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Community Archives and Heritage Group Special Issue



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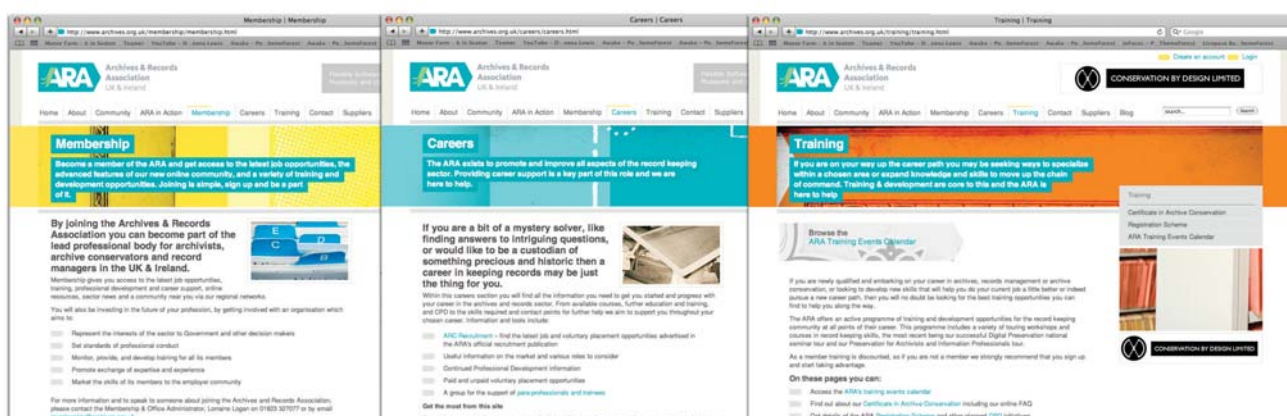
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in Action



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We're working hard to improve the website and make it the one-stop-shop for everything you need to know about your Association and the archive and record-keeping world.

Read the latest news and views. And share some views of your own on the community pages. Forgotten your password? Send an email to membership@archives.org.uk – and you're ready to join in!



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WELCOME **ARC**

EDITORIAL

Welcome to this special issue on community archives. You are in for a treat as many of the articles this month focus on the inspirational work done in many small archives often run by dedicated hard-working volunteers mindful of preserving and sharing their local heritage. My sincere thanks goes to Laura Cotton of the Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG) for gathering articles on these remarkable places, which arise out of a labour of love.

The personal histories in many of these local places are unlocked with unlikely keys. In Leeds, social history unfolds through personal stories interwoven in the fabric of garment collections held at the Yorkshire Fashion Archive. On the Isle of Man, the Ryde Social Heritage Group uses an old chapel and graveyard headstones to bring to life not just history, but other national curriculum subjects ranging from mathematics, science and creative writing to engage students at local schools. The archives of the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT), provides a physical and digital archive of non-traditional theatre venues, and objects related to performance for non-traditional archive users.

The international community archives are shared through the CAHG website and ARC readers are given an insight into the exciting selection process of the new CAHG award scheme. In Opening Lines, Andrew Flinn reflects on all the work done for and with the archive sector in the UK by these local-history heroes, who enrich not just our generation, but ensure that future generations have a really diverse history to explore for themselves.

Rose Roberto, Ceri Forster, Sarah Norman, Ellie Pridgeon and Richard Wragg

Correction to December 2012 issue of ARC

We would like to apologize to Sarah Demb for misspelling her name in the article she co-wrote with Nicole Convery on page 10. This has been corrected in the online PDF version of ARC, which can be found at: www.archives.org.uk/publications/arc-magazine.html

DISCLAIMER

The Archives & Records Association (UK and Ireland) cannot accept responsibility for views expressed by individual contributors to ARC Magazine. It is a medium for informing members of news, information and ideas relevant to the profession, including archive conservation. It is not an official guide to procedures, concepts, materials or products.



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Community Archives and Heritage Group Special Issue cover images:
Left: Shoes, Image courtesy of Yorkshire Fashion Archive, University of Leeds.
Right from top to bottom: Peacock Butterfly, © Ryde Social Heritage Club; Forest Hill Boys Workshop, courtesy of LIFT Living Archive, Goldsmiths University. Hydraulic engineering photo in Gloucester, from the Fielding and Platt collection.

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Opening Lines



Community archives – a decade of collaboration, cooperation, and change.

The occasion of this special issue on community archives and the work of the Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG) prompts me to reflect on what has changed and what has been done in the world of community archives over the last ten years. By any standards it is an impressive decade of achievement.

Ten years ago there was a developing professional awareness of the numbers of community archive endeavours and a growing appreciation of the significance of community-held and community-curated collections to their communities as well as to wider society. Among the clearest examples of this growing recognition was the TNA supported Community Access to Archives Project (CAAP) which began its work in 2003 and the report of the Archives Task Force, published the following year, which stated that archives held in the community 'are as important to society as those held in public collections'.⁽¹⁾

Although the terminology was relatively recent, community archive activity was not by any means new ten years ago. Independent, non-professional or semi-professional private archives had existed in different forms for decades if not centuries. What was changing ten years ago was the extent to which such activities were being recognised as being worthy of professional attention. That recognition has grown apace in the intervening years, reaching the stage where independent community archives are being

represented in, and by the ARA, in the form of the Community Archive and Heritage Group. A development that not many people would have thought likely in 2003.

It is true that a few professionals may still dismiss community archives or view them as a threat, seeing nothing to be gained from advising 'community archives on shelving'⁽²⁾ but it is a view that I come across less and less frequently. Across the UK and Ireland there are innumerable examples of professional archivists supporting the work of local community archives or enabling community groups to undertake their community heritage project. Ultimately I believe that such partnerships and collaborations, will in the future result in the preservation and accessibility of a more extensive and inclusive archival heritage.

Besides the innovative work done by many archivists and community archivists, much of the credit for the improved recognition for community archives must lie with the Community Archive and Heritage Group. Emerging out of CAAP and then transformed from the Community Archive Development Group into a membership organisation with officers and committee elected from within its membership, CAHG has done much to bolster the image and awareness of community archives. The role of the website www.communityarchives.org.uk and the annual conference co-hosted by University College London have been of incalculable value in raising the profile of community archives with wider professional and public audiences but also have brought the achievements of the groups themselves to the attention of many others working on similar endeavours around the country. Increasingly CAHG is acting not just as a forum and a voice for community archives, it is also responding to its membership and creating resources such as cataloguing guides

and digital preservation advice, which will directly benefit the long-term sustainability of community archive collections.

I know from my travels that community archives are anything but a phenomenon confined to these islands. I have conversations about differing instances of community archives with practitioners in Europe, the Americas, Africa, Australasia and Asia. What does appear to be different, however, is that community archives elsewhere are still rarely acknowledged and often under-valued. I may be wrong but nowhere else does there seem to be the equivalent of CAHG and in few other countries could you argue that community archivists have the same level of professional recognition or even the limited access to public or lottery funding that they do in the UK.

