

arc magazine

March &
April '22

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Welcome

arc magazine

March & April 2022 edition

Welcome to the March/April edition of *ARC Magazine* which we hope will keep you entertained as spring arrives and the evenings get longer.

Some key themes are evident across this edition's features and articles: developing partnerships within and beyond the sector, creating flexibility in our working practices and diversifying the routes into the profession.

Gary Tuson writes a timely piece on building trust in government and how records are central to this process, calling for an associated advocacy campaign.

We hear about great examples of partnership working: a collaboration between The UK National Archives and Creative & Cultural Skills on inclusive recruitment practices, and how Ancestry work with local archive services on digitisation projects.

Conservation training is discussed by Katie Proctor and Victoria Stevens, who provide a fascinating insight into educational developments that will be of interest to anyone working with historical records.

And, as we approach the second anniversary of lockdown restrictions in the UK and Ireland, Robin Sampson outlines some of the unexpected

opportunities that the COVID-19 pandemic has provided.

In our columns we also hear from contributors who have taken interesting routes into the profession and, as usual, showcase the latest news and developments from across the sector.

On a personal note, this is the first edition of the magazine I have been involved in so I would like to thank Maria Castrillo and Deborah Mason, and the editorial team for their support and guidance. Big thanks, of course, go to all the contributors for sharing their time and expertise.

I hope you enjoy the magazine and would love to hear your thoughts on things we could do better, topics you would like to see more of and ideas for contributions. You can contact us at arceditors@archives.org.uk.

Happy reading.

Michael

Michael Gallagher
ARC Joint Editor





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Cover image: Paper Instructor Shirley Jones (MA ACR ARA Cons Cert) with trainee Katie Brew from Durham University Archives. © Katie Proctor.



Opening lines

Rosie Al-Mulla is the Assistant Archivist at the University of Stirling Archives and Special Collections. She is currently Chair of ARA's Section for New Professionals (SfNP) and has recently taken up the role of Deputy Editor for Reviews and Obituaries with the Archives and Records Journal. She talks here about why volunteering for ARA is a worthwhile endeavour – particularly for new professionals.



I wanted to talk about the worth of volunteering, especially for new professionals beginning their careers. There is a certain wariness I have regarding the term. There's the danger you're being asked to do for free something which is skilled and deserves payment. But my experiences of volunteering with ARA have been focussed on developing particular skills that were missing from my set. I think that this kind of volunteering can be invaluable.

I did once have this sense that after I had qualified in my chosen profession, volunteering would be done with. Volunteering, after all, was the way I had decided on this profession and so I saw it only as an experimenting ground, a way of checking I enjoyed something enough to take it up in earnest. I could foresee plenty of training for keeping my skills sharp but failed to consider that without the means of putting that learning to use in my every day work, I wasn't really gaining a skill, only taking some notes.

At my very first Section for New Professionals Summer Seminar (remember when we met in person and played ice breaker games?) there were two vacant committee positions, that of the Careers Officer and the Treasurer. Now if a different role had been advertised, I don't know if my attention would have been caught or if I would have recognised the opportunity in the same way. But as the role of Treasurer was being described to the room I thought, wouldn't it be brilliant to have demonstrable

experience in managing a budget? Surely more senior roles in the future would want me to have this skill? But it seemed like one of those mysterious chicken-and-egg-skills where I couldn't see how I would gain the knowledge without holding a senior post and couldn't see how I would get a senior post without having the knowledge. Volunteering my time with SfNP was the perfect solution.

I served as Treasurer for three years and in that time learnt how to manage a sizeable budget and how to guide my fellow committee members in using it. I drafted budget bids and evaluated the year's

“
My experiences of volunteering with ARA have been focussed on developing particular skills that were missing from my set. I think that this kind of volunteering can be invaluable.
”

expenditure. And on top of that, I knew that all the Chairs and Treasurers of ARA would help me if I needed it. I learnt the skills I had identified as being key in my continuous professional development, and I was more supported than I could have realistically hoped to be had I been given a senior role and told to manage a budget in my day job.

Coming at the time it did, the summer of 2020, taking on the role of Chair after my term as Treasurer has been a mixed bag. In-person events were impossible and as a committee we were facing redundancies, struggling to complete (or even start) our studies, and starting new jobs from home without ever having met colleagues or seeing the collections we were working on. As a result, we didn't do much in 2020, which felt like an insubstantial way to become Chair of a group. Learning how to manage a team, when to take your foot off the pedal and when to dust yourself off has been my steepest learning curve to date and while I thoroughly expect 'managing a team' to be a skill I'll continue to develop my whole career, taking the first steps in ARA where there is much advice to be had should you need it, is surely a wonderfully gentle way to start.

The skills development is exactly as I hoped it would be. The pleasant surprise was how much volunteering on an ARA committee connected me to the whole of ARA. I'm a much more active participant than I think I would ever have been without taking on my volunteer role and, consequently, I'm getting more out of ARA than I ever would otherwise. And I think the fact that there are dozens of other folks volunteering their time too, adding their knowledge and experiences to the melting pot, is what makes this the collaborative sector I love to work in.

From the ARA Board



Andrea Waterhouse, ARA Board member, reflects on the work and achievements of the Pay Review Group.

I was elected to the ARA UK & Ireland Board in the spring of 2019. I enjoy the role - it's a privilege to draw on my work and life experience to inform decision making for the sector. The Board has a real pool of talent with a wide and broad experience, which makes debating sector issues interesting and enriching.

It has been to my advantage that I came into the sector via a non-traditional route; it has given me a unique perspective. Previously, I'd been a stay-at-home mother and a teacher. I was a user of archives for many years, mainly in local studies libraries and county record offices, researching family and local history. I later went to university full time at the age of 40 and studied for a history degree then followed this up with the master's degree in Archives and Records Management.

My main role during my tenure on the Board has been supporting and advising the Pay Review Group (PRG). Some members may remember that, following a paper I delivered on poor pay in the sector some years ago at the annual Officers Day, the then Chair of the Board asked me to undertake a pay review for the sector; it thus followed that the ARA PRG was established. I was on a mission for record keepers to be rewarded with parity of pay. I realised this wouldn't happen overnight, but the formation of the PRG has given a new awareness and respect to the record-keeping profession, within a structure that is continually developing. The work of the PRG has been influential; not long after the PRG released the first formal pay recommendations, the Museums Association brought its baseline pay up to meet the ARA's.

“ I'm delighted that the work of the PRG has not only raised awareness but has also been instrumental in HR departments acknowledging and respecting record keepers for the professionals they are. ”

Record-keeping hasn't always been recognised as a profession. I remember, in the early days of my research for sector pay, I was horrified by the term 'glorified filing clerks'. I'm delighted that the

work of the PRG has not only raised awareness but has also been instrumental in HR departments acknowledging and respecting record keepers for the professionals they are. Longer term issues to be addressed include the outdated and rigid pay structures that are still very evident in some organisations. The committee is not deterred and continues to lobby for progress and recognition in this area.

The PRG continues to go from strength to strength and there are many success stories. It's good that ARA members have a point of contact for queries about pay (payreviewgroup@archives.org.uk) and there have been instances when the PRG has supplied information to members to help them secure better pay. Likewise, some employers consult the PRG before advertising a job to enquire about appropriate pay to match the skills, knowledge and expertise required. I am extremely proud and inspired by the dedication, enthusiasm, and achievements of the present and past PRG Committee members.

During my career, I've experienced many changes in the workplace. Recently, I've taken 'working from home' to a whole new level and now spend a chunk of my year in the Tuscan city of Lucca, Italy. I would highly recommend 'working from home' in a different country. It has broadened me personally and professionally and it has been refreshing taking on board European working practices. I've even created a podcast, *Life in Lucca with Andrea*, which is evidence of the diversity of skills of a record keeper. Indeed, I've drawn on many of the skills and expertise I've learned as an archivist, the obvious being oral history projects.

Although the recent Board reorganisation means that I will no longer have responsibility for the PRG, I'm looking forward to continuing to work to support members through the pandemic and I'm optimistic that, with some creative thinking, the experiences of the past two years will bring interesting and exciting future projects. You can contact me via email at andrea.waterhouse@archives.org.uk.



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”

ARA Archive Volunteering Award 2022 - nominations open

Nominations are sought for the ARA Archive Volunteering Award 2022.

The 2022 award is an opportunity to thank our volunteers for all their continued support and work over this very difficult time.

We welcome projects which demonstrate how archives have supported volunteers through the past year and have adapted projects to suit their circumstances, whether remotely or in new ways of working together... but apart.

Winners will have a national platform to celebrate their volunteers' contribution to the service and gain publicity for their archive's role in supporting individuals and community through volunteering programmes.

ARA seeks to celebrate the role of volunteers in supporting archive services and to collect good practice case studies to

inform the wider sector. This award is a key strand of the work of ARA's Volunteering in Archives Action Plan, bringing to life the recommendations of the ARA report [Managing Volunteering in Archives](#).

The award is also supported by The UK National Archives, the Welsh Government's Museums, Arts, Archives and Libraries Division, and the Scottish Council on Archives.

