



Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Colin Lennox
Interviewed by Stephanie Pennell

British Library ref. C1345/58

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

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: C1345/58

Collection title: Unheard Voices: interviews with deafened people

Interviewee's surname: Lennox

Title:

Interviewee's forename: Colin

Sex: Male

Occupation:

Date and place of birth: 1956, Birkenhead

Date(s) of recording: 20th June 2009

Location of interview: Holiday Inn, Washington, Tyne and Wear

Name of interviewer: Stephanie Pennell

Speech to Text reporter: Julia Jacobie

Type of recorder: Marantz PMD660 on compact flash

Recording format : WAV 16 bit 44.1 kHz

Total no. of tracks: 1

Mono or stereo: stereo

Total Duration: 1 hr. 34 min.

Additional material:

Copyright/Clearance: Open. © Hearing Link

Interviewer's comments:

[Track 1]

This is Stephanie Pennell interviewing Colin Lennox on Saturday 20th of June. 2009. We're in Newcastle in Washington. The Speech-to-Text reporter is Julia Jacobie.

My full name is Colin Alexander Lennox.

Could you please give me your occupation or former occupation?

My present occupation I work for a firm called Dupont, locally in Dumfries. I am a day support supervisor but my professional skills I was a plumber by trade. Before I joined that company. I joined that company in that capacity.

Thank you could you please give me your date, and place of birth.

I was born on the 24 September 1956. In Birkenhead in Liverpool.

Thank you. Could you please give me your father's occupation?

My Dad is now retired but he worked as a mechanic, it was actually a firm called the Caledonian the British road services. He's now retired.

Could you please give me your mother's occupation ?

Again my Mum is retired, she worked for years in the clothing industry making trousers, jerseys, suits that sort of thing. Again she's retired.

Thank you. Moving on to the background questions now, can you tell me please something about your grandparents?

My grandparents on my Mum's side, my granny was killed in the war. She was the last person in Birkenhead to die during the war, there was a bomb dropped on the house. So I never knew my granny on my Mum's side. My Grandpa on my Mum side again died when I was maybe 18 months old. So I never really knew them. We

moved up to Scotland when I was maybe 3 years old, my Dad's Mum she was quite a character. She was very nice. A typical Scottish Grandma. But again she died when I was very young, I was about 5 when she died. My Dad's Dad, my Papa he was a lorry driver which used to thrill us when he fetched the big lorry round the house we would get a wee run in the lorry. Sadly he has passed on as well, again when I was young when I was 10 year old. My both sets of grandparents are no longer here.

Could you tell me about your parents?

My Mum she was born in Birkenhead, met my Dad when they were both stationed at Blackpool in the RA F, post-war. My Dad he's a Dumfries lad, again he met my Mum when they were in the RAF in Blackpool. They got married and lived in Birkenhead for a couple of years before they decided to come back to Scotland. I have 2 brothers and 2 sisters, a big family. Both Mum and Dad are retired now, both still alive both still well touch wood.

And are you close as a family?

Yes very close very close indeed. Although my brothers and sisters now are scattered world wide, my Mum and Dad my son, my daughter, and their kids all live within a couple of streets of one another. So we are pretty close. I have a brother who played professional football in Hong Kong, he's still in Hong Kong. I have a sister who lives in Lutterworth near Birmingham, another one lives in Kendal, another brother he lives locally right in the countryside. So we're pretty close.

Are you married?

Yeah! I have been married now for about 36 years. My wife and I were friends at school, married very young, still married. Happily.

Do you have children?

Yeah I have got a son and a daughter. My son is now 36, my daughter will be 33 nearly. My daughter has 3 children, the oldest boy my first grandson and just about a

year ago she had twins a boy and a girl. My son and his wife are expecting a baby in September, and as I say we all live pretty close so very tight knit family.

[07:02]

Thank you. Can you tell me a little about the community that you live in?

I live in, it's a rural, the area is rural area but I live in if you like, the main town in the rural area. Population of Dumfries is probably about 40,000. But we border fields so I live in, basically the country. It's a nice area, number of times I have been tempted I have been offered work out with the area, turned it down for that area because I like the area it's a nice area, it's a nice area to live it's close enough to big cities but far enough away as well. It's a nice area.

As a community?

The community has changed. When we were kids, society has changed, the community when we were kids was very, very close, didn't have to lock doors, that sort of thing. Everybody knew everybody. All friends all went to same schools. But it's changed a bit, as you get older. People I think are a bit more suspicious a bit more wary of people, although the street I live in now is very nice. Most of the people that live in the street are elderly people, who bought the houses when they were first built. But they are very, very nice. It's a nice place.

Thank you. Can we go back to your education now if you would like to talk something about that.

Yeah I can remember my first day at the school. We lived in a I am not sure if you are familiar with the word pre-fab we lived in a little pre-fabricated house, put up post-war houses, kit form type things. We lived in a little pre-fab in a housing scheme called Lincluden. The school was just at the top of the road I can remember the first day going to school, in my school uniform on my school bag and my wee cap. My Mum taking me up the road to school, I wouldn't have it. I was going to the school myself. I was a big boy now I can remember that as if it was yesterday. We got to

