



# Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Philip Pollard  
Interviewed by Pam Blackman

British Library ref. C1345/26

## IMPORTANT

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## Interview Summary Sheet

**Ref no:** C1345/26

**Collection title:** Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

**Interviewee's surname:** Pollard

**Title:**

**Interviewee's forename:** Philip

**Sex:** Male

**Occupation:**

**Date and place of birth:** 1940, Plymouth

**Date(s) of recording:** 14<sup>th</sup> March 2009

**Location of interview:** The City Inn Hotel, Bristol

**Name of interviewer:** Pam Blackman

**Speech to Text reporter:** Hilary McLean

**Type of recorder:** Marantz PMD660 on compact flash

**Recording format :** WAV 16 bit 48 kHz

**Total no. of tracks:** 3

**Mono or stereo:** stereo

**Total Duration:** 1 hr. 13 min.

**Additional material:**

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**Interviewer's comments:** Anna Pollard, Philip's wife, present at interview

**THIS PORTION WAS NOT RECORDED**

*This is Pam Blackman and I am interviewing Philip Pollard on 14 March 2009 for the Unheard Voices Project and we're in Bristol and the speech-to-text reporter is Hilary Maclean. Now, Philip, can we start with some basic information about you for the record.*

Yes surely.

*If you could give me your full name and date of birth.*

My full name is Frederick Philip Pollard. I was born on 10 July 1940.

*What was your former occupation?*

When I worked, my basic employment was as a marine engineer working on ships at sea.

*OK. Which part of the country were you born in?*

I was born 10 miles outside of Plymouth a little village called Harbridge, I lived there almost all my life.

*And your parents occupations?*

My father was a brick layer. My mother didn't work. She had odd jobs occasionally. Mostly she was a housewife.

*That's good. That just puts it in context. I wonder if first of all would you like to speak about your childhood and your memories of growing up?*

Yes.

*Just to remind you.*

I think my childhood was for I suppose since I was born during the war, my father was away until I was 6, I think. We didn't see him. I think my sister was born 2 years after me and from then until 1946 we didn't see him at all. He was away in the army. When he came back, things were quite good.

*Sorry, it's not recording. I'm going to start again. Would you mind repeating some of the information.*

**[Track 1]**

When my father came back from the army he went back to work in the building trade and I think basically although money at that time wasn't plentiful, put it that way, may be even scarce, my parents treated my sister and I very well. They concentrated more on giving us food rather than toys, but life was quite good for us. There was maybe friends and neighbours weren't so well treated, but we were - we did quite well. Childhood was I would say very happy

*It sounds as if it was. Were you close to your sister?*

I would say in today's terms not close, no. We still aren't. OK she's my sister but we don't, although she only lives maybe 15 miles away from us at the moment, we saw her last Sunday we had lunch with her, but that was the first time we'd seen her for maybe three months, so we're not close like that. Of course I would be not too happy if she wasn't with us any more, but we're not desperately close.

*OK. So, you went to school near Plymouth. You went to school in that area of Plymouth?*

Yes, I went to primary school was in the village. Secondary school was in Tavistock which at that time was a small grammar school, 400 people only. Now it's a huge what they - a comprehensive, that's the one. And I think 2500 people. Not very well regarded. As a grammar school it was very well regarded. People did well.

*Did that mean you had to sit an exam?*

I sat an 11 plus exam to get there. Yes. Lots of my friends didn't get there.

*Would you call yourself - did you enjoy learning?*

Oh, learning? Not particularly, no. I'm more of a sports person really. I mean, it was good at the grammar school, one did learn, but I was more interested in playing the football, rugby and cricket and all those things which they provided very well. I did reasonably I suppose. I

suppose I got 5 O Levels, which is - in those days were regarded as sort of fairly good. But, that was about all.

*When did you leave school? At what age?*

I was 17 and a half. I was at that time studying A Levels but I realised at that age I wasn't going to get any A Levels. I hadn't done any work for 12 months, 18 months something like that. I looked around and I found myself a job which involved 2 years at a college before I actually went into the job, so I thought ah this will give me something, a qualification which I'm unlikely to get if I stay here, so I went to college in Portsmouth to study marine engineering. That was 2 years and that led on to being in the merchant navy.

