

# Changes in Life and Work Patterns in Parkstone

Heritage Lottery Grant Funded Your Heritage Project  
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Evaluation Report 2011

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## Executive Summary

In November 2008 digital:works was awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Your Heritage Lottery Grant for the Our Working Lives project. Working in collaboration with a local community group and Poole Museum; capturing people's experiences of leaving school and entering the workforce between 1945 and 1950 and comparing their experience with the present day. The project aim was to preserve the everyday local memories and make history seem alive and directly relevant to people's lives. Moreover digital:works wished to further explore using digital storytelling as a heritage tool.

This report provides an evaluation of the 'Our Working Lives' project assessing whether the project met its aims and objectives and discussing lessons based on comments by participants, museum staff and volunteers.

The evaluation identifies that a wealth of stories and heritage awaits capture; that local

networks and knowledge are vital for the successful involvement of communities and individuals; and that sufficient time needs to be allowed within projects for volunteer development and for contributors, particularly if they are elderly.

Feedback from the participants indicates an enthusiastic response to the project. 'Brilliant' one contributor commented, while another elaborated; "These oral histories allow people to learn what life was like in those days. It tells everyone what school, working life and the hardship of life was like all those years ago." The project adopted a balance of encouragement and practical support that was appreciated by participants. One contributor mentioned how this type of historical scene settings is 'an engaging way for people to take things in'.

The project has shown how using digital stories can meet community and heritage needs and the agendas of local and central government. As a technique digital storytelling can build skills and offers a direct way of meeting HLF's strategic objective of 'Involving more people in decisions about heritage and in taking responsibility for identifying, sharing and caring for heritage'.



*Volunteer Rosemary Hayward talks to Katie Hanks, Poole Museum Local History Librarian.*

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## Acknowledgements

Our Working Lives was devised by digital:works. It involved two key partners both based in Poole in its delivery; a community group and Poole Museum. The project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and managed by digital:works. Due to the richness of material the project was extended from one year to two with Poole Museum requesting that the work should occupy two rooms at the museum rather than the original one specified.

The Our Working Lives partnership team was made up of volunteers from Poole and Parkstone; John Yarrow, Jean May, Barbara Marns, Rosemary Hayward, Cliff Densley, Giles Taylor, John Crowther, Margaret Sansom, Fran Buttress, Joan Cooksey. And Poole Museum; Michael Spender, Museum Manager; David Watkins, Local History Manager; Katie Hanks, Local History Librarian.

Unfortunately one member of the team Alf Cooksey died right at the start of the project. He was an important member of the team with a great wealth of local knowledge and was deeply missed. This was an important lesson for the team on how these personal memories, these sources of information are very fragile and why HLF plays such a vital role in helping to preserve our histories.

The Our Working Lives partnership team would like to thank everyone who made the project such a success. Special thanks must go to our many interviewees, who were so generous with their time and memories. Without their contributions we would not have this fantastic archive for future generations to enjoy.

Thanks also to Vivien O'Driscoll, Home Library Services Manager for helping to promote this within the library services and amongst its house bound customers; Poole Arts Development Team with their continual help and support; Ian Andrews and Frank Henson for access to their photographic archive and the personalised guided tour of Poole's industrial estates; English Heritage and Merck Ltd for use of their images. Special thanks should also go to digital:works worker, Joe Stevens, for the amount of time and effort he has put into putting it all together.

Digital:works would like to acknowledge the amount of work the volunteers did; they have put so much of their own time throughout the project, conducting interviews, summarising them, taking photographs and helping to make the website a rich source of information and media content.

*Three members of the Volunteer group the Happy Snappers.*



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# 1 Introduction

## **Our Working Lives: the project**

The initial idea for this project came from digital:works worker, Joe Stevens, having previously worked on a Poole Older Peoples Project (POPP). One successful outcome of this project had been the forming of a photography club for people over 65 years old, the Happy Snappers. They meet monthly to socialize, support each other to take better photos and to keep fit and healthy by being physically, mentally and socially active. While Joe had worked with them they'd talk about their lives, the jobs they used to do and about how things have changed in Poole. This tied in with previous oral history projects digital:works had been involved with and formed the basis for the project, which was then further developed when Poole Museum were approached to partner on this project, who were very welcoming and helped digital:works devise this oral history project along with the Happy Snappers.

The aim of the Our Working Lives Project was to record people's memories of leaving school and entering the workforce between 1945 and 1950. Comparing this to the present day by interviewing people about their situation now. Investigating how work patterns have changed from the 20th to the 21st century. Asking people about the type of jobs they did on leaving school and compare this with the range of options on offer today. Asking questions like:

- What qualifications do people need nowadays?
- What jobs could they do now with the skills/qualifications they left school with then?
- How does the pay scale compare to when they left school?

Recording the memories of the people who lived through this increasingly important time of British history after the war was an important part of preserving this heritage for future generations. There was a strong risk that by not acting soon, there was a danger that these memories would be lost. This was highlighted when one of the Happy Snappers, and a key member behind devising the project, died shortly after HLF approved the funding. We have discovered on issuing the book that three of the interviewees have since died since conducting their interviews. Relatives have expressed their gratitude that some aspects of their personalities, of who they were as people have been recorded.

The project explored the everyday personal histories, traditions, memories, values and hopes and encouraged closer relationships between generations. Over two years we recorded more than eighty oral history interviews exploring people's memories of how they experienced leaving school and starting work.

