



Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Ken Gardner
Interviewed by John Newton

British Library ref. C1345/54

IMPORTANT

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The British Library		Oral History	
Interview Summary Sheet			
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Interviewee's surname:	Gardner	Title:	
Interviewee's forename:	Ken	Sex:	Male
Occupation:		Date and place of birth:	1939, London
Date(s) of recording:	31 st May 2009		
Location of interview:	The Westminster Hotel, Nottingham		
Name of interviewer:	John Newton		
Speech to Text reporter:	Cate Oates		
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Interviewer's comments:	First portion of the interview was not recorded although there is a full STTR transcript.		

THIS PORTION OF THE INTERVIEW WAS NOT RECORDED

This is John Newton, interviewing Ken Gardener on 31 May 2009, for the Unheard Voices project in Nottingham. The speech to text reporter is Cate. Now, you have to, Ken, tell me your full name for the tape, this is to identify the recording, you see. Do you understand?

Kenneth Richard Gardener.

Where were you born? And when?

London. 1939.

I don't know why they want this, but it says here mother's occupation and father's occupation?

My father was a bricklayer, and my mother done a bit of cleaning.

Okay, that's just for preliminaries to identify the tape. Okay? Right, now, I have been reading the brief details you gave to Sarah, and I've discovered you are a mere youngster of 70, roughly, is that right?

A mere youngster!

Yes, you are 70. Right, I understand you went deaf when you were 65? Five years ago?

Age 64, but it doesn't matter.

Tell me what you remember about the circumstances of going deaf?

Shall I start right from the beginning? Or shall I go from when I went actually deaf?

Well, what do you think is the beginning?

Well, I got a bit giddy and I was wandering around and thinking 'what's going on' but then I didn't take no notice of it and then a week later the same thing happened. And I said to my wife, 'I don't feel too good, I'm going to go to bed', and I went to bed and I was sick and what not, and I could hear first of all, I said to her, 'have you got the telly on loud', and that was unusual for me to say that, I thought I was getting my hearing back, so when I was in bed I could here this swooshing sound in my ear all night, and when I woke up I was profoundly deaf. Anyway, my wife phoned up the doctor during the night and they said they would come at 11 o'clock the next day and she said to me, "stand up", and she said "how many fingers have I got up" and all that and she said "well Ill give you these tablets and if you ain't any better -- well you can fly", because I was going on holiday the following week. Well, they weren't doing me any good and three days later my own doctor come up to see me and said, "you can't hear at all"? And I said "no, I can't hear nothing", and he said "well I will get you into a hospital, and with that, after a couple of hours, I went into hospital, and I was on this drip thing, you know, they were trying to clear it, but he said I don't think it's going to do any good, you won't get your hearing back. Then he said -- I don't know what it says there. That's what he said I had got. That was what was wrong.

That was when you were in hospital?

Yes. He said 'why didn't you see a doctor earlier?' I said, 'I don't know', I couldn't remember anything because I was all mixed up and then it come to me and I went to tell him and he said 'it's alright' the other doctor told him what was wrong, why you didn't see the doctor and that. I think my first doctor didn't know I was deaf, I didn't tell her, I should have told her I was deaf, so I think partly that was my fault.

Hang on a minute, I'm getting confused here. You say your first doctor didn't know you were deaf?

I don't think so, no.

So you were deaf before you saw the doctor? I thought you had got poorly and the illness had caused your deafness, but that's not how it worked?

No.

When did you first become aware that you were deaf?

When I woke up in the morning, as soon as I woke up.

Yes, I'm with you.

I couldn't hear nothing.

Were you poorly at the time, you were feeling ill?

Yes, I felt a bit ill, a bit wobbly and that and still a bit giddy. They kept me in hospital for about a week, I think, and they give me a scan, they said no infection and no growth on anything, so you are alright. And he said 'I will get someone from Ropewalk to come and have a chat with you' and a woman came down from Ropewalk and had a chat with me and they said I will see you and your wife and then I will see you afterwards. Well I went to see them for about three months and then I was really ill, and the same thing happened. I said 'I don't feel too good' and I went to bed, and my wife come up about 10 o'clock at night and I was all doubled up and sick all over the place, and this time I didn't know nothing, I was out, and the ambulance come, and they asked me to open my mouth, I didn't know none of this, my wife was telling me this, in case I swallowed my tongue, she said he can't hear you, he said we've got a right one here, because I couldn't open my mouth, he couldn't get my tongue. So I was in hospital and I had a mass infection around the brain. They said I was being very ill.

When did you sort of wake up to your situation? I mean, you say you weren't aware of what was happening when the ambulance came? When did you sort of become aware of what was happening? When you got to the hospital?

I only know what my wife was telling me. I must have been fighting with them or something and they put bandages on my arms because I was pulling the stuff off of me.

And you were also deaf?

