

Oral History Society e-Newsletter

No. 4, Summer 2011

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.

The Oral History Society welcomes your news...

There is no need to wait for the next e-newsletter to pass on news of your projects or events. The Oral History Society also has a 'News' section on its website at www.oralhistory.org.uk/news.php, and updates this at regular intervals. Contact Rob Perks, rob.perks@bl.uk if you have items for inclusion. You can also advertise or search for job vacancies at <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/vacancies/advertise.php>.

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Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation project—an update

Lady Sylvia Hermon MP recently paid a visit to the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation to see how work is progressing on the compilation of the oral history of the organisation once headed by her late husband, Sir John Hermon, Chief Constable of the RUC from 1980 to 1989. She has contributed to the project herself by recording some of her own personal memories.

Murray Cameron, the Oral History Project Manager, writes that: 'She was met by Jim McDonald, Chairman of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, and spent some time listening to recordings made by former serving officers and their families. Lady Hermon said: "I am fascinated by the wide



Lady Sylvia Hermon (2nd left) during her visit to the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation

range of personal stories now held as part of this project. In the time available I was only able to dip into this important collection but could not help but be deeply touched by some of the interviews where people have shared their heartbreaking moments." Other interviews give a unique insight into the social conditions prevailing in Northern Ireland post-World War Two, and some illustrate the humour which helped individuals through the more difficult times.'

The project is part-funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and to date around 235 interviews have been completed with former serving officers and their families. The interviews are stored on a digital archive which gives access by subject, geographical location and other headings. Work is currently concentrating on the period from 1970, and the project is particularly keen to see the memories of more female officers in the archive. For further details, Email: rucgcfoundation@nics.gov.uk Website: www.rucgcfoundation.org.

**Oral history and gender—call for articles for a special issue of the
Journal for Gender Studies (Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies) on oral history**

In recent years interest in oral history as a research method has increased dramatically. Historians, anthropologists and other researchers have used this method of research for a number of reasons. Sometimes oral history is employed to retrieve the 'hidden voices' of groups that have long been invisible in history and society. In other cases, oral history complements existing research as it uncovers a new dimension of the topic.

Beside the disciplinary differences between the use of oral history in the Humanities and the Social Sciences, there is an important methodological difference between collecting oral history material for one's own research or for the purpose of establishing a (heritage) collection for (scientific) re-use by other institutions, such as libraries.

Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies wants to dedicate a special issue to the use of oral history in gender studies, with Saskia Wieringa (director of Aletta, Institute for Women's History) and Sara de Jong (research manager Aletta) serving as external members of the editorial board. This special issue was conceived during a conference held on the occasion of Aletta's 75th anniversary. Aletta (formerly called IAV and IIAV) has established an extensive collection of documents and diaries and strives to make oral history sources more accessible. Over the last years the Institute itself has produced collections of oral history material.

In this special issue we want to trace the specific gender aspects that play a role in oral history. Researchers and others who have been involved in oral history projects are called upon

to contribute. Some questions that could be addressed concern the character and the history of the method itself in relation to gender: where does the interest of feminist researchers in oral history come from; what is the unique character of oral history as a method? Which methodological and theoretical aspects play a role in the collecting of stories of women and men for one's research? How has oral history developed as a research method in relation to gender research? What is the role of new technologies in gender-based oral history? How can oral history be applied to interrogate gender inequality?

Another cluster of questions relates to the results of the method of oral history for gender research. How does oral history contribute to the history of gender relations? Which aspects play a role in setting up national and international oral history projects about women, sexuality and gender relations? What 'hidden' voices of women have been collected? How can we explain that gender studies considers oral history especially suitable for the study of women? Do stories of men get more attention nowadays and if yes, the stories of which men and why? Is oral history about/with men of a different nature than oral history about/with women; or would it need to be different?

Contributions can be submitted in English. For queries and submissions, contact:

Jantine Oldersma: gj.oldersma@planet.nl

Deadline paper proposal: 1 Oct 2011

Deadline first draft: 1 January 2012

Deadline final version: 1 April 2012

New book on the history of Bishop's Park, Fulham

Bishops Park in Fulham, London, was created piecemeal over a twenty year period from 1883 from land given by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners adjacent to the River Thames in Fulham. In the middle of the park is Fulham Palace, the home of the Bishop of London until the 1970s. Like many urban parks it had slowly declined as funding was cut to Local Authorities and priorities lay elsewhere. Thanks to the Big Lottery and Heritage Lottery Funds, an award of £3.65 million was made to the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham to undertake a comprehensive £6.7 million restoration of the park.

