

Oral History Society e-Newsletter

No. 2, Summer 2010

Welcome..

You have received this Newsletter because you are a member of the Oral History Society and have provided us with your email address. We hope that you will find it interesting and useful — but if you do not wish to receive it in future, please email Michelle Winslow, m.winslow@sheffield.ac.uk, asking for your name to be removed from the mailing list.

Mapping the use of digital technologies in the heritage sector (2010)

This new research has been conducted for the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) by Flow Associates and the Collections Trust, 'to help inform a possible revision of policies on what it will fund.' It gives an overview of practitioners' experience of the changes that digital material and technology have brought, and of the changing needs of users. See the HLF website at <http://www.hlf.org.uk/aboutus/howwework/Pages/digitalheritage.aspx>.

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CREATION, DESTRUCTION, MEMORY: ORAL HISTORY AND REGENERATION Annual Conference of the Oral History Society 1 – 2 July 2011, University of Sunderland Call for Papers

This 2011 international conference will bring together oral historians, academics, community workers, architects, planners, politicians and local residents to explore the uses and roles of oral history in urban and rural regeneration. It will cover the built environment as well the less tangible regeneration of landscapes and communities. The conference will not seek simply to document the various roles oral history has played in the regeneration process, but will equally explore its unrecorded and potential contribution. Key themes:

- oral history to inform regeneration: the contribution of oral history to the process of physical/community and rural/urban regeneration; the use of oral history by planners/architects; the roles of and relationship between consultation and oral history; the role of the oral historian in the process
- oral history as part of regeneration: as a mechanism to inform and create the future and preserve and create the past; regeneration through reclaiming and reinterpretation; reclaiming or creating cultural change; and enabling understanding between cultures and generations
- oral history to reflect and evaluate regeneration: lives and voices of the displaced, those who have been 'regenerated', as well as those working in regeneration; assessing gains and losses and perceived successes and failures; critiquing regeneration by listening to those whose communities have been 'regenerated'
- oral history and regeneration: linking the past, present, and future; continuity and discontinuity; talking about the future

Proposals are invited of 200-250 words that address one of the four major themes of the conference for talks or presentations of approximately twenty minutes. We are particularly keen to encourage papers from planners, architects, community workers, local residents and others directly involved in regeneration. Proposals should clearly state how oral history has informed the project/work/research described, and how it will be used in the presentation. They should be sent to Belinda Waterman, conference administrator, e-mail Belinda@essex.ac.uk by Monday 29 November 2010.

London History Workshop Sound & Video Archive—an appeal

Do you remember the London History Workshop Sound and Video Archive? The Museum of London is trying to get in touch with interviewers who deposited oral history collections with the London History Workshop Sound and Video Archive in the 1970s and 1980s. The Museum of London has been collecting audio visual memories and footage of Londoners since the 1980s.

As well as conducting its own oral history interviews with Londoners the Museum manages a number of donated oral history collections. One of these is the London History Workshop Centre Sound and Video Archive. The Museum has been awarded a grant from the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation to preserve and make the Museum's oral history collections, including the London History Workshop Sound and Video Archive, more accessible to the public. This involves making digital master and listening copies of oral history interviews as well as documenting the content and provenance of the collections.

Research highlights of the London History Workshop collection include Jerry White's Rothschild Buildings and Campbell Bunk; Stephen Humphries' Hooligans or Rebels? and Television History Workshops' series The Making of Modern London. The Museum's digitisation project aims

to unlock the value of the other original oral history projects, such as:

- Oxford House History Project
- The History of Waterloo
- East End Songs
- Covent Garden Community History
- Unity Theatre
- Memories of Stockwell Orphanage
- Ethnic Communities Oral History Project
- Montefiore Story

The London History Workshop Sound and Video Archive is a unique and valuable collection. It documents the birth of and emerging methodology of oral history in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as being a unique resource for studying the history of Londoners' experiences of daily life and work since the late 19th to the late 20th centuries.

If you have any information about any of the projects mentioned above please get in touch with Dr Hilary Young, Recorded Media Project, History Collections, Museum of London, 140 London Wall, London EC2Y 5HN, 0207 8145719, email hyoung@museumoflondon.org.uk.

Oral History of Children's Homes in Birmingham

An oral history of Council-run children's homes in Birmingham is being compiled by Birmingham Central Library with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. This will interview both people who have lived in children's homes and those who have worked in them. Photographs and other mementoes will also form part of the project archive.

