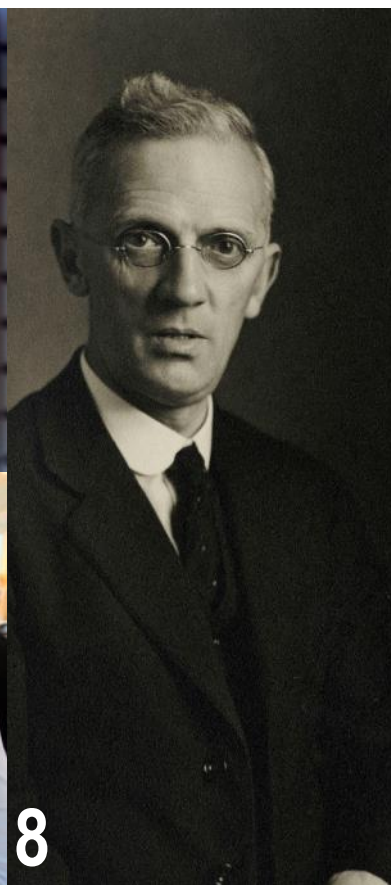
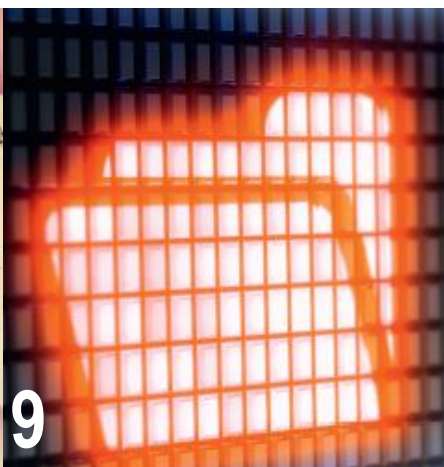


BROADSHEET

SCOTTISH COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES
ISSUE 28



WELCOME TO THE ISSUE number 28



2013 has been a full to bursting year and the last few months have sped by in a blur of activity. We've been off to Holyrood, out to Glasgow's grand City Halls for the Public Records (Scotland) Act, 2011 conference (report out in the New Year) and hosting exciting drama and enquiry education workshops. We've also been busily planning with The Scotsman what promises to be a brilliant day of discussion on all matters digital. Without the tremendous support of so many generous colleagues, none of this frenetic scurrying would be possible, or half as fun (many, many thanks to all of you). In the midst of all of the drama, music, visitors and flying by days there hasn't been time to stop and assemble our stories in the usual smaller, more digestible bits. Instead, in the run up to the holiday season, we've saved up a feast of news for you to nibble at, or gorge on, as you please.

A real high point of the past months were three days in October spent outside the debating chamber of the Scottish Parliament. We had a wonderful opportunity to display our wares in the heart of the Parliament and our aim was to capture as much interest as possible from Ministers and Members. From Ancestral Tourism, to addressing the challenge of digital continuity and preservation, we wanted to show what the archive sector offers to Scotland, and to the world. Our charming experts were of course an attraction, but it was the original archive material on display that really stole the show. From love letters from the infamous Madeleine Smith case, wills of First World War soldiers killed in action, to the Great Seal of Scotland, and the first recorded mention of whisky, there really is nothing like the real thing.



The small and perfectly formed exhibition of items from the National Records of Scotland was for the eyes of parliament staff, MSPs and Ministers only. Members of the public were treated to an altogether different kind of exhibition - Andy Warhol: 'Pop, Power and Politics'. Many of the works on display had never before been exhibited in Scotland, including his portrait of Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Warhol's colourful and deceptively simple screen print portraits are recognisable the world over. You might see them as vaguely sinister, cartoonish, thought provoking, or even beautiful. It's unlikely that you'll view them with indifference.

When he met Andy Warhol, Truman Capote famously described him as 'a sphinx without a secret.' Warhol's allegiance to the superficial is well known. A lesser known dimension of Andy Warhol exists within his enormous personal archive. He was a ravenous collector and recorder of anyone and anything that caught his eye or passed through his door. The stuff of Warhol's daily dealings left few obvious secrets. Anyone inclined to delve would be confronted with 8000 cubic feet of material including Warhol's Time Capsules – a collection of 612 sealed and dated boxes containing every scrap of evidence of his activities from the 1960s, to his death in 1987. Telephone message recordings, letters, wigs, photo booth strips and dinner invitations fill these hundreds of cardboard boxes. The staggering volume of material and Warhol's evident compulsion to keep absolutely everything perhaps points to a bigger truth – was he desperately collecting clues to the secret of himself?

The world has recently been united in celebrating the life and mourning the loss of a very different internationally renowned figure - Nelson Mandela. A prince, lawyer, prisoner, mediator, father, husband and leader, Mandela was many things to a great many people. Perhaps there is a little of the sphinx in all of us, but Mandela was one of those rare individuals who despite incredible hardship, remained true to principles of forgiveness, humility and a profound dedication to recognising the dignity and value of every human being. An avid letter writer, recorder and note taker, in addition to leaving a legacy of change and transformation that brought an end to the cruel and unjust regime of apartheid in South Africa, we are all the richer for the extraordinarily varied and candid archive Mandela left behind. The writer Tim Couzens, remarked of his encounter with the collection, 'What you actually learn, an unsurprising surprise, is that the private man is not all that different from the public person.'

Archives can reveal as much as they conceal - they are evidence of power and its distribution. They leave sometimes only faint traces of people, places and events that would otherwise be altogether lost and forgotten. South Africa's official archives under Apartheid documented a great deal of the regime's relentlessly oppressive activities, and very little of the experiences of those subject to its violence and iniquity. It is entirely down to the tenacity of Nelson Mandela and his supporters that in today's South Africa, something like the Apartheid Archives project is possible. The project is ensuring that the recollections and voices of ordinary South Africans who lived through apartheid are part of the historical record. Truth and reconciliation are inextricably linked and archives can play a truly important part in supporting those fraught with grief and anger to move toward forgiveness.

The holiday season is a time where most of us take a well-deserved break, catch up with family and eat criminal amounts of mince pies and chocolate. It can also be a very difficult and lonely time of the year for those who have lost loved ones - the empty space at the table.

Wherever you are, and whoever you are with over the holidays, we wish you a peaceful and restful break with good company and good cheer.

The Editorial Team

www.scottisharchives.org.uk

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ON THE COVER

AYRSHIRE ARCHIVES

Ayrshire Archives have been working with colleagues at the North Ayrshire Heritage Centre in Saltcoats to create an exhibition on the lost industries of the local area.

With its wealth of mineral deposits, other raw materials and a talented workforce, North Ayrshire was a hive of industry from medieval times to the mid 20th century. The monks at Kilwinning had been among the first to exploit the coal deposits on the Abbey estates which were later expanded by other land owners in the 18th Century. Situated along the west coast these mines were well placed to export to Ireland. Two canals were built in the 1700s to convey the coal to the ports at Irvine and Saltcoats.

Shipbuilding is traditionally associated with the yards further up the coast, but Saltcoats was an important forerunner. When the supply of Boston built ships dried up during the American War of Independence, Saltcoats became a centre for shipbuilding with no less than three shipyards by 1775. In just nine years, 27 square rigged ships were built at Saltcoats and local landowners were petitioning parliament in London to extend the harbour in the 1780s. Neighbouring Ardrossan developed ship building on a much larger scale during the Napoleonic wars, and the industry continued to thrive there until the 1980s when the main type of vessels built were ferries for the Highlands and Islands.

Ardrossan Harbour became a major industrial port and was chosen by Shell when they established a fuel distribution site there in the 1920s. Within a couple of years refining crude oil for bitumen and fuel had begun. Shell continued to expand production at Ardrossan, requiring ad-

ditional pier space, until the opening of a new distribution centre in Glasgow in the 1970s.

