

Storytelling and Oral History Full Conference Programme with Abstracts 18th & 19th June 2021

The annual conference of the Oral History Network of Ireland

This conference will be held on Zoom. A link will be sent to all registered participants in advance of the conference.

The Oral History Network of Ireland (OHNI) is pleased to announce its conference on the theme of ‘Storytelling and Oral History’. Allowing participants to tell their unique stories in their own words is key to the work of oral historians. This conference offers oral history practitioners an opportunity to reflect on the role played by storytelling within interviews, the factors that shape the telling of a story and the potential future uses of those stories after the interview.

DAY ONE: Friday 18th June

09.15 – 09.30	Conference Welcome
09.30 – 11.15	Workshop Session 1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop A: Narrative Analysis for Oral Historians with Prof Lynn Abrams
11.15 – 11.25	<i>Tea / Coffee Break</i>
11.25 – 13.00	Session 1: Papers associated with this afternoon’s Q&A will be live streamed in this slot as below OR delegates can choose to use this time to explore all pre-recorded papers on our private YouTube Channel
Live Streaming Session 1A: Migrants, diaspora & identity Chair: Regina Fitzpatrick <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family narratives across the generations of Holocaust survivors: the diasporic community of Rhodes. <i>Milena Callegari Cosentino (University of Limerick)</i> Sisters of Mercy (South Central Province) ‘NEW MISSION NEW HORIZONS’ from the 1980s onwards in Ireland, USA and Brazil. <i>Joe Lee & Sisters of Mercy</i> 	

- “Once Hard Men were Heroes”: myth, masculinity and performative Irishness in the storytelling of the post-war London-Irish.
Michael Mulvey (Maynooth University)
- An oral history of Black/Brown Irish America: unlocking narratives of identity and inclusion.
Miriam Nyhan Grey (New York University)
- Archiving Santiago de Cuba Carnival experiences: poetry and storytelling as ways preserving of cultural memory.
Yvonne Canham-Spence (University of Brighton)

Live Streaming Session 1B: Stories at the intersection of folklore and oral history

Chair: Thérèse McIntyre

- Oral history & folklore: relation or rival?
Kelly Fitzgerald (University College Dublin)
- 'Catching Stories': oral testimony, infectious disease and vaccine hesitancy.
Cliona O'Carroll (University College Cork)
- Telling family history stories: genealogy and oral history.
David Ryan
- Ailidh Dall Stewart, the travelling tinsmith.
Fiona MacDougall (Scottish Storytelling Forum/Traditional Arts & Culture Scotland)
- “This lonely rock in the middle of the great sea” - Considering the performative sites of knowledge embedded through Peig’s narration of her life stories.
Rachael Flynn (University of the West of Scotland)

13.00 – 14.00

Lunch at Leisure

14.00 – 15.15

Session 2: Meet the Presenters Q&A and Discussion

Chairs: Regina Fitzpatrick & Thérèse McIntyre

- Milena Callegari Cosentino (University of Limerick)
- Joe Lee & Sisters of Mercy
- Michael Mulvey (Maynooth University)
- Miriam Nyhan Grey (New York University)
- Yvonne Canham-Spence (University of Brighton)
- Kelly Fitzgerald (University College Dublin)
- Cliona O'Carroll (University College Cork)
- David Ryan
- Fiona MacDougall (Scottish Storytelling Forum/Traditional Arts & Culture Scotland)
- Rachael Flynn (University of the West of Scotland)

15.15 – 15.45

Tea / Coffee Break in Breakout Rooms

15.45 – 16.45

Session 3: Moments Panel 1

Chair: Sara Goek

- Collecting Stories that Shaped the Strand.
Rosie Hickey (Strand Arts Centre, Belfast)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archiving oral histories, a case study from the repeal referendum. <i>Aileen O'Carroll (Maynooth University) & David Landy (Trinity College Dublin)</i> The 34th Avenue Open Street Oral History Project: A harbinger of New York City's future. <i>Bridget Bartolini (Five Boro Story Project)</i> Different ways of thinking about documentary practices for sensitive contexts. <i>Tom McGorrian (Middlesex University)</i>
16.45 - 17.00	<i>Comfort Break</i>
17.00 – 18.30	Keynote Address: Prof Lynn Abrams, University of Glasgow <i>Tall tales and storytelling: reflections on two decades of life history research</i> Chair: Arlene Crampsie
18.30 – 19.30	Virtual Coffees / Cocktails & Catch Ups



DAY TWO: Saturday 19th June

09.00 – 09.15	Morning Welcome
09.15 – 11.00	Workshop Session 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshop B: Doing Oral History as a Graduate Student with Matthew O'Brien Workshop C: Interviewing Basics with Maura Cronin
11.00 – 11.10	<i>Tea / Coffee Break</i>
11.10 – 12.40	Session 4: Papers associated with this afternoon's Q&A will be live streamed in this slot as below OR delegates can choose to use this time to explore all pre-recorded papers on our private YouTube Channel
Live Streaming Session 4A: Conflict, protest, and disaster Chair: Matthew O'Brien <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressions of responsibility in Irish oral history documents. <i>Christopher Fitzgerald (University of Limerick)</i> From local stories to collective memory: individuals and communities preserving memories of a disaster. <i>Lucrece Heux (Université Grenoble-Alpes & Swansea University)</i> Stories that changed Ireland: an oral history of Irish journalism. <i>Daniel Carey (Dublin City University)</i> Historical Clarification Commissions in conflicted societies: the importance of oral testimonies. <i>Cira Palli-Aspero (Transitional Justice Institute)</i> 	

