

ISSUE 7

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011

BROADSHEET



News Review from the
SCOTTISH COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES



Welcome to the Issue (number 7.)

The heating is back on in the SCA office and the evenings are getting darker—Autumn has officially arrived, bringing with it the September/October round up of news, interviews and events from Scotland.

Summer came to a close in a flurry of activity as the annual Archives and Records Association Conference took place ‘north of the border’ in beautiful Edinburgh. Issue 7 contains a number of features dedicated to the conference, including an interview with the Chair of ARA Scotland Rachel Hosker, commentary from Caroline Brown who headed up the Conference Committee, and an article by the newly appointed President of the ARA, and consultant for the SCA, Caroline Williams.

The conference was also the perfect opportunity officially to launch the SCA’s advocacy publication for Scotland’s diverse and valuable archives, *Scotland’s Archives Matter*. You can download the publication at www.scoarch.org.uk/projects/scotlandsarchivesmatter and read about the launch on page 9.

All this, plus tales of a dashing and courageous eighteenth century Naval Officer. Perfect reading for a chilly autumnal afternoon.

Enjoy the Issue!

The Editorial Team



Detail from treatise on the fishes [or birds], from the *Hortus Sanitatis* (Mainz: Jacob Meydenbach, 1491).

University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives

One of the earliest European medical texts, the *Hortus Sanitatis*, or 'Garden of Health', is the most important of the medieval herbals. These were popular, anonymously written books, containing information on natural history, horticulture and medicinal remedies, including the purported medicinal value of various mineral substances.

Sections on animals and fish are reminiscent of a medieval bestiary, with fantastical images, for example, of harpies and mermaids.

Links:

www.abdn.ac.uk/historic/Intro.shtml

www.flickr.com/photos/scottisharchives



CONSERVATION

the bench

Forget Hollywood and Russell Crowe, the Real Master and Commander was a Scot

The National Records of Scotland (NRS) is a partner in the exhibition *Admiral Cochrane: The Real Master and Commander*, which brings together key documents and personal possessions to tell the story of an extraordinary character. The exhibition will be held at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh from 7 October 2011 until 19 February 2012.

Colleagues may know of *Master and Commander*, the historical novel by Patrick O'Brian featuring the well-known characters Captain Jack Aubrey and the naval surgeon Stephen Maturin. This work of fiction was closely based on the historical feats of Admiral Thomas Cochrane, 10th Earl of Dundonald and 1st Marquess of Maranhao (1775-1860), a Scottish nobleman who won huge acclaim as a daring naval officer during the Napoleonic Wars. Lord Cochrane later lost his reputation and position in an infamous financial scandal but he restored his name by successfully commanding the naval forces of Chile, Brazil and Greece in their struggles for independence. He died a Royal Navy Admiral.

NRS holds the personal archive of this controversial and complex man as part of the Dundonald family papers - GD 233 Papers of the Cochrane family, Earls of Dundonald (Dundonald muniments) 1654-1993. The NRS conservation department, specifically Gloria Conti, Johana Langerova and Eva Moya, have been working with Museum curators to get the exhibition material ready for display and presentation across both organisations.

Like most conservation work, the project is meticulous and time consuming, but also enjoyable. The exhibition is also an opportunity for us to work with colleagues from other institutions and professions. It follows a progression from condition reports and object selection, to the constraints, aesthetics and ethics of display, including mount making and, of course, all of the paperwork that underpins exhibitions of this nature. Not to mention the physical mechanics and pressures of installing.

The difficulties and challenges raised by such an undertaking are, however, well worth it. The efforts of everyone involved are rewarded by the increased access and opening up of the papers and objects to the many anticipated visitors that will come to learn about the real Master and Commander. And there is no doubt that the documentary records are enhanced by the juxtaposition with objects and pictorial artefacts. We are even displaying locks of Lord Cochrane's hair – move over Captain Jack Sparrow!

For more information on the exhibition please visit www.nms.ac.uk/cochrane

by **Linda Ramsay**

Head of Conservation, National Records of Scotland



Linda Ramsay was also one of the first speakers at this year's ARA Conference. Her topic was 'Need, Want, Like – Preservation Activities in Archive and Record Collections', and concerned the 15 Preservation Assessment Surveys currently underway in Scotland...

Linda presenting at the conference



In direct response to the findings of *An Archival Account of Scotland*, published in February 2000, the SCA have been working with the British Library Preservation Advisory Centre (PAC) to fund fifteen Preservation Assessment Surveys across Scotland.

