

Reports from the Regions

North West

Greater Manchester

Over the last year I have continued to record the life stories of refugees and survivors of the Holocaust for the Association of Jewish Refugees. This is the fourth and last year of their nationwide project in which 150 life stories have been recorded on video. I was responsible for interviewing in the north of England, and those interviews comprise approximately half of the collection. The project is now aiming to transcribe and catalogue all the testimonies, which will be housed in their London headquarters. Last year I was also involved in conducting interviews for the Salford Wartimes Memories Project run by Salford Age Concern, PCT and City Council and for the Manchester Wartimes Memories Project run by Manchester City Council. Manchester have since produced a CD and booklet based on the interviews. More recently after becoming involved as a regional networker, I was approached by the Middlewich Heritage Society, which received HLF Funding for an Oral History Project, to conduct training sessions for them together with the Middlewich High School and a local primary school.

From January to March 2006 I was commissioned by Manchester City Council to produce a report detailing recommendations for the setting up of a second phase to the World War 2 Memories Project in the City of Manchester. The suggested focus of phase 2 was to facilitate community groups, schools and youth to record the wartime memories of their elders for future generations. It would encourage all of Manchester's communities to record their own stories and involve intergenerational work. It was the intention of the report to identify and contact already existing oral history and local history groups and projects in the City, to make contact with community groups, BME, the health and services for older people, youth, school and universities and to outline the degree of interest in being involved in the suggested project. The report also aimed to give details of good Oral History Practice and to suggest possible project models, based upon oral history projects elsewhere.

The report identified the existence of a great deal of oral history activity in the Greater Manchester area and interest throughout the whole community in participating in oral history work with possibly a wider focus. It also identified the existence of an earlier report commissioned by Manchester Metropolitan University in 2004 recommending the need for access to a centralised source of information detailing community and oral history initiatives and sharing information and expertise. That report noted the lack of knowledge of one project about another and the isolation of groups, and this problem was found still to exist in 2006. As a result the 2006 report recommended the implementation of the 2004 report and this was submitted to Manchester City Council on 31 March 2006.

Discussions have been held but no concrete developments have yet resulted.

Examples of Oral History Activity in the Greater Manchester Area

There have been a number of projects and individuals, which have been engaged in Oral History Projects such as the World War Two Bolton Project, and the Manchester Cathedral Project, which has been recording the memories of war around the area of the Cathedral.

Also many major institutions, such as museums and libraries, have been developing community outreach work, which includes oral history activities. The People's History Museum has been involved in oral and living history projects involving the African Caribbean and Southern Asian Communities. The Manchester Science and Industry Museum this year launched its Histories Revealed project recording the experiences of people who have worked in the Textiles Industry in Greater Manchester as a way of bringing their collections to life. The Salford Lifetimes Project is continually engaged in Oral History and Reminiscence work and it has a permanent exhibition area within the Salford Museum and Art Gallery. Regeneration projects in the City are including an oral history element such the East Manchester and the Ancoats Regeneration Projects and the Victoria Baths Restoration Project. Large scale projects such as Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Archive Community History Project have been very active in oral history work with BME communities especially with an intergenerational element.

The 60th anniversary of the end of the 2WW inspired many groups to record wartime memories. Salford Age Concern launched a project involving volunteers and schools, Manchester City Council commissioned the making of a CD of Manchester wartime memories and an accompanying book. Individual groups such as the New Moston History Society, College of the Third Age and the Retired Teachers Association recorded memories and produced booklets. Many schools in the Manchester area participated in the 'Home Front Recall' and the 'Their Past Your Future' Projects and some schools worked with a Radio Station to produce programmes based on their recordings. 80 schools also worked on the My Manchester Project, which incorporated the recording of Manchester memories. An Oral History project in Blackburn worked with Youth Action, whereby Asian youth interviewed Asian veterans as part of a mutual respect project.

Recent examples of work within minority communities includes an oral history project with members of the Association of Ukrainian Women (AUW) in Great Britain, recording their experiences in Ukraine before the war, life during the war, subsequent arrival in the UK, and the development of the community and the AUW, Manchester branch. The Irish World Heritage Centre in Manchester is aiming to build up an archive of oral history of the Irish Community in Manchester.

Ros Livshin

Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside

The North West Oral history Network continues to grow and currently has over 60 members all actively recording in the region. The subjects covered by members are diverse ranging from 'The Struggle for Birth Control in Manchester 1926-1956' through 'Memories of the Manchester African Caribbean Community' to general memories of recipes, kitchen and cooking. A fourth open day was held for network members in May where over 100 people attended. The number of enquiries for advice and training re oral continues to grow with several enquirers stating they have contacted the Sound Archive through the Oral History Society web pages. During the last year around 20 oral history training sessions have been held for groups and individuals.

The North West Sound Archive also continues to undertake its own recording programme as well as making 'security' copies of collections held by individuals, local groups, museums, libraries, archives etc thus ensuring the longevity of the recordings. This process means that some collections are now available for use by the public for the first time.

During the previous year North West Sound Archive has taken in roughly 15,000 new recordings ranging from the collection of Rev. Dennis Blackledge who was responsible for the religious broadcasting for BBC Radio Lancashire for 10 years to the Getting Our Heads Together project which used students from Blackpool & Fylde College to interview people with a history of mental health problems.

Andrew Schofield

North East

County Durham

Unfortunately since the Coal Mining Oral History Project came to an end in November 2005 I have not been able to become greatly involved in local and national oral history events. Nevertheless I have still been busy promoting the OHS by giving talks to local history societies and delivering training sessions to groups throughout County Durham and Teeside.

The Durham Miners' Gala in July this year saw yet another successful get-together of some of the people who were interviewed as part of my project, and a stand with photographs and extracts from the oral histories received a great deal of attention.

Requests for information and advice about recording histories and making bids for oral history projects are frequent, as are requests from the media. One unusual oral history project about to begin in the region is the Houghton Hillside Cemetery Memories Project which is part of a major facelift for the cemetery. Details of the "Bringing Back to Life" of the cemetery can be found at http://www.houghton-hillside-cemetery.org.uk/hillside_home.html

Sheila Forster

Sunderland - Living History North East

The Regional Oral History Centre

This has been a *"long and winding road"* and I was beginning to believe it may never happen and that's coming from an eternal optimist! However we are finally ready to start work on the restoration programme that will leave us with a beautiful 1778 Charity School restored and ready for use as a new centre.