Community archives have come a long way in the last ten years, and continue to do very significant things in terms of collecting and making accessible the histories of their communities. However, this does not mean that the many challenges (resources, sustainability, preservation) faced by community archivists have disappeared already or are going away anytime soon. But it does mean that in collaboration with archivists and other heritage professionals, and with the support of a body like CAHG they have a better chance of meeting these challenges and continuing to flourish in the future.

Dr Andrew Flinn,

Vice-chair and committee member
Community Archives and Heritage Group

(1) Archives Task Force, *Listening to the past, Speaking to the future*, 2004.

(2) Anonymous, ARC Magazine March 2011, page 32.

Collecting Matters

With representation on the committee for the Community Archives Heritage Group (CAHG), The National Archives is currently revisiting previous partnership activities with the community archive sector to see if there is something more we can do to have a positive impact on community collecting. Having already been engaged in work with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) communities, we're now keen to take this further by looking at gender and women's history.

This March is *Women's History Month* when community groups and archives will once again join forces to celebrate women, their lives and their history. The UK Centre for Carnival Arts (UKCCA) in Luton is marking this occasion with female performances in the spoken word, theatre, hip hop, storytelling and carnival: <http://www.carnivalarts.org.uk>
In Tower Hamlets *alternative arts* is co-ordinating events to showcase women's contributions to the community: <http://www.alternativearts.co.uk/>

Community archives and women's history have gone hand in hand for many years. CAHG has a section on their website for special interest communities including gender-specific groups, and highlights collections like *From History to Her Story*, commemorating lives of Yorkshire women from 1100 to today; and the *Women's Archive of Wales* created to help preserve women's history in Wales.

Both The National Archives and CAHG want to find out more about community projects in your area so please get in touch via our email below or the CAHG website: <http://www.communityarchives.org.uk/index.aspx>

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/community-engagement.htm>

Rosie Logiudice, Collections Knowledge Officer

The National Archives

asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Registration Scheme News

New Enrolments

We welcome the following new candidates to the Registration Scheme and wish them good luck with their progress:

Sara Downs

Project Archivist, Shropshire Archives

Katharine Short

Archivist, De Montfort University, Leicester

Kelda Roe

Assistant Archivist, Unilever Archives

It's likely that you've been reminded about the ARA website recently - perhaps it was an advert in ARC, or by receiving *ARA Today*. But have you remembered that you can find plenty of information about the Registration Scheme on the website, under the 'Training' tab?

This month, we're running a workshop in Edinburgh followed by one in Dublin next month. We try to travel near and far with the workshops so that as many people as possible can attend. However, if you have particular questions and you're waiting for us to run a session near you, why not see if the information you're looking for can be found on the website. Failing that, you can always get in touch by using the contact details, below.

CONTACTS:

General Registration Scheme Enquiries:

[<registrar@archives.org.uk>](mailto:registrar@archives.org.uk)

Registration Scheme Events Enquiries:

[<regschemeevents@archives.org.uk>](mailto:regschemeevents@archives.org.uk)

Registration Scheme Admin and Bursaries:

[<regschemeadmin@archives.org.uk>](mailto:regschemeadmin@archives.org.uk)

Registration Scheme Communications Officer:

[<regschemecomms@archives.org.uk>](mailto:regschemecomms@archives.org.uk)

Registration Scheme Mentor Queries and Advice:

[<regscheme Mentors@archives.org.uk>](mailto:regscheme Mentors@archives.org.uk)

Richard Wragg

Communications Officer, Registration Sub-committee

Registration Scheme Workshop

New Register House, Edinburgh

Friday 15 March, 1.00 to 4.30pm

This FREE half-day workshop is suitable for candidates, referees, mentors and anyone interested in enrolling on the scheme or becoming a mentor.

It will provide the opportunity to:

- Find out about the Registration Scheme: Why do it? Personal and professional benefits? What does it involve?
- Work through the four development areas: Formal training courses; Study and research; Work achievements; Contributions to the profession
- Work through Learning Outcome Forms: Motivation; Achievement; Evidence
- View successful portfolios
- Ask questions.

Programme Structure:

13:00-13:10 - Arrival & registration

13:10-13:50 - Overview of the ARA Registration Scheme; Role of the candidate & mentor; Personal Development Planning

13:50-15:15 - Getting to grips with the four areas of development; Learning Outcome Forms

15:15-15:45 - Tea/coffee; View binders from some of the successful candidates; individual queries

15:45-16:30 - Support; Frequently asked questions; Discussion and round up

Maximum attendance: 24. Book early to avoid disappointment (no later than one week prior to the date of the workshop).

To register for the workshop, please contact Kate Jarman, Events Co-ordinator, Registration Sub-Committee, at regschemeevents@archives.org.uk

Meeting our members' diverse needs

Why has ARA set up a Diversity Working Group?

Nowadays, we all need to take diversity seriously. Not just for ethical and legal reasons, such as compliance with the Equality Act 2010, but for professional and business reasons too. In February 2012, the ARA Board established the Diversity Working Group to develop a diversity policy and action plan. Addressing diversity issues will help ARA meet members' and potential members' needs more fully, and help members meet the needs of their employers, customers and society as a whole more effectively.

In recent years, our profession has made significant strides in collecting from diverse groups and engaging with diverse audiences. The working group aims to extend this success by attracting a more diverse workforce to the archives and records sector. Initially, the group has focused on one area: removing barriers and increasing opportunities for employment within the archives and records sector for people with disabilities.

Who are the group members?

We are ARA members working in the archives and records sector, just like you. Some of us have disabilities and others do not. The group is chaired by Sam Collenette, who holds the Member Services (Inclusion) portfolio on the ARA Board. The other members are Andrew Janes, Lorraine Logan, Jim Ranahan, Louise Ray and Nicola Waddington.

What has the group achieved so far?

We have researched and reviewed existing best practice in employing people with disabilities. We collected additional ideas, feedback and examples of good and bad practice at last year's national, regional and sectional officers' day and ARA conference. A short quiz for conference attendees helped to raise awareness of diversity issues.

The ARA website now features diversity pages⁽¹⁾ containing a variety of useful resources, including an article written by Nicola for *Journal of the Society of Archivists* in 2004⁽²⁾ and a list of organisations to approach if you would like to offer a voluntary work experience placement to someone with a disability. We have also set up a discussion forum on the site's community pages dedicated to diversity.⁽³⁾

Last autumn, we reintroduced anonymous equality monitoring, via a questionnaire sent out with your membership renewal forms, to provide a benchmark for assessing future work. Thank you to those of you who completed it. 14% of respondents declared one or more disabilities or long-term health conditions and the range of disabilities and conditions specified was extremely broad. 70% had no disability and 16% did not specify either way. A full breakdown of the results is on the website. The response rate of 29% was higher than we expected and we hope to see it improve in future years.

We are commissioning a consultant to study the levels and types of disability among people working in the archives and records sector in greater depth. This work has recently been put out to tender.

What will be happening over the coming months?

