

# **TYNE & WEAR ARCHIVES SERVICE**

## **ANNUAL REVIEW 2006/7**

### **1 Introduction**

2006/7 has been a challenging year for the archives service. However, there have been many achievements, which have been detailed in the various sections of this report.

There was disappointment during the year that the second attempt at major funding for new accommodation, via the Big Lottery Fund, was unsuccessful. As the new year begins a full options appraisal will examine possible future directions for the service.

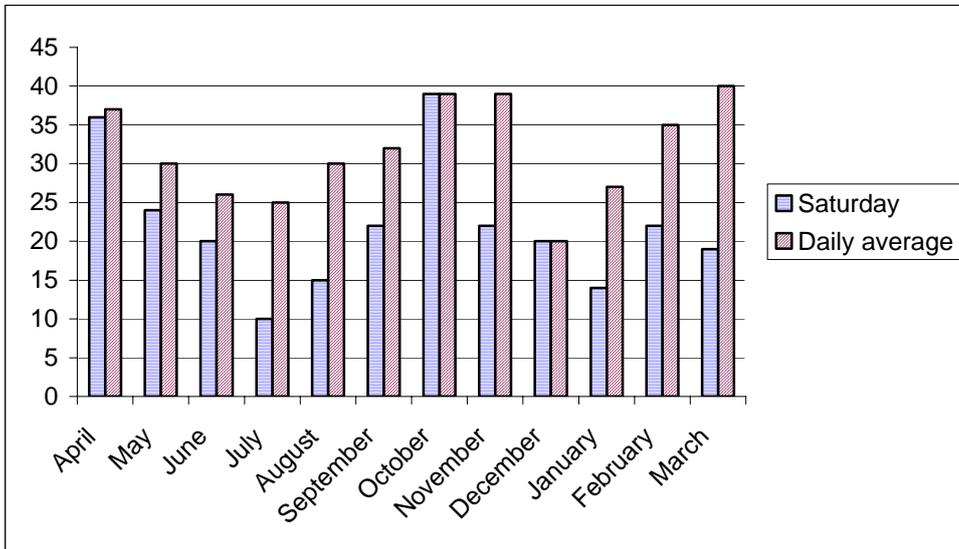
Largely as a result of the limitations with regards to accommodation, a one-star rating was achieved in the National Archives pilot self-assessment for local authority archives, and this seems unlikely to improve until this can be addressed. However, other aspects of the service that scored relatively poorly, such as written policies are being improved.

Reductions in the Archives revenue budget in line with recommendations for all the Tyne and Wear joint services impacted on service delivery as the majority of the budget is tied to building costs and staff salaries. In addition, extended periods of serious illness suffered by some staff, inevitably placed additional pressure on the service.

### **2 Searchroom and other public services**

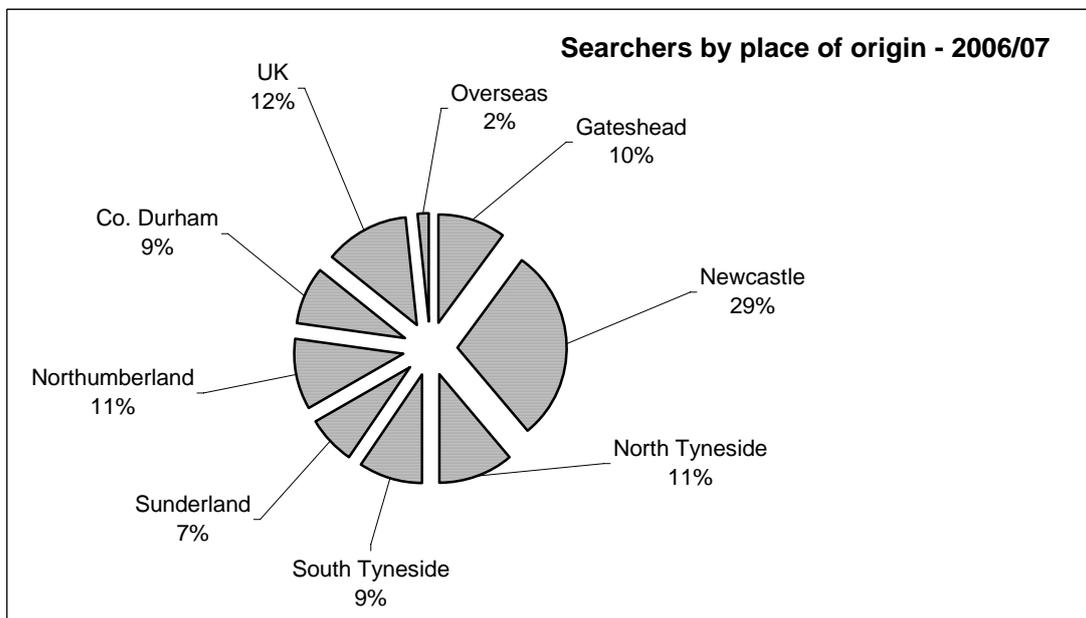
Direct usage of the searchroom went up by 18% this year, from 7105 to 8376, continuing the upward trend seen in the last quarter of the previous year. This is the highest ever number of personal visitors to the archives service.

