



arc magazine

May &
June '22

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Welcome

arc magazine

May & June 2022 edition

Welcome to the May/June issue of *ARC Magazine*, which is the first to be published since the war started in Ukraine.

There is a timely feature by Megan Joyce of the Imperial War Museum about the challenges of collecting in the midst of conflict, something which is now sadly a serious concern not far from home. Although commissioned some time before the war in Ukraine began the article on archives and transitional justice is also presciently relevant. Dagmar Hovestadt from the Stasi Records Archive in Germany looks at the different ways in which archives and records can be used, including recording conflict - something we know the Ukraine State Archive is actively undertaking. We also hear from Valentina Flex about the Gertrude Bell Archive and its connection to modern day Iraq through Bell's journeys through the Middle East and how her work deals with the uncomfortable context of imperialism and brings the voices of the people of Iraq back into the narrative.

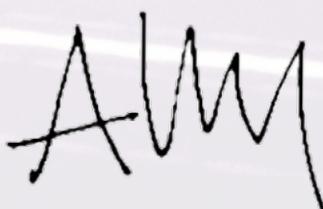
Our ARA News looks at how we in the UK can help colleagues in the Ukraine. Closer to home, we hear in Industry News about the work being done by the Crisis

Management Team for Business Archives to save records

from companies at risk of closure, takeover or other crisis. We also have a feature on the ARA Excellence Awards, back after a two year absence - get your nominations in now!

This is my first issue of ARC Magazine as one of the new joint editors. I'd like to say a big thank you to Maria Castrillo and Deborah Mason for their constant support and guidance, and to our contributors for their excellent pieces.

I hope you enjoy the magazine. Please email arceditors@archives.org.uk if you have any suggestions for topics for future issues or any ideas about how we can do things differently.



Ally McConnell
ARC Joint Editor



© Marcus Green

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Photograph taken in Bethlehem by Bell in January 1900. © GB/Photo/1/A/093, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University



Opening lines

Kate Maisey, Archive Development Manager at Gloucestershire Archives, discusses work being done with community groups in the Gloucester area in an innovative testbed project with funding from The UK National Archives.

In March 2021 we (Gloucestershire Archives) were awarded funding under round 6 of the UK National Archives Testbed programme.

The programme aims to encourage archive services to pilot and explore new approaches which have the potential to benefit the sector, and to share learning. It also recognises that not all such initiatives will ultimately succeed.

Our project aimed to recruit up to 10 paid “community gatherers” from the black and Asian communities to work with us. Their role would be to identify significant material within their communities which could be added to our collections. Our focus would be Gloucester where our community links are strongest, but would have the potential to be rolled out more widely.

The project was launched in September 2021 at History, Her Story, Their Story, Our Story, a City Voices event in the Gloucester History Festival, via a ‘shout out’ to the predominantly black audience. Eight potential gatherers came forward, making a very pleasing 10 in total, as two people we had worked with previously had already expressed interest in making films about the city’s African-Caribbean community. And if you’re reading this thinking “hmm this all sounds a bit too easy”, you’re right, it was! Nothing from this point onwards has gone quite as we anticipated.

We had taken the decision not to be prescriptive about the type of material to be located, or

generated, as we wanted this to be led by the community gatherers themselves. But we were still surprised when not one of the 10 gatherers responded to the idea of locating existing archive material, all preferring to create new content. And all eight of the new gatherers wanted to record oral history interviews.

Fortunately, we already had well developed in-house oral history training, and just about enough kit. But again, we were taken by surprise: this time by the amount and intensity of discussion between the gatherers which made it hard to cover all elements of the training within the allotted time. To compensate

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We had taken the decision not to be prescriptive about the type of material to be located, or generated, as we wanted this to be led by the community gatherers themselves.
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Gloucestershire Archives @the Hub

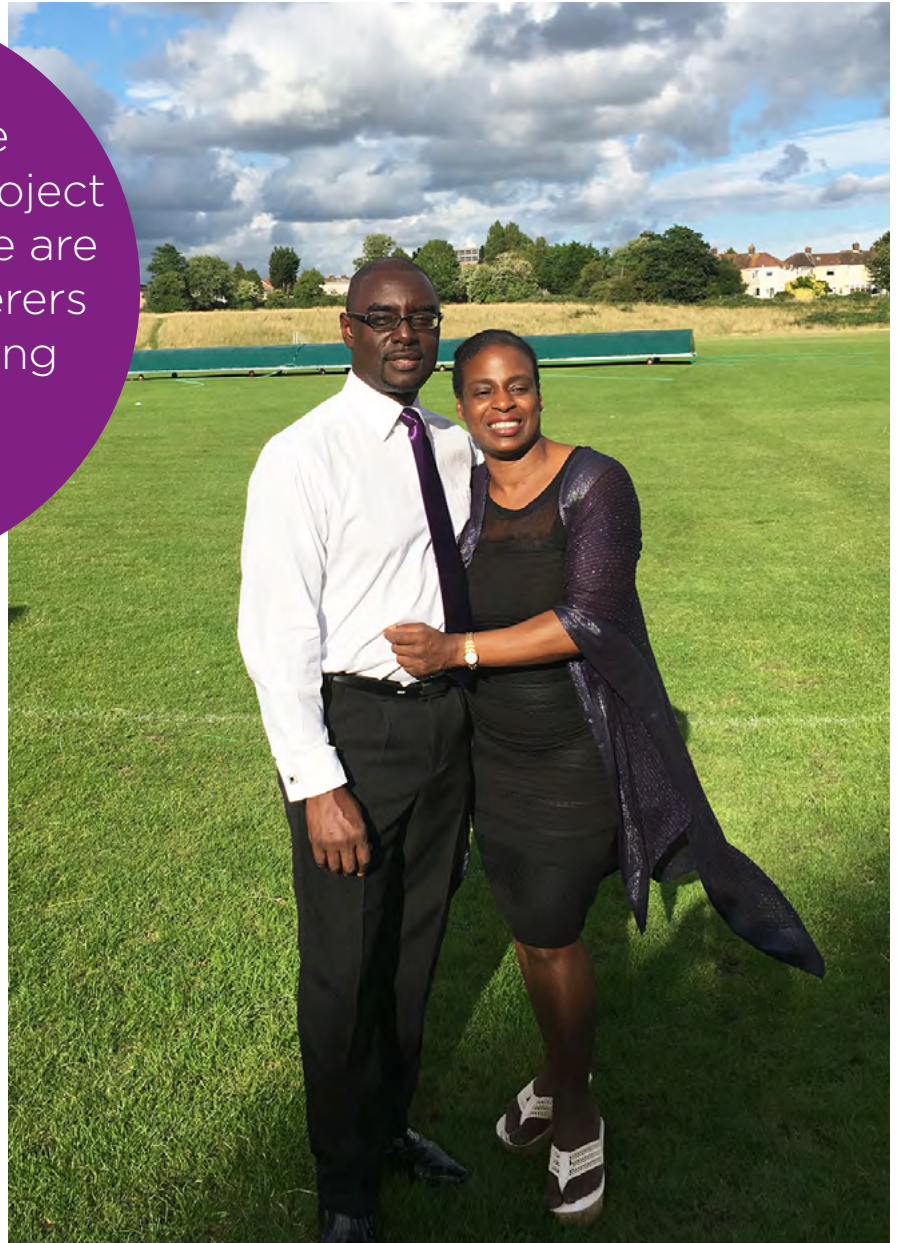
“An innovative element of our project is the fact that we are paying the gatherers rather than asking them to be volunteers.”

Jennifer & Philip, contributors to our/the/ Gloucestershire Archives' community gatherers testbed project. © Kate Maisey

for this, we offered top-up training to give extra hands-on time using the recording equipment. We also realised that our existing permission forms would not be readily understood by interviewees for whom English was a second language, and on the advice of our three Asian gatherers, got them translated in Hindi, Gujarati and Urdu.

An innovative element of our project is the fact that we are paying the gatherers rather than asking them to be volunteers. This too has proved challenging. Local authority processes for setting up vendors and paying invoices are better suited for making payments to businesses and organisations, rather than private individuals, and the necessary IR35 declarations about employment status were alarming for several of the gatherers.

Although genuinely enthusiastic at the start, not all the gatherers have delivered as yet, and one has decided not to continue. On the plus side, a new and productive gatherer has



recently been recruited which should mitigate this. There was perhaps a lack of awareness of just how much work would be needed around the exciting bit – the interview itself – and we needed to do more on our part to temper expectations. The stop/start nature of the project, with Christmas, fluctuating COVID-19 concerns and personal circumstances slowing progress at key times, has also made it hard to keep momentum.

Pleasingly, the project interviews that we've received to date have been excellent and wide ranging, and the comfortable relationship between interviewer and interviewee really shines through. Although it's currently a case of quality over quantity, we are confident that there are more interviews to follow. In the meantime, we have had some of our assumptions challenged and learnt a great deal.

From the Board



Julie Bon shares her experiences as a new ARA Board member and discusses her work on the newly formed Learning, Education and Development (LED) portfolio.

I joined the Board in July 2021. My background is in Preventive Conservation, and I was approached by members of the Preservation & Conservation Group of ARA to throw my hat into the ring. I was happy to do so as I was aware of the good work that ARA was doing, particularly in terms of archive conservation training, and I thought I might be able to contribute.

I head up the Collections Care team at the National Library of Scotland. Our team is made up of Conservators, Technicians, Preservation Assistants, a Conservation Exhibitions Officer, Registrar and Audit Officer. We focus on interventive and preventive conservation in order to prepare Library collections for access, display, and digitisation. I am fairly new to work in the recordkeeping sector as I only joined the Library in 2019. Prior to that I worked as a Regional Conservator for the National Trust for Scotland supporting the open display of collections within historic interiors. I felt that joining the Board of ARA would help to develop my knowledge and understanding of the wider sector and allow me to meet a variety of people working in different roles.

