NATIONAL

Life stories

Review and Accounts
2006/2007
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 to ‘record first-hand experiences of as wide a cross-section of present-day society as possible’. As an independent charitable trust within the Oral History Section of the British Library Sound Archive, NLS’s key focus and expertise has been oral history fieldwork. Over the past two decades 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 Archive’s catalogue at www.cadensa.bl.uk and a growing number of interviews are being digitised for remote web use. Each individual life story interview is several hours long, covering family background, childhood, education, work, leisure and later life.

Alongside the BL Sound Archive’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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As we approach our twentieth anniversary National Life Stories is active in a wider range of projects, and is working with a wider range of partners, than at any time in its history. NLS’s financial situation, and its success, remains reliant on its close relationship with the British Library but also on the energy and support of its trustees.

This year I would particularly like to thank Caroline Waldegrave for her enthusiastic fundraising for our proposed science project. We have a long way still to go but her support, and our developing partnership with the Royal Society, are the first milestones in the implementation of this project. 2010 will be the Royal Society’s 350th anniversary: we hope that it will be marked by oral histories of a hundred of its Fellows within our overall project.

Although we have made less headway than we had hoped with our water industry initiative, I can report success with two other projects. First we were greatly strengthened by an especially generous donation for Artists’ Lives from the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation, whose gift will give the project a breathing space from its previous hand-to-mouth existence and allow for smoother progress and efficiency. We must thank Cathy Courtney for her tireless work as both interviewer and fundraiser for this project. Second, we have succeeded in raising sufficient funding to start our new Authors’ Lives project. Following on from Book Trade Lives, which documented publishers and booksellers, we will now explore the world of literary and popular novelists, poets, crime, technical and science fiction writers, historical writers and literary agents. Work on all our current recording projects and other work is summarised in the Director’s report.

Over the past year, as part of our periodic collection review, we have noted an almost complete absence in the national collection of interviews with legal executives, lawyers, barristers and the judiciary, and have decided to set in train some project scoping work as the first step towards a Legal Lives programme in the coming years. Other areas we are investigating for future development include construction and property, tourism and travel, the utilities, and an update to the City Lives project.

We are grateful to the British Library’s Development Office for their assistance in raising the finance for Authors’ Lives. It is one illustration of the benefits that have accrued from the closer collaborative working between the British Library and NLS, also reflected in the smooth financial arrangements that are now in place. We have Sharon Johnson and her colleagues to thank for this. Although she leaves us for a new post in the British Library, we welcome her successor Steve Howard, who takes her place as a trustee and Executive Committee member.

As always we are grateful for the dedication of our executive staff, led by our Director Rob Perks, and of all our interviewers and administrative staff for another successful year.

Sir Nicholas Goodison
Chairman of Trustees
Review of 2006
Rob Perks, Director, National Life Stories

Collections and projects

During 2006 the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation consolidated its previous sponsorship of Artists’ Lives by awarding the project a substantial grant as part of its move towards closing the Foundation in 2008. This was an excellent endorsement of our work and its aims and, with careful investment, will bring stability to Artists’ Lives and the knowledge that we will be able to match the Henry Moore Foundation’s crucial continuing support of recordings with sculptors with a comparable number of artists working in other media. As ever we still need to raise additional funding and are particularly appreciative of the Yale Center for British Art and the Fleming Collection for their continued commitment. Recent interviews include Geoffrey Clarke, Stephen Gilbert, Lubaina Himid, Balraj Khanna, Alastair Michie and Anita Taylor. Artists’ Lives interviewer Anna Dyke has moved to a part-time contract, whilst Jenny Simmons, Cathy Courtney and staff from the Henry Moore Institute continue to contribute to the project as interviewers.

Our major food project, Food: From Source to Salespoint, collected some valuable interviews in areas which we had not previously covered, in particular dairy, fruit and vegetables. Amongst the more notable figures we recorded were Sir Ian Prosser, former Chairman of Bass; Peter Mayes, David Hudson and Doug White from Nestlé; fruiterers Laurence Olins, Hugh Lowe and Peter Vinson; and interviewer Cos Michael travelled to Spain for an interview with former Safeway chief Carlos Criado-Perez Trefault. We were especially pleased that Tesco agreed some additional funding for Tesco: An Oral History. Niamh Dillon has been tackling recordings with some prominent Tesco figures including Dame Shirley Porter (daughter of founder Jack Cohen), David Malpas (formerly Managing Director) and former Chairman Lord MacLaurin. Work also began on Food Stories, an educational web resource, led by Polly Russell in conjunction with the British Library’s Learning team. The site draws on recordings from across the collection, including Polly’s own recent interviews about the sugar and chicken food chains. In October the recordings supported by the Worshipful Company of Butchers were the subject of a celebratory lunch at Butchers’ Hall, at which CD copies of the interviews were presented to the interviewees, and in some cases to relatives of those who are no longer with us. A feature about the food project appears later in this Annual Review.

We received the final tranche of funding from the J Paul Getty Charitable Trust for our series of recordings with Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare, adding recordings with, amongst others, Nick Stacey, formerly an Olympic runner who pioneered modern fostering services; Dame Elisabeth Hoodless, Executive Director of Community Service Volunteers (CSV); and Sir William ‘Bill’ Utting, the UK’s first social work Chief Inspector who also served on the Rowntree and Mental Health Foundations and the Nolan Committee.

Tesco store 1960s.
Crafts Lives made good progress in the first part of the year, reaching a total of seventy-five interviews, including Sam Herman (stained glass), David Watkins, Wendy Ramshaw and Jacqueline Mina (all jewellers), Noel Dyrenforth (textiles/batik), Fred Baier (furniture), Malcolm Appleby (silversmith/engraver), Geoffrey Eastop (potter), Graham Hughes and John Creed (both metal workers), Ralph Turner (exhibition curator and writer), Stuart Devlin (goldsmith), and Brenda Burman (letter cutter). Project worker Hawksmoor Hughes has been on maternity leave since June and we look forward to her return later in 2007.

Some years ago we began a series of interviews with key press and newspaper figures, An Oral History of the British Press, and last year we were able to revive this, thanks to support from the British Library as part of the popular Front Page exhibition. Louise Brodie began the first of a dozen interviews, including Dennis Griffiths, former director of the Daily Express and the Evening Standard, who was involved in the launch of the Daily Star; Frank Barlow (Managing Director of the Financial Times); Robert Edwards (former editor of the Daily Express, Sunday Mirror, The People and deputy chairman of the Mirror Group under Robert Maxwell); Vic Giles (art director at the Daily Mirror and launch art director for The Sun); Ken Morgan (former General Secretary of the National Union of Journalists, and former Director of the Press Complaints Commission); and Andreas Whittam-Smith (proprietor and launch editor of The Independent).