Live Streaming Session 4B: Storied places and placemaking	
Chair: Adrian Roche	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Storied Isle: recordings from Rathlin in the NMNI Sound Archive. <i>Samuel Guthrie (National Museums Northern Ireland)</i> • “Tracing and Telling Stories”: mapping cartographies of birthplace stories. <i>Martina Hynan (NUI Galway)</i> • ‘To know one’s place’, a sense of local pride and place. <i>Derek Mulcahy (OHNI)</i> • Your Tenement Memories: telling the story of Dublin's tenements. <i>Tracy Bardon & Kate Chandler (14 Henrietta Street, Dublin City Council Culture Company)</i> 	
12.40 – 14.00	<i>Lunch at Leisure (AGM starting at 13.00)</i>
14.00 – 15.15	Session 5: Meet the Presenters Q&A and Discussion Chairs: Matthew O’Brien & Adrian Roche
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christopher Fitzgerald (University of Limerick) • Lucrèce Heux (Université Grenoble-Alpes & Swansea University) • Daniel Carey (Dublin City University) • Cira Palli-Aspero (Transitional Justice Institute) • Samuel Guthrie (National Museums Northern Ireland) • Martina Hynan (NUI Galway) • Derek Mulcahy (OHNI) • Tracy Bardon & Kate Chandler (14 Henrietta Street, Dublin City Council Culture Company) 	
15.15 – 15.45	<i>Tea / Coffee Break in Breakout Rooms</i>
15.45 – 16.45	Session 6: Moments Panel 2 Chair: Dianne Kirby
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing women's voices: The participation of women with disabilities in both the disability and women's movement. <i>Aoife Price (European Disability Forum)</i> • The Power of A Well Told Story - From the archive of Cuimhneamh An Chláir. <i>Linda Quinn (Cuimhneamh An Chláir Oral History Project)</i> • She lost her son, so did I – a paper about memories and storytelling. <i>Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen (Oslo Metropolitan University)</i> • Examining the relationship between oral history work and conflict resolution processes – a Northern Ireland case study (1998-2015). <i>Martha Beard (University of Brighton)</i> 	
16.45 - 17.00	<i>Comfort Break</i>
17.00 – 18.00	Final Panel Session: Telling Contemporary Stories Chair: Virigina Teehan, CEO, The Heritage Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brenda Malone (Collecting Contemporary History, National Museum of Ireland)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theo Lynn (Irish Covid-19 Oral History Project, Dublin City University) • Sarah-Anne Buckley (Tuam Oral History Project, NUI Galway)
18.00	Closing Address
18.00 – 19.00	Virtual Coffees / Cocktails & Catch Ups



Book of Abstracts **[Arranged by Session]**

Session 1A: Migrants, diaspora & identity

Family narratives across the generations of Holocaust survivors: the diasporic community of Rhodes. Milena Callegari Cosentino (University of Limerick)

The aim of this study is to examine the transmission of life experiences from Holocaust survivors to following generations within the family system. The focus is on the experiences of the Jewish community of Rhodes with its extensive international Diasporic community. The principle source for the Holocaust survivors' experiences are the interviews conducted during the 1990s, available at the Visual History Archive of the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation. In a follow-on study, second and third generation relatives of those survivors were interviewed in 2019, in order to explore how memory, identity, trauma, and nostalgia are communicated across generations. This is a transactional study on the transmission of trauma, involving people from different nationalities reflecting the global community of diaspora: even unrelated from one another, they can have similar characteristics on transmission of trauma and memory; what binds them are these experiences in the narratives of trauma, nostalgia through creating a memory. In this paper I will illustrate how survivors told their stories at the interviews available at the VHA archive, and how their descendants face those experiences, what and how they know and keep or transform. The contents of interviews demonstrate aspects of individual and collective memory; transgenerational trauma; nostalgia; identity and attachment. The legacy of keeping alive the memory of the Holocaust is well present.

Sisters of Mercy (South Central Province) 'NEW MISSION NEW HORIZONS' from the 1980s onwards in Ireland, USA and Brazil.

Joe Lee & Sisters of Mercy

This presentation will introduce largely unheard memories and stories of Irish women religious in the recent past. It captures the story of people and community projects in marginalised areas of urban Ireland and also preserves unfamiliar stories and experiences of Irish sisters in the USA from the 1960s onward and in Brazil from the 1980s. 'NEW MISSION NEW HORIZONS' is an oral history, audio archive project designed to capture stories from the changing lives and work of Irish Sisters of Mercy, South Central Province and the people who worked with them from the 1980s on. It contains 35 interviews. The contents are deposited, in Mercy Congregational Archives, Dublin, in the form of CDs, audio files, transcriptions and related photographs. The project is a collaboration between film maker Joe Lee and Mercy South Central Provincial Leadership team, who commissioned the work. The project maps the lives, influences, decisions and systemic changes the sisters made, particularly since the late 1970s and early 1980s when their work often migrated away from

formal health and education contexts to working and living in marginalised communities in Dublin, Limerick and Tipperary. Stories and memories from the sisters' time in both Brazil and the USA are also well represented. A key feature of the oral history project is that it shows numerous local initiatives the sisters engaged in and places those actions in a broader context at a time of great societal change in Ireland and elsewhere.

