



Press release

27 September 2005

Clear your catalogue backlog

The National Archives launches grant scheme to assist local archives with cataloguing

The National Archives in Kew, west London, is to distribute £200,000 worth of grants to tackle cataloguing backlogs in local archives. The new scheme, funded by the Pilgrim Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, will be piloted over the next 12 months in the North West, Scotland and London. The National Archives hopes to extend the programme in future years so that other areas across the UK will be covered.

Catalogues are the key to all archival collections. Typically about a quarter of the holdings of archive services are unlisted, and they often include some of the most important material in its custody. Without a catalogue, no one knows in any detail what a collection contains, and its full value for public access cannot be exploited. In the North West alone, the recent *Logjam* report estimated that 300 years of cataloguing work would need to be undertaken to eliminate the backlog, which amounts to 29% of the holdings of the region's repositories. This scheme will make a real difference for archive users who consistently identify the need for detailed catalogues as a priority.

Nick Kingsley, Head of the National Advisory Services at The National Archives, said: 'This generous donation from the Pilgrim Trust and Esmée Fairbairn will have a real impact in responding to the major challenge posed by the extent of uncatalogued collections in UK archives. Many smaller archives become overwhelmed by the sheer volume of items they have to catalogue and will welcome this new source of financial support.'

For more information on the Cataloguing Grants Scheme and how to apply, contact Nick Kingsley, National Advisory Services at The National Archives, 020 8392 5330 ext 2620.

Ends

For more information and interviews, please contact:

Nicole Hambridge on 020 8392 5277 or email Nicole.hambridge@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Notes to Editors

The National Archives, Kew, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk has one of the largest archival collections in the world, spanning 1000 years of British history, from Domesday Book to newly released government papers. The free museum and research rooms are open to the public 6 days a week.

Its National Advisory Services offers advice and guidance on all matters relating to the creation, management, care, and use of records and archives to improve the archival and records management health of the nation.

Over nine million records are available to view at Kew and some, including wills, First World War Army medal cards and Second World War Seamen's medal records, are also available online at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentsonline

The Family Records Centre, Islington, which is jointly managed by The National Archives and the Office for National Statistics, holds the indexes (not the certificates themselves) for births, deaths and marriages for England and Wales from July 1837 and also copies of wills, before 1858, from the Prerogative Court of Canterbury (PCC) and some other church courts.

Esmée Fairbairn Trust

Esmée Fairbairn is one of the largest grantmaking foundations in the UK. It makes grants and loans in four programme areas: Arts & Heritage, Education, Environment and Social Change:Enterprise and Independence. The Foundation also takes initiatives itself where it believes important opportunities remain unexplored. In 2005 it expects to make grants of £28 million across the UK. For further information please visit www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk

The Pilgrim Trust

The Pilgrim Trust was founded in 1930 by Edward Stephen Harkness of New York, with an endowment of just over £2 million. The current Trustees give grants totalling about £1.5 million a year to other charities and recognised public bodies for projects concerned with preservation and scholarship and social welfare. The Trustees' priorities in preservation and scholarship are repairs to historic buildings and the conservation, cataloguing and research of important collections in museums, libraries and archives.