The number of visitors on the open Saturdays has varied considerably. It was particularly low during the summer, but at other times has matched daily averages for the month. The July Saturday coincided with an England match during the World Cup, which may help to explain the particularly low attendance on that day.



The year saw the first full year of membership of the County Archives Readers Network (CARN). In 15 months we have issued over 2,000 full tickets as well as a large number of day tickets to those without sufficient ID for a full ticket.

The following chart shows the home address of service users. 68% of users came from within Tyne & Wear. The percentage from Northumberland remained higher than normal at 11% due to the fact that the Northumberland Record Office was closed from September 2005 to November 2006 in preparation for their move. Otherwise figures remain stable from year to year.



Users from Tyne & Wear (including groups) are broken down in the chart in Appendix 2 in line with the Best Value performance targets.

Use of the service's website has again increased exponentially with the number of hits increasing from 1.162 million in 2005/6 to 3.802 million in 2006/7. The target increase was 10%; the actual increase was 327%. The

average user spends over 10 minutes on the site and looks at nearly 10 pages.

During the year we answered 1,883 enquiries received by post or e-mail, very slightly more than last year. We also undertook 324 hours of paid research and supplied approximately 220 charged post mortem requests in connection with miners' compensation.

The searchroom team was pleased to receive a Gateshead Council Star Award for excellent customer service.

### **3 Collections**

We were extremely pleased that our shipbuilding and maritime trade collections were recognised as a nationally outstanding collection under the MLA's Designation Scheme in October 2006. Although this did not confer any immediate benefit we hope that the new status will help to unlock funding to provide better access to them.

By continuing to concentrate on completing small collections the percentage of all catalogues (including those not to current standard) available online increased from 65% in March 2006 to just over 68% in March 2007. A programme of producing collection summaries (collection level descriptions) online for large collections, which are unlikely to be catalogued or re-catalogued in the near future also got underway, and information on a further 3% of collections was made available. This is proposed as a new performance indicator to replace the old cataloguing indicator 100% achieved.

167 new catalogues, including both backlog and new material, have been completed in the course of the year. In addition a further 47 catalogues have had additional material added to them.

There have been no externally funded cataloguing projects this year. One bid, which would have resulted in a collection level description, was unsuccessful

The number of catalogue records created, measured against the target, was 9692 against a target of 8000.

We have received 126 separate deposits, transfers or donations of records in the past year. Although most of these were small they represented over 105 metres of records in total, with the records of the British Ship Research Association representing over 50 metres by itself. This was a national organisation, although based on Tyneside, but it proved impossible to find another repository willing to accept them.

