



## Oral History Training



**Central Stories Museum**

**2021**

# What is Oral History?

Oral history is a method of gathering information. It is the sound or video recording of an interview with someone who speaks from personal experience about a subject of historical interest.

It can also be the printed version of the material that has been recorded, whether a verbatim transcript or one that has been edited for publication.

## Eyewitness accounts

One of the values of oral history is that it adds the view of eyewitnesses to existing records, providing new or additional information and insights. It is not about repeating what has already been written and recorded about the past. Instead it gives us the *personal perceptions* of individuals who were there, so we can learn not only what happened to people in the past but also the thoughts and feelings they recall having at that time.

Oral history can also give a voice to people who are often left out of historical records, the ordinary men and women who have taken part in significant events and whose reflections may throw new light on the past.

## Interviews

There are two main types of oral history interview:

- *life history interviews* – for example, an interview that focuses on the life and the changes experienced by a long-term resident in your area
- *topic interviews* – those recording information about a specific subject, such as an interview with someone about the history of a workplace or occupation.

For example, war oral history is a topic interview, but it should include some questions about the interviewee's pre-war life to provide a context for their later experiences.

# Oral History interviewing – the three standards

As an interviewer you should be guided by the three standards that are essential for the proper collection of oral history material.

## Technical standard

Interviews should be recorded to the highest possible standard achievable with the equipment available. A poorly recorded interview will result in a sound document that may be unreliable because what is said on the recording may be hard to understand. Such a recording is unlikely to be regarded by future researchers as valid material worthy of serious use.

## Interview standard

Interviews should be based on thorough research. They should be conducted in a structured way according to a clearly pre-defined plan so that future researchers have a framework and context to guide them in the use of the material.

## Ethical standard

All dealings with people interviewed should be according to ethical standards which protect their rights and expectations. This means that from the first approach to an individual, throughout the interview, and in the use and handling of the resulting recording and accompanying material, those rights and expectations must be honored.

Ethical standards in oral history recordings require confidentiality on the part of the interviewer and all people handling recorded and accompanying material.

# Central Otago Oral History Project Overview

**“Oral histories not only add new perspectives to already documented events, they also allow for the creation of a record where none previously existed.... the capturing of everyday life and traditions are just as important to our collective memory as recollections of significant events in our provincial past.”**

The Central Otago Oral History Project was set up as a pilot project in 2019. The aim was to create a coordinated, systemic, professional and ethical approach to the collection of Oral Histories in the Central Otago Region. It was recognized that the Southland Oral History Project had achieved this very successfully, and would work well as a model for Central Otago. The Central Otago Heritage Trust identified a need for collecting stories among key community members in relation to their personal life histories and their involvement. In coordination with Central Stories Museum, a partnership was created to seek funding for a coordinator role and for ongoing training.

In 2019, the first round of training was undertaken, and in 2020 we had 17 active volunteers involved.

Since that initial training, and of course with Lockdown 2020 in between, we have gathered together a collection of 14 interviews, with an additional 9 currently on the go or in the works. We hope to collect around 30 each year.

Our volunteers come from a range of districts across Central Otago, from Millers Flat, Roxburgh, Naseby, Alexandra, Clyde, Cromwell and Wanaka. Volunteers are placed in a smaller regional group so that there is more support and communication between volunteers and the Manager locally. We aim to have either a full group meeting, or a regional meeting roughly every few months, and the purpose is to support, upskill and enjoy sharing our experiences about the Oral History work we are doing.

## Mission

- To record, store and share Central Otago’s oral stories and to create a trusted oral history repository that is easily accessible.

## Vision

- To curate, store and share the collective memory of Central Otago through our own words with our own voices.
- To be responsive to community needs.
- To record stories about historic events, significant developments, industries and groups within Central Otago.
- To ensure Central Otago people have the skills to create oral history knowledge.
- To foster interest and involvement in the Project.
- To preserve oral stories for future generations.
- To ensure ease-of-use access to oral histories for current researchers and future generations.

## Governance

The Central Otago Oral History Project is led and supported by two organisations

COHT:

- guidance and direction (COHT Trustees)
- funding for training, equipment, and Manager role
- promotion
- coordination
- support

The Central Stories Museum;

- preservation of interviews (physical and digital archival space)
- access and rights management (via the Manager)
- location of the Manager for weekly drop in sessions
- printing and admin support
- support in general for the project
- promotion

# Role of the Central Otago Oral History Manager

The overall role of the Project Manager is twofold.

Firstly the Manager ensures that the project meets the three standards for oral history.

These three standards are:

- Technical – equipment and digital storage
- Ethical – protecting the rights of those involved
- Interview – ensuring high quality interviews are created and preserved

Second, the Project Manager is a vital support person for volunteers to call on as required.

In detail the Project Manager:

- Supports and encourages the Interviewers
- Approaches and assesses interviewees suitability and refers them onto Interviewers
- Provides technical help with recorders and recordings
- Is the first point of contact for project and research enquiries
- Is the first point of contact for any problems or issues that may arise
- Provides advice with research and interview planning or any other part of the interview process
- Develops systems to ensure the COOHP gathers quality interviews
- Meets ethical and archival requirements so Interviews can be preserved and used in the future by ensuring paperwork is completed
- Develops the social side of the group – helps volunteers feel that they are part of a team and help people to find where they best fit in the team, for example, some people may not be able to undertake interviews regularly but may be able to assist with research or abstracting, etc.
- Communicate regularly with volunteers and arrange catch ups so that there is plenty of opportunity for feedback and upskilling
- Develops protocols for dealing with the technical and ethical aspects of the project
- Ensures the COOHP adheres to the NOHANZ Code of Ethical & Technical Practice as best it can
- Creates and maintains accurate records for oral histories in the oral history database so that they are discoverable by online searching
- Promotes the project to encourage use by researchers of all levels
- Undertakes community outreach to ensure the community feels involved in the project

# Our Volunteers

The success of the project relies heavily on the work of our volunteer interviewers and abstractors.

