

CURRENT BRITISH WORK

EAST OF ENGLAND

■ CAMBRIDGESHIRE HIDDEN HERITAGES

'Hidden Heritages' is a new oral history project led by Hadithi CIC. From the press release:

'Hadithi CIC have received a grant of £98,895 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a new intergenerational oral history project, "Hidden Heritages", which will connect students in Cambridgeshire with South Asian heritage and migration stories through training in oral history techniques. In addition, the project will create digital and learning resources for teachers, as well as produce digital and in-museum exhibitions.

'Using money raised by National Lottery players, the National Lottery Heritage Fund supports projects that connect people and communities with the UK's heritage. The team will deliver heritage and oral history training to nearly 250 students, to enable them to discover local and everyday migration history. Some students will partake in the advanced training course, which will delve deeper into oral history interviewing techniques, and participate in hands-on interviewing.

'Building upon the success of Hadithi CIC's previous



'Hidden Heritages' community event. Courtesy of Hadithi CIC.

intergenerational oral history project, "Hidden Heritages Cambridgeshire", delivered in 2022, this new project will reach a wider audience by partnering with a local secondary school, Sawston Village College. The team will engage Year 8 and 9 students through a bespoke programme of training to bring topics currently under-represented to the classroom. Stories of Cambridgeshire's South Asian population have gone untold and unacknowledged for generations, which is why Hadithi CIC seeks to bring these to the foreground in

this ambitious project.'

Maya Parmar, Hadithi CIC director, said: 'We are thrilled to have received this support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, we are excited to be able to develop previous project work in the Cambridgeshire region, upskilling young people and capturing the rich and diverse heritage of the county. At Hadithi CIC we are particularly passionate about revealing and preserving stories from the margins, and in this case, South Asian voices.'

Sarah Jackson-Buckley, head of history at Sawston Village College, said: 'Sawston Village College is very excited to take part in the "Hidden Heritages" project. While local history is already an important part of our curriculum, we are particularly excited that this project will give our pupils the opportunity to work closely with heritage organisations and historians to enrich their understanding of the subject outside the classroom. We hope that "Hidden Heritages" will help us develop their interest in connecting with the local community and further inform our teaching of oral history.'

See Current British Work in *Oral History*, vol 51, no 1 (Spring 2023) for information about Hadithi CIC's previous project, 'Hidden Heritages Cambridgeshire'.

● Further information: Dr Maya Parmar, email maya@hadithi.co.uk, website <https://hadithi.co.uk/projects-1>, Instagram @hadithi.stories, Twitter/X @HadithiStories

EAST MIDLANDS

LEICESTERSHIRE EAST MIDLANDS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

Colin Hyde shares this update from the East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA) based at the University of Leicester:

'EMOHA's project, "Sounds for the Future", funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, has finished. We have digitised and catalogued many old and new recordings from across the East Midlands, created web exhibitions, given talks and training sessions, and worked with over forty volunteers who have contributed to all aspects of the project. Information about the project can be found on the EMOHA website.

'As part of "Sounds for the Future", we have completely preserved the oral history collections at Northampton Central Library. These were created in the 1980s and 1990s and cover both

Northampton and villages in the county. We have also preserved several collections from the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. These include a collection of interviews with 150 local women, a collection of recordings with members of Leicester's Caribbean communities and recordings about the Century Theatre. We have also accepted collections of evangelical sermons recorded in Leicester in the 1950s and 1960s, local and national folk music from the 1980s and local wildlife recordings from the past fifty years.

'Training and support have been given to a variety of groups including for an oral history of Loughborough Bell Foundry; a project recording forty years of Diwali celebrations in Leicester; Aveland Archive in South Lincolnshire; Mosaic 1898, a Leicester disability charity; and Deep Roots, Tall Trees who are exploring the arts in Corby, Northamptonshire.'

Past project updates relating to 'Sounds for the Future' featured in Current British Work in *Oral History*, vol 51, no 1 (Spring 2023) and vol 51, no 2 (Autumn 2023).

● Further information: Colin Hyde, email emoha@le.ac.uk, website <https://le.ac.uk/emoha>, blog <https://eastmidsoha.home.blog>

UK SOUTH ASIAN DIGITAL ARCHIVE

The UK South Asian Digital Archive (UKSADA) was launched on 18 October 2024 at the Phoenix in Leicester. UKSADA aims to

preserve, digitise and make accessible archives relating to the experiences of South Asian communities and their contributions to the UK. The project will initially focus on the East Midlands region and include a range of archive materials such as oral history recordings, film footage, photographs, documents, newspaper clippings and correspondence. UKSADA will provide access to digitised collections via an online platform and through outreach activities. The archive also plans to work in partnership with institutions and community groups, and will deliver exhibitions, events and educational resources relating to the collections. The press release provides further information about the launch event and local support for UKSADA:

'The event, hosted by the BBC's Kamlesh Purohit, began with a welcome from Nisha Popat, chair of UKSADA, who outlined the organisation's mission to digitise and preserve the stories, experiences and contributions of South Asian communities across the UK. "Through the UK South Asian Digital Archive we aim to bridge the past and future, fostering understanding and appreciation of the invaluable role South Asians have played in shaping British society."

'Colonel Richard Hurwood, representing the Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire, expressed pride in supporting the project at the event. He highlighted how the city and county are shaped by various

UKSADA launch event. Photo: J Nandha Photo and Cinematography.





UKSADA launch event. Photo: J Nandha Photo and Cinematography.

cultures, with the South Asian diaspora playing a significant role in the UK's social, cultural and economic prosperity. "I hope the experiences of South Asian communities are preserved for generations through the stories and artefacts shared by individuals. It's crucial to recognise the past and preserve heritage, so future generations can learn about the history of the South Asian experience. We must honour the stories of countless individuals to ensure their history and experiences are not lost."

'Leicester City Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby addressed the audience, highlighting the significance of the UK South Asian Digital Archive and underscoring its vital role in preserving the histories of Leicester and the wider UK. He reflected on the celebrations and remembrances held two years ago in the city, marking the expulsion of Ugandan Asians and acknowledging the journeys of communities that arrived in Leicester before and after that pivotal moment. Mayor Soulsby emphasised that preserving these narratives is crucial for understanding the rich cultural tapestry of the city and ensuring that future generations can learn from the past.

'While she did not speak at the event, MP Shivani Raja shared her support, stating, "I am excited to support the UK South Asian Digital Archive project! As the

daughter of immigrants, I know how important it is to preserve the stories that shaped us. This project will give future generations a chance to connect with our shared heritage and celebrate the diversity that makes our community so special. I am proud to see this work happening right here in Leicester."

'The programme featured a keynote speech by award-winning filmmaker Ruhi Hamid, who reflected on the power of storytelling in preserving cultural legacies, and a presentation by Pippa Virdee, professor of South Asian history, titled "Preserve, Share, and Narrate: Creating Digital Histories". Virdee emphasised the role digital archives play in ensuring the accessibility and longevity of community stories.

'The event also included a panel discussion moderated by Kamlesh Purohit of the BBC, titled "Stories That Should Be Told", which explored the importance of documenting South Asian experiences in the UK. The panel featured Jiten Anand, Kartar Singh Bring, Maansi Kalyan, Sheherbano Syed and Surya Yadla.

'The event concluded with a networking session and the unveiling of a mini exhibition, "Stories That Should Be Told", which delves into migration experiences and highlights voices often overlooked in mainstream narratives. The exhibition captures UKSADA's mission to challenge stereotypes and celebrate the diverse histories of British South Asians.'

● Further information: Nisha Popat, telephone 07813 164887, email info@uksada.co.uk, website www.uksada.co.uk

LONDON

A HISTORY OF GALOP

Olivia Aarons, Royal Holloway, introduces her PhD research, 'A History of Galop':

'Using a combination of oral history interviewing and archival materials, the project seeks to write a history of Galop, the UK's anti-abuse LGBTQ charity. More widely, the project will investigate how LGBTQ communities in the UK have responded to different forms of anti-LGBTQ violence over the past forty years, from 1982 (Galop's conception) to the present day.

'In June 1982, Galop came into existence as "The Gay London Police Monitoring Group", born out of discussions that the Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE)'s Police Group were having about a need for a police monitoring group to address specific issues that lesbians and gay men experienced with regards to the police. These discussions reflected wider conversations taking place in London about the state of policing, particularly the efficiency of policing and the abuse of police power. Today, Galop define themselves as "the UK's LGBT+ anti-abuse charity". Their remit covers offering support to victims and survivors of various forms of abuse and violence, ranging from domestic abuse,

sexual violence, hate crime and so-called conversion therapies.

‘Despite this forty-year legacy of LGBTQ advocacy and fighting violence, Galop is largely absent from modern British queer history and a focussed study of its history is long overdue. This project, therefore, will serve to fill this gap in our LGBTQ history and to use Galop as a prism for understanding anti-LGBTQ violence, acts and networks of resistance, and the shifting relationship between LGBTQ individuals and the state.

‘Oral history interviews are currently being conducted with Galop’s past and present employees, volunteers and service users. Interviews will be archived at Bishopsgate Institute upon completion of the project. If you know of anyone who may have been involved with Galop, in any capacity and at any point over its forty-year history, please feel free to get in touch.

‘This project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, through Techné DTP, and is supervised by Dr Amy Tooth Murphy and Dr Alex Windscheffel at Royal Holloway. It is also being conducted in collaboration with Stef Dickers at the Bishopsgate Institute.’

● Further information:

Olivia Aarons, email olivia.aarons.2022@live.rhul.ac.uk

COVID-19 ORAL HISTORIES

On 13 May 2024 the Royal College of Physicians of London (RCP) hosted a seminar on ‘Covid-19 oral histories: recording the experiences of healthcare workers during the pandemic’. The seminar coincided with the exhibition, ‘Fortitude: Healthcare Workers’ Experiences of the COVID-19 Pandemic’. Presentations were given by Daisy Cunynghame, RCP Edinburgh; Alison Chand, ‘Rainbows in the Windows’ project; Felicia El Kholi, Association of Anaesthetists; Stephanie Snow, University of Manchester; Jane Bruton, ‘HIV Healthcare Workers Project’; the National Life Stories team from the British Library; and Sarah Lowry,

who organised the seminar and spoke about the RCP’s collecting programme as well as the ‘Fortitude’ exhibition.

Dr Sarah E Hayward attended the seminar and has compiled an overview of the day. She writes:

‘I attended the seminar as an interested outsider with my own oral history project on the horizon. My day at the RCP proved a stark reminder of how raw and recent the pandemic still feels. The seminar was a much-needed testament to healthcare workers across the country: to their inspiring, harrowing, poignant and funny stories and to their stoicism, resilience, adaptability and generosity of spirit in incredible circumstances.

‘The team of staff and volunteers at the University of Manchester were nearing the end of a nationwide oral history project marking seventy years of the NHS when the pandemic struck. With a strong network of participants, and a well-developed working framework already established, they were perfectly placed to react swiftly to extend their ongoing work. However, as project lead Stephanie Snow explained, the decision was not taken lightly. In the midst of a global crisis, would it be ethical to continue? Could they adequately safeguard their staff and volunteers? How would they collect oral interviews remotely?

‘The overwhelming consensus from the team was to push on, and new working practices were tested, refined and adopted. Exhausted and overwhelmed healthcare workers offered time they could barely afford because they staunchly believed in the importance of the project and, as unprecedented global events unfolded, they documented their experiences. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of all those involved, the University of Manchester’s “NHS Voices of Covid-19” project captured an unprocessed snapshot of the pandemic as it happened.

‘Felicia El Kholi from the Anaesthesia Heritage Centre spoke

of a similar assemblage of interviews captured in the moment. Very early on in the Covid-19 pandemic, it became clear that anaesthetists and intensivists would play a pivotal role in patient care. In response, the Heritage Centre developed a new contemporary collecting policy, including a substantial oral history project, to document the experiences of anaesthetists in different specialisms across the country.

