

# Oral History Society Regional Network

Annual Report  
2015

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## Annual Network Report 2015

Welcome to the Annual Network Report for 2015, and thank you again to everyone who has contributed to it. As you will see, the amount of oral history work happening around the country is immense and very satisfying to see.

Particular thanks are due to Helen Lloyd and Julia Letts for arranging the content of this year's programme and to Maggie Tohill for hosting it at The Hive in Worcester. And thank you to Padmini Broomfield who as Deputy Regional Network Coordinator has taken a lot of time to help with the essential administration for the event and to Belinda Waterman for the initial collating of reports being sent in.

This year's theme is 'Being Innovative with Oral Histories', and we have included speakers with a range of topics and methods of using oral histories in this way.

In the morning, Padmini and I will host an open discussion on topics of interest to the Regional Network and latest developments around the Special Interest Groups and Heritage Lottery Fund, Higher Education plus more. This session is also an opportunity for you to identify your own training and development needs as Regional Networkers, so please give it a little thought in advance so that we make the most of this time.

Then from 11am onwards the event is opened up to local OHS members to join us and Pam Schweitzer (London network) will be our first speaker, presenting on the Reminiscence Theatre Project and Archive at Greenwich University. This will be followed by Julia Letts who will introduce some of the innovative oral history work going on in Hereford and Worcester with some guest speakers, followed by a tour of The Hive, Europe's first joint university and public library, which opened in 2012.

After lunch Katy Wade of Sampad South Asian Arts will talk about the 'My Route' project and Elise Turner of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the West Midlands will talk about how a regional office works. Then Maureen Smojkis of the Midlands Polish Community Association will show a 10 minute digital story about the HLF-funded project, 'Fitting in and Getting Along: Integration and Identity for Birmingham's British Poles'. The day will close with a short illustrated talk by Helen Lloyd on how oral history talks can be used to increase mutual understanding in diverse communities.

At the business meeting on the Friday evening I will be able to update you on wider developments in the work of the Oral History Society since our last event, including the redesign of its website and our strategy plans with Higher Education. I hope there will also be plenty of opportunities for the informal networking that is such a valuable part of this annual event, and look forward to seeing those of you able to attend in Worcester.

The programme for the Saturday event is included at the bottom of this report as is the agenda for the Friday night business meeting.

I am looking forward as always to an interesting and enjoyable event. I can confirm that the OHS will cover the travel and accommodation expenses of Networkers who are not funded by their institutions and you can email me directly for expense claim forms.

Every year we are looking for offers from the network to host our annual regional networker event and ideas for the theme so please do contact me if you're interested in hosting it next year.

***Juliana Vandegrift***

***Regional Network Coordinator***

## Developing the Network

At last year's business meeting for the annual event in London we discussed the new introduction of a requirement for networkers to attend our annual event once in every three years as part of their commitment to the network. It was agreed at the meeting to implement this and also for a requirement for every networker to submit an annual report. We always aim to encourage networkers to attend by moving the annual event to different locations every year to make it accessible at least once every three years. It is a great way to meet other networkers and share best practice and ideas and generally catch up.

The OHS has also introduced a new 'Volunteer Agreement' for all new regional networkers who join, based on the current practice of charities who work with volunteers. All our existing regional networkers are invited to sign the agreement if they wish so and can contact me directly for the document.

Following on from last year's campaign to relaunch the London network, we would like to welcome Martin Bisiker to the network, an experienced film maker in oral histories.

We have had a few resignations recently due to the changing nature and pattern of networkers' workloads and jobs. The following networkers have recently left the network: Manda Gifford (SE), Jocelyn Goddard (SE), Linda Ballard (Northern Ireland), Angela Bartie (Scotland), Christina Raven Conn (East Midlands). I'd like to thank them all for their valued contributions over many years and wish them luck. They are always welcome to contact us in the future if circumstances change. We will be assessing where the gaps are and watch this space for a recruitment drive!

The OHS Committee still funds a limited bursary scheme to enable networkers without institutional support to carry out activities to support their Continuing Professional Development. Please do contact me for more details.

***Juliana Vandegrift***

***Regional Network Coordinator***

## Oral History Society Website and Yahoo Groups site

The Oral History Society Virtual Network has a web-area on the Yahoo Groups site where Regional Networkers can access not only archived messages but files posted onto the site – including this Annual Report. If you don't already have access to this, follow the instructions below:

### **Accessing Files/uploaded material on this email group's Yahoogroups web-area.**

- 1) What happens when you click on (or cut and paste into your browser window) <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/oral-history-network/files/> ?
  - a) You get right in, and see a list of files. You're in, these instructions are not for you!
  - b) You get a bumptious Yahoo! sign-in page. Sign in and try again.
- 2) If you don't have a Yahoo! ID to sign in with:  
Suspend disbelief, read 'Signing up is easy', and click on the link.  
Jump through the hoops. Billions of people around the world have already done it, so it must be possible.
- 3) Try again. The combination of a Yahoo! I.D. and email-address membership of the oral-history-network email group should be enough to get you in to the files, and you should be able to download or upload as you please - even bits of audio file, if you wish.
- 4) If you've done all that, and still can't get to the Files, then get in touch with me directly at [juliana.vandegrift@btinternet.com](mailto:juliana.vandegrift@btinternet.com)

***Juliana Vandegrift***

***Regional Network Coordinator***

## Reports from the Regions

### East of England

#### **Suffolk (Juliana Vandegrift)**

I have had very few enquiries this year from locally based community groups in Suffolk about HLF projects or oral history work.

From August 2014 to August 2015 I have been the project manager for an oral history project called 'Gurkha Stories'. (<http://gurkhastories.com/>)

It was a twelve month oral history project established to record a group of twenty retired Gurkha veterans living primarily in Colchester, Essex. The majority of the veterans live in Abbeygate House, a retirement home for Gurkhas, and some are still doing civilian jobs in their retirement years after the army.

The project has produced a website which acts as a record/archive of the project activities and contains the following:

- School resource kit available online for KS2 (ages 7-11) students. The resource kit was produced by West Midlands regional networker, Julia Letts, and is designed to help students understand a little of the background of Gurkha soldiers based on our oral history interviews with the veterans in Gurkha Stories. Resource kit can be downloaded from here: <http://gurkhastories.com/school-project/>
- There is a short film made by Colchester's Air Cadets, who worked for 3 months on the project: <http://gurkhastories.com/film/>

Colchester Castle housed an exhibition of the project for four months during the summer and a book of selected edits from the Gurkha's interviews is currently under way. The oral history recordings will be housed with the Colchester Recalled archive and Essex Sound Archive.

Other news from Suffolk:

**Nick Patrick:** 'Eighth in the East' project

Further information can be found at <http://www.8theast.org/oral-history/>

Now in its third and final year, *Eighth in the East* is a Heritage Lottery Fund project which explores the social and landscape history of the 8th United States Army Air Force which was based in the East of England from 1942 through until the end of the Second World War. As Project Director Nick Patrick explains, oral history is one of the key activities of the project. "The project came about", said Nick, "because a group of us (historians, museum professionals and archivists) were concerned that

the impact of the air war in Europe on life here in the East had been forgotten. We were interested in the civilian story. What's more, we were very aware that those people who experienced all this were sadly passing. We wanted to record memories of life with the Americans and the changes they brought to people and places". For the past couple of years the project has been running training sessions so that community groups can learn how to go about recording and archiving peoples' memories. The recordings that are produced will be transcribed and lodged in local archives. They are being used to inform a theatre production and an exhibition which will tour the region next year. Training sessions have already taken place in Norwich and Eye (Suffolk) and a local history group in Halesworth will soon start a recording programme too.

## **Norfolk (Jonathan Draper)**

The Norfolk Record Office (NRO) continues to support oral history projects in the county, by running basic training, lending equipment and acting as a place of deposit for recorded oral history interviews.

There have been fewer projects supported than previous years. Training has been delivered to the Connecting Links project which involves young people interviewing members of Norfolk's Congolese community. Training and ongoing support has also been delivered to the Eighth in the East project, which is exploring the impact of the United States Army Air Force's Eighth Army on the landscape and people of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire during the Second World War. This HLF supported project has produced some useful training literature which has been supplied to other local groups, including the North Norfolk Stories project which includes some oral history recording relating to that part of the county. Support has also been given to a group recording oral histories which relate to Hickling.

The NRO has also received several collections of oral history recordings. Subjects covered include, the gardens of Swanton Novers House, Norfolk archaeology and Loddon. The NRO has also received additional recordings from the Norfolk based Wise Archive. The recordings are the working life stories of people in the United Kingdom.

## **East Midlands**

### **Leicestershire & Rutland (Cynthia Brown & Colin Hyde)**

In July 2015 the East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA) hosted its annual oral history day at the University of Leicester on the theme of video and oral history. This was well attended by people from across the East Midlands region, with advice on the technical aspects of video and presentations demonstrating a range of projects in which it has been used. In partnership with Leicester Arts and Museum Service, EMOHA has also put more than two hours of oral histories about World War I online. Thirty years ago local historians at the Leicester Oral History Archive started to record the memories of local people in Leicestershire & Rutland. In the 1980s and 1990s almost 300 recordings were made with people who lived through 1914-18 as children or adults. EMOHA has selected recordings in which people have talked about the Home Front during the war, edited them down to just over

two hours of material, and arranged them in different themes such as 'The Start of the War', 'Attitudes to Germans', and 'Counting the Cost'. These sound files are on the EMOHA website and Soundcloud (where you can listen to all of the clips as part of a playlist). The website is here -

<http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/community/resources/ww1/index.html> and the recordings are also on Soundcloud - <https://soundcloud.com/emoha>.

Two HLF-funded projects using oral history to explore the legacy of the First World War have also been completed with the launch of publications and educational materials. 'Uncovering Resistance: Leicester and Leicestershire in World War I', a one year project by the Leicester Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND), explored resistance to the war before, during and after, and included recorded interviews in which people related their family memories and emotional responses to the war. 'How Saxby Street got its Name: World War I and the people of South Highfields' focused on a particular area of Leicester around Saxby Street – formerly Saxe-Coburg Street and renamed in 1918 along with other local streets with 'Hunnish' names. It incorporates stories of people whose fathers or grandfathers fought in the war, to illustrate how the redrawing of borders, invasion or violence eventually led individuals or families to Leicester.

A joint project between Leicester City Council's Arts and Museums Service and the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society received HLF funding of £40,000 to record Leicester's strong links with rugby football. 'Leicester Rugby, Leicester People' coincided with the Rugby World Cup in 2015, in which Leicester hosted three matches. Project staff and volunteers collected memories and memorabilia to feature in an exhibition at Newarke Houses Museum, which runs until April 2016. A touring exhibition will also visit various venues around the city.

Archaeological digging in Leicestershire from World War II to the advent of Channel Four's *Time Team* is being explored in an oral history project developed by Yolanda Courtney, a freelance museum curator based in Leicester. This will cover professional and community archaeology, including questions about interviewees' earliest digging days, and what has made Leicestershire's archaeology pioneering or otherwise distinctive. The project aims to conduct around fifteen interviews initially, and to publish some of the material online and in print.

### **Nottinghamshire (Christina Raven-Conn)**

The Local Studies section of Nottingham Central Library continues to support local projects, mainly with advice and access to our collection for research. We are also willing to receive copies of oral history from local Nottingham and Nottinghamshire projects for archiving and also copies for the library's collection where possible.

Nottingham Theatre Royal 150<sup>th</sup> celebration project has started with its research. It is in partnership with the University of Nottingham. The oral history aspect will be happening in the autumn, with three 'Memory Afternoons'. Further details about this can be found on the website - <http://www.trch.co.uk/anniversary>

Nottingham Lace features again in another HLF bid, this time from Nicola Donovan in conjunction with Nottingham Trent University. The research team is trying to discover how the community of people with connections to the Lace industry would like to preserve its heritage and pass on their stories and knowledge for the future.

Boots D10 project in partnership with Dr Richard Hornsey of the University of Nottingham, is capturing the memories of those employees who have worked in this listed Grade 1 factory, which was opened in 1933. Commencing this year but part of this project is the capturing of the memories of those employees who worked in the D6 'Drys' factory located nearby, in preparation for the celebration of the 80th anniversary of its opening in 2016. Contact Charlotte McCarthy, Senior Archivist, Corporate Records & Archives. Email: [charlotte.mccarthy@boots.co.uk](mailto:charlotte.mccarthy@boots.co.uk) Tel: +44 (0)115 9593307 for more information.

Dr Natalie Braber of Nottingham Trent University, has published her 'Nottinghamshire Dialects' book this year, which includes quotes from some of the Nottinghamshire Oral History Collection and she also listened to the recorded interviews. She shows how oral history can aid research into dialect in specific areas.

Down Hockley to Sneinton market is the HLF funded project by the Sneinton Community traders ltd. It aims to capture memories and stories about the market, both past and present; then create a digital archive and a book. For more information contact Sneinton Market Square, Gedling Street, Nottingham. Tel: 0777 1980386

This will be Christina's last network report as she recently moved on from the Nottingham City Library Service and the OHS would like to thank her for all that she's done for the network.

### **The Samuel Morley Programme – Backlit Gallery**

Backlit Gallery which is housed in buildings which were originally part of Samuel Morley's textile manufacturing business in Nottingham, used oral history recordings from the Nottinghamshire Oral History Collection as part of an exhibition, celebrating Samuel Morley's philanthropy and support for the arts and education in both Nottingham and in London and his belief in fair wages and free education for the working classes. It was Samuel's interest in the technology of the time that led to the building being known as the 'House of the Flying Wheel' and this was the name given to the exhibition that was held from June-September 2014. To learn more, go to <http://backlit.org.uk/exhibition-archive/>

## **London**

### **European Reminiscence Network (Pam Schweitzer)**

'Memory Culture' to promote peace in Europe (M4Peace) led by Matthias Neutzner, Dresden. The European Reminiscence Network, based in Greenwich and coordinated by Pam Schweitzer is a partner in this project.

This new project has been running since October 2014 involving partners in UK, Germany, Poland and Spain. The key activities are inter-generational work focused on World War II civilian experience, creation of inter-generational theatre in each participating country and peaceful collaboration on oral history projects in and between partner countries. All partners attended a kick-off meeting in Coventry

and a follow-on high profile conference in Dresden in February 2015, marking the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Dresden in February 1945.

We then heard that our application for funding under the Europe for Citizens programme was rejected, but we have been continuing our cooperation while our German partner reapplies to the European Commission.

