with his feet, and pulling as tho' he would ring a Bell, with other signs approved.⁸⁹

In 1765, a deaf person married and 'when he was not able to hear or pronounces the ceremonial words ... [and] his testification by signs of his intention was taken as legal'.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Albert C. Gaw, 'The Development of the Legal Status of the Deaf: A Comparative Study of the Rights and Responsibilities of Deafmutes in the Laws of Rome, France, England, and America', *American Annals of the Deaf*, 52:4 (1907), 373-388, p. 384

⁸⁶ *Daily Journal*, issue 1831, 26 November 1726

⁸⁷ *Grub Street Journal*, issue 375, 3 March 1737

⁸⁸ *Daily Gazetteer*, issue 2375, 1 February 1743

⁸⁹ *Daily Gazetteer*, issue 2375, 1 February 1743

⁹⁰ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 11439, 9 November 1765

Lord Kames defined gestures in 1762 as the 'natural signs of emotion' which show the 'external appearance of joy, grief, anger, fear, shame, and of the other passions'.⁹¹ They also 'embod[y] some of the most significant human values: sincerity, immediate responsiveness, and sociability'.⁹² Therefore, through his gestures, Thomas embracing Ursula with his arms and placing his hand upon his heart could be seen as a sign of his love for her, and with the placing of the ring on her finger, his desire to marry her. It is also possible that gestures alone could indicate one's intention. These marriage ceremonies show adjustments were made if necessary for deaf people to marry, and it was not questioned or disputed, even though another newspaper noted that a deaf and dumb bride was 'remarkable'.⁹³

In 1773, a Mr Wright of Manchester married Miss Creswell who was able to 'read, write, and do all sorts of needlework to perfection, though both deaf and dumb'.⁹⁴ In 1774 a 'deaf and dumb young man', reported to be a shoemaker, married 'a sprightly young girl',⁹⁵ raising questions about the existence of a deaf community, because this announcement gives further details about the guests, some who were also deaf:

At the wedding there were present three of the Bridegroom's sisters, with two young men, who were all born deaf and dumb, so that there were six deaf and dumb persons convened on this occasion.⁹⁶

This announcement related to a wedding held in Greenock, Scotland, and where these three deaf siblings met other deaf people is unknown. References up to this point

⁹¹ Jeffrey R. Smitten, 'Gesture and Expression in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: A Sentimental Journey', *Modern Language Studies*, 9:3 (1979), 85-97, p. 85

⁹² Smitten, pp. 85-86

⁹³ *Whitehall Evening Post*, issue 6373, 18 March 1788

⁹⁴ *London Evening Post*, issue 8071, 18 December 1773

⁹⁵ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 2147, 12-15 November 1774

⁹⁶ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 2147, 12-15 November 1774

restricted contact with other deaf people to family members, mainly siblings. For example, reporting the death of the Earl of Inchiquin, *St. James's Chronicle* state: 'his lordship had two daughters, who were both deaf and dumb'⁹⁷ and 'there is a family now living in Hemmingsrow, St. Martin's Lane consisting of the man, his wife, and seven children, four of whom are deaf and dumb'.⁹⁸ However, there was a marriage between a deaf couple in 1764:

a remarkable wedding, lately consummated at Llanbeblig, the parish church of that town, between Anthony Thomas ... aged 45, and Elin Prichard ... aged 24; they both having been born deaf and dumb; and such had been for a long time their mutual affection for each other ...⁹⁹

This wedding took place in Wales and was reported in a London newspaper which suggests deaf couples were not a common occurrence, or at least it was not usual for deaf couples to get married. The age gap between this couple also suggests it was not easy to meet other deaf people of a similar age. There are no references to a significant gathering of deaf people who are not siblings in England in this period, hence raising questions about whether there were any deaf communities prior to the establishment of Braidwood's school for the deaf.

Despite these sources showing deaf people marrying, unions involving deaf people were represented comically and found in jestbooks: 'One asked a young gentleman, what he meant to marry so deaf a Gentlewoman? He answered, Because I hop'd she was also dumb'.¹⁰⁰ Jonathan Swift also stated that 'at least deafness made men

⁹⁷ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 2557, 29-31 July 1777

⁹⁸ *Public Advertiser*, issue 15 759, 16 August 1779

⁹⁹ *London Evening Post*, issue 5653, 26 January 1764

¹⁰⁰ Anon., *The Laughter or the Art of Jestling* (London: W. Reeve, A. Dodd, and E. Cook, 1755), p. 83

unable to hear a woman's clack'.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the secret of a successful marriage was 'one of the most hotly debated topics in the salons and coffee-houses of eighteenth-century England'.¹⁰² Nevertheless, the newspaper evidence implies that deaf people getting married was not just a comic aberration in this period.

One further observation from announcements is that deaf people who married were not upper class, due to the reported occupation of the men. Whether this is because upper class parents decided to 'look after' their deaf offspring and prevent them from living independently, or whether parental influence prevented one from marrying a deaf person is unknown. It would have been difficult for a hearing woman from a rich family to marry a deaf man, particularly if he was also 'dumb', as the legal status of deaf and dumb people in the eighteenth century would have meant he would not have been in a position to legally inherit his in-laws wealth, something that was automatically handed down to men: 'the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of her husband'.¹⁰³

There do not appear to be any references to a deaf person divorcing. This may have been a sign of the times, as divorce was not easily done. For the rich, divorce was difficult, expensive and protracted and for the middle class it was virtually impossible. Interestingly, for the poor, it was much easier as they could 'ignore the law and only

¹⁰¹ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 68

¹⁰² Wendy Moore, 'Love and Marriage in 18th-Century Britain', *Historically Speaking*, 10:3 (2009), 8-10, p. 8

¹⁰³ Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 321

required community approval, consent and change of households was required'.¹⁰⁴ 'Modern divorce was only attainable in the eighteenth century by a private Act of Parliament, a situation that made it the recourse of none but a few powerful men'.¹⁰⁵ However, '[a] private act of separation was possible if enough familial pressure could be brought to bear on an estranged spouse'.¹⁰⁶ As it was possible in theory for a deaf person from the lower classes to separate from their husband, it is presumed they would have had the additional issue of communication to express their desire to separate.

Entertainment, leisure, social lives and laughter at deaf people's expense

Based on the findings discussed so far, we can assume deaf people were rather isolated with very little opportunities to meet others, especially as in closely knit villages,

Men and women of the lower classes belonged to homo-social worlds before marriage. They met members of the opposite sex in the highly public contexts of fairs, wakes, harvest festivals, and officially sanctioned holidays, whose dances and merrymaking were important preliminaries to courtship.¹⁰⁷

The marriage announcements raise questions about how deaf people were able to meet new people, whether they socialised with others and whether they had opportunities to meet other deaf people especially as deafness was considered 'an especially anti-social impairment'.¹⁰⁸ Cockayne explains that some studies have highlighted the importance of sounds for social interaction in early modern period while

¹⁰⁴ Kirstin Olsen, *Daily Life in 18th-Century England*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 17

¹⁰⁵ Hay and Rogers, *Eighteenth Century English Society*, p. 42

¹⁰⁶ Hay and Rogers, *Eighteenth Century English Society*, p. 42

¹⁰⁷ Hay and Rogers, *Eighteenth Century English Society*, p. 47

¹⁰⁸ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 112

emphasising that those without the ability to hear lived in a world of sounds controlled by those who heard.¹⁰⁹ How deaf people met others, whether they were able to enjoy life and join in fairs, festivals and dances in the same manner as their hearing counterparts has been considered as,

[m]ost prelingually deaf people could not enjoy this two-way communication, and one sign language tutor remarked that they were divorced from all 'verball contrivances of man's invention'.¹¹⁰

It was also remarked: 'it is with difficulty we can give any entertainment to a deaf person ... the deaf are often neglected.'¹¹¹

Leisure was not an everyday occurrence: it was a 'rare commodity in pre- and early-industrial Britain and those who leisured were few'.¹¹² However, 'the crowning achievement of eighteenth-century culture is its literature'.¹¹³ Inns, coffeehouses and alehouses all contributed to the distribution and circulation of printed materials, 'from newspapers, pamphlets, sermons and novels to ballads, chapbooks and prayer books'.¹¹⁴ To be able to enjoy such literature, one needed to be able to read and to be taught the ability to do so was not easily available to deaf people, as discussed in Chapter Five. However, eighteenth-century English culture was 'not limited to the world of print' and other forms of entertainment included music and theatre. 'The theatre brought a broad segment of society together to enjoy the spoken word, painted scenery, colourful costumes, and music'.¹¹⁵ It has been noted that 'orality allowed

¹⁰⁹ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 493

¹¹⁰ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 503

¹¹¹ *Whitehall Evening Post*, issue 5590, 22-24 July 1783

¹¹² Edward Royle, *Modern Britain: A Social History 1750-1985* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987), p. 227

¹¹³ Earl A. Reitan, *Eighteenth Century England: History, Literature, Theatre, Architecture, Art, Music* (USA: Illinois State University, 2009), p. 154

¹¹⁴ Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, p. 30

¹¹⁵ Reitan, p. 192

people to participate actively in society, enabling them to assimilate and communicate ideas'.¹¹⁶ Naturally, deaf people would have been excluded from such events as modern adjustments, such as sign language interpreted or captioned performances, would not have been available in the eighteenth century, so those citizens who were unable to enjoy printed materials still had the option of enjoying performances, music and get-togethers with others, but deaf people would not.

There is, however, a hint that deaf people were able to enjoy theatre to some extent. A young gentleman (reported to have been deaf and dumb from birth) gave a review of a performance at Drury-lane theatre where he saw an actor, Mr Garrick, perform the part of Hamlet:

When Britain's Roscius on the stage appears,
Who charms all eyes, and (I am told) all ears,
With ease the various passions I can trace;
Clearly reflected from his wond'rous face;
Whilst true conception, with just action join'd,
Strongly impress each image on my mind
What needs of sounds? When politely I decry,
Th' expressive features, and the speaking eyes.¹¹⁷

What is interesting is that it is primarily a comment on a particular style of acting that was so effective in non-verbal communication that a 'deaf and dumb' person could enjoy the performance and by no means a true indication of access for deaf people overall. The review was also well written suggesting that deaf person was literate and educated, so it is possible this person had read the play and knew it well enough to be able to follow it.

¹¹⁶ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 503

¹¹⁷ *General Evening Post*, issue 5964, 2-4 January 1772

There were no qualms in making a mockery of deaf people for entertainment. Dickie explains that ‘one finds an almost encyclopaedic range of jokes about those who were deaf¹¹⁸ while explaining ‘deaf jokes were sufficiently common in early modern culture’.¹¹⁹ It was not just in jestbooks people found humour at the expense of deaf people, as seen in the supposedly hilarious misunderstandings on the part of a deaf man due to a communication breakdown.¹²⁰ For example, as reported in 1772:

M. de la Condamine, in his journey to London ... was followed wherever he went, by a numerous crowd, who were drawn together by a great tube of block tin, which he had always to his ear; by an unfolded map of London which he held in his hand; and by frequent pauses, whenever he met with any object worthy of his attention ... being frequently hemmed in by the crowd, which prevented his advancing forward, he cried out to his interpreter, “what would all these people have?” Upon this, the interpreter, applying his mouth to the tube, answered by crying out to him, “They are making game of you”.¹²¹

It is invariably common for deaf people to misunderstand what is said to them, and for them to react in a certain way, either positively or negatively, and this phenomenon was often a ‘rich comic vein [that was] exploited by authors of jests’.¹²²

Humour at deaf people’s expense was taken to the stage in Frederick Pilon’s farce *The Deaf Lover*¹²³ and its sequel, *The Deaf Doctor*.¹²⁴ *The Deaf Lover*, ‘so great a favourite’,¹²⁵ was about a man encouraged to feign deafness and take advantage of pity to gain access to a wedding, while pretending the venue was an Inn:

¹¹⁸ Dickie, p. 18

¹¹⁹ Dickie, p. 288

¹²⁰ Dickie, p. 46

¹²¹ Pierre-Jean Grosley, *A Tour to London, or, New Observations on England and its Inhabitants*, Vol. I, trans. by Thomas Nugent (London: Lockyer Davis, 1772), p. 85

¹²² Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 64

¹²³ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 15900, 28 January 1780

¹²⁴ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 15794, 25 September 1779

¹²⁵ *Morning Chronicle* (1770), issue 3602, 4 December 1780

But grant you are taken for the character you assume, an old, deaf, blundering, blockhead; your mistakes will create so much entertainment, that nobody will think of turning you out of doors.¹²⁶

The character worried about being ‘taken before a magistrate’¹²⁷ for the sham. As well as an illustration of how deaf people were perceived, feigning deafness was clearly not unheard of in eighteenth-century England: ‘it was not at all unfashionable to pretend deafness’.¹²⁸ It was grounds for punishment, a point further discussed in Chapter Four when looking at law and order. Theatre was an opportunity to reflect on society’s perceptions of certain members of the public and deaf people were no exception: ‘comic reactions towards deaf people evoked pity, fear, malicious triumph and scientific curiosity’.¹²⁹ However, we do need to err on the side of caution. While such comic reference provides some insight into perceptions of deaf people, ‘we should not assume too readily that the portrayals of disability in jest books necessarily reflect social ‘attitudes’ towards it.’¹³⁰

Professions and notable deaf people

Marriage announcements indicate deaf people did work in the eighteenth century, and so further references to jobs deaf people did were sought and initial findings reveal deaf individuals worked as a ‘face painter’ (portrait artist);¹³¹ shoemaker;¹³² miniature

¹²⁶ Frederick Pilon, *The Deaf Lover, A Farce in two acts* (London: The Strand, 1780), p. 10

¹²⁷ Pilon, pp. 10-11

¹²⁸ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 32

¹²⁹ Dickie, p. 46

¹³⁰ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 64

¹³¹ *The Spectator*, issue 251, 18 December 1711

¹³² *St. James’s Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 2147, 12-15 November 1774

painter;¹³³ huntsman;¹³⁴ card and brush maker;¹³⁵ mayor;¹³⁶ and a stone mason.¹³⁷ Cockayne explained that those 'charged with the protection of land, armies, and property, such as sentinels, shepherds, and gamekeepers, would have relied on their sense of hearing'¹³⁸ while deaf people were not 'devoid of work opportunities, especially in manual trades in which copying tasks would have been achieved through watching and learning'.¹³⁹ To date, there have been no discoveries of deaf people doing jobs that relied on hearing, apart the mayor who would have required good communication skills to fulfil his role.

As well as highlighting the jobs deaf people did, there are discussions in primary sources about what deaf people were considered unable to do. For example, deaf men were considered 'unfit for service' for the role of soldier¹⁴⁰ and as they were considered too disabled to look after their own concerns, they were considered incapable of being tutors.¹⁴¹ Nonetheless, there is ample evidence to suggest that deaf people engaged in a range of professions, mostly in the arts, but also in the sciences and astrology. It is worth noting that opportunities for work might have increased as the eighteenth century progressed, particularly as it was the time of the Industrial Revolution when 'manufacturing diversified and commerce intensified'.¹⁴²

¹³³ Richard Twiss, *Chess*, Vol. II (London: G. G. J & J Robinson and T. & J. Egerton, 1787), p. 171

¹³⁴ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 3246, 25-27 December 1781

¹³⁵ *Public Advertiser*, Vol. 8, issue 8537, 18 March 1762

¹³⁶ *General Evening Post*, issue 8317, 20-22 March 1787

¹³⁷ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 11601, 17 May 1766

¹³⁸ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 494

¹³⁹ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 505

¹⁴⁰ *Public Advertiser*, issue 13943, 16 June 1779

¹⁴¹ Monsieur Domat. *The Civil Law in its Natural Order*, Vol II, trans. by William Strahan (London: J. Bettenham, 1722), p. 551

¹⁴² Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 505

Most of the work deaf people were reported to have done required good visual skills, as found in the description of a Mr B, reported in 1792:

Mr. B. died when he was about thirty years of age. Having been deaf from his birth, was consequently dumb. He possessed but little originality of genius, and his intellectual powers were very limited; but he was not destitute of talents for imitation. He frequently employed himself in drawing patterns for needle-work, and generally executed them with great exactness.¹⁴³

Cockayne observed: 'the deaf may have been better equipped for work which relied on visual skills than hearing people; some deaf people were considered to be gifted painters'.¹⁴⁴ The last three decades of the eighteenth century was labelled 'a golden age in the history of English miniature portrait painting'.¹⁴⁵ Amongst some of the best English miniature-painters were three who were deaf and dumb: Richard Crosse, Charles Shirreff and Sampson Towgood Roch, all of who succeeded as high society artists in London alongside deaf artist, Joshua Reynolds, the first president of the Royal Academy.

Very little is known about Crosse's personal life other than he was the second son and he had a deaf sister, who like him, was unable to speak. Like his sister, he was well educated, although where they received their education is unknown.¹⁴⁶ Crosse never married or had children, but would have done so if he had the opportunity having proposed to his cousin who did not accept, which had an impact on Crosse for the rest of his life: 'The disappointment embittered the entire remainder of Crosse's life; he

¹⁴³ Anon., *Memoirs of the Medical Society of London*, Vol. III (London: C. Dilly, 1792), p. 4

¹⁴⁴ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', pp. 502-503

¹⁴⁵ Basil S. Long, 'Richard Crosse, Miniaturist and Portrait-Painter', *The Volume of the Walpole Society*, Vol. 17 (1928-1929), 61-94, p. 61

¹⁴⁶ Long, p. 61

became a misanthrope and a recluse'.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, this further supports the fact that those 'deaf and dumb' did have the option of marriage and their circumstance was not an issue.

Personal life aside, Crosse was an abundant painter with a successful career. At the age of sixteen he was awarded a premium by the Society of Arts, he exhibited from 1760 at the Incorporated Society of Artists and he also exhibited at the Free Society of Artists between 1761 and 1766, and at the Royal Academy between 1770-1796.¹⁴⁸ Portraits included the Dukes of Cumberland and Gloucester in 1771. In 1789, Crosse became a court painter in enamel to King George III.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, he has been 'almost completely forgotten' in that many of his paintings 'remain in the hands of the families for which they were painted' and scarcely any owners of such portraits know who painted them.¹⁵⁰ Crosse did not sign his paintings,¹⁵¹ compounding the issue. Long explained further:

I have seen dozens of such miniatures by Crosse, but only one among the numerous owners who have shown them to me, except relatives of the Crosse family, knew that his family miniatures were by him: this was Earl Spencer. A few collectors and dealers have learnt to distinguish Crosse's work.¹⁵²

Charles Shirreff, the other deaf artist at the time, holds particular significance in the history of deaf education in Britain as he was the first pupil of Thomas Braidwood and received a successful education,¹⁵³ discussed in Chapter Five. Even though Shirreff

¹⁴⁷ Long, p. 62

¹⁴⁸ L. H. Cust, 'Crosse, Richard (1742-1810)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2008), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6804>> [accessed 25 July 2020] (para. 1 of 4)

¹⁴⁹ Long, pp. 61-62

¹⁵⁰ Long, p. 61

¹⁵¹ Long, p. 66

¹⁵² Long, p. 61

¹⁵³ *London Chronicle*, issue 1476, 3 June 1766

was educated in Scotland, he pursued his career in England and exhibited at the Free Society of Artists and at the Royal Academy.¹⁵⁴ According to Lee, Shirreff applied to go to India in 1778, although reasons for doing so was not documented.¹⁵⁵ In his application to the East India Company, he stated that he was unable to speak but was able to communicate using sign language, and requested that he be accompanied by his father and his sister Mary to act as his interpreters.¹⁵⁶ However, plans were put on hold after the collapse of Fordyce's Bank, which meant his father had no income and as a result, Shirreff had to support his family.¹⁵⁷

There is, however, little reference to Shirreff's deafness, such as the notice found in 1781: 'Charles Shirreff, Miniature Painter, takes the liberty respectfully, to inform his friends that he is returned to town.'¹⁵⁸ This suggests that the focus on these artists was their work, and not their deafness, and this also applied to Sampson Towgood Roch. Apart from being listed in the dictionary of artists who exhibited works in the principal London exhibitions of oil paintings from 1760-1880¹⁵⁹ which confirms Roch was known, there is no corroboration that he was deaf. A general online search does reveal several paintings by Roch, and *LibraryIreland* quoted Strickland's *A Dictionary of Irish Artists*,¹⁶⁰ which states Roch was deaf. He took up residence in Bath in 1792 where he continued to be successful in his profession; he painted several members of

¹⁵⁴ Neil Jeffares, [Shirreff Charles] *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800* (London, 2006) <<http://pastellists.com/Articles/SHIRREFF.pdf>> [accessed 16 June 2021], p. 1

¹⁵⁵ Raymond Lee, *Charles Shirreff* (Warrington: British Deaf History Society, 2015), p. 11

¹⁵⁶ Lee, p. 11

¹⁵⁷ Lee, p. 10

¹⁵⁸ *Morning Herald*, issue 155, 30 April 1781

¹⁵⁹ Algernon Graves, *A Dictionary of Artists who have Exhibited in the Principal London Exhibitions of Oil Paintings from 1760 to 1880* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1884), p. 200

¹⁶⁰ Walter G. Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists* (Hacker: Art Books, 1969)

the Royal Family and was offered a knighthood as a result, which he supposedly declined on account of his deafness.¹⁶¹

A famous name in this period is Joshua Reynolds. With deafness becoming a part of Reynolds' life in his late twenties, it is difficult to determine whether he would have still been the established artist he became as he was already a proficient painter when he was deafened. However, fame did come after his loss of hearing¹⁶² and despite his deafness he went on to become President of the Royal Academy in 1768,¹⁶³ was knighted in 1769¹⁶⁴ and became Mayor of Plymouth in 1773.¹⁶⁵ His life revolved around his career and he never married, unlikely to be because of his deafness because 'every woman whom he had liked had grown indifferent to him'.¹⁶⁶ Reynolds' experience with deafness as an eighteenth-century citizen, like Swift and Stanhope, is somewhat different to those born deaf or became deaf in childhood.

Other deaf men who achieved fame in the eighteenth century were Duncan Campbell and John Goodricke. Campbell, a deaf and dumb soothsayer, fortune teller or clairvoyant born in 1680 became famous in early eighteenth-century England 'for writing down the name of any stranger at the first sight'¹⁶⁷ and attracted attention when

¹⁶¹ LibraryIreland, 'Sampson Towgood Roch (or Roche), Miniature Painter' (2005-2020) from Walter G. Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists* (1913), <<https://www.libraryireland.com/irishartists/sampson-towgood-roch.php>> [accessed 28 July 2020]

¹⁶² Malone, p. ixxxix

¹⁶³ Martin Postle, 'Reynolds, Sir Joshua (1723-1792)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23429>> [accessed 25 July 2020] (para 31 of 80)

¹⁶⁴ Frederick W. Hilles, *Letters of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929), p. 15

¹⁶⁵ Hilles, p. 37

¹⁶⁶ Postle, para. 45 of 80

¹⁶⁷ *Post Boy*, issue 4697, 1-3 September 1719

he moved to London and ‘became all the rage in eighteenth-century London’.¹⁶⁸ He communicated with his clients by finger-spelling or writing things down and through gestures, such as ‘shrugs and nods’.¹⁶⁹ *The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Duncan Campbell*¹⁷⁰ provides an account of his birth, education and profession which highlights the,

various surprising Adventures of his Life, and the wonderful and mysterious Methods of Prediction, which he hath made use of for the Information of Persons in all ‘Stations of Life, that have consulted him, from the time he was five or six Years of Age.’¹⁷¹

However, the accuracy of some of the information in Campbell’s biography is questionable,¹⁷² as explained later, but if what Campbell says is true, he had an eventful life for a deaf person in eighteenth-century England. After moving to Scotland from Lapland after the death of his mother and receiving his education in Scotland, under the method of deaf education introduced by John Wallis,¹⁷³ he moved to London in 1694¹⁷⁴ where he ‘caught the attention of fashionable society with his predictions’.¹⁷⁵ He married and had two children and is also reported to have been in debt at one point, and enlisted as a soldier in 1703,¹⁷⁶ questionable bearing in mind deaf men were considered unfit for service,¹⁷⁷ although it is possible he could have hidden his deafness. As well as being a soothsayer, Campbell sold medicines in 1726 as

¹⁶⁸ Dickie, p. 90

¹⁶⁹ Donald F. Bond (ed), *The Tatler*, 2:121 (1710)

¹⁷⁰ Daniel Defoe, *The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Duncan Campbell* (London: E. Curll, 1720)

¹⁷¹ *Post Boy*, issue 4697, 1-3 September 1719

¹⁷² David Turner, ‘Campbell, Duncan (c.1680-1730)’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2005), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4494>> [accessed 9 October 2020] (para. 1 of 3)

¹⁷³ Wallis and his teaching methods are discussed in Chapter Five

¹⁷⁴ Defoe, *The History of the Life and Adventures of Mr. Duncan Campbell*, p. 124

¹⁷⁵ Turner, ‘Campbell, Duncan’ (para. 1 of 3)

¹⁷⁶ Turner, ‘Campbell, Duncan’ (para. 1 of 3)

¹⁷⁷ *Public Advertiser*, issue 13943, 16 June 1779

illustrated in *The Friendly Daemon*,¹⁷⁸ which led to him becoming a 'vendor of miraculous medicine'.¹⁷⁹ During the course of his career and fame, he attracted the attention of King George II, as reported in the *Daily Post*: 'Last Monday Mr. Campbell, the deaf and dumb gentleman ... presented to his majesty *The History of his Life and Adventures*, which was by his majesty most graciously received'.¹⁸⁰

Newspapers sometimes referred to Campbell as 'the dumb Gentleman'¹⁸¹ without any reference to his deafness, which is striking as he was also referred to as a cheat¹⁸² who, some years after his death, was considered someone who 'pretended at least, to be deaf and dumb'¹⁸³ The *Spectator* also claimed that Campbell had 'studied himself dumb'.¹⁸⁴ The publication of *The Secret Memoirs of the Late Mr Duncan Campbell* in 1732, which Campbell ordered to be printed after his death,¹⁸⁵ contained 'an appendix, by way of vindication of Mr. Duncan Campbell, against that groundless aspersion cast upon him, that he but pretended to be deaf and dumb'.¹⁸⁶

Whether Campbell's deafness was questioned because it was difficult to believe someone deaf and dumb could be successful, or because he was indeed a cheat, is unknown. However, the majority of references in the newspapers are adverts

¹⁷⁸ Daniel Defoe, *The Friendly Daemon, or the Generous Apparition* (London: J. Roberts, 1726)

¹⁷⁹ Turner, 'Campbell, Duncan' (para. 3 of 3)

¹⁸⁰ *Daily Post*, issue 184, 4 May 1720

¹⁸¹ *Post Boy*, issue 4697, 1-3 September 1719; *Daily Post*, issue 3284, 30 March 1730

¹⁸² *Pasquin*, issue 114, 6 March 1724

¹⁸³ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, issue 1284, 30 September-2 October 1765

¹⁸⁴ Christopher Krentz, 'Duncan Campbell and the Discourses of Deafness', *Prose Studies*, 27:1-2, (2005), 39-52, p. 39

¹⁸⁵ *Daily Journal*, issue 3550, 22 May 1732

¹⁸⁶ Daniel Defoe, *Secret Memoirs of the Late Mr. Duncan Campbell, The Famous Deaf and Dumb Gentleman* (London: J. Millan, 1732), p. 226

frequently promoting Campbell's book, as opposed to reports and observations of Campbell's actions, with the exemption of a select few, and 'there is no evidence of his fame at this period beyond his later publications'.¹⁸⁷ Uncertainties aside, Campbell is a further example of a deaf person receiving an education, marrying, having children and working in eighteenth-century England with no apparent barriers imposed because of his deafness and he did at least contribute to raising awareness of deafness in eighteenth-century England.

