

## Reports from the Regions

### North West

#### **Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside**

Interest in oral history continues to grow in the region. The North West Oral History Network now has over 70 members, both societies and individuals, all of whom are actively recording. New members' interests range from the Cheshire Gooseberry Project (which incorporates Greater Manchester) through memories of a Duck Decoy to Blackburn Orphanage. An Open Day for members of the Network was held in May with over 150 people attending the event. The number of enquiries for help and advice continues to grow, with several training days held throughout the year. These training days were attended by over 200 people, most of whom are now actively recording oral history.

The North West Sound Archive also continues to undertake its own recording programme with over 200 interviews recorded during the year. The Archive also continues to take 'security' copies of collections from throughout the region. The copying of these collections held by individuals, local history societies, universities, libraries etc. means that many of these recordings are available to the public and researchers for the first time as well as ensuring the longevity of the recordings.

*Andrew Schofield*

### North East

#### **County Durham**

The past year has been a hectic but exciting one for oral history in County Durham. The Coal Mining Oral History Project is now drawing to a close but it has been extremely successful in collecting the memories of the men and women who lived and worked in the mining communities of the County and by acting as a catalyst for other oral history projects in the region.

In November, the Project will launch a CD-ROM educational pack. This pack, which uses extracts of oral testimony, will be given free to more than 340 schools in County Durham. It is hoped that the innovative way in which oral history has been utilized, for debate, art, drama and poetry rather than purely as a historical resource, will encourage teachers and students to see the variety of ways oral history can be used in the curriculum.

Working closely with Durham County Council's Community Heritage Officer I have delivered oral history workshops to local history and community groups throughout the County. These workshops were in direct response to the growing awareness of the need to record the

memories of local communities and chronicle disappearing ways of life before it is too late.

As a result the project has become more widely known and because of my role as one of the regional net-workers for the Oral History Society here in the North-East I have also been approached by a wide variety of groups from outside County Durham. So far the advice and training given has resulted in some very interesting oral history projects, such as the Education Village Project in Darlington and the African Living History and Archive Champions Project in Middlesbrough.

Although my project is coming to an end I will still be representing the OHS and hope to continue raising the profile of oral history in the region. See <http://www.durham.gov.uk/coalminingoralhistory>

***Sheila Forster***

## **Sunderland - Living History North East**

### **The Regional Oral History Centre**

The Donnison Building was purchased by the organisation some time ago in the hope that one day we would be able to create an exciting new resource not just for Sunderland but also for the region. Sunderland City Council has now received the second stage approval for their Townscape Heritage Initiative. This means we will be initiating the restoration scheme for the site and provisional dates suggest we will be on site in the new centre for July 2006.

### **The North East Regional Database**

This project was funded up until January 2005 by HLF. Fortunately we have been able to extend this project so far. To date the collection at LHNE numbers around 1,300 recordings all of which are now digitised and catalogued along with other items. We are adding to the collection ever week. We are including the smaller collections that we have supported through training and advice. In addition we are still trying to advance the digitisation of the 6,000 items currently held by Tyne and Wear Archives. Some of these recordings date back to the 60's and 70's and reflect a variety of subjects and themes. We also had an interesting donation from a private collection, of 12 interviews from Boer War Veterans. The database is still in its early stages and we have a lot more to achieve. However the implications of the database and what it will potentially reflect and mean for the region will be significant.

### **Partnerships through out the region**

Living History North East has been eager to support and develop a network of activity throughout the region by providing training opportunities for different projects. We have been working in Berwick, Durham, Newcastle, Darlington and Sunderland providing advice and support for various projects initiating

and developing oral history recordings. We hope to incorporate all of these new recordings on to the regional database.

We are about to begin some new work with the British Afghan Association. This work is just the beginning of a new movement from within the Black, Minority and Ethnic communities to record and document changes that they have experienced. We have also been working alongside Tyne and Wear Archives Cultural Diversity Officer, Andrea McDonald, to look towards long-term partnerships with other communities in the region.

### **Other Work this year**

*If History were re-created* was a British Council led international project. LHNE

were asked to participate as the UK partners in a project that was set to explore Identity and culture through recording oral histories. We linked with a Newcastle Youth project called Patchwork to recruit 6 young adults. We travelled to Chanakkale, Turkey in July to meet with two Turkish groups and one group from Ireland.

The project was initially intended to run for one year. Unfortunately we had to re-evaluate it and are now concentrating our efforts on providing the young people from Newcastle with an opportunity to develop new skills and produce a video oral history of their own community. We hope we will pick up the international link once again. This was a valuable learning experience for the organisation and we hope it will be only one of the many international projects that we become involved with in the future.

Living History North East established its volunteer arm this year. It has been called *Friends and Volunteers of Oral History - FAVOH*. They have been very active trying to establish a strong base for their activities. These have been formative months for the volunteers, who have been encouraged and developed through our Volunteers Co-ordinator.

