Knole's ORAL HISTORY

October 2026

Veronica Walker-Smith

NT volunteer

- **Our on-going project, started in 2011**
- **Digitisation and archival**
- **Q & A**

Knole, in Sevenoaks, Kent

600-year-old property; Sackville family home since 1603

1946 gifted to the NATIONAL TRUST

- Sackville-West family's staff (Knole Estate)
- Lord Sackville and his family

- NATIONAL TRUST staff, volunteers

- Visitors to Knole and Knole Park;
- Sevenoaks residents

Knole's ORAL HISTORY archive now has 267 interviews; part of NT KNOLE Collection

Resources: limited (managed by NT KNOLE Curator)

Equipment: nothing new since 2011

Volunteers: team of 6 (interviews/transcripts/research)

Budgets available: *only* maintenance subscription to Community Sites, for www.knolestories.org.uk

How we record our interviews

Marantz PMD661

Zoom H4n

Saved: Digital Audio File Formats: wav, mp3

Majority in-person interviews; (rare) *online* interviews

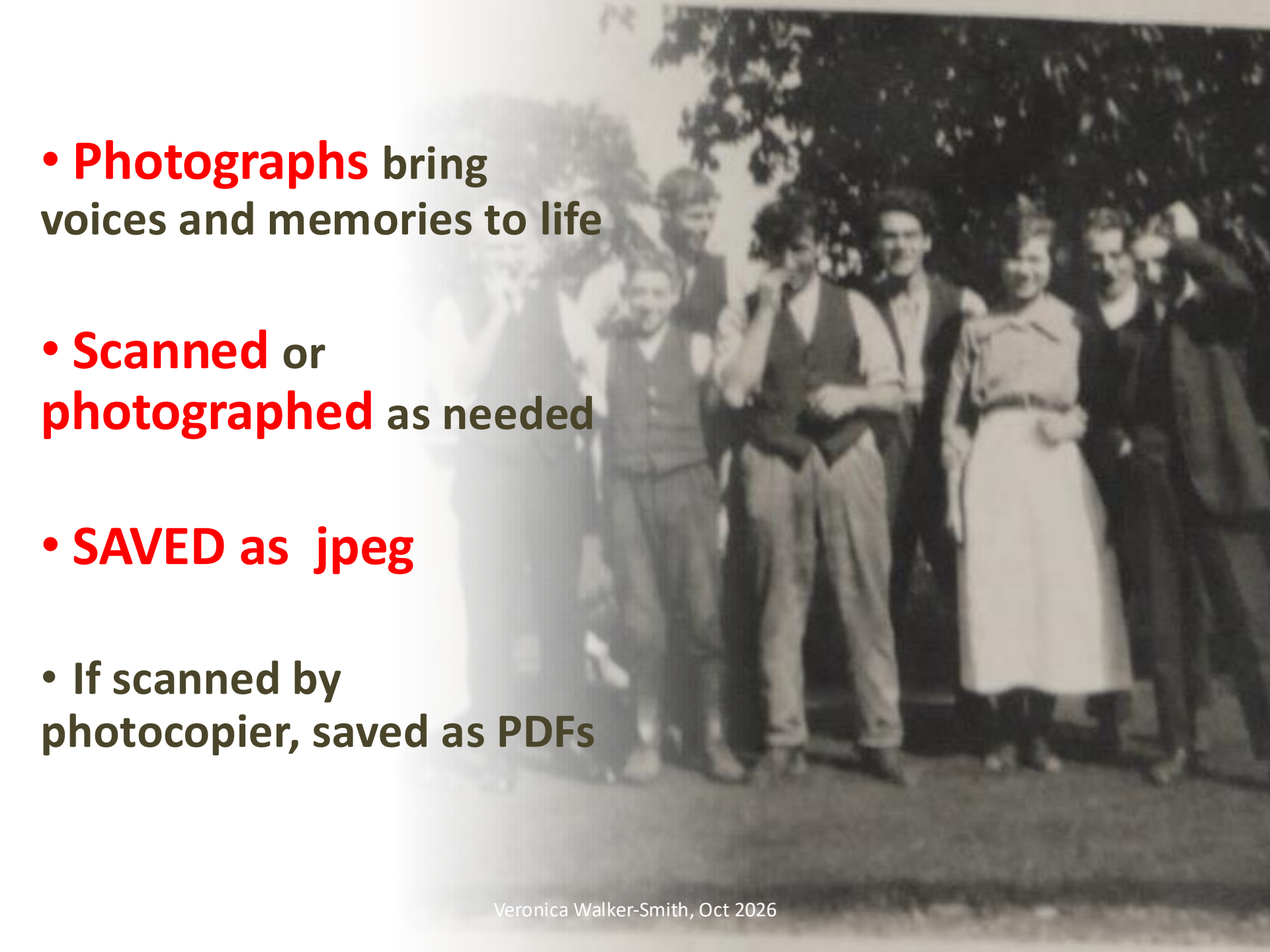
2016 discovery:
18 ANALOGUE audio *cassette* tapes

