

talking history

Diversity and courage

Joanna Herbert discusses her research on Asian groups in Leicester.



Joanna Herbert of the Centre for Urban History describes how she has used oral history to explore the experiences of different Asian groups in Leicester.

She has been listening to the oral history collections in the East Midlands Oral History Archive and the British Library.



Actual life stories defy stereotypes. The image of the timid and passive Asian female is quickly dispelled by examples of courage and strength.

Oral history has emerged as an invaluable resource for studies of migration, in part because there are so few documentary sources. It is also valuable, however, as it offers a more democratic and humane approach, giving a voice to hidden groups.

I have examined the experience of different Asian groups as a racialised and stereotyped group. I am interested in the meanings they attribute to events, their beliefs, attitudes and emotions which shaped their reality. What did they perceive as prejudice? Did they expect to face hostility? How have they responded? By shifting the focus away from dominant groups and the structures of racism I hope to highlight the effects of racism and illustrate the strategies employed to challenge and resist exclusion.

The interviews all follow the life story approach rather than questions on particular issues. The impact of listening to these tapes was striking. The expressions conveyed, the pace of speech, even the silences, provide a rich resource, and I am concerned that this unique aspect will be lost on transcription. The diversity within the communities is apparent throughout. There are differences not only between religion, gender, class, caste and country of origin, but also language, education, age, timing of arrival to Britain and place of settlement either in a predominantly 'Asian' or 'White'

"The impact of listening to these tapes was striking. The expressions conveyed, the pace of speech, even the silences, provide a rich resource, and I am concerned that this unique aspect will be lost on transcription."

area: a multitude of factors that affected their experiences. The interviews also show how people battle stereotypes. Interviewees from East Africa, acutely aware of the perception that they were aliens in a foreign land, are keen to emphasise that they were actually familiar with Britain before arrival, that they could speak the language, and received a British education.

The complexity and divisions within communities, particularly between generations, prompts a whole new set of questions. The tapes also gave me an insight into the problems involved in the interview process. Interviewees often appeared to be more open with an Asian interviewer than with a White British interviewer. This is obviously an issue I will need to address when I conduct my own interviews. Any comments or advice are most welcome: email me on jlh9@le.ac.uk.

Welcome to Issue 2 of *talking history*

**December
2001**



Leicester
City Council

Thanks to everyone for the positive feedback we got for Issue 1. The response to the article on Marc Fitch House was so interesting that we decided to print it (see page 3). We hope that everyone likes the second issue as much.

The East Midlands Oral History Archive has been very busy since the last issue. We've been collecting and

cataloguing the recordings that people have been telling us about; giving talks; producing education resources; launching our website, and a whole host of other activities. We hope this newsletter gives you a flavour of what we've been up to.

The next issue will be out in March so please try and get any articles to me by mid February

at the latest. We are particularly interested in articles which deal with aspects of rural life and updates on the work of rural heritage and history groups.

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Oral historians talk at the drop of a hat

The staff at the East Midlands Oral History Archive come from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines. The following is a list of talks and lectures that we have to offer. If you or your group would like to book any of these talks, which are free, please contact us (see contact details on the back page).

Using Oral History

- ⇒ The First World War.
- ⇒ Childhood – a look at the history of childhood.
- ⇒ Health and housing.
- ⇒ Work and unemployment in the first half of the 20th century.
- ⇒ Coming to Leicester.
- ⇒ Walnut Street - Past, Present & Future.
- ⇒ Death and funeral customs.
- ⇒ Wharf Street revisited.
- ⇒ The story of the Saff – Saffron Lane estate.
- ⇒ An introduction to oral history & the EMOHA
- ⇒ Training in oral history.

General

- ⇒ Children's magazines and books: what they tell us about the times when they were written.
- ⇒ Women in the armed forces in the First World War.
- ⇒ Leicester in the Second World War.
- ⇒ New approaches to garden history.
- ⇒ Gender and identity in *The Secret Garden*.
- ⇒ First World War cemeteries.
- ⇒ 19th century parks and cemeteries.
- ⇒ Women in garden history.