Saltcoats is said to have derived its name from the salt works there, established from earliest times. A by product of this industry was the production of magnesia which was exported to London and New York for large drug companies.

When Alfred Nobel identified a site for his explosives works along the coast at Ardeer in the 1870s, the area already had a multitude of iron works and brick works. The explosives company was a major employer in the area with over 13,000 workers at its zenith.

Textiles were also an important part of working lives in North Ayrshire with practically every parish having its share of hand loom weavers. Gradually, the rivers and lochs were harnessed to power machinery in the many textile mills that developed in the industrial revolution, most notably at Kilbirnie and Kilwinning. The last weaver in Saltcoats was still working in 1904.

The emphasis has been to bring together material from archive, library and museum collections held at the Heritage Centre to provide snippets on the wide variety of industries of the area. It is hoped that there will be an element of 'I didn't know that!' among visitors. Indeed, the team at the Heritage Centre were amazed to discover that Beith was a centre for curling stone manufacture as well as its more famous high quality furniture production. The exhibition will eventually go digital and will be available online. Look out for details in forthcoming editions.

By CHRISTINE EWING



Courier and Advertiser Supplement

The Coronation

MAY 12 1937

THE KING
George VI
born 14th June, 1902

THE QUEEN
Elizabeth II
born 21st April, 1926

Zingini Pink

PUTS A SONG IN HIS HEART

ON the 14th every girl's gonna wake up hoping that HE'S sent a Valentine to the girls below, but the dresses on these pages are the hardest he-man's heart turn to thoughts of you!

Romance

OCTOBER 3 1970

FOR LOVE'S YOUNG DREAMERS

Romantic COUNTRY

ENJOY CHARM & ELEGANCE Rooms by Rooms

the New Vintage

HAUNTING SHADOWS

NURSE AT SEA

decorating

36 Weekend MAKEOVERS

Old #

The D C Thomson archive is one of the largest and most significant business archives in the UK. It holds and the records of the company and its published titles: from the Dundee Courier and the Sunday Post to the Scots magazine, and from Jackie to the Beano. The material covers everything from business ledgers to letters from readers, from the Beatles to Take That. Moreover, it's an unusual mix, of business and art: not just the print versions of our titles but the artworks that went into making them too. The D C Thomson material ranges from the earliest edition of The Scots Magazine (in 1739) – currently the world's oldest magazine – to the photographs taken for the latest edition of the Courier. The latter forms part of our photographs collections - one of the largest photographic archives in Scotland, with everything from glass plate negatives of the Royal Family to images of the Beatles, the Who, Elton John and Bowie playing in Dundee's Caird Hall.

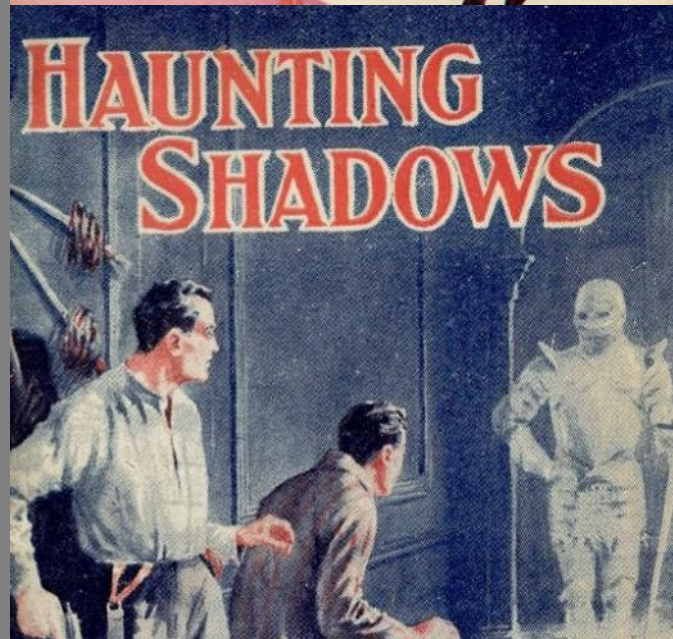
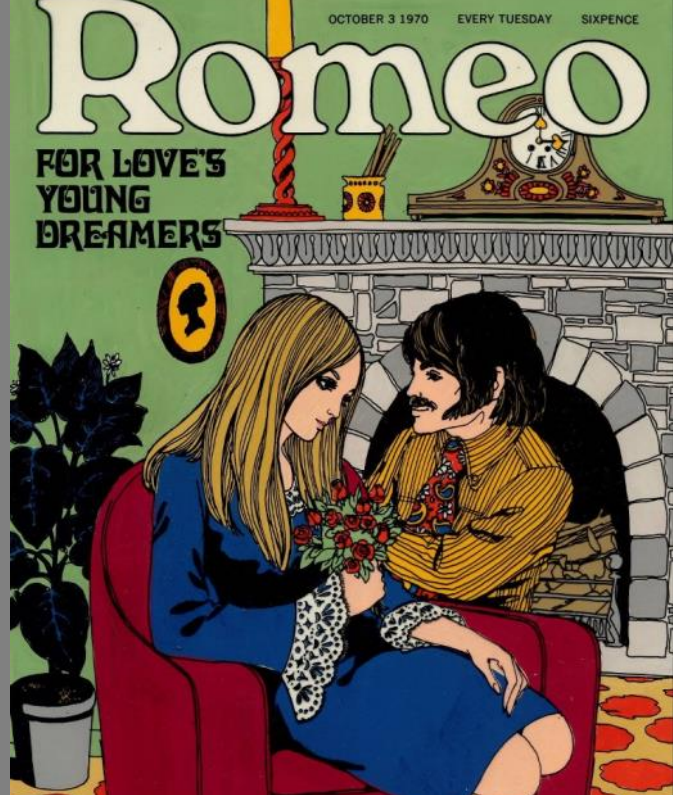
One of the most exciting things about the D C Thomson is that it contains material that forms the backdrop to almost everyone's lives. Who doesn't remember reading Oor Wullie and the Broons when they were young? Who didn't want to get away with Dennis and Gnasher's menacing manners? Personally, I always wanted to be Minnie the Minx: I have the hair for it... The reactions of the public at the Beanotown Exhibition that was part of the Southbank Festival of Neighbourhood earlier this year, certainly demonstrated the bond between the widest range of people and the material that the DC Thomson Archive holds and it will be interesting to see how this bond can be developed in the future.

Of course, with any business archive the principle object of the department is to make the collection work effectively for the business. That's why I'm also currently investigating what commercial opportunities the archive offers. Here, I have the opportunity to work with our licencing department and combine the archivist's knowledge of the collections and their management with specialist expertise that can set the possibilities of the collection free and ensure its connection to the core work of the business, something that archives can struggle with on a daily basis.

I've just recently started in my post as Archives Manager but am already discovering extraordinary material every day, material such as the letterbook from the Sunday Post Archive. It contains a letter from a sub-editor to a woman in Canada. She has been out of contact with her mother in Glasgow for some years and wants to know how she is. What else would she do but write to the Sunday Post for help? And what else would they do but go and find her mother for her and see how she is? This also goes for the Jackie's 'Cathy and Claire' - we've kept their (anonymised) replies to readers (and yes, they did reply to everyone that wrote in).

Like most archivists with a passion for the collections in their care, I could go on and on! What will I find next? Only time (and the archive) will tell...

By LIZA GIFFEN
Archives Manager, DC Thomson & Co Ltd



ARCHIVING THE ARTS

Supporting the arts. Supporting archives.

It isn't difficult to show the value of artistic archives. Most of us would feel confident arguing that the world would be a bleaker place without copies of the First Folio (otherwise known as Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies, published in 1623) Oscar Wilde's letters or Leonardo Da Vinci's sketch books.

