

## WE WERE THERE

1.

We were there: Womankind beheld the Earth.  
We were there; man beside us at our birth. And the world was made  
for sharing, Equal giving, equal caring;  
Learning, growing, doing, daring, We were there.  
Friend and mother, Sister, lover, We were there.

2.

We were there, throughout each changing century  
We were there, but still must write our history;  
For who heard us when we cried? How many fought; how many  
died?  
Hand in hand and side by side. We were there etc.

3.

We were there, through every strike, through every war.  
We were there, wondering what we struggled for;  
Wondering when our time would come? Would brothers, sisters, fight  
as one?  
Or would we stand alone? We were there etc.

4.

We are here, though the way is long before us.  
We are here, and the world cannot ignore us.  
We will celebrate our past.  
And when the future's shared, at last,  
Who will dare to ask if,  
We were there etc.

# WOMEN MAKE HISTORY

Women make history. You make history. Whatever your age — from  
eighteen to eighty — your life and the lives of women around you  
are full of stories and information about life as it is now and as it  
used to be. There aren't any "experts" in this sort of history. You're  
the expert. You can do it yourself — alone or with others. We hope

this booklet will help anyone who wants to have a try.

# MAKING HISTORY NOW

*"When you read someone else's life story, there doesn't seem to be any hitches at all. Mine, during the period I was doing it, seemed all higgledy piggedly"*

*Dolly Davey  
A Sense of Adventure*

**You don't need to be famous to have a history of your own, and you don't need to be a professional historian to record it.**

Recently, people have begun recording their own histories—looking at things the experts hadn't thought to examine.

Some women — shopworkers, servants, housewives—have started writing, and some have had their histories published. We've listed a selection at the back of the pamphlet.

People are realising that history is more than lists of dates and monarchs. It's about what life has really been like.

Lives we lead now are history. Things we take for granted may easily be different in a few years' time.

Women of all ages, of all classes, and from many different places all have stories to tell. Women who have moved from the country to work in towns, women who have come here from abroad, young women facing unemployment, older women looking back.

All have experiences and views worth recording so that our own and future generations will understand what women's lives are like, now.

## WAYS OF WORKING

**The first thing to remember is that you don't *have* to do it on your own. The individual approach can produce excellent results, but there are also advantages in working as a group.**

A group can collect more information than one woman working on her own, and will have a wider circle of friends and contacts

to approach for help and information. An individual might get discouraged at times by the sheer amount of information there is — a group can share the load, and keep each other going.

Even if there's only two of you, practical skills, knowledge and interests are multiplied in working together.

' If you have difficulty in finding like-minded people to team up with, try your local adult education institute — you may find a women's studies group, a local history class, or a writers' group. Your nearest branch of the Federation of Worker Writers (see Resources) may know of women working in your district.

## WHAT KIND OF HISTORY?

There are different ways of presenting your history. You may prefer to write a diary or an illustrated story. It might be a series of poems. You may prefer not to write but to speak in to a, tape recorder.

If you are working with others you might make a tape slide show, or produce a play. You might be able to make a video or film. You could draw your story or sew it — like the women who embroidered the Bayeux Tapestry in the 11th century. An exhibition might be another way of presenting all the information you collect.

Have a look at Mary Chamberlain's book "Fenwomen" or Angela Hewins' "The Dillens" to see how a combination of biography and autobiography can convey atmosphere. Don't worry if you haven't done it before.

***"I set out with a cheap Boots tape recorder which I found hard to use and talked to the women from the village that I had been living in; neighbours introduced me to neighbours and I found people just talked very naturally. I wanted to do it because I felt that women had been left out of other rural histories and I think that we were all surprised when it actually came out as a book."***

***Mary Chamberlain  
Fenwomen***

It's up to you how your history finally appears. But keep a copy aside to deposit in a safe place like your local library, or one of the women's libraries listed in the Resources section. This will mean that your work will be kept safe and shared with other people now and in

the future.

## WHAT INTERESTS YOU?

Whether you work in a group or on your own, there are many different ways for you to look at women's history.

You could do a family history, for example, or a local history looking at your house, street, neighbourhood, or housing estate. Or you could look at the local trades in which women have worked — shops, factories, hospitals, schools or farms.

The history of a particular place, like a church (and its churchyard), your local market, a bingo hall or a launderette might be a way to start. Or you could look at aspects of your own life, or those of your mother, or your friends, which no-one has thought to record before. Your local tenants association might have an interesting history, so might a women's co-operative guild, a play-group, literacy project, peace group, or a local political party. Or you could look at aspects of women's lives like neighbourliness, unpaid work, childrearing, health or diet.

