**Film Transcription**

**Rewind – Leonard Cheshire Disability, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.**

**Film title:** Words Without Hands

**Duration**: 14 minutes 51 seconds

**Transcription Date**: 15th July 2016

**Summary of Main Points**

00:17-01:06 Introduction

01:07-01:39 Simple gadgets for reading

01:39-05:57 Complex gadgets for reading

05:58-06:38 Speaking without speech

06:49-07:44 Simple gadgets for writing

07:45-11:09 Complex gadgets for writing

11:10-13:14 Gadgets for complete paralysis

13:15-13:52 Further information

13:53-14:51 Credits

**[Start of Transcription]**

[Opening credits:

The Le Court Film Unit presents: Words Without Hands

Introduced by Robert Robinson]

[00:17] **Robinson:** Most animals communicate by sounds, er, or movement, or even both, but people know how to write, they record ideas. And we progress from the simple matter of er communicating the exchange of information, or emotion, to more complicated things such as philosophy, or scientific theory, religion, technology. And men make beauty in poetry and prose, they feed human understanding on newspapers and great literature, and even parish magazines and pornography. But you need hands to write, or even to turn the page, and if you can’t use your hands properly, or if you can’t use your hands at all, you can be denied access to the printed word. But fortunately, happily, there are a number of devices, gadgets if you like, some simple, some rather more elaborate.

[01:07] **Robinson**: Dimpled rubbers bought at any stationers help weak fingers to turn pages. [Pause] Paperclips stiffen and separate the page edges. [Pause] Holding a magazine in a vertical position is tiring for a horizontal man. [Pause] The spider bookrest isn’t the cheapest on the market, but it is effective. [Pause] Must be hot. Mr. Simmonds wears spectacles with prisms, like periscopes, for reading. [Pause]

[01:39] **Robinson**: Suppose you can’t use your hands at all, well you still have a chance – you use your head. [Pause] A projection, from a head band, for instance. Mrs Abrahams deserves congratulations. This is an improvised mouth-stick; she’d never used one before, never likely to again either. It proves what an easy solution this is though. [Pause]

This useful thing was originated in the United States, it has been manufactured here now for some time, and it is what they call an articulated rocker. It’s for arms, which can’t move, either through arthritic conditions or paralysis of some sort. And – *this* end of the device, hooks into the chair, the wheelchair, and *this* swivel is friction-free – and the arm of the user rests in this socket or shoe here. And the object of the device, is to extend the reach of the arm, and to free it from any necessity of using muscle. Er it acts like a muscle itself, it holds the arm up, as you will see. [Pause] Mr. Driver’s arms were paralysed by polio. In fact these rockers are most useful to him for feeding himself. He can turn the pages with his feet, and generally does. [Pause]

[03:13] **Robinson**: Here’s a much more complicated affair: an electrically driven page-turner. [Pause] It can only be used for paperbacks, for obvious reasons, unless you take the covers off hardbacks. But you can get such a range of paperback these days, that it isn’t much of a hardship. [Pause] Miss Petersymes spent three months in England because she wants to start the first home for the disabled in Norway. A slight suck, releases the page. And blowing, flattens the page, and holds it flat for reading. [Pause] Mr Gardner’s hands are spastic and he can’t turn pages with them. This space-age machine comes from the US too. It seems to be the first electrically-powered gadget which turns pages from right to left, as well as from left to right. An advantage if you want to refer back. [Pause]

Now this is an interesting device, it’s a sort of cinema-miniature, and it’s intended for use by people who still have perhaps a flicker of movement in a finger, or toe, or even their heads. And what happens is this: on these spools, *this* one, running onto another spool that is fitted *here*, is the film of a book. And by touching *these* buttons here which submit to the absolutely lightest of pressures, the pages can be moved forward or backward, according to the whim of the user. And through this lens *here,* the book is projected onto a screen, which is integrally part of this particular device. That one uses er 16 millimetre film, and er, you can also use 35 mili- millimetre micro film, and the Red Cross has a library for use with another model. And, you can get, the film, to be used with this one, from the National Fund Research into Crippling Diseases. And if they haven’t got any publication that you want, they’re able to find them for you. And if you want, you could even read, for a degree. Mr White reads propped up against his pillow. The screen, can be fixed at any angle, so anybody lying flat, could read, with equal comfort. The mechanism opened up another country, that people can find within four walls. Mr. White was in the Royal Navy. Now he gets his action second-hand.

[05:58] **Robinson**: Talking is part of my job, I’ve, got to at least try to speak distinctly, and, er, of course people’s voices can become *in*distinct, or non-existent for a variety of causes. It could be accident, or cancer, disseminated sclerosis, cerebral palsy, to name just a few of them. Well, in that case, a substitute for speech, would be, the alphabet board. [Pause] The indicator, spells out the words. Mr England, is using a home-made alphabet board, but he makes his wants just as clear. [Pause as England points to ‘Help’, ‘Please’, ‘Stop’]

