

LORD CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

**The Forty-fourth Annual Report and Resource
Accounts of the Keeper of Public Records on
the work of the**

Public Record Office

**and the Forty-fourth Report of the Advisory Council
on Public Records**

2002-2003

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The Keeper of Public Records, Sarah Tyacke, with members of the Management Board

Keeper's foreword

To the Right Honourable the Lord Falconer of Thoroton, Lord Chancellor of Great Britain

I am pleased to present the last Annual Report and Accounts for the Public Record Office (PRO) for the financial year 2002-03.

Following the announcement in Parliament in July 2002, the Public Record Office and the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) came together in April 2003 to form a new organisation – The National Archives.

The National Archives – of England and Wales and of the United Kingdom government – will be able to deploy more effectively our joint resources for the benefit of the public.

We will promote the study of the

past through the public records and other archives held across the country and act as the chief source of advice on records management and archives policy within government. We will also provide impartial advice to custodians of records and papers throughout the public and private sectors.

This new central coherence is intended to improve the safeguarding, selection and preservation of official records and other archives. It will also provide greater on-site and online access for all to the documents, in partnership with other relevant departments and organisations.

Similar objectives have, of course, been pursued by the PRO and the HMC for over 100 years and it is on the experience of them both that the new National Archives

will build. Existing stakeholders, such as government departments and private records owners, will not be neglected and will remain at the forefront of our thinking.

It is in this emerging context that I am happy to report the continuing progress of the Public Record Office in 2002-03.

Popular online services

Amongst the highlights of this year's work, to which everyone in the PRO has worked so hard, are the popularity of the website and our online services – these now run at 77 million information requests a year.

Our website now includes wills from 1700 to 1840 and information about historical documents held in some 300 archives across England through the Access to Archives (AZA) programme – supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Also on our website is the award-winning online National Archives Learning Curve for schools which has just produced an exhibition for the National Curriculum about Britain in the period 1906-18.

Of particular importance to family historians this year has been the completion of the microfilming of the "Burnt Documents", the surviving personal records of the soldiers of the First World War, which were eagerly awaited by people across the world.

The Family Records Centre continues to operate close to capacity at some 15,000 visits a month.

The www.familyrecords.gov.uk website now also includes entries from the Imperial War Museum, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the Scottish Archives Network (SCAN), and the Access to Archives (A2A) programme.

The 1901 census website went back online on a trial basis in August 2002. Since its public relaunch in November, it has performed very well, with over 33 million searches completed by the end of March 2003.

For our academic users, apart from all our normal services, we have published, in partnership with Boydell & Brewer, the *Calendar of Curia Regis Rolls 1249-1250*. We have given many inductions to students as well as organising and contributing to seminars on subjects ranging from medieval history to marriage and divorce records. We have also started working with the University of London's School of Advanced Study and other research bodies in our field.

Taking archives into the community

We have made even greater attempts to engage with the public at large and with specific communities who have not previously used us. MORI research indicates that once people realise who we are and what we have to offer, they become determined to find out more.

Our main thrust has been to take archives into the community. We started this with *Memories from the Islands*, opened by David Lammy MP at Bruce Castle Museum, Haringey, which celebrates the stories of people

moving here through photographs and reminiscences of that time. This new initiative has been augmented by *Moving Here* and the *Pathways to the Past* programme, both of which have been supported this year by the New Opportunities Fund (NOF). Using exciting websites they engage with new audiences in ways they prefer.

Archiving digital records

We have also continued to provide advice and services for government and for the future. In March 2003 we established our Digital Archive – the first step towards being able to archive the digital records of government. An accompanying international conference was held at Kew, under the auspices of the International Council on Archives (ICA), to discuss the practicalities of archiving digital records, with expert contributions from North America and elsewhere.

We have already taken the digital multi-media records of inquiries such as that into The Marchioness disaster. In partnership with colleagues from the BBC we managed to preserve the original analogue tapes of the 1986 BBC Domesday disk in digital format.

