

## **Memory Bank – Unlocking Memories Through Archive Film**

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“I used to have a swimming costume like that,” says one woman, “So did I,” responds another, “do you remember how stretchy they were when they were wet and showed everything if you weren’t careful?”

Such responses to archive film have led to the establishment of Memory Bank, <http://www.memory-bank.org/> a complete, easy to use DVD resource pack and website created by the Yorkshire Film Archive (YFA) <http://yorkshirefilmarchive.com/> for use in reminiscence therapy and life story work. At its heart are archive films, each lasting 3-4 minutes and all carefully selected by the YFA. There are currently six themes available: Holidays; Schooldays; Working Life; Sporting Fun; Domestic Life; and Fêtes, Fairs & Fireworks. Each Memory Bank pack contains a DVD with six films relating to its theme.

The innovative idea of Sue Howard, Director of YFA, Memory Bank has seen miles of footage of amateur film and home movies considered for inclusion. During development, the packs were trialled in a hospice, residential care settings and dementia cafes. The trials were independently evaluated by the Dementia Studies Group within the School of Health Studies, University of Bradford and found to have “encouraged people with dementia to engage in meaningful communication and interaction, resulting in a tangible effect on their wellbeing and mood.” As a member of the Memory Bank Advisory Panel, I have been privileged to see the unwieldy prototypes develop into a colourful series of neat, professional A5 size packs.

Within each resource pack, accompanying the DVD, there is a rich supply of supporting material, including background information on the life and times covered by the films, suggestions for activities and many ideas for things to talk about. Ideas for a memory box to support sessions seem particularly useful. All the information is commendably concise and each pack includes guidance on the preparation that needs putting in place before running a session. The Yorkshire Film Archive also offers training for those wanting to ensure they are getting the very best from their DVD pack.

Memory Bank has been created as a portable, adaptable resource that everyone can enjoy, whatever the setting, using large screens for groups, but a laptop, tablet, or portable DVD player are options for use with individuals.

- For individuals, family members and carers, Memory Bank can be used at home with each of the films creating a great chance to look back, reflect and talk about shared memories, or simply to enjoy watching together.
- For healthcare professionals, Memory Bank demonstrates best practice in the provision of activities for older people and can support life story and reminiscence work. It feeds into the requirements of the Care Quality Commission.
- For reminiscence or community groups, Memory Bank provides a great resource for themed events, social interaction and group discussions.

In the early days of the project, two questions arose. Firstly, would young staff or those whose childhood memories are from a different culture to those for whom they are caring be able to use this? My impression is that Memory Bank will greatly assist such staff in understanding the background of people with dementia who were born and brought up in the UK. The rich visual content is supported by clear concise notes that are free from jargon and give an overview of life in the UK across the six decades covered by the films. Secondly, do you have to live in Yorkshire to use the tool? This is archive film from Yorkshire so, for example, holidays seen are on the Yorkshire Coast and in the Yorkshire countryside. However, members of the Advisory Panel from beyond Yorkshire found enough familiar scenes to prompt memories of holidays in Devon or elsewhere. By basing each DVD around a universal theme, such as work or domestic life, Memory Bank can unlock memories that many people share in common, irrespective of their location. Feedback already gathered from users beyond the Yorkshire region certainly bears this out.

The DVD based packs are supported by an evolving website from which individual films can be downloaded. A Memory Bank Development Manager is now also in post, looking at the many ways in which this valuable resource can be taken forward and working in close partnership with those who are already using it.

I have been excited to be a small part of the development of Memory Bank and hope that it provides pleasure and benefit for many of our patients and their carers.

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