

NATIONAL

Life stories

Review and Accounts
2013/2014



National Life Stories

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

National Life Stories was established in 1987 and its mission is: 'To record the first-hand experiences of as wide a cross section of society as possible, to preserve the recordings, to make them publicly available and encourage their use'. As an independent charitable trust within the Oral History Section of the British Library, NLS's key focus and expertise has been oral history fieldwork. For over twenty-five years it

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(from December 2013)
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VOICES OF SCIENCE WEB

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(to September 2013)
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PROJECT INTERVIEWERS

Frances Cornford
(*Crafts Lives, Artists' Lives*)
Niamh Dillon
(*Architects' Lives*)
Dr Katharine Haydon
(*An Oral History of Barings*)
Dr Thomas Lean
(*An Oral History of British Science and An Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK*)
Dr Paul Merchant
(*An Oral History of British Science*)
Sarah O'Reilly
(*Authors' Lives*)
Dr Elizabeth Wright
(*Crafts Lives*)

VIDEO CAMERAMAN

Matt Casswell

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 at <http://sounds.bl.uk>. Each individual life story interview is several hours long, covering family background, childhood, education, work, leisure and later life.

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

TRANSCRIBERS

Susan Hutton
Susan Nicholls
Business Friend

FREELANCE ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWERS
Zibiah Alfred Loakthar
(*An Oral History of Talking Therapists in the UK*)
Sue Bradley
(*British Library Staff Oral History Project*)
Louise Brodie
(*Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare*)
Catherine Croft
(*Architects' Lives*)
Geraint Franklin
(*Architects' Lives*)
Kirstie Gregory
(*Artists' Lives*)
Stephanie Kenna
(*British Library Staff Oral History Project*)
Lisa Le Feuvre
(*Artists' Lives*)
Shirley Read
(*Oral History of British Photography*)
Ann Sproat
(*Artists' Lives*)
Robert Wilkinson
(*An Oral History of Oral History in the UK*)
Jon Wood
(*Artists' Lives*)

VOLUNTEERS

Claire Fons

COLLABORATIVE

DOCTORAL STUDENT

Dvora Liberman

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Roger Gavin
Sir Nicholas Goodison
Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield
Bill Knight OBE
Lesley Knox
Dr Scot McKendrick
Dr Robert Perks
Dr Jo Reilly
Prof Dorothy Sheridan MBE
Professor Paul Thompson
David Webster
Jennifer Wingate

NLS ADVISORS (at 20 May 2014)

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Eric de Bellaigue
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Professor Mary Chamberlain
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Sir Roger Gibbs
Dr Mark Girouard
Martyn Goff CBE
Professor Leslie Hannah
Dame Penelope Lively DBE
Lord Rees of Ludlow OM
Jonathan Taylor CBE
Caroline Waldegrave OBE
Bill Williams

Chairman's Foreword

We have now concluded phase one of our Oral History of British Science. We can be proud that, with the support of the Arcadia Fund over the past four years, we have created a major archive of international standing about British scientists' work and lives. We have captured the fine detail of scientific and technological invention and endeavour, the great changes in scientific workplaces, the rise and demise of government research establishments, and the impact of computerisation. The life story approach, combined with our commitment to capture the experiences of a cross-section of the scientific community, not just its most eminent members, has ensured that we have gathered unique insights into the work of people such as laboratory technicians, apprentices, and others who rarely feature as individuals in the historical record. We have explored the masculine culture of British science in the twentieth century through the eyes of female scientists and technicians in male-dominated workplaces. Video has added another important dimension of understanding through the unique interaction scientists and engineers have with the tools of their trade or with things they helped create. Importantly, the project has contributed to the public understanding of science, by encouraging interviewees to discuss their work in ways more readily appreciated by non-expert audiences, most obviously via the *Voices of Science* website. Much remains still to be done and we are currently scoping and fund-raising for the next phase of the programme.

With all our current projects we are able, with interviewees' consent, to provide almost immediate digital access to the audio material via the British Library's Sounds website, together with time-coded content summaries and (where these exist) transcripts. Our campaign to digitise NLS's older analogue recordings for similar online access is now well underway, with around a third of the funds raised, and many



Bill Knight

of our foundation projects will be appearing on BL Sounds in the coming months. These include City Lives, The Living Memory of the Jewish Community, Lives in Steel, Crafts Lives and Architects' Lives. We thank those trusts and individuals who have helped us financially with this urgent work both to preserve our past recordings and to broaden our user-base very significantly, reaching new audiences around the world.

This coming year, with our staff complement restored to full strength, we expect to make further progress with several projects, including Legal Lives and Talking Therapists. As part of our plans to raise the profile and value of our work, we will hold the first of what we hope will be a series of NLS Annual Lectures. The valuable partnerships which underpin much of our work continue: with the Henry Moore Foundation and Institute and with Tate for Artists' Lives, with the Royal Institute of British Architects for Architects' Lives, with the London School of Economics for Legal Lives, and not least with the British Library through a renewed three-year working agreement and a shared vision to collect a cross-section of British memories and experiences from every walk of life, workplace, pursuit, opinion and persuasion.

I would like to thank all our trustees, advisors, staff and volunteers who have worked so hard to make the past year such a success.

Sir Nicholas Goodison
Chairman of Trustees

Review of 2013

Rob Perks
Director of National Life Stories

Collections and projects

We concluded the first phase of our ambitious **Oral History of British Science** programme, supported largely by the Arcadia Fund. One hundred audio interviews – including forty-nine for the **Made in Britain** strand and forty-eight for **A Changing Planet** – have been completed over the past four years, equating to over 1000 hours of recordings. An additional nineteen video interviews were conducted on location. This is now one of the major collections of oral history recordings with scientists available to researchers worldwide. Our oldest interviewee was ninety-four years old, the youngest fifty-nine. The longest interview was twenty-seven hours. Regretably, eight interviewees have died since they were recorded: Russell Coope, Alan Cottrell, Joe Farman, Dennis Highton, George Hockham, David Jenkinson, Norman Smith, and Maurice Wilkes.

The vast majority of the audio interviews are available online in their entirety to a worldwide audience, with transcripts, via British Library (BL) Sounds at <http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Science>. The *Voices of Science* website was launched on 29 November 2013, and within the first two months there had been 13,340 visits (from 11,000 unique browsers) and 44,500 page views, plus 15,000 views of video clips on the British Library YouTube channel. The website was featured on BBC Radio Four's 'World at One' and listed as a 'Best new website' by *Web User* magazine (January 2014).

Two well-attended public events were held at the British Library in March and November 2013, featuring leading scientists in conversation, and both were podcast. Since the project started the project team have given thirty-two presentations at conferences, seminars, workshops and other events, both in the UK and abroad, and twelve publications have appeared.

The project has successfully captured step-by-step descriptions, not available elsewhere, of the operation of instruments, methods of fieldwork, the conduct of experiments, the running of simulations and models, the use of computers, and the writing of papers and reports. There are no lone geniuses amongst our interviewees: their memories of interaction with colleagues, and as small parts of large scale collaborative projects, demonstrate how science is truly a teamwork activity. These descriptions form part of wider accounts of scientific work, revealing the extent to which science is a form of employment like any other, with hours of work, separation from home and family, workplace cultures, coffee breaks and concerns with promotion, seniority and retirement.

We have documented the great changes in scientific workplaces over the latter part of the twentieth century, capturing such trends as the demise of government research establishments, the impact of computerisation, an increasing focus on commercial concerns and the demonstration of 'value' in universities. And we have recorded the experience of female scientists and technicians in male-dominated workplaces, including the first woman allowed to work in Antarctica with the British Antarctic Survey (Janet Thomson), the first female commercial computer programmer (Mary Coombs), the first female marine geophysicist to work on Royal Research Ship 'Discovery' (Carol Williams) and the first female Chief Scientist at the UK Meteorological Office (Julia Slingo). The interviews also provide unique insights into the work of 'lesser-known' figures such as laboratory technicians, apprentices, drawing office staff and others who invariably drop out of the historical record.

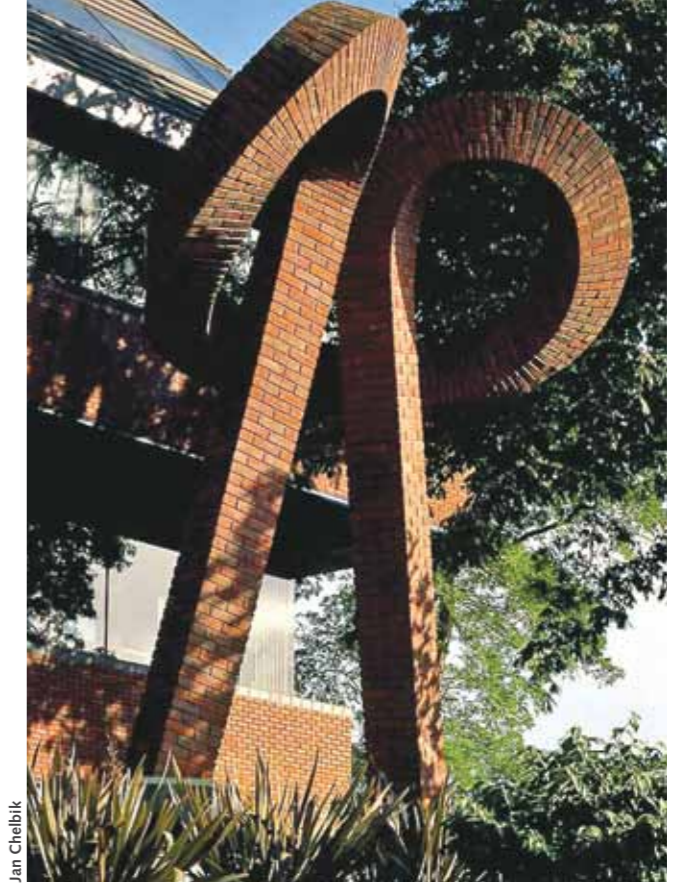
For the first time, **Oral History of British Science** invited a large number of British scientists to talk at length about their childhoods. The interviews can be understood as

a record of certain historical 'facts' about the social-educational background of these scientists, and as narratives in which individuals link particular early experiences to the development of an interest in science. Scientists talk about their lives outside work as adults – their hobbies, reading, travel, family life, experience as parents, friendships, relationships. This has revealed insights into the role of spouses, sacrifices made in family life, the 'long hours culture' of a career in science, and how leisure activities are often an extension of scientific work, or in some cases, such as missile scientist and Morris dancer Roy Dommett, an escape from it.

A full report about phase one of an **Oral History of British Science** is available and, to help us shape the next phase, we have commissioned a scoping study, due to report later in 2014. In the meantime interviewer Paul Merchant has been conducting a short series of audio and video interviews for **Inspiring Scientists: Diversity in British Science**, a project funded by and conducted in collaboration with the Royal Society, which documents the life stories of British scientists with minority ethnic heritage (especially Asian, African and Caribbean) in order to extend the **Oral History of British Science** collection and contribute to the Royal Society's Diversity Programme, seeking to inspire young people of minority ethnic heritage to pursue scientific careers. Interviewees have included metallurgist Harshad ('Harry') Bhadeshia, space scientist and BBC science presenter Maggie Aderin-Pocock, atmospheric physicist Mark Richards, immunologist Donald Palmer, pharmacologist and entrepreneur Mah Hussain Gambles, physics PhD student Jassel Majeবাদia, electronics engineer Jo Shien Ng, and a researcher at the Institute of Food Research in Norwich, Charlotte Armah. The recordings culminate in a new Royal Society website in May 2014 and an event in June. Paul describes the project findings in more detail later in this Review.

Project Interviewer Tom Lean has completed ten interviews for the **Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK**, documenting the wide spectrum of activities in the industry and its place in the context of energy supply, industrial and technology policy and the lives of consumers. The first tranche of electricity interviews have been loaded to a new BL Sounds package at <http://sounds.bl.uk/Oral-history/Industry-water-steel-and-energy>.

This year interviews have ventured into areas hitherto unexplored by the project. Alan Plumpton, Deputy Chairman of the Electricity Council, recalls the industry role in stimulating demand for electricity and in actively shaping public perceptions of it as being 'modern' through its marketing. Frank Davenport, from Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) transmission development and CEGB systems planner Sam Goddard gave useful perspectives on the growth and development of the high-voltage transmission system and, with Ian Preston, Director General of CEGB design and construction, add to our understanding of the technical development of the industry. Granville Camsey's interview charts the great variety of a career developed on the operational side of the CEGB, from apprenticeship to senior management. John Lyons, General Secretary of the Electrical Power Engineers' Association,



Jan Chelbik
Wendy Taylor's 'Sentinel', 1980–81, Reigate, Surrey.

and Roger Farrance, Industrial Relations Advisor for the Electricity Council, provide complementary perspectives on the sophisticated labour relations of the industry. Interviewing also began with Sir John Baker, first Chief Executive of National Power and last Secretary of the CEGB, after a diverse career in the public sector.

The collection reveals constant themes across interviews: the electricity supply industry as a benevolent employer and a route to social advancement; the need to move to develop a career and the role of families in supporting the sometimes difficult conditions of work; the interaction and teamwork of staff from different parts of the industry. The interviews have revealed the huge variety of tasks involved in keeping the system running, from managing power stations and control rooms, to building and maintaining equipment, policy and planning and scientific development. The industry ethos of 'keeping the lights on' has frequently been evoked: juggling supply and demand at National Control, midnight negotiations with trade unions, the miners' strikes, fixing technical problems in hard winters, and through closing discussions about future energy policy.

For **Artists' Lives**, Welsh painter Gwilym Prichard and artist and concrete poet John Furnival were among new interviewees in 2013. Ann Sproat began recording Wendy Taylor, one of the few women to complete the influential sculpture course at Saint Martin's School of Art in the 1960s. In the late 1970s Wendy took the courageous step to leave the gallery system and commit to sculpture in the open-air, making large works in steel, bronze and brick. Many of her sculptures, such as 'Timepiece' near Tower Bridge, have become landmarks and although images of her works are frequently reproduced, her career is less well documented than many of her peers. Wendy's energy, inventiveness and independence of mind shine through in the interview. We are grateful to the Yale Center for British Art for its support of our recording with illustrator and engraver John Lawrence.