“Once Hard Men were Heroes”: myth, masculinity and performative Irishness in the storytelling of the post-war London-Irish.

Michael Mulvey (Maynooth University)

Little has been written in terms of transnational socio-economic histories about the lived experiences of migrant Irish builders in post-war London. Yet, because of the predominantly oral transmission of stories of the 'mailboat generation', cultural memory within the Irish and London-Irish is replete with tales of Cuchulainn-like heroes of construction and civil engineering works with epic nicknames: 'The Elephant John', 'Darkie' Finn, 'The Bear O'Shea', and 'The Horse Muldoon'. The migrant Irish construction workers of twentieth-century Britain often seemingly portrayed a reckless, rakish, some might say swaggering attitude to construction work. Serious injury or fatality was seen as simply the risk commensurate with the comparatively high rewards available. Hard-drinking, gambling, fighting, itinerancy and vagrancy were common tropes of this cohort. The stereotypes which grew out of these depictions now dominate the historical narrative of Irishness in the British construction industry; they were often constructed or performed identities which mythologised the mundanities of working life in London. This paper will examine collected primary source oral evidence¹ – both archival and newly-collected field recordings– with documentary research, radio clips, published migrant stories, and other sources to explore the reality of the working experiences of Irish men in London through the middle and later decades of the twentieth century.

An oral history of Black/Brown Irish America: unlocking narratives of identity and inclusion.

Miriam Nyhan Grey (New York University)

New York University's Archives of Irish America is home to almost 400 oral histories in its Glucksman Ireland House Oral History Collection. These voices reflect immense diversity in terms of generational links to Ireland, occupations, ages, and backgrounds. Nonetheless, almost all of the narrators self-identify as white. Recently, an undertaking to collect a cluster of 15 oral histories with Black/Brown Irish Americans was initiated, with the support of a grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This paper will outline the ways in which this cluster of interviews stands apart from some of the trends typically identifiable when interviewing Americans who self-identify as Irish. Oral histories with Black/Brown Irish Americans place the narrative arc of the other interviews in sharp relief, with breaks and silences in family history being more dominant when family histories have been shaped by narratives of ancestors crossing racial lines. Identifying narrators is much more onerous in a community where active engagements with Irishness -through organizational, cultural and social networks- are typically very white spaces. The community-building and networking surrounding these interviews takes on more of an advocacy role by trying to raise awareness as to the diversity found under the label of "Irish American". Audio clips will frame this paper to demonstrate how the narratives unlock assumptions of Irishness being synonymous with whiteness and how dominant the identifier of race continues to be in framing white ethnic identities in the United States.

Archiving Santiago de Cuba Carnival experiences: poetry and storytelling as ways preserving of cultural memory.

Yvonne Canham-Spence (University of Brighton)

Salsa, carnival and the religion of Santería are rooted in West African cultural traditions and have become significant markers of contemporary Cuban identity, social and cultural life (Irobi, 2007; Sarduy and Stubbs, 1997). Despite this, communities of Afro Cubans, from which much of this cultural expression originates and is maintained, are marginalised and unheard, subject to an (in)visibility in Cuban national identity discourse. (Zurbano, 2012). The Santiago de Cuba Carnival (SdCC) is one such cultural marker. This paper reports on my PhD research that explores how Santiagueros tell stories of their everyday lives in relation to the Santiago de Cuba Carnival and how those stories can be amplified and archived. I will also briefly reflect on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted my research methods and what that means in terms of how the research participants are able/supported to tell their stories. By inviting the participants to also write poems about their stories in relation to the SdCC, they can reflect creatively on their contributions to cultural memory and new knowledge in relation to the SdCC, speaking directly to the reader instead of being spoken for. Using research generated poetry including spoken word, I explore encounters in/of the SdCC. By publishing their poems and stories online, the intention is to create an archive of their storied memories of the SdCC directly from their experiences.

Session 1B: Stories at the intersection of folklore and oral history

Oral history & folklore: relation or rival?

Kelly Fitzgerald (University College Dublin)

As a practitioner in these subject areas I have often defined myself as both folklorist and oral historian. My paper will illustrate why I felt the need to decipher the two barely separate disciplines. In terms of a methodological approach I do not separate the two. Somehow, that does not appear to be communicated in approaches to and dissemination of research. Are there more similarities rather than differences between the two areas? This paper will discuss the benefits to oral historical studies by allowing greater discussions around the input of folkloristic theoretical frameworks to develop within/along with oral history. A particular emphasis will be placed on the areas of performance, tradition and ethnographic fieldwork. Through analysis of similarities and differences, the paper will illustrate how these spheres and other subject areas within the humanities benefit from an interdisciplinary approach.

'CatchingStories.org': oral testimony, infectious disease and vaccine hesitancy.

Clíona O'Carroll (University College Cork)

In a recent project, the Cork Folklore Project has created a pilot resource that presents stories of individual and community experience of twentieth-century infectious disease along with commentary from an immunologist's perspective. The motivation behind the project is to explore the contribution that archival oral testimony and ethnographic/creative cultural heritage methodology can make to innovation in positive engagement with discourses around vaccine uptake and vaccine hesitancy. In this presentation, I consider the process of introducing stories and harnessing oral testimony in an area that is fraught with tensions, and where the construction of biomedical knowledge and decision-making is more and more recognised to be an arena in which stories matter.

