

Tape Letters Scotland



Modus Arts

Tape Letters
Scotland





Wajid Yaseen
Director, Modus Arts

Foreword

The Tape Letters project stemmed from a trip I made to my parental home several years after my father, Muhammad Yaseen, passed away. He had a love for singing a style of devotional hymn popular in South Asia known as a 'naat', and as a child, I'd sing these naats with him, either for relatives paying visits to our home or at any number of religious festivals held within various British-Pakistani communities dotted throughout the north. The development of domestic cassette tape technology in the early 1960s and the conveniences the system afforded for personalised recordings, meant there was a way for him to share his naats with those fellow community members who wanted to listen to him singing on cassettes in the comfort of their own homes at any given time.

I was aware my mother, Halima Jabeen, had kept copies of his naat tapes safely somewhere, and it was during a visit to her home as part of a search for my father's recorded voice that I found another type of cassette carefully stored in a chest of drawers. The handwritten label and inner sleeve inside the plastic casing marked it out to be different from the naat tapes or, indeed, a regular pre-recorded music tape. I realised I had stumbled on an audio message from a relative of ours abroad.

I was immediately transported to my childhood, remembering being asked by my mother to say hello to relatives in Pakistan on a tape recording for them - faceless family members whom I had never met in person. I remembered listening in on their audio messages to her too. Messages from another era - from another country. I also remembered the pedestrian pace of her voice as she recorded her messages to them - as though they were sitting right there beside her in our living room.

Holding the cassette in my hand, I realised I had hit on the sonic equivalent of a photograph - a sonographic snapshot of the lives of people like my parents and their lived experience of migration,

a subject that I, as someone born in Britain, would only have an indirect experience of. However, I also realised the cassettes would occasionally contain recordings of my siblings and me, which meant they also had the potential to reveal insights into the identity of people of my generation born and raised in the UK - the nascent British-Pakistani community. These 'tape letters' suddenly represented a historical capture of inter-generational identity and experience in audio form.

"Hello Aunty, hello Uncle...hope you're OK..."

I speculated that other families beyond my own may have also utilised cassette tapes in this way, and a picture slowly emerged of a far more widespread practice than I had initially thought. Support from the Heritage Fund allowed my project team at Modus Arts to research it in-depth, initially on a pilot project with a regional focus in the north of England, followed by an England-wide project, concluding with a Scotland-wide project. The focus of this booklet is to highlight the work undertaken throughout Scotland, where the project team have sourced over 20 'tape letter' cassettes and have undertaken 80 oral histories, culminating in a dedicated archive held at the National Library of Scotland.

The Tape Letters project has turned out to be far more fruitful than I could have envisaged, and analysing the archive has felt akin to undertaking a sort of 'sonic archaeology' - a deep dive into a wide range of fields and themes, including memory studies, linguistics, migration, discrimination, communication technologies, class and socio-economic dynamics, and many others. Although it has become a surprisingly complex social history project, it primarily demonstrates the deep and inherent need for people to communicate with each other in whatever way they can, wherever they're originally from or wherever they find themselves in the world.

Project Overview

The Tape Letters Scotland project highlights the practice of recording and sending messages on cassettes as an unorthodox method of communication by Pakistanis who migrated to and settled in Scotland between 1960-1980.

Drawing directly from first-hand interviews and from the informal and intimate conversations on the cassettes, the project seeks to unearth, archive, and represent a portrait of this method of communication. To stay in touch with family members abroad, early Pakistani migrants adopted various communication methods, including written letters, telegrams, and telephone calls, but also used the audio cassette tape as an additional mode of communication – applied essentially as a long-distance audio messaging system. Several factors drove the use including poor telecommunications networks in Pakistan and the high cost of making phone calls from Scotland. Poor literacy rates, especially amongst women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, also drove the practice. These audio cassettes were used to convey a variety of messages – from intimate and deeply private secrets between partners or long-distance parental guidance, to everyday conversations about the Scottish weather and an unfamiliar climate.

Surviving 'tape letters' from this period are rare as cassette usage, and sending audio messages on them, died down in the late 1980s. However, some do still exist, and relationship building with the Scottish-Pakistani community by the Modus Arts team has enabled access and unearthed information regarding the locations of a number of these cassettes. We have since sourced over 20 cassettes and undertaken 80 oral histories with people who utilised cassette tapes in this unorthodox way, and a dedicated project archive is now held at the National Library of Scotland. These surviving 'tape letters' cassettes can be considered significant artefacts both as objects and as sonographic snapshots of a crucial time for the Scottish-Pakistani community. This book includes images and quotations from individuals and families who contributed to the Tape Letters Scotland archive including an insight into the outputs produced by Modus Arts and the project team.