I was deaf then, yes. That's three months after I went deaf, this is three months after. I got the meningitis.

Was the illness connected with the deafness then? It was?

No, I think it was the accident that I had on my bike when I hit my head I didn't tell you that at the beginning, did I? I hit my head, both sides. I think there was a bone or something gone in my ear.

Tell me more about your bike accident?

That was in 1995, about ten years before all this business.

What happened?

Well, I was out of it again, I heard the phone go and I thought I can't hear a word you are saying and it frightened the life out of me, "I don't know what you are saying" I said and I told my wife and that, and they said it's not unusual to find out he has lost his hearing after a few days, and I was in hospital a couple of weeks then.

I'm getting confused I'm afraid about the timescale. Your bike accident, when was the bike accident?

That was in 1995.

Right.

And in 2004, I had this giddiness and that.

Yes, I'm with you.

And then I had the meningitis.

Why do you think your deafness was connected with the bike accident?

Because I had an operation on this ear so I don't get meningitis again.

After the accident?

No, this was after I got meningitis. We have to give you the operation and then we will put the cochlear in this ear, so they operated on this ear and got that done and he said we will have to get that sorted out first before we give you the cochlear implant. And well they gave me the cochlear and it's marvellous, good what treatment you get.

And that was five years ago? You have had the cochlear implant for five years?

Yes.

But you still haven't told me what the connection is between the bicycle accident and your deafness?

Well, I think the damage I had done with my ears then, I had a hearing aid and I couldn't get on with it very well, it kept whistling and that, I kept pushing it in but it kept whistling.

You had a hearing aid in 1995?

Yes.

When you had your bike accident?

Yes.

So you had some hearing loss before that, then?

Before the bike, no, I was all right, I could hear perfectly before the bike accident.

And then after your bike accident you had some hearing loss and you got the aid?

Yes, but that kept going wrong after time. Well, and then in 2004, I had all this. So I think it was something connected with that because the other doctor said -- I had two doctors.

Right, so going back to when you just had the hearing aid, tell me about how deaf were you then?

Well, I had a pretty bad difficulty, really. Because when I was in the hospital after the bike -- no, it was when I had an operation on my back. I have been knocking on the door a few times, you know! I have been put through it all. Where was I?

But you were wearing a hearing aid, how deaf were you?

Well, I couldn't hear what people were saying very well.

At all?

Well, with the hearing aid I could hear them a bit better, but I couldn't hear them too good.

Could you use the telephone?

Vaguely, yes, I think I could use the telephone.

Did you use the telephone?

Yes, just about, I think, yes.

Let's go back to where you were in 1995. You were working then? Tell me about your work and what work you were doing and so on?

I was gardening, I do gardening for big people, you know.

For a private house you mean?

I was semi-retired then. That was 65, I would say about 57.

I'm having trouble with your time table! When you first got the hearing aid, that was ten years ago?

Roughly, yes.

Roughly. What were you doing then?

What was I doing ten years ago?

Yes?

What, work.

Yes?

Gardening.

Full-time?

No, part-time. I semi-retired, because I used to live in London, and then I moved up to Nottingham.

Why?

Because the houses were cheaper up in Nottingham, than they were in London. I sold the house in London and bought one in Nottingham, so I could retire, because I had had enough of work, really.

What did you do before you retired?

I was driving, deliveries, I used to.

Driving what?

A laundry van. You know the towels and things and mats and all of that, I used to deliver everywhere.

Did you have an HGV licence?

I didn't have one, no. I was driving heavy goods, but then I left it and I went on to the small vans, but if I had stayed on there I could have got heavy goods, but I didn't.

So you then made the move to Nottingham. Why did you choose Nottingham?

Because my mother-in-law's son met a girl in Nottingham and then he came up here to live and when his mum retired he said 'why don't you move up to Nottingham because you are a pensioner and you will have a few quid in your pocket' and that's what she said, and I used to come up every Easter and Christmas time, and I liked it quite a lot.

You knew Nottingham?

Yes, it was lovely. So when I got made redundant on my driving job, I thought, 'well, I've got a year, I will get myself sorted out', because that's how long you are on the dole, aren't you? Well, I got made redundant in about February, and I moved up here in October same year. And I've never looked back.

I know you considered yourself semi-retired but you did some part-time work?

Yes, gardening.

Tell me about your typical day then, when you were semi-retired?

Well, I would do odd days here and there and then I had a dog, then, and I used to be out all day with the dog. I was a bit of a maniac for walking, because there was a canal, and I said how far along can I walk along there, and I thought well I've got all day, and I walked it and I said how far is it and he said about 7 miles, and I got to the end of it, it was the Langley Mill, it was, where I ended up and it crossed over on to Nottingham canal, I was on the

Erewash canal and I crossed over on to the Nottingham canal and walked back because there's a good lot of canal, it was a nature walk, it was nice. I was amazed by the amount of people you didn't see, you know there's lovely countryside and you don't see anybody. Because I come from London, I can appreciate it, really, you know, seeing all the cows and sheep and everything.

