P There we go. Oh, by the way, I got your email with the form.

I Yes.

P But my computer couldn’t cope with your form.

I Oh! Should I quickly go over it with you?

P Yes, please.

I Okay. I thought yeah, so okay I’ll read it to you now then. What it says is, it’s a participant consent form. And the purpose, the purpose of this study is to explore experiences of offline and online community engagement in the context of local community groups with a particular focus on the experiences of people who are retired. The procedure, if you agree to be in this study you will be asked to take part in an interview. The interview should take approximately 30 to -5 minutes to complete and will involve you answering questions from a researcher in an informal discussion. The benefits/risks to the participant, there are no risks or benefits expected for the participants of the study. Then the bit that says, voluntary nature of the study, confidentiality. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may decline to continue with the interview at any point. Your name will never be connected to your responses. Instead a pseudonym or a fake name will be used for identification purposes. Information that would make it possible to identify you or any other participant would never be included in any sort of report. The data will be accessible to only those working on the project. And the last little bit here is ethical approval, this study has been approved by the Sciences and Technology Research Ethics Committee at the University of Sussex, if you have any concerns about the way in which the study is being conducted you may contact the committee which reviews the project and there’s a telephone number here, do you want to jot it down?

P No. No, thanks.

I Okay.

P I understand and agree.

I Okay, well that’s the end of the bit. The statement of concern. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way. I’ve read the above information… yep, which is what you’ve just noted. So you’re happy to participate?

P Yes.

I Thank you very much. Okay, then I’ll go straight onto it, if that’s alright with you? …. Yep?

P Yep.

I Okay, the questionnaire comes in about five parts. In the main I’m reading from the paper, from a script, but I might ask questions around it. Okay, so I’ll start. We’re interested in understanding peoples social lives and the role of different technologies such as telephones and the internet in supporting them. As a starting point, could you think about a day recently, i.e. one that’s typical for you, and walk us through what you did, from waking up, through to going to bed, trying to recount all the activities and interactions you had with other people however mundane they may seem now. Remember to include people that you met in the street, any communication you may have engaged in by letter, telephone or via the internet. If you wouldn’t mind.

P Right. A typical day.

I Typical day, yes.

P Set my alarm. Make myself a cup of tea and a biscuit. Recently, last few weeks I’ve picked blackberries and had fresh blackberries with my breakfast.

I You pick them during the day?

P It’s surprising, I can pick them right opposite my house.

I Ah, that’s lovely!

P Even though I live in a ??? and also there’s so many blackberries this year that I’ve also picked bowls for a slight handicapped and old person living opposite.

I Okay.

P Then I would check my emails and because I’m slightly disabled in terms of fingers on keyboards I receive emails but I don’t send them.

I Oh, really? Okay… because you’d find it difficult typing I guess?

P Yes, erm, my thing is, if it’s important I’ll speak to the person on the phone.

I Oh, okay. I understand.

P 99% of emails are just information you’re on a list of a particular society or something, only one in a very few require an actual response and on that occasion I ring someone.

I Yes. Then what do you do after that? After breakfast and emails? Typically…

P Well, at least one day a week, sometimes two I go to the local prison where I’m a Quaker chaplain and I have until very recently organised all of the paperwork for prison visitors.

I You organise all the paperwork for this did you say? Do you use a computer for that or not really, is it all…

P No it’s just a question of filling in lots of forms and so on.

I Okay.

P It was so stupid that I had to stop it. Every time, every visit, every prisoner, I had to fill in a separate form.

I Ah. Bureaucratic then?

P Yes, bureaucratic nonsense, yes.

I So after you’ve done a visit to the prison, I guess you might meet all sorts of people?

P Every lunchtime, except weekends, I go down to the local community centre for lunch.

I Oh, is that the Hillcrest?

P Yeah.

I Oh well, they do nice food there. Ruth, I think her name is.

P Yeah, so they cook far more healthily than I ever would myself. My kitchen is very clean because I never do any cooking.

I Because Ruth does it all for you.

P Yeah.

I So you spend some time there, have your lunch.

P And it’s not only a lunch, it’s also as much a social occasion.

I Yes.

P Because I’m a trustee of the Hillcrest Centre.

I Oh, are you?

P And going down there, everyone knows me and … yeah. So it’s not just lunch. It would be in the café. It’s going down there and saying, ‘hello’ to people and things and once a week, if not twice a week, I bank all the takings from the Hillcrest Centre in the local bank, so I do the banking.

