The University of Sussex led developments in deaf studies from 1969 to 1977, the late Reginald M. Phillips of Brighton funded the ‘Phillips Deaf Unit’ and its research portfolio was led by Dr. William ‘Bill’ Watts. The relationship between deaf studies and education technology (Professor Norman McKenzie) led to the production of a film, *the Base of a Spiral*, in 1972. The film captures the educational experiences of deaf children in three schools: St Thomas in Basingstoke, Hamilton Lodge in Brighton and Ovingdean Hall in East Sussex.

The film is a snapshot of deaf education in 1970’s, it highlights the aspirations of education of the time; in particular, to give deaf children speech. While its aims were admirable, the true litmus test will be the evaluation from the young people, at the time, who have survived the educational regime. The Hidden Histories project will use oral history methodology to capture the reminisced narratives from the ex-pupils of the three institutions.

The project will engage with the Deaf community to establish a group of oral history interviewers. They will receive training on how to interview, awareness of the ethical impact of the interview and a camera! They will be expected to identify deaf people in their forties who attended one of the three schools and to record their experiences.

The two-year project will give an opportunity for deaf people to lead on the archiving of oral history narratives on deaf education. The interviewers’ work will culminate in an exhibition of the narratives from deaf people and supporting historical facts on education in 1970’s.

For more information, please contact

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