*When you looked into your course, the courses, had you decided that you wanted to do that job?*

No. No. I looked at the advert in the paper, and it was the 2 years at college that I wanted. I mean, people ask me now, you were at sea 25 years, and you still can't swim and you hate the water, why is that? I didn't look at the fact that I would be away at sea. 2 years at college studying. That was what I wanted - someone else paying for it so my parents didn't have to pay for me to go to college. My employer paid.

*How did your parents respond? Did they support you leaving school and doing that?*

Well, it was difficult because the same sort of thing, qualification really, was available in the dockyard in Plymouth, which is only 10 miles away. I could have gone every day on the bus. I didn't want that. I wanted to, I suppose in a way, branch out on my own and go somewhere where I was a bit more independent and so I insisted that I went to college in Portsmouth rather than

[06:27]

*So you lived in Portsmouth.*

I lived in Portsmouth for 2 years yes. When I went up there looking back I think it was dreadful the way I actually arrived in Portsmouth. I arrived, about 7 o'clock on a Sunday night, about the 3 January so it was dark when I got there on the train and I had nowhere to live I had to find myself somewhere to sleep at that time and I think my parents really should have insisted that I find somewhere to live before I left home. That's how it is. I survived. So, no problems.

*It was a different world, wasn't it, I think.*

Certainly was.

*I'm sure your parents were concerned.*

I'm sure, yes but that's the way –

*You were 18 at this time, were you?*

17 and a half, yes.

*Do you want to talk some more about your early career at sea? Did you ever have any regrets before your accident, that is?*

I still don't have any regrets no. I loved it at sea, I really did, I enjoyed the work. It was hard work especially at the beginning very hard but I enjoyed it. I still to this day wish I was back there. You can say - I liked it.

[08:16]

*Would you like to talk a little bit about - we spoke earlier about when you met your wife and how your family - because you were away at sea for long periods. How did that work out?*

I was away at sea and still as an apprentice at that time, apprentice engineer, and I came home and I booked earlier on I booked a holiday at a holiday camp in North Wales and we came

home, or I came home and went to this holiday and the first night I was there I met this young lady.

*Whose name is?*

We've been together ever since really. 12 months after we met, although we weren't together much, we had sort of the odd weekend when I was living in Newcastle working in the shipyard as part of my apprenticeship. I used to come down to here in Bristol where Anna was living and we'd spend the weekend, then I'd go back up again. 12 months of that and we got married here in Bristol and for I think a few months after we got married I was home because again being not a good - not academic anyhow, I hadn't passed all of my exams when I was an apprentice so the company I worked for sent me to a college in Southampton to re-sit some examinations, so that was over a period of about 3 or 4 months. I passed those exams, thankfully.

*Even with the distractions of you're only just married, weren't you?*

I must admit, I had to leave my wife with my parents and I went on my own to Southampton, stayed there for 2 or 3 months and did the job, as it were, and after that it was sort of come home, basically pack my bags and off to sea for the next 25 years. Very little time at home. Long trips away at sea.

*Your wife knew from the beginning that was going to be –*

I'm not sure she did to be quite honest. I think it came as a bit of a shock especially when the first trip I went on after we were married was 22 months before I came home again. In fact, when I left, she was already pregnant. We'd only been married about 4 months and the son it was born from that was 13 months old before I even saw him. It was a struggle in those early days.

*A struggle for both of you really.*

Yes indeed, yes. We survived. That's the main thing. We still survive.

*Did you have other children?*

We've got 3 altogether, 3 boys.

*I was wondering during their period of growing up they didn't see their father very much.*

Not a lot, no.

*How did that affect your relationship with them, do you think?*

I don't think it has really. We've got now a very good relationship with all 3. Of course their families, grandchildren and goodness knows what. I don't think being away really affected their relationship. The only thing that did affect was the eldest one, because of the job and the company I was working for at that time, when he was 11 they wanted me to go to a ship that was based permanently abroad and so we said, yes, we would go, the family would go with me but the eldest son we put into boarding school and I don't think he was too happy about that. But it gave us rather than me being abroad for 2 years, the whole family went, lived - in fact we lived in Bermuda for 2 years, which we all enjoyed, and I think although the one son was in boarding school, he flew out for school holidays and he really enjoyed that as well. So I think we all gained something out of it.

