



Archives & Records  
Association  
UK & Ireland

# ARC magazine

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## Preservation and Conservation Special Issue



7

Pushing Midwives  
Records

12

Lloyds Interactive  
Timeline

14

Parchment and  
archives

20

Red Rot  
Breakthrough



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# contents

WELCOME **ARC**

## EDITORIAL

When I was in Graduate School at UCLA, the student chapter of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), along with other professional-student associations on campus, was given a small pot of money for student member activities. At the end of the year, having some money left in our fund after reimbursing invited speakers and paying for travel costs to visit to local archives, we decided all SAA student members should get T-Shirts. But what do we put on the shirts, to commemorate our time at UCLA and plug our association?

My favourite suggestion, "Archivists Make It Last Longer", was ultimately rejected by other overcautious officers reluctant to endanger the future University activities fund for the students who came after us. But what I loved about it was that it encapsulated the profession—it was clever, it was geeky, and it was true... about the work and the materials, rather than the implied "it" of love affairs.

The articles in this month's issue on conservation and preservation have to do with activities that make material in our collections last longer. They also imply a love affair with materials of history, be they from business archives, a camping organisation over a century old, or photographs of mothers and the midwives that helped them through the most exciting and excruciating times of their lives. While the general conversation has shifted to talk about value for money, and being practical, the core reason that many of us got into the profession doesn't have to do with cash. Funding and budgets are something we need to deal with, sure, but that would be true of any job in this economy.

What is it we seek? Mark Allen from Flintshire talks about the tactile intimacy of working with parchment, as the material preserves culture and history through the millennia. Anne Morgan from Plymouth has spent more than 25 years working with volunteers on weekends and evenings to create and preserve graveyard records. Rachel Weldrake has been learning how to conserve parish registers and the process of bookbinding as a volunteer in Yorkshire. What motivates this work? I would argue is not professional standards. Professional standards help us know what is the minimum we need to achieve. But what drives us to seek and create higher standards is a love affair, of sorts—a love of history, a love of the cultural artefacts, a desire to share our pleasure with future generations.

Before another year moves forward, we should pause and look back at what we have been doing to make things last, and appreciate each labour of love.

**Rose Roberto, Gary Collins, Ceri Foster, Rachel Freeman, and Richard Wagg**

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



### ASSOCIATION NEWS

- 4 Opening Lines
- 6 Collecting Matters
- 6 Registration Scheme News
- 26 An opportunity to influence the future of archive services
- 26 Post-nominals for Conservators

### FEATURES

- 7 Push!
- 9 Enjoying the Countryside for over 100 years
- 12 Making History

### CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION GROUP

- 14 Parchment and the archives
- 17 Problems of adaptability
- 18 How to Preserve Parish Registers.
- 19 Conservation gets netted – by proxy!
- 20 Breakthrough in Treating Red Rot
- 22 An excerpt: the new best practise guidelines on conservation documentation

### AROUND THE REGIONS

- 23 Museum Information and Records Management Project
- 24 BBC get's new Media Archive in London
- 25 Profile of a 25-Year Career

### EVENTS AND TRAINING

- 25 Training Opportunities

Main picture: Abrasion of ink.

Paper stamp 1880.

14th century manuscript - St Deiniols

How to Breastfeed, circa 1950. Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal College of Midwives.

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# Opening lines



This is an old managerial adage that is much loved by us consultants. What it means is that whatever you measure performance by, that is the goal to which people will work regardless of the wider effect on the organisation. So, the business that measures sales performance by quarterly results will drive employees to put everything into the approach of the quarter end, possibly at the cost of future sales, staff morale and customer relations. So, the message is clear – be careful what you decide to measure. Have measures that are balanced and relevant and promote the long-term health of the organisation (and hopefully its employees!).

All well and good but what relevance does this have for the archives sector (and I will talk about archives rather than conservation or records management)? During my research into the capital impact of investment in archives, funded by the ARA, I have found it difficult to find relevant and comprehensive data either quantitative or qualitative. Indeed, the lack of data about investment is what prompted my research in the first place. Today at one of the very useful MAPLE (Major Archive Projects Learning

## What you measure is what you manage.

Exchange) meetings one participant pointed out that we do not have any 'breakpoint' information i.e., we have not identified that point at which the lack of resources makes it untenable to run a proper archive service. Thus we do not have a basic benchmark to present to decision-makers about constitutes fundamental resource requirements.

I think a key to this measurement issue is asking the right question. Let me give you a favourite bug bear of mine. Why do we have as a key measure the number of items produced? Firstly it is meaningless to us – producing 10 letters does not have the same resource implications as producing 10 bound volumes of Victorian newspapers. What do we mean to do with such simplistic figures? Secondly, it is meaningless to the non-archivist. There is no supporting benchmarks or nationally accepted measures as to what a particular level of document production means and it is difficult to link it in a meaningful way to resource requirements. I believe we have this measure because it is easy to collect and because it has always been done. We need to find more effective measures.

Let's ask a different and more complex question. Let's ask each user 'Did you manage to get the answer you were seeking?' Let's consider the types of responses users could select from:

Think what you could do with the results, which would hopefully contain the responses from a large body of responses thus providing firm evidence. You could make a case for cataloguing (even to the intractable Heritage Lottery Fund?), review staff training, improve remote collection information, or provide large scale evidence of the super service you are providing. This has much more meaning for stakeholders and potentially is far more effective in arguing for your service's needs. all just by taking time to ask a more meaningful question.

Returning to capital investment we need three types of data – factual about who built what where with what architects and at what cost; experiential about the building experience; qualitative and quantitative about the impact of the investment after opening. If we can find the right questions and the right method for collecting this data we will be able to provide valuable experiential information for our colleagues and material for advocacy. MAPLE is going to start looking at this issue but if you have any thoughts do get in touch with me (elizabeth@elizabehoc.co.uk) or Louise Ray at the National Archives. In the meanwhile, what questions are you going to start asking about your service?

.....  
**Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, M.Sc.**

**RMARA, MIC**

Director & Consultant Archivist  
.....

### Did you manage to get the answer you were seeking?

**Yes** – very easily

**Yes** – after looking through a large amount of material

**Yes** – but only after having been given the wrong information by staff initially

**No** – I ran out of time

**No** – I decided to follow a different line of enquiry

**No** – I do not know yet what I am trying to find out

**No** – the collections weren't sufficiently catalogued.

**No** – the relevant material was not available for production

**No** – the material was not held here.

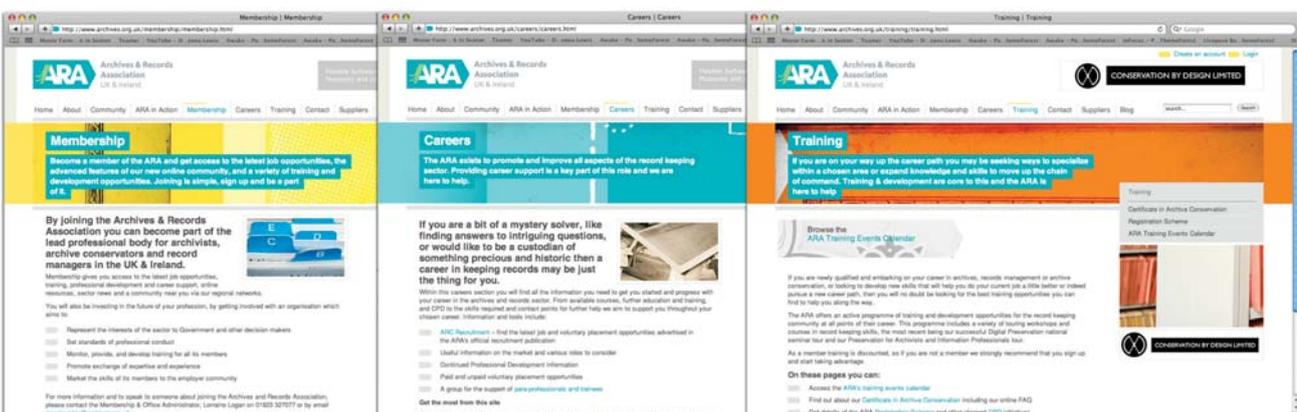
**No** – I did not understand the material I was looking at



