

TYNE & WEAR ARCHIVES SERVICE

ANNUAL REVIEW 2007/8

1 Introduction

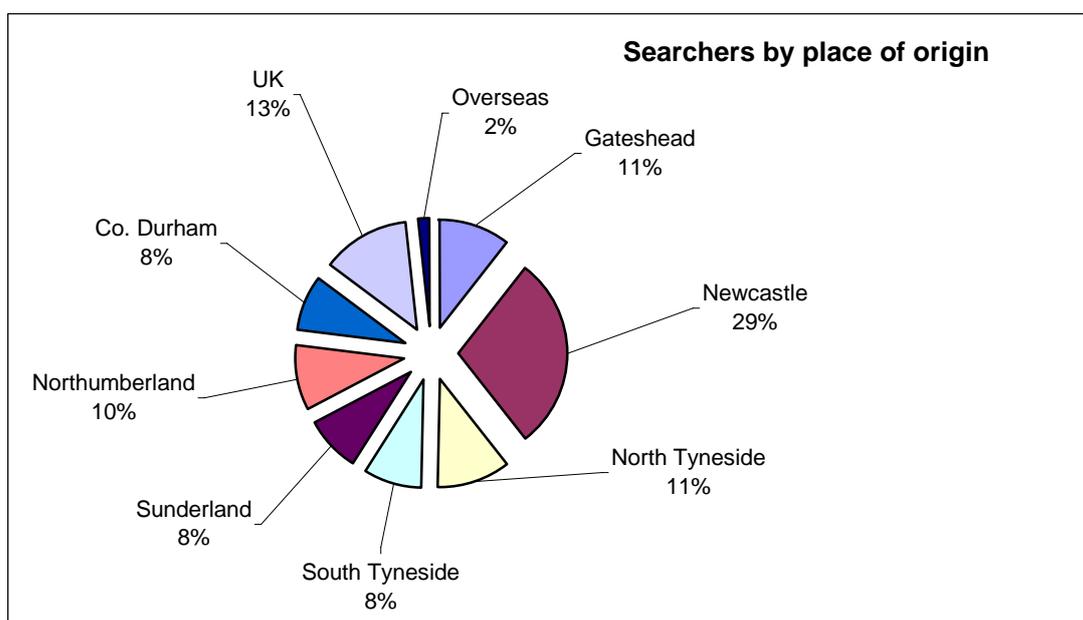
A major piece of work for the archives service this year was the commissioning of an options appraisal for the future direction of the service. This reported in August 2007 and made a number of recommendations, some of which have subsequently been followed up. One particular recommendation was an investigation of closer working with Tyne & Wear Museums, which was endorsed by the Tyne & Wear Leadership Group in November. A further report will be submitted to this group shortly.

At the same time the archives service improved its rating in the National Archives-led self assessment programme for local authority archive services from 1 star to 2 stars. A further assessment will be undertaken in summer 2008.

2 Searchroom and other public services

Direct usage of the searchroom decreased slightly this year from last year's record 8376 to 7790, although this decline is smaller than that reported by many other archive services. Much of the fall-off has been in use of microfilms, as many of the sources such as census returns that formerly saw regular use are now available online.

The following chart shows the home address of service users. 67% of users came from within Tyne & Wear. Figures tend to vary little from year to year.



Users from Tyne & Wear (including groups) are broken down in the Appendix in line with the Best Value performance targets.

Use of the service's website has again increased with the number of hits increasing from 3.802 million in 2006/7 to 4.7 million in 2007/8, a 24% increase. The Mauretania mini-site, created as part of the HLF-funded centenary project saw over 300,000 hits. It is also possible to isolate figures for use of the online catalogue, which increased by 155%.

Images of some documents were made available online within the catalogue for the first time during the course of the year.

During the year we answered 2,068 enquiries received by post or e-mail, another increase on the previous year. High cost of travel, combined with ease of sending enquiries by e-mail mean that this is increasingly the way information is sought from the archives service.

The service was also a partner in an innovative enquiry portal www.archivesnortheast.com, developed initially by MLA North East. This provides information about all of the local authority archives in the region, as well as links to a number of other archives, and enables an enquiry to be sent to any or all of the archives at the same time. This is invaluable for those with general enquiries, or who might be unfamiliar with the geography of the region.

We also received 149 paid research orders, varying from one to three hours each. 13% of paid research enquiries come from overseas, and it was helpful towards the end of the year to finally be able to offer secure online payment.

3 Collections

The percentage of all catalogues (including those not to current standard) available online increased from just over 68% in March 2007 to just under 73% in full or as collection summaries. This was below the target of 77%.