‘We gained a valuable perspective from Jane Bruton, who spoke about her work on the “Health Care Workers in HIV” oral history project. Having worked on both contemporary and retrospective oral history projects, Jane could attest to the importance of documenting history as it happens. Her message was simple: “if we don’t capture it now, it will be lost”.

‘Memory, emotion and reflection were key themes that had emerged for Jane’s participants. Talking about the past would trigger memories. Remembering the people, places and events from decades ago could evoke strong emotions. The act of structured reflection often helped people to make sense of their past and how it was linked to their present, and many spoke of a sense of catharsis. Throughout the day, this therapeutic aspect of the interviewee experience emerged as a recurrent theme.

‘The lockdowns and restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic were hardly conducive to collecting oral histories, and the seminar speakers revealed a variety of technological solutions to these enforced circumstances. For Daisy Cunynghame at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE), an unexpected but welcome outcome of the project was the forging of new connections between younger doctors at the College and the library and heritage teams. Daisy described her newly gained appreciation of oral interviews as an immediate, evocative and impactful record of history as it happens.

‘Mary Stewart spoke on behalf of the National Life Stories team at the British Library. As she reminded us, the after-effects of the pandemic on the population include bereavement, long Covid and mental health challenges. She also reflected on the legacy of pandemic collecting projects. “Where”, she asked, “are all the Covid-19 projects now?” Have they been concluded or are they still ongoing? Where have they been archived? Her team at the British Library created a database of Covid-19 testimony projects conducted between 2020-2022 which is available to access via the British Library Research Repository. National Life Stories interviewers are now considering how to ask about the pandemic in life story interviews. It will be fascinating to see how Covid-19 is viewed and spoken about in two or three years’ time, and whether, as Mary postulated, a new terminology has emerged around partitioning and defining the different stages of the pandemic.

‘Alison Chand spoke about her project “Rainbows in the Windows”. Conducting over a hundred remote interviews over the course of a year, she captured the experiences of parents who were bringing up very young children during the height of the pandemic. What struck me most about Alison’s presentation was the impact of her audio recordings. Even though I have worked with, and written about, sound in a museum setting, I was still caught off guard by their power and effect. In terms of emotional engagement, it is hard to express just how different the experience was between the acts of listening (to a new mother describe giving birth in a hospital during lockdown) and reading (those same words written on a screen). Interestingly, Alison noted that there was less of that sense of immediate emotion present in her follow-up interviews, which already had the padding of distance provided by the time between event and retelling.

‘In her presentation, Sarah

Lowry described the RCP London’s Covid-19 collecting project and the “Fortitude” exhibition. Like Alison, she included audio extracts in her presentation. She reminded us, however, that written testimonials – such as the personal letters and diaries that people had submitted for the “Fortitude” project – could also be incredibly moving and powerful.

‘As I mentioned above, a theme that was touched upon several times over the course of the day was the seemingly therapeutic nature of being interviewed. In her reflections on the project Sarah returned to this subject, listing it as one of the key aspects of curating Covid-19 that, for good practice, should be considered in future work.

‘Even though Covid-19 has, for many of us, receded surprisingly swiftly into a seemingly distant memory, we *all* experienced the pandemic, and its long-term effect on our physical and mental health remains to be seen. There is much to learn now, and for future generations, from the stories that have been assembled by these dedicated archivists, university staff, health workers and volunteers. I have no doubt that an incredible resource has been created by those who recognised the significance of this undertaking, and who strove, despite the many challenges involved, to collect front-line stories from the outset of the pandemic.’

Sarah E Hayward is an independent researcher and heritage professional. Her PhD explored personal stories from within Normansfield Hospital, a nineteenth-century institution for people with learning disabilities. She is currently project manager on a National Lottery Heritage Fund oral history and heritage project to mark 170 years of the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability, a research fellow at History UK, and involved in transcription and podcast-related work.

● Contact: Sarah Lowry, email sarah.lowry@rcp.ac.uk

FORTITUDE

‘Fortitude’ was an exhibition held at the Royal College of Physicians (RCP), Regents Park, from 25 September 2023 to 18 July 2024. Sarah Lowry, oral history officer for the RCP in London, writes about conducting a survey and oral history project during the Covid-19 pandemic, and how this work led to the exhibition:

‘In January 2021 the RCP Archive, Heritage Library and Museum Services (AMS) team created a survey to collect and record the experiences of RCP members and other healthcare professionals working during the Covid-19 pandemic. AMS works to preserve the history of the College and the history of medicine, using the collections to engage the public with medicine and with the RCP. This work also involves looking to the future: how can we preserve these historic collections and stories for future generations? What stories from today should we collect to prevent them being lost? As a major event in medicine, history and world culture, and with official responses to the pandemic being recorded elsewhere, the AMS collecting efforts around Covid-19 focussed specifically on recording individual healthcare professionals’ experiences of the changes, challenges and hopeful moments of working through this period.

‘We received survey responses from healthcare professionals representing over twenty medical specialties and professions, describing how their lives were transformed. In addition, we collected thirty-five oral history testimonies, once again from a wide range of practitioners, which built on the experiences shared in the surveys and enabled us to preserve spoken, as well as written, memories in our archives.

‘The objects, images, written accounts and recordings featured in the “Fortitude” exhibition were donated to the RCP via the survey, and the quotes used were taken directly from donations. The exhibition sought to improve public understanding of the realities on



'Fortitude' exhibition at the Royal College of Physicians. Photo: RCP Archive, Heritage Library and Museum Services Department.



'Fortitude' exhibition at the Royal College of Physicians. Photos: Saul Perryman.

the front line of the NHS during the pandemic by highlighting the voices of individuals who lived through this experience. The topics covered included teamwork and collaboration, the challenges of

personal protective equipment (PPE) and communication, working life during Covid, sacrifice and disruption, fighting back against the virus, and support and wellbeing.'

The following quotes are from testimonies collected as part of the project:

'I was proud of how hard myself and my colleagues were working, but I was so ashamed of some of the things we had to do, including turning away relatives at the ward doors, and refusing people ITU [intensive therapy unit] care based on comorbidities that never would have excluded them before [...]. Some patients that I have cared for will stay with me forever and I'm honoured to be able to carry memories of them.' AE, geriatrics IMT2 (internal medicine stage 2), Midlands.

'I am sixty-five. I loved my work and planned to stay for another five years or so. When my job changed at first I felt good to be part of the huge effort made by everyone to deal with the problem. Each holiday was cancelled and I carried on working. I had no childcare commitments and could be flexible so picked up more work as people went off [...] with Covid. By September [2020] I was worn out. I retired at Christmas. The guilt is awful. I should have stayed, but I was so tired. I miss it every day.' AH, medicine and geriatrics consultant, south-west England.

Sarah continues: 'Visitors to "Fortitude" were encouraged to reflect on the stories they encountered, and we provided quiet spaces for this purpose. Postcards at the end of the gallery allowed people to leave their thoughts and healthcare professionals were encouraged to contribute to the survey if they wished to.'

'One visitor commented, "I'm not a physician, I work at the BBC. It seemed odd to carry on working with much-reduced teams. But I was very aware that we weren't on the front line. It was odd and scary, but we never had to put ourselves in harm's way. I can't adequately express how grateful I am to all the medical personnel who worked so hard and carried on hour after hour, day after day trying to keep everyone safe. Thank you for this exhibition, it's a salutary reminder.'"

The RCP Covid-19 collecting project is ongoing. If you would like to share your experience of working during the pandemic with the RCP's Covid-19 Archive, you can do so at www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/RZRW96W.

● For further information: Sarah Lowry, email sarah.lowry@rcp.ac.uk, view the online exhibition at <https://history.rcp.ac.uk/exhibitions/fortitude>

GOING TO THE DOGS

In June 2024, Wimbledon in Sporting History and educational charity digital-works presented the premiere of 'Going to the Dogs', a documentary drawing on oral history recordings about Wimbledon Greyhound Stadium. Twenty-three interviews were recorded and all are accessible online via the project website. 'Going to the Dogs' was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and hosted by AFC Wimbledon.

The project website outlines a short history of greyhound racing in London:

'Wimbledon Greyhound stadium opened in 1928 and was home to races until it closed in 2017. Over that time it was of huge importance to many in the local community with races attracting capacity crowds of 25,000 in its heyday in the 1930s and then again in the 1950s and into the 1960s. Across the country it was estimated that around seven per cent of the adult population bet on dogs each week and the huge stadium in White City could fill its 60,000 capacity.

'There were twenty-seven different greyhound race tracks in London with only two remaining to serve Londoners, Romford and Crayford. Wimbledon Stadium was the most recent to close and was famous as the home of Mick the Miller and held the Greyhound Derby for over thirty years. The site of the stadium is now occupied by AFC Wimbledon's Cherry Red Records football stadium. This project will use oral history as the primary means to research, record and share this heritage.'

Twelve people received training



Courtesy of Roger Cearns.



Photo: Steve Nash.

in oral history interviewing techniques, how to develop an oral history project, audio recording and research skills. They went on to interview people connected to the races, whether as owners, trainers, stadium workers, bookies or punters.

The full interviews will be archived with Wimbledon in Sporting History, Merton Archives and Bishopsgate Institute.

Current digital-works projects include 'Moving Away Your Dust' (www.mayd.org.uk), a schools project about waste management in

London, led in partnership with City of Westminster Archives and Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea Archives, Beautness Animation, Zoom Rockman, Vincent Burke and MoD Theatre Company; and 'Fixing Day: An Oral History of Live Musicians' Work in London's West End' (www.fixingday.org.uk), led with City of Westminster Archives and Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre.

● Further information: email info@digital-works.co.uk, website www.goingtothedogs.org.uk

JACKSONS LANE

Jacksons Lane is a community arts centre in Haringey, north London, that will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2025 with a heritage project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Throughout the year the project team will deliver an oral history project, youth engagement work, a touring exhibition, public heritage events and an archive project.

Marie Horner, oral history producer, introduces the oral history project and outlines a brief history of Jacksons Lane:

'It's a big birthday for us! Jacksons Lane is marking its fiftieth anniversary and alongside events and performances we are gathering oral histories from those who have been part of our rich history of community activism and arts engagement.'

'In 2025 we will record fifteen oral histories, forming a collection which captures the individual stories of the formation and development of Jacksons Lane from founders and activists to community members and artists.'

'The collection of oral histories will remain accessible to audiences and visitors beyond the anniversary year through Jacksons Lane's website and in-venue listening posts, a tour of libraries in Haringey during the summer and as part of the permanent archive at Bruce Castle Museum and Archive.'

'To give you a taster, Jacksons Lane was originally opened in 1905 as the Highgate Wesleyan Methodist Church. By the 1970s it had fallen into disrepair, so members and activists of the local community campaigned to

transform the building into a community hub. For the first few years, Jacksons Lane was managed and run entirely by volunteers determined to create somewhere special for people to enjoy. Not long after opening, plans were put forward to widen Archway Road. Activists linked to the venue successfully campaigned to spare Archway Road, which led to Jacksons Lane being awarded a Grade II listing and Archway Road being made a preservation area.'

'In the 1980s the theatre was renovated and re-opened to the public. Over the years we've welcomed hundreds of companies at the start of their careers such as Complicite, The Mighty Boosh, Eddie Izzard, Out of Joint and Frantic Assembly as well as Xposure, the UK's first disability arts festival. After further significant restorations in 2020, Jacksons Lane now runs a year-round programme of contemporary performance, arts participation and cultural education to ignite creativity within diverse communities. The team works tirelessly to overcome traditional barriers through art. A lot has happened in fifty years and it's incredible to have this opportunity to learn more and celebrate this heritage with others.'

