



Britannia Museum Oral History Project

INFORMATION SHEET

This document provides some background information about the Britannia Museum Oral History Project and what will be involved if you decide to be interviewed. Please take time to read this information and feel free to ask us any further questions you may have or if anything is unclear.

What is the purpose of the project?

This is the first time an oral history of life and training at Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC) has been undertaken, and it will help provide a fuller picture than exists presently about the important role played by BRNC in the Royal Navy's pursuit of world peace, democracy and humanitarian assistance. Given the age of some of the potential contributors, it is important we gather this information now.

The recorded experiences of the former trainee officers will bring the oral history archive to the attention of a wider audience, and stimulate more visits to the Britannia Museum. We also hope it will help connect the College to the local community and other related organisations, as the exhibition arising from the archive moves first to Dartmouth Town Museum, and then to other interested museums and / or libraries.

The oral history project will become one of the Britannia Museum's core collections, and it will provide academics and research students with a valuable resource. There will also be opportunities to take aspects of the oral history recordings into schools and universities to enlarge the understanding of the role of the Royal Navy and how officers were equipped for their careers. The resulting archive will provide an insight not only into the history of the College, but also of social psychology, the acquisition of leadership skills, preparation for leaving family and country, and resilience in the face of danger during conflicts at sea. Present day BRNC cadets will benefit from understanding the legacies of previous generations of trainees, and help them to deal with their experiences during and after training.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The Heritage Lottery Fund and the Britannia Association are funding the project, which is being managed by Fiona Clampin. She is supported by the Britannia Museum curator, Dr Jane Harrold, and education officer Dr Richard Porter. Trained staff and volunteers will record the oral histories.

Why have I been asked to take part?

We aim to interview at least 40 former naval cadets who attended BRNC between the 1930s and the 1980s. We think that you would match these criteria and that is why we are requesting your participation.

Do I have to take part?

It is not compulsory for you to take part – however, we believe that you have something important to contribute. Training at BRNC has changed significantly over the years, and we hope that you will contribute to show how that change has taken place. If you agree to take part you will be asked to sign a consent form. But please note that you will still be free to withdraw at any time and we will not ask you to give any reasons if you choose to do so.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

By participating you will be helping to create a valuable and unique collection of interviews with a range of former BRNC cadets whose experiences have so far not been recorded. The collection will be of use to future academic research, as well as augment the existing collections already held in the Britannia Museum.

We hope that participating in the project will be enjoyable, and will provide you with the opportunity to recount your experiences – both positive and negative - of life and training at BRNC. The act of retelling life events can help people understand their lives and often contribute to a sense of well-being and identity. We also hope that you will find it rewarding to have an opportunity to add your account to a historically significant collection of archived interviews.

What does taking part mean?

An oral history interview aims to capture memories, feelings and emotions about past events and life experiences. It can last anything from 30 minutes to three hours, with breaks if necessary. If you agree to take part, the project manager will telephone you to fix a suitable time and date to interview you and she will talk to you briefly to establish some details about your time at BRNC.

These details will be passed on to a volunteer who will be carrying out the interview, preferably in your own home. However, if you wish to meet elsewhere this too can be arranged. The interviewer will usually be accompanied by another volunteer, who will monitor the sound recording equipment and provide additional support.

The interviewer will begin the recording by asking you to state your full name, date of birth and the years you attended BRNC. He or she will invite you to talk about the build-up to arriving at BRNC, moving on to life and training at the College and how / if your experience there helped you in your subsequent career – naval or otherwise. You may want to think about some of this in advance. Personal stories and anecdotes can really bring the past to life!

If at any time you wish to pause the interview or have a break, feel free to say so. If you are unable to recall specific events when prompted by your interviewer please do not worry about it! Your contribution matters to us.

We would also like to take a photograph of you to accompany your contribution. This will be used in strict accordance with your wishes as per the interview. Your interviewer will provide you with a consent form to sign which outlines how your contribution will be used, and that we have your permission to use the material in research and future publications, including on the internet.

Are there any disadvantages or risks in taking part?

We hope that the experience of taking part will be enjoyable. However, it's possible that you may find recalling some experiences distressing. If this is the case, the interview will be suspended if necessary and only resumed once and if you feel comfortable to carry on. We will ensure all agreements regarding access, clearance and copyright are adhered to in strict accordance with your wishes.

What happens to the interviews?

After the interview the recording will be transcribed and summarised by one of the volunteers. If you have requested a copy of the recording, we will be happy to send you one. The digital recording, transcript and summary will be stored securely at the Britannia Museum during and after the life of the project as part of its core collections. Contact detail sheets will be removed and stored separately.

One of the main outputs of this project is an exhibition at the Britannia Museum, and other interested museums and / or libraries. It will use extracts from the recordings to illustrate life and training at the College, and will take the form of both written excerpts and recordings. With this in mind, if you have any memorabilia of your time at BRNC such as photos, diaries or reports, we would be very interested to discuss how we could use them in this context.

Use of Quotations

Any publications or websites may include quotations of your words and sound clips from the interviews. The consent form will ask if you are satisfied for this to happen. It is also possible that after archiving, future researchers and academics may use the interviews. You will also be asked in the consent form if you are happy about this.

Contact for further information:

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Thank you for taking part