Details of the Award, nomination forms, guidance and information on previous winners and other case studies can be found [here](#).

Deadline for nominations is 9th May.

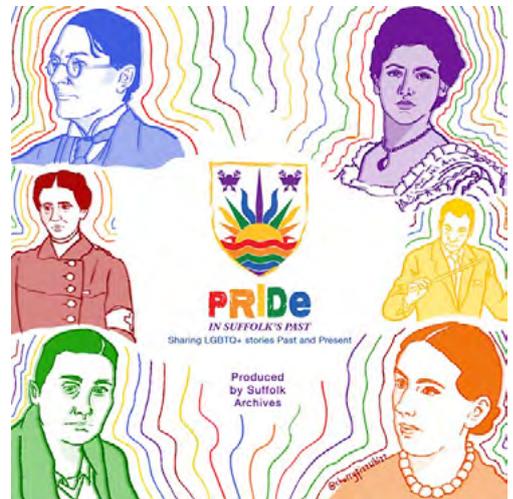
Warwickshire Online Volunteer Network (WOVeN) "Mining the Seams" volunteers. © Warwickshire County Record Office.



Warwickshire Online Volunteer Network (WOVeN) "Mining the Seams" volunteers. © Warwickshire County Record Office.



Volunteers at Suffolk Pride 2019. © Suffolk Archives.



Publication front cover, designed by volunteer Sarah Haskins. © Suffolk Archives.



Mining the Seams Cake and Coffee Social flyer. © Warwickshire County Record Office.



Please RSVP by 20th February to MININGTHESEAMS@WARWICKSHIRE.GOV.UK



New resources on the website



We have given the resources [page](#) a new look to make things easier to find and are planning an archive feature so you can find older reports and surveys. In the meantime, if you cannot find what you are looking for, please get in touch with deborah.mason@archives.org.uk for help.

Since the website launched in November, we have added the following new resources:

- [Section for Archives & Museums – Exhibition Tips](#)
- [Section for New Professionals – Recruitment Tips for New Professionals](#)
- [Accessible Learning Toolkit](#)

We also now have a dedicated [space](#) where you can advertise and find ARA officer vacancies and other ARA volunteering opportunities.

For any queries regarding website content please contact Deborah on the email above.

Blogs, blogs, blogs

Blogging is a great way of humanising our profession and giving people an insight into all the different things we do. Both the Archives for Learning and Education Section (ALES) and the Section for New Professionals (SfNP) are looking for writers to contribute to their blogs.

ALES is looking for people who:

- Have been working on new outreach projects
- attended, or run a training session on education and learning
- Created new educational resources
- Want to talk about developments in learning through archives
- Have experiences of outreach
- Would like to share their organisation's education a learning plans for 2022.

Please get in touch at ales@archives.org.uk and submit your ideas for their blog.

The SfNP is interested in anyone who is currently pursuing a career in records management, archives or conservation to write 500-800 words for [Off The Record](#). You can pitch your idea to them at newprofessionals@archives.org.uk.

We are also about to launch a new blog feature on the main ARA website. For the ARA blog we would like to hear from people working and volunteering in all aspects of the sector, so that those looking into a career in record-keeping get an idea of what people do. We'd also like to feature some of the more intriguing and obscure stories. Whether it's research into the value of dust in the crevices of old manuscripts, how to unlock a locked book or an exciting project you are working on, we'd be very interested to hear from members. Get in touch with ideas and pitches to deborah.mason@archives.org.uk.





ARA's Archives for Learning and Education Section launch an Accessible Learning Toolkit

Archives are for everyone, and inclusion should be on the agenda of every service and everyone working in archives. We know that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can engage meaningfully with archives. ARA wants to encourage more archive services to become more 'SEND-friendly', so the Archives for Learning and Education Section has launched a toolkit for accessible learning.

SEND-friendly archives need people who are confident in welcoming children and young people with SEND. One of the main barriers to inclusion is fear of the unknown and of saying or doing the wrong thing. Whilst engaging with children and young people with SEND might seem daunting it really isn't! This toolkit aims to equip archive services with information, ideas, tools, and language to reduce this fear and to increase accessibility and inclusion of children and young people with SEND.

The toolkit's introductory section includes information about equality, diversity, and inclusion as well as types of SEND. The main sections - Assess, Plan, Do and Review - help services to design and deliver accessible learning experiences. Each section includes top tips, things to think about and a case study. Further case studies and resources are provided in the appendices along with templates for SWOT analysis, action plans and information about ethics, safeguarding and legislation covering Ireland and the UK.

The work on the toolkit was led by a steering group comprising Alexandra Healey, Philip Milnes-Smith, and Laura Yeoman. Consultant Sarah Wickham brought the project to completion. Several archive services and their partner organisations collaborated on the toolkit, providing case studies, and sharing their experiences in online workshops. These services, which are already more SEND-friendly, want to show colleagues that they may already know more than they think they do about making their service accessible and that everyone can do something.

The project was funded by ARA Research Fund.



TRAINING

Professional Development News

Celebrating success in 2021: members achieving Foundation and Registered status

2021 was another successful year for the professional registration programme. We received a total of 29 applications for Foundation and Registered Membership. 23 applications passed the assessment, a pass rate of around 80 per cent - our highest pass rate to date! A huge congratulations to all the following members:

Foundation Member of the ARA (FMARA)

Congratulations to the following Bridging the Digital Gap trainees:

Ashraf Ullah FMARA
Erin Liu FMARA
Frances Bell FMARA
Matthew Waters FMARA
Olivia Northrop FMARA

Congratulations also to Sean Preston FMARA.

Bridging the Digital Gap is run by The UK National Archives and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Registered Member of the ARA (RMARA)

Congratulations to:

Alexandra Dolan RMARA
Alexandra McConnell RMARA
Bryony Leventhall RMARA
Elisabeth Thurlow RMARA
Fergus Mason RMARA
Frances Horner RMARA
Frederick Alexander RMARA
Hannah Little RMARA
Jennifer Lightbody RMARA
Katharine McQuillian RMARA
Kathryn Flanagan RMARA
Kolya Abramsky RMARA
Lara Nelson RMARA
Louise Woof RMARA
Malcolm Mathieson RMARA
Nathanael Hodge RMARA
Philip Jeffs RMARA
Stephanie Rolt RMARA.

CPD Review

All ARA members holding professional registration must continue with their professional development. CPD Review is a peer review service supporting

members with their CPD whilst revalidating their professional registration. For more information, please visit the [Professional Registration Programme website](#).

Congratulations also to the following members who successfully renewed their Registered status through our CPD Review in 2021:

Jan Hicks RMARA
Jemma Lee RMARA
Richard Wade RMARA.

Finally, a big thank you to the mentors who supported the applicants with the development of their application.

Thanks also to our wonderful team of professional registration assessors. They volunteer their time to ensure each application meets the required standards: Liz Newman RMARA, Philippa Smith RMARA, Victoria Cranna RMARA, Mari Takayanagi RMARA, Laura Yeoman RMARA, Alison Diamond RMARA, Gavin McGuffie RMARA, Lisa Snook FARA, Melinda Haunton RMARA, Lyn Crawford RMARA, Sian Yates RMARA, Ruth MacLeod RMARA, Heather Romaine RMARA, Jennifer Povey RMARA, Nicola Waddington RMARA, Alison Spence RMARA, Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan FARA, Charlotte Berry FARA, Gillian Sheldrick FARA and Jim Ranahan RMARA.

We are currently recruiting new volunteers to join our assessor team. If you are interested in developing assessment skills and supporting the next generation of professional record keepers, then please contact chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk. Full training given.

Archives and records are essential to democracy



In this article, **Gary Tuson**, Chair of the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group and County Archivist at Norfolk County Council, argues that archives and records are essential to democracy and that we should all work together to advocate for their importance in building trust in government.

When people refer to my place of work as a Records Office, I used to let it pass and not correct them by pointing out that there is no 's' in Record Office. In most cases, I still do, but not always. This is because I have found that it affords me a superb opportunity to dispel the notion that archives are purely a heritage service by stressing our role as a place of record with all that this implies for citizenship and democracy. Taking the risk of being called a pedant does seem to pay off: a brief look of puzzlement – or annoyance – is soon replaced by one of interest and, in many cases, a response of “I hadn't thought about it that way before.”

This leads me to think, should we be making more of our role in citizenship and democracy to advocate for archives and records? What we do is vital to the effectiveness of inquiries, the ability of citizens to defend their rights and participate in government at all levels, the efficiency of Freedom of Information and the fight against dis- and misinformation. If brought together into an effective advocacy campaign, based on a clear and consistent message, we could demonstrate why what we do as archive and records professionals is so important. I would also suggest that, in the current political climate and thinking about the potential range of support we might get, we emphasise the importance of archives and records in safeguarding and improving democracy.

In Europe, it would be fair to say, representative democracy is acknowledged as the best form of government. There are those who hold other opinions, but they have generally been considered to be firmly outside the window of

acceptable political discourse. Unfortunately, there is now ample evidence of increasing levels of dissatisfaction with democracy across Europe and those with alternative systems to offer may gain ground by this. To take just one example, work by the [Bennett Institute](#) at Cambridge University shows a sharp drop, to less than 50%, in the number of Western European millennials who are satisfied with democracy.

