

Scottish Oral History Centre

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

Annual Report 2020

The SOHC operates as **an interdisciplinary research centre for oral history and as a knowledge exchange hub between academic and community oral history**. Over 2020 our work – as with almost all oral history centres/projects – was adversely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, with the suspension of face-to-face interviewing and closing of archives.

This led to the postponement of some existing research projects (such as the Distillery Lives work with Diageo and Pernod-Ricard) and delayed start-up (such as the East Ayrshire CCLP/HLF 'Lost Villages' project and **Jesse Olszynko-Gryn's** new AHRC project on the pregnancy testing controversy). The SOHC/COHDS biennial Summer Institute conference due to take place in Montreal in June 2020 was abandoned and the SOHC seminar programme suspended. CPD / community oral history training was also severely disrupted, as were the oral interviewing plans of many of our students.

Responses and adaptations:

The SOHC moved quickly in Spring 2020 to convert all its training provision to online delivery, mostly via the Zoom platform. By May 2020 all the usual SOHC CPD training was being delivered online, new training provision on remote online interviewing was introduced and the SiM oral history training for the SGSAH/SS was delivered entirely online, using their new 'Social' platform.

Through the SOHC we thus continued to provide training, run oral history based research projects and supervise UG and Masters dissertations and PGR projects, moving interviewing to online (via Zoom, Skype or phone), and responding to a wide range of enquiries on aspects of oral history, including remote interviewing. The suspended SOHC seminar programme was re-established online in semester 1, 2020-21, and the suspended Summer Institute moved to online for June 2021.

A major success in 2020 was the winning of £174k in funding from East Ayrshire Council (financed by HLF and Historic Environment Scotland) for **the 'Lost Villages' oral history project**. After a long delay due to Covid, interviews for the project Research Associate were conducted in Dec 2020 and Scottish oral historian **Dr Yvonne MacFadden** appointed on a 0.6 research contract. The adjusted project duration will run for two years from 1 March 2021 to end Feb 2023.

SOHC staff have also contributed significantly to REF2021, with strong publications and the two History Impact Case Studies (McIvor; Smith) both involving extensive oral history based research / impact. With McIvor and Bartie's PICS in 2014 this means that 4 out of 5 of the PICS submitted in REF2014 and REF2021 had strong oral history components.

Current Affiliated Staff

The Centre currently has 11 affiliated staff in Humanities at UoS, 16 postgraduate research students deploying oral history methodologies and a wider network of 32 external SOHC research affiliates linked to the SOHC.

Dr Eleanor Bell
Prof Phil Cooke

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

Scottish oral historian Dr Yvonne McFadden joined us in 2019 and has been a vital asset, making a key contribution to the SOHC. Yvonne is involved in research and a wide range of oral history activities, including our UG and PG oral history teaching/training, delivering sessions to the MSc Historical Studies (research methods) and the MSc Gender Studies programmes. Yvonne has also appeared on BBC Scotland's *Time Travels* show talking about her oral history research.

Oral History Training, Workshops and Seminars

Changes made over 2020 noted above – including converting to online distance learning provision. One positive here is that this has opened SOHC training up to a wider market, with students attending from much farther afield in the UK and abroad (data from RKET).

Perhaps also worth a mention here is the new FutureLearn (2020) MOOC, 'Working Lives in the Coal Mines', taught by Profs McIvor and Blair and which includes an oral history component. Over 4,000 students undertook this MOOC over three cycles in 2020.

Working Lives & Corporate Oral History

Currently suspended until Covid restrictions lifted. Corporate clients do not want 'inferior' quality interviews via online (eg Zoom) provision.

The SOHC has continued to build its relationship with several corporate funders, undertaking oral-history interview based projects for several companies since 2013, including 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.

Transnational oral history research

DePOT project: In 2020 the SOHC started a seven year partnership on an international research project 'Deindustrialization and the Politics of our Time' (DePOT), funded by a major SSHRC (Canada) award (£2m) and headed by Prof Steven High (COHDS, Montreal). This is an innovative inter-disciplinary collaboration across an international team of researchers in an oral-history based project investigating the transnational social, cultural and political impacts of deindustrialisation in North America and Europe. It aims to re-shape Deindustrialisation Studies. The project runs over 2020-27 and will result in at least 8 books, commissioned by Univ. of Toronto Press, as well as a major new 'project commons' oral history archive. The funding incorporates support for postgraduates and early career researchers with an aim to nurturing the new and emerging generation of deindustrialisation oral historians.

