

M74 DIG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT REPORT

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Introduction

From December 2007 until April 2009 Culture and Sport Glasgow conducted an oral history project as part of the M74 Public Archaeology Project.¹ The main aim was to record the memories of those who had a connection with former buildings identified as being worthy of archaeological examination along the route of the M74 Completion. This provided an opportunity to draw on the knowledge of the local population and to use oral history as a source in combination with the historical archaeology. The former structures identified and excavated were:

- A group of former dwellings and workshops situated in South Laurieston, Gorbals, Glasgow. The buildings were situated in an area bounded by Devon Street, Eglinton Street, Turriff Street (formerly Elgin Street), Pollokshaws Road and dissected by MacKinlay Street. This was known as the 'tenement site.' (Appendix 1)
- Govan Iron Works (more popularly known as Dixon's Blazes), Glasgow. This site also included the former workers' dwellings known as the Lower English Buildings. (Appendix 2)
- Caledonian Pottery, Rutherglen. (Appendix 3)²

Over a period of just over a year 24 respondents from diverse social, occupational, and cultural backgrounds were recruited and interviewed. All of the interviews were arranged, conducted, and digitally recorded by Dr David Walker with the vast majority taking place at the home of the respondents. More than 30 hours of testimony were recorded providing a unique record of human histories that enhance our knowledge of the social, economic, political, and cultural aspects of life in these historically important sites. No respondents were found who could provide information on the Caledonian Pottery site. Each interview was transcribed - a task that takes approximately 5 hours for each hour of discussion - with the major bulk of this exacting work being undertaken by Lesleyann Gardner and Jennifer Kinloch. David Walker also undertook some transcription work and edited testimonies according to the wishes of the respondents. Along with the photographic images that were provided by many of the respondents the interview data (both MP3 and WAV files) was transferred to Kodak Gold DVD -R archive

¹ This project was conducted on behalf of Headland and Pre-Construct Archaeology (HAPCA)

² Work commenced at the tenement area and at Caledonian Pottery in August 2007 whilst at Dixon's Blazes the dig began in October 2007.

quality discs. The entire data set is now archived within Glasgow Museums, South Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire Councils, as well as within the Scottish Oral History Centre based at the University of Strathclyde. All of the data has copyright clearance and consequently can be consulted and used by researchers at all levels. This data forms part of the legacy of the M74 Public Archaeology Project.

Throughout the period of the oral history project the methodologies and preliminary results were discussed with members of the public. For example, at the oral history master classes, to a Sikh Community Group, at a seminar organised by the Scottish Oral History Centre, as well to the Lennox Heritage Society in Dumbarton and the Community Archaeology Conference in Musselburgh. Talks were also given to staff from Transport Scotland and Culture & Sport Glasgow whilst the aims and objectives of the project were discussed via BBC Radio Scotland's 'Past Lives' programme and on Sunny Govan, a local radio station.

Recruiting Respondents

Recruiting respondents is essential for any oral history project. Various methods were used to generate the cohort for this project and each of these will be discussed below. All of the recruiting material relating to the oral history project simply stated that potential respondents should have some personal experience or connection with the areas where the excavations had taken place.

Dig Sites and Open Days

Each dig site was large in scale, well signposted to the public, and, in line with the aims of the public archaeology project, held a series of Open Days.³ Open Days allowed the public the opportunity to safely view the sites, interact with the archaeologists, and occasionally handle some of the finds. Whilst enabling communities and the general public to engage with the archaeological digs these Open Days also provided a very good opportunity to recruit respondents for the oral history project.

Tenement Site

This site was located between two main roads that led to and from Glasgow city centre and therefore was highly visible to passing motorists, passengers, and pedestrians. Open Days at the site were popular and contact details of potential respondents were obtained. This information was passed to the oral historian who, following an initial assessment by telephone was able to sign up 7 respondents to the project. They were: Gerard Coyle, Crawford Dick, George and Josie Fairley, Charles McLaughlin, John McLaughlin and Thomas Wilson. One other respondent, Moira Stedward, was recruited to the project as a result of contact information being passed to her by a friend who had viewed the site from the upstairs of a passing bus, making a total of 8 respondents.

³ Open Days were held at the tenement site in September and November 2007 and in March 2008. At Dixon's Blazes they were held in November 2007 and March 2008 and at the Caledonian Pottery in October and December 2007 and in March 2008.

Dixons Blazes/Lower English Buildings Site

This site was situated within an industrial estate and set back from any main road. Open Days here attracted as many visitors as other sites despite its fairly remote location. Nonetheless, although large numbers visited on such days (120) no respondents were recruited directly to the oral history project. Contact was made with one visitor (George Jackson) who had been conducting a family history and had established that his great grandfather had lived in the Lower English Buildings. Mr Jackson passed along information from the dig site to a relative in Massachusetts USA. It transpired that this relative was friendly with one Arthur McIntyre who had been born in the Lower English Buildings. Through a series of international phone calls and mailings the project was able to recruit Mr McIntyre's 89 year old aunt, Christina Wilson, and cousin, Jane Sutherland, both of whom lived locally. Therefore, 2 respondents were recruited to provide invaluable testimony on the Lower English Buildings.