Among the more significant acquisitions have been:-

- records of the North East Orienteering Association 1974-2004

- papers of Henry Russell and Theresa Science Russell, Newcastle councillors
- records of Jesmond Lawn Tennis Club 1888-2005
- records of Byker Advice and Resource Centre 1978-2006
- records of HM Coroner, Newcastle 1904-1991
- additional records of Sunderland Hebrew Congregation and associated organisations 1888-2004
- minutes of the British Ship Research Association 1945-1985
- records of Gateshead Congers Harriers and Athletic Club 1922-1969
- records of Pride on Tyne 1982-2005
- records of Newcastle Preparatory School 1891-2003
- papers of Commander Gladstone Blacklock
- records of Bergman's Public Relations Consultants work for Swan Hunter 1986-1994
- papers of the late Joe Clarke, local historian, mainly relating to shipbuilding
- historical documents presented to Longbenton Urban District Council, including copies of letters between John Buddle, Sir Humphrey Davy and Rev. John Hodgson regarding the invention of safety lamps for use in coal mines, 1814-1839 (transferred from Northumberland Archives)
- records of Newcastle upon Tyne East Conservative Association 1928-1970
- papers of Sir Charles Mark Palmer 1850-1879 (transferred from Gateshead Library)
- records of Sunderland Quarter Sessions 1907-1961
- records of the North East Assembly relating to the consultation on regional government 2001
- records of Newcastle Corporation Tramways c1900-1940s (transferred from Beamish Museum)
- digital files relating to the "Passion" project
- additional photographs and other papers of Jimmy Forsyth, photographer
- additional records of Coles Cranes and associated companies 1907-1983

With the help of the V&A Purchase Grant Fund we purchased at auction Dr James Williamson's diary of a whaling voyage on the "Lady Jane" 1835-6

#### **4 Conservation**

Long-term work has continued, including the Bell collection of plans. The collection of Sunderland Empire bills has now been cleaned, encapsulated and housed in three custom-made storage boxes.

Following the introduction of new procedures for providing better access to documents in a poor state of preservation, the conservators have had more interaction with users in the searchroom. Some documents can be consulted if handled with care by a conservator, who accompanies them to the user, or

if this is not possible the conservator can explain the problems to the user. The conservation of unfit documents that are genuinely needed for consultation can be built into the programme.



Members of the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport visit the conservation unit

The conservators have also been integral to the exhibitions programme, not only creating digital images of documents for display, but this year presenting original material. The *Chains of Office* exhibition included an original charter of Charles II and other documents, while the *Mauretania* exhibition included an 8 feet long deck plan, one of a set of four that all had conservation work carried out on them.

## 5 Education, Learning & Outreach

Statistics for learning and outreach events are given in the following table.

Type of event	Number of events	Number attending
Schools	36	818
Universities/colleges	17	319
Teacher training	4	78
Family history groups	12	236
Local history groups	8	108
Workshops	8	144
Other talks	29	734
Totals	114	2437

Among the more significant projects have been 'Everyone can make an Archive', which provided a unique opportunity for the archives service to work with experienced visual artist, Dougey Hunter, and writer, Aiden Moesby. Dougey and Aiden worked with Year 6 pupils from four North Tyneside primary schools: Amberley, Bailey Green, Moor Edge and Shiremoor. Using family and local history documents as a starting point, the children reflected on changes in their own lives, especially the process of transition to

secondary school. The project resulted in creative work which was exhibited at the archives service.

The Outreach Manager worked with two schools on the MLA funded Learning Links Placement Programme. Teachers from John F Kennedy Primary School, Sunderland and Richardson Dees primary School, North Tyneside researched and digitised images for their locality. These will become permanent image banks for curricular work and community programmes in coming years

The Lice Hunter website (<http://www.licehunter.org/>) launched in January 2007 records the remarkable career of Captain Peacock and the Louse Patrol on the Western Front during World War I. Peacock is one of the forgotten heroes of army medical history and his research papers have been used to emphasis links between history and science in the school curriculum. The site was designed by MAAD and part funded by Gateshead Grid for Learning. TWAS was delighted with the guidance given by Peter Bolger of Gateshead Grid for Learning on this project.

The Amy's War website (<http://www.northerngrid.org/ngflwebsite/amyswar/index.html>) was launched in February 2007. This site commemorates the bombing of the Market Place in South Shields in 1941 and includes a variety of interesting and demanding activities for Year 6 children. The site was funded by South Tyneside Council and Cultural partnerships.

