

**The Making of an Historian:
Talk for the opening of the “Making History: Our first 25 years”, 25th CADHAS
Anniversary Celebration Exhibition,
The Old Police Station,
Chipping Campden,
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As Cousin Minnie Pearl used to say, I'm mighty proud to be here.

When the letter inviting me to open this exhibition to celebrate 25 years of the Campden and District Historical and Archaeological Society arrived, my immediate response was to say “No”. There are two main reasons, and a third which I will come back to if there is time. First - I'm not sure when it happened; my “Shut thee B--- Mouth” talk to the Society in 1990 was one of the most relaxed and enjoyable I can remember, but it was well and truly entrenched by the time of my talk in 2001 – I have come to have a terror of public speaking. That makes it almost impossible to do it well, and that in itself led me to automatically think “No”. Anyone who has read my PhD thesis will know the lengths I go to to try to do things right. But on top of that, in his letter of invitation your President referred to me as “one of our most distinguished members”, and as someone who likes to get things right I have to say with all self-honesty that I am not distinguished; I don't see much likelihood at this stage of becoming distinguished; and if I began to entertain the illusion that I was distinguished I am certain my wife and children would quickly disabuse me of the notion. There are genuinely distinguished people the Historical Society could call on. So my first reaction to Donald's invitation was to thank him for the immense honour, but to, as I say, say “No”.

However, I don't do very many things quickly at the moment, and before I could respond a couple of things kicked in.

I began to reflect on “distinguished”, and how looking at people in terms of “distinguished” and “most distinguished” is part of a process of everyday mythologisation. Mythologising is an essential human process in which we rework past experience to give us a route to the future. It helps us to clarify our beliefs and values, and to set them on signposts – a bit like the old Four Finger Post hanging from your ceiling here in the museum – as a guide to where you want to go. This is why myth is so exciting for historians, because it enables us to see through the opaque surface of events, statements and facts to the motivating beliefs and values roiling and moving life along underneath. I then reflected on what you, in the Historical Society, were mythologizing in asking me to speak. Was it academic eminence? No. Was it social eminence? No. Was it wealth or celebrity, of which there is no dearth in the Campden area? I think we know the answer to that. So, what is at work in the Historical Society, assuming it wasn't simple desperation?

In all of the publicity I have seen for this event, what you have chosen to highlight is the great help I gave to the Historical Society in its early days, particularly in the area of oral history. That isn't how I remember it, but that isn't the point. The point is that

what you have chosen to honour at your 25th anniversary is the ideal of service and helping one another to learn; and more especially, given the nature of oral history, you have chosen to honour and highlight the value of listening and of learning through listening to one another, to one's neighbours, to the past, in its and their own voice, and in that sometimes upsetting-the-apple-cart-of-what-we-thought-we-knew way. What you have placed at the centre of your beliefs and aspirations, looking ahead to your next 25 years, is the belief in placing one's knowledge and skills at the service of others; the value of putting back into the community something of what one has been given; and an understanding of the joy and the wonderful unexpected journey that comes to the whole community from listening to all the members of our community, past, present and future. Highlighting this says a huge amount about the Society, and where it wants to be going. It is extremely good news for Chipping Campden and its future. It is certainly something I would very much wish to help celebrate, especially as separation and division have been so much a part of Campden's modern history.

More importantly, however, I began to fill up with people who had touched me and changed my life in the course of my research on Chipping Campden. The Twinberrows, who first took me in when I came up the hill, and gave me an anchor; without them there would never have been a PhD, and certainly no help from me for this Society. The two anonymous lads in a Landrover at the Hidcote turn who offered me a ride up the hill into Campden during the onset of the blizzard of 1981, when my backpack was heavy with camping and recording equipment, and the road already thickening with snow – why I said No, I don't entirely know; but the long and wet walk afterwards, with melting snow on my outside, and rivers of perspiration underneath, must have evoked the right kind of pity in the Twinberrows, to insist a crazy American stay, and eat. And who was it at Paul's Pike, moved perhaps by a kind of horror mixed with disbelief as the snow mounted around us, who directed me to the Twinberrows when I asked if I could pitch a tent. What a bizarre sight I must have been, with Canadian Sorels on my feet and the down-filled mittens I'd brought with me from the sunny wilds of California, thinking all English winters were like those in the Yorkshire dales of "All Creatures Great and Small"; and not far wrong that year. What an amazing way to be introduced to Chipping Campden!