Last year we identified science as a major new area of potential collecting activity, building on the previous recordings carried out by our volunteer Katherine Thompson with Joseph Rotblat, Max Perutz and Aaron Klug. Working with Katrina Dean, the British Library’s Curator of the History of Science, we submitted a partnership proposal to the Royal Society for a series of 100 interviews with Fellows of the Royal Society (FRSs) to celebrate their 350th anniversary in 2010. Lord Rees, President of the Royal Society, has backed the initiative and agreed to fundraise for a pilot sample of recordings. With some funding raised by our trustee Caroline Waldegrave we have also agreed to commission a scoping study for the overall project, to better identify the gaps and key priorities for oral history work in the sector. We also held discussions with the Computing History Society and the Wellcome Library to shape policy.

We made less progress with our new initiative on the water industry. Despite support from Anglian Water, Scottish Water, Cambridge Water and Wessex Water, our paper to the Council of WaterUK, the industry-wide body, proposing a three-year oral history of the sector, was only discussed late in the year. It is clear that 2006 was a challenging year for the industry with record low rainfall, drought orders, and speculation about takeovers, and this forced any thoughts of water heritage well down the agenda.

More positively at the year-end we made a breakthrough with our new project, Authors’ Lives. Thanks to the persistence of our trustees, notably Penelope Lively and Martyn Goff, and generous grants from a variety of sponsors, in particular the Arts Council of England, we will be able to appoint a full-time project interviewer during 2007 to collect the first of what we hope will be 100 interviews over the next three years. An Advisory Committee is being assembled and priority interviewees identified.
Partnerships

Our collaborative project with Wimbledon College of Art, now part of the University of the Arts London, focussing on An Oral History of British Theatre Design, really got into its stride during 2006. Research student Liz Wright’s interviewees have included renowned scenographer, writer and director Pamela Howard FRSA who has worked on over 200 productions worldwide since 1960. Patrick Connellan, Richard Pilbrow, Andrea Montag, Alison Chitty, Lez Brotherston, Billy Meal, Belinda Ackerman, Sally Jacobs, Anthony Ward, Lis Evans, John Gunter, Richard Hudson and Rae Smith are amongst those so far recorded for the project. Liz has given several presentations about her work, including one at the annual Oral History Interviewers’ Forum in which she reflected on her own role as a young female theatre designer interviewing other designers. Extracts from an interview with Margaret ‘Percy’ Harris featured in an exhibition at the Chelsea Space, curated by Sophie Jump and Jane Won. Entitled When Marcel met Motley, it explored the 1930s relationship between Bauhaus architect and designer Marcel Breuer and the Motley Theatre Design Group, of which Harris was a founder.

Speaking for Ourselves was a two-year partnership oral history project, led by Scope and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, which trained sixteen disabled volunteer interviewers to record life story interviews with people with cerebral palsy over the age of fifty. 230 hours of recordings were deposited with the Sound Archive and are available on the web at www.speakingforourselves.org.uk. The interviews have also been used to create an excellent education resource for citizenship and history at key stages 1 to 4, and over 12,000 people have subscribed to monthly podcasts which explore themes from the project, such as employment and ‘disablism’.

An episode of BBC Radio Four’s Archive Hour on 8 April was also devoted to the project. This was one of three Archive Hour programmes based on our collections during 2006: the Haemophilia and HIV/Aids interviews were the basis for one broadcast; and a deposited collection of recordings with people behind the scenes at Parliament also featured, presented by Matthew Parris.

Our partnership with the London College of Fashion, which culminated in last year’s successful exhibition and CD, Fashion Lives, continued with an interview with outgoing Principal, Sandra Holtby. We look forward to working closely with her successor.

Over the past eight years the Unwin Charitable Trust has been one of the most consistently generous supporters of Book Trade Lives and this year was no exception. Their grant allowed Sue Bradley to devote time to work on a book arising from her interviews with publishers and booksellers which is due to be published by British Library Publications early in 2008.
People

We started the year without an administrator/assistant oral history curator, following Bre Stitt’s departure for a new post in community radio, but appointed Mary Stewart in April from a field of 125 applicants. Mary has brought great energy, enthusiasm and efficiency to the office, as well as ideas for new projects following a review of the BL’s oral history collections. She also completed the transition from analogue to digital recording, with the provision of new technical and documentation guidelines; and oversaw a major internal office move.

Invaluable support from the Dulverton Trust and the Wyfold Foundation has enabled us to augment our administrative and cataloguing team from one to two part-time staff. Dr Alex King continued as our main cataloguer and has also taken a lead role in the new digital archive procedures, whilst Naomi Satchell joined us as part-time archive assistant. She has been devoting her time to auditing the Artists’ Lives project, and preparing copies of interviews for our project partners, Tate Archive and the Henry Moore Institute.

Sue Bradley left after over eight years with us, working on the Book Trade Lives project, to take a research job at Newcastle University. She and Polly Russell both presented papers at the Oral History Society’s annual conference in June at Sheffield’s Hillsborough football stadium conference centre. Cos Michael also left us at the conclusion of her contract on the food project. Finally, thanks are due to Audrie Mundy, our longest-standing volunteer, and our transcribers Susan Hutton and Susan Nicholls, for their hard work during the year.
The scope of Food: From Source to Salespoint necessarily touches everyone in this country, but we could not have predicted when we began to think about the project, just how much the subject of food – its sourcing, its manufacture, its transportation, its branding, labelling and selling – would be front-page news during the ten years we have been recording the 271 interviews so far gathered. It is a topic ripe with debate, whether about additives and chemicals, the quality of school meals, the growing national waistline, the carbon footprint of air miles or the buying might of supermarkets. As this report goes to press, the future of Sainsbury’s hangs in the balance, an unthinkable proposition two decades ago when the company – in certain parts of the country at least – seemed almost as solid and as British as the Bank of England.

Food: From Source to Salespoint arose naturally from the life story format which has always characterised NLS’s approach to oral history, and it is a fair gamble that the majority of recordings in our collection include questions about childhood food, where it came from, who cooked it and how, when and with whom it was eaten. Usually these themes are picked up again at intervals in each life story so, long before NLS set out with the intention of recording individuals whose working life had been in the food industry, we had already built a bank of information about British meals and their constituent parts, all of which can be cross-referenced by word-searching the online catalogue. To this rich starting point, we set out to add as broad a range of recordings as we could in order to cover what is, of course, an enormous sector.

