

## **Guide to C1586 The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Retirement Association Oral History Project**

Physiotherapy started in the UK in 1894 as the Society of Trained Masseuses. It now comprises the third largest group of UK health care professionals with 50,000 + members. This project was instigated in 2010 by the then Chief Executive Officer of the CSP, Phil Gray and builds on 16 interviews with physiotherapists archived with the British Library at the Centenary of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy [CSP] in 1994. In 2010 Phil invited the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Retirement Association [CSPRA] to record changes in physiotherapy to bring the history of the profession up-to-date. A shared agreement between the British Library and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Library gives permanent public access to the full collection of 95 digitised recorded interviews. Written track summaries of each interview are also accessible.

Funded by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy Charitable Trust the project was a brilliant opportunity to capture the unique characteristics of the development of the profession, much of which has occurred 'bottom – up' through the endeavours and dedication of individual members working for the best health of their patients. Archived minutes of meetings, statistical surveys, documents, records of techniques, equipment and uniform artefacts can build a history of the profession, but only the stories of individual members' experiences, the voices of the professionals, can capture the actual process of practice to illustrate the response of the profession to never-ending changes in health care services and contexts. Oral history recognises that people experience the same event in different ways. The aim was therefore to obtain many different perspectives. An oral history approach gives a more personal flavour than is possible with a written record. In this project it has enabled different strands of development to be followed from a number of perspectives. The purpose was to learn from people who have experienced development of the profession. A secondary objective was to provide students, trained in academic environments away from health and social care contexts, with a resource from which they could appreciate the continuing overt and subtle challenges to physiotherapy in practice. The large collection provides data which researchers can access freely to focus on aspects of particular interest.

Marian Tidswell and Ann Compton on the CSPRA Committee originally took a lead in creating a robust framework for the project. Risk assessments, professional liability insurance cover and identity badges were provided by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. A snowballing methodology invited retired members to identify potential interviewees. A list of interviewees was developed from CSPRA notices placed in the fortnightly newsletter, Frontline, from 2010 which called for interested members to recommend people or self-nominate to be interviewed. A sub-committee of Barbara Richardson [chair], Alison Leighton and Sue Russell worked together from May 2013, joined by Lynne Caladine in March 2014 to complete the project. 15 retired volunteer members trained in the process of interviewing and use of audio recorders: Lyn Ankcorn, Sue Bond, George Chia, Lynne Caladine, Chris Foster, Lyn Horrocks, Elizabeth Hunter, Gill Jordan, Alison Leighton, Angela Marriage Pat McCoy, Jane Owen, Barbara Richardson, Sue Russell, Judith Saunders. Semi-focused interviews of one to two hours were carried out with 95 interviewees, most of whom are retired. An expertise matrix of place and type of work ensured perspectives from a range of practice areas across the United Kingdom. Interviewees come from different areas of physiotherapy work, background experience, and job descriptions. There is a broad geographical spread including Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The collection also includes some Associates, CSP officers and the interviewers themselves.

Five strands of development were identified: practice; education and research; structure and governance of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy; management and quality assurance; contexts of work outside the National Health Service. The project has provided the opportunity to collect histories of a range of people who both created change and people who worked with change. The resultant interviews capture the processes of change and development from those who qualified in the 1940's to the early 1980's. There are many differing perspectives of a journey from being "hand maidens", to autonomous professionals, to participating members of multidisciplinary teams. In addition to specialist fields of practice, such as musculoskeletal, community and neurology, changes portray the merger of the remedial gymnasts and support workers into the Society, moving to a university degree programme, development of postgraduate education, extending practice, and the Society becoming a trades union. The collection of interviews provides valuable historical evidence of skills of working with patients, qualities of leadership and teamwork and strategies of organisational management and behaviour which have led to the physiotherapy profession remaining a dominant force in health care over many years.

Most of the interviews have followed a format of opening with family background, early education, reasons for becoming a physiotherapist, training memories. The interviewees then go on to talk about their careers chronologically, highlighting points of importance to themselves, often described within the social context of the time. The interviews usually close with some reflection on their career and in many cases comments on physiotherapy past and future. Together, the interviews give an opportunity to fully appreciate the continuing

challenges to the principles and practice of physiotherapy, its delivery and its organisation. They can help students and others understand the realities of being a professional and the role and importance of professionalism in the continuing growth and practice of the physiotherapy profession.

This content guide is intended to augment the track summaries of each interview to facilitate access. It is hoped that the careful indexing of each of the 60-90 minute interviews will provide a guide to specific areas of interest for researchers, students, historians and the general public and provide a wealth of potential sources of learning. The guide is laid out in ten sections which give interviewee reference numbers (***N.B All interviewee reference numbers are prefixed by C1586/***) indicating comments on aspects of change and growth in the profession. It is not all-inclusive but we hope it will encourage exploration of the many fascinating threads of interest within.

**Dr. Lynne Caladine**

**Dr. Barbara Richardson April 2015.**

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## **1. Chartered Society of Physiotherapy [CSP]**

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Elderly care in mental health: 87  
Exercise and problem drinkers: 54  
Genetic Disorders, old hospital: 16  
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Work in old style mental hospital: 16

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Back to Fitness programme: 44  
Cervical and lumbar traction: 88  
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