

## CREATING A COLLABORATIVE WORKTOWN ARCHIVE

Researcher: Caroline Edge

### RESEARCH TIMELINE:

Date	Rationale of research decisions and activities undertaken
October 2009	<p><b>Awarded the Humphrey Spender John Marriott Scholarship for Documentary Photography</b> to document holidays in Bolton in response to Bolton Museum's Worktown Archive, a collection of photographs and visual artefacts produced during Mass Observation's experimental 1930s study of everyday life in Bolton.</p>
March 2010	<p><b>Worktown Holiday Rituals, Bolton Museum (see ITEM 3)</b></p> <p>Photographs produced for the scholarship were contextualised against a selection of Humphrey Spender's 1930s photographs. The process of research into Bolton Museum's Worktown archive for this exhibition demonstrated that Spender's photographs were not accurately catalogued and that both factual and interpretive inaccuracies had crept into established histories of both social documentary photography and the early Mass Observation project.</p>
April 2010	<p><b>'Photographing Holiday Dreams: The Worktown Archive as Ethnographic Surrealism'</b></p> <p>Recording Leisure Lives Conference, Bolton Museum (Apr. 2010)</p>
October 2011	<p><b>Started AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award based at Bolton Museum</b></p> <p>'Using social documentary photography to promote community cohesion', with the proposed aim of using photography as a means of enabling young people (14-19) to record and critically reflect upon their everyday lives.</p> <p>Initially the research focussed on cataloguing the archive and locating the photographs in the contemporary landscape of Bolton, as this was identified as a key need by Bolton Museum.</p>
March 2012	<p><b>Research visit to Mass Observation Archive (University of Sussex) and Humphrey Spender's personal archive (now maintained by his widow Rachel Spender at their home in Sussex)</b></p> <p>The aim of this archival research was to identify cross references between written (MO) and visual archives (Worktown) and to identify 'missing' photographs from the Worktown archive. This research substantially expanded the interpretation of Spender's photographs and also revealed the important contributions of other photographers - Michael Wickham and Philip Trevelyan to the Worktown study.</p>
May 2012	<p><b>Bolton History Day, Bolton Museum</b></p> <p>Public lecture giving an overview of Mass Observation and the Worktown archive - the constant iterative process of disseminating research to the</p>

	local community and collecting their responses is integral to the collaborative design of this project.
July 2012	<b>'Looking for Worktown's Lost Locations', Mass Observation 75th Anniversary Conference, University of Sussex</b>
August 2012	<b>Halliwell Befriending Group (Aug 2012) and Breightmet Befriending Group (March 2013)</b> Reminiscence sessions sharing the Worktown photographs and collecting oral histories in collaboration with Bolton Museum and Help the Aged. These sessions revealed the performative nature of archival photographs and the importance of conversation as a means of expanding photographic meaning (Langford 2006)
September 2012	<b>Bolton Worktown website (<a href="http://www.boltonworktown.co.uk">www.boltonworktown.co.uk</a>)(see ITEM 4)</b> This digital archive developed in partnership with Perry Bonewell (Bolton Museum) made all Humphrey Spender's Worktown photographs available to the public for the first time. The site enables the local community to contribute to the ongoing documentation of the archive. The site has had over 40,000 unique visits to date and has altered the types of loan requests made by national and international institutions, demonstrating a more nuanced interpretation of the Worktown photographs beginning to emerge.  <b>Worktown 75th Anniversary Exhibition, Bolton Museum (see ITEM 5)</b> I curated this exhibition of over a hundred photographs and artefacts created during Mass Observation's Worktown project, drawing on the research to document the archive. Many artefacts included in the exhibition had not been previously documented and were then included in the subsequent Mass Observation: This is Your Photo exhibition curated by Russell Roberts at the Photographers' Gallery.
September 2012	<b>BBC Radio Manchester.</b> Interview about the research documenting the Worktown project and asking for further participation from the local community.
October 2012	<b>Worktown 75<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary Symposium</b> I organised this public symposium and film screening in collaboration with Bolton Museum. Invited speakers included Russell Roberts (University of South Wales), film director Ian Potts (BBC), and Bob Snape (University of Bolton)
June - July 2012	<b>Lookout Manchester, Photovoice</b> I sought out experience in participatory photography methodologies through the charity Photovoice, acting as a facilitator for a photography project researching and addressing the causes of gang culture among teenagers. This project gave me invaluable insight to the practicalities of organising a participatory photography project, and the relationship between funding and politics and the media.

