Leonard Cheshire Resonate Podcast – Episode 1 Transcript

Start of Transcript

[**Michael Ruddy**] Hello, and welcome to Leonard Cheshire Archive's Resonate Podcast. Thank you for tuning in. We hope you stick with us and enjoy this short series.

[**Michael**] My name is Michael, one of the two presenters of this Podcast. I am the Project Officer for Resonate which officially started in October 2019. In this role I administer the project. This includes recruiting our transcription volunteers and liaising with suppliers.

[**Stephanie Nield**] My Name is Stephanie; I'm the Archivist for Leonard Cheshire and I've been working here for 8 years. I look after and provide access to the archive of Group Captain Lord Leonard Cheshire and his work and I also collect the history of the Charity and I came up with this Project.

[**Stephanie**] Leonard Cheshire has been supporting disabled people around the world for over 70 years. Their mission is to support disabled people to claim their basic rights, access quality learning and work and live as they choose

[**Stephanie**] So, the Sound Collection, where do I start? It's had a rather complex history and it has taken me a while to trace the provenance. The next stage is to represent this in a workable catalogue. But I do actually think I've come up with a plan now which is great.

[**Stephanie**] The collection itself began with the founder Leonard Cheshire. He communicated with his secretaries via tape in the years he was living in a TB Hospital. Then afterwards when he was travelling the world and he also started to record his own speeches and voice notes. When he got married to Lady Sue Ryder, he then recorded her speeches too. Later he branched out into recording radio interviews, especially his Ryder-Cheshire work with Sue Ryder in Australia. But this communication over tape came the other way, he had friends all over the world and they used to communicate with him on tape as well. He was also interested in film and soundtracks, so we have a few soundtracks. Hopefully, we are going to get a bit more detail now we've had the tapes digitised and the volunteers are looking at them, so that will be great.

[**Stephanie**] At some point in the 1970s he gave the tapes to some residents at our first service in Le Court in Hampshire. They started their own sound studio and radio station in the 1970s and 80s and added those recordings to the collection. In the 1990s the tapes were moved to the Leonard Cheshire Archive which had been set up by the founder. After he died in 1992 the then Archivist ran an oral history project collecting memories of him and we have those cassette tapes. Further sound recordings of events and interviews have been added. There are now 544 items in the collection, that’s at the last count though I do actually think there is probably more. We are digitising 256 of these as part of our Resonate Project

[**Stephanie**] Resonate is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Foyle Foundation. It's a digitisation and digital volunteering project. The first tasks have been to set-up the volunteering element. That's working out how to recruit volunteers, get training designed and made for people to do online. We are quite lucky that we are a Charity that has a lot of volunteers so we already had a system that we could plug into for recruitment online, which has been great. We also promoted it on the ARCHIVES-NRA Listserv and on Twitter and we have had a great response.

[**Stephanie**]We have already tested some simple ideas with a previous project that was also funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund called Rewind, so we decided to do the same here. We trialled a free transcription software before as well, but nobody really took it up and we were not able to train remotely so we decided to keep it simple again because we knew it had worked before. All you need is access to a PC and a word processing software and media player and you’re good to go.

[**Stephanie**] We share documentation and files using a free file sharing software like Dropbox. We have given people advice on free transcription software there is to use out there, and I have actually heard back from one volunteer saying they are going to give it a go. So, I guess watch this space to see how successful that is. It would be great if someone gave it a go, but I've done a couple of transcriptions and I've just been using a media player and Word, though maybe I am a bit old school.

[**Stephanie**] All the sound recordings we have are on obsolete formats, some over 60 years old. We had a scoping survey done thanks to an Archives Revealed Scoping Grant which gave us advice. This scoping report was really useful for our funding bid. We had applied before and got rejected and I believe having this report to back up our reapplication swung it in our favour. We have included in the project budget money to get the tapes digitised and also turned into subtitled films as accessibility is very important to us.