One factor underlying this malaise is a growing distrust of government. The [OECD](#) (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development) has identified five drivers of trust in government: openness, responsiveness, reliability, fairness, and integrity. As they acknowledge, “ensuring access to information and open data, along with timely responses to requests for information” are essential in driving this trust – what the UNESCO Declaration on Archives refers to as “the vital necessity of archives for ... accountability and transparency, [and] for protecting citizens' rights”.

The argument that we play a role of fundamental importance in an open democratic society, as well as being strong, pertinent, and important, is also quite simple to convey:

- Open responsive government is essential to building trust in government and defending representative democracy.
- Without comprehensive and effective records and archive management, open responsive government is not achievable.



- Investing in archives and records management builds trust in government and strengthens democracy.

Of course, the conclusion could also be that cutting investment in archives and records management weakens trust in government and damages democracy, but it would be better to keep the messaging positive - for now.

Despite the simplicity of the bolstering democracy argument and the clarity shown above, a successful advocacy campaign would require considerable work to outline both the case for change and hold within the campaign a variety of nuanced messages aimed at different audiences.

To begin such a campaign, we would need to:

- Develop clear aims and key messages, backed by evidence and individual examples. Aims might be as wide-ranging as an increase in government investment in archives and records, or as targeted as the inclusion of an information preparation phase in all relevant enquiries. As many of us have experienced, a relatively small investment in preparing collections for the Infected Blood Inquiry would have paid significant dividends.
- Map and analyse target audiences and frame key messages which resonate with them. For example, arguing that our role in improving responses to Freedom of Information will help dispel notions of cover-up and corruption

would be more effective than telling politicians that we wanted to make sure people can keep an eye on them.

- Forge partnerships with bodies both across and, more challengingly, outside our sector. These partnerships would be essential in reaching target audiences and broadening our appeal.
- Develop and implement a media strategy that enables us to react quickly to the ever-changing news agenda. So far, linking digital records and the upcoming COVID-19 Inquiry has had limited success and we would need the level of engagement to be significantly higher than it has been historically.

Advocacy around these issues has the potential to make a considerable impact, but it would require a significant investment of time and resources, the development of new skills, and support from across the sector. It is worth bearing in mind that, although the issues at stake here are important and might require a shift in priorities, our other areas of advocacy work are equally vital and should continue in parallel.

Gary Tuson is chair of the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group and is County Archivist at Norfolk County Council and Chair of the Archives for Wellbeing Network. Gary is also involved in the History Begins at Home campaign, which is an initiative of the Archives for Wellbeing Network and the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group of the Archives and Records Association UK & Ireland.



I would also suggest that, in the current political climate and thinking about the potential range of support we might get, we emphasise the importance of archives and records in safeguarding and improving democracy.



The unexpected benefits of the COVID-19 pandemic



In this article, **Robin Sampson**, Project Manager on Norfolk Record Office's Community Archives: Skills, Support and Sustainability project, argues that despite the difficulties COVID-19 has caused the sector, the events of the past couple of years have brought some positivity and new opportunities.

The archive sector, much like the rest of the world, has had to come to terms with a global pandemic of unprecedented scale in the modern world. This has impacted on the ongoing survival of archive services and has resulted in a very steep learning curve for the entire sector. How can we provide a level of service conducive to our ongoing survival? The answer may involve a focus on essentials - what is it that is really important to users?

The UK National Archives' executive summary of the impact of COVID-19 warns that limited access to archives leads to a risk of reduced scrutiny which in turn "limits the capacity of citizens, civil society and sections of the state to exercise and enforce accountability and transparency." The closures of archives may also lessen their public profile, in turn risking reductions in funding and income and potentially placing many archive services in a vulnerable position.

That impact has been seen over the past two years as archive services have been forced to limit physical access to their collections, putting a significant question mark over their *raison d'être*. To ensure compliance with social distancing guidelines, many have put booking systems in place to manage the flow of users and staff more efficiently within their sites, and there have been ongoing debates about the need to quarantine records after use.

Archive services have suffered backlogs in site-based work such as accessioning, repackaging and conservation, and have missed out on new donations of material during their closure periods. Opportunities for in-person outreach have also

decreased. Volunteers have been unable to come onsite, meaning their valuable contributions have reduced.

Yet despite this gloomy outlook, the pandemic has presented several opportunities for archive services, for example, staff working from home have had the opportunity to improve catalogue records - adding authority records, expanding descriptions, and cross-referencing between records - enhancing the user experience of archive catalogues.

The pandemic has also highlighted why people want to become involved with archives. People have had more free time during lockdown, and many have turned to family history and local

“
...limited access to archives leads to a risk of reduced scrutiny which in turn limits the capacity of citizens, civil society and sections of the state to exercise and force accountability and transparency.
”



heritage as a way of passing time, maintaining their wellbeing and a sense of community. Community history Facebook groups and forums are increasing in popularity, and this new interest presents an opportunity for archive services to acquire new users and new collections.

Some institutions, such as my own, the Norfolk Record Office, have taken the opportunity to create training around community archiving, particularly pandemic collecting programmes. There is an obvious opportunity to collect materials from this period, which will ensure that a rich and textured historical record develops. This is particularly important at a local community level; COVID-19 has impacted on the entire world, and everyone can relate to some level of discomfort or suffering. These stories need to be collected and retold, and community archives can play a vital role in

documenting the experiences of people in the community who may not otherwise be heard. This aligns with a more user-centred approach; archive services can move away from being perceived as 'heritage gatekeepers' to taking a more community-minded, advisory role, helping communities raise awareness and care for their own histories.

Almost two years into the pandemic, we can now also appreciate the benefits of a hybrid working environment where our time and resources don't always need to be spent on organising and travelling to in-person meetings and events. Digitisation programmes and online outreach offers have enabled the profession to continue its public-facing activities. Colleagues have learnt a lot in a short amount of time, for example, taking crash courses in Zoom and other remote technologies and many of us have greatly improved skill sets as



It is vital going forward that archive services place greater emphasis on community collaboration and work to maintain a flexible, hybrid approach to outreach and engagement.





An example of records stored within one of Norfolk's community archives. © Robin Sampson

a result. Of course, the rapid shift to remote and digital engagement is at risk of alienating certain demographics - anecdotally, I have seen some user reluctance to interact remotely, particularly at the pandemic's start - but this risk has lessened due to everyone's prolonged experience of using this technology.

Digitisation programmes mean certain records can be accessed online. We must recognise that digitisation is not a panacea and will never fully replace physical access to documents. It is important that we manage public expectations, and we should acknowledge that, as The UK National Archives notes, the sector "is not at the stage of digital maturity to meet the digital challenges that have emerged from the pandemic". Institutions have varying capabilities to capture complex digital records and preserve them for posterity, and not all demographics have the IT knowledge to access them. This being the case, why not pass on some of our digitisation skills and knowledge to community archive groups? This may benefit them in the long term and relieve archive services of some of the burden.

I'd like to highlight some examples from the Norfolk Record Office's 'Community Archives Skills, Support and Sustainability' project. The intention was to educate and advise Norfolk-based community archives on managing and preserving their collections to professional archive standards. Project delivery was to be via in-person meetings and training sessions. However, due to the pandemic most of the engagement has been delivered online and remotely.

The problems this created were mitigated by focussing on remote offers: creating an online

toolkit resource; running remote live training sessions which were later recorded and made available on YouTube; creating tutorial videos for useful software and processes; and running 'social' Zoom meetings and a Google forum, so that partner groups can meet each other and exchange advice and ideas.

Once restrictions were lifted, we were able to work with many of the groups in person. We have now developed to a point where we can run the project in both its intended format with site visits and in-person training, but also offer the option to engage in remote collaboration.

So, what have we learnt? We now have a benchmark of what to do should a similar crisis arise, and we can develop emergency workflows which could be adopted with short notice. Much of the work done during the pandemic has strengthened and improved our outreach offers and the finding aids that service users utilise to access our collections. Digital records and offerings won't fully overtake the importance of in-person research, engagement and collaboration, but will offer flexibility; online events offer greater accessibility and will attract people who otherwise would be unable to visit the physical archive site due to distance or disability. It is vital going forward that archive services place greater emphasis on community collaboration and work to maintain a flexible, hybrid approach to outreach and engagement.

Robin Sampson is a qualified archivist and is currently employed as Project Manager on Norfolk Record Office's Community Archives: Skills, Support and Sustainability project.



**Do you have a
Community Archive or
Heritage Group near
you who deserves some
recognition?**

**The Community Archives
and Heritage Group of
the Archives and Records
Association (ARA) is looking
for nominations for their
annual awards.**



Tell us in 200 words what you value most about your community archive or heritage project. Is it the new stories you discover about your people and place? Is it the way your research and activities bring your community together? Is it the important artefacts and paperwork you preserve for the next generation? Whatever the reason, tell us what it is that makes it special and worth your time and effort.

