

Duration: 0:51:14
Date: 02/07/2015
Typist: 699

START AUDIO

So, yes. Tell me about your diary, and how you started, and how long you've kept it for, and what it's about.

It started 1st January, [19xx] when I was 13, because my grandfather- I think I asked him for it, but he gave me a five-year diary, one of the tiny little ones, for Christmas, Christmas at the end of [19xx]. So, for the first five years it was very much five-year diary. In fact, I'll show it to you, if you want.

Yes (Laughter).

That was it. Can you see that?

Yes, absolutely.

Yes, so it was fairly standard, and it is a tiny, tiny little four-line entry for each day, but I kept it religiously right until the- so, that took me until the end of the first term at university, so that was quite good to do it, and that was 19xx that it ran to. Very factual, slightly boring, 'today I did this' kind of thing. So, even very meaningful events in life were just pretty much annotated in four lines. From then, it has been more of a journal, and it's been sort of an on-off journal depending on life, work, children, that kind of thing.

Yes.

I think my last entry was at the end of May.

Okay, yes, so how are you keeping the diary now? Have you got a different book for each year? Or maybe you could tell me a little bit about practically how you keep your journal at the moment.

I just write them until they're full. I don't have one for each year, and they are all just notebooks. Recently, they've all been bought in Tesco, because that fits in with my weekly shop (Laughter). They're just notebooks, and increasingly, over the years, I've stuck more and more stuff in. So, I've put in lots of cards; letters that have meant something, the occasional photograph, and occasionally, an email or something that I've printed out and put in.

How often would you say you write at the moment, and on what sort of occasions?

It's really, really variable. Over the years, it's very much dependent on what I'm doing. There was a spell when my children had swimming lessons once a week, so I would be sitting beside a pool for an hour once a week, and so the diary was

written religiously then. It was great, and recently, I would write it- my daughter had a lot of doctor's appointments, so again, once a week, I'd be sitting for an hour, and hour and a half on my own, and I'd just sit and write my diary then.

Now, there's nothing fixed at the moment. I don't have any fixed hour when I'm sitting doing nothing, so it's a bit more random.

Right. Okay, and where do you- ? More sort of practical things, as well. Where do you keep them? Are they all kept together, or are they on a bookshelf, or where are they [about the house] [Crosstalk 0:03:00]?

They're all kept in a trunk beside my bed. I've got an old-fashioned clothing trunk and they're all in there, except for the one I'm writing, and that's kept in a drawer by my bed, I guess because I always used to write it last thing at night, when I was a child, but I never write it last thing at night now, because I fall asleep (Laughter). That is where it's kept.

How long is it that you're sort of writing now? Is it longer entries? What's a typical length of something that you might write?

Oh, it would be several pages. When I sit down and write it, I will sit down for sometimes up to an hour and write retrospectively. I will go back to the last entry; usually, I'll read the last entry and get my kind of day-to-day diary out, look at what we've been doing, and write from there.

Right, okay. That seems very different from what you started doing as a 13-year-old.

[Of course, yes 0:04:01].

Was there a transition, or did you not do it for a few years, or how did that kind of come about?

I think it was just growing up, actually, because I wrote it until the end of the first term at university, and then didn't write it for a year, so really the rest of first year and the first year of second year, just because, well, I was at university. There were other things going on. Then, I think my mum had a little- something happened with my mum and I felt the need to write it down, so that's kind of triggered me starting to write again, but it was never written daily, ever, after that. After the first five years, it was never written daily.

Right, okay. Sorry, you were sort of saying about how often ____ [0:04:48]. I think I asked you this before, but I didn't quite catch your answer: how often would you write?

Probably once or twice a month now, to be honest.

Okay. What do you feel now is your- ? What do you think your motivations were to begin with, and what do you feel like your motivations are now for keeping a diary?

Oh, to begin with, I guess it was just childhood curiosity, fashion, maybe my friend had one. I don't know, but it could equally well have been my granddad saying, "You should write a diary," because he did always used to ask if I was doing it, and always used to tease me that he was going to read it, which he never did. So, that was probably a trigger: just a childhood fancy, but now it's more therapy. It's very therapeutic, so there's an element of that, but there's also an element of- sometimes, I have this great panic about documenting facts, and what I've done, and what everyone else has been doing, so there's a little bit of record-keeping, as well.

Mm-hmm. When you say documenting facts, are you- ? You said before that the first ones were quite 'I did this, I did that'. As [your writing became longer 0:05:51], what sort of style is it now, would you say? How would you describe it?

It's a mixture of- sometimes, it's purely chronological, so I'll go back to the last entry and then start, "Oh, right, okay, and the weekend after that, we had a great party," or, "The kids had their exams," or something like that, and I'd write a little bit about that.