So far so good as far as that is concerned! I have enjoyed meeting and working with my Board colleagues on Teams over the last seven months. In March I attended my first in-person Board meeting and away day, and it was a pleasure to meet my fellow Board members in real life for the first time. We come from a variety of professional backgrounds but are all committed to working together to further the work of ARA and to represent our members. I have found fellowship, support, understanding, enthusiasm, and clarity of thought amongst my colleagues and I am looking forward to future in-person meetings to develop our strategic thinking and decision-making.

There have been recent changes regarding how the work of the Board is shared out. What I find particularly inspiring about the ARA Board is that there is an expectation that you will roll your sleeves up and get involved. Board membership is certainly an active pursuit and allows us all to put our skills and experience to good use. For me, that has meant getting involved in the newly formed Learning, Education and Development (LED) portfolio. The development and delivery of training is a real interest of

mine. At the Trust I developed and delivered emergency planning and response training for staff and volunteers across Scotland. At the Library our team delivers preventive conservation and object handling training for our staff. We host student placements and paid internships to offer support and training for the next generation of conservators. I lecture on post-graduate conservation courses and enjoy all opportunities to support learning across the sector. I was particularly pleased to be able to contribute to the ARA Archive Conservation Training Scheme's Lecture Week, ably organised by Katie Proctor, in November last year.

I believe that I can usefully bring this training experience to the development of the LED portfolio. I have already had the opportunity to meet with a number of Training Officers across the organisation and am looking forward to working with these dedicated and hard-working volunteers. I hope to be able to support the development of central, core training to support the professional development of all our members. Supporting the archive sector through training, to enable the workforce to grow, develop and blossom, is an important part of ARA's mission and I am excited to be involved in helping to shape our offer.

Given my professional background, I am looking forward to ensuring that the recordkeeping conservation voice is heard at Board level. ARA is special as it welcomes members from different professional backgrounds across the recordkeeping sector, but it is important that the organisation works hard to represent all of the varied interests of our members. In that way I feel I am able to hold the Board to account and be a reminder of the important role that our conservation colleagues play in caring for and preserving vital records and archives. However, through my involvement in the training and development work I can also contribute across the whole organisation.

I am looking forward to 2022 being a year of discovery as I meet more of our members and get a better understanding of the work of ARA. I am particularly looking forward to our conference later in the year as our theme, 'Facing Forward: Post-pandemic recordkeeping – change, challenge, choice' feels like a good way to bring people together and to learn from the experience of others. I hope to see you there!



REGISTRATION NOW OPEN FOR: 'Facing forward: post-pandemic recordkeeping – change, challenge, choice' ARA's 2022 Conference.

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

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.

Stop Press:

Zoe Reid, Keeper, The National Archives of Ireland, is confirmed as our Friday keynote.

- The four themed streams of the conference cover Archives & Records, Conservation, Digital Preservation and Information Governance with speakers from around the world sharing their expertise and insights.
- 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 mediaeval 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.

Register now:

Members:

Full Conference Attendance with Accommodation includes 3 days at conference, 2 nights accommodation, the Wednesday evening meal with a visit to Chester Cathedral and the Thursday Gala dinner.

Registration fee is £555.00 Click [here](#) to register.

Non Members:

Full Conference Attendance with Accommodation – this includes 3 days at conference, 2 nights accommodation, the Wednesday evening meal with a visit to Chester Cathedral and the Thursday Gala dinner.

Registration fee is £720 Click [here](#) to register.

ARA Membership starts from just £38 per year and comes with a wide range of benefits – not just £180 knocked off the registration fee for conference. As well as a great support network of peers there are free training events and resources, member only discounts and free access to a number of academic journals (worth approximately £500 per year).

Day rates for the Conference are also available for the Wednesday, Thursday and Friday:

Members: £195 (inc lunch)
Non Members: £225 (inc Lunch)

Day delegates can also book separately for accommodation and evening social events as required.

Full information is available on the Conference website [here](#):

For updates on the programme and key note speakers:

Follow our conference twitter account @ARAConf #ARA2022 And check in on our [conference website](#).

The beautiful Roman city of Chester finally plays host to the ARA Conference @ Shutterstock

Helping our colleagues in Ukraine

At the beginning of March, in ARA Today, John Chambers, ARA's Chief Executive sent a message to all members regarding the war in Ukraine. The situation in Ukraine is still critical and changes from day to day but his overarching message remains valid:

"It is vital that we help Ukraine protect its archives. Russia has made it clear that this war is as much about culture and nationhood as it is about territory. Archives protect that culture; whilst the original records remain safe, history cannot be erased. As long as the archives remain open to inspection, investigators and journalists now, and historians of the future, will be able to rectify any misrepresentations

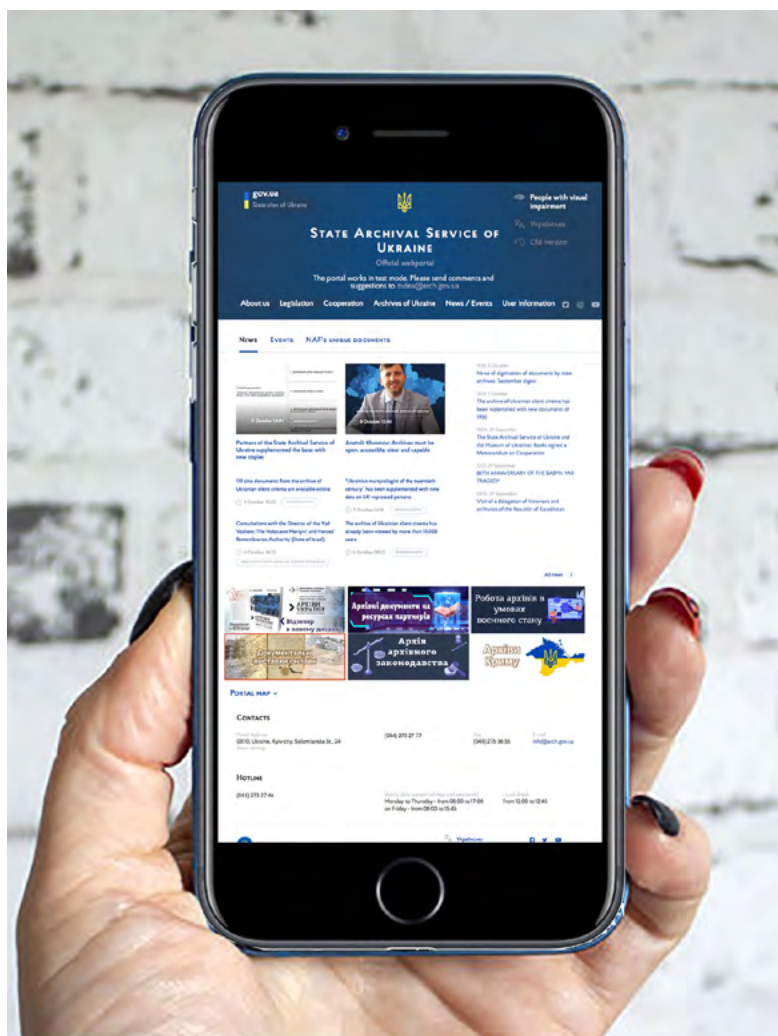
and misinformation. Archives and records are fundamental to representative democracy – just as that democracy is under threat in Ukraine so are its archivists and archives."

In the weeks that followed, John was in regular touch with the State Archival Service of Ukraine and we were also getting information from other sources on calls for help and initiatives to aid the heritage sector (and the country as a whole). Through this contact it has become clear that although the war in Ukraine continues to destroy important cultural and heritage buildings (and their contents) there is little we can do from a distance to help apart from raising funds or

sending specific materials when requested. What we can do has been captured on our website news page [here](#).

As requested by our contacts in Ukraine we have also sent messages of support as well as lobbying the International Council on Archives to sever ties with Russian institutions. We also [supported calls](#) for the World Heritage Committee meeting, scheduled for June, to be moved from its planned location in Russia. We will continue to update the 'What we can do for Ukraine now' [page](#) and welcome information from all members on any new initiatives or calls for support. Please email Deborah at deborah.mason@archives.org.uk with these.

State Archival Service of Ukraine website



Upcoming awareness campaign from the Section for Records Management and Information Governance

Following the success of the 'Don't Risk It! Know Your Records' campaign in 2018 - the first records management-specific campaign run by the ARA - the Section for Records Management and Information Governance is planning a shiny new advocacy campaign for 2022. The theme will be 'Think BIG!' (i.e. Better Information Governance).

There will be lots of exciting new content and events to get involved with around supporting prospective new entrants into the field; advocating effectively for Better Information Governance within our organisations; and improving our professional skills in this important but often misunderstood area of expertise. Keep an eye on Twitter @ARARMIG for all the latest updates.

This level of interest can currently be seen across the record keeping sector, including conferences, workshops, and research from a range of sector bodies, including the ARA and The UK National Archive. It has helped the community become more informed, but no group existed which brought like minded people together to discuss issues and suggest practical sector-wide changes which could in time lead

The ARA Board agreed and at the Board meeting held in March, approved the formation of an Environmental Sustainability Record Keeping Group. The group will take a practical approach, providing guidance and tips about how to limit the impact of institutions on the environment as well as running campaigns to keep current research and updates at the forefront of the sector. This exciting new group is

It is expected that the committee will be formed by the time this issue of ARC goes to press but if you are interested in volunteering your time please do get in touch with the group at ARAAEnvironment@archives.org.uk



Professional Development News

Professional registration is an important career milestone for many. It demonstrates to employers, clients, fellow professions and the public that qualifying members have met the highest national standards of knowledge and competence. Our professional registration [blog](#) features interviews with members who successfully qualified for the level of registration they applied for.