You can perhaps imagine how busy we have been to try and make sure that all of the funding that we needed was in place and at the right time! This has not been an easy road as costs have doubled since the projects inception, but thankfully we are there and hopefully oral history development in the north east region will be supported and encouraged from this new site. The new Regional Oral History Centre for the North East will be opened in May 2007.

Other Activities

As always we are keen to work with other partners to help deliver oral history led projects throughout the region, and this year has been no exception.

Let the Women Speak was a project that aimed to record and documents the experiences of women who found themselves in Sunderland as refugees or asylum seekers. It was a pilot project aimed at training, recording and documenting. The DVD's focus was key figures who could relate their experiences. It is a fascinating glimpse of how the human spirit can conquer all adversaries and find a way to move on.

The Heddon Heritage Project was developed in partnership and delivered a year long programme of activities focusing on oral history with Year 2 children, Key Stage 1 (5-7 years). This project was activity led, which accommodated the children's learning skills. In its final stages we asked an animator to work with the children and the memories they had collected to animate a significant story from the village. This gave the children a great sense of achievement.

Prisoners of War Exhibition: LHNE produces a portable exhibition which consists of a 60 minutes DVD that recounts the stories from six Prisoners of War from various theatres of war. This is accompanied by two banners.

My Family My History - Creative Partnerships: This project was the result of a year-long collaboration between photographer Julian Germain, children and families at Barnes Infants School Year 1, Brazilian photographer Patricia Azevedo and Living History North East. The result of the work was a photographic exhibition, an art photographic collage and a

DVD reflecting childhood memories that can be utilised as a long term resource for the school.

Their Past Your Future Project: Tyneside Cinema Education & Outreach Department worked with schools, older people and artists in an intergenerational oral history project. The project worked with students in school, to produce oral history interviews and recordings with older people as well as amateur archive footage of VE Day and Holidays at home.

This material was then passed over to a sound and visual artist, who created additional foley sound and produce a remixed version of the original film. The two remixed versions were transferred onto a DVD, where they appeared alongside the original re-digitised footage. On the DVD are links to complete wartime 'stories' (read by children), with a visual accompaniment (primarily made up of still images).

The Bombing of South Shields: Tyne and Wear Archives Education and Outreach department have been working on a website that uses two oral histories to tell the story of a major bombing incident in South Shields. These will help bring to life other documents that are deposited in the archives. These video interviews, conducted and edited by LHNE, will be used on the website and in other resource.

Building Bridges of Understanding: This is a CFD funded project that has just started and will be an interfaith oral history project culminating in an exhibition and DVD. The project will work alongside one school and a youth project as well as members of different faith groups to record at least 25 interviews.

Newcastle Community Heritage Project: Hannah Laughton is the Education Outreach Officer (West) and is involved in two oral history projects. The first is in partnership with Age Concern, called 'Memory Map'. This five year project aims to collect the memories of people living in the West End of Newcastle and eventually create a video of participants telling their stories. In the shorter term we are producing a booklet about Adelaide Terrace in Benwell using their memories.

The other oral history project I am about to embark on is with a group of African ladies (who are refugees), mostly from Somalia, who want to create an exhibition using their oral histories about their culture and the differences between home and here, including accounts of their journeys. Excerpts from these will be displayed with their traditional objects.

Information from the North East Heritage Lottery Fund Office

History of Blindness by Stockton Blind Peoples Voice: The History of Blindness in the Tees Valley from 1945 to date. The areas to be researched are hospital treatments; home life; employment opportunities; life and social skills; social life; education and training; the work of societies for the blind and the work of social services. A team of volunteers will be recruited and trained for this purpose. Blind and visually impaired people throughout the Tees valley will invited to

participate in the project. A minimum of 100 participants will be required, covering the full range of visual impairments and all ages.

Separate booklets will be produced on each of the themes - again in all relevant formats. A series of exhibitions will be held in museums and libraries throughout the Tees Valley area and beyond. The underlying objective will be to increase public awareness of blindness with particular emphasis on access. A good model for an exhibition has been discovered in the James Cook Memorial Hospital in Middlesbrough. There can be found a history of the North Riding Infirmary (an eye hospital) from 1885 until its closure in 2002.

Vagabonds & Ruffians - a Young Roots Project: (contributed by Andrew Clark Northumbria Coalition Against Crime). For the past year I have been working with a group of young people in Ashington on a project called Vagabonds & Ruffians. The project is to research the history of youth crime in Northumberland over the past 150 years. It is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund through their Young Roots programme which aims to get young people interested in their heritage.

At the end of the project we are producing a book, DVD and drama. The majority of our research is done through interviewing historians, crime experts and local people with a good story to tell. As well as projects such as this I run my own publishing company - The People's History. A number of our books contain oral history and I have edited several oral history books.

Other projects that have been funded are:

- The History of Education in the Old Parish of Bamburgh - Old Parish of Bamburgh local history archive
- Stories from the South Shields Yemeni Community - Nomad Cultural Forum
- Sustaining our Coastal Heritage: the value of local knowledge - The Dove Marine Laboratory
- Listen to the Soldiers: Durham Light Infantry Second World War Oral History Project - DLI Museum
- Down your way: Newcastle City Council

Museums, Libraries & Archives North East (formerly NEMLAC) - update provided by Linda Green, MLA North East

Communication

The North East Oral History Discussion List was set up in November 2005, at the request of members of the network who wanted a forum where they could discuss oral history issues and exchange ideas. It has been used to disseminate information to the group regarding network meetings and training. There are currently 32 people signed up to the Discussion List. (Editor's note: since receiving this report I have had a message from Linda Green saying that the list will be discontinued at the end of November due to the relatively small number of people who have used it).

Network Meetings

21 June 2006 – Current Projects in Oral History in the North East region. Speakers included: Geoff Garnett, Stockton Blind People's Voice; John Charlton, North East Labour History Society, and Holli McGuire, Tyneside Cinema.