And then Mrs. Dyer came to me and said "The first time you came to interview me I put out the silver tea service I made myself, in the Guild, which was exquisitely crafted, you said. I took you up to the silversmiths and introduced you to Henry Hart, and David popped his head out of the office; you called him Dave. I showed you my beautiful quiltwork, the heirlooms for my grandchildren; and let you talk at my hundredth birthday. I let you help Dave Twinberrow mend the fence in my back garden in the pouring rain and cold wind, and knocked at the window to make sure you got it right. So, you can do this talk for me."

Robert Welch, who took me through his sketchbooks, and around the prototypes and essays of hundreds of designs in the loft of the Silk Mill, a private design museum, each object handled and crafted by John Limburey at some point in the workshop below. Felicity Ashbee; sleeping in her flat surrounded by the family history, immersing myself in drawings, and documents and recordings alone and late into the night. Don Ellis, who lived in St. Anne's outside the Town Hall, which he loved – or, rather, the sprung floor of which and the dances which took place there filled him with joy again as he told me about them, and the time, in his dining room – I remember

there being a dark wooden oval table; I wonder if there was – he got up, and took me in his arms, and said “This is the way we used to dance.” I wonder what happened to the wooden wheel barrow he’d made as a boy?

Jack Tomes, who was then the leader of the mummers, which of course is what I had come almost five and a half thousand miles from California to study. I know that many people in Campden found him difficult. He was early on an agricultural labourer and then a builder’s labourer – an excellent employee according to John MacNamara. He liked his drink, and he was happy to take a misunderstanding or disagreement to the physical, indeed could be aggressive, and I think had been banned from various pubs for it. When Jack Powell first introduced me to him in the Volunteer, Jack Tomes required me turn my pockets out to prove I didn’t have a hidden tape recorder. I certainly wasn’t going to argue with him. Later, just as I was completing my writing-up at Christmas 1987 and thought I had everything about done for the PhD, I saw him one evening in the Town Square with some of his boys and went over to him, I think with Hayley Woolner, and he started shouting at me and telling me in no uncertain terms to F-off; which was hard because I had just turned my taperecorder off and don’t have a record of it; but even more so because it brought my PhD crashing down around my ears, as he was my principal informant for that stage of the writing up, and I couldn’t see using his material without his approbation. And yet, in re-reading my field notebooks for opening this exhibition, I find I have written “Jack Tomes is a lovely man.” And he was. In one of our earliest meetings he introduced me to the mysteries of cider at the Volunteer; stumbling home in the dark on the long road out of Campden, discovering its laxative properties, at least for the uninitiated; but on the way, being shown where he watched American Military Police bash recalcitrant GIs heads against the stone outcroppings of the Noel Arms bay window coming drunk out of Town Hall dances, and being piled into jeeps for the stunned ride back to Camp. A few nights after he shouted at me in the Square, I girded my loins and went up to his house after work, in one of the bravest things I’ve ever done. I walked down the long passageway outside, and of course the dogs in the dark in the back went mad. There was a light on in the kitchen, and, with huge trepidation, I knocked. I hadn’t phoned ahead, and I had no idea what to expect. Jack answered the door – and after the initial surprise we had a lovely evening, in which he showed me the many medals he’d won at the Stanway Flower Show, and old books he’d found – Seumas Stewart for goodness sake; people just keep coming into my mind - . Jack was a Campden man through and through; and although people found him difficult, I nevertheless was surprised at his funeral in St James, that that huge church was virtually empty, apart from a few of us rattling around in the back, and his relatives. And as they filed out, for the final service at the graveside, the collection plate by the door filled, and filled, and overflowed with bills; that was a gesture and a half.

