

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES USER GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Archives on 17 July 2007

Present: Prof.J. Beckett (Chairman), Mr P Gaw, Mr M. Dorrington, Prof. M. Bennett, Mr N Clark, Mr P Gaw, Ms D. Johnson, Mr P Jones, Mr S. Langford, Miss B.Sharp, Mr D. Walker and Mr C. Weir,

1 Apologies

Mr P. Reddish, Ms D. Ritchie, Dr D. Johnston

2 Peter Gaw, Head of Libraries, Archives and Information

- 2.1 The Chairman welcomed Peter Gaw to the meeting. The latter gave brief details of his earlier career: he had worked in Gloucestershire and lately in Swansea where he had managed a joint libraries, archives and museum service. He informed the meeting that before he had arrived to take up his post he had heard that Nottinghamshire provided a well managed Archive Service which had received a high TNA rating and this had been reinforced by comments received since taking up his post. He saw his role as forming a link with the rest of the L,A and I Service and to be an advocate for the Archive Service with the politicians especially in view of the joint arrangement with the City. He expressed his support for NAUG and his gratitude that such a voluntary body existed.

3 Membership and elections

- 3.1 The Chairman congratulated Martyn Bennett in gaining his professorship.
- 3.2 MSD reported that there had been no nominations for the elected place on NAUG, Ms Mawson having decided not to stand again. The Chairman agreed to write to Ms Mawson thanking her for her contribution, and requested her address. **Action: MSD/JB**
- 3.3 It was agreed to ask David Crook, formerly of TNA, whether he wished to be co-opted for the forthcoming year. It was noted that next year there would be two elected places available: one for two years and another for three. **Action: JB**

4 Minutes of the last meeting on 30 January 2006

With one amendment, the spelling of Dr Johnston's name (11.1) these were accepted as a correct record.

5 Matters arising

- 5.1 Item 4.1 The Chairman had written to David Lathrope, former Assistant Director (Libraries, Archives & Information) thanking him for his many years service to the Archives. MSD reported that no interim manager had been appointed and so the position of service director was still vacant.
- 5.2 Item 7.1 Storage accommodation: MSD reported that a building feasibility report had been produced to which he had responded and further news was awaited.

6 Practical Matters

None had been submitted to the Principal Archivist.

7 Archive Service Performance and Statistics, 2006/7

- 7.1 MSD pointed out that as a result of the previous year's report the document production standard had been improved from 100% in 30 minutes to 90% in 20 minutes and the Customer Charter altered accordingly. The change to the Charter was approved.
- 7.2 He also pointed out that NA's standards are more stringent than those in other CROs and yet are met. On being asked as to what he attributed this he replied that it was as a result of the processes in place and the commitment and hard work of the staff.
- 7.3 Other parts of the report were commented upon:
- the decline in reader numbers had been arrested in comparison with the previous year but he advised the Group that figures were down for the quarter April to June 2007 from the same period last year;
 - postal enquiries had dropped but these were compensated for by the increase in email enquiries;
 - there had been an increase in talks and visits
 - a decline in accessions, but these are unpredictable.

8 Audience Development Plan

- 8.1 MSD explained the background to this Plan, viz that the Service was conscious of not reaching all sections of the county and city populations and also a wish to halt the decline in reader numbers. A small staff working party had been set up, who used the guidance produced by MLA EM, to produce the Plan.
- 8.2 The national context for the Plan was explained ie that there is a national trend in the decline of readers visiting CROs but this is offset by the number of virtual users ie via the internet. MSD emphasised that NA was striving hard to get all the catalogues available on line and so

encourage people to visit the Archives and also that our remote user were regularly counted, indeed the only Archives statistic in the County Council Strategic Plan was of Virtual Archive visits. As this was going up, it did prove we were reaching new audiences.

- 8.3 The Plan was then discussed at length and the following noted:
- 1 Section 3.3 Many people were excluded from this list including the same type of people who use the Archives already (JB).
 - 2 Although not presently recorded it would be possible to determine how many people lived outside the county as the distance travelled is recorded on the PSQG survey and so some measure could be made (DW).
 - 3 It was pointed out that many people use our sources in Libraries on fiche (eg parish records) rather than visiting NA. It was agreed that it might be possible to get usage figures from our library colleagues (DJ).
 - 4 The reduction in the number of documents produced was noted (DW). It was pointed out that this was partly because all parish registers up to 1950 were now on fiche and also we count units of production rather than individual items since the weighing of archives was introduced.
 - 5 The question of how to broaden the family historian's research from the basic sources to the more complex ones and also into different avenues for research was discussed. MSD pointed out that NA was endeavouring to do this through its web pages and information leaflets and through the Family History Hour, the last session of which was devoted to 'Digging Deeper'.
 - 6 Working with education groups eg WEA and teachers and the need for NA to have a dedicated Education Officer was raised (MB). NA has done some work in this area including being involved with Emsource. Unfortunately funding for the latter was difficult and it was recognised that this was something which EMRAC needed to address.