*I guess he understood it was his age that meant it was more important that he –*

I don't think he did really

*Not at the time, no.*

He still says you deserted me and sent me to boarding school. I think that is only more in jest than anything but you're never quite sure.

[14:40]

*There may be a kernel of truth in it. It's up to you really. Would you like to talk me about your occupation, your work, which you obviously found very rewarding, or would you like to move on and talk about the accident that led to your –*

The work itself that I did. It was fairly basic really. Just keeping the ship going. I don't know that it's of great interest. Of course I was still on board the ship when I had the accident, which is probably more of interest than anything.

*Shall we talk about that and we can always go back further.*

Yes.

*That's true. Can you describe what happened?*

Yes. Well, I suppose I can - there is a bit of a gap. I'd been on this ship for only 3 days which I joined in Norway. I'd only just joined that company at that time, so I was new to the company and to the ship and we were going to travel from, I forget the little place in Norway, but we were going north to the island of Spitzbergen, to get a cargo of coal and bring back. It shouldn't have been going there. But the weather was so good that the owners decided one more trip would be good. The weather was so good. So it was a bit you know the I wasn't quite sure about going up north like that, but anyhow we went, set off. And the following morning –

*Is that because the winter was coming?*

Winter was there. It was probably 10 December. I mean, they were expecting snow and all that sort of thing. The weather was very good. Everything was calm and nice so they decided to go. Not that that stops a ship anyhow. But the following morning we were out at sea and I had to go and inspect a bulkhead in the ship because...

[End of Track 1]

**[Track 2]**

*You were just telling us about having to inspect the bulk head.*

That's right, yes. And to do this inspection I had to go down through a manhole in the deck. Now, that involved climbing down a ladder after you'd been through the manhole. I was going through the manhole. Half my body, the lower half of my body was through the manhole, I was getting the rest of me down through when I slipped. My feet left the ladder and the back of my head hit the edge of the manhole. I remember nothing - I don't even remember that. I know I slipped. And the next thing I remember was waking up in the ship's hospital still fully clothed in the bed. The captain looked at me and he said "there is a helicopter coming to pick you up". I didn't know why it was coming. I realised something was wrong with me. This helicopter picked me up and took me ashore to Norway.

*Could you hear - you could hear at that point. You could hear the captain.*

Yes, I could hear at that point yes. I remember feeling when the helicopter was lifting me up on a stretcher and looking down, that water looks very cold. I hope they don't drop me. We got ashore to Tromso, in northern Norway into the hospital. And the next thing I remember really is the surgeon saying "you've got a punctured lung. I'm going to stick this thing through your ribs and drain it off" then he said "sorry this will hurt, I've got it in the wrong place" but these are small things. It wasn't until - I think I was in intensive care but sedated for the next 5 days. I didn't know any of that because I was sort of asleep. The company I worked for contacted my wife and said I'd had an accident. They weren't too forthcoming with information apparently. But they did admit that later that they didn't tell her for 5 days because they weren't sure whether there was to be a body or a live person at the other end. I was I guess you could say I was fairly...

*Close?*

Close to not surviving. I did survive. When I came to, I'm fairly sure I could hear because I think Anna will tell you I think I actually telephoned her and spoke, so I could hear at that time. But the following day or the day after, that's when I lost my hearing. In those next 2 days. Because by the time she came up I couldn't hear. It didn't strike me I couldn't hear

because I remember in my head this music playing and I said to the nurse "can you turn the music off its annoying me" she said there is no music playing. I realised that I had in my head this - what's the - the American music, John Brown's Body or I think they call it the Battle Hymn of the Republic or something. But this kept playing over and over and over all day. And it was really driving me crazy. But gradually, over time, the musicians went away. So that gradually the volume reduced and it would gradually get quieter and quieter and one day it stopped, it wasn't there any more.

*That must have been on one level an enormous relief.*

It was, yes. That's when I realised I couldn't hear from then on.

[06:00]

*Exactly. What did the - how did the hospital respond to that? How did the doctors - were they surprised about your hearing?*

I don't really know because I can't remember - I know they did take me to be looked at by a very famous ENT man, although it was Norway the very famous ENT man was a Scot. I can't remember his name just at this moment. But he did examine me and I'm sure he said that there is nothing I can do for you. Your hearing has gone, finished, kaput.