top of road there was a swan walking up the road a big swan. So the school was closed until the RSPCA and the police and everybody came and moved the swan. I was so worried that I wasn't going to get to school because of this big swan. It turned out okay. but I was only at that school for a couple of weeks, when we got moved, we got the offer of a house out of the pre-fab into one of the biggest housing schemes in Scotland, council housing schemes in Scotland. It was a lovely house so my Mum took the house my Mum and Dad took the house I moved to a new school. I was very happy at the new school, again it was just at the bottom of the road. I can remember the janitor at the school was a big fat man Mr Wilson, he was really nice he always used to have pockets full of sweeties, you all always used to get a sweetie if you scored the goal at the football. So school and primary school I was really happy. I can't really remember much about my teachers at Primary school but I did enjoy it I liked the school. I like to learn new things. It was okay. Then I move from there to big school, the local high school which meant a bus ride across the town every day. We used to come home at dinner time, a bus ride across down 4 times a day we were on a bus to and from the school. But high school was a very, very big change for me from the Primary school because the kids were from all over the town. So your close knit group become even wider and wider. My interest in football took off, it was nurtured at the secondary school. Schools in Scotland are different from the schools in England I believe the schools in England have starter school, intermediate school and a finishing school. In Scotland we just have the 2, we go from primary to secondary. Secondary was very good. I was pretty academic, although numbers was never, I was okay with numbers but the likes of algebra where you put letters in instead of numbers that used to ... I blame it on the teacher they could never give me an answer that satisfied me as to why they were using letters instead of numbers. So arithmetic and that but mathematics didn't float my boat, but English and languages and that I was pretty good. My passion was always football. I always liked the football. I represented school I represented region and I represented national teams at schoolboy levels. And again through the football, big, big wide area, network of friends and colleagues. It was always my ambition I would always I like to the have been a gym teacher, but my reckoning if I was a gym teacher I would be able to play football all the time. And I certainly had enough qualifications when I left school, I got 5 O levels. I was asked, I was recommended to continue to go into further education to train to be a gym teacher. But when I, I had to go for a formal

interview to an academy in 6th form, I am afraid the man at the interview was a bit -- him and I just did not click. He told me I would need - if you believe this -- "get a hair cut". At the time I used to have long hair. So me being me said, I don't think there's much chance of that. So any way the offer is there for you if you would like to take it up. But when I was walking home seen an advert in an office window advertising for an apprentice plumber. So, I went in and the fellow says the jobs yours can you start Monday. So I was 15 at the time, and I did I started on Monday. I was quite fortunate because if 15 they sent me to the local technical college for City and Guilds in plumbing so through that he'd the education part of the training my work I was able to get pretty good national certificates for the plumbing just because I had an extra year on everybody else. That's probably my education. My history.

[15:44]

Going on then from your apprenticeship can you please tell me about your work?

The firm I served my time with as an apprentice was a local firm I was actually an electrician and a plumbers. I got to my 4th year which was just about time served, it looked as if the firm was going to go bankrupt. Through my football contacts I got the offer of employment just to ensure that my, I finish serving my time, with a bigger firm who worked on housing schemes that sort of thing. I worked there for about maybe a year, finished my apprenticeship, got the papers and that. Then left them went into a big engineering company which was like starting a apprenticeship again because it was so different from domestic plumbing. It happened to be in a local ICI factory. And that firm I learned welding and working with metal, and that sort of thing that I had never ever seen in the plumbing. It was kind of an extension to my apprenticeship. I worked there for about 5 years. Then I got the offer of employment back in the domestic as a supervisor. Which I took up. And I worked again locally, domestic plumbing for about 5 years again. Then ICI offered me a job as a plumber, and I went back to ICI in a local factory because the terms and conditions and pension, so I went back there. And ICI were taken over by the current company, Dupont, I have been there about 25 years now. Different roles, no longer working the tools. My title now is day support supervisor. I really run a squad of men that provides day support to the factory activities, so we ensure that all the raw materials

are there, all the scrap materials are removed so on so on. That briefly is my employment history.

[18:51]

Thank you. Can I ask you please going back a little you mentioned football, can you tell me a little more about how its been affecting your life?

Well football was a big part of my life, it was the only thing I ever wanted to do. It's funny, I cannae say that I used to I never had any big ambitions to be a super star I suppose I knew my own limitations but I really enjoyed playing football. I had done it quite successfully to quite a high standard I played professionally. But schoolboy stuff I represented Scotland at schoolboy levels, represented my school at regional levels I was Captain of the school team. When I left the school a local professional club Queen of the South signed me, but either wasn't good enough or old enough or whatever to really make a career out of playing football. So it was always a part-time, but it was part-time with a passion I have got to say. Probably biggest single thing that I regret through the hearing loss was the fact I lost the football. I was too old to play but I was heavily involved in coaching and managing local teams, I lost the ability to be able to do that. If you can't communicate you can't coach. But the football most of my social life, most of my friends, most of my ... my son played professional football he was with Kilmarnock for a number of years. My whole life was always based round about football.

Do you have any other hobbies?

I am the type that's tends if I do something I like to do it well to the best of my ability so I tend to focus on the one. When I was younger I used to really enjoy darts I used to play a lot of darts, I used to always be in the pub but I was never a drinker, because of the football I never used to drink much. Coca-Cola or a pint of shandy but I really liked the darts I was pretty could at the darts I used to play at a decent standard. But I broke my leg playing football in 1976, the same year that I won the national competition at the darts and I never played darts again until recently. Because I channelled all my efforts into getting back to football again I didn't have

time for anything else. So then, I suppose my passion then was the football and darts. Now, because I can't play football anymore, I am a golf fanatic. I probably started playing golf about 10 years ago which is too late to be a superstar, but I got to a decent handicap. And then had balance issues through my ears and that. I kind of went backwards a wee bit in the golf but I kept playing I really enjoyed the golf. It was a game where I didn't need to communicate so I could play on my own, or even if I was part of a group the it's all about what you do as an individual. So it was a good sport for me to pick up kept me active but the last 9 months or so, I am really starting to play well again at the golf so I am really starting to enjoy it again. Probably as a result of the operation. So just now, for the first time and I am back playing darts again, so football is kind of back seat, its a spectator sport. Golf and darts are my passion.

