

The status and future of oral history collections in the north east

Internal report for NEMLAC, October 2005

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
OBJECTIVES.....	5
PARAMETERS.....	5
METHODOLOGY OF AUDIT.....	5
THE COLLECTIONS.....	6
MATERIAL HELD LOCALLY	7
The large collections	7
Other collections.....	8
COLLECTION CONTENT.....	10
Themes.....	10
Geography	12
Dates.....	13
MATERIAL HELD OUTSIDE THE REGION	13
NEW RECORDING AND FUNDING	15
STEWARDSHIP AND STANDARDS.....	15
PRESERVATION OF CARRIER	16
DUPLICATION.....	17
DIGITISATION.....	18
COPYRIGHT.....	20
SKILLS AND TRAINING	20
ACCESS AND INCLUSION.....	22
ONSITE ACCESS (PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL)	23
TRANSCRIPTIONS AND SUMMARIES.....	24
INTERNET ACCESS.....	24
MEDIATED USES	26
Exhibitions and displays	27
Content packaging and merchandising.....	27
Audio guide	27
Educational resources:.....	27
Broadcast.....	27
DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE FUTURE	28
A SHARED VOICE	28
PARTNERSHIPS.....	28
POOLED KNOWLEDGE BASE	28
POOLED RESOURCES.....	29
RECOMMENDATIONS.....	30
REFERENCES.....	32
APPENDIX A: INITIAL CONTACT LETTER.....	33
APPENDIX B: FULL QUESTIONNAIRE.....	35
APPENDIX C: SCHEME DETAILS AND CODES FOR THE DATABASE	40
APPENDIX D: EXISTING COLLECTIONS	43
Existing collections included in the database	43
Existing collections not within the database	48
APPENDIX E: ONGOING RECORDING	50
Organisations which are generally active to some degree	50
Focussed recording projects currently underway/starting shortly	50
Groups with no oral histories or plans to record.....	53
APPENDIX F: ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	55

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: summary of all local collections by organisation type.....	8
Table 2: collection content.....	11
Table 3: geographical coverage of collections.....	12
Table 4: dates covered by existing (complete) collections.....	13
Table 5: continuing recording.....	15
Table 6: Carriers within collections (note many collections are mixed-media).....	16
Table 7: back ups of interviews.....	17
Table 8: finding aids (most detailed level available)*.....	19
Table 9: primary purpose of recording.....	22
Table 10: degree of access to collections.....	23
Table 11: degree of transcription or summary of collections.....	24
Table 12: intended outcomes of current projects.....	26
Figure 1: size of local holdings.....	7
Figure 2: collection content.....	11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is built upon a survey of the oral histories of the north east, which has been used to quantify information on collection content, management and use.

The oral history collections of the region are extremely diverse in terms of size, content, aims, stewardship and access. They are also far more numerous than might be expected, since they have been collected both by repositories in the heritage sector – libraries, archives and museums – and by many other organisations and individuals. There are at least 100 collection holders, and over 50 active collectors at present. This makes supporting best practice in oral history a challenge.

The biggest problem facing repositories at present is the deterioration of collections as their carrier media age. A significant proportion of north eastern interviews are at risk in this regard – around 40% are on unique carriers. Duplication is therefore a priority. Ideally this should take the form of digitisation as this has significant advantages in terms of preservation, storage, access and use of content. Other important issues include copyright and metadata.

Individuals or small private organisations hold at least 10% of known locally held recordings. Whilst the desires of these holders must be respected, it is important to encourage deposit or loan to public bodies better able to preserve and make publicly available recordings.

There is significant enthusiasm for new recording projects at present. This should be underpinned with expertise on good practice in all aspects of an interview's lifecycle. The Oral History North East Network and associated website have made steps towards increasing access to knowledge and training in the region, but more remains to be done in this area. Additionally new recording projects should be designed to fill in the gaps in existing collections, thematically and geographically.

In spite of various initiatives and publications, the region's oral history represents a largely untapped treasure, and knowledge of existing collections remains piecemeal. Potential exists for various holders to work individually or in collaboration on producing materials, in both old and new media, which showcase its strength and diversity. In particular the internet provides new opportunities and new challenges in access to oral history. All of these objectives should help to raise the profile of oral history in the region.

OBJECTIVES

To carry out a questionnaire-based survey regarding oral history collections in, or relating to, the region; quantifying information relating to content, stewardship, and access.

To input data on these collections onto a database a version of which will be made publicly available, to aid resource discovery and publicise collections.

To produce a report for NEMLAC which highlights key issues raised by these findings, identifying trends in regional oral history collection, preservation and use, and suggesting ways forward.

PARAMETERS

The “north east” is geographically the region under the remit of NEMLAC, comprising Northumberland, Tyneside, Durham, Wearside, and Teesside. The main focus has been to analyse collections held within this region. Brief consideration has been given to oral history recordings relating to the region but held beyond it.

This report is concerned primarily with audio material – interviews which were recorded in print only, or for which only a transcript survives, are not included. Although oral history collections are the key concern, and are the basis for statistical analysis, collections of recorded radio material have also been noted. No effort has been made to systematically find video material, although where audio-visual interviews have been found they have been included.

METHODOLOGY OF AUDIT

Initially a number of groups were contacted on the basis of desk research, notably using Patricia Sharkey’s “North East Oral History Directory” (1992), Bob Perks’ Oral History Annotated Bibliography (1990) and back issues of the Oral History Magazine. Online resources consulted included the web pages of NEMLAC, Local History Initiative and Tomorrow’s History, supplemented by the results of keyword searches. Additionally contacts were asked if they knew of any other collections. These methods yielded around 250 potential contacts. Each of these was sent an initial questionnaire, by post or where possible by e-mail (appendix A). This asked simply whether the recipient held any oral history content, had done in the past, or was planning to create any in the future. Where a suitable collection was identified, it was then followed up with a longer questionnaire by post or e-mail, or by a telephone call or visit, depending on the preferences of the contact. Further e-mails or phone calls were made where the questionnaire appeared to have been forgotten.

Appendix B is the questionnaire that was sent out to local organisations. A slightly revised version was sent to organisations for which north eastern material was a subset of a larger collection. A database was created in MS Access to allow searching and analysis of data collected. The use of a slightly modified version of RSLP collection level metadata fields will allow easy transferral of data about publicly accessible collections to an internet database, while the full version will remain available for NEMLAC use. See appendix C: database structure and relationship to RSLP metadata schema.

THE COLLECTIONS

Almost 85% responded in some way to the initial enquiry, either immediately or after follow-up communication. Understandably a higher proportion of these were from the public sector, less where individuals and local history societies were concerned. Given a (somewhat crude and approximate) division of all potential contacts into “public” (museums, libraries, archives, local government) and “private” (companies, societies, individuals), 90% of enquiries to the public sector, and 82% of enquiries to individuals, met with a response.

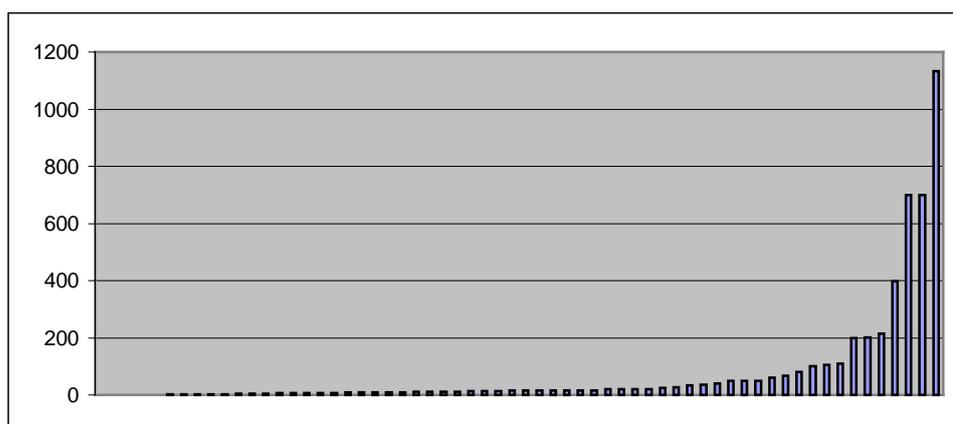
The level of audit possible varied greatly - many were extremely co-operative, others provided basic information on key elements of their collections but were reluctant to tackle the full questionnaire, or did not participate beyond an initial positive response.

Reasons (stated or implied) for non- or partial involvement included:

- Everyone knows about our collection, it is well publicised
- We don't want anyone to know until we have finished using it
- We have contributed to another survey recently
- We don't have the time or manpower to fill in the form
- We don't have the time or manpower to find the answers
- The collections are not catalogued or sorted
- The collections are in state of flux
- This is not a priority for us.
- We do not want to be “taken over”
- Our collection is not of interest to anyone else.

All knowledge gained about collections will be included in the broad analysis and appendices however the statistical breakdowns are made on the basis of information about oral history collections gained by the 1st of May 2005, comprising 106 collections held in 78 locations, and 20 collections-in-progress. Thus the data in the appendices will differ slightly from the aggregate statistics.

MATERIAL HELD LOCALLY



Darlington Library houses over 200 oral history interviews (on the social history of Darlington) dating from the 1970s and 80s, as well as a further 100 1980s local radio broadcasts. This material is accessible with notice, but is held on unique tape cassettes and only partially catalogued.

Tyne and Wear Museums have about 230 interviews, the large majority held at the Discovery Museum, generally created to aid with researching background or content for specific projects. As such, they are digitised; they can be accessed with permission.

Durham Light Infantry Museum houses a second copy of the 200 interviews of the Imperial War Museum project focused on the regiment. It is a back up to the IWM originals, and not accessible to the public (see below).