EMOHA staff are willing to come and address your group on a variety of topics.

- ⇒ The Co-operative Movement and Housing: Edinburgh 1860-1920.
- ⇒ Slums and Suburbs: Housing the Victorians

Cataloguing the EMOHA collection

The work in hand

A major objective of the work of EMOHA is to collect in, preserve and catalogue over sixteen existing collections, approximately 2,500 tapes, from the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland. There may be others we have yet to discover, too. These diverse collections, from different corners of the counties, will form the core collection of the EMOHA held at the Record Office for

Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland in Wigston. This mammoth task is now under way.

As each individual collection is received, it will be processed and detailed entries added to the EMOHA online catalogue, enabling users to search for material using a variety of search tools. A brief summary of each interview, where possible, will allow researchers to see what

type of material is available from the collections, and help narrow down what to listen to.

A list of the collections that are currently held and those which are expected to be deposited will be available on our website <http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha>. To offer an indication of what the material is about, as collections become available, links from the

list will give more detailed information on the background to and subject matter of each collection. This information will also be available in printed form on request from the EMOHA office.

Access to listening to the collections is by **appointment only** at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Tel: 0116 2571080.

The continuing story of the House of History

After our item about Marc Fitch House, the home of EMOHA, in the first edition of this newsletter, Christine, Marc Fitch House's cleaner, revealed that she had taken (and passed!) her driving test from the building when it was a driving test centre. We were also sent a number of other interesting facts about the history of the building.

Miss E. Gumley writes: 'I can tell you a little about Duplicating Services (former occupants of Marc Fitch House). It was run by Miss B. Nurse and Mr C. E. Hurst. They provided a service mainly for architects and surveyors, typing, duplicating, collating and binding bills of quantity and specifications.

'They would deliver reams of Double-cap paper (i.e. 17" x 27") to the office where I worked, which we would guillotine and return for processing. Sometimes the Bills would be drilled one hole after collating, and a split pin fastener inserted. The rest would have three wires in the spine and a cloth strip glued over the edge. Yates would do this binding part, and pack in Kraft paper for delivery.'

Mr Hurst was also the head of C. E. Hurst & Co., a printers which is still trading in Oadby.

Mrs Philippa Henwood helped us look back even further into the past of Marc Fitch House by filling in some background on her great-grandfather and former owner of the house, Duncan Henderson and providing us with some photographs:

'He was born in Kinneff parish near Inverbervie in Scotland, and came down to Kendal (Kay Shoes) to learn the trade. He started D. Henderson & Sons, shoe manufacturers, in 1880. On Duncan's retirement, his second son Harry Frederick, my grandfather, took



Duncan Henderson (centre) with his family at his golf club.

over as Chairman, and he didn't retire until he was 92! I think that was in 1972, and my father David then became Chairman. The pop star Engelbert Humperdinck worked for the firm for a while, under his real name of Gerry Dorsey.

'Duncan's first wife died in about 1883, and he then married her cousin. By 1891 there were six children by his first wife and two by his second. He needed a larger house, so built 'Cluanbeag' in Glebe Road ('Cluanbeag' means 'little field'). The plans are in the Record Office – there is even a 'motor house!' - and Duncan's initials are over the door of what is now called Glebe House.'



Dr Sandra Wheatley of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Leicester

In May 2001, EMOHA staff noticed an article in the *Leicester Mercury* about *Nine Women, Nine Months, Nine Lives* by Dr Sandra Wheatley. Dr Wheatley had spoken to women during their pregnancies and first year of motherhood and in doing so was helping to dispel some of the myths of motherhood.

Intrigued by the article, EMOHA outreach worker Mandy Morris, contacted Sandra to find out if her work had included any recorded interviews. The answer came back in the affirmative!

Oral history isn't confined to interviewing older people about the distant past. As this

innovative research demonstrates, oral history can be found in a variety of settings.

