

# Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire

## A R C H I V E S



### BIENNIAL REPORT

APRIL 2016 - MARCH 2018



# INTRODUCTION

Following an exceptionally productive two years, I am delighted to present the 2016-18 report for Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Archives. The service is jointly funded by Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council and 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 records held by the Archive date back over 800 years, with the earliest Council Registers recognised by UNESCO as being of outstanding historical importance to the UK. The people that use the Archive are as diverse as the documents themselves:

staff and elected members of both councils are frequent visitors, as are school pupils, academics, family and local historians and of course the wider public. The geographical spread of this audience ranges from local to international.

The scope of work in which the Archive staff are involved is similarly broad. Our contribution over the past year to the council's response to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry is but one way in which the service supports the key strategic aims of the organisation. Similarly, our outreach and promotional work is aimed at improving the customer experience. Educational initiatives contribute towards building a sense

of place while technological initiatives such as the digitisation of electoral material by Ancestry.co.uk are helping to maximise the resources we hold by making them available to a much wider audience and at the same time deriving an additional income stream.

By contributing to significant projects such as "Law in the Aberdeen Council Registers (1398-1511)" with the University of Aberdeen, the profile of the Archive continues to grow. The recognition gained and the progress this year on this many different fronts is a credit to the enthusiasm of the staff and their continued commitment to providing a professional and highly respected service.

## Access and Enquiries

Enquiries and visits to access archive items 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.

### Town House (TH) Statistics

	2016/17	2017/18	+/- from 2016/17
Enquiries	266	200	-66
Visits	321	256	-65
Productions of items to readers	3281	3538	+257

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

	2016/17	2017/18	+/- from 2016/17
Enquiries	495	451	-44
Visits	352	317	-35
Productions of items to readers	3398	2777	-621

*There was a general decrease in visitors to the search rooms and corresponding productions. This may be due to the online access provided to some records, such as burial registers, Peterhead admission registers etc, closure of Old Aberdeen House due to refurbishment in October / November 2017, plus the extremely bad weather at the beginning of March 2018. There may be an ongoing effect of the economic downturn that may have discouraged the public from spending money on travelling and research.*

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

	2016/17	2017/18	+/- from 2016/17
<b>Enquiries</b>	304	337	+33
<b>Productions of items to readers</b>	1001	841	-160

**Total Statistics for TH and OAH**

	2016/17	2017/18	+/- from 2016/17
<b>Enquiries</b>	761	645	-116
<b>Visits</b>	673	573	-100
<b>Productions of items to readers</b>	6679	6315	-364

**Enquiry Types, 2017/18 [exc paid research and copy requests]**

<b>Administrative</b>	32	<b>Architecture</b>	48
<b>Boundary Search</b>	6	<b>Data Protection</b>	37
<b>Family History</b>	223	<b>FOISA</b>	2
<b>Local Authority House Sales (Shire)</b>	3	<b>Local History</b>	160
		<b>Other</b>	68
		<b>Other history</b>	48

*The main types of enquiries received concern family history, but there are others relating to other topics, e.g. local history, architecture, road adoption, proof of recent attendance at a named school etc.*

*Enquiries from staff demonstrate an ongoing relevance of the archive records to both local authorities. There were 57 staff queries last year amounting to 50 hrs 40mins of staff time (excluding work done for the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI): see below). Topics asked about included information on the construction of flats on a named development; copies of building plans from the 19th century; information on historic trusts; common good status of fishings on the River Don etc.*

*The service has also contributed significantly to Aberdeen City Council's submissions for the SCAI with enquiries numbering 58 and estimated as taking 263 hrs 35 mins of staff time.*

**Where visitors have travelled from to visit the Search Rooms, 2016/17 & 2017/18**

Aberdeen		Aberdeenshire		Moray		Rest of Scotland		UK outwith Scotland		International	
16/17	17/18	16/17	17/18	16/17	17/18	16/17	17/18	16/17	17/18	16/17	17/18
491	360	68	107	3	1	49	39	35	40	27	26

*Aberdeen remains the highest source of visitors to the search rooms, although there was a marked decline between 2016 and 2018 figures. In contrast, there was a significant increase in those travelling from Aberdeenshire to access the records over the same period.*

# 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 the website [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archives](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/archives), to itemised lists available at the Online Public Access Catalogue at <https://archives.aberdeencity.gov.uk/CalmView/>

## Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)

This provides the public with a large searchable database of collection lists on the internet. The database is regularly being added to through a detailed process of cataloguing collections that have been received from depositors into our cataloguing database (called CALM).

