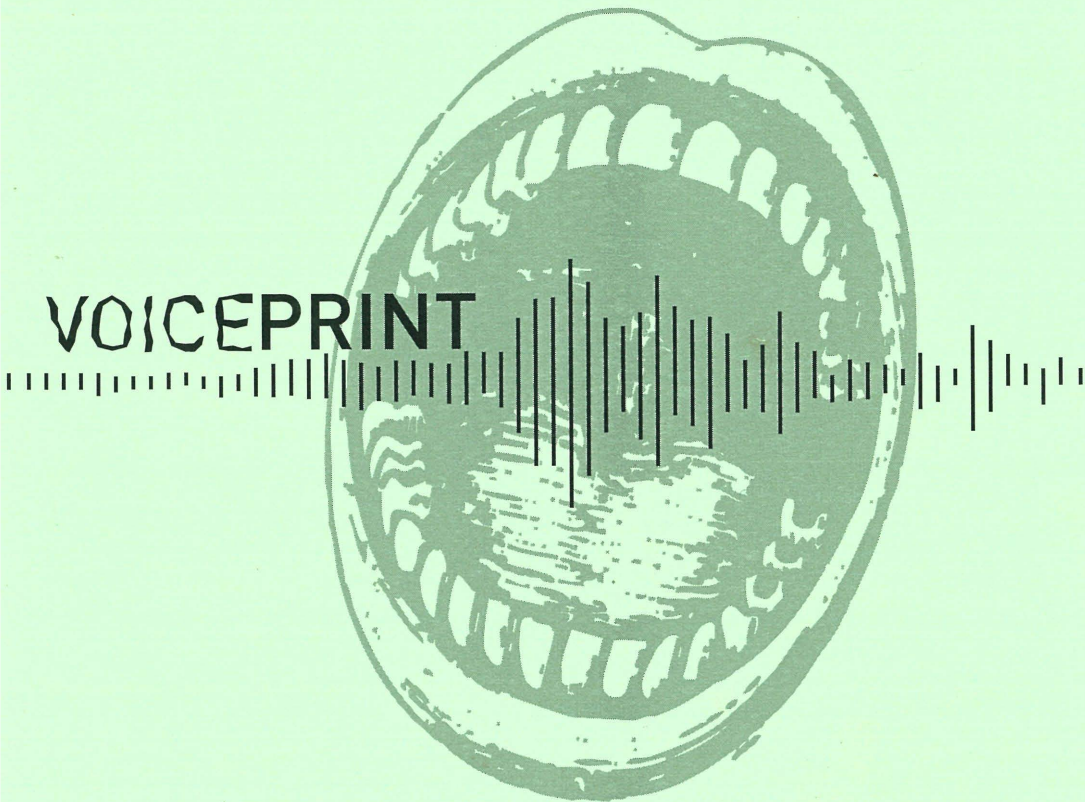


**Newsletter** of the New South Wales Branch  
of the Oral History Association of Australia

# VOICEPRINT



37

October 2007

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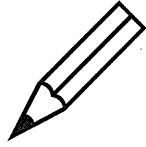
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# Editorial



*I am most grateful to our President Rosie and other committee members for helping with material for this Voiceprint. Have had to get it together 'under time pressure' as we are off to London, not to see the Queen but our three little princesses!*

*In reflecting on the articles in this Voiceprint it seems to me that life goes on with many similarities from age to age. David Mitchell amassed a huge collection of precious books, while more than sixty years ago families during the siege of Leningrad were forced to burn their precious books to keep their small stoves alight. We are most fortunate in Sydney to be able to enjoy the heritage Mitchell left to our NSW State Library. On the other hand so many people especially children in this world live in abject poverty. I can only conclude that we need oral histories, now and in the future, as we must hope that we will learn from the stories of those who have suffered in the past and not repeat past history. Again, on the other hand, we need to know of and be inspired by the triumphs and the rich heritage handed down to us. Oral history gives a very personal view of past events putting the people in history that can be absent from more formal texts.*

*I found Michael Abrahams-Sprod article about an accidental oral historian interesting. I am sure there are many other students who use interviews to inform their research. Hopefully more of these interviews will be preserved so we may know more of the effect of historical events on the individuals who experience them.*

*Speaking of preserving voices from the past, I am grateful to Frank Heimans and Peter Rubinstein for their contributions about the technology that is now available to make this preservation easier. Please note they will be available for advice and 'hands on' practice at the seminar on 3 November.*

*I am hoping that while we are in London we can arrange with our daughter to set up the technology, so that Gran and Pa in Sydney can see and talk to the little girls in London. Modern computers do marvellous things! We are so fortunate to have the advantage of 'easy and affordable' communication across the world today. As we enjoy the benefits of this age – may we keep the lessons of the past age before us.*

*Please write for Voiceprint and tell members about your projects, what you are doing and how you are doing it. Would love to have contributions before the end of the year.*

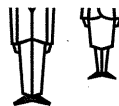
*Thank you,  
Joyce Cribb*

# Contents



<b>Editorial</b>	1
<b>Membership</b>	3
<b>Reports</b>	
Seminar 5 May 2007 – Oral History Goes Digital	4
<b>Articles</b>	
Reflections of an Accidental Oral Historian by Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod	8
Collecting Indigenous Oral History by Colleen Hattersley	11
<b>Reviews</b>	
<i>The Siege of Leningrad as Sacred Narrative: Conversation with Survivors</i> by Rosie Block	14
The Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London by Rosie Block	16
A Grand Obsession: the DS Mitchell Story by Rosie Block	18
Call for Papers IOHA	20
<b>Diary of Events</b>	23
<b>Noticeboard</b>	24

# Membership



## **New Members**

It is great to begin a period of normality as the Association swings into 'usual mode' with the return of the biennial national conference in September 2007 in Brisbane. It sure is exciting to be part of the world scene – once in a while! However, it is great to know that there is life after the International Sydney Conference!

