



Press Release

19 October 2004

Love Spells in the Archives

Where is the potion that wins us our one true love? Why does the frog never turn into the prince? And why does it always end in tears when our friends send us on a blind date? We may be used to hearing Bridget Jones ask these kind of questions but matters of the heart were just as important to ordinary folk nearly 400 years ago.

According to a document held at Cheshire Record Office a magic spell, a drop of blood and a white wand hit twice on the left shoulder are the answer to all our prayers!

One Sunday in December 1612 Nicholas Jackson, a linen weaver from Allostocke in Cheshire, took up an offer from his neighbour to help him in his quest for love using peculiar means:

"he must pricke his finger next the little finger upon his left hand, that it might bleed upon the said paper... and that a Circle must be made about him.. and then hee must kneele down upon the said grave and have a White wand in his hand and therwith strike twice backwards over his left shoulder, after which he said somethinge would appear to him..."

This is just one of the treasures from the archives revealed as part of the UK-wide Archive Awareness Campaign which will be launched on Wednesday 20 October. The court document goes on to say that when Nicholas discovered how his neighbours intended finding him a wife he was unconvinced by the morality of magic and wanted no part of it:

"...if this weare the meanes he ment, for him to have his desire, he would in no case medle with it."

Nicholas Jackson was not rich or famous but his quest for love rings true. The Quarter Sessions file which tells us all about Nicholas is our key to the past.

The file features in a talk at the Crown Courtroom in Liverpool this autumn which is taking place as part of Archive Awareness Campaign.

Tony Benn, a keen advocate of archives who will be speaking at the launch of Archive Awareness Campaign, said "Personal archives are the living history of the present and in the future will be the best way of understanding the past. The archives of everyone are important - not only the rich and famous!"

Archive Awareness Campaign aims to raise awareness of archives among new and experienced archive users. Over 400 events are going on in archives, museums and family history societies throughout the autumn, from art days for children to exhibitions about adventure and talks about gruesome historical crime. To discover more about Archive Awareness Campaign or to find an event in your area visit www.archiveawareness.com

Also speaking about their experience of archives at the launch of the campaign will be Peter Tatchell, gay human rights campaigner and historians Susan Williams and Marc Morris. Susan Williams, who used archive material extensively in the research for her book about Edward VIII, "The People's King: The True Story of the Abdication", said, 'I always love getting a file with Top Secret stamped all over it - knowing these old secrets are here for all of us to read and know.'

Liz Hallam-Smith, Vice-Chair of the National Council on Archives, said "Archives are the blood of history, literally giving life to those who went before us. They tell us who we are and where we came from. Archive Awareness Campaign is a chance for everyone to get involved with their own history."

If you would like to interview Tony Benn, Peter Tatchell, Susan Williams or Marc Morris about their interest in archives please contact Lucy Fulton at The National Archives on 020 8392 5237 or email lucy.fulton@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Notes to editors:

- Archive Awareness Campaign is run by the National Council on Archives (www.ncaonline.org.uk), The National Archives (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk) and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (www.mla.gov.uk). There are over 400 events going on at archive organisations across the UK this autumn. For further information about the campaign visit www.archiveawareness.com
- There are 2000 archives in the UK; 9 out of 10 people who have visited an archive felt they had "learned something"; 85% of archive users believe

that archives preserve our heritage (from the Archive Taskforce Report and Survey of Visitors to UK Archives).

- For media enquiries, images, interviews or quotes please contact Lucy Fulton, Archive Awareness Campaign Officer on 020 8392 5237 or email lucy.fulton@nationalarchives.gov.uk
- The Archive Awareness Campaign launch event is to be held at The Guardian Newsroom, Archive and Visitor Centre, Farringdon on 20 October. Guest speakers will speak about the personal or professional importance of archives to them. If you are interested in attending the event please contact Lucy Fulton on 020 8392 5237. Guest speakers will be available for interview:
 - Tony Benn, the longest serving MP in the history of the Labour Party, former Secretary of State for Industry and Energy and keen diarist.
 - Peter Tatchell, the gay human rights activist, author and journalist who has recently been campaigning for the establishment of an institution to chronicle and celebrate the history of gay people in Britain.
 - Susan Williams, academic and author of several books including *The People's King: The True Story of the Abdication* (2003) for which she used archives extensively.
 - Marc Morris, presenter of Channel 4's 2003 series *The Castle*, who is currently researching a biography of Edward I.
 - Mike Thomson, presenter of Radio 4's *Document* programme and correspondent for the *Today* programme, who will chair a discussion on archives at the launch.