Telling family history stories: genealogy and oral history.

David Ryan

The continued growth of sources available to genealogists has changed the nature of our research. We are no longer simply concerned with where and when our ancestors lived but who they were. We want the story of their daily lives. Genealogists are no longer just researchers; we have become the storytellers of those who came before. However, the stories we seek aren't always contained in the written sources such as census records and parish registers. Alternatives are needed. Oral histories can be invaluable for genealogical research because they allow us to appreciate the rich tapestries of the lives of previous generations. For example, the occupation listing on a census is only a snapshot of a person's life. It does not contain their full story. A seemingly humble seamstress may have also functioned as a midwife and the matriarch for her local community. But is oral history reliable when used for trying to tell these stories and what effective strategies are there for making the most out of it as a source? The purpose of this paper is to examine just how oral history can best be used by genealogists and some of the potential pitfalls to avoid. It will draw on some of my own experiences as a genealogist and an oral historian with the Cork Folklore Project.

Ailidh Dall Stewart, the travelling tinsmith.

Fiona MacDougall (Scottish Storytelling Forum/Traditional Arts & Culture Scotland)

Ailidh Dall (Blind Alec) Stewart (1882-1968), a travelling tinsmith from Sutherland, was described by the great folklorist, Calum Maclean, as the best Gaelic speaking storyteller in mainland Scotland. Ailidh Dall and his family were still following the traditional traveller lifestyle when discovered by Hamish Henderson, one of the first collectors for the School of Scottish Studies, in the late 1950s. Ailidh Dall's repertoire of stories, songs and anecdotes were recorded by Hamish during fieldwork visits over a number of years and deposited in the sound archive of the School of Scottish Studies. Ailidh Dall's storytelling repertoire included a number of unique international folk tales, Märchen and tales from the Finn Cycle and also featured stories which had been lost in the Gaelic storytelling tradition within the settled community. Thanks to Hamish's work in recording Ailidh Dall's stories for future generations, the sound recordings have enabled his grand-daughter, Essie Stewart, to relearn her family's stories and share them with the wider public in both Gaelic and English. Essie has been a key figure in the revival of the Gaelic storytelling tradition in Scotland and through her work with the School of Scottish Studies and the Scottish Storytelling Centre, has brought these stories to a new audience.

"This lonely rock in the middle of the great sea" - Considering the performative sites of knowledge embedded through Peig's narration of her life stories.

Rachael Flynn (University of the West of Scotland)

Noted Irish Seanchaí, Peig Sayers, was born at the end of the 19th Century, 1873, in remote West Kerry. With creative gift and inherited craft, she captured the stories of her own community of the Blasket Isles, performing and recounting legend as island Seanchaí. As a cultural practice, the 'Seanchai' historically served to document and perform the traditions and customs of the community through storytelling and lyrical recital. Performances of these histories would take on layers of meaning through the Seanchai's ability to extend experiential nuances as part of their account. As bearers of a collective cultural archive, this act of remembering and retelling would find tacit extension through performed expression. This paper aims to consider the performative sites of knowledge embedded through Peig's narration of her life stories. Her accounts took up currency as both personal and collective life stories, and as metaphors for local community, politicized national identities, and as evocative understandings of the Blasket landscape. This discussion

piece will unpick some of the performative element of storytelling and story listening. There will be reflection on the implications of such understandings when framing these as representations of socio-historic narratives, and as sources to gain insight into the historical contexts where they emerged from.

Session 3: Moments Panel 1

Collecting Stories that Shaped the Strand.

Rosie Hickey (Strand Arts Centre, Belfast)

'Strand Stories' is a unique heritage project, designed to record, cherish and promote the social and architectural heritage of the former Strand Cinema; a landmark of east Belfast. The Strand opened on 7 December 1935, with one screen and 1170 seats. It has evolved over the years and taken on multiple guises including 'picturehouse', variety theatre, four screen multiplex, and arts centre incorporating a cinema. Oral history is at the very heart of the project, which aims to uncover and collect stories of the Strand over its varied history. The project utilises oral testimony with a wide range of people, including local schoolchildren and older people, and those that have worked and visited the venue over the years. To date, a range of stories have been collected: personal; general; funny; sentimental; momentous; and mundane. Together these stories build up a sense of the cultural and social role of the Strand within a specific neighbourhood of east Belfast. This presentation will introduce the two-year project and highlight its early achievements. It will also comment on how the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic have actually contributed to the development of creative ways of both collecting and telling the stories of the Strand, utilising both digital and traditional methods. The presentation will utilise audio-visual material collected and produced in the project to date. 'Strand Stories' is kindly supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Archiving oral histories, a case study from the repeal referendum.