Elizabeth Hunter/British Library
(L–R) Chair Professor Dame Wendy Hall and panel speakers Professor John Coplin, Professor Sir Colin Humphries and Dame Stephanie Shirley at the launch of Voices of Science, British Library Conference Centre, November 2013.

Frances Cornford started interviews with painter and glass artist Brian Clarke, Simon Cutts, creator of Coracle Press, and cartoonists Gerald Scarfe and Ralph Steadman. The Henry Moore Foundation has provided crucial support for **Artists' Lives** since 1990 and the Henry Moore Institute continues to showcase our interviews on their own website (www.henrymoore.org/hmi/library/national-life-stories) whilst several members of the HMI staff are valued members of the interviewing team. **Artists' Lives** was the focus of *Essays in Sculpture*, the journal of the Henry Moore Institute, issue no 69. Cathy Courtney contributed a long essay, alongside an introduction by Lisa Le Feuvre, and shorter pieces by Sir Nicholas Serota, Mel Gooding, Alison Wilding and Kirstie Gregory.

We are grateful to the Monument Trust for their generous grant, which has enabled **Architects' Lives** to continue. Part of the grant was used to digitise the older analogue cassette recordings in the collection and make them accessible on the web, the remainder will be for new interviews over the next two years. Our collaboration with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) has developed well and, as part of our campaign to raise the profile of the project amongst their 40,000 members, there was a feature in RIBA's online newsletter and NLS provided audio clips related to their exhibition 'The Brits Who Built the Modern World', linked to the BBC4 series of the same name. RIBA President Angela Brady was amongst those whom Niamh Dillon, lead interviewer for **Architects' Lives**, recorded in 2013. Ongoing recordings include Norman Foster, Michael Hopkins, Nicholas Grimshaw and Terry Farrell, a group known for their early work on high-tech and postmodern buildings, and who have had a significant presence internationally. Foster has designed landmarks such as Wembley Stadium, 30 St Mary Axe ('The Gherkin') in London and the Millau Viaduct bridge in France. Hopkins' work includes key British cultural buildings, among them Glyndebourne Opera House, the Mound Stand

at Lords Cricket Ground, Portcullis House in Westminster and buildings at Princeton and Yale in the United States. Grimshaw, who worked in practice with Sir Terry Farrell from 1965 to 1980, is known for Waterloo International, the Eden Project in Cornwall, the Experimental Media and Performing Arts Centre in New York and more recently the restoration of the Cutty Sark in Greenwich. Farrell built the headquarters of M16 on the banks of the Thames in London, The Deep in Hull and the Z15 tower in Beijing.

Recordings have been completed with Gordon and Ursula Bowyer: who first came to prominence working on the Sports Pavilion at the Festival of Britain in 1951, and latterly for Ursula's conservation work particularly in Greenwich, and Gordon's work on exhibitions, housing and retail for Vidal Sassoon. The Monument Trust grant has allowed us to offer several interviews to Geraint Franklin, who had previously been contributing on a voluntary basis. He has recorded Neave Brown, perhaps best-known for his use of site-cast reinforced concrete in the Alexandra Road Estate in Camden, designed in 1968 whilst working at Camden Council's Architects Department; and Andy MacMillan, formerly Professor of Architecture at the University of Glasgow and Head of the Mackintosh School of Architecture. MacMillan studied at Glasgow School of Art while working for Glasgow Corporation's Housing Department and the East Kilbride New Town Development Corporation during the 1950s. He joined the architects Gillespie, Kidd & Coia in 1954, since when he has won the RIBA Award for Architecture on four occasions.

Funding for **Crafts Lives** has again been perilous and we are grateful to the Sackler Trust, Sir Sigmund Warburg's Voluntary Settlement and the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths for grants to allow us to continue. Frances Cornford completed long interviews with Takeshi Yasuda, Steven Newell, Alexander Beleschenko and Jacqui Poncelet. Takeshi spoke in his last session about setting up his own

studio in Jingdezhen, the ancient porcelain capital of China, and a new phase in his work, experimenting using industrial production methods expressively to achieve artistic results. Steven Newell described his new project, converting an ancient hamlet in Tuscany into an artists' village which will run glass and cookery courses. Alexander Beleschenko reflected on the changes in his work in architectural glass and the challenges of producing work which is now part of the fabric of the building. Jacqui Poncelet spoke about her move away from ceramics into sculpture, her use of different materials and her later career in public art.

Frances also interviewed tapestry weaver Joanna Buxton, basket maker Mary Butcher (supported by the Basketmakers' Charitable Trust), and ceramicists Julian Stair and Jill Crowley. Stair's work ranges from tableware to monumental funerary jars fired in brick kilns. He has written extensively about studio pottery, was a trustee of Contemporary Applied Arts and the Crafts Council, and reflects in his interview on the changes and developments in the crafts world in the last forty years. Crowley was one of a group of significant female ceramicists who graduated from the Royal College of Art (RCA) at the beginning of the 1970s. We now include her interview alongside those with Carol McNicoll, Elizabeth Fritsch, Alison Britton and Jacqui Poncelet in the collection. We were fortunate to be able to complete an interview with eminent Australian potter Gwyn Hanssen Pigott, who worked with both Bernard Leach and Michael Cardew, while she was exhibiting her work in this country. Very sadly, she died shortly after the interview was completed.

Elizabeth Wright's recording with Mary Restieaux covered her work in the fashion industry, including as a colourist for Herve Leger, as well as details of the process of ikat weaving that she uses to create fine art textiles for commission and exhibition. She has also been interviewing Michael Rowe, leading silversmith and Fellow and Senior Tutor at the RCA, and Dorothy Hogg, who has had an important influence on contemporary jewellery through her work and as course leader of Silversmithing and Jewellery at Edinburgh College of Art.

Critic John Carey, travel writer Colin Thubron, biographer Fiona MacCarthy, historian John Julius Norwich and non-fiction writer Julia Blackburn were among the contributors to **Authors' Lives** this year. Carey's recording with Sarah O'Reilly vividly captures the passion for books which led him to a career in academia, and his appointment as chief book reviewer for *The Sunday Times* where he has tirelessly written to involve and stimulate the general reader. Colin Thubron is the first travel writer to enter the archive, and his distinguished career is charted alongside compelling accounts of his extensive travels in Russia, China and Central Asia. Recordings with Fiona MacCarthy (the author of books on Eric Gill, William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones), John Julius Norwich (author of celebrated historical works on Venice and Byzantium) and Julia Blackburn (author of the groundbreaking works *The Emperor's Last Island* and *Daisy Bates in the Desert*) complete the tally of non-fiction writers who have added their voices to the collection this year.

Fiction writers were represented by the novelists Maggie Gee, Howard Jacobson, Fay Weldon and William Boyd. Gee, a technical innovator whose work is informed by contemporary political and social issues, served as the first female Chair of the Council of the Royal Society of Literature between 2004 and 2008, and her recording is a fascinating account of both the private and public realm of authorship. Howard Jacobson's recording, which began in 2010, was temporarily halted in the wake of his Man Booker Prize win for *The Finkler Question*; as a result, we have gained a fascinating first-hand account of his life before and after this career-changing event. Fay Weldon's witty recording looks back at the entirety of her writing career and personal life, filling in the gaps left by her two autobiographies. A writer whose fictional project has been to 'colonise the real', William Boyd's recording gives a fascinating insight into the ideas that motivate his work, and the experience of being a bestseller (both in his own right, and with the Fleming Estate, who commissioned Boyd's most recent novel *Solo*). Writer Caryl Phillips was the final author to enter the archive this year. His account of growing up 'black, northern, and working class' begins a compelling life story interview replete with reflections on politics, class and identity, the themes around which his work has centred. Long running interviews continue with A S Byatt, Andrew Motion, Indra Sinha, Michael Rosen, Jane Gardam and Ian McEwan, as and when their writing commitments permit.

Partnerships

Work is now underway on our **Legal Lives** joint project with the London School of Economics Department of Law's Legal Biography Project supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), 'The changing face of local justice: Examining the shift to a centralised justice system through the life stories of Crown Court clerks'. Collaborative doctoral student Dvora Liberman joined the team in October.

Following on from our **Book Trade Lives** project, we have forged a partnership with a new oral history led by **Women in Publishing**, set up in 1979 to promote the status of women in the book business through networking and training.

Projects in development

Building on an excellent scoping study in 2011, a roundtable meeting of interested parties and stakeholders, and completion of seven pilot interviews, we are seeking funding to further develop our project exploring the 'talking therapies' in the UK. **An Oral History of Talking Therapists in the UK** will involve a wide range of professionals who depend on verbal exchanges between client and therapist to alleviate mental distress, rather than interventions based on pharmaceutical or other medical procedures.

Dissemination

As well as the major new **Oral History of British Science** web resource – *Voices of Science* – we have added a number of new packages to BL Sounds, providing online access to ever-growing numbers of NLS interviews: we detail these



The Eden Project © Sealand Aerial Photography



Michael Rowe being interviewed by Elizabeth Wright with 'Cylindrical vessel 1984'.

later in this Review. Our campaign to digitise older analogue cassette recordings for long-term preservation and enhanced online access has been gathering pace, thanks to generous donations from the Brian and Jill Moss Charitable Trust and the Pears Foundation for our Holocaust collections; from the Monument Trust for **Architects' Lives**; and from the Nicholas and Judith Goodison Charitable Trust for **Crafts Lives**. Internal BL budgets have supported the digitisation of **City Lives**, **Lives in Steel**, **An Oral History of Wolff Olins**, **Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare**, **An Oral History of Theatre Design** and **Legal Lives**.

The team have again been busy with public talks and presentations. NLS achieved a high profile at 'Corporate Voices: Institutional and Organisational Oral Histories', the Oral History Society's annual conference at the University of Sussex on 5–6 July, organised in conjunction with the university's Centre for Life History and Life Writing Research. Niamh Dillon spoke about **Tesco: An Oral History**, Katharine Haydon about **An Oral History of Barings**, the science team gave two presentations, and I led the opening plenary. The **Oral History of British Science** team also attended and spoke at the 24th International Congress of History of Science, Technology and Medicine at Manchester University. The largest meeting in the history of the field, it featured nearly 1400 papers across twenty-three parallel tracks, 411 sessions, and 1758 registered delegates. In April 2013 Cathy Courtney took part in a symposium, 'Parole aux artistes', at the Centre Pompidou in Paris organised by the Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art and the Centre George Pompidou. She also talked to the Sheffield Society for the Encouragement of Art about **Artists' Lives**, and with Niamh Dillon to Architectural Association students about **Architects' Lives**. **Crafts Lives** interviewee, ceramicist Kate Malone featured at one of an occasional series of British Library 'Inspired by...' events for creative arts students co-ordinated by Elizabeth Wright and Frances Cornford. I represented NLS at the US Oral History Association annual conference in Oklahoma City in October. I co-taught our longstanding residential course for historians of medicine at Royal Holloway (University of London), funded by the Wellcome Trust, which resulted in the deposit of several

new interviews; and chaired a Museums Association one-day conference at the Royal College of Surgeons entitled 'Sound Advice: New Approaches to Oral History'.

In terms of published uses of NLS recordings, Jon Wood and Julia Kelly have made extensive use of our **Artists' Lives** recording with Bill Woodrow in their monograph, *The Sculpture of Bill Woodrow* (Lund Humphries, 2013); and Michael Bird has made use of Cathy Courtney's recording with Lynn Chadwick in a forthcoming biography of the sculptor (Lund Humphries, 2014). Sarah Ryle's book, *The Making of Tesco: A Story of British Shopping* (Bantam Press, 2013), charting events from Jack Cohen's Hackney market stall to a multinational company serving fifty million customers in thirteen countries every week, drew on the interviews with Tesco staff conducted between 2003 and 2007 by Niamh Dillon for **Tesco: An Oral History**, and was launched at the BL in the Spring. Elizabeth Wright wrote an article for the Goldsmiths' *Company Review*, introducing **Crafts Lives** and focusing on some of the wide-ranging personal and professional influences that have led interviewees to create objects from metal. To accompany the article, NLS trustee Bill Knight photographed Liz interviewing Michael Rowe in the studio at the British Library. The 'Archives' issue of the *Oral History* journal in Spring 2013 featured articles by both Mary Stewart on 'Exploring family reactions to life story recordings', and Paul Merchant on 'Scientists' childhoods'.

People

This year we welcomed Sir Peter Bazalgette as an NLS advisor. Great-great-grandson of Victorian civil engineer Sir Joseph Bazalgette and one of the creators of the independent television sector in the UK through his company Endemol, he is currently Chair of Arts Council England. He has also been a Board member of Channel Four, Chairman of English National Opera, President of the Royal Television Society and Deputy Chairman of the National Film and Television School.

Novelist Maggie Gee joined the **Authors' Lives** Advisory Committee, as did Rachel Foss, the BL's Lead Curator for Modern Literary Manuscripts. Gee was one of six women among the twenty writers on the Granta Best of Young British Novelists list in 1983. She has written eleven novels and a collection of short stories, and was the first female Chair of the Royal Society of Literature, 2004–2008. She is now a Visiting Professor of Creative Writing at Sheffield Hallam University and Professor of Creative Writing at Bath Spa University. She has also served on the Society of Authors' management committee and the government's Public Lending Right committee. Her seventh novel, *The White Family*, was shortlisted for the 2003 Orange Prize and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award.

Alex King, our longstanding Cataloguer and much-valued member of the team, retired in December 2013 after thirteen years, during which time he did a great deal to professionalise our cataloguing and data management practices. Our Archivist, Elspeth Millar, returned from maternity leave in September, picking up *Voices of Science* website responsibilities from Stephanie Baxter, who departed to work

in web development elsewhere in the British Library. Emily Hewitt and Haley Moyses helpfully covered for Ellie's absence and concurrently for Deputy Director Mary Stewart, also on a year's maternity leave following the birth of Albert. Haley left in November to take up a full-time job at Brighton University, and in December we welcomed Pauline Morrison to the team as our first Bookkeeper, a new role necessitated by the BL's withdrawal of finance services from NLS.

