



# **FAMILY HISTORY** Federation

## **Archive Liaison Newsletter**

July 2026 Issue 2

### **A note from the editor**

Up and down the country, archives and family history societies rely heavily on volunteers for a huge variety of tasks. Do please think about helping out your committee or society. In this issue you will find inspirational stories about the wonderful work that volunteers can do.

**Could you be a volunteer?**

**Turn to the back page of this newsletter to see how you can help.**

*In this issue you will find...*

**Lead article on The National Archives, Kew**

**Volunteer news from the Bedfordshire Archives**

**Collaborative workshop between Northamptonshire Family History Society  
and Northamptonshire Archives**

**A success story for Families in East India Society FIBIS**

**Update from Buckinghamshire Archives**

**...and news about forthcoming events.**



# Archive Liaison Newsletter



## The National Archives Kew



Regardless of where you are on your research journey, there is a wide range of collections held by The National Archives which may be of interest to you.

### **Where is TNA?**

TNA is situated in leafy west London, and open to the public from Tuesday to Saturday. Everyone is welcome to visit and you do not need a reader's ticket or an appointment to visit. They have a gallery, bookshop and an excellent café, as well as the delights of the reading rooms.

TNA can be accessed via the Mildmay and District lines at Kew Gardens, via national rail services at Kew Bridge, and local bus services. There is also a car park which visitors can use for a small charge. The coach bay can also be booked for larger parties, and further information about visiting can be found on the 'Visit Us' section on the TNA website. [Visit - The National Archives](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/visit/)

Some records are available to access in digital format, often through commercial providers such as Ancestry, FindMyPast and the Genealogist, and there is a wealth of information in the collections which may intrigue or inspire you. Where records are available through commercial providers, you can search them on site for free through the computers, and anyone is welcome to go in and use these. Staff are on hand to support research enquiries and are very happy to answer any questions. Some of the collections will be very familiar to researchers such as the censuses, which are available up to the 1921 census; in addition the 1939 register, which is still in the process of being released, is available too. All birth entries up to and including 1925 should now be open too (except where an individual has requested that the entry remains closed during their lifetime). Images can be emailed home, but there is no provision for onsite printing.



# Archive Liaison Newsletter



*A reading room*

## The records

For those wishing to look at original records, documents can be ordered through the 'Discovery' catalogue. When you are running searches, it is always worth checking that you have 'The National Archives only' box checked to ensure the records you are looking for are held by TNA, and not in other archive services around the country!

**Discovery** is a brilliant resource, but be careful not to overload it with search terms. It is always worth using fewer details, and using what you know about the records in question. There are video guides on TNA YouTube channel if you would like to brush up on your searching skills in Discovery. There is a wide variety of other topics and research guides. There are over 350 topics, ranging from the very broad to the very specific and these are well worth a read, especially if it is a new topic for you. Staff are available at the Research Enquiry desk on the first floor and in the Map and Large Document reading room. These are staffed 9.30am-5pm on the days TNA are open to the public. There is also a range of public events – some on site but many online and details of these and how to book can be found on the website.

## Reading rooms

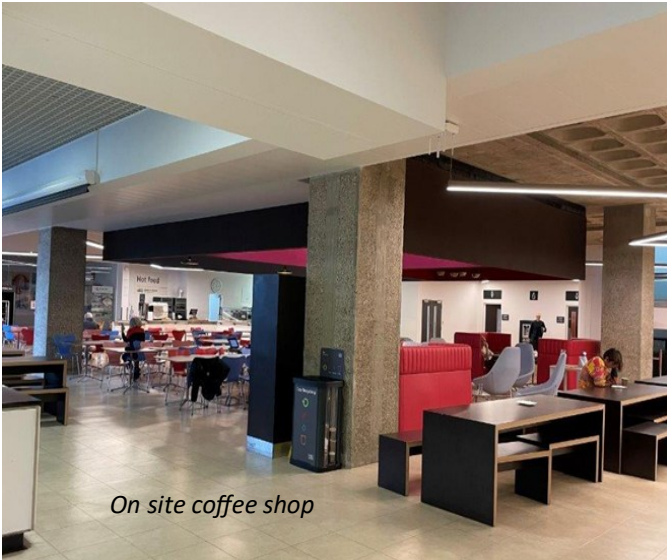
The vast majority of the collections are held onsite at Kew; the series which are held offsite are usually the least frequently consulted ones. The library is also freely available on the first floor and although volumes cannot be lent out, everyone is welcome to peruse the shelves and use the collection while they are onsite.