# When did you last click on [www.archives.org.uk](http://www.archives.org.uk)?

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

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



# Registration Scheme News

## New Enrolments:

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

### Kimberley Benoy

Cataloguing Archivist, Wolverhampton City Archives

### Fiona Bourne

Archives Specialist, Royal College of Nursing Archives, Edinburgh

### Laura Brett

Archivist, Aston Villa Football Club

### Julie Brooks

Project Archivist, National Archives of Ireland

### Barbara McLean

Archivist, The Mount Stuart Trust

### Sarah Norman

Archivist & Records Officer, UK Debt Management Office

### Richard Wade

Archivist, Hereford Archive Service

### Joanne Wishart

Assistant Archivist, Shetland Museum & Archives

## CONTACTS:

General Registration Scheme Enquiries:

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

Registration Scheme Events Enquiries:

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

Registration Scheme Admin and Bursaries:

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

Registration Scheme Communications Officer:

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

Registration Scheme Mentor Queries and Advice:

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

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### Richard Wragg

Communications Officer, Registration Sub-committee

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# Collecting Matters

This Christmas, why not try avoiding unwanted gifts by reviewing your collection policy? And maybe consider writing a collection development policy too?

The National Archives recently published draft guidance and a practical toolkit to help you understand the value of collection development planning, encouraging you to collect more actively and think more strategically. Let us know how useful it is and how you've put it into practice, or how we might improve it: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/projects-and-work/guidance-feedback.htm>

And with the New Year fast approaching, Christmas is a good time to review what you've achieved over the past year. That's why The National Archives begins the annual Accessions to Repositories survey this month:

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/projects-and-work/accessions-repositories.htm>

But the two are complementary.

Looking at your 2011 accessions might help guide collecting activity in 2012. Looking at how you've acquired collections could challenge your acquisitions process. Looking at your contributors should reveal the scope and coverage of your collections.

So how well did last year reflect your collection policy?

Use the Accessions Survey as part of our collection development toolkit and maybe next year you'll get what you want for Christmas!

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### Cathy Williams

The National Archives

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# Push!

## Describing and Preserving the Royal College of Midwives Records

Lecture on the anatomy of the pelvis, circa 1900. Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal College of Midwives

The Royal College of Midwives (formally known as the Midwives Institute) was founded to 'raise the efficiency and improve the status of midwives and to petition parliament for their recognition' in 1881. In May 2011, the Library, Archive and Museum of the Royal College of Midwives were moved under the terms of a service level collection care agreement to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. A six month project has seen the collection catalogued, preserved and made accessible in a variety of exciting ways for the benefit of members, staff as well as external researchers.

The collection, amounting to around 200 archival-sized boxes, had been in storage since 2008. Besides committee minutes and papers of honorary officers, it includes donated papers and artefacts of midwives, such as registers of cases, case books, lecture notes, badges and uniforms, revealing the relatively untold stories of midwives and the midwifery profession, as well as how perceptions of childbirth, women and sex have changed since the nineteenth century. The records that survive provide a fascinating insight into the development of the organisation and the campaign for the registration, training and education of midwives.

“The midwife heard the ominous and familiar burr of a pilotless bomb just as the labour she was attending reached its final stages. The midwife thought fast. As the bomb fell, she placed a pillow over the mothers face, and used her tin hat to protect the oncoming baby from glass and plaster”

When the material arrived at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, only a basic list existed and it had been packaged in a rather haphazard way. The first task was to create a more detailed list in order to support the integrity of the records and to establish a better understanding of the contents of the collection. Once this had been completed it was possible to arrange the material both intellectually and then physically taking into consideration context and the functions of the organisation, as well as chronology, format and the needs of users.



How to Breastfeed, circa 1950.  
Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal College of Midwives.

An audit of the above material was carried out, which involved assessing the historical importance, potential use and physical condition of each series of records and then entering this information into a database with a score matrix, which had already been developed for use on the collections of the RCOG. The sort of material that was subsequently identified by the audit as a cataloguing priority included, committee minutes and reports that discussed the organisational policy on major issues affecting the midwifery profession, correspondence containing detailed descriptions of the experiences of midwives and visual items that could be used for promotional purposes.

The collection has now been catalogued to international standards using the archival database, Adlib and the top level descriptions are searchable



Midwife providing antenatal care, circa 1960  
Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal College of Midwives

via the Archives Hub. It is also being made available through an ongoing programme of resource guides and historical articles featured on the website of the RCOG. In addition to this there is going to be a display in the library to coincide with the launch of the catalogue in the New Year.

We hope that the publicity generated by the project will encourage midwives and their families to deposit further material. The next stage of the project will involve working closely with staff at the Royal College of Midwives to implement a records management programme to ensure the smooth transfer of material to the archive in the future.

As well as providing access to previously inaccessible material, this project has brought together two

# Enjoying the Countryside for over 100 years

In August 1901, six people went camping in an orchard on the outskirts of Wantage. From this 'small acorn' a 'mighty oak' known as The Camping and Caravanning Club, has grown. The Club exists to help nearly half a million members reap the maximum enjoyment and value-for-money from their camping.

The prime mover for this organisation was Thomas Hiram Holding, a London-based journeyman tailor, who had developed a passion for camping at the age of nine, whilst crossing the American prairies with his parents in 1853, as part of a wagon train. In a book chronicling the experience, *Cycle and Camp in Connemara*, Holding discusses how he invited people interested in 'cycle camping' to contact him. Initially, with only 13 members, the Association of Cycle Campers was formed in 1901.

Five years later, The Association had grown to several hundred members, and the current local structure of the Club began to emerge, with the Birmingham District Association being formed in 1907, followed within months by the Metropolitan DA (later to be renamed London and District DA) and the North Midlands DA.

The Club benefited from several prominent early leaders. Captain Robert Falcon-Scott, RN, better known as Scott of the Antarctic, became President of the Club in 1909, a post he held until his tragic death three years later. In 1919, Sir Robert Baden-Powell, already well known as a hero of the Boer War and founder of the Boy Scouts, became its President.

During the Baden-Powell's period, the Club changed its name to The Camping Club of Great Britain and Ireland, reflecting its wide membership and national appeal.



Top: Midwife at a birthing class for expectant mothers, circa 1950  
Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal College of Midwives  
Bottom: Midwifery Instruments and equipment, circa 1960  
Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal College of Midwives

complimentary collections, creating an unparalleled centre for research into the history of women's health care and current practice surrounding the provision of maternity services. The success of the project is testament to the fact that collaboration is pivotal to ensuring that archive collections remain accessible, relevant and engaging.

For further information about the heritage collections of both the Royal College of Midwives and the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists: <http://www.rcog.org.uk/what-we-do/information-services> or email [archives@rcog.org.uk](mailto:archives@rcog.org.uk).