For more information about the oral history project or if you have your own history with Jacksons Lane, please contact Marie. The Jacksons Lane website provides further information about upcoming performances and fiftieth anniversary activities.

● Further information: email marie@jacksonslane.org.uk, website www.jacksonslane.org.uk



LISTENING INN

Sarah Gudgin describes 'Listening Inn', an oral history project and podcast about Lincoln's Inn:

'Lincoln's Inn is one of the four Inns of Court exclusively entitled to call their members to the Bar of England and Wales. It is a thriving association of students, barristers and judges, which provides support, education and

camaraderie to members at every stage of their careers. In 2022, Lincoln's Inn celebrated the 600th anniversary of its continuous record on Black Books, although the origins of the Inn have been lost in time before that.' See <https://archives.lincolnsinn.org.uk/the-archives/the-black-books> for information on the Black Books (the minutes of the Inn's Council) and digitised records from 1422 onwards.

Sarah continues, 'As part of the 600th anniversary year celebrations, the Inn set out to capture some of the experiences, thoughts and recollections of members of the Inn. I was commissioned to carry out an oral history project. The "Listening Inn" project entailed the recording of five long-form oral history interviews, with judges and KCs who are members of the Inn. Whilst each interview reflects individual aspects of the careers of interviewees and the legal profession, they also provide a varied and fascinating insight into the workings of Lincoln's Inn and the role of the Inn in people's lives.

'Interviewee Lord Justice Singh was the first person of Asian heritage to be made a High Court judge. He described some of the challenges he faced during his career and spoke about the law being a great equaliser, an idea that has influenced him in his work both as a barrister and as a judge. Veteran Chancery barrister David Ainger reflected on his long-standing relationship with the Inn, spanning sixty-six years, as well as some of the changes he has witnessed in his practice during that time. Elspeth Talbot Rice KC spoke of the importance of truth and integrity, her career as a Chancery barrister and the significance of the history and continuity of Lincoln's Inn.

'In his interview, David Scorey KC talked about his journey from humble beginnings in Manchester to studying at Oxford and the Bar. His path required ability, application and merit. Her Honour Judge Whitehouse KC discussed leaving a successful career in the City in order to become a barrister.

In her recording she speaks about her work as Silk at the Criminal Bar, her experience as prosecutor at the second Hillsborough trial and becoming Senior Treasury Counsel and a judge.

'The long-term aim of the project, which is funded by Lincoln's Inn, is to create an ongoing archive of recordings over time, covering a wide range of Inn experiences including those of students, pupils, employees, tenants, clerks, benchers, KCs and judges.'

Oral history interviews recorded for 'Listening Inn' can be accessed at the Lincoln's Inn archive. The podcast, featuring five episodes, is available to play on the Inn's website, Soundcloud, Amazon Music and Spotify.

● Further information: email archivist@lincolnsinn.org.uk, website www.lincolnsinn.org.uk/library-archives/listening-inn-podcast

ON THE RECORD

The On the Record team writes with an update on their current projects:

'Since our last update, On the Record's "Childcare History Map" website launched in September 2024 as the culmination of "Grow Your Own", a two-year project co-ordinated by Rosa Schling. The website can be visited at childcarehistory.org.uk. It contains a map of London which highlights the almost forgotten story of campaigning and community action that called for more and



Support South Bank Poly Nursery stickers. Courtesy of Pamela Calder archive, 'Grow Your Own' archive, Bishopsgate Institute.

better childcare in the 1970s to 1980s and beyond. More about the history of childcare activism can be read in Rosa Schling's article published in the summer 2024 issue of *Women's History Today*, "In those days we occupied everything all the time": Collecting Histories of Childcare Activism".

'On the Record shared the map and some of the stories it contains at a series of family play workshops between September and November 2024. The workshops took place at eight stay-and-play groups and children's centres in London. Groups of parents/carers and childcare workers learned about the history of childcare activism, shared their own experiences and imagined what a healthy childcare ecosystem would look like. They

Sandbrook Community Playgroup. Photo courtesy of Ken and Lorraine Worpole, 'Grow Your Own' archive, Bishopsgate Institute.





Childcare Now leaflet, Jenny Williams archive, 'Grow Your Own', Bishopsgate Institute.



Nineteenth-century tintype portraits. Photo © Surrey History Centre.



Portrait of Sonas with nine hats balanced on his head, created for 'Us and Them'. Photo © Emma Brown.

used garden-themed, custom-made play materials by Eva Freeman from Play Build Play, who collaborated with Rosa Schling to create the workshops.

'The podcast series, "Childcare Voices", made as part of "Grow Your Own", was nominated for a Grassroots Production Award at the Audio Production Awards in October 2024.

'Next to be added to the childcare history map will be the Islington Nursery Strike (1984). This is the subject of a new project, "When the Nursery Workers Said No", funded by Historic England. At the time of writing (October 2024) On the Record were recruiting participants with a connection to childcare and early years education to take part in a ten-

week series of workshops. Participants will record the history of the nursery strike and work on a piece of creative audio to tell the story of the strike. The project will run until May 2025.

'From November 2024 to February 2025, Rosa Schling will be collaborating with MayDay Rooms on a short oral history project interrogating past and present student activism. Participants aged between eighteen and twenty-five will receive oral history training. They will record interviews for the MayDay Rooms archive which will be shared through a listening session at the end of the project.

'On the Record's project "Us and Them" was recently shortlisted for the photography award "Portrait of Humanity Vol. 6". This project was a collaboration with disabled artists from Freewheelers Theatre and Media Company, King's College London, and Emma Brown and Laura Mitchison from On the Record. The Freewheelers co-created oral histories and portraits exploring visual representations of physical disability in Surrey, past and present. The portraits were produced using the Victorian tintype technique, which creates a photographic image on a thin sheet of coated glass or metal.

'The "Us and Them" project was inspired by nineteenth-century archive photographs of patients taken on admission to the Epsom Cluster of psychiatric hospitals. The hospitals also housed people with learning disabilities, epilepsy and Down's syndrome, which were classified in the same way as mental illness at that time.

'The project culminated in a public exhibition at arts centre The Horton in Epsom in December 2023, where the new and historical photographs were displayed side by side with an accompanying oral history documentary. The exhibition opened to great public interest, sparking important discussions around disability and inclusion. Looking ahead, the project aims to expand with further exhibitions and creative outputs, continuing to explore the

intersection of disability activism and historical memory.’

● Further information: Rosa Schling, email info@on-the-record.org.uk, website <https://on-the-record.org.uk>

NORTH WEST

■ GREATER MANCHESTER BLACKROD REMEMBERED

Blackrod Primary School in north-west Bolton has been awarded a grant by the National Lottery Heritage Fund for ‘Blackrod Remembered’, a collaborative oral history project exploring five decades of life in the school from the 1940s to the 1990s. The press release describes the history of the Blackrod community and heritage skills developed by schoolchildren for the project, which took place in 2024:

‘Through this project, twenty-five young historians aged seven to eleven years of age, known as the “Heritage Hunters”, have worked closely with community members, past pupils, teachers and governors to uncover and record a wealth of stories and memories linked to the school’s past since the 1940s. Children have viewed local archives with a historian, and with training from the organisation Vox Pops have recorded oral histories with visitors to the school. They have focussed their learning on the education at the school, past uniforms, technology, punishment, school trips and dinners. Together with the children, community members have helped to capture the essence of what has made the school a cornerstone of the community over the years.

‘The goal of “Blackrod Remembered”, a project made possible by National Lottery players, is two-fold: to educate students about the school’s rich heritage and to strengthen the sense of community belonging. It



Children and volunteers from the ‘Blackrod Remembered’ project. Courtesy of Blackrod Primary School.

highlights the significant role that Blackrod Primary School played in the local community since it opened as a senior school in 1939 before becoming a primary in the 1960s. The school is abundant with history, a heritage which has never been explored, and which is the driver for the project.

‘Blackrod was once a major coal mining centre with most of the

working male population employed in the pits. Many collieries closed at the time of the depression in the 1930s. Scot Lane Colliery employed 700 miners but closed in 1932, bringing hardship. The school educated local children after the Depression and through the Second World War. Many children educated at the school continue to live in the local community, themselves with children and grandchildren attending the school.

‘The project concluded with an in-person and digital exhibition in May 2024. Members of the local community, the local town council including the Mayor and Mayoress of Blackrod, parents, school staff and



governors from over the years took part. During the exhibition, local community members and those who had shared oral histories with children gave personal talks. The exhibition featured photographs relating to the school's heritage, work completed by children for the project and recorded oral histories available to listen to throughout.'

Mrs Mead, head teacher at Blackrod Primary School, said: 'Thank you to National Lottery players. This grant has enabled our children to learn so much about the history of the school. The accounts from members of our local school community have brought education and have been a joy to listen to. It has been a great inter-generational project with so much shared learning and it has been a privilege to welcome members of our community into school. Thank you to everybody who has been involved.'

Sarah Burt, project lead, commented: 'Throughout the "Blackrod Remembered" project, the integral inclusion of oral histories gathered from the local community has further developed and enriched the children's understanding of the school's place within the village as a focal point of life. The bespoke training delivered by the team from Vox Pops highlighted the importance of collating the memories and experiences of the local community for future generations. It has been a pleasure to work with the children to develop their understanding.'

Ian Dryburgh, former head teacher at Blackrod Primary School and now a volunteer on the project, said: 'Being a part of this project has been an incredibly rewarding experience. Seeing the children's excitement as they uncover the stories of their school's past has been truly inspiring. So many people from across the community have given their time to share the most fantastic memories of life in the school. This project is a powerful reminder of how history can connect us all, bridging generations and strengthening our

community. I feel honoured to have contributed.'

● **Contact:** Blackrod Primary School, Bolton, BL6 5SY

PUNJABI LIVES

Faheem Chishti, Oral History Society trustee and managing director at Crescent Community Radio writes:

'Crescent Community Radio is now becoming well known for our oral history projects. "Kashmiri Lives", "East African Lives" and "Musical Memories" have all documented, recorded and archived rich oral history inter-generational interviews. "Punjabi Lives" now takes this one step further.

'The UK has a significant

population hailing from the Punjab who migrated from the 1950s onwards due to a shortage of labour in the UK. Although Punjabi culture and history is often celebrated, it is usually only through the lens of one country or religion. For example, Pakistani Punjabis celebrate Punjabi culture through a Muslim perspective, whereas Indian Punjabis often recognise Punjabi culture and heritage through a Sikh perspective. Crescent Radio's "Punjabi Lives" celebrates the lives of people of Punjabi background, no matter their religion or country of origin. We interviewed individuals of Muslim, Sikh and also Hindu religions, all hailing from the Punjab.

crescent ((radio 97.0fm))

Made possible with **Heritage Fund**

PUNJABI LIVES

Farzana Shaheen

Farzana Shaheen was born in Sahiwal in Pakistan, which is a twin town for Rochdale in the UK. She is educated to Masters degree level and used to run a training college for people going overseas on student or visit visas.

In Rochdale, Farzana lives with her husband and 2 sons and volunteers on Crescent Radio, where she presents a show called Pyaar Da Vehra (garden of love) under her stage name of Guddo Rani.

Farzana's parents were born in Pakistan. Her paternal Grandfather and Great grandmother, who lived with them, came from Gurdaspur in India. Her Great Grandmother used to tell the stories about her life in India and recalled stories of how close they were with their Sikh neighbours. She told them that they lived as friends and family and used to share food and participate in each other's family events. They came from a farming family and looked after land and animals. When they left India, they had to leave everything behind and start from scratch.

Haleema Khan

Haleema Khan is a retired State Registered Nurse and Midwife. She came to Rochdale in 1970 and applied for her husband to join her later. Due to her Nursing qualifications from Pakistan, she found work at Birch Hill Hospital quite easily and originally lived in a hostel until her husband joined her.

