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COMING EVENTS

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EDITORIAL

_Farewell …_

This is the last time that I shall write to you from the Editorial desk. I am delighted to be able to hand over the baton and introduce our new editors, Margaret Leask and Sally Zwartz. Margaret and Sally have worked hard and put this edition of _Voiceprint_ together. Thanks to both of you for taking over and I trust that the task will be rewarding, interesting and enjoyable.

Thank you to all the members who down through the years have responded to my pleas for copy to fill the pages of _Voiceprint_. One last plea: our new editors need support – keep writing.

Joyce Cribb

... and _hullo_

The opportunity to take on the editorship of Voiceprint is both exciting and daunting. We have been inspired to get involved by the commitment and energy of Sandra Blamey, the retiring OHAA-NSW president, members of the committee and Joyce Cribb, retiring editor of _Voiceprint_. Joyce has been invaluable in helping us through the transition, and we thank her for that and for all the work she’s done in making _Voiceprint_ the lively and informative journal it is today (you can read about Joyce’s experiences as editor on p22 of this issue). We hope to follow her example and continue to provide members with a publication that is useful, relevant and interesting – though of course that depends in large part on your contributions! Please share your insights and experiences with the OHAA membership - it’s how we develop our community of practice. All contributions, ideas and suggestions are very welcome – you can get in touch with us at voiceprint@ohaansw.org.au.

Margaret Leask and Sally Zwartz

_Margaret Leask_ was for many years an arts administrator in Australia and England. Since 2004, as an Oral Historian, she has recorded and archived interviews for the National Institute of Dramatic Art, the Sydney Theatre Company, the National Film and Sound Archive and other organisations in Australia. Her biography, _Lena Ashwell: actress, patriot, pioneer_, was published by the University of Hertfordshire Press and the Society for Theatre Research in June 2012. She works as a freelance researcher and theatre historian.

_Sally Zwartz_ has a background in writing, research and editing, starting out many years ago as a journalist first for Consumer magazine in NZ and then CHOICE magazine in Australia. She has a postgraduate diploma in professional writing from UTS and an MA in children’s literature from Macquarie University; her work in the field of oral history so far has mostly related to family histories and community projects with children.

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the members who have joined in the past five months. We hope you find interest and enjoyment in your membership.

_Roger Davis_  Postgraduate historian
_Jo Parnell_  Retired
_Jayne Persian_  Historian
_Ruth Trappel_  Retired
_Peter Gesling_  Company Director
_Jacquelynne Willcox_  Director Public Affairs
ASSOCIATION NEWS AND EVENTS

Some introductions: the 2012-13 committee

A number of batons have been handed over with some new faces joining the OHAA-NSW management committee in 2012-13. The positions of president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, communications and public officer all have new occupants, introduced below.

**Virginia Macleod (President)** was born and grew up in London. She qualified as a physiotherapist and after working and travelling, studied social anthropology and South Asian history at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. She moved to Australia in 1978. She ran a local studies collection for Pittwater Council for 15 years and worked as a freelance historian, completing an MA in Public History at the University of Technology Sydney in 2003. She has written a variety of historical publications including *Liverpool Migration History Project* for Casula Powerhouse in 2009, which included experiences based on oral history interviews. She has curated exhibitions, *The Nature of Manly* and *The Holiday house on the Northern Beaches*, for Manly Art Gallery & Museum. She created a historical interpretation wall for a shopping centre in Balgowlah. Most recently she has interviewed for the National Library of Australia project: *Forgotten Australians and former child migrants* and a City of Sydney Council oral history project *Work in the City*. Previous interviewing includes: long-term local residents of Randwick, employees of a pharmaceutical factory and environmental activists.

**Dr Maria Hill (Vice President)** works as a professional historian using oral history methodology. Recently she conducted interviews with children of World War II veterans examining the transfer of trauma from one generation to the next (2011). Her honours thesis, an intergenerational study of the Greek family in Australia, was based exclusively on oral history interviews and can be accessed on: [http://www.cybernaut.com.au/greeksinoz/](http://www.cybernaut.com.au/greeksinoz/) She also conducted 50 interviews with Greek and Australian veterans for her doctoral thesis which can be heard on her website: [http://www.diggersandgreeks.com.au](http://www.diggersandgreeks.com.au) by clicking the Research button. Maria’s current research project examines, amongst other issues, how campaigns are remembered by the relatives of Australian and Greek people who fought in World War 1 and involves the use of oral history. There is a shorter blurb about Maria’s work on her Linkedin Profile: [http://au.linkedin.com/in/DrMariaHill](http://au.linkedin.com/in/DrMariaHill)

**Andrew Host (Secretary)** started his career in audio in 1980 with two years at radio station 2SM followed by a further 14 years producing audio in the advertising industry. In 1993, when CD recorders first came onto the market in Australia, Andrew started a business called CD Makers, specialising in audio transfers to CD. Five years later for a period of 12 years, CD Makers was merged with another company in North Sydney, but since 2010 Andrew has returned to running CD Makers alone, transferring and restoring audio and video tapes to CD and DVD.

**Tim Carroll (Treasurer)** has been running the arts and cultural program at BYDS (Bankstown Youth Development Service) since 1991. Tim and his team have used a number of oral history projects with locals as the basis for a number of successful theatre projects: most recently *I'm Your Man*, the runaway hit of the 2012 Sydney Festival. BYDS are currently wrapping up an eight year Aboriginal oral history project with local elders which will result in an online and printed publication. (*I'm Your Man* will tour nationally in the second half of 2013 – watch out for it).

**Susan Kennedy (Communications)** is a Records Manager and TRIM administrator currently working for the ABC in Ultimo. Her duties include business analysis and classification of records, appraisal and disposal, training and developing records management courses, and contributing to policy and procedures. She has co-produced two short marketing videos to showcase her department, and a short film on preserving archives called *Get the Picture* (runner up in the AMIA film competition of 2010). She is a qualified archivist and teacher who has also co-produced an ABC radio program
Verbatim - Give My Regards to Stalin) based on an oral history she did of Marie Armstrong, former communist, and life member of the New Theatre. In her spare time she likes to act, direct and play the ukulele.

Graham Hinton (Public Officer) is the curator at the Lady Denman Maritime Museum, Huskisson, where he is responsible for the management of the museum’s collections. This includes a growing number of oral histories as well as photograph and objects ranging in size from a 30 metre ferry to fragments taken from shipwreck sites.

OHAA-NSW COMMITTEE 2012-2013

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Seminars and workshops 2012

Trish Levido and Carol McKirdy have conducted two Capturing memories: oral history in the digital age workshops this year, the first on February 18 and a repeat on April 28; both were booked out. We have many participants new to oral history and keen to learn.

Then there was a very successful seminar, Using oral history to preserve your family history, conducted on May 12 by the very experienced team of Janis Wilton, Di Ritch, Michael Clarke and Laurel Wright. Network News has reported on these events, and the seminar was available for members as a sound file on our website. Keep an eye out for sound files as it is not possible to have them up on our website forever. Do visit regularly to see and hear the latest information and listen ‘now’ (in fact sound files are starting to be available on the web but the timeframe may be limited).

