

# Oral History Society Regional Network

Annual Report  
2017

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# Annual Network Report 2017

## Annual Network Report 2017

Welcome to the Oral History Society (OHS) **Annual Network Report 2017**. Thank you as always to everyone who has contributed to it. Each year the sheer volume and range of oral history activity taking place around the country increases and our networkers play a key role in advising, supporting or delivering a variety of projects. The individual regional reports give a glimpse into the kind of inquiries and requests for advice and guidance received over the past year and also provide a bank of information and links to projects led by museums, archives, libraries, universities and community organisations.

This year we are delighted to be holding our **annual network event in Glasgow** at the invitation from our networkers based in Scotland. We would like to thank Arthur McIvor who has generously provided the venue and facilities at the Scottish Oral History Centre (SOHC) at the University of Strathclyde, and are also grateful to Howard Mitchell of the Scottish Oral History Group (SOHG), Hilary Young, Alison Burgess and Alison Chand for their input and support in organising the packed programme of presentations on the theme of '**Oral History and Performance**'.

The theme, suggested by Howard Mitchell, highlights how oral history in Scotland has inspired and produced performance-related art forms. As Howard explains, *"Oral History in Scotland has traditionally encompassed a wide variety of song, music and performing arts. With Glasgow hosting GCU's [Centre for Political Song](#), [The Scottish Piping Centre](#), [The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland](#) all featuring strong oral history elements and within half a mile of the University of Strathclyde. The online archive of [Tobar an Dualchais](#), [The Scottish Storytelling Centre](#) in Edinburgh and Professor Gary West's recent use of oral history, song and music in a [performance play](#) add further opportunities to reflect on how oral history can be expressed through song, music and performance."*

In a slight variation from the usual format of the network event and in order to maximise the benefits of the additional time in Glasgow, the annual business meeting on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October will be preceded by an extended Continuing Professional Development session in the early afternoon to include: practical tips on using smart phones for oral history; a discussion on the logistical issues of collaborative projects and the impact of filmed interviews; and the use of oral histories to inspire theatre scripts. On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October, networkers will be joined by local OHS members for a day of presentations on how oral history collections have inspired theatre, performance, fiction and other creative outputs in Scotland. **(See programme at the end of this report.)**

As in previous years, the network event promises a stimulating and inspiring time for all and a time for networkers to catch up, exchange information, share experiences, seek advice and ... network.

*Juliana Vandegrift & Padmini Broomfield*

**Regional Network Coordinator/Deputy Regional Network Coordinator**

## Developing the Network

Four years ago, in 2013, the Oral History Society Trustees met over a weekend to discuss a new strategic plan for the OHS. This included initiatives to develop and support the Regional Network and address issues raised at the time by networkers responding to a qualitative study, at AGMs and discussed at Committee meetings. Since then we have worked towards implementing new recruitment procedures, actively identifying and filling gaps in the coverage over geographical areas and subject expertise, circulating information packs, improving our communication systems and training for Continuing Professional Development.

We now have a fairly good representation across the country, most recently with new networkers in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Welcome to our new networkers. Our networkers include practitioners in museums, archives, libraries, higher education, audio-visual and community organisations, and freelancers, offering a rich mix of subject expertise and breadth of experience. This has proven extremely useful, when through the Yahoo Groups discussion list, we are able to draw on our colleagues' knowledge to respond to public inquiries or as a sounding board for all sorts of discussions relating to oral history practice.

### **We'd like to welcome our new networkers:**

- Mary Ingoldby for South West, Bristol area
- Hilary Young for Scotland, Glasgow area
- Emily Hewitt for Wales, Swansea area

The Regional Network webpages on the OHS website are now looking great, with updated profiles and photographs of networkers. Thank you to all for sending these in. Please do send in information about events or vacancies in your regions to the web administrator. The editors of the newsletter and the Journal are always keen to hear of new projects and announcements. We also invite you to join in the conversations on social media.

We hope that these developments have been useful to both our long-time as well as new networkers. Over the coming months we would welcome any feedback, suggestions or ideas from networkers that would help us plan other initiatives that would be helpful to networkers. As always, we are also keen to hear from networkers who are planning to or would like to organise workshops or events in their regions.

Other OHS activities that may be of interest to networkers are Special Interest Groups (SIGs), of which there are four at present: (1) Migration, (2) LGBTQ, (3) Environment and Climate Change, and (4) Psycho-Social Therapies and Care Environments. Each SIG has been proposed by OHS members with particular interest in sharing and exchanging information with others working in that field, and has a trustee who provides a formal liaison with the OHS committee. All OHS members are welcome to join any SIG or follow their activities on social media. For more information visit the OHS [website](#).

***Juliana Vandegrift***

## 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)

# Reports from the Regions

## East of England

### Essex (Martin Astell)

There are a number of interesting projects which have just started or are about to start in Essex. And some which are reaching their final stages. Once again it is notable how many are being made possible through funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Colchester and Tendring Women's Refuge have almost completed their project – called *You Can't Beat a Woman* – which tells the fascinating and important story of the early days of the women's refuge movement. The recordings include the experiences of those who were involved in both the practical and political difficulties in setting up and running women's refuges, as well as those who used them.

The Essex Record Office Sound and Video Archive project, *You Are Hear: sound and a sense of place* continues into its third and final year. Fifteen of the listening benches (out of a total of 18) have now been permanently installed in locations around the county – including public parks, town squares, riverside walks and churchyards. More listening benches and audio-visual kiosks have been touring the county, and further recordings have been made accessible online via the Essex Sounds website, the Essex Record Office online catalogue, Soundcloud and YouTube.

Essex County Council is leading on two other projects which include oral history elements: *Snapping the Stiletto* is an arts project with funding from the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund. It will be a two year project working with museums across the county and resulting in exhibitions commemorating a century since the first British women were given the vote, 90 years since all women were given the vote and 50 years since the Dagenham Ford Workers' Strike.

*Resorting to the Coast* will explore and celebrate the seaside heritage of the coastal towns of Clacton, Frinton, Harwich/Dovercourt, Jaywick and Walton-on-the-Naze. In the same part of the county, the Clacton Victoria County History Group are about to begin a Heritage Lottery Funded project titled *Discovering 'Dad's Army' in the Tendring District*. The intention is to interview the rapidly diminishing numbers of those once in the Home Guard during the Second World War, and to survey and record the defence positions which they manned. As with the other projects mentioned above, the recordings created will eventually make their way to the Essex Record Office for permanent preservation and research access.

Another project approaching the use of oral history testimony from an arts perspective is that being run by Ewewright Arts Foundation. They have received HLF funding for a project called *Identities and Stories – Caribbean Takeaway Takeover*. The project will record the voices and stories of eight local African Caribbean elders from Colchester and the surrounding areas. The elders' stories

will be recorded by young volunteers and illustrated with hard ground photo-etched portraits.

Volunteers from the Galleywood Historical Society are recording the memories of residents of the village of Galleywood. Having started with a list of twenty people to interview, and having recorded eighteen of them, they now have a further forty-five eager contributors waiting to be interviewed.

And finally, the National Jazz Archive – based in Essex but with a national remit – launched their *Say It With Music* exhibition in May this year. This was the culmination of their Intergenerational Jazz Reminiscence Project.

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

During the last twelve months I've had enquiries to provide advice/guidance for the following oral history projects:

**University of East Anglia** in Norwich and their oral history project 'Akenfield Now' which follows on from Ronald Blythe's book *Akenfield: Portrait of an English Village*, which was published in 1969. Depicting life in Suffolk villages, it was based on the recollections of farmers and residents living near the author in the 1960s. The book became an international bestseller and was translated into more than 20 languages.

Led by Dr John Gordon, of UEA's School of Education and Lifelong Learning, the project will involve Suffolk residents, students from Kesgrave High School in Ipswich, Sir Thomas Mills High School in Framlingham, and UEA.

It aims to introduce young people to oral history and film archiving, and will see students working with the East Anglian Film Archive (EAFA), Norfolk Record Office, BBC Voices, Empty Vessel theatre company and expert oral historians, to make films to match oral history accounts of life in the area. The project is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

**The Longshop Museum** in Leiston, Suffolk has begun interviewing Leiston residents about their memories of Leiston Works, otherwise known as Garretts. It was a family business from 1778 to 1932, after which the company passed into the hands of Beyer Peacock. The works finally closed in 1981. The historic core was preserved and opened as a museum in 1984.

**Southend Museum** - I interviewed 8 World War II veterans for their exhibition called *Veterans - a Shared Experience* which runs until April 2018. I [http://southendmuseums.co.uk/whats\\_on/event/Veterans-A-Shared-Experience](http://southendmuseums.co.uk/whats_on/event/Veterans-A-Shared-Experience)

## **East Midlands**

### **LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND (Cynthia Brown & Colin Hyde)**

#### **East Midlands Oral History Archive (Colin Hyde)**

I have been providing advice and support to several projects involving oral history across the region, among them 'Deeds Not Words Towards Liberation: 100 Years of

women's social-political activism in Derbyshire'. This was initiated by the organisation Vox Feminarum: Women's Voices and is funded by HLF. It aims to tell 100 years of Derbyshire women's 'HERstory': to 'uncover, share and raise awareness of that heritage... [and] to leave a legacy for others to pick up the mantle to carry on this work'. Partners include Derby Museums, Derbyshire County Council, Derbyshire Records Office, Parliamentary Outreach, Derby Women's History Group and the University of Derby – see <http://voxfeminarum.wixsite.com/mysite>.

Theatre company Fifth Word has received £75,200 from the HLF for a project to celebrate the changing landscape of Normanton Road in Derby from the 1960's to present day – [www.derbymuseums.org/news/this-is-normanton-project-receives-funding](http://www.derbymuseums.org/news/this-is-normanton-project-receives-funding); and the Derbyshire Foundation has secured funding for a two-year project to create an oral history of cricket in Derbyshire, looking at memorable moments at the county club, and exploring the world of club cricket, women's cricket and disabled and partially-sighted cricket – <http://cricket.derbyshireccc.com/heritage-project/>.

Also in Derbyshire, there are plans for some oral histories as part of a project about Victoria Park in Erewash – [www.erewash.gov.uk/culture-leisure/parks-and-open-spaces/victoria-park-heritage-lottery-bid.html](http://www.erewash.gov.uk/culture-leisure/parks-and-open-spaces/victoria-park-heritage-lottery-bid.html).

Elsewhere in the region, the Theatre Royal in Nottingham has started a major heritage project with the University of Nottingham to explore all aspects of its past and develop an archive, including oral history interviews – <http://trch.co.uk/theatre-royal-nottingham-stories-people-heritage/>; and oral histories are being recorded at Weedon Bec, Northamptonshire, to support a bid for a visitor centre at the Royal Ordnance Depot – [www.weedonbec-village.co.uk/uploads/scan.pdf](http://www.weedonbec-village.co.uk/uploads/scan.pdf).

My own project, 'An Oral History of Post-War Leicester 1945-1962', is making good progress – see [www.le.ac.uk/emoha/community/postwarleicester.html](http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/community/postwarleicester.html).

### **LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND (Cynthia Brown)**

Among the ongoing projects in Leicester is 'The Story of Parks', which is funded by the HLF and managed by Leicester City Council. Oral history interviews are being collected alongside documentary material, and outputs will include information boards on a number of the city's many parks – [www.storyofleicester.info/explore-leicester/story-of-parks/](http://www.storyofleicester.info/explore-leicester/story-of-parks/).

