



Newsletter

Issue 23

January 2013

ISSN 1748-7676

AfL Chairman's Newsletter Message January 2013

First of all: Happy New Year to members of AfL and all our supporters!

2012 was a momentous year for London and for its archives, as we have shown in previous issues of the *Newsletter*, and in this issue we expand on events and those belonging to AfL too.

During the year, AfL continued advocacy work with London Boroughs, keeping the archives services at the forefront of thought and development. It saw the successful transfer of the Women's Library from London Metropolitan University to the London School of Economics.

The 2012 conference on Charles Dickens in October, was held jointly with the Centre for Metropolitan History of the Institute for Historical Research, a new partnership which we will build on, as it is clearly mutually beneficial. The conference was very well received by attendees and the wide range of speakers alike; all who could remained after giving their talks, and along with the publishers with a range of relevant books on sale, and attendees enjoyed the evening reception and opportunity for informal exchange of views and information. Feedback was spontaneously positively from the speakers afterwards for the organisation and content and from attendees.

Much had been done by a volunteer, Jenny Butler, to promote the *Winning Endeavours* Olympic history website, and we are grateful for her hard work and innovative approach. The website has now been archived by the British Library as planned at its inception.

In November 2012, AfL's achievements culminated in the *Pearl Party* and celebration of 30 years of advocacy for London's archives. In this *Newsletter* you can read a roundup of the organisations involved over the 30 years by David Mander, who was instrumental in them all, and a review of the *Pearl Party*, which was attended by some of our user members, as well as professionals past and present.

David is among the stalwarts of AfL who are moving on, as he takes a role in national advo-

cacy with the Association of Archives and Records. Seminar organiser Katherine Short is leaving London; she has provided a marvellous programme of seminars over the years and has seen us well into their organisation for 2013. David Prior, former Treasurer has overseen the finances splendidly for 10 years and has also stepped down from the Board; we thank them all for their services, and we wish all who have been involved in AfL well for the future.

As to AfL's future, in 2013, AfL will continue to advocate for archive services in London and also show how archives can be enjoyed and useful to all, through our website and continuing events. For example, the seminar series begins on 10th January with a talk entitled *I love Archives* – we can't get much more explicit support than that! Visits continue, and we plan a great presence at the *Who Do You Think You Are* weekend at Olympia February 22nd – 24th, for which we would be glad to hear from volunteers to take a turn at the stand, and later we will see a new styled conference on AfL's theme for the year of the 1960s.

AfL is for users and professionals alike and we would be glad to hear from any of you about events you would like us to put on, subjects for seminars and places for visits, so please contact us via our website.

We like to keep you informed, so please return regularly to our website and use it as a resource for information on AfL events and things archival as we swing into 2013.

My best wishes to you all.

Anne Barrett
Chairman, Archives for London
January 2013

The independent voice for
archives in the Capital

Inside this Issue (highlights)

30 years in the Archives p3

Editor's Roundup p4

AIM 25 p4

National Army Museum p4

Western Front Association p5

The Women's Library p5

Children's Society p5

Olympics Ephemera p6

Historic Southwark p6

Central St. Martins p7

Linnaean Society p7

Society of Antiquarians p8

BAC conference p8

Talbot Archive p8

AfL Conference 2012 p9

Seminar Reports pp 10, 11

- Can we switch it off?

- Parliament Burnt Down

- King's College Archives

- Frost Fairs on the Thames

30 years of Archive Activity

A party was held in November to celebrate 30 years of archive groups working in London. Here is a potted history

Archives for London (AfL) was formed in 2005 as the successor body to the Greater London Archives Network, London Archives Users Forum and the London Archives Regional Council.

The **Greater London Archives Network (GLAN)**, founded in 1982, was originally founded as a forum for all those working in London local authority archives, partly because the Society of Archivists' rules precluded membership for librarians, which was the role of many working on the 'edge' or archives. GLAN later expanded its remit to all those working in the care of archives and local studies in the Greater London area. Its thrice yearly newsletter, *MetLines*, was a precursor of this one.

AfL has continued work on two GLAN publications AfL; London Local archives: a directory of local authority and other record offices and libraries in London, and Greater London History Sources (copies are available from [Camden Local History and Archives](#)). Updated versions of these publications will be promoted to AfL members when they are available.

GLAN was wound up in 2005. Its records have been deposited at [Hackney Archives](#) (not yet available for consultation).

The **London Archive Users Forum (LAUF)** was founded in 1988 for all users of archives in London, Its publication *Researching London's Houses* by Colin Thom was published by Historical

Publications in 2005 (ISBN 1905 286 007).

LAUF received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for an A2A (Access to Archives) project. The *Place in the Sun* project saw the indexing of the Sun Fire Office policy registers 1811-35 deposited at the Guildhall Library Manuscripts Section – see <http://www.history.ac.uk/gh/sun.htm> LAUF was wound up in 2006. Its records have been deposited a London Metropolitan Archives, and this large project is still ongoing.

The **London Archives Regional Council (LARC)** was established in 1999, as one of the nine new English regional archives councils under the auspices of the National Council on Archives.

LARC managed and produced the initial London regional archives strategy *Out of the Past into the Future* (2001), and managed the post of regional archives development officer until the formation of ALM London (later MLA - Museums Libraries and Archives Council - London).

Funding for regional archive councils came from Re:source, later MLA. It ceased at the end of March 2004 and was wound up in 2006.

More on the history of our predecessor organisations can be found on the web site at <http://www.archivesforlondon.org/pearl-party/>. There is also a 12-page document on the history the archive organisations mentioned here,



Picture taken at the PEARL party of founding members of AfL and its predecessors

Editor's Roundup

This is completely personal, a selection of odd things that your editor has chanced across and enjoyed. (I have no association with any of the items mentioned.)

It is reported that the National Archives will take on about 5TB of internal correspondence, emails, bid materials and other data about last summer's **Olympic Games** in London. The files cover the bid process, planning and delivery, and would run for roughly 50km if they were printed out. They will be transferred to The National Archives' digital repository next year, but will stay closed for up to 15 years. In addition, British Film Institute National Archive will get audio and video material of the Games. The records will join those for the two previous London games of 1908 and 1948. TNA is said to be very pleased that "for the first time, we will be able to show the whole picture of how the games were delivered - from organising committee to government - with an innovative digital Olympic archive for future historians, researchers and host cities to draw inspiration from."

