

## **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES USER GROUP**

Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Archives on 15 July 2008

Present: Prof. J. Beckett (Chairman), Mr. M. Dorrington, Mr. P. Gaw, Ms D Johnson., Mr. P. Jones, Ms. B. Lockyer, Mr. P. Reddish, Miss B. Sharp, Mr. D. Walker, Mr. C. Weir

### **1 Apologies**

Prof. M. Bennett, Dr D. Johnston, Mr. S. Langford, Mr L Wright

### **2 Elections**

Mr Dorrington reported that there had been three nominees: Mr L Wright, Mr P Jones and Ms D Johnson. Ms D Johnson had withdrawn on being re-nominated to represent the Notts Family History Society and it was agreed with the parties concerned that Mr Jones would serve for three years and Mr Wright for two. Thus an election was not required.

### **3 Minutes of the last meeting**

These were accepted as a correct record.

### **4 Matters arising**

- 4.1 Item 4.2 NA Extension: Mr Dorrington reported that the architects were working on a third design. He and members of the Property Services department of the County Council were visiting the Borthwick Institute, York and the East Riding of Yorkshire Treasure House, Beverley later in the week and going to the Norfolk Record Office next month, all of which were new repositories.
- 4.2 Item 7.1.1: Service Director for Culture: Mr Dorrington reported that an interim Director (Keith Stevens) had been appointed; the advertisement for the permanent post was due to appear in September.
- 4.3 Item 6.1: Regional bid for funds from the Esmée Fairbairn/Pilgrim Trust: Professor Becket had enquired of Nicholas Kingsley, the chairman of the panel, why the bid had been rejected at Phase Two. NK had responded that the flaws in the management funding arrangements had not been apparent at Phase One and so the bid had been accepted for Phase Two at which point they were noticed. NK had hoped that the Region would reapply. Mr Dorrington pointed out that the Region had not reapplied because the amount of money available was only £135K and since the bid was for 50% of that (at £70K) it seemed unlikely that it would have been successful.

Mr Dorrington added that a subsequent bid had been made by NA alone for funding to have the Southwell Minster archive catalogued and he thanked Professor Becket and Mr Walker for their letters of support.

## **5 Practical issues**

Reader printer: Mr Jones pointed out that when one uses the microfiche reader next to the reader printer and the printer is in constant use, there is a build up of chemical fumes in the vicinity. Mr Dorrington responded that the staff were aware of this but no one had complained before. The situation would be monitored and the isolation of the reader printer would be considered in designing the extension to the searchroom. Unfortunately there did not appear to be anywhere to re-site the printer at present. **Action: CW**

## **6 Access policy**

Mr Dorrington introduced this pointing out that it outlined our current practices and did not introduce anything new. There being no comments from those present, Mr Reddish proposed and Mr Jones seconded that the Policy be formally approved by the meeting; carried unanimously.

## **7 Public Services Quality Group Survey of Visitors to British Archives, 2007 report**

7.1 Mr Dorrington spoke on this. It was pointed out that although the overall rating had gone up from 98.3% to 98.8% there had been slippage in some of the areas when compared with the national and regional averages; the latter he thought was because of improvements in the services provided by other offices in the Region rather than an actual decline in NA's. Mr Dorrington outlined the actions to be taken to improve performance further and then invited comments.

7.2 Professor Beckett commented on the number of times the size of the car park was mentioned and the fact that the statistics showed that 48% of users came by car, motorbike or taxi. He suggested that while the information on the website about parking at NA was correct perhaps the wording should be altered to emphasise the shortage of spaces at NA and to encourage users to use the park and ride. Mr Dorrington agreed that he would look into this. **Action: MSD**

7.3 Concerning document delivery, Professor Beckett said he would encourage additional productions, eg a half hourly production during lunch hours.

7.4 Ms Johnson complained about the noise of the staff keyboard. It was agreed that enquiries would be made to the IT section to see if a quieter keyboard was available **Action: BES**

- 7.5 Mr Walker commented on the positive impact visitors to the Archives had on tourism in the area.