We look forward to working with our consultant and seeing the results of the study. Later this year, we hope to run a session at the ARA conference. In the meantime, we hope to see more regular discussions on the online forum. Nicola also plans to update her article to reflect changes over the past few years. In the longer-term, we intend to establish partnerships with relevant groups to develop training, and to seek funding for a pilot workforce development project.

What about diverse groups other than people with disabilities?

Although the working group has begun by addressing disability, our work will establish a template for engaging with other currently under-represented groups. It is impossible to cover every area at once, particularly as all of the group members have demanding day jobs, but in future years we intend to look at ethnicity and social class. The composition of the working group will change over

time to include people with particular interests in the aspects of diversity that are being considered.

How can I get involved?

We are keen to hear a wider range of members' views, so please do join in with the discussions on the ARA website – or even start some of your own – if you are interested. If you would like to be involved with the group's work more formally, please contact Sam (sam.collenette@gmail.com).

Andrew Janes

Diversity Working Group

(1) See: www.archives.org.uk/ara-in-action/diversity.html

(2) Nicola Waddington, 'The employment of people with disabilities as archivists, records managers, conservators and assistants', *Journal of the Society of Archivists* vol 25, no 2 (2004), 173-188.

(3) See: <http://www.archives.org.uk/sections/interest-groups/general/diversity.html>



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Based in the School of Design and underpinned by research excellence in textiles at the University of Leeds, the Yorkshire Fashion Archive is a new, publicly accessible collection of haute couture, fashion garments and everyday clothing. It provides a unique historical and cultural record of Yorkshire life and documents clothing produced, purchased and worn by Yorkshire folk throughout the 20th Century. The collection reflects changing social attitudes and multi-cultural influences, economic prosperity, global trends and the regional technical

Upcoming exhibitions from the Yorkshire Fashion Archive:

'Wool Re-Fashioned': An innovative collaboration between the Yorkshire Fashion Archive and The Woolmark Company.

Documenting the Yorkshire community through fashion

Throughout the centuries the production and consumption of clothing, primarily for protection and modesty, then secondly as adornment and self-expression, has been a basic human need, common to all. Fashion and clothing research provides scope for investigation into class and gender identities linking directly with social and personal history. These non-textual documents record local culture, collect social history, as well as define personal identity. At the Yorkshire Fashion Archive (YFA), in Leeds, fashion and clothes also provide a new way of reaching out to local communities. Donors wishing to share their personal items and stories, and researchers wishing to understand life in 20th century Britain, have the opportunity to meet in a unique archival space.

The YFA collects vintage clothing and accessories spanning every decade of the 20th century, all donated by members of the public – from débutante gowns to mill workers' overalls. The repository's aim is to provide a historical and cultural record of Yorkshire

life in the 20th Century that will engage with business, schools, higher education and the local and wider communities to maximise its impact and ensure long-term sustainability. The YFA is a distinct repository from the other archives holding clothing (or material related to clothing) at the University of Leeds. Other repositories on campus include the University Library Special Collections department, the University of Leeds International Textile Archive (ULITA), and the Marks & Spencer Archive. While they share many things in common with YFA, none of these other collections makes it a priority to acquire local fashion as a genre, along with highly personal narratives.

When the YFA was first conceived in 1999, the original scope was to collect garments and accessories created between the years 1950 - 2000, in an effort to make the local social and cultural history of the late 20th century visible through clothing. However, it soon became apparent that there was a large amount of material available that pre-dated 1950. In 2008

Shoes, Image courtesy of Yorkshire Fashion Archive, University of Leeds.

Fig. 1 Red and cream, gingham weave check suit. Image courtesy of Yorkshire Fashion Archive, University of Leeds.



“garments can become inextricably entwined with lives experienced”

the executive committee was created, bringing together the academics specialising in fashion at the university and other key individuals, each bringing a different view and area of expertise to support the YFA. Colin McDowell, journalist, historian and fashion commentator became Chairman, and Christopher Bailey, Creative Director of Burberry (an iconic British luxury brand) became Patron. Colin McDowell has written about social history and community engagement with fashion. Christopher Bailey is a high profile figure in the fashion industry, and his presence alone ensures press coverage at openings and exhibitions. There is also a textile conservator, a respected business director, and a research professor.

Clothing has a direct intimacy and relationship with the wearer and/or donor. Each new donor has to be approached sensitively and it is important that the researchers remain receptive and responsive to the verbal and non-verbal communication of the individual. Entrusting treasured garments to strangers can be potentially stressful and can also reawaken long buried memories and feelings.

Garments can also become inextricably entwined with lives experienced or can evoke lives lost: it is not

unusual to cherish as an aide memoir a garment worn for a rite of passage or special occasion. Likewise, when a loved one dies, often an item of clothing, jewellery, or accessory is treasured above all other belongings as the most poignant reminder.⁽¹⁾

Most donors prefer to be visited in their home, which is mutually beneficial. Many are elderly and may not have their own cars. There are often a lot of items to look at which can make transportation for the donor an onerous task. YFA team members consider that in order to build a complete picture of the living context of the archive, and understanding the provenance of the garments being acquired, meeting the donor in their home environment is crucial. The team members are able to engage in a more relaxed and spontaneous dialogue with donors, encouraging serendipitous enquiries that do not occur when boxes arrive in the repository.

Each garment is given a reference upon entry to the archive and it is then photographed and accompanying information is scanned. All information is kept as both a hard copy and digitally, and this includes other non-textual material such as photographs, oral history recordings, and ephemera.

A case study of Casualwear

Casualwear is dynamic, and the area of fashion attire that changed and evolved most in the 20th century. It was here that popular culture had the most impact, in the form of music, film and associated youth movements. The demand for a new style of clothing was satisfied by the mass-production of this type of clothing.

In 2009 Mrs R donated seventy items to the YFA. These comprised garments, shoes and accessories bought in Yorkshire from the mid 1960s to the mid 1970s. Mrs R was born in the early 1950s in Batley, a small mill town south of Leeds, and eventually became an office assistant. As a young teenager during that era, she witnessed great social, political and cultural changes in the West, and these changes were reflected in the choice of clothes available to young people.

By the late 1960s the impact of the youth movement was well established and had trickled down to the industrial outposts of the region. Youth clubs and town halls held dances nearly every night of the week where resident live bands would perform, and were gradually replaced by discothèques. Mrs R would be paid in cash on Fridays, and on Saturday she would travel to Leeds to shop all day to find the perfect outfit to go dancing in (Mrs R, 2011). Two examples of garments worn to these events are a red and cream, gingham weave check suit with oversized collars, patch pockets and a mini skirt from Topshop (fig.1), and a rayon jersey printed top and skirt from Bus Stop.

These outfits illustrate how clothing for young women had changed since 1960; gone are the corsets, restrictive long skirts, gloves and hats to be replaced by short styles, which were easy to move in and were specifically designed to bear no resemblance to the clothes of the previous generation. Youth culture meant freedom from any restraints and openness to different possibilities. The clothes of this period reflect the lack of formalism. Mrs R remembers these days fondly and said when she made the donation, that these garments were from an exciting period in her life, 'when everything was so new.' Mrs R also donated her membership cards to local nightclubs, photographs, and recorded an audio interview sharing her personal insights.