While project methodologies are important the primary evidence on which this evaluation is based is the feedback from the project participants themselves. It seems appropriate that a project aimed at capturing the memories of local communities in their own words should also be evaluated with reference to the thoughts and comments of those who took part.

## What is oral history?

Oral history is the process of recording people's individual memories to create a living history of unique life experiences and in order that these experiences are preserved for the future. This type of personal and emotional information is often missing from industrial history. Oral history has both the advantage and disadvantage of recording a large amount of material from which the archivist or curator will then have to select or identify material of interest. They also have a wider importance as they capture local dialects and accents, which are a fascinating resource for anyone interested in the study of linguistics.

## Oral history projects;

- Values everyone's individual experience by enabling people to tell their life stories in their own words.
- Empowers people to be involved in the process of documenting their life experiences and the events that have affected them.
- Is unique in that it gives us the perspectives of people of difference backgrounds, cultures and religions.
- Gives a voice to people who in the past have largely been hidden from mainstream and traditional history.

## Where is the focus?

The focus was on the period 1945-59, the time just after WWII. It focused on local peoples memories of leaving school and entering the workforce, covering the range of work on offer and the type of employment people undertook over the last sixty years.

One area of discussion at the start was around should we focus only on those who were born and brought up in the area. As Poole Museum's focus is very much to do with Poole, while digital:works and the Happy Snappers (who have mostly moved to Poole in later life) felt that it should be open to everyone who now live in the area. It was decided that the exhibition side at the museum would concentrate on the Poole angle. While the project as a whole wouldn't. People's lives are not restricted by a neat geographical boundary and the 20th century was a period of great mobility with people moving around due to various issues, including health, work and personal reasons.



*One of the participants on his AA motorcycle.*

## Who was interviewed?

We interviewed a cross section of people who lived and/or worked in the borough of Poole. These recordings include memories of people who had moved to the area, either during their working lives or for retirement.



*A selection of portraits of the interviewees.*

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The questions were devised through discussions with participants and staff. Copies of the questions are provided as Appendix A.

The interviews were conducted over a two year period: 2009 - 2011

## What period does the project cover?

Our Working Lives captured a period of change in British history, a transitory time between the war, rationing and hardship of the forties and the sixties freedom of expression. After the war there was a serious labour shortage and to rebuild the country Britain needed workers, with employment easily available. As the fifties progressed there was an enormous feeling of optimism, with the population enjoying rising living standards. Social attitudes were changing and people were looking forward to a brighter future of continual growth. Ten years of enormous social shift.

In the workplace a new economy was emerging creating challenges to old ways of working. Along with the rapid pace of modernisation, the British wanted a less rigid society and old-fashioned attitudes to race, gender and class had to be pushed aside.

Poole had a vibrant economy in the 50s and by 1959 there were over 400 factories with a mix of established industrial manufacturers and newer companies that had moved into the area, some of whom had to relocate due to the war.

## 2 Aims

### The aims of the project were:

- To explore and celebrate personal histories, heritages, traditions, memories, values, hopes, and life lessons passed from generation to generation, and encourage closer relationships between generations.
- To explore current issues in a distinct and personal way that will reach ordinary individuals.
- To instruct senior citizens on the technicalities of audio recording, including interviewing techniques for oral history.
- The oral histories will be a valuable resource recording how the area has changed and people's work patterns have changed. The participants will learn how to record this local history.
- To coach senior citizens on using photography effectively.
- To increase the communication between the younger and the older parts of the community.

## 3 Outcomes

### The proposed outcomes for the project were identified as the following;

- An archive of recordings for use for the future which would provide a resource for the community and for researchers
- A book
- A exhibition at Poole Museum
- A bus tour of Poole's working landscapes with audio guide
- The promotion of the personal feeling of worth and value for the people who took part in the project and their families.

## 4 The process

### Background Research

Our Working Lives is a project that was designed to build on digital:works principles of participation with local communities. It was the first digital:works funded project since becoming a charity in 2008. The project built on digital:works workers previous experience in community and heritage work.



*Happy Snappers at Poole Museum.*

A stimulus for the project was an awareness by digital:works that despite the efforts of local authority services and local societies to identify and preserve local heritage, many ordinary stories of everyday life and customs remain unknown and unrecorded. Equally, where heritage has been recorded it often remains in a less than accessible format.

The project was developed in close collaboration with: a local community group, the Happy Snappers, who are a constituted photography group for people over 65 years old; and in consultation with Poole Museum.

The heritage focus was the capturing of stories of leaving school and everyday working life from 1945 to 1959. This focus on work was chosen in order to compare life today with that of austerity Britain after WWII. It was also felt that in many cases these stories could represent the last remaining link with a way of life that has all but vanished.

The project was also devised to explore the potential to engage, capture and share personal stories within and between communities and across generations to new audiences.

Digital:works worked closely with the community group, the Happy Snappers and Poole Museum, to devise a suitable set of open ended questions that were relevant and would get people talking. Training was given on interview techniques and on using digital recorders to capture the interviews.

There were teething problems at the early stage as the volunteers struggled with the dual aspects of getting to grips with the digital equipment and the skill of interview techniques. A number of sessions were held where they practiced on each other. But due to there being only two recorders the volunteers did not immediately practice and there were sometimes too long a gap between the practice sessions and them getting hold of the recorders again.

