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

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

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

This has been my first year as Chair in succession to Sir Nicholas Goodison, whom I would like to thank warmly for his remarkable leadership of National Life Stories over twelve successful years. We also thank him for his generous personal support for our various projects, in particular for the digitisation of Crafts Lives, and most recently for a scoping study and evaluation of our City Lives interviews, recorded over twenty years ago, in readiness for a new project on the financial capital. We mark his time as Chairman through our NLS Goodison Fellowships, named in his honour. Later in this year’s Review you can read about the impressive outcomes from our inaugural Fellows which include a BBC Radio 4 programme devoted to our food sector interviews.

Online access to our collections remains an important priority for us and I am delighted that our ‘Voices of Science’ website won not one but two awards this year: the judges remarking that it is ‘well-crafted and slick…innovative and engaging.’ I’d like to congratulate the Oral History of British Science team, both past and present. Recent news of significant earmarked funding from Heritage Lottery Fund for the British Library’s ‘Save Our Sounds’ initiative will ensure that all the remaining NLS analogue recordings are digitised for online access over the next five years, alongside many other oral history collections both from the BL’s archive and from ten regional centres around the UK. We expect the initiative to be transformative of the UK’s audio heritage and of people’s awareness of the richness of sound heritage.

NLS’s raison d’être, which marks us out as leaders in the oral history world, is the in-depth biographical life story interview, often recorded over many hours and days. In our financially strained times we are sometimes asked why our interviews are so long and who uses such long recordings, so we devote the main section of this year’s Review to answering those questions, featuring a range of contributors, users and family members who have benefited from the life story approach.

Our challenge ahead is to make progress on our new collecting areas: Legal Lives, for which we commissioned a scoping study but for which we still seek significant funding; and Talking Therapists, in partnership with Birkbeck College. The trustees have also agreed a strategy to take the charity forward for the next five years and we will be exploring new project themes including small businesses, design and tourism, alongside a renewed City Lives and the continuation of some longstanding projects with funding in-hand. Key amongst these is Artists’ Lives which celebrates this year of some longstanding projects with funding in-hand.

We’re proud to be working in partnership with Tate, with the Courtauld Institute and the Henry Moore Institute, and with the generous support of the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation. A linked conference will explore artists’ life stories.

Finally let me thank our donors, trustees and advisors for another successful year, and our staff for their hard work.

Dame Jenny Abramsky Chair of Trustees
Review of 2015
Rob Perks
Director of National Life Stories

We were delighted to win two prizes for our Oral History of British Science. Voices of Science web resource: the Royal Historical Society’s Public History Prize for Best Web and Digital Project, and The British Society for the History of Science Digital Project, and The British Society for the History of Science’s Ayrton Prize for Digital Engagement. The RHS judges commented that “This website provides rich materials for understanding the practice of twentieth-century science in a historical manner. The interviews themselves are fascinating; they are greatly enhanced by the interpretative material that is also provided on the site, encouraging users to reflect on major themes, including the role of gender in science, and the practice of oral history. The site is beautifully organised, providing not just valuable sources but tools for reflecting on them. It offers a way into a major field of history that makes it fully accessible to those with little or no previous knowledge of the history of science.” The chair of the BSHS judges, Jamie Stark, remarked that Voices of Science “breaks new ground in charting the lives of practising scientists and opens a gateway to a new generation of research and engagement. The site itself is well-crafted and slick, and makes the most of the resources available. Amongst a really excellent shortlist which included other innovative and engaging projects, Voices of Science is a worthy winner.”

In collaboration with the project ‘Science and Religion: Exploring the Spectrum’, led by Newman University, Birmingham and York University, Toronto, and funded by the Templeton Religion Trust, Paul Merchant continued to record life story interviews with British scientists, philosophers, and journalists and others involved in public discourse on relations between science and religion. They include psychologist and Christian Malcolm Jeeves; Denis Alexander, a biochemist and molecular biologist who since the early 1970s has written books and journal and newspaper articles arguing against forms of reductionism in philosophy and science (especially the assumption that only physically measurable phenomena are ‘real’) were focused on science-religion through the use of sociobiology and Richard Dawkins’ The Selfish Gene (1976). Other interviewees are John Hedley-Brooke, an historian of science whose influential book Science and Religion (1991) argued against the tendency for historical work on relations between science and religion to focus on conflict between them; geneticist Steve Jones; atheist chemist Peter Atkins; Christian philosopher Richard Swinburne; paleontologist Simon Conway Morris; biologist Rupert Sheldrake; ethologist, artist, television presenter and author of The Naked Ape (1967), Desmond Morris; and astrobiologist Chandra Wickramasinghe who covers his work with astronomer Fred Hoyle which led to theories of an extraterrestrial influence on the origin and evolution of life on Earth. Paul reflects on his work later in this Review.

A grant from the Wellcome Trust has allowed us to record individuals with a long association with the Trust and interviews are underway with the current Government Chief Scientific Adviser and former Director of the Wellcome Trust, Sir Mark Walport; Sir Michael Rutter, former Deputy Chairman of the Wellcome Trust and first professor of child psychiatry in the United Kingdom, after whom the Michael Rutter Centre for Children and Adolescents at Maudsley Hospital, London is named; and with Sir William Castell, who succeeded Sir Dominic Cadbury as Chairman of the Trust (2006 – 2015) and now chairs the Foundation for FutureLondon, the body developing London’s Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. A recording was also completed with geneticist Professor DameKay Davies on her long research into Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

As our Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK nears its conclusion Tom Lean has been adding to the project’s coverage of National Grid, one of the most complex parts of the industry. He conducted video interviews at National Grid’s National Control, the room from where the country’s entire electricity network is run, with Frank Ledger, Arthur Fowkes, Philip Johnson, Arslan Erminmez and Nick Winser discussing their experiences of the Grid at different points in history. He also did a group interview with National Grid control engineers and operational planners recalling their experiences of day-to-day life and change in system operations (including Les Clarke, Barry Gee, John Jones, Steve Waten, Derek Newman). Long-serving manager Philip Johnson brings our coverage up to the present day, where the Grid is entrusted with the vital role of keeping the lights on today and planning for the future.

Tom has also expanded our coverage of the regional electricity boards and the great changes experienced in this sector from nationalisation to privatisation. London Electricity Board engineer Mike Butterfield discusses the idiosyncrasies of the capital’s electricity network and daily life keeping it running. Mike Kay, outgoing technical support director of Electricity North West (formerly NORWEB), added perceptive comment on the organisations that distribute electricity directly into homes and businesses. Long-serving NORWEB industrial worker David Williamson described the craft skills needed by electricians and cable jointers, the consequences of privatisation for skilled industrial workers, and painted a vivid portrait of the realities of working in troubled 1970s Manchester. John Harris, former chairman of East Midlands Electricity Board, provided a top level view of the boards, and explained the strategies behind their privatisation and subsequent life and culture change as independent businesses. Further improving our coverage of privatisation, Tom has also recorded short interviews with former Chancellor and Secretary of State for Energy Lord Nigel Lawson and key privatisation advisers Sir Brian Pomeroy and Dame Fiona Woolf.
Our collection of interviews around energy generation has also expanded, particularly as regards nuclear. This has included CEBG Director of Engineering Peter Billiam, whose long career included nuclear developments and a key role in the programme of enormous coal power stations, which are still serving over fifty years from their design; Robert Hawley, Managing Director of NEI Parsons in the 1970s, who helped us to understand the role played by British engineering in the electricity industry; and Roger Vaughan, veteran nuclear designer and former chief engineer of the Nuclear Power Plant Co, who in 1955 led the design of Bradwell, the electricity industry’s joint first nuclear power station. At the other end of the timescale, station manager Peter Weber led the first decommissioning of a British nuclear power station, Berkeley in the 1990s, and adds an operational perspective; Andy Spurr, recently retired EDF energy manager of nuclear generation, brings the nuclear story up to the present day, and adds further operational insights from his experience as a station manager. Finally Peter Vey, the CEBG’s Director of Information and Public Affairs over the 1980s, helps us to understand the public face of this sometimes controversial, but vital industry.

Since Artists’ Lives began in 1990, the project has been run in association with Tate. To celebrate the project’s maturity (there are nearly 370 recordings to date), Tate Britain will host a display from November 2016 for approximately one year. This will centre on recordings relating to the Kasmin gallery and will encourage visitors to consider the relationship between a dealer, artists and a national institution such as Tate. Extracts from recordings will include Richard Smith, Johny Deryn and Burton (from Architects’ Lives), current and former Tate staff and others, as well as Kasmin himself. These extracts will complement and relate to the artworks on display in the gallery, most of which were originally shown at the Kasmin gallery and are now owned by Tate. Kasmin will be in conversation with Nicholas Seneta and Fiona MacCarthy at Tate Britain on 9 December, and we will host a conference at the Courtauld (jointly organised by NLS, Tate, the Courtauld and the Henry Moore Institute) on 10 December 2016. These events and the display itself have been generously supported by the Rootstein Hopkins Foundation.

