

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES USER GROUP

Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Archives on 31st January 2006

Present: Prof.J. Beckett (Chairman); Mr.M. Dorrington; Dr M. Bennett; Mr. N. Clark; Dr. D. Johnston; Ms. D. Ritchie; Miss. B. Sharp; Mr C. Weir; Ms M. Mawson and Mr D. Walker

The Chairman welcomed Dorothy Ritchie, representing Nottingham Library Service and Derek Walker representing the Nottinghamshire Local History Association

1 Apologies

Mr P. O'Malley and Mr S. Langford

2 Election and Membership

It was noted that an election would be necessary later in the year and Mr O'Malley had indicated a wish not to stand again

3 Minutes of the last meeting on 19 July 2006

The minutes were accepted as a correct record

4 Matters Arising

None

5 Practical Issues

None

6 Visitor Survey 2005

This follow-up survey in four areas where we had performed below the national and regional average had highlighted a number of areas for improvement. These had now been considered and a range of improvements introduced. Several high-magnification lenses had been purchased; a water cooler had been installed in the visitors' room; a list of alpha codes has been made available; cleanliness issues in the public areas were being addressed and there had been more promotion of the same-day photocopying service. A licence had been obtained for the national Burial Index and we had been presented with a copy of the Vital Records Index. A 3.45pm document production will be introduced this year.

7 Learning and Outreach Policy

Mark Dorrington discussed the context for this new policy. Preparatory work had been undertaken with the assistance of Helen Ward of EMLLAC and the work had used the Inspired Learning For All framework. While the Archives had been undertaking a variety of outreach work in the past the new policy aims to provide more direction and focus. It also aims to address issues like broadening the range of users. There was discussion on how to attract a wider range of users and the traditional dependence of archives on family historians. It was acknowledged that the PSQG survey did not take into account all users eg. internet users.

The Policy was accepted by the User Group

8 Customer Charter Revisions

- 8.1 Mark Dorrington noted that an addition to the charter indicating the 'community' served by the Archives was necessary. Prof Beckett suggested that any wording should incorporate users who although not physically visiting the search room nevertheless used the service. Mr Dorrington agreed to look at a suitable wording to include these users.
- 8.2 Mark Dorrington drew attention to the introduction of 'standard' for undertaking photographic orders (one week). After comments from the Group it was further agreed to include a phrase regarding permission for visitors to use their own cameras for an appropriate fee.
- 8.3 It was noted that the term 'rules and regulations' had been replaced by 'code of conduct'.

9 Local History

Prof. Beckett suggested the desirability of having a 'how to research local history' section on the web. Andy Nicholson, who puts information on the Thoroton Society site, had expressed interest in this possibility. Prof. Beckett asked if Archives were happy to consider a link along these lines and to place 'listings' on the site. Mr Dorrington indicated that Archives would be pleased to link to the site but there were issues that needed consideration regarding specific content. Dorothy Ritchie indicated that it was likely that Local Studies would be happy to have a link of some kind to the site.

10 Reports on Recent Developments at Nottinghamshire Archives

10.1 General

It was noted that Mr O'Malley had asked if there were budget implications for the Archives service following news of forthcoming reductions in the County Council's budget. Mr Dorrington reported that the service was having to make a 1 per cent reduction in 2006-07 but that this could be made from efficiency savings. There would also be some changes to the departmental structures within the Council.

The Archives service recently had two vacancies: one for an archivist (records management and collections) and one for a conservator. The former post had been filled, after being re-advertised, by Will Bell, an internal candidate, so his post had now just been advertised. As an interim measure the office was advertising for a temporary 'preservation assistant' - the permanent post would be advertised in the summer.

Archives had been re-assessed for the Charter Mark. This had been re-awarded, along with Libraries, for the subsequent year

Mr Dorrington reported the publication of John Speed's map of the county.

Mary Mawson asked if there might be any implications for customers because of budget reductions but Mr Dorrington thought this was not likely.

Derek Walker asked if the portfolio holder would remain the same (Chris Baron) following departmental reorganisation. Mr Dorrington thought this was likely.

Prof. Beckett had urged Councillor Baron to consider an extension to the Archives.

10.2 Archive Services

Barbara Sharp presented her report (attached)

10.3 Public Services and Outreach

Chris Weir presented his report (attached)

11 National and Regional Issues

11.1 Designation

This designated collections of national importance. The first round of submissions had included the University's Portland/Newcastle papers. Mr

Dorrington indicated that work was currently progressing on a submission at a future date.

11.2 Leadership Programme

Mr Dorrington was currently attending a Leadership course at Warwick University (MLA funded) aimed at heads of service in Museums and Archives. This was a 'pilot' course but would be spread wider in the future though there would probably be a cost implications for later courses.

11.3 MLA Review

The MLA is reviewing its functions and this would probably lead to a closer link between MLA and the regional organisations like EMMLAC. The MLA is moving out of London. Dorothy Johnston commented on the increasing demands of regional and national organisations like MLA on archives services.

11.4 Regional Archives Strategy

Mr Dorrington commented that the new strategy is a revision of the earlier strategy; it responds to the MLA agenda and the findings of the Archives Task Force. Prof Beckett had concerns about the content and noted that appendix C listed organisations with 'unknown collections'.

11.5 Advocacy Booklet

Mr Dorrington drew attention to this new booklet that aimed to promote archives in the East Midlands. The booklet was distributed and its appearance was welcomed.

11.6 Em:source

Work had been undertaken, along with other East Midlands offices, on the latest phase of em:source. The theme is World War One and it would be available on the em:source site shortly. It includes a wide range of images.

