

The Mass Observation Project

Description of the 1980s Mass Observation Directives

Introduction

Purpose of the paper

This paper describes the ‘directives’ sent out from the Mass Observation Archive (MOA) at the University of Sussex for the first decade of the Mass Observation Project (MOP), that is from 1981 to 1990. It also describes in general terms the replies by batch. Some details on the genesis (where known/remembered) of each directive is provided.

Background to the launch in 1981

What is now known as the Mass Observation Project (MOP) was called ‘The Inflation Project’ when it was launched. As it continued it was re-titled ‘MO in the 1980s’ and then ‘MO in the 1980s and 1990s’. The title ‘MOP’ only started being used formally after 2000¹. The choice of subject matter and the general approach of all the directives issued between 1981 and 1990 (Directives 1 to 31) were determined by David Pocock, who was Director of the MOA until his retirement in 1990 with the support of Dorothy Sheridan who was the full-time worker in the MO Archive throughout those years. Pocock (and occasionally Sheridan) replied in person to most of the correspondents; Sheridan managed the archival aspects of the Project, including public access. Details about directives which were produced as a result of external sponsorship or collaboration are given under each heading.

A small donation to the MOA of £7,000 from Denis Forman, Director of Granada Television, made the launch of the Project possible in 1981 (see Directive no. 16 in 1984). This donation represented the historic link between the founder of Granada Television, Sidney Bernstein, and the late Tom Harrison of Mass Observation. In terms of funding: both Pocock’s and Sheridan’s salary were paid by the University of Sussex; the costs of additional staff, usually temporary, were paid for by a series of awards under the short-term job creation schemes funded by the Manpower Services Commission. The Project ran out of money in 1985 and no directives were sent out between Spring 1985 and Autumn 1986. The resumption of the Project was made possible by a grant of £50,000 from the Nuffield Foundation. A disappointed correspondent wrote to the *Guardian* about the cessation of the Project. Her letter prompted a short article in the *Guardian*² which was seen by the Director of the Nuffield Foundation who, with the Assistant Director, paid Pocock and Sheridan a visit at the MO Archive and encouraged them to apply for a small grant. This was successful and supported the employment of new clerical staff to handle the administration and launch new recruitment campaigns over the next five years.

The directive in the 1980s

The word ‘directive’ was borrowed from the original term used in the 1930s and 1940s by Mass Observation. The idea appears to have been to *direct* the attention of the members of the volunteer

¹ MO correspondents were invited to comment on the title of the project and on “Mass Observation” and to suggest alternative names in the Autumn 1993 Directive, part 3.

² “Real life Adrian Moles lose funds” by Martin Wainwright, *Guardian*, 30 August 1985.

panel to certain subjects in order that they might respond in a relatively open-ended and autobiographical way. In practice, several of the early directives take the form of a traditional questionnaire with short factual questions calling for opinion and accounts of behaviour. The panel was used to obtain fuller and more candid responses than could be obtained from a door to door survey or by stopping people in the street to ask them questions. Reprising this notion of the directive as a prompt or guide to inspire people to write is central to the MOP even though some of these directives include numbered questions just as in the 1930s and 40s.

The format of the directives changed over the decade. Apart from the directives on the Falklands War and the Royal Wedding, most of the directives sent out between 1981 and Spring 1983 covered several small themes and were often repeated, especially those which asked for local information – reports on high street shop and business premises, currency and coins, utilities and bills. These encouraged the correspondents to write from their own experience but they also place an emphasis on the correspondent as an *observer* rather than as an autobiographer. People were asked to listen and watch, to record conversations, to interview people, to count instances of phenomena such as election posters in windows or high street premises changing, thus recalling early Mass Observation's preoccupation with observation and counting (eg gas masks being carried, drinks being drunk). Some responses to these directives are *entirely* devoted to the results of conversations with friends, family and acquaintances. As the decade went on, the directive subjects became more distinct. The move towards having separate discrete parts did not really emerge until 1985.

Is there a "directive response genre" which is inevitably suggested by the format and tone of the directive itself? Or does each correspondent develop their own style of response irrespective of the directive? More work on this is needed but it is probably a mix of the two. Correspondents develop their own very recognisable ways of contributing: a relatively consistent use of the same kind of paper, a preference for handwriting or typing, a consistency in terms of the length of reply (again often irrespective of the subject), the degree of self disclosure and the addition of extra material (press cuttings, drawings, maps, diagrams, photographs, cartoons and other printed items). Even the smell from the paper when envelopes were opened was distinctive. This distinctiveness starts to change with the advent of word-processing and then with the use of electronic communication but it is never entirely lost because people choose to use different fonts and formats. At the same time, most of the correspondents are extraordinarily compliant with Mass Observation's instructions, working through the directive answering the points in the same order and often taking the same kind of approach as that taken in the early Mass Observation directives.

The mirroring between response and directive means that the refined indexing of each response could be very repetitive: most people cover the same themes. This paper therefore suggests key words for the directive batch as a whole rather than for the individual replies. The reader can usually rely on *most* of the subjects mentioned in the directive appearing in *most* of the replies.

Key themes developed by Lucy Robinson for "Observing the 80s": (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (3) Britain at War, Falklands, Northern Ireland (4) The Unions (Miners' Strike); (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity; (9) End of an Era – Looking back

1. Summer 1981: Currency, Royal Wedding, Business Premises, Unemployment, Holidays, Food

SXMOA2/1

The very first directive of the new phase of Mass-Observation was sent out in the late Spring of 1981 (by post) to a mixture of Mass Observers which includes people still in touch from the first phase (1937-60) and people who had helped with the 1977 Silver Jubilee project. Completely new volunteers were recruited who had responded to the letters from David Pocock published in regional and national newspapers. Others were attracted later by the resulting press coverage of the re-launch.

The directive was two-sided and untitled. On one side it provided guidelines on how to take part and on the other it consisted of a series of questions headed Particular and General.

Particular: this asked for reactions to the proposed design of the new £1 and 20p coins, the lead-up to the Royal Wedding on 29 July, making comparisons with the Silver Jubilee, the closure of local business premises over the past 12 months and accounts of typical meals on a weekday and one typical main Sunday meal.

General: this covered unemployment (personal experience and observation), holidays (personal experience and observation), the price of vegetables and a request to be alert to signs of Christmas.