*But it must have been a result of the accident.*

Oh it was. I daren't tell you what the - I did learn, what I have since learned, what the damage was. I mean, I had multiple fractures of the skull, there were I think 4 fractures of vertebrae in my neck. And every rib on the right side was broken. Which resulted in the punctured lung of course and if you look at an X-ray of my head, you will see that all the little bones of the ears, the stirrups and anvils and all those little tiny bones they're scattered like a jigsaw, they're all over the place, they're not connected at all in either ear. The nerve in the right ear is severed. In the left ear the nerve was damaged, but it's still usable with this cochlear implant, although the surgeon that did the cochlear implant wasn't convinced before he did it that it would work. It works reasonably well, but not too good. That's part of it.

*Can I just ask you, again for the record, what year your accident happened?*

I can almost tell you the minute. It was December 13, wasn't it, 1984.

*Were you children adult by then?*

Basically yes, the youngest one was 17, 18, yes. They were adult by then, yes.

[09:10]

*I will ask you more about the cochlear implant. We can either talk about that now, or would you rather talk about immediately after the accident after you'd convalesced?*

If we keep it in –

*Chronological –*

In order it's probably better it's easier although –

*Well, I mean, can you - what are your memories of that time? I'm talking now - you'd seen the ENT specialist. You realised quite quickly I suppose that you couldn't carry on working.*

Yes, the result of this accident, I've never worked since, that's -

*I'm wondering if you can describe what your feelings were at such a –*

It's almost - it's unbelievable. The impact of that accident on me has been very little. I've lost my hearing, so, you know, what's the fuss? It's never really for me been too much of a problem. For the rest of my family, it has been a problem.

*Would you like to talk about that a little bit? About how your family?*

I think my wife would talk about it a lot more than me –

*From your perspective.*

I basically glossed over it. It hasn't worried me. OK I say I lost my job and things like that, but except for occasional times when I say I wish I was back at sea, that hasn't really bothered me too much. I suppose, sometimes I say, I say to other people: I've achieved my aim. I've got more pension time in than working time.

*More which time?*

Pension than working time. I've always wanted to do that. But I expected to live until I was 100 to achieve that. I'm not 70 yet but I've achieved it already.

*That sounds like, to me, as if work was never - for a lot of people work is their life, isn't it.*

Oh yes.

*For other people -*

Although I enjoyed work, when I was doing it, I also enjoyed the times at home and I could cut myself off from work and separate the 2, so not being able to work. I suppose at times I have sat at home and say I ought to be doing something, I should get a job, but then I say to myself, well, who would employ someone like me who cannot do even either mental work or physical work for more than a couple of hours before I've got to give up and go home and rest?

[13:05]

*Is the - it's difficult to concentrate is it? When you talk about the mental work, that's obviously to do with the hearing loss.*

Yes, I can't seem to concentrate too long before I need to put it aside and do something else.

*Has that been the case right from just after the accident?*

Yes, that's always been - we used to, early days we'd be out in the garden and I'd be trying to push the fork into the ground and instead of pushing the fork into the ground the pressure has thrown me back on to my back because my balance is non-existent and we used to laugh for hours, working in the garden because I fell over so much and things like that. That's how it's affected me rather than –

*It's more the balance is a day to day problem.*

Balance but it always has been bad from the day of the accident, it's still bad now, but we've made a - not a song and dance - we've made a laughter period about it. It's funny to walk into the wall. I go to walk through a door even now and I'll walk into the door jam rather than the hole in the wall and I laugh about it because oh it's happened again.

*It seems to me partly you can laugh about it, obviously that's your personality, but also because you've got the support of your wife who*

Oh yes, yes - she's put up with me for a long time.

*Would you say it changed - difficult really – changed your relationship, obviously. You were at home all the time. Can you talk about that?*

Anna wrote a piece in the NADP magazine three or four years ago. It was about my accident basically and how she's had two marriages to the same bloke, one when he was away at sea all the time and the other when he was at home all the time, the difference being he couldn't hear, the second one and it was very, very good. She got an award for that. The whole article showed her feelings about basically the accident really, what happened afterwards. But, I suppose in a way we've been together more, that's for sure, since.

*If you think, yes, I mean if you'd carried on at work, when would you have retired from the merchant navy?*

I would probably have retired about 10 years ago but that would have involved another 15 years of work between the accident and retirement times. So it has been different.

