

Archives & Records Association announces Suffolk Record Office as winner of the National Archive Volunteering Project of the Year 2009 Award

The Archives & Records Association (ARA) today announced the winner of its first Archive Volunteering of the Year Project Award, a national award which highlights volunteering opportunities, the important role volunteers play in their local community and the way archives work with volunteers.

The winner, Suffolk Record Office, Suffolk County Council's *Making a Difference Volunteer Cataloguing Backlog Project*, involved 69 volunteers helping to catalogue 33 collections including a photographic archive of most parishes in Suffolk created by Captain Dunlop RN who was the last Standing Officer of HMS Ganges.

As a result, the backlog of cataloguing-one of the major factors preventing the use of its holdings has been reduced. It has made collections more accessible for leisure and formal learning, increased public access to the collections and improved volunteer procedures and opportunities. For example, the volunteers increased their knowledge of the history of Suffolk; they developed their cataloguing, indexing research as well as their IT skills. They also made available collections that were of much interest to local communities, families and individuals.

The project was selected from 14 applications from across the UK, by a panel of judges that included National Council on Archives (NCA), CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries Wales (a division of the Welsh Assembly Government), the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the Scottish Council on Archives, the Society of Archivists and The National Archives.

Geoff Pick, Chair of judging panel said:

“The judges were impressed by the clear aims of the project and evidence of its impact for the service, the volunteers and the wider community. It clearly demonstrates how a local authority archive service, with good support within its council, can develop strong links with volunteering organisations and local community groups, to offer wider

volunteering opportunities. We would like to congratulate the Record Office as the success of the project is an example to the whole UK archive sector”.

Councillor Rosemary Clarke, Suffolk County Council’s Portfolio Holder for Sport, Culture, Diversity, Health and Wellbeing said:

“We are really delighted to have won this award, particularly as it recognises the hard work and achievements of local volunteers. I would like to congratulate everyone involved in this project and thank them for helping to make these collections available for everyone to use and enjoy.”

Three other nominations to receive a Highly Commended Award were Warwickshire County Record Office’s *Waller Volunteer Transcription Project*; The Black Cultural Archives, *The Heart of the Race: Oral Histories of the Black Women’s Movement* project; and The National Archives’ *Living the Poor Life* project.

The Archives & Records Association has established this award to mark the merger of this new body from the former groups representing the archives profession, including National Council on Archives (NCA), Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government (ACALG) and Society of Archivists. The groups have joined forces to create a single body to promote standards, improve access and speak for the sector.

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Notes to Editors

For pictures of the award winner, further information or interview request with volunteers from Suffolk Record Office please contact Kate Chantry, Suffolk Record Office Manager, Suffolk Record Office, Libraries, Archives and Information, Adult and Community Services, Gatacre Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 2LQ, Tel: 01473 584535, E-mail: kate.chantry@suffolk.gov.uk

If you are interested in attending the awards, please contact Angela Owusu, The National Archives on 0208 392 5237 or Katy McMullen, Museums Libraries & Archives Council on 0207 273 1406

- The panelists who chose the winning project were: Geoff Pick, Chair NCA; Helen Cooper, MLA; Sarah Horton, DH – CyMAL; Melinda Haunton, The National Archives; Catherine Taylor, Society of Archivists and Louise Ray, The National Archives.

- The three runners up who receive the 'Highly Commended' award include:
 - **Warwickshire County Record Office's** *Waller Volunteer Transcription Project*. In 2006 the Waller family archive comprising over 1700 records came up for sale and was purchased by Warwickshire County Record Office following a funding campaign.
 - **The National Archives** *Living the Poor Life project*. The project focuses on the records and experience of the nineteenth century poor particularly the working class who lived and worked in "the Victorian workhouse". Key archives of the (Ministry of Health) MH12 Poor Law Union correspondence (i.e. letters, memos and reports), which were passed between 600 Poor Law Unions/the Poor Law Commission board held at The National Archives have been catalogued. The scanned records will be made available online.
 - **Black Cultural Archives** (BCA) *The Heart of the Race: Oral Histories of the Black Women's Movement project*. From December 2008 to March 2010, the project collated the testimonies of Black women involved in the movement for the rights of Black women, including activism, organising, campaigning and lobbying at a grass roots, national or international level.
- The winners will receive their award at a Parliamentary reception at the House of Lords on the 14 July.