Original records are available in one of the two reading rooms. You will need a reader's ticket to access these rooms and more information on how to acquire a ticket is on the website. [Reader's tickets - The National Archives](#) The main document reading room is on the first floor. Once you have ordered a record on site, it will be delivered to the locker which matches your seat number inside the reading room. This will take about an hour; you can check on the progress of your where your documents are by using the terminals around the public areas. In the event that you need to order a record which is held offsite, this normally requires several working days notice, so it is worth checking your document references in advance if you can.





# Archive Liaison Newsletter



*On site coffee shop*

Any documents which date prior to 1782 (TNA's definition of modern) are usually sent to the second floor reading room – the **Map and Large Document Reading Room**, sometimes referred to as the MLDRR. Any large documents, including maps, plans, drawings and photographs, are produced upstairs too. You can use the seat number you have been assigned in the MLDRR, but you are welcome to sit wherever best suits your documents. The large map tables are actually the original rolls tables from the Chancery Lane reading rooms. Map tables can also be adjusted in height, and staff will help to support any access needs.

## Accessibility

All areas of the site are easily accessible by wheelchair users, including reading rooms. There are lifts available and all the staff points have t-loops for hearing aid users. TNA are also able to facilitate visits from individuals requiring support in the form of a carer or assistant, and service dogs are of course welcome in the building. If anyone wishing to visit has specific access requirements, please contact TNA directly so that they can ensure provision is in place in advance of your visit. You are welcome to take photographs of the documents for personal use, as long as your document is properly supported, and if both the flash and sound on your camera is turned off.

The records held by TNA can be name-rich – the census, court records and the military service collections are just three such examples – but only a small proportion of the collections is indexed and/or key word searchable. This is particularly true for the more historic collections, and you may need to consult printed finding aids to determine whether a records series will give you the information you are looking for. The research guides for the relevant series will give you all the information you need, so it is well worth checking these in advance of your visit.

In addition to the reading rooms, there are other things to do on site at Kew. The gallery currently has an exhibition of documents relating to the 250th anniversary of the Independence of the United States; this is free to visit, and the bookshop has an excellent range of genealogical and history books. There are other displays including a selection of pieces from the Government Art Collection, and the Cabinet Table which has facsimiles of a range of documents from all the prime ministers between David Lloyd George and Gordon Brown. And, of course, the café is well worth a pit stop!

*Dr. Jessamy Carlson FRSA RMARA FRHistS*

Family & Local History Public Engagement Lead and Head of Community & Transport team, Collections Expertise & Engagement

## The National Archives

Explore 1,000 years of history



# Archive Liaison Newsletter



## Bedfordshire Archives

### Focus on Cataloguing and Volunteers



#### The Campaign to Protect Rural England [CPRE]

Since November 2025, a part-time archivist at Bedfordshire Archives has been sorting, listing and cataloguing records deposited by the Bedfordshire branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE). The national charity is celebrating its 100th birthday this year and next year. 2027, is the 40th anniversary of CPRE Bedfordshire. With the help of volunteers, so far over 200 records have been catalogued, including minutes, developer reports, responses to planning applications and photographs of the Bedfordshire countryside, taken by the late Eric Meadows. A separate collection of newsletters published by the charity (Bedfordshire Matters) can be found under reference **Z1178**.

#### North Bedfordshire District Council Deeds [DC/NB/E]

This year one of Bedfordshire's archivists began tackling a large cataloguing project of North Bedfordshire deeds.

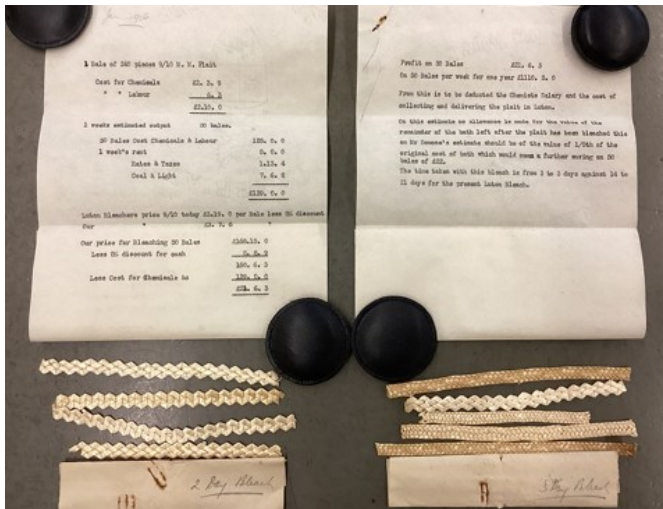
The collection referenced **DC/NB/E** are deed packets to properties owned by North Bedfordshire District Council at the time of their registration with the Land Registry. Many of the properties were acquired for redevelopment work within the town and therefore the deeds often relate to property boundaries and to a landscape much altered by subsequent development of roads and housing within Bedford.