Such a detailed process means that it can take some time before collection catalogues are complete and ready to be transferred onto the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC).

AET	Aberdeen Endowments Trust
POL	Grampian Police
	Aberdeen County, Kincardine County, & Banff County Public assistance collections
PD25	Buchan Field Club
DD1028	Cabinet Card photographs of the Buchan area (c. 1850-1900)
DD675	Duthie Park Trust
DD024	Papers of Aberdeen Post Office Workers and Communications Union
DD573	Boxmaster's Accounts of the Shipmaster's Society of Aberdeen
DD980	Papers of the Rev. Arthur Ranken (1806-1886), clergyman at Old Deer Episcopal Church, Old Deer, Aberdeenshire (19th century)
DD896	Business records of Berrywell Stores, Dyce, 1951 - 1991
DD886	Plans of the poor house at Oldmeldrum, 1858-1859
DD856	Records of Fintry Ploughmans Mutual Improvement Society (1876-1879); Fintry Mutual Improvement Association (1929-1933)
DD522	Records of St. Congan's Episcopal Church, Turriff, 1776 - 1982
DD363	Aberdeen City Centre Closed Circuit Television working group papers, 1993 - 1996
DD2567	Aberdeen Reformatory and Industrial Schools and Houses of Refuge Directors' Minute Books, 1896 - 1898
DD2517	Housing Survey Photographs detailing living conditions within the City of Aberdeen 1948 - 1949
DD2488/PFS	Records of the Peterhead Film Society 1949 - 1956
DD2439	Victoria Hall, Ellon, 1896 - 1964
DD1905	Records relating to Aberdeen Combworks, 1844 - 1972
DD1000	St Katherine's Club and Community Centre, Aberdeen 1917 - 2001
DD1227	Grampian Regional Council Social Work Department: Sudden Bereavement Counselling Service relating to Piper Alpha Disaster, c.1988 - c. 1993
DD1576	Dee District Salmon Fishery Board Papers, 1953 - 1988
DD1861	John Morgan Collection, 1825 - 1984

*By 26 May 2017 lists for 36 collections had been added to the OPAC, bringing the total number of collection lists on it to 401, containing 48977 individual catalogue entries. By 30 April 2018, 72 new collection catalogues had been added containing 50083 entries bringing the total to 473 on the OPAC.*

*The number of OPAC searches conducted were 8107 in 2016/17 and 6515 in 2017/18*



DD1028/33  
 Photograph of  
 an un-named society  
 from the Buchan  
 area c.1900

## Website and Social Media

The Archive Service's online presence consists of its [website](#), [Facebook](#) site, and [Twitter](#) site.