Quite a contrast?

Yes, and I wondered why can't I see anybody? I suppose they are used to it, aren't they, they don't bother with it.

Did you have any friends of your own age in Nottingham?

Only my mother-in-law, and my brother-in-law.

Were you able to talk to people that you met then?

Oh yes. With dog walkers, people, I used to meet a lot of people dog walking and my gardening, I got on quite well with that and they used to poach you to get you to go and then do their garden, they would say don't talk to them, you are working for me.

I see, so you were in demand as a gardener?

I was in demand, yes because I was cheap!

Did you work just one place at a time or?

I used to work with -- one person -- no, I would work with different people every week, a couple of hours, usually four hours, £2.50 an hour I think it was.

Did you have to go far to work?

No, I had a car then. But, no, I used to just use my bike, I used to like the old bike.

Are you still doing that?

I'm still doing it, yes, I love it, it's only a council house, but it's right on the corner and I got a farm behind me and all countryside like.

Are you still doing some gardening?

Oh, I'm always there now, because I can't walk so far and I can't go on my bike and I ain't got the dog! Yes, I was out there all year, nearly, from October last year, right up to now. I have been landscaping it. I've got all the conifers, and put fences up, I got rid of all the rose bushes and other plants I had because I had -- I thought get plenty in there and get a big flash of colour but you couldn't see them because they were all together you could only see the outside of them, so I cleared all of that up, grassed it all over, and made a short flower bed each side, four.

Let's come back to your deafness. Before you got the implant, how long was it between going deaf and getting the implant? How much time?

It was only about 13 months, I think.

Tell me about that period, what did you feel like during that time?

It was murder, really. Again, on buses and things, and -- but I was partly deaf before, and I used to lipread but I didn't realise I was doing it so I used to get by that way a bit. I used to do quite well with some people who -- people who associate with deaf people, I could almost hear them, what they were saying, you know, I would say I can hear you, and they would say you can hear then and I would say no I can't hear but I know what you are saying. I said that to my sister, I said I can hear you because she used to work with deaf and blind people. She only used to be cleaning there but I could hear her good, but mother says I couldn't hear her -- well, I couldn't understand what she was saying at all, she got a bit upset I think about that.

Were you working during that period? During that time before you got the implant?

No. I packed up when I was about 61 or 60.

But you were reasonably fit, were you, you could go out walking?

I could do, yes, oh yes, I was still pretty fit, I could still ride my bike then. I was riding my bike right up until I went deaf and when I went deaf they said oh your glasses are ready and I thought I will go up there and I got on my bike and Christ I was all over the road, I went to look around and I fell over and I thought oh this ain't no good. When I was ill, I was very bad, I was all over one side of the road. It really made me bad, my balance was gone completely. I've got a swagger when I walk.

How long did that -- how long were you troubled with your balance?

Well, after I went -- after the meningitis.

So that's when you stopped riding your bike, is it?

Yes, that's when I stopped.

Do you ride the bike now?

No. I don't ride it. I got rid of it because they kept trying to nick it, they nicked my wife's scooter, she had two scooters and they took them out of the garage. I had them locked up, and they still took them.

Can I come back to something you said? Let me come back to something you said just now. I said how did you get on? and you said it was murder.

Oh yeah.

Expand on that.

Well, it was trouble with bus drivers, really. I wasn't too bad in shops, and I suppose the neighbours and that, they were pretty good, but I could understand people who I knew a bit

better.

How did you feel about that?

I didn't feel too bad, really, because when I was hard of hearing it seemed to be worse than when I was deaf, I don't know why. So I used to get on not too bad really.

What was your wife's reaction?

Well, she wasn't too good, really, until we went to Eastbourne, and then she got a lot better when we went to Eastbourne, yes.

What did she get better at?

Well she treated me a lot better. Before she used to -- didn't have the patience, like, you know.

Give me an example.

Well, she didn't sort of tap me when she was talking to me or nothing, and she would tap me when I'm not looking and frighten the life out of me. My next door neighbourhood used to do that, when I was out in the garden and touch me on the shoulder, and I would go oh, because you can't hear nothing it frightens you doesn't it. Yes, and then she got a lot better, really, then.

Did you have any other family?

Well, when I was deaf, my sister used to phone up and they used to be on nearly an hour, and I would say I want to talk to her, and she would say well I'm talking she say, and I said I only want a few words so I can get used to hearing her and my sister said he has always been like that, since when he was little, so they more or less pushed me out of it, so I never bothered. I used to have the telephone and that but I couldn't get on with that, really.

You've just got the one sister, have you?

I used to have four sisters.

Where are they all now?