[17:03]

*Would you say, is it true that in spite of the accident and the hearing loss and the balance that life, you know, your quality of life - you're not working, you're living as a family –*

It's much better since the accident. As a family, certainly, because we've all been together more than we ever were before. I mean I hardly saw the children when they were growing up.

*Do they have children now?*

They do indeed.

*So you have grand children.*

We have a sort of funny family really because the middle son married an older woman with children and they now have children so we have step grand daughters and step great grand children, there are 5 or 6 of them. The number of children in our family is increasing almost daily I would think.

*Are you able to have a satisfying relationship with the grandchildren –*

Oh yes –

*Who've always known you as not hearing.*

Yes. It doesn't seem to make much difference. As long as they don't scream and shout altogether, I can understand what they're on about. We have a good relationship with them all.

[18:51]

*When did you have your cochlear implant operation?*

I had it in Birmingham, 11 years ago?

*Anna: In 1998*

Yes, 11 years ago, January.

*Did it take a long time - had you applied a long time before that?*

I would say it's an unusual story. 1998 was quite early in the cochlear implant age, as it were. I heard about cochlear implants through the Western group of NADP people. They had a meeting which I attended and local volunteers, local group, and they mentioned this cochlear implant thing, and they organised here in Bristol a seminar. It must have been 1996, yes. And I they organised for the whole team, the Birmingham implant team; surgeon, anaesthetist, the whole group, 6 or 8 of them, came from Birmingham to Bristol and had a seminar and they talked about it they explained it. Afterwards at the end, I said to Anna, I said "I would like to have one of those" and she went up and we both went up and grabbed hold of the surgeon and spoke to him about it and his sort of first ideas, he said to me "how did you lose your hearing?" So, I told him. And his reply to that was, "I want to do your cochlear implant". Without saying do you want one or anything like that, he said I want to do it, arranged to see the people and we'll arrange to come to Birmingham and have it done.

*Do you know why he said that?*

Yes.

*Why did he say it?*

Because he realised there was so much damage it was going to be a test of his ability to do it. He still says - he's since admitted that he did not expect me to hear when he put the cochlear implant in. He's very surprised even today that I get as much as I do. So, it was a test of his ability that I can hear at all.

*At the time it was in its very early days, was it –*

Yes –

[22:28]

*Was Birmingham one of the main centres?*

Yes they'd done quite a few. When I went home, I went to the doctor, my GP and I said "can you arrange for me to get this cochlear implant?" He said in his wisdom "what is that?" Medical profession was well up on all these things at that time, as a GP didn't know what it was so, he sent me to the consultant in Truro hospital and he knew about them so we're making progress and he said he would arrange for me to go to Bristol to have it done and I immediately said, no, you won't, because I don't want to go to Bristol. I want to go to Birmingham because I'd already met the surgeon anyhow, but the Birmingham team had done lots of these implants. Bristol at that time had only done one. I said, I don't want to go to somewhere where they're just learning how to do it. I want to go to an experienced man. So, OK.

*Perhaps it helped that you'd already met –*

It did yes because and the surgeon had already said he'd wanted to do it so I got the sort of impression he would go out of his way to ensure that I got it. In fact he did because having had all the tests and that which meant going up to Birmingham 2 or 3 times in the year and that, the assessments, they said, yes I could have it done, and they then informed Cornwall Health Authority that they would need funding to do this operation. Yes, okay no problems. Then a few weeks before the operation was due, Cornwall turned round and said to Birmingham "we can't fund Mr. Pollard's cochlear implant". So, Birmingham said to Cornwall "well, you tell him because we're not going to. He'll be disappointed"

*How much would it have cost. It's very expensive isn't it?*

At the moment it's I think 30, £35,000. It wasn't very much cheaper then. About 27, something like that. I don't know. In the end, Cornwall capitulated and said OK you can have it done we'll put it on next years budget so I had the implant done. It was really basically because I'd found out about it. I'd told the GP about it. We both learned something. And through the system then we got it done.

*You found out about it through –*

NADP –

[26:10]

*NADP Would you say that belonging to groups like NADP and LINK as well, has that made an enormous difference –*

Oh yes.