Scotland does not have the network of conservation studios that exist south of the border, with only three organisations outside of the Nationals incorporating professional conservation. The Preservation Advisory Centre aims to enable people working with library and archive collections to take a long-term approach to their use and promotes the benefit of good preservation practice. The Preservation Assessment Survey Tool is a statistically robust, independent, and nationally accepted model. The assessment looks at access, use, accommodation, condition and usability. Following training, guidance and assistance with sampling 400 items of any given collection, the information gathered from each survey is entered into a database. This infor-

mation is then translated into a report for each participating service. In broader terms, this information is also fed into a national picture of the condition of collections across the UK.

Conservators were initially sceptical of the survey. It seemed too general to professionals used to setting out very specific objectives to prioritise results and identify types of treatment. However, PAS can offer the following range of benefits: to support internal and external funding requests; to support project planning; to identify, promote and praise ongoing activities; to request and justify additional staffing; to raise the importance of preservation issues; to focus conservation activity; for staff development and to recognise where responsibility lies.

For us at NRS conservation, it has also enabled the opening up of a dialogue between conservators and

archivists. We have seen other collections and realise the challenges and dilemmas are the same. It also allows direct re-engagement with your collections – the reason most people want to be archivists or conservators is because they are interested in the collections! On site surveying has also led to interesting discoveries within collections that are not easy to locate using existing catalogues. Perhaps most importantly, it forges bonds and develops meaningful contacts. In our case, this has included joint projects with Perth and Kinross Council, Tasglannan Eilean Siar (Hebridean Archives), Historic Scotland, Dundee City Archives and Edinburgh City Archives. Working together builds on improved understanding and maintains and supports professionalism in challenging times

A key outcome of the surveys will be the production of an independent national profile. This will serve as a valuable lobbying tool for the SCA and the Keeper of the Records of Scotland to advocate for the preservation needs of Scotland's collections.

Linda Ramsay

To date the SCA have awarded 15 surveys; Edinburgh City; University of Dundee; Aberdeen City; Stirling; Scottish Borders; Moray; Lanarkshire; Midlothian; Falkirk; Western Isles; East Lothian; East Renfrewshire; Shetland; Glasgow City; West Lothian. Some are still in progress.

To find out more information visit www.scoarch.org.uk/projects/preservationassessmentsurveys

Rachel Hosker

Chair of ARA Scotland

Archive Manager for the Scottish Borders Council

Tell us a little about yourself.

I'm the archivist for the Scottish Borders and have been here five years. I love working in this sector because of the opportunities to provide people with stories and information that makes a difference to them. I also teach a Scottish Family and Local History module for the University of Dundee and I'm on a number of advisory bodies for archives and records.

This month's Broadsheet has a focus on the Archives and Records Association Conference. As the Chair of ARA Scotland can you tell us about your role and responsibilities?

It's great fun being Chair of ARA Scotland. You meet so many people and can get involved in what is going on in the sector. I've learnt so much during my time as Chair. This year I was able to be part of the conference organising committee and we were delighted it took place in Edinburgh. However we are looking for a new Chair so please get in touch if you want to find out more!

Did you enjoy the Conference? Apart from the spectacular, and potentially life-threatening, displays of ceilidh dancing at the dinner, did you have any other highlights?

I came away so inspired and with lots of ideas. I was scribbling furiously creating idea bubbles at the side of my notes. It really was a fantastic conference. Despite the doom and gloom we hear about in economic terms, we heard little of that and more about positive creative ways to work together, state your case and make a difference. The human face of archives was discussed a lot as was the importance of communication and storytelling. There were many practical examples provided for inspiration that looked at both advocacy to those who make the decisions and outreach tools and techniques to capture audiences.

The dancing was spectacular indeed – although I think our colleagues from France showed us a thing or two. Maybe next year there will be a 'dance off'!

Your 'day job' is the Archive Manager for the Scottish Borders Council – what has the Heritage Hub at Hawick been up to recently?

Recently we've been concentrating on adding more to our online catalogue and working with our colleagues in IT to develop a new website. We've also just done our first GLOW meet with a school and created some templates to allow us to interact with schools through GLOW and not have to do something new every time. We've also been taking in school records, records from a pharmacy and have had offers of political papers and papers of a former provost. We are also working with and talking to our colleagues in some of the large Border historic houses so we can consider joint initiatives. We hope to host another family and local history workshop in the autumn as well.

What originally sparked your interest in archives?

It was the detective aspect of uncovering stories and sharing them that sparked my interest. I originally



INTERVIEW

studied History and Medieval Studies which included art, music, and development of language as part of the course. Some of these aspects, rather than kings, queens and wars, made me want to investigate and find out more than what was in a text book. My first stint of work experience when I was 14 was in an archive!

Have you any specific career highlights so far?