To coincide with the completion of works the Friends of Bishops Park are publishing a book of the history of the park. One of the chapters contains reminiscences by local residents. Interviews undertaken record continuity and change in use of the park and are important to show the value of urban open space. One key role was as a playground for latch key kids in summer holidays and a number of interviews record changing attitudes to child safety. The importance of the park in attracting people to live nearby was another point picked up in the interviews. The book, price £14.95 plus £3.50 p&p, can be ordered from the Friends of Bishops Park, 54 Langthorne Street, London SW6 6JY.

Captive Memories—Far Eastern Prisoners of War oral history project

News of this project from a recent press release: A three year oral history project, commissioned by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) to capture the long-term perspective on captivity of sixty two British Far Eastern POWs (FEPOW), culminated in June 2011 in the publication of their stories on a website sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Over the several decades since the end of the war, LSTM has been involved with the FEPOW, first with treating the tropical diseases they had contracted during captivity, and more recently in helping manage some long term after-effects of their experiences.

The project website at www.captivememories.org.uk aims to achieve three things:

- to give the men a voice (many for the first time, after more than sixty years' silence following liberation and repatriation in 1946)
- to help future generations learn, from the men themselves, their experience of a long and frequently brutal captivity
- to record the effects these experiences had throughout the rest of their lives

It contains:

- audio excerpts from all sixty two men's interviews, which were conducted over three years as the men were entering their nineties
- a database of the men who took part in the project, searchable by their names, countries, camps, and the infamous 'hellships' used to transport them from their points of capture
- information on an education project based on the men's firsthand accounts

The education project, also funded by HLF, was devised and piloted during 2009-2010 by Pensby High School for Girls in Wirral.

During this period two elderly FEPOW, Fergus Anckorn and Tom Boardman, met the girls to talk about their experiences. Their accounts were then used as the basis for the pilot cross-curricular study in Music, Design Technology, Art, English, Media Studies, Drama and Science. The resulting learning resources - and the testimonies from the sixty



two men, many now no longer alive – are available to individuals and schools, through downloads from the site. The interviews themselves were conducted by Meg Parkes, Research Assitant in the Clinical Division of LSTM, whose own father Capt. A.A. Duncan was a Far Eastern Prisoner of War.

Maurice Naylor, ninety, who served in the 135th Field Artillery and was captured in Singapore, said of the project: *'The war in the Far East tends to be overlooked, especially the thousands upon thousands of young men who as POWs suffered and died from overwork, starvation and disease. When I was released I didn't want to know; I pushed it to the back of my mind. I couldn't talk about it... Then when I retired and visited Thailand, I saw the men's graves. Rows upon rows of them. I decided to do what I could to ensure that their sacrifice would not be forgotten At first it was difficult to talk. It set me back, dredging up old memories. But it is important ... We all lost our youth there.'*

Capt. Duncan is in the centre of the above propaganda photograph, taken by a Japanese photographer outside Motoyama POW camp on the island of Honshu, Japan, in March 1943 (Duncan Collection)

'Making Educational Histories in the 21st century— special issue of the *Oral History Forum*

The *Oral History Forum d'histoire orale*, the online journal of the Canadian Oral History Association, is seeking submissions to a special issue addressing oral history and education, entitled 'Making Educational Oral Histories in the 21st Century'. Through this open-access collection, it is hoped to generate discussion on this important theme and provide a valuable resource for people interested in the study of oral history and education, whether in the classroom or in their own research.

Submissions to 'Making Educational Oral Histories in the 21st Century' might concern, but are not limited to, the following topics: case studies where oral history strategies are used with students at various levels of the educational enterprise; challenges of oral history for scholars and educators; advantages of using oral history for students of History at all levels; recommended software for generating oral history within educational contexts; combining conventional educational history with oral history sources; and institutional responsibilities/ethical dilemmas in utilising oral history with students. University researchers, community organizers, educators, oral historians, public historians, and others who are working in this field are invited to submit theoretical and methodological papers, as well as empirically-based essays, reviews (books, new media, exhibitions, films, theatrical productions), and discussions for 'Making Educational Oral Histories in the 21st Century'.