## Interviewers

Our interviewers undergo training to ensure that our interviews are conducted in a professional and ethical way. Training workshops are usually held yearly.

There is no enrolment fee for the Oral History Training Workshops. However, participating in the workshops brings with it the expectation that you will contribute to the Central Otago Oral History Project as a volunteer interviewer.

No previous experience is required but an interest in people and an ability to listen are essential.

### **About training as an Interviewer for the Central Otago Oral History Project:**

In addition to undertaking interviews for the Central Otago Oral History Project, the Central Otago Oral History Project expects Interviewers to:

- communicate with the Manager about their interview plans
- accept assignments from the Manager that, where possible, relate to their interests and geographic area
- use the recording equipment provided by the COOHP and liaise with the Manager over proper use of the equipment
- meet the COOHP standards in terms of interview process and completion of essential paperwork
- lodge the interview, paperwork and any accompanying documentation at Central Stories Museum in a timely manner
- become part of our volunteer network, willing to receive updates and additional training opportunities
- be willing to have their interviews included in the project and reviewed and abstracted.

It is important to note that while the interview is focused on the story of the interviewee, the interviewer, (their questions and comments), form a key component of the audio recording. It is therefore essential to remember that these recordings are available to the public via the Archives Research Room at the Museum. Where possible brief extracts will also be available on the Oral History online catalogue (in development as of Feb 2021).

### **When you become a Volunteer Interviewer for the Central Otago Oral History Project you can expect:**

- to have access to the project's recording equipment to undertake interviews
- to have the support of the Manager for any issues that may arise in the interview process
- to receive feedback on your interviews

- to receive e-mail and newsletter updates several times a year from the Manager
- to be invited to attend training and meetings for volunteers

**Oral History interviewing on behalf of the Central Otago Oral History Project involves a number of tasks:**

- Undertake 2 full days training
- Being able to follow the interview process and undertake a number of different tasks including planning, research, interviewing and paperwork
- Willing to commit to a minimum of 2-3 interviews per year
- Able to do research and planning for the interview
- Use technology
- Ensuring paperwork is completed
- Explaining to interviewees the process of the interview, what will happen to their interview and how their interview will be accessed and used

**Oral History interviewing involves a number of skills:**

- Good with people
- Ability to listen and pay attention
- Attention to details when listening
- Ongoing learning – learn from each interview experience
- Interest in history and people
- Patience
- Able to receive feedback on interviews

### **Abstractors**

Our abstractors undergo training to ensure that abstracts are produced to a high standard. Training is done on an individual basis throughout the year as well as on the second day of the interview training.

You will need access to a computer with a word processing programme, email and a USB port. If necessary we can also provide interviews on CD.

Abstracting will be covered in more detail during the second workshop session.



# Introducing the Central Otago Oral History Project

## What is the project about?

Our 'Central Otago way of life' is derived from our unique landscape and the unique people who have lived within its boundaries. This is most vividly captured in the stories of the people themselves, and the memories they share which describe our collective community identity and shared heritage. The project aims to record, preserve, share and celebrate these stories for the benefit of all.

We conduct both full life history interviews and topic-based interviews.

## Why do you want to interview me?

The Project aims to record as many stories as possible from people who were born in Central Otago or who moved here at some point in their lives.

We are interested in your personal experiences of everyday life (childhood, schooling, family life, work, leisure activities) as well as personal recollections and perceptions of particular historic events.

## What will it involve?

Your memories will be recorded in an informal one-on-one interview by a volunteer oral historian at a time and place that suits you.

At the end of the interview you will be asked to sign a Recording Agreement Form which outlines how the recording may be used and storage conditions. You will receive a copy of this form.

You can also provide photos and other relevant materials that can be copied and kept with your recording to provide additional context to your memories.

## What will happen to the recording?

The recording will be held at Central Stories Museum and Art Gallery archive. The copyright holder will be the Central Otago Heritage Trust. You will also receive a copy of the CD to share with your family.

The recording of your interview and accompanying material will be available for research at the library, subject to any restrictions you wish to place on them. The recording and any accompanying material cannot be copied or removed from the library but the interview and accompanying material may be quoted in, for example, broadcasts, theses and published work (print and electronic), subject to permission being granted by the Project Coordinator or Archivist.

The recording will typically **not** be available in full on our archive website, (once this is fully developed) but very short recorded extracts, along with a written outline of the recordings contents, may be included to increase the community's appreciation of our collection.

## What if I want to know more?

Please contact the Central Otago Oral History Project Manager at [oralhistorycoord@gmail.com](mailto:oralhistorycoord@gmail.com)

# Technical Standard

## Central Oral History Project Equipment

### ZOOM H5 Recorders

The Central Otago Oral History Project has 3 Zoom H5 recorders for recording Oral Histories. These are shared among the team of Volunteer Interviewers. Each Zoom H5 comes in a bag. In addition to the equipment there will be a copy of the Basic Instructions for using the Zoom H5 (see blue notes) as well as a contents list of the equipment. You will also need to prepare a set of the forms that need to be completed for each oral history, please contact the Oral History Manager to get a copy of these if you do not have them.

