When many people think about history, they think about books and documents, castles or stately homes. In fact history is all around us, in our own families and communities, in the living memories and experiences of older people. Everyone has a story to tell about their life which is unique to them. Whilst some people have been involved in momentous historical events, regardless of age or importance we all have interesting life stories to share. Unfortunately, because memories die when people do, if we don’t record what people tell us, that history can be lost forever.

National Life Stories was established in 1987 and its mission is: ‘To record the first-hand experiences of as wide a cross section of society as possible, to preserve the recordings, to make them publicly available and encourage their use’. As an independent charitable trust within the Oral History Section of the British Library, NLS’s key focus and expertise has been oral history fieldwork. For nearly thirty years it has initiated a series of innovative interviewing programmes funded almost entirely from sponsorship, charitable and individual donations and voluntary effort.

Each collection comprises recorded in-depth interviews of a high standard, plus content summaries and transcripts to assist users. Access is provided via the Sound and Moving Image Catalogue at http://sami.bl.uk and a growing number of interviews are made available for remote web use through British Library Sounds at https://sounds.bl.uk. Each individual life story interview is several hours long, covering family background, childhood, education, work, leisure and later life.

Alongside the British Library’s other oral history holdings, which stretch back to the beginning of the twentieth century, NLS’s recordings form a unique and invaluable record of people’s lives in Britain today.

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It has always been a crucial objective for National Life Stories that we don’t merely gather unique first-hand testimonies, we also share them as widely as we can and encourage others to do the same. As we have placed growing numbers of recordings online through the British Library’s ‘Sounds’ website so users have increased. In 2017 NLS and other oral history content on the BL’s website, both full interviews and edited clips, accounted for over 1.15 million page views. Our Voices of the Holocaust and Voices of Science web resources are especially popular and over the coming years we intend to develop more of these ‘curated’ websites of interpreted audio clips drawn from the longer interviews, as well as working with BL colleagues on a brand-new ‘Sounds’ web offer, supported by funding from Heritage Lottery Fund as part of the digitisation initiative ‘Unlocking Our Sound Heritage’.

Later this year, thanks to a generous digital project grant from the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, we will launch Voices of Art. This builds on our highly successful exhibition at Tate Britain – ‘Artists’ Lives: Speaking of the Kasmin Gallery’ – and will offer over 100 audio clips from the exhibition alongside images and specially-commissioned essays, focusing on the British art world between the late 1950s and early 1970s, including an exploration of its underlying economics at that time, the role of commercial galleries, and the relationship between dealer, artist and public collections. This new educational resource will also, fittingly, explore the years of expansion of the teaching of art history and the development of the professionalism of curators.

The Tate Britain exhibition showed what is possible in a public space when sound is placed at the heart of the gallery, where the art works revolve around the oral histories, rather than as an adjunct. We continue to receive numerous requests to use NLS interviews in a range of exhibitions and displays, and later in this Review we highlight some of the most recent examples, including last year’s exhibition at The Lightbox in Woking, which was one of the outcomes of our NLS Goodison Fellowships, now in their third year. Last year’s were generously supported by the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation with a focus on Artists’ Lives. This coming year our Fellow, Rib Davis, will draw on our Holocaust holdings to write a play script. We are excited to see what emerges.

The challenges that the charity faces this coming year are once again mainly financial. We continue to seek significant start-up funding for our new collecting areas about the City and infrastructure, and we still need funds to complete the original vision for An Oral History of British Science. Our electricity project came to an end with a poignant event at the British Library attended by many interviewees and their families; and after nearly twenty years we have decided to rest our Crafts Lives programme and develop a new project on design.

I would like to thank our donors, trustees and advisors for another successful year, and our staff for their hard work.

Dame Jenny Abramsky
Chair of Trustees
Review of 2017

Rob Perks
Director of National Life Stories

Collections and projects

Our long-running Architects’ Lives entered a new phase led by Rab Bennetts as chair of the Advisory Committee, ably backed by our other Committee members. Rab has brought a fresh vigour to fundraising initiatives, reaching out to a younger generation of architects, centred on those who took part in a seminal 1988 exhibition, ‘40 Under Forty’. Related recordings include Keith Williams, Bob Allies and Graham Morrison. Williams, originally in practice with John Pawson, has won awards in Britain and Ireland, particularly for cultural buildings, including the National Opera House, Wexford (Ireland), the Luan Gallery in Athlone (Ireland) and the Unicorn Theatre, London. His Long House was described as ‘one of the most beautiful houses in London’. Bob Allies and Graham Morrison established their practice in 1984 and have completed a range of education, residential, civic and commercial buildings in the UK and overseas, among them the refurbishment of the Royal Festival Hall, the transformation of Arsenal FC’s former Highbury Stadium into residential units, and the Qatar National Archive in Doha. They specialise in masterplanning and were the winners of the competitions for King’s Cross and the Olympic Park, Stratford.

With the last of the Monument Trust funding, Niamh Dillon completed an interview with Max Fordham, a pioneer in ‘holistic’ mechanical and service engineering solutions, who started his career at Arup Associates before establishing his own practice in 1966, helping turn this branch of engineering into an integral part of the design process. Fordham worked on a range of projects including the concert hall at Snape Maltings, Neave Brown’s Alexandra Road, one of the largest public housing schemes in London, and the indoor cricket school at Lord’s Cricket Ground. Niamh recently began an interview with Robert Steedman who, together with his partner James Morris, was one of the first practices in Scotland to build modernist houses. These were marked by open-plan living, flat roofs, and the extensive use of glazing. Later, Steedman created important cultural buildings: the Lighthouse Museum and the music school at St. Leonard’s school in Fife.

Niamh was able to conduct a single session recording with architectural critic Gavin Stamp in the weeks before his death in December. One of the most influential architectural historians of his generation, Stamp championed the preservation of Britain’s nineteenth century heritage at a time when it was regarded as lacking in architectural merit. In particular he highlighted the work of George Gilbert Scott (junior), Alexander ‘Greek’ Thomson, and Lutyens, the architect who designed New Delhi as well as seminal First World War memorials. Stamp wrote extensively, for journals and monographs, and was a founding member of the Twentieth Century Society.

Several interviews were added to Crafts Lives in 2017. Frances Cornford completed a recording with Martin Smith, covering his time as Professor of Ceramics and Glass at the Royal College of Art (RCA) and how he maintained a balance between teaching and making; also about his recent work, which continues his interest in and mastery of ceramics technology. In 2015, he worked with the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) to restore a Meissen fountain using digital scanning and computer numerical control (CNC) machining alongside traditional press moulding. His most recent research project looks at the use of laser printing to printoptically complex ceramic transfers. Maintaining parallel careers in teaching and making was also discussed in the interview with ceramic artist Felicity Aylieff, who is a Senior Tutor at the RCA at the same time as pursuing her interest in large-scale ceramics. She now spends part of the year in Jingdezhen, the porcelain capital of China, collaborating with Chinese craftsmen to create monumental vessels some of which are over three metres in height.

Rush weaver Felicity Irons, recorded by Frances, started repairing rush seating whilst recuperating at home after a serious accident. When the last rush cutter in the country died, she found herself taking over and has since built a business supplying hand woven rush matting to National Trust properties, French chateaux and the houses of the rich and famous, as well as providing rush objects for shops and galleries. Felicity spoke about the qualities of English rush and her love of being out on the River Great Ouse in the cutting season, harvesting from aluminium punts. Frances also talked to architectural letter cutter Gary Breeze about his apprenticeship with sculptor, letter cutter and jazz musician David Holgate, and about his many commissions including designing and making the Bali bombing memorial in London and the Christchurch cloister fountain in Oxford. Breeze has recently developed his interest in boatbuilding as a result of a residency in the archaeology department of the University of
Southampton. He has also expanded into garden design and won gold medals at the Chelsea Shows in 2016 and 2017 for a garden inside an inscribed granite cube and for an East Anglian fen garden featuring a replica of a medieval boat.

Frances added recordings with Devon-based ceramicists Clive Bowen and Sandy Brown. Bowen had previously been interviewed in 2008 by Hawksmoor Hughes for the Potters of the Bernard Leach Legacy collection, having been an apprentice of Michael Leach at Yelland Pottery. Frances’s interview complements this by concentrating on Bowen’s slipware techniques and his activities in the last ten years, including the growing popularity of slipware in Japan and his regular exhibitions and residencies there. Sandy Brown traced her development from training in Mashiko in Japan to channelling her intuitive creativity to decorate functional ware and sculptures with brightly coloured, abstract marks. Creativity and the unconscious are again themes in Frances’s ongoing interview with the glass artist Danny Lane, who described the drawing classes run by mystic painter Cecil Collins at Central School of Art. The classes used a number of techniques, including rapid drawing to overcome self-consciousness and tap into intuition.

Elizabeth Wright completed her interview with silversmith Simone ten Hompel, who spoke about discovering metalwork at a young age, and noticing a difference between her own drawings and those of other children at school. The interview covers her training at the Royal College of Art, career highlights including solo shows at The Scottish Gallery and Galerie Marzee, winning the Jerwood Applied Arts Prize in 2005 and her recent collaboration with ceramicist, Julian Stair. One session of the recording focuses entirely on spoons — a form that Simone has interrogated throughout her career, and which hold a great deal of meaning for her.

Elizabeth’s recording with Grant Macdonald was also completed this year, thanks to a generous grant from the Goldsmiths’ Company. Macdonald reflects on his initial
discovery of silversmithing in the workshop of his father’s friend and details his progression from starting out as an individual designer-maker to growing an international business. The interview covers Macdonald’s use of new technologies combined with traditional silversmithing techniques to create work ranging from small commissions for livery companies to large scale projects such as the cross and orb for Dresden Cathedral. NLS was invited to contribute audio clips to an exhibition marking fifty years of Macdonald’s career, organised by the Goldsmiths’ Company in 2018.

Our exhibition at Tate Britain – Artists’ Lives: Speaking of the Kasmin Gallery – curated by Cathy Courtney and Elena Crippa, continued well past its original run and closed in late April 2018. The centre-piece of the gallery was four touchscreens featuring 255 audio clips with accompanying images from private collections, and these proved popular with visitors, encouraging them to consider the relationship between a dealer, artists and a national institution such as Tate.

New recordings by interviewers Cathy Courtney and Hester Westley for Artists’ Lives this year included the artists Mark Leckey, British-Nigerian Yinka Shonibare MBE RA (supported by the Yale Center for British Art), pioneer of cybernetics Roy Ascott, Montserrat-born British artist Veronica Ryan, the German-born printer, artist and publisher Hansjörg Mayer, and curator Norman Rosenthal (from 1977–2008 Exhibitions Secretary at the Royal Academy). Among other art professionals whose recordings are underway are dealers Anthony d’Offay and Karsten Schubert, and Richard Morphet, formerly Keeper of Modern Collection at the Tate Gallery.

For Authors’ Lives, Sarah O’Reilly has been completing long-running interviews with Ian McEwan, Melvyn Bragg, Liz Calder (Founder and Editorial Director of Bloomsbury Publishing), Peter Hennessy and Bernardine Evaristo. Will Self is the latest writer to agree to be interviewed for the project, and his recording will begin later in 2018.

Over the past year we have been working hard to raise the funds we need to complete the original vision for our Oral History of British Science. Interviewer Tom Lean continued his interviews focusing on the Daresbury Laboratory near Warrington. Originally established as almost a mini-CERN for physics research, Daresbury became a pioneering synchrotron light source used by scientists in many fields. Its particle accelerators produced X-ray and ultra-violet light brighter than the sun, which is useful for everything from examining the HIV virus, to analysing materials, to discovering the optimum melting point for chocolate. Interviewees have included physical chemist John Hellwell, whose research on proteins included using synchrotron radiation to understand why lobsters turn pink when cooked; materials scientist Bob Cernik, who helped visiting scientists from many disciplines use the facility; accelerator scientist Mike Poole, who helped design the pioneering SRS Synchrotron and its successors, and later became Director of the national Accelerator Science and Technology Centre (ASTeC); and current laboratory director Susan Smith, who led the development of the innovative ALICE accelerator and played a key role in the reinvention of the site after the controversial decision to build the £500 million Diamond accelerator at Harwell in Oxfordshire rather than at Daresbury where it was designed. Tom also completed long interviews with electronics engineer Lord Alec Broers, former IBM Research Fellow and Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University; and Ian Munro, one of the founding figures of applied synchrotron radiation.

Our collaborative project, ‘Science and Religion: Exploring the Spectrum’, led by Newman University, Birmingham and York University, Toronto, and funded by the Templeton Religion Trust, drew to a successful conclusion, and Paul Merchant has been writing up the findings arising from his life stories with scientists and others who have written, spoken and broadcast on the relations between science and religion.

Straddling both engineering and architecture we have been further developing our new project, Britain building the world: an oral history of infrastructure and the built environment. With some generous funding from Chris and Gilda Haskins we have made a start. Tom Lean recorded British Rail director of civil engineering Jim Cornell, who provided an excellent perspective of British Rail’s infrastructure development from the early days of post-war nationalisation through to 1990s privatisation, offering several contrasts with our electricity project. Tunnelling engineer Hugh Doherty spoke about a long career building mass transit systems, including the Singapore and Hong Kong metros and the Jubilee Line Extension (as project director), and other underground structures, such as sewers and road tunnels; Joanna Kennedy, bridge designer, project management director at Arup consulting engineers, and founding figure in Women in Science and Engineering (WISE), reflected on a career that includes work on the Francis Crick Institute and King’s Cross redevelopment; and Tim Broyd, outgoing president of the Institution of Civil Engineers, spoke about an engineering career encompassing everything from the air flow around offshore oil platforms, to radioactive waste disposal, to digital building design.
Tom also concluded a number of fisheries science interviews for a project on the history of the Fisheries Society of the British Isles (FSBI). While these have been short (three-hour) interviews mixing life history with details of work and the history of the FSBI, they have explored subjects not covered by Oral History of British Science to date. The focus on scientists in a lesser-known field gives a different perspective to our other interviews and explores the under-appreciated role of modern scientific societies.