Sadly, that doesn't mean that artistic archives always enjoy the support and attention they deserve. As resources tighten in both the artistic world and in the archival sector the danger of important artistic archives falling between the cracks and being lost for future generations should worry us all. Archiving the Arts is a programme being led by the National Archives which we hope will put a spotlight on artistic records, wherever they are held. There are four key aims:

To make sure that arts collections are found and used by those who care about them

This includes helping organisations to list their records on databases like the National Register of Archives, but also facilitating relationships with academics and community groups.

To help those outside of the archive sector who have artistic records to make good decisions about their care

Often those who hold these records may not have realised that they have value. We want to help people or organisations understand the decisions they need to make to turn their 'stuff' into an archive and then to work with them as they decide whether to care for their records themselves or to deposit at an established archive.

To enable those who care for artistic collections to access sustainable funding streams

Excellent funding streams are currently available but often the access points to them are not clear. We want to enable archivists to have strong relationships with funders and to make good choices about where to apply. We also recognise that many arts collections have commercial potential and want to help this to be realised where appropriate.

To encourage dialogue and skills sharing between artists and archivists

Where strong relationships exist, everyone benefits. Artists are able to access existing archives and be inspired to create new work and archivists are able to build the trust which is so necessary before discussions about depositing collections can even begin. Also, by working together, artists and archivists can access funding and gain important high-level support which is out of the reach of their separate endeavours.

We have already surveyed archives and arts organisations to find out key facts about the records they hold, their collection development strategies and the partnerships they have been exploring. We have also surveyed strategic and funding bodies to learn from their experience in working with Arts Archives.

We will now be reaching out with a series of targeted communications which should reveal both where more support is needed and also where great activity is already taking place. We will also be working directly with leading arts institutions to support their collection development and to learn new skills and new ideas which we can share with the rest of the sector.

Some of this learning will be shared through a series of workshops throughout the UK to inspire both archivists and artists. We will also be developing 'toolkits' especially designed for either archivists or arts practitioners to help them make the most out of the arts archives they care about.

Let us know if you would like to be part of Archiving the Arts by emailing us at asd@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk. In your email please let us know if you are contacting us from the perspective of an archivist or an arts practitioner. Please also include any details you can share about the collection with which you are involved.

By KATE WHEELER
The National Archives

THE STUDY OF INTELLIGENCE: GODFREY THOMSON



On the morning of 1 June 1932 every school child in Scotland who was born in 1921 sat a test. The Moray House Test number 12 examined their verbal reasoning. On 4 June 1947 this was repeated for children born in 1936, with the addition of a questionnaire to collect data regarding the child's social and familial background. The purpose of the second Scottish Mental Survey was to establish if there had been a decline in the level of intelligence. In actual fact the test showed a small increase.

The resulting rich data, of which no equivalent exists elsewhere in the world, survives to this day at Glasgow University Archive Services. It has enabled current psychologists at the University of Edinburgh to undertake pioneering research in cognitive ageing, with the aim of discovering why some people's thinking skills decline less than others.

However, until relatively recently it seemed that little had survived of the creator of these tests and the Chairman of the 1947 Scottish Mental Survey Committee, Professor Godfrey Thomson. A pioneer in the fields of intelligence, statistics and education, he was also the first – and only – individual to hold both the

post of Bell Chair of Education at the University of Edinburgh and the Directorship of Moray House College of Education. Thomson published prolifically and counted Carlos Paton Blacker, David Glass, Karl Pearson and the infamous Cyril Burt as admirers; while the eminent psychologist Charles Spearman found him a worthy opponent. Despite this, and a Knighthood awarded in honour of his services to education, Thomson had all but been forgotten.

This was in part due to the absence of an archive and personal papers, which were finally discovered in 2008 by Prof Ian Deary of the University of Edinburgh who has long been re-evaluating Thomson's work. It was also in part due to Thomson's uncontroversial nature, and perhaps even his modesty. Amidst a 20th century backdrop of eugenics and intelligence testing, Thomson, who came from humble beginnings in the North East of England, strove for equality and fairness - qualities he demonstrated throughout his whole life.

Nowhere was this more apparent than the Moray House Tests and their precursors, the Northumberland tests; a series of mental ability tests produced for Northumberland Council. It was hoped these tests would identify talented children who, by virtue of living in rural areas, rarely attended school and were seldom put forward for scholarships. Thomson created a test that was dependent on 'native wit' rather than learning, enabling children to demonstrate innate intelligence.

The tests he and his team produced in Room 70 of Moray House in Edinburgh were used widely in England, especially for the purpose of school selection. The mental testing industry was highly lucrative and Thomson could have become a rich man thanks to his work. However, he ensured that profit made by the tests was ploughed back into their continued improvement.

Thomson's archive is now situated in Edinburgh University Library Special Collections. A rich find, the papers encapsulate the study and documentation of intelligence throughout early - mid 20th century through correspondence with international figures, biographical notes, photographs, annotated publications and artefacts. More than this, it finally tells researchers something of the man himself.

With the help of Wellcome Trust funding, cataloguing and conservation work is underway on the collection whilst links are being established with other collections within the University of Edinburgh, including the collection of mathematician Walter Ledermann and the records of the Godfrey Thomson Unit. These, alongside the records of the Scottish Council for Research in Education at Glasgow University Archive Services, complete the story of Scotland's pivotal role in the study of intelligence and education.

By EMMA ANTHONY

Project Archivist, University of Edinburgh

<http://libraryblogs.is.ed.ac.uk/godfreythomsonproject/>



THE DIGITAL FABRIC OF SCOTLAND

Scotland has one of the richest archive collections in the world. Our business archives span four centuries, with over 6,000 sets of records. Our family history-related records are worth £100 million a year in ancestral tourism income. Institutions from the National Records of Scotland to local archives services hold millions of pieces of information that tell the story of Scotland and its people, from warrior Kings to school dinner ladies.

The digital revolution of the last two decades presents Scotland with a unique opportunity. As archives are dusted down from shelves and captured online, we have the chance to build a digital legacy that will enrich generations to come.

As William Kilbride, Executive Director of the Digital Preservation Coalition, said recently: "Data is the new oil. It is the emerging infrastructure for industry, science, government, law, health, the creative industries and our personal life. But it is fragile".

Everyone with an interest in protecting Scotland's growing digital archives, and crucially, having them accessible over time, needs to work together to get the technology right and secure sufficient investment to nurture these important national assets.

Whatever the collection, be it Burns' first draft of his most famous poems or A G Barr's records of their most iconic product, Irn Bru, it is incumbent on us as Scotland's first digital generation to preserve and protect our priceless archives for generations to come. By doing so, we will stitch together the fabric of our nation.

By DR IRENE O'BRIEN
Chair, Scottish Council on Archives

See the next page for details on a major conference in January 2014 looking at digital continuity.

Data is the new oil. It is the emerging infrastructure for industry, science, government, law, health, the creative industries and our personal life. But it is fragile...

THE DIGITAL FABRIC OF SCOTLAND: THE CHALLENGE OF STITCHING IT TOGETHER

12:00 - 17:00, WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY 2014, THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL GALLERIES, EDINBURGH

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- Annelies van den Belt, Chief Executive, DC Thomson Family History
- Rosemary Agnew, Scottish Information Commissioner
- Catherine Hardman, Deputy Director, Archaeology Data Service, University of York
- Ben Sullivan, Head of European Operations, Ke Software
- Brendan Dick, Director, BT Scotland
- Professor Lorna Hughes, National Library of Wales
- Tim Ellis, Chief Executive, National Records of Scotland

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OCTOBER 2013

ARCHIVES GO TO HOLYROOD

The Scottish Council on Archives recognised that gaining entry to the Scottish Parliament was both a great privilege and a unique opportunity to raise the profile of archives. The essential question was how the best might be made of the opportunity. What should be said? Who should be there? What should be displayed?