**Clare Sexton, Project Archivist**

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists



Founder Thomas Hiram Holding and his son, Early Days

After the Great War, and the name change, a strong feeling arose that the scope of member activities should be widened, so the Club further expanded its activities. The 1930s saw the formation of a Mountaineering Section, a Folk Group, a Canoe Section, a Photo Group, and interest in a new form of camping – the caravan.

Other traditions were also established. The first Club Feast of Lanterns was held in 1921 at Deep Dene, Dorking. Based on Chinese tradition, this was an event in which members were encouraged to decorate their units with hand-made lanterns. This has become one of the Club's biggest annual event and, nowadays, is attended by many thousands of people.

The Club also took the initiative in forming the International Federation of Camping Clubs (Federation Internationale de Camping et de

“  
**Captain Robert Falcon-Scott, RN, better known as Scott of the Antarctic, became President of the Club in 1909, a post he held until his tragic death three years later.**  
 ”

Caravanning – FICC), which has, ever since, held international rallies in member countries.

The Thirties were also dogged by legal battles between landowners and those demanding free access to moorlands and uplands, as a growing outdoor movement gained unstoppable momentum. This led to Mass Trespasses being organised and the first of these, on Kinder Scout, was close to the Club's site at Hayfield. Many Camping Club members took part.

During World War II, the opportunity to get into the country, away from the raids of the towns and cities, was something Club members really appreciated. Throughout the war, people regarded holidays and shorter periods away from home, as important. Despite the war, the Club's popularity remain steady. Members in the forces could continue their Club membership on a reduced subscription, and many did so.

In 1941, The Youth Camping Association, sponsored by the Club was formed. In 1944 The Association of Cycle Campers was re-formed as a specialist section of the Club. It later changed its name to the Association of Lightweight Campers.

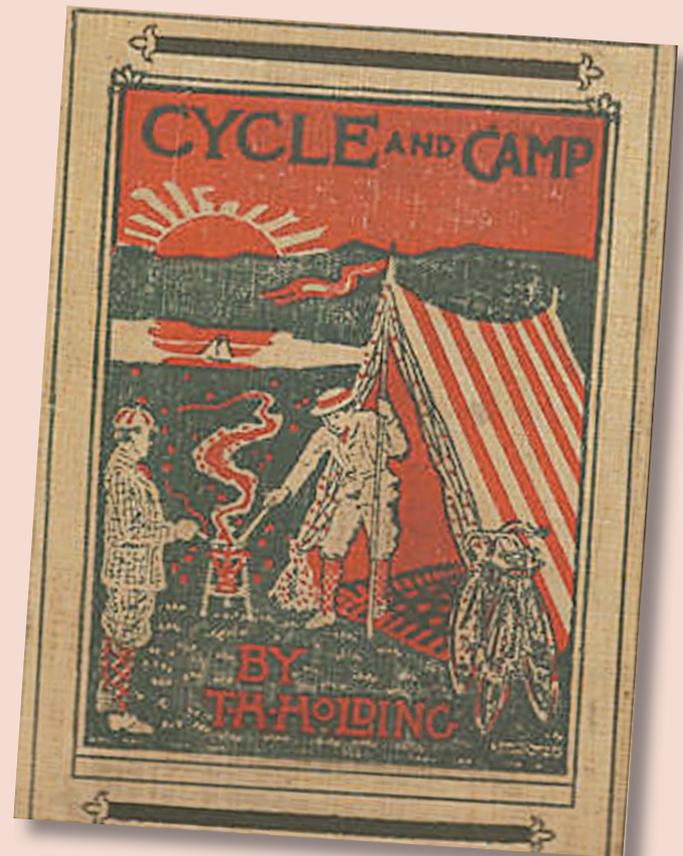
In the last part of the 20th century, the Club has seen steady growth in the membership, and more sites added to the network. By the time it celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1951, membership had reached nearly 15,000, and the Club had gained the patronage of HM King George VI. In 1952, following the death of the King, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh granted his patronage.

By 1967, Club membership topped 100,000 and the Club magazine was recording its 60th year of publication. By 1991, membership had broken through the 200,000 barrier and, by the last year of the old millennium, it had passed 300,000.

In 1983, to reflect the growth in caravanning amongst Club members, the Club changed its name to The Camping and Caravanning Club, the name by which it is still known today. Then in 1990, Club headquarters was moved out of London to its current base on the outskirts of Coventry.

The 1990s saw further development of services to members: a loan service, a range of branded clothing, an overseas travel service, and a discount car scheme, and insurance for caravans, motor caravans, trailer tents, tents, small craft, vehicle, pet and household insurance.

More and more people are taking to the road to experience the freedom camping and caravanning brings. Currently the membership stands at 500,000 and over 3 million campers experienced the Clubs quality Club Sites and 1400 smaller Certificated Sites set in hideaway locations. Over 65,000 members



Cycle and Camp in Connemara, by Thomas Hiram Holding

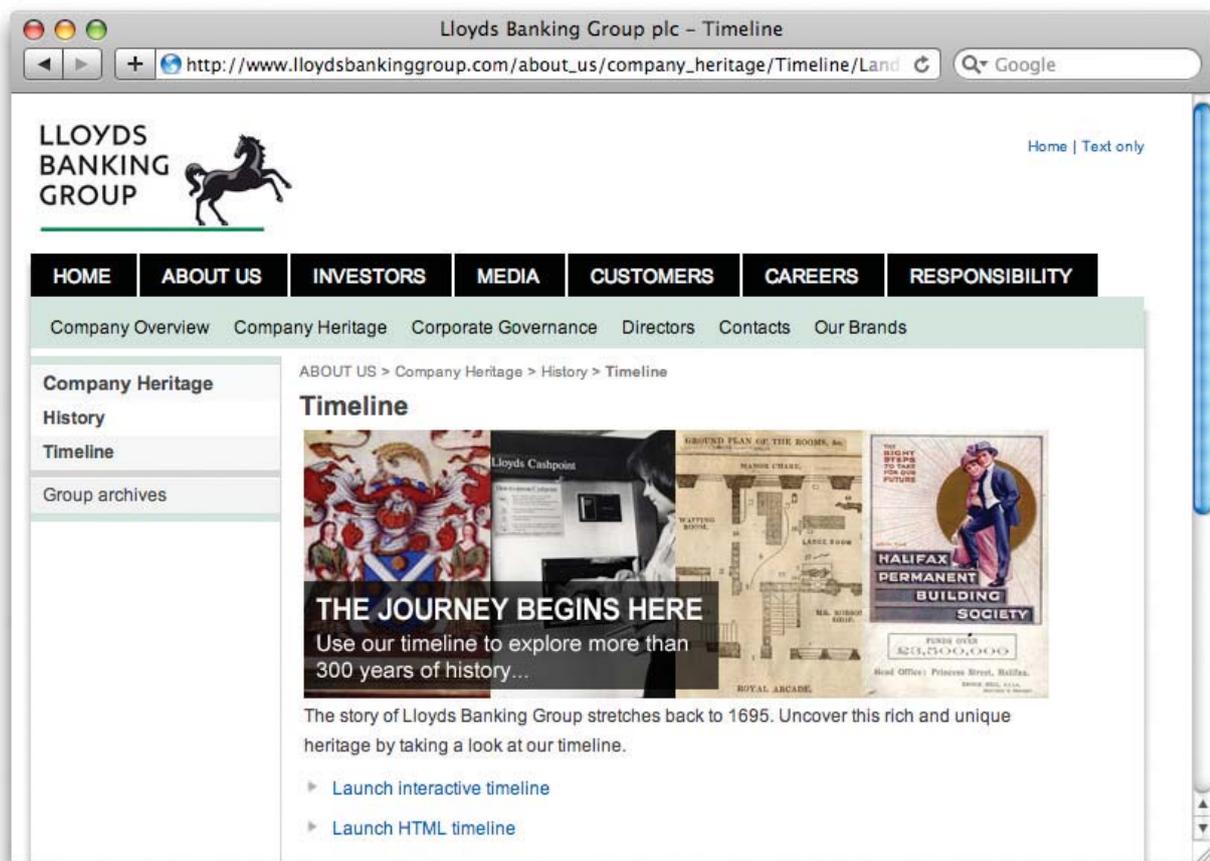
went to 142 summer campsites and 181 winter sites in 17 different countries around the world including the Canadian Rockies and New Zealand.