I look forward to keeping in touch with you. If we don't catch up in Brisbane then it will be at other meetings – and of course through Voiceprint. It is wonderful to be keeping our membership numbers growing so positively – our special thanks of course to you – and welcome!

Berice Dudley	Retired, interested in oral history
Dorothy Blake	Historian
Pat Trott	Retired, interested in oral history
John Bartholomaeus	Librarian
Pat Francis	Transcriptionist
Donna Johnston	Student
Simone Gaunt	Student mentor
Marika Leibrandt	Student
Sharon Ganzer	Nurse
Carol McKirdy	TAFE teacher
Suzanne Baker	Retired, interested in oral history and music
Warwick Franks	Cricket historian
Philippa Hetherington	Lawyer
Tamar Mordecai	Restorer
Connie Eales	Student
Amanda O'Brien	Student
Godden Mackay Logan	Heritage Consultants
Pride History Group	Historians
Lane Cove Library	
Wollongong City Council Cultural Services	
Wagga Wagga City Library	

**Rosie Block, President**



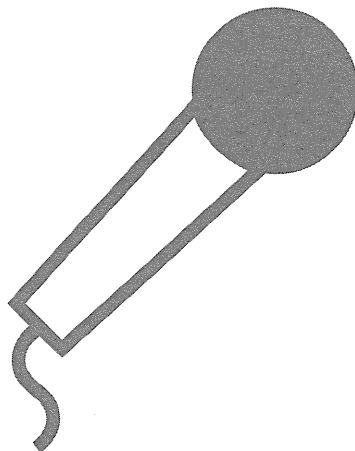
## Seminar: Oral History goes Digital; May 5

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*The Metcalfe Auditorium was filled for this seminar, a very popular topic! It seems many members are keen to know about digital equipment and what is available? Then, there is the age old problem of comparisons, what is best for your particular purpose and also affordable. Solid state recorders, the Edirol R-09 and the editing package ProTools were demonstrated. I am not into (as it is often said) technology so I am most grateful to Frank Heimans for preparing some notes for Voiceprint on ProTools and Peter Rubinstein supplied me with his PowerPoint presentation which I have summarised for Voiceprint. Both Frank and Peter you will notice use ProTools for editing, but use different recording equipment to suit the needs of their final products. Peter records for radio, often out and about and says he can take the Edirol anywhere, while Frank in recording his oral histories likes to have two sound tracks so does not use an Edirol. If you have listened to any of Frank's compilation discs you will understand why he likes to have the voices on separate tracks. Frank and Peter are Committee members and always willing to share their knowledge with members. Thank you both.*

*Rosemary Broomham, historian, gave personal testimony in how to use digital technology – and survive. Most reassuring to many!*

**Joyce Cribb**



## Recording Oral History Interviews with ProTools – *by Frank Heimans*

---

In recent years the ability to record oral history interviews on something other than a tape recorder has been possible and there are now many devices on the market that use hard disk recorders of some description. These usually record in WAVE files or in MPEG format on recorders such as Edirol and Marantz. But for those who already have a laptop computer and do not want to invest in additional hardware an application called Pro Tools has been available for about 7 years. It is made by Digidesign, a division of Avid Technology Inc. in the United States – check out their website, < [www.digidesign.com](http://www.digidesign.com) >.

ProTools is easy to learn how to use and its additional advantages are that you can view your interview as soundwaves while it records, you can log your interview in accurate timecode, you can edit soundtracks and you can equalize the soundtracks to minimize or get rid of unwanted low-frequency sound like air-conditioning noise, etc. It's a perfect tool for an oral history interview where you are sitting down at a table in controlled conditions.

I have already used this system to record several hundred interviews for projects on Lord Howe Island and in the Riverina without any problems.

You can purchase ProTools for a PC or Mac and prices start at \$495.00 for the basic version. For this you get the software and an audio interface called the Mbox 2 Mini, connected by USB cable to the computer. This is the basic Mbox – it has a single microphone input and a more expensive option, the Mbox 2 has two microphone inputs and a built-in mixer. For about \$ 750.00 you get the ProTools software and the Mbox 2. The Mbox has analog and digital (spdif) inputs and outputs and you can plug your earphones into it to listen while you're recording. When you're editing at home there is also an output that feeds into your amplifier so that you and others can hear the recording through speakers.

Mbox can take normal dynamic microphones or can power microphones with a 48V booster for those microphones that need it, such as condenser microphones.

To set up a recording session for two microphones you connect the Mbox with a USB cable to your laptop, plug the microphones in the input on back of the Mbox (plugs can be the standard jacks or XLR plugs), open a new ProTools session, give it a name and click on the RECORD buttons that are next to each track on the screen. You should then be able to hear the sound coming through from the microphones and see the audio level on the meter next to the sound tracks. There is also a MIX panel in which this is enlarged if you wish to see recording levels in greater detail. When you then click the

## Reports (cont...)

PLAY button it will start recording and soundwaves will start forming.

You're on your way and recording the interview. At the end of your recording session SAVE the session and an icon will appear on your desktop with the name you gave the session.

