I Okay, it’s Monday 16th September and it’s Cara and Barbara at the Hill Crest Community Centre. Okay. I think that should be okay. So we’ve read through the ethics form, the consent form and I’m interested in understanding peoples social lives and role of different media, different technologies such as telephones and the internet. Could we start by, if you could walk me through yesterday? As a starting point could you think about a day recently, one that was typical for you and walk me through what you did from waking up to going to bed and trying to recount all the activities and all the people, the interactions that you had along the way.

P I got up. Always watch the news on the TV. And then I did my exercise on my Wii machine which are yoga, had a bath, washed my hair and went to my Sunday lunch club. And then I came home and I spent two hours on the Wii machine playing games really. And then I sat down and did my knitting and watched the TV in the evening. After speaking to my son on the phone.

I So are there any people that you met at the Sunday club which are regular people that you would usually meet? Were there any social interactions that you had there?

P Oh yeah, it’s nice we have a good old natter really about things we’ve done in the week, yeah, mostly what we’ve done in the week really and thinking about upcoming events like Christmas lunch.

I So, is it catching up with people that you already know?

P Yeah, I do. I know all of them really. They’re all quite regular. Mostly regular. There were a couple who weren’t.

I Did you use the internet at all yesterday?

P I didn’t. No. No.

I Moving on now to different kinds of community engagement, I was wondering what community means to you?

P About people getting together and socialising really. That’s because I’m on my own. Now I’ve retired. Yeah, it’s nice to get out and meet people and interact. Yeah.

I Could you describe an event that you’ve been involved with where you’ve experienced a sense of community? That might be past or present. Or shared activities.

P Well, there is my computer classes. I come down and see. Few people that are still going to the Sunday night club and some that don’t. I tend to do things like, go on coach trips which I tend to book myself and it’s all age groups really that go on these trips. The only regular one that I really do, well, two regular ones, my computer club and my Sunday lunch club.

I Both of those groups, they are community for you?

P Yeah. Yeah.

I Whereas the coach groups are not so much community, or different…

P Well, no I suppose not because I don’t really know the majority of people on there, so…

I Okay. So building on those established links you already have, the regularity you need them…

P Sorry I don’t know what…

I Oh no, that’s okay, don’t worry. I was wondering what the difference was really? That, is it the class or the people that brought that community?

P Yeah, erm, well obviously I’ve got friends. Mostly neighbours really. Some of them go to the club. So we sometimes get together. Maureen and I get together sometimes and get takeaway on a Friday night and drink wine or something. That’s nice. And then earlier on in the year we did go… after Sunday lunch I took one of the neighbours over to Rodmell to the open gardens. That was nice because it was a lovely day. Then she came back to mine for coffee afterwards and that was nice too.

I So your neighbours, would they be included in what you would think of as community?

P Yeah, I think so, yes.

I So, people who live nearby?

P Yeah.

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

P It’s funny you should say that, I had a conversation with a chap this morning at the door who I don’t see very often because when you’re indoors and I’ve got like alley running between my house and theirs so I don’t see them very often so I had quite a nice conversation with him out in the car park and we were talking about decorations and stuff like that and he said something about having a baby and I feel awful because I’m not… my hearings all that good and I didn’t quite catch whether they’re having a baby or whether they just had one. Very bad really!

I So do you feel that you could build on that conversation the next time that you see him?

P Oh definitely, yeah. I’m going to have to admit that I didn’t quite hear what he said.

I I’m sure that’ll be okay!

P Do you think the experience of community has changed during your lifetime?

I Yes, definitely.

P Well, when I was a kid, all the neighbours knew each other, all the way down the road, I’m not just talking next door. We all knew each other and all the kids we all played together and we were allowed to play out on the street and I hope we weren’t a nuisance to anyone. Today, people keep themselves to themselves much more. Definitely do. I’m lucky I’ve got good neighbours. Some people. I’ll tell you where I first got to know a few of my neighbours, we had neighbourhood watch meetings and I started going to that. I got to meet a few neighbours that I didn’t know before. That was very good. Yeah. That was nice. But no, I don’t think people. I don’t know, when things go wrong people do get together. But people are all just so busy working and bringing up a family that… I’ve done all that now.

I So, just a lack of time do you think?

P Yeah, there’s pressure on everyone to earn a living really and it’s really tough times. Yeah.

I Do you think it’s changed for better or worse or is it just not even as simple as that?