John Goodricke, the son of a British diplomat, became deaf and dumb in infancy and was educated at Braidwood's school for the deaf, later studying at Warrington Academy, specialising in mathematics.¹⁸⁸ Goodricke had a short life as he died in 1786 at the age of 21.¹⁸⁹ However, in that short time, he became a prominent figure in the field of stellar astronomy, working alongside Edward Pigott, one of the founders of the study of variable stars. As a result of his discoveries, Goodricke presented a paper to the Royal Society which earned him the Copley Medal of the Royal Society and he was later elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, shortly before his death.¹⁹⁰ Goodricke's success as a deaf person at a young age and in such a short time in eighteenth-century England was rather unusual; his success could have been as a result of his background, being the son of a diplomat, and able to access Braidwood's

¹⁸⁷ Turner, 'Campbell, Duncan' (para. 1 of 3)

¹⁸⁸ Michael Hoskin, 'Goodricke, John (1764-1786)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/10982>> [accessed 25 July 2020] (para. 1 of 6)

¹⁸⁹ Hoskin, 'Goodricke, John (1764-1786)' (para. 6 of 6)

¹⁹⁰ Linda M. French, 'Hearing with the eye: the life and work of John Goodricke', Yorkshire Philosophical Society (2010), <<https://www.ypsyork.org/resources/articles/john-goodricke/>> [accessed 25 July 2020]

Academy, a privilege only available to deaf children from wealthy backgrounds, discussed further in Chapter Five.

The workhouses

Deaf people unable to work and provide an income for themselves were faced with similar options as other members of society when seeking charitable assistance or entering workhouses. Workhouses were not the only form of poor relief in this period and tended to be the last resort of those least able to work, usually ‘the sick, the old, the handicapped, the mentally retarded, and the very young’.¹⁹¹ By the mid-eighteenth century, the workhouse was the institution with the longest history of housing disabled people.¹⁹²

There are references to deaf people in workhouses in primary sources. For example, a pauper, Anne Blackwell, was admitted to St Martin’s workhouse on 20 April 1758 at the age of 25. The reason for admission seems to be because she was ‘deaf and dumb’. Blackwell was reported to have been discharged on 30 March 1759 and re-entered the workhouse several times during her lifetime, at the ages of 30, 31, 35 and 36.¹⁹³ On 26 September 1768, a pauper, John Russel, was admitted to the same workhouse, also because he was ‘deaf and dumb’¹⁹⁴ and Elizabeth Smith was

¹⁹¹ Olsen, pp. 24-25

¹⁹² Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 20

¹⁹³ St. Martin’s Pauper Biographies Project, Anne Blackwell, 20th April 1758-30th March 1759, *London Lives*, smdswhr_354_35445 (www.londonlives.org, version 2.0, March 2018), Westminster Archives Centre, Ms. F4075

¹⁹⁴ St. Martin’s Pauper Biographies Project, John Russel, 26th September 1768, *London Lives*, smdswhr_522_52229 (www.londonlives.org, version 2.0, March 2018), Westminster Archives Centre, Ms. F4077

admitted at the age of 60, due to being 'deaf'.¹⁹⁵ In addition, a deaf and dumb man lived at a workhouse in Ipswich for several years:

In the workhouse of St. Laurence parish, Ipswich, where he had been maintained upwards of 40 years by the said parish, Edward Richman, a deaf and dumb man, aged 73.¹⁹⁶

It would be a stretch to suggest deaf people were commonly sent to workhouses during the eighteenth century. Admission into the workhouses simply because they were deaf is not a certainty, and indeed, questions are raised about the consistency of reasons for admission. Many deaf people could have been admitted due to a 'mental impairment', which again is symptomatic of the aforementioned labelling issues. Recurring admissions such as Anne Blackwell suggest some individuals did struggle to get by or hold down employment and her recurring admission could have been due to this rather than her deafness. It is also possible that people like Blackwell were particularly isolated individuals who lacked the required support from family to help them integrate into society and find work: 'many prelingually deaf were dependent on family members of the wider community for their subsistence'.¹⁹⁷

A slightly different case is found with George Sprouel, reported to have been admitted to St Martin's workhouse with his mother and siblings at the age of 6, due to being deaf and dumb. On 28 August 1806 at the age of 15 or 16, he was discharged and

¹⁹⁵ St. Martin's Pauper Biographies Project, Elizabeth Smith, 14 March 1770-18 May 1770, *London Lives*, smdswhr_526_52675 (www.londonlives.org, version 2.0, March 2018), Westminster Archives Centre, Ms. F4077

¹⁹⁶ William B. Todd, *The Annual Register or a View of the History, Politicks and Literature, for the Year 1765* (London: J. Dodsley, 1766), p. 158

¹⁹⁷ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 505

transferred to the Deaf and Dumb asylum on Kent Road.¹⁹⁸ This suggests that the authorities may have sought appropriate care for individuals who needed it, perhaps realising that it was better for Sprouel to be with other deaf people rather than with hearing people and to provide him with appropriate training so he could earn a living for himself. This was an approach increasingly utilised in the nineteenth century¹⁹⁹ and was beginning to develop by the end of the eighteenth century with asylums for educating the deaf poor established as discussed in Chapter Five.²⁰⁰ On the subject of asylums, a newspaper article in 1763 suggests that deaf people had an advantage in that they would be eligible to be admitted to asylums and benefit from their provision, which 'would be as extensive as the malady.'²⁰¹ The fact that deaf persons were referred to in this context demonstrates that the presence of deaf people was not unusual in eighteenth-century England: 'there are many persons who have children that labour under this melancholy disorder'.²⁰² Due to the few references to deaf people in workhouses, we cannot make any definite conclusions other than deaf people were considered for a place if necessary.

Conclusion

By adopting a 'history of the people' approach to social history²⁰³ in this chapter, we have attempted to reconstruct the lives of deaf people in some of its aspects. This

¹⁹⁸ St. Martin's Pauper Biographies Project, George Sprouel, 26th July 1797-28th August 1806, *London Lives*, smdswhr_960_96108 (www.londonlives.org, version 2.0, March 2018), Westminster Archives Centre, Ms. F4022

¹⁹⁹ Steven King, 'Constructing the Disabled Child in England, 1800-1860', *Family and Community History*, 18:2 (2015), 104-121

²⁰⁰ Urban, p. 130

²⁰¹ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, issue 942, 25 July 1763

²⁰² *Lloyd's Evening Post*, issue 942, 25 July 1763

²⁰³ Wilson, *Rethinking Social History*, p. 9

included society's attitudes towards deaf people in general, the picture painted of deaf people through birth, death and marriage announcements, deaf people as portrayed in entertainment and through their leisure and social lives, and the professions deaf people worked in and what happened if they were destitute.

While the reasons for including the fact that someone is 'deaf and dumb' in eighteenth-century British newspapers and whether they were reported because of their circumstances is not known, these reports are a valuable source in providing an insight into the lives of deaf people in eighteenth-century England. They have laid the foundations for this thesis by demonstrating that deaf people's presence was acknowledged throughout the eighteenth century, and in the process drawing attention to several key points to explore further. In short, deaf people coexisted alongside other members of society in eighteenth-century England, and indeed, many deaf people 'worked, married, and had families and most would have coped with their condition'.²⁰⁴

While it is evident that deaf people were able to work, marry and have families, despite the limitations imposed due to lack of hearing, the extent to which they coped with their condition is inconclusive. We have statements from Swift, Stanhope and Reid who clearly struggled with their deafness and its consequence: social isolation. These men were sufficiently educated to be able to put their feelings into writing and this is the only real evidence we have in terms of 'the deaf experience' from the perspective of

²⁰⁴ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 502

deaf people themselves. However, despite the insight into their mind-sets, we cannot conclude this was the case for all deaf people, particularly those born deaf and dumb as Swift, Stanhope and Reid went deaf later in life, were successful prior to going deaf, and possibly still benefited from some degree of hearing, like Reid and Reynolds who relied on an ear trumpet.

Swift, Stanhope and Reid were clearly vocal about the effects of their ailment, unlike artists Crosse, Roch and Shirreff, who appeared to accept their deafness, although making such statement is difficult with no written records about their experiences as a deaf person, so such comparison may not be particularly helpful. However, with Shirreff and Roch, we can see that the focus on one's deafness was not always the case as there is a distinct lack of mention of their deafness in publications. From this, it could be suggested that being deaf was not always the be all and end all in eighteenth-century society, and that it was their skill and talent that was important, rather than their deafness. If a deaf person proved themselves capable and were considerably successful, the focus would shift to their skill and talent, and they were viewed as another 'successful artist' rather than as someone 'different'. Campbell is an exception to this, however. Even though it was questioned whether he was genuinely deaf, his fame was because he was deaf and dumb; he used his deafness to his advantage to gain recognition. Therefore, how deaf people portrayed themselves and how they coped with their condition may have contributed to society's attitude towards deaf people in the eighteenth century.

We get the sense that attitudes towards deaf people, or rather attitudes towards being deaf, were generally negative and deaf people, while considered unhappy, idiots and

a burden to society, were generally pitied. However, such views were taken from the primary sources available and these only account for a small minority of views of the population at large: not every member of society would not have recorded their views, and so it is not possible to conclude that this was the general position. In particular, there is no way of determining if such attitudes towards deaf people were present amongst both sexes, all age groups and class backgrounds. However, despite the lack of evidence, with the examples identified, we can conclude to some extent that it seems the achievements of deaf men, compared to deaf women, were more likely to be noticed and the vulnerability of poor deaf people were likely to be documented. It is also not known whether the authors of these primary sources had contact with deaf people or were merely writing with general stereotypes in mind.

Nevertheless, such reports and announcements together with the portrayal of deaf people in theatre performances suggest the general attitude was one of pity and that it was acceptable to make a mockery of deaf people. This is somewhat contradictory, however, because if the general attitude was one of pity, then mocking deaf people would be considered cruel and unacceptable. Conversely, this does indicate the consequences of deafness was widely known, particularly if there were discussions about whether it was preferable to be blind or deaf, with it being claimed that those who were deaf were 'better able to move around freely [but] the blind having easier access to conversation': ultimately, it was a case of whether 'independence or sociability [was] most valuable'.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁵ Söderfeldt and Verstraete, p. 252

As deafness did not discriminate, all deaf people would have struggled with the concept of polite society, especially as the attainment of politeness was not necessarily restricted to class status. There has been considerable debate regarding polite 'norms' applying to not just courtiers, but also to scholars and tradesmen.²⁰⁶ Klein in particular argues that 'politeness was an idiom with uses for a wide range of people, including some who were neither aristocratic nor landed nor middling'.²⁰⁷ He also goes on to argue that 'the relevant question is not so much "who were the polite?" as "who pursued politeness in any of its modes and why?"'²⁰⁸ It is therefore clear that the need to be polite did not discriminate either.

In terms of communication, this chapter has highlighted the use of ear trumpets and sign language, both of which will be explored further in Chapters Three and Five respectively. The use of an ear trumpet shows the availability of options to improve residual hearing, although whether they were widely available or widely used is unknown, nor do we know how effective they were, a point also discussed in Chapter Three. The use of sign language as one form of communication is also prevalent in eighteenth century texts and is evidence that alternative forms of communication were used when spoken English was difficult, particularly in marriage ceremonies. For sign language to be used in marriage ceremonies suggests it was somewhat accepted by society at large; its use in such ceremonies and its description in newspaper announcements suggest it was not uncommon for deaf people to use it, but it was considered unusual enough to be remarked upon in newspapers. This conclusion

²⁰⁶ Carter, p. 59

²⁰⁷ Klein, p. 873

²⁰⁸ Klein, p. 897

does raise a pertinent question, however: how did deaf people learn sign language when there was minimal, if any, contact with other deaf people other than deaf siblings? This will be examined further in Chapter Five, which explores the extent to which education improved the lives of deaf people as hinted in this chapter.

The discoveries of experiences and attitudes towards deafness and deaf people in this chapter serve as background information and a starting point for Chapters Three, Four and Five. We are now able to examine deafness from a medical perspective in Chapter Three, particularly with the link to newspaper adverts advertising treatment and cures. We can also elaborate on newspaper announcements of deaf individuals committing crimes and standing trial in Chapter Four, and closely examine the development and impact of deaf education in Chapter Five.

Chapter 3 - Medicine

Introduction

With few secondary sources on deaf people in history, the reliance on primary sources to identify the position of deaf people in eighteenth-century England has proven valuable. A dominant theme identified in these sources is the medical aspects of deafness, particularly with newspapers commonly advertising treatments for deafness and even promising cures. Attempting to cure deafness was not a new phenomenon, however, as ‘attempts to correct hearing loss have been in existence since the very first person to cup a hand behind one ear’.¹ Nonetheless, this raises several questions: why was there a need to cure deafness? Who sought such treatments? Who claimed to be able to treat deafness and how did they claim to treat it? Who were the treatments available for?

As well as examining what was known about deafness by looking at it from a medical perspective and considering how deafness was perceived in the eighteenth-century medical world, these are some of the questions this chapter will attempt to answer. In terms of geography, the source of most newspaper articles featured in this chapter is largely focused on the region of London, with some exceptions. Loudon sheds light on this:

When one looks at the history of the medical profession in eighteenth-century England, the striking feature is the extent to which historians have concentrated on the minority of famous and distinguished medical men, mostly in London,

¹ Max E. Valentinuzzi, ‘Hearing Aid History: From Ear Trumpets to Digital Technology’, *IEEE Pulse*, 11:5 (2020), 33-36, p. 33

and how little is known of the much more numerous rank-and-file practitioners of provincial England.²

By way of contextualisation for this chapter, Porter explains that sickness was widespread in the eighteenth century resulting in painful, disabling and debilitating implications, some of which included 'deteriorating sight and hearing'.³ He further explains that such illnesses did not end a person's life, but it could put an end to their 'active, working or enjoyable existence, and made living more or less burdensome'.⁴ As well as validating the necessity to examine the medical aspects of deafness in this thesis, these statements also support some of the points discovered in Chapter Two with deafness preventing one from enjoying life and becoming a burden to others. It has also been documented that people during this period 'were obsessed with their bodily health',⁵ so this will be taken into consideration when examining the extent of those seeking treatment for deafness.

Before embarking on a detailed study of how deaf people were dealt with by medical practitioners, eighteenth-century definitions of deafness need to be considered. In 1738, deafness was described as 'the state of a person who wants the sense of hearing', or 'a disease of the ear'⁶ resulting from:

an obstruction, or a compression, of the auditory nerve; or from some collection of matter in the cavities of the inner ear; or from the auditory passage being

² Irvine Loudon, 'The Nature of Provincial Medical Practice in Eighteenth-Century England', *Medical History*, 29:1 (1985), 1-32, p. 1

³ Roy Porter, *Health for Sale: Quackery in England 1660-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), pp. 23-24

⁴ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 24

⁵ Rosemary O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England, 1450-1800* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 185

⁶ Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or, an universal dictionary of arts and sciences* (London: D. Midwinter, etc, 1738), p. 7

stopped up by force hardened excrement; or lastly, from some ... swelling of the glands, or some foreign body introduced within it.⁷

It was further reported in 1754 that deafness could be from external causes, such as falls from high places or excessive noises.⁸ It was also reported that 'those who are born deaf are rarely cured [because] a real deafness is hard to remedy',⁹ and that curing deafness was often difficult: 'when the obstruction is recent, it is soon removed; but when of long continuance, the circulation is not only impeded, but frequently obliterated'.¹⁰ In addition, 'when the nerves which are sent off from the Brain to the Ears have lost their circulation, the branches which run from them to the Drum, or Tympanum, become thickened and insensible',¹¹ resulting in deafness.

Explanations of deafness in 1798 compared to 1738 were more elaborate as they included more medical terminology. The Royal Society's *Philosophical Transactions and Collections* present a wealth of information about who were actively treating deafness, the discussions they had and the methods they used for treatment. These points are particularly important, especially as before the mid-eighteenth century, diagnosis of any condition was generally inadequate.¹² This suggests that medical understanding of deafness was more concrete by the end of the eighteenth century, a point given due consideration later in this chapter.

⁷ Chambers, p. 7

⁸ Richard Brookes, *The General Practice of Physic; Extracted chiefly from the Writings of the Most Celebrated Practical Physicians*, Vol. II (London: J. Newbery, 1754), p. 207

⁹ Brookes, p. 207

¹⁰ John Boniot De Mainauduc, *The Lectures of J. B. de Mainauduc, M.D.* (London: Fry, at the Cicero Press, 1798), p. 170

¹¹ De Mainauduc, p. 169

¹² Joan Lane, *A Social History of Medicine: Health, Healing and Disease in England 1750-1950* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 1

An overriding feature of this chapter is adverts for the treatment of deafness in eighteenth-century newspapers, entailing an examination of the eighteenth-century medical marketplace. Patient testimonials and adverts emphasising success of treatments are also common: 'It was advertisements, particularly for medical goods and services' that helped finance the cost of newspapers and gave the publishers their profit¹³ without which it probably would not have been financially viable to print them.¹⁴ This marketplace was particularly complex with quack advertising reported to have been at the centre: in Georgian England, 'the air was filled with quackery' and the eighteenth century has been referred to as 'the golden age of quackery'.¹⁵ This, when compared with eighteenth-century medical documents by surgeons, raises questions about the validity of the information published and the authenticity of the treatments offered, and whether deafness was largely treated by orthodox or unorthodox medical practitioners.

The significance of hearing in the eighteenth century will be explored by considering the role of the five senses. There will be a consideration of diagnosis, pathology and anatomy. The four humours, a medical theory which played a substantial role in the diagnosis of deafness as well as offering a route for treatment, will be explored within this context of medical knowledge and investigations. This will be followed by a

¹³ Lisa Foreman Cody, 'No Cure, No Money,' or the Invisible Hand of Quackery: The Language of Commerce, Credit, and Cash in Eighteenth-Century British Medical Advertisements', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 28 (1999), 103-130, p. 105

¹⁴ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 115

¹⁵ Roy Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind: a Medical History of Humanity from Antiquity to the Present* (London, Fontana Press, 1999), p. 284

detailed examination of how medical practitioners attempted to treat deafness by way of snuff, cold water bathing, electrification, and operations. The availability of ear trumpets¹⁶ will also be considered. The chapter will end with an attempt to conclude whether it was quacks or physicians that were the practitioners who advertised treatments for deafness, although it is not always easy to distinguish between the two. There are some clues: 'many elite and traditional practitioners, namely physicians, surgeons, and midwives, less often promoted their services in print, choosing to rely instead on word of mouth and recommendations among a private clientele'.¹⁷ The role these practitioners played in the eighteenth-century medical marketplace and how effective people were led to believe their treatments were, will be given some thought and this chapter then, will provide an insight into aspects of deafness in eighteenth-century medicine.

The five senses

Before going further, we need to determine why being able to hear was considered necessary. Bynum and Porter's *Medicine and the Five Senses* sheds light on this, explaining the role of the senses dates back to Aristotle who claimed that the more precise senses are located in the head, with smell in the middle, sight above and hearing to the side.¹⁸ Hearing was therefore ranked in the top three senses. The ears were said to be located on opposite sides of the head so that hearing can come from all directions while the eyes are placed at the front because this is the direction of

¹⁶ Monsieur Du Verney, *A Treatise of the Organ of Hearing* (London: Samuel Baker, 1737), p. 150

¹⁷ Cody, p. 106

¹⁸ W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 25

movement.¹⁹ These senses were placed near the brain, cold and wet, so that their work could not be disturbed by the heat of blood, compared to the source of sensation being the heart and touch and taste directly connected with this, the hottest organ.²⁰ These explanations have links to the four humours, which were significant in the diagnosis and treatment of deafness, discussed later.

As discussed in Chapter Two, there was considerable debate about which was the greater sense: sight or hearing. Alongside sight, hearing was regarded as one of the most valuable senses in eighteenth-century England:

Sight and hearing are undoubtedly two of the principal external senses, as they supply us with the knowledge of a far greater number of external objects, than the other senses put together.²¹

However, hearing loss was 'ranked in the Number of the greatest Misfortunes'.²² Being able to hear was considered necessary and the source of most of man's pleasures that without, 'the rest of his senses would be of little benefit'.²³ This is partly because it was believed you needed to be able to hear the word of God but also because the sense of hearing was considered to be the immediate organ of intelligence²⁴ and it was not unusual for some to state that those blind from birth were more intelligent than those born deaf and dumb²⁵ because the general consensus was that learning is owed to hearing:²⁶

¹⁹ Bynum and Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses*, p. 25

²⁰ Bynum and Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses*, p. 25

²¹ Andreas Elias Buchner, *An Easy and Very Practicable Method to Enable Deaf Persons to Hear* (London: Mess. Hawes, 1770), p. ii

²² Claude Nicolas Le Cat, *A Physical Essay on the Senses* (London: R. Griffiths, 1750), p. 67

²³ Oliver Goldsmith, *An History of the Earth, and Animated Nature*, Vol. II. (London: J. Nourse, 1774), p. 174

²⁴ M. De St Pierre, *Studies of Nature*, trans. by Henry Hunter (London: C. Dilly, 1799), p. 312

²⁵ Bynum and Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses*, p. 24

²⁶ Bynum and Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses*, p. 29

To form a right judgement of his excessive misery, we need only reflect how valuable to Mankind are the Lights of Education, of which this Species of deaf Persons is almost totally deprived. We have remarked, that there are more Things in the World that are the Objects of the Sight, than of the Hearing: but, in point of Knowledge, there are very few Truths that present themselves to the View, being almost universally the Objects of our Hearing.²⁷

This resulted in the attitude that deaf people possessed little intelligence as hearing makes possible rational discourses and serves a greater role in developing intelligence,²⁸ a point discussed further in Chapter Five.

One of the key reasons identified for the significance of understanding the ear and hearing is found in the link between hearing and speech. If one was born deaf, they were also expected to be dumb²⁹ because the tongue and ear were dependent upon each other,³⁰ a view held throughout the century. Speech was said to be from imitation and as deaf people cannot hear, they are deprived of the means to speak as a result.³¹ So the general belief was that those who had never heard a spoken word would not be able to pronounce any and therefore unable to show any signs of intelligence. Despite the emphasis on the significance of hearing in relation to education and to being able to speak, it is debateable whether sight or hearing was the most significant, especially as contradictory statements have been found making it difficult to determine whether hearing was more important than sight or vice versa.

²⁷ Le Cat, p. 69

²⁸ Bynum and Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses*, p. 24

²⁹ Goldsmith, p. 174

³⁰ Bernard Lamy, *Apparatus Biblicus or, An Introduction to the Holy Scriptures. In Three Books* (London: S. Palmer, 1723), p. 462

³¹ Anon., *The British Apollo: Containing Two Thousand Answers to Curious Questions in most Arts and Sciences*, 3rd edn (London: Theodore Sanders, 1726), p. 46

Sight has been noted to be the more valuable sense because it was thought to be a supplement to hearing more than hearing is to sight; deaf people could use their eyes for communication 'by [watching] the motion of the lips' and blind people would not be able to use their ears to see things.³² On the other hand, it was remarked that 'a man born deaf is more unhappy than a man born blind'.³³ In light of these arguments, sight and hearing were considered to be of equal importance, with Bynum and Porter concluding they were 'the gates of memory' and two of man's 'noblest senses'.³⁴

Who sought treatments?

As hearing was a necessary sense to possess in eighteenth-century England, we turn to those who sought treatments. Hearing loss does not discriminate and anyone in this period could have been affected, regardless of age, gender or background. As the Industrial Revolution originated in eighteenth-century England, 'deafness increased with the coming of machinery in factories.'³⁵ Gentlemen, gentlewomen, the poor and parents sought cures for deafness for their child, confirming that people from various backgrounds sought cures. Loudon confirms the market for regular medical care in eighteenth-century England came from a wide range of social classes and people frequently consulted regular practitioners for both serious disorders and minor self-limiting ones.³⁶ Therefore, there was no reason why such treatments would only have been available to certain deaf people from wealthier backgrounds. However,

³² Le Cat, p. 68

³³ Le Cat, pp. 68-69

³⁴ Bynum and Porter, *Medicine and the Five Senses*, p. 22

³⁵ Lane, *A Social History of Medicine*, p. 6

³⁶ Irvine Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner 1750-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 102

there are theories about who were more likely to be affected by deafness with suggestions that 'women appear more liable to Deafness than men', reasons for which medics have 'not able to determine'.³⁷ A further example supporting this theory is the case of 'a family, in which the females, who were born of a deaf mother, were all deaf, but none of the males'.³⁸ There could, however, be a humoral explanation for this, as women were deemed to be 'colder, moister, clammier' than men,³⁹ which corresponds with the evidence that these humours caused deafness, discussed later.

In terms of the availability of medical treatment, Lane claims that 'before the mid-eighteenth century, medicine was really only available to the prosperous',⁴⁰ which suggests only those from more affluent backgrounds could afford to seek such treatments. This rings true in the case of three children of a 'Noble Lord', who were restored to their hearing after 'taking the Pill and Drop of that famous Restorer of Health, Joshua Ward'.⁴¹ However, other primary sources present a slightly different picture: a 73 year old Mr Thomas Gardner, of St George's work-house, was totally deaf for two years⁴² and Mary Preston, reported to have been deaf for four years and belonging to St. James's Workhouse,⁴³ were both restored to hearing by Dr Raynes. As Thomas and Mary were reported to be from workhouses, this shows treatments for deafness was available to those from poorer backgrounds. Further, a report from

³⁷ Anon., *Memoirs of the Medical Society of London*, Vol. I (London: Fry and Couchman, 1787), p. 106

³⁸ John Baptist Morgagni, *The Seats and Causes of Diseases Investigated by Anatomy, in Five Books*, trans. by Benjamin Alexander in three volumes, Vol I (London: A. Millar, 1769), p. 297

³⁹ Gail Kern Paster, 'Unbearable Coldness of Female Being: Women's Imperfection and the Humoral Economy', *English Literary Renaissance*, 28:3 (1998), 416-440, p. 416

⁴⁰ Lane, *A Social History of Medicine*, p. 1

⁴¹ *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, issue 96, 25 February 1735

⁴² *Morning Chronicle (1770)*, issue 1866, 16 May 1775

⁴³ *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, issue 10378, 28 July 1762

1775 refers to lower classes often using 'remedies for deafness which are seldom attended with any good effects'⁴⁴ suggesting that they could only access the less successful and possibly cheaper or free alternatives.