I will not report again on these excellent programs but rather comment about the interest and enjoyment members gain from attendance. Oral historians all seem to be interested in what others are doing and these workshops give members the chance to catch up with friends, make new ones and have conversations with some of the more experienced members. They have extra benefits for members as well as interesting and informative programs. We have many new members who are anxious to learn about oral history and workshop places are limited so those attending can participate in an interactive way. We do not fill a great big lecture hall where the audience sometimes does not understand and has no opportunity to ask questions. There are always questions and answers, with the answer sometimes coming from the audience, and the enthusiasm for oral history is inspiring. Our experienced members have always been very generous in giving their time and knowledge. Members come to these events from all over the state and are often able to make contact with others who have a similar interest – lots of email addresses are exchanged. It is good to find someone to talk over your projects with, as so many members work by themselves.

Do come to these days; the programs and company are always interesting, the venues are comfortable and there is always tea, coffee, and something to eat – so you go home with renewed enthusiasm! Workshop and seminar registration details are published in Network News – book early for the November seminar – see some of you there!

Joyce Cribb
Report on OHAA NSW 2012 AGM and Seminar

The meeting and seminar took place in the Jean Garling Room at the State Library of NSW on Saturday September 22. The retiring President, Sandra Blamey, welcomed approximately 60 attendees. The Minutes of the previous AGM (September 13 2011) were accepted and Sandra explained that overall the finances were sound. For a small organisation, the NSW branch has done well and is financially viable. The Association has money in reserve, in investments and to work with. Sandra’s President’s report had been circulated in advance and is available online, so she chose to illustrate, with a couple of stories, what OHAA NSW is, using a phrase coined by Susan Kennedy, the new editor of Network News: ‘a community of practice’. Sandra described a number of situations where members had facilitated significant interviews by putting people in touch with each other and sharing their knowledge and contacts. She ‘raised a glass’ to this community of practice which is the oral historian’s contribution to the rich tapestry of experience which enriches our understanding of history.

Officebearers were officially elected following nominations for all committee positions. Virginia Macleod and Maria Hill were welcomed as President and Vice President and Sandra thanked the outgoing and incoming office bearers for their commitment and contribution. She also saluted some long-standing members, including Nancy Manefield, OAM, a staunch supporter for 20 years. She also acknowledged regional people who are spreading the word throughout NSW. Virginia Macleod introduced herself, explaining her oral history experience and thanking Sandra for ‘getting us involved when we were hanging back!’ Frances Rush presented Sandra with a gift and thanks from the members. Sandra’s role in expanding partnerships with organisations in Macquarie St, Sydney, and in regional areas was acknowledged, as was her major contribution to the Association’s website.

After morning tea, Rosie Block thanked Sally Hone for the Association’s use of the Jean Garling Room at the State Library and Sandra explained briefly who Jean Garling was and why the room had been named after such a generous benefactor. Rosie asked Sally to talk about her curatorial role in the digital updating of the library’s oral history collection. Sally advised the meeting that the library had received substantial state government funding to digitise material and increase regional access to its collections. Oral history was in the top 10 priorities for this process, which will probably take five years. Iconic collections, such as Richard Raxworthy’s 30 interviews relating to the Sydney Harbour Bridge,
have been digitised to the highest quality. Having listened to many of the Bridge interviews, she said her whole experience of the bridge (which she crosses daily on her bike) has changed. She acknowledged the huge task of collecting metadata but looks forward to the improved delivery for library users. Sally then welcomed Julian Raxworthy, Richard's son, to the gathering. Julian had provided electronic versions of his father's interviews to the library.

Frank Heimans, an oral historian and filmmaker since the mid 1970s who has recorded more than 850 interviews, was introduced and presented his paper – on giving the Sydney Harbour Bridge a number of voices. His starting point, to mark the 80th anniversary of the Bridge's opening, had been 'what has oral history done for the Bridge?' The answer, which became apparent, is that it had given it different viewpoints from those of politicians, the press etc, some of which we heard when Frank played his 38 minute compilation disc of extracts from Richard Raxworthy’s interviews with those who had worked on its construction. (An edited version of Frank’s paper, together with some of the illustrations he used, is published in this edition of Voiceprint; see p9). During Frank’s paper, he asked Julian Raxworthy to say a few words about his father’s life and work and how this had impacted on his interview style. Frank showed extracts from a film of the Bridge, made to mark the 75th anniversary (March 18 2007) and concluded his presentation with extracts from 153 interviews he recorded on that day when thousands of people celebrated the ‘Iron Lung’ of Sydney by walking across it.

Sally Hone, in thanking Frank, expressed appreciation for his juxtaposition of contemporary views with historical material. She then described the library website under construction and demonstrated how it will be possible to listen to some interviews online, view transcripts and photographs, hopefully early next year.

Sandra Blamey announced two forthcoming events for OHAA NSW members, expressed appreciation for the presentation and thanked everyone for attending.

Margaret Leask

New home for Voiceprint

A new agreement between the OHAA NSW and the National Library of Australia means Voiceprint will now be stored at the library’s PANDORA archive. PANDORA – which stands for Preserving and Accessing Networked Documentary Resources of Australia - is a web archive that collects Australian online publications, established initially by the National Library of Australia in 1996, and now being built in collaboration with nine other Australian libraries and cultural collecting organisations.

The agreement grants the National Library a copyright licence that permits it to copy Voiceprint into the archive and provide online public access to it in perpetuity.

Access to Voiceprint will be possible in two ways: via subject and title lists maintained on the PANDORA home page, at http://pandora.nla.gov.au/index.html, or via the Library’s online catalogue. To get directly to Voiceprint, follow this link (and bookmark it!): http://nla.gov.au/nla.arc-130957

REPORTS AND PROJECTS

History Week 2012

This article was written before September 8-16, when History Week was held. Keep an eye out for reports written after the event in upcoming issues of Network News and/or Voiceprint.

Sixteen years ago in 1997 the History Council of NSW (HCNSW) began History Week. It is a NSW state-based event and was established to demonstrate and celebrate the rich and varied history created, written and produced by organisations and individuals throughout NSW.

History Week is a significant part of the NSW cultural calendar that engages local communities throughout NSW. Each year members of the History Council of NSW collaborate to host events that explore a particular theme in a variety of formats, for example – talks, exhibitions, tours and online...
The HCNSW aims to host events that appeal to as many people as possible and the events vary each year to suit the particular theme. For instance, in 2011 with the theme of Eat History it was possible to attend events at which participants could sample various foods from previous eras. Community groups, local councils, libraries, archives, museums, universities, cultural institutions, professional and amateur historians across NSW present the latest in today’s historical research – fascinating stories, artefacts and experiences about both our past and ourselves today.

As explained on the HCNSW website, the objectives of History Week are:

**Showcase:** to showcase history in an innovative and exciting format.

**Experience:** to give people a sensory experience of a moment in time.

**Attract:** to attract new audiences to history, demonstrating that history is exciting, relevant and all around us.

**Diversity:** to present audiences with the rich and diverse history relevant to all aspects of our community.

**Educate:** to provide educational experiences that reach out to students from primary to tertiary level and promote lifelong learning opportunities.

With over 100 events across NSW, History Week is about celebrating the best in community and professional history, highlighting its role in our cultural life and inviting people to get involved.

The theme for 2012 is Threads:

*They wore what?! Long before the fashionistas of today decided ‘the look’, dress was an important element of human expression. From status to style, culture to professional identity, clothes have defined us. History Week 2012 explores the history of threads and unpicks the meaning behind the wardrobes of the past.*
In 2012, the response from Oral History Association NSW members has been generous. Members submitted twelve soundbites and 10 were chosen based on audio quality and relevance to the theme Threads. Getting such a wonderful response this year has been gratifying; members are able to showcase the projects they have worked on, with appropriate personal acknowledgement and as an organisation we are in a position to give an audience to the voice of a select group of interviewees. In 2009 I was fortune enough to win a Westfield’s NSW Premier’s History scholarship and as a consequence I travelled around the United Kingdom visiting centres dedicated to the collection of oral history. This was very exciting but also sad because more than once I was told that after the fanfare of conducting an oral history project recordings are often not listened to. Often I was the first person to ever listen to someone’s thoughts and recollections. The Oral History Association NSW Soundbites event embraces digital technology using the online platform available with the History Council NSW website and makes it easy to hear an interviewee’s words. The soundbites are limited to about nine minutes maximum length but with one click anyone can access the full interviews. And images to support the oral histories are easily included.