11.7 Learn with Museums & Archives

Chris Weir reported that Archives is hosting a 5-day placement for 4 humanities teachers at Kirk Hallam Community College. It is one of several schools in the UK selected to pioneer new work on the humanities curriculum. The placement is under the 'Learn with Archives & Museums' Strategic Commissioning initiative and is being co-ordinated by EMMLAC. The aim is to produce a CD of resources on the theme of public health and housing in Nottingham which can then be adapted for lesson plans.

12 Any Other Business

12.1 University of Nottingham Manuscripts – Moving

Dorothy Johnston reported that the manuscripts department would be moving to the Kings Meadow Campus in the Spring. It would close on 13 April and re-open in early August. The East Midlands Collection would remain available until early June. Information would be published on the website. Land mail would probably go via the University's address.

12.2 Staff Exchanges

Prof. Beckett asked about exchanges between the University and Notts Archives staff, especially for 'junior' staff. Exchange visits had taken place but future possibilities would be considered.

12.3 Blue Plaques

Prof. Beckett reported that he had been appointed as an adviser to English Heritage on blue plaques in the East Midlands. Suggestions were welcomed but any names submitted must be for people who are deceased and of national importance; there must also be a building available to take the plaque and this must be viewable from the highway.

13 Date of Next Meeting

18 July at 4.30pm at Nottinghamshire Archives

Archive Services Report

Accessioning and Cataloguing: There have been 110 accessions since the last meeting including additional records from the lace manufacturers Birkin and Co (acc 6845; 6890), records relating to Moorgreen Show, 1938-2004 (acc 6846), papers concerning the Newstead Estate, 18-20 cent (acc 6903) and a huge additional deposit of papers from Tallents of Newark, solicitors (acc 6866).

A lot of time has and is being spent on the customising of the CALM cataloguing software, a task which is nearly finished. The next part of the project is the transfer of the data from IMPReS to CALM.

With the responsibility for licensing premising passing from magistrates to local authorities as from November 2005, all the magistrates' courts are being visited and records selected for permanent preservation. Newark, Worksop and Mansfield have been visited so far and Nottingham will be visited in February.

Meanwhile cataloguing work is continuing on the City and parish council archives.

Microfilming: The fiche for all the parish registers held by NA for the period 1900 to 1950 are now available in the searchroom. Copies have been provided for the County Libraries but a date for their being available is not yet known. A set has been ordered for the Central Library. 3684 fiche were produced, all of which had to be checked for quality, listed, put into envelopes and then into panels and I would like to formally record my thanks to all the archive assistants who accomplished this and to Jaime Harris-Hughes who over saw the project.

Records Management: The annual review has produced 19,500 files which are being processed.

Conservation: Unfortunately due to the vacancy of the post of Conservator, the implementation of the National Preservation Office's *Preservation Assessment Survey* has had to be postponed.

An action plan has been drawn up arising from the completion of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council's standard *Benchmarks in Collection Care* and its implementation will begin in February.

Meanwhile work continues in the Unit on the tithe maps and on work for the local studies libraries.

Volunteers: We now have a total of 10 volunteers and work is progressing on both the Southwell Probate index (which is up to letter M) and the Bishop's Transcripts' listing (which has got up to Nottingham).

Public Services & Outreach Report

Search Room

We are due to have various alterations undertaken on the search room desk. This is to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act. Parts of the desk will be replaced to provide lower level access and there will be a new desk section for document production. An extension to the overhead lighting should improve lighting over the desk itself. Also the visitors' room and search areas will be repainted.

From the 6- 11th March we will be holding another Public Services Quality Group visitors survey. The last PSQG survey was held in 2004. The 2006 survey will have the same set of questions so that there will be continuity between successive surveys and so that comparisons can be made between them. We will be handing out 220 forms in total during the week of the survey.

Outreach

Recently Mark gave a talk at Nottingham Castle to the Friends of the Museums about the Archives service and we had a visit here just before Christmas from a history class at St Hugh's School, a secondary school, in Grantham. The school wanted to view some of the raw materials of history and in particular see an inclosure award and some Great War documents. Earlier this week we received a visit from a group of special needs pupils from Emmanuel School, Wilford. The pupils were doing a project on the changing world of work. We also received 2 groups of Humanities students involving a total of 70 Humanities students from Nottingham Trent University. There have also been visits from groups from People's College and the School of Education at Nottingham Trent. Visits are also due from Keyworth Local History Society and South East Derbyshire College.

Work on various displays continues. Archives staff, especially archivist Will Bell, have been working with the University of Nottingham Manuscripts Department on an exhibition titled 'Buildings For Life & Leisure' featuring a wide range of plans and related material on a variety of aspects of Nottinghamshire's built heritage, ranging from 'lost' country houses to a building that housed Turkish baths and 1920s council houses. The exhibition is on at the Weston Gallery until the 1st May. Currently we are organising displays for this year in the display case in the reception area, which will include one on Trinity Square, Nottingham and one on a Worksop theme. There have been approaches from Cinderhill Church and Abel Collins Trust to assist with items for display later in the year.

We have also been supporting research being done for a museum or heritage centre on the theme of Black History at Parkhill Church, Derby Road, Nottingham – the researcher was especially interested in locating early references to Afro-Caribbean settlement in the county.

On the 11th February (morning) the Archives is hosting a family history event sponsored by Radio Nottingham, linked to the BBCs 'Who Do You Think You are?'. This will involve a series of pre-arranged interviews between people who have encountered a particular family history problem and record agents/staff. The event will be repeated in the afternoon at Mansfield Library. Volunteers will be present at the archives to assist with the event.