I You do the bank run, yes.

P Erm, what else? I’m also involved with Brighton and Hove Mediation.

I What’s that?

P Hmm?

I What is Brighton and Hove Mediation?

P Brighton and Hove Independent Mediation. It’s people who are in conflict. Neighbours who are conflicting about noise usually. Children, rubbish, boundaries, parking, whatever. And sometimes there’s also intergenerational conflict within a family between generations. If you want, some people, mediation is probably better known for it’s more legal thing between couples.

I Yes, that’s right.

P That’s a legal process which I’m not involved in.

I Okay, so you’ve had your meal, you’ve done some community work, or community based work at the Hillcrest, you might have gone and done some further work with the mediation service in the afternoon. What do you do for tea, around about teatime?

P I don’t have a separate tea, I just have an evening meal which is a simple slice of toast.

I Oh yeah, yeah.

P And a glass of red wine.

I (laughing) I like that. I like that idea of a glass of red wine at the end of the day. And is that pretty well it for an average day?

P And then I watch television or often television. I feel sleepy about nine or half past nine, unless it’s a very good television programme I go to bed and listen to the radio.

I Okay, so you listen to the radio often last thing at night?

P Yeah, yeah. What I didn’t say was that I automatically am woken by the radio. Radio four in the morning.

I Oh are you? Ha!

P I listen to that for a couple of hours.

I What time do you, it sounds a bit intrusive, I’m just curious as to what time that would wake you up in the morning?

P Normally about 5.30am/6.00am.

I Gosh quite early then?

P Yeah.

I Okay, so I’ve now got some questions about community and what your sense of community is. So, I’m wondering, what does community mean to you?

P It’s a critical size of… critical size of people you could relate to. I should only speak of myself. I relate to several communities, the Quaker community, I go to a Quaker meeting every Sunday and I also have a Quaker meeting here once a month, at my flat. And to the Hillcrest, where I can relate to people, even the reception eating lunch with me and so on. And the important thing to me about community is it’s all very well, you can’t talk about a town or a national community, they’re too big.

I Yes, that’s interesting.

P So, size to me is critical. You know people and they know you.

I In the area where you live now, which I guess is Newhaven, do you ever have conversations with people that you don’t know very well?

P No. Except when they approach me.

I Why would they approach you?

P Well, to ask the way or something, or ask the whereabouts of something. But if I need to know something, I’ve learnt in life that I need to ask. So, on that occasion, might speak to a stranger.

I Okay.

P In other words, yeah… the only other occasion when I’d speak to a stranger is when I see they’re lost of they’ve dropped something or something like that.

I And how do you think the spirit of community has changed during you lifetime? If indeed you do think it’s changed.

P It has changed a lot. When I worked my community was my job and all the people around me. I worked in the Faculty of Art and Design and so there was perhaps too much of a separation between my job and the home. So I think that the community was very much the job. You related to your family but you didn’t have what I would call a local, relating community at all. Which I would like to think I have a lot more of now.

I It sounds like you do from what you’ve told me up to now. That’s interesting. I have now some questions about the important relationships in your life. Who would you say are the most important people in your life at the moment?

P Fellow Quakers and perhaps a couple of people at the Hillcrest Centre and a lady and her husband opposite who I pick blackberries for and go and visit. I don’t do just that for them. They do things for me and I do things for them, it’s a reciprocal thing.

I Relatives? Do you keep close to them?

P I’ve got a brother only, one sibling who lives in Brighton and Withdean and sadly he never comes to me I only go to him. But he’s married and he has two daughters and a wife and so on and he’s younger than me so he has other priorities perhaps? He’s an elder distant brother. Not just geographically distant.

I And the relationships that you initially told me about, that you believed are the most important to you, what is it about these relationships that make them so important? The Quakers and so on, the Hillcrest friends…

P Openness about feelings.

I Okay, so…

P And obviously the realms, or the dimensions of openness vary with the various people sometimes.

I Yes. Yes.

P Sometimes you feel that you can’t literally unburden yourself or hear someone else’s opinion. No, forget that, you’ll hear theirs but you can’t unburden yourself to them if you feel they might, if they’ve got their own problems or if they would take it too seriously or something like that.

I Okay. Okay. How do you think the nature of your relationships have changed during your lifetime?

P Difficult to summarise, but… I suppose that as I said to you before, I now, every day say, ‘hello’, if only, ‘hello’ not often more than that, to people with whom I don’t work with. When I worked nine out of ten greetings were with people I worked with.

