Contact us
National Life Stories
The British Library
96 Euston Road
London NW1 2DB
T +44 (0)20 7412 7404
nls@bl.uk
www.bl.uk/nls

Online catalogue access
www.cadensa.bl.uk

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Review and Accounts
2011/2012
National Life Stories

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 twenty-five 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 www.cadenza.bl.uk and a growing number of interviews are made available for remote use. 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.

As National Life Stories (NLS) celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2012 there is much to look back on with pride. Oral history has entered the popular understanding and imagination; it is used as a research tool in myriad different disciplines and contexts, from planning to health-care, reevaluation to museum interpretation; it has grown exponentially in local and community history; and has earned its place among academic and heritage professionals. As a UK centre of excellence NLS has played an important part in this transformation.

Since its establishment in 1987 NLS has grown significantly – to help focus and guide charity needs frequently to review its objectives in the context of rapid change, a difficult and competitive financial environment, the shifting expectations of users. Accordingly the trustees asked our Director, Rob Perks, to prepare a strategic review –

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Since its establishment in 1987 NLS has grown significantly in ambition and scope. Working as an integral part of the British Library’s Oral History Section, it has raised £3.9m of funding and helped to create one of the largest oral history collections in the world, some 35,000 recordings, of which, at the end of 2011, 1,425 are long-in-depth biographical interviews created by NLS. NLS has enriched the huge breadth of subject coverage across the British Library’s oral history collections: encompassing the oil and steel industries, the food sector, Royal Mail, the utilities, science and technology, computing, aerospace, the crafts, art and photography, architecture and design, horticulture, charitable activity, banking and finance, Jewish Holocaust experience, publishing and authorship, theatre and fashion design, and the press. All of these are accessioned and catalogued, and where funding has allowed there are full transcripts. All have detailed content summaries and growing numbers of full interviews are available online via the web (over 200 so far).

But anniversaries also encourage re-assessment and the charity needs frequently to review its objectives in the context of rapid change, a difficult and competitive financial climate, and the shifting expectations of users. Accordingly the trustees asked our Director, Rob Perks, to prepare a strategic review – National Life Stories: The Next Ten Years, 2011–2021: Strategic Directions – to help focus and guide our path over the next decade.

Apart from reviewing our collecting policy, we have decided to press on with plans to digitise our collections in order to enhance public access. Since 2005 all NLS recordings have been born digital. Some pre-2005 analogue recordings, such as many of the artists interviews and parts of the architects, photography and Holocaust projects have been retrospectively digitised for web access, but many hundreds more remain undigitised and thus inaccessible remotely. This will be one of our key challenges and fundraising priorities over the next few years. We will also seek ways of disseminating our collections more widely through academic programmes and the media, especially electronic means of communication.

The fundraising environment remains challenging. We have been delighted to receive further donations during the year, including the second of three annual donations from the P F Charitable Trust and from the Heathside Charitable Trust, both for core funds. The Arcadia Fund has made further contributions to our project on science. And, thanks to the generosity of Hodgson and Luda Thorner (and the support of our advisor Leslie Hannah) we will be able to realise a major new series of interviews in the electricity sector.

I would like to thank all our trustees, staff and volunteers who have worked so hard to make the past year such a success; and our donors and funders for making it all possible.

Chairman of Trustees
Review of 2011

Rob Perks
Director of National Life Stories

Collections and projects

By the end of 2011 65 in-depth life story interviews had been completed or were underway as part of our ambitious Oral History of British Science programme, funded largely by the Arcadia Fund. In the Made in Britain strand interviewer Tom Lean’s focus has been materials science, covering the study of the behaviour and structure of materials. Key interviewees have included neutron scattering pioneer Dame Julia Higgins and metal fracture expert Julia King. The post-war shift to understanding materials behaviour on an atomic level is covered by interviews with Anthony Kelly and the late Sir Alan Cottrell; and the British invention of carbon fibre has been discussed by Roger Morston, the last survivor of the Farnborough team that originally developed it in the 1960s. In other areas we have added interviews with Sir Tony Hoare on theoretical computer science, Dame Ann Dowling on the science of aerodynamics, Dennis Highton on building the instrumentation to test Britain’s first jet plane, and Michael Forrest on the laser scattering equipment that allows fusion plasma temperatures of millions of degrees to be measured.

Interviewees have been carefully selected to provide a cross-section of the different cultures of industrial research, government laboratories and academic institutions. The role of scientists at policy levels has also been addressed and highlights have included Alan Cottrell about his time as Government Chief Scientific Advisor, and Julia King on the experience of formulating the Browne Review of University Funding and King Review on low carbon transport.

For the science programme’s strand A Changing Planet, Paul Merchant has conducted interviews across all Earth science disciplines. The development of satellite remote sensing and climate change science has been explored in interviews with Chris Rayleigh and John Houghton. Interviews with Richard West, John Kington, Ann Wintle, the late Russell Coote and Mike Hall capture the use of fossil pollen, weather logs, remnant radioactivity in minerals, fossil beetles and the shells of sea creatures as records of climate history. The story of the discovery of plate tectonics is documented in interviews with pioneers in geomagnetism (Mary Almond), isotope dating of rocks (Stephen Moorabath), seismology (David Davies) and the use of an early computer to show how the continents fit back together (Alan Smith). Interviews in oceanography cover spectral analysis of waves (David Cartwright), measurement of ocean currents (Bob Dickson) and the use of tide gauges and satellite data to record sea level change (Philip Woodward). In glaciology, an interview with Stanley Evans recalls the first British efforts to measure ice thickness with radio waves. Care has been taken to include the life stories of technicians and research assistants. The National Institute of Oceanography is recalled by a longstanding technician, Norman Smith. John Linögen describes work as an undergraduate field assistant in glaciology. In the field of palaeoclimatology, an interview with Richard West records the role of non-academic helpers in the field, and an interview with Mike Hall examines the day-to-day technical work behind one of Britain’s most well-known achievements in climate history: Nick Shackleton’s reconstruction of glacial/interglacial cycles through isotope analysis of calcareous shells in ocean cores.

The complementary video component of the project has also made good progress. At the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough Sir John Charnley was filmed discussing early supersonic aeronautical research, and Desmond King-Hele talked about his pioneering work in satellite orbit analysis. At Brooklands Museum we captured Ralph Hooper, the lead designer of the Hawker P1127, the prototype vertical take-off aerofoil which evolved into the Harrier ‘jump jet’; and at the Rolls-Royce Heritage Centre in Derby we filmed John Coplin with the Rolls-Royce RB211 jet engine, and John Scott-Scott with the Black Arrow satellite launcher rocket.

Quaternary geologist/botanist Richard West was recorded in the field in Norfolk and in his laboratory at home in Cambridgeshire, demonstrating the use of map work, landscape observation and the analysis of exposures of sediment to reconstruct the glacial/interglacial environmental history of Britain. The most successful video interviews have been those where the presence of key objects or the location have led interviewees to talk about their work in ways that go beyond their own audio contributions and say more about the physical objects and their construction, or the significance of those objects or places in a wider context. For example John Coplin talked about lift engines and his work on composites, and reflected on the compartmentalisation of civil and military work at Rolls-Royce in ways that had not emerged in previous interviews.

The Oral History of British Science website (www.bl.uk/historyofscience) and blog continue to grow and we made excellent progress – thanks to the hard work of our archive assistant Elspeth Millar – over the past year in providing online access to completed interviews and transcripts through the recently-relaunched ‘British Library Sounds’ website (formerly the Archival Sound Recordings website) at http://sounds.bl.uk. The interviews available online can be browsed by both ‘name of interviewee’ and by ‘subject’, aiding searchability and increasing the use of the life story recordings from lesser-heard voices within the project who may not have a public profile. Over the next year it will be a major objective to create a new history of science online resource within the British Library’s website, and planning has already begun on a new website – ‘Voices of Science: understanding technology, innovation and environment’ – which will forefront our science interviews and lead many different users – from school pupils to academics – to explore a wide range of BL content. We are very pleased that ‘Voices of Science’ has been accepted as one of the two projects that will help shape the first phase of the major redevelopment of the British Library website, due to be launched in spring 2013.

As a complement to our science programme, we are also delighted that we will soon be launching a new Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK, thanks to the generosity of Holland and Luda Thorner. Sally Horrocks and Tom Lean worked exceptionally hard to deliver an excellent scoping study for the project, cogently arguing the urgent need for it and identifying the key themes and individuals involved, from which forty-five will be chosen for interview over the next three years. A full-time interviewer – Steven Guilbert – has been appointed and a project advisory committee has been assembled.

The Earl of Antrim, formerly Alexander Dunluce, head of conservation at the Tate Gallery, Stephen Buckley and David Tremlett were among new interviewees for Artists’ Lives. Jeffrey Steele kindly donated forty-seven films he had shot in his studio and home between 1997 and 2011. These will complement his life story recording, together representing a remarkable insight into his development and working methods. On their visits to Britain, Cathy Courtney was able
to complete her recordings with Harold Cohen, Tim Scott and Richard Smith. A lively and wide ranging recording is being developed with the dealer and collector, John Kasmin, whose gallery played such a major role in Britain’s art world in the 1960s and 1970s, and whose life story overlaps with many of the artists and art professionals already in the collection. Although we were too late to record Aubrey Williams, we are grateful to his widow, Eve, for her recording with Niamh Dillon covering both her own and Aubrey’s lives.

Since 1990, alongside the crucial support of the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation, the Yale Center for British Art, and the Henry Moore Foundation, **Artists’ Lives** has benefited from an important partnership with Tate and at the end of 2011 this was marked by the hand-over of copies of the open digital recordings to Tate Archive. We also started recordings with Tate Director Nicholas Serota and Tate Britain Director Penelope Curtis. Tate and the BL are now working together to ensure that the interviews and documentation will be available to researchers on a reference basis through the Tate Archive reading room, although it is hoped that in time staff within Tate will be able to access the audio files and related documentation through the Tate intranet to increase visibility and use of the material in research and exhibitions.

