

Supporting research at The National Archives

Spring 2015

Welcome to the first Research Newsletter of 2015! The new year has seen a flurry of activity as a number of new projects get underway. The National Archives and Research Libraries UK (RLUK), a consortium of 34 of the UK and Ireland's leading research libraries, recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to deliver two international conferences, produce joint research, and a planning workshop for archives contained within the Higher Education sector. We are thrilled to be involved and look forward to working with RLUK to exploring the possibilities for collaboration between archives, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and academic institutions. You can read more on [page 5](#).

The Thames Consortium, comprised of The National Archives, The National Portrait Gallery and The National Maritime Museum, has announced six new PhD studentships as part of The Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). There is more information about the universities involved and the topics on [page 4](#). The proposals for studentships were extremely strong this year so thank you to everyone who participated in the proposal stage and put forward their ideas.

2015 has also seen the launch of Postgraduate Archival Skills Training (PAST). This programme is run by specialist teams in the Advice and Records Knowledge Department and covers Medieval, Early Modern, Modern Domestic, and Modern Overseas history. PAST aims to provide postgraduate students with the essential skills and knowledge needed to undertake research and there are three levels of training available. More information about training and registration on [page 8](#).

I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter and please do get in touch via research@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk if there is anything you would like to contribute to future issues.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition.

Victoria Lain

Editor and Research and Academic Liaison
The Research Team
The National Archives



In this issue

Discovery

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Digital Downloads Subscriptions

Over the last three years, The National Archives has offered an institutional subscription model named Digital Downloads for universities, museums and libraries enabling them full access to our online digitised collections.

We currently provide access to several universities in the UK. Further afield, we include several major libraries in Australia and New Zealand and would like to encourage a wider take-up.

What is Digital Downloads?

These are popular collections that have been digitised and made available through our website within **Discovery**. Currently, we have over 5% of our total holding available online which amounts to over nine million records.

What are the benefits?

If you decide to take up a yearly subscription with us, you will benefit from:

- Full access to all the digitised collections held at The National Archives
- Unlimited downloads
- Easy set up via the university IP address
- Helpdesk 09:00 - 17:00, Monday to Friday for technical problems
- Monthly reports on usage, if required

What do we hold online?

Our current holdings cover a diverse range, from the 1.1 million PCC wills (Probate/Court records from 1384 to 1858) to the 5.5 million records of First World War medal card indexes.

Other military collections include WO 95 series (First World War and Army of Occupation War Diaries), the Royal Navy, Marines, Merchant Navy, RAF and other various Army records. Other areas include migration, twentieth-century politics, crime and of course, the Domesday Book.

What's the cost?

We offer a simple three-tiered approach, with larger institutions paying more than the smaller ones. Our prices start at £600, then £1,800 and finally £3,500 for a year's contract. We also offer a reduction of 10% for a two-year contract and 15% for a three-year commitment.

Example:

If your university is on the middle level (£1,800) and you decide to opt for a three-year deal then you would end up paying £1,530 per year over the three years.

Summary

We already have several universities who have been using this service for some years, as well as museums, schools and overseas libraries.

If you would like further information and a free trial then please contact us on 020 8876 3444 extension 2373 and speak to Alan Jones.

Big Ideas 2015

The Big Ideas series is up and running for 2015 and got off to a fantastic start in January featuring Corrina Gardner, curator of contemporary product design at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). Corrina spoke about Rapid Response Collecting, a new strand to the V&A's collecting activity – one that is responsive to global events, situating design in immediate relation to moments of political, economic and social change.

Corrina took us through examples of artefacts, such as an IKEA toy wolf, a set of Christian Louboutin shoes in five shades of 'nude', the world's first 3D-printed gun, the mobile game Flappy Bird, and an all-female LEGO set raise questions of globalisation, mass manufacture, demography and the law.



▲ Lufsig, soft toy wolf, 2013 designed for and manufactured by IKEA. © Victoria and Albert Museum



► Flappy Bird mobile game, 2013 designed by Gears Studios.
© Victoria and Albert Museum

The following talks have been confirmed for 2015:

Monday 11 May

Innovation in the Air Force
Ross Mahoney, RAF Museum

Monday 1 June

British Art and Tradition: Exploring an Eclectic Cultural Heritage
Alexandra Harris, Liverpool University

Monday 6 July

Collaborative Doctoral Partnership
PhD student round table

Monday 7 September

Non-destructive rapid analysis of photographs
David Dunston, Queen Mary University of London
and Brian Smith from Renishaw

For more information, please email the research team at research@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships

The Thames Consortium, comprised of The National Maritime Museum, The National Portrait Gallery and The National Archives was awarded six **Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships (CDPs)** per year for three years to support doctoral students. The CDP studentships are funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to sustain and promote high-quality research and skills in the sector. We are pleased to be involved and thrilled that students will have access to a museum, an art gallery and an archive through which to explore their themes.