Other collections

organisation type	Number of organisations	Number of interviews
local interest group	24	345
local individual	7	47
local museum	7	1017
local authority archive	6	1757
local authority library	6	309
local arts	4	110
local higher education	4	135
local authority	3	113
local military museum	3	246
local independent archive	1	700
local school	1	11

Table 1: summary of all local collections by organisation type

Smaller collections may be static and archival, the by-product of a project or research, or a spontaneous demonstration of interest in history of a locality. Table 1 shows the wide range of types of organisation which house oral history. This diversity makes provision of help for these organisations and individuals challenging.

“Local interest group” and “local arts”

This includes not only local history societies but also for example film making clubs, a theatre, community drama schemes and an environmental volunteers group. These are likely to be unique and inaccessible and as such represent an untapped resource in the region. It is likely that there are other similar groups with small collections.

“Local individual”

These tend to be authors, or those recording their own family members. Undoubtedly there are many more individuals with small collections than this survey has brought to light. As with local interest groups, it would be advantageous to encourage such individuals to come forward and allow copies of their material to be housed at a public repository, although clearly the wishes of those involved must be respected.

“Higher education”

At present higher education bodies have a lesser role in the audio sector in the north east than in other regions. There are no formal links between higher education bodies and oral historians. Additionally individual academics are frequently unaware of the value of their recordings to a wider audience. It is rare for such recordings to be deposited elsewhere, and copyright is often not considered with an eye to wider uses of the material. One approach would be to work with university libraries – which in some cases already have a small oral history collection – to encourage further deposition of audio research materials.

“School”

Despite the low figure for schools in the table, several schools have been involved in oral history recordings. This is usually in partnership with others who ultimately keep the recordings, for example the Stockton Remembering the Past project, Cranes Boats and Trains (run by Living History North East) and the “It’s the way we tell it” collaboration. This is positive as it helps to encourage some basic standards of interviewing, required if the documents are to have any value beyond the learning outcomes of the creation process. However it is likely that many more recordings have been made by individual school groups, and never find their way into collections. Ideally such schools should be encouraged both to take advice from specialists in the field before recording, and to deposit or loan their recordings.

COLLECTION CONTENT

Information about collection content should be made publicly available. This will enable those embarking on projects to more easily target the gaps in coverage. This in turn will reassure funding bodies that they are not contributing to a duplication of effort.

Themes

This breakdown comprises all known existing and in-progress collections for which there is information. It excludes the largest collections, which can be safely reckoned to hold some material in virtually all of these categories (Teesside Archive, Beamish Museum, Living History, Darlington Library, NRO, TWMS, Millennium memory bank); and collections of less than five interviews.

	Intended focus			Inferred additional strength*		Total
	Local	National	Incomplete	Local	Incomplete	
Regional life	24		11			35
All work			1	3		4
Mining	6	1	1	4	4	16
Industry	1	4	1	5		11
Rural work	3			2	2	7
Sea work	1	1	1	5		8
Shops			1			1
Public sector			1			1
Wartime	7	2	3			12
Leisure	1		1			2
Politics/strike	4					4
Dialect	2	2	1			5
Education	1	1				2
Migration	2		2			4
Religion			1			1
Varied	3	4	2			9

* for example where the aim has been to record all village life in a village dominated by mining.

Table 2: collection content

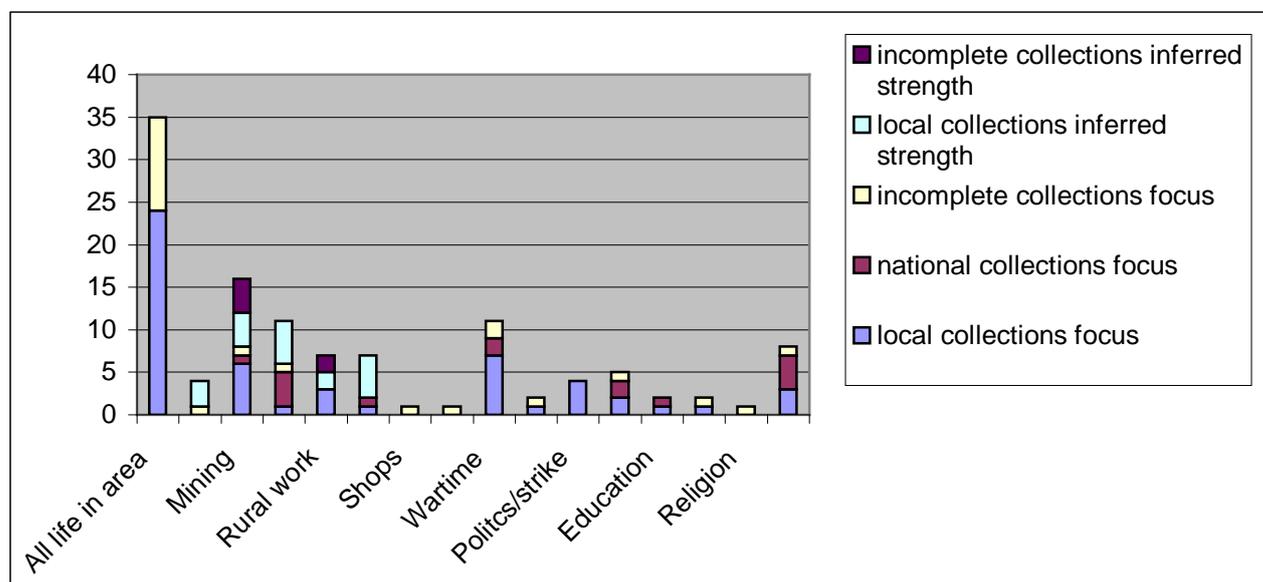


Figure 2: collection content

Recording has tended to focus either on life in a particular community, or on the particular industries which dominated employment in the region being studied. Thus professions more widely distributed across the region - for example public sector jobs and unusual jobs – have received less attention. Additionally aspects of cultural and personal life are rarely covered – examples would be relationships and sexuality, religion, and folk traditions (the latter has flourished as a separate discipline in some parts of the country, but not the north east). Sport, entertainment and leisure have also received little coverage.

In continuing to collect oral histories it is important to reflect regional identity and also the diversity of life experience in the region. Certain subjects - for reasons of dating (e.g. Home front projects in 2005) and importance to regional identity (e.g. coal mining) - may be seen to more readily attract funding. However the Oral History Network’s Regional Conversation on Collecting for the Future concluded that in addition to such core concerns a wider approach to theme is needed, which encompasses a cross-section of society and includes engaging with the “non-PC” story (for example field sports, extremist politics). Gaps and overlaps in recording and collecting should be minimised through reference to the database and potentially also through agreement on collecting strategies amongst the major collectors.

Geography

	Complete	In process/new	Total
Durham	25	9	34
Teesside	14	5	19
North Northumberland	16	2	18
Gateshead	13	2	15
South Northumberland	11	3	14
Newcastle	12	1	13
North Tyneside	8		8
South Tyneside	7	1	8
Wearside	7		7
International (military)	3	2	5
Scotland	4		4
Darlington	4		4
Cumberland	2		2

Table 3: geographical coverage of collections

Although this table must be treated with caution (as it does not factor in issues of scale of collection), it does appear that coverage is better in Teesside and Durham than Tyneside and Northumberland. However Teesside in this instance refers primarily to the Middlesbrough and Stockton areas – Redcar, Cleveland, and Hartlepool have been little recorded.

An impressionistic assessment suggests that agricultural and mining villages and small towns, are better served, proportional to population, than either urban centres, or rural outlying districts. This may be because active local history groups tend to be from these areas. It is also possible that population mobility has an effect in some cities.

Dates

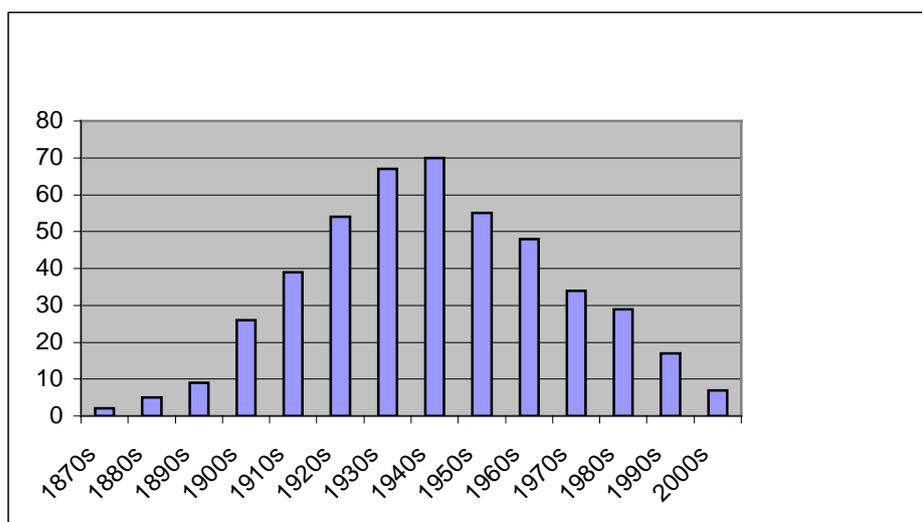


Table 4: dates covered by existing (complete) collections

Some work is being done on relatively recent memory, notably through projects which have deliberately aimed to record the century through the lives of all its inhabitants, such as the Millennium Memory Bank. It remains that the large majority of collectors are aiming to record the memories of the communities' older members. This means that memories of the recent past are usually secondary to earlier memories, and usually told from the perspective of a middle aged or older person. Clearly there is an urgency in such recordings which makes them a priority, however it must also be remembered that recent memory will also have value to future users. For instance, memories of the miners' strike given by a ninety year old may be very different from those of his grandson, but both are valuable.

