

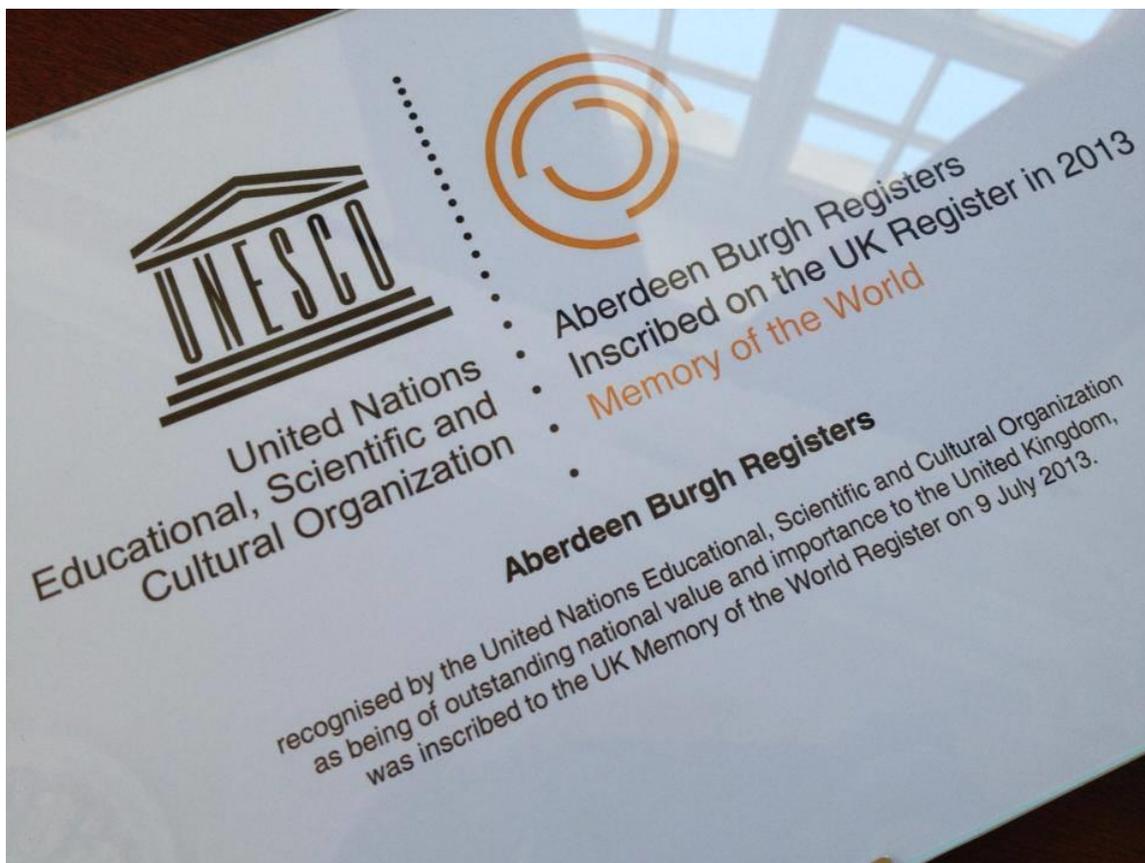


ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire

A R C H I V E S

ANNUAL REPORT
April 2013 - March 2014



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Introduction and Summary

I am delighted to present the annual report for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives for 2013/14, a year which has seen significant recognition and achievement.

The service, jointly funded by Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils, exists to collect, preserve, promote and make publicly available the historical records of the two local authorities, together with other significant records relating to the region. The Archive provides a service for the staff and elected members of both councils as well as for the general public at a local, national and indeed international level. With records dating back over 800 years, the users of the service are as diverse as the archives themselves: school pupils, academics, councillors and family historians are all regular visitors.

Members of staff have worked positively to further develop existing partnerships with other organisations, to raise the profile of the archive and to increase the number of people engaging with the service either in person or through social media and the internet, which now stands at a higher level than ever before.

In July 2013, the Aberdeen Burgh Registers (1398-1509) were recognised by UNESCO as being of outstanding historical importance to the nation because of their status as the oldest and most complete set of records of any Scottish town. Among the ten other items included in the UNESCO “*UK Memory of the World Register*” last year were the Domesday Book, the Churchill Archive and Alfred Hitchcock’s silent films, providing a measure of the calibre of the material in our care.

This prestigious recognition followed the digitisation of the Burgh Registers from 1398 – 1563 in a partnership with the National Records of Scotland which in turn enabled the UNESCO recognised volumes to be made freely available online through ScotlandsPlaces. The creation of a digital resource has also been the catalyst for a further very productive collaboration on two projects with the departments of History and Computing Sciences at Aberdeen University which has seen the transcription of 100 pages of a volume from the 1530s as a first step in making these records more widely accessible to the public.