### **North East Museums, Libraries and Archives Council - NEMLAC**

This update is provided by Anna Siddall of NEMLAC:

#### **North East Oral History Network**

- ***Website***  
Since July 2004 the website has had 5004 visitors. 882 visits were recorded for July 2005. There has been a significant increase in the daily average no of visits, 57 in July compared to 19 in June. In the future it is intended to actively identify and add to case studies highlighting good practice.
- ***Regional Mapping Project***  
Jo Bath, Co-ordinator for the Regional Oral History Project at Beamish has looked at what oral history collections there are in the region, where they are, how accessible they are and where collecting is still active. The findings from this research are to be published by NEMLAC as an advocacy document with recommendations for the future direction of Oral History collecting (drawn from the 'Regional conversation' held with Network Members.
- ***Training***  
21 June 2005 - Oral History Basics, led by Sheila Forster  
29 September 2005 - Managing Oral History Recordings, led by Rob Perks

- **Communication**  
Discussion list to be set up...
- **Network meetings**  
15 March 2005 - Editing sound: process of transference of sound recordings with computer package software, led by Mike Hirst. Web tutorial available at [www.nemlac.co.uk](http://www.nemlac.co.uk).

6 June 2005 - A Regional Conversation - the collection of oral history. This was an afternoon for those involved in undertaking oral history projects and will discuss collecting and using oral history. The aim was to move towards a clearer understanding of the regional picture and invites you to contribute to the future development of our Oral History Collection in the North East.

Session on copyright & oral history collections end of October/November.

- **Membership of network**  
Around 100

**Janette Hilton**

## Yorkshire

### **North Yorkshire**

York Oral History Society is continuing the inputting of our material onto computer, but now need more funds to complete the digitisation. We are involved in several new projects happening in our region.

I am working for York Archaeological Trust on their Home Front Recall project, which involves interviewing about 40 people who lived or worked on the home front during WWII, covering in particular, evacuees, rationing, the Home Guard, the land army and war work. Copies of the collection will go to the Imperial War Museum.

We are also doing some work for the York Castle Museum on the oral history of Terry's Chocolate Factory, (which was also used for munitions during the war), which closes this month after 240 years. The company was taken over by Suchard and then Kraft Foods, and the museum was offered some of its memorabilia, so they decided to accompany this with oral history material, and hopefully produce a book next year.

The project Expanding National Archive of Railway Oral History, is a follow-on from the National Archive of Railway Oral History, which was completed in 2003. It is being organised by the Friends of the National Railway Museum and funded by the HLF. Nicola Fox is the part-time Project Coordinator and there is also a volunteer Project Director, Michael Walker. There are seventeen volunteer interviewers, including a focus

group leader for each area of the project. The aims of the project are to examine the significant employment, social and cultural changes in three particular railway communities: Yorkshire, incorporating Sheffield, Doncaster and York, Stratford in East London, and Harwich/Parkestone Quay over a period of around 50 years, c.1950-2000. It will explore how different places were shaped by work traditions and how the railway industry and the communities it was based in have supported each other, with particular reference to the roles and experience of ethnic minority groups and women.

Once completed, the archive will be handed over to the National Railway Museum and can be accessed by the public, and hopefully excerpts will be used in future displays and exhibitions. They also plan to use the material to develop an education pack for school groups which will link to the history or geography syllabus.

### ***Van Wilson***

#### **South Yorkshire**

Oral history is healthy in South Yorkshire. Numerous projects are underway, at various stages of development, and are generating a steady demand for training. The following projects give a flavour of current work.

In Sheffield, the Burngreave Voices initiative, funded mostly by New Deal to help regenerate the Burngreave area, is working with Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust and Library Services, and partners, to celebrate Burngreave's history. Local residents are involved in a series of activities and events, and outputs will include a local history pack for primary schools, a book, a website, a permanent exhibition, an oral history archive, short courses and other adult learning opportunities. Also part of Burngreave Voices is an Allotment Project led by Tim Neal. This study is recording interviews with allotment holders in and around the area, to acknowledge the importance of these small plots of land in peoples' lives.

Also in Sheffield, Jennifer Vickers and Helen Fiddler are working on community projects for the Metalwork Gallery in the Millennium Galleries. Jennifer is working on the HLF funded Bill Brown Community Involvement Programme which interviewed people in the cutlery industry and others about the experience of cooking and dining across cultures. Their outputs include 13 new audio excerpts in the Metalwork Gallery (with transcripts of recordings and images); a new '3D soundscape' incorporating oral testimony; a permanent archive of recorded and paper material in the Local Studies Library; and a range of napkins and carrier bags which feature quotes from the oral history project. Helen is working on a related project funded by the Designated Challenge Fund, which involves community groups, schools, third age citizens, and families and metalwork enthusiasts, to promote intergenerational learning by sharing peoples' narratives of the light metalwork trades industry. All outputs, including oral history testimonies, are produced in conjunction with individuals, school groups and families.