The newest addition to Artists’ Lives is Senior Royal Academian, painter Rose Wylie, whose recording is supported by the Yale Center for British Art. Recordings undertaken this year include Trevor Bell, Shirley Cameron, Charles Carey, John Dunbar, Joan Hills, Peter Hide, Caryll Hubbard, Allen Jones, Nicholas Logsdail, John McLean, William Pye, Colin Self, and Sue Swan (also known as Sue Finlay). Frances Cornford completed interviews with experimental filmmaker Malcolm Le Grice and with artist and publisher Simon Cutts. It was interesting to note the effect that digital technology had had on both types of artistic practice; Le Grice has moved entirely into digital media and is exploring multi-projection and 3-D video. Cutts used computers for some typesetting but was still using letterpress printing and handwriting to produce the quintessential, casebound book. Hester Westley’s recordings with Anthony D’Offay and Howard Hodgkin are underway again after a long gap. Elizabeth Wright has been interviewing artist and sculptor, Jane McAdam Freud, who has been talking about her early career, her award-winning medal to commemorate the birth of Picasso, and her British Art Medal Scholarship to Rome, which led to work at the Royal Mint and Perth Mint, Australia, before she decided to focus on her practice as a sculptor. We were extremely sad to learn of the death of Jan Thompson in February 2016, and are also the more grateful to him for taking part in Artists’ Lives, so documenting his own work and the important contribution he made to art school education. Terry Frost’s recording from 1994, was used in the publication Sir Terry Frost, RA (1915–2000); A Leamington Lad, alluded to an exhibition of the same title.

For Architects’ Lives Niamh Dillon has completed interviews with Ivar Smith, Owen Luder, Denise Bennettts and Eldred Evans. Ivar Smith, now ninety years old, was evacuated during the Second World War, and as a pacifist chose agricultural work over active service and worked on Eric Gill’s farm, Pigotts. He went on to train at The Bartlett, University College London’s School of Architecture, and the Architectural Association, where he met a group of similarly minded students (Andrew Derbyshire, John Voelcker and Pat Crook) who were exploring new urban environments in the period immediately following the Second World War. Inspired by this, and the ideas of Le Corbusier, Smith joined the newly-created architecture department at Sheffield Council with Jack Lynn, and immediately embarked on the Park Hill housing scheme in the city. This was groundbreaking in its ambition and scope; it was the largest public housing scheme up to that time. Initially acclaimed, it later fell in disrepair and was threatened with demolition. However, a Grade II* listing and a current refurbishment by Urban Splash, has resurrected it. Smith was also notable as a teacher; perhaps most influentially at University College Dublin in the 1970s, where alongside Edward Jones, Jeremy Dixon, Isa Metzstein, Andy MacMillan and other young architects, he restructured the school of architecture.

Owen Luder is best-known for his work in the ‘Brutalist’ style where the buildings are marked by exposed concrete and strong structural forms. He was working in the commercial sector in the 1950s and 1960s when most architects were employed by the state, and he pioneered new building forms particularly large shopping centres and car parks. The latter famously featured in the film ‘Get Carter’. The recording is particularly important as Luder’s most notable works, the ‘Trinity Square apartment’ and the new Derwent Tower (both in Gateshead) are now demolished. He has been active in the Royal Institute of British Architects, and was twice elected President. He campaigned for change in the profession to allow developers to advertise, to limit professional liability and removing the mandatory fee scale.

Eldred Evans trained at the Architectural Association in London, and at Yale in the US where she was a contemporary of Richard Rogers and Norman Foster. Returning to the UK, Evans started her career by winning the competition to design Lincoln Civic Centre in the 1960s. It was on this project that she met her partner, Israeli architect David Shalev. Together they have worked on projects such as the library for Jesus College Cambridge, Tate St. Ives, Truro Crown Courts and Newport High School. Eldred has combined private practice with periods of teaching at the Architectural Association and the Regents Street Polytechnic.

Other ongoing interviews include Terry Farrell (who has recorded fourteen hours so far), Nicholas Grimshaw (seventeen hours), Michael Hopkins (twelve hours), and Czech-born Eva Jiricna who trained as an architect in Prague during the Communist era. During a secondment to London, the Russians invoked Czechoslovakia and Eva became stateless. She initially worked for the Greater London Council, and then joined private firm Louis de Soissons, where she worked on Brighton marina for ten years alongside Danish engineer Ove Arup. She established her own practice in 1979: initially working on innovative glass and steel interiors for retailers such as Joseph, and Joan and David in London. While her projects were mainly in the UK, they have been internationally, her work in the Czech Republic has concentrated on construction, with projects including the Hotel Josef, and the restoration of St. Anne’s church, a project sponsored by Vladcz Havel. We were very sad to learn of the death of engineer and acoustician Derek Sugden. Derek trained as an engineer in the 1940s in East London, but it was in his work at Arup, and later as a founding partner of Arup Associates, that he was able to combine his passion for music and expertise in engineering. Working with Benjamin Britten at the opera house at Snape Maltings, he created a pioneering acoustic environment. Derek would work with Hopkins Architects on Glyndebourne.

For Crafts Lives Frances Cornford completed a recording with blacksmith Arthur Jones, who explained how the formation of the British Artist Blacksmiths Association in the 1970s opened his eyes to the artistic possibilities of blacksmithing. His interview includes an account of his long association with Michael and Anne Heseltine, who commissioned birthday and anniversary gifts for their ornamental garden and a detailed description of the making of the Churchill Memorial Screen in St Paul’s Cathedral. Tim Hunkin’s interview covered his early days as a cartoonist, drawing ‘The Rudiments of Wisdom’ for The Observer, his work on television creating and presenting The Secret Life of Machines for Channel 4 and his parallel career as an inventor devising 3D micro-exhibits and automata. The final session of the interview was recorded on Southwold Pier where Tim’s Under the Pier Show, a collection of satirical coin-operated machines including ‘Whack a Banker’ and ‘Microbreak’, is installed. Eldred Evans’ interview traced her development as a potter making distinctive, delicate pinched pots, and discussed her activities as a feminist and peace campaigner. It also explored her later work as a walking artist undertaking long journeys across the British Isles exploring themes such as ancestry, belonging, friendship and the giving and receiving of gifts. Frances also began interviews with calligrapher Evan Clayton and ceramicist Magdalene Odundo. An interview with Edmund de Waal continues.
Elizabeth Wright completed her interview with David Poston, who reflected on his return to jewellery-making after decades of work in international development, and how he has used the techniques of his craft in other fields, including medical innovation. With general support from the Furniture History Society, Liz and Frances also started interviews with furniture designers Luke Hughes and Ashley Cartwright. Luke Hughes spoke about the influence of his weekend job as a schoolboy, sweeping the workshop of a local piano retailer and harpsichord maker. Ashley Cartwright reflected on a childhood spent making things with his father and his later training in design at Kingston College and the RCA.

We were delighted to receive grants from the Garrick Charitable Trust and the Friends of the British Library for our Authors’ Lives project, now in its eighth year. Sarah O’Reilly completed valuable recordings with novelists Louis de Bernières (Captain Corelli’s Mandolin, Birds Without Wings), Lawrence Norfolk (Lempière’s Dictionary, The Pope’s Rhinoceros), Jane Gardam (The Old Fifth Trilogy, God on the Rocks) and Indra Sinha (Animal’s People, The Death of Mr Love). Other important additions to the collection this year include recordings with former Poet Laureate Andrew Motion, poet and recording artist Linton Kwesi Johnson, and former Junior Minister and former Poet Laureate John Sh坚信son. We look forward to holding similar events to promote Authors’ Lives.

Projects in development

Sasha Rosenell, Professor of Sociology and Social Theory and Head of Department of Psychosocial Studies at Birkbeck College, University of London, has successfully obtained a small Heritage Lottery development grant with the Wellcome Trust in connection with An Oral History of Talking Therapists in the UK. A larger grant application will be prepared and submitted by Hester Westley and Isabel Sutton who are researching the work of Sri Lanka’s leading clinical psychologist, who founded the Child Traumatic Stress Centre at the University of Otago, and led teams in the 1980s and 1990s to establish the first psychosocial response to war related trauma in Sri Lanka. Further information about this work can be found on the project website www.ohs.org.uk/conferences/conference-2015/.

The Death of Mr Birds Without

Elizabeth Wright has started an interview with costume designer, Deidre Clancy, covering her childhood in Malvern and the beginning of her career at the Royal Court Theatre, including designing the wardrobe for ‘Come to Life’ at the National Theatre, and acting alongside Glenda Jackson, Anthony Hopkins and the late John Thaw in ‘A Sense of Jewellery’ at the Goldsmith’s Centre. She is currently writing a text about the transition from the ancient Assize system to modern magistrates courts. The interviews range between six and thirteen hours.

Over the past year we have been experimenting with ways of making recordings more accessible to the general public outside the archive and the web, through audio clips in displays and exhibitions activated by QR codes and NFC chips, which users can take away with them. We encourage visitors to leave a comment when listening to the interviewee talk about it. Frances Cronford and Elizabeth Wright edited Crafts Lives extracts for ‘Collect’, the Contemporary Craft Fair run by the Crafts Council; and for the exhibition ‘A Sense of Jewellery’ at the Goldsmith’s Centre. For Crafts Council we also supplied clips for a Crafts Council survey of forty years of British furniture design ‘Inside at the Platform’, Gallery, Habitat, King’s Road, London. The extracts form part of an exhibition app that can be downloaded. Frances and Liz discuss this in more detail elsewhere in this Review. We have also provided the Henry Moore Foundation with a selection of oral history interviews from our collection produced by sound post, funded by Moore Institute with an AHRC grant.

Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train crash demonstrations and nuclear power open days. Tom also spoke at a day seminar in November for history train
The interviews recorded for National Life Stories’ projects are archived at the British Library and cared for as part of the Library’s Oral History collections.

All National Life Stories interviews are catalogued on the British Library’s Sound & Moving Image Catalogue (http://sami.bl.uk), which provides detailed content data about individual recordings. NLS recordings can also be discovered through ‘Explore the British Library’ (http://explore.bl.uk), the Library’s main catalogue which provides a more comprehensive way for users to search within the Library’s collections of books, journals, datasets and sound recordings. We have been updating and re-releasing some forty NLS and oral history collection pages that were taken down last summer, ready to reload them to the new improved BL website.

