

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES USER GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Archives on 21 July 2009

Present: Professor J Beckett (Chairman), Professor M Bennett, Mr M Dorrington, Mr P Gaw, Ms D Johnson, Dr D Johnston, Mr P Jones, Ms B Lockyer, Mr P Reddish, Ms D Ritchie, Miss B Sharp, Mr D Walker, Mr C Weir

1 Apologies

There were no apologies, all members being present

2 Elections and Membership

- 2.1 There had been one nomination (for Peter Reddish) for the one vacancy and so he had been elected un-opposed.
- 2.2 Mr Dorrington had written to the Chief Executive of the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham concerning a representative to the Group but had received no reply.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

These were accepted as a correct record.

4 Matters Arising

- 4.1 Item 2.2 Marker cards: Mr Weir reported that these were now available for use with the index drawers in the search room.
- 4.2 Item 6 The National Archives Self-Assessment: Mr Dorrington reported that when the results for this had been published NA was 8th throughout the country and the highest scoring repository in the East and West Midlands.
- 4.3 Item 10.1.4 Ultra -violet light: Mr Dorrington reported that he had received a response from the National Preservation Office concerning the use of this but was still awaiting a reply from the Council's Health and Safety Officer. He would write again **Action: MSD**

5 Practical Issues

None had been notified to the Principal Archivist before the meeting and none were raised at the meeting.

6 Archive Service Performance and Statistics, 2008/9

- 6.1 Mr Dorrington spoke to this item and pointed out that all the standards had been met with the exception of the accessioning, which was the

result of 22 accessions being received on one day from Newark Library. He pointed out that the Service would be reviewing the standards over the coming months.

- 6.2 Mr Dorrington pointed out that the statistics showed an increase of 5% in readers, a 36% increase in web 'visits', one of 9% in post/email enquiries and 75% in paid research enquiries.
- 6.3 Mr Gaw informed the meeting that research recently undertaken within the County Council had shown that NA's response times to emails was exemplary.
- 6.4 The reasons for the decrease in the number of documents consulted were discussed and it was suggested that some way of measuring the number of surrogates used should be considered, as the use of fiche would appear to have affected the production figures. Mr Dorrington agreed that some thought would be given to this. **Action: MSD**

7 Public Consultation

- 7.1 Mr Dorrington presented the results of the survey held in the previous February requesting views on opening times, any ideas for the new extension (public facilities) and ideas for improvements to the Reprographics Service. He pointed out that the results were as he had expected; ie they confirmed his assumptions. Most of the actions arising from the survey were dependent upon the extension being built and so the architect had been informed of these.
- 7.2 Professor Beckett highlighted the trend across the country whereby record offices were restricting their opening hours, including TNA which was proposing to close on Mondays from the New Year.

8 Victoria County History

- 8.1 Mr Dorrington reported that the County Council had agreed to contribute towards the re-establishment of the VCH in Nottinghamshire in partnership with Derbyshire VCH and the University of Nottingham. A member of staff would be employed one day a week for 2 years.
- 8.2 Professor Beckett pointed out that the VCH was being promoted throughout the country. The approach is very different from that originally adopted at the end of the 19th cent, and would involve community groups and volunteers. A general meeting would be held on 15 Sep 2009 at 6.30pm at NA for anyone interested in becoming involved. The Notts Local History Association and the Thoroton Society would be advertising it and Ms Johnson agreed to have some information included in the Notts Family History Society Journal, if JB would provide some. **Action: JB**

9 Reports on recent developments at Nottinghamshire Archives

9.1 General

- 9.1.1 Extension: the proposal to extend the storage and public areas of the building had been costed at £3 million. Mr Dorrington reported that public finance was extremely tight and that the new county administration was reviewing the capital programme.
- 9.1.2 Change of CC administration: Mr Dorrington informed the meeting that as a result of the local government elections, the cabinet member for Culture and Community is now Councillor John Cottee.
- 9.1.3 Staffing: Neil Bettridge had been appointed as the Southwell Minster project archivist and had begun work in May.
- 9.1.4 Staffing: Sam Collenette had been appointed to the new post of Local Studies Manager and would commence work in August. She would be based at NA.
- 9.1.5 Nottinghamshire Renaissance Heritage Awards: NA had had two projects short-listed for these awards: the Wheels of Fortune exhibition and NAWCAT, the on-line catalogue. The awards ceremony was being held on the 23 July.
- 9.1.6 1911 census: TNA had decided to provide free access to the 1911 census in 1 repository in each region and NA had been chosen for the East Midlands. It would hopefully be available shortly. NA would be introducing a booking system for the PCs. Ms Ritchie mentioned that the City Library restricts access to half an hour a day per person, on 1 PC.

