Cataloguing projects completed 2017-2018

C 101: Chancery Masters Accounts (c1700-c1850)

This series was initially input with just short title and no covering dates. An earlier attempt to catalogue was made which established the format to be followed but stopped after piece 189. Using volunteers we have catalogued the remaining records from the originals. There were 97 entries that had been missed from the initial cataloguing that have now been added, making a total of 6755 piece level and 10 pieces that have a total of 269 item level descriptions, giving full names of the parties (where given), the places involved, the name of the receiver, Chancery Master and places and counties as well as the dates covered by the accounts.

These can be useful in indicating subject matter for causes where our current descriptions for pleadings just have names, sometimes only short titles and give significant details concerning the management of both rural and urban property, just under 300 entries that refer to estates in the West Indies. There are also records of early cases dealt with under the Joint Stock Companies Winding Up Acts that give useful information on mid-19th century company development.

FO 800: Foreign Office, Private Offices: Various Ministers’ and Officials’ Papers

This project, part of our First World War centenary programme, has catalogued the private papers of a number of key figures in British diplomacy in the First World War era. These have included the papers of Foreign Secretaries Sir Edward Grey and Lord Curzon, who were responsible for taking Britain into the war and implementing the peace treaties respectively. These documents offer the counterpoint to our official Foreign Office collections and, due to previously very limited cataloguing, contain numerous undiscovered gems.

The project has catalogued 117 pieces adding 15,386 item level descriptions to the catalogue. In doing so it has opened up this vital set of documents for historians and students of the First World War.

HO 409 Home Office: Immigration and Nationality Department and predecessors: Indexes to Naturalisation and Denization (1908-1980)

Digital images of whole series (HO 409/1-32) have been added to Discovery with some improvements to the existing cataloguing, including minor changes to the restrictions on use.
PIN 26 Ministry of Pensions and successors: Selected First World War Pensions Award Files (1871-1950)

Catalogue entries for this series have been enhanced as part of a project supported by Volunteers, including the Friends of The National Archives. Previously these files were only searchable, in some cases, by surname and first initial and in most cases by surname and disability only. The new catalogue descriptions include the subject's military rank, full name, regiment and the disability for which the pension was awarded. The series is one of the best record series available to a student of military and medical history in the period as the records, in rich and uncompromising detail, illustrate the medical and financial consequences of conflict for those who served.

The re-cataloguing of the existing files in the series was completed in March 2017, but during the course of the project some previously unlisted files had been found and those have subsequently been added to the series.

The expansion of the catalogue descriptions allows the records in PIN 26 to be linked to the multitude of First World War personnel files at TNA. Furthermore, the ease of access to these records, via full name searchability and military rank, makes it much easier for academic service users to access the documents for use in socio-cultural and medical-historical projects.

CAB 6 Committee of Imperial Defence: Defence of India Memoranda (D Series), 1901-1939

All 6 volumes have been catalogued to item level, giving a description, provenance and date (as well as folio numbers) for each individual memoranda within the volumes. Previously each piece was simply listed with a range of paper numbers, for example, 1-50, and a range of dates. In addition, cross-references were given to the digitised (duplicate) copies of the memoranda, which from 1901 to 1914, are to be found in CAB 38, Committee of Imperial Defence: Photographic Copies of Minutes and Memoranda. The highlighting of this additional source is another helpful feature for researchers.

The enhanced descriptions effectively open up a series of records that give valuable insights into how Britain regarded India (in the first half of the 20th Century) as a colonial possession within overall military strategy. The CAB 6 records document the extent of the British military and political establishment’s preoccupation with threat posed by Russia, particularly the possibility of a Russian advance through Afghanistan. The strategic implications of new railway lines also receive a great deal of attention.

Improved catalogue listings for this series are a welcome addition in view of the 70th anniversary of Indian Independence (achieved on 15 August 1947), which prompted a fresh wave of historical interest in India’s history.

In 1933 an amendment to the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914 meant that under section 10(5) a woman, if not already British, was required to make a declaration within 12 months of the certificate of naturalization being granted to her husband if she wanted to acquire British nationality. TNA hold a name index to duplicate certificates of British citizen and they include declarations of acquisition of British nationality (DABN) made by alien women covering the period 1934-1948. However, because they are incomplete we were unable to offer a comprehensive search service and it was impossible to identify missing entries of alien women.