If you want to edit out some unwanted material from the interview all you need to do is to locate the offending bit (it could be a pause during recording because a dog was barking, a plane flew over, or whatever), enter an in and out point and press the delete key on your keyboard. If you wish to retain the original interview intact, make a copy of it first and then work on the copy only. If you have recorded the interview and one of the two microphone levels has been set too high or too low, you can very easily adjust the level to set it to the same level as your other track. Instructions on how to do this and how to use ProTools are in the manual that comes with the software.

Because high-quality sound files are memory intensive, it makes sense to store your audio files on an external hard disk for editing and safekeeping so that it won't eat up your computer's hard disk memory.

Logging is very easy with ProTools. I use Microsoft Word and switch between Word and ProTools when listening to sound and typing information into the logs. The timeline above the sound tracks give you

an accurate reading of where during the session material has been recorded.

After you have recorded the interview and logged it you are now ready to make a hard copy for others to listen to. To make a CD copy, split your session into tracks and name them sequentially. Then you highlight the track by just clicking on it, go to FILE menu, pull down BOUNCE TO DISK, and choose the audio file type (usually WAVE files), then name the track and ProTools will create a WAVE file of the track in real time. When you have bounced all the tracks, you can load them into an application such as Toast or i-Tunes and burn the disc, just as you would do when creating any other audio CD.

You can also use ProTools to record to an audiocassette, DAT tape, i-Pod or any other MP3 player from the outputs on the back of the Mbox.

ProTools can be purchased from several suppliers: Sound Devices in Sussex St Sydney, [www.sounddevices.com.au](http://www.sounddevices.com.au) or Turramurra Music Centre, [www.turramusic.com.au](http://www.turramusic.com.au)



## The Edirol R-09 Summary of Peter Rubinstein's Presentation

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### **Peter commenced by making these points:**

**Fact:** I am not a child of either the computer age or the digital age (please don't combine them on me, otherwise I'll be a total mess.)

**Fact:** I have an aversion to new technology

**Fact:** I used to think "The bigger the better"

**Fact:** If I can operate this device then pretty much anyone can.

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Peter explained that the Edirol R-09 is a hard drive digital recording device which delivers unbelievably high quality sound. There are no tapes, no rewinding – just one button recording! Peter explained that the device is small, about the size of an electric shaver, and is light and easy to carry and will fit in a shirt pocket.

It has an easy to see visual display and there is no mechanical noise while recording. It records in MP3 or WAV. The recording is stored on a memory card. It comes with a 64Mb card but Peter bought a 2Gb to have extended memory. The large card costs about \$80+.

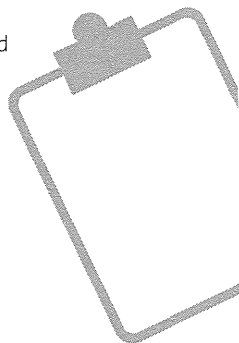
The Edirol uses two AA batteries and has a display to show the battery level.

Peter emphasized that all the displays are easy to see including the Peak Meter. The device has an inbuilt omni-directional microphone, but he recommended that for recording oral history interviews an external microphone or two are better. It takes a standard mini jack into the Mic input and Peter uses a splitter for recording with two microphones. The device also has a Line-in input so sound from another source can be recorded on the Edirol.

The recordings are downloaded straight into the computer via a USB port in a fraction of the time that it takes to transfer sound from a DAT, cassette or mini disc. Peter explained that there was no need to install special software to download sound, however he uses ProTools for editing.

Peter bought his Edirol R-09 from Turrumurra Music Centre, [www.turrurramusic.com.au](http://www.turrurramusic.com.au)

Frank and Peter will attend the 3 November Seminar in order to give those interested a 'hands on' opportunity to evaluate the technology.



## Reflections of An Accidental Oral Historian *by Dr. Michael Abrahams-Sprod*

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In July 2006 I submitted my PhD dissertation entitled: *Life under Siege: The Jews of Magdeburg under Nazi Rule* and subsequently graduated from The University of Sydney in May 2007. Of interest to this readership is the fact that this social history of this beleaguered German-Jewish community on the River Elbe, in what was the Prussian province of Saxony, was reconstructed solely from primary sources – they being archival material and oral history material. My thesis and hope was, and remained essentially, to recreate the world the Nazis destroyed and the world the Nazis created; to recreate and to document what was lost, how this community responded to this catastrophic assault and what remained after the Nazis had annihilated this small, diverse community. This has largely been achieved by the successful collaborative enterprise of combining oral history interview material (survivor testimony) and archival material. Why do I feel that I am/was an ‘accidental oral historian’? I shall explain presently!

The genesis of this project dates back close to ten years ago, when I decided I wanted to document the life and destruction of a German-Jewish community under Nazism in the former German Democratic Republic. A number of communities were suggested

and I finally settled on the community of Magdeburg in central Germany. As I had decided at the outset that I wanted my research to be based on a healthy (where possible) combination of oral history interview material or ‘survivor testimony’ and archival material, the need to locate willing interviewees in Australia from the chosen community was paramount. My desire to include oral history interview material emanated from my own wish to document day-to-day life and the view of Jewish life ‘from below’. My firm conviction has never shifted from the position that oral history interview material provides a very personal and often intimate window into these two vanished worlds – the world the Nazis destroyed and the world the Nazis created.

With this proposal in mind I set about simultaneously locating and assessing what archival material existed on this former community and commenced the very new experience of conducting oral history interviews with Jewish survivors from Magdeburg who had settled in Australia at varying stages, all owing to Nazism and its devastating impact. This marked the commencement of locating, accessing, assessing and copying archival



material and also the embarking on the quest of recreating a picture of what was this small, but nevertheless, dynamic Jewish community.