Plans are also underway to produce a history of the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield. The work has yet to secure funding but Lyn Howsam is collating and cataloguing existing materials with current and ex-employees. They plan to collect memories, photographs and artefacts to explore the role of the hospital in social, local and medical history.

In Barnsley, Brian Elliott is working with the Pit Voices Project which is recording the working experiences of Yorkshire miners. Material from this work, including oral history transcripts, will be deposited with the National Mining Museum for England, Caphouse Colliery, near Wakefield. To date, more than 50 interviews have been collected with men born in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A CD of interview extracts, *Pit Voices*, is available, and a book, *Yorkshire Mining Veterans*, will be on sale in September 2005.

In May of this year, a 5<sup>th</sup> South Yorkshire network meeting was held, generously hosted by Beighton Community Archive. Despite a timing clash with the FA cup final (a previous meeting coincided with the Rugby World Cup final), representatives came from Discover Beighton and Beighton Historical Society; Burton Street Project; Dore Oral History Group; Sheffield Independent Film; Wild Rose Heritage and Arts, Hebden Bridge Project and the University of Sheffield. Topics uppermost in the lively discussion included archiving digital collections into the future, the practicalities and ethics of oral history on the internet, and how community groups created for a funded project can be sustained when the grant period ends. No doubt these and other issues will be returned to in our next meeting in 2006 - date to be confirmed after careful examination of the sporting calendar!

***Michelle Winslow***

## East Midlands

### **East Midlands Oral History Archive**

The last year at the East Midlands Oral History Archive has seen the departure of two more of the original staff of seven, leaving Colin Hyde to run the Archive. The main aim now is to complete as much of the cataloguing of the interviews in the Archive's collections as possible. The Leicester Oral History Archive collection has now been completely catalogued. These interviews were recorded in the 1980s and form the single largest collection of oral history interviews about Leicestershire, with some memories going back to the 1880s. See [www.le.ac.uk/emoha/catalogue](http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/catalogue) for full details.

As for other work, the following update is provided by Colin:

EMOHA is no longer funded by the lottery (and hasn't been for the last year) so has to charge for services which we once provided for free. While this has probably discouraged small groups from asking

for training them, visits have still been made to schools and a variety of groups who have applied for lottery money and have included the cost of training in their budget. EMOHA's work at the University of Leicester (where it is based) has been mainly to continue to provide a course in oral history as part of an MA in Social History, and to provide occasional seminars for students.

However, the need to raise money has been ever present, and EMOHA has been fortunate that a number of projects have presented themselves in the last year. A Leicestershire village website commissioned the archive to provide oral history content for its web pages, and has repeated this commission for the coming year. Other projects include providing oral history extracts for new social history and Leicestershire Regiment galleries at the Newarke Houses Museum in Leicester, and compiling a guide to interviewing for the University of Leicester website.

As activities have scaled down more use has been made of the EMOHA website, and this continues to be well visited by people from across the UK (and the world!). As well as having training material on the website Colin has tried to post up to date information about recording equipment, and unsolicited feedback suggests this is a useful resource. He has also contributed to other websites, such as the '24 Hour Museum' and '*emsource*'. Plans for the immediate future are centred around finding the resources to preserve and catalogue the BBC Radio Leicester collection, and make this available to the public. EMOHA will be applying for funding to various bodies in the near future.

While the University is generous in its provision of facilities, the future of the post at EMOHA depends on whether or not money can be raised to cover the salary. Fortunately we have been successful at raising money over the past year, and we shall be working hard to repeat this in the coming year.

The EMOHA website is at [www.le.ac.uk/emoha](http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha); email [emoha@le.ac.uk](mailto:emoha@le.ac.uk); or telephone 0116 2525065.

### **Audio Visual and Screen Media Heritage Strategy for the East and West Midlands**

I have recently taken part in consultations relating to an audio visual and screen heritage strategy for the East and West Midlands which aims to produce 'a realistic and sustainable vision for the archiving and availability of the audio visual culture and history of the Midlands'. A draft regional strategy based on these consultations is expected later this year. The consultation will:

- identify the scope of regional holdings and the plans that currently exist for their future development
- assess and integrate the strategic priorities of local, regional and national stakeholders

- identify and respond to the key issues surrounding collecting, documenting, storing, preserving and conserving the archive holdings
- identify and respond to the key issues surrounding the proactive use of archive holdings for social, cultural, educational and economic benefit
- make proposals for delivery and implementation

***Cynthia Brown***

### **Northamptonshire**

In April 2005 the Northamptonshire Black History Project (NBHP) won the prestigious Libraries Change Lives award, sponsored by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the Library + Information Show (L/S). The award was established in 1992 'to acknowledge and reward libraries and information services working with disadvantaged groups to combat inequality, including the unemployed, homeless, persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities'. Previous winners include the Big Book Share, and the Bookstart scheme to raise to literacy and numeracy levels in primary schools.