She recalls the story behind her getting a visa to live and work in the UK. After marriage she had moved to Karachi to live with her husband who was a Headmaster there. She recalls one day whilst on a motorbike ride with her husband, they saw a queue outside a building and went to see what was happening. They were told people were applying for visas to go abroad. They decided to try their luck and apply.

They were surprised when Haleema got a visa based on her qualifications and work in the Army but her husband's application was not approved. Haleema originally came to the UK on her own on 11th November 1970, and had to apply for her husband to join her later. She came to Rochdale as her brother in law lived there.

INDIA

Courtesy of Crescent Community Radio.

‘The project managed to complete twenty full oral history interviews as well as three group reminiscence sessions. Many of the recordings are also recorded on video. All our interviews are available as audio recordings on Mixcloud, YouTube and Facebook. We have also completed ten live radio shows to promote the project and raise awareness of heritage amongst the Punjabi community. For our final event, we produced an exhibition involving A0-size placard posters, artefacts, banners and an audio-video presentation. All of our content is archived by the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre and made available via Crescent Radio’s website and social media. A heartfelt thank you to all who contributed to the project, Tasneem Shahzad, Abdur Rehman Hussain, Zahir Siddique, Sajid Yasin, Sam Singh and Husaam Faheem.’

The ‘Punjabi Lives’ project ran from September 2022 to January 2024. Project staff and five volunteers received oral history training from the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre. Subjects covered in the interviews include Partition, migration, childhood, arriving in the UK, faith, education, work, racism, family and language. In addition to the touring exhibition and project events, the team produced a booklet to showcase the recordings which has been distributed to interviewees and project partners. The project was funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

● Further information: email faheem@crescentradio.net, website www.crescentradio.net/punjabi-lives/introduction-to-punjabi-lives

QUILTMaking

Lydia Donohue describes her research, ‘The Art of the Ordinary and the Pleasure of the Necessary: Quilting in South Manchester’:

‘I am in my final year of an Economic and Social Research



Images courtesy of Lydia Donohue, 2024.

Council-funded visual anthropology PhD at the University of Manchester, conducting a doctoral research project into communities of quiltmakers in South Manchester.

‘Over the last few years I have been speaking with, stitching and generally immersing myself within the quilting groups, recording through sound, photography and material media the storytelling that emanates from these communities of practice.

‘My central focus is the lively community building and constant flow of creative work that is produced in town halls, community centres and quilters’ living rooms every week. My work celebrates this heritage craft and the intangible cultural knowledge that is shared through teaching quiltmaking practice. Positioned as

an ethnographer, I ground my work in material knowledge and a craft/designerly way of thinking as a valuable form of knowledge production that needs to be taken seriously in academic discourse.

‘The afterlife of this project aims to reframe quilting in the social sciences and position it as a material-method in which to explore women’s history and everyday lived experiences. The outcome of this research, alongside a written thesis, will be a multimedia exhibition displaying the various visual, sonic and tactile outputs of the project at the end of 2025.’

● Further information: email Lydia.donohue@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk, website www.lydiadonohue.co.uk, social media [@lydiadonohueart](https://www.instagram.com/lydiadonohueart)

SOUTH EAST

■ ESSEX MUCH MORE THAN JUST A RESULT

Amanda Lavelle is conducting life-story interviews for her PhD at the University of Essex, “Much more than just a result”: using life history research to understand the influence of the 11+ on schoolgirls 1955-1965’. Focussing on the lives of women who were among the first generation to experience the tripartite system of the 1944 Butler Act, her thesis examines the effects of the outcome of the 11+ exam on an individual’s identity. Amanda writes:

‘The doctoral study builds on my earlier work which used oral history methodology to examine the lives of young women in the 1950s, specifically their childhood, workplace and familial relationships. I found that interviewees placed significant emphasis on education, demonstrating that as young girls they were not passive recipients, but assumed agency regarding opportunities and aspirations.

‘This new study uses a life-history methodology to focus on the impact of the 11+ as a method to differentiate pupils and to explore the extent to which this shaped girls’ sense of self and future life chances and experiences. The 11+ was a written examination taken by all children to determine the most appropriate secondary education type, either grammar school or secondary modern.

‘Focussing on girls who sat the 11+ between 1950 and 1955, a sample of fifteen self-selecting participants identified via women’s organisations provide first-hand accounts of their own educational journey. A cohort of this size allows deep exploration of memory and individual subjectivities constructed by the life-long effect of a pass or fail, enriching sociological studies of 11+ outcomes.

‘Of particular interest is the selection of memories that feature

in the life histories, revealing the level of meaning that remains attached to the recollections of young adolescents some fifty years later. Details such as narrative performance demonstrate the importance behind the experience they choose to share, most notably the highly emotive responses of the wider family to an individual’s 11+ exam result. Close attention is paid to sense of self, composure and dis-composure, blocked or unremembered memories and intersubjectivity in this feminist research.

‘Early findings show how this is not just a story of pass versus fail or good outcome versus bad. Rather, each individual experience offers a deeper complexity and nuance than the conventional 11+ discourse would suggest. The selective educational policy of the 1944 Butler Act provided an “opportunity for all” to improve their life chances through the academically rigorous grammar school system. Opponents, however, characterised the secondary modern school as a second-class provision which only reinforced the class divide and hindered the likelihood of improved social mobility.

‘In contrast to other types of school examination, the 11+ result was a marker, a “sorting-hat”, resulting in effects on these women’s subjective sense of self that they must navigate in later life. For those who failed, it is often something they have to come to terms with, or an issue that they continue to exert some level of self-protectionism over or a stigma that they attempt to erase. Similarly, those who passed and gained entry into the grammar school find that the golden ticket to higher educational opportunity and increased life chances was far from straightforward. Success at the 11+ pre-determined a level of aspiration which, if unfulfilled, created a lasting sense of disappointment at the wasted opportunity.

‘Key aspects of the study include the influence of family and

the wider social structures of class and gender in relation to post-war education that existed within their communities. Using the notions of failure and achievement, the study explores individual 11+ experiences to better understand what was gained and what was lost through the inconsistencies of educational provision. Additionally, the study questions how, based on the result of one written examination, it was possible to secure any genuine sense of belonging to the prescribed school system.

‘As someone who has also experienced educational anxiety, I am interested to understand how others have learned to adjust or cope with feelings of inadequacy, disappointment and an omnipresent fear of failure. With one full year of my PhD remaining before writing up begins, my priority lies in the deep examination of the identifiable themes within the life-history narratives: stories of class, gender, family, failure, achievement and belonging.’

Interviews recorded for this study will be archived at the University of Essex.

● Contact: Amanda Lavelle, email a.lavelle@essex.ac.uk

■ HAMPSHIRE FARNBOROUGH COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY

Stuart McBratney and Flo Stock describe the ‘Farnborough College of Technology: A Life Story’ project:

‘Oral history and life stories will form the centrepiece of events to celebrate the upcoming seventieth anniversary of construction work starting on Farnborough College of Technology’s (FCoT) main campus.

‘The interviews are part of the “Farnborough College of Technology: A Life Story” project that is being produced by University Centre Farnborough’s (UCF) Historical and Literary Society. The society, which was founded in November 2023, aims to unite current and former



Members of University Centre Farnborough's Historical and Literary Society at the group's inaugural meeting in November 2023. Photo: Steven Hunt, Farnborough College of Technology.

learners from UCF's modern history and English literature degree courses in research projects that engage the local community.

'Stuart McBratney, co-founder of the society, writes: "The collaborative nature of oral history and life-stories research aligns with the core mission of our society, which is to form links with the local community. We hope that the interviews will provide a voice to the diverse range of people who have studied at the college and capture what FCoT has meant to those who have attended and worked here. We want the project to empower local people to tell their stories and hope the interviews will also enhance the research and communication skills of our present students and alumni."

'Recordings and transcripts of interviews will be a central part of digital and physical exhibitions being designed to mark significant events in the history of FCoT in summer 2025 and autumn 2027. Throughout its history, FCoT has offered a mixture of technical, vocational and academic courses to cater for the needs of local people and employers. These courses range from GCSEs and starter apprenticeships to doctorates in environmental science.

'The experiences of mature

learners on Access to Higher Education courses are of particular interest to project co-ordinator Flo Stock: "The transformational effects of adult education and lifelong learning are well evidenced. We know that Access to Higher Education learners are more likely to study closer to home and contribute to the economic and social development of their communities, so we're interested in learning more about the social and inter-generational impact of adult learning in Farnborough over the years."

'In addition to highlighting the experiences and stories of its learners, we hope to obtain recollections about interesting events in the college's history. These include the 1967 UFO "hoax" – where a "RAG" week prank designed by FCoT apprentices gained national attention – and fundraising endeavours to rebuild the Student Union bar, which was destroyed in a fire in the 1980s.

'Twelve members of UCF Historical and Literary Society received training in oral history methodology from the Oral History Society's Sarah Lowry on 27 June 2024. Interviews began in autumn 2024. The project team plans to use content from early interviews in

an initial exhibition in summer 2025, marking seventy years since building work started on the college. In the long-term, the project team aims to create shared resources that can be used in future celebrations of the college's history and be available to future students, external researchers and members of the local community.'

● Contact: Stuart McBratney, email s.mcbratney@farn-ct.ac.uk

■ SUSSEX LIVING HISTORIES

Nicola Bengé, project manager, introduces 'Living Histories: Exploring Mental Health Narratives in Sussex':

'Mental health stories are often left untold due to stigma. Through the "Living Histories" project, running until July 2025, we aim to change that. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and NHS Charities Together, and led by Heads On, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust's charity, this initiative captures the life experiences of thirty-five mental health service users and NHS staff. It spans the closure of old asylums in the 1990s to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic.

'This project amplifies voices including those of volunteers with personal mental health experiences. Volunteers have been receiving training in oral history techniques, mental health awareness and safeguarding, ensuring they handle interviews with care and respect.

'Given the sensitive nature of the stories, safeguarding and consent are critical. Many participants have faced mental health challenges, so our approach has needed to be flexible and robust, with ongoing support from Heads On, the Mass Observation Archive and West Sussex Record Office. This ensures that the dignity and rights of each participant are upheld throughout the process.

'A key element of the project's legacy is our partnership with the Mass Observation Archive. Interviews will form part of their



'Living Histories' project, October 2024. Photo: Nicola Bengé.



Oral History training led by Sarah Lowry for 'Living Histories', October 2024. Photo: Nicola Bengé.

"Covid-19 Collection", while documenting broader changes in mental health services since the 1990s. The archive will serve as a permanent resource for future generations. We are also collaborating with the West Sussex Record Office to preserve additional materials such as photographs and ephemera.

'In addition to the oral history recordings, we are embracing creative formats to share these narratives with the public. Award-winning sound engineer Michael Umney is producing podcasts based on the interviews, allowing listeners to engage with these stories in an accessible and powerful way. A mobile exhibition,

planned for summer 2025, will travel to four venues across Sussex. Using a blend of physical displays and digital resources, including podcasts and audio snippets, this exhibition will foster understanding and conversation around mental health.

'At its core, "Living Histories" aims to empower participants. For service users, sharing their stories provides an opportunity to reclaim their narrative. For NHS staff, it offers a space for reflection, especially in the wake of the pandemic. The project gives both groups a platform to contribute to the broader history of mental health in Sussex and the UK.'

Interviews are now underway

for the project. Nicola reflects on the initial recordings: 'I have been deeply moved by the stories I've heard so far. Each one highlights the strength and perseverance of individuals who have experienced mental health services first-hand. My background in heritage and social work allows me to ensure this project remains focussed on community needs and those sharing their stories.'