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

British Library Sounds

National Life Stories and Oral History provide online access to over 1700 oral history recordings from twenty-six collections via British Library Sounds http://sounds.bl.uk.

In the last two years, the number of oral history recordings available on British Library Sounds has increased by thirty-five percent. British Library Sounds enables people to access the material offsite without travelling to the British Library, therefore increasing usage considerably, and is beneficial to researchers and inspirational to new generations of students and the public in general.

In 2015, 117 open recordings from the Food: From Source to Salespoint collection became available online via British Library Sounds within a new package entitled ‘Food’ at http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Food. One of the largest of its kind, this oral history collection charts the extraordinary changes which transformed the production, manufacture, and consumption of food in the twentieth century Britain. We aim to formally launch this collection in June 2016, in line with a forthcoming BBC Radio 4 ‘Food programme’, which will feature audio clips from the NLS interviews.

In the autumn, eighty-four recordings from the Artists’ Lives collection (that are currently only available to Higher Education institutions) will be combined with approximately one hundred and fifty open access Artists’ Lives recordings to form a new ‘Art’ collection package on British Library Sounds, enabling online access to users worldwide. Artists’ Lives includes interviews with British artists, curators, dealers and critics whose life stories have helped build a picture of the art world and its interwoven relationships.

We will also be adding further interviews to the Science, Crafts, Architecture and Industry collection packages on British Library Sounds.

Voices of Science

Edited clips of the audio and video interviews for An Oral History of British Science, (as well as interviews from Leaders of National Life and NLS General Interviews) can be accessed via the award-winning Voices of Science web resource (http://bl.uk/voices-of-sience). Voices of Science tells the stories of some of the most remarkable scientific and engineering discoveries of the past century using oral history interviews with prominent British scientists and engineers.

Follow us on Twitter (@BL_OralHistory) and keep up to date with what’s happening at National Life Stories via the Library’s Sound and Vision blog (http://britishlibrary.typepad.co.uk/sound-and-vision)

An overview of the Library’s Oral History collections can be found at http://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/oral-history
Louise Brodie has added new recordings to the Pioneers of Charity and Social Welfare collection. Juliet Lyon is director of the Prison Reform Trust, previously associate director of the Trust for the Study of Adolescence, and worked for fifteen years in mental health, managing Richmond Fellowship halfway houses, and in education, first as teacher in charge of a psychiatric unit school and then as head of community education in a comprehensive. She was an independent advisor to Childline, the Social Exclusion Unit, the Haliday review of the sentencing framework, the Corston review of vulnerable women in the criminal justice system and the Bradley review of mental health and learning disability. Up to 2010 Juliet was a Women’s National Commissioner for England and Wales. She is currently secretary general of Penal Reform International and vice president of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. Chris Mould is Executive Chairman of the Trusts Trust, the charity which runs the UK Foodbank Network. He previously worked in the National Health Service, as general manager of Southend hospital, in South Bedfordshire Mental Health Services, and as Regional General Manager of the NHS in Salisbury. He started volunteering for the Trusts Trust and realised that there was a need for foodbanks across the UK. Trusts Trust has launched over 200 foodbanks over the past two years. A third interviewee this year was Eileen Munro, Professor of Social Policy at the London School of Economics, best-known for the Munro Review for government which assessed how social work practices could be altered to cut red tape and improve child protection.

For An Oral History of British Photography Shirley Read completed two long interviews begun last year with Pete James and Wolfgang Tillmans. James was, until recently, Curator of Photography Collections at Birmingham Central Library, one of the national collections of photography. Amongst other things he described the campaign, following news of cuts at the Library, by photographers and academics to save the photographic provision, his own and his colleagues’ redundancies, and the decision to ‘mothball’ the collection in the hope that in the future it will be possible to build on the twenty-five years work they had done to identify, organise and promote photography in Birmingham. Tillman’s detailed interview covers his international career and living in London, New York and Berlin. He talked of his political and photographic interests, of his installations, his studios and assistants, his galleries and his transition from analogue to digital which produced the major work ‘Neue Welt’. Also his nomination for the Turner Prize and the particular sorts of fame winning it bestows, as well as his subsequent exhibition at Tate, his role as an artist Trustee, and the Venice Biennale. We were also pleased to add an update to an interview at Tate, his role as an artist Trustee, and the Venice Biennale. His project ‘Living Like This: Photographs from the Free Photographic Omnibus’ in 1975 was an important record of British (primarily working-class) life, which he updated in the 1990s (see opposite). With Martin Parr he exhibited ‘Butlins by the Sea’ (1971) and the now classic study of June Street in Salford. After moving from the North of England in the early 1980s, Meadows became one of the UK’s leading photographic educationalists, eventually becoming joint leader of the documentary photography course at Newport College. Alan Dein’s new interview covers Meadows’s work over the past twenty years, notably the impact of digital on photographic practice including his digital storytelling initiatives. We have also acquired a number of Meadows’s digital storytelling movies and recordings, including ‘Eight Stories’ (2015), ‘Talking Pictures’, and BBC Wales’ ‘Digital Stories’ (2001–2007).

The oral history section continues to work in collaboration with a number of partner projects and depositors, in order to further broaden the range of interviews within the already rich national collection. In 2015 Emmeline Ledgerwood deposited Interviews with Conservative Association Members in Surrey and Sussex (C1688), a collection of twenty-one interviews that examine changing membership patterns in the Conservative Party. The recordings were used as the basis of Emme’s MA dissertation at the Institute of Historical Research.

We have also added a collection of ninety-five interviews from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Retirement Association Oral History Project (C1586), covering the development of the structure and the role of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists, the development of professional practice within the NHS, the changes in the day-to-day physiotherapy clinical practice, locations of practice, equipment used and the effects of advances in medical knowledge and practice, and the educational development of pre- and post-registration courses. The management group for the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Retirement Association Group included Dr Barbara Richardson, Sue Russell, Alison Leighton and Dr Lynne Caladine.

In Defence of the Long Interview

Why we are different and why we think it matters

There are many ways to carry out an interview. Interviews are used by journalists to gather information, by police to obtain evidence; we attend interviews to get jobs and therapeutic counselling is a kind of interview. Oral historians use interviews to understand the past better, to get information from eye witnesses that is simply absent from documentary sources, and to get beneath the surface of public narratives to the vivid directness of remembered personal experience. From the outset, National Life Stories has employed the in-depth life story approach pioneered by our co-founder, Professor Paul Thompson, because we believe it yields uniquely valuable insights, not only into the detail of individual lives but also into the wider social context within which people live their lives: how adult life is shaped by childhood and parenting, by friendships and networks; how working life can be better understood alongside family life, belief, politics and wider external pressures. Often asked to justify the length of our recordings, NLS regularly examines its approach in team meetings and more public sessions. In this special feature devoted to the in-depth life story, we have asked contributors to comment from the differing perspectives of those invited to make recordings, NLS interviewing and project managing staff, and the users of our material.

Mind the Gap

NLS Project Director Cathy Courtney draws attention to what lies beneath the surface of life story recordings

“It’s your name. With ‘dral’ attached.” This remark was spoken by John Jones (1926 – 2010) in 2009. Earlier in our recorded conversation we had documented, at John’s request, that he had suffered a stroke and sometimes couldn’t articulate words even though he knew perfectly well what he wished to say. We had met once before, fleetingly and in noisy circumstances, but were otherwise strangers. Given that coming to the British Library studio for a first recording in noisy circumstances, but were otherwise strangers. Given that coming to the British Library studio for a first recording

For those with a sharp ear, the subtexts within NLS’s projects are sounding with ever greater resonance. These rich seams will have growing significance as the distance between ourselves and future generations elongates. Just noting the changes in vocabulary and expectation in recordings made before and after 9/11 will yield some interesting results let alone a comparison after the slippage of centuries. Beneath the obvious subject matter of NLS’s recordings lie layers of material representing the subliminal assumptions of those alive in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The ample space offered in these extended conversations, the consequent relationship which is heard to develop between participants and NLS interviewers, and the privilege of leaving the testimony unedited are all important elements that encourage these strands to take root. We do not live – either in our heads or amongst one another – by sound bites. Life stories are neither inner monologues nor streams of consciousness yet, collectively, they offer a remarkable opportunity for future historians to understand the backdrop of our times.

The Inner View

Sarah O’Reilly, Authors’ Lives interviewer, reflects on the value of the long recording

The expansiveness of the NLS interview, its capaciousness, is highly unusual in our culture of sound bites, and for some participants this is its appeal. On being asked why she agreed to make a recording for Authors’ Lives in 2013, Julia Blackburn revealed:

“Funnily enough I did think that it was a very interesting point in my life to be asked to do such a thing, at a time when I was slowly getting an awareness of how my life and work have overlapped in ways I wouldn’t have thought, and didn’t intend…. (The long interview) is totally different from others I’ve done. I’ve found that I’ve become aware of some very crucial things about what I do and how I do it. It’s clarified things I’d long suspected about my writing, and myself, because only in the talking do you get clarity.”

Although writers are probably interviewed more frequently than other contributors to NLS, I think this sentiment holds true across our collections. The long interview is an opportunity for speakers to examine what they do and why, capturing the contradictions and layers, the light and shade, that colour human experience and require time to be meaningfully examined. And for listeners, it offers a conduit into the mind of another person, revealing, in as much as it is possible, their ‘inner view’. When in 2008 poet Peter Porter observed that “we don’t seem to live very long, yet on the other hand, twenty-four hours can be a tremendous burden” he spoke of literature as “a sort of keeping going whilst the various destinies all around and about you are being enacted.” Yet when time and space to think are curtailed, the content and pattern of daily experience is frequently ignored in favour of an over-arching narrative.