Aileen O'Carroll (Maynooth University) & David Landy (Trinity College Dublin)

In this talk we will draw on our recently archived The Repeal the Eight and Reproductive Rights Collection (<https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.kh04tb834>) to discuss the issues we need to consider when preparing our oral histories for deposit in the Digital Repository of Ireland. This collection consists of 25 qualitative interviews with organisers who in 9 organisations campaigned for repeal during the 2018 referendum. As researchers we argue that we had an ethical responsibility to share and amplify the voices of those who are often absent from the contemporary and historical record. However, it was a challenging process. We needed to consider carefully the consents attached to the data sets, promises of confidentiality, and the concerns of those who donate data to the archive. In this paper we outline how we responded to these challenges and the protocol we developed to ensure that we both met our commitments both to our interviewees and future researchers. Additionally we discuss the creation of audiovisual training clips, also archived, which are intended to facilitate the use of the interviews by other civil society organisations.

The 34th Avenue Open Street Oral History Project: A harbinger of New York City's future.

Bridget Bartolini (Five Boro Story Project)

On May 1, 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City, Mayor Bill de Blasio initiated an Open Streets program to relieve cooped-up New Yorkers by providing more space for socially distanced recreation. The program closes designated streets throughout the city to vehicular traffic from 8am to 8pm every day. Many of the open streets never flourished, with drivers simply moving aside the barricades, and

others withered when the weather turned cold. However, the 34th Avenue Open Street continued to thrive even in the winter, with local residents jogging, strolling, riding bikes and socializing while maintaining physical distance, without fear of cars. The new gathering space also presents opportunities for local entrepreneurs to improvise: when the pandemic meant that Alvaro Tautiva could no longer hold classes in his martial arts studio, he started holding classes on the avenue; when Janet Bravo lost her job, she began selling homemade food on the street. 34th Avenue became the gold standard in the campaign to make the Open Streets program permanent. What makes this street so successful? What does it mean to the locals who use it? How do community volunteers manage the street? I will present on the 34th Avenue Oral History Project, which I launched in spring 2021, and play a short audio clip with excerpts from interviews with people who are reshaping their lives around the open street, including Alvaro Tautiva and Janet Bravo. I will also discuss how 34th Avenue is at the vanguard of a wider movement that envisions walking and biking as the centerpieces of city streets. Yet, it is also a site where visions of how public space should be used are clashing. Some want this street to be a blueprint for the city, while others object that the closed street exacerbates traffic. On 34th Avenue we see a harbinger of what post-pandemic New York City may look like, and what it will take to get there: imagination, negotiation and adaptation.

Different ways of thinking about documentary practices for sensitive contexts.

Tom McGorrian (Middlesex University)

In the sensitive environment of a hospice, my central consideration was to represent individuals with dignity and with sensitivity to the place, time and experience. The purpose was to develop documentary practice in sensitive contexts and the aim to explore the capacity of documentary and oral history methodologies to guide documentary researchers navigating ethical concerns in interview with those of varying ages and experience, living out their final life-stage, and establish a means of addressing them. This research harnessed video production in the UK hospice sector as an ethnographic process and case study, contributing to the field guidelines on greater refinement in approaching and managing the capture of vulnerable people's perspectives. The developed procedures involved three key aspects of the proposed collaborative framework for documentary film-making: maintaining authenticity; ensuring authentic confidentiality; and awaiting the unfolding of outcomes. In the production of the vignettes and short film as evidence, I considered how far the process of evidencing – recording and having on record such behaviours, attitudes and voices – might influence future practice. My contribution to knowledge is using collaborative documentary and oral history practices to incorporate vulnerable people's perspectives. Through the film artefacts and written thesis, my contribution to knowledge is the extension of an ethical, collaborative methodology that can be used further to capture the experiences of diverse participants in sensitive environments. This has been achieved through establishing a supportive research framework in which the documentary filmmaker's mediations are limited and participants themselves are prioritised across all stages of production.

Keynote Address: Tall tales and storytelling: reflections on two decades of life history research

Prof Lynn Abrams, University of Glasgow

We are delighted to welcome Professor Lynn Abrams, Chair in Modern History, University of Glasgow. Lynn's research interests span women's, gender and oral history of the modern period in Britain and Europe. She is

the author of *Oral History Theory* as well as studies deploying oral history methodology including *Myth and Materiality in a Woman's World: Shetland 1800-2000* and *The Orphan Country: Children of Scotland's Broken Homes 1800-present*. She is currently working on a book on post-war womanhood in Britain and is leading an AHRC research project on the history of knitted textiles in Scotland.

Session 4A: Conflict, protest, and disaster

Expressions of responsibility in Irish oral history documents.

Christopher Fitzgerald (University of Limerick)

This paper outlines the practicalities of constructing a representative corpus from a large archive of oral history documents and presents an analysis of how responsibility is linguistically conveyed within these statements. The Irish Bureau of Military History was established by the Irish Minister for Defence in 1947 to gather as much information as possible from those involved in the Irish independence movement. This resulted in one of the largest oral history collections of its kind ever undertaken, comprised of over 36,000 pages of statements. Since becoming publicly available in 2003, these oral histories have been used as valuable sources of historical data relating to the 1916 Rising and War of Independence, but have hitherto not been investigated linguistically. By constructing a corpus composed of these statements, linguistic devices are identified that signal agency. These devices, are analysed for the extent to which they distribute responsibility for actions depicted in the statements. It is seen that these devices, especially hedging through expressions of memory, are both explicitly and covertly used by participants to attribute responsibility for historical events to themselves and others. This presentation will also outline the potential contribution of oral histories to the field of applied linguistics while establishing the generic linguistic characteristics of oral histories. Finally, a case is made for the potential value of interdisciplinary collaboration between oral historians and applied linguists and points out the areas in which both fields overlap.