The demand on the time of MSPs is significant and therefore clarity was seen as 'a must' when engaging with them. No resorting to esoteric 'archive speak'. Give clear and simple messages that were both correct and would impress: Scottish archives are the documented national memory, a unique heritage asset of unparalleled richness, depth and extent; the archives sector has a vibrant open culture that encourages wider use, exploration, learning, partnerships and innovation.


The focussed messages must be delivered by experts in each of the three themes (Ancestral Tourism, Business Archives and Digital Continuity) confident in terms of the underlying principles and with hands-on experience and day-to-day practice. They must be individuals with good communication skills who would not become tongue-tied at the approach of a major political figure. As there was real enthusiasm for the whole exercise, the line up of experts secured was impressive. Twenty-two volunteered to answer any questions fired at them with quiet and engaging authority. More immediately important for our preparations were the experts feeding into the core messages for the three themes so that they properly reflected the realities in those specific parts of the archives sector.

Planning and bringing to execution the whole event could be described as the best of times ... and also the most worrying of times. To bring together an exhibition and information booth and to organise a reception at the Scottish Parliament looked like 'a big ask'. There was a definite element of unconvincingly oft-repeated 'Don't panic'. However, fretting and dithering doesn't get the work done. We got stuck into the nitty-gritty that would deliver success – or failure.

The initial task was to secure sponsorship from two MSPs, the first to obtain permission for the exhibition and booth and the second for the reception. It was a crucial moment when Jean Urquhart and Jenny Marra agreed to do the necessary. Sighs of relief, and then straight into what looked like a maze at first sight – the procedures for non-MSPs allowed into the members' areas. Obviously, the procedures were something with which we were unacquainted. That created a sense of unease. What if we unwittingly blundered? However, good fortune smiled on us. The parliamentary staff, including the researchers for the two MSPs, were more than co-operative and clearly understood our unease with the unfamiliar. Then

we had the indefatigable Linda Ramsay, Head of Conservation at the National Records of Scotland, who dispensed the matter-of-fact wisdom that comes with 'been there, done that'. With support from within the Parliament and from Linda, we were off.

The 'off' was both challenging and interesting. It might sound a simple task but it required total concentration when deciding what photographs should cover the display panels allocated by the Parliament. Should there be geographical representation from across Scotland? What subjects should be covered? What about injecting some colour into the otherwise totally black and white scene? Which items should be given partic-



ular prominence? How would these factors come together to create visually attractive display likely to encourage MSPs to stop and look?

The potential anxiety of sourcing items never featured since we could draw on the superb range of illustrative items that graced Broadsheet over the months. We were soon down to looking through the items, making the selection and then arranging for high quality copies mounted on board. Perhaps the most difficult task was carried out the day before the event opened. We clutched the chosen items and cut ourselves off from the outside world. Absolute concentration was essential. Set out on tables, the photographs were moved this way, then that way until a pleasing arrangement was settled on. Then it was off hastily to the Parliament to mount the photographs on the boards. The attractiveness of the area containing the boards and the display cases was enhanced by the presence of new Council banners, two of the four emblazoned with eye-catching photographs. The final touch was the monitor for showing looped films. Well, almost the final touch. There was, in fact, something for distribution – a goody folder (no bags for archivists) containing high quality postcards, exhibition catalogues for the original documents and the display of photographs and a memory stick (with Council logo) containing the full set of photographic images.

From early on in the planning of the event, it was recognised that even the best quality copies of archive material cannot rival the impact of displaying original items. With the support of colleagues, Linda was crucial in meeting the need. Original documents were drawn from among the vast holdings of the National Records of Scotland. The guiding principle was simple – what might intrigue, even fascinate, MSPs. Of course, it was guesswork but Linda came up with a superb selection of material: love letters from the infamous Madeleine Smith case, through the wills of First World War soldiers killed in action, to the Great Seal of Scotland, the Register of Tartans, Mary Queen of Scots' signature and the first written mention of whisky. There was one disappointment. The ban on having poisons in the Parliament meant that a box of poisoned chocolates exhibited at the Smith trial could not be displayed. In fact, it proved no set back. Early each day Linda and her staff put on display a new selection of original documents (and, of course, the documents had to be whisked back to General Register House each evening). The turnover was used not only to engage with MSPs who had seen an earlier selection of documents but also to convey the core message that the display could be no more than a taster from among the riches of the archival heritage.

It was all systems go on the morning of 8 October, with kick off at 9 am. Absence of people, and silence. Anxiety was waiting in the wings. In fact, the apparent lack of activity was wholly incorrect. MSPs were working in several committees. Then they rushed – past the display and into the chamber. What we did not know was that the Scottish Government was announcing its readiness to bring Prestwick Airport into public ownership. The political atmosphere was electric.

Later that day and, indeed, over the three days the threatened anxiety was banished. It turned into a sense of solid achievement (with a goody mixture of sheer relief) that was fully shared by everyone participating. MSPs came and went, looked at what was on display, asked lots of questions and listened with interest. They were busy people with lots of claims on their time, but Jean Urquhart and Jenny Marra very successfully suggested to their colleagues that they stop and look. In all, 49 MSPs did so. Twelve resorted to Twitter, tweeting and retweeting messages.

The outstanding impression we had was that MSPs were interested both in what was on display and in the whole area of archives as 'the documented national memory'. The First Minister, Deputy First Minister, Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs and the Presiding Officer all found time to engage with us. MSPs from right across the political parties asked questions and showed their interest. Certainly a big draw was the display of original documents.

All the weeks of planning, of making phone calls, of researching and attending to every detail had paid off, and handsomely. Spirits were high on the evening of the 9 October when a reception was held in the Parliament. Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs, Fiona Hyslop delivered a key speech in which she set out her view of archives and the archives sector. She referred to the vastness of the holdings across Scotland as

‘a treasure trove’ that had the power to ‘inform, educate, inspire and motivate us.’

Archives are the documented national memory. We are a people moulded by past experiences and memories. We connect with what has forged our nation, our communities and, indeed, we as individuals. The story of Scotland in all its richness, diversity, tragedy, joy, success and, yes, failure too is captured, preserved and made available through thousands of archive collections cared for by a relatively small but dedicated cadre of archivists and conservators. They are the guardians of an essential part of our culture - that documented national memory.

The Cabinet Secretary recognised the contribution of the sector to the Scottish Government’s strategic objective of a Wealthier and Fairer Scotland, notably through ancestral tourism and supporting the ‘Scottish experience’ for visitors. She referred to archives as a research tool ‘integral to business’. She focussed on the ‘enormous challenge’ of future access to the digital records being created today and called for that challenge to be met by ‘Co-operation among those with archive, records management, IT and business skills’ so that they might produce ‘the solution or solutions that meet the needs of government and of citizens who depend on easy access to reliable records for everyday transactions.’

Jenny Marra spoke eloquently of her family’s connection with the jute industry in Dundee, which had inspired her to pursue an interest in politics. She made clear what is often an important connection, that between personal and family memories and records and archives.

The Chair of the Scottish Council on Archives, Irene O’Brien described the reception as ‘a wonderful opportunity to bring together a range of guests and, most importantly, MSPs’, to talk about the present-day and future importance of archives’.