Emmeline Ledgerwood, our AHRC collaborative doctoral student in conjunction with the University of Leicester, continues to investigate the history of government research establishments (GREs) since the 1970s. She concluded her three-month fellowship at the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) with a briefing paper for parliamentarians on ‘Science Diplomacy’ which was published in January 2018. As part of her research she interviewed a wide range of top-level civil servants, including chief scientific advisers, and gave a presentation in Parliament to members of the London Diplomatic Science Club. She also travelled to Jordan to represent POST at the World Science Forum in November. Her interviews with former government scientists about their experiences of privatisation begin in 2018.

Our Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK concluded with a successful event at the British Library on 19 October, attended by industry figures, interviewees and their families. The discussion amongst invited speakers and the audience drew out a number of interesting topics, particularly around social mobility in the ESI and the value of a non-technical-specialist interviewer in encouraging interviewees to reflect on their work differently when explaining it for non-specialist audiences. The final project report highlights forty-seven life story interviews, seven topic-focused interviews, two group interviews, and three location videos: altogether over 530 hours of recordings.

**Partnerships**

Collaborative doctoral student Dvora Liberman successfully passed her viva for her excellent thesis ‘Exploring the social world of Crown Court clerks from the 1970s onwards’. Her research is part of our Legal Lives initiative and was a joint...
project with the London School of Economics Department of Law’s Legal Biography Project supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). We continue to work with Linda Mulcahy from LSE and have been joined by Marie Burton from Middlesex University on a new project using interviews to capture the important history of community law centres from their origins in the 1970s. Linda will take up a new post at the University of Oxford in January 2019, but is keen to maintain her longstanding working relationship with NLS.

For An Oral History of Women in Publishing (WiP), our joint project with the campaigning organisation established in 1979 to promote the status of women in the book business through networking and training, Sarah O’Reilly completed all her recordings. Thirty recordings with women active in this pioneering campaigning group make up this collection, including early members such as Penguin Random House Chair Gail Rebuck and former CEO of the Longman Group, Paula Kahn. A website showcasing numerous extracts from the collection was launched in April 2018: www.womeninpublishinghistory.org.uk

Projects in development

After some delay pilot interviews are underway to develop An Oral History of Talking Therapists in the UK, funded by a Wellcome Trust Seed Award in Humanities and Social Science. The project is led by Professor Sasha Roseneil and Senior Research Officer Orsolya Lukacs, both based at the University of Essex.

The scoping study for our proposed City Lives Revisited project was completed and we are using this as the basis for our fundraising campaign.

Public profile and access

It has been a year in which we have seen the extensive use of NLS interviews in exhibitions and displays around the UK (as the article later in this Review details). In addition to the Tate Britain exhibition, Artists’ Lives featured prominently in In Their Own Words: Artists’ Voices from the Ingram Collection at The Lightbox, Woking curated by National Life Stories Goodison Fellow Michael Bird. Pitched at different audiences, the Tate and Lightbox exhibitions illustrate contrasting approaches where the sound has been the impetus for the display rather than a secondary element. Tate Britain Kasmin extracts also featured in an exhibition at the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester: South Asian Modernists 1953–63.

As part of an ongoing relationship with Chelsea College of Art and funded by the special donation from the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of Artists’ Lives, four students on the MA Curating & Collections course curated an exhibition in July, using audio clips about the history of the College. We provided the students with digital editing training, giving them the skills to use oral history in the future.

Since autumn 2017 selected tracks of Artists’ Lives interviews with Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Sandra Blow, Terry Frost, Alexander Mackenzie, Margaret Mellis, Telfer Stokes and John Wells (whose recordings are available on British Library Sounds) have been included on stand-alone computer terminals in the ‘Gallery 9: St Ives Studio’ resource display at the renovated Tate St Ives. This is a ‘named’ gallery displaying archival resources from Tate St Ives Archive and the Borlase Smart John Wells Trust. The intention of the room is to give context and history to the wider story of modern art in St Ives.

Clips from interviews with Crafts Lives interviewees Rod Kelly, Michael Lloyd, Jane Short, William Phipps and Susan Hare (former Goldsmiths’ Company librarian interviewed for City Lives) featured in the refurbished silver gallery at the V&A. And several NLS interviews featured in the BL’s exhibition ‘Listen: 140 Years of Recorded Sound’.

The team have again been busy with public lectures and training over the past year. In April Emmeline Ledgerwood presented a paper, ‘MPs who speak for science: using oral history as evidence’, at the British Society for the History of Science (BSHS) postgraduate conference in Florence in April, and again at the postgraduate conference run by the School of History, Politics and International Relations at the University of Leicester in May. This paper used the History of Parliament Oral History collection to consider the reasons why MPs engage with scientific issues in Parliament. She also presented a paper on using archived oral history collections at a workshop held at the National Archives. In April Paul Merchant gave a paper on his interviews with British writers and broadcasters on science and religion at a one-day conference in Birmingham exploring ‘the historical, cultural, social and psychological aspects of the relationship between science and religion’. In May – at the invitation of the University of Cambridge’s Centre for Science and Policy – he and Sally Horrocks returned to Oral History of British
Science’s interviews with climate scientists to contribute to a workshop on ‘Oral Histories, Careers, and Conservation Science’. Paul gave two conference papers in July drawing on his interviews with scientists and others involved in public debates on relations between science and religion: the first at an international, interdisciplinary conference in Manchester on ‘New Perspectives on Science and Religion in Society’, and the second at the annual conference of the Oral History Society in Leeds, ‘Remembering beliefs – the shifting worlds of religion and faith in secular society’.

Sally Horrocks attended a meeting of the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry held in May at the Royal Institution and presented on, ‘I wish I could say I had a little chemistry set at home’: what does oral history really tell us about scientists’ childhoods? She also gave a paper at the Association of Business Historians Conference in Glasgow entitled ‘Putting the past behind you: organisational and personal transformations in the privatisation of the British electricity supply industry’, and organised a session at the British Society for the History of Science (BSHS) conference, ‘Privatising Science and Technology: The UK Experience since 1979’. In this session Emmeline Ledgerwood presented a paper on ‘Government research establishments and organisational change from 1970: Mapping the routes to privatisation’, illustrating how privatisation affected scientists who worked as civil servants in government-funded research labs; and Tom Lean gave a paper in the session called ‘Privatising networks of power: Technological and cultural changes and continuities in the privatisation of the British electricity supply industry’. In November Tom gave a talk on the Oral History of British Science space science interviews to ‘Collecting Space: The Inaugural Science Technology and Archives Group Conference’ at the Science Museum, and in December an introductory talk to new PhD students at the Centre for the History of Science, Technology and Medicine at Manchester University on the value of oral history in the history of science. In January Tom and Sally also delivered a well-received talk to the Newcomen Society called ‘Made in Britain: an oral history of British applied science and engineering’.

Cathy Courtney made presentations about Artists’ Lives at ‘Unboxed: Artists & the Archive’ at the Southbank Centre; at The Nunnery Gallery, Bow Arts, in relation to an exhibition of the work of Jacqueline Morreau; and to the 2017 AMARC conference (Association for Manuscripts and Archives in Research), which helped get our work better known by Library colleagues as well as a range of other participants from national archives. Cathy also took part in the Paul Mellon Centre’s one-day workshop ‘London-Asia Virtual Exhibitions’ and Hester Westley gave a presentation at Camberwell College of Art as part of a symposium to complement their exhibition, ‘A History of Drawing’. Cathy and Niamh Dillon made a presentation to the Getty Conservation Institute in August as part of a three-day workshop held in London, ‘Conservation Management Planning: A Workshop for Keeping It Modern, 2017’. They also hosted fifth-year Architectural Association students (this has become an annual event and is much valued by the AA tutor). Oral history has now become an established methodology for students researching creative practice. Following on from a presentation last year to postgraduate students on the V&A/Royal College of Art MA in Design History, Niamh and Cathy returned to give a brief history of the development of oral history and play extracts from Artists’ Lives and Architects’ Lives to illustrate themes such as orality, narrative and truth, and objectivity.

Members of the NLS team again led seminars for students on the Archives and Records Management MA course at UCL, focussing on the archival management of oral history and how we provide access to collections. The joint training programme with the Oral History Society continues to be popular. In 2017 we ran 94 training courses attended by 846 people.

Our international profile was enhanced through several overseas visits. In March Niamh Dillon travelled to the University of Leiden in the Netherlands to present a seminar on oral history and creative practice to a multi-disciplinary group of postgraduate students. In November I gave a public lecture at the University of Athens on oral history in museums and galleries, and led a day-long workshop on archiving oral history, attended by oral history groups from all over Greece. In December I taught a similar course to groups and archivists active all over India, and also led a panel on oral history at the conference of the Business Archives Section of the International Council of Archives at the Godrej Archives in Mumbai. In February 2018 Mary Stewart and I travelled to Istanbul at the invitation of the Hrant Dink Foundation – a human rights organisation founded following the assassination in 2007 of prominent journalist Hrant Dink, founder of the Armenian-Turkish newspaper Agos. We each gave papers at an evening public event, chaired by leading Turkish oral historian Arzu Öztürkmen. The following day we led a training course in oral history technique and archival practice. Also in February 2018 Sally attended the CERN History Workshop in Geneva, an event which brought together historians and philosophers of science to reflect on how institutional history of science has been written and to think about how a new CERN history project might be developed. Sally contributed particularly to discussions about the role of oral history in such a project, and on diversity and inclusion.

In terms of media use of NLS recordings, Nick Willing’s film about his parents, Paula Rego and Victor Willing, aired on the BBC in March. Nick found Paula’s Artists’ Lives recording enormously helpful in preparation for his filmed conversations with her and used NLS extracts in the film itself. The film has been immensely successful, drawing a large audience in Paula’s native Portugal as well as through the BBC broadcast. Subsequently, Cathy has been recording Nick himself. BBC Radio Four’s ‘Last Word?’ featured clips from interviews with Geoff Tootill and Mary Lee Berners-Lee.
The team has had an excellent year for publications drawing on the collections. Mary and Oral History Society colleague Cynthia Brown’s article ‘Exploring encounters between families, their histories and archived oral histories,’ was published in Archives and Records: The Journal of the Archives and Records Association. Tom Lean’s article on electricity life stories appeared in the Oral History journal. Paul Merchant’s paper drawing on life story interviews with scientist-Christians was published in a special issue of the Canadian journal Oral History Forum d’histoire orale, and his paper on science and religion as a form of ‘popular science’ has been accepted by the journal Notes and Records of the Royal Society.

NLS’s online web presence and number of users has continued to grow with the launch of a new podcast series, available through the BL’s website, SoundCloud and iTunes. This excellent initiative has been led by David Govier and Charlie Morgan. A clutch of new packages of full interviews were launched on the BL Sounds website including: ‘Pioneering Women’ (22 interviews from the Fawcett Library interviews), ‘Law’ (eight interviews from our Legal Lives project), ‘Charity and Social Welfare’ (30 interviews), ‘Fashion’ (13 interviews from An Oral History of British Fashion), ‘Theatre’ (29 interviews from An Oral History of Theatre Design and The Legacy of the English Stage Company), and ‘Politics’ (including 23 interviews with female former MPs to coincide with the Vote 100 project). Twenty-nine interviews from the Tesco: An Oral History also went live, and Paul Merchant prepared a package of clips, images and texts for eleven new interviewees on the Voices of Science website. NLS was successful in an application to the Paul Mellon Centre for a grant of £36,000 to develop a new BL web resource ‘Voices of Art’ derived largely from the Tate Britain exhibition, for launch later in 2018.

People

Warm congratulations to Sally Horrocks for winning the Best Public Engagement Award at the University of Leicester’s Impact Awards in June 2017 for her work as senior academic advisor to An Oral History of British Science and An Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK. Also in June we said farewell to our administrative assistant Eleanor Lowe, who left to have her first child, and to Cai Parry-Jones (covering for Mary Stewart during her maternity leave), who took up a new post at the Royal Horticultural Society. We wish them well. Charlie Morgan joined us as full-time Oral History Archive and Administrative Assistant, working closely alongside our Archivist Dave Govier. Sarah O’Reilly returned to work on Authors’ Lives following her maternity leave.

Our Trustees and Advisors are invaluable in supporting and guiding our main collecting activities and there have been several changes this year. We welcomed three new Trustees: Professor Jon Agar, Amanda Game and Hodson Thornber. Jon Wood, Head of Research at the Henry Moore Institute, joined the Artists’ Lives Advisory Committee to represent the Henry Moore Institute now that Lisa Le Feuvre has left to work in America as Inaugural Executive Director of the Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson Foundation. Rab Bennett generously agreed to chair our Architects’ Lives Advisory Committee.