It's a difficult one as I get excited about a lot of things! Finding out our medieval music manuscript we hold at the Hub was genuine is definitely up there. A simple afternoon spent recently helping one of our researchers uncover the story of a small sick house and how it was used. It all started from a mystery about where it was, no-one knew much more than that. It brought it home the fun and the mysteries still to be uncovered and solved. I also think the Shaw Report has also been a highlight in that it focused us to look at records we had that could help people trace what they experienced in the past. We have had reunions of family and friends through research done in the archives. We recently helped a half-brother and sister who last saw each other as children get back in touch – that was just a lovely moment.

What do you feel are the main challenges currently faced by the sector?

One major challenge is the changing pace and nature of the sector and the dilution of former boundaries and 'boxes' sectors and professions were put in. We have to be more open and engage with community-run archives, heritage groups and organisations looking after archives who won't relinquish them into the care of a professional service. We have to engage with those who may not think archivists can help with their work as it's all available online. There is a lot of competition for who is safeguarding heritage, and archivists and curators are no longer the respected 'sacred professional'. Another big challenge in the wider records sphere is with digital records and information management. IT professionals are managing in many cases the creation, lifeuse and deletion of digital resources under the umbrella term of information management. We have to engage with them or good practice in managing digital records could no longer be seen as something a records manager has to influence and advise on. Keeping pace with all of these issues is a challenge!

If money was no object...

I'd invest in a cataloguing archivist, a records store with records management, getting our digital archive up and running with IT and then use other money for making the archives available through creative, engaging, projects from running courses in 'Art and Archives' to having a pot of money to transport schools to visit the Hub to do projects like our emigration project which included animation.

Describe archives in three words.

Memory. People. Stories.

*The Heritage Hub at Hawick
© Keith Hunter 2011*



CONFERENCE 2011



CONFERENCE 2011

ADVOCATING FOR ARCHIVES AND RECORDS

Commentary by Caroline Brown, Conference Committee Chair and Deputy Archivist at the University of Dundee

With over three hundred delegates, including representatives from as far afield as China and the USA (not to mention the Highlands and Islands of Scotland!), the 2011 Archives and Records Association and the International Council on Archives Conference has been declared the most successful in years and the best attended in a decade.

In addition to the wide variety of speakers presenting on this year's theme of 'Advocating for Archives and Records: the Impact of the Profession in the 21st Century', Thursday afternoon at the conference provided delegates with something a little bit different. As well as opportunities to network at the Information Marketplace, conference attendees could choose from a series of workshops. These were designed to promote discussion and to provide a greater focus on current projects than was possible in the main conference sessions. Irene O'Brien and Gerry Slater provided an introduction to the Archives and Records Management Quality Improvement Framework (ARMS) which has been developed by the Scottish Council on Archives. In addition to

defining relevant performance indicators for the sector, ARMS aims to serve as a tool to assist in the implementation of the Public Records (Scotland) Act, 2011. It was encouraging to see real interest and engagement with ARMS from international colleagues who were there, and it's great that Scotland is taking the lead on something as important as this. To find out more about ARMS visit the SCA website at:

www.scoarch.org.uk/projects/qualityframework

Also showcasing Scottish talent was Kay Foubister who gave an entertaining presentation on films of Scotland held by the Scottish Screen Archive - 1950s fashion tips for women provoked hilarity and some amazement, and it was fascinating to hear about the technical aspects of film conservation and preservation. Other workshops looked at educational activities for children, working in partnerships on digital projects, International Council on Archives projects and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for the sector.

The CPD workshop focused on ARA's role in providing continuing professional development for its members. Much of the discussion focussed on how to encourage members to continue with CPD after registration, and whether some kind of higher registration or even a compulsory element was feasible. ARA is very keen to provide its members with opportunities for CPD but it wants to do so in as effective a way as possible. Therefore, having the opportunity to discuss the issues during the workshop session was extremely useful and productive.

Future ARA conferences will include more workshop sessions so if there is a topic that you would like to discuss then the conference committee would be very happy to hear from you.

You can find out further information on the 2011 conference, including speaker abstracts and biographies, Information Marketplace exhibitors and the conference workshops, by visiting:

www.archives.org.uk/ara-conference/the-ara-conference.html



A range of Scottish organisations represented on the SCA stand at the Information Marketplace

The Nation's Catalogue: Scotland Online Update

by Caroline Williams



Caroline is a Senior Research Fellow at the University of Liverpool and an Independent Archival Consultant. She has been employed by the Scottish Council on Archives to take forward the Scotland Online project. The SCA would like to congratulate Caroline, who officially confirmed her acceptance of the role of ARA President at this year's Conference in Edinburgh.