Find out more and fill in the entry form at <https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/awards/community-archive-heritage-awards-2022/awards-2022>

**DEADLINE FOR
NOMINATIONS
18TH MARCH**

The closing date for these submissions is 18th March. Entrants will then be shortlisted and shortlisted groups will be contacted in April for more information.

Winners will be announced on Sat 16 July, during the CAHG Annual Conference at the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG). This year we are delighted to be co-hosting with the Irish Community Archive Network, Galway County Council and Hardiman Library, NUI, Galway.



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council



IRISH
COMMUNITY
ARCHIVE
NETWORK



Archives & Records
Association
UK & Ireland



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

museum
National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Class ACT: conservation training in archives



Katie Proctor and **Victoria Stevens ACR** look at how conservation training in the UK was transformed by events in Florence in 1966 and has continued to develop in the years that followed.

Conservation as a profession is still in its adolescence: born out of a natural catastrophe, the modern profession has continued to develop and grow to occupy the broad base it maintains today. This process has been forged from a solid methodology: constant materials and process testing, persistent reflection and treatment analyses and an open minded and global interest and approach to learning. Conservators are no longer only the maintenance operatives of an archive, they are project and personnel managers, technicians and logisticians, data modellers and analysts, whilst still working magic with a bone folder, a scalpel and sometimes a dwindling budget. All this carried forth on the flood waters of the Arno in 1966.

The Florence Flood was the unfortunate catalyst for change in conservation, moving conservation from an adjunct in collections management to a profession in its own right. In November 1966, exceptional rainfall necessitated the release of water from two dams to the east of Florence, sending a huge volume of water down the Arno and into the city. A staggering 40% of the state archives were damaged, including demographic records and key historical legal records.

“From the beginning we were all thinking, “What can we do? What’s the best way?” We didn’t think, “Oh, we can’t do anything.”¹

The response to the flood was a perfect reflection of the internationally co-operative work model we see today, with help, ideas and advice being shared across the globe. Conservators congregated in Florence, setting up makeshift studios and triage centres in buildings all over the city. A new conservation method, attitude and organisation was called for, not least due to the scale of the

problem and the responsibility for the heritage of Florence, the region and Italy as a whole.

The silver lining from this devastating event was new conservation standards and a uniformity of accepted methodology, quality and excellence in documentation, materials, treatment, and damage stabilisation. The collective conservation community came together and effectively brainstormed a way forward for Florence and the profession at large. From this moment came the extensive use of Japanese as opposed to Western paper for repair, non-adhesive limp vellum binding, advances in studio design and a wave of courses across the US and Europe offering the same high-quality approach to tuition in archives and book conservation.

Library and archive conservation training programmes already established in the UK undoubtedly benefitted from the advances made due to the Florence Flood. One of those pioneering schemes was the ARA’s Conservation Training Scheme, or ACTS which has been running for well over 70 years² and was predominantly formed with a view to training students from local government record offices. It was initially set up with the idea of reciprocity in mind. A student would train in another office and in turn, the student’s office would take on a trainee from elsewhere. Conservation professionals were sharing their knowledge and experience with the new generation of archive conservators, passing on lifelong skills, experience, and knowledge. The course as it stands today abides by those principles, however, with changes in the profession it has had to evolve. One of the main advantages of the ACTS model is that the trainee receives one to one training, in an instructor’s place of work. They are provided with intensive and focused learning on specific archive

conservation subjects. A hybrid between what we think of as a traditional apprentice route and an academic route, students learn vocationally as well as by attending lectures, undertaking research projects and self-directed study. This style of learning has proved to be very successful and 78 per cent of employers that have employed staff with this type of training have said that productivity has increased, with students becoming highly skilled before the end of the programme.

The training scheme is entirely run by volunteers, the commitment to it shows a real passion for education and training and a true dedication to developing the future of the archive conservation profession.

“Not only is it a learning process for the student, but it also benefits the instructor; you are given the opportunity to work with students who bring with them a source of energy, new innovative and inventive ideas that can be imbedded with present practices, this enables the profession to push forward in finding new ways of repairing and protecting our archival material well into the future.” -

David Dorning (MA ACR FIIC) teaching students on ACTS during Chemistry Week 2019. © Katie Proctor.

Huw Bonner, one-time trainee and now Preventative Conservation Manager from The National Library of Wales and seals instructor on the training scheme

Instructors and trainees alike value the opportunity to learn from each other as well as the wider national and international conservation profession. The value of the course to those who have progressed through it is clear. The training scheme also works collaboratively with several training institutions and the wider profession to deliver education. It holds several biennial training weeks: Chemistry Training Week and Annual Lecture Week, where conservation professionals from around the UK (and further afield) provide lectures on a variety of conservation subjects. Through this openness for communication and sharing, professional relationships have flourished. During the pandemic the training scheme held its first virtual lecture week, opening the lecture week up to a much wider audience including attendees from Canada, Italy and Ireland.

The response to the crisis of the Florence Flood in 1966 has provided the current generation of



“
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”



LIB.	TITLE	VALUE				
CAT NO	SYM	ORIGINAL	REPAIR	25	Stabbed joint	COVERING
PHOT	BOLS	STRUCTURE	1	As necessary	SEWING	Full
S	⊗	COVER	2	General dry cleaning	Original holes	Limp
C	⊕	Full	3	General mending	Alum-tawed thongs	Yap edges
P	?	Stiff	4	Fold mending	Vellum thongs	Quarter and vellum tips
W	!!!	Limp	5	Reinforcement	Herring bone	Case
FC	~	Half	6	Swing plates	Double cords	Box
M	≈	Quarter	7	Do not trim edges	Single cords	Alum-tawed pig
Se	≈	Alum-tawed pig		SIZING & ADHESIVES	Staining cords	Vellum
For	R	Vellum	8	Parchment size	Sawn-in cords	Calf
Fin	R	Calf	9	Gelatine size	Linen tapes	Goat
WASHING	YES	M	10	Starch paste	Linen braid	Native-dyed goat
OK		M	11	Polyvinylacetate	Stab	Pulp
OK		X	12	Glutofix	Link-sewing	Buckram
S	Δ	SEWING	13	Methyl cellulose (Tylose)	Linked overcasting	Reback
B	Δ	Original	14	Soluble nylon	Machine	Refurbish
Y/A	⊕	Thongs		TYPES OF PAPER	Stabbed joints	Restore as original
D	⊕	Double cords	15	Handmade	As necessary	TITLING
Ph	⊕	Herring bone	16	Mouldmade	BOARDS	Original
Before	⊕	Single cords	17	Machine-made	Laced-in	Manuscript
After	⊕	Sawn-in cords	18	Japanese mending	'Split' s	Tool
DEACIDIFICATION	⊕	Tapes	19	Lens tissue	Original	Label
	⊕	Laced-in	20	Heat-set tissue	Cased	TREAT WITH
	⊕	Two-on		ENDPAPERS	HEADBANDS	Saddle soap
REINFORCEMENT		HEADBANDS	21	'Italian'	Handsewn, laced-in	Potassium lactate
		Thread, laced-in	22	'Made'	Handsewn, thread	Paramitrophenol
		Thread	23	'Library'	Handsewn, silk	Lanolin & neatfoot oil
		Silk	24	Tipped	Stuck-on	
OTHER INSTRUCTIONS						
Roger Powell on behalf of Peter Waters who designed the conservation system at B.N.C. Firenze Sheila Waters who wrote this sheet originally saw v.l. Britton in June 1966 on the occasion of E.A. Thompson's visit to Florence						

Paper Instructor Shirley Jones (MA ACR ARA Cons Cert) with trainee Katie Brew from Durham University Archives. © Katie Proctor.

Book examination and documentation form developed by Peter Waters and designed by Sheila Waters. From After Florence: Developments in Conservation Treatment of Books in Flood in Florence, 1966: A Fifty-Year Retrospective, Paul Conway; Martha O'Hara Conway; published by the University of Michigan under a creative commons licence.

conservators and related heritage professionals with a route map for the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic: through skills sharing, collaboration and generosity across international boundaries and the current and next generations of conservators have been engaged, educated, and inspired through the rich seam of online content that has benefitted us all over the last 2 years.

The need for training in archive conservation has never been greater, with archives featuring more prominently in the engagement offer of all heritage sectors. Visitors to exhibitions and museums expect

to see the back story to objects and works of art, with archives being used to bring alive characters and events in a way that no other material can. The value of ARA's ACTS should not be overlooked. Currently the scheme is one of the only opportunities to provide education and training to students that focuses specifically on archive conservation with provision of both practical and vocational training. The success of the model is undeniable. The City and Guilds London Art School course has seen student numbers at capacity since its foundation in 2020 and ACTS is, at the present time, closed to enrolments due to being at capacity. The need for the whole ARA membership to get behind ACTS and support the next generation of archive conservators – and future instructors - is paramount and an ever-growing concern for the scheme. It is only through a continued sector-wide collaborative, determined and inclusive approach, as demonstrated in 1966 and at the core of ACTS, that we will achieve a sustainable and bright future for archive conservation.