In order to enhance the service we offer the names of 27,736 married women have been added to the descriptions of certificates prefixed AZ or BZ. AZ and BZ certificates were issued under section 2 (Naturalization of Aliens) of the Act. BZ certificates include the names of children. All married women have been included, both foreign born and British born, plus those for the period of 1931-1933 to complete both sets of certificates. However, it should be noted that the index cards are the only surviving evidence of alien women who declared their British nationality. In the absence of an index card we can’t categorically state that a declaration was made, but we can be confident that all are searchable by name in Discovery.

CO 725 Colonial Office Aden: Original Correspondence

This project catalogued to item level the ten bound volumes (CO 725/1-10, 1921-1926) of correspondence on Aden that lacked informative catalogue description. During 1926, the Colonial Office began to organise its correspondence into subject files with informative titles, which already appear on the catalogue.

The whole of series CO 725 can therefore now be searched effectively by keyword, thus improving reader access to the earlier volumes. The project has added 778 item descriptions to the catalogue for this key period in the history of the Middle East.

PRO 30/55: The Carleton Papers, 1747-1788

The completed Carleton Papers now populate item-level descriptions of the content of 107 volumes (totalling some 10,735 items) in series PRO 30/55 in Discovery. The benefits of this project are: reducing the reliance on the rare printed calendar volumes as the main description and means of searching; and building TNA’s content relevant to international users and the history of other nations.

These papers are the personal records and correspondence of successive commanders in chief of the British Army Headquarters in North America. They represent the official notes of General Thomas Gage, Sir William Howe, Sir Henry Clinton, and Sir Guy Carleton as successive commanders in chief. They include some earlier records relating to American campaigns as part of the War of Austrian Succession, 1744-8 (known as King George’s War in the colonies). The main
collection concerns the American Revolutionary War and its immediate aftermath. They are named as the Carleton Papers because Sir Guy Carleton was the final Commander in Chief of British forces (at New York) before defeat in the War of Independence.

**HO 334: Home Office: Immigration and Nationality Department: Duplicate Certificates of Naturalisation, Declarations of British Nationality, and Declarations of Alienage, 1870-1987**

A further 5,800 expanded item descriptions were released onto Discovery in January, relating to the series HO 334. They refer to individuals who naturalised or registered their British nationality after 1948 and who were born in 1917. As they were born more than 100 years ago, the item descriptions include date and place of birth as well as full name and country of nationality. This cataloguing exercise will be an annual occurrence.

**C 10: Court of Chancery: Six Clerks Office: Pleadings before 1714, Whittington**

C 10 had been input to the catalogue in an alpha sequence, some had full descriptions and dates, others just short title and some no description or date at all. Using volunteers we have added detailed document descriptions and dates from the 14 volume Map Room Finding Aid. There are now 57505 descriptions, giving full name of the first named plaintiff and one or more full names for the defendants, sometimes noting that there are others in the case. These entries also give place and/or subject matter and we have added a plaintiff coding for some cases. We have added the document type to all the entries from OBS 1, created 322 new descriptions that had previously been missed from the catalogue and the entries have been sorted and reorganised into a numeric sequence. Some entries were in subsubseries, these have been moved into the main series to be consistent with other like series and the subsubseries can be removed.

C 10 is the last of the early modern Chancery pleadings series to be worked on making all the pleadings from 1384-1875 (C 1-C17) searchable in discovery with varying levels of data. This is a total of 1,090,555 catalogue entries, of that 321,728 (30%) have short title descriptions.

In addition to the above completed projects, the Catalogue and Taxonomy team have worked to reduce the backlog of unaccessioned records, improve ‘bad’ data within our catalogue descriptions, and participated in a number of enhancement projects in response to user feedback. Below are some selected highlights of work carried out by the team during this period:

The team handled 2,098 Discovery suggestions from members of the public. The suggestions generated the improvement of 6,979 record descriptions. We also
processed the opening of 1,079 records as a result of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests (workflow from the FoI Centre).

The State of the Catalogue piece of work tackles bad data in bulk proactively. In 2017-2018 bad data (non-unique references, blank dates or scope and content descriptions) decreased by 19%. We had identified 818,249 data problems at the beginning of 2017-2018; there are now 661,033 left. Series benefiting from this work for this period include the following series: ADM 52 Admiralty: Masters' Logs, SC2 Special Collections: Court Rolls, and CO 318, Colonial Office West Indies Correspondence.

TNA's historic backlog of un-accessioned records continues. By the end of this financial year, 75 further files of the Court of Common Pleas were sorted, catalogued and made available to the public for the very first time.