As they were advised, the correspondents selected those themes that interested them and there is not much consistency in content or format. This does not comprise a very informative set of replies because of the way they were invited to collect other people's comments but they are interesting as the response to a first set of questions. Most of the Royal Wedding material has been boxed with the next set of directive replies – the Special on the Wedding (see Directive 2).

Key words: food; food prices; eating habits; unemployment; business premises; Christmas; coinage; holidays; domestic life; household budgets; royalty;

Key themes: (5) Work, employment, technology

2. Royal Wedding Special 1981: Diary for the Day

SxMOA2/2

The directive allowed for dissenters in the title 'celebration or bore?' Detailed accounts of what people did that day were requested. Printed material (press cuts, souvenir issues, brochures etc) was also requested and received.

The Day Diaries captured activities on that day by people who were both fans of the Royal Family and those not. The replies are strong on marriage, Royalty, national events, watching television, political views, fashion and the wedding dress, street parties, people's views both for and against the event and royalty.

Key words: Royalty; national identity; celebrations, media (television); fashion; street parties; political views; family life

Key themes: (6) Community, Nation, Race; (3) Britain and the World (9) Cultures of resistance, identity (7) Family Values, the Home;

3. Autumn 1981 : Currency, Pet Food, Shopping Strategies, Business

Premises, Unemployment, Liberal-SDP Alliance, Christmas

SxMOA2/3

The third directive follows the same format as Directive 1 and is also untitled with only subtitles as 'particular' and 'general' and ranging over several topics which emphasise the family budget and everyday financial practices. Many of them demanded detailed records of what people actually do rather than what they think.

Particular covered coinage, use of cheque books, savings schemes, graffiti on bank notes, collecting specific coins for specific purposes, the price of pet food, shopping strategies and finding the cheapest items;

General covered changing shop premises, unemployment – facts and feelings and the side effects on marriage, community, social relations; the Liberal SDP Alliance: request to make 'casual soundings of the political climate'; Christmas: early signs in the shops and personal preparations.

There was selective coverage by correspondents – often it took note form and was rather brief. There is little personal reflection or narrative accounts but a lot of lists and enclosures of press cuts etc. Some correspondents give occasional stories or elaborations on a theme (see S496). The overlap between the themes in Dirs 3 and 4 is confusing and some of the material received at the end of 1981 or in 1982 has been filed with later directives. The lack of distinctiveness between the directives and the presence of the same themes means that people sent in their replies at different intervals and these have been filed in different places.

Key words: Housing; domestic life; food prices; strikes (railway strike); local elections; business premises; inflation; unemployment; family

Key themes (7) Family Values, the Home; (5) Work, employment, technology; (4) The Unions

4. Spring 1982: House Prices, Unsolicited Mail, Weather in January, Railway Strike, Local Elections, Business Premises, Unemployment

SxMOA2/4

Dir 4 is untitled and has the same paragraph headings as Directives 1 and 3. Particular covers house prices, requests for correspondents to observe estate agents' windows, local area values – desirable, posh, "nice areas"; value of your house. Correspondents are asked to interview an estate agent or collect info from one and there is a request for lists of unsolicited material received through letter boxes; they were also asked to record the January weather and the effect on food prices and to comment on the effects of the railway strike. General covers local elections, people's knowledge and voting intentions for the local elections in May 1982 and shop changes in local area

Many of the replies are composed of lists or compilations of notes, or interviews with people they meet on the above subjects. There are very few in-depth or narrative replies. Correspondents see themselves and are positioned as Observers rather than as Autobiographers.

Key words: housing; domestic life; food prices; strikes (railway strike); local elections; business premises; inflation; unemployment; family

Key themes (7) Family Values, the Home; (5) Work, employment, technology; (4) The Unions

5. The Falkland Islands Crisis 1982

SxMOA2/5 and SxMOA2/9

The wording of this directive, sent out on 19 April, is entirely the work of David Pocock but there were discussions behind the scenes which prompted the choice of subject at that time: Graham Dawson and Alistair Thomson who were then postgraduate students teaching at Sussex, were seeking new kinds of material for their teaching and urged Sheridan at the MOA to persuade Pocock to cover the war. There were also reports on the war coming in unprompted from the correspondents themselves (see text of directive).

This Sussex batch of replies covers two separate directives sent out in 1982. The first “Special Directive: Falklands Island Crisis” was dated 19 April 1982. The second was a request for Parade reports “Autumn Directive Postscript” sent out 28 September 1982.

Replies to first directive (April) often in a dated entry form over the period of the war. Two sets of replies are arranged together. The box of replies from women A-G contains a fat folder of press cuttings.

Issues arising from the replies: matters of principle, ignorance (eg not knowing where the Falkland Islands were), shifting responses as the operation went on, lack of interest in Parade, different generational responses, lack of respect for most politicians and Navy defence cuts.

Key words: Falklands War; defence cuts; propaganda; media; public events (the Parade); politicians; Margaret Thatcher; war

Key themes (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (3) Britain at War, Falklands War (6) Community, nation, race

6. Summer 1982: Public Services, Private Services, the Budget, Gas & Electricity Bills, Royalty, Inflation, Currency, Food, EEC

SxMOA2/6

This directive asked quite a lot of the correspondents. The first question was on the Public Services (with a short sentence beforehand referring to rates and taxes) identifying as areas for possible discussion as health, education and public transport. The second on Private Services including work in the home – building repairs and installations, interior decoration, and consumer goods and an enquiry about people’s level of satisfaction with providers. Correspondents were also asked to record changes in services offered to them by phone and by leaflets through the letter boxes. There was a question on the effects of the recent Budget on people’s lives and a request for details of recent gas and electricity bills for the winter quarter with a note about any planned economies. Finally in this section of the directive there is a request for a report of any dreams relating to the Royal Family specifically mentioning the Princess of Wales’ new baby.

The General section of this directive asks about responses to the economy and 'granny bonds': how would correspondents cope if inflation decreased? The last question is on coinage again – the vanishing half penny and reactions to the new 20p coin.

Correspondents were very diligent in answering the questions in this directive although not all of them answered all the questions. In particular, they warmed to the themes of public and private services. These replies are good for looking at issues such as the increasing privatisation of the public sector.

Key words: public services; private services; domestic life; utilities; home and housing; food prices; inflation; business premises; inflation; unemployment; family; the Budget 1982; coinage; royalty; saving and investing

Key themes (7) Family Values, the Home; (4) The Unions;

7. EEC Special: Tenth Anniversary of British Entry into Europe

SxMOA2/7

Headed 'Common Market Special', this directive contained two parts: an open ended first part inviting general comments on British membership after ten years including impact on employment, holidays, shops, other members of the EEC and recording jokes and graffiti. The second part is a 10 point questionnaire which 'tests' general knowledge about the Common Market.

