Gathering Reminiscences: some basic questions & prompts for interviewing

Start all interviews (recordings) with writing or if recording, saying:

1. Your name (as interviewer) and the date of interview.

2. Ask the person being interviewed (interviewee) to state their name, age (can be approx.) and address.

3. Thank the person for agreeing to be interviewed about ..... (the particular topic previously agreed)

4. The other questions and follow up prompts/ exact phrases will depend on the topic of the interview. Some suggestions are set out below but it is important to keep questions ‘open’ where they need to say something more than yes/no.

When did you first start at / live at/ go to .....  
How long where you at ...... 
Where is / was location of ..... 
Why were you at .../ start work at.../ did you move to... 
What did you do there? – what are your particular memories 
What changed during your time there/ visits – different jobs/ classes/ improvements to home. 
Who were you there with – any particular person / group.

5. ‘Prompt’ questions (in case you / they get stuck) such as – but remember leave a listening ‘gap’ before prompting. 

Tell me more about..... 
What happened next? 
How did it make you feel? 
What did you think about .......... happening? 
Why did you think this was? 

6. At the end of the interview

Thank the person for taking part and go through what they have said and what will happen next. Note: for formal oral history interviews you will need to get them to sign a permission letter for you to use their words.

CH/V1/0419