● Further information: Nicola Bengé, email livinghistories@spft.nhs.uk, website www.headsoncharity.org

SOUTH WEST

■ CORNWALL MOOR TO SEA

Oral history interviews recorded for 'Moor to Sea' are now available to listen to on the project website: <https://moortosea.org.uk/> recordings. The full recordings and transcripts are archived and accessible at Kresen Kernow in Cornwall, with copies held by local museums in Looe and Liskeard. Dr Jo Buchanan describes the project, its connection to the local geography and how local communities co-produced and took part in project activities:

'The "Moor to Sea" project took place between 2021 and 2023 in the Looe Valley in south-east Cornwall. Geographically it covers sections of Bodmin Moor that are part of the Cornwall and West Devon World Heritage Site (CWDWHS), Liskeard Town, through the Looe Valley to the coastal town of Looe. The Looe Valley is rich in cultural, heritage, environmental and social history and the "Moor to Sea" project sought to capture these experiences.

'The overall project aimed to "build partnerships and capacity among heritage, environmental organisations and communities in the valley and to develop understanding and value of the natural and heritage assets of the area" (extract from project tender). Funding for the project included a grant from the National Lottery



Heritage Fund, which supports projects driven by the local “community” and promotes public access to recordings. The project was also funded by local and regional stakeholders including the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, Looe Town Council, Liskeard Council, Cornwall Heritage Trust and the CWDWHS Partnership.

‘The project aligned with current UK policy around “cultural place-making”, which refers to the role of arts, culture and heritage in shaping the place we live in the context of Levelling Up. Increasingly, oral history is being funded within place-making initiatives as a method of inclusion within planning, regeneration and re-use of historic buildings. The process is centred round observing, listening to and asking questions of the people who live, work and play in a particular space so as to understand their needs and aspirations for that space and for their community as a whole. In addition, oral history is increasingly mobilised in research to explore the interface between heritage, memory and identity. This part of “Moor to Sea” therefore wanted to capture the intangible, personal, embodied connections to place, record cultural traditions and traditional knowledge, and explore impacts from a changing world illustrating the socio-cultural



The farming community, family of interviewee Dean Marshall Tamblin. Courtesy of Dean Marshall Tamblin.

valuing of place as an emotional geography.

‘In total forty-eight individual interviews were collected and two with focus groups; the latter were in a care home. The methodology aimed to facilitate an informal chat exploring themes that emerged, but we also had some predetermined open-ended questions to help if needed. The oral histories captured a diverse complex relationship with place, covering farming, the fishing community, childhood memories, the Looe Valley railway line, Bodmin Moor, changes in the towns and concerns over coastal erosion, as well as first-hand accounts of trauma connected to

the Second World War and Covid-19. In addition, stories included much joy, a sense of community and celebrated the many traditions that people still enjoy from community choirs to ancient festive events.

‘Regional authorities spearheaded the project, but the aim of the oral history project was to create an on-the-ground, participatory process where local communities were involved in co-production. Volunteers were involved in decision-making and, importantly, sourcing people to be interviewed. Some were happy to conduct oral history interviews and were provided with training. Local

museum volunteers also received training in oral history skills, to keep collecting stories for use in future exhibitions. It was fantastic to receive donations of images and footage from local museums and interviewees for use by the project. There was also engagement work with schools, which ranged from teaching oral history to A-level students to trips to local museums, exploring the coastal environment via the Looe Valley rail line.'

Jo outlines some of the themes that emerged during the interviews: 'James Currah, now ninety-nine, recalled his work as a skilled boat builder in Looe, memories of the Second World War and changes in the town. He also spoke about John Payne, a Black singer who came to live in Looe and was instrumental in teaching young people how to sing; he also created a choir in the Black GI camp near Liskeard. Several interviewees talked about community choirs, including male voice choirs and shanty singing in the pub after fishing trips.

'Paul Greenwood worked as a fisherman in Looe. In his interview he reflected on the hard work but also camaraderie with the crew, as well as changes to the fishing industry and local community.

'Valerie Hosking spoke of the industrial links in the Looe Valley, from limekilns to the old wool factory and her family business in agriculture. Other participants had stories connected to the railway community in the Looe Valley.

'Many interviewees were children or teenagers during the Second World War and they shared stories about being evacuated, Plymouth being bombed, the responsibility of owning a family shop and overseeing rationing. They recalled different emotions when the war ended, from celebration to witnessing the emotional impacts of loss in the community, including parents with PTSD.

'A recurring theme in the interviews was a strong connection to the landscape – a "deep cultural, social and spiritual relationship" (Jesse Foot), "the specialness is just

looking and living with the land" (Dean Tambllyn) – and buildings or monuments such as the Old Lifeboat Station, a poignant symbol to the Looe community, which inspired a career in the emergency services (Jane Day). "Moor to Sea" illustrated the intrinsic connections between tangible and intangible heritage and the socio-cultural valuing that is key to the act of place-making.'

Alongside the oral histories, project outputs included a touring exhibition, online exhibition, art installations, a performance, walking tours and a video.

● Further information: website <https://moortosea.org.uk>

■ DORSET WHERE WE CAN CALL HOME

Louise Worswick, volunteer project researcher and transcriber, introduces 'Where We Can Call Home', an oral history project taking place in Dorset:

"Where We Can Call Home" captures stories from ethnically diverse communities in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP), recording their journeys from different places and their experiences of making their home on the south coast of England.

'Citizens Advice Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole leads the project alongside DEED, a global education centre based in Dorset which aims to help people learn more about the rich, cultural heritage of BCP, its challenges and its successes. Dorset History Centre provides support for the project, which is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

'Between April 2023 and July 2024 five community researchers undertook face-to-face audio or video recorded interviews with volunteer participants from the local community who had migrated to BCP and Dorset within the last thirty years. As of

autumn 2024, fifty interviews and two focus group sessions had been transcribed and further transcriptions were underway. Interview length varies from eighteen to eighty minutes.

'The next stage of the project is to share the interviews with the wider community through an exhibition and website with learning materials for schools and the community. The interviews will also form part of an important historical archive which future generations can study and research, building more knowledge, empathy and understanding of local diversity, and its impact and importance in the community.'

Louise shares her experience of transcribing the interviews and highlights some of the findings so far: 'To prepare for analysis I started by transcribing each interview in full. I noted a timecode at each new prompt from the interviewer and on occasions when there was a lot of continuous narrative from the participant, for example greater than half a page of text, I filed each transcript and then began to recreate a timecoded summary for each participant by summarising the transcript so that it included only key points, but all relevant points. Each paragraph began with a timecode.

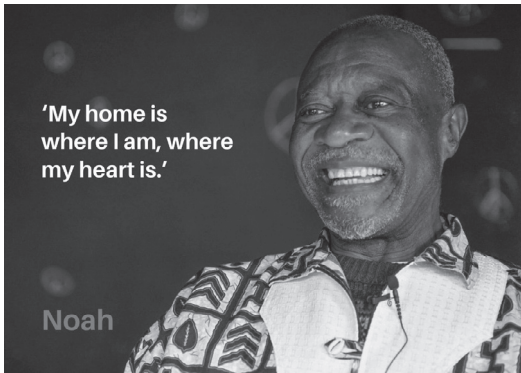
'Timecoded summaries were between one and four pages long. These were filed alongside the full transcripts for each participant. In this way, none of the narrative was lost, but if an observer wanted to just get a



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Photos: Martin Coyne, courtesy of DEED.

general idea about a particular interview, they could start by looking at the timecoded summary first. If they wanted to search for a particular part of the video recording, using the noted timecodes, they could do so. I also placed an overview paragraph at the start of each timecoded summary and full transcript. This included the country of origin and general background of the participant and a summary of their story living in Bournemouth, Christchurch or Poole.

‘In terms of the content of the interviews, I observed people who had probably struggled in some way before coming to the UK, but were optimistic, resilient and keen to succeed. Some of the participants had experienced difficult journeys before arriving in the UK and almost all of them were faced with having to learn English on arrival. Many of them spoke English incredibly well in their interview. Some of the participants had left what sounded like exciting careers behind. Some described family problems or the politics of their country as their reason for leaving.

‘All of the participants loved living in Bournemouth. They loved the sea and the location, close to the New Forest and yet not too far from London. All interviewees except two seemed to have settled in Bournemouth and created a life for themselves, many with families of their own. Some had demonstrated business skills in starting their own businesses and

were enjoying much success. All were full of praise for the infrastructure support they had felt around them, in terms of organisations providing support, people who were very friendly, events and places that welcomed them. Many of them said they felt they were part of their community.

‘In terms of “where we can call home”, not all participants placed Bournemouth as their home now, but most of them did. One or two said they might try living elsewhere in a couple of years and one or two said that home was both their country of origin (when they were there) and Bournemouth (when they were there).

‘Reflecting on the process of transcribing these personal stories, some of which contained very sensitive discussion, it was extremely rewarding, and I feel privileged to have been part of their storytelling experience. Many happy moments were shared, which was enjoyable, but some very sad experiences were described which were interesting to hear, first-hand, but I observed how difficult it was for the participant and that made me realise how courageous they were to have told their story, escaping a country at war and leaving behind some childhood tragedies for example. Overall, it has been a fulfilling and humbling experience.’

Louise Boston-Mammah, project lead, comments on the relevance of listening to first-hand, lived experience when researching local diverse histories: ‘People’s

incredible journeys, told beautifully, immerse you in their world, just for a moment. They provoke questions of us, as listeners, about how we can change our communities for the better.’

Analysis of the interview transcripts continues, and findings will be shared alongside the recordings in an exhibition, on the website, as part of learning materials and in the archive.

● Further information: Louise Boston-Mammah, email education@deed.org.uk, website <https://deed.org.uk/where-we-can-call-home>

WEST MIDLANDS

■ SHROPSHIRE ADDERLEY HERITAGE

Adderley Heritage is a community-run initiative created to preserve and promote the history of Adderley in north Shropshire. Oral history interviews are now being recorded as part of a larger heritage project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Val Nash describes the events that led to the funding award and project achievements so far:

‘The Adderley Heritage Project came about when we were made aware of a massive collection of materials accrued by local man Geoff Butter. Geoff had been collecting anything about the history of the village for more than fifty years. It was all about to be lost though, because Geoff felt he could not continue and no-one in the village was able to store the

collection in a way that would keep it safe from deterioration.

‘Paul Nash made enquiries to the National Lottery Heritage Fund describing what we had, and we were invited to submit a full proposal for preserving this for generations to come. The result was an amazing £47,000 grant, and a lot of work from a small band of volunteers. The whole collection has been digitised with the help of Shropshire Archives. With the funding we have:

- designed and built a website: <https://adderleyheritage.co.uk>
- created a heritage trail through the village with signage and QR code access to the website at each trail point
- started work with our primary school to develop curriculum materials about our heritage
- produced information boards about our history for use in the village and the church, which were used at our launch event in April 2024.

‘We are currently in the process of developing a display showing the history of our village church, St Peter’s, and links to the Corbet family, who have been connected to Adderley since 1068.

‘On 7 October 2024 the final phase of our project began, with an amazing oral history training day run by Julia Letts on behalf of the Oral History Society. The day was truly wonderful, and we were very lucky to have eighty-seven-year-old Brian Lees, who grew up in the village, join us to be our guinea pig interviewee for the day.

‘We are now off to prepare ourselves to undertake our oral history interviews, which we hope will add another dimension to the website and enable us to capture not just history from the 1940s onwards but our more recent history too, including how we lived through Covid-19 in our small community. From our training day we have a much better understanding of how oral history can bring history to life and we can’t wait to get started.’

● Further information: website <https://adderleyheritage.co.uk>



Above: Nunnery Wood Podcast Group. Left: Sophie and Amelie with a photo of Freda Griffiths. Photos courtesy of the ‘Porcelain Podcasts’ project.