Caledonian Pottery Site

Again, many visitors were drawn to this site yet it was wholly unsuccessful in generating respondents. The most obvious explanation for the absence of respondents is the fact that the Pottery closed for business in 1928, and, assuming that a former worker had left school aged 14 he or she would have had to have been in their mid 90s to have participated. Sadly, a potential respondent died just shortly before the project began. Of course, relatives of former workers could have visited the site and contacted the project but this did not happen.

M74 Dig Discovery Centre, Scotland Street School Museum

The M74 Dig Discovery Centre was based at Scotland Street School Museum and was designed to provide information and events to visitors. It was open to the public during the opening hours of the Scotland Street School Museum and housed a range of books relating to the local history of the areas being excavated, a series of dig reports containing maps and historical information, as well as a simulated dig. Two consecutive public exhibitions were held at this venue: the first from February 2008 until August 2008 and the second from August 2008 until February 2009. Both exhibitions contained information panels about the oral history project although the second exhibition did so more prominently with some testimonies from the project on display. David Walker, with the assistance of Lesleyann Gardner, also organised and created a historical photographic exhibition entitled 'Past Lives: The Kingston Area.' This exhibition aimed to draw on the memories of those who lived and worked in the dig areas of Scotland Street, West Street, and Kinning Street. The photographic exhibition remained in place until the end of the project in July 2009. Visitor Assistants working within the Museum were briefed by David Walker about the oral history project and were asked to bring to his attention any visitor who expressed knowledge of the areas being excavated. Large numbers visited the exhibitions but only 6 respondents were recruited. They were Disha Parkash, Gurdev Pall, Alex Hamilton, Gerald Fisher, and Sarah and Jacqueline Rodgers.

Media

The media (newspapers, television and radio) was used to reach potential respondents. Articles about the digs were broadcast on Scottish Television (Scotland Today), on BBC Radio Scotland (Past Lives) and community radio (Sunny Govan) as well as appearing in print in both national and local newspapers (*Herald, Evening Times, Rutherglen Reformer* etc.). Three respondents were recruited by these methods. One came forward as a result of having seen an article in the Sunday Herald (Dr Ronald Douglas) whilst another (Catherine Devlin) responded after seeing an article in *Flourish*, the Catholic Archdiocesan newspaper in Glasgow. The third respondent, Marion Neil, contacted the project having been told of its existence by a friend who had seen an article in a Southside Media community newspaper.

Trade Unions

Letters were sent to the retired members sections of the former Transport & General Workers Union (TGWU), General Municipal and Boilermakers' Union (GMB) and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) seeking respondents for the Dixon's Blazes site. These trade unions were willing to engage with the project and sent letters to district committees seeking potential respondents. No respondents were found.

Health Centres

An A4 poster and covering letter were designed, printed, and distributed by David Walker seeking respondents for the Dixon's Blazes site. One respondent (Rosemary McCafferty) came forward as a result of having seen the poster in her health centre. Her father had worked in Dixon's Blazes for many years.

Libraries

An A4 poster and covering letter were designed, printed, and distributed throughout Glasgow's libraries seeking respondents for the Dixon's Blazes site. No respondents came forward.

M74 Dig Website

Many general enquires were received about the M74 Dig project via the website and only 2 people became involved in the oral history project through this means. One enquiry brought information that a family reunion was taking place and that a likely attendee would be the daughter of a former resident of the Rosehill building. By attending this family reunion David Walker was able to recruit that person - Stephanie Russell – who provided not only her own testimony but also an account of life in the building written by her father two years prior to his death. The second person to get in touch via the website was Kevin Robertson whose parents had lived close to Dixon's Blazes. The original interview was to be conducted with both parents but unfortunately Mr Robertson became unwell and died shortly thereafter. An interview was subsequently conducted with Mrs Jane Robertson.

Community based websites

A brief but informative notice about the project was posted on community websites and one website www.gorbalslive.org.uk proved successful. One respondent was found who

had memories of Dixon's Blazes— James Boyle. James now lives in Australia and therefore could not be interviewed. Instead, he responded to a list of written questions by providing anecdotes of his life as an apprentice in Dixon's Blazes.

Assessment of Recruitment Methodology

The potential to recruit respondents at the dig sites and Open Days was good as many visitors were likely to have had a connection with the site. In the end a total of 10 people were recruited to the project by this method. This appears to be a relatively low number in comparison with the numbers who attended the Open Days (an average of 260 for the first set of Open Days falling back to about 120 for the second set) and therefore reasons for this should be explored. First, it has to be assumed that many of the visitors had an interest in archaeology - perhaps spurred on by the television series Time Team - but had no personal connection with the sites whatsoever. Second, experience has shown that many members of the public tend to underestimate the importance of the knowledge that they have and therefore tend to shy away from becoming involved. 'I don't know very much' and 'I doubt if I would be able to help you' are phrases heard frequently by those undertaking oral history projects. In order to overcome this reticence it is important to recognise the potential in respondents and to spend some time engaging people in discussion rather than readily accepting their self dismissal. In reducing the anxiety of potential respondents it is also better to talk about someone 'having a chat' with them about the past rather than 'conducting an interview.' Clearly, having the knowledge, skill and experience in recruiting for oral history projects would have been an advantage in assessing the Open Day visitors. However, the oral historian was unable to attend the Open Days and the archaeologists on site who were asked to undertake this task had no such training or experience. This was caused by delays in the recruitment process and by delays in obtaining Enhanced Disclosure clearance (obtained late November 2007). From December to March 2008, the workload was focused on delivering an approved plan for the project, interviewing those who had already made contact with the project, and on developing and delivering an educational outreach programme to nine primary schools involving more than 1400 children.

