

Papworth Oral History Project

Heather MacLeod, Papworth Archives Project Officer

17 September 2004

1 Brief

- 1.1 The Papworth Oral History Project was undertaken as part of the Papworth Archives Project to supplement material already contained within the archive. According to the grant application to the Wellcome Trust, the oral history project was listed as an objective but the extent had been decided at that stage. It was therefore agreed that the Oral History Project should aim to gain as broad a representation as possible, from all aspects of Papworth life from the TB Settlement era through to the present day Papworth Trust and its work with the disabled. It was also to include an extensive section on Papworth Hospital and its development as a regional centre for cardio-thoracic surgery. In August 2003, a target of 20 interviews was set as being appropriate and achievable.

2 Background research

2.1 Oral History techniques

As background research, the project officer visited several other professionals who had experience of oral history recordings, including Martin Astell (Essex Sound Archive), Kate Perry (Archivist, Girton College) and Anne Thompson (Archivist, Newnham College). Initially, regular contact was also maintained with Rob Perks, National Sound Archive, so that advice could be sought on appropriate recording equipment. In order to gain a better understanding of the techniques behind recording oral history, the project officer also attended a training course run by the Oral History Society in Birmingham in September 2003.

2.2 Recording equipment

Extensive research was undertaken to ascertain what type of recording equipment would be the most appropriate, both for the Papworth Project and also for the Archives Service in the longer term. Following the advice that is currently being given three main items were purchased (a separate Report on Recording Equipment is available for further details of this).

2.2.1 Interview recording equipment: *Sony MZN-710 (Sony ECM-T145)*

The portable Sony minidisc recorder (MZN-710) allowed interviews to be recorded at excellent quality. This particular recorder was chosen due to the

microphone input feature. With the appropriate adapter, this allowed the use of two tie-clip microphones (Sony ECM-T145), which enhanced the quality of the interview significantly and allowed both the interviewer and the interviewee to be heard clearly.

2.2.2 Transferring from minidisk to CD: *Sony MDSJB980, Philips CDR802*

In order to comply with current archival preservation standards and to make the interviews publicly available, the minidisc recordings were transferred to CD.

The Sony MDSJB980 was a stand-alone minidisc player/recorder. It was purchased because it had an optical output, which allowed a digital transfer to CD and thus eliminated any degradation in sound quality. The Philips CDR802, a CD Recorder with a triple deck player, was chosen because of its multiple facilities including optical input, coaxial input and output, as well as analogue input and output. It was decided that this machine would be best equipped to provide a wide range of sound recording facilities to the Archives Service in the future.

2.3 Advertising the Project

The Oral History Project was first advertised at the public launch of the Papworth Archives Project on the 19th September 2003. This was followed up by extensive advertising within Papworth, including both the village and the hospital, in the form of posters and leaflets. This was followed up with regular articles in the local newsletter giving updates on the project's progress, and advertising in both the Papworth Hospital Staff *newsletter* and Papworth Trust's quarterly housing publication.

Extra boards were created specifically for the Project to add to a previous display that had been made for Papworth. These boards were then placed in Papworth Library with Project leaflets and oral history application forms. A drop box was also provided in the library for the application forms, which was checked regularly by Project staff.

Additional talks were given at the Over-60's Club in November 2003 to stimulate interest amongst the older residents of the village. This talk was extremely effective and resulted in the majority of interviews for this period.

In order to advertise the Project beyond Papworth, a press release was organised for the launch of the Project and this was subsequently followed up by an interview by the Project Officer for BBC Radio Cambridgeshire.

3 Interviewing

- 3.1 Interviewing for the oral history project commenced on 22nd October 2004 with the interview of Frank Jordan. To date, 36 people have participated and a total of 39 interviews have been recorded. Of these, 34 have been transcribed and of these 34, 25 have also been indexed (see Appendix One for details). All those who took part have also received a copy of their interview in the format of their

choice¹. The exception to the rule was Olwyn Taylor-Davis who agreed to be interviewed but not recorded. She is therefore included in Table II but not Table I.

3.1.1 Table I: Table showing the progress of the oral history project to date

	Recorded	Transcribed	Indexed
TB era	23	20	17
Cardiac Hospital	10*	8	4
Papworth Trust	6	6	4
Total	39	34	25

*All recordings have only been entered once in the table but in practice some of the interviewees could be considered for two areas

3.2 Participation

3.2.1 In practice it was found that the most effective way of gaining the participation of appropriate interviewees was by word of mouth and by the suggestions of those who had already taken part. Most of the people who expressed an interest in the project and filled out the necessary paperwork were included. Those who were not were those who were unable to get to the Cambridge area.