Another interesting project is 'Air Raid Shelter Stories' by Granby Street School. Project manager Katie Soan recorded local memories and created a book – [www.airraidshelterstories.co.uk/the-project/](http://www.airraidshelterstories.co.uk/the-project/).

The 'Lost Legends' project, run by the Leicester arts organisation Serendipity has been working with Black Cultural Archives in London to celebrate the achievements of the African and African Caribbean communities for the anniversary of 30 years of Black History Month (BHM). It has been recording the cultural heritage of Leicester's 'trailblazers' through oral history recording and the donation of brochures and other memorabilia. The project culminates with an exhibition in October 2017 at Newarke Houses Museum in Leicester, and the creation of a film to sit alongside its publication *30 years 30 Voices*.



The Saffron Heath project in Leicester, part of the charity Saffron Lane Neighbourhood Council, is applying to HLF for funding for a project involving oral histories. This is based on old allotment land on the Saffron Estate, which includes a field pond pre-dating a Victorian map and a heritage orchard. It also plans to rebuild an Anderson shelter, and is recording oral histories from local people, particularly around food growing during rationing in World War II and afterwards, through to the present day.

The Great Central Railway (GCR), the UK's only double track, main line heritage railway, is collecting oral histories as part of the development of its £18 million Main Line museum project. Main Line will tell the story of the GCR through a collection of locomotives, rolling stock, artefacts, and objects from the National Railway Museum in York, along with biographies of people to which they relate. Interviews are being conducted with people with memories of travelling or working on the railway, which ran from Annesley, just north of Nottingham, through Nottingham Victoria, Leicester and Rugby to London Marylebone. It was opened for passenger and goods traffic in 1899, and closed in 1969. The project is supported by £10 million from the HLF, and the museum is expected to open in 2021.

## London

### London (Pam Schweitzer)

It has been a busy year, with some on-going projects and some special events.

#### **On-going projects at the University of Greenwich:**

**The Reminiscence Theatre Archive**, based at the University of Greenwich has grown considerably in the last year. It has been supported by an intern, Brogan Stewart, who wants to work in archiving in the future. She has transcribed more interviews and developed the website to include projects undertaken back in the 1980s and 90s. The University is supporting an update of the website in the coming weeks. The Drama students at the University of Greenwich use the oral histories and theatre productions in the archive as a source for their theatre-making activities working with older people in the community and children in local primary schools. The Reminiscence Theatre Archive will be moving to the University Archive section of the main library in the magnificent new building in Stockwell Street, Greenwich.

The newest project, which has just begun, involves Drama students in making theatre shows from the stories of older people contained in 24 Memory Boxes on display in the University of Greenwich. I shall report on this in the next report.

#### **Remembering the Past, Building the Future: EU 2-yr. inter-generational project:**

Led by Jugend und Kultur, an intergenerational project in Dresden, this EU partnership promoted inter-generational understanding through oral history, reminiscence and the arts. Partners were in Thessaloniki (University Art Department) Macedonia (Skopje University Art Department) Wroclaw, Poland (Culture Center of Olesnica and the Chamber of Memories) Budapest, Hungary

(European project in the community) and European Reminiscence Network in partnership with University of Greenwich.

We had 4 meetings in Dresden, Thessaloniki, Wroclaw and Budapest. In each venue we saw one another's work on the ground involving art, music, theatre and history. Staff and students of the local universities and colleges shared their response to oral testimonies (live and recorded) of living through war, occupation, totalitarianism and oppression.

The Greenwich element in this project focused on wartime evacuation. It involved students of Drama and History at the University of Greenwich, a local pensioners action group, the Greenwich Pensioners Forum, and the European Reminiscence Network, now based at the University of Greenwich.

The older people created their own play based on their memories and this was described in my Regional Report for 2016. The drama students then devised 3 pieces of theatre from the memories of older people, some of whom they met direct and some via the Reminiscence Theatre Archive, now based at the University of Greenwich. Two of the plays were aimed at children in primary schools (Year 4 and 5 children) and actively involved the older people from the Pensioners' Forum as fellow-performers or as story-tellers. The 3<sup>rd</sup> play was aimed at older people and played in a local sheltered housing scheme. These plays were developed and performed as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year students' course work in their Applied Drama degree. The history students conducted interviews, transcribed memories and put together a book of memories and photos, especially those of the older people who had been involved throughout the project.

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December 10.30 – 4.30pm**

**"REMEMBERING THE PAST: BUILDING THE FUTURE"**

**A One-day conference at the University of Greenwich, as the culminating part of the European inter-generational oral history Project:**

Presentations were given by international partners from Germany, Poland, the UK and Greece, explaining the project work they had been delivering in these partner countries. The links with different university faculties across the project countries showed the broad application of oral history and reminiscence when studying art, music, theatre, film, politics, history and cultural diversity.

The papers were followed by a presentation on the 'Remembering the Past, Building the Future' project in Greenwich by Pam Schweitzer, including contributions from members of the Greenwich Pensioners Forum who had participated, sharing their evacuation and wartime memories working with Drama and History students at the University of Greenwich and school pupils in a local primary school.

Then followed a lecture demonstration by two groups of students who had prepared Theatre-in-Education shows and performed them in a local primary school to Year 4 pupils alongside the Pensioners Forum, and sometimes incorporating them into their shows. A third group performed a play they had prepared from the same sources for performance to older people. These performances were shown in the University theatre to delegates at the conference and were felt to be very moving and well done.

The day finished with a whole-group roundup of all those attending (about 45) in which everyone explained what they had received from the stories they had heard and the plays they had seen.

The PowerPoint presentation about this inter-generational project was given at the Education Day of the Oral History Society on 27<sup>th</sup> September at the British Library in London.

### **Special Events:**

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> October: 3-6pm**

#### **MEMORY GRAND CHALLENGE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH**

#### **Exploring Links between oral history and reminiscence in dementia care:**

This was a very stimulating afternoon attended by 60 delegates from across London and some from further afield (Gateshead, Northampton, Wales).

We had input from established oral historians who had graduated from a training and apprenticeship programme on reminiscence in dementia care, and family carers of people with dementia who had participated in the European Reminiscence Network's long-running project "Remembering Yesterday, Caring Today".

Over the last three years, key members of the **Oral History Society** have participated with others from the worlds of museums, arts, education and mental health, in a new Training and Apprenticeship scheme in **Reminiscence in Dementia Care**. They have worked with older people with dementia and their family carers, revisiting the key stages in their lives using creative arts-based approaches in order to support the sense of identity and self-worth of the participants.

The oral historians reflected on the links and differences between working as an oral historian and working in the field of group reminiscence arts. They spoke of the benefits of bringing new empathetic approaches and group facilitation skills into their work as oral historians.

The results of this work for the families involved have been very significant. They have made friends, affirmed central relationships and found new ways to keep their person stimulated, confident to communicate again and engage socially with others.

One of them, Kate White, a psychotherapist and leading attachment theory expert, shared her transition from someone silenced by the stigma of dementia to a champion of group reminiscence as a means of identity re-building for families living with dementia. Another, Kate Harwood spoke of the affirmation of long-term relationships in dementia care and the value of sharing life history with others.

In this workshop, we heard excellent papers from the following Oral Historians: **Dvora Liberman, Sarah Gudgin and Padmini Broomfield** and the following family carers: **Kate White, Robbie Wick and Kate Harwood**

The carers brought along Memory Boxes they had made on the project and explained the impact of reminiscence on the daily lives they lead with their relative with dementia. The session was led by **Pam Schweitzer**, Director European Reminiscence Network and Honorary Research Fellow, University of Greenwich

### **These were the questions we addressed together.**

- What are the links between this highly personal exploration of life stories in a group of families living with dementia and the more conventional role of the oral historian?
- What are the effects of this activity on the participating people with dementia and their family carers in terms of how they see their own past and present lives?
- What are the effects on oral historians of working so closely with people with dementia and could it affect their future practice?
- Whose 'truth' is shared in these life-course sessions?
- How do we make the process of remembering together in these sessions into a memorable product?

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

I have also continued to share my oral history expertise both within the museum and heritage and also with community groups and young people. This year I have been carrying out oral history interviews, advising projects, training volunteers and young people and carrying out evaluation work. Here is a brief overview of some of my current work:

**St Mary Mags Oral History Project:** I'm currently working as an oral history consultant for this project which is part of the Paddington's Living Heritage project at St. Mary Magdalene's Church. This HLF funded project is transforming the church building into a heritage, community and arts hub. As part of this heritage project, the St Mary Mag's Oral History Project is recording the memories of people who have lived and worked in the local area, about their lives and everyday experiences, as well as some of the changes that have taken place in the area of North Paddington. In addition to training and supporting volunteers in all aspects of oral history work and methodology, I am undertaking a number of oral history interviews for the project.

**Gunnersbury Park Museum:** I am engaged in a pilot project using memory and story sharing at Gunnersbury Park Museum. Working with the Alzheimer's Association, I have devised creative reminiscence sessions for people with dementia and their carers, using objects from the museum's handling collection to stimulate memories and stories. I am now developing a reminiscence resource pack based on the outcomes of this pilot project, incorporating objects from the collection and other multi-sensory resources, including oral history. The toolkit and guidance notes will help to support workers / carers to further engage with the collections and to carry out future reminiscence, memory and story work.

**Regional Network Enquiries:** in the past 12 months have included: A PhD student at Institute of Contemporary British History at King's researching on female Chinese immigrants in Britain since the 1960s. A number of projects who have contacted me to ask for advice and guidance for their HLF applications, including one exploring the history of riot and grass roots protest in east London and the Association of Kenyans in the Diaspora. There have been several training enquiries, including an oral history project with people from Anola, Ameroon and Congos about their wedding customs. An enquiry about oral history ethics from someone conducting research, through recorded interviews with past and current

members of an Islington community, which they are using as a basis to create visual narratives to tell these stories. Lastly a group from Highbury who have asked for help regarding their HLF funded oral history project which they are struggling to complete.

For this year's report I reached out to the oral history community across London. This section of the report gives a fascinating picture of the broad range of oral history work happening in the region. Thanks to all the people who responded:

**Report from Justin Bengry: Lecturer in Queer History, Goldsmiths, University of London, Oral History Activities.**

I've been working on two different oral history projects this year. I currently hold a British Academy Small Grant (£2275.00) for the project titled 'The Pink Pound: Capitalism and Homosexuality in Britain'. This funding is exclusively for undertaking and transcribing up to 15 oral history interviews from 2016-2018 in London and across the country. So far I have interviewed men and women in London, Brighton, Worthing and Bristol, and intend to do further interviews in other regions as well. These will be used for teaching and research, and will contribute to my book project *The Pink Pound: Capitalism and Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Britain* currently under contract with the University of Chicago Press.

I am also involved as a researcher on the 2-year AHRC-funded (£338,325) project 'Sexualities and Localities, c.1965 – 2013', which investigates the impact of locality on queer communities and histories in Brighton, Leeds, Manchester and Plymouth. Lead by Professors Matt Cook (Birkbeck, University of London) and Alison Oram (Leeds Beckett University) and informally known as 'Queer Beyond London' ([www.QueerBeyondLondon.com](http://www.QueerBeyondLondon.com)), the project relies extensively on extant oral history collections around the country, but also includes an original oral history component. We have undertaken recorded witness testimony seminars (group oral history events) in each city with LGBTQ people across a range of ages, gender identities and sexualities. These are augmented by a further 3-4 individual interviews per city to further explore particular elements of local queer history and/or to include a more diverse range of voices. Research from this project provides primary source material for a co-authored monograph by Cook and Oram, and will inform individual articles written separately by all three of us. It also informs other project outputs including an international conference (Nov/Dec 2017) and edited collection, possible sourcebook, and a History and Policy event (2018).