At the end of 2013, aged ninety-four, Dundas Hamilton stepped down as an NLS advisor, having previously served as a trustee between 1988 and 1994. Born in 1919, Dundas entered his father's City firm, Carroll & Company, as a low paid clerk in June 1946. By the time he retired, following Big Bang in 1986, he was Deputy Chairman of the Stock Exchange and had witnessed the transformation of London's Square Mile. Dundas has been one of NLS's most avid and consistent supporters, reliably attending meetings and contributing wisely and wittily. In his interview in 1988 with Rebecca Abrams for **City Lives** after his retirement from the City he reflected that he:

"...would like to play golf again...and look after my little place in the country, three Lutyens cottages that were a stable originally, and a Gertrude Jekyll garden. There I have a studio and a computer and I hope to write plays and maybe a book or two...I don't think it will ever be the same again, because it never is."

We warmly thank Dundas for fitting us into his hectic schedule.



Courtesy of Leonie Glass

Dundas Hamilton ice skating in Wengen, c.1936.

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

Louise Brodie has continued her interviews for **Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare** and other projects, including with epidemiologist Professor Jean Golding who was key to the foundation in the early 1990s of the continuing long-term health research project 'Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children' (ALSPAC). The study has involved more than 14,000 mothers, who, along with their children have been followed in great detail ever since, providing scientists and health researchers with data to investigate a wide range of health problems, exploring both genetic and environmental factors. Interviewee Keith Elder worked for Mind for a lengthy period, setting up new centres and associations in the West Midlands, at a difficult time when mental institutions were closing, the priorities were being changed and the organisation was being restructured. Steve Whiting works at Quaker headquarters, Friends House, where a particular part of his work is 'Turning the Tide', training groups in all aspects of non-violent peace activism: helping them think about the ethical, legal and practical issues which may arise during demonstrations or activities. Pegeen Hill worked for the British Red Cross for seventy years. When she was young, she served overseas, attached to military hospitals in many parts of the world which saw conflict, such as Korea and Cyprus, helping to smooth the lives of the servicemen and women. In later years she took up various roles for the Red Cross in Somerset, so has negotiated many changes through her long career. Lord Low of Dalston has been almost blind from birth and took an interest in disabled politics from an early age, first in his academic career and then through his long stint at the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), one of our largest charities. Professor Ian Bruce started his working life in marketing for corporations, then spent twenty years as chief executive for RNIB. He now lectures at the Cass Business School, helping voluntary organisations to run their affairs in a more business-like and effective manner.

For the **Oral History of British Photography** Shirley Read interviewed Armet Francis, who moved to Britain from rural Jamaica when he was ten. He talked of growing up as the only black child in a school in Docklands, his discovery of photography, starting work in fashion photography in swinging London, his work in Britain, Africa and the Caribbean for the book and exhibition *The Black Triangle*, and his role as a founder member of Autograph, the Association of Black Photographers. Vanley Burke also came to Britain from Jamaica as a teenager in the 1960s and has since created a unique insider's portrait of the Caribbean community in Birmingham. He talked too about his time spent in South Africa in the 1990s, documenting Mandela's state-wide celebrations for the ANC veterans, and the use of one of his images of Birmingham as a record cover by British reggae band UB40. Shirley also interviewed adventure, travel and expedition photographer Martin Hartley, who has been to the north and south poles more than twenty times. He works on both scientific expeditions, such as the Catlin Arctic Survey which measured ice thickness in 2009 and 2010, and on voyages of exploration and endurance. He talked about

the issues and dangers of working in subzero temperatures, the specialist knowledge he has developed to deal with photography in these circumstances, his passion for the early photographers working in polar regions and his work for Huw Lewis-Jones's book *Face to Face* (Polarworld on behalf of the Scott Polar Research Institute, 2008). Judy Harrison talked of having Bill Brandt as her tutor while at the Royal College of Art, her work in documenting the (mostly female) farming community in a remote area of Staffordshire in the late 1970s and early 1980s, her work with Format (an all women photographic agency), and a residency in Southampton which led to over thirty years of working with children from the Sikh community in Southampton – a project which empowered the children and gave them the means to develop their roles within their own community and the wider world.

Amongst this year's deposited collections, we archived twenty-two interviews with founding members of the child psychotherapy movement in post-war Britain (**Pioneers of Child Psychotherapy Recordings**, Sound & Moving Image Catalogue reference C1560). Interviews for the project were carried out between 2000 and 2003 by Professor Michael Roper and Dr Andrew Briggs. The recordings document the development of child psychotherapy training and practice from the 1950s and 1960s. **Pioneers of Qualitative Research** (C1416) is an ongoing project initiated in 1997 by Paul Thompson at Essex University to record life story interviews that document qualitative research techniques and practice in the twentieth century. We received the first tranche of twenty-three life story interviews with some of the most significant sociological and anthropological researchers, who explain the personal, social and intellectual context of their research. Each covers the researcher's family and social background and key influences with detailed accounts of major projects. All are fully transcribed. Interviewees include: Michael Young, Janet Finch and Colin Bell on family, kinship and community; W M Williams on rural community studies and Meg Stacey on urban community studies; Dennis Marsden on single mothers and education; Stan Cohen on deviance and prisons; Ray Pahl on urban sociology; Paul Thompson on oral history; Sir Raymond Firth on anthropology in the Pacific and in Britain; Sir Jack Goody, Mary Douglas and Pat Caplan on Africa and anthropological theory; and John Davis and Peter Loizos on Italian and Greek Cypriot communities.

We were the archive partner for a number of organisations. Between August 2012 and August 2013 the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) conducted **Care Leavers' Stories** (C1597), a project (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund) to record video oral histories of people whose lives have been affected by their experiences in care, including residential and foster care. Four volunteer interviewers, themselves formerly in care, were trained in oral history interviewing techniques. We also received fifty audio and video interviews from ALLFIE (the Alliance for Inclusive Education), who co-ordinated a project to record **Oral Histories of Disabled People's Experiences of Education in England**, called 'How Was School?' (C1559). The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation. Ten volunteer interviewers, all of whom are disabled, were trained in oral history interviewing techniques. These interviews were made available via the British Library Sounds website to mark national Disability Month, and also through a schools resource at www.howwasschool.org.uk/. **Sephardi Voices UK** deposited the first fifty video interviews from its project to capture oral histories of the Sephardi Jewish community in the UK (C1638), mainly Jews from North Africa, the Middle East and Iran, as part of a global initiative to record oral histories with the Sephardi community (www.sephardivoices.org.uk/). The History of Parliament Trust deposited the second batch of interviews from their **History of Parliament Oral History Project** (C1503). Supported by Dods, it aims to create an archive of accounts from people involved in politics at national and constituency level, focusing initially on backbench Members of Parliament.

The **British Library Staff Oral History Interviews** project (C1534), which began in 1985 but stalled after 2000, was revived. The project includes former staff of the British Library, including from Printed Books, Acquisitions, Reader Services, the Sound Archive, Maps, Manuscripts and past Chief Executives and Board members. The first sequence of interviews (1985–2000) was held by the British Library Corporate Archive until 2012 when it was transferred to the Oral History section. New recordings are being added with retiring longstanding staff members as funds allow.



Charlie Paton on the second Catlin Arctic Survey, 2010

Increasing remote access to National Life Story recordings

Elsbeth Millar and Emily Hewitt, Archivist and Assistant Archivist, NLS

As an archive it is usually unnecessary to state that our aim is to preserve recordings; but it is sometimes necessary to remind people that our aim is also to make them as accessible as possible.

Since the 2010/11 Annual Review we have written about the increasing ways we have been providing access to National Life Stories interviews, including access to extracts from interviews through 'curated' learning websites and access to full, unedited interviews via the British Library Sounds website. During 2013 we have made even more material available remotely to users outside the British Library's reading rooms and this trend is set to continue over the next year as funding and staffing resources allow.

Online Resources

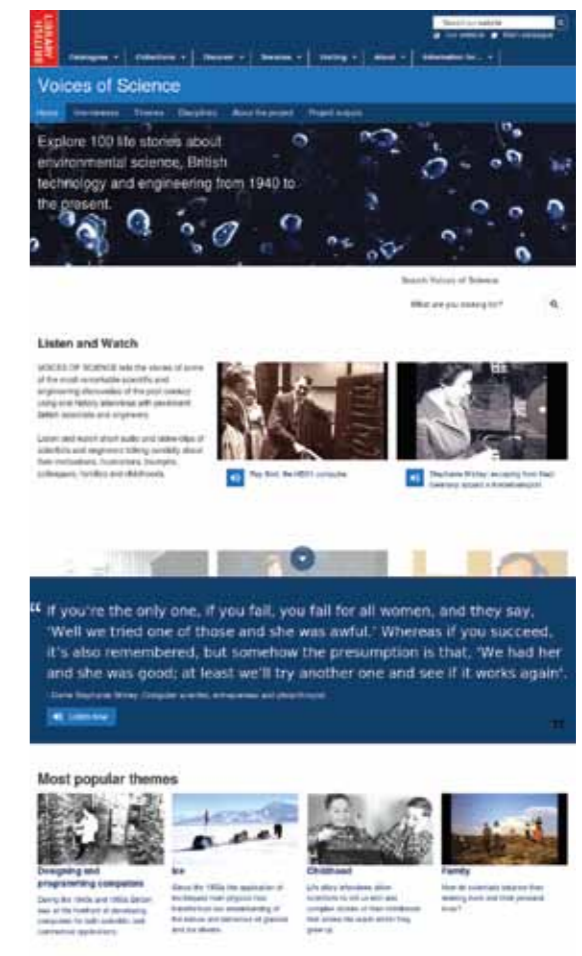
Voices of Science is a new web resource, launched in November 2013, showcasing audio and video clips drawn from life story interviews with scientists, engineers and technicians (primarily from the **Oral History of British Science** interviewing programme, but also from **Leaders of National Life** and **NLS General interviews**). This presents life story interviews with scientists in a new and more accessible way. Although National Life Stories' aim is to collect life story autobiographical recordings, these can sometimes appear overwhelming to users, so offering different routes and 'pathways' into the recordings can be beneficial.

Voices of Science features scientists and engineers talking about aspects of their lives that we all experience (childhood, education, work) but also about their role in some of the most inspiring scientific and technical breakthroughs of twentieth century British science. The website is 'curated'; although the material itself is drawn from unedited life story interviews, the web resource provides access to over 350 edited audio and video clips clustered into 'life' and 'scientific' themes, such as 'childhood', 'motivations', 'retirement', 'gender and science', 'aircraft', 'engineering', 'plate tectonics' and 'climate change'. Mini-biographies and images for each interviewee provide context for the clips, and links to external online resources provide users of the resource with further suggested readings.

Voices of Science appeals to a wide audience of potential users, from undergraduates and historians of science, to general interest users. The web resource can be navigated by interviewee, by scientific discipline and by theme which

presents the detailed content in a more accessible manner. As the clips are drawn from life story interviews, averaging 12 – 20 hours in length, we felt it was vital that it was clear that the clips were edited from long interviews; so each clip is linked to the full, unedited interview on the British Library Sounds website (or if it is not yet available via BL Sounds, then linked to the interview catalogue record).

NLS is keen to provide access to content through these curated platforms and the **Voices of Science** web resource is the latest of a number of resources which provides access to curated and full interviews. Other online resources using NLS and Oral History collection interviews include **Sisterhood and After: An Oral History of the Women's Liberation Movement** (launched in 2013), **Food Stories** (2007), **Playtimes: A Century of Children's Games and Rhymes** (2011), and **Voices of the Holocaust** (2003).



British Library Sounds

Over the past eighteen months we have significantly increased the number of interviews available online via British Library Sounds, <http://sounds.bl.uk>, a website that enables people to listen without charge and from anywhere in the world to our oral history collections. Between January 2013 and the end of 2014, British Library Sounds will have provided online access to six new resource packages, eleven collections, and approximately 700 oral history interviews, around 7,000 hours of material.

New online resources available now

Launched in March 2014, the *Architecture* collection provides online access to interviews from **Architects' Lives (C467)**. Twenty-three recordings that were originally only available to Higher Education institutions have been combined with sixty-four newly available recordings, and can now be accessed by users worldwide. **Architects' Lives** is a rare opportunity for British architects and those associated with them to talk at length, about their routes into the profession and the challenges they met there. Topics include theoretical approaches, the impact of new building materials and the effect that the era of the computer has made on the design process.

As part of the new *Industry: water, steel and energy* collection on BL Sounds, **An Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK (C1495)** collects memories and experiences from those who worked in the sector at various levels. Interviews explore themes such as nationalisation in the 1940s, privatisation in 1990–95, the increase in scale of coal-fired power stations, the shift to gas during the 1990s and the development of renewable energy sources since the 1970s.

Forty-eight oral history interviews with disabled people about their experiences of education were added to the *Disability* package in October 2013. The interviews were a result of a two year project led by the Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE) entitled 'How was School?' (**Oral Histories of Disabled People's Experience of Education C1559**) which looked at disabled people's experiences of education over the last 100 years through the telling and recording of personal memories and histories of school.

Coming soon to British Library Sounds in 2014

Approximately one hundred and twenty-five interviews from **City Lives (C409)** will this year be made available on British Library Sounds. One of the first projects undertaken by National Life Stories in 1988, **City Lives** explores the little-known world of the financial capital in the period before recent transformations and documents personal accounts and pivotal moments, among them the British Aluminium Battle, the arrival of women traders at the Stock Exchange, the privatisation of British Telecom, the 1987 Crash, the creation of LIFFE and the rise in power of the American banks in London.

Recorded between 2001 and 2003, **An Oral History of Wolff Olins (C1015)** covers a broad range of interviews with individuals at all levels of the company (including Wally Olins who sadly died in April 2014), reflecting its origins, its growth and development, the shifting business climate, key accounts and clients, its impact in the sector, and the company's unique ethos. Thirty-eight interviews from the collection will be made available online this year. Established in 1999, **Crafts Lives (C960)** includes over 100 in depth life stories with Britain's craftspeople including glass artists, potters, jewellery makers, metalworkers, textile artists and furniture makers. Digitisation and online access has been made possible thanks to the generosity of the Nicholas and Judith Goodison Charitable Trust.

Approximately 150 interviews from the **Holocaust Survivors' Centre Testimony Recording Project (C830)**, together with further recordings from **The Living Memory of the Jewish Community (C410)**, will this year be added to the *Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust* package on British Library Sounds. This collection was a National Life Stories collaborative project with the Holocaust Survivors' Centre, a Jewish social centre in north London for survivors who were in Europe during the Second World War or who came to the UK as refugees. Digitisation is being generously supported by the Pears Foundation and the Brian and Jill Moss Charitable Trust.

