



Open meeting on Kew 2008 held at the FRC on 18 January 2007

Lee Oliver gave a presentation previously given to the Kew 2008 User Advisory Group and to an open meeting for Kew readers.

Questions and answers:

Q: How many staff will be on duty at the enquiry desk?

A: We don't know yet, but more than are at the FRC, plus standbys.

Q: Can you do anything to improve public transport at Kew?

A: We probably can't influence transport providers but will talk to Kew Gardens, which has 7 million visitors per year. We will publicise the different routes, including various buses and fast trains to Richmond. It would be prohibitively expensive for TNA to provide a shuttle bus. The A205 is too narrow to accommodate a public transport bus route going past Ruskin Avenue.

Q: Which microfilms will no longer be available on open access at Kew?

A: This will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The census microfilms/fiche will definitely be available.

Q: Will the opening hours at Kew be extended?

A: We have no plans to change the current hours.

Q: Will one still need a reader's ticket to use Kew?

A: Only to consult original documents.

Q: Will the FRC family history talks be continued at Kew?

A: Yes, we plan to have a dedicated talks room within the reading room and daily talks.

Q: Will there be more car parking spaces at Kew?

A: Probably not: it is government policy to discourage use of private cars. We may provide an extra coach bay, and we plan to lift the current restrictions on numbers of coach parties.

Q: How big will the open reading room at Kew be, and how dense will the seating be?

A: It will be bigger than the FRC reading room, with similar density.

Q: Will all the FRC computers go to Kew?

A: Yes, and it may be necessary to provide even more.

Q: Will post-1858 wills be going online?

A: These are not TNA records, but we understand that the Court Service is currently producing an online index.

Q: What about BMDs?

A: The indexes are being digitised by the GRO's DOVE project. The index will be available on the internet.

Q: Some PCC wills cannot be found online. How will these be made available at Kew?

A: It is, and will remain, possible to request microfilms or original documents when the information required cannot be found in any other way.

Q: Will other record series such as PROB 6, PROB 8 and IR 26 be digitised?

A: These are included in TNA's digitisation plans.

Q: 1881 is the only online census available free of charge offsite. Will the others become available in this way?

A: It is unlikely, as 1881 was a voluntary project funded by the LDS Church. The other censuses have been digitised as commercial projects.

Q: How much disruption will there be to services at Kew while the changes are made?

A: We will keep disruption to a minimum, though it may be necessary to close for a short period.

Q: Will Kew be able to cope with the increased numbers of users?

A: We are planning to ensure that it will.

Q: Are all FRC staff going to Kew?

A: They have all been offered a job and we hope that as many as possible will transfer to Kew.

Q: Will the service at Kew be as user-friendly as the FRC?

A: That is our intention.

Q: What is the future of the GRO service at FRC?

A: GRO has announced this week that it will be withdrawing from the FRC at the same time as TNA ie by 31 March 2008. The index books which have not been digitised by then will be housed at Kew as an interim measure, but they will not be on open access and will only be made available if researchers cannot find the information they require using the online and microfiche versions. The new index when finished will be more accurate and more complete so the books will be redundant. It will be possible to order certificates online at Kew but there will be no collection service.