It has also been sad time for NLS, with the deaths of several people who had long associations with us: former Trustees and Advisors Bill Williams and Dundas Hamilton, our long-term volunteer Katherine Thompson, and two members of the founding Architects’ Lives Advisory Committee, Jill Lever and Sherban Cantacuzino. Bill was an NLS Advisor, and helped shape our major Holocaust survivors project, The Living Memory of the Jewish Community. Dundas was a great advocate of our life story methodology and an early interviewee himself (for City Lives) as well as a witty and warm contributor to our Trustee meetings for many years. We still reap the benefits of Katherine’s years as a volunteer in our office. She worked as an interviewer on City Lives and The Living Memory of the Jewish Community, and the recordings she made with scientists Aaron Klug, Max Perutz and Joseph Rotblat laid the foundations for An Oral History of British Science. Jill and Sherban were vital in helping us set up Architects’ Lives, and faithful members of the Advisory Committee. Jill conducted recordings with Edward Hollamby, Geoffrey Kellicott, Ralph Erskine, Denys Lasdun and BL architect Colin St John Wilson. Sherban was interviewed at length for the project. We are grateful to them and shall miss them all greatly.
The interviews recorded for National Life Stories projects are archived at the British Library and cared for as part of the Library’s Oral History collections. All National Life Stories interviews are catalogued on the British Library’s Sound & Moving Image Catalogue http://sami.bl.uk, which provides detailed content data about individual recordings. NLS recordings can also be discovered through ‘Explore the British Library’ http://explore.bl.uk, the Library’s main catalogue which provides a more comprehensive way for users to search within the Library’s collections of books, journals, datasets and sound recordings. A range of NLS projects and thematic oral history collections guides are available on the British Library website www.bl.uk/subjects/oral-history.

The Listening and Viewing Service in St Pancras provides free public access to open recordings which have no access restrictions, on an appointment basis. Many digital recordings are also available via SoundServer, a listening facility available at the Library’s sites in both St Pancras and in Boston Spa, Yorkshire. Further information about listening at the Library can be found at www.bl.uk/listening.

British Library Sounds

National Life Stories and British Library Oral History provides online access to over 23,500 individual recordings from 3,900 oral history interviews in a selection of twenty-eight collections via British Library Sounds https://sounds.bl.uk. British Library Sounds enables people to access the material offsite without travelling to the British Library, therefore increasing usage considerably, and is beneficial to researchers and inspirational to new generations of students and the public generally.

In 2017, new recordings have been added to the Architecture, Art, Crafts, Curator’s Choice, Food, Industry, Photography, Science and Sport collections. Seven new collections have also been added: Charity & Social Welfare, Fashion, Law, Oral Historians, Pioneering Women, Politics and Press & Media. The site attracted approximately 40,000 unique browsers and over 143,000 page views over the year, a significant increase on the previous year.

Online Learning

Many of the British Library’s learning packages and online exhibitions feature oral history extracts. These include:

• Holocaust Voices including extracts from Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/voices/holocaust.html
• Sisterhood www.bl.uk/sisterhood including extracts and video from the Women’s Liberation Oral History Project
• LGBTQ Histories www.bl.uk/lgbtq-histories on the struggles for love, identity and legislative change faced by LGBTQ communities in the UK.
• Voices of Science http://bl.uk/voices-of-science which tells the stories of some of the most remarkable scientific and engineering discoveries of the past century using oral history interviews with prominent British scientists and engineers.
• Sounds Familiar, an accent and dialect resource www.bl.uk/learning/langlit/sounds/
• Playtimes draws on the Opie collection of children’s songs and games recordings www.bl.uk/playtimes

Social Media

Follow us on Twitter @BL_OralHistory and keep up to date with what’s happening at National Life Stories via the Library’s Sound and Vision blog http://blogs.bl.uk/sound-and-vision/oral-history/. Each month we publish a new episode of the National Life Stories podcast featuring interviews with interviewers, curators and other members of the team. The podcast is available at iTunes, Soundcloud or wherever you get your podcasts www.bl.uk/projects/national-life-stories. An overview of the Library’s Oral History collections can be found at www.bl.uk/collection-guides/oral-history.

Photographs of the Old Prison site and the corresponding set model made by Sakis Kolalas for ‘The Greek Passion’ staged in 2005 for Opera of Thessaloniki in the Old Prison Courtyard of the Heptapyrgion, an 11th century Byzantine fortress in Thessaloniki, Greece. Pamela Howard, Director/Scenographer for the production, discusses the model in her oral history interview (C1173/07) which was recently added to the ‘Theatre’ package in British Library Sounds: www.sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Theatre.
This year for *An Oral History of British Photography* (C459) Shirley Read completed two lengthy interviews. Eric Franck had previously talked about his life and work as a gallerist, collector and director of Eric Franck Fine Art. The final session of his interview described his part in the creation of a second curator of photography at Tate Britain with the remit of building a collection of British photography. He spoke in some detail of the artists and photographers he represents including Markéta Luskacova (see page 22), Chris Killip, Graham Smith, Beate Gutschow, Al Vandenberg, Karen Knorr, Tom Woods, and Hans Heike Halke. He also expanded upon his work, the survival and storage of prints, advising artists, selling, editioning and signing work.

Rock photographer Jill Furmanovsky outlined the importance of being ‘invisible’ as a photographer and the thrill of taking photographs of Eric Clapton and Bob Dylan – describing in detail her quest to photograph Dylan. She talked about a photo shoot in the early 1990s with Nelson Mandela, and his engaging modesty; and her longstanding friendship with Chrissie Hynde which started when they worked on photographs for *Living Without Cruelty*. She also talked about her continuing work with Oasis, including the major exhibition *Was There Then* at the Roundhouse, London. It was this exhibition which led her to digital photography and to setting up Rockarchive (https://www.rockarchive.com/), which brings together significant images by photographers working in music.

Katharine Haydon finished the last in a batch of recordings for the *British Library staff oral history interviews* (C1534) by interviewing Sir Anthony Kenny, who chaired the Board of the British Library from 1993–1996, a period dominated by the construction of the St Pancras building and preparations for the closure of the various existing library sites across London.

The core archive team of David Govier, Charlie Morgan and Mary Stewart have been busy with a number of partnership projects and deposited collections. This work involves agreeing permissions forms, developing processes for data collection and management, formalising the collection of metadata for the catalogue entries and establishing the terms and conditions under which the material is archived and made publicly available at the British Library.

We continued our longstanding relationship with the *History of Parliament Oral History Project* (C1503), accepting sixteen new interviews into the collection in 2017. The History of Parliament Trust concentrates its efforts on interviewing former Members of Parliament, not only about their life as MPs, but also before and after they enter the House of Commons. The collection includes household names (like Jeffrey Archer, Edwina Currie, Chris Smith and Diana Maddock) and also the voices of lesser-known backbenchers, such as Ian Wrigglesworth, Hugo Summerson and George Foulkes. Forty-nine History of Parliament interviews are now available online at British Library Sounds, including almost all former women MPs so far interviewed for the project – launched in time to celebrate the centenary of the Representation of the People Act.
In May 2017 the Woodcraft Folk Oral History Project (C1699) deposited twenty-eight interviews which were recorded as part of the Woodcraft Folk’s 90th Anniversary Heritage Project, primarily funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The oral history interviews were carried out with current and former Woodcraft Folk members aged between 16 and 93 years, providing a broad understanding of the organisation and the people who have chosen to participate in it. The interviews present the lives of Woodcraft Folk members within the wider perspectives of social issues and world events of the past ninety years, and reflect their impact on members’ lives. Interviews were mostly undertaken by volunteers drawn from the Woodcraft Folk membership, all of whom received oral history interview training.

In December 2017 the ongoing Sephardi Voices (C1638) project added eight new audio interviews and seventy-two new video interviews with people from the Sephardic Jewish community in the UK. 2017 was an exciting year for the project as it staged a very well-received exhibition at the Jewish Museum in London. A further addition to an ongoing collection came with fifteen new interviews for Pioneers of Qualitative Research (C1416): a project initiated in 1997 to record life story interviews that document qualitative research techniques and practice in the twentieth century. NLS Founder Professor Paul Thompson is the Principal Researcher for the project and carried out the vast majority of the recordings.

August 2017 saw the seventieth anniversary of the Partition of India and the BBC Radio 4 series Partition Voices (C1790) documented this traumatic time through first-hand testimonies, which were then crafted into three 40-minute programmes broadcast in summer 2017. The series has had a legacy of its own as Kavita Puri (presenter) and Ant Adeane (one of the producers) then completed the additional work on the permissions forms, transcripts and content summaries necessary to archive thirty-two of the uncut audio interviews into the oral history collections. The full interviews are available for researchers in the Library Reading Rooms, and will be launched for online access in 2019. The programmes documented the years leading up to the division and the bloody aftermath which saw up to twelve million people displaced and up to one million people killed. The final programme told of the legacy in Britain today, not only for those who lived through it, but for the second and third generations. The programmes managed the challenging task of reflecting the complexity of experiences: geographically within British India; reflections from women; as well as gathering testimony from many of the communities who lived through it, not only Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, but also Anglo-Indians, Parsees and Colonial British. ‘Partition Voices’ was recognised by the Royal Historical Society (RHS), as winner of both the radio/podcast category and overall Public History Prize 2018. The oral history team have had previous success in the RHS Public History Prize, winning the web category for ‘Voices of Science’ in 2015.

Charlie Morgan catalogued the Michael Marshall Fishing Interviews (C1786), a collection of forty-four interviews on cassette conducted by Michael Marshall in 1985 and 1986 as research for his 1987 book Fishing: The Coastal Tradition. The interviews took place across the United Kingdom, from Ling Ness in Shetland to Mevagissey in Cornwall, and cover a range of fishing trades including fishing by creel, coble, tractor, and yawl. Most interviewees had spent their entire lives working in the fishing industry and came from established fishing families, often working the same shores as their parents and grandparents. Common themes across the interviews are the transition from sail to motorised boats and the decline of the local fishing industries. These interviews contain lots of technical detail and will be of interest to anyone researching fishing, coastal communities or endangered trades and crafts.
Decisions

Some turning points are moments of decision-making. Professor Stephen Moorbath, FRS [1956–2016] tells us here about his conversion to geology in his first year of undergraduate studies at the University of Oxford:

“... I signed up for chemistry and in the first year at Oxford you had to do one main subject and one subsidiary subject for the examinations at the end of the first year and I chose chemistry and physics. [...] Now at some time during the first year of university, but I can’t remember which month – it might have been early on in 1952, I was taken by a friend into the [...] Department of Geology and Mineralogy, and when I was in there I suddenly had a – I watched people, they were [...] rearranging the cases and I watched somebody laying out fossils and somebody else was doing minerals and they were rearranging display cases and relabeling them, and I watched this for a while and suddenly [...] I can’t say why [...] I suddenly got a conversion to geology, like you know some people get Christianity or some people get alcohol or whatever, I suddenly got geology and the same day I said, ‘I’ve just got to sign up for this, I can’t live without this any longer’, and so I asked whether I could transfer from chemistry, as my main subject, to geology. Well they weren’t too happy about that [...] Finally [...] I just did it [...] I just changed over [...] and I did get a First in geology in 1954, after very happy times studying the subject.” [Stephen Moorbath C1379/36 Track 4 13:13-17:59]

Moorbath went on to do pioneering work in geology, developing new dating methods which he applied in the identification of some of the oldest rocks on Earth (in the photograph he holds a piece of 3.8 billion year old Greenlandic gneiss).
With similarly sudden certainty, Baroness Helene Hayman [b.1949] turned onto a political path at university. For her, though, it was a feeling of disappointment – an experience of being unimpressed rather than deeply impressed – that made her decide:

“I don’t know whether I’ve built this up over the years but I think something very significant happened when I went to the no confidence debate at the Union in my first term [at the University of Cambridge]. Yes, I’d gone up thinking this was the absolute zenith of debating and I listened to the no confidence debate, thinking it was going to be like we went to war or not, and it was pretty mundane. It wasn’t brilliant and I think a better person might have said, ‘Gosh, that’s not what it’s cracked up to be, I think I’ll try and get a First or concentrate on my acting’, but I thought, ‘Bloody hell, if they can do that, I can do that. I can be as good as that because that’s not really out of anyone’s league’. [Helene Hayman C1503/115 Track 1 14:18-15:20]

She soon became the President of the Union (in 1969), was elected as an MP at the age of 25, served as a Minister in Tony Blair’s government and became the first Lord Speaker in 2006 when the role was created.

We might see Moorbath’s and Hayman’s turning point decisions as fully conscious – they saw things and knew at the time that they were significant. Views of geology in practice and underwhelming debating inspired more or less immediate, deliberate action. For ceramic artist Sandy Brown [b.1946], though, a possible turning point was not necessarily clear to her at the time. Then working for Max Factor in Japan, she visited a local potter on a day off:

“The son [of the potter Kaneshige Toyo] was showing us round and he took us into another shed, another studio and then another studio and then he stood outside the door of a building that looked a bit like a chapel and he was about to open the door and he said, ‘Shhh’, and he opened the door and inside this chapel-like space – it had a mud floor and it was empty except in the far corner there was this man working at the wheel making pots and he had a row of pots beside him he’d just made on the wheel. I can see it so clearly – the reverence the son
was showing to his father: ‘Shhh, he’s working, don’t disturb him’. And then, bearing in mind that at that time I was 22, I was in full make up, in full Max Factor false eyelashes – a 22 year old beauty consultant who knew nothing about ceramics, nothing about pots, nothing about Japanese culture – they said ‘Would you like to stay for dinner and have a meal?’ So I did. And I remember being struck by that meal. It was beautifully presented, I mean all Japanese food is, on these strange, earthy, quite crude dishes that were completely different to anything I’d seen before. It was the most amazing experience. It was nourishing body and soul. It was wonderful, and they were so kind. I’m touched by it now if I think about it – what an extraordinary thing that they did really.” [Sandy Brown C960/156 Track 2 1:07:32-1:09:44]

The visit to the potter involved unfamiliar sights (perhaps for all involved), and courtesy across the differences of age and culture. But this moment was more than just new, unfamiliar or curious. That first experience of handmade studio pottery sowed the seed for a growing interest in ceramics. Within a year or so Brown had become an apprentice in the Japanese pottery village of Mashiko and she later returned to the UK and established herself in this country. She is now known for her generous, colourful tableware and ceramic sculpture, which one feels may well not have existed had she chosen to do something else on her day off.

