



WHY ARCHIVES MATTER: HERITAGE, MEMORY, IDENTITY

Scottish Council on Archives conference

Wednesday 17th April 2019

The Engine Shed, Stirling.

REPORT

1. BACKGROUND

Why Archives Matter: Heritage, Memory, Identity, was the second in a series of events run by the Scottish Council on Archives demonstrating the importance and impact of Scotland's archives. The first conference, on 27th October 2018, focused on projects where archival material has been used to support educational initiatives, intergenerational and community-based heritage activity, and mental health and dementia-related work by charities. A third event, later in 2019, will focus on the importance of good records management in terms of governance, best practice, business efficiency and accountability.

The purpose of *Why Archives Matter: Heritage, Memory, Identity* was to promote greater awareness of the importance and usefulness of archives to many different sectors including education, architecture, cultural heritage, archaeology and genealogical research.

The first session, 'Heritage' focussed on how archives inform and underpin the work of architects, academics, archaeologists and conservation professionals. The second session, 'Memory' revealed some of the many stories of individuals, communities and organisations which are safely stored in the National Record while also being widely shared. This session ended with a presentation from Dr Ciaran Wallace of Trinity College Dublin and the Beyond 2022 project. The project involves a virtual reconstruction of the Irish Record Office, destroyed in 1922 during the civil war, and assembling a complete inventory of loss and survival. The final session, 'Identity' examined how archives contribute to our diversity and sense of identity, with focus on the changing demographics of Scotland, looking ahead to the 2021 Census.

Fiona Hyslop, MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs gave the opening speech.

The event was supported by the Built Environment Forum Scotland, Historic Environment Scotland and the National Records of Scotland.

A press release was issued before the conference which included the following quotes:

Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs Fiona Hyslop said:

"We can properly understand Scotland as it is today by understanding the stories of those who came before us."

“Archives help keep those stories alive and give us all a real sense of what it was like to live, learn and work through the generations”.

Paul Lowe, Keeper of the Records of Scotland, said:

“Archives and records are vital and relevant to our lives, health and wellbeing and provide a unique insight into the history of people, past and present.

“National Records of Scotland preserves the primary records for understanding all aspects of the history of Scotland, its people and its government, economy and society, which can inspire and engage communities with their own heritage.”

John Pelan, Director of the Scottish Council of Archives said:

“Archives are the documented memory of the nation. They tell our stories, enrich our lives, connect us with the past and give us a sense of identity. Why Archives Matter will highlight some of the many ways in which archives underpin every aspect of society.”

2. DELEGATES

The conference was extremely well-attended. Over sixty delegates joined around twenty speakers and staff. A wide range of organisations were represented.

ORGANISATIONS REPRESENTED

After Adoption UK	National Register of Archives for Scotland
Archives & Records Association Scotland	National Trust for Scotland
Argyll Estates	New Lanark Trust
AS Archive Services	RIAS
Austin-Smith:Lord LLP	Scottish Civic Trust
Built Environment Forum Scotland	Scottish Council on Archives
Carney Heritage Productions Ltd	Scottish Jewish Archive Centre
Colourful Heritage	Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
Crieff Museum	Society of Helpers UK
Falkirk Archives	South Lanarkshire Council
Glasgow City Archives	Sports Heritage Scotland
Harper Collins	SURF - Scotland's Regeneration Forum
Heriot-Watt University	The Ballast Trust
Highland Archives	The Glasgow School of Art
Historic Environment Scotland	Trinity College Dublin
Inherit	University of Edinburgh
Kirkcaldy Civic Society	University of Glasgow
Kirkcaldy Old Kirk Trust	University of Hull
Lennox Heritage Society	University of St Andrews
Lothian Health Services Archive	University of Stirling
Moving Image Archive, NLS	University of Strathclyde
National Library of Scotland	University of the Highlands and Islands
National Records of Scotland	

3. FEEDBACK

The feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Selection of responses to feedback questionnaire.

Q. How has the conference changed your perception of archives?

"I am keener than ever to make sure they are available to all, and that we keep them updated."