With two public exhibitions on view and a range of archaeological material to explore the M74 Dig Discovery Centre drew large numbers of visitors and therefore provided a good opportunity to recruit people. Visitor Assistants were briefed to listen for visitors who became animated about the displays as this would indicate that they had knowledge that could have been useful to the project. On one occasion a former Dixon's Blazes worker had been identified and whilst chatting informally to David Walker in the Discovery Centre the man recalled a particularly harrowing scene that he had witnessed as a young man. This involved a fellow worker at Dixon's Blazes who had been slowly engulfed in molten iron following an 'accidental' spill. Having originally agreed to participate on the project the man phoned the following day to say that 'having slept on it' he now wished to withdraw. It must be at least possible that other such events were witnessed in these works and perhaps former workers do not want to recall these events. In this case a reasonable period of time was allowed to elapse before a follow

up call was made to the man (at his own invitation) but the request to participate in the project was once again rejected.

Perhaps the most interesting thing to emerge from discussions with the visitors was that very few had ever heard of, or knew anything about the Govan Iron Works. However, it became clear that it was the formal title of the workplace - Govan Iron Works - that was virtually unknown whilst the colloquial title of 'Dixon's Blazes' was very well known. An example of this can be seen in this extract from an interview:

DW – Can you remember the Govan Iron Works?

JR – (Silence) The Govan Iron Works?

DW – Or Dixons Blazes it was called

JR – Oh I remember Dixon's aye I remember just seeing it - the illumination at night you know, but as I say, I went down that way quite a lot

The oral history project received some media coverage but few people made contact as a result. The public's failure to recognise Govan Iron Works as Dixon's Blazes may partially explain the lack of response whilst other reasons have been noted above. Further, the contact telephone number for the oral history project was not connected to an answering machine and therefore those trying to reach the project after 6pm (the cheaper rate) would have been unable to do so as Scotland Street School Museum had to be cleared of staff by that hour. With hindsight the administration phone number should have been used as the contact number as this was connected to an answering machine. Of course, contact could have been made by email but it is suggested that few of the potential respondents would have had sufficient interest or skill to use this method of communication.

Engaging with the retired members section of the trade union movement can often bring good results but on this occasion no leads were provided. It was suggested by the unions concerned that many of the men involved in Dixon's Blazes may have died or moved on elsewhere - possibly to England - following the closure of the plant in 1958.

The response to the poster campaign that was rolled out across local doctor's surgeries and Glasgow's libraries was disappointing. Only one person contacted the project, a woman whose father had worked in Dixon's Blazes.

From discussions with respondents it became clear that most had 'no idea' about the M74 Dig website (or of the Scotland Street School Museum website). Moreover, once informed of its existence most respondents had no practical knowledge or experience of how to access the internet. This information goes some way to explain why the websites were never likely to produce a wave of respondents.

Sample

Given the time limitations of the oral history project what was important to its success was not necessarily the number of respondents involved but whether there was a good enough sample. Gender, age, religion, and proximity to the dig sites were all important in this respect. As can be seen below the sample generated was very good although

there is some disappointment in not being able to recruit anyone who had knowledge of the Caledonian Pottery site.⁴

In total, 24 people participated in the project with one respondent interviewed twice (Thomas Wilson). Of those interviewed, 17 were connected to the tenement area and 7 had knowledge of the Govan Iron Works and Lower English Buildings

Gender

There were 13 (54%) female and 11 (46%) male respondents. This reflects UK demographics which show that 9% of the over 65s are female whilst 7% are male.

Age

Dates of birth ranged from 1918 to 1968 with the oldest respondent aged 89 and the youngest aged 40. The average age was 67.

Religion

The 2001 Census states that the religion of upbringing amongst Glaswegians is as follows:

Church of Scotland 36.1%, Roman Catholic 30.7 %, Other Christian 4.6%, Hindu 0.2 %, Jewish 0.2 %, Muslim 3.1%, Sikh 0.4%.

The sample for the oral history project was:

Church of Scotland 37.5%, Roman Catholic 41.6%, Other Christian 4.2%, Hindu 0% Jewish 0%, Muslim 0%, and Sikh 8.3%

There were 10 people whose religion of upbringing was Catholic, 9 whose religion of upbringing had been Church of Scotland and there were 2 Sikhs and 1 Spiritualist. One respondent had no connection with any religion. No Muslim or Hindu contacted the project. The tenement area was one that had been home to a large Jewish population. In seeking Jewish respondents contact was made with Harvey Kaplan at the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre and an article was published in the *Jewish Telegraph*. No Jewish respondents contacted the project. It is estimated that few Jewish people now live in the Gorbals area and those who once did were interviewed by the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre in March 2002 following a tour of Glasgow organised by 'Limmud Scotland.'

Interview length

The longest interview lasted 2 hours 32 minutes (an interview with a couple) whilst the shortest lasted 37 minutes. The average interview lasted approximately 1.5 hours

⁴ One photograph of a former employee of the Caledonian pottery was secured.

