

# e3i Employability Case Study



## Community history module

**Alison Twells**

[A.Twells@shu.ac.uk](mailto:A.Twells@shu.ac.uk)

Faculty of Development and Society

<b>Subject group:</b>	History
<b>Number of students involved:</b>	20
<b>Elements of the employability framework addressed:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Development of autonomy;</li><li>• Key skills development;</li><li>• PDP</li><li>• Real world activities;</li><li>• Work related learning;</li><li>• Reflection on use of knowledge and skills: transfer of these to work environment;</li><li>• Preparation for specific professional areas;</li><li>• Enterprise, innovation and creativity</li></ul>

- the developments in British social history which have seen the growing popularity of family, community and oral history in the post-war years;
- key concepts in community history;
- community history and community 'regeneration'.

### Oral History:

- oral history: theory and practice;
- the problems of memory

### Heritage:

- the growth of the heritage industry;
- the 'heritage debates'.

### Schools' History:

- History at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3;
- Local history in school

The lectures introduce the theoretical aspects of the subject area, while the appended seminars enable students to develop and practice some of the research skills necessary to undertake project work in the field of community history.

**Week 5:** Students meet your project contact and draw up an initial project proposal.

**Weeks 6:** work-in-progress session plus oral history training (for those doing oral history)

### **Weeks 5-11: the community history project**

Weeks 5-11 will be mainly spent out of the university. This is likely to involve visits to the 'site', meetings with appropriate people, visits to record offices and possibly doing oral history interviews.

Students work either individually or in small groups to produce something of use to the community group concerned. This might be a report, a piece of primary research, an education pack, a number of oral history interviews and transcriptions, or (skills allowing) a DVD, etc. An individual learning contract will be drawn up which will

### Description of learning and teaching approach adopted

#### Teaching and Learning

The module is organized into three sections:

#### Weeks 1-4: University-based preparatory work

For the first four weeks, teaching and learning on the module takes place in the university, in the form of lectures, seminars and workshops on the following subjects:

#### Community History: what is it?

- an introduction to some of the major sources of use for studying families, parishes and communities since 1800;

specify the nature of a student's contribution to the project and the project work required for assessment. We will have regular drop-in work-in-progress sessions at the University, to ensure that you are on track and to iron out any difficulties with the project.

### **Week 12: feedback and debriefing session**

This session will be University-based. Students will be expected to present their project to the seminar group as a whole.

#### **Assessment:**

##### **Project - 50%**

This will be the major piece of work (3000 words if a written report) that comes out of the community history, and will be worth 50% of the total marks. This will be negotiated between the student, tutor and community history group, as appropriate. It might take the form of a report, a set of transcribed interviews, an education pack, a booklet, a piece of primary research for a community-based organisation. It will be marked by the tutor in consultation with the community group representative. The project will be developed on a group wiki on the Community History blackboard site.

##### **Portfolio - 50%.** This includes:

- a critical appraisal of a primary source used by family and community historians (eg Census, wills etc) (500 words).
- a 1500 word individual project analysis which reflects upon the successes and problems of the project (1500 words). Students need to consider: the project formulation; clarity of aims; degree of difficulty; achievement of aims. They are to comment on personal issues (time management, reliability, attitude, initiative, team work, verbal communication skills, flexibility, research skills); any external support, including that of supervisor; the overall value of the project. Students are expected to clearly introduce the project; to set in its appropriate historical contexts; to use primary sources; to be critical of both sources and methodology.
- a weekly on-line learning diary or blog, in which students record and reflect upon the development of their community history projects and placements.

#### **Employability objectives and intended learning outcomes**

Clearly the module addresses a range of 'employability' issues, in terms of developing both transferable and specific skills related to 'doing history' in different contexts. In particular, the module is concerned with the practice of History in the 'Real world'. We examine the difference between academic and public history, and explore issues relating to the presentation of history within the heritage industry and within 'regeneration' projects within the locality. Students acquire skills in oral history, and are able to put these into practice in interviews. This year, I have added a session on History in the National Curriculum, both to further facilitate the educational materials that some students are engaged in producing, but also in response to students' reports that the clear links with their planned PGCEs were not made explicit enough in the course of the module.

#### **Description of and tips for good practice; lessons learned**

One of the joys of this module is that it changes each year, depending on the requirements of the community history groups with whom we work. As a result, the portfolio of possible projects is continually expanding, and students now have (some excellent) past work to consult. (One of the problems early on was a lack of confidence about what was being asked of them). So one lesson I have learned has been that this module becomes easier to run each year, as it brings with it a body of work and actually generates enthusiastic partners who want us to work with them.

A really important part of this module is that we do good quality work for the external partner. Early on, I hadn't given much thought to 'keeping sweet' the partners, and so now make sure I am in regular contact with them, partly to make sure they have realistic expectations of what the students can achieve and to iron out any difficulties. This followed a particularly bad experience last year, with an over-controlling and hyper-critical 'partner', with whom we won't be working again! A key part of the project is negotiating the different styles of the partners: some want control, and I have to try to loosen their grip; others remain quite distant, and I then have to step into a more actively supervisory role; while others are very inspiring and give considerable leeway to the students (this latter is something I have learned from in turn also).