10 October 2006 – Working with Young People. Speakers included: Janette Hilton, Living History North East, and Andrew Clark, Northumbria Coalition Against Crime.

Training

29 November 2005 – Copyright and Oral History, led by Cynthia Brown, Oral History Society.

Membership

There are c.100 members

Janette Hilton

Yorkshire

North Yorkshire

It has been a busy year for York Oral History Society. We have had involvement in three projects. We have worked with the York Castle Museum on an oral history of the Terry's chocolate factory which closed at the end of 2005 after over 200 years in York. I have now been asked to produce a book using research and some of the oral history gathered. I also worked with the York Archaeological Trust on a project on York in the Second World War entitled Home Front Recall. Over 30 interviews were done using the PMD Marantz solid state recorder, which several of us used for the project. We have not as yet been able to buy our own.

Our HLF funded music project which culminated in an exhibition and two books was followed by a CD on the dance band era in the city, using music by York musicians of the period. In November we will produce a second CD on music from the 1950s and 1960s in York, interspersed with

speech. The launch will be another big occasion when musicians from that period meet up and hopefully there will be some live music too.

We have had several students to help with inputting of photographs onto computer using the Comma software. We are still trying to find funding to digitise our whole collection. Some of the earlier material is in danger of being lost if we don't manage to get this done soon. If anyone can suggest sources of funding nationally, please let me know.

Nicola Fox reports that the project entitled the Expanding National Archive of Railway Oral History is nearing its conclusion. This is a follow-on from the National Archive of Railway Oral History, which was completed in 2003, and it is organised by the Friends of the National Railway Museum. They were awarded a grant of £49,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund 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.

The seventeen volunteer interviewers have tried in their interviews to 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. So far they have received 56 interviews, with a handful due to be completed before the project comes to an end at the end of the year. Once completed, the Archive will be handed over to the National Railway Museum and can be accessed by members of the public. Hopefully excerpts will also be used in future displays and exhibitions. We also have plans to develop a website so a selection of excerpts from the original NAROH and E-NAROH interviews will be available online.

Van Wilson

South Yorkshire

A highlight in the South Yorkshire oral history calendar this year has been the opportunity to host the Oral History Society annual conference in Sheffield (17-18 June): *Passion, Play and the Everyday: Oral history and the consumer society*. Our conference partners, Sheffield Wednesday Football Club, provided an excellent venue and contributed exhibitions of community engagement work. The conference attracted 90 delegates – from academic, museum and community backgrounds, with many representatives attending from local projects. In addition to two inspiring keynote speakers and eight exhibition stands, 31 presenters delivered a broad range of papers and a panel session - highlighting the diversity of themes, processes and outcomes within oral history.

Prior to the conference, in May, a sixth Regional Network meeting was held in Burngreave Library. Seventeen people attended, sharing updates of their work and enjoying presentations by Liz Carnegie on the role of photography in social history displays, and Stuart Crosthwaite on dialect and transcription. Two OHS training days in Sheffield have fully booked

well in advance, and demand continues for training tailored to specific group needs.

Numerous and varied oral history projects are underway in South Yorkshire – the following give a flavour of work in progress.

Age Concern Doncaster (<http://www.acd.org.uk/home.htm>) has a Heritage Lottery grant to carry out a two year living history project involving older people and school children. The project is collecting Age Concern clients' reminiscences from Doncaster's mining and railway communities. The stories will form part of an interactive CD ROM, together with historical information on Doncaster's links with these industries. To date, 10 volunteers working with the project officer have collected over 50 oral histories.

Burton Street Community History Project

(<http://www.burtonstreethistory.org.uk>) is based in a former school which lost its local community when surrounding terraced housing was demolished in the 1970s. Members of the community were dispersed throughout Sheffield and beyond but retain a strong bond with the area - a recent reunion attracted over 100 people. The project has collected images of life in the community from the early 20th century through to the 1970's, and promoted inter-generational activities in local schools. Volunteers have supported World War Two projects, answering questions on evacuation and the Sheffield Blitz, and a 'Then and Now' project has compared lifestyles across generations. Nine schools and around 600 children have been involved, and a book has been produced.

Wild Rose Heritage and Arts (<http://www.wildrosearts.net/index.shtml>) develops projects that include research and training to promote, encourage and investigate the heritage and legacy of Calderdale. The organisation has recently embarked on a new HLF funded project, Generations Talking, which aims to collect 40 interviews from all age groups focusing on themes of childhood, work, special days/events and change. All interviews will be placed on the Wild Rose website and included in outputs such as an exhibition, educational resource pack and publication.

The Burngreave Voices project

(<http://www.bndfc.co.uk/projects/burngreave-voices>) in Sheffield is funded by the Burngreave New Deal for Communities, with Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust and Sheffield Libraries and Information Service. Local residents are involved as interviewers - collecting Burngreave's history through stories, photographs, objects, and by organising community events and training courses. To date, they have over 20 oral history interviews covering themes of family, community and work, which will contribute to a book and a website. A school education pack incorporates written histories from local residents and encourages pupils to interview older residents as a classroom activity. A video, 'The Corner Shop', shows the role of local shops in the community and is installed in Weston Park Museum, now re-opened after extensive HLF funded refurbishment.

The Thorne and Hatfield Moors Oral History Project, supported by HLF and managed by English Nature (Natural England from October 2006) will produce a history of Thorne and Hatfield Moors. The project will coincide with the cessation of industrial peat extraction and the start of restoration of this important natural environment – heritage from which the local community have been excluded for many years. The project aims to encourage and enable people to value the natural and human environment and heritage, and to actively engage in its future development and presentation. It is hoped that project outputs will form part of a ‘Green Tourism’ initiative to help revitalise the local economy. Intended outputs are a travelling exhibition, CD/DVD and a booklet. This work will form the basis of a permanent exhibition should plans for a visitor centre be agreed in the future.

Furthermore, a number of university based oral history studies in the region are exploring diverse themes including medicine and healthcare, migration, environment, employment, food, leisure, entertainment and community. For more information contact: m.winslow@sheffield.ac.uk.

