

## **Stories and Memories of Restalrig, Lochend and Craigentenny**

### ***Final Report Part 1: The Process***

**Origins:** TRACS (Traditional Arts and Culture Scotland) leaders Donald Smith and David Francis had gained Creative Scotland funding for a national People's Parish Project to explore local identities and intangible cultural heritage, inspired by the 18c parish accounts written by local church ministers.

Fieldworker Jan Bee Brown had previously done excellent research and groundwork in Restalrig/Lochend, but lockdown conditions hampered progress. Jan later moved to Orkney. As the pandemic situation eased, Donald followed up with the Ripple Project, based at the Hub, for their potential involvement as 'anchor agency'.

**January 2022:** Carol Stobie, experienced in community development and heritage/oral history, was employed as Creative Fieldworker

**February:** Carol engaged Joan Robertson as Project Assistant. Joan who had worked in the area for over 30 years with young parents' groups at Lochend YWCA, volunteered at Craigentenny Castle in late 80s, worked at Link Up women's support centre until 2017 and was passionate about the hidden history of the area. We planned initial groundwork and held meetings with Ripple staff, gaining introductions to the Lunch Club and Friday Group at the Hub.

**March:** We finalised the Survey Monkey questionnaire and Facebook page to gather stories and memories more widely.

**April:** We continued visits to the Hub, circulated the questionnaire and conducted initial oral history interviews plus outreach/streetwork.

**May:** We held further oral history interviews, research visits/walk-rounds in Restalrig and Lochend, continuing with outreach/streetwork and Survey Monkey circulation/analysis. We engaged social history tour guide Hetty Lancaster for Memory Tours, storytellers Claire and Fergus McNicol for schools workshops, Debs Mullen for leaflet graphics, slideshow and photography.

**June:** The project continued with outreach/streetwork and Survey Monkey circulation/analysis, development of a slideshow, plus evolving plans for events. We engaged researcher Ross Cullen for Digital Archive work.

**July:** There was further work on developing a Digital Archive, continuing with outreach/streetwork and Survey Monkey circulation/analysis.

**August:**

*Sharing event 1. Memory Afternoon Tea:* this was held with the Monday Group at Craigentenny Castle Community Centre (c 20 participants), sharing slides, stories and treats, recording some further responses.

We arranged training from tour guide Hetty Lancaster in order to share the leading of tours.

## **September:**

*Sharing Event 2. Memory Lane Tours (walking and bus) of Restalrig, Lochend and Craigentenny - inviting contributors and participants (15 participants)*

*Sharing Event 3. Memory Afternoon Tea with Friday Group at Hub (c 20 participants)*

We gained Culture Collective grant funding for Training & Development (re tours) and Access (re leaflet).

## **October:**

We held meetings to plan for the Resource Pack including leaflet, Tours Toolkit, slideshow, lists/links for further research.

There were also meetings to explore the Digital Archive and establish how it should be used, where to store etc.

## **November:**

The project report was drafted and more contacts were made regarding the Digital Archive.

Schools workshops were begun at Craigentenny Primary School.

December 2022-January 2023:

We took a Christmas break. Hetty resumed work on text for the leaflet, while Debs developed design plans. Ross worked on finalising the Digital Archive for sharing.

## **Online activities**

*Online Survey:* Carol managed the development and circulation of the Survey Monkey questionnaire, which allowed us to collect from over 50 current or former residents of the area, some as far away as Australia.

*Facebook:* Lost Edinburgh, the Living Memory Association and other Facebook group pages inspired our own Facebook page,

<https://www.facebook.com/RestalrigLochendCraigentennyPeoplesParishProject>

Here, we shared photos, suggested queries and invited engagement with the project. Again, memories were collected from some far-flung locations, and we encouraged the contributors to then complete our Survey Monkey.

*Flyers* were also circulated at the Hub

*Articles/ project updates* were published in two editions of The Speaker, Ripple's community newspaper, and in the Pilmeny Development Project's newsletter, which reaches many residents in our area.