One of the Trustees of the MOA in the 1980s was a contact of the late Tom Harrison's, James Fulton, who had connections with the Foreign Office. Fulton was also a friend of a research and Parliamentary lobbyist, Heather Randall, who worked at the London Office of the European Economic Community. Ms Randall commissioned the EEC Special and wrote up her analysis in Randall, H: Looking at Europe: pointers to some British attitudes in *Europe* 83 (4) pp 22-23, 1983.

Because of the format of the directive as questions, this directive elicited more yes/no style short replies than most other directives. Only a few take a narrative form. Nevertheless, the replies are useful for evidence about Britain's early relationship with Europe and the hopes and fears of specific kinds of people at that time.

Key words: European Economic Community (Common Market); food; family budgets; employment

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism; (2) Britain and the World; (6) Community, nation, race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

8. Autumn 1982: Pocket Money, the home hotel, your childhood, business premises/cheque books/currency

SxMOA2/8

The directive includes several questions on pocket money mostly directed at parents but also asking for own experience. It was a popular directive and most correspondents were expansive in their replies especially about their own childhood memories and about their childrearing practices. This represents a useful batch of replies for looking at attitudes to children, parenting and family

budgets. It also sheds light on people's own backgrounds (part 3) in terms of how much money was around in their families and what kind of upbringing they had had. The home hotel (part 2) section raises questions about how much support parents should (or have to) give to their children. There is also information about consumer behaviour in all three sections, for example what people bought with their first pay packet. Generational differences are evident in the replies.

Key words: domestic life; family budgets; children; bringing up children; utilities; coinage; royalty; food; EEC, consumer behaviour

Key themes: (7) Family Values, the Home; (4) The Unions

9. Falklands/Malvinas: Postscript 1982 Directive

This directive, like the previous Falklands War themed directive, took the form of a letter from David Pocock and was headed 'Autumn Directive Postscript' and dated 28 September 1982. It asked for further reactions to the war after the taking of Port Stanley plus views on the 'Peace/Victory Parade' and Service at St Pauls on 10 October.

The replies to this directive are boxed with the replies to the earlier Directive no. 5 on the same subject.

10. Winter 1982: Food, Gardening

SxMOA2/10

This directive is much more cohesive in terms of the main themes: section one concerns regular eating and shopping patterns with reasons why people might not buy or eat certain foods: moral, health, political, religious, 'personal' (ie taste); also cost issues. Meat eating is also specifically mentioned. Section two is on food for special occasions, new foods, and the concept of things being 'in season'. Finally, requests for memories of childhood food and the costs of growing your own food for those correspondents who are gardeners.

The responses follow the questions closely and most people write quite fully in reply with lots of detail. For a reader in 2012, there is a noticeable lack of concern or awareness about 'seasonal' food – most people mention that with modern methods of long-term storage, above all freezing, this is no long an issue. Several comment on trying to "Buy British" and avoiding European imports like French apples but this doesn't come over very strongly. Only a few mention political or ethical reasons for not buying certain foods. Veal is most often mentioned to be avoided. Very strong on childhood memories and on the new foods and recipes/dishes they have come to discover in recent years.

These replies are a good source for exploring the relationship between food and family income and class; also for investigating the relationship between food and emotion and associations. Also shed light on gender relations in the family – who cooks and shops in 1982?

Key words: food; domestic life; domestic budgets, the Home, vegetarianism; food; gardening, EC, childhood, political views; religion; ethics; apartheid; embargoes;

Key themes: (7) Family Values, the Home; (2) Britain and the World; (6) Community, nation, race;

11. Spring 1983: The General Election, Water Workers' Strike, Coinage, Viewing and Reading

SxMOA2/11

Question 1 is on the General Election with a direct request for the correspondents' views and voting intentions. Most are frank in response. Q2 on the strike by water workers: answers relate more to the impact on their own lives rather than to their views on the strike. Q3 on £1 coin elicited a few stories and Q4 is on viewing and reading with 8 sub questions. As often happens with lists of numbered questions, the replies are brief but this is a good guide to where people find information and the ways in which they may construct their political frameworks. Very few correspondents report having video recorders.

Key words: General Election; political parties; politicians; political views; strikes; coinage; leisure; the media; television; radio; reading; newspapers; leisure; the environment (water saving); new technology (VCRs); the home

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (6) Community, nation, race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

12. Summer 1983: Work

SxMOA2/12

This directive was sponsored by BBC TV. It was designed in consultation with BBC2 researchers for a series of six programmes provisionally entitled "Will we work tomorrow?" to be screened from April 1984.

It starts with five questions about personal experience: first job, nature of job or past jobs, previous work, unemployment, prospects for future jobs; Q6 asks for predictions about unemployment in 2000. The next three parts are more open-ended and cover the family history of work in the past, the present and the future.

Subjects covered in the replies: historical experience – the Depression, World War Two. The replies are really interesting and detailed but not about the 1980s directly *except* that the 80s is the lens through which people are recounting theirs and their family members' experiences. Young people and their hopes for work; leisure use; predictions about unemployment, new technology and its impact on employment and the value of having work. In particular it asks about home computers and provides an early glimpse of how computers are coming into the domestic environment.

There is considerable personal detail in these replies on the correspondents' family backgrounds in terms of social class, occupation, leisure and relations between the generations. It includes a question about university leavers as well as school leavers. It is also a future-facing directive and could be used to explore how positive people felt about employment prospects for themselves or the next generation and whether they think new technology will affect them.

Key words: Work; Job Centres; gender differences; education; social class; housework; young people; leisure; unemployment; the future; new technology; home computers;

Key themes (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (4) The Unions (Miners' Strike); (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity; (9) End of an Era – Looking back

13. Autumn 1983: Housework & Maintenance, Business Premises SxMOA2/13

This directive was successful in attracting very long and detailed replies especially from women. Only two men (R470 and A833) in the selected 1980s group (those still writing in 2011) were writing for the MOP at the time and only R470 replied.

The first task was to keep a log of household jobs and most correspondents responded to this with a list by the day. People also included comments on who did the work and when so this throws light on division of labour and on the kinds of relationships that exist in the household. For example R470 reports that he shares housework because his wife is disabled by rheumatoid arthritis.