The transcripts on which *Nine Women Nine Months Nine Lives* is based will hopefully be deposited with EMOHA. In the meantime, Mandy approached Sandra to find out more about her book and the interviews.

EMOHA: What are the main themes of 'Nine Women Nine Months Nine Lives'?

SW: Well, I asked the women about their expectations and their actual experiences of pregnancy, birth, and the first year of becoming a mother for the first time. We talked in great detail about the emotions they had throughout this time, how their partners had impressed and disappointed them, and how they themselves had adjusted to what is potentially the largest and the most rewarding life change.

EMOHA: Why did you focus on women from Leicester?

SW: I readily had access to the patients of Leicester General Hospital as a result of having established a good working relationship between the University of Leicester Department of Psychiatry, and the Leicester General Hospital's Maternity Unit over the several years I've been working here.

EMOHA: What was important about using interviews for your book, compared with other available research methods?

SW: The vast majority of books that exist to reassure women about motherhood consist of health professionals *telling* women how they are likely to feel. Now, throughout my work I was constantly being asked by first time mums-to-be "Am I normal?" "Should I feel like this?" But when I offered them (the somewhat limited) information from the health professionals they requested something more realistic. So I decided to gather women's real-life experiences, in full, by speaking to them, as opposed to a brief written series of short questions and answers. Now, in order to present them as completely as possible, and for other women to be certain that they were getting information from the horse's mouth



as it were - I included their *entire* conversations with me in the book.

EMOHA: Could you give me an example of how this impacted on your research?

SW: I had already been using qualitative research methods – i.e. interviewing people to gather a range of individual's experiences – for a year or so, and carrying out this research utilising recorded life histories confirmed, for me, the invaluable nature of this method above others.

EMOHA: Will you be doing any more research interviewing, and if so, what have you learned most from the *Nine Women Nine Months Nine Lives* project about conducting and using interviews?

SW: Yes – I have already spoken to the women about their lives every year around about the time of their eldest child's birthday and am planning to write a follow-up book focusing on coping with a growing child and, for some of them, an expanding family (what with the birth of subsequent children) and how that has affected their lives and their relationships. Probably the most important thing I have learnt about conducting and using interviews as a research technique is to always have spare blank tapes and that nothing anyone ever says in an interview is irrelevant!

EMOHA: Why did you use interview extracts, organised around themes, as well as having the whole transcripts in the back of the book?

SW: Linking back to the earlier question about the general public's desire to hear the truth from the horse's mouth, unfortunately, it is not always easy to *read* spoken English. Providing a chronological journey of the nine women whereby I compared, contrasted and discussed the range of experiences

talk

they had had, in addition to using extracted quotes from the full conversations, was intended to actually ease the reader into the rhythm of reading spoken English rather than *listening* to spoken English. But, due to the sheer length of the full transcripts of our conversations, it was not possible to discuss every individual point raised by each woman. So, the conversations were included in the back of the book to provide the reader with the opportunity to find out more about, perhaps, the one or two women that they, as the reader, may have particularly identified with.

EMOHA: A lot of academic research interviews are confidential. How did you overcome this problem and does it restrict where copies of the tapes and transcripts can be deposited?

SW: Now, obviously, all of the names of the women, partners and their babies were changed from the taped conversations when they were transcribed into the written form. In addition, any other person named (for example, friends, neighbours) were changed, as were their locations and the place names where it was possible. Complete anonymity had to be guaranteed to the women due to the *extremely* sensitive nature of our conversations. They then rewarded me with being entirely honest – an extremely worthwhile exchange, I felt.

Now, unfortunately, this has meant that the actual tapes of our conversations can not be deposited as they still contain the original identifying information. However, the transcriptions of the research can be deposited with organisations like the East Midlands Oral History Archive. So that's good.

EMOHA: How is the book being used, for example, within schools?