Victoria Stevens ACR is a library and archive conservator accredited by the Institute of Conservation (ICON). She has worked in written heritage conservation for over 25 years, mainly

National Library manuscripts being washed after the flood, 1966. © UNESCO / Dominique Roger, CC BY-SA 3.0 IGO





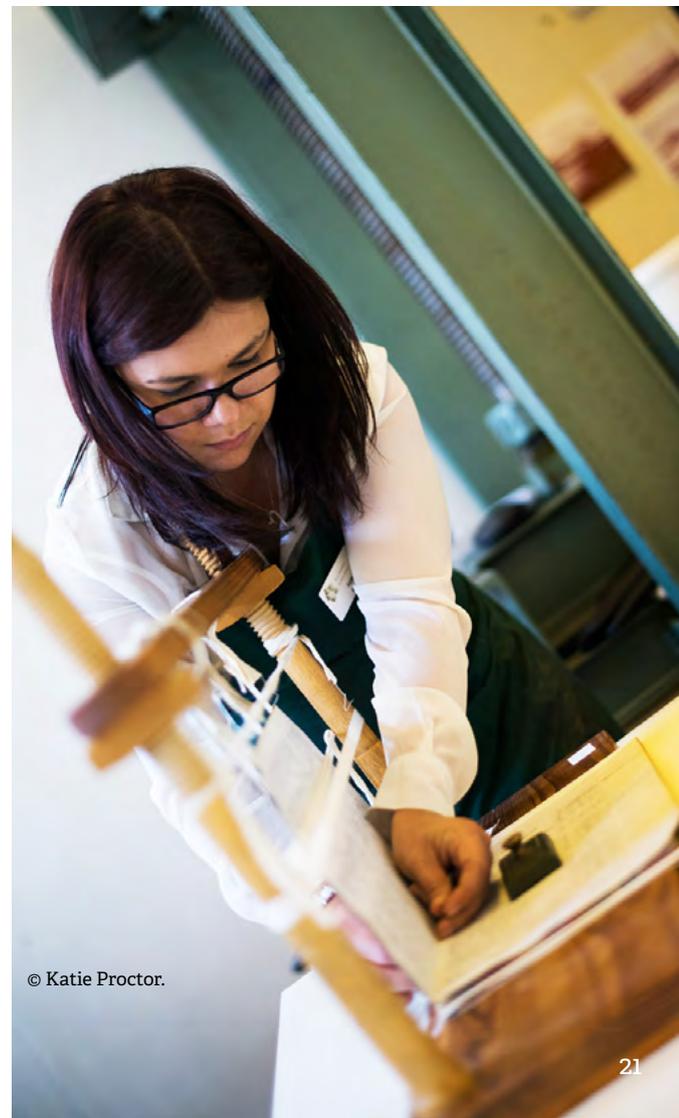
International book restoration volunteers responding to the Florence Flood. From *After Florence: Developments in Conservation Treatment of Books in Flood in Florence, 1966: A Fifty-Year Retrospective*, Paul Conway; Martha O'Hara Conway; published by the University of Michigan under a creative commons licence.

in the central library and college collections of the University of Oxford but also in local government, museum, educational and religious libraries, and archives across the country. She now manages her own UK-wide conservation practice and preservation consultancy from her studio in Reading, UK, as well as being a leading tutor on the City and Guilds London Art School BA Book and Paper course.

Katie Proctor is conservator at West Yorkshire Archive Service. She trained as a conservator with the ARA's Archive Conservation Training Scheme. Katie sits on the ARA's Archive Conservation Training Scheme and the Preservation and Conservation Group committees. Katie also sits on the PACR pathway; hoping to apply for ICON accreditation this year, as well as a working group for the Professional Development Programme for the ARA.

¹ Don Etherington, *After Florence: Developments in Conservation Treatment of Books in Flood in Florence, 1966: A Fifty-Year Retrospective*; Paul Conway; Martha O'Hara Conway; Michigan Publishing, University of Michigan Library, 2018.

² Originally run by the Society of Archivists which amalgamated with the National Council on Archives (NCA) and the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government (ACALG) to become the Archives and Records Association in 2010.



© Katie Proctor.

A collaborative approach to digitisation



The Archives and Records Association's online conference in 2021 was a great experience for delegates who could dip in and out of sessions and get on with other tasks in the gaps in between. In a conference venue that time is usually spent networking and visiting exhibitor stands. To replace some of the discussions they might have had with delegates, we have asked our premier conference sponsor, Ancestry, to write a series of articles looking at how they work with archive service providers.

In this first article **Kristian Lafferty** explains how they work with local archive services on digitisation projects.

A Collaborative Approach to Digitisation

As I skim through past editions of *ARC Magazine* and see the weight of expertise and knowledge being shared amongst peers, it's impossible not to feel privileged to be a part of such an engaging and intelligent community as ARA. Then, as I sit down to write this article, it reminds me very much of the time – as a fresh-faced English Literature undergrad – I took an elective in Classical Music and Musical Theory; acoustic guitar slung over my shoulders in a classroom full of cellos, bassoons, French horns and violas. I couldn't have been more out of my depth if I'd joined the open-water swimming team. However, despite my ill-fated analysis of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, I believe steadfastly in the importance of welcoming outside voices and the different perspectives they bring, as a way of learning from one another.

These principles hold true, particularly, when we at Ancestry work with an archive. As a commercial, family history company, we occupy a niche place in the archive sector with our interest being, primarily, in enabling customers to make personal discoveries, and thus to disseminate the information that can help them to do that. I know the archive sector has an immeasurably broader remit, but in that precise tranche where we overlap there are so many great opportunities to work together and to share knowledge. We're experts in large-scale digitisation and transcription



projects, promoting and disseminating records, and online publishing; and the archivists we work with are experts in understanding their collections, each collection's value to family historians, community engagement, the details and context of each collection, as well as document handling, conservation, managing access and running complex projects within the archive whilst continuing to run the archive uninterrupted. This shared knowledge enables us to work effectively with archives to carry out large-scale digitisation and publishing projects.

Parish registers.
© Ancestry.



Parish registers. © Ancestry.



Parish registers. © Ancestry.

Identifying collections for digitisation and publishing

This is, typically, the first step in our journey of working together with an archive to digitise and publish a collection; we collaborate to find a good collection to work on together and then we sign an agreement to set the ball rolling on the wider project, and outline mutual expectations.

Ancestry has over four million subscribers, so we have a good sense of what record types our users like engaging with; archive services are dealing with a continuous stream of public enquiries, so have excellent insights into the most used family history resources.

Creating a clear plan

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service had around 400 boxes of loose-leaf bishop's transcripts at The Hive in Worcester that were suitable for digitisation and publication. In March 2020 we began to work with the archivists there to scope out the full scale of the project and come up with a plan to facilitate the production and digitisation. This involved Ancestry creating a method statement, agreed with the archive, detailing a workflow that covered everything from the equipment we would use, to who was responsible for the documents at each step in the process.

Developing Trust – working together on-site

Once we had that in place, we employed a dedicated digitisation operative, Agnese Davies, to work on-site at The Hive. Agnese was given a pass and a dedicated space to work within the archive. We worked with Worcestershire to ensure that we were handling the documents in the right way, and our processes for digitisation were suitable and appropriate given the delicate nature of the materials. We also created a detailed catalogue of

the bishop's transcripts at item level; this way we, and the archive, could be confident that everything was captured, and nothing omitted. Something that we and our archive partners are acutely aware of is that fidelity and detail is as important to the genealogical communities we serve as it is to us.

