



# Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Roland Hilton  
Interviewed by Colin Ellis

British Library ref. C1345/50

## IMPORTANT

This transcript was created at the time of the interview by a Speech-to-Text Reporter. The summaries were completed by the interviewer after the interview using the STTR transcript.

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it. Should you find any errors please inform the Oral History curators

Oral History  
The British Library  
96 Euston Road  
London  
NW1 2DB

T: +44 (0)20 7412 7404  
E: [oralhistory@bl.uk](mailto:oralhistory@bl.uk)

This interview and transcript is accessible via <http://sounds.bl.uk>.

© Hearing Link. Please refer to the Oral History curators at the British Library prior to any publication or broadcast from this document.

## Interview Summary Sheet

**Ref no:** C1345/50

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

<b>Interviewee's surname:</b>	Hilton	<b>Title:</b>	
<b>Interviewee's forename:</b>	Roland	<b>Sex:</b>	Male
<b>Occupation:</b>	Engineer	<b>Date and place of birth:</b>	1945, Darley Dale

**Date(s) of recording:** 30<sup>th</sup> May 2009

**Location of interview:** The Westminster Hotel, Nottingham

**Name of interviewer:** Colin Ellis

**Speech to Text reporter:** Lynn Allen

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

**Recording format :** WAV 16 bit 44.1 kHz

**Total no. of tracks:** 3                      **Mono or stereo:** stereo

**Total Duration:** 1 hr. 7 min.

**Additional material:**

**Copyright/Clearance:** Open. © Hearing Link

**Interview notes:** A portion of the interview at the end of Track 1 was not recorded although it does have a STTR transcript.

**[Track 1]**

*This is Colin Ellis interviewing Roland Hilton on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> May for unheard voices project in Nottingham. We are ably assisted by a Palantypist Lynn Allen from Manchester.*

*Roland would you like to tell us your full name, when and where you were born and about your family?*

My name is Roland Hilton and I was born in Darley Dale in Derbyshire. My family, I have a sister who is older than me by about 5 or 6 years and I have two or three cousins, who are not local at all. They still live in Lancashire where my family derives from, both my mother and father were born in Lancashire and stayed there for about the first 30 or so years of their life. Before my father moved to get work in Derbyshire and both my sister and I were born in Derbyshire so we have a sort of division in the family. Mum and are very much Lancashire and my sister and myself are two Derbyshire children.

*Could you tell us if you know what your father did when he was in Lancashire and about his mother and father?*

Right. We on my father's side my grandfather was much in my line actually he was in engineering and as far as I know he was a supervisor at the local colliery. Not exactly sure what his precise name was but into engineering. My grandmother was a housewife, I think mostly. I think she did some sort of work but nothing professional as such. And I think it was sort of work to provide a little income to keep the house going. My own mother was in service actually, she likes to call it, I think that was domestic service and later on she moved to working in a pub. And I think that is probably where she met my dad.

*So, could you tell us why they moved to Derbyshire. Was it because your father lost his work or was it just a change of direction?*

I think it was sort of looking for better things. Public houses seem to be in the family a little bit, in that I think he started work in a public house a little bit and was looking for other things. I remember stories I have been telling you how he bought a lorry and tried to set up his own transport business I didn't hear the end of that story much I think it pretty well

collapsed. But things weren't working out for him too well, and at some stage in his life I think it had gone railway wagon repairs when railway wagons were wooden because he was a joiner and he was doing that work. And I think through his work he got transferred down into Derbyshire. So, basically it was a move to keep employment rather than look for better work. It was times when work was difficult to come by. It had been sort of in the late 30s early 40s when I think Britain was coming out of the depression and work was not too good.

[04:34]

*Can you tell us a little bit about your childhood and your family, what your likes and dislikes were and your school?*

My first school was in a village and we were very sort of close group of kids in that school that we had our own little groups and it was a very small school, so we knew everybody else in the school and it was just at the end of my street actually, so everything was nice and convenient. It wasn't a big city school, it was very much a small village school which was a community in itself quite possibly.

My likes and dislikes, I don't know. From my experiences I think I was a difficult kid. I was always getting told off, into trouble, I can remember coming home many nights with bruises and cuts and so on. Mostly due to falling off things but one or two due to fighting and everything else. So, it was a childhood of quite a lot of incident. But I am not quite sure how it all arose. I used to fetch the evidence home though!