The recognition by UNESCO has provided a fantastic lever to publicise the wider archive service through our active programme of outreach. This included the well-received publication of *Aberdeen City Centre Through Time* in partnership with Aberdeen City Libraries and Aberdeen Museums and Galleries, as well as

planning for a major exhibition of archive material opening at the Tolbooth Museum in May 2014. The involvement of the service in education remains strong, with involvement in the 'Arts Across Learning Festival' and a major HLF funded project to produce educational materials for schools in Aberdeenshire on the subject of the First World War.

The recognition gained and the progress made in 2013-14 is a credit to the enthusiasm of the staff and their continued commitment to providing a professional and highly respected service.

Phil Astley
City Archivist.
May 2014

Access and enquiries

A major part of the Archive service is devoted to providing access to the collections in its care. Enquiries and visits come from individuals in the North East of Scotland, from further afield in Scotland, England and abroad, and also from within the councils that pay for the service. Basic statistics for this are provided below.

In addition, last year's project to analyse where visitors to the Old Aberdeen House Search Room have come from has now been extended to both Search Rooms. This information is provided below, and shows that the majority of visitors last year came from Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.

It will be seen that the general usage of the service has increased over the past year, although productions for Old Aberdeen House are still down by 10%, whilst the number of visitors has increased. This is attributable to the introduction of digitised versions of the civil parish records in place of producing the original items. These records are extremely popular with family historians, and the provision of access to copies reduces the need to produce the originals to users in the search room. By contrast, the number of productions in the Town House has increased dramatically without the number of visitors increasing. This is attributable to a number of regular readers viewing a large number of photographs in the second half of the financial year.

Enquiry Types

The majority of enquiries and visits that are received by the Archives Service are for family history purposes, but a significant number are also received about other local matters. These include requests from academics, (on topics ranging from the history of probation in Aberdeen to records of press-ganging in Kincardineshire), planning requests from building owners for old house plans, and requests from the public on political matters (e.g. establishing the common good status of land).

Once again the most varied enquiries and visits have been received from council departments. In the past year requests for information have included:

- A copy of asset costings from a 1994 council report about Archaeolink
- historical information relating to the establishment of a conservation area in Aberdeenshire

- Information about the conditions of use and byelaws for a public park in Aberdeenshire
- Historical title deeds, minutes, and corroborating documents relating to City Council owned properties
- Retrieval of information on mortifications and trusts administered by the City Council

In each case a preferential service to research information has been provided to the councils that have requested it, and in most instances information has been provided remotely to save Council staff time in travelling to our offices to locate this information themselves.

Town House Statistics

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	+/- from 2012/13
Enquiries	290	301	385	+28% (+84)
Visits	279	337	338	+ 0.2% (+1)
Productions	1089	1280	4024	+214% (+2744)

*Old Aberdeen House Statistics **

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	+/- from 2012/13
Enquiries	644	449	490	+9% (+41)
Visits	523	337	393	+16% (+56)
Productions	2770	2005	1790	-10% (-215)

* of these, the following statistics regarding Aberdeenshire Council collections were gathered:

Aberdeenshire

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	+/- from 2012/13
Enquiries	287	244	382	+56% (+138)
Productions	1426	994	708	-28% (-286)

Total Statistics (TH + OAH)

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	+/- from 2012/13
Enquiries	934	750	875	+16% (+125)
Visits	802	674	731	+8% (+57)
Productions	3859	3285	5814	+77% (+2529)

Geographical break down of visits to search rooms, 2013-2014

Aberdeen	Aberdeenshire	Moray	Rest of Scotland	UK outwith Scotland	International
405	137	3	59	57	70

Remote Access

The Service maintains various sources of information on the internet to inform potential researchers about what is held in the collections, ranging from general information about collections, to itemised lists.

Online Public Access Catalogue

Work is ongoing to populate the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) with completed itemised lists of collections, either through new cataloguing, or retrospective checking and typing up of old lists. By 1 May 2014 lists for a further 62 collections had been added to it. This brings the total number of collection lists on the OPAC to 332 collections, containing 41410 individual entries.