**Architects’ Lives** has been using the final part of a grant from the Monument Trust to complete interviews with Donald Insall, famous for his renovation of historic buildings such as Windsor Castle and the House of Lords; with Ted Cullinan, whose notable projects include the Weald and Downland Grashell (nominated for the Stirling Prize in 2002) and the new library at Fitzwilliam College Cambridge; and Jeremy Dixon, whose Dixon Jones architectural practice redesigned the Royal Opera House and won a RIBA award in 2010 for St Peter’s Arcade in Liverpool. Project interviewer Niamh Dillon is also recording Dixon’s colleague Edward Jones; and Alan Irvine, who specialises in interiors of museums and the display of works of art. This latter interview was generously

funded by Andrew McIntosh Patrick. A start has also been made with industrial designer, artist and architect Ron Arad. And volunteer interviewer Gesaunt Franklin is donating recordings to NLS: the first of these was with architect, academic and critic Robert Maxwell.

When **Authors’ Lives** interviewer Sarah O’Reilly left on maternity leave in the autumn she had forty-eight interviews with authors and writers completed or underway, some 615 hours of recordings. Much of the early part of the year was devoted to the editing and production of a double CD, *The Writing Life: Authors Speak*, after which interviews were started with A S Byatt, Pat Barker, Maggie Gee and Indra Sinha. Sarah also completed recordings with science writer John Grisham, with translator Anthrea Bell, and with Agatha Christie’s grandson Matthew Prichard. Fundraising continues to challenge the project advisory committee chaired by Dame Penelope Lively but the Booker Prize Foundation again agreed to support the project and, together with a grant from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, this will ensure we can welcome Sarah back in the summer.

**Crafts Lives** celebrated reaching its 100th interview this year and now has 113 interviews completed or in progress. They cover a broad array of craft categories from textiles to glass, ceramics, jewellery, furniture, metal work, stained glass, book arts and interviews with key gallery owners and curators. Interviewer Frances Cornford reflects on over a decade of achievement in a special feature later in this Review.

Elizabeth Wright completed interviews with textile makers Janis Jeffreys and Michele Walker, with silversmith/enameller Jane Short, jewellers Andrew Logan and Jacqueline Steger, and is in the process of interviewing the silversmith Rod Kelly. Carried out at her home and studio in Brough near Hull, Jacqueline Steger’s recording includes detailed information on her use of the lost wax casting technique to create jewellery, medals, trophies and sculpture. Pieces discussed in particular detail include a pair of corduroy trousers belonging to her late husband, Alfred Gruber, that the couple worked together to cast in bronze, as well as impressive bronze doors for the chapel at Robinson College, Cambridge and a set of curved bronze and stone lectern steps for St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh.

Frances Cornford added interviews with potters Eric James Mellon, Shelia Casson and Carol McNicoll, glass artists Colin Reid, Tessa Clegg and Alison Kinnaird, basket-maker Lois Walpole, calligrapher Wendy Westover, architectural letter cutter Richard Kindersley and weaver Alison Morton. Recordings with Takeshi Yasuda (ceramics), Steven Newell (glass), Madeleine Dinkel (calligraphy/glass), Alexander Belleschenko (architectural glass) and Stephanie Bergman (textiles/ceramics) are underway. Innovation is a theme that has emerged strongly in the interviews: Tessa Clegg was one of the first glass artists in the UK to specialise in kiln cast glass and vividly describes the constant experimentation and frustrations of teaching herself to cast glass in plaster moulds; Richard Kindersley explains how he created a niche for himself in the field of letter cutting by inventing ways to work with concrete and also revived the art of brick-carving;

while Carol McNicoll recalls how her lack of formal training in ceramics meant that she saw no obstacle in using the industrial process of slipcasting to produce complex and surreal shapes.

Unexpected connections and influences also emerge. For instance, as a young woman calligrapher Wendy Westover went to learn letter cutting from Richard Kindersley’s father David, also a letter cutter. While there, she taught the Kindersley children, and Richard Kindersley has fond memories of being taught handwriting by Wendy. Richard also credits Wendy’s father’s invention of an early photographic typesetting system called Rotofoto as a possible influence on his own father’s determination to invent an electronic system for calculating letter spacing.

Amongst the smaller projects, Niamh Dillon’s interview with textile designer Celia Birtwell for *An Oral History of British Fashion* has been an especially rich and vivid addition. Niamh has also been completing the final recordings for our *Chefs* series with David Eyre (of The Eagle gastropub fame) and the River Café’s Ruth Rogers.

**Partnerships**

An oral history project of Barings, our collaborative project with The Baring Archive, will culminate in twenty-seven interviews covering some 330 hours of recordings. The completion of the project together with the production of a selection of audio clips and a booklet showcasing the oral history and Archive will complement the commemoration of Barings’ 250th anniversary in 2013. The final interviews have included Mark Baring, who, in addition to recordings made with Nicholas Baring and Tessa Baring, added contrasting reflections from a different generation and branch of the family. John Orbell provided an archivist’s viewpoint and John Dare talked about some of the non-core business activities of Barings and its subsidiary companies. Ted Derbyshire gave insight into the development of computerisation, Phil Hatch recalled Barings during the Second World War, and Mary-Anne Daly described a career which included working in Europe and undertaking roles in both corporate finance and asset management. Although a substantial proportion of the material is likely to be closed to public access in the short-term, this will be a uniquely valuable resource for future historians.

Alison Gilmour has been completing the last few recordings for *An Oral History of the Water Industry* as we wind up the project with thirty interviews across the six participating water companies (Cambridge, Northumbrian, Wessex, Yorkshire, Scottish and Southern) covering engineering, plumbing and maintenance, water and waste water treatment, dam management and land drainage, as well as structural and organisational changes. In continuing to interview people from various levels within each organisation, Alison talked to the Executive Chairman of Wessex Water, Colin Skellett, as well as recording a site walk-around with Facility Manager, Mike Caple, to capture the sustainability features of the company’s unique Operations Centre in Bath which won ‘Building of the Year’ in 2011 from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors.

Other interviews have been useful in exploring the organisational changes in the water companies and their evolution into modern businesses, in part through changing...
corporate communication and media relations. These themes were explored through interviews with Geoff Loader, Southern Water’s Direct of Communications, and John Mowbray, Northumbrian Water’s Director of Corporate Affairs. These accounts are balanced by more technical interviews exploring changes in technology, work patterns and managing: with Scottish Water’s Frank Milne, Team Manager of Wastewater Operations within Customer Service, and Donald Milne, Head of Delivery within Asset Management.

Five interviews have been completed with women, which have been useful in exploring their perspectives of this traditionally male-dominated industry. They include process manager Brenda Franklin, formerly of Yorkshire Water, and Ellen Petrie of Northumbrian Water, who worked as a secretary, then in public relations and communications.

Alison coped with terrible weather conditions in the early part of the year, was snow-bound in Glasgow for several weeks, and was forced to cancel interview sessions with Scottish Water interviewees as they were dealing with the consequences of the bad weather for the water network. As we reflect on the challenges of the project we now recognise that raising funds from a number of companies within a sector and maintaining their active involvement throughout the project has been a huge strain on resources and any future project covering such a vast geographical area should seek significantly more travel and subsistence funds within its budget.

Projects in development

We have been making some progress with Legal Lives this year, thanks to a valuable collaboration we are forging with the London School of Economics’ Department of Law Legal Biography Project. In November we submitted a joint funding bid – ‘The changing face of local justice: Examining the shift to a centralised justice system through the life stories of Crown Court clerks’ – for a collaborative doctoral student whose research would encompass life story recordings with Crown Court clerks, who played a key role within the courts throughout a lifetime of change and restructuring in the legal system after the Second World War. Whilst awaiting the outcome of funding bids we added to the collection an interview with Lennie Hoffmann, recorded by Louise Brodie, which provides an in-depth account of his childhood, and his long and distinguished career in the law, culminating in his time as a Law Lord from 1995 to 2009.

An Oral History of Talking Therapies in the UK will seek to interview a wide range of professionals who do not use pharmaceutical or other medical forms of intervention to alleviate mental distress but depend on verbal exchanges between client and therapist. Rebecca Hutton from the Centre for Psychological Services Research in the School of Health and Related Research at the University of Sheffield delivered an excellent scoping study outlining the historical background, surveying existing collections (of which there are few), and highlighting the need for and support within the sector for the project. She also helped provided an extensive list of prospective interviewees. Following a useful roundtable meeting of interested parties and stakeholders, potential partners are now being sought to help us undertake some pilot interviews, finalise a clear plan for academic involvement and participation from within the sector, and formulate a list of possible avenues for funding.

Dissemination

In March we launched a double CD publication, The Writing Life: Authors’ Speak, at a special event in the British Library Conference Centre with keynote speakers Michael Frayn, Philip Hensher and Hilary Spurling, ably chaired by Deborah Moggs from the Authors’ Lives advisory committee. With support from Arts Council England free copies of the CD went to schools’ charity First Story (800), to the Arvon Foundation for its bursary holders (300), to Higher Education creative writing courses across the UK (500), and to the Writers in Prison Network (sixteen). Part of the profits from sales will come back to NLS.

It has been a particularly busy year for public talks and presentations. Oral History of British Science interviews Paul Merchant and Tom Lean both gave lectures about their work to history of science colleagues at the University of Manchester and at University College London. In May Paul presented a paper entitled ‘Oral history and the scientific self’ at the Royal Society’s ‘Science Voices’ conference (the podcast can be found online at http://tiny.cc/3590dw); and gave a paper at the Annual Conference of the Women’s History Network on ‘Labeatories and landscapes: the life stories of female earth scientists’. In July, Tom contributed to an oral history session at the British Society for the History of Science annual conference at Exeter University, in which he reflected on the methodology of interviewing scientists, and in September he and Sally Horrocks presented material from the project to a specialist audience at a conference on government science in Britain, at the University of Kent. Their papers looked at scientists and national service from the Second World War to the 1960s and at life as a scientific civil servant. In October I took part in an oral history of science panel at the US Oral History Association’s annual conference in Denver, presenting a paper on the audio-video debate: the Oral History of British Science at the British Library’. Drawing on Artists’ Lives material, Cathy gave a talk on interviewing and oral history to Birkbeck College students on the MA Research Methods course run by the London Consortium: a unique collaboration between the Architectural Association, Birkbeck College, the Institute of Contemporary Arts, the Science Museum and Tate. Finally, Sarah O’Reilly gave a talk on life writing and Authors’ Lives at the Alderney Literary Festival (in conjunction with the University of East Anglia).