Project Team

Director	Wajid Yaseen
Project Coordinator	Syma Ahmed
Community Engagement Officer	Tabassam Niamat
Community Engagement Officer	Adeel Ibrahim
Community Engagement Officer	Mumtaz Unis
Community Engagement Officer	Saverra Khan
Company Producer	Caitlin Evans
Oral History Advisor	Alison Chand
Translation Services (PK)	Nouman Saeed
Translation Services (UK)	Hubbiah Rafaqat
Exhibition Designer	Kevin Lloyd
Photographer	Miriam Ali
Videographer	Basharat Khan
Education Resources	Nuzhat Uthmani
Podcast Producer	Steve Urquhart
Web Designer	Pau Ros
Mobile App Designers	Stephen Cooper and Andrew Walker
Digital and Marketing Officer	Hubbiah Rafaqat
Social Media Video Producer	Amna Afzal
PR	Susie Gray at Premier

Volunteers

Iman Afa, Aqsa Baig	Maniza Iqbal, Amna Afzal
Anisah Ali, Afshan Saleem	Amarah Butt, Sehar Mehmood
Zunaira Faisal, Amarrah Ahmad	Ayisha Hussain, Anjum Afzal
Farheen Arshad, Rabia Begum	Sarona Hussain, Smeera Farooqi

Archive Contributors

Abdul Latif Aziz
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Asghar Mohammed
Assia Ali

Bashiran Bibi Irshad

Dean Mohammed

Erm Murad

Faria Khan

Ghulam Zhorah
Gul Sameen

Humera Adnan

Izaz Ur Rahman

Jamila Aziz
Jamila Bibi

Kalsoom Rasul

Kausar Arshad

Kausar Ilyas

Kausar Riaz

Khadijah Khurram

Khalida Hussain

Kulsum Farooq

Kursheed Begum

Maqsoodah Begum

Mariam Ali

Mirza Muhammad Saeed

Mohammed Khan

Mohammed Azam Gondal

Mohammed Farooq

Mohammed Ishaq

Munwar Sultan

Musarat Anwar

Musarat Begum

Mussarat Arshad

Mussarat Jahan

Nadira Saddiq

Naila Waseem

Naseem Akhtar

Naseem Hashmat

Nasim Hussain

Nasreen Akhtar

Nasreen Ali

Nassir Ellahi

Nazia Majid

Nazir Fatima

Nisa Amir

Parveen Akhtar

Parveen Sajid

Rabia Begum

Razia Pracha

Rehana Ahmad

Ria Din

Rukhsana Ali

Sabeeha Nazami

Saima Begum

Saira Chaudhry

Sameena Kauser Younus

Samina Akhtar

Samina Ali

Seriya Iqbal

Shabana Shami

Shaheen Akhtar

Shakila Gulzar

Shamim Aktar

Shamim Sharif

Sharifan Mohammed

Shavana Abdul-Jabbar

Shenaz Ahmad

Shubnum Suleman

Sienah Hayat

Suriaya Hussain

Suraya Sharif

Surriaiya Begum

Wazir Ahmed

Zahida Qateel

Zebunnisa Shahid

Tape Letters Scotland - Testimonies

Aqsa Mohammed

Glasgow

"My mum would listen to the tapes and tears would fall – she was always crying. Even when recording she would be crying. I'd be a bit careless and more excited though. "Haan tape aayi!" [Alright! a tape has arrived!] It felt like a different feeling for us – a very emotional time. Emotional for her. Excitement for us."



Asghar Mohammed

Glasgow

"The tapes came out in the 80's and if somebody was going over to Pakistan like your rishtaydaar [relatives] or someone close, you gave it to them. So that was for their mum or dad, you know. And then they would record something in Pakistan and give it to somebody who was coming back to Scotland – a relative, dad's cousin or somebody. That's how they communicated."



Faria Khan

Glasgow

"Dad used to turn the cassette player on and test it and, you know, he'd bang on the mic saying "testing, testing". It was just such an exciting thing! Like, what are we doing here? He'd then explain to us that it was for the family back home in Pakistan."



Ghulam Zhorah

Edinburgh

"My sister and my aunt kept those cassettes at home. When they'd record tapes, they sang songs in their own voices. Their written letters used to come too but we could listen to each other's voices when we got the cassettes."



Jamila Bibi

Livingston

"I recorded a tape for my parents once and they sent back a reply the following week. I didn't expect it to arrive so soon and I wasn't at home when the postman knocked on the door. He gave the parcel to my neighbour and said they should hand it to me when I returned. When I saw the parcel, I knew it was a tape and I was so happy because I knew it would be from my mum and dad. I listened to the tape and when my husband came back from work, he listened to it too."



Kalsoon Rasul

Glasgow

"My uncle brought down the cassette player from upstairs and played a tape and I started crying after listening to my mum's voice. I used to weep every time I heard it, so I didn't listen to the tape very often. When my mum died, I didn't want to listen to it again. My heart shook when I thought of listening to the tape. I kept it for some time though. It's been more than forty years since my mum died and I haven't listened to it since."





Owner : Zebunnisa Shahid

Migration

Migration from Pakistan to Scotland between 1950 and 1980 followed similar patterns to migration to other parts of the UK but also had unique characteristics influenced by Scotland's specific economic and social context. The 1948 British Nationality Act was crucial as it allowed Pakistanis, as Commonwealth citizens, to migrate to the UK without restrictions. This legislative framework remained in place until the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962, which introduced controls that led to a spike in immigration just before its enforcement. In Scotland, Pakistani migrants found opportunities primarily in urban centres such as Glasgow. Many of these migrants came from Punjab and Azad Kashmir, often driven by economic necessity and the displacement caused by infrastructure projects like the Mangla Dam in Pakistan, which accelerated migration due to land dispossession.

These migrants initially took up jobs in industries that were vital to Scotland's economy at the time, such as textiles, shipbuilding, and manufacturing. Glasgow, in particular, became a hub due to its established industrial base, attracting many from the Mirpur district and other parts of Pakistan. The need for labour in these industries provided a significant pull factor. Scottish cities like Glasgow saw the formation of tight-knit Pakistani communities.