*In this case you were able to bypass the GP weren't you really.*

You don't bypass but you get information quicker than you would do any other way. There is all sorts of people belong to LINK, belong to NADP, and they're interested in different things so they find out about it, then tell the whole group, the whole group then knows and you can make your way forward from that whereas if you didn't belong to this group you'd never find out about these things. We go back a bit to the time I had my accident. I came home from Norway on Christmas, 23 December because it was Christmas time. They didn't want me up there. I was brought home. I flew home. Specially equipped thing. Private ambulance to take me home from Heathrow. The local Social Services guy based in Barnstaple came out to me where I was living in Ilfracombe then and he came out to us and because he was deaf he concentrated on deaf people, so he came out and first of all he brought out a catalogue of things that Social Services could supply to deaf people to help. So, we looked through it. But he said, don't matter what it is, we can't supply it because we've got no money. You'll have to buy it yourself. Those were the days.

*At least all he could do –*

Of course we could look at the catalogue and say OK we'll buy that whatever.

*I suppose you don't know but Cornwall is, and Devon I suppose also, not - they're not that well funded are they because of population. The scant population.*

Let's say they're not well funded don't matter whatever reason and still not. He was very good. It was through him that I think only a month after my accident I found myself in Eastbourne at LINK, basically I was still physically still very, very weak but I had a fortnight in Eastbourne at the rehabilitation course and that really made things for me because I wasn't allowed to sit down and feel sorry for myself. You must get up. You must learn to lipread and you must do this - it didn't allow me any time to feel sorry for myself.

*May be that's why you know you –*

Yes, I'm sure the

*As you've described –*

Why I'm like I am, I'm sure, because I haven't been allowed to sit and vegetate and I still don't although I the probably Anna says I do at the moment but as long as there is sport on the telly that's all - but –

[30:53]

*Am I right in thinking to go on the course in Eastbourne did Cornwall have to fund it?*

Oh no because even to this day Cornwall refuses to fund it.

*To fund any –*

Anything to do with, they will not fund anyone going to the rehabilitation course in Eastbourne. Argument is: we supply enough help for deaf people in Cornwall. It's not true. And I'm a volunteer for LINK. I know what the difference is but I can't fight them. LINK is very important I think to –

*Shall we pause?*

[End of Track 2]

**[Track 3]**

*Okay. Could we talk some more about LINK? I noticed on your questionnaire that you'd attended quite a few courses.*

Yes I did.

*Within a close period wasn't it, after - was it after you'd had the cochlear implant?*

Yes. Yes, it was after I'd had the cochlear implant that I really went back to LINK because I felt that I could do things then, whereas before when I couldn't hear anything it was so difficult to meet lots of people and be able to communicate, whereas after I'd had the implant I felt more confident of being able to meet people and communicate with people than I could before.

*Even in that way it's made a tremendous difference.*

Yes it has.

*To your life?*

I would say LINK has really made a tremendous difference to me personally because it has got overall sorts of problems that I might have had. Hadn't even recognised what problems might occur. I must tell you a little story before I had the cochlear implant. We were out one day in the car, stopped at a garage for petrol and I got out, put the petrol in, went into the pay desk, into the office to pay for this petrol, and obviously the guy behind the till said something to me. I didn't hear, didn't answer, just turned around and walked out. As soon as I turned round he obviously said something to his partner, to the other guy on the till, made some comment, a derogatory remark I think the words would be. Anna saw this when she was sitting in the car. We passed each other on the way back to the car. I was going back she was going into there and she let this garage guy know what was what. She said "don't you make remarks like that because he can't hear, he hasn't heard you, he's not ignoring you, he's just not able to hear you". "Oh sorry" this sort of thing.

*But that's an example of, if your wife hadn't been there or you hadn't had someone with you, you wouldn't have - well, you wouldn't have known.*

Exactly, I didn't know what was happening.

[03:14]

*Are there other situations where you have been aware that people are treating you in a –*

In early days meeting people in the street, friends that you knew, would start to talk to me, would have difficulty in getting to me and would immediately turn and speak to my wife and ignore me and that used to upset her terribly. It didn't bother me because I said if they don't want to speak to me I'm not interested. It's their problem to get me to understand. It's not my problem if they don't want to make the effort; they're not going to get the answers. But Anna used to get terribly, terribly upset about it, that I'd been ignored. Don't bother. It didn't bother me. But it happens, all the time.