The deeds were considered archives once the land had been registered. The packets were arranged alphabetically by place and a box list was produced to enable discovery and use prior to full cataloguing being carried out. So far, nineteen of the fifty-four boxes have been fully catalogued with over 3,800 new item level entries being added to date.





# Archive Liaison Newsletter



## Franklin, Deacon, Briars [FDB]

In January four new volunteers started work at Bedfordshire Archives on a project to make a list of the contents of the boxes of business papers and project files of Franklin, Deacon, Briars, architects of Luton (FDB).

By the end of the year, ninety of the approximately 150 boxes had been listed onto a spreadsheet. This will enable the collection to be understood and a scheme prepared for the final cataloguing.

The volunteers have made some interesting and unexpected discoveries including. These include

files on the selling off of army surplus from Biscot camp and a camp in Devon, when the camps closed at the end of World War One. Some samples of bleached straw plait were also found and brochures from the 1930s on the use of concrete and asbestos as building materials!

## Volunteers' Training Event

On 23rd April, Bedfordshire Archives were delighted to welcome twenty of their wonderful volunteers to a dedicated training session and talk on maps. The archives wanted to hold an event especially for their volunteers, who contribute so much to the accessibility and preservation of their collections.

They currently have twenty-five volunteers (three of whom work remotely), and it is estimated they contribute an additional 100 hours a week and 4,200 hours a year in time! The event was an opportunity to meet other volunteers, and find out what everyone is working on (and in some cases discover crossovers!). They also wanted to communicate ongoing work to improve their indexing of names, places and subjects - the keywords that are used to help describe their collections, and to go through the crib sheet they have put together to help everyone catalogue consistently.

Archivist, Natasha, gave a whistle-stop tour of the search room and indicated all the easily accessible resources available on the shelves. The session was rounded off with a talk on the printed and manuscript maps in their collections, why they were created and the sorts of things they do (and don't!) tell you. As with any record, knowing who created it and what it was created for, is key to understanding the strengths and limitations of county, estate, tithe and enclosure maps.

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## Events in and around Bedford

**28 Aug 2026** Pop-up Archives Family Event,

Bedfordshire Archives Visitor Information Centre — 10am-1pm

**5 Sep 2026 *Stewartby 100***. Remembering 100 years of Stewartby at Stewartby Village Hall — 12pm-4pm

**18 Sept 2026 *Heritage Open Day*** at Luton Hoo walled garden in Bedfordshire

**18-20 Sep 2026 *Steam and Country Fayre***. Speak to Bedfordshire Archives in the Heritage Tent.





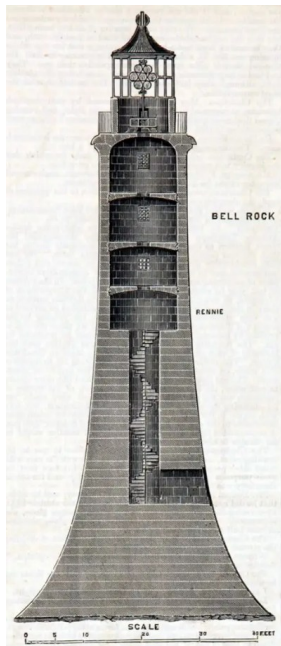
# Archive Liaison Newsletter



## Forthcoming events

THE  
NATIONAL  
ARCHIVES

### National Records of Scotland



#### ***For the Safety of All - Scotland's Lighthouses***

3 August – 25 September 2026

General Register House, Adam Dome

Monday-Friday, 09:00-16:00

Free

The stunning coastline of Scotland and its islands have provided a livelihood for its population for centuries. While beautiful, it is one of the most treacherous coastal waters in the world.

The fascinating archival exhibition celebrates the history of Scottish lighthouses, the establishment and role of the Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB) and the unique occupation of the lighthouse keeper. This exhibition examines the construction of the world's oldest off-shore lighthouse, the Bell Rock, and displays original records documenting the disappearance of the three lighthouse keepers of the Flannan Isle Lighthouse in 1900.