124 new catalogues, including both backlog and new material, have been completed in the course of the year. In addition a further 54 catalogues have had additional material added to them. The landmark of 2,500 completed catalogues was achieved in December 2007.

There have been no externally funded cataloguing projects this year, but a successful bid was made to the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation/Pilgrim Trust Cataloguing Grants Programme for funding to catalogue the important and extensive Swan Hunter shipbuilding archive. Work on this will get underway in 2008/9.

A bid to the Wellcome Foundation for funding to catalogue the records of the Gateshead Asylum at Stannington was unsuccessful.

The number of individual catalogue records created, measured against the target, was 7987 against a target of 9000.

We have received 111 separate deposits, transfers or donations of records in the past year.

Among the more significant acquisitions have been:-

- Additional records of Newcastle Breweries and Newcastle City Council deed parcels relating to the Tyne Brewery site.
- Records of Royal Arch Chapter De Swinburne no. 24 of Freemasons, Newcastle upon Tyne 1854-1980
- papers relating to the Pitmen's Strike 1831
- records of the British Shipowners' Association (previously the British Steamship Owners' Association and the British Steamships Short Trade Association) 1898-1999
- records of Tynemouth Sailing Club 1929-2004
- plans and other records relating to MV Derbyshire and sister ships
- records of Whitley Bay Jewish congregation 1942-2000
- additional records of the Northumberland Football Association 1960s-2005
- Register of members of the Keelmen's Hospital Society, Newcastle 1769-1888
- papers of Michael Lane, civil engineer, including letters from Isambard Kingdom Brunel



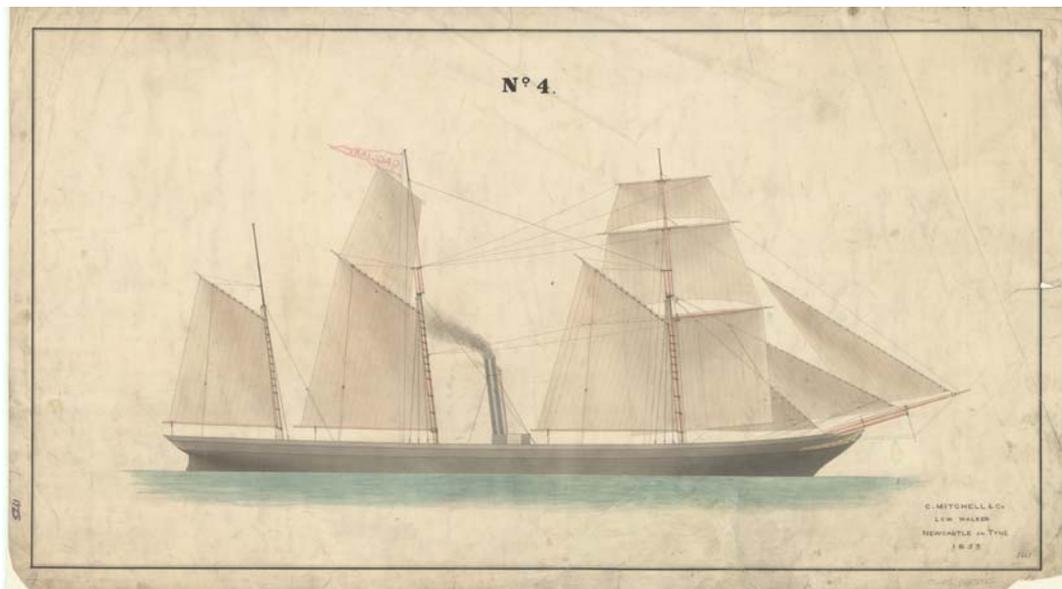
- papers of Len Edmondson, Trade Unionist and Labour Party activist 1940s-2006
- papers (including family papers) of Eric Walker, Labour Party activist, Newcastle 1754-c2000
- records relating to the Lord Lieutenancy of Tyne and Wear
- records of Usworth Comprehensive School, Washington 1969-2007
- papers of the Clare family of Newcastle, 20th century

- papers of Miroslav Sigmund, entrepreneur and inventor (1907-2004)
- records of Ponteland Cottage Homes 1903-1955
- papers of Olive Kaer, businesswoman and councillor c1945-2007
- records of the NOMAD Housing Group c1970s-2006
- records of Newcastle upon Tyne Aero Club 1925-1995
- Gateshead Council files relating to the Angel of the North

4 Conservation

The year has been an extremely difficult one for conservation, with two of the three conservators taking long-term sick leave at the same time.

Nevertheless, the remaining conservator, Matt Parsons was able to deliver a project to clean nearly 500 shipping plans from the Armstrong Mitchell yard in preparation for digitisation, as well as continuing with regular work for the searchroom.