As part of this international project, the European Reminiscence Network and the University of Greenwich have hosted an international meeting for this M4Peace project on 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> October 2015. It was held at the university involving performances, talks and workshops. A group of older people in Greenwich, the Greenwich Pensioners Forum, worked with Pam Schweitzer to create a play based on their memories to present at this event. None of the group, aged between 82 and 98, had ever performed before, but rose to the task with extraordinary enthusiasm and commitment. They performed free of scripts and with great aplomb for an audience of 100 in the University theatre, playing to drama and history students from Greenwich, older people from their pensioners' group and a visiting group of young people from the Dresden wing of the project. The young Dresden group gave a performance of their work (still in progress) on a play exploring what they had heard from their grandparents about their wartime experience. This was done with great sensitivity and was greatly appreciated by the very mixed group attending. Drama students from Greenwich also created a short piece of theatre as part of their course work, based on memories in the Reminiscence Theatre Archive of Pam Schweitzer at the University of Greenwich, and this too was performed at our international meeting.

In the afternoon the history department presented their oral history work and their archive, Memories of War. There were presentations from 2 German directors from Dresden and Frankfurt concerning processing memories of war in Germany and the issues presented by revisiting and dramatizing these painful memories. On 10<sup>th</sup> October, a joint workshop, led by Pam Schweitzer, between the older people's group and the young Dresden performers, in which they explored their memories together in small groups and co-presented scenes. The whole cooperation has been very positive and we hope to continue it.

### **Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today: Reminiscence and Dementia Care**

This reminiscence arts project has been running in Westminster (October 2014 to March 2015) and Camden (April 2015 to October 2015) and is the continuation of a long-running international project begun in 1997. Partners on current projects are Westminster Arts, Camden Carers, University of Greenwich

And the European Reminiscence Network. The project is supported by Awards for All. It brings together families caring at home for someone with dementia for a series of 12 weekly reminiscence meetings followed by monthly reunions. In these sessions we explore the memories across the life course from earliest memories to the present day, using drama, dance, visual arts and artefacts to animate the groups. The sessions are led by Pam Schweitzer, Caroline Baker and Kath Gilfoy through the European Reminiscence Network. The effect has proved highly therapeutic for the people with dementia and their family carers.

The families are supported throughout the project by Reminiscence Arts Apprentices from a wide range of backgrounds including oral historians, radio

producers, theatre people, musicians, visual artists, dementia specialists and writers. The apprentices attend a 2-day training before participating in the weekly sessions and taking responsibility for running some activities within the sessions. On completion of an essay following the course, the apprentices receive accreditation as project facilitators. The training and apprenticeship scheme is now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year and has enabled arts and community health workers to build up their skills in the areas of reminiscence and dementia care so that they can go on and apply this learning in future independent community projects.

You can read more about this project at the website:

[www.rememberingtogether.eu](http://www.rememberingtogether.eu)

### **Reminiscence Theatre Archive at University of Greenwich**

This archive has been considerably developed over the last year with support of History and Drama students. They have digitized oral history interviews connected with 2 major reminiscence theatre projects conducted in the 1990s, as well as production records of these shows (photos, film, reviews, etc). This digitised material has been stored in the archive. Much of it has also been uploaded onto the website [www.reminiscencetheatrearchive.org.uk](http://www.reminiscencetheatrearchive.org.uk)

This year considerable progress has been made also on digitizing and up-loading older people's and inter-generational reminiscence theatre projects so that visitors to the site can now see many examples of this work, both in process and in final productions.

The students of drama and history at the University of Greenwich now have a continuing relationship with the Reminiscence Theatre Archive in their course work and in student placements with the archive. The students have their own pages on the website to share the work they have done, showing how they have used the archive to make new reminiscence theatre shows and how they have taken those shows out to older people in the community and in sheltered housing units in the local area.

**Fielding enquiries:** Throughout the year I have fielded calls and enquiries concerning oral history and reminiscence, often in connection with people's funding applications.

### **London (Sarah Gudgin)**

As a freelance museum professional I am passionate about finding and facilitating stories. Over the past 12 months my freelance work has been interesting and varied, ranging from conducting interviews for Council of British Archaeology, to recording memories of the North Sea gas and oil industry as part of the Capturing the Energy project for University of Aberdeen. In addition I have sourced funding for further projects including an oral history project for Southwark and Lambeth Archaeological Excavation Committee which is about to commence. This will entail interviews with key individuals who have been involved in archaeological work in London, with a particular focus on the development of archaeological work in the London Boroughs of Southwark and Lambeth. The recordings will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service.

I have continued to share my expertise in collections management, interpretation and display of oral history in museums, to deliver oral history consultancy and mentoring within the museum sector particularly around oral history collecting and archiving.

In addition, I completed training in reminiscence arts via the Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today, Reminiscence and Dementia Care programme, which has been inspirational. It has led to a variety of creative arts and memory based work in collaboration with museums and arts organisations as well as with Jewish Care.

Throughout the year in my role as Oral History Society Regional Networker for London, I have also fielded calls, emails and enquiries concerning oral history. I have supported approximately ten London projects, mainly with advice, often in connection with HLF funding applications and access to collections for archiving.

For this report, I contacted oral history society members in the London region in order to share information about London oral history activities or projects, which have taken place over the past 12 months or are about to commence. Many thanks to all those who responded, their contributions to this report are listed below. It's great to hear about your inspiring work, which shows that oral history continues to flourish in the London region with a wide range of projects and outcomes.

Reports received from London Oral History Society members working on oral history related projects:

**Lynda Finn:**

I've been working on the following projects this year:

- Oral history follow-up to Wellcome Witness seminars for QMUL
- Royal College of Physicians oral history project
- A Hackney Autobiography (oral history of Centerprise and its connections)
- And the London Transport Museum is about to embark on a further (but limited) range of oral history.

**Victoria Northridge:** The Black Cultural Archives

Current projects: We have received the following oral histories in the last year:

- Staying Power project: 17 Digital oral histories featuring photographers reflections on Black British experience 1950s-1990s in collaboration with V&A.
- Hip Hop project: 10 digital oral vox pop recordings in collaboration with Indigo Youth.
- Elimu Carnival band: 10 digital oral histories reflecting upon the 30 year continuation of Elimu carnival band.
- We have also received in 30 copies of digital oral histories from the Lisapo Congolese project.

**David Priest:** Series Producer of THE REUNION

David Priest continues to be Series Producer of THE REUNION – the BBC Radio 4 oral history series, presented by Sue MacGregor, which gathers people from a major news event or cultural happening and asks them to recall their memories of, and feelings about, the experience.

The 2015 series included participants in the Fastnet Boat Race Disaster, the cast of Peter Brook's Midsummer Night's Dream, campaigners for the Birmingham Six, Alan Bennett's Talking Heads, Foot and Mouth Disease, far East POWs, pioneering food writers, the Spycatcher Trial, and Guantanamo Bay detainees.  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b007x9vc/episodes/player>

**Ruth Dewa:** Project Coordinator, After Hiroshima, London Bubble Theatre Company

'After Hiroshima' oral history project seeks to explore the British immediate, and longer term, response to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima & Nagasaki through a foraging process of conducting oral history interviews and research.

Thus far, we have had a wonderfully interesting time interviewing founding members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, folk-musicians, scientists, academics, prisoners of war, veterans and local residents about their personal memories of the bomb that changed the world and the subsequent Cold War and Peace Movement.

The stories shared vary from vibrant accounts of the camaraderie and song on the Aldermaston Marches to the bleakness and cruelty of living in a Japanese prisoner of war camp. The interview transcripts & research are creatively explored during weekly, intergenerational sessions. We are delighted to announce that we have just received Arts Council England funding to turn these interviews into a play which will be performed in February/March 2016. Find out more on our website here: <http://londonbubble.org.uk/projectpage/after-hiroshima/>

**Professor Lucy Bland:** Reader in History, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge

I am currently researching the mixed-race offspring of black GIs and British women born in the 2nd World War. The project is funded by British Academy and has a UK wide remit. I have done long oral histories with 17 people so far, with another two lined up. I am also looking for more participants. If you would like to take part, please contact me at [Lucy.bland@anglia.ac.uk](mailto:Lucy.bland@anglia.ac.uk)

**Carol Low:** Old Stories for New Times: inspiration for sustainable living at Brent Museum and Archives Willesden Green from 12th Oct to 24th January  
Old Stories for New times is an oral history based exhibition. The project is a Transition Town K2K initiative.  
<https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/brent-museum-and-archives/>

**Bill Lowry:** Museum of London

I am working on a couple of long term projects which won't be completed until next year. The first is to help redesign and update the collections online portion of the Museums website enabling it to play video and improving the audio playback along with display of relevant documents such as summaries and transcripts.

The second project is digitising the transcripts for the Port and River Oral History project from the 1980's to help make this collection more visible and understandable by making the data within the Oral History interviews more accessible.

As part of a contemporary collecting project exploring London tattoo artists, Jen Kavanagh conducted four oral history interviews with London-based tattooists. The artists were chosen due to their prominence in the tattoo industry and also as a kind of chronology of current studios. Interviews were conducted with Lal Hardy, who opened New Wave Tattoo in 1979, Alex Binnie, owner of Into You that opened in 1993, Mo Coppoletta, who opened The Family Business in 2003, and Claudia de Sabe who started work at the new studio Seven Doors in 2014. Extracts from these interviews will feature as part of a temporary exhibition, Tattoo London, which will open at MOL in late January.

### **The Memories of War:**

The Memories of War website brought together many of the memories that people have shared with us over the last two years. Led by Dr June Balshaw and Malin Lundin from the University of Greenwich, the Memories of War project team made up of staff, students and volunteers has conducted and transcribed hundreds of individual and group interviews. In addition to oral testimonies and visual images, the website includes a range of free teaching and learning resources for use by schools and colleges.

<http://www.memoriesofwar.org.uk/category/index.aspx>

**Rosa Kurowska Kyffin:** Women's Voices: Velvet Fist Oral History Project - Beyond Past Social Enterprise

Since 2014 Beyond Past, a social enterprise founded to provide training and opportunities in Oral History to young people, has been working with a group of high school students in Tower Hamlets, London, to record and intergenerational oral history of Velvet Fist.

Velvet Fist were a feminist socialist accapella choir active 1983 - 2013 who sang and campaigned internationally for peace, equality and justice. In summer 2015 Rosa Kurowska Kyffin, project facilitator, completed a short film based on the first interviews with the choir and more interviews are planned in winter 2015/16, culminating in the archiving of the interviews and Velvet Fist's campaign and musical collection in 2016. For more information about the project or to get involved see [www.beyondpast.org.uk](http://www.beyondpast.org.uk) or email Rosa at [beyondpast@outlook.com](mailto:beyondpast@outlook.com)

**London Transport Museum:** 'London's transport stories: preserving the digital past, collecting the digital present'

A couple of years ago, London Transport Museum embarked on an Arts Council England funded project to explore ways to better document, store and provide access to its 'born digital' collections. It was identified at the time that 'born digital' collections, including contemporary oral history interviews, couldn't be fully catalogued and accessed on the Museum's Information Management System (IMS). Files were dispersed across various drives and systems, many of which were increasingly cumbersome to store and access. As such a project was launched to secure the future of this collection and make a key part of our digital collection, oral histories, available online for the first time.

Since the project was initiated, the Museum has put into place the infrastructure, policies and future strategies needed to secure this digital material, providing levels of care beyond that for normal digital files including enhanced backing up. Digital

files can now also be processed within the IMS ensuring they are centrally available, stored and managed.

The project is now in its final phase, which involves making a selection of 'born digital' and archive oral histories available to the public online. The Museum's oral history collection contains a wealth of material including interviews with London Transport staff that were recruited from the Caribbean, as well as interviews with renowned artists and designers whose work feature heavily in our collection such as graphic designer Tom Eckersley and textile designer Enid Marx. Although most were recorded on analogue tape formats, they have now been migrated to WAV files for digital preservation as the original recording media have become dilapidated. Twenty of these existing interviews have been selected to go online.

Running alongside this work, a contemporary collecting project has been launched to record and collect twenty new digital oral histories from people experiencing and shaping London's transport today, capturing the intangible changes brought about by new developments.

A new public online platform for this collection is currently being developed for these recordings, and the Museum aims to have all 40 interviews on a new Online Collections website by March 2016. To support this work, the Museum is working with a number of volunteers to undertake a process of editing, summarising and data cleaning the interviews.

This project will provide a full case study for 'born digital' collecting, storage and preservation. The Museum will use this as a case study to illustrate the benefits of enhanced digital curation and contemporary collecting through our networks.

Jen Kavanagh – Freelance oral history curator

Anna Creedon – Digital collections development manager

Laura Sleath – Curator

**Daniella Hadley:** Orleans House Gallery: Joined by the River Project and Village Stories Project

As part of the wider celebration of the creation of the London Boroughs in 1965, Richmond upon Thames chose to commemorate its formation in a project entitled *Joined by the River*. Featuring oral history, archival research, and an intergenerational creative response, the project culminated in an exhibition exploring the changes in local democracy in the key period 1962-1967. Local councillors and residents of the Borough were asked to recall their memories of life in Richmond upon Thames and key quotes were used in exhibition.

The exhibition will tour local libraries, and a video of oral histories will be available online. The project has been a great way for local people to learn more about their Borough and to celebrate the official creation of Greater London.

Another project at Orleans House Gallery is being planned as part of the programme of commemoration for the First World War Centenary continues. *Village Stories* will gather and unearth WWI stories from the fourteen villages within the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.

The project will work closely with researchers and local historians, as well as residents, to collect WWI narratives and showcase them in a blog.

([www.wv1richmond.wordpress.com](http://www.wv1richmond.wordpress.com)) and in exhibition at Orleans House Gallery in 2018. As part of this process, we will conduct oral history interviews with those who have family memories and stories they wish to share.

**Sue Onslow:** Senior Research Fellow & Senior Lecturer, Institute of Commonwealth Studies

We've just completed a major 3 year AHRC funded oral history project on the modern Commonwealth.

Unique oral history project sheds unprecedented new light on the story of the Commonwealth. Is the Commonwealth just an obsolete relic of the British Empire? There is a widespread view that if the organisation is to survive for much longer, it urgently needs a major programme of reform and rejuvenation. But has it ever actually performed a useful purpose? This is the overarching question which a ground-breaking new study seeks to answer.

The Commonwealth Oral History Project will be officially launched at a 'Legacies of the Empire symposium' at Senate House on 21 October. It is the result a three-year programme of research - 'An oral history of the modern Commonwealth, 1965-2010' - funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

It was conducted at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, part of the University of London's School of Advanced Study (SAS), with Dr Sue Onslow acting as Co-Investigator and interviewer. Since the project started in 2013, Dr Onslow has talked to some 65 leading players involved in Commonwealth activities from 1965 to the present, including those from governments who were on the receiving end of Commonwealth strictures. They include the Commonwealth Secretaries General, Sir 'Sonny' Ramphal, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, and Sir Don McKinnon, former prime ministers from across the Commonwealth, and two former British foreign secretaries – Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Lord (Douglas) Hurd.

The result is an extraordinary collection of interviews, which will give an unparalleled overview of the changing nature of the organisation over the last 50 years. The interviewees are often frank about the Commonwealth's problems and limitations, but also give surprisingly positive insights, as well as candid assessments of its likely survival and future.