In May Sally Horrocks joined us part-time from the School of Historical Studies at Leicester University to replace Tilly Blyth as Senior Academic Consultant for the Oral History of British Science. Sally is currently President of the British Society for the History of Science. Authors’ Lives interviewer Sarah O’Reilly left on maternity leave in November and has since had a baby boy, MiLo Theodore. Bethany Lamont successfully completed a work placement cataloguing a collection of broadcast andunedited interviews with artists, architects, photographers and writers produced by the late Judith Bumpus for BBC Radio between the 1970s and the 1990s (Judith Bumps radio interviews C798). Bethany was our third student placement from the Central St Martins BA in Communication, Criticism and Curation in the Arts.

Six new artists have been interviewed: British jeweller and medallist, Elizabeth Wright edited a number of tracks, four of which were selected for inclusion on a listening post. Excerpts from Elizabeth Blackadder’s Artists’ Lives interview featured in an iPhone app in connection with her retrospective at the Scottish National Gallery; and extracts from Andrew Lambirth’s recording with John Craxton were edited for inclusion alongside a display of his work at Tate Britain. We are exploring strategies for incorporating more of the recordings into Tate websites and within exhibitions, particularly in relation to the 2013 re-hang in Tate Britain, and it has been immensely helpful to have Penelope Curtis’s focus behind these initiatives.

In terms of press coverage, an outstanding feature article by David Jenkins about NLS – ‘History in the Speaking’ – in the Financial Times’ Life and Arts section on 30 July, attracted a great deal of attention. In March, Mary Stewart spoke about oral history and NLS – using clips from Lives in the Oil Industry – for a BBC Radio 4 ‘Archive on Four’ documentary about the British Library’s sound collections.

People

We welcomed as new NLS trustees: Bill Knight, formerly as senior partner at Simmons & Simmons and Deputy Chairman of Council at Lloyd’s of London, and also Scot McKendrick, the British Library’s Head of History and Classics. We welcomed as new NLS trustees: Bill Knight, formerly as senior partner at Simmons & Simmons and Deputy Chairman of Council at Lloyd’s of London, and also Scot McKendrick, the British Library’s Head of History and Classics.

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Over the past year, following an extensive restructure within the British Library, NLS has been settling into the new History and Classics section of the British Library’s Arts and Humanities directorate, and we recently completed an office move to a location on the west side of the St Pancras building, a key benefit being that the whole team is now located together.
Access to National Life Story recordings

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.

Discover National Life Stories recordings

All interviews recorded for National Life Stories are catalogued on the British Library's Sound & Moving Image Catalogue (www.cadensa.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 new search tool which provides a more comprehensive way for users to search within the Library’s collections of books, journals, datasets and sound recordings.

Access National Life Stories recordings

The Listening and Viewing Service in St Pancras provides free public access on an appointment basis to open recordings which have no access restrictions. Many digital recordings are also available via SoundServer.

The interviews recorded for National Life Stories projects are also accessible via the British Library’s Sounds website (http://sounds.bl.uk). The full video interviews can be accessed onsite at the Library.

Oral history at the British Library: what else has been happening?

Sophie Williams-Brown, on a four-month placement over the summer from London Metropolitan University, completed an excellent qualitative survey of users of the oral history collections. Her report, *A User Evaluation of the British Library’s Oral History Collections and Services*, will help target our promotional activities and feed into developments for enhanced onsite services and remote access to oral history. Alex King, who has been our oral history catalogue since 2000, reflects further on these issues later in this Review.

To augment the Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare collection Louise Brodie has been recording social campaigners and activists. Herman Ouseley reflected on his long political career and his time as Chair and Chief Executive of the Commission for Racial Equality from 1993 to 2000. A recording with journalist, actor and anti-apartheid campaigner Sylvester Stein covered a varied career, from his education as an electrical engineer, to pioneering work as a journalist for Drum, an influential anti-apartheid magazine based in Johannesburg, and Africa’s first black lifestyle magazine. Stein also recounted his life-long love of athletics which included winning a gold medal aged sixty in the 200 metres at the World Masters Athletics championships. Someone else who worked for Drum was veteran street, fashion and studio photographer James Barnor, who spoke to Shirley Read for *An Oral History of British Photography*. He moved to Britain from Ghana in 1957 and his images of glamorous young black people provide an extraordinary insight into London’s emerging multicultural society in the 1960s and 1970s. Louise also recorded a short interview with John Bird, founding editor of *The Big Issue*.

Many of the British Library’s Learning websites feature extracts from NLS recordings including Food Stories, *Voices of the Holocaust* and *Playtimes*. Further information can be found at www.bl.uk/learning.

Further information

An overview of the Library’s Oral History collections can be found at www.bl.uk/oralhistory/collections. The National Life Stories team contribute to a number of the British Library’s blogs, including ‘Untold Lives. Sharing stories from the past’ (http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/untoldlives), the Sound Recordings blog (http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/archival_sounds) and the History of Science blog (http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/oralhistoryofsciences), which provide up-to-date information about ongoing National Life Stories projects.
Crafts Lives has been running for over ten years and has collected more than 100 interviews. These cover the range of British studio crafts including independent designer-makers working in glass, ceramics, furniture, textiles, metalsmithing, jewellery, basketry, calligraphy and book arts.

The project grew out of Cathy Courtney, Project Director of Artists' Lives, meeting writer and crafts historian Tanya Harrold at the ‘Telling Tales with Technology’ conference in Aberystwyth in 1996. They identified that there was relatively little information available on crafts and craftpeople and a clear need to document their life and work. NLS founder Paul Thompson also had a longstanding interest in crafts. The in-depth life history interview methodology used by National Life Stories had already shown itself to be an effective way to capture the lives and working processes of visual artists. Tanya Harrold was working on a survey of British studio crafts from their beginnings in the Arts and Crafts movement at the turn of the last century via the artist craftsmen of the 1930s to the renewal of interest in individual and handmade objects in the 1970s and 80s, later published as The Crafts in Britain in the 20th Century (Yale University Press, 1999). This provided the basis for a list of craftpeople who should be interviewed.

Crafts Lives began in a modest way in 1999 prioritising older interviewees and with funding from Sir Nicholas Goodison and the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths. Tanya Harrold conducted early interviews with makers such as jeweller Gerda Flockinger and embroiderer Constance Howard, and Linda Sandino contributed interviews including the potter Ursula Momomens and weaver Peter Collingswood. The project received a major boost in 2003 when generous funding from Libet Raising enabled Hawkmoor Hughes to be appointed as a full-time interviewer. Hawkmoor substantially increased the number of interviews in the collection. Support from other funders, notably the Siegmund Warburg Voluntary Settlement, the Laura Ashley Foundation and the Michael Marks Charitable Trust, allowed Hawkmoor to keep working until 2008 and for part-time interviewer Elizabeth Wright and full-time interviewer Frances Cornford to succeed her.

The Crafts Lives archive now represents a rich resource spanning the range of crafts disciplines. In common with other NLS collections, it uses detailed biographical interviews to situate details of work and career within the context of an entire life. Taken as a whole, the archive gives a vivid portrait of the pleasures and pains of making – the deep satisfaction of creating beautiful objects and working for oneself balanced with the difficulties of earning a living and the sheer physical hard work of carving stone or blowing glass.

As with the other life story projects one of the fascinating things to come out of the body of interviews is the map of influences, inspirations, friendships and collaborations between the interviewees and between generations as each builds on or reacts against the work of the generation before. The project also explores the boundaries between art and craft, and how people define their work.

A particular challenge in Crafts Lives is uncovering the tacit knowledge that makers have of their craft. Craftpeople have highly developed physical skills that are ‘second nature’ combined with a deep sensory understanding of the material they work with. Their creativity comes as much through the hands and the process of making as through design and planning, so it can be difficult to articulate how work is made and how techniques develop over time.

Interviewers have devised various strategies to encourage craftpeople to talk about their work. Sometimes ideas have come from the interviewees themselves. Hawkmoor Hughes recalls that it was textile artist Ann Sutton who gave her the idea of asking about five key pieces in detail to show how a craftperson’s work has developed over a lifetime:

“I was talking to her about her marriage to John Makepeace and I was asking her about his work and her perspective on her work and on other people’s work and she said ‘I think most makers make five key pieces in their lives which really define a moment or a point of change or that they’re really particularly proud of’ and I thought that’s really interesting.”

Methods of encouraging craftpeople to talk about their skills include taking them back to the time when they had to painstakingly learn each technique or asking them how they teach them to others. Asking what goes wrong is also fruitful as people are forced to step back and consider how they do something and this often leads to a detailed explanation of techniques and processes. What it also reveals is how craftpeople are constantly experimenting. Far from following tradition, their careers are often characterised by innovation – renewing traditions but reinventing them, combining old techniques with new materials or importing skills from one discipline into another.

Even though many craftpeople say that they would much rather demonstrate their skills than describe what they are doing, they often speak very well when they are asked to explain a technique or give a detailed account of how they make a piece. This means that the archive goes some way towards capturing not only life histories but lifetimes of experience in the skills and processes of creating.

The following extracts give a glimpse of the range of the archive, from detailed description of skills and key pieces to the difficulties of acquiring the right tools.
Recorded in 2005 by Hawksmoor Hughes (C960/27). Walter Keeler describes throwing a pot on a potter’s wheel.