I had no experience in interviewing – as my original academic training, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, had been in modern languages (French, German, Hebrew and Russian) and education, although I had always been a keen historian. I had never heard of the term ‘oral history’ and must confess that it was only at the end of the bulk of my interviewing process that I joined the NSW branch of the Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA) and attended one of Rosie Block’s workshops in October 2000.

Nevertheless, regardless of my lack of experience in conducting what essentially amounted to oral history interviews, I knew what I had hoped to discover and record from my interviewees and after every interview I would obsessively listen to every last detail of the recorded interview and make the necessary arrangements for the follow-up interview. My questions never seemed to end. Gradually over time a trust and friendships evolved and unique relationships and bonds formed. The experiences and life stories of my interviewees were enormously varied, as were their reactions to my questions – all concerning a very private and unhealed gaping wound. I was never able to be adequately prepared for their answers and their narration of the events that had both dislocated and destroyed their ‘former’ lives.

One element of the process that recurred with regularity was not receiving the answer to the question asked – regardless of how many times it was asked. Many questions could not be asked. Yet, over the course of time, the previously ‘unanswered’ questions were offered at a time decided by the interviewee. Whilst the vast majority of the interview process was completed within four years, informal exchanges of information continued and still continue to this very day with the few interviewees still alive from the original core group.

The fascinating and compelling component of this research project was that whilst source material was being collected from oral history interviews, I was simultaneously collecting archival material from collections spread across the globe, mainly from various public and private archives in Germany, Israel, the USA and Australia. This was both frustrating and exciting. It was very often frustrating owing to gaps in the material sought and in the delays in receiving material, which I forever wanted to compare and hopefully weave together. Needless to say, throughout this project the material gained through oral history interviews has often overwhelmed me. In many instances it has been through oral history interview material, in conjunction with the use of archival material that I have been provided with, shall I say, a colour rather than a black-and-white account of a happening or events.

## Articles (cont...)

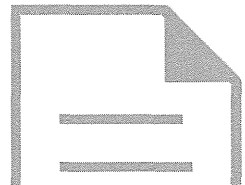
In numerous instances the oral history material remained the only source material from which to reconstruct an event or happening.

After extensive years of research and much travel, in 2005 the fruits of my research were put into text and the result was my PhD dissertation, which is currently under preparation for publication in Germany. To return to my earlier definition of myself as an 'accidental oral historian', which may need to be explained! Firstly, I was never really conscious of being an oral historian until I made contact with the NSW branch of the OHAA. I simply had proposed using interview material (survivor testimony) as a primary source for my research, which was still regarded with scepticism in historical circles some ten years ago. Secondly, I had no training and no experience whatsoever in the processes of any aspect of oral history interviews. In essence, I became an oral historian quite by accident. With this in mind and the knowledge that the OHAA provides regular workshops, I hope that my experience will encourage others, who either lack the experience or confidence to give voice to their yet-to-be executed research projects.

Both professionally and personally, the learning experience I embarked on was something that has remained a valuable and rewarding life experience. For me, my personal compulsion was the drive to record the rich tapestry of the Jewish world that was. As historians, we should feel compelled to record not only for

the sake of the historical record, but also for the benefit of the victims, the survivors and their descendants. It is also, but a small, yet nevertheless, important act in restoring some dignity to who these people were and where they came from. When I see this sense of restored dignity and commemoration in the faces of the few remaining interviewees, I know full well that I have achieved not only my goal as an academic and an historian, but as an oral historian in bringing this destroyed community's voice into text.

The PhD dissertation: *Life under Siege: The Jews of Magdeburg under Nazi Rule* was completed under the joint supervision of Professor Konrad Kwiet and Associate Professor Suzanne Rutland at the Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies at The University of Sydney and is available in its entirety at The University of Sydney's Fisher Library scholarship Repository at the following permanent weblink: <http://hdl.handle.net/2123/1627>.



# Collecting Indigenous Oral History

## *by Colleen Hattersley*

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*(This article first appeared in On Tape, June 2007, Newsletter of OHAA Queensland)*

My first experience interviewing Australian Indigenous people was during the National Library's "Bringing Them Home" oral history project. Then there was the project for the Yuriny (say yurinn) Cultural Centre in Derby (WA), Women of the Clarence Valley (NSW), the Derby Historic Cemetery (WA), setting the Tweed (NSW) 5th City of the Arts oral history component going and now the incidental stories that are volunteered as I go about my work as a linguist with Aboriginal groups on both the East and West coasts of Australia. It seems that whenever I have a video camera or recording device people want to record their knowledge and experiences. I am an eager and privileged collector.

Recently I was accompanied on my annual trek from Brisbane to the West Kimberley by an Aboriginal friend who is interested in documenting the skills and knowledge of the old Aboriginal stockmen. His current topic is 'making greenhide rope'. My friend has memories of his own father drying and salting skins and making the rope components by soaking the skin in water until it was soft enough to work, then making a continuous cut in a circular

motion until the centre was reached. It therefore came as somewhat of a surprise to have some Top End stockmen tell him a different story.

The interview, while linguistically rich showing the combination of Aboriginal language grammar with English vocabulary in the speech of the stockmen, also shows the ease of conversation when the interviewer can share the speech style of the interviewees but still retain his position of controller of the conversation. If the audio is entertaining, video would have been more so, capturing as it would, body language and facial expressions of these orally-based people.