[23:18]

Can you ask you about your friend you mentioned you had various friends over the years, has this been sort of shifting population if you like, in your life?

My friends, I have a very close knit family, my best friends have always been my family. Your friends at the time tended to go with whatever football team you were playing or whatever team you were coaching at the time. That was your circle of friends. I have probably only got a couple of really close friends I have had from school days who are still friends but we don't really see much of one another. Not as much as we used to. My son, who was born when I was just 17 when he was born, we grew up if you like together. He's probably my best friend. I spent a, we still do spend a lot of time together, golfing, going to football matches so on and so on. But I have a wide range of broad area acquaintances. I can go most places in South-west Scotland or the bottom half of Scotland from Glasgow down there hardly a village or town I go into that I don't meet somebody that I know or who knows me through the football. It's nice in that respect. Close friends probably my son, he will be my closest friend in that respect just because of the nature of things.

Good. Can I ask about the various hobbies things you have had, obviously sounds as though you have travelled a lot is this so?

I have travelled a lot internationally, hobbies my hobbies are the sport. I was an avid reader always a school I liked to read books. I wasn't really fussy what they were but I would devour any sort of books. And latterly, with not being very good at conversation, again books came in heavily. So I was always an avid reader but my hobbies was always football because I never made a living hobbies were always football, golf and darts. I am not really I can't say that I like making model aeroplanes or that sort of thing. Just not me. Its football or darts, a bit boring in some people's eyes.

[26:31]

What about holidays?

Holidays when we were young, holidays were great going with my brothers and sisters. Because there was 5 of us my Mum and Dad in their days you never went abroad. I never went a broad until I was probably my kid would be about 10 years I was probably 26ish the first time I went a broad. Holidays were usually Butlins. One of the kids at next door was a manager in Filey in Yorkshire, accommodation manager, so we used to get friends and family discount to go to Butlins, it was great when we were kids we used to love it. We done that for years. When I got married, my kids came along it was much the same thing, locally the seashore in a caravan or but we always managed to get a holiday it was always good. Then when my earning potential got better I earned more money we went abroad. We used to go to Cyprus with the kids and that. Latterly, we have been going to Tenerife. We go maybe twice a year we'll go in March time and then again maybe in November which leaves our summer holidays free to spend with the families and the kids. So holidays are about maybe about 5 or 6 years ago, the whole family all over there happened to be a wedding. We made a pact at the wedding saying once a year we need to start getting together as a family and have a holiday, not wait for a wedding or a funeral. So we resurrected the Butlins, although there isn't so many of them left now. Haven Holidays. We went to Skegness last year which is miles away for us, Minehead which again is miles away. Pwllheli This year we're going to Ayre, there used to be a big one there. There is about 25 of us in total, all congregate on the Butlins. Its

Haven Holidays now. We really enjoy, grandkids and my sister's kids. My Mum and Dad still able to go, my daughter's mother in law, my son and his wife. Its really nice. That's my holidays.

Good. Lovely, moving on now can I ask about religion, do you have a faith?

I was when I was a kid, we used to attend the Church of Scotland all the time. I am not a disbeliever; I can't say am a great believer. I think there's somebody there but I don't spend a lot of time wondering who He is. I would like to think, Christian is not the right word but I like to think I am a pretty good person I treat people okay. I am in favour of the church. But I would rather my kids, my philosophy; make their own mind up in religion if they want it they can have it but it won't be forced on, it will not be me that makes them believers. They will make their own mind up. I am, I am still a member of the church, but I'm not a church goer.

What about politics?

I am a trade unionist I always have been, I like to see things done fairly. Traditionally trade unionists have been Labour supporters, and I was to a certain extent. But just recently, my political affiliations are shifting. I am not one for Scotland or Wales or Ireland breaking away from the UK I'm a firm believer in the UK. I do admire some of policies the SNP are putting in, in Scotland for instance the free prescriptions, free school dinners. I do realise somebody has to pay for them, but I am not convinced it's enough to make me vote for SNP to break away from the UK but I do like some of their policies. But as I say traditionally I was a Labour supporter.

[32:05]

Thank you. Moving on now can we talk about health, health care and specifically about your hearing loss and its diagnosis. Can you tell me where and when it happened.

Health wise I was always fit as a butchers dog, I never really had any problems I mean I had the usual thing when we kids we always, because we were a big family if

one got the measles, everybody got it. If one got chicken pox everybody got chicken pox. But never really, I was never unhealthy, I had a lot of orthopaedic accidents because I played professional football it was an occupational hazard. You were always getting a injury of some sort. But I was always okay. Pretty healthy, always have been. Never missed a day off work apart from if I had a serious injury at the football, used to limp in some days but always made my work. Apart from the time when I broke my leg. My hearing, it's funny when you get plenty of time when you can't hear people, to sit and reflect on maybe what's happened. I can remember years and years ago when we were kids we all got the German measles which lead to jaundice, I can remember my Mum putting a bed settee in the living room. You had to have a certain diet. My younger brother who's the middle one in the family, and me we got problems with our ears. And the doctor said it was a result of the German measles. We used to get terrible ear ache. My brother still has issues yet. He had mastoid operations. But mine seemed to go it never really bothered me again for years and years. Then it would be, I can't say that I really noticed any hearing loss as such, in my early 20s but I can remember one day playing football when I was, there was a fair crowd watching a local cup final. I was running along the pitch, and the next thing I was looking up at the sky I thought what on earth happened there? I thought somebody knocked me over. This was a start of dizzy attacks. I went to doctors and the doctors at the time my GP at the time diagnosed me with Ménière's disease. I was not really conscious of hearing loss I would be in my early 20s probably. The attacks seemed to come, doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason for them, I don't know why or what triggered them if anything, or whether it was just a slow cycle of events I am not sure. But I got the job in the ICI, passed the medical fine. I used to work shifts and I started to notice I was really struggling to hear on the left hand side but it was still okay because I still had plenty hearing in my right hand side. My work then instigated health checks on a yearly, we would have hearing checks. My left ear without fail was getting worse and worse over a period of 2 or 3 years. I seemed to lose everything in my left ear. But it was fine I coped okay, I was still getting the dizzy spells still taking, they prescribed a drug called SERC, I used to take them faithfully for about the 20 years. It never, ever stopped the dizzy if they decide to come they would come. It was okay I could manage it, it wasn't nice but I could manage it. then about 12 years ago, at my work again it was a night shift a Wednesday they night shift, where I work they make, for want of a better word, crisp