I have learned that it is good practice to give students a lot of autonomy in the planning and execution of the project. I feel more relaxed about this now that the project development is done on-line, i.e. via a (small group) wiki and (individual) learning diary. I can give the students a lot of scope with their work while also satisfying my need for some degree of surveillance! So, the framework is important; if it is well structured and well organised, it is easier to facilitate autonomy.

I have changed the module to include more focus on teaching history in schools, in response to student feedback. A good number of the students who take this module are planning to do a PGCE, and come highly motivated regarding producing teaching materials. An understanding of history at key stages 1, 2 and 3; of themes and challenges in history teaching; and reflection on their own school history education, have thus become a key component of the module.

#### **Key points of any feedback gathered or evaluation undertaken with students or staff**

Some comments from 2005-06:

*'Our project is complete and I've enjoyed it very much. By far, my favourite module this year... This course was very challenging; it required the learning of many new skills and demanding much more commitment than any other one that I had partaken in before. Despite this however, I found it thoroughly enjoyable. It has provided me with the opportunity to try many new skills and with the forum to meet lots of very pleasant people, whom I would otherwise not have had the opportunity to meet. For this reason alone I would recommend it to future students.'*

(Student 1, female)

*'... The transcription was long and arduous and extremely time consuming, but once done there is a sense of achievement which has been unique amongst my modules this semester. I think this project has definitely been the highlight of my module choices and I would advise any student thinking of taking it next year of two things. Firstly, I would warn them that it is a big commitment, and you have to be prepared to organise, arrange and meet with complete strangers sometimes in places you've never been before, so it is best to be as confident and positive as possible. Secondly I would say, go do it! Despite the work load being high, and without sounding melodramatic, I think (I and Marie) will have gained more than just points and grades from this module. Although it has been hard, it has also been a lot of fun and I would definitely consider helping on another community research project in the future.'*

(Student 2, male)

*'It is hard to say what overall value the project will have to the school children who carry it out but for me it has proved invaluable. As an aspiring teacher, it has given me experience in planning projects and will help me next year in my teacher training. Local history has proven to be important to many communities and I feel proud to have been part of something that encourages this... If there was anything I would change it would have been the time we had for the project... Overall it has been a pleasure to do the project and I feel that I worked well and am pleased with the work that I have done.'*

(Student 3, female)

## Resources used

### Community History

1. Drake, M. (ed), *Time, Family and Community: Perspectives on Family and Community History*
2. Drake, M. and Finnegan, R. (eds) (1994), *Studying family and community history, vol. 4,*
3. Drake, M., Finnegan, R., Eustace, J. (eds) (1997), *Sources and methods for family and community historians: a handbook*
4. Dymond, D. (1999), *Researching and writing history: a practical guide for local historians,*
5. Golby, J. ed., *Communities and Families*
6. Hey, D. (1987), *Family History and Local History in England*
7. Hey, D. (2002), *Oxford Companion to Family and Local History*
8. Hey, D. (2004), *Journeys in Family History*
9. Higgs, E. (2005), *Making Sense of the Census*
10. Hoskins, W. (1967), *Fieldwork in local history*
11. Hoskins, W. (1984), *Local history in England*
12. Iredale, D. (1980), *Local history research and writing: a manual for local history writers*
13. Lewis, C. (1989), *Particular places: an introduction to English local history*
14. Phythian-Adams, C. (1991), *Re-thinking English local history*
15. Pryce, W. (ed.) (1994), *From family history to community history* (Studying Family and Community History: 19th and 20th Centuries, Vol. 2
16. Read, P. (1996), *Returning to Nothing: A Study in the Meaning of Lost Places*
17. Riden, P. (1983), *Local history: a handbook for beginners*
18. Rogers, A. (1977) *Approaches to local history*
19. Snell, K. *Local and Regional Societies since c 1650: approaches and skills*
20. Spick, M and Ayling, K. *Sources for Local History: a resource pack for teachers and students*
21. Taksa, L. 'Defining the Field', in P. O'Farrell, John Ingleson and Louella McCarthy (eds), *History and Communities: A Preliminary Survey* (Sidney, 1990), pp.

22. Tiller, K. (1992), *English local history: an introduction* (1992)

### Videos

1. Doorstep discovery [VIDEO]: working on a local history study. English Heritage, 1993.
2. History at home [VIDEO]: family detectives finding the past Rob David. English Heritage, 1996.
3. Investigating local history [VIDEO] / Sallie Purkis
4. Landmarks [VIDEO OFF-AIR]. Investigating local history. The Victorians in Sheffield. BBC 1996
5. Who do you think you are? [DVD OFF-AIR] 2 and 3 (Amanda Redman and Sue Johnston)