■ WORCESTERSHIRE PORCELAIN PODCASTS

OHS regional adviser Julia Letts writes about working with students from Nunnery Wood High School in Worcester to produce the ‘Porcelain Podcasts’. The podcasts draw on a collection of interviews recorded by Julia in 2007, documenting life and work at the Royal Worcester Porcelain factory. Julia provided oral history training for the students in hour-long after-

school sessions, over a period of twelve weeks. She describes how the podcasts came together:

‘The “Porcelain Podcasts” was a school-based project in Worcester focussed on sharing an

existing oral history archive. The archive in question was a collection of thirty-five interviews recorded in 2007 with workers at the Royal Worcester Porcelain factory. After a trip to the Museum of Royal Worcester, Year 7 students at Nunnery Wood High School listened to a selection of oral histories. In pairs, they chose one interview to focus on.

‘Each pair listened to their chosen interview and started to

select stories which particularly interested them. They were taught how to edit extracts from the original audio interviews using Audacity and to write attention-grabbing scripts which would put the stories they had chosen in context. The result is a series of podcasts presented by the students and featuring the voices of former casters, painters, gilders, designers and model makers from the Royal Worcester factory.

‘In a blog about the project, Sophie and Amelie, both eleven years old, explained how they made the podcasts: “We chose to make our podcast about a porcelain painter called Freda. She’d started working at the Worcester Porcelain factory in 1946. First, we found three stories in Freda’s interview that we really liked. Then we wrote our scripts, putting our interview clips into the order we wanted them. The most exciting part was recording our podcasts. It was the first time we’d been in a recording studio and used microphones. We learned the tips of the trade to make sure our podcasts sounded professional. We are really pleased with the end result!”

‘The students made eight episodes of “Porcelain Podcasts”, featuring extracts from oral history interviews with ten former workers. You can listen to them here: <https://podcasters.spotify.com/pod/show/worcester-heritage-forum>

‘The project was funded by Worcester City Council working in collaboration with the Museum of Royal Worcester and Nunnery Wood High School. Lauren Thatcher, a history teacher at the school, thoroughly recommends this model as a way of inspiring students to use oral history sources. The Museum of Royal Worcester is also delighted that the podcast project has enabled the “Workers’ Story Collection” to be shared more widely with the general public.’

● Further information: email info@museumofroyalworcester.org, website www.museumofroyalworcester.org

YORKSHIRE

■ SOUTH YORKSHIRE BRODSWORTH HALL AND GARDENS

‘Next Chapter’ is an oral history project currently underway at Brodsworth Hall and Gardens. The aim for the project is to incrementally build on an existing archive of recordings at the Hall. Eleanor Matthews describes the history of the collection and plans for this new project:

‘Brodsworth Hall and Gardens near Doncaster, South Yorkshire, survives as a remarkably complete ensemble of a mid-Victorian country house, with its contents and gardens lived in and adapted by the same family over three generations. The Hall was built between 1861 and 1863 for Charles Sabine Thellusson, whose great-grandfather Peter Thellusson, a merchant and banker, had bought the estate in 1791. The Hall stands at the heart of the gardens, newly laid out around it in the 1860s, and overlooks its historic park and wider estate landscape. Both Hall and gardens were given to English Heritage in 1990.

‘Oral history is a vital component of how the stories of the generations of people who lived and worked at Brodsworth are understood. The property has an exceptionally strong history of collecting oral history relating to



lived experience of the Hall, gardens and wider estate, having been actively collecting since the early 1990s; interviewees range from family members to housemaids, gardeners, farmers and village residents. There are now over 150 recordings within the collection, making it one of the largest oral history assemblages relating to a single country house, with the potential to grow much further.

‘Recording oral histories at Brodsworth has generally coincided with specific exhibition projects: for example, memories of wartime Brodsworth were sought to inform and enhance the “Duty Calls: Brodsworth Hall in Time of War” exhibition, and a 2017 conservation project at the Hall captured the voices of workmen past and present. The intention has always been to collect as broad a field as possible of memories, and we are regularly contacted by individuals who have memories of Brodsworth. However, staff capacity to carry out oral history work on a day-to-day basis is limited. To have the opportunity to broaden the oral history archive further outside of project work was an increasing ambition, leading to



the formation of the “Next Chapter” project.

The “Next Chapter” project seeks to begin anew the recording of living memories of people associated with all aspects of life in the Hall and across the wider estate and not be limited to a specific theme. It is anticipated that around four further interviews will be completed each year from 2024 to 2029 (inclusive), resulting in at least twenty-four further interviews for the collection. A freelance oral history specialist has been engaged to provide professional and technical expertise and ensure that oral testimonies are acquired to the highest standard. This will enable a more strategic and long-term approach for gathering oral histories at Brodsworth, which is aligned with English Heritage’s National Oral History Standard and Research Strategy (2023).

As the project is not tied to a specific current or future exhibition, there is greater freedom to select and respond to potential interviewees who seek us out, or vice versa, and fill gaps within the oral history collection. Indeed, the opportunities to record the memories of people who knew Brodsworth Hall and Gardens prior to English Heritage’s 1990 involvement are becoming fewer; many of the possible interviewees are very elderly and there is a dwindling window of opportunity to save their stories for posterity. The broad nature of the project also means that interviewees could also blend pre- and post- English Heritage, for example memories of the Hall transferring into public ownership, which has now moved a generation into the past.

Interviews completed so far in 2024 include: a woman who grew up on Rat Hall Farm on the Brodsworth estate in the 1930s whose father was the tenant farmer between 1937 and 1973; a man who regularly visited Brodsworth Hall as a teenager with his family, who were friends of Mrs Sylvia Grant-Dalton, and remembers playing table tennis in the Hall and croquet on the lawn; and a woman

who grew up at a children’s home in Doncaster in the 1950s who has vivid memories of visiting the Hall and gardens at Easter to take part in an egg hunt and afternoon tea. The latter interview helped to illuminate former owner Mrs Sylvia Grant-Dalton’s role as president of the Doncaster Committee of the Church of England’s Children’s Society. Future possible interviewees include the son of an estate gamekeeper, relatives of the long-standing cook/housekeeper Emily Chester and a television interviewer who developed a long-lasting relationship with Sylvia.

Completed “Next Chapter” interviews will form part of the research collection at Brodsworth and will be used in future talks, exhibitions and online content. It’s exciting to think that the project will record new stories to share with visitors, offer unknown perspectives of the site’s history and fill the next chapter of oral history at Brodsworth.’

Eleanor Matthews is internal advisor for oral history at English Heritage and curator of collections and interiors for the South Yorkshire, North Midlands and Lancashire regions.

● Further information: email oralhistory@english-heritage.org.uk, website www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/brodsworth-hall-and-gardens

SHEFFIELD NEWSPAPERS

Clare Jenkins worked on the *Sheffield Star* and *Morning Telegraph* before becoming a BBC radio broadcaster and senior lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University. She is interviewing journalists who have worked on Sheffield newspapers, past and present. Twenty-five interviews have been recorded so far and Clare is preparing transcripts to accompany the collection.

Interviewees include two former editors, a photographer and people who went on to forge careers in national newspapers and on national TV and radio. Their ages range from twenty-three to ninety.

The interviews are one to two hours in length.

Clare outlines some key themes that have emerged in the interviews: ‘The shrinking, and in some cases the closure, of local newspapers has obviously led to far fewer jobs in the industry. This in turn has led to a “democratic deficit” where institutions like councils and the police force are no longer as accountable to their communities as they once were. Instead, in-house press officers increasingly act as gatekeepers – or, as one former editor put it, as “censors”.

‘In addition, people within those communities no longer have the same open access to journalists as they once did, so many stories are no longer being told, thus creating an “information vacuum”. And as newspaper offices have moved away from town centres or into anonymous co-working office “hubs” (with many reporters working wholly or mainly from home), they’re much less visible, leading to a loss of community cohesion.

‘Then there’s the transition from print runs to online: reporters are now multimedia experts, whose daily tasks involve trawling social media sites for potential stories and cut-and-paste quotes, data journalism, the creation of Tik Tok and Facebook videos and possibly podcasts. All the time, they’re keeping an eye on the newsroom’s “analytics board”, often being asked to write clickbait listicles – “Top 9 Dog Groomers in Sheffield” is one that was mentioned – rather than hard news stories.

‘It’s light years away (in terms of experience, excitement and enjoyment) from that of many older journalists I’ve interviewed, whose memories are of busy, cluttered, smoke-filled newsrooms with clattering typewriters, photographic darkrooms, specialist film or theatre reviewers, business editors, education reporters, women’s editors, four or five daily editions, district offices, street newspaper sellers...

“In my era”, former deputy editor Alan Powell recalled, “the *Star* was always regarded very warmly, as part of the community. It was kind of woven into the fabric of what Sheffield was about, whether it be its industry, its local government, or whatever. It was a big player in the life of the city. It’s just another media outlet now, which the majority of people will not see, so they don’t have any way of feeling that it’s theirs, really.”

‘Dan Hayes, a former *Star* reporter, now editor of Sheffield’s *Tribune* online newspaper, agreed. “Newspapers give people the sense of being part of something, a sense of belonging. And without that sense of civic pride, people and places are poorer for it.”’

Clare has presented several talks about the collection, including in 2024 at Sheffield University’s Festival of the Mind. In 2023 her article about the interviews, ‘Is human life in a press release?’, was published in *British Journalism Review*, vol 34, no 4.

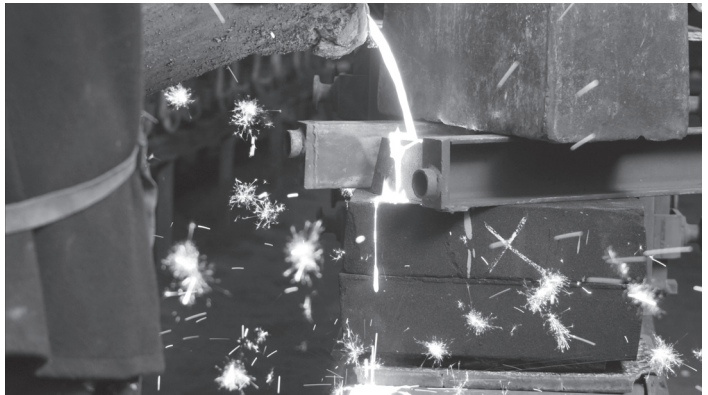
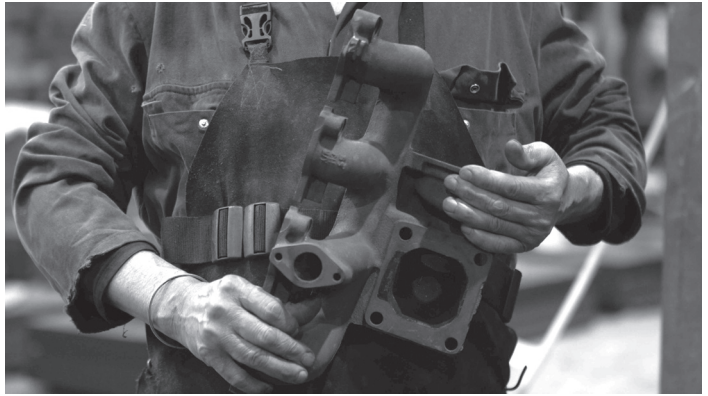
● Contact: Clare Jenkins, email clarejenkinsbbc@googlegmail.com

■ WEST YORKSHIRE FURNACE FRUIT

‘Furnace Fruit’ is an exhibition by Karanjit Panesar at Leeds Art Gallery, running from 4 October 2024 to 15 June 2025. The exhibition features a new body of work, inspired by oral histories, including those of Punjabi workers in British foundries. The press release describes the exhibition and background context for the project:

‘The exhibition explores themes of labour, migration, memory and empire through a range of contemporary mediums. It takes as its starting point stories of migrant labourers from Punjab, including members of Karanjit Panesar’s own family, who came to the UK and found themselves working in automotive foundries in the post-war period.