'Whether the visit is on-site or remote, the message from archive services to users is the same – these are your Archives, your history and your stories, allowing you to make real connections with the past and helping to shape your future.'

This quote from *Scotland's Archives Matter* is a timely reminder to archivists of the importance of getting information from our archives 'out there' so that as many people as possible can have easy access to it. One way of doing this is through catalogues, and there is currently an on-going project investigating how online cataloguing might further develop to help users. Over the last few months Scottish archivists have been contributing their ideas to this vision for the future.

In May at an event in Glasgow speakers demonstrated to the audience of archive practitioners just how technology can be used to make connections (and start conversations) with people interested in history, geography, culture and archives. Sites such as the Peoples Collections Wales (www.peoplescollectionwales.co.uk) really do show how this can be done. Presentations about the Archives Hub and the International Council on Archive's open source cataloguing software AtoM led to further discussion about the direction online cataloguing in Scotland might follow.

Subsequently, over the summer, 37 archives contributed both their ideas of what the future of online cataloguing might look like as well describing their own progress – and challenges - in the area. Although it was a self-selected group that responded to the questionnaire, it was clear that some pretty advanced work is going on in some areas, even though others were struggling to find sufficient resources to make much progress.

What did they feel that users would appreciate in an online catalogue?

- More detail through item-level descriptions
- Better and easier- to- use search facilities (including to people, places and subjects) possibly open to Google
- A site that could host image, sound and other files with easy navigation to and from the catalogue
- The option of a wiki facility (if well controlled) that would help communication and outreach
- The potential to develop geo-referencing
- An area for learning, interpretation and other micro-sites that linked into the catalogue

What are the options?

Because archives are already using a variety of methods for getting their catalogues on line a number of technical solutions need to be considered. These will look at web-based systems (such as the Hub), data-based systems (such as Axiell), open source systems (such as ICA AtoM) and at systems that can accommodate both distributed and centralised functionality, archival standards, and sophisticated searching. It will certainly be difficult to find a solution that suits everybody!

How do archivists want this to work?

- Many wanted a system that enabled them to control their own data rather than send it to a central database – and to allow it to be harvested periodically
- However a substantial minority would still like to their submit data to be managed elsewhere, and to receive support in order to do so
- A simple input and uploading process that would encourage rather than prevent people from contributing
- A system that would avoid the need to update many versions separately on individual sites
- A system that although standards- compliant would prioritise user-friendliness, ease of use and interoperability
- That while interpretive resources, learning and knowledge bases were important, archivists shouldn't lose sight of other challenges such as retro conversion and backlogs

What are the next steps?

Now that we have a clearer idea of the kind of functionality today's online cataloguing systems now require, during the forthcoming weeks and months we will be considering in detail available commercial and open-source options. We shall make sure that we keep you updated with our progress.

AND FINALLY...



On 31 August *Scotland's Archives Matter*, a publication by the Scottish Council on Archives was officially launched by Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture and External Affairs. The reception at General Register House in Edinburgh was held in collaboration with the National Records of Scotland and coincided with the annual Archives and Records Association conference. The ARA's theme this year was 'Advocating for Archives and Records' and as the lead advocacy body for archives and records management organisations across Scotland, the SCA is committed to developing a national strategy for those services and providing a consensus voice for the sector.

Scotland's Archives Matter seeks to serve as an introduction to the world of archives, to act as a source of information that will encourage exploration and enquiry, and to be a persuasive advocacy document highlighting the importance of the archives and records management sector.

The publication is both informative and visually attractive, filled with thought-provoking commentary and stunning images. The SCA hopes you will take the time to read it. We hope you will feel enthused enough to discuss it with others. We hope it will help highlight the amazing collections held across Scotland, and those archivists, conservators and records managers that care for them. Above all, we hope you enjoy it. *Scotland's Archives Matter* is proof that when Scottish archives and records management practitioners come together they can produce something quite simply second to none.

"Scotland's Archives Matter offers a glimpse into the amazing range of archives held by an equally amazing range of bodies, large and small, across Scotland. Archives are a shared inheritance and, in that sense, democratic. They are about the people and in a very special sense they belong to the people. They are our archives. They tell our stories. I am confident that Scotland's Archives Matter will help to deliver that message loud and clear."

(Fiona Hyslop MSP, extract from speech launching the SCA's *Scotland's Archives Matter* on 31 August 2011)



Fiona Hyslop with George MacKenzie, Keeper of the Records of Scotland, and members of the SCA Management Committee at the launch of *Scotland's Archives Matter*

Download your copy of *Scotland's Archives Matter* at www.scoarch.org.uk/projects/scotlandsarchivesmatter

A SCOTTISH COUNCIL ON ARCHIVES PUBLICATION

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