Real-time playback converter:

One year to digitise into mp3

Digitised audio of descendants of Knole Estate staff

Veronica Walker-Smith, Oct 2026



- **Photographs** bring voices and memories to life

- **Scanned** or **photographed** as needed

- **SAVED as jpeg**

- If scanned by photocopier, saved as PDFs

Audio and image files **SAVED** on **National Trust Cloud-based system**

+ all audio deposited with British Library NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE for posterity

+ back-up: Knole has stand-alone, encrypted hard drive, 2 TB (1000 GB)

Organisation and management of files:

One **volunteer archivist – updates**

MAIN (Excel) Catalogue viz.

- Knole catalogue numbering (BL-compliant)
- chronological (date of interview)
- metadata helps future researchers, *e.g. file format, file name, file size, length of interview, interviewee data, copyright, etc.*

CHALLENGES:

GDPR (especially in 2018) → ongoing restrictions / NT organizational protocols

Cyber attacks: at BL in 2023 → NT's IT security (restrictions on email attachments; banned use of memory sticks unless Bitlocked)

REWARDS:

2013 - 2020: ‘Hidden Histories’ exhibition in the former office of Knole Estate

Room audio on a loop

Telephone audio – dial an interview

Transcripts … sharing with visitors

2026: ‘Tools of the Trade’ exhibition in the Venetian Dressing room

We are proud of 2013: www.knolestories.org.uk

Meet our interviewees

Visiting Knole

Working at Knole

The Sackville-West family

Featured interviews

Stan Hollands

Assembling the Knole silver table after WWII

Michael Doggett

Heating and Plumbing designer at Knole for 40 years

Christine Sitwell

Adviser, National Trust, Painting Conservation

Interviews by decade

1880s (1 interview)
1890s (2 interviews)
1900s (2 interviews)
1910s (2 interviews)
1920s (3 interviews)
1930s (5 interviews)
1940s (13 interviews)
1950s (8 interviews)
1960s (14 interviews)
1970s (10 interviews)
1980s (11 interviews)
1990s (6 interviews)
2000s (5 interviews)
2010s (18 interviews)

Popular keywords

These are the most popular keywords used on the site.

conservation (15) servants (11)
childhood (8) showrooms (7)
park (7) war (5)
room steward (5)
Hugh Sackville-West (4)
maintenance (4) Sevenoaks (4)

www.knolestories.org.uk

Largest Oral History archive in the National Trust – at 267 interviews (and counting)

