THEIR FINEST HOUR
DIGITAL COLLECTION DAY TRAINING PACK

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UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

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FACULTY OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Introduction

This guide will introduce you to the key elements of organising and planning a 'Digital Collection Day'. **Section 1** outlines the process involved in planning and running your own Digital Collection Day, while **section 2** contains the complete set of forms and promotional materials that you will need when running your event.

The *Their Finest Hour* team are always on hand to assist you at any stage of the process. You will find all the guidance, documents and templates that you will need to organise and deliver a Digital Collection Day on the 'Toolkit' page of our website. For further support and advice, email us at theirfinesthour@ell.ox.ac.uk.

Section 1: Digital Collection Days

Background

Their Finest Hour is a University of Oxford project launched in July 2022 and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It aims to empower local communities to digitally preserve the stories and objects of the Second World War before they are lost to posterity.

We do this by helping local communities organise and run their own **Digital Collection Days**. A Digital Collection Day involves members of the public bringing along their Second World War-related stories or objects to be digitised (i.e. photographed) and uploaded to the *Their Finest Hour* online database by volunteers.

Anyone can organise and run a Digital Collection Day. All you need is a venue, some equipment, and a group of volunteers. The number of volunteers and the size of the venue depend on the format of the event, the expected number of visitors, and the available resources.

The project team can support you in several ways. We can provide you with free training, advice and guidance on how to run a Digital Collection Day. We may also be able to offer you some financial support. Please contact theirfinesthour@ell.ox.ac.uk for further details.

Planning the event

The aim of the Digital Collection Day is to collect material held by the public, digitise it, and upload it to the *Their Finest Hour* online database. There are **four stages** involved in this process: **Welcome**; **Interview**; **Digitisation**; **Upload**.

At a typical Digital Collection Day:
1. Visitors arrive and proceed to the **Welcome** Desk;
2. The visitors are taken to the **Interview** Area and interviewed by volunteers;
3. The objects are taken to the **Digitisation** Area, digitised, and returned to the visitors;
4. After the event, volunteers edit and **Upload** the story and object information to the *Their Finest Hour* database.
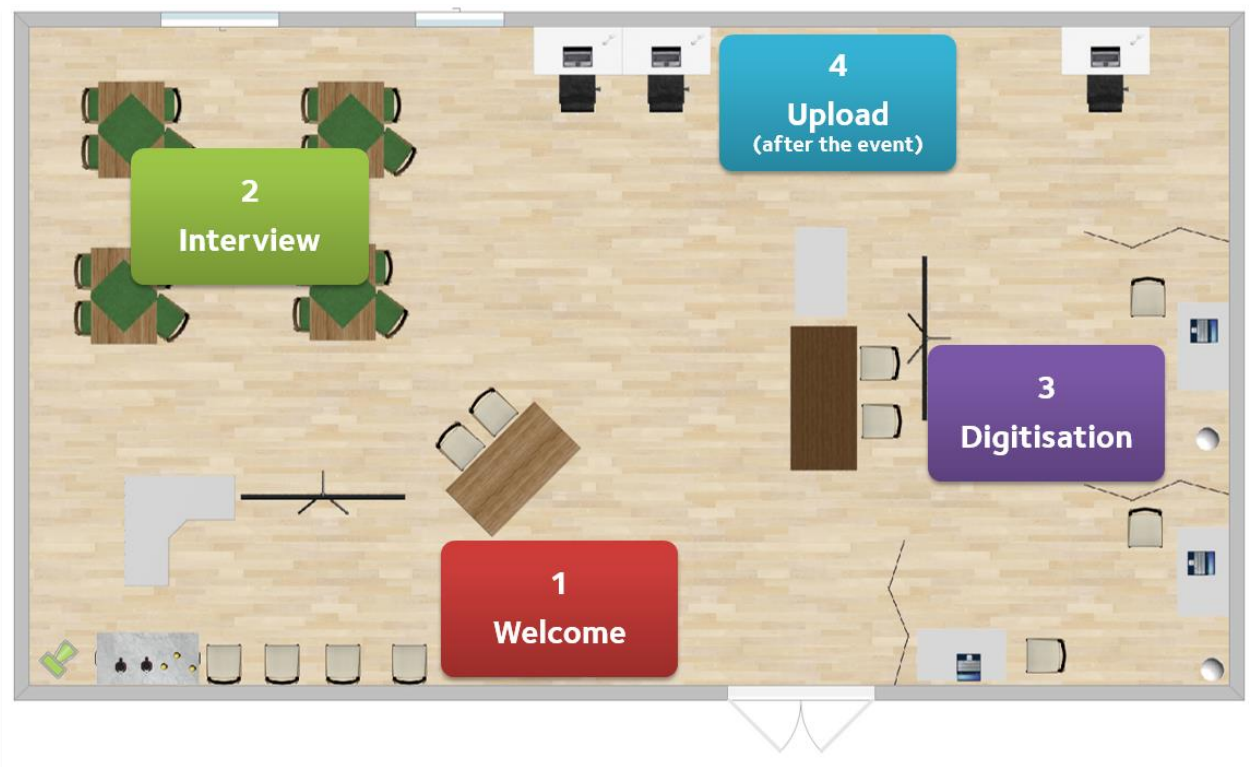
Choosing a venue