The response to the description of the home and then of the living room is quite substantial. Almost everyone writes a great deal and several include illustrations – sometimes tiny diagrams, sometimes whole page layouts of their homes. Most people include descriptions of their furniture, objects, ornaments, soft furnishings, decorations, bookshelves, pictures on the walls, equipment (TV etc) and most also give the history of the objects and who uses them (or collects them). There are lots of comments about tidiness or lack of it. For a study of material culture this is a treasure trove with colour, texture and *meaning* of homes most evident. The language used for tasks, for items and above all for the naming of rooms is revealing about work, leisure, class, income (and 'disposable income'), generations, childrearing habits, housing including council houses. Often historical information is also provided.

The last section is devoted to mantelpieces - a repeat of a 1938 MO directive. Correspondents respond well and provide detailed accounts of their own mantelpieces or the equivalent in their homes.

Key words: work; the home; housing; interior design; furniture; consumer behaviour; housework; gender; leisure; children; new technology; social class;

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

14. Winter 1983: Christmas Cards, Buying British SxMOA2/14

Three sets of questions in this directive: the first on Christmas cards received and sent with a request for lists and categories (themes, charities) and an account of how they are arranged in the home.

The second asks about "Buying British" and asks for lists of household goods and equipment (including cars) with their country of origin. Replies consist of extensive lists but do not include very

much narrative. They provide an indication of how relevant the notion of “Buying British” is to them. They also respond to the question of whether the country of origin is a measure of quality and value for money. They are also asked about import controls.

Key words: Christmas; Celebrations, the Home; Social Class; Social Networks; Friends; Family; Industrial production; Charities; Consumerism; New Technology; Nationalism

Key themes: (2) Britain and the World; (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

15. Spring 1984: Social Well-Being

SxMOA2/15

This directive was unusual for the MOP in several ways: it ran to seven sides of text; it left spaces for people to write their replies onto the directive itself; it inserted boxes to be ticked and it employed numbered scales for people to assess their agreement and disagreement with particular opinions.

It was commissioned by Ian Miles and his colleagues in the Science Policy Research Unit based on the University of Sussex campus. Miles was funded by the Rowntree Foundation to explore the relationship between the experience of employment and their sense of well-being. His results were published as Miles, I. et al, *Dependence, Interdependence and changing work roles: a report to the Joseph Rowntree Memorial Trust*, Science Policy Research Unit, 1984.

Many people squeezed their replies in between the boxes; there are sections with larger spaces so many returned their questionnaires completed as requested. This directive supplies some key biographical information about the correspondents which is useful (living situation, marital status, employment status). The directive covers a wide range of topics from health and wellbeing, mental health, views of and use of the NHS and complementary or alternative health services, prescription charges, hospitals, organ transplants and the costs of certain procedures; as well as social networks and support systems, views about public health risks (food, radioactive leaks) and whether people receive enough information about their health/illness from the medical profession.

There is quite a lot of information in these directive replies about people’s understanding of good health and “well being” as well as the relationship between them and social networks and the health services as well as the availability of work.

Key words: health; the NHS; complementary/alternative medicine; wellbeing; mental health; health dangers; employment; work; social class; social networks; friends; health risks, prescription charges; hospitals

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (4) The Unions (Miners’ Strike); (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

16. Summer 1984: Electronic Banking

SxMOA2/16

The first part of this directive on Electronic Innovations in Banking was developed by David Pocock with a group of anthropologists known as Social Analysis and Anthropology (SA3) working with the economic consultants, Maxwell Stamp Associates. There was no record of a fee being paid to the MO Archive but it is possible that a consultancy fee was paid to Professor Pocock. This directive is significant because it was accompanied by an information sheet on the subject, a practice that was avoided in the later years of the project. The information sheet is interesting in its own right as it indicates what the research team assumed would be new to people at that time: cash dispensers, direct debit cards, personal home banking (via Prestel and the TV set in people's homes), managing businesses from home, and working from home in general. They also described the development of "financial supermarkets" that is, one stop service points for a wide range of financial information and advice (pensions, travel, tax, insurance etc).

There is no evidence that any analysis was actually done on the replies. Although the purpose of the directive appears to have been at least in part to explore people's reactions to electronic innovations, much of the replies describe non-electronic financial and budgeting practices.

Replies range over attitudes to money – cash, chequebooks, cash and credit cards and buying on credit. Often repeated was the great fear of debt if you use credit cards which gives rise to people's antipathy to credit cards. Several argued that it was 'not real money'. A good deal is revealed here on class differences and social rivalry: 'Keeping up with the Jones's'.

These replies reveal much on variations in attitudes and behaviour between generations see, for example, W632 on older people's anxieties about banks and building societies. Topics covered:

- Cash machines
- Attitude to banks, building societies but as high street service providers rather than as major investors and not about bankers in current sense. People in banks are those met over the counter rather than rich bankers or financiers. So relationships with bank managers for example are discussed by some respondents.
- Ignorance of "direct debit" cards. Some writers report ignorance about bank accounts and cheque books (see D996) Prestel
- Information about the financial world: a few comments but not much. Some people apologise for not knowing very much about some of the issues.
- Saving and spending
- Mortgages/tenancies
- Utility bills
- Loans and hire purchase
- Relations in the family – distribution and control of household income and expenditure
- Consumer attitudes: asking for discounts, returning goods, shopping,
- The economic climate: unemployment, inflation plus specific info on person's local area.
- Electronic developments, including attitudes to new technology in general: fears impact on family life, loneliness
- Some stories of personal experience with early home computers eg D156

Key words: the Home; Money; banks; the Home; budgets; coinage; gender relations; Social Class; Social Networks; Consumerism; New Technology; saving and spending

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home

16 - Summer 1984: Part 2: Miscellany

SxMOA2/16

(not catalogued separately from Part 1)

The title "Miscellany" which describes Part 2 of this directive disguises a number of important themes. Not everyone answered these short questions perhaps seeing them as optional. Most of what people did answer relates to the miners and the teachers. Very little on the other questions. Some people squeezed their replies onto the directive itself between the typed questions.