*Can you tell us any more about your hobbies and what you liked and disliked during this period?*

As a child, I used to play with the children on the street and I remember that, you know, things were in short supply at this time and I didn't have a bike. I always wanted one and I can remember quite often getting one by various means that I used to enjoy riding bikes but never had one of my own. Mum wouldn't let me have one because she thought they were dangerous sort of thing and little did she know that I spent most of my time riding one. On work days when I was at home I was very much a collector I think. I had lots of collections of various things. Dinky toys and stamps and all sorts of things, which perhaps appealed to

me to some extent. I am not a loner, but I can sort of play on my own and find my own interests sort of thing, and that was evident at an early stage. I used to have lots of collections, stamp cards and cigarette cards everything that was going.

[07:23]

*The progress during your school, did you go to a senior school and would you like to tell us a little bit about that time of your life and your first experiences of employment?*

School I went from the village primary school, I passed 11 plus and went on to secondary school. And enjoyed my life there. It was a bit further away about 5 miles away so we had a bus trip to school each day and I progressed quite well. Got a good collection of O levels and decided to go on to A level struggled a bit more at that stage and got by. Got a few A levels but was getting a little more difficult. My sort of reason for that is the teachers that I had, these teachers who were most uncooperative sort of thing, but I don't think the academic route was altogether my sort of main strength. I did okay, but I didn't excel at school.

*Would you like to tell us about your first employment and how you trained?*

Yes, that after school I went on to college and got some qualifications and then found sandwich courses that appealed to me, with local companies and started to develop through there. That it was a sort of transition from academic to employment in sort of stages, where you could have a taster session of the employment and then back to the academic life for 3 years or so and during which you could find roles that suited yourself. And during that stage I sort of found my creative side, I think that I am a mixture of abilities, not just pure academic, but a little bit of knowledge mixed with a bit of creativity and quite a lot of ideas. And it was quite evident at that stage perhaps I didn't recognise it so much, that it is the side of me that has developed throughout life, that I have always been there with ideas and hopefully a bit of ability to make them work.

*You told us that you went to college, where was that Roland?*

That was in Derbyshire, it was quite local it was in Chesterfield at that time.

*Did you ever consider going on to university life after that, or was it that you found your natural level and found some employment?*

It was a thought that my academic qualifications weren't wonderful but were sufficient and I had set my mind at the time on being a designer really. And the design that appealed to me was building design and, therefore, I set my mind on architecture. And my careers master at school should have been encouraging me but really turned me off it for life really. It was a long course that was needed and the more I heard about it the more I sort of impracticable it seemed which disappointed me and I sort of took off into other routes then. I think with a bit more encouragement I would probably have gone to university and done something different but I didn't get that, and decided eventually to sort of go for an easy option perhaps and took a sandwich course with an engineering company that was not too far away from home.

Disappointing really that with better encouragement and better guidance I think I might have taken a different route.

[12:22]

*Would you like to describe what type of engineering company that this was and was you able to get an apprenticeship or a qualification job?*

Well, you know after the sandwich course I had got qualifications and I got a job at the company and started to move on. And was quite pleased actually, because it was basically as a draughtsman to start with, and then I worked got a promotion out the company and had stayed there for about 3 years, which was a reasonable sort of time to get established and started to look around at what opportunities there were. Things weren't moving as quickly as I would have wanted at that company and I found work in Derby at what was then the British Rail research centre and they had got some interesting projects on and I decided to uproots and get off there the money was good the work was good so why not? But when I did that I was offered a promotion again at my existing company to try to keep me, but they didn't manage it I took off to Derby. And at Derby I found work very interesting because I was getting teams together almost immediately I had got sort of six staff working for me on small projects, research projects which appealed to me enormously because I mean that was my sort of design flare given its full reign. And that was a very good move I think. Because it gave me scope to express myself and things moved on from there.

*What age was you when you went to British Rail then Roland?*

I would think somewhere about 25 or 6, 25 perhaps yes.

*So this would be in about 1976?*

About that time, yes.