SW: Well, at the moment I am making enquiries as to whether the book may provide a useful tool to introduce young adults to the *realities* of parenting to aid their understanding of why contraception really is such a good idea! I believe it will provide them with an extremely accessible form of information that will not frighten them or embarrass them. Likewise, teachers looking for interesting catalysts for discussion to meet the National Curriculum guidelines would do well to take an extract from the book and utilise it within their Social and Personal Development classes. Introducing the notion of responsible parenting at a young age through such a simple source should



enable society to reap the rewards at a (hopefully!) later date. The unacceptably high teenage pregnancy rate in the UK reflects the impact of the current sex education taught in schools. And this paucity of education has no place in the 21st century.

EMOHA: How much did you know about oral history before we got in touch with you?

SW: I have to confess very little! I had already realised the value of oral information through my own research and was extremely pleased to be approached and to take part in the EMOHA project. What a fantastic idea!

EMOHA: Where can people find out more?

SW: Well, the book is available to buy online [www.potent.uk.com] and with a freephone number [0800 9961244]. It's published by Potent Ltd and the ISBN number, should you need to quote it at a bookseller or perhaps in a library,

is 0 9540012 0 6. ... The first chapter of the book [is on the website]. ... Potent@hushmail.com is the email address. If anybody would like to send any comments in, then they're really pleased to hear from you. So that would be great! Thank you!

Around the East Midlands

MEMORIES FOR THE MILLENNIUM The Nottinghamshire Living History Archive

Nottinghamshire County Council has been awarded £337,000 by the Millennium Commission to help individuals record the modern history of a Nottinghamshire community in sound or vision. The resulting projects will be stored at Nottinghamshire Archives, and copies will be held for public use in various community locations. The third round of awards has just been made for projects which commenced in October 2001 and will be completed by May 2002.

The projects already completed or in progress cover a variety of themes, including the Ukrainian community in Nottingham, childhood games, Clipstone and Manton collieries, evacuees in Nottinghamshire, and the Mansfield business community.

For further information, contact the Scheme Office, Mansfield Library, Four Seasons Centre, Westgate, Mansfield, Notts., NG18 1NH. Tel. 01623 662672. Fax 01623 629276. Email living.history@nottsc.gov.uk.



Find out more about what is happening in the region by visiting our website.

<http://www.le.ac.uk/emoha/emoha/eastmid.html>

EMOHA to the rescue

Anneke Bambery, Principal Curator at Derby Museum and Art Gallery, contacted EMOHA requesting help with a funding bid for an oral history project to explore local people's experiences of the Queen's Silver Jubilee. We offered advice on a range of issues including recording equipment, transcription, and items to raise in the proposal. Anneke wrote to EMOHA:

"May I thank you most sincerely for all the help, advice and support you have offered me in preparing our bid for the above project. I started work from a position of complete ignorance about oral history recording, but with your help I have been able to learn very rapidly."

Teacher's Notes

Oral history is a valuable resource that can be used with different age groups to support learning across the curriculum. Oral accounts of the past can take the form of songs, stories, edited recordings, as well as interviewing people directly to find out about their experiences of a particular time or event. Taking part in an oral history project enables children and older students to develop a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding, and offers schools the opportunity to develop links with the wider community.

The East Midlands Oral History Archive aims to make oral history material easily accessible to schools across the region. EMOHA will be offering training and support for teachers wishing to use oral history, including advice on how to use it effectively in the classroom, and how to make recordings with different age groups. By April 2002, we will be able to offer CD-ROM or an audio-cassette and support materials for use at Key Stages 1 and 2. During the second year of our project, we will also be able to provide materials for use at Key Stages 3 and 4. Our information sheet 'Using Oral History in Primary Schools' is now available and gives advice on using oral accounts as a cross-curricular resource, as well as tips for developing oral history projects in schools.

We are also currently in the process of setting up a pilot project with Tony Williams, Community Tutor at Shaftesbury Junior School, Leicester. The project aims to bring together adults from the local community with children in school to develop a website based on their memories of the West End of Leicester.

Whether you are a teacher, governor, member of support staff, consultant/advisor, or parent/carer, our termly bulletins for primary and secondary schools will keep you informed of new interviews, resources, conferences, training and support.

