

ONCE UPON A TOWN

Guide To Taking An Oral History

Oral history involves gaining an understanding of the past by talking to people to collect memories and personal experiences. It's a great way to find out about the everyday lives of ordinary people and can help us understand how big events have affected people on a personal level.

Who To Talk To

Who you choose to talk to will depend on your subject. If you are exploring growing up in Ormskirk an easy way to start is to speak to a relative of the right age for your subject. You may also be able to speak to friends of relatives.

Choosing A Topic

In this case growing up in Ormskirk or living in West Lancashire through the current global pandemic. Oral history can also be a great way to understand an important national event from the recent past by finding out what it was like to experience the event first hand. So a subject from modern history will work well, such as the Queen's Coronation.

Recording Your Interview

At the moment we may not be able to speak to people face to face because of the pandemic. We can only talk to people face to face who are in our bubble, this means we may have to hold a telephone conversation or arrange a Zoom, Skype or WhatsApp or Facebook meeting. Many of these tools allow for the recording of audio and video. We are looking for submissions in either of these formats or as written histories.

Interview Questions

Think about asking 'open questions'. For example, if you are preparing for an interview about the Queen's Coronation, a good first question would be 'Can you tell me how the day started for you?' This is an open question which should lead to a detailed answer. Ideas for questions can be found at www.genealogy.com/articles/research/70_tipsoral.html.



Identify a subject or theme • Choose a location & recording equipment
Prepare open questions • Be sensitive, the process can be emotional

Useful Links

[BBC History](#) • [British Library Oral History Collection](#) • [The Oral History Society](#)