[14:50]

*Yes. Would you like to tell us how you met your partner and a little bit about your family?*

Right. When I was sort of in my 20s I was keen on outdoor activities, I got involved with a group from Sheffield University and weekends we used to take off climbing, pot holing, camping, walking all sorts of outdoor things and I enjoyed my freedom. But time moves on, you get to be 25 and you think you know it is time to be settling down. And with friends we used to go off to various discos and dances and things like that. And that is where I met my wife quite by chance really that we decided to go to Chesterfield one night and so had she, and we bumped into one another and we were together for about 3 or 4 years I think before we got married, which didn't seem to suit her. She wanted to get married rather quicker than that. But it gave us a long time to get to know one another and I think it has been of benefit because we are still together 35 years later. The family, I have got four boys. The youngest now is 19 and the eldest is 30 going on 31. So that they are a sort of happy bunch and spread out around the country now. The youngest one is still just at home but he is at university we don't see him as much as we would like to but he is not too far away and still calls in quite frequently.

[End of Track 1]



[THIS PORTION HAS NOT BEEN RECORDED]

*Would you like to describe how you first noticed the deterioration of your hearing and your feelings about any related problems tinnitus, balance, relationships how it affected it?*

My hearing loss probably started very, very young at birth probably. In those days there was no screening, not where I lived anyway, and probably my parents weren't aware, simple as that. Because I could hear on one side okay, and I guess I responded okay and nobody bothered. And it wasn't until I was sort of becoming more socially aware as a youngster, 5 or 6 years old that I realised I was a bit different to other kids and I couldn't hear on one side. But it didn't really bother me that much. I just got on with life you know, that is the sort of person I am. But there were times even in those early days when one or two sort of embarrassing blunders occurred. I could get the wrong thing because I had misheard but it didn't stop me in life. I mean I could complete my education I could get jobs and so on and the fact that it was there was just incidental rather than any great problem.

And life carried on like that and I was getting ambitious and I was doing well at work, I was progressing, I was getting promotions. The family was increasing, we had bought a better house and life was rich and rosy, everything was good. The things I was trying for and wanted I was achieving and we had got a good and happy young family, and life just couldn't be better really. And it was going to work one day I was late, I was catching the train that morning and I was a bit late. And I tried to run for the train and my legs didn't seem to want to coordinate. And I had to walk for the train rather than run which was a bit of a shock to me, because I was keen on sport at that time, I was fit and healthy and running was just one of those things that you didn't question and suddenly it didn't seem to be working too well. And I did notice that morning I had got a little sort of buzzing noise in my ear, that I have had similar things before when I had had a cold or something, nothing very significant at all very, very slight. And perhaps I should have gone to see the doctor that morning, but being the sort of person I am there was work to do I went in and did it. I came home in the evening nothing had changed much, you know, I don't know about my legs never tried them again never tried running again. But the buzzing was still there and I went to bed that night. About 2 o'clock or 3 o'clock in the morning I woke up

with this profound noise going on, tinnitus so bad that my teeth were shaking. It was really, really loud a roaring, rumbling noise that just wouldn't go away. And that was something sort of totally alien, I had never come across that before heard about it or anything. And I didn't know I had lost my hearing. Hearing wasn't the problem, tinnitus was the problem because it was just so loud. Put a hearing person into those circumstances when there is a perceived loud noise and they will shout at one another, and that is what I was doing, I was going around shouting my head off at people and people were saying stop, stop shouting. But at that time it was simply a case of let's get rid of this tinnitus and get back to work sort of thing. But after some months nothing had changed it was still there. And the months went on and gradually sort of six months and there was a case of whether I could get back to work or not. That is what pushed me over the 6 months I think the tinnitus declined a little, not enormously but to some extent. I perhaps should mention that in the early days it wasn't just tinnitus either but it was balance problems and when it first occurred it was a strange feeling that pressure on one side of my head on the right-hand side of my head it felt like I had got somebody sitting on it, it really was a sort of squashed and that wasn't internal pressure it felt like sort of pressure from the outside, something pushing really, really hard. I don't think it happened so much in the early days perhaps this is a more modern thing, I have also got dizziness problems where sometimes I get up in the morning and the whole room is whizzing round at an enormous rate makes you feel sick but it only lasts for a few seconds. So that is the sort of history of how my hearing deteriorated it was pressure from people at work and perhaps threat of losing the job that pushed me to get back to work. I am pleased that happened. It was so difficult, impossible really, but it drove me into the situation that I had to solve. Without it I perhaps would not have done, because things have not changed that much even today.