Since turning 100 years old the Club has instigated a number of new initiatives. National Camping and Caravanning Week was created in the centenary year to set a record for the most people camping and caravanning at one time. In 2008, the audited figure for number of people camping out overnight was 96,000.

The Club has a strong environmental policy. Dr David Bellamy O.B.E, author, broadcaster, environmental campaigner and scientist, currently serves as Club President. Additionally, the Countryside Care section allows campers to put something back into the countryside from which they derive so much pleasure. They do this on a voluntary basis through an ongoing programme of footpath construction, hedge clearing, and tree planting.

.....  
**Barry Rook**

Hon Club Archivist  
.....



Opening page of the Lloyds Banking Group timeline

# Making History

## Lloyds Banking Group Timeline

Lloyds Banking Group was established in January 2009, following the takeover of HBOS by Lloyds TSB. The new Group brought together a host of well-known brands, including Lloyds TSB, Halifax, Bank of Scotland, Scottish Widows and Cheltenham & Gloucester. Each of these companies has their own rich and unique heritage, the earliest stretching back over 300 years. How to bring all this history together under the Lloyds Banking Group banner?

Last year, the Archives team were approached by Group Communications, who were looking to add interesting and engaging content about the history and heritage of the Group to their new website. The idea of a timeline was put forward as a way

of bringing together the very diverse histories within the Group, which encompassed banks, building societies, and life assurance companies.

As it was going onto a public platform, we wanted the timeline to have broad appeal. So as well as key founding dates and milestones, we decided it should also include events of more general interest from our histories.

Some document the huge changes there have been in the way we do our banking. For example, the early launch of paper money by Bank of Scotland in 1696; the invention of the travellers' cheque by Robert Herries in 1772; and the arrival of cash machines and electronic banking in the 1970s and 1980s.

Others reflect broader events in British and world history. For example the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, which resulted in Bank of Scotland having to close its doors for several months. And the outbreak of the First World War which saw female clerks being employed at Lloyds and other banks for the first time.

We also included several events with an element of mystery and intrigue – infamous banknote forgeries, a highway robbery, even a murder...

We wanted the timeline to be visually stimulating and have an interactive element to encourage users to engage with it. This was a key consideration when it came to developing the 'look and feel'. The timeline was built using

Flash software so it could incorporate moving elements. Colourful, high quality images were used to illustrate events. Clicking on an image brings up a popup box with further information. We've even included some video clips from old TV advertising campaigns. Remember that Halifax ad from the 1990s where people came together to form a 'living' house? Or the Lloyds' ads featuring Jan Francis and Nigel Havers?

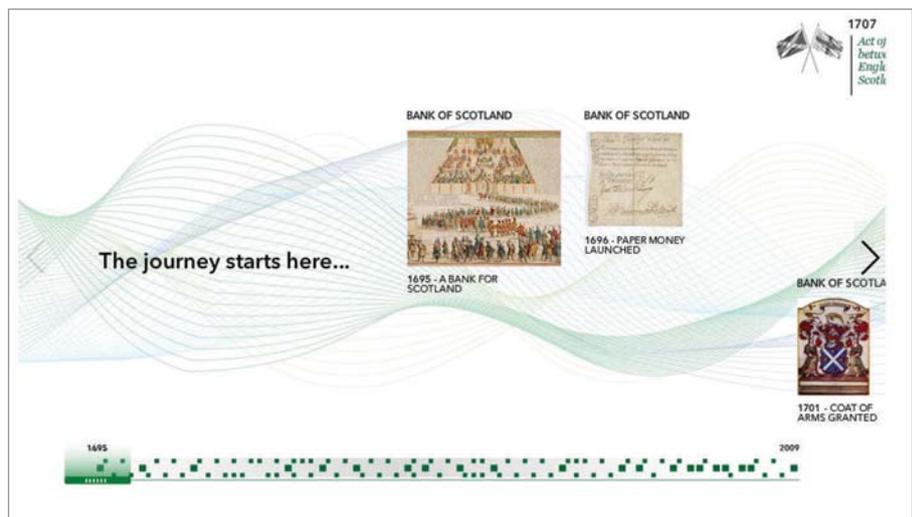
In all the timeline has taken over a year to develop and launch. A good part of that time was taken up researching events from across the Group. Making the final selection was difficult with so many to choose from. But we've ended up with 90 in total, evenly balanced across the different heritages, stretching from the founding of the Group's earliest constituent, Bank of Scotland, in 1695, to the formation of Lloyds Banking Group in early 2009.

The timeline is already proving a popular feature on the Lloyds Banking Group website. Reaction from users has been extremely positive. This is one comment we received from an American viewer:

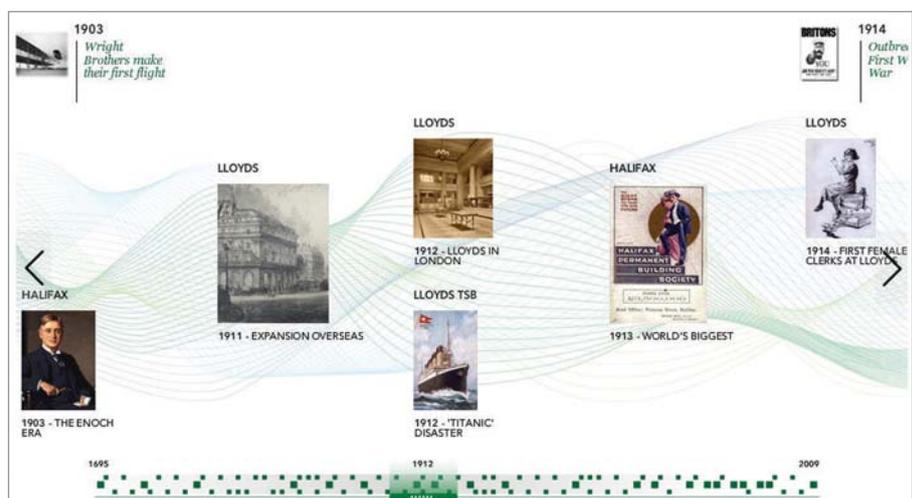
“  
 Congratulations on the excellent history and interactive timeline ... very well done, interesting and informative. I am a US shareholder ... and find it important to understand the history of the firms I invest in.”

The timeline project is a great example of how archives can add value to a business. We hope it provides a fun, engaging and informative overview of the rich and diverse history of Lloyds Banking Group. Why not take a look at: [http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/about\\_us/company\\_heritage/Timeline/Landing.asp](http://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/about_us/company_heritage/Timeline/Landing.asp)

.....  
**Sian Yates, Senior Archivist**  
 Lloyds Banking Group Archives  
 .....