From local stories to collective memory: individuals and communities preserving memories of a disaster.

Lucrèce Heux (Université Grenoble-Alpes & Swansea University)

In the making of oral history, researchers are often confronted with narratives composed around territories, local places and communities. This paper will explore the case of two disasters to see how individuals from different places share various ways of relating and remembering dramatic events that befell communities. These stories about both the Aberfan (Wales, 1966) and the Plateau d'Assy (France, 1970) disasters are similar in many ways: the mudslides took the lives of many children, and in both cases the affected communities questioned the culpability of disinterested administration. The destruction of pit no.7 and of the Roc des Fiz sanatorium became, in both contexts, symbol of the beginning of the deindustrialisation process that affected both places. This paper aims to show how significant episodes affecting community can shape a common sense of belonging, and how these local stories could engage the formation of a collective memory. It also aims to deal with conflicts resulting in fragmented memories about the disasters. This study uses a wide range of media and oral sources with a novel and innovative approach bringing together history and psychology. The paper will show how individual memories contribute to strengthen images and storytelling about the territory. It will explain how the collective memory about a disaster can evolve depending on individual silences, media intervention and growing demands for a *devoir de mémoire* ('duty of remembrance'), or at least a wish not to forget the victims.

Stories that changed Ireland: an oral history of Irish journalism.

Daniel Carey (Dublin City University)

Dictionary definitions of the word 'story' seem to provide ammunition for those hostile to journalism, Wynford Hicks et al note in their book *Writing For Journalists* (2008: 11). In certain contexts, the word 'story' conjures up images of anecdotes and rumours, falsehoods and legends, fireside tales and children's books. Yet 'story' is also the standard term reporters have long used to describe the articles (especially news reports) that are the bread and butter of newspapers. Certain newspaper stories have been major landmarks in Irish life, and a handful have even changed history. Drawing on extensive oral history interviews with Irish print journalists, this paper explores some of the most significant newspaper stories ever published in this country. The presentation will include audio clips from these interviews. Among the stories which will be examined are three marking moments of significant social change – the death in childbirth of fifteen-year-old Ann Lovett; the so-called X Case of 1992, and the resignation of Catholic Bishop of Galway Eamonn Casey. Some people imagine that significant works of journalism emerge fully-fledged – “like packaged tomatoes in the market”, in the memorable simile deployed by Boston Globe columnist Linda Weltner. Yet this is not the case, and this paper will show how these stories came into the public domain. It will also examine the contemporary context in which they were written, and discuss the impact they had. This research is part of an ongoing PhD on the working lives of former journalists and editors in Ireland.

Historical Clarification Commissions in conflicted societies: the importance of oral testimonies.

Cira Palli-Aspero (Transitional Justice Institute)

This paper introduces some methodological and theoretical elements of the uses of oral history as a research source for historical clarification commissions (HCCs) operating in societies afflicted by conflict. Conflicted societies are often left rooted in a complex ground of competing narratives about what happened and who is to be held responsible for the crimes committed, transforming the past in a much-contested space. HCCs are temporary bodies set to investigate specific events of the past that are object of interpretative dispute in the present, through the re-evaluate already existing historical knowledge and new evidence, and the revision of long-held assumptions and paradigms about the violent past. Typically, HCCs operate distant from the inquired events, which usually result in limited access to oral witnesses and testimonies, and leave written documents as their main source of investigation. However, in contexts in which HCCs interrogate events that have taken place in the relatively recent past, the access to oral testimonies become key for the work of the commissions. To illustrate the potential of using witnesses and testimonies as a research resource for HCC, I draw from the findings of my doctoral research, presenting the case of Historical Memory Group (GMH) operative from 2007 to 2011 in Colombia. I explain how the use of oral testimonies allowed the GMH to access information that otherwise would have not been available due to restricted access to sources. Moreover, it contributed to uncover unknown facts that challenged those accounts that were based on historically inaccurate events. The publication of the GMH's general report represented a turning point in public policy on the conflict.

Session 4B: Storied places and placemaking

A Storied Isle: recordings from Rathlin in the NMNI Sound Archive.

Samuel Guthrie (National Museums Northern Ireland)

Rathlin Island, though home to just 146 residents today, has earned an elevated place in Irish oral history. This claim owes not only to being the most northerly inhabited Island of Ireland. Rathlin was also, among other things, the site where the Vikings made their first raid on Ireland; where Robert the Bruce sought refuge and drew inspiration from a spider's web; and where, in 1898, the world's first commercial wireless radio transmission was made. The pride that Rathlin residents have in their storied history is evident from their tape-recorded interviews for the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, now held in the sound archive of National Museums NI. This paper will draw from several interviews recorded by the museum curator Linda Ballard with Rathlin islanders in the 1970s-80s period. Above all, it will focus on the storytelling of Tommy Cecil (1946-97), the fearless, freethinking ferryman and raconteur who acted as the unofficial custodian of island culture and lore. It will examine how one man's encyclopaedic knowledge of Rathlin history became the basis for a series of interviews delving deep into mythology, invasions, massacres, the MacDonnells, and the heritage of nearby Scottish isles. It will further outline how the warm, charismatic and candid manner of his storytelling, and the occasional considered contributions of his wife Mary, went some way to redressing some recent negative portrayals of the islanders. The paper will also explain how digitising such oral history is central to National Museums NI's Unlocking Our Sound Heritage project.