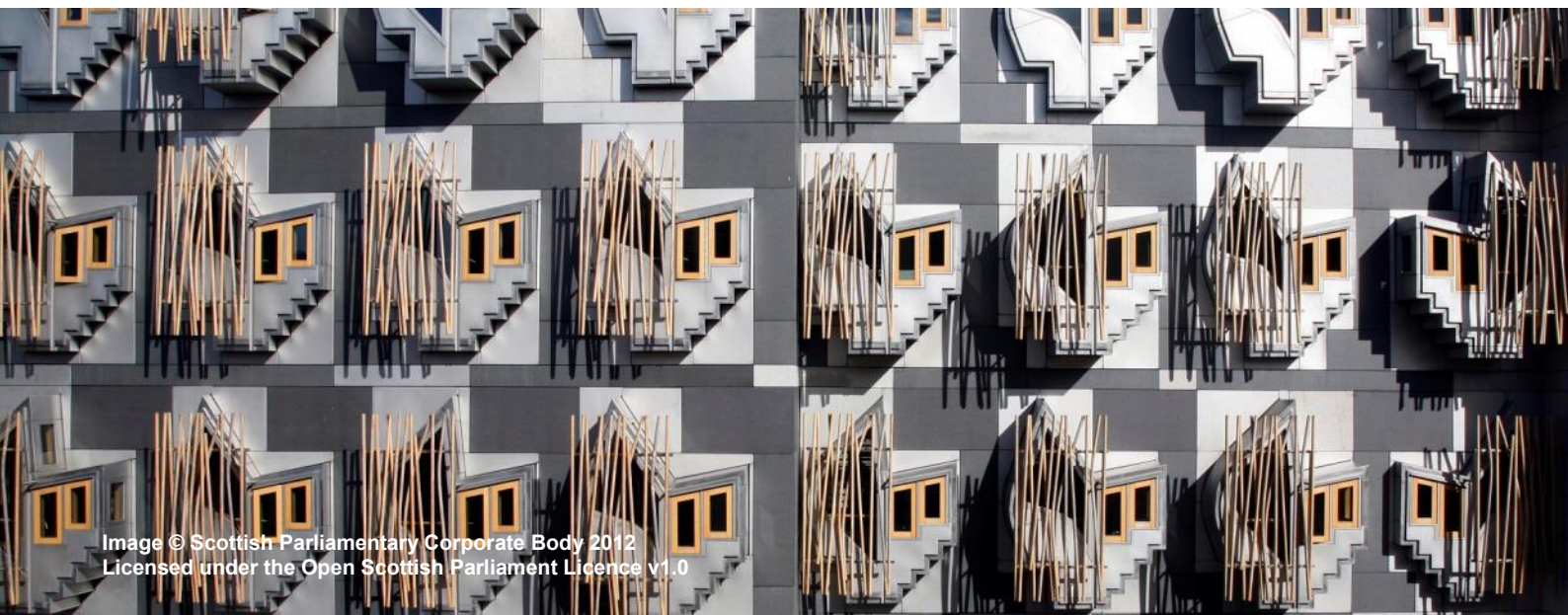
Those present were treated to a display of the musical talents of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in what was proof that archives – in this case musical manuscripts – can inspire across a wide range of human activities. It also showcased the talent of young Scottish musicians taking their first steps towards a career that enriches those who hear them perform.

In the end, it really was a case of ‘Everything will be alright on the night’ ... well, over three days. Success was possible only with the co-operation of the Parliament’s staff, the MSPs’ researchers and the team of experts who fielded questions. However, the vital ingredient was the MSPs themselves. They gave of their time, listened, asked questions, engaged. It really made all the effort worthwhile.

Over three days the sector had the opportunity to show MSPs that it is interesting and contributes to the wider needs of society. The event at the Scottish Parliament proved that practical co-operation in the sector ‘delivers the goods’, secures quality and raises the profile of archives. In that sense, it was a template for the future.

Perhaps next year ... another event at the Parliament?

[Click here to visit the website to hear the speeches and music from the reception, download the exhibition catalogue and view an image gallery documenting the events.](#)





“
A lasting
impression of
professionalism,
quality and
collaboration.
”

ARCHIVES GO TO HOLYROOD: THE EXHIBITION

Working together with colleagues across various departments of the National Records of Scotland (NRS), we prepared a total of eight separate exhibition cases for The Scottish Parliament. It is unusual to change themes each day but the idea was to encourage MSPs to visit everyday to find out the variety and range of archives available in Scotland. It was a very positive experience for the conservation department, working with colleagues advising on displays, devising 'the look', delivery, transferring and presenting these wonderful items to a professional standard.

The eight themes were selected to be current and topical. Day one was based on Ancestral Tourism and we chose Mary Queen of Scots and First World War Soldiers' Wills. NRS had recently been involved in the popular Mary exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland and the Wills were selected to reflect the nearing Armistice Day and also were relevant as we mark the 100 year anniversary of the start of World War I in 2014.

Day two, Business Archives, saw the display of Court and Legal papers and items relating to the Forth Bridge. Madeleine Smith's items and the Double Jeopardy Bill, which relates to the current work on reviews of closed cases with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and Police Scotland. Forth Bridge was chosen for collaboration work with Historic Scotland relating to the bid to UNESCO for World Heritage site status. At the evening reception tartan and records referencing food hinted at a more celebratory theme. Two newly registered tartans - the Battle of Bannockburn and the Ryder Cup - were selected to commemorate historical and new events in 2014, whilst an 18th Century recipe book and the SS Politician government file relating to the removal of a large consignment of whisky from a shipwreck complemented the refreshments on offer.

The final day's display consisted of The Great Seal of Scotland and one of the original Scottish Parliament visitor books (bound by NRS conservation department) from the official opening of the Holyrood site. These were chosen to reflect the ideas of continuous record keeping and maintaining access for future generations therefore complementing the day's theme of Digital Continuity.

After the initial selections, the conservation team discussed the positioning and layout of objects with other colleagues. Some of the records needed conservation treatment before they could be displayed, and others needed specialist cradles and support. Perspex display stands and museum grade mounts were selected or made to go inside the cases, themselves specially produced for short term exhibition at the Parliament.

The team rehearsed the transitions and mocked up the exhibits, taking pictures as a guide to aid recreating them easily at the venue. Exhibits were packed in boxes and labelled and each day we have to liaise with Parliament exhibition staff and security teams. Normally we loan and present single items - this time all hands were on deck working together to show Scottish archives at their best and ensure a lasting impression of professionalism, quality and collaboration.

Image: Saho discussing the exhibition with Tim Ellis (Keeper of the Records of Scotland) and Linda Ramsay (Head of Conservation)

By SAHO ARAKAWA
Conservation, National Records of Scotland

THE GLASGOW MIRACLE

Materials for Alternative Histories



In the mid 1990s, the Swiss curator Hans Ulrich Obrist coined the phrase “The Glasgow Miracle” to describe the emergence in Glasgow at that time of a strong artistic community including Douglas Gordon, Christine Borland and Martin Boyce developing out of and around galleries and projects such as Transmission Gallery and Street Level. Glasgow is now widely recognised as the largest centre of creative activity and practice in the UK outside London and a major influence on the development of contemporary art of the last quarter century.

To outsiders of the city, Glasgow’s rapid artistic output producing eleven Turner prize nominees and six winners over the past fifteen years may appear as anomalous phenomena in a post-industrial landscape. However, the community here in Glasgow understood that rather than a single moment or ‘miracle’ this highly visible acclaim was based on a gradual accumulation of artistic work and strategic funding policies. In fact, the emergence of the Glasgow art scene has its roots in the early 70s, the successes of painters in the 1980s and the growth of a thriving artist-led scene across the city which it continues to maintain, with pop up exhibitions and events in flats and shop fronts such as Victor&Hestor, Studio 41 and Picture Window taking place alongside established artist-led galleries such as David Dale Gallery and Market Gallery.

Commencing in January 2012 The Glasgow School of Art in partnership with the CCA: Centre for Contemporary Arts Glasgow embarked on a speculative research project to open up previously inaccessible archive material to assist research and reflection upon the causes and conditions which encouraged this renaissance of the visual arts in Glasgow since the late 1970s. The Glasgow Miracle project is not designed to write a definitive history of this period, simply to organise and provide access to a spectrum of materials that will provide a starting point for further exploration and a variety of potential histories.