Confirmations

Some turning points would seem to have been not decisions as such, but rather confirmations of decisions already made. They may even come to stand for – to sum up – important personal dispositions. A striking example is present in the interview with marine biologist, university Vice Chancellor and former Chairman of Northumbrian Water, Sir Fred Holliday [1935–2016]. He explains that during his degree in zoology at the University of Sheffield he became ‘committed to the oceans’. This commitment was strongly confirmed in the course of his National Service working for the Fisheries Research and Protection Service at Aberdeen Marine Laboratory, which followed his degree:

“Going out to sea and going a long, long way out to sea you realise the sheer vastness of the ocean. When it took you four hours to haul your trawl up from the bottom you realise the depth of the water underneath you, and you were sampling, and it really just finally locked me into this incredible medium of water, in which all this wide variety of sea life, not just commercial fish but deep sea fishes, luminescent species. I would go up to the sharp end of the boat at night and look over and the sea would be alive with luminescence, just flashes and sparkles, and if you put a net in the water it was outlined, because the plankton glowed, and you can see it.” [C1364/05 Fred Holliday Track 4 14:10-15:24]
In the first phase of his own career, jeweller David Poston [b.1948] encountered an object – one of his own silver bead necklaces returned for repair – that confirmed his view that jewellery should be made for the wearer, rather than any external spectator:

“The thing I really liked about the silver bead necklaces, in the simplest way, they weren’t in any way demonstrative or loud, but they were physically comforting – because of the weight – and nice to wear. And a lot of people ended up wearing them twenty-four seven. And I liked the fact that you could wear it as twinset and pearls equivalent, or you could swim in it, or sleep in it, or do whatever you wanted in it, so it was a necklace for the person. [...] It was in fact one of those while I was at Electrum that made me realise [how] the wearer plays a part in the continuing making of a piece [...] Initially I strung them on hemp because I was doing some work in hemp, and [the stringing] would not last that long, two or three years. So it came back needing re-stringing and it sat on my peg on my bench and it just had all this presence, it was there big time [makes humming sound]. It told me it was there. And I was amazed because I hadn’t put that into it; it was a breadline, it was something I’d knocked out while listening to some nice piece of music on the workshop stereo. And I did actually take the trouble to deliver that back to the person and she was a very strong woman, very handsome, from Iceland, a very independent, powerful woman. So here was this person who, through wearing it, had invested something into the piece, which blew me away. And I remain interested in what the Irish call ‘thin places’ where you go into a building and you can feel the good or the evil that’s there. And I am very sure that’s there, certainly for me in tools, but also in jewellery and it’s one of the things that makes jewellery, for me, much more interesting than sculpture because I sort of always knew that the thing that makes jewellery fascinating is the connection with the person.” [David Poston C960/136/6 Track 6 00:47-04:31]

We might see the story of the necklace as in part allegorical in that it comes to stand for or symbolise a person-centred outlook or worldview that is threaded through Poston’s work as a maker of jewellery, a creator of sustainable African blacksmithing processes and a co-developer of novel medical technologies for the delivery of drugs directly to the brain. We see next that, having chosen a certain career (perhaps involving decisive or confirmatory moments of the kind explored above), other turning points can present sudden changes in what might be expected of the future – paths open up (or perhaps close, demanding a diversion).

Openings (and a closing)

While studying for an MA at the University of East Anglia in 1973, Ian McEwan [b.1948] received a particular bit of post:

“It was while I was living in West Parade [in Norwich] that probably the headiest moment of my early writing career came with a little package through the door one morning. It was the latest copy of *New American Review* and it was a sort of shocking pink, mass market paperback size, and on the front it just had four or five names. It just said Philip Roth, Susan Sontag, Gunter Grass, Ian McEwan. To see my name associated with them, was really thrilling to me at that point. Susan Sontag’s work I knew, Grass, Roth of course. And to be alongside those names on the cover was a validation, really, and in a sense there’s never been anything quite so exciting in my writing career since. I mean all sorts of nice things have happened, moments of pride and pleasure in other people’s responses to my work, but I think for all young writers there’s a point where you don’t even dare call yourself a writer. You’re someone who’s ‘doing some writing’ but that’s not the same thing, and the arrival of this copy of *New American Review* felt like a point of approbation, of ‘I’ve arrived’. That was very important to me. I think maybe that was a turning point.” [C1276/32 Ian McEwan Track 12 09:09-11:35]
One letter was involved in a dramatic change in fortunes for architect Sir Jeremy Dixon [b.1939]. This one, received in the early 1980s, brought the very unexpected news that he had been awarded (in an ‘untried partnership’ with Bill Jack of the firm Building Design Partnership) the contract to redesign the Royal Opera House, a project that would last for over sixteen years, transforming his career:

“The process of selection was really very odd when I look back on it. Very unusual. The Opera House had been very nervous about the whole thing – they devised a process for selection which went through about six different hurdles. [...] The first selection was narrowed down to twenty-two and we were asked to make a short presentation. I had been teaching at the Architectural Association using that site so I knew about Covent Garden – the fight to rescue it – and as a result I had photos of the site and something to say about it. So Bill Jack let me talk through that in our presentation. And this put me in the position of a leading person. [...] So [...] the twenty-two got narrowed down to twelve, then eight, and each time I was absolutely certain we weren’t going to get anywhere so I gave myself license to say what I thought rather than what they wanted to hear: things like Covent Garden is part of the city and more important than just the Opera House, there are priorities like re-creating the square. [...] Then they set an exercise to produce not a building but an approach. [...] Finally it was between Richard Rogers and ourselves; he was a very glamorous figure and deservedly so, and we thought we had no chance whatsoever. And then the letter came and it was addressed to me, copied to Bill Jack of BDP. The appointment was to the two individuals, not the firm.” [Jeremy Dixon C467/91 Track 3 1:05:15-1:11:59]

Another letter was involved in a dramatic change in fortunes for architect Sir Jeremy Dixon [b.1939]. This one, received in the early 1980s, brought the very unexpected news that he had been awarded (in an ‘untried partnership’ with Bill Jack of the firm Building Design Partnership) the contract to redesign the Royal Opera House, a project that would last for over sixteen years, transforming his career:

Physicist Stanley Evans’ [1929–2016] account of his own turning point also features the postal service and a sense of things falling into place that might have fallen differently. Having accidently discovered that a piece of equipment designed to study the high atmosphere could (turned the other way up) record the depth of glaciers and ice sheets, he wondered whether it might work from an aeroplane (allowing swifter data gathering). This was the first attempt:

“We flew down the Gilman Glacier. I had a steady echo [...] and I saw the depth decreasing, just exactly as you would expect, as we flew down the glacier to the snout and I saw it peter out on the snout and then we just got the rocky ground below. And I think I can honestly say, that was the first time I really believed in my heart that what we were recording was the depth of the ice [and] wasn’t some complicated fault of the apparatus producing this sort of result. [...] And so I developed the films. [...] You could see everything clearly. And this was the first ever from the air. [...] So I started to write there and then [...] ‘Glacier Depth Sounding from the Air’. [...] And [...] it was less than two weeks between the time I dropped this paper addressed to [...] the editor of Nature [...] into a letterbox in Cambridge [...] that it appeared in Nature with a notice on the front cover [...] Plenty of other more distinguished people have had [laughs] many such moments, but I think that was my moment.” [C1379/51 Stanley Evans Track 6 36:22-40:12]

Like McEwan’s inclusion in issue 18 of American Review and Dixon’s astonishing commission, for Evans the Nature paper (very strong currency in science), he says, ‘opened doors’ – it led to the opportunity to develop radio echo sounding using US resources and aircraft in long surveys over Antarctica.

Openings and beginnings are strongly present, too, in Sir John Charnley’s [b.1922] account of starting work at the Royal Aircraft Establishment in 1943. Educated as a civil engineer in preparation for military service in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME), John was arbitrarily redirected to serve as a civilian aeronautical engineer, as part of the team testing Britain’s first jet plane, the Gloster-Whittle E28/39:
“To have been directed to somewhere that you knew was going to make history, because it was our first jet-propelled aeroplane and you’d got in right at the start of a new age, a new age of aerospace without anything to do with you whatsoever, you’d just been put there when you thought you were going into REME and you’d no idea of what you were going to do, but you got this feeling that you hadn’t heard of this jet propulsion until you arrived and here you were in the middle of it, our number one aeroplane with an engine that you didn’t know how it worked at that stage and you were there and actually working on it. Unbelievable. So you got stuck in.” [C1379/30 John Charnley Track 4 40:40-44:00]

His account of first seeing the jet stresses contrasts (huge-small, public-hidden, old-new) but also a continuity, in serving the country’s war effort, albeit through a different sort of service:

“I can remember first seeing the aeroplane. [...] [Dennis] Higton, who was the practical engineer in the section [...] decides it’s time I knew a little bit about aeroplanes so he takes me out to show me some of the aircraft that are standing there on the hard standing at RAE. And this is January, very cold. And the first aeroplane he shows me is a Stirling and I was gob-stopped; he stood me under these enormous wheels of a Stirling aeroplane and the fuselage is way up in the sky and there’s this great long fuselage standing back and I think ‘does this thing fly?’ [...] So the next thing is we go into the hangar and there was this new form of aviation, this little aeroplane, the jet. And after that enormous great Stirling, here’s this little aeroplane, single engine now instead of four, different engine altogether, neat, completely tucked in, tiny. [...] And so he then starts telling me a little bit about aeroplanes and there we are, I’m now beginning to get quite excited about the idea of doing these things, all military [...] my little war effort; I can believe myself that I can do something here.” [C1379/30 John Charnley Track 4 49:14-58:36]

But turning points are not necessarily doors opening. They might well involve a diversion around an obstacle, a path taken with others suddenly closed. Sculptor Ivor Abrahams [1935–2015], for example, tells us that the shape of his career was determined by two moments: an opening up (the discovery of art school) and a closing down (the discovery of his colour-blindness):
IA: “My father had a clothing business – women’s outfitters – and it was decided that I should go there and work for him; I didn’t want to do that. [...] They decided to send me to the local technical college to learn window dressing [...] stuff about retail, umm, ‘business’. [...] You did the window dressing in the art school. Of course, as soon as I got inside the art school...[chuckles].”

Interviewer: “What?”

IA: “Well, that was it, you know. I had found my niche [...] I just loved it, you know. [...] Then they found out that I was colour blind, or partially colour blind in the art school [...] They gave my one of those Japanese colour tests [...] and everybody was seeing 18 or 29 and I was seeing 2 or 4. I could see then it was very serious. So they suggested that I put my emphasis on sculpture at art school [...] I was doing work in the modelling room, making clay models, and I soon found out that I had an aptitude for that... so that’s how it started, really, this sculpture business. I have always had a leaning or a yearning to do painting, but I never actually have; I have done lots of prints but never paintings.”

Throughout his career – in the words of his official website – Abraham has ‘explored different ways of treating sculpture as if it were painting, or of uniting painting and sculpture in imaginative new combinations’.2 His life story interview allows us to understand the turning point of the diagnosis of colour-blindness as thoroughly formative and, in a particular way, productive.

Violent moments

Especially sensitive readers should look away now. We end with a road-accident and a face smashed on the rugby pitch, both of which made it into hugely successful novels. In *Enduring Love* (1997) – a book that is itself concerned with a turning points – the description of a man falling from a balloon (the narrator had ‘never seen such a terrible thing as that falling man’)3 owes something to an accident Ian McEwan witnessed as a child:

“I was eleven [in 1959] [...] my father and I walked out of my sister’s flat and we witnessed a car accident. A bike – a motorbike – collided with a car and the motorcyclist was thrown. And I have this clear memory – I’ve never seen such an extraordinary thing – the motorcyclist, he went right up in the air and landed, I don’t know, about 30 feet away, but it seemed to take forever. And something of that, of how long it took for him to reach the ground, found its way into the falling man in *Enduring Love*. And my father went over to help, but he said to me at some point, ‘We’ve got to get out of here because the police will come and I don’t want to be a witness because I have to get back to North Africa’. I remember his hands were covered in blood and he put them deep in his coat pockets. The ambulance was there but the police weren’t. An odd event, a violent, strange event, and the cyclist kept shouting ‘I can’t see, I can’t see’.”

In the case of playwright, Booker Prize winning novelist and artist David Storey [1933–2017], a similarly violent and focused moment is reproduced in – and indeed inspired the writing of – his novel *This Sporting Life* (1960), winner of the Macmillan Fiction Award:

“The ball came loose in the middle of a melee of players on a very wet, muddy, horrific afternoon and the ball was at my feet and I had to pick it up and I knew if I picked it up I’d get kicked in my teeth and my face, the way the limbs were all coming. And I hesitated, just with a split second, and the guy in the second row I was playing with was thirty years old – I was nineteen, eighteen, nineteen – and he’d been a well-known player and he was now getting too old and was playing out his life reluctantly because he wanted to go on playing because he couldn’t afford to stop playing. And being a pro, a real pro with ten, twelve years of experience, he immediately lent down where I hadn’t lent down, picked the ball up, got kicked in his teeth and his head came up completely matted in blood round his mouth and nose. And he didn’t look at the guy who’d kicked him, he looked at me and said, ‘You cunt’. And I knew precisely what he meant. And the guilt and the horror of what I’d done and the betrayal of a fellow team-mate, it became the trigger for writing *This Sporting Life*. I wanted to atone for that moment. When I was at the Slade and was writing the first version of *Sporting Life* I started off with this image of a guy getting injured, with his teeth and his face and his mouth, thinking I’ve got to atone for that cowardice on my part. Because the
whole games I played were all to do with avoiding getting seriously injured, not with playing the game. I was only there to earn enough money to keep me going at the Slade, and that was the other falsity of course...the fact I wasn’t playing like they were playing, I was playing just to survive.” [C464/67/1 David Storey Track 1 57:00-59:25]

This extract combines many of the features of turning points considered in this article. At the time of the incident described, Storey – the son of a Yorkshire coal miner – was studying at London’s Slade School of Fine Art, but supporting himself by playing weekend matches for Leeds Rugby League Football Club (back at the Slade, his hands would shake until Wednesday because of the violence of the rugby). The moment he describes marks the beginning of a move into different directions: Storey’s screenplay for the film version of This Sporting Life sparked a collaboration with director Lindsay Anderson that burned for thirty years. Having directed the film Anderson went on to direct Storey’s plays at the Royal Court and, later, the National Theatre. The moment – this turning point – also came to stand for, to symbolise, a key feature of Storey’s identity: the tension between the depth of his roots in the north and the force of his desire to leave his background behind him.