Assembling the project in the required format for the HCNSW was interesting! Audio files came in several unusable formats and had to be converted to the required MP3 format; text was sometimes hard copy rather than digital as were some images and file extension names had to be formatted for safe deposit on a website. However nothing was too difficult to sort out. Contributors worked exceptionally hard to follow up on copyright and hunt down pictures and all the extra paperwork required – all done graciously and with good humour and only a tiny buffering of deadlines. Working with oral historians put simply, generates respect for the profession and was a lot of fun. As oral historians the technical tools we use are digital but the digital field is vast and compiling this event illustrated how much digital know-how we need to apply and utilize.

The soundbites for 2012 vary enormously. Anna Green explains how she and her husband escaped communist Hungary in a potentially deadly ‘game’ of dressing up. Glennis Murphy explains how her professional dancing career led to a fascination with vintage fashion. Fred Darmody and two mates talk about the importance of a hanky in Papuan New Guinea waters in WW2. Robyn Nevin describes a wonderful stage costume. Phyllis Stroud, Australia’s first ever Miss Cronulla, talks about early swim suits. Anne Melkman, a fashion retailer explains ‘I had to know who was wearing what’, John Hilton talks about the famous clothing brand his father established and Margaret Gutman talks of how she and June Dally-Watkins took fashion shows to Sydney factories. Eleanor Keene talks about extremely old clothing and textiles she sold in a famous English auction house and Jean Carroll talks about theatre millinery in the Australian Ballet and the movie industry.

Many other events feature at History Week 2012, from all over NSW Among them are ‘Fashion Undercover’, ‘Cinderella You Shall go to the Ball’, ‘Fashion Yarns: Tales from the City’, ‘Flash Back: 160 years of Australian Fashion in Photos’, and ‘Threads: a Survey of Fashion’.

Carol McKirdy

For more information about History Week visit the History Council website at http://historycouncilnsw.org.au/
Giving the bridge a voice

Sydneysiders proudly refer to their icon, the Sydney Harbour Bridge, as the ‘coat hanger’. Others simply call it ‘the bridge’, and although there are now many other bridges in Sydney, that description would leave no-one in any doubt as to which bridge they were referring.

This article is going to give the bridge a voice – in fact, many voices, as more than a few oral history projects, documentary films and television broadcasts about the bridge have been made in the 80 years since it opened in 1932. Oral history has played an important role in bridge history because oral history can present a story that is different to the perspectives of the bridge’s designers, engineers and politicians.

The bridge has been idolised by some and cursed by others – how many times has someone late for an appointment, or dinner called to say ‘I’m stuck on the bridge.’ People have walked and cycled over it, run over it in marathons, climbed it, flown over it, sailed under it, had community breakfast on it and in the past some have thrown themselves off it in a final act of desperation. The bridge has been part of Sydney for so long now that it’s difficult to imagine Sydney without it.

The bridge is the stuff of legends. There are many stories, mostly unrecorded, involving the bridge. That brings to mind a story that I first heard when I came to Sydney to work for a film company as a young film editor in the 1960s. The cameraman on staff related to me a story about another cameraman with whom he was travelling across the bridge - a freelance news cameraman for ABC Television (they used to call them ‘stringers’) by the name of Doug Hardy. This fellow and Doug, who was driving, were racing across the bridge to film an urgent news story about a fire that had broken out in the city and were doing over 70 miles an hour, clearly breaking the speed limit. They were, of course, followed by a cop on a motorcycle. Unaware of this, Doug was having a quick lunch, eating a rather runny meat pie. He decided that he did not like the taste of the pie and threw it out the window. That pie was collected squarely in the face of the motorcycle policeman, who was fast coming up on Doug’s side to book him. The policeman lost control of his motorcycle and crashed spectacularly while Doug, still unaware of what he had done, was never booked. Just another bridge story - every Sydneysider probably has one.
The idea of a harbour crossing was first proposed to Governor Macquarie by convict and Colonial Architect Francis Greenway as early as 1815 but at that stage it was no more than a pipedream. It was not until 1857 that the first sketches of a proposed bridge across the harbour were drawn by a Sydney engineer, Peter Henderson, who had served under George Stephenson, the inventor of the railway locomotive.

There were many other plans for a bridge and various tunnels proposed and most of these ended up in the dustbin of history.

In 1912 John Bradfield was appointed as Chief Engineer of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and Metropolitan Railway Construction Branch of the Department of Public Works and in charge of city transit. Bradfield was a clever man, a good engineer and he was an all-rounder, with knowledge of Greek, Latin, the arts and literature. He was also very persuasive and dedicated, and his own great spin doctor, as he was described by Caroline Mackaness, former Curator of the Historic Houses Trust, in an oral history interview that I conducted with her in 2007.

Initially Bradfield proposed a cantilever bridge but the government of the day could not make up its mind and they sent Bradfield overseas on a study tour where he saw arch bridges in the United States that greatly impressed him. He redesigned his original work and that is how we now have the bridge that the world knows.

Construction began in 1925 and the bridge was opened in 1932 during the depths of the Great Depression. It was, and still is one of the greatest engineering feats in the history of Australia, together with the Sydney Opera House.

One of the first people to give the bridge a voice was Richard Raxworthy. In 1982, for the 50th anniversary of the bridge’s opening, Richard, who had a background in ship engineering, persuaded the then Department of Main Roads to allow him to record an oral history project in which he recorded the recollections of those who worked on the construction of the bridge. The interviewees were by then all men in their 70s and 80s. Richard became a fervent oral historian, carrying out about 1600 interviews during his lifetime.

Peter Lalor, who wrote a book about the bridge, quotes this gem about Richard:

‘For somebody coming to the history of the Harbour Bridge now, Richard is a curse and a blessing. A curse because there is nowhere you can go that Richard hasn’t been before you. A blessing because Richard went there before it was too late, before the stories had passed and it is a blessing because Richard proved to be so generous with his research and knowledge.’

The ‘Sydney Harbour Bridge Builders’ Oral History’ was Richard’s first major project and he carried it out with amazing research skills and incredible attention to detail. He became the pre-eminent Australian oral historian of his generation and his interviews have recently been digitised by the State Library of NSW where they have become a classic collection.
For the 75th anniversary of the opening of the bridge in 2007 I was commissioned by the Roads and Traffic Authority (now Roads and Maritime Services) to produce an oral history project to commemorate the event. On the day the bridge was closed to traffic for 18 hours as over 200,000 people crossed it by foot in one of the greatest community events in Sydney’s history. Every bridge walker was given a green cap to commemorate the occasion and they became part of the Bridge Family in a sea of green.

I was able to record spontaneous interviews with over 150 members of the public as they walked the bridge and offered their views and feelings on what it meant to them to be there that day. In addition, structured interviews were held with those who were involved in the planning and execution of the event. Over 13 hours of material was recorded on digital audio tape. Project Manager for the event was Vince Taranto, a fervent originator and supporter of oral history at the Roads and Traffic Authority.