The main thing to remember is not to be too ambitious at the beginning. You may find you've taken on too much, and end up wasting the work you've done by feeling unable to finish it.

Small projects help provide material for larger histories later — there just isn't the evidence to write them yet.

Deirdre Beddoe's book 'Discovering Women's History' is very helpful, and emphasises that '*local* contributions are vital to reveal the full range of women's experiences both inside and outside the home'. She advises women making history to set limits for their work at the beginning — of time, space, and scale.

An interesting and manageable piece of history could be done on 'women's work' in your housing estate or street in the last ten years, for example; whereas a global history of the same thing from 1066 might never get done!

## MAKING A START

**Every history can use spoken, visual and written evidence. They go hand in hand. There'll be different sources of**

**information for you to seek, depending on what sort of history you've got in mind.**

*"In this book I have tried to tell you about my real life. It has not been easy to tell, because remembering is not easy. There is a lot even now that I've left out. And like a lot of people I find writing hard to do on my own. If it hadn't been for the tape recorder, this book would never have been written"*

*Joyce Crump  
The Ups and Downs of Being Born*

## **MEMORIES**

The best source of information about women's lives this century is women themselves. Whatever sort of history you may want to do, talking to other women about it will help get your ideas straight, and may set you thinking along new lines.

If you're part of a group, a joint "brainstorm" may be a good way to start perhaps with a list of possible topics to discuss jotted down at the beginning. A lot of ideas, memories, jokes and sadness will be shared over an evening's talk round a tape recorder.

Try to speak one at a time, or the tape will be too noisy to understand when you play it back.

## **INTERVIEWING**

Interviewing yourself or others for memories is best done with a cassette recorder set running nearby. If you haven't got one you may know someone who'll lend you theirs. For clear recordings a separate microphone is better than one built in to the recorder, and keep the microphone about 12-16" from the person talking.

Whether you are doing an autobiography, or interviewing others for a biography or a local history, it helps if you've got a list of things you want to think about.

If you've got some memories you'd like to record, just sit down with your list and a tape recorder and start talking. Or try writing them down in a letter.

It may help to imagine someone to talk to — like a distant cousin far away, or a future grandchild. Playing your tape or reading to others may help to get them to join in.

You can also interview as a group. Young women can contribute a lot to this way of recording history, listening to older women's memories, asking for explanations where necessary, and chipping in

with recent experience of how different or similar things are now. You will need to be aware also of different ways of asking questions and unlocking memories. Some people will respond to old photos, to newspaper accounts of something they were involved in or perhaps to someone else's written or taped story.

Some people will talk more easily on their own; or you could try a large group of old friends together or women of different generations discussing their experiences. As you get to know people they feel more at ease.

*Interviewers: "There were things that when you first knew us, you wouldn't have told us, and quite right too, because you wouldn't have trusted us" Louise: "No it was embarrassing when I first started it, but little by little you started to write and tape, and then I say, well there's no harm by trying"*

*Louise Shore*

*Pure Running*

Try to keep questions short and specific; general questions about what your job was like or what your area was like will usually get a vague reply. Ask instead about the journey to work, workmates, the corner shop or the local cinema.

Sometimes household objects like baking trays, sweet tins, hot water bottles, buttons, or pieces of material will help to jog people's memories.

Don't follow a questionnaire slavishly, a less formal prompt list might be more useful.

And make sure you don't end up doing all the talking yourself!

## **FINDING PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW**

**Start with your own friends and relations. Personal contacts will probably snowball. If you talk to enough people one contact will lead to another.**

The editors of "Dutiful Daughters" found the women who contributed to the book in a 'random, non-scientific way' mainly through friends and relations of friends.

When you feel ready to branch out, you can try any or all of the following ways to increase the number of informants:

- Contact local groups; those working with the elderly, local history organisations, community centres where all age groups visit. The local health centre may have midwives still working, or retired, who may be a mine of information about your area.
- Write to the local paper asking for informants on a particular subject.
- Put adverts in shop windows and in pubs and clubs.
- Try to get some publicity on your local radio.
- The local library or churches may be willing to display an announcement about your work.
- A local school might be interested to take up the idea as a project, and you could benefit by achieving access to women through their children or grandchildren.