Finally, I am involved in the early stages of planning for a future Archive of Queer Life Histories to be associated with the world's first MA in Queer History at Goldsmiths, which launched this year. Ultimately, the archive will welcome individual archival deposits as well as building a strong LGBTQ oral history collection. Ideally the oral histories collected for the projects described above will be archived there.

**Kingston Centre for Independent Living: 'Fighting for our Rights' oral history project November 2016 – March 2018. Report from Jen Kavanagh**

Kingston Centre for Independent Living (KCIL) is a user-led organisation based in Kingston upon Thames. For over forty five years they have campaigned for full equality of status, opportunity and inclusion for all disabled people. KCIL provides a

range of services to ensure that disabled people who live, work or study in Kingston are able to lead independent lives.

Through a generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, an oral history project was launched by KCIL in late 2016 with the aim of documenting the history of the disability rights movement and the involvement of local people in direct action and campaigning. The project has involved recording 23 oral history interviews, from disability rights pioneers including Baroness Jane Campbell and Ann Macfarlane, who proposed the original Independent Living Scheme in Kingston in the late 1980s, through to current access advocates and Kingston Council staff. The stories are powerful, and the project hopes the interviews will inspire a new generation. The interviews will be deposited in Kingston's Archive, and will be made publically available via a new website, [www.kingstonfightingforourrights.co.uk](http://www.kingstonfightingforourrights.co.uk) (due November 2017). A school resource and drama performance by local SEN students will also be created, as well as three small displays at Kingston Museum, Kingston History Centre and a touring display of local archives. The project has involves a number of partnerships, including Kingston University. Student nurses from the University were trained in oral history best practice and conducted a number of the interviews, as part of their community practice hours.

### **Gipsy Hill Training College, South West London: Report from Christine Evans Appleyard:**

Interviews with former Gipsy Hill students who attended the pioneering Gipsy Hill Training College during its final twenty years at Kingston formed the basis of my oral history-based undergraduate dissertation at Kingston University, completed in 2016. Memories of 15 students who attended the college between 1954 and 1975, a period of social change and reforms to teacher training, helped to explain why students chose to become teachers and how far their decision was influenced by gender, social background, previous educational achievement and societal expectation.

Founded 100 years ago in October 1917 in Norwood, South London, by members of the New Ideals in Education movement and headed up by the progressive educationalist Lillian de Lissa, Gipsy Hill Training College began as a small, independent establishment for educating women nursery teachers. Transferring to Kingston in 1946 and with a new principal, Frances Batstone, the college successfully navigated the demands of an expanded remit, dramatically increased numbers, the introduction of the BEd degree and male students. By the 1970s, a national reduction in teacher training provision saw the College, like many others, facing closure. Gipsy Hill secured its survival in 1975 by merging with Kingston Polytechnic, which became Kingston University in 1992. Now fully absorbed into the University's Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education, the name and history of Gipsy Hill Training College is known by relatively few. The project provides additional records of this period of the University's history for Kingston University Archives.

### **Library and Learning Centre: University of East London Paul Dudman BA (Hons.) MScEcon. MCLIP: Report from Paul Dudman:**

Our oral history work at the University of East London has been productive. April 2017 saw the publication of "Voices from the 'Jungle': Stories from the Calais Refugee Camp." *Voices from the 'Jungle'* is a collection of these stories documented by the UEL Centre for Narrative Research focusing on the lives of migrants and refugees living in the Calais Jungle. The Centre for Narrative Research taught a short university course on 'Life Stories' with residents at the Jungle refugee camp in Calais, in 2015-2016. This course is now continuing in other environments where university access is low, and will also be available online.

Between January and August 2018 we have also been undertaking a civic engagement project entitled Tate Lives: Community Engagement Salvaging the Oral History of the Tate Institute. The aim of this project was to salvage, document and preserve the community history of the Tate Institute in Silvertown. The Tate Institute was established by Henry Tate in 1887 as a secular social venue for his sugar workers (altruism soon followed by funding for the Tate Gallery in 1889). The Institute was constructed at a cost of £5,000 and included an 800 seat hall, billiard room, reading room and nine bathrooms. It soon became an important meeting venue for the local community hosting lectures, popular musical entertainments, celebrations and even political meetings. The Institute also had sports teams that played at the Tate and Lyle Sportsground (immediately east of our Docklands campus)." The project resulted in an exhibition and the recording of several video life histories focusing on the history of the Tate Institute and the wider community of North Woolwich and Silvertown.

We have held several initial meetings on behalf of the OHS Migration SIG and we are looking at investigating a mapping project to help document and highlight oral history projects focusing on migration and refugee issues. Web:- [www.uel.ac.uk/Discover/Library/Library-archive](http://www.uel.ac.uk/Discover/Library/Library-archive)

### **On the Record: report from Rosa Schling:**

In 2017 On the Record completed their HLF funded project 'A Hackney Autobiography: Remembering Centerprise' with the publication of *The Lime Green Mystery: An oral history of the Centerprise co-operative* by Rosa Schling and the launch of their ground-breaking GPS located mobile app and website 'a hackney autobiography' produced by Laura Mitchison. The extensive new Centerprise archive we collected, including 34 oral history recordings, is held by our archive partner, Bishopsgate Institute. See <https://www.ahackneyautobiography.org.uk/>

Commissioned by UCLH Arts and Heritage, OTR have this year worked in partnership with ScreenDeep on 'Chrysalis': a project about specialist medical facilities on the Grays Inn Road: the Royal National Throat Nose and Ear Hospital and the Eastman Dental Hospital, which are both scheduled to move to a new site in 2019. Chrysalis is consulting staff and patients in order to build up to a larger project. See <http://chrysalis-arts-heritage.tumblr.com/>

OTR has been running 'Holding the Baby: an oral history of parenting and childcare in the East End' in 2017, funded by the Gilda Street Trust. 20 oral histories will be archived at Bishopsgate Institute. A touring exhibition and podcast series will launch in early 2018. See <https://holdingthebabysite.wordpress.com/>

OTR has provided oral history and creative interpretation services for a variety of organisations. Highlights this year include advising Modus Arts on their project Tape Letters, running audio recording and editing workshops for students who produced an audio walk of Brompton Cemetery (for the Royal Parks) and exhibition production workshops for the Young Historian's Project's Black Liberation Front project.

**Report from Sarah Lowry:**

**Royal College of Physicians:** The project has been running for three years now. We are interviewing members and fellows of the college about their medical education, clinical practice, and working lives in the NHS. Forty-five life story interviews are available through the RCP Library catalogue: <http://rcp.soutron.net/Portal/Default/en-GB/Search/SimpleSearch>.

Approximately 15 volunteers are involved in the project. Extracts from the recordings were used at Open House weekend on 17 September, and we also held three successful events based around the oral histories in the Wellcome Reading Room over the summer. There are further plans to use the oral histories during the 500th year anniversary of the college in 2018.

**Gunnersbury Park Museum:** I've been working with a small group of volunteers to digitise and catalogue approximately 400 oral history recordings in the collections at Gunnersbury Park Museum. The content is very wide ranging, covering the history of Brentford Football Club, memories of the First and Second World Wars, housing, industry and agriculture in Ealing and Hounslow, as well as the changing demographic of the area. In 2019 we are hoping to record new oral histories to add to the collection. Extracts from interviews will be included in the permanent displays at the refurbished museum, due to open in 2018.

**Training:** I've been continuing to provide training to a wide range of organisations throughout the UK in oral history methodology and practice. This year clients have included the Inner Temple, the RAF Museum, Westminster University, Black Cultural Archives and Historic England.

**Thames Festival Trust: 'Working River' oral history project 2017. Report from Bea Moyes:**

The Working River oral history project, led by Thames Festival Trust, ran throughout 2017 and documented the rich history of London's boat builders, from the Thames Barrier up to Teddington Lock. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the project recorded 26 oral history interviews, both film and audio, with eleven full length audio interviews acquired by the Museum of London, building on a wealth of existing historic interviews about Thames life.

London's boatyards have a long and significant history on the banks of the Thames. From the Royal Dockyard of Deptford, and the iron shipbuilding yards on Poplar and Blackwall, to the yards building barges and tugs in Isleworth and Brentford, and the wooden pleasure boat builders in Richmond and Twickenham. While this was a key industry in London at the turn of the 20th Century, by the 1960s many boatyards were closed with the decline of the London Docks and the diminishing role of freight on the river. From the 1990s, London's boatyards were also heavily impacted by the increase in land values along the riverfront. Today many of the yards continue as family businesses, and while they continued to be threatened by riverside developments, their businesses are thriving with the



increasing popularity of residential houseboat communities and passenger boats on the Thames.

The Working River project drew on personal reminiscences of those who have worked in the London boatyards, including many yards which have been forced to close. Alongside 26 oral history recordings, supported by consultant Jen Kavanagh, the project also commissioned a photographer, Hydar Dewachi to take portraits of all the interviews and the working yards. An full length oral history film was also produced by Digital: Works, which has been screened at exhibitions across London in September 2017. <https://thamesfestivaltrust.org/our-work/heritage-programme/working-river>

### **'They came in Dhows' Oral History Interviews for the exhibition: 'Gujarati Yatra – Journey of a People.' Report from Rolf Killius:**

From 14 November 2017 until 14 April 2018 the Museum of Croydon, Clocktower hosts a multi-dimensional exhibition and events series with the intention to highlight the cultural heritage of Gujarat and the historical journey of the Gujarati community.

A main element of this exhibition is the extensive research based on twenty Oral History y interviews captured on audio and video. For the interviews members of the Gujarati community based in the UK were chosen.

The community activist Lata Desai and the ethnomusicologist and oral historian Rolf Killius are the researchers, curators and oral historians of GUJARATI YATRA. The Croydon-based Gujarati community organisation *Subrang Arts* has been closely involved in the exhibition object collection and interpretation, the Oral History interviews and the organisation of the events series.

The Oral History interviewees have been selected according to their diverse background of personal experience and expertise. This includes historians, businessmen, cultural experts, a publisher and educationists.

From the lengthy Oral History video recordings around fifty short and two longer films have been selected and produced for the exhibition. Most of the objects displayed relate in one or another way to the captured interviews.

After the closure of the exhibition all Oral History interviews and the produced films will be preserved at the Museum of Croydon (onsite only) and on the project website: [www.gujaratiyatra.com](http://www.gujaratiyatra.com). [www.rolfkillius.com](http://www.rolfkillius.com)

### **'We Are Our Own Liberators': Young Historians Project launches their exhibition and documentary on the forgotten history of the Black Liberation Front in Britain. Report from Rosa Kurowska**

After securing funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Young Historians Project (YHP) will be unveiling their exhibition and premièring their film on the Black Liberations Front on Friday the 20th October 2017.

With statistics revealing that History is the third most unpopular subject, and with less than 10 Black PhD students in the U.K., the project emerged as one of the outcomes from the 'History Matters' conference held at the Institute of Historical Research in 2015.

“The aim of YHP was to encourage young people of African and Caribbean heritage to engage more with history and to provide them with the skills to present history,” commented Professor Hakim Adi, one of the founders of the initiative, “I think the film and exhibition will reveal to the public that YHP has succeeded”.