“Well, throwing is a quite extraordinary and unique way of working. You’re dealing with a plastic material which is rotating under your hands and whereas with a lot of processes you … for instance if you’re working with raising metal you will beat it in a rhythmic way, bashing each little bit as it turns under your hands, with throwing the pot is rotating the whole time and you are exerting pressure on it from the inside and from the outside. You’re lubricating the clay with water so it doesn’t stick to your fingers so it slides under your fingers. Initially you centre the piece of clay so that it’s rotating symmetrically, you insert your fingers or your thumb into the centre of the clay and make a hole which is down to within a short distance of the wheel itself, leaving enough thickness for the base of the pot, you then extend that hole into a – into the base of the pot, you make a wide base, as wide as you feel you need for that pot, and you smooth that interior. And that remains there, that’s the bottom of the pot and it’s done virtually. You then have a thick collar of clay, like a doughnut, a ring doughnut which has to evolve into a thin vertical wall and to achieve that you keep the clay lubricated and you squeeze the clay between initially the fingers of your left hand on the inside and your thumb on the outside, so you exert pressure, reducing the thickness. That reduction in thickness is then converted either into height or into width and depending on how you exert pressure on the pot you can dictate which is which, whether it’s going up or whether it’s going out or whether it’s doing something in-between. So for a cylinder you exert a lot of pressure from the outside and as you squeeze the wall and reduce the thickness and draw your hands up the pot so the wall of the pot rises and forms an embryonic cylinder, thicker and shorter than the cylinder that you are aiming for. After that initial lift you then fundamentally use your left hand on the inside and your right hand on the outside, the wheel’s rotating in an anticlockwise direction so that the clay is moving away from your fingertips, your fingertips are trailing as you work, otherwise if it was coming towards you your fingertips would be implanted again. So the pot’s rotating, your left hand’s inside, you – if it’s a small pot you can connect your two hands by their thumbs so that you can tell precisely which finger of the left hand is opposite a finger on the right hand. As the pot gets bigger you have to use your hands independently so that the inside hand is inside with no connection to the outside hand and you have to simply know by instinct or by feel, by subtle signals that the hands are giving to each other through the clay, how those two hands are relating. And it’s simply a pressure between the – usually the knuckle on the outside in the first place, you bend your forefinger and use the knuckle of your first finger which is quite a sort of robust tool as opposed to a fingertip which is relatively refined, so if you’re looking to move a lot of clay you use a knuckle. And you squeeze against the finger on the inside and then you reduce the thickness between those two so that the clay has become thinner. And you have to give the clay time to rotate so if you make the clay thinner that reduction in thickness has to go right around the pot, so you have to pace your movement up the pot in accordance with the speed of rotation so that the influence you’re exerting on the clay is affecting the whole surface of the pot or the whole diameter of the pot, so the whole circumference of the pot as you come up. So you come up the pot treating each bit of it as it rotates under your hand until you get to the top. Then you check that it’s still lubricated sufficiently so it’s not going to stick to your fingers either inside or outside, but you don’t make it too wet because it will make the pot too soft and go back to the bottom, locate the two hands, relate them to each other, register them if you like, and then reduce the thickness yet again and bring that reduction of thicknesses systematically up the pot, each time reducing the thickness. You probably do that maybe twice, three times.”

Recorded in 2011 by Elizabeth Wright (C960/111). Rod talks about acquiring a set of chasing tools during his time as a student at the Royal College of Art.

“I lived in Islington, cycling on my bike to South Kensington each day [to the Royal College of Art] and there was a woodworking tools shop in Islington and I’d look in the window at the tools and occasionally might be able to afford a hammer if they had a nice hammer, and they occasionally had silversmithing and jewellery tools and one day I noticed in the window they had a set of chasing tools so I went into the shop and I asked [the owner of the shop] how much they were – there were £15 tools all in a rack – and he said they were a pound each so it would be £15. Well, I didn’t have a £15 but I really wanted them, so I explained to him where I was, at the Royal College, and he was very interested so I went off and I told [Professor] Gerald Benney about this and he said what I should do is I should take some of my work, go and see the man, make a presentation, show him what I was trying to do, explain to him about the technique and see what he says. So a couple of days later I took a silver beaker that I was working on, I went to see him in his shop and I showed him the beaker, the chase work, the drawings, what I was trying to do, chasing, about pitch and pitch bowls and he was really interested and I said ‘and that’s why I really want these chasing tools,’ and he said ‘I can understand that,’ and I said ‘How much will they be?’ So he said ‘They’ll be £15’ and there was no discount, that was it. So I decided that I would have to have them and I bought them with my student grant so I had macaroni cheese for I don’t know how many months while I saved up this £15 to buy the tools, which I’m still using today. So going back to 1983 they were probably quite cheap really. So I started with those tools, which they weren’t all great but you can then make them into very nice tools.”

Rod Kelly still uses these original tools and sees them as very precious, having enabled him to chase many wonderful pieces of silver.
Lois Walpole, basketmaker

Recorded by Frances Cornford in 2011 (C960/105). The term ‘urban basketmaking’ was coined to describe Lois Walpole’s work using recycled and found materials. This extract is from a long description of making a laundry basket inspired by Tatlin’s Monument to the Third International.

“I really wanted to make a tower that was going to be big, that would be consisting of functional baskets but that when I wanted to send it away to an exhibition, I could pack it all up into one small box, so it was the jack-in-a-box idea. So I had these ideas playing in my head about the practicality of it and about the Tatlin tower – practicality, the ability for it all to collapse, this jack-in-a-box thing so that it was really easy to post and it all came together in this one piece. When I made it, it all seemed to flow really well. Basically it’s a willow construction of four drums, each one fitting into the next one. Each of these drums has a separate lid so that when you stack them the next one sits on the lid of the previous one and ultimately when it’s standing up it’s nearly three metres high in the room so it makes quite a spectacular piece. But it weighs next to nothing and it all packs into the bottom cylinder and it can be posted in actually quite a small box. And it’s willow construction – a very simple traditional willow base, so you make a round base, you stake it up, and then you weave with whatever the material is. Now in this case I was using cardboard and when you’re working with willow you have to have wet willow so it will bend when you want to bend the border down so I developed a way of working with cardboard where I would make the skeleton out of the willow while it was all damp, so I would use other things to hold it to the right shape than the final weaving. So the final weaving didn’t go on until the structure which was the base and the sticks going up the side and the border had all been made. And I would hold that together with other bits of weaving. And when I was then going to put the cardboard in when it was dry – because you don’t want to get the cardboard wet – I would cut out these other elements of weaving that I had used to hold the shape and put the cardboard in instead.”

Crafts Lives Interviewees (at May 2012)


Funders

Crafts Lives is grateful for the support of The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, Lisbet Rausing, the Sir Siegmund Warburg Voluntary Settlement, the John Keatley Trust, Janice Blackburn, the idewild Trust, the Stuart Heath Charitable Trust, the Laura Ashley Foundation, the Furniture History Society and the Michael Marks Charitable Trust.

Sir Nicholas Goodison, current chair of National Life Stories and a notable patron of British contemporary crafts, has been an invaluable friend and benefactor of the project.

Crafts Lives Advisory Committee

Founding members Amanda Fielding, Tanya Harrod, Helen Joseph, John Keatley, Martina Margetts, and Ralph Turner were later joined by Rosy Greenlees, and more recently by James Brighton, Annabelle Campbell and Sarah Griffin. Emmanuel Cooper, who died in January 2012, was a valued founder member of the Advisory Committee and will be very much missed. Emmanuel, a leading potter and writer on the crafts, was interviewed for Crafts Lives in 2005. An extract from his interview appears in Last Words on page 24.
“I was there. This is what I remember.”

Dame Stephanie Shirley, entrepreneur, computer scientist and philanthropist, with Tom Lean, Project Interviewer, National Life Stories

Dame Stephanie ‘Steve’ Shirley was born in Germany in 1933 and arrived in Britain as a refugee aboard a Kindertransport in 1939. After working with early computers as a scientific civil servant, she started Freelance Programmers in 1962, to provide programming jobs for women who had been forced out of the computing world on marriage or when they had children, adopting the name “Steve” to help her in the male-dominated world of business. Her late son Giles was autistic, leading Steve to fund projects in education and causal research into the disorder, efforts that eventually saw her appointed as the first Ambassador for Philanthropy.

In 2010, Steve recorded a fifteen-hour life story interview with Tom Lean as part of NLS’s An Oral History of British Science. Nearly three years after the recording, Tom was intrigued by an email from Steve with some reflections on the interview and decided to investigate further, particularly as Steve has recently written her memoirs with a ghost writer.

Interview Reflections

I was wondering if you had any questions for me as the person on the other side of the table?

Steve: I was flattered of course. I was surprised. I think I wrote back along the lines of, “are you sure this is not a mistake as I no longer think of myself as a scientist?”.

Do you ever miss the scientific work of your career?

Not really! I find people much more interesting. What I learnt I suppose, is that research can also be something like market research, which I hadn’t realised to begin with, I thought research was something you did with test tubes in a laboratory... I think the scientific process is valuable, I’ve certainly found it so in the last five or ten years when I’ve been involved with funding of medical research and realise that metrics, peer review, accuracy, precision — all those things still come into my daily life.

Tom: How did you feel when the letter inviting you to join the project arrived?

Steve: I was flattered of course. I was surprised. I think I wrote back along the lines of, “are you sure this is not a mistake as I no longer think of myself as a scientist?”.

Were there any key stories you were trying to get across in the interview as a whole?

Yes I think there were. Something to do with the understanding of innovation, where it comes from. Where do you get the spark of an idea from? I don’t have the answer! But it’s a question that comes up over and over again.

I did wonder if the process of having your memoirs written differed from doing a life story interview?

Much more unstructured, because nothing was going down as a permanent record. The ghost writer would condense a twenty-minute rambling onto tape into a couple of paragraphs. Whereas with you I knew I was going down for ever and ever.