The **London Journal** issue of November 2012 concentrates on the single topic of London Scenes: it is based on a conference held 2 years ago in York. The five essays cover the work of Samuel Scott between 1745 and his death in 1772; the illustrator Edward Pugh's contribution to Richard Phillips' *Modern London* (1802); Rudolph Ackerman's *The Microcosm of London* (c1809); George Scharf's pictures (c1830) of the area around Charing Cross; and John Tallis' *London Street Views* (1838). The last of these was reprinted by the London Topographical Society in 2002, the others may be more difficult to locate.

This was a period when London was expanding and becoming the centre of a world-wide trading empire, but these topics do not lend themselves to illustration. The pictures illustrate the lives of well-to-do Londoners, and many pictures are street scenes showing them going about their leisure activities.

Although very well illustrated, this reviewer thinks that the quality of many of the reproductions could have been better: that of Westminster Bridge on page 160 seems very washed out. The online edition on the Maney website has all the pictures in full colour (where the originals were in colour), and are much better. Those without a subscription can find many of the images, including Westminster Bridge, on the web site for the Yale Center for British Art (britishart.yale.edu/), where all their pictures and viewable online, and free.

Brixton Windmill was built in 1816, and is now the only surviving windmill in inner London. In 2003 local residents set up a friends' group to restore the mill: the actual work did not start until 7 years later, and was completed in 2011. In October of this year the Friends received an English heritage 'Angel' Award for their work restoring an historic building. The friends have a website with pictures of the mill at www.brixtonwindmill.org.

Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park is a well-known site for anyone with a strongly held view to get up on his (or her) soap-box and harangue anyone who will listen.

Bishopsgate Institute and On the Record are collaborating on *Sounds from the Park*, a project that will illustrate the location's eccentric history since it started in 1866. It too has been awarded funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, and details can be found on the Bishopsgate Institute site (www.bishopsgate.org.uk/ and search for *speakers corner*).

This newsletter is due to come out only a few days after the 150th anniversary of the opening of the world's first underground railway. Readers of this newsletter will not need to be told that the **Metropolitan Railway's** line from Paddington to Farringdon opened on 9 January 1863. The route still in regular use to this day as part of London Underground's Circle/Met. Lines. One wonders what it was like in those first days, travelling through tunnels on steam-hauled trains. However, the web site claims that 26,000 passengers used the service each day in the early days, so if it was uncomfortable it was presumably no worse than finding your way along streets clogged with horses (I always forget that this was well before the motor car). Visit itmuseum.co.uk/met1 for information on the history of the line and celebration of the sesqui-centenary. In addition, the [Bishopsgate Institute](http://BishopsgateInstitute) has a number of events and lectures celebrating the anniversary.

The **National Gallery** started life not in Trafalgar Square, but in Pall Mall. The historical pages of their web site, www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/history/, notes that "The National Gallery Archive contains records of the Gallery's activities from its foundation in 1824 to the present day. The archive holds public records generated by the Gallery itself, and private papers relating to individuals or activities closely associated with the Gallery." This includes the buildings themselves, the Wilkins Building and the Sainsbury Wing; the Bridgewater syndicate, named after Francis Egerton, 3rd Duke and 6th Earl of Bridgewater, who was one of the three aristocrats who were founding collectors (although he was said to have been a bit of a philistine); and the famous Myra Hess concerts that kept Londoners smiling during the war. Also the directors of the Gallery and collectors and benefactors.

The web site partleton.co.uk/James1837in1861.htm is a reconstruction of the (possible) life of a real C19 boy, James Partleton, using a wide range of picture and documentary sources; I found it quite fascinating. Do take a look.

A more recent look at a boy's life can be found at tanner.westminster.org.uk/, where Westminster School has been digitising the journals of a pupil, Lawrence Tanner, at the school from 1905 to 1909.

AIM25

The Archives at King's College leads a major cultural consortium for London: AIM25. Set up in 2000, as both a website and a partnership of archivists from 133 of the capital's universities, learned societies, hospitals, museums and cultural organisations, AIM25 allows users to cross search descriptions of historic records and archives on dozens of themes and covering more than 500 years of history, and to do so quickly and efficiently. Subjects covered by its constituent archives include politics (LSE archives), exploration and travel (Royal Geographical Society), art and design (V&A), science, technology and medicine (Wellcome Library, Royal Society, Imperial College and Royal Institution), and the history of London (London Metropolitan Archives).

AIM25 remains a popular search tool – regularly attracting some 1.5 million hits per month from the furthest corners of the globe. New institutions join regularly and add their personal paper and institutional records – recent examples include Kew Gardens, the National Maritime Museum and Transport for London. For many partner institutions, AIM25 remains the only means of providing online public access to descriptions of valuable archival holdings, and the only way in which researchers can discover and use these often unique resources, whether they be literary archives, records of scientific discovery, descriptions of war, catalogues of medicine or details of women's history.

King's Archives still manage AIM25, but its broader success relies on the enduring partnership of its constituent archives, which work on joint projects to promote culture in the capital. A recent example was 'Navigating Nightingale', an iPhone app that uses augmented reality technology to bring to life the London of the pioneering nurse, Florence Nightingale, using original photographs, maps, cartoons and sound recordings held in AIM25 archives.

Standards remain at the heart of AIM25, not least indexing, which provides consistency in describing people, places, organisation names and subjects or themes as part of the UK Archival Thesaurus (UKAT), which King's College Archives and its technical partner, University of London Computer Centre, maintain on behalf of the national archival community. UKAT is currently being improved and extended with new vocabularies relevant to the First World War, to provide a consistent and definitive description of the conflict's battles and military operations, to support numerous national projects that will anticipate the anniversary in 2014 of the outbreak of war, including commemorations planned by the BBC and Imperial War Museum.

AIM25 remains at the cutting edge of technology: all its descriptions have been accessible to Google and other search engines since inception, meaning researchers can easily find relevant material. Now, with the help of grants from JISC (www.jisc.ac.uk), it is implementing cutting edge Linked Data tools that will make resource discovery easier and link archive descriptions with other useful information and original content for research and teaching, including bibliographies, video and maps (openmetadatapathway.blogspot.co.uk).

