



# On Tape

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Hello Everyone!

The last couple of months have been wonderful for me and for oral history. I attended the International Oral History Conference in July and had the most wonderful and stimulating experience. I met many interesting people from all over the world and learned a great deal. It was most satisfying to speak to so many like-minded people who were passionate about oral history and had many diverse ways of approaching the topic. A few delegates are featured in the newsletter. For those of you unable to attend, I can only give you a taste in the newsletter. There will be more articles on the conference in the December newsletter. You may find more information, including abstracts on the conference web site at:

<http://www.une.edu.au/ioha2006>

The complete papers (which delegates received in their conference satchels) are available on CD for \$15.00 through Janis Wilton on [jwilton@pobox.une.edu.au](mailto:jwilton@pobox.une.edu.au). If there is a particular paper that interests you, email me and I will email a copy to you.

In this newsletter I have some interesting contributions from members. Leigh

Chamberlain has written about her project on the Toowong community. Pat Ryan gives us an insight into one of the master classes offered at the Conference given by one of the oral history “greats”, Alessandro Portelli.

I have an article on the recipient of the inaugural Hazel de Berg award given to a most worthy oral historian, Beth Robertson.

I am very excited to inform you that our Committee has been hard at work organising the next National Conference to be held in Brisbane from 27 to 30 September 2007. We are calling for papers and you can learn more about the conference on our new web site: <http://www.ohaaqld.org.au>

Please note the Notice of the Annual General Meeting on page 9. This is a very important meeting and I urge you all to attend.

I hope you will enjoy the oral history information you can read on the web sites mentioned, this newsletter and the Journal.

Suzanne Mulligan  
Editor

## Report on the International Oral History Conference Suzanne Mulligan

The conference went from 12 to 16 July 2006 but for me it began with the Master Classes on Tuesday 11 July and finished with the Canberra tour on 18 July – a full week of oral history information and entertainment.

The morning master class I attended was conducted by Linda Shopes “Preparing oral history interviews for publication”. Linda explained that if interviews are to form the basis of a publication they need to be edited, contextualized and interpreted. See <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/mse/oral/>

In the afternoon Dean Rehberger and Michael Fegan presented a master class “Oral history in the digital world”. This presentation clarified for me the principles of sound and digital audio best practice.

On Wednesday evening delegates attended a civic welcome reception at the beautiful Sydney Town Hall. It was our first opportunity to meet socially with other delegates – old and new contacts.



On Thursday 13 July, the conference was officially opened and we listened to a very powerful keynote address from Professor Peter Read “The truth which will set us all free: national reconciliation, oral history and the conspiracy of silence”. He spoke in very moving terms about the aftermath of the Pinochet coup in Chile and paralleled that with the story of Australia’s “stolen generations”. He emphasized the importance of the role oral history plays in ensuring events like these are not forgotten. Oral historians have a responsibility. He said we

“must hand on the past to the future” and “oral historians have a duty to bring the truth out. The future can decide what to do with it.”



Then followed the parallel sessions of presentations. Delegates had such a wealth of speakers and sessions from which to choose that it was sometimes very difficult to make that choice. I was fortunate to be among the 20 people to attend a radio broadcast session at the ABC studio next door to the conference venue. Michelle Rayner, producer of “Verbatim” interviewed aboriginal activist, Charles “Chicka” Dixon. It was very interesting to witness the interview. On Saturday, we returned to the studio to listen to the edited interview and discuss the process that led to that.



Lesley Jenkins and Helen Klaebe



Pam Willis-Burden and Suzanne Mulligan

Conference Dinner

Our Conference Dinner on Thursday night was in the Strangers' Dining Room at New South Wales Parliament House. This was another opportunity for socializing and networking within the oral history community amid beautiful surroundings. We were entertained by a very talented acoustic vocal trio Touchwood.

Friday was back to the serious business of learning from some excellent presenters. My first session that day was on "Memory and trauma". Chieko Kuriki from Japan discussed her interviews with the New York fire-fighters who survived the trauma of 9/11. Next Denise Phillips (from Brisbane) did an excellent presentation on her work with the Hazara refugee community.

Friday afternoon I attended the session on "How we listen to our war veterans". Michael Caulfield's presentation on "Turning personal history into film: the Australians at War Archive" was the most interesting as he discussed the television program that developed from that project. He said the 12,000 hours of film material from 2000 veterans was done in their homes, forming a rich repository of memory. The result is at: <http://www.australiansatwarfilmarchive.gov.au>

On Friday evening, we were treated to a refreshing and unusual stage performance "Fast Cars & Tractor Engines" by the Urban Theatre Projects company. The performance was based on a collection of oral history interviews which was worked into an audio script. The performance technique was unusual with the actors, rather than learning the lines, wearing headphones, listening to the interviews and speaking along to the actual edited interviews word for word. Their "characters" were sometimes of different age, background or gender to that of the actors, which at times made the audience "work" to understand it.