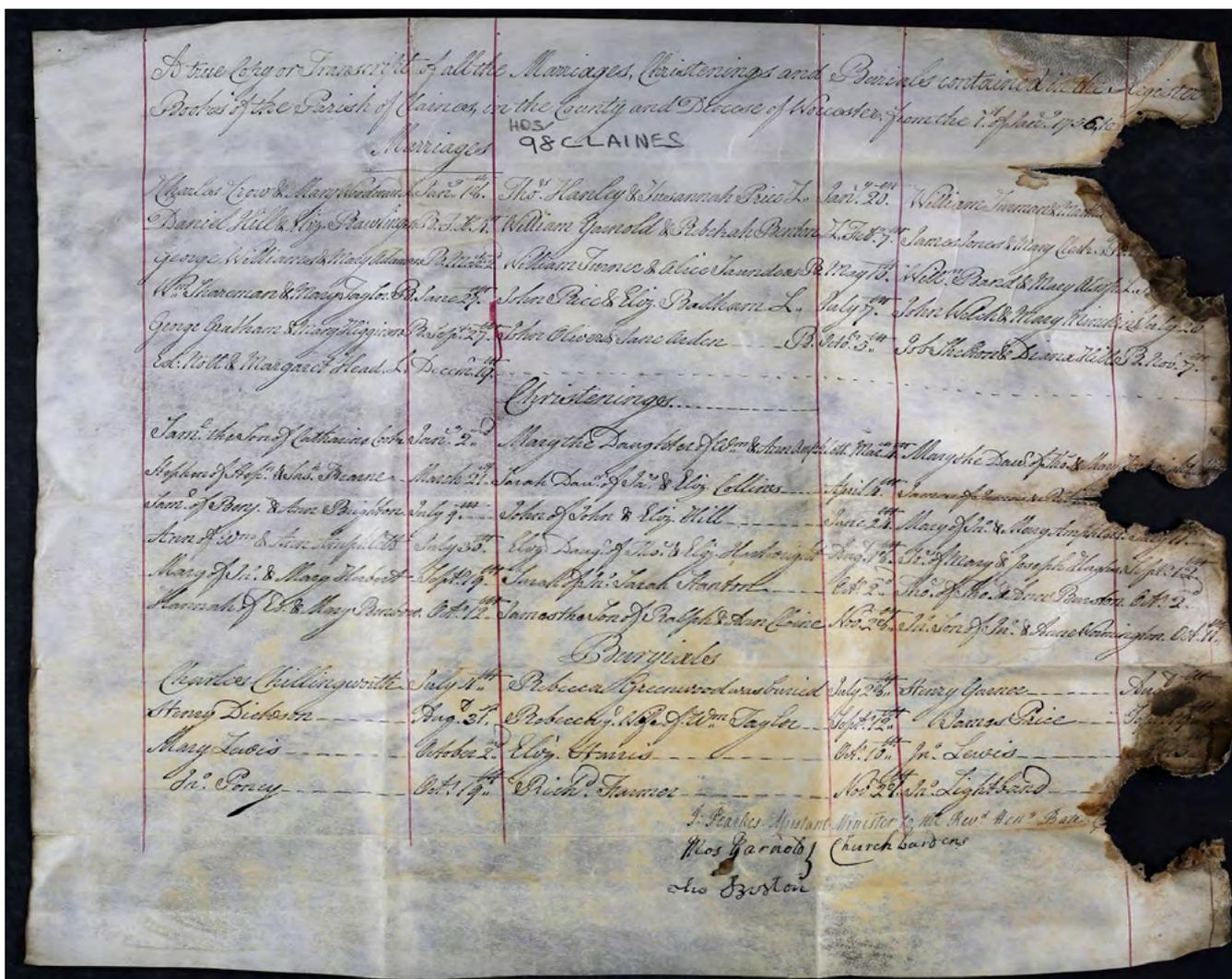
A big logistical question is always the production of documents. At Worcester we set up a process whereby a member of archive staff would fill a trolley each morning and we would work through it, moving each complete box to a returns trolley to be collected at the end of each day. This is a common way we tackle productions, and it works well. As Agnese captured the images, we uploaded them to the Ancestry servers where we performed quality assurance checks on them and arranged for one of our indexing vendors to begin their transcription work. Together we navigated the unforeseen challenges presented by the pandemic and digitisation was completed in July 2021, with the final collection totalling 300,000 images.



Archive Ref b736/BA2015/317 © Ancestry.

BAPTISMS Solemnized in the Parish of <i>Saint John in Bedwardine</i> in the County of <i>Worcester</i> in the Year 1856						
When Baptized.	Child's Christian Name.	Parent's Name.		Abode.	Quality, Trade, or Profession.	By whom the Ceremony was Performed.
		Christian.	Surname.			
1856 11 th May	Edward James son of	Edward Cooper	Cooper	Chapeltown Lane St John's	Labourer	J. N. Macaulay
No. 1266		Ann		Born Nov. 28. 1855		
18 May	Sophy Elizabeth or of	William Thompson	Thompson	St John's	Tailor	John Nye Wood
No. 1267		Emily		Born Jan. 8. 1856		
18 May	Bartholomew James son of	William King	King	St John's	Warehouseman	John Nye Wood
No. 1268		Ellen		Born Feb. 23. 1856		
25 th May	Thomas son of	Thomas Freeman	Freeman	Broadheath St John's	Labourer	J. N. Macaulay Officiating Curate.
No. 1269		Mary		Born April 27 th . 1856		
1856 5 th June	James son of	George and Ann	Ledgley	St John's	Policeman	J. C. James Curate
No. 1270				Born 28 th April 1856		
1856 8 th June	Andrew son of	John Morris	Morris	S. John's	Gardener	J. N. Macaulay Officiating Curate.
No. 1271		Eliza		Born March 28. 1856		
1856 25 th June	Jane Eleanor daughter of	William Boe	Boe	St John's	Shoemaker	J. N. Macaulay Officiating Curate.
No. 1272		Philippa Sarah		Born June 3 rd . 1856		
1856 29 th June	Mary Ann daughter of	William Vobe	Vobe	S. John's	Carpenter	J. N. Macaulay Officiating Curate.
No. 1273		Henry Charlotte		Born April 26. 1856		

Daigton, Worcester.



Archive Ref b736/BA2020/403a © Ancestry.

Building a partnership that goes further than the project in-hand

One of the great things about working with an archive on a digitisation project like this one, is that in this overlapping space where Ancestry and the archives come together, we have an opportunity to really be a part of the sector, to build trust, and to be a force for good within the archive. During our time at The Hive, we were able to spend a couple of weeks (when we weren't working on the bishop's transcripts) digitising a collection of finding aids and doing a small piece of digitisation work for Gloucestershire Archives. It's those small gestures, and feeling like we're making a positive difference, that give us the most satisfaction.

After care – sharing the benefits

The digitisation work at Worcester is complete but the indexing work is ongoing. Later this year we will build a beta version of the Worcestershire Bishop's Transcripts database on Ancestry. We'll test it ourselves to try to find errors and bugs and then send the links to the archive for another round of testing and checking. Two weeks later we will launch the collection, working closely with Worcestershire to coordinate a marketing and PR campaign.

Once we've launched a collection with an archive, we continue to be valued partners to each other. We'll typically (if we haven't done so already) arrange for a set of the digital images to be sent back for the archive to use to run their service, and we'll switch on the free Ancestry access that we provide to archives and libraries with whom we work. Then, on an ongoing basis, we'll share usage and data insights and have discussions about potential future projects. We're proud to work with dozens of archives across the UK and Ireland in this way, and we're looking forward to continuing to work with new and existing archives throughout 2022.

Kristian Lafferty is the Content Acquisition Manager for Ancestry in England. He has worked at Ancestry since 2019 helping to create digitisation and publishing partnerships with archives and other heritage institutions. With a background in academic publishing, he has spent the last 10 years working in content licensing across the academic, archive and news and business sectors.



Collaborating on an inclusive recruitment training programme

The UK National Archives and Creative and Cultural Skills

In this joint feature, The UK National Archives and Creative and Cultural Skills highlight the importance of inclusive recruitment and a diverse workforce and explain how a partnership approach between the two organisations is helping to broaden the sector's understanding of inclusive recruitment practices.

Archives Unlocked The UK National Archives' strategy for the sector and one of its aims is to develop the capacity of the archive workforce to deliver sustainable, resilient and forward-thinking archive services. These archive services should foster trust, enrichment, and openness by reflecting the communities they serve, meeting their needs and engaging with wider society.

In so many ways, archives are doing a fantastic job of achieving these goals – our publication *A Year in Archives 2021* is a testament to this. However, most of us by now are aware that the archives sector is still not representative of the wider working population and is dominated by those who have completed undergraduate and postgraduate study.

So, why are inclusive recruitment and a diverse workforce so important? Firstly, and most evidently, we all want our sector to be welcoming to anyone from any background. That's why The UK National Archives' overarching strategy is called *Archives for Everyone* and why 'inclusive' is one of the three key characteristics that we aspire to be as an archive.

On top of this fundamental belief, a diverse workforce would have other long-term benefits for archives. The sector needs to attract additional talent from other spheres, such as high-level digital skills, to ensure that it keeps pace with changes within both heritage and society more generally. Improved recruitment is also vital to reach new users and audiences and to gain greater funding and other opportunities.

For all these reasons, The UK National Archives aims to keep diversity and social mobility at the forefront of discussions in the sector, across all



aspects of service delivery. If we are to achieve greater diversity in the workforce, we need to think about talent development in a new way, adapt our recruitment practices and diversify the range of entry routes that we use to train future employees.

The need for a partnership approach

This is a big challenge, and The UK National Archives knew it would need to work in partnership to make this a reality. Earlier this year, we started working with *Creative & Cultural Skills* to deliver effective training and

Creative & Cultural Skills,
© Photographer:
Briony Campbell.

“Archive services should foster trust, enrichment, and openness by reflecting the communities they serve, meeting their needs and engaging with wider society.”



Creative & Cultural Skills,
© photographer:
Briony Campbell.

professional development opportunities that would broaden the sector's understanding of inclusive recruitment practices.

Creative & Cultural Skills already had a Fair Access Sector Support programme, which was designed to help organisations from across the wider cultural sector embrace the use of different entry routes. However, despite this programme being open to archives, services didn't engage with Creative & Cultural Skills as much as they'd hoped. In light of this, The UK National Archives commissioned Creative & Cultural Skills to tailor its workshops specifically to archive services and to ring-fence a series of sessions just for archive professionals.