But the other way I quite often do it is that I make myself little headings, so I'll write about family, I'll write about friends, I'll write about work, I'll write about me, marriage. Whatever is important to me at that time.

Yes, and do you ever feel it's difficult to write, or is it something that, once you start, you're quite [Crosstalk 0:06:31]?

Yes. Once I start, it's not a problem. The difficulty is actually being disciplined enough to find myself the time that I need to sit down and do it. Once I've got that, and once I've started, it's not a problem.

Yes. You said, as well, you keep other things alongside it, like letters and things. What do they add? What's the sort of value of them to you?

It's normally letters from people who are very important to me, or cards from people that mean a lot to me: that kind of thing. But occasionally, I will keep the odd email, because keeping in touch with friends: if I write a really long email about something that's really important, sometimes I'll just print it out and stick it in my diary, probably with the reply from whoever I have emailed, just because it puts flesh on what I'm writing in my diary.

Okay, and how does that all fit together? Is it all just in the book, or is it [Crosstalk 0:07:28]?

It's all Sellotaped in. I have a roll of Sellotape by my bed and I stick them in periodically (Laughter).

Great. You said when you write the next one, you look back at what you've just written, but do you look further back, periodically?

No, very, very seldom. Very seldom, and I had a look at them today; this afternoon, I got them all out. Some of them, I re-read for the first time, bits of them, so...

And, actually, I'm going to ask you in a minute to maybe have a little flick through, as well, but when you're writing them, are you sort of envisioning looking back at them at some point, or is it more about just writing it there and then?

It's mostly about writing it there and then, but I guess I always assumed I'd read them again sometime, and I had this great idea that what I'd like to do is get a voice-activated Dictaphone and read them all so that they- and then store them electronically, but that was going to be a retirement plan, to actually sort out my diaries, so you kind of kick-started it a little bit sooner than I'd anticipated (Laughter).

But the other thing is, and I have said to my daughter that she can read them when I die, but not until then. But I think she'll find them quite boring (Laughter), but there you go.

Yes, and so at the moment, is it quite a private diary? Is it something you talk about, or...?

Well, no. My family all know I write it, and I don't mind telling people that I write a diary, but it's not to be read by anyone. I'd find that quite an intrusion, an invasion of my privacy if anyone read it.

Yes, and so [Gerard] wouldn't have read it or looked at it?

No, he would never- I mean, he keeps it a diary and he leaves it lying around all over the place, but I would never read it. [Shannon] keeps one, but she keeps hers hidden (Laughter). But she wouldn't read ours, either.

Yes, absolutely, and so it's not then a case of- do people ever ask you about things that you've written about, or do people ever sort of ask you what sort of things you write about, at all? It's not something that's a topic of conversation?

No, it's never discussed, really.

Mm, okay. Okay. It's been really interesting; with this study, I've been speaking to so many different- people keep diaries for so many different reasons. I was speaking to someone the other day, and they were very much like- they kept a journal, but it was very- it was on a phone, as well, and people were [marked 0:09:58] in it, and it was almost very public. It was very much like [he was making] a recording of the events, so, "What did we do last year?" and things. It was completely different from a sort of traditional notion of this kind of secret diary.

Yes.

So, [I'm sort of thinking 0:10:17], yes, as well, is there anything that you've sort of -? When you have looked back, what have been the triggers for that, at all? It's just been to hand, or you've had something in mind you wanted to look at?

Occasionally, I've wanted to check on something; maybe a date something happened, or something like that, but that's quite rare. Yes, I mean, I guess important events in recent life, sometimes I have re-read if I've felt the need to, like my father was very ill and then died, so obviously I did a lot of writing about his diagnosis with cancer, and how we looked after him, and his death and his funeral and all that kind of stuff.

I think in the aftermath after he died, I went back and read quite a lot of it, and in a way, I found it quite comforting, actually.

Yes, yes, and again, when you were writing it, how did that feel, and secondly, did you anticipate that this would have this sort of use of looking back and feeling comforted by that?

No, I didn't expect it to comfort me. I wrote it because it was important to me, and anything that's important, I want to write down, and also because it helped me at the time. I do find it very therapeutic to write these things down.

Yes, yes, and again, [just in terms of 0:11:39] practically: is it just about finding a quiet moment, or is there a particular routine you have now to how you like to write it, or...?

No; with a cup of coffee or a glass of wine, but otherwise, just wherever and however (Laughter).

Yes, yes, and is there anything- ? Have you ever gone back and changed anything, or thrown anything away, or sort of edited it in any way?

No. In fact, today, I read my last entry and realised I got the months wrong, so I corrected it, but I try not to edit [Crosstalk 0:12:09].

Yes, yes.