The archives service contributed to two joint exhibitions with Tyne and Wear Museums. The first, *Chains of Office*, in July-August 2006 commemorated the centenary of Newcastle's Lord Mayor and saw the first exhibition of original material in a number of years with Charles II's charter to the city going on display at the Mansion House and the Discovery Museum. The Lord Mayor also visited the archives service with her mace- and sword-bearers. The second collaborative exhibition was for the centenary of the launch of the *Mauretania* in October. Further information on this can be found under Special Projects below.

In partnership with Tyne Bridge Publishing the archives service published *Victorian Villains*, a popular look at crime and its social background in 19<sup>th</sup> century Newcastle based on a volume of prison records including photographs. Research and writing was carried out by Barry Redfern, a retired police officer who has also done other volunteer work for the archives service.

## **6 Volunteering**

The volunteer programme has now been running for two years and has 25 active volunteers who gave over 1600 hours of their time. Over 1000 hours was spent indexing records, the creation of a valuable finding aid that regular staff have never been able to devote time to.

Volunteers have also been involved in delivering workshops and one workshop volunteer has since established his own history group. Another volunteer has produced a workshop designed for volunteer training in reading old handwriting.



Volunteers working together on indexing

A regular mentoring session in family history has been established on Wednesdays and both take-up and feedback have been very good.

Another volunteer produced an exhibition *Freedom & Liberty* as part of the *Remembering Slavery* programme. He is now inspired to do more research for his own personal project.

*"I have become caught up with doing the research into political/social movements in and around Newcastle during the lead up to the abolition of the corn laws. There is quite a lot of stuff in the local newspapers, my current favourite is the Newcastle Courant. There are reports of large Chartist meetings at The Forth during 1842, also there is a report on the formation in 1842 of a Newcastle unemployed workmens association. So as you can see there is lots to get my teeth into."*

A page on volunteering was added to the archives service website, including comments from regular volunteers on their work

*"I am fascinated by local and family history and like nothing better than poking around libraries and archives! At the moment I am checking two large volumes of Sunderland Police records from the 1830/40s. As you read these documents you don't know whether to laugh or cry. One poor lad gets a month in the House of Correction for stealing a turnip; a destitute tramp is given a few shillings from the poor box and sent on his way; a lot of people in Sunderland seem to*

*spend their time smuggling tobacco and brandy! It is a fascinating snapshot of a time and a place. Working as a volunteer at TWAS is also great fun. I have met lots of really enthusiastic, like minded people, who have a real passion for local and family history and who are always happy to share their interests and skills. I have learnt more about Excel spreadsheets in the last few months than I have ever done on the few courses that I have attended!"*

A disabled volunteer who comes once a week commented

*"You are always open to new things. In the Archives those things are old new things. You never know what you might learn. Plus it's a fresh change from the day to day routines of work. The people are pleasant and helpful. It's one more reason to get out of bed in the morning as you do something useful with your time."*

## **7 Visits & partnerships**

David Lammy, Minister for Culture, visited the archives service in September, when he was particularly interested in the work of the Legacy project. One story we had uncovered, of Charles Johnson, a black American-born watchman at Swan Hunter from the 1890s to the 1930s especially caught his imagination.



Andrea Macdonald shows archives relating to the recruitment of workers from the Caribbean to David Lammy

The Parliamentary Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport visited the archives service, along with the Discovery Museum and Beamish, in February as part of the enquiry into Caring for Collections. It was the first time many of the members had visited an archive and they were interested to learn more about how we operated.

Parliamentary connections continued in March when the archives service participated in an event *Treasures of the North* sponsored by the Yorkshire Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. Museums, libraries and archives from the three northern regions transported some of their iconic items to the House of Commons to show MPs some of the wealth of heritage to be found in the north. The archives service exhibited two photograph albums, one of the *Mauretania* and one showing the building and transportation of icebreakers from Armstrong's yard on the Tyne to Lake Baikal for the Trans-Siberian Railway. The event was well-attended by MPs.



