

ARCHIVE EXPLORED

PRESS RELEASE

Archives sector in UK and Ireland launch biggest ever public awareness campaign

- Archives in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales are holding a range of talks and events, and online and in-house exhibitions during the week of **16-22 November 2013** to highlight their collections
- Archives will share amazing stories to allow the public to discover the facts, the places and people at the heart of our communities
- Fascinating content to read, touch and explore on display
- Material to inspire - whether you are interested in family or local history, fashion, sport, music, art, food or even UFOs
- Archives will create 'Story Boxes' to introduce people to historical tales and scandals through key records and artefacts from their collection*

Local, university, business, specialist and national archives throughout the UK and Ireland are inviting the public to experience, understand and take pride in the wealth and variety of material held in archives as part of a brand new campaign launched this November.

The campaign

[Explore Your Archive](#) highlights the essential and inspiring role of archives and brings to life some of the individuals, the tales and the adventures waiting to be explored in archives throughout the UK and Ireland.

The campaign encourages the public to discover the stories that are at the heart of their communities and their identities. It will inspire new visitors to visit archives to share the excitement and passion of finding unique treasures, historical records and artefacts.

The Explore Your Archive campaign ambassadors – all lifelong users of archives - include **Lord (Paddy) Ashdown**; historian, **Antony Beevor**; Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Archives and History; **Dr Hywel Francis MP**; historian, **Dr**

Tristram Hunt MP; academic and broadcaster **Professor Lisa Jardine CBE**; curator and cultural historian, **Dr. Augustus (Gus) Casely-Hayford**; Professor of History at Birkbeck, University of London **Joanna Bourke**, as well as actress **Sara Stewart** and curator and film maker **Leon Robinson**.

Academic and broadcaster Professor Lisa Jardine CBE who is supporting the campaign said:

“Archives are amazing. Without them we would not know this summer was the 'seventh-sunniest' summer since records began in 1910, nor would we be able to revisit -- as if we were there -- controversial and compelling legal cases from years gone by, like The Profumo affair, one of the most sensational scandals in modern British political history.

If you've never been to an archive, get down there now. Because I can tell you from a lifetime of working in them – you will experience pleasures and thrills like you've never known”.

Also keen to inspire people to discover the amazing stories within archives, Paddy Ashdown commented:

“Archives are treasure and I always feel I'm on a treasure hunt, going down into the past. And sometimes if you're lucky that wonderful Eureka moment arrives – you come across the gem you've been looking for”.

As part of the launch, many archives across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales are encouraging the public to visit their services to begin their own journey of discovery and take part in events centred on their unique collections. They will also introduce some extraordinary people whose lives and stories have been discovered.

Events include:

- **'Coming Home' – the National Railway Museum's** series of talks on wartime ambulance trains – through oral histories, photographs and drawings of ambulance trains, nurses, soldiers, operating rooms, poison cupboards, padded cell compartments and much more.
- **Victoria and Albert Museum's** behind the scenes tour looking at the recently acquired Vivien Leigh archive and Paul Scofield's Oscar for Best Actor; as

well as some of the colourful individuals and incidents that helped shape the Victoria and Albert Museum over the last 150 years.

- **SOAS, University of London's (The School of Oriental and African Studies)** exhibition on the 200th anniversary of the birth of Dr David Livingstone, explorer and humanitarian campaigner. Tying in with the exhibition, 'The life and afterlife of David Livingstone: exploring missionary archives', SOAS archivists will create a 'Story Box' based on a box of medical equipment used by Livingstone.
- **The National Cooperative Archive's** display of objects charts the journey of bringing tea from plantations to our pots. The display will also share their artefacts on George Jacob Holyoake – a worker cooperative, and founder of the term "secularism" in 1851 and "jingoism" in 1878.
- **Derbyshire Record Office's** Regency story boxes inspired by Pride and Prejudice and Sharpe novels. The boxes will contain tales of elopement, eye witness accounts of the Battle of Waterloo, ladies maid letters, caricatures of political figures and polite society all telling the story of life up and downstairs in Regency Derbyshire.
- And just in time for Christmas: **Wrexham Archives** will get into the pantomime season by sharing a fascinating collection of pantomime memorabilia and artefacts.

Treasures and untold stories

Among the many lives shared as part of the campaign are:

- Henry Rawlinson Carr, the first ever Black Inspector of Schools. **University of St Mark & St John** will showcase his register entries and materials relating to his training at the university.
- Dr Haygarth a physician at Chester Infirmary from 1766-1796. As a result of his work, Chester Infirmary was one of the first places to have specialist fever wards and a successful strategy to control the smallpox epidemics that threatened most urban areas in the late 18th century. **Cheshire Archives and Local Studies** will display Dr Haygarth's original manuscript papers

as well as *Minutes of the Board Meetings of Chester Royal Infirmary* which includes a quote dated 26 August 1771 that debates partition of beds on the fever wards at the hospital.

- Dr James Barry, an army surgeon of the 19th Century. After his death he was allegedly found to be a woman. **The National Archives** has a file of 'his' medical record.

Geoff Browell, Senior Archives Services Manager, King's College London said:

“Archives contain a wealth of stories - which individuals can explore for themselves and from which they can find information or inspiration. The thrill of discovery is at the heart of this campaign”.

Exploreyourarchive.org, the public website for the campaign, boasts a modern colourful design and includes features such as an archive locator with an interactive map, a live twitter feed promoting Explore Your Archive activities taking place in their area and a video gallery featuring the campaign's ambassadors.