### SD Cards

Recordings are made onto SD cards. These need to be kept away from magnetic objects such as cell phones and where possible keep the card inside the card holder if one has been provided. There is a spare SD card in the top pocket inside the recorder bag.

Typically the SD cards are 8GB or larger, however some may be 2GB. A one hour interview takes up about 1GB of space. The Zoom H5 will show you on the screen how much recording time you have left.

If you have any problems with the Zoom H5 recorder or the SD cards please contact the Project Manager.

### Technical tips

Place the recorder on the foam pad. The microphones should be about 'shirt pocket' height. Use a lanyard (from the recorder bag) to clip the microphone on to.

The recorder should be within arm's reach of the interviewer and the screen should be in view so you can make visual checks during the interview e.g. time remaining, still recording etc.

Always undertake a sound check.

### File ID Statement

You should have a copy of the File ID statement with you. This statement includes a verbal agreement with the Interviewee regarding the Oral History interview.

It is vital that this statement is used for every interview. It only needs to be read in full once with each interviewee, if second or third interviews take place it does not need to be repeated in full each time (although do always note the date and time if interviews are done on different days).

# Central Otago Oral History Project



## FILE 01 IDENTIFICATION

The following is to be recorded at the start of each interview:

"This is an interview with \_\_\_\_\_ (full name)

for the Central Otago Oral History Project

recorded at \_\_\_\_\_ (place but not address)

On \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

The Time is \_\_\_\_\_

The interviewer is \_\_\_\_\_ ( your name)

I am using a Zoom H5 recorder and AKG C417PP clip on microphones

There is background noise from \_\_\_\_\_ (or state if there is no background noise)

This is File number 1.

For the record could you please tell me your full name and date of birth. (Interviewee answer)

Before we begin the oral history interview (name of interviewee) I just want you to confirm that you understand that this interview is being recorded for archival purposes as part of the Central Otago Oral History Project. The recording and accompanying documentation will be held at Central Stories Museum, in Alexandra.

(Include additional statement if the recording will also be held at another location.)

And at \_\_\_\_\_"

Access to and use of the recording and accompanying documentation will be subject to the conditions and any restrictions stated in the Recording Agreement which we will sign at the end.

Are you happy about that and willing to continue?" (Interviewee answer).

## **Sound check**

It is important to do a sound check before recording the interview to ensure the equipment is working.

Suggestion: ask the interviewee what they had for breakfast.

The sound check is also the opportunity to identify any background noises e.g. heat pump, fridge hum. Where possible eliminate these noises.

If a room has limited soft furnishings the sound may be hollow.

If the microphone is too close to one person this may result in a popping sound for consonants P B T.

## **Care of the equipment.**

Please take care of the Zoom H5 recorders and microphones.

- Please take care when using the Zoom H5, and in particular the microphone cables, please take care not to 'kink' these, and coil them loosely when finished.
- Please make sure the Zoom H5 is turned off when putting in the SD card and removing it.
- Care needs to be taken with the SD cards – please keep them in the case and away from magnetic objects e.g. cell phones.
- Keep in mind not to store the equipment in a hot place, ie do not leave in a car on a hot day.

If you notice any wear and tear with the machines please advise the Manager.

## **Use of the equipment – Booking**

With an active group of Interviewers we are unable to leave recorders with Interviewers long term. This means that you will have to plan ahead to undertake interviews. The Manager tries to keep at least one recorder at the library at all times; however, Interviewers need to book recorders and let the manager know how long they would like to keep the recorder for.

Please email the Manager to book at time to pick up a recorder. The Manager is at Central Stories on Thursday's 10-3pm. The maximum amount of time Interviewers will be able to keep recorders for will be 2 weeks; however, exceptions will apply if the nature of the recording work requires longer use.

# The Interview

## Flow Chart for Undertaking Interviews

The following flow chart identifies the steps involved in the creation of an interview. Each of these steps should be completed in order to ensure the Interviews created meet the three Oral History Standards – Technical, Ethical and Interview.

1. An Interviewee is referred to the Interviewer (in some instances the interviewer may make the initial contact with an Interviewee, especially if the interviewee is known to them)
2. Interviewer contacts Interviewee to arrange Preliminary meeting
3. Preliminary meeting:
  - a. outline the project and explain the Record Agreement Form and how the interview will be used,
  - b. gather Information as per the *Interviewee Information form*,
  - c. talk about what topics will be covered in the interview (but don't get into detail)
  - d. talk about any additional material (photographs etc) that can be included (or copied for inclusion) with the interview.
4. Research – contact the Project Manager for help or direction if needed.
5. Plan Interview – contact the Project Manager to organize pick up of a recorder. Organise all the forms which you will need (ie File ID form, Interviewee Information form, Recording Agreement Form and Frequently Asked Questions Guide, and Oral History Interview Checklist).
6. Arrange Interview time with Interviewee
7. At the interview:
  - a. Take a test recording (“what did you have for breakfast?”)
  - b. remind Interviewee that what they are saying is going on the record
  - c. record ID statement and verbal agreement at the start of the recording
  - d. take a photo of the interviewee or obtain a copy of existing photographs (check that these can be used online as part of the interview record).
  - e. ask the Interviewee if they would like to hear their interview before signing the Agreement Form
8. Complete relevant the *Oral History Interviewer Checklist*
9. Deliver/post recording and relevant documentation (including checklist) and any photos to the Project Manager (*covered in more detail later*).