For more information about these or any of the services we offer, please contact Sarah Ferrier, Education Officer on sjf17@le.ac.uk or (0116) 252 5065.

Making Home

How did you set up your first home?

Domestic historian Lucy Faire writes: I am doing a pilot study on the way wedding ceremonies and receptions have changed throughout the 20th century and how couples (married or cohabiting) went about setting up and organizing their first home.

I am interested in finding out: where couples got married; where did they hold their reception and who was invited; what presents they received; and the kind of things collected for the 'bottom drawer'.

- ⇒ Can you send me a list of the presents you or a relative/ancestor received?
- ⇒ Would you be willing to be interviewed about your wedding and/or first home of your own?

I will be interested to hear from you, whether you set up home in 1938 or 1998, as long as this was in the UK.

Reply to Lucy c/o EMOHA.

Fifty Years Of...

Carlton Television are looking for people to help them in the making of *Fifty Years Of... the Queen in the Midlands*, a series, celebrating the Queen's Golden Jubilee.

They are looking for people with first hand experiences, with fond

or funny memories of meeting the Queen or of being involved in some aspect of the royal occasion.

Please write to Beverley Colledge-Bell, Carlton Television, Lenton Lane, Nottingham NG7 2NA or call on 0115 964 5642.



The wedding of Duncan Henderson's eldest daughter Margaret (see page 3). What do you remember about your wedding? Researcher Lucy Faire would like to interview people about what they asked for and what they were given for their first home.

How do I do oral history?

EMOHA produces a series of information sheets, a useful starting point for anyone who is interested in getting involved in any aspect of oral history.

The information sheets are available on-line in PDF format (see www.le.ac.uk/emoha/training/infosheet.html) or by

sending a stamped addressed envelope to EMOHA, Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester. Remember to specify which sheets you would like.

EMOHA Information Sheets

1. What is oral history?
2. How to conduct an oral history interview.
3. What equipment to use.
4. Who can help? Contacts and research sources.
5. Copyright and ethics.
6. Personal safety while interviewing.
7. How to use the Internet.
8. Oral history and the Internet.
9. Using oral history in schools.
10. Publishing your material.
11. Publishing on the internet.
12. How to look after your material.
13. How to get funding for oral history projects.
14. How to promote your project.
15. How to transcribe and summarise.
16. How to research local history.

Special Offer Knitting Together



Leicester City Museums Service - one of the partners in EMOHA - is offering a 50% discount on the publication *Knitting Together: memories of Leicestershire's hosiery industry* (1990), by Geoffrey Bowles & Siobhan Kirrane. This is based on interviews carried out by the former Leicester Oral History Archive in the 1980s. Normally priced at £3.50, *Knitting Together* can now be purchased for £1.75 from New Walk Museum or Abbey Pumping Station, or by mail order from Helene Kelly, New Walk Museum, 53 New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7EA, adding 50p for postage. Cheques should be made out to 'Leicester City Council'.

The East Midlands Oral History Archive is a partnership between the Centre for Urban History at the University of Leicester, the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR), and Leicester City Museums and Library Services. It is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to establish the first large-scale archive of oral history recordings for Leicestershire & Rutland.

Its first aim is to retrieve as many of existing recordings as possible, and to make them more accessible through a website, an on-line catalogue, newsletters and edited CD-ROMS and cassettes. In addition to the Record Office itself, some of the recordings will also be available later in libraries and museums. EMOHA also aims to generate new oral history recordings through its own programme of interviewing, and by providing advice, training and support for community groups, museums and heritage organisations, students and other individuals who are interested in developing their own projects.

To hear more about EMOHA and Oral History in general join our mailing list. Send your name, address or email address to us and we will send you *talking history* and news of other events, special offers and opportunities to get involved.

We're on the web
www.le.ac.uk/emoha/

East Midlands Oral History Archive

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EMOHA Diary

Send us details of oral history and general history events for inclusion in the next EMOHA Diary. All news, views or diary dates must reach us by Friday 15th February 2002.

