

## **ORAL HISTORY**

"Oral History gives history back to the people in their own words ..."

"It provides a new basis for original projects, not just by professionals, but by students, by school children or by the people of a community. They don't have to learn their own history they can write it".

PAUL THOMPSON "Voice from the past"

"Oral History, or life history as it is sometimes called, springs from living memory. It draws upon the memories of the people whose experiences have often been neglected and excluded from the history books of the past. The voice of the working class, of women, of racial minorities, of young people, even of the middle class has rarely been heard".

STEPHEN HUMPHRIES "Handbook of Oral History"

**THE ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION** in the **Local Studies Library** is part of the local collection providing information on the people and history of the Bradford Metropolitan District.

It is divided into two main sections:

### 1. **How to collect and use Oral History**

In order to encourage wider use of oral history a growing collection of books, journal articles and periodicals provides information and advice on collecting and using oral history.

Examples of publications based on the results of oral history research are also available.

There is a card catalogue and reading lists have been prepared.

*e.g. 'Oral History and Reminiscence with Elderly People (N<sup>o</sup>. 24a)'*

*'Children and Oral History (N<sup>o</sup>.24b)'*

### 2. **The B.H.R.U. collection**

Bradford Heritage Recording Unit (BHRU) was set up in September 1983 by the City of Bradford Metropolitan Council (*Libraries and Museums Divisions*) and the Manpower Services Commission, its main aim was to capture by means of tape recorded interviews and photographs, the memories, reflections, contemporary attitudes and images of Bradford people of all ages, classes and races. MSC Funding ceased in September 1988. The collection is now maintained by the city's Libraries and Museums Divisions.

This collection in the library includes important primary source material for research students, historians or anyone wanting to know how life was lived in this area, 10, 50 or 100 years ago. It includes sound recordings, transcripts and summaries of full life story interviews arranged in broad subject groups.

A	Bradford's textile community
B	European communities in Bradford
C	Asian and Afro Caribbean communities
D	Quarrying
E	Engineering
F	Farming in the Worth Valley
H	Health and Community Care
M	Miscellaneous
R	Retailing
W	World War One veterans

All interviews include some information on childhood and family background, education, working life and leisure activities, often exploring attitudes and experiences of religion, culture, politics etc.

## **HOW TO USE THE B.H.R.U. COLLECTION**

Each interview is anonymous and identified by an accession number *e.g. A0001*. The prefix indicates the subject group of the interview (*see above*). All items in the collection are arranged in accession number order.

**The BHRU catalogue** lists all interviews conducted by BHRU with abstracts indicating the main topics discussed in each interview. It identifies which transcripts and sound recordings are available for use in the library.

*Use of some interviews has been restricted by the interviewee or by BHRU. Some of these are not currently available for public reference.*

**Interview summaries** give more detail about the contents of each interview and can be used as an index to the sound recordings or transcripts.

**Sound recordings on cassette** are available for over 700 interviews. Listening facilities are provided in the Reference Library.

**Transcripts** present a typewritten verbatim account for over 300 interviews. Many include a subject index and many of the interviews are indexed by subject in the oral history card catalogue and in the catalogue to the 'Local Collection'.

**Photographs** both historical and contemporary, provide a visual background to the interviews. These are arranged in subjects and form part of the local illustrations collection.

## **BRADFORD ORAL HISTORY SERIES**

A series of "edited highlight" cassettes has been produced. Each cassette contains short extracts from several interviews on one particular theme e.g.  *schooldays, Bradford textiles, experiences of immigration*. The cassettes are also available for sale or loan. There is a separate leaflet giving further information on this series.

## **MEMORY PACKS**

A series of reminiscence or memory packs has been designed by the *Bradford Memory Bank*. The packs include photographs and a collection of objects from the past which have a subject theme such as school days or growing up. Some also include tape-recorded memories. The packs are designed to encourage memory sharing amongst older people. They may be borrowed from the Local Studies Library for use in residential homes, day centres, memory groups etc.

We are pleased to make this collection available and acknowledge the support of MSC in setting up BHRU and the dedication and enthusiasm of many staff who worked on the scheme. Most of all however we are indebted to the people of Bradford who generously gave their time and shared their memories and experiences.

**This collection is a way of returning history to the people who made it - we hope you will use and enjoy it !**

### FURTHER INFORMATION FROM :-

**Carol Greenwood** (Senior Information Manager: Local Studies)

Local Studies Library, 5th Floor, Bradford Central Library, Prince's Way, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD1 1NN. Tel: 01274 433688. email [carol.greenwood@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:carol.greenwood@bradford.gov.uk)

OR

Tim Smith, Bradford Industrial Museum, Moorside Mills, Moorside Road, Eccleshill, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD2 3HP. Tel: 01274 435857. email [tim.smith@bradford.gov.uk](mailto:tim.smith@bradford.gov.uk)

## **COPYRIGHT**

**Please ask staff if you wish to copy, publish or broadcast from material in the collection.**

Leaflet N°. 11  
CG/May 2004

# Oral History Collection

**ORAL HISTORY**,  
living history, memory sharing,  
memories of local people,  
sharing past experience,  
looking back, life review,  
recording life story interviews,  
reminiscence therapy,  
spoken history, by word of  
mouth, voices of the past,  
rediscovering the past,  
preserving individual lives and  
ways of life, collecting oral evidence.