We also have many miles of paper records which need conservation and this year we have, amongst many other documents and photographs, conserved the will of William Wordsworth.

Supporting the public sector

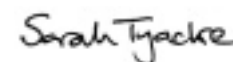
We have also continued to support other government departments in organising and safeguarding their digital records through our Electronic Document

and Records Management 2004 (EDRM) Project. This in turn supports the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, due to come into force in 2005. We prepared the Code of Practice on Records Management for the public sector as a whole, which was required under section 46 of the Freedom of Information Act, and have given training to colleagues in the NHS and other similar bodies.

During the year we took the lead in a review of record keeping and archival legislation in the light of legislative and technological and other developments since the Public Records Act was passed in 1958.

We have also continued to develop, both inside and outside government, strategies to improve both records management and archiving, notably through the Interdepartmental Committee on Archives (IDAC) and the Archives Task Force set up by Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries.

The range of work now undertaken by the staff of the PRO is substantially greater than that of a few years ago, and it is a tribute to their flexibility and commitment that all of these critical developments can be encompassed as well as those of serving the public and preserving the records for the future.



Sarah Tyacke CB

Keeper of Public Records and Chief Executive, The National Archives

A new gateway to British history

The National Archives for England, Wales and the United Kingdom acts as the custodian of the nation's collective memory as revealed in the records of government. We also collect and disseminate information about archives relating to British history wherever they are held.

Building on the achievements of the Public Record Office and the HMC, The National Archives will be better able to safeguard the nation's memory for present and future generations to enjoy. We want to reach out to people who have not previously used our services and to make The National Archives available to everyone – onsite or online.

Over the next 12 months, the National Archives will combine the services and expertise of both the PRO and the HMC but will be greater than the sum of its parts.

We will achieve this by making stakeholders the focus of the new institution – not only those who already use our services, but also those who would like to do so if they knew about them. We will be seeking to communicate more with our users and with expert bodies – the Society of Archivists, the National Council on Archives (NCA), Resource: the Council for Museums, Archives and Libraries and the International Council on Archives.

The National Archives will take a leading role in the new national archives network which will

Becoming The National Archives

In April 2003 the Public Record Office (PRO) and the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) came together to form The National Archives. Our new combined organisation covers both public records (the records of government and the courts of law) and private archives.

This is therefore the last annual report to cover the work of the Public Record Office. The work of the Historical Manuscripts Commission in 2002/03 is covered separately in the HMC *Annual Review 2002-03*.

allow researchers to search the catalogues of local and national archives from a central website. We will work closely with major players in this field, such as NCA.

Sharing knowledge and collaboration are two of the major themes of the new National Archives: we will share our own expertise freely with others and will learn from them.

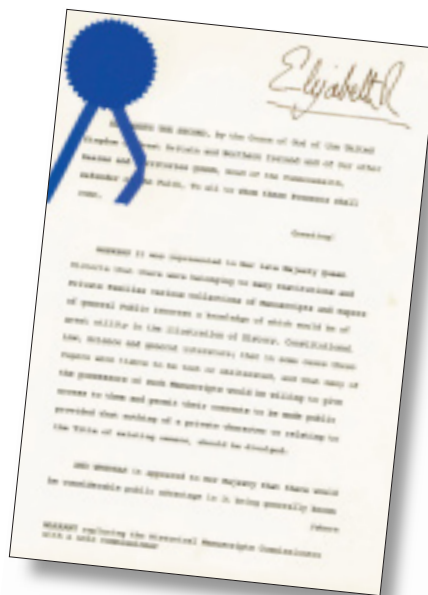
The aims of The National Archives are:

- To assist and promote the study of the past through the public records and other archives in order to inform the present and the future
- To act as the chief source of authoritative advice and guidance on records management, archive policy and related information policy matters within government
- To provide impartial advice to custodians of records and papers throughout the public and private sectors on records and archives management.