We were greatly helped in planning the project by our Advisory Committee, chaired by Dominic Cadbury, and benefitted particularly from the clear thinking of Bill Mason, formerly Deputy Secretary at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who constructed a ‘wish list’ for us in the form of a matrix setting out the main areas and subsections which he felt were essential to the scope of our ambition. This has been a difficult project to fund and it has advanced slowly – the food industry is not one which readily takes to the idea of documenting itself – perhaps because it likes to be forward thinking, perhaps, sometimes, because there are stories and practices it would rather fade into the ether – and we have not been able to cover our matrix entirely but nevertheless have achieved a substantial proportion of what we set out to do. The recordings range from individuals on the production line to those who have directed policy, from the one-man or family business to the rise of conglomerates such as Hillsdown Holdings and the might of the international corporations such as Unilever and Nestlé. In addition, the recordings collected by Polly Russell for her collaborative PhD, ‘Narrative Constructions of Culinary Culture and Identity in Britain’, and the subsequent research programme ‘Manufacturing Meaning Along the Food Commodity Chain’ have done much to widen and deepen the project, adding interviews with restaurateurs, producers, retailers, food writers and intermediaries. In both cases we have benefitted from research council funding – the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) – and valuable partnerships with Professors Peter Jackson at Sheffield University and Neil Ward at Newcastle University. A web-based educational resource, Food Stories, is in preparation and we will be building on the groundwork laid by Polly when she add the last interviews for Food: From Source to Salespoint over the coming months, a series of recordings with leading chefs, generously funded by NLS’s Trustee, Sir John Craven.

If there are overlying themes running through the various food sectors, they could most readily be identified as relating to the enormous changes brought by technological advances after the Second World War within farming, manufacturing and transport, coupled with the gradual decline of the high street specialist shops and the concomitant dominance of a handful of retailers. Alongside these more quantifiable alterations, the recordings remind us how post-war austerity gave way to a period of cheaper air fares and foreign holidays on an unprecedented scale, in turn producing a domestic market for ‘foreign’ dishes and a widespread interest in tasting new wines, hitherto often brought out only on occasions such as Christmas or weddings. They tell us, too, how our eating habits have changed, both within and outside the home, and remind us there was once a time when the ‘ready-meal’ and the shop-bought sandwich were unknown products. The picture constantly shifts – witness the growing customer demands for locally-sourced foodstuffs as Food: From Source to Salespoint reaches its close – crystallising these recordings as representative of their particular period.

We have been especially well supported by the Worshipful Company of Butchers, The Fishmongers’ Company, the Fruiterers’ Company and the Vintners’ Company, all of whom have helped us construct a valuable cross-section of recordings relating to their trades. We were grateful to Northern Foods for supporting a three year programme of recordings within different components of their conglomerate, an ideal subject for the oral historian due to NF’s policy of allowing companies to keep their regional identity intact after being absorbed into the larger organisation. Northern Food’s Holland’s Pies in Baxenden in Lancashire, for instance, had, at the time our recordings were made, retained its historical links with the meat pies and other products first developed by its founders, and its markets were, to an extent, still local. Recordings at Fox’s Biscuits, Northern Food’s Batley division, formed a...
contrast to Hector Laing's account of the production line at United Biscuits (home of the McVitie's Digestive) and allowed us to capture stories of Fox's founders, as well as tracing its production history from the days when brandy snaps were rolled out one by one on the bare hands of the employees to the point when robots had just been introduced into the factory. Two former chairmen provided an overview of Northern Foods from vastly different perspectives; Christopher Haskins (whose father-in-law, Alec Horsley, grew the firm out of Northern Dairies) and Peter Blackburn (whose earlier career in the industry began at John Mackintosh which later became part of Rowntree which itself was bought, controversially, by Nestlé, where Blackburn became Chairman and Chief Executive UK).

Whilst many of our recordings concentrated on lost worlds from the more distant past, a characteristic of the most recent conversations added to Food: From Source to Salespoint has been the fast-changing ructions among the leading retailers as the Safeway name vanished into the Morrison empire and the remaining players jockeyed for position behind Tesco. Tesco has itself been the subject of an in-depth project, Tesco: An Oral History, led by Niamh Dillon, which will be featured in our 2007/2008 Report. An Oral History of the Wine Trade, forty recordings conducted by Mark Bilbe, which resulted in the In Vino Veritas compact-disc audio publication, further complements Food: From Source to Salespoint.
Sir Dominic Cadbury
Chairman of the Food: From Source to Salespoint Advisory Committee

Food: From Source to Salespoint Advisory Committee

Bob Boas, Sir Dominic Cadbury (chair), Bill Mason CBE, Jonathan Taylor, Caroline Waldegrave and David Webster

Food: From Source to Salespoint starts with the post-war period when food was rationed and choice limited, and tells the story of the Food Revolution through the people responsible, creating the vibrant market we know today – brimming with variety, choice, quality and abundance. The personalities recorded are from every level and every part of the food chain.

There is nothing unique about industrial and commercial change, but no economic activity so closely reflects the changing face of post-war British culture, habits and taste as food. Perhaps no other country in the world looks more different when seen through the lens of its changing food chain. Here you can see the impact of immigration and new cultures, of European politics, of prosperity, leisure and travel, of education and health, of technology and competition.

The NLS food team under its leader, Cathy Courtney, have been tireless and determined to hunt down every sector and channel to identify the organisations and people who contributed to the Food Revolution. The food chain has responded enthusiastically to the challenge and been open and generous in giving its support, making available people and material from Board level to checkout, shop floor and farm gate. I was one of the early ones to be tapped on the shoulder and many months and recordings later I was amazed to discover at the British Library recordings of my parents who, years earlier, unknown to their family, had taken part in a project on the lives of children in Victorian and Edwardian households.

Food: From Source to Salespoint will be a magnificent resource to anyone researching or interested in changes in British lifestyles and culture over the last 65 years.

Mr L J and Mrs J Cadbury were interviewed in the 1970s as part of Paul Thompson’s ‘Edwardians’ project, interview reference C707/499-500.
An Interviewee’s Perspective
David Lidgate, Butcher and Charcutier

When I was asked if I would like to speak about my life for National Life Stories I was very surprised. With all the great and the good to choose from with their mastery of anecdote and varied, colourful lives, why choose a retail butcher? Cathy Courtney was persuasive, however, and turned my thoughts to how I felt about history and, particularly, the spoken word.

With our modern hubris and inflated ideas of our own importance, it is easy to believe our ancestors lived in simpler times, that their problems were basic and their solutions too. If we could hear their voices, it is likely we would have to re-evaluate our assumptions.

I feel the loss of the spoken word everywhere. How was Stonehenge built? Who hauled those massive stones such great distances – then raised them with phenomenal accuracy? What meritocracy was in place that promoted such intelligence? What did the ordinary people think of Stonehenge? How did it affect them and their families? What was it like when the Romans came?