Advise the Project Manager of any problems, issues, concerns or relevant things to the interview.

It is vital that any issues regarding any content of the interview or any concerns over use/access are cleared up as quickly as possible.

## Identifying Potential Interviewees

It is necessary to use some discretion in identifying suitable people to interview. There are several reasons for this:

- The project, and more importantly the Interviewers, do not have the capacity to interview every person so some limits need to apply
- There needs to be an assurance that people are properly informed about the Project and what happens to the recordings
- The project needs to ensure the right people are getting involved
- The project needs to ensure interviewers are not burdened with the responsibility of making promises they may not be able to keep.
- If you are given a name of someone who might make a suitable interviewee please refer them onto the Project Manager.

The Project Manger will then:

- Contact the person concerned to ask if they would be interested in participating
- Establish whether the person has something to contribute that is relevant to the COOHP purpose.
- Answer any questions the person may have regarding their involvement.
- Send a letter to the person thanking them for their willingness to participate and giving them some information about the oral history project and who will be contacting them to do the Interview.
- The details of the new Interviewee will then be passed on to a willing Interviewer and the Interviewer will make contact to arrange a time for the Preliminary meeting.

## Preliminary Meeting

The purpose of the preliminary meeting is to get to know your interviewee by gathering some information about them. It is also to ensure that the Interviewee understands what the Oral History Project is and what will happen to the interview. The preliminary meeting is vital to the Interview process.

- Never record an oral history interview without a preliminary meeting with your interviewee.
- Telephone your interviewee, and explain why you wish to meet them.
- Make an appointment to see them, preferably within two or three days.
- Be on time for the preliminary meeting.
- Be professional and confident.
- Take the time to explain your project again, including what you intend to do with the recordings.
- It is essential that you have told your interviewee enough to enable them to make an informed decision as to whether or not they wish to be interviewed. If they do not wish to be interviewed, thank them for their time and leave. Do not pester or attempt to persuade them if their mind seems made up.

### If the person agrees to an interview

Seek basic biographical information from your interviewee. Biographical data helps you, and those who use your interviews, to place interviewees in their social context, and it may provide information for genealogists in years to come.

*Refer to the copy of the Interviewee Information Form here.* This form and should be used for collecting this biographical information. It includes:

- the interviewee's date and place of birth
- the names of the interviewee's parents and their dates of birth, marriage and death
- the names of the interviewee's siblings, partner(s) and children
- details of the interviewee's schooling, hobbies, interests and occupations.

*Please note that interviewees need to be aware that this form is not shared with anyone listening to the recording in the future but is kept on restricted access in the library archive. This is important if they have any concerns about privacy.*

Some things to remember and do at the Preliminary Meeting:

- Keep in mind that some people will not want, or will be unable, to give you all of this information.
- Do not be insistent about collecting it if the interviewee is obviously unwilling to tell you.
- This is the stage at which to ask for relevant documents and photographs to copy to help with your research and to add to the interview file, if the interviewee agrees.
- At some point please find out what, if any, of the additional material provided can be used online to enhance the online record.
- It is also the stage when you should explain what will happen to the finished recording.
- Outline the general areas you will be asking about in the interview.

- Do not give the interviewee specific questions at this stage. They will want to begin answering them and may also try to prepare answers before your next meeting.
- Some people fear that they might inadvertently say something sensitive on tape, so it is important to tell them that they can put conditions on the use of their interview if they wish and that material can be removed. This is the time to talk about the agreement form.
- Keep the preliminary meeting brief, less than an hour. You do not want your interviewee telling all their stories at this meeting.
- Make an appointment to come back and record them, preferably within a week. A longer delay can make some people anxious about the process.
- It is advisable to ring on the day of the interview to make sure that it is still convenient.

This information has been provided by the NZ History website:

<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/hands/preliminary-meeting-a-guide-to-recording-oral-history>

### **Other Things to do at the Preliminary Meeting**

- Identify any obstacles to recording – potential noise or interruptions.
- Identify where the power supply is and if an extension cord is going to be needed.
- Identify any illness the Interviewee may have that might affect the interview e.g. deafness
- Ask the Interviewee to jot down anything they may remember after you leave which they might like to include in the interview
- Remind the interviewee that if there is something they do not want to talk about just let you know.

Explain the ideal interview environment – room where there will be the least interruptions, if a third person in the room the dynamic changes and privacy is compromised. However, situations can arise when another person is present for health/support reasons – it is important to identify this person in Interview ID. If they make a significant contribution to the interview then they will need to complete a Recording Agreement Form.



## Research

Using the information gathered at the preliminary meeting the interviewer should then find out as much relevant background information as possible to assist in guiding the interview. An unresearched interview can perform the same function as a vacuum cleaner i.e. it can collect anything and everything. A researched and planned interview will result in the collection of material relevant to the project focus.

Research establishes a framework for the whole interview – it will help you think of the most relevant and appropriate questions to ask and help pinpoint gaps in written records – areas that need exploring. Also it will often enable you to recognize inaccurate or misinformed answers.

It is useful to compile your research in chronologies:

- The first chronology should document events of national and international importance during the lifetime of the person interviewed.
- The second chronology should document events and milestones in the relevant lifetime environment of the person interviewed e.g. their home town, workplace, etc.
- The third chronology should document personal milestones of the person interviewed i.e. date of birth, family background, education, work history.

## Planning Interview

The Central Otago Oral History Project requires interviews to be planned for several reasons:

- it ensures all interviews include the same background information e.g. all interviews include information about schools attended – this is useful for future researchers
- it results in all interviews being ‘thinking interviews’ e.g. with relevant and intelligent questions being asked.