P I don’t think it’s as simple as that, no.

I We can move on to the next section if you want. It’s to do with social relationships. The questions are about the important relationships in your life. So, to begin with, who would you say are the most important people in your life at the moment?

P My family.

I Are there particular people in mind that come to mind immediately and whereabouts are they living now?

P Well, basically I’ve got two sons and one lives at Southwick and the other one lives in Kent. So I probably tend to see the one that lives nearer but we can go for weeks without seeing each other, but in the summer holidays it’s nice because I have the grandchildren to stay with me which is lovely and the family with me as well, all of them sometimes, it makes for a busy house, but yeah, it’s great fun.

I And, what about friends? You were saying about your neighbours, are you friends as well?

P Yes, I’ve got a couple of… there’s Maureen and then her next door neighbour, Sheila. We’ve been trying to get together in each others houses. That’s quite nice. One-to-one, not a group and erm, I was going to say something else, but I’ve forgotten.

I Well, if it comes back to you just bring it in, that’s okay.

P What was the question again?

I It was about important relationships in your life.

P Oh yeah, I’ve one girlfriend who I used to work with. She lives in Saltdean. We go out, always once a week, we have a day out together, she’s my best mate.

I Yeah. What is it about these particular relationships that make them so important?

P Keeping regular contact with them and I’ve had friends over the years. Good friends. And try as I might I can’t seem to get them to…

I So you’ve tried to get in contact, but they’ve not got back to you?

P Yeah, they get back to me and they say, ‘oh yeah, one day we will’, and it never happens.

I But in terms of shared histories and things like that, you were saying that you used to work with your best friend and having that shared history, is it that that keeps you together, or…

P Yeah, we do have conversations about that, I go in and see them or she goes in and sees them, I’ve tried to keep in touch with some of them. I’ve popped in and seen them now and then because it is a shop…

I Oh, okay.

P Yeah, so I can go in and see them sometimes. I hadn’t actually met up with any of them outside of work since I left and that was over a year ago. It’s a bit of a shame really. I think they’re just colleagues, they were just work mates really. While we all got on really well, actually meeting up after work… for them it’s awkward because they are busy working still. Yvonne and I have both retired, so that’s why we’ve both got time to spend together really.

I How do you think the nature of your relationships has changed during your lifetime?

P Don’t know really. I can’t… say… I’ve always been the sort of person, this sounds a bit strange, but it’s not. I tend to have one good friend or a couple of good friends, but one really good friend and then I’m not so good in big groups. I often feel a bit of an outsider. It’s probably my fault because I don’t like to speak up.

I That’s okay.

P And make my voice heard in big groups. Plus, I can’t hear.

I But that’s absolutely okay. Everyone…

P But I think that people are generally. Yeah, they are the same. The thing about neighbours is… that’s a bit different isn’t it. I think the thing about neighbours is, like I say, it’s having time. Lot’s of people don’t have the time. I think everyone’s too busy. I think maybe it’s changed a little bit… maybe in the old days people used to have their parents living with them more than they do now. Obviously, if people are at home in the day then you are going to see them, whereas, I find in the winter, I can go for a week or two without seeing my neighbours even though both our doors come out on the same level but I don’t see them for a couple of weeks, more maybe in the winter months.

I Do you have any neighbours the other side, or is it just…

P Yeah, but they’re across the alleyway. And also there’s a funny thing. My gate is on the side of my garden, everyone else is at the bottom of their garden.

I So do you think that has an impact on how you see other people?

P Yeah, definitely, if people are across the alleyway, it’s very odd. One would assume it would be in the same place as mine, but it’s not. So if they came out of their gate, obviously there’s going to be times when we’ll see each other, because they come out down at the bottom gate from me. I have to go up steps and through the side.

I It’s a valid reason. If you’re coming out at different places the chances of you meeting, but is that just more recently that you’ve been noticing that?

P I knew the other neighbours very well before this couple moved in. They’ve probably been there five years. And then all of a sudden I’m in the shop, and serving this lady, that’s when I was still working there. ‘Oh, you live next door to me’, and I said, ‘do I?’ That is so embarrassing! ‘Sorry I didn’t recognise you’, yeah, so I’ve probably not really seen her face-to-face before than and she’d probably been there a couple of years then.

I So you just haven’t had the opportunity to be introduced.

