



## **Press Release**

5 September 2007

### **Archives join forces to celebrate human rights**

The Archive Awareness Campaign ([www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com)) launches today with hundreds of archives across the country planning special events to celebrate the history of human rights in the UK.

The theme of the 2007 campaign is 'Freedom and Liberty', looking at the struggle for rights in history, including the Chartists, the Suffragettes and the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade.

This year archives are reaching out to audiences of all ages and ethnic backgrounds and have teamed up with artists, theatre and community groups to help make their material more fun and accessible

Learn about Britain's history of gay rights activism at *1967 and all that*, a travelling exhibition in archives telling the story of the decriminalisation of homosexuality. Discover the link between your region and the slave trade at talks and events such as Hertfordshire Archives' *Hidden History* workshops or London Metropolitan Archives' Slave Walks. Visit the Women's Library and find out about the unsung heroines behind feminism.

Jonathan Pepler, Chairman of the National Council on Archives, said: "The Archive Awareness Campaign offers something for everyone and gives people a unique chance to play detective and reinterpret the past themselves.

“This year archives will explore the more hidden history of the UK and are highlighting documents which haven’t been as visible in the past. Almost every region has a connection to the slave trade, for example, and your local record office is the place to find it.”

Paul Carter, historian at The National Archives, said: “Everyone can find something relevant to them in an archive. Looking at authentic materials offers immediate access to Britain’s history of ordinary people who fought for many of the rights and freedom we take for granted today.”

Special websites are offering access to newly digitised material, including the Parliamentary Archives’ slave trade registers ([slavetrade.parliament.uk](http://slavetrade.parliament.uk)) and The National Archives’ Human Rights online exhibition ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/humanrights](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/humanrights)).

Events run throughout the autumn and are listed on:  
[www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com).

Many archival projects have received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, which is supporting schemes aimed at reaching new audiences.

**- Ends -**

For further details, case studies, spokespeople or images on Archive Awareness Campaign please contact Elise Oliver, Archive Awareness Officer, on 020 8392 5237 or [elise.oliver@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:elise.oliver@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

## Notes to editors:

**Archive Awareness** is spearheaded by the National Council on Archives ([www.ncaonline.org.uk](http://www.ncaonline.org.uk)) and funded by The National Archives ([www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council ([www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk))

Archive Awareness Campaign was originally designed to address the issues of **under-representation of UK archives**, especially in comparison with the museum, gallery and library sectors. The campaign began with 'Archive Awareness Month' in September 2003 and since then has taken place over a longer period in the autumn. Visit [www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com) for more details.

## Archive facts:

- There are 1,999 archives in the UK
- More than 2 million people in England visit an archive at least once a year
- Use of archives has doubled in the last 10 years
- Archives have received over £150m in Heritage Lottery Fund grants since 1994
- Local authority archives in England and Wales hold over 30,000 cubic metres of information

## Examples of Archive Awareness 2007 Freedom and Liberty Projects (Spokespeople from each project available)

### **Anti-Slavery International's Recovered Histories Project**

*Recovered Histories* ([www.recoveredhistories.org](http://www.recoveredhistories.org)) provides insight into the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the struggle between those seeking to maintain the trade and those fighting for its abolition.

Containing over 40,000 digitised pages of literature on the slave trade, *Recovered Histories: Reawakening the narratives of enslavement, resistance and the fight for freedom*, makes Anti-Slavery International's collection of literature on the Transatlantic Slave Trade widely available on the internet for the first time.

### **1967 and all that**

*1967 and all that* will improve access to and raise awareness of important archival collections that record the hidden history of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities in Britain. The project will be a joint venture led by the Lesbian and Gay Newsmedia Archive (LAGNA) housed at Middlesex University, and the London School of Economics (LSE) Archive. A travelling exhibition will be created to promote the awareness of the importance of LGBT history as well as telling the story of the campaign

for decriminalisation. There will be talks to community groups and non-heritage organisations and a mapping project will identify previously untapped sources relating to LGBT history held in private or public collections.

### **Cotton Threads: Bury's Industrial Links to Slavery**

The project *Cotton Threads* is aimed at broadening the audience to Bury Museum and Archive Service. Using key material from their collection two formal learning resources will be created which will be aimed at key stage 2 and 3. The project will focus on key themes from 1850 such as the transatlantic trade with slavery still in existence in the USA, local cotton production and working conditions and domestic consumption. Material will also be digitised and made available on a website with a linked online catalogue.

The website will be an interactive resource with the content also available on the museum touch screens. There will also be a display of the material from the museum and archive to tour local libraries.

### **Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies: Remembering Slavery in 2007: Hidden Histories Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies**

A countywide project in partnership with museums, libraries, BME groups, Herts University, schools, local history and community groups to research three areas: Links between Hertfordshire estates and slavery (wealth from plantations); Abolition and abolitionists (including Thomas Clarkson); Names and family histories of slaves who came to Herts (earliest is 1570 in Cheshunt). Outcomes will be refurbishment of Thomas Clarkson memorial, a touring exhibition (including overview of slavery from Roman times to present day), booklet, heritage trail, writer in residence, talks and events. The project will aim to show how understanding the past can change the future