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. The Centre partnered with Edinburgh University historian Dr Jake Blanc in a successful funding bid to the Royal Society of Edinburgh which will bring copies of recorded interviews with Brazilian labour and human rights activists to the Archive when the project is completed in 2021-22.

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.

New arrivals include:

Rebekah Chatellier (first supervisor Mclvor) - new overseas PhD student from New Orleans, USA, working on a comparative oral history of deindustrialisation in textile communities in the USA and Scotland since the 1970s (links to SSHRC DePOT transnational project).

Aaron Sheridan (first supervisor Matt Smith). Oral history of council housing, Edinburgh. This is an important success resulting from Prof Matt Smith securing matched PhD Studentship funding from Castle Rock Edinvar for this PhD (external funding value c £30k)

Colin Moore (first supervisor Jesse Olszynko-Gryn). Aids crisis in Scotland (UoS/Edin).

Shannon Combs-Bennett ? (Sup: Mark Ellis/Tahita McCabe) Geneological societies, USA.

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 Kirstin Hay who has appeared on BBC Scotland's *Time Travels* show twice talking about her oral-history based research (see below). Also to those who were awarded their PhDs this past year: **Lorna Barton** (on an oral history of trans lives in Denver, USA - and a Neil Rafeek Oral History Prize-winner); **David Evans, Stuart Bradwel; Iain Ferguson and Alex Chandler**. And to **Martin Conlon** on submission of his MPhil thesis. Our congratulations also go to SOHC Research Associate (and ex-PhD student) **Andy Clark**, on his recent success (Dec 2020) getting a three year ESRC New Investigator Award (at the Oral History Unit, Newcastle Univ.).

The wide range of oral history research projects currently being undertaken by PhD students in the SOHC include:

Kristin Hay (birth control and abortion in Scotland)

Marion Henry (a co-tutelle with Sciences Po, Paris working on music and social class in the British coalfields)

Rachel Meach (diabetes in Britain and the USA)

Jan Brownfoot (women and gender relations in post-war in Malaya)

Georgia Granger (an oral history of vasectomy)

James Ferns and **Rory Stride** (both working on aspects of deindustrialisation and memory in West Scotland, James on steel and shipbuilding communities, Rory on women and factory closures in textiles and clothing)

James Dougan (deindustrialisation and mental health)

Alice Williamson (the lesbian community in Scotland)

Kate Wilson (an oral history of community literature in the 1980s)

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 work we can report the following:

Dr Eleanor Bell has been researching/working on her monograph on Scottish literary magazine culture from the 1960s to the 1990s. This contains a strong oral history element, drawing on her interviews with editors, writers, and other key contributors to these publications. Drawing on these interviews, she has recently published a chapter on feminist interventions in Scottish literary magazine culture in *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1940s-2000s: The Postwar and Contemporary Period* (EUP).

Dr Laura Kelly is currently completing her monograph based on her Wellcome Trust-funded project 'Contraception and Modern Ireland, c.1922-92'. The monograph is under contract with Cambridge University Press and draws on extensive oral history research. She is also continuing to undertake oral history interviews as part of her Carnegie Trust project on 'Pro-life and Pro-choice activism in the Republic of Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s'.

Yvonne McFadden featured in the recent series of BBC Radio Scotland's *Time Travels* discussing oral history research on consumption and home. She chaired and organised an event online to mark 50 years since the passing of the Equal Pay Act with Women's History Scotland and the Centre for Gender History at University of Glasgow in November 2020 which focused on hearing women's experiences of Equal Pay. This can be listened to [here](#) Yvonne will talk to the University of the Third Age on oral history of women's work within the home in March 2021 and she is to present at a paper on oral history methodology to the online SOHC-COHDS Summer Institute in June 2021. In July 2021, 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. Her ongoing oral history project working on the transition from Inner City Glasgow to Easterhouse has been on hold due to the pandemic but plans to resume over the summer 2021. From March 2021, she will be working with Prof Mclvor on the community based oral history of the miner's rows in Ayrshire. The project website can be found here: <https://www.thelostvillages.co.uk/>

