



# *Hear their Stories*

RECORDING ORAL HISTORIES

MARY ELGAR & PATSY VIZENTS

# Stories record family history on Wadjemup

Patsy Vizents

Oral histories reveal more about an individual, place and time with the accents, inflections and pauses bringing the individual closer. They paint a picture of the individual concentrating on sound.

Patsy managed the oral history collection on Wadjemup from 2007 - 2018 - her task was to digitise the collection. Out of 70+ oral histories, Jack O'Donoghue's was the most interesting interview.

Jack was born 15 May 1894 and he recalled living on the Island for the first 20 years of his life before leaving to fight overseas in WW1. He returned to Wadjemup after the war and worked on various projects including re-roofing the Quad (prison).

Jack O'Donoghue recorded his life as a  
Warden's son on Wadjemup



# Stories record family history on Wadjemup

## Patsy Vizents

Jack O'Donoghue's recall of his childhood provided family information but also an ambience of what it was like to live on Wadjemup when the Island was an Aboriginal Prison.


Jack explained the Prisoners were allowed out of gaol to hunt and supplement their diet on Saturdays and/or Sundays.

The children on Wadjemup accompanied many of these hunting and cooking trips and he recalled being with them.


Oral histories provide documented support not only for researchers and heritage managers but also for linguists who are studying the language of periods.

# Whose stories do we want to hear?

Come out of your comfort zone and include diversity in your oral histories.



Record stories from Indigenous people, migrants, non-Whites, people of colour, LGBTQI+ people, people whose views you don't agree with. Also known as 'others' in Australia 😞



All these stories are available - broaden your archives to reflect the true diversity of your area.

Don't interview anyone unless you know what you're doing, and you are qualified.

**Skills and experience matter when dealing with painful or sensitive subjects.**

A relevant qualification will help you take oral histories and understand informed consent, privacy, interviewing techniques, ethics, etc.

The Oral History Australia (OHA) offers an accredited course run by Dr Elaine Rabbitt and full details from this webpage:

<https://oralhistoryaustralia.org.au/guidance/training/>

*You need training before you start*

# Interviewing 'others'

## Research

- Do your research before you start - understand where they came from, what trauma they've suffered, language difficulties, fear of talking to a stranger, cultural barriers or feeling culturally unsafe

## Don't judge

- Don't judge -it is the interviewee's history you're after not your opinions

## Ask

- Ask what pronoun they prefer and stick to it, regardless of your views on this matter

## Inform

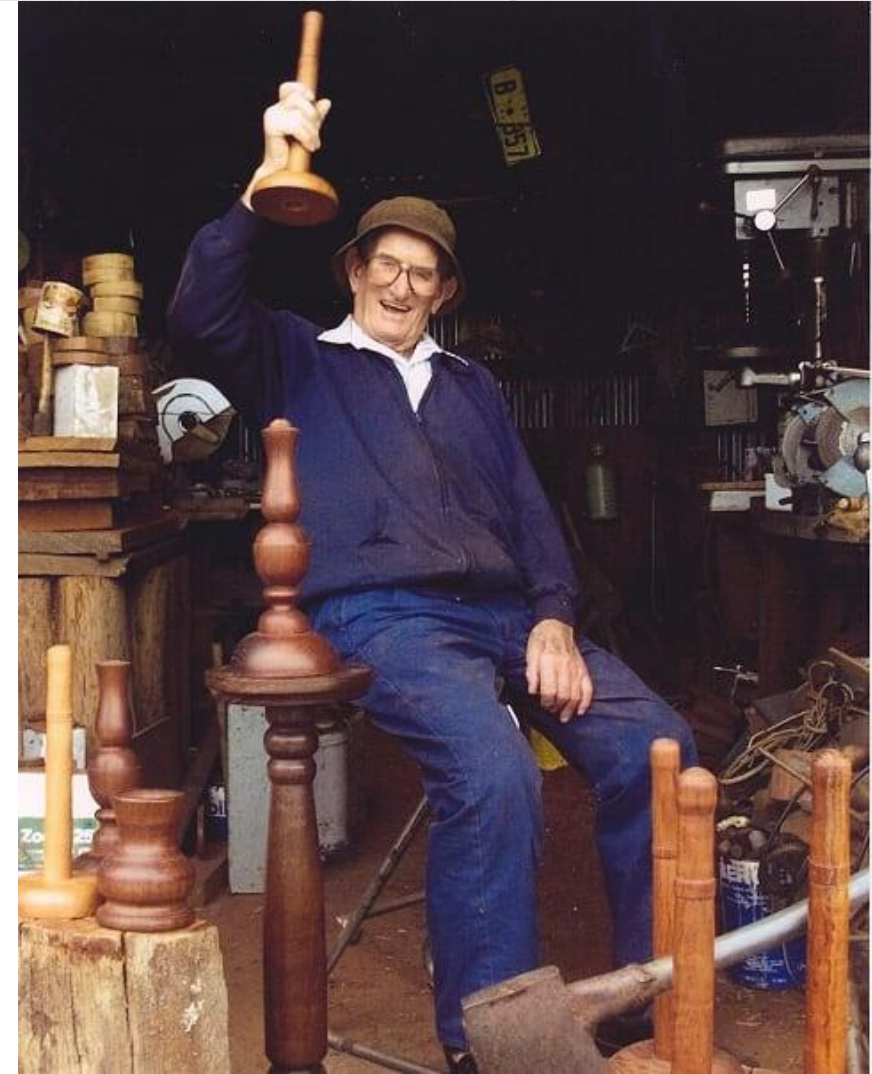
- Informed consent must be made and signed by interviewee

# Ken Smith, Bridgetown

Ken was interviewed twice, first in 1935 then again in the 90s. His story is still the most fascinating in BHS's collection.

He was a prolific talker and someone who had a rich history of anecdotes to share.

Choose your interviewee carefully so that you record lots of stories, and your questions are kept to a minimum.





# What questions should I ask?



It depends on **why** you want to record the oral history. What are you trying to learn from the interviewee? What is it that you want to add to the history of your area?



Do your research and formulate appropriate questions that are relevant to what you want to learn from the interviewee.

# The Stories are recorded, what next?

