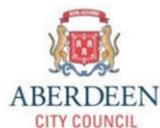


# Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire

## A R C H I V E S

**ANNUAL REPORT**  
**April 2015 - March 2016**



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## Introduction

I am delighted to present the annual report for Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives for 2015/16, a year which has seen very positive development for both the service and its staff.

The Archive, 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 an 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.

Of particular note this year has been the blossoming partnership with the University of Aberdeen and in particular the joint, three-year project focussing on the City's UNESCO-recognised Burgh Registers (1398-1511) which was awarded £310,000 by the Leverhulme Trust in December 2015. Excellent work continues to be done with regard to educational initiatives with schools, ancestral tourism and imaginative public engagement. The year also saw the team return to full strength with the welcome arrival of two new members of staff in the summer of 2015. Katy Johnson and Barry Robertson have quickly become an integral part of the team and have already made a very positive contribution to the work of the service.

Phil Astley  
City Archivist  
June 2016



Phil Astley, City Archivist, with participants at a workshop jointly hosted with the Scotland's Urban Past Project, April 2016

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## Access and enquiries

The Archive service has continued to provide access to the collections in its care throughout 2015/16. 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 two councils that fund the service. Basic statistics for the numbers of enquiries, visits to the organisation, and productions of items in the search rooms are detailed below:

### *Town House (TH) Statistics*

	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>+/- from 2014/15</b>
<b>Enquiries</b>	385	218	178	-40 (-18%)
<b>Visits</b>	338	210	245	+35 (+17%)
<b>Productions</b>	4024	2864	1226	-1638 (-57%)

### *Old Aberdeen House \* (OAH) Statistics*

	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>+/- from 2014/15</b>
<b>Enquiries</b>	490	462	614	+152 (+33%)
<b>Visits</b>	393	523	594	+71 (+14%)
<b>Productions</b>	1790	1946	2788	+842 (+43%)

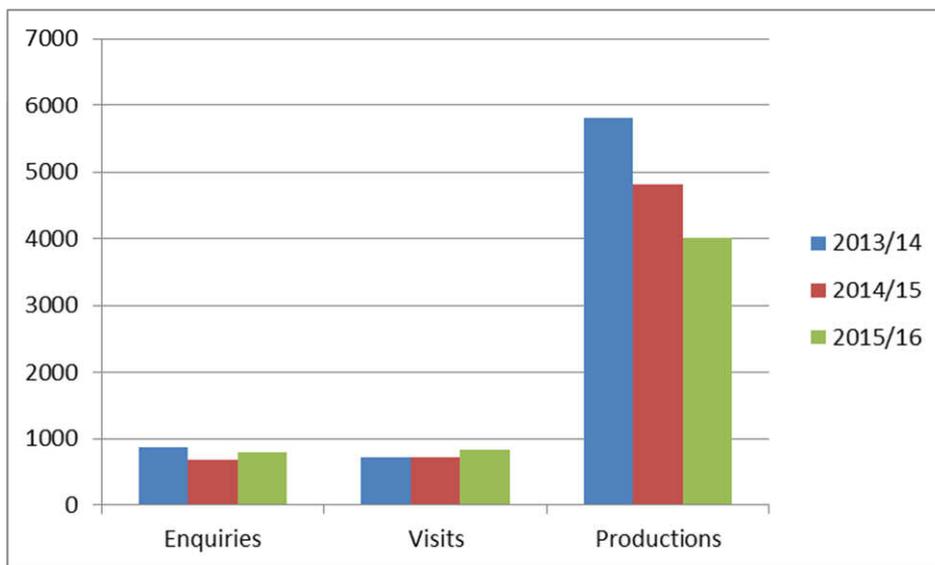
\* Aberdeenshire Council statistics at Old Aberdeen House are as follows:

	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>+/- from 2014/15</b>
<b>Enquiries</b>	382	288	261	-27 (-9%)
<b>Productions</b>	708	870	1377	+507 (+58%)