These Commonwealth Oral Histories are freely available on a dedicated website hosted by SAS. Among the many significant insights offered by the interviews, they

- Throw important new light on the Commonwealth's attempts to end apartheid in South Africa, drawing on the memories of some of those most closely involved;
- Give behind-the-scenes accounts of relations with Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe
- Demonstrate sharply conflicting assessments of Margaret Thatcher's policy towards South Africa;
- Chart South Africa's input into the Commonwealth since 1994
- Provide rare insights into the Queen's 'hands-on' role as Head of the Commonwealth;
- Investigate the extent to which the Commonwealth was an important policy incubator in the major achievement of international debt forgiveness for heavily indebted poor countries;

- Demonstrate the important role of leadership in the history of the Commonwealth and the extent to which it was shaped by the personalities of its Secretaries-General;
- Offer important insights into the value leaders attached to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings;
- Provide important new details about some of the challenges the Commonwealth faced from episodes such as Idi Amin's brutal rule in Uganda, the invasion of Grenada in 1983 and the coups in Fiji in 1987, and 2000;
- Reflect thoughtfully on the on-going debate about democracy/development
- Highlight conflict mediation in Africa
- Chart the troubled history of efforts to reform the Commonwealth.

Quote from Sue Onslow: "These interviews show the Commonwealth has been surprisingly resilient. It hasn't been just 'a talkfest', and it underlines ideas still matter – ideas about rights, development, governance, the rule of law. These interviews highlight the history of its frictions, its limitations, its achievements and its quiet strengths. The repeated message from leading Commonwealth personalities is its informality and multiple support networks help built 'trust': the secret ingredient in any diplomatic activity, right across the board."

**Julia Honess:** Art in the Park, 'Place to Remember'

I'm working on an HLF-funded project with Art in the Park called 'Place to Remember'.

The project is looking at four buildings in an area of huge social and cultural change and all within a mile radius of each other. The buildings have respectively: stood the test of time; are about to be demolished; have changed use; are no longer there. The buildings are: English Martyrs Church; Wendover, Aylesbury Estate; New Peckham Mosque formerly St Mark's Church and North Camberwell Radical Club.

The year-long project involves: collecting oral histories; research; walks and talks; art workshops.

We have also just been awarded funding for a project in Crystal Palace marking at the 50th anniversary of the creation of the London boroughs.

**Laura Mitchison:** On the Record <http://on-the-record.org.uk>

Our main HLF project, *A Hackney Autobiography*, is now in its interpretation phase. We are devising a publication and a sound-rich mobile app, drawing on oral histories recorded in 2015 and the material published by the pioneering co-operative Centerprise. The polyvocal mobile app will put figures such as Dr. Jelley, the Three Penny Doctor, and Vivian Usherwood, a looked after child whose enigmatic 1972 poetry collection sold nearly 20,000 copies, into dialogue with the present environment. Throughout 2015, *A Hackney Autobiography* has used the projects' archive as a springboard for creative workshops with Hackney community groups who have made their own poetic and musical responses. For instance, Saint Dominic's primary school composed poetry about the experiences of Travellers in Hackney, while Hackney Quest youth explored the history of the Rego singing strikers and created their own protest songs.

To give some background to this project, Centerprise was established in 1971 and closed in 2012. It hosted a bookshop, publishing project, reading centre, café, youth club, advice centre (Hackney Citizens Rights Group), crèche and more all under one roof in Dalston. It not only sold books, it made it possible for local people to write and publish their own works of poetry, autobiography and history. An archive of oral histories with Centerprise workers and users, Centerprise books, associated photos and documents is being catalogued and digitised at Bishopsgate Institute as part of *A Hackney Autobiography*.

In September 2015, On the Record created a pop up Memory Kitchen in collaboration with chef Simon Wroe, which went on tour to the Wigtown Book Festival. We created a menu and conversation topics designed to elicit food memories, and their associated cultural worlds and politics. Experimental soundscapes ensued!

This year, On the Record continued providing heritage training and consultancy services to all manner of people, ranging from community groups to universities. For instance, we recently played a big part in making a digital exhibition called *Becoming Fathers* which explored public health issues and the many ways of being a man in rural Malawi.

<http://www.reproductivejourneysinmalawi.org/>

**Dr Carmen M Mangion:** Aggiornamento and Female Religious Life in Britain 1940-1990

This study will examine the changes in religious life for women religious in Britain from 1940 to 1990 to identify how community and individual lives were altered. While the project will centre on events in the 1960s, particular the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) it importantly considers pre and post Vatican II social, cultural and religious events as influencers in these changes.

This project employs a combined methodological approach using archives, surveys and oral history. Ten international women's religious institutes, both contemplative and active, will be chosen for archival research. The archival research will be done in diocesan and religious archives in the UK, mother/sister/daughter houses outside the UK and in the Vatican archives. Historical documents cannot tell us everything we need to know about the past though they can identify events, official decision-making and corporate ideologies. Oral history will allow an examination of the various meanings derived by women religious to the changes in religious life.

The project will include interviews with at least 100 women religious from 10 different women's religious institutes. Project outcomes will be disseminated as both academic and public history. The academic outputs will include one monograph, an international academic conference (open to the public), peer-reviewed journal articles and interactive presentations to various interested organisations.

**Robert Wilkinson:** Waltham Forest Oral History Workshop 2015 Report

We now have almost 700 recordings dating back to the 1970s. As with many archives nearly half of these are analogue recordings. Over the past couple of years we have been digitising both the recordings and the accompanying

paperwork. We are almost there on the paperwork and have around 150 tapes left to digitise. We started in a pre-computer age so many of our summaries and transcripts are hand written – another massive task to type up into digital files. As part of this exercise we are in discussion as to how to make our recordings more accessible – a lot of which will need digital typescripts to be able to search for subjects.

We continue to record local peoples' memories. We are working on a couple of strands around community arts and recording life stories of people with a minority ethnic background – we acknowledge a deficit in this area. We are also interviewing people for the 'Watercress Beds to One Way Streets' project which is HLF funded. We are also starting to work on recording World War Two memories as a specific project. The interest as a result of the centenary of World War One threw up how relatively little we have on this subject. Although we have testimonies we need to carry out recordings of the decreasing number of people with memories of this conflict. We are in discussion with the WF Museums Service about an exhibition planned for 2017 involving both Vestry House Museum and the William Morris Gallery.

We are working with the London Borough of Waltham Forest on a HLF Townscape Heritage project in the St James Street area in Walthamstow. We will be using oral history to develop links with local communities as well as recording changes in the local retail trade in the twentieth century. This will form an integral part of a dedicated website. We are currently in the early stages of recruiting volunteers to undertake interviews, research local archives and create sound extracts.

We have supplied a number of sound extracts for an exhibition on workhouses at Vestry House Museum (which started life as a workhouse). We have a number of personal memories of local workhouses recorded in the 1980s. In a follow up to a previous exhibition on toy making in the borough we have continued to interview former managers and staff at Britains Toys and relatives of a manager at Wells Brimtoy who was awarded the MBE for his designs for a bomb release on Lancaster bombers which were made by the toy company.

### **Verusca Calabria, Oral History Consultant & Project Manager:**

#### **Jam Yesterday Jam Tomorrow**

I curated an the exhibition 'Feeding London' which was co-produced with volunteers for the heritage project 'Jam Yesterday, Jam Tomorrow', run by the Environment Trust for Richmond upon Thames, is now in its third year. The project has uncovered the forgotten history of market gardens and unearthed the memories of those that worked in the industry of food production. The audio-visual exhibition celebrates the long and rich history of market gardening in South West London. The memories of local people who worked in the nurseries and market gardens of South West London until the last days of the industry in the 1970s are on display. The exhibition runs until 23 December in the Library at the Royal Botanic Gardens. The soundscapes can be accessed at [www.soundcloud.com/jamyesterdayjamtomorrow](http://www.soundcloud.com/jamyesterdayjamtomorrow).

#### **Arts Richmond 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project**

I have helped collect oral histories of the founders of one the first arts council in England set up in 1956 in the London Borough of Richmond which continues to run to this day. The oral histories and related memorabilia will be deposited at the Richmond Local Studies and Archives.

### **Black British Artists and Modernism project (BAM) at Chelsea College of Arts**

I am the Oral History Consultant providing training in oral history theory and practice to the team of artists/academics running the Black British Artists and Modernism project, a 3-year research programme that will investigate the often-understated connections as well as points of conflict between Black-British artists' practice and the art-works' relationship to modernism.

## North East

Freelancer Jo Bath has recently resigned as a networker due to change in working patterns and we'd like to thank Jo for her contributions over the years.

### **Tyne & Wear (Janette Hilton)**

#### **Living History North East: The Regional Oral History Centre – Sunderland**

Living History North East, the north east's oral history centre celebrates its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September 2015. Based over the last eight years in Sunderland's East End and located in the recently restored grade II listed Donnison School, it currently looks forward to new horizons.

LHNE continues to promote and support the recording, documentation and interpretation of oral histories within the north east region. Working as the heritage specialist to support project delivery, the demand for services and resources are based largely on the organisations expertise in training and advice for oral history projects funded by HLF, local authorities or private sector sponsors. This work involves LHNE as a "heritage partner" focusing on innovative and creative ways to use oral history recordings as well as documenting the process of the project.

LHNE's are looking forward to new developments over the next 18 month. The organisation has secured HLF Transitional Funding for the **"The Repositioning of Living History North East and Reinterpretation of The Donnison School: New Interactive Heritage Experiences in Sunderland"** Living History North East secured £62,000; this funding will support the proposal to develop a new strategy to consider re-housing the Regional Oral History Centre, with all of its collection and resources to another city location and redefine its long term strategic goals for its twinned heritage assets. The long term ambition will be to look at ways to make the collection more accessible and usable. Part of this funding will be to complete an audit on our current collection and equipment assets; it will also look at the regional profile of oral history practitioners. One of the aims of this proposal will be to consider a review of the viability of future oral history projects from a regional perspective.

Living History North East will be working alongside a number of projects, these include:

**'Our Roots, Our Journey Our City'** The Sunderland Bangladeshi Community has been awarded HLF funding to complete this initial project over the next 12 months.

There has been a Bangladeshi community in Sunderland since the mid 1960s. This project will investigate the history of the Bangladeshi Community in Sunderland. It will discover why they came here, what they have achieved and the challenges that they faced. The project will explore Bangladeshi cultural values and norms, investigate Bangladeshi history and its impact on migration to Sunderland. The project will have strong intergenerational emphasis enabling the older Bangladeshi generations to share their cultural heritage with the younger Bangladeshis. The project will provide a succinct story in pictures, words and audio/video material of how the Bangladeshi Community came to be established in the City. It will help the wider community in the City to understand the cultural roots and journey of this community and how we have become an integral part of the City of Sunderland.

**'Capturing Coastal Memories'**, a Durham heritage Coast, HLF funded project.

This project will consider, family stories and the rise and fall of the mining industry to the impact of war and effects of expanding cities and towns alongside an eroding coastline. The project will record memories of living and growing up on Durham's coastline, these will be captured on film.

The project aims to give future generations a truly personal connection to their community's heritage and young people will have some great opportunities to get involved. Local school children will visit key points along the coast (including Horden Heritage Centre, George Elmy Lifeboat House and Donnison School) and have the chance to add their own thoughts through artwork and poetry.

LHNE will develop and deliver video training for volunteers and produce a DVD item for the project as a heritage partner.

### **EnDEAR: (Enhanced Dementia Education and Awareness Raising)**

This project was an ESF funded programme. Those involved undertook training in using reminiscence activities with people with dementia/Alzheimer's. Techniques of life story interviews, storyline techniques, reminiscence, oral history training, and dementia friend training were all part of the delivery programme. The project covered a 10 month period and was a pilot programme for the development of accredited training. Living history North East this year has extended their outreach into community reminiscence, with a long term view to developing further oral history community projects.

**Our Whitley bay Big Local** – Reminiscence Project...Bringing Generations Together. This project was an ESF funded project, aimed at improving employability skills for those aged 19 years and over. It attracted 3 age groups from the local community, young people over the age of 19, recently retired individuals who supported the younger participants and a group of older residents who were living in social housing and potentially experiencing social isolation.

The project researched into the history and development of the seaside resort Whitley Bay, through sharing and recording memories. All participants received training in new skills to support the recording and documentation of Whitley's past. Memories were gathered from all participants; it also involved reminiscence sessions within the care settings with older residents.

The project then developed a edited DVD which was produced and shared with the wider community. Living History North East delivered the training throughout the project and production of the DVD on this project.

**"Baby Boomers"** was part of the Heritage Schools Initiative, run by English Heritage, and the Heritage Lottery Fund. It worked with local volunteers, children from Southland's School, Bridging the Gap and Living History North East to develop an intergenerational oral history project and experience that would look at the generation known as baby boomers (1946 -1964). Living History worked with the partners to develop skills and new learning that would support the production of a DVD for use in schools and the community. Southland's school is a senior's school that supports the learning and development of children with moderate learning difficulties and associated behavioural difficulties. Bridging the Gap have worked with the school over a number of years to engage community volunteers with children and encounter new learning opportunities.

### **Oral History training in the community:**

Living History North East developed a 6 week oral history training programme, *"VOICES" from the past: How to listen and record memories for future generations.*" This was a WEA funded programme of learning which allowed for in depth learning and discussions around skills, knowledge and those issues for budding community oral historians.

LHNE continue to train community groups and volunteers across the region in oral history skills, editing and filming.

### **Other Information around the region:**

**Meadow Well Connected** ran a community-led oral history project focusing on the history of the Meadow Well Estate. Since the end of 2013 they have been working with a group of local residents to share memories and experiences of living on the estate, and to create a timeline of key events and changes.

This culminated in the launch on May 28th 2014 of an exhibition based around this timeline. The event began with a formal launch by North Tyneside's Mayor, Norma Redfearn, and members of the group. During the afternoon and evening there was a drop-in for local residents and other interested people to see the exhibition and film created by the project, and to share their views and experiences. This was the first step in a wider process of consultation and research in order to engage the community in exploring the identity and history of the area.

Website: <http://www.meadowwellconnected.org.uk>

**Hopes and Fears.** Patchwork Youth Project in Benwell produced a film with the title of "Hopes and Fears", exploring young people's experiences of life in the area and how they imagine the future. The project involves training young people in editing and other film-making skills. Living History North East supported the

training of the young participants and the production of the DVD.  
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/PATCHWORK.PROJECT.Newcastle>

These projects were part of the Durham University Imagine project. *Imagine2 – connecting communities through research* is a two year programme of research (January 2014 to December 2015) led by Professor Sarah Banks, Durham University. The research is located in three places: Benwell in Newcastle, part of North Shields and Hillfields in Coventry. These three areas were formerly part of the National Community Development Project (CDP), which was Britain's first national area-based anti-poverty programme in the 1970s.