Arthur Mclvor: As mentioned above, the Centre Director was awarded funding (£141,000) from the Coalfield Communities Landscape Partnership / East Ayrshire Council to undertake

a major community-based oral history project on the social history of the miners' rows and deindustrialisation in mining communities in Ayrshire. Delayed by Covid, this new oral history project runs for two years from 1 March 2021. **Dr Yvonne McFadden** is the newly appointed Research Associate (0.6) on the project. McFadden and Mclvor will co-author the resulting book from the research (to be published in 2023). Mclvor was also appointed to the DePOT project (see above) Coordinating Committee and is co-organiser of the gender strand (one of six), which will result in one of the co-edited project books (Univ. Toronto Press, c2024/5). His publications in 2020 include 'Working-class studies, oral history and industrial illness', in Michele Fazio, Christie Launius, and Tim Strangleman, eds, *The Routledge International Handbook of Working Class Studies*. (2020), and 'Guardians of Workers' Bodies? Trade Unions and the History of Occupational Health and Safety' in a special issue on the history of occupational health and safety, *Labour History* (Australia), vol 119 (Nov 2020), pp. 1-31. Mclvor and the SOHC were also featured in *Le Temps des Ouvriers* (*Worker's Times*). dir. Stan Neumann (ICI Films) broadcast on the French/German public TV channel ARTE (28 April, 2020). <https://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/RC-019317/le-temps-des-ouvriers/>. Mclvor is currently researching / writing a book, *Jobs and Bodies*, on the oral history of occupational health in post-war Britain (for Bloomsbury Academic, Sept. 2022).

Jesse Olszynko-Gryn officially launched in collaboration with the University of Heidelberg a new AHRC research project with a significant oral-history component: 'Risky hormones, pregnant patients and the contested science of birth defects: the rise and fall of hormone pregnancy tests in the FRG and UK, 1950-81'. As stated above, the oral-history component of this project has been delayed on account of the pandemic. AHRC has granted a 24-month extension, so the project will now run until February 2025. Since January 2021, Jesse has been supervising Colin Moore, who has an SGSAAH AHRC DTP in collaboration with the University of Edinburgh for an oral history of AIDS activism in Scotland.

Matthew Smith has continued his oral history based research, primarily in two projects:

- 1. Out on the Pitch: Sexuality and Mental Health in Men's and Women's Sport, 1970-Present.** During this past year Smith and colleague Dr Dan Callwood published a short article in the *Lancet* based on this research, which was funded by a Wellcome Trust Seed Award: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(19\)32646-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)32646-7/fulltext) . Their research also contributed to an article in *Wellcome Open Research* on 'Conducting Sexualities Research': <https://wellcomeopenresearch.org/articles/4-137>
- 2. An Ounce of Prevention: A History of Social Psychiatry in the USA:** This project, which also involved SOHC Research Affiliate, Dr Linsey Robb (now at the University of Northumbria), led to a number of keynote and other high-profile lectures for Smith this year, including his inaugural lecture at the University of Strathclyde and a keynote for the NHS Research Scotland Mental Health Research Network, amongst other talks. He also received a good deal of media coverage that spurred from related articles in *The Conversation*. Smith has been writing up his research in a monograph for Columbia University Press and in an article for a special issue of *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry*.

Arthur Mclvor, SOHC Director, University of Strathclyde

Appendix 1

SOHC CPD / KE oral history training / consultancy, 2020-21 (delivered online)

15/16 Sept 2020	Introduction to Oral History Practice (2 x 3.5 hours)
30 Sept/1 Oct	External: Inverclyde Council – for OH training (2 x 3.5 hours)
14/15 Jan 2021	Intro to OH (2 x 3.5 hours)
8/9 Feb	Intro to OH (2 x 3.5 hours)
19 Feb	Remote interviewing for oral historians (1 x 3.5 hours)
4/5 March	External: Tees Arts, Teeside, England (2 x 3.5 hours)
16/19 March	External: Scottish Catholic Diocese Tribunal (2 x 3.5 hours)
1 / 2 April	Intro to OH (2 x 3.5 hours)
9 April	Remote interviewing for oral historians (1 x 3.5 hours)
22/23 April	External: Glasgow Women's Library (2 x 3.5 hours)
10-13 May	SGSAH/SS - OH training for postgraduates session 1 (4 x 2.5 hours)
3 / 4 June	Intro to OH (2 x 3.5 hours)
10/11 & 17/18 June	SGSAH/SS - OH training for postgraduates session 2 (4 x 2.5 hours)
28-9 June	Intro to OH (2 x 3.5 hours)

TOTAL: 97 contact hours in 14 training programmes (83.5 hours in sem 2)