

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES USER GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Archives on 30 January 2007

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

1 Apologies

Mr S. Langford.

2 Membership & elections

- 2.1 Mary Mawson's term on the group ends in the summer – invitations for nominations will be issued.

3 Minutes of the last meeting on the 18 July 2006

- 3.1 These were accepted as a correct record.

4 Matters arising

- 4.1 Item 8.1.2 Mr Dorrington reported that David Lathrope, Assistant Director (Libraries, Archives & Information) was leaving the County Council. LA&I has been incorporated in a new Communities Department with Mick Burrows as strategic director and there will be five service directors. An interim manager will replace David Lathrope until the post is filled permanently. Mr Dorrington expressed his appreciation of David Lathrope's support for Archives and Local Studies. Prof. Beckett indicated that he would, on behalf of the User Group, express thanks to David Lathrope

5 Practical Issues

- 5.1 Mary Mawson commented on the difficulty of reading some of the wills on microfiche. Mark Dorrington recognised the problem, pointing out that the fiche were provided, free, by the Church of LDS and adapted from microfilm. There were possibilities of digitisation though this was very much in the long-term. Bev Lockyer indicated that Archives had purchased more large magnification lenses for the search room readers that would help readability.

6 PSQG Survey of Visitors to British Archives, 2006

- 6.1 Mark Dorrington reported that the overall rating, in the very good and good category, for Nottinghamshire Archives had risen from 95.9%

to 98.3%. The service is above average both regionally and nationally. Actions for the future, following the Survey, would include improvements to visitor facilities, website improvements, reviewing opening hours and broadening the user base. The audience development plan, now being developed, would be addressing the issue of the user base. Prof Beckett congratulated the Archives on the results.

7 TNA Inspection

7.1 Mark Dorrington reported on the Inspection. The inspection underlined the need for additional accommodation – a building feasibility study was in progress. Dr Johnston noted that this was the first Inspection following the combining of the TNA and HMC. There was some discussion over the possible solutions for expansion of the Archives in the future.

8 TNA Self-assessment

8.1 The inspection had piloted a self-assessment of local authority archive services. Nottinghamshire was judged to be a three-star service and was in the top 10% of all archive services. It was noted that the service could not expect to meet the target of 0.75% of gross revenue on training and that this was not realistic. On the issue of Investors In People Mark Dorrington reported that the Council had not renewed IIP because of restructuring but it would probably be an issue in the future. On the matter of uncatalogued accessions it was noted that it was not realistic to put these on the internet at present owing to practical difficulties. The possibility of putting index cards online was raised by Philip Jones but Mark Dorrington commented that planned work on the conversion of data would render the cards superfluous. Mr Dorrington also commented that a2a information would also be incorporated into NA's data.

9 Reports on Recent Developments at Nottinghamshire Archives

9.1 General

9.1.1 Following Rupert Vinnicombe's retirement Mark Dorrington will take the lead role for local studies in Libraries, Archives & Information

9.1.2 Alexa Rees has been appointed to the post of Archivist (Public Services & Cataloguing)

9.1.3 Sue Horsman has been appointed to the new (self-financing) research post

9.1.4 The conservator vacancy, which was advertised three times unsuccessfully, has now been converted to a trainee post. The term is

for three years. It has received some funding from MLA (East Midlands).

9.1.5 Archive Services (see attached report)

Barbara Sharp presented her report

9.1.6 Public Services & Outreach (see attached report)

Chris Weir presented his report

10 National and Regional Archive issues

10.1 Alan Ball Local history award (2006)

This had been awarded for 'Viewing The Lifeless Body' by Bernard Heathcote which had been published by the Libraries, Archives & Information Publications group. The award was presented at a County hall reception to the chairman of NCC.

10.2 Positive Action Initiative

A small grant had been awarded to Nottinghamshire Archives to produce a series of display panels on the theme of Young People. It would be planned with input from a group of school pupils and a former work experience student.

11 Any Other Business

11.1 Dorothy Johnson reported on the move of the University of Nottingham's Manuscripts Department to the King's Meadow site. The move had gone successfully and the Department was now very busy. New collections were already being deposited. The general reaction had been very favourable. The Department was now opening one Saturday a month. Nottinghamshire Archives staff were due to visit.

11.2 Peter Reddish raised the issue of gas records. It was noted that some museum material, and possibly archives, may be moving to Snibston Discovery Park. Mark Dorrington suggested Mr Reddish contact Carl Harrison at the Leicestershire Record Office to check their involvement and interest in archive material.