In each area, teams of university researchers (from Durham and Warwick Universities) and a range of community organisations will undertake research and a programme of related activities. We will look at the history of regeneration in each area, how local people have been involved (or not), the visions of local people, community workers, policy-makers and politicians (and how these may differ) and consider what we can learn about how local communities can be engaged in imagining and creating better futures for their areas.

This project, called *Imagine2* for short, is part of a much bigger research project that is focusing on 'civic participation'. The bigger project *Imagine - connecting communities through research* is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and includes colleagues in Edinburgh, Sheffield, Brighton, Huddersfield and beyond, who are all exploring different aspects. Details of the projects can be found at:  
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/beacon/socialjustice/imagine/communityprojects/>

**Journey to Justice: the exhibition:** A stunning new exhibition about the US civil rights movement, the UK and Tyneside's struggles for social justice. Visit our dynamic multi-media exhibition with its photographs, music, poetry, art, audio-visual, interactive features and installations. Using a series of 'bus stops', we focus on the stories of some of the less well-known men, women and children involved in the movement, people of all ages and ethnicities, whose voices are not often heard but without whom it would not have happened – people like us. We show how the movement had a significant impact on the UK and we highlight examples of local people challenging injustice. <http://journeytojustice.org.uk/projects/footsteps-to-freedom/>

**For information** call Carrie on 07711199198 or email [carrie@journeytojustice.org.uk](mailto:carrie@journeytojustice.org.uk) or Bethany on 07779 558547 Email: [bethany@journeytojustice.org.uk](mailto:bethany@journeytojustice.org.uk)

**Holes in Tights:** A Heritage Lottery funded Project, focused on the role of women in the 1984 miners' strike and its impact on their lives. The project involved recording the stories and anecdotes of the women involved in the strike. These recordings will be accessible to the public through archives in local museums and libraries and used to form the basis of a theatre production which will be performed within the region. One For All Productions with the support of volunteers from the local communities some of who will be trained in oral history interviewing techniques and camera / recording operations. <https://www.facebook.com/North-East-Miners-Wives-Oral-History-Project-109946952435804/>

## **North Tyneside Area (Kath Smith)**

This report looks back at some of the projects that have been running in the North Tyneside area since the last Network meeting and at some of the unexpected opportunities and developments that always keep life interesting.

### **Examples of work in 2015**

Remembering the Past Resourcing the Future has undertaken projects of varying scale this year which have provided our volunteers with a range of experiences and methods of maintaining and enhancing their skills as oral historians. The **Romance in the Dome** commission was a short and intense piece of work linked to the local authority's regeneration of a local landmark on the north east coast. The Dome of the Spanish City was once a favourite meeting place for young people and oral histories were collected in situ from participants, giving them the added experience of being in the building where some of them had met their lifelong partners. This piece of work was very successful and demonstrated that oral histories can be collected in a difficult setting (basically a building site) to get the best out of contributors. A booklet and short DVD were additional products of the work.

The Linskill Life school history project was a larger commission and entailed a significant training element so that a new set of volunteers could collect school memories by interview. Linskill School's records of admissions were lost when the school closed in 1984 and there was a strong feeling that its whole identity had become invisible. The school buildings are now used as a community centre. An intense amount of work was done by project volunteers to create a history based on the memories of past pupils and the project captured the imagination of the local community. The process of collecting and using oral histories was perfected so that the contributions of participants were archived as part of the project and then edited into a variety of lengths to be used in the major exhibition which took place over Heritage Open Day weekend in September 2015. During the exhibition visitors could sit in a dedicated room and listen to the oral histories while watching a continuous roll of photographs handed into the project by local people. Nearly 800 people came to the exhibition over HODs weekend and material is still arriving.

One of the main learning points from this project has been identifying and implementing innovative ways of making oral histories accessible to larger numbers of people. Being able to use the old school rooms as settings in which to listen to stories was a unique experience.

Finally, 2015 has seen us develop a helpful link to the Newcastle University Oral History Network. This group runs a seminar programme in term time which has enabled students and the public to meet some of the significant experts in the field of oral history. Joanna Bornat is speaking at the next event. This programme has provided a way of sharing skills between those used to working in an academic setting and those who are based in communities and work directly with local people on a day to day basis. It is also making more people, especially students, aware of the value of oral history as a technique for learning and research.

### **Greater Manchester (Rosalyn Livshin)**

There have been a number of Oral History Projects or projects with an Oral History element taking place in the North-West over the past year, funded mainly through HLF grants. The following report aims to give a few examples rather than giving comprehensive coverage. The Fusilier Museum in Bury, Greater Manchester launched the 68 Voices Project. This aims to collect up to 68 oral histories from past and present fusiliers and their families, telling the story not only of the soldiers of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (RRF) but also of their families since 1968. It is hoped that these stories will create a far richer picture of army life as part of an ongoing programme of refurbishment to the RRF gallery with the approach of the 50th anniversary of the regiment in 2018. Ten volunteers pursued themes which included:- The regiment in Northern Ireland; Army children at home and abroad; Peace keeping roles in places such as Cyprus and Bosnia and its experience in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Quarry Tales Oral History Project is recording memories of the quarrying industry around the Clitheroe area of Lancashire. This includes current and former workers, their families and those affected by or with links to the industry. The Project's website ([www.quarrytales.co.uk](http://www.quarrytales.co.uk)) has short extracts of the interviews that have so far been carried out. Quarry Tales is also hoping to carry out a similar project in the coming year as part of the Ingleborough Dales Landscape Partnership. Both projects will collect quarry related language and enable academics to carry out comparative research.

As a result of his experience with the Quarry Tales Project Dr Martin Seddon is incorporating an Oral History element into the Clitheroe Pinnacle Project. The pinnacle which was removed from the Houses of Parliament in the 1930s for safety reasons was brought to the Clitheroe Castle Grounds as a gift from the Clitheroe MP, Sir William Brass for the town's commemoration of the coronation of George VI. Volunteers will record memories of the arrival of the pinnacle and of Sir William Brass in a wider project aiming at the restoration of the pinnacle.

'My Voice' Oral History Project is a joint initiative between the Association of Jewish Refugees and the Fed, a social care charity for the Manchester Jewish Community. It aims to record the life stories of refugees and older members of the community and to produce individual life story booklets.

Oral History has been used in the Bradford Pit Project, which commemorates the colliery that used to stand on the site now occupied by Sport City and the Etihad Stadium. The project seeks to educate new generations on the effects and relevance of the area's hidden legacy and to engage in how the past can inform the future. Nine voluntary interviewers collected 25 interviews with people who worked or lived on the site or in the area and these have been deposited in the Archives + at Manchester Central Library. It is hoped to expand on the number of interviews in the future as the project progresses further.

The volunteers at Clayton Hall in Manchester formed a 'memories' group to collect memories of the hall and the surrounding area. They hope to make the recordings

accessible in their planned new education space and to produce an updated booklet of Clayton Memories.

HLF money has been awarded to deliver a series of community based projects across Knowsley in the North-West to get people involved in learning about their local history and heritage. I delivered the training in April to the first project involving Kirkby U3A. The group hopes to capture people's memories of the development of Kirby from a rural community to a "new town" from the 1940s. Their oral history will be supplemented by research materials, photographs and documents made accessible through the Archive Resource for Knowsley (ARK), all of which will be utilised for an exhibition.

The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre (AIURRRC) has again been active in supporting Community-based Oral History Projects over the year 2014-15. A Young Roots Project 'Celebrating the Gift of Life' explored the history of Moss Side in Manchester along thematic lines, resulting in audio and video recordings and a book. The British Muslim Heritage Centre's Project 'From 1914 to 2014: 100 Untold Stories of Sacrifice' is collecting stories of 100 Muslim soldiers funded by an Armed Forces Community Covenant grant. The Project 'Voices of Kosovo in Manchester' recorded interviews with Kosovan Albanians settled in the North West and those who returned to Kosovo, which resulted in an Exhibition at the People's History Museum from April-July 2015. A Young Roots Project, the 'Nimba Tales' explored the life of migrants from Guinea Conakry, resulting in a comic book and a final celebration in October 2015. The recordings from each of these projects are being deposited in the AIURRRC.

## **North West (Fiona Cosson and Steve Kelly)**

It's been another busy year in the north west on the oral history front...

### **Greater Manchester Sound Archive**

The biggest news of the year was the closure of the North West Sound Archive in December 2014. Based in Clitheroe Castle and for years a staple of the oral history scene, the North West Sound Archive collected and cared for over 140,000 items, and making it, probably, the largest collection in the United Kingdom outside London.

The regrettable closure of the NWSA has, however, given a new lease of life to sound archives in the region. The receiving repositories of Liverpool, Lancashire and Manchester, have taken to their new challenge with gusto, and there are exciting plans afoot to work with the new sound archives in their respective new homes. Here in Manchester, the Greater Manchester Country Records Office have taken on the collections relating to the Manchester region, creating the Greater Manchester Sound Archive.

The Manchester collection takes up about 170 shelves in the archive strong rooms in the basement, and is made up of a range of formats, from wax cylinders, 78 shellac discs, LPs, reel to reels, to cassettes, minidisks, CDs and USB sticks. Thousands of these recordings are available to listen to immediately, either online or in the search room of Manchester Central Library. For more information, please see <http://www.archivesplus.org/news/greater-manchester-sound-archive>

## **Contact Theatre**

Contact Young Theatre, based in Manchester, recently used oral history in their on-site immersive theatre production, 'The Shrine of Everyday Things'. The piece used oral history testimonies of people living on the soon-to-be demolished Brunswick Flats in Manchester to record everyday life and create a voyeuristic investigation of 'who we are and how we live'. The young actors were trained in oral history and interviewing skills by Fiona Cosson in May 2015, and the original interview recordings were used in the theatre production itself.

## **OUT! Manchester Pride**

Manchester Pride, the organisation responsible for the Manchester Pride annual LGBT festival, were awarded funds from the Heritage Lottery fund earlier this year for their project, 'OUT!' to document Manchester LGBT histories. 'OUT!' will bring the heritage trail and LGBT digital histories to life online, and provide a central place where people can look at available resources, create links and then develop their own journeys through these different stories. The audience will be able to create their own personalised trail based on geographic location, subject matter or time period that draws data from different LGBT heritage projects and archives. T

Fiona Cosson has been working with the project to train volunteers in oral history interviewing skills, and will train another batch of volunteers again in early 2016. For more information contact Daniel Jessop, Project Manager for OUT!, [daniel@manchesterpride.com](mailto:daniel@manchesterpride.com)

## **Moss Side Fashion Project**

Fiona Cosson has been working with young people at Moss Side Millennium Powerhouse as part of the *Moss Side Fashion Project*, which has sought to explore the history of fashion in the Moss Side area since the 1950s. The project will culminate in a clothes show finale at Manchester Metropolitan University in November 2015.

## **Granadaland**

Work continues on the oral history of Granada Television with a major conference planned to be held at Manchester Metropolitan University in May 2016 to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Granada TV. The project is being managed by the Manchester Centre for Regional History at Manchester Metropolitan University. Further funding awards have been made to the project from the Granada Foundation, the Royal Television Society and the Jules and Cheryl Burns Trust. More than 35 interviews have now been recorded with a wide range of personnel who worked at the company between the years 1956-90. Most of these interviews have now been transcribed and placed on the project's website ([www.granadaland.org](http://www.granadaland.org)). Further interviews will be conducted over the next year. Former Granada employees Stephen Kelly and Judith Jones are the project's managers.

## **Life's a Drag**

Manchester-based artist Jez Dolan has recently been awarded HLF funds for his project, 'Life's a Drag'. The project will use as a starting point the infamous Hulme Drag Ball raid of 1880 to examine the history of drag in Manchester from the

perspective of performers, audiences and archival material, and its importance in terms of a shared LGBT heritage, and a way of encouraging people to proactively engage with that heritage. Oral history interviews will be undertaken by volunteers (training will be provided by Fiona Cosson) with Manchester drag performers and audiences. The content of the interviews will be used to inform the development of the performance piece, and the finished interviews will be archived with the Greater Manchester Sound Archive at Archives+ in central Manchester.

### **Elizabeth Roberts Oral History Archive**

The Regional Heritage Centre at Lancaster University is fundraising digitise the transcripts of the Elizabeth Roberts Oral History Archive, and to create a fully searchable, largely open access, online resource. They also aim to enable a community history project in collaboration with archive offices at Barrow and Preston. This will involve volunteers interviewing family members of the original interviewees, asking about their reactions to hearing the interview(s) given by their forebear, and gathering historic photographs, and perhaps photographing relevant artefacts, to form an online exhibition for presentation alongside the transcripts and sound clips of the Archive. You can find out more and donate online via the website: <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/users/rhc>

### **Steve Kelly (North West):**

#### **Before the Curry Mile**

This is an HLF funded oral history project recounting the Rusholme community in Manchester before it became famously known as the Curry Mile with its multitude of Asian restaurants. The project is aiming to identify all the shops and buildings in the area and their importance to the local community before major changes took place in the 1970s. Training has been carried out and the intention is to begin interviews with local residents before the end of the year. The project manager is Rich Browning.

Birkenhead High School for Girls is involved with an HLF funded project to help restore a Second World War air raid shelter which was constructed in the school grounds shortly after the outbreak of war. A series of oral history interviews will also be conducted to capture the memories of girls who used the shelters during the war.

### **Keith Medley Archive**

Liverpool John Moores University last year initiated a project around the archive of local professional photographer Keith Medley whose collection of photos was recently donated to the university. Many of Medley's photographs reflect Merseyside life during the 1950s and 60s, particularly of New Brighton where he was based. Ian Bradley and Sue Potts at the university have also carried out a series of interviews with members of the public talking about particular photos and their own memories of New Brighton. Many of these memories and photos have now been reproduced in a book 'Our Day Out' which has been published by the University

### **Care to Share**

Care to Share, is a Heritage Lottery Funded project collecting memories of Blackpool's variety theatres. The project is working in conjunction with two local care homes and is collecting interviews with residents about their experiences as audience members at Blackpool shows. Their intention is to use the care workers to carry out interviews with the residents who will use a variety of materials and prompts to aid memories. The recorded interviews will then be lodged in Blackpool Central Library's Local Family History Centre. The project is being managed by Julia Brosnan with Ian Alderson as the project's resident oral historian.

## South East

Manda Gifford and Jocelyn Goddard have recently resigned from their roles as regional networkers after several years in the role due to changing work patterns and voluntary commitments. The OHS appreciates their long term contributions to the network over this period of time.

### South East Region (Padmini Broomfield)

While there have been fewer inquiries this year from organisations seeking advice for new projects, oral history activity in the region continues apace. Many projects, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, are including recording of memories in wider projects focusing on archaeology, restoration, environment or the arts. As a freelance consultant, I have been involved in a few of these projects, providing pre-application advice, training or carrying out interviews or evaluations.

