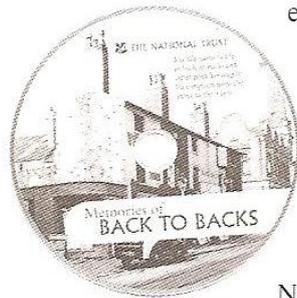


WEST MIDLANDS

■ BIRMINGHAM

Helen Lloyd writes with news about a CD she has produced for the National Trust, *Memories of Back to Backs: recollections of life in back to backs and other poor housing in Birmingham from the 1920s to the 1950s*: 'The memories recorded go beyond such clichés as "we were poor, but we were happy" – though that was true for some people some of the time. The CD includes amusing stories and songs, but also harrowing tales of means-testing and illness before the creation of the Welfare State and the NHS.

'One theme that emerges is the contempt with which poor people were treated before the Second World War and their consequent glee at managing to outwit those who held them in such low esteem. Another theme, which will be of use to teachers educating children about



consumerism and the environment, is the "make do and mend" attitude of so many of the interviewees: there is a whole track called "Waste Not, Want Not".

There is also a track devoted to immigrants who lived in back to backs, including a Jewish woman who was born in Warsaw in 1914 and came to England aged six; an Irish woman who recalls sharing a bed with fellow-lodgers; and the tailor from St. Kitts, whose shop provided a front which hid the last remaining 19th century courtyard of back to backs in Birmingham and saved it from the slum clearance of the 1960s'.

● The CD is on sale from The National Trust Back to Backs, 55-63 Hurst St, Birmingham B5 4TE, tel 0121 622 2442, price £6.50, including postage and packing, plus £6 for every additional CD sent to the same address. Cheques should be made out to The National Trust.

Back to Backs website:
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-birmingham_backtobacks