These sessions covered a wide range of topics relating to inclusive recruitment, including:

- 'A best practice guide to recruitment', which provided a general overview, including the concept of recruiting for potential, understanding the difference between diversity and inclusion, summarising the range of entry routes available and explaining the basic legalities associated with workers.
- 'An introduction to apprenticeships', which helped employers understand more about apprenticeships and how they work.
- 'A manager's guide to apprenticeships', which expanded on the topic of apprenticeships to specifically support those who were looking to take on their first apprentice. This session explored further why apprenticeships matter and discussed open recruitment and safeguarding.
- 'Understanding volunteering', which was designed to help employers understand the conditions that support genuine volunteering (as opposed to unpaid work) and to explain how this route can be positioned as a stepping stone into paid employment.
- 'Introducing a workforce development policy', which concentrated on helping employers create a meaningful policy, encouraging them to actively consider the different entry routes they use and what they want these routes to achieve.



Creative & Cultural Skills,
© photographer:
Briony Campbell.

“
If we are to achieve greater diversity in the workforce, we need to think about talent development in a new way, adapt our recruitment practices and diversify the range of entry routes that we use to train future employees.
”

- Finally, 'Working with freelancers', which helped employers understand what constitutes sound practices for working with freelancers and the difference between this and fixed-term employment. This was designed to help employers avoid inadvertent discrimination.

These six guidance sessions were repeated throughout 2021 and we're pleased that they were able to reach more than 250 archives in the first eight months of this support being available. Early evaluation findings show that this support is already starting to generate discussion, increase understanding of inclusive recruitment and raise awareness of how we can support the next generation of diverse talent in making the step into archives.

Alongside this broader training, Creative & Cultural Skills has offered one-to-one advice clinics where participants can ask questions specific to their organisations, such as how to draft a job description, how to create an apprenticeship role and how to target recruitment. These personalised sessions will continue in 2022 to ensure that archive professionals receive the support they need to implement real change in their organisations.

This support coincides with the recent approval of a new Level 7 Archivist and Records Manager apprenticeship in England, which will be the first time that future talent can train for this occupation via a technical training route. The UK National Archives chaired a trailblazer group that developed the apprenticeship standard, and we

are now working with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the ARA to prepare an end-point assessment and potential providers to support the development of a training offer. We hope that the first Level 7 apprentices will start in late 2022.

If you have any questions about our inclusive recruitment training, or ideas for how we could support the sector's workforce development further, please get in touch with us at asd@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

About Creative & Cultural Skills

Creative & Cultural Skills is the UK-wide agency working to create a fair, skilled and accessible cultural sector by shaping skills, education and employment best practice. Visit www.ccskills.org.uk to find out more and follow us on [Twitter](#).

About The UK National Archives

The UK National Archives is the official archive and publisher for the UK Government and guardian of more than 1,000 years of iconic national documents. Since 2012, [The UK National Archives](#) has fulfilled a leadership role for the archives sector in England, which comprises more than 2,500 archives. Our approach to the leadership role is collaborative, supporting partnership working to encourage a sustainable and innovative archive sector. Visit [here](#) to find out more and follow us on [Twitter](#).

ARA CONFERENCE 2022

Join us in Chester from 31st August to 2nd September for 3 days of fascinating, pertinent and illuminating talks and workshops.

Registration for 'Facing Forward: Post-pandemic recordkeeping – change, challenge, choice' will be opening in mid-March.

Why attend?

- Probably the best value for money of any conference in our sector.
- Three full days of talks, seminars and workshops with a top keynote speaker each day.
- The ARA conference attracts the widest breadth of speakers in terms of specialisms and content providing excellent opportunities for cross-sector networking – you'll meet new people not just those you see at every event!
- Those face-to-face networking opportunities include a variety of social events, including the conference dinner.
- Accommodation at the conference venue included in the price (unlike so many other conferences).
- Our conference venue, The Crowne Plaza hotel, is situated in the centre of the historic city of Chester which has the most complete city walls, the oldest racecourse and the largest Roman Amphitheatre in Britain, plus a 1000 year old Cathedral with Europe's finest example of medieval carvings - and of course the one and only 700 year old Rows galleries where shopping is a double delight. The hotel also has a very nice swimming pool and gym if you want to keep up with your fitness regime.

Follow our conference twitter account @ARAConf #ARA2022

And check in on our conference website: <https://conference.archives.org.uk/>

For regular updates about the programme and registration timetable.



WEAVE project links marginalised communities and institutions to preserve cultural heritage

WEAVE - Widen European Access to cultural communities Via Europeana - is a new project, co-financed by the European Union under the Connecting Europe Facility programme, which aims to develop a framework to link the tangible and intangible heritage of historically marginalised and underrepresented cultural communities and safeguard the rich and invaluable cultural heritage which they represent. In particular, the project will aggregate over 5,000 new high-quality records to Europeana and showcase these collections in a set of engaging editorials and a virtual exhibition.

In 2021, the Coventry University WEAVE team coordinated a series of ten project LabDays held in conjunction with partners IN2, ARCTUR, UNL, ERIAC, Europeana Foundation, PhotoConsortium, CRDI-Ajuntament de Girona, KU Leuven, TopFoto, PédeXumbo, as well as with artists and organisations such as the Early Dance Circle.

In a collaborative space where all voices were acknowledged and valued, these LabDays were designed to engage a range of communities with project activities and to reflect upon the cultural heritage content and archival collections to be aggregated to Europeana. Topics included the 'Digital Innovation of Cultural Heritage', 'Roma Self-Representation in the History of the Venice Biennale' and 'Early Dance'. The LabDays offered open spaces to discuss important questions about how communities and cultural heritage institutions can work together to safeguard and manage tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

The LabDays highlighted the importance of consultation and that to achieve equality, diversity and accessibility, members from the relevant communities needed to lead on the narratives, metadata, and archival processes. This first set of LabDays fed into a second series of events, programmed for Spring 2022, focussing on capacity building and cooperation with archives, collections, art institutions and museums.

For more information about the LabDays and digital tools and resources being developed by the project, please visit the [WEAVE](#) website.



In the evening around the camp fire a family sing and play their violins, 1950s. ©TopFoto



A big band of soldiers, 1928. © Promoter Digital Gallery

British Records Association awards 2021 Janette Harley Prize

The British Records Association (BRA) awards the annual Harley Prize in memory of BRA member Janette Harley, who died in 2015. It is intended to raise awareness of research and achievements in the world of archives and is awarded for the best, or most original, piece of published work which reflects the aims of the Association: to promote the preservation, understanding, accessibility and study of our recorded heritage for the public benefit.

The 2021 winner is Dr Amy L Erickson, Robinson College, Cambridge, for 'City Women in the 18th Century', a free open-air exhibition in autumn 2019 about women who ran luxury businesses in the City of London in the 18th century and a supporting article, 'Esther Sleepe, fanmaker, and her family', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 42 (2) (2018), pp.15-37. The exhibition was based upon trade cards in the British Museum and described more than fifty women in business in the heart of the City as jewellers, silversmiths, milliners, fan makers, lace dealers, upholsterers, printers, whalebone merchants and shoemakers.

Three further entries were highly commended:

- The King's Fund Library Service for 'Spoonful of Sugar: Hospital Food and Medicine', an online exhibition on hospital catering.

- The Unlocking History project (King's College London and elsewhere) for 'Unlocking history through automated virtual unfolding of sealed documents imaged by X-ray microtomography' (*Nature Communications*, Open Access, March 2021) and its related website, [Signed, Sealed, and Undelivered](#).
- Geoffrey Yeo, Honorary Senior Research Fellow, University College London, for *Record-Making and Record-Keeping in Early Societies* (Routledge, 2021).

A call for entries to this year's Janette Harley Prize will be made in April.



One of the trade cards, upon which the exhibition was based. Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum



Amy Erickson giving a talk at the 'City Women in the 18th Century' open-air exhibition. © Graham CopeKoga

New facilities for Archives: Wigan & Leigh

Wigan & Leigh's state-of-the-art new archive facilities opened in June 2021 at the freshly renovated Grade II listed Leigh Town Hall. Thanks to a £1.3 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and match funding from Wigan Council, the service has created a much-extended facility for researchers and volunteers. The new archive facilities include:

- A family-friendly exhibition space and high street fronting temporary displays
- A refurbished search room with improved access to collections
- A new conservation and digitisation studio
- State-of-the-art strongrooms (with possibly the tallest archive-only racking in the country at 5.0m)
- A dedicated education space and exciting new programme of activities and workshops.

Building work started on the Town Hall early in 2020 but was soon halted during the first national lockdown. Whilst work restarted

in May 2020, the challenges of a pandemic impacted everything from reduced contractor capacity on site and exhibition design via Zoom, to moving the collection back in whilst trying to enforce social distancing.

The COVID-19 related challenges to the scheme illustrated the importance of working relationships with key contractors (Carefoot and The Creative Core) and the dedication of the Culture and Capital Projects teams at Wigan Council to see the project completed. The team rapidly embraced new ways of working to keep the programme of works progressing and adapted designs and working practices. The continued senior management and political support for the project, despite the pandemic-focused priorities facing the authority, ensured a positive outcome and a bright future for the Borough's heritage.