- **The 1984 Miners' Strike:** most people wrote about this in some in detail; most of them are not very sympathetic to the miners, though some support the miners but not Arthur Scargill. They are worried about the violence and clashes with police. Replies include information about collections in support of the miners' strike fund and references to donations of food and other goods. Some people talk about attitude to unions and their own union membership.
- Rate-capping in Liverpool: many people did not respond to this question.
- The teachers' unions' actions: stories about fights in schools where teachers are on strike
- The threatened rail strike triggers further criticism of the railway system
- Elections for the European Parliament in June not much coverage. All a bit vague
- The new train timetables see (4)
- The state visits of Prime Minister Botha (South Africa) and President Reagan (USA): very little on Botha but a few fairly negative comments on Reagan. Most people have no objection to Queen meeting Heads of State and many say it is desirable.

Key words: Miners' Strike, 1984; police; trade unions; railways; EEC; South Africa, USA; rail workers; teachers; strikes and industrial disputes; rate capping

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (3) Britain at War, Falklands, Northern Ireland (4) The Unions (Miners' Strike); (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity;

17. Autumn 1984: Attitudes to the USA

SxMOA2/17

The directive starts by asking about earliest awareness of America and Americans suggesting films, and the Vietnam War as prompts. In practice, however, the older correspondents refer back to meeting (or hearing about) Americans during World War Two. Further questions relate to language including slang, imports of goods, defence policy; American tourists, the EEC; plus a general knowledge question asking correspondents to list as many US presidents as they can. They were also asked if they could remember where they were when they heard J F Kennedy had been assassinated.

There are some good and evocative stories here which could provide interesting background for study the so-called “special relationship” between the UK and the USA.

Key words: USA, childhood; films; language; race; music; culture; economy; consumerism.

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity;

18. Winter 1984: Relatives, Friends & Neighbours

SxMOA2/18

This was a collaborative directive between Sheridan and Pocock and involved the advice of gerontologist, Dr Dorothy Jerrome, at that time a lecturer in Anthropology at Sussex, who went on to use the results in as a MOA Occasional Paper No. 6, 1996, *The Family in time and space: personal conceptions of kinship*.

Another densely typed directive divided into three sections heading ‘Relatives’, ‘Friends’ and ‘Neighbours’ and encouraging the correspondents to define in their own terms who fits into which category. This led to irritation on the part of some people who wanted a definition of a ‘relative’ to work with. Nevertheless the absence of a definition in the directive text ensured that the replies described the person’s own sense of kinship. The questions are wide in scope including events (weddings, funerals, anniversaries), the language used for friends, social expectations, personal appearance, homes. Relationships with neighbours relates to local practices determined or influenced by region, age group and social class.

Produced a rich response.

Key words: Kinship; family; friends; friendship; neighbours; community; relatives; social networks; social occasions; celebrations; language; personal appearance; the home; locality; social etiquette

Key themes: (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

19. Spring 1985: Part 1: Morality & Religion

SxMOA2/19/1

This is quite an abstract directive but yielded some very in-depth and candid replies. The authorial voice of David Pocock is tangible. It ranged across religious and moral beliefs and atheism. It is an example of a directive setting up an imagined scenario (in this case being arrested for religious belief in an anti-religious society) and asking correspondents to imagine what evidence of religiosity could be brought against them.

In the second part of Part 1, there is another scenario: a test of morality. Would you keep a £5 note you found in a street? This section then goes on to ask about personal moral systems covering donations to charities, the relationship between religion and politics, the belief in a god, dreadful crimes (and appropriate punishments), medical science and the newish possibilities of saving or prolonging life in the present day. The last question asks whether the passage of time affects moral judgement (mentioning the case of Nazi war criminals).

Finally a questionnaire covering capital punishment, experimentation on animals, abortion, suicide, overseas aid, the disestablishment of the Church of England, the Virgin Birth and resurrection and the views of the Bishop of Durham.

The replies are in general long and detailed and the correspondents do their best to hop around these major questions dealing with all the above, the Christian Church, missionaries, morality and ethics, charities and charitable giving, the value of life – capital punishment, abortion and still birth, contraception, euthanasia, and variations of their belief systems. Most of them seem to be Church of England or lapsed, or agnostic/atheist and there are few challenges to the assumptions embedded in the directive text from people of other religions or ethical systems.

Key words: the Christian Church; missionaries; morality; ethics; medical science; charities and charitable giving; crime; murder; Nazi war criminals; vivisection; overseas aid; the value of life; suicide; capital punishment; abortion; contraception; euthanasia, belief systems; the Church of England, the Bishop of Durham; disasters; religious education in schools;

Key themes: (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity;

19. Spring 1985: Part 2: Posters

SxMOA2/19/1

Feelings about posters in house windows – in other people’s houses and in your own. A directive requesting lists and observations.

Key words: the home; housing; streets; posters; advertising; political activity; community; social class;

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity;

20. Autumn 1986: Self portrait, Major events, Christmas Day Diary SxMOA2/20

This directive was the first to be sent out after a gap of over a year when the MOP ran out of funds and no directives were posted out. Part 1 is therefore a request for a self portrait either updated from those people who’d been on the mailing list in Spring 1985 or a new one from people recently recruited for the re-launch. Part 2 requests an account of the most significant events of 1986, both personal and in the wider context. Part 3 is a request for a day diary for 25 December (whether you celebrate Christmas or not).

The replies are – as expected – a genuine mix of significant personal changes (births, deaths, marriages, house moves, changes in career or loss of jobs, retirement, shifts in education, financial changes, health experiences. References to local, national and international events are dominated by the Chernobyl nuclear accident in the USSR and fears of pollution in the UK and bombing of Libya (including fears of reprisals) other current news topics include: child abuse/molestation (and the return of capital punishment), unemployment, Heseltine and the Westland Deal, royalty including

Queen turning 60, the wedding of Prince Andrew to Sara Ferguson, EEC and food mountains, AIDS, earthquakes, South Africa, space shuttle, banking, buying shares in British Telecom, Terry Waite, bad weather, privatisation, Sport Aid, Band Aid and Bob Geldorf. Some people mention events from previous years eg assassination of the Swedish Prime Minister, Olaf Palme.

The replies are interesting on relationship between bad news on the international/national scene and people's sense of control or agency.

Key words: Chernobyl; Libya; nuclear power; Westland Deal; government; privatisation; royalty; weather; disasters; unemployment; sport; Bob Geldorf; Overseas Aid; child abuse; crime; politics;

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (3) Britain at War, Falklands, Northern Ireland (4) The Unions (Miners' Strike); (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity; (9) End of an Era – Looking back

21. Spring 1987: Part 1: Waste, thrift and consumerism

SxMOA2/21/1

The directive is aimed at exploring changes in people's habits and expectations over waste and consumerism. It includes a question on the use of credit cards and credit in general as well as 'impulse buying' and people who are 'addicted' to shopping and extravagances. Correspondents are also asked to report on local waste disposal services, collections, bottle banks, council tips and the use of charity shops and jumble sales for 'recycling' clothes and consumer goods.