Gudrun Limbrick writes from the Central Library: 'I am joined on the project by an archivist who is seeking out and cataloguing formal records and registers pertaining to children's homes and ensuring that the oral history records are preserved and archived appropriately. We would like the finished history and archive to act as testimony to the thousands of people who have been in Birmingham's children's homes, and to act as a resource for those wishing to look at their own histories or the histories of family members. The journey is taking us from the Cottage Homes of the Victorian era, housing around 300 children in each, to small family homes on the housing estates of the 1950s and the "boom period" of residential care in the late 1960s and the 1970s, through to the current picture of just a few small children's homes and a far greater emphasis on working with families and fostering rather than residential care.'

For further information, contact Gudrun at Archives & Heritage, Birmingham Central Library, Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3 3HQ, tel 0121 464.



From Auschwitz to Ambleside—Holocaust Survivors in the Lake District

I have been working with a group in the Lake District for the past year, collecting the stories of the survivors of the Holocaust who were brought there after the war. The group, led by Trevor Avery, first carried out a project on the Sunderland Flying Boat Factory, which moved to Windermere for safety at the beginning of the war. A whole complex of buildings, the Calgarth Estate,



was built to house the factory and the workers. Trevor and his colleagues discovered that when these were vacated after the war, the buildings were used to house child survivors who had been brought to England for recuperation. As a result, they successfully applied for funding for a project which they entitled 'From Auschwitz to Ambleside'.

The Calgarth Estate no longer exists, having been knocked down to make way for the Lakes School, which had no idea that it was standing on the site to which the survivors were brought. Over 300 children under eighteen were brought to this site in August 1945. Most were flown from Prague to Crosby on Eden near Carlisle and taken by coach to Windermere. They had survived the horrors of the Holocaust, including concentration camps, work camps, and the death march and had lost their parents and most, if not all, of their wider families.

They were allocated chalets for sleeping with beds and sheets – an unimaginable luxury. They were taken to the large dining room and given food. Told to pass the plates of food along the tables, they hid them on their laps, stuffed their pockets as well as their mouths, so that those at the bottom of the tables never received their share. The children were reassured that they would continue to receive food at every meal and did not need to horde it, but for chil-

dren who had starved for five years this was hard to believe.

A group of Jewish voluntary workers, some from Prague and others, who had come from Germany before the war, did their best to bring the children back to a normal way of life. The children were given clothes, medicals, dental treatment, English lessons and taken on trips.

They had to learn that helping themselves to the locals' bikes was not appropriate. A number of locals have given their memories of the arrival of the children in their midst.

Whilst I had already interviewed many of the children who finally settled in Manchester during an interviewing project with the 45 Aid Society in Manchester, I started interviewing those who went to settle in London. A number of their stories feature in Martin Gilbert's book

The Boys. However, it was known that a number of girls had also been brought over and their stories have been somewhat neglected.

I began to track down 'The Girls', and have interviewed some in London and one in Israel. By now the BBC were interested in doing a programme and they led us to one of the small children who had come to Windermere aged three. I interviewed her in London and she told how she and her mother had been taken to Theresienstadt, where her mother had died. She survived in the children's camp and was brought over in a group of six children, who acted as parents to one another. In the meantime Trevor has tracked down the log books of the planes which brought the children over, and he is looking for any of the air crew who accompanied the children on their flights who may be still alive.

Cumbria County Council has now offered a specially prepared gallery room in Windermere Library, in the centre of Windermere to host an exhibition and archive resource about the story. The exhibition will run from 1 August to 31 October. For more details, see the project website at www.anotherspace.org.uk.

Rosalyn Livshin

The photograph above shows the children before leaving Prague.

Historical Association Meeting on Teaching History in Schools 19 July 2010, London

The following is a brief summary by Oral History Society Chair, Graham Smith, on the meeting called by the Historical Association in response to widespread concerns about the Education Secretary's statement on teaching history in schools. Michael Gove's statement appeared to be an enthusiastic endorsement of [Niall Ferguson's](#) argument that history in schools would benefit from concentrating on the 'big story' of 'the rise of western domination of the world'.