"I found the talk on the poor law records by Dr Irene O'Brien and the talk on Pension Appeals by Bruno Longmore particularly interesting as I had no idea of the wealth of information within these records."

"The conference has reinforced my opinion that archives are essential to all aspects of life. As Ciaran Wallace said, "try living without one"."

Q. What did you learn about archives?

"I'm not an archivist and I've taken away the huge role archives have in recording history and how people lived; how archives provide a platform for local people to learn recording and archive techniques and the wealth of a nations memory that is treasured and available for public access."

"I hadn't previously thought about the variety of jobs that archives can support - from architects to foundry workers."

"It was great to have a diversity of speakers and to hear about less well-known archives - for example the business archives of Harper Collins and the Jewish archives."

Q. How has the conference inspired you to think about using archives in different ways?

"I am going to try to organise events in my local area for local people to see what happened in the past."

"It has underpinned the various forms of engagement that archivists should be doing, ensuring that engagement goes beyond traditional methods."

"Yes - it has taught me to think about the bigger picture of the archive and the reason behind the story and collection."

"It has underpinned the various forms of engagement that archivists should be doing, ensuring that engagement goes beyond traditional methods."

Q. What did you enjoy most about the conference?

"Each session sparked my interest in different ways and started me thinking about ideas to take back."

"I thought Irene O'Brien's presentation was very interesting and inspiring."

“The variety of speakers were excellent. It was good to see they all had different approaches for creating and developing their archives and making their collections accessible.”

4. SPEAKERS/PRESENTERS

Dr Terri Colpi, University of St Andrews
 Lesley Ferguson, Historic Environment Scotland
 Fiona Hyslop, MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs
 Harvey Kaplan, Scottish Jewish Archives Centre
 Ruth Honeybone, Lothian Health Archives
 Bruno Longmore, National Records of Scotland
 Dr Irene O’Brien, (SCA Chair), Glasgow City Archives
 Dr David Mitchell, Historic Environment Scotland
 Dr Saqib Razzaq, Colourful Heritage

Emeritus Professor Richard Rodger
 Dawn Sinclair, Harper Collins
 Fiona Sinclair, architect
 Annabelle Sings (performer)
 Alison Stirling, Artlink
 Dr Ciaran Wallace, Trinity College Dublin
 Amy Wilson, National Records of Scotland

Chairs

Elizabeth Roads (morning) (SCA Trustee)
 Rachel Hart (afternoon) (SCA Trustee)

Opening and closing remarks

John Pelan, Director, Scottish Council on Archives

5. PROGRAMME

Introduction: John Pelan, Scottish Council on Archives
Welcome: Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Culture, Tourism and External Affairs
Session One: Heritage (Using Archives)
Dr David Mitchell, Historic Environment Scotland Using archives for conservation
Professor Richard Rodger, University of Edinburgh Mapping Edinburgh
Fiona Sinclair, Architect Using archives for architectural research
Lesley Ferguson, Historic Environment Scotland Archives and archaeology
Session Two: Memory (Telling our Story through Archives)
Bruno Longmore, National Records of Scotland WW1 Pensions Appeal Tribunal Records
Dr Irene O’Brien, Glasgow City Archives Scottish Poor Law Records
Dawn Sinclair, Harper Collins Corporate Memory
Ruth Honeybone, Lothian Health Services Archive Miss Annabelle Sings (performer)

Alison Stirling, Artlink Stories from the Edinburgh Royal Hospital
Dr Ciaran Wallace, Trinity College Dublin Beyond 2022 Project, Ireland's Virtual Record Treasury
Session Three: Identity (Seeing ourselves in Archives)
Dr Saqib Razzaq, Colourful Heritage South Asian and Muslim identity in Scotland
Harvey Kaplan, Scottish Jewish Archives Centre Jewish identity in Scotland
Dr Terri Colpi, University of St Andrews Scottish-Italian community in the archives
Amy Wilson, National Records of Scotland Changing demographics

6. SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

Fiona Hyslop opened the event by expressing her appreciation of the collaborative nature of the conference, run by the SCA with support from Historic Environment Scotland, the Built Environment Forum Scotland, and National Records of Scotland. She spoke about how archives tell the story of Scotland and how, without archives, we would have an incomplete picture of how our ancestors lived. She emphasised the significance of archives as "... the raw materials which inform the work of architects, academics, archaeologists and conservation professionals." Ms Hyslop also spoke about the importance of community archives in terms of their contribution to a distinct sense of place and she highlighted the role that the new Cultural Strategy for Scotland had in recognising these local identities.