## **DOCUMENTS**

like a sampler of old embroidery stitches, a Sunday school prize, an indenture for apprenticeship, or even a banner.

These personal bits and pieces are often very useful for building up a history. Each one may have a story. Old names and faces may be remembered when they're brought out, or forgotten events and emotions triggered off.

It's also a good idea to have a look in your local library and records office or museum. These places usually keep books on local history, and sometimes have good collections of photographs of the neighbourhood, of interesting events, or of landmarks or people.

They also store other documents which may be of use to your work—like school log books, street directories, local newspapers, and other such material. The staff in these places are usually very helpful to beginners, so don't be shy to ask for help! You'll be surprised how quickly you get to know your way around.

As you go on collecting information, you may also build up your own collection of material relating to the subject of your history. Keep it all together, and keep notes about where you found things, or who gave you them, and what they signify. Date them if you can, and name faces in photos if you or any of your informants have been able to identify them.

It's wise to set up some sort of subject filing system at the beginning and to keep it in order as it grows.

Using this material to set your own or other people's memories going can be very useful in getting conversation flowing.

Your collection is very important. You are gathering material on something which has been largely ignored. When you've finished the

project, you could donate it to the local library or museum, or deposit it somewhere else, like the Fawcett library, for other historians to use.

# DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

**The following sections suggest ways to start thinking about the historical importance of your own life, or those of others.**

Each one looks at a different aspect of a woman's life experience. The 'you' may be yourself, or the woman you 're talking with. The suggestions are designed for use with women of all ages and backgrounds, so details will have to be added by you to make questions personally applicable.

Women interested in a particular *subject* — like childrearing, women's use of contraception, or rent strikes — will want to expand upon the appropriate sections here. So will those who are thinking of doing a history of a school, or a hospital. So the questions and ideas offered here are only a beginning— many others will crop up as you work.

## ROOTS

*"I took my kids home in 1976 the ones who were born here, when we reached Jamaica, Tony said to me, mum they lied... I said, what you on about, he said, mum they did lie. He said that they say you live in trees,"*

*Jean Bernard*

*Woman to Woman*

**Where do you belong in your own family history? What do**

**you remember of your mother's life, your grandmother's or other family members, even those you've never met, or who died before you were born? Where do you really feel your roots are?**

Basic facts are important, and allow you to put memories in historical context. Record names and dates, where you were born, and if you can, where your parents and grandparents were born and brought up. Birth, marriage and death certificates and other family documents and photos may be useful here.

If your family has its roots in another country, find out why they moved, how they travelled and what their first impressions were. What do they remember about their old home, and are there any photos? If not, can they draw a picture?

Stories and details bring the past to life. Why your mother was in your birthplace at the time you were born, how old she was, whether there was any significance in your name. What was your mother's life story, and her aims for herself, or for you.

Compare your own life with your mother's, or your grandmother's. For example, is your life different from theirs? If so, how has the change come about? Your life may have been easier or harder than theirs, but in what ways do the differences show?

Many women in earlier generations had larger families, laundry was a major task with perhaps a mangle, where we have spin driers, or the local launderette. Other pressures may have replaced hard physical labour.

On the other hand, if you have come from a different social class, you may envy your predecessors' ability to hire servants to do the work.

If you can, go back and visit your birthplace, and where your parents and grandparents were born and grew up. You may find local records there.

## **EARLY LIFE**

*"My earliest memory is of sitting up in bed with my mother and watching our local midwife bathing my new baby brother."*

*Alice Linton*

*Not Expecting Miracles*

**Thinking back to your roots may have helped you remember your own earliest memories. Toys, games, clothes, punishments and prizes, treats, and childhood**

**playmates are all part of history. Describe your childhood home, room by room, and include sleeping arrangements, or family bath I night.**

Think about differences and similarities between boys and girls. Some women were brought up inside institutions, and details of what life was like for

children in these places are very hard to find. If this was your experience, your memories are important, so do record them. The lives your parents led, and how much time you spent together provide insights. Include such details as how they earned a living, whether you were often in the care of neighbours, or a nanny and when you saw your parents. Did you have pocket money, how much, and what did you spend it on?

Girls and boys were taught differently at school. Go through an average day in your

memory. Think about going to school, about what the schools you went to looked like inside and out.

Try to recall the atmosphere during assemblies; different lessons; lunchtime and playtime; punishments and prizes; rainy days or outings; teachers you liked and loathed and their nick names. Remember your happiest and saddest moments

What do you feel you were being educated for? What occupation did the teachers expect you to follow? What did *you* want to do?