It was the ordinary, largely illiterate, people of these islands who, when their rulers for 300 years spoke French, began to form our native tongue. It was the men in the fields, the tradesmen and craftsmen who simplified the grammar, absorbed words from their foreign masters and the dialects surrounding them. This rapidly expanding vocabulary became the currency of today’s internet even though the texture and individuality of the voices of the people who first used the words have vanished.

History is written by the victors and by those with the gift of the written word. Do these words truly reflect what people would say in a friendly oral history recording? I believe we would be astonished at the difference in the detail that would emerge if we could compare the two. Without accents, pronunciations and differences in emphases, we can only guess at how a person might have sounded. Throughout the course of history the very meaning of words can completely change – and it is usually the ordinary people who change them.

When I spoke at Butchers’ Hall to celebrate the Food: From Source to Salespoint recordings made on behalf of the Worshipful Company of Butchers, I recalled a visit I had made a few weeks before to All Hallows-by-the-Tower in London. It was from the window of its tower that its rector, who had served as a rear admiral in the navy, saw, in 1666, London burning towards his church. His naval experience had taught him the value of a fire break – he needed one now to save his church and the rest of the city. He promptly ordered the demolition of rows of houses and it was this quick action which stopped the Fire of London. Samuel Pepys, whose navy office was a short distance away, came to the church the next day and looked out of the same window and viewed the devastation that had been London. These facts are recorded – but not the spoken words that must have told and retold the story.

Inside the church is an inspection panel making it possible to look down on the actual floor where these great men stood in 1666. As I looked, I wondered if perhaps another butcher had once also stood there – a man who would have been very familiar with the Smithfield Market of those days?

When I sat down to tell my story I tried to make it simple to follow and to put it in the context of the times for those who might listen in the distant future. Confronted with the telling of my life I was interested in how the past fell into a series of snapshots. Linking them together in a logical manner was the problem. I was fortunate that my interviewer exhibited a seemingly permanent interest in my story and frequently returned to points mentioned at previous meetings. I was therefore encouraged to expand from the relatively exceptional to the mundane. I was pleased to do this because it is the absence of the mundane in history that I find so frustrating. This professional help will, I hope, enable future generations to build a picture of the events that surrounded a business that was active at the turn of the millennium.

Mr Lidgate in his family-run butcher’s shop in Holland Park, London.
My relationship with National Life Stories at The British Library goes back to 1998 when I approached the Director, Rob Perks, to see if he would be interested in co-funding a PhD project on British culinary culture. The timing was fortuitous as NLS had recently embarked on their Food: From Source to Salespoint project and they were keen to work with external partners (such as the University of Sheffield) in order to fill some of the gaps that were emerging in their growing collection of food-related life histories. We were successful in gaining funding for a PhD studentship through the Economic and Social Research Council’s CASE awards competition and recruited Polly Russell to undertake the study. Polly’s background was in American Studies and she had previously worked as a food developer for Marks & Spencer before deciding to return to postgraduate study. She completed her dissertation on ‘Narrative constructions of British culinary culture’, based on the collection of some 40 life history interviews. Interviewees included Alan Yau, founder of London’s Wagamama restaurant; Rosamund Grant, who cooks and writes about Caribbean food; Steven Hallam, maker of traditional pork pies; and Perween Warsi, managing director of S&A foods who supply curries and other ready-meals to high-street supermarkets. The interviews formed the basis for a series of fascinating arguments about the politics of food and identity in relation to the changing nature of domesticity, the complexities of multiculturalism and the vexed nature of culinary authenticity.

Following this successful beginning, we were keen to extend our collaboration. An opportunity arose to bid for research funding under the Cultures of Consumption programme, a joint initiative of the Arts and Humanities and the Economic and Social Research Councils (AHRC-ESRC). Despite fierce competition, we were again successful, partly, I am convinced, because of the innovative nature of our collaboration and because we were able to include Polly Russell as our prospective researcher, citing our track record of successful collaboration on her PhD research. This time, we involved a new partner in the team, Professor Neil Ward, Director of the Centre for Rural Economy at the University of Newcastle, who provided expertise on food and farming issues to complement our interests in retailing and consumption. The timing was again propitious as the British food industry was recovering from the impact of Foot and Mouth Disease and government policy was emphasising the need to re-connect producers and consumers up and down the food supply chain. Our project was designed to examine food chains of varying length and complexity, comparing two specific commodities: chicken and sugar. Researching these contrasting commodity chains allowed us to offer fresh insights into current debates about ‘food miles’ and ethical consumption, the management of risk, the regulation of markets and the demand for more transparency in food marketing.

Few food researchers use life history methods but we were attracted to the approach for a number of reasons. It allowed us to examine change in the food industry within living memory and to situate people’s working lives within a wider social and biographical context. As a result, we generated some fascinating data on changing food technologies and agricultural practices as well as some rich information about the changing cultural meanings of food. In particular, our interview material allowed us to reflect on the role of memory and nostalgia in contemporary food retailing and the extent to which the industry now has to contend with the culture and politics of food as well as with the technical and economic issues associated with technological innovation and product development.

The project contributed some 30 new life histories with full transcripts to NLS’s Food: From Source to Salespoint collection, together with some shorter and more focused policy-related interviews and consumer focus groups. Interviewees included chicken growers, agricultural technologists, food buyers and category managers, together with sugar beet farmers, cane refiners and people involved in the recent reforms of the EU sugar regime.

The successes of both the initial PhD project and our large-scale Cultures of Consumption research project owes a great deal to the collaboration with NLS. In practical terms NLS provided Polly Russell with first-class training in life story
recording as well as contact with other oral historians who shared their expertise and experiences to the benefit of our research. Furthermore, the association with NLS facilitated our access to people within the food industry who might not otherwise have contributed to projects with a purely academic remit. We were particularly fortunate to develop a close working relationship with Marks & Spencer, the retailer who was largely responsible for introducing the ‘cold chain’, making fresh chicken widely available to British consumers.

Another key aspect of our partnership with NLS has been in the archiving of our research materials and the dissemination of our findings. Often the primary data collected as part of academic research projects is lost or forgotten when a project comes to an end. In collaborating with NLS the life stories we have collected will be available for future researchers for years to come. Moreover, as well as producing the conventional academic outputs associated with any research project (conference papers, book chapters and journal articles), we have worked closely with the Library’s Learning team to produce an interactive website, designed to serve as an educational resource for school children and university students. The Food Stories website goes live in June 2007 and contains a selection of extracts from our interviews together with photographic material and other resources.

