



## **Press Release**

04 April 2003

### **Kew Welcomes New Gateway to British History – The National Archives**

The Public Record Office, Kew, joined together with the Historical Manuscripts Commission to form a new organisation - The National Archives on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

The National Archives marked its launch by hosting an international conference in Kew from 2 to 4 April on "Practical Experiences in Digital Preservation". The keynote speaker was Rosie Winterton MP, Parliamentary Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department. She announced a new digital archive system at The National Archives which has been created to store, preserve, and provide access to government records created in electronic form – such as emails, web pages and databases. Local readers will now be able to access this information from the reading rooms at Kew and there are future plans for these digital records to be available to the public over the Internet.

The National Archives also revealed it has successfully collaborated to preserve the content of the BBC Domesday project which has often been cited as an example of the problem of digital preservation. BBC Domesday provides a unique snapshot of life in the 1980s. It will become an invaluable resource available for future generations of users to view at The National Archives.

The National Archives is open Monday, Wednesday, Friday, Saturday 9.30am – 5.00pm and Tuesday and Thursday 10.00am – 7.00pm. Visitors to the museum at The National Archives will be able to view many fascinating documents from the original Domesday Book to Edward VIII's abdication letter.

### **Notes for Editors**

- 1. The National Archives** for England, Wales and the United Kingdom acts as the custodian of the nation's collective memory as revealed in the records of government. It also collects and disseminates information about archives relating to British history wherever they are held. The National Archives is open to the public to carry out research 6 days a week. It holds over 1000 years of documents including sources for family history research.
- 2. The Public Record Office (PRO)**, [www.pro.gov.uk](http://www.pro.gov.uk), founded in 1838, administers the UK's public records system under the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967.
- 3. The Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC)**, [www.hmc.gov.uk](http://www.hmc.gov.uk), was set up in 1869 by Royal Warrant to discover and disseminate information about archives held in private and institutional hands. In 1959, under a new Royal Warrant, it became the central advisory body on archives. The HMC now provides free expert advice to owners, custodians and users of archives throughout the UK. They include central and local government, universities, business and industry, many other individuals and institutions, and a range of public and private grant-awarding bodies.