A new project will display AIM25 descriptions on the

Historypin website, to help introduce archives to new audiences, and to map archives to relevant local historic photography.

For more information on AIM25 and recent projects, visit www.aim25.ac.uk. Item by Geoff Browell, Senior Archives Services Manager, King's College London.

National Army Museum paintings

The National Army Museum 643 oil paintings held by the National Army Museum in London represent one of the best holdings of British military themed art in the UK. Only the collection of the Imperial War Museum is larger. The permanent art gallery displays a highlights collection ranging from Charles Edwin Fripp's rousing painting of the British Army's crushing defeat at The Battle of Islawanda during the Zulu Wars to a bust of Florence Nightingale.

A collaboration between the Public Catalogue Foundation and the BBC has been photographing publicly owned oil paintings held in museums, institutions, town halls and universities across the country and publishing them on the Your Paintings Website. This includes those of the NAM. It is hoped that all 200,000 painting will be on the website by the time this newsletter reaches you. Visit www.nam.ac.uk/your-paintings.

Western Front Association

The Western Front Association announced that it will preserve an archive of over six million Great War soldiers' pension record cards, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) was no longer able to retain and manage. The MoD had held these cards, passed to it from prior custodians, which date from the time of the war. As the records might have been destroyed, the WFA has catalogued the primary information of each group of records in the archive, and arranged their storage.

During the Great War, dependents of each serving British soldier, sailor, airman and nurse who was killed were entitled to a pension, as were those service personnel who were wounded or otherwise incapacitated due to the conflict. The records cover a wide range of serving personnel or their widows, both men killed in the war and those who survived and were granted a pension.

A record card is illustrated on the web site: whilst it does not show where he was killed (although this could be found from Commonwealth War Graves Commission entry), it does reveal his date of birth, address and the names and dates of birth of his children. The cards thus provide a fascinating link between service records and family history.

Visit <http://www.westernfrontassociation.com/great-war-current-news/pension-records.html>.

The Women's Library

The oldest and most extensive collection of women's history in Europe, and a key part of the UK's national heritage, is moving to the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where it will become part of the largest social science library in Europe.

The Women's Library is currently held by London Metropolitan University but its future has been under review since the LMU announced it could no longer maintain the collection and would be looking for a new home for it. Following a competitive bidding process, LMU announced last September that LSE's offer has been successful. The collection will become the Women's Library @ LSE, with its own dedicated reading room to ensure its unique identity is maintained. LSE's Library is unusual amongst university libraries in being open to the public and the School looks forward to welcoming visitors to the new library.

Professor Craig Calhoun, Director of LSE, said: "It is of vital importance that strong historical collections are maintained and I am proud that LSE has been able to step in to keep the Women's Library open. There are numerous synergies between the Women's Library collection and LSE's existing holdings. Combined, they will undoubtedly make one of the best international collections for the support of research on women's lives and gender issues."

The Women's Library (WL) was founded in 1926 as the Library of the London Society for Women's Service, a non-militant organisation led by leading suffragist Millicent Fawcett. It has evolved into Europe's leading source of documents relating to every aspect of women's lives, including women's rights, suffrage, sexuality, health, education, employment, reproductive rights, the family and the home.

The library will shed light on over a century of women's struggles for equality and will enrich the already significant collections relating to the lives and experiences of women currently housed in the LSE Library. The WL collection includes Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) as well as first editions of the Brontës' works and of Virginia Woolf, signed biographies of Margaret Thatcher and copies of Bridget Jones. These will join items in the LSE Library's collection such as a first edition of Sylvia Pankhurst's *The Home Front* (1932) and a petition by London midwives, published in 1643, protesting at the effect the civil wars were having on their trade.

The move will also bring together for the first time the papers of Baroness Seear, former Chair of the Fawcett Society, which have to date been split between both collections.

The open collection will be housed in a brand new reading room connected to an exhibition space. The archives and museum pieces not on display will be kept in a refurbished and extended secure store with material made accessible on request. Work will also begin on digitising the collection and providing access to it through the LSE Digital Library.

Children's Society Records

The Children's Society Records and Archives Centre

reports that work has started work on a new project that is being funded by a grant from the Wellcome Trust's Research Resources in Medical History grant scheme. "From 1881 until the present day, The Children's Society has been helping vulnerable children to have a better childhood and a better chance in life. In its early history up until the 1970s, The Children's Society did this by running a network of children's homes for poor and disadvantaged children. The records held at The Children's Society Records and Archives Centre document the work of The Children's Society and can help to explain what life was like for children in care during the 19th and 20th centuries.

"Hidden amongst these records is a wealth of primary resources about the history of medicine, including information about the history of children's health and healthcare, children's mental health and 'maladjustment' diseases of poverty, alcoholism and nutrition. It is a very exciting project that will unearth information about what life was like for these children".

The project aims to open up the medical information within the records of The Children's Society and pave the way for research into areas of yet to be researched medical history. The Children's Society Records and Archives Centre will catalogue the case files of children that were in the society's care, each of which contains a medical certificate giving information about the child's history of vaccinations, disabilities and childhood diseases. Another part of the project will seek to create preservation copies of later case files that are only stored on microfilm; this will ensure that deterioration of the microfilms will not result in this information being lost forever.

Collecting Olympics Ephemera

Throughout the summer, staff at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) have been assiduously collecting paper ephemera relating to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. They have gathered newspaper and magazine cuttings, tickets, travel leaflets and timetables, flags and message boards, food packaging and product advertising, and much more. It requires imagination to form a really good ephemera collection, and a gratifyingly varied array of items have been observed in the hands of archive staff heading in the direction of the Olympics collecting point!

It would be interesting to compare what the LMA collectors have found with what was available to be collected in 1948, or even in 1908. Comparing the differing political, economic, social, technical and health and safety environments, will be just the beginning of the task for the London historians who will one day explore this material. We are sure that historians of design, transport, consumer culture and students of ephemera, will all be keenly alert to the potential of this field.