MATERIAL HELD OUTSIDE THE REGION

Additional to the various collections held locally several other organisations have collected interviews relevant to the north east. Most non-locally held collections with a small north eastern component will not have been identifiable. Additionally the BBC own many oral history interviews, which cannot be investigated at present (the BBC History Audio Database has been off-line for over a year).

Nonetheless almost 1000 local oral histories, including much high-quality material, have been found outside the region. Thus these alternative sources should not be dismissed as a mere adjunct to locally held material, but a useful addition to it especially in particular areas of focus.

a) NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE - houses many thousands of oral history recordings from across the country, including collections with a north eastern component. Large nationwide collections include the Millennium memory bank (286 north eastern interviews), Family life and work experience before 1918 (29); and the NLSC Lives in Steel collection (25). Many other collections focussing on a particular profession may be expected to have a few north eastern recordings.

- b) **DIALECT AND FOLK ARCHIVES** – the biggest recording survey of English dialect material is the Survey of English Dialects, 98 of which are north eastern – copies of this are held at the National Sound Archive, the North West Sound Archive, and Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture. Other dialect centres, such as the National Centre for English Cultural Tradition in Sheffield, have tended to focus on their own locality (although this does include c.25 recordings relating to folk life and traditions in the north east).
- c) **NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL MUSEUMS** – there are national museums for many occupations which have relevance to the north east, notably railways, mining, fishing and the military. Of these, the Imperial War Museum is the most significant to us, as the Durham Light Infantry was made the focus of a project, leading to 197 interviews with ex-members. Also some specific research projects have been housed at the Imperial War Museum, including 40 interviews with female shipyard workers of Tyneside, 67 with workers at Newton Aycliffe Ordnance, and 57 with members of the Northumberland Fusiliers. Small numbers of relevant interviews are held by museums for the other occupations.
- d) **RESEARCH CENTRES** – there are various academic centres around the country dedicated to gaining information including oral history on specific nationwide social and cultural topics. Information has not been hugely forthcoming from these, for various reasons, although it may be assumed that small numbers of north eastern interviews may be housed in, for instance Cambridge's Archive of Teacher Memory, and Oxford's Centre for Islamic Studies.
- e) **NATIONAL HERITAGE ORGANISATIONS** – English Heritage and the National Trust are in a similar position, in that both are making efforts to centralise, document and improve access to the various small collections of audio recordings made piecemeal by their different sites. Until this is done there is little idea about exactly what has been recorded.
- f) **MISCELLANEOUS NON-LOCAL COLLECTIONS** – since people move around, inevitably interviews made for localised projects elsewhere may contain small amounts of material relevant to the north east. These have built up in regional audio centres like the NWSA and EMOHA, as well as in other less likely places like Birmingham library's Charlie Parker archive, and Nuneaton Museum (which exhibited on coal mining). These are unlikely to have significant impact however.

In most of these cases good stewardship may be assured and indeed the relevant institutions are leaders in curatorial standards. In most there is good access and either existing documentation or steps being taken towards it. There is therefore little need to be concerned for the safety or access of these recordings. However given the region's distance from London, there would seem scope for obtaining digitised copies of key collections, perhaps through an exchange programme.

NEW RECORDING AND FUNDING

Many organisations with existing collections – both public bodies and local groups - aim to add to their collection with fresh oral history recording.

Acquisitions	
Ongoing	21
Planned or projected	8
Considering for the future	8
Not a priority	13
No	14

Table 5: continuing recording

In addition, there is great enthusiasm for starting a recording programme amongst many community groups, heritage centres, arts organisations and others. This is clear in appendix E, which lists projects in progress. In many cases this is seen as a component of specific projects, often with some form of external funding. It would be instructive to establish more clearly the main sources of funding being drawn upon by schemes currently in progress. From past projects it seems that the Heritage Lottery Fund has (often through the Local History Initiative) been responsible for funding a significant proportion of community heritage projects with an oral history component. Oral history recording seems to be popular with funding bodies, and for good reasons. As well as engaging with local history and producing a resource which can be exploited in many ways (see below), an oral history project brings other benefits in terms of training, inter-generational understanding, community building, partnerships, and psychological gains. It is also positive from a stewardship viewpoint, as applicants for external funding are encouraged to consider issues of content longevity, copyright and public access.

However, the reliance on short term project work does increase the need to ensure safe stewardship of recordings in the longer term. It may also lessen opportunity for communities to become engaged by the project.

STEWARDSHIP AND STANDARDS

As with all collections, there are important issues to be addressed in terms of how oral history materials are conserved and recorded. Audio material is unusual because the curation of media, audio content and informational content raise different issues. Preservation of material is the key challenge currently facing many oral history collections, as the life span of existing formats is increasingly coming to an end. Responses to this situation vary widely, and unless a preservation strategy is implemented there are collections in which valuable material will be lost.

PRESERVATION OF CARRIER

It is generally accepted that with few exceptions, the aim of audio archiving is to preserve the content, not the carrier. However while duplication is low priority for many, and in a world of imperfect copying methods, there remains an imperative to attempt to maximise the lifespan of carriers.

Medium type	
Tape cassette	65
Minidisk	12
CD	11
Reel to reel	9
Video tape	5
DAT tape	3
Dictaphone	2
Solid state	1

Table 6: carriers within collections

Many collections are mixed media. Little attention has been paid by most organisations to storage conditions. Very few are kept according to BS 5454 audio-visual standards (i.e. temperature 19 degrees +/- 1; humidity 40% +/- 5). 22 collections were reported to be held in some form of controlled conditions (archival boxes and/or temperature/humidity controlled space, although degree of detail varied). 36 more were reported to be in non-archival boxes, filing cabinets or open shelves in normal room conditions. The implications of these conditions are inevitably different for different media types. Fortunately since most material is in the form of tape cassettes which are relatively robust and stable in normal room conditions, the lifespan of the media will rarely be unnaturally shortened, although archival boxes would be preferable. Reel to reel material requires more careful storage and is in some cases at risk for this reason.

The IASA details the formats which it considers to be inherently unstable. Of these, the ones of concern on the local scene are

- A) acetate reel-to-reels
- B) all long/double/triple play reel-to-reel tape
- C) all cassette tapes of any type

D) any carrier that shows obvious signs of decay either by inherent instability (e.g. sticky tape syndrome) or by deterioration caused by improper handling or storage (e.g. mechanical deformation, mould, etc).

Of these, A and B are not likely to be very large (although acetate and long play were not specifically identified within the survey). Only two respondents identified a slight loss of quality in their audio, one an individual, the other Durham Library's radio collection. This leaves cassette tapes as by far the biggest area of concern. There is little doubt that many other collections' unique carriers – primarily cassettes - are on borrowed time or have not been checked for degradation in some time, which raises the importance of a duplication strategy.

An additional consideration is the longevity and availability of playback devices, since perfectly preserved carriers are of no use if the playback device does not survive. However, small collections may not merit the storage of obsolescent hardware. One solution might be a listing of, for example reel-to-reel machines in the possession of organisations willing to collaborate to preserve at risk materials. Impressionistically the problem seems to be more severe with video recordings, which have seen more changes of media type over recent years (for example, the Northumberland Fusiliers Museum houses videos in various old formats but has no way to play them and little idea of what is on them).

Given the speed of change in the digital recording field and the gradual expansion of solid-state technology, this problem is not confined to older hardware. DAT playback devices are rapidly becoming obsolete. Additionally the IASA recommends the transferral of all recordable minidisks, not because they degrade or are in danger of obsolescence as such, but because new data-reduction coding is being developed and it is not known whether future minidisk players will be fully backwards-compatible. Nonetheless the minidisk, because of its low cost, is often the recording device of choice for new projects.

DUPLICATION

Backup information	Number of interviews
None	1853
Yes - digital	1700
Partial/in progress	500
Yes - analogue	433
Unknown	174
Yes – unknown type	96

Table 7: back ups of interviews

The north east clearly houses a large number of unique materials many of which are of vulnerable age or type – around 40% are unique. Many organisations do not consider this problem a priority, perhaps considering the minidisk format to be future-proof or simply being unaware of the finite lifespan of cassette tape. Additionally, much of the material held by local and community groups or produced within arts and educational context is not formally “collected” and preservation is not necessarily regarded as a primary concern, nor one for which budgetary provision is available. Advice must be made available on these matters; additionally it may be possible to co-operate, for example by the loan of recordings to better-equipped organisations with public access. Nonetheless it should be noted that the situation is not necessarily any better within the public heritage sector and indeed the large majority of at risk material is in public hands.

Care should be taken to avoid duplication of effort where more than one organisation has the same recording. This requires good communications, and perhaps partnerships to share the workload and exchange digitised copies. It is more likely to occur with regard to radio programmes.

DIGITISATION

At present very few collections have been digitised (although this includes some of the largest, which means that around 50% are either digitised or soon will be). Teesside Archive’s tape collection is perhaps the most important single task. Other priority collections, on the basis of size, medium, age of recording and apparent quality, include the Gateshead general strike collection (although this is at least digitised in transcript), Easington Council collection, and Darlington Library collection – although many other small collections should not be ignored simply on grounds of size.

While it can to some extent be performed as a background task, and suitable free software is available, digitisation undeniably places additional demands upon the organisation undertaking it. A certain amount of staff or volunteer time is required, along with money for, for example, storage media and (if not already available) sufficiently high specification hardware. These factors, together with a lack of knowledge about the digitisation process (perhaps leading to overestimation of the difficulty of the task) provide disincentives towards digitisation. Prolonging the lifespan of a collection will also seem more important if there are concrete goals for using the material thereafter.