Timeline landing page on the Lloyds Banking Group website



Section of the timeline covering the early 20th century



Popup box playing Lloyds TV advert from 1989, featuring Jan Francis and Nigel Havers.



Royal Paper Cypher

# Parchment and the archives

For centuries, the first choice of scribes, clerics, and court officials for sacred and/or legally binding documents was parchment—because of the medium’s durability, handling qualities, and beauty. Today, miles and miles of shelving in County Record Offices across the country provide storage to valuable records on parchment. As the archive conservator who is charged with the onerous task of preservation, I’d like to share thoughts on this versatile and ingenious material.

Without parchment much of ancient literature only written on the relatively short-lived papyrus would have been lost forever. The first recorded incidence of documents written on skin occurs in the fourth dynasty in Egypt circa 2700-2500 BC. By the first century BC parchment was becoming common in Ancient Rome, writers Martial and Pliny refer to its use.

Relatively few parchments survive from the Anglo-Saxon period but as bureaucracy increased after the Norman Conquest many more documents were produced. As literate modes of recording transactions proliferated, the notion of proof changed. Writing seemed more durable and reliable than the spoken word. Parchment then became the foremost medium for records, as paper was yet to appear in Britain.

Due to the numbers of animals required to produce membranes for writing, parchment was expensive, and sometimes reused, especially in the early medieval

“ In 1538 Thomas Cromwell ordered that every vicar should provide a lockable chest in which to store the records of weddings, burials and christenings. ”

period. For example, many archives have palimpsests, manuscripts that have been scraped down and rewritten on, although underlying writing can be detected beneath. Parchment was also reused in book-bindings or as wrappers for documents, or sliced up to provide the attachments for seals. As the culture of writing proliferated, the development of more compact scripts resulted in the more economical use of the skin. Further encouraged by widespread literacy, and therefore high demand of reading material, paper began to gradually replace parchment in the later medieval period because of its convenience and low cost to produce.

In 1497, Cardinal Ximenes of Toledo began requiring the registration of baptisms for practical reasons of controlling marriage, preventing incest, as well as reducing divorces. In 1538 Thomas Cromwell ordered that every vicar should provide a lockable chest in which to store the records of weddings, burials and christenings. Sixty years later, to ensure these records’



Paper stamp 1880

survival, it was ordered that professional scribes should transcribe old paper registers on parchment in books.

An act in 1711 ensured the provision of proper register books with ruled and numbered pages. In 1755 it was ordered that records should be kept of both banns and marriages, that these should be 'in proper books of vellum or good and durable paper' to be provided by the churchwardens. In 1783 through the Stamp Act, the Crown began to take 3d for each register entry whether burial, marriage, birth or christening. There was a clear distinction between the techniques for stamping paper and parchment. Embossing on paper was quite straightforward, at first uncoloured and then, from about 1883, often with dies that could both emboss and ink simultaneously. However, parchment being tougher resisted the impression of the early hand-worked presses and any embossing would tend to be erased by damp.

This led to the development and use of 'semi-adhesives'. A small rectangle of base paper, uniformly coloured, was glued, usually onto the top left corner of the document, and embossing was then done through both paper and parchment together.

It was sometimes argued, when the paper was found to be missing, that the embossing had been done but the paper had fallen off. So from 1701 security was



Abrasion of ink

improved by making a small double slit through the parchment with paper attached, passing a thin strip of metal right through, bending it over and then holding it in place by gumming on a square of paper called a cipher seal. Only then when the embossing had been

completed was the parchment ready to be written on.

The place of archives in the decorative arts has often been overlooked. Long after the advent of printing, parchment became a sign of status in a book or a document. An early medieval charter was not so much a legal document full of written text, but a prestige object signifying that an important legal transaction had been carried out in the presence of witnesses. Much of the language used was explicitly religious as threats of excommunication or incurring the wrath of a higher power had to be evoked to give the document a solemnity and seriousness that would frighten the signatories into compliance. Manuscript illumination also lingered on in charters and manorial surveys. In the formal and legal instruments and volumes, particularly of the 17th and 18th centuries, skills and styles of calligraphy persisted while personal handwriting elsewhere declined.

One of the final things I appreciate about this medium has to do with the layout or diplomatic of the document. Scribes wrote on evenly spaced lines with regular spaces between words so that any discrepancy or interference would be obvious at a glance. This security measure prevents nefarious alterations, and is so effective that sometimes one can discern when the pen has been dipped in the inkpot. One can picture the scribe or secretary who made a document, demonstrating how archival material written on parchment can immediately and intimately connect you with a person from the past.

Parchment is rarely used these days and will hold an endearing fascination to those brought up in the digital age. Although I appreciate today's technology, I do lament that today's documents don't seem as durable, as aesthetically pleasing, or provide the same tactile intimacy as parchment.

**Mark Allen**  
Flintshire Record Office



Early music manuscript St Asaph



14th century manuscript -St Deiniols

# Problems of Adaptability

I've been meditating on the changing nature of archive conservation, and the people who handle it. I'd like to share some thoughts on this subject, and, hopefully, hear back from others.

Originally, documents were repaired occasionally by their custodians, or anyone concerned enough to undertake delicate and dodgy work. Early archive conservators were recruited from the ranks of the bookbinding trade, and other craft backgrounds, as conservation was synonymous with repair. We find examples today of neat and elegant work which preserved the text of a volume or bundle of documents, but none of the secondary information which original formats would have provided. The craft skills may no longer be second nature, but they are better informed.

In my experience, practical conservation is one of the most popular aspects of our work with the public. Those who have the chance to visit conservation facilities, or see demonstrations, marvel at the apparently audacious care with which they can transform archival material from grubby waste to heritage. It's as cheering as seeing a sick dog cured and playful; we are the vets of the archive world.

But for some years now archives have been under pressure, and the current crisis is adding to it. As finances grow tighter, craft-based conservation will often take a back seat to quicker and broader-based preservation initiatives, which show more results for a smaller expenditure, and which can put off the need for interventive treatment for a few more years or decades. The use of surrogates encourages this, while improving access. Conservators nowadays increasingly need not only sensitivity and craft skills, but the ability to plan and carry out non-interventive preservation projects, or prepare risk assessments, surveys or reports. This is a different, not necessarily easier, skill set, for people who chose a career on the basis of dexterity and knowledge of the material world.

“

We find examples today of neat and elegant work which preserved the text of a volume or bundle of documents, but none of the secondary information which original formats would have provided

”

Finally, if we put off the treatment, will we have the conservators when the time comes? The less active conservation we do, the more preparation time we will want before we undertake it, to refresh the skills and procedures needed to complete it. To say 'it worked eight years ago, I'm sure I have the notes somewhere' isn't enough. One of the most valuable aspects of the ARA's Conservation Training Scheme is that it calls upon practising conservators for its pool of instructors, and the training itself is one way to keep their interventive skills fine-tuned. As long as the next generation provides future instructors, the bench skills will be available to call upon. Internships, available through ICON's partnership with the Heritage Lottery fund, and through large institutions, are of immense value. Both the ARA and ICON, as well as other institutions, organise not only conferences, but one-day training events, which are often practical; and some regional groups, such as the Midlands Conservators' Group, regularly hold meetings which can provide practical advice and training. But if the job changes too drastically, different sorts of people will choose it, and then we might indeed lose the skills.

These are points to ponder, while we work out how to make the best use of the expertise we have at our disposal, here and now.

.....  
**Debby Rohan**

.....  
 Cambridgeshire Archives  
 .....