To help us meet the increasing demand for professional registration we are recruiting new volunteering members to join our existing team of assessors.

As an assessor, you would review applications for professional registration. You complete your assessment online via the professional registration programme, the new name for our online application and assessment platform. You may assess your allocated application at any time from any device with a broadband or wifi connection. Candidates submit applications that consist of competency forms. Each form should describe how their work activity meets their chosen competency level, what they have learned and how they have progressed, and to reflect on their work experiences and consider what went well, what didn't and how they may continue to improve.

Assessors also complete assessments of CPD Reviews, previously known as revalidation. This peer review process offers constructive feedback to support members as they continue with their professional development. All assessments are completed within three months.

Are you looking to develop your assessment skills? Would you like to help ensure we maintain the highest professional standards? Then put yourself forward to be an assessor. Training is provided and all assessors are supported by Chris Sheridan, ARA's Head of Professional Standards and Development. For more information, please visit the [ARA website](#).

If you are interested and would like to know more please contact chris.sheridan@archives.org.uk.

Congratulations to all the following members who earned their professional registration in 2021;

- **Foundation Member of the ARA (FMARA)**
Bridging the Digital Gap trainees;
Ashraf Ullah FMARA, Erin Liu FMARA, Frances Bell FMARA and Olivia Northrop FMARA. Congratulations also to Sean Preston FMARA and Matthew Waters FMARA.
- **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 McQuillan RMARA, Kathryn Flanagan MCILIP RMARA, Kolya Abramsky RMARA, Lara Nelson RMARA, Louise Woof RMARA, Malcolm Mathieson RMARA, Nathanael Hodge RMARA, Philip Jeffs RMARA and 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 application [portal](#)

Congratulations also to the following members who successfully renewed their Registered status through our CPD Review in 2021; Jan Hicks RMARA, Jemma Lee RMARA, Anna-Maria Hajba RMARA and Richard Wade RMARA.

If you are interested in starting your professional registration journey, visit our [website](#) for more information.

Finally, a big thank you to the mentors who supported the applicants with the development of their application during 2021. 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

Contemporary conflict and recordkeeping at Imperial War Museums



Megan Joyce, Curator in the Contemporary Conflict team at Imperial War Museums (IWM), writes here of the practical and ethical challenges of collecting around recent and ongoing conflict.

In August 2021, the Taliban seizure of Afghanistan's capital in Kabul prompted reflections across the globe on the previous twenty years of war following 9/11. At Imperial War Museums (IWM) it forced us to re-evaluate our current archival collections relating to Afghanistan and how we might approach future recordkeeping.

The Contemporary Conflict team manages and develops IWM's collections relating to the causes, course and consequences of conflicts since 2001 to the present day. As part of this, the team of curators and archivists work on collecting projects relating to the UK's involvement in the Iraq War (2003-2011), the Global Coalition against ISIS (2014-present), Libya (2011-present) and the War in Afghanistan (2001-2021). Our aim is to grow the public understanding of post-2001 conflict relating to the UK through recording the many ways contemporary conflict impacts upon people's lives. The idea is to build a collection that will be as relevant in 100 years' time as it is today.

Whilst these collecting projects are an exciting opportunity for the team to develop IWM's contemporary archival collections, the very nature of contemporary collecting poses several challenges. Digital file formats, data protection and other ethical concerns have often required us to rethink traditional archival practice. How do we acquire archival collections from donors relating to such recent events? How do we appraise large volumes of born-digital records? How do we ensure we can provide access to these records now and in the future? We need to consider all of these questions when acquiring, managing and preserving IWM's archival collections relating to contemporary conflict.

Collecting contemporary material requires a proactive approach. Traditional unsolicited donations of material are rare, encouraging the team instead to reach out to people who have experienced recent conflict and to academics or journalists who study or report on war. In 2009, IWM launched its War Story project in partnership with the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and focused on collecting stories from service personnel who served in the War





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It is therefore our priority to diversify our collection to ensure a range of perspectives are being preserved for the future and this has been written into IWM's Collections Development Strategies.

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in Afghanistan. War Story responded to the need for IWM to document the experiences of UK forces that operated in Iraq and Afghanistan at this time. The project conducted workshops with service personnel and collected letters, photographs, film and other personal items for the collection. This was a new way to collect for the Museum. The MOD provided direct access to service personnel and eventually, between 2012 and 2014, allowed members of IWM to visit Afghanistan to meet with soldiers on deployment. This was the first time since the First World War that IWM teams had visited an active theatre of conflict. This was a unique opportunity and a great moment for IWM to develop its contemporary collection.

Since the project came to an end, it has been harder to access certain spaces and broaden the collection. As an example, Afghan voices are underrepresented in IWM's contemporary collection and therefore we are hoping to reach out to Afghan communities both in the UK and in Afghanistan. However, the events in August 2021 temporarily paused our efforts as we were mindful that the return of the Taliban will have changed personal security and safety for many.

This brings to the forefront the ethical side of collecting such material. Experiencing conflict can be extremely distressing and traumatic. How do we decide whether to ask people who've fought in or lived through conflict to open up about their lived experiences and potentially donate material to the archive? Some of the individuals we approach often have an online presence or have spoken about their experiences openly. However, this is not always the case. Therefore, whilst we may ask people to talk about their experiences in the form of an oral history and acquire personal items from them, we also ensure they are comfortable



An Afghan National Police Commander walks with two British soldiers at Lashkar Gah Training Centre in Helmand, Afghanistan, 09 June 2013. © IWM DC 3194

to discuss their experiences in detail through informed consent and that they understand what will happen to any items they donate. It also must be acknowledged here that there is a wider debate surrounding the role of archivists in such positions to shape national collections and decide whose voice should be preserved. It is therefore our priority to diversify our collection to ensure a range of perspectives are being preserved for the future and this has been written into IWM's Collections Development Strategies.

As recordkeepers, a fundamental part of our role is to provide access to the collections we manage. However, making contemporary conflict archives accessible is often difficult given the sensitive nature of the material, as well as data protection concerns. Many of the contemporary archival collections at IWM contain personal data that may be embedded within the material and even in the metadata if it's a digital file. Balancing the need for access with UK data protection law, copyright and ethical considerations can be tricky. Sensitivity reviews are conducted at the point of acquisition and further reviewed at the cataloguing stage before any collections are made available. With

collections relating to contemporary conflict, we need to be mindful that the situation is often ever-changing and may impact on how we provide access to any contemporary material. When the Taliban regained control of Kabul, we reviewed the collections we had made available online which contained names or imagery showing Afghan civilians who had worked with British forces. Whilst these are public records and available to access, we decided to limit online access as a matter of safety for those who featured.

Increasingly, contemporary archives are being created in a born-digital format, which adds another challenge to providing access. Whilst the same archival principles can be applied to born-digital collections, there are additional considerations to be made as digital files are complex and arguably at a higher risk of deterioration. As technology evolves, this impacts practically on recordkeepers in retrieving, processing and preserving digital records whilst retaining their original essence. To avoid file format obsolescence, born-digital files may need to be migrated to an open file format to ensure the content will be readable for the future. Digital files

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Experiencing conflict can be extremely distressing and traumatic. How do we decide whether to ask people who've fought in or lived through conflict to open up about their lived experiences and potentially donate material to the archive?

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A soldier from the Afghan National Army holding an IWM guidebook during a visit from the War Story project team at Camp Shorabak in Helmand, Afghanistan, 03 June 2013.

are easy to create and as a result, the Contemporary Conflict team often manages collections with thousands of digital files.

Born-digital archival collections are often under collected and inaccessible but with the right tools and conversations with recordkeepers, digital preservation experts and IT specialists, collecting and preserving this material will become more manageable and give individuals the confidence to pursue further contemporary acquisitions.

For IWM, collecting around contemporary conflict has provided unique challenges but there are unprecedented opportunities in this digital age to connect with those who have been impacted by conflict and preserve their stories for the future. Our aim is to broaden understanding on the complexities of contemporary conflict and how it impacts on people's lives, and this can only be achieved through proactively engaging with people willing to share their experiences and giving them the reassurance that we will preserve their personal records, photographs and mementoes for future generations.

Megan Joyce works at Imperial War Museums (IWM), having joined the Museum in 2017 to work on a major cataloguing project with its Museum Archive. She is currently working as a Curator in the Contemporary Conflict team, supporting the development of the Museum's collections relating to the War in Afghanistan (2001-2021) and is studying for her Archives and Records Management masters at the University of Dundee. Her main role at the Museum is to conduct oral histories with people who have been impacted by contemporary conflict. Megan can be contacted via LinkedIn under the same name or on Twitter @megljoyce.

Gertrude Bell and the Kingdom of Iraq at 100: Encouraging Conversation around uncomfortable histories

Photograph taken in Bethlehem by Bell in January 1900
© GB/Photo/1/A/093,
Gertrude Bell Archive,
Newcastle University

Valentina Flex, Project Archivist at Newcastle University working on the Stillman Family Foundation funded project, Gertrude Bell and the Kingdom of Iraq at 100 writes here about encouraging conversations around the uncomfortable histories revealed through the Gertrude Bell archive and its connection to modern day Iraq.