How do you feel about the prospect of “going down for ever and ever” in this way?

Oh I like it! Anyone with an interest in their legacy would! It’s a small legacy but I’m a great patriot and it’s good to support the British Library.

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Weird! I am still one of the best proofreaders I know, and that comes from my computer training and needing to be precise!

What I’d thought of as generalist turned out to be quite specialist and sharp. And conversely what I’d thought of as being specific turned out to be of universal interest.

The thought that occurred to me over the interview was how many different layers there were to your life and the connections between them. I thought the way we’d discuss the same period from perhaps three different angles with quite different insights was fascinating.

I’ve agreed a publisher for my memoirs, Let It Go, as an E-book, as I’d had terrible problems finding a conventional publisher because they don’t know how to market it. “It’s brilliant, couldn’t put it down! But is it a book about refugees? Is it a book about autism? Is it a book about women?” But then most professional managers have one aim at a time and entrepreneurs, we have several.

Was there anything that surprised you on listening back to the recording afterwards?

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Yes I think there were. Something to do with the understanding of innovation, where it comes from. Where do you get the spark of an idea from? I don’t have the answer! But it’s a question that comes up over and over again.

And also the learning process that meant that you could identify the sort of boss you didn’t want to be and that’s a valuable thing to learn and tuck away.

Do you ever miss the scientific work of your career?

Not really! I find people much more interesting. What I learnt I suppose, is that research can also be something like market research, which I hadn’t realised to begin with, I thought research was something you did with test tubes in a laboratory... I think the scientific process is valuable, I’ve certainly found it so in the last five or ten years when I’ve been involved with funding of medical research and realise that metrics, peer review, accuracy, precision — all those things still come into my daily life.

How did the life story interview differ from other interviews you’d done before?

The length allows you to go into some detail. Things came out that I wasn’t so conscious of before. I certainly recognise how holistic everything is. Everything is connected to everything else. And it brought out new insights into the importance of networking. I hadn’t realised how it was a thread through everything I was doing and that some of that stemmed from my own need to be accepted.

We have this classic thing about science as ‘standing on the shoulders of giants’, a bit like a relay race, you pass on the baton. And I was trying to think of a metaphor for what it’s really like. I don’t think it’s just team work. If you watch a cycle race, teams form something called a peloton and it’s quite weird — a group become a unity, they take turns to get in the front and so on. And I think that’s what science is like, we do have to work together and sometimes you are privileged to be the first to know something. And it’s a great joy.

Were there any things you found difficult with doing the interview?

I really found it difficult to separate hearsay from memory. Certain parts of my life have been well written up, the Kindertransport and so on. But to recall what I remember, what I experienced, I do find that difficult. I saw a documentary on it that didn’t look anything like I remember, but who’s right? I don’t know. I was there. This is what I remember.
Architects’ oral histories as a campaigning tool?

Catherine Croft, Director of the Twentieth Century Society

As an interviewer for Architects’ Lives, and a member of the Advisory Committee, I’ve given a great deal of thought to the gathering of material: who should we record and how can we make each recording as comprehensive as possible? A recent project for my ‘day job’ as Director of the Twentieth Century Society gave me a different perspective and made me more aware of the range of uses that recordings can be put to.

The Twentieth Century Society campaigns for the preservation of twentieth century buildings — and increasingly fights for the retention of the best examples of all of them. If experts differ over the merits or authenticity of a painting it may be shunted to the store room of an art gallery, but if a building’s merits are not highly valued at any critical point, it may be demolished and is then unavailable for any future reassessment. Last year we heard of the imminent demolition of part of the Broadgate Development in the City of London, the Postmoden office complex that surrounds Liverpool St Station. Constructed in the mid-1980s, Broadgate is the most significant and successful commercial development in London of the post-war period. The provision of public space and artwork (including sculpture by Richard Serra and Barry Flanagan) brought an entirely new template to London and it was also remarkable for both the manner and speed of its construction. It is well used and enjoyed by City workers and visitors.

The earliest, and arguably best, part of the scheme was designed by architects Arup Associates. An earlier work by this distinguished practice had been listed as long ago as 1993 (the Leckhampton Building for Corpus Christi College Cambridge, 1963–4). In 2011 a planning application was made for permission to demolish several of the Arup Broadgate buildings and replace them with a much larger building by MAKE architects.

Press coverage rapidly showed how contentious the history and significance of buildings designed and constructed so recently could be. It was not just a question of reconciling differing subjective judgments of the architectural quality or historic significance of the buildings (not necessarily the same thing); rather it was a broad debate about exactly what the facts were and about attributing authorship to a building in an age where one person cannot be making all the creative decisions.

The Guardian reported the Broadgate controversy with relish, asking if the buildings were “Heritage or Horror?” and describing the development as the “landmark that launched the loadsamoney culture of 1980s” (Robert Booth in The Guardian, 12 May 2011). The original architect’s apparent poor assessment of the buildings was cited as a reason not to value them highly, and as justification for demolition. Building Design magazine published a letter from reader Paul Taylor who “had the privilege of working closely with Peter Foggo from the start to the finish of his part of the Broadgate project” and recalled that, “He confided to me a number of times that he would have preferred to have continued the metal and glass theme” of his earlier work (Building Design, 11 May 2011). This question became more significant when it seemed as if what Foggo may or may not have thought of his own work might have significantly influenced the planning process. The Guardian reported how “Speaking in favour of granting permission for the redevelopment at last month’s Corporation of London planning committee meeting, the City of London’s Chief Planning officer (Peter) Rees claimed Foggo was unhappy with the buildings he produced. The plans were then granted consent.” But the paper went on to cast doubt on the accuracy of Rees’s stance, noting that “The claims were described as ‘scurrilous’ by Lilian Foggo, his widow, and strongly denied by his colleagues on the original project. ‘Never did I hear him say that,’ she said. ‘No architect would design buildings he didn’t like and put them up. My husband definitely did not hate or dislike his own buildings. Full stop.’”

As the debate around Broadgate grew, I wondered what the oral history collections including NL’s Architects’ Lives could contribute. Authorship of a building is always hard to attribute, given the generally highly collaborative process of building design. As Arup Associates was founded in 1963 specifically so that architects and engineers could work on an equal basis as ‘building designers’, this was especially pertinent in this instance. Should Peter Foggo indeed be regarded as the individual ‘author’ of the building? What I was hoping to find was an interview with Peter Foggo, saying how pleased he was with Broadgate, backed by interviews with colleagues acknowledging him as a lone creative genius. What I got was different, but was both revealing and thought-provoking.

The British Library has fifty-seven audio tapes of interviews with people who knew or worked with Ove Arup. Although most of them follow the life story format, it was a project initiated (and funded by) Ove Arup & Partners in 1996–7 (Ove Arup Architecture Interviews C765). Sadly there is no recording of Peter Foggo and, although he had previously left the firm to establish an independent practice, it was a project left to the writer who worked with Ove Arup. Although most of them follow the life story format, it was a project initiated (and funded by) Ove Arup & Partners in 1996–7 (Ove Arup Architecture Interviews C765). Sadly there is no recording of Peter Foggo and, although he had previously left

In fact the recordings proved to have very little value as a direct campaigning tool for the Twentieth Century Society: they did not provide media-friendly soundbites. However they undoubtedly provided extra background information that had not been captured in any other form, and enriched my understanding of the development of Broadgate. The exercise also inspired me to think of other ways in which the Twentieth Century Society could make direct use of recordings, and a forthcoming tour for our members of the work of architects Maguire and Murray, will be greatly enhanced by playing some extracts from the Architects’ Lives recording with Bob Maguire, as we visit some of his most interesting buildings. Clips will be on our website, alongside photographs from the event, for those who miss it. And I am also playing a selection of extracts of architects talking about how they used concrete, to students on my annual course on the Conservation of Historic Concrete. I’m delighted by how these oral histories capture the sense of excitement and possibility that the material generated in the immediate post-war period — and convey it in such a powerful and accessible way.

The second speaker is very different. David Armstrong was the firm’s in-house model maker and his words are more reflective and relaxed. One senses that he is less embedded in the project of creating a heroic and celebratory legacy for the firm, and is in fact keen to subvert the official version of events:

“...it was a question of reconciling differing subjective judgments of the architectural quality or historic significance of the buildings (not necessarily the same thing); rather it was a broad debate about exactly what the facts were and about attributing authorship to a building in an age where one person cannot be making all the creative decisions.

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“My favourite architect in the firm I suppose — this wasn’t Philip Dowson this was Peter Foggo who was... [pause]... the... [pause]... well I always felt he was the (oh, I shouldn’t say this should I?) the architect of Arup associates, architecturally... [pause]... not administratively in a sense... but... well... I felt for him and he preached the Arup gospel with such passion...it was about how it was a crusading body of people out to produce good work before anything else, all else... the only jobs they made any money out of were the ones that were cancelled before they were finished.” (C765/19/01–04)

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The second speaker is very different. David Armstrong was the firm’s in-house model maker and his words are more reflective and relaxed. One senses that he is less embedded in the project of creating a heroic and celebratory legacy for the firm, and is in fact keen to subvert the official version of events:

“My favourite architect in the firm I suppose — this wasn’t Philip Dowson this was Peter Foggo who was... [pause]... the... [pause]... well I always felt he was the (oh, I shouldn’t say this should I?) the architect of Arup associates, architecturally... [pause]... not administratively in a sense... but... well... I felt for him and he preached the Arup gospel with such passion...it was about how it was a crusading body of people out to produce good work before anything else, all else... the only jobs they made any money out of were the ones that were cancelled before they were finished.” (C765/19/01–04)

In fact the recordings proved to have very little value as a direct campaigning tool for the Twentieth Century Society: they did not provide media-friendly soundbites. However they undoubtedly provided extra background information that had not been captured in any other form, and enriched my understanding of the development of Broadgate. The exercise also inspired me to think of other ways in which the Twentieth Century Society could make direct use of recordings, and a forthcoming tour for our members of the work of architects Maguire and Murray, will be greatly enhanced by playing some extracts from the Architects’ Lives recording with Bob Maguire, as we visit some of his most interesting buildings. Clips will be on our website, alongside photographs from the event, for those who miss it. And I am also playing a selection of extracts of architects talking about how they used concrete, to students on my annual course on the Conservation of Historic Concrete. I’m delighted by how these oral histories capture the sense of excitement and possibility that the material generated in the immediate post-war period — and convey it in such a powerful and accessible way.
Climate change in holes
Paul Merchant, Project Interviewer, National Life Stories

“When one of the teachers in the primary school...one of them asked, I think it was Robert, ‘and what does your Daddy do?’ He said ‘he washes mud,’ which is his impression of what I spent my life doing.” (Russell Coope C1379/63 track 3 1:14:32 – 1:15:11)

This article considers the role of holes in the production of scientific knowledge about past climates, and climate change. We’ll start with holes at the bottom of the sea.