Bringing the PRO and HMC together

Following the announcement in Parliament, in July 2002, of the coming together of the Public Record Office and Historical Manuscripts Commission to form The National Archives, extensive work has taken place across both organisations. The Royal Warrant was signed by Her Majesty the Queen, transferring the powers and responsibilities of the Historical Manuscripts

Royal Warrant



Commission to the holder of the post of Keeper of Public Records.

Consultation about the formation of The National Archives took place not only across the PRO and HMC but also with key stakeholders including academics, archivists, museum professionals and representatives from the wider government world. We now issue a regular newsletter, *ArchiVISTA!*, to the archives community and have placed a number of articles in publications and newsletters to inform this and other groups of stakeholders about the new arrangements.

In the run up to the launch of The National Archives, we developed a new logo and consistent corporate identity for all future publicity. The new logo – which incorporates elements of a traditional letter A (for Archives) and a more modern one – represents The National



Archives' role in preserving the past for future generations.

A new gateway page for The National Archives has also been launched at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

Later in 2003 staff from the HMC in central London will move to the PRO site in Kew. The information and advice areas will be redesigned to enable us to provide information not just about public records but also about private archives held throughout the UK and overseas, relating to all aspects of British history.

"I am confident that the new National Archives will build on the resources provided by the HMC and PRO – including their award-winning online education resources – to provide even better services to all its stakeholders."

Rosie Winterton MP, Parliamentary Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department, announcing a new digital archive system at The National Archives to store, preserve, and provide access to government records created in electronic form – such as emails, web pages and databases



The nation's memory

The National Archives carries out the role of the Public Record Office (PRO) in holding the historical records of government for England, Wales and the United Kingdom. We also administer the UK's public records system under the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967.

The records we keep span 1000 years – from Domesday Book to the latest Government papers to be released – and fill about 176 kilometres of shelving.

The PRO's aims in 2002-03 were:

- To assist and promote the study of the past through the public records in order to inform the present and the future
- To advise government on public record issues and related information policy matters.

The PRO's core functions in 2002-03 were:

- To oversee records management in government and the selection of public records to provide an information resource for our generation and for future generations
- To preserve the public records
- To provide access to the public records and promote their value and use as a national information and educational resource.

What are public records?

Public records are the administrative and departmental records of the Crown. They include written documents, maps, seals, photographs, moving images, sound recordings, and electronic records created and read by computers.

Public records tell us about the processes and actions of the state and about its relations with citizens. They can also be used for historical and genealogical research, to make government accountable to the people, to

inform government decisions and as legal evidence.

Public records selected for permanent preservation and public access are held by The National Archives (PRO) and other places of deposit appointed by the Keeper of Public Records on behalf of the Lord Chancellor.

The National Archives is open to the public. Anyone with proper identification can consult the records without charge and can buy copies of most documents. Some of the most famous records are on display at The National Archives Museum in Kew.

Most records are opened to the public after 30 years but the Lord Chancellor and his ministerial colleagues may decide to release some records earlier or later than this.

With the coming together of the PRO and the HMC to form The National Archives on 1 April 2003, we are no longer exclusively concerned with public records but also have a general responsibility to promote high standards of care for, and public access to, archival material of all kinds relating to any aspect of British history.

Our vision – The National Archives in 2006

Our vision is that in 2006, The National Archives is at the centre of a flourishing network of public and other archive services, which provides nationwide access to the unique information held by the archive sector and related

material kept in libraries, museums, heritage and higher education institutions.

The network has been forged through imaginative partnerships such as Access to Archives (a nationwide online catalogue for England) and Moving Here (digitised sources relating to the experience of immigration), which have crucially depended on grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the New Opportunities Fund. The network, already galvanised through the implementation of the Action Plan of the Government Policy on Archives, is now ready to tackle the challenge of archiving “born digital” records on a large scale.