Nigel Thomas, Chair of the judges, described NBHP as:

'a fantastic example of how libraries can partner community-led initiatives... [it] serves as a model which can be replicated in libraries across the country. Northamptonshire's Black History Project is proving how vision and commitment has changed and enhanced the lives of individuals whose history has been forgotten and unacknowledged for years'.<sup>1</sup>

The project's HLF funding has now come to an end, and Julia Drake, its Oral History Officer has moved on to another post in Bedfordshire. She will continue on the Regional Network, but as one of the representatives for the East of England. The Black History project itself is seeking alternative funding, but will continue in the form of a community association. The 185 recordings generated by NBHP have been deposited in the Northamptonshire Record Office and will continue to be accessible there.

***Cynthia Brown***

### **Nottinghamshire**

Despite major re-organisation at Nottingham Central Library, the Local Studies Library, which maintains an over-view of local studies activities in both the City and County, has managed to assist a number of oral history projects during the year.

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<sup>1</sup> *CILIP News* (20 April 05),  
<http://www.cilip.org.uk/aboutcilip/newsandpressreleases/news050420a.htm>

Many of these have been projects supported by Local Heritage Initiative (LHI), an award-making body made up of Heritage Lottery Fund, The Countryside Agency and Nationwide Building Society. Not all of LHI's projects are oral history based, but it has funded many successful community-based oral history projects that would not otherwise have seen the light of day. Amongst these, the Local Studies Library loaned minidisc and/or video equipment (acquired via the Nottinghamshire Living History Project, itself supported by Lottery funding) to the Lost Village Project at Greasley, Underwood Remembrance, Bombs to Butterflies at Ruddington, Bingham Heritage, Gamston's Early Schooling, and Hucknall Heritage's "Locally Speaking" project.

Christina Raven-Conn, my successor at the Local Studies Library, has also loaned equipment to the "Inside Out Group", for a major project involving prisoners in Nottingham prison, and to a school project in Worksop. She is also engaged in discussions to set up a project in Nottingham to record asylum seekers and refugees in the City. The Library's oral history collection gained prominence when Nottingham University borrowed tapes on the life of D H Lawrence, recorded by David Gerard in the 1960s. The recordings, which included one with Lawrence's brother George, were played during an exhibition to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the author's death.

On a personal note, since my retirement from the Local Studies Library a year ago, I have obtained a grant of £3,800 from Home Front Recall, part of the Big Lottery Fund, on behalf of my local history group at Sawley in Derbyshire. Unfortunately we only had three months to collect memories and prepare an exhibition for the August Bank Holiday, so were not able to tape as many people as we would have liked. We have since had a successful Home Front event in September, and are aiming to prepare a digital presentation, education pack and publication by Christmas. Who said retirement was easy!

***Judy Kingscott***

## West Midlands

The vacancies for Networkers in the West Midlands have still not been filled, though not for want of trying – and I will keep doing so... In the meantime, the Connecting Histories project at Birmingham City Archives that Sian Roberts talked about at last year's Network event in Birmingham is well under way. Over its two year time span it aims to:

- catalogue and provide access to archive collections of photographs, documents and sound recordings which record the lives of Birmingham and the West Midlands' diverse communities
- digitise sound and photographic archives to ensure preservation and access
- develop e-learning packages on themes including research skills, Black British History, migration, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

- train and support a network of archive user and volunteer groups who will help with cataloguing, presentation and interpretation of the collections
- provide Positive Action Traineeships to enable two individuals to qualify as archivists at the end of the project

Among the collections with which the project will work are those of photographers Vanley Burke, George Hallett and the Ten:8 magazine photographic collective; Birmingham Hebrew Congregation; Charles Parker and Banner Theatre; Birmingham Anti-apartheid Movement; Indian Workers Association, and the Trades Union Resource Centre. For more information follow the Projects and Outreach link to Connecting Histories from <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/archives.bcc>.

***Cynthia Brown***

## London

### Museum of London

The Museum of London is a partner in the Refugee Communities History Project, led by the Evelyn Oldfield Unit and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Trust for London. Other partners include London Metropolitan University, the Mother Tongues and Supplementary Schools Resource Unit, and fifteen refugee community organisations or collaborations from across the capital. One of the strengths, and most exciting aspects, of the project is this partnership structure.