The moment such an interview is committed to writing, about half of the information is lost. If it is edited to suit the SAE literate reader, then, in my view, the purpose of the interview is severely compromised. The purpose to me is to record the special character of Aboriginal people and their own descriptions of their contribution to and participation in Australian society and economy; to include their patterns of speech amongst other Australian varieties and to enhance our national diversity in the written record. Heavy editing also masks the secondary story – that of the interviewer seeking confirmation of his childhood memories

## Articles (cont...)

only to discover that this reality was different. In the raw text this is clearly apparent. I also believe that the interview is much richer than would have been the case had I, a non-Indigenous woman, been the interviewer.

Below are two edits of the material by way of illustration.

### **Greenhide rope Edited for Standard Australian English (SAE)**

Tuesday 8 May 2007. It's Vic Hunter from Broome talking with Leslie Hogan from Borroloola and Rex Wilfred from Ngukurr. I'm at the Corroboree Hostel in Katherine.

Leslie, you were saying that when you were on the station you made all the different greenhide ropes. Can you tell me about those different ropes?

You need a good big rope when you want to catch a bull or work with a bronco horse. On the stations we used to make greenhide rope.

We would skin a freshly killed beast, clean the meat off and peg out the hide. Then we'd make a slit in the centre and cut in a circular motion from the middle. You don't have to salt it or anything if you work when the hide is fresh. Then, when we finished cutting it we'd put it through a steel ring and twist it and leave it to dry. If you want to work on it the next day you can put it in a bucket of water overnight to keep it moist.

We used that rope for all kinds of stock work. Made them different lengths for different jobs. Finished them up on the ends so they wouldn't come undone.

They don't do that any more. They buy rope in the store instead.

We used to make our whips out of greenhide too. We'd use horse hair or hair from the bullock tail on the end for the cracker.

Thank you for that.

### **Edited to maintain some of the characteristics of Aboriginal English**

Leslie, you were saying that when you were on the station you were making all the different greenhide rope. Can you tell me what all the different type of ropes you were making?

*When you want to get some big bull, you gotta make a big rope. Head rope, you know? When you want a bronco horse too, hmm?*

And – tell me from the start, about what sort of material you made that rope out of, and how did you get it to begin with.

*That's greenhide rope. When it's just killed, you gotta cut the meat off and cut it round like this. You gotta keep going circle like that. All 'round.*

From inside?

*Yeah you gotta peg it out first. Put a peg there, there, there, there. Always peg it, you know. Straight him out. You start a hole in the middle.*



You put salt on it?

*No, you don't hav'ta. Peg it out and cut it straight away, while he's soft.*

You use it when it's wet?

*No good he dry! When he dry he broke. You know? When you twist him 'round. Bang! He snap off.*

Oh, right. But do you soak it with the water?

*Yeah, you can soak it with the water. But it's fresh one I'm talking about.*

Yeah, yeah, the fresh one.

*He's different. You don't have to soak it. You just make greenhide rope and twist it straight away – or you can leave it in the bucket for tomorrow. Just, you know, leave'm for tomorrow. You get up in the morning. You can straight him out then.*

*You get that flap out. Little bit of the skin from inside the greenhide, and get a pocket knife and just cut the greenhide with that pocket knife.*

From the inside and you're working out?

*Yeah, yeah. And we finish, put a hole in the end of that greenhide and we put him in the fork or something. And then stretch him out and we stretch the greenhide and do the roll.*

*Yeah, we cut it and then we get the ring, eh? And then we put it in that ring. Take the end of that greenhide and put it in that hole – and tighten him up. So that ring can stop inside that greenhide.*

*And then we roll'm up buliki or calf like that for branding. And we make a little stay and we get all them cleanskin and rope'm up with that bronco horse and then pull'm and some bloke stay with that leg rope off that greenhide. That's a shorter rope. You make a long one and after that you cut it in half. Make two ropes.*

*Now you got it. You don't have to go buy cotton rope. Just like them cowboy ones. But today they don't make it. They buy it in the store. Yeah, they buy cotton rope.*

*Making that whip – that greenhide we make'm and we get'm horsetail hair, eh? and make that cracker. We just cut horsetail or even from bullock tail for the cracker.*

Thank you very much for that.

*Nah, you're right.*

**Colleen Hattersley**  
colhatts@gmail.com



**Leslie Hogan and Rex Wilfred at Corroboree Hostel, Katherine, NT May 2007**

The Siege of Leningrad as Sacred Narrative:  
Conversations with Survivors  
(Journal of the Oral History  
Society Volume 35, no. 1, Spring 2007)  
*Reviewed by Rosie Block*

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There are 2 reasons why I am writing this review of the article in the British Oral History Society Journal. The first is to draw your attention to this excellent publication published twice yearly. Many of you have of course met Rob Perks and Alistair Thomson, the editors, but I suspect that not many of you are regular readers of the Journal.

This edition, as usual, contains a section on Current British Work which features oral history projects from all over the UK – mainly supported by town councils and museums, many funded by that great British institution in favour of the arts – lottery money. There is also an extensive report on News from Abroad, including Albania, Cambodia, Finland, South Africa to name only a few. Conference Reports are also given and in this issue Alistair Thomson reviews very favourably our own Sydney International Conference, *Dancing with Memory: Oral History and its audiences*.