**[Track 2]**

*I want to take you back on something that you said about deafness and at birth. Do you reckon that it is hereditary within your family or do you know whether any of the family had hearing problems?*

No, I don't think it was a hereditary; there is no real evidence of deafness in the family. My father, but certainly my grandmother got deaf as they got older but that was when they were very old, particularly I remember my grandmother, because they used to come to see us from time to time and in the evenings I got to sit with her and play cards. Because I think anything else she couldn't do. She was very profoundly deaf really, but that is when she was about 85, she lived until she was 92 and in those days in the 60s or 70s time that was a good old age. So, I don't think that is sort of hereditary it was just deterioration at the end of life. I don't know what caused mine but it was certainly there from birth to a little extent on one side.

*What was the reaction from your family, friends or work colleagues? Did it affect your work, was you able to work or did you have to have time off or were you able to progress to better jobs?*

Well, strong words can be easily misused, but sort of panic, terror were things that I think were very much in -- present at that time that I was confused because I didn't know what was going on. I was worried because I didn't know what was to come. And I really just couldn't see a future for myself. And I did get very depressed. When it first happened, I went to see the GP and then on to see the consultant at the hospital and all I got at the time was one analogue hearing aid, which was absolutely useless. I got no other help at all. I can remember quite clearly that day of going to the hospital, getting no help and sort of leaving with a sort of guys were saying "next please" type of thing and I was just shoved out and forgotten and I was almost crying walking up the street holding the wall because I just couldn't see anyway out of the problem. And all that sort of built up because I was getting no help from anywhere and I guess that problem had occurred at perhaps the worst stage in life. Because as I say things were nice and rosy, everything was good, everything was developing and suddenly I fell off the cliff and got hurt. It was 6 months before I could get back to work. It was 6 months before I could do anything. 6 months before I could buck up courage to get out of the house even. And it was a dreadful time of life to be honest. That my main concern

was the family, the children. We had got ambitions we had got plans and all I could see for myself was a life on benefits, living as a cabbage almost. And you know, I just lost direction, lost enthusiasm, I must have been dreadful to live with for 6 months. But getting back to work was useful. After some months the tinnitus declined a little but not much. And in doing so it let some sound come back, but the sounds that I could hear were nothing like the sounds I had heard before. It was pure Donald Duck stuff, squeaky little voices that didn't make any sense at all. That was without hearing aids, without anything. That prevailed for some time and I guess it must have been me getting used to it, but I gradually learned to recognise some sort of voice, certainly not speech but I could use the voice rhythms to pick up what developing lip reading I was getting and bit by bit I could pick up enough words to sort of make some sense of people. But it is the difficulty of disjointed communication. I could sort of make sense at the second or third try with a lot of words missing, socially that is not very good. Professionally it is pretty awful, but I had to go back to work. And things did start to change, that I was working in a group; that was useful because you know I had caught up with the same people during the day. I was not sort of working on a counter where you see a whole range of different people. And bit by bit I started to put life back together again slowly.

[06:07]

*I want to take you back to the time that you went to see the consultant. Can you remember where you went to see him and, roughly, your age at that time?*

My age at that time it was - I was 33 and the consultant was at Derby Royal Infirmary and he was useless. In my opinion.

*How did this affect your young children and the way that they communicated to you?*

There was understanding and a willingness to help. But what can you do when words are not enough? You can just write things down and that wasn't altogether a good solution with young kids. And, yes, life was difficult for many, many months. Bit by bit you learn sort of new skills and ways to work through things, problems and I guess that is what we did. Life didn't collapse, but certainly there was a very, very rough patch before we learned how to deal with what we were facing. My wife I think suffered more than I did, as much as I did

anyway, in that she was distressed you could see it you didn't need to ask. And she was distressed for many reasons, perhaps some sort of concern for me, but concern for the children and the family the same as me and also concern with her own situation, because she just didn't know how to cope. I would try to help her, but I didn't know what to tell her, there wasn't a way. So yes life was really difficult for a period of time there, but I think interestingly that by perhaps isolating myself in some ways that my family was a big family, four boys, my wife there were six of us at home and at work there were perhaps similar number, 6 or half a dozen people together in an office, most of the day. And that to some extent maintained my social life, limited but there were a dozen people in my life with whom I could talk to some extent. And great relief that I had managed to keep my job as such, although it wasn't exactly the same job, but before I got my hearing loss I had got -- I was a group leader I had got six or eight staff working for me and getting back I had got more or less six staff working with me rather than for me which was a bit different. But that was a relief. A huge relief because I had a job, and I had a kind of social life.

