



September 2004

Welcome to the September edition of the NMDC Newsletter. In support of the Archives Awareness Campaign, this issue includes a special feature highlighting the archives of the national museums. The newsletter can also be found at www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

NMDC News

Joint Advocacy Forum

Representatives of museum sector organisations, including NMDC, MLA, AIM, GLLAM and the Museums Association, met at the Imperial War Museum at the end of August. The museum sector remains united in its support for funding for Renaissance in the Regions and adequate core funding for the national museums. The outcome of the SR2004 settlement for museums is likely to be announced in October. Meanwhile, NMDC and its partners continue to reinforce the evidence and arguments presented in the Manifesto for Museums in support of the need for investment.

PR Group

The NMDC PR Group met at the National Portrait Gallery on 25 August. The meeting focused on media evaluation: systems for analysing press coverage. The purpose of the discussion was to consider whether there was scope for developing a consistent methodology that all museums could use and whether there might be efficiency savings by working together in this area, perhaps through joint procurement of services or negotiating a discounted rate. The group invited three leading suppliers to give presentations on the services they provide. The next meeting of the PR Group will be in late October and will focus on Freedom of Information.

UK Affairs

An initial meeting regarding the new UK Affairs Committee was held in Liverpool last month. David Fleming chaired the meeting and attendees included Sandy Nairne, Sean Bullick, Kathy Gee, Rachel Kerr, Penny Wilkinson and Virginia Tandy. The meeting discussed the roles and remit of the group, which will include following up and implementing the findings of the National Dimensions report. The first meeting of the new committee will be in October.

Members News

£1.1m for London Museums

Arts Minister Estelle Morris has announced the award of over £1.1 million to six London museums and galleries to help improve the quality of their displays, access and environmental controls as part of the DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund 2004/05. These are:

- British Museum - £150,000 for improvement of access provision
- Courtauld Institute of Art - £63,000 for renovation of the prints and drawings room
- Geffrye Museum - £258,000 for new 17th and 18th century rooms
- Imperial War Museum - £186,000 for gallery lighting upgrades
- London's Transport Museum - £200,000 for the creation of the First Metropolis Gallery
- National Gallery - £296,300 for the restoration of the staircase hall.

£2.75m of grants to 26 museums in the other English Regions were announced at the end of July. The DCMS and the Wolfson Foundation have each contributed £2million to the Fund which this year. For details visit: www.culture.gov.uk

New V&A Website

The V&A has launched its new website, which has been redesigned by a Norwegian company Tape London. The site is designed for easy accessibility and avoids the use of Macromedia Flash or other add-on applications in all navigation and in the main content areas. The site includes photographs and information about 25,000 objects, some of which can be explored in 3D. The new "What's On" search facility provides a much easier and quicker way of finding out what is happening at the museum. The website can be found: www.vam.ac.uk

Architecture Awards Shortlist

The King's Library at the British Museum and the Manchester Museum are on the shortlist for the RIBA Crown Estate Conservation Award, which recognises the best work of conservation that demonstrates the successful restoration or adaptation of an architecturally significant building. Manchester Museum, along with the Horniman Museum, has also been shortlisted for the RIBA Inclusive Design Award. The winners will be announced at the presentation of the RIBA Stirling Prize on 16 October.

The shortlist for the RIBA Stirling Prize will be announced on 9 September. For details visit: www.architecture.com

Flesh-Eating Museum Staff!

The Natural History Museum has announced that flesh-eating beetles, 10mm long, are the newest members of staff at the museum. The Dermestes maculates beetles will be working behind the scenes to strip whole animal carcasses to skeletons. The museum has more than a million whole and part skeletons in its collections. The beetles' first job will be to strip an orange roughy fish, a long-tailed fruit bat and a very rare Norwegian lundehund. When the colony is fully established there will be almost 1,000 beetles in the 'dermestarium' and they are expected to get through about 2-4 kilos of flesh a week. The beetles, which will eat any organic material, will be kept in tight security. Skeletons removed from the dermestarium will be frozen and cleaned before being moved to other parts of the Museum to ensure the beetles are not accidentally transferred to the collections.