There are several things to consider when choosing the venue:

- Is it in an **easily accessible and convenient** location with parking facilities and good public transport links? It must also be accessible by people with reduced mobility.
- Is it **close to other facilities** such as a high street or a coffee shop? Another way of attracting participants is to hold the event in a venue that is normally closed to the public, such as a restricted area of a museum.
- Is it **big enough** for the three main areas (**Welcome**, **Interview**, **Digitisation**) and any staff, visitors, and equipment? Is there room for people to wait and something for them to do while waiting?
- Are you able to **access it before the event** to set up the equipment and, time permitting, to do a test run of the process?
- Is it **technology friendly?** The venue should have power sockets and an internet connection, and there should be sufficient lighting (natural or artificial). Although you can run an event without an internet connection, it may be useful if you wish to upload or check online resources. The venue may also need to perform a safety check on your electrical equipment.
- Is it **cheap to hire?**

You should also ask the venue to confirm the following:

- Availability of venue staff on the day (do they need to give you access to the building or set up any equipment?).
- Arrangements for car parking on the day (staff and visitors).
- Access to refreshments (staff and visitors).
- Safety regulations (is there a limit for how many people can be in one room? Do you need first aid staff on hand?).

Choosing a date and time

Think about when people are **most likely to be able to attend** and **potential obstacles** that may prevent them from attending on certain dates or at certain times.

Some timing considerations include:

- School and public holidays (half terms; bank holidays; time of year)
- Working week (lunch hours; weekends; rush hour; cost and availability of public transport and parking)
- Availability of venue (opening hours).

You may want to hold your event – or events, if you would prefer to split it over two days – after building up momentum for public interest in the subject. For example, you could link your event to a series of lectures or an exhibition on local or family history, or a key anniversary (e.g. 2022-24 represents a series of 80th anniversaries for the war, plus there are also national events such as Remembrance Day).

Soliciting volunteers

You will need a group of volunteers to interact with the public, record and digitise stories and objects, and upload items to the online database. You also need volunteers to make sure the event runs smoothly and to solve any problems that may arise.

The ideal number of volunteers depends on the size and set-up of your event and the number of people that you expect to attend. At a minimum, though, we would advise you to recruit a co-ordinator to oversee the event plus two people for the Welcome stage, two people for the Digitisation stage, and two people per interview station.

We are committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to take part in and benefit from *Their Finest Hour*. People who have a 'protected characteristic' under the Equality Act (e.g. age, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation) experience barriers to being involved in heritage projects, and are generally under-represented as visitors, participants, and volunteers. We encourage you, therefore, to embed inclusion into your event by recruiting a diverse range of volunteers to be representative of your local community.

Equipment

What equipment you need depends on how you run the event. Previous Digital Collection Day organisers have made use of the following equipment:

- **A computer** to access online resources and to upload stories and images to the online database (this requires a **reliable internet connection**)
- **Stationery** such as pens, paper, staplers, raffle tickets
- **Audio recorders**
- **Furniture** such as tables and chairs
- **A projector** (optional) to display slide show, films or other promotional material
- **Second World War-related books** (optional) for reference purposes
- **Activities for children** to keep them entertained during the event

Note: this list does not include the equipment required for the Digitisation process (see below).

Promoting the event

Promoting your event is vital if you want your Digital Collection Day to be a success. Think about what message you want to convey and what would be the most useful means of connecting with your target audience. Remember, the project team is always on hand to help spread the word about your event by posting out details on our communication channels, providing you with template posters and flyers, and so on.