At-risk collections are extremely varied in size, and thus solutions to the problem will not be uniform. For instance, the scale alone of the Teesside archive tapes points to a specific concerted digitisation scheme. In the case of small collections, there is a case for encouraging small groups to loan their material to public sector bodies for copying and return of originals (or another digital copy). Sensitive handling is required to ensure that individual organisations feel valued and retain their sense of involvement with the collection. An alternative might in some instances be the provision of small grants for duplication to groups, in exchange for the promise of a

certain level of access to the recordings. Training or information would need to go along with this to ensure it the work was being done effectively.

A final consideration, highlighted by the MLA / Digital Preservation Coalition Report on Digital Knowledge (2005), is the lifespan of digital media, an issue not currently taken into account in many long-term plans. This is in many cases a controversial subject since it has only been tested in artificial conditions, which differ in their estimates of lifespan. The most commonly used figure seems to be around 75 years, longer in the case of archival Gold CDs. However there is sufficient uncertainty (and some quite low figures suggested for 1980s CDs) that it seems wise to err on the side of a pessimistic approach and advocate the use of checking and refreshing strategies for digital audio files. However this is a time-consuming task, which will inevitably be seen as of low priority.

Technologies available for digital storage are rapidly changing, although it is important not to follow a route which becomes problematic in terms of specialist or proprietary hardware or encoding. Long-term one option for larger collectors might be to treat all disc storage methods as an intermediate stage on the path to a Digital Mass Media Storage system. These will always represent a significant investment, and are not currently available on a suitable scale, although they should become so within the next ten years. DMMS systems provide easy access to all files, extremely compact data storage, and have the particular strength of automatically monitoring the data integrity of their contents, copying endangered carriers to new ones before they become unreadable. The scale of a DMMS would lend itself to collaborative storage ventures.

METADATA AND DOCUMENTATION

Informants were asked about objects associated with the collection, for instance catalogues, transcripts and ephemera. In hindsight these issues would have been better addressed separately, as this would have encouraged a fuller response. Only 30 collections were described as having finding aids – some are too small for this to be necessary, but other informants may have simply not responded to this facet of the broader question.

Finding aid type	
Electronic catalogue	9
Card catalogue	4
Catalogue (type unknown)	4
Partially catalogued	3
List	10

Table 8: finding aids (most detailed level available)*

* i.e. if a collection has a list and an electronic catalogue the latter will be recorded.

Given the apparent under-usage of existing material, poor or inaccessible documentation and knowledge does seem a key issue. Finding aids are crucial in promoting access to collections, and while some are user-friendly and detailed (for example Living History's on-site electronic database, Teesside Archives' cross-referenced card catalogues) many others are not fully catalogued. Documentation systems tend to vary according to the materials available and the thoughts of the cataloguer, or to fit in with a pre-existing library catalogue or museum accession system. In the current climate existing metadata is unlikely to be altered, although more detailed finding aids are sometimes produced.

Some collections are not listed, and holders are not aware of the contents of the collection. This seems to be due to a low priority, low estimation of value, or a simple lack of time to dedicate to the task. Making available a blank database or list based on standard schema like Dublin Core, to holders of such collections and those newly engaged in digitisation, would encourage standard metadata and inclusion of key attributes. This may prove valuable in the event of any future joint portal or catalogue.

COPYRIGHT

Many collectors, particularly those working outside the public sector and unguided by external funding bodies, have not gained copyright from their interviewees and are not well versed in audio copyright issues. A variety of misconceptions exist - most people either do not think at all about formal assignment of copyright, do not think beyond their own specific project uses, assume they can do whatever they consider reasonable, or conversely that they can't do anything at all. There is a need for training and simply set out information in this area to promote an understanding of the limitations and uses of copyrighted material, and encourage best practice in future recording projects. A sample copyright form could also be provided, for instance through the Oral History North East website.

Even where copyright remains with the speaker this does not negate the need for preservation as it will eventually lapse.

SKILLS AND TRAINING

It is important to ensure that enthusiasm to begin recording is matched by knowledge and training, amongst heritage professionals and community groups alike. At present there is little provision for training in the oral history field. Those with no training sometimes begin projects in the region, while other projects are postponed without it. A certain amount of basic training in oral history interviewing is available in some regions - for example the Durham Community Heritage project has a rolling programme of basic training. Knowledge of these short courses appears to be patchy - in the course of research for this report the author received several enquiries about oral history training. The Community Matters newsletter helps to increase knowledge of training opportunities in Durham, but even here coverage is incomplete.

Funding bodies often make training a requirement of the grant. Collation of information about training courses could be made available through the Oral History North East web pages alongside other sources of information. Additionally it would

be advantageous if accredited training in oral history interviewing could be offered within the region; however this is problematic in that there is no national standard or qualification in oral history.

Continuing stewardship also has training implications, especially in the light of the observations made above regarding digitisation and documentation. Many repositories of oral history have no staff with specialist knowledge of either oral history recording or audio archives. Teesside Archives is taking the lead by focussing its annual Day School for staff on oral history this year.

If the public is to be encouraged to loan or donate their oral history collections to public repositories, it would be advantageous if a simple accreditation system or benchmark were put in place to provide reassurance of the level of care and access provided. In some cases this may involve additional training.

The Oral History North East website and network training days have begun a process by which skills and knowledge can be disseminated. Efforts should be made to ensure that such opportunities are made known to all potentially interested parties. In general terms, profiling needs to be done to establish the training needs of both public sector bodies and community groups – this may not be limited to oral recording but include interpretation, funding bids, sound editing, digitisation, metadata etc. This is essential if the region is to promote high standards in interviewing, preservation and management.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Purpose	
Archive	50
Broadcast	7
Community participation	5
Education	4
Exhibition	13
Research	17
Time capsule	2
Various	3

Table 9: primary purpose of recording behind existing collections

Table 9 demonstrates that the majority of collections were made with an aim to “archive” material. However this is a loose interpretation of the term, as chosen by the collection holders, and in practice incorporates all those recordings which were made for their own sake rather than for another outcome.

As stated above, substantial bodies of material in private hands end up inaccessible, unconserved, and ultimately forgotten. Where a grant has been given for the project, access through a major public collection is often made a requirement of the funding (in practice however it is clear that this does not always happen). Other collections are formed in ways which mean they are unlikely to find their way into public collections.

This has impact on public access just as it does on preservation. Collections do not exist in isolation, and their value is related to their accessibility, application and dissemination. Preservation therefore cannot be treated in isolation from other considerations, as improvements to stewardship – digitisation, working copies, improved documentation – directly impact on ease of access and resource identification, which in turn facilitates further mediated uses of recordings.

Access can come in many forms, which can be broadly divided into the audio and the visual. Once digital copies are made, these can be easily made available through on-site computers, the internet, and other methods (see below), also as sound or text. This allows access without disturbing the original, thus prolonging the lifespan of both content and carrier, and allows the content to be searched and used faster and more flexibly. The creation of digital copies therefore makes sense in terms of both collection stewardship and access.

ONSITE ACCESS (PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL)

Access restrictions	Number of locations
Notice required in advance	31
Permission required in advance	19
Turn up to listen	19
Not publicly accessible	15
Online/purchase output access only	3

Table 10: degree of access to collections

Although some locations have embraced public access to un-mediated audio material, many organisations can only provide direct access in an ad hoc fashion. This is sometimes through lack of listening facilities or space, or due to patchy documentation, or simply because (as with many museums) providing access to raw materials is not a priority. Several community groups have said that access can be agreed, and have been included above, demonstrating the commitment and goodwill of those concerned. However this form of private arrangement is not necessarily ideal for either holder or listener. Most collections do not have dedicated access copies of recordings, whether analogue or digital. The advantage of digitisation of collections is ease of further duplication and access through PCs, either directly or through CD working copies. Additionally at this stage noise reduction may be employed to improve audio quality. It should be noted that user copies are only of value if there are facilities to listen, or a loans system – North Shields library has no standard listening method for instance. Only one site, Woodhorn Museum, allows the borrowing of copies of material.

Aside from the largest archival collections, most resources are not widely publicised, and a member of the public would not know to ask for access to recordings from information provided on-site or through the internet. The database created alongside this report, if made available through the internet (excluding all private information), is one step towards improving public access to collections. However with respect to the largest collections it would be helpful if more information were made available to the public. For instance the Living History North East collection and Beamish Museum collection are each made up of many sub-collections on different localities and themes, which are not listed within the report database.

Even after such information is available through the internet, oral history is low in the public consciousness – it seems from conversation that the general public is simply not aware of the riches of the oral histories of the region. There is, therefore, a case for some form of region-wide publicity to raise the profile of oral history. This would be particularly powerful if it could be linked to a portal providing easy access to information about all the region's major collections.

Little work has been done in surveying the use of archival oral history collections by individual enquirers. More detailed analysis of users and their requirements would be advantageous, but would place additional demands on staff. The only available information is for Beamish museum. Here the diversity of potential users is clear - 21 enquiries over the last 12 months included postgraduate students, family history researchers, community projects, museums, local history societies, a radio producer, an author, and a stage director.

TRANSCRIPTIONS AND SUMMARIES

Transcriptions and summaries fall somewhere between constituting an additional form of access, and an advanced finding aid, depending upon the accuracy and depth of the transcript, and the requirements of the user. They are secondary artefacts derived from the interviews, which lose content as the sound is interpreted by the transcriber, and also as the vocal qualities of the interview, such as accent, are lost. However in practice many users prefer the ease and speed of looking at transcripts to listening to recordings.