Ingenious Tours

The Science Museum has launched a programme of tours of Blythe House, opening up public access to 170 000 objects in store at the former GPO building in Kensington. The massive labyrinth of storerooms is home to everything from beautifully crafted telescopes and early examples of operating tables, to Stone Age tools and freeze-dried genetically modified animals. Curators will share their knowledge and enthusiasm as they use the objects to bring a fresh perspective to subjects as diverse as war and the body, love, the secret life of women, conservation and space exploration. For details visit www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/ingenioustours

New Naval Heritage Committee

One outcome of the recent Business Process Review of the Principal Armed Service Museums has been the establishment of a Naval Heritage Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to ensure that Naval heritage is deployed to its full potential in promoting the Royal Navy, and that the full range of Service heritage assets are appropriately resourced, managed and employed in a coherent manner. In particular, the Committee will ensure that the legacy of historic buildings, artefacts and archaeological features are managed to the highest standards that the Royal Navy can achieve, taking account of Government-wide good practice. As an advisory body, the Committee does not have an executive role, either in the management of heritage assets or in the allocation of funding.

The Chairman of the Committee is the Second Sea Lord, and the four Naval Museums (Royal Naval Museum, Royal Marines Museum, RN Submarine Museum and Fleet Air Arm Museum) provide two representatives – one Chairman and Director on a rotating basis. The current representatives are the Chairman of the RN Museum and the Director of the RN Submarine Museum. Other parties that are involved include the Naval Historical Branch, the MoD Art Collection, Defence Estates, the Veterans Policy Unit, the Navy's Department of Corporate Communications and the DCMS. The first meeting of the Committee took place on 23 July and two initiatives were agreed: a stock-take of heritage assets and the creation of a Strategic Plan for the four Naval Service Museums. The latter task will fall to a sub-committee that includes all the Museum directors. Progress on the two initiatives will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Naval Heritage Committee on 5 November.

Secondment Opportunity at NPG

The National Portrait Gallery has an opportunity for a secondment to the post of Head of Exhibitions and Collections Management, a senior management role with an extensive remit covering the Exhibitions, Collections, Design, Conservation and Art Handling Departments. The secondment is to cover the period of Kathleen Soriano's Fellowship with the Clore Leadership Programme from December 2004 to August 2005. For further details visit: www.npg.org.uk/jobs

If you have any comments on the NMDC Newsletter or would like to contribute to a future edition, please contact Emily Adams - eadams@iwm.org.uk. For more information about NMDC visit: www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

NMGW Storage Plans

NMGW has announced plans to improve its collection facilities, confirming how a £3.5m grant from the Welsh Assembly Government will be spent. The grant will enable NMGW to extend its existing collections facilities at the National Museum and Gallery Cardiff and the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, as well as its storage centre at Nantgarw, Rhondda Cynon Tafnsuring. The nationally-important collection of wooden patterns used to create machinery parts for the slate industry will be re-housed at Llanberis' Welsh Slate Museum and the Museum will also be able to provide permanent accessible storage for its collections of machinery including those associated with the Welsh woollen industry.

Whilst the main funding for this work has come from the Welsh Assembly Government, NMGW continues to seek private and wider public sector funding to finalise the financial package for the scheme, which will cost approximately £5 million in total. The work will allow the Museum's wide ranging collections to be housed in better conditions whilst addressing recommendations made in the National Audit Office's recent report on the Museum's collections management strategy.. For details visit: www.nmgw.ac.uk

New Director of IWM Duxford

Richard Ashton has been appointed as the new Director of the Imperial War Museum Duxford. He is currently Director of Marketing at the Caravan Club and will take up his new post on 25 October.

Trustee Appointments

The Prime Minister has made the following appointments to the Boards of national museums:

- The Marchioness of Douro as a Trustee of the National Portrait Gallery. Lady Douro is a member of the English Heritage Panel for Apsley House, where she has lived since 1977.
- Tom Wright as a Trustee of the Imperial War Museum. Tom Wright is Chief Executive of VisitBritain.
- Mark Getty, co-founder and chairman of Getty Images Inc re-appointed as a Trustee of the National Gallery.
- Hasan Askari, Chief Executive of Old Mutual Financial Series, David Lindsell, a senior partner at Ernst & Young, and Eric Salama of the WPP Group re-appointed as Trustees of the British Museum.