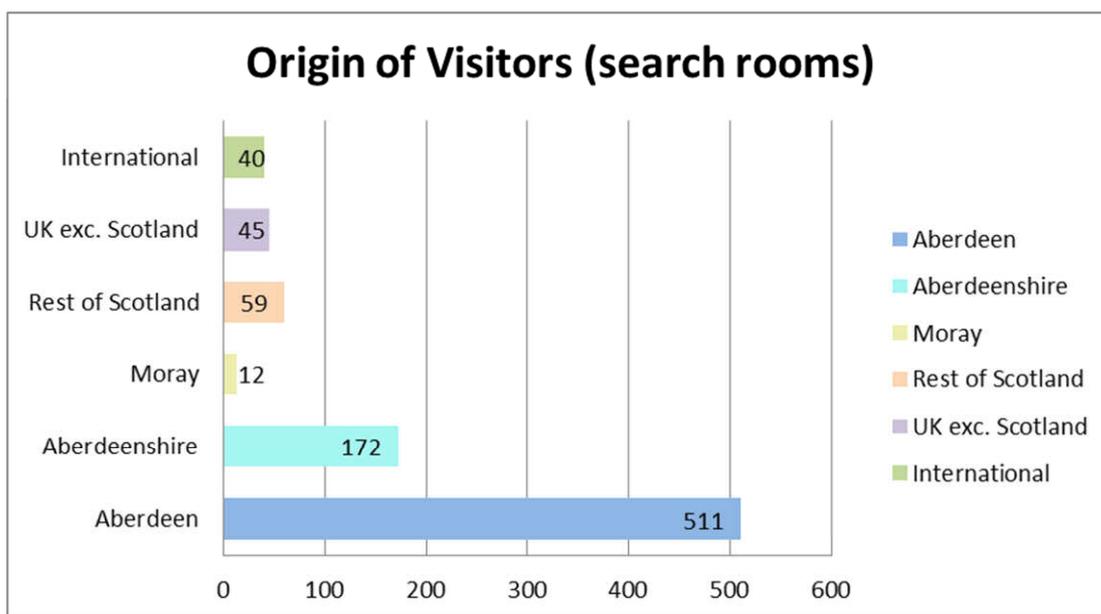
### *Total Statistics for TH and OAH*

	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>+/- from 2014/15</b>
<b>Enquiries</b>	875	680	792	+112 (+16%)
<b>Visits</b>	731	733	839	+106 (+14%)
<b>Productions</b>	5814	4810	4014	-796 (-16%)

*Total numbers of enquiries, visits and productions, 2013/14-2015/16*



*Origin of visitors to the search rooms, 2015/16*



Usage of the service across the two sites has remained reasonably level (in comparison with last year's figures). The total numbers of enquiries and visits are up, but this is offset by a decrease in item productions. A closer look at the figures reveals significant increases in enquiries, visits and productions for Old Aberdeen House. The Town House has seen an increase in visits, although the number of enquiries is down slightly on last year. Alongside this there has been a reduction in the number of productions. Across both sites, the vast majority of users are from Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

In part, the increase in Old Aberdeen House productions can be attributed to some remarkable usage by individual visitors. In August 2015, for example, two academics from the University of Glasgow accessed 139 individual productions as part of their 'History of Working-Class Marriage in Scotland' project. Alongside this, some wider trends should be acknowledged. The newly deposited archival collection of Grampian Police also proved popular last year, as was the City's building warrant collection that was used extensively by Architecture students from The Robert Gordon University. Such heavy individual usage aside, the quantity of Old Aberdeen productions has risen across the board. This is perhaps indicative of the fact that the family history market has continued to generate plentiful productions from the most popular sources from the school collections and valuation rolls.

