



Norfolk Records Committee

Annual Report 2003-2004

Overview

In April 2003, the Norfolk Record Office closed its temporary premises at Gildengate House and embarked on its third major move in nine years. The Archive Centre opened at the end of October, and NROCAT, the Record Office's electronic catalogue, which was made available through public access at the same time, was launched on the internet in January 2004. A visit by the Queen in February 2004 crowned the year.

The Archive Centre

Keys to The Archive Centre building were formally handed over on 17 April. The move from Gildengate House began on 14 April, four days before the building closed to the public. It was completed on 10 July, exactly on schedule. Gildengate House and two outstores just outside Norwich were decommissioned in August.

A civic opening ceremony took place in The Archive Centre on 31 October, at which the Chairman of the County Council, the Vice-

Chancellor of the University of East Anglia and a representative of the Heritage Lottery Fund officiated. The building opened to the public on Monday 3 November. Feedback from the public to the new premises and facilities has been overwhelmingly positive: in both formal and written comments the words 'superb', 'excellent' and 'splendid' recur.

An official opening by the Queen took place on Thursday, 5 February 2004 and was commemorated by a plaque in the Long Gallery.

Accessions

262 deposits, gifts or purchases of documents were made during the year, compared with 312 the previous year. They include 8 accessions to the Norfolk Sound Archive. The average number of accessions each month doubled once the Record Office reopened.

One document had waited nearly half a century to return to Norfolk. This was a royal grant, in the form of letters patent of Henry VIII to Roger and Giles Townshend, of the Norfolk

properties of several former monastic houses. Dated 1543, the charter includes a portrait of the king and has the great seal attached. The document had been given to the City of Bath in 1916 and was originally offered to Norfolk County Council in 1954.



Above King Henry VIII, from letter patent granting estates of former monastic houses in Norfolk, 1543. ACC 2003/47

Another example of letters patent with a royal portrait, an engraved image of George III, came from the Norfolk Mental Healthcare NHS Trust, which deposited the charter of incorporation of the Governors and Guardians of the Bethel Hospital in Norwich, 1765. This had been retained when the other Bethel Hospital records were passed to the Record Office some years ago.

A vibrantly coloured map of the estate of Stephen Gardiner in Hales and Loddon, 1758, was among private state maps received. Others were of estates in Bacton, 1755, Blo Norton, 1773, Easton, 1776, and Tilney All Saints, 1813.

Records deposited from parish churches included those of Northrepps, 1558-1889, Sidestrand, 1558-1920, and Gayton Thorpe, 1575-1905. A volume of Upwell and Outwell parochial drainage accounts, 1657-1854,

which had long ago been estranged from the parish was returned to the Norfolk from Kent.

A collection of records relating to policing in Norfolk and Norwich amassed by Chief Superintendent Frank D. Slack includes a Norwich Police charge book, 1836-1838, and personnel record book, 1848-1879, and records relating to Loddon Police Division, 1844-1883, and Wymondham Bridewell, 1850-1866, among others.

Among business records received were registers of pledges kept by Messrs William and Geoffrey Boston of Norwich, pawnbrokers, 1892-1941. These record the names of customers and list the articles which they pawned.

Rye family additional correspondence, 1840-1923, consists of over 200 letters to and from the antiquary Walter Rye (1843-1929) and his relatives. They relate mainly to family events, but include some lively descriptions of Norwich and of Norfolk's countryside. A sketchbook of Jane Marian Kerlake of Brancaster Staithe, with watercolour sketches and notes recording the wildlife of the North Norfolk coastal marshes and elsewhere, 1921, appears to have been compiled for a Girl Guides' Naturalist Badge.

Research papers of Harry Apling form a substantial proportion of Norfolk Windmills Trust records, c.1940-c.2002, deposited by the Historic Buildings Conservation section of Norfolk County Council's Planning and Transportation Department.

BBC Radio Norfolk has deposited records dating from the early 1980s to the late 1990s in the Norfolk Sound Archive, including more than 1,000 reels of audiotape.

Copies on microfilm and fiche of census returns for Norfolk and the Lowestoft area (for which the Record Office holds parish records) were purchased from the Public Record Office and placed in the microform area of the new searchroom.

Cataloguing and stocktaking

While cataloguing of unlisted records has been limited during the year because of the move, further progress has been made in the conversion of existing lists into electronic formats. Out of a total of at least 7,000 *fonds*, or archival collections, held by the Record Office the CALM electronic catalogue contains 3,638. Of these, 2,571 have 'catalogued' status, which means they are accessible to the public.

The Norfolk Record Office's electronic catalogue (NROCAT) went live on 31 October in the NRO searchroom at The Archive Centre and was launched on the internet (<http://nrocat.norfolk.gov.uk>) in January. The A2A (Access to Archives) database (<http://www.a2a.org.uk>) includes around 2,000 *fonds*, many of which are also in CALM.