All the appointments are for a period of four years, except Hasan Askari who has been appointed for two years.

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

Current Issues

DCMS Senior Management Changes

Nicholas Kroll, Chief Operating Officer and Deputy to the Permanent Secretary at DCMS has been appointed as the BBC's first Director of Governance. Nicholas joined the Department of National Heritage in 1993. His posts included a period as acting Permanent Secretary in 2001 and most recently he has had responsibility for modernisation and the Efficiency Review. He will take up his new appointment on 1 October 2004.

Jeff Jacobs, previously Executive Director, Policy and Partnerships at the Greater London Authority has been appointed as a Director-General (Children and Young People and Communities) at DCMS.

DCMS has published a new business plan setting out the progress it intends to make during 2004-5 towards delivery of the new key strategic priorities announced by the Chancellor on 12 July. The business plan includes a revised organisational chart, setting out how the senior management team has been restructured to focus on Department's strategic priorities. There are three Director-General posts, under Sue Street:

- Jeff Jacobs will be responsible for children and young people and communities (PSA target 1 & 2). Libraries and Communities Division will report directly to him and he will be supported by Alan Davey, Director of Arts and Culture, and Nicky Roche, Director of Sport.
- Andrew Ramsay is the Director-General responsible for industry and economy (PSA target 3), supported by Brian Leonard, Director of Tourism and Creative Industries.
- Nicholas Kroll's replacement is expected to lead on PSA 4 (modernisation and delivery).

The business plan can be found at:

www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2004/dcms_business_plan_2004_05.htm

The Department aims to publish a new strategic plan in the autumn, setting out plans for the next 5 years.

DCMS Evidence Toolkit

DCMS have launched an online interactive web-based toolkit for accessing and using information about the cultural sector. The DCMS Evidence Toolkit (DET) aims to:

- Establish a 'blueprint' for the analysis of the cultural sector by outlining a standard conceptual and technical definition
- Provide a reference point on how to use key data sources for a range of purposes
- Outline some best practice measure for researching the cultural sector.

For details visit www.culture.gov.uk/global/research/det

The Big Lottery Fund

DCMS has published a position paper on The Big Lottery Fund. The New Opportunities Fund and Community Fund under went an administrative merger in June. The paper sets out three broad themes – community learning and creating opportunity, promoting community safety and cohesion, and promoting well-being – supported by four outcomes and a larger number of indicative priorities. Examples of these priorities include: improving parenting skills, increasing community participation in sport, dance, play and physical and creative activity. About £1.2bn is expected to be allocated to funding within these themes over the period 2005-2009. The paper says that some of the Big Lottery Fund's funding will complement wider Government priorities, but none of it will substitute for funding that would otherwise fall to mainstream Government expenditure.

The proposals have drawn criticism from the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations. They carried out a survey that found that 88% of charity chief executives opposed tying lottery grants to the government's themes (see www.acevo.org.uk for details).

The Government intends to introduce a Bill to formally establish The Big Lottery Fund as soon as possible. The paper can be found at: www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2004/big_lottery_fund_position_paper.htm

£4m to Save Heritage Skills

The Heritage Lottery Fund has announced that it is setting up a £4m 'Training Bursary Scheme' to keep alive essential heritage skills such as harling, pargeting, flint knapping, stone masonry and gold leafing. The scheme will also fund training for essential customer services skills at heritage site. The scheme follows on from the *Sustaining our Living Heritage* survey published by the HLF in 2002, which highlighted a significant decline of traditional heritage skills.

A wide range of organisations, including local authorities, development agencies, professional and education bodies, community and voluntary organisations, will be able to apply for the HLF bursaries to train employees. Training will be undertaken in the work place by master craftsmen or experts in relevant fields.

Applications will be in two stages – the first stage requires only expressions of interest, which should be received by 21 October 2004. For details visit: www.hlf.org.uk/hlfbusaries

Public Confusion about 'Good Causes'

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has published the result of a poll that revealed widespread confusion about where "good causes" cash raised by the national lottery goes. For example, most people overestimated the amount put towards helping asylum seekers.