Over 100 new interviews will be added to the *Industry: water, steel and energy* resource package, including **Lives in Steel (C532)**, a collection gathered in 1991–2 which comprised the first national oral history of the steel industry. In their own words, steelworkers discuss the skills, hazards and complexity of producing steel, with interviewees drawn from a broad spectrum of occupations within the steel industry in the UK, including those in management, melters, blast-furnacemen, maintenance staff, coke oven operatives, crane drivers and the full-time and lay officials of unions and steelworker membership.

Other ways to access recordings

All interviews recorded for National Life Stories are catalogued on the British Library's Sound & Moving Image Catalogue (<http://sami.bl.uk>), which provides detailed content data about individual recordings. The Listening and Viewing Service in St Pancras provides free public access on an appointment basis to open recordings which have no access restrictions. Many digital recordings are also available via SoundServer, which provides instant access onsite at the British Library in both St Pancras and in Boston Spa, Yorkshire. Further information about listening at the Library can be found at www.bl.uk/listening.

An overview of the Library's Oral History collections can be found at www.bl.uk/oralhistory/collections and a list of NLS projects can be found at www.bl.uk/nls.

Turning points: National Life Stories interviewers reflect on key moments

One of the enriching aspects of making oral history life story recordings is that the interviewer is continually undergoing an informal education, not just through an understanding of the sweep of individual lives but also via myriad small observations that sharpen perception of the wider world. Cathy Courtney asked the interview team to pick out moments that have had particular significance for them; some have had small consequences, others more profound.

Cathy Courtney, Project Director, Artists' Lives

My own key moment is one of the smaller examples, the sculptor Lynn Chadwick's remark about a London building familiar to me since childhood. I like to think I am good at looking up, and I know I was aware of the frieze Lynn speaks about before he reminded me of it, but I could never have described it and this made me realise I hadn't looked well enough. Lynn's recording was important to me, so when I look at the frieze now it has the added resonance of its place in a chain of connections linking me to Lynn (1914–2003) and Lynn to Clapperton (1879–1962) and his studio in Barnes. Further research revealed that Clapperton worked on the 1926 frieze, 'Britannia with the Wealth of East and West', in collaboration with Charles Doman.

"If you ask anybody, 'What do you think of the frieze at Liberty's, in Regent Street?' They'll say, 'What frieze?' So all you have to do is go there and look at it, it's an enormous frieze, vast. I don't know how tall it is, eight feet tall or something like that, and it goes all the way round the sort of curved building. But nobody ever sees it. It was made by the ... a sculptor, who was a friend of my mother's, and when I was thinking about being a sculptor, a long time before I ever did anything about it, a long time before, many years before, she said, well, she knew this man, Thomas Clapperton, and I'd better go and see him, because he'll give me advice about being a sculptor. So I went to see him, and he said that it was a very unwise thing to do, because there was absolutely no money in it whatsoever, and so he dissuaded me. That was a long time before. That was when I was still a schoolboy." (C466/28)



'Britannia with the Wealth of East and West', the frieze on the Liberty building on Regent Street, designed by Charles L J Doman and T J Clapperton.

Tom Lean, Project Interviewer, An Oral History of British Science/Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry

After four years of interviewing engineers and scientists I am surrounded by things created by people I know. Whether it be the ARM chip that powers my smartphone, the liquid crystals inside my flat screen television, the jet planes that take me on holiday, light emitting diodes in my lightbulbs, or the electricity pylons that snake across the land. All around me are things great and small that I appreciate in ways I wouldn't have done a few years ago, for knowing a bit about how they came to be and the people behind their creation. One that has personally pleased me most is the Severn Bridge. Growing up in South Wales, its huge grey painted towers were one of the landmarks of my childhood, marking the border between the land of my fathers and England. On holidays we'd watch out for it in anticipation on our drive out of Wales down the M4, and in weary relief on the way back. Yet oddly enough I'd never really thought about it as an engineering achievement, more just as part of the landscape, until I interviewed Michael Parsons who'd played a key role designing and supervising its construction in the 1960s.

As Mike described his feelings about designing bridges like the one across the Severn, I started seeing them as more than just functional ways of getting across rivers as I learned to appreciate the beauty of their designs: "Well I suppose in a suspension bridge it's the shape or the curve and the apparent efficiency of the whole thing. And it's just a – well, it's a work of art I suppose."

Mike's memories also helped me to see the amount of work that went into designing a large bridge and how the responsibility for getting it right weighed on the designers. Through understanding the stresses within its structure Mike recalled building up confidence in the design on an almost intimate level: "I jolly well had a feel for what the structure was doing. I understood it and I felt the structure was almost a part of me."

As I drive over the bridge, I know from talking to Mike that the structure beneath me, a box girder, was revolutionary at the time, its low wind resistance reducing aerodynamic stresses on the bridge and allowing a more efficient use of materials. Yet the detail that makes me see the bridge in a different way mostly comes not from its design but a knowledge of its construction. The bridge deck was built of huge 130 tonne sections, each hoisted into place from the river below, welded to its neighbour and suspended from steel cables linking the towers on each river bank. Rather than starting at the towers on the riverbanks and working toward

the middle, Mike hit upon the idea of starting the bridge deck in the middle and working outwards:

"It seemed to me, and the contractors reluctantly accepted it, that if you started erecting in the middle of the span you could achieve a state where you could pull the sections together and weld them up at a much earlier stage than if you started erecting at the towers.... It was a new idea 'cause I'd never heard of it before. It just seemed a good idea at the time." (C1379/77)

When you start a suspension bridge in the centre, there's a period during construction when the middle of the bridge hangs over the river with no connection to either side, save for the cables holding it up from the towers. These days, whenever I think of the Severn Bridge, in my imagination it's missing the sections at either end.



Michael Parsons (right) atop the Severn Bridge during construction, 1960s.

Elizabeth Wright, Project Interviewer, Crafts Lives

Continuing my practice as a theatre designer, I am convinced that the work I have made since recording the interviews for **An Oral History of British Theatre Design** (the basis of my PhD thesis) is better than beforehand. There was no one 'eureka moment' which caused this, just lots of smaller insights that come to mind now when I'm working on aspects of a design.

A comment about the solitary nature of the theatre designer's role became vivid to me for the first time during one of my earliest interviews with Lez Brotherston, and Lis Evans later described this situation with reference to costume fittings. It was partly a feeling of isolation that made me interested in going to meet theatre designers to record their life stories, but having trained on a small design course of just four students at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, I hadn't been aware that other, much more well-established, designers might feel similarly cut-off.

"You don't meet that many [other theatre designers] because most of the work is at home, by yourself, having ideas maybe with an assistant to make models and to help you and then you're dealing with production managers and carpenters and wardrobe mistresses and supervisors and so you don't really meet that many designers. You might cross over in a room or something now and again." (Lez Brotherston, C1173/10)

"As a designer you work on your own, so you don't know how to do it... you don't know how other people go about it. It's like being in a costume fitting, and behaving in a certain way, you don't know how other designers behave in the costume fittings. So, do you pass the pins, or do you stand in the corner and make comments, or do you get involved? And you're kind of doing your own thing, and obviously the other people in the room - the costume cutter and the costume supervisor and the actors have been in the same situation with other designers and you don't really know whether you're doing it right or not." (Lis Evans, C1173/15)

Now that I am interviewing for **Crafts Lives**, I am conscious that makers such as silversmiths and weavers also lead relatively solitary working lives, but I noticed that they often don't comment on this in the same way. Among the **Crafts Lives** recordings, this comment from ikat weaver, Mary Restieaux, interested me because of its reflection on the language of creativity and because it highlights the value of oral history in capturing testimony from people who probably wouldn't write their autobiographies:

"I am an undiagnosed dyslexic but my language isn't very rich for a start and I think that's part of it. I don't know my left from my right and they always say that's a sign of it, I mean there are very many symptoms or signs. I really don't like writing at all, I find it very difficult, I have these ideas but I can't get them down on paper or on the computer now so I would have had a thoroughly miserable life if I'd had to sit in front of a computer writing something all

day - not that I could have sat in front of one for all my life because computers are new things - but looking back, I'm sure my father was dyslexic but he died in 1987 and it wasn't until after that, that I thought about it. But so many kids who go to art school are dyslexic and it seems as though many of us have some added creativity so if I hear of a friend's child or grandchild now who is dyslexic I say 'Oh goody' because they'll probably be creative and look to that. So, I can read quite well but I'm not a great reader - I don't know if that's because I've always made things since I was a child and I'm always making things now - with my work, with sewing my clothes, with gardening and would always much rather do that anyway [...] So I'm lucky I found something practical to do where I don't need much writing." (C960/117)



Lis Evans and colleague preparing for a production of 'The Hundred and One Dalmatians' at the New Vic Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, 2013.

Frances Cornford, Project Interviewer, Crafts Lives

Alison Morton is a weaver who specialises in weaving with linen. Her detailed explanation of all the stages of growing and processing linen - perhaps the most ancient of all textiles, which was in use even in ancient Egypt - made me think about the sheer complexity of producing even the oldest and most basic of stuffs. How did anybody ever 'discover' making bread with all the growing, grinding, mixing, proving and baking involved? How did it ever occur to anyone that sand could be melted into glass or clay baked into pottery? Hearing about the knowledge and skill that goes into the everyday items that Alison makes - hand woven kitchen towels and hand-towels - made me appreciate them all the more. In fact it convinced me that it is worth having and paying for beautiful items however mundane their use - like drying the dishes - because you can use them every day.

I was also particularly interested in the vocabulary that has been handed down to us from linen weaving. For instance hackles are the combs that are used to extract the long flax fibres for spinning. Even more fascinating was to see, in Alison's studio, the flax fibres gathered on a distaff before they had been spun and realise that flaxen-haired isn't a metaphor but an accurate description. Flax looks identical to blonde hair. In this extract from a long description of growing, pulling, retting, hackling, spinning, weaving, bleaching, boiling and beetling linen, Alison talks about spinning from the distaff:

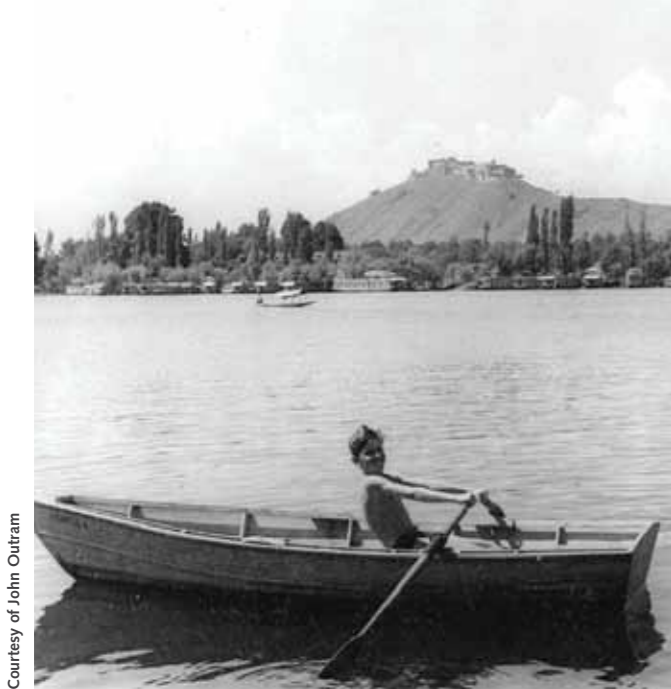
"You take a handful of fibres, nice long fibres, and tie them on to a distaff, which is a tall broom handle or something, sometimes spinning wheels come with a special distaff, elaborately carved and all. So you tie that on, usually with a ribbon. And different coloured ribbons used to denote whether you were married or a spinster, I can't remember now which colours - I've got a green ribbon so I don't know what that signifies. So you tie that at the top and crisscross it around the distaff round the bottom and loosely tie it so you can pull the fibres out gently without the whole thing coming down.

"Having tied your bundle of yarn, you then take fibres from the bottom and attach it to a piece of yarn that's already on the spinning wheel and you start to pedal and you slowly draw out fibres from the bottom of the fibres that are on the distaff. You slowly draw out fibres and twist them and you have wet fingers while you're doing this because the water helps to smooth the fibres. And you keep your fingers wet, and they used to, before industrial spinning, people would be spinning linen in damp cellars because the damp stops the fibres drying out too much and it makes it much easier to spin. They adhere together more smoothly." (C960/112)



Les Beech

Flax in Alison Morton's studio.



Courtesy of John Outram

John Outram in a boat in India, 1940s.

Niamh Dillon, Project interviewer, Architects' Lives

An observation by architect John Outram laid the seeds for what has become the subject matter for my PhD:

"These picnics were amazing – this was in Pachmarhi [India] – we used to go to rocky gorges where all the stones were smoothed with flood water and we used to slide down stones and they had waterfalls. We were playing in a landscape, like you see in the Marabar Caves in Forster's *Passage to India*. They are fabulous landscapes. And the British just sported around in them. Because I was never taken to see a temple, never went near one, even to look at it, it was always the landscape and nature and rocks and trees. It's almost as if we lived in a parallel universe to the Indians. We were obviously all there in the same place at the same time, but we never saw each other.

"...I've thought a lot about India later in my life, and when I went back after forty-four years I felt so at home. I realise I am not properly rooted in England in the sense of feeling really happy sitting in an English field. If you want a child to be happy in a place, feel at home in it, it's a very good idea to bring it up in its earliest years – perhaps up to six or seven, because it will just feel at home there." (C467/86)

This recording with John Outram took place when I was interviewing him about his work as an architect. As we began to discuss his family background I learned that John and several generations of his family had lived in Burma and India, only returning 'home' to England after Indian independence and partition in 1947. For them, the idea of England being home was never completely straightforward. They were used to the heat and the grand landscapes of India. I was fascinated to understand how this sense of Englishness – or Britishness – had been retained over distant geographies and generations. This led me to embark on a history PhD on 'British diasporas': people who had left Britain to live and work in the Empire, and returned at the end of it. Without John's eloquence about this now vanished way of life I would never have begun thinking about Britishness in this way.