“Tracing and Telling Stories”: mapping cartographies of birthplace stories.

Martina Hynan (NUI Galway)

Have we lost touch with birthplace? By mapping a series of multigenerational interviews of birthplace stories from Co. Clare this paper seeks to critically examine how the changing relationship with birthplace during the twentieth century in Ireland emerges within these stories. Drawing on feminist critical posthuman new materialist theories together with creative research methodologies, the entanglements of birthing bodies with place are interrogated. Up to the middle of the twentieth century in Ireland most births were in the home supported by a local midwife, handywoman known as a “Bean Ghlúine” in Irish. In 1955 over 33% of all births in Ireland took place in the home. By 1970 home births made up 2.92% of all births. In 2020 less than 1% of births take place in the home. The last maternity unit in county Clare closed its doors in 1987. Since this time pregnant people have to travel to either Limerick or Galway for all appointments and when in labour. This can mean journeys of up to two hours each way. Theorists such as Stacey Alaimo, Jane Bennett, Rosi Braidotti and Erin Manning provide the critical theoretical framework for this presentation. The materiality of birth, in particular the role of touch, and its intra-action with place, matter together with other living things and non-living objects, spaces, places will be explored. This paper proposes to critically consider how birthplace stories consider the touch of place and the place of touch during the event of birth.

‘To know one's place’, a sense of local pride and place.

Derek Mulcahy (OHNI)

The concept of place can have various meanings and, in my research, this includes geography, folklore, music, sociability and a sense of local pride and place. ‘To know one's place’ is probably one of the most frequently heard sayings in Ireland. There is also a pride that comes from oral interviews about those that achieve something in life. When interviewing 96 year old Limerick man, Paddy Casey, about marching bands, he recalled his neighbour PJ McNamara of 1920s McNamara's Band fame: ‘He went to America you know, he did, he did. He became a professor of music’. I remember his animated pride in that ‘one of their own’ achieved success in America. Casey's sense of identity intertwined with location and his love of music and bands. Those who hail from St Mary's parish, Limerick, belong to the oldest part of the city and if anyone asks you where you are from in Limerick and you say ‘THE Parish’ emphasising “THE”, they immediately know

where you mean. This gives one from St Mary's a sense of place and sets an attachment or a feeling to this geographic setting. The streets and lanes, as well as the personal memories surrounding them, express their own uniqueness and character. Oral history based on place is the articulation of memory and not to be measured statistically. This comes across in the many interviews I have carried out with people from my locality. Those being interviewed are remembering rather than stating facts. They feel they have a special identity coming from their place and their stories both past and present reflect the urban landscape and how they inhabit it.

Your Tenement Memories: telling the story of Dublin's tenements.

Tracy Bardon & Kate Chandler (14 Henrietta Street, Dublin City Council Culture Company)

14 Henrietta Street is a storytelling museum run by Dublin City Council Culture Company. The Your Tenement Memories oral history project aimed to address gaps in our knowledge of tenement life in Dublin, whilst enhancing public engagement and connection with their heritage. Previous oral history projects had revealed there were many people willing to share these stories, but these had taken place in inner city locations, and were not always accessible to the large number of tenement dwellers who were relocated to Dublin's suburban areas in the 20th century. Ten of Dublin's new suburbs built in the 20th century were identified as neighbourhoods in which to hold pre-interview community outreach sessions, which doubled as pre-interview meetings. After these sessions, recorded interviews took place and were accessioned into the museum's collection. The resulting stories and emerging themes have been used to shape the programming of the museum and storytelling through the tours given at 14 Henrietta Street. We have also continued a relationship with the interviewees, many of whom have been inspired to continue to tell their stories in other, creative ways. At the OHNI conference 2019, we discussed how we engaged with communities in the first part of the project. This presentation will cover the next stages: the results of the recorded interviews, including emerging themes, key stories and audio recordings, as well as how these oral histories have informed how 14 Henrietta Street tells the story of the tenements.

Session 6: Moments Panel 2

Hearing women's voices: The participation of women with disabilities in both the disability and women's movement.

Aoife Price (European Disability Forum)

Women with disabilities have, in general, been silenced within society, including in cases by the feminist and disability movement. The disability movement has mainly been male-dominated, with male issues shaping the political and historical agenda. The women's movement and feminist scholars have been slow in seeing disability as a political issue, rather than a charity or welfare concern. The focus of this study centres around women with disabilities' participation in social movements, particularly in the women's and disability movement drawing on their experiences at the local, national, regional and international levels. Feminists have embraced the potential of oral history for recovering the voices of women. It is particularly useful for groups who might have otherwise been hidden from history and in gaining personal interpretations of history and personal meanings of lived experience. This presentation will focus on my research to date and use of oral history in the project.

The Power of A Well Told Story - From the archive of Cuimhneamh An Chláir.