Note: Just because you go to the interview with a plan, this doesn’t mean you cannot follow the direction of the interview and ask other questions.

## The Interview

The best oral history interviews are the result of careful planning, thorough research, familiarity with your equipment and good rapport with your interviewee.

Before you go out to record an interview

- Make sure you have all the equipment you need (ie do you need an extension cord for the recorder?).
- Make sure that everything is in good working order.
- Check that you know how to operate all your equipment properly.
- Check to see that you have copies of the recording agreement form, the Interviewee Information Form and your interview questions.

### At the interview

1. Make a sound check.
  - a. Record your voice and that of your interviewee to make sure that both of you can be heard. It does not matter what you record for the sound check. A useful question is 'What did you have for breakfast?'
  - b. Make any necessary adjustments to the microphone.
  - c. Record the Card Identification at the beginning of your interview.
2. You should spell any person's or place names (i.e., say – Clarke, spelt C–L–A–R–K–E, Te Anau spelt T–E new word A–N–A–U). This is particularly important if the interview is to be deposited in an archive.
3. The interview is not a conversation. You are there to find out information. Once you have asked a question, keep quiet. (You are not the star of the show!)
4. Smile and nod to show encouragement and interest. Try not to say yes or make encouraging noises, and don't wriggle about or shuffle your papers.
5. Begin the interview with straightforward questions that your interviewee will have no difficulty answering. Ask for their full name and date of birth; ask about their mother and father and their names and occupations. Ask some questions to gain a little insight into their early life before the war – where they went to school, what they did when they left school.
6. Ask specific questions to get specific answers, and ask open-ended ones to get longer, more detailed answers.
7. Avoid questions where your interviewee only has to answer yes or no. Say, for example, 'What were your living conditions like?' rather than 'Did you have cramped living conditions?'
8. Don't tell them the answer to a question: 'So you milked the cows by hand?' Allow them to explain how they did things.
9. Ask open-ended questions if you want description or comment: 'What can you remember of the trip over to Egypt?' or 'Can you tell me more about what Cairo was like?'
10. Don't ask more than one question at a time.
11. Try to make your questions as clear as possible. If your interviewee does not understand, repeat the question and/or rephrase it.
12. Do not fill every pause they take. Most people will need to think about answers,

13. Make sure that your interviewee has finished answering before you ask the next question.
14. Don't worry if you seem to be straying from your prepared questions as long as the information you are hearing is relevant.
15. Don't expect people to remember dates. Most won't. For example ask, 'How old were you then?' or 'Was that before or after Cassino?' If you have done your background research well enough, the answer should allow you to pinpoint the year.
16. Aim to get interviewees to spell out measurements; 'It was about this wide' will mean nothing to a listener. Try to get the interviewee to give a verbal estimate of size: 'Oh, about a metre', or give it yourself: 'Is that about a metre?'
17. At the end of an interview, it is helpful to say thank you while still recording so that listeners know the interview has finished.
18. At the end of the interview, ask your interviewee to sign the agreement form. – Some Interviewees may prefer to listen to their interview before signing the agreement form.

These points were taken from the following website:

<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/hands/the-interview-a-guide-to-recording-oral-history>

### **Other Interview Tips**

1. Remember what the COOHP focus is – life and experiences in Central Otago.
2. If having more than one interview with a person, listen to the previous one to identify any points to clarify or obtain further information
3. Make sure it is a thinking Interview – ask questions, even if you might know the answer – be knowledgeable and naïve at the same time
4. Clarify with Interviewees how they know about something, were they there, did someone tell them etc.
5. Remind the interviewee that what they are saying is going on the record
6. Remember you are the eyes of the future listeners
7. If you are receiving an information overload from the Interviewee take steps to direct the interview, ask the interviewee to go back to something they had previously said and tell you more about it, steer the interview with your questions.
8. Listen as you interview – look for new leads
9. Be sensitive to tiredness
10. Keep an eye on recorder for time left and that it is recording, etc.
11. Take notes as you go so you don't forget things to ask about.
12. A good length for a life history interview is 3 hours – expect to go more than once if the interview is longer.

### **Types of Questions**

1. ask open question – not yes/no (closed) questions
2. be specific not vague
3. ask one question at a time
4. do not ask 'loaded' questions
5. use simple language
6. use events rather than years to establish dates and times (this can often be easier to remember)

7. ask about personal feelings and opinions as well as the facts
8. gather as much background type info as possible e.g. family history, schooling, religion, family life, childhood, etc. so all interviews contain this info
9. use research to develop specific questions on topics of interest e.g. if person was a rabbitier or involved in WWII

### **During the Interview**

- Be sure to remind people that what they are saying is being recorded – especially if they say something like ‘just between you and me...’ which can happen if/when they start to feel comfortable with you. Tell them how this is handled can be discussed after the interview.
- Mistakes in interview can be corrected by adding notes to paperwork.
- Use the headphones to identify background noise – sometimes the ear can block out background noise but the microphone will pick it up and you will hear it through the headphones.
- Interviewees concern about ‘getting it right’ – they were there so they are the expert, don’t worry too much about dates, ask how old they were, were they at school or before they started.
- Reassure them that if they make a mistake you can add it later in the paperwork (or further interview)

### **Follow up questions**

Follow up questions are used in interviewing to clarify points raised, focus the interviewee on a specific subject and encourage elaboration.

- Example – I’m not sure what you mean by that comment. Could you explain it further?