In contrast it can be argued that the digitization of burial records in 2011 has continued to have an impact on Town House figures. These records are the most popular source held at the Town House for family history, but are now mostly being viewed online. Productions there are mostly made for local history, family history or internal staff purposes, and while they are down on last year, they are roughly similar to the numbers from 2012/13.

Nevertheless, family history remains the predominant enquiry type across the archives service (a total of 266 in 2015/16). Local History also has a strong showing (155 enquiries were classed as Local History in 2015/16). There were also other enquiries that reflected current community concerns such as requests for historical information about important buildings in the community (e.g. the Stonehaven Court building), and for information about the opening date of the access road to Cove Harbour.

The two local authorities are also make good use of the Archive service. A total of 25 enquiries were completed for City Council staff, and 45 were completed for Aberdeenshire Council staff. These enquiries are significant as they usually involve a large amount of research and represent a considerable investment in

staff time. For example, over 64 hours of work was done on enquiries for Aberdeenshire Council alone in the past financial year.

Aside from regular requests for copies of past reports to council committees, the corporate enquiries that the service helped with concerned a broad range of subjects, such as appeals for information regarding the structure of Ballater Bridge, enquiries concerning the ownership of various parcels of land associated with trusts, requests for tenancy history in council properties, and applications for historical building plans for planning purposes. There was even a request for information about the burial of an elephant near Turriff that the service was able to help with.

### *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 on [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archives](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archives), to itemised lists available at the Online Public Access Catalogue at [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archivecatalogue](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archivecatalogue).

### Online Public Access Catalogue

Work has been ongoing since 2009 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 27 May 2016 lists for a further 16 collections had been added to it. This brings the total number of collection lists on the OPAC to 365 collections, containing 45273 individual entries.

Notable collections added to the OPAC in 2015/16 include:

CA/1/8/6	Aberdeen Prison Visiting Committee Papers 1988 - 2014
CA/3/A3	Aberdeen Town Charters 1601 - 1641
CA/3/B1	Bogfairly Charters 1511 - 1583
DD642/18	Estate papers of James Hendry 1883 - 1944
DD1209	North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board : Aberdeen and North East Scotland records c.1900-1997
DD1212	Henry P. Trail Papers, 1917-1956
DD1744	Records of Richards plc, textile manufacturers of Broadford Works, Aberdeen 1879 - 2004
DD1790/2/4/2-	Planning Department Photographs of War Memorials 1979 -

19	1982
DD1828	Fenton Wyness Collection, 20 <sup>th</sup> Century
DD1907	Newburgh Amenities Committee Papers 1918 - 2003
DD1931	Hatton of Cairnie Farm, Garlogie: Papers c. 1871 - c. 1960
DD1960	Torry Citizen & Dole Drum Community Newsletters 1983 - 1989
DD2318	Papers Received from Peterkins Solicitors, Aberdeen Office 1499 - 1987
DD2397	Guard book of material relating to Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire prisons, policing and juvenile delinquency 1840s - 1850s
DD2438	Robert and John Falconer, Solicitors (Stonehaven): Papers 1865 - 1928
ED/GR6S/A49	Additional records of Marchburn Infant School
ED/GR6S/G66	Additional records of Westhill School
OA/1/6/3	Papers relating to Old Aberdeen 1609 - 1729
PD2/JS	Records of James Sutherland and Company (Peterhead) 1829 - 1966
PD2/LH	Records of Longside Heritors 1892 - 1927
PD2/PPH	Peterhead Public Hall Company Limited 1871 - 1936
PD20/4/1/1-42	William Spence Factory (Huntly): Photographs c. 1990
PD25	Buchan Field Club Papers 1897 - 1992

The Service began monitoring usage of the Dserve online public access catalogue in November 2015. A standardised measurement was established by January 2016, with a total of 4,836 searches conducted between November 2015 and the end of March 2016.

### Website and Social Media

The Archive Service's online presence has grown and developed over the last year, with increased usage of social media and catalogue searches, but a slight decline in the visits to its home page.