No, no, I try not to. Some of the spelling's awful, and my writing's terrible, but I don't do too much editing.

Yes, yes, and if you look back on your earliest one, if you look back at that one from your teenage years, how is that different, or how does that seem different to some of the other ones?

I think- there's a lot less detail, and that's probably because there was a lot less space, but also, I guess when you're a child, you never imagine you'll forget anything, and I remember my parents going, "Well, I can't remember who was in my class at school." I remember thinking, "Well, why? How stupid." You know. I suspect that some of my earlier diary writing just assumed that I would always be able to remember who this person is that I mentioned in my diary.

So, now I'm a lot more detailed; if I put someone in, then I'll maybe explain who they are, or what...

Yes, yes. And do you ever- ? It's amazing that you've kept them for such a long time. Is it something you've always felt motivated to do, or have there been times where it has lost its importance in your life? Or has it always been something that stuck with you?

It's always been important, but it's not always been a priority, if that makes sense.

Yes.

I think in 2002, there's a scrapbook. There's not an actual- any length of diary handwritten entry. There's lots of cards and letters and bits and pieces stuck into a scrapbook, and I've written down beside it what it was. In 2002, I had pre-school children and I was working, so I didn't have any time (Laughter).

Yes, I can imagine. Just generally, what's the best thing for you about having kept a diary? What does it mean to you now to have kept them?

It's just my history, isn't it? I'm not bothered that it's not terribly interesting, and that I'm not going to be famous from it. I would hate it to be published. It's not for that, but it's just [about 0:14:24] my life, and I think it's good knowing it's there, because I would like to go back and read them sometime. [Just remembering and] use it as a trigger for remembering a lot of things that I've done.

Yes, absolutely. It would be really interesting- what I'd like to do for the next bit, and it's really up to you how ____ [0:14:43] do this, but would be to have a [little flick] back on some things, and maybe pick a couple of things: if you could just give me examples of the kinds of things that you write about. As I say, I don't want you to tell me any of your deep personal secrets, or anything like that at all. So, really [just if you're 0:15:01] comfortable with it, just if you could have a little flick through the kind of things that come up: something that stands out to you, or something you've looked back at before, or something like that.

Okay. Just bear with me.

Yes, absolutely.

Right.

How many notebooks is it now? Is it- ? Wow.

That many.

I might get you to send me a little picture of that later on.

Okay, so you see my wee first one, and then if I was clever- that's it. 24th May, '15. That's my last one I just finished, and my current one is pristine, virgin, not even

dated at the moment. So, that's got cards and stuff, and they're all tied up in string and ribbons just to keep it together. That's how they have been, pretty much, for a good long while. I don't know: what would you like?

I don't know; maybe pick something from a few years ago. I don't know- if there's something in mind that you would be interested to talk about, or you think it's an interesting kind of entry, or just something at random, that- just to get a flavour of what sort of things you write about. As I say, people are incredibly different in how they write, and what they like to write.

Right, ____[0:16:31]. Erm, just bear with me, because what I'll do is...

Yes; please take your time.

I can find you the bits about when my dad died.

Yes, I mean, if you'd like to-

I'm fine with it; I'm fine. Here you are. Look, there's an example. I stuck a little- you probably can't see.

If you move the- great, yes.

I stuck a little thing in that I saw in the newspaper on 2nd August, 201[x]: Albert Einstein. "We have to do the best we can. This is our sacred human responsibility." That's the kind of random thing I stick in. I just liked it, so I stuck it in my diary. Okay, and then this was Monday, [x]th August. "I have been up since 2:30am. It's now 11:30pm. Dad has taken a turn for the worse and is now on a sub-cut syringe driver." A lot of the stuff about illness, I just put the medical stuff in, so-

Yes, I'm used to it. I was just having a conversation with [Will on the same effect 0:17:44].

Yes, yes. So, "Sub-cut syringe driver and sub-cut fluids. He phoned us at 2:30am saying he was having some sort of attack. When we arrived, he was writhing on his bed, drenched in sweat, pale and [shut down 0:17:58] with abdominal colic and a feeling he needed to move his bowels." That's kind of what- and I wrote a lot over those days, because those were the last few days my dad was ill, and we were sitting in his house, essentially, waiting for him to die, so just sitting. And actually, it was a good time to write a diary.

Yes, no, absolutely, and is it a sense of recording what has happened, and what is happening, or is there a lot of personal emotions and feeling and things in there, as well, or...?

No. I don't write much personal stuff. Sometimes, I will, if I'm writing about [Gerard] and I, and friendship and stuff like that, I might touch on personal. But I haven't written, the whole way through this, how I was feeling terribly much because I just- I don't know why, but I don't write it down, so...