It is your responsibility to ensure the interviewee has meant what they said. This question will ensure that you have a clear understanding of what the interviewee has related.

- Example – You mentioned that you were at home when the earthquake struck. Can you describe what happened?

Questions like this encourage the interviewee to speak more fully about the subject raised.

- Example – You’ve told me that you were involved in the 1951 waterfront strike. What do you think was the cause of the strike?

Questions like this can encourage the interviewee to think and reflect – to give their own views on why things happened the way they did.

### **Suggested Questions**

Possible biography questions you could include:

- Full name of person interviewed, place and date of birth
- Father’s name, place and date of birth, occupation
- Mother’s name, place and date of birth, occupation
- Siblings: names, place/date of birth.

### Grandparents:

- Names and dates of birth – any memories of them?
- When did they come to NZ?
- What stories have you heard about them?
- Were you told stories about any other ancestors?

### Childhood:

- Earliest memory?
- Where did you grow up?
- Describe the house you lived in
- Describe the sort of food you ate
- Describe the types of clothes you wore
- Describe the games you played as a child (eg. sports, marbles, skipping, cards)
- Describe the chores you did when you were growing up. Did you get pocket money? What did you spend it on?
- Were there significant/influential people [e.g. family, friends, mentors] in your childhood? If so, how were they significant?

### Family activities:

- How would you describe family life - relationship with parents/siblings?
- What did your family celebrate (eg. Christmas, birthdays etc)
- Describe a typical family Christmas/birthday/family gathering
- What was the discipline like at home?
- What were your parents strict about? How? Why?

### Religion:

- How was your time spent on Sundays?
- Did you wear different clothes/play different games?
- Did your family go to church/ Sunday school?
- Were you taught to say prayers at night?
- What did religion mean to you as a child (later as an adult)
- Did you retain your religious belief/practices throughout your life?

### Education: [Ask the same questions about high school and university, if appropriate]

- Where did you go to school?
- How did you get there?
- How many classes were there?
- How many children in a classroom?
- Did you have any favourite teachers? Why?
- Were there any teachers you disliked? Why?
- Favourite school subjects/activities
- What was the discipline like at school?
- Describe the games you played at school

- How old were you when you left school? Why did you leave?
- What did you want to do when you left school? What did you do next?

Work: [If person interviewed had more than one job, repeat for each]

- What was your first paid job?
- Where did you work?
- Describe what you did in your job. Hours of work?
- Wages? Did you give any to your parents?
- Did you need special clothes? equipment?
- How did you feel about your job?
- Were you involved in a union? Which? How?
- What were your relations like with your workmates? with your boss?
- Why did you leave?

Leisure:

- What did you do in your spare time? (clubs, dances, hobbies?)
- What was a good night out when you were young?

Marriage/Partner:

- how did you meet?
- Describe your wedding
- How many children did you have?
- Where did you live?
- Who paid the bills and how?

People and Events:

- Did anyone ever do something or say something to you that had a big impact on how you lived your life?
- Who had the biggest influence on your life?
- If you had the chance to meet anyone in the world, who would it be? Why?
- Which world leader have you admired most?
- What has been the happiest time of your life?
- What has been the most traumatic time of your life?
- Is there anything else you would like to be put on the record?
- Reactions to/involvement in other public events relevant to the interviewees life & work
- Moving away from home how did you feel about that?
- Did you keep in touch with your family? How? Why?

Other themes

- Experiences during the 1930s Depression e.g.:
  - effect on you & your family (eg: unemployment; having to leave school; family member on relief work; mortgage foreclosure on home/farm; hunger – soup kitchens & other food relief; evicted by bailiffs if could not pay rent)

- Did you or your family receive assistance?
- Did the family have swaggers call? Meet any?
- Were you aware of other families with changed circumstances?
- How did the Depression affect your outlook on life - attitudes and values?

#### Experiences during the war

- If you have access to the Internet the following website has example questions that are specific to different aspects of the war (based on where a person was eg Pacific, North Africa, Greece and so on).

<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/hands/from-memory/from-memory>

- The website also includes background information.

## Useful References

Below is a list of useful books about Southland. This is by no means a comprehensive listing but a few examples. There are also numerous other sources of information available such as newspapers and archives.

Please contact the Project Coordinator for any assistance with research.

### General

ESLER Lloyd, Invercargill – 150 years, pub. Lloyd Esler 2006

ESLER Lloyd, The Southland Book of Records, pub. Lloyd Esler 2002

Ed. SORRELL Paul, Murihiku – the Southland Story pub. The Southland to 2006 Book Project Committee 2006

The 20th Century, a Century of Change – The Southland Times (Millennium Publication), Invercargill 1999

### Districts

HAMILTON G.A., History of Northern Southland, Invercargill 1952

LAMONT, Margaret, Tokanui, Slope Point-Haldane Centennial 1886-1986, Tokanui 1986

MACKINTOSH J., A History of Fortrose: ToeToes Riding the Toi Tois, (Invercargill 1975)

MACKINTOSH J., A Regional History of North Makarewa, Makarewa, Lorneville (Makarewa 1979)

MILLER F.W.G. West to the Fiords: The History of Western Southland, Christchurch 1954

MILLIGAN, David, Moonlight Ranges: The Story of Dipton 1877-1977, Dipton 1977

MUIR D.C.W., Mataura, City of the Falls, Gore 1991

MUIR D.C.W., DICKIE L.W., MCKAY E., Tuturau, a History of the District, Invercargill 1995

OVERTON J. Nigel, The birth of a district: a history of Otapiri, Lora Gorge, Benmore and Kauana, Winton 1984

THOMSON John S., Pasture, Coal Seam and Settlement: a Centennial History of Nightcaps and District 1880-1980, Nightcaps 1979

THWAITES Agnes M., The Wyndham Story, 1854-2000, Edendale 2003

TROTTER Margaret, Early Woodlands, Invercargill 1973

TYRELL A.R., Waikaia and Districts – a history, Waikaia 1999

WING Doug, Balfour: Pioneers to Present, Gore 2004



# The Recording Agreement Form

## Interview Restrictions

If an interview is unrestricted then it will be available for use once the Museum has processed the paperwork.