Gertrude Bell and the Kingdom of Iraq at 100 is an ongoing project at Newcastle University Special Collections to fully catalogue and digitise the Gertrude Bell archive. The project will include the creation of a bespoke dedicated Gertrude Bell website on which the newly created catalogue records and digitised images will be showcased alongside existing transcriptions and other related materials. Funded by the Harry and Alice Stillman Foundation, this work will encourage increased engagement around the archive and the project will culminate in a new exhibition, centred around the recent centenary of Iraq, to be held in early 2023. Bell, a noted explorer and archaeologist, is also

known for her role in the creation of the Kingdom of Iraq in 1921.

Bell's travels in the Middle East, which are documented throughout the diaries, letters and photographs held at Newcastle University, facilitated her involvement in British military intelligence in Cairo during the First World War, and her subsequent role in the British administration of Iraq. She was the only woman to have a significant role in post-war peace settlements, attending both the Paris Peace Conference and the Cairo Conference, and she exerted considerable influence in the creation of the country's borders as

Photograph of the Western Wall, Jerusalem, taken by Bell in December 1899. © GB/Photo/1/A/034, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University



well as in the selection of Faisal I as the Kingdom of Iraq's first monarch.

Given the eventful life Bell led, being a kingmaker, successful mountaineer, archaeologist and author in the first half of the twentieth century, it would be easy to fall into the trap of hagiography when discussing her legacy. However, despite her achievements, Bell is not an unproblematic figure. A tool of colonialism, Bell played a significant part in ensuring the continued influence of the British in the Middle East. She captured and documented her experiences through the Western gaze, facilitated by a position of familial wealth and privilege. An anti-suffragist, Bell negotiated male spheres of influence whilst actively opposing votes for women. With that in mind, the romantic ideal of the lone, pioneering feminist, travelling to far off lands can change quickly to the entitled Western meddler, whose priorities and opinions greatly influenced the creation of the modern state of Iraq, and the geography of the Middle East as it is today.

Bell's archive is inextricable from its colonial context, and it would be remiss of us to ignore the complexity and nuance of the material held within it, and the questions it raises. We have, for instance, over 7,000 photographs taken by Bell, a multitude of which depict the landscapes, buildings and archaeological sites of the Middle

East. They often capture British officials and colonial administrators, as well as Bell's own camp, including her 'caravan' of employees. The majority of these employees remain nameless, as do the bystanders she captures in scenes of populated areas. These men and women, carrying out their daily business whilst Bell moves among them, immortalising them on film, are rarely the sole focus of her photographs and yet they often attract the most attention from viewers. They are arguably, in the context of the images and perhaps in the mind of Bell herself, part of the wallpaper of the 'exotic East', and yet it is their cultural heritage she is capturing on film, and their lives that her work, as a colonial figure, is directly affecting. The questions raised by this material, and the historic power imbalance it portrays, is something we are keenly aware of as we progress through the current project.

Digitisation and greater accessibility of material is a large aspect of this project, and as such we are actively seeking ways in which we can promote the use of the archive not only in the United Kingdom and Europe, but also in the Middle East. Whilst the current iteration of the Gertrude Bell website garners considerable international attention (83 per cent of all traffic in a three-year period, 2018-2021), we hope that the new version will reach an even broader audience as a result of enhanced catalogue

metadata, such as geographical location information and other access points, as well as increased promotion and publicity through aggregated resources, such as the Digital Library of the Middle East, and partner institutions. As such, the ongoing investment in the archive in the form of the current project will play a significant role in encouraging increased engagement with the material in different contexts as opposed to in isolation, on an insular platform. By widening the scope of our engagement, we will be better able to spread the word about the existence and value of the archive, as well as encouraging dialogue and interaction with the collection by different communities. This can lead to mutually beneficial relationships, in which we have the privilege of hearing stories

and reminiscences from those who are familiar with the documented landscapes, whilst also capturing local, geographical and cultural knowledge when developing metadata for catalogue records. By seeking and maintaining open channels of communication, we also hope to increase our awareness of cultural sensitivities within the material, ensuring that we are proactively revising our methods of description in order to create accurate and empathetic catalogue records.

This strand of engagement is key to the project, although it is not something that is necessarily easy to facilitate. Despite being hugely gratifying when achieved, making organic connections can be difficult and often reliant on word-of-mouth and existing relationships. We are fortunate

View of the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount, Jerusalem, taken by Bell in December 1899 © GB/Photo/1/A/035, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University

Photograph of the Temple of Bel, Palmyra (modern day Syria), taken by Bell in May 1900 © GB/Photo/1/A/298, Gertrude Bell Archive, Newcastle University



enough, through our shared custodianship of the archive with the School of History, Classics and Archaeology here at the University, to have existing links with the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (Gertrude Bell Memorial). Through the Institute, we have been put in contact with the Director of the Basrah Museum in order to explore potential use of the Bell photographic archive in upcoming exhibitions. This opportunity is hugely exciting, and preliminary conversations have allowed us to forge connections and discover a shared enthusiasm for making the archive widely available in Iraq not only to academics but to wider communities.

Closer to home, we have been arranging visits and reaching out to related organisations and University societies, as well as planning a lunchtime seminar in which a variety of researchers have been invited to share their work and experiences with the archive, both personal and academic. This will present an opportunity to highlight the variety of ongoing projects relating to the archive and Bell herself, as well as act as a forum for expression of varying views and opinions on Bell and her legacy. In exploring these ideas, and in exchanging knowledge, opinions and reactions to the material, we are aiming to approach the archive, and our end of project exhibition, with a holistic view of Bell and her legacy.

By encouraging open and honest engagement with the archive, we hope to demonstrate the value of the collection as a tool for learning, discussion and reflection as well as an academic resource.

Although we are aware that issues relating to contested narratives and uncomfortable histories such as colonialism must be approached with sensitivity and empathy, we also feel strongly that these aspects of cultural heritage collections should be openly acknowledged, and not ignored. Equally, we feel strongly that work relating to the description and management of such collections should not be undertaken in isolation but in collaboration with a variety of communities in order to ensure accurate and sensitive description of archival materials. With this project, we are therefore hoping to improve accessibility of materials through newly created catalogue records and digitised images, and also to open up and promote the resource to communities locally and internationally, encouraging honest engagement with and discussion around Bell and her legacy in all of its nuance and complexity.

Valentina Flex is currently in post at Newcastle University as Project Archivist working on the Stillman Family Foundation funded project, Gertrude Bell and the Kingdom of Iraq at 100. Previously, she has worked in various posts at the University of Edinburgh, including Project Archivist at the Centre for Research Collections and Senior Archives Assistant at the School of Scottish Studies Archives. She has a personal and academic interest in the Second World War (and has written and presented on the topic of records-creation during the Holocaust) and in LGBTQ+ social and cultural history.

Archives for transitional justice



Dagmar Hovestadt, Department Head Communication and Research with the Federal Archives, Stasi Records Archive (Germany) writes here on how archives can be used for transitional justice.

In 1990 when the Stasi Records Archive began its work in Germany as “The Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records” it was a global first - never before had the complete documentation of a secret police and intelligence body been opened for public access. Forty years of intelligence and secret police work documentation became declassified all at once. Opening the records with its own agency demonstrated a larger purpose than just the state’s obligation to maintain the archive and make it accessible. Had that been the case, the records would have been incorporated directly into the Federal Archives. If they had, they would have been subjected to archival laws making their access minimal in order to comply with standard archival rules of security, privacy and usual retention periods for such sensitive material.

But several circumstances led to a different outcome. The state, whose secrets these records contained, had vanished through German unification. Preceding this historic event, the people of East Germany had taken to the streets to end the 40-year rule of the East German communist party. One of the central demands of the “Peaceful Revolution” of 1989 was access to the files of the Stasi, the Ministry for State Security, who for 40 years had been persecuting and surveilling its own people in the service of the communist party. This demand for access, from the people who had just toppled a dictatorial regime, became a reality. As early as 1990 access to the Stasi records began, supported in late 1991 by the enactment of the Stasi Records Act which provided for immediate access to the documentation with specific provisions. It allows for transparency in looking at all the many actions of the Stasi, whilst also protecting the privacy of those subjected to these activities. The law is to this very day, some 30

years later, the foundation for access to the Stasi records.

So, what is the driving force that overrode all archival conventions? Access to the Stasi records was meant to pull all Stasi activities and its mechanisms of repression from the shadows into the light. Political prisoners could prove their unjust incarceration. Tens of thousands of people could see how their fate had been altered through covert Stasi activities. Those responsible could be addressed. The goal was to expose the truth about what had happened; to negotiate responsibility for injustices; to understand mechanisms of dictatorship, so that the new society would be able to learn from the mistakes of the past. In short,



Access to the Stasi records was meant to pull all Stasi activities and its mechanisms of repression from the shadows into the light ... opening the Stasi records can be seen as a tool of transitional justice.





A segment of the famous Berlin Wall which collapsed in 1989 © Shutterstock

opening the Stasi records can be seen as a tool of transitional justice.

This effort was timely. Dealing with the past in post-conflict society became an emerging field of analysis in the late 1980s and early 1990s - Latin American military dictatorships were toppled, the apartheid regime in South Africa collapsed, the Soviet Union lost its grip on Eastern Europe. In these contexts, the same transition from a violent or dictatorial past to a more peaceful and democratic present was happening. To understand the processes of how societies moved on, the term “transitional justice”, in short TJ, emerged and encompassed several mechanisms with which to address the violent past: Truth commissions, trials, memorialisation efforts, vetting of the public sector. These mechanisms were based on principles that then found their way into UN standards: the right to truth, the

right to know, the duty to record, the fight against impunity, the redress for victims of state crimes, the memorialisation of the injustices and the guarantee of non-recurrence.