P Yeah, I’ll tell you what, when I was younger move into somewhere and the neighbour would say, ‘is there anything I can do for you? Would you like a cup of tea? If you haven’t got any hot water’, all the rest of it. Whereas that doesn’t happen today. When people move in, they move more frequently, because of rented accommodation.

I So there are fewer opportunities just to have that initial meeting?

P Yeah, yeah. I mean, that could have been down to me, but again you see them coming along the front of the house, I don’t use my front steps if I can help it because they’re too steep, you see them going along and down but you don’t actually know whether they’re the people that live there, or maybe they’re relatives, or maybe they’re just only looking at the place, you know, with a view to moving into it.

I This is the last question in this section. If you wanted to make new friends, what would you do?

P Well, the internet. Facebook. I am on Facebook. It’s purely on the basis of seeing what my family are doing!

I So, you use that particular programme to make links with other people?

P You can make friends with people. I’ve got a few friends on there, not too many, some people have got hundreds I’ve got about 11, bit more maybe. I tend to not get all the time for these, ‘do you want to be friends with so-and-so’, and I think, well, no because actually I don’t know who they are. I’m probably still a bit old fashioned. I need to see… like meet someone face-to-face. I tend to, with Facebook, I tend to not actually do anything on there. I just look at things. There was one time when my granddaughter sent me a message and that was good because I got an email saying that I had a message and she was out of the country and I got a chance to answer her email and on Facebook there’s a message on Facebook so that was good. I have actually, this is going to surprise you. I’ve actually been on a dating website.

I Have you?

P Yes.

I Yeah. Wow! How’s it going?

P Well I’m not on it now because it didn’t really work out. I met a really nice guy on there. We went out a couple of years. He had issues I think. He was a widow, same age as me, really nice guy, but he wanted to do other things I think. We were friends. We just went out and he well, he just all of a sudden said, ‘oh, I’m going to leave it, I’m not going to see you anymore’, so, I haven’t ever been on there since and that was about two years ago because I normally stop going on there when I’ve met someone. So, problem with that is, you don’t know when you’re going to be meeting them and it’s a bit scary.

I Yeah.

P So, I’ll have a proper think and then try out a different one. Maybe one for older people. I don’t want to meet anyone younger. And I don’t necessarily want to meet someone and get married. I just want someone to meet socially, to go out. It was really hard when we broke up actually, because I didn’t have anyone that I could turn to for support. It was just me. That was really hard. It would be nice to have someone. I might do it again one day if I’m feeling brave.

I only did it because my son said they might be moving to Lincolnshire and I went to see my cousin and he said to me, ‘go on a dating website’, but no, it didn’t really work out. You get a lot of people on there who are timewasters. They say they’re going to meet you and then they don’t turn up. You just meet for coffee originally and then they don’t turn up. I can’t be bothered with it. What else… obviously email. I do email people. I do think I could get to go. I thought, when I first got my laptop, this will be good to keep in touch with my family, but they don’t really email. The younger ones do Facebook, even the older ones, one of my sons don’t do Facebook, they don’t do email, he doesn’t phone either. I do think about Skype, maybe I could do that, but then again, if they’re not doing it. If they’re not going to be doing it, what’s the point in me doing it? I haven’t got a web-cam on there.

I You can get like a plug-in USB one.

P To get my son interested I think would be hard. So busy now with their own lives. So… if they can’t be bothered to phone you, or they can’t find the time to phone you and they don’t always think of it, then they’re hardly going to have time to Skype.

I I suppose you could tell them about the idea?

P I tell you when I think that’s Skype’s really useful, when you’ve got family living abroad.

I Yes. Yeah.

P Yes, definitely. If I had family living abroad I would do it. Yeah. But I haven’t yet… touch wood!

I So it sounds like you do quite a lot, communicating with other people, you do use online means.

P Using that Drop By.

I Oh yes.

P That didn’t really work out because there didn’t seem to be anything going on much.

I Right. Okay.

P And the people that were doing it all lived so far away.

I So, would it be important for you to meet them in person as well as online?

P I have met a couple of them, they came down and although a couple of them to start with you email and I went on there for a little bit where you can chat on-line. Sometimes I look at it and there’s nobody online. Only a couple and there’s nobody I know. I need to know them before I start to chat. It could be nice if you had one for a local area.

I Would that be a means to meet other people or talk?

P Yeah. Because what you need to do, for me is meet people in my own area.