These communities were often formed through chain migration, where earlier settlers would help relatives and friends migrate and settle. This led to the development of support networks crucial for new immigrants navigating their new environment. Pakistani migrants in Scotland, similar to other parts of the UK, used various methods to stay connected with their families back home. This included writing letters and sending audio messages on cassette tapes. The cultural adaptation process was challenging, given the colder climate and different social customs, but these communities gradually established themselves, contributing to Scotland's multicultural fabric. The Pakistani migrant community in Scotland, established during the 1950s to 1980s, laid the foundation for future generations. They played a significant role in the economic and social life of their adopted cities and towns, influencing the cultural landscape and contributing to the diversity of Scottish society.

Mirza Muhammad Saeed

Edinburgh

"We used to use a cassette, which we also referred to as a 'reel' in Pothwari, to communicate. We used to record and send messages on it and we used to get a response from our family members after one to two months. Our family members used to be so happy after listening to the voices. We used to discuss happy or sad occasions, sometimes marriages, and console each other on deaths. This was all that we recorded."



Mohammed Khan

Glasgow

"If I was going to Pakistan, someone would ask me to take a tape with me in which they recorded their voices for their friends, parents, siblings, or family members. They used to give them to us by hand and asked us to hand them over to whoever it was meant for. Similarly, if someone from there was coming to Scotland, they used to send the tapes after recording to their parents and siblings in Pakistan. The people in Pakistan used to listen to those tapes by sitting close to the recorder, and they were curious about the recorded messages. We couldn't write as much in the letters as we recorded in the tapes. The tapes consisted of an hour. You had plenty of time to record anything. The mothers, especially, recorded many things, for example, 'My son, may God keep you safe through thick and thin. May you be safe. I always pray for you'. The tapes were full of prayers."



Mohammed Farooq

Livingston

"You had cheap cassettes and expensive cassettes. The tape on the cheap ones would get stretched sometimes, and would get caught in the little wheels and the spindles on the player. By the time you pulled the tape out, it had got all twisted and mangled, so you had to cut it, snip it, and join it back together. Doing that meant you missed some of the conversation on the tape. Yeah, so that's happened lots of times."



Munwar Sultan

Glasgow

"I kept listening to a tape over and over by rewinding it. I would first hear my brothers' voices at first, and dad's voice came at the end. My mother voice was perfect but she didn't talk deeply, just an overview. She'd ask, "How are you, my daughter?" Once, I said that I couldn't stitch the clothes. She guided me on how to stitch inch by inch. I didn't sew at that time, so my mother used to talk about it on the tapes. But my dad talked about serious matters; what he did in the office, and that he was going to retire. He'd remind me that I had to take care of myself and must take care of my health. All serious things."





Owner: Rehana Ahmad

Language

In Scottish-Pakistani households, a variety of languages are spoken, reflecting both the heritage of the Pakistani community and the influence of the broader Scottish environment. Punjabi is the most widely spoken language, especially among those from the Punjab region of Pakistan. Urdu, the national language of Pakistan, is also commonly used, particularly in formal and educational contexts. Many households also use oral-only languages such as Pothwari which has no established written script. Although there have been efforts to cultivate it as a literary language – a standard has not yet been formally developed. There are variant spellings for the language - Pothwari, Potwari, or Pothohari, and is considered by some sociolinguists to be part of a cluster of dialects that includes Pahari, Mirpuri, and Hindko (previously referred to as Western Lahnda), whilst some of its speakers also refer to it as Punjabi. In addition to these South Asian languages, English is widely spoken, especially among the younger generation who are educated in Scottish schools. Scots, the Germanic language historically spoken in Lowland Scotland, and Scottish Gaelic, primarily spoken in the Highlands and Islands, have less influence but are part of the broader linguistic landscape in which these communities live.

In the home, older generations tend to speak Punjabi, maintaining cultural and familial ties. Younger members often use a mix of English and their heritage languages, leading to a bilingual or multilingual environment. This dynamic is evident in how family conversations and community interactions often blend languages, a phenomenon known as code-switching. The use of heritage languages is a crucial aspect of cultural identity for Scottish-Pakistanis as it ensures the transmission of cultural values and traditions. The languages involved in the Tape Letters Scotland project which include examples of code-switching during interviews are English, Urdu, English & Urdu, Punjabi, Punjabi & Urdu, English & Punjabi, Pothwari, Mirpuri & Pothwari & Punjabi, Pothwari & Punjabi, Pothwari & Urdu.

The Tape Letters Scotland project aims to highlight the nuances and diversity of these closely related languages, with the fortuity for the project team and academic researchers of having access to several oral-only languages preserved on cassette tape.

Nasreen Ali

Glasgow

"I'd listen to the cassettes almost every day. Honestly. When we were ironing or doing something like cleaning or anything, we would put that cassette on. Listening to the cassette, doing our work."



Nassir Ellahi

Edinburgh

"At that time you could get cheap cassette recorders for about fifteen pounds. And they were small things. They had a little microphone, and the whole family could sit around and record their own message to their parents or their uncles, and we would record messages for our cousins and other people our age. You could have a thirty minutes message on one tape and you could turn it over and you'd have another thirty minutes on the other side. That's one hour – that's a lot of messages! You could catch up with the whole year's news."



