

Tuesday 9 August 2011

Culture and Diversity: Archives reveal our stories

The [Archive Awareness Campaign](#) unveils its *Culture and Diversity* theme today, inviting the public to celebrate culture, diversity, the arts and creativity. The Campaign is honouring local artists who have made an impact on the history of our communities, and also brings to light stories and artefacts from the places, people and cultures that make up the UK today.

Coinciding with the 60th anniversary of The *Festival of Britain* (nationalarchives.gov.uk/imagelibrary/festival-of-britain-showcase.htm) *Culture and Diversity: What's Your Story?*, has been inspired by the Festival's attention to the arts, design, architecture and culture of post-war Britain. The Festival was designed to be a celebration of all things British, both historic and contemporary. By its very nature, it was diverse representing the varied communities and social and economic classes involved in the celebrations.

Geoff Pick of the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) said: *"It's great this year's campaign is happening in the anniversary year of the Festival of Britain. Uniquely, it told the story of contemporary culture and diversity in the ways different communities marked the occasion. Now this campaign offers everyone the opportunity to explore the rich resources and discover the fascinating quality of the UK's cultural heritage. It is paying homage to the arts, contemporary culture and the hidden stories of cultural groups across the country".*

Museums and archives are participating in a wide range of activities to commemorate the *Festival of Britain*. Highlights include:

- Norfolk Record Office will be holding a twilight event where visitors can participate in a live exhibition and view footage of the Festival of Britain

celebrations. The Record Office will also explore the 1950s celebrations of the Queen's coronation.

- The Victoria and Albert Museum is staging *Inside Outing*, which will involve an Open Day with a morning of speakers and an afternoon tour at the Southbank's Museum of 1951, plus an exhibition utilising its collection of Festival of Britain material.
- The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) is staging an *Inside Outing*, which will involve a morning of speakers, a display of the Festival of Britain material from the V&A's collection, and an afternoon tour at the Southbank and Museum of 1951.

Institutions are also honouring UK and Irish history and heritage:

- The stories of servant George Africanus, local Olympic sportswomen Denise Lewis and Tessa Sanderson are told in a display at Wolverhampton Archives.
- Greater Manchester County Record Office, Manchester Archives and the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) are celebrating Manchester's Chinese community with the *Manchester Chinese Archive Community exhibition*. The exhibition explores the community's impact on the cultural richness of Manchester and looks at the daily life, business, festivals and rituals of the community.
- A collection of previously forgotten recipes and foods from across the generations, and cultures in Scotland will be tried and tested at the Scottish Council on Archives.
- Cornwall Record Office will be launching a series of exhibitions looking at Cornish culture, its arts, festivals, and lifestyle.
- The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland will explore their collections of heritage material relating to art and diversity in Irish medicine.

Angela Owusu of Archive Awareness Campaign said:

As part of this year's Campaign, archives across the country are hosting special events to celebrate the fantastic wealth of their collections. Diverse activities are being held all over, from exhibitions, talks and competitions to an archive feast where the public will have the chance to taste a Regency era seed cake, which once doubled as a cure for madness!

Culture and Diversity: What's Your Story? events will take place in communities across the country; keep up with these at www.archiveawareness.com/events.

– Ends –

For free postcards on this year's theme, further details, spokespeople or images on the Archive Awareness Campaign, please contact **Angela Owusu** on **0208 392 5237** or email Angela.Owusu@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Notes to Editors

- The Archive Awareness Campaign (AAC) is spearheaded by the Archives & Records Association (ARA) www.archives.org.uk and funded by The National Archives nationalarchives.gov.uk and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council www.mla.gov.uk.
- Archive Awareness Campaign www.archiveawareness.com is an ongoing celebration of all kinds of fascinating archive treasures. It celebrates and promotes local and national archives. Throughout the year archives across the country open their doors to showcase history, hold open days and present workshops to help the public discover a piece of their own history.

***Culture & Diversity: What's Your Story?* events highlight:**

London

- **Autograph ABP** is holding exhibitions, seminars, Talks as well as film screenings on art, debate and diversity until August. See www.rivingtonplace.org for more details.
- **The Scout Association** has a number of activities until the end of summer including tours of Gilwell Park, web exhibitions on *Diversity*, including the fascinating story of Hélène Vagliano and the Association's contribution towards the Festival of Britain. Tours can be booked at www.scoutsrecords.org/tours.php and the exhibitions can be viewed at www.scoutsrecords.org/exhibitions.php.