### Journals

Local historian, COLLEGIATE STACK 1968-2001

Local history news [SERIAL], 1995-2001

### *Family and Community History*

### Oral History

1. Bertaux, D. (1981), *Biography and Society: the Life History Approach in the Social Science*
2. Counce, S. (1994), *Oral history and the local historian* (1994)
3. Chamberlayne, P., Bornat, J., Wengraf, J. (eds) (2000), *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Sciences*
4. Frisch, M. (1990), *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*
5. Gluck, S. & Patai, D. (eds) (1991), *Women's Words: the Feminist practice of Oral History*
6. Hatch, J. & Wisniewski, R. (eds) (1995), *Life History and Narrative*
7. Josselson, R. & Leiblich, A (eds) (1993-9), *Narrative Study of Lives*, Vols 1, 3, 6,
8. Lummis, T. (1988), *Listening to History: the Authenticity of Oral Evidence*
9. Miller, R. (1999), *Researching Life Stories and Family Histories* (1999)
10. Passerini, L. (1978), 'Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism', *History Workshop Journal*, 8, 82-108.
11. Passerini, L. (1987), *Fascism in Popular Memory: The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class*
12. Perks, R. & Thompson, A. (eds) (1998), *The Oral History Reader*
13. Personal Narratives Group (1989), *Interpreting Women's Lives*
14. Portelli, A. (1991), *The death of Luigi Trastulli and other stories: form and meaning in oral history*
15. Portelli, A. (1997), *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the art of dialogue*
16. Radstone, S. (2000), *Memory and methodology*
17. Ritchie, D. (2003), *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*



18. Rosen, H. (1998), *Speaking from Memory: the Study of Autobiographical Discourse*
19. Rosenwald, G. & Ochberg, R. (eds) (1992), *Storied Lives: the Cultural Politics of Self-understanding*
20. Samuel, R. & Thompson, P. (eds) (1990), *The voice of the past: oral history*
21. Thompson, P. (2000), *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*
22. Tonkin, E. (1992), *Narrating our Pasts: the Social Construction of Oral History*
23. Tosh, J. (1999), 'History by word of mouth' in his *The Pursuit of History: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history*
17. Samuel, R. (1984), *Theatres of Memory*, 'Unofficial knowledge', pp. 3-48 and 'Heritage baiting' in Part 4, pp.259-271.
18. Yale, P. (1991), *From Tourist Attractions to Heritage Tourism*

### History in Schools

### Heritage

1. Al Sayyad, N. (2001), *Consuming Tradition, manufacturing heritage: global norms and urban forms in the age of tourism*
2. Aplin, G. (2002), *Heritage: Identification, Conservation and Management*
3. Arnold, J., Davies, K. and Ditchfield, S. (eds) (1998), *History and Heritage: Consuming the past in Contemporary Culture*
4. Boniface, P. and Fowler, P. (1993), *Heritage and tourism in the 'global village'*
5. Boswell and Evans (1999), *Representing the Nation: A Reader*, esp chapters by Rojek, Samuel and Urr.
6. Brisbane, M., Wood, J. (eds) (1996), *A Future for our Past? An introduction to Heritage Studies*
7. Chase, M. and Shaw, C. (1989), 'The dimensions of nostalgia', in *The Imagined Past: History and nostalgia'*
8. Delafons, J. (1997), *Politics and preservation: a policy history of the built heritage, 1882-1996*
9. Dodd, M. (10 Dec 2001), 'The New Rock 'n' Roll, the New Statesman
10. Fladmark, M. (ed.) (1993), *Heritage: conservation, interpretation and enterprise*
11. Hewison, R. (1987), *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a climate of decline*
12. Hunter, M. (ed.) (1996), *Preserving the Past: the Rise of Heritage in Modern Britain*
13. Jordanova, L. (May 2000), 'Public history', *History Today*
14. Kean, H., Martin, P., Morgan, S. (2000), *Seeing History: Public History in Britain Now*
15. Lowenthal, D. (1998), *The Heritage Crusade and Spoils of History* (1998)
16. Rojek, C. (1999), 'Fatal Attractions', in
1. Andretti, K. (1993), *Teaching History from Primary Evidence*
2. Blyth, J. (1994), *History 5 to 11*
3. Bourdillon, H. (1994), *Teaching History*
4. Brown, R. (1995), *Managing the Learning of History*
5. Griffin, J. & Eddershaw, D. (1994), *Using Local History Sources*
6. Haydn, T. (1997), *Learning to Teach History in the Secondary School*
7. Husbands, C. (1997), *What is History Teaching?*
8. Lomas, T. et. al. (1996), *Planning Primary History for the Revised National Curriculum, Key Stage 1 & 2*
9. *National Curriculum for England and Wales: History* (1999) (<http://www.nc.uk.net>)
10. O'Hara, L. and O'Hara, M. (2001), *Teaching History 3-11*
11. Redfern, A. (1996), *Talking in Class: Oral History and the History Curriculum*
12. Geoff Timmins, Keith Vernon and Christine Kinealy (2005), *Teaching and Learning History*
- A. Twells (1992), *Colonialism, Slavery and the Industrial Revolution: The Empire in South Yorkshire*
- A. Twells (2007), *Olaudah Equiano in Sheffield*