Summary of the Oral History Project

It is acknowledged that there is always the possibility that the respondents 'private memory' can be influenced over time by 'public memory', that is by exposure to other people's memories fed through media reports, books, films etc and that this 'hegemonic process' can help create a false or different past for respondents.⁵ Self evidently, this is more likely to happen when the subject matter under discussion has received some interest and information about it has been widely disseminated. It is therefore relevant that there has been a large range of books written about the Glasgow's Gorbals and its past.⁶ Nonetheless, this does not detract from the fact that people can and do remember events quite clearly and that by recalling these they create a 'voice of the past' that helps fill the gaps within the documentary sources.⁷ Moreover, much of the 'private memory' of the respondents in this study would have been highly unlikely to have been influenced by 'public memory' as so little public information exists about the specific areas under investigation such as the Lower English Buildings, Dixon's Blazes and the Rosehill building.

The respondents were informed beforehand of the purpose of the research study and two documents were sent to their homes in advance of the visit and interview. The first was an 'informed consent statement' that outlined how the interview would be recorded, what the aims of the research were, what the rights of the respondent were, and how the transcript of any interview was to be processed before being deposited in named archives. The second document was a 'copyright clearance form' that listed options as to how the testimony may be used in the future. Prior to the interviews taking place contact was made with the teams of archaeologists and they were asked to submit any questions they had which they felt might help answer or clarify the findings they had made from the excavations. This offer was taken up by those working on the tenement and Lower English Buildings sites. The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis although wives, husbands, and other family members were also present in most cases. All of the interviews were semi-structured in style. This allowed the interviewer to compose questions specifically about the areas that had been excavated but also to put questions that encouraged 'life-histories' to emerge. Standard questions were used at the outset to gain basic information and allow the respondent to relax and become familiar with the microphone and the situation. Thereafter, in a relatively unstructured manner questions were asked of the respondents about the experiences they had in connection with the appropriate site.

⁵ For example see A. Thomson, 'Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia,' pp.239-252 in A. Green and K. Troup (eds), *The Houses of History, A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory*, Manchester University Press, (Manchester 1999)

⁶ See for example R. Glasser, *Growing Up in the Gorbals*, House of Stratus (2001) C. MacFarlane, *The Real Gorbals Story: True Tales from Glasgow's Meanest Streets*, Mainstream Publishing (2007) A. McArthur and H.K. Long, *No Mean City*, Corgi Books (1984) J.V.L. Faley, *Up Oor Close, Memories of Domestic Life*, White Cockade (1990)

⁷ P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past, Oral History*, Oxford University Press, (1978)

Tenement Site

The project was fortunate to find a good representative sample for this site who were able to discuss all of the areas excavated. This enabled questions to be asked about the variety of tenement housing on offer that included the tenements on Eglinton Street designed by Alexander 'Greek' Thomson as well the early nineteenth century Rosehill building on Pollokshaws Road. The project also benefited from the fact that the testimonies covered the decades from the early 1930s through to the late 1970s thereby allowing a glimpse of the changes that took place in this area. For example, the services within the buildings improved with the change from gas to electric lighting and from cold to hot running water. However, external communal toilet facilities were something that most residents had to contend with and this was an obvious signifier of this type of housing. One respondent commented thus, *'I was conscious of the fact that when moving to Albert Road from MacKinlay Street I was moving to a better home...it had an inside toilet.'* Not all of the flats in the tenement area were without an inside toilet but very few had a bathroom. By contrast the interior of the Alexander Thompson tenement was described as being 'beautiful' having marble fireplaces and carved wooden doors although for such an obviously superior building the entrance close and stairway was surprisingly plain and had no 'wally' or ceramic, tiles. The building did however have a bell-pull security entry system thought to have been installed in the 1930s but the door and mechanism were removed during the Second World War.

With the passage of time it seems that the entire area became run down with some buildings being demolished whilst others were poorly maintained. Scurrying rats in the midden area were not an uncommon sight and mice within the home were a persistent pest. Nonetheless, the testimonies show that although there were some shortcomings the standard of housing in the 'tenement area' was slightly better than in other areas of the Gorbals. Charles McLaughlin noted the social segregation thus, *'On the other side (eastern) of Pollokshaws Road that was where the labourers all stayed and their housing was much poorer,'* a view echoed by Tom Wilson who stated *'George Waters...he came from Surrey Street and he once took me down there...and that was the first time I'd ever been in a close where the sewage was in the close - broken pipe - and the sewage was on the slabs.'* Up to the late 1950s and early 1960s it seems that the living conditions in the 'tenement area' were largely acceptable to those who lived in them. A regime of cleanliness was in evidence, both inside the house and in the communal areas with much of the responsibility for this falling on the shoulders of the women who experienced labour intensive working days. This was especially so when clothes and bedding had to be laundered. Until the introduction of public wash houses (the steamie) women had to light fires to boil the water in the wash house situated in the back court area. They then had to hand wash all of the laundry and thereafter try to dry the clothes on wash lines strung across the back court avoiding the rain *and* the children who used the same area for playing. The 'steamie' provided the machinery to help with these tasks although the washing day still entailed lifting heavy loads, ironing, and ferrying the laundry to and from the tenement flat. The local GP who practiced from the 1960s from his surgery based in the 'Thompson' tenements was able to relay objective information about the overcrowded conditions, the bed lice, and how difficult it was to carry out anti-natal care when the patient was lying on a bed within a recess.