I Yeah and then have that opportunity to meet in real life.

P Yeah, I still prefer to meet people, go out and meet people, rather than chatting online. Because I’m on my own I need some face-to-face contact really, I think, because I’m on my own. Having something to chat in that’s a bit more local would be quite nice because then you could meet people off the back of that. I’ve been to a couple of meetings down here that we’ve been to with Kate, about things concerning older generation and I met a couple of people there and they’re all like, you get to a point where, you think you know them and then you think, might be that we get in touch with each other, but it actually doesn’t happen. Shame really.

I Why did you think that is?

P I remember one lady in particular saying, ‘we’ll have to get in touch’, and I don’t think I probably had contact numbers for her. I’ve also joined the walking club and then I found out the walks are about anything from four to seven miles and I’m thinking, I’m not sure I could do that. But yeah. I am volunteering still for the seven sisters. But I haven’t done it lately. For the school visits. I haven’t done it since the summer holidays. Because of the weather.

I But it sounds like you’ve got quite a lot of ideas if you wanted to meet new people.

P Yeah, we get together, the girls or people, it’s mostly women that volunteer up the seven sisters, we all met up for a meal up the new youth hostel on the Lewes, on the road between Lewes and Newhaven and we all met up there and had a really nice time together. Some of them walked there. I didn’t, I was lazy, but that was really nice.

I It sounds as though you’re quite proactive. It sounds as though you’re doing different things, in different ways as well, in terms of being in person…

P The other week I went to a Martletts coffee morning. No, it was afternoon, it was tea and cakes. My friend told me about it and a woman that she knew was doing it. So we went over to Saltdean and sat in the gardens and had tea and cake and it was a beautiful afternoon. I really enjoyed that and she’s going to do a coffee morning soon. I’m going to that as well.

I So, just a bit of a get together and a bit of socialising?

P Yeah. It’s a nice mix of people.

I Yeah, it does sound good. This part is about technology and communication, but it sounds like you’ve covered a little bit of this already, so… what technologies do you use to keep in contact with other people?

P Email and Facebook. Obviously I don’t do a lot on Facebook, but I see something going on in my family that would probably make me think, oh, I’ll phone them up and find out more about it. I just found out my sons just got an allotment. That was on Facebook!

I So, that would motivate you to call him?

P It would, yeah.

I Rather than write a message on Facebook.

P Oh yeah, definitely. No, I don’t write on Facebook because I’m frightened about who’s going to see it. I’m not…I half know how to do it, but I’m not confident enough to actually… when I got the message from my granddaughter I knew how to send a message back, that was easy, but actually doing it myself I’m like, I’m not sure how to do this.

I That’s okay. But it would motivate you to use another…

P Yes. ‘You’ve got your allotment at last’, it took him years to get it.

I The second question, I think you’ve discussed this to some extent. How do you normally keep in touch with close friends and family?

P It’s mostly by the phone. And Facebook just to see what’s going on because you can see what’s going on.

I So, do friends, as well as family, do they post things on Facebook as well?

P Not so much. Mostly it’s just, like take my friend at Saltdean, she’s got… she didn’t have a computer for a while, but she’s got one now, but she doesn’t really email and stuff. We text each other on our phones mostly. Or we phone each other.

I So, how do you maintain contact with people in your local community? You know the Martlett’s group, how did you find out about that?

P Well, that was through my friend Liz in Saltdean and she knows a lot more people than I do. Having lived here for many more years than me… I’ve only lived here since 1---, so I think, having lived here a long time means that you don’t have such a wide range of… what’s the word I’m looking for?

I Contacts?

P Yeah, I don’t know so many people. 20 years sounds a long time to be here. But I think when my husband was alive I think we were a little bit, we didn’t really go out much socialising, not really. Stay at home together. So it was hard after he died. Had it not been for the fact that we had just started to go to neighbourhood watch, even knowing my close neighbours because Sheila for instance, I never even knew her name until then and now we’re quite good friends. I think her hubby died as well, some years ago. Sometimes, not very often, she’ll come over and have coffee with me. She’s very much into her family, she spends a lot of time at her family’s house, so, I wouldn’t have met her and known her if it had not been for the neighbourhood watch.

I So you got to know people through established groups that were already going?

P Yeah.