bags but we make the base film that makes the crisp bags we used to make big rolls of it and send it away they would make it into crisp bags. We make this stuff in a great big oven, probably a hundred yards long by about 18 yards wide. Anyway to cut a long story short, this is a continuous process and they wind it up in big rolls. If there's an interruption, you have to sort out what that interruption is. I went as custom and practice as we had been trained to do, there was an interruption you had to check the oven that there wasn't any debris left in the oven. When I went into the oven somebody started the machine again, two of us were in there at the time. The inter locks and health and safety in the place that was not supposed to be able to happen. And it caught me on the neck and knocked me on to the ground gave me serious burns down one side of my body and broke my neck and so on. I was in hospital for months. Skin grafts. And when I came out of there, the dizzy attacks the dizzy spells seemed to be more frequent. Same type of severity, just the frequency was much, much quicker. Then I started to notice that the hearing on my right side was dipping as well. And it was really becoming a problem because I had nothing on the left side. So that followed a period of visiting health professionals, audiologist so on so, and I was bounced from one professional to another. One would say yes, Ménière's disease its moved to your right ear. Another would say its not Ménière's disease, they weren't sure whether it was as a result of the hearing loss, I was in a spiral where I was getting nowhere quick the only thing that was happening I was going deaf I was being dizzy. There didn't seem to be any end to that.

[39:52]

So eventually, my work has a private health scheme which is a bet against my politics, I am a firm believer in national health. But I was desperate. I ended up attending a private hospital in Newcastle where a Mr Johnson who's a supposedly of leading lights in ENT in Britain he said yes you have Ménière's disease. By this time more and more powerful hearing aids I went for the wee hidden hearing-aids in the ear digital stuff which private health provided. They were no longer strong enough, I was behind the ear digital stuff then bigger and better. The Ménière's disease kind of gave me fluctuating hearing some days I could hear really well other days I couldn't hear a thing. It was so frustrating. Maybe a good two year ago they decided I would be a good candidate for a cochlear implant. So I set off on the route for a cochlear implant,

but at the time, politics intervened, Newcastle wanted to do the implant but my hospital my primary care trust would not pay for it because it was in England and I lived in Scotland. So that's where Hearing Concern LINK came in. They pointed me in the right direction, chivvied up a few people and I was transferred to Scottish cochlear implant programme. Hey presto I got the implant. That's a kind of brief history of where I am at the minute. Brief, well no say brief.

Can you describe your emotions through that whole period of time?

At the time I mean when I had the accident at my work it was really, it stopped me playing football. Then I was about 39, early 40s, too old to play it seriously but I enjoyed going to 5 a sides and that. But it took me about, I have never really recovered from that accident because I still have problems with my neck, mobility wise. I took up the golf to see how I could get on at the golf, it suited me I enjoyed the golf, I was really getting, sounds a cliché I was starting to get my life back a bit. I was still involved in the football I still had hearing in my right ear although it was getting worse I was still heavily involved in the football I was a manager of a local team I coached the kids I coached adults I was pretty good at it. I used to enjoy it. Then as my hearing deteriorated I was getting more and more frustrated, both with the kids, not so much the kids the adults and myself, I when I think back I wasn't picking up what they were saying. So I started, I didn't get the same enjoyment from the football. I stopped doing it. It took me about 2.5 years, and I convinced myself it was because I wasn't getting any enjoyment anymore out of the football but it was really because I couldn't really hear what people we're saying. Especially in a noisy environment like a dressing room. So I stopped doing that. Of course stopping going to football, and one fell swoop decimated my social life because my whole life revolved round football. So we just stopped going out well I did. If a wedding or anything like that come along I used to make any excuse not to go. So, it was a hard, hard thing for me personally and it must have been harder for my wife, because she was she didn't know what the pin number was on the bank card I used to do everything, tax the car all that sort of thing. She wouldn't know how to switch her computer on in those days. Everything then transferred to her because I couldn't hear on the telephone to save my life. If I went into a bank I couldn't hear what they were saying to me. All these sort of things. It must have been much harder for her, must

have been a big upheaval for her that I didn't really appreciate as much as it was for me. The kids by this time, they were grown had their own families and own life didn't affect them as much as it did my wife. It was just the 2 of us at home. We didn't have any grandkids, it was just the 2 of us. Probably for a 5 year period, we hardly ever spoke. Not because we didn't want to speak but because when I came home from work I was so exhausted with trying all day trying to hear, when I came home I want to sit in a pit of silence. You kind of get into a routine that was the routine we got into. It was really isolating. I am not one for saying I felt sorry for myself, I was determined to keep working I could have easily said, the company I worked for said if it gets too much for you fine. But it never was me, I thought I will battle on. I struggled away at work but I totally withdrew socially then my wee grandson was born, my first grandson that made a big difference because I thought I need to start doing stuff here. Especially with him. As he got to crawling stage the walking stages I used to take him places, to watch local football, swimming pools, libraries that sort of thing. I was thinking I better get a grip here and help myself I want to have any sort of relationship at all with the kids. So I went to a local lip-reading class I actually seen it in the paper. The frustrating thing for me is that maybe its because of where I live, but there was not a great deal of help. There wasn't a great deal of information. They hand you your hearing-aid that was it they used to send you home. It was so bad one time when I went to the audiologist he gave me a hearing-aid for my left ear which I had not been able to hear in for, they might have well have given me an ear plug. What a waste of time and energy and money. So I was pretty peed off about the authorities.