Many of the replies begin with childhood memories of 'waste not want not' and the significance for those growing up in the years immediately after the Second World War when there was rationing and shortages. They report admonitions about not wasting things, feelings about credit and money, about advertising and how influential it is, about young people's attitudes and consumerism, about impulse buying and the cost of persuading people to save materials (paper, energy) at work.

There are lots of examples from people who grew up immediately after World War Two describing the way they avoid waste and save money and how deep the 'training' goes, see descriptions (eg H1806) of the evolution of family life with the advent of electricity, the purchase of material goods; food, eating, cooking, management of household products like soap. The replies give insights into the attitudes of many older adults in the 1980s not just harking back to wartime but to the thirties. Several people speak of the 1980s as the 'throw away' society. One person comments on their desire in the present day not to exploit the welfare state (L1504). The directive prompts comparisons with the past in terms of home activities and practices – not sitting down together at the table but watching TV instead. There is a good deal on society becoming wasteful. Often cited: wrapping and packaging and the re-use of plastic bags.

Comparisons with the past especially interesting and rather shocking (like the woman who could only have a bath once a week when she was a child even though she wet the bed, see B1771). There are quite a few stories of childhood deprivation with descriptions of what counts as luxuries.

The replies throw up some major difference in the childhood backgrounds between correspondents (see D996 with servants in 1930s).

Key words: childhood; generational change; family; waste; income; household practices; food; council refuse services; recycling; the environment; the Second World War; Austerity; jumble sales; charity shops; consumerism; credit; credit cards.

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity;

21. Spring 1987: Part 2: AIDS campaign

SxMOA2/21/2

Some correspondents had already started to comment on the AIDS crisis in Directive 20 so the directive is more of a response to an existing interest on the part of some of the correspondents. It is a nervously worded directive asking not about the wider subject or AIDS directly or about those suffering from it but about the government health campaign on television, in the press and at public events. It is a directive asking for observations rather than personal experience. It includes a request for jokes about AIDS.

The replies are relatively brief and are in general, in response to the directive, confined to comments on the health campaigns, advertisements on television and sex education in schools. Replies include jokes about AIDS and rumours, urban myths, theories about the spread of infection, questions of blame and retribution, comments about those deemed innocent or deserving victims, on Africa, stories about prejudice and misunderstandings; comparisons with other dangerous illnesses and health campaigns; homophobia both observed in others and expressed by correspondent. Few correspondents seem to know anyone with AIDS. Several people comment on language change, eg use of the word 'gay' and also on the growing ubiquity of the word 'condom' in the public sphere.

Key words: AIDS; health; media; government; homosexuality; homophobia; urban myths; humour; sex education in schools; Africa; morality;

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity;

22. May Special 1987 General Election

SxMOA2/22

The directive is a 'Special' and consists of six questions: thoughts on own personal voting choice, the political party campaigns including meetings, canvassing, posters in windows, overheard comments in public; observations on Election Day and post-Election Day accounts of own and others' behaviour. The replies covered the following:

- Tactical voting, personal intentions.
- Lots of accounts of discussions and conversations in home, among friends and at work places.

- Important issues (A883): unemployment, NHS, Education, Public spending, Planning & the environment, Defence strategy, Immigration, Law and order, electoral reform, pensions and the social services.
- Also (from Scotland see H1541) Private Schools, Devolution, Students Grants, Multinationals, Defence, proposed Community Charge.
- IRA bomb that killed Airey Neave
- Gay rights, women
- Views of politicians: David Steel, David Owen, Neil Kinnock, Michael Heseltine, Margaret Thatcher, Norman Tebbit, Ken Livingstone, Cyril Parkinson, Shirley
- Experience of canvassing
- Prevalence of posters
- Election and politics on TV – reactions of friends and acquaintances
- Attendance at public meetings
- Media, election fatigue
- Polling stations
- Voting systems
- Yuppies (Young Urban Professional or Young Upwardly Mobile Professional) and Dinkies (Double Income No Kids Yet)

Key words: Political parties; General Election; political meetings; canvassing; posters in windows; government; the media; politicians; NHS, privatisation; unemployment; education; defence; immigration; IRA;

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (3) Britain at War, Falklands, Northern Ireland (4) The Unions (Miners' Strike); (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity; (9) End of an Era – Looking back

23. Summer 1987 Part 1: Directive Holidays

SxMOA2/23/1

This directive calls for an explicitly autobiographical response: it starts with questions about how much time people have off work for holidays, then memories of past holidays, honeymoons, 'annual holidays' types of holidays, holiday budgets, who plans the holidays; travel, travel sickness, children and holidays, spending time on holiday, living in a tourist resort, holiday misbehaviour, foreign holidays, hotels, ideal holidays. The directive acknowledges that some people may not take holidays.

This produced a very rich and detailed set of replies with a clear emphasis on people's childhood memories of campsites, caravans, B&Bs at British seaside resorts. There is much more on holidays 'at home' than abroad. Most replied to all questions carefully starting with their allowances of leave from work and the ways in which work affects holidays and the kind of holidays people are able to take.

Key words: family; holidays; travel; attitudes to going abroad; hotels; leisure; family budgets; consumerism; social class and class mobility; childhood; countryside; seaside; cars, caravans, bed

and breakfasts; work; relations between the generations; honeymoons; the British abroad and national stereotypes;

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

23. Summer 1987 Part 2: Day Diary: August Bank Holiday 1987 SxMOA2/23/2

Request for a diary for activities the August Bank Holiday (31st August): nothing special here and rather repetitive. Most people seemed to be at home doing routine things – housework, car maintenance; cooking and eating; seeing family and friends and watching television in the evening.