Volunteers slowly discovered their own interview techniques. As the project progressed the interviews become longer and more relaxed. However saying that some of the most interesting interviews were captured right at the start. But they never really got totally comfortable with the equipment.

### **Attracting interest**

In order to contact appropriate people to interview, appeals were placed in local newspapers and the main library. Local interest groups were also contacted e.g. Society of Poole Men and Poole Historical Trust. Talks were given to local groups about the project. A website ([www.ourworkinglives.org](http://www.ourworkinglives.org)) was designed to promote, as well as host information and material collected as part of the project.

The flexibility for the volunteers to visit participants in their own homes surmounted mobility and transport issues and also allowed for a more personal relationship with contributors.



**WE CAN WORK IT OUT:** Poole people who started work in the 1940/50s are to have their memories recorded and added to the museum's local history centre. A £19,350 Heritage Lottery Fund grant is allowing digital:works and a group of volunteers (pictured) to investigate the differences in working practice and compare them with the present day. To share your memories or find out more call Joe Stevens on 07784 874112 or email [joe@digital-works.co.uk](mailto:joe@digital-works.co.uk).

## Equipment

Advice was sought from a wide range of sources regarding the purchase of the equipment used to record the oral histories. Balancing quality of recording with ease of use. We opted for two Zoom H2 Handy Recorders with inbuilt microphones that the volunteers shared out between themselves. To foster the community groups involvement and independence they managed these recorders with one recorder being shared amongst those that lived in the Parkstone area, while the other shared amongst those living in old town part of Poole.

The recorders capture onto SD cards and we bought a few allowing digital:works to switch cards around when we met up (we'd take the card with recorded interviews on and give the volunteers clean SD cards).

The original recordings were captured with a sample rate of 44.1khz (the red book standard for CDs) and saved as wav files. These original files were duplicated onto hard disk and backup before being edited ready for summarising and putting onto the website. Finally the original and the edited versions were stored on archive quality DVDs and CDs and deposited with Poole

Museum so that they can be preserved for future generations, along with other material collected as part of the project e.g. photographs and other ephemera. Edited material is available on [www.ourworkinglives.org](http://www.ourworkinglives.org).

## Paperwork

Relevant copyright and consent forms (see Appendix D) were created after taking advice from British Library to ensure that the project followed the correct procedures in the collection and recording of the interviewee's permission to use their data. Before publication of the book, each interviewee was contacted again to ensure that this information was correct. In several cases some of the interviewees wished to remain anonymous and their wishes have been followed. Copyright of all recordings belong to Poole Museum and digital:works, and all the original paperwork has now been deposited with Poole Museum.

## Interviews

Following best practice and taking into account the fact that many interviewees were elderly, the recordings took place in the interviewees' homes or at a place of the interviewees choosing. The interviews were conducted by the volunteers who gave their time regularly throughout the project, along with the digital:works project officer conducting some interviews.

In some cases interviewees found old photographs where the interviewees worked and talked about these photographs in their possession as part of the process. Many of these were subsequently lent to the project, digitised (with copies included as part of the digital archive give to Poole Museum) and made accessible on the Our Working Lives web pages.

The project did have a number of expected outcomes, one being in that it reflected the movement of labour that was experienced by most of the interviewees either by choice or by necessity during their working lives. Another, being



*Apprentice records from a participant.*

the ready availability of employment. However there was also a number of unexpected outcomes, for example one being the perception that people used to have a job for life, this proved from our sample to be quite rare, with very few having the same job, or even just the same employer all their lives. Another one was the realisation about how far we have travelled in regard to equal opportunities, with the fifties being not that long ago and women having to leave jobs because they got married or had had a child.

During the interviews, other subjects were naturally talked about and these have remained in the original recordings since they give an insight into what life was like growing up in the area. But were edited out of the interviews used in the exhibition and on the website. In this respect the original material held at the museum has a much wider appeal to those interested in the general history of the period covered by the project.

Some of the interviewees also talked in length about certain aspects of their job for example, how the money was collected in a department store and made its way up to a central point where change and a receipt was issued and passed back down via a vacuum tube. This kind of detail is extremely useful, as these processes and ways of working are no longer in use. This device always brought back memories and discussion amongst older people and a sense of bewilderment amongst the young as they tried to picture these devices.



*Portraits of the interviewees.*

A photograph of the interviewee at home was also taken and if permission was given this was then added to the website. One result was the discovery of a rich source of archive material from one participant who was born and bred in Poole. He has over two albums full of original material from his life, which he will

be donating to Poole Local History Unit. This material also formed a key display material, 'A Poole Working Man's Life', in the final exhibition.

On the whole the interviews were conducted in people's own homes and the resulting oral histories is testament to how the volunteers were adept at putting all the participants at ease, and getting the contributors to share their memories. This balance of listening, of conversation and encouragement is evident from the unedited recordings.