### Website

The website at [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archives](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archives) received a total of 13,107 hits in 2015/16. This is down slightly from the 2014/15 total of 13,657.

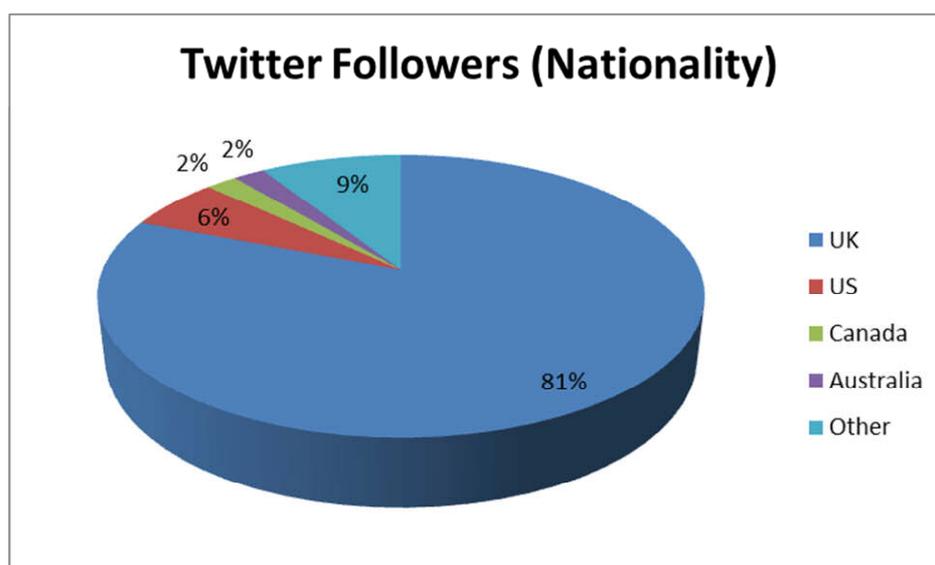
The website is used to provide updates on news and events etc; to link to collaborative projects and other resources of interest; and to provide guides and tips to people, whether they are experienced users of the service or complete novices. Virtual access is being provided to an increasing number of images and transcriptions of archive documents via the website. The air raid maps on the Service website were updated and relaunched this year, and these have been widely publicised and used.

### Social Media

The Archives social media presence has continued to build over the last year.

### Twitter

The Archive Service uses Twitter to keep its followers informed, entertained and engaged with our work. The Service has seen an increase of around 32% in the number of followers from last year, with 1324 now following the account (@abdnarchives). The majority of our followers are UK based (81%), followed by the U.S. (6%), Canada (2%) and Australia (2%).



### Facebook

The Archives Service Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/aberdeencityandshirearchives/> has continued to see an increase in followers in 2015/16. Slightly more formal than the Twitter feed, the page has seen an increase in the number of enquiries submitted via Facebook messages. The page now has over 4,500 followers, with its stories, images and features being regularly 'shared'.

### History Pin and Code the City

The Archive Service's virtual tour of Union Street shops at <http://tinyurl.com/nl85bz8> was utilised during Code the City's collaboration with Local Studies to create a virtual 3D tour of Union Street. This work is ongoing, with updates provided at <http://codethecity.org/> The Service also provided information from the 1937 valuation rolls to provide information behind the images, so people can find out the names and occupations of the people who lived or worked in the buildings that year.

### **Preservation and Conservation**

The conservation for 2015/16 focussed on 2 collections: Aberdeen County Assessed Tax records and the Aberdeen Burgess Charter of 1215.

#### *Conservation of Aberdeen County Assessed Tax Records*

In June 2014 Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives was awarded £10,000 by the National Manuscript Conservation Trust (NMCT) towards the cost of conservation on the Aberdeen County Assessed Tax Roll collection, 50% which was noted in a survey of 2013 as being publicly inaccessible.