Her collection clearly represents an emerging fashion genre – casual clothing that was specifically designed and marketed to young people. The designs took inspiration the street culture of this demographic and reflected their changing lifestyles and the growth in youth culture. Mrs R was not only impacted by cultural trends, she and other young people of this generation participated actively in these growing leisure activities. The fashion styles she selected provide an unusual, but informative document of this time period in industrial West Yorkshire.

(1) Mendes, V and de la Haye, A (2011) *Fashion since 1900*. Thames and Hudson, London.

(2) R, Mrs. oral history at Yorkshire Fashion Archive. Interviewed 14 March 2011

Claire Watson and Rose Roberto

University of Leeds

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Lift Living Archive – Forest Hill Boys Workshop at Goldsmiths Library, photo by Tim Mitchell.

The LIFT Living Archive

The LIFT Living Archive (LLA) is both a physical and digital archive that documents the processes of making the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) at the turn of the twenty first century. The word 'Living' flags up two commitments - to facilitate access to this archive for traditional and non-traditional users, and to investigate how it may be used as a creative resource, reflecting the business of the archive itself. *Making an Invitation: Creative Engagement with the LIFT Living Archive* documents a year long collaborative research project with artists, academics, education and community groups and special collections' staff to develop, test and share participatory arts approaches to working with archives generally and the LIFT archive specifically.

Founded by Lucy Neal and Rose de Wend Fenton in 1980, the festival has, over the past four decades produced an audacious range and scale of work from companies across the globe often in non-traditional theatre venues including London Zoo (*Urban Man*, 1983), a department store's window (*Urban Dream Capsule*, 1999) and a kitchen in a north London home (*Bobby Baker's Kitchen Show*, 1991).

The LIFT Living Archive is made up of the things that have been left behind in the process of making an international theatre festival. There are more than 300 boxes of documents, 4,000 photographs, 100 Festival programmes and leaflets, 700 hours of video documentation and 60 hours of audio recordings held within the archive. Budgets,

production schedules, minutes from meetings, internal evaluation reports and correspondence by letter, fax and email with theatre companies, local authorities, funders and partners detail the extraordinary labour involved in realizing the 11 festivals between 1981-2001. Additionally, the LIFT Living Archive website provides an overview of each of the festival years and has a selection of digitised resources from the archive. Within the website, it is possible to curate your own 'trail' of interests.

As well as challenging audiences' expectations of what theatre is and where it takes place, LIFT has also invigorated ideas about *who* can make theatre. Through its Learning and Participation programme, it has developed extraordinary projects, led by internationally renowned performance practitioners working with school children and community groups. Christophe Berthonneau, the world leading pyrotechnician, worked closely with secondary school students to transform Brockwell Park into a luminous landscape inhabited by a carnival of fantastic creatures (*Factory of Dreams*, 1997). Primary school children in Greenwich worked with the Vietnam Refugee Project and Emergency Exit Arts to create a visual feast of large scale puppets parading across the grounds of the National Maritime Museum (*Sang Sang River Crossing*, 1993). These projects were fuelled by a commitment to collaboration, participant centred learning and critical investigation. It is these values that frame the LIFT Living Archive and its commitment to public engagement.



Lift Living Archive – Launch Event – photo by Tim Mitchell.

The LIFT archive was deposited at Goldsmiths' library in 2008. When staff from Goldsmiths and LIFT began to discuss a programme of public engagement with non-traditional archive users, we quickly realised that only by working with them would we, together, understand what would be appropriate and possible. Over the following year pupils and staff from a local primary and secondary school, a creative writing community group and university drama students collaborated with LIFT, special collections' staff, academics and Sue Mayo, an artist with extensive experience of working in community and heritage contexts, to develop participatory models of engagement with the archive. Together, this research team developed, tested and shaped models of access to and engagement with the LIFT archive. The processes and findings of this project are outlined in *Making an Invitation: Creative Engagement with the LIFT Living Archive*. This research report is also a practical resource with exercises and illustrated examples of educational and community groups' engagement with the archive which can be adapted to facilitate particular users' needs and interests.

The possibilities of the LIFT archive as an educational and creative resource were revealed to us by the groups themselves: their curiosity and enthusiasm highlighted how the archive could support learning not only about the more obvious areas of theatre and performance, cultural policy and arts management for researchers but also maths, geography and history for primary and secondary school groups. The potential of the archive as a site for creative response was made abundantly clear in the range of poems and performances generated by it in the initial period of research and in the subsequent project, 'And The Winner Is



Lift Living Archive – Launch Timeline – photo by Tim Mitchell.

“As well as challenging audiences' expectations of what theatre is and where it takes place, LIFT, has also invigorated ideas about who can make theatre.”

... London' (2010/11), when seven schools across the city worked with the LIFT Living Archive team as part of A New Direction's Olympic-themed Enquiry Schools programme.

All of the project partners very much look forward to finding out more about the creative possibilities of the archive through future projects with educational and community groups.

The LIFT Living Archive website can be found at www.liftlivingarchive.com/lla/.

The online catalogue detailing the LIFT Living Archive's full contents is available at www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/archive.

The research report and resource, *Making an Invitation*, is at www.liftfest.com/living-archive/making-an-invitation-the-lift-living-archive.

.....
Dr Caoimhe McAvinchey, Senior Lecturer in Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies
 Queen Mary, University of London.

Archive Storage Solutions

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Glamorgan Archive

The Glamorgan Archive in Cardiff is a four-storey repository that accommodates a vast number of records from six local authorities in South East Wales.

Link 51 was challenged to provide a versatile shelving and storage facility that not only met current needs, but would also fulfil storage requirements for the next 25 years. This meant sufficient space to stock 8,000 linear metres of items, leaving more than 2,000 metres still available.

Anglesey Archives

Thinking 20 years ahead was part of the remit for Link 51 at the new Island of Anglesey Archives and Modern Records.

An industrial unit, measuring 13 metres by 13 metres, at Llangefni was converted into the repository, known as the 'Pod', and Link 51 shelving enabled archivists to accommodate existing records, with capacity for a further two decades' worth of growth.

To meet BS5454 standards, Link 51 designed a unique solution using mobile, static and cantilever shelving that resulted in more than 5,000 linear metres of storage.



"The quality of the product and the installation is very good. We have had no problems with mobility and weight loading and the art rails and clothing racks are ideal. Space is maximized to its fullest extent."



Highland Archive Centre

The Highland Archive Centre in Inverness is a £10.5 million development that brings together the history and heritage of a region that extends north from Loch Ness.

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Community Archives and Heritage Group Special Edition

The Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG) has been busy since the last special edition of ARC. We launched our awards scheme and awarded the first trophy to the Community Archive and Heritage Group of the Year, 2011 at our conference in June 2012. Nominations for the 2012 award closed at the end of December and judging has been underway on those entries. The results will be announced at the CAHG Conference in July. Judith Harvey writes eloquently about the process behind those first awards in her article.