[09:36]

*Was this employment still with British Rail at Derby and can you tell us a little bit more about some of the projects that you have got involved with and what the technology nothing that you got involved with at this time?*

I was still with British Rail at the time, yes the British Rail board and that was the reason for the relief really, because the possibility of jobs elsewhere was almost non-existent. I wouldn't have fancied my chances going for interview at all. And it was a case of keep what you have or finish up with nothing. And that was the thing -- the real sort of break through that I managed to keep a job and then I could start to build from that base. And it took time. But I think I perhaps moved sideways for a year or two, but eventually I must have learned something, I must have learned new skills, new techniques. And I certainly did, not sort of recommended ones, perhaps rather devious ways of dealing with things of looking at other people's notes and things like that rather than hearing. Of getting other people to do jobs for you that you could not do yourself. Of going to see people rather than leaving them perhaps to ring up or whatever. We didn't have e-mail in those days. So, devious ways of getting round the problem. But perhaps I am a devious character and I was rather good at it because eventually I started to move on and I quite surprised myself actually because I took on a job

with Intercity business and I got to be transmissions engineer for the whole of the UK with Intercity which was a promotion and, you know, I never thought I would get that far again. And perhaps things like that were a stepping stone in confidence that helped me enormously to sort of get on from being a person feeling sorry for myself, to someone who had got real opportunities and ambitions in life once again.

[12:20]

*Now would you like to describe how you went about getting diagnosis and treatment after this awful treatment from this specialist?*

Simple answer to that is I didn't. I had a single aid that was put in the drawer because it was useless. And it stayed there. And I just got along with what was left as best as I could. I of course went back to see people from time the time, you know you are aware that technologies is improving that digital aids are changing and getting better, sorry analogue aids are getting better, digital aids are coming along and so on. So, every five years or so I used to visit the hospital to see what progress there was. But, really didn't get any help at all it was the same old story time after time. Which was disappointing and for 20 years I think it must be I didn't wear hearing aids, I didn't have anything, just got on with life. Tough. But I am not a guy for feeling sorry for myself, that is no way, if you have not got it you live without it.

*Roland, how long has this been going on now, and what rate is the deterioration if any to the point where you found it really extremely hard to hear?*

I don't think this has been a deterioration in the normal sense of things, that the tinnitus is still there. I think perhaps I am getting used to it and someone which is letting it be less invasive, that I don't notice it when I am busy. So I keep busy. And after you have been listening to the thing for the last 30 years there is no surprises. So it is easier to ignore it to some extent perhaps. And that has made tinnitus a lot better. I have always been able to manage it very well even though it is very severe. Nothing keeps me awake at night I put my head on the pillow and I am asleep. So a lot of the stories you hear about tinnitus being debilitating almost, I can't recognise because I can deal with it very well. I certainly mentally I think I have got good ability to keep myself in control now. In the early days I got quite depressed and suicidal nearly but that has gone that is way in the past.

So, it has not been deterioration quite like that. To a large extent, you know, the sort of increasing opportunity and increasing sort of scope within my life since being deafened has lessened the effect of it, medically I think it is still much the same as it was.

[16:08]

*Would you like to describe in what way your family and your friends have now been able to deal and to talk to you normally with your disability?*