January 2013	<b>Oral history with Annie Shaw (nee Barlow)</b> Annie was photographed with her brother by Spender during an election parade in January 1938. Her father also appears in Spender's photographs and these are the only photographs she has of him. This interview revealed how the afterlives of photographs are unpredictable and that the photographic archive may also act as personal album.
February 2013	<b>Radio 4, You and Yours (February 25, 2013) Identifying the people of Bolton in the 1930s</b> 7 minute feature about the research to document the Worktown archive.
March 2013	<b>'Looking for Bolton in the Worktown Archive'</b> Between Art and Information Conference, De Montfort University
May - August 2013	<b>Observe Bolton (SEE ITEM 7)</b> A collaborative photography project with young people (11-23) in Bolton which reimagined Mass Observation's research methods as urban surveillance. This project enabled me to test MO's methods against contemporary practice in participatory photography.
August 2013	<b>'Bolton/Worktown', short film for Mass Observation: This is Your Photo exhibition, Photographer's Gallery, London</b> (in collaboration with the South Manchester Arts Collective).
March 2014	<b>Worktown to Cottonopolis, Manchester Histories Festival</b> Public lecture on the Worktown Archive at Bolton Museum and a happiness photography pop- up studio for children at Bolton Museum's Super Saturday.
April 2014	<b>'What they photograph in Worktown: Participatory photography and Saturday afternoons in Bolton'</b> Recording Leisure Lives Conference, University of Bolton (Apr. 2014)
April 2014	<b>Our Connected Histories.</b> I presented a short film on the Worktown Archive for the Greater Manchester Museums Group website.
May 2014	<b>'What they think in Worktown: Using photography to create a participatory archive'</b> Anthropology and Photography Conference, Royal Anthropological Institute, British Museum <b>(See ITEM 8)</b>  This conference paper was key to siting the Worktown study as an early example of visual anthropology and gaining feedback from leading scholars within this field.
July 2014	<b>Worktown Observation Centre (<a href="http://www.worktownobservation.co.uk">www.worktownobservation.co.uk</a>)(See ITEM 9)</b> This project re-evaluated Mass Observation's visual research methods through the creation of a collaborative archive over 8 days. The centre was based in a disused shop in Bolton town centre. 38 volunteer

	observers including local amateur and professional photographers, and academics from 5 institutions participated. Over 1000 members of the public were directly engaged.
October 2014	<p><b>Invitations to present research:</b></p> <p><b>'The Worktown Observation Centre: documentary photography and community engagement'</b>  Visual Anthropology seminar series, School of Anthropology, Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford University (Oct 2014)</p> <p><b>'Creating a collaborative Worktown Archive: Mass Observation and mass photography'</b>  Research seminar series, Photographic History Research Centre, De Montfort University (Oct 2014)</p>
May 2015	<b>'Looking for Bolton in the Worktown Archive' in eds. Edwards, Elizabeth and Morton, Christopher, Photographs, Museums, Collections, London: Bloomsbury (May 2015). (see ITEM 6)</b>
May 2017	<p><b>PhD thesis: 'Creating a collaborative Worktown Archive: Photography, Place and Community.'</b> (see ITEM 10)</p> <p>PhD Viva. External examiner: Dr Annebella Pollen</p>
July 2017	<b>'Mass Observation as a relational art practice' Mass Observation 80th Anniversary Conference, University of Sussex (Jul. 2017) (see ITEM 11)</b>