

The National Archives Makes Social Media Part of the Nation's Official History

- Videos and tweets archived online as the public record -

EMBARGOED UNTIL THURSDAY 8 MAY 2014 00:01 GMT – From today The National Archives will begin to archive tweets and You Tube videos published by UK central government departments from their official Twitter and YouTube social media platforms. This marks the culmination of a complex project to capture social media as part of the [UK Government Web Archive](#) and permanently preserve it as the official public record.

The new [online social media archive](#) contains over 7,000 You Tube videos and over 65,000 individual tweets from UK central government departments currently on Twitter and You Tube. The archived social media content being made available today was captured during the pilot stages of this project and contains videos that date from 2006 to early 2014 and tweets from 2008 to September 2013. It covers some major events in our recent history, including: The Birth of the royal baby, Prince George of Cambridge; London 2012 Olympic Games; The Queen's Diamond Jubilee and Andy Murray winning Wimbledon in 2013.

Clem Brohier, Interim Chief Executive and Keeper, The National Archives, said:

“Social media now plays an important part in government communications with departments using Twitter to clarify policy and You Tube to promote initiatives. So it was imperative for The National Archives to develop systems to support social media archiving and for these formats to be preserved as part of the official public record. This was no small task but we rose to the challenge. It is an exciting step for archives and history; with present and future generations being able to view tweets to understand events in history, just like we do with historic telegrams today.”

The National Archives is now able to capture ‘snapshots’ of Twitter feeds of up to 3,200 tweets at a time. Users can access the shortened links that appear within tweets and will either be directed to the web archive or be shown the full URL directing them to the relevant live site. The social media archive presents tweets with the code that comprises each tweet and the context such as the date and time of publication, making it a useful and comprehensive resource for future generations of researchers.

Since 2003, over three billion items that were published online by the UK Government, including web pages, documents, interactive games, have been archived by The National Archives as part of the [UK Government web archive](#) – and now with social media being added, this is set to grow enormously.

The National Archives worked with the Internet Memory Foundation to develop tools to capture the record in its original published context, preserving the content and making it permanently accessible through the [UK Government Web Archive](#). The project had to overcome many technical challenges that archiving social media presented, such as replicating the behaviour of the formats employed by the social media services to ensure the best possible user experience. The National Archives will continue to capture and archive tweets and video feeds from UK central government departments on a regular basis and develop the social media archive so that it is fully integrated into the rest of the [UK Government Web Archive](#).

For media enquiries please contact Rebecca Simpson at The National Archives press office on 0208 392 5277 or e-mail press@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Notes to Editors:

More details on capturing social media archive data:

It is estimated that the capture of new video content will take place on an annual basis. There is a 3,200 limit on the number of tweets that can be preserved at one time so a fixed timetable for when tweets will be archived cannot be given. However, there will be a minimum 2 month period between a tweet being accessible on the live service and the archived version being available. The National Archives will continue to monitor the volume of tweets produced by UK government departments and archive Twitter accordingly.

Images available:

- Tweet from @number10gov: #Royalbaby: An important moment for our nation
- Tweet from @number10gov: Andy Murray visits Downing Street following his historic win at #Wimbledon
- Tweet from @DCMS: Congratulation to @Mo_Farah ! His double gold takes #TeamGB's medal haul to 27 golds
- Tweet from @dpmoffice: Nick Clegg: I genuinely believe we will look back on today as a landmark for equality in Britain #equalmarriage

Available on Flickr (for publication use only): <https://www.flickr.com/gp/59260229@N06/3cLj81/>

Spokesperson available:

Clem Brohier, Interim Chief Executive and Keeper, The National Archives.

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, we look after and make 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. We do this by devising technological solutions to ensure the long-term survival of public records and working to widen access to our collection. The National Archives also advises on information management across government, publishes all UK legislation, manages Crown copyright and leads the archive sector. We work to promote and improve access to public sector information and its re-use.

www.nationalarchives.gov.uk www.legislation.gov.uk