The research team, led by Dr Francis McKee and Ross Sinclair, have overseen the cataloguing of existing archival material from the Third Eye Centre and CCA (material spanning the period 1972-the present) and conducted a series of interviews with artists, critics, curators and art administrators from across that timespan to construct an archive for future investigators. The project has also enabled cataloguing and digitisation to commence on The George & Cordelia Oliver Collection; the personal archive of an important art critic, commentator and collector Cordelia and photographer George, housed at the Glasgow School of Art.

A large portion of this cataloguing activity has been undertaken excellently and ably by our team of dedicated volunteers, comprising mostly of recent GSA graduates, practicing artists and curators. The team have not only been able to offer their own valuable interpretations of the material as contemporary practitioners within the city, but have also gained knowledge and expertise in heritage and research practices which have enabled them to move into paid positions and freelance opportunities elsewhere in the sector. Part of their experience included one-to-one career Q&A sessions with experts, training workshops with professional conservators, librarians and archivists, and monthly group visits to specialist archives, collections and events. In a climate of increased awareness and discussion surrounding the use of voluntary labour, the project team have not only followed the Archives and Records association best practice guidelines but have endeavoured to create a tailored and supportive framework for the



volunteers to excel. The monthly team sessions have been crucial to foster a great team dynamic that positively encourages working standards, provides a valuable peer network and a welcome community environment to discuss progress research and cataloguing which can often be an isolated independent activity.

The transition of the archives from a rough assortment of boxes and paperwork into an accessible and indexed collection has been a remarkable undertaking which has also produced an exhibition of archival footage, items and contemporary artistic responses. Taking its title from an introductory text in the publication *NuSpeak* written by the first Director of the Third Eye Centre Tom McGrath, 'What We Have Done, and What We are About to Do' received a busy and curious crowd at the CCA in September 2012. More recently, at the beginning of July 2013 the project team in partnership with ARLIS\UK & Ireland hosted a study day at White Cube London, 'Giving up the archive?: Reflections on the creation, examination and dissemination of arts organisations' archives'. The day was an opportunity to explore questions, reflections and case studies from academics, curators, artists and archivists such as; why many arts organisations are interested in locating and exploring their archival heritage, what can archives tell us about the history of these organisations and how important are they to their contemporary activities. Speakers included our project team members Ross Sinclair and Francis Mckee alongside artist Marysia Lewandowska; Dr Julie Bacon (University of Kent); Prof Beryl Graham (CRUMB at University of Sunderland); Donna Romano (NIVAL) and a key note presentation by the artist Gerard Byrne.

As we reach the end of our eighteen month speculative research grant period we are currently consolidating the research areas to form a coherent index and timeline of past events around the Third Eye Centre and CCA. All the evidence collected through the project will be made available for public access via appointment. A website will draw highlights and interpretations of the material to be used as a tool for furthering specialist research and general debate on the subject of contemporary art in Glasgow and beyond, to help ensure Glasgow remains a creative centre with the right conditions for artistic practice.

Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) the project team are; Francis Mckee, Ross Sinclair, Carrie Skinner, Susannah Waters, Dominic Patterson and Julie Ramage. Supported ably and excellently by a team of volunteers; Oliver Braid, Annie Crabtree, Caroline Gausden, Jocelyn Grant, Collette Rayner, Nicole Stapinski, Cedric Tai and Nick Thomas and CCA staff Robert Allanson and Rachael Gallacher.

For project updates please [visit our blog](#) or contact the project co-ordinator Carrie Skinner at c.skinner@gsa.ac.uk.

What We Have Done What We Are About To Do

Image: from the exhibition 'What We Have Done, and What We are About to Do' (CCA, September 2012)



EXPLORED

DISCOVERED

FOUND

DETECTED

CONNECTED

ENGAGED

UNEARTHED

LEARNT

IMAGINED

CREATED

UNLOCKED

OPENED

REVEALED

CELEBRATED

On 21 November 2013, MPs, peers, notable academics and archivists from across the UK gathered in the Churchill Room at the Palace of Westminster. There was an atmosphere of real anticipation, a feeling that something was about to happen – the formal Westminster launch of the Explore Your Archive, an event sponsored by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Archives and History.

Speeches followed, but these were no ordinary speeches. Most prominent among the speakers were those more than happy to be called 'ambassadors' for archives. Their contributions spoke to one theme, namely that archives are important to individuals, to communities, to society, to democracy itself. While it was recognised that archives might be misunderstood and might not have the standing among decision-makers that they deserve, the remedy was seen as lying with archivists ably supported by those who use archives and know from first-hand experience their unique importance.

Space does not permit detailed reporting of what was said by whom. However, two very short and incisive speeches made a particular impression on me, not only on the night but also days later. The first was that of Professor Lisa Jardine, an academic historian whose radio broadcasts have made her a readily recognised name. While setting aside nothing of her academic rigour, the professor spoke eloquently as the daughter of a man of remarkable ability, the late Professor Jacob Bronowski, the mathematician, biologist, historian of science and much else. Indeed, there was more than eloquence being heard. These were words charged with emotion and mixed with proper pride. The content of two thick MI5 files on Bronowski, especially when read in conjunction with other sources of information, proved that he had been the victim of unwarranted suspicions about his loyalty to his adopted country and, indeed, of lies. There can be few things more personal than a child's discovery of the truth about a parent. Professor Jardine spoke not simply to those gathered in the Churchill Room but to everyone who has an interest in knowing the truth or in righting an injustice. There could be no more eloquent example of how archives can impact on an individual and how they help to underpin democratic accountability.

The other speech that particularly impressed me was that of Gary Brannan, e-Services and Offsite Services Co-ordinator in the West Yorkshire Archives Service. He told the gathering what he felt it was like to be an archivist – the reward of helping people, especially when in need; harnessing resources to help older people develop their IT skills; bringing history to life for children; and seeing the past (from that of the individual to that of the nation) examined, interpreted and re-interpreted. What came across with good humour and wit was a sense of pride at the opportunity to undertake valuable and enduring work. Let Gary speak for himself:

I am proud. Proud to keep the records of the forgotten, so they can be rediscovered. Proud to keep the memories of great deeds alive, and proud to keep the memory of our less-great days alive too, so that in the future we can learn and not make the same mistakes again. Proud to let communities connect with a past that binds them, and proud to know that when I'm gone, the work I have done will benefit someone.

There are times when archives services are under almost unbearable pressure and resources run close to failing to meet demand. We know that there is often a struggle to keep front-line services operating at optimum levels. The pride of which Gary spoke is what should motivate archivists. Whatever the day-to-day cares, it is a privilege to have

responsibility for the management and opening up to wider audiences of unique assets that inform, educate and inspire.

Explore Your Archive is a campaign jointly developed and jointly led by the Archives and Records Association (ARA) and The National Archives. They have every reason to be proud of what they are achieving. The campaign provides the archives sector with an opportunity to act in a concerted way in the promotion of archives in all their richness and variety. It has lined up an impressive range of ambassadors for archives: to name a few, two prominent MPs (Dr Hywel Francis and Tristram Hunt), the politician and diplomat Lord Ashdown, and the historians Antony Beevor and Lisa Jardine. Knowing the value of archives, they speak from personal experience and with their individual insights.

We need not for a moment feel that the challenge for archives is other than huge. The President of the ARA, Caroline Williams, highlighted a statistic that should engender pride but attached to it words that encapsulated that challenge: 'Those who use our services think very highly of us – we constantly receive satisfaction rates of up to 97% - but millions of people in the UK and Ireland have yet to walk into an archive or access our information.'

The campaign has produced a very professional on-line film in which the different ambassadors express what archives mean to them. The film covers four important questions: What is an archive? What impact have archives had on your life? What discoveries have you made in archives? What would the world look like without archives? The film can be accessed at www.exploreyourarchive.org. It cannot fail to impress. For that reason, wherever there is an opportunity to do so, we should point those who make decisions about archives services to that film.