By March 2006 practically all initial access to The National Archives – and a high proportion of our services to users – is through our website. This site projects the well-defined branding of The National Archives and is accessible from all relevant heritage, educational and cultural portals. It also has links to all the major historical and genealogical research sites in the UK.

Online services, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, are based on our comprehensive electronic catalogue, which is accessed by all users free of charge. The depth of our catalogue relating to public records is complemented by the National Register of Archives’ breath of coverage of archival sources outside the public records. We now provide a “one-stop” shop for information about archival sources relating to any aspect of British history.

We offer online ordering and sales from our shop but, above

all, we supply an increasingly large percentage of our popular records as images online, which can be accessed and downloaded for a small fee.

We also provide online access to the increasing volume of records, which are being transferred from government in digital form.

Royalties from licensing agreements, as well as income from our Documents Online system, provide a significant amount of our receipts, all of which is ploughed back into further online service developments.

These are the five objectives we have set ourselves to help realise our vision in the five years up to 2006, together with some highlights from the year’s achievements.

1 To improve electronic access to public records

We have continued to provide greater access to digital images of wills and other records through Documents Online. Wills from 1700 to 1840 were made available during the year and in the coming year earlier wills from 1384 to 1699 will be added.

The second phase of the collaborative Access to Archives (A2A) project (*see page 51*) has made excellent progress, with over 20 proposals for the digitisation of catalogues and related work receiving grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund. More than 500,000 catalogue pages are now available on the A2A database covering over 300 record offices throughout England.

The result of the additional material and increased publicity

has been that our website handled over 77 million information requests from users, and was regularly among the top five government websites in terms of popularity.

② To enhance the quality and efficiency of our public services, onsite and online

We continue to maintain high standards of public service on and off site.

The results of our four major onsite user surveys conducted this year showed that nearly 97 per cent of users thought that our services were "good" or "excellent".

For the first time we conducted two satisfaction surveys of our vast constituency of online users world wide, and were encouraged to learn that over 85 per cent of them thought our services were "good" or "excellent".

③ To improve the way records are selected and managed

We accessioned 2128 metres of records and most government departments continued to make steady progress towards the target of introducing electronic records management by 2004 under our guidance.

We prepared a Code of Practice on Records Management which was approved by the Lord Chancellor and will help all public authorities meet their obligations from January 2005 onwards to provide access to information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

④ To improve preservation of the public records on conventional and digital media

The highlight of the year was the installation of a specially developed digital archive system, which will store "born digital" records – i.e. records of government which have been produced electronically.

The first accessions into our new archive will include the records of high-profile public enquiries, royal commissions and departmental websites. These records can exist in an enormous variety of formats but we have made a promising start in rising to this immense challenge.

A large number of intrinsically valuable maps, books, photographs, documents and seals have been restored, rebound or preserved in our continuing programme of preserving key objects at risk of permanent damage.

⑤ To promote the value and use of public records

The collaborative *Moving Here* project (see page 40) is now well underway, with the website launched on the Internet in January. By the end of March the site contained over 56,000 catalogue records, containing nearly 115,000 images, audio and video clips.

Our Learning Curve website aimed at school pupils and teachers continues to go from strength to strength. Additions this year included a large new exhibition about Britain in the period 1906-18, as well as snapshots relating to Florence Nightingale, Captain Cook and the V1 Rocket.

Our Pathways to the Past programme aimed at lifelong learners included two online exhibitions, on the First World War and Citizenship.



New Year Openings

Most records are closed for 30 years before being opened to the public, usually in the following January.

On 1 January 2003 we released about 30,000 documents from 1972 and a further 2,500 which had been closed for longer periods. The 1972 records included minutes and memoranda of the Cabinet and the Chiefs of Staff Committee which we made available as scanned images on our website.