I So what made you decide to go to those particular groups? Was it something…

P Neighbourhood watch. Probably I got a letter through the door saying about meeting and then we just, me and my husband decided just to go along and it wasn’t a big turn out but yeah, all close by neighours, there was a few of those turned up. Yeah and I got to know them through that and I’ve got to know them and made friends with them rather than just passing them in the street with a cursory nod.

I So, some of the last bits. Could you walk me through yesterday online, or a typical day online for you. If you could think of a time recently when you went on your computer. One that was typical for you and what you did from switching it on, to closing down.

P I went online and ordered my cat food and then I ordered my coffee pods for my machine and then I was looking on… looking for a hoover part. A hoover or some hoover parts. I need new bags for my hoover so I was looking online to see where I could get them cheaply and also I need a new pipe for it so I’m in half a mind to look on Argos and places like that to see what they cost because I need a new hose and a new bag it’s almost going to cost me as much as buying a cheap, new hoover and…

I Have you got to make up which… what you want to do?

P I check my emails, but I don’t check them every day. I go two or three days before checking them. Recently I went onto YouTube to find out how to fix my tap. I had a dripping tap. That was brilliant because I managed to do it all on my own, fix my dripping tap. So that was good. Sometimes I go on there looking up recipes. Not as much now, I’ve got no-one to cook for now, but I think that YouTube is brilliant because you can find out all sorts on there.

I When you’re looking to get a hoover or hoover parts do you ever look on forums where other people might have left reviews?

P I do look at reviews, yeah. I think it’s hard not to really because they’re kind of, in your face. Yeah.

I Do you find that helpful? Other peoples input?

P Yeah, what were we saying?

I How you would use reviews and things like that and whether…

P Yes and no, I do find the reviews helpful. But, sometimes you read a few and you think, actually we’ve all got different opinions. I think reviews can put you off things. Some people have bad experiences anyway, they’re just unlucky with a product, but I tend to mostly know what I want to buy. Things like hoovers for instance, I want one with bags, I don’t want a bag-less one because they’re so messy to empty. So yeah, I know. You know what you’re up against in life anyway, there’s little choice really.

I Thank you.

P Oh and I do Facebook of course, yes, but we’ve already done that haven’t we?

I So is that something you do on a daily basis?

P No, no, no. I don’t even do it every time I check my emails. Sometimes I think, oh I’ll have a look and see what’s going on with the family, but sometimes I do think I’ll quickly check my email and then put it away again.

I So, would you say it’s like a weekly thing?

P Yeah, probably, yeah.

I So, just the final question now. What else do you… oh, sorry, who else do you make contact with through the internet?

P Well… I met a few guys. Nothing ever came of it. For now I’m just doing my own thing.

I The people that you met through the dating thing, were they all local people as well?

P Mostly, yeah, because I don’t think I want to be with someone too far away because we’re not going to have the chance to meet up. But yeah, I do prefer to have face-to-face contact rather than just but that’s my situation because I’m on my own. Other people might be…

I Yes, of course, do you think that community is something that can exist online? … No?

P Not really. Not… no. I don’t know. It all seems a bit. I’m probably old fashioned. It all just seems a bit, a bit erm, what’s the word. I can’t think of the word that I’m looking for. Kind of… I can’t think of the word.

I It’s okay.

P It doesn’t seem very kind of, not real… real’s not the word I’m looking for. Impersonal.

I Impersonal. Yeah.

P It seems a bit impersonal now.

I Erm, the last one is about social networking sites, such as Facebook and YouTube and the question is, what do you think they’re for and how do you use them?

P Well, I mean YouTube is about looking for videos. I’d no idea that you could contact people on it.

I You can sometimes put your own videos up there as well.

P Oh yeah, my granddaughters had one on there I think. Yeah, I first saw it on Facebook. She was singing in class. Standing at the front of the class singing. And then, I said to my son, is it on Facebook, is it on YouTube, I’m not certain it was, but yeah, yeah. I’d be far too shy. That’s why I don’t do Facebooking, I’m worried about putting stuff on there, because I’m not to sure who can see it. Because I don’t understand it fully, I’m not sure who can see it.

I But you know how to use them in as far as you can go onto YouTube and go onto Facebook?

P Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

I Are there any questions that you were expecting to be asked that haven’t, or is there anything more that you’d like to add at all?

P No.

I Thank you for your time.

P That’s okay. It’s my pleasure.

I Right, I’ll pause it here.

RECORDING ENDS.