Michelle Winslow

East Midlands

Derbyshire

Although for me it has been “all quiet” on the Derbyshire oral history front, groups and individuals have been working away behind the scenes producing books, DVDs, CDs and tapes based on their recordings, several of them recalling the Home Front.

Some of this work has been supported by the Derbyshire Local Studies Library, under the guidance of Ruth Gordon and the county’s former Literature Development officer, Jenny Edgar. With the help of external funding, several books have been produced: *Props, points and pig iron, reminiscences of life in Renishaw*, along with a junior version *He says, she says*, including children’s artwork in response to the stories of the old people; *Keep the home fires burning: stories of World War 2 from Swadlincote and area*; and *Now we are here: memories of people from other countries and cultures who made their home in Chesterfield*.

A set of reel to reel tapes of dialect plays, written by L du Garde Peach and performed by the Village Players of Great Hucklow in the early 1960s, has been transferred to DVD and can be listened to once again via the library service.

The Library is also working in partnership with a local volunteer, Margaret Wombwell, who has produced 80 recordings so far from her parish. Their second publication *Barm and battleships: memories of childhood in Ashover* came out this year, and work is continuing on a third selection on farming.

Community groups which have produced their own outcomes include Chesterfield's book *Keep smiling through*; Wirksworth's DVD *Home front memories*; Langley Mill's DVD *Through the mill*; and my own society has produced an education pack and book, *Memories of the home front in Sawley, Long Eaton and nearby Derbyshire villages*, based on an exhibition staged in 2005.

A recent book from Blackwell author Robert Dawson, *Rokkering, clecking and cracking; aspects of Romany and gypsy vocabulary*, is the latest in a series of publications by one of Britain's foremost experts on Romany culture. He has spent fifty years talking to Romany and gypsy families, many now settled in Derbyshire, but due to the reluctance of his subjects, Robert was not able to record many of his interviews on tape. His extensive archive of some 2,500 items has now left Derbyshire as he has given it to the Romany and Travellers Family History Society. The Robert Dawson Romany Collection is now on permanent loan at Reading University and can be accessed, by appointment, in the University's Museum of English Rural Life.

Recordings of Derbyshire people, along with others from neighbouring counties, are available (via the East Midlands Oral History Archive) on www.landshapes.org, an attractive site featuring communities, projects and activities within the area covered by the National Forest.

Judy Kingscott

Leicestershire & Rutland

The East Midlands Oral History Archive, based in the School of Historical Studies at the University of Leicester, is now sharing premises with the Media Archive for Central England (MACE), the recognised body responsible for collecting, preserving and making accessible the moving image heritage of the East and West Midlands. MACE forms the final part of a network of public sector national and regional moving image archives that collectively care for the United Kingdom's moving image heritage and form the membership of the UK Film Archive Forum. See their website at <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/film/mace/>.

EMOHA continues to produce oral history content for villages on the www.leicestershirevillages.com website. You will find oral history on the Leicestershire Villages website under the local history sections of Bagworth, Bardon, Barkby, Barrow, Barwell, Blaby, Bottesford, Foxton, Hungarton, Melton Mowbray, Newton Burgoland, Oadby, Sharnford and South Wigston. The EMOHA website also hosts the oral history collection of the LANDshapes project, comprising 36 audio interviews and transcripts. LANDshapes is a heritage project designed and hosted by The National Forest Company, working with local people to gather together information about the heritage of The National Forest. This partnership is creating an archive of knowledge and memories about the area, to be shared by everyone. For more information about LANDshapes and the

National Forest, have a look at their website at <http://www.landshapes.org/>.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded a grant of £50,000 to the East Midlands Economic Network, based in Leicester, to capture memories of the Belgrave area of the city. From the 1880s, the area attracted migrants from Ireland, Eastern Europe, Italy and Belgium from the 1880. Belgrave Memories will examine major changes to the built and social fabric of Belgrave associated with the arrival of migrant populations from the 1950s to the present, including those from the Caribbean, the Indian sub-continent, East Africa, Hong Kong and China.

It will interview people who lived in Belgrave in the past, as well as those living there now. It also aims to encourage people to donate or loan heritage materials to the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, and will use these alongside the oral histories to produce a museum exhibition, booklet for schools and libraries, and a website. Training in oral history and archival research will be provided to local residents and volunteers as part of the project. Partners in Belgrave Memories include the East Midlands Oral History Archive and the University of Leicester.

Cynthia Brown

Northamptonshire

The Northamptonshire Black History Project has now recorded over 200 life story interviews with Black people across the county. A large team of people have been involved in collecting these interviews, and digital recordings, full interview transcripts or summaries can be accessed at Northamptonshire Record Office. Extracts from some of the recordings can be heard on the NBHA website at www.northants-black-history.org.uk/activitiesInterviews.asp. Copies of interview summaries are also available in the reference sections of the county's local libraries.

The Northamptonshire Black History Association, the successor organisation to the Northamptonshire Black History Project, was formed in the summer of 2005 as a membership organisation to carry on its activities. Its objectives are to:

- be guardians of the resources created by the project
- continue to conduct historical research and oral history interviews
- create publications and regular newsletters
- hold regular meetings with guest speakers
- maintain the project website
- maintain a membership for individuals and organisations

The Association was recently awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to produce educational materials based on its collections. Its online database of the collections is at <http://www.northants-black-history.org.uk/search.asp>.

Cynthia Brown

Nottinghamshire

The Local Studies section of Nottingham Central Library continues to support local projects with the loan of equipment and advice, despite staffing difficulties within the Service. Some of this support has been basic advice to individuals wanting to record members of their own families. At a different level, advice has been provided to local history groups in Nottinghamshire seeking funding to record various aspects of village life. Some have needed guidance on compiling their bids; others have borrowed mini disk recorders to try out before submitting a bid.