[48:17]

So I seen in a local paper, lip-reading class I thought that might be the thing for me. I should go there and learn to lip-read. As it turns out subconsciously I must have been lip-reading for years I was quite good at it at the class compared with some of the people that were there. But I did learn finger-spelling and a degree of Sign Language, although I didn't find it very helpful. It was OK in the classes when everybody knew what you were talking about. But when I came out of the class and went home my wife didn't know what finger-spelling was, kids didn't know. Because I live in not so densely populated area I didn't know many other people that

knew finger-spelling it was a skill you learned and lost just as quickly. It gave me - confidence is not the right word, I had not lost my confidence I just lost my enthusiasm for the social part. But as I say my grandson he sorted that out. I used to take him everywhere. Then I got the opportunity of the implant. It was a lot of soul searching in that because I had never ever at any time in this whole journey this whole journey to deafness as I like to call it, considered that they would implant my good ear. I mistakenly thought they would implant the bad ear and I would have a bit of both. When I was in Newcastle they didn't give me any indication they would implant my right ear, I was always under the impression it would be the left. But I went to Cross House, Scottish implant Centre, they said they would implant my right ear because it would give me the best chance of success. But the implication of that it would leave me totally deaf. I probably had about 25% hearing left at the time. Even with the hearing-aid so it wasn't great anyway but it was mine. And I was loathe to lose that so I had to make a decision to go for the implant. I done a whole lot of research on cochlear implants, the internet is a great thing but sometime it can give you far too much information. And this Mr Johnson at Newcastle says he advised me to get in touch with Hearing Concern LINK, when the funding issue came up because I lived in Scotland because my PCT was in Scotland and they wanted to do the operation in Newcastle. My PCT refused to pay for it. So, it looked as if I was going to have to start the whole thing again in Scotland, go through all the tests all the qualifying thing that I already just done in England. When he advised me to get in touch with Hearing Concern LINK which I did. And I e-mailed, I am not sure the lady's name now, I e-mailed this person we'll say on a Wednesday morning at 9 o'clock. And by about dinner time I had a reply saying give me some history, and I will see what I can do. By tea time that night I had another email saying you have to go to Cross House hospitals in November it was, of 2008, they will assess you and within 18 weeks if you're a successful with the assessment you will have surgery. So Hearing Concern LINK latterly played a big, big part in where I am now. When I finally got to Cross House its a superb facility, absolutely superb. Scotland is different in England in the respect that in Scotland they have what they call centres of excellence for in this case it was cochlear implants. Anybody in Scotland that needs one goes to Kilmarnock, and I guess there's a place in Glasgow where if anybody needs a heart transplant they go to centre of excellence for heart transplant. But in my case it was Cross House in Kilmarnock. I was a bit reluctant because Mr Johnson at

Newcastle was the first professional for all this whole journey into deafness, who seemed to be talking sense who gave me a sense of direction, this is where we need to go he was pretty confident, he gave me confidence again in the health professionals, in the hearing professionals. I was a bit loathe to leave him and go to Cross House. But when I got there they were absolutely superb its a terrific facility.

[54:00]

In November they said yes you're a good candidate for implantation, but we would like to implant your right ear not your left which really meant without the implant, I am deaf. I took a bit of getting my head round that took a pit of soul searching. Again Mr Johnson put me in touch with the makers, one of the things I found was a bit difficult to get your head round was the implant centres, it was the same in England say there's 3 different brands of implant you can pick 3 different makers. They weren't really fussy what brand you picked everything had something better as the other. It was just the end result is generally much the same. Preferences, you choose. But they gave me a website for Advanced Bionics. They sponsor a forum with people who have had Advanced Bionics implants. It was a terrific website I was able to speak to people who had a similar experience as me, similar age as me, similar trials and tribulation, went a long way to easing a lot of questions, easing a lot of the doubts. I chose the Advanced Bionics for the implant. In March of this year in the first of March this year, I had the operation done in Cross House. And then there was a 6 week gap between having the operation and having the internal part of the operation and the implant fitted, to the fitting the external part and switch on. For that 6 weeks I was totally deaf. It was not too bad because I had problems when I was nearly deaf anyway with hearing-aid, so it wasn't as bad as I expected to be. It wasn't nice but I have had worse things. Then they switched me on, I have not looked back I have got to say. Its been super.

[56:38]

Can you describe what it was like before when you were totally deaf, and afterwards being able to hear, that separate journey, that small journey from deafness to hearing?