Yes. Is there any- ? When you look back now, does it seem at all something that you would have liked to have written about, or do you think it's as it is?

No. I don't feel it's missing, I guess because I know how I felt then. I mean, occasionally, I will put in, "Oh, I felt really pissed off about this," or, "This was really upsetting," or something like that. But I would never use a lot of very descriptive words to illustrate it.

Yes. Would you say it's sort of quite functional, then, in a way?

Yes. It is, fairly, but it serves a purpose. It's functional for me, because it helps me.

Yes, absolutely. Maybe you could just grab another couple of things, or maybe something from further back, if you like, as well, or whatever you like.

Yes, [further back 0:19:53].

Maybe one you that haven't looked at in a while, and just ____ grab something ____.

(Laughter) Okay. All right. I'll get one from random. Right, okay. 1989 sometime.

The year of my birth.

Oh, listen to you. Blimey. Right, Tuesday, 22nd May, 19[xx]. It's almost- you can see- oh, you can't, but it's very neat, so I obviously had a lot of time to write this in 19[xx]. I don't know why, because I was in the last year of medical school (Laughter).

"It's almost one week since I last wrote. I can't remember much about Thursday, or why I didn't right, but anyway. Antenatal clinic in the morning. I'm not very good at the antenatal examination, so felt rather incompetent. In the afternoon, [[Sheila] 0:20:45] and I went to the Elsie Inglis hospital to watch colposcopy. Gruesome and a little frightening. Finished early, but I couldn't be bothered to go swimming." I used to swim a lot at uni, and one of the things I do write is actually whether or not I'm exercising, because it reflects quite a lot how I feel.

Yes, yes.

"Went to library in the evening. Had a coffee with [Tony] in the [tea bit 0:21:12]. [Mark Johnson] was there, so of course I got..." Oh, (Laughter). "I got the old, 'who was that you were having coffee with?'" [Ego]. I mean, it's not very exciting really, is it (Laughter)?

Yes, no, but it's- no, everyone I've spoken to seems to think that their lives aren't terribly exciting, as if they should be writing down a Hollywood movie, but it's fascinating what people record about their lives. How does it feel to you to look back at that and know that you wrote that? What does it feel like to read your diaries like that?

It's quite funny, because I can't actually remember- I can't remember that day. ____[0:21:55], so I remember the people, but I can't physically remember that day, which is like, "Oh, I did something and I can't remember it." But sometimes, I'll read something and I will remember it.

Yes. Would you say that's more out of the ordinary? Most of the time, you can't remember it, and it's like reading about- ? Does it feel like you're reading about yourself, or about someone else, or...?

No. I know it's about myself, because I know I've written it, and I know that in May 19[xx], I was doing my obstetrics attachment, obs and gynae, so I know it's about me, but equally well, if you had read it out and said, "I'm reading this from my friend's diary," I wouldn't have gone, "That's my diary you're reading," necessarily. Although I'd have gone, "Does your friend know [Tony] and [Sheila] as well?" (Laughter) ____[0:22:50].

Yes, and what is it- ? What are the details you feel that stand out to you most, are you most interested in? In terms of: is it places or events or people? What are the things that stand out?

People. People. I like to know what I was doing, but it's people. I was obviously on an attachment with [Sheila], and [Tony] was obviously studying in the library at the same time, and Mark Johnson] was around. He's someone I'm still in touch with, so it's people.

Okay. Maybe you could just grab one more example of something, and then we'll [Crosstalk 0:23:28] the next bit.

Mm-hmm. Right, I'll just _____. [What do you want]?

When you've looked back at them before, is it something that you've sort of sat down deliberately for a bit of time, or just checked one or two things, or...?

Just checked one or two things. No, I don't- I've never really looked back at them. This one is '92, '93. This is the early days of my husband. Right, okay. This was 20th October, 1992, and I last wrote on 15th October, so that's not too bad.

"Thursday evening passed in a strange way. We had a nice supper. Mum and Dougal, my brother, then went to bed. My sister, [Kina 0:24:25], Dad and I watched Trading Places. Stuart, my other brother, phoned and it was good to speak to him. Mum and Dad took me to the airport."

My parents were living in Kuwait at the time, because my father was working there, so I was obviously out visiting them. "I was a bit sad to be going, but resigned to it. The flight was fine. I slept most of it. I wasn't relishing the thought of getting across London and out to Penny's..." I was going to visit my cousin, "...but made it. It was great to see Penny again."

Again, it's pretty factual, but I know that I was feeling sad, then, because I know how I felt when I used to leave my parents to come back to this country when they were abroad.

Yes, and would you say that the way that you've written then is still the way you kind of write now, in terms of the style of it, and the things you try and record, and...?

Yes, yes. I mean, that's pretty similar.