Endnotes

1 Daniel Bertaux and Paul Thompson, Pathways to Social Class: A Qualitative Approach to Social Mobility, (OUP, 1997), p.18.
2 www.ivorabrahams.com

Edited by Paul Merchant with contributions from Frances Cornford, Cathy Courtney, Niamh Dillon, Camille Johnston, Tom Lean, Sarah O’Reilly, Hester Westley, Emmeline Ledgerwood and Elizabeth Wright.
Contested oral histories of privatisation

Tom Lean, Project Interviewer, National Life Stories

Privatisation has been the biggest shift in British economic life since the 1940s. Before Margaret Thatcher’s government, the British state owned a vast swath of the economy, encompassing everything from utilities and railways, to scientific research and car factories. The privatisation of these enterprises transformed the role of the state and private sector and changed millions of working lives. Historians have yet to fully explain the enormity of this process and judgements vary over its costs and benefits. However, NLS collections offer a range of insights into how privatisation happened, how it affected people, and what difference it made.

Some minor state enterprises were transferred to the private sector in the 1970s, but the idea that major industries should be privatised was far from established thinking. Economist Stephen Littlechild, whose regulation ideas were key to the 1980s privatisation programme, recalled that in the 1970s:

“There was some thinking going on, even though the mainstream was fully against privatisation… If you wrote as a professional economist advocating what was then called denationalisation, now called privatisation, that, at that time, was professional suicide. You simply could not talk about that and be treated as a sensible academic… Economists contributing to the literature up until 1979 did not talk about either the merits of privatisation or how it might be done. It was in non-academic, as it were, circles, like the Institute of Economic Affairs, economists were there… but they didn’t write academic papers about it.” (C1495/56)

After the Thatcher government came to power privatisation entered the political mainstream with a major programme to sell state enterprises. Initially there was little attempt to restructure the industries being sold. However, radicals in the Conservative Party saw how privatisation could remake Britain’s economy along free market lines. By splitting industries into rival companies, it was believed that competition would drive efficiency and innovation. As energy secretary Lord Cecil Parkinson recalled of privatising electricity that selling the industry as a single giant monopoly would have raised more money, but it was politically more important to split it into competing companies:

“[Margaret Thatcher] felt that I was comfortable with finance and, in that universal description, I was ‘one of us’ and therefore was very committed to the idea of competition. One of the most encouraging bits of instruction that I had came from Nigel Lawson, backed up by the Prime Minister, who said: ‘If it’s a question of competition or money, competition wins.’ So in other words I wasn’t to go after the optimum cash and if I created a more competitive environment that was less easy to sell, then that would be acceptable.” (C1495/21)

Many state industry managers recount exasperation with inefficiencies and bureaucracy, and regarded privatisation as a chance for radical change. Bryan Townsend, for example, chairman of the Midlands Electricity Board, reflected that before privatisation:

“I think the [electricity] industry had stagnated, had ossified to an extent… You didn’t really need this enormous great structure, you didn’t really need all these area boards, with all these tiers of staff… it was monolithic, too big, too ungainly… it was just ready for a massive change.” (C1495/06)

Others were more sceptical, concerned that the strategic achievements and public service ethos of state industries would be threatened by the private sector. While NLS collections include people vocally in favour or against privatisation, many interviewees offer nuanced perspectives, acknowledging that state and private industries had both merits and problems, or reflect on their changing views over time. Flood defence manager John Tinkler, for instance, worked for Wessex Water Authority at privatisation:

“I didn’t really see the necessity for it. I mean the talk was, that by privatising some of the functions of the water authority… that would lift those out of the public financing and they’d be raising their own finances and that would be to the benefit of government spending. Whilst that may have been true in a way, I think looking at it from a public amenity and a more democratic sort of view they’d better be left all in one.” (C1364/04)

Yet later in his interview Tinkler noted that his views on privatisation had, ‘changed a bit’, as time went on: ‘I only see how Wessex Water behaves and certainly I’m agreeably surprised by how well and how efficiently I think they conduct their business.’ Decades after the election of Margaret Thatcher, the merits and faults of privatisation are still debated.
as they are across NLS collections, where interviewees discuss how their organisations and working lives were affected. Many, particularly managers, highlight improvements. British Rail Director of Civil Engineering Jim Cornell, for example, reflected on how privatisation helped to reverse decades of underinvestment in Britain’s railways:

“Passenger growth has doubled. There are 50% more trains running in this country than there are in France every day, which is the bigger country… Freight, despite the decline in coal, has done OK actually, and none of this would have happened if we hadn’t privatised. Because whichever government was in power would not have released this sort of investment… We’d never have the amount of new rolling stock… we’d never have had the introduction of new services and the building of new stations. It just would not have happened.” (C1379/127)

Competition, rationalisations and private sector approaches all drove down costs and initially reduced prices for customers in some cases. Chairman John Harris, for instance, recalled the efficiency savings at East Midlands Electricity:

“I think privatisation did drive competition, but I think the biggest benefit from privatisation must have been cutting the size of businesses in terms of manpower down to reasonably low levels… I guess now it’s probably operating on 60% of the staff that it had when it was a nationalised industry. Now that alone is worthwhile in terms of economic resources and I don’t think manpower reductions of the kind like that would ever have been achieved in the nationalised industry setting because of the strength of the trade unions.” (C1495/45)

Privatisation and subsequent rationalisation and culture change had many critics, particularly amongst the trade unions concerned about loss of jobs, poorer employment conditions, and their declining influence. John Edmonds, General Secretary of the major GMB union, reflected that:

“It probably cost us 200,000 members… we talked about privatisation in terms of change of ownership, but there was another sort of privatisation which was just outsourcing of activities that were previously handled in-house and very often the contracts change every two or three years… then it goes to another company and how did the other company win? Usually by undercutting, usually by lowering standards, usually by dumping things like training and so on. Much less interested in dealing with trade unions and often much more interested in casual, staff part-time staff… you move closer and closer to zero hours contracts. And so it becomes very difficult for trade unions to recruit members.” (C1495/53)

At a working level, many interviewees recall a more target driven culture emerging. Engineer Alison Simpson, for instance, worked in the newly privatised Scottish Power in the 1990s:

“We kind of ceased to be a company that worked for the customer, to being a company that was working to targets that were set to increase the profits. And to increase the profits, we had to meet targets set by OFGEM [the regulator]… I’m not sure how many of the improvements that have been made would not have been made anyway, I don’t see what, in terms of the distribution network, what improvements privatisation has brought in.” (C1495/55)

A focus on short term profitability sometimes made privatised companies less willing to invest in long term projects, like infrastructure and scientific research. Cyril Hilsum, for example, was a government scientist whose research laid the groundwork for liquid crystal displays, netting government over £100 million in patent royalties. Over the 1980s and 1990s most government defence research organisations were rationalised and eventually privatised as QinetiQ, a process that Hilsum recalled as:

“Terrible. I thought it was essentially a way in which what I and many colleagues had established as an inheritance was being passed to a company that had no history of involvement and where people would be making millions of pounds out of what we had really set a foundation for… We always thought that it had been sold to QinetiQ on the cheap… Essentially, you’ve seen what is happening, I mean for instance last year QinetiQ decided that it was going to stop all the research done on photonics, which is the word to describe the infrared photocell work and the liquid crystal work and things, and just stop it on the grounds it wasn’t profitable.” (C1379/69)

Privatisation led to many job cuts, however it created new business opportunities too. Many small contracting companies were created to offer services to former state industries. Some newly privatised industries began expanding overseas. The expertise gained through Britain’s world-leading drive to privatised was exported, as those involved advised other countries on privatisation and market liberalisation. Amongst them was National Grid’s legal advisor Dame Fiona Woolf, who found herself advising electricity industries around the world:

“I went off to Argentina for the Grid to buy the transmission system there under the Menem privatisation… and but for the trials and tribulations of Argentina and its economy it… would have been a great asset because they’d done some marvellous innovative thinking in Latin America in market designs and system operations. And it was actually that Argentine design which I then took to California… that spawned a whole load of system operators all around the United States… Politics of power and electricity are very different from one country to another… but the nuts and bolts of what I learnt here in England and Wales… have given me lots of useful tips to give.” (C1495/47)

As this sample suggests, the history of privatisation and its effects on life in Britain is a vast, but contested subject. Oral history provides ways of appreciating not only how the process unfolded, but also its varied effects, and reveals the many different, often conflicted, opinions people hold about it.
“It is an uncanny experience listening to a voice”

Cathy Courtney, Project Director, National Life Stories

Nicholas Serota, Director of Tate 1988–2017 and current Chair of Arts Council England, and Richard Morphet, curator at the Tate Gallery 1968–1988, are both making recordings for Artists’ Lives. Below, they share their reactions to interviews made with Joanna Drew (1929–2003), recorded for NLS by Lydia O’Ryan, and Jane Dowling (born 1925), whose interviewer was Anna Dyke.

Joanna Drew joined the Arts Council in 1952, creating legendary exhibitions that had a profound effect on colleagues as well as the gallery-visiting public. Nicholas Serota worked closely with Joanna in the early 1970s and remained in touch with her subsequently. He has written his response to hearing her recording:

“It is an uncanny experience listening to a voice that is so distinctive that you recognise it half way through the first sentence, even when you have not heard it for nearly twenty years. Joanna’s recording captures her wry observation of the behaviour of curators, bureaucrats and artists in the London art world over a period of forty years. She was close to and then at the centre of the web, deploying her guile and a firm hand to secure great exhibitions from difficult men, like Kenneth Clark and David Sylvester. Such testimony depends on establishing trust between the subject and the interviewer. Joanna is unguarded, as she was after six o’clock when the whisky bottle appeared on the table, and brings vividly to life the experience of working with Picasso and other great artists, her struggles with the increasing ‘accountability’ at the Arts Council, her love of France and preference for the company of intellectuals rather than dealers or collectors. Her sharp, but often affectionate comments tell stories and give insights that would have been edited out of a written memoir, giving a much fuller account of history than any official record. And no obituary could ever describe her laugh as she recalls winning her point with a tough opponent or working partner using her clear logic and a teasing humour. The value of the NLS archive lies in just such moments, when the subject tells us something that has not been carefully rehearsed or told a thousand times before.”

Despite a friendship with artist Jane Dowling that goes back many years, listening to her Artists’ Lives contribution enriches Richard Morphet’s understanding of her. What follows is an extract from Richard’s own recording:

“You’ve just been telling me you’ve been listening to some of the Artists’ Lives recordings online.

“The one that I’m on at the moment is of the painter Jane Dowling. …I’m finding it almost like a drug… Her voice comes across really loud and clear and one of the great qualities… is that she’s so direct and she just calls a spade a spade. …my only regret is that it’s sometimes rather difficult to hear what the questioner is saying.

“How do you listen, what machine are you using?

“I’m using my computer, because you gave me the link, which is available to anybody… and then you go to the alphabetical list of the recordings and then scroll down to the person in question… I note down things that are of interest to me, but actually the whole thing is interesting because it’s a person’s life and it’s a family’s life.

“I hadn’t a clue about her family background… one doesn’t with most people. …I didn’t realise the extent to which the medical profession loomed large in her awareness of life… because her father was a doctor, and I’d no idea about the South African aspect of her background… Nothing about meeting Jane suggests South Africa in the slightest degree, but there it all is… she didn’t live there, but it was critically
important in her father's life... That's where he was raised as a child and then, they were of English origin, and he was sent to England to pursue his education and soon his training as a doctor and apparently he resented that, lifelong... just being ripped out of the bosom of the family... Her mother's family... was a totally different world in Ireland. And then yet another totally different world... in which Jane was brought up in England... and it's very interesting social history actually, because... class stratification is one of the things that... comes out... The continuity really, once she becomes an adult, is her deep preoccupation with art and with how you go about making a work of art... There's continuity in that from her years as a student in Oxford right through to the mature career that... started in the early sixties. But another thing that nobody would know from meeting her is that for thirteen years she was an enclosed nun and she was completely cut off from the world. Greatly to be respected and fascinating to hear about.

"Playing devil's advocate, why does it matter that the recording exists?"

"My answer is twofold. Of course you get two for the price of one in that there's a great deal about the work of her late husband, Peter Greenham, who I think died before the system got going and who was a key figure. The primary reason is that it tells you so much about her training and her sensibility and her vision as an artist. But the secondary advantage of it, which I think is very important, is that you learn what life was like for somebody in the part of a community of society... into which she was born... Lives are porous in that any one life links with all sorts of other people's lives and the interactions are what life is all about.

"You're listening to it as somebody who has had a professional career in the arts and you're listening to the story of a friend?"

