

Scottish Oral History Centre

<https://www.strath.ac.uk/humanities/schoolofhumanities/history/scottishoralhistorycentre/>

Annual Report 2019

The SOHC operates as **an interdisciplinary research centre for oral history and as a knowledge exchange hub between academic and community oral history**. We have had another very busy, exciting and productive year supporting oral history projects, providing training, running oral history based research projects, supervising dissertation, Masters and PhD students and responding to a wide range of enquiries on aspects of oral history. Our research activities and academic and knowledge exchange collaborations have expanded significantly and are briefly noted below. The Centre currently has 11 affiliated staff in Humanities at UoS, 16 postgraduate research students deploying oral history methodologies and a wider network of 28 external SOHC research associates affiliated to the SOHC.

Current Affiliated Staff

Dr Eleanor Bell (2019)
Prof Phil Cooke
Dr Matt Eisler
Dr Laura Kelly
Dr Yvonne McFadden (2019)
Prof Arthur McIvor (Dir.)
Dr Emma Newlands
Dr Jesse Olszynko-Gryn (2019)
Prof. Matt Smith
Dr Natalia Telepneva (2019)
Dr Angela Turner

Oral History Training, Workshops and Seminars

The SOHC has again been involved in an extensive programme of **training, CPD and support for local community projects** in Scotland and Northern Ireland delivered by **Dr Alison Chand, Dr Lorna Barton and Arthur McIvor**. These events have included oral history training for the Workers' Educational Association in Glasgow (Springburn) and local community projects in Callander, Falkirk and Inverclyde and the Causeway Glens Museum Service in Co. Antrim. Participant feedback has been excellent. The Antrim group noted how the training had a 'profound impact' on them leading to the initiation of a major oral history project deploying the 'exacting ethical standards' from the training. Additionally, the SOHC

has delivered over the past year four 'Introduction to Oral History' training days, open to the general public, professionals and to students looking to get training for undertaking oral-history based research, including for their UG dissertations. The SOHC also provides GDPR compliant 'template' informed consent statements and recording agreement forms on its website for the use of the oral history community, researchers and students.

The SOHC is also recognised for the provision of oral history training by the **Scottish Graduate School for the Arts and Social Sciences**. For the past three years the Centre (McIvor and **Lorna Barton**) has designed and delivered (in collaboration with SOHC Research Affiliate **Dr Erin Jessee** at Glasgow University) a 2.5 day oral history theory and practice training programme for the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Social Sciences in their 'Spring into Methods' PGR training programme. Podcasts have been produced from the presentations. The session for this coming year will run through 5-7 May 2020 (converted to online training as a consequence of the Covid-19 situation).

In 2019 we organised a PG oral history conference (June 2019) and also began planning for our next biennial **Oral History Summer Institute** – a collaboration between the Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, Montreal (**Steven High**) and the SOHC. The COHDS will be hosting this in Montreal and we currently have 12 staff and postgraduates whose papers have been accepted and intend to travel to the conference for a series of 25 stimulating papers, audio trail talks and other events around the theme of 'gender and oral history'. This was planned for June 2020 but has been rescheduled for summer 2021 as a consequence of the Covid-19 situation.

A series of **other workshops and seminars** have been organised at the Centre over the past year, including the monthly SOHC seminar series, organised by SOHC postgraduates **Kristin Hay and Rory Stride**. Unfortunately plans to host our next visiting professor to the SOHC (**Prof Christine Walley, Anthropologist at MIT, Boston**) has had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus emergency. Prof Walley's visit will be rescheduled at a later date.