- Distribute **posters and leaflets** in museums, libraries, cafes, coffee shops, newsagents, and community centres.
- Use **social media platforms** such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to attract the attention of schools and universities, researchers, students, libraries, and community groups.

- **Send emails** to libraries, community groups, parents (if a school-based event), family history groups, World War Two organisations and charities.
- Get in touch with **local newspapers and radio and television stations** to see if they would be interested in covering and promoting your event.

We encourage you to make inclusion a key part of planning and promoting your event. Here are some tips for taking an inclusive approach:

- Start by being reflective: **who you are *not* talking to?** Which people and communities are missing from your audiences?
- Understand the **demographics of the area** in which you plan to hold your event
- Reach out to **community representatives and groups** and ask someone with **knowledge of a particular community** to work with you and promote your event
- Make sure your **publicity appeals to the communities** that you want to attract
- Ensure that publicity is **in places or media used by the people you are trying to reach**
- Consider publicising your event in **community languages**
- Include **information about disability access** and any other adaptations on your publicity

Further guidance on inclusion can be found [here](#).

Running the event

Stage 1 – Welcome

The Welcome Desk is the first thing that visitors see when they arrive at the event. It is where visitors are made to feel welcome and told about the aims of the event.

Tasks for Welcome Desk volunteers:

1. Welcome visitors, introduce them to the event and project, and explain the Digital Collection Day process.
2. Ensure that the **Data Protection Poster** and **Participant Information Pack**, which include key information about the project, are made available to visitors or are on display.
3. Keep track of visitors who wish to share their story and/or objects using the **Welcome Desk Tracking Form**. Assign each visitor with a unique ID number.

ID Numbers

To make it easier to identify, sort and upload all the information collected at a collection event, each person who contributes a story should have unique identification (ID) number assigned to them.

Each ID number will consist of a three-letter abbreviation of the location of the event (e.g. BRA for Bradford, LEI for Leicester) and a three-digit number indicating when the person arrived (e.g. 001, 002). For example, at the Bradford event, BRA001 would be given to the first contributor, BRA002 to the second, and so on. The three-letter abbreviation to denote location **must be agreed with the project team in advance of your event** to avoid different events having the same code.

ID numbers should be **written on all forms** that have a box saying, 'ID number', as well as any extra pieces of paper used.

Please note that the number should be given to a contributor group (e.g. if two people arrive from the same family but are contributing one set of stories or objects, then they would only be given one ID number).

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4. Write the ID number on the following forms and hand them to the visitor:

- **Consent and Permissions:** visitors must <u>read and sign</u> this form if they wish to take part. The form confirms, among other things, that visitors are happy for representatives of the project to share the material that they have brought in.
- **Demographic Survey:** ask visitors to fill this out for everyone in their group (this is not mandatory).
- **Story Form:** this is where details of the visitor's story and objects will be recorded at the next stage.
- **Visitor Feedback Form:** visitors can fill this in to tell us what they think about the event.

5. Pair contributors with volunteers in the Interview Area.
6. Guide contributors to the Interview Area to be interviewed.

Forms required on the Welcome Desk:

- Welcome Desk Tracking Form
- Participant Information Pack
- Data Protection Poster
- Consent and Permissions Form
- Demographic Survey
- Story Form
- Visitor Feedback Form
- OPTIONAL: Welcome Desk Quick Guide
- OPTIONAL: Photography Recording Notice

Stage 2 – Interview

The Interview Area is where volunteers talk to visitors about their story and objects and record the information on a **Story Form** and **Objects List**.

Interviewers assign raffle ticket numbers to objects or group of similar objects to ensure that they remain with the corresponding stories throughout the process (see images below). We recommend that a standard interview should take around 20-30 minutes. We also recommend that one volunteer take notes while another asks the questions.

When the interviewing process is complete, interviewers place all the forms, objects and raffle tickets in a plastic wallet or box/tray and take it, along with the contributor, to the Digitisation Area.