Seriya Iqbal

Glasgow

"The tape in the cassettes would sometimes get chewed up when you were playing them or when you were forwarding and rewinding them in the player. I'd see my parents sitting there there with a big pen trying to roll the tape back on the spool and we used to find that funny. If the tape actually snapped, you could just tape it back together, so it was an easy fix. We kids used to normally tape over the message tapes with music but our parents would get quite angry at that!"



Shabana Shami

Glasgow

"Whenever we had birthdays or weddings in the family, that's when a lot of cassettes were sent. I would just record anything and send it to my sisters in Pakistan and sometimes they would be very emotional. The first time we went to Pakistan was in 1979 and I had recorded and sent lots of cassettes by then, my programs, weddings, and recordings of us just being together, there were lots of things. My family had kept them safe until about fifteen years ago when they moved house and things got misplaced. They had kept them until then though."





Owner: Shavana Abdul-Jabbar

Communication Technology

Invented and released in 1963 by Lou Ottens and his team at the Dutch technology company Phillips, the cassette tape system became hugely popular as a format for pre-recorded music. Cassette tapes were also available as 'blanks', allowing for personalised home music recordings from records or the radio. Many Scottish-Pakistani families embraced this home recording functionality of cassette recorders, espousing the technology to record audio messages to communicate with their relatives abroad.

International phone calls in the 1970s were prohibitively expensive for most Scottish-Pakistani families, and relatively poor telecoms networks in Pakistan at the time made real-time communication difficult. Other issues also existed around literacy, specifically for many women from lower socio-economic backgrounds excluded from formal education, leaving many unable to read or write Urdu or English comprehensively.

Cassette tapes were relatively inexpensive and reusable, making them a practical solution when people needed to send audio messages. Tapes would be sent via the postal system or delivered by hand when a family member or trusted community member was known to be travelling abroad. Messages recorded on tape were intended for either private or collective listening. Most of them sourced on the Tape Letters Scotland project were recorded initially with specific individuals in mind and meant for private listening only, whereas some cassettes were meant to be listened to collectively by multiple family members. Some tapes contained deeply intimate messages between lovers; some contained parental guidance. Some were recorded in secret, whilst others contained domestic banter. The cassettes all contain deeply human stories and we at Modus Arts consider them to significant aural artefacts.

Shaheen Akhtar

Glasgow

"We would record messages on these tapes to stay updated about each other's well-being. Sister would send or receive them via someone coming or going, and we'd collect them from that person. Sentiments couldn't be conveyed through mere words on paper. Letters fall short in capturing the essence of our feelings. That's why a written letter wouldn't suffice and tapes would."



Shakila Gulzar

Livingston

"My mum, dad, sisters and brothers all used to sit and talk on the tapes as if they were sitting right in front of us and as though we were talking to them in person. We used to share our feelings about how much we missed them and when they sent a tape to us, it was nice to hear how much they missed us, and their recordings showed it. The voice could judge it."



Shamim Sharif

Glasgow

"We didn't have telephones at home back then, and even when you could get to one, it was really expensive, so we rarely used them. It was easier for us to write a letter but we missed each other's voices. We would use tapes instead and I recorded our voices and asked my parents about their health. I couldn't talk much because somebody else sitting with me would want to record too. My Mum used to say on the tapes, "Daughter, how are you? I miss you so much. Come back here so that we can see your face". She recorded it with love."



Sharifan Mohammed

Dundee

"Back then we'd receive written letters saying "Your tapes were so beautiful, your voice was beautiful. There was so much joy in your voice." Tapes and written letters would come like that."



Tape Letters Scotland
Project Outputs



Project Outputs

The cassettes sourced on the Tape Letters Scotland project were primarily exchanged between close family members, so the project team needed to implement an empathetic approach to uncovering the oral histories around the practice, being mindful and acutely aware of the intensely personal nature of the recordings and the complex inter-personal dynamics at play. We commissioned Alison Chand from the Scottish Oral History Centre to provide bespoke oral history training for all project staff and volunteers, which provided the project team with the skills needed to undertake the interviews. We then hired translation teams with specialist language skills to transcribe the audio on the cassettes and the interviews undertaken with the archive contributors on the project. Qualitative data analysis provided us with a rich source of information about cassette tapes as an unusual but practical mode of long-distance communication within the Scottish-Pakistani community.

By ensuring project participants and archive contributors remained at the centre of the work, the project team could convert what was a profoundly private practice into a publicly accessible one. Respecting this private nature of the recordings allowed us to produce a range of appropriately sensitive public-facing outputs using a range of creative disciplines to engage with various audiences, from non-English speaking and non-literary communities to academics, archivists, historians, linguists, sound artists and other special-interest groups. The outputs include an archive, a website, physical exhibitions, a WebXR-based digital exhibition, a podcast series, educational resources for teachers and community educators, a photo series, and mobile apps.

www.tapeletters.com/outputs

Oral Histories

Undertaking oral histories was an essential part of unlocking information about the Scottish-Pakistani community's use of cassette tapes for long-distance communication. This method was crucial for gathering detailed and personal insights into how this community utilised a technology that was once ubiquitous but has now largely been replaced by digital alternatives. Alison Chand from the Scottish Oral History Centre played a pivotal role in this endeavour by developing and delivering bespoke oral history training for the Tape Letters Scotland project team. Her expertise provided nuanced insights into contemporary trends within oral history as a discipline, ensuring that the project team was well-equipped to conduct thorough and nuanced interviews.