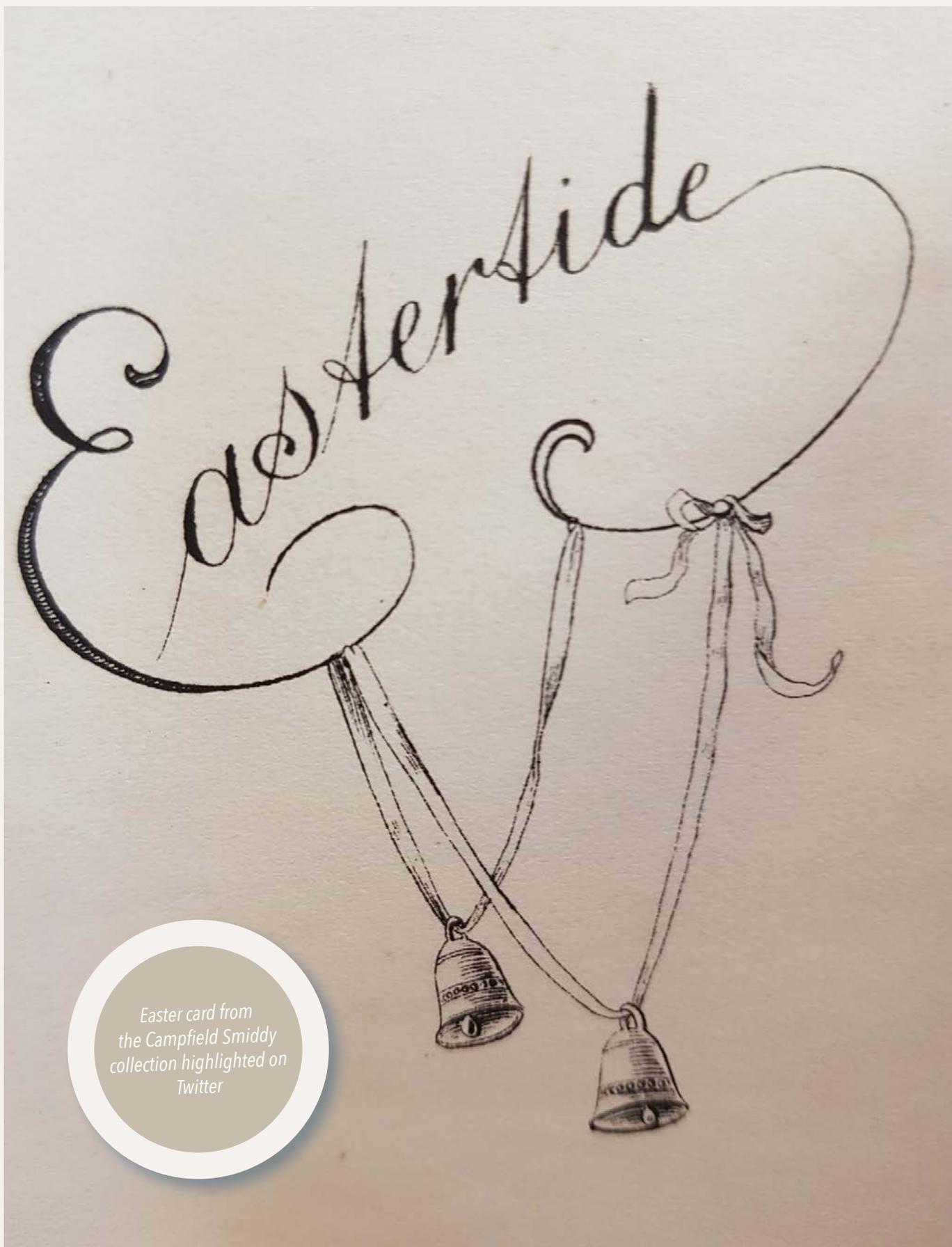
Hits / Followers	2016/17	2017/18	Increase / Decrease
<b>Website</b>	12236	8529	- 3707
<b>Facebook</b>	5213	5483	+ 270
<b>Twitter</b>	1766	2048	+ 282

### Website highlights

The website containing other information about the Archive service and its collections was substantially refreshed in 2017/18 as part of the corporate re-working of the Council website.

The most regular updates made to the website throughout the period have provided an increasing number of transcriptions or indexes of archive documents at <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/libraries-and-archives/aberdeen-city-and-aberdeenshire-archives/catalogues-and-indexes>. The following transcriptions or indexes were added to the website in 2016/17 and 2017/18:

- Index of children named in the Aberdeen Boys' and Girls' Hospital minute books
- Pupil rolls in Fasque School Log Book
- School Board Censuses from Marykirk, Maryculter and Fetteresso and Rickarton
- Fraserburgh Police Court Book, 1881 – 1896
- Index to names in the Aberdeen City Police Register of Criminal Photos
- Indexes to five police personnel registers (covering the Aberdeen City and Aberdeen and Kincardine County forces)



*Easter card from  
the Campfield Smiddy  
collection highlighted on  
Twitter*



## *Facebook highlights*

The Facebook page continues to be regularly updated. It has proved a good medium for sharing work on the Harbour Board project in 2017/18, and in several cases our followers have been able to identify or date photos from the collection.



## *Twitter highlights*

Involvement in the annual Explore Your Archive awareness campaign and the ARA Scotland's Archive A-Z on Twitter have played an important role in increasing awareness of the service.

# Remote Access to Archives

The Archive service also started 3 projects in 2016/17 to promote remote access to collections and encourage engagement with local community groups.