The creative heritage project, [Crossing the Teas](#), led by Art:sync Brighton, for whom I ran a training workshop, worked with diverse communities to explore the different customs and traditions of tea-drinking to produce events, a touring exhibition and [website](#). A training day at [St Barbe Museum Lymington](#), in preparation for their redevelopment and redesign, also drew volunteers from several local history organisations who found the session useful for networking and discussing further collaboration to share resources. I have recorded some fascinating interviews recently – one with a [long-serving councillor](#) and three-times mayor in Eastleigh and who reflected on how politics had changed over his 60 years in office. Another interview was with sculptor, Dennis Huntley, creator of some of the sculptures at Guildford Cathedral and other locations, who described the techniques and inspirations behind his work.

Here is news about some of the other projects in the region.

Philippa Secretan, Volunteer & Apprentice Officer, [People's Cathedral project](#), has sent this update: "[Guildford Cathedral Oral History Project](#) is underway, with three training sessions having been completed since 2014. 10 interviews have now been recorded with a number of volunteers and interviewees still to be linked up. As a volunteer interviewer as well as now an employee on the project, it has been fascinating to gain a unique glimpse into the early life of the cathedral and how it impacted on the lives of people in its immediate vicinity. Memories shared have been extremely evocative of a bygone era, etched in some cases against the backdrop of the Second World War. Skilled craftsmen have forged and honed their skills in the construction of the building and the cathedral is also ushering in a new generation of construction workers through the introduction of apprentices on site

from later this month. It is anticipated that their verbal testimony of experiences gained whilst working on Guildford Cathedral will also form part of the growing oral history collection. I am sure it will prove fascinating to juxtapose earlier and current observations of working upon the cathedral. It is hoped that by exploring the early days of the cathedral's life, the connection between ordinary people and the cathedral they helped to get built will be restored along with the restoration of the fabric of the building itself, thereby breathing new life into support for the cathedral going forward, ushering in a new era of public support."

Website: <http://bit.ly/1hxWMjG>

Lisa Kerley, Oral History Project Co-ordinator at [Carisbrooke Castle Museum](#), Isle of Wight writes: "Carisbrooke Castle Museum is working in the community to bring museum objects out to people and enable people to have better access to their heritage. The museum is currently running an Oral History project with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund Sharing Heritage programme. Oral history is about recording the memories of older people and storing them for future generations. Staff and volunteers at the Museum are conducting interviews with people who have lived on the Isle of Wight since birth or childhood. By exploring individual life stories the Museum is creating a digital archive of the social history of the Island. The interviews will be used in an exhibition in the early part of 2016 and will be made available for research, publication and educational use. This project can benefit both older people who are living in residential care and those who are still living independently. The Museum also runs an Outreach Service to residential homes, as well as organisations supporting older people in the community by using museum objects for reminiscence with older people. A new resource comprising 12 boxes of museum objects and photographs all with different themes for reminiscence were developed. Case Study at: <http://bit.ly/1jWVINM>

Sarah Rance-Riley, Project Manager, The Secrets of the High Woods Project: This is a community archaeology and research project, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund and run by South Downs National Park Authority in partnership with Chichester District Council. We are currently half-way through a 3 year programme that is using exciting LiDAR technology to reveal, explore and map the hidden archaeology across the woodland landscape of a portion the South Downs National Park. Our project team and volunteers are engaged in a field work verification of the features, along with a robust archival research project. In addition to this our trained Oral History team are recording fascinating interviews relating to traditional woodland skills and crafts; military activity during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; industry across this landscape; previous archaeological surveys; and crucially, memories of how this landscape has changed over time – for better or worse. More details can be found here: [www.southdowns.gov.uk/highwoods](http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/highwoods) or please contact [highwoods@southdowns.gov.uk](mailto:highwoods@southdowns.gov.uk)

## **Sussex (East and West)/Brighton & Hove (Jo Palache)**

This year I have had a number of general enquiries about setting up oral history projects that have resulted from people visiting our website and by word of mouth. The past year's oral history projects in Sussex include:

### **Blind Veterans UK (Brighton Centre): 100 Years 100 Voices**

Blind Veterans UK (Brighton Centre) have now completed their interviews with over fifty veterans, family members and staff which have been collected to both mark their centenary and provide an oral history archive for the future. Sound clips from these interviews, together with readings from the charity's archive, are now available at <http://www.blindveterans.org.uk/100-voices/?page=1>. The clips were also included in the Service of Thanksgiving to mark the centenary at Westminster Abbey on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2015.

### **Chesham House Centre (RVS), Lancing: Age Craft**

The local Royal Voluntary Service in Lancing has launched an HLF project to enable children to engage with older people in their local community through intergenerational workshops. The project will also conduct oral history interviews and reminiscence sessions with the local residents, who attend their local centre, to pass on remembered stories, skills and crafts.

### **East Sussex Record Office: History On Your Doorstep**

The HLF funded **History on Your Doorstep** project culminated in an exhibition at The Keep, Brighton & Hove on 26 September 2015. The project worked with adult volunteers and a local secondary school to collect a number of oral history interviews, photographs and artifacts from the Moulescoomb, Coldean and Bevendean to celebrate and record the local history of the area.

The Keep holds the collections of East Sussex Record Office, the Royal Pavilion & Museums Local History Collections, the Mass Observation Archive and the University of Sussex Special Collections. The archive includes a broad range of oral history interviews relating to the local area.

### **Science Policy Research Unit (SPRU), University of Sussex: An oral history of SPRU**

In 2016, the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex, widely known as SPRU, will be celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. In its attempts to attain a broader and more sophisticated understanding of the highs and lows of these first five decades of existence, it became clear for this pioneering research unit that the moment was ripe for an oral history approach. Under the current directorship of Prof Johan Schot and his team this need was recognised, and an oral history angle was added to an ongoing SPRU History Project. From September 2014 to March 2015, Dr Angela Campos undertook this research in the United Kingdom and abroad, interviewing a diverse sample of relevant individuals on their SPRU-related experiences. Besides providing vital clues for SPRU's institutional history and identity, the resulting narratives remain internally instrumental in planning the Unit's future strategies, rekindling important networks and improving communication channels – asserting yet again oral history's powerfully inclusive and innovative role in institutional history and beyond.

A publication which will include a reflection on this oral history practice is in preparation to coincide with SPRU's anniversary year. There are also plans in place to archive and make publicly accessible during 2016 at The Keep, in Brighton, the over fifty hours of oral history recordings generated for this project. This oral history collection is particularly significant because, in addition to documenting the history of SPRU, it also illustrates the under-researched unfolding of science policy

in the UK, and to some extent internationally. For further information, please visit: <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/spru/>

## South West

### Gloucestershire and Bristol (Craig Fees)

This has been a very quiet year as a Regional Networker: very few queries and requests for help. This may indicate a diffusion of knowledge and experience around Gloucestershire and Bristol as an outcome of numerous projects and trainings in recent years; and it may indicate the unfulfilled need for a more active regional outreach and engagement.

Personally, and through the Planned Environment Therapy Trust Archive and Study Centre where I am based, it has been an intensely busy year.

- **Personally:** As author and tutor I created and conducted a new stand-alone distance learning module in Oral History for the Centre for Archive and Information Studies at the University of Dundee, basing it on my previous unit in the four-unit Sound and Vision Module. As a trainer for the Oral History Society/National Life Stories at the British Library oral history trainings I conducted numerous trainings throughout the South West; chaired a session at the Oral History Society's annual conference; and as a Trustee of the Oral History Society am co-convening with Verusca Calabria a new OHS Special Interest Group on 'Psycho-Social Therapies and Care Environments'.
- **Through the PETT Archive:** we loaned recording equipment to the Early Pestalozzi Children Project, which has recently been awarded an HLF grant; to student Thu Thuy Phan, carrying out a Wellcome Trust-funded project through the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at Oxford University; and to Caldecott Community alumnus Bob Lawton to record an interview with a woman who joined the Caldecott staff at the beginning of World War Two. The Archive took in three oral history interviews made by others, uploading one to the website; recorded seven oral history interviews and one witness seminar; and recorded five conferences and events, editing versions and uploading them to the website. A Wellcome Trust grant enabled us to digitise a significant number of reel to reel recordings from the Dialectics of Liberation/Institute of Phenomenological Studies Collection. See <http://www.pettrust.org.uk>

Elsewhere in the County, it has been a busy year for oral history projects:

#### **GLOUCESTERSHIRE:**

##### **Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire**

Supported by HLF, Chipping Campden School ran an archives and oral history project to celebrate 575 years since the school's founding, creating a new History website which includes recordings: <http://www.chippingcampdenschool.org.uk/>

##### **Hempsted, Gloucestershire**

Supported by HLF, oral history formed part of a project called "Discovering the WW1 Home Front: Children and charities, food and farms", which involved a consortium of village individuals and organisations - current, and former, pupils and staff at Hempsted C of E Primary School, as well as members of Hempsted's Garden Club, the WI, Artists' Group, and St. Swithun's Church and its affiliated groups. <http://homefront.creativeblogs.net/>

### **Stroud, Gloucestershire**

HLF awarded a grant to HF Trust Ltd (formerly Home Farm Trust) for a project entitled "Celebrating and remembering the lives of people with learning disabilities in South Gloucestershire."

### **Tredworth, Gloucestershire**

HLF awarded St James CofE Church in Tredworth, a culturally diverse part of Gloucester, a grant towards a project to record, preserve and share the personal stories of people connected with the Church. The project also involved Gloucestershire Archives, St James Church Primary School and Gloucester University's Writer in Residence.

### **Yate, South Gloucestershire**

The ongoing Yate Oral History Project held an open day on May 16th for people wishing to see their World War II collections at Yate Heritage Centre.

<http://www.yateandsodburyvoice.co.uk/view-from-yate-heritage-centr.html>

### **General: Emmaus**

The first Emmaus community in the U.K. opened in Cambridge in 1991. To celebrate their 25th U.K. anniversary in 2016, the charity has started an archive and oral history project, with interviews in Gloucestershire among the 30 targeted. [http://www.emmaus.org.uk/assets/0002/4238/Emmaus\\_UK\\_history\\_project\\_ITT.pdf](http://www.emmaus.org.uk/assets/0002/4238/Emmaus_UK_history_project_ITT.pdf)

### **BRISTOL:**

There is a significant amount of oral history work going on in, around, and from Bristol.

### **A Forgotten Landscape – Restoring the Heritage of the Lower Severn Vale Levels**

The 'Our Tales of the Vale' oral history project forms part of the £1m-plus HLF-supported 'A Forgotten Landscape' project to preserve and protect the unique landscape and heritage of the Lower Severn Vale Levels between Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston in Bristol. The aim of the oral history element is 'to capture the memories of people who live or work (now or in the past) in the Lower Severn Vale Levels area and to use those memories to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of the area's heritage'. 'The project is a partnership of statutory and non-statutory bodies including South Gloucestershire Council, Avon Wildlife Trust, Bristol City Council, Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre, Environment Agency, Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group Southwest, Natural England, RSPB, The Conservation Volunteers and University of the West of England, alongside

stakeholder groups including businesses, parish councils, schools and walking groups.' <http://www.aforgottenlandscape.org.uk/>

### **Acta community theatre**

Supported by HLF, and using theatre, film and the written word, Acta community theatre's "Sailors' Tales" project explores and celebrates the people engaged in Bristol's maritime industries during the post-war period, focusing on stories newly collected from sailors, dockworkers and their families living in Avonmouth and North Bristol. <https://www.acta-bristol.com/sailors-tales/>

### **Barton Hill "drain covers"art installation**

Listening posts disguised as drain covers now form an audio trail running through Barton Hill, a deprived area of Bristol which was involved in a decade-long regeneration scheme from 2000 to 2010, including the creation of new affordable housing. As part of a locally-driven initiative, the Barton Hill History Group and M-Shed recorded existing members of the community, and when people stand on the "drain covers" they will hear these local memories, linking past to present, and giving a sense of continuity and community. The project has been a partnership including artists Kerry Russell and Tracy Graham from the InBristol Studios, M Shed, Barton Hill History Group, Wellspring Community Arts Project, and Bristol City Council. <http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Sounds-past-rising-drain-covers-walk-past/story-26031242-detail/story.html>

### **The Black South West Network**

Supported by HLF, and engaging M-Shed, the Black South West Network is carrying out a two-year oral history project entitled "Where Are We From and Who Are We Now? – Bristol Somali Diaspora," launched at the 2015 Somali Festival in Bristol.

### **Freedom Youth Bristol**

Supported by HLF, Freedom Youth Bristol, 4YP Bristol's LGBTQ service for young people aged 11-25, is carrying out an oral history project about Freedom over the last 20 years, as discussed here: <http://www.shoutoutradio.org.uk/shows/2015-08-20>

### **Mapping LGBT+ Bristol**

Funded by AHRC, 'Mapping LGBT+Bristol' is a collaboration between OutStories Bristol, the 'Know Your Bristol' project at the University of Bristol, and 'Know Your Place,' an interactive mapping website run by Bristol City Council, to create a permanent digital archive of the LGBT+ history of Bristol and the surrounding areas: Bath, South Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire.  
<http://outstoriesbristol.org.uk/category/current-activities/>

### **Rosemary Early Years Centre**

Supported by HLF, the 'Rosemary Nursery School 90th Anniversary Project' involves the Rosemary Early Years Centre with Bristol Record Office and local history groups in oral history and archive work celebrating the 90th anniversary of the nursery founded by Quakers in 1940.

## **Underfall Boat Yard**

As part of a major development project supported by HLF, Bristol's historic working Underfall Boatyard is also carrying out an oral history about the Yard and the people who have known, used, and worked there.  
<http://www.underfallboatyard.co.uk>

## **University of Bristol Department of Archaeology and Anthropology**

Dr Stuart Prior of Bristol University and Dr Helen Frisby of the University of the West of England and Bristol University have been awarded €5635 for an archive and oral history project entitled 'Grave Communications: an oral history of grave-digging', 'interviewing gravediggers in the municipal cemeteries of Bristol and environs in order to better understand the social and cultural processes of grave-digging'. <http://www.bris.ac.uk/archanth/news/2015/002270415>

## **University of Bristol Department of History**

- Among 'the best undergraduate dissertations of 2015' listed on the Department of History website is Nathan Beesley, "'Out of Place?' An Oral History of Palestinian Refugees in Bristol".  
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/history/study/undergraduate/ugdissertations/best-undergraduate-dissertations-2015/>
- Working with the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers, and involving oral history, the Department of History has initiated a 'Merchant Venturers PhD Studentship' to research and write a modern history of the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers since 1975.

## **University of Bristol Theatre Collection**

The University of Bristol Theatre Collection has an ongoing oral history project, based on the premise: "From keen theatregoers who recall memorable performances, to those who were working on stage and behind the scenes, everyone has a story to tell, bringing theatre history to life."