Some of the comments from the public were illuminating:

**Dana Wong**: Oh, it is an historic moment, it happens only once in a lifetime, really. My daughter has just done a headstand, we took photographs, she’ll be the first person that did a handstand on the Harbour Bridge.

**Shirley Brown**: We are from Nottingham and we are on holiday here and this has been the most wonderful experience I can tell you about, fantastic.

**Peter Brown**: Really good. I mean we will never see it again in our lifetime and I don’t suppose we shall ever walk the bridge and thanks to Sydney for letting us cross it. How’s that? Marvellous.

**Shirley Brown**: We are really thrilled to have done it.

**Peter Brown**: Thrilled to bits we are.

**Shirley Brown**: We are also going to have to tell them at Trent Bridge in Nottingham where we come from - we want a celebration like this.

**Bruce Macnamara**: There were 16 people killed in the construction, but when you consider the conditions that they worked and you see some of the photographs and there was no Occupational Health and Safety, the guys are up there with nothing attached to them, no ropes, no harnesses, helmets or anything, working away.

The organisers of the 75th Anniversary event wanted to make this a special day of celebration and they had teams coming up with ideas to entertain the 200,000 people who would march across the bridge that day. Catherine Parker was the RTA’s Communications Services Manager.

**Catherine Parker**: There was some discussion about having an iconic Australian person who would create a concert on the bridge. Someone either seriously or jokingly suggested Kylie Minogue should do a concert off the bridge.

Rachel Hurford was the Director of Special Event Management at the RTA.

**Rachel Hurford**: We created a soundscape that lined the bridge, we worked closely with the ABC, so as people crossed the bridge they actually, I guess, experienced an audio journey, they went through the seven or eight decades of the bridge’s life, starting in 1932, and they had a mix of music, news bites and grabs, so definitely a first. We engaged a sound engineer, designer, who is quite brilliant technically. He designed the system to be positioned that would achieve you being able to walk into a decade and walk out of a decade and then into another without them overlapping from an audio point of view. We referred to them as sound pods, so you walked through from the overture through to the sound chimes at the end. (1)

One of the more unusual characters found on the bridge was John Arkwright, an eccentric Englishman dressed up as Santa Claus.

**Frank Heimans**: Would you like to say a few words to us?

**John Arkwright**: Nothing, except that I’m older than the bridge, thank you. My 76th birthday is next week.

**FH**: You don’t remember the opening, of course, of the bridge then?

**JA**: No, I don’t know, I was still in short pants, or nappies.

**FH**: So what do you feel about the bridge?

**JA**: It is wonderful. I have put on my hat just in case any of your Colonial workmen might have dropped a rivet on my head.

**FH**: I don’t think there will be any more rivets falling now.
JA: Don’t you think? Well I’m glad to hear it.
FH: Now what does it mean to you this bridge?
JA: Not a lot I have to admit. I hear that you frequently get stuck on it.
FH: You mean it doesn’t match up to bridges in the old country?
JA: It is a nice little young bridge, yes.
FH: You have a bridge probably 1000 years old in the London Tower Bridge.
JA: That’s right.
FH: Do you think our bridge can compare to your bridge?
JA: Well it is not bad for beginners.

One of those interviewed was Malcolm Turnbull, then Minister of the Environment in the Howard Government.

Malcolm Turnbull: I am very excited to be here today with hundreds and thousands of other Australians and Sydneysiders. It is a wonderful day, the bridge has been part of the life of its history - it has really framed the city for 75 years. All of us have our own special memories of the bridge. I was particularly pleased earlier today to announce that we are placing the bridge on the National Heritage List so that is a very important recognition of the bridge's cultural and historical importance for Sydney and of course for all of Australia, it is one of the great icons of Australia. If the bridge were to be built today it would be an awesome feat. But to imagine it in a city with no skyscrapers, with no Opera House, with no jets flying overhead, a city of a completely different scale, a fraction of the size, this must have seemed even more remarkable, much more remarkable than it is today.

Frank Heimans: So what sort of a statement do you think it makes for Sydney?
Malcolm Turnbull: Oh I think this bridge is all about Sydney, it is really saying welcome, isn’t it, it is an open gate.

Among the bridge interviews there were many historical connections of the public and the structure.

Vera Douglas: You know, I am nearly 83 and I’m walking along here because my father helped Bradfield build the bridge, he made all the rockers, steel rockers that held the cables on the bridge. You know, this bridge at the bottom has four large rockers - well they were too big for here, but all the little ones down in the tunnels at Wynyard and on the other side that held the cables that held the bridge up until it was joined were on the rockers that my daddy made. Now I hear everybody at the moment talking about their grandfathers and what they did but that was my father, that’s a long time ago.

As well as the event went, there was an unexpected tragedy on the day, which threatened to throw the whole event into chaos. Bill Lawson was the Executive Manager, Major Events at the RTA.

Bill Lawson: In designing any event we always have a contingency because we really don’t know what is going to be served at us, but unfortunately just before 2pm on that Sunday afternoon, the 18th of March somebody decided to commit suicide at North Sydney Station and that of course disrupted train services. It presented a huge problem in terms of the delivery of people to North Sydney Station, where we had to actually then marshall most of them to Milsons Point Station. Police were on the scene very quickly, the situation was able to be recovered fairly quickly. It is a shame that it happened and it is a shame for the person concerned, of course.

Noel Staunton was invited by the RTA to design the event.

Noel Staunton: We decided to do a smoking ceremony on the bridge because we felt the Aborigines that lived around the bridge at the time - there were two important communities there. So we engaged Stephen Page, the artistic director of Bangarra Dance Company, and we worked with him to find a big smoking ceremony and we put 90 drums on the bridge and filled them with eucalyptus in a particular way and they gave off a whole lot of beautiful smoke. And we gave all the members of the public caps with lights on, so if you imagine a picture of a sea of lights and smoke smelling of eucalyptus and a fantastic soundscape of Aboriginal music composed by David Page, Stephen’s brother. It was the most magical moment on the bridge and I will never forget that as long as I live.

To end this article, the last word is from Charles Traill, who walked the bridge.

Charles Traill: A soldier, a Pommy soldier and an Aussie were walking down George Street or whatever and the Yank said, 'You know it took us six months just to build the White House.' And
the Pommy said, ‘Oh that's nothing, Buckingham Palace only took three months.’ They turned the corner and they saw the bridge and they said to the Aussie ‘What's that?’ and he said, ‘I don’t know mate, it wasn’t here this morning.’ (6)

NOTES
(1) Oral history interview with Rachel Hurford, May 7 2007
(2) Oral history interview with Malcolm Turnbull, March 18 2007
(3) Oral history interview with Vera Douglas, March 18 2007
(4) Oral history interview with Bill Lawson, April 27 2007
(5) Oral history interview with Noel Staunton, May 8 2007
(6) Oral history interview with Charles Traill on bridge, March 18 2007

Building a resource – the Fintona Oral History Group

As a voluntary group of past students of Fintona Girls’ School - aged from 38 to 92, and drawn together by an interest in the education of women by women - we set out with enthusiasm, and a host of misconceptions, to preserve first-hand accounts of the life of an educational institution. Fintona was founded in 1896 by Annie Hughston, or so the mythology said. One of our exciting, but not universally welcomed, findings is that a man, Annie’s brother, was heavily involved in the foundation years.