West Yorkshire Archive Service behind-the-scenes

# How to Preserve Parish Registers

I volunteer for one of the conservation offices of West Yorkshire Archive Service, where I have learned many skills, mainly to do with packaging, including knowing different types of material and how to make several boxes. I have also helped out with the monitoring of many storage units and helped to prepare books and maps at the Leeds Archives office for relocation.

But I have enjoyed doing most is a library-style binding with Katie Jordan who was practising her skills before her ARA Conservation Training Course assessment. It was a lot more intricate than the bookbinding I had previously done and I used new techniques. Then recently, I have started to recover deteriorating printed and sewn paper-covered parish register transcripts for public use in the search rooms.

## Materials and equipment used:

- eva
- end papers
- printed labels
- spine paper or card
- matt plastic heat set film
- 1000 micron folding box board
- mulberry paper
- hot press
- book press

## I did this by using the following steps:

**Step 1:** Fold two sheets of the paper you are using for end papers and cut to size. Then tip these on with the EVA glue. Place them under a weight to dry after smoothing them down with a bone folder. Next cut two pieces of mulberry, the first piece to lap over 2 cm of the spine on both sides, the second to be about 1 cm thinner. Glue the spine and then glue out the larger piece of mulberry paper and place on the spine. Brush down the mulberry with a nail brush, this ensures that the mulberry gets into all the gaps and sticks to the spine more effectively. Repeat with the second piece of mulberry paper. This will strengthen the spine.

**Step 2:** Cut a piece of thick paper or card to fit the spine. Cut out your label, making sure it fits your spine too. After cutting your boards (folding box board) to size, finally cut a piece of matt plastic which is 4 cm longer than your spine and 5cm wider than the width of the spine. Dab two small splodges of glue onto the back of your label and place on your spine paper. This will keep the label attached.

**Step 3:** Place the spine paper and label in the middle of the matt plastic, then place your two boards adjacent to it, leaving a ½ cm gap for the French fold. Next, fold over the ends of the matt plastic over the boards. Make sure it's flat and place in the hot press. Remove from the hot press after a minute and leave the plastic to cool, making sure it is flat so it doesn't stick to itself. Lastly, case-in and place in a press to dry. The new cover will add strength to the text block.

.....  
**Rachel Weldrake**  
 .....



Editing to the bitter end

## Conservation gets netted – by proxy!

One of the advantages of working for a diverse institution is a broader range of skills to share. The Herbert is an Art Gallery, Museum, and History Centre mainly serving Coventry and the sub-region. We have a range of MLA funded outreach and audience development projects (at the moment!), including a small team increasing digital access and audiences, as well as a long-established Media team providing training, production and studio space hire. The conservation section covers paper/archives, paintings and objects, all housed in one space.

I will have to confess that IT is not really my thing; perhaps that should be 'really not my thing'. I've finally become reasonably competent, to the extent of being the in-house expert on environmental monitoring and Building Management programs, but my relationship with it is very similar to that of a friend who prefers a lift if one is available owing to a dislike of driving. So the thought of Social networking or whatever you call it is total anathema to me. But due to the interventions of my friends in the Herbert 2.0 team, this is not a problem, and indeed conservation holds its own in terms of profile. We have a Herbert blog, to which a number of teams contribute on a rota (in theory....I'm well overdue again) and my paintings conservator colleague is now on her second series of blogs following through a large scale treatment. We have an occasional podcast, each with a behind-the-scenes interview – for which I wangled conservation to get the first slot, having extracted a promise that the interviewer would find a collar mike. And a couple of weekends ago, we had a tranche of Wikipedians round – (see photo), courtesy of a GLAM wiki event organised jointly between the Herbert 2.0 team and Wikimedia.

“

It was lovely to have a group of all ages who listened actively and demonstrated deep understanding through their comments and questions.

”

What do we get out of it? Partly it's a case if it's happening, so we need to be seen taking part, but it does help you think more about communication, too. The blog requires a slightly different tone from either a professional presentation or showing a group around. It's meant to reflect what we've been up to, but if I'm out of inspiration or the more interesting activities have been ones we wouldn't want to admit to having had to do, taking a small activity to illustrate a conservation topic works just as well, and looking at the lighter side certainly makes me appreciate anew the privilege of working in a place like this; what other job allows you to handle an ancient Egyptian pot, get too close for comfort to the spiders on an insect trap, dry nasty photo albums after someone put a nappy down the loo, and pour water over a tray of lost property? The Wiki event was very interesting. As far as I'm aware, the resulting articles have not featured conservation, but we had a good share of folks opt for a tour of our room. It was lovely to have a group of all ages who listened actively and demonstrated deep understanding through their comments and questions. I don't think it would be entirely a delusion to suggest that the lack of concrete results is more down to it being easier to write from cold on, say, Whitefriars Monastery (one of our buildings), than the care of collections or pyrite disease



Martin Grahn demonstrating the use of dry microenvironment storage for items with pyrite decay

in fossil and mineral samples. But we've sown seeds in the minds of folks who like digging and sharing. And it made us have a bit of a tidy up as well! And all the above for nothing more techie than a few emails.

So, if you like blogging, get out there and do it for work. If you're a would-be IT refusenik like me, find a colleague who blogs and get them to set something up. It can't do any harm, you might make useful contacts (we now have a potential lead to working sketches of one of our paintings) and isn't much effort. Wikimedia are keen to extend their Backstage Pass events, lacking only the contacts from our side, certainly not the enthusiasm and manpower. If you're interested, I'm sure I can put you in touch – once my colleague returns from the US...

Jane Pudsey

The Herbert

## Breakthrough in treating Red Rot

The Leather Conservation@centre has developed a new treatment for acid deteriorated leather (commonly known as red rot).

The Centre, based in Northampton, carried out extensive research over two years led by a leather chemist. The research was carried out in conjunction with the University of Northampton.

The new product has been stringently tested and works by reducing the acidity of leather (evidenced by raised pH levels) and stabilising the collagen fibres (as evidenced by a rise in the denaturation temperature). The results were consistently and significantly better than previous treatments and the beneficial effects lasted longer.

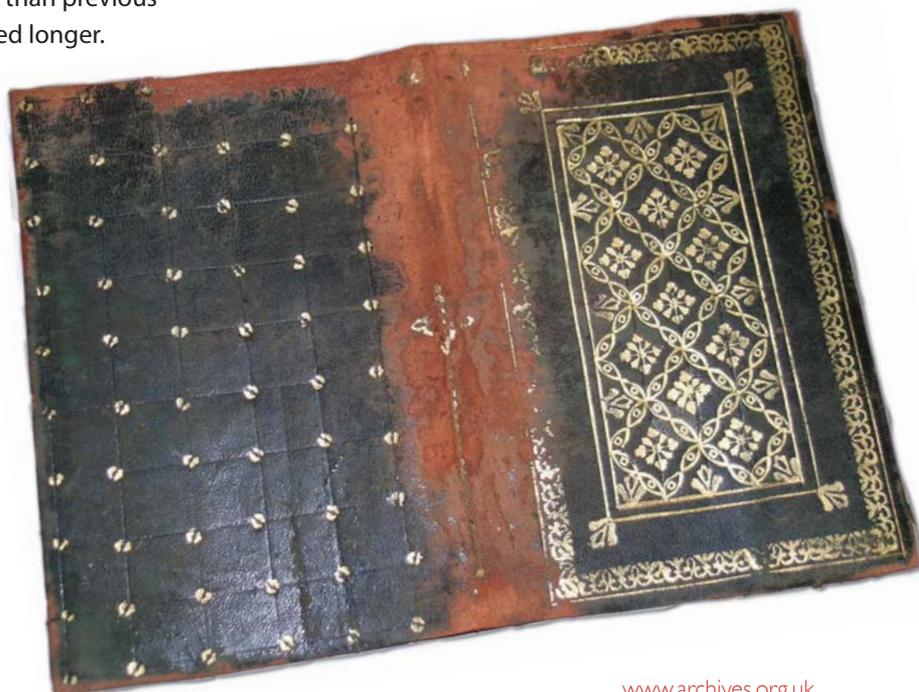
To ensure its acceptability within the conservation profession, a seminar and a workshop were held at the British Library in the summer of 2011. This was attended by senior conservators from national museums, archives, libraries, and other institutions. One senior conservator from a major museum commented, "...this is the best thing to happen in leather conservation for 30 years".