Did the school encourage you to think of yourself as special, clever or talented? Talk about your talents and abilities, your favourite school subjects, books interests games work or pastimes.

Maria Burgwyn's experience was that no-one bothered:

***"No one knew what I was thinking, no-one stopped to ask me you know, even when I grew up to come to leave school. No one said to me 'well, what would you like to do Maria'?"***

**Maria Burgwyn  
Woman to Woman**

Moral values people grow up with, such as attitudes to stealing, cleanliness, fighting, or truanting may change over time. Were you 'good' or 'naughty'? Who were your heroines and heroes and in what ways did they impress you?

The Television History Centre provides a range of resources, materials information and assistance to help people record their own history. It distributes Television History Workshop productions on video cassette. Together with the London History Workshop Centre, it has established a Sound and Video Archive of history tapes.

001 THE BRIXTON TAPES. Video 40 mins VHS (1981) Rent £10.00 Buy £25.00

A series of interviews with Brixton residents recorded in the aftermath of the April 1981 disturbances. Contrast with media coverage. Eyewitness accounts; personal & community history; police relations. D 001 P Reprint of ten page article describing how tapes made & summary of content.

C 001TR Transcripts available of programme & complete interviews. P.O.A. C

002 MAKING CARS. Video 180 mins (Nine 20 min sections) VHS (1983) Rent £10.00 user pack £2.50 Buy £45.00 user pack free. A history of car making at the Morris Motors & Pressed Steel factories at Cowley Oxford by the people who make the cars.

**Introduction:** The factory. Making a car today.

**Part One: 1915-1945.** The early day sat Morris Motors & Pressed Steel The work process; conditions & injuries; building union; the search for work; lay-offs short time; women workers; the War.

CARS: Bullnose Oxford. Cowley, Morris Minor **Part Two: 1945-1976.** Post war boom: Piecework; Mergers; Measured Day work; new management systems; British Leyland; shop stewards & union.

[Cars: Morris Minor 1000: the Mini; 1100, Maxi; the Marina.

**Part Three: 1976-1983.** Work process, line working, Labour pool robots; The Edwardes era; unions; women workers; discussion.

Cars: Marina, Princess, Triumph Acclaim, the Maestro.

002P Pamphlet: Making History no 1, The Factory. Suggestions how to do a factory history. Contains examples from Making Cars, cartoons, photos, hints on interviewing, archiving, further reading etc £0.75.

002B Book: Making Cars. 160 pp illustrated. Available 1984 £4.95.

002EX Exhibition: Free Travelling exhibition based on programmes. Send for details.

002TR Transcripts of programmes & complete interviews available. P.O.A

021U User Pack suggestions how to use video, materials, and

pamphlet , in Factory history. (002P) \$2.50.

003 RUMOURS OF THE MINERS FORTNIGHT. Video 40 mins VHS (1983) South Wales miners and their families on their annual holiday in Trecco Bay discuss their history, the General election of 1983, the promised pit closures, the Falklands War and the future and past of South Wales. Unheard voices from today's Britain.

003TR Transcripts of programmes and complete interviews available. P.O.A.

004 WOMAN TO WOMAN.

Conversations about politics and personal change. Women review their experience and the profound affect of becoming involved in both local and national campaigns.

004A HELEN JOHN. Peace Campaigner. 30 mins VHS 1983 Rent £10.00 Buy £25.00

In 1981, Helen John joined the peace march to protest against the planned siting of Cruise missiles in the UK. Unexpectedly she found herself driven to continue the protest at the Greenham base. It has resulted in an enormous upheaval in her personal life. She has served one short prison sentence and is prepared to face much more if that is what it takes to be allowed to say, 'no, I won't condone it; in the protest against a nuclear build-up.

004B MARIA BURGWYN. Tenants Rights Campaigner. 30 mins VHS 1983 Rent £10.00 Buy £25.00

Some years ago in an act of desperation, Maria Burgwyn chained herself to the town hall railings in Pontypridd, to draw attention to the awful conditions on her council estate. Since then, Maria has literally "come alive". She has gone on to help others with their housing campaigns and in May 1983 came very close to being elected to the local council. Her political activity has affected her personal life. She has learned to read and write and has discovered a growing confidence in herself.