Young people have played a key role in shaping the project. The project has given young people a chance to engage with history through digital technology, while developing their knowledge of political activism. “Being involved in YHP was a fantastic opportunity to learn valuable skills in filmmaking and curating an exhibition in a subject matter very important for me as a black British person,” explains Enna Uwaifo, one of the young volunteers, “It's amazing that we get to bring to life a part of black British history that is overlooked in schools. Learning about the important work of BLF has heightened my awareness of the black struggle in this country, how far we have come and how far we still have to go”

For the past 2 years, young volunteers have been creating a short documentary and designing an exhibition on the BLF to be presented at secondary schools in London. As part of the project, young people have undergone archival, oral history and film training, and ventured out to explore some of the most undiscovered aspects of the BLF. “I've learnt about how important editing is making a documentary. The right images, music and cuts are vital to telling the story effectively” comments Jemmar Samuels, a member of the YHP.

The event will be a fantastic opportunity for the community to engage with an extremely forgotten aspect of Black British history. Founded in 1971, the BLF had a significant impact on the Black British political landscape and played a key role in the black community. From developing links with liberation struggles in Africa, to establishing supplementary schools in London, the BLF consolidated black political identity and challenged the impact of racism in Britain. In acknowledging this, the exhibition focuses on key themes such as community engagement, the role of women within the BLF, anti-racism campaigns, young people and black political culture.

Premiering their short documentary titled ‘We Are Our Own Liberators’, along with their exhibition, the launch will represent the achievements of the YHP thus far. “I've met some amazing people on the project and we worked hard to make documentary and exhibition happen,” explains Enna, “I'm excited to see the end result and the former BLF members' reaction to it all.”

### **HIV/AIDS and prisons in England and Ireland: Work at the Centre for History in Public Health- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Report from Janet Weston:**

At the Centre for History in Public Health, Janet Weston and Virginia Berridge have been exploring the history of HIV/AIDS in prisons. This is part of a much larger research project into healthcare for prisoners in England and Ireland from 1850, which is funded by the Wellcome Trust. Over the course of 2016-2017, we have conducted a witness seminar and around 20 oral history interviews, mostly with individuals who worked with the prison services of England & Wales or Ireland over the 1980s and 1990s.

We invited 12 people to participate in our witness seminar on HIV/AIDS and prisons in May 2017. Our guests included Sir Richard Tilt, former Governor and Director General of the Prison Service of England & Wales, Dame Ruth Runciman, former chair of the AIDS working group of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs and co-founder of the Prison Reform Trust, and Mike Trace, former Director of the Cranstoun Parole Release Scheme and Chief Executive of the Rehabilitation for Addicted Prisoners Trust. They were joined in conversation by former governors, drugs workers, public health advisers, and representatives of the National AIDS Trust and Department of Health. The transcript of proceedings, with an introduction and suggestions for further reading, is freely available as a pdf from the Centre or project websites, or the LSHTM research database (links to all three below).

Interview participants have included retired governors and prison medical staff, civil servants, health promotion workers, probation officers, addiction workers, and former prisoners. As well as contributing to several academic articles, out in 2018, these interviews have inspired an audio drama about the HIV separation unit in Dublin's Mountjoy prison. This was created with producers Digital Drama and writer Liz Rigeby. You can hear the audio drama as part of a roundtable discussion about history, creative writing, and HIV/AIDS in London on 22 November 2017, as part of the Being Human festival, and in Dublin on World AIDS Day, 1 December 2017 (both events are free but booking is required). The drama will also be available to download from the Centre and Project websites from December 2017 onwards. Our interviews will be deposited in the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine Archives, to add to interviews and other materials from the 1980s and 1990s relating to the history of HIV/AIDS. Anyone interested in using this collection should contact [archives@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:archives@lshtm.ac.uk). Project website: <https://histprisonhealth.com>

### **Changing dimensions in women's religious life, 1945-1990: Report from Dr Carmen M Mangion**

This study examines the changes in religious life for Catholic women religious (sisters and nuns) in Britain from 1945 to 1990 to identify how community and individual lives were altered. While the project centres on events in the 1960s, particular the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) it 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. Nine international women's religious institutes, both contemplative and active, have been chosen. 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 includes interviews with approximately 80 sisters and nuns from a variety of communities located throughout Britain. At the end of this project, these oral histories will be housed at the British Library.

### **Eastside Community Heritage: Report from Judith Garfield:**

- Interviews collected this year 114
- Worked on 11 projects
- 4 projects completed with exhibitions and 4 websites produced

- Delivered 36 reminiscence sessions
- Engaged 8560 people in oral histories and local history
- Delivered 22 school workshops using the oral history collections
- Held 10 community pop up stalls
- Launched 6 exhibitions

### **Eastside projects completed this year:**

- 30 years of living with HIV: 21 oral histories collected from those who have been living with HIV for 20-30 years and also Politian's and campaigners from the 1980s onwards. The interviews document the retraction and impact on the governments public health campaign in 1986 -87 'Don't Die of Ignorance'.
- Margaret's Story: video documentary and oral history telling the oral history of a trans woman living in 'Redbridge.
- Silvertown Explosion: an explosion that took place in 1917 in Silvertown East London - family members who were effected and the local community retelling the story and impact of the explosion interviews include local community members whose families were involved 10 oral histories collected.
- Ramfle Refugees: 10 oral histories collected from founding members of the organisation set up in 1992 in Redbridge to support Refugee and Migrants.
- Plashet Park: 6 oral histories from the local community who remember the park, the zoo and anti-racist festival held in the park in the 1990s.
- Folk of Forest Gate 14: music and leisure people's memories and experiences in Forest Gate East London – still working on the project.
- Snapshot through Time: history of Ilford Limited photographic company 10 oral history interviews with scientist and people who worked for the company from 1940 till its move in the 1960s – we produced an exhibition and mobile application and a website.
- Women and football: 10 oral histories collected from women who play professional football in East London an exhibition experience was produced telling the history of women's football in East London over the past 100 years.
- Armenian Genocide: 17 interviews collected from relatives of survivors of the genocide and a few interviews with members of the Armenian community whose families served in the First World War.

### **On-going projects:**

- Working on Three score years and Ten: celebrating 70 years of the National Health Service and the closure of a local hospital; still interviewing have collected 6 oral histories.
- Changing Minds LGBT+ and Mental Health: 12 interviews so far still working on the project to be launched in 2018 for LGBT+ History month.
- Appliance of Science: women working at home and the changes in technology.

### **'Lost Trades of Islington.' Report from John Gabriel:**

'Lost Trades of Islington' is an HLF funded project, led by Age-UK Islington in partnership with Islington Local History Centre and London Metropolitan University. It will run from November 2017 to mid 2018. Students and older volunteers will be

trained to interview people with experience of working in the disappearing trades and industries in the borough. The digital recordings, along with other artefacts, including photographs will be used to inspire a series of art and poetry workshops which will interpret the oral history in a range of creative methods. These would be shared through public exhibitions and on Age UK Islington's 'Get Together' website. Islington, an inner London borough, once had a very diverse industry. Clerkenwell, in the south of the borough has a long history of clock making, printing and brewing, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until after World War II. Central and Northern Islington had factories amongst its residential properties, for textiles, metal manufacture, chocolate and wallpaper. The project will provide a history of such trades from the perspective of those who worked in them.

'Lost Trades' will provide a unique opportunity for pairs of students and older volunteers to work together to collect oral histories, to learn about Islington's past and the contribution made by older people to the Borough. Students, who will be accredited as part of their degree programme, and older Volunteers, will also learn about archiving and ways of promoting local history through exhibitions and social media. Older volunteers will also have the chance to use these histories to inspire their creative practice through art and poetry workshops. For further information please contact: John Gabriel email: [j.gabriel@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:j.gabriel@londonmet.ac.uk);

**Report from Rib Davis:** I'm involved in three projects:

**The Isle of Dogs: Protests of the 80s:** A community oral history-led project and exhibition presented by The Isle of Dogs Living Archive. In the 1980s The London Docklands were transformed into the world-class commercial hub we see today. But what happened to the community that was there before and how did they make their voices heard against the behemoth of high finance? As the new developments on the Island took shape, many of the original residents felt neglected or ignored. The new jobs, it seemed, would not be jobs for them. The shiny new towers were not for their benefit. With over 20 audio testimonies from community activists, local figures from the time and former members of the London Docklands Development Corporation, along with photographs and protest posters, this exhibition explores the context of – amongst others - the famous Armada protest, the sheep and bees protest and the Death of a Community march. Shown at Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, George Green School and St John's Community Centre.

**For Walls with Tongues:** A community oral history- led project and exhibition presented by Greenwich Mural Workshop. The Community Arts movement began in the mid-1960s in tandem with similar movements such as Tenants Control, Workers Control, Community architecture and planning and a move away from Gallery Art. Individual artists or groups sought to work in ways that sprang from a desire to use their artistic skills to facilitate social reform and develop radical alternatives to the established cultural norms. The Mural Movement steeped in the ideology of using the arts collaboratively as a 'tool for social change' sought to work with 'ordinary' people enabling them to change their neighborhoods, give tongue to their aspirations, influence local politics and enjoy cultural expression. Through over 20 interviews, mostly of community muralists, this project explores the movement nationally. It will lead to a website, a publication and archiving of the interviews at the British Library.

**Millwall's changing communities: memories of football and neighbourhood in South London:** This project is collecting oral histories of Black, Asian and

Minority Ethnic (BAME) Millwall fans and engaging residents in the northern part of Southwark, South London in an exploration of the relationship between football, youth culture and neighbourhood community.

(In)famous for the chant 'No one likes us, we don't care', Millwall F.C. is historically known less for footballing achievements and more for a fan base with a reputation for intimidation and racial abuse of opponents. But whereas the wider popular image of Millwall remains coloured by this reputation, it is also a perception that blanks out both the lesser known history of BAME Millwall fans and decades of Millwall involvement in a local community increasingly dominated by black minority populations. Recordings of the oral histories will be made available to the Southwark Local History Library, they will be used for the production of two documentaries, and they will form the basis for two theatre performances, co-designed with local residents.

### **LONDON (Martin Bisiker)**

**Fiona Clague:** Contacted me about a project she was doing with elderly residents of Camden. So I recommended she start with transcriptions. This way she would be able to see the similarities / differences between the different stories. From this analysis she could create sound bytes of individuals as-well as providing links to the long form interviews. She was also talking about doing a mini-audio documentary. The feedback was that she did deliver the project in the form of a booklet with one of the recordings. She also asked for advice on editing herself. I suggested Audacity.

**Maddie Kitchen:** Contacted me to provide advice about setting up an oral history project for Camden NHS Drug Service which would look at the history of addiction in the Borough. So I suggested she look at Big lottery for funding. I also explained differences between using audio and video for recording. It was agreed that in this instance, where anonymity might be required, audio was a better option. We talked about who would listen and where and the idea of a pop-up exhibition was explored. Unfortunately Maddie was unable to bring the project to fruition because of a mixture of time, resource and money. I think that with the right direction and funding, this project could be resurrected.

**Sarah Boud:** Contacted me about an audio based oral history project on the Fitzrovia chapel which used to be the Middlesex Hospital Chapel. She was looking for HLF funding. We discussed use of audio versus video and the issues / benefits of how they could be used. There was a preference for video as a video both was anticipated for people who might visit the chapel. I have chased Sarah to find out more but have heard nothing. [\*If I do, I'll let you know]

**Madeleine Brzeski:** Contacted me to discuss an oral history project for the McTimoney Trust who specialise in a form of chiropractic. The plan was to interview members who were taught by the founder of the specialism, John McTimoney. It was going to be a video based oral history project because the practice has global following and Youtube was perceived to be the best opportunity to ensure widest possible access. However, I have since heard that the project was shelved.