Mm-hmm. Is there anything in particular- ? You know, you mentioned that you liked to keep an idea of exercise. Is there anything else in particular you think, "I really want to try to record that and make sure that's written down"?

I like to note down a lot of family things, so family-related stories, because both sides of my family have done a lot of genealogy, so I come from a family of record keepers and things like that. So, if I'm out with a member of my family, and they give me a good story about, "Oh, Uncle Bob did this," then I'll try to write that down.

Right, yes, yes.

The trouble is the way I've done it is just randomly mixed in in my diaries, so I'm not going to be able to find those stories until I read the whole lot of them through again. So, family events: both sort of ancestors, but also what my immediate family are doing, so there's [my sister 0:26:22] all about my dad, and when my parents got divorced, I wrote a lot about that. That was quite factual, but there was a fair amount of emotion thrown in, as well.

Now, it's more and more, increasingly, about the children: about their lives, about what they're doing, about their Highers, about this, that and the next thing. You know.

Yes, yes, and in terms of sort of [binding 0:26:43] things, again: each book is just the length of however much you write; I mean, how easy is it to lay your hand on a particular time of your life?

Oh yes. I can, I can, [after 0:26:54] this afternoon, because I've got them all labelled with the dates, so the first entry and the last entry in each book, so yes, I can do it now. In fairness, it didn't take me very long to put them in chronological order this afternoon.

Yes, and those ones there from the early '90s: have you got things like cards and newspaper cuttings in them, as well, or is that a more recent thing?

That's a more recent thing. I've got the odd bit, and little bits and pieces. I write down a lot of quotes. I don't know why. Sometimes it's- when I was younger, it was a lot of song lyrics. I guess that's a teenage thing, and just a lot of quotes, and if I read something in a book that I really like, I'll write it down, because I know I'll never remember it, so I'll write it down, and I've always done that.

Yes, and when you're looking back there, I know you haven't looked back a great deal, but how do you think that compares to something you've written yourself, versus these things that you've added in, or these things from other people? How does it compare to look back at them?

Oh, well, the quotes I write down are always beautifully written, and wonderful and meaningful, and my stuff's just drivel (Laughter), so there's no comparison.

Is there anything -? Have you got an interest in figures, and facts, and numbers? Are they something that you record, at all, or is it all very sort of written?

It's mostly written; it's mostly written, yes.

Mm-hmm, and what are the things that -? You've said people, but what else, as well: what are the things that most interest you in your diaries, now? What are the things you think will most interest you in 20 or 30 years when you come to look back on [them then] [Crosstalk 0:28:37]?

___ (Laughter). I don't know, but something caught my eye today: my little red diary, when I looked at that, I had a list of all the boys I fancied. That was quite interesting, all the way through school (Laughter). And then another list of my boyfriends, which was shorter, you'll be glad to hear, than the list of the boys I fancied (Laughter). And that made me laugh, actually. Obviously, I've stopped doing that now (Laughter). I don't know; I just- no, I don't know.

Yes. Is there anything you feel that's missing from them, or anything you would have liked to have written more about, or add to them?

I guess, yes: you can never write enough, because I think the older you get, the more you forget; there's no doubt, and I would love to have had the time to write so much that you could almost see it again, almost like it was a video recording, or something. There's just never enough time to write everything down, but there's no one particular thing.

I threw away one- there is one letter that I wish I'd kept, and that was thrown away, but no. There's not much, really.

You just mentioned video, there, but how does it compare to photographs and videos and things like that that you've got? Are they quite separate, or...?

Yes, well, my diaries, I keep them separate, obviously, but it probably won't surprise you: I keep a lot of photographs. They're all dated, and placed, and labelled. But actually, in my defence, I have a photo album from my granny who was born in 1905, and she's exactly the same: all these wonderful photos from the 1930s. Dated, placed, name on and who the people are. It's in my genes to do this (Laughter).

(Laughter) Yes, so maybe you could tell me a little bit about how they're kept. Are they more public, as well, or...?

Yes. I've got photo albums; they're downstairs, on a bookshelf. I've got all them, and they're all dated. Now, because we have a digital camera, obviously they're all on the computer, but periodically I will sit, go through them and print out a selection, just because sometimes I like to sit and flick through a photo album.

Yes, yes. What sort of occasion will you- ? What will lead you to do that, and how do you share them with people, as well?

Well, it'll be a trigger. Recently, my husband I have a really good friend, and he's 50 tomorrow so he has made him up a photo album: old photographs from when they first met, [the years 0:31:24] of their friendship. They met when they were 19, so we were looking through photo albums for photographs of him, so that would have been a trigger. You start looking, and then you kind of go off at tangents all over the place, and it's lovely.