The second reason for writing highlights once again why personal testimony is so vital a part of the historical record and how it can enlarge and enrich it. There have been many accounts of the historic siege and the suffering undergone by the citizens of Leningrad, present day St Petersburg, in the 900 days from September 1941 to January 1944. James Clapperton who conducted the interviews examines the mythology of that terrible time and both records and challenges these accounts with his encouragement of personal memories often involving the individuals' memories of their senses – the look, the smell, the sound, even the taste.

Many refer to the bombing of the food stores of the Badaev warehouses in September 1941. The mythology dictates that that act contributed to the fearful famine that followed. Other historical sources tell us that there were only a few days' worth of supplies of sugar and grain contained there and their loss therefore made little difference to the horrors that followed. Despite this the mythology





persists and is confirmed by almost all of his interviewees. Personal testimony of the disaster does exist, however, and one of his interviewees recounts that she went to the ruin of the buildings and was able to remove earth from the burnt site. She carried this home and siphoned sweet liquid from it which was used to make the family tea.

That first winter was the most severe with temperatures of 400 below zero. Here it is that Clapperton brings his invitation to his *blokadniki* (siege survivors) to remember their own cold, hunger and distress. They described the mountains of snow which formed temporary graves for the dead, the taking of the bodies of family members on the children's sledges to the cemetery (where 600 000 to a million are buried). They talked of the darkness which was all pervading and the cold which was all-encompassing lightened very slightly by the infamous *burzhuika* small stoves. Svetlana Gachina recalled that the family had to give up their store of wood to build a bomb shelter and then she watched 'in horror' as their library became fuel for the insatiable and ineffective *burzhuika*.

Interviewees recalled the sound of the metronome which played in the streets, both as a warning of the German incendiary bombing raids and an assurance that the siege still held. They tapped the rhythm with accuracy as they spoke. And above all they described the hunger and how they gathered anything at all edible to add to the 125 grams (now a mythic

figure) of bread allowed. They mention cannibalism in the mythology, but no one was sure they had ever partaken of human flesh.

Aleksandr Cherapukhin described being driven in the family car across the ice on Lake Lagoda in the spring of 1942. Doroga Zhizni was the Road of Life across the frozen lake. He described the splashing of the water as the ice grew thin in places and how nothing could be taken on the roof of the car in case it sank and they might have to crawl up on to it for safety. He remembered receiving warm kasha when the family arrived at the other side, but also the officials screaming warnings against eating too much as so many starving evacuees had died, their systems unused to surfeit.

James Clapperton concludes that the mythic narratives have achieved the status of sacred tales and the tellers have become immortalised as 'homines sacri'. It is clear that he has allowed his *blokadniki* their status, but has been successful in penetrating beyond the myths and finding the individual memories which illuminate with such human-ness that almost incredible survival.

I am sorry that he chose not to give the individuals their own names and I hope that he has retained for the purpose of history, a master list.

## The Holocaust Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum in London *Reviewed by Rosie Block*

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This is a large and is intended to be, a permanent exhibition and it certainly presents one of the clearest historical overviews of the Holocaust I have ever viewed in a single display. Against this 'big picture' which includes the side of a railway cattle car and the cart used to carry the corpses of the dead in the ghetto there are the many 'small things' that wring the heart. A little story book was sent by his parents to 4 year old Henri when he was in hiding. Paul Sondhoff's solitude in his hidden cupboard was relieved by a clockwork bear.

And then there are the people speaking in the extensive audio-visual oral history component. Survivors speak from TV screens throughout the exhibition and many of the speakers speak more than once so that even though the excerpts are relatively short one 'knows' them when they are next encountered.

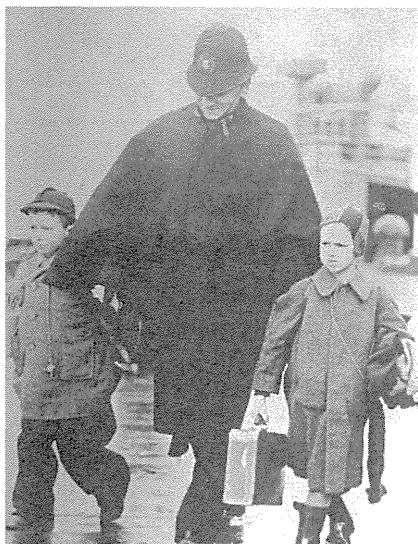
The *Kindertransports* took place after *Kristallnacht* in 1938 to the end of August and the outbreak of war in 1939. Organized by private organizations in Britain, particularly the Refugee Children's Movement, Jewish children were sent out of Europe by train and ferry. Their

accommodation was either in foster homes or in special centres. More than 9000 children came. Most never saw their parents again. Many speak on the screens.

Because mine had to be a very quick visit I must necessarily mention just what highlights remain with me. The whole exhibition is superbly illustrated with some iconic and some quite unusual images. The storyboards are beautifully arranged and composed, the whole leading to the clear historical overview I have mentioned. Throughout the exhibition the companionship of the people talking was certainly a highlight. Their voices enrich the historical record in a way which is unique, vivid and immediate.

The text of the exhibition also includes the ways in which those in the ghettos and in the camps managed to resist their captors – from the amazing breakout from the death camp of Sobibor and the Warsaw Ghetto uprising to the small religious practices secretly conducted. In addition tribute is paid to the courage of those who were hidden and those who hid them.

There is a very large model of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp which has an arresting impact. It makes very clear the enormous extent of the camp with



**Kindertransport arrives in Harwich**

the barracks, railway, arrival ramps, gas chambers and crematoria. The whole is presented in mono-chrome - ash grey.