The project adopted a topic guide approach, striking a balance between a structured questionnaire and a free-flowing conversation. This method was designed to create a comfortable and natural interview environment, allowing participants to share their stories more openly and authentically. The topic guide approach facilitated the collection of rich, qualitative data while maintaining enough structure to ensure that key themes were consistently explored.

A total of 80 oral histories were conducted in person by our team of Community Engagement Officers. These interviews took place across various locations, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Livingston, Falkirk, and Kirkcaldy, reflecting the widespread nature of the Scottish-Pakistani community. The face-to-face nature of these interviews was crucial in building trust and rapport with participants, leading to more in-depth and meaningful exchanges.

In addition to the oral histories, 22 cassette tapes were sourced during the project. These tapes are invaluable artefacts that provide a tangible connection to the past, capturing the voices and experiences of individuals in their own words. The combination of oral histories and cassette tapes offers a multifaceted view of the Scottish-Pakistani community's practices around the use of tapes in this unorthodox way and an insight into the complex cultural and social dynamics at play.

www.tapeletters.com/scotland



Community Engagement

Given the intimate and private nature of the content of the cassettes and the potentially upsetting memories of loss and separation commonly experienced by the owners, Modus Arts took a deliberate and empathetic approach to unlocking the testimonies and stories on the project. The complex interpersonal dynamics within the Scottish-Pakistani community and the apparent issues of public access to intensely private material on the tapes meant we needed to factor in an extensive relationship-building phase on the project. Building trust with individuals and families about our objectives and motives was vital, so we hired a team of four community engagement officers embedded within various Pakistani-heritage communities in Glasgow and Edinburgh who undertook all of our in-person interviews. Reminiscence events and other community-orientated events further reassured archive contributors about the framing of the work primarily as a social history project. This reassurance allowed them to comfortably relay their stories, allowing the project team to uncover a nuanced and more profound understanding of cassette tapes as an unusual mode of long-distance communication within the Scottish-Pakistani community.



Syma Ahmed



Adeel Ibrahim



Tabassam Niamat



Saverra Khan



Mumtaz Unis



Archive

Cassette tapes containing audio messages are rare for several reasons - primarily because of the obsolescence of the cassette medium itself, either accidental or intentional re-recording or simple disposal. Although rare, some tapes still exist and are kept relatively safe in homes for sentimental reasons, usually in attics, cupboards, or drawers. Temperature and humidity levels generally fluctuate in these environments though, leading to potential deterioration of the magnetic media on tapes. Therefore, a central physical repository was considered vital to ensure any surviving tapes were safely archived and catalogued.

The National Library of Scotland agreed to be our archival partner, and all the cassettes and associated oral histories connected to the project now reside in Kelvin Hall in Glasgow. The NLS has a long history of preserving and promoting cultural heritage; its audio-visual archive is a testament to that. Charlie McCann, Sound Curator in the Moving Image and Sound Collections and the staff at the NLS have worked tirelessly to capture the essence of the institution's events and activities, maintaining their extensive archives with careful planning and implementation.

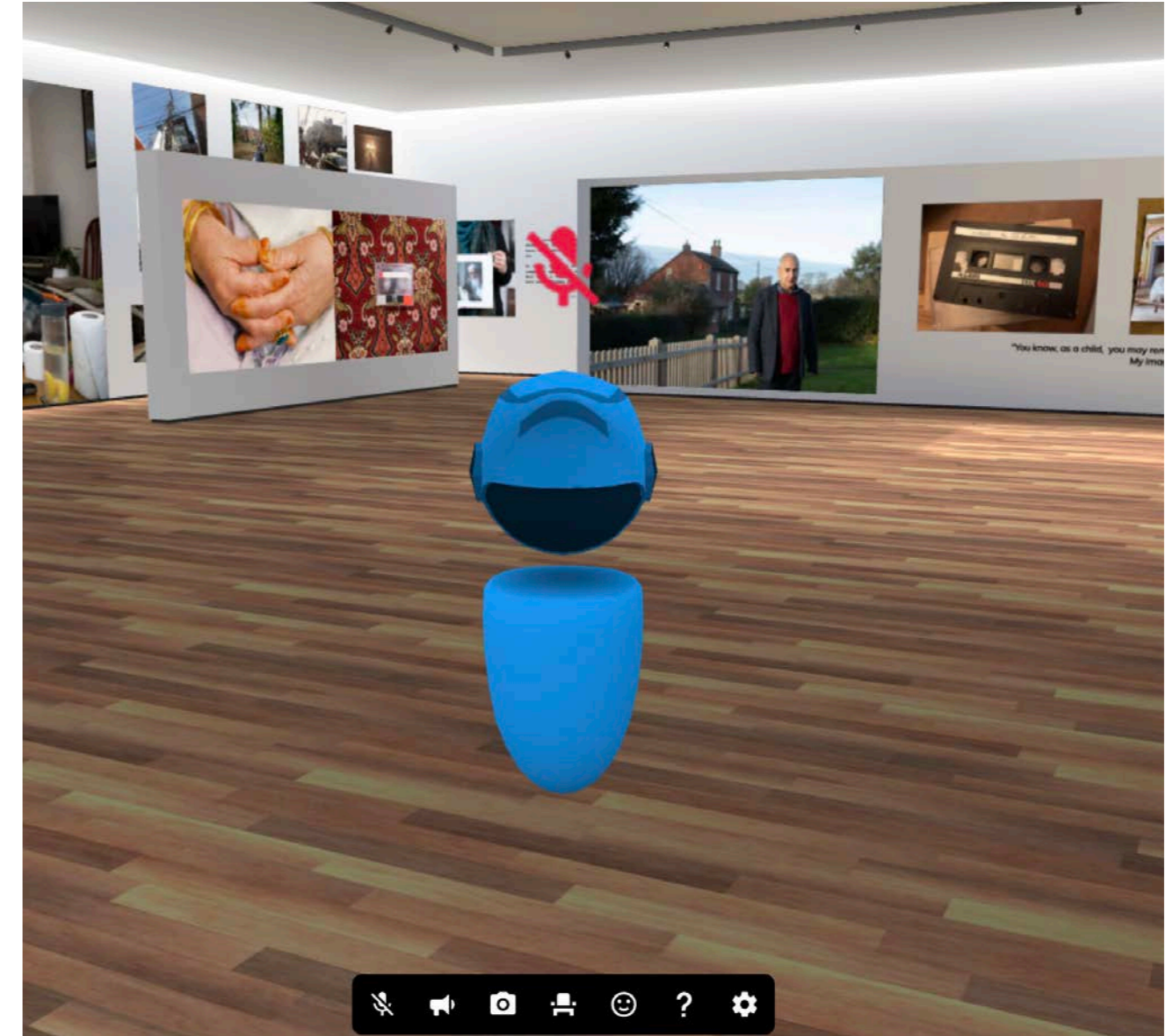
In addition to creating a physical repository for the cassettes and oral histories for the Tape Letters Scotland project at the NLS, Modus Arts have developed a bespoke in-house archival system, ensuring the tapes and associated oral histories are catalogued and accessible for various creative outputs.