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/news/2015/project-oral-history-.html>

## **West Midlands**

### **Birmingham & area (Helen Lloyd)**

In July 2015, the Assay Office in Birmingham moved out of the beautiful Victorian building where it had been housed since 1877 into larger purpose-built premises elsewhere in the city's Jewellery Quarter. (It was founded in 1773 by industrial pioneer Matthew Boulton to hallmark precious metal products from his Birmingham Manufactory and guarantee their quality.) Before this year's move, I spent many days in the Assay Office's old library recording memories of present and retired staff members, including laboratory workers, hallmarkers, office staff, and some of the Guardians, Wardens and Assay Masters who've governed the institution, including the current Assay 'Master' – the first woman to hold the post.

Those who'd worked in the Assay Office in the 40s, 50s and 60s told me that the equipment, paternalistic management and brown overalls hadn't changed much since the reign of Queen Victoria! Right up until the 1990s, it was still a 'family firm', with many employees related to each other and managers who expected to help out with personal problems. Even by the time I made my recordings, there were still employees who'd been there for decades, who expressed great loyalty to the institution. Some of the recordings have an elegiac quality, as the interviewees recognised that the move to larger modern premises was necessary, but spelled the end of a way of life. They can all be heard on the Assay Office website: <https://assayofficebirmingham.com/oral-history>.

I'm also recording interviews for Birmingham Cathedral, which celebrates its 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. It was built as St.Philip's parish church and consecrated in 1715 before it became the cathedral of the newly formed Diocese of Birmingham in 1905. So far my interviews have ranged from the oldest member of the congregation to the Dean of the Cathedral – again the first woman to hold the post.

It has been interesting to compare the experiences of people who have no doubt that they're part of local history with community groups currently in the process of discovering their place in history. In last year's report I mentioned the research and training I'd done for the South Asian arts organisation, Sampad, as they prepared to explore the history of immigrants who've settled along the Stratford Road in Birmingham since the 1940s. The project was called 'My Route' and in June this year I attended the launch of the My Route Exhibition Trail which included giant photos of local residents on the walls of a supermarket car park and the exterior of a Baptist church, accompanied at street level by audio-clips from their life-stories. There were several mini-exhibitions in community venues and a large touch-screen digital map which allowed users to discover the history of the area by tapping into collections of photographs, video and sound-bites. A My Route book contains a collection of essays, poems and memories, with icons that allow readers to use a smartphone or tablet to access audio, video and 3D content. (See [My Route Project](#).)

I've also been involved in a project this year called 'Growing From Your Roots' organised by Ryton Organic Gardens in Coventry, with two community gardens in Birmingham and Walsall. ( See [Garden Organic, Growing from Your Roots](#).) They're contacting recent immigrants including Nigerians, Somalis, Iranians, Iraqis and Kurds to research food crops from their home countries and record memories of growing, cooking and eating them. Their aim is to provide seeds and information to allow them to grow some of these crops in the UK with fact-sheets and web-pages that document each crop and include stories of the people behind them.

My telephone enquiries this year have included community groups hoping to receive grants to record memories of former servicemen from British Somaliland; African men's mental health; Bangladeshi traditional games; black music culture in Birmingham, and Sikh migration. They all aim to inform younger generations about their heritage while also educating the wider public – as does a project which has already received a grant from the HLF - the SHIE project, (Sandwell Heritage Icons Empowerment), which is recording the memories of South Asian women who have worked in the textile industry: <https://shieproject.wordpress.com>.

Earlier this year I trained university students to record memories of being gay in the 1970s for a project with similar aims of informing young people about their place in history and educating a wider public. The memories will form part of the soundtrack of a dance called "What Sexuality is Love?" funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and performed by the youth section of the Rutherford Dance Company (<http://rdcyouth.com/meet-our-oral-historians>).

## **West Midlands (Julia Letts)**

Interest in oral history in the West Midlands remains high. It is often as an adjunct to a wider project such as the conservation of a building or piece of land, or as a vehicle for intergenerational work or a way to bring a diverse community together. In my report this year, I am keen to promote the collection of rural oral histories, as I am very conscious that we are losing the last generation of farmers with memories of using horses on the land. This was brought home to me recently when summarising some recordings from Llanwrtyd Wells in Wales; the sense of place in these interviews and the attachment to the land and the landscape is incredibly strong and has an important place in our heritage.

In the past year I have been directly involved in a number of diverse projects, whose link seems to be anniversaries. They include the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a tiny country school, the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a Black Country housing estate and the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a Worcestershire hospice. If there's another link, it's the gratitude and pleasure all the interviewees have expressed at being given the opportunity to tell their stories. In addition to these projects I have recently recorded two rather special interviews; one with a gentleman of 100 who could recall sheltering in a neighbour's house during a bombing raid in WW1, and another with a lady who aged 5 was sent on her own to New York as a sea evacuee during WW2.

Below I have listed the projects which I have had some direct involvement with in the last 12 months:

**St Richard's Hospice; 30 years of memories.** This is an HLF funded project to record and share the memories and experiences of the people who were involved in the creation of St Richard's Hospice in 1984. The collection will consist of between 25-30 interviews which will be housed in the Worcestershire Hive. There will be extracts from the interviews on the St Richard's website, a portable display and broadcasts on local radio.

**Tardebigge First School** This tiny rural school near Redditch in Worcestershire celebrated its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015. With a small grant from HLF, the children did some training and then recorded oral history interviews with 10 former pupils (who had attended the school between 1920 and 1950). The interviews, along with further research from log books and school records, were used to create a 45 minute play, which was performed twice by the children to a packed audience in the village church.

**Stowlawn, Bilston** This project was commissioned by Bilston Craft Gallery and was part of a fascinating exhibition on the history of Stowlawn, a housing estate in Bilston which was designed by the visionary Austrian social scientist and town planner Dr Otto Neurath just after the war. Oral history recordings were made with

six of the first residents of Stowlawn, all of whom moved from slums in Bilston to this new utopia. During the recording session, two people, once childhood friends, met again for the first time in 50 years.

**Croome.** After the success of Croome Voices (an oral history project of the National Trust's Croome Park in Worcestershire), a new group of volunteers has formed to take the project forward. They have received OHS training and have started advertising for interviewees. They are currently busy recording the memories of visitors to the Croome estate.

**Hawford at 60** This prep school on the River Severn just north of Worcester was founded in 1955 and marked its 60 anniversary by creating a 20 minute DVD, produced by a group of Year 6 students. The DVD included oral history interviews with the first Headteacher, 3 of the first pupils (there were only 15 when the school started), a former master and several long-serving teachers who are still at the school. It was full of wonderful stories that make you wonder how anybody survived the 1950s!

**Telford and Wrekin Libraries** I have been involved in some fascinating work at Telford and Wrekin Libraries. As part of a wider HLF project to digitize the collections of the Telford Development Corporation held by the Shropshire Archives, the library staff have been finding ways of using the photos to stimulate memories. Those working in outreach, home service and in care homes have received oral history training, and the library service has just started recording interviews with some of the people involved in the development of the New Town. This is an innovative, experimental and intergenerational project.

**Arnos Vale – A People's History** This HLF funded project in Bristol culminated this year with the production of a book and CD containing extracts from about 25 interviews with people who helped save a Victorian cemetery from redevelopment. I have been involved with this project since its inception, and am proud that the end result includes powerful extracts from the interviews. There are also clips online. <http://your.arnosvale.org.uk/oral-history/>

**Llanwrtyd Wells** This small town in mid Wales has a big history. It was famous for its sulphur rich water, and tens of thousands of Midlanders used to descend on the town each summer to 'take the waters'. When this industry faded, the town reinvented itself as the first pony trekking centre in Wales. Volunteers have been recording life stories with local people for several years now. This year's update is that building work is nearly complete on a former chapel in the town which is being turned into a heritage centre. The oral history interviews, which are still going on, will be incorporated in the displays.

**In the Shadow of Elisabeth, Bilston Community Association** Oral history is an important element in this HLF funded project about the closure of the Bilston Steelworks in 1979. 'Elisabeth' was the name of the huge furnace which was demolished the following year. Despite eventual closure, the unionised steelmen of Bilston engaged in a well organised fight which united the entire community. 'In the Shadow of Elisabeth' aims to tell the story of this period in Bilston's history. 24 volunteers have received OHS training and are in the process of collecting 40 oral history testimonies. These will be used to produce a range of innovative outputs including an AV documentary, an educational booklet, a temporary museum exhibition and an oral history tool-kit. <http://www.itsoe.co.uk/>

## **Voices from a Disused Quarry, Centre for Alternative Technology, Machynlleth**

I must give a mention to the oral history team at CAT under the guidance of Allan Shepherd who have recorded more than 90 interviews, created a digital archive, produced a book, given talks and written articles on the history of the Centre for Alternative Technology. It all started one extremely stormy day with a training session interrupted by flooding and falling trees! Do look at their archive <http://archive.cat.org.uk> and buy their book.

[The Centre for Alternative Technology Eco Store : Voices From a Disused Quarry - £19.99](#)

**After Osborne** John Osborne (of 'Look Back in Anger' fame) lived in Clun in Shropshire at the end of his life and is buried in the churchyard there. This HLF funded project will record memories and perceptions about a place and a playwright to mark 70 years since Osborne's ground breaking play was first performed. It is hoped that the project will widen knowledge of one of Britain's most influential playwrights, and use oral history to record people's memories and reflections of the Clun valley in the 1950s. I will be working with Bishop's Castle Community College to train students to record their own interviews with local people.

**The Great Blackberry Pick** This project is worth mentioning although it is not directly related to oral history. It's an HLF WW1 project, engaging young school children in the Droitwich area of Worcester in their heritage. I have delivered workshops in four schools, involving primary sources including oral history, and the children have re-enacted the Great Blackberry Pick of 1917, when students had time off school to pick fruit for jam making. The 2015 children picked 12 Kg of berries, whilst the 1917 children picked 700 Kg!  
<https://thegreatblackberrypick.wordpress.com/>

**Bromyard Downs, Herefordshire** The Bromyard Downs Project is just getting started and is a partnership between Bromyard Downs Common Association and Herefordshire Wildlife Trust. The project is safeguarding the future of the Downs for people and wildlife. The group has received HLF funding to collect tales from the Downs in order to preserve and communicate its cultural heritage. Training gets underway in November.

Below I have listed a couple of other projects that have been going on in Worcestershire and Herefordshire. My target for 2016 is to organise an OHS get-together with groups producing oral history projects, so that we can share best practice and generally support each other:

**Chewing the Cud** This was a Heritage Lottery funded project based on the characters, traditions and history of the original Hereford livestock market. The hour-long film was made with a group of volunteers working with media professionals and features an affectionate portrait of the farmers, auctioneers, market traders and members of the public whose lives were touched by this well-loved institution. Seen by an audience of 2324 people in various venues throughout rural Herefordshire. DVDs were distributed free to schools, libraries and history societies. The entire film can be watched on [www.chewingthecud.net](http://www.chewingthecud.net) which has had 16,190 views from 3,601 visitors.

**Three Counties Tradition Orchard Project** This is also an HLF project setting out to use oral history to create a memory bank of orcharding skills, tales and traditions. Since 1960 over half of the traditional orchards of the Three Counties have disappeared; a huge loss for the landscape, for wildlife and for people. The TCTO project hopes to use oral history to paint a picture of what it was like to live in these orchard communities, and, by raising awareness, help to preserve the orchards which remain.

### **Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (Maggie Tohill)**

For much of the year I have been seconded to a cataloguing project, so have had less time to undertake oral history work. The bulk of my oral history time has been spent surveying our holdings and updating the information we hold on our audio collections for the British Library's '**Save our Sounds**' project. I have continued to give advice to local organisations, answer enquiries about our audio holdings particularly from students and organise work for volunteers and placements wishing to undertake some oral history work.

There have been several 70<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> World War II anniversaries this year so I have taken to blogging using information, quotes and sound bites from the recordings in our **World War II Oral History collection** to link in with local and national commemorations. It's been quite a different experience getting to grips with social media. As other anniversaries crop up in the forthcoming year I will continue to look for suitable soundbites for our blog as the WW2 collection covers a wide range of wartime experiences.

The WAAS outreach team has been involved with several oral history projects over the last year. Details are as follows:

#### **Jestaminute Community Theatre (JCT)**

The Jestaminute Community Theatre have completed their Heritage Lottery funded project '**Engineering the Past**' investigating the industrial heritage of Redditch 1939-64. WAAS worked in partnership with JCT, local volunteers and schoolchildren to record reminiscences of people who worked in various industries. An online education resource which includes oral history clips '**Springs, Batteries & Bikes**' has been produced for study at key stages 2 & 3 and will support the study of local social history in a number of schools during the 2015-16 academic year. More information can be found at [www.jestaminutehistory.co.uk](http://www.jestaminutehistory.co.uk).

JCT has received a second HLF award for a new project '**The Start of Something Big**' which will be exploring similar themes for Redditch, but concentrating on the 'New Town' years from 1964 to present. WAAS has again been commissioned to support oral history training workshops with local people and in schools and will be making the many stories of home life and work available on a touring 'pod' kiosk, currently sited in the public foyer of Redditch Palace Theatre.

#### **Witleys' Oral History Group**

During 2015 WAAS completed its commissioned work for the Witley Village Oral History Project working with local people and school children who have interviewed residents about the life of the village and its surroundings. Some of these audio interviews are available to listen to at <http://witleysoralhistory.org>.

## **Spetchley Park**

This year WAAS has also worked with a group of year 9 school children at Nunnery Wood High School in Worcester who interviewed members of the Berkeley family and their staff at the Spetchley Estate. Audio clips from these interviews will be loaded onto listening posts around the family's historic gardens.

## **Bromsgrove Townscape Heritage Initiative**

WAAS staff have also completed their oral history work for the Bromsgrove Townscape Heritage Initiative mentioned in last year's report. Audio CDs are now available at Bromsgrove Library and online in three parts at <https://www.facebook.com/BromsgrovePastPresent/posts/677583868957988>

## **Yorkshire**

### **South Yorkshire (Michelle Winslow)**

There are several oral history projects happening in diverse contexts in the region, this short report gives a flavour of some of the work taking place.