I've got two now. I've got the youngest one and one is a bit older than me. I had a lot of trouble down there, really, difficulties and that. In London. Tooting.

Do you have a lot of contact with them now?

Not a lot.

Because you can't use the phone?

I don't bother, to tell the truth.

Do you have any children?

No. When a friend phoned up, she says 'this is Diana', and I said 'hello', I said 'who is this', and she said 'Dian'a and I could hear her quite well, and I had a chat with her, but I haven't chatted to her since. She phones my wife, but I don't know whether they've got no time or what. So I didn't bother, really, they pushed me out of it.

Does your wife report the conversations to you?

Yes. I ask her. She don't tell me otherwise. I said, 'who was on the phone?' and then she tells me but if I didn't say nothing, she wouldn't say nothing. I think to myself, she will tell me in a minute, she will tell me who phoned up, but no. So I'm like 'who was that?' and she tells me. It's not all that important but some people you like to know who she is talking to and that, who is phoning her. But sometimes I pick up the phone and I can hear it but it ain't all that good, because the reason is I didn't practice. I'm a bit lazy like that, really.

Why do you pick up the phone?

I picked up to test it, to see if I could hear it, it was my other sister and she was -- I couldn't hear what she was saying so I had to put it back down again. I've got a thing to put in a phone -- I had the proper phone which makes it sound louder, but she says that's broke.

Do you use a mobile phone

No, no.

For texting?

I would lose it.

You don't use text messages?

No. Mentally I don't do nothing, physically I can do anything. That's the way I am, I don't know why.

Okay, well, tell me what your typical day is like now.

Well it's pretty good, really.

What did you do yesterday?

Gardening. Well -- what did I do yesterday? I went and got a paper. And then I was in the garden, I think, chopping up wood, I was doing the -- for woodchip, I got all this wood I bought and I can't stick it in the dust bin and I was chopping it all up and making it all splintery and that to put on the garden in the winterer to stop the frost getting at the fuscias.

How do you do that?

What chopper and an axe. Well a sledgehammer I actually knock it down on the brick, break it that way and then chop down the bits. I put it all over, she says oh that looks horrible. This morning I put it all back into the bag and put it all away for the winter. I thought it looked nice myself. But she never likes anything I do. That's women though, isn't it?

Do you watch television?

Oh, I've gone off it now. I used to like watching it, but I keep getting up to go and find something to do, I can't seem to sit down, I'm always doing something.

I don't bother with -- I used to like music and that, I used to love that, the hi-fi but in the afternoon I used to like to play on it, but she has always got the television on, so I don't really bother. I can't watch television all day. She watches that programme where the husband and wife is having an affair and all this and that, do you know what I'm talking about? I can't think of the names.

Can you hear the television?

I can hear some of it, yes, but again I get lazy and I just drift off and look up and then I look at it again and I can practically hear what they say, but sometimes they are moving away, like, or they are going mm-hm, and covering their mouths and something like that.

Do you use the subtitles?

When it's going, yes, sometimes. Sometimes it's not on.

Well, it's always going. All television has subtitles or nearly all

.

Nearly all, most of the time, yes. It's only a few there's not. Then I can practically hear what they are saying.

You can. Right, anyway, let's talk about your implant. How long have you had it, five years you have had it, the implant?

Four years.

Where did you have it fitted?

Nottingham Medical Centre.

What can you remember -- can you remember when you went to have it switched on?

Switched on, yes.

Tell me about that.

Oh. Well, they was all in the room, the therapist and the speech therapist and psychologist person, and they switched it oh on and she said "La" and shouted out loud and nearly blew my head off, "is that too loud", "Cor, yes, it is" so she quieted it down a bit and I says she is Irish and she said I know she's either Irish from when she came to see me in hospital and we were chatting away and that and they went out of the room and I said I can hear people talking and she said there are people talking here and I said it don't sound like them and I went in the toilet and I could still hear people talking and there was no-one in there so I told her about that and so everyone went quiet –

Let me stop you just for a second. You say you could hear people talking, could you understand what they were saying?

No, it was all mumble-jumble like.

So you knew they were talking but you couldn't actually understand it, am I right?

Yes, I couldn't.

So carry on, tell me the rest of the story about that day then?

Where was I? Well, after that, they got two programmes, I think, she put on, and I just went up there a couple of times a year, and they got it better. But this woman this year, because the other woman left, come from Manchester, and I don't know what she had done, but they got a sound and it's so soft you can strain to hear it, it's like a buzz, and I couldn't hear it at first with this other therapist, but this woman I kept pressing it when I thought I could hear it, she said do it when you think you can hear it, so I was just pressing and well she has done marvellous she has given me four programmes. One is for every day and one is for talking

one to one and one is for noise and another one is for big crowds. I switch them about. I am on two now.

You used four programmes? You do use them then?

More or less, yes.

When you were having your lunch today, could you hear what people were saying around the table?

No.