Notable collections added to the OPAC in 2013/14 include:

ASC/1	Minutes of Aberdeenshire Council, 1995 – 2012
ASC/2/1	Aberdeenshire Council Agendas and Associated Papers of Policy & Resources Committee, 1996 – 2001
ASC/2/2	Aberdeenshire Council Agendas and Associated Papers of Education, Learning, and Leisure Committee, 1995 – 2005
ASC/2/3	Aberdeenshire Council Agendas and Associated Papers of Infrastructure Services Committee, 1996 - 1999
CA/14	Aberdeen City: Harbour Records, 1682 - 1959
DD227	Papers relating to 612 Squadron and R.G. Robertson, 1937 - 1997
DD412	Records of the Labour Party of Aberdeen, 1936 - 1996

DD1745	Papers of Donside Paper Company, 1893 - 1974
DD1810	Records relating to Aberdeen Children's Theatre, and Drama Education in North East Scotland, 1944 - 2001
PD35	North East of Scotland Federation of Townswomen's Guilds, 1934 – 1995

Website and Social Media

Website

The online presence of the Archives has continued with promotion via the service website, Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms.

The website at www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archives is updated regularly, particularly the homepage, which sees an average of 1,400 hits per month. This is used to notify users of events, public holiday closures, and other notable items, as well as additions to the catalogue and indexes. Volunteer projects are uploaded onto the site where appropriate.

The website is also used to link to other projects, such as the Burgh Register Project in conjunction with the University of Aberdeen.

Social Media

The Archives have continued to take advantage of the informality of social media this year to further engage with the wider community outside its traditional user base.

Twitter

Twitter has seen an increase in the number of followers, with over 750 now following the account (@abdnarchives). While more informal than the website, and to some extent Facebook, Twitter is a useful tool for advertising events, links, and images. It also allows the Archives to see what others are up to, as many of the accounts followed are other archive offices from around the UK – this means that ideas and networking can be shared quickly and easily.

The output on Twitter often mirrors that of the main website and Facebook, but it is also used when joining in on trending topics. The use of hashtags allows us to link in with trends, thus maximising our Twitter audience.

Facebook

The Archives Facebook page at www.facebook.com/aberdeencityandshirearchives has seen an increase in users in 2013/2014. With an established presence, the site now has over 2,500 'likes', and stories and features are regularly shared.

Users of Facebook are comfortable interacting online, and we do make an effort to reply to comments and questions where appropriate. We also receive enquiries via the private messaging function which are also responded to. Again, the most popular posts are those of historical photographs of Aberdeen and the surrounding area and these have helped to increase the number of likes to the page.

People also like seeing what is going on in the Archives, so Facebook is used to keep people up to date with projects, to show what the archives are like behind the scenes, and what the staff are up to. It allows a better interaction with our users, both remote (online and geographically) and local (living within the area).

History Pin

As part of the Archives Awareness campaign, we took part in the 'story box' event taking place across the UK. The premise was to produce a box with items which people could see and find out the story behind them. Instead of having a physical box, we created online tours using History Pin, a social media tool developed with libraries and archives in mind. It allows images to be pinned to a location on a map, and virtual tours to be developed from these. Our use of the site for documents was commended by the administrators of History Pin, who had only seen it being used for historical photographs up to that point. It is hoped that we will continue to use History Pin in such a way in the future.

The existing 'tours' can be viewed at <http://www.historypin.com/channels/view/49526#!tours/all/>

Customer Surveys

Between 7 August and 1 September 2013 two surveys were made available online through SurveyMonkey to measure awareness and usage of Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives amongst staff of both councils and the public, and also to gauge opinion of possible initiatives that could be implemented to develop the Service further.

Overall opinion of those that responded highlighted the high quality of the service provided, but a number of areas for improvement were identified. These included

- Increased access by extending opening hours
- Provision of more opportunities to access records remotely, e.g. through digitisation
- More online guidance on the collections and systems for accessing records

These were addressed by:

- Trialling extended opening on Tuesday evenings throughout Spring and Summer until 6.30pm from 13 May 2014.
- The Aberdeenshire burial registers and lair plans in the collections were digitised at the end of 2013, and are in the process of being put online at www.DeceasedOnline.com Plans are also being developed for providing access to more collections in a digital format, such as pre-1938 School Log Books.
- Guidance on 'Planning Your Visit' was placed on the website in 2013. Collection specific guidance will be drawn up in the coming financial year

Preservation and Conservation

Routine Conservation

A large part of the Service's budget for conservation this year was dedicated to several items from burgh collections that included minutes from Stonehaven and Inverbervie, and administrative volumes from Old Aberdeen and Laurencekirk.

These were sent down to a professional book and paper conservation studio in Dundee, and it is expected that they will be returned in the next few months.