## *Assessed Tax Roll Transcription*

A pilot project was started with the Cromar History Group to transcribe and analyse the wealth of data contained in the Aberdeen County Assessed Tax Records of 1799-1832 for the parishes of the Tarland area. A crowd-sourcing method is being used to provide remote access, where digital images of the records for their area of coverage (3 parishes) are being sent along with templates for the task of transcription. By May 2018 the Group had completed the parish sets from 1799-1811.

The group has noticed some useful information – movement of individuals between parishes, unusual spellings of place names, and an economic dip in 1802/3.

## *Peterhead Admission Registers*

The Family History Society of Buchan also approached the Archive Service about obtaining copies of Peterhead School Admission Registers for the purposes of running a transcription project. It was decided to digitise these and place them on [Flickr](#) for both the Family History Society and the wider public to access. By the end of April 2018 the registers had been accessed 799 times and with work well underway by the Society on indexing them.

Screen  
shot of  
Aberdeen Electoral  
Roll for 1860-61 on  
Ancestry

## Burgh of Aberdeen—Parliamentary Register—

SECOND WARD—NORTH and GREYFRIARS Parishes—Continued.  
POLLING PLACE—at or near the North Side of CASTLE STREET.

No.	Christian Name and Surname of each Voter, at full length.	Place of Abode.	Occupation.	Nature of Qualification.	Street, Lane, or other place where property is situated.
<b>GREYFRIARS PARISH.</b>					
<b>R</b>					
1096	Roy, James, Junior	Ferryhill	Nurseryman	Proprietor of house	West North street
1097	Robb, George	182 Gallowgate	Writer	Tenant and occupant of house	182 Gallowgate
1098	Roy, John	Rotunda place	Seedsman	Proprietor of house	210 Gallowgate
1099	Reid, James	11 Seamount place	Tailor	Tenant and occupant of house and shop	11 Seamount place and 154 George street
1100	Rose, John	166 Gallowgate	Innkeeper	Proprietor and occupant of house and stables	166 Gallowgate
1101	Ross, Hugh	26 Gallowgate	Umbrella maker	Tenant and occupant of shop and house	12 and 26 Gallowgate
1102	Ritchie, John	10 Gallowgate	Broker	Tenant and occupant of shop	10 Gallowgate
1103	Raymond Gustave de	1 Gallowgate	Surgeon	Tenant and occupant of house	1 Gallowgate
1104	Reid, Robert	76 Broad street	Tobaccoist	Tenant and occupant of shop	80 Broad street
1105	Rennie, George	Skene terrace	Printer	Tenant and occupant of printing-office	64 Broad street
1106	Roger, Thomas	55 Longacre	Teacher	Proprietor of house	55 Longacre
1107	Ross, George	3 Queen street	Tailor	Tenant and occupant of rooms	3 Queen street
1108	Roberts, David	4 Frederick street	Saddler	Tenant and occupant of stores	Shoe lane
1109	Ross, George	38 Chapel street	Shoemaker	Proprietor of house	53 West North street
1110	Robertson, John	52 West North street	Grocer	Tenant and occupant of shop	52 West North street
1111	Robertson, John	6 Mealmarket street	Stabler	Tenant and occupant of house and stable	6 Mealmarket street
1112	Rennie, Alexander	131 King street	Painter	Tenant and occupant of house	131 King street
1113	Ramsay, John	91 George street	Shoemaker	Tenant and occupant of house and shop	83 Queen street

## Ancestry

Throughout the year the Service developed a project with the web based family history service Ancestry and the City Library to digitise electoral rolls for the Grampian Region with the intention of deriving income from placing images on the Ancestry website. The project predominantly includes Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Electoral Rolls from 1918 up until 1977 alongside a selection of 19th and early 20th century electoral registers pre-dating that period.

Council approval for the project was gained in March 2017, and the scanning work was finished in early 2018. The registers are due to be launched officially in Autumn of 2018.

