

In this issue:

- Find out about the MO anniversary celebrations
- Work starts on the Archive's new home
- News about conferences and new projects
- New publications
- A report on the latest MO day diary project

Keep in touch!

Visit: www.massobs.org.uk

Join our email list:

massobs-request@jiscmail.ac.uk

Follow us on Twitter:

<http://twitter.com/MassObsArchive>

Welcome to the Bulletin!

This edition of the Bulletin is loaded with information about how we are marking the 30th anniversary of the Mass Observation Project and the 75th anniversary of the foundation of the original Mass Observation organisation.

Celebrations have already begun. In the article below, you can read about the Mass Observation Anniversary Lecture Series which was launched in October. We are also planning a three day conference in July which will focus on all aspects of Mass Observation. We are hoping that the conference will attract a broad range of delegates. Please ensure that you put the date in your diary!

As well as event planning, we are also busy with the day to day running of the Archive. We are involved in a new JISC funded project to create a new educational resource (page 3) and have been promoting Mass Observation at a recent conference (page 2). Our current panel of Mass Observation writers continue to ensure that everyday life in Britain is recorded for current research and posterity. They have recently been writing about the royal wedding in April. You will find extracts on page 4.

I hope that you find this issue of the Bulletin both informative and enjoyable.

Jessica Scantlebury
Bulletin editor

Celebrating Mass Observation

In 2011 and 2012 the Mass Observation Archive is commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Mass Observation Project (1981 – ongoing) and the 75th anniversary of Mass Observation (started in 1937).

To mark these important events a series of five lectures are planned. The series began on 12th October with a lecture by social historian and best-selling author, Juliet Gardiner.



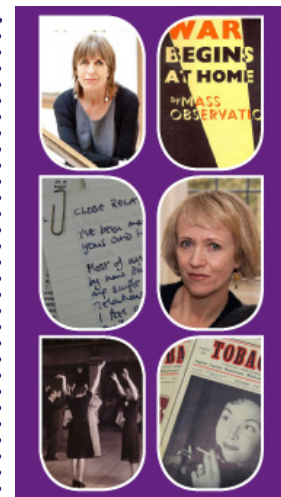
“Mass Observation was embedded in the fabric of the time, part of the prevailing progressive zeitgeist.”

Juliet Gardiner speaking at the first Mass Observation anniversary lecture.

The lecture series was formally opened by the University of Sussex Vice-Chancellor, Professor Michael Farthing and the lecture was chaired by Professor Dorothy Sheridan (former Director of the Mass Observation Archive and current Trustee). Lord Asa Briggs (eminent historian and Patron of the Archive) introduced Juliet and shared his memories of Mass Observation and of working with Tom Harrison when the Archive was first established at Sussex in the 1970s.

“Mass Observation has to be studied not just as a source... but for its own unique history.”

Lord Asa Briggs speaking at the first Mass Observation anniversary lecture.



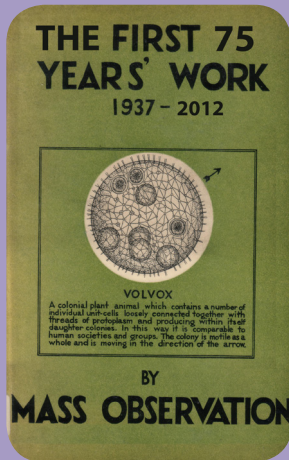
After the introductions, Juliet gave her lecture which was titled 'Writing the mid century with Mass Observation'. In her talk, Juliet set out the origins of the original Mass Observation movement in the 1930s

and explored the intentions of the organisation's founders. A podcast of the lecture can be downloaded from the Mass Observation website: www.massobs.org.uk/podcasts.htm.

The next lecture in the series will be given by Virginia Nicholson at 6.30pm on 8th December 2011 at the University of Sussex. Places are limited. For more details and for news about future lectures in the series visit: www.massobs.org.uk/events.htm.