- On Saturday 13 August **The British Postal Museum & Archive** will hold an archive Open day. The Post Office/BT Art Club will have a display of documents relating to culture and diversity. Behind the Scenes tours will be available throughout the day. Find out more here www.postalheritage.org.uk.
- **Brent Archives** will be putting on an arts and culture display utilising materials from a number of local sources in the borough. In addition, throughout August, the Archives will collaborate with Brent Museum as part of the Museum of London's (MoL) Story of London project. The Museum will feature boards on the main Festival of Britain activities at Southbank and nationwide, and the local celebrations in Brent. The display will also include images and information from the Brent Archives local history collections. Other activities:
 - On **Wed 24 August**, the Museum will hold an 'indoor street party', celebrating the street parties of 60 years ago (mostly held in torrential downpours in Willesden!). There will also be a display of folk dancing from a local dance school, reflecting the folk dance displays held in local parks for the Festival of Britain.
 - On **Sunday 28 August**, the Museum and the folk dancers will be at the Southbank, where they will hold a workshop and dance display.
 See www.brent.gov.uk/archives for details.
- **Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A)** will be holding an *Inside Outing* in September. The event will involve a morning of speakers, a display of the Festival of Britain material from the V&A's collection, and an afternoon tour at the South Bank and Museum of 1951. Visit www.vam.ac.uk/whatson/event/1260/inside-outing-festival-of-britain-2299/ for details.
- On 22 September, **The Guardian News & Media Archive** will hold a talk and tour of the Guardian and Observer's archive collections at GNM's main offices in Kings Place, London. A website showcasing some of the vast collection of photographic work held in the GNM Archives will also run during the month. See www.guardian.co.uk/gnm-archive for more details.
- **Black Cultural Archives (BCA)** will be holding *Gems of Black Cultural Archives* exhibition in October to celebrate BCA, and showcase its collection of historical artefacts, objects and projects. See www.bcaheritage.org.uk for more details.

South East

- As part of the BBC's Reel History film series, **Hampshire Archives Record Office** will be showcasing a short compilation of amateur films showing local celebrations around the Festival of Britain. There will also be a small exhibition with displays on cinemas and early films in September. Visit www3.hants.gov.uk/archives for more details.

South West

- **Cornwall Record Office** is launching a series of exhibitions in November using their resources, as well as those of their partners in the Cornish Archive Network (CAN). The exhibition content will delve into Cornish culture, traditions, arts and festivals. It will also incorporate a diary of a school-trip to the Festival of Britain. See www.cornwall.gov.uk.

Midlands

- **Wolverhampton Archives & Local Studies** *Culture and Diversity* exhibition is telling the stories of servant George Africanus, local Olympic sportswomen Denise Lewis and Tessa Sanderson, as well as bands such as Slade and One Direction, and other local

heroes. The exhibition will showcase archival material, including newspaper articles and photographs until the end of September. They will also be holding a prize giving event at the Molineux Hotel on Wednesday 28 September to announce the winner of Wolverhampton's next Black Country bard competition. Entrants will be invited to read their work. Further details can be found here

www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/leisure_culture/libraries/archives/new/events.htm.

- Between September and December **Herefordshire** will be celebrating the work of local artists and writers. For example, **Herefordshire Archives** will be holding an exhibition on knitting and wool, particularly celebrating the pattern book of Ursula Frances Bund. **Herefordshire's Museum Learning and Resource Centre** will also display knitting and wool related items in October. Visitors will be invited to knit items including baby's hats from a Victorian pattern. The hats will then be on display for a time before going to the County Hospital maternity unit. Find out more here www.herefordshire.gov.uk/archives.

North West

- **Wigan Archive Service** will be holding events around Open Heritage weekend in September. In addition, there will be an Art Factory event with Turnpike Gallery in Leigh and an interactive exhibition www.wlct.org/Arts-and-Festivals/turnpike-gallery/turnpike-gallery.htm inspired by art and artists until August. See www.wlct.org/heritage-services/wigan-archives-service.htm for more details.
- In January 2012, the Manchester Chinese Archive Community Exhibition will tell the story of Greater Manchester's large and vibrant Chinese community at the **Museum of Science & Industry (MOSI)** www.mosi.org.uk/whats-on/manchester-chinese-archive-community-exhibition.aspx. The Manchester Chinese Archive is available to view at **Greater Manchester County Record Office (with Manchester Archives)** www.manchesterchinesearchive.org.uk/. Also, as part of the city's Pride celebrations Manchester Archives will be launching the reprint of its LGBT History Source Guide with a talk by Jeff Evans on the 1880 Manchester Drag Ball on 24 August at City Library. See www.manchester.gov.uk/libraries/arl for more information.

Yorkshire

- **East Riding of Yorkshire Archives and Local Studies Service** is holding an Open day at The Treasure House on Saturday 22 October. *Get Creative. What's Your Story?* will enable the public to see behind the scenes at the Archives and explore family and local history. There will be an exhibition of local archives and books on creativity, literature, art and music; children's activities and competitions; a quill pen writing and conservation demonstrations. See www.eastriding.gov.uk for more information.