The closing plenary session on Sunday had three interesting speakers. Alistair Thomson (United Kingdom), spoke of what he saw as the "Four paradigmatic revolutions in oral history" – 1. the postwar renaissance of memory as a source for 'people's history'; 2. the development, from the late 1970s, of 'post-positivist' approaches to memory and subjectivity; 3. a transformation in perceptions about the role of the oral historian as interviewer and analyst from the late 1980s; and 4. the digital revolution since the late 1990s – transforming how we record, preserve, catalogue, interpret, share and present oral histories.

Catherine Moyo from Zimbabwe spoke about her country's efforts to document the liberation struggle testimonies and Daphne Banai from Israel spoke of her experiences as a member of MachsomWatch

bearing testament to the Israeli occupation – a very moving presentation which took on greater significance, coinciding with the Israeli bombing of Lebanon.

That saw the end of the conference as we all said our reluctant goodbyes, promising to keep in touch with new found friends. The organizers, Janis Wilton, Rosie Block and Paula Hamilton, are to be commended for an excellent and memorable conference.



Alistair Thomson, Rina Benmayor, Catherine Moyo, Daphne Banai



Janis Wilton, Anne Thorpe, Rosie Block

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**Christine Nelson (Canada)** - I'm finding the Conference extremely valuable as someone who's just starting out doing oral history. Every session is important. Every session has a new aspect on the theory or the process of oral history and of course, the best part is meeting people outside the sessions and talking about their projects.

different colleagues from different countries have different approaches and some are more academics and some are more related to social movements and it's interesting.

**Felix Wemheuer (Austria)** - I like the conference very much. It's my first oral history conference. My field is Chinese politics and before I just went to this conference with related to Asia or China. I learned a lot about theory and methodology and it's challenging. There are so many



**Danoye Oguntola-Laguda (Nigeria)** Well, it's been stimulating, interesting and an avenue to open new frontiers to research. I have enjoyed myself so far and I hope the two days left for the Conference will be as interesting and as stimulating as the last two days.



**Toowong Through my Eyes — 1920s to post war era.**  
**by Leigh Chamberlain**

The excerpts printed below are extracted from two volumes of reminiscences published by Toowong and District Historical Society titled *Toowong: Snapshots in time* and *Toowong: The road to everywhere* and also include items from a third manuscript, *Toowong: Down the River Road*, which is ready for publication later this year.

**Toowong in the 1920s: a background:**

Just two years after the ending of World War I, Toowong (an inner city western suburb) was no longer the lightly populated rural community that it had become by the early 1860s. Land in this area was used for farming purposes, such as growing citrus orchards, maize and olives.

However, by the beginning of the 1920s, land usage had changed dramatically. The large farming tracts had been sub-divided over the preceding half a century and vendors were purchasing what today we would regard as an average-sized suburban block, although people were frequently buying two, side by side, with land set aside for the 'veggie' garden, the chook run and to graze the horse and possibly a cow upon.

**The Stories:**

**Len Huxham**, son of the Toowong Town Council Engineer moved with his family to Toowong in 1913. Len, who was about four at the time, then went to the local school. Here is a memory of a childish prank (circa 1919, 1920).

[The sexton's house was] just across the road [from the Brisbane General Cemetery]. I can tell you the story about his son, Don Melville, too. His son was in my class at school. Of course the trams turned there at the cemetery gates, and one night they heard piercing screams coming from outside. Melville and his father raced out. Anyhow, there was a group of terrified women there who had seen a ghost in the cemetery.

They went up there and there was the ghost all right, all in white, waving its arms around with two bright shining eyes. But he said he was as scared as anybody. His father said, 'Come on lad, you don't worry about the dead; it's the live ones you've got to worry about.' So they chased this chap and caught him. He was dressed in this sheet and he had a large-size tin on his head with a candle in it. Melville gave him a clip over the ear or a kick up the backside and that was the end of it. I remember him [the culprit] coming to school and telling us all about it.

**Arthur Hinsbey's** family lived in Bayliss Street, Toowong, then called Isaac Street. This was one of these newly opened suburban areas, developed by local 'Gympie Gold Millionaire', Mr William Davies and his wife, Eliza. Arthur's family moved here from Arthur Street, Red Hill in 1914. Arthur reminisced about what he did as a child:

We had good neighbours down there, you know. [Mother would] talk [to the neighbours] and that... We would often watch the football down at the park. I finished up playing soccer. I used to go down and play my game of soccer and come home instead of seeing another game of soccer, I used to meet my father and go down to the park and end up playing Rugby League. Well, it was Wests Rugby League in those days, and years and years later, it became part of the Toowong Recreation Club...All the sports joined it. They had boxing, wrestling, weightlifting. It was a big concern that — practically every sport imaginable. Just over the years, it sort of died right out.