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

Revelations in my recordings for 'A Changing Planet' are fundamental to our understanding of the earth's existence. Physicist John Nye told me about features of all natural materials called dislocations. In the case of metal:

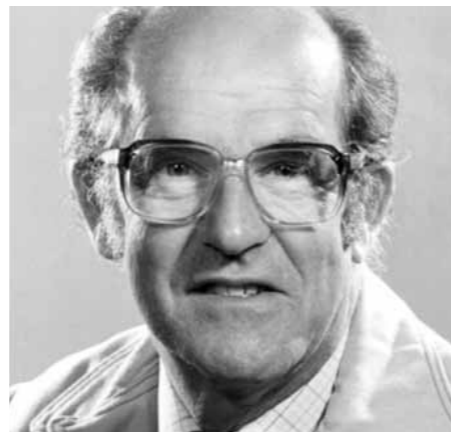
"Well, a crystal, and metals are made up of crystals, a crystal is a repeating structure. It's a geometrical arrangement of atoms arranged in planes, intersecting planes, as we say, a lattice. And, if you imagine one of these planes suddenly ending in an edge, you've got something wrong, and through the middle of the crystal there's running a line which is the edge of that missing layer. That is a dislocation. Now it's just a defect, there's something wrong with the perfect crystal." (C1379/22)

Dislocations are sites of irregularity – places where you might say that a pattern goes wrong. I asked John repeatedly about his interest in dislocations. Far from revealing an interest in disorder or pathology or failures in nature (which is what I had expected) John explained patiently that dislocations should not be thought of as exceptions to order, but as discrepancies that have their own structure:

"If you take any kind of natural or, or ordinary way of growing crystals, they're full of dislocations, singularities. Likewise, if you take any natural wave phenomenon, take the tides, look at a map of the tides all over the world, and you will find that there are many, many amphidromic points, these are these places that are analogous to dislocations. The Black Sea has one right in the middle; the North Sea has two or three. There's one in the Irish Sea. And, they're a natural phenomenon [...] nature is not perfect. Indeed, but these things have a sort of perfection of their own. They have a definite structure. [...] Nature is full of, imperfections [...] and when you study these imperfections in detail, you're often surprised to find that they have a certain similarity to one another."

"I mean I don't think it's anything whatever to do with creation by God, but, nature does exist [...] and there are some very mysterious things about it. I mean the most mysterious thing [...] is that it's intelligible at all. I mean, why shouldn't it be just total chaos? But for some reason things are unravel-able. [...] It's just, it's just very odd. [laughs]"

An atheist, like John, I am now left unable to answer a question that I had never (and perhaps never would have) posed myself: 'Why shouldn't it be just total chaos?'



John Nye, c.1980, Bristol.

Sir Anthony Caro (1924–2013) and Artists' Lives

Cathy Courtney, Project Director, National Life Stories

Sculptor Anthony Caro made his **Artists' Lives** recording in 1994 with Paul Moorhouse (C466/16), testimony which remains closed until 2026. The following extracts from other speakers give a taste of the extensive material about him documented by NLS.

Caro met his future wife, the artist Sheila Girling, in the 1940s, at the Royal Academy Schools. In her recording with Hester Westley (C466/296), Sheila recalled their meeting:

"We were in the drawing school because I went to get my board and it wasn't there. I mean no-one touched your board, you know, because you had your name on it and it was yours. And I looked down to the second tier and there was this sculptor with my board and I thought, 'What a terrible cheek these wretched little creatures have, they come in here and' ... At the break I said, 'Look, you have my board.' And he said, 'Oh I didn't know, I thought everybody could take them, you know.' ... He made some outrageous remark about art and ... I said 'You can't say that', and we argued. And he said then, 'Come out, let's go out to lunch' ... so that was it. [laughs]...And we just gelled really ...We were both interested in pushing art further and we could both talk about it because ... and also we had the same sense of humour, we could laugh a lot... you knew that it was right somehow."

Anthony and Sheila married in 1949. In the early 1950s they moved to Much Hadham, Hertfordshire, where Caro worked as an assistant to Henry Moore, an important period in his own development. Concerned about becoming too influenced by Moore, the couple returned to London and settled in the home they were to keep for the rest of Caro's life. Alterations to the house were made by the architects Peter and Alison Smithson, and the Caros found themselves part of a group of artists who lived locally. Sheila Girling:

"Alison and Peter, Nigel Henderson were in a little group ...and [Eduardo] Paolozzi would come up, he was just a little way down Frognal, and we'd all meet up really. ...very quickly you got to know the artists and through Dorothy Morland you went to the ICA [Institute of Contemporary Arts], which was very exciting for us in those days...you had fights there and people would scream from the audience and Ivon Hitchens would sort of rush down and punch somebody. [laughs]...For us ...this was life really."

At the invitation of Frank Martin, head of sculpture at St Martin's School of Art, Caro became an influential teacher there. During this period his own work underwent a

revolutionary change following a visit to America in 1959.

John Kasmin (C466/184), on the verge of opening what was to become a key London gallery, remembers his first visit to the Caros' home, here recorded by Monica Petzal:

"Anthony Caro at this stage was doing very, very exciting work indeed. ...the whole world knows that he went to America, he saw American art, he was bowled over by his meeting with Clement Greenberg, by his sight of David Smith's work, his friendship with Ken Noland, and he completely reinvented himself and his approach to art in the light of what he was seeing there, and the result of this sort of titanic effort of Tony's, he actually broke through to making sculpture of such originality and power and with such a degree of feeling that one was entering a new world ...I couldn't see any way in which if I wanted a good gallery I could cope without him. So I went up there as someone who'd met him a couple of times but didn't know him particularly well, I went up to this very nice house in Frognal.... In the yard there were many, many, many very large brightly painted metal sculptures, constructions I suppose you'd have to call them... they were jumbled, you know, you couldn't separate one from another very easily because they were bigger than the space that he could afford to give to them. Nevertheless, one could see enough to realise that one was in the presence of not only a great artist but somebody who was doing work that was absolutely – terrible expression – the cutting edge.... I couldn't imagine not being his dealer. So I said 'Look, I can see all the problems with the size of your work and the weight of it and where is one going to sell it, but I'm opening a gallery and I want to be your dealer and I want to guarantee you' – I can't remember what it was – 'a thousand a year for three years, buy your work and make the whole world look at what you're doing'. ...I suppose he was worried that I was perhaps a bit mad, he thought what on earth is this little chap going to do with these great big works... He was so amazed when I said 'I want to be your representative and put you under contract to me'. [laughing] He looked at me and said – 'I'll never forget the amazement of Tony – 'Are you sure?' he said, 'this great big difficult... who's going to want it ever?'"

Kasmin confirms the importance of Sheila's involvement in the development of Caro's work:

"Sheila was vital to his art, she was the first judge he ever asked about everything that he did... Tony listened to her... she was his prime adviser, judge. Sheila advised on



Image © Robert Whitaker

Caro's 'Prairie' at the Kasmin Gallery, 1967. Spectators include David Hockney and Kasmin.

the colour, when pieces were painted colours Sheila was the colour consultant and Sheila was an arbiter of the installation."

Sheila Girling: "I would choose his colours and I would paint them by hand, I mean physically paint them then... we talked a lot...Well I said, 'Look at music, why is music such an abstraction, how can they get into abstraction, you know?' And we thought of the timescale in music and he started doing *Early One Morning* then, going along the whole pole with intervals. And then we said, 'You know, you get two different themes blending in music', and he did *Month of May* then with different themes going... I had lots of ideas that I could give him and he had lots of ideas to add to it, you know, and we fed each other all the time."

In 1967 Kasmin exhibited Caro's sculpture, *Prairie*:

"It is remarkable the number of people that say to me that one of the more important moments in their life was walking into the gallery and finding Caro's *Prairie*... it might have been the high point of the gallery because it's the most remembered moment. People ...remember ...walking down the passageway and into that sort of beautifully lit white inner space, which in itself was sort of surprising, like coming to the holy chamber in a temple or something, and finding this sculpture which was so unlike anything they'd ever seen before, covered the floor, you know, spreading out... It's during the Anthony Caro show when I had to replace the Pirelli flooring. In order to show *Prairie*, the greatest sculpture I ever showed in the gallery, very, very big, almost filling the gallery.... to Tony's amazement I said, 'Oh don't worry, I'll just make another floor and we'll use it occasionally for other things'. So I had a floor made of

sections of oak wood planks."

Richard Wentworth (C466/182), a Royal College of Art student when he saw Kasmin's exhibition with his then girlfriend, Sarah Matheson, recalled the event when he visited Caro at his Hampstead studio in 2011. Tim Scott and David Annesley were former students of Caro's:

"I talked to Caro about *Prairie* and said, 'I saw that on the second day it was exhibited'. We had quite a nice conversation about Kas taking the floor out and replacing it. I said that's one of the first times I saw the potential reverence of a dealer for an artist or for an artwork, that his fancy Milanese, very beautiful plastic floor which was the cleverest floor in London of its time had either been covered or removed – I don't know which – and then becoming maple or something.

"It might have been my first term in sculpture, it might have been the very end of '67. ...I think she [Sarah] probably drove, she had one of those little Triumphs with soft tops and I'm sure you could just park outside. 'Let's go to Kasmin's in the lunch hour'....I seem to remember ...a narrow entrance, it was that thing that appears in lots of architecture, that the aperture to the place, the great place, is constricted in some way....nonetheless it was something about being confined and then arriving in the gallery.... I think I thought it was magical. I remember thinking how amazing it [*Prairie*] was matt and how interesting the way its matt-ness took in the light, its funny sort of buff feeling. Feeling that it was suspended, and then the moment when it goes 'Oh no I'm not, I'm held up like *this* and like *this* and like *this*, and I've got to meet the ground *here* and I've got to come up again over *here*', but none of it utilitarian. ...

And ...then how on earth that got made without it being designed. That's a lot of friendship, that's a lot of Tim Scott or David Annesley or somebody holding something, 'Can you hold that a minute...?'. I think it is his peak work. ...The hollowness of the pipes, and they're pipes, they're not rods, they're not solids. The gorgeousness of the corrugations.

Kasmin, too, remembers student interest in Caro's work:

"One thing ...about shows of sculpture at that date, and particularly shows of Tony, I always had to have the gallery repainted afterwards because every sort of student in England would come to see the show...and they nearly all seemed to me to wear dusty, dirty, black donkey jackets... and they all leaned against the wall....People would come in with sandwiches, they'd stand, I mean the gallery was so chock-a-block with students... it was normal to have up to 200 people a day of whom perhaps only six might be the sort of people that ever buy a work of art. It was more like having an institute, a sort of another ICA, than having a commercial gallery.

"When Tony brought his students around it was a stage at which he'd been introduced by [Jules] Olitski, [Kenneth] Noland, [Clement] Greenberg and so forth to Sullivanian analysis ...in which there's a lot of confrontation and shouting and expression. He encouraged his own students to attack his work... I'd put out a couple of bottles of Scotch for them... and there'd be these sort of seminars going on in the gallery which were quite noisy, you know, and Tony wanted them to attack him....he looked a bit Norman Mailer-ish, you know. It's like this figure standing out there ready to, like a boxer in training, waiting for the students to punch, you know... And then they'd all go hammer and tongs at each other. That was part of having a Tony Caro show. ... Tony would say. 'We're taking over now'....'They're going to tear my work to shreds, let them have a go'...And he loved it all.Oh God, the gallery was lively, there was very rarely dull moments."

There were other challenges from Caro as well as accommodating heavy artworks. Kasmin:

Tony occasionally, well actually I tried to avoid this, but he took an annual dip into the sea on, I can't remember, I think it was New Year's Day. A very English thing to do, at Swanage on the beach and mighty chilly. And I can remember an occasion when I somehow or another found myself with him there and even with brandy it was... he said, teasingly, jokingly, he said 'You know, I might leave the gallery and go to the Marlborough if you don't come, if you're too timid to come into the sea'. So I thought, oh my God, I'll have to."

Among fellow artists who were admirers of Caro's work was the British painter John Hoyland (C466/205), interviewed by Mel Gooding:

"Tony Caro I've known since '63 and always been very good friends....Our friendship really cemented when we

went to São Paulo together, for the Biennale in '69 and then we spent about three weeks together...just talking about art and life and everything...I think he's the greatest artist alive, all round. Not just sculptor. I can't think of anybody who could come up to him really, today.

"He's a very complex man... but he hides it under the guise of being sort of rather light, jovial, unassuming Englishman sort of thing, which he is that too....In fact he's a bit American in that way because he has that childlike quality, but can be incredibly shrewd at the same time. He's got this kind of dual personality... I learnt a lot from being with Tony. When we were in Brazil, he bought some of these little touristy, fetishistic objects and he bought me a few because I hadn't got any money, I still have them, and then of course when he got back he proceeded to try and find ways of making sculpture in a parallel fashion to the way that these objects made of feathers and string and gourds and things, how they'd been made, you know that sort of – that was a kind of a pointer to me...I found myself in ...in a sort of formalist straightjacket after a while and it took me an awful long time to sort of try and battle my way out of this situation."

The writer Mel Gooding (C466/329) remembers his last meeting with Caro:

Every year since John [Hoyland] died [in 2011] we've had a lunch on his birthday, given by these restaurateurs for whom John did the decorations in one of their restaurants and [who] became great patrons of John and bought paintings and were very close to him and friendly to him. Each year they give this lunch and those people who wrote about John or knew John welland Anthony Caro and Sheila come. So there's this lovely lunch. And we had that lunch on the Monday and I think I learned of Anthony's death about six or seven days later. My last words with him were...Anthony, very characteristically, said 'You must come to the studio...Because Sheila's studio is there as well and you can have a look at all this wonderful work she's making at the moment'."



Polaroid of John Hoyland and Anthony Caro pretending to fight each other on a beach in Brazil, 1969.

Image © Estate of John Hoyland

'Part of the scientist's toolkit'

Frank Raynor, scientific instrument technician,
with Tom Lean, Project Interviewer, National Life Stories

Frank Raynor was born in Grimsby, Lincolnshire in 1922. In the late 1930s he started work as an electrician in his father's electrical installation business and worked in electrical installations interspersed with National Service in the Army. In the early 1950s he joined the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Aldermaston, beginning a long career as a technician in nuclear research. Subsequently he helped to set up instrumentation and collect data on the British nuclear weapons trials in the Pacific. Later he transferred to the civilian nuclear research establishments at Harwell and Culham, where he spent the rest of his career supporting scientists by designing and constructing research apparatus. In 2012 he recorded a life story interview for An Oral History of British Science, intriguing interviewer Tom Lean with his surprise that anyone would be interested in what he had to say, and so Tom was delighted to go back to ask Frank about how he had found the whole interview experience.