Lane sheds further light in that the Poor Law was a contributing factor for poor people's access to medicine, explaining that most surgeon-apothecaries looked upon Poor Law work as a 'useful and reliable source of income, especially when a parish contract was negotiated, rather than charging individual fees for every pauper'.⁴⁵ Loudon considers that the advantage of the old Poor Law system was that it was 'not despised by medical practitioners [and] was usually paid at the same level as private practice'.⁴⁶ Poorer communities also had access to a parish surgeon, reported to be a 'familiar local doctor whose concern for his reputation in his community would have made him generally careful and considerate towards the poor'.⁴⁷ In addition, a substantial number of herb-based preparations were commonly prescribed by the surgeon-apothecary both for paupers and also for his more affluent patients.⁴⁸ Nonetheless,

certain top medical practitioners were found to have cultivated practices amongst fashionable members of society, who could afford a guinea or more per consultation ... it was noted that even they would also treat less affluent patients, while amending fees according to ability to pay. Top physicians also held charity surgeries for the poor.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Sydenham and others, *The Modern Family Physician, or the Art of Healing Made Easy* (London: F. Newbery, 1775), p. 215

⁴⁵ Lane, *A Social History of Medicine*, p. 18

⁴⁶ Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner*, p. 232

⁴⁷ Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner*, p. 232

⁴⁸ Lane, *A Social History of Medicine*, p. 46

⁴⁹ Dorothy Porter and Roy Porter, *Patients Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), p. 17

Despite evidence confirming that poorer people accessed treatments, the types of treatment compared to those who were wealthier must be considered. Those who could afford to consult a professional doctor when they fell sick and those who could not made free use of quack, family and unorthodox remedies adopting a 'try-anything' approach.⁵⁰ There is an example of this 'try anything' approach in the *Daily Post* in 1719, in the form of an advert giving 'advice to the deaf':

By a Lade of Note in the Country, who had entirely lost her Hearing 47 years from a Cold in her Head ... spent a great deal of Money upon all the Practisers for the Ears she could hear of, far and near ... try'd every Thing she was told of, to no purpose ... believing she was out of the reach of Cure ... soon after ... by a mere chance, at a Friend's House, an old physical book, where amongst many Receipts, for almost all Distempers, was one for Deafness, compounded of several innocent ingredients [which] she made and used ... one months time, she could hear a little, and began to distinguish sounds ... it miraculously and perfectly cured her ... she can now hear as well and as quick as any person whatsoever and has continued so far above 3 years, ... she has cured above 50 people with the same ... and it never once failed.⁵¹

It is claimed that 'a patient's choice of a medical practitioner depended upon his or her complaint, social status, economic circumstances, geographical location and previous medical experience'.⁵² However, Irvine asserts that 'patients of all social classes used not one but frequently a range of healers, without making any distinction between, what has been described as, 'practitioners, proper and improper'.⁵³ Further evidence suggests the availability of treatments did not discriminate and it must not be assumed that only certain members of society could afford to consult top practitioners, particularly as literature shows that lay people, when sick, eagerly threw themselves

⁵⁰ Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, p. 286

⁵¹ *Daily Post*, issue 16, 21 October 1719

⁵² Sally Irvine, *Surgeons and Apothecaries in Suffolk: 1750-1830, City Slickers and Country Bumpkins: Exploring Medical Myths* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of East Anglia, 2011), pp. 24-25

⁵³ Irvine, p. 29

into such healing options as were available.⁵⁴ As members of society were reported to have been concerned with their health, 'they were avid consumers of medical cures [who] reserved the right to purchase such cures from many different sources [and] to take advice from many different types of medical practitioner'.⁵⁵

Porter explains there was no shame in going beyond a regular medical practitioner and most resorted to quack medicine out of desperation, having already tried everything in vain.⁵⁶ After all, quack medicines were offered for conditions that qualified medics could not really treat.⁵⁷ For example, Mr James Bourke is reported to have approached Dr Raynes after being deaf fourteen years and had 'tried the most eminent Persons for Disorders in the Ears, without the least Benefit'.⁵⁸ A Gentlewoman who had a deaf and dumb child approached Dr Ward after being told by physicians that her child's deafness could not be cured, Ward however, insisted he could cure the child:

[Dr Ward] thereupon order'd it to be brought to him three times a Week. The Gentlewoman gave him five Guineas, and came away, very joyful with the Hopes of having her Child cured ; and, accordingly sent it three times a Week to him, as he had order'd, for upwards of five Months, and he gave it such Medicines as he thought proper, particularly one of his Pills, which work'd so roughly ... After this Gentlewoman had been at about nine Pounds Expence in Coach-hire, in sending her Child for so long a time to him, and she found the Child receiv'd no Benefit by the Medicines he had given it, she desisted to send the Child any more; but, she says, he made use of many Experiments, to convince her that her Child was better, which, she thinks, were only mere

⁵⁴ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 25

⁵⁵ O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England*, p. 185

⁵⁶ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 25

⁵⁷ Jonathan Berry, 'Publicity and the Public Good: Presenting Medicine in Eighteenth-Century Bristol' in W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds), *Medical Fringe and Medical Orthodoxy 1750-1850* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 30-31

⁵⁸ *Public Advertiser*, issue 8630, 2 July 1762

Contrivances to amuse her, the Child being not, in any degree, better than it was when she took it first to him.⁵⁹

Her commitment to pay the money and take the time to pay regular visits with her child emphasises her desperation.

Therefore, it transpires that the decision whether to self-dose or to consult a doctor was more than just about the ability to pay. Personal preferences and the perceived seriousness of the complaint were also taken into consideration.⁶⁰ For example, Smith concurs that the apothecary was the 'physician of the poor in all cases, and of the rich when the distress or danger is not very great'.⁶¹ Irvine, however, argues that Smith may have been overemphasising this point, explaining that 'where apothecaries were surgeons as well, and had patients across a wide range of classes both of those who could afford them, or those whose health needs were met through 'club' or Poor Law arrangements'.⁶² In light of the above, it can be suggested that available treatments for deafness were there for all deaf people to access, regardless of their economic status and background, if they so wished.

Who treated deafness?

Even though there are references to physicians treating deafness, there was no specialism in the ear until the nineteenth century, when John Harrison Curtis established the first hospital in England devoted to ear disease in 1816 and advances

⁵⁹ Joseph Clutton, *A True and Candid Relation of the Good and Bad Effects of Joshua Ward's Pill and Drop* (London: J. Wilford, 1736), pp. 88-89

⁶⁰ Porter and Porter, *Patients Progress*, p. 17

⁶¹ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (Chichester: Capstone, 2010), p. 107

⁶² Irvine, p. 279

in treatment were made by James Yearsley.⁶³ In eighteenth-century England, there was no single medical profession but groups of practitioners who formed a pyramid of three distinct groups consisting of physicians, surgeons and apothecaries.⁶⁴ Physicians provided theory, diagnosis and prescriptions; surgeons practised external dissection by cutting, manipulating and treating disorders outside of the body,⁶⁵ and 'the apothecaries were tradesmen who dispensed drugs'.⁶⁶ However, O'Day questions whether the medical profession was 'tidily and hierarchically arranged into these three tiers'⁶⁷ and Aspin argues it was 'a rich matrix of overlapping spheres of competence and activity, populated by a range of claimants to medical expertise'.⁶⁸ Unqualified doctors known as quacks were an addition to this equation. They did not have a license to practice medicine as they held no official medical qualifications nor were they enrolled in medical colleges or establishments.⁶⁹

Evidently, there were a range of medical practitioners in eighteenth-century England who had some involvement in the treatment of deafness. Medicine was a competitive business⁷⁰ and as Cherry explains, 'there was no distinct body of 'scientific medicine' and medical fads [and] the whims of moneyed patients could not be ignored'.⁷¹ Irvine elaborates further:

⁶³ Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, pp. 384-385

⁶⁴ Lane, *A Social History of Medicine*, p. 1

⁶⁵ Irvine, p. 21

⁶⁶ Penelope J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in Britain 1700-1850* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 149

⁶⁷ O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England*, p. 240

⁶⁸ Richard Aspin, 'Illustrations from the Wellcome Library: who was Elizabeth Okeover?', *Medical History*, 44:4 (2000), 531-40, p. 531

⁶⁹ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 3

⁷⁰ O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England*, p. 239

⁷¹ Steven Cherry, 'Medical Care since 1750', in Carole Rawcliffe & Richard G. Wilson (eds.), *Norwich Since 1550* (London: Hambleton Continuum, 2004), p. 272

The failure of regular and scarce physicians to offer patients much more than uncertain drugs as well as their inability to recognise with certainty the origins of human disease made even those who could afford the best medical care sceptical of traditional medicine's authority and power.⁷²

Those working in the field of medicine, both licensed or unlicensed, generally grew in number and status and as early as 1711, writer Joseph Addison warned of the danger of over-supply.⁷³ Early modern healthcare is described as a medical marketplace 'where physicians, surgeons and apothecaries melted into each other along a spectrum that included thousands who dispensed medicine full- or part-time'.⁷⁴ To establish

a clear distinction between the orthodox and unorthodox is often impossible [because] there is the diversity of medical men, and second, the absence of a clear distinction between the orthodox or regular practitioner and the unorthodox irregular or quack.⁷⁵

Loudon discusses the difficulties created by lack of a clear distinction between the orthodox regular, and the unorthodox or irregular quack⁷⁶ and it is indeed difficult to determine whether most treatments of deafness came from physicians, surgeons, apothecaries or quacks. The adverts, however, offer some indication as quacks advertised 'more nakedly, more aggressively and more forthrightly than others [and] commonly asserted point-blank that their medicines were universally effective and therapeutically non peril'.⁷⁷ Licensed medical practitioners, on the other hand, advertised their services in the papers, but tended to do so more discreetly, such as

⁷² Irvine, p. 29

⁷³ Corfield, p. 25

⁷⁴ Mark S. R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis, *Medicine and the Market in England and its Colonies 1450-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 1

⁷⁵ Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner*, p. 13

⁷⁶ Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner*, p. 28

⁷⁷ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 44

to announce their removal to a new and larger premises, for example.⁷⁸ This suggests the majority of adverts for treatments of deafness identified in the primary sources were from quacks.

Quacks

With the likelihood of quacks being the main commissioners and authors of adverts and as adverts for treatments for deafness provide the inspiration for this chapter, we now turn to the contribution quacks made in the treatment of deafness in eighteenth-century England. Quack medicine was at the centre of the medical marketplace, leading Loudon to comment 'this country is infested' with a 'vile race of quacks.'⁷⁹ This is partly because until the 1780s, 'they supplied practitioners with raw materials, but began to open shops and supply drugs and potions over the counter more cheaply than surgeons and apothecaries'.⁸⁰ Quack adverts were everywhere: 'it was impossible to step into a coffee shop without being bombarded by such adverts'.⁸¹ Common names identified in adverts include Dr Ward, Dr Raynes and Dr Graham, all of whom are discussed below.

Quacks often sold pills and drops and claimed to be able to cure a list of disorders. Many of them were eye specialists and benefactors of the deaf,⁸² although they apparently could only treat deafness from an external cause, and if the eardrum was

⁷⁸ Porter and Porter, *Patients Progress*, p. 98

⁷⁹ Irvine Loudon, 'The Vile Race of Quacks with which this Country is Infested' in W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds), *Medical Fringe and Medical Orthodoxy 1750-1850* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 106

⁸⁰ Irvine, p. 24

⁸¹ Porter and Porter, *Patients Progress*, p. 96

⁸² Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 136

intact.⁸³ They 'often laid claim to pioneering innovation and experiment in therapeutics and eighteenth-century operators championed medical electricity',⁸⁴ a treatment discussed below. However, quack medicine was also considered to be 'the most worthless of consumer goods in the eighteenth-century marketplace'.⁸⁵ The reported successes or failures of these treatments will be discussed in due course.

Dr Ward

Dr Ward was well-known for curing deafness with his 'pill and drop'⁸⁶ and he was reported to have made a fortune. His method was to prescribe a pill, a drop and two bottles of liquid snuff to provoke sneezing and to purge the head. The pill was believed to be an 'antimony compound which acted as an expectorant, an anti-pyretic and an emetic, the drop was a violent purgative'.⁸⁷ Purging was not unusual as a form of treatment for deafness and there is a case where blistering was advised as a form of treatment to encourage purging. A family who had four children born deaf were advised to lay a blister on the head of any future children they had. It was assumed the deafness in these children was caused by too much mucus in the drum and laying the blisters would encourage its discharge.⁸⁸

Even though Ward was reported to be successful, there are reports that his treatments were a failure. For example, an eighteen-year-old woman, born deaf and dumb, took

⁸³ Loudon, 'The Nature of Provincial Medical Practice in Eighteenth-Century England', p.3

⁸⁴ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 6

⁸⁵ Cody, p. 103

⁸⁶ *Grub Street Journal*, issue 406, 6 October 1737

⁸⁷ Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, p. 285

⁸⁸ William Cheselden, *The Anatomy of the Humane Body*, 2nd edn (London: S. Collins, 1722), p. 251

this pill and drop. When asked what effect the medicine had on her, it was reported 'the first Dose had like to have kill'd her; that her Flesh turn'd to all manner of Colours presently after it; and that she thinks, that she is not anything better for them, in her Hearing and Speaking'.⁸⁹ This is not the only case that discusses the failure of Dr Ward's treatment as seen in the above-mentioned case of the Gentlewoman who took her deaf and dumb child to Dr Ward. However, it is important to note that this article was written by Joseph Clutton, which raises doubt as to its authenticity. Clutton was a rival practitioner, an apothecary, and as the occupation of medicine was thriving by the close of the eighteenth century,⁹⁰ it would be expected that qualified medics would point out the failures of quacks. In Clutton's case, it was at the turn of the eighteenth century that apothecaries established the legal right to prescribe medicines.⁹¹

Dr Raynes

Dr Raynes, labelled an Oculist and Aurist, was reported to have 'restored Numbers of deaf Persons to their Hearing by a Peculiar Method, even when the Malady has been 50 Years standing, and deemed incurable by the most Eminent of the Faculty'.⁹² Further emphasis on the success of Dr Raynes' cures is found in the announcement that he 'had the high Honour to be recommended by his present Majesty King George the Third, in publick Court; and has a Pension for curing the Blind, and Deaf'.⁹³ The success of Dr Raynes' treatments are widely documented and it was noted he was

⁸⁹ Clutton, pp. 61-62

⁹⁰ Porter and Porter, *Patients Progress*, p. 21

⁹¹ Porter and Porter, *Patients Progress*, p. 17

⁹² *Public Advertiser*, issue 8262, 29 April 1761

⁹³ *Daily Advertiser*, issue 13811, 27 March 1775

able to tell patients 'in a moment' whether or not their deafness was curable.⁹⁴ Mr Henry Centliver had been deaf 26 years, and deemed incurable and Miss Montgomers incurably deaf for 19 years, and Mrs Ann Bostock, deaf for 20 years, were all successfully treated by Dr Raynes.⁹⁵ The case of Mrs Bostock in particular was explained more fully:

She being upwards of 60 Years of Age, greatly despaired of Relief; but being informed of the extraordinary Cures performed in Deafness by Doctor Raynes, was determined to try him; and, to my great Surprise, was brought to my Hearing in a short time as well as ever I heard in my Life, for which I return him my sincere Thanks, and earnestly recommend to him all afflicted with that melancholy Disorder.⁹⁶

The list of people cured by Raynes is considerable, and in the space of six months, Raynes is reported to have cured at least 75 people of their deafness.⁹⁷ To confirm the authenticity of Raynes' treatment, it was reported that:

He has not a Competitor in that melancholy Disorder; he has also rendered Scores of Blind to Sight ... he tells the Patient whether curable or not in a Moment; he consults the faculty in any incident of the ears; has invented an artificial pupil, and also an artificial ear, whereby many persons that are deemed incurable may see and hear to great perfection, without inconveniency or pain ...⁹⁸

Dr Graham

Another famous name in this period deserving of mention is that of Dr James Graham, who like Dr Raynes was labelled an Oculist and Aurist. Numerous success stories are reported by Graham himself in his *Thoughts on the Present State of the Practice in*

⁹⁴ *Public Advertiser*, issue 8371, 3 September 1761

⁹⁵ *Public Advertiser*, issue 8584, 8 May 1762

⁹⁶ *Public Advertiser*, issue 8317, 3 September 1761

⁹⁷ *Public Advertiser*, issue 8317, 3 September 1761

⁹⁸ *Public Advertiser*, issue 8262, 29 April 1761

*Disorders on the Eye and Ear.*⁹⁹ Graham had considerable success when treating deafness with abundant testimonials and case studies of patients cured by him during a period of 10 years.¹⁰⁰ Despite his impressive credentials, Graham was also a quack, compounding the questions surrounding the qualifications of those who treated deafness.

Even though quacks are labelled as having no medical knowledge nor possessing any medical qualifications, practitioners denounced as quacks had in fact received a regular education or achieved a degree. Graham was known to have studied at Edinburgh under Cullen and Black, so he was one of the more educated quacks.¹⁰¹ Unlike Ward, discussed earlier, there did not appear to be much, if any, criticism of Graham's work. It was even claimed that he was 'too well known and too well authenticated to be doubted'.¹⁰² An example of Dr Graham's success stories include:

For more than sixteen years, I have been afflicted with extreme deafness in both ears, ... I had given up, for several years past, all hopes and attempts to recover my hearing, or of enjoying the conversation of my friends – till encouraged by your skill and candour, I ventured to apply to you - and I am now (thank God) so well recovered, ... for the benefits and encouragement of others who labour under the like gloomy, solitary misfortune, I make my case thus public.¹⁰³

Another detailed testimonial has nothing but praise for Graham:

Sir, HAVING been afflicted with the unspeakable misfortune of total deafness in both ears, for about thirty years past, ... I had tried a great variety of medicines for many years, to no purpose; yet, being encouraged by seeing your advertisement in the newspapers, I thank God, and you as being the instrument

⁹⁹ James Graham, *Thoughts on the Present State of the Practice in Disorders of the Eye and Ear* (London: Mr Newbery, 1775)

¹⁰⁰ Graham, *Thoughts on the Present State of the Practice in Disorders of the Eye and Ear*, pp. 13-20

¹⁰¹ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 5

¹⁰² Graham, *Thoughts on the Present State of the Practice in Disorders of the Eye and Ear*, p. 6

¹⁰³ Graham, *Thoughts on the Present State of the Practice in Disorders of the Eye and Ear*, p. 10

of restoring my hearing to so unexpected a degree of perfection, that I have not the least occasion for the trumpet, can hear ordinary conversation.¹⁰⁴

There are several more testimonials concerning Graham but 'to describe every case, and to record every cure, would be to compile volumes'.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, the fact that these testimonials were in the form of letters to Graham and published by Graham himself has to be taken into consideration. Quack advertising depended heavily on testimonials and those whose miracle recoveries were dramatised were members of the respectable classes, such as gentlemen, clergymen and titled ladies.¹⁰⁶

Medical knowledge and investigations

Despite quacks insisting they could treat deafness, other physicians had sound knowledge regarding the ear and hearing and were adequately qualified to treat deafness, found in discussions amongst medics about the causes and treatments for deafness. Several medical texts from this period give a fairly detailed description of the ear and its use and explained pathological causes of deafness, Cheselden's *Anatomy of the Humane Body* (1722)¹⁰⁷ being one such example. It was acknowledged in 1714 that 'several physicians and other learned persons have been at great focus on the discovery and improvement of hearing', although 'most attempts have only occasionally and incidentally proved to be of any benefit.'¹⁰⁸ In 1754, the causes of deafness was described to be,

¹⁰⁴ James Graham, *An Address to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, Particularly to those Residing in the Great Metropolis of the British Empire* (London: G.Scott, 1775), p. 13

¹⁰⁵ Graham, *Thoughts on the Present State of the Practice in Disorders of the Eye and Ear*, p. 6

¹⁰⁶ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p.52

¹⁰⁷ Cheselden, *The Anatomy of the Humane Body*, 2nd edn (London: S. Collins, 1722)

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Browne, *Institutions in Physick, Collected from the Writings of the Most Eminent Physicians* (London: W.R. for Jonah Browne, 1714), p. 160

a cutting off the external Ear, or an Obstruction of the auditory passage from wax or other things; from a rupture of the membrane of the tympanum, or when it is corroded or ulcerated, or the auditory nerve is obstructed or compressed.¹⁰⁹

It was also explained in 1770 that:

The ear consists of several distinct parts, which together concur to produce the sense of hearing. Hence, if the causes of deafness, or of a difficulty of hearing, are in the ear itself, one or more parts thereof must be injured ... As deafness is the inability to perceive those tremulous or vibratory motions of the air, which produce sound; the cause of this defect must necessarily be, either in the organ itself, namely the ear, or in its connection with the common sensory, the vibrations of the air being prevented from producing the necessary and determinate alterations in those parts of the human body.¹¹⁰

Medical practitioners sought to broaden their knowledge by presenting questions such as 'why does crying/yawning create dullness in hearing?' and 'why is there deafness if the eustachian tube is obstructed?'¹¹¹ These were in place at the start of the eighteenth century, as found in the case of a deaf child by physician, John Lowthorp:

the Child's Head and Face were a little distorted, the whole right side being somewhat elevated, and the left depress'd; so that the Passage of his left ear was quite shut up, and that of the right Ear proportionally distended, and too open. I found, upon Examination, that the Auditory Nerve of this right Ear was not perish: and I supposed the Defect to lye in the want of due Tension of the Tympanum of his Ear; whose use I took to be only to preserve the Auditory Nerve, and Brain, and inward parts of the Ear, from outward Injury by Cold, Dust. For it is requisite that the Tympanum be Tense and hard stretched; otherwise the Laxness of that Membrane will certainly Deaf and Damp the sound.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Brookes, p. 207

¹¹⁰ Buchner, pp. 2-3

¹¹¹ Browne, *Institutions in Physick*, p. 160

¹¹² John Lowthorp, *The Philosophical Transactions and Collections*, Vol. III, 4th edn (London: T.W., 1732), p. 42

The common list of causes of deafness included an 'obstruction of the passage to the tympanum by wax or dust'¹¹³ or a 'dry intemperies' of the tympanum of the ear, because 'when the tympanum is under a dry intemperies, and becomes rigid, it is not capable of motions correspondent to those in the external air'. Warm water in the ears was a suggested treatment for this.¹¹⁴ Another apparent cause of deafness was 'too moist intemperies of the tympanum', described as 'hinder[ing] the vibrating motion of the important membrane and render[ing] it incapable of communicating to the air' causing deafness as a result.¹¹⁵ Referring to dryness and warm water suggests a link to three of the four humours; hot, dry and wet.

However, knowledge was still fairly limited and Hippocratic medicine did not offer all the answers:

The workings of the body and the springs of disease remained thorny issues which divided physicians and even though Hippocratic doctors had a sound grasp of surface anatomy, first-hand knowledge of the innards and living processes depended heavily on wound observation and animal dissection.¹¹⁶

The ear and hearing were no exception as physicians and quacks were conducting their own experiments to determine the causes of deafness. There is evidence of trying to cure deafness in animals in 1732, where a spaniel received a blood transfusion from a lamb, apparently with success.¹¹⁷ Whether this experiment was used to enhance understanding of treatments for deafness is not known.

¹¹³ Theophilus Lobb, *The Practice of Physic in General, as delivered in a Course of Lectures on the Theory of Diseases and the Proper Method for Treating Them*, Vol. II (London: J. Buckland, 1771), p. 178

¹¹⁴ Lobb, p. 179

¹¹⁵ Lobb, p. 180

¹¹⁶ Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, p. 56

¹¹⁷ Lowthorp, p. 690

The four humours

Consideration of the four humours in relation to deafness was prevalent in eighteenth-century medical texts, especially with references to temperature and saturation. The four humours proved rather versatile as an explanatory system and there were academic lectures referring to the four humours as causes of deafness.¹¹⁸ A common consideration for the cause of deafness, as already discussed, was a 'dry' or 'too moist intemperies' of the tympanum of the ear.¹¹⁹ The importance of warmth in terms of treatment and even prevention was emphasised: 'whatever Medicines you put into the Ear be sure they be warm, but not very hot; because the natural temperature of the Ear is cold and dry';¹²⁰ it was believed that if warm water in the ears did not cure deafness, nothing else would.¹²¹ It was also recommended to keep the head warm as 'Nothing can contribute so much towards preventing deafness as keeping the head warm'.¹²²

The four humours are referred to in the works of William Salmon, an English empiric doctor. He emphasises that whether deafness had a hot or cold cause, what,

proceeds only from those simple Intemperatures, seldom lasts long; yet you ought to have some respect to them, because hot Medicines in a hot Temperament influence the Body as cold Medicines in a cold Temperament chill it, and to make the Disease worse.¹²³

¹¹⁸ Herman Boerhaave, *Boerhaave's Academical Lectures on the Theory of Physic*, Vol. IV (London: W. Innys, 1742)

¹¹⁹ Lobb, pp. 179-180

¹²⁰ William Salmon, *Medicina Practica: or, the Practical Physician* (London: Edmund Curll, 1707), p. 98

¹²¹ Thomas Marryat, *Therapeutics: or a New Practice of Physic* (Shrewsbury: T. Wood, 1775), p. 337

¹²² Sydenham and others, p. 215

¹²³ Salmon, p. 94

In the case of deafness as a result of old age, the four humours offered an explanation: 'In the decline of life the moisture in the ear is dried up, and there are little hopes of a cure, because nature sinks under the operation before any beneficial consequences can be promoted'.¹²⁴ There was a lady who recovered from a fever but still had an excessive noise in her head and ears, particularly at night, that rendered her very deaf, believed to have been caused by 'a slackness of the auditory nerve, attended with too great a humidity, occasioned by the fever'.¹²⁵

An experiment by W. Holder, documented in 1732, indicates further research on deafness regarding the four humours. A young boy born deaf and dumb until the age of 10 or 11 was committed into the care of said doctor. On examination, it was recorded that 'the Passage of his left Ear was quite shut up, and that of the right Ear proportionally distended and too open.' Holder explained his findings:

upon Examination, that the Auditory Nerve of this right Ear was not perished; and I supposed the Defect to lie in the Want of due Tension of the Tympanum of his Ear; whose use I took to preserve the Auditory Nerve, and Brain, and inward Parts of the Ear, from outward Injury by Cold, Dust.¹²⁶

Treating deafness

Applying simple logic, treatments for deafness must have had some success if they were being widely sold. However, the only evidence of effective treatments derive from doctor reports, patient testimonials and eyewitness observations, all of which will be discussed further. These are likely to have been exaggerated, particularly if the ulterior motive was to generate more business. Cody argues that it was not unusual

¹²⁴ Sydenham and others, pp. 214-215

¹²⁵ William Rowley, *The Terrible Effects of the Poison from the bite of a Mad Dog* (Dublin, 1795), p. 25

¹²⁶ Lowthorp, pp. 42-43

for quacks to offer a “No Cure, No Money” plan, which promised refunds for treatments that did not work,¹²⁷ in that ‘quacks were happy to refund money, so long as the displeased customer signed his name and offered his good credit in a bogus testimonial’.¹²⁸

Snuff and other treatments

Medicinal snuff such as cephalick snuff¹²⁹ and angelick snuff¹³⁰ were a common find. Snuff ‘invoke[d] gentle sneezing and discharges from the head’ and were sometimes ‘found surprisingly efficacious’.¹³¹ Adverts for snuff treatment tended to be accompanied by testimonials from patients deaf from infancy,¹³² and were found amongst a list of people cured by named doctors such as Dr Ward,¹³³ Dr Raynes,¹³⁴ Dr Francis,¹³⁵ and Dr Graham.¹³⁶

Typical case studies highlighting the success of medicinal snuff include Mr Rook, a Master Farrier in Walter-lane Fleet-street described as deaf who, after finding no remedy, took the ‘Royal Patent Medicinal Snuff’, of which ‘one Paper restor’d his Hearing, and the second perfected the Cure’.¹³⁷ Another gentleman had ‘an obstinate

¹²⁷ Cody, p. 123

¹²⁸ Cody, p. 123

¹²⁹ *Flying Post*, 13-16 July 1700

¹³⁰ *Daily Courant*, issue 2657, 29 April 1710

¹³¹ Michael Underwood, *A Treatise on the Disorders of Children*, Vol. II (London: J. Matthews, 1797), p. 48