Our aim was to build an archive of recorded memories of the school. Much of our effort has been directed towards interviewees, aged from 90 to 105 years, who have first-hand memories of the founder. In a sense these interviews with the elderly have redirected the project from being solely concerned with an institution, to the gathering of life stories (1). The volunteers’ journey has been one full of error, misconception, invention and interest. Technical details are in the following footnote (2). Some of what we’ve learned and still have to resolve is noted in the paragraphs below. Any comments and suggestions are welcome.

We have learned that oral history is not quick or simple, as we had naively thought! We feel privileged to have shared part of the lives and thinking of our interviewees. We now know that selecting interviewees is a fraught task, as the famous are not necessarily the most interesting or most informative. One of the wonders of digital sound editing is that our mainly conversational interviews don’t have to be perfect. We have made significant historical findings, which we accumulate in a wiki (an editable website) (3), along with ideas and considered speculations. Indeed, working out how to set up and use a wiki has been one of the many unanticipated benefits of the project.

However, if we had known at the outset what this project would involve, we would not have undertaken it. Not only is the project intellectually demanding, but it is very time consuming. Commercial firms cost each personal interview as taking about 30 hours. This seems unbelievable, but is in fact realistic. The time and effort demanded makes this a difficult project for volunteers. Anyone thinking of a project like ours needs to be very confident that the topic will sustain the
volunteers’ interest. We believe that groups need reinforcement in the form of moral, critical and financial support from the wider community.

We still don’t know how to guarantee the survival of our digital archive, or its accessibility to researchers. A better oral history project for volunteers may be one with an end point, such as our sub-project to compile an account of the life of Annie Hughston. This account will be added to the sound releases of individual interviews already made. Our releases, some of which we hope will appeal to readers of this article and to social and educational historians, can be downloaded from www.fintonahistory.com.au.

Lis Christensen, Prue Gill and Mary Lush
Correspondence to historyinfo@fintonahistory.com.au

NOTES

(1) Examples are releases 1-3, www.fintonahistory.com.au
(2) We use a Zoom H2 recorder (WAV mode), informed consent and copyright documents are in perpetual evolution and based on university and National Library of Australia documents, files are stored on DVDs (Taiyo Yuden) backed up to external hard drives, and the whole archive is made searchable based on timed summaries (using Audacity, free software) uploaded to the group’s wiki (Mediawiki, free software) and also archived as TXT and Ms Word files. Chronologies and other interviewer aids are also on the wiki.
(3) www.oral.fintonahistory.com.au, user name OHAAmember and password OHaaSept12. If this login doesn’t work email us for access.

Oral history: just how far do you go?

In 2011, my husband Graham and I were holidaying in Banff, B.C. Canada when we met up, quite by accident, with an amazing lady. Her name is Dorothy Carleton and we met her by being in the right place, at the right time: outside the Whyte Museum in Banff, where there was an exhibition about 10 Iconic Women of the Rocky Mountains, one of whom was Dorothy. After spending half an hour talking to this 91 and 7/8ths years young lady, I was totally smitten by her and her story and we made a bargain: if she was still alive in another 12 months, then we would travel back to Banff and I would record her whole life story for her family, as her legacy.

What made Dorothy one of this elite group of women was the Canadian part of her story. After a life in England, just outside London, during the 1940s war years she was an Air Raid Warden at night and worked during the day, and for relaxation she would sing (which she has loved to do since she was very small) and dance with the servicemen on R & R leave nearby. Her connection with Canada began when she married her Ed (a Canadian), whom she met at one of these dances. She subsequently travelled as a war bride to Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada with her three month old son, commencing with the train trip across Canada to Lake Louise, Alberta, meeting up with her husband some time later.

Ed secured a job working as a park warden in the Rocky Mountains National Park - not somewhere that Dorothy, in her previous life in England, could have imagined herself living, but an ideal role for Ed as he was a real backwoodsman. Dorothy however, loved the outdoors too and perhaps this added to their lifelong romance. Her new home was a log cabin set many miles away from civilisation in the mountains and in this cabin Dorothy raised her three boys, home schooling them until high school and

Trish Levido with Rocky Mountains icon Dorothy Carleton
cooking in the round cast iron oven on the side of the stove pipe that connected the pot belly heater to the chimney. Ed was away a lot of the time checking on the telephonic communications throughout the National Park, as severe weather, such as heavy snowfalls, would often bring down the wires. The cabin was without running water or power and, in the early days of Dorothy’s life there, without a telephone.

Eventually a telephone was installed in the cabin - not so she could chat to far distant friends, but so she could report the weather conditions at her part of the mountains back to Park HQ. The phone was one of those that hung on the wall with a handle on the side that you turned. This was when Dorothy’s life improved immeasurably, as she could now talk to other women and made some life-long friends – a real asset when Ed was away for long periods.

As anyone who is an oral historian understands, this sort of story is irresistible, especially when you add in the personality of Dorothy, a one of a kind, who at all of about five feet tall seems still to be a ball of energy. The recording was done in a log cabin exactly like hers, which had been removed to the grounds of the Whyte Museum and decorated with items very familiar to her, including the wall phone, kerosene lantern and of course her pot bellied stove. Dorothy informed me that she wouldn’t be able to sit for too long, as she needed to ‘keep moving’ and move she did, throughout the four hour interview. She helped me stoke the pot bellied stove which kept us warm and kept jumping up and moving about the cabin like a 20 year old as she talked about the various artefacts.

The interview was unique in so many ways. To be able to take Dorothy back through her life whilst recording her story in a cabin similar to the one she’d lived in so long ago was such a bonus. There were some issues, however. The major one was that when I began to ask a question Dorothy would jump in before I had finished and of course, I would stop speaking as soon as she spoke, which unfortunately led to a lack of flow which I usually strive to achieve. Also, before the interview I was able to do a lot of internet research on Dorothy and indeed managed to cover most of her story pre-interview by speaking at length to her eldest son Mike, who lived in Calgary. I asked him what he would like me to ask his mum about in the interview. Mike requested information on the years before she married Ed. Dorothy however, was concerned that we were spending too long talking about these years when we should have moved quickly through them and onto the ‘interesting’ part – her years in the Rockies. But to hear the crackling of the fire in the stove, to turn the telephone handle and hear the familiar ringing and to watch Dorothy’s face reflected in the lantern light made this a very special oral history.

Our interview was over all too quickly and it was time to drive her back to her house, ‘aways up the hill’ past the Fairmont Banff Hotel, and to spend our final time with her over a cup of tea in her beautiful home looking at the deer in the neighbour’s garden. I should also mention that this special day was arranged well in advance as she had commitments – the day before she was singing for the Alzheimers Group and the next day she had to go and help out at the Hospital fete. Dorothy loves to sing still and at every opportunity will break into song in a remarkably steady and lovely voice. Her favourite song? ‘Keep on Smiling’.

If you’re interested, you can google Dorothy (see details below) to find videos of Dorothy, including in the cabin where we did the interview - and she will even sing you a song!

What an honour and a privilege it was to record this very special and wonderful lady’s oral history.

**Trish Levido**

Google: Dorothy Carleton, Whyte Museum, Banff, Canada. The Whyte Museum site will open; on the right of the page is a list of iconic people of the Rocky Mountains. Click on number 11 - Kathy Calvert and Dorothy Carleton. This will bring up a video of them both. The first part of the six minute video is about Kathy and at 3:03 minutes it turns to Dorothy’s life, with photos of her being married in England, the ship on which she travelled to Nova Scotia and so on. You can also see Dorothy singing on YouTube: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60pqeg7ci5E](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60pqeg7ci5E)
Parents as educators – voices of the past and vision for the future

Oral histories formed the basis of sociological and qualitative research for my doctoral thesis in sociology, which investigated the changing role of parents in their children’s Catholic education over the 20th century. It was the culmination of many years experience and engagement in the field of education.