We used to go to the Church of England Hall at Toowong on Friday nights. There was physical culture and all that. We had boxing gloves over there and used to do a bit of boxing and all that. We did that, gymnastics, on a Friday night over there. But what made it good after a while was they brought the boxing gloves there and we were doing that as well then. It paid off. I was able to look after myself — that was one consolation.

Then later on I took this girl to the old picture show, the Plaza at Paddington. There was my mate, myself and these two girls from Paddington. I can't even remember their names now. This mob behind us kept

kicking our chairs [canvas chairs]. Anyhow, I said to my mate, 'If there's any trouble outside, don't run away'. We got a fair way down [the hill after the picture finished] and I belted two of them. After that we could go up there and say 'good night'.

But when I met Freda [my wife], we used to go to the Paddington pictures. You would get a tram. We used to use a tram quite a lot. They were cheap. One night she wanted to go to the Plaza. I said, 'I don't know' and I told her all about it.

Anyway, we went up and had a good night, for sure, no trouble at all.

Resident, **Shirley Wright**, née Caffyn, grew up in Toowong during the 1930s. Of course, by 1928 the false illusion of prosperity promised in the 1920s was exposed and the slide into depression had gathered momentum:

...And the other interesting thing about the time of the Depression, was the road up to Mount Coot-tha, on the right hand side before you got to the gates<sup>1</sup>, there was a number of shanties, I would say. Some of them were half old galvanised iron tanks and people who had lost their homes resorted to living there. I can remember going with my mother and father and various friends and taking them food because many people who had a job during the Depression felt an obligation to help those who had lost their jobs. There was nothing there — it was vacant land. We'd call it 'squatting' these days, but it was just somewhere where they could establish a bit of a shanty that wasn't too far out of the town, because they only had to walk down to the Cemetery gates and the tram was there. They did things like selling clothes props. They cut down the local saplings and they'd walk around the district and sell clothes props which they'd been able to fashion out of the saplings they cut down. I was never up there much during the day so I don't know what happened then. ...

**Mona Lewis** is a Toowong resident who grew up in rural Queensland. Her daughter died from undiagnosed paint poisoning. She said:

After Dawn died, we came down to stay in Sylvan Road [opposite the Regatta Hotel] with [my husband] Bill's sister for a week. The house has now been demolished to make way for the new apartment complex now occupying the block.

During WWII, torpedoes were unloaded on the river-bank opposite the Regatta Hotel. Yes, we walked down some steps there, yes — wooden steps. There used to be a ferry there. You could go across there to West End. They used to have the Rowing Club there until the flood came too.

They had those big torpedos to fit in submarines. I suppose they were ten feet long. They used to hang out the back of a truck anyway. The Yanks used to come up Sylvan Rd, and come up [to] Mt Coot-tha. You weren't allowed to go up Mt Coot-tha. But the torpedos...great long things, you know, they were about this size around (indicating with arms). They used to load them off at the Regatta Hotel, off a boat and bring them up on a truck and take them up there and store them up there.

**Don Cowley's** wife's family came to Brisbane to live during the Second World War. Don explained a very common practice, and how his wife's family had fared:

During the war it was extremely difficult to get accommodation of any kind. There had been a big increase in population and it was impossible to get timber to build more homes. The Federal government, under its wartime powers, fixed house prices and there was almost a complete absence of sellers. If there was a sale, it was common practice for the solicitors to settle the contract at the contract price and for buyer and seller to get together when cash would change hands for the difference between the fixed price and the market value. The practice was known as 'meeting in the garage'.

For some months the new arrivals were obliged to separate and move in with relatives wherever room could be found. One such 'refuge' was at the corner of Maryvale and Explorer Streets. This had been occupied by Mrs Ellen Griffith, widow of Edward Griffith and grandmother of Pauline and her sisters, for some years before her death in 1935. But during the war her daughter, Miss Maude Griffith, and other family members were still living there, and were able to help the new arrivals with their problem.

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<sup>1</sup> There were gates at the entrance which were locked at night.

A baby boom experienced in the post-war era was caused by the returning servicemen starting new families. This posed new challenges for the local Catholic parish school, St Ignatius, which is located in Kensington Terrace. One of the local teachers at the school explains:

I'm **Sister Mary Whelan** and this is how I came to be associated with Toowong. I came to Australia as a Professed Sister of Mercy from Ireland at the beginning of 1947. My group and I would have come earlier if it weren't for World War II. Transport was of course unavailable and impossible during the war. We were professed as Sisters at home in Ireland and we had done what you would call a 'correspondence course' in spite of all the hazards of war. But we had basically done some teacher-training, Queensland style, before we came, and on arrival, we of course, did our teacher examinations. For two years I taught at Red Hill, The Valley and Rosalie, and in 1950 I was transferred to Toowong.