One of the cleaned and digitised plans

Other ongoing projects have been on hold for the time being.

5 Education, Learning & Outreach

Statistics for learning and outreach events are given in the following table. Figures in brackets are the comparable figures for 2006/7, which were higher than usual because of the number of externally funded projects. Taking this into consideration 2007/8 has been another busy year.

Type of event	Number of events	Number attending
Schools	30 (36)	577 (818)
Universities/colleges	8 (17)	204 (319)
Teacher training	5 (4)	35 (78)
Family history groups	8 (12)	147 (236)
Local history groups	4 (8)	98 (108)
Workshops	11 (8)	146 (144)
Other talks	33 (29)	636 (734)
Total	99 (114)	1843 (2437)

One significant project was a Young Roots funded initiative with Walker Technology College involving 12 young people with learning disabilities marking their transition from 6th form (ASDAN Curriculum) to leaving school and the world of work. Working with visual artists Dougey Hunter and Aiden Moesby, as well as TWAS volunteer and Walker resident John Gallon, the students researched the working lives of their families and the working culture of Walker using material at the archives service. They also talked to older residents in the community. The final product was an exciting photographic exhibition, which was turned into a calendar to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the school. Using Photoshop students layered archive and other historical images together with their own artwork and text.



Students from Walker Technology College engaged on their project

The Primary Sources project funded by MLA North East and HLF launched in November with a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session for participating teachers at Tyne and Wear Archives Service. The project involves TWAS and five other regional archives working together with 12 schools to create a range of KS1 & 2 resources for Literacy and Numeracy. TWAS worked with Stocksfield Avenue Primary, Newcastle and Richardson Dees Primary, Wallsend. Teachers spent three days researching with the help of the Outreach Team and took away a varied and challenging set of digital images for their children. Stocksfield Avenue chose Britain since 1948 as a topic, notably the 1950s and 1960s. Richardson Dees staff worked on their locality and Swan Hunter records, especially newly found material on the SS Baikal, the ice-breaking ferry that took the Trans-Siberian Railway across the

expanse of Lake Baikal. A website featuring archive images and medium term teaching plans and lessons will be launched late in 2008.

The Learning and Outreach Manager took part in an evaluative study tour run by the Imperial War Museum to Germany and the Czech Republic to test run similar visits for teachers and students. Major sites from World War II and the Cold War were included. An outcome of this is a Their Past Your Future bid by TWAS/Living History North East, Sunderland for funding to create a small website and teaching materials based on civil defence records and oral history accounts for Wearside from c1945-1970.

A teacher from St Aidan's School, Sunderland spent five days at TWAS researching the evacuation of Wearside children for GCSE coursework. Some of this material will become a small website for pupils. Among the more poignant discoveries were the Sunderland children involved in the *City of Benares* tragedy, in which an evacuee ship was sunk by a U-boat in 1940. This short placement was part of the Learning Links programme funded by MLA North East.

The archives service also took part in a cultural venues project with Creative Partnerships North and South Tyneside, involving Western Primary School, Wallsend working with creative artist Effie Burns, and writer Carrina Rodney. Evaluation of the impact was very positive, especially for boys' participation and reading.

The archives service also continued to contribute to *Where the Hobgoblins are*, a module in the Childhood Studies degree at Northumbria University. The tutor commented

The students work has now gone through our exam board and the External Examiner from York Univ. was very complimentary about the module and the scripts. So thank again for all your hard work. We could not run this module without TWAS

Educational websites continued to be well used, with *Walks on the Wild Side* receiving nearly 24,000 views and *Westall's War* over 52,000. Unfortunately usage figures for the resources hosted by the Northern Grid for Learning are not available because of the way the site is accessed.

The archives service contributed original documents to a joint exhibition on the 1,000 Families Study (the 'Red Spots') held at Discovery Museum. The records of this major study into the health of 1142 children born in 1948 are held by TWAS, and the museum worked with study participants around their 60th birthdays to bring their stories and experiences up to date. The launch of the exhibition brought together some participants who had not seen one another since primary school days. Total attendance was over 43,000.



Opening of the 1,000 Families exhibition

The archives service was also a partner in the *Remembering Slavery* project led by the Literary & Philosophical Society. This has resulted in extensive volunteer research throughout the region, which has thrown new light on the north east's involvement in the slave trade, a booklet, and an exhibition which has shown at the Discovery Museum and at Sunderland Museum. At the same time the archives service mounted a small exhibition showing the wider context of the abolition movement in Chartism and other radical politics in the region.

Another joint project with Tyne and Wear Museums was *Peopling*, later renamed *Destination Tyne and Wear*. The resulting exhibition highlighting the different groups who have contributed to the mix of the region opened at the Discovery Museum in February 2008 and will subsequently tour to Sunderland and South Shields.