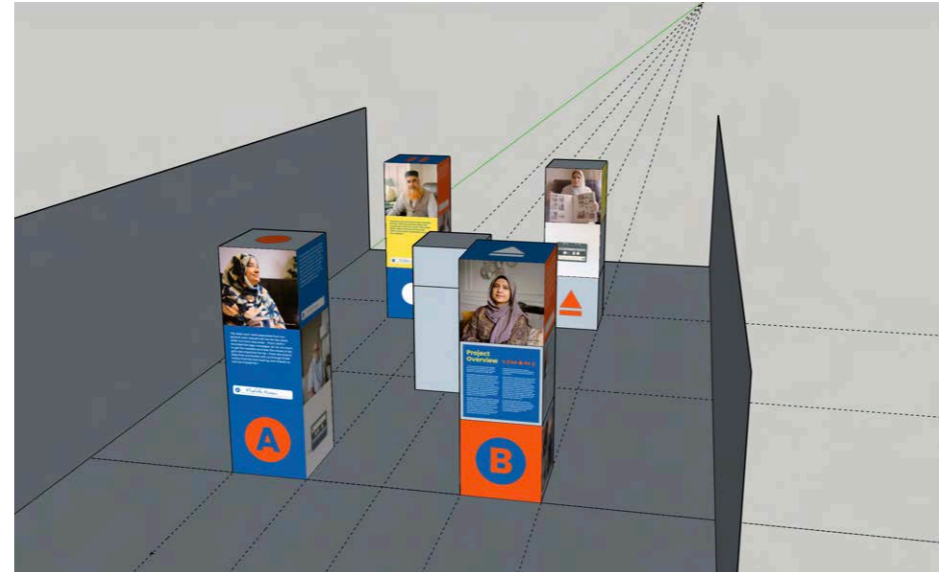
www.scotlands-sounds.nls.uk

Digital Exhibition

Modus Arts were keen on producing both physical and digital outputs on the Tape Letters Scotland project and we deployed FrameVR, a WebXR technology developed by US-based tech firm Virbella, to create a browser-based digital exhibition that also ports into true VR space. This virtual exhibition offers an immersive experience, allowing visitors to explore the rich oral histories of Scottish-Pakistani families who communicated via cassette tapes. The FrameVR platform will enable visitors to navigate a virtual space as an autonomous avatar, listening to recordings and viewing transliterations and translations. This innovative approach preserves and enhances engagement with these historical narratives. Virbella, the developer of the FrameVR platform, chose to showcase the Tape Letters digital exhibition as an example of cutting-edge technology being utilised in a social history context.

www.framevr.io/tapeletters-scotland





Physical Exhibitions

The Tape Letters Scotland exhibition opened at the Museum of Edinburgh, followed by the Tramway in Glasgow and concluded at the Dundee Central Library, showcasing the rich oral histories of Scottish-Pakistani communities through a series of participatory exhibitions.

Designed by Kevin Lloyd from KL Studio, renowned for their expertise in museum, heritage, and cultural exhibitions, the exhibitions highlight the unique use of cassette tapes as a medium for storytelling. Various approaches were taken regarding physical exhibits, including site-specific inter-disciplinary exhibitions and sound design incorporating the projects' multi-lingual, inter-generational, and international scope. Modus Arts is particularly interested in the creative potential of sound as a medium, and the Tape Letters archive provided a rich source of audio as source material from which to draw.