9 Reports on Recent Developments at Nottinghamshire Archives

9.1 General

9.1.1 Staffing:

- A new post of Senior Archivist (Records Services) had been created and Ruth Imeson had been appointed. She would be concentrating on records management and digital preservation.
- The position of trainee conservator had been filled by an existing employee of the County Council on a trial basis as part of the re-deployment process. This had not worked out and the post would be advertised externally at the end of the month.

- The Research Assistant had resigned for personal reasons and the post has been re-advertised.
- The Administrative Officer had retired and a new one had been appointed. Jean Stanbridge would be joining the staff in August.

9.1.2 14th century Guild Roll

This had come up for auction last December and been bought by an American collector. An export ban had however been placed on it which gave NA the opportunity to raise the funds to purchase it. As well as a contribution from the County Council, grants were received from the MLA/Victoria and Albert Purchase Grant Fund and the Friends of the National Libraries.

The roll is important as it is the earliest record of any Nottingham religious guild and the only reference to the Guild of St Mary's, Nottingham. A facsimile is on display in the searchroom.

9.1.3 Parish Finding List

This has been launched on NA's website and includes details of all Church of England and non-conformist records held at NA with a note of where copies are also available in local libraries.

9.1.4 Depositors' Evening

The third depositors' evening had been held successfully on 11 July.

9.2 Archive Services (see attached report)

Barbara Sharp presented her report. DW asked about a list of the Southwell Chapter records and was informed that NA did have a list and he should ask the staff for it when using the searchroom.

9.3 Public Services & Outreach (see attached report)

Chris Weir presented his report.

10 National and Regional Archive issues

10.1 MSD reported that there was to be another national round of grants available from the Esme Fairbairn/Pilgrim Trust and a regional bid was being put together for the cataloguing of business records. However there is only £200,000 which will not go far between four regions.

10.2 Sarah Bridges, County Archivist of Northamptonshire is the new chair of EMRAC. The next meeting is at NA the following evening when Chris Weir will be giving a presentation on the education work we have been doing under the Strategic Commissioning project.

10.3 MLA EM has a new chief executive, Sam Beswick.

11 Any Other Business

- 11.1 Southwell Workhouse: PJ reported on the joint project between the National Trust and TNA to launch on TNA's website copies of the Charity Commissioners correspondence with the Southwell Union up to 1871. All the papers have been indexed by volunteers and the next phase is to continue the series up to 1900. TNA is hoping to get local bodies in other parts of the country interested in doing a similar project for their union.
- 11.2 DW asked how the self-financing research post was doing. MSD responded that it had not generated as much work as had been expected but once the vacancy had been filled, there would be a publicity drive. PJ asked whether consideration had been given to combining it with a post doing research at the Central Library but MSD replied that it would have been too complicated having one post funded by two authorities.

12 Date of Next Meeting

29 January 2008 at 4.30pm at Nottinghamshire Archives

Archive Services Report: July 2007

Accessioning and Cataloguing: There have been 76 accessions since the last meeting.

Additional deposits were received from the Foljambe estate, c 1595 - 1773 (acc 7169), Mapperley hospital, 19th - 20th cents (acc 7134) and the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham, 1961 - 1993 (acc 7140). Through the recommendation of Rupert Vinnicombe, a former principal librarian within the authority, we have received the records of the Newark and Sherwood Community and Voluntary Service, 1976 - 2000, (acc 7154), the Collingham Advice Centre, 1984 - 2006 (acc 7153) and Newark Civic Trust, 1964 - 1998 (acc 7172).

Of particular interest are the papers of the Lace Market Heritage Trust, 1991 - 2006 (acc 7146) which trust was of course responsible for the regeneration of the Lace Market area of Nottingham.