Stephen Hepburn MP looks at photographs of the *Mauretania*

Three trainees from the National Museum, Khartoum, Sudan and two from Egypt visited in August, and the archives service also hosted an archives outreach worker from the National Archives of South Africa on extended placement with Tyne & Wear Museums, including facilitating a visit for him to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

The archives service worked with MLA North East and television presenter Carol Malia on the Archives Awareness campaign, tracing Carol's family history in the Byker and Walker areas and then back to Scotland and Ireland. She and her family were fascinated by the findings and the story was covered in her column in the *Evening Chronicle* as well as on BBC *Look North*. Hits on the archives service's website soared after the address was displayed briefly on screen.

## 8 Special projects

Andrea Macdonald completed her HLF funded post as Cultural Diversity Worker with a number of notable achievements during 2006 including:

- Building relationships between TWAS and BME community groups
- Two open days for BME community groups

- Work shops and events including: Engaging with archives and your heritage, a practical and discussion based workshop with young Muslims based in Newcastle's West End.
- Launch of the Legacy website [www.legacyarchives.org.uk](http://www.legacyarchives.org.uk) the first regional site dedicated to the history of cultural and more specifically, ethnic, diversity in the NE.
- New User Guide 24: Ethnicity and Migration
- Advisory role in regional Remembering Slavery project 2007.

The archives service was successful in getting HLF funding under the Archives 4 All umbrella for a year-long project to involve the community in the celebration of the centenary of the launch of the *Mauretania*. Colin Boyd, the project consultant, had an outstanding year. Achievements include:

- 32 talks to 892 people during 2006/7. This included six sessions with schools where he appeared in costume as Harry Bocler, Technical manager for Swan Hunters c1905.
- 56 *Mauretania* and shipping related enquiries, highlights included an enquiry about the "gardener" employed on *Mauretania* – there really was one to look after all the plants.
- A major find was a photograph album relating to the SS *Baikal* & SS *Angara*. These were the icebreakers built for the Russian Government and reassembled on Lake Baikal to allow the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway.
- Development of the *Mauretania* website, including a stunning gallery of captioned images; community memories of the ship and images of *Mauretania* memorabilia.  
<http://www.tyneandweararchives.org.uk/mauretania/index.htm>
- The Education section of the *Mauretania* website was developed by the Outreach manager and includes activities for art, English, maths and science.
- Joint *Mauretania* exhibition held September-November 2006 with Tyne & Wear Museums. Exhibits included the huge general arrangement plans for the ship, superbly repaired and framed by the Conservation team. Attendance counted by Tyne & Wear Museums was almost 73,000.



The opening of the *Mauretania* exhibition

## **9 Records Management**

The running of the records management service was reviewed, and a number of issues identified. It was nevertheless decided that the service should continue along the lines it has been taking for the past few years, with more resources devoted as far as possible to local authority clients. Approval was given to make a direct charge to Tyne and Wear-wide services using the records management service, and as the year ended a number of these were re-examining their current practice. This should prove more cost-effective both for the archives service and the service users.

In view of the decision to continue the service the ARMS software system that operates it was identified as a 'system critical'. Steps are underway to develop new software in 2007/8.

## **10 Northern Region Film & Television Archive**

The archives service remains a major partner, alongside Teesside University, and is represented on the board by the chairman of the joint committee and the chief archivist.

Activities in Tyne and Wear during the year have included a DVD *Moving Memories* produced in conjunction with the Tyneside Cinema in August, documenting life on Tyneside in World War II and two screenings at Benwell Library in March 2007 attended by 80 people.

Tyneside will be the focus of the new NRFTA DVD *Tyneside Tales*, which was in course of preparation at the end of the year.

*The Way We Were* broadcast on Tyne Tees Television made extensive use of NRFTA footage from across the region, and is now available on DVD.

The NRFTA also participated in the Northumberland and Borders History Fair in Hexham, showing film of Northumberland and Tyneside.

## **11 Conclusion**

In spite of challenges during the year the service has continued to make progress in many areas and continues to develop its services to users and potential users.

Priorities for the coming year will include

- Presentation and analysis of the commissioned options appraisal for accommodation and service delivery
- Continuing work on the existing collections to improve preservation and access as well as in preparation for a possible move

- Increased digitisation of content and uploading of images to the online catalogue
- Continuing work on electronic archives
- Partnership with NRFTA and the British Film Institute to provide improved access to archive film in Newcastle