And I realised, as person after person poured into me – Dick and Vera Doran, Dennis Hughes, Fred and Nancy Coldicott, Agnes Buckland, Lionel Ellis, Dorrie Ellis, Allan and Charmian Warmington, Col. Powell, Sheila Wood, Charlie Blake, George Plested, Lawrence Ladbrook, George and Sammy Greenall, Norman Morrey, Mrs. Hirst, Dorothy Stanley, Horace Haines, Mr. Osborn, Prebendary Knowles – person after person, and every time I stop, more come in – Norah Taplin, Nina Griggs, Sue Tomes, Ian Jones, in no order and clamouring, and still more – Mrs. Whitfield, Carolyn Mason, Frank Johnson, Alan Crawford, Ernie Haden, John and Phyllis Horne, Lew and Dora Horne, Mrs. Thorpe’s entire class – and still more; that my life had been touched by

and transformed by the people in and of Campden, by Campden, by my research on Campden. That I owe an immense personal debt, and an immense professional debt in my formation as an historian, as an archivist, and as an oral historian, to Campden. That far from my helping you, it was you, the people in and around my research on Chipping Campden, it was Campden whose patience, willingness and generosity, forgiving my many mistakes, giving me opportunities and experience, who helped and taught me. And I owe a tremendous thank you.

That is why I am here. Through Campden I was given immense opportunities, and extraordinarily rich experiences, which shaped me into the person, historian, archivist, and oral historian I have become. I owe a great debt to all of those people whose stories and kindness fill me – John Smith, Bernard Harrison, John Prentice, and more who keep coming in (some from the past, before I was born!). I realised that this is probably the last opportunity I would be given to properly and publicly say thankyou – 25th anniversaries don't come every year -, and that I had better take it. So, with that need to say "Thankyou" in mind, I emailed Donald and said Yes.

When I then asked your President what he would like me to say, he suggested I share some anecdotes of my research, along the lines of the talk I gave in the school hall in 2001. So that's what I am about to do, taking the title of this 25th anniversary exhibition as my guide. The exhibition is entitled "The Making of History". My talk is entitled "The Making of an Historian". And I will touch on the four main areas of my professional formation: Researcher; Archivist; Oral Historian; and - going into an area of Campden's recent history which I don't think has been recorded anywhere but involves, among others, Felicity Ashbee, and Alec Miller's daughter Jane Wilgress bouncing around in the back of a micro-camper, Chipping Campden as a therapeutic community.

Some background.

I came to Britain in 1981 thanks to a Rotary Foundation International Fellowship, to begin my PhD in the Institute of Dialect and Folklife Studies at the University of Leeds. If there are any Rotarians here, I would very much like to record my very deep thanks to them, and especially to the members of the Rossmoor Rotary Club in Walnut Creek, California, who saw something of value in me. I hope they will feel I have repaid some of what they have given.

I came to England in order to pursue a number of questions which had been thrown up by my Master's research while I was a student at a small liberal arts college in Los Angeles called Occidental. I am pleased to say that Occidental College is where Barack Obama began his college career, and I am even more pleased to say that we were actually on campus at the same time. As he was a Freshman living in a dorm at one end of the campus, and I was a postgraduate student living across the road on the other side of the campus, I don't know that our paths ever physically crossed. However, we did breathe the same heady Los Angeles air, and I see from his career that he has adopted a number of my better ideas.