How did you feel to be asked to take part in An Oral History of British Science?

Well I had mixed feelings. I was apprehensive, partly due to my ignorance of how you operated, I dislike the way the press sometimes operate, the newsreader's aggressive questioning to produce the story that they want, if you like. I wasn't sure about how historians like yourself operated when you conducted an interview. I got assurances from Mike Forrest [another interviewee], that it wasn't nearly as aggressive as some of the interviews we'd had for promotions over the years! In a way I may even feel slightly flattered – but I'm not subject to flattery I'm afraid! For my generation and working-class background talking about oneself, even as a young man, you'd get comments about shooting a line. It was never considered the thing to talk about oneself, I mean you didn't even have to be boastful, it would evoke that sort of response. So talking about myself was never something I was very keen on.

I was going to ask about how you found talking about matters that were once secret?

When I joined the Atomic Energy Authority you couldn't talk about what you were doing, even within a domestic environment, and since my family knew little about electronics or physics it wasn't a subject you could discuss in the house anyway. It was always a joke in the family, people would ask my wife, what did I do and she'd say I worked for the Atomic Energy Authority, and she used to deliberately make light of it saying I did a few odd jobs round the lab and making tea, and that killed the questions immediately which was her idea. Much was declassified in the 1990s and with the publication of the official histories, I realised there

was nothing I knew that would be classified, but certainly I wouldn't have talked about it in the 1950s. But I realise since, how much of it I've forgotten. I was listening to Dennis Highton, on *Voices of Science*, talking about instrumenting Britain's first jet plane and I remembered I'd worked installing instrumentation on the Canberra aircraft that was used on air sampling on nuclear weapons tests, and I think I'd forgotten to mention that in the interview. I realise there's all manner of detail I've forgotten, presumably because I've never talked about it.

What did you think about us interviewing technicians and scientific assistants as well as well-known scientists?

I never cease to be amazed, but to be fair most people would accept that we did a necessary and essential job in a lot of cases. The other thing that concerned me a bit, when I looked down the list of other interviewees – oh my goodness me! I realised that you were broadening your scope and looking beyond top scientists, and that you were interviewing engineers and technicians as well. But when I look at the list on *Voices of Science* I noticed my name comes between Nobel Prize winners Max Perutz and Joseph Rotblat, and I thought goodness gracious me, you know, in that fish tank I'm a minnow intellectually.

Did you think the work of the technicians was appreciated by the scientists?

It varied very much with the scientists. In most cases technicians were appreciated, in some cases they were not noticed, in others they were greatly appreciated and even mentioned. It was unusual for them to say to technicians, as happened to me on one occasion: 'Write up your bit and we'll incorporate it into the paper'. I, along with other people of my ilk, could be viewed as part of the scientists' tool kit. We provided some of the required 'kit'.

I was wondering how easy you found it talking to me about technical subjects?

I had assumed you had a physics background, but then you pointed out you were a historian, but I suppose you had a broader appreciation of the field from interviewing so many different people from different disciplines. You can talk about technical subjects but you have to be a bit careful. I didn't know how much detail you wanted. I didn't want to appear to be talking down if you didn't have the same sort of detail knowledge, but I never assume that people are silly or stupid. One of the things I realised in my working life, working amongst the sort of people we did, was that you rarely stuck your neck out – whatever you

knew there was always someone around who knew more than you did and so that made you naturally cautious about making any proclamations. I was surprised by some of the detail you asked for, by and large the only people that have been interested in the detail were my fellow workers. The way the technology has gone now, the only time you talk about detail is when you discuss vintage equipment. I was talking to staff at Bletchley Park museum of computing about the components in some of their machines – 'Oh do you remember the characteristics of the XK7?' 'Yes, I can remember the anode impedance and how we did the calculations!'

I was fascinated at some of the things you talked about doing in the interview – observing nuclear explosions, then being helicoptered in to retrieve records from instruments shortly after, for example. Did you ever think about any of this at the time as being remarkable?

No, but I was quite pleased to do it because it was interesting. If you consider the sort of background I had come from and the sort of work I'd done prior to that, here I was a few years later sitting in helicopters and doing the sort of thing we were doing. I must admit I had reflected that 'how the heck did this happen in such a few years, when the previous years had been routine?' I never regarded it as a subject for a line shoot if you like, the people I worked with weren't the type to brag, it was part of your working life and function. I thought myself extremely fortunate to be in the position I was. My generation was probably the first that came in when people with working-class background like myself had any ideas of getting into science.

Did you ever think of what you were doing as of interest to historians?

I'd never thought of it in that light. I was doing it to make a living, I was doing my best to improve my knowledge of what I was being paid to do, to do the best job I could. I never thought 'am I doing anything historic?' I always thought 'am I making a good job of what I'm doing? I hope my boss appreciates it.'

What do you think people might find of interest in your interview in the future?

I've asked myself this a few times. I didn't make any original discoveries, I didn't do anything outstanding that people in similar positions have done; I thought people tend to look at outstanding events or achievements. If I was a pop star or a soap opera actor then I could see it, but Joe Public has little idea about a scientific environment or the atmosphere that prevailed within some of them. After all when you see the few scientists who are put on TV over the years people have a strange idea of who scientists are and what they are about. I suppose it depends a bit on if they have any interest in technology. If someone in the future were to say 'weren't their electronics simple?' they may not realise that we were, in our own small way, pushing the boundaries of technology.

Having done the interview do you look upon any of the things you have done any differently?

I'm still slightly surprised that anybody should be interested. There's a few things I did in my life that were unusual, but I didn't think it would be of any scientific interest, certainly not historical interest. I look at some of the other interviews on the project and think 'there's a guy who did something different' – I didn't think it applied in my own case.



Frank Raynor, in protective suit, before re-entry aboard HMS Narvik, Operation Grapple, 1957.

Moving and being: the life stories of ethnic minority British scientists

Paul Merchant, Project Interviewer, National Life Stories

“One of the problems I had when I was growing up – kids pick on any difference, and in quite a few of the schools I was at there weren’t many Black kids. [...] I’d never say that I was English so; I’d say ‘no I’m Nigerian’ because if I said that I was English, it was like, ‘You’re don’t belong here – you’re not English – you’re not like us’ so I definitely said I wasn’t English, but I’d say I was Nigerian. But the problem is with being Nigerian, I’d meet my relatives and I didn’t speak the language, I’d never been there, so: ‘you’re a lost Nigerian’ they’d say. So I was a ‘lost Nigerian’ and I wasn’t English so what was I? And, I think space puts that all into perspective. Space: you see a globe; you don’t see different countries, you don’t see borders, you just see everybody. And – Star Trek [laughs]. ‘Cause Star Trek was sort of a group of people from all over the world working together and travelling through space so to me that’s what broke the barriers down. When you’re in space, you’re not a lost Nigerian – it’s not that you don’t belong here; you’re just a member of the human race and that’s what counts.” [C1379/101 T1 42:07 – 43:20]



Image courtesy of Maggie Aderin-Pocock

Maggie Aderin-Pocock as a child looking at a caterpillar.

In the transcribed, edited extract here, space scientist, science communicator and television presenter Maggie Aderin-Pocock links childhood feelings of being out of place, and of seeking escape, to the development of her interest in space. It is taken from a life story interview, recorded for the project **Inspiring Scientists: Diversity in British Science** – a collaboration between National Life Stories and the Royal Society. **Inspiring Scientists** has recorded the life stories of ten ethnic minority British scientists and made short films illustrating and introducing these life stories.

Maggie’s words introduce a theme that cuts across all **Inspiring Scientists** interviews: the effect on identity of movement. Movement from one country to another, from home to university, from one community to another. Moving on or moving away to mark out the limits of family, community and self.

Most of the interviewees were either born in the UK to parents (or in one case, grandparents) who had emigrated from India, Pakistan, the Caribbean or parts of Africa, or had emigrated themselves as young children. Interviewees’ parents tended to speak of their lives and their children’s lives as purposeful movements forwards, upwards. For food scientist, Charlotte Armah:

“It was all about education and learning and achieving and striving. [...] My Dad was the one who was pushing [...] and pushing, wanting me to go forward and do more and do more. [...] I think maybe he’s thinking possibly if he had the opportunities as a child that I’ve been given then he would want to make the best of it and so he doesn’t want me to waste the opportunities because it’s just so important. [...] I think things must have been quite hard [...] and such a struggle: moving to a different country, establishing yourself, trying to find work, you know, the climate – some being friendly, some not being so friendly, maybe not achieving, fulfilling your potential in a country because of barriers, you know [...] wanting me to overcome those barriers through education.” [C1379/107 T1 34:33 – 39:31]

In other ways, cultures of origin tend to be overwritten by childhoods in the UK. Growing up in south London in the 1970s, immunologist Donald Palmer remembers being more interested in Raleigh ‘Chopper’ bikes and Spiderman comics than in stories of Jamaica told in the front room. Professor of computational chemistry, Saiful Islam, feels that his movement away from Islam, and from Bengali heritage, was encouraged by his father’s ‘Westernised’ outlook. He came to the UK aged one, and by the time he went back to visit East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) aged ‘thirteen or fourteen’,

he naturally viewed it with some of the detachment of a tourist (though one who could understand Bengali):

“Looking back I think it wasn’t a comfortable experience for me. Here I was [...] very you know Anglicised, my spoken Bengali wasn’t good, because [...] Dad was, I think he was more keen than Mum for us to integrate into the UK, so he was happy for us to speak English between sisters and I and with him as well. [...] So again the relatives in Bangladesh saw us as different – we were already different because we dressed slightly different [...] and I suppose in relative terms we were much wealthier than they are. [...] Other memories that stick out – going on a rickshaw for the first time in Dhaka which was exciting and scary at the same time [...] I’d never seen haggling before [...] The food was really good though I know initially I had an upset stomach [...] as youngsters we didn’t like the toilets because they were the crouch down type so we didn’t like that. I imagine [...] we were probably whinging quite a bit. You know, here we were in a foreign environment.” [C1379/104 T5 1:14:50 – 1:18:09]

Having moved to the UK, the parents of many of the interviewees settled in places where – to a greater or lesser extent – they were in close contact with extended family and a wider community of families with similar ethnic heritage. Interviewees speak of being part of South Asian or Caribbean or Indian or Pakistani ‘communities’ in London, Hull, Nottingham or wherever. Becoming a scientist – with degrees and higher degrees – entailed for many interviewees a movement away from these communities. For example, pharmacologist and entrepreneur Mah Hussain-Gambles waited for her parents to go on holiday, to take her first long journey in the UK with a friend, enrolling in a pharmacology degree at the University of Sunderland to avoid family expectations (learning to cook for a husband and reading accountancy at a local university).

“Right – my mum and dad wanted me to do [...] accountancy and I’d rather be dead than do accountancy, and it was at Hull University because they wanted me to stay in Hull – be near them. So, they went on holiday [...] and I said to my friend, my school friend Jill [...] I wanted to do real science [...] pharmacology [...] Sunderland sounded good because it was far away from Hull, I didn’t know where it was, and at the time it was probably the best university [for pharmacology] because it was sponsored by Wellcome [...] I’d never been on a train on my own before [...] so my friend she helped me – so this was like 18 I’d never been on a train by myself, so I still had that kind of remnant of overprotective family. So that was an interesting experience: I got on the train, went to Sunderland and yeah got in and when my parents came back I said ‘this is where I’m going’. So my Dad was not happy but he drove me up there...” [C1379/106 T1 42:12 – 44:16]

Echoing Maggie Aderin-Pocock at the beginning of this article, Mah recalls her childhood in Islamabad and then Hull as follows:

“In Pakistan I was picked on for not being able to speak



Image courtesy of Mah Hussain-Gambles

Mah Hussain-Gambles and her neighbour dressed as Star Trek characters, hand coloured by the interviewee.

Urdu properly and in England [Cottingham, Hull] I got picked on for, you know, for having an accent and being called a ‘Paki’ and all that. So yeah, I had a – I didn’t have an exciting time at school; maybe that’s why I don’t want to talk about it much or don’t remember it much. [...] Cottingham’s a very kind of middle class area – lot of people had horses and stuff and I was probably the only Asian pupil in the school so it was different, you know. I didn’t experience that much racism there, but initially I did – you know, somebody wrote ‘Paki’ on the back of my chair, for example. [...] So that’s why I thought ‘never come back to Hull’ but now it’s very different – very multicultural.” [C1379/106 T1 14:24 - 29:56]

Again Star Trek appealed and Mah speaks of feeling pulled towards what might be thought of as minority or ‘outsider’ cultures in Britain, especially the ‘biker’ scene. By the time she found herself the only female, Asian scientist in a pharmaceutical factory in the north of England, she experienced difference positively – taking particular kinds of pleasure in standing-out, or being notable:

“I was the only girl there, the only female in the formulation [department] and possibly the only Asian person in the whole factory; I think we had one mixed-race person who was half Filipino or something. So that was interesting; it was like, you know, all sort of northern men there, so it was interesting.

“Was it commented on? [...]

“I mean things were said like ‘oh Mah will you make me a cup of tea – oh you don’t need to put sugar in because you’ve got such sweet hands’. Things that [...] if said now would be very sexist but in those days it was fine. I didn’t, you know, I had a good time there. There was no racism at all.” [C1379/106 T1 1:24:35 – 1:25:20]

'Disclosure by Unstudied Talk'

Lawrence Sail, member of the Authors' Lives Advisory Committee, with Sarah O'Reilly, Project Interviewer

*Since its inception in 2007, a committee of advisors has guided the Authors' Lives project under the chairmanship of Dame Penelope Lively. Meeting three times a year, committee members share their knowledge of literature, fundraising and archiving, guiding the work of the project interviewer, Sarah O'Reilly. Committee member Lawrence Sail is the author of eleven collections of poetry, most recently *Waking Dreams: New and Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books), as well as two books of essays, *Cross-currents* (Enitharmon) and *The Key to Clover* (Shoestring Press), and a memoir of childhood, *Sift* (Impress Books). Between 1990 and 1994 he was chairman of the Arvon Foundation. He is a Fellow of The Royal Society of Literature.*

Lawrence, can you tell me how you came to join the Authors' Lives Advisory Committee for this project?