Historic Southwark

In the fourteenth century, London Bridge was the only crossing of the river. It had gates which were locked at night, and such was the crush on the narrow bridge when it was open, lined as it was with houses that jettied out over the street, that it could take two hours to get across the bridge, from one side of the river to the other. Head south from the bridge and you are in the High Street. One of the original coaching inns on the east side is the George, which still preserves part of the gallery that would once have surrounded most of the coaching yard. Originally called St. George and the Dragon, it is first recorded in 1554, but the site may well be much older.

Stow records eight inns in and around this area, so the George was by no means alone. A famous one was the Tabard. This was the inn from which Chaucer and his pilgrims set out, and the site is believed to have been in today's Talbot Street, but nothing remains of Chaucer's hostelry, the last remnants of which were demolished in 1873. It is recalled in the name of Tabard Street, which runs nearby, but that is a recent naming. The Tabard Inn was first mentioned in 1304, when the abbot and convent of Hyde, near Winchester purchased 2 houses held by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The abbot may have built a house for himself (e.g. when attending the House of Lords) and the convenience of travellers. In 1307 he obtained a licence to build a chapel by the inn. The abbot's lodging was 'to the backside of the inn called the Tabard'. Harry Bailey, who occurs in the tales, was an MP who represented Southwark in 1376. The inn and associated land was sold to John and Thomas Master c1540, as it was acquired by under Henry VIII at the time of the dissolution.

It is an area that was known to Charles Dickens. His father was for a short time in 1824 a prisoner for debt in Marshalsea Prison, whilst Charles lodged in Lant street. The prison no longer exists, but its location is recorded in the street name Marshalsea Road, and what is said to be a remaining wall of the prison can be seen in Angel Place, a footpath that starts at the northern end of Tabard Street. Charles worked in a blacking factory (i.e. a factory that made shoe-blackening) whilst his father was in prison, and the family found this a useful source of income and made him continue working there on his father's release, a step which he resented. In nearby Mint Street there was a workhouse, which would have been known to the young Dickens, and may be a source for his novels.

Also in this area are Guy's and St. Thomas hospitals. Of the two, St Thomas' has the longer history, being already considered 'ancient' in 1215. Thomas Guy, founder of Guy's, was a benefactor of St Thomas', and his hospital was originally intended to house incurables discharged from the older one, and so was located conveniently nearby.

The most modern building is the ludicrous one called the 'Shard', from its resemblance to a piece of broken glass. This is now the tallest building in 2012 London.

Kings Cross, Central St Martins

The Saint Martins School of Art was established in

1854, in the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields, whence the name. Now known as Central St Martin's it has established a world-wide reputation for excellence as a school of art and design.

In 2011 the school moved to a site in Granary Square. This is part of the area just north of Kings Cross station that has seen significant development over the last few years, starting with the development of the Guardian building and Kings Place concert halls in York Way (AFL organised a visit to the new Guardian offices a short while ago).

When the site of the railway stations was developed in the nineteenth century, the whole area was given over to railway warehouses. In the days of steam trains it was important to have a plentiful supply of coal for the locomotives, so there were large coaling yards, and coal also fed the gas works — railway buffs know that one of the tunnels that lead into Kings Cross station is known as 'Gas Works'. Until recently the iron frames of the large gas holders could still be seen in the area, and I understand there are plans to re-erect one of them. Regents Canal runs through the area, and would have provided a means of onwards distribution for goods. There was not just coal here, there were pens for cattle and other livestock (I recall seeing live cattle moved by train into the 1950's), to feed London's burgeoning population, and warehouses for grain: hence Granary Square.

The interior of the St Martins building has a distinctly quirky feeling: the old iron ribs that hold the building together are in many places exposed, whilst on the tables are the latest laptops being used for creative designs. Students from the school's Drama Centre might be trying their lines, or trying out costumes from their friends in the School of Fashion & Textiles, and as we walked past the room that supplies costumes and props from the school's stock was thronged with students seeking just the right item for their latest project.

The school's buildings are not open to the public, but there are exhibition and information areas, which are.

The old coal drops on the west of the building will be retained and converted to retail use. In front of the building, between it and the canal, is an array of fountains. Map right, © Crown Copyright, shows the whole development site with both railway stations.



Linnaean Society

The society is named after the Swedish biologist Carl (or Carolus) Linnaeus (1707-1778). Linnaeus is most famous for the 'binomial' system of naming: Genus and Species e.g. *Corvus Roystoniana*, which he published at the age of 27 in a book entitled (in Latin) *Systema naturae*.

Founded in 1788, it claims to be the oldest 'learned' society after the Royal Society. Sir Joseph Banks, the then president of the Royal Society, was offered Linnaeus' entire collection of books, manuscripts and specimens, but declined to make the purchase. James Edward Smith, son of a Norwich merchant and first Linnaean Society president, stepped in and bought the collections personally in 1784 (for £1000). Smith was elected FRS in 1786, and in 1788 he founded the Linnaean Society. The Linnaean Society moved to present premises in 1874, when the Royal Academy site at Burlington House was developed, and there it remains to this day, occupying the suite of rooms on the left as you go in from Piccadilly. The Linnaeus' collection purchased by Smith comprised his books, and specimens, pressings of flowers, and animals: the collection also included mineral samples which Smith did not retain and which were not catalogued, but some may have found their way into the collections of the Natural History Museum. However, at his death the society had to buy the material from his estate as he had retained personal ownership.

The treasures of the archive are housed in a bomb-proof room sealed in the basement of the building. They comprise Linnaeus' original writings, and many other books on botanical and zoological subjects, including a herbal printed in 1484: before the advent of modern medical practices, extracting medicines from herbs and plants was widespread. His collections of specimens is also there. Some of the books were printed in Linnaeus' lifetime: he had them bound with blank pages interleaved, and on these blank pages are to be found extensive annotations and revisions: as new evidence came to light, Linnaeus was not afraid to change his mind, and in some cases the original text has been vigorously scribbled through. The room also houses the collection of specimens, included some superb beetles some 3inches long.

