

Title: Griffith, Rhys_Interview_Complete
Creators: Rick & Julia Goldsmith
Project: Herefordshire Life Through A Lens
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Interview Date: November_07_2018
Location: Herefordshire Archive and Records Centre, Hereford, Herefordshire, UK
Source: Catcher Media Social CIC
Interviewee: Rhys Griffith (speaker, male)
Interviewer: Marsha O'Mahony (speaker, female)
Camera & Sound: Rick Goldsmith (male)
Producer: Julia Goldsmith (female)
Language: English

Type: Video
Video Format: MPEG-4
Bit rate (overall): 19 mbits/s
Frame rate: 25 FPS
Aspect ratio: 16:9
Width: 1920 pixels
Height: 1080 pixels
Scan type: Progressive
Audio Format: AAC
Audio Sampling rate: 48.00 kHz
Audio Bit rate: 227 kb/s
Stereo/Mono: Mono
File Size: 3.75 GB
Duration: 28 mins 16 seconds

Type: Audio
Audio Format: MP3 audio
Audio Sampling rate: 44.100 kHz
Audio Bit rate: 256 kb/s
Stereo/Mono: Mono
File Size: 52.2 MB

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Summary transcript of interview

Outline

Rhys Griffiths is Senior Archivist at Herefordshire Archives Service, he explains about the collections held at HARC including the photographic collections, why he thinks the archive service is important and the work currently being undertaken regarding the Derek Evans photographic collection.

0.00

Rhys Griffiths is the Senior Archivist at Herefordshire Archives, he works in a wonderful purpose built building and his job is wide ranging from planning outreach projects and cataloguing archives to manning the reception desk.

The counties archives are similar to any county archive in that it houses parish records of registrations of births, marriages and deaths, copies of wills and maps, property details, local authority and court records. The archives tell the story of human life covering the period 1100 to the present day.

Physically the archives would cover from end to end the length of two and half miles, the amount of records held was highlighted when they moved from their old offices in Harold Street to the new purpose-built building in Rotherwas, it took 6 weeks to move the boxes which had taken over 18 months to repackage.

Although it is a huge collection it may be considered not compared to other archives collections but is reflective of the population of Herefordshire. The archives tell the story of the people of Herefordshire from the earliest title deed dated 1100 to wills describing what people owned in the 16th century.

The archives is home to a number of photographic collections including W.H. Bustin who was a prolific photographer at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century, over 7,000 glass negatives cover the range of life from young portraits of men heading off to the trenches to scenes of farm yards and the May fair and it is glorious collection which has been digitalised and made available on the Herefordshire History web-

site. The archives is also home to the photographs of Miss White who was taking photos in the mid-20th century, she was renowned pathfinder for women taking photographs for The Lady and Country life, she took photos of the hop fields ,everyday life on a farm and also of key figures of the time. They also were lucky enough to obtain the Derek Evans collection which is variety of photographs telling all sorts of stories.

5.00

Rhys describes how photos are such an accessible route to the window on the past, they capture life at a particular time useful for adding colour, even though many are monochrome they still bring to life the time in a way that the minutes of a meeting or the documentation of title deeds do not, whilst these resources are valuable they don't bring history to life the way a photograph does.

Photos are a good way in to schools and hard to reach groups, people look at photos and realise there is so much more to archives, they help unpick a story, add layers to the history and make you ask more questions such as who were those people.

10.00

The Derek Evans collection is a substantial collection of over 2,000 negatives and hundreds of exhibition prints showing a range of subjects from the May fair in Hereford , local politics of which he had an interest in, to wider reaching stories such as the Aberfan disaster. The collection is housed in 60 boxes and documents the story of life from the 1950's to the end of the 20th century. The photos show Derek's specialist skills as a photographer, his range of interests and the character of Derek the man, as a recorder of events the collection lends itself to the project that Catcher Media have been working on and captures the public's interest.

Rhys comments on how he thinks the collection helps to replace the loss of photographs from local newspapers at the end of the 20th century, Derek did a lot of work for local newspapers and his photographs reflect what has been officially lost from that period.

When asked what are his favourites Rhys picks out the May fair, he describes how Derek's photos show a vivid picture of what the fair is like and his experiments with black and white and colour show the fun and how Derek felt a responsibility for recording what is an ancient event and capturing the living history of it.

15.00

Rhys goes on to explain the mechanics of archiving; many people have commented on the building being expensive and why not digitise the complete records and do away with the originals. Whilst keen to make the archives accessible by digitising as much as possible the originals will always be treasured. Photographs lend themselves to digitalisation, but digitalising records is not straightforward, the Derek Evans project has galvanised volunteers and attracted new volunteers but it is expensive to digitalise records and without volunteers it would take a lot of time and effort. The costs associated with digitalising records and photos means that consideration needs to be given into what will be of interest and used by the public.

There are two sides to this, the access and opening the door to a wider audience and preserving information. Going forward with records being held on computers this may cause headaches in the future as the archive service will find it challenging deciding what to keep and how to keep it.

20.00

In the past many families took only a few photos but today how information is captured is different with individuals taking hundreds of photos.

Herefordshire archives are working with other archive services in the region to decide how to work going forward and what to invest time and effort into.

Rhys goes on to explain how he feels that archives add value to history by helping you understand your place in the community, the history of your family or community and give people a sense of belonging.

25.00

Photographs help by giving a direct route into finding out about things, you don't need specialist skills to understand, some archived documentation maybe in Latin or require in depth knowledge of what the document is telling you.

The archive is a public asset for everyone to enjoy, there will always be surprises and discoveries as it's impossible for the archive service to describe everything and people will have preconceptions about how people behaved in the past. As a public asset these are challenging times and it requires exploration of different ways to run the service but however the archives are run in the future it is guaranteed that it will be available to everyone who wants to access it.