Public domain: website visitors sometimes offer information and contacts

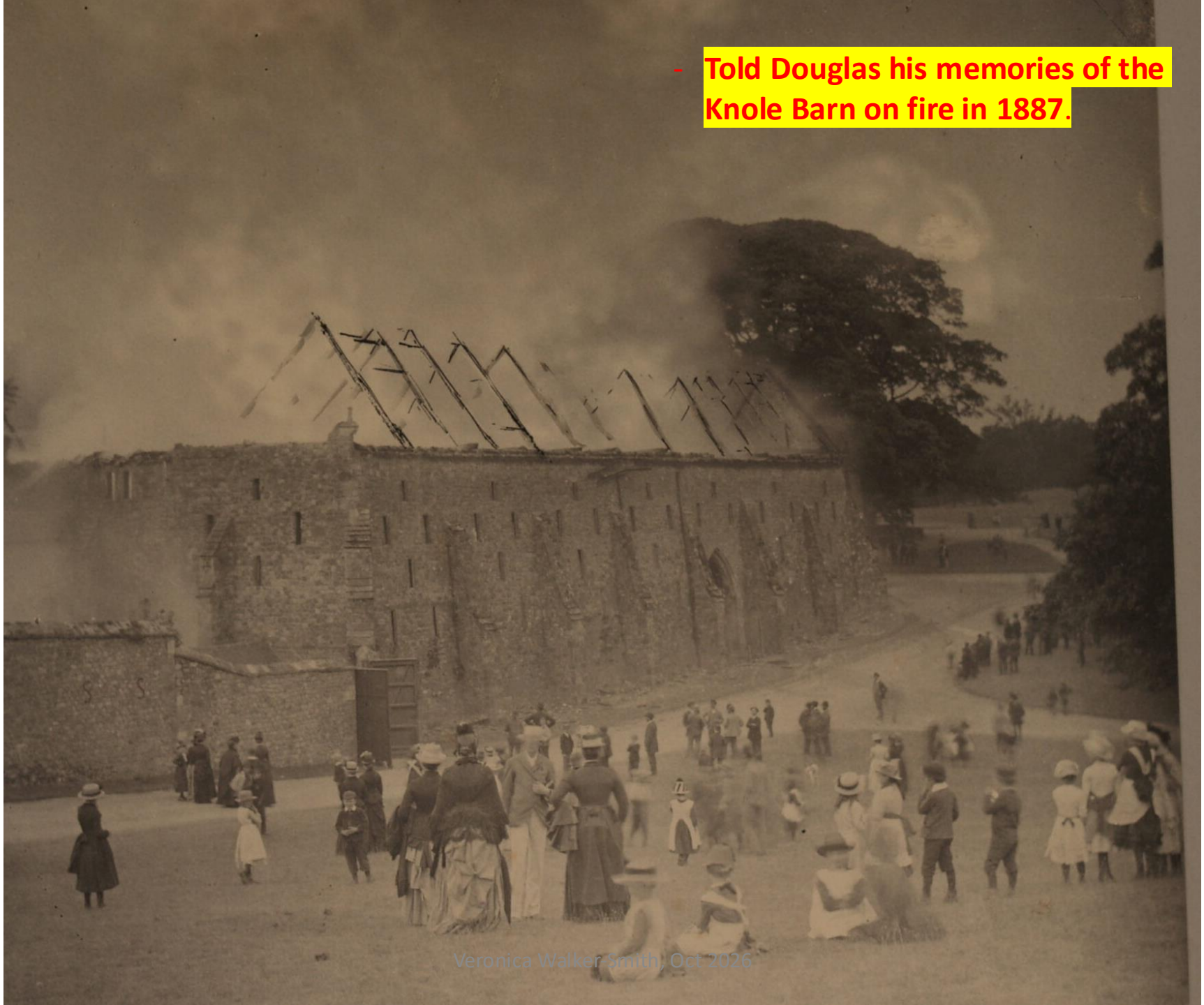
'Meeting' people from the past ...

Douglas Jeffery
– damaged audio cassette

- **Nephew** of Miss **Bertha Jeffery, Knole Housekeeper**, aged 46 in **1921 census**

- Father was Bertha's brother, **Adin**, aged 43 in **1921**. Knole Estate **Carpenter and Joiner.**

- **Grandfather** also a Knole Carpenter, went to Knole in **1881** with his wife and 5 children.



- Told Douglas his memories of the Knole Barn on fire in 1887.

Veronica Walker Smith, Oct 2026

Thank you, Q & A ?