Archives and documentation play a central part in dealing with the past. Without accurate documentation of injustices, they become difficult or impossible to redress. Those responsible have an interest to be silent. Those who were victims often have the burden of proof. Those in the middle would rather move on and forget that they were indifferent to impotent supporters of the old status. So, archives with their long-term goal of preservation find themselves in a central role helping establish the truth about what happened no matter how much time it takes.

Over the last three decades, three forms of archives used in TJ processes have emerged. First,

there is state-documentation from the period of violence like the Stasi Records Archive or other state bodies from the period of repression. These are often useful documentations of the previous regime's human rights violations that can be used for trials, truth commissions and in memorialisation efforts as well as vetting processes. Rather than just seeing them as "regular" documentation of state activity they become, to a degree, repurposed as documentation of human rights violations. Many of the former Eastern European secret police authorities today are archives open to address the injustices of the communist past. Also, the Guatemalan police archive or the Argentinian "Comisión Provincial por la Memoria" are examples of these archives.

Second, are the archives that have been established through the activities of national, international or hybrid trials as well as truth commissions any time after repression. These TJ mechanisms are specifically created to address the violent

Aerial view of the former Ministry for State Security in Berlin, site of the Stasi Records Archiv. Credit: Bundesarchiv/Mulders. The rights to this image are with the Federal Archives / Stasi Records Archive in perpetuity for all territories in relation to publications about this archive.

“ archives with their long-term goal of preservation find themselves in a central role helping establish the truth about what happened no matter how much time it takes. ”





Repository with informants' files at the Stasi Records Archive at the Federal Archives. Credit: Bundesarchiv/Mulders. The rights to this image are with the Federal Archives / Stasi Records Archive in perpetuity for all territories in relation to publications about this archive.

past and for justice, truth and memorialisation. Their documentation is often hard to access as witness statements and perpetrator testimonies were mostly only possible through the promise of long retention periods after the end of those mechanisms. Examples for these archives are the documentation of the Chilean or Argentinian truth commissions as well as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the archives of the UN Tribunal on the Rwandan genocide.

Third, there are archives that collect efforts to document ongoing human rights violations by state actors. In these cases, civic groups, transnational actors or opposition groups in exile are active in organising reliable documentation that can be used in future trials or truth commissions. The archival collections of Memoria Abierta in Argentina or the South African History Archive are examples of the documentation from the periods of military dictatorship apartheid. Currently, efforts are ongoing for the conflicts

in Libya (Lawyers for Justice in Libya) and Syria (Syrian Archive), and many other conflict areas as the necessity for documentation to address a violent past has been thoroughly proven.

Although the archives mentioned in this article have a special role to play in transitional justice, all archives have some role to play in protecting the truth and increasing transparency and trust in governments and democracy.

Dagmar Hovestadt is Department Head Communication and Research with the Federal Archives, Stasi Records Archive (Germany). Together with Dr. Julia Viebach and Dr. des. Ulrike Lühe, she has edited a special edition of the "International Journal of Human Rights" on Archives and Transitional Justice that just came out as a paperback: "Beyond Evidence. The Use of Archives in Transitional Justice". <https://www.routledge.com/Beyond-Evidence-The-Use-of-Archives-in-Transitional-Justice/Viebach-Hovestadt-Luhe/p/book/9781032197401#>

Bridging the Digital Gap trainees: new assets to the sector

Bryony Hooper from Amnesty International's International Secretariat, **Emma Hancox** from the University of Bristol, **Fabi Barticioti** from the London School of Economics and **Philippa Mole** from the Guardian Foundation look at the benefits of creating a cohort within the Bridging the Digital Gap programme.

We are archivists from four organisations that all work for social advocacy. In early 2020, we joined together to form a 'Social Advocacy' cohort of hosts for The UK National Archives' Bridging the Digital Gap programme. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the programme placed trainees who have digital backgrounds at different archive organisations for 15-month training contracts.

The trainees brought their digital skills to a sector more traditionally known for its analogue expertise, the hosts provided an immersive introduction to a wide range of work in archives, and The UK National Archives delivered digital archiving training to help the new recruits bring the two worlds together. The 2021-2022 programme also funded a second 'E-Preservation West' cohort, consisting of Dorset History Centre, South West Heritage Trust, Gloucestershire Archives and Warwickshire County Record Office.

Reaching the broadest range of candidates

The first stage in the process was recruitment. The impact of the pandemic began to be felt, and after a few months of optimistic delay, we resigned ourselves to recruiting our trainees remotely. We aimed to reach a broader range of candidates by advertising the posts outside of traditional platforms such as the Jiscmail ListServ. After an anonymised shortlisting process, designed to diversify the pool of recruits, we held virtual interviews in November 2020 and we welcomed George, Noor, Sam and Tasdiq into their new roles in January 2021. They started work two months later than planned, and sadly in the same week that a third national lockdown was introduced in England.

What the trainees did

The UK National Archives provided online training to the cohort, which introduced them to both the archive sector and the practical aspects of digital access and preservation. In addition, the trainees completed all of the Digital Preservation Coalition's [Novice to Know How](#) modules on digital preservation and access, which gave them a good grounding for their work throughout the course of the traineeship.

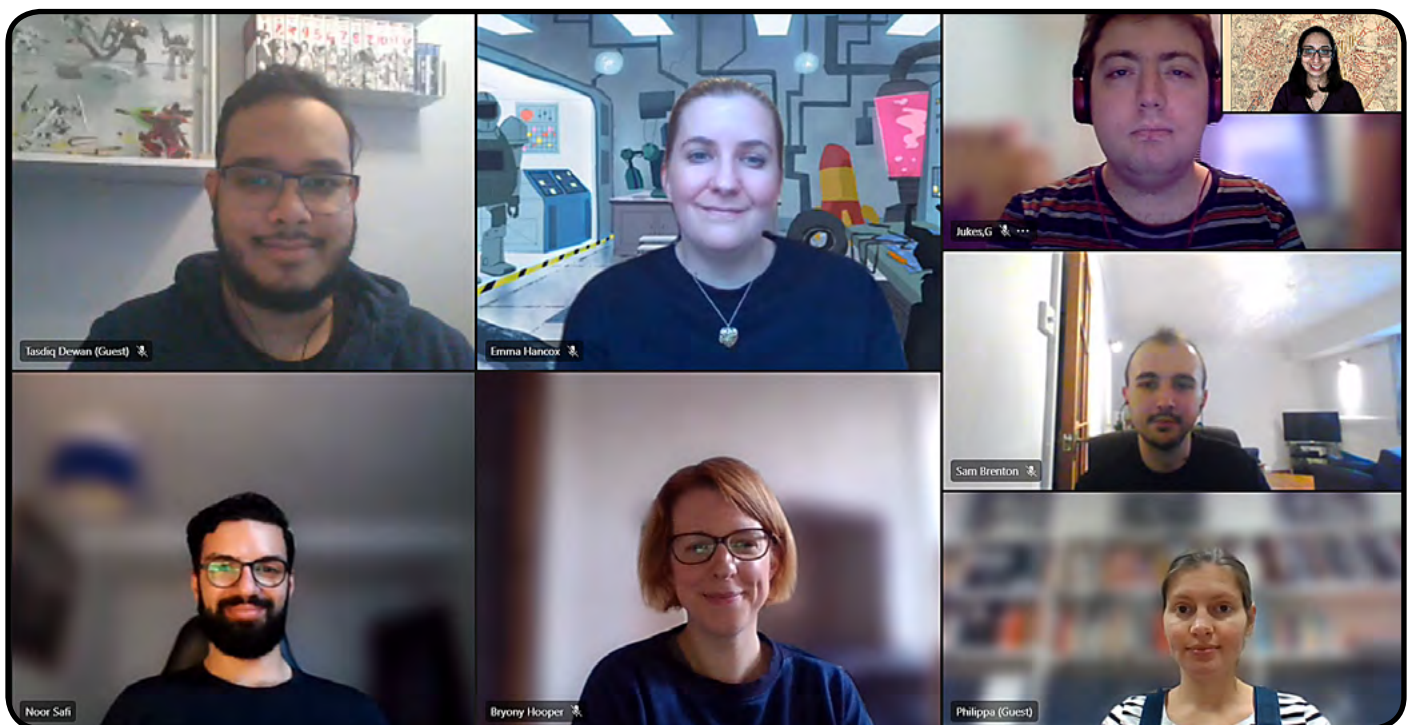
As supervisors, we were encouraged to ensure hands-on experience to support the theory. With an agreed work plan, we introduced our trainees to our methods of ensuring long-term preservation of and wider access to digital archives. Tasks included the transfer of digital assets, ingesting content into our digital repositories, recording assets in digital accession registers and enriching catalogue data. All of this work had to be done remotely!

Tasdiq Dewan
© Tasdiq
Dewan





Sam_Blandford UoB. ©
Sam Blandford



Social Advocacy Cohort © Fabiana Barticioti

As well as supporting the intellectual and technical management of archives and metadata created and stored in digital formats, the trainees had the opportunity to be involved in a diverse range of tasks. These included transferring data stored on outdated hardware, preparing collections for digitisation, creating 3D scans of archaeological artefacts, testing the suitability of file types for long-term storage, and performing website crawls to support web-archiving activities.

Sharing our practice within the cohort

In addition to these hands-on tasks, each organisation hosted a workshop focusing on a specific aspect of working with digital archives. The workshops provided the trainees with an in-depth overview of our approaches to preservation, ingest, access, and engagement, as well as more specific work around computer-assisted workflows. The workshops enabled us to share our different 'set-ups' with the cohort and enabled the trainees to see (and occasionally also play!) with a range of software systems, including Preservica, Perpetua, in-house systems, and open-source solutions.