## **Legasee**

My charity has had a reasonably productive year. The VR Submariners oral history never came to fruition because we were advised by the HLF in respects of partner contribution. I think this project will be resurrected but not in the near future.

We received money from the The Korean War Veterans Digital Memorial to record stories of UK based Korean veterans. The KWVDM are an American organisation that have captured hundreds of stories from American Korea veterans.

## **North East**

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

This report is more about endings than beginnings. Last year I highlighted the excitement over the new Shiremoor Adventure Playground and North Tyneside Art Studio projects. Now they are both finishing. The Adventure Playground had a wonderful close of project event recently. The young people presented their findings and the digital stories and film material were shown. This project broke new ground with the scale of activities undertaken and some important interviews were collected from ex-playworkers. The Art Studio project has also had some fine outcomes. They have achieved their target of collecting 25 oral history interviews, one for each year of the Studio's existence. Taken as a whole the collection provides important insights into the role of art in mental health service provision, from both the participant and the mental health 'establishment' perspective. There is another project there to actually analyse the content.

The 'Pass it On' pilot which was mentioned in my report last year has drawn to a close for now. I was privileged to go with Cath Mather from the Palliative Care unit to the inaugural Storytelling for Health conference organised by NHS Wales. We presented our findings using a film entitled 'The dog that ate the Christmas cake'. The voice recordings contained in the film had a powerful impact on the audience and certainly reinforced the message that illness doesn't define the person.

Finally, I've just returned from a 'School Sharing Experience' day organised by Julia Letts and Helen Lloyd on behalf of OHS. Networkers had the chance to meet teachers delivering oral history projects and to hear from them what works well and what some of the challenges are. We also had a chance to explain some of the things that we find when we work in schools. It was absolutely riveting, with real learning on both sides. Much of this will eventually be incorporated into new on line resources on the OHS website. Many thanks Julia and Helen.

### **North East (Janette Hilton)**

#### **The Regional Oral History Centre – Sunderland**

Living History North East continue to support the development of oral history led projects, training, networks and support across the north east.

Following on from the success of '**Our Roots, Our Journey Our City**', with Sunderland Bangladesh International Centre, LHNE are currently working as a partner to deliver '**From Syedpur to Sunderland**'. This is an educational heritage

project working with a large number of schoolchildren and adults to explore the culture, history, traditions and heritage of Sunderland's Bangladeshi community through storyline and oral history methods.

### **The Stroke Association -*Life after Stroke: Past, Present and Future.***

The project will develop the historical, cultural, social, health and well-being heritage of the people involved in and affected by the stroke condition. This will be delivered by three partners The Stroke Association, Living History North East as our heritage specialist/oral history adviser and Banyan Arts, creative expressive arts specialist. The project will provide opportunities for stroke survivors, carers/family members, and younger participants to develop skills to research the history of the stroke condition using existing archives and to create a new oral history collection.

### **Tees Valley Wildlife -Trust Where the Wild Things Were Project**

The project aims to fill a gap in our current knowledge about past experiences and activities of children exploring wild spaces and nature in East Cleveland. It will also help us to map the past distributions of animals, wildlife arrivals and changes to the landscape to help us better contribute to nature conservation in East Cleveland today. The project was a two year funded project and can now be viewed at <http://wildthings.teeswildlife.org>

### **Sunderland's Music Arts and Cultural Trust - The Old Fire Station**

**Conversion Project.** £2.8 million was secured to develop an Art and Culture facility in the heart of our City Centre. It involves the conversion of the Old Fire Station into a Music and Arts Hub with performance spaces and an auditorium. It will be a home for Music, Dance, Comedy, Theatre alongside a Fire Station heritage centre. The centre will open in November 2017. LHNE have been working to record a small number of oral histories that will be used as part of the heritage installation on site.

### **Sunderland City Council - Hylton Castle Project**

Plans are now underway to redevelop one of Sunderland's most historic buildings following a successful bid of £2.9 million to bring the 14th Century Hylton Castle back into community use. The site once finished will use community oral histories as part of its historic interpretation. The focus for this collection will be on the surrounding estate know as Hylton Castle, which was a 1950's housing development.

**Groundwork -The Land of Oak & Iron (LOI)** focuses on the Derwent Valley and the surrounding area, following the River Derwent from Derwent Reservoir to the River Tyne, involving Consett, Rowlands Gill, Prudhoe and Whickham. There are many different opportunities for local people to get involved by taking part in one or more of the 14 interconnected projects. LHNE have supported the project through oral history training and sound editing.

**Living History North East** are also currently working to develop future oral history projects with The International Community of Sunderland; Sunderland & North Durham Royal Society For The Blind and several local heritage associations.



### North West (Andrew Schofield)

Over the last year training courses have been delivered to several, mainly HLF funded, projects. Several others are currently in the application process or have been awarded a grant but have not, as yet, started the oral history portion of their project.

It still remains a problem for new projects as to where to deposit their recordings so that they will be accessible to the public. Although repositories will accept recordings some will only do so on the understanding that they are fully transcribed and catalogued. In some cases this has been built into the funding bid but in others it has meant that the recordings are only available through the initiating organisation or in the form of extracts online. For projects relying on volunteers to transcribe this remains a big problem in recruiting the volunteers. Those projects using professional transcribers see their costs spiral.

Below is a brief summary of projects currently recording:

- **East Cheshire Libraries** The Library Service are using oral history in an attempt to help those suffering from Alzheimers.
- **Jubilee Tabernacle (Manchester)** Recording the use of traditional African medicine in the Manchester communities.
- **Inclusion Network** An oral history project with young people recording the memories of those who worked on Bootle Docks.
- **Uppermill Museum** General memories of the Uppermill and Saddleworth areas.
- **Lancashire Infantry Museum** Recording the memories of those who have served in the regiment since the Second World War.
- **RECLAIM** Young people recording the memories of those who used to live in three areas of Manchester which are now becoming 'gentrified'.
- **Clarion House** A project in association with Clapham Film Unit recording the memories of the Independent Labour Party's last remaining Clarion House.
- **People First** An organisation for, and run by, people with learning difficulties recording those who use their services.
- **Sustainability Development** Recording the memories and experiences of refugees to the Greater Manchester area.
- **St James & Emmanuel Churches** An oral history project recording memories of the Didsbury area.

### NORTH WEST (Rosalyn Livshin)

The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust (AIUET) continues to support the following oral history projects in the local community, largely funded by Heritage Lottery.

Warmhut – Motheritage project, which focuses on the experience of pregnancy, childbirth and raising young children among African women in Salford. The women

are also sharing their childhood memories and traditions with a view to recreating the arts, crafts and costumes from their past. A photobook, animated video and the oral history recordings will be permanently archived at the county record office in Manchester alongside the oral history recordings and these will also be available through warm Hut UK's website/You Tube channel.

Mosscaire St Vincents Housing Association, (mixed range of backgrounds), which has done an oral history project based at one of their elderly care homes in Rochdale.

A project exploring the lives of women from the British Bangladeshi community in Hyde (Greater Manchester), run by MMU with Hyde Community Action, Tameside. The women are exploring their own life stories and the historical narratives of their communities through workshops on life history, cross-cultural storytelling and digital skills and are creating digital comics illustrating their stories.

Sunnyside Club - Bolton Asian Migration. This project is collecting photographs, other records and oral histories documenting early Asian migration to Bolton from the 1960s to 1980s and their experience of life in Bolton including participation in leisure, social and recreational activities. People will be able to follow the project on social media under the title Bolton Asian Migration on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

AIUET is in partnership supporting a new project – Memories of Partition, being run by and exhibited at the Manchester Museum, August 2017-Feb 2018. The project marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence and Partition and has combined oral history, social research and documentary film-making to reveal the untold stories of the significance of Partition on local communities, multiculturalism and migration. Alongside the exhibition has been a series of performances at the Royal Exchange Theatre.

A new project launched in Sept 2017 is being run by the University of Manchester - 'From Cradle to Grave: The NHS at 70' which will gather memories from the north-west. This is phase 1 of a larger National Lottery Funded project to collect oral histories nationwide about experiences of the NHS from 1948. It is aimed to gather stories from the NHS's patients and workers as well as politicians and the general public. A major component of the project will be the creation of an innovative new website which will allow the public to submit their stories of the NHS by uploading recordings, photos and documents. The website will act as a hub for existing and previous histories of the NHS.

Two different National Trust properties in the north-west have run oral history projects in the past year. Hardman House in Liverpool has been recording the memories of people who remember working with or having their portrait taken by the Hardmans in their photographic studio, which is now a National Trust property. Erddig Hall in Wales has launched an oral history project coinciding with its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a National Trust property. The project is collecting memories of the period before and during the restoration and opening of Erddig and it is hoped these will help bring the stories and characters of Erddig to life.

Finally the War Widows Stories project begun in Liverpool in November 2016 has recorded 15 interviews to date and these will be made available on the War Widows' Stories website (<http://www.warwidowsstories.org.uk>) after their launch event on 10 November 2017.

## South East

### South East Region (Padmini Broomfield)

It has been a fairly busy year in the South East region with several inquiries from community groups and organisations setting up oral history projects. Inquiries ranged from advice on equipment, archiving, training as well as requests to publicise staff and volunteer vacancies. It is encouraging to note that many of these have sought advice in the planning and pre-application stage and have reached me via the OHS website or been directed by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) regional office.

There is a lot of oral history activity taking place in the region, often as part of larger restoration or redevelopment projects, such as those at [Guildford Cathedral](#), [Netley Hospital at Royal Victoria Country Park](#), or in intergenerational interactions at [Carisbrooke Castle Museum](#) on the Isle of Wight or [Age Fusion](#) at Age Concern Hampshire. The [New Forest Remembers project](#), part of a wider project to survey, document and research the archaeology and history of the area during World War Two, recorded oral history interviews, edited extracts of which are now online. Other projects are revisiting older interviews in archives to edit, interpret or re-use in creative workshops.

As a freelancer, I have been involved in advising, training, evaluating for various projects; and recording and editing oral history interviews for projects such as:

**'TRANSITIONS: from fields to Ford and beyond'** funded by the HLF is a community project exploring the changing industrial history of a site in Southampton that at various times has had manufacturing of aircraft components, helicopters, automotive motors and Transit vans. Working with the local community as volunteers and participants, the project is recording memories of people who worked or were connected to manufacturing on the site. Local residents are participating in activities such as memory-sharing cafés, coach trips to museums, accredited training in employability skills and will work with the team to create a pop-up museum to be displayed in shipping containers on the site next Spring.

**Bridport Museum:** Recently reopened after an extensive redevelopment project, funded by the Heritage Lottery fund, the museum incorporates oral history to bring the history of the town to life. The new displays and interpretation showcase key items from the collections to tell the story of the town's ancient and fossil rich geology, the importance in the past and today of the long and ongoing rope and net making industry, the role played by the harbour, railways and tourism at various times. Edited extracts from archival recordings and newly recorded oral histories are presented on audio posts throughout the museum.

## South West

### Bristol (Mary Ingoldby)

Since starting as Regional Networker for Bristol in May this year I have had various requests through the network and have taken note of oral history activity in the area.

Generally requests are for advice on digital recorders. What to buy and where, on the basis of budget and project participants. These included Nick Sturgess from the Fairground Heritage Trust in Devon; and Katherine Ashton at The Bassetlaw Museum Redditch – she got in touch as with me I had done some training for her when she worked at the Helston Museum in Cornwall.