No.

No, I can never hear what people are saying, not unless they are talking to me. Not if there's two people talking, not really. I'm not really bothered because I'm not in the conversation.

In the four years, has it got better during that time?

Well, it was really good to start off with, with this Mary, who I was talking about, she was -- I don't know what it was, talking to her, it was brilliant. I think it was just because she was trained, I think, and it was in a quieter room. But as time has gone on, yes, I say, as this woman at the test, she is ten times better, she has given me the four programmes, it's really good I'm really pleased with it. Some people -- I don't take no notice of people saying it's not good, I only take notice of what they tell me at the Ropewalk.

When did you see this new lady and get the new programmes? How long ago was that?

About six months ago. I see her once a year, I think. She just said she has got six programmes.

Can you give me an example of how it was better?

Well, I used to get a lot of background noise and that, that used to interfere with it, but that

doesn't happen now. And people seem to be a lot clearer, a lot of people.

What about bus drivers?

They are all right mostly.

Do you have any -- have you any particular situations where you have difficulty?

I can't think of one really. Sometimes when people are talking and I don't catch they are saying, that gets a bit annoying, really, they are talking and I'm talking about something else. I want to get my –

Give me an example of that?

Well, like when they are talking I don't quite catch what they are saying and I will say what you are talking about and then I know what they are saying then, once they tell me that. But you know it's no problem really.

Do you ever visit your doctor for other reasons, I mean?

My doctor, I used to be there all the time at one time. Not so much now, I suffer with bronchitis, I have had an alert a pink card, you know, if you want an ambulance just give this to the driver and they will take you to the hospital to see Mr Lynn.

When you go to see your doctor, can you talk to your doctor okay?

Oh yes, terrific with doctors, yes, marvellous.

Good, that's good. Let's have a break now, we are just going to stop for a bit. It's just to give Kate a break.

[Track 1]

Okay, tell me what you were telling me just now.

I didn't know whether it was my sister or -- but it really upset me that did telling me that when I was deaf, you know, they could have shown some sort of sympathy, I had just gone deaf and that. How do I know she said that when I was deaf? I was deaf but I knew what she said that , I must be lipreading or something.

I didn't ask you that, did I! Your sister lives in London and you are in Nottingham. When did these situations arise when you felt she lacked sympathy for you, she wasn't very sympathetic?

When I went deaf, really. She seemed to be a bit –

Was it face-to-face? When you say she said it to you?

I was saying to her move the camera, "go away, get off!" and another time, is she was all going on about what work -- I said 'why didn't you get them to build a thing round the hedge and I said don't need it, not when it's absolutely level with the grass'. I think my missus told her something about this. I said you paid that money you should have told them you wanted it done and the gate I made up that was no good, she said it's not even level. 'Let's have a look at your garden', she said, 'that's a weed', I say 'no it ain't', she was having a go like that all the time but I saw her a couple of weeks ago and she seems to be a lot better towards me now. I don't know whether it's me or what.

So this lack of sympathy didn't break up the relationship then?

It nearly did.

It did? How did you feel about it at the time?

Well I was really annoyed, really. I thought, well, if she thinks like that, she doesn't think much of me and yet she has having a breakdown about her friend and family and that, that has

died, like. A bad time there, really. But I said, a couple of weeks ago, it seemed a lot different, I don't know whether my wife has had a go at her, because I was saying to her 'I'm not bothering to go and see her anymore if she thinks like' that because my older sister is always like that and I think she was getting like it as well. But they seem to be all right. I don't know, she was a bit stuck up or something. Yes, she's worse than me -- no weeds won't go in her garden, they are too frightened.

How old are your sisters? How old is your sister compared with you, is she younger or older?

She is the youngest.

How much younger?

About seven or eight years.

How would you describe your relationship with her in the past?

Well, we just got on, really, but she never come to my house once, not once she never come in. And my other sister lived round the corner and she used to walk past my house and not come in, the same. And I used to go round there every Saturday morning, Sunday morning, round her house, my elder sister, and buy the Sunday papers and I used to pop in and see them, but that fell through. I thought, well, they don't want to know, well. Yet my other sister, my oldest one I used to take her on holidays and that, I used to drive her around, I suppose that's why I was in her good books, I used to take her on holiday. She used to go down for pie and mash.

In your own car?

Yes, I had cars then. All HP. I used to work my holidays so I could buy a battery and things like that.

[05:32]

Do you have a car now?

Go down?

Mm-hm?

Only to funerals, we get a lot of them lately. I've lost two sisters, three brother-in-laws, a niece and a nephew, all in a matter of a few years. Well, they seem to be all right anyway, down there.

Do you still have a have a driving licence?