004C JEAN BERNARD. Black parents campaigner. 30 mins. VHS 1983. When Jean Bernard arrived in England from Jamaica she was shocked by the unwelcoming and alien climate; the appalling housing conditions she faced and the dirty, low-paid jobs which were the only ones on offer. But she's been fighting back and now she is a qualified social worker with a decent standard of living. However when it came to protecting her children from police harassment and trying to secure for them educational opportunities, she came up against what she calls 'institutional racism' — a whole system geared against them. 004TR Transcripts of programmes and complete interviews available. P.O.A.

004P Pamphlet. Making History 2. Women offers suggestions and hints for recording women's history, ways to start, to organise etc.

50p.

## SOUND & VIDEO ARCHIVE.

Video and sound tapes for viewing by appointment. Open to public.  
Sales for broadcast & educational use. Catalogue available £1.00.

INFORMATION SHEETS on tape recording; video and film; tape  
slide sets etc.

## PAST & FUTURE

**The titles suggested in this and other similar pamphlets are often not readily available in local bookshops. Past & future trading has been set up to make them more easily available. A proportion of any profits made from sales on this list goes towards the Sound and Video Archive of history tapes.**

The following titles are currently available. Please tick the titles and indicate the quantity required (see below for payment details)

\*Deirdre Beddoe, Discovering Women's History, 1983 £3.95

\*David Dymond, Writing Local History: A practical guide  
£3.25

John Richardson, The Local Historian's Encyclopedia £3.50

Don Steel, Discovering Your Family History £3.50

John Berger, Ways of Seeing £2.75

Working Lives, Centreprise Vol1 £1.10 D Vol2 £2.00

### **Autobiographies**

Winifred Foley, A Child in the Forest. Futura £1.50

Doris Knight, Millfields Memories, Centreprise

Alice Linton, Not Expecting Miracles, Centreprise £1.90

Rose Lowe, Daddy Burt's for Dinner, Centreprise

Daisy Noakes, The Town Beehive, Queenspark Books 45p

Daisy Noakes, Faded rainbow, Queenspark Books 35p

Margaret Penn, Young Mrs Burton, Futura £1.95

Louise Shore, Pure Running, Centreprise £1.25  
Lil Smith, The Good Old Bad Old Days, Centreprise 30p

Milly Weir, Shoes were for Sunday, Pan 85p  
Shush Mum's Writing, Bristol Broadslides 50p  
Shush Mum's Writing Again, Bristol Broadslides 65p  
Joyce Crump, The Ups and Downs of Being Born, Vassall  
Neighbourhood Centre 75p  
Dolly Davey. A Sense of Adventure, SE1 History Project 70p

Annie Spike, A Woman's Work. Centerprise 60p  
The Island The Life and Death of an East London Community  
1870-1970. Centerprise £1.20

Carol Adams, Ordinary Lives, Virago £4.50  
Mary Chamberlain, Fenwomen. Routledge £4.50  
Angela Hewins, The Dillen, OUP £2.95  
Stephen Humphries, Hooligans or Rebels, Blackwell £2.50

Jill Liddington and Jill Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us,  
Virago £3.95  
Margaret Llewellyn Davies (ed.), Co-Operative Working  
Women:  
Life as We have Known It, Virago, £3.50  
Margaret Llewellyn Davies (ed.) Maternity: Letters From  
Working Women, Virago £3.50  
Ann Oakley, Housewife, Alien Lane £2.25

Maud Pember Reeves. Round About a Pound a Week, Virago  
£3.50  
Angela Phillips & Jill Rakusen, Our Bodies Ourselves, Penguin  
£3.50

Sheila Rowbotham, Hidden From History: 300 years of women's  
oppression and the fight against it, Pluto £2.95  
Margery Spring Rice, Working Class Wives, Virago £2.95  
Dorothy Thompson (ed.) Over Our Dead Bodies: women against the  
bomb, Virago £2.95  
Anne-Marie Turnball, Women With a Past  
Amrit Wilson, Finding a Voice: Asian Women in Britain, Virago  
£3.50  
Stephen Humphries, The Oral History Handbook, Inter-Action  
£3.95  
Ruth Richardson, Making History): The Factory 75p  
Dutiful Daughters, Penguin £3.25

**Other titles of related interest:**

- Victorian Working Women, Hiley, G.F. £7.95  
Portraits and Photographs of the Lives of Victorian Working Women.  
Married Women's Work, Black, Virago £3.95  
A survey of the working lives of married women carried out in  
1909/10. Women and Work, Lewenhak, Fontana £2.25  
Controversial study of the history of women and work. History on  
Your Doorstep, Ravensdale, BBC £4.50  
From the TV Series on local history.  
Sally Alexander, Women's Work in 19th century London: A study of  
the Years 1820-1850, Journeyman Press 1983. The only book on the  
subject — a model for future work £2.75  
More than a labour of love Luxton (womenspress) £4.95  
Three generations of a women's work in the home.