I thought I had myself pretty well prepared for deafness because I convinced myself that my hearing was so bad at times with the hearing-aid I wasn't far away from being deaf anyway. You work out all the strategies where to sit in a room, what functions to attend what meetings to attend what people to invite to the meetings who speak nice and clear I had already started using all that. But one thing I did underestimate, and underestimated really badly was the help that even residual hearing, the clues you get from that residual hearing is really reinforces the lip-reading skills. If those clues are not there and you are totally deaf its so difficult to follow a lot of the stuff lip-reading. Its okay if you instigate a conversation, but if somebody comes and asks you a question out of the blue, unrelated topic its so difficult then to pick up the lip-reading. That 6 week spell was really, really difficult. TV and that wasn't too bad because I had always been in the habit of watching TV with subtitles anyway. It wasn't too bad. It was just the conversation, the easy conversation if my wife was to say "would you like a cup of tea?" that was easy because I could lip-read that. But if she was to come in from her work, and she works in a nursing home and say so and so has took not well or so and so has died or whatever, I just could not get that it was so difficult to lip-read that part. My wee grandson again it took him about 2 weeks to realise that I couldn't hear anything. Before he used to get some clues that what was going to be said, what would be your best reply to that. He still has the habit he's not dropped the habit, he had to come and touch me. It was a couple of funny stories when he was having what we call now a sleep over, staying away and on the Saturday morning which was we used to always go on the bike. I had a special seat made for him on the bike when he was a kid. We used to go for miles on the bike he used to love this. He was tapping me on the Saturday morning, he was only two of us in, for the life of me I couldn't make out what he was saying. Whereas at the time he was just turned 4 and a bit, and he got a blank sheet of paper. Because everybody else came in had been in the habit of writing down anything I couldn't catch. So he gets a blank piece of paper and a pencil he drew two big circles on the piece of paper with a line in between them signifying a bike, he wanted to go out on the bike. And I'm not kidding you the tears were running down here. Poor wee soul, it was terrific, shows you how adaptable kids can be. We had a wee trip on the bike. That six weeks, it certainly, there was an element of safety in it as well. Even though you have got not much, little hearing I could still hear the fire alarm if it went in the house. I could never really

hear the door bell or the telephone, but sometimes I could. I could hear the dog barking, and he would bark if the door or the phone went. That 6 week period I lost all that. So it was a bit, even yet when I come too hotel like this at night when I take this off, I never really sleep properly. Because I am not saying its insecure I am not just sure that I would like I like to be in charge of my own safety I am not one to rely on anybody else being in charge for me. So kind of sleep with one eye open kind of thing. So that 6 week period was, and of course you have a lot of doubts, have I done the right thing here, is this implant going to work? Because all the people tell you, health professionals especially say that “look this implant will not restore your hearing its not the same as natural hearing”. I am thinking during that 6 week period, “have I done the right thing here?” Too late to change my mind, but it’s all these things come into it. Then when they switched me on, we went up my wife and my sister came through from Glasgow, and my sister she's a typical like I was saying typical Glasgow, lived in Glasgow now for 40 years, married life. She as broad Glaswegian as a natural born Glasgow person. But she has all there's a Scottish word, “galus” which means she is really very confident. She said to me her exact words, when she came, “I am glad you will not be shouting at me anymore you ween yuff”. So any way, they came with me and we were in an audiologist booth thing. The audiologist was writing on a piece of paper exactly was going to happen and how it was going to happen about 2 hours they played a series of beeps. Then he said to me, he wrote on a bit of paper, he said it am going to switch you on now. Tell me what you hear. He looked at me and he said “can you hear me?” I heard it as plain as day but I think my grandson could have lip-read him! I said it can hear you as plain as anything. He said well, just so I know you weren't lip-reading, can you look out the window. So I had to turn my back look out the window. And this boy had a right broad Scottish, an Ayrshire accent, has a different dialect as my accent he said to me “I could murder a Belhaven Best”, which is a pint of Scottish beer I heard it as plain as anything. So I told him what I said he said “that is absolutely fantastic”. He said I don't think I have ever had an implant recipient respond as quickly as that. He said I think you better have a break, just go and take a wee walk round the hospital and come back. Well my wife and her sister had went for a cup of tea I said I will go find them. As I come out of the implant centre, still part of the hospital, but a wing on its own, into the mainstream hospital a man in the corridor stopped me and asked me directions. I heard every word he said. I thought this is fantastic. But I couldn't find

my wife. My mobile phone, I just use it for texting because I never been able to hear it for years, I never been able to hear a mobile phone it was always just used for texting. So I was standing outside I thought I will text her, then I thought no I will phone her. So I put the phone in my ear - I am standing outside I wasn't sure where to hold this phone because I never heard the sounds before, I heard a funny noise. I wasn't sure whether the noise was this implant or the phone or whatever, but it was the ringing tone on the phone. I didn't know that. Then this lady's voice come on and says "we're unable to connect your call at present. Please try later". I looked at the phone I said who on earth is that? Just at that my wife walked up, I said "how did you learn to talk like that?" She has a Scottish accent as well, this was not Scottish, she said "what are you talking about?" I said there's a woman on the phone saying please try later she said, no, no that's the operator, that's what happens if your phone is switched. I heard that as plain as anything on the day they switched me on. I went back in I told audiologist that he couldn't believe it. From the word go from the minute they switched me on it's been absolutely terrific. Its early days yet I have only had it 3 and a half months, but the difference in 3 and a half months, in me and confidence, I feel like I am getting back to the old me. I might even take up football again.

[01:07:24]

Great thank you. How do you feel about the switch between the self-esteem you had before hand, and now?

Its a difficult question because the type of person I am I have always been bit cocky, a bit sure of myself sometimes too cocky some people would say. I am not sure I lost that confidence, I just withdrew from people. I just wasn't prepared to interact with people. I would choose the situation that suited me rather than the other way round about. I wasn't keen on situations that were not under my control kind of thing. Since I have had this done I am happy to do whatever. I am back to what I used to be before. There's not many situations touch wood yet, that phase me. Although having said that, couple of weeks back May time, Hearing Concern LINK held a volunteer training session in Glasgow I went to that. I don't know why but for about 4 days I really struggled I don't know what it was with the implant, everybody sounded like

Daleks. Or Darth Vader or something like that. I thought 'heavens here we go'. I sat there, I could hardly hear a thing I could hear but I couldn't make out what they were saying. But then it came alright again I have been fine since. So, I had made, my son-in-law my wee grandson's Dad he convinced me to start playing darts again, because I wasn't going out or socialising because I would sit in the house all the time on my own, specially when my wife worked shifts. He convinced me to come and play darts again there was a an element of getting back into the social thing anyway, before I had the, kind of linked with me going to lipreading and what I said before about my wee grandson. I wanted to be able to have a relationship with my grandkids, a better start being a bit pro-active in where I am. Sowed the seeds of getting back into the mainstream. I was tentatively starting to climb back up from the bottom. Pick myself back up.