9.2 Archives Services Report (see below)

Miss Sharp presented her report.

9.3 Public Services & Outreach Report (see below)

Mr Weir presented his report.

In response to Mr Jones' enquiry about a social event being planned to celebrate the Archives' 60th anniversary, Mr Dorrington informed the meeting that he was in the process of finalising the date.

10 National and Regional Archive issues

10.1 Archives for the 21st century

- 10.1.1 Mr Dorrington presented this consultation document produced by The National Archives and explained that once the consultation period was

over it would be published as a command paper and an action plan produced. Dr Johnston pointed out that there was no mention of how the proposals would be financed and that there was little on preservation or collection management. Mr Dorrington pointed out there were no references to standards.

10.1.2 Mr Dorrington reported that he had responded on behalf of the County and City Councils. It was agreed that the group as a whole would not respond; individuals were welcome to do so if they so wished.

10.2 Business Archives

10.2.1 Mr Dorrington reported that TNA had also produced another public document, this time concerning business archives, called *Corporate Memory: A Guide to Managing Business Archives*, giving examples of how businesses have made use of their archives. He also mentioned the *National Strategy for Business Archives (England and Wales)* and best practice website. He would ask for the internet links to be included in the minutes.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/corporatememory

www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk

<http://www.managingbusinessarchives.co.uk>

10.2.2 He reported that TNA would be appointing a Business Archives Manager and setting up a Business Archive Strategy Group.

10.3 The National Archives

10.3.1 It was reported that TNA

- had reorganised the Advisory Service into the Archives Sector Development Section
- had published a national collections strategy
- were proposing to close on Mondays from Jan 2010

10.4 MLA

10.4.1 It was reported that

- All the regional offices had been closed and with the demise of MLA (EM) there would be no discrete body working for the interests of archives in the region. Each region did however have a Regional Manager; that for the East Midlands was Brian Ashley.
- The learning pages of MLA (EM), Emsource, had been moved to the Learn with Museums site.
- EMRAC would continue to exist and they were still working on the Literary and Tourism Network and also on an Olympiad journal project for young people with MLA

10.5 British Records Association

10.5.1 Professor Beckett highlighted a flier he had received at a conference issued by the BRA concerning the retention of deeds. This was discussed. Mr Dorrington suggested something could be added to the Archives website about deeds. Consideration would also be given to contacting building societies. **Action: MSD**

11 **Any Other Business**

There was none.

12 **Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 26 Jan 2010 at 4.30pm at Nottinghamshire Archives

Archive Services Report: 21 July 2009

Accessioning and Cataloguing: There have been 90 accessions since the last meeting including deposits from the Notts Congregational Union Inc, 20th cent (acc 7585) and papers of the pressure group set up to save the railway line at West Bridgford, as a local amenity, known as the Green Line Group (acc 7599).

With regard to cataloguing, work continues on the Tallents correspondence and the City Engineering plans. The cataloguing of the district council records has been completed and listing of the Brunt's charity records has been resumed. The listing of the main deposit of records relating to the Vernon Road Bleach works is nearing completion.

Small deposits continue to be listed and added to our online catalogue NAWCAT which had c 165,000 visits in June.

A report has been completed on entering the remaining 47 years backlog of paper catalogues to the site and this has revealed that it would take three people 4 years to achieve this at a cost of £335K. We are now investigating grant awarding bodies to fund this work.

Conservation: The report of the National Preservation Office's Preservation Assessment Survey has been received and an action plan drawn up which mainly comprises a survey of the preservation needs of our holdings. This will take several years to achieve but work should begin this year.

Work is continuing on parish and small deposited collections, the conservation needs of which were identified as a result of the stock check of these collections. Under the MLA's *Benchmarks in Collection Care* standard a review of the storage of the flat items has been undertaken and the amount of work to improve it has been assessed. Thought is now being given to finding the money to achieve that improvement.