The Thames Consortium Selection Panel met in January to discuss the proposals put forward for this round of funding. The panel was chaired by the Head of Research from another Independent Research Organisation and included three external academics. Each proposal was assessed on its academic quality; applicability to research priorities and objectives of The National Archives and relevant research institutions; its suitability for collaborative doctoral research; its capacity to deliver original research and make significant contributions to the field or discipline; and the track-record and aptitude of the university partners to supervise (collaborative) PhD studentships.

This year's proposals were of very high quality, featuring creative project ideas and research questions. The CDP scheme has, once again, firmly highlighted the mutual benefits to be procured from collaborative workings between academia and cultural heritage organisations.

The following studentships were chosen, and will be advertised shortly:

The National Archives

- **Investigating methods for information exploration and discovery in big digital archives**
With Dr Sonia Ranade, The National Archives and Professor Paul Clough, University of Sheffield.
- **Vagrancy and Poverty in the Post-Emancipation Anglophone Caribbean, 1834-1900**
With Dr Dan Gilfoyle, The National Archives and Dr Diana Paton, University of Newcastle.

National Maritime Museum

- **'All at Sea?': Chronometry and Chronometers on British Voyages of Exploration, c. 1815–c. 1872**
With Dr Richard Dunn, National Maritime Museum and Professor Charles W J Withers, University of Edinburgh.
- **Portraiture and the British Naval Officer, c. 1740–1805**
With Christine Riding, Royal Museums Greenwich and Dr Sarah Monks, University of East Anglia.
- **The History of British Prison Hulks, 1776–1864**
With Dr James Davey, National Maritime Museum and Professor Clare Anderson, University of Leicester.

National Portrait Gallery

- **Radical Portraiture 1789–1815**
With Dr Lucy Peltz, National Portrait Gallery and Professor John Barrell, Queen Mary University of London. This studentship is for a named student.

Please keep an eye on our **website** and on the Independent Research Organisation CDP **website** for more information about how to apply.

The National Archives – Research Libraries UK Memorandum of Understanding

In November 2014, The National Archives and Research Libraries UK (RLUK), a consortium of 34 of the UK and Ireland's leading research libraries, signed a Memorandum of Understanding. This was the embodiment of over a year of close cooperation between The National Archives and RLUK, most notably in the delivery of two international conferences, the commissioning of joint research, and RLUK's contribution to The National Archives planning workshop for archives contained within the Higher Education sector.

At the various joint events and conferences we have delivered together, the importance of collaboration and close working between heritage and academic sectors has never been far from the surface. In order to support this, The National Archives and RLUK have jointly commissioned Caroline Peach (of Preservation Matters) to produce a 'how to' guide to archival collaboration with academic institutions based on her extensive research in both sectors. This has now been **published online**.

Caroline's research has revealed the many opportunities for enhanced collaboration between archives and academic institutions. It has also outlined some of the potential challenges in undertaking such work, and the practical means through which to overcome these.

This guidance is also joined by a series of practical case studies and examples of collaboration which were showcased at last year's collaborative conference, held at the Library of Birmingham in October. These have been published on the Unique and Distinct Collections Hub, an RLUK resource platform developed in partnership with The National Archives, at www.rluk.ac.uk/udc. Through the availability of the published guidance and practical case studies, it is hoped that both archives and academics will feel more confident, and better informed, when undertaking collaboration with one another.

This programme of collaboration between The National Archives and RLUK will continue over the coming months. We are excited to announce that this year's collaborative conference, *Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities 2015: Exploring new digital destinations for heritage and academia*, will be held on 13 and 14 October at the Lowry, Salford Quays. A **Call for Papers** has now been issued.

The National Archives is also delighted to have hosted RLUK's Deputy Executive Director, Dr Mike Mertens, for a week to enable both organisations to continue their close cooperation in the spirit of mutual understanding.

Striking Women: labour unrest amongst First World War female workers

Vicky Iglikowski

Diverse Histories Records Specialist, The National Archives

On 30 September 1916, 'between 2,000 and 3,000 of the women employees of the Lancaster National Projectile Factory struck work as a protest against the dismissal of a girl. The girl had been dismissed because of misbehaviour with a male employee, who, however, had been allowed to remain in the factory'. The Ministry of Labour reported that they 'anticipate the possibility of further trouble' (MUN 2/27).