Conservation of Aberdeen County Assessed Tax Records

In September 2013 a major conservation survey was undertaken by Emma Fraser ACR on 116 volumes of the Aberdeen County Assessed Tax Rolls (AS/Acom/14). The collection covers every year between 1799-1832 and records annual details relating to various taxes payable by individuals in the county area, such as how many windows were in their buildings, how many horses they owned, how many servants they employed, how much is owed and by whom etc.

The information recorded in the collection gives a detailed record of life and the economy right down to parish level in North East Scotland during a time of great national change. They are also the only complete surviving Scottish Assessed Tax record for the years of 1799-1832 and they therefore represent an almost uniquely complete socio-economic record of rural and urban development in Scotland outside Edinburgh at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The survey found that much of the collection required treatment that would cost far more than the amount provided in the conservation budget. An application has therefore been submitted to the National Manuscript Conservation Trust for assistance to wards the work required, and a decision from this organisation is pending at the point of writing.

Management of Archives

Cataloguing

As is previously noted, the OPAC has continued to be populated with newly completed lists, and cataloguing has played a major part in that process. Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, 3152 new catalogue entries were created in our electronic cataloguing system, CALM, and of these, 1304 were marked as being on the OPAC.

New Deposits (Accessioning)

The Archive service collects records from a variety of sources. The majority of new deposits come from departments in Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council, but a number also come from external sources such as organisations and private individuals.

Notable deposits for the year 2013/14 include:

- Fenton Wyness Papers, 20th Century
- Minute Book of Banff Pipe Band, 1921 – 1969
- Duff House District, Macduff Feus, 1811 - 1864
- Banff Royal Charters, 1372 – 1633
- Records of St Peter's Episcopal Church in Torry, 1896 – 2008
- John Morgan Collection, 1844 - 2000

Statistics for new deposits are as follows:

Authority *	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Aberdeenshire	57	52	63
Aberdeen City	38	22	16
Moray	1	12	1
GVJB	2	1	0
Total	98	87	80

* This will not always be the depositor, so these figures represent a combination of deposits from external sources and council departments. It is common for external organisations and private individuals to gift collections to the Service, in which case the authority covering the area that the records relate to will be designated as the owner.

Outreach and Promotion

Actively promoting the service to a wide variety of users is fundamental to building and maintaining a high profile for the archive. 2013-14 saw a very active and diverse programme of outreach and promotion.

Burgh Records Project

The early minute books or “Council Registers” for Aberdeen start in 1398 and constitute the oldest and most complete set of records for any Scottish town. Consequently they are of national and indeed international significance. Wider recognition for these fantastic records is long overdue. Commencing in the autumn of 2013, an initial pilot project, funded by the University of Aberdeen’s Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies (RIISS) initiated a new phase of collaboration between the University, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives and the National Records of Scotland (NRS). Capitalising on the recent digitisation of Aberdeen’s council registers from 1398 to 1563, this pilot has tested the practicalities of creating an online, publicly-accessible database linking a full transcription and translation of the registers’ text with corresponding images. The sample covers one hundred pages from volume 13 covering the six months from October 1530 to March 1531.

This is a ‘proof of concept’ exercise using a previously underexplored volume to identify technical solutions as well as the appropriate editorial procedures for the creation of comprehensive transcriptions and translations. These link to a related database housing the corresponding digital images.

As part of this pilot project, a two day conference focussing on the records was held at Aberdeen University in November 2013. “The Burgh in the North: Society, Polity, Law and Hinterlands c.1400-c.1800”, attracted significant interest with attendees coming from Norway, the Netherlands, Trinity College Dublin and several universities within the UK.

A second phase external funding bid to dot.rural (the Research Council UK Digital Economy Hub focusing on the rural digital economy) has enabled a further project to be run, which now includes staff from the Department of Computing Sciences at Aberdeen University. While the focus remains the one hundred pages from 1530/31, a text-analytic approach is being used to help interpret and widen access to the records. This project is due to run until September 2014 with

a view to the submission of further funding bids to broaden the scope of the project.

Ancestral Tourism

The Archive service has continued to take a lead role in promoting ancestral tourism in the region. The City Archivist chairs the Aberdeen and North East Scotland Ancestral Tourism Partnership (ANESATP), an affiliation of regional archives, registrars, family history societies and other organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors that promote genealogical and heritage resources to visitors both at home and abroad. In March of this year the group was shortlisted in the 'Partnership in Tourism' category of the inaugural Aberdeen City and Shire Tourism Awards.

Much of the year has been devoted to planning a major family history event at Haddo House as part of Homecoming 2014. The event, to be held on the 8th-10th August 2014, will be the signature Homecoming event for the region.

