

## **Synopsis**

The project aimed to (a) examine (via questionnaire) the different forms that community history projects take in UK universities and (b) explore the means of developing effective student-centred community history projects. The case study centred on a new third-year module at Sheffield Hallam University, entitled Life Stories and Community Histories. Students taught (by lecture, seminar and workshop) on this module worked alongside Y10 pupils at a Sheffield secondary school in a deprived area of the city, in conducting oral history interviews. Contact with the school, categorised as 'band c' within the new Excellence in Cities project, was made through my involvement with the Widening Participation and Gifted and Talented projects in Sheffield. A further group of older people were contacted via Burngreave Library. The project took the theme of immigration to Sheffield in the 1950s-1960s. Parents of Y10 pupils were invited to participate and (school) students were employed to translate where necessary. It was hoped that the interviews would result in material for display and possibly publication and would lead to an event held at the school, the Library and at Hallam University.

## **Results of investigation**

While the oral history aspect was not a success (despite assurances of interest, there was very little uptake – see Report) and the small number of interviewees' accounts has meant that we were unable to pursue the original aim of holding exhibitions (in school, the library and at Hallam) and of ultimately publishing the accounts, there have been other positive and fruitful outcomes of this project. Firstly, the project was successful in generating an interest in 'doing family and local history' among some of the participant school students.

Those who undertook interviewing at home quite evidently enjoyed the experience and told their stories with pride and interest. As a consequence, 'Life stories and Community Histories' has metamorphosed into 'Family and Community History', and will (from 2005-06) involve university students working alongside school children (both primary and secondary) to interview family members and friends of the latter. Secondly, I have learned from this project of the variety of history being done 'out there', often associated with regeneration projects.

As well as working in schools, the new module will also involve students participating in community history projects, conducting oral and community history. Other students, perhaps those less keen on the interactive aspects of the above, will be involved in undertaking community/material history of the Pitsmoor area, investigating a range of sites, including a Georgian House, local allotments and places of worship. Finally, it is hoped that my new module will develop close links with a local initiative called 'Celebrating Burngreave', a three year project run between a Sheffield museum and Burngreave Library. It is intended that the original transcripts of interviews from the 'Bridging the Divide' project will find a permanent home within this project, and will become part of a larger display of similar material generated by this new initiative.