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BRITISH ENTERTAINMENT HISTORY PROJECT

Bulletin no 8

May 2021

Dear all

The Board of Management with support from David Sharp (who has so much knowledge about the history of the History Project) is still zooming and getting on with work behind the scenes of digitising, transcribing and checking/correcting our records.

Check of possible missing tapes

Mike and Sue have been working through a list of possible missing tapes from our collection. We have established the following:

7 Sid Cole – all recordings are now on website.

19 Adolph Simon – for which only 2 sides uploaded, there was a second tape which has now digitised and uploaded.

37 Francis Searle – 5 cassettes have been found and now uploaded.

73 Bob Dunbar – The missing recording has now been found and has been uploaded.

115 George Elvin. – the tape is in the drawer in the Archive room.

118 Ivor Montague – the tape is in the drawer in the Archive room.

213 Stephen Williams – 4 CDs are in the drawer in the Archive room.

326 John Krish - the tapes are in the drawer in the Archive room.

479 Roy Fowler is an audio recording.

Finance - Current situation

Martin Sheffield reported that the current situation is pretty healthy which is just as well as we expect some costs to come in soon associated with the upgrading of our DRUPAL website and database.

Sue reported £40 cost of Data Protection registration with the Information Commission website www.ico.org.uk – an annual cost. We are now a data controller!

Methods of shooting. Camera cards.

Nick's proposal as outlined in the last Bulletin is to be tested with an interview with Paul Collard as soon as is possible when Covid restrictions are lifted.

Shooting new interviews

In preparation for a return to the circumstances when we can begin interviewing again, a general discussion agreed that we need to review the list of proposed interviews and review our workflow for the recording and processing of new digitally recorded interviews

It was decided that the Board should review the current list of possible interviews and create two lists - 1, general to shoot when we can; 2, a priority list

Nick prioritised Tony Palmer and Sue Malden; Mike has suggested Alan O'Duffy and Martin Sheffield. Other recommendations are welcomed.

Ken said that there is a studio in the SWALE Media Centre that he can use with recordist Graham Fowler to conduct the interviews he has proposed.

Nick offered to shoot 12 interviews a year. He proposed that we should have targets to be achieved and that the interviews should be recorded, uploaded, transcribed as a matter of course. Sue added that at the start of the process the interview should be formally approved at the start and quality checked by the Board at the end of the process. The final stage is to deliver/upload to BFI (yet to be discussed with BFI how this should be done)

So the new workflow would be:

- Approved, number assigned
- Recorded
- Delivered with all relevant documentation ie log sheet copyright consent forms and photo,
- Quality checked
- Uploaded to website with all essential data
- Transcribed automatically
- Uploaded to BFI
- Proofread

Theatre Museum oral history collection

Sue reported that there is an oral history collection of interviews in the Theatre Museum under the V&A. These have a lot in common with the BEHP collection. This collection is possibly under threat with cuts at the V&A. She has contacted Simon Sladen of the V&A which is currently engaged in a period of consultation regarding redundancies and a new proposed curatorial structure.

Sue has since heard from V&A Theatre & Performance Enquiry Service

<http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/t/theatre-and-performance/> with the good news that these

interviews are searchable on the National Art Library catalogue: <https://nal-vam.on.worldcat.org/discovery> and they will continue to be held in the Theatre and Performance collection and will be accessible at our new premises in Stratford, East London in 2023.

Sue responded by suggesting some cross promotion in the future

Missing tapes

Sue outlined the need for BEHP to recover from the BFI replacement copies for interviews that have been mislaid. A donor request has been submitted to bfi for interviews known to be missing – 154 Johnny Jay; 323 Eileen Diss ; 486 Rose Tobias Shaw ; 340 Jan Zilliacus ; 387 Stephen Cavallier ; 488 Betsy Blair; 497 Mark Anstiss ; 515 John Wiles 531 Alvin Bailey. The cost would be £75 per interview.

The following interviews may also be missing and are known to be in the BFI archive. 252 Tina Peters; 318 Edward Williams; 322 John Schlesinger; 442 Charles Beddow; 546 Simon

Relph , but no action to be taken until Mike can visit the Archive room to check returned tapes that are there.

Feedback for Website Upgrade of database and website

There is nothing yet to report on the plans to upgrade the website. We are awaiting summary of discussion from Alison of Redport

Transcripts update and use of OTTER

Mike advocated getting 324 Allan Prior transcribed as soon as possible and recommended to BBC/Sussex project as he is a very significant figure in BBC Entertainment. Emma Feather is going to be asked to do this one, as she has finished the 21 sides of the Phillip Donnellan interview – what a tour de force!!!

Shanice Martin is tackling the Lois Singer interview; Ros Cranston has finished her first batch and will now do Margaret Thomson's interview; A new volunteer – Helen Hawken, an Executive Producer and writer who has worked mainly in broadcast television – may also do some proofreading.

BBC/Sussex University Project – 100 voices <https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/bbc-memories>

Mike and Sue had an extremely useful update with Alban Webb. Unfortunately, David Hendy - the project director has been ill with long- Covid for some months – we wish him a full recovery. The next phase of the project is “Entertaining the Nation” and their website will be launched on 12 July. Jamie Medhurst of Aberystwyth University will take over from David on this section. Some BEHP interviews will be used – John Ammonds, Pete Murray, Denis Main Wilson and Yvonne Littlewood.

Alban gave us a very impressive demonstration of the benefits of the tremendous work they have done with metadata. Here is their website <https://connectedhistoriesofthebbc.org/> They have transcribed some of our interviews for the Project using a BBC speech to text software. It will be interesting for us to compare the quality/accuracy of this with OTTER

Other Projects

We have been approached by another oral history project exploring the working lives of London's film projectionists. This project was supposed to start in November last year but was halted due to Covid. They are working with the team at the BFI and will be running workshops and interviews. but with the Covid uncertainties remaining they have pushed it back again to September and October 2021. They **are still looking for more projectionists to speak to**

The project is led by Matthew Rosenberg

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Hard drives

Nothing more to report – Mike is continuing to add correct HD numbers to the database. In time we need to consider archive/master storage of hard drives -ie how many interviews to store on a hard drive, how many backups there should be and where should they be stored.

Patron

It was agreed by the Board that initially we should invite only one patron who should be UK based. Views from members on this issue are welcomed.

The concept of Honorary Membership of the British Entertainment History Project creating a special category of supporter will be discussed. Suggestions are welcomed

ACTT Films

Mike is planning to research into ACT Films to see how many of the HP interviewees worked on these films. Any information from members is most welcome.

BBC centenary/marketing of the archive

We need to decide what we want to do with our collection to mark the 100th anniversary of the BBC – all suggestions are welcome

Mike and Sue June 2021