In July I gave a talk and a bit of training/advice to The Redcliffe Seniors who are working on a project with Part Exchange Theatre Company to collect oral histories to inspire a script for a community play about the Redcliffe area of Bristol.

**<http://www.partexchange.co.uk/2017/07/27/redcliffe-seniors-community-theatre-collective/>**

I am also working with The Henleaze Swimming Club in Bristol on their centenary project. (2019) Oral histories have been collected as research for a book about the Lake; and we are working on ideas for a centenary weekend which may include a series of theatre pieces performed by professional actors, and inspired by the oral histories.

**<http://www.henleazeswimmingclub.org/news/henleaze-lake-memories/>**

Two notable venues in Bristol are collecting oral histories as part of larger heritage projects.

The Bristol Theatre Collection and The Bristol Old Vic are working on a heritage project (HLF awarded 2016) to digitise collections in time for the opening of newly refurbished Bristol Old Vic. They are collecting oral histories about the history of the BOV and audience memories which will form part of an exhibition in the foyer of the new theatre.

**<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/theatre-collection/news/2016/bristol-old-vic-heritage-lottery-fund-award.html>**

St George's Bristol is also having a big makeover, they are working with a team of volunteers to collect oral histories about the history of the building and audience experience.

**<http://www.stgeorgesbristol.co.uk/venue-info/heritage/>**

Both these projects will no doubt have collect some interesting material, and I will keep in touch with them re the final deposit of these interviews.

In September I attended the Oral History in Schools Event at The British Library. Organised by Kate Melvin, Julia Letts and Helen Lloyd. It was a really interesting day, and good to meet some of my fellow networkers for the first time.

## West Midlands

### **BIRMINGHAM & AREA (Helen Lloyd)**

At the time of writing (30.9.17), I've just attended a moving event to mark the end of a one-year oral history project called *Catching Stories, Making History: Workers' Voices, 1973-2000*. The project recorded memories of performers, writers, directors, technicians, administrators and others who've worked with Banner Theatre since its inception in the early 1970s. As 'Britain's foremost radical theatre

company', Banner has always based its productions round recordings of working people's stories and experiences, but this is the first time that their own members have been recorded, in lengthy interviews which will be archived in the Library of Birmingham and posted on a new website:

(<http://catchingstories.infamousarts.co.uk>). The launch featured performances of songs from past productions, including one about newly-arrived black immigrants cleaning white people's loos! The audience of interviewees, interviewers, and friends, joined in with songs that many of them clearly knew by heart.

It brought home to me the vital roles of end-of-project launches – to publicise projects and make them widely accessible and to give participants, volunteers and supporters an overall view and give them credit and thanks for their contributions. Several of the projects on which I've worked have had particularly effective launches this year. In March, the charity New Hope organised a festival to celebrate their project, *Bangladeshi Urban and Rural Heritage: Stories and Games*, at which those who attended could play traditional games while learning about their role in the lives of those who'd been interviewed (<http://www.nhbham.org/heritage-project>).

In April, I attended two excellent launches of projects with which I'd been involved in the early stages. The Birmingham Irish Association launched an exhibition at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery called *We Built This City*, (<http://www.birminghamirish.org.uk/news/38/we-built-this-city>) which featured extracts from audio interviews with Irish labourers who worked in dangerous environments with little physical or legal protection - plus photos, a short video and a free project newspaper. The exhibition was opened by the Lord Mayor and the Irish Ambassador; the opening was attended by 200 people and the exhibition was subsequently visited by over 2000 people and widely reported in the Irish press.

The following day I attended the opening of the *Fighting Back* exhibition (<https://birmingham.impacthub.net/event/fighting-back-exhibition>) to mark the end of an oral history project about attitudes to domestic abuse over the past 60 years, organised by a Muslim charity called the Amirah Foundation. The exhibition included extracts from oral histories and live testimonies from victims of abuse and those who'd helped them.

Although these two April launches were very different from each other, in both cases the publicity seemed to give the interviewees a new pride in having survived difficult circumstances and the wider public a new admiration for the interviewees. This was perhaps also true of an exhibition of Somali culture held in May to launch a book called *The Bright and Dark Colours of My Life* which featured translations of audio interviews with five Somali women now living in Birmingham, whose life-stories included experiences of female genital mutilation.

(<https://projectsomali.org/paintings-and-exhibition>) Around 160 people attended the launch event and the book was short-listed for the Women's History Network Community History Prize.

In August, I attended the launch of a highly professional film called *The Reality of Partition: The Impact of Independence on Birmingham*, which was screened for 12 days at the city's Ikon Gallery (<https://ikon-gallery.org/event/desiblitiz-ga-and-film-highlights>). It featured the memories of people now living in Birmingham and the Black Country who'd been affected by Partition - memories recorded by young

Asian journalists and film-makers from the online magazine, DESIblitz. Although I used to be a journalist, I found it hard to train people to abandon their journalistic practices and hand the agenda over to the interviewees.

It was easier to train Asian volunteers with no journalistic background for a project called *Second Generation Stories*, which is currently recording the experiences of second generation Indians born in Sandwell between 1970 and 1975, with one or both parents born in India or east Africa before migrating to Sandwell between 1965 and 1970 - the main time of arrival for the majority of Indian immigrants. Their application to the Heritage Lottery Fund argued for the importance of 'the first generation to be born outside of India, on such a large scale, for the first time in history'. I recorded three of these interviews, trailed by a volunteer interviewer, including a two-hour interview with a local councillor, Preet Kaur Gill, one week before the election was called which made her the first Sikh woman MP.

Migration has been a thread running through all my work this year, including a project for a Birmingham organisation called Gap Arts, which provides a range of cultural activities for young people and in particular young asylum seekers. Their *Children in Migration* project involves young people recording memories of child migration from many different countries. So far their interviewees have ranged in age from 17 to 85. (<https://www.thegapartsproject.co.uk/children-in-movement>). I introduced them to a woman who came here as a child from Somaliland, who runs a charity called the Dery Foundation. She recently employed me to train a group of teenagers and young adults to record memories of Somaliland soldiers who fought for the British in the Second World War - when Somaliland was a British protectorate - and memories of their family members.

I also provided training for a Hereford-based company called Rural Media, for their project, *Ballad of the Travelling People*, which looks at how times have moved on for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people since Charles Parker's Radio Ballad of the same name. ([www.travellerstimes.org.uk/News/Ballad-of-the-Travelling-People](http://www.travellerstimes.org.uk/News/Ballad-of-the-Travelling-People)).

All these projects were funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. In January Maggie Tohill, Julia Letts and I were invited to a meeting at the HLF office in Birmingham to discuss various mutual concerns. In February one of the HLF Development Officers, Elise Turner, sent us a draft project plan to be given to grant applicants for oral history projects and Julia and I provided detailed responses. This kind of co-operation is obviously valuable to all concerned and we recommend it to all Networkers!

## **WEST MIDLANDS (Julia Letts)**

Oral history training courses have taken me all over this patch and further afield this year, but I will confine my report to the projects that I know about which are going on around my home base in Worcestershire. This was the second year I ran an OHS/ BL Introduction to Oral History Course at the University of Worcester. Again it was well attended and a great venue, thanks to Maggie Andrews, Professor of Cultural History at the University of Worcester. Maggie is also responsible for my involvement in the Women's History Network Community History Prize. I am privileged to be on a panel of judges

<https://womenshistorynetwork.org/> short listing entries for this prestigious award. The majority of the entries included oral history in some form or another including one of the winners and 2 runners up. Entries are now open for 2018.

As Helen Lloyd has mentioned in her report, we continue to work closely with the HLF team in the West Midlands which, as you will see below, supports a wide range of oral history projects in our patch.

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

### **Tales of the Vale - A Forgotten Landscape**

I am the oral history coordinator for a project called **Tales of the Vale**, researching and recording interviews with people connected to the Lower Severn Vale Levels in Gloucestershire and Bristol. This is an amazing hidden corner of England, really beautiful and well worth a visit. It runs along the Severn Estuary and is an area full of fascinating history, ancient traditions, unique habitats and wildlife, sharing the space with intensive development in every direction including 2 nuclear power stations, 2 motorways and 2 major bridges – the Severn Bridge and Second Severn Crossing. Our project Tales of the Vale is part of a wider partnership project called **A Forgotten Landscape**, funded by HLF and run by South Gloucs council. My team of volunteers (who had never done any oral history before) have succeeded in recording 46 remarkable interviews which we are currently turning into a publication, podcast, exhibition, video and putting up on the AFL website. Please do have a listen to our extracts and to the 'soundscapes' produced by one of the volunteers, Dave Howell. [afl@southglos.gov.uk](mailto:afl@southglos.gov.uk)

### **The Worcester Spirit; Memories of Campus Life 1946 to 2016**

We are into the editing stage of a project to record the memories and experience of people who have studied, lived and worked at what is now The University of Worcester, but started as a teacher training college in 1946. Many of the current staff still have offices in the RAF Nissan huts that housed the first 250 students. Our most memorable interview was with a 103 year old man who was in the first intake of students seventy years ago when the establishment was set up as an 'Emergency Training College' to combat the dearth of teachers after the Second World War Two. So far 36 interviews have been collected by myself and 3 students, charting the changes the college has undergone. We are now producing a website and mobile exhibition before handing the collection over to the Worcestershire Archives at the Hive in Worcester. The Hive is part of the University's history itself, as when opened by the Queen in 2012, it was the first joint University and City Library in Europe.

**Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust** – The Trust was awarded a £5m HLF grant to purchase and preserve the Castle (home of the Bishops of Worcester from 13<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century) and as part of the project, a group of volunteers is recording memories of those who've lived, worked and visited the Castle in living memory. My role has been as trainer and mentor to this lovely group who are just getting to grips with recording oral history.

**Unitarian Meeting House, Newcastle Under Lyme** - A quick mention for this HLF funded project called 'Faith, Reason, Arson And Riot: The Old Meeting House and Its 300 Years'. This week I am training volunteers to collect memories from people connected to the meeting house. I am also recording a couple of interviews

with people who've moved away from the area. The building has had an eventful history (being burnt down and rebuilt twice) and its members have fascinating stories. <https://www.newcastlestaffsunitarians.co.uk/>

**Engineering the Past and The Start of Something Big (Redditch)** – To add to the words Maggie Tohill has written about these projects run by Jestaminute Community Theatre, I worked with the Hive last summer to create audio clips for a school resource which encourages children to use oral history as a historical source for their local study on Redditch. The material covers the town's many manufacturing industries (springs, needles, motorbikes, car and aeroplane parts etc), the social side of work, immigration, mechanization etc from the 1940s to 1960s. The second project looks at the creation of Redditch New Town in 60s to 80s from different perspectives.

**The Witleys Oral History Group** – This group of volunteers from Great and Little Witley in West Worcestershire has been collecting interviews for the past 3 years from people who've lived and worked in the area all or most of their lives (HLF funded). They have created a website <http://witleysoralhistory.org/> and asked me to produce narrated CD containing highlights from the interviews on five themes; farming, WW2, school days, village businesses and the Redmarley Hill Climb. The group held a wonderful launch event in June. The CD is in production and will be available soon.

**Ombersley Remembers...** A quick mention of this group in a small Worcestershire village who are being very inventive with an HLF WW1 project. Essentially the project is researching what the village was like 100 years ago, involving local people, businesses and the primary school. We are incorporating some oral history with the children, as well as numerous other engaging activities (including audio and recording).