For example, when asked to estimate what proportion or percentage of the money went to asylum seekers, the average response was 23%, when in fact the Community Fund awarded just 2.5% of its grants for advice, information and counselling for asylum seekers in 2002-3. For details visit: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Culture Skills Website

Creative & Culture Skills, the Sector Skills Council in development for the Creative and Cultural Industries, is developing a new website to help meet the skills challenges facing the sector. To help ensure the website provides the information and resources that users want and in the way they want them, Creative & Culture Skill have launched a web-based consultation questionnaire asking people for their opinions and preferences.

The questionnaire can be found at:

www.strategia.co.uk/ccweb/

For further information on the Creative and Cultural Sector Skills Council, visit

www.cciskills.org.uk

EU Funding Consultation

DCMS has launched a consultation to seek views on the European Commission's proposal for the future Culture Programme 2007-2013. As reported in last month's NMDC newsletter, this programme will replace the Culture 2000 programme, which ends in 2006. DCMS officials will take into account the advice received through this consultation programmes when they participate in negotiations on the new programme in Brussels this autumn. The deadline for responses is 29 October. For full details visit:

www.culture.gov.uk/global/consultations/2004+current+consultations/consu_eucom_culture_programme.htm

Meanwhile, EUCLID, the official UK Cultural Contact Point for the Culture 2000 programme are running another series of seminars across the UK, on European Funding opportunities for the cultural sector. EUCLID are also running workshops or surgeries for those making applications for the 2005 call for Culture 2000 (deadlines in October 2004. For more information visit: www.euclid.info

Links with Sub-Saharan Africa

British Council is undertaking research into the links between arts organisations in the UK and countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The purpose is to refresh the British Council's art programmes in Africa by working with new partners and the research will end in a report with recommendations on new ways of working in the arts. Sheila Murray, Arts Profile Manager (Africa) would like to hear from any museums that have strong, on-going links with Africa, particularly in expertise, collections and support to Africa. If you have any examples to share, Sheila can be contacted on 0131 558 2637 or sheilamurray1@btopenworld.com

Sharing Web Statistics

The 24 Hour Museum is carrying out their third survey looking at web statistics for UK cultural websites. The performance indicators are drawn from the NOF guidelines. To participate please contact Kristen@24hourmuseum.org with the name of your institution, URL and date site launched and provide the following information covering the period 1 January – 30 June 2004:

- Total number of user/visitor sessions
- Average duration of user sessions
- Total number of page impressions
- Average page impressions per user session
- Total number of unique users

Where information is not available, please leave blank. The results of last year's survey can be found at www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/etc/formuseums/TXT21448_qfx_en.html

Liverpool's Cultured Cabbies

Liverpool City Council and the Liverpool Culture Company have launched a competition to find Liverpool's most culture cabbies in time for 2008, when the city becomes European Capital of Culture. They want cabbies who can wax lyrical about Liverpool's cultural hotspots, including its many theatres, galleries and museums, as well as the city's Biennial arts festival. The aim is to boost the experience of tourists visiting Liverpool by making cabbies more knowledgeable about the city's rich cultural heritage. In return for their efforts, the top ten most cultured cabbies will be officially recognised with eye-catching new Capital of Culture 2008 branding for their cabs.

Drivers taking part in the voluntary project will be asked to answer a series of questions on culture and will then be interviewed by a panel from the Liverpool Culture Company. Amongst other questions, the application form asks cabbies to name two of Liverpool's National Museums. For more information visit: www.liverpoolculture.com

State to Purchase Apethorpe Hall

The Secretary of State has given instructions for a compulsory purchase order to be served on the owners of 15th century, Grade I listed, Apethorpe Hall in Northamptonshire. The Secretary of State took the decision following impartial advice from the Independent Inspector who heard evidence at a public Inquiry into the case earlier this year. The power to make a compulsory purchase order is used in exceptional circumstances by the Secretary of State, this being only the second occasion. The Order, will allow for the property to be purchased by the State at a fair price based on the District Valuer's estimate and agreed between the parties.

East Northamptonshire Council started pressing the then owner of Apethorpe Estate to carry out the necessary works to ensure its proper preservation in 1996. A total of seven urgent works notices were served on the owner, two by the Council and five by English Heritage. As a result English Heritage completed works at a cost of some £300,000.