Over the course of its two year duration, the project is employing fifteen fieldworkers, each based within a different community. The fieldworkers receive training in life history methods at London Metropolitan University, before collecting a minimum of ten oral history interviews. They also undertake placements at the Museum in order to document those interviews, as well as to learn about the work of museums and to contribute to the development of the exhibition that will conclude the project. The training is an important feature of the project in its own right, building skills and capacity within the communities involved. The project as a whole will see the collection of at least 150 interviews, which are being archived at the Museum, together with images, ephemera and objects. Each fieldworker and their hosting refugee community organisation create an exhibition, in order to share the interviews that they have collected with the community. A final exhibition opening at the Museum of London in November 2006 will bring together all of the material collected in order to reflect the experiences and contributions of refugees in London.

The project is now entering its second year. In the first year, the participating refugee community organisations were the Afghan Association, Bosnian Resource Centre and Kosovar Support, Council for

Assisting Refugee Academics, Iraqi Community Association, Kurdish Association, Latin American House, and Tamil Relief Centre. More than seventy interviews have been collected with people from a wide variety of backgrounds, already a wonderfully rich resource. The community-based exhibitions and events developed by these organisations are currently in progress and have been very well attended and received. The year two refugee community organisations have just started work on the project. They are the African Community Health and Research Organisation, Chinese Information and Advice Centre, Eritrean Elders 50+ Welfare Association, Eritrean and Publication Trust, Ethiopian Community in Britain, Haringey Somali Community and Cultural Association, Latin American Disabled People's Project, Latin American Elderly People's Project, Latin American Women's Rights Service, Lwo Cultural Group and Roma Support Group.

A new exhibition opens at the Museum on 1 October 2005 (until 26 February 2006), entitled *Roots to Reckoning*. This exhibition presents the work and lives of three Jamaican-born photographers, Armet Francis, Neil Kenlock and Charlie Phillips. The exhibition features a film, produced in-house, based on oral history interviews with the three photographers. The Museum is also in the process of developing new modern London galleries, in which oral history will play an important role.

Ongoing enquiries suggest that a range of oral history projects are underway in London. A significant proportion of these focus on particular communities, frequently with some emphasis upon developing cross-generational links or understanding. For example the Chinese National Healthy Living Centre recently completed a project focusing on the Chinese community in London, resulting in a DVD entitled *Whispers of Time: Oral History of London's Chinese: Memories of Migration and Settlement*. The Museum also receives a steady stream of enquiries concerning the display of oral history. These come not just from the London region, but also from elsewhere in the country as well as from overseas, and suggest a strong current interest in this issue.

**Annette Day**

## South East

### Essex

The Essex Sound and Video Archive has just been awarded an HLF grant for an oral history project "The Development of Modern Essex." The project, which will run for one year, aims to collect 30 interviews around the themes of: personal and family relationships; health, welfare and education; leisure; and migration. The recordings will be made available for research along with the other collections in the Essex Sound and Video Archive, and will be used to create an audio/visual exhibition to be shown in a number of museums in Essex.

"Changing Perceptions", a three year project at Epping Forest District Museum will be staging its final exhibition in the New Year. The project has conducted interviews around a number of themes, such as life on a local housing estate and local employment, including The Bank of England. The most recent exhibition has been on World War 2 and included the use of audio guides and video workshop recordings. The museum has been able to give advice to other groups and develop new projects in the area of Arts Heritage and Theatre, using the skills acquired in developing and presenting the oral history project.

At the Essex Sound and Video Archive, we are asked for help in training people who are doing a variety of community projects that include an oral history element. These include a theatre project on Canvey Island about memories of the floods, a building restoration project at Mistley Maltings and a community project in Clacton.

### ***Sue Cubbin***

### **Kent**

Kent Oral History Discussion e-network (KOHD) membership includes staff, volunteers and researchers, working in museums, galleries, archives, libraries, universities and community groups. Current work ranges from HLF-funded projects and PhD research to informal life-interview recording. Within the last year:

- The English Heritage team at Dover Castle recorded wartime Combined HQ staff and facilitated interviews by primary pupils, following an advance INSET for teachers on oral history and wartime Dover;
- Herne Bay Living History Group celebrated completion of its A4A-funded project with the launch of a publication and memory boxes;
- Telling Whitstable's Story was involved in an exhibition and book about Whitstable's lost shipyards and their workers;
- Kent Libraries & Archives provided an interactive workshop with the Evacuees Reunion Association funded by Homefront Recall and attended by 12,000 pupils (assisted by 1,750 work experience students).
- The University's Electronics Dept produced a DVD featuring oral history testimony about the Baedeker Raids; St Johns Comprehensive School in Gravesend published a book of oral history;
- Gravesham Borough Council developed a Community Memories project, and have received an HLF grant for a website and further events linking into schools' citizenship agenda.
- A university-based member completed her PhD on the Bevin Boys, deposited her interviews at the Imperial War Museum, and is moving on to an oral-history based project on Hungarian refugees.
- Wye Rural Museum Trust received a Local Heritage Initiative grant for recording woodland and agricultural crafts; and the Woodland Trust and Blean Woods Initiative have been using recordings to

inform the project to re-create woodlands cleared in the 1950s (to provide material for sea defences).