### The National Archives



#### ***Revolution 250***

***America's Independence Story 1763-1783***

***Britain and America, One Story, Two Nations***

24th June to 29th November

The National Archives, Kew

Free

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of a document that changed the world - the US Declaration of Independence. This summer, TNA will be marking this momentous period in British American history with a powerful free exhibition that charts the emergence of the United States.

As well as the familiar story of Britain and the rebels, discover more about those often overlooked in the traditional narrative-Indigenous peoples, Black Loyalists, and enslaved persons. Uncover the human consequences of the decisions made on both sides of the Atlantic during this time of shifting powers and allegiances.

For the exhibition the TNA team consulted members of the Onondaga and Mohawk nations, and the Black Loyalist Heritage Centre in Nova Scotia.



# Archive Liaison Newsletter



## Forthcoming Events

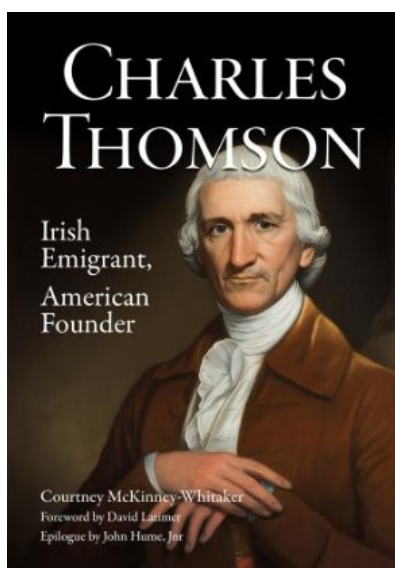
### Public Record Office of Northern Ireland PRONI

***Did you know that many of the talks held by PRONI are free to view on their YouTube channel?***

The talks are organised by topic, on playlists. You can explore subjects as diverse as conservation, family and local history research at PRONI, emigration, and genealogy.

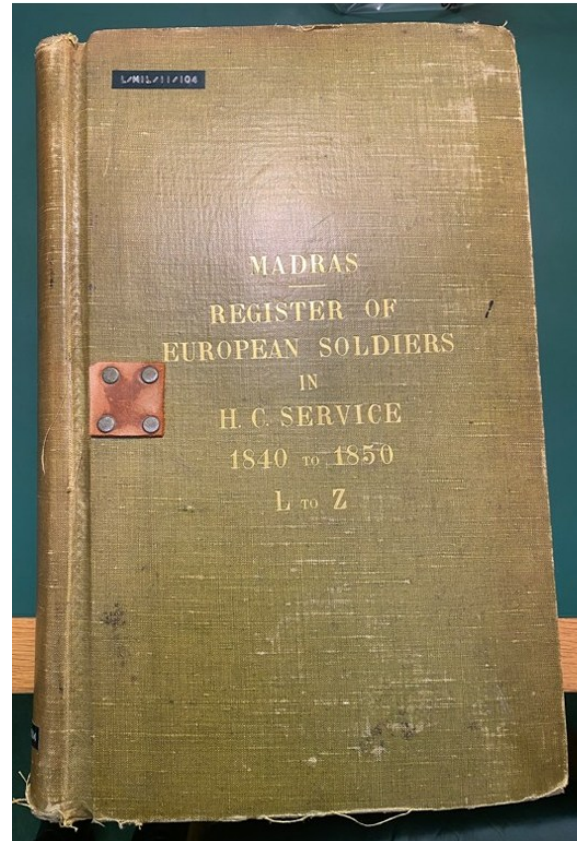
There is a wealth of information at your finger tips. For example on the family and local history research playlist, there are 106 videos. Almost every topic you can think of has been covered, from farmers and labourers to teachers and pupils, and from DNA to the future of the archives.

There is a series of short videos, the 'How To Guides' which will guide you around the various documents that PRONI hold. Whether you want to know how to use the Irish Genealogy Online site, explore the Ordnance Survey Maps, or examine the documents, there is a guide to help you.



*A recent talk being advertised*

## Volunteer Update



Through this newsletter in January 2026, FIBIS appealed for volunteers to take photographs of pages in the *Madras Register of European Soldiers in Honorary Company's Service 1840-1850*. This is an eight-volume series held at the British Library. The images would then be transcribed and made available on the FIBIS website.

I am pleased to report that the appeal worked and now FIBIS have a team of enthusiastic volunteers who are taking photographs of the pages in question.

If you are an archives or a family history society and need volunteers to help with a project, then please let me know and we can include an article about your project in the next newsletter.