The freehold of the Apethorpe estate will eventually be transferred to English Heritage whose preferred option is to sell it on to a private owner who will keep it intact and in single occupation. In the meantime, its Commissioners have agreed to re-prioritise their grant-aid budget to ensure that funds are available to meet the full cost of repairs. English Heritage will work on repairs as soon as possible. . If a new private owner can be identified before the restoration programme is in full swing, they will grant-aid the works. In either case, in return for the public money that will be committed to urgent repairs, English Heritage will negotiate with any prospective new owner to allow for public visitor access. For further information visit: www.culture.gov.uk

First Impressions Count

Councillor Eric Milligan, a former Lord Provost of Edinburgh has been appointed to lead a review of the 'first impressions' of visitors entering Scotland. The review, announced earlier this year, will assess present standards in all entry points to Scotland as well as carry out a comparison study looking at the best examples from across the globe. As well as considering provision of information and customer service, the review will consider how well ports, airports, bus and rail stations contribute to projecting a 'sense of Scotland'. Mr Milligan is due to report back to the First Minister by the end of this year.

Tank Museum Redevelopment Plans

The Tank Museum in South Dorset has submitted a bid for Lottery funding for redevelopment and expansion scheme costing over £15m. The plans include a new 5000 sq m display hall to provide better environmental protection for the most treasured articles in the collection and provide more internal floor space for some of the 150 tanks currently outside. The museum hopes a successful bid will turn it into a modern leading edge military museum making a direct contribution to the regional economy. The outcome of the bid is expected in early 2005. For more information visit www.tankmuseum.co.uk

Parliamentary Report

The Scottish Parliament is in recess until 6 September.

The House of Commons and House of Lords are in recess until 7 September 2004.

The Welsh Assembly is in recess until 20 September 2004.

International Issues

Munch Museum Closes

The Munch Museum in Norway closed on Monday September 6th, two weeks after the theft of two paintings from its collection. The museum originally reopened two days after the theft of *The Scream* and *Madonna* on 22 August but a notice posted on the museum's website now announces that it is closed and that further information will follow. A museum official told Reuters "We are closed and will be closed for three weeks to install alarms, among other things,"

The museum's security measures were criticised in the Norwegian press. The museum's silent alarms led to confused eyewitnesses reporting that no alarms went off when the paintings were ripped from the walls by the armed gang. *Aftenposten* reported that the City of Oslo's art collections were granted funds for new video equipment for surveillance as part of vital security improvements at the Munch Museum in January 2004 but the improvements had not been made.

There is no further news about the whereabouts of the paintings. The Munch Museum's website can be found at www.munch.museum.no/

Forthcoming Meetings

CORRECTION: Please note, the HR Forum meeting on 17 September starts at 1.00pm, not 11.00 as reported in last month's newsletter.

NMDC Executive Committee

11.00am, Fri 10 Sept, Imperial War Museum

Human Resources Forum

1.00pm, Fri 17 Sept, British Library

Cultural Diversity Working Group

3.00pm, Tues 21 Sept, National Portrait Gallery

Spoilation Working Group

4.30pm, Tue 21 Sept, Tate Britain

Learning & Access Committee

11.00am, Fri 29 Oct, National Portrait Gallery

NMDC Executive Committee

11.00am, Fri 5 Nov, Imperial War Museum

National Museum Managers Consortium

Fri 12 November, Science Museum

Board Secretaries Group

11.30am, Thurs 2 Dec, Imperial War Museum

National Museum Director's Conference

11.00am, Fri 3 Dec, Imperial War Museum

National Museum of the American Indian

America's newest national museum is due to open on 21 September. The National Museum of the American Indian, part of the Smithsonian Institution will be an institution of living cultures dedicated to the preservation, study and exhibition of the life, languages, literature, history and arts of the Native Peoples of the Western Hemisphere.

The museum was originally set up by an act of Congress passed in 1989 and work began on the \$200m building in 2000. More than 250,000 Americans, as well as tribes, the U.S. Congress and corporations and foundations, have contributed to the museum. The building on the National Mall in Washington resembles a rock formation from the deserts of southern Utah or Arizona and extensive consultations were held between the architects and Native Americans.

