**The Oral History Unit and Collective**

The Oral History Unit and Collective (Unit) is a team of internationally recognised oral historians. It crosses disciplinary, institutional and geographical boundaries and brings together colleagues in academic and community settings who study the past to enhance understandings of the present and conceptions of the future. Its members include professionals in the archives and the libraries and heritage sectors. The Collective provides a forum for knowledge exchange with a common purpose: to explore the dynamics of memory and historical narrative through theory and practice and to include those voices too often marginalised in representations of the past.

Unit members have expertise in social justice, labour, rural, and women’s history as well as the history of medicine and health. The team supports innovative digital practices in the collection, archiving and representation of personal testimonies in the making of history. The Unit seek to use oral history as an evidential tool to inform other research and as a way of responding to societal challenges. This includes helping to shape policies on poverty, ageing, transport, crime and international development.

The Unit is helping to develop the next generation of oral historians, with early-career researchers involved in the design of two ground-breaking projects. The first of these pilot studies investigates the relationship between reminiscences of working lives, orality and their visual representation. The research will be with people in the North East of England who have lived through industrial decline and attempts at economic regeneration. Oral histories will be collected from former employees of manufacturing industries along with visual sources, including photographs and film. Working with the School of English Literature, Language and Linguistics, the project will also explore changes in the ways speech and narrative performativity have changed over time by identifying and re-interviewing a sub-sample of participants who were recorded in the past.

The second of these pilots is in the history of health and brings together colleagues from History, Classics and Archaeology, the Faculty of Medical Sciences and the Institute for Ageing. The research explores the recollections of men and women who were born in Newcastle one year before the National Health Service came into existence. Studied from birth, participants have taken part in an epidemiological study that continues to this day. Their memories will not only historically contextualise pioneering medical research, but will provide an invaluable record of their participation and its impacts. The interviews from both pilots will form the basis for a new oral history archive at Newcastle.

**Project Team**: **The Oral History Unit and Collective**

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