Tasks for Interview Area volunteers:

1. Ensure that the visitors have completed the **Consent and Permissions** and **(ideally) the Demographic Survey** forms that they were given at the Welcome Desk.
2. Ask visitors to share details about their story and/or objects. Record the details on the **Story Form.**
3. If possible, audio record the interview. At the beginning of each recording, state the name of the interviewer and interviewee, and the location and date of the event. For guidance on audio recording, see our Audio Recording guide on the ['Toolkit'](#) page of our website.
4. Assign raffle ticket numbers to individual objects or groups of similar objects.
5. Give one part of the ticket to the contributor and keep the other part of the ticket with the object.
6. Record information about the object(s) on the **Objects List.**
7. Ask visitors if they would mind answering the five 'Further Questions' on the back of the **Story Form**. If they agree, ask the five questions and record their answers (keep succinct).
8. Place all forms, raffle tickets and objects in a plastic wallet or another appropriate container (see images below).
9. Carry the plastic wallet and accompany the volunteer to the Digitisation Area.

10. You may also identify a contributor who has an extensive story to tell. If so, see guidance below under 'Longer Interviews'.

Note: A story can have more than one object/ticket number attached. For example, a story about a soldier could be attached to a photograph (ticket #1), a letter (ticket #2) and a set of medals (ticket #3).

Forms required on the Interview desks:

- Story Form
- Objects List
- OPTIONAL: Interviewer Quick Guide (additional guidance for volunteers)

Equipment required:

- Pens
- Plastic wallets or similar containers (e.g. trays, folders) to carry forms and objects to Digitisation area
- Raffle tickets
- Audio recorders (if possible) – see our Audio Recording guide for guidance.
- OPTIONAL: computers with internet connection
- OPTIONAL: reference material (books, databases and project information)

Longer interviews

The interview may be your only opportunity to collect information about the story and object(s), so try and extract as much information as possible from the visitor. At the same time, this is an opportunity for the visitor to share something that may be personal and important to them, so be sensitive when conducting the interview. Most interviews should last around 20 minutes, but can go on for longer if the pace of the collection day allows.

However, if you identify a potentially rich interview that could last for over an hour, ask the visitor if they would be happy to discuss their story/objects further (but still complete the Story Form for now). If they agree, check the 'Longer Interview?' box on the Story Form and conduct a longer, free-form interview on the same day at a separate desk or after the event at an agreed time.

Please record (audio or video) all longer interviews. Guidance on audio recording and conducting longer interviews can be found on the 'Toolkit' page of our website.
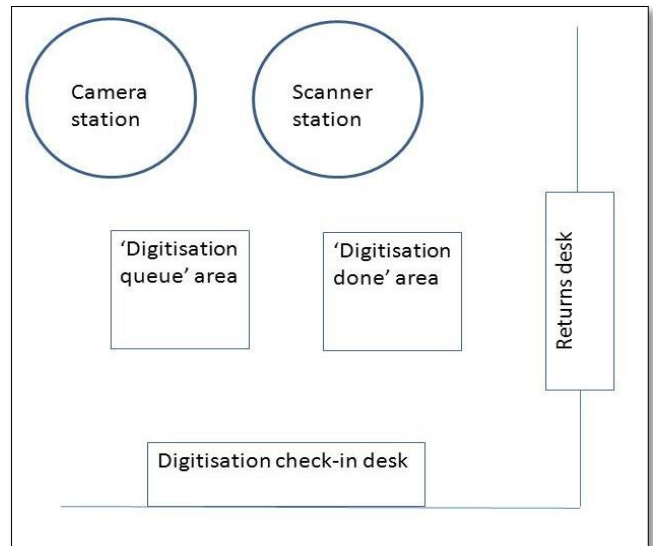
Stage 3 - Digitisation

The Digitisation Area is where objects are collected after the interview stage, scanned or photographed ('digitised'), and returned to their owner.

It is advised that one volunteer (a co-ordinator) should manage the Digitisation check-in desk and keep track of all incoming and outgoing objects while other volunteers ('crew members') focus on operating the camera equipment.

Note: All volunteers should ensure that objects are kept safe and away from public access.

Tasks for the Digitisation Area volunteers:

1. Co-ordinator: receive objects and associated forms from interviewers and log the details on the **Check In/Check Out List.**
2. Co-ordinator: place all objects and forms relating to an individual in a single box/plastic folder and place it in the 'digitisation queue' area;
3. Crew members: photograph objects (making sure to take one photograph/scan at the beginning of both the object(s) and the raffle ticket)
4. Crew members: Place objects and associated forms in the 'digitisation completed' area;
5. Co-ordinator: Return objects in the 'digitisation completed' area to their owners.

Forms required:

- Digitisation Check In/Check Out List

# Photography Quick Guide (additional guidance for volunteers)

For further guidance on photography, see the Photography guide on the ['Toolkit'](#) page of our website.