Two of the many Local Heritage Initiative projects based in the County are just coming to their conclusion. The *Underwood Remembrance Project* has deposited its tapes with the Local Studies library: these were recordings made whilst researching the two World Wars for their book, *Underwood and Bagthorpe remembered*. When possible, copies of these tapes will be placed in the appropriate local libraries. Also, the *Rediscovering the lost village of Greasley* project is just coming to an end and the equipment it borrowed is being returned. The results of this project are awaited with interest. The Nottinghamshire Oral History Collection, stored in Nottingham Local Studies library, continues to be accessed on a regular basis by students and readers, either at the library or by using the loan system.

Christina Raven-Conn

West Midlands

Overview by Julia Letts

I took on the role of Regional Networker for the West Midlands at the beginning of 2006 and have been constantly impressed by the variety, quantity and dedication to oral history going on in this huge and diverse area. I am also working with the Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) West Midlands to produce a comprehensive list of oral history collections and active recording projects in the region, and would love to hear from anyone who is aware of collections (large or small) in the West Midlands.

Below I've summarised a handful of the many local projects currently going on in this area:

Working Lives, Nuneaton and Bedworth

Alison Clague has been coordinating a project in Nuneaton and Bedworth, funded by Warwickshire County Council's Library and Information Service. It is focusing on memories of work and industry in the area, and since launching in May she has recorded interviews on a range of topics, including brick, tile, quarrying, engineering and textile industries. Her next challenge is to look at ways of getting the full interviews on line. See www.warwickshire.gov.uk/workinglives for the project Newsletter.

Cider Museum, Hereford

Rebecca Rosscoff is managing a project at the Hereford Cider Museum, called Apples and Pears Past. Since launching in May, she has done about 24 interviews, covering most of the areas that lead to drinking cider. She has also made a database of recordings that will soon be on line, and is now looking at how to integrate the recordings into the museum to bring it to life.

Jensen Motors, West Bromwich

Victoria Slade has been working on a project for the Sandwell Museums Service to record the memories of people who worked at Jensen Motors Limited. This project is linked into the wider Museum Service programme 'How Sandwell Changed the World', and celebrates the 40th anniversary of the most popular Jensen car, the Interceptor. She is creating a soundtrack of excerpts from the interviews and also a small display.

Croome Court, Upton on Severn

Eileen Clement has been coordinating a Heritage Lottery funded project on Croome Court, recording memories of what went on there before it was taken over by the National Trust. With a small band of volunteers from the Friends of Croome, she has so far conducted 26 interviews on every day life on the estate, providing ample information on the Coventry family, Capability Brown (whose first landscape design was for the Sixth Earl of Coventry), Robert Adam and James Wyatt. She is now working on a booklet, sign boards and illustrated talks.

Kington Camp, Herefordshire

Cressida Fforde has been managing a Heritage Lottery funded project on the background of a Second World War Military site near Kington, which was used for regrouping troops after Dunkirk, and later as a US hospital, a Polish resettlement Corps and then a low-cost housing estate for local people. Her team has gathered archaeological, oral and photographic evidence, which have been used to create a website on Kington Camp and a small exhibition in the local museum. Local primary and secondary school children have been involved. She is now looking for funding to expand the project and create a soundtrack.

Worcester Porcelain Museum, Worcester

Amanda Savidge has been applying for funding to launch an oral history of Worcester Porcelain, recording the memories of workers at the factory in living memory. It is hoped that this project will get underway as soon as possible, as the 250 year old company has now moved all its manufacturing abroad and the factory site is being redeveloped for housing.

Worcestershire Record Office

There has been something of a lull in oral history work at Worcestershire Record Office over the last couple of years. This is partly because of changes in staff and their roles and responsibilities, but also because a shift in office priorities has meant those staff who make up the oral history

team have been much more involved in other areas of office work, with oral history work taking more of a back seat than it had in recent years. This year things have started to pick up, with the team beginning to meet again on a regular basis and to look at new directions and new challenges.

We started the year by picking up the work Julia Letts had previously done for us on compiling a directory of sound recordings in Worcestershire. It had always been our intention to make this available on our website, but until the post responsible for maintaining and updating our website had been filled we had not been in a position to do this. The directory is now available on our oral history webpage at <http://worcestershire.whub.org.uk/home/wccindex/wcc-records/wcc-records-oral-history.htm>.

The oral history team continued the ongoing task of checking the transcripts of the World War II project interviews we had undertaken some years previously. This has been a long task but we are now starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. We have also started to pick up the key word database work we had also started for these interviews.

We were very pleased to have the assistance this year of a volunteer, Ben Kent, from Worcester College for the Blind, who helped on a regular basis with some transcription work. Tom Bomford, one of our temporary archives assistants, has also done some regular voluntary work checking transcripts for us.

David Everett, one of our regular volunteers, has continued to interview any 'stray' World War II interviewees who came our way. As we have no staff whose time is wholly dedicated to oral history work, we are always very grateful to the help given to us by our small band of volunteers. As their numbers have dwindled in recent years we will be looking at ways to recruit new volunteers in the coming year.

A new venture for us this year was undertaking some oral history work with a local primary school. The school contacted us because their building was being rebuilt and they were undertaking some research into the history of the school in preparation for activities relating to the reopening of the school in its new building. One of their avenues of research involved a group of year 5/6 pupils taping some reminiscences of ex pupils and teachers at a special open day. We were asked to undertake some of the preparatory work with pupils and to come along on the day to assist the pupils with their interviews.

As the school was living in temporary classrooms the open day took place in one room – the same room in which the children were conducting their interviews in groups and in which refreshments were being served! It was certainly a challenge. At times it was a bit like spinning plates as we dashed from one group to the next trying to ensure that all the tape recorders were working, no one was without an interviewee and everyone in the group was asking their questions in turn. The school was very pleased with how the day turned out and we were pleased to have had the opportunity to do oral history work with a group of school children,

something we had never done before. Once the school has had the opportunity to work on the tapes themselves we will be doing some follow up work with them.