## Preservation and Conservation

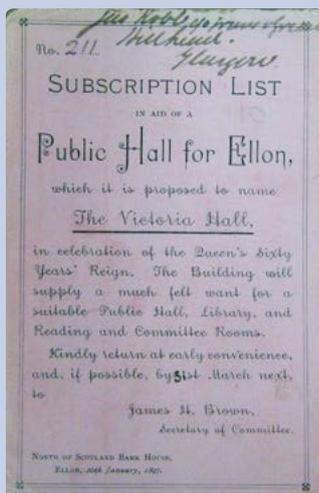
Conservation was completed on 26 items between 2016-18

Reference	Title
AS/Acom/14	20 volumes of Assessed Tax volumes (various dates 1800-1832)
Press18/65	Statement of Isobel Strathancyn on charge of witchcraft, 1598
BR/SP/34	Spital Churchyard Burial Dues Book (1831-1851)
GR6S/B various	4 School Admission Registers for the Peterhead area

*Work on Aberdeen County Assessed Tax records continued the conservation project for which £15,000 external funding had been obtained. Completion of work on 20 volumes in 2016/17 and 2017/18 brought the high priority phase of the project to its conclusion. Work on the medium priority items in this project will be started in 2018/19.*



Isabel Strathancyn's Dittay of 1598 on a charge of witchcraft has now been conserved, ensuring it can be accessed in years to come



The Victoria Hall in Ellon still exists and is still run by the community. Its archive collection contains much about the building of the Hall, including plans and subscription lists (ref DD2439/1/3)

# Accessions of New Collections

## New Accessions

### New Accessions

Authority Area	2016/17	2017/18
Aberdeen City	32	14
Aberdeenshire	67	83
GVJB	1	1
Moray	1	0
Total	101	98

### Notable accessions for 2016/17 & 2017/18 include:

Title	Date
Aberdeen Combworks Company additional material	1844-1972
Records of Victoria Hall, Ellon	1896-1964
Records relating to Richards Limited, Aberdeen	1940s - 2000s
Records of Peterhead and Fraserburgh Societies, including the Peterhead Film Society	1908 - 1996
Records of Pennan Community and Harbour	20th century
Records of the Aberdeen Zonta Club	1967 - 2017
Braemar School Log Book	1889 - 1914
1st Foveran Boy Scout Troup Log Book	1940 - 1942
Records of Inverurie Market Place School	1938 - 2011
Records of Kincardine County Council and its successors, including material concerning the history of the Stonehaven Open Air Swimming Pool	19th century - 2009

101 new accessions were received of material of varying sizes between 2016 and 2017 and 98 between 2017 and 2018. The majority of our material is received from both Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council, alongside some donations from external depositors.



The event and talk celebrating Richards and the Broadford Works collection in November 2016 was extremely popular

## Outreach and Promotion

The Archive Service has continued its active outreach programme with a total of 76 over the period 2016-18 (33 events 2016/17 + 43 in 2017/18).

### *Law in the Aberdeen Council Registers Project (LACR)*

The Aberdeen Council Registers, 1398-1511, are the single most important source for the study of Scottish urban history for the late medieval period. In 2015 Aberdeen City & Aberdeenshire Archives joined forces with the University of Aberdeen in a successful application to the Leverhulme Trust for £310,000 of funding to create a digital transcription of the eight UNESCO-recognised volumes. This is the latest and largest of three projects between the Archive and the University focussing on the early records of Aberdeen.

The volumes comprise 5,238 pages containing some 1.4 million words, primarily in Latin and Middle Scots with one or two entries in Dutch. The project team is drawn from various disciplines including archivists, legal historians, linguists and computing scientists.

Transcription of volumes 1-7 was completed on 18th January 2018. New funding from Aberdeen

City Council in the latter part of 2017 enabled the contracts of the research assistants to be extended to enable volume 8 to be transcribed. This is due for completion by July 2018.

As a parallel to the main project, a team of third-year Computing Science students developed, as part of their degree study, a prototype web-based platform to present and search the LACR resource. This resulted in a prototype platform currently known as 'LACR Search I'. The initial installation and testing of LACR Search I on Aberdeen City Council internal servers is under discussion for implementation in late 2018.

Alongside this, the team has participated in a diverse range of academic and public outreach events which have attracted significant media exposure for the project itself and also for the Archive service. The project will run until the end of March 2019.

## Events & Exhibitions

The service ran an event in September 2016 focused on the Broadford Works, formerly a significant employer in the City, with around 450 visitors at the Town and County Hall. An exhibition of photographs of Aberdeen shops, Window Shopping, at in autumn of the same year attracted 1800 visitors to 17 on Belmont Street. A subsequent exhibition of building warrant plans at the same venue attracted around 250 visitors.