Parents have been recognised traditionally, by both state and church, as responsible for their children’s education. Both institutions are committed to the aim of social and cultural reproduction. Catholic Church decrees and secular educational documents, including overseas reports, reinforce the determining nature of the parent role as the ‘primary educator’ in the educational, moral and social development of the child. How this played out at the school level was the focus of the study, which investigated what the situation was, why, and how or why it has changed.

The study involved three groups of parents and religious teachers representing three distinct periods of the 20th century: 1900-1950 (age 85-100); 1950-1975 (age 60-85) and 1975-2000 (age 30-60). The cross-generational perceptions of the parent role were examined in three ways: from childhood memories of how their parents had been involved in their schooling; secondly how parents themselves had been involved in their children’s Catholic education and thirdly, how the religious teachers had involved parents in their schools. The collective memories were tape-recorded both individually and in focus groups. The questions were specific but also tended towards a certain open-endedness which allowed spontaneity and reflection. Sensitivity was required as painful incidents were recalled. Interviews were analysed in terms related to the parent role in Catholic schools. How Catholic parents were viewed, particularly by church authorities and in relation to education and schools, was significant. Equally important was how Catholic parents saw their own role.

The oral history testimonies enabled me to unravel the processes that were in place during each period and subsequently to detect the shift in traditional practices that related to the parental role, where there was scant recognition of it and, often, certain customs that limited it.

My argument claimed that parents had been marginalised in the first 50 years of the century and that they had adopted a compliant, submissive role in support of the Catholic school and parish. The explicit oral histories portrayed how everyone knew their place. The parents had a subservient role, related to fundraising, making cakes and so on, and did not expect any other role as Sister, Brother or Father knew best. Interestingly, the religious teachers themselves reinforced this premise as they adapted their notions about parent involvement to fit this all-pervasive model.

The memories of the participants provided a colourful kaleidoscope of experience, sociologically and historically. A story was revealed of heroic struggle to provide educational facilities for children in the first 50 years of the century. It was found that the parents did not resent their role during this period as the fundraising and manual work at the schools provided a social life when their cultural heritage of being Irish tended to exclude them within wider society. They kept their cultural practices of music, poetry, song and dance alive and supported the authority of the religious teachers and priests without
question. They found unity in adversity and considered that education was vital for their children, representing ‘social capital’.

Oral history and qualitative research methods guided the investigation and analysis of the collected data, considered against the changing social context of each period. Sociological factors such as WWI and the Great Depression were influential in dictating cultural norms during the first 50 years.

The effects of significant social shifts permeated the oral history memories in the second half of the century and were closely allied with social and cultural events such as reconstruction after WWII; the ‘baby boom’ era; feminist movement; the 60s revolution which swept the western world; the second Vatican Council in the Catholic Church and the upheaval that followed; the Vietnam War; space age; the diversity of a multicultural society due to arrival of migrants in Australia. Better educated parents began to express their right to participate in their children’s education. Teachers, who had become accustomed to parents playing a supportive role within parameters set by them, noted that some degree of tension started to surface.

In exploring the changing parent-teacher relation through oral history, issues were identified such as power and authority and how these were used to promote social cohesion; education as a key component of socialisation; stratification - inclusion and exclusion in society and within the Catholic Church and school communities; and the concept of the institutional Church and community which provided a sense of belonging.

The memories of the participants added a richness and depth to the data collection and were drawn into the theoretical analysis of the perceived notion of parents’ role in Catholic schools over the 20th century. The collective memory of those involved in the study ensured a ‘living link’ between generations and indicated how traditions are transmitted from one generation to the next - for example, mothers were the main decision-makers in the education of their children. This notion was authenticated by the group as a whole. The way the story unfolded reveals how events and people of certain circumstances came to be the way they are. The research highlighted the need for more practical recognition to be given to the participatory role of parents in a partnership with teachers. The challenge facing the educators of the future is to work out how to realise the complementary nature of their roles.

Oral history in this research offered me the role of an ‘advocate’ in enhancing recognition of the critical role parents play in education. It seems that many teachers tend to regard parents as ‘those who are supportive; those who complain and those I never see.’ A principal reinforced this perception when he commented, ‘There is only one thing worse than the parent who is always bothering me, and that is the parent I never see.’

Since then I have once again drawn on oral histories for my research with indigenous parents in an inner city school, while still focusing on the intergenerational element of the larger academic work.

A book based on the oral history and sociological research has been published by St Pauls, NSW, as Bridging the Gaps between Families and Schools – the challenge of building inclusive, learning school communities for the 21st Century. The doctoral thesis, Through the Looking Glass... From Comfort and Conformity to Challenge and Collaboration: changing parent involvement in the Catholic
education of their children through the twentieth century, is in the Mitchell Library and has a place ‘on the shelf’ with a call number (Q371.192/4) as it represents 100 years of oral history.

Dr Nance Millar

Sharing oral history: a presentation by Sarah Cudgin

In April 2012 Sarah Cudgin, Curator of Oral History and Contemporary Collecting, Museum of London, gave a presentation to Queensland OHAA. Queensland OHAA made a sound file of Sarah’s talk, available on request for listening but not to be passed on. Dianne Taylor was there and reports here on the event.

The presentation was very informative and contained a great amount of interesting information on work involving oral history in a museum. Sarah came to the museum role with a background not as a teacher or historian but as professional who had worked in a social work field including training, experience and expertise in reminiscence work.

She has a passion for people, especially the underdog, reflected in her projects old and new, for example ‘Lewisham and London Voices’ and, most recently, an oral history exhibition on slavery. Her work is very much about getting out into the community and about creating exhibitions that allow community interaction. One of her exhibitions, ‘Belonging’, was based on the contribution of refugees to London.

In relation to the Museum of London oral history collection she has organised and completed a number of projects and placed various sections of the oral history collection online. The project in Lewisham featured some interesting ideas, including a set of postcards with short extracts of interviews printed on them, shopping bags printed with interviews and the creation of a soundwalk. These ideas allowed community interaction and ownership from both the Lewisham people and the broader community. ‘London’s Voices’ explores, reflects on and celebrates London's great diversity through the voices, memories and opinions of the London Museum's rich oral history collection. This was a three-year program (2001-2004) initiated by the Museum of London, designed to engage diverse audiences through innovative oral history projects. A downloadable booklet is available from the ‘London’s Voices’ website (see link below) which explores some of the approaches taken and the lessons learned. It is intended as a case study for anyone planning or carrying out oral history work.

The chapters cover: Collecting with community groups; Partnerships with organisations; Putting oral history online; Exhibiting oral history; Working with artists; Promoting the unexpected.

Digitising of the collection, which involves searching and itemising each collection, is a huge and ongoing job. Funding had to be accessed to employ extra staff with expertise to help with the mammoth job. Questions about how to maintain and care for equipment to be used in the digitisation process were discussed at the presentation, with various options and solutions proposed.

Sarah recommends the use of a secure server that is backed up each night for the archiving of the files, both WAV and mp3. The question of what to do with the recordings without proper permissions was discussed. Sarah explained about the paper trail, gaining copyright clearance and the need to show “due diligence”.

At this stage, with the ongoing work on the digitising of the collection, Sarah and her team are putting together a toolkit that will be helpful for other museums in the future.

I would recommend that anyone interested in oral history and museums visit the website (www.museumoflondon.org.uk/archive/londonsvoices) and follow Sarah’s work for future ideas and developments. .