*But also, as well as I guess your wife being concerned that they were ignoring you, it puts a lot on to her, doesn't it*

Exactly, yes. All the emphasis on - even now, I get out of doing all sorts of things. I can't use the telephone, so if there is a telephone call to be made, she has to do it. Dealing with all sorts of people over the telephone, workmen that come, buying things, all sorts - terrible amount that she's got to do which I cannot do. The bank for instance. When I was fully fit shall we say, I could deal with the bank and things like that. I haven't done any banking for years and at this moment in time if she wasn't here I would be in real problems because I cannot access a bank anywhere with anything because all we do - banking is done on-line. I have no idea how to do it.

*One question occurs to me there. Do you use the new technologies like the internet, email, do you use them? Because that is a way for some people –*

No way. I've just opted out. Anna can use internet. I do use email. That is my one thing I can do. But anything else, no. I sometimes put on I want to go on to the internet on the

screen. Then I think to myself "where do I go from here?" I've got the first picture but I don't know how to use it. I can't go any further without help because I haven't bothered. If I was to make an effort I could do it I suppose. There is no reason why I shouldn't but I just don't make the effort. I've opted out of so much.

*Partly because it was quite a long period before you had, between your accident and having the cochlear implant that certain habits may be you could hear some things now.*

Got in to a way of life and haven't come out of it. 14 years between accident and implant, so it was quite a long time.

[07:31]

*Earlier on you started to talk about LINK and I wondered, we went into a different direction, I wondered if there was anything else, any other memories or support that you gained from LINK that you'd like to talk about?*

Yes, I've done as you say several courses up there which are all valuable. I became an Outreach Volunteer for LINK and the idea being I would be able to help other people, which is really what I would want to do. Unfortunately, we've tried several times to form groups of people at home, a group connected with LINK, with hard of hearing groups and things like that, but people in Devon and Cornwall and not only deaf people, hard of hearing people, but I've spoken to all sorts of others, the people down there just do not join groups, period.

*That's very interesting.*

That's it. Don't think about forming a group in Devon and Cornwall because you will get nobody to attend. Why, I do not know.

*Do you think that's true of yourself up to a point as well?*

Yes, exactly, I don't join groups. I belong to a hard of hearing group at the moment and also a

—

*You mention in your questionnaire. Hear we go as a group. Is that a local group?*

That's right.

*Is that a very local group?*

That was formed only a few months ago really in Liskeard and I quite enjoy going to that but I can see it not lasting very long because you've got maybe 15 or 20 members. That's it no more coming. They'll start going away shortly. When we started the group in Plymouth for LINK, spent a lot of money, LINK money, advertising this group. We started off I suppose the first meeting we had may be 12. After 3 years I closed it down when it expanded to two. The main excuse for not coming in Plymouth, a big city, was transport. We can't get there.

*Were people coming from a distance?*

No, within the town. It struck me as very odd. But then again when I've looked at it since, to get from one side to Plymouth to the other probably takes 3 buses. Changes. There is nothing straight across. I don't notice these things. I get out of the car and go. Probably transport isn't as good as it could be anywhere. Where we live now I think, I'm not sure, I think there is 4 buses a day in each direction. I've never used them. So I don't know.

[11:59]

*You don't find driving a problem with your balance?*

I don't. She does. She won't let me drive.

*So your wife drives. When you said you get in the car, you do, but not as the driver.*

It's not because I can't drive. But she loves to drive. There was a period when we bought this particular car we've got now when for some reason I wasn't able to drive, I forget now. She took the car from the garage immediately we bought it and the attitude was "this is my car" I'm not allowed to drive it so I don't drive. If I want to get in the car and go and drive I can of course, there is no problems. The balance has never been a problem. I had, even when I

couldn't hear, I had a test with some charity that used to run driving instructions for disabled people. I forget the name now. I had an hour of driving with this guy sat beside me. I've got a letter in my wallet which I keep from the DVLC to say I'm perfectly what's it –

*Capable –*

Good to drive because of this report this charity put in about my driving so there is - balance doesn't make any difference as long as I'm sitting down. You can't get over balanced.