**Home of Metal – Celebrating music from the Black Country.** Despite my knowledge of Heavy Metal being minimal, I thoroughly enjoyed training a diverse group of volunteers collecting memories as part of this HLF funded project, delivered by Capsule in Birmingham <http://homeofmetal.com/the-project/> Well worth a look at their online archive!

**Museum of Carpet, Kidderminster.** In April I worked with the Museum of Carpet in Kidderminster, running training and interviewing sessions for a dementia group and local school. Both groups recorded memories and experiences of those who had worked in the carpet industry. In St Mary's Primary, all the Year 5's were involved in oral history workshops and conducted interviews with a weaver and a picker. A smaller group of children then went to the museum to conduct a further 4 interviews with other people in the trade. Their interviews are now on an audio player in the museum.

**It was only Rock and Roll.... Unlocking Malvern's Hidden Musical Heritage.** This project is just starting out to record memories of those who played at or attended more than 300 rock concerts at the Winter Gardens in Malvern in the 60s, 70s and 80s. The project, led by Clare Gillam who used to work at BL, has got some initial funding from local grants, has raised great interest in the area, with people unearthing posters, tickets, newspaper cuttings of gigs they attended (The Who, The Jam, Pink Floyd, Black Sabbath, AC/DC... ). Volunteer interviewers will collect oral histories for an online archive and exhibition.



**The Look Back Project, Clun, Shropshire** – A quick update on the HLF funded **Look Back Heritage Project** which I was involved with last year. This year the group has edited the recordings done by volunteers and school children about the Clun area in the 1950s, and memories of the playwright John Osborne living there towards the end of his life. These have been broadcast on BBC Radio Shropshire and uploaded to the website. [www.osborneandafter.org](http://www.osborneandafter.org)

## **Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service at the Hive (Maggie Tohill)**

For much of the year I have continued to be seconded to externally funded archive cataloguing projects, which means I have less time to work on oral history projects. I have nevertheless continued to organise oral history work for our volunteers and work placements. This continues to be a very useful way of getting material transcribed, checked and summarised. I have been particularly lucky this year to recruit a regular volunteer to summarise and keyword index all our WW2 interviews. This will enable me to create online individual catalogue entries for each interview.

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

JCT's '**The Start of Something Big**' project mentioned in previous years has now come to an end. This HLF funded project aimed to investigate the industrial heritage of Redditch during the new town development years. Our Learning and Outreach team helped train volunteers and schoolchildren to interview local residents and capture their reflections on the changes to the town. Local playwright Andy Higgitt also penned a radio play 'Redditch 1964 – the start of something big' as part of the activities. Themed audio clips will be available on Jestaminute's website during 2018 as part of an education resource for schools. Our staff have also re-adapted the earlier 'Springs, Batteries & Bikes' key stage 2 study of Redditch industries with audio clips to complement existing web resources created during the previous Engineering the Past project.

### **Lending an Ear**

Lending an Ear was an Arts Council project using sound in art in Worcestershire Libraries. Different groups of library users took part and the artwork produced included music, drama, poetry and audio recordings. For instance at the Hive staff used interviews created whilst our building was being built and the artist involved then created a musical score to go with the interviews. For access to the artworks created at the various libraries see: <http://www.thehiveworcester.org/lending-an-ear>

### **Eastham Bridge project**

The collapse of Eastham Bridge near Tenbury Wells in May 2016 had a significant impact on the rural communities in the area. During the construction of the new bridge WAAS was commissioned by the County Council to record audio interviews with local farmers and residents on the agricultural and industrial past of the Teme Valley. A sample of these interviews will be available at the Eastham Crossings blog: <https://easthamcrossings.wordpress.com/>

### **Histories at Hobmoor**

This project run by Mercurial Arts Charity is funded by HLF and Hobmoor Hub. It aims to enable adults and children in Yardley, Birmingham to learn about their heritage and share stories of moving to and living in the area. Over the summer children from Oasis Academy Hobmoor interviewed and recorded memories and oral histories of their family and local community members, explored local heritage and worked with poets and writers. In the autumn it is planned for a group of adults to interview local councillors, teachers and members of the public. There will be a website to share the stories collected where people can also comment and add their own stories. An Augmented Reality app will give a walking tour of the area see [www.historiesathobmoor.mercurialarts.co.uk](http://www.historiesathobmoor.mercurialarts.co.uk)

## Yorkshire

### **SOUTH YORKSHIRE (Michelle Winslow, Sam Smith, John Tanner)**

The projects below are examples of work being undertaken in South Yorkshire. Oral history in Barnsley is particularly strong at present, with good news received from Barnsley Museums:

**Barnsley Museums** were awarded £51,500 in April 2016 by the Heritage Lottery Fund to develop a sound and film archive through the project 'The Joy of Sound and Vision: uncovering over 100 years of Barnsley's memories'. The first year has focussed on mapping existing collections, appealing for the donation of new material, and training staff and volunteers. This was done alongside a programme to convert footage to modern formats and produce detailed catalogues. Sound collections include an oral history archive compiled by Brian Elliott. His interviews with Barnsley politicians, centenarians, sportspeople and those who worked in local industries go back over 30 years, and include memories of the 19th century. The project has also worked closely with the Yorkshire Film Archive (YFA) to curate 'Barnsley on Film' – a 90 minute long film show featuring films from YFA and Barnsley collections. The project is focussing on making new collections available online and in the 'Experience Barnsley Museum' galleries and is helping to ensure the long-term preservation of film and sound that otherwise might not have survived.

**Dearne Valley Landscape Partnership** (DVLP) is a five year programme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund working to protect, preserve and enhance the unique and varied landscape of the Dearne Valley in South Yorkshire. The DVLP has provided support to a number of groups in the area to develop their skills in oral history. This has resulted in the Barnsley Main Heritage Group developing a project to record the stories of ex-miners in the area. A local farmer is also in the process of developing a project to record the memories of those who worked on farmland in the area.

<http://discoverdearne.org.uk/projects/showcasing-local-art-events-dearne/>

**Barnsley Football Club** reaches its 130th anniversary this year and is also marking 20 years since the club's promotion to the Premier League. These

anniversaries present a unique opportunity for the rich heritage of the club to be highlighted, explored and shared. Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's Creative Minds initiative, 'Reds in the Community', through its 'Our Club, Our Ground, Our Past, Our Future' project, is inviting supporters and the wider community to share their memories and experiences of supporting Barnsley FC.

<https://barnsleyfccommunity.co.uk/other-information/sharing-memories-barnsley-football-club/>

**The Oral History Services Project** in Sheffield Hospitals reached its 10th anniversary this year. The project works with people with life-threatening or potentially life-limiting conditions within Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust to create audio recordings that they can share with family and friends. Much of the project's work takes place in palliative care, dementia, cancer and renal services and recordings are archived with the University of Sheffield Special Collections Library. The project runs under the auspices of The School of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Sheffield. In 2017 the project has been funded by the League of Friends and Sheffield Town Trust. The project collaborates with St Luke's Hospice, Sheffield, which similarly offers opportunities for people using its services to preserve their voices and memories.

<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/snm/research/oralhistory/main>

**The Witness Project** in the University of Sheffield's History Department continues to collect and preserve Sheffield's past using oral history. Interviews are carried out by history students in their second year who recruit participants from the local community. This year Witness has been interviewing people to explore Jewish experiences of growing up in Sheffield during and after the Second World War.

<http://www.witness.group.shef.ac.uk/full-list-witness-oral-histories/>

**Greenhill Oral History Project**, a community initiative in Sheffield, has been recording memories of people, now in their 80's who grew up in the village and surrounding areas. The material collected will be archived by the History Society at Greenhill Library.

<http://www.greenhill-library.org/oral-history-project/>

**Sheffield Feminist Archive Project** is documenting the struggle for gender equality by capturing the stories and memories of individuals involved in feminist and gender equality activism, past and present. Interviews will be deposited at Sheffield Archives for long-term access and preservation.

<https://sheffieldfeministarchive.wordpress.com/oral-history-project/>

Last but not least in this selection, the village of Elsecar has recently been awarded Heritage Action Zone status by Historic England, one of only ten in the country. As part of three years' of activity to fully understand the village's heritage and its potential, local people, former employees of its collieries and workshops, are taking

part in reminiscence and memory activities and strolls, being interviewed and contributing to the creation of a new sound archive.

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE (Van Wilson)**

Our main project this year has been the new edition of 'The Story of Terry's', one of the big chocolate factories in York which closed in 2005 and has an interesting story since that time, with all the original site, including five listed buildings, now being built on. I carried out more oral history interviews and as well as the updated book, I also edited extracts from 15 of the interviews, which included three members of the well-known Terry family, two of whom are no longer with us, to create a complimentary hour long CD with the book.

The other project, on the history of life 'below stairs' at the York Mansion House, (which is second only to that of London), is not complete as the House has been closed down for over 18 months for renovation. Problems with builders held up the work and so the oral history and the publication have been held in abeyance. We hope this will be produced in 2018.

We hope to run an oral history project on the history of printing in York during 2018, possibly in conjunction with the central library. This will depend on funding.

We continue to digitise our collection, and as we are a small group this is a long-term pursuit, but we have two excellent volunteers. We have a section of a small office in the city, where interested people can view or listen to the material but all our work depends on funding. We now have 950 recordings and approaching 9000 photographs. The plan is for more oral history extracts to be available on our website.

## **Wales**

### **WALES (Beth Thomas, Emily Hewitt, Andrew Edwards, Julia Fallon)**

After being somewhat uncoordinated in its network activity over the past few years, Wales is now aiming towards putting things right by establishing a Welsh oral history network. During last summer, the OHS network representatives for Wales – Beth Thomas (St Fagans National Museum of History), Andrew Edwards (Bangor University), Julia Fallon (Cardiff Metropolitan University) and Emily Hewitt (Swansea University) - got together with Hazel Thomas (National Library of Wales), Berian Elias and Gruffydd Jones (People's Collection Wales), Siân Williams (Llafur) and Owen Collins (HLF Wales) to discuss what we could do collectively to better support oral history in Wales.

In recent years there has been a significant increase in Welsh oral history activity, placing a high demand for training for community groups and in Higher Education. Of all the applications HLF Wales receive for funding, about 75% of applications contain some element of oral history. However, not all of these projects came to fruition, or to the attention of the OHS, and quality of output was variable. The number of OHS members in Wales was very low, suggesting that it was not seen as the primary source of information and support in Wales. It was agreed that an oral history network should be set up in Wales to support individuals, groups and institutions who work with oral history, to promote best practice in the creation, collection, preservation and access of oral history in Wales (in both English and Welsh), and boost OHS membership. A further

meeting is being arranged for November, with a view to organizing an event/workshop in 2018.

Currently HLF Wales are funding a number of oral history projects related to mental health: Mencap Cymru's *Hidden Now Heard* project featured in the 2016 OHS conference; Abertawe Bro-Morgannwg University Local Health Board is working on *A Mental Picture: Celebrating the History of Cefn Coed Hospital 1931 to 2017*; while West Wales Association of Mental Health is involved in *Discovery - the forgotten Memories of the Asylum*. Other projects include: Wales for Peace, Welsh Centre for International Affairs; Curry Chips and Cappuccino - the Diverse Food Heritage of Swansea, Ethnic Youth Support Team; Crumlin Navigation Colliery Oral History Project, Glofa Navigation Cyf; Preserving the heritage of Durga Puja festival and clay image making in Wales, Wales Puja Committee; *Legacy of Longfield*, memories of a disability charity in Swansea.