Commission a drilling ship and you can drill a hole into the ocean bed and pull up the contents of the hole – a cylinder of oozy sediment called an ‘ocean core’. If you rinse this ooze into a sieve, you are likely to find tiny shells of sea creatures called foraminifera (forams for short). Shells from the top of the core were made by forams that lived in the ocean recently. Shells from deeper in the core were made by forams that lived longer ago, perhaps (at the bottom of the core) a million years ago. The detailed chemistry of the shells is affected by the global climate at the time of their formation; shells from colder periods are chemically ‘heavier’. Interviewee Mike Hall has spent most of his working life using instruments called ‘mass spectrometers’ to encourage forams to tell a chemical story of ice ages and warmer interludes.

“We started at the top of the core and were gradually working down into it so we would do the first ten measurements and you could see that these were probably fairly flat being a sort of interglacial period and then you would find, do the next two or three measurements and they would be getting heavier and you would be going down into a glacial and then at the bottom of that you’d find, the next day you’d do a few more measurements and be coming up to another interglacial and you’d be going back in cycles between glacial and interglacial periods and it was interesting to see how many glacial cycles there were.” (C1379/59 track 21 39:54 – 40:42)

A hole in the ocean floor becomes the focus for a conversation with a curious mix of timescales – the lifetime, the career, geological time, the working day:

“I think one of the most exciting times was certainly in the late sixties, early seventies where we produced...data from the longest core, which was V28/238 and it went...through up to about a million years. Oh goodness me! [laughs] I think it was a number of years...How long did it take you to work all the way down from the top to the bottom of the core?...I remember one occasion when collecting samples, this (characterised by his son at the beginning of this article) made use of holes dug by others, especially gravel...living in the arctic, and in the tropics. Material had to be collected before the holes were deepened, or filled in: ‘We had some air photographs I believe and it was – it was really a matter of locating oneself on the air photographs and then following gullies in the slopes which revealed the...’ (C1379/12 track 13 26:44 – 28:16)

Britain is not affected by gully erosion. The ground is not opened up in this way. Here, if you are a scientist concerned with past climates, it is often necessary to wait for someone else to dig a hole. Interviewee Richard West has been able to reconstruct the effect on the East Anglian landscape of past ice ages by examining the contents of holes made by farmers in west Norfolk. For example, a sand pit near the village of Beachamwell (pictured) contains layers of sand and silt deposited in a lake that formed when rivers were blocked by glaciers. And nearby:

“I found another place by walking around in the Gadder Valley...where a farmer, Mr Knights, who is a great dealer in carrots, in fact I think he was ‘Mr Carrot of East Anglia’, had dug some pits for washing the carrots... And this pit is on the edge of this lake, it turns out, and you can see how stuff has slumped into the lake in the section beautifully, it’s an amazing experience. It was pure luck really. And so I’m able to construct a really good story about the origins of the Breckland sands, the origin of those dry valleys and the whole landscape history, the formation of this lake.” (C1379/34 track 13 1:06:19 – 1:07:20)

“...How long did it take you to work all the way down from the top to the bottom of the core?...And so we went and collected the material whilst they were about to, to fill the hole in. And I was at the bottom of the hole when there was a hopper of liquid concrete suspended over my head, dribbling concrete all the time, so that I finished up looking like one of these monsters from out of space, being totally encased in sorts of semi-congealed concrete, but I collected the stuff – in big bags – and fished the bags out and as I came out of the excavation they pulled the chain on the hopper and the whole thing filled with liquid concrete.” (C1379/63 track 7 1:15 – 1:55)

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All this was going on in Cambridge in the 1960s and 1970s. Meanwhile, in Africa, interviewee Dick Grove was seeking out other holes in the ground to answer questions about climate change. It was known that at times in the past African lakes had been bigger – suggesting wetter climates. But when? For how long? How much bigger? The ground could answer these questions. In places deep gullies (ditch like channels) cut open the ground, offering views of layers of sediment that had once accumulated under water, under bigger lakes of the past:

“We had some air photographs I believe and it was – it was really a matter of locating oneself on the air photographs and then following gullies in the slopes which revealed the sedimentary succession on the slopes which would have been laid down by the lakes when they were much bigger than they are now... We knew that we would find shelly material that would be datable. So it was largely a matter of grubbing around in – in gullies and where there had been landslips or anything of that kind.” (C1379/12 track 13 26:44 – 28:16)

Similarly, from the 1950s the late Russell Coope (characterised by his son at the beginning of this article) made use of holes dug by others, especially gravel quarries, motorway cuttings and building foundations. Samples of fossil beetles (pictured on the front cover) from these holes included, at different levels, species currently living in the arctic, and in the tropics. Material had to be collected before the holes were deepened, or filled in:

“I found another place by walking around in the Gadder Valley...where a farmer, Mr Knights, who is a great dealer in carrots, in fact I think he was ‘Mr Carrot of East Anglia’, had dug some pits for washing the carrots... And this pit is on the edge of this lake, it turns out, and you can see how stuff has slumped into the lake in the section beautifully, it’s an amazing experience. It was pure luck really. And so I’m able to construct a really good story about the origins of the Breckland sands, the origin of those dry valleys and the whole landscape history, the formation of this lake”. (C1379/34 track 13 1:06:19 – 1:07:20)

When foundations were dug for the Ugandan Embassy, was in a road cutting, because again motorways cut great swathes through the country, I started, in the morning, in the ground, offering views of layers of sediment that had once accumulated under water, under bigger lakes of the past:

“We started at the top of the core and were gradually working down into it so we would do the first ten measurements and you could see that these were probably fairly flat being a sort of interglacial period and then you would find, do the next two or three measurements and they would be getting heavier and therefore you would be going down into a glacial and then at the bottom of that you’d find, the next day you’d do a few more measurements and be coming up to another interglacial and you’d be going back in cycles between glacial and interglacial periods and it was interesting to see how many glacial cycles there were.” (C1379/59 track 21 39:54 – 40:42)

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The ways in which we can access the contents of libraries, archives and museums has been changing fast since the 1970s, as computers have become the main tools of business and administration. This change is fossilised in the design of the British Library building at St Pancras, where the large central atrium was intended at first to house a catalogue hall, to be used in the same way as the concentric rings of guard-book shelves in the British Museum’s old Bloomsbury reading room. The contents of that entire structure can now be presented on a computer screen in any corner you choose to put it, and you don’t need to come to the library to look at it. The actual contents of libraries are gradually following their finding aids on to the internet. The ‘digital library’ and the ‘museum without walls’ are constantly in the thoughts of policy makers. NLS collections are moving in this direction too, as Elspeth Millar described in NLS Review and Accounts 2010/2011, but the nature of the material we collect has presented us with a number of questions about how we gather and present information about the interviews, so that they are as accessible as possible. With NLS projects becoming more ambitious, and the interviews growing in scale and scope, a more deliberate focus on gathering and accessing, and the evolution of a more standardised procedure, has become necessary. In 2000 the post of ‘research cataloguer’ was created, sponsored by NLS, to work at first on the Artists’ Lives collection. This important collection was well documented, but not particularly accessible because the documentation consisted of long typescript summaries and transcripts stored in filing cabinets. Part of our task was to incorporate a version of this material in the online catalogue.

Catalogues can bear a variety of relations to the objects they describe. A spectrum runs from simply identifying an object (by title, author, subject, of a book, for example) and presenting the distance between the catalogue as finding aid – the normal role of an archive or library catalogue – and the archived object itself.

In some ways a life story recording is like a book. It is a narrative, it is deliberately composed to a certain extent, and its content is ordered from the point of view of, usually, one or two individuals. However, it is also made up of the sort of raw material which appears in personal diaries and letters. Moreover, being deliberate recollections rather than a contemporaneous account, it will contain a wealth of information about other people and a wider variety of events and situations of which the speaker has intimate knowledge, and so have an interest well beyond his or her biography.

To guide users through this kind of material we need something like an index in the catalogue itself, but which can also give some indication of the relation of each topic to the narrative as a whole, suggesting its place and scope. Mere notes of subject are not sufficient, as they do not provide a basis for navigating through long recordings in which the discussion ranges back and forth over many topics. In the process of recording extended interviews, interviewers find it useful to keep an accessible summary of what they have talked about so far, and this provides a basis for a final summary, which will be included in the catalogue, to provide the kind of guide we need. The interviewer, having the knowledge of a participant in the recording, is supplying the central component of the catalogue record.

Until we started the Artists’ Lives cataloguing project, there was an unspoken presumption in favour of summaries rather like calendars of letters – the results often being long and unwieldy. The summary was treated as an analysis of primary data – as if it represented the results of an experiment. Much social research data has been archived in this way, so as to protect not only the informants but also the academic interests of the researchers. If, by saying as much as possible in the summary, you could avoid recourse to the actual recordings, you at least saved trouble when revising a large mass of data. (Nowadays this is less true, with the change to more easily accessible digital recording techniques.) You could also control the amount of information others might get about your sources. This, however, assumes that your recordings are primarily a personal not a public archive, and that is not what we aspire to. The British Library’s oral history collection, and especially NLS, wants to be as open and accessible as possible within the constraints set by our interviewees. We therefore want the interviewees’ recorded words to be the main point of reference for our users, and this affects the way we present our collections.