The book *Victorian Villains*, by Barry Redfern, which the archives service published in partnership with Tyne Bridge Publishing, won a prestigious Alan Ball Award for local history publishing.

The archives service exhibited at *Yesterday Belongs to You* at Durham County Hall in May 2007 and at the National Family History Fair at Gateshead Stadium in September. Several hundred enquiries were received at each event.

In May 2007 the Archives Service participated in *the Late Shows*, a Saturday evening opening of a number of cultural venues in Newcastle. We showed a selection of archive films, including the new *Tyneside Tales* DVD, and over 100 people visited in the course of the evening.

6 Volunteering

The third year of the volunteer programme was another busy and successful one. As well as working within the service a group of volunteers visited the Cumbria Record Office at Carlisle to see a different kind of volunteer programme, and also enjoyed a visit and lunch at Tullie House Museum.

Volunteers have again been involved in delivering workshops and were critical to the success of a family history forum, where family history researchers could bring their problems for expert advice.

As detailed above, John Gallon, a long-term regular volunteer, helped with the Working on Walker project, and Jimmy Rutter helped TWAS staff at the National Family History Fair at Gateshead in September 2007.

David Stell, who is working towards an archives qualification by distance learning, curated the archives service's exhibition alongside the *Remembering Slavery* project, as well as putting together a useful analysis of the content of the archive of the North East Railway Servants' Pension Society, a complex collection with a number of seemingly overlapping series.

Randi Addy, a qualified archivist from Ghana has also been volunteering on a regular basis to gain familiarity with English records and upgrade his computer skills. Randi has now gained a place on the international archives course at University College London, starting in September.

Another qualified archivist, Valerie Rowland, has also been undertaking some cataloguing work to upgrade her skills with CALM.

A number of new indexes were also produced by volunteers and made available in the searchroom. Discussion is underway about how these can be best made more widely available over the internet.

At the year end there were 15 regular volunteers, and a further five who have delivered workshops.

Carolyn Durkin, who had worked on the volunteer programme since its inception, and who was personally responsible for many of the ideas, retired at the end of March. Roy Young has taken her place as outreach development assistant.

7 Visits & partnerships

Baroness Lola Young visited the archives service in May 2007 and viewed the exhibition on radicalism in the north east, which she referred to in her subsequent lecture at the Lit & Phil.



Baroness Young is Emeritus Professor of cultural studies at Middlesex University, and has been a member of the Historical Manuscripts Commission and of the board of the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council.

The archives service also received a visit from model, sportswoman and presenter Jodie Kidd in the course of filming for the forthcoming series of *Who do you think you are?* for the BBC.

The year's major partnership activities are detailed elsewhere, but have included

- Participation in the *Remembering Slavery* project
- Participation in the *Destination Tyne & Wear* project
- A project funded by the North East Museums Hub to increase online access to collections, whereby the Armstrong archive of ships plans and photographs, which is split between the archives service and the Discovery Museum, was digitised as a whole and made accessible via the archives service's online catalogue. Nearly 500 plans and over 1600 photographs are included.

8 Records Management

The records management service has continued to prosper, with several new public sector clients. Some of the existing Tyne and Wear-wide clients have reviewed their arrangement in view of the new charges, but this has enabled us to transfer some long-term material to archive, and others have continued to use the service.

Work on upgrading the software to manage the system is underway.

9 Northern Region Film & Television Archive

The archives service remains a major partner, alongside Teesside University, and is represented on the board by the chairman of the joint committee and the chief archivist.

It has been an extremely difficult year for the film archive, with the departure of the curator leaving staff without professional direction, and financial uncertainty very much to the fore. However, additional national funding for regional film archives was announced in the course of the year and a strategy on screen heritage for the region was in course of preparation as the year closed.

All who participated in the strategy workshops agreed that a regional film archive was crucial to the future of screen heritage in the region.

A DVD *Tyneside Tales*, was previewed at the Late Shows at Tyne & Wear Archives service, as well as at several other venues around the region, and has been selling well, and footage from the archive was used in a number of television programmes.

10 Conclusion

The service has faced challenges throughout the year as well as managing to seize numerous opportunities. It has been successful in many areas, outperforming some other archives services and continues to develop its services to users and potential users.

Priorities for the coming year will include

- Action arising from the decision of the Tyne and Wear Leadership Group on the future direction of the archives service
- Continuing work on the existing collections to improve preservation and access.
- Increased digitisation of content and uploading of images to the online catalogue
- Continuing work on electronic archives
- Partnership with NRFTA and the British Film Institute to provide improved access to archive film in Newcastle