According to the GP the development that delivered the greatest improvement to tenement living in this area was the introduction of oral contraception.

Of the many books written about the Gorbals area of Glasgow much of the content has focused on the violence, drunkenness, and poverty within the district. However, although invited to discuss any such experiences most respondents claimed to have witnessed little violence although poverty was at times noticeable. Asked specifically about violence in the area most respondents stated that this was of a trivial nature and found it difficult to recall having witnessed any adult violence. Clearly, these are the memories of children and it may have been the violence was being committed once the children had retired to bed? However, there does not appear to be any fear of the potential for violence being passed down to the children by their parents. Indeed, the testimonies tell the story of children of all faiths playing a range of games together in the streets and backcourts of the tenements without hindrance. Moreover, there is evidence of the children travelling by tram some distance from the tenement area unaccompanied by their parents. Nonetheless, as very few people had motor cars until after the 1960s most of the children's games and adventures were acted out on the streets whilst carters and their horses toured the area selling coal, milk, and even tripe whilst others gathered rags and helped with house removals.⁸ Poverty left its mark on some such as Jane Robertson who recalled *'I got laughed at and they used to always say 'Jane Hardie' that was my name 'look at Jane Hardie she's got her Parish clothes on.'* Tom Wilson recalled a Christmas morning in the 1930s thus, *'I remember going out one day and we were all out there with our presents and one of the boys, he came from Devon Street, he said 'Santa Claus didn't come to me' (pause) and you know when you think back obviously why not - poverty.'*

A strong sense of 'community' emerged from the interviews. Knowing who the neighbours were and that they could be relied upon all helped to cement this feeling. Local shops also provided a communal meeting area where community information was passed along. This was an area where various religious and ethnic groups lived side by side. Churches were sited at either end of MacKinlay Street, there was a Hebrew School (Talmud Torah) in Turriff Street and Synagogue close by in South Portland Street and these were joined by the very first Sikh Temple (Gurdwara) in Glasgow in the 1950s, also in South Portland Street. Gurdev Pall provided testimony of this Gurdwara and how it came into being as well as providing photographs of some of the original meetings. Apart from some minor skirmishes at school or outside a pub it would seem that most people simply got along with each other. An interest in each other's cultures was apparent and this seemed to be heightened around the topic of food. Some respondents spoke of visiting the Jewish bakeries in the area whilst the Sikh respondents spoke of discovering the tooth decaying delights of 'the jam piece', 'trifle,' and 'cream cookie.' In return, their neighbours were quick to savour pakora and other Indian foods. There was little evidence of overt racism although some Sikh parents had their son's hair cut just before they went to school rather than adhering to the tradition of

⁸ In 1938 there were just over 2 million private cars in Britain with ownership rising to 2.25 million by 1950. In 1955 this figure had risen to 3.6 million and thereafter rose dramatically. See A. Marwick, *British Society Since 1945*, (Penguin 1996), pp.32-33.

wearing a turban. The reason given for this was that the boys would be like the other boys at school. This strategy may only have been partially successful as is seen in the following comment made by Gurdev Pall who noted that his school friends sometimes called him 'Pele.' He stated *'I don't know why, I don't think I was ever that great at that time.'* Perhaps it was because at that time Pele was the most well known black footballer in the world and that the reference was being made to his skin colour rather than his skill.

Several respondents remembered the war years (1939-1945) but as children they had little notion of fear despite witnessing nearby bombings. The excitement of following the war in the newspapers and of hunting for shrapnel the following day seemed more the norm. Clearly, WW2 has been covered in book, on television and on film therefore personal stories were sought rather than general memories. One respondent did touch on the disruption caused by war when she poignantly discussed the loss of her sister who was evacuated to Canada. Another told of his 'near miss' when his mother decided not to send him and his sister to Canada on a ship that ultimately was sunk en route. Most of the memories seemed vivid and unique such as that supplied by Crawford Dick who recalled playing on a relative's farm in Balfron – *'a thousand miles away just outside Glasgow'*. Crawford and his sister saw an aeroplane flying low overhead, *'It had an open cockpit at the front with a gun or something mounted on it and the guy hanging over the front of it. The man, he was out in the open with goggles on hanging over the edge waving to my sister and I down at the side of the hill. It was just when it passed over (us) we realised it was a German plane obviously heading for Clydebank or so.'*

Lower English Buildings

As noted above, a large amount of good fortune was responsible for delivering a respondent to the project who was able to recall memories of her own and her family's life as lived out in these buildings. Mrs Wilson was born in 1918 and stayed in the Lower English Buildings until the mid or late 1930s. At that point in time the family was forced to move by their landlord (Dixons) because the houses were considered to be no longer fit for purpose. The house had no internal running water and therefore all of the water for cooking and washing had to be carried indoors from a stand pipe in the yard. The lavatory and laundry areas were also outside in the yard. Living space was at a premium especially since Christina was one of 12 in the family sharing the amenities. Her niece, Jane Sutherland, was also interviewed and she recalled Christina saying she had to *'fight to get washed'* and that *'when everybody was in the house sometimes we'd to sleep across the bed.'* Despite the lack of internal space and amenities the majority of the interview relates to an idyllic past where a close family lived near to relatives and friends. There was a large enough garden space to grow many vegetables and to keep hens as well as the father's homing pigeons. Many family photographs taken at the Lower English Buildings were provided by Mrs Sutherland and these greatly enhanced the testimony. Late in the project an aerial photograph of the Dixon's Blazes site was submitted by one respondent. This picture, estimated to have been taken in the 1950s, clearly shows the Works but also the abandoned Lower English Buildings site.