A vital production and curatorial consideration was the involvement and engagement of Tape Letters Scotland archive contributors, whose voices aren't typically reflected or represented in formal gallery settings.

www.tapeletters.com/physical-exhibitions

Videos

With over 15 years of experience, filmmaker and visual artist Basharat Khan brings a unique storytelling approach to the Tape Letters Scotland project. His work, spanning film, photography, and projection, is rooted in uncovering the narratives of people and places. Central to Basharat's creative vision is the discovery of untold stories and the shared experience of bringing them to light. His collaboration with the project reflects a deep commitment to capturing the voices of migrant communities, visually weaving their experiences into compelling narratives that resonate with a broader audience.

Basharat's video contributions will be featured across multiple platforms, including project exhibitions, the official website, virtual reality (VR) exhibitions, and social media. His work plays an integral role in expanding the reach and impact of the project, immersing audiences in the lived experiences of those at the heart of the Tape Letters Scotland story.

www.tapeletters.com/videos



Podcast



Steve Urquhart brings over 30 years of experience in audio production and sound artistry to the Tape Letters Scotland project, for which he has produced a 4-part podcast series. With an extensive career that includes producing features and series for BBC Radio 4, Radio 3, World Service, Radio Scotland, KCRW's Unfictional, ABC Australia's Radiotonic/Soundproof, National Prison Radio, and many more, Steve has mastered the art of crafting engaging and immersive auditory stories. His work has also featured in creative outlets such as The Wire magazine and Resonance FM.

Beyond his radio work, Steve is also an accomplished sound artist and composer. His sound installations, soundscapes, and compositions have been showcased in prestigious venues such as the Science Museum (London), the Foundling Museum, the National Library of Scotland, and various arts festivals like b-side and Radiophrenia.

For the Tape Letters Scotland project, Steve's podcast series splits into four episodes, each referencing the record and playback functionality of the cassette tape system:

Episode 1 : PLAY - Explaining the concept of the Tape Letters Scotland project

The feeling of pressing play on a cassette that's just arrived from some 5,000 miles away.

Episode 2 : REWIND - Providing historical and cultural context

What life was like for Scottish-Pakistani communities at the time; how tape letters fit in with this.

Episode 3 : PAUSE - Allowing time and space for reflection

Reflections on identity; how have things changed since 60s/70s/80s? Where are we right now?

Episode 4 : FAST FORWARD - Looking to the future

The future of Scotland, and of Pakistan. Scottish-Pakistani identities.

www.tapeletters.com/podcast

Photo Series

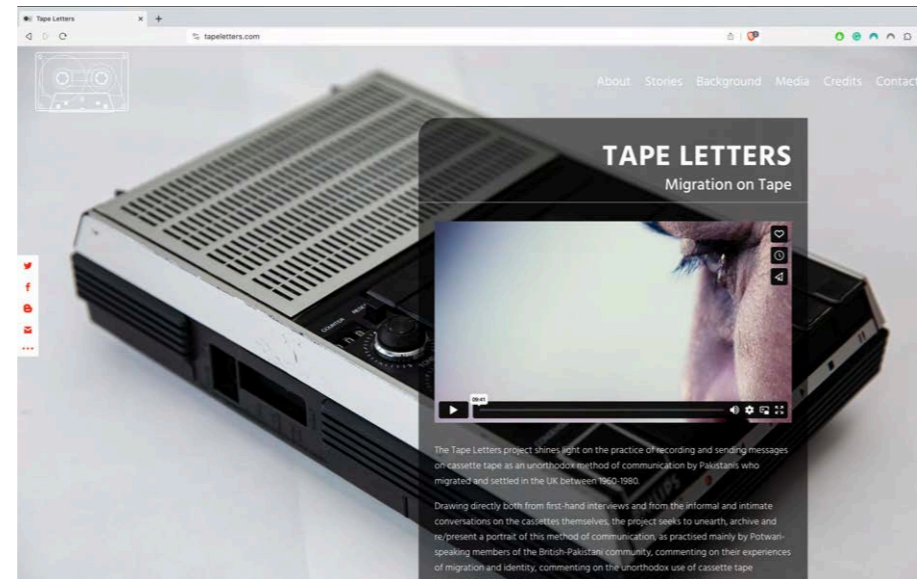
Miriam Ali, a Glasgow-based photographer and visual artist born in 1998, brings a thoughtful and multi-layered approach to the Tape Letters Scotland project. Her work explores themes of identity, religion, and home, often blending the visual with other artistic forms such as poetry and textiles. Miriam's creative practice delves into the complexities of personal and cultural identity, making her an invaluable contributor to the project's mission of preserving the stories and memories of tape letter usage within Scottish-Pakistani communities.

Her photography plays a central role in the project's exhibitions, contributing to the immersive visual narratives on display. Miriam's unique ability to intertwine different mediums allows her work to resonate with diverse audiences, adding depth to the project's exploration of migration and belonging. As well as being an integral aspect of this project booklet, her contributions are also featured extensively in the physical exhibitions, on the project's website, in social media campaigns, and as part of the VR exhibition, the helping to visually connect the audience with the narratives at the core of the Tape Letters Scotland project.

www.tapeletters.com/photo-series



Miriam Ali



Digital Outputs

Several digital outputs have been produced alongside the physical in-person events and exhibitions, including online events, a collection of videos and access to a cutting-edge WebXR-based online exhibition space, developed in partnership with US-based tech company Virbella and accessible via smartphones, tablets, desktop computers and in virtual reality.