I was a drama student, working my way through college as a stage technician (Props for a Pasadena Playhouse production of "Heidi"; Stage Manager for a Downey Light Opera production of "The Music Man"; painting the set of a film called "The Silent

Scream” starring Yvonne deCarlo; tech consultant, advisor and doer with a small co-operative company called Giatheatics around various Los Angeles small theatres), and doing theatre, but the main focus of my post-graduate career was research for a thesis on “Medieval Theatre in Indo-European Context” during which I used my job as a delivery driver for the Los Angeles Cash Register Company, local buses, and a little Honda 90 motorbike, to visit every private and public research library of note in the Los Angeles basin, seeking to tie together votive offerings from ponds in Gaul, Old Irish texts, script fragments in Tocharian B, Vedic scriptures, the archaeological remains of Romano-Celtic theatres in Roman Britain and France, and a whole lot of other stuff, to form a coherent argument about the survival and continuity of theatre and technologies and traditions of performance right across the great historical void of what used to be called the Dark and Middle Ages, during which it used to be said theatre had died, disappeared, and was eventually re-invented.

But my argument was almost entirely library based, and to answer the kinds of questions which the research was throwing up, and to explore and develop the theoretical issues which it raised, I needed to get out of the library; I needed to immerse myself in a living or very recently dead sub-historical performance tradition; one surrounded with the fullness of the everyday historical record, which could be studied in its living context in a depth and detail which is impossible – for obvious reasons – with Medieval Theatre. That translated into folk drama, which then translated into British folkdrama, and the Rotary Foundation made it possible for me to go to the premier place for studying folkdrama in England (or the world) at that time, the Institute of Dialect and Folklife Studies at the University of Leeds. There is a further story there, because in my innocence of Britain I had no idea of the conservative revolution then sweeping the country following the election of Mrs. Thatcher two years earlier; which led to the hasty destruction of the Institute soon after my having enrolled in the University. But although its impact on my research was immense, I won’t tell that story here.

My glad focus in the autumn of 1981 was to immerse myself in and study the heck out of a recently defunct folk drama tradition in Yorkshire (defunct so as not to intrude on the sensitivities of a living community). My tutor at Leeds, Tony Green, rightly felt I ought to see a living tradition before buckling back into the dead, and sent me down to Chipping Campden, which an earlier PhD student, Peter Harrop, had included in part of his research. Having said which, neither Tony nor I was entirely certain where Chipping Campden was, county-wise; and in those pre-Internet days, a general idea and a general direction seemed to be enough to set out on. So I packed my backpack with a tent and sleeping bag, cold weather clothes, food and camping stove, a camera and reel to reel tape recorder; got on a train to Birmingham, caught a bus to Stratford-on-Avon, walked a fair ways out of Stratford before a small van stopped to pick me up, and then hitch-hiked all the way to the turn at Mickleton, by which time the snow was falling, traffic had disappeared, and there was no alternative to walking. I passed a farmhouse on the right, and felt I ought to call in to see if I could stay; but the fear of being an imposition kicked in, and with night coming on, snow piling up, the fear of being an imposition leading me to say no to the ride up the hill in the Landrover, I found myself eventually standing outside the garden at Paul’s Pike, asking if there were a space where I could pitch a tent. Very soon after that the Twinberrows had begun to introduce me to old mummers and others in Chipping Campden, I had done

some recording, and I was hooked into studying a still-living Christmas mumming tradition.

You can readily get a sense of how wonderful it was for me. But imagine me coming down later on a National Coach from Leeds into Evesham, and seeing its wide high street spread out generously like the Main Street of an American frontier town, embracing the energy of horse-drawn commerce and industry, but set in the midst of ancient fields and buildings. The Library in those days was on the market square, in the right hand side of what is now the Riverside Shopping Centre with its echoing empty stores. On one side of the Square was the magnificent, tilting half-timbered National Westminster bank; down the road, which I walked to catch the bus out to Childswickham where I was camping, was the Almonry, and of course the two bell-towers. The Library's local history collection seemed to me fantastic, but it was the collection of Evesham Journals upstairs which gave me one of my favourite memories as a young researcher. These were in a small room on the first floor, English style, up a set of old wooden stairs with, I think, a bathroom – a toilet, English style – on the landing above. I can remember the racks, I can remember a small window, and a small wooden table and chair where Mr. Hird and the library staff let me set up home as I began my journey through one of the most detailed records of local life imaginable. I could make it through about two years of the Journal in one day, starting with the first issue in 1860; and I guess when the Library packed away its Journals in preparation for the move down the road, I moved my work over to the old Journal offices themselves, where the wonderful Zena Lezdins made me feel at home. But the specific memory in the Library is at the end of a long exciting day with Campden's history, when it suddenly dawned on me that it was very quiet, and that it was getting dark outside. I put everything away and went downstairs, and found the Library well and truly closed. Fortunately, I found a door which could unlock from the inside, and let myself out; but thought I'd best phone the police to let them know the building was now open. Two bobbies showed up – one a WPC, I think – and they marched me around the inside of the building with a kind of quizzical air, until I guess they were satisfied I was on the level, and everything was secure. And then I was free to go. My memory is that the last bus to Childswickham had left, and that I walked in the beautiful English evening back to the campsite.