Prior to the interview being conducted the archaeological team were contacted and told about Christina Wilson. Joanna Hurst, Project Officer for the Lower English Buildings, responded by sending a list of questions about areas of the dig which required some

clarification and these were included in the interview. Once the interview had been completed preliminary results were sent to Joanna and she responded by stating *'Wow, what a response, very impressive memory capacity for a 90 year old lady. A large amount really ties in with the archaeology. Believe it or not we have even got some of the lino from Mrs Wilson's house.'* Further, the interview helped to confirm to the archaeologists that these were single storey buildings and that some people slept in box beds. It also confirmed that one of the finds was indeed a communal washing area, that the homes had a hearth and range and that there had been stables in close proximity to the buildings as well as a fish smokehouse. Many other interesting pieces of information from this interview helped with the interpretations of what life was like for the residents of the Lower English Buildings. Having researched the archives for information relating to this group of buildings none was found. It is therefore probably the case that this is a unique social history about life as it was lived during the 1920s and 30s within the company housing provided by Govan Iron Works. Although other people who were interviewed had known of the existence of these buildings none could say much about them or the people who lived in them. For example, Jane Robertson recalled that her late husband had visited the area as a child but remembered little. *'He didn't say anything about the people because he would just be a wee boy himself but he just said that every time they all ventured to go over the bridge and down onto that (area) they were chased (by the residents) and they were frightened.'*

Dixon's Blazes or Govan Iron Works

In preparation for the interviews some research was carried out at the archives of Glasgow University to examine the William Dixon papers. Revealed were lists of former tenants of the Lower English Buildings from the late 19th Century and some limited documentary evidence relating to the condition of the workshops and furnaces. Some information was also found on the accident committee established in the late 1920s. A document detailing the opening of new coke ovens and a by-product installation in 1936 (designed to handle crude gas and to remove tar, ammonia and benzol) was also recovered. However, despite an extensive recruiting programme (see above) only one person was found who agreed to discuss his personal experiences of working in Dixon's Blazes. Unfortunately James Boyle lived in Australia and therefore he could not be interviewed face-to-face but instead provided written answers to questions sent by email. In addition, relatives of former workers and residents of the area were also able to discuss Dixon's Blazes and together they helped build a more comprehensive picture of this workplace. During the late 1950s James Boyle worked as apprentice in Dixon's Blazes. The picture he painted was of a relatively hard life, both inside the works and outside in the Oatlands district where he lived. For example, he told of a beating he received within Dixon's Blazes thus, *'My tradesman and a rigger were having a heated argument and I unfortunately interrupted them to my regret. The rigger unceremoniously gave me a good punch on the jaw that sent me tumbling down a flight of steel stairs and told me to shut my mouth until I was asked to open it.'* He worked a 44 hour week – Monday to Saturday lunchtime with a 1 hour lunch break and for this he received £1.10 per week in his first year rising by £1 per week for every year served. The production squads worked shifts (6 am to 2 pm - 2 pm to 10 pm - 10 pm to 6am). James explained that some workers rested during the lunch break in the abandoned Lower English

Buildings. He also remembered that it was an international workforce at Dixon's with Italians, Polish, Lithuanian and the Irish all helping to make up the squads but stated that the machine shop was manned exclusively by 'Scots.'

Situated on Cathcart Road, just within the grounds of Dixon's Blazes stood a large two-storey house (not excavated) which was rented to managers of the Works. Marion Neil, the daughter of one of the former managers was interviewed and told of her experiences living there. *'It was very dusty. The house, the garden, they used to get a tremendous amount of soot. Lots of noise...lots of smoke...it was difficult keeping things clean.'* She also remembered that her father worked very long hours and, due to his proximity to the works, was often called out when things went wrong. Certainly, there is evidence to show that Dixon's Blazes was not functioning efficiently by the late 1940s and the order books show the difficulties they had in obtaining parts to keep some of the equipment operational. Marion had happy childhood memories of waving to the workers as they passed by her window and of inviting school friends to her home to play in the garden – something her friends enjoyed as this was a 'private play area' unlike the tenement back courts. Other memories of the place were less sanguine. Gerald Fisher's father had a hairdressing business in Crown Street and many of his customers worked at Dixon's. He recalled his father pointing out men standing at the street corner and he explained that these men had been physically wrecked working in Dixon's Blazes. *'They were more or less crippled working there...the hot furnaces and then coming out into the cold...all sorts of rheumatism and what have you. Big heavy men, furnace men, steel workers, standing crippled at the corner.'* Alex Hamilton also told of an uncle who had worked in Dixons who had toes severed from his foot, ironically by a defective machine guard.

Conclusion

This project successfully delivered an archive of new oral history testimonies relating to most of the areas of the M74 Completion archaeological dig sites. The information contained within these testimonies adds to our existing knowledge of the sites as well as providing new information about the social, economic, political and cultural events that were experienced by the communities from the late 1920s to the late 1970s. This information is now freely available to all of those who have an interest in Glasgow's historic past.