The trainee conservator has completed 14 weeks of her off-site training, leaving her 7 weeks yet to do. The aim is that the training should be completed next summer.

Volunteers: All the wrapping of the archives has been completed and the staff are very grateful to the volunteers for persevering with this. Work continues on the Bishop's Transcripts and the Exchequer court probate records projects.

BES
9 Jul 09

Public Services & Outreach Report 22 July 2009

We held a variety of events in the first half of this year, including a Family Fun Afternoon on Saturday the 18 April, a night of 'Strange Deaths & Ghostly Occurrences!' on Friday 15 May and a Manorial Study day on Saturday 27 June. The Family Fun event had a low attendance but it was a good opportunity to try out the various activities like marbling and papermaking and I think we are now in a better position to assess what will work at such an event and how many visitors we could realistically cope with – which is less than we originally thought! Some of our volunteers assisted at the event and were a huge help. We are going to re-run the event this autumn. The evening of Ghostly Occurrences was fully booked and proved a lively event with lots of interest and positive feedback from the attendees. It included a background talk from Chris Weir and a wonderfully spooky session from the Storytellers of Nottingham. The Manorial Study Day was also well attended. This started with sessions on manorial records and looking at manorial landscapes and continued in the afternoon with a visit to Donington-Le Heath restored manor house in Leicestershire. There have also been the daytime and evening visits from all kinds of local groups including the Nottingham Oddfellows, Wollaton Drama Group, the Nottinghamshire County Link organisation, and the Alfreton WEA local history group. During April and May we held another Family History Hour series that was very well attended and the evaluations seemed very favourable.

Between the 18 March and 26 April the display panels on 'Getting Your Indentures: The Life & Times of the Poor Apprentice' were put up at the National Trust's Southwell Workhouse. The panels were put together by Jo Peet in association with the staff and volunteers at the Workhouse. Jo also delivered a talk at the Workhouse on the theme of 'Finding Your Apprentice Ancestors'. In the autumn we are collaborating again with the Trust on a display on the theme of 'Kill or Cure! Bygone Medicine in Nottinghamshire' and we will also be putting on a talk at the Workhouse on this same subject. We also provided 5 showcases on the archives of Edwinstowe for their recent Village Extravaganza with a series of displays at the local library. The selection of archives was organized by our archivist Jaime Harris-Hughes. And we put on display a selection of charters at Nottingham's Council House on the 19-20th June as part of a civic exhibition on aldermen of the City. We are also liaising with the University's Manuscripts Department on the Gladstone exhibition this autumn at the Lakeside Centre on the University Campus.

The autumn programme of events includes the series of lunchtime talks that will be badged to celebrate the Office's 60th Anniversary. This starts with Adrian Henstock on the Savile family archives and Rufford on 14 October. Then there's Professor Beckett on Researching Parish Churches in Nottinghamshire Archives, Philip Jones on 'Paupers & Patients: The Workhouse & Its Records' and finally Elaine Harwood, who compiled the new edition of Pevsner on 'Not Just Bricks & Mortar! Discovering Nottingham's

Architectural Heritage. Then we are participating in the English Heritage Open Days event on Saturday 12th September and the Family Fun Afternoon will be on the 17th October. We will also be running a series of Taster Sessions on a variety of themes during the autumn. There are one or two other possibilities for the autumn programme but details are yet to be finalised.

In addition we hope to run a competition for young people from mid-November to early 2010 in association with the Nottinghamshire Local History Association and Children's Services. The title of the competition is A DAY IN THE LIFE OF... and entrants would write/blog/ record electronically their feelings and activities during a single day within the event period. The idea is to encourage young people to value their own lives in their local communities, to create an archive that will hopefully provide an insight into the lives of young people. There will be different categories, according to age groups. Entrants may be school pupils, or attending a youth organisation or individuals can make a submission. There would be an awards presentation in the New Year.

I'd like just to finish with a word in praise of Brian Bailey, a former member of the User group, a regular supporter of the Archives and a regular user of the search room. Brian wrote this week to say that owing to an eye condition he could no longer drive and therefore visit the search room to undertake his researches and transcription work and thanks the staff here for all the support he had received. While I hope Brian will still manage to visit the Archives occasionally, perhaps to special events, I thought it might be nice for the Group to acknowledge Brian's contribution to the Archives service.