# Living Memories Online: Using archive films to help reduce the isolation of older people.

**Monday 5 October, 2020**

**A new online service that uses archive films and newsreels to trigger memories which encourage discussion and reminiscence**

A new service that brings memories to life through archive films and newsreels is now available for watching at home and for care homes, hospitals, public libraries and community groups.

The **Living Memories Online** (https://livingmemories.imagencloud.com) portal offers access to a huge range of information and social history programmes and newsreels from the late 1930s to the 1970s, which can be streamed, with online reminiscence resources being added soon to help trigger conversations. It aims to bring the past to life for older people, the people who care for them and anyone interested in UK social and industrial history, including schools.

Brian Norris, founder of Living Memories CIC, says: “Archive films can prompt older people to share memories and life experiences. Long-term memory is usually one of their strengths, so reminiscence encourages them to communicate and feel more confident about themselves. Living Memories Online will make reminiscence activity much more widely and easily available.

“This is important in combatting isolation, especially now that Covid-19 means that many elderly people are unable to access community groups.”

Living Memories C.I.C. is a not-for-profit social enterprise, developed by Brian and his wife, Leonore, after long practical research with older people, including those with dementia. It publishes DVDs and reminiscence resources and for some time has been running Tea and Memory groups where archive programmes and newsreels are shown to community groups.

Brian says: "At the group sessions we have found that many older people (including those living with dementia) who had previously been reluctant to talk, started to reminisce about their lives and shared experiences and to make new friends and get to know their neighbours.”

Local NHS Social Prescribing Nurses started referring people to the sessions, and demand was so high that Brian and Leonore decided, with the support of Imagen.io technology, to develop Living Memories as an online service. It can then be used, for example, by care homes, hospitals, public libraries, local memory cafés and in people’s own homes The pandemic speeded up their plan.

Now the Living Memories online portal is live, offering a huge range of social and historical documentary and newsreel footage about life and work in the mid-20$^{th}$ century. Subscriptions to reminiscence resources with film summaries, questions, plus social and historical information to prompt reminiscence and discussions will also be available.

The videos include numerous programmes licensed from the archive of Greenpark Productions Ltd, established in 1938 by Walter Greenwood, author of “Love on the Dole”.

There are also hundreds of programmes licensed from collections such as The Imperial War Museum, Beaulieu National Motor Museum, archival film suppliers Screenocean, Clips and Footage and Huntley Archives and Reuters which made newsreels shown in cinemas before television was widely adopted and continues today. Over 1,700 titles are currently available on Living Memories Online and more will be added each month.

The programmes can be accessed on a PC, laptop, tablet or mobile phone and can then be cast to smart TVs for group viewing. The Living Memories Online portal can be searched by decade, topic and subject and users can make a collection of their own favourites, which can be shared with other users of the portal.

Brian says “ That can make it easy to have online reminiscence chats with friends or several generations of family members about what life was like in the mid-twentieth century. One of our 82 year old volunteers, Noelle Ingman, says watching the archive films and chatting about them with friends and family makes her feel young again.”

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The Abbeyfield Society, a charity which operates over 450 retirement houses across the UK, has already signed up to use Living Memories Online. It is also partnering with Living Memories CIC to create virtual and live Tea & Memories reminiscence groups around the UK in the communities in which Abbeyfield operates. Other similar relations will be developed.

The home page at https://livingmemories.imagencloud.com
offers newsreels and clips free for trial viewing, plus the ability to sign up for the collection at a monthly launch offer subscription of £4.00 per month for individuals, care homes and other organisations. Annual subscriptions, which include reminiscence resources, will also be available.

For an interview with Brian about the Living Memories story see:
https://livingmemories.imagencloud.com/record/1649

**To find out more, and for interviews with Brian Norris about Living Memories C.I.C. e-mail him via brian.norris@livingmemories.io**
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