"On the art side, I'm learning about her passionate belief in the importance of drawing and passionate interest in technique, but also her belief that an artist to be any good must be him or herself and that really anything goes in terms of how they communicate what it is they have to say, even if they're riding roughshod over established ideas. But she does feel a burning passion that the traditional understanding of teaching about art is something that must not be lost sight of and that the great heritage of art from past centuries... including the twentieth... that students and artists must constantly have access to that. So all that's on the art side.

"What's it like listening to a friend?"

"It's just like being with her. She's wonderfully straightforward and direct. Very tolerant, very, very much aware of the complexities of modern life, which is so unlike how it was when she was growing up. And of course actually a major aspect... which is again something that people wouldn't necessarily have known... is how deeply read she is in great literature and how much she cares about it and about all the contrasting approaches of authors through the centuries.

"And what would have prevented you, when you've known her over the years... from asking her any of these things? Why are there things that are new to you if you've known her quite well?"

"It's because, not just Jane and I, but everybody that I know in the art community and many other communities is so busy, is so short of time... when you meet a friend... there's so much to talk about... including the issues of the day and really the only way that you can get to know a person in the way that these tapes make possible would be to spend a very long time with them, which is what I am actually doing in tiny snippets... as I slowly move forward through her recordings... Two things I love about this Artists' Lives system, and I'm sure it would be true of engineers' lives, farmers' lives, whatever it is, is first of all the concentration, you know, the ability to go into depth into what the real full experience of life in all its richness has been like for one person and secondly, the way that it opens up the whole of the period that the person has lived through and opens up the whole of the field in which that person was active.

"Anything to say about her voice and delivery and language?"

"Forthright, as I said. Marvellous example of, you know, classic established received English enunciation and pronunciation [laughs] that I wouldn't have begun to think about without your question, but then it definitely is the case."
NLS Interviews in Exhibitions
Compiled by Mary Stewart, Deputy Director of National Life Stories

Year on year NLS receives ever more requests to use excerpts from life story recordings in exhibitions at galleries, libraries, museums and public spaces. As NLS’s recordings now stretch back over thirty years, our rich and diverse collections are of increasing significance, as we hold the voices, stories and memories of many narrators who have since died – and whose testimony gives us insights into aspects of British life and culture which have changed in ways that interviewees could never have imagined at the time they were recorded. Here are four recent contrasting examples which show not only the value of NLS’s long life story recordings to those curating exhibitions and displays, but also how the audio is now being offered to the public in a thoughtful and innovative manner.

‘In Their Own Words: Artists’ Voices from The Ingram Collection’ at The Lightbox Gallery in Woking, 20 May – 30 July 2017

Curated by Michael Bird as part of his 2016 NLS Goodison Fellowship, this outstanding exhibition gave visitors the unique opportunity to view and contemplate key artworks whilst listening to excerpts of oral history recordings from the artists that created them. All the artworks were from The Ingram Collection: 600 works of Modern British Art collected by entrepreneur and philanthropist Chris Ingram, which are on medium term loan to The Lightbox. Guiding the selection was the Artists’ Lives collection of life story recordings, as Michael selected only pieces where the artist had been interviewed – and where he could edit an interesting extract of audio from the interview. The artists featured were some of the best known within The Ingram Collection, including Eileen Agar, Kenneth Armitage, John Bellany, Ralph Brown, Lynn Chadwick, Geoffrey Clarke, Ken Currie, Mary Fedden, Paul Feiler, Elisabeth Frink, Terry Frost, William Gear, Derrick Greaves, Patrick Heron, Josef Herman, Allen Jones, Bernard Meadows, Brendan Neilland, Eduardo Paolozzi, Leonard Rosoman, Carel Weight and Rosemary Young. In the centre of the exhibition was a ‘soundshower’ which played a loop of extracts that could be heard by anyone standing within the radius of the speaker placed at the centre of the dome. For all the other audio extracts visitors were encouraged to sit on six sofas spaced around the gallery, allowing them to take a comfortable seat to listen to a loop of artists’ voices on a particular theme. The sofas were positioned so that the listener had full view of at least one piece of art or sculpture by each artist on the audio loop. For most of the artists featured the testimony quite deliberately did not relate to the artwork on view – but this was part of the exhibition’s power: it was magical to be enveloped in a space where the art and the voice could be appreciated together, shedding new light on the fascinating personal experiences that shaped the speakers’ lives, relationships and art. Reclining on the sofas one could enjoy Ralph Brown’s description of seeing the Victorian nude statues in Leeds City Square every day on his way to school and trying, aged eight, to carve a snowman in the shape of a nude woman, and hear how Terry Frost started to paint portraits in a POW camp after World War Two, using colours like Prussian blue and yellow that were left over because no one else wanted to use them. Elisabeth Frink explained the origin of her 1969 sculpture Goggle Head, based on a photograph of General Mohammad Oufkir, which was one of several politically motivated pieces that were a direct response to the Algerian War. The recordings also shed light on some of the most iconic pieces in British art. Speaking
about his study for the Tottenham Court Road Underground Station Mosaic, Eduardo Paolozzi brought to life the atmosphere of the area, ‘it’s a big kind of... it’s a rich churning mass of people with lights and sort of a kaleidoscope of events and cinemas, hamburgers, fast food.’ This was a wonderful exhibition which demonstrated the power of the life story as a centrepiece and placed listening at its heart.

‘Connecting Stories: Our British Asian Heritage’ at The Library of Birmingham, 15 July – 4 November 2017

This joint exhibition run by The Library of Birmingham and The British Library celebrated the important role South Asian culture has played in forming Britain, and in particular Birmingham’s history and identity. ‘Connecting Stories’ explored Britain’s enduring connections with South Asia, from historical trading links stretching back 400 years to the impact of migration and settlement in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The rich and intertwining history of South Asia and the Midlands was illustrated by photographs, letters, posters, paintings, documents, oral history, music and ephemera, demonstrating how libraries and archives can reveal untold and forgotten stories. The oral history component, selected and edited by Cai Parry-Jones, included a key section on food stories, which featured excerpts from Food From Source to Salespoint interviewees Shezad Hussain and Cyrus Todiwala. Extracts were also included from a number oral history collections archived at the British Library including Oral Histories of British Goans from Colonial East Africa, Overseas Trained South Asian Geriatricians interviews and The Millennium Memory Bank. The audio was delivered on a free standing player designed to look like a radio, and had an accompanying booklet to guide listeners through the extracts and encourage them to select audio from the tracks available on the player. Further oral history extracts and music were played in the galleries as more ambient sounds to draw in visitors. Penny Brook, Lead Curator for India Office Records and co-curator of the exhibition commented: “Working on the exhibition and community engagement programme has been very rewarding personally and a fantastic opportunity to learn from colleagues in Birmingham, members of the public and from working with the schoolchildren. I have deepened my understanding of the cultural significance of the India Office Records for people of South Asian heritage and the importance of reaching out to different audiences. The oral history really brought the themes to life and gave visitors an opportunity to feel a sense of personal connection with the stories told by the exhibition.”

Over 6,000 visitors came to the exhibition, 59% of which identified as BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic), with almost half visiting the Library of Birmingham for the first time. This post-it note on the feedback board from a visitor gives a good sense of how the audio was appreciated by many of the visitors.

Sound Point at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds, 2016–

Since its inception in 1990, Artists’ Lives has been run in close collaboration with the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds. In 2016 the Henry Moore Institute installed a National Life Stories sound point in its reception area, generously funded by the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation. The sound point further forefronts the many life stories in Artists’ Lives which relate to the Institute’s collections and, where possible, its audio clips are selected to accompany the Institute’s exhibition programme. Past extracts have focused on the work of John Latham, Stuart Brisley and Paul Neagu. The recordings have also explored Liliane Lijn and Bryan Kneale’s experiences of the 1972 City Sculpture Project, and the influence of Roy Ascott and cybernetics on Laurence Burt’s artistic development. Recent extracts have focused on artists’ experiences of living and working in 1950s Britain, with Eduardo Paolozzi, Elisabeth Frink and Kenneth Armitage discussing austerity, post-war life and the Venice Biennale. These later extracts accompany the exhibition ‘The Sculpture Collections’ (22 March – 2 September 2018).
Karen Atkinson, Assistant Librarian at the Henry Moore Institute reflects:

“The sound point provides an introduction to the wealth of recordings in *Artists’ Lives* and gives visitors to the Institute an opportunity to hear the voice of artists whose work they have seen in the gallery space. Listeners are encouraged to visit the Research Library to discover more about the artists through the *Artists’ Lives* oral history recordings available onsite and via British Library Sounds and the library’s extensive book collection. A number of sound clips from featured artists are also available on the Henry Moore website, giving further exposure to *Artists’ Lives*: [www.henry-moore.org/archives-and-library/sculpture-research-library/artists-lives-project](http://www.henry-moore.org/archives-and-library/sculpture-research-library/artists-lives-project).”

Both NLS and the Henry Moore Institute are delighted to continue this close collaboration and we look forward to seeing what other gems of audio will be made available to visitors through the sound point in the coming years.

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**Listen! 140 Years of Recorded Sound, British Library, St Pancras, 6 October 2017 – 13 May 2018**

As part of the British Library’s *Season of Sound*, this exhibition delved into the Library’s extraordinary collection of over 6.5 million recordings of speech, music, wildlife and the environment, dating from the 1880s to the present day. Visitors were encouraged to reflect on the importance of sound in recording our lives and cultural heritage, and the impact of radio in the twentieth century. Integral to the exhibition was an eclectic mix of sounds from the archive including many rare and unpublished recordings and also items on display from the Library’s rarely-seen collection of records, players and recorders, exploring how technology has transformed our listening experience. As well as historic voices from the archive such as Florence Nightingale, recorded at home in London in July 1890, key oral history recordings peppered a timeline illustrated by important audio recordings from the collection. These included cellist Anita Lasker-Wallfisch recounting her experience of playing in the orchestra in the concentration camp at Auschwitz from the *Living Memory of the Jewish Community*. Bob Ballantyne described his experience on the North Sea oil rig disaster on the Piper Alpha platform in July 1988, recorded for the *Lives in the Oil Industry*. In an interview from 2004 for *An Oral History of British Athletics*, Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson – one of Britain’s greatest Paralympic athletes – described her attitude to disability. In a clip from his recording for *Food: From Source to Salespoint* celebrated chef Cyrus Todiwala recalled his shocked reaction to first encountering Indian restaurant menus and food when he arrived in the UK from India in the 1990s. In an extract from her interview for *An Oral History of British Science*, space scientist and science communicator Maggie Aderin-Pocock discussed the origin of her interest in space and in an excerpt from *Authors’ Lives* Linton Kwesi Johnson explained how Jamaican reggae artists such as Big Youth, and US political rap group the Last Poets, amongst others, influenced the development of his literary voice. An innovation in this exhibition has been the listening pods where visitors can sit in a comfortable space, put on the headphones and select from the over 100 featured audio recordings using a touch screen. The pods are always in use and provide the listener a comfortable space to immerse themselves in sound and reflect upon the audio to which they are listening.
Saved for the nation
David Govier, Archivist & Charlie Morgan, Archive Assistant, National Life Stories

We gauge the numbers of people accessing National Life Stories and other oral history collections at the British Library in a variety of different ways. We track the use of interviews online to see how many people are listening to each collection, where they are from, and how long they are listening for. In 2017 22,535 people accessed National Life Stories content online at BL Sounds and looked at 64,708 pages. Oral history content as a whole on the BL's website had 1.15 million page views last year.

We often get comments via the BL Sounds website or on Twitter about how people have reacted to or used our interviews. We also get regular information on what people are requesting from the Listening Service onsite at the British Library’s Reading Rooms in London and Boston Spa. All of these factors influence how we prioritise collections for digitisation and how we manage our workload in making interviews available online.

Some of our users found the experience of listening to oral history material led them to ask questions and get answers from their own family members:

“Very moving – my 89 yr old dad sharing his awful experiences for 1st time w/me.”

Others were able to move their research onto different phases:

“Having such a good day. Thanks to @BL_OralHistory recording, I’ve learnt that film director #StephenFrears’ parents met @ToynbeeHall.”

Some researchers are interested in the provenance of collections, and delighted that we have saved them for the nation to enjoy:

“It’s fascinating that the tape was found from someone’s private collection – to think it could have been lost to the world.”

One 90-year-old interviewee was delighted to receive a transcript of his interview:

“I have been wondering what I was up to for the last 90 years and this document will certainly help.”

We often hear from the families of National Life Stories interviewees. Mostly it is simply to share their reaction to hearing the voice of a long lost loved-one. Sometimes it is to correct or update interview documentation. In September we got a call from Annabel Simms and Kate Turner, the daughters of Elizabeth Simms who was interviewed for the Holocaust Survivors’ Centre Interviews in 2005. After Elizabeth’s death in 2015 Annabel and Kate rediscovered ‘I Got Away’, a poem their mother had written about her escape from two Nazi death marches in 1944. Thanks to their help we were able to upload the poem to the BL Sounds website so that researchers can now access it alongside the complete interview. You can read the full story of the poem at the British Library’s Sound and Vision blog.
“One of my inspirational things at home, to do with drawing, was my eldest brother died when he was six and his school teacher sent home his art book which my parents had, which was full of pastel drawings in colour, each with a piece of tracing paper to stop it smudging... I do remember looking at this book and thinking with amazement because the drawings were as if by an adult. You could almost pick up the apple and the bananas and the things he'd drawn there. I always regret we lost it, I don't know where the book disappeared to. It disappeared from the house at some point. But I think that must have been a marker at quite an early age, of having that in the house... It was kept in the sideboard... I wouldn't have looked at it often but I do remember getting it out and looking and being amazed that this little boy could do these extraordinary graphic drawings.