Walking and camping were very much a part of my early life as a researcher. For a number of years, at the beginning of each summer, I spent a week camping outside the village of Comberton near Cambridge – the campsite owners got to know me by name, as their prices went up each year they kept mine the same – and walked each morning the three and a half miles into Cambridge, across the river, through the gates at the back of Kings, through the barriers marked “private”, up the stairs and through the gothic-windowed Library to the Modern Archives at the rear – “Modern Archives” Kings College style being anything post-Medieval. At lunch and again in the evening I roamed Cambridge, listening to the sounds, the choirs; and was even privileged once to have a bath – in a giant 19th century bathtub – in the building that held the library and archives. And then back to Comberton to boil up an evening meal.

A very early memory from Campden, at haying time, when Dave Twinberrow took me with him to a field where George Greenall stacked the hay on a flat-bed trailer behind a tractor while Dave and I rolled the tedded hay into untied sheaves using shuppucks, speared and lifted them over our shoulders, and up to the spot George wanted, to build

the stack. It sounds easier than it was, and it was not the first occasion I came to physically understand the skill involved in building and agriculture, and no doubt tested the temper of my teachers. I don't know where the field was, now. Mentally I have it over near Littleworth, but I don't see how that is possible. Certainly it was being taken as an opportunity to instruct me in the way that hay traditionally used to be taken in, and at points, on the question of technique and process, Dave and George had their different views. The denouement, if that is the right word, came when the stack was about as high as it could be, eight or ten feet, and with George at the top, and Dave in the tractor, the trailer decided to tip and the whole stack came sliding to earth with George riding it to the ground. Strong words were said.

My first CofE service came at my second Christmas in Campden, in 1982. Back home I was Episcopalian, and a master acolyte, and therefore no stranger to cassock and cotta. But in England since 1981, I hadn't been to a service. It came about when I encountered the church choir, touring the pubs and hotels singing carols, and I asked if I could join them. I remain impressed at how welcoming they were. And who would miss taking part in a tradition which probably collected money as it went, but certainly was given drinks all round in the pubs it visited, certainly in the Lyggon Arms, with all of the Christmas Eve noise of Campden. One of the places they always stopped was the Drs. Olliffe's in the high street, Grevel House with its myriad of collected clocks, all ticking and chiming at different times as we sat in a circle in their sitting room and may have had drinks, but certainly remembered Christmases past. I had my tape recorder, but sadly had not turned it on before going in; among the reminiscences were stories of the mummers. There was a break, but I was invited back by the choir for the midnight service, and having found people to talk to in the pubs I arrived at St. James late, and was fumbling with robes even as we processed into the Nave to the choir stalls; and I spent my first church service in England singing at midnight mass with the choir.

It was a remarkable time to be a researcher.