Ecclesfield Civil Parish were awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund grant in 2014 to develop a parish-wide community project supported by existing local history groups. It is generating a digital archive of local history material with some accessible on-line. Oral histories are focusing on particular aspects of community activity and will accompany photographic material in the archive. Many of the photographs record places, events and activities that no longer exist. Oral history is capturing memories and descriptions from people who were there, finding out what life was like, for example at the blast furnace, making gimlets, visiting the PoW camp and taking part in Whit Sings and Hospital Parades. Volunteers have undertaken Oral History Society training and are carrying out interviews. For more information contact Christine Handley: [christine.handley@ecclesfield-pc.gov.uk](mailto:christine.handley@ecclesfield-pc.gov.uk)

Doncaster Ethnic Minority Regeneration Partnership's project 'Life after the 1947 India / Pakistan Partition and Migration to the UK Doncaster', have launched a project booklet and oral history DVD at Doncaster Museum in the company of the Mayor elect, a HLF representative, around eighty members of the local BAME community and oral history interview participants. Clips of oral histories were shown and photographs of artefacts were on display. The project now plans to raise funds to establish a dedicated website to share their work widely within schools and community. For more information contact Peter Singh: [peter@demrp.co.uk](mailto:peter@demrp.co.uk)

In the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health, University of Sheffield, the oral history project in the Sheffield Macmillan Unit for Palliative Care is in its eighth year, funded by Sheffield Hospitals Charity. The service is within the School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Sheffield, and works with a volunteer team of interviewers. Oral history in palliative care offers time to reflect, capture identity and make a voice record for family. Participants receive an audio CD soon after their interview and recordings are securely archived. The project is a model for five further services in the north of England and Northern Ireland funded by Macmillan Cancer Support. The Sheffield project aims to pilot oral history with people with

dementia in 2015/16. For more information contact Michelle Winslow:  
[m.winslow@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:m.winslow@sheffield.ac.uk)

In the same faculty as the above project, undergraduate students in the School of Clinical Dentistry are the first to take part in a world leading programme of learning called 'Outreach'. Outreach involves fourth and fifth year dental students who go out to real world dental clinics whilst learning to treat patients from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Students write a report on patients whilst exploring the nature of the social determinants of health and inequalities. To help students gain a deeper understanding of diversity in peoples' lives a pilot study is recording oral histories with the aim of establishing an archive of life story experience to give new insights and perspectives of oral health and dentistry. The archive will enhance undergraduate teaching on health inequality with first and second year students to broaden their understandings of varied experience. For more information contact Dr Janine Owens: [jan.owens@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:jan.owens@sheffield.ac.uk)

The University of Sheffield's MA in Public Humanities has worked with 'Ruskin in Sheffield' (<http://www.ruskininsheffield.com/>) in their group project module in the Spring semester. Students were tasked with investigating different sites of the Ruskin Museum in Sheffield from its first inception in Walkley through to its home on Norfolk Street, where it was displayed from 1985 until being installed in the new Millennium Galleries in 2001. Part of the project involved talking to people who had memories of the Sheffield Ruskin Museum and recording their oral histories. The recordings have been used as an accompanying soundscape for a walk between different sites of the Museum. The soundscape captures some of the intangible heritage of the Ruskin Museum, as well as giving some insight into views about John Ruskin and his Museum in Sheffield. For more information contact Amy Ryall: [a.ryall@sheffield.ac.uk](mailto:a.ryall@sheffield.ac.uk)

More news about projects in South Yorkshire can be found on the 'South Yorkshire Through Time' website: <http://www.southyorkshirethroughtime.org.uk/> Now in its second year, SYTT brings together community and oral history organisations and projects in the region in this online resource. Sheffield Hallam University history students post on the website ensuring that the website's resources continually grow.

### **East Yorkshire (Stefan Ramsden)**

In June 2015, Artlink Hull obtained a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to research and undertake oral history with the city's former trawlermen. As part of their research Artlink have worked with volunteers to collect first hand evidence of onshore life and dress of deep sea trawlermen in Hull. Distinctive fashion was a way in which the trawlermen, sometimes called 'three day millionaires' for their extravagant lifestyles during their onshore leave, expressed a subcultural identity. Artlink are now hosting a temporary exhibition about this subject, which will travel to other venues in Hull after October. See <http://www.artlink.uk.net/index.php?idsection=3&subid=1>.

East Riding Museums Service staff and volunteers continue to undertake excellent work collecting, catalogue and making publicly available oral history from residents of the county, on a wide range of subjects.

## North Yorkshire (Van Wilson)

York Oral History Society officially finished its two year project of digitising WW1 recordings made in 1980. We have transcribed them and I produced a book. Our 23 frame exhibition has toured various venues including several schools, libraries and museums. We are still being asked for copies of recordings by relatives, and we continue to do presentations.

My main project for this year is one for the York Mansion House, home of the Lord Mayor of York, who is second only to the Lord Mayor of London. The Mansion House is undergoing an HLF funded refurbishment which includes an oral history project. My remit is to interview about 35 people who worked at the Mansion House over the years. From having maids, a cook, butler and two chauffeurs, only a few years ago, the place is now run by a small team of civic support officers. The end result will be an archive, a book and exhibition.

I am also doing some work for York Civic Trust with life interviews of people who have contributed to the social history of the city. When York Oral History Society began in 1982, the focus was on interviews with working class subjects, sharing domestic detail which was missing from the history books. But the people at the other end of the spectrum have not been recorded so we want to rectify that a bit. We are also interested in interviewing people who were at the York Art School which had a national reputation.

Now that we have a semi-permanent office, we are concentrating efforts on cataloguing our large collection of photographs as well as recordings.

## Northern Ireland

Linda Ballard resigned to begin her PhD studies and we will be recruiting for a networker in this region. The OHS would like to thank Linda for her role in the regional network.

## Scotland

### Scottish Oral History Centre (Arthur McIvor)

The SOHC reached its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015 and has had another productive year, with a series of new developments and some really exciting events and activities.

The SOHC operates as a hub between academic and community oral history and has again been involved in an extensive programme of training, CPD and support for local projects in Scotland. **David Walker and Sue Morrison** have once again been busy delivering oral history training to external agencies including those working within the heritage and museum sectors. This year they have worked with the ISARO Social Integration Network, a group who provide minority ethnic groups with opportunities to experience and enhance their understanding of the Scottish culture and also share their own cultures. They have also delivered oral history training to the Cranhill Arts 'Talking Pictures' Project. This is a long-standing community-led organisation which

helps promote personal development among the most marginalised, and hard to reach people in our society. The oral history project is being undertaken so that visitors to the website [www.glasgowfamilyalbum.com](http://www.glasgowfamilyalbum.com) will hear the unique stories behind the pictures that make up this huge collection of images. David and Sue have also delivered training to volunteers working on the Inner Forth Landscape Initiative. This ongoing project, funded by the HLF, focuses on the natural, cultural and historical wealth of the upper reaches of the Firth of Forth.

The Centre has also been involved in training and support (including interviewing) for the Lanarkshire HLF project *Pits, Ponies, People and Stories*, delivered by **Alison Chand**. Alison has also been working on oral history summaries for the Memories of Fiction project at the University of Roehampton. Our work with disability groups also continues, led by disability historian **Angela Turner**. Angela completed a project evaluation for the Scottish Council on Deafness school days HLF oral history project and has recently started work as SOHC coordinator on an oral history project funded by HLF for the learning disability charity ENABLE. The SOHC will be delivering tailored training for this project over the next few months. Angela Turner also continues to work on the history of learning disability and with Arthur McIvor on an oral history of disability in the Scottish coalfields since 1950. We are in the process of applying for external funding to extend this research. McIvor continues to work on occupational health and disability, recently publishing: 'Economic violence, occupational disability and death: oral narratives of the impact of asbestos-related disease in Britain', in Steven High (ed), *Beyond Testimony and Trauma: Oral History in the Aftermath of Mass Violence* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2015).

Commissioned by the Centre for the Social History of Health and Healthcare (CSHHH), Glasgow, **David Walker** undertook a systematic survey of extant oral evidence across archives, libraries, museums and private collections that were connected to health history and health cultures. The project resulted in the creation of a data-set of the oral histories he found across Scotland. David has also been busy working with Arthur McIvor and **Angela Turner** on a Hudson Trust funded project on War and Disability in Scotland during the period 1939-1950 and is working with Arthur McIvor on the future cataloguing and preservation of oral history archives within the University of Strathclyde archives.

The SOHC has continued its initiative with **Springburn Academy** under the University's MUSE programme. Led by PhD student **Andy Clark**, it has become further involved with community interest groups, in particular the campaign to restore the A-listed Victorian Glasshouse, the Springburn Winter Gardens which were abandoned and left derelict in the 1980s. The pupils led an oral history project examining the significance of the Winter Gardens and the symbolism of its current state for local residents. They presented their work at the official launch of the Springburn Winter Gardens Trust in April 2015, which was broadcast live on STV Glasgow, and the project received commemoration in the Scottish Parliament in a motion lodged by Patricia Ferguson, MSP for Glasgow North. Andy recently published a piece based on the project in the UK OHS journal *Oral History*.

We launched in Sept 2015 a new team-taught **Advanced Oral History** Masters class (coordinated by Erin Jessee) offered across our existing History Masters programmes and as a stand-alone module. This further develops the existing oral history UG pathway which includes classes on *Oral History Theory and Practice* (Jessee) and *Work and Community Placement in Oral History* (Walker and McIvor). Plans are also well advanced to launch the first COHDS-SOHC collaborative '**Summer Oral History**

**Training Institute'** in June 2016 in Montreal with Steven High, rotating around to the SOHC, Glasgow the following year. We have also delivered in 2015 the first of what we hope will be a regular series of training days in oral history theory and practice to the Scottish Graduate Schools in Arts and Humanities (May 2015), the SGS in Social Sciences (June 2015) and the Wellcome Trust funded history of health and medicine postgraduates (Aug 2015).

The **SOHC monthly seminar series** has also been expanded in 2015 and highlights have included really superb, stimulating talks from Graham Smith (Royal Holloway), chair of the OHS UK, Linda Bryder (University of Auckland), Andrea Matošević (Socialist Studies Centre, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula) and Annie Pohlman (University of Brisbane). Callum Brown (Glasgow University), co-founder of the SOHC back in 1995, is scheduled to delivery our forthcoming annual oral history lecture, which will be on 'Laughter in Oral History Interviews'.

The Centre's involvement over the past few years in a major AHRC-funded project on **the Reserved Occupations in Second World War** has produced a number of outcomes this year. 56 new oral interviews were completed for the project with SWW veterans and Linsey Robb (Teeside), Juliette Pattinson (Kent) and Arthur McIvor are near completion of the project book. This is due to be published by Manchester University Press in their cultural history of war series in 2016. We organised a conference at the SOHC in January 2015 and this will result in an edited book on masculinities in wartime (Pattinson and Robb), contracted with Palgrave. The AHRC CDA with Glasgow Museums linked to the project has also resulted in a forthcoming book by Alison Chand, *Masculinities on Clydeside: Men in Reserved Occupations During the Second World War* due to be published by Edinburgh University Press in 2016.

Following the COHDS-SOHC conference in Montreal last year on *deindustrialization and its aftermath* organised by SOHC staff member Andy Perchard, the SOHC has continued to participate in work on the **oral history of deindustrialisation**. SOHC hosted a workshop on gender and deindustrialisation in Oct 2015 (organised by Jackie Clarke of Glasgow University) and are collaborating in the formation of an international research network. SOHC staff and postgraduates (Lucy Brown; Andy Clark; Martin Conlon; Arthur McIvor) are speaking on the topic at the Association of Critical Heritage Studies conference in Montreal in June 2016. McIvor and Clark have chapters on their work coming out soon in S. High, L. MacKinnon and A. Perchard (eds), *Deindustrialization and its Aftermath* (University of British Columbia Press).

**Laura Kelly** joined us in January 2015 and has been awarded a three-year Wellcome Trust Research Fellowship for her project *Contraception and Modern Ireland, c.1922-92*. This project examines the Irish experience of birth control in the twentieth century and will involve a significant amount of oral history research. Contraception was illegal in Ireland from 1935 to 1979, however, declining birth rates in this period suggest that many Irish men and women were practising fertility control measures. The project will examine four main themes: men and women's changing birth control practices and attitudes to contraception; the dissemination of knowledge about contraception; the stories of individuals prosecuted for the illegal sale and distribution of contraceptives and; the role of activist groups in debates on the legalisation of contraception.

**Erin Jessee** launched a new scoping project on the recognition and preservation of pre-colonial and colonial heritage sites in Rwanda and has continued her project on the anonymous deceased victims of civil war in northern Uganda. She launched an online resource 'Research in Difficult Settings' (<http://conflictfieldresearch.colgate.edu/>) (with Milli Lake and Susan Thomson) and has run workshops on "Democratizing history in conflict and post-conflict settings in central and eastern Europe" (<https://democratizinghistory.wordpress.com/>) (with Catherine Baker and Mary Heimann, hosted by the SOHC and funded by HaSS at Strathclyde and CRCEES at University of Glasgow); and "Approaching Perpetrators: Insights on Ethics, Methodology and Theory" (funded by Wenner-Gren Foundation and the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council). Erin published journal articles in *Oral History Review* (with Alexander Freund), *History in Africa* (with Sarah Watkins), and *Conflict and Society*; public interest pieces in Times Higher Education, Al-Jazeera (with Marc Ellison), Emergent Conversations blog (with Sarah Wagner) and an Oral History Review blog (with Alexander Freund). Erin has also submitted her first book manuscript on the politics of history in post-genocide Rwanda to Palgrave Macmillan's Studies in Oral History series.

**Matt Smith** has also continued his work interviewing mental health professionals from North America and the UK as part of his AHRC Early Career Fellowship project on the post-1939 history of social psychiatry. Linsey Robb has been working as RA on the project. Together they delivered a paper on their research at the UK OHS annual conference in July 2015. A witness seminar is also planned for the project in June 2016 as part of the conference: 'Preventing Mental Illness: Past, Present and Future'.

Following the publication last year of her first book *Civilians into Soldiers: War, the Body and British Army Recruits, 1939-45* (MUP, 2014), **Emma Newlands** is continuing to work on SWW, currently researching her next book on Army medics, which draws upon the extensive oral testimonies in the IWM, London. She has delivered training on using existing archived oral interviews, coordinates a MUSE project on medical history in two Glasgow schools which draw upon oral testimonies, as well as acting as joint Postgraduate Coordinator (with Erin Jessee) for the SOHC.

The SOHC has added to a strong cohort of Masters and PhD students this year and recently organised and held the second **SOHC oral history postgraduate conference** (June 2015), which was a resounding success. New PGs Martin Conlon and Lucy Brown are the current organisers of this and the regular SOHC seminar series. Martin is working on heritage and memory, with a focus on the iconic Clydeside cranes, and Lucy on the community arts movement in Scotland in the 1970s and 1980s. Other new postgraduates bringing oral history to their studies include Helen Foster (oral histories of lace workers being used as the basis for a novel), Rachel Meach (diabetes and diet) and Iain Ferguson (oral history of acne). Andy Clark is entering the final stages of his investigation into the female factory occupations in 1980s Scotland and Jessica Douthwaite is making great progress interviewing up and down the country for her AHRC CDP oral history of Civil Defence and the Nuclear Threat during the Cold War which we hold in partnership with the IWM, London. Other postgraduates using oral history are Simon Walker (military bodies in the First World War) and Margaret Ritchie (fishing communities in East Scotland). Jan Brownfoot is currently writing up her PhD on the oral history of women and gender relations in post-war in Malaya and Anni Donaldson hers on domestic violence in Glasgow.