I was appointed to teach the Scholarship class and the class beneath it. The two classes were in the same classroom and there were about 30 children in the two classes together. Scholarship class was very important because of the financial advantages of passing the Scholarship, which meant a lot to children and their parents in those days. So I had what was a very important responsibility and can remember my trepidation at the challenge of teaching this class and making sure that they passed the Scholarship Examination. I was quite nervous, but I have happy memories of the time as it turns out.

**Rad Guerin** grew up as a 'baby boomer'. His memories show how the post-war 'Baby Boomers' used their leisure time and indicates the development of a new social phenomenon, the growth of a 'Youth sub-culture'. He remembers:

When we went to the Elite Theatre, we used to see the police at intermission time and at the end of the show. I remember when they first showed Marlon Brando's *Wild One*, which was one of the first of the bikie-type movies. The police were there in force at intermission and at the end and they were checking everyone's bike for registration and whether they had baffles in their mufflers.

Really good PR — got everyone's back up! They were like Gestapo checking everyone — and you couldn't have a pillion passenger unless you had been riding for more than twelve months. If you had a pillion you were pulled up. They must have felt really threatened by the sub-culture in the movie. But it was pretty harmless when you look at it now. I can remember one of the local lads came hurtling down with his mufflers off his motorbike past the Elite Theatre — we were all inside. He did that twice — he did it with a motorbike — a Norton. He bought it from the Police Auctions and it used to go! One night, he took the mufflers off that and another time he turned around and put a bigger engine in his Valiant and put extractors on it. We were sitting in the Elite Theatre and we could hear him coming over the hill, down past the Picture Theatre! The coppers just stood there and said 'There goes \_\_\_' and named [the young offender.]

These stories, while individual in the voice which tells the story, each possess a universality. Such is the story of Australia. These individual stories provide much 'meat' for the historian to pour over and are of interest to the general reader as well. Together, these stories provide a wider picture of what life was like in times past.

*Inquiries are welcome. Contact details are ph: 33715000 and les.chamberlain@bigpond.com*

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**Wafa Chafic (Sydney, Australia)** - Well, I'm absolutely overwhelmed. I've actually learned an incredible amount. My overall impression is that as someone who's working with oral history now as something new, and it's only something I did when I was in high school and now having to do it in my 40s and wanting to do it and also having a different hat. I work as a psychologist and as a counsellor and I listen to people's stories all the time through levels of distress and what-have-you. It's just, in a sense, come full circle for me because here I am listening to history and listening to people's stories and people's memories and having a perspective from psychology and counselling and really all it is about human experience and being privileged enough to hear it from different perspectives is wonderful. But really essentially, it's all human experience and based on how people formulate, reconcile, have joy and tribulation over whatever it is in their lives.

## Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History

2006

At the International Oral History Conference in July 2006 the inaugural “Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History” was awarded to the very deserving Beth M. Robertson. The award was presented by Diana Ritch, Hazel de Berg’s daughter. Diana spoke about her mother’s achievements and played extracts from some of her recorded interviews, a large number of which form part of the National Library’s oral history collection. The beautiful award was designed and made by artist Brian Hirst. Below is the citation for Beth’s award:



Beth receives her award (Hazel de Berg in background)



Artist, Brian Hirst with Beth Robertson

Ms Beth M. Robertson has made outstanding contributions to oral history in Australia since joining the committee of the Oral History Association of Australia (South Australia) in 1981, in which she has had a long and distinguished career.

As Oral History Officer at the State Library of South Australia she has been an exceptional advocate for the crucial significance of oral history collections to Australia’s national heritage. She has been an inspiring mentor and her personality and enthusiasm has encouraged many oral historians to deposit their collections with the library. Her tireless efforts have helped ensure that many cultural institutions throughout South Australia and other States have created and preserved oral history collections.

Beth’s much acclaimed *Oral History Handbook* was first published in 1983, and is now in its fifth edition. The Handbook, which helped to create a national standard for Australia, is practical and informative, and has done much to establish the importance of good quality sound recordings. It is used extensively overseas and has been published in a Chinese edition.

Beth has also conducted a number of interviews for the J.D. Somerville collection at the State Library of South Australia including an important one on home births.

Beth is a member of the Australian Sound Recordings Association, where her involvement has helped to ensure the preservation of oral history. She has participated regularly in the biennial national oral history conferences and is a contributor to the Association’s annual journal, which she has indexed twice. Her clear, logical and insightful counsel is widely and deservedly sought.

She was awarded Honorary Life Membership of the Oral History Association of Australia in 2001.

**Master Class – Creative Aspects of Memory**  
**Pat Ryan**

In July I had the privilege of attending the *Creative Aspects of Memory* Master class presented by Alessandro Portelli at the State library building of New South Wales. It was a serendipitous choice of venue; while we gathered downstairs to hear a master storyteller unwrap the layers of time and myth and symbolism that surround human stories, upstairs the library featured a display of the lives and culture of the Eora people who lived around Sydney Harbour at the time of the first white settlement in Sydney.

