



The National Archives

Date: 25 June 2008

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## **Self-service society drives The National Archives transformation**

The National Archives has just completed a £4 million transformation of its reading rooms to accommodate its family records service, setting a new standard for archives in a digital age.

The National Archives' new facilities bring together all of their family history and historical assets into a one-stop-shop of online resources, with practical face-to-face support to help researchers make the most of the wealth of information available.

Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive says, "Our goal is to bring history to life for researchers, whether they are in our reading rooms or online. We are leading the world in online delivery – last year 85 million of our records were downloaded, and for every one document delivered in our reading rooms, we deliver 150 online. Our customers tell us, that in addition to superb online services, there's huge value in accessing experts and resources in one place. These new facilities at Kew show that we're committed to meeting the evolving needs of 21st century researchers".

With vastly increased online access and seating capacity in the new open plan reading rooms, visitors can search online sources, microfilm and the world-class research library. Experts give lectures in the new talks rooms on subjects inspired by the records themselves or simply on how to research

family history. Lectures are uploaded as pod-casts and visitors' personal insights on files are shared on 'Your Archives' wiki, so this expertise is made available to those working at home or in the office. Access to expert advice has never been easier, wherever you are.

The newly re-opened and re-designed museum adds another dimension. From medieval parchment to contemporary podcast, it gives a snapshot of The National Archives' role as guardian of the nation's memory. At the museum's centre sits Domesday, the iconic and oldest public record from the days of William the Conqueror in the 11th century. Radiating around the centrepiece are stories of how secret documents are made public and tales of spies, conspirators and family history.

Ends

### **Notes to Editors**

- The National Archives opens its new facilities on Wednesday 25 June 2008
- Photography and spokespeople will be available

### **Opening times**

Mondays and Fridays, 9am – 5pm

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9am – 7pm

Wednesdays, 10am – 5pm

Saturdays, 9:30am – 5pm

Sundays – closed

### **Facts and figures**

- Documents line 170km of shelving at The National Archives, with approximately 2km added every year
- In total, its repositories hold just over 10 million documents
- The National Archives' digitisation programme has seen the number of online downloads per year go from zero to 85 million in seven years.
- For every paper document delivered to researchers in our reading rooms 150 are delivered online

### **About The National Archives**

- The National Archives is a UK government department and executive agency of the Ministry of Justice
- As the official archives of the UK government, it preserves and protects one the most important collections in the world, holding public records dating back almost 1,000 years
- Preserving important historical documents forms only a part of its innovative and wide-ranging work. It holds information, but more than this, actively promotes and encourages public access to that information, both onsite and online
- It manages current, as well as historical information, publishes all UK legislation and official publications and promotes and regulates the re-use of public sector information
- The National Archives formulates and supports information policy implementation and best practice, improving government's capability when securely creating, using and storing information. It devises new technological solutions for keeping government records readable
- It supports and acts as leading advocate for the wider archive sector