The other thing we used to- less so now, but we used to have a lot of video recordings of the kids when they were really young, and they used to love sitting down and watching them, so it's- yes. It's good.

Yes. I mean, how do you think it compares, looking at photographs, compared to looking at your diaries? What's the difference between the two?

Well, the photographs are public and my diaries are private. That's it, really. A photograph is a picture; it's an impression that someone else standing in exactly the same spot as me at that time would have had the same image in their brain. But my diary is my impression; my perspective on what happened.

Yes, and with the diary, do you wish that you had any photographs of things that you'd written about? Is there any desire at all for those things [to cross 0:32:31], if that makes sense? Would you go and look at photographs having read about something in your diary, say?

No, no. My diaries are for my memories in my head, and my images in my head. I've never- no, and there are very few photographs, actually, in my diaries.

Right, and is that a regret, at all? Is that an issue, or...?

No, I've never felt the need. Never felt the need.

That's really interesting, because a lot of the apps for smartphones now for diary-keeping are very photo-based. They're very based around taking a photograph and then maybe writing a bit about it, or take a photograph a day and write about your day, sort of thing. It's a really interesting contrast [Crosstalk 0:33:17].

Yes. I would say my diaries are the other way around. My diary entry is so that I can generate the photograph in my head in years to come.

Yes, and are you kind of confident that you'll be able to do that?

No (Laughter). I might get dementia or something like that and read it and go, "Who's this about? This is not me." No, I don't know, but then- I don't know. You have your memories, and sometimes you don't want to change the images in your head. It's like if you- you've probably lived in the same house all your life, but if

you've lived in a different house, you have this idea of how it was in your childhood, and if you go back to it, it rewrites that and it spoils it.

Yes. How would you- ? Do you think you have enough details, though, in what you've written? Do you feel like what you've written is detailed enough, or will be detailed enough in years to come?

Probably [not 0:34:17]. You know, it's how it [was].

Yes, yes, and so- yes, it's the final question really: what do you think you want to do with your diaries in the future? I guess it's something you'll keep on doing. Is it something you hope, you know, think people might read them 20, 30 years hence? Or would you liked them to be looked after? Have you got any thoughts about the future of them?

No. I am going to keep writing them, because I enjoy doing it. As I said, I find it very therapeutic, and I have always said to [Shannon], my daughter, that she can have them when I die, on the understanding that she'll probably find them quite disappointing and boring (Laughter), but- yes, as I say, I had this idea of storing them all electronically: reading them into one of these Dictaphone things. My only concern is that I probably would edit it as I went, which I don't really want to do, and having looked at them again, you realise how much you've scribbled in the margin, and actually, that's almost as important as the text: the little quotes and things [I've written 0:35:36]. So, I guess, no: I'll just keep writing them and [Shannon] can sort them out when she gets them.

Yes. When you say it's sort of scribbled in the margin, do you mean that's something you've written, and as you're writing it, you've gone back and added something else, or...?

Occasionally I've done that if I've missed a bit out, but it's more just the things written in the backs and the fronts of the book, the little quotes or little comments or little things I've stuck in: maybe coming from a novel that I was reading at the time, or a conversation I'd had, or something I'd seen. And I don't know how you'd annotate those if you typed it all up, if you see what I mean, because some of it's quite visual. You open my diary, and there's a card stuck in or a letter stuck in that correlates to something that's written on the pages either side of it, kind of thing.

Yes, yes, and do you- ? Sorry, the question has just gone from my mind. I was just asking you about- it's completely gone.

The future? ____ [0:36:40].

Yes. No, it was after that. It was after that. I just asked you about writing in the margins. Oh, yes, sorry. At the time, when you're writing it- I should have asked this earlier, but at the time, is it- ? You know, how much do you kind of think about things before you write them, if that makes sense? Is it a stream of consciousness, or is it quite a, "I need to get this, this and this down." How considered would you say it is, what you've written in the first place?

It's structured. It depends on how I feel, how I start. Sometimes, I do start by looking back at my day-to-day diary and going, "Oh, right. On this day, we did that. Right, I'll start with that." And going through it chronologically. But other times it may be that there's something very important that I have to write about, and that would come first, and then I'd fill in the rest.

But quite often, I will go through a structure of, I'll write about the children, then I'll write about work, then I'll write about other members of my family, or my friends, or something. So, there will be sort of headings.

Yes. Well, I think I've asked you everything I wanted to ask. Is there anything else you wanted to ask, or anything I should have asked, or anything you want to [add 0:37:47]?

