



NCA PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Coming together - The Formation of the National Archives – p1

The Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission are merging from April 2003 to form the National Archives. Chairman of the NCA Nick Kingsley commented *“this is without doubt the most important structural change for archives within the last fifty years”*. What could the benefits be? (Contact: Nick Kingsley, Chairman of the NCA on 01452 425299)

New Archival Legislation – p2

We are living in the information age. The Government has supported this through key legislation such as Data Protection and Freedom of Information. Wouldn't it be an irony if much of that information were to be lost for lack of proper provision to manage and protect it? We look quickly at the issue and ask, *“Is it time for a new Records and Archives Act?”* (Contact: Duncan Simpson on 020 8675 6652)

Archives Task Force – p3

Archives provide the bedrock for our understanding of the past, showing us - and future generations - how we came to be what we are as a nation, a community or an individual. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) has asked Resource: The Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries to take a close look at UK archives, demonstrating how this unrivalled but often neglected national legacy can be developed as a rich learning resource for all, a means of reinforcing our sense of local and national community and the nation's personal, corporate and public memory. What kind of opportunity will this offer? (Contact: Justin Frost, Resource on 020 7273 1477)

Joint Arrangements – p4

Some local authority archives have sought to build and maintain joint service agreements in an effort to create the kind of stability and sustainability needed to respond effectively to users. But just how successful are such ventures? (Contact: Katie Norgrove, NCA on 020 8392 5376)

Heritage Lottery Fund – Making a Difference – p4

The DCMS is conducting a review of the Lottery that will undoubtedly affect all five of its distributors, of which HLF is one. HLF is currently providing about £20m per annum of support for innovative and user-driven projects throughout the archive domain. HLF continues to be the main source of external funding for archives and we look at the real difference it is making by highlighting a selection of funded projects. (Contact: Alison Berwick, NCA on 020 8392 5347)

Access to Archives – p6

A2A is the English strand of the UK National Archival Network, the concept for which was first set out by the NCA in 1998. Its database at www.a2a.pro.gov.uk contains the electronic equivalent of over 400,000 catalogue pages and is supporting well over 100,000 searches per month. Initial figures also suggest that over 60% of users of A2A have never

searched an archival catalogue before. So how is progress going towards the target of a further 300,000 catalogue pages on-line by March 2004? (Contact: Alison Berwick, NCA on 020 8392 5347)

Review of Civil Registration – what’s the view of the family historians? – p7

The NCA is watching with interest the current Review of Civil Registration being carried out by the Office of National Statistics. The NCA endorses the need to cut down the chance of fraudulent use of civil registration data and would broadly welcome the prospect of civil registration records being designated as public records. However, the NCA has some major concerns about the process including the proposed transfer of original registers to County Record Offices without associated funding for their upkeep and the basis by which access will be made available to some of the data. But what do the representatives of family historians think of the Review? The NCA asked the Federation of Family History Societies for its view. (Contact: Katie Norgrove, NCA on 020 8392 53760)

Opinion Piece – Archives as Commodities? – p8

Is there a growing tendency for archives to be viewed as commodities to trade? If so, what are the factors that are bringing this about? We look at the case of the archive of Thomas Wilson, Boulton and Watt’s agent in Cornwall and draw some tentative conclusions. (Contact: Paul Brough, Cornwall Record Office on 01872 323125)

The 1901 Census on-line – p9

The PRO reports that the 1901 Census Online website has been back online since August 2002 at www.census.pro.gov.uk and that user reactions have been very positive. (Contact: Dr Elizabeth Hallam-Smith, PRO on 020 8392 5245)

Making Connections: Birmingham’s Black International History – p10

How can archives best strive to ensure their collections reflect local communities? Birmingham City Archives is working in partnership to develop a strategy for building permanent historical and cultural records of black people’s lives and experiences in Birmingham. The project leader explains more. (Contact Siân Roberts, Birmingham City Archives, on 0121 464 3362)

Hidden Treasures - Moving Image and Sound Archives – p11

Perhaps moving images and sound create the most easily understandable form of archival material. So how do we make sure we are looking after them and making them accessible? This question formed the basis of discussion at “Hidden Treasures” a one-day conference held at the British Library. The conference formed an important part of the NCA’s commitment to highlight the potential and needs of archives in non-traditional formats. (Contact: James Patterson, The Media Archive for Central England on 0115 846 6448)

Inspiring Learning – p12

Somerset Archive and Record Service is piloting a new framework produced by Resource to enhance learning and access opportunities within archives, museums and libraries. The pilot is already yielding information from users that will help to shape services in ways that help support better learning.

(Contact: Janet Tall, Somerset Archive and Records Service on 01823 278805)