This collection of 118 volumes covers every year between 1799-1832 and 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 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 conservation work using the NMCT award was completed at the end of 2015/16, and this has provided accessibility to 25% of the collection that was previously unfit for production.

More volumes were also sent at the end of 2015/16 to the conservators on the project to start work funded by the Leche Trust which awarded £5000 towards the project, and this work is ongoing.

### *Aberdeen Burgess Charter*

2015 saw the 800th anniversary of the foundation of the Burgess Guild of Aberdeen. As part of the celebrations the Burgesses of Guild funded conservation work on the charter of Alexander II that established the Guild. It was subsequently displayed to the Burgesses in February 2016 once the work was completed.

## **Management of Archives**

### *Cataloguing*

The Archives Service has created 2911 new entries on our CALM Archives Database, expanding the available information about our collections throughout the year. Of those 2911 descriptions, 1944 have moved from draft to fully-catalogued status, and are available for consultation on the OPAC.

### *New Accessions*

The service received 126 new accessions of material of varying sizes between 2015 and 2016 – as before, the majority of our material is received from both Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council, and we receive some private donations that inform the historical record for the north-east of Scotland.

Notable accessions for the year include:

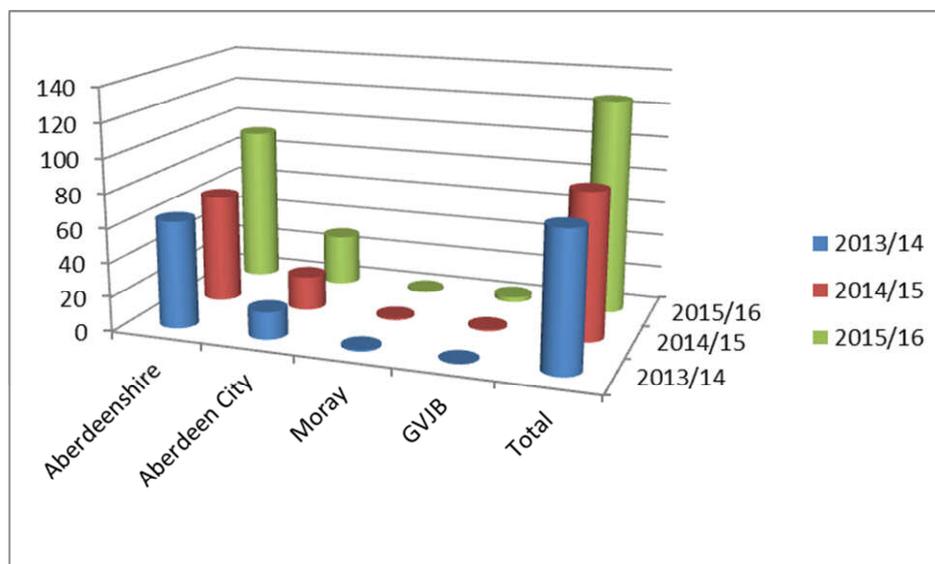
- Stanley W. Mackenzie Photographic Collection, 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Historic House Survey of Banff (Digital Photographs), 1986 & 1990s
- Fasque School Log Book, 1864-1905
- Torry Citizen & Dole Drum Newsletters, 1983 – 1989
- Papers of Innes of Raemoir and Others, 1499 – 1935
- Letters and papers of Alexander Spence of West Gallaton, 1843-1912
- Aberdeen Art Gallery McDonald Collection: Artists Index, 1950s
- Duke of Fife's Chartulary, 1725 - 1956
- Banff and Buchan Cemetery Records, 1704 – 1998
- Aberdeen Soroptimist Club International Material, 1928 – 1999

*Number of new accessions*

<b>Authority *</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Aberdeenshire	63	64	92
Aberdeen City	16	20	30
Moray	1	1	1
GVJB	0	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>126</b>

\* 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.