The Centre's conservators have been trained in the specialist procedures required for the application of this new product and it is now included in the comprehensive range of conservation treatments available at the Centre.

For further information, please contact Yvette Fletcher, Head of Conservation ([lcc@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:lcc@northampton.ac.uk)).

Sharon Manitta

Leather Conservation Centre in Northampton





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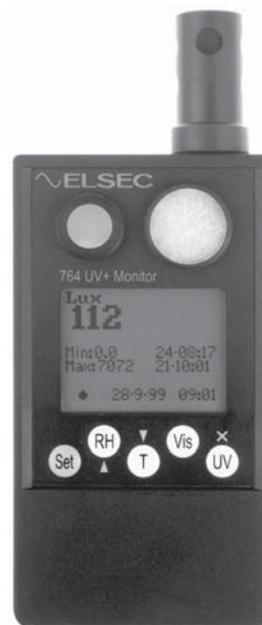
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# An excerpt: the new best practice guidelines on conservation documentation

**C**onservation or preservation documentation refers to the information permanently recorded prior to, during and after the conservation or preservation treatment of archival collections.

Documentation is recorded in a written format and may be supplemented by images or diagrams. The information summarises in appropriate detail: what items have been treated; their condition; proposed treatment and requirements; treatment or actions undertaken and recommendations for future preservation. Conservation or preservation records may cover: a short episode of treatment; a one-off survey; or monitor observations or treatments over longer periods of time.

Documenting preservation and conservation measures are integral to collection history. Record keeping is also fundamental to professional integrity, providing a record of decision making, observations, treatments and planning.

The following points from the new guidelines available on the ARA website pick out some of the areas in which documentation can have particular relevance.

## **13.3.4 Accessibility**

Conservation documentation makes information available about collections to others which may not be accessible elsewhere. It also makes information about the profession as a whole available. Accurate, organised and up to date records are one of the means conservation and preservation can be integrated as a holistic part of collections care and access within an organisation.

## **13.3.5 Accountability**

Any responsibility held by professionals for aspects of collection care should be accountable. To

be accountable for activities undertaken in the interests of collection care, recordkeeping is needed. Conservators, because of the nature of the work they undertake, are often temporary custodians of historical and unique archives which require bespoke treatment, and they should also be accountable for this responsibility by documenting their work.

## **13.3.6 Collection history**

Information gathered from observing the physical components and make up of archival documents (e.g. binding styles or watermarks) adds to insight to collections (e.g. dates).

## **13.3.7 Collection monitoring**

Conservation documentation can be a vehicle for monitoring changes in the condition of collections over time. Inspecting and testing collections at intervals, then recording the results can build up a picture of deterioration or stability (e.g. iron gall ink corrosion or cellulose nitrate film degradation). This documentation paints a portrait in time of how a collection or document is ageing.

## **13.3.8 Collection provenance**

A condition report can provide an insight into collection history prior to acquisition, for example regarding past storage conditions. Recorded information about treatments carried out after acquisition provides detailed primary evidence about any changes or alterations a document or collection has undergone during this treatment.

## **13.3.9 Consistency**

Documentation enables greater consistency of approaches to collection care and maintenance of appropriate standards by providing benchmarking references.

# Museum Information and Records Management Project

## 13.3.10 Future treatment review

Interventive conservation treatment or repairs carried out may require removal or reversal at some future date. Information pertaining to exact materials and adhesives used can be crucial to safely carry out this process. Where consistency of materials used is important (e.g. leather dye), records enable these decisions to be more easily repeated.

## 13.3.11 Health and safety

Documentation of health and safety measures (Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health – COSHH - assessments, Personal Protective Equipment - PPE) observed during treatment of collections is important to record when appropriate. This helps protect both practitioners and employers and encourages safe practise.

## 13.3.1 Professional memory

Conservation information recorded today can itself form an archive for the future, giving an insight into an area of archive preservation history, such as repair techniques or approaches to pest and control.

Conservation documentation may be paper based, electronic or preferably both and the guideline includes information on what should be recorded and what is essential. There is advice on how to describe the physical make-up and extent, together with an appendix on how to use CALM.

.....  
**Shirley Jones ACR,**  
 West Yorkshire Archives  
 .....

Since 2007 the MLA / Renaissance London Information and Records Management Project has raised awareness of, and increased capacity for, information and records management in London's regional museums. Although museums are inherently 'information businesses', their information is often generated at the local, departmental or project level, with specific targets and outputs in mind. While this approach may meet immediate goals, it does not always take into account the overall business needs of an organisation, or its potential future requirements. This situation can result in missed opportunities and a restricted ability to innovate.

A case study relevant to museum libraries and archives, "Museum Information and Records Management Project", is now available online.

### During this time, the project has:

- reviewed the state of the museum sector in relation to information and records management;
- provided free training for museum staff and volunteers, including the basics of museum records management, getting a mandate to tackle information issues, and developing new policies;
- delivered free records management consultancies to 15 regional museums - ranging from small volunteer-led organisations taking their first steps in improving record-keeping, to large museums facing organisational change, and all points and issues in between;
- set up a forum for discussion and knowledge-sharing around museum information and records management;
- published free museum specific toolkits, e-learning tools and fact sheets, to enable staff to tackle information and records management in their museums beyond the life of the project.

The case study can be downloaded free of charge from:  
<http://www.museuminfo-records.org.uk/CaseStudy200711.pdf>

For further information on the project and to use or download its free guidance resources, see <http://www.museuminfo-records.org.uk>

.....  
**Sinead Wheeler**  
 Museum of London  
 .....

[svwheeler@museumoflondon.org.uk](mailto:svwheeler@museumoflondon.org.uk)

# BBC get's new Media Archive in London

**B**ruynzeel Storage Systems has fitted the BBC's new, purpose-built media Archive in Perivale, North West London with a series of two-level high-density storage systems. Designed as 12 vaults to house the Corporation's precious stock of archive material, the media Archive will hold a total of 3.7 million items – ranging from early sound recordings to classic television and from media memorabilia to modern digital recordings.

Bruynzeel undertook the complete turnkey operation, which included the installation of 3.9 metre high mezzanine floors. In total the company installed more than 5 kilometres of rails for the mobile carriages, together with 4500 sq.m of infill flooring on the ground floor, and a similar quantity of steel mesh decking on the mezzanine level. With more than 85,000 shelves, the new building provides 100 kilometres of linear shelf capacity. Ten of the archive vaults are temperature and humidity controlled to maintain the optimal storage environment..