[01:10:34]

Work wise, work was very difficult because as I said I have always been an active trade unionist, I was elected representative. I was a site convenor, it was getting more and more difficult especially with being a convenor it meant I was chairing meetings that were dozen, 20 strong people which was so, so difficult. The company I worked for were very, very good they provided all sorts of support for me to get through the meetings, but I didn't like to be treated any differently as anybody else. It was getting hard I was getting close to saying 'no I have had enough of this'. Whether or not implant came galloping over the horizon kind of thing, and I hung in there. I have just about back to where I was before. Its funny people, you're not aware of people's perception of you until they start telling you, and they say that now, I am back to what I was prior to hearing loss getting too bad my speech and all the rest of it is so much better, more fluent, more cohesive as it was before. I was getting a bit staccato if that's the right word, small sentences, unknown to me I never realised this before I couldn't hear "S" sounds or "CH" or "TH" sounds. I don't know how you are going to get that down. So I subconsciously started not using the words. But you don't realise that you are not doing that. Until I went back to work they said what a difference in your speech. And of course the volume level, before they were shouting with the hearing-aid. It didn't I couldn't hear my voice II didn't think I was shouting but to everybody else if shouting. When I got the implant they said you have to speak

up you're too quiet because I can hear my own voice now. That's been a big thing its a bit reassuring when you can hear yourself talking.

[01:13:07]

Can I ask you about your personal relationship, obviously your wife as you said was under a lot of pressure, during the time you were under pressure. How are things now?

I am not the best one to talk about, she's probably better but from my perspective, for me, we were, I was 16 on the Wednesday, I got married on the Saturday. My wife was 17. So we have always been friends as well as married if you like. I think after 36, 35, 36 years married, conversations it's not the be all and end all. It's not like when you first meet when you are talking about everything and anything, but I have already said for a number of years, the only time we would really have any conversation was when we were on holiday or something like that if there was any the two of us. Day-to-day stuff must have been really difficult for her. It was okay for me, because I was at work I was talking or trying to talk to people all the time. But there was a lot of time she was at home waiting on me coming in then I wouldn't talk when I got in or I couldn't hear what she was saying. She used to get frustrated having to repeat herself. And that sort of thing. And then of course, she had to take over the day-to-day stuff, the bill paying, all the wee silly things that you can't live without for instance taxing the car or paying the phone bill you have got to do online or on the telephone. She had never done anything like that she didn't usually do anything like that. Not through choice not because I want to do it was just the way we had always done things. She had to pick all that side of it up. If happy to let her do that, and I think a big change now is she's so used to doing it she automatically goes forward and does that now. And I kind of resent it because I can do it! But, in a perverse sort of way it's probably been a good thing for my wife it's made her more confident in her own abilities and that sort of thing. It's hard to say its makes a stronger as a couple but it has not driven us apart in anyway. We're still here! Which is, no surprising but where we probably would have been anyway because ...

[01:16:43]

Thank you. Can you tell me over this very long period of time through losing your hearing, being deaf or deafened, and then getting it back again, has that whole journey changed your perspective?

Well its certainly, well I mean the fact I'm sitting here today proves that its broadened my horizons at least, its opened my eyes. Pardon the pun but it has opened my ears as well. There is an element of you think you're only the one in the world that has this issue, but it has certainly opened my eyes. It again sounds a cliché I am not using clichés but you think you're the only one that's got this problem. And its a bit, not comforting is not the right word, but it has a bit reassuring is maybe the right word that there's other people going through the same thing you are going through. I have had families, other couples other individuals. So my perception on the whole raft in my case, hearing loss has changed completely. Because of the impact Hearing Concern LINK had on me, through their pulling power through their influence, with the hearing professionals, really impressed me and I thought I would like to be able to do that I would like to be able to be in a position to help somebody sooner rather as later. As when it came to me. Because it might save somebody a whole lot of that sort of stuff that I went through. I think its a personal thing because all the emotions and that they are personal you can't you have got to go through that anyway, but the practicalities of where to go and how to go about it, maybe if I had known that earlier it wouldn't have been as fraught, as roller coaster as it was. So I mean, and in my wife's case it certainly broadened her whole scope. She's now very much more independent than she was before. She's more confident in herself dealing with business like stuff and strangers. She's not as shy as she was before, well she wasn't that shy, confidently shy.

[01:20:01]

Can I ask you about how you find people's reactions generally, not your family?

Again that's a bit difficult because the type of person I was, I was always the captain of the team whatever it was, if it was darts or football or the golf. So, people always used to, I am not saying respect I don't know if that's the right word, but always had

people coming to me for advice, rather than just me going to them for advice. Same with my work. People always came to me. Always looked to me to be to be do the leading type thing I was always quite comfortable doing that. I am not really sure.

Rephrasing it then can I ask you on your views of access and awareness?