Linda Quinn (Cuimhneamh An Chláir Oral History Project)

CAC was the brainchild of Tomás MacConmara of Tuamgraney in East Clare. His interest in listening to and recording the older generation began while he was still a teenager. As he progressed in his studies he felt that when an old person died it was a huge loss to the community and was akin to a library being burned. Driven on by the desire to record as many of the older generation as possible he set up Cuimhneamh an Chláir, the Clare Oral History and Folklore Group in 2009. The group developed quickly, and a number of similarly enthusiastic Cuairteoirí/Visitors travelled the highways and byways of the County recording men and women who were open to sharing their stories. As of April 2021, over 500 recordings have been added to the archive. The oral history and folklore recorded is of huge value to the present and future generations. I am an active cuairteoir/ oral history collector with CAC, and have met and recorded wonderful storytellers over the last 10 years. One such lady was Madeleine Killeen from Ennis who generously shared her stories with me. I have picked 2 audio clips from her archive. One recounts the story of her father running away to join the British Army at 16 and his subsequent return to Ennis and hostile welcome received from Cumann na mBan. In the second clip Madeline recounts a trip to Lahinch with her family and how it came to an abrupt end. I propose to do a short introduction to each piece to set the scene. Both clips highlight the wonderful storytelling talent of this lively lady.

She lost her son, so did I – a paper about memories and storytelling.

Mimesis Heidi Dahlsveen (Oslo Metropolitan University)

This is a paper that discusses and looks at how memories work in an intertextual way where you do no longer know which story is being told, the paper is based on a performance about the grieving woman. The basis of the paper is a storytelling performance that blends a personal narrative with a Norse myth about losing a child. The past view of the woman blends with the modern and highlights something invariable concerning grief and memories. The mix of artistic research and narrative inquiry looks at the concretization of memories that manifest themselves bodily and how the mixing of the private and the public, the past and the present, influence the performer and the researcher and the memory itself. In the paper, the author blurs the personal and the academic using temporality, contrasts, interruptions, various physical placements inspired by Mikael Bakhtin's concept of grotesque realism. Through narratives and talk, the author will clarify how the two concepts artistic research and narrative inquiry can be linked and create an understanding of the meeting between traditional old stories and contemporary narratives, and the artificial and natural memory with reference to Frances Yates. In the blurring of the lines that separate art, academia, tradition and life, an understanding of the importance of memory for the identity arises. The author also asks what happens to the identity of a grieving mother when the memory is being industrialized, disseminated and shared.

Examining the relationship between oral history work and conflict resolution processes – a Northern Ireland case study (1998-2015).

Martha Beard (University of Brighton)

This paper critically reflects upon the relationship between oral history work and local conflict resolution processes in the context of the Northern Irish Peace Process. It does so by investigating the perceived use and value of the Dúchas oral history archive based in West Belfast, which worked with local partners in key strategic interface areas throughout the peace process, recording over 300 life-history interviews across and between divided communities. As will be seen, these resulting histories have preserved an immensely diverse socio-political and cultural experience of living in Belfast before, during and after the Troubles. At the same time, however, local understandings of the archive reveal that it was not just the resulting 'historical record', but the act of building and conducting oral histories that offered a specific tool, for

interviewers, interviewees and local organisations, to bridge divisions, develop trust, and 'deal' with the legacy of the past. Drawing together these lines of enquiry, the paper ultimately conceives Dúchas as a relational web that was dependent on strengthening inter-community and cross-community relationships in making a rich historical record of the Troubles, within the context of 'peace'. Hence, this paper will critically discuss the role of oral history work both as a product and a process in relation to promoting local conflict resolution processes.

Final Panel Session: Telling Contemporary Stories – Speaker Bios

Brenda Malone (Collecting Contemporary History, National Museum of Ireland)

Brenda Malone, historian and museum professional, is the Curator of Military History Collections at the National Museum of Ireland. Her particular areas of interest include the development of the idea of 'nation', and how this is collected and portrayed in National Museums particularly through its historical collections. She has recently begun developing a new collecting area in the NMI with the theme Contemporary Ireland, which is becoming the vehicle through which the NMI can collect important material reflecting modern Irish society.

Theo Lynn (Irish Covid-19 Oral History Project, Dublin City University)

Theo Lynn is Full Professor of Digital Business and Associate Dean for Strategic Projects at DCU Business School. Professor Lynn specialises in the role of digital technologies in transforming business processes. He was Centre Director at IIDB (2018-2019) and Principal Investigator of the Irish Centre for Cloud Computing and Commerce, an EI/IDA funded Cloud Computing Technology Centre (2011-2018). He was a PI on the Horizon 2020 CloudLightning Project (2015-2017) and Horizon 2020 RECAP Project (2017-2019); he is currently a PI on the Horizon 2020 RINNO project (2020-2024) and Co-PI on the Horizon 2020 ERASMUS+ MENA-Preneurs Project (2021-2023). In 2020, he helped set up the Irish COVID-19 Oral History Project at DCU with Dr Caitríona Ní Cassaithe and Dr Pierangelo Rosati. Professor Lynn is an Expert Evaluator for the European Commission and he advises a number of domestic and international companies in the area of digital business.

Sarah-Anne Buckley (Tuam Oral History Project, NUI Galway)

Dr Sarah-Anne Buckley is Lecturer in History at the National University of Ireland Galway and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Lifecourse and Society (ILAS). She is past President of the Women's History Association of Ireland (WHAI), and current Co-PI of the Tuam 'Home' Oral History Project.