The library on the first floor houses a collection of works on all aspects of biological research: as well as books on specific plants and animals, or groups of them, there are also studies on notable Linnaeans. Many books, socially those on some of the more exotic varieties of plants, and superbly illustrated. The library is a fine room in its own right, too. A volume on display on the occasion of the editor's visit was a large book, described as an 'elephant folio', a facsimile of a volume by Audubon on the plants of North America. As well as being beautiful to look at one, could only admire the size, some 3ft tall, and weight from wooden end-boards.

The society's modern motto is "A living forum for biology". The library, open to any bona fide researcher, has an on-line catalogue at www.linnean.org/

Society of Antiquarians

The September AfL visit was to the Society of

Antiquarians. The Society's present building is immediately north of that of the Linnaean Society in Burlington House.

Although there are some details of earlier groups of antiquaries, the first formal record of the society is the minutes of a meeting in 1707, the year of the Act of Union. A group of like-minded individuals met in and around the Strand. A formal constitution was drawn up in 1717, and the society was granted a royal charter in 1751. In 1753 meetings were held at Robbins' coffee house, which was on the site of the old PRO in Chancery Lane. By 1780 it was based at Somerset House, using the rooms that now form the Courtauld Galleries: it moved to Burlington House when the wings that now house the four societies were added to the house in 1874.

The aims of the society are 'practical' rather than philosophical. Members tend to have specialism in areas such as art history or archaeology, and, although modern subjects are not excluded, the society concentrates on history prior to 1700. Emphasis is on interpretation of artefacts, not straight description. Fellows of the society (the only type of membership) are elected by the existing body of fellows, and must achieve a ratio of 80% 'yes' or better to be elected. On display for the AfL visit was a voting box into which a member would insert his hand and, unseen, drop either a white or black ball, somewhat reminiscent of voting in classical Athens.

The visit took in the library, similar in layout and appearance to that of its Linnaean neighbour, both of them fine rooms. When it was built the specification was that it should have 3,500 linear feet of shelving, perhaps 35,000 books? The library now houses 100,000 books and runs of some 800 periodicals in its subject areas, and has long since overflowed its own space, so some is held in adjacent basements or off-site. Although many of the volumes are old—a copy of Stow on London, bound in 1700 with alternate blank leaves so that the owner could add his own annotations, and so running to 4 volumes—the library continues to collect the latest publications, and of course is keen to accept the works of fellows if they are relevant to its collections. The size of the collection means that in recent years a strict relevancy policy has been adopted, and books whose subject is not seen as lying in a key topic are declined.

The rooms and stairways are copiously decorated with portraits, many of past presidents.

Our visit ended in the lecture room where a group of items from the society's archives was had been set out.

The society also owns Kelmscott Manor, the country home of William Morris from 1871 until his death in 1896. The house contains a collection of items associated with Morris and his associates.

The Antiquarians website at with a library catalogue, history of the building and many details of the society is at: www.sal.org.uk

Born this way: a call for pragmatic digital preservation at the BAC conference

London's corporate archives were well represented at the Business Archives Council's 'Born this Way' conference (November) that focused on the challenges and opportunities the digital age brings archives.

"It won't go away; it won't do itself; don't wait for perfection", advised William Kilbride, executive director of the Digital Preservation Coalition urging practitioners to take an active, pragmatic approach to preserving born-digital records. This attitude was demonstrated in case studies from the Bank of England and the BBC Multimedia Archives. The first describing how the Bank developed a digital preservation programme by explicitly referencing historical value as a key purpose of their records management programme, and the second using the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) model to design the structure for the new teams tasked with maximising the amount of archive programmes available online.

Presentations from Network Rail and The Baring Archive reinforced how digitised versions of traditional archives can improve access and generate positive publicity both inside and outside of organisations. Network Rail's virtual archive demonstrates how technology can exceed the details available to the naked eye whilst Baring's 'Risks and Rewards' website shows how new interpretations of traditional records can make creative education tools.

The conference returned to the theme of born digital records when Oliver Morley, chief executive and keeper of The National Archives shared the lessons they have learned about preserving digital records. Morley compared the early attempts to create digital archives to the efforts of our predecessors to preserve early radio and television programmes, noting that the archive capture of new information channels takes a while to catch up. He also echoed Kilbride's introduction observing that file format is not the problem people originally thought it was going to be - both counselled that a successful digital archive will be one that keeps processes simple and follows standards.

The importance of putting users at the heart of digital preservation strategies was raised during the concluding panel session. Morley remarked that digital formats are technology palaeography - one reason why migration between formats is ill advised.

The reflective and real approach of 'Born this Way' seemed to give many delegates more confidence in their approach to digital preservation. Importantly the conference also demonstrated once again the wealth of research opportunities being preserved within London's corporate archives. It was followed by the presentation of the BAC Wadsworth prize for British business history, which was awarded to Duncan Campbell-Smith for his study of Royal Mail, largely researched at the British Postal Museum and Archive in Mount Pleasant.

For further information see
www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk

Report by Sian Wynn-Jones

Talbot Archive

From the website of the Bodleian Library:

William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) is most famous today for being the British 'founder of photography'. His personal archive is to be sold for over £2 million, and the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford is trying to acquire it, as it is the only significant Talbot collection remaining in private hands. The Fox Talbot archive includes original manuscripts by Talbot, family records, correspondence, and early photographic images made by Talbot. The library has been awarded £1.2 million by the National Heritage Memorial Fund towards the acquisition, and has until the end of February to raise the remaining funds.

William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) was one of the greatest polymaths of the Victorian age. The archive contains great potential for fuller understanding of the breadth of Talbot's scholarly activities, and of the influences exerted by the women in his family, in particular their educative roles, their shared interests in botany, languages, art, travel and history that are so central to Talbot's work, and their roles as practitioners, supporters, and collectors of the new art.

The collection includes artefacts such as glassware and artworks that Talbot photographed for the groundbreaking publication *The Pencil of Nature*, the first book illustrated with photographs. There is a strong connection to Oxford, as the archive includes some of the first pictures of the city, which enhances its relevance to the Bodleian

Alongside items related to his pioneering work in photography, the archive also sheds valuable light on his family life, his role managing his estate at Lacock, his life as a Member of Parliament, and his range of intellectual interests from science to ancient languages.

The Bodleian is anxious to ensure that the collection is made available to scholars and to the general public to allow the legacy of this extraordinary innovator and pioneer in photography to continue to inspire new generations of researchers, innovators and photographers.