If the Interviewee has a concern about a part or the whole of their interview being available for use then:

- Interviewees have the option of restricting the whole interview or parts of it for access, broadcast, published work, use in public performance, and electronic publication on the internet. They can place a restriction on 1 or more of these options.
- Any restricted material, (unless permanently deleted – see below), will be removed from the listening copy but retained on the archival copy. The restricted material only becomes available on the listening copy once the restriction period has ended.
- Any restriction **must** be accompanied by a date that indicates when the restriction period can be reviewed or is released.
- In some cases people may wish for material to be permanently removed – this needs to be noted on the Recording Agreement Form. In these situations, the material will be removed from the listening copy and the archival/raw copy.
- Interviewees are welcome to listen to their interviews before signing the Agreement form.
- Don't underestimate the importance of this form.

**Please note:** if the interviewer wants the entire interview restricted with no release/review date then the recording *cannot* be included in the Central Otago Oral History Project. If this situation arises then please discuss it with the Project Manager.

## What will happen to the Interview?

Please ensure interviewees understand:

1. Their interviews and accompanying documentation will be held at the Central Stories Museum Archive (and sometimes other approved repositories if permission is given)
2. Access to and use of their interview and accompanying documentation will be subject to the conditions agreed by interviewees on the Recording Agreement Form
3. Access: recordings of interviews will be available to the public to listen to in the Museum unless there are restrictions specified on the Recording Agreement Form. Users need to fill in an Oral History User Registration form to access recordings
4. Abstracts of the interviews will be available to the public on the Central Oral History Project online database (yet to be developed) unless there are restrictions specified on the Recording Agreement Form.
5. Short audio extracts of the interview will also be included in the online catalogue along with any relevant photographs unless there are restrictions specified on the Recording Agreement Form.
6. Publication: Interviews will be available for publication unless there are restrictions specified on the Recording Agreement Form. Permission to publish material must be sought in writing from

the Central Otago Oral History Project (specifically the project Manager). Where possible the Central Otago Oral History Project will let people know about use of the interview

Interviewers also need to understand that they do not receive a copy of the interview.

**NO INTERVIEW CAN BE ACCEPTED INTO THE *CENTRAL OTAGO ORAL HISTORY PROJECT* WITHOUT A FULLY COMPLETED RECORDING AGREEMENT THAT IS SIGNED BY THE INTERVIEWEE, INTERVIEWER AND COMMISSIONER.**

If you have any issues with understanding and/or explaining the Recording Agreement form then please contact the Project Manager.

### **COOHP Policy for Minimising and Dealing With Ethical and Other Issues:**

When recording the interview please ensure:

- the verbal agreement as written on the Card ID is included at the start of the Interview
- if a topic of a sensitive nature is discussed by the interviewee and the Interviewer is concerned, ask if the interviewee is happy for this to be going on the record.

If, as the Interviewer you identify a potential concern regarding the recording please tell the Project Manager.

This includes:

- Interviewee seemed hesitant or unhappy to sign recording agreement form
- A third party expresses concern about content of recording
- The interviewer hears 'through the grapevine' of a concern about the recording

It is not the responsibility of the Interviewer to deal with concerns regarding the content of oral history interview recordings.

Once the concern has been forwarded to the Project Manager the following steps will be taken:

- Project Manager to contact the interviewee to hear any concern they may have
- If appropriate the Manager will contact the third party concerned
- If an understanding cannot be met, the Manager will then contact the National Oral History Association of NZ to seek direction on where to go next for advice
- The Project Manager will document this process

# National Guidelines

National Guidelines for the ethical, professional and technical standards of Oral History exist. This Code exists to promote ethical, professional and technical standards in the collection, preservation and use of sound and video oral history material. The Central Otago Oral History Project has used these as the foundation of its own standards.

## Origins

The National Oral History Association of New Zealand (NOHANZ) Te Kete Kōrero-a-Waha o e Motu was established as a result of the first national oral history seminar organised in April 1986.

## Objectives

1. to promote the practice and methods of oral history
2. to promote standards in oral history interviewing techniques, and in recording and preservation methods.
3. to act as a resource of information and to advise on practical and technical problems involved in making oral history recordings.
4. to act as a coordinator of oral history activities throughout New Zealand.
5. to produce an annual oral history journal and regular newsletters
6. to promote regular oral history meetings, talks, seminars, workshops and demonstrations.
7. to encourage the establishment of NOHANZ branches throughout New Zealand.
8. to improve access to oral history collections held in libraries, archives and museums.