Ends

For more information, interview requests please contact **Angela Owusu on 0208 392 5237** e-mail Angela.Owusu@nationalarchives.gov.uk

FACTBOX

- The oldest document at the University of Birmingham's Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections dates back to the **6th century**, and their clay tablets to **c2000 BC**.
- Norfolk Record Office has a collection of private correspondence of the Paston family of north-east Norfolk. The Pastons are famous for the **fifteenth-century** 'Paston Letters': the earliest surviving major collection of private correspondence written in English.
- Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow have items dating from **1602** relating to physicians, surgeons and dentists with connections with the College. They have the case book of Dr Archibald Young, civil surgeon during the **Boer War** along with tickets which had been used for tying to wounded soldiers. The case book is a book of descriptions the doctor was working on.
- Irish Traditional Music Archive has materials in original and copied forms dating from the **1700s** to the present day.
- Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies has the signature of Button Gwinnet, one of the 56 original signatories of the American Declaration of Independence who lived in Wolverhampton from the **1750s to 1765**.
- Kent History and Library Centre have the earliest known drawing of the French trapeze artist Monsieur Jules Leotard, wearing his leotard in **1861** – our common noun leotard derives from him.
- One of the weirdest items at Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre is a dead cat, which was found in a solicitor's firm, where it had crawled away to die among the paper files. It has effectively been 'mummified' by the dry atmosphere.
- Many of The Children's Society's (formerly Church of England Children's Society) former children's homes kept dietary diaries from the **mid-20th century** that list the food which was fed to the children each day. These included *Swiss porridge*, *banana jelly*, *junket* and *Spam fritters*.

Notes to Editors

Archives across the UK and Ireland are inviting the public to explore their archives to discover hidden treasures within from **Saturday 16 November 2013**.

Explore Your Archive has been developed by **The National Archives and the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland)** and is supported by The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), The National Archives of Ireland, The Archives and Records Association Ireland, National Records of Scotland, Scottish Council on Archives, The Welsh Government through its CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales division and The National Library of Wales.

*Archive 'Story Boxes' have been produced as part of the campaign to show visitors the potential of archives. They are a way for archives to introduce people to what they could find in archives.

Further information about the campaign and events taking place as part of it, can be found at www.exploreyourarchive.org

Follow the campaign on Facebook www.facebook.com/ExploreYourArchive and Twitter <https://twitter.com/exploreyourarchive>

Archives sector in the UK and Ireland

Archives hold the records and memories of individuals, communities, organisations and nations. They ensure accountability and good governance and make access to history possible. Archives look after and make accessible the records that hold the stories, facts, places and people at the heart of our communities. Archives underpin education, heritage, business and identity. There are more than 2000 archives of all kinds in the UK and Ireland. The largest archive is The National Archives, which holds the records of the UK government. Some archives are tiny; they may hold the records of a community group or a family. In between are local authority record offices, university and public bodies, private, religious and corporate collections.

Family and community history has never been more popular and archives are a dynamic and growing sector which is open to the public as never before. Programmes such as 'Who Do You Think You Are?' have helped millions understand some of the work done every day by the professionals who work in archives.

Each day, more archive material is made available online. Millions of people access material in this way. Particularly popular are censuses (the 1911 censuses are the latest available) and newspaper archives. A wealth of other material – music, art, design, photography, cartoons – is also available to view online. While a relatively small percentage of material held in archives is available online, we can all now do basic searching – particularly of births, marriage and deaths – online and then visit archives to delve more deeply.

Sector statistics

- The archive sector is believed to have the highest satisfaction rate of any sector. In 2012, 96% of visitors to archives rated the service as 'good' or 'very good' and 97% rated the helpfulness and friendliness of staff as 'good' or 'very good'
- There are around 24 million visits to The National Archives' website per year, 26% of them from outside the UK
- 5% of adults visited archives in England in 2012-2013**
- 13.1% of adults in England visited an archive or records website online in 2012-2013**
- Volunteers contribute a quarter of a million hours to archives in the UK and Ireland. The Archives and Record Association's policy on volunteering, widely supported in the sector, makes clear that volunteers can never do the work of professional qualified staff. Volunteering in archives is a partnership between professionals and volunteers from which both benefit.

*CIPFA Survey of Visitors to UK Archives 2012

**Taking Part – DCMS September 2013

What does an archivist do?

Archivists and record managers use their skills to identify, collect, list, catalogue, preserve and make available, where appropriate, records of all kinds. Decisions on what records are to be kept – and in what format – are made every day. Some archivists are working with historical records and artefacts; paleography (reading and dating historical manuscripts) may be a core skill. Cataloguing and researching are vital skills and most archives are open to researchers and/or the public, so customer service, advice and referral are important. Many archivists are involved in outreach, exhibitions and publications. Current challenges for those working in archives include digital preservation and how to take in and give access to material that was ‘born digital’.

Three archivists have shared their ‘a day in their life’ on the campaign website.

About The National Archives

For the record, for good...The National Archives is a government department and an executive agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). As the official archive of the UK government and England and Wales, The National Archives looks after and makes available to the public a collection of historical records dating back over 1,000 years, including records as diverse as Domesday Book and MI5 files.

Our 21st-century role is to collect and secure the future of the record, both digital and physical, to preserve it for generations to come, and to make it as accessible as possible. The National Archives do this by devising technological solutions to ensure the long-term survival of public records and working to widen access to our collection. It also advises on information management across government, publishes all UK legislation, manages Crown copyright and leads the archive sector. Since 2011, The National Archives has had responsibility for leading in the development of the archive sector in England.

About the Archives and Records Association (ARA)

The Archives and Records Association is the leading membership body for archivists, record managers, archive conservators and all who care about archives in the UK and Ireland. There are more than 2,000 members.

ARA serves its members through a programme of training and development, publications, conferences, networking and communication. It advocates widely for the sector. ARA is proud to offer awards which celebrate the works of volunteers in the sector and the contribution made by community archives. www.archives.org.uk