Some lives will leave a greater footprint than others. Diaries, letters, photographs and video footage may be supplemented, if the subject has lead a public life, with published memoirs, newspaper interviews, books, articles and carefully maintained archives. But as Hilary Mantel noted in her recording of 2008, all accounts are necessarily partial, “true, but not the whole truth.” The long interview is just another snapshot, but it aims for something nearer completeness, privileging amplification over abbreviation, and adding to the evidence that accures around a life.

In the long interview, that evidence might include the social and professional worlds in which the speaker is embedded. U A Fanthorpe, interviewed in 2008, wrote of the many onerous duties undertaken by poets’ wives in ‘The Poet’s Companion’, apparently inspired by the sight of Mrs Seamus Heaney singing to a coach full of writers in Rotterdam. We neither live nor work in a vacuum, and this interconnectedness can be traced with sufficient time. So too can the professional and personal friendships that sometimes make such a difference to a writing life, as Hilary Spurling’s remembrance of an unexpected act of generosity from a fellow biographer testifies:

“Michael [Holroyd] not only aerated and improved the life of writers on an almost industrial scale … but he also operated on a private level too. One day I got a letter saying I’d been given a grant from The Phoenix Trust. It was just something he, Michael, happened to sit on, and happened to think ‘she’s hard pressed, she has two, three children…’ And I spent half the money on a freezer and half on a year’s nursery schooling for my youngest, which was three hours in the mornings. It made my writing life viable.”

The spheres of domestic and professional life, whether in harmony or competition, and the opportunity to delineate the cast of supporting characters that gather around a life, are just some of the ways in which the long interview can add to a greater understanding of speakers’ lives and enrich listeners’ knowledge.
‘The truth is a fugitive commodity’

John Coldstream, Literary Editor of The Daily Telegraph 1991–99, encounters the transcript of Martyn Goff’s life story recording

Eight years ago I went to have lunch with Martyn Goff and Rubio Lindroos at their house in Wandsworth. Martyn himself was in the early stages of his cruel dementia: at times lucid, at times vague, but never allowing frustration to cloud the zest for life which I had witnessed at myriad events and across many lunch tables. We talked about a possible memoir, on which he had made a start, but which had stalled. At one point he turned in his chair and pointed to a set of ring-binders which had survived submersion in the mass of other publications that littered the drawing-room. ‘Those,’ he said, ‘are the transcripts of my contribution to National Life Story Collection.’ I knew that Martyn had chaired the British Library’s great oral history project from 1995 to 2003, but I had no idea that he had made his own contribution to Leaders of National Life, which ran from 1997 to 2006.

Three thoughts came immediately to mind. First, how sad that even with access to such a compendious aide-mémoire Martyn was finding it impossible to proceed with his autobiography. Second, how on earth many hours of tape do those volumes represent? Third, what a goldmine. And so it was to prove.

Fast forward to October 2015, six months after Martyn’s death at the age of ninety-one. His nephew, Anthony Goff, invited me to be one of the speakers during a memorial event at the Athenaeum, of which Martyn had long been a member. Also ‘on the bill’ were Rabbi Julia Neuberger, Jonathan Taylor, David Whitaker and Anthony himself – a quartet bound to have a fund of personal reminiscence and anecdote which, coupled with the plentiful obituary coverage given in March by the national and trade newspapers, would make any reflections of mine run the risk of being an unpolished, untitivated truth by a subject confident that his words are to be rendered faithfully. And at a time when most public utterance is greeted with a suspicion of spin, how precious is that?

Of course, the truth is a fugitive commodity. For a biographer, the most trustworthy route to accuracy about a subject are the private diary and the private letter. The public utterance, whether written or spoken, necessarily carries a veracity warning. But when an honest, candid individual talks about him- or herself under circumstances such as those in the present case, and not in sound bites for immediate public consumption, the interview carries immense weight. Had I been commissioned to write a Life of Martyn Goff, I would have fallen on the transcript as the survivors of ‘Ice Cold in Alex’ fell on their first beer. My terms of reference were on a far more modest scale. Nonetheless, I treated this raw material in exactly the same way, reading it from page 1 to page 1,196 – every now and then using a key word as a reminder – as I sifted for nuggets.

Throughout I counted myself fortunate to be granted access to the results of a genuinely valuable and worthwhile exercise in archival inquiry. Not least because, even without the tapes, I could hear Martyn’s voice.

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Case Studies

Sally Horrocks, Senior Academic Advisor, An Oral History of British Science, National Life Stories

The use of the life story in An Oral History of British Science, launched in 2009, was a significant departure from standard interviewing fieldwork in the history of science. Most recordings with scientists had concentrated on privileging a few key moments in the long careers on which subjects’ reputations had been founded, and many of those we spoke to were surprised at our interest in their experience before and after their careers, and their lives outside science. Employing NLS’s approach has created a resource capable of addressing a wide range of research questions.

Some participants had not expected interviewers Tom Lean and Paul Merchant’s interest in what they saw as unremarkable, mundane aspects of their working lives. Familiarity meant that the skill and expertise required to do these tasks had become hidden, even to themselves. By asking for detailed descriptions of these ‘humdrum’ activities we captured elements of working lives unrecorded elsewhere, and placed the ‘eureka’ moments that dominate other sorts of interviews in their context. Eureka moments are more likely to be recorded in the extended length of the interview is crucial. The longer the better, because after all who knows the relevances an artist may have beyond his lifetime; there is only one certainty, that they are bound to be different from today’s. It is also a question of style or mood: an open agenda and relaxed format makes for a greater naturalness and lessens any tendency to art speak, to tried and tested formulas.

Nick Willing:
“When I started researching a documentary film about my mother, Paula Rego, I found NLS’s recording invaluable. Most interviews in the public domain are relatively short and cater for a specific readership or audience, skewing the questioning to build their particular picture of a person. The life story has a much broader and more helpful agenda, concerned solely with finding out as much as possible about the subject’s life, without prejudice or injection, and to get as close as possible to the truth.”

‘The longer the better’: Bruno Wollheim and Nick Willing, filmmakers

NLS interviewers try to take into account the multitude of needs future users may have when consulting recordings. Some are unexpected. Filmmakers Bruno Wollheim and Nick Willing explain how NLS recordings fed their work. ‘John Golding Painter: A Path to the Absolute’, and ‘Looking Out – a personal portrait of Paula Rego’.

Bruno Wollheim:
“For a documentary filmmaker concentrating on the visual arts, NLS is a wonderful resource. In particular my film on John Golding (1929–2012) would have proved impossible without the recorded interview conducted by Elizabeth Cowling. Audio is a powerful tool, even (or perhaps especially) within a visual medium like video. I feel the extended length of the interview is crucial. The longer the better, because after all who knows the relevances an artist may have beyond his lifetime; there is only one certainty, that they are bound to be different from today’s. It is also a question of style or mood: an open agenda and relaxed format makes for a greater naturalness and lessens any tendency to art speak, to tried and tested formulas.”

John Golding in his studio.

‘Detail is incredibly important when getting to know how a person thinks and feels, and these sessions are filled with detail thanks to the hours of patient questioning. But perhaps most importantly, they also draw out extraordinarily revealing and confessional testimony from Paula. This, I think, is because, like most people, it takes time to win my mother’s trust. She can be very evasive until you get to know her. After about the third or fourth visit to her studio, the tapes really start to get under her skin.”

“The other masterstroke is that they’re spread over a long period. My mother is greatly affected by her moods, and her versions of her life can change depending on how she feels that day. As the NLS sessions were spread over many months they reflected her moods, put them into context, and painted a more accurate and telling picture of her life.”

Life stories also allow a much fuller account of the intersections between the personal and the professional, and how family life might shape career choices for both men and women. In early life, and the significance of these past events to adult, scientific selves. From this we can begin to see how scientific identities are constructed not only on the basis of professional achievements, but also through the narratives of their wider lives.
‘An entirely different kind of talk’

Writer and broadcaster Howard Jacobson was recorded for Authors’ Lives between 2009 and 2013

In 2009 I was invited by Sarah O’Reilly to be interviewed for the British Library’s Authors’ Lives programme. I didn’t hesitate. Obscurity is the writer’s greatest dread – doesn’t that explain why we write in the first place? – and here was an opportunity to be rescued from it. I enjoyed the experience from the start, partly because the walk through the archives to the studios was exhilarating, partly because Sarah was an excellent interviewer, someone who listened so intently that she could pick up a thread I hadn’t noticed I’d dropped, who remembered even over a period of weeks, and somehow managed to be as a listener a sort of ideal reader. But above all I loved the leisureliness. Not, I hope, because I can never talk about myself enough, but because this was an entirely different kind of talk. The usual interviews one does for newspapers and magazines are inevitably compromised by time, by space, and by the consciousness that there’s a specific audience and particular expectations. You are who you are for that interviewer and that audience. With NLS there is no agenda, you feel you are talking to no one – that was Sarah’s skill – but also to everyone.

And because of the length of interview – not just the time you are granted at each sitting, with no pressure to rush or abbreviate a recollection, but also the spread of the sessions, a morning one week, an afternoon the next – you are able to let your story breathe, not be a victim of your own fluency. But more than that, the spacing of the interviews allows events to change an emphasis here, an accent there. In my case the interview was suspended for over a year because I won the Man Booker Prize and then had to travel extensively publicising the novel I won it for. When I resumed the conversation, the story I had to tell had taken on a different complexion. This didn’t mean I wanted to change anything I had said, but I could look back and forward differently.