At the end of the exhibition mug shots of some of the major perpetrators are lined up. A line or two describes their fate after the end of the war. Many escaped their just desserts.

The exhibition has a brilliant Advisory Group including Professor David Cesarani and Sir Martin Gilbert. The Senior Historian is Dr G. Steve Paulsson who wrote the beautiful text for the finely designed exhibition booklet.

I should like to include two quotations from the recordings:

Freddie Knoller says, 'The atmosphere was an atmosphere of despair. Babies were crying, couples were fighting with each other, arguments ... And the fear that everybody had, the unknown of what's going to happen to us.'

Ruth Foster recounts, 'This particular teacher who was the headmistress of the school brought in big cardboard pictures of Jews. They called them "Stürmer" Jews, with big noses, flat feet, big bellies, bushy eyebrows. And they said, "These are the Jews, the vermin of society. They have to be destroyed." And one girl got up and said, "But Ruth Heilbron - that was my maiden name - doesn't look like that. Neither do her parents nor the other Jewish people in this town." So she punished her. She got lines to do and was sent out of the class.'

I look forward to visiting the exhibition for longer when next I am in London. I feel I owe it to those voices to hear everything they have said. I do hope some of you may be able to visit it too. What a privilege it is to have their testimony live - forever.

August 2007

**Rosie Block**

President

## A Grand Obsession: the DS Mitchell Story by Rosie Block

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During June to August 2007, *A Grand Obsession: the DS Mitchell Story* was an exhibition in the Picture Gallery, State Library of New South Wales, which I hope many of you were able to visit.

On his death in July 1907 David Scott Mitchell bequeathed his extraordinary collection of Australian and Pacific material to the specially incorporated Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales. Before he died he saw the foundations of the Mitchell Library building begin to rise from its chosen site and was therefore assured that his collection would be safely housed.

Curator Paul Brunton has selected a small but fascinating collection of books, manuscripts, photographs, pictures and objects all of which illustrate some aspect of Mitchell's collecting life and bear witness to his grand obsession.

One of the items on display is De Bry's *Historia Americae* ... [A History of the New World] 5 volumes, 1590 -1634, being accounts of the early discovery and settlement of America. Mitchell bought it from the collection of one of England's foremost private collectors, William Beckford. On a recent trip to Somerset I visited Beckford's Tower, a Gothic Folly, set high above Lansdown overlooking sunlit Bath. When his home, Fonthill

Abbey, collapsed (literally – he was a great collector but a poor builder!) he built the Tower and lived there surrounded by a superb collection of books, furniture and rare objects.

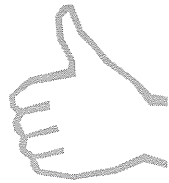
Many of the great houses in England and Scotland hold furniture and objets d'art from his collection. We visited one of these, Charlecote Park near Stratford-upon-Avon (until recently Stratford-under-Avon in the floods!), and admired some extraordinary pieces there.

The exhibition will be closed by the time you read this, but I wanted you to know that the last board bears the following legend:

### 'The Legacy'

The Mitchell Library has been continuously added to since 1907 in those areas in which David Scott Mitchell was pre-eminent: Australia and the Pacific. The original collection has been extended and developed, so it now contains over 590 000 printed volumes, 11 000 meters of manuscripts, in excess of 1 million photographs, 130 000 prints and drawings, over 200 framed paintings, 100 000 maps, over **9 500 hours of oral history**, 140 000 pieces of ephemera and 3000 historical objects.'

So there we are – oral history is on the record!



**Beckford's Tower in Somerset**



**The Red Drawing Room in Beckford's Tower**

You can still 'enjoy' the exhibition with the additional pleasure of 2 essays by Elizabeth Ellis, Mitchell Librarian, and Paul Brunton, Senior Curator, in the catalogue *A Grand Obsession. The DS Mitchell Story*, available at the Library Shop, State Library of New South Wales.

At the end of this year Professor Brian Fletcher's history of the Mitchell Library will be published. He was delighted to use the oral history interviews in the Mitchell Library Centenary Oral History Project. These were conducted with

researchers and staff, both former and present. Again this will let the world know of the collection here and how useful oral histories are in preserving historical information.

**Rosemary Block**  
Curator, Oral History

# [Last] Call for papers

15th International Oral History Conference  
*Oral History – A Dialogue with our Times*  
September 23 – 26, 2008, Guadalajara, Mexico

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[www.congresoiohazoo8.cucsh.udg.mx](http://www.congresoiohazoo8.cucsh.udg.mx)

The International Oral History Association in collaboration with the University of Guadalajara and the Mexican Oral History Association (AMHO) invite paper proposals from around the world for the 15th International Oral History Conference in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Proposals may be for a conference paper, a thematic panel, a special interest group session or a workshop session. Only those proposals clearly focused on oral history will be given consideration. Proposals will be evaluated according to their oral history focus, methodological and theoretical significance and relevance to the conference theme and sub-themes.

## **Sub Themes**

- **Contributions of Oral History to the understanding of the 20th Century**
- **Time in Memory:** Lived experience; what is remembered and what is forgotten
- **Spaces of Memory:** Community, the local, the global and everyday life
- **Ecology and Disasters:** Environmental themes, natural heritage, cultural resources
- **Memory and Politics:** Experiences of political participation; NGOs, political groups, political agency and individuals

– **Family and Generations**

– **Migrations:** Diásporas, international and local migratory movements, networks, borderlands, religious migration, the human capital of immigrants

– **Sharing and Transmitting Faith:** Religious traditions

– **Oral Tradition**

– **Theory and Method in Oral History**

– **Memories of Violence and War:** Justice, trauma and memory, survivors, civil rights and human rights

– **Memories of the Body:** Dance, tattoos, dramatizations and the emotions

– **Work:** Experiences, conceptions and modalities of work.