Dianne Taylor

Dianne has an interest in museums and is a regular volunteer at the newly redeveloped Newcastle Museum.
State Library of NSW: oral history update

As readers of Voiceprint will know, the State Library faces the challenge of preserving and making accessible more than 10,000 hours of analogue sound recordings – on cassette and reel. It also has several hundred hours of DAT and CD recordings that need to be preserved. These recordings – mostly oral histories, but also speeches, radio interviews and other miscellaneous recordings that have come into the collection with manuscripts - have been collected for over 30 years. This material will eventually be lost if it is not converted to digital format and preserved in the Library’s digital storage system.

The Library received very good news in the most recent NSW State Budget, securing $32.6 million (spread over the next four years) to commence the digitisation of 52 of the Library’s most iconic, at risk and highly valued collections as well as to undertake a complete renewal of the Library’s aging infrastructure and technology support systems.

I am very pleased to announce the oral history collection is among the top 10 priorities for digitisation, and the process has begun. Over the past year, I had organised for some of the big, important collections to be prepared for digitisation – a time-consuming process that involves reviewing material and collating data in spreadsheets prior to sending the cassettes and reels off-site. I selected the Ethnic Affairs Commission oral histories from the early 90s, the Institution of Engineers collection, and the Twelfth Hour Holocaust survivor testimonies as priority collections to start with – over 1000 sound cassettes. I have also identified studios that can do the work at the highest archival standards as set out by the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives (IASA – see www.iasa-web.org). The Library will be appointing a project manager to tender out the digitisation work, but in the meantime PARADISEC studio at Sydney University has made a good start on the Ethnic Affairs Commission recordings.

This is an exciting step towards making our important oral history collection truly accessible. The whole project will take more than five years, and it will still be a few years before the collection will be available through the Library’s website, linked to the on-line catalogue. Other preparation work involves checking rights and permissions prior to releasing material. It is hoped that in the meantime the public will be able to access at least a small sample of our collection, through the ‘Discover Collections’ section of the Library’s web site. Currently the web team is working on a prototype to stream online the classic recordings Richard Raxworthy captured in 1982 with 30 Sydney Harbour Bridge workers. For a while researchers will still have to listen to cassettes in the Mitchell reading room, but they are welcome to check with the Curator of Oral History if they need to listen to, or order copies, of recordings already digitised.

Sally Hone
Curator, Oral History
Original Material Branch, State Library of NSW

Producing an audio documentary: The Oodnadatta Track

In 2000 I was in what I have come to call ‘retirement number one’ and I was freelancing travel articles for Overlander, a four wheel drive magazine. One adventure I wrote about traced the route of the Old Ghan railway from its beginning in Port Augusta through marvellous outback places like Marree, Oodnadatta, Finke and Alice Springs.

My research for the article revealed the route of the Ghan coincided for much of its distance with the Oodnadatta Track. In fact, this road followed a route which I termed the “most historic in Australia” because it started out as an aboriginal trading route following a line of natural mound springs. John McDouall Stuart followed this same route in competition with Burke and Wills to be the first across the
Centre. After that came the Overland Telegraph and its associated track which is now called the Oodnadatta Track.

When I wrote the article there was not much in the way of on-site interpretive material for travellers in this region. Adam Plate of the well-known Pink Roadhouse at Oodnadatta had done a remarkable job erecting his hand-lettered roadside panels, but there was nothing to aid in the comprehensive understanding of what I came to call ‘The Oodnadatta Track - Australia’s Most Historic Road’.

The idea I had was to produce a series of cassette tapes (later CDs and now downloadable MP3) that would explain the history of the track and all there was to see along the way. I also decided to interview a half dozen people who lived along the track.

Thus, people could listen to expert commentary on the history of the route, its plants and animals and hear the voices of interesting local residents describing in their own words what it’s like to live in such a remote area. If played while driving along the Track, the listener’s travel experience would merge with Australian history. My target audience included families, overseas travellers, and inquisitive grey nomads.

**Equipment**

To collect the field interviews I used a portable Sony digital mini disc recorder – MZ-R55 with external power pack coupled with a Sony stereo mic – ECM-MS957 with windsock and desk stand. At that time, this equipment seemed to be best value if not state-of-the-art in portable digital recorders.

*Left:* An enormous ochre quarry is near Lyndhurst, SA at the south end of the Oodnadatta Track. For tens of thousands of years this ochre was traded all over inland Australia. *Right:* The waters of the Great Artesian Basin can be tapped with bores or may leak out in natural ‘mound springs’. The water can be extremely warm, sometimes reaching almost boiling.

**Voices**

After a massive research and writing effort, the script I developed called for a presenter who would introduce a segment or explain some short technical/scientific items, and a narrator who would tell the stories. I sourced both presenters from Canberra’s local print handicapped radio station 1RPH. Jenny
Murphy did the presenting while narration was by Jim Johnson. I did the field interviews myself, but being saddled with an American accent, I ensured both the presenter and narrator had good solid Aussie accents.

Music was by Johnny Daylight-Lacey (didgeridoo) and Charlie Davey. I paid a fee to Charlie for use of his mournful ballad about the Flinders Ranges. I also sourced background music through the Australian Mechanical Copyright Owners Society.

Sound engineering was by ArtSound FM studios in Canberra, a local community station which does contract work. The final result was forty tracks occupying four cassettes or CDs and running for three hours.

In searching for likely candidates to interview I went out of my way to ensure I spoke with both women and men. I wanted the women’s stories to provide a counterweight to the “blokey” macho image of the outback.

Lyell Oldfield is from a family with a long history of living and working along and around Marree, South Australia. In the interview, he talks about what it’s like living in Marree and his reaction to the sudden and mysterious appearance of “Marree Man”, the gigantic aboriginal figure carved into the desert near there.

Laurel Frahn was a real gem. She and her husband Hugh had started out on a round Australia adventure, but fell in love with the land around Copper Hills Station west of Oodnadatta. She had spent virtually her entire adult life there. In the interview she tells some humorous stories about riding on the old steam powered Ghan and then relates some sad stories of scorching temperatures buckling the rails and killing kangaroos from heat stress.

Tony Williams is part of a large family that owned a number of cattle leases along the track. He talks of what it’s like managing some of the largest cattle stations in the world and the way in which they have to manage their properties in response to drought and flood.

Alison Speirs came to Australia as a backpacker on holiday. While working part time at a roadhouse she met and fell in love with her husband “Phantom” who managed Hamilton Station. Alison describes her experiences of being left alone for long periods and using the Royal Flying Doctor Service during her pregnancy. It seems a huge leap from the noisy bustling streets of London to outback South Australia but some people seem to just instantly adapt to the quiet isolation and unforgiving environment.

Lynnie and Adam Plate own the famous Pink Roadhouse in Oodnadatta. Lynnie tells the story of how she and Adam were “two hippies” wandering the outback when they “sort of settled” in Oodnadatta and set up a soup kitchen. Things just grew from there. Adam describes the ideas behind the ubiquitous pink hand-lettered road signs and gives some tips to travellers on how to better enjoy their journey.

Martyn Martin was the nurse at Oodnadatta Hospital which was Reverend Flynn’s first outback hospital. It was Flynn who founded the Royal Flying Doctor Service. I took my microphone and followed Martyn on a private tour of the hospital where he describes the history of each room and tells a funny story about the date palm planted outside. His love and respect for the hospital and the people it serves really shine through.