Maggie Tohill

East of England

Bedfordshire

In Bedfordshire I am sure that there are other oral history projects going on, but two that I am aware of are based in Samuel Whitbread Community College. Year 9 and Year 13 students have been involved in two projects which have included interviews with people from the local community. Year 9 have been involved in a project creating educational materials with the Museum of Military Intelligence that is being set up on what was the Chicksands military base in Shefford. The students were involved in delving through the archives to find out about how the base was used during World War Two. This included the opportunity to interview one of the women who worked on the base on the top secret code breaking activities that were located there, which included using the Enigma machine. A group of Year 13 students have been looking at names on the World War 1 memorial in Shefford and interviewing relatives of the people concerned. This has led to a wider focus for those working on the project, as one of the relatives was very interested in discussing his participation in the Suez crisis. So as I am sure has happened many times, through an interview on one subject, interest in another has been awakened in those students involved.

Julia Drake

Luton Voices

Luton Voices aims to record, preserve and celebrate the oral history of a broad range of communities in Luton in the 20th and 21st centuries. Working with a number of community partners, it will record at least 150 life histories, and use these as the basis for educational and creative outputs such as exhibitions, websites and publications. The majority of the interviews will be carried out by trained volunteers from the partner groups, working within their own communities. The project is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and will run from 2006 – 2009.

Information provided to Cynthia Brown by Dien Luu, Luton Voices

London

British Library Sound Archive

We continue to receive daily calls and emails from projects, groups and individuals all over London (in fact from all over the UK) seeking advice on starting up an oral history project. This ranges from information on

funding and equipment to sample job descriptions and places of deposit. We also work with an array of applicants for Heritage Lottery funding, providing guidance where we can: in a few cases offering to accept their recordings into our collection here at the British Library, in others recommending local or regional archives.

Technical matters remain the most popular topic and we have now developed a factsheet based around our own new digital practice at the BL that we send out and which we are considering adding to the OHS website. The problem, as ever, is that technology moves fast and opinions, amongst both practitioners and archivists, vary. There seems little doubt, however, that digital has now replaced analogue and the sooner we develop protocols for dealing with digital files the better.

Rob Perks

South East

Buckinghamshire (and beyond)

Although Living Archive in Milton Keynes does not currently have a Director, staff, board members and volunteers have been working hard to ensure that the organisation's work continues, and this year has been a fruitful one for oral history work. The LHI funded project on the railway heritage of Bletchley collected 50 interviews and resulted in an exhibition, book, *Where the Lines Meet* and a website created by volunteers (<http://www.myrailwaymemories.org.uk/index.html>).

A commission by the development agency, the Central Milton Keynes Partnership, has seen 22 key figures in the development of Central Milton Keynes 30 years ago being interviewed. Architects, engineers, landscape architects, financial and commercial people and others have told their stories, and a book based on their memories will be produced in 2007.

Like many others, Living Archive received funding from the Home Front Recall pot and organized a 'Down Memory Lane' event to solicit people's memories and memorabilia of life on the Home Front in World War 2. More than 20 people were interviewed and their memories inspired the local Junior School to produce songs, dance and painted backcloths that were presented at a special VE Day Street Party. Besides the children's performances there were songs from the Living Archive Band and music from a big dance band. Again, there was an exhibition and a website created by volunteers.

On a personal note, I have been running oral history interviewing and recording training sessions all over the country and I can confidently say that oral history is very much alive and well. In London, young people of Chinese origin and from the Iteso tribe in Uganda are learning more about their cultural roots and migration to Britain from their parents and grandparents. Staff and volunteers at the Florence Nightingale Museum are collecting experiences of nurses and patients from the 1930s onwards. In the West Midlands CAMRA members are collecting memories of pub culture in Tamworth, Boys Brigade members are interviewing members of Birmingham's oldest company, and workers at the Rural Media Company have been collecting Travellers' tales and using them to create individual digital stories.

In the North East, staff and volunteers at a Marine Laboratory in Cullercoates are collecting memories of the seashore and of the fishing and other marine related industries. In Scunthorpe they are interviewing women who worked in the steel industry and in Humber and Wolds 14 people from local history groups did their oral history collection training and then six months later came back with their recordings and had a day's training in digitizing and digital sound editing.

I have been thrilled by people's enthusiasm for collecting oral history. They have recognized not only that it has great historical worth but also

that the process of the collection of memories and the presentation of the results is itself such a powerful tool for creating and celebrating community.

Roger Kitchen

Kent Oral History Discussion (KOHD) network

Report from Maggy Taylor at English Heritage:

This year in Kent we have been recording the memories of people who dug at Lullingstone Roman Villa with Colonel Meates in the 1950s and 1960s. Many of them were schoolboys at the time. The site and their discoveries there led them into starting careers as notable photographers and specialist antique dealers and many others. As well as a store of remarkable and interesting stories about the dig and personalities we have been able to copy several volumes of contemporary photographs. These have enhanced our knowledge of the site and its early development considerably. Another project we have been working on, via our interest in the Cold War period, was the recording of personnel who worked at a Royal Observer Corps Group Control in the 1970s to 1991. This project took place in York, but the way the Group operated, recruited volunteers, became aware of the nuclear threat and the risks it posed for the general populace, was the same in other Group Controls around the country. In Kent our own Group Control was in Maidstone where the operation of the team would have been almost identical.

Report from Tom Hill at the Agricultural Museum, Brook: We are well into a project funded by the Local Heritage Initiative on 'Recording Woodland and Agricultural Crafts'. Three studies form the basis of the grant and work has been completed with a rake-maker, with work with a maker of chestnut hurdles just due to begin and with a basket-maker at the planning stage. In due course any recordings made will be available to anyone interested, and it is our intention to continue this work after the expiry of the grant, making use of the expertise developed during the initial studies.

Report from Glenn Bowman, Senior Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Kent at Canterbury: I've been carrying out oral history research on Muslim (Sunni and Sufi) and Christian (Orthodox) use of religious sites (i.e. shrines) in Macedonia (aka FYROM). This involves not only direct interviewing and participant observation, but also photo elicitation. Should the situation improve - and the Israelis cease banning foreign observers on the West Bank - I will be carrying out parallel research in the Jerusalem and Bethlehem regions of the Occupied Territories in the autumn. See

<http://www.kent.ac.uk/anthropology/department/staff/bowman.html>

Other activities

The oral history group, Telling Whitstable's Story, in collaboration with the Canterbury City Council's Museums and Galleries Service, has been piloting a project called *Shop Talk* and expect to make a funding bid

shortly. Whitstable has become most famous for its oysters and divers, but for the incomers and the people who already live there, the secret treasure is its small traditional shops. Many of these are making way for cafes and design shops as Whitstable becomes 'Islington-on-Sea', but the group plans to collect and celebrate shop images and memories in an exhibition and series of outreach activities in 2007.