Our partnership with NLS has been an extremely productive one. We have moved on from a small-scale PhD project to a large-scale research programme. My own research has benefited from an exposure to life history approaches, including the ethical issues involved in recording and archiving personal testimonies. Working with NLS has challenged me to consider the relationship between individual biography and wider social discourses. The research has also shed new light on the British food industry where constructions of meaning and the play of memory have an increasingly central role within contemporary commercial culture. An association with the British Library also helped us gain access to prominent individuals within the food industry and to disseminate our findings to a much wider audience than we would otherwise have been able to reach.
Claudia Roden was born and brought up in Cairo, and pioneered Middle Eastern cookery in Britain.

“At that time, writing about food and talking about food was looked down upon. Somehow food was not a subject, it was a taboo subject, it was a ridiculous subject. People thought little of it, and in a way to be interested in writing about food was a very low thing. When I did start writing about food it was for my reasons. My reasons were loss of a world, loss of a heritage and a need to capture it. That was such a strong need I would've done it anyhow. So I was thinking of us, the family, all the people who had had to leave but then onto others who had come from Syria or who had come from Turkey... You know, thinking those have to be written down, have to be made a record of. In those days I wasn’t thinking of the English because at the time the English were not interested at all in Middle Eastern food because people just thought of it as something maybe disgusting even because of the idea of those countries. I mean when the English had been colonists they would never eat the local food, they would never taste it. Now I can say all those things without feeling I’m offending because now I think it’s the absolute opposite. It’s somehow gone completely the other way. When I came here as well, when I told people I was writing about Middle Eastern food they would have an embarrassed look, even pitiful look you know like ‘oh, what’s that going to be?’ and some people were saying ‘is it eyeballs and testicles?’ Because there was no idea…”

Marjorie Walker joined Fox's Biscuits in 1954, where she worked until 1986.

“We started about 1956, they’d always made brandy snap but they used to just sell it flat, then we started hand-curling brandy snap and I was part of the team on this. There were twenty of us and we used to sit either side on the oven band, so you can imagine what that would be like on its own because heat is just rising from the oven band. And there was ten rows of brandy snap and two girls shared a row. You used to pick it up, lay it flat on your hand, turn it over slightly and just rub it and it made a curl. You used to get blistered hands. The brandy snap when you put it on your hand, it had just come out of the oven ... We were two or three years doing that and it was a particularly hot summer and two girls in particular – I still know these girls because I go line dancing with them – they were twins, Dorothy and Doreen, they used to faint every day. They used to go down together ... We used to have people fainting practically every day. This one particular Friday afternoon we were all there busy and this one girl, Peggy, said ‘I don’t know about you lot but I’ve had enough of this.’ Then somebody else said, ‘We’ll go on strike.’ So we just all in unison just stopped working and we just sat back and all this brandy snap was going down and down and we all just sat there. I can just see Stanley Oldham coming in now ... and he looked straight across and he must have spotted this immediately and he went running ... his office was about twenty five yards from the door and he went running, he was tearing his jacket off, got his white coat on and came running over. He then started asking everybody what was wrong so we told him. He said, ‘Go outside, sit on the lawn for half an hour and then I’ll see you all individually.’ We were thrilled to bits. We went outside, smoking, having the time of our lives. We thought it was absolutely marvellous. Then we came back and he saw us all individually, asked us what our complaints were. When we came in on Monday, we’d got about half a dozen fans over the oven band. He took us all in together and said I’ve taken your complaint and I’ve done something about it, got you all these fans up and I’m going to start paying heat money. Of course our eyes lit up at this. I think a full-timer got 12/6d a week heat money, which was quite a nice amount at that time. We thought that was wonderful. I think I got two pound nine shillings a week wage then and a part-timer would get seven shillings. So we were all quite delighted with this and worked away quite happily then. But I think it had set things going in his mind and he got one of the engineers coming looking at things and this engineer finally invented a machine to curl the brandy snap.”

Claudia Roden interviewed by Polly Russell, C821/47.

Marjorie Walker (b.1930) interviewed by Cathy Courtney, C821/81.
Peter Vinson is a strawberry breeder and farmer. Here he describes the atmosphere amongst the strawberry pickers working for his family company, Edward Vinson.

“All our strawberry pickers and all our casual workers until the 1980s were locally sourced. Housewives, as a broad definition, before the days of sexual discrimination you could recruit just female labour for this purpose, it was deemed that men’s hands were too big and weren’t so dextrous, damaging the food. We’re talking about a time of relatively low unemployment for females and there was a ready supply of people wanting to come and harvest. Looking back it still amazes me, it wasn’t just for economic reasons, there was very much a social aspect. They were coming out to the fields – they were having a good time and they were also working very hard but they would at break times they would gossip and even in the fields they could gossip perhaps in a way they couldn’t in a factory. And it was, there was a great sense of camaraderie. Many of the workers would of course have children. There were many cases it was pre-school mothers who we were employing, once their children were at school they may well seek something more permanent. They were coming to earn pocket money, pin money really, and it was chaos, you know at the end of strawberry rows were parked the prams, the pushchairs and the kids were expected to stay in them most of the day. You know those that were in nappies had their nappies changed at various times of the day, those that were past it would scream to go be taken to the toilet which unlike our sophisticated field toilets today were very primitive holes in the ground in a tin shed. It amazes me that the kids put up with it but they didn’t have any choice you know they had snotty runny noses, they were crying, they were bawling, they tended to be given things to eat of course to shut them up – but again a number of workers would work in groups and look after each other’s children so if one was right down the row, quite a distance away and a child was needing help someone else would assist, there was this great sense of working together which in a way we don’t have today.”

Peter Vinson (b.1945) interviewed by Cos Michael, C821/177.
Oliver Walston is a Cambridgeshire farmer.

“When I was a little boy, on this farm we had three dairy herds, pigs, chickens, turkeys, sheep etc and today we have no animals at all. But the difference is that we now have huge machines – huge machines – and so we can run this farm of 800 hectares with two men quite easily. When I was a child and we employed eighty people and they all lived in tied cottages in this village, in filthy conditions – I say this with absolutely no pride and a great deal of shame but it was normal at the time – all farm workers on this farm, almost none of them had indoor toilets, they all had outdoor privies, most of them had a standpipe outside rather than running water and their working week was long, it was about 48 hours, their working conditions were deeply unpleasant and dangerous and they worked at certain times of the year in very dusty conditions so they had problems with their lungs, they worked certain times of the year carrying very heavy loads on their backs so they had back problems – which explains why in the 1940s, 50s, 60s and indeed 70s any farm worker who had any sense at all had one overriding ambition and that was to get out of agriculture in any job, anything was preferable.”

Oliver Walston (b. 1941) interviewed by Cathy Courtney, C821/154.

Christopher Haskins, former Chairman of Northern Foods.