12 Date of Next Meeting

17 July 2007 at 4.30pm at Nottinghamshire Archives

Archive Services Report: January 2007

Accessioning and Cataloguing: There have been 75 accessions since the last meeting including additional deposits of records from the solicitors Larken and Co of Newark, 19th - 20th cent (acc 7030) and the Diocesan Board of Finance, 19th - 20th cent (acc 7032). Among the other accessions of note are the records of NAVO (Networking Action with Voluntary Organisations), 1993 - 2001 (acc 7045), the records of the Graphic, Paper and Media Sector Union, 19th - 20th cent (acc 7033), and those of Cherrington and Sons of Newark, chemists. The Hopkin papers relating to D H Lawrence were transferred to the Archives from Eastwood Library at the end of December.

Cataloguing has begun on the Newstead estate papers (acc 6903) and is progressing on the City engineering plans and on district council records. A large amount of time however has had to be devoted to the transfer of the data from IMPReS to CALM which is proving a time consuming and complex matter. Work is also well underway on the design of the public interface for the internet.

Microfilming: All those parish registers of baptism, marriage and burial which were deposited in 2006 have been filmed and the fiche should be available in the searchroom by Easter.

Records Management: This year's annual review produced 12,324 files for assessing. Progress is being made with departments in sorting out their files *in situ*.

Conservation: The boxing and re-locating of our maps within the storage area is due to take place next month which will be a great improvement.

The temporary Preservation Assistant left in the autumn which has meant that the cleaning of new accessions including the van load from Larken's has fallen to the remaining two staff. However work continues on the separation of the tithe maps and awards and on work for the local studies libraries.

Volunteers: Work continues on the Archdeaconry of Nottingham probate records, letter C having been reached which is the letter being sorted by the volunteers on the Bishop's Transcripts' project, which as reported last time is on its final (but longest) phase sorting and listing the transcripts from c1598 to 1812.

Training: As well as attending various courses provided by the Department on internal policies etc, visits have taken place to the Latter Days Saints' Centre at West Bridgford and the Land Registry in the City. Staff have also visited TNA and visits to the new University Department of Manuscripts are planned for April.

Public Services Report: January 2007

Search Room

The new, sliding, entrance doors will probably now be familiar to members of the Users Group and will offer more security for the building and improved accessibility. The new desk design has also improved accessibility and has provided more space for storing and receiving documents from the document store. To help family history beginners we are in the middle of running another series of Family History Hours. The series topics are on registration, the census, family history & the internet, probate records and 'digging deeper'. Bookings have been very good and following publicity on the Council's intranet, the evening Post and promotion through our mailing list there are demands for this to be repeated. We are also going to re-run the modules as part of a training day for library staff in April.

Outreach

Recent group visits have included groups from Beckingham, where a local group has received Lottery funds for various heritage projects; from The Wayfarers' Club, a rambling club that has deposited some very interesting archives with the office; from Southwell and Farndon branches of the Workers Educational Association; Bleasby Women's Institute; North Muskham local History Group and we had 50 children (one group in the morning and another in the afternoon) from Spring Street Junior School in Hucknall. They undertook projects based on dating documents, assessing diaries and letters written by children and analysing Victorian images.

While group visits continue to flourish the response to last autumn's lunchtime talks series was disappointing. Although the series, based on the theme of Leisure, was targeted at a popular audience bookings were well down. As a result the mailing list has been re-assessed and supplemented following recent publicity for family History Hour. We also aim to increase publicity through the internet. This autumn we plan to do a series based on the theme of 'Slavery To Citizenship' and we would be grateful for any ideas for good speakers who might be able to contribute to this theme.

The project to produce an education resource on the theme of 'Slavery to Citizenship, funded through MLA East Midlands, is now well underway. A researcher, Peter Foden, has been identifying material from our archive collections and documents based on the life of George Africanus and on the theme of abolition have been scanned for placing on the draft emsource website. To help guide the project a partnership meeting was held which included both teachers and community partners. The website will be aimed at the History and Citizenship curricula for key stage 3 (11-14 yr olds). Last autumn our current Black History display panels and some supplementary material, was borrowed by the Council's Black Workers' Group and placed in the foyer area at County Hall.

Finally, last autumn, we were approached by the local Amateur Swimming Association about archives relating to the cross Channel swimmer, Tom Blower. One of its members was in possession of a large trophy that had been presented at some time to Tom Blower but they wanted it to be placed somewhere more secure. Eventually it was agreed that it would be kept by the City Council, along with some historical information about Tom Blower, and a presentation, attended by the Principal Archivist was held at the Council House last November.