*One participant's collection, showing a works outing and a copy of Red Tape Union from 1963 in which she was featured; winning second prize as a C.S.C.A. Personality Girl.*



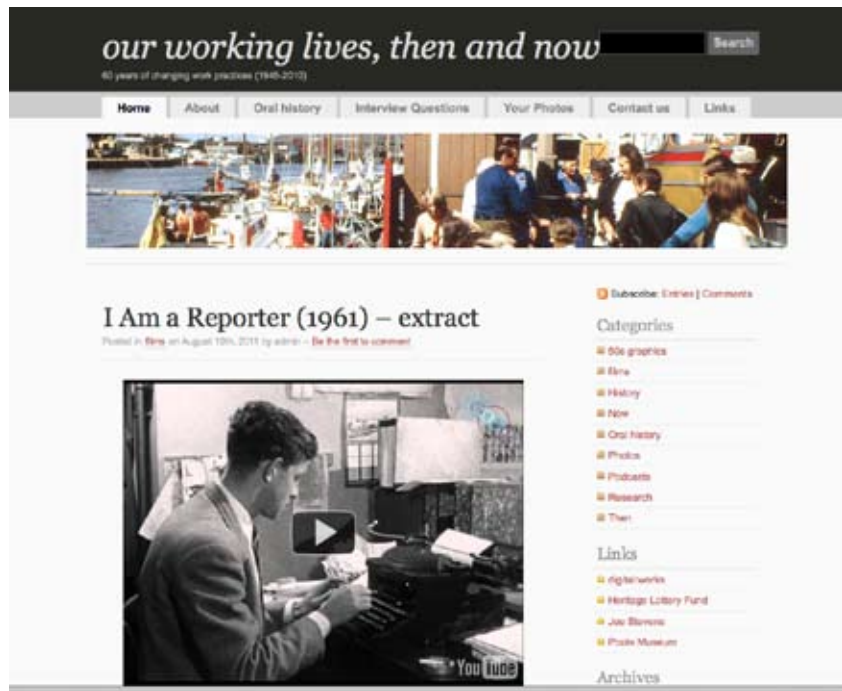


*A selection of participants archival material.*

## After the interview

The interviews were then summarised by one volunteer, with another then typing up this transcript. Where permission was granted via the consent form, these interviews (the typed summaries, the audio oral history interviews, the photographic portraits and any supporting material given to us by the interviewee) were transferred to the website at a later date.

We also produced audio CDs with the latest interviews (if permission was given). Copies were given to the local library service and Poole Museum.



## Branding

A professionally designed branding was created for the website, publicity and book design.

## 5 Sharing with the community

### Our Working Lives web pages

In order for the material to be as accessible as possible and to ensure sustainability, all the material collected as part of the project was digitised and hosted on specially commissioned website: [www.ourworkinglives.org](http://www.ourworkinglives.org)

Early on in the project, web pages were designed specifically for Our Working Lives enabling information on the progress of the project to be shared. Public events were also promoted via the site. As the project developed recordings were included.

**As the project progressed the site expanded and by the end of the project the site included:**

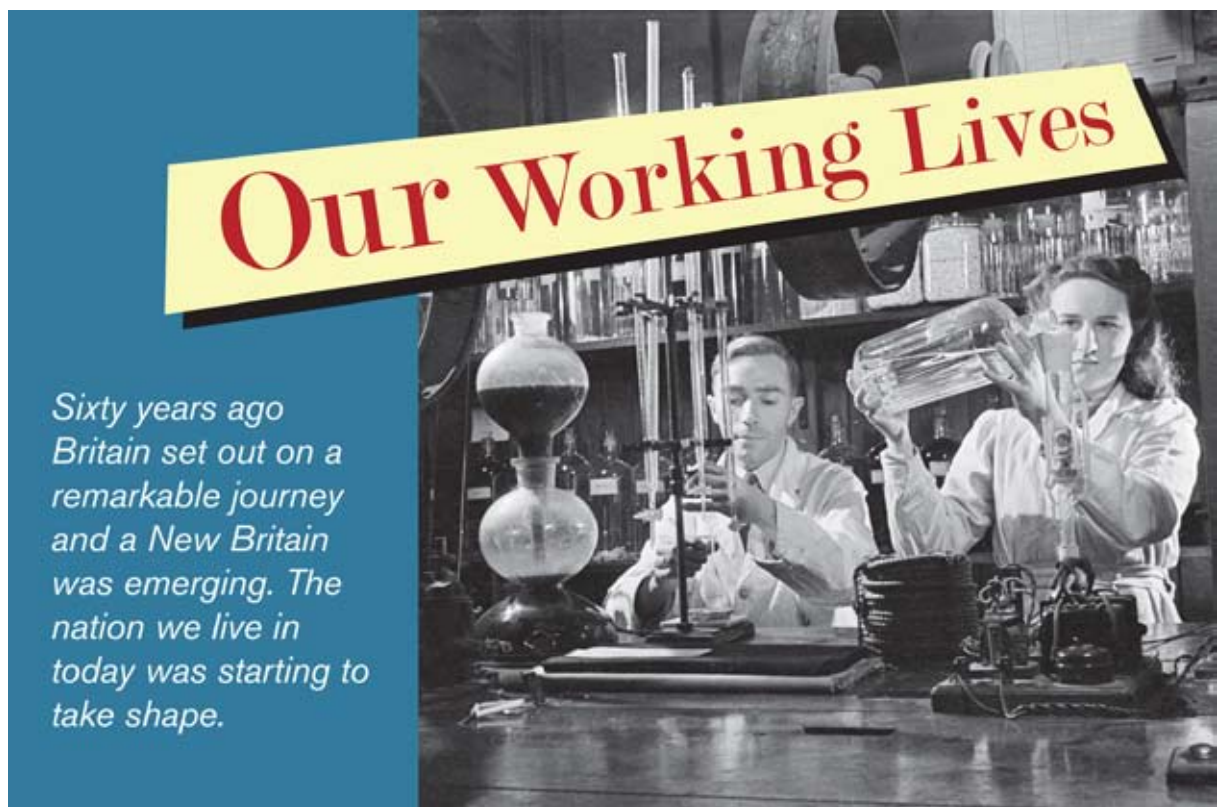
- The edited recordings, which allows the user to listen to the interviewees;
- Portraits of the interviewees;
- Historical information and links to relevant research
- Archive photographs;
- Films from the period