I Okay, and if you wanted to make some new friends, what would you do?

P Perhaps join other clubs. I should say, I’d forgotten about a very typical thing, I’m a member of Lewes U3A and Newhaven U3A.

I Oh, University of the Third Age.

P Third age. And Lewes U3A is very, not at this time of the year, but starting next week, it’s a very big part of my life.

I Okay, do you teach there or do you learn?

P First of all we have a discussion group every Thursday morning at the town hall in Lewes which I sometimes share, but we do it on a rotating basis. We discuss things in the news and things like that, whatever’s current. And then they have a series of science lectures and I’m also involved, as soon as the lectures on geology and fossils and philosophy and things like that.

I Gosh! A bit of everything, yes. But your background you were saying earlier was design I think, is that what you said? Which is very interesting. So, now I’ve got some questions about technology and what part it plays in supporting or not playing in supporting your social life, so what technologies do you use to keep in contact with other people?

P Mainly the telephone.

I Telephone, yeah. Do you have a mobile phone? Do you use that?

P No, I don’t have a mobile phone, no.

I You read the email but don’t write too much because it’s a problem. Well it’s difficult for you. Facebook and Skype, I guess you don’t do it?

P And also I’ve got a very old computer.

I Oh have you?

P It’s an i-mac probably designed in ninety-five or something, ninety-eight and I’ve still got it.

I Does it still work?

P I’m very soon getting a new one and that then will improve my computer literacy finding out how to transmit and sometimes emails you need to say, ‘yes’, or ‘no’.

I How do you normally keep in touch with your close friends and family? Face-to-face? Telephone? Email?

P Face-to-face and telephone.

I Yeah. And lastly in this section it says, how do you maintain contact with people in your local community? You’re a member of quite a few groups, how do you maintain that contact? Do you use any technologies?

P No, again meetings like the U3A and face-to-face and occasionally telephoning.

I When you are on your computer at the beginning of the day and you’re looking at your emails do you ever use… do you use your computer for anything else other than looking at your emails?

P No, I know that I could search the internet but I don’t.

I Okay, so you don’t do searches on it or anything like that, you don’t use the internet, if you like, in that sense.

P Oh and I’ve just thought of another typical thing which I do every day and take for granted and I do it all the time.

I What’s that?

P Write things.

I On pen and paper?

P Er, no, I use the brief because of my slight disability, they’re very lengthy erm, they’re very short, not lengthy because of my inability or my reluctance to press a lot of keys with my fingers.

I Oh! (laughing)

P At the moment I’m doing, ‘a credible creed, a credible creed’,

I A credible creed. What might that be about?

P Well you know of the Anglican creed it’s a humanist version of that.

I Ah. And you’re writing that down yourself?

P Yeah. And a thing about word processing on the computer of course, you can change words, you can change orders, delete, repeat, un-do and so on.

I Yeah, you can polish your efforts.

P Yes, which I’m really… most people write things down. Most people do things on the computer mainly off the top of their head and I don’t, I put stuff down and move and correct it. I move and correct an awful lot.

I You iterate I guess.

P And I do that every day with something or other. At the moment it just happens to be a credible creed, yeah.

I So on your computer you must have lots of documents where you’ve recorded your thoughts.

P Yes.

I Okay and out of interest are you keeping a back up of this stuff?

P Am I keeping?

I A back up? Are you keeping a copy of it somewhere?

P No, no.

I Okay. And, so before I finish this…

P If my computer fails they’re all gone.

I Oh dear. Does that worry you? A little bit? Or not so?

P A little bit, yeah, yeah. I’ll be a very, yeah, yeah.

I Can you make a back up? Would you know how to do that?

P I could do. Sometimes I have offloaded things onto a memory disk. A memory… not a disk, but…

I A USB stick, maybe?

P Yeah, yeah, a memory stick, a memory stick, yeah. So, important things I have put on a memory stick, yeah.

I So, the last question really is a question for you, from me about these processes. Are there any questions that you were expecting me to ask that I haven’t?

P Hmm, no, I don’t think so. No. I think I’ve responded and indicated which ways I think the ??? of community has ??? (22 minutes)

I That was interesting because you said it was almost as if you thought there was a Goldilocks point on it. That it’s not too big and not too small.

P Exactly. That’s one reason I think is good about Newhaven, that’s it’s nearer, not exactly, but nearer my size. Brighton and Seaford and Peacehaven are too big.