Comments on the archive come from Carole Souter, Chief Executive of NHMF, who writes: "Considered by many as the father of photography", the impact of William Henry Fox Talbot's pioneering work is felt daily by all of us whether we are snapping our holidays with a camera or capturing outings on our mobile phones. This collection offers fascinating new insights into Fox Talbot's family life, particularly the wonderful contribution made by the women of his family; this is why the Trustees of the National Heritage Memorial Fund felt it was so important that the archive should be secured for future generations to explore."

Hiroshi Sugimoto, one of the world's greatest living photographers, said: 'The Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford is seeking to acquire the archive in order to ensure that everyone interested can have access to the mass of papers, sketchbooks, photographs and artefacts that it contains.'

Archives for London Conference 2012 Some Tales of One City: Dickens and London

The Archives for London conference on 6 October saw a coming together of Dickens scholars and enthusiasts, to learn about the profound links between Charles Dickens personal and professional life and the city of London. Hosted by Senate House, the conference was organised jointly by AfL, the Dickens Museum and the Centre for Metropolitan History.

The full schedule began with **Alex Werner** from the Museum of London and Dr Tony Williams from the Dickens Fellowship discussing the Dickens and London exhibition at the Museum of London from December 2011 to June 2012, and the film and book that accompanied it. The exhibition focused on exploring key themes related to Dickens and his association with London, with artefacts relating to his works acting as pivot points. Innovative curating techniques succeeded in evoking Dickens' Victorian London, while also thoughtfully illustrating Dickens' works (coloured letters suspended from the ceiling spun gently in mid-air to spell out key words and phrases). Original shop signs and architectural features hung alongside contemporary paintings, amongst original manuscript material.

A film made to accompany the exhibition, *The Houseless Shadow*, was directed by William Raban. Reflecting Dickens' love of pacing the city streets by night, it depicts a walk through modern London by night over a reading of Dickens' essay *Night Walks*. Dickens referred to his own works as 'a little fanciful photograph', so it is perhaps rather poignant that the book of the exhibition should use hundreds of photographs of London taken from the Museum of London's own collection. The revelatory images show a city in constant flux. The book also includes over 120 quotations from Dickens and other contemporary references.

The next speaker was **Michael Allen** discussing his research into Dickens' childhood experience of working in a blacking factory. Dickens claimed that this time had a lasting effect on him, though Allen revealed that this was true in more ways than one.

Dickens was sent to work at 'Warren's Blacking' factory on Hungerford Stairs in 1824, his job being to paste labels on the bottles of blacking (shoe-polish). Dickens had family links to the company, as a cousin of his, George Lamert, acted as clerk to Jonathan Warren's partner. Through Lamert, Dickens was also connected to the Jewish Worms family. They resided in Whitechapel, and it is possible that Dickens paid a visit to them. Among the family was a Henry Worms, a shady character who was frequently accused of receiving stolen goods. In 1825 he was convicted and sentenced to 14 years in Van Diemen's Land, with his seven children. Allen concluded his talk by asking whether Henry Worms (rather than Ikey Solomons, the usual candidate) was the model for Fagin in *Oliver Twist*; a Jew who receives stolen goods surrounded by children?

After lunch, **Professor Jenny Hartley** from Roehampton University spoke on 'Charles Dickens and the Fallen Women of London'. Dickens long-held obsession with the plight of 'fallen' women led him to get involved in 1846 in a progressive experiment to save

and redeem a select number of fallen women from London. Together with Angela Burdett-Coutts he built a home called 'Urania Cottage' in Shepherd's Bush.

The home adopted a non-punitive approach, in the hope that the women could develop and grow in an atmosphere of encouragement. The women (who were all mostly in their teens) were taught to cook, sew and clean, but they also learnt about poetry and music. The ultimate aim was that after each girl had spent time in the cottage, they would emigrate to Australia and start a new life for themselves, using the skills they had acquired. By 1853 Dickens reported that the cottage had had 30 success stories, many of whom had indeed gone to Australia and had married and started a new life.

This talk was followed by an insight into the world of Dickens' servants, by **Nicholas Waloff**. Servants were Dickens' 'other family', the permanent yet unacknowledged back-drop to his personal life. Between 1837 and 1870 he employed 46 servants, many of whom had an influence over Dickens' writing, as well as interesting personalities of their own.

One of Dickens' cooks came with him to Italy and promptly married a French cook, setting up a restaurant in Genoa; William Topping the coachman was allegedly ordered about by Dickens' pet talking raven, 'Grip'. John Thompson (1822-1871) was Dickens' manservant and secretary, and appears frequently in Dickens' correspondence. It is thought that he was the inspiration for Sam Weller's character in *The Pickwick Papers* and he also acted as the go-between for Dickens and his mistress Ellen Ternan, and was unfortunately dismissed for theft in 1866.

Anne Barrett, in the absence of Peter Clark, then read from Clark's book, *Dickens' London*, a volume describing a series of Dickens related London walks. The book includes five walks illustrating his life and writings, including his letters and journalism, supplemented by visits to six places in outer London.

Following a tea break, **Dr Ruth Richardson** reprised her previous AfL seminar talk on Dickens and the Cleveland Street Workhouse. Again this was a talk akin to a detective story, describing the hunt for a link to Dickens to save a Georgian workhouse from demolition. Richardson discovered that not only was Cleveland Street the local workhouse for boys being apprenticed at the same blacking factory that Dickens worked at, it was also located just down the road from where Dickens lived as a young man, so it is highly likely that it was the original inspiration for the workhouse in *Oliver Twist*. Other clues, such as the location of a pawnshop directly opposite the workhouse (just as is described in the novel), as well as the existence of a real Bill Sikes who lived in the area, cemented this likelihood.

This substantive new evidence led to the appeal being won in April 2011 and the workhouse was saved from demolition and is now Grade II listed.

The final session by **Caroline Shenton** reprised much of her September seminar, reported on page 10.

SEMINAR REPORTS

Can we switch it off now?

This was the title chosen by our speaker, Mr C.S Woods, for the October seminar. He is the chairman of the National Conservation service, which is a "consortium aimed at supporting libraries, archives and businesses to care for their collections" (from their web site at www.ncs.org.uk). He spoke about the changing ideas on good environments for keeping documents.

