

talking history *for adult learners*

**Adult learners
bulletin
No2
April 2001**

School Days

I left school at 14. Some of them went to grammar school, but I didn't 'cos I knew very well that my father and mother could use the money
Childhood memory of the 1920's.

I was top of the class at school, but my mother couldn't afford to pay for the books and rulers and things for me to go on...so I left at 14 and I went to work in *t h i s s w e e t f a c t o r y .*
Memory of Earl Shilton in the 1920's.

I never did take to school life...I were glad to leave. They were very strict in those days you know, very strict... talking in class, standing in the corner, making a blot on your paper, I had the cane for that.
School memory of the 1920's.



Photographs and oral history can be a great way to engage adult learners for the first time. Above, children from Thurnby Church of England School have their first class photograph taken in the mid-1950s. The oral history extracts come from the 1920s, but the East Midlands Oral History Archive contains memories from Leicestershire and Rutland school days from the 1910s to the present day.

Engaging adult learners with oral history

Oral history is an excellent way of encouraging adults and families to get involved in learning, and in developing a wide range of new skills. The East Midlands Oral History Archive is currently piloting two exciting oral history projects with adult learners in the City of Leicester. One project, based at Shaftesbury Junior School is detailed over the page: the other is the *LiveAge* project which is working with Asian elders.

Working in association with Leicester Adult Education College's *LiveAge* project, a Leicester City community centre is planning to record the memories of Asian elders who moved from Uganda to the city during the 1970's. Interviews will be recorded in Gujarati, and will also be translated into English. It is hoped that all participants will benefit from their involvement in the project. For the interviewees, it is an excellent opportunity to share their stories with others in an

informal setting; for the interviewers, it is a chance to learn about the experiences of the 'experts' through their first-hand accounts.

If you are interested in advice on setting up a project of your own contact EMOHA Education Officer Sarah Ferrier on 0116 2525065 or sjf17@le.ac.uk.



Shaftesbury pioneers oral history project

Leicester children at Shaftesbury Junior School and Community Centre are taking part in a project where they will learn about the ways in which their local area has changed, from people who have lived there all their lives. Members of a local history group, which meets at the school once a week, have been examining old maps, photographs and census records of the West End of Leicester.



Course Tutor Chris Lewitt

Over the next few weeks, children in Year 5 will interview the adults, and will record their memories of what life was like when they were growing up in the area. Both the children and adults are thoroughly enjoying their involvement in the project, and are learning an enormous amount from the experience, as course tutor Chris Lewitt explains:

As the group moved into the school hall there was an audible sigh from the three former pupils who had last set foot there in 1946!

"Where's the fireplace? Look! There it is! It's been covered over by those boards."

"I remember the day the men came to put the electricity in!"

"There were air raid shelters over there for all the neighbouring streets."

These comments were just a few of the many expressed by members of the History of the West End Project who have gathered every Wednesday morning at Shaftesbury School during the last couple of months.

The group consists of some locals and many exiled 'Westenders', some of whom were born and raised in the Braunstone Gate/Duns Lane area. Their collective memories provide us with a priceless resource of historical information that encompasses the sad, touching and humorous. Any

doubts people had about going back to learn disappeared within minutes of the first meeting, with the students realising there were others who shared the same interests, and that if group discussions are handled in a sensitive and democratic manner, then every person is able to make a contribution.

It seems that every week someone arrives with an intriguing newspaper cutting or an old photograph, providing a catalyst for further study, which when added to the already prepared resources leaves us with more than enough for a two-hour session! The students are all steeped in knowledge of the local area, and what they give to the subject is immeasurable, adding depth and soul to the more conventional research into primary and secondary sources. The course also gives the students the opportunity to talk with the schoolchildren, and to compare experiences of today and many years ago. The students were very keen to volunteer for these extra sessions, which will be taped as part of the project between the school and the East Midlands Oral History Archive.

There are many barriers that may prevent people from thinking that they can take part in adult education, but it seems that those who do give it a go are very happy. It is rare for students to drop out, and the weekly attendances are consistently high. The interest in their chosen subject, and the friendships and acquaintances gained from attending these groups, seem to provide great enjoyment and satisfaction for the older students. And, judging from the maximum turnout for outside visits on wet, wintry days, the spirit is very willing!

There is a further short course planned which will feature a closer look at local industrial history and will include two sessions where an introduction to the internet will be available.

Anyone interested in joining the group should contact Tony Williams at Shaftesbury Community Centre, Latimer Street, Leicester on (0116) 2549939 for enrolment and course fee information. Reduced fees are available for retired and benefit claimants.

Find out more...

talking history
Adult Learners
Edition

Issue 2
March 2002



Leicester
City Council

Get in touch with the East Midlands Oral History Archive by contacting Sarah Ferrier, our Education Officer, on (0116) 252 5065, by email at sjf17@le.ac.uk or by writing to:

Sarah Ferrier
EMOHA
Centre for Urban History
University of Leicester
University Road, Leicester,
LE1 7RH

EMOHA
Education
Officer

Sarah
Ferrier



You can also find out more by visiting our website at:

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

Our website also offers links to other local and national education and history sites.



University of
Leicester



Heritage
Lottery Fund



LEICESTERSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL