

NORFOLK RECORDS COMMITTEE

21 April 2006

Item No:

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REPORT BY THE COUNTY ARCHIVIST

ANNUAL REPORT 2005-6

Overview

The award of Designation status by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council brought national recognition for the outstanding collections of the Norfolk Record Office, while additions to the collections have come in at an unprecedented rate. Public access has been provided for the first time to the Norfolk Sound Archive. The Salthouse register project has broken new ground in archive conservation and community partnership working.

Designation of the holdings of the Norfolk Record Office (NRO)

- 1 In October, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council awarded Designation Status to the entire holdings of the Record Office, described as 'the Archive relating to the history of Norfolk'. The NRO is the only country record office in the country to have all its collections recognised in this way.

Accessions

- 2 In all, 426 deposits, gifts or purchases of documents were made during the year, compared with 346 the previous year. They include twenty-three accessions to the Norfolk Sound Archive. Given the number and quantity of new accessions, selected highlights only are mentioned in this report.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council transferred its series of royal charters and grants of privilege, 1208-1836, together with the Hutch map and a seventeenth-century admiralty chart. Two Church of England parishes,

Bunwell and Martham, deposited records for the first time. Bunwell parish records include registers from 1551; churchwardens' and overseers' accounts and papers from the sixteenth century, constables' accounts, 1591-1676; and surveyors' accounts, 1655-1835. Martham's parish registers begin in 1588, and the records also include churchwardens' and accounts starting in the mid eighteenth century.

Manorial records received include Morley Hall court rolls, 1518-1707, an early seventeenth-century terrier of the manors of Gressenhall North Soken, Gressenhall South Soken and Gressenhall, and court books of the manors of Holt Market, 1728-56, and Holt Pereers, 1868-1932. Papers of the financier, Sir Robert Clayton, relating to the estate of Colonel William Cobbe at Sandringham, 1660-79, were given by the Queen.

A map of the manor of Diss, surveyed by William Tampon, 1637, is an exceptionally large estate map for its date, and highly coloured, with a decorative border and cartouche. A map of the of the manor of North Barsham belonging to the Right Honourable Horatio Walpole, 1741, by Thomas Hawkes of Wells, exhibits an early attempt to show relief by means of bold shading. Another outstanding addition to the NRO's holdings of estate maps is a volume of maps of the estate of Thomas Brown in North Tuddenham, Elsing, Swanton Morley and Lyng, surveyed by John Miller, 1730 and c. 1811.

Organizations which have deposited records include The Arable Group (TAG), based at Morley St Botolph. Minutes and accounts of TAG and its predecessors survive from the 1880s onwards. Records of the Broadland Singers and Junior Broadland Singers, c. 1958-c. 2000, include recordings from the 1970s onwards, correspondence, photographs of the choir and soloists, programmes, publicity material and news cuttings.

Outstanding among the personal papers received are sixty-five letters to Dawson Turner from John Sell Cotman and others, 1804-51. Writing impulsively to his friend and patron Turner, Cotman refers to his sketching tours in Norfolk, to projects including his Norfolk etchings, his admiration for Piranesi, his appointment as Professor of Drawing to King's College School, London, and a return visit to Norfolk in 1841, when he found Norfolk 'flints capable of once more creating a blaze in my heart'.

The extensive personal and family papers of Wilhelmine, Lady Harrod (1911-2005) reflect her work with the Norfolk Churches Trust and other conservation-related matters in Norfolk and beyond, and her wide circle of friends. Billa Harrod was the daughter of Captain Francis Cresswell, and the older family papers, from the early nineteenth century onwards, relate to the Cresswells, the Gurneys and also to the Boileaus.

Papers of Lucy, Lady Noel-Buxton, labour politician, 1930-c.1970, consist of correspondence and papers relating to her political life in

North Norfolk and Norwich, including parliamentary elections, at the House of Commons and campaigning for the Labour Party. A less public life is recorded in 'An Unimportant Chronicle', the Second World War diaries of John Hastings Turner, 1939-1945. Born in 1892, Hastings Turner moved to Titchwell in September 1939 with his family. His diary records domestic events, and also the national and international events in the war.

Two very different accessions of scientific records were received. A book compiled between 1785 and 1788 by Samuel Bunnett, a mathematical teacher and writing master at King's Lynn, contains worked exercises in spherical geometry, practical astronomy, geography and the construction of sundials. The research notes and papers, 1947-2006, of ecologist Dr Joyce M. Lambert (1916-2005) relate to a turning point in the landscape history of Norfolk in the middle of the twentieth century. Dr Lambert challenged received wisdom to prove that the Norfolk Broads were not formed by nature but were created as a result of medieval peat-digging.

Accessions to the Norfolk Sound Archive included recorded memoirs and interviews of the mid 1960s to 2003 collected and created by Norwich Rivers Heritage Group. These relate to working and leisure activities on the rivers Yare and Wensum in Norwich. Also linked to a particular project are recorded interviews, script and publicity material, 2004-5, relating to *Beyond the Breakers*, a play by Ivan Cutting for the Eastern Angles Theatre Company based on oral history of the Norfolk lifeboat services.

Cataloguing

- 3 Of accessions received during the year, more than a quarter were fully catalogued by the end of March 2006. Backlog cataloguing completed included a group of documents collected by the Hobarts of Blickling, fourteenth century-1915 (among them is a Wymondham town book, 1584-1621), Ashwellthorpe, Wreningham and Fundenhall with Hapton manorial records, 1660-1930, the diary of Jehosaphat Postle of Norwich, brewer, 1753-7, a Wright of Erpingham estate account, 1793-1819, a Kimberley estate map, 1827, a map of East and West Runton, 1840, a game book attributed to Revd John Lubbock, 1854-74, Thomas Bullock Primary School records, 1874-1978, accounts of Richard Rout of Banham, butcher, 1879-98, business records of R.H. Bolton and Co. Ltd, printer of King's Lynn, 1898-1965, and S. Thompson and Son, bespoke shoemakers of Norwich, 1929-50, and Neville of Sloley correspondence and papers relating to the Prayer Book Society and the Norfolk Churches Trust, 1972-80.

Catalogues added to the NRO's CALM 2000 electronic catalogue as part of the retro-conversion programme included all the remaining lists in the 'Minor Collections' series, several catalogues of estate and family records and some substantial lists of public records: St Andrew's Hospital, Thorpe St Andrew, Hellesdon Hospital (formerly the Norwich City Asylum), Norfolk Area Health Authority and the Drainage Boards.

At the end of March 2006, the total number of catalogue entries in CALM was 428,374, of which 403,945 have 'catalogued' status and are accessible to the public *via* the internet on <<http://nrocat.norfolk.gov.uk>>.

Public Services

- 4 Visits to the Record Office were made by 19,794 people, compared with 12,578 in 2004-5. 14,062 original documents (20,829 in 2004-5) were produced in the searchroom, to visiting groups, for copying or to answer enquiries.

13,889 postal, telephone and e-mail enquiries were answered during the year, compared with 13,161 in 2004-5.

Conservation

- 5 Conservation work was completed on the leaves of the first Salthouse parish register, c. 1538-c. 1713. As a result of being buried in the churchyard during the Second World War, the register had been so severely damaged by damp that it had been inaccessible for research for more than sixty years. Half of the parchment register was conserved before Christmas, using the humidification chamber, low-pressure suction table and techniques developed by the section to deal with water-damaged documents after the 1994 fire at Norwich Central Library. This enabled the NRO to invite the Salthouse History Group, which is funding the project, for a visit in January to see a comparison of the condition of the leaves before and after conservation.

Norfolk Sound Archive

- 6 Public access was opened to the listening room in the searchroom and thirteen visits were made. The Sound Archive also began promoting oral history and supporting the collection of oral testimony. Recording equipment was been acquired for loan to volunteers on the understanding that recordings will eventually be deposited.

King's Lynn Borough Archives

- 7 246 visits were made to King's Lynn Borough Archives, compared with 306 in 2004-5, and 587 (1,272 in 2004-5) original documents were produced in the searchroom or used to answer enquiries. Seventy-one (fifty-three) telephone enquiries were answered.

An exhibition of facsimiles, '800 Years of King's Lynn' continued in the Regalia Rooms until May. In the same month, a one-day programme of archival events was held at the Town Hall to mark the end of the year of celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the borough's first royal charter.

Education and Outreach

- 8 2051 people (1,364 in 2004-5) attended NRO events at The Archive Centre and elsewhere. A series of lunchtime talks and workshops under the title 'Unlocking the Past', timed to link with the BBC series *Who do you think you are?* proved particularly popular. A Family History Day, in conjunction with BBC Radio Norfolk, attracted at least 875 people to The Archive Centre on Sunday, 12 February for a programme of displays, talks, question and answer sessions and tours.

Seventy-six (eighty-four) groups, comprising 1,040 people (1,364) visited The Archive Centre for an introduction to the NRO, a tour and to see a specially selected array of documents. 17 talks given around the county by NRO staff attracted 658 people.

There was a good response from schools and others to two new resources available on the NRO website: 'Lord Nelson: Norfolk Hero' and 'Are we still in England?', relating to the experiences of wartime evacuees.

In a project called 'Learning Links', funded by the East of England Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the NRO worked with three teachers, four schools and eighty-six pupils, who used copies of documents to study local history topics, Britain since the 1930s and World War Two. Two schools also came into The Archive Centre for an archive experience day, including activities on making paper and creating illuminated manuscripts.

Exhibitions and events

- 9 *A Fine City*, an exhibition on the history of Norwich, opened in the Long Gallery at the end of June and continued until the end of September. It was succeeded in mid October by two separate exhibitions, *Sir Thomas Browne of Norwich* and *Lord Nelson: Norfolk Hero*.

In September, the NRO hosted the Society of Archivists' Conference, at which several members of NRO staff presented a morning session on disaster recovery, chaired by the County Archivist. As part of the programme, more than 300 conference delegates were given guided tours of The Archive Centre.