



Recording crime:

the preservation of policing history

Participant Information Sheet: Oral History

What is the Recording Crime project?

Recording Crime is an Arts and Humanities Research Council funded PhD project. The project is being led by Angela Sutton-Vane who is a research student in the history department at the Open University. The main aim of the project is to examine the laying down of regional policing history by establishing patterns and practices around the preservation of police records. Unlike the Metropolitan Police regional police forces have never been covered by *The Public Record Act* and management of records, particularly around their selection for retention and destruction, has been left to individual forces with little guidance around the identification of records of potential future importance to historians, families, criminologists, sociologists or public enquiries (to name just a few).

Much has been written about the history of the UK police, but little about how this history has been selected and preserved, or about the relationship between information management, legislation, history and organisational pride. Research will aim to provide a balanced reflection of the police's relationship with their own history and the necessarily complex area of managing sensitive information alongside the public's growing expectations for rights of access and it is hoped it will also support future policy work around the preservation of police records.

Why do you want to interview me?

Gathering the stories of retired police officers and staff who were responsible for creating or managing police force records will form an important part of the research project. Angela is especially interested in people who were directly involved in creating police files; for example who may have worked in CID, or used police history as trainers, police museum volunteers or curators, or processed files in records management. You have been invited to participate in the project as a result of the information you provided on the initial project questionnaire.

Between 25 and 30 people will be interviewed for the project. Your story will be immensely important in that it will add valued personal experience to the research argument around questions which have never been asked before and contribute towards understanding the effects of change and pride on the preservation of policing history.

How will the interview be arranged?

You will be contacted by Angela (using your preferred method) to arrange a suitable date and time. The interview will be carried out in a place of your choice, but ideally this will be your own home. Please allow two hours for the interview.

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What will the interview be like?

- The interview should take place in a quiet room away from interruptions and noise and the only people in the room should be the interviewer and yourself. It is also a good idea not to eat or drink during the interview to avoid background noise and to put your mobile phone on silent;
- the interview will be recorded so that everything you say is remembered;
- Angela will be the interviewer and she will bring recording equipment which will take a few minutes to set up and to complete a quick sound test;
- before the interview begins Angela will go through the consent form with you (a copy will have been sent to you in advance) and check you understand the reasons you are being interviewed and if you have any questions; she will then ask you to sign the form.
- once the recorder has been turned on Angela will introduce herself, give the date and time. She will also introduce you using a code to ensure anonymity. This information identifies the recording for future research;
- the interview will normally last about an hour, but if you have lots to talk about it can take longer so make sure you arrange it for a time when you are not rushed. If you feel you don't have much to say it may only last half an hour and this is perfectly normal – the interview will still be very valuable;
- don't be put off by the recording process – Angela will be listening to what you are saying very carefully. However: she may take some notes whilst you are talking of questions to ask later; she will also make a point of not saying much other than asking questions – this is your story not hers; she won't be making any noises such as “mmm” or laughing because it will be picked up on the recording.
- at the end of the interview Angela will turn off the recorder. Before she leaves she will check whether you have any further questions.

What sort of things will the interview be about?

Angela will send you some ideas for you to think about before the interview, but you don't need to write anything down beforehand. It is important that this is your spontaneous story, thoughts and feelings. During the interview Angela will prompt you around these ideas:

- organisational pride
- the history of your police force and of the UK police
- preserving history
- working practices
- retirement and remembering your work
- dealing with change

At the end of the interview before she turns the recorder off she will give you a chance to say anything else that you feel hasn't been covered.

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Concerns about revealing information

If you are a retired police officer or staff you may have concerns around discussing working practices under the *Official Secrets Act* and Angela will be happy to discuss this with you. However, for your peace of mind, the Act covers very specific types of disclosure and it is highly unlikely you will breach it during the interview. You may inadvertently refer to colleagues by name or identify them in other ways and such references will be removed from any final research outputs.

What will happen to the information I give?

The project has been guided and assessed by the Open University's *Human Research Ethics Committee* to ensure it meets all standards regarding confidentiality and is in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

The recording will be typed up by Angela as a Word document and at this point all personal information will be removed so you will not be identifiable. The information in this document, along with information from the other interviews, will be drawn together into a final report which will be published at the end of the project in late 2018 or early 2019. If any parts of your interview appear in the final report they will be anonymous (unless you specifically request otherwise). The personal details you have provided, to allow Angela to contact you for example, will be entered on a spreadsheet and stored on the Open University's secure server. This personal information will not be shared with anyone during the project. If you would like to see what information is being held please contact Angela and she will be more than happy to let you know. Under the Data Protection Act you are within your rights to amend or request deletion of any information held about you.

The audio files of the recordings, along with the transcripts, will be preserved as a future resource for research within the British Library's Sound Archive. Again, your wishes (as outlined on the Consent Form) will be upheld at every stage of this process.

The final published PhD report will be publicly available through The Open University's *Open Research Online* website. It will be similar in size to a large book so it is not something that can be easily printed off. However, if you would like to see it Angela will be more than happy to arrange this.

About the Consent Form

This can seem a daunting form, but it is very important to ensure you understand your rights as an interviewee. The form ensures that the relationship between the interviewee (yourself) and the project organiser and interviewer (Angela Sutton-Vane) is one of trust and that your recording will be used in an ethical and responsible manner and comply with any restrictions specified. The form also explains how you can withdraw from the project if, at any time, you have second thoughts about participating.