Over the last few years, CAHG has focused effort into planning regional events in response to feedback from its members, who said that whilst they enjoyed our annual conference held at University College London, many people did prefer to attend events closer to home (and that proved to be just about all over the UK). So during 2012 CAHG held two small events: the first in Chippenham, Wiltshire in May; the second in Worcester in November. As shorter events with fewer attendees, each programme provided more focused topics, a more informal atmosphere, but still a very interesting range of speakers to engage the audience. The feedback from those two events was overwhelmingly positive and we have more such events planned for 2013.

An important part of our work is providing guidance that can be used by community archive and heritage groups in their work. Several years ago, we published *Cataloguing guidelines for community archives* (available at www.communityarchives.org.uk) and recently we have published a checklist for working with local authority record offices and have been developing guidelines for digital preservation and film and sound collections. These will both appear on our website in due course, and Alexandra Eveleigh tells us about her work developing the digital preservation resource in her article. Further guides are in the pipeline, including ones about working with children and setting up a community archive.

As you will see from the articles by Elaine Davis and Nick Barratt, the world of community archives is still developing and there are a number of exciting projects going on out there. CAHG tries to keep up and develop alongside our member groups. If you are interested in finding out more, please have a look at our website, join our mailing list, come along to our conference in July, or one of our regional events and find out about the great work of the hidden heroes of archives.

Laura Cotton

Chair, Community Archives and Heritage Group



Nick Barratt presents the Community Archive of the Year 2011 to David McFarland, Chair of the Marden History Group. Image courtesy of Marden History Group.

A Steep Learning Curve

Let's face it, a bit of praise and a certificate does wonders for self-esteem. It's also a good way to encourage many to aim for high standards. In 2011, the first Community Archives and Heritage Group awards were presented by the CAHG. The awards were intended to acknowledge excellence and also to set a standard for others to follow – a benchmark for future awards entrants.

Self-nomination for an award was the only possible system. Perhaps there was a degree of naivety in basing the submission form on one that already existed, albeit one with a proven track record, but it did its job. The awards were based around six categories: Impact, Innovation, Inspiration, Interest, On-Line and New Archive. One of those six category winners would then be chosen as the overall 'Community Archive and Heritage Group of the Year'. Foolishly the form asked for separate entries for each category and several groups had entered all six: lots of duplication for both applicants and reviewers. It was all part of CAHG's learning curve, which highlighted overlap in categories and a basic mistake in omitting overt encouragement of 'heritage' groups. We have looked at this and decided to take this down to four categories plus the overall winner for 2012.

Slow submissions meant extending the deadline. Not an auspicious start. The assessors (two professional and two community archivists from the CAHG committee and an external member from ARA to provide balance) eventually found themselves in business. As my inbox filled with submissions I wondered: Why had I agreed to judge? Where would the time come from to read all these forms? How, as an interested but very amateur community archivist, could I judge other people's efforts? The usual string of doubts!



Nick Barratt, John Chambers and Laura Cotton present the Community Archive of the Year 2011 to David McFarland, Chair of the Marden History Group. Image courtesy of Marden History Group.

After several hours/days looking at a computer screen there was a realisation that some groups were in a league of their own. These guys didn't dabble in archives, they lived them. Their archives exist because they want them to. Money might be scarce but enthusiasm worked out ways round such a minor detail.

Personally it was hard to select the overall winner. Category winners were fairly easy but which of these was best?

Pride in our Past, Plymouth had opened up an archive of stories from the lesbian, gay, transsexual and bisexual community in a town where such things were not mentioned and were steaming on to an exhibition having established academic and professional links.

Oughterard Culture and Heritage Centre, Ireland, had created an overlay of then and now; simple to look at, effective certainly and an idea that other groups could follow.

The Planned Environmental Therapy Trust, Cheltenham, had got past therapy recipients talking about and acting out their past led by a group of teenagers from a school in Leamington Spa. This group really showcased their enthusiasm when they spoke at the CAHG conference. It was a sponsored project but had expanded well beyond its remit.

Our Oxhey, Hertfordshire had created a forum for local people to share and enjoy memories in a community with little written history and no museum. They aren't an old community but have established roots.

Chorley Heritage had raised awareness of their past in different ways and despite hunting for funds had pressed on with hiccups along the way and lots to come.

Finally there was Marden, Kent. They had not only created a unique volunteer archive in the local library but had also spent



Community Archive of the Year 2011 Award and Certificate. Image courtesy of Marden History Group.

months playing detectives to find out more about where an ancient horde had been found. Place names hadn't matched recorded detail but the sleuths had eventually dug back far enough to find old maps with clues. Perhaps they span a good story but for sheer determination and lateral thinking Marden History Group came out overall winners. They hadn't just archived they had researched, planned and succeeded.

It all sounds an easy decision but it wasn't! I certainly could have made a case for any one of the category winners being chosen as the Community Archive and Heritage Group of 2011. As community archives, each was working in and with their community to document and record their past in an accessible, interesting and often novel way. The submissions also presented archiving as something for all that enhanced the local professional archives.

Judith Harvey

Community Archives and Heritage Group



Sixth Annual Community Archives and Heritage Group Conference

History Matters: Community Archives and Learning

The sixth annual Community Archives and Heritage Group Conference took place on Wednesday 27th June 2012 at University College London. Over 130 members of CAHG, representing a wide variety of organisations, including county archives, commercial projects and local history societies attended the conference.

Personal history

In his keynote speech Dr Nick Barratt emphasised the importance of community archives for making a personal connection with history and their use as a tool for community engagement, curriculum enhancement and collaborative working with various groups. Geoff Young reiterated personal history and curriculum engagement in his speech about the Making History project. The brainchild of actor Colin McFarlane, Making History aims to personalise history for a new generation. Pupils involved in the project investigate their family history by talking with family members and are given help to access archival sources online and in person. Students also make a video reflecting on what they have discovered.

Award Winners 2011

Following the AGM, awards were presented to the six 2011 CAHG award winners. The overall winner of Community Archive of the Year, Marden History Group, gave a short presentation on their achievements, including their Community Heritage Centre attached to the local library,

designed and staffed by the group's volunteers. The presentation was complemented by a display over lunch of a bronze-age hoard discovered in the parish.

Show and Tell: Part One

At different points during the afternoon the other winners gave us examples of the variety of work being done by community archives. Volunteers from the Our Oxhey website spoke about their sustainable forum for exploring community memory through oral history. Next, representatives from Pride in our Past spoke about their project which used oral history and memorabilia and artefact collecting to tell the story of Plymouth's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities, culminating in an HLF funded exhibition in Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. Oughterard Culture and Heritage Centre, who were unable to attend, sent a presentation demonstrating their innovative website, merging contemporary and historic images of their town.