*New accessions by authority, 2013/14-2015/16*



It is worthy of note that this year saw receipt of some digital material that will need special measures in order to be stored and accessed in perpetuity. This issue is being addressed as part of Aberdeen City Council's Information Preservation Domain project, and a feasibility study of available strategies has already been carried out by the Archive Service.



ABERDEEN  
CITY COUNCIL



Photograph of former Free Church on Castle Street in Banff, c. 1986 (now the Harvest Centre), from the Historic House Survey collection (ACC1986)



Extract from the Torry Citizen and Dole Drum, January 1984 (DD1960)

## 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. 2015-16 saw a very active and diverse programme of outreach and promotion.

### *Burgh Records Project*

In July 2013 Aberdeen's Burgh Records (1398-1511) were recognised by UNESCO as being of outstanding historical importance to the UK because of their status as the oldest and most complete set of records of any Scottish town. This recognition, together with the digitisation of the eight volumes the previous year by the National Records of Scotland, acted as a catalyst for two pilot projects in partnership with the University of Aberdeen. The first of these, [Connecting and Projecting Aberdeen's Burgh Records](#) ran for six months in 2013, followed by a second six-month project in 2014 titled, [A Text Analytic Approach To Rural And Urban Legal Histories](#).

The aim of both projects was to demonstrate the type of information contained within the records and how best to navigate through the text. The experience gained was used in the submission of a successful £310,000 funding bid to the Leverhulme Trust in 2015. The resulting [Law in the Aberdeen Council Registers, 1398-1511](#) is a three-year project that will see all of the UNESCO-recognised volumes (comprising approximately 5,000 pages) transcribed, and will form the basis for much greater public engagement with the records. The project has already attracted significant media interest, with the Burgh Registers also featuring as a case study in [The Wider Value of UNESCO to the UK, 2014-15](#) following the benefits that have accrued to the Archive from the UNESCO recognition of 2013.

### *Ancestral Tourism*

The Archive service continues 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. ANESATP has built up a strong reputation and is frequently cited at a national level as an example of good practice.

The partnership produces the very popular booklet "Routes to Your North East Roots" which is currently onto its fifth edition, and markets its collective resources

both online via [northeastscotlandroots.com](http://northeastscotlandroots.com) and in print through the Landmark Press folder which is distributed to hotels, guest houses and bed and breakfast accommodation across the north east and Moray.

In September 2015 the partnership held a family history fair in Stonehaven which attracted an enthusiastic crowd of over 300. Organisations from across the region were in attendance ranging from the very small, such as the Family History Society of Buchan, through to larger institutions such as the University of Aberdeen and the National Records of Scotland.

### *Exhibitions*

In September material from the Aberdeenshire Commissioners of Supply collection was loaned to Shetland Museum and Archives for display as part of an exhibition relating to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century mapmaker, James Robertson that also included maps from the National Library of Scotland and map-making tools from the University of Aberdeen. As the exhibition had clear connections to Aberdeenshire, the Archive Service facilitated a transfer of it to the Arbuthnott Museum in Peterhead, where it ran until February. A talk on the archive collections was also delivered as part of promotional activities for the exhibit.

At the end of 2015 the Service supported pupils at Ellon Academy in developing an exhibition of material relating to the school in a display for the opening of the new school building. Archival Items from the education collections were on display in the school in December and January, and further support is being given to the School for ongoing use of the cases.

In February several documents including the newly conserved Burgess Charter of Alexander II at an event hosted by Lord Provost and the City Council for the Aberdeen Burgesses. This event also saw the Burgesses presented with a Coat of Arms, Letters Patent and Banner by the Lord Lyon King of Arms.

### *Talks and Visits*

Talks and visits continued to be a popular element of the service's outreach work. A total of 11 talks were delivered by members of the archives team across the year to a variety of groups, including the Aberdeen History Society, Westhill Seniors Group, Ellon Probus Club, and the North East Scotland Branch of the National Trust for Scotland. Two talks were delivered by staff for the Tolbooth Talks series at Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museum's Tolbooth Museum, and the

service also participated in a panel session at the University of Aberdeen-led Explorathon event in September, examining the question 'What is Research?'.