Key words: family; holidays; leisure; social class and class mobility; work; relations between the generations; home; housework

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

24. Autumn/Winter 1987 Part 1: The Car

SxMOA2/24/1

The directive was designed to be answered by car drivers, non-drivers and pedestrians. It includes car ownership, past and present, details of use and costs, driving tests, use of the car in everyday life and making contact with family and friends, taking children to school, shopping, or as part of a job. It also covers drinking alcohol and driving and the effects of car use on health. It is also one of the first directives to ask directly about environmental issues (see also the Waste directive 21 in Spring 1987). It includes questions on hitch-hiking, parking, road etiquette, motor bikes, cycling and motorways; also advertising psychology and the image of the car and the driver. There is also a question on the future. *There is, however nothing, on using buses or public transport!*

Rich responses on car ownership and transport. The men in particular provide a lot of detail on the makes of car they have owned or would like to own. Included are memories of family cars in childhood, learning to drive as a rite of passage and fairly full responses to the above questions.

Key words: travel; transport; household budget; gendered behaviour; consumerism, oil consumption; the environment; childhood; alcohol; road safety; advertising; road etiquette;

Key themes: (5) Work, employment, technology; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity;

24. Autumn/Winter 1987 Part 2: The Hurricane

SxMOA2/24/2

The trigger to this directive theme was the strong storm which hits the south of England in October 1987. In order to ensure that people from other parts of the UK did not feel ignored, there was also a question about the floods in Wales and a recognition in the directive that the North/South divide might account for some of the differences in reporting and experiences.

Most people didn't write very much on this theme. Their replies depend on where people were living and how much they, or people they are close to, were affected. Those that do reply from

direct experience are good on local descriptions – damaged shops and houses, fallen trees, parks, transport difficulties; nervous neighbours, the media coverage. Some awareness that it wasn't as bad as all that and that for other reasons in other places people suffered more in the north. Some comments on decisions about safety and wisdom of going to work/school the next morning. Concern about insurance and the time it takes to get things repaired.

Key words: weather (climate change); the environment; housing; media; roads; trees; north-south relations; neighbours; community; council services; utilities;

Key themes: (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

25. Spring 1988: Clothing

SxMOA2/25

The directive starts with a request for lists ('a complete inventory') and most correspondents respond dutifully with long lists, often annotated according to the themes set out in the directive (how old, when worn, how often worn, how stored). Men as well as women complied. There is lots of information about clothes-wearing and clothes care in this directive batch. Many people express shock at the numbers of items they found. Clothes-buying is the second section (ten questions) and the last section is devoted to clothes and image: what clothes and appearance means.

Key words: personal appearance; clothes; laundry; housework; household budgets; gender differences; body image; home; children; consumerism; social class; aesthetics; fashion; family relationships; second hand clothes;

Key themes: (Work, employment, technology; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity;

26. Summer 1988: Part 1: Time

SxMOA2/26/1

The directive is long and dense, with narrative diversions, but it elicited very full replies:

- Relations between past and present (analogue/digital); feelings about digital clocks
- Material culture: objects in the house – clocks and timepieces, decorations/functions, positioning, meaning and historical significance, cost
- Income, class
- Wasting time; 'using' time well or badly
- The body: wristwatches
- Childrearing: teaching about time-keeping; relations within the family
- Work and working structures; work v retirement. Timetables
- Language: spending time, filling time, wasting time, using time, losing time, phrases and symbolic meanings of time.
- Aging and time passing
- Sleep, diurnal rhythms, health, jetlag (travel), shift work ("Time shifting" cf being able to video record TV programmes)

- The future

Key words: time; pace of life; household objects; home; children; work; shift work; memories of childhood; timetables; sleep; travel; leisure; language; child rearing; ageing;

Key themes (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

26. Summer 1988: Part 2: Objects about the House

SxMOA2/26/2

Request for list of most loved (and least loved) objects in the home; full responses from photographs albums through to a potato peeler. These replies comprise an excellent resource for exploring material culture, gender, social class and regional variations.

Key words: household objects; home; housework; design; memories; aesthetics; consumerism; family relationships; budgets

Key themes: Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

27. Autumn 1988: Part 1 Regular Pastimes

SxMOA2/27/1

The British Film Institute approached the MOA to participate in a national 'Television Day Diary' to capture on one day what people were watching on TV. The directive went out in the post with a colour printed form which explained the BFI's intentions and offered space on the form for the day diary. The form was not restricted to the Mass Observers – it was the BBC's general public form. Copies of the form were donated to the MOA.

The MO directive itself however was intended to capture TV-watching within a broader context and asked the correspondents about their leisure activities described as 'Regular Pastimes'. The directive can be criticised for stressing reading over other kinds of leisure activities. Not only it is mainly concerned with reading books, newspapers and magazines but it also included book clubs and postal purchases, libraries and library membership, the storage and arrangement of books in the home, use of second hand bookshops, childhood reading habits and the social aspects of reading – discussions with others.

In response to the main part of directive on Pastimes, correspondents struggle to define the term 'pastime'; they refer to hobbies, leisure, free time; mostly reading, acquisition of books, use of libraries, storage of books. There is some descriptions of other hobbies and activities. Some mention writing including for MO.

Key words: leisure, television, music; radio, media; reading; books, home; magazines, newspapers; crafts; hobbies; bookshops;

Key themes: (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

27. Autumn 1988: Part 2: TV Day-Diaries

SxMOA2/27/2

See above.

Key words: television, diaries; leisure; humour/comedy; culture; music;

Key themes: (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity; (9) End of an Era – Looking back

28. Spring 1989 Part 1: Disasters

SxMOA2/28/1

The directive begins by asking about definitions of a ‘disaster’ which enables the correspondents to consider the difference between ‘man-made’ and ‘natural’. They are also encouraged to think about whether the time between a disaster and the reporting of it matters, and also whether the fact that disasters happened abroad makes a difference. Correspondents not only write about themselves in relation to what they feel about other people who are affected by disasters but also how it affects their own lives and choice about, for example, travel and holidays. Questions about voyeurism and our interest in misfortune are answered with candour. The replies include discussion about the newsworthiness of reporting disaster and about the media coverage of disasters whether it’s intrusive and exploitative and whether it leads to saturation. The replies indicate to some extent people’s sense of powerlessness in response to scenes of dreadful experiences.

Most people refer in their replies to recent well-publicised national and international disasters including Lockerbie, Hillsborough, the famine in Ethiopia, the ferry disaster at Zeebrugge as well as scenes from earthquakes and famines.