Archiving and marketing

At the time it was first produced I lodged copies with the National Film and Sound Archive in Canberra. ABC regional radio in South Australia was very supportive and arranged for a telephone interview. But of course the ABC cannot plug the product by mentioning contact details or retailers. I also set up a simple website which included an active button to purchase the product from my distributor Westprint Maps. Westprint is mainly an online retailer of outback maps and books. My website button would open the relevant page in Westprint’s online catalogue. These days new websites are quickly found by search engines like Google or StartPage as long as the main web page has some specific titles, facts and images with captions. Regarding pictures, Google Images [http://www.google.com.au/imghp?hl=en&tab=wi] is very clever at finding online pictures with captions.
Lessons learned

Should anyone be thinking of self-publishing an audio documentary, I would suggest they carefully consider the target market. It has proven very difficult for The Oodnadatta Track to find an audience. Travellers these days do not have the time or patience to digest three hour documentaries and modern motor cars are equipped with a wealth of alternative on-demand entertainment options. A confounding factor was that my ‘retirement number one’ came to an end, hence I did not have time to pursue marketing of the product.

Based on my experience, suggestions for intending authors would include:

* Research your market to ensure the product will find a ready audience
* Take your time to find suitable “talent” for the interviews
* Short and pithy is probably better than long and thorough
* To reduce production costs, consider offering the product as an online download instead of physical CDs

Bob Dunn
Contact bob.dunn@bigpond.com

Bob trained as a civil engineer at Texas Tech University before migrating to Australia in 1971. His career in the ACT Public Service and the Australian Public Service included traffic planning, road construction, environment protection, chemicals management, advanced manufacturing policy, and fibre optic networks construction. He is currently in what he terms “retirement number four” but still works part time for his partner’s psychology business. His interests include vintage photography, outback travel and engineering heritage – especially oral histories arising from important engineering projects. Bob has self-published a book The Disputed Country – Australia’s Lost Border available from Westprint Books. [http://www.thedisputedcountry.com]


Voiceprint History: On Paper to Online

I can remember when I first agreed to assist with Voiceprint production back in 1996, Angela Wawn (then editor) asked me if I liked to write, as the Voiceprint committee often had to do a lot of writing if there was a shortage of contributions from members. I have enjoyed writing for you over the years and now as I hand over editorial responsibility to others, I feel it is time to write about my experiences with Voiceprint down the years.

When I first became involved there were pages and pages of typewritten notes, all needing to be converted into a computer file. Ivan, my husband, had a scanner that recognised the characters in a document, instead of just taking a photo as many scanners still do. I undertook to convert the typed pages into computer files. The process was not perfect as it was inclined to turn the ‘rn’ in turn into ‘m’ and a few other faults as well, but it was easier to edit these files than retype them into the computer. One thing with this process was that I read all the articles several times and learnt to discreetly edit spelling, grammar and add at times some punctuation. So much of interest and what an enjoyable way to learn! Pages and floppy disks went back and forth through the post, the yellow express post allowed a two day turn around during the editing and design process and then a master print copy was sent to the printer. At this time the printing was done from a paper master, so it took time, about a month after all the copy was on hand to move through the editing, design and printing processes as well as the posting. Over the years as email came into use it became the way of communicating, and they flew back and forth from members to editor, from editor to design and then the master copy to the printer. As time went on, there was not quite as much paper but there were occasions when the telephone...
was useful, as every now and then the computer ‘played up’ – never admit the instructions were wrong! I liked the years when there was a book of computer instructions for when all failed – ‘read the book’! Much more helpful than the ‘help’ on line. I had towards the end of the paper era become faster and more efficient with the editing process but as always as when you get everything under control the time comes for change.

During 2010, like many other not for profit organisations, OHAA found it necessary to look at its finances – and again like other organisations it seemed that by using email instead of printing and posting there were substantial savings to be made. So the committee decided that Voiceprint would become an online document (now in 2012 all the OHAA branches are producing online newsletters) and this decision sent me on a very BIG learning curve.

I had thought it would be just an extension of the Word master file that was produced for each Voiceprint, turn it into a PDF document and off it goes. I thought of it in terms of words but that is the easy part – all the graphics make for a tricky and testing time - perhaps others find words difficult!

Then the questions came: how large a file can the average member’s mailbox accept? How much time do members have for online reading? What to do with long articles – especially with footnotes? Will members want to read it when opened or find it too much and put aside for another day that does not come? Will members want to print it all out or only some of it? Will they keep it filed on computer or expect it to be stored in an accessible place? How to make it accessible over time? So many questions – time for a lot of research. It was fortunate that at this time I had seen a couple of easy to read online newsletters that were sent to me as well as numerous ones I thought were poorly designed. I worked the search engine overtime trying to find a template that would produce a document that allowed the reader to roll down with the mouse and quickly see what was in the newsletter. Nothing – they all seemed to be designed for a print document. In the end I did my own thing, down the screen, a comfortable eye width wide, some bold headings, easy to identify with different colours, and a clear font that stands out on the screen and definitely no need to work the mouse up and down pages, as well as across two or three columns. I did want members to be able to read without getting lost! Ease of access called for hyperlinks, just click and off for more detail. Members will know that the first online Voiceprint lost the hyperlinks when turned into a PDF document (do not trust free downloads)! However, the version in the National Library is correct.

Voiceprint No1 was produced in August 1994, edited by Stephen Rapley. There were several editors connected to the first 10 editions and over the years a very long list of members who have contributed and assisted – some names keep appearing – loyal, helpful and constant supporters. For many years of my time with Voiceprint, we might say that Rosie Block was ‘Oral History NSW’. It was Rosie who asked me to join the committee to work on Voiceprint and was always there advising, contributing and persuading others to contribute. To Rosie and Berenice Evans who was our Treasurer, thank you for being the support office. Thank you too, to Sandra Blamey who stepped into the support office over the last two years – lots of support needed as the production adapted to change! The NSW committee members have always assisted and rallied round to answer my pleas for help – thank you. As well as members there have been others who have helped with the design and production of Voiceprint – family, friends, colleagues and business contacts with timely and practical advise. Very special thanks and congratulations to Vanessa Block who designed all the 44 print editions of Voiceprint – 17 years of efficient and reliable work!

Members have been generous in reporting about their own and a wide variety of oral history projects. Stories of families, the building of communities, the sad tales of war, the success of new settlers to Australia, the effect of disasters – flood and fire, childhood memories, the triumph of Olympic Gold, so much history about the built and the natural environment, adventure stories, funny stories, it is hard to think of a topic that has not at sometime featured in Voiceprint. Looking back, what a joy to read!!!

Now of course is the time to look forward. Voiceprint is your newsletter so be sure to keep contributing, telling the history of oral history in NSW. Margaret Leask and Sally Zwartz look forward to
your contributions. There is a long time ahead – remember this is only number 47. Online we progress!

My thanks and best wishes.

Joyce Cribb

COMING EVENTS

**October 19** Capturing Memories: Oral History in the Digital Age. At History House, 133 Macquarie Street Sydney, from 9.45am - 4.30pm

**November 10** Oral History and Photography. At Parramatta Heritage and Visitor Information Centre, from 9.30 am - 4pm.

For details about these events visit the OHAA -NSW website, http://www.ohaansw.org.au/

NOTICES

**ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPTION**

Professional transcriber - reasonable rates

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Urgent work accommodated.

**CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED**

Voiceprint welcomes contributions of any kind - please share your knowledge and experiences with other members!

Email voiceprint@ohaansw.org.au for information about deadlines etc. Comments and suggestions also welcome.

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