Quite honestly I think it has been rather disappointing that I can remember an incident actually that happened that going back to work when I resumed work after becoming deafened I had a friend there who lived at the same place as myself and we used to walk off at night uptown to catch a train home. We had always done that before becoming deafened and we got to be quite good friends we used to meet up at weekends and have a game of squash, go out for a drink and I thought he was a friend. And after becoming deafened we met up one night and walked off to the train and I made a bit of a mess of the conversation I guess, traffic passing and stuff like this and I didn't know what he was talking about and answered wrong question or something, I don't know quite what, but the relationship deteriorated quite considerably after that and in the following day or two talking to him he wouldn't even talk to me, wouldn't answer me. I don't know any more than that, but that really shocked me. Someone who had been a reasonably close friend not just through work but at home as well, meeting up at weekends, wouldn't look at me and wouldn't talk to me again. I never got to the bottom of it, but other incidents like that were occurring at the same time and it is distressing to a large extent, because it emphasises your differences. You are well aware that you are a nuisance, a problem or whatever, and there is no easy solution. Quite a lot to a large extent, I think, that has become selective that areas of life and people in life that you can deal with and other areas and other people that you cannot and so you just play to your strengths. You find the people that are cooperative, and you find the areas that are productive, and stick with them. And the ones you cannot deal with, too bad. The family have been very supportive as far as they can. But, more so as youngsters I think, as they have got older and have become teenagers and have got a life of their own they have tended to forget more, they sort of have got their own interests and they get together as a group and there is a lot of laughing and shouting and joking and so on, and you have just got to sit there and watch it and you have

not a clue what is going on. So, children can be quite supportive, adults tend to revert to type, I don't know. They look after themselves a lot and forget you.

[19:39]

*Would you like to tell us how you have sought help locally, or nationally, to help you with the psychological loss of your hearing?*

Well the biggest psychological loss was in the early days and at that time I didn't really appreciate there was any help available. I may well have been right I am not too sure there was much. But I didn't seek any, I sort of always been chronically independent and I was quite happy to sort out my own problems if I can't do it nobody can. And that was my sort of view of things, that as I mentioned that I went back to see NHS consultants at frequent intervals every five years or so to see what was going on. Any help, any developments that sort of thing. At one of those meetings perhaps about 5 or 6 years ago I said the right things to a hearing consultant. I think that is quite important actually, I just mentioned the fact that I couldn't hear one of my own sons at all, I have got some residual hearing and you can pick up voices to some extent, but one of my sons seems to be talking on a frequency that does not register and you know, as your own son and you cannot sort of relate to the kid at all which is a bit distressing he is growing up and he is not part of my life anymore. And perhaps expressed it in those ways to the hearing consultant, and I got on to a LINK intensive course, 20 odd years, 25 years perhaps after becoming deafened which is not what it is all about at all. And that was an inspiration in many ways. I mean, that is for newly deafened people and I was deafened 25 years ago. But it introduced me to a whole new world of things that I had not at that stage met anybody else who was deafened. Never talked to another deafened person, I was just this odd bod out on my own in the world as though I was the only person who was deafened. And coming to the LINK course and hearing Heather Jackson who was giving a presentation that time, tell a story that was almost identical to my own, was a revelation that the whole course for me was over in an hour, it showed me a completely new direction of peer support and working in an area where I had knowledge and so on, that opened up the world of volunteering to me. Helping other people who had the same sort of problem because it wasn't just help as a volunteer, it was helping me as an individual to understand things in a completely different way than I had ever done for 25 years previously. So, it was quite a sort of -- quite an experience. It wasn't life changing but it certainly



changed direction a lot that I could see things that I had not seen before.

*Have you been able to get more socially involved with Deaf societies or other organisations?*

Yes I have, but not so much in a social way more in a working way in that, I enjoy involvement as a volunteer. I enjoy involvement as a trustee. But all the time I am doing my own thing, I am not just doing jobs that are identified, I am getting a foot in the door and making my own job, doing what I want; offering what I want should I say perhaps, and finding people who want me to do that. So, perhaps I have approached that in a different sort of way, but socially I think to a large extent I am a little cut off still because that is the way I am. I am quite happy with my own company I could live on a desert island it is other people that are the problem!

[24:42]

*You mentioned being a trustee, would you like to tell us a little bit more about your work there?*

I find that very interesting actually, that it is a job where I can exchange ideas and give reign to some of the creativity that I have got. And I find that appealing and it is work that I have been trying to extend. That having got a foot in the door found it interesting, found it gives opportunities it is something that I am quite keen to develop and I am doing so now I am a trustee for two charities rather than one. Not too sure if I will continue increasing that too far but happy with what it has brought along so far.