*Visits to Groups* - although our other commitments made it impossible for us to work regularly with any one group, we had a few opportunities to visit, present to and speak with

community groups over the months. These included Craigentiny Castle's Monday Group, The Hub's Friday Group, Lunch Club, Writers' and Walking Groups. These were partly to spread word of the project and partly to invite their own memories, generate interviews and encourage completion of the Survey Monkey wherever possible, which had some success - some were more reluctant than others.

*Oral history interviews:* As we didn't have the capacity or opportunity to work regularly with any of the local groups, we worked on informal networking through our own efforts and those suggested by others, to identify rich sources of oral history such as former postman Adam Turnbull and retired Librarian Norma Armstrong, both in their nineties. We held extensive interviews with them and with a few other locals discovered along the way, which involved many hours of transcribing afterwards. We walked the area with Adam, who was able to describe buildings and businesses formerly sited on all the local streets from the 1930s onwards, the associated sights and smells and other rich reminiscences. These interviews were among the most meaningful activities of all, as we were able to range far and wide over the decades of memories and to discern both these individuals' part in the development of these communities and their thoughts on what had changed for the better and for the worse. The value of being encouraged to remember and reflect on one's life and community, which the oral history process allows, is immense.

### ***Outreach/street survey work - the desire for diversity***

Meanwhile, knowing that digital means would reach only a limited portion of our target groups, Joan spent many days walking through the area and approaching local dog-walkers, shoppers and strollers in the park, capturing their comments wherever possible on a simple mobile voice-recording app. It's clear that many people, though initially unsure, tend to truly appreciate being listened to and sharing freely. How often do we make time to listen to one another without interrupting or imposing our own agenda? There is something extraordinary about bravely approaching people in a public space to strike up conversation, not trying to sell anything or persuade people to commit to anything other than a short chat, possibly never sharing their name if they prefer. Many of those Joan spoke to expressed the desire to feel part of something, and we hope that letting them know about places of gathering such as the Hub may have made an impact on a few.

Joan's perspective is below. (CS)

"Restalrig-Lochend is an area of multiple deprivation, a working-class housing area where many flats became sold off privately. It's also now an area where a lot of people from communities all over the world have come to live. So our original aim was to meet a great range of people to hear about how they felt living in the area was.

"At the Ripple Project in the Community Hub, we met people from all backgrounds, including older people, unemployed people and volunteers trying to help in the cafe as a way of learning English, or getting back on their feet after difficult times.

“We approached many organisations who support people from BME and immigrant communities to connect with their local area, such as the Welcoming, ELREC, Feniks (a Polish organisation), an online language exchange cafe, and Sikh Sanjog.

“I undertook street outreach in Lochend park and nearby, and met people living here from all over Scotland, with some folk whose family had lived in this area for generations, plus local people originally from England, Poland, Ukraine, Algeria, Nigeria, Kenya, Peru, Spain, Italy, India, Afghanistan, America, Rumania, Pakistan, Ireland, Turkey, Canada, Argentina, Venezuela, Netherlands and so on. The area really is a melting pot.

“Despite warm interest on initial contact, only a few were interested in being interviewed or doing the Survey Monkey, yet many indicated they'd be interested in learning more about the area. Many were overworked on shift work, rushing to work, or coming home tired, so understandably had no spare energy to share.

“Nevertheless, despite a commitment to including all communities in this work, I feel our part-time short-term project did not succeed in getting beyond initial contact. I met workers who were so busy that despite telling me a story verbally in the Restalrig Village about discrimination and an attack on Polish workers for merely being Polish and shooed out of a local service, I couldn't get ongoing contact, emails not being responded to.