HERITAGE

David Mitchell reflected on the significance of archives to him in both a personal and professional basis, particularly around his research interests. David has a particular interest in industrial heritage and the iron founding industry in Scotland and using archival material to understand and bring back to life artefacts and structures has been an important part of his working life. David highlighted the importance of archived drawings and plans to restoration projects such as the Perry Bandstand in Kirkintilloch and the Glasgow School of Art.

Richard Rodger spoke about his frustrations as a user of archives services, specifically around lack of funding, uneven provision, inconsistency of cataloguing, and uncomfortable chairs! He also called for a review of the 100-year census rule, as people were living much longer than before. Richard also spoke about the Mapping Edinburgh project which uses datasets from historians and geographers to create an online map of historical social data for Edinburgh. Datasets included taxes, businesses, valuation rolls, rents, trades, professions and a range of other indicators. He concluded by saying that "the argument is

that we need to be less defensive about archives and proactive in developing public interest in heritage through the documentary and material record.”

Fiona Sinclair spoke about the importance of creating and retaining records “irrespective of whether they seem important or valuable at that particular point in time”. Fiona talked about her experience of personal archives. These included discovering long-lost blueprints for a car designed by her grandfather a hundred years which were now being used by Dalbeattie Men’s Shed to help rebuild the vehicle; an archive of the Formakin Estate in Renfrewshire; and the records of the Glasgow Institute of Architects. Fiona explained the invaluable contribution of archives, including photographs, maps, plans, original prospectuses, newspapers, street directories and Dean of Guild records towards the refurbishment and repair of two 1930s Art Deco apartment blocks in Glasgow.

Lesley Ferguson told the story of two remarkable men, John Nicholson, a Caithness farmer and Sir Francis Tress Barry, a wealthy businessman and MP, both born in the first half of the 19th century, as revealed through a collection of photographs and drawings held by Historic Environment Scotland. Nicholson, who became a sculptor and artist, collaborated with Barry on a series of archaeological excavations, surveys and recordings of brochs in Caithness. Their photographs and drawings, held within the archives, continue to inform and inspire archaeologists and historians.

MEMORY

Bruno Longmore provided compelling evidence of the traumatic impact of WW1 on survivors and their families as revealed through the Wellcome Trust-supported WW1 Pensions Appeal Tribunal Records project. The project involved cataloguing to ISAD(G) standards over 30,000 records containing service histories, medical information, personal statements and supporting evidence with a view to making them widely accessible online. They provide unique insight into the long-term traumatic impact (physical, mental and economic) of war on working class people and the manner in which they were treated by authorities, having served their country. The project gives a voice to these people, many long-forgotten.

Irene O’Brien talked about the importance of the Scottish Poor Law records which shed light on the lives of poor people in 19th century Scotland. They are now the most important source for family history and academic research in Glasgow, reflecting Glasgow’s rise to the second city of the British Empire. The records reveal the terrible conditions which many people lived in and provide evidence of the discrimination they faced in their claims for poor relief. The records also reflect the changing demographics of the city which experienced large-scale immigration, housing shortages, growth and significant health challenges.

Dawn Sinclair explained the importance of the HarperCollins archive in recording and sharing the story of the company, its staff and authors as well as its contribution to the history of Scotland and beyond for more than 200 years. The archive is a rich resource for the company to draw on from its early days as an educational publisher through to the international company it is today. The archive also reveals the important contribution to society made by Collins in terms of improving working conditions and the welfare of people in Glasgow.