Right away at the very start when I first started having issues, I was referred to my local Ear Nose and Throat department, ENT department and there was a particular head of department there who was in my eyes an ignorant man, he didn't listen to anything I had to say. I wasn't trying to tell him how to do his job, I was just telling him what was happening with me he wouldn't listen to me he wasn't interested in what I had to say. He seemed to pigeon hole me right away, on his first consultation, impression whatever it was, on me and he never varied from that all the time. He was very, very critical and it was probably him that through him that I never went back to the Ear, Nose and Throat place for a long, long time. Probably didn't go nearly as early as I should have. Another thing have noticed when you say access, end again I am not sure if it's because of myself imposed exile from the ENT, or because I live in a sparsely populated area. But there was not much information for somebody in my situation. As I said Ear, Nose and Throat gave me a hearing-aid sent me home, never ever recalled me to have the hearing aid set up or checked or whatever. It was just left to get on with. Didn't know a thing about digital hearing-aids or about hearing loss apart from the fact I couldn't hear. It was really critical at that, and being in all other ways healthy I never went to the doctors. He give me these tablets all the years ago I just kept taking for them just kept asking for repeat prescription they were giving them no questions asked for 20 odd years. I didn't see my GP, I didn't know my GP's name. I was left to get on with it but I didn't force things I just accepted them and got on with it. So, but when things started to get I needed help I realised I needed help, there still was not any mention of an institution like this. It was not, I didn't realise it was such a thing as Hearing Concern LINK, I had heard of the RNID, but I didn't realise that had anything to do with me I thought that was for deaf people. I wasn't deaf I could still hear a bit. It wasn't really anything in my eyes, it wasn't anything that jumped out and said "there's help here, and this the way to go to get any help". When I did go to my GP he never once said there's an organisation called Hearing Concern or there's an organisation called RNID or whatever. Didn't even tell

me there was lipreading classes. So it was pretty critical. It was okay when you got to very top, when I got to the top man in the Ear, Nose and Throat place, Mr Johnson, and the people at the cochlear place in Kilmarnock absolutely superb, really professional people really caring people. And I am don't mean to be disrespectful to people in the middle the local surgeries, but they don't seem to have much, maybe its because of the time constraints, I am not sure but for instance I would go in, I have said before I really struggle, I don't know how you cope but coloured people or Asian people in particular accents are really, really difficult to lipread. I would go in 9 times at of 10 it would be an Asian guy who was the audiologist, or the ENT person. They would ask you to take your hearing-aid out, and then talk to you when they are holding your hearing aide I couldn't understand them with my hearing-aid and there was no chance of understanding. I said there was "no disrespect intended but I can't understand a word you are saying to me you need to do something about this". It was surprising for me, that hearing professionals have not got that level of understanding that's required. For communication with hard-of-hearing people. So, apart from the very top of the tree, I am not impressed with how it is handled all the way up how the information, which is why the opening story this morning for next door really hits home. If there's a network to bring that support I want to be part of that, I would like to be part of that in some small way.

The last question really is about your, well actually, on the subject of discrimination do you feel you have ever been discriminated against? As a deafened person?

Discrimination, I think again from a trade unionist background there's 2 types of discrimination, there's knowingly discriminating against somebody, knowing saying you can't have that job or you can't too this or that because you are deaf or disabled or whatever. And then there the discrimination where people don't do it wittingly, they do it for instance say "oh don't talk him he can't hear, talk to me". That's discrimination but its no, sometimes it's done for the best reasons. Discrimination is, it's I can't say I have been discriminated, I don't think in my work environment I have been discriminated against. But I have never been in a position where my employer has the opportunity to discriminate against me I have never been for a job interview or anything like that since I have had the issues. The job I am in is the job I am in. If I was paranoid I would say that maybe other people have got things done that would

have probably come my way if I had been fully hearing, but discrimination no. Not really.

[01:29:29]

Thank you. So to sum up now, we're approaching the end of the interview, I wanted to ask you about your feelings on this project, Unheard Voices, and how you feel about what you have been doing today.

I had never heard of it or the British Library when they asked me if I would be interested at York. I thought 'I am not sure what that's all about', I don't know what I was volunteering for. So when we went town to London and seen the British library I never knew anything about the fellow down there the boss down there gave us the whys and the wherefores if you like on what it was all about I thought what a smashing idea what a really good idea. An I understand all the philosophy behind you interviewing me, I think you have got some empathy towards where my situation. I certainly feel pretty comfortable sitting with somebody that can sympathise with where I am, but the whole set up here is a bit false. I wouldn't get this in real life. Its again it is about comfort the fact that my story might be used, if we rewind back a bit, and I say that if I was doing research on the internet into deafness and hard of hearing or whatever, and I knew there was a facility on oral history where I could go in and pick out a male of my age with similar history and listen to what his life story has been like that would be very, very reassuring for me as somebody going through that process. So in that respect, if that's the only reason for doing this it's a good reason. But the fact its a bit humbling when you think this is going to be in the British Library for when I am long gone, and maybe my grandson and his grandson could go there say there's my Papa in the British Library. There's a bit of vanity in that as well. Being preserved for posterity if you like.

Thank you. Finally, can I ask if you have any particular plans or hopes for your future?

Probably break it into three. I have got the short-term plans just to enjoy this freedom that the implant brings back, enjoy the kids I can hear my, my daughter hat twins they

are just at the stage where they are starting to talk and walk now I really enjoy that part of it. So short-term, biggest driving factor going to where I was, was to give be the best chance to hear the kids, to be part of that and not been excluded from that in any shape or form. That was the short-term thing. Middle term, just to get everything back the way it was, obviously I am a bit older in that in that things change as you do get older unfortunately. But the middle term thing is just get back to my family's normality. Longer term, part of the reason I am here, maybe through the benefits of my experience to help others. In similar situations.

Thank you. Thank you very much indeed Colin for giving a smashing interview, for coming along today, thank you too Julia for supporting us. I will close the interview now. Thank you.

[End of recording]