- News and latest events
- A link to an online version of the book;
- A link to Google maps which provides a map of the tour of Poole's working landscapes.
- Search facility (available on every page)

The site also provides information on the project, conditions of use, contact details for the project and links to partner sites (Poole Museum, the Heritage Lottery Fund, and digital:works).

### Book

The book gives an overview of the project, highlighting particular memories and giving a background to the history of the period covered. With edited quotations from the interviews alongside black and white photographs donated or lent by the interviewees and material gathered from English Heritage, from Ian Andrews and Frank Henson photographic archive and Merck Ltd are featured. It also contains a list of all partners of the project. Readers are asked to visit the website for further information.



Within the publication there is a specially commissioned compact disc allowing people to listen to snippets of interviews thereby getting a flavour of the project. The tracks have been arranged on the following themes;

- School (3:02)
- Careers advice (4:27)
- We did as we were told (8:05)
- Office work (7:50)

- Men at work (6:40)
- Women at work (8:48)
- Farm work (6:58)
- Shop work (9:29)
- Apprenticeships (5:58)
- National Service (2:50)

A print run of 500 was produced. Each of the interviewees or their representatives were presented with a copy and additional copies were given to the Library Service for lending and reference, to residential homes in the area, to members of the Poole Forum, Poole Historic Trust and Society of Poole Men. A number of review copies were sent to the media. The remainder were given to Poole Museum, with digital:works holding onto 50 copies.

### Exhibition

The exhibition has proven “one of the most popular exhibitions Poole Museum has ever put on” Michael Spender, Museum Manager. This exhibition ended up covering twice the agreed space the original funding application had stated. Going from one room to two rooms of the museum, giving us twice the space and making it a much richer exhibition.

The exhibition features panels, interactive displays, historical objects, along with audio players that have extracts of the recordings. Interested members of the public are able to listen to highlights from the resource whilst looking at the exhibition. The exhibition will be on from April to September 2011 (this end date has now been extended to April 2012).



*Shots of the Exhibition*

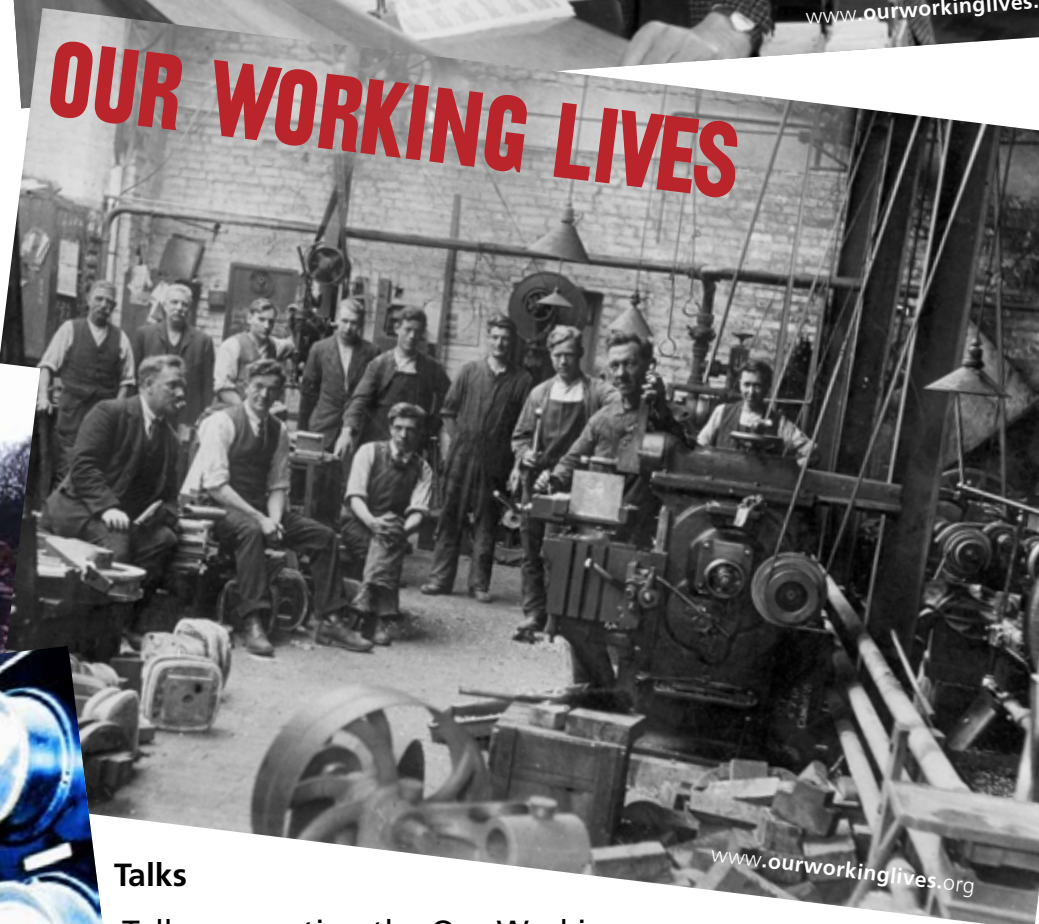
# OUR WORKING LIVES

## Publicity

Articles about the project have appeared in the following local newspapers; Bournemouth Echo and Stour and Avon Magazine. Features have also appeared in 'In Touch' (local newsletter tenant of Poole Housing), and Society of Poole Men newsletters. The project was also covered on BBC radio4's Making History and on local radio station WAVE FM.