The meeting took the form of a 'question-time' styled panel. It was chaired by [David Cannadine](#) and included [Katharine Burn](#), [Anne Curry](#), [Chris Husbands](#), [Steve Mastin](#) and [Kenneth Baker](#). [Tristram Hunt](#) (historian and Labour MP), who had been billed to appear, was otherwise engaged in Commons' business. A number of conclusions could be drawn from the night:

1. Government supporters are keen to talk down any link with Ferguson and are sensitive to charges that history in schools is either under threat or might be subjected to being influenced by politicians
2. Kenneth Baker's once criticised national curriculum is now being seen as a bulwark against political interference
3. There is evidence that the teaching of school's history is increasingly restricted to those considered to be the brightest (30%) of school students
4. Assessment no longer has an academic basis, instead being run by commercial organisations
5. 'One big story' history would attract the support of some politicians (including Baker) and could develop into an important debate
6. The teaching of history in schools is likely to be reduced further with the spread of the academy model
7. In education market forces are likely to be more significant in the current government's decision making processes than points of principle

Graham's full report is available to members of the Oral History Society at:

<http://www.ohs.org.uk/members/documentation/index.php>

Memories of War: New Narratives and Untold Stories Conference University of Greenwich, Saturday 9 October 2010

This one-day conference forms part of a wider social history project which has examined alternative narratives and previously untold stories of war. The project has encompassed a series of public seminars and the ongoing collection of more than 250 written and oral testimonies from London and South East England residents who lived through the Second World War. This has created a valuable record of local, social history from a turbulent time which will form part of an exhibition to be hosted at the University of Greenwich from 17 September – 15 October 2010.

This conference will complete the initial phase of the 'Other Narratives' project and will serve as a platform for new and established academics interested in this area. Although the project's focus has been World War Two, conference papers will address alternative or new narratives on war from the twentieth or twenty first century and may include such topics as Women and war; Reminiscence, remembrance and comradeship; Oral testimony and popular memory; Animals and war; Family history and war; Archives, public/private records and war; Writers and war; For more information, please contact the Conference Coordinator, Malin Lundin at: memoriesofwar@gre.ac.uk

Talking about Work—a schedule of sample questions

At the recent East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA) event at The Workhouse in Southwell, participants were asked to contribute their ideas about questions that could be asked about 'Work', the theme of the event. These have now been collated and added to the EMOHA website so that other people can have access to them as a potential resource. You can download them at http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/news/ohday_2010.html - scroll down the programme and click on the link in the 3.45 pm section.

NEW GALLERIES OF MODERN LONDON AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON

The Museum of London's major new Galleries of Modern London opened to the public on 28 May 2010. Telling the story of the capital from 1666 right up to the present day, the galleries present 7,000 objects, show-stopping interactives, film and oral history exhibits as they transport visitors through London's tumultuous history, rich with drama, triumph and near disaster.

More than five years in the making, oral history was integrated into the development of the galleries from the outset. The Museum has been collecting oral history since the 1980s and has employed permanent oral history curatorial staff since 1992. With an extraordinary collection of thousands of



Stan Harris, who is featured in the War exhibit, visits the gallery with his grandson who has followed him into the family funeral director business

hours of recorded interviews from which to draw, and the potential to collect new interviews, the opportunity to integrate oral history in the permanent galleries was an exciting one.

One of the signature exhibits in the new galleries is an immersive audio-visual display about the Second World War. Subverting the normal practice of sound being led by the visual, for this exhibit oral history is the lead resource with images and film selected to create a supportive visual track. The emphasis of the exhibit is upon personal experiences and perceptions: at its heart are real voices recalling real experiences, with all the immediacy and emotion inherent in first-hand remembering and telling. From its earliest conception, the exhibit was defined and shaped to encourage visitors to engage on an emotional and empathetic as well as an intellectual level, with the aim that visitors leave with a greater understanding of how lives have been shaped and affected by war, and in particular how people in London experienced, responded to and were influenced by the Second World War.

A conscious decision was made not to shy away from the more traumatic aspects of war. For example, Stan Harris recalls working for his family's undertaking business at the age of fourteen: 'there used to be two big removal vans going round to these bomb sites to collect the bodies, take them down to the Romford Road Baths. And then the undertakers would go in there and be told, shown by the relatives, where they could identify them, which were theirs'. In all but one case the extracts were drawn from audio interviews in the existing collection. The exception was a new video interview with William Pearce, who was born profoundly deaf and recalls his experience of living during the war when all the signifiers of danger – from sirens to bombs falling – were sound.