“The contrived product which people have never heard of is very seldom successful. The only contrived product that I’ve known in my food lifetime which people had never heard of before was yoghurt. Didn’t exist when I first joined the food business, nobody knew what yoghurt was ... Tubby Raines, one of the great figures of the dairy industry ... they were making odd sort of concoctions of soft cheeses for the Jewish community in London, way before the war. And Tubby took it over when he was nineteen, in about 1932 or ’33. It was really a twopenny-halfpenny little business. And he made his money in the war, because he got into line with the Ministry of Food, so that whenever a train was bombed, there were milk trains coming into London, Tubby became the man who pumped the milk out of these bombed trains. And (laughs) some of this milk was quite mature, but because it was mature and curdled nicely, it made, it added to his product range at his factory in east London. Tubby always said, that’s what set him on the way to ... A lot of people made money out of the war, so the war was quite good to people in the dairy industry. But Tubby was the very first person to sell yoghurt in this country, way back. He actually was selling yoghurt before the war to the east London community. And then he was the first person I think to sell yoghurt into Marks & Spencer, and Sainsbury, but he couldn’t do national distribution because he was a London company. So then Unigate took it on and did the rest.”

Christopher Haskins (b. 1937) interviewed by Cathy Courtney, C821/48.
Following the Second World War, Richard Pascall joined his father in the family business, Pascall Knight. His father set him the task of finding new factory premises:

“The old man was on a soft drinks industry committee with a chap by the name of Frank Clifford, the owner of the Pure Lemon Juice Company in Sumner Road, West Croydon. An old sea dog, he was. He wanted to become a farmer and was anxious to sell his business. We didn’t want the business, we wanted the factory. And thank God, the old man, contrary to the advice of his great friend and accountant who’d been chairman of Pascalls, bought the business complete. We ran Pure Lemon Juice as a subsidiary of Pascall Knight Ltd. In those days we were still official producing units of the soft drinks industry. It was virtually a nationalisation during the war; everybody lost their identity, Schweppes and Kiora and Pascall Knight all had a number. We were all producing to a standard formula with a list of prescribed customers and quantity. We would be issued with the ingredients for that quantity. Pure Lemon Juice Company weren’t allowed to produce their named product because it was a specialist product, they could only produce squash to the same standard formula as anybody else. They were producing about £10,000 a year turnover. We bought them in April 1947. About February 1948 the industry was freed and we were allowed to produce to our own formulae and we were able to put pure 100% lemon juice back on the market. All the trade welcomed us back. But the customers had forgotten. It went to health food stores mainly. We built that up, got to saturation point of health food stores. We thought, ‘We need another market. Is it to be grocers or is it to be chemists?’ We were selling it on grounds of health and the chemist distribution system is much better. A wholesale chemist in those days would send one bottle to a retail chemist. Boots were interested. So we went to the chemist. It was one of these things that took off. Magic. Got the right line in marketing and PR and in ten years’ time we had a turnover of a million. A million in 1957 was quite a lot of money. One product in two sizes."

Richard Pascall (b.1920) interviewed by Cathy Courtney, C821/29.
Over the past two years NLS and the BL Sound Archive have been moving from old-style analogue recording to digital. This has had enormous implications for the way we record, copy, document, catalogue and archive oral history recordings. As digital recording technology has swiftly overtaken analogue, professional cassette recorders and cassette tapes are now increasingly obsolete and hard to source. NLS has purchased seven solid state digital recorders, which capture sound and store it on a small compact flash card. Each CF card is about the size of a large postage stamp, which can store up to three hours of high quality stereo sound (2GB at 16bit/44.1kHz PMD.wav for the technical!). Gone are the days of laboriously labelling and copying cassette tapes. All the new digital files can now be downloaded to our central computer system in a matter of minutes. Digital audio files are faster to edit for lectures, publications and web projects and can be copied quickly for interviewees and partner organisations. The challenge has been to create new workflows and systems, and to keep abreast of rapidly developing technology and the storage demands of the large quantities of electronic data we produce.

Digital Object Management System

Oral history was one of the first departments in the Sound Archive to switch to recording digital files, and we have also been in the forefront of testing the British Library’s new Digital Object Management System – DOMS. This large ‘digital filing cabinet’ has been designed to store in perpetuity vast quantities of digital text, images and sound from across the British Library’s collections. Around 300 files have already been uploaded and during 2007 we expect to increase the pace of ingesting digital files into the DOMS system. Once a file has been consigned to DOMS it cannot be removed or changed: the entire system is duplicated in two back-up computer systems in different parts of the UK.

Digital access

The new digital systems are also revolutionising the access to recordings we can provide. Within the British Library Reading Rooms listeners can now access digital recordings (and transcripts where they exist) by clicking on links from the Sound Archive Catalogue. All our new digital recordings are held on SoundServer: an onsite online jukebox where listeners can build their own playlists of recordings from across the Sound Archive collections without the need to make an appointment and pre-order material from the Listening and Viewing Service. As time goes on we aim gradually to digitise all our analogue recordings and make them available via SoundServer. This service is currently only available onsite and, of course, access to any recordings – whether analogue or digital – is in strict accordance with the access instructions agreed with each interviewee.

What is SoundServer?

SoundServer gives instant electronic access to a growing collection of sound recordings, including our most requested items, in the Library’s Reading Rooms.

How can I use SoundServer?

SoundServer is currently available from computer terminals on selected desks equipped with headphones in the Humanities 2 Reading Room. Readers should ask for SoundServer at the Humanities 2 Enquiry Desk.

For further information, contact:
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7412 7676
Fax: +44 (0)20 7412 7441
sound-archive@bl.uk
www.bl.uk/soundarchive

Remote access via the internet

Now that the internet has become one of the researcher’s primary tools, the demand for digital access to recordings has swelled, not least in the education sector. Oral history/NLS recordings already feature in several exciting websites which promote the use of oral history from school to lecture hall. CollectBritain (www.collectbritain.co.uk), launched in 2005, integrates audio extracts from the Survey of English Dialects and
the Millennium Memory Bank to show changing ways of speaking over the past fifty years. Users can zoom into a location in England and hear examples of changing accent and dialect use, alongside maps, images and manuscripts in the British Library collections. Voices of the Holocaust (www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/voices/holocaust.html), based on an earlier cassette tape teaching pack, features extracts from interviews collected as part of the Living Memory of the Jewish Community project, one of NLS’s first projects, and has proved very popular. Over the coming months we will launch two more educational web resources: Food Stories, a dynamic website for 11–14 year olds illustrating the journey of food from farm to factory to plate; and Sounds Familiar about language change in the UK for older A and A/S level students.