‘Central to the show is a two-channel film, which weaves together writing, tableau shots of a performer in and around the



‘Furnace Fruit’, stills, 2024. Images © Karanjit Panesar.

artist’s car and footage captured in an industrial foundry. Told through a semi-autobiographical narrative, it delves into an internal experience of diaspora and personal memory and depicts the industrial foundry as a site of myth-making and alchemy. The film acts as an anchor point for the exhibition on display which also includes sculptures, prints, collection artworks and industrial objects.’

‘Furnace Fruit’ is the result of the second ‘Collections in Dialogue’ co-commission by Leeds Art Gallery and the British Library. The ‘Collections in Dialogue’ project supports research into the collections held by these two institutions. In doing so it serves as a catalyst for new work, creating a dialogue between the collections.

Karanjit Panesar said: ‘Punjabi foundry workers were a cheap, itinerant labour force that made everything from scaffolding to cast-iron car parts. Drawing on research into the collections, my

work for the commission interrogates a longer lineage of metal-working in Britain, and the interior changes born of migration.’

The press release continues: ‘As the recipient of the latest co-commission, Karanjit Panesar was selected from more than eighty submissions in an open call-out to artists across the north of England.

‘The residency has seen Karanjit Panesar work with both physical and digital source materials across different collections over a period of several months. The work stems from his research into oral history collections held at the British Library and the Bradford Industrial Museum, as well as research into the Leeds Sculpture Collections at Leeds Art Gallery and the Henry Moore Institute. The oral histories have been made available thanks to the British Library’s “Unlocking Our Sound Heritage” project.’

Karanjit Panesar is the second recipient of the 'Collections in Dialogue' co-commission. The first was awarded to Jill McKnight in 2021.

● Further information: email madeline.white@bl.uk, website www.museumsandgalleries.leeds.gov.uk/leeds-art-gallery

NORTHERN IRELAND

■ BELFAST GREAT PLACE NORTH BELFAST

Sam Guthrie, OHS regional adviser for Northern Ireland, describes heritage work being undertaken by North Belfast Heritage Cluster and Belfast Charitable Society in preparation for oral history interviews:

'Clifton House, Belfast opened its doors to the public on 1 September 2024 for a special "Heritage Day" celebration. The team from "Great Place North Belfast" were on hand to conduct their first "Heritage Harvest".

"Great Place North Belfast" is a project of the North Belfast Heritage Cluster and Belfast Charitable Society. The cluster consists of thirteen organisations and fourteen heritage buildings – from St Anne's Cathedral to the North Belfast Working Men's Club, from Belfast Orange Hall to Annesley Street Synagogue. The goal of the project is to collectively influence positive change and develop confidence and belonging in an area deeply impacted by de-industrialisation and the Troubles.

'Over the coming years the project plans to develop further investment in heritage, especially through community engagement, storytelling and story capture. The "Heritage Harvest" event focussed on those final two points.

'On the day, members of "Great Place North Belfast", the Armstrong Storytelling Trust, a North Belfast Heritage Cluster volunteer from the Quaker church and an independent oral historian worked as a team to meet residents and collect their stories. Interviews were conducted with notes rather



The Belfast News-Letter from October 1781. Courtesy of the 'Great Place North Belfast' project.

than recording, and prompts were offered in relation to the fourteen heritage listed buildings in the area. Stories were gathered and archived with a view to working with individual Cluster members to develop oral history projects in the future.

'Despite the weather the day was an outstanding success with more than forty contributions gathered. Stories ranged across the Cluster members and north Belfast. A highlight of the day was one member of the public bringing in an original copy of the Belfast News-Letter from October 1781.

"Great Place North Belfast" continues to work with a number of its members on upcoming heritage projects including oral history projects. It is also seeking ad hoc contributions about its Cluster members.'

The 'Great Place North Belfast' project received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2023. The project plans to develop heritage assets for use by the local community, to provide growth and regeneration in the area.

● Further information: David Price, email info@greatplacenorthbelfast.com, website <https://greatplacenorthbelfast.com>

MEMORY FRACTAL

OHS regional adviser Sam Guthrie outlines a creative project, 'Memory Fractal', led by artist Katya Solomatina:

"Memory Fractal" is an

augmented reality project that is experimenting with innovative ways of preserving memory and storytelling through digital sculpture and oral history. "Memory Fractal" has received funding through Belfast City Council's Augment the City Challenge Fund.

'The project is led and developed by Belfast-based sculptor and artist Katya Solomatina and is supported by Portview Trade Centre and the EastSide Partnership. Two groups of Belfast residents – one representing former industrial workers in the city's east, the other representative of migrant and refugee communities – will participate in a series of co-creation workshops known as the "story cycle". These sessions allow individuals to share stories of their lived experience and memory and engage in the digital sculpture experience through the 3D scanning of personal belongings connected to their narratives. Solomatina has liaised with Belfast-based oral historians and has previously worked to capture memories of residents of Belfast's Sailortown.

'The final product of "Memory Fractal" is an exhibition, a mixed reality installation, to be hosted at Portview Trade Centre in 2025. The mixed reality format is designed to create a layered experience, encouraging visitors to engage simultaneously with the

physical space of Portview (the former Strand Spinning Mill), physical artefacts, and AR digital sculpture and audio. Stories are housed, virtually, in the displayed physical artefacts and to release them the audience must interact with the objects directly while wearing virtual reality equipment or using their mobile phone. The experience animates the liminal space between intangible cultural and physical heritage and is sure to be an intriguing highlight of east Belfast's cultural calendar in 2025.

● Further information:

Katya Solomatina, email k8.solomatina@gmail.com; Gareth Neil (Portview Trade Centre), email info@portviewtradecentre.com; Sam Guthrie (EastSide Partnership), email samuel.j.r.guthrie@gmail.com

SCOTLAND

CARING SCOTLAND

'Caring Scotland' is a three-year project running from 2024 to 2027, led in partnership with the National Theatre of Scotland, Who Cares? Scotland and the National Library of Scotland. The project aims to document the lives of care experienced people in Scotland. Lead artist Nicola McCartney will work with a team of multidisciplinary artists to undertake research, deliver workshops and events, record oral history interviews and produce a touring installation and exhibition. The project is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The 'Caring Scotland' website provides a definition of the term 'care experienced': 'The term care experienced refers to anyone who has been or is currently in care or from a looked-after background at any stage in their life, no matter how short, including adopted children who were previously looked-after. This care may have been provided in one of many different settings such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care (a family member, other than your biological parents are/were your main carer), or through being



Courtesy of 'Caring Scotland'.



Artist facilitators Jo Mango, Sara Shaarawi, Mal Fraser, Roxana Haines, Lewis Hetherington and Kevin P Gilday. Courtesy of 'Caring Scotland'.



Billy McMillan, Louise Hunter, Leah Flint (Who Cares? Scotland) and Nicola McCartney (lead artist for 'Caring Scotland'). Photo: Kirsty Anderson.

looked after at home with a supervision requirement. Looked after at home means you remained in the family home, with your parent or parents and had contact with a social worker and the Children's Panel.'

The press release describes the project: "Caring Scotland" is a far-reaching creative oral history project that will document the lives and experiences of at least 100 members of the care experienced community in Scotland. The project aims to raise the profile, celebrate the achievements and foster empowerment of the care experienced community and is inspired by the practice of playwright and socially engaged theatre-maker Nicola McCartney.

'Artists Kevin P Gilday (writer), Lewis Hetherington (theatre-maker and writer) Sara Shaarawi (writer), Jo Mango (musician and songwriter), Roxana Haines (director) and Mal Fraser (filmmaker) will form the team that will drive the project and engage with care experienced people from across Scotland to collect their stories for an unprecedented oral history audio archive.

'As part of a special week of events during Care Experienced Week (19-26 October 2024), these artists visited five different venues across Scotland to launch the project, meet local care experienced people and start to collect stories. All stories will be deposited in the final oral history sound archive, housed in perpetuity at the National Library of Scotland, and will inspire the creation of the touring interactive installation as well as the photographic exhibition.'

Lead artist Nicola McCartney is a playwright, director and dramaturg. She is currently Reader in writing for performance at the University of Edinburgh where she leads the Master's programme in playwriting. She said: 'I'm honoured to lead this project which is about actively listening to and recording the stories care experienced people want to share

about their lives. The most important story is the one we tell to ourselves about ourselves. And these individual stories are a vital and hitherto often overlooked part of the nation's story, what Scotland was, is now and what we can become.'

The press release continues: 'Nicola McCartney has extensive experience of the care experienced community, as a member of the Children's Panel and as a foster parent. "Caring Scotland" is a continuation of her creative practice and her ongoing research into the care system in Scotland. Previously, in 2021, Nicola was commissioned by National Theatre of Scotland to create "Holding/Holding On" as part of their "Care in Contemporary Scotland – A Creative Enquiry" programme. Nicola's practice of *active listening* enables participants to take control of their narratives. "Caring Scotland" will empower the care experienced community by offering members a platform for their voices to be heard by the people of Scotland.

'The project is supported by national Scottish partners Dundee Rep Theatre, Citizens Theatre, Glasgow and Aberdeen Performing

Arts alongside local authority social work departments with whom the theatres already have positive existing connections.'

Care experienced people of all ages are invited to take part in the project, whether as an individual or as part of a group. See here for more information: www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/projects/caring-scotland/get-involved-with-caring-scotland. A Youth Advisory Group will be established to co-design the project and advise on its delivery.

● Further information: for information about taking part, Paul Fitzpatrick, director of creative engagement at National Theatre of Scotland, email paul.fitzpatrick@nationaltheatrescotland.com; for information about the project, email caring.scotland@nationaltheatrescotland.com, website www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/projects/caring-scotland

WALES

■ CARDIFF THEN AND NOW

'Then and Now: Exploring the Lives of Blind People in Wales' was a project led by UCAN Productions from 2023 to 2024, with funding

Made possible with
Heritage Fund

THEN & NOW

UCAN

Courtesy of UCAN Productions.

from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project website outlines the project and key objectives:

‘This was an inter-generational project exploring the history of blind and partially sighted people, as well as the people and organisations who have been instrumental in improving the lives of blind people in Wales from the early 1800s to the present day. The aim was to build a collection of recorded stories, plays, discussions and interviews documenting people’s oral history and historical stories.’

UCAN Productions is a creative arts charity for blind and partially sighted children, young people and adults. Project participants developed skills in researching, writing, archiving and recording. They visited St Fagans National Museum of History and Glamorgan Archives and met archivists and conservationists. As part of the project they recorded plays, monologues, oral history interviews and a series of seven podcasts. Podcasts are now available to listen to via the UCAN Productions website, Podbean and Spotify.

● Further information: email info@ucanproductions.org, website www.ucanproductions.org/then-and-now-project

UK-WIDE

AT THE RAINBOW’S END

‘At the Rainbow’s End’ is a new verbatim play by Clare Summerskill. Clare introduces the play and the interviewees whose testimony it represents:

‘In my own theatre work, which I produce with members of my theatre company Artemis, the plays that I write are usually verbatim plays, where a script is created entirely from interviews with people about a particular subject or an event. I have recently written a piece based entirely on interviews with older LGBTQ+ people who have experienced incidents of homophobia and transphobia while either living in a residential care home, a supported retirement



‘At the Rainbow’s End’. Image by Freepik.

community or when receiving care in their own home. The play is called ‘At the Rainbow’s End’ and we are currently presenting it as a script-in-hand performance around the country.