East Anglia

- During October and November, **Norfolk Record Office** will be running a number of events on the 1950s celebrations of the Queen's coronation and the Festival of Britain. The first event will be a twilight session to coincide with the BBC's Reel history season. Visitors will be invited to find out how Norfolk took part in the celebrations by listening to experts, watching archive footage and reminiscing about the celebrations in their area. In November, the Record Office will hold a talk on celebrations (including the Festival of Britain) in Norwich over the past 900 years. See www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk/nroindex.htm for more details.

Scotland

- **Scottish Council on Archives (SCA)** will be staging *The Edible Archive* feast – see the SCA website www.scoarch.org.uk for details and updates. Archives and members of the public across Scotland will contribute recipes from their collections and personal cookbooks. Contributions will be included in an archival cookbook, *The Edible Archive*. *The Edible Archive* cookbook will represent the diversity of the region, communities and archival collections across Scotland. Selected recipes from the cookbook will be brought to life by the SCA for the Edible Archive feast. See www.scoarch.org.uk or www.scottisharchives.org.uk for information.

Northern Ireland

- **Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)** will be running an exhibition *A century of change conflict and transformation Northern Ireland, 1911-2011* until 2013. The exhibition uses PRONI archives to explore themes such as economy, society, leisure and governance. It will also feature a display on the Blitz experience in Northern Ireland. Visit the PRONI website www.proni.gov.uk for further details.

Ireland

- **Royal College of Physicians Ireland (RCPI)** will be exploring their collection of heritage material in *Art and Diversity in Irish Medicine*. The Open day display will be held within the College's home and visitors will partake in tours and watch films throughout the day. Further details are available on the RCPI website at www.rcpi.ie.
- Archives and libraries across the region will also be hosting various events as part of this year's theme, information can be found at www.learnaboutarchive.ie or www.archiveawareness.com/events/. In addition, log onto www.heritageweek.ie for details of AAC events taking place during Heritage Week (20-28 August).

Wales

- **Pembrokeshire Record Office** will be holding a small exhibition *Culture and Diversity: Pembrokeshire's Story* at Pembrokeshire Record Office from 3 October until December 2011. The exhibition will include facsimiles of famous links to the county in the field of art, architecture, music, literature, poetry, theatre, film and photography. For example, documents will include the baptisms of artists Augustus and Gwen John; letters from astronomer Sir Patrick Moore, wildlife photographer Eric Hoskings and writers Dick Francis, Auberon Waugh and Norman Mailer; photographs of a local production of 'Our House'-a *Madness* musical at the school where Suggs attended as a pupil; poems in the original hand of Welsh poet Waldo Williams; plans of Martletwy primary school by architect Thomas Ellis Owen and press cuttings relating to the filming of '*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*'. Find out more here www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/archives.

Archive Facts

- There are over 2000 archives in the UK.
- Local archives in the UK surveyed around 16,084 reader visitors in 2009 (PSQG Survey 2009).
- Between April 1994 and 31 March 2010 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded £284m to archives.
- According to TNA's self-assessment for local authority archives (nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/our-services/self-assessment-

[results.htm](#)) which showed that 27 local authority archive services now have the top (4 star) rating for the quality of service they provide across the board, including several who have recently opened new buildings such as Glamorgan Archives and Hull History Centre.

- In 2009 the length of time visitors spent in archives increased by 22%, with 55% staying for over 3 hours.
- In 2009, 78% of visitors surveyed agreed that archives contribute to society by “preserving our culture and heritage”. Over 62% also agreed archives have an important role in providing opportunities for learning. (PSQG Survey 2009)
- Programmes such as *Who Do You Think You Are?* have helped to boost audience interest in archives and family history.
- There are about 69,500 cubic metres of archival holdings (not including record management holdings) in local authority archives in England and Wales (CIPFA stats 2006 - 07).
- In 2010 alone, National Archives annual survey of archive collecting showed that the 250 archives surveyed added over 3000 significant new items to their collections’ [Accessions to Repositories 2010].
- The commercial digital sites Findmypast.com and Ancestry.co.uk alone have 650 million and 820 million individual records online. This is estimated to be less than 1% of archives in England and Wales.
- In 2010, The National Archives surveyed the archives of thousands of religious and secularist groups and individuals (nationalarchives.gov.uk/religiousarchives/default.htm). The survey mapped collections, identifying that many of these important archives are at risk. The survey is the basis of the Religious Archives Strategy now being developed to support the sector in future. Rt Rev and Rt Hon Richard Chartres, Bishop of London, said, “The information captured in these records extends far beyond the religious sphere and provides a key to our self-understanding as a diverse union of nations”.