Community Archives in schools

Helen Foster from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland spoke about how the North Edinburgh Social History Group had taken their community archive into local schools. She detailed some of the ways that the archive was linked to the Scottish curriculum and gave inspiration for how other community archives could do the same. Following on from this, Daphne Knott explained how the Herts Memories website has



'Pride in our Past' representatives at the CAHG conference. Images courtesy of Elaine Davis.

successfully engaged with local secondary schools and the University of Hertfordshire. Helen Tyler gave a personal account of how her engagement with the website had enriched her university course in History.

Show and Tell: Part Two

Bill Walker from Chorley Heritage Centre Support Group began the next set of award winner presentations by speaking about his group's efforts, towards creating a heritage centre in Chorley's main street. He also exhorted us to 'make heritage a habit'. He was followed by students from Trinity Laban Catholic School with a very professional presentation about a drama performance they had created using the recollections of students who had attended innovative therapeutic living environment schools.

Archivists and archeologists

For the final talk, Andrew Flinn and Sarah Dhanjal introduced UCL's 'Dig Where We Stand' project, uniting researchers in archaeology, geography and archives in developing and sustaining broad participation in heritage projects, including enabling students from

Hendon School to participate in an archaeological dig in their school grounds. Emma Densham, an alumna of the school, shared her positive experiences of the project and gave some valuable recommendations for working with young people.

Throughout the day, speakers focused on the value of using community archives to connect with young people and new groups. As a whole, the conference inspired attendees to be outward looking and to find ways of taking their community archives to new audiences.

Emma Hancox, Emma Howgill and Naya Sucha-Xaya
University College London

Byte Size

Digital Preservation Guidance for Community Archives

Whilst there is a huge amount of information, standards and even training now available on digital preservation, much of it is very specialised and designed for a professional or highly technical audience. Current guidance on this topic is mostly aimed at large, formal organisations, overlooking the needs of small, independent or community archives and heritage groups.

Potentially this is a serious problem. A survey of community groups carried out last year confirmed that many community archives already have significant holdings of digitised sources and are also beginning to acquire born-digital materials. Digital material is held in a wide variety of formats, although digital images (particularly .jpgs), audio and video content predominate. The survey also revealed considerable variations in the levels of technical support available to community groups, and members' degree of confidence in handling digital materials:

"We are left with software that is limited in what can be done because we do not have access to a programmer. Any help would be extremely valuable."

To address these issues, CAHG's forthcoming publication on Digital Preservation Guidance will offer step-by-step advice to help community archives keep their digital holdings in an accessible condition.

"It's good to know someone is researching this field. It will help small groups like ours develop their systems and expertise."

Rather than duplicate resources, the web-based guidelines (which will also be available for printing via PDF) draw upon existing expert approaches, but adapt and re-scale them for community archives

Amongst the topics included:

- tips on how to identify different kinds of digital records and which are the priorities for preservation
- best practice in the documentation of digital content; and
- simple, cost-effective solutions for stable data storage.

Keep an eye out for more information on the CAHG website.

Alexandra Eveleigh

University College London



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Newcomers to the world of community archives

The website of the Community Archives and Heritage Group (www.communityarchives.org.uk) provides a directory of community archives across the UK and Ireland. A look at just a few of the recent additions to the site highlights the diversity and impact of community archives.

Fielding and Platt Community Archive, Gloucester, was launched in July 2012. The aim of the project is to gather, preserve, and share memories, documents, and photographs of an important hydraulic engineering firm in Gloucester that employed thousands in the city from 1866 to 2003. The project is led by Gloucestershire Archives and Gloucester City Centre Community Partnership and has received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Former employees have been working as volunteers to complement the work of Gloucester Archives who are making the business records of the company

accessible for the first time. The vibrant sporting and social side of the company and employees' personal memories are being preserved by the volunteers through the recording of oral histories.

Project Pigeon is an art and education project based in central Birmingham. In celebration of Birmingham's rich pigeon-fancying heritage they have been developing an archive that records the history and culture of pigeon-fancying in the area. Supported by a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund volunteers have been making oral history recordings, conducting video interviews with pigeon-fanciers as well as collecting memorabilia.

Pigeon-fancying is a fascinating part of the West Midlands' social history and still today Birmingham has more pigeon-fanciers than any other UK city. The archive not only gives insight into pigeons



Hydraulic engineering photo in Gloucester, from the Fielding and Platt collection.

but into many areas of Birmingham life such as the development of council housing and the rules and regulations about keeping pigeons and the evolution of working men's clubs - where many pigeon clubs still meet.

The completed archive will be housed at Birmingham Library and Archive for future generations to access.

Wicked Fish, a Liverpool theatre company for people with learning difficulties, secured Heritage Lottery Funding in October 2012 for a unique project. Working with partners, including North West Sound Archive, Liverpool Record Office, and the National Museums Liverpool, Wicked Fish will create People Like Us, a community archive recording the experiences of people with learning difficulties.

The project will work with a small group of participants and will focus on their first day of school. Participants will be given control over all aspects of the project and will receive training to help them develop their archive to tell their story. This will include training on oral history recording, selecting appropriate material and learning how to develop a website. Emotional support for the participants will be available throughout the project as they explore what was for some an unhappy and possibly traumatic time.

The Community Archives and Heritage Group have also been pleased to develop links with international archives:

The California State University Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), a public state university in the United States of America, has been developing a unique record of women in non-traditional occupations, such as construction trades, transportation and the fishing industry. The Tradeswomen Archives project aims to create a living document of the history created every day, by inviting tradeswomen to contribute to an online archive. This online archive consists of many different items including written stories and oral histories and documents such as certificates of achievement and images of women working.

Further information on these and many more archives can be found on the Community Archives website <http://www.communityarchives.org.uk>.

Elaine Davis

Website Administrator, CAHG

From the Wicked Fish collection.