Equipment/conditions required:

- Digital camera(s) – these could just be good phone cameras but Digital SLRs are better;
- Tripods or camera stands;
- Scanner(s) attached to computer(s) with scanning software [optional – scanners can be quite slow so do not worry if you do not have access to one];
- Tray/plastic folders
- Good lighting;
- Photography accessories as appropriate: e.g. memory cards, card reader, spare batteries, battery charger, spare light bulbs, copy-stands/tripods, equipment for displaying and holding objects, light cubes, reflectors, backdrops;
- Back-up solution for captured images (a variety of ways of doing this – card-reader connected to a computer, possibly using an external hard drive or USB stick also, cable connector for a Phone to computer, access to 'cloud' storage service such as Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive). In summary, make sure at regular intervals throughout the day you have two copies of every image taken and know where they are.

Tips for photographers and scanners:

- **IMPORTANT**: always take one picture/scan of the object/group of objects alongside its associated raffle ticket. If this is not done, it will be difficult for volunteers to know which objects relate to which stories during the upload process. For example:
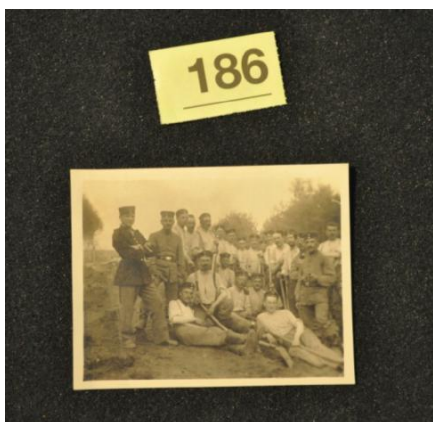
- Photograph objects from all angles and capture both the front and the back of two-sided objects such as postcards;
- Reduce blank space around the objects by moving the camera or using the zoom function. This will save time during the editing phase.

Stage 4 – Upload

Running your event is a major achievement, but there is still work to do after the event. You need to make sure that you have the volunteers and equipment required to carry out these tasks.

Detailed upload instructions can be found on the 'Toolkit' page of our website. You will need to:

1. Upload photos of the objects and all information on the **Story Forms** (including answers to the five 'Further Questions') to the Their Finest Hour Online Archive
2. IF APPLICABLE: Upload audio recordings of interviews and longer interviews
3. Upload information on the **Demographic Survey** forms

All stories and photos will go live on our website in June 2024.

After the event

1. Scan and email (or post) all paper forms to the project team (theirfinesthour@ell.ox.ac.uk or Dr Stuart Lee, 13 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 6NN). Please destroy all paper copies after emailing them.
2. You may receive enquiries after the event, perhaps from someone who could not attend but who wants to contribute to the project in some way. If you do not feel that you can answer these queries, please feel free to forward them to the *Their Finest Hour* team at theirfinesthour@ell.ox.ac.uk.
3. We welcome feedback on our project and encourage you to complete and send us (electronically or by post) the **Volunteer Feedback Form**.

Document checklist

Stage	Document	Task	Complete?
Pre-event	Volunteer Consent and Permissions Form	**MANDATORY**: All volunteers must complete and sign.	
Pre-event	Volunteer Information Sheet	For reference.	
Pre-event	Privacy Policy	For reference.	
Welcome	Welcome Desk Tracking Form	To keep track of contributors	
Welcome	Participant Information Pack	For reference. Make available to contributors.	
Welcome	Data Protection Poster	For reference. Make available to contributors.	
Welcome	Consent and Permissions Form	**MANDATORY**: All contributors must complete and sign.	
Welcome	Demographic Survey	OPTIONAL: Contributors can complete and sign.	
Welcome	Visitor Feedback Form	OPTIONAL: Contributors can complete and sign.	
Interview	Story Form (and Further Questions)	**MANDATORY**: Record information about story and object(s). Record answers to 'Further Questions'.	
Interview	Objects List	**MANDATORY**: Record information object(s).	
Digitisation	Digitisation Check In/Check Out List	To keep track of objects through the digitisation process	
Post-event	Volunteer Feedback Form	OPTIONAL: Volunteers can complete and sign	
Additional	Welcome Desk Quick Guide		
Additional	Interviewer Quick Guide		
Additional	Digitisation Quick Guide		
Additional	Photography Recording Notice		
Additional	Poster/leaflet		
Additional	Risk Assessment		