The museum is governed by a 23-member board of trustees, fourteen of whom are Native Americans and the founding Director, Richard West is a Southern Cheyenne. The Smithsonian's American Indian Museum Training Program organizes courses, technical assistance, internships, residencies and publications in museum practices for American Indians. Visit: www.nmai.si.edu/

Fire Destroys German Library

Thousands of rare books are thought to have been destroyed in a fire at the Duchess Anna Amalia Library in Weimar on 3 September. *BBC News* reports that some 6,000 books, including a 1534 Martin Luther bible, were saved before the building became too unstable. Among the works saved were the travel papers of naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt, rescued by people forming a chain to get the books out of the building. The library was opened in 1691 and housed the world's largest collection of Faust by Johann Wolfgang Goethe. The Library's director Michael Knoche said up to 13,000 historical books were housed in the affected area, focusing on Germany literature between 1750 and 1850.

The fire is reported to have started on the top floor of the library, housed in a 16th Century palace and it took firefighters two hours to get the fire under control. The cause of the blaze is not yet known.

Guard Pleads Guilty to Dali Theft

A correction officer has pleaded guilty to the theft of a Salvador Dali painting stolen from Rikers Island jail in March 2003. *Newsday.com* reports that Timothy Pina admitted he and three accomplices stole the painting during a midnight fire drill. The thieves replaced the painting with a fake, which was spotted almost immediately. Dali gave the painting 3ft by 5ft, gouache, ink and pencil drawing depicting the crucifixion of Christ, to the jail in 1965. The painting has not been recovered and is believed to have been destroyed.

Pina will be sentenced to five years probation and will resign from the Department of Correction. Former Assistant Deputy Warden Mitchell Hochhauser pleaded guilty in June 2003 to the theft and is serving a three-year prison sentence.

www.nationalmuseums.org.uk

Archives Awareness Campaign

Everyone has a history and we've got a bit of yours!

There are over 1.5 million visits each year to archives in the UK, and over 75% of those visitors do so for private or personal research. Many are first time visitors, and many more millions access archives virtually. The Archive Awareness Campaign began in September 2003 with a month long programme of over 475 special events around the country. This year the Campaign takes the form of a "season" of events from October to December. The theme for this year's event is Routes to Roots. The Campaign, which is backed by The National Archives, the National Council on Archives and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, aims to draw people into archives via this season of events and to raise awareness of archives and what they have to offer among both new and experienced users, particularly focusing on under-represented groups: black and minority ethnic groups, the under-24 age group and higher education students. For more information or to get involved in the campaign and register your events go to: www.archiveawareness.com

Archives Collections of the UK National Museums

The UK's national museums hold extensive and rich archive collections. Most of the UK national museums are recognised by the National Archives as a place of deposit for the public records they create, and their institutional archives include minutes of trustee meetings, accession papers, museum correspondence and personnel records. In addition to these institutional archives, many national museums hold extensive and internationally important archives related to their subject areas. In celebration of the Archives Awareness Campaign, here is very brief glimpse of just some of these archives. Full information about public access to their archive collections can be found on each museum's website.

Museum of London – London Archaeological Archive and Research Centre

The LAARC is the primary source of evidence for early London and a resource of international significance. It holds the records and finds from over 5000 archaeological digs including 120,000 boxes of archaeological material from Roman pomegranate seeds to Saxon jewelry. www.museumoflondon.org.uk

National Railway Museum Library Archive

This is one of Britain's major reference sources for the study of railway history. Since it opened in 1975, the NRM has built up an important collection of archives reflecting the many aspects of railways in the British Isles. The Collection includes material from many of the railway companies, nationalised industries, and associated industries and from members of the public. The collections emphasize the engineering and technical activities of the companies, including railway manufacturers' papers, technical specifications, engineering drawings, and collections of papers of notable people in the industry. www.nrm.org.uk

National Maritime Museum

The Caird Library, founded in 1936, is the most comprehensive reference library of its kind in the world. Its holdings include a world-class collection of manuscripts, including personal papers and diaries, official Admiralty and dockyard records, business papers and lieutenants' logs. The National Maritime Museum's Film archive

holds over 1500 documented films dating back to 1910. These provide a rich insight into Britain's relationship with the sea. For details visit: www.nmm.ac.uk

