



**Wednesday 21 January 2009**

### **NORFOLK PROUD OF A NATIONAL FIRST**

As America celebrates the inauguration of its first African American President, the UK can also be proud of the history that was made over a century ago when it elected the first ever Black Mayor in Britain.

According to recent research, the first Black Mayor in Britain was Dr Allan Glais(y)er Minns, elected in 1904 in Thetford, Norfolk.

Until recently, John Archer, elected as Mayor in radical Battersea in 1913, was thought to be the first black man to hold this title. However the '*American Negro Year Book 1914*' recorded that:

'In 1904 Mr Allan Glais(y)er Minns, a col'd man from West Indies, was elected Mayor of borough of Thetford, Norfolk'.

Allan Glais(y)er Minns was the son of Jonn Minns of Inagua, Bahamas. He was born on October 19th 1858 and educated at Nassau Grammar School. He later studied at Guys Hospital and became the Medical Officer at Thetford Workhouse and the Medical officer at Thetford Cottage Hospital. He became a member of the British Medical Association as well as the Norwich Medico-Chirurgical Society.

Allan worked tirelessly for his community, he was President of Thetford Horticultural society and was elected Mayor of Thetford from 1904-1906. In addition, he was a member of the Town Council and Director of Thetford Gas Company. In 1902 he wrote an article entitled 'Fresh Air and Common Sense', in Thetford's local paper, Thetford and Watton Times. He also wrote other papers and lectures on hygiene, literary and horticultural subjects.

Interestingly, it appears that there was a family trait of public service. For example, his older brother, Pembroke, worked as a doctor in the town and a sister, Ophelia Minnetta, lived in the town until her death long after Allan had moved away. In her will Minnetta leaves property and land which indicates that the family were reasonably well off.

Allan's eldest son Allan Noel who was a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps received both the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) and the Military Cross (MC) Incidentally, Allan's older brother also served on local boards.

**Rachel Farmer, Archives Support Services Manager, Norfolk Record Office**, said: “Norfolk is so proud of the history that was made over a century ago. Dr Allan Glais(y)er will always be remembered for an outstanding record of service to his local community. We recognise that his profile in Norfolk is gradually increasing and it’s appropriate that the first black mayor in the UK should have served in the very town where the author of the 'Rights of Man' was raised.”

**Angela Owusu, Archive Awareness Campaign Officer, The National Archives** said: “Personal archives are the living history of the past and present. At this momentous time, Dr Allan’s story serves as a great reminder of this. Archive Awareness Campaign is a chance for everyone to get involved with their own history and the history and future of their local community.”

- Ends -

For further details, spokespeople or images on Archive Awareness Campaign, please contact **Angela Owusu** on **0208 392 5237** or email [Angela.Owusu@nationalarchives.gov.uk](mailto:Angela.Owusu@nationalarchives.gov.uk)

### Notes to Editors

- For more details on Dr Allan Glais(y)er Minns contact the Norfolk Record Office [rachel.farmer@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.farmer@norfolk.gov.uk)
- Throughout Winter, to highlight the Archive Awareness Campaign [www.archiveawareness.com](http://www.archiveawareness.com) archives across the country are hosting special

events to celebrate the fantastic wealth of their collections and to bring to light the importance of archives as guardians of history.

- 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.