# OUR WORKING LIVES



# OUR WORKING LIVES



# OUR WORKING LIVES



## Talks

Talks promoting the Our Working Lives Project and the ethos behind it have been delivered to the Poole library service and to care services.

## Promotional material

At the beginning of the project postcards were produced to promote Our Working Lives project. These were sent to community venues, libraries, council departments and Poole Museum for display.

## Events

During the project a talk was specially arranged from Borough of Poole's Economic Development team about the town and its development plans. This was very well received, with one person saying; "Adrian has spelt out for us how Poole might develop and how it's facing up



*Adrian Trevett, Poole's Economic Development Manager, with community group, the Happy Snappers.*

to these difficult times in a clear and concise way." Another described the talk as "stimulating, he has given me fresh eyes which to see Poole in."

To launch the completed project, in 2011 a tea party themed around the fifties was organised to celebrate the opening of the exhibition at Poole Museum. This was for invited guests; including interviewees, local dignitaries, the press and other interested parties. Speeches were made by the Worshipful the Mayor of Poole, Councillor Graham Wilson, along with speeches by representatives from Poole Museum, Heritage Lottery Fund and digital:works.

At this event interviewees were presented with a copy of the book and had an opportunity to see the finished exhibition. They also had a chance to meet other contributors. One participant met someone he was an apprentice with and this contact has now led onto him being in touch with another former apprentice.

The second event was to promote the project to members of the public and showcase the oral histories in a different way by presenting history live in the 'real' world, so that history merges with the present. It allowed passengers to hear people describe workplaces that no longer exist while travelling through Poole's industrial and commercial landscapes. Passengers heard the recordings from the seats of a true British icon, a 1959 RouteMaster bus, as the tour drives



*Photographs from the official opening to the exhibition at Poole Museum.*

through areas in Poole not usually visited by commercial tour packages. The tour snaked through Poole's industrial estates, as well as other interesting features of Poole's economic landscape.

Both events were very successful and staff had many positive verbal comments from people attending the events.



*Photographs from the bus tour.*

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### **Did the project meet its aims and objectives?**

The project identified as a measure of success the production of 80 good quality oral histories. The project successfully met the workshop aims, detailing in the application form, with over fifteen workshops were held with the Happy Snappers. A high quality book was created that is an immediate end product, which is discrete and marketable; an outstanding exhibition over two rooms at Poole Museum and a unique bus tour that took the oral histories out into the 'real' world.

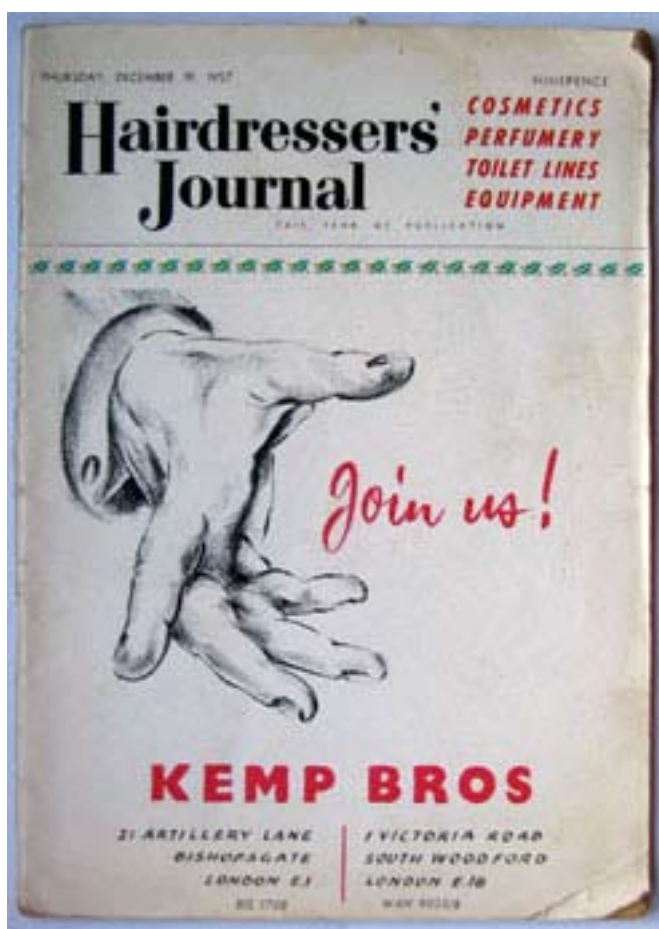
The acquisition of new media skills by those participating in the project was identified as one of the benefits of the project. Certainly the participants themselves gained new skills, as several of them commented on. Feedback from volunteers indicates that each joined the project with differing levels of media and ICT skills, as well as broadening their knowledge in working with communities and individuals.