All of the events advertised in the Oral History Diary are open to the public unless otherwise stated.

December

Wednesday 5th

4.30pm De Montfort University, Historical and International Studies, Clephan Building, 1.38. Dr Maurice Fitzgerald (Loughborough University), *'Dirty Hands? Berlusconi, Haughey, et al.'*

7pm A guided walk from the Cathedral Fountain. *Mediaeval Leicester at Christmas.*

Thursday 6th (2.15pm) at Centre for English Local History, Marc Fitch House, 3-5 Salisbury Road. John Knight (University of Bristol, Centre for the Study of the Historic Environment), *Woodland Archaeology: lessons from Wansdyke parishes.*

Wednesday 12th (4.30pm) at De Montfort University, Historical and International Studies, Clephan Building, 1.38. Professor Scott Lucas (Birmingham University): *'We're Number One! US*

Ideology, "Americanisation" and the Cold War'.

Monday 17th (7pm). A guided walk from the John Biggs statue, Leicester. *Tales for a Winter's Night.*

Wednesday 19th (4.30) at De Montfort University, Historical and International Studies, Clephan Building, 1.38. Professor Colin Richmond (University of Keele), *'Neighbours: Poles, Russians, Germans and Jews at Jedwabne in 1941'.*

Sunday 23rd (2pm). A guided walk from Stonehurst Farm, Mountsorrel. *Ding Dong Merrily on High.*

Thursday 27th (10am). A guided walk from Stonehurst Farm, Mountsorrel. *A Breath of Fresh Air.*

January

Friday 11th (7.15pm) at Vaughan Archaeological and Historical Society at Vaughan College, St Nicholas Circle. Kenneth Wayne, *The Rustic Rhymes of Leicester.*

Thursday 24th (2.15pm) in the Centre for English Local History, Marc Fitch House. Dr David Marcombe (University of Nottingham), *The power of the place: a Lincolnshire sacred*

site and its continuity.

February

Friday 1st (2.30pm) in the Centre for Urban History, Marc Fitch House. Richard Harris, *North American suburbs, 1900-1960.*

Thursday 7th (2.15pm) in the Centre for English Local History, Marc Fitch House. Catherine Richardson (University of Birmingham, The Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon), *Changing clothes and changing status: the bequest of clothing in sixteenth-century Kent.*

Friday 15th

2.30pm in the Centre for Urban History, Marc Fitch House. Leif Jerram, *Bureaucratic Passions and the Colonies of Modernity: Municipal urban expansion in Munich, 1890-1930.*

7.15pm at the Vaughan Archaeological and Historical Society, Vaughan College, St Nicholas Circle. Anthony Wessel, *The High Sheriff of Leicester.*

Thursday 21st (2.15pm) in the Centre for English Local History, Marc Fitch House. Rob Lee (University of Leicester, Centre for English

Local History), *Rural society and the Anglican clergy in Norfolk, 1815-1914.*

Friday 22nd (2.30pm) in the Centre for Urban History, Marc Fitch House. Cynthia Brown (East Midlands Oral History Archive), *Oral History: What Is the Point?*

March

Friday 1st (2.30pm) in the Centre for Urban History, Marc Fitch House. Lucy Faire (Loughborough University). *Remembering Reconstruction: Out and about in the 'Coventry of the Future.'*

Thursday 7th (2.15pm) in the Centre for English Local History, Marc Fitch House. Dr Tom Williamson (University of East Anglia), *"Woodland" and "Champion" revisited: explaining variations.*

Friday 15th (7.15pm) at the Vaughan Archaeological and Historical Society at Vaughan College, St Nicholas Circle. Patrick Clay, *Recent Discoveries in Leicestershire and Rutland.*

Thursday 21st (2.15pm) in the Centre for English Local History, Marc Fitch House. Dr Peter Musgrave (University of Leicester), *Valpolicella in its region.*

talking history is available in large print and on audio tape on request.