“How much did you think of him?”

“I suppose I imagined him, but not very strongly...”

“What was his name?”

“Neville.”

“How much was he talked about by anybody?”

“It varied because he died when my mother was three months pregnant with me and it had a traumatic effect on her. She allegedly attempted to commit suicide.”

Neville’s death scarred an already tough childhood in a 1930s and 1940s mining community in Wakefield. Lily Storey’s deep grief at the loss of Neville during her pregnancy with David led, as she later told her daughter-in-law, to her holding her newborn son as little as possible and being unable to show affection for him; throughout his childhood she remained depressed, with no means of addressing or expressing her feelings. David’s life was one of dichotomies, an early example of which was his ability to turn the haunting absence of his brother into a kind of liberation.

“The myth of him, his death, was always in the background in that sense, that I was a kind of embodiment or expression of their experience... I’ve always seen him as someone who would have been an artist and in a way I could perhaps fulfill his destiny for him... I’ve always used that as a kind of sentimental motivator of being creative. That there was a precedent that kind of warranted this kind of creativity. That this warrant was Neville’s death... Neville’s gift and therefore it was up to me to do something with it since I appeared to have some ability in this direction.”

Winning a place at grammar school deepened David’s sense of separation from his parents but he was also acutely aware of the difficulties of their lives, his mother’s unhappiness and his father’s unremitting job in the mine. His maternal grandparents could neither read nor write and, as he said, the family went from illiteracy to winning the Booker Prize (for his novel, Saville, in 1976) in three generations. Aged twelve he contributed to the family income through holiday jobs, some of which – in particular summers with a marquee contracting company – were to feed his future novels and plays. The warranty of Neville’s legacy helped when his parents opposed his taking a place at Wakefield School of Art, when he supported himself by playing rugby league for Leeds. Later the money fuelled his move to London to join the Slade School of Art. The first evening, sitting in an ABC café on Euston Road, eating beans on toast was an indelible memory: ‘This is the happiest moment of my entire life. I’ve escaped.’ (His feelings on leaving Wakefield are vividly expressed in the final paragraphs of Saville.) Despite this, he never could escape his beginnings and his writing is infused with it. He never felt wholly part of his new life either, yet relished being an outsider amongst new friends and colleagues.

A playwright, poet and novelist, David continued to paint throughout his life, and also had brief careers as an art critic and a film maker. One of the benefits of oral history is its ability to rescue information about opportunities in a person’s life from which they walked away, and there are many of those in this recording, an intriguing insight into character. Success came early and the conversation captures incidental joys such as a bizarre evening with Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton, as well as discursive passages about his work with the director Lindsay Anderson, the designer Jocelyn Herbert and with actors, in particularly Ralph Richardson for whom David wrote Early Days towards the end of Ralph’s career (National Theatre, 1980). A wonderful raconteur, David’s recording is steeped in humour, most often directed against himself.
Like many of his generation, the direction of Geoff Tootill’s life was set by the Second World War. After school he was dispatched to Cambridge in 1940 to study mathematics, part of the war effort to build up Britain’s scientific workforce. He was subsequently assigned as an operational researcher, but ‘realised I’d made a mistake. I realised at that stage that I was in fact an engineer and not a theoretician, not a mathematician.’ Having taught himself electronics whilst building a wireless in childhood, Geoff agitated to transfer to the Telecommunication Research Establishment (TRE) at Malvern.

TRE was the centre of Britain’s secret efforts to develop radar, an immensely creative place whose staff laid many of the foundations for the electronics age. Geoff’s role was developing airborne radar for night fighters, but like many of his inventive colleagues, he was soon finding electronic solutions to other problems too, not least his freezing cold office:

“This was entirely illicit from [the Ministry of Works] point of view. We didn’t have a proper electric fire… but of course in the course of our work we had access to large ceramic resistors… Well, half a dozen of these resistors gave you quite sufficient dissipation to warm your office appreciably, so we got half a dozen resistors… to go directly across the mains and be loaded up to dissipate their 120 watts each and we strung those across the ceiling of the office. Each resistor had metal ferrules at each end which in this installation were live to the mains… highly dangerous, you could reach up and touch them. The Ministry of Works became cognisant of this and we said, ‘Oh no, that’s a dummy antenna. We can’t install it in the lab, it’s too close to the receiver, so we have to bring the signal from the lab over to the office here’. And, ‘Oh, I see’. [laughs]”

After the war Geoff joined former TRE colleagues FC Williams and Tom Kilburn at the University of Manchester, where he helped design and build the Manchester Baby, the world’s first stored program electronic computer, proving the fundamental concepts still used in computers today. In his interview for An Oral History of British Science Geoff described in detail the methodical process of building the Baby, leading up to its first run.

“We thought it was very important to have something that worked, did something or other at every stage as we built up these units. The very last thing we could contemplate doing was to design the whole thing and have it all built and wire it all up and then find out why it didn’t work… It was necessary that the apparatus should do something which we could see was correct, or if it wasn’t correct we could mend it until it was correct… Well, we went on with this process of adding the units and making the whole lot do something together at every stage until we got to the stage when we’d made a computer… Tom and I commissioned this last unit and we laboriously fed in a few binary numbers, switched it on and we saw the thing had done a computation. And we then, I went up to FC Williams’ office and told his secretary to ask him to come down, we’d got something worthwhile to show him.”

Geoff subsequently spent most of his career in computing. He translated Manchester University’s experimental machines into the design of the world’s first commercially available computer, wrote one of the earliest books about computers for the general public, and managed the mission control computers at the European Space Research Organisation (ESRO). Yet his own original expectations for computers were modest:

“We thought there would be scope for another, one or perhaps two big computers in the UK and three or four in Europe and probably half a dozen in the US, because they always have big ideas in the US, and that was the eventual scope of our invention. We thought.”

C1379/02 (edited by Tom Lean)
Jitterbugging at the 1939 World’s Fair in New York, a teenage memory Lois shared in her NLS recording, conjures her energy, proficiency and joie de vivre. Quietly, behind the scenes, and with immense generosity, she achieved a great deal for the arts in Britain and had enormous fun doing it, collecting an array of longstanding friends, Sam Wanamaker (pioneer of the rebuilding of Shakespeare’s Globe theatre in London), Antonia Fraser and Harold Pinter among them.

Lois, an only child, was born in Brooklyn in 1923; her father, William Ross, a steelworker, was among those employed to construct the Empire State Building. Money was tight; eggs from the family chickens were exchanged for Lois’ early dancing lessons. Bright academically, she played the piano and French horn and, at fourteen, began modern dance classes to learn Martha Graham techniques. A scholarship enabled her to attend New York’s Neighborhood Playhouse, perhaps the source of her light, crisp diction. As a young adult, she worked at CBS radio, witnessing studio performances of plays and music. It was in these years that she met her first husband, the British composer Richard Arnell, commissioned by George Balanchine and Lincoln Kirstein’s Ballet Society, the forerunner of the New York City Ballet. They married in 1947, with a wedding party in Mark Rothko’s studio.

She settled in England with Arnell, where their daughter was born. Music friends included the composer Benjamin Britten and his partner, the tenor, Peter Pears. One memory of them is a moonlit night in Suffolk when the sea sparkled:

“But Ben and Peter came in for a swim, too, in their underpants and we were all in the water, swimming around in the phosphorescence.”

Lois’ marriage foundered in 1951 and she went back to America with her daughter, not long after having met Edward Sieff, seventeen years her senior, a member of the Marks & Spencer dynasty and future chairman of the firm. Only months after returning to her parents, Teddy sent a telegram saying he was going to telephone with an important question. A second telegram arrived ‘that listed all his faults. It said “I’m an old man of 46, awkward with children, bad tempered… please remember that when I telephone.” …The question was would I marry him? I said, “Yes”.’ She returned to London for thirty years of happy marriage, during which their son was born. At home with Teddy in December 1973, Lois’ sangfroid helped save his life when he was shot by Carlos the Jackal.

She was introduced to the backstage world of the English Stage Company (ESC) at the Royal Court, and attended the first night of the production that defined 1950’s British theatre, John Osborne’s Look Back in Anger. The ESC’s finances were in constant peril, and Lois became a crucial supporter, her fundraising skills made easier by the warmth of her friendships and ability to infect others with her enthusiasms. Witness to the notorious battles at the ESC, Lois’ recording augments others NLS has with its directors, writers and designers. She became mother-in-law to the ESC director Robert Kidd.

Her recording highlights the degree to which the food and drink industries supported the arts in this period. Lois commandeered a pub bar for the Court through her link to the brewer Edward Courage, and as well as the Marks & Spencer family connection, she and Teddy were great friends with Alan Sainsbury and his second wife. Another swimming anecdote captures the four on holiday:

“He and my husband would go for a swim round the bay and my husband was deaf in one ear….on the water you can hear people’s voices and they’d be swimming round and they’d be talking business…and their voices would sweep back onto the beach.”

In 1980 Lois joined the board of the National Theatre, a role she maintained for eighteen years, and her account contrasts the atmosphere of this theatre with that at the ESC. She was widowed in 1982, and on her daughter’s marriage to Stanley Johnson she became step-grandmother to Boris and his siblings.
Ralph Turner (1936–2017)
Interviewed by Hawksmoor Hughes, 2006

Ralph Turner was born in Maesteg, South Wales. He studied at Cardiff College of Music and Drama, but gave up theatre to become a gallerist, curator, author and critic of crafts. As a founding member of the advisory committee for Crafts Lives, Ralph provided his invaluable advice, expertise and good humour to the project for almost a decade.

Ralph's father, Frederick Turner, was a coalminer but discouraged his son from following in his footsteps:

"I never, ever went down a coalmine but he took me to a coalmine [...]. And we stood at the shaft and I could hear this extraordinary rumbling and up would come this great cage – and it was nothing but a cage – with iron bars on it and about a dozen men in it, all black-faced. And they'd come out, and the other guys would go in and the shaft would drop – and you could feel it just dropping – and I said to my father: 'Why?' and he said: 'It has to be like that, it has to travel a mile.' [...] And it scared the hell out me and he said: 'Now, if you don't pitch in at school, that's where you're going.' And I mean it worked, I wasn't very bright at school but my god I put every effort into what I could do."

In his youth, Ralph was a talented singer and The British Library holds a recording from around 1949 of him billed as the 'Wonder Boy Soprano':

"I did a lot of singing, it wasn't just now and then, there was a lot of it: Eisteddfods, of course, and singing in chapels, and then there were extraordinary things like you'd be asked to sing at the Farmer's Union Meat Dinner, the Western Welsh Male Voice Choirs Club, bus companies – a whole range of places to sing. [...] It introduced me to a totally different sector of society. Suddenly [...] there were functions to attend and you had to learn how to use knives and forks and napkins. What the hell were napkins for?!"

As a young actor, Ralph learnt to respect the creative endeavours of others:

"When somebody is showing you their work, whatever it is, it's the best they can do and [...] for them it's mega-important, so you treat them with all the respect and as much time as you can afford. The last thing you do is to put somebody down in a situation like that. I was once [...] auditioned by Noel Coward and I didn't know he was [...] in the theatre, but he was there. I was asked to sing and I sang, I was asked to move and I moved, I was asked to sing again and I sang. And there was a long, long, pregnant pause and then there was this [voice]: 'That was very nice,' he said, and it was obviously Noel Coward and I thought: 'Bloody hell it's Coward himself!' And then he said: 'But when you sing that song, dear boy, you must sing it with a smile on your face. You should smile more.' Now, that was the nicest way of saying: 'You haven't got the job man.' Whereas most people would just say: 'Next!'"

In 1971, Ralph co-founded the gallery, Electrum, with jeweller Barbara Cartlidge, exhibiting jewellery with a conceptual approach for the first time in Britain and attempting to change prevailing attitudes:

"Most people think of jewellery as something they wear to elevate themselves in some way. Usually the things are bought by men and worn by women. Women are sort of pedestals if you like, flaunting their husband's or boyfriend's wealth. I mean that sounds pretty crude, but I think there's an element of truth in it. We wanted to change all that. We also wanted to change that jewellery was predominantly for women, many of our jewellers made jewellery for both sexes and that was really important. And [there was] also some jewellery that was for either sex. You'd start talking to a chap in the gallery who was interested and I'd say: 'Are you looking for something for yourself' and he'd almost blush and say: 'Oh good heavens no!' and I'd say: 'Why ever not?'"

Ralph became the first Exhibitions Officer for the Crafts Council from 1974 to 1989, and was responsible for groundbreaking exhibitions including 'The Maker's Eye':

"It seemed to me that the crafts were so diverse, that it needed more than one curator to pull something together and break things up a little bit, not just give one man's or one woman's choice. So [...] we chose fourteen craftspeople to say what the crafts meant to them. And I was very anxious that they weren't just going to... say if you select a jeweller, she or he will go off and select all the jewellers. I didn't want that at all. I wanted to get more than that out of them – to get what they felt about ceramics or textiles or glass or interiors or engineering or fine art – it was really up to them. I mean sometimes you had to work your socks off to get the message across."