We also received the papers of the late Diana Barley relating to her work as a magistrate and in connection with the Elizabeth Fry Family Centre, c1960 - 2002 (acc 7183).

The cataloguing of the Newstead estate papers (DD NW) has been completed and work has recommenced on the Tallents correspondence (DD TL) which largely concerns WE Tallents and his successor, ES Godfrey's, activities as the Duke of Newcastle's agent both in estate and political matters.

Work continues on the cataloguing of the City archive, district council, parish council and county council records but all is still in draft form; any cataloguing of additional records to existing collections has had to be retained in draft until the IMPReS data had been transferred to CALM. After a very long and arduous year that has now been accomplished although not completely satisfactorily and there are several months editing to be done.

Conservation: The boxing and re-locating of our maps within the storage area has been completed and the next project is to reassess the storage of our volumes.

Volunteers: The Bishop's Transcript project, c1598 to 1812, is progressing well and letter E has been reached. Hopefully with the appointment of a new administrative officer, the clerical assistant will be able to re-commence entering the catalogue onto CALM.

Work also continues on the Archdeaconry of Nottingham probate records, letter F having been reached.

Public Services Report: July 2007

The latest series of Family History Hours, aimed at Family history beginners, finished on the 4 July. It repeated the same series of sessions as before, on Registration, the Census, Family History & the Internet, Wills & Probate and 'Digging Deeper'. Many of the people who attended were those who had failed to get on the previous course, so we had to do very little promotion. We undertook an evaluation of the series which revealed that the early evening slot, 5.30-6.30 had suited all but one attender and most recorded that they would return to use the Archives service. It is hoped to repeat the series in the New Year.

Among the groups who have visited the archives in recent weeks was a group of pupils from Elliott Durham School in Nottingham. The group visited on the 25th June. The pupils toured the building, had a session on Archives, and then we had a session where they helped us identify suitable material for the display on the theme of 'Youth' we are preparing under the Positive Action initiative. In early July we had two visits from Primary School pupils, from Toton. The pupils did a variety of activities at the Archives which included using quill pens and a workshop based on an early 1900s photograph of Nottingham.

Still on the theme of schools we had two school pupils with us on placements between 9-13 July. One was from Emmanuel School, near Nottingham and the other from Carlton-Le Willows in Gedling. They worked on several projects and undertook modules on cataloguing, accessioning, outreach, conservation and records management. In June we provided placements for a student on the Dundee Archive postgraduate course and a graduate who hopes to undertake a postgraduate course at a future date. In August we will be hosting a week's induction for a BSc Heritage Conservation and English student and this will lead to a series of days when they will be undertaking conservation project work. In September we have another two prospective course students with us for placements and a school in West Bridgford has asked to take one of their pupils in the autumn.

On the 5th July a group from St Mary's and St Peter's parishes came to visit the Archives. This was linked to the service's recent acquisition of the Nottingham 1371 Guild roll – a facsimile of the roll with extended captions is now on display in the search room reception area.

On the 11th July we held a Depositor's evening which was attended by 20 depositors. This provided depositors with an opportunity to see where and how their material is preserved and to view some of the deposited archives.

On the Saturday the 14th July we hosted a visit from the Anthony Powell Society. The Society was in Nottinghamshire that to explore places like Widmerpool that Powell used for some of his characters in his novels. Apparently Powell found the name Mr Widmerpool in Lucy Hutchinson's Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson and the Society visitors seemed delighted to see Lucy's original manuscript with the reference to Mr Widmerpool. The

Society was very keen to investigate these historical roots of these places and get a sense of time and place!

On the Saturday 8th September we will be holding an Open event for the English Heritage Open Day programme which will provide opportunities for existing and new users to see around the building and hear about what we do at the Archives.

At present we are organising a series of fortnightly Lunchtime talks for the autumn, starting on the 19th September– there will be talks by Peter Lester on ‘Slavery & Abolition’, Chris on ‘Riots & reform in Victorian Nottingham’, Bev Baker of the Galleries of Justice on ‘The Loss of Liberty’ and Richard Gaunt of the University of Nottingham, on ‘The 4th Duke of Newcastle, the Mob & Election Fever’.

Over the past year we have been working to create an addition to ‘emsource’, the MLA East Midlands Learning website, on the theme of Slavery & Abolition. This site has now been completed and a wide variety of our archive material, on this theme, is now available along with related learning activities, teachers’ notes and related transcripts for use by schools or anyone with an interest in the theme of slavery and abolition.