Degree of transcription	
All transcribed or partially transcribed	16
All transcribed or summarised	7
Some transcribed	17
All summarised	7
Some transcribed or summarised	2
Some summarised	1
None	56

Table 11: degree of transcription or summary of collections

This information should be reasonably complete, and would suggest that around half the collections have been subject to some form of transcription or summarisation (this does not, of course, reflect the proportion of recordings themselves given variations in size). Full transcription is a very time consuming and hence often an expensive process, but detailed summaries are much less so, and still provide a valuable tool.

INTERNET ACCESS

Use of the internet is a practical and affordable way to widen access through virtual on-line copies of material and more straightforwardly on-line copies of transcripts. This is especially the case given the increase in public access to the internet, and the rapid spread of broadband (essential for the transmission of all but the shortest of sound files). Nationally there are some examples of best practice in internet provision of oral history, notably via the British Library. Further afield Project

Jukebox (The Oral History Program at the University of Alaska Fairbanks) has raised many the possibility of providing oral history as a central pillar of community multimedia heritage sites. Nonetheless, in line with the heritage sector in general, in this country and beyond, surprisingly little work has been done in the region in terms of internet access to oral histories (see Karen Brewster, Internet Access to Oral Recordings). Currently only a handful of local organisations provide any format of oral history on-line, and those that do provide only a small number of short extracts.

This is a missed opportunity. Certainly there are potential obstacles in terms of cost, file size, technological know-how, and copyright. Copyright issues change rapidly in the digital domain, and the law has lagged behind, but this is not insurmountable. Approaches have included streaming files to prevent copying, simple notices of copyright, and the use of user agreement forms (as at Project Jukebox).

Opportunities provided by information technology go beyond simple provision of access, and are increasing rapidly. In terms of community innovation, there is the Tees Valley Community Media scheme (which includes maps with audio “hotspots”, and digital release of community radio interviews alongside other interactive multimedia features). On-line exhibitions allow the possibility of linking together different media and creating multi-level interpretation, as at Northumberland Record Office’s Northumberland Communities website. A very different side to the potential value of oral history unlocked through technology is demonstrated by the high level tagging of audio material at Newcastle University English Dept (which allows detailed examination of dialect and accent),

MEDIATED USES

Most new recordings at this time are created with a particular use in mind, indeed output is frequently an integral part of securing funding. With the older more established collections, while there are honourable exceptions, there seems less impetus to make further use of archived content. Nonetheless across the region there have been many attempts to put across the content of old and new oral history interviews to the public. Methods have in recent years have included CDs, books, art installations, drama, walking and cycling trails, educational materials, exhibitions, web site access and more. In the case of all mediated uses care must be taken not to misrepresent a speaker, and it is important to recognise the mediator's role in the process of selection of material.

Project outcomes	
Audio extract CD:	1
Book/pamphlet/community publication:	3
Exhibition (most not as audio):	10
Drama:	2
Website access:	2
Trail (with audio guide):	1
Trail (with installations):	1
Educational/other resources:	2
Research/archival collection:	9

Table 12: intended outcomes of current projects

Clearly while a range of outcomes are underway the more traditional end products – archives and traditional exhibitions – predominate.

There is, of course, much to be said for combining several of these different aims, and there is certainly evidence of creative uses of oral history within the region (for example, the “sensory trail” cycle route of Durham City Arts, or the intergenerational work of Stockton Borough Council). Many such schemes, and particularly the more unusual, tend to be the result of partnerships between traditional heritage organisations, and arts or community groups.

It is valuable to also look outside the region for inspiration. For instance the Museum of London's London Voices project has involved a wide range on innovative uses of

oral history, including the printing of quotations chosen by the public on postcards and carrier bags as well as real and virtual exhibitions.

Exhibitions and displays

Exhibition, usually in the form of text extracts, is frequently part of the intention of collectors. This is easier than the use of audio extracts, which may require special technical solutions. Examples of the latter include the “radio” in the Locomotion exhibition, and the “telephone” in Bellingham Heritage Centre. However recent work by students of the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies suggests a need for greater understanding of how visitors interact with sound in order to use recordings effectively. It suggests that audio exhibits are generally underused, and seem to have a stronger profile when combined with visuals and objects.

Content packaging and merchandising.

Some groups have produced CDs and other packages on the back of small recording projects. Quality is generally high due to advancing technology, however interest is probably quite localised. The opportunity exists for the larger organisations, alone or in partnership, to produce publications and packages on themes both more broadly of interest to the public, given the popularity of history and heritage at present. (An example of such an attractive audio package is the Dartmoor National Park “moor memories” series). Selecting material will in some cases require dialogue with members of user groups or potential user groups.

Audio guide

A recent development is the presentation of oral history extracts in the places being discussed (for example the Blyth “sound posts”). This has been achieved both through handheld audio-guides, and through sound installations. It is too soon to judge the success of these schemes, although there is clearly potential in this approach in terms of increasing access and enhancing sense of place.

Educational resources:

Despite increasing awareness that audio material can contribute to national curriculum teaching, very little use of oral history is made in educational material in the region. The only scheme of note is the recent launch of an educational CD from the Coal Mining Oral History project (Teesside Industrial Memories aims to follow suit but is still in the early stages of development). It is clear that there is a missed opportunity at present, either for individual museums to produce material or for several repositories to collaborate on themed educational materials. The opportunity also exists to contribute to online knowledge networks such as the People’s Network, Curriculum Online, National Archives Learning Curve and the National grid for Learning. More generally, the sector should seek to promote use of audio in a learning culture, and as far as copyright allows, support the principle of free access for non-commercial educational use.

Broadcast.

While several local radio documentary series have generated their own oral history content, there do not seem to be very strong links with broadcasters.

DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

A SHARED VOICE

Audio material in general and oral history specifically are often seen as low priority - they have relevance to several sectors but are not the core priority of any. Clearly organisations have much to gain from increased co-operation in some form. A unified voice for audio archives would raise the profile of oral history in the life of the region. This means increased communication and building on the work of the Network, aided by a mailing list to encourage discussion, partnership and exchange of ideas amongst interested persons. The NEMLAC Oral History Regional Conversation demonstrated the wide range of individual reasons why individuals and groups undertake oral history, and bodies fund it. It also highlighted different underlying assumptions about the point of their work, whether that is in terms of content provision, academic or archival usefulness, or supporting community and individual identity (see summary document). Moves must embrace rather than alienate arts and community workers, heritage professionals, academic researchers and other interested parties. Any model of future development needs to be flexible enough to incorporate these diverse lines of approach, supporting each while emphasising high standards. Indeed this diversity of approach may be viewed as a strength, allowing the sector to contain a range of expertise and perspectives and to assemble wide ranging initiatives.

Increased funding to the sector will be necessary to achieve major improvements in stewardship and access, although this will come from a variety of sources. Such funding is more likely to be forthcoming in an atmosphere of co-operation and clear goals. Key areas are supporting the centres of excellence and specialisation, and ensuring access to, and preservation of, material in non-specialist locations.

PARTNERSHIPS

In the custodial realm, it is clear there is much scope for partnerships. Not only do these tend to reassure funding bodies, they also allow different organisations to combine their strengths to produce fresh approaches and high quality materials. Partners might include a whole range of organisations – funding bodies, museums, libraries, archives, broadcasters, schools, further and higher education, arts, local history societies, reminiscence workers and more, alongside the community support without which, it is important to remember, oral history projects are likely to be poor indeed.

Another potential partner to oral history is video archive. In the region this is represented by the Northern Region Film and Television Archive, and given that many of the goals and challenges of oral history curation are shared by the video sector cross-fertilisation of ideas may well prove valuable for both groups.

POOLED KNOWLEDGE BASE

There are many areas in which a pooling of knowledge will be of benefit to all. Some of this can be achieved through the pooling of existing data. To fully support oral history in the region it is vital to have a broad knowledge of holdings and their custodianship. The existing database, comprising collections in the region and north

eastern elements of those held elsewhere, is a key first step in this process. It should be made available on line and publicised. However, any data is only as good as it is up to date, and provision must be made to check accuracy on a regular basis – especially as some projects are currently incomplete or are to be passed on to other institutions. Ideally new collections should also be incorporated into the database where possible. It may be possible to incorporate direct entry facilities into the Network web pages as one aspect of this.

However, this database does not cover all the areas of interest. The need for consideration of training requirements has already been noted. Additionally, further research needs to be done in other areas: some indication of the profile of users and their needs would be useful in future planning.

POOLED RESOURCES

It is not only knowledge that repositories have to offer each other. For instance, a bank of recording equipment available for loan would reduce the financial burden on small groups wishing to produce a finite series of recordings. Certainly there are groups who wish to do oral history but cannot afford equipment.

Many potential moves forward in using oral history are held in common by most of the its custodians. Not only can individual partnerships be formed, but ultimately shared initiatives under the banner of the Oral History Network could be made to benefit all collections in the region. For instance, co-operation between network members could engender a joint online portal/resource/catalogue showcasing the highlights of respective collections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Advocacy of the sector

Advocacy for the critical importance of preserving oral history, combined with an understanding of the diversity of its practitioners and their objectives

Raising the profile of oral history in the region through a joint venture – publicity campaign, web portal, or on-line showcase of region-wide collection highlights

Work with national bodies to discuss local access to key collections.

Furthering knowledge about the sector

Commissioning of further information on those who use oral history and their requirement and preferences

Commissioning of further information on training requirements of interested parties

Strengthening the network

Mailing list to allow discussions of projects, equipment, etc.