No, I don't drive now because I'm too giddy. A friend who my missus works for, used to have a place in Cornwall and she used to let us go down there for a fortnight. How long ago was it? Was I deaf? I don't know. I must have been. Yes, I was deaf. I drove down to Cornwall, and it frighten the life out of me, all these lorries and that, I felt like they were going to hit me and that, and I got giddy spells and it was like 'Oh Christ I don't like this' and we got there and come back, and then I was taking her shopping and even going just to the shop, I used to get little giddy spells like, so I thought, 'no, I don't like this'. I never used to drive much anyway then. So when it expired I didn't renew it, I didn't bother.

When did you stop driving regularly then?

Oh, that was when I come up here more or less. At Nottingham I never used to drive much.

That wasn't to do with your deafness then?

No, no. I just didn't reckon on it. When I first come I used to do quite a bit because this chap who knew my mother-in-law we got quite pally with them and he used to be navigator and I used to drive, and we used to go around the peak district, and it was quite good.

You mean rallying? You mean driving -- when you say he was a navigator you mean for a rally car?

No, nothing like that, no, he just new the district and that, when I didn't, I was new up here and he was better at it, he knew which way to go, because I hate getting lost, that's one of the reasons I didn't like driving, really. He moved away, like, and I used to get on with my gardening. Funnily enough, what started me off on the bike was a chap who was a few doors away, he give me this old bike, and I thought oh this is all right, riding around and that, anyway I bought a new one, and I bought the wife one cycle and I thought we could go cycling together because I knew she used to cycle to work. Anyway I got her one, and I got this thing you fit on the car to put your bikes on, and I said we will go out in the country, we will go for a ride. We went out there and went along this pathway and she went oops, and she fell off it, so I didn't do that no more. But I used to go on my own down the canals and round about with the dog as well, well not with the bike, but I used to walk quite a lot with the dog.

[09:23]

Were you a cyclist when you were younger?

Yes, when I was at school, when I first left school I used to cycle to work and that. I cycled along and this chap came along on a motorbike came along and he said you know you are doing 30 miles an hour! I thought, well. But after a couple of years I packed in and I got another job and I didn't do it no more up until that day this chap -- that was in about 1991 or something like that I started riding a bike again. I loved it, I did. I never used to go on the road though. I know all the cycle paths and bridle paths but I didn't know the roads. People would ask do you know so and so and I would say you go down this cycle path and they wanted to go by road.

When your wife had the accident that put her off permanently did it? When you say your wife fell off?

It put her off, she didn't bother no more, but it didn't scare me off.

So that finished it for her, did it?

Well, more or less, she has got a scooter, she is good on that.

That's interesting.

Yes, I miss it in a way, I miss the gardening and that, all things have got to come to an end, haven't they, can't go on forever. But I'm reasonably happy now with what I'm doing. I do a lot of –

When you say you are happy with what you are doing, what are you doing?

DIY, all that, in the house and that.

For yourself? Doing work on your own house?

Yes, yes, my own house, yes. I don't do it for other people.

[11:39]

Apart from your wife, who do you talk to on a typical day?

Next door neighbour, a few people, a few neighbours, a few people I know. And the old doggy walkers, that's about it. I don't really talk to many people really.

But when you are talking to your neighbour, you can cope with -- you can understand and have a conversation with them can you?

Oh yes, I can hear them, because I know -- well, I know them for 20 years I have been here. Yes, they are lovely, nice people.

How long have you been in Nottingham then?

22 years. I come up here in 1988. 1988 we come up here.

21 years, yes.

22 years.

And that was when you started considering yourself semi-retired?

Yes.

And have you lived in the same place, the same house?

Yes, we've done a lot things to it and alterations and what not. But the people who had it before, they done a lot, they done a lot of hall alterations and that and they put in fitted wardrobes and that but I put new doors up and our tunnel groove stuff I put that all over the doors and that and I've now put the floor in the bathroom and the passage, I've done that. There's always wall papering or decorating or some blooming thing.

Do you have a workshop?

I keep looking for it, when you know what you have got to do you go and look for it. It keeps me occupied really.

You are not a drinker, you don't go to the pub?

I used to go and have a pint down in Beeston, a pint of Guinness I used to have, I used to walk there and back, but I asked myself, '#are you enjoying this?', and I thought 'I don't think so', so I never bothered no more. That was about a year ago now, I suppose, a couple of years. I used to go down about dinner time, I never used to go out of a night drinking, just dinner time.

Would you describe yourself today as more sociable or less sociable than you were 20 years ago?

I think more.

More sociable?

Yes.

And who are you talking to, socialising with, your neighbours?

When I first come up? No, it took -- it was about six months I suppose before we started talking. It might have been three months. Because you are a bit nervous when you go to a new place, what the neighbours are and this and that.

Apart from your DIY and stuff, and so on, and walking the dog, do you and your wife have any -- go out in the evenings at all for any reason like to the pub or cinema?

No, not really.

You don't?

No.

You are not into bingo?

No, no, I used to go to bingo.