KOHD meets face-to-face once or twice a year, and in the meantime shares news and views via e-mail. Enquiries about training, funding, equipment etc are dealt with within the network or referred on through regional networks such as the Oral History Society and SEMLAC. Anyone wishing to join the network, please e-mail [manda\\_gifford@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:manda_gifford@yahoo.co.uk).

***Manda Gifford & Jocelyn Goddard***

## **Hampshire**

### **Southampton Oral History Unit**

At Southampton Oral History Unit we have been working on several projects over the past year. External funding has enabled us to employ temporary project staff, and at times there have been 7 of us in the team.

**Riveting Stories:** Our big project this year has been the Oral History of the Vosper Thornycroft shipyard in Woolston, Southampton. With funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, two project workers and volunteers have been recording life stories of men and women who worked at the yard. The shipyard, one of the biggest employers in the city for over a hundred years, closed its Southampton operations and moved to Portsmouth in 2003. The project has been very popular with the local community and the response to calls for interviewees and volunteers has been tremendous.

50 interviews, many recorded by volunteers, and over 600 photographs have been collected. An exhibition at the Maritime Museum (9<sup>th</sup> September – 27<sup>th</sup> October 2005) brings together images, voices and objects which tell the story of life in the yard. A book, which includes a compilation CD, will be published in November 2005. An additional new feature is an interactive freephone line, which allows callers to listen to interview extracts in their own home. People can also record their own memories on the phonenumber, making it truly interactive. The phone line (0800 1974 835) will be in operation for a limited period from the 9<sup>th</sup> September.

**Divine Restoration:** An HLF funded project for the repair and interpretation of Southampton's historic Holy Rood Church is nearing completion. The church, which was badly damaged during the Blitz in 1940, needed urgent repairs to the structure as well as making the site more accessible to visitors. As part of the new interpretation, there will be two sound posts on site, where visitors can listen to local people's memories as well as an audio guide describing the restoration work. Extracts from new interviews and material from the archive describe church services, the local area and memories of the Titanic disaster. The accompanying book will be published in November 2005.

**VJ Day Commemoration:** To commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War, a city-wide poster exhibition during August featured images and quotes from people who remember the celebrations in the city. The posters were displayed on advertising boards across the city as well as inside all the local buses. An educational project working with local school children will start in the new term. This will be funded by the 'Home Front Recall' HLF initiative, which will give local schoolchildren an opportunity to take part in oral history training workshops, and enable them to interview people about their 'Home Front' experiences.

**Remembering Forgotten Heroes:** This project, funded and led by English Heritage, looked at the contribution made by servicemen and women from the Indian subcontinent in the two world wars. Working with the Undivided India Ex-servicemen's Association of Slough, we visited four memorials to Indian soldiers in the South East region (Woking, Brighton, London and Barton-on-sea). We (Southampton OHU) were commissioned to record the group reminiscence sessions and individual life story interviews in English, Hindi and Urdu. Following the wishes of the participants who wanted to share their experiences with young people, an inter-generational element was developed. A touring exhibition, a compilation CD, an illustrated brochure were produced.

**MDO Digitisation:** Funding from the HLOW MDS (Hampshire & Isle of Wight Museums Development Service) Small Grants Scheme allowed us to embark on a pilot project to digitise photographs from our maritime collection. A temporary project worker set up a database and catalogued nearly 1000 images from the archive. The images are also being digitised. The completed database will make the search and use of images quicker and more efficient. The pilot phase will also enable us to learn from the experience and test the database in preparation for the eventual digitisation of the entire archive.

**Weston Shore project:** Southampton City Council has been awarded over £7,000,000 as part of the HLF 'New Deal' project, to regenerate Weston Shore, an area to the east of the city which represents the only significant stretch of open coastline in Southampton. The Oral History Unit will be working with Mount Pleasant Media Workshop (a non-profit making community media facility) to provide an oral history of the local community, training workshops, publications, educational projects, sound posts and extracts for use in the 1920's beach shelters along the promenade.

### ***Sheila Jemima & Padmini Broomfield***

#### **Wessex Film & Sound Archive**

Another busy year for me, as shown by the number of Hampshire sources of oral history recordings received by the Archive (WFSA) since the last report: Basingstoke (various, including the local history society and the Vyne National Trust property); 'The Village Speaks' project (Hurstbourne Tarrant and Ibthorpe); Emsworth Museum; Royal Observer Corps; Aldershot & District Bus Interest Group (good social history material from staff and passengers); Macmillan publishers; Rowlands Castle; Lymington;

Fordingbridge; Olivers Battery community in Winchester; Yateley (about the Haven Unmarried Mother & Baby Home); Winchester School of Art Centre for the history of textiles and dress. I also received memories of former Pirelli General Cable factory workers at Eastleigh, and those who worked on the Spitfire prototype at the local airfield, then attended marvellous multimedia performances based upon those reminiscences.