Sharing our internal processes highlighted the differences between our individual organisations' approaches to tackling digital preservation. We each have different stakeholders, budgets, and strategic goals driving our work. The trainees benefitted greatly from seeing that there is no 'one size fits all' method of digital preservation and learnt that organisations make choices that best suit their context and needs. Being part of the cohort greatly expanded the trainees' professional network. Each trainee had a mentor outside of their line management structure and they also benefitted from interacting with the other cohort trainees.

Transferable skills

Although the trainees' roles centered on working with digital archives and bringing new digital skills to their respective archive services, we have been struck by the range of transferable skills they have acquired along the way. These skills will stand them in good stead for future roles in the archive sector. Examples include, but are not limited to, analysing the overall content of collections, attention to detail in describing archival material and processing digital files, applying a systematic and logical approach to the projects they are working on and especially





Noor Safi © Noor Safi

problem solving, which is a key aspect of working with digital collections and systems.

After a 15-month journey spent participating in a wide range of activities, the trainees (many of whom had not previously considered a career in archives and knew little about the sector) now have a good level of familiarity with the archival landscape and would be an asset to any archive service.

Bridging the digital gap

As supervisors, taking part in the traineeship provided us with a clearer understanding of where digital skills gaps are. At recruitment, we looked for specific skills such as coding experience, understanding of web concepts, familiarity with applied terminologies and ease experimenting with software and applications.

The trainees' digital literacy gave them a readiness to plunge into hands-on tasks with ease. It struck us how comfortable they were at delivering tasks at the same time as picking up theoretical archival concepts. We also noticed that they had a natural aptitude for picking up digital skills and dealing with anything digital rather than needing to play continuous catch-up with technological advances. Participating in the traineeship has helped us reflect on our recruitment processes. We agree that in the future we would like to consider changing the way we recruit for assistant posts.

We would consider embedding more digital tasks in future roles and adding digital skillsets to person specifications. We would also like to seek alternative recruitment pathways with the aim of diversifying applicants.

Next steps

The traineeship was designed to prepare the trainees to join the sector in an entry-level position supported by a senior information management professional. We believe that they are well equipped to carry out any archiving activities expected of that level. Having participated in extensive professional development activities over the course of the scheme, the trainees have a strong foundation of skills, knowledge and practical experience to launch their careers in the archive sector.

It has been a pleasure to work alongside our cohort of trainees and we are grateful for all the benefits they have brought our organisations over the course of our fifteen months together. They have given us new ways of looking at things, helped us to redefine our teams' work packages and complemented our existing traditional archival skills with digital skills. We wish them all the best in their future careers.

Bryony Hooper (AIIS), Emma Hancox (UoB), Fabi Barticioti (LSE) and Philippa Mole (GF)

ARA Excellence Awards - Six years on



After a two-year gap due to the COVID-19 pandemic the ARA Excellence Awards are back.

Given what has happened in those two years and the changed – somewhat rockier – landscape we now face, it is even more important to let the outside world know what an amazing job the sector is doing and to celebrate organisations and individuals who have gone the extra mile. The awards are a great opportunity to spread the word about the value of the recordkeeping sector – archives, records management and conservation – to the publics of the UK and Ireland. When the winners are announced we will publicise the results not just to the sector but to the wider press (particularly focussing on press in the locations where the winners work) as well as to key government influencers – such as DCMS, the Cabinet Office and local MPs.

If we are to improve government funding and resources to the sector then we must take every opportunity to let them know what we do and why it is important both to them and to the general public. The [ARA Excellence Awards](#) is one such opportunity.

A little history

When David Mander OBE, as incoming ARA Chair in 2014, put forward the idea of the ARA Excellence Awards his thought was to augment the existing awards in the sector, for example, the Community Archives and Heritage Group Awards, The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Archives and History lifetime awards, the FARMER award for the best annual archive course student dissertation and the Ellis Award for long standing achievement.

These awards were either specific to a particular area or theme or aimed towards people at the end of their careers, which left quite a few gaps. He says:

"I was very keen to have awards to generate more publicity for archives, and with the support of a small working party, came up with the proposals for record keeping service of the year and record keeper of the year, both with an element of voting in them so that we could encourage wide-ranging participation. But I was also looking for something a little lower key than either the Ellis prize or

Cup cakes made by the Central Bank of Ireland to celebrate their award



the APPGAH lifetime award. So the idea for the Distinguished Service Award (DSA) was born – a recognition for significant achievement, slanted to, but not limited to, those who have built up a long service record and a recognition of acclamation by the profession as a whole.”

The first awards were made in 2016. In 2017 the New Professional of the Year Award –was brought into the fold.

Rosie Al-Mulla, Chair of the Section for New Professionals says:

“The Section for New Professionals is an incredibly busy, keen, often passionate ARA Section. Previously, none of the ARA Excellence Awards were targeted specifically towards newcomers to our profession so the excellent work of our members could often get lost among the achievements of those who have been working in the sector for much longer and might therefore have many more accolades to their name. But New Professionals can and do undertake integral work in the sector and conduct innovative research and so we wanted to create an award that acknowledged and celebrated this. We’re so pleased that the New Professional of the Year award now sits in the suite of ARA Excellence Awards and that we are able to celebrate excellence after the difficult few years we have all experienced. The SfNP committee is looking forward to reading the nominations and I’m certain we can look forward to being immensely proud of our membership.”



The new design of the award



Central Bank of Ireland receiving
their award for Recordkeeping
Service of the Year



What does it mean to win an award?

Sadly, David's plans for a more exotic name and trophy fell foul of supply issues: *"My original title for the award was Jenkinson's Elephants, after his example of the kind of attachment to a record that might prove difficult for an archive service to host. I had hoped to have the award in the form of a glass elephant – but sourcing a trophy maker for this proved to be too difficult."*

The original awards did feature an elephant but now have a simpler design. Award winners receive a small trophy, a certificate and their names will be enlisted on the ARA Excellence Awards Roll of Honour.

There are other, perhaps more important, benefits:

Giulia Bernasconi, archives manager at the Central Bank of Ireland describes the impact of winning Service of the Year:

"When announced that the Central Bank of Ireland Archives was successful in this category, there was a huge influx in researcher queries and visits (pre COVID-19 of course!) and this has been a great way to ensure management is aware that our service is of high quality and recognised by our peers and the ARA like."

The effect of winning Record Keeper of the Year was similar for Erin Lee, archivist at the National Theatre in London:

"Being nominated for and winning this award really improved my standing in my organisation."

The National Theatre is very supportive of its Archive but as a large employer it can be difficult to get your voice heard. This award was announced to all staff as 'like winning an Olivier for archivists' and I was blown away by the well wishes that came in from all round the organisation. This was very much a win for the whole archive team at the NT and our work was recognised by a much broader range of staff than before."

For a new professional making their way into a career in the sector every little helps on the CV. Julie Devenney won the New Professional of the Year Award in 2019 and her nomination focussed on her work as social media officer for ARA Scotland where amongst other achievements she set up #ArchiveHour and #Archive30, she says:

"I was delighted to win, of course, but even just to be nominated was such an honour. I had graduated from my Information Management course two years previously and never would I have imagined I would be nominated for an award in the sector, never mind win. It was so nice to be recognised in the sector for the work I had done, which had become a passion, but there were lots of late nights and hard work organising it so it really meant a lot that others saw and appreciated that work."

Also to be recognised by ARA like that was also important to me, as the work I was doing was in social media, a part of our work that, then, often went unnoticed in our sector so, to me, this sent a message that ARA recognises ALL the work we do in our sector, even the work that's not often shouted about and made that work feel 'seen'."



Erin Lee receiving her award for Recordkeeper of the Year



Julie Devenney receiving her award for New Professional of the Year

As well as being beneficial to her career Julie also mentioned a very personal impact:

"My girls (who were seven and nine then) were really proud of me. They weren't really sure what I was doing but they could see the hours and effort I was putting into it so to tell them I had won an award for it was really special. When I brought the award home and put it on my side table, the next day I noticed they had put their baton medals next to it which made me so happy and all the effort worthwhile."

For those winning the Distinguished Service Award the impact on their career is probably a little less marked – they are usually already established and the award is given either to mark their long and ongoing commitment to service in the sector or for a particular piece of work or initiative that has made a big difference.

David Mander who set up the awards in 2015 went on to receive his own DSA, he says:

"It could be said that if you want to have an award first create it yourself, but that was not my intention, though it was a great pleasure to receive my own DSA at our Leeds conference in 2019. Having become Chair of the Northern Region the year before, it has been my pleasure to help bring the region back into activity and with the support of my colleagues on the region's committee provide local content for the Leeds conference. My award was at least in part a recognition of that recent voluntary activity."

David's own testimony is modest, the citation for the award referenced his long and distinguished career, the key role he played in setting up Archives for London, the work he did as chair of the ARA Board of Trustees in revising the Vision and Mission Statements and Code of Conduct, widening ARA's reach with new membership categories and helping to revive ARA's Northern Region.

How to take part

A call for nominations went out to members and the wider sector in April 2022 but anyone can make a nomination for the four categories (you do not have to be an ARA Member). Each nominee requires a nominator and a referee, you can self-nominate for the DSA, Record Keeping Service of the Year and Record Keeper of the Year Awards but not the New Professional of the Year Award.

The Distinguished Service Award is decided by the ARA Board, the other three awards are decided by a public vote which will open shortly after the nomination process closes on 1st June 2022.

Information on criteria for each of the awards as well as nomination forms can be found on the ARA website [here](#).