Another publicity tool is a set of five badges (one for each day of the working week?). Each has two words, the first a clever creation 'ArchI've' followed by one of five words that point to the impact of archives – Created, Discovered, Explored, Found and Learnt. Important messages expressed in few words. Let us wear those badges with a pride that reflects the importance of the work done every day by archives services.

It would be wrong to end this report on the launch without putting three people in the spotlight – the campaign team of Marie Owens from ARA and Angela Owusu and Emma Markiewicz from TNA. They worked behind the scenes to ensure that 'everything'll be alright on the night'. It was.

Scotland is participating fully in the campaign. The Scottish Council on Archives teamed up with the National Records of Scotland (and its professional box-making service) to invite archives services to participate in Explore Your Archive Kist. A simple but effective idea put into action: distribute well-designed conservation-standard archive boxes, which can be filled with original documents or copies that illustrate a story (or stories) from the collections. Available in search rooms or other public access areas, the boxes encourage members of the public or service staff to Explore Your Archive. The Scottish Council on Archives will feature more details from each of the participating services soon. A flavour of what is happening in Scotland is to be found at [Jura Archive](#), [Edinburgh City Archives](#), [Angus Archives](#) and [West Dunbartonshire Council Archive](#).

Explore Your Archive can be thought of as something more than a strap line. It is as close as archives have come to an overarching brand with all the potential for instant recognition outside the sector, including among decision makers. Make sure it is 'up there' and repeatedly mentioned. We all stand to gain.

By DR GERRY SLATER
Policy Adviser, Scottish Council on Archives



IN CONVERSATION WITH

DR ATHOL MURRAY

November 2013 marked a remarkable personal milestone in archives, one that is unlikely ever to be repeated. It is the 60th anniversary of continuous professional association with archives by Dr Athol Murray, retired Keeper of the Records of Scotland. Dr Murray retired as Keeper on 31 Dec 1990 after 37 years' service in the then Scottish Record Office (SRO), now the National Records of Scotland (NRS). He started work there in November 1953, aged 23, and his career was marked by his scholarship, his dedication to the Office of Keeper, and overseeing significant changes that laid the foundations for many key future developments, including improvements for local archive services and the construction of Thomas Thomson House.

Dr Murray's dedication to archives and records continues to this day. He regularly visits West Register House (WRH) in Edinburgh as a volunteer, working tirelessly on the records of the Scottish Exchequer about which he is an acknowledged expert. He is a wealth of knowledge on the subject and his research has made a key contribution to furthering Scottish administrative history. Broadsheet caught up with Dr Murray at WRH.

60 Years is a long time in one profession. Do you think it is a record? I think it is. Going back 60 years from 1953 takes you to the 1890s and there was no one around in 1953 who had been in the Scottish Record Office (SRO) that long. None came from the historical side. SRO's 'oldest inhabitant' was the accountant John Robertson, who had joined the old Sasine Office in 1911. He was one of those who came to SRO from what became the Department of the Registers of Scotland. For actual length of service, I am probably the longest served in terms of continuous association with one office and may just have beaten C T McInnes, who started as a clerk in 1915. He retired in 1961 but served on the Scottish Records Advisory Council (now abolished) from 1961-1970, and as an editor until about 1975.

How did you find your way into the sector? It is something of a convoluted story. I was turned down for the army in 1949, which meant that I could remain at school in Lancaster for two terms longer than most. That allowed me to continue my 'light reading' such as Milton's 'Paradise Lost', the complete works of Shakespeare and Gibbon's 'Decline of the Roman Empire'! The school asked me to write a full blown history, requiring me to research historical records. I found that I had an aptitude for reading 17th century handwriting and found myself reading and interpreting some 13th century Latin as well.

So were you self taught? Up to a point. In 1951 I attended a summer school on archives and palaeography run by the Diocesan Archivist of York. An assistant keeper from the Public Record Office (PRO), now the National Archives, ran the palaeography course and at one stage it was addressed by none other than Sir Hilary Jenkinson. I graduated from university earlier than most, aged 21. Looking for work, I considered a career in the university sector, or the Civil Service, but I was considered too young for both. At that time graduate entry to the Civil Service fast stream was 22, so I went and wrote another history, for Sebright School in Worcestershire. It was a wealthy establishment, long since closed, which owned a large chunk of Bethnal Green. That exposed me to many more records, particularly in local archives, and I prepared an NRA survey of Sebright's records. I kept in touch with the PRO and went for an Assistant Keeper post there. However in those days they did not bother interviewing you unless you had a double First from university.

So what brought you to Scotland? A job in the SRO had presented itself. I had never heard of the SRO, in fact the only time I had been to Edinburgh was when I visited the Glasgow Empire Exhibition of 1938. I applied and it must have been a bad year for Scottish history



graduates as I was offered the post of Assistant Keeper Grade 2. When at SRO I met my future wife Joyce, who was taken on as a temporary AK and started on the same day as me.

What kind of questions were archivists asked at interview back then? I was interviewed by Sir James Fergusson, then Keeper of the Records, who asked me whether I had read the SRO's annual report. A bit of a trick question, and he knew it, as at that time it was not published. Also on the panel was C T McInnes, a glowering presence, who ran the Historical Search Room. I was asked what I had read on Scottish history and they seemed impressed, more so because I was a published author. It is worth remembering that there was very little published on Scottish history back then. I think my name helped as well.

So how did you find working in archives in the 1950's? Was it well paid? At the time of my appointment I was the youngest permanent Assistant Keeper by 7 years. Joyce was a year younger than me but only held a temporary post. The office was very hierarchical and perhaps 90 strong. Administrative grades were the civil service top dogs, assistant principals up to permanent secretaries. They included graduate specialists like Assistant Keepers in the SRO and PRO. Then came the non-graduate executive officers and clerical officers, followed by the support grades at the lower levels (paperkeepers, binders, typists) and finally the cleaners. There was little chance of executive officers rising to become Assistant Keepers. I was paid the princely sum of £1 a day before tax. Sir James' salary was £1,750 a year, while cleaners were paid one shilling (five new pence) an hour.

Describe Archives in three words. I'll use two. Collective memory.

What are you working on at the moment? A string of things that I will never finish. Scottish Exchequer records in the main.

How did you become interested in them? When I started, all Assistant Keepers had a private collection to index as their stock job. Myself, Joyce and another contemporary John Bates (later Deputy Keeper) were put onto indexing the Register of the Great Seal. I spent 6 months in the General Register House (GRH) Dome, being bored with legal searches, but as time progressed I became known as a person who knew about Latin records. Exchequer records were mostly done by executive or clerical officers, who were put to listing boxes from the unsorted records under the direction of the Chief Clerk. When they found a Latin document they brought it to me to interpret. Eventually I was given permission to go raking through the masses of unsorted stuff and investigate the 10 rooms of unsorted records held in the basement of GRH. That would have been 1957, the year I started my PhD.