## 2016 ORAL HISTORY SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

### **2016 Oral History Conference: Beyond Text in the Digital Age**

*Oral History Images and the Written Word*

Venue: University of Roehampton, London

From: 8th & 9th July 2016

Call for papers now: <http://www.ohs.org.uk/conferences/2016-conference-beyond-text-in-the-digital-age/>

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## **Wales**

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**Oral History Society Regional Network  
Minutes of Business Meeting**

**Date & Time:** Friday 14th November 2014 at 6pm-8pm  
**Location:** British Library Conference Centre - **Bronte Room**  
 96 Euston Road  
 London  
 NW1 2DB

**Present:** Juliana Vandegrift (chair), Padmini Broomfield, Roger Kitchen, Cynthia Brown, Rob Perks, Christina Raven Conn, Helen Lloyd, Michelle Winslow, Stephen Kelly, Graham Smith, Sarah Gudgin, Janette Hilton, Pam Schweitzer

| <u>Item</u> | <u>Minutes</u>  | <u>Action</u> |
|-------------|---|---------------|
| 1.          | <p><b>Apologies for absence received from:</b></p> <p>Garry Tregidga, Jocelyn Goddard, Jonathan Draper, Martin Astell, Linda Ballard, Pam Schweitzer, Jo Palache, Sheila Jemima, Marilyn Tucker, Julia Letts, Janette Hilton, Julia Fallon, Manda Gifford</p>   |               |
| 2.          | <p><b>Minutes of 2013 meeting</b></p> <p>Agreed</p>   |               |
| 3.          | <p><b>Matters Arising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juliana (JV) asked the group if they wanted to continue holding Friday night business meeting in this formal format or move it to a more informal venue because there was an overlap of material from Friday night/Saturday morning some years. It was agreed to keep it going as it stands</li> </ul>  | None          |
| 4.          | <p><b>Heritage Lottery Fund - news</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rob Perks (<b>RP</b>) advised that there is new and updated guidance for oral history best practice now published on the Heritage Lottery Fund website and he would go through it in much more detail during his slot in Saturday's programme (<a href="http://www.hlf.org.uk/oral-history">http://www.hlf.org.uk/oral-history</a>)</li> <li>• Graham Smith (<b>GS</b>) mentioned that at the 2013 OHS conference the subject of pay rates for oral historians arose and that they are under paid for the work they do. <b>RP</b> highlighted that the rates have been newly updated and published on the HLF website with guidance on rates. (same url as above), however <b>RP</b> pointed out that most posts if they are through local authorities then they</li> </ul> |               |

would be graded through the local authority grading system. **RP** says they did discuss whether the OHS should additionally develop its own scale but they were uncertain as to how to do this given that there are lots of other scales out there that may or may not apply. **GS** pointed out that some regions seem to reduce the cost of their bids to cut their cloth accordingly and hence pay scales are affected. **Helen Lloyd (HL)** said that the West Midlands are not asking people to reduce bids they're saying the opposite which is they won't judge bids on what it costs, however, they are letting through lots of bids that include very very low rates of pay and if they were alerted to that she thinks they would not do it. She gives the example of a case with a fixed fee of £6k for 60 days so that's £12.50 per hour for an 8 hour day with an enormous list of huge skills greater than any museum officer or library officer would be asked to do. Far from that being a minority case it's the majority of ones she deals with. She points out that there are lots of community groups putting in bids with far too low rates of pay for what's being asked in the budget and timescales.

- Continuing on the same topic **Padmini Broomfield (PB)** has been contacted by community projects who say that because they have to keep application bid/figures down they then cut down the number of hours that the project coordinator to 2 or 3 days a week instead of having one full time. However, by the time their projects come to a close they realise how they should have insisted on having a full time project coordinator because there was way too much to do in the shorter days per week. So even though they may be paying the accepted day rate they were forced to have a shorter period. **PB** has cases of people telling her elements of the project had to be dropped in order to keep the standard high and fit in all the hours to do it. **Stephen Kelly (SK)** noticed from his mentoring of HLF officers that they did not have detailed awareness of budgets, especially equipment costs, which impacted the budgets they 'let people get away with'. **RP** said that it is all in the guidance which has been updated with the new fees and we need to point people to it and HLF needs to be reminded too by us.

**PB** says on a positive note she has had lots of recent enquiries from groups who say they've been pointed towards the OHS to get accredited training and advice in the preliminary stages. **RP** says that **Eithne Nightingale** from HLF has been out training HLF staff in the regions about the new guidelines for oral history and if regional networkers discover that in reality community groups or any projects are trying to cut corners once the project has funding and begun we need to feed this back to HLF

- **HL** asked if there is any guidance or a list of the basic admin we need to do per interview, not just consent forms but uploading documents and stuff that can take nearly a whole day, uploading photos, scanning them etc. **RP** says that yes there is quite a lot there in the guidance
- **RP** said that if we do want the OHS to come up with a rate scale

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|                  | <p>then we do need to seriously think how we are going to do it. He asked if anyone had ideas about how to do it. Cynthia Brown (<b>CB</b>) thought we probably don't but we need to be able to point people in the direction of the rates that do exist with organisations we work with. Sarah Gudgin (<b>SG</b>) said that the Society has not really said what the day rates should be, although freelancers talk quietly with each other about the subject of day rates. The OHS is a respected organisation, it's got the ear of many people, if the Society said we think we should be aiming for a scale of x on the website, people can be referred to this and take the rates away with them when their putting their bid together</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>PB</b> and Janette Hilton (<b>JH</b>) suggested creating a spreadsheet of scales with a calculation to the job or according to length of experience, the nature of the job being asked for similar to how the Artist Network and National Union of Journalist do publish theirs.</li> <li>• <b>GS</b> suggested it would be helpful if some of the freelancers could take a look at the rates that Rob has published and start a conversation online and start pushing it from the freelance position. <b>RP</b> said it's going to come up in the December committee and he suggested that one positive step the OHS could do is to take a principled decision about what they would publish on the website when jobs are submitted with fees or rates considered to be too low for the job requested.</li> <li>• Pam Schweitzer (<b>PS</b>) felt that we also need to consider the point of view of smaller community projects with smaller grants who may not be able to afford a day rate of £350 which was mentioned in the discussions, but they would benefit the most from the advice even though they could not afford to pay that much and needed to spend their funds accordingly.</li> </ul> | <p><b>All<br/>(ongoing)</b></p> |
| <p><b>4.</b></p> | <p><b>Regional Network Update:</b></p> <p><b>Leavers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chris Webb (South West) resigned from the network when he moved from Bristol to London</li> <li>• David Lee (South East) retired and has left the network</li> </ul> <p><b>Joiners:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simon Bradley (Yorkshire)</li> </ul> <p><b>London network</b> - relaunch underway with recruitment campaign in Autumn 2014 and the applicants were invited to the Networker event to find out more about the role.</p> <p>Every networker attending the meeting gave the updates for their region which will be published on the OHS website once a glitch is resolved in the form of the 2014 annual report!</p> <p><b>Highlights/Topics discussed from the networkers:</b><br/>Janette Hilton (<b>JH</b>) noticed that there was an increase in request for support for Heritage Lottery Funded ethnic projects</p>  |                                 |

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|                  | <p>happening in her region which had never been done before in the North East region: African projects, Bangladeshi projects. The Living History North East regional centre is looking into partnerships around the region, especially in the dementia area. Kath Smith (<b>KS</b> North East) noted that there are more requests for formal oral histories to be done. They are also looking at driving forward using their existing oral histories and re-distributing them in various ways and there is a heritage strategy in place with their local authority to support this.</p> <p><b>RP</b> said the training courses were very popular and demand was so strong they were challenged to keep up with it all, it's a huge activity, but a good one. Graham Smith highlighted that the OHS has a problem with the conversion rate of training participants taking out OHS membership as only 30 of the 740 people trained were members of the OHS and this is something the regional networkers need to be aware of and we need to ask people to join as members. Julia Letts (<b>JL</b> West Midlands) found it very different in her region and quiet for take up of training courses.</p> |  |
| <p><b>5.</b></p> | <p><b>Continuing Professional Development:</b><br/>Mary Stewart and Sarah Lowry have relaunched the continuing professional workshops to create an opportunity for OHS members to engage with the Society on a local level. Regional networkers are encouraged to read the proposal sent by Mary Stewart. The workshops are a chance for members to engage and discuss topic around oral history and are led by their regional networker. A small fee was proposed to cover the cost of holding the event The OHS member rate based on ten attendees is £24 and for non members it is £30.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>6.</b></p> | <p><b>OHS Website and Regional Network:</b><br/>Michelle Winslow (<b>MW</b>, Yorkshire) reported that the new website developers have been appointed, watch this space for the coming months and some of the OHS committee members, such as Juliana Vandegrift, will be trained to do updates and edits. <b>MW</b> requested photos of projects to use on the website.</p>   |  |
| <p><b>7.</b></p> | <p><b>OHS Strategic Review Update:</b><br/>JV reported that the OHS strategic review which took the place is now a plan and underway. With regards to the Regional Network we have introduced a new information pack for networkers which explains what the network is about.</p> <p>As part of the strategy review we have also introduced the requirement for networkers to attend the annual event once in every three years to</p>   |  |

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|            | <p>help keep the networkers in touch with each other and up to date with what's happening. There is also now a requirement to submit the annual report. This was agreed by the networkers attending the meeting.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the location of the event varies each year and is prompted by a networker volunteering to host it in their region and sometimes this makes it easier or more difficult for the networkers to come, depending on location. It has been very scattered over the last 7 years. London may prove to be the most convenient location for everyone as we've had the most attendees in London.</p> |  |
| <b>8.</b>  | <p><b>Training:</b></p> <p>Julia Letts (JL, West Midlands) requested that she is keen to see a new training course developed which is 'teaching teachers how to teach oral history' as she feels there is a need for this based on the work she does with schools.</p>   |  |
| <b>9.</b>  | <p><b>Regional Network Event 2015:</b> ideas were discussed for location and tbc</p>   |  |
| <b>10.</b> | <p><b>OHS Annual Conference 2015:</b> An Oral History of British Science at Royal Holloway University of London, July 10/11 2015</p>   |  |
| <b>11.</b> | <p><b>Any Other Business:</b> None</p>   |  |

## Oral History Society Regional Network

### Network Business Meeting 2015

**Date & Time:** Friday 13th November 2015 at 6pm-8pm

**Location:**  
The Hive - **Report to Reception for directions**  
The Hive  
Sawmill Walk  
The Butts  
Worcester  
WR1 3PD

**NB Please allow plenty of time - Children in Need event is being held at The Hive on same night and security is very tight and busy!**

### AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence received from:  
Stephen Kelly, Martin Bisiker, Garry Tregigda, Beth Thomas, Michelle Winslow, Graham Smith, Arthur McIvor, Stefan Ramsden
2. Minutes of the 2014 meeting
3. Matters arising
4. Heritage Lottery Fund News & Update
5. Regional Network Update
6. Continuing Professional Development
7. OHS website and Regional Network
8. OHS Strategic Review – latest update (including Higher Education and Special Interest Groups)
9. Training
10. Network event 2016
11. OHS Annual Conference 2015: *Beyond Text in the Digital Age, Roehampton University, London, call for papers*
12. Any other business

**ORAL HISTORY SOCIETY  
REGIONAL NETWORK ANNUAL EVENT**

**Date:** Saturday 14th November 2015  
**Time:** Arrive at 09:30 am for a 10.00am start, closes at 4:30 pm  
**Location:** The Hive  
 Sawmill Walk  
 The Butts  
 Worcester  
 WR1 3PD

**Venue & theme:**

The Hive in Worcester is Europe's first joint university and public library, which opened in 2012, and the theme for our Regional Networker event this year is 'Being innovative with oral histories'.

**Programme:**

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|--|---|
| <b>09:30 for teas &amp; coffees<br/>10:00 am start</b> | <p><b>Welcome &amp; introductions:</b></p> <p><b>Juliana Vandegrift</b>, Regional Network Coordinator (Oral History Society)<br/> <b>Padmini Broomfield</b>, Deputy Regional Network Coordinator (Oral History Society)</p> <p>Open discussion for Networkers on suggested topics (but open to including more):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the new Special Interest Groups (SIGs) being set up,</li> <li>- sub-committee work such as Education</li> <li>- Higher Education</li> <li>- new website and how networkers can send in fresh content</li> <li>- new training courses e.g. for Archivists and training gaps</li> <li>- New developments for Regional Network e.g. new Networker Agreement &amp; recruitment process</li> <li>- CPD workshops</li> </ul> |
| <b>11:00</b>   | <b>Coffee/Tea</b>   |
| <b>11:30</b>   | <b>Pam Schweitzer</b> talks about the Reminiscence Theatre Project and Archive at Greenwich University and the innovative use of oral history made by drama and history students of the university  |
| <b>11:45</b>   | <b>OH in H&amp;W</b> - Networker <b>Julia Letts</b> will introduce some of the innovative oral history work going on in Hereford and Worcester. <b>Julia Goldsmith</b> will talk about Chewing the Cud – an OH film on the history of Hereford Livestock Market created by <b>Catcher Media Social</b> . Then <b>Julia Letts</b> and Hive Project Officer, <b>Justin Hughes</b> , will talk about a variety of local oral history projects that have used drama, murals, mime, radio broadcasts, reminiscence and various technologies.   |
| <b>12:30</b>   | <b>Tour of Hive</b> with Justin Hughes, Hive Project Officer  |
| <b>1:00 pm</b>   | <b>Lunch break</b> (sandwich lunch & refreshments will be provided)   |
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| <b>2:00 pm</b> | <b>Katy Wade</b> of Sampad South Asian Arts will talk about the 'My Route' project - a people's history of the Stratford Road in Birmingham - which has been praised by the Heritage Lottery Fund as a model of community engagement and innovation. It included audio recordings and photos on the exterior walls of a church and a supermarket car park; free heritage taxi tours; an interactive touch table and a book with icons that trigger audio and video recordings on a smartphone or tablet: <a href="#">My Route Project</a> . |
| <b>2:40 pm</b> | <b>Elise Turner</b> of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the West Midlands will talk about how a regional office works; about the different grants programmes and her 'Top Tips' for a successful application; and how the HLF and OHS can work together in the regions.   |
| <b>3:20 pm</b> | <i>Short break</i>  |
| <b>3.30 pm</b> | <b>Maureen Smojkis</b> of the Midlands Polish Community Association will show a 10 minute digital story about the HLF-funded project, 'Fitting in and Getting Along: Integration and Identity for Birmingham's British Poles' (An exhibition will be at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery from 28th November to April 2016.)  |
| <b>3.45 pm</b> | <b>Helen Lloyd</b> will give a short illustrated talk on how oral history talks can be used to increase mutual understanding in diverse communities.  |
| <b>4:15 pm</b> | Round up and any further questions  |
|                |   |