For more information please contact: archives@wigan.gov.uk.



New strongrooms at Archives: Wigan & Leigh



New exhibition space at Archives: Wigan & Leigh. Archives: Wigan & Leigh



2021: A Space Odyssey at Isle of Man Public Record Office



Fifty-eight rows of new roller racking in place. © Isle of Man Public Record Office

After “are you going to digitise everything?”, the question many archive services are most frequently asked is “what happens when you run out of space?”

The issue of space will no doubt resonate as it’s one of the preconditions for safeguarding the future of our collections. This is why the Isle of Man Public Record Office began to plan for the future several years before it neared capacity.

The island’s national archive occupies two units on an industrial estate outside the capital, Douglas. One houses the main office and public service facilities, while the collections are spread across both premises.

Staff saw that in the secondary store, Unit 3, they could gain space by replacing the early 1990s fixed shelving with a roller racking system running the length of the store. What sounds like a straightforward swap took three years of careful planning and execution, including an application to the Isle of Man Treasury for funding and working through the tender process.

Fixed shelving in Unit 3 cleared of records and ready for dismantling © Isle of Man Public Record Office

Perhaps the biggest challenge was managing the displacement of the collections: as the old shelving came down and the new system took shape, finding temporary homes within the store for more than 19,416 archive boxes definitely tested the team’s logistical (and weightlifting!) skills.

By the end of December 2021, the store had been transformed and there is now 350 cubic metres of shelving free for new accessions. The success of the project demonstrates the service’s ongoing commitment to preserving the historically and culturally significant records of the Isle of Man.





MOPIDAC volunteers. © MOPIDAC

The unexpected wellbeing benefits of a digital volunteering project at the Museum of Policing in Devon and Cornwall

Local and community archives, and those archives that serve a particular community of interest, can help create a sense of social connectedness when people get involved, either through engagement activities or volunteering.

The Museum of Policing in Devon and Cornwall discovered this when engaging volunteers to help describe parts of its large collection of photographs.

With the COVID-19 pandemic removing the opportunity for in-person volunteering, the museum decided to host the images in a closed Facebook group that only former police personnel could join. Members of the group could then add comments and the lead volunteer, an ex-policewoman, monitored the site and collected

any information that could be used for cataloguing.

The group now has nearly 400 members, of whom about 300 are active: contributing, commenting, and providing the information needed for the catalogue. This has resulted in 1,763 photographs, for which there would previously have been no context, being uploaded with catalogue descriptions, making them more accessible and understandable to the public.

The creation of this online group had a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing, which was particularly important during a period when the country was in lockdown. By indirectly creating a space for ex-police personnel to reminisce about the 'good old days' through the images, and then being encouraged to speak to

staff at the museum and to other ex-officers about their experiences, the museum created a new opportunity for social interaction.

The project has been a major success both in creating excellent catalogue descriptions for the images (its original purpose) and demonstrating that the use of digital volunteers is not something that is only reserved for larger organisations with bigger budgets. Using a simple, familiar, and free tool such as Facebook, together with a known audience that can be rallied to help, the museum successfully recruited digital volunteers at no additional cost and provided an extra wellbeing benefit to the wider police community just when it was most needed.

Backchat



Michael Gallagher talks to **Jennifer Lightbody**, Archives and Collections Assistant at The Glasgow School of Art Archives and Collections, about changing career, the similarities between engineering and archives and the joys of genealogy.



You've had an interesting journey into the record-keeping sector. Can you tell me about your background?

I spent 18 years working in design engineering, designing quiet ships in the defence industry. It's a job I didn't know existed when I started my Maths and Physics undergraduate degree nearly 30 years ago! Over the years, I progressed from an acoustic consultant, when I started work after graduation, to ultimately being an Engineering Manager, managing a team of around eight staff. This combined complex technical work with project managing, planning, and reporting.

What made you decide to work with archives?

I have a passion for researching family history which started when I was pregnant with my first daughter and *Who Do You Think You Are?* was first shown on the BBC. When I was looking to leave engineering, I investigated whether it was feasible to carry out family history research for a living. I took advice from a range of people, and it became apparent that working in archives was wider than family history specifically, and I felt this offered a wider scope for employment. Another factor which drew me to archives was the fact that no two archives hold the same material,





Another factor which drew me to archives was the fact that no two archives hold the same material, and all archives are unique.



and all archives are unique. I was fortunate to gain a place on the Scottish Council on Archives (SCA) traineeship programme 'Opening Up Scotland's Archives' in 2016/17.

How was your experience of the traineeship?

The traineeship was a great experience for me and a perfect fit as the SCA were looking for people from diverse backgrounds. It was a good balance to have specific projects to work on (outreach and digitisation at Glasgow City Archives and cataloguing a collection at The Glasgow School of Art Archives and Collections) and be immersed in the day-to-day workings of two archive services. I was also fortunate

The Glasgow School of Art. ©Shutterstock

to attend conferences and training events, and I visited several archives (22 over the course of the year!) to see what they all held and how they ran, and to build a network of contacts.

What are you working on at the moment?

In my current role as Archives and Collections Assistant, I have a varied remit. I host individual visitors and groups in our reading room, to support their research and showcase our holdings. Some visitors have a very specific idea of what material they would like to see for their research but for others, I can guide them and suggest material which may be relevant. I also answer remote enquiries – these are mostly split into historical enquiries (looking into a particular person or theme within our holdings) and image requests, where enquirers wish to use images from our collection in their research, publications, or exhibitions. I also post on our social media feeds



Twitter and Instagram, and take the lead on monitoring and reporting our environmental data and pest management findings.

What main skills from your 'old' career have you taken into your 'new' one?

Many people are surprised that I have come from engineering into archives, but a huge raft of skills apply to both careers. Attention to detail is vital when cataloguing to ensure correct referencing and information is applied to each item, and when carrying out image requests, to ensure the correct pricing structure and copyright guidance are applied. An inquisitive mind and methodical thinking are vital when carrying out research for historical enquiries. I've also found data management has come in very useful when dealing with large data sets, of item locations, for example. One unexpected transferable skill was data analysis and reporting, which I have applied to environmental monitoring data - I hadn't anticipated this when I moved into archives!

What advice do you have for people moving into the profession?

I would talk to people already in the profession. I knew that I wanted to use my management skills from engineering and progress to a professional level rather than para-professional, so I undertook the MSc in Information Management and Preservation at the University of Glasgow after my traineeship. This isn't appropriate for everyone however, so speak to people who have been working in this area

“ I gained a lot from visiting and volunteering in different types of archives ... so I recommend doing the same to get a feel for which of these interests you and if you can see yourself working in an archive. ”

for a while. I gained a lot from visiting and volunteering in different types of archives (local authority, higher education, business, medical, community, private collection) so I recommend doing the same to get a feel for which of these interests you and if you can see yourself working in an archive. It is also worth being aware of the tendency for a career in this sector to begin with temporary, fixed-term contracts before moving to a permanent contract – this is very different from the background I came from, so this is worth considering.

You recently qualified as a Registered Member of ARA. How did you find the process, and do you have any tips for people working towards professional registration?

I would recommend allowing yourself enough time to complete the paperwork as there is a lot of work involved. I work part-time and used my days off, over the course of about six months, to complete the paperwork. It is a good opportunity to take stock of what you have achieved - I found that whilst looking at the competencies, I had done more in my five years in archives than I had realised! I was fortunate to have a mentor who I had met during my traineeship and who has supported me ever since - she gave constructive feedback on my draft text throughout this process. I would advise applicants, if they are able, to find a mentor who they are comfortable taking advice from. Mentors have been through the application process themselves, so use that to your advantage!

Finally, what do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

When I get a chance, I enjoy carrying out my own family history research and getting lost down all the rabbit holes that come with that! I started doing more walking in lockdown and in summer 2021 I completed the One Million Steps Challenge – I enjoyed exploring the country roads around us as we had moved house just before lockdown, and it was great to get out every day and clear my head. I enjoy days out with my family too, Culzean Castle on the Ayrshire coast is a particular favourite and highly recommended!

And finally arc magazine

Our next edition of the **ARC Magazine** is due out in May/June 2022 so look out for it in your inboxes. If you have any content suggestions for future editions, please email ARC Magazine arceditors@archives.org.uk

aratoday

Meanwhile, **ARA Today**, our electronic members' bulletin which contains all the latest ARA and industry news, is circulated on the first Wednesday of each month. Please send any content suggestions for future editions of ARA Today to deborah.mason@archives.org.uk.

Our **ARA Together** Online Community calls also continue on Discord, with regular calls hosted by representatives from across the sector covering a wide range of topical content.

Our next call will be on 16th March at 4pm; the topic is 'Reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic two years on'. You can find details of upcoming calls and how to join in [here](#).

If you haven't yet joined the community, it's free and very easy to do so. Simply click [here](#) to sign up. Once registered, you will be able to access a number of different content channels covering topics such as sustainability, digital record-keeping, diversity, keeping connected and professional registration - among others.

ARA 2022 CONFERENCE



CHESTER
31st August to
2nd September 2022