Improvements to packaging and storage continued into the period of the move. Many series of volumes were boxed for the first time, including long runs from the county records, Norwich City records and business archives. A new and comprehensive locations

database was compiled, mainly during the summer months while the Record Office was closed.

The usual two weeks' closure for stocktaking in November-December was cancelled in 2003 for the second year running in order to offset the reduced public access during the year.

Public Services

In the two weeks before the Record Office closed at Gildengate House, 462 visits were made to the searchroom and 2,310 original documents were issued. The public service was largely suspended during the months when the Record Office was closed, although a temporary searchroom service was available at The Archive Centre by advance appointment. This was open to researchers with urgent deadlines or who required access to records in connection with pressing legal and similar matters. 67 visits were made on this basis between May and October.

In the five months after the public opening, visits to the searchroom were made by 3,879 people (compared with 3,722 during the same period in 2002-2003). 10,109 original documents were produced, compared with 11,514 in the same period in 2002-2003.

8,776 postal, telephone and e-mail enquiries were answered during the year, compared with 12,389 in 2002-2003. However, the year includes a period of over six months during which enquirers were asked not to contact the Record Office except in matters of urgency. Numbers of enquiries after the reopening were 5,242 compared with 5,339 in the same period the previous year.

The Norfolk Heritage Centre in the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library was very busy during the closure of the NRO, and the booking system was extended to help with the management of increased numbers of visitors. Use of NRO sources at the Norfolk Heritage Centre is not recorded separately.



Above Cartouche from a Tilney All Saints estate map, 1813. ACC 2003/153

Conservation

Documents treated in the Conservation section included seven 18th- and early 19th-century estate maps, all of which were badly damaged by water in the aftermath of the fire in 1994 at Norwich Central Library building, the former home of the Record Office.

Six Norwich City charters ranging in date from 1345 to 1539 were repackaged in tailor-made enclosures made of semi-rigid foam

inside a board folder. The same system was used for letters patent of Henry VIII granting former monastic estates to members of the Townshend family, 1543.

Among volumes conserved were three registers of liquor licences relating to the Reepham area. A rental from the King's Lynn Borough Archives, 1697, was repaired and sewn into a new paper cover.

Education and Outreach

The Archive Centre generated considerable interest from a range of societies and other groups and 37 groups visited between September and the end of March. Most had a tour extending to the conservation studio and other back-of-house areas of the Record Office and saw a specially prepared display of documents. In addition to local historical societies and interested professionals, the visiting groups included people of all ages with little or no previous experience of archives.

In addition, 15 lunchtime tours of The Archive Centre were run in November and December for staff based at County Hall. A document handling session run by one of the conservators was opened to the public one lunchtime in the Green Room.

33 study unit packs and 10 local history packs were sent out to schools. New titles include *Homes for Keystage 1* and *The Victorian Market Town* for Keystage 3.

The Search is on...



Above Looking at a Hales and Loddon estate map of 1758. The map has been conserved and encapsulated in polyester to make it safely accessible to researchers. ACC 2003/57

A threefold Welcome

Dr John Alban (County Archivist), Cllr Richard Rockliffe (Chairman of Norfolk County Council) and Cllr Paul Brandon (Mayor of King's Lynn and West Norfolk) at the opening in the Long Gallery of the King's Lynn, 1204-2004 exhibition, celebrating the 800th anniversary of King John's charter.



Publications and exhibitions

A new information leaflet for visitors to the Norfolk Record Office at The Archive Centre was produced in good time for the opening, as was an Archive Centre leaflet which also covers the East Anglian Film Archive. The range of in-house leaflets has been expanded

The bimonthly NRO *Newsletter* continued to appear regularly throughout the year, despite the closure and move. The second of two issues of *The Archive Centre Project News* was produced in colour for the first time in October to herald the opening.

One membrane of the Broadland Swan Roll was loaned to the Victoria and Albert Museum for its exhibition, *Gothic Art for England, 1400-1547*, from October 2003-January 2004. Designs by Thomas Jeckyll for Colton National School, circa 1852 and for the restoration of the church of St Mary the Virgin, Wiveton, 1863, were loaned to the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture, New York, for its exhibition *Thomas Jeckyll: Architect and Designer* from July to October.



Above Conservator, Antoinette Curtis describes how conservation staff treated and repackaged the first royal charter to Lynn.

to 40 information leaflets and four guides and the existing titles were completely revised and updated to match the new ones. Two Conservation leaflets have also been updated.

A display of documents for the Queen's visit was concentrated, by request, in the searchroom. It included the early Broadland swan roll and other swan-related documents, items representing some of the major record-creators and depositors (including the Queen herself), and examples of recent conservation work and techniques.



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