Archives on Your Doorstep

Following a successful run of these events, it was decided that there would not be such a focus on these in 2013/2014. This was for a variety of reasons, including looking to other outreach events. We are looking to develop these differently, possibly into more workshop style events, which will have more of a focus on a theme such as conservation practices.

Promotional Events

On the 9th July 2013, the Aberdeen Burgh Registers were recognised by UNESCO as being of outstanding historical importance to the nation. The City Archivist attended a ceremony held at Tamworth where ten other items, including the Domesday Book and the Churchill Archives, were also awarded recognition. The award attracted significant media attention at both a regional and national level.

Along with Aberdeen City Council's Local Studies Library and Museums and Galleries, the Archives were involved in a joint production with Amberley publishers to produce a book of 'then and now' photographs of Aberdeen. Called *Aberdeen City Centre Through Time*, the book featured a number of unpublished photographs from the various collections, alongside new photographs of the same area. Each photograph was captioned, explaining the changes which had

taken place and giving historical information. The publication was officially launched in November 2013.

In addition, the archive service promoted itself and took queries at a number of events that included the Tayroots Festival, Fraserburgh Heritage Centre Open Day, and Aberdeen City's Doors Open Day in September 2013, when over 600 visitors came to see the Charter Room and samples from the archive collections.

Talks and Visits

Invitations to speak to various community and educational organisations are a regular feature in the calendar of the service and while they may take time to prepare, they are a great way to engage with the public on a personal level – in 2013-14 these groups included the likes of the Inverbervie Probus Group, Udny Heritage Society, the Craigiebuckler Community Group, and the Scottish Genealogists Network. Guided tours of the two buildings are also very popular and give people an opportunity to see 'behind the scenes'.

A total of 28 talks and visits were carried out in the course of the year; 10 were City events, 10 were Aberdeenshire events, and 18 were joint City and Aberdeenshire events. These ranged from the City Archivist speaking to the Grampian Chamber of Commerce about Ancestral Tourism, through to a Conversation Café about the role of women in the history of Aberdeen.

Inreach

As well as promoting the public service within the wider community of North East Scotland, staff have also been active in promoting the corporate side of its service. The Archive is more than just basic storage for council records that have been selected for permanent preservation. In particular, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives provides a research and retrieval service for council departments should they need access to historical information in order to conduct their business. It is therefore important to promote the resource within Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council.

Over the past year this has been undertaken mostly in person: tours of the Charter Room were provided to staff and official visitors in Aberdeen City Council, whilst lunchtime talks on topical aspects of the service that relate to Council business (e.g. Common Good, Social Housing) have been delivered to staff in Aberdeenshire Council. Distribution of the internal leaflet to advertise the corporate service has continued throughout the year.

Education

Educational outreach has again featured prominently in the work of the Archive Service in the last financial year.

The Arts Across Learning Festival run by Aberdeen City Council was again very successful, with the Archives joining up with Linda Cracknell, an author. We worked with her on developing an idea for a story involving original documents relating to the Jacobites of 1745 – 1746, which involved the children writing their own. Original documents were taken to the schools, giving the children the chance to see that the events they were being told about had actually taken place.

Aside from this, the majority of educational work was carried out through the Aberdeenshire Heritage Education Partnership in which the Archives Service has played a leading role since its formation in 2010. This partnership, which also includes representatives from Aberdeenshire Registrars, Aberdeenshire Libraries (Local Studies section), Aberdeenshire Council Arts Development Team, aims to promote the services of its representative organisations in education through the creation of resources for schools and teachers.

Much of the work has concentrated on development of resources for teaching the World War 1 topic in Aberdeenshire secondary schools. The project is in its second stage of developing classroom resources, in collaboration with the Project Co-ordinator (appointed in October 2012) and local Community Groups across Aberdeenshire.

Over the past financial year professional training and piloting associated with the project has taken place, with sessions using elements of the resources being run for teachers, network librarians, and schools in Aberdeenshire. The classroom resources are now in the process of being published for distribution to schools, with several schools in the Aberdeenshire area having noted interest in running them in the next school year.

Visits have also been made by the Archive service to schools to promote the resources available to them. These have included:

- Running activities with several S2 & S3 classes at The Gordon Schools in October 2013 using original documents and plans illustrating the history of the School

- A session was delivered to a P6 class at Mill O' Forest Primary School in November 2013 about the effect of the First World War on Stonehaven and its schools.

Concluding Remarks

2013-14 has been an extremely positive year for the service, not least because of the UNESCO recognition granted to the Burgh Registers. This in turn has raised the profile of the service as a whole, enabling further collaboration and the development of additional projects with our various partners.



Wordcloud using feedback gathered from the public in 2013-14 about the service