The project website has been developed by Pau Ros, and two mobile apps were also created by Stephen Cooper at millipedia and Andrew Walker at Periscope, the first being an interactive tablet app for use in exhibitions and the second being a mobile app available on Android and Apple devices. Both of these can be downloaded on relevant app stores – key search: tape letters

www.linktr.ee/tapeletters_scotland

Educational Resources

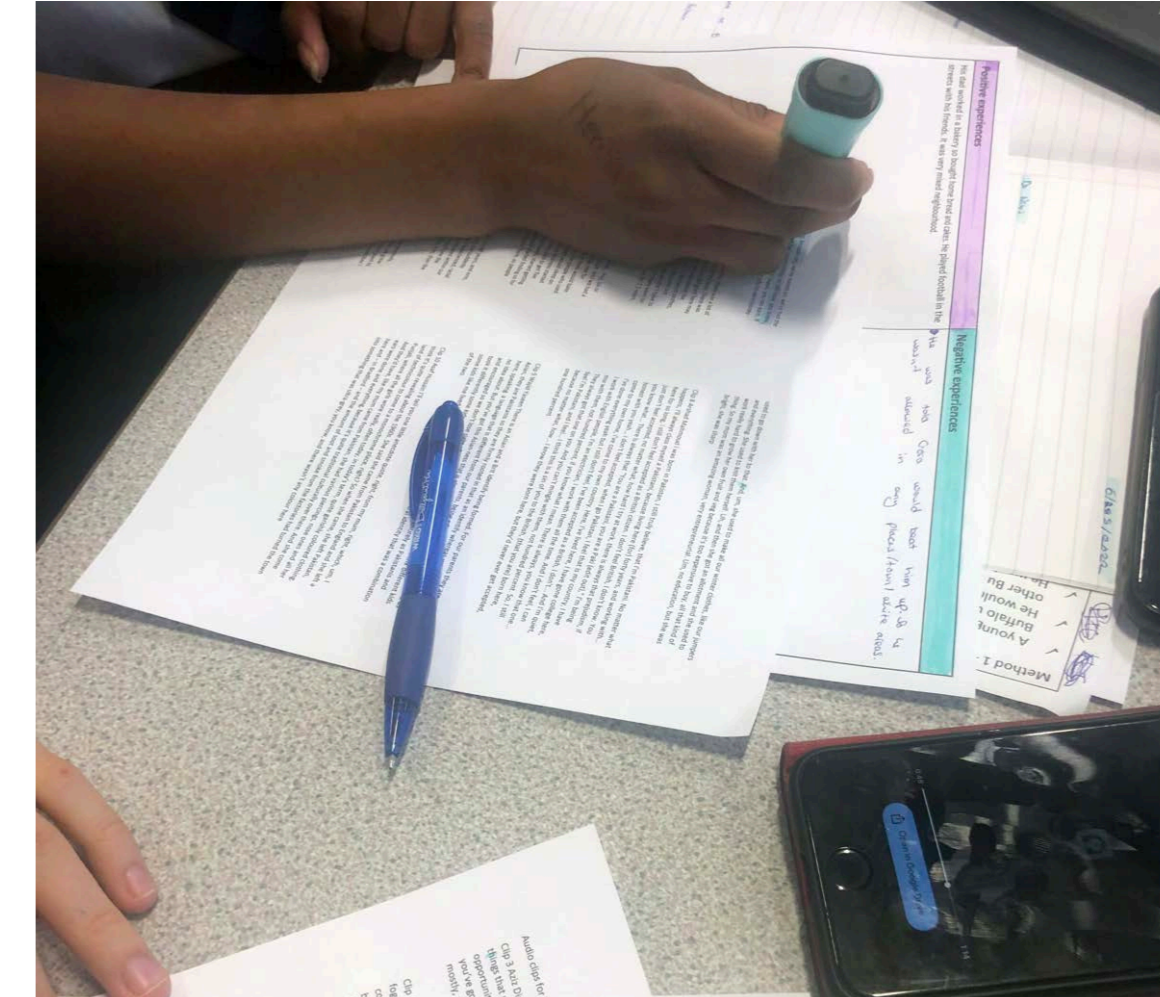
A set of educational resources for the History curriculum has been produced in collaboration with Nuzhat Uthmani, founder of GC Education Scotland and Lecturer in Primary Education at the University of Stirling. It consists of a tailored lesson plan and includes themes on migration, the British Empire and the partition of India, and communication, culminating in a practical lesson plan on oral history as a discipline. The learning resources include a PowerPoint presentation, hand-outs, and video tutorials for each lesson, ensuring that those teaching the Tape Letters module within the classroom have the support and guidance to deliver the unit successfully.

These resources aim to introduce oral history as an impactful and effective approach to historical studies and engage students with narratives often under-represented or side-lined within the mainstream curriculum, such as the British presence in India and the associated South-Asian experience of migration to the UK. Sound and a focus on aurality have been intentionally centralised within the Tape Letters learning resources pack, encouraging a supplementary approach to traditional text-based study.

Wajid Yaseen, Project Director, states:

"I grew up with the 'Kings, Queens, and Battles' approach to history, but demonstrating that people are themselves living books and living histories, and being able to apply that in a classroom setting was rewarding and genuinely exciting. Drawing directly from the Tape Letters archive and applying an oral/aural approach in developing the lesson plans meant students could listen to direct audio testimony and understand how large socio-political events and micro-interpersonal politics combines to manifest in people's lives. As an observer in the classroom, I sensed the children experienced a more tangible approach to history."

www.tapeletters.com/learning-resources



Acknowledgements

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