(Laughter) I don't think so, no. I don't. No, I've kept- the only other thing I'd say is I have kept other- I don't know if they're diaries, but documentation alongside. So, when we got married, my husband and I kept a diary for two weeks, a joint one, which went from our wedding day through the two weeks of our honeymoon. Also, when we had each of our three children, each of us wrote an entry into a different book for them, the idea being that the children would take it on as they get older. I think they've written one entry each into that, so it didn't work (Laughter).

I've kept a flight diary, which my father started me with. Because he was in the army, and he worked abroad a lot, I flew an awful lot as a child, and when I went to boarding school in 19[xx], at the age of eight, he had written down every single flight that I had ever been on in my life to date. Detailed it all. He had some of the flight numbers; it was incredibly. He gave it to me and said, "You've to keep this on."

So, I have a list of every flight that I have ever taken in my life, purely because my dad said it was a good thing to do.

Wow. Yes, and is that something you've looked at [in recent time] [Crosstalk 0:39:12]?

Yes.

What does that say to you, now? What does it...?

Well, that's always associated with- that's good and bad, because that's always holidays, going home, but then coming back to school. And it wasn't a diary; it was just a note, but there was always one or two lines of, "I flew with my brother this time," or, "I flew on my own for the first time." That kind of thing.

Mm, and again, is that something you've shared? Is that something that [Gerard] has seen, say?

Yes. [Gerard]'s seen it, and I think the kids have seen it. It's not a private thing. It's just, "This is what I've got," kind of thing.

Yes, yes. I've actually done something similar. I travelled for a bit after university. I took a lot of flights, and I did spend one day working out what flights I'd been on for the past year.

Yes. It's incredible, and the other thing I had was a Junior Jet Club book. I don't think they do those anymore, and you used to be able to get the pilot to sign it, and when you had flown 25,000 miles, you got a certificate, which I have (Laughter). So, [there you go 0:40:22]. But that's all very public. The other thing that we do have in the family is a lot of genealogy on both sides, going back to the 1700s. Obviously, that's very open. The whole family has access to that.

And just to ask, you said that [Gerard] keeps a diary, and your daughter, is it [Shannon]?

[Shannon], yes.

How did they start? Had they started it because of you, or did they start of their own accord, or do you think they've taken inspiration?

I think [Gerard] occasionally would write something, but he wasn't really a diary-writer until 2010 when one of our children got quite ill, and for him, it was very therapeutic. And he has written it daily since about 2010. Or evening-ly, usually, he sits down and writes it. And, in fact, a lot of his was typed into the computer, because for many years I thought he was working diligently at his computer (Laughter). But he was typing away in his diary.

Yes, yes.

But then he was given a really nice leather-bound book for his 50th birthday with a nice pen, so it's handwritten at the moment. [Shannon]: I think she started of her own volition. Whether or not it's because she knew I wrote one, I don't know, but she started at the age of about 10, writing her diary, and I think she writes it every day. I don't know.

Yes, yes. Just, as well, is there any- ? It's really interesting that you've mentioned the flight thing and other sort of documents that you're keeping. The context of what I am interested in, as well, is sort of how a lot of sensors and new technologies are making these sort of records that we don't really intend to keep, but we end up with them, like where we've been, who we've been with, and our Internet history, as well, and how that's a sort of record of lots of things. Lots of conversations, lots of interests, and how that compares to much more intentional things, so are there any other records you would say you keep that are kind of like that? That flight thing, or anything like that?

No, I don't think so, not just personal ones. I've kept- well, yes. I've got boxes for each of the kids, but that's their thing, so schoolwork or certificates they've got, or something like that. They've got boxes, and I've got stuff from my grandfather from the First World War, and obviously stuff of my fathers. I'm scanning more and more of it in; when I get the time, I try to scan some in, because I am very aware that paper documents perish, and they might get wet or something worse might happen to them.

So, that kind of stuff, I'm scanning in, but my diaries: I wouldn't be able to physically scan them in to protect them. I'm trying to think if there's anything else. No, I don't think so.

Okay, well it's been really, really interesting talking to you, so thank you so much.

You're very welcome.

But have you got any questions, or anything, or anything else you'd like to know?

I don't know. How far through are you? In your second year of your PhD?

Yes, so I'm just over 18 months through. I've got about a year and a half left, so this is still at a fieldwork stage, and then in my final year, I'll be looking about designing some technologies, or some sort of interactive objects, or things which combine these people's values and interests in remembering, and in sort of the things people want to record every day, and combine them with the sort of [quantitative 0:44:12] records that are created by digital things now.

I'm trying to combine them in interesting ways. To try to make that a bit clearer, as I say, I'm a sociologist working in a computer science department, and the raison d'être of our field is to give implications for design, so ____ [0:44:32] say, "Well, having studied how people actually use these technologies, and the values and practices people actually have, we suggest these technologies could be designed in these interesting ways." That's the idea of what we try to do.