3.2.2 Table II: Table showing the success of different forms of advertising in contacting participants

Method of contact	
Talks: Introductory Talk, Over 60's Club	4
Papworth Library Display– Drop Box	3
Other advertising within Papworth/Word of mouth within the village	5
Papworth Hospital advertising	3
Papworth Trust advertising	
Identified through interviews	7
Identified by the Project through research or by Frank Jordan*	12
Advertising outside Papworth (press release, radio broadcast)	2
Total	36**

*Frank Jordan presented a list at the start of the Project with names of people who he thought would be of interest

**Frank Jordan, Hugh Fleming, Ben Milstein and Peter Pattle were all interviewed twice

3.2.3 All of the interviews were conducted by Heather MacLeod and all the interviewees were interviewed in their homes with the exception of Ian and Brian Gerrard who came to Cambridge from Oxford to be included in the Project and were interviewed in Shire Hall, and also John Willis and Liz James who were interviewed at work in the offices of the Varrier-Jones Foundation in Papworth.

¹ In practice this was usually CD although some of the interviewees requested a copy on cassette.

3.3 The Interview Process

- 3.3.1 After a date for interview was agreed, the interviewee would be sent a confirmation letter for the date and time of interview with a list of questions based on the topics that were likely to be discussed. The list of questions had not previously been considered but was requested by one of the early participants in order that he might prepare something. Although it is sometimes considered a disadvantage to prepare the interviewee in advance, for this oral history project it was deemed appropriate given the age of the majority of participants.
- 3.3.2 Interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis (although sometimes a spouse would insist on sitting in). The interviewee was reminded before the interview the purpose of the interview and it's prospective audience. The equipment was explained and a tie-clip microphone attached to both the interviewer and the interviewee. Each interview was introduced by the interviewer with a confirmation of the time and place of interview after which the interviewee was asked to confirm their name, place and date of birth.
- 3.3.3 All interviews were recorded using the Sony MZN-710 minidisk recorder and used one or two discs depending on the time that was spoken for; varying from 20 minutes to two hours. All discs were clearly labelled with the interviewee's name, reference number, date and length of the interview, place of interview and the interviewer's initials.
- 3.3.4 There were initial problems with the microphones as it was found that they required an additional adapter to convert the recording from mono into stereo. After discussions with ESPO, the adapter was supplied free of charge (along with two spares!). However, the initial problems mean that the first two interviews of the project are in mono.

3.4 Interviewee Information

- 3.4.1 All those participating in the project were asked to complete an oral history application form in order that the Project keep a record of their basic personal information and contact details. This has been kept, in accordance with advice from the Council's Data Protection Officer, with all records of correspondence with that participate along with any other information relating to them or their recording that has been identified as relevant.
- 3.4.2 This information should be considered confidential and not for public disclosure. The application forms and copyright release forms have been copied for security purposes.

3.5 Copyright

- 3.5.1 Each interviewee was asked to complete a Copyright Release Form giving the Record Office full rights over the recording and thereby allowing it to be made available to the public. The Copyright Release Form was compiled based on examples from the British Library and the East Midlands Oral History Archive.
- 3.5.2 The copyright forms were all signed at the time of the interviewee with the exception of Hugh Fleming and Ben Milstein who wanted to read the transcripts

first, and Keith Easter whose release of copyright was subject to conditions that were clarified and agreed by the interviewer (see also Section 6).

3.6 Data Protection

- 3.6.1 The issues of data protection and libel were considered during the project due mainly to the medical component of Papworth's history. After discussions with the Council's Data Protection Officer, Julia Terry, it was agreed that any information that, in the Service's view, might be regarded as libellous or personally damaging should be removed. After reviewing the interviews it was decided that most of the information was suitable for public disclosure. Subsequently the only interview to be edited for the purposes of data protection was Lily Newman (LN001 (1), (2)) (See also Section 6)

4 Transcription

4.1 Transcribing

- 4.1.1 Based on the time available to the Project it was decided that extended summary notes would be taken of the interviews rather than transcribing verbatim. This was decided based on advice gained on the Oral History Society training day, but also after observing similar notes on the British Library Sound Archive catalogue. The transcripts were therefore written in extended note form and also in the third person. Reference was made to all names, places and subjects mentioned regardless of relevance.
- 4.1.2 At the start of the Project, the transcribing of each interview was carried out as soon as possible after the interview itself. This allowed for the interviewer to accurately relay any other information that was necessary for understanding the interview such as an explanation of hand gestures relating to size etc. However, as the project progressed, it proved impossible with other duties to keep up with the rate of interviewing, and there remain five more interviews left to transcribe.