For the higher education sector the Archival Sound Recordings Project has digitised 1920 hours of entire oral history interviews with artists, architects, designers and scientists (www.bl.uk/sounds). University students and academics with authorised passwords can listen to and download segments of the recordings, bringing oral history to new audiences from a range of disciplines. Only interviews without access restrictions are included on the ASR website and all interviewees, or their families, were informed of this new mode of access to the recordings. It was encouraging that only a very small number of interviewees declined to take part in the project. Another key change is that, unlike the current online catalogue www.cadensa.bl.uk, the content summary information about each recording on the ASR site is accessible by search engines such as Google, raising the profile of NLS worldwide. The ASR project phase 2 will get underway during 2007 with funding from JISC.

How to use Archival Sound Recordings

Information about the recordings is freely available online to all, but in order to listen and download authentication is required.

To request a licence for authentication a Higher or Further Education institution should contact asr@bl.uk

The ASR website URL can be found at http://www.bl.uk/sounds
Last Words

Alan Fletcher (1931 – 2006)

Celebrated designer Alan Fletcher was interviewed by Linda Sandino in 2003. Emily King, curator of the recent retrospective of Fletcher’s work at the Design Museum, introduces this excerpt from his recording: ‘When Alan Fletcher launched his first company with Colin Forbes and Bob Gill in 1962, graphic design was still an unknown quantity in Britain. More than merely making and selling their work, he and his partners were inventing the role of design in the corporate and commercial sphere. They were extremely confident, but rightly so. I love the way this anecdote about raising funds for the company hints at a world that was up for grabs and a group of young men who were prepared to seize it.’

“So, Bob leaned across the desk and said to the guy, he said, ‘Excuse me Sir, which is the best... You know, I’m an American, I don’t understand these things. Which is the best bank in England?’ He said, ‘Well Barclays of course,’ you see. So he said, ‘Ah,’ he said, ‘which is the best branch of Barclays?’ I mean, you know, they’ve got to be... So the guy said, ‘Well, you know, we think we are, in this one.’ So Bob said, ‘Well what are you buggering around for?’ He said, ‘We’re the best design office, you’re the best bank, give us the money.’ And the guy said, ‘OK.’

Sandra Blow (1925 – 2006)

Sandra Blow was among the generation of artists who firmly established abstract painting in Britain after the Second World War. Here, she remembers a pivotal moment in her transition from figurative to abstract painter.

“I left St Martin’s in ’46 … [and] went on to the Academy Schools which I hated … they were very dingy in those days. They have been transformed since, but they were cold and dark. And there was a teacher there, I think William Dring, who actually said to me, ‘You nauseating female; you should be able to take one inch of your painting and go up to the model and not know the difference.’ And he said, ‘You’re just like Ethel Walker.’ And I thought Ethel Walker was a wonderful painter, I really liked Ethel Walker paintings. I don’t know, I thought, ‘what am I doing here?’ And then, by just chance … I decided to go to Italy for a holiday … the first week I was there I met … [the painter] Nicholas Carone, who had been a student of Hans Hofmann … He’s a wonderful talker and teacher, and he just talked about abstract, he never stopped talking. But he was talking to me about his paintings, and suddenly I saw what he was talking about; he was talking about spatial movements in paintings. And I suddenly saw that one patch of colour was doing something to another. It just came clear to me what he was saying. So I said to him, ‘Ah, I’ve got it.’ … I had got what he was talking about, I understood spatial movement with colour.”
Jim McMahon (1923–2006)

In the mid 1950s Jim McMahon had helped to design a new aircraft that sprayed fine droplets of insecticide on agricultural land. Just before the 1956 Suez Crisis Jim worked in the Sudan. Here, he reveals how the remarks of a Sudanese cotton farmer made him consider the wider impact of his work:

“And when we arrived, the owner of the two thousand fedans*, it was his property we sprayed, came and he threw his arms around us and he said I’m ever so grateful, I’ll be grateful to you people for the rest of my life, he said, I’ve produced the best cotton in the whole of the Sudan because of your spraying, and he said they’ve promoted me and given me a senior job. So this was a very dramatic thing and we thought, oh well this was nice but we didn’t take much notice of it at the time because it was just a job of work we were doing, but it was building up into something astronomical.”

[*1 fedan is 4200 sq. km.]


Joseph Rotblat (1908–2005)

In this extract from his interview with Katherine Thompson, nuclear physicist Joseph Rotblat describes the moral dilemma he faced over his work on the atomic bomb. Rotblat saw himself as ‘an humanitarian scientist’ and was fully aware of the devastating potential of his work. Still uncertain of his moral duty, he was recruited to join the Manhattan Project in America in 1942 to help develop the first atomic bomb. Unable to reconcile his ideal of science as a positive force for progress with his work on the Project, he left in late 1944, beginning a campaign for the ethical use of science that would earn him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995.

“I am a scientist and not a bomb-maker, particularly a bomb of this magnitude, therefore I felt I would not, I am not going to do it. But I was at the same time afraid that other scientists may not have the same scruples, moral scruples, as I had...I was torn in myself, agonizing, because I felt it’s not my job to do weapons of mass destruction. It’s not my ideal about science. I was afraid that these very ideals will be eliminated if a person like Hitler comes to power and decides it’ll not be allowed to proceed in an open way. Then the whole of democrats, the whole democracy will come to an end. So I was torn between these two.”

Joseph Rotblat interviewed by Katherine Thompson. C464/17 Tape 2 Side B.
## Statement of Financial Activities

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<th></th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Total 2006</th>
<th>Total 2005</th>
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<td></td>
<td>£</td>
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<td><strong>INCOMING RESOURCES</strong></td>
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<td>Donations</td>
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<td>18,641</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous income</td>
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<td>7,213</td>
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<td>Direct Expenditure</td>
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<td>188,680</td>
<td>169,536</td>
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<td>Management and administration</td>
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<td>(8,750)</td>
<td>(8,750)</td>
<td>8,913</td>
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<td>Loss on disposal of investments</td>
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<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</strong></td>
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<td>23,374</td>
<td>394,484</td>
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### STATEMENT OF OTHER RECOGNISED GAINS AND LOSSES

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<tr>
<td>Net income/(expenditure) for the year</td>
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<td>23,374</td>
<td>394,484</td>
<td>12,888</td>
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<td>Unrealised investment gains</td>
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<td>Brought forward</td>
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<td>413,929</td>
<td>584,252</td>
<td>534,782</td>
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<td>Carried forward</td>
<td>541,433</td>
<td>482,249</td>
<td>1,023,682</td>
<td>584,252</td>
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Approved by the Board of Directors and Trustees and signed on its behalf by:

Sir Nicholas Goodison
Chairman of Trustees

PARKER CAVENDISH
28 Church Road
Chartered Accountants & Registered Auditors
Stanmore
Middlesex
HA7 4XR

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, with the exception of investments which are included at market value. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective January 2005), the Companies Act 1985 and comply with the Charities Statement of Recommended Practice issued in March 2005.