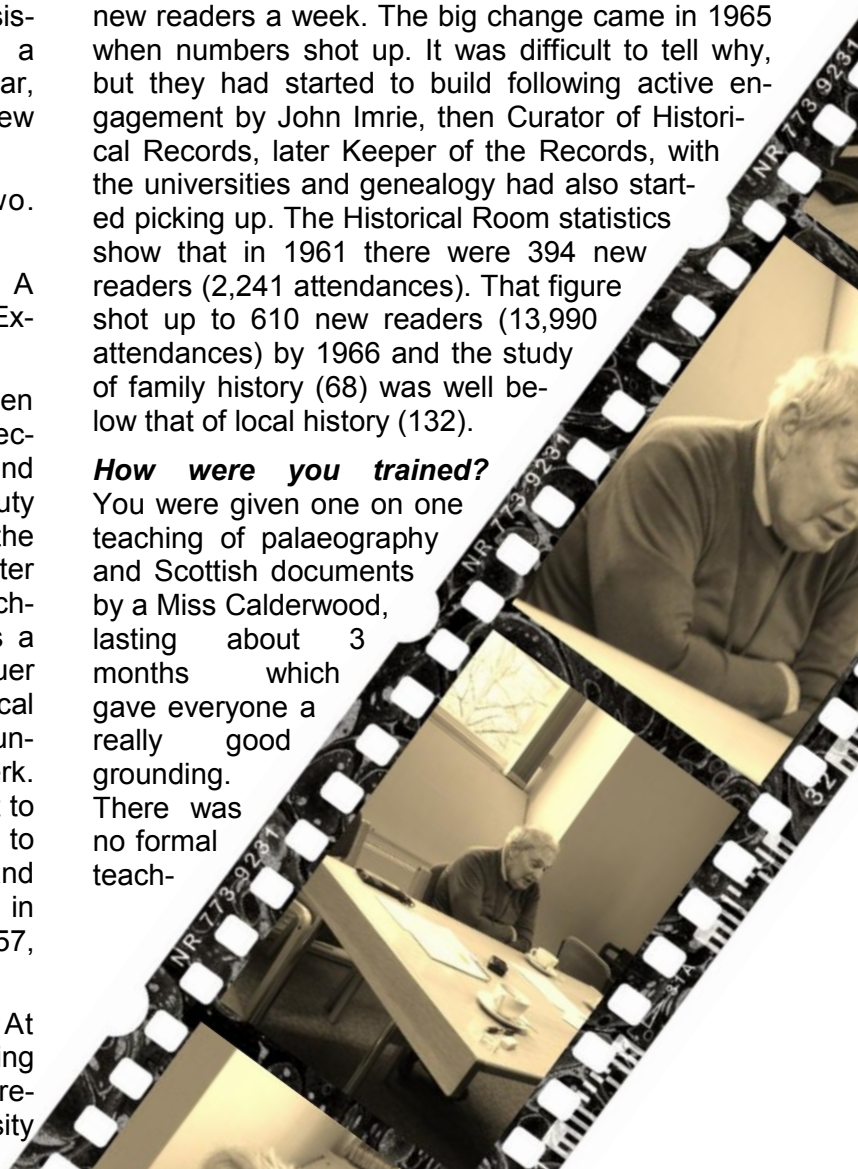
How did the public get to see the records? At the time we were much more relaxed about letting people see and have access to documents. I remember taking a lecturer from Glasgow University

(Bruce Webster) to a corner room of GRH that contained a parchment haystack of unsorted documents stored on shelves. He spotted something that we thought were 18th century records which turned out to be a 15th century Exchequer roll. Such practices would be frowned upon today.

How did you deal with the public? If a reader came into the Historical Search Room (HSR) I pretended to be busy because of my limited knowledge of Scottish history. Catalogues were not on public view, only the printed indexes and published books on records were made available, so readers relied on the expertise and knowledge of the archivist. Larger catalogues were locked away in a cupboard, smaller catalogues were recorded in The Deposited Muniments Book controlled by McInnes. He would sit in a glass fronted room (nick-named the Fish Tank) and peer out to see what we were doing. Any new reader was always directed to him first and he would determine what records might be of use to them and what they could have access to. The welcome to the HSR was limited and the only facility provided for readers was a coat rack. Readers even had to be escorted to the toilets, access to which could only be gained through a staff room.

How many readers would there be? Staff always outnumbered readers. There were six Assistant Keepers, an executive officer, a clerical officer and 2 paperkeepers in the HSR. Readers were mainly regular clients, with perhaps two or three new readers a week. The big change came in 1965 when numbers shot up. It was difficult to tell why, but they had started to build following active engagement by John Imrie, then Curator of Historical Records, later Keeper of the Records, with the universities and genealogy had also started picking up. The Historical Room statistics show that in 1961 there were 394 new readers (2,241 attendances). That figure shot up to 610 new readers (13,990 attendances) by 1966 and the study of family history (68) was well below that of local history (132).

How were you trained? You were given one on one teaching of palaeography and Scottish documents by a Miss Calderwood, lasting about 3 months which gave everyone a really good grounding. There was no formal teach-



ing of cataloguing where you were given an established AK as mentor. John Imrie and Peter Goldesborough were very helpful to their trainees, but I was landed with Andrew Anderson who couldn't really be bothered. However, I made up for it when I followed McInnes' advice to take a set of keys and explore the Historical Room cupboards and various storage rooms. Effectively I was encouraged to "go and look" for myself, which I did, particularly if I got bored in Historical. I was conscious of the wealth of public records that was available, much of them untouched. There was no need to develop any business case back then, you simply went to explore them. It was your own drive and determination to find out more that developed your expertise of records and knowledge of Scottish history.

What are the main changes that have occurred in the sector? The main change is that back then historical records were seen as anything over 100 years old. There has been a shift in emphasis to modern records and proper records management (RM). In the 1950's RM was an alien concept. I remember John Imrie, my predecessor as Keeper, bringing someone in from America to talk to us about it. RM was very much a foreign idea. Another big change is that the NRS is no longer the sole archive office in Scotland. Sir James Fergusson took in everything as there was no scope to place archive collections elsewhere. Local government units were too small. Though Edinburgh had an 'archive' it was just a lady who looked after records, not a qualified archivist. Glasgow set up the first proper archive service with the appointment of Richard Dell. The big impetus for change for archives came with local government re-organisation in 1975.

How has the sector developed since you began your career? The shift to records management. Also the impact of IT, not something we ever had to consider when I first started. Changes also to the type of person coming into archives. NRS now has a much better career structure, particularly for non-graduates, and the job pool across the sector is much larger than it used to be.

Anything not so good? While recruitment has widened, it is no longer necessary to have Latin. In my day that was a pre-requisite. My concern is that some archivists who deal with older records cannot read them and struggle to interpret them. I feel that the specialist traditional skills of archivists are deval-

ued. I also felt that, when repository assistant grades were abandoned by the Treasury and NRS lost its own cleaners. John Imrie, myself and Patrick Cadell kept cleaning in-house and Patrick managed to show that it was cost-effective, but the cleaners ceased to be established civil servants with pension rights. It diminished security and the pride that people, at all levels, took in their work. Finally, I don't like the use of the terms "customer" when referring to readers and "Chief Executive" of the NRS. I much prefer the original titles of "Keeper of the Records of Scotland" and "Registrar General for Scotland". A Chief Executive could be head of anything.

What has been the highlight of your career? There are so many. On the buildings front, knowing that funding for Thomas Thomson House had been agreed just before I retired. That meant that the storage of the nation's public records was secure for many years to come. Also, on a smaller level, building the connecting corridor from the Historical Search Room to the Robertson Wing, something we were told would not be permitted. My one regret is that we were unable to retain the old Sasine Office building on James Craig Walk. Plans had been drawn up for SRO to take over that building, but at the last minute the Scottish Office moved in instead. It would have eased storage and permitted the location of more records in the city centre.

Have you any advice for people about to embark on a career in archives? It's worth it. There will be moments of intense boredom, but I am reminded of a quote by Sir James Fergusson "You learn something new every day".

Do you have a favourite record or story? In terms of documents, there are so many – all of them reflecting very human stories. One, a personal covenant by an Edinburgh merchant, records the main events of his life. He remarked that things could have turned out worse. One of my favourite stories concerns a retired curator, J Maitland Thomson, who was a wee man and would visit the Historical Room with his dog. He kept the dog on a leash and when he went to a cupboard to look at records, sometimes he would climb a ladder, forgetting that the dog was still attached and drag the poor beast up after him.

By DR ATHOL MURRAY
In conversation with Bruno Longmore & Hugh Hagan
National Records of Scotland





SEASON'S GREETINGS

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