There is clearly no lack of stories that could have been used to illustrate Our Working Life since the 1940s. This is illustrated by feedback, from participants in particular, who stated that the telling of one story brought to mind many others. The aim of preserving the knowledge of older generations has been met through these recordings. The participants identified the capturing of past knowledge of people's life that was revealed as, for them, one of the most important aspects of the project. A sense of gratitude and pride is evident in the feedback that these oral histories were recognised by the project and that the 'thread of shared experience that runs through the generations' as one participant put it, was considered of value. As a result of the project the contributors have uncovered or renewed an enjoyment of their heritage and this is evident in the overwhelming interest of all participants to either take part in similar projects in the future or encourage others to do so. The structure of the project and the use of volunteers who are a similar age and entered into conversations appear to have been very important in engaging the contributors.

Many participants also expressed the hope that the stories would prompt further work and encourage discussions with younger people. This feeling is summed up by one participant who stated how being involved in the project: 'set me thinking what a wealth of experience and knowledge each generation has to offer the next one'.

Many of the stories recorded detail events from the 1940s and 1950s, with a smaller number recording tales from 2000. There are also a couple of stories that tell of events before the 1940s. The generational focus reflects the predominant age of participants being retired. Younger people felt that they did not have a story to tell and were on the whole disinclined to 'tell their story'. While the older generation spend more time looking back, seeing how things have changed, of ways of life that had disappeared. The stories provide, therefore, a range of perspectives and recollections from the post-war years and record an era of working practice that has to all intents and purposes disappeared.

Given the age of the contributors the project may represent a last opportunity to record such eyewitness accounts. The histories can be regarded as capturing in small part the knowledge of the last generation of a lost culture, as important a part of our global intangible heritage as that of many other vanishing tribes.



Cover of magazine from 1957 with illustration drawn by one of the participants.

Of the 80 histories (nine of whom contributed twice) 60% were women, 40% men. One of the regrets voiced by participants and echoed by digital:works specifically raised the point about capturing the stories of more housework. We'd concentrated on paid employment and very rarely ventured into the domestic sphere. This was a missed opportunity and a sign of the perception of communities toward the project's subject matter and the conscious or subconscious gender roles associated with work.

The participants all noted how the act of telling their stories and listening to them brought back memories and made them consider how things had changed. One participant commented how the experience of listening to the stories 'made you stop and think about the last 50 years and how much it had altered'.



*Parkstone Regal staff from Ian Andrews and Frank Henson archive*

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If the enthusiasm of the participants and project team is anything to go by the collection will, no doubt, be very well received by wider audiences. In their feedback all the participants expressed how much they enjoyed the chance to listen to stories told by other contributors. It was listening to others' stories that encouraged some of the participants to tell their own tale or reminded them of a story to share.

The project's aim to increase the communication between the younger and the older parts of the community was an ambitious one. As with the previous objective the use and engagement with the collection by new audiences will need to be assessed separately at a future date to determine how successful the stories can be in stimulating a younger generations' interest in heritage.

Feedback from those who took part in the project however provides more immediate evidence to suggest that the objective of encouraging greater interest in the heritage and its stewardship was achieved. Several of the participants mentioned how their relatives had become intrigued by what their parents and grandparents had been up to and were keen to get a copy of the book, to go on a bus tour and to see the exhibition. One young person, who said she lived near the museum, but had never stepped inside before, will be definitely visiting again. Moreover, Trudie Cole, Learning and Access Manager at Poole Museum Service, told us that; "One of the lovely things about the exhibition is that it sparks up conversations between different generations. Families visit our exhibition, but the result is that they find out more about each other".

A common aside that comes through from the feedback and in discussion with participants is that many participants hadn't appreciated the value of their stories as heritage objects until they were approached by the project. Some

of the participants expressed that prior to the project they had not been all that interested in history or 'older things' but through involvement in the project had recognised the importance of preserving the knowledge they and others had for future generations. Few of the participants said that they had a burning desire to tell their stories at the outset, and most didn't think that anyone would be interested in what they had to tell. Despite this initial uncertainty the feedback reveals an overwhelmingly positive response to the project.



*Archive photo from Ian Andrews and Frank Henson*

### **Lesson Learned – what works and what could be done differently?**

The early and close consultation with an established community group and a council run museum and the application of a known existing technique in oral history has resulted in few issues arising. This sensible approach allowed the project to be delivered successfully without any significant problems.

Digital:works works robustly to maintain the need to balance between supporting a community to make its own decisions and putting in place some timescales and management to ensure a project gets done. This is a basic issue that all projects face and the project team worked effectively with all the participants who came forward to complete the interviews within the timescale determined by the funding agreement.

Feedback from all participants identified only a small number of concerns and suggestions to be taken into account for future projects of this kind. The main issue being the need to build in sufficient time, and perhaps more time than was available to the project, to support the projects development, the management of the website and more importantly the editing of the oral histories following recording.

Feedback from another participant picked up this theme echoing the need for future projects to build-in sufficient time for participants to get more familiar with the digital process so they could 'have more hands-on experience with the equipment.

Secondly, there is a requirement to understand how a community works, how they are reached; what they respond to and as noted above the need to build-

in sufficient project time to contact, recruit and nurture potential participants. Most of the contributors when asked what made them want to get involved in the project replied that they had been asked to. This contrast with an almost total absence of response to postcards, posters and press releases circulated in advance and during the project phase. Word of mouth recommendations along with personal connections with the project were how the majority of interviewees found.