Another interesting recording concerned the memories of a member of the gypsy community, talking about her work in Hampshire fairgrounds in the past. I am delighted to report that more such material will follow in future, thanks to the award of a HLF grant to Hampshire County Council, to record memories and film the activities of two gypsy communities over the next year. The idea is to help bridge the cultural gap between them and the 'mainstream' community through exhibitions, presentations, and a DVD for schools aimed at educating the latter about the former in the classroom to forge a better understanding between both sides.

Other oral history projects which have received HLF funding – at Portchester and Whitchurch Silk Mill – are still ongoing, and the Theatre Royal, Winchester is just embarking upon its own project to record the its history through reminiscences. A project with which WFSA is actively involved concerns the Hampshire Coppice Craftsmen's Group. They have secured a LHI grant to record and interpret coppice industries from across the county, including a travelling exhibition featuring the memories, views and activities of coppice craftsmen on video. One of the WFSA volunteers will be taken on to do the filming, with the help of a Group member for the oral history interviews (trained by me). The objectives are to raise awareness of the role coppice woodlands have played throughout Hampshire's history, and of the benefits linked to its practice that is being lost as the coppice industry declines. Through this project it is hoped to promote interest in coppice products, like sheep hurdles, rustic furniture, gates and trellis, and help ensure the continuation of this ancient rural industry.

The Hampshire Craftspeople display mentioned in the last report has now gone onto the Internet. It can be viewed and listened to via <http://www.hants.gov.uk/record-office/craft/> . I hope you enjoy the extracts from the collection.

The annual Oral History Seminar at Winchester was well received last October. It featured an introduction to the basics of recording, interviewing and interpreting by me and Sheila Jemima, followed in the afternoon by fascinating sessions on the production of a book based upon memories of Petersfield and district by local author Pamela Payne, and the use of new (digital) technology in this field by Chris Litton of Southampton Talking Echo. Delegates learnt much about the trials and tribulations of book authoring, and using computers to edit and transcribe recordings. This year (19 October) our guest speakers will be John Stedman and Sharon Lee from Portsmouth Museums and Records Service, talking about their multicultural projects, and John Lewis from the Red House Museum, Christchurch on their recent video history project. It should be good.

In the meantime, I have been spending lots of time training various groups and individuals in the art and skills of oral history, and look forward to the fruits of these sessions in the form of projects from the likes of the Hampshire Red Cross.

Lastly, I mentioned in my last report the MA course in Museum Studies that I dipped into this year, in order to study the use of archive films, sound and oral history in displays. Well, I thoroughly enjoyed the course and learnt a lot, not least due to some excellent lectures from people like Gaynor Kavanagh, author of *Dream Spaces* (about oral history in museums). I also assisted fellow students in their projects, including one involving a family's memories and views about a doll's house, which has been in use for several generations now. I am now putting my learning into practice, including the provision of oral history recordings for study and display purposes at the recently opened Gosport Discovery Centre. You can learn more about this new type of library/museum/archives service at <http://www.discoverycentres.co.uk/gosport/index1.html>, and clicking on the local studies library and Museum on the Mezzanine links.

**David Lee**

## South West

### **Dorset & Somerset**

Another very quiet year in this area; either there is no new activity or it is occurring without recourse to my help or advice, as enquiries have been very few and far between! The planned project at Bridport Museum, reported last year, has experienced further delays due to staff changes, and it is now anticipated that the project will be re-launched towards the end of the year.

The closure and transfer of materials from the Oral History Research Unit at Bournemouth University has been completed; the electronics material has been deposited with the Imperial War Museum, the remainder has gone to the Dorset Record Office sound archive. Oral history activity at the University is now sadly confined to a small amount of teaching with Museums Studies students.

Agreement has been reached to run OHS training courses at the Dorset Record Office in Dorchester, and it is hoped to offer at least one course a year there. The first of these is planned for December or January.

**Frances Cambrook**

## Gloucestershire

On August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005, almost sixteen years after making its first recording, the Oral History Programme of the Planned Environment Therapy Trust Archive and Study Centre entered a new phase. Along with Archives and the Research Library, Oral History was one of the three keystones of the Centre's work from its inception in 1989. Now, however, persistent financial cutbacks, and the consequent loss of the full-time Archivist/Director position, to be replaced by a part-time position which is tightly focused on archive tasks, mean that the doing of oral history is no longer part of the job description. Other forms of support for recording will be significantly curtailed, unless or until a more favourable financial position is restored.