ARC magazine is a great read - but are you also reading **ARA TODAY?**



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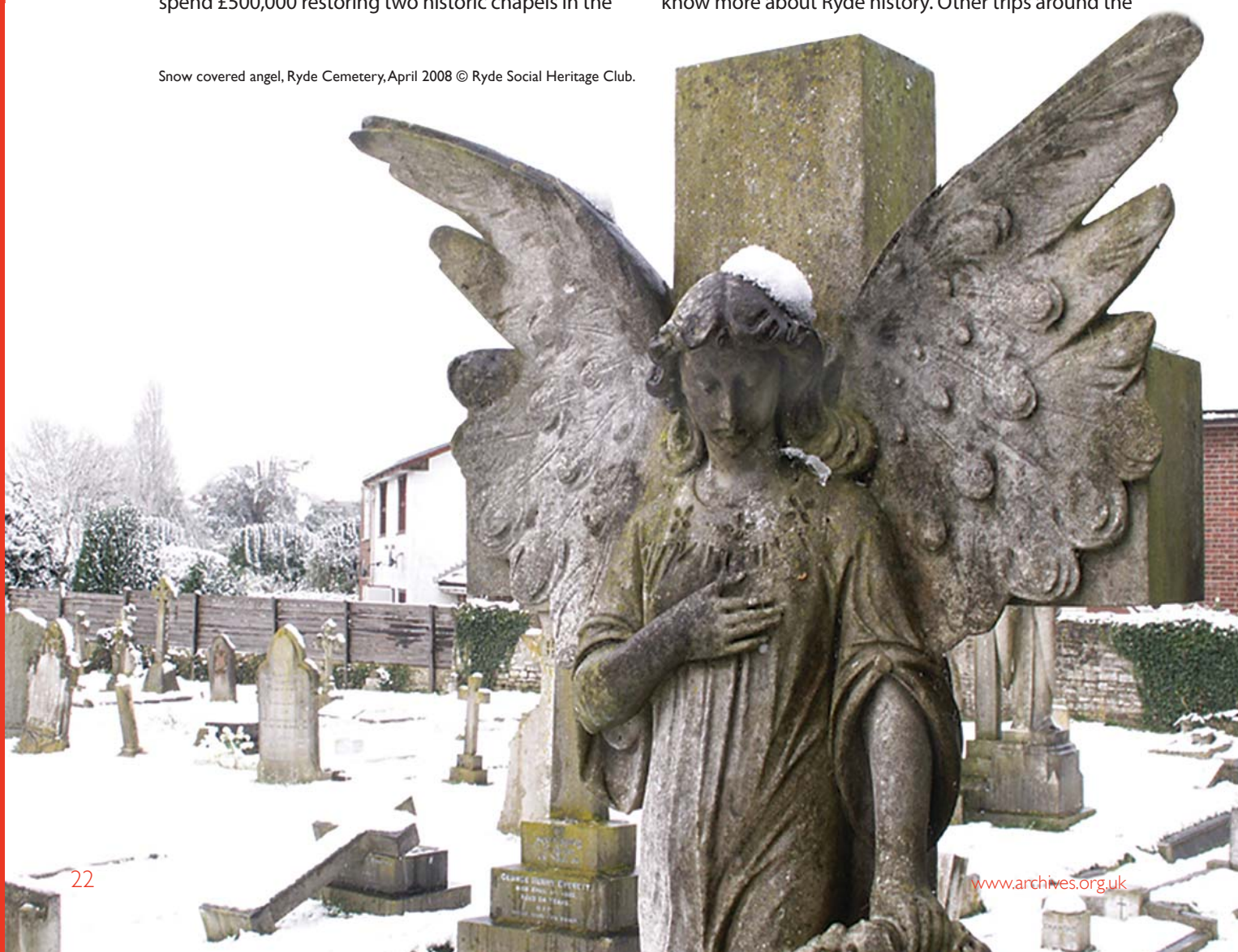
Social Heritage in Action

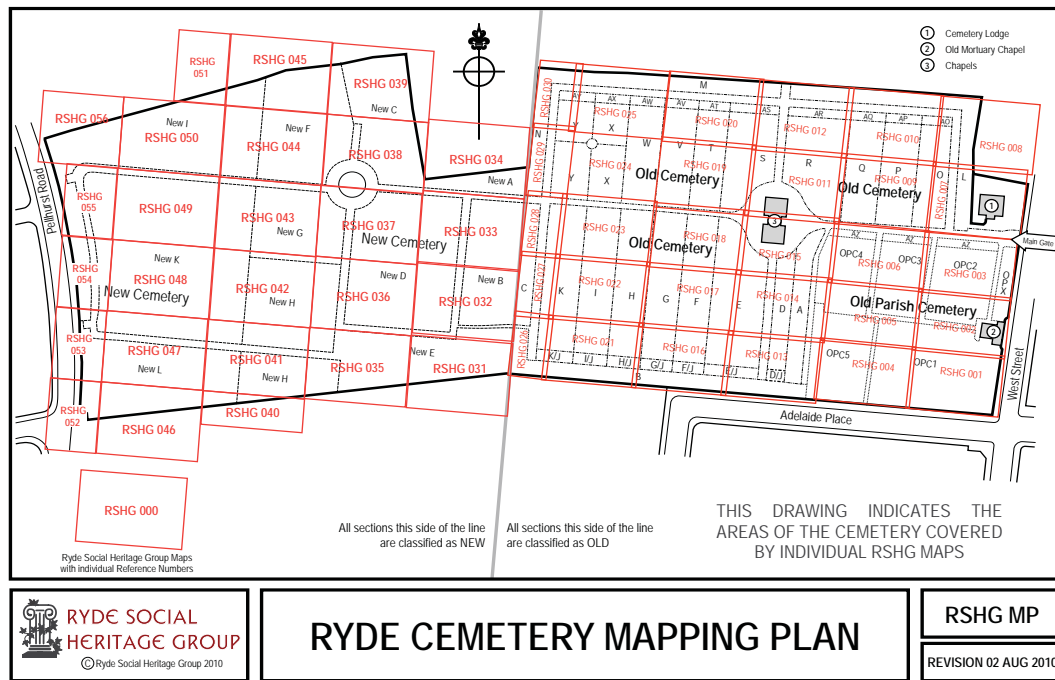
The Ryde Social Heritage Group on the Isle of Wight provide an exemplary model of how a small group of dedicated volunteers can make a large impact in the community. They are actively engaging in all of the areas I would suggest family and local history organisations could explore to expand their membership and fulfil their remit.

The Ryde Social Heritage Group was founded ten years ago primarily to protect and conserve the local cemetery, which was falling prey to vandals and becoming dilapidated. A transcription and mapping project was set up – Dave ‘The Grave’ Earle taking the lead – with the support of a successful £20,000 bid for funding. In turn, this led to the council deciding to spend £500,000 restoring two historic chapels in the

heart of the cemetery, one of which was allocated to the group. This enabled them to create permanent displays about the history, heritage and people of Ryde as well as start some community archiving – recording stories, placing material online, writing books, actively acquiring memorabilia and personal documentation, even establishing an oral heritage trail around the town. The cemetery transcriptions proved to be particularly popular, with people coming from around the world to visit the last resting place of their loved ones; the group now offer a ‘meet and greet’ service for overseas visitors. Many of the members regularly visit the local record office to research aspects of Ryde history, but reciprocate by offering assistance to any enquirers who want to know more about Ryde history. Other trips around the

Snow covered angel, Ryde Cemetery, April 2008 © Ryde Social Heritage Club.





island, and onto the mainland, are also conducted on a regular basis – this is an active group of people!

Perhaps most hearteningly of all, the Ryde Social Heritage Group have started something that I can only describe as a graveyard classroom, using the other chapel as a place to inspire children from local schools on a range of topics from the curriculum, not just history. Up to seventy children use the cemetery as a place of learning, with some given a name to research from a gravestone and then using the online resources to find out more about their lives. Others focus on maths, calculating the angles at which many of the graves are now leaning, or working out ages from the inscriptions. Creative writing is covered, using the results of historical research or old photographs to imagine what life used to be like in Ryde – often expressed as poetry. The more elaborate headstones inspire art and drawing, whilst the 'wild' section of the cemetery is used as a nature trail (I'm assured that a colony of slow worms reside under one fallen headstone and generate great excitement from the children when 'discovered' by an adult!) Groups have even been taken into town to research the history of the local pier. As part of the Tenth Anniversary celebrations, dolls houses were modelled as replicas of the historic shops from old photographs – another amazing way to engage with a younger audience. I am told that members of the group are regularly stopped in the street by younger generations and asked when they can next come back to 'do' some history.