I was just coming to the end of my stint on the Management Committee of the Society of Authors. Mark Le Fanu, who was then General Secretary of the Society, is also on the Authors' Lives Advisory Committee, and I understand it was his suggestion that I might join. As it happened, some years earlier I had also got to know Penelope Lively, who chairs the Committee, but simply as a fellow writer. I didn't know of this other incarnation of hers.

And why did you agree to serve on the Committee?

It's a project that intrigued me from the outset. I did know a little bit about oral history – living in the South-West, as I do, you are very aware of rural communities whose history was largely not written down, with the consequent danger that their views might be lost for ever. And then, as a writer of poems, I think of the simple fact that poetry was oral long before it was written – voice and utterance before tablet or paper... I was also intrigued to learn more about the British Library and its workings, so that certainly played its part too.

What were your feelings towards being part of something that was linked to the British Library?

Well, as a poet one's less likely perhaps to use the Library as fully and frequently as prose writers and novelists doing research, so here was a chance to find out more. And the building of the new British Library has generated a lot of excitement and energy: I was very keen to be involved from that point of view as well.

And thinking about the project itself, how sympathetic are you to the life story approach that we take? Some would say it's only the works that matter, and not the life.

Yes, writers are quite wary of that life/work frontier, aren't they? And indeed, some prospective interviewees have felt that there's nothing to add, that their life as a writer is their work, full stop. It's a border that produces a wide variety of responses, according to the temperament and experience of the individual. In the age of the celebrity I think the kind of in-depth interview Authors' Lives aims at is particularly worthwhile. So many interviews nowadays are superficial, and often biased towards the life but in a very obvious sort of newsgathering or gossipy way. Gilbert Ryle, the philosopher, has a wonderful chapter heading in his book *The Concept of Mind*, 'Disclosure by Unstudied Talk', which is wonderful because even if it has a kind of warning built into it, it also describes a great opportunity.

It's interesting that a number of writers have said that they enjoyed their interview (and this is a compliment to you as interviewer) much more than they thought they were going to. Some report that they find themselves saying things that they had no idea they were going to say. This isn't said in a tone of regret (and I think that having the safeguard of the writer being able to close all or part of his or her archive can be crucial here). Rather, there's a sense of mild surprise and pleasure. And occasionally it is a matter of memories that have been stirred, whether of the life or the work or a viewpoint at a particular stage in their career, which clearly would not have surfaced but for this experience of the interview.

The other thing is that writing is essentially a solo business, and interviews are often solos in effect. What you're getting here, it seems to me, is a kind of mosaic: the interviews inform one another on several levels. You are also getting, of course, an overview of what it is like to be a writer in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

How interested are you personally in knowing about other writers' lives?

Some people have great curiosity about practical aspects of the writer's life, questions such as 'At what time of day do you work?' 'Do you write with a pencil?' 'Do you compose on screen?' – almost as if there were magic formulae and rituals to be learnt for success. And although a number of interviewees have wanted to talk about their work methods, I think what's very interesting (and it comes across again and again) is the sense of compulsion. You know, that writing is almost a love/hate thing: as one writer put it, 'You don't choose writing; writing chooses you.' But to go back to that idea of the project as a mosaic composed of individual lives, I think that's almost one of the central points of interest for me. You may know the wonderful comment by Jean Rhys,

in which she says, 'All of writing is a huge lake... All that matters is feeding the lake. I don't matter. The lake matters. You must keep feeding the lake'. I think the sense of being a part of something that is living and organic has its own fascination.

And thinking about the recordings that we've gathered, how would you like to see them being used in the future, and by whom?

Above all, I hope they will be used in schools and colleges, and I mean by teachers as well as pupils. If ever there was a time when creativity is being squeezed out by a nonsensical over-insistence on measurement and comparisons and eyeing the opposition, it's now. Schools have precious little time and somehow ought to find more, for teachers and pupils, and listening, like reading, is a good way of drawing breath and allowing room for thought. And then the other people who would, I hope, enjoy the recordings and find them very informative, are aspiring writers. We come full circle here, we're back to the writer as soloist. Many of the writers recorded make mention of their isolation – not resentfully, because it's always outweighed by their admissions of fulfilment and excitement, but nonetheless there is this element of, 'Oh, you think it's fun? It's not, it's bloody hard work'.

For aspiring writers, to go back to them, I think information of the kind these interviews offer is like gold-dust. Think of writers just setting out with very limited confidence, or who are shy by temperament: they don't want to make fools of themselves, they want to gather their information and their ammunition secretly. For them these interviews could be really thought-provoking and inspiring. This comes home to me whenever the committee listens, as it does at each meeting, to clips from the recordings. It's then that the project seems at its most rewarding. It can be poignant, too, when you hear the voices of writers who have died since the start of the project, for instance Beryl Bainbridge, John Gross, U A Fanthorpe. Here they live on in conversational immediacy.

What about the academic researchers and the biographers of the future who may access the archive – how do you think they will benefit from the existence of these recordings?

Clearly the archive constitutes a fascinating resource. And to hear the writer's own voice, to have the voice, is always interesting, and can be revelatory.

I know you've sat on a number of committees, and I was wondering if you could say a little about how the Authors' Lives Committee compares with others?

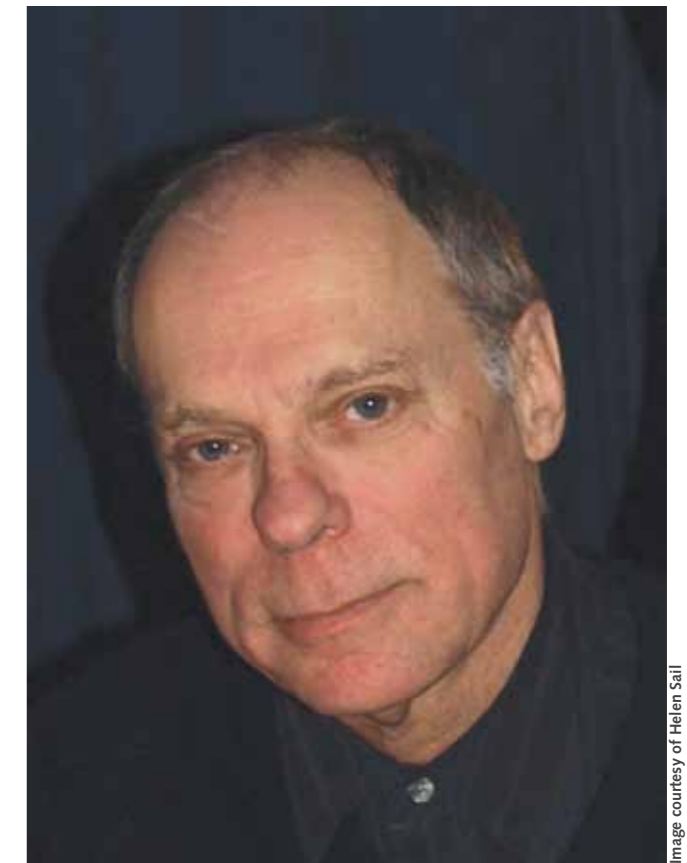
Well, I think it's exemplary in at least one respect, and that is the two-hour limit, flexible as it is, because I've always thought that no meeting should go on much beyond that. Two hours seems for some reason to be the point at which thinking becomes scrambled. The other thing is that I always learn something from each meeting, from others' perspectives and opinions. I never yet have gone away thinking it had been like a double maths lesson just before lunch.

So when you are at a Committee meeting with the other members, what discussions, what areas, what things that we touch on, have you found most interesting?

Well, choosing the writers to be recorded is the core of the thing. Here the constraint is to do with money, not merit. Incidentally, the funding we've had from the Booker Prize Foundation, with the consideration of Booker winners, has added another interesting dimension. I think and hope we retain a salutary awareness of the need to be on the look-out for people we might have overlooked – especially important, given the need for balance and that the interviews cover a number of genres. We've also had interesting discussions about ghost-writers and best sellers, as well as translators. Over the last fifty years there has been a great burgeoning of excellent translations, and I do think that translators are still not sufficiently acknowledged.

And tell me, what would you like to see happen next with the project?

It's a hard question to answer because it does really depend on funding and how long the project goes on for: it would be good to be able to include more writers than is currently possible. Given the speed with which the technology of communications is developing, we also need to think of the best possible ways in which to make the recordings available. And I suppose that, in an ideal world, it would be fascinating to have a kind of parallel series to this project, in which writers talk about their one favourite work or author. That would take different bearings and explore other frontiers.



Laurence Sail.

Glyn England (1921 – 2013)

Interviewed by Steven Guilbert and Tom Lean, 2012 – 2013



Glyn England with a football team made up of Indian soldiers during his time in the Army, 1940s.

Glyn England joined the electricity industry in 1947, as the hundreds of electricity companies in Britain were about to be nationalised into a single organisation. After working in a variety of roles across the industry, Glyn served as Chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board (CEGB) between 1977 and 1982, responsible for running a vast and difficult to manage industry. It was far from his first experience of managing complex situations. In the 1940s he commanded a mechanical engineering unit of the Indian Army, a post that demanded careful and sensitive handling of the cultural issues involved:

"The antagonism in India was great as we went towards independence. We had to have two kitchens, and I thought it was my duty to eat from both kitchens because I didn't want to show favouritism, so I did very well for food – Muslim food and Hindu food. But later on a medical officer came into my unit who was Hindu, and he made disparaging remarks about Muslims and I got him moved because it was intolerable for me, trying to hold the peace between these different troops to have someone coming in and stirring up trouble. [...] I had a great benefit in a way because the great game, with Hindu and Muslim, the great game was football, barefooted football, and from the very beginning I joined in. [...] It wasn't easy running a unit with multiple languages, multiple cultural differences, language problems, but somehow I found that, it wasn't real engineering, it was sociology or something, I made sort of friends in so far as an officer can. It was fun."

In 1977 Glyn was appointed Chairman of the CEGB, quite aware of the heavy responsibilities of running such an essential industry in the difficult economic and political position of the time:

"In perhaps not my happiest moment I did say to a minister I thought the job was too big for anyone to deal with. Now that's to do with managing skills I suppose and I

did manage, but it was a very big job. The construction function, the research function, the relationship with suppliers, the relationship with the Coal Board the major supplier of fuel, with the oil companies, dealing with MPs – not always friendly, and having regard to public relations. It's [a] bigger [job] than most industrial chiefs', who don't have factories around the country and local populations to consider. It is a big job [...]

"Did you ever think about not taking the job?"

"No, having discussed it with the family and a few other people outside I was happy to take it, I knew the rules, it was a five year appointment with no guarantee of going on afterwards, that's understood. I knew I'd not have that number of friends in high places, but that didn't bother me. So I didn't really hesitate to take over."

Raised in a Primitive Methodist household in a mining area of South Wales, Glyn became interested in progressive politics from an early age and saw the role of the electricity industry very much as a service run for the benefit of society at large, and held in public hands. As the new Conservative government began to plan to privatise the industry in the early 1990s, Secretary of State for Energy Nigel Lawson ordered Glyn's replacement as CEGB Chairman, a decision often regarded as politically motivated:

"I thought then that electricity supply was a great public service, something for the whole population, everybody benefited. I didn't look at radio in that same sort of way. But it was quite strong for me. I think I mentioned, in those days the electricity supply industry, apart from the CEB, the Central Electricity Board, was privatised, and I wrote a paper at university on the public ownership of electricity supply. I thought then that it ought to be in public hands.

"Why did you think that for the electricity industry to be in public hands would have been a good thing?"

"Because it was very much, in my view, a public service. It wasn't a commodity. It wasn't subject to competition. And this is the classic argument in favour of public ownership. But I remained a public servant for all my working life, believing in it, much to Lawson and other people's slight disgust and disbelief, but there we are."

C1495/03 (edited by Tom Lean)

Joseph Farman (1930 – 2013)

Interviewed by Paul Merchant, 2010 – 2011



Joseph Farman in his office, late 1980s.

Joseph Farman CBE was the British Antarctic Survey scientist who discovered the 'ozone hole' using instruments called Dobson Spectrometers pointed at the sky above Antarctica. In his Telegraph obituary we learn that: 'In 1990 Mrs Thatcher paid generous tribute to Farman for sounding the alarm at an international conference on the ozone layer.' Here is Joe's account of this conference:

"So we had this Save the Ozone Layer Conference, in which we had six initial talks of which Sherry Rowland started off with talking about what he and Molina had decided about it all. Then I spoke [...] and Bob [Watson] was giving the third [...] whereupon Mrs Thatcher suddenly climbs to her feet and takes her entourage out, leaving Bob sort of in mid-sentence [laughs] gasping somewhat. [...] And then she appeared later in the day and gave some press conference and told everyone to go out and buy these wonderful new refrigerators from ICI [...] And while she was away, heads of delegations from all around the world, paid for by us [laughs], solemnly got up and made statements about what needed to be done and so on and so forth. [...] Well, the Prime Minister says a few kind words and she says to me, somewhat sadly, 'Did I make a mistake in telling everyone to buy this new refrigerator from ICI?' you see. So what can a poor man do, but say, 'Well, actually I don't think they'll be on the market for a year. What you saw this morning was a prototype and they haven't yet gone into mass production.' [Laughs] 'Oh,' [laughs] 'oh, get rid of this man, I don't want to [speak to him anymore]' [laughs]. So you get passed off. And I find myself face to face with Denis [Thatcher], you see, that's what happens to people when she says [laughs]. So Denis is busy studying the marble floor and says to me, 'Tell me, Mr Farman, and what are you going to turn your brilliant mind to now that the ozone question is settled you see?' [laughs] Oh, bloody hell. [Laughs] I'd had enough of this! [...] And that's what life at some levels is all about. It's somewhat sad I'm afraid."

Accounts of Joe's life tend to stress the success of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which was the political response to the 'ozone hole' discovery. Joe, himself, was less impressed:

"Well, I mean I suppose I'd better go on record somewhere as pointing out that, please, if you ever read the World Health Organisation's view of the Montreal Protocol, just don't believe it. They will tell you that the Montreal Protocol has prevented N cases of eye trouble in the tropics, and various other things, and the answer is: what on earth do you mean? There hasn't been any ozone depletion in the tropics, there hasn't been any increase of UV, documented increase of UV in the tropics; what the hell has the Montreal Protocol got to do with saving all this vast number of malignant melanomas and all the rest of it, you know. And they – and the world goes mad in front of environmental problems and alarmist scares and things like that. It sort of somehow takes the story to be hard evidence [...] And, you know, okay we don't want to lose the ozone layer, I'm as keen as anyone to get rid of CFCs and put the ozone layer back to where it was. But you don't fight battles by misleading the public."