Bruynzeel's Compactus range is designed to optimise the storage capacity of any given area. Consisting of shelving units mounted on mobile carriages that run on floor rails, it reduces the footprint of a storage system by having only one "floating" aisle instead of a series of fixed aisles. In the new Archive, the shelving in each vault has different coloured end panels to distinguish between static (Red) and mobile (Graphite) units of shelving. Mobile Shelving units that hold historic material, such as royal footage of the Queen Mother from 1890, are fitted with special locks.

## About Bruynzeel Storage Systems

Bruynzeel Storage Systems is part of the Constructor Group. As a manufacturer, advisor and installer, Bruynzeel is a trendsetter in the development of space-saving storage systems. The organisation has a distinct international orientation, with sales offices around Europe. In addition, its systems are manufactured in an environmentally friendly manner. Bruynzeel Storage Systems is certified according to ISO 9001 and ISO 14001.



The BBC's new, purpose-built media Archive in Perivale, North West London with a series of two-level high-density storage systems.

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# Profile of a 25-Year Career in Archives

**Archive: Plymouth and West Devon Record Office (PWDRO)**

**Archivist:** Ms Anne Morgan, Archivist

**Background:** Anne's service record at Plymouth City Council is extremely impressive. Anne started work at PWDRO on 14 July 1986 and has progressed through the ranks to her current position as Archivist. With over 24 years' experience, then, Anne is the longest-serving member of staff and her knowledge of the collections is unparalleled. Our archive catalogue (CALM) identifies that she has single-handedly created or modified over 30,000 entries, and this is on top of co-ordinating all the other collections management work undertaken by para-professional staff.

Anne is utterly committed to her work as an archivist, as evidenced by her interest in personal and professional development. Over the past few years, Anne has done training in counselling to help her deal with members of the public who have sensitive enquiries and, furthermore, this year she gained her NVQ Level 4 in Volunteer Management. Anne had become aware of the ever-increasing demand for volunteering opportunities at PWDRO and wanted

to make sure we were implementing Best Practice and so asked to be put forward for this qualification. She now reflects her learning directly onto the working environment and is continually challenging us to involve volunteers in ever wider and more innovative ways, such as in public-facing and outreach roles and in a 'virtual' capacity.

Perhaps the most impressive of Anne's recent contributions, however, is her co-ordination of a small band of volunteers to clear, photograph and record the contents of various graveyards around Plymouth and then catalogue the images into CALM. Anne's band of volunteers work on evenings and weekends, sometimes in rather inclement weather. This demonstrates her outstanding commitment to the service.

On 14 July 2011, various members of staff and volunteers, both current and existing, put together a range of activities and gifts to mark this impressive achievement of 25 years continuous service. Well done Anne!

**Louisa Mann, City Archivist**

Plymouth and West Devon Record Office

25-year anniversary Party at PWDRO, July 2011



## Training Opportunities

**Actions for access: tools to prioritize within collection care**

9 December 2011, London <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/prioritize.html>

Considering a selection of tools used to establish the priorities in collection care and how the tools could be used in participants' own organisations.

**Digitisation practicalities**

12 December 2011, London <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/digitise.html>

An overview of how to set up a digitisation project and how to handle physical library and archive items which are being digitised.

**Cataloguing Art Materials**

Thursday 15th December 2011, London <http://arlis.org.uk/events.php?link=2>

Introduction to cataloguing various art-related materials: exhibition catalogues, artefacts, art ephemera and artists' books. Workshop includes presentations and two practical hands-on sessions.

**Disaster response and salvage**

16 January 2012, London <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/salvage.html>

How planning can minimise the impact of emergencies and practical steps to take when responding to situations.

**Disaster response and salvage**

7 February 2012, Manchester <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/salvage.html>

How planning can minimise the impact of emergencies and practical steps to take when responding to situations.

**'Your Heritage Grants' workshop**

9th February 2012, Winchester <http://www.archives.org.uk/events/viewevent.html?eventid=80>

The workshop is designed for those aiming to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Your Heritage' grant scheme. This scheme is for grant bids between £3,000 and £50,000.

**Damaged books: first practical steps**

7 March 2012, London <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/damaged2.html>

Overview of how books and bound archives become damaged; action to minimise damage and first steps to address common forms of damage.

## An opportunity to influence the future of archive services

### Co-creating the Archives Accreditation Standard

Since April 2010 a UK wide partnership (The National Archives, Arts Council England, Cymal, National Records of Scotland, ARA, SCA, ARCW and PRONI) have been developing options for the creation of an Accreditation Scheme for Archive Services. Developed, owned and reviewed by the sector, this will drive improvement by externally validating and accrediting achievement. A similar scheme for museums has been described as *one of the best things to have happened to museums in the UK*<sup>(1)</sup> and reported benefits that include increased profile and credibility and an impetus to improve working practices.

It is recognised that the key to creating a credible standard is a process of “collaborative product or service development: developers and stake-holders working together.” - co-creation<sup>(2)</sup>. By bringing people together to develop a mutually beneficial standard we hope to inspire innovation and to develop a scheme that meets the needs of all archives.

### How can you get involved?

Archives Accreditation will be innovative and proposes to take full advantage of technology to provide opportunities for virtual discussion, alongside explanatory physical workshops. (travelling expenses are available for a limited number of those attending.)

Current plans are as follows:

- November / December 2011 Introducing the Accreditation Development process
- January 2012 – 3 Workshops to discuss the proposed principles of archives accreditation
- February – April 2012 – Online discussions and creation of the archives accreditation standard.
- June 2012 – Planning, then piloting of the scheme

We want you participate in this process as easily as possible and so will be designing the online discussions to allow you to provide regular, short contributions to the process. We are keen to ensure we have the full breadth of the sector represented in creating the standard, so if you would like to take part please contact [asd@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:asd@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

For further information see <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/our-services/archives-accreditation-scheme.htm>

.....  
**Janice Tullock,**

Archive Consultant

.....  
[Janice@janicetullock.co.uk](mailto:Janice@janicetullock.co.uk)

(1) Impact of the Museum Accreditation Scheme, a report to MLA by Jura Consultants.

(2) Fronteer Strategy White Paper 2009, Co-creations 5 guiding principles

## Post-nominals for Conservators

If you are a conservator who qualified on the ARA or Society of Archivist's full Certificate in Conservation, you will now be able to use the letters 'ARA Cons Cert' after your name if you wish. Prompted by a recent request from the conservation course's committee, the ARA Board was pleased to vote in favour of the proposal at its November meeting.

Similarly, conservators who are qualified to teach the placement modules of the course will be able to use the post-nominals 'ARA Cons Cert Inst'. One newly qualified instructor said, "I shall be very proud to put letters after my name." One of the three recent successful candidates who passed the course this year, Katie Jordan, is also pleased to be able to use the letters; "I think it will be especially helpful for dealing with enquiries from the public about preservation of their documents, they can see that I am qualified by and part of a professional organisation."

The conservation course is undertaken by trainees over approximately 3 years while they are employed at their own archive. They undertake six practical modules across the range of archive conservation disciplines at qualified instructors' workplaces. Assessment is made of work undertaken on placements as well as a final written exam and an oral portfolio presentation and assessment.

Conservators may then embark on Professional Accreditation for Conservator Restorers (PACR). Accreditation is assessed and awarded against a set of professional standards with a requirement regularly produce CPD (Continuing Professional Development) reports. The PACR scheme therefore recognises continuing professional competency.

The letters 'ARA Cons Cert' are a badge of accomplishment and qualification and we hope will be proudly worn.

<http://www.archives.org.uk/training/certificate-in-archive-conservation.html>



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