There was a British standard BS5454:2001 (Recommendations for the storage and exhibition of archival documents): in line with standards practice this was due for 10-year review in 2011. As a European standard is evolving, in the interim a Publicly Available Specification (PAS), PAS 198, has been issued. From the BSI web site "It includes requirements for temperature, relative humidity, light and pollution. It will apply to cultural collections whether in storage, on display or on loan, and to all types and sizes of collections held by all collecting organizations such as archives, libraries and museums, both public and private."

So much for the technical stuff: what are we looking at? How best to preserve our archives, especially paper items, but also older parchment ones, and more modern items made with 'plastic' materials. Many items have survived hundreds of years of storage and occasional handling without any special treatment, especially in their early days. They are probably quite robust and are happy in a wide range of environments. The worst that they can be subject to is excessive fluctuations of temperature and relative humidity (RH). In 3 words "stability is all". The old standard mandated RH to be in the range 45-60%, but with a variation of at most $\pm 5\%$ around a fixed point. For temperature a more stringent range of $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ in the range 16°C - 19°C was suggested. If a wider range is allowed the lower limit should not go below 13°C , as this is where beeswax, a frequent component of old seals, starts to degenerate. The newer standard relaxes these limits slightly. Effects of variation can be mitigated by storing items in boxes, where the box-wall will act as a simple brake on variations from the outside: yes the inside temperature and RH will change, but more slowly than the outside. Conditions will change, and can be allowed to do so as a part of 'seasonal drift', but this should be over a period of weeks or months, not by the day.

Take an audit: look at your collections, what are they, what do they need, are there any items that need special handling? Look at your storage: what space do you have, what conditions obtain in each part of it. Match the two together, find the best allocation, bearing in mind that just occasionally a sub-optimal, but acceptable, location for one item may free up space for a more valuable one to be better housed. At the end you may be left with items for which there is no home, and these should steer a development plan.

It is not true that one needs fresh air: if a building is situated near a car park or an industrial chimney, air drawn from outside the building may be more polluted than recycled conditioned air from inside the building. If your building is well-designed you may find that air-con. is not needed, and "you may switch it off now".

The Day Parliament Burnt Down

Caroline Shenton, Director of the Parliamentary Archives, gave the September seminar, a spirited talk about the series of incidents and indiscretions that led to the burning down of the historic buildings of the original Houses of Parliament on 16 October 1834.

Shenton first developed her interest in the fire while working at the Public Record Office, where her job was to catalogue a collection of medieval wooden tally sticks. These sticks were records of the exchequer.

Transactions would be recorded on the sticks in the form of notches, and then the sticks would be cut in half and given to the two parties. Though the use of the sticks had been abolished in 1780s, they were still in unofficial use until 1826, where they had been stored away in cupboards in the Exchequer Offices. It was these sticks that were directly responsible for the conflagration that would destroy the Houses of Parliament.

In October 1834 it was decided that the obsolete sticks should be burnt in the coal furnaces beneath the House of Lords. On the morning of 16 October, two workmen were given this task. Great loads of the sticks were thrown into the copper-lined furnaces, which became more and more over-heated throughout the day. By 4pm the floor of the Black Rod's Box felt hot to touch and the room was full of smoke. At 6.30pm, the furnaces had reached their limit and a flashover occurred, causing an explosion in the House of Lords.

The alarm was immediately called and horse-drawn fire engines arrived on the scene at 6.40pm. Unfortunately by this point the fire was too out of control to cope with, and to make matters worse, a south-westerly wind was fanning the flames. Fire engines at this time were manually operated and it took a lot of physical effort to pump water out of fire hydrants in the street on to the flames. Efforts were instead directed towards saving Westminster Hall and salvaging furniture, paintings and other contents. By this point, a great crowd had gathered to watch what must have been a momentous sight. Apparently the blaze was so large that it could be seen from Windsor Castle.

By 11pm the Commons' Library had been destroyed. Attempts had been made to rescue as many documents as possible by throwing them out of windows, and then moving them into nearby St. Margaret's church, but very few records survived. Fortunately the House of Lords records had been stored in the Jewel Tower, which was not touched by the fire, and so several Acts of Parliament were saved. The subsequent salvage operation was organised by Henry Stone Smith, a Clerk of the House of Lords. The impact on the future of British record keeping was immense; Francis Palgrave was appointed as the first Keeper of Public Records, and the bulk of the collection moved to Chancery Lane. The Public Record Office Act was created, and the plans for the new Houses of Parliament stipulated that the Victoria Tower (a repository for records) had to be fire-proof.

Write-up by Sarah Hale.

SEMINAR REPORTS

Visit to King's College Archives

Patricia Methven, a member of the AfL board, arranged for the November seminar to take place at King's College. The College was founded in 1831 on its present site in the Strand, and, in 1840, its hospital in a former workhouse in Portugal Street. It was the second college, after UCL, to form part of London University and named in honour of the then King, George IV. We were given a talk on the archives that the college holds, and then allowed to browse through the amazingly diverse selection of items that had been set out for us to view.

From its foundation the college has progressively expanded and has taken in Chelsea College, Queen Elizabeth College, Maudsley's Institute of Psychiatry, and Guy's and St Thomas hospitals, so there is a good collection of records relating to this history of medicine. St Thomas hospital has a long history going back to the priory in Southwark which, in 1173, was renamed in honour of St Thomas à Becket. In addition to these archives, the collection also holds the records of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the records of the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, and of course the records of its students back to 1831. Whilst the majority of the records are post 1800, the archive does house some dozen early printed books (incunabula). Details of these, and a full index of all the collections, can be found online at <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/library/collections/archivespec/index.aspx>.

The oldest item on view (dated 1726) at our visit was a casebook by Charles Oxley, medical student at St Thomas Hospital; its drawings of surgical cases show details of human anatomy, and are not for the squeamish. Also on display, a map of the Battle of Waterloo published in Brussels in 1816, only a year after the allied victory. A delightful item was a scrapbook album of watercolours, sketches, and ephemera dating from 1901-1903 and assembled by Beryl White (1877-1954) whilst she was living in Sikkim, northern India. It came into the hands of Lt Col John Heard, who served in India during the Second World War and is part of the Liddell Hart collection. A collection of photographs relating to Thomas Edward Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, revealed his interest in Crusader Castles (about which he wrote his thesis) and also in French medieval buildings such as Aigues Mortes, Carcassone and Mont St Michel.