The service took part in the respective 'Doors Open Days' for both Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire during September. Old Aberdeen House was visited by around 100 members of the public on 12 September, while a display of Deeside material was mounted at the Victory Memorial Hall in Aboyne for Aberdeenshire's Doors Open Day the following weekend.

Old Aberdeen House also hosted two visits from university groups at the start of 2016: two groups of trainee primary teachers and a class of history students. These sessions generated follow-on visits from both sets of students.

The service was also represented at a number of external events, including an open day at the Fraserburgh Heritage Centre in June, a Family History Fair in Peterhead in July, and the Routes to Your North East Roots family history fair at Stonehaven Town Hall in September. The service also hosted a workshop run by Historic Environment Scotland's 'Scotland's Urban Past' project at the Town House in September. This project is encouraging the public to get involved in researching and recording information about their towns and cities and should generate use of the archive's collections.

### *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.

During 2015/16, promotion has been undertaken in a number of innovative ways:

- The Town House Archivist participated in an event telling stories from the collections illustrated with manual animations (a roll of paper cranked by hand) as part of the Corporate Governance conference in November 2015, and subsequently at the Communities, Housing and Infrastructure Conference in January 2016.

- Staff also took part in Corporate Governance Networking events at the beginning of 2016 to raise awareness of the Archives amongst new and existing Managers.
- The Senior Archivist participated in a video promoting Aberdeenshire Council's Records Management Plan under the Public Records (Scotland) Act and the Archive service's function in that.

In addition, staff in both councils were surveyed at the end of 2015 about their experience of the Archive service, which simultaneously raised more awareness of the Service as well as providing other ideas for publicising it in future years.

### *Education*

Educational outreach has developed well over the past year in a number of diverse activities with schools and the University of Aberdeen.

The Service undertook a number of educational visits to support learning in schools throughout the year. There were visits to primary schools in Torphins and Chapel of Garioch. There were also a number to Ellon Academy to support a group of pupils in developing displays about the history of the school for museum cases in their newly constructed building which was officially opened in December 2015. Items from the archive collections featured in the displays. This cross-curricular project introduced the pupils to local history research, heritage, and preservation issues, as well as the work of heritage professionals. The School intends to repeat the project in the coming academic year, with the addition of having a regular work placement working for one day a week in the Archive Service doing some work connected with developing another display for the case.

The Service also hosted visits from students at the University of Aberdeen across a range of disciplines – medicine, education, and history – in order to introduce them to the concept of using locally available archive sources for research. Most notably, the students in Primary Education all had to produce assignments exploring the educational use of local heritage sources, including archives, to teach primary school children about their local area. The feedback from the course indicates that the students accessing archival sources found the experience to be enjoyable, and not as challenging as they had first perceived.

Throughout the year the Service also had work placements of students from schools and the university wishing to have experience of archives work. This year, one of the placements subsequently decided to pursue a career in Archives

and has secured a place on a postgraduate course in Archives administration at the University of Glasgow.

The work of the Heritage Education Partnership continued in 2015/16. The Partnership was involved in a Puppetry Animation project in Fraserburgh at the beginning of the year. Partner organisations including the Archive Service provided a wide range of information to help schools research information about Saltoun Square in the town as the basis for developing puppet dramas to bring its historical stories alive.

The partnership also worked with Education Scotland's Scots Language Co-ordinator for the East Coast of Scotland in developing an extension to the 'Hard Vrocht Grun' resource that explored Doric poetry of the First World War and highlighted the use of historical sources in local heritage collections as part of that process. The partnership also participated in Education Scotland's Scots language training for teachers in Aberdeenshire Council by promoting Scots language sources available to them in local heritage collections, such as early archive material and oral history collections.