You used to? When?

But I couldn't hear, so you couldn't mark it down.

Do you miss it now?

No. No, no, I didn't like it really. I used to go down the army place.

What army place?

They had bingo and dancing and that, I don't know if they still do it now, and cards they played cards.

Where is that?

It's in Beeston just down the road. It's for the first world war soldiers or something.

You mean the British Legion?

Something like that, yes.

It's a club?

Yes.

[16:57]

So do you have holidays?

Yes, we used to go on quite a lot of holidays, but because of the recession and that, everyone we booked up they said it's cancelled, not enough people going. We are going to Germany in July for five days.

You are going? Or you are not?

Yes.

That's on, is it?

Yes.

Tell me about your last holiday?

That was in Benidorm in Spain, that was in January, I think. We went for a month. You could get four weeks for the price of three weeks and it's cheaper in the winter. But then I get bored.

Tell me about it.

Well, the shops are shut in the afternoons, because they have a siesta and I don't think they really do, I think that's something they did years ago and they still keep doing it because it's too hot, isn't it, to work? We used to walk around the shops and up and down the thing, but after a couple of weeks I have had enough, really, I thought well I would have more fun at home. But it's nice, though, the cooking and that, the meals, and it's all inclusive, all your drinks and that, it's all free. I didn't drink much though, did we. I had a cough, as well, that started off, why is it always when I'm on holiday?

When was this?

January, just after Christmas.

What was the weather like?

It was very windy at one time. Very windy, it blew signposts off and broke windows, and two children got killed in Barcelona, the roof collapsed in.

What did you do with yourself apart from going to the shops?

Walked up and down the sea front, it's quite a nice long walk along there. Yes, and I was looking for a stiff brush to scrub the blocks, paving, something to scrub that, I couldn't find one in London and I was looking for one there, and we found one. A couple. You know, you use to scrub it, with a long handled, you know. But I don't do that now because I sealed it all with this stuff to stop weeds and that coming through.

You didn't go to Spain to find a brush, did you?

Yes! That's all I was interested in really! I was thinking about work again at home! I bought these shoes there. I can go in the river with them.

What did you miss when you are away from home then?

The garden. Walks and that. Yes, because there are walks there but they've got all these

tower blocks all up all over the place, and the gardens, it's more concrete, isn't it, their gardens, not very nice. You just get fed up with looking around shops, shops, shops, it's all right for women, but I had better get home really.

But you are going to Germany in July, are you?

Yes. Going up the river.

Have you been before?

Well I've been to Germany, yes but not there. We are passing through we stop in Bond or somewhere, we were going to Croatia, yes, we were going to Croatia.

When was that? How did you get on in Croatia?

It was quite nice, yes, nice place.

What did you like about that?

Well, the hotel was nice, and the beach and that, and the different towns we went to, little ports and that, by the sea, the cafes and that.

Is there any place that sticks in your mind that you have visited, any particular place, that made an impression on you?

Well, we went to Venice -- seeing these horses, these Spanish -- you know the Spanish dancing with horses, they've got them all white, and they do all that and there is a stable where they bred them, and they gave us a show of them, and that was quite impressive. Some of them are born black but they go white after a time. I was stroking the horses and they said 'he will bite you' and I said 'I know but I won't let him'. It was the oldest horse there, he was. That and the caves, they go miles and you are walking in and up and around, some Russian discovered it. What's that place near Croatia? I can't think of the name of it.

Do you go on holiday every year?

Yes. A couple of holidays a year. Skills or the other big firm.

Wallace Arnold?

It's a big firm.

[23:45]

Doesn't matter. Do you ever go looking at gardens for a holiday? I mean do you go looking at other people's gardens?

Well, erm, in Holland, the Dutch bulbs, or the Chelsea flower show, they do that by coach, don't they.

Did you go to the Chelsea show this year?

They have it every year don't they.

Tell me about the last time you went to the Chelsea flower show?

I haven't been there.

You haven't been?

No, I would like to go.

But you are a Londoner! What about gardens round Nottingham?

They are already -- it's mostly garden centres, isn't it? The parks and that are nice, aren't they and the roundabouts they do them well.

When you are away from home, apart from your garden, what else do you miss?

Jobs.

You like working?

I don't like reading, I read the paper -- I read two books once, when I was ill it was in hospital that was, and then I couldn't -- they kept coming in and I was reading something, the same page over again and over again and they kept walking in and talking and then I would look back and think where was I?

Do you watch television at all?

In the evenings, yes.

What do you watch?

Anything, whatever is on. I like the sport and that and some soaps, I like the Dog Whisperer, I think he is funny.

Which soap?

Eastenders, but when you go on holiday you miss them and you can't catch up with what's going on and it's all the same stuff. I've fallen out with that as well. Coronation Street and Eastenders.

I'm just looking at my notes.

I like Britain's Got Talent.