The sourcing of images to illustrate the period and form an essential part of the arrival book was also challenging. It was interesting to see the lack of records in Poole Museum's photography archive on people at work and the places where they worked. They have a lot on Mayors, official functions and the scenic places, but not so much on the everyday landscape that we travel through; the trading estates; the shops and its commercial panorama. Contact with regional and national museums and archives proved very important in securing relevant images. Additional images were sourced from the participants and other local contacts. Awareness of the project raised through contact with image-holders created an immediate audience interested in this project. The interest generated highlights how the project stages can be used to market the product and that it is not therefore necessary always to wait until a product is complete before promoting it.

#### **In sum the lessons learned from the project are:**

- Research how communities work, how communities respond to requests to take part in projects and allow sufficient time, within a project framework, for individual and group consultation.
- By engaging with local communities the project has recorded a small sample of the local memories. These reminiscences, many of whom represent the last remaining link with a way of life that has all but vanished, have been preserved for future generations.
- Local networks are key to identifying, supporting and encouraging local people to take part. Project workers shouldn't underestimate the power of word-of-mouth recommendation and local knowledge.
- Ensure Local Societies and/or other community groups are involved from the start.
- Build-in sufficient time within the project for participants to fully contribute.
- Develop specific strategies and tactics to ensure representation across the community. Think about who you target and how.
- Develop strategies to ensure participants have ownership of their stories – perhaps measuring this by their interest in what happens to it and how it is used in the future.
- Know of image sources and contact archive holders as early as possible to determine what content they have and terms of use. Don't assume participants will have photographs relevant to their story. Knowing where to go to obtain that key image to illustrate a story can save precious time and stress.

## 6 Legacy

A key outcome of the project was to ensure that a lasting on-going resource would be made available to not only the people of Poole but also to a far wider audience of researchers and people worldwide who are interested in social history and the history of this fascinating period of British history. To support this outcome, the project created a sustainable internet platform which can be used to host further recordings related to this core area of interest. The possibility of broadening the area either geographically or topically will be explored. The interest generated in the project will be developed and the opportunity to acquire funding to develop this interest by using drama and art to widen the audience to this resource will be investigated. The interviewees and their families have developed a real pride in not only their contribution to the project but also to the development of the industrial and community heritage of Poole. The raised profile of the project has resulted in an increase in the number of donations given to the Libraries' Local studies collections. Skills and experience acquired by the project team in developing the project will be fed into future projects that Poole Museum run as well as digital:works work. This will facilitate the delivery of other digital:works projects as well as giving the museum the opportunity, to further expand the project.

The project has led Poole Museum and digital:works to have formed a strong working bond, with a trust in each others organisations and different ways of working. This will hopefully flourish into further joint projects in future.

## Update

We have just learnt that such is the popularity of the exhibition that Poole Museum is now planning to keep it up for a year (extended from the original six months). Further they are developing a series of learning materials for schools to use in September. This will be a whole series of new workshops. One is called 'In Living Memory' and is based on life in post-war Britain. Pupils will be given worksheets based around different themes and the one for work and money takes them into the exhibition.

We (Happy Snappers, Poole Museum, digital:works) have just been interviewed by Bournemouth Echo for a feature in their colour weekend magazine. This should be coming out in next two weeks.

## Appendix A

**Questions asked**

**Consent Form**

Before you start the interview can you record your name, their name and the date. This will help us later indicate the start of each interview. Remember to keep quiet and let the interviewee tell their history in their own words (I will edit your questions out so you need to try and get the interviewee to almost say the question in their answer).

## Interview Questions

1. Would you mind **introducing yourself** and telling me when and where you were you born, and what age you were when you left school?

2. **Can you tell me about when you left school?**

For instance were you still living in the same area as where you were born and did you have any qualifications? Did you have a career in mind and go onto further training or education?

3. **Can you tell me in your own words about your first job on leaving school?**

For instance upon leaving school how long did it take you to find work and how did you find this job? What was your job title and what did the work involve? How did you get to work and was it far/did it take long? And do you remember how much you were paid and whether there was a dress code?

4. **Did you stay at this company for long and did your job change?**

How long did you stay in this job for? Did your job change (was this a promotion or did you move into a different department? Did you have to undertake any training for this job i.e. day release or night school? Did you get a pay raise?

5. **Was this job suitable or had you other ambitions/careers in mind?**

If they did not stay in this job for very long, why did you leave and what did you go on to do? OR Did you have to give the job up because you got married or had children?

**CLEARANCE NOTE**

This project aims to record peoples memories of leaving school and entering employment. The project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that your contribution is added to the collections of the digital:works sound archive in strict accordance with your wishes. All material will be preserved as a permanent public reference resource for use in research, publication, education, lectures, broadcasting and the internet. The archive will be stored at Poole Museum's local history centre.

I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution to digital:works sound and photo archive. digital:works reserves the rights to pass this copyright over to other archives, i.e Poole Museum's local history centre and the British Library.

The photographs and oral history you allow us to record may be used for promotion including newsletters, leaflets, posters and books. They may also be used to promote the work of digital:works and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Signed . . . . . Date . . . . .

Print Name . . . . .

Address . . . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . .

Signed (on behalf of digital:works) . . . . .

Print Name: . . . . . Date . . . . .