4.2 Issues

- 4.2.1 Following comments over some of the transcripts it was later decided to change the policy of writing in the third person and transcribe verbatim to avoid confusion or misrepresentation. Some of the later interviews to be transcribed as subsequently in this format although it still remains debatable whether any further detail can be gleaned from this extra work.

4.3 Indexing

- 4.3.1 The Sound Archive Index was compiled based upon the indexing advice outlined by Hunnisett in *Indexing for Editors* (British Records Association).
- 4.3.2 All the interviews were indexed according to their summary notes with all names, places and subjects being indexed accordingly. All references were entered alphabetically into one index. Each interview therefore has its own index that is saved with the summary notes.

- 4.3.3 The individual indexes were then compiled into one Sound Archive Index that has been compiled with the addition of future collections in mind. All relevant cross-references have also been added.

5 Copying for preservation and for public use

- 5.1 Minidisks are not recognised by the archives world as an appropriate archival medium on account their relatively short history on the market. It was therefore necessary to create a preservation copy of each recording from the original minidisk to satisfy archival preservation policy for sound recordings.
- 5.2 High grade Mitsui Gold CDs (LA30 MA) were selected for the preservation copies following advice from the National Sound Archive (see *Report on Recording Equipment*). Preservation copies of each interview were made as soon as possible after interviews. Further copies were then made from the preservation copies onto JVC Audio CDs for donation to the interviewee and also for use in the Record Office.
- 5.3 Preservation copies of all the interviews have been made. Copies of the interviews have also been sent to all those who participated in the Project and copies for use in the Record Office are currently being completed.

5.4 Issues

- 5.4.1 There were some problems with the Philips CDR802 which started to corrupt some of the CD copies that it was making. It was returned to the manufacturer who was unable to locate any fault. No further problem has been experienced and all recordings made have been of the highest quality.
- 5.4.2 Due to the problems with the CD recorder (see 5.4.1) and the unexpected demand for interviews, the supply of Mitsui Gold CDs was insufficient for the amount of recordings made. It was therefore necessary to record the preservation copies of the final interviews onto JVC CDs. This is not expected to reduce the quality of the recording in any way.

6 Sound Forge: Editing for data protection and copyright conditions

- 6.1 Sound Forge 7.0 was purchased by the Project in order to be able to edit any recordings made. This was seen as necessary in order to edit recordings for data protection purposes or conditions stated in copyright, but also to allow compilation CD to be created or provide brief extracts for the Internet.
- 6.2 Only two interviews required editing, one for the purposes of data protection and one following conditions placed upon its release from copyright. In both cases, the preservation copy remained unaltered in order to preserve the original recording in its entirety, and the relevant sections were edited out in the user copy, using the Sound Forge software,.
- 6.3 The Sound Forge package has been loaded on a computer in the FenPast room as it is consistent with the technical expertise being provided by the Fenpast digitisation unit.

7 Short-term and long-term storage

7.1 Short-term storage

7.1.1 For the duration of the project, the original minidisks, the preservation copies and the user copies have been kept at the Project Office at Bar Hill. It is intended that the copies for public use will be kept at the Record Office whilst the preservation copies will be accessioned and boxed.

7.1.2 Although the minidisks are, in term of archival preservation, not recognised as the preservation copies, they are still the original medium on which the recording was made. It had therefore been decided that they will be kept although it is currently unclear as to how they will be accessioned.

7.1.3 For the present, the preservation CDs will be removed from their jewel cases and placed in purpose-made sliver safe envelopes along with any relevant information in order to reduce their bulk. They will be stored in archival boxes and accessioned as it is not expected that they will need to be accessed for use on a regular basis.

7.2 Long-term storage

7.2.1 It is expected that, at some point in the future, this recordings and any future deposits made to the sound archive will be stored digitally to prevent any degradation in sound quality over time. At present, this is not possible due to the huge amounts of memory that would be needed.

8 Costs

8.1 Travel Costs

All of the journeys made for interviewing were within the county boundary with the exception of Sir Terence English for whom the project made a special trip to Oxford. The furthest travelled was Perry and Warboys. Of the 39 interviews, 24 were conducted in the village of Papworth itself, two in St. Ives, one in Boxworth, one in Colne and eight in Cambridge. It was an advantage of the nature of village life that so many of the people involved in the history of Papworth were still so close at hand.

9 Conclusion

9.1 The Papworth Oral History Project has succeeded in complementing valuably the conventional paper archive for the history of the Papworth Village Settlement, Trust and NHS Hospital, and of thereby providing a valuable source for the medical and social history of this remarkable village. Considering that it was the first oral history project undertaken by the Archives Service, it has been completed with few difficulties. It is believed that this experience will provide a firm foundation on which to build future oral history work.