National Portrait Gallery - Heinz Archive and Library

This is the primary centre for research in the field of British portraiture and holds extensive files of engravings, photographs and reproductions of portraits in collections worldwide. These files are arranged by sitter and artist name and they contain approximately 500,000 images. The Reference Collection contains approximately 80,000 prints and drawings, including silhouettes and caricatures, and a small group of paintings, miniatures and medallions. www.npg.org.uk

Imperial War Museum

The Department of Documents holds the papers of high ranking officers such as Field Marshals Sir John French, Sir Henry Wilson and Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, manuscripts of war poets and writers such as Isaac Rosenberg and Siegfried Sassoon, and many unpublished personal diaries, letters and memoirs. It also holds an extensive collection of captured enemy records. Private papers in the collection include substantial numbers of diaries, letters and personal papers on subjects such as wartime service, conscientious objection and civilian life in Britain during the Second World War. The Sound Archive, set up in 1972, holds over 33,000 hours of recordings, the core of which are oral history records of peoples experiences of conflict. The Film and Video Archive holds some 120 million feet of film and 6,500 hours of videotape. A large proportion of material has been transferred to the Museum from the Services and other public bodies, as the Archive is the official repository for such public record films. www.iwm.org.uk

National Museums of Scotland - Scottish Life Archive

The Scottish Life Archive, located at the rear of the Museum of Scotland was originally established in 1959 to record and preserve documentary and illustrative evidence as context to the Country Life collections of the Museums. More recently, the collection has been extended to include documentary, illustrative and oral evidence of the maritime, urban and industrial history of Scotland and now holds material from c. 1700 to the present day including photographs, slides, film; drawings, maps, manuscript sources such as diaries, letters and account books; printed ephemera such as posters and leaflets and newspaper cuttings. The photographic collections consist of around 130,000 images is the most extensively used part of the collections. The postcard collection contains around 5000 items, mainly topographical views or street scenes. www.nms.ac.uk

Tate – Hyman Kreitman Research Centre

The Hyman Kreitman Research Centre opened in 2002 and provides access to the Tate's collection of archival material relating to British art and artists, collectors, critics, writers, galleries and institutions primarily from 1900. The archive contains over a million archival items ranging from manuscripts, letters, diaries, sketchbooks, drawings and maquettes to photographs, audio-visual material, and press cuttings. Major groups of papers include those relating to David Bomberg, Kenneth Clark, Barbara Hepworth, John & Paul Nash, Ben Nicholson, Stanley Spencer, The Institute of Contemporary Arts, the Charleston Papers and the Barbara Reise papers. The treasures include Turner's palette, Paul Nash's paintbox and Sickert's painting overalls. www.tate.org.uk

National Museums & Galleries of Wales

The Museum of Welsh Life archive consists of an assortment of documentary material including farmer's diaries, craftsmen's account books and school exercise books. During the 1930s, the Museum began a programme of collecting information throughout Wales on various aspects of its folk culture. A detailed bilingual questionnaire was circulated 1937 and the responses are now in the archive. Among the archive's most important sources of information are the 'Answer Books', replies to questions sent out by the Museum's Department of Oral Traditions and Dialects in the 1960s to various persons in Wales who were considered to have specialised knowledge in certain fields. They include detailed and valuable notes on topics such as old farming methods, fairs, medicines and other folk customs, pastimes, crafts and rural craftsmen, dialects and sayings. www.nmgw.ac.uk

Fleet Air Arm Museum – Centre for Naval Aviation Records & Research

The collection covers a wide range of documents from official and private sources, related to the Royal Naval Air Service and the Fleet Air Arm. They cover areas such as aircraft, ships, equipment, air stations, operations and personnel. Amongst the most regularly consulted are the Squadron Line Books and Record Books, Air Publications and aircraft accident records. The Centre also holds documents relating to service in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines before and during the First World War. Personal papers from important figures in aviation are held. The very large photographic collection covers all areas within the Museum's remit and is widely used by researchers and authors. www.fleetairarm.com

V&A – The Archive of Art and Design & National Art Library

The AAD, established in 1978, holds over 200 archive groups including the Arts Council of Great Britain and designers, manufacturers and retailers such as Eileen Gray, Heal & Son and Biba. NAL's Special Collections include illuminated medieval manuscripts and artists' letters and archives and much more! www.vam.ac.uk