## **8 Archive Service Performance and Statistics 2007/8**

- 8.1 Mr Dorrington spoke on this. He pointed out that all the targets had been met with the exception of all accessions being acknowledged within one week (4 out of 174 missed the deadline).
- 8.2 With regard to virtual visits, Professor Becket enquired whether the figures could be broken down; Mr Dorrington replied that there were more 'visits' to the NCC web page than there were to the A2A site, with the latter dropping in usage. Professor Beckett wondered whether the origin of the virtual users could be ascertained; Mr Dorrington said he would enquire of the web team in County Hall about this but getting such figures would probably be difficult. **Action: MSD**
- 8.3 Ms Johnson asked whether 'hits' from the searchroom PCs were included; Mr Dorrington responded that only external 'hits' were counted.

## **9 Reports on Recent Developments at Nottinghamshire Archives**

### **9.1 General**

- 9.1.1 Mr Dorrington reported that a grant had been received from the Strategic Commissioning Fund to finance the production of a schools loan box. Mr Weir would be producing this and using it with pupils and teachers from the Annie Holgate School, Hucknall.
- 9.1.2 There had been an unsuccessful bid to the Their Past Your Future fund for a grant to catalogue a series of World War I memorials. Another bid put forward by Local Studies concerning World War II sources had also failed.
- 9.1.3 NAWCAT, Nottinghamshire Archives online catalogue had gone live and Mr Dorrington expressed his thanks to Barbara Sharp, Josanne Peet and Peter Lester for their perseverance with this project.
- 9.1.4 Turning Back the Pages at Raleigh produced by Chris Weir and Nick Clark had been published to link in with the exhibition at the Weston Gallery. The latter was likely to beat all records for visitors to an exhibition in that venue.
- 9.1.5 A new Record Centre had recently been opened at Ollerton as part of the County Council's property strategy. It will serve the north of the county. Two extra staff had been appointed to help run it, one of whom was Matt Hallsworth, who had transferred from NA.

9.1.6 The only other staffing change was that Dona Bickerdyke was now on maternity leave for a year and that a temporary replacement was being sought.

9.1.7 Discovering Lost Ways: the scope of this national project to identify all the footpaths and bridle paths not on the current definitive maps had been under-estimated by the government department involved and the project had been scrapped. Work had been done on Nottinghamshire's paths and the resultant data had now been received by NA.

9.2 Archive Services (see attached report)

9.1.2 Miss Sharp delivered her report. Professor Becket asked whether the back log of paper catalogues would be re-keyed by typists in India; he was informed that how the data would be entered had not yet been discussed.

9.1.3 Public Services and Outreach (see attached report)

Mr Weir presented his report

## **10 National and Regional Archive issues**

10.1 MLA

Mr Dorrington reported that the number of staff at the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council was being reduced and that it was being relocated to Birmingham. There would no longer be regional offices after April but a central team of c30 people. He thought that we would not receive the support we had in the past from MLA as a result.

10.2 The National Archives Self-assessment

Mr Dorrington spoke on this. He informed the meeting that he was in the process of completing the form for this year, the results of which would give us not only a star rating but also show whether we were improving, stable or in decline. The rating had increased from a three star top rating to a four and thresholds would be set at definite point levels to determine the rating given to each office. Many of the questions had changed and whereas last time we had scored highly in some areas, the change in the questions would mean we would drop points in those same areas. He pointed out that last time we had just fallen within the top 10% of offices but he was pessimistic of our achieving such a high rating for the present year.

Professor Becket pointed out that when one considered the other offices in the top 10% eg Hampshire, Norfolk and the East Riding which were better funded and had more recently built premises than Nottinghamshire, then the previous year's result had been very good.

**11 Any other business**

- 11.1 Professor Beckett reported that an All Party Parliamentary Group under Tim Boswell, MP had recently been set up to consider matters relating to archives.

**12 Date of next meeting**

27 January 2009 at 4.30 at Nottinghamshire Archives

## **Archive Services Report: 15 July 2008**

**NAWCAT:** the most significant development has been the launch of our on-line catalogue, NAWCAT which finally went live at the beginning of July. Thanks are due to all the archivists involved who have been editing the past ten years' worth of data (and continue to do so) but especially to Jo Peet and Peter Lester for their work on the web front end itself. There is still a lot of editing to do to get all the data transferred from the last system on line. The next step is to devise a strategy for getting the first 45 years of our catalogues on line.

**Accessioning and Cataloguing:** There have been 78 accessions since the last meeting.

Seven accessions were received from schools including the logbooks from the Greasley Beauvale school which D H Lawrence attended and one of the log books includes references to him including the fact that he won a scholarship to the High School (S/L76/1).

