

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT CASE STUDY

What was the issue?

Oral History interviews in collaboration with Brighton Museum and the WRVS.

Who did you engage with?

Inhabitants of Brighton and Hove who were generally over the age of 60 and who have lived in the city for all, or nearly all, of their lives.

They were identified either by Brighton Museum or the WRVS as individuals who wanted to partake in the projects and / or had a story to tell regarding their life and experiences in Brighton and Hove.

The interviewees lived in a diverse range of places in the city and met at their own convenience at the Brighton and Hove museums, WRVS centres, residential care homes, or their own homes.

The aim was to make the interviewee feel comfortable and free to reminisce about their experiences in Brighton and Hove.

What did you do?

I interviewed members of Brighton and Hove's population who have lived here since birth or for the majority of their lives during a particular time-frame.

The interviews comprised of questions regarding their experiences around World War 2, its impact on themselves, their families, their opportunities and social lives, and the changes in landscape and society as a whole.

Other interviews were based on the neighbourhood in which they are most strongly connected (either through birth or upbringing) - these are more localised memories where the landscape and people are the primary focus.

These interviews will form a part of museum exhibitions and education packs, and local neighbourhood exhibits respectively. They will also contribute greatly to the city's archives of local history.

What was the impact?

I believe that this oral history project is of huge benefit to the individuals involved and the community as a whole.

Through inter-generational exchanges, it seeks to make and elicit connections between people and place and promotes engagement for both interviewer and interviewee with the cultural life of the city.

The interviews can generate in the interviewees feelings of belonging and ownership to a city that has gone through many changes both socially and physically. I believe they place a sense of importance on the interviewee's own knowledge and memories and the importance of the stories they can tell for present and future generations, and for the narrative of Brighton and Hove as a city.

What barriers, challenges or points of learning did you identify from the process?

As a relative newcomer to the city, this project has highlighted further the transient nature of many members of Brighton and Hove's population, and the value of 'setting down roots' and becoming more involved in one's community through the memories of its population.

It is very easy to live as a temporary visitor in Brighton and Hove and my participation in this oral history project has given me a greater sense of belonging to the community in which I live. I have experienced enriching exchanges with members of the population who I would not normally meet and it has reinforced my belief that we really do share many commonalities.

My participation in the project has also enlightened me to all the community projects that are taking place within the city - particularly those that may be less visible such as the reminiscence projects amongst the older population in Brighton and Hove.

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