Fill in below and return to Past & Future Trading, 42  
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cheques payable to Past & Future Trading.**

\*we welcome any suggestions as to how this list could be improved  
and any news of community publication projects.

Education has changed a lot. Or has it? If you have children of your  
own, consider their childhood and education. How similar or  
different is it from your own?  
Memories can be elusive, and a visit to your childhood home and  
schools may bring back the past. Some caretakers or teachers may  
still be in the area.  
Old playmates and school friends can get together and talk things  
over (with a tape running). Old school log-books, and school rolls,  
might still be kept at the school, or at your local records office.  
Local newspapers may have reported prize days, sports days, or the  
visits of celebrities and governors.  
You or your friends may have kept exercise books, school reports or  
old photos. Your local history librarian may guide you to places  
where these or similar things may turn up.

## **ADULT LIFE AND WORK**

**"We had half an hour for our dinner and a ten minute tea break. The rest was work right through. If you wanted to go to the toilet you had to have a pass"**

*Annie Spike  
A Woman's Work*

**What choices were open to you on leaving school? What did you decide to do — or did someone else decide for you?**

For some women becoming adult dates from a particular event like reaching 21, leaving home, a first wage-packet, or having a baby. For others it may date from coming to terms with a grief, surviving the Blitz, or a growing self-confidence.

Most women have been occupied at different times in their lives with paid work inside or outside the home, and with unpaid work, like housework and childrearing inside the home.

Record how you have been occupied (whether paid or unpaid) since you left school; the jobs you've done; the places you've worked in; and the people you've worked with.

Go through each occupation in as much detail as you like, using things like old wage slips, or letters of appointment to jog your memory. You may have a photograph of a works dance or outing, too.

If you can't remember much, try describing how you got to work, what the place looked like, what your office or shop or hospital ward looked like from inside. Was there a desk, or a corner of your own? Where were coats kept? Where were the toilets and who made the tea?

Alternatively go through an average day in your memory, describing what your job entailed, the busy and slack periods, the enjoyment and the tedium. Old work friends may help you remember things, and so may the card they all signed when you left.

Your experiences of the union are also important. As a rule, women have been paid less than men, and many women have felt let down by the lack of support for women within unions. Your experience may be very different, but either way, try to remember what you can. A strike or a go-slow may bring vivid memories back of the work processes and relationships. Try finding company or union records:

***"We get a better class of women than men for the same pay. Women are more patient under routine, they are less likely to combine (form a union) for higher wages and they***

***leave often on marriage when their pay would be increasing"***

***Post Office official, 1870.***

During the two world wars women did jobs that had previously been considered men's. How were women assigned to the work? What was involved, and what was life like at that time? Give as much detail as you can, thinking of the roles women and men had in the workplace and whether they were paid similar rates. Describe the working day, the child care facilities, and the social life; how you managed for clothes, and treats, whether you felt rundown or exhausted, or perhaps enjoyed the pressure?

Television History Centre has published another pamphlet to help factory workers write the history of their working lives. If you've worked in a factory, you might like a copy. Our address is given inside the back cover.

Women also earn as home workers; making things like teddy bears, clothes, matchboxes and paper bags, at home. Employers like it because it keeps their overheads low. Women bear the costs of rent, light, and heating, and are less likely to get together to ask for higher pay. Home working tends to be the worst paid work of all. If you have ever done it, describe why you chose to do it, and how you got the work. The details are important; the employers; rate of pay; fines for mistakes; and the method of delivery and collection.

## **HOUSEWORK**

**Whatever paid work women do, they usually also have responsibility for unpaid domestic work. A recent survey shows that over 90% of housework is still being done by women. Many women do a 'double shift' spending part of the day in paid work, then coming home and cleaning the house, doing the laundry, shopping and cooking for themselves, children and their partners.**

Labour-saving devices introduced in this century like vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and food mixers may have changed the nature of the work but not the sex of the worker. |

Whatever your domestic situation and arrangements, historically it is important how you've organised your home, cleaned your floors and windows, and clothed your children, managed your budget, did the washing, where you shopped and the sort of meals you cooked.