Winners will be announced at the ARA Conference which takes place in Chester from 31st August to 2nd September 2022. Information on the conference can be found [here](#).

If you have any questions about the awards please contact Deborah at deborah.mason@archives.org.uk

What crisis?: introducing the Crisis Management Team for Business Archives

Who is the Crisis Management Team?

The team co-ordinates actions to save records of businesses in cases of insolvency, closure, takeovers and other circumstances posing danger. The team includes archivists and researchers covering England, Scotland and Wales, and is represented on the Records at Risk Steering Group. Since 2008, the team has dealt with 260 businesses ranging from local businesses to international concerns. Cases include firms making bells and carpets to fashion and shipbuilding companies. 49 cases are resolved; others are on-going or unresolved with limited intelligence to hand. Usually covering 15 new businesses a year, during the COVID-19 pandemic from January 2020 to October 2021, the team saw 113 cases. The retail sector has been especially badly hit, facing accelerated changes to shopping habits, reduced office storage and transfers to purely online business.

Chaotic boxes of a firm on survey – digital records can be even harder to access. © Richard Wiltshire.

What successes have there been?

High profile collections have been successfully deposited. These include Arcadia including Burtons (West Yorkshire Archive Service), Quaker Oats (Gunnersbury Park Museum), Thomas Cook (Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland) and Toys “R” Us (History of Advertising Trust). Experiences from these inform case studies used by sector bodies to advocate for funding. You can find more information [here](#).

What makes the team work well?

- A focused, coordinated approach to saving records between businesses, insolvency firms, heritage services and heritage sector bodies
- Volunteers with leadership, experience and drive
- Demand from archive services for guidance to secure collections
- Independence. The team acts freely, responding quickly using connections made
- Little bureaucracy. Acting as broker means it can focus on outcomes

What’s happening now? - What lessons have been learnt?

Records are at risk, even in a nation at peace. There is no legal imperative to protect business archives. Conversations with the insolvency and wider business sector must continue to encourage two-way dialogue.

The archives of Debenhams, the high street brand founded in 1778, have been a major concern since 2019. Now an online business, nearly 200 shelves of archives were urgently transferred in September 2021 to safe, emergency storage at South West Heritage Trust. The team is working with the Trust to transfer records to lasting homes. More information can be found [here](#).

The case highlights the ongoing

- Threat from dispersal by sale
- Reliance on being able to find homes for collections. Archive services find it hard to justify accepting large business collections versus limited staff and space capacity
- Limited opportunities to



Queuing before closure outside Hastings' Debenhams branch, December 2020. © Richard Wiltshire.

- safeguard digital records
- Need for funding
- Need for press coverage on the importance of safeguarding records. Especially unrepresented cases of smaller community businesses, and leisure and tech firms.

Researchers, archivists and other stakeholders work brilliantly together. With Thomas Cook and Debenhams, academic and community testimonies enabled the team to communicate the value of these business archives for society - through documentation of developments in products, communities and landscapes preserved for the public good. By protecting the archives they also symbolically preserve the voices of past customers and staff. Archives as a shared testimony can be harnessed as a powerful ethical argument in the face of risk.

What guidance and funding are available?

Explore advice for archivists and insolvency practitioners on [Managing Business Archives](#) and [here](#).

Visit the Records at Risk Steering Group and Legal Records at risk guidance [here](#).

Launched in 2021, the Records at Risk Fund provides support for urgent interventions to save physical and digital records facing immediate peril across the [United Kingdom](#).

How can I help?

Get in touch if you think business records are at risk. Contact the [team](#) if you would like to help out.

Richard Wiltshire outside Ipswich Debenhams branch, 2020. © Richard Wiltshire.



Thomas Cook & Son poster © Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland



Richard Wiltshire in Thomas Cook archive store. © Richard Wiltshire.

Call for case studies for The Local Government Association Commission on Culture and Local Government

In March 2022 the Local Government Association (LGA) announced a commission to investigate the role that publicly funded culture can play in the UK's national recovery. Their stated aim is to use the commission to demonstrate the important contribution local council funded culture can make to the Levelling-Up agenda and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of this work they are asking for case studies from people working in local cultural services. The case studies should reflect the Commission's four key themes of economic recovery, social mobility, health inequalities and place and/or the overarching theme of levelling-up.

The terms of reference explicitly include archives and members might want to consider whether work they do or projects they have run fit the bill. Even if you don't work in a council funded service, it may be that your archive or organisation has worked with a council funded service on a joint project and you can submit a joint case study with them. The LGA is mostly focussed on England and to a certain extent Wales. However, it has not limited this call for case studies to those areas and there may be excellent examples of local government funding in other nations which would help build their evidence base.

This is a golden opportunity to ensure that archives and the recordkeeping sector don't get pushed to the back of the funding queue and are seen for the important service they provide. In order to help members with creating case studies for this commission ARA Communications Manager, Deborah Mason, has created a briefing document which gives further details and provides examples and ideas of how to map the work you do to the priorities of the commission. This briefing document can be downloaded [here](#).

Workforce mapping appointment

In November 2021 The Workforce Data Consortium convened by CILIP and the Archives & Records Association (ARA) invited tenders for a Workforce Mapping Survey of the library, archives, records, information and knowledge sector.

This survey will build on the previous Workforce Mapping carried out in 2015 by CILIP and ARA.

The Local Government Association has been successful in winning the tender for this work and the Workforce Mapping project will establish an initial baseline survey from which we will seek to provide a periodic update every 4 years.

Further information on the tender call out and details of the consortium can be found [here](#).

'How to digitise' guides: a collection of guides for (almost) every material

Townsweb Archiving has made the protection of heritage archives a priority for over twenty years. Working with some of the country's rarest archives has given them an opportunity to form a specialised team and a series of tried and tested workflows. Acknowledging that not everybody who wishes to digitise will do so through a specialist provider, they decided to share these workflows, in a

series of published guides. These guides have now proved so popular that they recently decided it was high time for the content to be reviewed, new contributions have been made and images updated, and all have now been gathered into their own dedicated resource area, for quick and easy access. These new look 'How to Digitise' Guides can be found [here](#).

NEW!

WE'VE BEEN BUSY!

How to Digitise guides: refreshed for 2022

Visit blog.townswebarchiving.com to learn more ►

The Towns Web Archiving (TWA) Heritage Digitisation Grant returns for 2022!

The TWA Digitisation Grant will be opening on 20th June 2022. This will be the grant's fifth year, having undergone an overhaul in 2021 to better prepare for this coming period of recovery.

The TWA grant has supported a great many projects over the years and many of the recipients have gone on to do things digitally that they would not have been able to achieve physically. Every year TWA looks at what the industry needs in the given climate, and what adaptations should be made to the grants to meet those needs.

For 2022 they have made the following key changes:

- £3,000 x 4 grants
- £500 will be added to the Match Funding pot per application

In summary, there will be an additional grant of £3,000 available, to ensure more organisations can benefit from the financial support. This year a Match Funding Pot will be created into which £500 will be added per funding application. This pot could become very substantial indeed and each accepted applicant will be eligible to claim up to £1000 in funding for their digitisation project.

Keep the opening date of 20th June 2022 in your diary, or you can sign up to the TWA [blog](#) for all grant related releases, and keep an eye on their newly designated digitisation grant [page](#).



Announcing the 2022 Business Archives Council cataloguing grant

BAC is excited to announce this year's cataloguing grant for business archives. This year a single award of £5,000 is available.

The aim of this grant is to fund the cataloguing of a business archive collection(s) in either the private or public sector, and to:

- provide financial support for institutions/businesses that manage business archives
- reach collections that have not yet been prioritised but have academic, socio-historical and wider value
- create opportunities for archivists, paraprofessionals and volunteers to gain experience in cataloguing business collections
- make more business collections accessible

Criteria for the grants and how to apply are now available on the BAC website. Previous applicants

are welcome to re-apply. Please note that the BAC will not award a grant to the same institution within three years. The decision on the award of the grant will be made by a Cataloguing Grant Panel established by BAC which consists of two executive committee members and one non-executive member. Panel members will not judge applications where they have a research or employment affiliation.

The Cataloguing Grant for Business Archives (2022) opened on 11th April 2022 with the deadline for applications being Friday 24th June. Further information including guidance notes is available on BAC's [website](#).

Any questions should be addressed to Natalie Attwood, Grant Administrator, natalie.attwood@rothschildandco.com

Records at Risk Fund awards grants to save vulnerable collections

In April The Records at Risk Fund announced the successful applicants who have received grants. Eight archives from across England and Scotland have each received grants of up to £5,000.

The Records at Risk Fund provides support for urgent, short-notice interventions to save historical records, in both physical and digital formats, that face immediate peril. The fund focuses on categories of records that are not protected by legislation, such as the archives of businesses, charities and private individuals.

A broad range of organisations has been supported, with grants given to preserve collections focusing on policy, engineering history, film, sculpture,

youth culture and more. The grant to South West Heritage Trust, for example, will allow them to meet the costs of emergency storage for the Debenhams archive after the last store closed in May 2021. South West Heritage Trust will also now be able to employ a consultant archivist to re-home the 200-year-old business archive, which contains letters, ledgers, deeds and photographs, at an appropriate archive service.

Another grant was awarded to the Garden Museum to preserve the records of R. Halliday & Co. Ltd, one of the foremost glasshouse manufacturers in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. The archive contains the last evidence of some glasshouses' existence but the collection is currently at serious risk of degradation due to its storage in a hayloft and cellar.

The Records at Risk grant will enable a consultant to survey the records, carry out urgent conservation work and re-package them for future safekeeping and public access.