[**Stephanie**] Finally the podcasts. When I was designing the project, I thought it would be good to have a learning opportunity for people. Podcasting seems to be having a moment, so it seemed you know why not get people to learn about podcasting. We are planning 3 podcasts one by project staff, which is me and you Michael and 2 led by volunteers. And I am really interested to hear the volunteer's opinions and thoughts about the process or what they have listened to, good and bad. The podcasts are going on YouTube mainly because it’s hard to find an accessible free platform for podcasting. And also, we know that YouTube is still really popular with online audiences and we already have content on there from the Archive. Training is being designed with a contractor with expertise in this type of thing and we are making subtitled films for YouTube both the training films and the edited sound clips. It will be really interesting to see how all this pans out

[**Michael**] Resonate is an on-going project and is aiming to finish in February 2021. Currently the project is in the transcription phase; volunteers have been trained, sent recordings and been asked to transcribe them. The months leading up to the transcription phase were mainly focused on project admin. Between October 2019 to February this year, we were able to select a digitalisation supplier, an evaluation consultant and a podcast trainer. During this time, we also recruited our first group of volunteers. This process we managed to administer through Leonard Cheshire’s volunteering portal.

[**Michael**] During this transcription phase of the project we will also be providing podcast training to our volunteers through the form of tutorial videos and email support. As Stephanie has mentioned, we want our volunteers to think critically about what they are transcribing. Particularly, we have asked our volunteers to take clips from any recording and describe why they found the clip interesting.

[**Michael**] The final phase of the project will take the form of an exhibition which is currently planned for February 2021 in a venue in Derbyshire, close to the Archive. Although some question marks have been raised due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, we have a contingency to create a digital exhibition if necessary.

[**Michael**] I just wanted to add that we are recruiting volunteers in phases and have so far received a massive response to all our adverts. We welcome anyone to volunteer, not necessarily just from the heritage sector. We currently have a waiting list for applicants which you can be added to by contacting our email archivecentre@leonardcheshire.org.

[**Michael**] So why should you spend your valuable time listening to the two of us? Especially when there is now over 800,000 active podcasts to choose from. Well let me explain the uniqueness of this Podcast. This Podcast, except for this first episode, will be volunteer led, therefore allowing a co-creation element for our volunteers. This co-creation will allow them to provide their own interpretation of the sound collection, rather than having us two pick our favourite bits because of our own previous experience with the collection. We want our volunteers to think critically about these recordings What does this speech, interview, even piece of music mean to them? Does it reflect contemporary issues today? Or does it represent something personal in their own lives? Most importantly, our volunteers will be able to express how these recordings made them feel. Our volunteers will amplify how important archives are and why access to them should always be broadened.

**[Michael]** To summarise, we have little control over the content of this Podcast.

[**Michael**] Furthermore, the digitalised sound recordings themselves will be played in this podcast, alongside volunteer contributions. This means all listeners will have access to original recordings of discussions relating to a wide range of themes, which still have relevance today. These themes surround disability rights, the RAF in wartime and even the morality of war.

[**Stephanie**] I am hoping our Podcast will give other archives some inspiration. I mean our set-up is pretty simple, it's just me most of the time and a member of project staff if we have got a project on. But if not it's just me managing the outputs of the project, you know, it does not just end when the project ends.

[**Stephanie**] We have got no complicated expensive technology to commit to or understand so perhaps it is less intimidating for participants and also, I count myself in this!

[**Stephanie**] Sustainability is a big issue and one that funders will ask about; it's definitely played a big factor in some of our decisions. I have been able to use the expertise of colleagues to get funding however this has meant a lot of work. I would advise to definitely set aside time to do an application, do not do it a day before the deadline. You want to take some time to make sure that what you are committing yourself to is realistic. But to also contact supporters for some written support that is always great.

[**Stephanie**] Designing budgets can be a challenge, I do it by contacting people for quotes and I make it clear that it is for a funding budget. That will help you once time comes to tender as you will already know who is out there.