The year 2020 marks the 100 year anniversary of the opening of Swansea University. As part of its centenary celebrations the University is embarking on an ambitious oral history project entitled 'Voices of Swansea University, 1920-2020: An Oral History'. The aim of the project is to record and capture the memories and experiences of a hundred individuals who have studied and/or worked at Swansea University between 1920 and 2020. The interviews and research are being carried out by Dr Sam Blaxland (Centenary Postdoctoral Researcher) with support from staff in the Department of History, and the Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University. As of September 2017, fifty two interviews have been conducted and deposited to the Richard Burton Archives.

The Gower Landscape Partnership, supported by the City and County of Swansea, is conducting a range of heritage activities, including an oral history project, with an aim to inspire and help local people learn more about and preserve the history and heritage of Gower. Funding was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund, with additional funding and support from Rural Development Plan for Wales 2007-13, Natural Resources Wales and the National Trust. The 'Gower Landscape Partnership Oral History Project' is aiming to collect over thirty interviews with people who have lived and/or worked in Gower. This project will record Gower's industrial and cultural heritage, and will explore what Gower means to those who have lived through and observed its history.

Ten volunteer interviewers have been recruited and have received training by an accredited Oral History Society/British Library trainer. The project is being coordinated by Emily Hewitt, and the recordings and associated documentation will be deposited to the West Glamorgan Archive Service, Swansea in spring 2018.

## Scotland

### **Glasgow/Strathaven (Alison Chand)**

This year, in my role as regional networker, I have dealt with enquiries from the following groups and individuals:

- Ken Laurie (Falkland Community Development Trust): Ken was interested in training volunteers in oral history skills to carry out interviews in the town of Falkland, and signed up some of his volunteers on a training day at the Scottish Oral History Centre at the University of Strathclyde.

- **Molly Brown:** Molly enquired about a project to open up the Highhouse colliery engine house and winding gear (in Ayrshire) for the benefit of the local community. A key element of the project will be working with ex-miners and their families (most of the local population) to record their experiences of working down the mine, and other associated memories. Molly indicated that the project is at an early stage but has secured Heritage Lottery Funding to do a feasibility study and plan for what could happen on the site. Community Enterprise will be working to undertake some research to scope out what could work, what is needed, and what would be of benefit to the community. Molly wanted advice on how oral history might fit into the project and possible training that volunteers/staff could undertake.

In my personal oral history related work this year, I have continued to teach at the Scottish Oral History Centre, and also launched my book (published in July 2016 with Edinburgh University Press), entitled *Masculinities on Clydeside: Men in Reserved Occupations During the Second World War* at the SOHC. In addition, I have worked for various projects undertaking freelance transcribing, summarising and interviewing work, including Union Canal Unlocked (editing interviews about the Union Canal), the History of Parliament Trust (conducting interviews with ex-MPs) and Scots Atlas (conducting interviews with people in different areas of Scotland to explore sentence construction in Scotland's regions, towns and villages).

## Northern Ireland

### **Belfast (Dr Anna Bryson)**

In the course of the past year I have, in addition to my own research projects, provided consultancy support to a number of groups that have approached me directly in my capacity as OHS networker for Northern Ireland. I also continue to closely monitor and contribute to debates concerning the Oral History Archive proposed as part of a package of measures designed to deal with the legacy of conflict. I am actively involved in two local oral history networks – the Queen's University Oral History, Technology and Ethics hub (QUOTE) and the Stories Network, co-ordinated by the local NGO, Healing Through Remembering. A brief overview of this work is set out below.

### **Oral History Archive proposed under terms of Stormont House Agreement**

In the months following the Stormont House Agreement of 2014 I worked as part of a team of academics, civil society activists and lawyers who wished to inform and shape official consultations on the agreed legacy mechanisms. My role was to lead on the Oral History Archive, liaising as necessary with a wide range of oral history experts and with the political parties involved in the negotiations, senior officials from the British and Irish governments and the relevant devolved departments. We developed and launched a comprehensive 'model bill' but progress stalled in late 2015 amidst concerns about information deemed detrimental to national security being potentially withheld from victims' families in

contravention of their human rights. Throughout 2016 and 2017 I have nonetheless continued to call attention to the value of the Oral History Archive and of the importance of ensuring that it is designed to function optimally. In the course of various [blogs](#), [articles](#) and [media appearances](#) and in a report published by the [Conference of Irish Historians in Britain](#) (following a specially convened roundtable at Hertford College, Oxford, in October 2016), I have argued in favour of a diverse and representative steering committee which could both hold the proposed management structure to account and collectively enable sensible, flexible and imaginative means of working with and through existing groups, including those working in the creative arts. I am currently consulting with a range of Victims and Survivors organisations to explore how existing oral history training programmes might be adapted to meet the specific needs of our post-conflict society. These efforts will intensify if, as recently intimated by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, we now progress to a public consultation phase ahead of legislation passing through Westminster.

### QUOTE

The Queen's University Oral History, Technology and Ethics hub ([QUOTE](#)) was launched at Queen's University Belfast in March 2017. Since then we have organised numerous symposiums and seminars and have provided advice and support to a wide range of oral history projects including the Ballinascreen Commemoration Committee, the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education and the Ulster Rugby Association. As well as drawing together the many academics across Queen's who engage with oral testimony, the hub has provided a focal point for collaboration with organisations such as the Ulster Museum, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the local BBC and the Dealing with the Past NGO, Healing Through Remembering. Perhaps most gratifyingly it has helped to deepen the existing collaborative relationship between the Oral History Network of Ireland and the Oral History Society. This is reflected in plans for the [2018 joint annual conference of the Oral History Society and the Oral History Network of Ireland](#). This event is being co-organised by QUOTE and takes place at Queen's University Belfast on 28-29 June 2018 under the banner of 'Dangers Oral Histories: Risks, Responsibilities & Rewards'.

In the course of the past year I have worked as consultant and mentor to two HLF-funded oral history projects. The first is led by [Belfast Interface Project](#) and focuses on the 'peace walls' or interface barriers in the Short Strand / Inner East area of Belfast. This archive is nearly complete, with exhibitions and publications on track for completion in Spring 2018. The second was created in 2016 by the [Maghera Historical Society](#) and Heritage and Cultural Centre. Directed by James Armour and Maeve O'Neill, this project set out to record oral histories of farming practices in and around Maghera during the mid-twentieth century. Through the prism of five carefully selected case-studies it captured first-hand recollections of a way of life that has undergone radical transformation in recent years. The original oral recordings are now archived in the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum. Other outputs include ten exhibition panels, a book, video, and webpage: <http://www.maghera-heritage.org.uk/category/maghera-roots/>. The latter will continue to grow and develop as further information comes to light. In addition to these projects with which I have been directly involved, fellow members of the **Stories Network** set up by the NGO **Healing Through Remembering** have provided the following updates:

### **RUC George Cross Foundation**

While the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Foundation is not currently collecting stories from former serving officers, the archive is publicly available to researchers and students and the Foundation is currently exploring creative ways of ensuring that the stories collected can reach a wider audience. Building upon the success of the *Crows on the Wire* project (in the course of which the Jonathan Burgess wrote a play based on interviews with retired police officers), the Foundation developed a partnership with the International Police Association, An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) and Diversity Challenges to collect oral testimonies from former police officers on both sides of the Irish border. These formed the basis for a play titled *Green and Blue* written by Dr Laurence McKeown and produced by [Kabosh Theatre](#). The play has been performed in venues across the island of Ireland and has also toured in Great Britain and mainland Europe (including opening the Dresden Arts Festival in June). It will tour again this month with performances in (amongst others) The Seamus Heaney Centre, Bellaghy, the Brian Friel Theatre, Belfast, and a special performance commissioned by the International Fund for Ireland. In other news from the Foundation, Roger McCallum has contributed to a number of oral history projects including a documentary titled *In Dialogue* for the San Sebastián International Film Festival (2016). This was screened at the 2017 Belfast Human Rights Film Festival and provided the platform for a cross-community panel discussion with contributors (including Roger McCallum) which I chaired.

### **Diversity Challenges**

In addition to the work outlined above in connection with the *Green and Blue* project, [Diversity Challenges](#) has developed a toolkit for International Sites of Conscience, reflecting their experience of the ethical challenges of collecting the oral histories of former police officers. This toolkit will be particularly helpful to members of Sites of Conscience who wish to unlock sensitive and hitherto hidden stories of the past. Diversity Challenges has also worked with the Bridging Ages group to develop the concept of Applied Heritage. By way of example, a project focusing on the impact of the 1974 Ulster Workers Council strike on a local community in Armagh has just been completed. The oral history interviews and supporting material was subsequently used to develop a piece of theatre in which participants relived the stories recorded to recreate the impact of the strike on this local community. As part of my work as a Director of [Diversity Challenges](#) I have also recently co-written a new HLF grant application for an oral history of detective policing in Northern Ireland.

### **The Northern Ireland Mixed Marriages Association**

The deadline is now impending for volunteer contributors for a new book focusing on individuals from mixed marriages who left Northern Ireland. The paperback, with the working title 'Exiles for Love', will give at least six couples the opportunity to recall their experience of prioritising love over traditional allegiances (and in many instances thus severing family ties). NIMMA Chairman Ken Dunn has praised the courage of those who have volunteered to date stating: 'It takes a special kind of person to put his or her head above the parapet and talk about what has been for so long a taboo subject and I have nothing but admiration for those who have pledged their support. We have been relatively successful in attracting around half a dozen contributors, but are actively seeking even more volunteer couples to make the book as comprehensive as possible. I would urge such couples to get in touch with their stories.' Those who have contributed to date include couples now living as far away as South Africa and New Zealand. The project is designed to



reinforce the message of reconciliation underscoring NIMMA's first two books, 'Mixed Emotions' and 'Both Sides Now'.

### **Prisons Memory Archive**

The [Prisons Memory Archive](#) (PMA) is a collection of 175 filmed walk-and-talk recordings with those who had a connection with Armagh Gaol and the Maze and Long Kesh Prison during the conflict in and about Northern Ireland. A major development for this project in the past year is the award of a grant of £500,500 from the HLF, in partnership with the Public Records Office NI. This grant is designed to facilitate the 'Preservation, Accessibility and Engagement' of the 300+ hours of audio-visual recordings contained within the PMA archive.

### **Forthspring Inter Community Group**

[Forthspring's 5 Decades Project](#) continues to collect stories based on individual's experience of living through the recent conflict. Although funding has been significantly reduced in recent times, stories continue to be collected and transcribed and the organisation is currently preparing to update their website with additional interviews and information. <http://www.forthspring.org/5-decades-project.html> Looking ahead, this project hopes to develop a further publication to complement *Talking about the Troubles*, copies of which are still available.

### **Conclusion**

It will be clear from this snapshot that a wealth of oral history work is under way in Northern Ireland – within, across, and between universities, community groups, the museum and archives sector, and the creative arts. Funding for community and voluntary groups nonetheless remains a major challenge, as does the resolution of outstanding concerns relating to the Oral History Archive proposed under the terms of the Stormont House Agreement.

## **2018 ORAL HISTORY SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**2018 Oral History Conference:** Dangerous Oral Histories: Risks, Responsibilities and Rewards

**Venue:** Riddel Hall, Queen's University Belfast, 185 Stranmillis Road, Belfast BT9 5EE

**Date:** Thursday 28 and Friday 29 June 2018

**Call for papers now:** <http://www.ohs.org.uk/conferences/belfast-2018/>