C960/72 (edited by Elizabeth Wright)
Statement of Financial Activities

Year Ended 31 December 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INCOME</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations and legacies</td>
<td>63,723</td>
<td>4,750</td>
<td>68,473</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investment income</td>
<td>10,409</td>
<td>18,071</td>
<td>28,480</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other incoming resources</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>27,114</td>
<td>27,114</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL INCOME</strong></td>
<td>74,132</td>
<td>49,935</td>
<td>124,067</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Raising funds</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,933</td>
<td>10,933</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charitable activities</td>
<td>192,115</td>
<td>57,790</td>
<td>249,905</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
<td>192,115</td>
<td>68,723</td>
<td>260,838</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net gains on investments</td>
<td>7,967</td>
<td>21,287</td>
<td>29,254</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE) and net movement in funds for the year</strong></td>
<td>(110,016)</td>
<td>2,499</td>
<td>(107,517)</td>
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</table>

Reconciliation of Funds:

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funds brought forward</td>
<td>518,198</td>
<td>681,458</td>
<td>1,199,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total funds carried forward</td>
<td>408,182</td>
<td>683,957</td>
<td>1,092,139</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Balance Sheet at 31 December 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIXED ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments</td>
<td>900,295</td>
<td>871,041</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CURRENT ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Debtors</td>
<td>4,605</td>
<td>1,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash at bank and in hand</td>
<td>208,639</td>
<td>346,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Current Assets</strong></td>
<td>213,244</td>
<td>347,698</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**LIABILITIES:** Creditors falling due within one year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(21,400)</td>
<td>(19,083)</td>
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</table>

**NET CURRENT ASSETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>191,844</td>
<td>328,615</td>
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</table>

**NET ASSETS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,092,139</td>
<td>1,199,656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Founder’s donation</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted fund</td>
<td>483,957</td>
<td>481,458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted fund</td>
<td>408,182</td>
<td>518,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CHARITY FUNDS</strong></td>
<td>1,092,139</td>
<td>1,199,656</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Restricted funds are limited to expenditure on specific projects; unrestricted funds are intended to provide sufficient resources to maintain the general activities of the Charity. The Founder’s donation is the establishing donation given to NLS to contribute to the support of general activities. The balance on restricted funds represents donations received, the expenditure of which has not yet been incurred.

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2015) – (charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

The Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet have been extracted from the full financial statements of the charity. The opinion of the auditors on the full financial statements is reproduced below.

**OPINION**

In our opinion:
- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company’s affairs as at 31 December 2017 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its result for the year then ended;
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Directors and Trustees and signed on its behalf.

R Rubenstein (Senior Statutory Auditor)
For and on behalf of Parker Cavendish Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditors 28 Church Road Stanmore Middlesex HA7 4XR

Dame Jenny Abramsky
Chair of Trustees
Leaders of National Life
(C408) [31 interviews]

Leaders of National Life is one of NLS's founding collections. Its scope is wide, and includes politics, industry, the arts, sports, religion, the professions, administration and communications. Priority is given to those whose life stories have not been previously recorded or published.

City Lives
(C409) [150 interviews]

City Lives explores the inner world of Britain's financial capital. Support from the City enabled NLS to make detailed recordings between 1987 and 1997 with representatives from the Stock Exchange, the merchant and clearing banks, the commodities and futures markets, law and accounting firms, financial regulators, insurance companies and Lloyd's of London. The project is a unique record of the complex interrelationships and dramatic changes which defined the Square Mile in the twentieth century. City Lives: The Changing Voices of British Finance by Cathy Courtney and Paul Thompson (Methuen, 1996) was edited from the interviews.

Living Memory of the Jewish Community
(C410) [188 interviews]

Recorded between 1987 and 2000 this major collection was developed with the specialist advice of leading Jewish historians and complements a number of collections held by the British Library on Jewish life. The primary focus has been on pre-Second World War Jewish refugees to Britain, those fleeing from Nazi persecution during the Second World War, Holocaust survivors and their children. An online educational resource based on the collection is accessible at www.bl.uk/services/learning/histcitizen/voices/holocaust.html NLS has also worked with the Holocaust Survivors' Centre to archive and provide access to their collection of over 150 recordings (C830). Full interviews from both collections are available online via British Library Sounds.

General Interviews
(C464) [92 interviews]

This collection comprises diverse interviews additional to the main NLS projects. Interviewees are drawn from many fields including education, medicine, retail, dance and engineering, and embrace scientists, notably Joseph Rotblat, Max Perutz and Aaron Klug; and leading designers such as Terence Conran and members of Pentagram.

Artists' Lives
(C466) [391 interviews]

Artists' Lives was initiated in 1990 and is run in association with Tate Archive. Collectively the interviews form an extraordinary account of the rich context in which the visual arts have developed in Britain during the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries. Artists' Lives provides visual artists with a forum in which their lives and work can be documented in their own words for posterity. We are grateful to all our sponsors but in particular to the steady support of The Henry Moore Institute, The Fleming Collection, The Rootstein Hopkins Foundation and The Yale Center for British Art. A double CD, Connecting Lines: Artists Talk about Drawing, was published in 2010 funded by the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation. The audio from the CD is available online in the ‘Oral History Curator’s Choice’ collection at British Library Sounds.

Artists' Lives Advisory Committee
Sir Alan Bowness, Dr Penelope Curtis, Caroline Cuthbert, Adrian Glew, Mel Gooding (chair), Cornelia Grassi, Professor Lubaina Himid MBE, Lisa Le Feuvre, Richard Morphet CBE, Clive Philpott, Dr Andrew Wilson and Dr Jon Wood.

Architects' Lives
(C467) [141 interviews]

Architects' Lives documents the architectural profession from the early decades of the twentieth century to the present day. It charts the post-war rebuilding programme, the impact of lottery funding on civic building, and the global reach of British architectural firms. Topics including changing theoretical approaches, new construction techniques, and the impact of the computer on the design process. Those interviewed include: Sir Denys Lasdun, Neave Brown, Sir Jeremy Dixon, Edward Jones, and Sir Michael Hopkins. In addition to the main collection, and in association with the National Trust at Willow Road, NLS made a series of recordings documenting memories of Ernö Goldfinger which resulted in a co-published CD Passionate Rationalism (2004).

Fawcett Collection
(C468) [14 interviews]

In connection with the Women’s Library (formerly known as the Fawcett Society) this collection of interviews recorded between 1990 and 1992 charts the lives of pioneering career women, each of whom made their mark in traditionally male dominated areas such as politics, the law and medicine. Woman in a Man's World by Rebecca Abrams (Methuen, 1993) was based on this collection.

Lives in Steel
(C532) [102 interviews]

Lives in Steel comprises personal histories recorded between 1991 and 1992 with employees from one of Britain’s largest yet least understood industries. Interviewees range from top managers and trade unionists to technicians, furnacemen, shearsers and many more. British Steel General Steels Division sponsored both the project and the Lives in Steel CD (BL, 1993), which is available online at BL Sounds.

Oral History of the British Press
(C638) [21 interviews]

This collection of interviews with key press and newspaper figures was extended with support from the British Library as part of the popular Front Page exhibition in 2006.

National Life Story Awards
(C642) [145 interviews]

This nationwide competition ran in 1993 to promote the value of life story recording and autobiographical writing.

Listen online at British Library Sounds
https://sounds.bl.uk/oral-history
Lives in the Oil Industry
(C963) [178 interviews]

A joint National Life Stories/Aberdeen University project, which, between 2000 and 2005, recorded the major changes that occurred in the UK oil and gas industry in the twentieth century, focussing particularly on North Sea exploration and the impact of the industry on this country. The project received support from within the industry.

An Oral History of the Post Office
(C1007) [117 interviews]

From 2001–2003 this project, a partnership with Royal Mail, captured the memories and experiences of individuals from the postal services sector – from postmen and postwomen, to union officials, sorters, engineers and senior management. A CD, Speeding the mail: an oral history of the post from the 1930s to the 1990s, was co-published by the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) and the British Library (2005).

An Oral History of Wolff Olins
(C1015) [40 interviews]

This collection documented the development of design and corporate branding through a biographical project based around the growth and development of a single commercial company, Wolff Olins, and was completed 2001–2002.

An Oral History of British Fashion
(C1046) [18 interviews]

This collaborative initiative between London College of Fashion (University of the Arts London) and National Life Stories documents fashion and its related industries within living memory.

Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare
(C1155) [30 interviews]

Records the memories and experiences of key figures in social welfare, social policy and charitable endeavour.

An Oral History of Theatre Design
(C1173) [33 interviews]

This collaborative project with Wimbledon College of Art (University of the Arts London) charted developments in post-war British theatre design.

Authors’ Lives
(C1276) [67 interviews]

Authors’ Lives was launched in 2007 with the aim of recording approximately one hundred novelists, poets, writers and editors. A CD, The Writing Life: Authors Speak, featuring extracts from the collection, was published by the British Library (2011) and the audio is available online in the ‘Oral History Curator’s Choice’ collection at British Library Sounds. Between 2014 and 2018 the Women in Publishing project (C1657) documented the work of this campaigning organisation established in 1979 to promote the status of women in the book business through networking and training. Extracts online at www.womeninpublishinghistory.org.uk
Authors' Lives Advisory Committee
Stephen Cleary, Rachel Foss, Dr Maggie Gee OBE, Deborah Moggach, Martin Pick, Lawrence Sail, Nicola Solomon and Jonathan Taylor CBE.

The Legacy of the English Stage Company
(C1316) [15 interviews]

Sponsored by the John Hodgson Theatre Research Trust, this series of interviews charts the story of the English Stage Company at the Royal Court Theatre. This complements other theatre collections and adds the important perspective of the theatre director.

An Oral History of the Water Industry
(C1364) [31 interviews]

Between 2009 and 2012 this project recorded life story interviews with staff at all levels within the water industry. Funded by six water companies, these recordings provide valuable insights into one of Britain's most important and least documented utilities.

An Oral History of Barings
(C1367) [34 interviews]

In partnership with The Baring Archive, this project ran between 2009 and 2013 and focused on the history of Barings throughout the twentieth century, providing important insights into life and work within the bank – including stories from the family and those working at all levels within the company. This complements City Lives and documents the bank up to and including its collapse and subsequent acquisition by ING in 1995. A booklet, In the Locker of my Memory: Extracts from An Oral History of Barings was published in 2012.

An Oral History of British Science
(C1379) [128 interviews]

This programme was initiated in November 2009 in collaboration with the British Library's History of Science specialists and is run in association with the Science Museum. The first phase (2009–2013) was generously funded by the Arcadia Fund and the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851. It is creating a major archive for the study and public understanding of contemporary science in Britain through in-depth interviews with British scientists. As well as filling obvious gaps in our knowledge of major developments and innovations by interviewing the key players in British science, this project aims to account for the character of scientific research since the Second World War. To complement life story interviews, averaging 10 –15 hours in length, the project also includes some shorter video recordings reflecting key events or locations. The project website at www.bl.uk/voices-of-science won the Royal Historical Society's Public History Prize for Best Web and Digital Project, and the British Society for the History of Science's Ayrton Prize for Digital Engagement. Full interviews are available online via British Library Sounds. Interviews with ethnic minority British scientists conducted for a collaborative project with the Royal Society, Inspiring Scientists: Diversity in British Science, are available at https://royalsociety.org/topics-policy/diversity-in-science/inspiring-scientists/

An Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK
(C1495) [58 interviews]

Contributing to NLS's documentation of the utilities in the UK, this project collected the memories and experiences of those who worked in the industry at various levels, covering the period from nationalisation in the 1940s to privatisation in the 1980s and 1990s. It includes such themes as changing technology, industrial relations, the miners' strikes, changing workplaces, corporate cultures, nuclear power, energy marketing, and public service. We are grateful to Hodson and Ludmila Thornber for their generous support.

Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry Advisory Committee
Sir John Baker, Professor Leslie Hannah, Dr Sally Horrocks, Professor Stephen Littlechild, Hodson Thornber, Ludmila Thornber.

An Oral History of Talking Therapists in the UK
(C1553) [11 interviews]

This growing collection explores the development in post-war Britain of those therapies that depend primarily on verbal exchanges between client and therapist to alleviate mental distress. A future project will interview a wide range of professionals in this complex and diverse sector.

Wellcome Trust Life Stories
(C1665) [5 interviews]

A collection of interviews with key individuals with a long connection to the Wellcome Trust, funded by the Trust.

Science and Religion: Exploring the Spectrum
(C1672) [33 interviews]

A collaboration between An Oral History of British Science, and York University, Toronto and the Centre for Science, Knowledge and Belief in Society, Newman University, Birmingham, this multidisciplinary research project funded by the Templeton Religion Trust investigated the social and cultural contexts of public perceptions of relations between ‘science’ and ‘religion’ across all faiths and none.

Crown Court Clerks Life Story Interviews
(C1674) [20 interviews]

A collaborative project with the London School of Economics and Political Science, these interviews provide an insight into the lived world of the law and the pivotal role that Crown Court clerks play in the administration of justice.
How to support National Life Stories

NLS’s charitable status means that donations or sponsorship are subject to the relevant tax relief for either individuals or companies. There are four tax efficient and convenient ways to support National Life Stories.

**Gift Aid**
The Gift Aid scheme allows us to claim back basic rate tax on any donation received from individual taxpayers. This means that for every £100 donated we can claim an additional £25 from the Inland Revenue if a signed Gift Aid form is received. A Gift Aid form can be obtained from the NLS Office. It needs to be completed and returned to NLS together with your donation.

**Companies**
Companies can pay a charity the full donation without deducting any tax and in turn obtain full tax relief when calculating their profits for corporation tax.

**Donation of shares**
Donors of shares are not deemed to have made a disposal that makes them liable to capital gains tax. The charity has the option of retaining the shares or selling them. Unlisted shares traded on a recognised exchange are included in this initiative. The individual making such a donation will also be able to reduce their taxable income by the value of the gift. A company donor will obtain full relief against corporation tax.

**Bequests**
Sums left to National Life Stories are deducted from an estate in the calculation of Inheritance Tax and are therefore free of tax. NLS can advise on an appropriate form of words within a will. For further information please contact:

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