From our work on Artists’ Lives we drew a number of conclusions about the style of summaries. We need to communicate enough to users about the recordings for them to choose what to listen to, while not swamping them in a mass of detail which may make their searching difficult or make the catalogue record too large for the catalogue system. Summaries should indicate the topics, people and places which appear in the interview rather than give specific details of speakers’ stories and opinions. We must also make sure that the terms we are using to describe interviews follow the forms accepted in the international library and archive world, and which make finding things globally on the internet possible. Recently, we have been especially helped in this by an expert volunteer who checks summaries and corrects names and other details in our Artists’ Lives collection. Finally, the benefit of these experiences is passed on to other collectors of oral history through the advice and which the British Library is often asked to give on other people’s oral history projects, so we can provide a model for oral history archiving all over the country.

One afternoon in January this year all the British Library staff concerned with sound and moving image collections were huddled round tables with large sheets of paper scribbling out their fantasies of a totally integrated system for describing, finding, managing and delivering collection items. We were trying to imagine where the gradual interweaving of catalogue as finding aid and the archived object itself was leading. NLS material, being large and complex, has pushed the boundaries of the cataloguing and handling of recordings from the very beginning of the British Library’s measures to collect digital recordings, and we must make sure that future systems will fit our needs. We already have complete verbatim transcripts for many interviews, and now that these too can be presented online, they could act to some extent as finding aids giving details of the contents of recordings down to the level of the actual words used (which sounds like a complete reproduction, but excludes how the words are used – the intonation and timing, which can carry a great deal of meaning). So far, these cannot be accommodated within the catalogue at the level of primary finding aid. Future developments might display different representations of recordings on different electronic platforms, linked across to each other, and might include voice and sound-pattern recognition. All might offer new ways of finding wanted material from amongst the masses available.

Concern for the future expectations of library users drives these developments. As the power of computers and the internet grows, ways of discovering the enormous variety of available data sources which are out there – in an equal variety of sites and formats – and ways of directly accessing that material are more and more valuable. As increasing importance is accorded to an efficient, powerful and, not least, attractive user-experience, we are doing our best to provide it through imaginative use of our resources, elegant description, clear searching and transparent reproduction. Perhaps the time is coming when the catalogue as fine art will be an everyday reality.
Potter Emmanuel Cooper was born in the mining village of Pilsley in Derbyshire and initially trained and worked as a teacher before deciding to concentrate on ceramics. As well as being a distinguished potter, he co-founded Ceramic Review, taught widely and wrote on ceramics and campaigned for gay rights. He was a tireless advocate for crafts and sat on a number of boards and committees, including the Advisory Committee for Crafts Lives at National Life Stories, where he will be greatly missed.

In this extract he describes how, after training with Gwyn Hanssen (Pigott), he took over her studio in Notting Hill and set up as a potter in his own right.

"And then I was about 28, 29 and really I felt that my life was really then taking the sort of shape that I wanted it to be though I was living by myself. I got the pottery – it was... I met Kaffe Fassett and his then boyfriend Bill Gibb and a guy called Tom Wakefield who was then a teacher in a special school and wanted to be a writer and later became a novelist. And there was this wonderful rich vaguely artistic community – David Hockney lived round the corner and could often be seen cleaning his car in the garage next door and I never had the nerve to go up to him and speak to him which I’m sure would have been fine but I just was a little bit too timid. And I joined the Craft Potters Association. The first time they turned me down, the second time they took me on. And all that was absolutely wonderful.

"Within the workshop... although you think you know what you want to make, when you come to work it out in detail it’s actually more complicated than you think. But I was driven by a very strong imperative to make tableware and that’s what I really felt was where real pottery was with individual pieces made alongside it. And it was very much the Leachian, William Morris line which carried with it an enormous amount of virtue – made me feel virtuous and it’s like a moral imperative – that pottery had to be meaningful, that making it was worthwhile and the making of it and the objects themselves would have not only the pleasure of the use of the well-designed, I hope, object but also that feeling of the individual maker bringing their own sensibility, their own creativity to it. And I didn’t want the model to be Leach – of the pots. I wanted it to be much more Scandinavian and much cooler, much more simple. And anyway I was working in London, I wasn’t working in the country. The pottery was small, I had an electric kiln, I didn’t have a kiln I could fire to reduction and so I suppose the model was much more Lucie Rie at that time and she lived just down the road in Baywater and I’d had an introduction to her through Gwyn Hanssen and gradually got up the courage to go and see her a few times. And although I didn’t at all emulate her pots at that time, she was perhaps a far bigger model than I realised, but I wanted something a bit more earthy in my pottery than she made. Her work is terribly sophisticated, white or black ... My model was Scandinavian and all the forms were based on the cylinder with incised or scratched decoration or little lips and I devised slowly a range of work which included store jars, different sized plates, teapots, coffee pots and coffee sets, soup bowls, soup tureens and so on, which were done in different glazes of which there was a greenish mottled white which was by far the most successful. And slowly this started to be accepted and taken in to galleries and although – because it was tableware – the prices were very modest, I made a living, just about."

Emmanuel Cooper (1938–2012)
Interviewed by Hawksmoor Hughes, 2005

In 1960 the President of the Royal Academy of Art, Sir Charles Wheeler, was so affronted by John Hoyland’s shift from figurative painting to abstraction that he ordered the staff to cover the walls. Mel Gooding’s recording was conducted in Hoyland’s London home in a former hat factory in Charterhouse Square.

"I never wanted a house with all sorts of little rooms. That’s why I never had a house, why I never bought one... I always put the art first... if I could get a bigger studio with... I always put the art first... if I could get a bigger studio with a bigger living area, I wouldn’t mind... I don’t like working by appointment, I don’t like having to get up and drive somewhere and try to find somewhere to park and then climb the stairs and go into a cold loft... I can keep all my energy for working. I just walk through that door and if I don’t feel like working I can come out again... generally speaking, I’m a very, very early riser... like this morning I was up at five thirty. Once I’m awake I can’t sleep any more. And I get up and I usually have coffee or some breakfast – sometimes go out for breakfast because everything opens very early around where I am because of... Smithfield Market. But, I have to get started, really before eight o’clock. Often I might start at quarter to seven, something like that... I usually put the TV on, watch the news... Put my studio clothes on, all my protective clothing and I like to get going early when I’m at my peak and

before the phone starts ringing or any other distractions. And I’m often through by nine thirty, ten o’clock, you know because I try to work as quickly as possible and as directly as possible.

But a lot of the bigger works are made actually horizontally aren’t they?

On the floor, yeah... Painting and pouring and then of course knitting, that would be done vertically... then it’s the watching paint dry syndrome... puddled paint... can sometimes take two days. But I might go and disturb it, or shift it, or somehow interfere with it. But William Scott came into the Academy Schools a few times when I was a student and he said, ‘never fiddle with a painting. This is an English disease you know, this fiddling’, And I have to hold myself back from fiddling and just turn my back and of course sometimes when I pour paint and puddle paint, because the floor’s not totally even, it can build up like a dam and it can move on its own when you’re not there, which sort of excites me and scares me equally... sometimes you go back in and it’s done something you don’t like... And then you have to take some sort of evasive action... and either do something to build a barrier of paint or something like that. If it was a puddle of paint you might have to draw an arc around it. But then you might see that it’s done something that’s advantageous that you hadn’t thought of, so you’ve always got to be learning from the painting and the process, as well as, you can’t just impose on a painting. I’ve said this before many times, but I should imagine it’s like catching a fish where you have to let it run and then you have to gradually haul it in, but you can’t yank it in, you can’t get heavy with it, you just have to play it and try to keep as light a touch as possible, certainly in those early stages of a painting. Maybe you have to get more murderous and more violent towards the completion of the painting, but at the beginning you’re trying to coax life into the thing, I think. Something like that.

John Hoyland (1934–2011)
Interviewed by Mel Gooding, 2005–2007

David Stuart Jenkinson (1928–2011)
Interviewed by Paul Merchant, 2010

“And the main finding, and probably the most important, was that when we harvested in August or so, this is winter wheat, we found ...most of it was in the plant.... We did maize; we did beans, we did barley, spring barley, and oilseed rape. And with all those ...if you use nitrogen fertiliser at the right time and not use too much, you don’t get a large residue of unused fertiliser sitting in the soil at harvest ready to be leached out into the watercourses.”

Sensibly applied at the right time of year, nitrogen fertilisers could continue to benefit farming. A similar practical, down-to-earthness set him apart from more recent valuing of organic farming:

“I was walking over, yesterday, the farm owned by the Prince of Wales ...and he’d got, he was growing an organic crop of wheat there, and it was miserable. Full of weeds. Obviously yellow, suffering from extreme nitrogen deficiency, and they’ll get a tiny little yield. But on the other hand, they’ll sell it as organic flour at a colossal price. But as a way of feeding huge populations, it’s, it’s not on.”

In retirement, David found time to apply his understanding of the cycling of carbon between the atmosphere, soil, plants and micro-organisms to contribute to predictions of climate change:

“I realised... by the time I retired, that if the Earth warmed, and there was a lot of talk then about warming at that time... the rate of decomposition of...soil organic matter, would increase. ... If you get even quite a modest warming of the soil, you could release quite a lot of carbon dioxide by accelerating decomposition. And, I wanted to look at this.”

With colleagues, he confirmed the role of soil organic material as a ‘positive feedback’, and improved the global climate models in use at the Met Office’s Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research. As he put it, retirement wasn’t ‘entirely devoted to gardening’.

“...I was aware, even as quite a young boy, that...these things could be improved. I mean I was very well aware that... one of my uncles, for example...was introducing...quite a lot of fertilisers, inorganic fertilisers. And I still feel that, that this is something that is important; science and engineering should be used in agriculture, both to raise productivity and also to eliminate at least some of the awful heavy hard work that was normal in those days.”