‘The production is targeted in particular at the LGBTQ+ community (groups and individuals) and those working with older LGBTQ+ people in the care sector in order to raise awareness about “real-life” situations occurring where members of the LGBTQ+ population, who are weak and vulnerable as older people needing help and support, can suffer at the hands of carers who may be inexperienced, ill-informed, prejudiced or, at times, blatantly cruel.

‘The subject matter of the play is one that is only just beginning to be addressed by those working in the health and social sector and perhaps also by many gay and trans people themselves who will – maybe in a few years’ time – have been out for most of their adult lives and who might be in a situation of requiring help from a care system that seems to have done little to prepare for our particular needs. The play lasts fifty minutes and, after a short break, each performance is followed by a Q&A session between the actors, the writer, invited specialists and audience members.

‘There are three main storylines in the play: one addresses the experiences of Ted and Noel, who were original members of the Gay Liberation Front in the early 1970s. After Noel was moved from hospital to a residential home due to his dementia, Ted discovered cigarette burns on Noel’s hands and bruising on his body. He later found out from two other residents that these were caused by homophobic staff.

‘Another story is that of two women who moved to a supported retirement community only to be at the receiving end of relentless homophobic prejudice from other residents who had been told by the staff that the women were lesbians, something that they had not revealed publicly. As a consequence, they had to sell their property there and relocate across the country at quite an advanced age.

‘The third narrative comes from an older transgender man who is disabled and receives care at his own home. He describes numerous incidents of homophobic and transphobic comments made by carers when they visit and his powerlessness to prevent them. Throughout the play, the narrators’ stories are interwoven between each other and presented by a cast of five actors.

‘One of the main aims of interview-based theatre is to retrieve previously unheard voices



Cast members from Artemis Theatre presenting 'At the Rainbow's End'. From left to right: Richard Hansell, Chris Rochester, Sam Feeney, Karen Spicer, Clare Summerskill. Courtesy of Clare Summerskill.

and experiences, frequently provided by members of marginalised communities and, in this way, the work has a similar purpose to that of many oral history projects. It was relatively hard for me to source the narrators for "At the Rainbow's End" since I needed to find older people in the LGBTQ+ community who had lived experience of the issues addressed in the play. I had known Ted from an oral history interview I had conducted with him for London Metropolitan Archives and had seen from some of his social media posts over the last couple of years what he and his partner had suffered towards the end of Noel's life in care. I knew Robin from a previous theatre production that I had worked on, created from interviews with disabled LGBTQ+ people. The story of the two older lesbians was one that had appeared in an LGBTQ+ Age UK report and, from that, I managed to track them down and ask them to participate.

'As is often the case with verbatim theatre productions, the interviews will not be publicly archived, but it must be mentioned that I have never worked on a

verbatim play where the narrators expressed such a palpable sense of urgency in having their experiences shared with a wider audience through a theatre project.

'Since the 1960s, the popularity and success of plays based on interviews has come about not only as a result of an ongoing interest by the public in "real-life" stories but also because verbatim theatre has been seen as filling the gap of reporting in the mainstream media. But because of the political and social nature of many verbatim plays, the playwright or producer who initiates this work will inevitably have their own agenda in the creation of the piece and, indeed, it was my strongly held personal beliefs and personal outrage at the stories I had heard about LGBTQ+ people being specifically targeted by so-called "carers" that propelled me to create this play.

'Over the last few months, we have presented "At the Rainbow's End" as a script-in-hand performance twelve times. Six shows were at the Courtyard Theatre, London, three were in the London borough of Waltham Forest, two were at universities

(Kent and Hertfordshire), and one was online, supported by the LGBTQ+ disabled group Regard. We have several more performances lined up in the future in the London borough of Hackney and in Brighton, York and Leeds. We are also working with academics whose expertise focusses on older LGBTQ+ care to secure funding in order to create a piece of research on the subject and present the piece as a training tool for care workers.'

Clare Summerskill is the author of *Creating Verbatim Theatre from Oral Histories* (Routledge, 2020) and *Gateway to Heaven: Fifty Years of Lesbian and Gay Oral History* (Tollington Press, 2012).

● Further information: Clare Summerskill, email claresummerskill@gmail.com, websites www.claresummerskill.co.uk, www.artemistheatre.co.uk

OUR LIFE STORIES

'Our Life Stories' is a peer-led oral history project by United Response made possible with funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund. Project partners include National Life Stories at the British Library (archive partner) and oral history organisation On the Record (exhibition delivery partner). United Response is a charity that provides support to autistic people and adults with learning disabilities and mental health needs. Dr Maxine Spry, project curator and grant manager, introduces the project:

'United Response supports over 2,000 individuals with learning disabilities, autism and mental health needs across England. For "Our Life Stories" we aim to preserve fifty life stories from people supported by the charity, offering a rare and invaluable perspective on the progression of care, advocacy and rights for people with disabilities.

'Since its founding in 1973, United Response has witnessed profound transformations in social care and legal rights, and "Our Life Stories" seeks to document that journey through the voices of those



'Our Life Story' project research team.
Courtesy of United Response.

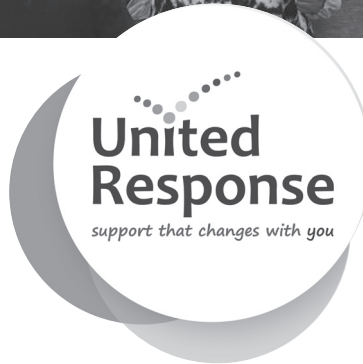
who lived it. Fifteen participants with learning disabilities have been trained in oral history techniques, preparing them to interview and record life stories of fifty peers. This training was developed and led by Dr Jan Walmsley of the Open University alongside project manager Charlotte Moore.

'The project provided two training sessions in York, with senior service manager Simon Cooper, and Richmond, led by Matthew Campbell. The interviews are now in full swing across England, gathering stories that reflect a range of life experiences.

'The project is capturing history from a deeply personal perspective. Many of the interviewees are older adults, whose memories reach back to life in institutional care settings and the earliest days of community-based care. By incorporating the experiences of younger people too, the project will reveal generational differences in the lives of people with learning disabilities. The result will be a tapestry of voices that illuminates the evolution of social care and independence for people with disabilities.

'At the heart of "Our Life Stories" is co-creation and collaboration. Participants are involved in every step, not only conducting interviews but soon, beginning in March 2025, they will also co-curate a touring exhibition of their life stories.'

Dr Jan Walmsley said of the project: 'This project is unique in that it both enables us to explore the potential of peer interviewing



and to capture the stories of people whose lives so often go unnoticed and unrecorded. The generous funding and the partnership with the British Library present a rare opportunity to generate significant methodological innovation.'

One of the project's lived-experience interviewers, Donna Harrison, shares her perspective: 'I am really pleased to be involved in "Our Life Stories", as I feel it will have a huge impact on people with additional needs. We're learning about the history of the care system. It's been eye-opening for me, as I've realised that people with disabilities weren't always treated equally in the past. I wanted to be part of this project because I didn't know much about the history of people with disabilities. I was shocked by what we've discovered about how people were treated. I want to spread awareness about the way the care system was years ago and make sure it doesn't happen again. I hope that by spreading awareness, we can encourage the system to keep improving.'

Maxine continues: 'The oral histories will become part of the British Library's national collection, preserving the recordings for future generations. Beginning in October 2025, the

project will deliver a touring exhibition co-produced with On the Record. Locations will include Cornwall, London, Nottingham and York. The exhibition will give audiences a rare insight into the lived experiences of people with learning disabilities, fostering greater understanding and appreciation of their journey.'

● Further information: email our.lifestories@unitedresponse.org.uk, website www.unitedresponse.org.uk/our-life-stories

RE:SHARE PROJECT

Dr George Severs introduces the 'RE:SHaRE Project':

'The 2020 State of the Nation Report into Sexually Transmitted Infections in England noted a worrying lack of research into racialised communities' experiences with sexual health, despite the fact that ethnic minorities make up one in five of all diagnosed sexually transmitted infections. Two years later, the National Perinatal Epidemiological Unit published the alarming finding that Black and ethnic minority mothers were three times more likely to die in childbirth than white mothers. At the same time, charities and organisations set up to provide inclusive and sensitive sexual and reproductive health information to racialised people were celebrating significant anniversaries and achievements. As these underappreciated histories and concerning medical data suggest, research on race and sexual and reproductive health has been lacking in Britain.

'An oral history project is currently conducting interviews to better understand the racialised experiences of sexual and reproductive health in post-war Britain. Funded by a Swiss National Science Foundation Eccellenza Professorial Fellowship, the "RE:SHaRE Project" (which stands for "race and ethnicity: sexual health and reproductive experiences") is led by Professor Caroline Rusterholz at the Geneva Graduate Institute. As the project's postdoctoral researcher I am most

actively engaged in its oral history work, alongside my colleague Naomi Samake-Bäckert.

“RE:SHaRE” has two project partners. The first is NAZ, a sexual health charity which works to “address sexual health inequalities in Black, Brown and Global Majority and LGBTQ+ communities”. NAZ is in the process of conducting interviews with service users as part of the research for this project, forming part of its collaborative approach. The second is National Life Stories at the British Library, where interviews will be archived once the project wraps up in 2028.

“RE:SHaRE” is interested in collecting narratives and memories relating to experiences with a wide variety of medical and social issues. These include, but are not limited to, contraception, abortion access, family planning consultations, fertility treatments, sex education and information about sexually transmitted infections. “RE:SHaRE” is also

researching sexual and reproductive health activism, including the demands for better and more inclusive services and calls to end racist and reactionary practices of governments and medics. Its approach is self-consciously broad, interested in communities and individuals which have been “racialised”. Such a definition allows for interviewees to “buy into” it, rather than seeking the experiences of particular ethnic groups or specific diaspora communities. It also recognises that racialisation is a process, one which functioned and was felt differently across the post-war period.

‘To date, interviews have taken place with medical service users, nurses, charity workers, researchers, teachers and people involved in delivering sex education to faith schools. Topics have included access to in-vitro fertilisation, sex education, establishing sexual health charities, and working on research into

ethnicity, race and sexual or reproductive health. The “RE:SHaRE” team is keen to continue to recruit interviewees, and invites readers who have any relevant experience of sexual and reproductive health to get in touch. Interviews can be arranged remotely or conducted in person (the research is Britain-wide).’

For further information relating to the project, including obtaining an interviewee recruitment poster, or to arrange an interview, please contact George Severs.

● Contact: George Severs, email george.severs@graduateinstitute.ch

Current British Work is compiled and edited by Camille Johnston. For inclusion in a future issue, send your news stories to currentbritishwork@ohs.org.uk, along with full contact details for the project and images. Text submissions should be 300–1,000 words per news item and high-resolution jpeg files are preferred for images.

**ORAL
HISTORY
SOCIETY**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

**17.30-19.00 Wednesday 2 July 2025
via Zoom**

Draft AGM agenda:

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the last AGM (as published at <https://tinyurl.com/AGM-2024-Minutes>)
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman’s Annual Report (John Gabriel) incorporating reports from the Regional Network, the Journal, Special Interest Groups, and about the website, membership, publicity, higher education, diversity/inclusion, and training
5. Treasurer’s report: presentation of Annual Accounts
6. Election of officers: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer
7. Election of committee members
8. Questions from members
9. Any other business

Oral History Society members are warmly invited to attend and participate in the Society’s AGM which will take place online (only) via Zoom: <https://tinyurl.com/2025-OHS-AGM>. Please contact the Secretary Rob Perks by 2 June 2025 at the latest at rob.perks@ohs.org.uk if you would like to suggest agenda items or make any nominations to the committee. Otherwise simply drop in and join the discussion!

Please note that the Chairman’s report, the draft annual accounts and the final agenda will be posted online at www.ohs.org.uk/about/documents/ at least fourteen days prior to the meeting. Members not able to attend the meeting should send questions and comments to the Secretary: rob.perks@ohs.org.uk