

Title: Pilot Home Guard digitisation update

Date: 06 /09/2011

Presenter: Chris Mumby (Head of Commercial Delivery) and Alison Webster (Head of Strategic Projects)

Required Action: Update on Pilot Home Guard digitisation (see minutes of last meeting).

What the User Advisory Group are being asked to do / consider:

- To consider a revised list of fields within the Home Guard records for potential transcription as part of the pilot Home Guard digitisation project. The list was revised following a session at which User Advisory Group members viewed a sample of the records and made recommendations / prioritised fields for transcription.
- To receive a general update on the pilot Home Guard digitisation project. In particular, we will be providing responses to questions or issues raised by UAG delegates at the previous meeting or during the sample viewing session.

Background / context for discussion:

The Home Guard records are one of several series of historic service personnel records which the Ministry of Defence (MoD) currently have in their custody.

Although The National Archives' usual policy would be to take a representative sample of the paper records, it has been identified that this material is of sufficient interest that a viable solution is to create digital objects from the paper records, accession the records digitally and make them available in their entirety through a third party commercial licensee partner.

Licensing the creation of digitised material and making it commercially available online is a standard model. However, there are significant additional challenges in this case, one of which is that we will be accessioning the digital images rather than the paper documents themselves which we have not done on this scale before. This means that we have to be absolutely sure that the overall approach will work to the high standards required.

In order to test the robustness of our systems and procedures, we are undertaking a pilot digitisation project of a small sample of the Home Guard records. For the purpose of the pilot, we plan to deliver the service for searching and downloading images of the records to the public via our existing DocumentsOnline site, thereby testing and asking for feedback on the quality of the metadata and 'searchability' - not the user interface.

William Spencer, Principal Records Specialist - Military, Maritime & Transport made a recommendation for which fields within the records should be transcribed and we set up a session for User Advisory Group delegates to view a sample of the records in order to ratify, prioritise and make recommendations regarding our proposals. Feedback from individual delegates was recorded on a standard form and subsequently collated and fed into our revised list.