At the moment, it's kind of fieldwork and lots of interviews and things, and then next year it will be actively towards designing something that kind of combines meaningful memories with some sensor-based technology or something like that. But it's still- yes, I'm in the thick of it at the moment, but I'm not too close- you meet people who are a year ahead, and they're getting very nervous, now, so I'm still kind of quite [enjoying it 0:45:10] and quite relaxed about it.

____ [0:45:11] three years, or...?

Yes. It's three years; it's usually three and a half. It's usually three years and then you write up, and it depends, but we're quite lucky. We're quite well-supported and quite well-funded and things, so it's not- I have friends who have maybe got more pressure to finish absolutely in three years, whereas we've got quite a bit of support, which is quite good. So, yes. I would probably say that I've got a year and a half left, and maybe a little more.

[Good, good. Nice 0:45:44].

Yes, yes. It has been really interesting talking to all these different- as I say, people are very, very different in what they do. I think you sometimes come into these things thinking you're going to find a unified way people do

things, and of course, they don't. People are incredibly idiosyncratic, and that's the interesting thing; that's the thing that's really exciting, as well. You interview someone new, and they tell you new things. You think, "Oh, no-one else has said that."

____[0:46:09].

But equally, they say things that other people have said, and your mind's going, "Oh, yes, of course..."

Yes, [you'll find some 0:46:16] common threads, or something, won't you, going through it?

Yes, and that's kind of the idea: you try, and when you- so, this is- we'll be aiming to write a paper on this in September time, and the aim will be to try to represent all these different viewpoints, but at the same time, represent the sort of common things that people have talked about, and the common experiences.

Mm.

So, you can sort of start to see, well, if you were designing an app to take a diary, then you sort of need to bear these types of things in mind, or you might consider these features. Like, for example, something you said there about photographs: it's really interesting, actually, thinking- is it that diary-keeping as a practice is radically changing because of the fact that photographs are becoming so ubiquitous? It might well be. It's possible that that's the case.

Yes.

And if you were to start keeping a diary today, you might include photographs in it, whereas as it is, you haven't done that and you wouldn't necessarily start doing that.

Yes, yes.

Does your daughter keep a handwritten diary, does she, or...?

Yes, hers is handwritten in notebooks, much the same as [my lot 0:47:22], actually.

Yes, that's quite interesting.

If you want to speak to her- I don't know if you want- I think she'd be up for it.

Well, two things. It would be very interesting to speak to her. I've spoken to a couple of people who are much older, so it would be really interesting to speak to a teenager. Just two things: one is really, if she was okay with that, I'd really want her to be up for doing that, not just because she felt she had to

or anything like that. Secondly, just on a- this is sort of a bureaucratic point, but just because she's under 18, I'd need to run that by my supervisors.

[Yes, yes 0:48:01].

I'm sure it's fine, and it's not really- I don't think there are too many ethical issues with this study, but that's just one thing, as well. If you let me get back to you on that, and maybe if you just speak to her and see if she's interested. As I say, I'd really only want her to do it if she was interested in talking about it. I'd completely understand if she wasn't, and if she thought it was something that was a bit boring, or just didn't really want to talk about it. But that would potentially be really interesting [Crosstalk 0:48:28].

Yes. That's fine. I'll ask her and see what she says.

Yes, and just let me know, and I can get back to you at my end.

And have you got enough people for your study? Are you still recruiting?

Yes. If you- how many is enough is always the question. Certainly, if you know people it would maybe be interesting. [The idea 0:48:55] with this one- I think you're about the sixth diary-keeper I've spoken to, but I have spoken to about eight or nine people who have kept digital diaries, as well. I'm probably looking for more people who have got digital ones, but if you know other people and they would be interested in doing it, then that could be really useful. Is there someone you have in mind?

No. I don't know. [Gerard] could speak to you if you wanted, because he's- I think about five years now, he's kept a diary. I can ask him, as well.

Yes. Ask them and let me know, and I'll get back to you as well with where I'm at with it. The other thing is that I can send you a £10 Amazon voucher.

You don't have to. It's not coming out of your pocket, is it?

No, no, not at all. Not at all. It's the university, and it's a small token of thanks, and it's fairly standard, as well. I'll send you that, and it should just be a code that you can just put in. Just to say though, I'll send with also just a little form, just to say that you have got that okay and you've received it, because I actually already have the voucher, so if I don't give it to you then it looks like I've taken it (Laughter).

[Nice 0:50:05]. Yes. Okay, okay.

And the final thing is, it would be really interesting if you could maybe just send me a couple of photographs of what your diaries sort of look like. Just that sort of box, and maybe just what they kind of look like, if that's okay.

Yes.

If you could just email me them when you get the chance, that would be super.

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