Mass Observation Anniversaries Conference

Seventy five years of Mass Observation
Thirty years of the Mass Observation Project
University of Sussex
4-6 July 2012



Confirmed Speakers: James Hinton (Warwick), Nick Hubble (Brunel), Laura Marcus (Oxford), Dorothy Sheridan (Sussex)

Call for Papers: We welcome proposals for individual 20 minute papers, as well as submissions of panels.

This conference seeks to reflect all aspects of Mass Observation and invites submissions from across the fields of the humanities, the social sciences and beyond in a spirit of interdisciplinarity. It is expected that papers will cover topics ranging from the early history of the organisation to

contemporary research, drawing on the current Mass Observation Project and the future of Mass Observation.

Proposals (300 words max) and brief biographies should be submitted to moa@sussex.ac.uk by Monday 16th January 2012.

For more information about the conference visit:
<http://www.massobs.org.uk/conference.htm>

The Second World War: Popular Culture and Cultural Memory Conference

In July, the Mass Observation Archive team were pleased to represent the Archive at the *Second World War: Popular Culture and Cultural Memory* conference. This three day conference was hosted by the Centre for Research in Memory, Narrative and Histories at the University of Brighton. The event, which attracted speakers from a wide range of disciplines, explored the popular culture of the Second World War and its cultural legacy in the post-war years.

Mass Observation had a strong presence at the conference, with many speakers referencing Archive material in their papers.

On the first day, Fiona Courage, Curator of the Mass Observation Archive, chaired a thought provoking panel discussion on 'Mass Observation and the Second World War'. The panel speakers included Professor James Hinton (author of *Nine Wartime Lives* and currently working on a history of Mass Observation), Dr Jen Purcell (author of a Mass Observation diary anthology, *Domestic Soldiers*) and Professor Penny Summerfield (author of *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives* and a researcher working on the 2009 MO Project directive on the Second World War). In a separate session, Professor Dorothy Sheridan also gave a paper titled: 'Anticipating History: Historical consciousness and the 'documentary impulse.' Each of these papers highlighted the unique value of Mass Observation for historical research.

On the last day of the conference, Jessica Scantlebury and Kirsty Patrick facilitated a group visit to the Archive. Most of the group had used Mass Observation for their own research, accessing material through Mass Observation Online or through publications. They were fascinated to see material first hand. One delegate was especially moved to see the original diary of a woman from Cornwall which she had been using for her own research whilst working from Australia.

Mass Deduction

The Mass Observation Archive recently acquired a copy of *Punch* magazine from November 1948. The magazine was kindly sent in by a current Mass Observer who had noticed that the publication included an article about Mass Observation. The article, by an anonymous author, appears under the heading, 'Mass Deduction'. It starts:

"Last week I was put into a mild flutter by a visit from a Mass Observer. I had always believed this happened only to other people, like seeing a ghost and winning the football pools. I could not at first believe that I had actually been picked out for Observation."



The author goes on to explain how they are interviewed about their health and their experience of the newly founded NHS. The Mass Observer asks a series of questions, such as: 'Are you pleased with your health?' and 'What ailments have you suffered from recently?' Worried, that their answers to these questions will be a disappointment, the author writes:

"To please her I told her all about my hay-fever...It cheered her up almost as much as a good influenza...She filled a page and a half of foolscap with my hay-fever – how I woke in the morning with that tight feeling across my chest, the number of handkerchiefs I got through a day...I thoroughly enjoyed myself. It was years since I'd had so eager a listener."

This new acquisition has entertained the current MO team and it will be interesting to see if we can locate this report on hay-fever in the Archive!

Life on the Inside

On Thursday 12th May 2011, the Mass Observation Archive reissued a national call for day diaries. The responses provide a fascinating insight into the daily lives of individuals - their thoughts, views and opinions. Over 460 diaries were received from all areas of the UK.

To encourage participation from an underrepresented group, the Archive initiated a project to collect diaries from prisoners.