The central premise of the Master class: that stories are laden with meaning and storytelling is a dynamic and creative process in which storyteller and listener alike play a part, kept the audience spellbound. To illustrate the point Alessandro led us through some of his own experiences as a collector of oral histories-experiences which ranged from a working class area in Northern Italy to the coal mining towns of Kentucky-demonstrating to us along the way that memory is not a repository like a database, and that the act of remembering or forgetting is a creative process by which humans seek to give meaning to events in their lives. When the same story is related in the collective memory and retold in ways that conflict with other accounts, both documentary and oral, we should not discount its veracity but should rather seek to understand the phenomenon by asking the questions, ‘What happened?’ ‘What do people believe happened?’ ‘Why?’

He dealt with the issue of ‘truth’ in storytelling by demonstrating that stories are told and retold over time with each new generation of story tellers adding layers of powerful cultural and religious metaphor to the story. Language changes over time too, phrases are discarded

and new words are added. Thus, all versions of a story are valid because all are meaningful and we must seek to interpret the meaning of stories to the present.

In a little over two hours he led us through an understanding of the relationship that is built between an oral historian and the interviewees - a relationship that can be viewed as a autobiographical performance since both interviewer and interviewee constantly assess each other (body language, accent, hair, skin and eye colour) in the course of an interview. Suppression of the role of the interviewer distorts the narrative which then appears to exist in a vacuum. Inclusion of the questions reveals the bias of the interviewer and gives a context to the interview. There is no such thing as a ‘neutral transcript’ and oral historians must be aware of the ethnocentrism of perception-you hear what your culture allows you to hear. Sometimes cultural familiarity leads us to make assumptions that may be mistaken. Be aware of the reasons for editing a transcript - is it to make it accessible in print format for publication? There are no rules about punctuating for syntax and grammar as opposed to time and rhythm, but a sense of aesthetics may guide the interpreter. The oral historian has an interpretive responsibility to act as a channel and to give ‘voice’ to a narrative. The oral source is the person being recorded; the recording is the transcript; the document is what is produced to make the story accessible to a wider audience. Alessandro asked us what we sought from our interviews - the publication or the process of arriving at it and finished by telling us if we do an interview and are not changed by it, then we have wasted our time.

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**Notice of Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting of the Oral History Association of Australia (Queensland Inc.) will be held from 1.45 pm to 3.45 pm on Saturday 4 November 2006 at the Kelvin Grove campus of QUT. Prior to the meeting, we are pleased to announce that Vicki Warden, Regional Museum Officer, Cobb & Co Museum in Toowoomba will speak to us about the use of oral history in her museum. I urge you all to come along as there are significant issues to be discussed and decided regarding the future of the Association. Please confirm your attendance by emailing Sue Pechey (acting President) on [suepechey@bigpond.com.au](mailto:suepechey@bigpond.com.au) and she will forward to you more information on the venue, the issues involved and forward copies of the minutes of the last AGM.

## **Oral History – its role in Interpretation**

### **Ken Howarth**

This brief article outlines the role Oral History can play both at a professional level and for the visitor.

Oral History has for a long time been perceived as peripheral to Interpretation. Guided walks, signboards, audio tours, demonstrators, and actors - but little mention of oral history - either as a primary research tool or as a way of conveying knowledge. Oral Historians themselves are in part to blame traditionally having concentrated on social history and personal biography. Yet, oral history techniques do have an important role to play for Interpreters and their public.

#### **What is Oral History?**

Oral History is a structured interrogative method of recording memories as sources of information. It is often a very personal process requiring trust and a high-level of professionalism. Oral History as a subject sets out to record 'that which is not written down' – which in reality is considerable. Whilst oral historians strive for accuracy of recall in their interviews, the application of the oral history technique does not necessarily have the same objective. For example, in Reminiscence work (especially with older people) the primary objective may be to encourage socialising or 'raising the quality of a person's well-being' - albeit sometimes fleetingly.

Oral History has important role to play in engaging communities in understanding their own histories. This new climate of awareness in the community can usefully support the work of professionals especially in the development of tourism, heritage, natural history conservation, museums, and community cohesion. A form developed here in Wales by HR (Conwy) is Affective Oral History which uses the *techniques* of the oral historian to bring about change. The 'useful'

recording of memories is seen as a secondary function. The primary purpose is get people talking and socialising with one another in a friendly meaningful way. For example, it has been particularly successful in developing English language skills and removing barriers between asylum seekers, refugees and others.

So what is the role of Oral History in Interpretation? There are arguably two distinct parts.

#### **Part One Oral History for professionals - Interpreters and planners etc.**

Oral History is a neglected tool for many Interpreters and Planners. Yet, it should be seen as an essential way of gathering first-stage research information. This level of oral history is not casual and certainly should not be left to untrained volunteers. It is a professional tool intended to solicit information for a variety of uses ranging from understanding country houses through to chronicling the effects of climate change.