¹³² *Flying Post*, issue 846, 8-10 October 1700

¹³³ *Grub Street Journal*, issue 406, 6 October 1737

¹³⁴ *Public Advertiser*, issue 8371, 3 September 1761

¹³⁵ *London Evening Post*, issue 6112, 1-3 January 1767

¹³⁶ *Morning Chronicle (1770)*, issue 1815, 17 March 1775

¹³⁷ Samuel Major, *An Impartial Account of the Power and Efficacy of that Eminent and Noble Specific, the Royal Patent Medicinal Snuff* (London: W. Owen, 1751), p. 29

Deafness that no other Remedy he could procure would reach: 'On the taking of one Paper he found Relief, and three perfected the Cure'.¹³⁸ A butcher, Mr John Harding, claimed to be very deaf and was cured 'by taking about four papers of the Royal Patent Medicinal Snuff'. Mr Ballding, Clerk to Merchants in Watling-Street, 'tried several Methods to get cur'd, but the Deafness was too obstinate, but on taking one Paper of *The Royal Patent Medicinal Snuff*, found great Relief, and two or three restored him to his Hearing'.¹³⁹ Other snuffs included the 'Cordial Cephalic Snuff ... excellent in curing recent deafness'¹⁴⁰ and Rowley's British Herb Snuff, also stated to remove and cure deafness.¹⁴¹

Advertised treatments for deafness did not just consist of snuff. Other remedies that were not as widely advertised or written about included cold bathing, tar water, pills, drops, cordials and herbal remedies, to name a few. Cold bathing, linked to the four humours, was a documented treatment for deafness. It was claimed that 'Cold Immersion [is considered] to be useful in all the Infirmities of the Head and Eyes: And ... Deafness has been lately cured by the same, in the Cold Bath at London' as in the case of a Mrs Ride, who was deaf.¹⁴² In 1774, 'the Bath' was described as an experience which required 'pumping the head'.¹⁴³ In 1746, a Gentlewoman was reported to have had a deafness which was progressively getting worse each day. Being anxious of losing her hearing completely, she 'drank Tar-water in small

¹³⁸ Major, p. 29

¹³⁹ *General Advertiser*, issue 5212, 4 July 1751

¹⁴⁰ *Morning Post*, issue 1584, 18 November 1777

¹⁴¹ *Adams's Weekly Courant*, issue 2365, 17 February 1778

¹⁴² Edward Baynard, *The History of Cold Bathing: Both Ancient and Modern* (London: Sam Smith, 1706), p. 74

¹⁴³ Philip Dormer Stanhope, *Letters written by the Late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope*, Vol. II (Dublin: E. Lynch and 11 others, 1774), p. 293

Quantities several Weeks with no Effect; but being advised to take double the Quantity of the Water every Day, she did so and was soon after cured of her Deafness'.¹⁴⁴ A similar outcome of this treatment is found in man who had been deaf for many years and after 'drinking Tar-water for some Time, he is much improved in his Hearing, and though not quite cured, yet has Hopes of Relief by a longer Use of it'.¹⁴⁵

Alongside adverts for snuff was drops, liquid 'spirit', herbal remedies, oils and cordials. One of the common causes of deafness identified and easily treated was ear wax, especially in adults who experienced an onset of deafness. There are several suggestions to treat this type of deafness, such as:

Oil. Amigd. Amar. Dropt into the Ear warm, and dip a small Dorcel of Cotton, or black Wool, in the same, and put it into the Ear ... two or three times; and at last warm a little White-Wine, ... and Syringe the Ear well therewith, with your Ear-Syringe, ... and by that time you have injected two or three Syringe fulls, you will see a lump of wax come out ... and your Patient is Cured.¹⁴⁶

Chymical Specifick Drops claimed to be:

an infallible and Instant Cure for Deafness ... which infinitely excel all other Methods for they directly cure Deafness ... strengthen the Tympanum or Drum of the Ear, free the auditory Nerve from Obstruction, and remedy all Defects of the Hearing Faculty, almost in an instant.¹⁴⁷

Liquid spirits, such as a 'Great German spirit' left a 60-year-old man 'perfectly Cured by one Bottle' who had been deaf for several years¹⁴⁸ and herbal remedies, such as the extract of hemlock which:

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Prior, *An Authentic Narrative of the Success of Tar-Water* (Dublin: Margt. Rhames, 1746), p. 157

¹⁴⁵ Prior, p. 169

¹⁴⁶ John Moyle, *Chirurgus Marinus: or, the Sea-Chirurgion* (London: E. Tracy, and S. Burrowes, 1702), p. 306

¹⁴⁷ *Daily Gazetteer*, issue 5022, 30th April 1745

¹⁴⁸ *Flying Post*, issue 1754, 2-5 June 1705

often penetrates, and reaches to parts, which the most powerful remedies hitherto known could not touch. It open obstruction; and by that means restore a free circulation of the blood, when it is disturbed, and obstructed ... The remedy often cures the deaf.¹⁴⁹

A typical poster that would have been placed on the walls of coffee shops include Dr Wallis's Oil and Balsamic Cordial advertised as 'the first Remedy in the world for the cure of deafness' alongside other disorders, with examples of its success including Mr J. Oliver, a Clerk of Preston Church, who 'had been so deaf he was obliged to employ a man to do the duty of the Church, but by the application of the Oil and Balsamic Cordial, is perfectly cured, though in the 79th year of his age'¹⁵⁰ and Mrs Bennet, reported to have been cured of deafness that had been troublesome for 'many years'.¹⁵¹

Adverts of Dr Brodum's Nervous Cordial is accompanied by success stories, such as one experiencing an 'astonishing recovery from total deafness' and restored another to hearing after being 'deaf several years' and yet another perfectly cured after 'afflicted with a deafness for twelve years'.¹⁵² There are more sporadic references, such as people being cured of deafness by spittle, which was placed into the ears and a doctor turning his Finger in the ears rubbing and 'chas[ing] them well'.¹⁵³ A perhaps

¹⁴⁹ Antony Störk, *A Necessary Supplement to the former Essays on the Medicinal Virtues of Hemlock* (London: T. Becket, 1762), pp. 23-24

¹⁵⁰ *E. Johnson's British Gazette and Sunday Monitor*, issue 1037, 6 September 1795

¹⁵¹ *E. Johnson's British Gazette and Sunday Monitor*, issue 1037, 6 September 1795

¹⁵² William Brodum, *A Guide to Old age, or a Cure for the Indiscretions of Youth* (London: J. W. Myers, 1799), pp. 40-43

¹⁵³ Lowthorp, p. 11

extreme non-medical intervention, although rare, included a woman who had been quite deaf for two years perfectly restored to her hearing shortly after an earthquake.¹⁵⁴

Electrification

Another treatment, mainly offered by quacks, was electrification:

Beginning in the 1740s, electrical treatments were often offered by practitioners who did not make a mystery of their ignorance of medical theory. Their claims to authority were based on the success of their new methods as assessed by patients themselves, rather than on theoretical grounds.¹⁵⁵

It was reported to be ‘the craze of the eighteenth century with experiments becoming forms of polite entertainment for ladies and gentlemen who enjoyed feeling sparks, shocks and attractions on their bodies’.¹⁵⁶ In relation to deafness, the Royal Academy of Sciences specified that electrical experiments ‘surpass all those of other countries; the Deaf are restored to their hearing, the Dumb to their speech’.¹⁵⁷ The prevailing view in England was that electricity exerted a mechanical action upon muscles and nerves and could have ‘some other action upon the human body besides that of mere stimulus’.¹⁵⁸ The developing focus on this form of treatment indicates an increasing interest in nerves and a potential cause of deafness later in the eighteenth century.

With electrification considered on occasion for curing deafness, the *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries* highlight cases where hearing was successfully

¹⁵⁴ William Stukeley, *The Philosophy of Earthquakes, Natural and Religious*, Part III (London: A. and C. Corbett, 1756), p. 34

¹⁵⁵ Paola Bertucci ‘Shocking Subjects: Human Experiments and the Material Culture of Medical Electricity in Eighteenth-Century England’ in Erika Dyck and Larry Stewart, *The Uses of Humans in Experiment: Perspectives from the 17th to the 20th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 112

¹⁵⁶ Paola Bertucci, ‘Sparks in the dark: the attraction of electricity in the eighteenth century’, *Endeavour* 31:3 (2007), 88-93, p. 88

¹⁵⁷ *London Daily Advertiser*, issue 644, 3 April 1753

¹⁵⁸ Bertucci, ‘Shocking Subjects’, p. 112

restored.¹⁵⁹ Some success stories concerning electrification include a seven-year-old girl who was deaf and dumb from birth and as a result of being electrified, her hearing was gradually restored which thus enabled her to learn to speak.¹⁶⁰ There are also reports of a gentleman who was cured after experiencing violent vomiting and blood being forced out of the ears.¹⁶¹ This also highlights that practice of blood-letting, considered an acceptable form of treatment in this period.¹⁶²

Further, one with constant tinnitus had his hearing perfectly restored in a matter of minutes,¹⁶³ and another who had impaired hearing for thirty years cured by the use of electricity.¹⁶⁴ Finally, a case of a 19-year-old man who fell into water through ice and 'contracted a dullness of hearing' from which he soon recovered by electricity.¹⁶⁵

Another similar case is of Samuel Jones Gardner who:

in the year of the great frost, leap'd into the Thames to save a man from drowning. Hereby he became so deaf of both ears, that he could not hear any sound at all ... In February last, after being once electrified, he could hear the noise of a Coach at some distance. After the third time he could hear the sound of the machine. He came no more so it is suppos'd he is well.¹⁶⁶

The cases of the 19-year-old man and Gardner in particular show an evolution from humoral theory to electrification. Rather than treating deafness caused by something cold with something warm, electrification was an alternative remedy that supplemented and eventually replaced humoral explanations.

¹⁵⁹ Anon., *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries*, Vol. I, Part 1, 2nd edn (London: J. Murray, 1774), p. 371

¹⁶⁰ Anon., *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries*, p. 371

¹⁶¹ John Wesley, *The Desideratum: or Electricity Made Plain and Useful* (London: W. Flexney, 1760), p. 48

¹⁶² Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, p. 57

¹⁶³ Anon., *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries*, p. 370

¹⁶⁴ Anon., *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries*, p. 370

¹⁶⁵ Anon., *Medical and Philosophical Commentaries*, p. 371

¹⁶⁶ Wesley, p. 48

The sources discovered only refer to one particular scientific instrument, a 'covered vial' that was placed on the patient's head and a wheel which was turned to generate the electricity. There is a detailed account from 1750 of the use of electricity on a woman to rectify deafness: the covered vial on her head was electrified by just two turns of the wheel, in which she felt a small warmth in her head and the experiment thus repeated four times with the electrical shock stronger each trial and her reporting the warmth increasing.¹⁶⁷ The experiments were repeated again in the same manner, but negative effects soon followed which saw complaints of her arms and body being affected by the shock and she started twitching violently. Initially there were reports that she could hear better, but other comments indicate the treatment was not perfect.¹⁶⁸

For those willing to put themselves through electrocution and risk the physical side effects suggests a desperation to cure deafness. The ethos was that when all other methods had been tried in vain, electricity was worth a go.¹⁶⁹ Interestingly, even though there were success stories, there was no shame in admitting when it failed: it 'much more frequently disappointed the expectation'.¹⁷⁰ For example:

Mr Wilson cured a woman of a deafness of seventeen years standing. He also observes, that she had a very great cold when she began to be electrified; but that the inflammation ceased the first time, and the cold was quite gone when the operation had been performed again the second day. But he

¹⁶⁷ Benjamin Wilson, *A Treatise on Electricity* (London: C. Davis, 1750), pp. 202-208

¹⁶⁸ Wesley, pp. 49-50

¹⁶⁹ Albert Haller, *Practical Observations on the Small Pox, Apoplexy and Dropsy* (London: T. Becket, 1772), p. 147

¹⁷⁰ Anon., *New Thoughts on Medical Electricity* (London: Tho. Clout, 1782), p. 35

acknowledges, that he had tried the same experiment upon six other deaf persons without any success.¹⁷¹

Surgery

Another method of treatment was surgery. Although seemingly not a common occurrence, surgery was a rather hands on approach to fixing the ear, as opposed to prescribing pills or suggesting medicinal snuffs, and entailed of intensive treatment, particularly operations by surgeons. By way of example,

A very remarkable history of a Boy that was deaf and dumb, that after the hinder part of his skull had been fractured, and cured by the Industry of a skilful Surgeon, he perfectly recovered his Sense of Hearing and his Speech.¹⁷²

Operations to cure deafness were usually performed when the auditory passage was stopped by a thick membrane and it was only when this was removed that hearing could be restored: the membrane had to be 'pierced with a lancet, otherwise one will be deprived of hearing for life'.¹⁷³

An example of a surgeon who performed such piercings is John Alderton, labelled an Aurist, who 'practised in the Country the Curing of Deafness with great Success, from the Year 1738 till the Year 1759, since which he has practised in London, where he has cured upwards of an Hundred afflicted with Deafness'¹⁷⁴ The *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser* went further: 'this Art or secret of curing Deafness has been in his Family 150 Years; therefore he don't take upon himself the Credit of being the

¹⁷¹ Joseph Priestley, *The History and Present State of Electricity* (London: J. Dodsley, 1769), p. 390

¹⁷² William Beckett, *Practical Surgery Illustrated and Improved* (London: E. Curll, 1740), p. 215

¹⁷³ M. de La Vaugnion, *A Compleat Body of Chirurgical Operations* (London: Henry Bonwick, 1699), p. 322

¹⁷⁴ *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, issue 10378, 28 July 1762

Author of it'¹⁷⁵ and 'he really believed he is the only Person in England capable of curing that Disorder'.¹⁷⁶

The general consensus is that surgical treatment tended to be performed by qualified surgeons rather than quacks. However, one report contradicts this. It was usually quacks who advertised their treatments somewhat uncompromisingly, so there is some confusion about the credibility of Alderton, who appears to be a surgeon exhibiting the advertising trait of a quack:

'he knows the Disreputation that attends Advertisements of this Sort, and that too often they have no other Meaning or Intention but Puff, Fraud and Deceit, to get Money from the Ignorant and Unwary, which has lately been the Case by a Person pretending and advertising to cure this Disorder.'¹⁷⁷

There is a case of an eight-year-old girl, born deaf, who was cured after an operation to remove the membrane, documented by James Drake, a physician in the early eighteenth century. Also, when referring to a paper about deafness caused by obstruction of the Eustachian tube, Johnathan Wathen discusses the performance of an operation on his patients, reported to be successful:

I have frequently performed the same operation, and sometimes with the most desirable success, Amongst the rest, on a young man who had been totally deaf from his birth in one ear, and who is now by it restored to his perfect hearing.¹⁷⁸

Wathen was a surgeon and brother of Samuel Wathen, a well-known London physician. By association, it is assumed that Wathen was also a surgeon.

¹⁷⁵ *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, issue 10378, 28 July 1762

¹⁷⁶ *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, issue 10378, 28 July 1762

¹⁷⁷ *Gazetteer and London Daily Advertiser*, issue 10378, 28 July 1762

¹⁷⁸ Jonathan Wathen, *Practical Observations Concerning the Cure of the Venereal Disease by Mercurials*, 2nd edn (London: J. Rivington and C. Henderson, 1765), p. 59

Nevertheless, we should not assume that surgery was usually performed by trained medical practitioners. Joseph Toynbee's nineteenth-century mission to 'rescue aural surgery from the hands of quacks' which resulted in the publication of *Pathological and Surgical Observations on the Diseases of the Ear* in 1860,¹⁷⁹ suggests that deafness was widely treated by unorthodox medical practitioners before this time.

Ear trumpets

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the treatment of deafness went down the path of ear trumpets, a funnel shaped instrument, described as 'man's first attempt at inventing a device for treating hearing loss'.¹⁸⁰ Although not a new invention with its origins in the seventeenth century, it was in the eighteenth century that 'the better ear trumpet was invented' and 'their use was becoming increasingly common'.¹⁸¹ In 1770, ear trumpets were reported to be a 'new-invented machine for the cure of nervous deafness, hardness of hearing, and noise in the head and ears'¹⁸² and 'used by people who are very deaf, in order to magnify common sounds upon the organ of hearing'.¹⁸³

Like 'other products aimed at correcting acquired or congenital defects,' the use of ear trumpets became widespread later in the century, at a time when 'such goods proliferated, thanks to innovations in design and materials [and] the expansion of advertising' that allowed sales to the wider public.¹⁸⁴ This is likely to be because an

¹⁷⁹ Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, p. 385

¹⁸⁰ Valentinuzzi, p. 33

¹⁸¹ Valentinuzzi, p. 34

¹⁸² *Morning Chronicle (1770)*, issue 1935, 4 August 1775

¹⁸³ Benjamin Martin, *The Young Gentleman and Lady's Philosophy*, Vol. II, 3rd edn (London: W. Owen, 1781), p. 366

¹⁸⁴ David M. Turner and Alun Withey, 'Technologies of the Body: Polite Consumption and the Correction of Deformity in Eighteenth-Century England', *History*, 99:5 (2014), 775-796, p. 776

increasing number of 'technologies of the body' became available in the later eighteenth century,¹⁸⁵ manifested in the promotion of ear trumpets and their effectiveness. It is likely ear trumpets were predominantly used by the upper classes, as references to its use in the newspapers include 'Sir Joshua [Reynolds] made use of his eyes, as well as his Ear-trumpet, when he attended this great orator in Westminster-hall'¹⁸⁶ and 'Old Lord Denbigh was in the House of Peers on Monday last ... though unable to catch any of the oratory of the day, except by an ear trumpet'.¹⁸⁷

Adverts for ear trumpets to 'assist deaf people'¹⁸⁸ show 'some improvement has been made in the sense of hearing'¹⁸⁹ and were advertised for purchase, but not by medical practitioners. They were generally found in stores selling tin, for example¹⁹⁰ and 'the first firm to begin commercial production of the ear trumpet' was not established until 1800, in London.¹⁹¹ As these adverts were more common towards the end of the eighteenth century, it is possible that medics turned to aids to enhance what limited hearing deaf individuals had, rather than setting out to cure them. 'Ear trumpets were the 'most improved plans for deaf people'¹⁹² suggesting they were a welcome introduction after years of treatments in the form of pills, drops, electrification and surgery.

¹⁸⁵ Turner and Withey, p. 775

¹⁸⁶ *Stuart's Star and Evening Advertiser*, issue 45, 4 April 1789

¹⁸⁷ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 19 483, 18 May 1791

¹⁸⁸ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 16287, 12 April 1781

¹⁸⁹ Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Edinburgh, John Bell, 1785), p. 286

¹⁹⁰ *Morning Chronicle (1770)*, issue 5050, 21 July 1785

¹⁹¹ Valentinuzzi, p. 34

¹⁹² *Morning Chronicle (1770)*, issue 3582, 10 November 1780

A further interesting find concerning the development of technology is in the *London Chronicle* reporting in 1777 that there was a 'new-invented machine for the cure of nervous deafness ... neither of the nature of electricity, nor what is commonly called an ear-trumpet'. It is not known what this machine entailed exactly, but Valentinuzzi mentions that 'in addition to ear trumpets, there were hearing fans and speaking tubes ... [which] helped amplify sounds.' These could have been what the *London Chronicle* was referring to. Nonetheless, it is clear that the development of technological aids for deafness continued to grow during this period.

Reported successes of treatments and patient testimonials

It is clear that alongside adverts, testimonials from happy patients were a frequent find, particularly in the case of Dr Graham, with the aim to convince those who 'despaired of being ever relieved', of being 'quickly and perfectly cured to their great Joy and Admiration'¹⁹³ to the extent that 'nothing in Nature can come near them for the certain and almost immediate Cure of DEAFNESS'.¹⁹⁴ For example, in relation to Dr Raynes: 'The frequent instances of Dr Raynes's skill in restoring the Deaf to their Hearing ... [was the] Basis of a successful Practice of 40 Years'.¹⁹⁵ Mrs Elizabeth Nedriff also claimed to have had 'the inexpressible pleasure to acquaint the public of her being perfectly and happily cured of her deafness, by Dr Raynes, which she had been afflicted with for fifty years, or ever since she was born'.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ *Daily Gazetteer*, issue 5022, 30 April 1745

¹⁹⁴ *Daily Gazetteer*, issue 5022, 30 April 1745

¹⁹⁵ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 4815, 2 February 1792

¹⁹⁶ *Morning Chronicle (1770)*, issue 7069, 3 February 1792

Reported successes of treatments did not always come in the form of testimonials but emphasised in adverts, an example being Wallis's abovementioned Oil and Balsamic Cordial, advertised as 'the first Remedy in the world for the cure of deafness'.¹⁹⁷ Another examples is found with Ann Stanley, interestingly deaf and dumb herself, claiming to be able to 'cure deafness and thickness of hearing if the Drum of the Ear be not hurt or broke' and claiming her father was 'once an eminent physician' as a means to justify her treatments.¹⁹⁸ A further example is a treatment advocated by Margaret Searl. The announcement explains that Searl's husband, Samuel, and father, Edward, were famous for relieving and curing deafness for more than 38 years and did not communicate the secret to anyone 'other than to Margaret, an 'art' that had now been passed on to her.¹⁹⁹ Even though these advertisements do not state the method of treatment used, the statement about their fathers and Margaret's husband would have been an attempt to convince the public of its authenticity.

Another example of advertising is the services of a German Physician, Dr Krook who,

for the Publick Good, gives Notice, That he dexterously cures all sorts of Deafness in Old or Young, ... He has cured several Persons deaf above these Fourty Years, who now bear as well as any Persons living, with a great Number deaf from the Cradle. He performs the Cure without any manner of Pain, and with such a safe Operation as never was practis'd by any before.²⁰⁰

Dr Krook was reported to have been able to tell at first sight whether or not he would be able to cure the patient, and testimonials have been found to validate his claims, such as the case of Mr Fuller 'in the Parish of the Holy Trinity, about 84 Years old, who

¹⁹⁷ *E. Johnson's British Gazette and Sunday Monitor*, issue 1037, 6 September 1795

¹⁹⁸ Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner*, p. 17

¹⁹⁹ *Post Man and the Historical Account*, issue 1765, 3-5 April 1707

²⁰⁰ *Brice's Weekly Journal*, issue 211, 25 April 1729

had been deaf near 50 Years, was cured in a few days'.²⁰¹ There is also the example of Mr Duckett:

Cure for the Deaf by Mr Duckett of Fairford in Gloucestershire, an approv'd Operator for the Hearing, and a licens'd surgeon for 20 years and upwards ... found out Medicines that cures all sorts of Deafness, ... hundreds of people, who have been perfectly cured thereby, several of which were Deaf from their birth.²⁰²

Twenty years later, Mr Duckett's success continued to be published with similar wording, emphasising that people of all ages had been cured, a claim testified by hundreds of people. These testimonials also explained that Duckett had the ability to tell at first sight whether the deafness could be cured and that 'these are the most famous Medicines for the Hearing, that were ever yet found out'.²⁰³

In light of the above, it appears the majority of adverts concerning treatments for deafness were from quacks and it was the quacks who actively voiced their remedies for deafness in the eighteenth-century medical marketplace. 'Quacks rarely left records of their practice'²⁰⁴ but they must have had successes as there was no shortage of citizens approaching them to purchase their advertised cures because 'the sick were more prepared to fork out for medicines than for advice'²⁰⁵ and quacks responded to this customer demand.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ *Brice's Weekly Journal*, issue 211, 25 April 1729

²⁰² *Evening Post (1709)*, issue 1399, 19-22 July 1718

²⁰³ *Gloucester Journal*, issue 380, 15 July 1729

²⁰⁴ Loudon, 'The Nature of Provincial Medical Practice in Eighteenth-Century England', p. 3

²⁰⁵ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 41

²⁰⁶ Porter, *Health for Sale*, p. 143

Conclusion

Being able to hear was clearly valued in eighteenth-century England, with the sense of hearing placed as one of the top two of the five senses. The primary sources provide a considerable number of examples of individuals seeking cures for deafness, some of who resorted to desperate measures after licensed physicians informed them there was no cure. It has been established that the sick were willing to try anything that was available and those with hearing loss were no exception, as shown in the considerable number of articles and medical documents detailing ingredients to use and instructions on how to administer such treatments for deafness, as well as the number of treatments provided in the various publications throughout the century, all of which shows that the options were not limited.

Deafness had a list of causes including an original fault, or wrong formation of the ear itself, or because of ulcers, or anything that destroys the structure of the ear. It was reported to be the effect of old age; of violent colds in the head; of fevers; of excessive noise; of hard wax in the ear; or because of too great moisture or dryness of the ear. It was also recognised that treating deafness was not as simple as one treatment for all and even though various treatments were widely advocated it was also accepted that not all deafness' could be cured. Morgagni summed it up thus: deafness is 'one disorder, but appears in a thousand shapes'.²⁰⁷ With this in mind, it had been established that there was a consideration of whether 'there be a perfect deafness, or a difficulty of hearing only'.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Morgagni, p. 327

²⁰⁸ Salmon, p. 93

The eighteenth-century medical world actively worked towards curing various forms of deafness whenever possible, in a medical market able to survive with citizens from all backgrounds regularly funding treatments. Attempts to remedy hearing loss was underway, at a time when England's citizens, as explained by Porter, 'grew intrigued by the medical profession, while clutching at every scrap of information about their skills and trying to evaluate their successes'.²⁰⁹ However, it proved difficult to determine how active licensed practitioners were in the field of deafness in eighteenth-century England as most information in primary sources came from adverts and testimonials, both of which tend to be associated with quacks, particularly. 'Deafness, provided the tympanum or ear-drum is intact' was one of the disorders that recurred with significant frequency amongst quack adverts.²¹⁰

The reported number of successful and unsuccessful treatments seem to be consistent as the century progressed, suggesting there were no medical breakthroughs in the treatment of deafness. There were some introductions by way of treatment, such as electrification, which were not used for deafness until the mid-eighteenth century, possibly contributing to considerations about whether damage to the auditory nerve became more prevalent in explanations of deafness as time went on, supplementing (and eventually supplanting) older humoral explanations. The wider use of ear trumpets towards the end of the century turned the focus to enhancing what little hearing people had, rather than treating what they did not have.

²⁰⁹ Porter and Porter, *Patients Progress*, p. 92

²¹⁰ O'Day, *The Professions in Early Modern England*, p. 114

The medical marketplace in eighteenth-century England was a competitive one and treating deafness was one of a long list of disorders that treatment was available for. With this in mind, it can be suggested that the aim to treat deafness may not necessarily have been because it was viewed as an illness to be cured, but something for which there was a market to exploit; people saw something wrong with themselves and set out to see if it could be treated. Therefore, whereas the truth of testimonials was dubious they repeatedly framed deafness as an undesirable and ‘disabling’ condition, helping to create demand for medical treatment. It must also be remembered that, as Porter discussed, advertising was the ‘soul’ of eighteenth-century newspapers, so the existence of so many adverts for treatments of deafness could simply have been because newspapers were trying to stay in business: Black argues that newspapers were likely to have been purchased at the rate they were purchased largely for their adverts and notices of markets.²¹¹ Nevertheless, whatever the motivation for treating deafness in eighteenth-century England, all the investigations carried out and discussions that took place laid the foundations for the development of the branch of medicine that became the specialism of the ear in the early nineteenth century, with the first hospital devoted to ear diseases established in 1816.²¹²

²¹¹ Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 2010), p. 41

²¹² Porter, *The Greatest Benefit to Mankind*, p. 381

Chapter 4 - Law and Order

Introduction

Having considered the experiences of and attitudes towards deaf people and deafness in eighteenth-century society and medicine, we now turn to how deafness was viewed in the eighteenth-century legal world and consider whether the law was a contributing factor to how deaf people were viewed, and whether being deaf determined how one was treated in the eyes of the law, either in civil or criminal settings. Sharpe argues that crime has become a 'serious subject of historical study', mainly due to the 'explosion of interest in social history', which has led historians 'to study not just crime, but a number of other hitherto disregarded or little regarded topics.'¹ This chapter contributes to that field of social history because the experiences of deaf people in the eighteenth-century criminal justice system has received little attention. Further, Beattie explains that by exploring crime in the eighteenth century, we gain insight into the lives of ordinary men and women who have left few records of their own.² As deaf people have left so few records, looking into crime methodically will provide answers about the experiences of and attitudes towards deaf people in this period.