"Got up at 8.30 and realised I was still in prison. Got dressed (in prison greys) and had a coffee, then went off to "E" wing for English class."
(Male, 48 years old)

"10.45am. Shower...When I returned to my cell, there was a letter from home, which I read several times and which also included four new photographs. I've put them on my picture board."
(Male, 30 years old)

We sent publicity to librarians in prisons across the country as well as to the 'Writers in Prison Network' (WIPN) – an organisation that puts writers and creative artists into prisons to deliver creative learning programmes. We received a positive response and went on to work with thirteen prisons, along with WIPN.

*"11.30: return to my cell for lunch, read a book and rested untill the afternoon...
13.40: went to work in the print shop preparing various folders for departments within the prison establishment...
16.30: Return to my cell to collect my evening meal as well as my friend's, as he is currently ill.
17.15: Banged-up untill 18.10 to eat my meal.
18.10: Opened up for evening association untill 19.30. Complete some writing for other prisoners unable to read and write."*
(Male, 50 years old)

"23.15: Got ready for bed and went to sleep with the radio on...."Someone Like You" by Adele is the last song I remember before nodding off."
(Male, 30 years old)

The diaries received from prisons are a valuable contribution to our 12th May diary collection and will be a useful resource for academic researcher and for outreach activities. They provide a snapshot of daily life from those serving both short and long term sentences in different category prisons and from the staff who work with them.

The diaries are available to view in the Special Collections reading room at the University of Sussex.

The Keep

We are pleased to report that work has started on a new archival resource centre called 'The Keep'. The Keep will store the Mass Observation Archive alongside the archives and historical resources of East Sussex and Brighton and Hove and the Special Collections of the University of Sussex.

The Keep, which is being built near the University of Sussex, is being funded by East Sussex County Council and Brighton & Hove City Council. The project is in partnership with the University of Sussex who will continue to care for the Mass Observation Archive in its new home.

The centre opens to the public in 2013. For more information about The Keep visit: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/thekeep

Observing the 1980s

The University of Sussex has been awarded JISC funding for a project called 'Observing the 1980s'. This project will make selected material collected by Mass Observation during the 1980s, together with oral history interviews from the British Library, available through an Open Educational Resource (OER).

New publications

Several books which make extensive use of the Mass Observation Archive have recently been published:



Published by Blackstaff Press Ltd in April of this year, *The Belfast Blitz: The People's Story* explores the effects of war on civilians. Stephen Douds' book utilises Mass Observation material alongside a vast range of other archival collections to tell the story of the Blitz in Belfast. Covering the short period of peace before the Luftwaffe began bombing in 1941, throughout the darkest days of the Blitz and ending with its aftermath, the book provides a fascinating insight into an often overlooked area of the Second World War.

For those who have enjoyed reading previously published Mass Observation diaries, Virginia Nicholson's *Millions Like Us: Women's Lives in War and Peace 1939-1949* has been published by Penguin. Nicholson uses many Mass Observation diaries alongside a host of other source material to colour her research into the role that women played in the Services and on the Home Front throughout the Second World War and after. Virginia Nicholson will be speaking about her research at the second Mass Observation anniversary lecture on 8th December 2011. See page one of the Bulletin for more details.



Bill Bytheway's *Unmasking Age: The Significance of Age for Social Research* (published by Policy Press) critically examines the various methods and discourses surrounding the ways of revealing the authenticities of ageing. Using Mass Observation Project directive replies alongside a vast range of varying source material, including fiction and social research, Bytheway's study seeks to answer and explore the seemingly simple question 'What is age?'



The Royal Wedding: Day Diary for 29th April 2011

In 1981 the Mass Observation Archive issued a directive asking Mass Observers to keep a day diary on the 29th July, the day of the wedding between Prince Charles and Princess Diana. The directive was one of the very first directives issued by the Archive.

30 years on, and with another royal wedding, current Mass Observers marked the occasion with a day diary.

