

## Reminiscence guide



### Work.

This is an approximate guide to a Reminiscence session. This is only a guide of what each session could contain. Sessions should flow and there is no strict timescale that **MUST** be followed, let the participants take the lead, this guide can be used as a prompt for volunteers and staff.

#### **Part 1: What everybody did for work**

Question Prompts:

- What did everyone do for work?
- What were your working duties and/or working hours?
- Did you enjoy your job?
- Where was your place of work?
- Did anyone leave work when they got married?

From the answers make links between people and discuss some of the different roles – **you may be able to use picture prompts to help**. There may be a range of jobs in the group, and some people, particularly women, may have only worked a short while before having children, as many women stayed at home to manage the household. Chat about how long people stayed in their roles, and how easy it was to find work.

#### **Part 2: Skills and training**

Question Prompts:

- What age did everyone leave school and start work?
- How did everyone learn their working skills (ask about apprenticeships, Saturday jobs, family businesses)?
- Did anyone go to college and or university?
- Was anyone in the armed forces? If so, what was your rank and duties?
- Did anyone train for a job different then they ended up in?

A lot of people left school between the ages of 14 and 16 to either start and apprenticeship or start working. Discuss everyone's learning journey. Ask how much apprentices got paid and how long it took them to get qualified. Skilled labour such as Carpentry, Plumbing and Mechanics to name a few, all required a number of years as an apprentice to learn the trade. Some people will have been academic and gone to University, although this was

much less common than it is now. What did people study and where? Joining the Armed Forces equipped people with a number of specialist skills depending on their rank and duties, for example people may have learned to drive transporting tanks.

### **Part 3: Earning a living**

***(USE THE PRE-DECIMAL MONEY GUIDE BELOW AS A CHEAT SHEET!)***

Question Prompts:

- How much did you get in your first pay packet?
- How often would you get paid?
- Was it always cash in hand? (See picture of 'old money')
- What did you buy with your first pay packet?

Most people were paid weekly with cash. This would be given in a brown envelope with paper money and coins. Some people would give their mum 'keep' each week when they lived at home. Before 1971, British currency was Pounds, Shillings and Pence, so see if people can remember how much they would receive per week. If anyone worked in accountancy or finance, they might remember having to process payroll every week, ensuring that they had enough of each coin to give each employee the exact correct payment.

### **Part 4: Popular Jobs**

Question Prompts:

- What were popular jobs that are less common today?
- What were the biggest employers in your local area?
- What were the most popular jobs in the 1940s and 1950s?

Jobs such as bus conductors checking and selling tickets, the milkman, Gas lamp lighters and herbalists are much less common today. Discuss if everyone can recall seeing people working these roles and where. Did everyone had a regular Milk man and/or postman that they knew by name? There were many smaller local shops as opposed to large supermarkets. Shops such as the haberdashery (sewing), green grocers, butchers, herbalist, sweet shop and ironmonger were usually privately owned by local families and well known by the community.

### **Part 5: Staying at home**

Question Prompts:

- Was anyone a housewife? Did you have a certain routine to your days/weeks?
- What day was wash day? (usually a Monday)
- Would you shop daily for food?

- Where would you visit?
- What were the best/worst housekeeping tasks?
- Did you ever take in washing/sewing to earn extra money?

Women staying at home were not idle and often had a long day of cleaning, shopping and looking after children, and their husbands when they got home. Ask about laundry and household tasks before modern conveniences such as washing machines, dishwashers and gas central heating. Discuss how different it was for children to be looked after by their mothers as opposed to paid childcare; did the wives prefer this lifestyle or did anyone miss working life? It may also have been the case that their living arrangements were dependant on their husband's employment. For example armed forces families would have to travel frequently. How did this impact their wellbeing? Did they enjoy seeing new places, or find it difficult to adjust?

- Thank everyone for coming and for sharing their memories.

### **Pre-decimal money: An easy guide!**

Before 1971 UK currency was pounds, shillings and pence, (or l.s.d – Libra, Solidus, Denarius...which is latin for pounds shillings and pence!)

Denominations over one pound were essentially the same, but the pound was divided into 240 pence, instead of 100 pence like it is now. We will refer to pre-decimal money as 'old' money as we go.



The picture above shows a collection of British Pre-decimal coins to show their sizes in relation to each other. Read on for a guide on Pre-decimal money and

enjoy reminiscing with the participants. It may take some time to get your head around the maths, let the participants teach you about the different coins and what you might have been able to buy with each!



Above is a Farthing, this is worth a quarter of an old penny. It is a very small coin with the well-known image of a Wren on the back



Above is a Half Penny or Hay'pny; this is worth half an old penny. It is larger than a farthing but smaller than an old penny. It had a picture of the 'Golden Hinde' on the back, which was Sir Francis Drake's ship



Above is an old penny. This is one of the largest coins except the crown (which was rarely used). There were 240 of these in a pound. The big penny and small farthing lends itself to the name of the 'penny farthing' bicycle with one big wheel and one small wheel!



This is Three pence coin, or thrupenny bit. These were originally small and silver, but most people will remember this 12-sided nickel-brass version.



This is a silver sixpence, or a 'Tanner'. A sixpence is about the size of a modern 5 pence piece and is half a shilling.



This is a shilling and is worth 12 old pence. Doing the maths you can work out that there are 20 of these in a pound making up the 240 pence total. So ten of these is equivalent to 50p in 'new money'. The shilling was sometimes called a 'Bob'. However instead of a coin, there was a 10 shilling note to represent half a pound, which was a brown colour.



This is a Florin, which is worth two shillings, so there were ten of these in a pound.



This is a half crown, and is worth 2 shillings and six pence, or 'two and six' as participants will tell you. Two shillings and six pence is 30p; so there were eight of these to a pound.

There was also a coin for a crown, which would have been worth 60p in old money, or 25p in today's terms, but the coin was not much used. Instead of a pound coin, there was a pound note which was blue, and then green, and a 5 pound note which was large and white.

**We hope you have enjoyed this guide and learned a 'thing or two' from your group. The next time someone says 'I've got a few bob'...you will know what they mean!**