*"Monday was washday, no matter what the weather was like. With five boys and five girls, every day was a washday, but Monday was different. It must have been the original "Day of Steam." Everywhere we looked was water in baths, bowls, copper and puddles on the concrete floor"*

Daisy Noakes

The Town Beehive

Housework is a low status occupation, and it has proved very difficult to investigate its history because no-one has bothered to record these details. If this has been your occupation, for however long, try to record it in as much detail as you can. Compare your own domestic arrangements with your mother's, for example.

Seek out pictures of yourself or your friends doing housework or alternatively take a few snapshots, or do some drawings. Do you look like the women in the adverts? Compare the pictures of kitchens, clothes and menus in women's magazines with your own life.

Or go round your home from room to room (in your memory if it's where you used to live) describing what you'd have to do in each, and how they'd look before and after you'd done them.

Some women have special days set aside for laundry, for shopping, for turning out various rooms. Daily routines would cover getting up, washing and dressing, getting breakfast, and so on through the day.

Talk about how the floor feels when you get out of bed — cold lino or carpet, whether you've got hot running water in your sink, what clothes you'd be putting on, what you'd have for breakfast, and so on.

Don't be shy to talk about domestic details in this way. Things you take for granted now will probably be different in five or ten years time, let alone a hundred.

Describe, draw, or photograph your domestic appliances — everything from the gas stove to the pram. Describe how you managed in the days before disposable nappies, and instant mashed potato. Did you have net curtains to keep clean, and did you whiten your front doorstep?

A fully detailed diary of a day or a week in your own life could be your contribution to the history of women's domestic lives.

## **HOME**

***"You never see a television programme where the woman's house is all in a mess, do you? They are always nice and clean and tidy and everything is going on all nice"***

Linda Peffer

Dutiful Daughters

Whether you're recording details about the place you live in now, or a home you used to live in, think about its location. Describe it in relation to local shops, transport and schools, parks and the nearest hospital. What are the other houses like in the street? Do children play in the road, or do cars speed down it?

If it's a block of flats, describe what the land is like around it, whether there's a lift, cement or carpeted stairs, what your neighbours do to keep their places nice, what they do for a living, who looks after the flats. Don't forget things that you don't like—all the doors being the same colour, or graffiti on the walls, the noise, or the condensation.

Describe your home from outside, as you approach it. And if you've got a garden at the front, what your gate or fence is like, and what route the path takes to the front door.

Maybe you can give a detailed description of what happens when you turn the key in the lock — what your entrance hall or passage is like, where you hang your coat, what the wallpaper's like, any pictures on the walls, what sort of furniture and how it's arranged—around the fire (coal or gas?), or around the television and so on.

Think about lighting and heating, too.

Don't forget the bathroom, the toilet and especially the kitchen. Look at every detail, or remember everything you can: the distinctive smell, the cosy glow; your favourite room, the furniture, and the view from the windows. Recall any funny or sad memories attached to any room.

Can you hear your neighbours through the walls, or are the nearest people three hundreds yards away? Do planes screech overhead, or can you hear the birds singing outside at dawn and dusk? If you have a back garden, describe how it looks, what you've got in it, and what's either side and at the end.

Think about how your feelings about your home are affected by who owns it—whether it belongs to you, to your husband or partner, or to a landlord.

You could do a photographic tour of your home, or a series of drawings. You could use these to illustrate your diary, or to help you start to write a history to accompany them.

If the home you're describing is a childhood one, try to go back and visit, or if it's been knocked down, see if your local library can help you find an old photo of the street. Or try and draw it from memory.

It may help you remember things you'd thought were long forgotten. Another way to record the history of your home is to get other members of the family or friends talking with a tape recorder running. Try the scheme of going round room by room, or get each person to go round it in their memory one at a time. Talk about what rooms looked like before they were redecorated, or before another

child was born, or after the old piano was bought.

Homes have a story of their own, as well as people, and you might remember a lot of your own life story by recording the story of your old homes, or the one you live in now.

Thinking about money and its importance in your life may give insights into other aspects—working life, or relationships. Have you always had enough or never? Have you gone through stages of being broke, and then better off, or have you got poorer as you've got older?

Some women are lucky enough to start off with money from parents or family, but most have only what they've earned themselves. Money—or lack of it—may determine the form of education you received, the man you may have married, the homes you have lived in, and the lives you and your children will have led.