Key words: disasters; famine; earthquakes; war; floods; accidents; air crashes; Lockerbie; Ethiopia; Herald of Free Enterprise ferry capsizing at Zeebrugge; Hillsborough; overseas aid; bereavement; counselling; charity;

Key themes: (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; ((9) End of an Era – Looking back

28. Spring 1989 Part 2: Food News

SxMOA2/28/2

Part 2 is very brief and asks for responses to ‘food scares’: the news that salmonella has been identified in eggs and that soft cheese may be dangerous. Responses invited and received on whether the correspondents have changed their behaviour either by stopping eating eggs and soft cheese or by altering their storage methods.

Key words: food; health; media; politics; domestic life; the home;

Key themes: (2) Britain and the World; (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

29. Summer 1989 Part 1: Rules of Conduct

SxMOA2/29/1

The directive is broad and explicitly covers a wide range of attitudes and behaviours from morality through to manners. The replies similarly range over a number of issues and the correspondents integrate accounts of their own behaviour and attitudes with accounts of what they observe around them. Behaviour covers dress, posture, grooming, behaviour in public, language use. Politeness and how appropriate different conducts are for men or women, adults or children and in different settings: the home, on public transport, in shops, public lavatories, art galleries, places of worship, swimming pools, waiting rooms, work place, as a guest and so on. The heading 'best behaviour' is discussed plus greetings – verbal and phatic and gestures.

Usual headings- many report a decline in formality but many make no judgements. Meetings, family, hospital, commuting, daily help, wearing belts as nurses to signify status, shop assistants, cheating, greetings, family relations, visitors and bringing wine to a meal, toilet (what to call it), speech. The directive contains many suggestions and headings and the responses are equally extensive.

The replies are a good source on generational differences, bringing children up, relationships with neighbours and behaviour on public transport as well as comparisons between the past and the present.

Key words: Children and childrearing; politeness; etiquette; manners; social changes over time; formality; greetings; language; consideration for others; social life; cultural differences; gender differences; relations between men and women; social class; generational differences; public transport; public spaces; toilets; driving and road behaviour; pets; politeness' morality; neighbours; gardens; bodily functions;

Key themes: (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity; (9) End of an Era – Looking back

29. Summer 1989 Part 2 - Day Diary for June 15th, European Election Day

SxMOA2/29/2

The directive does not mention that 15 June was European Election Day and unsurprisingly few people mention it. The usual range of everyday weekday activities are described by most correspondents.

Key words: Day diary; home; family; work; leisure; EEC; elections; politics;

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

30. Autumn/Winter 1989 Part 1: Relaxants and Stimulants SxMOA2/30/1

This was not a directly commissioned directive but it did emerge from discussions with Dr Geoff Lowe, a psychologist at the University of Hull working on addictions. Lowe later either commissioned or consulted other directives sent out in the 1990s (on Pleasure for example). See Lowe, G: "Everyday uses of social relaxants and stimulants" paper at British Psychological Society Annual Conference, 1992; Lowe, G: "Judgements of substance use and creativity in ordinary people's everyday lifestyles" in *Psychological Reports*, 76, pp 1147-1154, 1995; Lowe, G. *Ordinary pleasures - Mass Observation Archive analysis of people's pleasures and enjoyments*, draft report, University of Hull, 1995.

A lot of discussion took place before the heading 'Relaxants and stimulants' was chosen. We wanted to avoid the immediate associations with illegality and with dependency and addiction which the use of a word like 'drug' might suggest. We also wanted to the correspondents to talk about legal and illegal substances without feeling that the directive was judging them. Certainly Lowe was especially interested in the pleasures which people who did not regard themselves as addicted to smoking or drinking alcohol, hence the inclusion of tea and coffee, and the sections of people's relationship with food, health and weight gain. We also wanted the social contexts of the practices to be described.

The replies were gratifyingly frank although in practice there is very little on illegal substance use in the batch of material, perhaps because most of the correspondents themselves didn't regularly enjoy illegal drugs. Significantly, there is a lot of material here on legal medically prescribed drugs – anti-depressants and tranquilisers.

The directive produced many long detailed replies which included stories about people who drank too much and discussions about how to advise/bring up young people. as well as accounts of people reducing their smoking.

Key words: drugs; smoking; illegal practices/crime; addictions; social life; health; child-rearing; home; pubs; drinking and driving; alcohol consumption; food; weight-gain; legalising cannabis; depression and mental health;

Key themes: (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

30. Autumn/Winter 1989 Part 2 - The 'Backing Britain' SxMOA2/30/2

A brief repeat request for people's views (if any) on the 'Backing Britain' campaign. Views and practices on buying British-made consumer goods.

Key words: consumerism; nationalism; industry

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

1 - Social Divisions

SxMOA2/31/1

Another euphemistic directive called 'Social Divisions' rather than Class and Race, with the idea of getting correspondents to identify their own markers of race, class and other signifiers of social difference. This attempts to reach into a more subjective level of awareness of difference by requesting people to talk about their behaviour and experience rather than their opinions in the first instance. Definitions are elicited of 'middle class' and 'working class' and how people recognise them. Several occupations are listed for reactions and to be ranked. There is also a scenario which invites the correspondents to explain how they decide who to sit next to on a bus. The directive produced full and candid replies.

Key words: Social Class' race and racism; multiculturalism; prejudice; behaviour; social status; occupations and work; behaviour on public transport; crime; sexuality; royalty; 'society'; diversity; religion; ethics; national identity; language; humour and jokes;

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home;

Part 2: Retrospective on the 1980s

SxMOA2/31/2

A brief request but the directive section produced extensive replies - see keywords below. Many concluded with hopes for the future and for a better decade including hopes for a Labour Government in the 1990s. A lot of concern about the decade of Thatcher and issues like unemployment and redundancy (including personal accounts).

Key words: Environment, NHS, AIDS, disasters, sex education, Kings Cross, IRA, Anti-terrorism, language change, tax, education, Poll Tax, transport, environment and international: Iran & Iraq, Aids, population growth, Arms, Chernobyl, privatisation, growth of materialism, Liberal-Democrat Party, Beirut, Ireland, Africa, Afghanistan, Berlin Wall, Cold War, Miners' Strike, Thatcher, Trade Unions, crime, Terry Waite, Princess Diana; Royal Family, Common Market, unemployment redundancy, police, Wapping, New technology, cultural changes, hypermarkets.

Key themes: (1) Thatcher & Thatcherism (2) Britain and the World; (3) Britain at War, Falklands, Northern Ireland (4) The Unions (Miners' Strike); (5) Work, employment, technology; (6) Community, Nation, Race; (7) Family Values, the Home; (8) Cultures of resistance, identity; (9) End of an Era – Looking back