I I must admit I’m very impressed with the Hillcrest Centre. I go up there a bit in the computer drop-in centre. In fact I might be there next Monday I’m not too sure at the moment, but I certainly will be there on Tuesday for the, they’ve got a big open day there haven’t they? What have they got? An older peoples day, I think they call it. I don’t think people necessarily like the titles, but they like the stuff that goes on and I said I’d go along and help out.

P What the Meridian Mature Citizens thing?

I I shall be there.

P Oh! Well then, Bryan, I will be on a table probably with some pamphlets and things about research and stuff so come and say hello if you feel like it. But if you don’t…

I Well, I think I’ll be there and if I am I shall try to find a table with Eric again. Well I’ll be there… do you know a chap called Bill, erm, I forget his surname now… who runs the computer course there, the computer drop-in. I’ll be there anyway…

P Bill ??? (24 minutes)

I Yes! Well, I think we’re sharing a table with Bill.

P Well, Bill ??? is also one of the trustee’s at Hillcrest. I know him well, yeah.

I Yeah and of course we all know Kate who’s an absolute dynamo. Kate Davies.

P Oh yes, yeah, yeah.

I I think that’s about it, unless there’s something else you’d like to tell me about communities and technology?

P I’m sure that when I ring off I’ll think of something.

I Well, if you do, I tell you what I’ll take my recorder with me just in case you would like to…

P No, I think we’ve covered everything.

I Oh right, well that was very helpful Bryan.

P I’m just trying to think if there’s anything that, some other things about writing things, changing odd words on the computer, it’s important to me because I do that so much, almost more than anything else and the U3A’s I forgot and I picked up on that and the prison I’ve done, mediation.

I Did you make a list?

P So, I think that’s it.

I Okay.

P If you’ve got a second I’ll look for my diary.

I Oh do, do.

P Because I had brain damage in a road accident, oh about twenty or thirty years ago and so often, I need to look in my diary to remind myself what I’ve done! (laughing).

I Oh, is it short-term memory that causes you difficulty?

P Yeah, yeah, yeah.

I Okay, you’re going to look in your diary then?

P Also, I think I do frequently, sometimes more than once a week, but at least once a week, is go to a philosophy group which is called the ‘One Garden’ group.

I In Newhaven?

P Well, no, no. The last one I was in Whistles Café at Seaford Station on Wednesday mornings, this morning for example, it was the Brighton Quaker Meeting House, nothing to do with the Quakers, we just hire a room there.

I Is that in Kemp Town?

P No, it’s in Ship Street, Brighton.

I Oh, I know, yeah, the one in the centre of the Laines.

P Yeah, yeah, that’s right.

I It’s nice that building.

P It’s not a weekly thing, it’s very much part of an on-going concern. Both of them have been for many, many years and they’re still ongoing. I’m a member of the ??? (27 minutes) of the Quaker Universities which is a national organisation and the Quakers in Criminal Justice group. And they each have a conference every year and a committee that I’m on has a meeting three or four times a year.

I You said you teached design. Where did you teach?

P Croydon College.

I Oh, yeah. Towards London.

P I never lived in Croydon, but I always worked there.

I How did you get up there? By train?

P Yeah, commuted from Sussex, yeah.

I Golly. I suppose when they’re working it’s quite quick. Okay, I think we’ve come to a conclusion. A natural conclusion to this. If you do think of anything else. Just jot it down. I will be around on that Tuesday. So if I see you then, just pop over and have a chat.

P Hope to see you next Tuesday then.

I Alright then Bryan.

P One thing you haven’t asked, which I think might be appropriate although it varies with age, I’m seventy-nine.

I I don’t have your form in front of me, I think we asked for ages.

P Anyway, I’m… I can imagine that when I get into my eighties I shant be able to do the things necessary I do now.

I Which is?

P Well, travel into town for the committee meetings and things like that and conferences and so on, so I shall be less involved, not just geographically but mentally with so many things.

I Yes, well it sounds like you’ve got so many to choose from if you were going to thin down a bit, you’ll still be fairly well occupied.

P I’ve already whittled down. Within the last two or three years I’ve stopped being the governor of the Infant School at the end of my garden and stopped working for the victim support.

I It’s amazing you’ve got any time left.

P Well, I’ve whittled those things and more down.

I Okay.

I Alright Bryan.

P Okay, next week then.

I Okay, and yeah, look forward to it.

I Thank you very much.

P Bye, bye.

I Goodbye.

RECORDING ENDS.