“To ensure anonymity of the above story, and avoid any repercussions for the individual, I designed the start of a children's story about local birds' treatment of a foreign hard-working bird at Lochend Loch and being told it wasn't welcome. I hope this story will be used and developed by storytellers working with local children in the future.” (JR)

### ***The Resource Pack***

The Digital Resource Pack will be hosted in a number of places and shared as widely as possible, downloadable for use with community and education groups and individuals.

### ***Digital Archive***

Local researcher Ross Cullen has curated our Digital Archive, organising, tagging and making searchable the whole of our collected transcribed material. This will not be part of the Resource Pack but will be available for future research use. We are exploring options with Edinburgh City Libraries and others to investigate where our material might be stored and shared.

### ***Schools Workshops***

These were held at Craigentenny PS in November 2022-January 2023 (*see Resource Pack*), led by storytellers Claire and Fergus McNicol and drawing directly on the collected memories and other findings.

Some of the children's drawings and quotes to emerge from these have been added to the Resource Pack, and could potentially be used to illustrate future educational materials, activities, quizzes etc which we suggest can be derived from the archive.

## **Part 2: Observations**

### **Challenges met and Learning from the Project**

- *Lack of local workspace/correspondence address* limited our profile and opportunity to reach/work with specific groups
- *'Pandemic Burnout' Effect* - exhaustion, illness, with health and economic after-effects among staff, volunteers and participants all limiting participation and repeatedly delaying plans; frequent and unpredictable closures of local meeting places; risk of infection/desire to protect others cared for sometimes limiting our own or others' ability to enter enclosed spaces or group events. Many have lost the habit of going out.

"In a non-pandemic time, with more resources and staff and living in a country with better weather, we might have had a series of outdoor stalls - had there been any toilets nearby - and perhaps recorded people at greater length when meeting them initially. As it was, we were trying to build engagement and if people didn't get back to us, it was hard to pursue this." (JR)

#### *Other barriers to participation:*

- Hesitation, suspicion, wariness over being approached, more important priorities such as work and financial survival. It takes time to build trust, and opportunities were limited.

"Although we tried to ensure people knew we were connected to the Storytelling Centre (better known to most than TRACS), that everything we did was free and that there was no commitment needed, there was still a hesitation to engage or respond to follow-up. I found that even people I had worked with over the years and had seemed likely prospects for involvement were lying low, several with serious health concerns and not keen to mingle unnecessarily. Some people indicated that survival issues were more their focus - making money to pay bills; finding a job after losing work during the pandemic; others on zero hours contracts were needing to focus on being available in case any other work came up. Others said they loved the idea of being involved but had other things they had to sort out first, so life got in the way." (JR)

- *Lack of community spaces* open for coffee/meeting space after 1.30pm or in evenings
- *Bereavements* among workers and volunteers led to cancellation of the initially-planned Memory Meal; also to severe postponement of other events and the creation of legacy resources
- *Poverty issues* - young parents, and others on benefits, might struggle to afford even community café rates for lunches out and were unlikely to use the few venues available for meeting, even if we could pay for their refreshments
- *Privacy and confidentiality* - our hopes of speaking with users of Food Bank were hampered by this issue; about 50% of participants requested anonymity when using

their quotes, fearing risks to their privacy and/or wellbeing - possibly owing to local crime rates

- *People's Parish Project name:* some comments suggested the word 'Parish' in project name and email addresses may have been a barrier to people following up their initial friendly interest, some thinking we were trying to recruit them to a church.