Contributors are strongly encouraged to think outside the traditional box of the printed academic journal and thus their submissions may also include photographs, artwork, annotated transcripts, audio and/or video clips, field notes and any other additional research materials that may enrich our understanding of Oral History and Education. The deadline for submission is **15 August 2011**—see www.oralhistoryforum.ca for details.

Lessons from the Past—a school oral history project



News from Lindsey Johnstone, Head of History at Lostock Hall High School in Preston, of an innovative project, 'Lessons from the Past', involving students from the school and funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund Young Roots scheme: 'The project is designed to enhance pupils' enquiry skills and get them exploring and making sense of their local history by conducting oral history interviews and creating an archive of evidence to interrogate. It aims to provide a model in terms of oral history training, support and equipment that can be adopted by other schools. One of its core aims is to enable young people to tackle the issues that they may face, including low self-esteem, racism, underachievement by boys, and anti-social behaviour, by researching their local history and heritage. It will create a central public archive of evidence, generated by young people and designed to be accessible to them across all the Key Stages and in subjects such as English, ICT and Geography as well as History. For further information: contact Lindsey Johnstone, email info@lessonsfromthepast.co.uk, website www.lessonsfromthepast.co.uk/.

International Conference on Welsh Studies, 26—28 July 2012 Bangor University, Bangor, Gwynedd, Wales—Call for Papers

The North American Association for the Study of Welsh Culture & History (NAASWCH) Program Committee seeks diverse perspectives on Wales and Welsh culture - as well as proposals focused on the Welsh in North America—from many disciplines including: history, literature, languages, art, social sciences, political science, philosophy, music, and religion. NAASWCH invites participation from academics, postgraduate/graduate students and independent scholars from North America, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Abstracts for papers (twenty minutes in length) are welcomed, along with proposals for thematic sessions, panel presentations, or other formats; deadline 2 January 2012. Send proposals to Prof. Tony Brown, School of English, els015@bangor.ac.uk, or Dr Andrew Edwards, School of History and Welsh History, a.c.edwards@bangor.ac.uk, both at Bangor University. For additional information, see the NAASWCH website at www.naaswch.org.

**Winston Churchill Memorial Trust -
Churchill Fellowship Applications for 2012**

Would experience overseas enhance your effectiveness in your career or field of interest? Are you in a position to disseminate the new knowledge and examples of best practice that you will observe, for the wider benefit of your community and the UK? Check your eligibility, see examples of previous projects and find the application form at www.wcmt.org.uk. The closing date is 4 October 2011.

**Advertise your
oral history events**

The Institute for Historical Research website now has an 'Oral History' category for events. If you have seminars or other events that you would like to advertise there, visit www.history.ac.uk/events/categories.

Oral History Association — Annual Meeting 2011

The annual meeting of the Oral History Association (OHA) will take place on 12–16 October 2011 at the Renaissance Hotel in Denver Colorado on the theme of 'Memories of conflict & disaster: oral history and the politics of truth, trauma, and reconciliation'. The deadline for submission of papers has passed, but details of the meeting itself are still available at www.oralhistory.org/annual-meeting/2011-oha-annual-meeting-call-for-papers/.

**Oral History of the UK
Electricity Supply
Industry—an appeal**

The British Library National Life Stories project is conducting a scoping study for a proposed new oral history programme documenting the British electricity supply industry since the Second World War.

Rob Perks, Director, National Life Stories and Lead Curator Oral History, is keen to hear from anyone who knows about any interviews that have already been collected in this sector, or which relate to it, both in the UK and elsewhere, that might inform its planning and research. Contact him at the British Library, 96 Euston Road, London, NW1 2DB, tel 020 7412 7405/7404, rob.perks@bl.uk.

**Understanding & Preserving Audio
Collections—a three day course at the
British Library, 7–9 November 2011**

Custodians of audio collections are faced with the challenge of maintaining access to our priceless audio heritage, but with so many formats, from wax cylinders to the latest audio file formats, there is a risk that recordings on obsolete and fragile formats may be lost. *Understanding and Preserving Audio Collections* will guide you through collection management and preservation strategies, with an emphasis on digitisation for preservation and access.

The main areas covered by the course are analogue audio carriers and technology; digital audio theory; collection level overviews; working with audio files; archival principles for audio material. Whilst no hands-on experience is necessary, it is useful to have identified a collection to which the theory and practical elements of this course will be applied in order to get the most from it. For details: the Preservation Library Service, British Library, tel 020 7412 7612, website <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/audio.html>.

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.