Being unable to hear and speak had repercussions for a person's legal rights and responsibilities.³ A key consideration when exploring attitudes towards deaf people in

¹ James A. Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England 1550-1750*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 1

² J. M. Beattie, *Crime and the Courts in England, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 3

³ Emily Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 46:3 (2003), 493-510, p. 506

the eighteenth century is whether deaf people had legal capacity, which determined their experiences with the English legal system. Legal capacity is defined as ‘the authority under law of a person to engage in a particular undertaking or maintain a particular status’.⁴ It has already been established in Chapter Two that marriage was an option for deaf people, showing they were given the opportunity to provide consent to enter a contract of some sort, although the law stated ‘In Contracts of Matrimony, the Persons contracting ought to be of sound Mind, and Lunaticks may not marry but a Person who is Deaf or Dumb, may contract Matrimony’.⁵ They were also able to make a will and ‘may be Heirs’,⁶ but it very much depended on their ability to communicate and show understanding.

The hierarchy of the senses discussed in Chapter Three holds some relevance in this context, with Michael Dalton, a seventeenth century barrister and legal writer, using it to explain why a man ‘born dumb and deaf can hardly have Understandings’. He elaborated on this stating ‘though the Sight be the chiefest Sense, yet by Hearing we come chiefly to Knowledge’.⁷ Dalton published *The Country Justice*, a ‘popular legal treatise’,⁸ which served as a guide for magistrates and Justices of the Peace, explained further later, thus enabling them to interpret the law and criminal justice, for

⁴ ‘Legal capacity’, in *The Oxford English Dictionary* [online], <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/107008?redirectedFrom=legal+capacity#eid1193884090>> [accessed 1 May 2021]

⁵ Anon., *The Lady’s Law*, 2nd edn (London: E. and R. Nutt and R. Gosling, 1737), p. 26.

⁶ Thomas Wood, *An Institute of the Laws of England* (London: E. and R. Nutt and R. Gosling, 1722), p. 66

⁷ Michael Dalton, *The Country Justice: Containing the Practice, Duty and Power of the Justices of the Peace* (London: E. and R. Nutt, and R. Gosling, 1727), p. 386

⁸ D. A. Orr, ‘Dalton, Michael (1564-1644)’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7067>> [accessed 3 June 2021] (para. 3 of 5)

which Dalton remains 'historically significant'.⁹ Although originally published in 1618, further editions were published and it remained in circulation and was widely used in the eighteenth century.

Crime and the courts in eighteenth-century England receive considerable attention in this chapter, particularly with a deaf person as the offender. Considerations about whether one feigned their deafness and inability to speak was a common occurrence, reflecting suspicion of imposters. There were two criminal courts in eighteenth-century England: the quarter sessions and assizes. Quarter sessions, mostly concerned with lesser offences such as assault and petty larceny, were held by the Justices of the Peace of each county four times a year and the assizes mainly dealt with more serious crimes such as rape and burglary, held by judges of the High Courts who came into the county on circuit twice a year.¹⁰ The criminal trial focused on establishing the 'circumstances of the offender [to search] out the more abstract truth of his guilt or innocence' as well as 'exercising the broad discretion available to them in verdicts and sentencing [while] swayed by the personal characteristics of defendants and prosecutors'.¹¹ These scenarios with deaf people needs to be taken into consideration.

This chapter concludes with a discussion about the changing attitudes towards deaf people in the legal system. This ties in with the significant changes in the administration of criminal law in this period. Beattie explains that 'men accused of

⁹ Orr, para. 3 of 5

¹⁰ Beattie, p. 5

¹¹ Beattie, p. 3

committing a felony in 1800 had more opportunity to defend themselves at their examination before a magistrate' and they were 'allowed to engage a lawyer to help them present their case at trial'.¹² Whether deaf people were able to take advantage of such opportunities with communication needs as a barrier will be considered. How such cases came to court in the first place also requires consideration as the decision to prosecute was very much up to the victim; if a deaf person was the accused, did the fact they were deaf influence the decision of the victim to prosecute? If the deaf person was the victim, did communication issues impose barriers to prosecution?

As explained in previous chapters, the labelling of deaf people in this period was varied and consequently, it is impossible to be sure that all possibilities have been explored during the search for deaf people in judicial records. It must be noted that in some instances, deaf people were labelled 'idiots' and 'lunatics' which would have influenced how they were treated. Hale explains:

A man, that is *surdus* (deaf) and *mutus* (dumb) *a nativitate* (from birth), is in presumption of law an idiot, and the rather, because he hath no possibility to understand, what is forbidden by law to be done, or under what penalties.¹³

However, this assessment is ambiguous, as those born deaf and dumb could be regarded accountable if 'he hath the use of understanding, which many of that condition discover by signs to a very great measure, then he may be tried, and suffer judgement and execution, tho great caution is to be used therein',¹⁴ a point explored throughout this chapter.

¹² Beattie, p. 13

¹³ Matthew Hale, *The History of the Pleas of the Crown*, Vol. I (Dublin: E. Lynch, 1778), p. 34

¹⁴ Hale, p. 34

This chapter, therefore, will begin with an exploration of legal capacity in civil law, as far as making a will and sureties of the peace are concerned. Deaf people's experience with criminal law, particularly as the offender, will then be discussed forming the bulk of this chapter. This will include consideration of the crimes they committed and whether they thought capable of committing such crimes. Whether deaf people stood mute intentionally or genuinely was an important discussion at the beginning of a criminal trial and the impact of these deliberations will also be considered within this context. In cases where a full trial went ahead, how deaf people communicated in court will be examined, particularly the use of interpreters and who the interpreters were.

Trials conclude with the handing out of verdicts and punishments so the types of punishments deaf people received and whether they were subject to pardoning and discretionary procedures will be observed. Once the position of deaf people in court as the offender has been confirmed, we will move on to deaf people as victims and witnesses. Turner has explained that the number of cases featuring disabled people as victims of crime or as witnesses is low and likely to be because crimes against disabled people were under-reported,¹⁵ so the extent to which this was the case with deaf victims and witnesses will be explored. Throughout the chapter, eighteenth-century legal procedures and process will be considered to determine just how deaf people fitted in and the extent to which it was accessible to them. It then concludes

¹⁵ David M. Turner, 'Disability and Crime in Eighteenth-Century England: Physical Impairment at the Old Bailey' *Cultural and Social History*, 9:1 (2012), 47-64, p. 52

with a consideration of changing attitudes towards deaf people towards the end of the century, with a reason being the development of deaf education, allowing a natural progression to Chapter Five.

Chapter methodology

The eighteenth-century criminal justice system is a substantial subject, and it is impossible to cover all aspects of this area when considering deaf people, so a narrowing of the topic is required for this chapter, bearing in mind the themes raised by the various primary sources consulted. Historians of eighteenth-century crime have quantified criminal cases by counting indictments, trials and convictions in the judicial records¹⁶ but the approach taken in this chapter is different. Electronic search engines such as the British Newspapers Online have been used to locate deaf people within particular legal settings; an approach utilised in previous chapters. Since the early eighteenth century, newspapers were regularly reporting crime,¹⁷ providing a good starting point, especially as there are reports of cases not recorded elsewhere.

Other electronic search engines for this chapter include the Old Bailey Online and a search for all cases of 'deaf' was undertaken. This presented 10 court cases, the majority consisting of a deaf person as the accused. The records identified are however not particularly representative of crime in eighteenth-century England because they mainly deal with cases in London and because they deal with felonies rather than minor misdemeanours. Also, prior to 1805, there are no national crime

¹⁶ Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England 1750-1900*, 5th edn (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 21

¹⁷ Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England*, p. 4

figures and minimal evidence from eighteenth-century petty sessions.¹⁸ Sharpe explains that historians seeking to gain an impression of the totality of crime in early modern England are 'faced with the daunting task of analysing all of the records generated by the whole range of courts dealing with a limited geographical area'.¹⁹ Nevertheless, at least an understanding of deaf people's experiences will be revealed.

Stone and Woll's work on deaf people in the Old Bailey²⁰ use associated sources to uncover hidden aspects of the lives of deaf people in eighteenth-century England and therefore, it seems logical to adopt the same approach. Although Stone and Woll's work is informative as far as the use of interpreters for deaf people in eighteenth-century courts is concerned, they only cover one aspect of deaf people's experience with crime: how they communicated. This chapter will therefore seek to fill the gap and provide an overview of deaf people's experience with the law in criminal situations, both as victims and perpetrators of crime. It will examine what crimes deaf people were generally guilty of and what punishments they received, if any, and consider what this information contributes to the understanding of the experiences of and attitudes towards deaf people in eighteenth-century England.

Capacity

The issue of whether deaf people had capacity is a substantial point when shaping their experiences in eighteenth-century English law, so before examining the

¹⁸ Emsley, p. 21

¹⁹ Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England*, p. 75

²⁰ Christopher Stone and Bencie Woll, 'Dumb O Jemmy and Others, Deaf People, Interpreters and the London Courts in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Sign Language Studies*, 8:3 (2008), 226-40

experiences of deaf people in the eighteenth-century legal system, we turn to how eighteenth-century English law referred to deaf people. In *A History of English Law*, it was stated that those deaf and dumb were labelled as 'idiots' as a 'rebuttable presumption' in law until the nineteenth century.²¹ 'A man born dumb, deaf, and blind, cannot have Understanding,'²² but this attitude varied between those who were 'deaf' and those who were 'deaf and dumb': in 1728, it was made clear that those born deaf and dumb were too 'disabled to bring an Appeal',²³ but there is no equivalent statement for those who were deaf with speech. Additionally, of note in Dalton's document, discussed earlier, is sureties, an alternative way of dealing with offences against the peace:

'A man who was Deaf, Dumb, and Blind shall not have this Surety granted to him, for he hath no Understanding to ask it, and yet for such a Person'²⁴ A Man that was born dumb and blind 'may have Understanding; and therefore it seemeth tis Surety may be granted to him, or against him'.²⁵

In some instances, 'a justice could order a person to enter into a recognisance, a legal document, in which the delinquent promised not to offend in the same manner again',²⁶ a document one would need to be able to clearly understand. Given the popularity of Dalton's text, this guidance is likely to have been followed by most Justices of the Peace in dealing with offenders.

²¹ William Searle Holdsworth, *A History of English Law*, Vol. I, 3rd edn (London: Methuen, 1922), pp. 187-188

²² Giles Jacob, *A Treatise of Laws. In Three Parts* (London: T. Woodward and J. Peele, 1721), p. 51

²³ William Hawkins, *A Summary of the Crown-Law*, Book II (London: E. and R. Nutt and R. Gosling, 1728), p. 150

²⁴ Dalton, p. 385

²⁵ Dalton, p. 386

²⁶ Dietrich Oberwittler, 'Crime and Authority in Eighteenth Century England: Law Enforcement on the Local Level', *Historical Social Research*, 15:2 (1990), 3-34, p. 11

It appears that a distinction was made between those who were deaf and for those who were deaf and dumb, with the former bestowed additional privileges. However, it still varied amongst those who were both deaf and dumb, depending on whether they were able to show they could understand what was being said and had other means of communication, such as using signs, gestures or writing:

Bastards, such as are Deaf, Dumb or Blind, that have Understanding ... although they cannot express their Intentions otherwise than by Signs, ... may make any Deed or Conveyance.²⁷

An early English case in 1754 confirmed that an individual 'deaf-mute from birth, used writing to attain 'her majority applied for the possession of her property real and personal'²⁸ as she was able to demonstrate her 'Understanding'.

The fundamental issue of deaf people's capacity impacted the making of wills and the inheritance of property. *The Civil Law in its Natural Order*, published in 1722, gives an overview of which deaf people could 'make a testament'. It was clearly believed that one who was both deaf and dumb could not make a testament if unable to read, write or was deemed 'incapable of giving any Sign of his Will', but if the will was made before becoming deaf and dumb (as a result of an accident, for example), it would still be valid, but without the means to write or communicate, the deaf and dumb person would not be able to make any changes to their will later on. If one was born deaf and dumb and able to 'explain his Will, by writing it himself, and observing it in the Formalities', then they would be allowed to do so. There was no question of deaf men

²⁷ Giles Jacob, *The Accomplish'd Conveyancer*, Vol. I (London: J. Nutt, 1714), p. 7

²⁸ Albert C. Gaw, *The Legal Status of the Deaf: The Development of the Rights and Responsibilities of Deaf-mutes in the Laws of the Roman Empire, France, England, and America* (Washington DC, Gibson Brothers, 1907), p. 83

making a will if they were able to speak, '[f]or they are capable of explaining their Intentions; and much more, if they know how to write'. This is consistent with those who were dumb, but not deaf, 'and know how to write, since they are able to explain their Will, they are capable of making a Testament'. However, 'if they cannot write, not being able to explain themselves but very imperfectly and by Signs, they have not the liberty of making a Testament'.²⁹

The right to make a will in eighteenth-century England clearly depended not on the ability to hear, but on the ability to understand and to be understood. This view was consistently held throughout the eighteenth century as seen in by a statement from lawyer, Henry Swinburne in 1743, stating those deaf and dumb from birth could not make a will 'unless it do appear by sufficient arguments that he understandeth what a Testament meanth ... he may by signs and tokens declare his Testament'.³⁰ A document published in 1790 also demonstrates this:

As persons who are born blind, deaf and dumb, are incapable of making any will, so likewise are those who are deaf and dumb by nature; unless it appears by sufficient arguments that such a person understandeth what a will means, and that he hath a desire to make a will; for if he have such understanding and desire, then he may make his will by signs and tokens.³¹

Mute out of malice or by the visitation of God?

As well as considerations about a deaf person's capacity, a common issue faced by juries was whether the deaf and dumb prisoner stood mute artfully or naturally. It was

²⁹ Monsieur Domat. *The Civil Law in its Natural Order*, Vol II, trans. by William Strahan (London: J. Bettenham, 1722), p. 13

³⁰ Henry Swinburne, *A Treatise of Testaments and Last Wills*, 6th edn (London: Henry Lintot, 1743), p. 95

³¹ Peter Lovelass, *The Law's Disposal of a Person's Estate Who Dies without Will or Testament*, 7th edn (London: T. Whieldon, 1790), p. 142

not uncommon to find imposters making money from begging by pretending to be deaf and dumb³² and the issue of imposters was one faced by the courts. Fraudsters who displayed sensory deprivation did so to 'appear vulnerable and worthy of charity'.³³ On occasion, prisoners pretended they were deaf and dumb, suggesting they were considered to receive lighter or no punishment for their crimes. Such reports include a beggar in his fifties who pretended to be deaf and dumb, later confirmed he was indeed an imposter after confessing he had been one for 14 years and that was how he had made his livelihood. As a result, he was sentenced to hard labour for three months.³⁴ Even though this suggests that the public sometimes took advantage of deafness, the courts viewed such actions as intolerable: this was true for all people faking impairments as pointed out by Turner.³⁵

There are instances where it was doubted that one 'stood mute naturally': in a case heard in October 1771, a man was arraigned at the Old Bailey for house breaking but refused to plead, pretending to be deaf and dumb. The court ordered him to be 'close confined till reason should conquer obstinacy'.³⁶ Juries were usually brought in specifically to determine the cause of a prisoner's silence. In April 1782, a prisoner, Moones, did not plead the previous day. The recorder informed the jury that they must investigate whether the prisoner genuinely stood mute and they were re-sworn for this reason.³⁷ Quite often, the trial of a deaf person saw two juries being called in; one to

³² *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 12 312, 18 August 1768

³³ Stephanie Fern Allen, *Deceitful Bodies: Ideas, Performance and the Physicality of bodily fraud, 1540-1750* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2019), p. 132

³⁴ *London Evening Post*, issue 5670, 3-6 March 1764

³⁵ David M. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 81-104

³⁶ *Middlesex Journal*, issue 402, 26-29 October 1771

³⁷ *London Courant*, 13 April 1782

decide if the perpetrator stood mute out of malice or by the visitation of God and the other to try them for the offence.

Questioning whether one stood mute out of malice or by the visitation of God was also important in terms of deciding punishments, as being sentenced to death was a punishment available for those who merely refused to speak.³⁸ This raises questions about how many deaf people received punishment because it was not believed they were genuinely deaf and dumb. This may have happened in the case of John Durant in February 1734. Durant had been indicted for stealing but he was initially unable to give a plea, with deafness being the reason. He was then tortured by thumbscrew to make him speak and plead guilty. When that failed, he was found guilty anyway and sentenced to transportation'.³⁹ The impact of transportation is discussed further below in the context of punishments.

Confirming the cause of deafness to be by the visitation of God seems to have some influence over how a trial was concluded. For example, in April 1772, Nathan Soloman appeared in court for theft and a witness, 'a person who had known him from a child, was sworn interpreter: who interpreted the evidence to the prisoner by signs' confirmed he was deaf by the visitation of God. Soloman was then acquitted with no

³⁸ Joan Colin and Ruth Morris, *Interpreters and the Legal Process* (Winchester: Waterside, 1996), pp. 92-93

³⁹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 27 February 1734, trial of John Durant (t17340227-6)

further discussion as to why he was acquitted, although it seems the confirmation that he was deaf by the visitation of God was enough to end the case.⁴⁰

In December 1773, a Thomas Jones was tried for theft, and it was also questioned whether he 'stood dumb through obstinacy, or by the visitation of God'.⁴¹ It was confirmed he was deaf by the visitation of God but his trial proceeded and he was convicted and sentenced to transportation.⁴² It is not clear how this trial proceeded because the Old Bailey Proceedings do not present evidence that shows Jones was guilty. It seems Jones was on trial for stealing from a John Goldwell in his dwelling house, and found guilty of stealing from a shop, although the witnesses confirm they did not actually see Jones taking the money. This raises questions about whether Jones was found guilty because he was deaf and whether his deafness placed him at a disadvantage to defend himself. However, it was noted that Jones had been tried the previous year for stealing money and was acquitted, although the reason for being acquitted has not been stated,⁴³ so it is possible the fact he was on trial again for a similar crime influenced the decision to find him guilty.

It should be noted The Old Bailey Proceedings is a published account of legal trials and can therefore be selective in its evidence. The absence of evidence to prove Jones' guilt may reflect deficiencies in the legal reporting rather than the trial itself.

⁴⁰ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 29 April 1772, trial of Nathan Soloman (t17720429-52)

⁴¹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 8 December 1773, trial of Thomas Jones (t17731208-23)

⁴² *Lloyd's Evening Post*, issue 2567, 10-13 December 1773

⁴³ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, issue 2567, 10-13 December 1773

There is a contradiction between Soloman and Jones' experiences: both were deaf, both were faced with questions over whether their deafness was genuine, both had a friend in court to act as an interpreter, but one trial proceeded, the other did not. It is therefore not possible to state with any certainty whether those who were deaf and dumb were treated more leniently in court.

In the case of disabled people and the less fortunate, and those not considered to be a threat to society, it was common for judges to be compassionate. King explains,

the courts frequently took a very positive attitude in such cases. The elderly, the inform, the 'idiot', the insane and the ill usually received relatively sympathetic treatment during the pardoning process.⁴⁴

When discussing transportation as a punishment, Beattie states that not everyone who was sentenced to transportation actually went, examples being those who were old or had a physical disability.⁴⁵ Even though historians have not mentioned the experiences of those who were deaf and dumb, it does seem they were subject to discretion too, provided it was proved they stood mute by the visitation of God.

Witnesses

Although most cases concerning deaf people found in the Old Bailey and in the British Newspapers were related to the crimes they committed, there is mention of the role of deaf witnesses, although accounts are scarce. King notes that questions were raised about the testimony of deaf and dumb witnesses.⁴⁶ To gain a further insight into how

⁴⁴ Peter King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England 1740-1820* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 304

⁴⁵ Beattie, p. 510

⁴⁶ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 227

the courts perceived deaf people we will now explore deaf people as witnesses in court.

Gaw explains that up to 1786, it was once presumed those deaf and dumb from birth were considered incompetent as witnesses:

the difficulty of making an illiterate deaf mute appreciate the nature and sanctity of an oath has at times led to the exclusion of his testimony, even when it has seemed perfectly clear that such testimony was reliable.⁴⁷

After 1786, however, Gaw's position was that,

the testimony of an uneducated deaf-mute was given full credence in England and since that time illiterate and partially educated deaf-mutes have repeatedly been called upon to act as witnesses in England.⁴⁸

1786 was a time when progress was being made in deaf education and the recognition that deaf people could be educated, discussed further in Chapter Five, and with this 'came a gradual recognition by the courts of the inherent capacity of even the uneducated deaf-mute'.⁴⁹

There are five reports of deaf witnesses in the sources consulted in this chapter, three of which were recorded in the Old Bailey. In September 1737, in the case of Mr William Young, a deaf witness gave evidence. There is a sense of reluctance in using this witness because it was noted that the witness asked the court to accommodate him despite being deaf: 'I have the Misfortune to be deaf, I hope the Court will indulge

⁴⁷ Gaw, *The Legal Status of the Deaf*, p. 87

⁴⁸ Gaw, *The Legal Status of the Deaf*, p. 88

⁴⁹ Gaw, *The Legal Status of the Deaf*, p. 83

me'.⁵⁰ In September 1742, another case highlights techniques used to include deaf people in the courts whereby Charles Pearce, a deaf witness, was sworn in by being given a written copy of the Oath and the questions were put to him in writing.⁵¹

However, the use of deaf people as witnesses was not always accepted, as in January 1786 the use of a deaf witness in the case of William Bartlett was 'violently opposed'. A prisoner was on trial for stealing and the witness was a man who was deaf and dumb, and his version of events was to be interpreted by his sister. The counsel of the prisoner 'violently opposed' the use of this witness arguing:

such a witness could not be examined, not being competent as he could not give sufficient proofs of understanding, and could not be tried for perjury, not being able to plead, as he would, on the impanelling a jury, he returned must be by the visitation of God.⁵²

The deaf and dumb witness, however, was permitted to give evidence. Although the reasons for opposing the use of a deaf witness were given, it could be suggested that the lawyer used this argument to make the case for his client stronger by encouraging the court to dismiss the deaf witness. He was aware of the common perceptions of deaf people and tried to use this to his advantage. Such incidents may have been less likely to have been observed before this date as it was not until the eighteenth century that the use of defence lawyers in court gradually came into existence.⁵³

⁵⁰ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 7 September 1737, trial of Francis Fuller (t17370907-39)

⁵¹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 9 September 1742, trial of Magdalen Swawbrook (t17420909-18)

⁵² *London Recorder or Sunday Gazette*, issue 132, 15 January 1786

⁵³ Beattie, p. 278

Victims

Eight cases of deaf people as victims of crime in the eighteenth century have been discovered showing evidence of deaf people as victims of theft, assault or murder. Although the number of such cases is small, it is likely there were several incidents that went unreported, and what has been reported shows the vulnerability of deaf people in this period. Such reports include the execution of two convicts who robbed a deaf and dumb man of his watch and money⁵⁴ and a woman who was to be tried for the murder of her deaf and dumb sister.⁵⁵ Three women had been charged with assaulting and robbing a deaf and dumb man⁵⁶ and a deaf and dumb gentleman who had his pocket picked and was violently beaten for 'not vociferating God save the King' in a theatre was reported.⁵⁷

The reasons for so few reports of crime against deaf people could be because there were so few crimes or because such crimes were unreported.⁵⁸ How prosecutions were generally carried out in the eighteenth century is likely to have been a contributing factor to the lack of reports of crime against deaf people. King states:

the right of prosecution was placed entirely in the hands of the offended party, who becomes the sole arbiter of the fate of the offender and can either prosecute him by modifying the form of the indictment, or even pardon him altogether...⁵⁹

⁵⁴ *General Evening Post*, issue 7726, 30 August 1783

⁵⁵ *General Evening Post*, issue 8214, 18-20 July 1786

⁵⁶ *Morning Post*, issue 6271, 28 May 1793

⁵⁷ *Morning Post*, issue 7406, 3 November 1795

⁵⁸ Turner, 'Disability and Crime in Eighteenth-Century England', p. 52

⁵⁹ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 13

Furthermore, 'the decision to prosecute or not was likely to have been influenced by the personal relationship of the victim and the accused and their place in the village'.⁶⁰ As the offended party had the responsibility to ensure culprits were arrested, deaf people would have been at a disadvantage as the opportunity to report such crimes may not have been accessible to them. This appears evident in the case of Samuel Wardell, 'a poor labouring man who was deaf' and a victim of robbery. His home was broken into, but he knew nothing of the robbery until the next morning, demonstrating that deaf people were not always able to report a crime immediately.⁶¹ Again, this highlights the vulnerability of deaf people and the disadvantages faced by deaf people in eighteenth-century England.

In order to prosecute someone for a crime, it needed to be clear what the perpetrators had done, thus relying on the victim's testimony. As communication would have been an issue for deaf victims, the inability to do so effectively is likely to have been a deciding factor in terms of whether crimes against deaf victims were reported. For example, there was a situation in July 1786 where a deaf and dumb man was 'barbarously murdered'.⁶² He was still alive when he was found and 'still retained his senses' so he was able to explain what had happened.⁶³ However, communication between him and those who found him was difficult. By using gestures and objects they were able to make some sense of what had happened:

the landlord fetched an axe and bill-hook, and place them on the table ... he pointed to the bill hook, and then to his head, which plainly indicated he had

⁶⁰ Beattie, p. 8

⁶¹ *Daily Advertiser*, issue 12997, 19 August 1772

⁶² *General Evening Post*, issue 8212, 13-15 July 1786

⁶³ *General Evening Post*, issue 8212, 13-15 July 1786

received the wound by such an instrument ... by signs with his fingers ... the villains who committed the act were three in number.⁶⁴

After this brief exchange of information, the victim unfortunately died and despite recovering information from him, it would not have been enough to establish who the perpetrators were. Again, the vulnerability of deaf people is emphasised: if people were able to understand this man's gestures, identifying the murderers may have been more likely.

Crime

The points made above about whether a person deaf and dumb had capacity and other means of making themselves understood raises questions about whether such attitudes were prevalent in other areas of law. In criminal law, it was reported that:

A Man born deaf and dumb, killeth another, this is no Felony; for he cannot know, whether he did evil or no; neither can he have a felonious Intent ... Otherwise, if he were not so born, but becometh so afterwards ... That a Man which can neither hear nor speak may commit Felony, and shall be imprisoned.⁶⁵

While this principle of law was clear, the practice of criminal justice was more complex with evidence presenting people both deaf and dumb in court on trial for a crime.