*Would you like to tell us what their names are Roland?*

Well the first charity is the National Association of Deafened People, which is a charity that is run entirely by volunteers we have no paid staff. And, therefore, what it entails is perhaps limited in some ways insomuch as any work opportunities that you identify can very easily turn into jobs and, therefore, you have got to think rather carefully as to whether you want to do that job before you volunteer the idea. The second charity that I am involved in is Action Deafness in Leicester, where we have quite a lot of paid staff and I find that a different opportunity entirely, because I can get people to do the work rather than have to do it myself.

And enjoying what that may produce in the future, that so far I have been a trustee there for only a few months but certainly I am very, very, very keen and pleased with what it is bringing so far. Not altogether just the benefits for deafened people, but the sort of management opportunities that I need to replace when I retire. A couple of years ago I took early retirement but continued to work as an associate, which means that I am working part-time in effect, not regular 3 days a week or so, but jobs as and when I can find them which gives me a bit of spare time. And I found retirement, as such, enormously difficult, because with tinnitus I need to keep very busy and the last thing I would ever want is to be sitting round with nothing to do. So, losing employment as such is something of a concern to me. And I think that the sort of roles I am taking on and so on is a way to keep myself involved and I am pleased that I have had that opportunity to find them.

*Do you know exactly roughly when the NADP started and when Action Deafness in Leicester started?*

Started? Yes, NADP started in 1984, but the start was more or less two or three individuals with a big idea. Action Deafness started in something like 1885, which was in a different form entirely from what it is now of course. I think it was two clergymen in the area who were concerned that deaf people could not hear the Word of God and decided to do something about it by building a local deaf church. That developed over the years, and became pretty well a BSL club, and it is not a lot different today. The challenge of turning it round from those origins and its past use for BSL is enormously interesting, because it involves not just decisions but changes of culture and resistance to change which are to some extent new areas for me to tackle and I am very much looking forward to that.

[30:07]

*Have you ever had the opportunity to be referred to an alternative audiologist or consultant, or even to lipreading classes or hearing therapists?*

Yes, I don't wait for opportunities I go and find them for myself. I have been to see numerous consultants and different areas, I have been to Derby, been to Leicester, been to Nottingham even been to Melton Mowbray and well you can't cure deafness I guess. So, I am not really too sure what I am looking for but possibly just alternative opinions so yes I have seen plenty

of different consultants. I have never had the opportunity to go to lipreading classes, with work and the lack of accessible classes I didn't go to a lipreading class until last year. But I have been last year, not that that is much good it is just a really a sort of chance the see what goes on, find out firsthand if I cannot lipread now I never will be able to. I am not that good, I don't think I ever will be.

*I am going to take you back to something you said quite early and have actually mentioned twice, and that is how low your esteem has been and been yourself. That you could easily live on a desert island. What hobbies would you have on that desert island apart from your consultancy work and working for these two notable charities?*

What hobbies would I have? I have no idea.

*Do you still?*

But I guess I would find some I have got great confidence in myself that I would find some, what exactly they would be I don't know because I have never lived on a desert island on my own.

*For instance, you mentioned as a child being interested in collection of cigarette cards and stamps and it is something that I personally picked up again on, my collection of stamps. I wondered whether it was something that might interest you?*

Not really no, no. That was as a child, I don't think I would ever do that again. I have never collected anything much in later life, but as a child that seemed to be quite an interest with me. I liked collections and perhaps it was picking up on something that has stayed with me is that I like ownership. I am a collector of sort of ideas and I like to feel that I sort of know a lot these days, so that is the same sort of thing I try to collect knowledge rather than collect bits and pieces.

[33:44]

*You mentioned earlier that you now have taken semi retirement and your work with the trustees and also as a volunteer. Has this affected your travelling on buses, railways or even*

*in your own transport in the confidence to communicate?*

No actually that is an area that I have never had much problem with. I have never been short on confidence in some ways. Perhaps it has been selective. To some extent I am a bit shy socially perhaps, but I have got a lot of confidence in my own ability that if a job can be done I can do it. There is no way am I going to back out of a challenge in any way. And transport and shops and so on, if I run into problems I just batter my way through them. I often feel I get my way through life, I have said this to people, like driving a car down hitting every lamp post in the road and getting to the end of the road I am battered and bruised and every lamp post is broken but that is the way I get through it. If I cannot get an answer I ask them and if I cannot get an answer the third time I will batter and bruise until I do. In that way I am a very determined and confident character but perhaps that does not apply totally through everything that I approach.