Restricted funds are limited to expenditure on specific projects; unrestricted funds have no such limitations. The balance on restricted funds represents donations received, the expenditure of which has not yet been incurred.

The Statement of Financial Activities and the Balance Sheet have been extracted from the full financial statements of the company. 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 in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practices of the state of the charitable company’s affairs as at 31 December 2006 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 1985 and the information given in the Trustees Report is consistent with the financial statements.
Leaders of National Life (C408)
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)
City Lives explores the inner world of Britain’s financial capital. Support from the City enabled NLS to make 150 detailed recordings 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 inter-relationships 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)
Holocaust Survivors’ Centre Interviews (C830)
These major collections were developed with the specialist advice of leading Jewish historians and complement a number of collections held by the Sound Archive 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/curriculum/voices.html.

Artists’ Lives (C466)
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 Foundation, The Fleming Collection, The Rootstein Hopkins Foundation and The Yale Center for British Art.

Artists’ Lives Advisory Committee
Sir Alan Bowness, Judith Bumpus, Penelope Curtis, Caroline Cuthbert, Mel Gooding (chair), Beth Houghton, Richard Morphet, Chris Stephens, Margaret B Thornton.

Architects’ Lives (C467)
Architects’ Lives documents architects working in Britain and those in associated professions. 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 (BL, 2004). NLS has also partnered English Heritage to document Eltham Palace and the Courtauld family (C1056).

Architects’ Lives Advisory Committee
Colin Amery, Sherban Cantacuzino, Ian Gow, Jill Lever, Alan Powers, Margaret Richardson, Andrew Saint.

Fawcett Collection (C468)
Supported by the Women’s Library (formerly known as the Fawcett Society) this collection records 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)
Lives in Steel comprises ninety personal histories recorded with employees from one of Britain’s largest yet least understood industries. Interviewees range from top managers and trade unionists to technicians, furnacemen, shearers and many more. Interviews were carried out in Scunthorpe, Teesside, Workington, Corby, South Wales and Scotland by Alan Dein (now well-known as a BBC Radio programme-maker). British Steel General Steels Division sponsored both the project and the Lives in Steel CD (BL, 1993).

Oral History of the British Press (C638)
This growing 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.

National Life Story Awards (C642)
This nationwide competition ran in 1993 to promote the value of life story recording and autobiographical writing. The judges, among them Lord Briggs and Penelope Lively, chose winners from 1000 entries in three categories: young interviewer, taped entries and written entries. Melvyn Bragg presented the prizes. The Awards were supported by the Arts Council, the ITV Telethon Trust, and European Year of Older People.

An Oral History of Wolff Olins (C1015)
This project 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. It was complemented by a smaller series of interviews with Pentagram designers (C464).
Food: From Source to Salespoint (C821)

Food: From Source to Salespoint charts the revolutionary technical and social changes which occurred within Britain’s food industry in the twentieth century and beyond. Production, distribution and retailing of food are explored through recordings with those working at every level of the sector, including life stories with those in the ready-meal, poultry, sugar, meat and fish sectors; employees of Northern Foods, Nestlé, Sainsbury and Safeway; and key cookery writers and restaurateurs. This project encompasses Tesco: An Oral History (C1087) and An Oral History of the Wine Trade (C1088).

Food: From Source to Salespoint Advisory Committee
Bob Boas, Sir Dominic Cadbury (chair), Bill Mason CBE, Jonathan Taylor, Caroline Waldegrave, David Webster.

Book Trade Lives (C872)

Book Trade Lives records the experiences of those who worked in publishing and bookselling between the early 1920s and the present day. Interviews covered all levels of the trade, from invoice clerks and warehouse staff to wholesalers, editors, sales staff and executives. The Unwin Charitable Trust was lead funder for this project.

Book Trade Lives Advisory Committee
Martyn Goff CBE (chair), Penny Mountain, Ian Norrie, Michael Turner, David Whitaker, David Young.

Crafts Lives (C960)

Documenting the lives of Britain’s leading craftsmen and craftswomen, Crafts Lives complements Artists’ Lives and Architects’ Lives. Areas of activity include furniture-making, embroidery, ceramics, jewellery, silversmithing, calligraphy, weaving and textiles, metalwork, glasswork and bookbinding.

Crafts Lives Advisory Committee
Emmanuel Cooper, Amanda Fielding, Rosy Greenlees, Tanya Harrod, Helen Joseph, John Keatley, Martina Margetts, and Ralph Turner.

Lives in the Oil Industry (C963)

A joint National Life Stories/Aberdeen University project, Lives in the Oil Industry, between 2000 and 2005, recorded the major changes which have 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 sector.

An Oral History of the Post Office (C1007)

An Oral History of the Post Office, 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 BL (2005).

An Oral History of British Fashion (C1046)

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)

Records the memories and experiences of key figures in social welfare, social policy and charitable endeavour. Funded by the J Paul Getty Jr Charitable Trust.

An Oral History of British Theatre Design (C1173)

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

Authors’ Lives

NLS has secured funding for this exciting project interviewing approximately one hundred novelists, poets, writers and editors. 2007 will see the formation of an Advisory Committee, recruitment of an interviewer and the start of the interview programme.

Projects in Development

Research, development and fundraising are proceeding in the areas of the British legal system, the scientific community, the utilities; water, electricity and the nuclear power industries.

Onsite and Online Access

NLS recordings are available through the British Library Sound Archive’s Listening and Viewing Service T +44 (0) 20 7412 7418 www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/nsaservices.html with online catalogue data at www.cadensa.bl.uk
## Statistics

### Table 1: NLS Fieldwork Projects, interview totals (active projects in bold)

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<thead>
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<td>C408</td>
<td>Leaders of National Life</td>
<td>Freelance</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>C409</td>
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<td>C821</td>
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<td>C830</td>
<td>Holocaust Survivors’ Centre Interviews</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
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<td>C872</td>
<td>Book Trade Lives</td>
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<td>C960</td>
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<td>C1173</td>
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<td>Research Student</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<td>1772</td>
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<td>1878</td>
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### Table 2: Oral History service delivery totals, 2006 (including NLS)

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<th>Service</th>
<th>2005</th>
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<tr>
<td>Public Enquiries</td>
<td>4144</td>
<td>3914</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plus onsite Listeners (excluding SoundServer users, see page 16)</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plus public lectures/training sessions</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
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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 £28 from the Inland Revenue if a signed Gift Aid form is received. A Gift Aid form can be obtained from the NLS Administrator. It needs to be completed and returned to NLS together with your cheque or notification of your BACS transfer.

Companies

Companies now pay the 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. The NLS Administrator can advise on an appropriate form of words within a will.

For further information please contact:

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