Building on the success of its *Childhood* project in 2004-05, Herne Bay Living History Group has applied for funding to celebrate the role of sport in the local community. This will include an exhibition at Herne Bay museum and a new publication, as well as inclusive activities in the community. As before, the group will interview all age groups and work with a local school.

Later this year the Society of Sturry Villages is publishing *Broad Oak - A Kentish Village Reconsidered* (ISBN 978-0-9544789-3-3) edited by Heather Stennett and Kinn McIntosh, which contains a number of oral history interviews. Work continues at the Sevenoaks U3A Oral History Group; and Gravesham Borough Council have completed their new website www.graveshampeople.org.uk, with HLF funding. This is an online archive of stories and memories from the people of Gravesham, on which people can watch, read or listen to other people's stories and also share their own memories of Gravesham.

For further information, or to make contact with any of the groups above, please contact the KOHD co-ordinators, Manda Gifford (manda_gifford@yahoo.co.uk) or Jocelyn Goddard (jocelyn.goddard@mlasoutheast.org.uk)

Manda Gifford & Jocelyn Goddard

Southampton Oral History Unit

The Oral History Unit has had another busy year. Here is an update on projects since the last OHS Network Report.

New Epoc – European Port Cities: For the past three years we have been partners in the Culture Component of the EU funded New Epoc project (Renewing Economic Prosperity for Port Cities). One of the outcomes of this project was a joint online exhibition, '*Beginning of a New Epoc – European Port Cities*', which was launched at the final conference in Brussels in June. See www.newepocexhibition.org.

The exhibition traces the development of seven port cities through their early growth, decline and challenges of the late 20th century, to their current regeneration. Produced jointly by partners in Bilbao, Bremen, Gijon, Pasaia, Southampton, Taranto and Trieste, it features photographs, sound extracts and video to trace this shared history. The software was specially designed to enable partners to work on it from their own cities and offered a practical way to share our collections to a wider audience.

The project has now received additional funding for a year to develop activities identified in the first phase. Our Unit, which leads the Culture Component, will provide training and advice to our partners who wish to set up their own oral history projects. An exchange of shipyard exhibitions is also planned. The extension offers the opportunity to develop contacts with partners from new member states for future joint projects.

Thorny's: The HLF funded project recording the oral history of the Vosper Thornycroft shipyard in Southampton culminated with the publication of a book based on the material collected during the year. The richly illustrated book, *'Thorny's – an oral history of a shipyard, Southampton'* contains an audio CD with interview extracts [ISBN 0 954 394 15; £12]. A DVD featuring sound extracts, archive film and photographs was also produced.

The book, DVD and touring exhibition, 'Riveting Stories' are based on oral testimony collected during the project, and tell the story of life at *Thorny's* in the words of the men and women who worked there over the past century. Past and present workers at the shipyard share their memories of the yard during the two world wars, the depression years, changes in technology and the closure which deeply affected the local community. The project had active involvement of the local community not only as interviewees, but also as interviewers and volunteers who helped with the archiving and documentation.

Divine Restoration: The HLF funded project for the repair and interpretation of Holy Rood Church is now complete. After much needed repairs to the structure, the site has now reopened to the public with improved access, lighting and public art work. The Oral History Unit recorded 20 new interviews with local people who remembered the area. Two audio posts on site allow visitors to listen to extracts selected from new and archival interviews. One sound post offers memories of the church before the war as well as the night of the bombing. There is also a potted history of this medieval church narrated by Nick Gurdler from the BBC. The second post near the Titanic crew memorial has local people describing the events leading up to and the sinking of the Titanic and the impact it had on the town. This is the first time we have put up sound posts outdoors, which are open to the elements. Feedback from users has been very positive.

Titanic Voices: A new edition of the best-selling 'Titanic Voices' is due to be published at the end of this year. The new edition will include several previously unpublished photographs as well as a DVD with archive film, images and voices. The previous editions of the book sold thousands of copies worldwide and it was translated into several languages.

The book is based on oral testimony collected by the Unit from survivors and local people with memories of the disaster. The sinking of the Titanic had a devastating impact on Southampton, which was home to the majority of the crew who perished.

Training: Over the past year we have been approached by several groups embarking on oral history projects for training and advice. More and more cultural projects, often funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), are including oral history into their community history work. In Southampton, we have run successful workshops for volunteer interviewers on the Thornycroft's and Diaper projects. Outside Southampton we are also delivering training workshops for Godalming Museum, English Heritage and the British Council.

Other projects

Following training of volunteers, we are offering support and advice to various HLF funded local projects. The material collected will be deposited in our archive.

- The Diaper Heritage Association is currently recording memories of this well-known Southampton maritime family. An exhibition, 'Fisherman, Ferryman, Sailor, Spy' is on display at Southampton Maritime Museum until March 2007. A free phone line (0800 0789083) allows callers to listen to memories already collected and those from our archive as well as record their own.
- Weston Shore: As part of a larger regeneration project, Mount Pleasant Media Workshop, a local community media organisation, is documenting the changing face of Weston. Through recorded memories, photography and art, local residents and school pupils are working towards building a picture of the area, which has developed from a small country village to the densely populated suburb it is today. An exhibition and educational CD-Rom will be produced.
- Art Asia, a South Asian arts organisation is celebrating its 25th anniversary. Among other events, they are recording the memories of local people actively involved with the organisation.

Sheila Jemima & Padmini Broomfield

Wessex Film & Sound Archive

There have been a number of active oral history projects in Hampshire during the last year, from the Red House Museum (using a video camera); Hiltingbury Community Association, Chandlers Ford (a 'Home Front Recall' project); Aldershot & District Bus Interest Group; Kingsclere Heritage Association; the Worthys Local History Group; Emsworth Museum; Macmillans publishers; Fordingbridge Museum; Balfour Museum of British Red Cross History, Winchester; Basingstoke Talking History; Hyde Abbey Bowls Club, Winchester; St Barbe Museum, Lymington; Hampshire Coppice Crafts Group (video again); Theatre Royal, Winchester; Portchester Civic Society; and Whitchurch Silk Mill.