Ruth Honeybone from Lothian Health Services Archive and **Annabelle Sings** from Artlink used the words of past patients of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital (established in 1813 as the Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum) to reveal the changing treatment over people with mental health issues over the years. The performance travelled backwards and forwards through time and offered a fascinating perspective of the people who stayed and worked at the hospital over 200 years. **Alison Stirling** introduced the performance by talking about the important collaborative work done in hospitals by Artlink, an arts and disability organisation.

Ciaran Wallace summarised the chequered history of Irish records. He gave an update on progress with the Beyond 2022 project, which aims to digitally reconstruct the premises of the Public Records Office of Ireland, destroyed in 1922 during the civil war, and to refill its shelves using copies and transcripts taken from the original records during the operational lifetime of the Record Treasury. Ireland's troubled and often war-torn past had resulted in the loss or misappropriation on records. The establishment of a new state-of-the-art Public Record Office of Ireland in 1867 provided the country with a safe and reliable archives facility. However, its destruction in 1922 has had profound implications for the country and future generations of researchers, historians and record keepers. The Beyond 2022 project will involve a digital recreation of the destroyed records office with online access to all available copies, extracts, transcriptions etc. taken from originals in the PROI and gathered from copies around the world into a single resource.

IDENTITY

Saqib Razaq spoke about Colourful Heritage, an organisation in Glasgow established in 2010 to preserve and celebrate the contributions of the early South Asian and Muslim communities and migrants to Scotland. Colourful Heritage has created a large online video archive of first-hand accounts of the early South Asian and Muslim communities to come to Scotland. The project has concentrated on a range of themes including: migration, family life, role of religion, and identity. Saqib also talked about the Bashir Maan archive which was launched at the Mitchell library in Glasgow in 2014, where it is now housed. It consists of letters, photographs and other material which belongs to Britain's First Muslim Councillor – Bashir Maan.

Harvey Kaplan told the story of the Scottish Jewish Archives Centre which has recorded and preserved the history of records of Jews in Scotland. The centre, which is based in the historic Garnethill Synagogue in Glasgow, documents, preserves, exhibits and publishes aspects of its collections and makes them available for education, academic research, tourists and other visitors. The collection includes synagogue registers, minute books, correspondence, annual reports, membership lists, brochures, personal papers, family histories, books, newspapers and photographs as well as objects. The archives show Scottish Jews' place in Jewish history as well as their important contribution to Scotland's wider civic society.

Terri Colpi spoke about Italian history and identity in Scotland, the importance of archives and the challenges accessing records relating to the history of immigrants from Italy over the last 170 years. Terri explained that because archival and research resources relating to the Italians are widely distributed, in local archives, museums, libraries, galleries and

personal collections, it can sometimes seem difficult to trace and unravel. A great deal of testimony and potential archival materials have thus vanished over time and, although there is a tradition of oral history within the Italian community, there is something of a sense of loss, certainly of the detail, since often the past cannot be substantiated or verified. Yet, interesting records do exist, e.g., Poor Law Records, directories and photographs at Glasgow City Archives and the Italo-Scottish Research Cluster, set up by Professor Federica Pedriale at Edinburgh University in 2011, and which has an online archive. Another important resource, currently held at the Italian Honorary Consulate in Glasgow, is a census of Italians in Scotland carried out in 1933 by Mussolini's government.

Amy Wilson summarised the history of the population records in Scotland from incomplete records in the 17th and 18th centuries to the first modern census in 1801 and up to the present day. The 1801 census was started because of concerns that the population was increasing and the effect this was having on food production, emigration and colonisation. The 1841 census records the names of individuals within a household along with ages, literacy, occupations and places of birth. The system adopted in 1841 generally stood the test of time and has remained essentially unaltered since then. Amy showed how subsequent censuses could be used to chart the changing demographic of Scotland and provide invaluable data on a wide range of subjects including mortality, life expectancy, population growth, ethnicity and religion. Amy also set out some of the possible new questions for the 2021 census, which will be predominantly online, around issues such as sexual orientation and transgender status.

END

John Pelan, Director, SCA
May 2019