

# Unlocking Our Sound Heritage

This little video gives a glimpse behind the scenes at the British Library and explains the project's rationale:  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02w1ds4>

Thousands of tapes and discs are sitting in archives, museums, libraries and in peoples homes all over the UK. They hold all kinds of unique live music, radio and conversation. We've already lost many of the people captured on them. And the British Library estimates that we have only fifteen years to preserve the sounds themselves.

Unique sounds held on physical formats risk being lost as the tapes degrade over time and the equipment to play them is no longer produced. If we don't transfer the tapes now, we many never get the chance again. That's why the British Library has received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to establish Unlocking Our Sound Heritage, an exciting new national project to save thousands sounds which are at risk of being lost forever. Archives+ at Manchester Central Library is the hub partner for the North West region, which covers Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Merseyside. We are digitising, cataloguing and making available recordings from 5,000 tapes held all over the region.

The lives recalled on the 200 CAS oral history cassettes form an intimate picture of Chester over the last century, from changes to rural life in the surrounding villages and towns to commercial and cultural in the Chester city centre. Once the tapes are digitised, our team describe the audio and add catalogue records to the British Library's online catalogue. Digitised copies will be made available at Cheshire Archives in due course. Some recordings may be published at the British Library's new website to be launched in 2021, if appropriate rights can be cleared.

Other collections proposed for digitisation include the oral histories of seafarers, dockers and football fans in Liverpool, mill and hospital workers in Lancashire, the stories of mountaineers from the Mountain Heritage Trust and immigrant stories from Tameside. Not to mention dialect poetry from Lancashire to the Lakelands. And local BBC radio recordings from all over the region, as well as output from pioneering independent radio stations like Piccadilly Radio. Plus live music recordings including 1960s folk gigs in Cheshire, Royal Northern College of Music student performances, Irish traditional music and, of course, loads of brass bands!

Visit <https://northwestsoundheritage.org/> to find out more.

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