Fear of poverty affects the way many people behave with money. Some remember the fear of the workhouse, and pay insurance all their lives to avoid a pauper's grave. Do you recall anyone in your family or street with this fear?

Try and think particularly about your relationships with other women; and how relationships between parents and children, and husbands and wives, change over time.

Your experiences will vary if your family lived near each other, sweethearts were from the same street, or school, or if you moved a lot, or kept in touch with family in different parts of the country, or perhaps abroad.

Old photos may help you remember faces, and things like birthday cards you may have kept, or old letters, will help you recall old friendships.

Who are your closest relationships with now? How did you meet each one, and for how long has your relationship been going? How have these individuals affected your life?

Think also about relationships with people in shops and in the street — people you may only know by sight, but who you may have nodded 'good morning' to for years.

You could construct a guided tour of all the personalities in your street or neighbourhood, or make a photographic album of their faces, with a short life-story of each. You could do an album also for your family, your school, your social club or a group of friends.

You might like to do drawings instead of photos, and get each individual on tape talking about their own life-histories.

## **POLITICS**

***"I have cut myself off from one way of life in order to preserve the very things I care about, and if I was at home doing all the things I was doing for twenty odd years I wouldn't feel confident, as I do now, that the things I care about will be preserved'."***

**Helen John**

## **Woman to Woman**

Women are active *now* in campaigns for better pay and conditions in their workplaces, in national campaigns against unemployment, to save the National Health Service, and are at the forefront of the peace movement.

Older women are involved in pensioners' campaigns and others are struggling to get better living conditions in rented property, safer roads, and better nursery facilities for their children. Black women are fighting for racial equality.

Women are active in trades unions and local political parties, and in conservation organisations, pressure groups of all kinds, as well as in churches and charities.

Recent campaigns on women's issues include the campaign for safe abortion respectful maternity, care, action against rape and other violence against women, and wages for housework

Women have often brought not only different priorities, but also different tactics to politics. Today, the women's peace movement is continuing a long tradition of expressing political views and aims in sometimes irreverent ways.

**Your views and your politics are historically important.** One of the most far-reaching effects of the women's movement has been to bring home to many that politics isn't confined to Whitehall - that people live their politics in their private lives.

Maria Burgwyn one of the women in our programmes, became a leading Tenants Hignis Campaigner in South Wales because she couldn't afford her heating bills. Then she found her friends couldn't either. So they organised a protest to the council. Eventually the campaign was successful and Maria is now helping other groups to do the same thing:

***"I didn't know nothing about politics. in my life was my home, my children and my family... then I was sort of coming alive — there is another part of life outside the front door"***

**TIME OFF**

“I go to Bingo once or once a week if I want to. You don't just see office cleaners at Bingo everyone goes. I've seen bus drivers there enjoying themselves and having a pint. A bacardi and coke is what I have. I've worked for it.”

Annie Spike

A Woman's Work

**Whatever people do with time off they will usually have vivid memories of it.**

Also there may be lots of photos, as we tend to take them on special occasions like birthdays, outings and parties.

Notice if going out clothes were different from everyday clothes. Look for mementos like programmes, tickets, menus, old records, maps, sewing and knitting patterns or your childhood toys. They will bring back memories.

Leisure activities have their fashions — have D.I.Y. and television replaced rambling, cycling and the cinema? Did people really make their own entertainment in the "old days"? How have women's magazines and novels changed?

How about taking a tape-recorder round with you next time you go to a party or a family reunion? That way you can record your family and friends in the act!

## **AN OVER-ALL VIEW**

*"We were not expecting miracles... all we both wanted was a place of our own where we could find companionship and contentment, and in spite of the war and its enforced separation and before that the slump and unemployment and the usual ups and downs of any marriage, this we achieved for 47 years until John died"*

*Alice union  
Not Expecting Miracles*

**Take a long view back at your own life, and see how one bit has led on to the next.**

This will have been made easier if you've thought about all the previous sections, and all the other ideas they may have brought into your mind while you were reading them. Think about what the key

events have been in your past life which have brought you where you are now-reading this.

Think of important turning points, where your life has taken one course rather than another, like leaving a job to get another, becoming pregnant, making some money, or deciding to write your own history!

Don't forget life-events, like births, death and marriages, sickness or disablement, moving house or job, or becoming redundant. What effects have public events like international crises, elections, or high unemployment had upon your own life? And what about the fulfillment of personal aims, like setting up shop, winnings strike, passing an exam, or finally making it to Rome?

How do you see your own future?