Of course, the interview has to stop somewhere. It can’t wait for every new event. But the more of the vicissitudes of a writer’s life it can comprehend, the richer it is bound to be.

Sexing chicks? The ‘fifth quarter’? ‘BOGOFFs’? These are just a few of the practices described in the National Life Stories’ Food: From Source to Salespoint recordings. Taken individually, these interviews offer deep biographies of people whose lives are bound up with food production. Taken as a whole, this collection is a rich resource for understanding how food culture in the UK has been transformed over the last 100 years by industrialised farming, the arrival of supermarkets, integrated distributions systems and a changing population.

Given popular interest in food in the UK and the growing awareness of the challenges the food system faces, these collections are a valuable resource for researchers, historians and the general public. Having used the NLS’s food recordings in our own research and writings, our main intention on being awarded the Goodison Fellowship was to increase awareness of the NLS food collections.

Over the course of working on the Fellowship we were supported by the expertise of the NLS office team and interviewers who shared their insights about particular recordings and helped us navigate our way through the archive. Life story recordings are detailed, lengthy and rich. They are invaluable historical sources but they are challenging to use and analyse – it takes considerable time to listen to them and even more to sort, sort and compare two or more recordings. Being awarded the Goodison Fellowship allowed us to dedicate ourselves to researching the food recordings and to finding different audiences for them.

To this end we gave talks to food writers and food studies scholars, provided BBC Radio 4 and the World Service with NLS clips for food-focused features and wrote about Food: From Source to Salespoint for a scholarly food journal and for the Financial Times Saturday magazine. A large amount
of our time for the Goodison Award, however, was spent drafting a Foods Book proposal and working closely with producers at Radio 4 to create an entire episode of the ‘Food Programme’ celebrating NLS food recordings.

Barley

Food is present in every collection of National Life Stories – it’s there in the stories of book-sellers, bankers and scientists, as well as biscuit makers, wine-merchants and butchers. In drafting a chapter on food shopping for the Food Stories book proposal, therefore, I looked to the archive’s food recordings and beyond. These narratives document how shopping has changed – from ‘shop walkers’ and end-of-week meat auctions to self-service and supermarkets.

Ron Stedman:

“The ice-cream that I remember of course was ‘Stop me and buy one’. It was a little man on a tricycle, it had four wheels in the front, a box, and it was a little cold store and he would come round the roads ringing his bell ‘stop me and buy one’ that was the answer and the kids stopped him and they had a snow fruit, that’s what they used to call them, and they were about a penny or tuppence.”

Immersing myself in these recordings transformed my daily experience of London. Surfacing from the tube at King’s Cross I imagine the traffic replaced with cattle and am reminded of Philco Cramer’s anecdote of the day that a bullock ‘went berserk’ and fell off the roof of a Peabody building. Ron Stedman remembers 1930s Brixton in such detail that as I shop there eighty years later his past is conjured up around me as he imagines the traffic replaced with cattle and am reminded of Stedman’s account of the day that a bullock ‘went berserk’ and fell off the roof of a Peabody building. Ron Stedman remembers 1930s Brixton in such detail that as I shop there eighty years later his past is conjured up around me as he imagines the traffic replaced with cattle and am reminded of Stedman’s account of the day that a bullock ‘went berserk’ and fell off the roof of a Peabody building.

During the Second World War, thanks to his background, he joined the Catering Corps. When his father died early on in the war, Mr Cramer trained Monica so she could run the shop in his absence. Mr Cramer was to the end full of admiration for how she coped during these years. War-rationing required butchers to be inventive and when he was able, Mr Cramer made rabbit sausages and ‘macon’ for the shop:

“The German with haverseen Denmark that put a stop to Danish bacon so I bought some over-mareded lambs and I got them smoked and we called them ‘macon’ not ‘bacon’.”

Mr Cramer from a family of German butchers who moved to the UK in the early twentieth century. Anglesising the family name from ‘Kramer’ to ‘Cramer’, Mr Cramer’s father Frederick first established a business in Homerton and then opened ‘Cramer’s’ in 1935. As a young man Mr Cramer started a livestock business in Halesworth, Suffolk. Through this he met his future wife Monica, a local farmer’s daughter.

Today ‘Cramer’s’ is the last traditional butcher’s left in the area. More than eight butchers shops plying their trade on the York Way. When I interviewed him Mr Cramer was aged eighty-five and living in a snug farmhouse in Suffolk. Paul was, and still is, running ‘Cramer’s’.

Generous with their time, Mr Cramer and Paul shared their memories with ease and humour. Between them, these two men had seen more than a century of change in the butchers trade. Listening to them describe ice deliveries pre-refrigeration, initiation ceremonies for new staff, livestock being driven to the lairages from King’s Cross station and how supermarkets impacted on business was a lesson in twentieth century food history. I was hooked and have been involved with oral history ever since.

Over the years that followed those first recordings I often thought of Mr Cramer and Paul. Being awarded the Goodison Fellowship gave me the impetus to listen to their interviews again. Their recordings were as vivid and articulate as I remembered. I decided there and then that they should be shared with a wider audience.

Without thinking, I googled ‘Cramer’s’, found the telephone number for the shop and called to see if Paul was still there. He answered the telephone after one ring and before I had time to say ‘Polly’, he remembered who I was. We caught up and then tentatively I asked about Mr Cramer. I never imagined that Mr Cramer, who turned 100 in 2015, would still be alive but Paul told me he was living in an old people’s home in Suffolk. Ten minutes later I was speaking to Mr Cramer. His voice was a little shaky, and I had to speak loudly, but he remembered every bit of our time together and even reminded me of a few things I had forgotten.

Two weeks later, Mr Cramer turned 100 and soon after Barley and I secured agreement from Radio 4 for an episode of The Food Programme on the NLS’s food collections which would include the story of ‘Cramers’ and Mr Cramer. When Mr Cramer had had time to recover from his birthday party, Barley, Clare Salisbury, a BBC producer, and I travelled to Sussex to record another interview with him. We were joined by Paul, Mr Cramer’s son Paul and his daughter Jane. For more than an hour Mr Cramer captivated us all with stories from his time as a butcher. It was a morning Barley, Clare and I will always treasure, not least because on September 26th Mr Cramer passed away.

We are so pleased that the Radio 4 Food Programme, due to be broadcast in May 2016, will pay tribute to Mr Cramer’s life and work and are most grateful to the Cramer family and to Paul Langley for their support in this endeavour.

What’s come out of the fellowship?

Press articles:

- Oxford Food Symposium: paper on oral history and the archives to be presented and published in collaboration with Tessa Tricks, 9 July 2016.

Radio Broadcasts:

- BBC Radio 4 Food Programme: Contributions to – "How did the chicken cross the world?" – 12 October 2015.
- BBC Radio 4 Food Programme on NLS Food Collections – 5 June 2016.

Book Proposal:

- Food Stories Book: Book proposal in collaboration with Professor Peter Jackson, University of Sheffield.
Science and religion

Paul Merchant, Project Interviewer, An Oral History of British Science

[SR]S led by Newman University, Birmingham and York University, Toronto. Their stories of significant science books would be recognized by other scientists – An Oral History of British Science is already brimming with them (see, for example, James Lovelock’s page on the ‘Voices of Science’ website at www.bl.uk/voices-of-science/interviews/lovlock) – as would their accounts of making explosives or playing with Meccano. But their accounts of coming to faith might raise an eyebrow or two. Take, for example, the reaction to John Polkinghorne’s decision, in the late 1970s, to leave CERN and particle physics behind to train as a priest:

“(...) it’s all just a superstition. (...) But I mean people were kind. ‘John, what are you up to?’, and ‘what’s the purpose of this?’ (...) I mean there are many people today, including many scientists I think, who just take it as a default position: everybody knows that really there isn’t anything in religion – it’s all just a superstition. (...) But I mean people were kind. Some of them thought, obviously, I was being pretty stupid, but mostly they were both puzzled and supportive I think would be the way I would describe it.” [C1672/04 John Polkinghorne Track 1 24:42 – 26:25]

And, seen from the other side as it were, from church, consider Russell Stannard’s experience:

“I was a fully qualified scientist. At the same time I had [...] become a Reader in the Church of England. And there I was on a Sunday, preaching. And, I found people, not so much at the university but in normal everyday life, sometimes my friends at church [...] they would say, ‘Well, how can you be both, you know, how can you wear a white lab coat Monday to Friday and a white surplice in church on a Sunday? Do you need Saturday to, to make the transition?’” [C1672/03 Russell Stannard Track 2 1:07:42 – 1:08:21]

It is this widely held and perhaps usually unexamined assumption of an opposition between science and religion that SRES attempts to explore through psychology, sociology, philosophy, archival history and oral history. National Life Stories is covering the oral history through thirty life story interviews with religious and non-religious scientists, philosophers, psychologists, writers, journalists, broadcasters and others who have made substantial contributions to more or less public debates in Britain on relations between science and religion, including Desmond Morris, Mary Midgley, Lewis Wolpert, Steve Jones and John Polkinghorne. These interviews include detailed, step-by-step accounts – not available elsewhere – of how significant books were written and published (including Desmond Morris’ The Naked Ape in 1967 and John Hedley-Brooke’s Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives in 1991), university courses set up, public debates staged and radio and television programmes made.