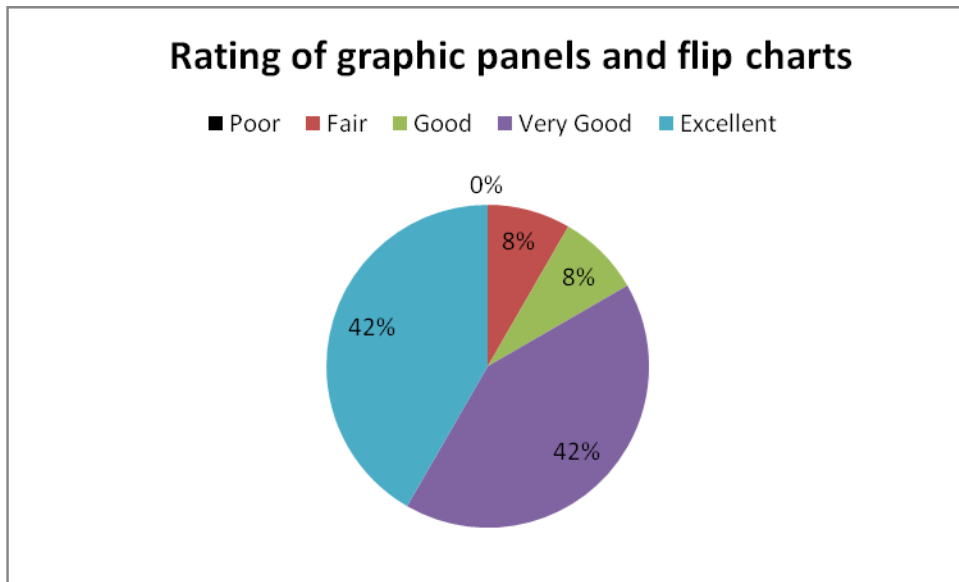
Some problems did occur and these have been discussed above. A delay of several months in the appointment procedure meant that the timetable for the project became distorted. It has been suggested that as a result of this delay recruitment opportunities were lost. Perhaps if the project had been allocated its full term of 2 years rather than 1.5 a more comprehensive sample of respondents could have been found.

Evaluation

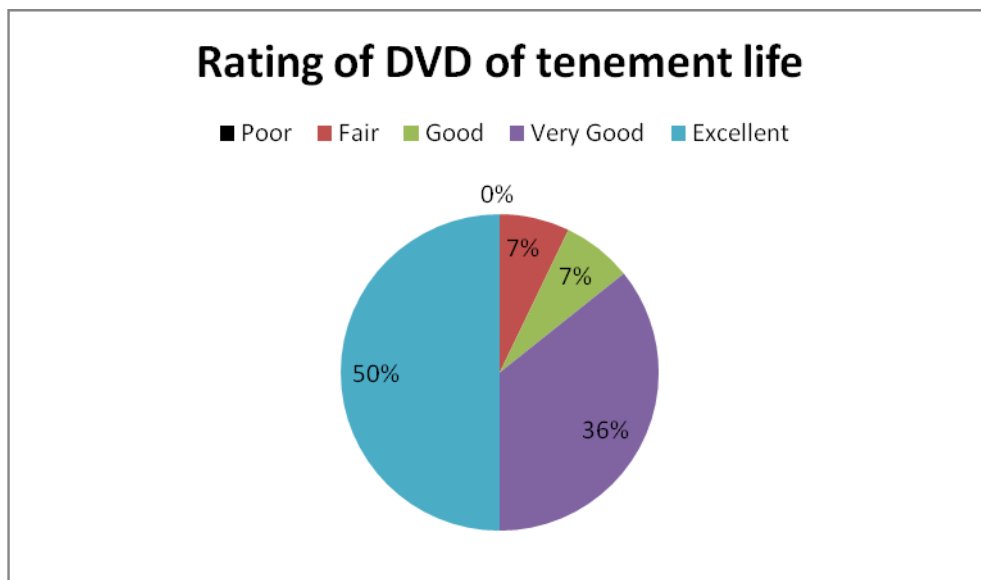
23 evaluation forms were mailed to the respondents (as Mr Boyle was not interviewed face to face and did not visit the exhibition it was decided against sending him a form) 17 were returned.

Below are the set questions which required an answer ranging from poor to excellent.

