



Oral History Society newsletter

Autumn 2012



Oral History Society annual conference

Thank you to all the speakers and delegates who came to the Oral History Society's annual conference in Southampton on July 13th and 14th and made it such a success.

The theme of this year's conference was *Displaced childhoods: Oral history and traumatic experiences* and papers focused on a range of subjects: the effects of growing up in care; the experiences of refugee children; and stories of children evacuated during the war. Speakers and delegates came from the fields of oral history as well as education, social care, psychiatry and psychotherapy and papers covered a huge range of themes and topics.

There were two keynote speakers. The first was Dr Joanna Sassoon, project manager of the Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants oral history project at the National Library of Australia. And the second speaker was Professor Lynn Abrams, author of the books *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes* and *Oral History Theory*.

The conference also included a discussion session for the first time, led by a psychotherapist and psychiatrist, where delegates talked about the practice of interviewing children and young people.

Abrams summed up the importance of recording lives. "Life story work is seen as an essential tool to help children who have had traumatic childhoods develop a coherent narrative and identity... Knowing who I am is fundamental," she said.

OHS and Institute of Historical Research joint seminar programme

The Oral History Society and Institute of Historical Research are pleased to announce the joint seminar programme for this academic year. The seminars began last year as a forum for the discussion of current research in oral history, particularly for students and academics working in higher education, but open to all. Building on the success of last year's programme the society has increased the frequency of seminars from one to two per term.

The dates are:

- November 1st 2012: Professor Paul Thompson, University of Essex, 'Pioneers of social research: Interviewing our own elites'
- December 13th: Professor Lynn Abrams, University of Glasgow, 'Liberating the Self: Epiphanies, conflict and coherence in the life stories of post-war British women'
- February 7th 2013: Dr Anindya Raychaudhuri, University of St. Andrews, "'My other mother": Separated families and mourning as agency in narratives of the 1947 Indian partition'
- March 7th: Professor Penny Summerfield, University of Manchester, 'Oral history, subjectivity and gender: Some reflections on theory and practice'
- May 16th: Dr Toby Butler, University of East London, 'Memoryscapes: Making place-based oral history'
- July 4th: Donald Ritchie, historian of the United States Senate, 'Top down/bottom Up: Using oral history to re-examine government and other institutions'

Seminars are at 6pm at the Institute of Historical Research. For more information go to:

www.history.ac.uk/events/seminars/325 or contact Shelley Trower shelley.trower@roehampton.ac.uk

Alessandro Portelli lecture – November 6th, Royal Holloway University

Leading oral historian Alessandro Portelli will be speaking at the launch of the new Public History Centre at Royal Holloway, University of London. The title of Portelli's lecture will be: Reflecting on a life in progress and the stories of oral history.

In this lecture Portelli, professor of American literature at La Sapienza, the University of Rome, will reflect on his work to date..

All are welcome to the lecture which takes place at 6.15pm in the Windsor Building, Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham, Surrey. For travel details go to:

www.rhul.ac.uk/aboutus/ourcampus/locationmap.aspx

Regional networkers' annual event – November 9th and 10th

All regional networkers, a vital link between practising oral historians and the society, are invited to join the OHS's annual regional networkers' event in Leicester, whose theme this year is Celebrating Anniversaries. Speakers will discuss oral history projects commemorating the 40th anniversary of the arrival in Leicester of Ugandan Asians and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

The event takes place 40 years after the seminal Leicester conference on the problems of oral history which led to the founding of the OHS in 1973. Members of the society can read a report of the original conference in *Oral History*, via www.oralhistory.org.uk/journals/journal_indexes/01.php (*Oral History*, Volume 1, No 3 1971-73). Networkers will be asked to think about the “problems” raised at the conference and whether they are still relevant today.

For more information please contact Juliana.vandegrift@btinternet.com

Oral History Society annual conference 2013 – Corporate voices: Institutional and organisational oral histories. Call for papers, deadline December 1st

The OHS’s 2013 conference, which will take place at Sussex University on July 5th and 6th 2013, will explore the hidden histories of institutions and organisations, from private companies to hospitals, universities and charities. The organisers would like to hear about what interviews with those who work in organisations tell us about organisational history and memory, the institutional or educational community, and more.

Conference organisers are looking for papers on topics including: personal voices; institutional voices; organisational memory and oral history; the role and use of oral history in business settings; and archiving. For more information go to www.ohs.org.uk/conferences/2013.php

New committee members

The OHS welcomes two new committee members and bids farewell to Anna Green, who is returning to New Zealand. New member Sarah Lowry has worked in oral history since 2004 and has managed two large-scale Heritage Lottery Fund projects, the Refugee Communities History Project and Foundling Voices. She currently works as an accredited trainer as part of the British Library/Oral History Society training team.

The second new member is Fiona Cosson, who runs the Oral History Noticeboard blog (www.oralhistorynoticeboard.wordpress.com). She is completing her doctoral research at the University of Northampton, is a research associate and tutor at Manchester Metropolitan University and is founding organiser of the Unofficial Histories conference.

Oral history book wins prestigious history prize

Congratulations to Wendy Ugolini, lecturer at Edinburgh University and OHS committee member, who has won the prestigious Gladstone Prize, awarded by the Royal Historical Society, for her book *Experiencing war as the “enemy other”: Italian Scottish experience in World War II* (Manchester

University Press). Ugolini undertook 45 interviews with members of the Italian Scottish community and the book contrasts these personal narratives with official records and newspaper reports.

The judges said: "It adds another dimension to our knowledge of social interaction and identity in the Second World War." The award further underlines how far oral history is now accepted by historians as a valid research methodology.

Oral history with people using palliative care services

The charity Macmillan Cancer Support has announced that it will fund a pilot project to record oral histories with people who use palliative care services. The project will be led by the Academic Unit of Supportive Care, University of Sheffield, which has been recording oral histories as a service for patients, family and friends since 2007.

Five project pilot sites, all based in the north of England, will be confirmed shortly, after which volunteers will be recruited to work with them as oral historians. A call for volunteers will appear on the OHS volunteer page in the coming months: www.ohs.org.uk/volunteers/index.php . For more information contact Michelle Winslow: m.winslow@sheffield.ac.uk

Oral history of Speakers' Corner

A new oral history organisation, On the Record, has won £41,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and £2,800 from the Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust to create a permanent archive of oral histories and memorabilia of Speakers' Corner.

The organisation is looking for volunteers to conduct 20 oral history interviews with speakers, listeners and orators which will be held as a permanent archive at the Bishopsgate Institute in London. The project, called Sounds in the Park, will culminate in an exhibition, a radio show and a website.

For more information contact info@on-the-record.org.uk

If you have any news items please email annecgulland@yahoo.co.uk

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