The interviews also – not surprisingly – shed light on relations between public and published debates on relations between science and religion and more personal ‘debates’ within the individual. For example, the philosopher Mary Midgley is well-known for her argument that science is not in a position to explain all human experience – that there are kinds of being in the world that it does not cover. She rehearse this intellectual argument in the interview:

“(...) consciousness, which wasn’t allowed to be talked about at all in the ‘behaviourist epoch’, suddenly has become and has remained a great sort of topic hasn’t it and people keep saying they’re explaining it and they have got something called ‘the hard problem of consciousness’ which they will shortly answer. I don’t think anyone’s in a situation to do any such thing, you know, it’s – because there’s a confident materialism around isn’t there; in a way people want to say all that there is chemicals really and then when their attention is drawn to the fact that they seem to be conscious they don’t know where to put it at all and I mean we’ve sort of lost the idea of spirit and I think we probably need some such idea ‘cause not everything is chemicals and not all the questions are about chemicals.” [C1672/05 Mary Midgley Track 4 16:47 – 17:47]

But what she also does – because of the life story methodology – is reveal that her intellectual position is closely aligned with her individual life story. As the daughter of a vicar, in childhood she attended church and attempted prayer:

“I liked the hymns and I liked the psalms (pause) and I, on the whole, you know I could do with the general world view. What I couldn’t do was contact this character God and get a reply. Now I don’t know whether this is my fault or anybody else’s fault but I, it, I, I just had a sort of sense of an empty room, you see, and I did try from time to time but it didn’t get me far and I’m sure I was doing it in the wrong sort of spirit but [...] I would do a better job on this if it’s ever really got rid of it, you see, I [...] have continued to, to not have a sense of God as a person being there but I do think that, you see, if you ask me ‘is there something greater than ourselves and does it point us the way we need to go?’ I’d say, ‘yes!’ But I don’t have a name for it. [...] And, I think this must be recorded as a gap in my intellectual world, you know, I don’t think I’ve seen the truth and nobody else has [laughs] I don’t think that at all. [...] I mean I was rather worried about this and, oh, when I was at college I sort of stopped going to church on the whole and my father said ‘why have you?’ and I made some sort of feeble explanation. But it didn’t, it didn’t develop into any (pause) any sort of theory and it still hasn’t.

“(...) it all began with that faded, dark blue book on the bottom shelf. I don’t know who it was by but it was an introduction to Einstein’s relativity. And, I began reading it as that. [...] It all began with that faded, dark blue book on the bottom shelf.” [C1672/02 Sam Berry Track 1 13:27 – 14:03]

A historian might say that she was predisposed to think as she does. It does not follow, though, that we should necessarily regard religious belief – or as in Mary Midgley’s case a non-religious perception of something beyond the material – as being a kind of bias against an otherwise unbiased, rational, scientific worldview. Thoroughly atheistic science is just as likely to be shown by life story oral history to be biased, in the sense of aligned with personal experience.
Out of the archive: Experiments in using interviews in exhibitions

Frances Cornford and Elizabeth Wright, Project Interviewers, Crafts Lives, National Life Stories

Crafts Lives records in-depth life stories of British craftspersons, exploring their personal and working lives. In 2014 we were fortunate enough to receive funding to digitise and put online many of the life story interviews that have been recorded since the project started in 1999. There are now over eighty interviews with British craftspersons, along with searchable summaries, available to users worldwide through British Library Sounds (http://sounds.bl.uk/oral-history/crafts).

The digitisation of the archive opens up new possibilities in making the recordings available to the public. Museums and heritage organisations have been experimenting with mobile technology to provide contextual information about their exhibits for some time, using apps and mobile websites in addition to the more traditional headsets and information points. With two-thirds of adults in the UK now using a mobile phone that can access the internet – predicted to be almost everyone by 2018 – making information available via smartphones seems to be the way forward, especially as this can be done relatively cheaply, avoiding the cost of dedicated equipment. Methods of connecting smartphones to the internet include the use of Quick Response (QR) codes and Near Field Communication (NFC) chips. QR codes are the barcode-like squares which can be scanned by a smartphone with a camera and a QR scanning app and which then link the user directly to a website which might contain audio, video or text. NFC chips are used in contactless payment technology and the phone is tapped against a symbol which contains a coded chip that links to a website. They have been used widely in museums and site-specific audio trails such as the Burnley Canal Trail which links to audio reminiscences of the history of the canal and the recent Talking Statues project where passers-by can listen to monologues voiced by actors emanating from statues in London, Manchester and Chicago.

As interviewers, we knew how much hearing the maker speak adds to one’s appreciation of an object, not least because of the immediacy of the maker’s voice. Imagine what it would be like to be able to hear the Anglo-Saxon jewellers who made the Sutton Hoo treasures describe the heat of the furnace and the difficulties of working with gold or listen to the carver of the Lewis chessmen talk about his or her commission. Listening to a maker’s thoughts on the development of their work, and their breakthroughs, challenges, inspirations and methods has added hugely to our understanding and we wanted this to be available to as many people as possible. The primary aim of the archive remains the recording of long life histories which give a detailed portrait of a craftsperson’s work and life. However shorter extracts from the interviews can give valuable insights, and digitisation has made it much easier to edit and access extracts from the interviews.

Our opportunity to experiment came at 2015’s ‘COLLECT’, the International Art Fair for Contemporary Objects held every year in London and run by the Crafts Council. Among the makers exhibiting there were several with whom we had existing recordings, and they and their galleries kindly agreed to have signs with QR codes and NFC chips next to the maker’s work so that people could access audio clips via their smart phones. We chose extracts between one and a half and two minutes long from the interviews as we thought people wouldn’t want to listen to anything too protracted in the middle of a busy art fair. The conversational form and length of the interviews means that it can be difficult to extract a short, meaningful clip but also that there are reflections and observations which wouldn’t exist in a shorter or more targeted interview.

Dorothy Hogg, a jeweller and educator. It featured key makers ‘Inside Out’, with QR codes on the exhibition panels. Since ‘COLLECT’, Crafts Lives has supplied extracts to the mobile website for the Crafts Council exhibition of furniture makers ‘Inside Out’, with QR codes on the exhibition panels. In September 2015 Crafts Lives was invited to collaborate on audio clips of QR codes for the exhibition, ‘A Sense of Jewellery’ held at the new Goldsmiths’ Centre. This exhibition was co-curated by Crafts Lives committee member Amanda Game, an independent curator, and project interviewer Dorothy Hogg, a jeweller and educator. It featured key pieces of jewellery by forty makers from the past forty years, and used several kinds of media to present jewellery and its makers in different ways – from videos of practitioners at work to innovative Oculus Rift glasses, which enable the three-dimensional viewing of objects at a very high level of magnification and resolution. In this case the glasses could be used to navigate around an intricate ring by Andrew Lamb. Dorothy selected extracts from interviews with two of the makers whose work was exhibited, John Donald and Gerda Flockinger, both amongst the earliest interviewees for Crafts Lives. The clips focused on each maker’s approach to work, including descriptions of Donald’s nugget gold technique and Flockinger’s use of sheet metals, as well as the role of the Goldsmiths’ Company within each of their working lives. Surreptitious observation of how people navigated the different exhibitions and website statistics showed that although signs and panels with QR codes were noticed, they weren’t accessed very often. This could be because of the environment or because of people’s lack of familiarity with QR codes and NFC chips. Although QR codes are antediluvian in internet terms, having been around since the 1990s (and are now so widespread they have appeared on banknotes in Russia and Nigeria), the number of steps involved in using them, including downloading a special app, may put people off. It may also take time for people to get used to NFC chips – as proved when one of us witnessed someone stamping his foot on the NFC ‘Tap here’ instruction of a Talking Statue in Spitalfields and complaining that it wouldn’t work. Another drawback is that the sound is delivered via the internet, and therefore through the speakers of the phone, which might be unsuitable for a gallery or museum setting. However new technologies such as i-beacon, where a smartphone picks up a wireless signal when it is near a transmitter, are being developed all the time. In the near future we hope that such innovations will offer even more straightforward and widely available solutions for bringing together the voice and the maker.
When did you find out he’d done an interview for National Life Stories?

I knew he was being interviewed but I didn’t really realise how extensive it was until I started looking into it after his death. I had no idea it was as long as it is…. But there was definitely a point where people started to realise he was getting ill, when he was giving a lot more interviews to people and passing on recorded things… A couple of days after he passed away I sat down and started reading it, because I was asked to write an obituary that went into the order of service, because his funeral brought together so many who knew one aspect of his life but didn’t know the whole picture of him. And so we felt it was very important to have some sort of representation of all of the different aspects of him… I watched it all I could online, and then realised that the entire transcript was available and so sat down and started reading it which was absolutely fascinating.

What was anything in the interview that surprised you?

I suppose a lot of things suddenly started to make sense. It put some order in, I suppose, to things that I already knew about him. It was getting the big picture to the little things I’d been told or picked up on along the way suddenly made a lot more sense and I was able to understand what he’s done across his life. There wasn’t so much anything I was shocked at, it was more it was nice seeing the stories I’d forgotten or wasn’t quite sure if they were real put down in print, and thinking that was something I remembered right or certain things I got confused about. It’s a question that interviewees are often curious about, ‘What will future listeners make of the interviews we record?’ And so it was this wonderful combination of seeing his life preserved and his achievements recorded and recognised in a different perspective…”

Reading things that only members of the family would be able to interpret the significance of was quite funny… It was really fascinating, as a member of the family, to see not only this great man’s life, and reading this you almost get that sense of detachment, but because of the way it was done you could see him. And I could see my Grandad within the interview transcripts… so it was this wonderful combination of seeing his life preserved and his achievements recorded and recognised for other people to see, but also seeing the man we all knew.

I’m glad you’ve said that. I’m always worried about that. Much of what Roy did was secret at the time, did some things that I thought he was a scientist doing top secret stuff that was important. I didn’t realise how influential he was. It gave that detachment, but because of the way it was done you could see him. And I could see my Grandad within the interview transcripts… so it was this wonderful combination of seeing his life preserved and his achievements recorded and recognised for other people to see, but also seeing the man we all knew.