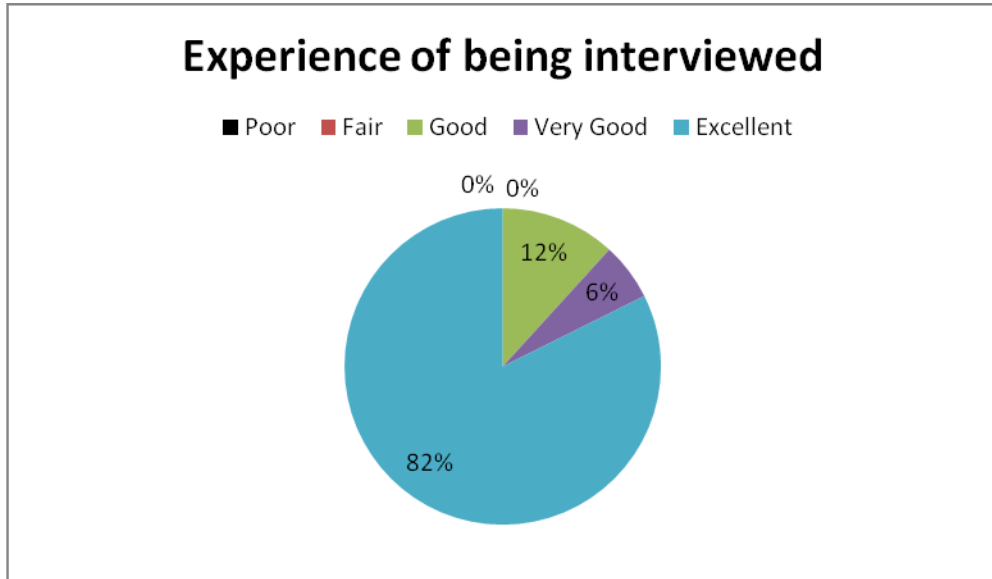
Q. An exhibition of the M74 Dig was held at Scotland Street School Museum. If you visited this exhibition how would you rate the displays for the Lower English Buildings? (Graphic panels and flip boards)



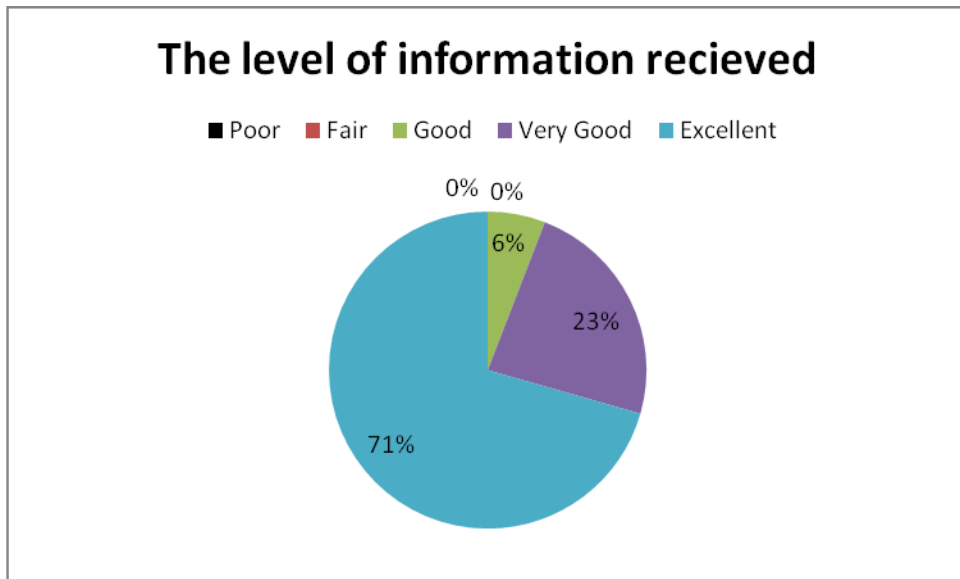
Q. If you visited this exhibition how would you rate the DVD display?



Q. Taking everything into account how would you rate your experience of being interviewed for the oral history project?



Q. Prior to your interview you received correspondence from the oral historian. How would you rate the level of information you received?



In addition, a series of open questions were included and a random selection of the comments are noted below each.

Q. Were there any particular aspects of the interview that you enjoyed?

'David Walker's relaxed and relaxing manner'

'Remembering things you thought you'd forgotten'

'I had memories of my father in his working clothes and the family holidays in Saltcoats'

'Very skilled interviewer...I felt that Dr Walker became a personal friend.'

'I enjoyed the whole experience and was made to feel very comfortable.'

'Talking about my childhood and my parents and although a bit teary I enjoyed the funny moments also.'

I particularly enjoyed recalling my experiences of living in Dixon's Blazes with my family, all of whom are now deceased, as they were happy times.'

'Interview was easy and relaxed and he allowed me to express myself and I was never under pressure.'

Q. Were there any particular aspects of the interview that you didn't enjoy?

'There weren't really any – personal aspects were not gone into'

'I enjoyed every moment. Plenty of time to think and to listen.'

'An image of my father's face when he came back from the hospital.'

No, I was made to feel quite comfortable – like chatting to an old friend.'

Q. Is there anything that you feel could have been done which would have improved your experience of participating on this project?

'I was happy with the entire experience but I did sometimes have difficulty with the MacKinlay Street DVD sound when the exhibition room was busy.'

'Was unable to travel and would liked to have viewed the exhibition.'

'No, I think everything was done in a very satisfactory way.'

'No, the whole experience was great fun.'

'No, everything was put together very professionally.'

No, but I would like to be part of a Local History Group.'

'I thought everything was handled extremely well, especially the input by Dr Walker who was excellent.'

Other comments include:

'More work than I thought'

'If I required clarification he helped me by phone and email'

'What was asked of me was explained simply and concisely.'

'I thought meeting would take maybe 20 minutes or so in fact it lasted over 2 hours'

'Very friendly and helpful'

'Dr Walker was very clear about the interview and how the information would be used in the project and also how beneficial it would be to whoever was interested.'

'All the information I received from Dr Walker was informative and interesting.'

'Everything was clear'