In brief, some of the applications include:

- Soundscapes. We are a very visually orientated society. In the past soundscapes were extremely important and should not be ignored by Interpreters. How have soundscapes changed? What was the soundscape of Blaenau Ffestiniog at the height of slate quarrying? What the soundscape of great country house? Sound is a vital component in understanding people, communities and their values, as well as in some aspects of archaeology. Soundscapes are an essential component of sense-of-place mapping.
- Information capture – processes etc. The recording of processes, crafts and skills using a particular combination of

photography and oral history is important if those processes and skills are to be re-created for the visitor, or in training demonstrators or in training much-needed apprentices.

- Demonstrator training. The use of former workers to explain sites and take visitors around is commonplace. However there will come a time when those workers will no longer be around. Specially structured Oral History interviews (audio and video) can then be used to train new staff.
- Object interpretation. Objects – such as tools – can often form the focus of an interview and act as an aide memoir for the informant.
- Site interpretation. On the ground Oral History creates an instant Interpretive experience. This method is usually combined with photography, and video. Examples of its use would include country houses, estates, industrial sites, extreme weather event information, changes in vegetation, structures etc.
- Photographic interpretation. Oral History methods have recently been developed in which photographs are interpreted using a grid reference system.
- Archive, map and plan interpretation. Recently developed methods use oral history techniques can be used to understand archives – such as maps, estate plans, diaries and other works. Surrogate exploration is another new technique used to understand maps and plans.

## **Part Two Oral History for the public - as a way of conveying knowledge**

### Using Oral History

- Audio replay units. Oral History material can be used in a variety of locations from museum galleries through to outdoor audio replay stations such as the U-turn system

developed by Black Box A/V at Port Talbot. These allow oral history recordings to be heard actually on site bringing a sense of reality. (A recent project in which HR (Conwy) was involved was in the sandstone quarries of the Northern Pennines where U-turns were installed to bring back the voices of quarrymen describing how the quarries were worked.)

- Internet. Snippets of Oral History interviews can be used on site websites.
- Working with Older People – Reminiscence work.
- Audio CD production for resale and education.
- Books – such as ‘*A Town remembers Memories of Wartime Abergavenny*’.
- Interpretive panels using quotations.
- Audio tours especially for the visually impaired
- Village trails. Oral History is used to identify meaningful things in the village. Local people share memories of the kind of things not usually obvious to the casual observer – such as the site of a murder, historical event, or unusual feature such as a glacial erratic as well as childhood and work experiences.

### **Oral History in the Welsh context.**

Heritage Recording (Conwy) has helped to develop a number of oral history projects throughout Wales. Each project has been different and in many cases the new approaches have been encouraged by Cymal, the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries in Wales.

Briefly, Pontypool Museum has looked at ways objects in the museum’s collections can be interpreted using oral history techniques, at Abergavenny the soundscape and relevance of the local market was explored. At Ruthin Gaol Museum and Archive, oral history was seen as a way of understanding the prison and its use during the Second World War as a munitions factory employing many local women. At Brymbo near Wrexham, former steel workers have such a strong sense-of-place they are

recording their own story before it is too late. A bilingual project at Llanrwst Almshouses Museum included an interpretation of features and wildlife of Gwydir Forest by a long-term resident. At Trefriw the former steamer quay was recalled and explained by another local person; at Dolgarrog one of the last eye-witnesses to the Dolgarrog Dam disaster of 1925 related his experiences.

### The future

A recent consultancy document drawn up for Ynys Mon Council by HRS (UK) has broken new ground by suggesting that Oral History could be the catalyst to bring disparate communities on the Island of Ynys Mon (Anglesey) together in common purpose – by they themselves Interpreting their own lives and communities proactively using museum, archive and other sources as part of Life-Long Learning. The use, preservation and recording of the Welsh Language and culture is seen as a key part of the strategy as is the identification of hitherto unknown or unrecognised sites, objects, and structures (such as shipwrecks). The people would be self-empowered to undertake (with professional guidance) their own Interpretation and the creation of recordings, transcriptions, and archives in association with the local council. This is very much in the flavour of the well-established European concept of eco-museums, where ‘Interpretive empowerment’ of the local people is vital. The buildings, rocks, plants, animals, archaeology, industrial archaeology, language and culture are seen as a ‘museum without walls’ but without the implication that museums are static, boring and stuffy.

Oral History as a professional tool for Interpreters, and as a way of conveying information to the public still has a long way to

go. Wales is leading the way in the use of these new approaches. The Internet, proper archiving and access to recordings are ways of ensuring material is not just preserved but is also accessible. The need for a professional approach to training and recording Oral History specifically for the Professional Interpreter has never been greater.

### Contact information

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Lesley Jenkins and Ken Howarth at Penryn Castle, Wales. All that food is made of rubber!!



