

This is a short summary of what has happened to different archival material and responses.

### **Archive material:**

#### **Student records**

Unique student files from c.1900 to c.2000 containing application forms, details of union sponsorship, progress within the college, in some instances press cuttings on future activity

#### **What's happened?**

All the contents of the student files have been destroyed. Some bare bones material has been digitised (not scanned).

#### **Student records from 1950s**

It was finally confirmed today 19 October that some student files do still remain

#### **What's happened?**

Although legal advice has been taken by Ruskin College management - and section 33 of the Data Protection Act allows for the retention of personal data for historical research –there have yet to be any guarantees that any of the remaining material will be saved

#### **Records of the Ruskin Student Union**

Cupboard full of records and material relating to the Ruskin Students Union collected for many years by librarian 1972 – 2004

#### **What's happened?**

Thrown away as cupboard space was needed

#### **Duplicate pamphlets**

Duplicates of rare labour movement pamphlets including those on the history of the college

#### **What's happened?**

Shredded – rather than given to another library – as space was at a premium in the new library

#### **Former student dissertations**

Although until recently most courses were not full degrees students nevertheless wrote dissertations. Several of these have been published.

#### **What's happened?**

As the principal instructed, on July 11<sup>th</sup>, many have been destroyed:

‘Please do not mention the SW DiPSW work to anyone but dispose of it straight away. ..Out go those 23 boxes. Now, please.

The SW BA work is different matter and will go to a SW storage area in the Rookery. I will talk to SW about this.

Social Studies 2000-2003 is out, please. Straight away. We no longer teach that course.

Also chuck the English earlier 8 boxes. Not to be mentioned to anyone - thanks. More recent 2 to ...

Same goes for Employment Relations - 2000- 2002 . Out, please.

Please do the chucking straight away and I will talk to relevant tutors who are getting the rest, in advance of the move.

Thanks  
Audrey'

### **Records on the National Register of Archives:**

These included historic labour movement collections such as the Middleton collection or those relating to Oxford.

### **What's happened?**

All items on the Register have been dispersed to other collections –People's History Museum or Oxfordshire Local Record office

### **Historic ephemera:**

Artefacts reflected the radical history of the college and were on public prominent display. These included a painting of Bernard Shaw, a plaque to Charles Bowerman, former president of the TUC, painting of Raphael Samuel, anti-apartheid photographic mural, miners' banner from 1984-5 strike

### **What's happened?**

All have gone to other institutions or individuals. The miners' banner is no longer displayed in the library but in a satellite building in a corridor on way to toilet.

### **Academic and former student response etc**

To date over 4,000 people have signed the petition to stop further destruction. These include: Sarah Waters, Alan Bennett, M Lewycka, Sir Brian Harrison former editor of the Oxford DNB; Dr Nick Mansfield former director of the People's History Museum; Dr Eve Setch History publisher at Routledge; Professor Alison Light (widow of Raphael Samuel); Professor Paul Pickering, British labour historian at ANU, Professor Jonathan Rose author of The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes; Stewart MacLennan, chair of the Scottish Labour History Society; Harry Barnes, former Labour MP and former Ruskin student; Professor Geoff Whitty, former director of the Institute of Education; Professor Pat Thane, co-founder of History and Policy; Alice Kessler-Harris former President, Organization of American Historians; Dr Andrew Foster, Chair of the Public History Committee of the Historical Association; Professor Geoff Eley, Chair of the History Department at the University of Michigan; Dr. Serge Noiret, Chair of the International Federation for Public History, Italy; Dorothy Sheridan, former archivist of the Mass Observation archive; Dr. Roger Fieldhouse, joint author of A History of Modern British Adult Education and hundreds and hundreds of former Ruskin students and staff and their descendants. As Gillian Barlow has written 'My great uncle's records will be part of this. He was originally a shoemaker - but after the opportunity of study at Ruskin College he became parliamentary secretary to Hugh Gaitskill. I do NOT want the memory of his academic record erased'

### **What has been the response of the college?**

In response to a letter to the Guardian (and college management) by Prof Ken Jones and 17 other distinguished academics Audrey Mullender replied on October 8<sup>th</sup> : 'You should all be ashamed of yourselves, as senior academics, for not checking your facts. I am ashamed of my profession on your behalf.'

In response to a letter to college management by Professor Jane Caplan and 9 other Oxford historians, the principal replied on October 10<sup>th</sup> : 'As none of you has troubled

to check the facts with us despite belonging to a discipline where I thought you were supposed to go to primary sources wherever possible, I shall only respond to a request for accurate information and not to a muddled set of allegations’

Although Bishopsgate Institute advised the college management that it could take unwanted material in July, management did not take up that offer. A statement to governors on 9 October that suggests that it did not know that such provision could be made for storing of records is highly misleading. Various people including historians advised the college management of the possibility of storing archives elsewhere, if not wanted in the college, in August and September. At that time, inter alia, the College Principal stated on September 30<sup>th</sup> ‘I also resent the allegation that I did not consult. I consulted the person in College who had relevant responsibility: the Data Protection Officer. There is no problem. It does not need to be resolved. This conversation is now closed.’

**Position now:**

John Prescott said when shown his own files "I was amazed how detailed they were. Every little scrap had been retained, from bills to private reports on my progress. I hadn't known how hard Ruskin had worked on my behalf to get me there."  
[http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/archive/2008/06/13/Features+%28of%29features%29/2331021.Prezza\\_recalls\\_Oxford\\_years/](http://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/archive/2008/06/13/Features+%28of%29features%29/2331021.Prezza_recalls_Oxford_years/)

**Most of such similar files have gone. College management has – belatedly – taken legal advice on the retention of student records for historical research. However it has not said that it will save the remaining student records despite worldwide petitioning and emails and letters.**

**Further background:**

General position <http://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/whose-archive-whose-history-destruction-of-archives-at-ruskin-college-oxford/>

Background to what has been lost, by Ruskin librarian 1972 – 2004 David Horsfield : <http://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/losing-the-memory/>

Background to actions in college library by Denise Pakeman, recent graduate of Ruskin College : <http://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/thoughts-questions-of-a-ruskin-graduate-on-the-college-archives/>

What digitisation does and doesn't mean see blog: <http://hildakean.com/?p=1416>

Hilda Kean 19 October 2012