When discussing property offences, King explains that those accused undertook a 'bewildering journey along a route which can best be compared to a corridor of connecting rooms' that eventually led to 'criminalization, conviction, and punishment'. However, each room also had other

⁶⁴ *General Evening Post*, issue 8212, 13-15 July 1786

⁶⁵ Dalton, p. 477

doors indicating legally acceptable ways in which the accused could get away from the arms of the law, while some rooms also had illegal tunnels through which the accused might sometimes be smuggled to safety.⁶⁶

King further explains that the 'socially diverse group of men and women' and their actions, and interactions throughout determined which exit they took.⁶⁷ One of the key considerations in this chapter is whether a defendant's deafness was given consideration before entering such 'doors'.

With communication barriers in mind, it is necessary to determine deaf people's experience of the typical process of the criminal legal justice system, from prosecution, the court experience and punishment. Beattie explains how such proceedings start:

Many of those brought to trial had been taken at the scene of the crime by the victim, aided perhaps by his family or employee or passers-by. Others had been arrested soon afterwards because they acted suspiciously or were unable to explain sudden wealth, or because they had offended before and had been let off with a warning, or simply because they had a reputation of dishonesty.⁶⁸

Already, questions are raised about how a deaf person would be taken to the scene of the crime, when their capacity, as explained earlier, is questioned. There is ample evidence of deaf people on trial for crimes and three key themes have been identified. Firstly, most crimes committed by deaf people appear to be theft. Secondly, it was often questioned whether those who were deaf and dumb 'stood mute out of malice or by the visitation of God', discussed earlier. Thirdly, once it had been agreed beyond reasonable doubt that the prisoner stood mute by the visitation of God, a lighter punishment or no punishment was given. King shows that defendants and their families introduced evidence about extenuating circumstances and details particular

⁶⁶ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, pp. 1-2

⁶⁷ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, pp. 1-2

⁶⁸ Beattie, p. 37

to their situation as an appeal for a reduced sentence or an acquittal⁶⁹ and whether this was the case with deaf people will be considered. It is these key themes that we will now examine further.

Crime rates in England increased throughout the eighteenth century and this correlates with available records concerning deaf people as it appears that crime committed by those who were deaf also increased. For example, there seems to be very few records of deaf criminals prior to 1760: only two records mention deaf defendants in the Old Bailey. In April 1725, George Armstrong was on trial for theft and after a jury enquired whether he stood mute artfully or naturally, the latter was confirmed and he was eventually found not guilty as a result.⁷⁰ One other report prior to 1760 is that of John Durant in February 1734, who stole eleven pairs of stockings.⁷¹ Apart from those two records in the Old Bailey, there are no other records and no reports in newspapers until we come across an article in March 1767 where a deaf and dumb man was charged for being an accessory to murder.⁷² Additionally, it was not until February 1768 that an article reports a deaf and dumb man tried for stealing and found guilty.⁷³ What is significant about this article is that it declares 'this is supposed to be the only instance of a deaf and dumb man being tried for many years past'⁷⁴ which supports the statement that very few deaf people were convicted for

⁶⁹ Dana Y. Rabin, *Identity, Crime and Legal Responsibility in Eighteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 25

⁷⁰ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 7 April 1725, trial of George Armstrong (t17250407-70)

⁷¹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 27 February 1734, trial of John Durant (t17340227-6)

⁷² *London Evening Post*, issue 6142, 10-12 March 1767

⁷³ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 12162, 25 February 1768

⁷⁴ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 12162, 25 February 1768

crimes in the first half of the eighteenth century, or at the very least, they went unreported.

Based on the search for deaf people in the Old Bailey Online and the British Newspapers Online, it is reasonably conclusive that between 1760-1800, the number of reports concerning deaf perpetrators in court rose and as stated earlier, most of the crimes committed by deaf people were theft. It is not clear why it was not until the 1760s that these numbers started to rise, although statistics have shown that from 1750 onwards there was generally a gradual increase in theft anyway.⁷⁵ Between 1768 and 1774 there were three cases in the Old Bailey concerning deaf people who were on trial for theft and all three cases were reported in British Newspapers. The numbers rose to eight cases in the 1780s and seven cases in the 1790s and of those 15 cases, nine were for theft, one for arson, one for forgery, one for treason and one for murder. It has not been possible to establish the details of the circumstances surrounding theft cases mainly because reports of theft cases in particular from the Old Bailey 'consisted of brief summaries of offences charged against the prisoners and a note of the verdict and sentence in each case'.⁷⁶ Other cases are noted including that of John Durant on 27 February 1734, previously mentioned; James Saytuss (aka Dumb O' Jemmy) in July 1771; Robert Dewar on 10 December 1783 and Elizabeth Steel between May and October 1787. These cases and their significance will be discussed in due course.

⁷⁵ Emsley, p. 32

⁷⁶ Beattie, p. 24

A typical court experience for one who was deaf and dumb is found in the case of John Kesterton, who was tried and convicted for burglary in 1781.⁷⁷ Kesterton stood mute when asked to state whether he was guilty or not, resulting in the jury enquiring the cause of his silence. Kesterton's master was eventually sworn in and confirmed the prisoner was deaf while explaining he had worked for him for 10 years and has never been known to speak; he was later sworn in to act as his interpreter. Interestingly, the use of an interpreter was described as a 'curious scene' and a 'very curious pantomimical exhibition, which was of comic-tragic nature'.⁷⁸ This description suggests that the use of interpreters in court in the eighteenth century was unusual and not something the public was familiar with.

The use of interpreters for deaf people in court, however, was not unheard of, prompting Stone and Woll to examine the case of James Saytuss or 'Dumb O Jemmy' as he was more commonly known. The first record of a court interpreter in the eighteenth century is found in this case when a person whose name is not given, 'with whom he had formerly lived as a servant was sworn interpreter'.⁷⁹ Those who were used as interpreters for deaf people in court in the eighteenth century were usually someone acquainted with the defendant, whether a friend or relative. For example, Thomas Jones who was convicted for theft in December 1773 had 'a person who was acquainted with him' as his interpreter.⁸⁰ As mentioned earlier, in the case of Kesterton, his master was sworn in as his interpreter and in April 1772, a childhood

⁷⁷ *Morning Herald*, issue 130, 31 March 1781

⁷⁸ *Morning Herald*, issue 130, 31 March 1781

⁷⁹ Stone and Woll, p. 231

⁸⁰ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, issue 2567, 10 December 1773

friend of Nathan Soloman was his interpreter.⁸¹ It has also been documented that three different cases saw family members sworn in as interpreters, such as a sister of a deaf witness, John Rasten, in January 1786,⁸² the mother of William Burrans in January 1796⁸³ and the brother of William Smith in April 1797.⁸⁴ Since the first school for deaf children was not established in London until 1783, discussed in Chapter Five, it is likely that none of these defendants were educated or communicated using a signed language, so the signed language used would have been what is now more commonly known as 'home signs'.

Unlike sign language, home signs were a 'gestural communication systems developed by deaf children who lacked input from a language model in the family'.⁸⁵ Therefore, the number of people who were able to sign and were familiar with the defendants' 'home signs' would have been minimal. Home signs are different to signed languages as they do not have a 'consistent meaning to symbol relationship', nor are they shared by a large community of sign language users, nor passed down from generation to generation.⁸⁶ Because of this, friends and relatives who were familiar with the deaf person's home signs would have been the only ones who could relay information to and from the deaf person in court. The advantage of these situations helped to determine the competence of those born deaf and dumb and if they could show by

⁸¹ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 29 April 1772, trial of Nathan Soloman (t17720429-52)

⁸² *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 11 January 1786, trial of William Bartlett (t17860111-30)

⁸³ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 13 January 1796, trial of William Burrans (t17960113-97)

⁸⁴ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 26 April 1797, trial of Philip Dyke William Smith (t17970426-10)

⁸⁵ Stone and Woll, p. 228.

⁸⁶ Stone and Woll, p. 228

signs that they have understanding, then the trial could continue with someone present who could sign to the deaf person, especially as there were no qualified interpreters during this period as Stone and Woll explain: 'much of the literature on sign language interpreters in the UK suggests that the use of the term 'interpreter' arose only in the late twentieth century. They also confirm that 'before this time, hearing relatives, missionaries and religious workers undertook this role in legal settings'.⁸⁷

Punishment

Changes took place in the administration of criminal law in the eighteenth century, and this also applied to punishments.⁸⁸ 'The criminal justice system of England in the eighteenth century presents a curious spectacle to an observer more familiar with modern institutions':⁸⁹

In theory, the eighteenth-century criminal law was a rigid, fixed and bloody penal code laying down the penalty of death for a broad range of property crimes. In practice it was a flexible and highly selective system. The legal process had no effective police force to provide an organisational care, and it was therefore a private and negotiable process involving personal confrontation.⁹⁰

Despite there being a small number of reported cases of deaf people committing crimes, the meting out of punishment was uncommon, mainly due to pardoning and discretionary procedures. Beginning in 1718, transportation to the American colonies was a regular punishment for non-capital offences, unless there was a reason why it

⁸⁷ Stone and Woll, p. 226

⁸⁸ Beattie, p. 13

⁸⁹ David D. Friedman, 'Making Sense of English Law Enforcement in the Eighteenth Century', 2 U. Chi. L. Sch., *Roundtable*, (1995), 475-505, p. 475

⁹⁰ Peter King, 'Decision-Makers and Decision-Making in the English Criminal Law, 1750-1800', *The Historical Journal*, 27:1 (1984), 25-58, p. 25

was inappropriate, such as physical disability or great age.⁹¹ When introduced as a punishment, it 'widened judges' discretionary powers' and judges became inclined to sentence men convicted of theft to transportation.⁹² This could be viewed as a less serious punishment for some, as Emsley explains there had been some doubts about the extent to which transportation was a punishment because 'those who had been transported had actually been given the opportunity to become profitable members of another state'.⁹³ However, Rabin explains the impact of this punishment would have been quite dramatic: prisoners were likely to have felt fear and anxiety of having to leave their homes and travel by sea in treacherous conditions to an unknown destination.⁹⁴ Rabin's discussion is more accurate for deaf prisoners because transportation would have been a much more serious punishment for them. They would have been taken away from their support network of people, especially those whom they could communicate with in their familiar 'home signs', as discussed earlier.

It has been discovered that a significant number of deaf people were either found not guilty or received a lighter punishment once their 'infirmity' was considered.⁹⁵ For example, in January 1796 a deaf and dumb boy was tried for stealing a silver watch. After being found guilty, he was ordered to be privately whipped and discharged after his 'infirmity' was taken into consideration.⁹⁶ However, there is a question over whether he received this punishment on account of his deafness because whipping

⁹¹ Beattie, p. 470

⁹² Beattie, pp. 509-510

⁹³ Emsley, p. 282

⁹⁴ Rabin, p. 35

⁹⁵ *Whitehall Evening Post*, issue 7676, 21–23 January 1796

⁹⁶ *Whitehall Evening Post*, issue 7676, 21–23 January 1796

was a common punishment for petty offences anyway⁹⁷ and being whipped in private, compared to in public, was not unusual after the mid-eighteenth century.⁹⁸ It is also likely that the defendant's age was considered as he was 16 at the time⁹⁹ as it has been claimed that 'young offenders were much more likely to receive the relatively light punishments of whipping'.¹⁰⁰

At the conclusion of trials, as prisoners awaited their sentencing, they were asked if they could give any reason why judgment should not be pronounced against them, giving them an opportunity to request a lesser punishment.¹⁰¹ Discretionary procedures and pardoning was not uncommon and 'roughly half of those condemned to death during the eighteenth century did not go to the gallows, but were transported to the colonies or imprisoned'.¹⁰² Hay and others explain that the 'policy of terror' was not working because 'more of those sentenced to death were pardoned than were hanged'.¹⁰³ This highlights the extent of such procedures and shows that it was not exclusive to deaf people. Therefore, deaf people, like others, benefitted from a legal system that used discretion and tended to view capital punishment as a last resort.

However, it needs to be established whether deafness as an 'infirmity' increased a person's chance of receiving a lesser sentence. As deaf people were already subject

⁹⁷ James A. Sharpe, 'Civility, Civilizing Processes, and the end of Public Punishment in England', in Peter Burke, Brian Harrison and Paul Slack, *Civil Histories: Essays Presented to Sir Keith Thomas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 215-230

⁹⁸ Beattie, p. 461

⁹⁹ *Public Advertiser*, issue 15821, 8 February 1785

¹⁰⁰ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 289

¹⁰¹ Beattie, p. 451

¹⁰² Douglas Hay and others, *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Verso, 2011), p. 43

¹⁰³ Hay and others, p. 23

to fixed perceptions and attitudes, it would be expected that deaf defendants were often subject to discretion in their sentencing. King has explored the role of discretion in eighteenth-century trials and concludes that it was not uncommon for juries to be lenient depending on the defendant's circumstances,¹⁰⁴ explaining that 'at every decisive point on the accused journey, an attempt had been made to analyse the circumstances in which decisions were made'.¹⁰⁵ Therefore, the role of discretion in relation to deaf people is rather significant and a number of cases shed further light on this.

In March 1780 a deaf and dumb man was ordered to be re-examined on suspicion of stealing and the case was eventually dismissed 'on account of his natural infirmity'.¹⁰⁶ In the case of John Kesterton in 1781, after overwhelming evidence was presented which resulted in him being found guilty of burglary, the jury agreed to be lenient. The judge was confident Kesterton knew what he was doing was wrong 'just like any other felon is of his guilt' and he observed that:

the principal enquiries for the jury to make, if they believed the evidence before them, was whether the prisoner, in his unhappy circumstances, was sensible that he was doing wrong and he observed, that there were strong presumptions for his consciousness that the fact was criminal'.¹⁰⁷

As the jury 'recommended him to mercy', the judge presented the case as they wished.¹⁰⁸ Brewer and Styles explain that 'discretion meant that the leaders of society

¹⁰⁴ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, pp. 105-106

¹⁰⁵ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 2

¹⁰⁶ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, issue 17929, 2 March 1780

¹⁰⁷ *Morning Herald*, issue 130, 31 March 1781

¹⁰⁸ *Morning Herald*, issue 130, 31 March 1781

had the opportunity and capacity to be kind'¹⁰⁹ and this is evident in Kesterton's case. The trial of James Innocent for arson in May 1782 went no further after it was confirmed he stood mute by the visitation of God.¹¹⁰ Also, in August 1783, two prisoners who had spent considerable time in a gaol indicted for felonies were granted a pardon after being considered incapable of taking their trials because they were deaf and dumb.¹¹¹ Additionally, in August 1786 a deaf and dumb man was indicted for murder and after the jury found he stood mute by the visitation of God, he was convicted of manslaughter as it was felt he was not able to fully understand the true nature of his crime, but they could not ignore the fact that he had been responsible for a death.¹¹² Therefore, despite the increase in records of deaf crimes they still seemed to be overlooked to some extent in the last decade of the eighteenth century. For example, in July 1795 William Truelock, who had been deaf and dumb from birth, was charged with theft and was capitally convicted receiving a sentence of death but later reprieved.¹¹³

However, not all deaf people escaped punishment. On 10 April 1782, Thomas Plumbe was tried for theft, found guilty and punished by whipping. In 1783 Robert Dewar was tried for forgery, found guilty and sentenced to death. Dewar did mention he was deaf to no avail and like his counterparts, he was not subject to pardoning or discretionary

¹⁰⁹ John Brewer and John Styles, *An Ungovernable People: The English and their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), p. 19

¹¹⁰ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 15 May 1782, trial of James Innocent (t17820515-37)

¹¹¹ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 3500, 12 August 1783

¹¹² *London Chronicle*, issue 4639, 12-15 August 1786

¹¹³ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 5862, 18-21 July 1795

procedures.¹¹⁴ What is different about these two cases is that there is no mention of an interpreter being present in court so it can be assumed that these defendants spoke during their trials. This indicates that the treatment deaf people received in the courts in the eighteenth century was not entirely consistent and is likely to have been determined according to their proficiency in communication. As a point of comparison, in 1788 a deaf person was called for jury service and he asked to be excused on account of his deafness. This request, however, was declined once it was evident that he was able to communicate reasonably well on a one-to-one basis.¹¹⁵ This further supports the notion that deaf people who were able to speak were not quickly dismissed.

Beattie offers a different perspective on eighteenth-century criminal trials by explaining that as well as seeking the truth of guilt or innocence, it was as much devoted to establishing the circumstances of the offender. While exercising the broad discretion available to them in verdicts and sentencing, both judges and jurors were swayed by the personal characteristics of defendants and prosecutors.¹¹⁶ The use of character witnesses to determine the reason for the prisoner's silence was important as it depended on their testimony to ascertain how to proceed. Generally, character witnesses were tremendously important and often used and if such witnesses failed in 'convincing the jury to acquit, their support was the first step in influencing the judge to consider a pardon'.¹¹⁷ Even though most cases confirm the person was indeed deaf

¹¹⁴ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 10 December 1783, trial of Robert Dewar, otherwise Dewars, otherwise Deewar (t17831210-59)

¹¹⁵ *Times*, 26 September 1788

¹¹⁶ Beattie, p. 623

¹¹⁷ Hay and others, p. 42

and dumb, the case of Jeremiah Bailey in December 1757 demonstrates the opposite. Bailey appeared to be deaf and was on trial for violent theft and highway robbery, but witnesses confirmed he was not deaf, having known him ten years and never known him to be deaf.¹¹⁸

Changing attitudes towards deaf offenders

In 1907, Gaw argued that excusing deaf people without punishment in this period led them to believe that because of their deafness,

they were given greater license, opening the way for pretend ignorance on the part of educated deaf-mutes and makes it common for criminals to simulate deafness in the hope of escaping with a lighter punishment.¹¹⁹

This was a predicament raised in the case of Elizabeth Steel in 1787. This case is of great significance as it appears to have been the first time where it was genuinely questioned whether pardoning deaf people because of their deafness was justified. Steel had been charged with stealing a silver watch and was found to be deaf and stood mute by the visitation of God, although some evidence suggests that she spoke on occasion particularly when stating 'you know I cannot hear' when asked to plead,¹²⁰ so there is some contradiction as far as her communication skills are concerned.

The dilemma that arose was whether Steel should be tried for the crime because not doing so raised the fear of publishing 'a dangerous precedent that deaf persons might

¹¹⁸ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 25 April 2021), 7 December 1757, trial of Jeremiah Bailey (t17571207-16)

¹¹⁹ Gaw, *The Legal Status of the Deaf*, p. 97

¹²⁰ *Old Bailey Proceedings Online* (www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 8.0, 10 May 2021), October 1787, trial of Elizabeth Steel (t17871024-15)

commit felonies with impunity'.¹²¹ As a result of this the judge ordered Steel to be remanded until the next session so he could have the opportunity to consult twelve other judges respecting this 'curious and unfrequent point'. Steel did subsequently stand trial in October 1787 and was found guilty and sentenced to transportation. This case is important in showing how it was eventually recognised that deaf people did understand the nature of their crimes. Even though this had already been identified in the trial of Kesterton in 1781, it was determined that deaf people were just as capable as their hearing peers.

It can be suggested that it was Steel's case which began to establish that a deaf person could understand the proceedings, whether through lipreading, writing or via an interpreter, and from this point, jurors would 'agree to try that person in the normal way'.¹²² This is supported by an article in *The Sun* on 28 April 1796 which published the 'plan of the resolution respecting the manner of proceeding in a trial against deaf and dumb persons accused of some crime.' The article explained:

this plan was adopted by the council, namely, that besides the official defender, or counsel, allowed to every person tried for a capital crime, every dumb person is allowed to choose a counsel, who shall be instructed in the art of speaking by signs.¹²³

Therefore, by the end of the eighteenth century, there was a growing willingness to view deaf defendants on an equal basis to other members of society.

¹²¹ *St. James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, issue 4096, 29-31 May 1787

¹²² Colin and Morris, *Interpreters and the Legal Process*, p. 93

¹²³ *Sun*, issue 1120, 28 April 1796

Conclusion

There are several unanswered questions in relation to deaf people's experiences with the law in eighteenth-century England, particularly with crime. It has been difficult to determine the legal status of deaf people in this period because of the overlap between the nature of deafness and their capacity. As a result, the status of those deaf and dumb was uncertain, although officially, their capacity was considered in line with those labelled as idiots, while those unable to speak or write were deprived of their legal rights, presumed to be lacking the required mental development. However, in reality, those deaf and dumb were not prevented from making a contract if they were able to demonstrate their understanding of what was required of them, whether it be through speech, signs or writing. In a civil case, if it was found that a deaf individual had capacity to make a claim or defend a claim, then the matter would be dealt with in the usual way. Criminal cases, however, raised capacity issues throughout the process: whether one was capable to stand trial, the focus on guilt (which could be influenced by the fact that the individual was deaf) and then punishment if found guilty. Therefore, the key findings in this chapter show that the way deaf people were treated depended very much on their ability to communicate, whether they were able to do so by speech, signs and gestures or writing, and whether people were able to communicate with them.

It should be acknowledged that with such portrayals of deaf people in mind, the task of searching for them amongst the judicial records was going to be somewhat difficult as this attitude will have influenced how deaf people were recorded. It will therefore never be possible to determine how far recorded cases of crime represented the full scale of deaf people's experiences of the legal system in eighteenth-century England.

As the criminal justice system underwent significant changes, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century, the experiences of English citizens with crime, trials and punishment were subject to change anyway and as deaf people were scantily mentioned, how the changes affected them is not obvious.

The evidence uncovered of deaf people's experience with crime has mainly been related to their experiences on trial in court and not during the pretrial process: this is a fair statement as King explained it is impossible to analyse pretrial processes from court records as they only cover cases where informal solutions were not chosen by the victim.¹²⁴ There are instances where a trial did not continue simply because the defendant was deaf and dumb and sometimes they did not receive the punishment typical for their crime, and were subject to pardoning or benefitted from discretionary procedures. However, evidence suggest that being viewed compassionately was not restricted to deaf people as the use of pardoning and discretionary procedures were relatively common. For example, the pardon allowed those passing judgment to recognise poverty, when necessary, as an excuse, even though the law did not.¹²⁵

As far as deaf people were concerned, discretion was usually most likely to be applied when the perpetrator appeared to be 'dumb' or 'mute', confirmed to be as a result from the 'visitation of God'. No evidence has been discovered to suggest that deaf perpetrators who could speak were treated in the same way, so it seems conceivable that those who were unable to speak and used signs and gestures were treated more

¹²⁴ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 18

¹²⁵ Hay and others, p. 44

benevolently than those who were hard of hearing or deaf with speech. The identification of imposters feigning deafness in the hope they are viewed sympathetically or even dismissed from standing trial or receiving a lighter punishment does suggest it was the commonly held belief that deaf people were treated more leniently in eighteenth-century English society.

Nevertheless, what is clear is that deaf people would not have experienced the process in the same way as their hearing counterparts, even if it seemed they were following the natural order of the crime process: they would not have had full access to communication from start to finish. Without the use of sign language interpreters, as they were not prevalent at the time, some had to rely on friends or relatives to sign the proceedings to them, usually in the 'home signs' they were familiar with. The presence of friends and relatives to relay information suggests deaf people's communication needs were respected and it was intended that they were given a fair trial. There are also deaf people who went to court without an 'interpreter' and because they had the ability to speak, it is likely to have been assumed that they understood everything that was going on. This then raises the question about whether they were wrongly punished or received a harsher punishment than they should have.

On the other hand, when considering the number of crimes that took place, there are only a small number of reported cases concerning deaf people over the 100 years, so it is likely another significant number of crimes against or committed by deaf people went unreported. As King explains, 'in most theft cases the victim's decision was intimately tied up with the character, attitude, and previous behaviour of the

accused'.¹²⁶ Therefore, the accused's deafness is likely to have influenced the victim's decision and it would explain the small number of deaf people not being tried for such crimes. King further explains that the victims' fear of those in their community voicing their disapproval was another strong motive for the offender not being prosecuted¹²⁷ which could have been another contributing factor to the number of deaf offenders being tried for their crimes. It has been stated that 'understanding crime in any society is impeded by the existence of a 'dark figure' of unrecorded crime'¹²⁸ and 'most often, the history of crime is the history of what got recorded'.¹²⁹ This is very much the case when applied to deaf people. Nevertheless, exploring this topic has contributed to an understanding of the lives to deaf people in eighteenth-century England to a certain extent, by providing a picture of some of the attitudes towards and experiences of deaf people in legal situations and not all deaf people had the same experience.

The role of deaf people as witnesses and victims is not well established and it is likely they were disregarded, partly due to questions raised about their capacity and the inability to communicate with those who did not speak. Apart from the case where the convicts who robbed a deaf and dumb man were sentenced to death in 1783, it is difficult to determine whether crimes against deaf people were otherwise omitted. Given the process required on the part of the victim to ensure justice is served for a crime for which they were a victim, deaf people were placed at a disadvantage simply because communication barriers would not have ensured a smooth process.

¹²⁶ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 33

¹²⁷ King, *Crime, Justice and Discretion in England*, p. 31

¹²⁸ Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England*, p. 63

¹²⁹ Sharpe, *Crime in Early Modern England*, p. 21

As a general overview, it is fair to suggest that attitudes towards deaf people where the law was concerned changed dramatically throughout the eighteenth century. Early English law viewed deaf people as 'idiots' which strongly influenced how they were treated, and this provides a possible explanation for the lack of records prior to 1760. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, deaf people were not considered to be 'idiots' as such and were capable of being tried just like anyone else, as identified in the case of Elizabeth Steel in 1787 and later in 1796 with the publication of the 'plan of the resolution respecting the manner of proceeding in a trial against deaf and dumb persons accused of some crime'.¹³⁰ It can be suggested that the case of Steel was a turning point in how deaf people were perceived in the legal system towards the end of the eighteenth century as there was now reluctance to use discretionary procedures. One likely suggestion for this development is the establishment of deaf education towards the end of the century, a topic which will now be explored in Chapter Five.

¹³⁰ *Sun*, issue 1120, 28 April 1796

Chapter 5 - Education

Introduction

According to Aristotle, deaf people could not be educated and 'if a man be born deaf, he would infallibly be dumb, because he cannot hear from another the sound of the words'.¹ However, by the time of the Renaissance, scholars in Europe questioned and actively challenged Aristotle's claims about deaf people and set out to provide them with an education. As explained in Chapter Four, being deaf had legal implications which posed a considerable problem for wealthy families, since their deaf children were not always able to inherit their estates. Only a successful education and competence in speech allowed the children to be seen as 'deaf ex accidente', and therefore inherit the family estate.² This alone emphasised the need for deaf people of the elite to receive an education in the eighteenth century. A deaf nobleman writing on his experience of being deaf stated the value of education:

letters are the ornament of youth, and the comfort of old age. Without that comfort, what a miserable creature should I be, oppressed as I am by various physical ills, and cut off from society by my unfortunate deafness!³

This suggests that education was just as important, if not more important, for deaf people, and it also epitomises the value of education beyond economic and legal motives as it allowed people to connect with others.

¹ Juan Huartes, *A Treatise of the Education and Learning Proper for the Different Capacities of Youth* (London: C. Rivington, 1734), p. 86

² Genie Gertz and Patrick Boudreault (eds), *The SAGE Deaf Studies Encyclopaedia* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2016), p. 189

³ Harry Powlett, *Letters from a Celebrated Nobleman to his Heir* (London: J. Bowen, 1783), p. 2

The earliest official reference to deaf education is found in the fifteenth century, with the Dutch scholar and humanist, Rudolf Agricola, believing deaf people could 'hear by reading and speak by writing'.⁴ Anecdotes in the sixteenth century reveal that gestural communication and sign language became an accepted form of intelligent communication, leading an Italian mathematician and physician, Girolamo Cardano, to teach deaf people to read, write and use sign language. Around the same time in Spain, a Benedictine monk, Pedro Ponce de Leon, went beyond teaching deaf people to speak and gave them opportunities to learn to read and write as well as teaching them mathematics, Latin, Greek and Italian.⁵ This culminated in the first public school for deaf children, noted as the 'oldest, biggest and most prestigious school for deaf children'⁶ to be opened in France in 1771 by Abbe Charles Michel de l'Epee, who advocated sign language and whose methods of teaching signed French involved the use of gestures, writing and fingerspelling.