## CALL FOR PAPERS

The Oral History Association of Australia (Qld Inc.) invites proposals for papers and presentations for its 2007 National Conference to be held in a delightful riverside setting at Riverglenn Conference Centre, Indooroopilly, Brisbane from 27 to 30 September 2007. The theme of the conference is: Old Stories New Ways. Proposals that relate to mediations and new work on the following are encouraged:

- interpreting story;
- working with community;
- understanding memory;
- oral history and independent practitioners; and
- addressing changing technologies.

Proposals on other topics are also welcomed. The Conference Committee invites proposals from oral history practitioners in a wide variety of disciplines and settings, including academic institutions, museums, historical societies, archives and libraries, community organisations, media professionals, independent historians and oral historians, arts workers and reminiscence practitioners. We also encourage proposals from students. Sessions may address the many uses of oral history in media such as film, video, play back and other theatre, radio, exhibitions and multi media. Similarly, while sessions may be organised in a panel format, we encourage workshop proposals, media and performance oriented presentations and other formats that go beyond the boundaries of conventional conference presentation.

If you are interested, please send us a single page proposal (email [info@ohaaqld.org.au](mailto:info@ohaaqld.org.au) or OHAA (Qld Inc., PO Box 12213 George Street, Brisbane Qld 4003) including an outline of your paper and the following details:

- name (with your family name in CAPITAL letters)
- affiliation
- postal address
- email address
- phone and fax numbers
- relevant theme
- whether an individual paper, a thematic panel, a workshop proposal, an exhibition or a dramatic piece.

### **DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: 28 February 2007**

Acceptance or rejection of proposals 16 March 2007.

Full papers by email required by 30 May 2007.

For further details visit the website of the Oral History Association of Australia- Qld Inc – ([www.ohaaqld.org.au](http://www.ohaaqld.org.au))

**IOHA CULTURAL TOUR TO CANBERRA – 17-18 July 2006**  
**Suzanne Mulligan**



We set out in our mini Murray's Bus from outside the Conference venue for our tour hosted by the National Library. Our host and tour guide for the bus journey was Kevin Bradley (Curator of Oral History and Folklore, Director of Sound Preservation and Technical Services, National Library). Tour guests were Jim and Toni Lane with their granddaughter Miranda, from Gary, Indiana, USA; Funso Afolayan from the USA (originally from Nigeria); Terry from Scotland, Dr Wasu from India; and Soo Choon Lye from Singapore.

Our driver, Rick, took us through Sydney and we headed south, stopping at the historic town of Berrima for a scrumptious morning tea. As we neared Canberra, our overseas visitors were thrilled to spot a kangaroo jumping through a field.



We arrived at the National Library of Australia ([www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au)) to meet Dianne Dahlitz (Senior Librarian, Oral History and Folklore) and Shelly Grant (Manager, Sound Preservation and Technical Services). Our hosts greeted us with a generous lunch.



Following lunch, we were given a tour of the Oral History and Folklore Branch and the Sound Preservation and Technical Services areas. Kevin Bradley showed us the climate-controlled file storage areas; their sound restoration areas; and the interviewing studios. It was fascinating to see all the old sound equipment being used to digitally copy items that had used that equipment. Some items were in such poor repair that we could only marvel at the patience required to restore them to a standard that allowed them to be heard once again.



From there we walked to Old Parliament House ([www.oph.gov.au](http://www.oph.gov.au)) where we were given a tour of that historic building. The Press Gallery's office area was most interesting as we saw the cramped conditions in which journalists worked to get their stories out. In the old Press Gallery itself, there are "telephones" set up for you to pick up and listen to the voices of prominent journalists of the time, such as Alan Reid. We also saw the Prime Minister's office before having a lovely afternoon tea in the Old Parliament House restaurant.

We then visited the National Archives ([www.naa.gov.au](http://www.naa.gov.au)) where there were a number of interesting exhibitions including "Summers Past" featuring iconic photographs of Australian summers; and "Charters of Our Nation" showing the significant documents that contributed to the evolution of Australia's nationhood. We were shown how to research the wealth of material housed in the Archives, including immigration and military records.

After a very busy day, we were taken to University House ([www.anu.edu.au/unihouse](http://www.anu.edu.au/unihouse)), our accommodation for the night. Our National Library hosts took us to dinner at the Sabayon Restaurant in Canberra City where we enjoyed a delicious meal and lively discussion.

Next morning, driver Rick, was ready to take us out for another day. Our first stop was the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Studies



([www.aiatsis.gov.au](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au)). This was not an institution I was familiar with, so it was interesting to learn about it. The Institute is a centre for researching past and present indigenous lifestyles. It includes a Native Title unit, Family History unit and Audiovisual Archives. The Family History unit has an important role in reuniting members of the Stolen Generations with their families. The Audiovisual Archives is working to digitize its collection to make it more accessible.