[**Stephanie**] We have used networks already available to us for volunteers. We have not forgotten staff, service users and current volunteers who are our biggest audience. We get some engagement from Twitter but the best by far is the Jisc ARCHIVES-NRA Listserv, which has phenomenal reach. Within a few minutes of posting we got expressions of interest, our record is 20 in 15 minutes, it was a bit overwhelming! We have an online recruitment and training portal as a Charity that we can use which has definitely made things easier. I would think this would be a challenge if you work in an archive or heritage setting where volunteering is not your everyday way of working. I suggest you get in contact with your local CVS - Council for Voluntary Service - for help. We have got an office in Swadlincote, they are very helpful. They are used to advising people on charity work and volunteering. There is also a free volunteering portal called 'Do it' where you can advertise volunteering opportunities, that has got quite good local reach. And we have also used the University of Leicester's Museum Jobs Desk because they also advertise volunteering opportunities.

[**Stephanie**] We will learn some things as we go along, and COVID-19 is going to be a challenge. We have had a lot of applications because people are looking for things to do from home which is great. But that does not necessarily mean us having a lot of active volunteers. I know I learned from our past project that when people come to you to volunteer, they usually have a period of time in mind and the recruitment process takes time. So, it could be that you actually miss the boat with some people because the time they have got in mind to volunteer with you has been and gone. So, I would definitely factor that into the way you plan the volunteer recruitment Maybe plan to have 3 or 4 rounds of recruitment to replace people who have left. And also, do not take it personally when people leave either, you know they are volunteering their time and people are busy, that is just want happens. But you know people want to have a good quality volunteering experience So definitely take the time to do a proper induction.

[**Stephanie**] I hope the Podcast will also shed some light on the history of the Charity and the people who have contributed over the years. A lot of the recordings are of the Founder's own talks and they really show us the themes he was concerned with throughout his life. The Charity has been around since 1948 and has been involved with a lot of social change and continues to be so. The recordings show changes in language describing disabled people and also changes in the aspirations of disabled people. They show how the Charity has contributed to the championing of basic human rights for disabled people and their role in challenging discrimination.

[**Stephanie**] Because part of the collection is also the Founder - Leonard Cheshire's personal collection. We have quite a lot of tapes about his inner life; he was a very devout Christian, so we have sermons, we also have some interviews that he made with people he knew from the Second World War. There are a couple of contributions from members of his family, we have got interviews with people who knew him. They were done after died in 1992 and that was a seminal for the Charity as well because he had very much been the figurehead up to that point. We have some oral histories with residents and service users, which are quite interesting. They talk about their lives and what life is like living in a care home or in a communal way. So, I am hoping that the Podcast will show some of this rich history and show how the Charity has grown and changed and how society has grown and changed.

[**Stephanie**] We decided to approach the Podcasts themselves in a prospective way, reporting on the project as it develops. I am hoping the volunteers will pick up some aspects we have not thought of as well. I think the collection is so eclectic it is difficult to have the Podcast on any one subject. And it would be good to have discussion over the actual work of doing a project such as this, not just saying here is the finished project, but share what it takes to get here.

[**Michael**] It is also important to say that many of these recordings have not been listened to before. Through this Podcast, we will be exploring the recordings for the first time with you. Although, I cannot promise there will be any huge revelations that come to light, I think it is exciting that us, the volunteers and you, the listeners are the first to hear these recordings though since we do not know what the content will be, we can't!

[**Michael**]Thank you so much for listening to this first Podcast for the Resonate Project. We hope we have given you the incentive to keep listening. Most podcasts at this point will give a teaser for the next episode, though since we do not know what the content will be, we can't! But I would say that is another reason to keep listening.

[**Michael**] In the meantime, you can explore the Archive's digitised film and oral history collections on our website, which is rewind.leonardcheshire.org. We also have a Twitter page @archiveslc, now this will be the place to hear about updates of the project and when our next episode will be released. For now, it goodbye from Steph and myself.

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