The developments in mainland Europe, particularly l'Epee's work in promoting deaf education in France, made this an important period in deaf education. Although this chapter focuses on aspects of deaf education in Britain in the eighteenth century, unlike the aforementioned educators, l'Eppe was mentioned in British newspapers. A portrait of l'Eppe, painted by one of his deaf and dumb students had the following testimonial: 'Wond'rous the secrets of his art appear, To teach the hands to speak, the

⁴ Harry G. Lang and Bonnie Meath-Lang, *Deaf Persons in the Arts and Sciences* (London: Greenwood Press, 1995), p. xv

⁵ D. G. Pritchard, *Education and the Handicapped 1760-1960* (Oxon: Routledge, 1963), p. 4

⁶ David M. Turner and Kevin Stagg, *Social Histories of Disability and Deformity* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 117

eyes to hear!’⁷ His death announcement, which included a statement that he was ‘so celebrated for teaching the deaf and dumb to speak’,⁸ also suggests his significance.

Duncan Campbell, introduced in Chapter Two, made a significant contribution to the development of deaf education in England, despite the belief he feigned his deafness: ‘He helped to popularise the idea that deaf people could be educated and literate, laying the ground for the widespread rise of deaf education later’.⁹ It is also acknowledged that Campbell taught two deaf children to read using methods implemented in the seventeenth century by clergyman and mathematician, John Wallis.¹⁰ In early eighteenth-century England, however, no formal education existed for deaf people, for they were still widely perceived as ineducable¹¹ a point supported by Borsay who sums up the situation for disabled children during the eighteenth century: ‘before the late eighteenth century, children with various disabilities were generally regarded as incapable of education’.¹² However, Britain’s first special school for deaf children, set up by Thomas Braidwood, opened in 1764 in Scotland, later moving to London in 1783,¹³ challenging the view that deaf children were ineducable.

Despite the early attitudes towards educating those who were deaf, ideas for teaching deaf children were actively developing and being put into practice in seventeenth

⁷ *General Evening Post*, issue 8234, 2-5 September 1786

⁸ *General Evening Post*, issue 8769, 31 December 1789

⁹ Christopher Krentz, ‘Duncan Campbell and the Discourses of Deafness’ *Prose Studies*, 27:1-2 (2005), 39-52, p. 45

¹⁰ Krentz, p. 47

¹¹ Krentz, p. 43

¹² Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 94

¹³ Borsay, p. 95

century England under scholars such as John Wallis, John Bulwer and William Holder, all of whom will be discussed in due course. Therefore, by the eighteenth century, the education of deaf children had already begun to be established and was further implemented as the century progressed. Newspapers and historical texts provide evidence of one-to-one teaching as well as documenting the development of the first deaf school towards the end of the century. Therefore, the eighteenth century was an important time for deaf education: pre-seventeenth and early eighteenth-century attitudes were still prevalent, as found in the 1771 edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* where deafness was described as ‘a total obstruction to speech, or written language, that an attempt to teach the deaf to speak or read has been uniformly regarded as impracticable’,¹⁴ yet progress towards deaf people having access to education was being made.

To examine deaf people’s experiences with education in eighteenth-century England, this chapter will also examine what educational opportunities were generally available to eighteenth-century citizens, which members of society they were available for and how deaf people benefitted from these opportunities. The developments in education in Scotland will be discussed and the extent to which they contributed to deaf education will be evaluated, particularly as the first deaf school in Britain was established there. The contribution an education made to the lives of deaf people in England in the eighteenth century and beyond and the opportunities such schools provided will be discussed. It has been acknowledged that much of this chapter

¹⁴ William Smellie, *Encyclopaedia Britannica; or a Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. II (Edinburgh: A. Bell and C. Macfarquhar, 1771), p. 457

relates to London, with references to Scotland where relevant, so there is unease that taking a regional approach does not offer an insight into the wider picture. However, the dearth of sources on deaf education in other areas of England has made this approach unavoidable and suggests there was limited development in this field aside from the progress made by Braidwood.

Education in eighteenth-century England

The history of education is much more than the history of schools. In early modern England, it was common for children to receive an education through private arrangements. 'The government felt no responsibility to educate any or all of its future citizens, and as a result many children never went to school'.¹⁵ At the beginning of the eighteenth century, those who could afford to do so (usually members of the upper class), hired tutors for their children.¹⁶ Aristocrats were largely educated at home with private tutors with some going to boarding schools and on to universities.¹⁷ Whether the poor should receive an education was a subject of debate, the reason being poor children were required to work from an early age to contribute to the family income.¹⁸

In addition, 'the debate over whether women should be taught and how much they were to be taught raged as fiercely as that over educating the poor'.¹⁹ Those who opposed education 'feared a change in society, one that would eventually destroy a

¹⁵ Kirstin Olsen, *Daily Life in 18th-Century England* (London: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 222

¹⁶ Olsen, p. 222

¹⁷ Helen M. Jewell, *Education in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1998), p. 7

¹⁸ Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Education in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Woburn Press, 1971), pp. 1-2

¹⁹ Olsen, p. 226

society which was based upon rigid social distinctions'²⁰ indicating that denying education to the poor was the only way to preserve the status quo of the classes.

Further, it was claimed that giving education to the labouring classes of the poor

would be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments. Instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them fractious and refractory.²¹

Vincent claims the eighteenth century was probably the most interesting period of English education, partly because it marks an important transitional phase in European society and culture, particularly with the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, and partly because it was a time of 'transition from orality to literacy',²² a significant change that would benefit those who were deaf. Pre-eighteenth century European culture had been dominated by what can be termed 'primary orality'.²³ Skills in reading and writing were something few professionals possessed, while the bulk of the population relied for information on what they could see and what they could hear. The ordinary man or woman simply had to listen: 'for most people, seeing and hearing were more significant than reading and writing'.²⁴ As deaf people were generally unable to hear, or at least unable to hear everything, they were naturally placed at a disadvantage, being less privy to information. Without the opportunity to read, deaf people were likely not to learn as much as their hearing peers.

²⁰ Neuburg, pp. 1-2

²¹ Neuburg, p. 4

²² David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 2

²³ R. A. Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe: Culture and Education, 1500-1800* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 1

²⁴ Houston, *Literacy in Early Modern Europe*, p. 1

Despite the divide between those who had the privilege of an education and those who strongly argued against education, attitudes towards education were changing at a pace where,

the education of the child increasingly became 'social rather than religious' and 'its aim was social, to equip the child with accomplishments that would secure for it gainful employment' ... in other words, in the eighteenth century, 'education for society became paramount'.²⁵

Being able to read was a crucial element of 'communication which developed in response to a cluster of needs connected with man's social and economic life'.²⁶ This recognition may have been what prompted the rapid development of deaf education and deaf schools towards the end of the eighteenth century. Indeed, Krentz elucidates that perhaps it was 'no accident that the rise of deaf education followed the rise of printing'²⁷ while providing further evidence for the transition from orality to literacy, explaining that 'speech and oral culture gradually became less important as more communication took place through reading and writing, which are silent, visual acts'.²⁸

Within this context, there is evidence to suggest that children were taught to read in the eighteenth century, as the significance of reading was initially recognised in relation to religion: 'the most delicate branch of education is that which concerns religion'.²⁹ Bearing in mind today the term 'literacy' includes both reading and writing, the two were divided in the past,³⁰ with priority given to reading over writing initially.

²⁵ Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society, 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early Modern Britain* (London: Longman, 1982), p. xii

²⁶ Neuburg, p. 93

²⁷ Krentz, p. 45

²⁸ Krentz, p. 45

²⁹ Henry Home Kanes, *Loose Hints Upon Education* (Edinburgh: John Bell and John Murray, 1781), p. 188

³⁰ Neuburg, p. 93

Vincent argues 'in the middle of the eighteenth century, three hundred years after the invention of printing, half the English population could not write'.³¹ Literacy was only considered important where 'religion was a recognised component of the moral training'³² and 'reading opened up the bible [and] was a vehicle of salvation, while writing was not'.³³ It was therefore not unusual for poor children to receive instruction in reading for two or three hours each day³⁴ so they could read the Bible. Whether this included deaf children of poor backgrounds is unknown as there is no reference to deaf children receiving such tuition. However, although Borsay argues that 'deaf people were denied access to the word of God'³⁵ suggesting that deaf people were not included in the limited opportunities to learn to read, there are references to deaf children being educated in the early eighteenth century. For example, James Ford, referred to in the *Post Man and the Historical Account* of 1703, 'brought a child to speak that was born deaf and dumb'.³⁶ Unfortunately, the article does not go into detail so we cannot draw many conclusions, but Ford is also reported to have 'taught those that were born Deaf and Dumb to speak articulately, intelligibly, and in good tone'.³⁷ Ford was not recorded as being a teacher but a speech therapist who removed 'stammering, and other impediments in Speech'.³⁸

The development of speech therapy in eighteenth-century England is most often credited to John Thelwall, but he was not the first to attempt to treat or discuss issues

³¹ Vincent, p. 1

³² Vincent, p. 64

³³ Jewell, p. 148

³⁴ Neuburg, pp. 8-9

³⁵ Borsay, p. 94

³⁶ *Post Man and the Historical Account*, 23-26 October 1703

³⁷ *Post Man and the Historical Account*, Issue 1877, 27-29 April 1710

³⁸ *Post Man and the Historical Account*, 23-26 October 1703

with speech;³⁹ Ford was noted to have been a speech therapist in 1703.⁴⁰ Wallis' teaching methods included treating mispronunciation in deaf clients and according to the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, he also used his skills to assist non-deaf clients who:

...had great Impediments in their Speech (who stuttered extremely, or who have not been able to pronounce some Letters) I have taught to Speak very Distinctly, and to pronounce those letters which before they could not.⁴¹

Despite the differences between speech therapists and educators of the deaf, there is an overlap. It has been argued that 'Thelwall's professional debt was to European educators of the deaf'⁴² mainly because the methods used for speech correction proved useful in other areas. Despite the similarities between speech therapists and educators of the deaf, their motives were different, as advocated by Thelwall, whose criticism was that deaf people needed 'something other than remedial elocution [which] was properly directed towards those who were potentially normal, or at least 'improvable'.⁴³ There is no doubt Thelwall viewed the two fields separately and his perception of deaf people was distinctive. As there is evidence that Ford attempted speech therapy with deaf people, it is possible others did too. There is also an implication that whether an eighteenth-century speech therapist was willing to provide

³⁹ Elizabeth Foyster, 'Fear of Giving Offence Makes Me Give the More Offence': Politeness, Speech and Its Impediments in British Society, c.1660–1800', *Cultural and Social History*, 15:4 (2018), 487-508, p. 501

⁴⁰ *Post Man and the Historical Account*, 23-26 October 1703

⁴¹ John Wallis, 'A letter of Dr. John Wallis, (Geom. Prof. Oxon, and F. R. S.) to Mr. Thomas Beverly; Concerning His Method for Instructing Persons Deaf and Dumb' *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, 20 (1698) 353–360

⁴² Denyse Rockey, 'John Thelwall and the Origins of British Speech Therapy', *Medical History*, 23 (1979), 156-175, p. 164

⁴³ Rockey, pp. 156-157

speech therapy for deaf people depended on their attitudes towards deaf people, and whether they believed deaf people could be taught to speak at all.

Attitudes towards education in eighteenth-century England were therefore somewhat contradictory, with poor families opposing education, yet acknowledging poor children should be given opportunities to learn to read: 'when a child can talk, 'tis time he should learn to read'.⁴⁴ It was increasingly common in the eighteenth century for children to acquire literacy skills at home, having spent their childhood working rather than attending school, due to poverty in their family. Opportunities to learn to read was from family members and by attending a Sunday school,⁴⁵ coinciding with earlier points about daily tuition in reading to understand the Bible. Whether deaf children received some basic private tuition from family members is currently unknown. The case of Duncan Campbell in Chapter Two gives no indication of how he was able to read and write, especially as 'the details of his childhood are sketchy and unverifiable',⁴⁶ which leaves his educational experience open to interpretation.

As well as the conflicting attitude towards the education of the poor, late medieval and early modern formal education was dominated by social class with grammar schools being intentionally elitist,⁴⁷ a barrier to education faced by many eighteenth-century citizens. Additionally, Jewell points out, 'discrimination against women was so essentially part of the mindset of the times'⁴⁸ that 'one very striking feature of formal

⁴⁴ Neuburg, p. 58

⁴⁵ Vincent, p. 1

⁴⁶ Krentz, p. 45

⁴⁷ Jewell, p. 7

⁴⁸ Jewell, p. vii

early modern education is that it was almost exclusively male'.⁴⁹ This changed by the eighteenth century. Between 1580 and 1640 there were approximately eight literate males to every literate female and by the end of the seventeenth century this ratio changed to three males to one female with this gap closing further throughout the eighteenth century.⁵⁰ O'Day explains that female literacy was rising faster than men over the country as a whole and within all social classes: it increased in the first half of the eighteenth century and accelerated further in the second half, with 45 percent of women literate by 1800. As a point of comparison, the number of literate men was unchanged during the same period.⁵¹

From this, it is possible to deduce that throughout the eighteenth century, education became more widespread in its availability to the less represented members of society and its value widely recognised. Whether this observation applied to eighteenth-century deaf women as well is unknown. The references we do find to deaf children receiving one-to-one tuition tend to refer to 'a deaf child' rather than stating a deaf boy or a deaf girl, a practice found in the newspaper reports about Ford in 1703 and 1710. However, the legal and inheritance issues outlined earlier indicates that boys' education might have been considered more important, particularly boys of the elite.

Nevertheless, one thing that is clear is education was something eighteenth-century citizens were conscious of, it became 'more common and more necessary for survival

⁴⁹ Jewell, p. 7

⁵⁰ O'Day, *Education and Society*, p. 190

⁵¹ O'Day, *Education and Society*, p. 190

and success'.⁵² Since deafness did not discriminate and deaf people were found amongst all social classes and backgrounds, it is possible family background was a deciding factor for receiving an education, before the issue of deafness came into consideration. For example, a deaf child from a poor family may have been denied the opportunity of an education because they were required to work from a young age, not because they were deaf, whereas a deaf child from the upper class may have been denied an education because it was believed they were incapable of being educated, despite having the financial means to provide one-to-one tuition.

Deaf education

Origins of eighteenth-century deaf education

Even though this thesis focuses on eighteenth-century England, such an analysis is incomplete without an exploration of deaf education in the seventeenth century to fully understand how it later developed. Hans states that the eighteenth century was 'not only a period of as brilliant schemes and philosophic works as the seventeenth century, it was also a period of actual realisation of modern education'.⁵³ Such 'brilliant schemes and philosophic works of the seventeenth century' have been identified in the field of deaf education.

John Bulwer, a medical practitioner and philosopher, reported as the first person to propose the education of deaf children in England, is described as 'the founding father of BSL research'.⁵⁴ His 'view on deaf people, whom others deemed Nature's errors,

⁵² Olsen, p. 228

⁵³ Nicholas Hans, *New Trends in Education in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxon: Routledge, 1998), p. 6

⁵⁴ K. Dekesel, K., 'John Bulwer: The Founding Father of BSL Research', *Signpost* (Winter 1992), 11-14

is inclusive and accepting'.⁵⁵ Bulwer studied and published works on the human body and communication, particularly gestures, which culminated in various publications including *Chirolgia* in 1644 and *Philocophis* in 1648, in which he discusses the education of deaf children through lipreading and the use of a manual alphabet. Bulwer argued 'gestural language was universal and primary, with spoken language being but a gloss on gestural communication'.⁵⁶ As well as focusing on sign language and gestures, Bulwer paid particular attention to lipreading 'to enable deaf mute people to communicate with everyone else'.⁵⁷ Bulwer was not the only individual to pay attention to deaf education in seventeenth-century England, however, several other scholars worked with and wrote about deaf education, including William Holder, known for using written language to teach deaf students to speak as well as teaching his students to sign the alphabet. George Dalgarno, author of the 1680 publication, *The Deaf and Dumb Man's Tutor*,⁵⁸ was also believed to have been the first to state that deaf and hearing people had equal learning abilities.

Later in the seventeenth century, Wallis became known for his publication of *De Loquela* in 1653 in which he provided a method for teaching the deaf to speak by focusing on the function of the vocal organs, English phonetics, signs and fingerspelling. A successful case of Alexander Popham, born deaf and dumb, taught to communicate in sign language by Holder and Wallis is documented and possibly

⁵⁵ Elizabeth B. Bearden, 'Before Normal, There Was Natural: John Bulwer, Disability, and Natural Signing in Early Modern England and Beyond', *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 132:1 (2017), 33-50, p. 38

⁵⁶ Graham Richards, 'Bulwer, John (bap. 1606, d. 1656)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2008), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3934>> [accessed 25 October 2020] (para 3 of 8)

⁵⁷ Richards, para. 4 of 8

⁵⁸ David Cram, 'Dalgarno, George c.1616-1687' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2006), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7023>> [accessed 25 October 2020] (para. 5 of 5)

served as a guide for eighteenth-century teachers: ‘talking on the fingers is very common among us ever since Dr Holder and Dr Wallis taught Mr Popham’.⁵⁹ In a letter to a Robert Boyle, one of the most renowned scientists of the seventeenth century, Wallis provided an overview of his experience teaching a deaf person when stating,

I had undertaken another task, to teach a person dumb and deaf to speak and to understand a language; of which if he could do either, the other would be more easy; but his knowing neither, makes both harder. And though the former may be thought more difficult, the later may perhaps require as much of time.⁶⁰

In the same letter, Wallis provided an overview of how to teach a deaf person to speak: ‘for there being no other way to direct his speech than by teaching him, how the tongue, the lips, the palate, and other organs of speech, are to be applied and moved in the forming of such sounds as are required...’⁶¹ while explaining that,

as to that of speech; I must first, by the most significant signs I can, make him to understand, in what posture and motion I would have him to apply his tongue, lips, and other organs of speech, to the forming such a sound I direct ... with some tryals, and a little patience, he learns first one, then another sound, and by frequent repetitions, is confirmed in it...⁶²

Initially, teachers of the deaf aimed to teach their pupils to speak,⁶³ and references to deaf people found in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* focused on communication through speech and hearing.⁶⁴ This is likely to be because belief in speech as a defining feature of humanity, influenced by Aristotle’s thoughts

⁵⁹ Ovid, *Ovid’s Art of Love*, Book I, trans. by Mr. Dryden and Mr Congreve (London: W. Taylor, 1712), p. 76

⁶⁰ Richard Boulton, *The Theological Works of the Honourable Robert Boyle*, Vol. I (London: W. Taylor, 1715), p. 292

⁶¹ Boulton, p. 289

⁶² Boulton, p. 297

⁶³ Pritchard, p. 5

⁶⁴ Harry G. Lang, ‘Revisiting History: Sign Language in the Seventeenth Century’, *The Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 1:1 (1996), 91-92, p. 92

on the subject, contributed to delayed formal efforts to educate deaf children and delayed an emphasis on academic content over communication for centuries.⁶⁵ This belief was still fairly prevalent in the early eighteenth century. A statement in *An Introduction to Holy Scriptures* discusses diseases in the scriptures:

they who are born deaf, are always dumb: ... having never heard a word spoken, their tongues cannot pronounce any; words being nothing else but an imitation of what we hear others say.⁶⁶

However, there are some observations which suggest attitudes were moving away from earlier beliefs. In particular, to teach a deaf person to read, Wallis used various methods such as 'teaching him several inflexions fitted to the organs of his voice, to make it articulate'.⁶⁷ Another description of teaching deaf people to write is found in Wallis' letter on deaf education:

it will be convenient all along to have pen, ink, and paper, ready at hand, to write down in a word what you signify to him by signs, and cause him to write, or show how to write, what he signifies by signs, which way of signifying their mind by signs deaf persons are often very good at; and we must endeavour to learn their language, if I may so call it, in order to teach them ours, by showing what words answer to their signs.

Wallis was credited for introducing 'the new and extraordinary invention ... [of] instructing persons born Deaf and Dumb to Speak, Write and Read'.⁶⁸ A considerable number of primary sources show testimonies regarding Wallis, including 'Dr Wallis had brought a person that was born Deaf and Dumb to read at Oxford. [He taught him]

⁶⁵ Lang and Meath-Lang, p. xv

⁶⁶ Bernard Lamy, *Apparatus Biblicus or, An Introduction to the Holy Scriptures. In Three Books* (London: S. Palmer, 1723), p. 462

⁶⁷ Samuel Sorbier, *A Voyage to England, Containing many Things relating to the State of Learning, Religion and other Curiosities of that Kingdom* (London: J. Woodward, 1709), p. 28

⁶⁸ Richard Browne, *The English School Reform'd* (Dublin: Grierson, 1743), p. 138

several inflexions fitted to the organs of his voice, to make it articulate'⁶⁹ and 'He taught also two persons who were dumb (because deaf) not only to read English distinctly, but to pronounce the most difficult words of other languages'.⁷⁰ Clearly, during the seventeenth century, discoveries were made and methods established for teaching deaf children, which were then implemented in the eighteenth century.

Continuing developments in deaf education

The advantages of gesture continued to be identified in the early eighteenth century: 'if it is by speech alone we converse with the blind, 'tis by gesture alone that we can converse with the deaf; and without this faculty, we should have no commerce or conversation at all with 'em'.⁷¹ This idea influenced educators including Bulwer and Thomas Braidwood, suggesting that as deaf education developed, language acquisition for deaf children was given great consideration with communication skills, whether by speaking or signing, at the centre of the curriculum. Lang and Meath-Lang support this contention with 'emphasis on academic content over communication'.⁷² During the eighteenth century, there was no standard school curriculum.⁷³ This gave deaf educators the freedom to implement learning to speak and sign into their teaching, something not likely to be found amongst general eighteenth-century teachers, so a more specialised method of teaching deaf pupils was already being established.

⁶⁹ Sorbriere, p. 28

⁷⁰ James Greenwood, *An Essay towards a Practical English Grammar* (London: John Clark, 1722), p. 45

⁷¹ Michel Le Faucheur, *The Art of Speaking in Publick: or An Essay on the Action of an Orator* (London: N. Cox, 1727), p. 171

⁷² Lang and Meath-Lang, p. xv

⁷³ Olsen, p. 223

As identified, most primary sources of the eighteenth century in relation to deaf education refer to the foundational work of Bulwer, Wallis and Holder, suggesting continuities in deaf education. There does not appear to be many references to deaf children being educated in the eighteenth century in primary sources until we come across Telfair and particularly Braidwood after 1760. Telfair, however, has received little attention. Finding a reference to 'Telfair's Academy for the Deaf and Dumb' in the *Morning Chronicle* in November 1781 with a brief explanation of teaching methods used prompted further exploration:

The Deaf and Dumb are taught at Mr Telfair's Academy in Knightsbridge, to speak and to know what others say when talking slow, to read and understand books, and to write and cast up accounts; after which they may acquire most other arts and sciences except music...⁷⁴

Telfair's primary focus was on people with speech impediments generally and not so much deaf people, he was listed in a 1775 Edinburgh trade directory as a 'curer of impediments in speech, and English teacher' and the only brief reference confirming his involvement with deaf people is that 'over his career he set up an academy in Knightsbridge 'for teaching the Deaf and Dumb, and removing IMPEDIMENTS in SPEECH', and accommodated pupils 'Defective in Speech'.⁷⁵ The title of his academy having 'impediments in speech' capitalised emphasises that was his area of specialism, and not so much teaching deaf children. As speech practitioners often began their careers working with people who were deaf, as explained earlier, this

⁷⁴ *Morning Chronicle* (1770), issue 3908, 24 November 1781

⁷⁵ Foyster, p. 498

would explain why Telfair did not establish his career with deaf people any further and turned his attention to those with speech impediments.

A defining development of eighteenth-century deaf education is credited to Thomas Braidwood, who opened the first school for deaf children in England in 1783 after it had initially opened in Scotland in 1760. Braidwood began his career teaching deaf children following an approach by the father of an American deaf boy to teach his son Francis Green to speak, and it was his success in teaching this boy to speak that led to pupil numbers increasing to a total of twenty deaf pupils by 1780. Braidwood used a 'combined method' which consisted of sign language, gesture and speech, whichever suited each individual child depending on their ability.⁷⁶ He observed that deaf people found it difficult to pronounce words correctly and more difficult to acquire a proper knowledge of written languages, concluding their only method of conversing is by signs and gestures.⁷⁷ Braidwood did, however, promote the oral approach to education, with methods such as 'using a small silver rod, flat at one end with a marble at the other, to position the tongue for the correct articulation of vowels and consonants' but to be open minded about using sign and gesture if required, suggest his primary focus was providing an education and not so much focusing on teaching one to speak.

An observation of Braidwood's teaching methods provides some insight into how he taught:

⁷⁶ Hugo Arnot, *The History of Edinburgh, From the Earliest Accounts to the Present Time* (Edinburgh: William Creech, 1788), p. 426

⁷⁷ Arnot, p. 425

Mr Braidwood first teaches them the letters and their powers; and the idea of words written, beginning with the most simple. The art of speaking is taken from the motion of his lips; his words being uttered slowly and distinctly.⁷⁸

One criticism of Braidwood was the fact he tended to keep his teaching methods a secret because he wanted to avoid competition.⁷⁹ This makes it difficult to find his teaching methods in eighteenth-century primary sources and it is not until the nineteenth century, three years after Braidwood's death, that his approaches to teaching were published in 1809 when his nephew, Joseph Watson described his methods of education in a book *Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb*.⁸⁰ Even though this text falls out of the time period studied, it is the best source available to understand Braidwood's approach to teaching deaf children to speak, read and write.