In the late 1970s, while others panicked about nitrate pollution of rivers and aquifers by ‘leaching’ of nitrogen fertilisers, David conducted careful experiments to determine what happened to labelled (radioactive) nitrogen after it was applied to plots of various crops:

“David’s account of his childhood on a farm in County Armagh, Northern Ireland mixes stories of flower pressing, chasing hens, checking the hindquarters of sheep for maggots, being cold and stooking hay. He felt that experiences of farm work proofed him against a sentimental view of ‘natural’ farming:

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## Statement of Financial Activities

**Year Ended 31 December 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th><strong>TOTAL</strong></th>
<th><strong>2011</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>INCOMING RESOURCES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>238,499</td>
<td>14,626</td>
<td>253,125</td>
<td>265,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank interest receivable</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>4,430</td>
<td>4,621</td>
<td>3,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment income</td>
<td>10,699</td>
<td>15,985</td>
<td>26,684</td>
<td>25,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous income</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>11,085</td>
<td>11,085</td>
<td>8,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES</strong></td>
<td>249,389</td>
<td>46,126</td>
<td>295,515</td>
<td>303,552</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **RESOURCES EXPENDED** | | | |
| Charitable Activities | 276,529 | – | 276,529 | 247,121 |
| Governance and administration | – | 3,488 | 3,488 | 26,101 |
| **TOTAL EXPENDITURE** | 276,529 | 3,488 | 280,017 | 273,222 |

| **NET INCOMING / (OUTGOING) RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR** | | | |
| (27,140) | 42,638 | 15,498 | 30,330 |
| Realised investment loss | – | (238) | (238) | – |
| Transfers | (18,048) | 18,048 | – | – |
| Net income (expenditure) for the year | (45,188) | 60,448 | 15,260 | 30,330 |
| Unrealised investment loss | (9,500) | (19,426) | (28,926) | 48,323 |
| Net movement in funds for the year | (54,688) | 41,022 | (13,666) | 78,653 |
| Total funds: | | | |
| Brought forward | 683,867 | 432,183 | 1,116,050 | 1,037,397 |
| Carried forward | 629,179 | 473,205 | 1,102,384 | 1,116,050 |

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 are 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 April 2008), the Companies Act 2006 and the requirements of the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities.

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 of the state of the charitable company’s affairs as at 31 December 2011 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure for the year then ended;
- the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice applicable to Smaller Entities;
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

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

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

Sir Nicholas Goodison
Chairman of Trustees

## Balance Sheet at 31 December 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>2011</strong></th>
<th><strong>2010</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIXED ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investments</td>
<td>676,744</td>
<td>705,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CURRENT ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debtors</td>
<td>8,832</td>
<td>5,890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash at bank and in hand</td>
<td>427,169</td>
<td>440,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CREDITORS (Amounts falling due within one year)</strong></td>
<td>(436,001)</td>
<td>(446,620)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>**(10,361)</td>
<td>(36,477)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NET CURRENT ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>425,640</td>
<td>410,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</strong></td>
<td>1,102,384</td>
<td>1,116,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CAPITAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder’s donation</td>
<td>200,000</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted fund</td>
<td>273,205</td>
<td>232,183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted fund</td>
<td>629,179</td>
<td>683,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL CAPITAL</strong></td>
<td>1,102,384</td>
<td>1,116,050</td>
</tr>
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Chairman of Trustees
Projects and Collections

Leaders of National Life (C408) [30 interviews]
Leaders of National Life is one of NLS’s founding collections. Its scope is wide, and includes politics, industry, the arts, sport, religion, the professions, administration and communications. Priority is given to those whose life stories have not been previously recorded or published.

City Lives (C429) [149 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) [187 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 and over sixty full interviews are available on the web at http://sounds.bl.uk. NLS has also worked with the Holocaust Survivors’ Centre to archive and provide access to their collection of over 150 recordings (C830).

General Interviews (C464) [83 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) [321 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 Foundation, The Fleming Collection, The Rootstein Hopkins Foundation and The Yale Centre 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 http://www.bl.uk/nls/artists/drawing.

Artists’ Lives Advisory Committee
Sonia Boyce, Sir Alan Bowness, Dr Penelope Curtis, Caroline Cuthbert, Adrian Glov, Professor Mel Gooding (chair), Beth Houghton, Lisa Le Feuvre, Richard Morphet CBE, Margaret B Thornton and Dr Andrew Wilson.

Architects’ Lives (C467) [98 interviews]
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 Emö Goldfinger which resulted in a co-published CD Passionate Rationalism (2004). NLS has also partnered English Heritage to document Ettun Palace and the Courtauld family (C1056).

Architects’ Lives Advisory Committee
Colin Amery, Catherine Croft, Ian Gow, Dr Elin Harwood, Dr Alan Powers and Professor Andrew Saint.

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, fitters and many more. British Steel General Steel Division sponsored both the project and the Lives in Steel CD (BL, 1993).

Oral History of the British Press (C638) [19 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) [115 interviews]
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 Young of Older People.

Legal Lives (C736) [10 interviews]
This collection documents changes in the legal profession in Britain, including interviews with both solicitors and barristers. Since 2008 further interviews have been added, including Lady Justice Hale and Lord Hoffmann. From 2012 we will develop this area of our work in partnership with the Legal Biography Project at LSE.

Food: From Source to Salepoint (C821) [24 interviews]
Between 1998 and 2006 Food: From Source to Salepoint charted 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; a series with employees of Northern Foods, Nestlé, Sainsbury’s and Safeway; and a series with key cookery writers and restaurateurs. Within Food: From Source to Salepoint a set of interviews with Chefs [12 interviews] explores the working lives of chefs over a period when their role has changed from being in charge of the kitchen, to being more high profile. The food programme of interviews also encompasses Tesco: An Oral History (C1087) [47 interviews recorded 2003–7] and An Oral History of the Wine Trade (C1088) [40 interviews recorded 2003–2004).

Book Trade Lives (C872) [120 interviews]
Book Trade Lives recorded the experiences of those who worked in publishing and bookselling between the early 1920s and 2007. 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. The British Book Trade: An Oral History (British Library, 2008 and 2010) was edited by Sue Bradley from the collection.

Crafts Lives (C960) [113 interviews]
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

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, sorts, 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 (2000).

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) [17 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) [15 interviews]
Records the memories and experiences of key figures in social welfare, social policy and charitable endeavour.
How to support National Life Stories

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:

Mary Stewart
Deputy Director
National Life Stories
The British Library
96 Euston Road
London NW1 2DB
United Kingdom
nls@bl.uk
T +44 (0)20 7412 7406

National Life Stories is the trading name of the National Life Story Collection, which is registered as a company limited by guarantee no.2172518, and as a charity no.327571.

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.

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Foundation for Sport and the Arts
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Matthew Hoddle Charitable Trust
Roxanne Levy and Brian Wruble
Andrew McIntosh Patrick
PF Charitable Trust
Hodson and Ludmila Thornber
Yale Center for British Art
Worshipful Company of Armourers and Brasiers
And a number of other generous individual donors

An Oral History of Theatre Design

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

Authors’ Lives

Authors’ Lives was launched in 2007 with the aim of recording approximately one hundred novelists, poets, writers and editors. The project has so far received funding from the Arts Council of England, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, ALCS and private individuals. Support from The Booker Prize Foundation is enabling shortlisted authors to be interviewed for the archive. A CD, The Writing Life: Authors Speak, featuring extracts from the collection, was published by the British Library (2011).

The Legacy of the English Stage Company

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

This project records life story interviews with staff at all levels within the water industry. Funded by six water companies, these recordings provide valuable information about one of Britain’s most important and least documented utilities.

An Oral History of Barings

In partnership with The Baring Archive, this project focuses 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.

An Oral History of British Science

This project 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 and generously funded by the Arcadia Fund and the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851. It will create a major archive for the study and public understanding of contemporary science in Britain through 200 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 the 200 life story interviews, averaging 10–15 hours in length, the project also includes some shorter video recordings reflecting key events or locations, plus at least one group ‘witness seminar’ for each of the project’s four themed strands: Made in Britain, A Changing Planet, Biomedicine (currently unfunded) and Cosmologies (currently unfunded). Full interviews are available online at http://sounds.bl.uk.

An Oral History of British Science Advisory Committee

Jamie Andrews, Stephen Cleary, Martyn Goff CBE, Mark Le Fanu, Dame Penelope Lively CBE (chair), Deborah Moggridge, Martin Pick, Lawrence Sall and Jonathan Taylor CBE.

An Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK

Contributing to NLS’s documentation of the utilities in the UK, over the next three years this new project will collect the memories and experiences of those who worked in the industry at various levels, spanning nationalisation in the 1940s, privatisation in 1990-95, and themes such as the changing technologies of generation, the increase in scale of coal-fired power stations, the shift to gas during the 1990s ‘dash for gas’, and the development of renewable energy sources since the 1970s. We are grateful to Hodson and Luda Thornber for their generous support.

Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry Advisory Committee

Sir John Baker, Professor Leslie Hannah, Dr Sally Hornsby, David Jefferys, Professor Stephen Littlechild, Hodson Thornber, Luda Thornber.

Project in Development

An Oral History of Talking Therapies in the UK will explore the development in post-war Britain of those therapies that do not use pharmaceutical or other medical form of interventions to alleviate mental distress, but depend entirely on verbal exchanges between client and therapist. A future project will interview a wide range of professionals in this complex and diverse sector. Fundraising for a pilot programme of interviews will commence in 2012.

An Oral History of Barings

(C1367) [26 interviews]

In partnership with The Barings Archive, this project focuses 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.

NL5’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 £1.00 donated we can claim an additional £0.25 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.

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PF Charitable Trust
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Yale Center for British Art
Worshipful Company of Armourers and Brasiers
And a number of other generous individual donors

How to support National Life Stories

Bequests

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