The article duly appeared in the National Farmers' Union's magazine *The British Farmer and Grower* in June; we now wait to see if any records are forthcoming.

Among the accessions received were the records of the Gilstrap library (acc 7341), the Notts Footpath Preservation Society, 1937 - 1995 (acc 7365), the East Midlands William Morris Study Group, 1983 - 1988 (acc 7351) and Mansfield and District Trades Council, 1908 - 1993 (acc 7346). As a result of the Raleigh exhibition at the Weston Gallery, a product catalogue for Rudge cycles was deposited (acc 7372).

With regard to cataloguing, work continues on the Tallents correspondence, the District and Parish Council deposits, recently received school records and the City Engineering plans.

**Conservation:** Work has begun on implementing the National Preservation Office's Preservation Assessment survey. This involves choosing a sample of 400 items from the holdings and then assessing the condition of each one and its storage. The results are entered onto a database which is sent to the NPO at the British Library and they use the findings to produce a report on the state of the Archives. The information is also used to build up a picture of the condition of archives nationally.

**Volunteers:** These have embarked on yet another project- wrapping. Many of our volumes need wrapping or re-wrapping and the volunteers undertake this one afternoon a week. They are continuing with work on the Bishop's Transcripts and the Exchequer court probate records project.

**Microfilming:** the parish register fiche, produced as part of our annual programme, are now available in the searchroom.

## **Public Services Report: 15 July 2008**

Since the last meeting there have been talks to various groups, including the Nottingham Local Access Forum, which was especially interested in sources of information on the City's footpaths and open spaces, to students on the University of Nottingham's PGCE Humanities course, Eastwood Probus Club and to the University of Nottingham's Alumni as part of the Raleigh Cycles exhibition at the Lakeside Pavilion and a lunchtime talk has been given at the Lakeside on the subject of Advertising & Business Icons 1900-1950. We have also provided a Family History taster session at the newly refurbished Carlton-In-Lindrick Library and we recently hosted and helped to tutor a day course for Trent University students on their Heritage Management course and it is hoped to repeat this on an annual basis. We have also provided a morning's workshop session on Archives for pupils from Toton Primary School.

On Exhibitions the Wheels Of Fortune exhibition continues to the 3<sup>rd</sup> August with visitor numbers we understand probably at a record number for the gallery. We also displayed 6 of Nottingham's charters at a civic exhibition on the theme of 'Mayors & Sheriffs' held at the Council House from 24-26 April. For this we also provided general information on the history of civic offices and various images of past mayors and sheriffs for inclusion in two archival books on these officers that will eventually be deposited in the Archives. The civic exhibition was organised by Mrs Dennett, in memory of her husband Frank Dennett, a former sheriff and long-serving councillor and great enthusiast for the history of Nottingham who I knew for many years. The exhibition attracted well over 2000 visitors.

We have also loaned a duplicate set of our display panels on the African Caribbean Heritage in Nottinghamshire to Brunts School in Mansfield.

Between January and March we were a lead partner in a Young Cultural Creators Project in association with Rosslyn Park Primary School in Aspley, Aspley Library and author Andy Barratt to create a drama based on archive sources on the life of George Africanus. It involved research sessions at Aspley library and the Archives, some of which used our display panels on the African Caribbean Heritage and there were sessions with Andy at the school to put the drama together. This led to a very successful performance of the drama at Rosslyn, which it is hoped to repeat in September at Ellis Guildford School.

Earlier this year we heard that we had been successful in a bid for A Learning Links Project. The project aims to create a school loans box that will include resources for the national curriculum module on the Industrial Revolution. For this we were linked with Holgate Secondary School in Hucknall and two teachers from the school are due to visit the Archives next week for an induction and planning session.

However we heard recently that our bid for funds to undertake a project to list a major collection of material on First World War Memorials and undertake an

outreach programme related to the collection with two schools and the Sherwood Foresters Museum has been unsuccessful.

In recent weeks we have arranged week-long work experience programmes for two postgraduate students and a school pupil, Emily Harrison, from Arnold Hill School.

Recently we organised a programme of events for the summer and autumn that will include another Family History Hour series, a series of taster sessions, a Depositors Evening which was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> July, an Open day on the 13<sup>th</sup> September as part of the Heritage Open Day programme and a series of Lunchtime Talks that will be organised to coincide with the Archive Awareness theme of 'Communities: Take your Place In History'.

All these events except the depositors' evening appear on our website.