The Centre also ran its **Work and Community Placement in Oral History class** over Jan-April 2019 which builds and extends collaboration between the Centre and Scottish museums, community groups and archives. This was taught by McIvor and **Lorna Barton**. We have agreed oral history placements in a wide range of workplaces to gain practical experience of interviewing and the running of oral history projects, including at a number of Glasgow and Edinburgh Museums, the Scottish Mining Museum, Summerlee Industrial Museum, Clydebank Museum and the Scottish Jewish Archives. This is what one partner (North Lanarkshire Museums) has said about the impact of the oral history work placement programme:

A key outcome of the student placements has been the capture and preservation of memories relating to the industrial heritage of North Lanarkshire and beyond. All interviews are available to researchers and several audio excerpts have been used in temporary exhibitions at Summerlee Museum and North Lanarkshire Heritage Centre... This has ensured that CultureNL is able to understand and adhere to best practice in undertaking, preserving and interpreting memories and the voice, not least in relation to the ethical practice of oral history, before and since GDPR 2018... The work of Prof McIvor and our ongoing collaboration with the SOHC has been invaluable to CultureNL Museums in informing our oral history procedures and practice, and in contributing towards the development and use of our archive.

This third year and honours option class is one element in an oral history pathway for students at Strathclyde University sandwiched between *Oral History Theory and Practice* and the Masters level class *Advanced Oral History*. **Dr Yvonne McFadden** joined us in 2019 and has been contributing to our PG oral history teaching, including delivering sessions to the MSc Historical Studies (research methods) and the MSc Gender Studies programmes.

Working Lives & Corporate Oral History

The SOHC has continued to build its relationship with several corporate funders, undertaking oral-history interview based projects for several companies, including in 2019 Diageo, Chivas and Irish Distillers (Cork). This brings a valuable external income stream into the SOHC and the Faculty. SOHC Research Associate **Dr David Walker** has been the researcher/interviewer on these projects which have focused on the working lives of distillery workers. The research has accumulated over 130 interviews which are now archived and in many cases accessible to researchers, including the Diageo oral history collection at the SOHC Archive in the University Archives and Special Collections. Irish Distillers' Archivist Carol Quinn has noted: 'the interviews have enhanced the Archive in several ways – adding colour and emotion to the written record', whilst the Diageo Archivist has commented:

For us, the importance of our work with the Scottish Oral History Centre cannot be overstated. Many of the people interviewed have been pioneers within our industry, and capturing their experiences as they near retirement, especially when much of their early careers have not been well represented in our paper records, has meant simply that their knowledge will not be lost for future generations to learn from. We have a gap in the history of our Scotch Whisky Distilleries and our work with the Scottish Oral History Centre is of huge significance to Diageo as it allows us to build a complete picture of what

it was like to grow up, live and work in Scotland's whisky industry. We rely on this heritage to inspire much of what the business does today.

The SOHC Archive

The SOHC interview archive, now managed by the University Archives and Special Collections, has continued to grow with new accessions of material from oral history projects. For a full catalogue listing see <http://atom.lib.strath.ac.uk/sohc-archive>.

University Archivist Victoria Peters has written:

As a result of McIvor's influence, Archives and Special Collections is now recognised as the main repository in the UK of archives documenting the worldwide struggle to raise awareness of the dangers associated with exposure to asbestos. McIvor's work has been equally influential in relation to the preservation of the intangible evidence of oral history interviews since 2013 and his work has been very important in relation to our thinking around industrial heritage and making such resources accessible to the wider public in recent years. As director of the Scottish Oral History Centre, he has developed a unique and growing archive of oral history recordings focussing on the history of work, occupational health and the social impact of de-industrialisation.

SOHC Research students

The SOHC has also added to a strong and growing cohort of Masters and PhD students this year and several SOHC postgraduates have recently graduated. Our postgraduates continue to inspire and energise us with their pioneering, reflective and wonderfully innovative approaches to their doctoral research. A special mention should go to those who were awarded their PhDs this past year: **Lucy Brown** (cultural representations of deindustrialisation); **Helen Foster** (a Creative Writing PhD including a novel based on an oral history collection of lace workers); **Lorna Barton** (on an oral history of trans lives in Denver, USA - and a Neil Rafeek Oral History Prize-winner); and **Anni Donaldson** (domestic violence in Glasgow). Our congratulations also go to recent graduate Helen Foster, on her subsequent appointment to a post as Researcher and Outreach Officer at the East Midlands Oral History Archive at Leicester University.