System of loans of recording equipment

Continuing programme of training sessions in response to user needs

Enhancing the Oral History North East website

Copyright advice, sample form

Preservation of different media types

Metadata advice and blank database

Listing of owners of obsolescent hardware

Listing of oral history and related courses

Help with funding bids and list of potential funding bodies

Database of oral history collections and contents, regularly updated, including direct entry methods

Database of oral history projects in progress

Efforts to make knowledge of the above available to all

Future recordings

Agreement between major collectors regarding areas of focus

Target the gaps in the existing collections thematically and geographically

Stewardship of collections

Targeted help for digitisation of the most at risk collections

Continued programme of training

Access to collections

Encourage deposition or loan of collections to public repositories to maximise access

Introduction of standard criteria for repositories by which collections care can be assured for the public donor.

Encourage university libraries to play a more active role in conserving oral recordings of academics.

Use of collections

Encouragement of creative partnerships

Creative use of new media and the internet to further access used of oral history for education

REFERENCES

Regional Conversation on collecting for the future (NEMLAC Oral History Network: 2005)

Evaluation of the new galleries in Sunderland, Discovery and South Shield: summary (Kathrin Pierin, TWMS, summarising work of MA students, International centre for cultural and heritage studies: 2005)

Guidelines on the production and preservation of digital audio objects, (International Association of Sound and Video Archives (IASA): 2004)

Hidden Treasure: the UK audiovisual archive strategic framework (UK Audiovisual archive strategy steering group, 2004)

Digitisation – the only viable way to preserve audio archives in the long term (Dietrich Schuller, phonogram archive of Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences: 2004)

Curating oral histories- survey results (Nancy MacKay, 2004)

Taskforce to establish selection criteria of analogue and digital audio contents for transfer to data formats for preservation purposes (International Association of Sound and Video Archives (IASA): 2003)

Standard for Access to Archives (National Archives: 2003)

Southeast audiovisual mapping and strategy report (SEMLAC: 2003)

Progers, picks and postcards: a report on the Durham community collections project (Julie Hawthorn, Durham County Council, 2002)

Collection description focus conference materials (UKOLN: 2002)

The safeguarding of the audio heritage: ethics principles and preservation strategy (International Association of Sound and Video Archives (IASA): 2001)

Oral History Evaluation Questionnaire (Oral History Association of America: 2000)

RSLP collection level description schema (UKOLN: 2000)

Internet Access to Oral Recordings: Finding the Issues (Karen Brewster, Oral History Program, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska, Fairbanks: 2000)

Fuel for thought: the status and future of coal mining collections in north east museums (Alison Gale, North of England Museums service: 1994)

APPENDIX A: INITIAL CONTACT LETTER

Note that slightly different versions were sent out to those with known holdings.

Dear

I am writing to tell you about a new regional project which is being conducted from Beamish Museum in partnership with NEMLAC. The aim is to produce an accessible searchable database of information about the collections of oral history interviews held in the north east region, such as their size, the geographical area they cover and the subject areas they are strong in. This will greatly increase accessibility by allowing people to easily pinpoint useful resources. It will also make it easier to identify gaps in the current archive, which will in turn encourage future recordings.

To this end, I would very much appreciate it if you could spare a few minutes of your time to help me. In this first instance I would like some very basic information from you about whether or not you hold any relevant material. If you do, I hope that in a short while you will be able to help with the creation of an entry in the database. If you do not wish information to be publicly available we will of course respect this. I appreciate the demands on your time, and will do my best to fit in with whatever is easiest for you – therefore, it would be useful to know which method of communication is easiest for you. I enclose a brief form allowing you to easily address these points, and a stamped addressed envelope; I look forward to hearing from you.

With thanks,

Yours,

Jo Bath,
North East Oral History Mapping Coordinator,
Jobath@beamish.org.uk

Oral History Mapping: basic information form

Organisation/Individual:

- 1) Do you currently have any oral history recordings? Yes/No
2) Have you ever had any oral history recordings? Yes/No
If so, where did you deposit them?

3) Do you have any plans to conduct oral history recordings in the future?
Yes/No

4) How would it be best for me to contact you in future to gather more information?

Short questionnaire with notes through the post

Short questionnaire with notes by email

Telephone call

Personal visit

Please give further preferred contact details where appropriate.

5) If this has been sent to the wrong person, to whom should it have been sent?

6) Do you know of any other individuals or groups who have holdings of oral history material?

Thank you.

APPENDIX B: FULL QUESTIONNAIRE

(note that a slightly different version was sent out to national organisations)

Thank you for your cooperation in completing this questionnaire.

Much of the data will be made available via the web, allowing users to locate holdings and organisations to pinpoint gaps in current collections. If you wish fields to be kept from public view but simply held by NEMLAC and Beamish for collections development purposes, please indicate this with an * on relevant fields.

If you can fill in most of it but will have to look into one or two aspects then please return it anyway and we can come back to the gaps later. If any sections do not apply to you just leave them blank and I will sort it all out at this end.

Thank you for your time.

If you have any queries please contact Jo Bath
jobath@beamish.org.uk

I: Institution

I.1 Institution information:

Organisation name

Institution type

Address

County

Postcode

Telephone

Fax

I.2 When is the site usually open to the public?

I.3 Electronic information:

Email

Website

Does this website contain any information about collections?

Are any sound files or transcripts available on line?

I.4 Is your organisation engaged in creating, acquiring or expanding oral history collections?

Actively at present,

Considering for the future,

Not a priority,

No interest at present

If a project is due to begin soon, please give brief details.

2: Collection content

2.1 The collection

What is the collection called? *If there is a well-known acronym, include this as well.*

Roughly how many interviews are in the collection?

Roughly how many hours material does this constitute?

When was the collection recorded?

Is any of it in a language other than English - if so what?

2.2 Collection content description

What is the biggest strength of the collection? *This will be a short phrase, for example, Durham miners, wartime Tyneside, north eastern communities.*

Write a short description of the collection.

What are the main subjects it covers? *Chose from:*

Community life –

1. Cultural tradition

2. Organisations
3. Government
4. Education
5. Sport and entertainment
6. Warfare

Domestic life –

7. General
8. Food and drink
9. Health and wellbeing
10. Hobbies and pastimes
11. Childhood

Working life –

12. General
13. Agriculture and fishing
14. Mining and chemical working
15. Engineering
16. Manufacturing
17. Transport
18. Construction
19. Shops and shop work

This is only intended to give a broad sense of the collection. If there are any key focal points to the collection not covered here – for example if the collection is built around football or music, a local church or company, the General Strike or the home front – please specify within the description section.

Does the collection contain interviews with any famous individuals?

2.3 Collection content scope

What geographical area is covered by the collection? *Choose from:*

Darlington, Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle, North Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Northumberland, South Tyneside, Teesside, Wearside.

Does the collection focus on specific towns or villages?

What time period is covered by the oral history within the recordings? Give the first and last decades discussed, e.g. 1920s to 1980s.

3: Creation, management and storage

3.1 Collection format

What medium is the collection held on (select all that apply)?

Reel-to-reel tape

Vinyl disc

Tape cassette

CD

CD-ROM

Mini-disc

Digital audio tape (DAT)

Electronic MP3

Electronic solid state recorder

Other

Please give details if the collection is of unusual format

Are there back-ups made of recordings, or only one unique copy?

What format are the back-ups?

Where are they located?

3.2 Collection Storage

Does the organisation have a dedicated storage area?

What storage conditions are the recordings kept in?

Archival storage boxes

Ordinary non-archival boxes

Open shelf

Other (please specify)

Temperature-controlled surroundings

Yes/no

Humidity-controlled surroundings

Yes/no

Does the store show evidence of overcrowding?

Are the recordings stable, or is there evidence of deterioration?

3.3 Collection relationships

Are there any objects associated with the collection?

Simple list

All fully transcribed
Some fully transcribed
All summarised or partially transcribed
Some summarised or partially transcribed
Card catalogue
Electronic catalogue
Photographs or other ephemera collected from interviewees

Have any publications been based on the use, study or analysis of this collection?
Please list them.

Does the collection contain sub-collections? Is it itself part of a larger collection? *Give names where appropriate.*

3.4 Collection administration

What code, if any, does your organisation use to identify this collection?

Who created the collection? What changes of ownership or custody has it seen?

Was there a specific project associated with the creation of the collection, and did it have a sponsor?

What was the purpose of creation? *E.g. research, archive, broadcast.*

Who holds the copyright on the collection? Have they placed any restrictions for example on how soon the recordings may be used?

What restrictions are placed on access to the collection?

Permission required in advance
Notice required in advance
Charging system in place
No advance notice required, just turn up during opening hours
Equipment needs to be booked
No access possible at this time (please give a reason for this)

Who is responsible for the collection? How should members of the public contact them? *Give details where not covered by organisation address above.*

Is there anything else about the collection you think should be recorded? For instance, are there plans to update format, extend cataloguing, or donate to a different institution?