New video oral history interviews were collected for two other exhibits. 'London Liberationists' is a touch-screen interactive based on interviews with people involved in gay liberation and women's liberation movements from the 1960s to the present day. 'Portraits', meanwhile, features people from a range of backgrounds talking about their personal values. Here contemporary interviews are interspersed with 'talking heads' from a series of films made by Peter Davies in the 1960s, offering interesting juxtapositions.

The Museum of London has increasingly been working with video oral histories over the past few years. On 20 November 2010, in partnership with the Oral History Society, it will host a one-day seminar entitled 'Vision on: digital video and oral history'. This lively event will reflect upon the uses, benefits, challenges and implications of digital video technologies for oral history, and will include opportunities to visit the new galleries. Further information, including how to book, can be found on the Oral History Society website at: <http://www.ohs.org.uk/events.php>.

Annette Day, Head of Programmes, Museum of London

Eastside Community Heritage

The June 2010 edition of the Eastside Community Heritage Newsletter has an update on the 'Working Lives' project: 'Year three interviews and reminiscence sessions are well underway. These are focusing on the industries of markets and textiles. If you, or anyone you know, worked in these industries, we would love to hear from you. The final exhibition will be held at Guildhall Art Gallery, opening on 12th January 2011 for six weeks, and the publication will also be available at this time'. For further details, contact Eastside Community Heritage, Ilford Methodist Church basement, Ilford Lane, Ilford, IG1 2JZ, 020 8553 4343, email office@ech.org.uk, www.hidden-histories.org.uk.

Southern Association for History of Medicine & Science (SAHMS) - Annual Meeting, 4-5 March 2011

Proposals for individuals papers or panels of several papers are invited for the above on the history of medicine and science, 'broadly construed to encompass historical, literary, anthropological, philosophical and sociological approaches to health care and science including race, disabilities and gender studies'. Deadline: 30 September 2010. Visit the online submission site at <http://library.uthsc.edu/sahms>.

Digital Audio & Digital Imaging — guidelines

Brooklyn Historical Society has produced online guides to digital audio and digital imaging. These are available at <http://www.bcr.org/dps/cdp/best/>.

Fellowship Awards -Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

Applications are invited for the 2011 Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowships, which are intended to provide overseas experience to enhance effectiveness in a career or field of interest. Fellows receive a grant to cover travel, daily living and insurance within the countries visited.

Categories include Arts, Crafts & Music; Education & Training; Environment, Food & Rural Affairs; Exploration, Adventure & Sport; Medical, Health & Social Services; and an Open Category. Applications will close in early October 2010, with interviews of short-listed applicants taking place in January 2011. See <http://www.wcmt.org.uk/> for further information.

2011 Narrative Conference

The 2011 Narrative Conference, sponsored by Washington University in St. Louis and the International Society for the Study of Narrative and will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, April 7-10, 2011. This is an interdisciplinary forum addressing all dimensions of narrative theory and practice. Proposals for papers and panels are welcome on all aspects of narrative in any genre, period, discipline, language, and medium. Deadline for receipt of proposals: October 30, 2010. For the Call for Papers, please go to: http://narrative.wustl.edu/media/Flyer_final-6-25.pdf.

Oral history on Wikipedia

A new section on oral history has recently been added to Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia, by Graham Smith, Chair of the Oral History Society. It covers such topics as oral history in Britain and Northern Ireland and the modern tradition in the United States, plus external links to case studies and collections, and technical information. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_history.

New online exhibition from the Breman Jewish Heritage & Holocaust Museum

The Breman Jewish Heritage & Holocaust Museum, Atlanta, Georgia, has announced the launch of an online exhibition, *New Lives: coming to America*, which features the stories of the more than 400 Holocaust survivors who emigrated to Georgia, USA. Explore video testimony and biographies, peruse family photographs and historical documents, and learn about the context of the Holocaust through maps and narrative histories of ghettos, concentration camps, and the home countries of the survivors. See <http://www.thebreman.org/exhibitions/online/newlives/start.php>. Contact Ruth Einstein, Special Projects Co-ordinator, The Breman Museum, www.thebreman.org for more details.

Your comments, suggestions and news, please...

Do you have any comments about this Newsletter, suggestions for future editions, or short items that you would like to submit for inclusion? Please send them to Cynthia Brown, cib2@le.ac.uk. She also welcomes items of up to 1000 words for the 'Current British Work' section of *Oral History*, the journal of the Oral History Society.