It was also a good time to learn the trade of an archivist, although I had no idea that that was what I was doing. My brother was senior curator of the Buffalo Bill Museum in Cody, Wyoming, so there may be an underlying family DNA; but Campden gave me opportunities to learn and discover the skills and vocation. Campden is, in any event, fortunate in being in a county with one of the best and most welcoming Record Offices in the country, which you will know because David Smith, the former County Archivist, has been one of your presidents and very helpful to the Society; and throughout my research it was - and has remained - a great influence and support, attracting and developing remarkable staff. Nick Kingsley is now a major shaper and developer in the national archives world, but in those days he was simply a highly professional Jeeves-like figure in my Wooster/Tiggerish days in the County Hall section of the archives as they then were, bringing archives almost before they were asked for. The late Kate Haslem set a very high standard of archival hospitality which I would like to say I emulated in the Archive and Study Centre for which I am responsible. But perhaps the most influential over many years has been Julie Courtenay, who very rightly would not allow me - as much as I tried - to read "mummers" for "music" in the manuscript Petty Sessions Record of a case involving Charlie Brotheridge, which would have revolutionised the history of mumming in Campden; and among many other things let me take Jesse Taylor photographs

(originally from Don Ellis's basement) out of the archive and into Campden to see what people could say about them. I have never managed to convince her to do any oral history herself, sadly; but it was thanks to her encouragement that I applied under the experience clause (one of the last before it was phased out in favour of formal training and qualification) to become a Registered Member of the Society of Archivists, and I've learned a great deal from her positive attitude to researchers and queries and what archives are for and can be for in relation to the community.

Dr. Michael Halls, the modern archivist at Kings, was another model of archival excellence and generosity, a genuine guide both as a researcher and archivist; who allowed me to meticulously list the images in the Ashbee Journals, but also let me set up my camera and day after day come in and make photographic copies, under his direction.

Ray Leigh at Gordon Russell's in Broadway guided me through the rabbit warren as it then was to his office, and to the cabinet that held the Campden Trust collection of Jesse Taylor glass negatives. Again, not only did he let me list them, and give me the opportunity of researching and learning how best to handle and store glass negatives, but he allowed me to take them away to my dark room to make prints. Imagine the excitement of a young researcher thoroughly in love with Campden history, alone in the red-lit silence of the dark room, watching images emerge through the waters of the developer out of nothing; people, places and things being seen for the first time in forty, fifty, sixty years, with startling resolution. There was a tendency with the glass negatives for the sky to bleach over and create a kind of detail-erasing corona where it came into contact with roofs; which could be corrected by using your hand as a mask to give sky and roof different exposure times – a combination of discovery and artistry.

Imagine my feelings the day that Zena Lezdin led me to a closet – I remember it as a closet under the stairs, upstairs, but perhaps I've been influenced by Harry Potter - in the old Evesham Journal Offices on Swan Lane, and opened it to reveal a virtually undisturbed collection of sixty years or so of Journal photographic negatives, going right back into the days of glass. Imagine the pleasure of then being allowed to go through them systematically, certainly the first person to have done so, discovering and cataloguing those relating specifically to Campden; unexpectedly finding a second picture of the boy mummers, in addition to the one originally published by the Journal in 1934.

Imagine the days I spent in the St. James church muniment room with the Saxon corbel and etched schoolboy graffiti, thanks to the generosity of the curator, the late Derek Owen-Jones, who allowed me to organise and catalogue the largely untouched collections up there. A mass relating to the fundraising drive in the 1970s (in memory), which illustrated and taught just how much work was involved in saving the church from decay; but a whole array of other material, including Josephine Griffiths' personally gathered Book of Remembrance, with her personal remembrance of the onset of the First World War, and the Campdonians lost in it. At the time I was operating under a personal mythology of the archivist leaving no trace, and purposely didn't sign my work. It suited the romance of being so close to the roof of Campden, generally entirely alone, in what felt, with the dead pigeon and the tangle of leaves up

the next level of stairs, as an almost neglected frontier of the Cotswolds, a private aerie above the graves and the Banqueting Hall then, of course, untenanted.

Neglected by no means were the Paul Woodroffe materials in the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, which I also listed. When the Museum had a special Ashbee/Guild exhibition, Annette Carruthers let me come in out of hours and record the exhibition meticulously – possibly, although I really remember it as being amateurishly – with one of the heavy domestic video recorders of the day, with separate camera and recording unit.