The wide range of oral history research projects currently being undertaken by PhD students in the SOHC include **Alice Williamson** (the lesbian community in Scotland), **James Ferns** and **Rory Stride** (both working on aspects of deindustrialisation and memory in West Scotland), **Kristin Hay** (birth control and

abortion in Scotland), **Stuart Bradwel** (Diabetes and the consultative relationship), **Alex Chandler** (masculinities and film in Scotland), **Marion Henry** (a co-tutelle with Sciences Po, Paris working on music and social class in the British coalfields), **Martin Conlon** (memory and heritage in Glasgow dock communities), **Rachel Meach** (Diabetes in Britain and the USA), **Iain Ferguson** (a social history of Acne), **David Evans** (breakaway trade unions), **Jan Brownfoot** (women and gender relations in post-war in Malaya), **Georgia Granger** (an oral history of vasectomy), **James Dougan** (Deindustrialisation and mental health), **Kate Wilson** (an oral history of community literature in the 1980s) and **Jasmine Wood** (Disability and Intimacy in the Lives of Wounded British SWW Servicemen).

SOHC Staff Activities

Centre staff have continued to pursue innovative oral-history based research in the past year. Amongst our activities we can report the following:

Dr Laura Kelly has completed the oral history research for her four-year Wellcome Trust-funded project, Contraception and Modern Ireland, c.1922-92. This has included over 100 interviews with 'ordinary' men and women born in Ireland before 1955 and 35 interviews with activists who campaigned for and against the legalisation of contraception. Kelly is currently writing a monograph based on this work and will be presenting a keynote lecture at the Society for the Social History of Medicine 50th anniversary conference in Swansea in July 2020. Two articles on this research were published in *Irish Historical Studies* (November 2019) and *Medical History* (April 2020). Kelly is currently working on a new project funded by the Carnegie Trust on pro-life and pro-choice activism in the Republic of Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s which draws on approximately 40 oral history interviews.

Yvonne McFadden has been working on a community based oral history of the transition from Inner City Glasgow to Easterhouse in the 1950s and 1960s. This project is working with a group who wish to document this key moment in Glasgow's housing history of slum clearance in the post-war years, focusing on health, childhood, play, housing and environment. The outputs will be an exhibition, book, academic journal article and public engagement workshops. Along with Women's History Scotland and Glasgow University's Centre for Gender History, Yvonne is organising a series of events around the 50th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act in May 2020. This will include a screening, knowledge exchange day and a mini oral history capture. The oral history capture will provide data for a grant application for a project on Gender and Work. She is currently writing a journal article based on her PhD thesis on the methodology of interviewing couples. She will present this as a paper to the SOHC-COHDS Summer Institute in Montreal, June 2020. In July 2020, she will give a paper to the UK Social History Society conference entitled, 'Setting

Up Home: Social Networks, Gender and Consumption in Post-War suburban Britain' based on her oral history interviews from her thesis.

Arthur McIvor gave a keynote presentation on 'Oral history, work and the body' to the UK Oral History Society Annual Conference, Swansea, 5-6 July 2019. Amongst several oral-history based publications he co-edited a special edition of the *Journal of the Social History of Medicine and Health* (vol IV, no. 1, June 2019) on coal miners' health in Asia, North America and Europe. He is writing a book on the occupational health crisis in the Second World War in Britain (drawing upon recent oral history interviews of reserved occupation workers and existing archived Home Front veteran interviews) and continues to work on an oral history of deindustrialisation and health. He has recently been awarded £141,000 by the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership / East Ayrshire Council to initiate a major community-based oral history project on deindustrialisation in mining communities in Ayrshire. This new oral history project will begin in the summer 2020. McIvor is also currently collaborating with an international team of researchers (led by Steven High, Montreal) in an oral-history based project investigating the transnational social, cultural and political impacts of deindustrialisation.

Matthew Smith has been working on two oral history projects. The first, funded by an AHRC Early Career Fellowship, is on the history of social psychiatry and has concentrated on interviewing mental health professionals. The second, funded by a Wellcome Trust Seed Award, focussed on LGBT athletes and mental health. Dr Dan Callwood conducted the interviews for this project, which resulted in an article for *The Lancet*, co-written by Callwood and Smith.

Arthur McIvor, SOHC Director, University of Strathclyde.