Withdrawing from the project

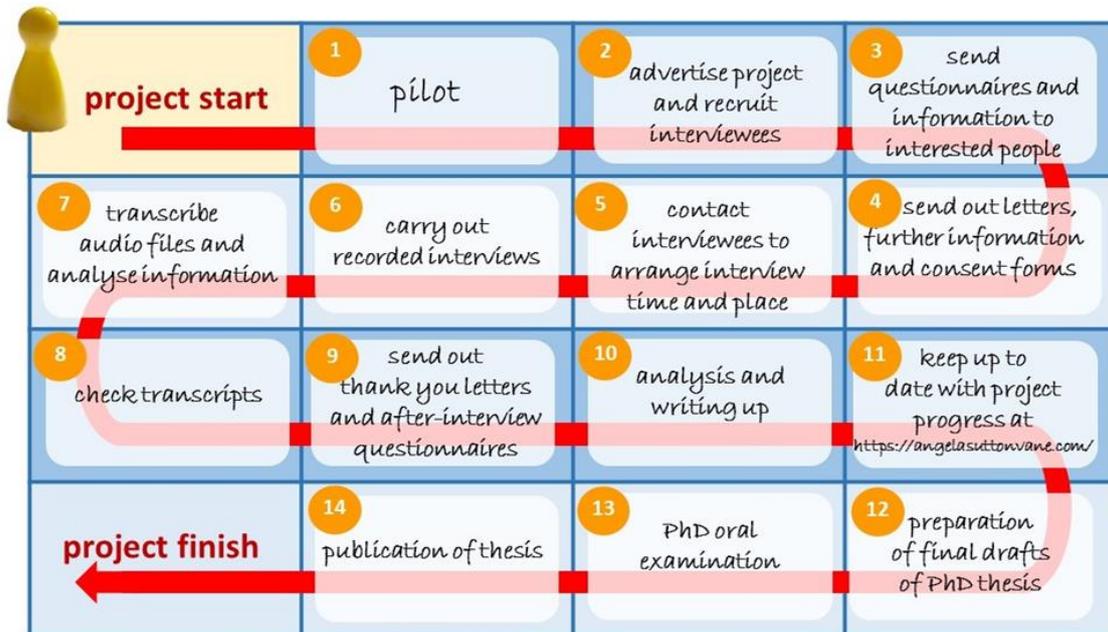
If, having agreed take part, you then feel you would rather not, you are free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason. However, if this is later than two weeks after the interview the information will already have been extracted and anonymised, so it will not be possible to remove it from the research material.

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Following the project and spreading the word ...

Angela Sutton-Vane has a website at <https://angelasuttonvane.com> which will have a page on the **Recording Crime** project. She will update this with news, milestones and events and you will also be able to leave comments.

An important part of the recruitment process will be by “word of mouth” so if you have friends or know of ex work colleagues who may like to participate in the project, please do ask them to contact Angela.



Contact details

If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the project you can contact either Angela or her supervisor, Dr. Chris Williams:

Angela Sutton-Vane: Project mobile No: 07376 921507 email: Angela.Sutton-Vane@open.ac.uk
Address: c/o The History Department, The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

Dr. Chris Williams email: chris.williams@open.ac.uk
Address: Senior Lecturer, The History Department, The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA



@Recording_Crime



<https://angelasuttonvane.com/recording-crime/>

Find out more

Below are details of some other oral history projects in the UK around policing and also organisations who support police and oral history. If you are aware of any other oral history projects about police forces please let Angela know:



The Oral History Society website is at: <http://www.ohs.org.uk/> with lots of excellent information around oral history projects and news.



The Friends of the Metropolitan Police Historical Collection are running an excellent oral history project with many of their interviews now online which you can listen to at: <https://www.metpolicehistory.co.uk/met-police-oral-history.html>



The Crime and Punishment Collections Network (CaP) is devoted to the preservation and promotion of all collections relating to crime and punishment such as prison and court museums as well as policing collections. Their website is at: <https://capcollections.wordpress.com/>



The Old Police Cells Museum at Brighton has a number of oral history recordings with ex-officers from Sussex Police online at: http://www.oldpolicecellsmuseum.org.uk/category/audio_histories



Anglesey Archives hold a small oral history collection relating to Anglesey Constabulary. You can find out more at: http://www.archiveswales.org.uk/anw/get_collection.php?inst_id=27&coll_id=78501&expand=



Royal Ulster Constabulary are conducting an oral history project and access is available by contacting the George Cross Foundation at: <http://www.rucgcfoundation.org/oral-history/>



Herts Policing Past have a small number of oral history recordings available online at: <http://www.hertspastpolicing.org.uk/content/category/police-history/oral-testomies>



The British Library's Sound and Moving Image collection holds a large oral history project carried out by Barbara Weinberger covering a number of police forces. Details are available at: <http://cadensa.bl.uk/uhtbin/cgisirsi/?ps=7nPcJxWdrk/WORKS-FILE/137860068/8/2612313/Barbara+Weinberger+Police+Interviews>



The Police History Society is at: <http://www.policehistorysociety.co.uk/phsframe4.htm>



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Oxford University: St Antony's College Middle East Centre Archive hold an oral history project on the British Mandate Palestine Police at: <https://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/meca-palestine-police-oral-history.html>