We have continued to take part in City's festival programme, participating in the Look Again in 2016, MayFest (2016), Spectra (2017) and Granite Noir (2017 & 2018), the latter with exhibitions of wanted posters and crime scene photographs at 17. We also participated in the national Doors Open Day in the City & Aberdeenshire, with 500 visitors to the Town House in 2017. We undertook a range of events to mark 2017 Year of History, Heritage, and Archaeology with a talk and exhibition highlighting Aberdeenshire's 18th and 19th century militia collections, and a celebration of the 700th anniversary of Aberdeen's Burgh Court Roll.

## Talks and Visits

We have delivered a range of talks and tours promoting the collections to community groups, staff, Councillors, Civic visitors, and as part of events programmes for other organisations.

The talks have covered a range of topics as diverse as early Quakers in Aberdeen, the 18th century Aberdeenshire militia, to bombing raids in the region during the Second World War. Highlights include: an interactive 'Crime in the Boardroom' talk at Peterhead Library; and an illustrated Box of Stories and walking tours on Aberdeen's history for the Corporate Governance staff conference.



## Ancestral Tourism

The Archive service continues to play a coordinating role for the Aberdeen & North East Scotland Ancestral Tourism Partnership.

- A family and local history fair was held at the Town House in September 2017 to coincide with Doors Open Day.
- In that same month the City Archivist presented a paper at the Archives and Records Association Conference in Manchester entitled, "The Archive as a Tourist Destination: the Pleasures and Pitfalls of Ancestral Tourism".
- Market of the Partnership continues through the website [www.northeastscotlandroots.com](http://www.northeastscotlandroots.com) and by print in the annual Landmark bedroom folder which is distributed to hotels, guesthouses and B&Bs throughout the region.
- A sixth edition of the partnership's popular publication, "Routes to Your North East Roots" is currently in preparation.

# Education

The service has been very active with its educational outreach over the past 2 years with 14 sessions being delivered to school and university classes. These include:

## *Schools:*

- Visits to Inverurie Market Place School, Braemar School, and Dunnottar School with records of these schools looking at Victorian education
- Creative sessions at Inverbervie Primary School, and Banff Primary School looking at a Log Book of a journey to Batavia, and Banff's Royal Charter of 1372
- Teachers twilight session on local history sources at Chapel of Garioch School

## *Further Education Talks and Displays*

- History – University of Aberdeen MLitt Approaching Archives course
- Medicine - sources for University of Aberdeen Medical Humanities Historical Research Assignment
- Education - University of Aberdeen MA Primary Education: sources for Learning about Localities

All of these fed into students' coursework and produced assignments on topics like Assessed Tax records, Spanish Flu in Aberdeenshire, and using archives in educational work.

# Careers & Volunteering

For many years the service has provided volunteers of many ages and backgrounds an opportunity to work in depth with the collections - perhaps to learn more about the history of an area, to experience something different, or to make a contribution to the community. For some the experience they gain leads to a career in archives or a related heritage or information profession. The contribution they have made to the service is invaluable and they are valued additions to the Archives team.

In the past 2 years 12 people have volunteered with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives: 4 adults; 3 university students (2 of whom have gained places on postgraduate university courses in archive administration); and 5 school students. The amount of work over the past 2 years is estimated at 2432 hours, and included accessioning, listing collections, producing public displays, transcribing items, digitisation and preservation packaging.

## Volunteering highlights



*Thom Brown,  
a work placement from  
Inverurie Academy this year,  
listing a photograph album from  
the collection of Daisy Jessiman-  
Gordon, Inverurie Town Council's  
first female councillor.*

### *Ellon Academy Work Placement*

A pupil from Ellon Academy undertook a weekly placement in 2016/17 doing work related learning in the Archives. He undertook a variety of research, accessioning, cataloguing and preservation activities. The culmination of his work was displayed in the form of 2 displays in Ellon Academy's museum display cases at the end of the academic year. The Archives continue to provide work placements for schools.

### *Aberdeen Harbour Board*

Since 2015 the service has been involved in a project at Aberdeen Harbour Board. Beginning with a survey of the Board's records, the project has evolved into a programme of cleaning, repackaging and scanning 1,700 glass plate negatives in the Harbour Board collection with a team of volunteers. Discussions are ongoing with the Board to arrange the deposit of the collection with the service.