[13:52]

*Can I just ask you briefly, if you want to talk about it, if there have been any financial issues considering you had to give up work, or did you get a pension from work?*

It's surprising. I sometimes think - I'm very well-off really because I get no pension from the company I was working with but I did get a lump sum of compensation, not as much as I would have liked, and it didn't work out to very much anyhow because their maximum even a death pay out was 100,000 dollars. Well, of course, they changed into different figures when it became pounds. But then –

*Was that the employer?*

Yes, that was the employer. I'd get a small pension from the Merchant Navy Officers Association. I'd get a very small minute from the Anglian water authority which I worked for for about 18 months so the pension is about 30 pounds a month or something - huge. But then I get obviously now I get old age pension. Before that I was getting industrial injuries. I still get that. By the time you add it up it's reasonably - we've never been short of money since I've had my accident. And through I suppose over the last few years because parents of both of us have died, we've got money from them, so we're very well-off at the moment, I must admit. I feel sorry for anybody who's got to work for their living.

*I just wonder. We can stop soon unless you want to talk about anything else, but I just wondered if you could describe, if there is such a thing, a typical day in your life now in the present.*

[16:42]

Today, most days, now, specially in the winter, we get up, breakfast, and then I must admit we've got into a habit just over the last 6 months I suppose taking a coffee from the breakfast table, going to the sitting room and put the telly on and we put on BBC news programme 503 and that is on all day. It never gets switched off and we just sit and watch that or get up and do something, come back and watch that. Read the papers. That's about all. Nothing too strenuous.

*Is it very different in the summer when the weather is better?*

When the weather is better we're probably out in the garden doing things like that. Over the last two weeks we have joined a gym because we feel we need to. In fact the doctor told me, insulting really, he said I had to lose weight. But we've both felt better for that over the last two weeks, I must admit. So, we've got into a very bad way, really, of doing nothing. Absolutely nothing. And I think this maybe going to the gym will liven us up a bit and we'll may be get out and do a little bit more than we have been doing.

*Could I ask you about other - obviously gardening is an interest, has always been an interest.*

It's not my interest. It's my wife's interest. She likes gardening. I go out and do a bit may be sometimes but –

*Do you have any other interests that either that you had as a young person, were you interested in music for example, or films.*

No, no the sorry, yes. Not as a performer or player, listening. I used to love listening to music. I can't do that now that's the problem. I really do miss that.

*That was something that when you lost your hearing obviously a really big –*

I must admit it never has been, even as a teenager, I've never been interested in pop music, or even very little interest in classical music. I used to love jazz. I used to go to jazz concerts when I was at college and things like that but I miss that.

*With the cochlear implant, you can hear some music. Is it just not the same?*

It's just a noise. I cannot. You can't sort of split it down into even rhythm and individual instruments. I can't do that. It's just one solid noise. It's a waste of time. I've tried all sorts of things. One - a few years ago we went, stayed at a hotel in Newquay - no it wasn't we went to Lands End for Christmas one day and there was a lady there who was giving, who was entertaining us in the evening, and she was an Ella Fitzgerald not look-alike but sing-alike and she was absolutely marvellous. Now with her I moved in close, explained to her that I would be lip-reading what she was singing, could she sing a few Ella Fitzgerald numbers. Oh great she was made up. And I sat there, watched this woman and that was absolute magic.

*I can imagine, yes.*

Other than that, no, the music is the unfortunately it's not. I would love that. But it doesn't do. It's the same with when you've got more than one person talking, I can't differentiate. It all comes in and is noise. One person, that's it. Maximum.

[22:04]

*So, I guess that affects how much you socialise.*

Exactly, yes.

*I'm going to - is there anything else you would like to talk about or talk more about?*

If there is anything you want I'll talk. You've got me going, I'll talk all day.

*I know the tape will finish so I'll bring the interview to a close but because I very stupidly didn't start the recording I am going to ask you, if you wouldn't mind at the end now just repeating your full name and your date of birth and where you were born and that information, would you mind repeating it again thank you very much.*

Restart the interview.

*It's just the very first part. If I say, this is Pam Blackman, I've been interviewing Philip Pollard on the 14 March 2009, for the Unheard Voices Project in Bristol and the speech-to-text reporter has been Hilary Maclean. Now, Philip is just going to repeat what wasn't recorded thank you. Your full name.*

My full name is Frederick Philip Pollard. I was born on July 10, 1940.

*And which part of the country?*

Yes I was born in a little village in Harbridge which is about 10 miles north of Plymouth in Devon.

*I think that will be fine actually. Thank you very much.*

Welcome.

[End of Track 3]

[End of recording]