The Records at Risk Fund is a partnership between The UK National Archives, the Archives and Records Association and the British Records Association. The Business Archives Council is an associate partner, and is using its own funds to further support some of the business records that have been identified as being at risk.

You can find details of all the grants awarded on the UK National Archives website [here](#).

Belvoir Castle drawing room, repository for evacuated Public Record Office records
© The National Archives
(reference: PRO 18/1)



Appointment of end point assessor for Level 7 apprenticeships

As an instrumental member of the apprenticeship trailblazer group, the Archives and Records Association welcomed the announcement by CILIP and The UK National Archives that CILIP Pathways has been appointed as the end-point assessor organisation for the new Level 7 Archivist and Records Manager apprenticeship standard. The Level 7 apprenticeship will open up a new technical training route into the archives sector and will be equivalent to the Master's degree typically required to become an archivist or records manager.

Apprentices will receive 20 per cent formal learning and 80 per cent on-the-job training, meaning that they can achieve a high-level qualification while working and earning. This opportunity will enable a wider range of people to join the recordkeeping profession.

Read more about this story on the ARA website [here](#).

Herschel 200

To help commemorate the bicentenary of the death of Bath based astronomer William Herschel (1738-1822), the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) has awarded Bath Preservation Trust £64,000, which will be invested into a year-long programme of events throughout 2022.

Activities will include a new exhibition at the Herschel Museum of Astronomy in Bath. This exhibition will reveal the family's remarkable story through original artifacts loaned from the archives of the Royal Astronomical Society and the Herschel family. The exhibition will also engage local students who will have the opportunity to develop content and learn curatorial skills with the support of the Museum's professional staff.

The Herschel Museum of Astronomy is also working with British photographic artist, Lynda Laird. Inspired by her research on the Herschel archives at the Royal Astronomical Society, she is creating a light box installation which will provide a creative response to the Herschel achievements and in return, encourage art-lovers to visit the Museum. For more information about Herschel 200 and the Herschel Museum of Astronomy, click [here](#).

March 13. 1781.

10.^h 30' Looking at a star in the quartile between Aurigas right foot and the left foot of Castor. I discovered a Comet. It was at the distance of almost $\frac{2}{3}$ of my field of view from a small telescopic star which followed it and seemed to have the same declination.

Fig 1.
B — 2' 48" — A

the scale of the figure is to inch to 5."

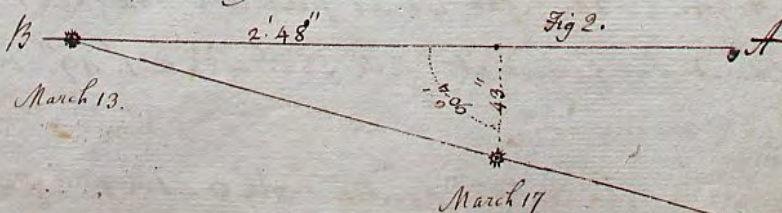
my field is 4' 28" and allowing 10" wanting to $\frac{2}{3}$ of that quantity we have 2' 48". AB represents the apparent motion of the star and comet.

March 17. 1781

11.^h I measured the distance of the Comet from the same small star $12^{\text{h}} - 3\frac{1}{4} = 68\frac{3}{4} = 42'' 968$ exactly $41'' 58''$
measured. 227. apert 61 Tab 2 Tab 4

I took the angle of position $32^{\text{h}} 19^{\text{m}} - 3\frac{1}{2} = 90.14'$
power 278. more exactly = $2'' 53''$

I took the dia^r of the Comet $51^{\text{h}} - 43\frac{1}{4} = 7\frac{3}{4} = 2'' 968$
power 932. 460. Tab 3



See page 92. 93. 94. Observ. on the First Stars. See also Journal

The 'Blues Off the Record' project comes to an end

The Blues Off the Record project to catalogue the research papers and audio reels in the Paul Oliver Archive of African American Music has successfully drawn to a close. Funded by an Archives Revealed cataloguing grant with support from the European Blues Association, the project aimed to make accessible the papers and audio recordings of Paul Oliver,

one of the pioneering scholars of blue music. The collection, held at Oxford Brookes University Special Collections and Archive, includes an important set of audio interviews with blues musicians conducted in the summer of 1960, which formed the basis of the book *Conversation with the Blues*. Digital files of the audio material will be available to researchers on request, and

the catalogue is now available to search online. You can find out more about the material on the collection webpage which includes an online exhibition of photographs and audio clips as well as links to playlists and webinar recordings relating to the collection.

Blind James Brewer, straw-hatted, plays for a preacher and his congregation on Sangamon Street, Chicago, 1960



A journey up the Watter: recording the rowing and river heritage of the Clyde

Glasgow Building Preservation Trust (GBPT) are repairing and bringing back to life a category B listed timber frame building and its contents, the West Boathouse – a clubhouse for two rowing clubs on the banks of the River Clyde, Glasgow. The rowing clubs have archives dating from the 1840's which were not catalogued or listed until the start of this project.

Scottish Council on Archives will be supporting and recording how

the clubs' archive is being managed and its long-term preservation. Working closely with Ingrid Shearer, Heritage Engagement Officer at GBPT they will follow the journey of the archive from the attic of the Boathouse, to becoming a catalogued and digitised collection that will be enjoyed and used by the local community, club members and researchers.

There will be a regular blog from Ingrid and her team of volunteers

featured on a dedicated webpage to the project. Plus, there will be webinars relating to the management of the archive and a useful resources section with lots of helpful information and links for anyone starting or currently managing a community archive. A Journey Up the Watter: Recording the Rowing and River Heritage of the Clyde - Scottish Council on Archives (scottisharchives.org.uk)

Backchat



Ally McConnell talks to **Veronica Howe**, archivist and records manager at Wells Cathedral and collections manager at Bath Record Office, about a career change into archives, the benefits of joining the ARA and her current and varied work in Bath and Wells.



You had a long career before choosing archives as a profession ten years ago. What made you change career and how did you facilitate this change?

As a young single mum, I worked in a variety of office jobs for 10 years before moving into local government, starting as a school secretary. By the time I was made redundant 16 years later I was working in an Improvement and Development role in the strategic planning of cultural services.

My job was cut just as I graduated with a BA in History from the Open University. It had taken me seven years of part time study combining it with work, but I loved it. My final course, Total War and Social Change, introduced me to the Mass Observation archive. I was enchanted by people's wartime diaries and saw a way of combining a love of history with a future career.

I spent my redundancy money on studying the one-year full time MA in Archives and Records Management at University College London. But first I had to gain the experience that is an entry requirement, so I spent a couple of years doing part time work to subsidise volunteering in archives which I did thanks to the Women's Library, the Royal College of Surgeons, and London Metropolitan Archives. I qualified as an archivist in 2012 aged 54.

What was your first professional job?

Digital Records Officer was not the job I had in mind when I set out, but I was



“

I have never found being older because of a midlife career change a barrier. On the contrary employers seem to value work experience, and it gives you plenty to talk about in applications and interviews

”

very fortunate to get my first post at King's College London working for a manager who is still a valued mentor and friend. I worked on a JISC-funded project looking at barriers to digital records management, which turned out to be unexpectedly fascinating, then became the University's Research Data Manager. This is a world that brings people from Archives, Information Management and IT together to manage material generated by research, and making it accessible. Although important and rewarding work, I found it a bit too similar to what I had done before becoming an archivist, and hankered to handle archival material rather than data sets.

So when we decided to leave London and relocate to Somerset to improve our financial, physical, mental and social health, I emailed local archives offering to work as a volunteer.

Tell us a bit about your involvement with the ARA South West region when you moved to the area?

I contacted ARA SW before I moved and, within days of my arrival, the then Secretary scooped

Wells Cathedral © Shutterstock





Bristol Old Vic © Shutterstock

me up and drove me all the way to Exeter for the next regional meeting, which I considered an impressive welcome. Bath Record Office and Downside Abbey took me up on my offer and I got to enjoy working with archive material, practising professional skills and meeting other archivists. Just as I was wondering if I had qualified in a profession that had doomed me to eternal unpaid work, I got a brilliant job in the form of a short fixed-term contract at the University of Bristol's Theatre Collection, working on the Bristol Old Vic collection. Sorting out scripts and correspondence of great actors and writers before they were famous felt like exactly what I had always wanted to do.

How did your previous career help you in your current and other professional jobs?

I have never found being older because of a midlife career change a barrier. On the contrary employers seem to value work experience, and it gives you plenty to talk about in applications and interviews. Understanding of project and budget management and communicating with people, and familiarity with how organisations work are all very transferable skills. There's a lot to be said for being a late developer.

What are you currently doing in your career?

I have been the part time Archivist and Records Manager at Wells Cathedral for four and a half years. The uninitiated imagine I spend all my time admiring mediaeval cartularies but archivists will understand that my time is really spent on catalogue spreadsheets and introducing methods of managing modern records, albeit those that concern the management of ancient tombs, stained glass, bells, the organ and conservation of the country's finest West Front. I am currently also one of the Collections Managers at Bath Record Office, covering a colleague seconded to a funded project until the end of the year. Working in a public records and local studies service has been the ideal complement to being a lone archivist in a specialist institution, giving me wider experience of other professional aspects like helping people in a public search room, using CALM and working with digital archives. My professional life therefore involves caring for the whole spectrum of archives from 11th century charters to working out how to ingest born digital records into a preservation system, so I am living proof of the varied nature of being an archivist!

And finally **arc**magazine

Our next edition of the **ARC Magazine** is due out in July/August 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.

ARA 2022 CONFERENCE



CHESTER
31st August to
2nd September 2022