

# National Trust Sound Collection Report 2023

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## Introduction

This is a 2023 status report on the National Trust (NT) sound collection, which is housed in the British Library (BL). The report is based on two audits carried out during May and June 2023. The first audit was to establish what material has not yet been catalogued or digitised. The second audit was to find out which recordings have the correct copyright and access permissions for today's standards. In the following report you will find the results of these audits in a list of figures and a more detailed section on the status of copyright and access in the collection.

## The Numbers

The collection is the result of **13 tranches** of recordings, with the BL receiving the last one in 2019.

The recording dates of the catalogued recordings ranges from **1953 to 2018.**

The earliest recording is a radio programme and the earliest oral history was recorded in 1969.

The collection holds **1661 recordings** from **157 NT properties.**

There are 326 recordings which have not yet been catalogued and a number of recordings in the more recent tranches require digitisation, including some mini-discs.

482 recordings of the 1661 recordings have copyright assigned to NT.

## The Copyright Audit

A recording is deemed to meet copyright standards when the BL is in possession of a form, signed by the interviewee stating that copyright has been given to NT. Since the interviewer was working on behalf of NT at the time of the recording, it is assumed their copyright automatically lies with NT. This also goes for those interviewees who were staff members at the time of the recording, although this might need to be double checked in certain cases.

# The Evolution of Copyright

All recordings, which were recorded before 1995 do not come with any copyright or consent forms (except for one in 1986). Between 1987 and 1992 reuse forms were occasionally used, however these do not explicitly contain the word 'copyright'. Also, during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s there are copyright forms for the interviewers only, not for the interviewees. This is likely due to the misunderstanding of copyright law, namely that whoever presses the record button holds the recording's copyright. However within oral history, all speakers on the recording are considered to hold the copyright over their own voice, regardless of who holds the recording copyright. From the end of the 1990s onwards copyright forms were used more regularly, although there are five recordings of couples where the husband has signed off the copyright for himself and his spouse. It is also the case that the older copyright forms do not mention the BL as the party who is keeping the recordings.

## Broadcasts

There are also 150 recordings of broadcasts. In these cases copyright is held by the broadcaster, which means many different broadcasters will also need to be contacted.

## Next Steps

In order to make these recordings more widely available either copyright or a license to publish needs to be obtained from the interviewee or, if they are likely deceased, their next of kin. For this purpose the BL takes the position that if the interviewee will be over hundred years old they are likely deceased. If the interviewee or their next of kin cannot be found in spite of reasonable attempts to do so the item can be declared an 'orphan work' and made available on this basis. In all cases, whether the interviewee would be over a hundred or not, it is recommended practice that the BL and NT try and find the interviewees or the interviewees' next of kin to invite them to sign over copyright.

This is not an easy task as the recordings without copyright come from 150 different NT properties. The BL has therefore created a three-month PhD placement in which the PhD student will work together with one or two NT properties to create a workflow for obtaining copyright, which can then be used by the remaining properties to bring the BL and NT closer to making this large collection publicly available.