But one of the more special gifts of Campden, in terms of archival training, was the opportunity Frank Johnson created, to work with him, and Allan Warmington and Alan Crawford in setting up what became the Guild of Handicraft Trust. The experiences here could take a talk of their own to scratch, much less delve; but among them was the discovery of what the silversmiths put in; that after a day's work they would meet with us in an endless series of meetings about the handling and future of the drawings and artefacts; and then after that, would carry out classes in silversmithing. Remarkable people, David, Derek, Will and Julian.

It was another of the gifts of Campden, that it gave me the freedom and opportunities to discover and explore not simply researching, but documenting – recording, and oral history recording in particular.

I made about 200 oral history recordings during my work in Campden. I say it that way – “about” – because my system and practice changed as I grew and learned about oral history and how to catalogue and manage it; and since winding down my recording in Campden I haven't been back to unify it all into one system. That number doesn't include videos - the Art Gallery and Museum video, the Maypole dance, the video of the opening of the old Guild of Handicraft Trust Museum in the Silk Mill (with Desmond Pymont, Felicity Ashbee, Fred Coldicott, Yuko Shioji, Robert Welch...) and so on; or BBC recordings; or any other audio recordings I made at the time. It does include the recordings I made during the year of Local History with Kate Thorpe's Year 5-6 class up at St. James's School, which gave many opportunities for learning: Not least, learning how sophisticated children could become as oral historians. I've recorded elsewhere how excited and full of life Don Ellis was after coming to the school and interacting about the history of Campden with the children; and what a thoroughly interesting interview a group of boys had with Lionel Ellis in his home about football in Campden. But walking around Campden with photographs, and a mother of one of the children, a Campden native, pointing out things we hadn't seen, like the remains of the sheep and cattle market behind the Noel Arms (probably gone now in the re-development there?); and doing genuine research with the children, which became part of my PhD. That was a very important year, made possible by the creativity and depth of the head Ian Jones, and Mrs. Thorpe; and, of course, the children. Who are probably older now than I was then.

What I haven't recorded is the immense debt I owe to Dorrie Ellis. As I look through the list of recordings, it becomes obvious how many people she introduced me to, and/or took me to interview. She took me up to Amy Bennett's house in Hoo Lane, where I conscientiously asked whether I could plug my recorder into the mains, began the interview, and towards the end noticed workmen in the road outside. When I asked

what they were doing, I was told that they were from the Electricity Board; and that we had been without electricity the whole time. An oral historian's lesson in ensuring that your machine always has fresh batteries installed, whatever the situation. She introduced me to Daisy Pieters, a lovely woman, and the first I interviewed who had severe short-term memory loss; well before I ever heard the term "reminiscence therapy". Dorrie introduced me to Fred Coldicott, who became a close friend and interviewee; over the last three or four years or so of his life I phoned each evening to touch base, until he went into the nursing home at the end and it became more difficult for him and them. I learned something about microphone placement when Mrs. Ellis took me up to Norah Taplin's for an interview with herself, Norah and George Plested; and Miss Taplin's asthmatic dog came and lay down next to the microphone. Still, it does record for posterity the richness of background life.

I learned a similar lesson on my own at Tub Reynold's down at Bath, who had organised the visit of the mummers to Bath University some years before. There I had the microphone cable trailing across the floor, and his wife brought in some tea, caught the cable on her leg, and sent the tape recorder (my old Sony; the first I bought with my own money) flying to the floor. It still works, albeit with dented internal mic. I'm more careful now.

I made the remarkable mistake of interviewing George Greenall for a good hour ("my, this is a long tape") with the pause button on; and with Jack Tomes in the car, outside the Volunteer, made a recording on the University's reel-to-reel in which the battery gradually died. Jack Tomes once told me I could photograph the performance of the mummers in Stanton Club, and having come naked of equipment dashed home, only to be stopped from taking pictures by a member of the audience when I returned; many lessons there. That was the first known performance of the mummers to include a woman; mummer Charlie Blakes' granddaughter Hayley Woolner. One of my first recordings in Campden was in their home, before I had developed a Campden ear, and I resolutely heard about the "boughs" that the Campden Morris dancers wore around their legs: "Boughs?" you can hear me say on the tape, confirming. "Bells" you can hear them clearly say (if you're not a tinned-ear American) in the vain attempt to correct me.