# Archive Liaison Newsletter



## Northamptonshire Family History Society Workshops in conjunction with the Northamptonshire Archives



*The workshop in action*

As part of Northamptonshire Family History Society's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, they are organising **two** workshops for their members. The first one took place on 1 May, entitled '*Not just the lives of the landed gentry*'. The workshop was delivered by Sarah Bridges and Andy North on behalf of Northamptonshire Archives.

Members looked at some of the huge variety of documents in family estate collections, such as rentals, which enable family historians to locate their ancestors in parishes which were part of large estates. These documents can be used to build up a picture of the community where our ancestors lived. Members were able to study a large number of documents, which had been brought out of the archives.

The workshop was attended by thirteen members, some of whom travelled quite a distance to join the gathering plus several members of staff from the record office. The date chosen enabled visiting members to take advantage of the additional Saturday morning opening at the record office. Everyone said how much they had enjoyed the day.

The second workshop will be in March next year to round off the year of celebrations. This workshop '*Delving deeper into the parish chest*' will look at documents created by parish officials and parish charities, alongside the decay of the medieval manorial system. Again, this workshop will be delivered by Sarah and Andy on behalf of the archives. Details will be available on the Northamptonshire FHS website in due course.

*Angela Malin*

*The society were very grateful and extend their thanks to both Sarah and Andy, and also the brilliant staff at the Northamptonshire Archives, who always go out of their way to make everyone feel welcome and provided a fantastic selection of documents for members to look at.*



# Archive Liaison Newsletter



**Buckinghamshire  
Council**

## News from Buckinghamshire Archives



*Rolling stacks*

Buckinghamshire Archives have had some recent acquisitions that might be of interest to family historians— some original seventeenth-century maps of the county. This is a large collection and, with more to come, they should be available soon.

In terms of upcoming projects, our annual History Festival is approaching fast! We've got plenty of events booked in already and lots more still to come. More details can be found on the festival's website: [www.histfestbucks.co.uk](http://www.histfestbucks.co.uk).

Researchers are able to visit the archives either in person or through using their Virtual Search room, which gives free access to their documents via a live stream from a member of the archive team. It's great for those who are researching from outside the county, or for those who want to check what documents before visiting.

More information on this can be found at [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/schools-libraries-and-parks/archives/book-a-session-in-our-virtual-searchroom/](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/schools-libraries-and-parks/archives/book-a-session-in-our-virtual-searchroom/)

In Autumn this year Buckinghamshire Archives will be closed for about six months. In that time they will be finalising the complex preparations for their archive move. This is a once-in-a-lifetime project for everyone involved; they will shift 800 years of history and about five miles of documents to a new purpose-built site in High Wycombe, about fifteen miles away.

The new archive will be a massive upgrade in their facilities, with a twenty per cent increase in their document storage capacity, plus dedicated exhibition, outreach and schools spaces, and significantly enhanced conservation facilities including cold storage. They are still waiting for specific dates, but the building is progressing very well!

When county archives move, they are usually closed for the period. But, our researchers will have limited access to the Buckinghamshire Archives through their virtual searchroom offer, see above. What could be better?

*Callum Walker*  
*Community Engagement Officer*



**Buckinghamshire  
Council**



# Archive Liaison Newsletter



## ***VOLUNTEERS NEEDED !!***

**How *YOU* could help?**

Family historians everywhere need to be kept up to date with recent record releases.

At present only a small team of dedicated volunteers are helping with this task.

Thank you to them all, BUT...

***...We need more volunteers!***  
***Can you help?***



These volunteers are needed to contact their local archives and repositories on a quarterly basis and gather information about any new record releases, relevant events and projects. That information would then be forwarded to the editor here so that it can be included in the next newsletter.

***That's not too much to ask, is it?***

This useful and important volunteering role should only take one or two hours a month. It also gives you, the volunteer, the advantage of getting to know your local archivists well! All this is so that the Federation can keep family historians as up to date as possible.

Please contact me to discuss your needs and to find out more.

You can email me at – [archives.liaison@familyhistoryfederation.com](mailto:archives.liaison@familyhistoryfederation.com)

***Archives, repositories, community and heritage groups can help too.***

**Are you a member or user at an archives, record office, a community or heritage group?**

**The Family History Federation is here to help and support *you*!**

**We know there are many records out there and we want to help you make your collections accessible to family historians everywhere. If you would like information about your archives or record release included in the next newsletter, then please get in touch.**

You can email me at – [archives.liaison@familyhistoryfederation.com](mailto:archives.liaison@familyhistoryfederation.com)