APPENDIX C: SCHEME DETAILS AND CODES FOR THE DATABASE

Collection table

Collection ID	Dc: identifier	Globally unique formal identifier for the collection. Simple number, mandatory.
Collection name	Dc: title	Name of collection, preserving word order and spelling. Also includes well-known acronyms.
Collection size	Dcterms: extent	Number of units of audio material
Oral history size	Created (subset of dcterms: extent)	Number of units of oral history material
Length in time	Created (subset of dcterms: extent)	Approximate play length of the collection
Date collected	CId: contentsDateRange	two dates (year only) separated by a forward-slash (/); if ongoing, one date ending with a forward slash.
Language	Dc: language	Language of items in the collection - ISO 639-2 provides a list of three-letter language codes. For example, 'eng' for English.
Strength	CId: strength	Short phrase indicating the strengths of the collection. Free text.
Description	Dcterms: abstract	Brief description. Free text.
Subjects	Dc: subjects (attribute: concept)	Choose as many as appropriate from: all life in area, all work, mining, industry, rural work, sea work, shops, public sector, wartime, leisure, politics/strike, dialect, education, migration, religion, varied/random; or other equivalent level terms.
Broad geography	Dcterms: spatial (subset of dc: coverage)	Choose as many as appropriate from: Durham, Teesside, North Northumberland, Gateshead, South Northumberland, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Wearside, international, Scotland, Darlington, Cumberland, or equivalent region
Narrow geography	Dcterms: spatial (subset of dc: coverage)	Choose appropriate towns and villages.
Time period covered	Dcterms: temporal (subset of dc: coverage)	Temporal coverage of collection. Shown as a complete series of all decades covered, eg 1910s, 1920s, 1930s, 1940s.
Media	(subset of dc: format)	Choose as many as appropriate from: tape cassette, minidisk, LP record, CD, reel to reel, VHS video, digital video, Betamax video, DAT tape, dictaphone, solid state, etc
Back-up information	(subset of dc: format)	Information given about existence and format of back-ups, free text
Storage		Information given about storage arrangements, free text
Catalogue	Dc: description	Information given about existence of index,

		catalogues and transcripts, free text
Publications	Dcterms: isReferencedBy (subset of dc: relation)	List publications using extracts from or based on research involving the collection
Internal ID		Code used by the organisation to identify the collection
Creator	Dc: creator	
Copyright holder	Dc: rights	Copyright holder as given by organisation (note some of these may have been assumed by the organisation and may not in fact be valid)
Access restrictions	CId: accessControl	Choose one from: notice required in advance, permission required in advance, turn up to listen, not publicly accessible, online/purchase output access only
Person responsible	CId: administrator	
Contact for person		Where responsible person's contact details differ from those of the organisation, telephone number or email address for direct communication
Notes	CId: note	Any other information
Location ID	Dc: title	Globally unique formal identifier for the location. Simple number.
Sponsor		
Purpose		Choose as appropriate from: archive, broadcast, community participation, education, exhibition, research, time capsule, various.

Location table:

Location ID	Dc: identifier	Globally unique formal identifier for the location. Simple number.
Organisation	Dc: title	Name of organisation or individual responsible for collection. Includes any well known acronym
Organisation type		Choose from: local, national or other, followed by one of – interest group, individual, museum, archive, library, arts, higher education, government, military museum, independent archive, school – or appropriate term of same level.
Postal address 1	CId: address	
Postal address 2	CId: address	
Postal address 3	CId: address	
Post code	CId: postcode	

Telephone		
Fax		
E-mail		
Website	CId: onlineLocation	The online location (URL) of an online resource.
Information on website		Degree of information about interviews available – e.g. none, simple description, catalogue, transcripts, audio files.
Opening hours	CId: hasAccessConditions	Opening days and times; costs
Acquisitions		Choose from: ongoing, no, not a priority, considering for the future, planned or projected.
Record review date		Not currently in table, needs to be added.

Note that for non-publicly accessible collections many of these fields need to be hidden.

APPENDIX D: EXISTING COLLECTIONS

Existing collections included in the database

INSTITUTIONS/SOCIETIES ETC

Arts Advance

20 interviews on life in Jarrow and Hebburn

BASIS

10 interviews on leisure in Saltwell Park

8 on life on Gateshead Quayside

3 on poverty in Bensham

Beamish: the North of England Open Air Museum

Around 1000 recordings, of which 650 are oral histories, covering all life in the north east with a leaning towards mining and agriculture.

Bellingham Heritage Centre

66 oral histories on rural life in Bellingham area

Berwick Record Office

84 oral histories of Kennington region

12 oral histories on the Ford and Etal estates

10 miscellaneous oral histories on war and sea.

Bishop Middleham Local History Society

3 miscellaneous oral histories

Blyth Resource and Initiative Centre (BRIC)

10 interviews on life in Blyth

Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park

8 recordings on history of what is now park area

Darlington Library Centre for Local Studies

202 oral histories of Darlington; 122 radio recordings on Darlington

Durham and Tyneside Dialect Group

14 interviews on life in area, focus on dialect

Durham Clayport Library

130 radio programmes on north eastern life.

15 miscellaneous interviews

Durham County Council

Around 70 interviews made for the Coal Mining Oral History Project and Durham Miner Project

Durham Light Infantry

200 interviews on wartime experiences, in partnership with Imperial War Museum

Durham Record Office

18 interviews relating to life in Byers Green

16 on wartime experience

15 miscellaneous interviews

Durham University Library Archives and Special Collections

13 interviews about the loss of the mining industry in Durham

Easington Council

50 interviews on life in Easington district

Egglecliffe School

11 oral histories on history of the school

Folk Archive Resource North East (FARNE)

400 recordings relating to folk music in the north east, many copied from other repositories, mostly music, a few oral history.

Fusiliers Museum of Northumberland

Various video and audio documentaries, and about 25 interviews on wartime experience

Gateshead Library

50 interviews on the General Strike in Chopwell area

Glass Arc Limited

20 interviews on life in Blyth, used on sound posts.

Glendale Oral History Group (inactive)

10 interviews on wartime Wooler

Greenhead Local History Society

1 recording of Greenhead quarrymen

Hartlepool library

2 recordings with fishermen

Howden le Wear Local History Society

5 interviews on life in Howden

King's Own Scottish Borderers, Regimental Museum and Archive

Handful of recordings of wartime experience.

Kings Royal Hussars

16 oral histories on wartime experiences

Living History North East

700 interviews made for various projects and community groups, covering life in the region.

Locomotion: the National Railway Museum at Shildon

60 interviews on life in Shildon area, particularly in the wagon works.

Longhorsley Local History Society

One interview of wartime experience

Ludworth Community Centre

6 oral histories of life in Ludworth, now in a time capsule.

Newcastle Library, Local Studies

Unknown (small) number of local oral histories

Newcastle University, English Department

104 interviews in "north east corpus of Tyneside English", focus on dialect

Newcastle University, Library Special Collections

7 miscellaneous interviews

North East Labour History

5 interviews on 1950s politics in the north east

North Shields Local Studies

70 interviews on life in the North Shields area

Northumberland Fusiliers

100 oral histories on wartime experiences

Northumberland Record Office

350 interviews in main recording sequence, life in Northumberland

33 on Morpeth

15 from the Northumberland Village project

Old Parish Bamburgh Local History Archive and Resource

6 interviews of people in Bamburgh district and life by the sea

Ord Parish VDS group

14 interviews of life in Ord

Royal Quays Local History Society

10 oral histories of North Tyneside

South Shields Movie Makers

20 interviews on life in South Shields area

Southwick History and Preservation Society

10 oral histories of life in Southwick

Stockton Council

10 oral histories on home front
5 on Yarm fair

Teesside Archives

900 interviews done by Manpower services commission on Cleveland
100 interviews in the "country endeavour" rural project
34 miscellaneous interviews
600 broadcasts from radio Cleveland

Tudhoe and Spennymoor Local History Society

27 oral histories on aspects of south west Durham

Tyne and Wear Archives Service (TWAS)

400 miscellaneous radio programmes, most relating to the region

Tyne and Wear Museums

215 interviews held at Discovery Museum, including mining and industry
15 held at South Shields on life in the region
5 held at Sunderland museum

University of Teesside Social Futures Institute

11 recordings of life story of Arabic women in the north east

West Newcastle Local Studies

80 interviews, on life in the west end of Newcastle

Wheatley Hill History Club

1 oral history

Whickham U3A web wanderers

20 oral histories of life in Whickham area

Witton Park Community Association

12 oral histories about life in Witton Park

Wolf FM

15 oral histories made for a community radio project, on life in Tyneside

Woodhorn Colliery Museum

25 oral histories on mining

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

Bob Little private collection

1 interview with a miner

Don Watson personal collection

Small collection of interviews on politics and strikes

Jennifer McNish private collection
3 miscellaneous oral histories

Grangetown in times past
1 interview

Lewis Mates personal collection
12 interviews on 1920s politics and strikes in the region.

Maureen Brook personal collection
50 interviews of early twentieth century life in rural Northumberland

Pancrack private collection
50 interviews with ironstone miners

NON-LOCAL COLLECTIONS

Alston Moor Historical Society
Collection mostly relating to Cumberland, a couple of interviews include the north east

Archive of Teacher Memory
Large collection of teacher oral histories, 8 north eastern.

East Midlands Oral History Archive
Large collection on east midlands oral histories, 4 are north eastern emigrants

English Heritage
18 recordings on life in various Northumberland EH properties

Imperial War Museum
200 interviews on Durham Light Infantry
40 on Tyneside shipyards in wartime
67 on the "Aycliffe Angels" munitions workers

National Centre for English Cultural Tradition
Material on cultural traditions including 20 interviews from the north east

National Railway Museum
Large collection of oral histories of railway, including 71 from the north east

National Sound Archive (NSA)/ British Library Sound Archive (BLSA)
Large Millennium Memory Bank national collection, 286 north eastern
National survey of English dialects, 98 north eastern
National steelworkers collection, 30 north eastern
National Edwardians collection, 30 north eastern

National Trust

23 interviews on work and life at Wallington Hall, stored there.
5 on Holy Jesus Hospital, stored there
Possibly others.

North West Sound Archive

Duplicate of national survey of English dialects, 98 north eastern
Handful of miscellaneous north eastern interviews

Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery

Collection on mining, includes 4 north eastern emigrants.