We find in these two extracts a striking feature of what we might call Joe's 'character' or 'personality': the tendency to stand irritated and amused alongside an absurd political and media culture in which 'scientific knowledge' can float away from its context in muddled and exaggerated claims. Darkly funny throughout, Joe's life story interview captures the exasperation of someone who refused to stray from reporting what his instruments had recorded – low ozone concentrations in the peculiar environment of the Antarctic stratosphere – even if that meant covering his face in television interviews:

"I spent a whole television interview, which went on for three quarters of an hour I think, and they wanted me to – what shall we say – be forthright about Margaret Thatcher's views on the environment and things like that. And I said, politely, that it wasn't my job to criticise the Prime Minister [laughs] and if they persisted in asking this question I'd just cover my face up. And so they agreed and we started off and then just as you're sort of talking some sense, they'd suddenly switch back to try and get it. And I spent, you know, most of that flipping hour's interview putting my hands in front of my face [laughs] and saying, 'You've forgotten what I told you.' [Laughs] 'I'm not here to openly criticise the Prime Minister, you know, it's not my job.'"

C1379/07 (edited by Paul Merchant)

Olive Stevenson (1930–2013)

Interviewed by Niamh Dillon, 2004 and 2005



Image courtesy of Hinton House Publishers.

Olive Stevenson was born in Purley, Surrey, in 1930, the youngest child of two Irish Protestant parents. She studied English at Oxford but her real interest was in social work and she began her career working as a Childcare Officer in Devon. After completing her social work training with Clare and Donald Winnicott at the London School of Economics in the early 1950s she became influential in social work and social policy and became the first female Professor in Social Work at Keele University. She later became Professor of Social Work at Nottingham where she spent the remainder of her career. Her interest lay initially in the care of the young, and latterly in the protection of vulnerable adults. She sat on the enquiry into the tragic death of Maria Colwell in 1974. Olive Stevenson wrote extensively; both articles and contributions to books and singly: *Claimant or Client, Somebody Else's Child, and finally her memoir, Reflections on a Life in Social Work.*

In 2004 Olive Stevenson kindly agreed to be recorded for her contribution to social work and social policy for *National Life Stories*. The recording, at approximately seventeen hours long, demonstrates her ability to describe detailed and complex topics with an unusual reflexivity.

"When I was nine or ten I used to sit in trains taking notes of people sitting opposite, to try and decide what they were like. Unfortunate people! I used to, incidentally, search for German spies a lot in Croydon aerodrome. Didn't find any. I was genuinely fascinated by the dynamics of people's behaviour. When I left school I had the equivalent of a gap year and went immediately to work in a children's home. And I worked there for nine months and I really learnt a huge amount from this little group of children."

"After I left university I went to the LSE [London School of Economics] to train as a social worker. I became very involved in aspects of psychoanalytic theory, much influenced by my then teacher, Clare Winnicott, who was the wife of Donald Winnicott, who was a rather famous paediatrician who became a psychoanalyst. Clare's teaching at the LSE was quite remarkable. She was a woman who, when she taught, it was always as if it was for the first time, because there was nothing pat about it. If you asked her a question, she was slow to respond, careful to respond, it was really a dialogue....."

"And that door opening was very, very important to me in how I subsequently understood situations that social workers encounter, thought about my own life and also very important to me in providing some kind of a partial theoretical framework for teaching social workers ... And I've always taken the view that social work was a combination of a concern with material and environmental issues and a concern with the inner problems of the people that prevented them from managing their lives okay and that it was social work's job to be, as it were, a mediator between these two things."

Olive Stevenson began her working life specialising in children's care and development but later became interested in aging and its associated policy concerns.

"I was approached and asked if I would be Chair of Age Concern England. That was in 1980 and it was really an interesting challenge ... it was my first experience of any large-scale work in connection with the voluntary sector and ... anybody reading the literature realised that there was a demographic challenge here, that the whole business of an increasing number of elderly people led me to think that it was very likely that social work and social services were going to have a huge task in the provision of care for people. And it was apparent that social work as such had not really taken on board the intrinsic interest and importance of that work".

C1155/01 (edited by Niamh Dillon)

Wendy Westover (1928–2013)

Interviewed by Frances Cornford, 2011



Wendy Westover studied painting at Wimbledon School of Art and then at the Slade but became a calligrapher after choosing a secondary course in design and taking classes with internationally renowned calligrapher Margaret Alexander. In her time as a member of the Society of Scribes and Illuminators, a 'Scribena' as she called it, she became especially well known for her collaborations with Joan Pilsbury and for her skill in painting in miniature.

After graduating from the Slade and spending some time with the architectural letter cutter David Kindersley, learning letter cutting in stone and tutoring his children, Wendy returned to London to establish herself as a calligrapher writing captions, notices and certificates as well as more decorative work for churches and livery companies.

"I think I did whatever work came along. People sometimes passed me work which she didn't feel like doing if it was not too ambitious, because I was only a beginner really still. If someone wanted a coat of arms drawn or painted she might send me that because they'd send me something to work from so I couldn't go wrong. I did get some very strange work and I took it all on because I thought I must get practice. I worked in the School of Oriental and African Studies for three months writing two Indian scripts. This was very exacting – this was for a student's handbook. There was a chap that was doing it too, he did two other Indian scripts. It was very exacting, you had to hold the pen at a certain angle and we used to spoil quite a lot of pen nibs so there was a crisis at one point because we'd spoiled them all and we had to be laid off almost while Miss Lambert tried to

get some more. I think she tried to contact friends in India but in fact they were made in Birmingham, like all the other pen nibs in the world..."

In 1970 Wendy was part of a team of five calligraphers, who worked on the Royal National Lifeboat Institute's memorial book. She devised the roundels and painting the headpieces depicting each lifeboat station.

"The Lord, who was the Lord Saltoun, who was a Scottish Lord, commissioned it. He was a marvellous old man. He was elderly when he commissioned it. He went to the Society [of Scribes and Illuminators] and the secretary at the time thought 'Oh Joan [Pilsbury] lives just down the road from him, we'll ask her if she'd be interested' so they were put in touch. It was a wonderful job, and what was wonderful about Lord Saltoun was that he had worked I think all his life for the Lifeboat Institution and he didn't want any reference to himself shown or written in the book. It was to be completely anonymous. But when we had finished it, I understand he took it to all the widows of lifeboatmen whose names were recorded in the book, to show them what had been done to remember their husbands. He lived in Twickenham and he had Joan under his thumb and he was hurrying her toward the end because we weren't keeping up fast enough and he was in his 80s and he wasn't going to last much longer and what was going to happen. I think really she got quite bothered about it because she'd got four people working for her and we can't all work at the same speed. And some of the work was much more intricate than others – the borders and things. So it did have a nerve-racking element to it.

"I don't think he actually set a time limit on it, apart from the time he thought he was going to leave this world which he held as a threat over us, we just had to hurry on. But you can't hurry on with work like that . . . I just did the views – they were tiny and I liked that very much. They were set into the borders of the page. Joan had to do the layout first and it had to be approved by Lord Saltoun of course. He wanted it to look a bit like a book of hours from the old days with lots of pictures in and illustrations. He was great because he went to Scotland to his family home and he used to send me things. The Mumbles lifeboat came into this book and he sent me a stone with the Mumbles lifeboat station on. And he used to send me harebells in special parcels – a Scottish bluebell is a harebell apparently – to prevent me making a mistake. . . Two of my favourites, I don't know if you know that book by Marie Angel, *Painting for Calligraphers*. That had two of my paintings next to each other. They were Mumbles and Aldeburgh, they really did come out nicely."

C960/107 (edited by Frances Cornford)

Statement of Financial Activities

Year Ended 31 December 2013

	Restricted	Unrestricted	Total	
			2013	2012
	£	£	£	£
INCOMING RESOURCES				
Donations	187,641	16,589	204,230	297,027
Bank interest receivable	253	3,337	3,590	6,509
Investment income	9,842	16,956	26,798	25,442
Miscellaneous income	–	47,476	47,476	17,362
TOTAL INCOMING RESOURCES	197,736	84,358	282,094	346,340
RESOURCES EXPENDED				
Charitable activities	225,842	–	225,842	258,940
Governance and administration	–	72,638	72,638	27,079
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	225,842	72,638	298,480	286,019
NET INCOMING (OUTGOING) RESOURCES				
Unrealised investment gain	38,134	59,975	98,109	33,153
Net movement in funds for the year	10,028	71,695	81,723	93,474
Total funds:				
Brought forward	656,180	539,678	1,195,858	1,102,384
Carried forward	666,208	611,373	1,277,581	1,195,858

Balance Sheet at 31 December 2013

	2013		2012	
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Investments		808,006		709,897
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors	3,366		14,057	
Cash at bank and in hand	481,126		522,941	
	484,492		536,998	
CREDITORS: Amounts falling due within one year	(14,917)		(51,037)	
NET CURRENT ASSETS		469,575		485,961
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		1,277,581		1,195,858
CAPITAL				
Founder's donation		200,000		200,000
Unrestricted fund		411,373		339,678
Restricted fund		666,208		656,180
		1,277,581		1,195,858

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

The financial statements are prepared under the historical cost convention, with the exception of investments which are included at market value. The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective April 2008), the Companies Act 2006 and the requirements of the Statement of Recommended Practice, Accounting and Reporting by Charities.

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

OPINION

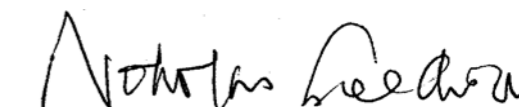
In our opinion:

- the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 December 2013 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.



Sir Nicholas Goodison
Chairman of Trustees

Leaders of National Life (C408) [30 interviews]

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

City Lives (C409) [150 interviews]

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

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

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

General Interviews (C464) [89 interviews]

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

Artists' Lives (C466) [346 interviews]

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

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

Architects' Lives (C467) [114 interviews]

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

Architects' Lives Advisory Committee
Colin Amery, Catherine Croft, Dr Elain Harwood, Dr Alan Powers and Professor Andrew Saint.

Fawcett Collection (C468) [14 interviews]

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

Lives in Steel (C532) [102 interviews]

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

Oral History of the British Press (C638) [19 interviews]

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

National Life Story Awards (C642) [145 interviews]

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

Legal Lives (C736) [10 interviews]

This collection documents changes in the legal profession in Britain, including interviews with both solicitors and barristers, including Lady Justice Hale and Lord Hoffmann. Since 2013 we have developed this area of our work in partnership with the Legal Biography Project in the Law Department at the London School of Economics, initially focussing on Crown Court clerks.

Food: From Source to Salespoint (C821) [216 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** (C1087) [47 interviews recorded 2003–7] and **An Oral History of the Wine Trade** (C1088) [40 interviews recorded 2003–2004].

Book Trade Lives (C872) [120 interviews]

Book Trade Lives recorded the experiences of those who worked in publishing and bookselling between the early 1920s and 2007. Interviews covered all levels of the trade, from invoice clerks and warehouse staff to wholesalers, editors, sales staff and executives. The Unwin Charitable Trust was lead funder for this project. *The British Book Trade: An Oral History* (British Library, 2008 and 2010) was edited by Sue Bradley from the collection.

Crafts Lives (C960) [127 interviews]

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

Crafts Lives Advisory Committee
James Beighton, Annabelle Campbell, Sarah Griffin, Dr Tanya Harrod, Helen Joseph, John Keatley, Martina Margetts.

Lives in the Oil Industry (C963) [178 interviews]

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

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

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

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

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

An Oral History of British Fashion (C1046) [17 interviews]

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

Pioneers in Charity and Social Welfare (C1155) [17 interviews]

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

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

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

Authors' Lives

(C1276) [58 interviews]

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

Authors' Lives Advisory Committee

Stephen Cleary, Rachel Foss, Dr Maggie Gee OBE, Martyn Goff CBE, Mark Le Fanu, Dame Penelope Lively DBE (chair), Deborah Moggach, Martin Pick, Lawrence Sail, Jonathan Taylor CBE.

The Legacy of the English Stage Company

(C1316) [14 interviews]

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

An Oral History of the Water Industry

(C1364) [31 interviews]

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

An Oral History of Barings

(C1367) [34 interviews]

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

An Oral History of British Science

(C1379) [108 interviews]

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

An Oral History of British Science Advisory Committee

Professor Jon Agar, Dr Tilly Blyth, Lord Alec Broers, Georgina Ferry (chair), Professor Dame Julia Higgins, Dr Maja Kominko, Professor Sir Harry Kroto, John Lynch OBE, Professor Chris Rapley CBE, Dr Simone Turchetti.

An Oral History of the Electricity Supply Industry in the UK

(C1495) [14 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, spanning nationalisation in the 1940s, privatisation in 1990-5, and themes such as the changing technologies of generation, the increase in scale of coal-fired power stations, the shift to gas during the 1990s 'dash for gas', and the development of renewable energy sources since the 1970s. We are grateful to Hodson and 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

(C1553) [7 interviews]

Seven pilot interviews, recorded in 2012–13, explore the development in post-war Britain of those therapies that depend primarily on verbal exchanges between client and therapist to alleviate mental distress, rather than pharmaceutical or other medical forms of intervention. A future project will interview a wide range of professionals in this complex and diverse sector.

How to support National Life Stories

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Rob Perks
Director
National Life Stories
The British Library
96 Euston Road
London NW1 2DB
United Kingdom

nls@bl.uk
T +44 (0)20 7412 7404

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Front cover image: 'First Ascent' taken in the Eastern Pamirs in the Kyrgyz Republic. Martin Hartley, interviewed for an *Oral History of British Photography*, is an adventure, travel and expedition photographer who works on both scientific expeditions and on voyages of exploration and endurance. Huw Lewis-Jones's first book *Face to Face* (Polarworld on behalf of the Scott Polar Research Institute, 2008) included a Hartley portrait of *Oral History of British Science* interviewee Charles Swithinbank. Photo courtesy of Martin Hartley.

Back cover image: Mary Restieaux, Ikat woven silk textile, 1982. Photo courtesy of Andra Nelki.

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Contact us

National Life Stories
The British Library
96 Euston Road
London NW1 2DB

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