### ***Achievements***

- Achieved conversations and surveys with over 80 participants, from a variety of backgrounds and age groups
- Gathered valuable material on how locals view the area and what makes them feel part of it
- Showed that learning about local history and landmarks is of interest to many and a passion for some
- Adapted to circumstances, met the challenges and reworked our approach as necessary
- Recorded and transcribed substantial oral history interviews with local experts
- Identified and recruited four skilled local enthusiasts to help bring the project forward - tour guide Hetty Lancaster, researcher Ross Cullen, Audio-visual Engineer Neville Blaszk (for our Memory Afternoon Tea at Craigentenny Castle Community Centre) and Graphic Designer/Photographer Debs Mullen. There is excellent scope for their further involvement, should local grant funding be found, and Joan will retain their contacts along with those of others particularly interested in further projects, where consent was given.
- Continuing Professional Development held with fieldworkers, enabling them to lead local tours - this will feed into our Tours Toolkit
- Commissioned, co-planned and held Memory Lane walking and bus tours based on collected memories and stories plus local history research – tour participants' sharing helped build up the final product
- Planned and held Memory Afternoon Teas at Craigentenny Castle and the Hub - as above, attracting some participants who had made great local contributions
- Commissioned and co-created Stories and Memories PowerPoint Slideshow (final notes to be appended, for future Resource Pack)
- Commissioned searchable Digital Archive, attending training on considerations and guidelines to follow
- Commissioned history content and drawing for Walking Map leaflet (in development)
- Commissioned tour guide Hetty Lancaster to create Tours Toolkit
- Commissioned and briefed storytellers Claire and Fergus McNicol to run Schools Workshops (held in late 2022/early 2023)

## ***Recommendations for the Future***

The Resource Pack is to be completed and circulated in the community, and more widely, in Spring 2023.

### ***Further potential in this area***

- There is great enthusiasm from former council leader, former Parish Minister and Ripple Project co-founder/current Chair of Board Ewan Aitken to take this work forward in various ways.
- As lack of toilets and cafes in the area made working in the community difficult, there would need to be negotiations with staff of local public venues, in order to succeed with future tours.
- We see great scope for food-based events (as originally intended with the Memory Meal plan), inviting Feniks, Shakti Multicultural Family Base or other organisations that already have the trust of local people who have more recently moved into the area and who may not have English as their first language. This has worked well in Saughton Park, for example.
- “This is an area for future development. maybe a soup, a pie and a song over lunchtime or a wee play, like the Traverse, or a lunch with a short hello from a community arts organisation, or the chance to make angel wings for the children - possibly a drop-in scone, coffee and chat session.” (JR)
- As people often had children to look after, for future work, we would suggest having more child-friendly events with storytellers etc at the community level events, as people couldn't stop to talk for long if their children got bored.
- We recommend linking in with Friends of Lochend Park and the Secret Garden, as two examples, as a great way of meeting people and sharing ideas – participating in and having a presence at their litter-picks and picnics and Pizza Days, meeting lots of people committed to their area in general.
- Pilgrimages: late in the project, Joan and Debs visited the St Margaret's Rail Yard, as they were fascinated by the history of St Margaret's Well, removed by the railways. Interviewees had mentioned the Clockmill Lane part of the pilgrimage to St Margaret's and St Triduana's Well. Joan found a cairn to show where the well had been originally. There is scope to link to Edinburgh City Council's planned opening of a cycle path based on the old pilgrimage path in the future.
- Joan's interactions in the park with Ukrainian recent refugees were very touching. For the future, interpreting help would be needed and a gentle approach, as the few people Joan did meet were still feeling very dislocated and had very little English.
- Further local history research can be done to extend and add material to the Resource Pack in the future

- Quizzes and other interactive activities can be derived from the material for use within one-off community events or learning events
- Further oral history interviews could be conducted with individuals we did not have time or opportunity to speak to in more depth - if they give permission for Joan to retain their details after the project's conclusion.
- Apps (for example, using GoJauntly) could be developed to enable self-guided walking tours and other activities to encourage a sense of belonging and pride in this remarkable area
- Group tours and other activities can be built around our material, drawing on the Tours Toolkit and the inspiration derived from community-led initiative like [Jane's Walk](#)
- In short, having discovered how many people are interested and enthusiastic about local heritage and stories, locally-based groups and individuals could build on this work and take it much further than was possible for us in the limited time we had. The groundwork has been laid for this place to be rediscovered and celebrated in many ways.

***Carol Stobie and Joan Robertson***

***April 2023***