[06:39] **Robinson**: Well we’ve showed you so far some ideas for er managing to read, and speak words, and now turn to the business of writing. Well if your, your hands are weakened, with arthritis, or paralysis, erm you find it very difficult to hold something as thin as a pencil. So what you have to do is thicken the pencil, and you do that very simply, by winding a bit of string around it like this, bring it up to *that* sort of thickness. [Pause as close up on thickened pencil] You can use plastic, foam perhaps, or even a jam jar, with a pencil attached, can come in handy. [Pause] Other devices for weaker hands, are more complicated. For a person with one useless hand, the paper could be held between the thin sheet of metal, and two small magnets because you need one hand to write, and one to hold the paper still. Better anchor the magnets, they’re *loseable*. [Pause as man writes with right hand]

[07:45] An electric typewriter is the best answer of all. Reconditioned machines can be bought cheaply through the National Fund for Research into Crippling Diseases or the Spastics Society, Miss Curtis is using a wrist stick. [Pause as Curtis types] Clearly the head-band stick isn’t such an effective method. [Pause as Levinson with head-band stick struggles to type by nodding head] Mr Levinson can’t aim very accurately or exert more pressure on the keys. The most commonly used gadget for typing, a stick of one sort or another, like two you see here, either held in the hand or attached to the hand. *This* is a converted paintbrush, er, in the middle there’s a toy lorry wheel, and it’s held like *that*, the lorry wheel lodging the fingers to stop the stick slipping up or down. On the end you have this rubber tip, so that when it strikes the keys, it doesn’t slip. On the other *hand*, which has no grip, this little *ring*, the small, stick again a rubberised end, is slipped onto one of the fingers and used *thus*. [Pause]

Feeding paper and envelopes into the typewriter is a problem, here's one way of doing it. The gadget rests in a trough, on an untippable stand. You grip one end with your teeth, press a plunger with your tongue, and this opens the jaws of the other end of the arrow shaft. If you keep on pressing the carriage return button, the paper will wind in but it takes a bit of manoeuvring to get it under the retaining bar [pause] A close up to show how much the chin-rest takes. This device is invaluable for addressing envelopes. [pause for demo] A micro-switch gadget, for turning back the platen to make corrections. Mr Horton's sight is poor, he has brightly coloured paint markers and intervals on his keyboard, so that it's not too much of a strain on his eyes to count along to the letter he wants. He memorised the positions of the letters on the keyboard when he taught himself to type. This is the conventional paper feed system, a long row of paper perforated to tear off into quarto-sized sheets. The wired tray fixed to the back of the typewriter, stops the paper cascading to the floor. Mr. Beckingham was disabled by polio. He can't use his hands, so he learned to type with a mouth-stick. His speed is 23 words a minute. Being a man of initiative, he got himself a full-time job as a telephone sales representative at a firm in Covent Garden, he gets around inside buildings with a powered drive electric wheelchair. Recently he married and left the Cheshire home, where he was living, for an ordinary flat. [pause as Beckingham types]

[Film returns to Robinson at desk]

[11:10] **Robsinson**: People whose breathing muscles are partly paralysed can sometimes learn to do without a respirator by using a method called frog-breathing. And this, is done by drawing back the head, that raises the chest cavity, and thus inflates the lungs. Mr Driver has gone one better, and can project his voice for public speaking. He types with his feet, the mechanism he uses is called a distaff. He rests his feet in strapped soles, like the top halves of roller-skates, and by remote control works the two typing fingers, he types articles and short stories, with speed and accuracy. [pause for demo] The electric unit besides the typewriter in front of Mrs Cormford is called a POSSUM: Patient Operated Selector Mechanism. And this will translate a muscle flicker, er into other actions as well as typing. You have turning on and off television, radio, a heater, er and adjusting their volume, ringing a bell, answering a telephone, opening a door, just some of the examples. Well, when Mrs Cormford started typing with a POSSUM she couldn't swallow, and she had to be fed by tube. And the slight, suck-and-blow movement on the mouthpiece had the unexpected very happy effect of stren- strengthening her throat muscles. And she could swallow normally again. So now she types with two fingers and micro-switches. Mrs Cormford is about as paralysed as you can be and still stay alive. But her wheelchair, with a built-in respirator makes it possible for her husband to take her out on a minibus at weekends, and with her parents they also go away on the minibus for holidays. Here she's using the original suck-blow method for typing. The inventor of the POSSUM worked out a series of long and short impulses similar to Morse code, for the letters of the alphabet. A skilled operator can achieve ordinary typing speeds.

[13:15] These books which are called "Equipment for the Disabled" are produced by the National Fund for Research into Crippling Diseases. And the devices we've been dealing with in this film, only a few of the devices of course available under the heading of 'Communications', er are to be found in section 7. And in that section, you will find out where you can get them and how much they are going to cost you. And I will now give you the address to which you write. "The National Fund for Research for Crippling Diseases, Vincent House, Vincent Square, London, SW1".

Credits

[13:53] And here you can see the people who made this team. The camera team, Laurie Mawer, cameraman. Peggy Shiftner, his assistant. Neville Thomas, the technician. The editing team, Mr Thomas again. Brian Line, and Barbara Beesley, who also wrote the script.

[14:22-51]

[Centred Text: The Film Unit wishes to thank Mr Robert Robinson for giving his services as narrator, Mr Ian Curtis for all his help and advice, and Mr Bill Morris for extra film sequence.

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**End of Transcription**