“The cemetery transcriptions proved to be particularly popular, with people coming from around the world to visit the last resting place of their loved ones”



Snow in Ryde Cemetery, April 6th 2008 © Ryde Social Heritage Club.

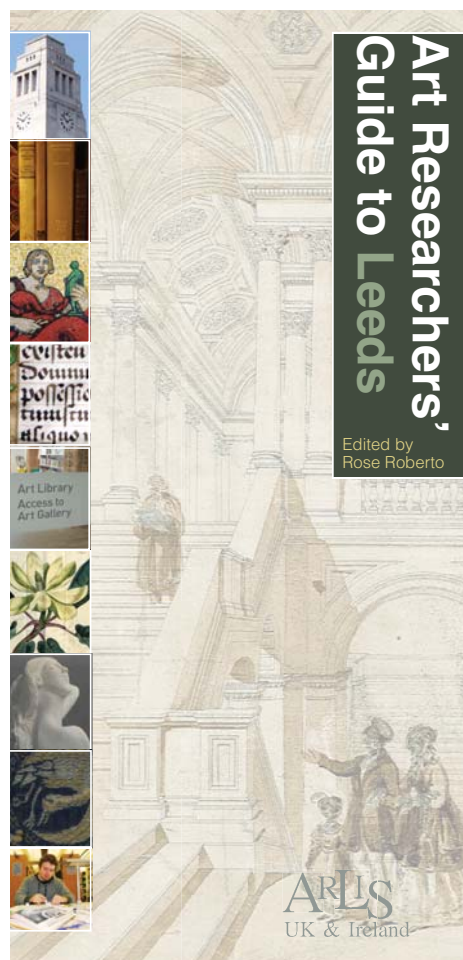


Peacock Butterfly (Inachis io), July 2007 © Ryde Social Heritage Club.

Ten years, 10 to 15 regular volunteers and a huge amount of work have created an incredible resource for both locals and visitors alike. The secret to their success – and here I can quote directly – is that ‘it is a happy, friendly labour of love.’

(An expanded version of this article first appeared in *Your Family History* magazine)

Nick Barratt



available at the
West Yorkshire Archive Service
<https://eshop.wyjs.org.uk/>

An Assessment of Record Offices' online catalogues

Research in local history has been immensely assisted by Access to Archives and individual record offices' online catalogues. However, the quality of these search tools varies greatly. Based on examining the online catalogues of 33 English counties and five English cities in October and November 2012, I would suggest universally applying these principles to improve the user's experience.

1. Online catalogues should be simple to use.
2. It should be possible to search in such a way that relevant documents can be pinpointed, and in particular to confine searches by date.
3. Search results should provide sufficient information to assess the relevance of each document, without having to click through to a further level for the basic information.
4. It should be possible to see the record in context in the collection it belongs to, and in particular to be able to click through to the catalogue for that collection.
5. Searches should identify all items containing the words searched for; documents should not be missed because of the way the data is structured.

A possible sixth principle is that there should be clear information about what the online catalogue contains and what alternative finding aids are available.

Ease of use

Most online catalogues have something as simple to use as Google, and computer jargon is almost entirely absent. 'Any text' searches usually function as one would expect, but one catalogue finds items containing *any* of the words entered and at least seven search for the exact phrase. In most cases this can be corrected, but in three that is not possible.

Pinpointing documents

All but ten catalogues allow searches using any combination of dates entered in a simple form, such as '1650-1750'. Of the 10 exceptions, five provide some help, through a more complicated form of search, ability to sort results by date or allowing searches within specified periods, but five fail to provide any form of search by date at all. Being able to search by reference is important because it enables searches within individual collections, and only six catalogues do not offer this.

Search results

Search results are most often reference, title and date, though many catalogues add other fields. Two catalogues do not show dates, and three do not show references. The major problem is that the descriptions of documents are usually split between 'Title' and 'Description' fields, and nearly always only 'Title' is shown in the search results. Worse, the title is often entirely unhelpful, such as 'Lease', 'Grant' or 'Letter', or even 'Note', 'General' or 'Bundle'. Frequently it is simply a place name, so the researcher interested in a place is confronted by a long list of search results all presenting only the place name. The split between two fields generally makes little sense, and there is usually no consistency in the way the information is divided. None of this would matter so much if all catalogues displayed both fields in search results, as five do.

Seeing the record in context

Sometimes individual search results become meaningful only when seen in a wider context. The name of the collection is often sufficient, and all but six online catalogues provide it. Whether not providing the collection name makes individual results incomprehensible depends on the quality of the cataloguing and whether there is direct access to the catalogue itself. In all but six cases it is possible to click through to the relevant catalogue. However, in at least 15 cases the catalogue accessed is in a more hierarchical form than a paper catalogue, with further clicks needed to move through it. To some extent a balance has to be struck between ease of navigation and ability to browse, but some online catalogues achieve neither, especially where only uninformative titles are shown at first, there is a proliferation of

unnecessary levels, only one level is shown at a time or the layout is poor.

Identifying all relevant material

Users should obviously be able to rely on online catalogues identifying all items which have the words entered in 'Any text' search boxes. The irony is that archivists have become ever more concerned to separate information about documents into hierarchical categories, scattering it across collection, title and description fields, just when online searching needs to be able to access all the information about an item at once. For two reasons this results in most online catalogues failing to identify all relevant items when more than one search word is used. First, catalogues will not find one word in a collection title and one in the title or description fields. Secondly, at least 11 online catalogues do not identify items if search words are separated in title and description fields. In some of these the simple 'Any text' search fails this test but 'Any text' within the advanced search passes it, and in one the opposite is the case.

Conclusion

Even the least satisfactory online catalogues provide something that was not available before, but they vary significantly, and some fall down on fairly basic aspects. If this piece encourages those responsible for online catalogues to examine best practice elsewhere and archive users to press for that best practice, it will have served its purpose.

This is an abridged version of an article first published in *The Local Historian* in February 2013.

Dorian Gerhold

Chairman of Wandsworth Historical Society

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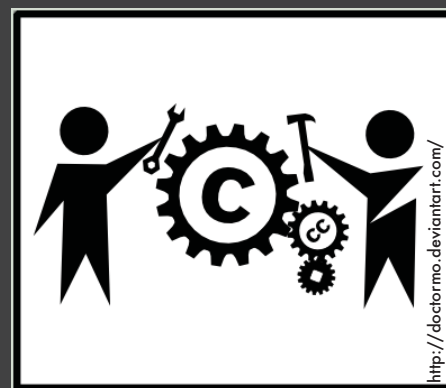
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