We went on to the National Film and Sound Archive ([www.nfsa.afc.gov.au](http://www.nfsa.afc.gov.au)) for a wicked morning tea before being shown a “collage” movie featuring scenes from the Archives collection covering significant Australian historical and cinematic moments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

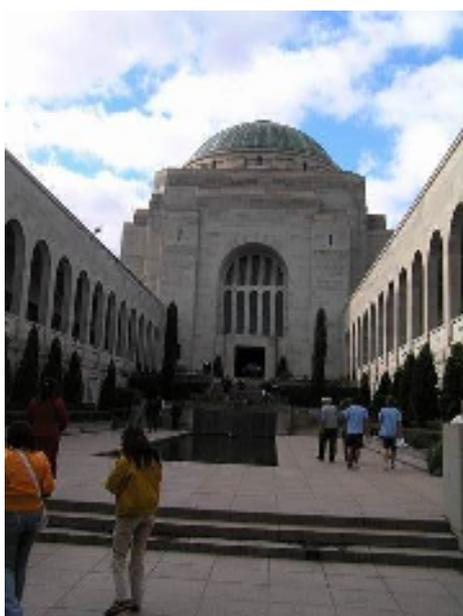
Graham Shirley gave us a tour of the “behind the scenes” work being done to digitize old movies, television programs, records, tapes and other media.



We were then taken to the National Museum of Australia ([www.nma.gov.au](http://www.nma.gov.au)) for a whirlwind “taste” of the vast collection the Museum has to offer visitors. It was very well patronised with a number of school children enjoying the exhibits. There was a diverse range of exhibits featuring aboriginal life; colonial Australia; immigration; Australian icons; evolution of computers; Australian “characters”; outback life and much more. After the tour, we had some free time to lunch and continue to explore the Museum.



Our bus then drove us to the top of Mount Ainslea for a spectacular view of Canberra and surrounds while our hosts pointed out significant landmarks.



We moved on to the Australian War Memorial ([www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au)) for a very informative guided tour by former soldier, Terry Ballantyne. This was another building heavily populated by school groups, showing what a great educational centre it is. Terry showed us the Wall of Honour and took us through the World War I section telling us stories and anecdotes about individual soldiers, which helped us see these exhibits as representing real people.

That is where the tour ended for me as I stayed on Canberra for a couple of days. I was very glad to meet such an interesting group of people and, as an Australian, I was also proud of the institutions that we visited and that the overseas visitors enjoyed them. The team at the National Library did a wonderful job planning the program, liaising with the other institutions and ensuring all of us were made so welcome wherever we went. The tour was memorable, informative and entertaining.

Contributions are invited from Australia and overseas for publication in the  
**OHAA Journal No. 29, 2007**  
***Old Stories, New Ways:***  
***More Challenge(r)s in Oral History***

**Contributions** are invited in the following 3 categories:

**A** Papers to be submitted for peer review, and non-refereed articles on the following themes  
(*limit: 5,500 words*):

- Papers addressing themes at the OHAA's Biennial National Conference, September 2007, Brisbane, *Old Stories, New Ways* (\*See note below)
- Issues arising from the 2006 International Oral History Conference *Dancing With Memory: Oral History and its Audiences*
- Ethical, methodological, legal and technology challenges being met in the practice, collection and usage of oral history both in Australia and abroad
- Critiques/analysis of strategies and protocols in projects, the perceived value and meanings attributed by oral historians to their work, or the way in which projects and agencies handle their involvement

**Peer Review**

If requested by authors, papers in this category may be submitted for assessment by peer review at the discretion of the Publication Committee. However, note two important points:

- Papers for referral must show a high standard of scholarship, and reflect a sound appreciation of current and historical issues on the topics discussed
- Deadline for submission of papers for peer review is 27 February 2007, earlier than the deadline for other material

**B** Articles describing specific projects, the information gained through them, and may discuss important outcomes or practice issues identified in the process (*limit: 4,000 words*)

**C** Reviews of books and other publications in Australia or elsewhere that are of interest to the oral history community (*approximately 1,000 words*)

Photographs, drawings and other illustrations are particularly welcome, and may be accepted for any of the above categories of contribution.

**Deadlines**

Papers for peer review: **27 February 2007**

All other paper, reports and reviews: **30 April 2007**

An 'Information for Contributors to OHAA Journal' document will be available on the OHAA web-site in late 2006, which **all contributors must obtain**. For information before this, contact the Editor, OHAA Journal, c/- OHAA President, email: rblock@sl.nsw.gov.au.

**\* NOTE:** The 2007 OHAA Journal will be issued in time for the OHAA Biennial National Conference in Brisbane, September 2007: 'Old Stories, New Ways'. Papers accepted by the conference organising committee for presentation at the conference may also be offered by authors for publication in the *Journal*, but only if they are **separately submitted** by authors to the *Journal* editor by the due date. Papers will be accepted for publication in the *Journal* at the discretion of the Publication Committee.