Wartime memories project

Collects nationally on home front; based in north east so has some local material

Existing collections not within the database

Acklam 2020 – project recorded on heritage of Acklam Hall and the surrounding area. CD of OH sent to Teesside Archive

Allen Valleys Archiving

Amber Films

Avram Taylor, academic

Banks and Lanes Group

Blyth Local History Society

Carmen Llamas, academic

Dorman Museum

Hindu Nari Sangh women's association – Asian Community interviews, used in the book *Desh Videsh*

Jenny Braddy, private collection

Jim McGurn, author – around 50 on life in Tyneside

Katrina Porteous, author – around 50 on life in north Northumberland, sea themed

Kirkleatham Old Hall Museum

Leeds Archive of Vernacular Culture – includes a handful of early recordings of north eastern folk music and oral history

Longhorsley Local History Society

Margaret Williamson, academic – on women's work

National Fishing Heritage Centre – small number on fishing in North Shields

North East Police History Society – small number on north eastern policing

Northern Region Film and Television Archive – video material includes some oral history content

Ponteland Local History Society – small number on life in Ponteland

St Mary's Lighthouse – interview with lighthouse keeper

Seven Stories centre for the children's book – non-local collection e.g. interviews by the publisher of Puffin Books

South Shields Library

Teesdale Heritage Group

Tom Leonard Mining Museum – small number on mining

Tynemouth Photographic Society Film and Video Group

Walker Local History Society – small number on life in Walker

Weardale Museum

Wreckenton Community Partnership

Likely collections whose owners/administrators did not respond:

Blackbox Arts and Media (Moment of Truth project)

Craster Community Development Trust (Craster village history project)

Hartlepool Borough Council (Back to Our Roots Project)

APPENDIX E: ONGOING RECORDING

Organisations which are generally active to some degree

Arts advance

Audio Archive (private company making OH for families)

Bellingham Heritage Centre

Berwick Record Office

Crook and District Local History Society

Durham and Tyneside Dialect Group

English Heritage

Greenhead Local History Society

King's Own Scottish Borderers

Living History North East

Longhorsley Local History Society

Northumbrian Language Society

Ord Parish VDS group

Pancrack

Royal Quays local history society

Shincliffe Local History Society

South shields Moviemakers

Southwick History and Preservation Society

Tarset Archive group

Tom Leonard Mining Museum

TWAS with Jarrow and Hebburn Local History Society

Wartime Memories project

West Newcastle Local Studies

Whickham U3A Web Wanderers

Witton park community association

Focussed recording projects currently underway/starting shortly

The following are not in a state to include in the database at present. However most will need to be checked up on later for inclusion. Additionally they show the directions in which oral history is currently being pursued and used in the region.

Note that this category is quite broad; some plans may never come to fruition, whilst others may have been completed since contact was last made.

Bellview Project – oral history element to a workhouse history project, this summer, as part of new resource centre and housing project for the elderly in rural north Northumberland. Building is on site of the old Belford Union workhouse. LHI has funded research, a book, display boards, drama and oral history related to this.

Blackhall Local History Group – would like to make recordings but do not have audio equipment, have been turned down for Awards for All funding.

Bothal Middle School

Plans to do some oral history this year. S. Dickinson, Project Co-ordinator, Bothal Middle School.

Consett YMCA

Plans to record on the history of the YMCA in the area in 2006, uncertain outcomes at present.

Discovery Centre, Bishop Auckland – looking into the history of the old Doggarts store. Are recording memories in some form, but it is in the early stages of development and research at the minute.

Durham City Arts – “sensory trail” project in the Bowburn area, funded by Northern Rock. A cycle route with oral history and other audio tie-in (using illustrative map and “sound CD of local experiences, old and new”); will also train locals in photography and sound techniques. Originals will be donated to Beamish museum.

English Heritage: recent work with reminiscence with Gail Graham – with small groups of carers.

Equal Arts – “Tyne map” recording snippets on life by the Tyne, for placing in situ with seating on a trail along the riverside.

Gaunless Valley History Group - It is intended to interview people with long memories of mining, railways and life in the Gaunless Valley over the next 2 years. Sticking point so far has been equipment – was on loan and then incomplete.

Haltwhistle local history society “up the valley, down the years” Local Heritage Initiative funded project includes some recording; general plans to do some recordings in future

Stockton borough council next work – part of neighbourhood renewal in Stockton, cross generational recording on living there, leading to theatre and resources.

Karibu – “A collaboration with Teesside Archives to begin research and a collection of items from the African community. KARIBU will be creating “Archive Champions” and recording living histories of migration”.

King's Royal Hussars – new project starting on campaigns in Malaya, Ireland, Cyprus.

Military Vehicle Museum – “We are about to embark on collecting veterans stories over this year, we are in the process of building a WW2 street in the Museum with the Hope of opening it on VE Day as part of the Home Front Recall. It is intended to have a visitor accessible data base with selected memories available at the relevant displays, although this will take time and new technology to us...” With help from BBC.

Natural History Society of Northumbria – interviewing north eastern natural historians about their life and work.

North east labour history – aims to record north eastern workers and publish transcripts in labour history journal. Also plans for recording day “Our working lives” in May 2006.

People's theatre – creating an archive relating to the history of the theatre, plans to include oral history recordings.

Port Cities, Hartlepool – council based project soon to start recordings for “People’s War”.

Rothbury and Coquetdale LHS – general plans to do recording along with other forms of record collection, “intention of establishing a Rothbury & Coquetdale museum and record of life in Rothbury & Coquetdale”.

Shotton Colliery History Group – only a maybe.

Southwick Memories Revisited – “we have started to record people memories of the earlier years and have been placing them in our community newspaper. We have been teaching young people the basic skills of oral history they have followed through with visits to local residential homes to interview older people”.

Teesside Industrial Memories Project – has recently been awarded money by the Lottery to undertake around 100 interviews on workers and others associated with ICI Billingham “later this year” – will lead to a book, a web site, a teachers pack for local schools and a mobile exhibition, and copies at Teesside Archive and National Sound Archive.

Tyne and Wear Museums – “Memory net: people and communities of the sea” project producing digital resources on communities reliant on the sea in the north east, will include OH recording.

Waterhouses Community Association – general plans to do some recording, related to “Fly the Flag” project, Local Heritage Initiative funded.

Weardale Museum – “We’re trying to get a project together to make a record of all the Chapels in the North Pennines. Much of it is done as county based surveys. Once that is done we hope to consolidate it with oral histories and mount a travelling exhibition. It’s probably going to be 2005-6.”

Woodhorn colliery - as well as existing collection, have two projects at present – 1) Heritage Lottery Fund funded, making 20 recordings on mining social life – Bedlington miners picnic 1950s-60s, pigeons, leek growing, and the 1984 miners strike. 2) People talking about use of the large objects in the display, so sections can be played as people look around – mostly relate to underground mining.

Wrekenton Community Partnership – “Wrekenton Heritage” project aims to build includes involving schools in oral history alongside other outcomes, due to finish shortly. Local Heritage Initiative funded.

Groups with no oral histories or plans to record	
Age Concern Durham	Marianne Patterson
Allenheads Heritage Centre	
Appleby Oral History Society	Vivienne Gate
Armstrong household and farming museum	
Association of Northumberland Local History Societies	Sally Bird
author	David Douglass
author	Gillian Allnut
author	Neil Gander
Bailiffgate museum	
Barnard Castle and District History Society	
Beamish Park Golf Club	
Berwick borough museum and art gallery	
Billingham Art Gallery	
Bishop Auckland Civic Society	Dr McManners
Blyth Library	
Border History Museum	
Bothal Middle School	S. Dickinson
Bowes Museum	
Brandon and Byshottles parish archive	John Kitching
Consett Iron Company and Derwent Local Heritage Association	Billy Robson
Cragside	Pam Dryden
Dorman Museum	
Durham County LHS	John Banham
Durham Heritage Centre	
Durham Mining "Museum"	
Edmondsley Community Partnership	
Exhibition and Brandling Parks Community Trust	Anne Cohen/ Keith Pimm
Felton and Swarland LHS	Peter Cook
Fenham Library	
Green Dragon Museum, Stockton	
Guisborough Museum	
Haltwhistle Partnership	John Watson
History Department Newcastle	Joan Allen
individual	Ken Howarth
individual	Norman Miller
individual academic	Aidan Doyle
individual academic	David Renton
individual academic	Malcolm Chase
individual academic	Martin Richardson
individual academic	Nick Cott
individual academic	Robert Moore
individual academic	Robert Wilson
Jarrow and Hebburn LHS	
Killhope Lead Mining Museum	
Lanchester LHS	J. Thompson
Lindisfarne Heritage Centre	
Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne	
Middlesbrough Library	
Military Vehicle Museum	

Morpeth Antiquarian Society
Muggleswick and Waskerley
North East Catholic History Society
Northern Voices
Northumberland Central Library, Morpeth
Northumberland National Park
Northumbrian Language Society
Ouseburn Heritage
Redcar Library
Redesdale Society
Reyrolle Heritage Trust
Souter Lighthouse
South Tyneside Central Library
St Cuthbert's Archivists, Darlington
Stockton library
Story of Seaham
Sunderland Library
Tarsset Archive Group
Tees Valley Arts
Trinity House Maritime Museum
University of Teesside Library
Wallington Hall
Washington Old Hall
Waterhouses Community Association
Wingate LHS
Women's Library
Wylam Local History Society
Wylam Railway Museum

C. Hudson
Helen Barrass

Keith Armstrong

Ann Barnes
Kim
Mike Greatbatch

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Blackhall Local History Group

Edwina McGarry

Blyth History Society

Gordon Smith

Blyth Resource and Initiative Centre

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S. Dickinson

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Northumberland Record Office
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Northumbrian Language Society
Kim Bibby-Wilson
North West Sound Archive
Andrew Schofield
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Maureen Bramley
Ord parish
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Royal Quays Local History Society
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Jean Richards
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Anne Andrew
Caroline Singleton
The Women's Library
Victoria Wilde
Trinity House Museum
Tudhoe and Spennymoor Local History Society
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