Several items reminded us that research work on DNA was done at King's in the 1950s. The last item I will mention is a collection from 1966 of letters from Ted Hughes to Daniel Weissbort. They were joint editors of the periodical *Modern Poetry in Translation*. Its policy was to overcome language barriers and enable English-speakers to benefit from previously untranslated poets from other countries, finding talented poets and matching them with translators.

As can be seen from the items I have selected for mention here, only a selection of what was on display, the complete archive is extremely wide-ranging in the fields it covers.

December Seminar Frost Fairs on the Frozen Thames

The AfL December seminar, delivered on a suitably chilly December evening was given by Nicholas Reed. He is a local historian, author and lecturer whose book on the history of London's Frost Fairs was published when he discovered a number of images of the Frost Fairs in the Guildhall Library; until the year 2000, only two images were known to exist, and both were in the Museum of London. In his seminar, Reed talked in detail about these newly discovered images, highlighting interesting facts about the Frost Fairs along the way.

Frost Fairs were held numerous times for over 600 years during Europe's 'Little Ice Age', when the winters would be cold enough for the River Thames to freeze over. The 'starlings', the bases around the footings of the arches of the old medieval London Bridge restricted the flow of the river and also encouraged the build-up of ice on the Thames; when there was a severe freeze followed by a slight thaw, the ice would travel down the Thames and get stuck under London Bridge, thereby creating a barrier and preventing the ice from flowing away downstream. Sometimes the river would be frozen for several months at a time.

The watermen who worked on the Thames, who could potentially have lost their livelihoods with each freeze, found an alternative way of making money by charging people to go on to the surface of the river. As well as being a novel way to cross the river, people would venture on to the ice to go skating, riding, shooting and to play games. Visitors from overseas, particularly those from Holland, would take the opportunity to put on their 'Fen-Runner' skates and demonstrate their skills. Sledges pulled by horses were driven across the ice, while others invented methods of propelling themselves along in sedan chairs. Reed has also uncovered in the archives a reference to a 'mechanical' carriage that moved by the use of cogs and gears. Early forms of the playground roundabout were also set up, where participants could be pushed along on the ice in a circle.

Food and drink stalls were set up, as well as stalls selling merchandise and souvenirs. Oxen were often roasted whole on the ice in enormous bonfires, with the ice staying intact because heat rises upwards. Buying a print of an engraving of the fair became popular, and so printing presses would be dragged on to the ice, perhaps testimony to how thick the frozen water was. William Hogarth bought one such print for his dog, 'Trump', which still survives and is at the Hogarth House Museum in Chiswick.

The building of the new London Bridge in the early 1800s also coincided with a gradual warming of the climate and so the last time the Thames froze over enough for a Frost Fair was in 1814, and this was for only a week. Sadly they are now a thing of the past though the surviving images of the Fairs allow us to gain an insight into what they were like.



AfL Events: Seminars and visits

The following seminars are planned: please check your monthly email for last minute changes.

- 7 Feb *Human Genome Archive Project* by Jenny Shaw, Project Officer on the project
- 7 Mar *Crimean War archives at the National Army Museum* by Alastair Massie, archivist at the NAM
- 11 Apr *The Royal Albert Hall* by Fiona Gibbs, Royal College of Music (follow up to the December visit)
- 2 May *Standard Chartered Bank cataloguing project and colonial records* by the project team
- 6 Jun *Co-ordinating volunteers at TNA* by Susan Lumas

These are the planned visits: check as above

- 25 Jan 10:30 *TfL Corporate Archives* with Tamara Thornhill, 18-35 people
- 19 Feb, 2:00 *St John Gate (St John's Ambulance)* with Pamela Willis, 15-20 people
- March we hope there will be a visit to the *British Interplanetary Society Library and Archive* but this is not yet confirmed and may change
- 25 Apr 11:00 *Weiner Library* with Katy Jackson 15 people
- 21 May 10:00 *Paul Mellon Centre* with Charlotte Brunskill, 15-20 people
- June we hope there will be a visit to *The Rose Theatre*, with Pepe Pryke, we are discussing details.

Other events

LAMAS is holding its 50th annual conference on London archaeology. It takes place at the Museum of London on 16th March 2013, admission £15. LAMAS has also announced a 'London Heritage' Conference for later in the year, 28th September. Fuller details available in May

LMA and the London 2012 Olympics

Throughout the summer, staff at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) were assiduously collecting paper ephemera relating to the Olympic and Paralympic Games. They have gathered newspaper and magazine cuttings, tickets, travel leaflets and timetables, flags and message boards, food packaging and product advertising, and much more. It requires imagination to form a really good ephemera collection, and a gratifyingly varied array of items have been observed in the hands of archive staff heading in the direction of the Olympics collecting point!

It would be interesting to compare what the LMA collectors have found with what was available to be collected in 1948, or even in 1908. Comparing the differ-

ing political, economic, social, technical and health and safety environments, will be just the beginning of the task for the London historians who will one day explore this material. We are sure that historians of design, transport, consumer culture and students of ephemera, will all be keenly alert to the potential of this field.

'Our Sporting City' is aimed to bring to LMA a photographic archive that would capture the look and feel of life in London during the course of the summer of 2012.

We wanted to have a record of what it was like to experience the Games, but without necessarily having seen any sport, or even been anywhere near the Olympic Park!

The editor welcomes contributions to the Newsletter and letters for publication. Please send your contribution to: Peter Jackson, Archives for London, c/o London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Road, London EC1R 0HB. Or preferably by email to: newsletter@archivesforlondon.org

*The AfL Newsletter is published by Archives for London Ltd, a limited company registered in England and Wales
Company number: 5635424*

Registered offices: 40 Northampton Road, London EC1R 0HB.

Opinions expressed are those of contributors and are not necessarily endorsed by Archives for London or its officers. The original contents are copyright, January 2013.