This text confirms that the techniques for teaching deaf children were based on the methods used by Wallis, with a detailed explanation of how to begin with articulation and later combining speech elements into symbols and then into words. As it was recognised that 'gesture, feature and modulation of the voice are the natural signs of internal feelings',⁸¹ deaf children were encouraged to use natural signs until they had mastered speech, while recognising speech was only possible if the 'organs of speech are perfect, and the voice clear, and sufficiently strong'.⁸² The text goes further and presents a discussion about deaf children facing additional challenges when learning to speak as they cannot learn from their auditory surroundings during their early years,

⁷⁸ Anon., *The Annual Register, or the View of the History of Politics, and Literature for the Year 1776* (London: J. Dodsley, 1777), p. 124

⁷⁹ Gertz and Boudreault, p. 230

⁸⁰ Gertz and Boudreault, p. 231

⁸¹ Joseph Watson, *Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb* (London: Darton and Harvey, 1809), p. 42

⁸² Watson, p. 1

a crucial time for language development;⁸³ 'by the help of hearing, a language is readily and almost imperfectly acquired at an early age (4-5 years)'.⁸⁴ That language acquisition defines intelligence and not hearing, and that deaf children can acquire language when words are 'presented as objects of the eye'⁸⁵ and communication 'done by a motion of the hand, head, or countenance'⁸⁶ is emphasised. In short, it is a detailed text emphasising that the priority should be language acquisition, not speech, and that deaf children can be educated like their hearing peers with the key difference being that such education is to be delivered visually and through repetition to be successful.⁸⁷

Despite the criticism of Braidwood keeping his teaching methods to himself, visitors were impressed by the school and Braidwood's reputation was soon widespread.⁸⁸ For example, an extract of a letter from Paris from an unknown author, published in the *London Chronicle* in January 1777 states:

I paid a visit to the school in which the deaf and dumb are instructed, and which in my opinion is one of the greatest curiosities in this city ... to see a number of people conversing together by signs is ... a very extraordinary sight.⁸⁹

Perhaps the fact Braidwood kept his teaching methods a secret is what gave him his reputation; seeing so many deaf children educated successfully with little reference to how he did it was an intriguing mystery behind closed doors. Braidwood's success was also well documented in *The Scots Magazine* in 1767, with an advertisement for

⁸³ Watson, pp. 43-47

⁸⁴ Watson, p. 70

⁸⁵ Watson, p. 74

⁸⁶ Watson, p. 72

⁸⁷ Watson, pp. 103-112

⁸⁸ Gertz and Boudreault, p. 230

⁸⁹ *London Chronicle*, issue 3142, 23-25 January 1777

the school stating he could teach anyone to speak and read within three years.⁹⁰ By 1769, *The Scots Magazine* announced that thirty deaf pupils had been refused by the academy, mainly because they could only take a few pupils at a time and such education was expensive.⁹¹

The opportunity to be taught by Braidwood was available initially to wealthier members of society evidently in a position to pay. For example, Braidwood's notable pupils included Charles Shirreff, the son of a wealthy wine merchant and John Goodricke, the son of a British diplomat, discussed in Chapter Two. Other pupils included the son of Dr John Douglas⁹² and the son of a merchant in Liverpool.⁹³ These examples suggest access to such education was only readily available to those from a wealthier background. Nevertheless, while a list of all of Braidwood's pupils is not documented, there are commentaries of Braidwood's success from personal testimonies of people with no reference to their social background: 'my daughter ... has been with Mr Braidwood six years, can speak intelligibly, read distinctly ... she can converse with any person who speaks slow and distinct, by observing the motion of the lips',⁹⁴ and 'a boy of 13, has been only 4 months under Mr Braidwood's care, but his progress is remarkable'.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ *The Scots Magazine*, Vol. 29 (Edinburgh: W. Sands and others, 1767), p. 421

⁹¹ *The Scots Magazine*, Vol. 31 (Edinburgh: W. Sands and others, 1769), p. 342

⁹² *London Chronicle*, issue 1450, 3-5 April 1766

⁹³ *Public Advertiser*, issue 13344, 16 July 1777

⁹⁴ *London Evening Post*, issue 7099, 3-6 July 1773

⁹⁵ *London Chronicle*, issue 1450, 3-5 April 1766

Braidwood accepted both boys and girls equally; his first six pupils were three boys and three girls. The age children were referred to Braidwood and the time spent under Braidwood's tuition varied; there was no set timescale as noticed by the two recorded experiences; it was reported in 1788 that 'Mr Braidwood's pupils are under his tuition from three to six years, according to their age [and] capacity.'⁹⁶ Due to an increasing demand for Braidwood's school, it moved to Hackney, London in 1783 'to be at the centre of things', affording access to a larger clientele since London was the largest city in Europe at the time, and also raising the profile of his work in an intellectual or scientific context.⁹⁷ This school became known as Old Kent Road Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb, with Braidwood's nephew, Joseph Watson becoming the new headteacher in 1792.⁹⁸

Despite Braidwood's teaching methods being concealed in eighteenth-century primary sources, it has been identified that his teaching methods were not new nor unique. An unidentified eighteenth-century author stated: 'I do not mean to mention the instruction of the deaf as new. Having been first practiced upon the son of a constable in Spain, it was afterwards cultivated with much emulation in England, by Wallis and Holder'.⁹⁹ However, the author went further to acknowledge 'how far any former teachers have succeeded, it is not easy to know; the improvement of Mr Braidwood's pupils is wonderful'.¹⁰⁰ Some of the identified methods used by Braidwood include:

⁹⁶ Arnot, p. 426

⁹⁷ Pritchard, p. 14

⁹⁸ Gertz and Boudreault, p. 230

⁹⁹ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Island of Great Britain*, Vol. IV, 9th edn (Dublin: D. Chamberlaine and others, 1779), p. 96

¹⁰⁰ Defoe, *A Tour through the Island of Great Britain*, p. 96

he begins with learning the deaf articulation, or the use of their vocal organs; and, at the same time, teaches them to write the characters and compose words of them. He next shows them the use of words in expressing visible objects, and their qualities. After this, he proceeds to instruct them in the proper arrangement of words, or grammatical construction of language.¹⁰¹

Wallis and Holder both made the claim of being the first English teacher to describe a successful method of teaching the deaf.¹⁰² In the *Transactions of the Royal Society* in early 1670s, for example, we find Wallis immersed in a hostile argument with Holder over their claims to being the first teachers of deaf pupils in Great Britain.¹⁰³ In 1779, whether Braidwood or Wallis deserved the credit for being the first Teacher of the Deaf in Britain was discussed: 'it was much controverted, whether the glory of first teaching deaf and dumb persons to speak, and understand a language, was due to [Braidwood] or Dr Wallis' further stating 'the true history of the art appears to have been published by the latter, in his book *De Loquela*.'¹⁰⁴ A document in 1756 sums up the knowledge of deaf education at that point, pre-Braidwood: 'Dr. Wallis has given us the Method whereby he taught two young gentlemen, born deaf, to understand what was said to them, and to return pertinent answers'.¹⁰⁵ Despite evidence suggesting Braidwood was not the first teacher of the deaf in England and the development of deaf education was underway before the start of the eighteenth century, Braidwood's school became a model for many later schools across Britain. These newer schools were established

¹⁰¹ Arnot, p. 425

¹⁰² Pritchard, p. 5

¹⁰³ Lang, 'Revisiting History', p. 92

¹⁰⁴ James Granger, *A Biographical History of England, from Egbert the Great to the Revolution*, Vol. III, 3rd edn (London: J. Rivington, 1779), p. 263

¹⁰⁵ Anon., *Every Man Entertained: or, Select Histories* (London: Thomas Truth and Daniel Daylight, 1756), p. 34

under Braidwood's influence as he trained his sons and nephews to spread his methods.

Interestingly, while Braidwood was credited for being behind the setting up the first deaf school, it has been claimed that his nephew, Watson was 'destined to become the first superintendent of the first public school for the deaf [in England]' and he approached 'the King who promised £100 towards the venture'.¹⁰⁶ Also, establishing a public school for deaf children was under discussion while Braidwood was still in Edinburgh but practical steps were not taken until the mother of one of Braidwood's pupils approached John Townsend, a Dissenting minister of Bermondsey, with the idea. Townsend then approached Henry Cox Mason, the Rector of Bermondsey and they both set out to raise funds. After a successful response, a committee was formed and Watson was invited to oversee this new institution, labelled as the *Asylum for the Support and Education of the Deaf and Dumb Children of the Poor*.¹⁰⁷ There was, however, fear there would not be enough demand from deaf children to justify its means. However, in November 1792 there were six pupils and in 1796, the school had twenty children with a waiting list of fifty children and this success continued to grow in the nineteenth century, with the Asylum relocating to larger premises in 1809, catering for 80 children with an even larger waiting list.¹⁰⁸ This supports Borsay's suggestion that the new methods of teaching deaf children to communicate offered a justification for schools.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Pritchard, p. 14

¹⁰⁷ Pritchard, p. 20

¹⁰⁸ Pritchard, p. 20

¹⁰⁹ Borsay, p. 94

To be in demand and to be successful for so long made this school unique having survived for so long, particularly as general schools founded in the eighteenth century tended to have a short life span with the likelihood of being out of business five to ten years after opening.¹¹⁰ If there were only a small number of schools, and those that did exist struggled to survive for a long period of time, this point alone offers an explanation as to why schools for deaf children did not exist in early eighteenth century, particularly with its requirement being specific pupils and a more specialised approach to teaching. A further possibility for the development of this deaf school is because it was initially established in Scotland, around the time of the Scottish Enlightenment.

The Scottish Enlightenment was concerned with teaching and 'sought to transform every branch of learning'.¹¹¹ Scotland is reported to have been 'one of the best educated countries in Europe',¹¹² with education on a far larger scale at all levels and far greater social mobility, the system 'catering for an unusually wide range of social classes'.¹¹³ Herman further explains:

An official national survey in 1795 showed that out of a population of 1.5 million, nearly twenty thousand Scots depended for their livelihood on writing and publishing - and 10,500 on teaching ... Scottish culture had a built-in bias towards reading, learning and education in general. In no other European country did education count for so much, or enjoy so broad a base.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Olsen, p. 223

¹¹¹ Arthur Herman, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Scots' Invention of the Modern World* (London: Fourth Estate, 2003), p. 61

¹¹² R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity: Illiteracy and Society in Scotland and Northern England, 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 8

¹¹³ Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity*, p. 8

¹¹⁴ Herman, p. 24

It was generally assumed that Scotland had enjoyed a considerably greater progress in education and literacy compared to England¹¹⁵ and Scotland's achievements in literacy has been noted to be among the best in Europe.¹¹⁶ For Scottish people of the middle class, education was 'more than just a means to professional credentials or social advancement. It became a way of life'.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, education was not only available to upper and middle classes. Jewell explains that education in Scotland had always had a good reputation with 'the Scots ... seen as people who particularly value[d] education and its availability for all students capable of advancing through it, regardless of their class at birth'.¹¹⁸

As Scotland appeared to be ahead of England in terms of education, it is understandable how deaf education came to be considered there first: the tools and expertise required for educating others had already been in place for several years. It could also be that such advances in education here in this period encouraged demand on the part of parents to have their deaf children educated.

Conclusion

The eighteenth century was a time of substantial reform of the education system in England, with an expansion in the number of people being educated, schools multiplying, and literacy rates increasing, albeit slowly. Deaf education within this context was not unheard of but still in its infancy, having received attention in the

¹¹⁵ Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity*, p. 4

¹¹⁶ Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity*, p. 22

¹¹⁷ Herman, p. 26

¹¹⁸ Jewell, p. 156

seventeenth century in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* amongst educators and prominent scientists such as Boyle.¹¹⁹ Deaf members of society were included, but the type of education they received, compared to hearing members of society, was limited, particularly in the first half of the century. Where there were educational opportunities for the more disadvantaged members of society, deaf people still faced the barrier of communication (and lack of early language acquisition) before being able to fully access education.

As the number of women being educated increased as well as the obvious conflicting attitudes towards poor children receiving an education, there were changes in who education was available to. This provides an indication of changing attitudes towards deaf education as O'Day explains: 'where we can detect changes in education, we should be able to discern changes in attitudes towards the place of children in the family and in society as a whole'.¹²⁰ So, we can carefully assume this was the case for the deaf citizens of eighteenth-century England. One thing that is clear, however, is that despite the opportunities that arose for eighteenth-century English citizens, it would not have been readily available to deaf people.

Early educational opportunities for deaf people were in the form of one-to-one tuition, with the primary focus on teaching them to speak, so they could fit into an oral dominated society. This is supported by Watson in his 1809 publication:

it should never be a lost sight of, that deaf people are not educated to live always among persons in their own unfortunate situation ... as they intend to

¹¹⁹ Michael Hunter, 'Boyle, Robert (1627-1691)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2015), <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3137>> [accessed 18 September 2020]

¹²⁰ O'Day, *Education and Society*, p. 1

mix with their fellow beings, in social habits and necessary avocations, we have to open a channel to this intercourse.

The presence of speech therapists in the eighteenth century highlighted the importance placed on correcting speech and despite speech therapy coming under the medical umbrella, it had close links with deaf education though the motives of the two were different. Deaf educators aimed to give deaf children the ability to communicate using speech, if possible, with the primary focus being on understanding a language and being able to express their minds by writing, whereas speech therapists aimed to correct imperfections in speech already acquired. Nevertheless, it is possible speech therapists took on deaf clients perhaps due to intellectual interest in the 'problem' of teaching someone to speak who could not hear and saw it as an opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

The desire to teach deaf people is a strong indication of attitudes towards deaf people at this time; it shows belief that deaf people could be educated but not in the conventional way. Evidence shows that deaf people were taught in the form of sign language and gestures, suggesting educators of the deaf were becoming more open minded in their attitude towards the importance of speech and realising that the priority should be language acquisition.

The transitioning culture from orality to literacy was an important positive step for deaf people as the written word was more accessible than the spoken word, but one still needed to be able to read. As efforts to teach deaf people to read and write was already taking place at the time of Wallis in the seventeenth century, the tools were already in place for eighteenth-century educators of the deaf. However, the fact there is little mention of deaf education in primary sources until we come across Braidwood

in the second half of the century is perplexing. It could either because one-to-one teaching of deaf people was the predominant method for a considerable number of years, and not considered newsworthy, or perhaps the number of deaf people being taught declined, before rising again at the time of Braidwood.

It is debateable whether the development of an education system for deaf people in eighteenth-century England stemmed from the Scottish Enlightenment, and specifically whether this provided the trigger for Braidwood to pay attention to the field of deaf education. Conversely, it is questioned whether Braidwood or other named western European scholars can take the credit for deaf educational success. However, one thing is certain: deaf people's access to education and the opportunities available to them were widespread in London by the end of the eighteenth century. So too were general educational opportunities which reached a wider audience: women, disabled people and poor people, albeit in a limited way. Receiving an education opened doors for deaf people and society was able to recognise that deaf people were indeed 'capable of reason' and could certainly be educated; directly contradicting what Aristotle led people to believe for centuries.

Overall, receiving an education had a positive impact on the attitudes towards and experiences of deaf people. It brought deaf children together in greater numbers than ever before, which is evident in the increasing numbers of deaf pupils at school. Braidwood, therefore, sowed the seeds of the development of deaf education to a larger scale, leading to the founding of further deaf schools in the nineteenth century, which in turn was the start of a strong deaf community that continued to grow and

strengthen for centuries to come: 'the establishment of Deaf schools was of immense significance for Deaf communities from this time forward to the present day'.¹²¹

¹²¹ Paddy Ladd, *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2003), p. 109

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Van Cleve's remark that the topic of 'deaf history' did not exist prior to the 1950s prompted academics to reveal the history of deaf people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in America and specific historical events elsewhere. The aim of this thesis was to go back further and explore aspects of deafness in eighteenth-century England and identify what primary sources revealed about the attitudes towards and experiences of deaf people during this period. This built upon the work of Cockayne which concerned the experiences of deaf people in the early modern period up to 1750. Baynton clearly insinuated that 'disability is everywhere in history, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories we write',¹ a position very much proven by the research undertaken for this thesis which has revealed that deaf people were very much present in eighteenth-century history, albeit still relatively unexplored in social, medical and disability histories.

There is more to be said about deaf people in the eighteenth century than was initially believed with a wealth of information hidden amongst primary sources that contribute to a better understanding of aspects of deafness in eighteenth-century England. It also substantiates Viridi's contention that

the history of hearing loss is more than a history of medical and technological intervention. It is a history that incorporates ideals of citizenship and philosophy to debate the meaning of humanity and what we consider "normal".²

¹ Douglas C. Baynton, 'Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History' in Lennard J. Davis, *The Disabilities Studies Reader*, 5th edn (New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 31

² Jaipreet Viridi, *Hearing Happiness: Deafness Cures in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2020), p. 9

The thesis findings revealed that the existence of deaf people in eighteenth-century England was acknowledged, and that they were considered part of society, albeit in a different way to their hearing counterparts due to communication barriers. As a result, we have been able to place their experiences into four categories: status in society, medicine, law and education. The general conclusion is that it was not so much about whether they could hear that determined deaf people's status, but whether they were able to communicate, whether through signs, gestures or writing, and whether they could show that they understood. If the latter, they were likely treated equally to their hearing counterparts. In a nutshell, it is evident that deaf people were not prevented from participating in society: medical practitioners were actively seeking cures for deafness and deaf people were seeking such cures; the legal system placed careful consideration on the role of deafness when determining a deaf person's legal status and capacity; and it was recognised that deaf people could receive an education and the opportunities to do so increased as the century progressed.

Themes of the thesis

While those were the key areas of consideration for this thesis, numerous themes were prevalent throughout, particularly in relation to how deaf people communicated and the use of sign language. The general view towards deafness and deaf people and the differences in experiences and attitudes towards those who were deaf with speech and those who were labelled 'deaf and dumb' were also apparent to some degree. Three main differences were kept in mind throughout this research: whether one was born deaf or became deaf and whether speech was acquired before becoming deaf, the level of hearing loss (whether partial or profound), and whether such hearing loss was temporary or permanent, although it was not always obvious

which one of those areas a deaf person fitted into. While we have been able to gain an insight into the life of a deaf person, in terms of the way they embodied these differences, several questions remain unanswered, mainly because deaf people themselves left so few personal records, with the bulk of information derived from observers and those who had interacted with a deaf person in some shape or form at the time. Nevertheless, these have all contributed to gaining an understanding of the life of a deaf person in eighteenth-century England.

Discussions were had about whether being deaf or blind was worse, examined in Chapter Two, with suggestions that deaf people were more cut off from society compared to blind people, as blind people were able to interact with hearing people, the majority group, easily and were also able to enjoy theatre performances alongside other members of society, for example. More philosophical consideration was given to deafness and blindness during this period than physical disabilities, because of the larger issues they raised about independence and sociability, further highlighting the importance placed on being able to hear, which links to discussions about the hierarchy of the senses in Chapter Three. Chapter Two also examined the daily lives of deaf people in this period, and it is clear they were able to get married, have children, work and enjoy the social aspects of life, just like their hearing counterparts. This chapter has shown how extracts of newspaper material provided nuanced evidence of deaf people's experiences in this period.

While it was not always clear whether the deaf person used verbal communication, it seems likely it would have been noted if they did not; references to the use of signs and gestures were documented, although sparse. References to deaf people using

signs, gestures and writing as a form of communication shows that allowances were made for more viable access to communication whenever possible, as seen with the use of signs and gestures in marriage ceremonies, and later with the use of interpreters in court in Chapter Four and educating deaf children in Chapter Five. Ear trumpets were also used on some occasions suggesting efforts were in place to help enhance what little hearing deaf people had. With adjustments evident, deaf people's existence in eighteenth-century England was clearly acknowledged, and the portrayal of deaf people in stage performances suggest that society did not shy away from discussing the existence of deaf people. The evolving concept of polite society is likely to have been a contributing factor for the apparent inclusion of deaf people.

Despite the inclusion of deaf people in what was a hearing dominant society, oral communication was also the dominant form of communication, particularly if full participation in society was to be had. This undoubtedly left deaf people vulnerable, some more than others, depending on their degree of hearing loss. For example, one to one verbal communication would have been feasible for some, while others, mostly those deaf from birth, would rely on signs and gestures and would require communication support. Even those who were able to communicate on a one-to-one basis due to being able to speak and having some residual hearing would have still struggled to participate in noisier and crowded environments,³ so access to stage performances, for example, would have been an inevitable barrier. As discussed in

³ Emily Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 46:3 (2003), 493-510, p. 501

Chapter Two, some deaf people were able to enjoy such entertainment, but as such references are sparse, it is safe to conclude that not many deaf people did so.

A further notable point that stemmed from this research is that deaf people were self-sufficient, such as the artists in Chapter Two who drew attention to themselves because of their skills, although the fact that they were deaf is likely to have made their skills even more remarkable. So, the achievements of deaf people were more likely to be documented as well as incidents that highlight their vulnerability, particularly in situations where one had to rely on sound, whether through conversation, to receive instructions or to be alerted to danger and the need to be accompanied by a friend or relative to relay such information. The examples of deaf people in workhouses, particularly those who were admitted on account of their deafness, in Chapter Two, likely lacked family or community support and as victims of crime highlighted in Chapter Four further emphasises their vulnerability and need for support.

Chapter Three allowed us to delve into how deafness was observed as a medical issue in eighteenth-century England clearly showing it was viewed as 'a symptom to be treated, ameliorated and denied, though never quite cured'.⁴ Discussions surrounding the hierarchy of the senses has allowed us to establish the significance of hearing in this period and why it was perceived as a condition to be cured. Chapter Three has also shown 'deafness treatments have left many traces in the historical records', whether it is 'families or individuals attempting to treat their hearing loss

⁴ Jan Branson and Don Miller, *Damned for their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled* (Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press, 2002), p. 170

through different forms of medical, religious or technological methods'.⁵ Although deafness was widely accepted, curing it would have allowed deaf people to be normalised and thus exploring this area enabled us to view the efforts that was placed in correcting the impairment, particularly with the numerous adverts advertising cures for deafness in the form of medical snuffs and oils.

While deaf people did not appear to be prevented from living their lives, being able to hear was preferable as medics carried out experiments, quacks advertised treatments, and deaf people themselves sought such cures, taking advantage of the options available in a competitive eighteenth-century medical marketplace. As newspapers flourished in the eighteenth century, medical goods dominated advertisements,⁶ but the proliferation of cures for deafness does show the value placed on hearing in this society. This chapter, however, makes it clear that engagement in the marketplace would have been the preserve of those who had milder forms of hearing loss, temporary hearing loss or deafness that occurred later in life. Nonetheless, there is evidence to suggest that those with more severe hearing losses and those deaf over a longer period did seek treatment in an attempt to 'fit in' a hearing dominant society.

Examining the legal status of deaf people in Chapter Four has contributed to a clearer understanding of the views towards deaf people and is likely to have served as a foundation of all thought and attitudes towards deaf people in the eighteenth-century;

⁵ Viridi, p. 23

⁶ Lisa Foreman Cody, 'No Cure, No Money,' or the Invisible Hand of Quackery: The Language of Commerce, Credit, and Cash in Eighteenth-Century British Medical Advertisements,' *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 28 (1999), 103-130, p. 105

described as inconsistent due to the flexibility of legal guidelines.⁷ Initially categorised as 'idiots', this view towards them and thus their status changed once it became evident that they could show understanding and the ability to communicate. It is without a doubt that being unable to hear or speak had legal implications for a person's legal rights and responsibilities;⁸ the law facilitated whether deaf people could get married, make a will or inherit their parents' wealth. The legal status of deaf people was also responsible for discussions about whether someone unable to speak and show comprehension was in fact able to understand the true nature of their crimes. Such attitudes towards treating deafness as shown in Chapter Three is likely to have stemmed from the fact that a deaf and dumb person was considered 'non compos mentis' and the development of deaf education worked towards enhancing confirmation that deaf people could indeed understand, despite not being able to hear and in some cases, speak.

The development of deaf education towards the end of the eighteenth century highlighted an increasing awareness that deaf people could indeed be educated, a vital and a positive step towards more optimistic attitudes towards deaf people. This also paved the way for the development of more deaf schools in the nineteenth century, offering deaf people opportunities to meet other deaf people, thus marking the beginning of a deaf community and 'the uniformity of sign language that eventually developed in these schools became an essential step in building a [deaf] culture' that continued until the present day.⁹ Although there is evidence that deaf people received

⁷ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 509

⁸ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 506

⁹ Viridi, p. 11

an education on a one-to-one basis prior to this period, it focused on speech and only those from wealthy backgrounds would have enjoyed the benefits. The ability to read and write and communicate through sign language contributed to the improved legal status of deaf people and the decreasing adverts offering cures for deafness towards the end of the century shows a more general acceptance of deafness or a belief that deafness could be mitigated through education rather than through medical cures. Virdi's work on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, shows that attempts to cure deafness continued and proliferated at the same time as deaf education expanded in Britain and North America.

In terms of the broader implications of the findings in this thesis, Bauman and Murray argue

the multiple diversities of human knowledge have become increasingly important ... [with] forms of knowledge previously thought to be marginal now being recognised as potentially significant in their contributions to humanity'.¹⁰

In the case of deaf people, this thesis goes beyond existing knowledge of eighteenth-century society to discovering new ways of being, to an understanding of a different cognitive take on the world.¹¹ It is noted that 'scholars are now realising that deaf people have brought to the world unique ways of living and being as visual beings'¹² and this perspective has been applied to eighteenth-century medicine, law and education. Although deaf people's own perspectives are difficult to access in the sources, this thesis has argued that deafness raised specific social, legal and

¹⁰ H-Dirksen L. Bauman and Joseph J. Murray (eds), *Deaf Gain: Raising the Stakes for Human Diversity* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. xxxix

¹¹ Bauman and Murray, p. xxxix

¹² Bauman and Murray, p. xxxix

educational issues and therefore it is important to include deaf people's experiences in our histories of eighteenth-century society, law and schooling. Moreover, the wide range of 'cures' and (by the end of the period) technologies aimed at addressing deafness as a medical problem indicates the importance of including deafness in histories of the eighteenth-century medical marketplace.

Scope for further research

The discoveries of aspects of deafness in eighteenth-century primary sources not only highlighted the experiences of and attitudes towards deaf people in eighteenth-century medical, legal and educational worlds, it has also shown there is yet more to be discovered and scope for further research. An area of particular interest is that of religion, mentioned in Chapter One. From a practical point of view, religion was an aspect of life where deafness posed a disadvantage: 'The Hearing of God's Word is not commanded to deaf Persons, but to those that can hear it'.¹³ Cockayne elaborates further, pointing out that the Bible states, 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God'.¹⁴ Nonetheless, it was not unusual for deaf people to be able to sit near the front of the congregation in church, 'a position normally reserved for higher-status worshippers',¹⁵ which would have made it easier to hear or even lipread, suggesting deaf people were not excluded from worship entirely. Among the primary sources discovered, numerous medical adverts quoted miracle narratives and references to Jesus miraculously curing deafness was a common find.¹⁶ The discovery of four

¹³ Monsieur De Roden, *The Funeral of the Mass*, trans. by Robert Hall (London: 1716), p. 113

¹⁴ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p 496

¹⁵ David M. Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England: Imagining Physical Impairment* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 88

¹⁶ William Smith, *The History of the Holy Jesus* (London: H. Tracy, 1718), p. 63

children of a London wool merchant, all born deaf and dumb with the statement in the 1701 *Post Angel* periodical 'people should thank God who hath made the Difference'¹⁷ also raises questions about how Christianity provided a model of accepting deaf people in the eighteenth century, which would benefit from further investigation.

A comparison between those with other disabilities, particularly those who were blind and further exploration on the experiences of deaf people from various class backgrounds would also be useful, particularly as Cockayne claims: 'there were not only class differences in the experience of prelingual deafness, but there were also class differences in attitudes to the prelingually deaf'.¹⁸ There are a number of additional primary sources that could be consulted, not easily accessible online, such as parish records, family papers, and court records, to consider in more depth how the deaf experience compared throughout eighteenth-century England between larger cities and rural areas. Throughout the thesis there have been references to the seventeenth century, so further research would be particularly valuable to determine how developments in the previous century influenced attitudes and the experiences of deaf people in the eighteenth century and how the advances of the eighteenth century continued into the nineteenth century. In particular, the development of deaf culture with the increasing number of deaf people being educated in schools together would be an important subject for research.

¹⁷ Turner, *Disability in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 37

¹⁸ Cockayne, 'Experiences of the Deaf in Early Modern England', p. 510

Baynton has been proven right in terms of disability being 'everywhere in history': deaf history was sought in the eighteenth-century and it has been found and documented. This thesis therefore extends the growing field of deaf history to cover not just the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also the eighteenth century, at least within the context of attitudes towards deaf people, medicine, law and order and education. By focusing on deaf people specifically, the distinctive social experiences of people born deaf or went deaf later in life have been drawn out, contributing to the wider understanding of disability history. There is still much yet to be discovered.

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