I think systems engineers are like that sometimes. Having to grasp how all the different parts of a technical system work together, in interviews they often shift seamlessly from talking about one topic to another that was somehow connected.

I think it was always going to be like that with Grandad… there was always some aside or memory that would drag him off down a different path… and it’s always fascinating and you’re always getting interesting information and aside that it was nothing to do with what you were trying to get at in the first place.

He had a profoundly long memory and he was unendingly curious, I think how I now reflect on him. He was never just interested in fulfilling the task that was there, as you can see throughout his life, his unending curiosity.

I’ve often been struck by how much of that incidental information in interviews turns out be interesting afterwards, in ways I probably didn’t appreciate at the time when I asked the questions.

I think that’s a story of a lot of the conversation I’ve had with Grandad, you start off and you’re not sure why on earth he’s telling you stuff and then later on… I think he was a real planter of seeds, he’d say something that would at some point down the line turn out to be quite significant to you…. He was an interesting man and I think it’s rare to have that capacity not to need to impose your view but to let those hints down and allow them to make their own way.

Much of what Roy did secret at the time, did some things make more sense to you after reading the transcript?

Definitely. I didn’t really know about Chevaline, but I knew he’d been involved in the Cold War some way, but it was very vague. Also the kind of things I’d vaguely heard Grandad talking about, you could see why he was still involved in things…. There were things like when they tried to land a British probe on Mars and then it burnt up in the atmosphere. Over one Christmas I remember being with Grandad and he said, “I told them it would never work because they’d used the wrong materials for the parachute.” And I remember sitting there thinking, “why on earth would this man know that?” Because I didn’t have any context as to why he would have been asked, so suddenly seeing his links into the establishment, how prominent he was… Previously I just thought he was a scientist doing top secret stuff that was important. I didn’t realise how influential he was. It gave that broader context. He would have been pretty much the only person who was still alive who would have the experience of doing this. I think that was his biggest frustrations, he consistently said to me over the last few years that he was just so frustrated over the loss of institutional memory and that there was no way of capturing and reflecting these things and that the same mistakes were just being made again and again. So reading the transcript and seeing the historical context about what he was living through and dealing with, suddenly made that make sense.
Adrian Cadbury (1929–2015)
Interviewed by Niamh Dillon, 2004

Adrian became Managing Director in 1965 and it was during this time he noted a change in the relationship between manufacturers and retailers with shops on the high streets replaced by larger supermarkets. The impact this had on chocolate production was to reduce the lines manufactured and to emphasise those supported by advertising. Flake and Crunchie became a greater part of sales than plain bars of chocolate which could be replicated by the supermarkets. Adrian remembers:

“In the 1950s we had something like two hundred and fifty thousand direct accounts and the main business was actually going through these small corner shops. Well then you had the rise of the supermarket and that meant that first of all that many of the smaller shops had to close, but also that the supermarkets clearly had more clout and you know, (laughing) they had considerable purchasing power and they wouldn’t buy from a whole lot of separate companies, so having a company that could cover a whole range of products made much more sense to them, but equally it gave them much more power. The small corner shop was dependent on Cadbury, paid on time, accepted Cadbury’s terms. The big supermarket wanted discounts, some of them didn’t pay on time (laughs). It was a changing world and so if you like, the balance of power had changed.”

Responding to these changes in British distribution and retail, Adrian oversaw the merger of Cadbury with the drinks company Schweppes, through the Architectural Association (AA) in London in the 1960s. This gave the merged company greater distribution in the UK and a more international orientation. On his retirement, he chaired a committee that would set the benchmark for corporate governance, his values being reflected to the extent that rather than being known by its title Financial Aspects of Corporate Governance, the widely respected document is more often referred to as the ‘Cadbury Report’. He comments:

“I was asked to chair the first committee that was set up to look into it [corporate governance] in the UK – that was in May 1991 and we produced our report and a code of best practice in December 1992. It was quite short, two sides of A4, nineteen recommendations, most of which were only one sentence long, which was really setting out what we saw as the task of the board, and we defined it very simply, as the system by which companies are directed and controlled. And by that we meant, the board of Directors, to whom are those Directors accountable, how effective is that accountability, and the whole basis of our code of best practice was the importance of disclosure, of openness. So that there was no obligation to comply, but there was an absolute obligation to disclose.”

James Gowan (1923–2015)
Interviewed by Niamh Dillon, 2012 – 2013

“With the orders and you drew them all out – plans, sections and elevations – you had to draw to a high standard, but the labour of drawing them… line for line, it registered in your mind.”

The Second World War interrupted his architectural education but after demobilisation, he resumed his studies at Kingston Polytechnic, where students were encouraged to work in a modernist idiom. A chance meeting with Geoffrey Powell led him to a job with Powell and Moya, working on the Skylon at the Festival of Britain. James recalled the new optimism prompted by the Labour government’s programme of rebuilding and how it influenced him and his fellow architects. One of the foremost practices of the period was Lyons Israel and Ellis, and it was while working there that he met James Stirling.

“After Etion, he studied economics at Cambridge, starting his career in Cadbury in 1952. He worked in different departments before becoming Personnel Director in 1958 where he was involved with negotiations on pay and staff conditions. It was during this period that the Quaker tradition of mentoring and using discussion to form a point of consensus was influential. Adrian reflected on the long-term tradition of the family’s involvement in the organisation:

“The people you worked with on the shop floor were pleased to see that the family were still interested, they were still prepared to work, they hadn’t become landed gentry and moved away, but lived down the road and you know, were committed to the business. Because in those days we owned the business as well as managed it, so in a sense it was something that we would take a long-term view, that we believed, you know, that the business was something that we’d inherited and something that we ought to keep going.”

However, it was not only in his built projects that Gowan influenced a generation of British architects. As a tutor at the Architecture Association in the 1960s he devised a new programme of teaching. His influence on architects such as Jeremy Dixon, Edward Jones, Tony Fretton, and others, has been substantial.

“I have great admiration for the young English students. They didn’t mind if you said their building was rotten and ought to be done again! They would say things like, ‘I quite agree with you James! … One of my hobby-horses was that public school was heavy handed in relation to art … and I remember talking to a little group of students at the AA and launching into my theory, and I remember when I finished the leader of the group said, ‘We thoroughly enjoyed your talk James, by the way we are all from public school!’ And he wasn’t being cynical.”

The Leicester building did involve a lot of drawings but not as many as one would expect because most of the time we were sorting out options rather than doing working drawings. Because we were in the dark really, we didn’t have a model to work to, not like a Corbusian model, we were shaping the thing up from scratch. So we were trying out various types of roofs, various arrangements for the front, and that was done at a smaller scale… One of the things that fixed the building was the fact the hydraulic tank had to be sixty feet up in the air to get the pressure… The building committee were dealing with wanted to make a statement, and indicate their presence, and make a splash, and I think that was probably successful.”
**Last Words**

**Ion Trewin (1943–2015)**

Interviewed by Sarah O'Reilly, 2009–2010

Ion Trewin was born in London, the son of two theatre critics, JC and Wendy Trewin. He went on to become one of the great publishers of his generation as well as an accomplished writer. In 2006 he succeeded Martyn Goff as Literary Director of the Man Booker Prize. Trewin began his career as a writer. In 2006 he succeeded Martyn Goff as Literary Director of the Man Booker Prize. Trewin begun his career as a writer. In 2006 he moved on again, to become the Man Booker Prize’s literary director. Here he describes his interview for the job:

“They started by asking me very boring questions about my CV, and then suddenly Julia Neuberger, who is an impressive and powerful woman, leant forward and tapped the desk and she said ‘Now then, Martin is very well known for the way that he leaks stories into newspapers. You might call him a devious figure. Are you a devious person?’”

And I thought ‘Now how the hell do you answer that? That’s the ‘and when did you last beat your wife?’ kind of question.

But I looked to my left and (interviewer) Ronald Harwood had a sheet of paper, and it was quite obvious that this was the agenda for the day. Now, because I’d been a journalist and had worked in hot metal, I’m very good at reading things backwards and upside down. And I could see this document was a list of names with mine at the top. So my immediate response was to say ‘Well I don’t know if this is being devious, but I know who all the other candidates for this job are.’ And she looked at me, and she said ‘Who?’ So I rattled off these names, and she said ‘How did you know that?’ And I said ‘Well I can read upside down!’

A week or two went by, and there was an advisory committee meeting, chaired by Martyn (Goff), at the Savile Club, followed by a lunch. (Chairman of the Booker Prize Foundation) Jonathan Taylor turned up at the end of the meeting for the lunch, took me aside, and said ‘I can have a word with you afterwards?’ and I thought ‘I’ve just got the job.’

“I remember being approached by one who said ‘Have you ever thought of moving across, and being an editor in publishing?’ I hadn’t, but I thought ‘Interesting idea – though I don’t actually like that particular publisher very much’. Then another one came along, and then finally in the summer of 1979 Eric Major, the MD of Hodder and Stoughton, then a family-owned business, took me to lunch and said that his Chief Non Fiction Editor had resigned and he was looking around for somebody and wondered if I might think about it? So I thought about it, and I talked to my wife – I couldn’t make my mind up – and I went to see the group MD, who was from the Hodder family…

Anyway, eventually my wife said ‘For Heaven’s sake, just take the job. If it doesn’t work out you’re a good enough journalist, you’ll get back into it’. So I remember going up to see (Times editor) William Rees-Mogg and saying ‘I’m going to resign’, and he looked at me in absolute horror and he said ‘You mean you’re going to go and work for a book publisher?’ and I said ‘Yes’. ‘Not a very safe profession’, he said. ‘Working for The Times is as safe as the civil service’. I laughed and said ‘How can you say that? Look, we’re here, we’re not publishing.’ ‘Oh, that will all get resolved’, he said, ‘The Times will always be with us.’ And I think it was that which convinced me that what I was doing was the absolute right thing…” [C1276/30, track 6, 58:47 – 1:03:30]

In 1992 Trewin left Hodder and the old world of Bloomsbury publishing to join Anthony Cheetham’s new venture, Orion, based – somewhat symbolically – in a newly modernised office block in St Martins Lane. In 2006 he moved on again, to become the Man Booker Prize’s literary director.