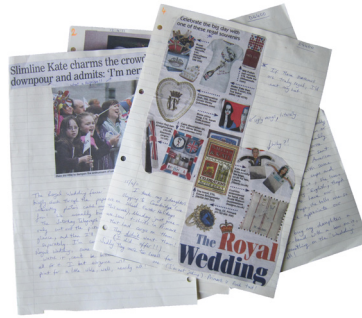
"Woke up at 6am having had a dream about the Royal Wedding. Rather bizarre dream, as there were hardly any guests, none of them were royal, and the bride wore an old 1980s style flowery party frock." (F3137, female, Gloucestershire)

"I asked [Dad] what Kate Whateverhernameis does, whether she was in the RAF also. Dad said "no, she doesn't work." I imagined the Daily Mail being totally confused by her being both a person marrying royalty and (in their language) a lazy dole scrounger." (W4614, female, Coventry)

"The entire ceremony was, in my opinion, perfect...In my household there was an intake of breath when the wedding ring looked as if it was too small, but otherwise I could find no fault." (T3686, male, London)

"We avoided the 10pm news on BBC-1 and found to our disgust that the staple fare of 'Newsnight' was entirely devoted to the royal wedding, so we switched off." (H1541, male, Strathclyde)

"Westminster Abbey looks to be a beautiful place indeed – I wonder if one can go there to look at it or take a tour. These days it probably costs. Just looked it up on line -£16.00 for an adult! SIXTEEN QUID!!!" (O4706, female, West Midlands)



Directive response: D4400

Nothing in
the World But
YOUTH

Material from the Mass Observation Archive is on display in Margate as part of the Turner Contemporary's exhibition *Nothing in the World but Youth*. The exhibition explores how the 'adolescent experience' has been reflected in art and culture since the late nineteenth century. Diaries from the Mass Observation Archive have been selected to reflect the experiences of young people growing up in Britain during the Second World War. The exhibition is open until 8th January 2012. For more details visit: www.turnercontemporary.org

Conferences

3-5 April 2012: Social History Society Annual Conference, University of Brighton www.socialhistory.org.uk

16-19 May 2012: FutureEverything, Manchester 'Mass Observation at 75: Critical Mass' <http://futureeverything.org>

7 April 2012: Recording Leisure Lives Conference, University of Bolton www.bolton.ac.uk/Worktown/News/Articles/April2011-1.aspx

Lives at War



A screenshot from the *Lives at War* game

Lives at War is an interactive computer game aimed at secondary school children learning about life on the Home Front during the Second World War. The game uses wartime material from the Mass Observation Archive, including diaries, restaurant menus and a 'make do and mend' instruction manual.

The content of the game has been developed with a group of students from Longhill secondary school in Brighton. The students worked with older people in the local area who remember the War and its aftermath. The intergenerational group worked together and visited a number of museums and archives including the Mass Observation Archive to research and select material for the game. Their work was supported by filmmaker Annis Joslin, with additional input from teachers, historians and archivists.

Lives at War has been developed in partnership with the Lighthouse, Screen Archive South East, Corporation Pop, and the Mass Observation Archive. The project was funded by the Digital Film Archive Fund and the Heritage Lottery Fund. To play the game visit: <http://www.lives-at-war.org.uk>

The Mass Observation Archive specialises in material about everyday life in Britain. It contains papers generated by the original Mass Observation social research organisation (1937 to early 1960s), and newer material collected continuously since 1981. The Archive is in the care of the University of Sussex and is housed in the Library in the Special Collections department. The Mass Observation Archive is a registered charitable trust (no 270218) and is recognised by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council as having outstanding national and international importance under the Designation Scheme.

The MO Bulletin is edited by Jessica Scantlebury. It is distributed to Mass Observers and members of the Friends of the Archive scheme. Why not join our Friends scheme - not only will you be kept up to date with the latest MO related news, but you will also help to support Mass Observation's activities. See our website for further details: www.massobs.org.uk or email moa@sussex.ac.uk