*Roland you mentioned your confidence and you have also told me more about people that have turned away from you and your friends. So how do you now overcome these prejudices and discriminations that you encounter in life?*

I guess I don't deal with them, I just side step them and avoid them there is plenty of fish in the sea, and I go and find the best ones that. I am selective. That if people cannot take the time to help me and deal with me, I will go and find someone else who can. So, that is not a solution, that is an avoidance, but there is plenty of scope in life to do that, so why not use it?

*Do you think that you are making a difference in Leicester area with your good work?*

Not yet because I have only been a trustee for 3 months but in time, in 3 years time I hope there is going to be a huge difference. I feel confident, very confident that there will be and I shall not stand around if there is not. But there will be I have absolute confidence in that.

[37:23]

*I am now going talking a little bit about the future. And I wondered whether you believe that your disability as it is today, that you have achieved everything to give you a better which of life whilst being disabled and yet still being told that you are not in a position to possibly have*

*a cochlear implant?*

Well, I don't think initially that I have achieved everything to give me a better life. I have still got lots and lots of things I want to do. I know what they are, I have got a little more time to use to progress some of them, but I have got a huge amount to do with my life still I am running out of time. I have inquired about a cochlear implant. I have been assessed, and I don't think they know any more what to make of me than I do. That I seem to be sort of on the borderline as to whether it would be of any benefit or not. Having some residual hearing makes things worse perhaps, because well cochlear implants are not guaranteed it could make things worse as well as make things better. And having managed to get on with life for the last 20 odd years 30 years now without one, 20 odd years without hearing aids even, is it worth the bother? And perhaps in that respect I am not pursuing it as aggressively as I could. But it is something that I do keep in mind it is a sort of low level erm, possibility but I am not pursuing it with any great vigour, no.

*Are there things within those aspirations you would like to share with us of what you want to achieve?*

I want to feel that I am some use in the world. I don't just simply want to be passing time. I don't know exactly what I will be doing next year, I am not altogether sure what I will be doing next week. I am like that, I will look around until I find an opportunity but I have got every confidence that I can find those opportunities for myself and will continue to do so. So I am approaching the future with great enthusiasm and it will be good. Whatever comes along.

*So, would you have a plan and sorry about the pun of this question, but can you see the light at the end of the tunnel?*

I am not a great one for making plans but as I say that I have every confidence, every belief in the future because it will be good and yes there is lots of light at the end of the tunnel. In fact I am not too sure I am in a tunnel any longer I am out in the daylight and enjoying it.

[41:01]

*You have mentioned that you have already taken an active role in two and I know a little bit about your work in H C L Hearing Concern LINK. Would you consider taking a more active role in that area for them in Leicester or as a trustee?*

I have no limitations in anything that I look at every opportunity that comes along to see what it involves, or could involve. So yes, everything is an option as far as I am concerned. But that does not say yes or no. That is simply that I have no limitations and no boundaries, I look at everything.

*My final question to you is quite important for many of us, you go home from this interview today and close your door, put your feet up, get a cup of tea. And there is a knock at the door and a friend or a face of the family, may be distant, points to their ears and says Roland I am deafened I have lost my hearing. What do I do? Do you think you would be able to point them in the right direction to get all their rights and all the tools to help them have a better way of life?*

I have got to hear the knock on the door first! If I could meet people like that yes on the doorstep I have done in fact, I have worked as a volunteer for LINK as it was then, outreach volunteer and I have been out to meet people in that situation. The feedback is that those people were grateful for what help I gave them, which is very encouraging. But certainly, yes, I feel that I could most certainly help people in that direction. Not just for me to provide help, because overcoming deafness is a personal thing. It is self-management. And you have got to help people to help themselves, which is quite difficult when people are feeling distressed and alone, to ask them to help themselves. So it is a slow process, but I am totally confident that I have the ability to help those people, yes.

*Well Roland, I want to thank you very much for this afternoon. Thank you for that very interesting story, and I wish you all success in your work.*

[End of Track 2]

**[Track 3]**

I would just like to say thank you Colin, because talking over this sort of thing is therapeutic as well and I have enjoyed it. And I think it is interesting for people who are Deaf to talk about their problems to other people who are sympathetic listeners as well. Thank you.

[End of track 3]

[End of recording]