In order to help these projects along, I have given a number of training sessions to various groups and individuals, extolling the virtues of the new digital flashcard recording equipment, .BWF or .WAV files and computer

editing to sceptical ears! The problem seems to lie with the computer side of things, where some people have come badly adrift when trying to download sound files or edit them. Another thing I come across is the insistence of some people using digital dictation equipment with proprietary and incompatible software - whilst the end result can sound 'good enough', it does not bode well for the longevity of such recordings. I will persist, however, especially now that the MiniDisc format is being phased out and audio cassettes will surely follow.

Our annual Oral History Seminar at Winchester is also useful for training and awareness purposes. The October 2005 event was well attended by delegates from across the region. The morning consisted of the usual illustrated talks by myself and Sheila Jemima on the equipment, principles and ethics of this subject. In the afternoon there were speakers from Portsmouth Museums and Records Service showing how they had organised projects with ethnic minorities in the city, and from the Red House Museum revealing techniques used to record oral history with a video camcorder, to produce material for an exhibition.

A couple of projects at Hampshire Record Office have incorporated oral history: the 'Living Album' gypsy heritage DVD (referred to in last year's report), and the 'Their Past Your Future' Home Front DVD both used extracts from recordings made specially, as well as from those held in the Archive. These DVDs have been distributed free to all schools in Hampshire, used in exhibitions, and for presentations (involving veterans of the Second World War talking to children, in the latter case).

Portsmouth Museums & Records Service have also been very busy. Sharon Collins (nee Lee) reports: over the last year we have been working on our HLF funded project Portsmouth's Voices. Last year's project was based on the subject of Food. We interviewed about 60 people (including several school children) about the food they eat, cooking and serving food, the health issues surrounding what we eat and why, the politics of food and food manufacture and demand. The outcome of the project was presented in the form of an exhibition here at the City Museum. "Fabulous Food & Marvellous Meals", a potted history of food, has been on display from 20 May and is due to close at the end of this week. We also produced a film of clips recorded at the Multicultural Festival in Sept 2005 of people talking about food, an audio CD of the audio used in the exhibition which consisted of extracts from the original interview about each topic on food. We also worked with one of our local schools with school children from the textiles classes and food technology classes. One created pieces of work based on food, and we went into the food technology class and recorded them interviewing each other about their likes and dislikes. We had our first celebrity to open the exhibition, Ken Hom, which brought in the crowds.

Another busy and interesting year here in Hampshire!

David Lee

Sussex

I seem to respond to some sort of oral history query, mostly from people in the Sussex region, every few weeks. But I guess my main role as a Regional Networker is through the courses I convene and teach through the

Centre for Continuing Education and Centre for Life History Research at the

University of Sussex (all of which are detailed in the Current British Work section in this Autumn issue of the Oral History journal, or on our website at www.sussex.ac.uk/clhr):

- two adult education open courses (each taught through 4 day schools, once a year), one on oral history interviewing, one on reminiscence work
- the undergraduate level adult education Certificate in Life History Work
- the MA in Life History Research: Oral History and Life Story Documents

I'm about to add a section to the Centre for Life History Research website with news of what former Sussex life history students have gone on to - they've been emailing me in recent weeks and I've been amazed and excited about the wide range of ways that people are using oral history and life history research in their paid or voluntary work and in other parts of their lives."

Alistair Thomson

South West

Report from the Cornish Audio Visual Archive

Over the past year the Cornish Audio Visual Archive (CAVA) has been focusing on the areas of education and research. In 2005 the archive was awarded £64,000 from the European Social Fund to develop a series of community projects (including links with local museums and a programme of educational day schools). This funding was also used to appoint Dr Mandy Morris, who was formerly at the East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA). Mandy is currently working on two oral history initiatives: a study of Penlee Quarry in West Cornwall and Cornwall County Council's Mineral Tramways Heritage Project.

In April 2006 CAVA received an additional £49,000 from the European Social Fund, Tamar Valley AONB Service and other sources to initiate a new oral history study of border identity in the Tamar Valley. This work includes the collection of audio-visual recordings, the preparation of research articles and the production of CD/DVD publications in association with local museums and cultural organisations. The project team recently produced a new testimony film exploring identity in the Tamar Valley and

this will be the centrepiece of a CAVA presentation at the Cornwall Film Festival in November 2006. The project leader is Dr Kayleigh Milden, who was awarded a PhD by the University of Exeter for her oral history study of Cornish Methodism earlier this year.

CAVA hosted the inaugural conference of the Celtic Education and Research Network at County Hall in Truro from 8-10 September. Entitled '21st Century Celts', this international conference brought together delegates from 14 countries including Japan, Russia and the USA. There was a particular emphasis on oral history, cultural memory and film representations in relation to Celtic Studies.

Finally, CAVA is currently developing a community-based network throughout Cornwall. Trained co-ordinators have been appointed for three of the six district council areas (John Pollard for Penwith, Katya Martin in Kerrier and Celia Langley for North Cornwall). These volunteers will identify any previous/ongoing oral history projects in their area, initiate new community projects where appropriate and provide support at the local level for the CAVA team, which is now based at the Penryn Campus of the Combined Universities in Cornwall.

Garry Tregidga

Dorset and Somerset

There has been a little more activity in this part of the South West this year. The Corfe Castle History group are working on their project to collect the memories of the residents of the village; they have received initial training and will have a follow up session in early December to review their progress. I have been contacted by the North Dorset Scout Group which is interested in doing a project to mark the 100th anniversary of the Scouting Movement in 2007, and I am currently pursuing a contact from the Purbeck Oral History group. There is one HLF project, Spinning Yarns, continuing in Dorset at Bridport Museum; a tailored training session and follow up was provided for them.

Two general training sessions have been run this year in Dorchester, with trainees attending from as far away as the Netherlands!

Frances Cambrook