“...And when did you last beat your wife?” kind of question. But I looked to my left and (interviewer) Ronald Harwood had a sheet of paper, and it was quite obvious that this was the agenda for the day. Now, because I’d been a journalist and had worked in hot metal, I’m very good at reading things backwards and upside down. And I could see this document was a list of names with mine at the top. So my immediate response was to say ‘Well I don’t know if this is being devious, but I know who all the other candidates for this job are.’ And she looked at me, and she said ‘Who?’ So I rattled off these names, and she said ‘How did you know that?’ And I said ‘Well I can read upside down!’

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**Yolanda Sonnabend (1935–2015)**

Interviewed by Elizabeth Wright, 2007

Yolanda Sonnabend was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. She studied at the Académie des Beaux-Arts, Geneva, and the Slade School of Fine Art under Nicholas Georgiadis. She spent her working life in London, designing primarily for ballet but also theatre, and carried out much of her work at the Royal Ballet with celebrated choreographers including Kenneth MacMillan. Her numerous designs included ‘La Bayadère’ and ‘Swan Lake’, part of the Royal Ballet’s repertoire from 1967 – 2015. In addition to designing for theatre and ballet, Yolanda was a distinguished portraitist and her works held in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery include paintings of Steven Berkoff, Kenneth MacMillan and Stephen Hawking.

Yolanda credited some of the features of her childhood home, in what was then Southern Rhodesia, as an influence on her work for the stage, especially on the use of metal and glass within her design for ‘Swan Lake’:

“It was full of beautiful things and rubbish things – rather like this house. I don’t mind rubbish things around but I also like beautiful things. I think just the notion of my father saying ‘We’ll have a Roman dining room.’ Why not? And also using it as a concert place and you could open up one room into another room. I remember a funny glass table – the dining room was steel and glass. There was something about metal that I’ve always liked and it goes back to that.” [C1276/30, 14:15:07 – 2:01:17]

Her childhood in Zimbabwe also gave her some experience of the body when it came to portraiture and helped her to find ‘the essence underneath the realistic skin’:

“You can tell a lot by the way somebody sits and it’s very important to find the right position for them. Usually you want them to be comfortable but sometimes you want them to be uncomfortable... Because of the theatre you look at the body and how it works and what it’s clothed in, you have to make up your mind quickly what character it’s playing, a little bit like your sitter in a sense: that’s the sort of character and that’s how he would move. It’s the positioning of the body I think, that’s helped.” [C1276/30, 13:01:45 (edited by Liz Wright)]

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Statement of Financial Activities

Year Ended 31 December 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Restricted</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INCOMING RESOURCES</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Donations</td>
<td>134,504</td>
<td>20,280</td>
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<td>144,681</td>
<td>61,723</td>
<td>206,404</td>
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| RESOURCES EXPENDED | | | | |
| Charitable activities | 193,809 | – | 193,809 | 263,480 |
| Governance and administration | – | 51,918 | 51,918 | 41,367 |
| TOTAL EXPENDITURE | 193,809 | 51,918 | 245,727 | 304,847 |

| NET (OUTGOING)/INCOMING RESOURCES | | | |
| Unrealised investment (loss)/gain | (49,128) | 9,805 | (39,323) | (37,666) |
| Net movement in funds for the year | (2,839) | (2,399) | (5,238) | 10,253 |
| Total funds: | (51,967) | 7,406 | (44,561) | (27,413) |
| Brought forward | 639,737 | 610,431 | 1,250,168 | 1,277,581 |
| Carried forward | 587,770 | 617,837 | 1,205,607 | 1,250,168 |

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIXED ASSETS</td>
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<td>Investments</td>
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<td>416,548</td>
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<td>LIABILITIES: Creditors falling due within one year</td>
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<td>NET CURRENT ASSETS</td>
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<td>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</td>
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<td>1,250,168</td>
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THE FUNDS OF THE CHARITY

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<th>Notes</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tr>
<td>Founder's donation</td>
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<td>Unrestricted fund</td>
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<td>Restricted fund</td>
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<td>1,205,607</td>
<td>1,250,168</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Restricted funds are limited to expenditure on specific projects; unrestricted funds are intended to provide sufficient resources to maintain the general activities of the Charity. The Founder’s donation is the founding 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 January 2015), 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 charity. The opinion of the auditors on the full financial statements is reproduced below.

OPINION
In our opinion:
- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the charity’s affairs as at 31 December 2015 and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its result for the year then ended;
- the financial statements have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice;
- the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

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

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

Dame Jenny Abramsky
Chair of Trustees
Leaders of National Life (C408) [30 interviews]

Leaders of National Life is one of NL5s founding collections. Its scope is wide, and includes politics, industry, the arts, sports, religion, the professions, administration and communications. Priority is given to those whose life stories have not been previously recorded or published.

City Lives (C409) [150 interviews]

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

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

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

General Interviews (C464) [89 interviews]

This collection comprises diverse interviews additional to the main NLS projects. Interviews are drawn from many fields including education, medicine, retail, dance and engineering, and embrace leading designers such as Terence Conran and members of Pentagram.

Artists’ Lives (C466) [365 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_rooftopsteins Hopkins Foundation and The Yale Center for British Art. A double CD, Connecting Lives: Artists Talk about Drawing, was published in 2010 funded by the Rooftopsteins Hopkins Foundation. The audio from the CD is available online in the ‘Oral History Curator’s Choice’ collection at British Library Sounds.

Architects’ Lives (C467) [128 interviews]

Architects’ Lives documents architects working in Britain and those in associated professions. In addition to the main collection, and with the association with the National Trust at Willow Road, NLS made a series of recordings documenting memories of Ernö Goldfinger which resulted in a co-published CD Passionate Nationalism (2004). NLS has also partnered with the English Heritage to document Eltham Palace and the Courtauld family (C1056).

Architects’ Lives Advisory Committee
Sir Alan Bowes, Dr Penelope Curtis, Caroline Cutbert, Adrian Cree, Professor Mel Gooding (chair), Liba Le Feuvre, Cornelia Grassi, Lubaina Himid, Richard Morphet CBE, Clive Phillpot and Dr Andrew Wilson.

Legal Lives (C736) [12 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 Hoffman. From 2012 we have been developing this area of our work in partnership with the Legal Biography Project in the Law Department at the London School of Economics. A scoping study was completed in 2014 to outline the scope of a wider project and inform fundraising efforts.

Food: From Source to Salespoint (C821) [217 interviews]

Between 1998 and 2006 Food: From Source to Salespoint 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 Salespoint 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 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 book-selling 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) [145 interviews]

Documenting the lives of Britain’s leading craftsmen and craftswomen, Crafts Lives complements Architects’ 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
James Bright, Annabelle Campbell, Amanda Game, Sarah Griffin, Dr Tanya Harrod, Helen Joseph, John Keatley and Martina Margrets.

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 business, from postmen to postwomen, to union officials, sorters, engineers and senior management. A CD, Speeding the mail: an oral history of the post from the 1910s to the 1990s, was co-published by the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) and the British Library (2005).

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

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

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

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

Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare (C1155) [28 interviews]

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

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

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

Authors’ Lives (C1276) [60 interviews]

Authors’ Lives was launched in 2007 with the aim of recording approximately one hundred novelists, poets, writers and editors. A CD, The Writing Life: Authors Speak, featuring extracts from the collection, was published by the British Library (2011) and the audio is available online in the ‘Oral History Curator’s Choice’ collection at British Library Sounds. In 2014 work began on the Women in Publishing project (C1657), to document the work of this campaigning organisation established in 1979 to promote the status of women in the publishing industry and its networking and training. The project will record 25 interviews.

Authors’ Lives Advisory Committee
Stephen Cleary, Rachel Foss, Dr Maggie Gee OBE, Dame Penelope Lively (chair), Deborah Moggach, Martin Pick, Lawrence Sal, Nicola Solomon and Jonathan Taylor CBE.
The Legacy of the English Stage Company
(C1316) [15 interviews]

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

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

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

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

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

An Oral History of British Science
(C1379) [117 interviews]

This programme was initiated in November 2009 in collaboration with the British Library’s History of Science specialists and is run in association with the Science Museum.

The first phase (2009–2013) was generously funded by the Arcadia Fund and the Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851. It is creating a major archive for the study and public understanding of contemporary science in Britain through in-depth interviews with British scientists. As well as filling obvious gaps in our knowledge of major developments and innovations by interviewing the key players in British science, this project aims to account for the character of scientific innovations by interviewing the key players in British science, and to complement life story interviews, averaging 10 –15 hours in length, the this project aims to account for the character of scientific developments by interviewing the key players in British science, and to complement life story interviews, averaging 10 –15 hours in length, the

An Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK
(C1495) [50 interviews]

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

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

An Oral History of Talking Therapists in the UK
(C1953) [9 interviews]

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

Welcome Trust Life Stories
(C1665) [5 interviews]

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

Science and Religion: Exploring the Spectrum
(C1672) [15 interviews]

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

Donation of shares

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

Bequests

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

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

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

Companies

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

Donation of shares

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

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