[26:49]

Did you have any of your family deaf?

No, only my dad was a bit hard of hearing but that was with age, though.

When he was older you mean? At what age?

About 65 or something.

So you've no other history of deafness in the family or anything?

No.

No, no.

No, only with eyes.

I notice in your details you said you didn't have any contact with other deaf people. But you went on the LINK course, didn't you? You must have met other deaf people there?

Yes.

Do you know any deaf people in Nottingham?

No, not really. They introduced one come and see me when I was deaf to come and see me, she lived in deter by, that was the only one really.

What about lipreading classes or anything like that?

No.

Have you ever been offered the chance to do that? Has anybody ever invited you to go to a group or a lipreading class?

No.

They must have done after your LINK course, surely? After you went on the LINK course?

No, because I had the implant not long after that.

They didn't?

Because it didn't take long to put it in, really. When I went there I had a big cotton wool stuff in it, because I had just had the operation. And we saw Jenny at the Hearing Foundation there.

Sorry, tell me more about that Jenny, I haven't heard about Jenny, tell me more about Jenny.

Well, she looked after us when we were in Eastbourne and that.

Oh, I see. She is not in Nottingham?

No, she lives in Eastbourne. And there was another chap who was helpful. They say I used to shout, they stopped me.

So this other fellow was in Eastbourne and not back home?

No I'm talking about when it was in Eastbourne and they stopped me shouting, you know.

I'm surprised you haven't had any contact in Nottingham with a group?

Well, I go to the Ear Foundation sometimes. I've got quite a few there, but mostly I think it's for children and that, parents with children.

Where is that?

They have them all over the place, in Loughborough and –

Where do you go, I mean, you say you go to the Ear Foundation, where?

I used to go to the Ear Foundation just there and they used to have sandwiches and that and they used to have a talk and they used to have this chap come from America or somewhere explaining the cochlear implants and that. Then they have a raffle and that.

Where is this?

It's in Nottingham, the Ear Foundation. But I am the world's worst person to talk to a deaf person, because I can't understand what they are saying.

[30:40]

But you told me that the cochlear implant is marvellous?

It is really, yes.

But now you are telling me you can't make sense of it?

They can't hear what I'm saying, that's what I'm saying. They say I talk too fast. I don't know. I used to be slow and precise at one time.

I don't -- this place that you go to locally, the Ear Foundation, describe the place for me, I don't know anything about it?

Don't you know it?

No.

I thought you was in -- oh you are in LINK.

I'm not from Nottingham or Eastbourne. Describe it to me.

I got the invitation from Eastbourne.

Yes, but what is this place you go to. You say you go to the Ear Foundation in Nottingham?

Oh yeah it's like -- it's where they put people up that live far away that's coming here for a cochlear or an implant for their children and that, the parents stop with them.

Oh I see, I'm with you now?

Like a hostel.

This is a clinic?

Yes.

I'm with you now. I thought you meant it was some sort of social group?

Oh no, not a social thing, no.

[32:13]

I understand. Well, I think I'm running out of steam. What else would you like to tell me about your deafness?

Well, that's about it, really. I'm quite pleased with it, you know the ear implant, with it, but being deaf don't really worry me that much. I live a really sheltered life, really.

Can you imagine what you might be like if you didn't have the implant?

It would be unbearable, really. Well, I mean I would live in a world of my own then. I live in a world of my own, but it would be worse, if I was deaf I would go into decline, really. Stop indoors and that and do my gardening.

But that's what you do now?

I would do it more! I would be all night doing it. I would talk to the plants. But I've always been like that, though, I've never been -- well, I'm not anti-social, but I'm not a big conversationalist, really.

Yes.

A few words and that and that's about it.

What regrets do you have?

Regrets? I got no regrets really. Like I'm really happy with my life, really. Some people never are really happy and never got enough and that, they are always trying for more and more and they are never happy really. If you've got your ultimate strength I am happy, I ain't got that much but I'm happy with what I got. I have been knocking on the door a few times. There was a lump I had, and well I had TB back in 1980, that's what caused all me bad lung and that. I had that for three years before they this knew anything about it, before I done anything, because they didn't know about it then, did they, you would go to the hospital with a cough and they would say, oh, and then they sent me up to the hospital and they didn't even notice it. Finally they did and when he come up to see me he said 'oh I told you', he says, and when he told me I didn't know what the hell it was, 'what's that?', I thought at least I've got something, going there if I ain't got nothing and then the ambulance took me into hospital then and I was there for four months in hospital. Nice it was, I quite enjoyed it really, I didn't want to go home! The administrator came in and said, 'are you still here', he used to say! Because of course it was costing them money all the time I was there, I suppose.

Well, that was very interesting. I think you are a very self-sufficient person.

I feel it, yes.

And I've no more questions, I don't think.

No more, oh.

So we will stop at that.

[End of recording]