

# British Entertainment History Project...

## 100 years of personal stories from 'shopfloor' to stars

For nearly 30 years now the members of the History Project have been quietly, painstakingly recording interviews with working men and women from the UK film, television, radio and theatre industries to ensure that their lives and experiences are preserved for future generations. The interviews tell us about the challenges these workers had to overcome, the skills they employed, the enduring human relationships they forged as Britain developed into one of the world's major centres of the entertainment industries.

The project began in 1987 when a small group of workers in the British film and television industry in London, under the guidance of producer/director Roy Fowler, set about collecting and archiving the oral testimonies of retired co-workers. They called themselves the ACCT History Project. Fearing that the story of early British filmmaking would disappear forever with the passing of industry pioneers, the volunteers set about the task with urgency. In the space of five years, it grew into an archive of international importance.

In 1991, when the two unions the ACTT and BETA amalgamated to form BECTU, the project changed its name to the BECTU History Project. 25 years later it has now changed its name to the British Entertainment History Project to better reflect the independent nature of the organisation and the range of interviews in its archive. The project is now a unique collection of 700 interviews.

### Famous voices

Among the famous voices in the collection are Lindsay Anderson, Richard Attenborough, Sheila Hancock, Karel Reisz and David Puttnam. But there are also interviews with hundreds of other men and women from all walks of life who have worked in our industry over the last 100 years. There are DoPs, film editors, hair and make-up artists, actors, projectionists, writers, neg. cutters, electricians, dubbing mixers, costume designers. Every craft is there. It is a vast audiovisual archive of knowledge and experience.

The archive's earliest memory features an interview with Adolph Simon, an early newsreel cameraman, who recalled filming in 1914. The most recent interviews include 90-year-old radio and television DJ, actor and presenter Pete Murray; Doug Allan, wildlife and underwater cameraman; Jenny Barraclough, whose career



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in documentary television covers 50 years and 101-year-old Jack Hollinshead. His BBC staff membership goes back longer than any other living person. He joined the BBC in Manchester as a sound effects boy in 1930.

Over the last few months the members of the History Project have been extremely busy. We have built a new website and have begun retrieving the audio and video tapes from the archive where they have remained relatively untouched for the last 30 years. We have started the huge task of transferring, digitising and uploading the 700 existing interviews to our website.

Now we can really begin to fulfil the vision of the original History Project pioneers - to make these valuable recordings accessible to future generations. You can find out more about the British Entertainment History Project by logging on at

[historyproject.org.uk](http://historyproject.org.uk).

**Mike Dick**

Chair British Entertainment History Project

[historyproject.org.uk](http://historyproject.org.uk)