– **Health:** Illnesses, healing, myths, the handicapped, elderly and retired people

– **Gender**

– **The Teaching of Oral History:** Experiences in formal and informal education

– **Archiving Memory:** The interview as a source for social research, multiple readings of interviews, publication and dissemination of oral history, audio archives, audiovisual media, access and questioning



- Museums and Oral History
- Oral History and the Visual Image
- Legal and Ethical Issues in Oral History

**MASTER CLASSES:** Several Master Classes and workshops on Oral History will be offered before the Conference by internationally renowned scholars and specialists in Oral History.

**SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS:** Continuing the precedent set in Sydney, Special Interest Groups sessions will be scheduled so that participants can get to know one another, establish contacts and exchange resources and ideas.

**DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS:  
SEPTEMBER 2007**

**Proposal Specifications**

Please submit a 300-word maximum proposal summarizing your presentation, via the Conference Website:

[www.congresoioha2008.cucsh.udg.mx](http://www.congresoioha2008.cucsh.udg.mx)

You will also be requested to supply the following information:

- Name (last name in CAPITALS)
- Institutional or Academic Affiliation
- Postal Address
- Email Address
- Telephone and Fax numbers
- Relevant Sub-theme/s
- Indicate if the proposal is an individual paper, a thematic panel or a workshop
- Suggestions for Special Interest Groups Sessions.

Only those proposals clearly focused on oral history will be given consideration. Proposals will be evaluated according to their oral history focus, methodological and theoretical significance and relevance to the conference theme and sub-themes. The Organizing Committee will notify acceptance or rejection of proposals by October 15, 2007.

**Proposals must be written in English or Spanish.** If your proposal is accepted, you will be required to send the final paper in English or Spanish, attaching an abstract summary *translated professionally* into the second language.

Insofar as possible, papers and presentations should allow the audience to hear the voices of the interviewed narrators.

**Individual Papers:** Will be assigned by the Organizing Committee to international panels or workshops with other papers with similar theme or focus.

**Thematic Panels:** Proposals for thematic panels must have no more than four presenters, preferably from different countries.

**Workshops:** Workshop proposals must identify the theme or focus of the presentation and should propose a structure and a workshop chair.

**Special Interest Groups:** Suggestions and proposals for sessions are accepted.

## Call for Papers (cont...)

Final papers and abstracts must be received on or before February 28, 2008, for inclusion in the Book of Abstracts and the CD of the proceedings of the Conference.

### Travel Scholarships

The International Oral History Association (IOHA) has a *small* Travel Scholarship Fund aimed at providing *partial* financial support for travel to and/or accommodations at the Conference, particularly for those participants from developing countries. Related information and the application form are available on the IOHA Website (<http://www.ioha.fgv.br>). To be eligible for a travel scholarship, candidates must first have their paper proposals *accepted*. To receive a scholarship, finalists must submit their final paper by the published deadline.

### Contacts

If you have questions or would like advice from an IOHA Council member about a conference proposal, you may contact your regional representative as follows:

**Asia** – Tomoyo Nakao  
(tomoyopow@aol.com)

**Africa** – Sean Field  
(sean@humanities.uct.ac.za)

**Europe** – Rob Perks (rob.perks@bl.uk)

**Mexico** – Ana Maria de la O Castellanos  
(anadelao@cencar.udg.mx)

**North America** – Alexander Freund  
(a.freund@uwinnipeg.ca)

**South America** – Marilda Menezes  
(marildamenezes@uol.com.br)

**Oceania** – Megan Hutching (megan.hutching@hotmail.com)

To contact the Conference organizers in Guadalajara, please email or write to:

Maestra Ana María de la O Castellanos  
Email: [iohacongress@csh.udg.mx](mailto:iohacongress@csh.udg.mx)  
Departamento de Historia  
Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades  
Guanajuato # 1045  
Colonia Alcalde Barranquitas  
Guadalajara, Jalisco, México. C.P. 44260  
Phone Number/FAX (52) 33 38 19 33 79/74



# Diary of Events

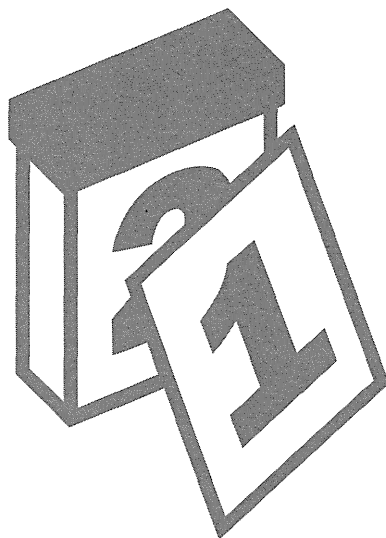
## **Committee Meeting Dates for 2007**

Members are encouraged and welcome to attend meetings held at the State Library at 5.30pm. Please meet at the Mitchell Wing vestibule at 5.25pm. (Staff will direct you if you miss the group).

**October 16, November 20**

## **Seminar**

The final Seminar for the year will be held on November 3.



# Noticeboard



**Website** Oral History Association of Australia <[www.ohaa.net.au](http://www.ohaa.net.au)>.

Do bookmark and visit this site from time to time to keep up to date with what is happening around Australia and especially for details and links to the International Conference.

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