The release of these documents – particularly those transferred by the Prime Minister's office, the Cabinet Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Northern Ireland Office – gained extensive coverage in the national and international media.

Much of the media coverage concentrated on records relating to the major events in Northern Ireland, notably "Bloody Sunday" and the introduction of direct rule from Westminster.

More recent government documents

Under the Open Government Initiative many documents are released before they are 30 years old. These include computerised statistical surveys organised by central government. If selected for permanent preservation such surveys are held in our National Digital Archive of Datasets (NDAD), managed

Opening up the records

The National Archives makes the Government's historical records available to the public.

Much of the work we do to make this happen goes on behind the scenes. We help government departments identify the most important records to preserve. And we ensure that the records we keep, on behalf of the nation, are looked after properly so that they will still be available for future generations to enjoy.

Photograph of Double Cross agents "Mutt" and "Jeff", from a Security Service file (TNA:PRO KV 2/1067) released in November 2002

under contract by the University of London Computer Centre. In 2002/03 the surveys released have included:

- the Metropolitan Police crime statistics system containing data relating to crime in the Metropolitan Police area, 1976 to 1997
- datasets compiled as part of the annual census of schools (commonly known as form 7) from 1975 to 1993.

These and other datasets are an important resource for researchers. They illustrate the way that in the electronic age government data can be made available to the public online within a relatively short period after creation.

Other records released within the 30-year period include those of the Ladbroke Grove Rail Inquiry 1999-2001.

Subject areas

Here are some of the areas covered by newly released files in 2002/03. Many of them attracted widespread media interest:

- **Lawrence of Arabia:** Air Ministry files on T E Lawrence's service in the RAF from 1922 to 1935. Ten were made available via DocumentsOnline, and have proved to be some of the most popular images on our website
- **Interwar European immigration into the UK:** Further individual files of applications for UK naturalisation from 1934

- **Abdication of Edward VIII:** About 120 previously closed files relating to Edward VIII's abdication were released on 30 January 2003. They documented the role of ministers and senior officials in the crisis, and revealed important new evidence about such matters as the tripartite relationship between the crown, the UK government, and governments of the Dominions. They also documented the investigations into the private lives of the King and Mrs Simpson by the Metropolitan Police Special Branch and the King's Proctor

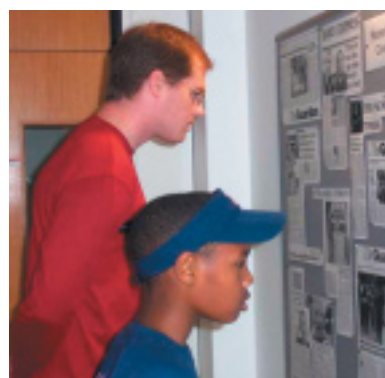
- **History of the railway industry:** This year saw the culmination of a three year programme to sort and transfer the most important historical records of British Rail. Several hundred metres of railway records arrived at Kew, illustrating the history of the railway industry and its impact on wider society from the great railway boom of the 1840s to the privatisation of the nationalised industry in the 1990s

- **Merchant marine in the Second World War:** The remaining log books and crew agreements of ships in UK coastal waters were released
- **Special Operations Executive:** The final records of the SOE were transferred, comprising personal files of agents and other staff

- **MI5 in the Second World War:** The diaries of Guy Liddell, deputy Director General of the Security Service (MI5)

- **Cold War:** A number of individual documents on the Cold War included the key government assessment of the impact of nuclear attack on the United Kingdom in 1955, and a file relating to the disappearance of Donald Maclean
- **Social conditions in the 1950s:** Witness statements relating to the Notting Hill riots of 1958.

During the year we added about 2,000 metres of records from central government departments to our existing holdings. For the first time, these included electronic records created by committees of inquiry, such as those into BSE, the *Derbyshire* and Bristol Royal Infirmary.



During the year we organised 14 press events to promote new releases of records and received extensive coverage in the national, regional and specialist press and media