

## **A173 Start Writing Family History: Track 7**

Producers: Claire Sandry, Kirsten Adkins

Contributors: Betty Boothroyd, Claire Sandry, Jane Van Hool

### **Jane Van Hool**

Track 7. Block Three. Writing Lives. Lady Boothroyd, former Speaker of the House of Commons, and Chancellor of the Open University, has written her life story. What motivated her to do this?

### **Betty Boothroyd**

Because I wanted to. I think it was as simple as that. I was the first woman Speaker in the history of our country, and I wanted to set that out as to how I got there, and my background, my humble beginnings, and also I was encouraged to do so by a lot of friends who believed that I should write it. I have to tell you at the outset, I don't think I was a very good writer. Lots of people seemed to have enjoyed the book and it was hard work, but it was worth doing, and I was motivated because I wanted people to know how I became Speaker, and what the life of the Speakership was like.

### **Claire Sandry**

What do you mean when you say you don't think you were a very good writer?

### **Betty Boothroyd**

I never think I'm very good at anything really, very much. I don't know, maybe you'd call it modesty, but it was daunting, it was a great challenge to me, let's put it like that. But then I've always accepted challenges.

### **Claire Sandry**

So how did you go about it, did you sort of read a lot of autobiographies to sort of see how other people did it?

### **Betty Boothroyd**

No, I didn't. I did it my way, if I can put it like that. I wrote about my life, I divided it up into various compartments that I thought were interesting, and I started like that.

### **Claire Sandry**

You did all this research. Did you have any sort of filing system, what about the actual concrete process of dealing with all the bits and pieces?

### **Betty Boothroyd**

Well, what I had, you see, I had press cutting books. So they were all in, in date order, so that was relatively easy. I had all my campaign literature that was all in, in order. I had my diaries, when I say diaries, I don't mean... they were just events, they were just occasions, they were just the times, and of course they, they sparked me on about various things. So that was a help. But I'm a very orderly person, so when I came to look at things they were not in bad order. I think they're in poor order now that I've been throwing them around quite frankly, but to start with they were in fairly good order. But I think, with me, the essence of everything, the essence of success in life is to do your homework first, and I believe in any form of writing it is to do that homework, to do your research, to know what you want, to set out your plan, as I say, to set out your skeleton, and then start writing.