For most of my time in Chipping Campden I was living and working in a therapeutic community for disturbed children down where the wolds meet the Vale, for the first five years as a volunteer trading my labour for a place to stay while I carried out my field, library and archive work on Campden, and then as a part-time member of the therapeutic team. A 10/11/12 year old girl who is now a 30 year old mother of two recently returned, and her memories with me were of Campden – mowing lawns, eating flapjack, playing in the orchards. Mrs. Hirst had a wonderful orchard, planted by her late husband with an amazing array of apples and plums, which was old enough to lose branches after every high wind and so provided us with endless weekend opportunities to saw, and clear, and build bonfires, and play hide and seek. Allan and Charmian Warmington were great, and allowed us to mow their garden from time to time, as did Mrs. Ellis and Mrs. Dyer, and I have memories – although this would have to be confirmed – of even going over to Andy and Jo Doran's house in Blockley. Behind Mrs. Ellis's house had once been rows of glass houses, which had been knocked down, but which had left behind a residue of broken glass; and perhaps

surprisingly, children and I spent happy hours safely putting glass into buckets and carrying it away. It's therapeutic to be cared for and useful.

Sheila Wood welcomed me with one of the more difficult boys, who towered over her; and what a good experience for him. I drove a mini-camper van for a while, and one of the children and Jane Wilgress entertained each other in the back on one occasion as we bounced around the Oxfordshire countryside (as I remember it) visiting places where her father's war memorials and memorial sculptures were. Many people came down to the school – Felicity Ashbee with Rosemary Voaden, Fred Coldicott, Mrs. Dyer, Dorrie Ellis. And as I am writing this I remember that even the Record Office became involved; it welcomed me with one of the children, who helped me to do some research.

Which all indicates to me how much of a therapeutic community a community can be, and how much is owed to the normal, everyday generosity of people; and how deep this generosity is in and around Campden. I haven't been exhaustive in any of these rememberingings, and more people, and more good experiences keep coming in. But you have been very patient; and it is time to get down to the business at hand.

So, first of all, and once again, Thankyou.

I was at the inaugural meeting of the Historical Society on December 6, 1983. It is clear from the entry in my field notebook that I had no inkling then of how successful the Society would be. Who would have seen then your own museum and archive room, which have taken in over 2,000 accessions and responded to well over 500 queries in the past four years alone? I know as an archivist myself that that "500" doesn't even begin to reflect the real figure, because you never record every conversation, phone call, or even email; and relatively few queries come in by post anymore. There have been over 193 Lectures, over 60 outings and visits, and 10 major exhibitions and displays. You have published over 12 books (I'm quietly proud to see that I have accounted for about 1/6th of the total!) as well as pamphlets and so on, and organised at least 10 workshops/symposia/day schools. Your website is excellent, a model of accessibility, information, and professional layout. There have been over 30 issues of Notes and Queries. And remarkably – I leave this to last, because it is so easily overlooked by organisations of all kinds, reaching for the big events, the big occasions – you have produced 91 Members Newsletters. This consistent attention to the day-to-day communication and involvement with members says as much as anything can about the health, and the vitality, and the grounded nature of the Historical Society as it enters its second quarter century.

This is important, because a healthy, thriving historical society conduces to a healthier, happier, and more creative future for the entire community it serves: Simply, quietly and inevitably by bringing the community as a whole into deeper communication with itself - with its past; with dispersed generations around the world, following the threads of their belonging back; in bringing children and adults, incomers and natives, and everyone into conversation with one another, in this time and in this place.

And with that – with thanks; with congratulations for your past, and excitement for your future - I declare this exhibition open.