During those sixteen years the Archive – based in Gloucestershire, and the only recognised facility of its kind in the world which is devoted to the therapeutic community approach to disturbed, difficult and delinquent people, and to that approach to education sometimes called progressive, alternative or democratic – directly made or commissioned almost 600 audio and video recordings, and provided financial support, equipment and/or transcription for a further 175, in a total oral history collection of just over 1,000 audio and video recordings. The role of the Archive in promoting the use of oral history in archives was recognised in comments accompanying the award of Registered Membership to the Archivist by the Society of Archivists in 2003, and has been an active part of the Oral History Society's Regional Network since 1998.

Elsewhere in Gloucestershire the picture is not surprisingly more rosy, as the Lower Severn Community Flood Information Network, an initiative of the University of Gloucestershire's School of Environment, gathers momentum. Funded by the Royal Society and the Environment Agency, with a further contribution from the Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society, the Network provides training in oral history through the University, and aims "to capture the experiences of communities affected by the River Severn's long history of flooding, and discover the extent of their knowledge and awareness of flood risk." On the other side of the County, near the border with Oxfordshire, the adventurous and resourceful Fairford Oral History group has begun interviewing using equipment and discs purchased with a grant from a local Trust. The Fire Service College at Moreton-in-Marsh joined with the London Fire Brigade Museum in a successful grant application to the Home Front Trust, and are now well down the road of recording the memories of Wartime Firefighters on CD and video. BBC Radio Gloucestershire's contribution to the national "Voices" project, described as a "massive project to survey local dialects and languages", has a strong inter-active presence on the Web at [www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/voices2005](http://www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/voices2005).

The potential for oral history in the County is illustrated by the South Gloucestershire Mines Research Group, centred on Bristol. The last mines in the Bristol area closed forty and fifty years ago, and the Research

Group has a complex and demanding set of concerns which includes oral history but ranges from an archaeological dig, to acquiring buildings and equipment for preservation, to locating and rescuing archives. Despite limited time and conflicting demands on scarce resources some recordings have been made, earlier tapes of recorded interviews have been located, potential interviewees identified, and there has been discussion with the Yate Oral History Group and the Filton Oral History Society to see if it is possible to progress the recording of miners and families, friends, and others in the community through their members. An enthusiastic student or researcher would make a tremendous difference very quickly. The Forest of Dean's Dean Heritage Museum, which completed an HLF-funded oral history project in 2003 and has taken in the Elsie Olivey Oral History Collection (named for the volunteer who began recording in the 1980s), has an ongoing programme of transcription, and is actively seeking funds to carry out more recording. Watch this space for 2006.

### ***Craig Fees***

## Wales

Due to restructuring at NMGW there is no Network report this time around. However, once this is completed, a decision will be made as to the most suitable member of staff to represent Wales on the Regional Network. In the meantime, enquiries can be directed to Emma Liles as usual, and she will forward them to the most appropriate person.

## Scotland

### **Scottish Oral History Group**

Over the last year there have been the usual enquiries from individuals and organisations for help and information, including a good number from media journalists and researchers as ever; however the quantity from individual academics beginning research projects has been higher than in previous years.

The Scottish Oral History Group will hold its annual conference on Saturday November 19<sup>th</sup> in Edinburgh. This will be held in conjunction with the Scottish Working People's History Trust and will focus on women's involvement in the 1984/85 miners' strike. A programme is available on [www.oralhistoryscotland.org](http://www.oralhistoryscotland.org)

The conference will tie in with the OHS training day in Edinburgh on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November.

Activity within the Scottish Oral History Group has included discussion and implementation of a confederation of interested bodies practising oral history in Scotland and some initial meetings have been held to this end. An HLF bid to compile a directory of OH work in Scotland has also been finalised.

Graham Smith from the OHS has attended one of our committee meetings in order to discuss further activity and collaboration between the groups.

***Howard Mitchell***  
***Chair SOHG***

### **North East Scotland**

The main initiative here has been the consolidation of the Aberdeen & Region Oral History Association (AROHA) which was established in 2003. AROHA has now developed its own website which went live in June ([www.arohascotland.org](http://www.arohascotland.org)). The association holds training workshops both in the North East of Scotland and in Shetland. Meetings in Aberdeen and in the region are held approximately three times a year and in the past year attendances, while always modest, have been growing. AROHA is a joint Aberdeen City Council/Aberdeenshire Council/University of Aberdeen initiative and we think it is a good response to the interest in oral history of many individuals and groups in the region.

*Hugo Manson*

### **Orkney**

There isn't much going on up here other than what I described last time. I am still working with the University of Highlands and Islands Cultural Studies degree students, lots of whom are doing oral history related project work, and doing some bits of research of my own.

*Kate Towsey*