Archives, sponsors and organisers of oral history projects have the following responsibilities:

1. To inform interviewers and people interviewed of the importance of this Code for the successful creation and use of oral history material
2. To select interviewers on the basis of professional competence and interviewing skill, endeavouring to assign appropriate interviewers to people interviewed
3. To see that records of the creation and processing of each interview are kept
4. To ensure that each interview is properly indexed and catalogued
5. To ensure that preservation conditions for recordings and accompanying material are of the highest possible standard
6. To ensure that placement of and access to recordings and accompanying material comply with a signed or recorded agreement with the person interviewed
7. To ensure that people interviewed are informed of issues such as copyright, ownership, privacy legislation, and how the interview and accompanying material may be used
8. To make the existence of available interviews known through public information channels
9. To guard against possible social injury to, or exploitation of people interviewed

Interviewers have the following responsibilities:

1. To inform the person interviewed of the purposes and procedures of oral history in general and of the particular project in which they are involved
2. To inform the person interviewed of issues such as copyright, ownership, privacy legislation, and how the material and accompanying material may be used

3. To develop sufficient skills and knowledge in interviewing and equipment operation, e.g. through reading and training, to ensure a result of the highest possible standard
4. To use equipment that will produce recordings of the highest possible standard
5. To encourage informative dialogue based on thorough research
6. To conduct interviews with integrity
7. To conduct interviews with an awareness of cultural or individual sensibilities
8. To treat every interview as a confidential conversation, the contents of which are available only as determined by written or recorded agreement with the person interviewed
9. To place each recording and all accompanying material in an archive to be available for research, subject to any conditions placed on it by the person interviewed
10. To inform the person interviewed of where the material will be held
11. To respect all agreements made with the person interviewed

Taken from <http://www.oralhistory.org.nz/index.php/ethics-and-practice/>

# Oral History Interviewer Checklist

All interviewers need to complete an Oral History Interviewer Checklist for each interview that is undertaken.

The form should be started at the beginning of the interview process and completed as the interview process proceeds.

The interviewer will be provided copies of the form along with the recorder and SD cards at the start of the interview process.

The checklist will act as a prompt to ensure that the interview process is conducted properly and all the necessary information is obtained.

It is critical for recording and tracking any material given to the interviewer by the interviewee that needs to be returned.

The summary will be used as the basis of the "Brief Synopsis" that appears on the online catalogue to give people an idea what the interview is about. Please make this as informative as possible.

## Once the Interview has been done:

1. Drop the recorder, SD cards, Interviewer Checklist, Recording Agreement and any other materials to the Project Manager at Central Stories Museum.
2. If you need to discuss the interview with the Project Manager then please arrange a time to meet first.
3. If the Project Manager is not available at the time you come in, then for security of the equipment, recording and paperwork, please drop everything to the staff at Central Stories who will then put it in a safe place.
4. The Project Manager will then check that everything is complete and assign an Accession Number. Expect to hear from the Project Manager if there are any issues!
5. The recording will then be downloaded and converted to wav and mp3 files.
6. *If signing of the Recording Agreement is subject to the Interviewee listening to the recording then a copy of the interview will be sent out on USB at this point and no further action will be taken until a signed Recording Agreement is provided and any restrictions are dealt with.*
7. Photos or documents provided by the Interviewee will be scanned and/or copied.
8. The recording is copied to USB/ CD for the Archive and Interviewee
9. Information about the recording is added to the online catalogue.
10. The Project Manager will provide the USB copy to you.
11. The Interviewer passes the USB copy and any additional materials (ie photos) onto the Interviewee and thanks them for their participation, thank you cards are a nice idea.
12. Interview signed off as complete – WELL DONE 😊

## **Requests for Additional Copies of an Oral History Recording**

There are often situations or circumstances where an Interviewee may request an additional copy of their interview. This includes when they have several children and would like to give each a copy of their life story.

The Central Oral History Project is happy to do this however there may be a charge of \$10 per interview for copies to be produced (in reality this fee is often waived). In most instances family are happy to receive the oral history electronically as a MP3 file, for which there is no charge.

The Project also requires a form to be completed by the Interviewee to give permission for these copies to be made. The main reason for this is because if additional copies of interviews are made and distributed to family members the Museum will no longer have control over access to the recording and what the recording is used for.

Interviewees need to understand that although the Museum will still require written permission to publish extracts from interviews held at the Museum we cannot administer distributed copies in this way.

Please contact the Project Manager to discuss this option is required.

## **ORAL HISTORY METHODOLOGY & TECHNOLOGY**

### **FURTHER READING**

Beth M Robertson. Oral History Handbook. OHAA, Australia. Fifth edition, 2006

Donald Ritchie. Doing Oral History. 1995.

Maori and oral history: a collection. Edited by Rachael Selby and Alison Laurie. Wellington: NOHANZ, 2005

Megan Hutching. Talking history: a short guide to oral history. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books/Historical Branch, Dept of Internal Affairs, 1993

Paul Thompson. The Voice of the Past: Oral History. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

The Oral History Reader. Edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson. London: Routledge, 1998. Second edition, 2006

### **USEFUL WEBSITES**

NOHANZ: <http://www.oralhistory.org.nz/>

Oral History Centre, Alexander Turnbull Library: <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/collections/a-z-of-all-collections/oral-history-centre>

New Zealand History on Line - Ministry for Culture and Heritage: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/>

Online Oral History guide: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/hands/a-guide-to-recording-oral-history>

Australian Sesquicentennial Gift Trust for Awards in Oral History:  
<http://www.mch.govt.nz/awards/history/oral.html>

Jack Ilott Oral History Education Operating Fund: <http://www.natlib.govt.nz/about-us/scholarships/scholarships-and-grants>

Professional Historians' Association of New Zealand/Aotearoa PHANZA: <http://www.phanza.org.nz/>