There is a broadly accepted historical narrative surrounding the First World War that the activities of trade unions and women's organisations subsided during the conflict. This has particularly been perpetuated by the 'suffrage myth', the idea that all Suffrage societies and women's organisations stopped campaigning as of 28 July 1914. However, this assumption grossly oversimplifies the complexities of the women's movement of the time; some groups halted their lobbying activities in solidarity with the war effort and, ultimately, the government, but by no means all.

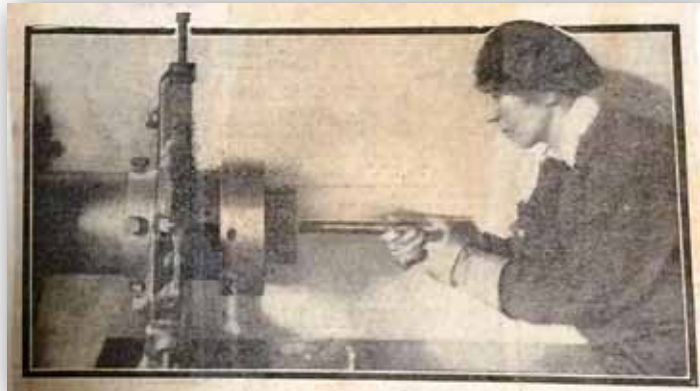
As women moved increasingly into the workforce there was a greater need than ever to lobby parliament around specific issues, from the double standards of Regulation 40D, which criminalised those women who knowingly conducted sexual relations with soldiers despite having a venereal disease, to the realities of women's wartime pay. Indeed, strikes solely by women workers are far from uncommon in Ministry of Munitions digests and thus problematises the widely accepted patriotic narrative of women's labour in the First World War.

Weekly statistical reports in the documents MUN 2/27 and MUN 2/28 provide a national perspective into the regularity, circumstances around, and success rate of women's strikes during the middle of the First World War, while case files from the LAB series provide further details of particular disputes and the arbitration process. These records will form the backbone of a forthcoming paper my colleague Chris Day and I will deliver in the near future at the **Women's History Network's Organising Women Conference**, of which this is an early version.



▲ MUN 5/70/324/14

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◀ MUN 5/70/324/14: Press cuttings on the employment of women for munitions work

What motivated women to strike?

Despite the legislation under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) in the First World War, trade unions did manage to agitate for strike action. However, The National Archives records also document a significant number of intriguing, small scale, self-organised strikes by female workers over issues as diverse as pay disputes, the dislike of a foreman, or the wearing of trousers by women outside their work place. On 3 November 1917, 900 men and women working on aircraft at Messrs. Petters Limited, Yeovil ended up striking over a change of tea time for charwomen.^[1]

Indeed, women's strikes during the period are surprisingly common: one observation on 13 October 1917 attributes the labour unrest in London to 'nervousness' caused by air raids, while another report comments that the women are 'jumpy' and might strike again at any time.^[2]

It becomes apparent when assessing women's motives in striking that they were surprisingly conscious of their labour rights – but how were they able to invoke these rights? It seems workers, including women, were aware of the power they held: the government needed manpower to win the war, and without factory workers men would be going to the frontline without their khakis or ammunition. To keep their workforce appeased, and stop workers from striking, the government gave concessions, including equal pay for equal work, arbitration tribunals to mediate on fair pay, and increased welfare rights.

The establishment of munitions appeal tribunals that resulted from the 1916 Munitions Amendment Act provided a structure to workers grievances.^[3] Though the purpose of arbitration tribunals was to avoid strikes, it seems that in giving these rights the government was raising awareness of the rights and working conditions to which workers were entitled. A strike on 9 September 1916 was caused by a wage dispute and three women at the Lancashire Dynamo and Motor Company refused to work.^[4] These women felt empowered to strike for their rights alone, seemingly with minimal support of other workers or a union.

As 90% of trade union members were male at this time, the implementation and exercising of these rights signalled a remarkable mobilisation of women in the labour force.^[5] These digests indicate that women's patriotic war service is an oversimplification, particularly in reference to those women amongst the working classes who were clearly willing to significantly disrupt wartime production to insist on their rights.

How did women organise?

The question that remains largely unanswered from the Labour digests is how did these women organise and did strategies change according to large and small scale strikes? For women to be so aware of their rights it appears that there must have been individuals or unions agitating for the strikes. There is some evidence of this in the digests, including occasional reports of workers distributing literature, with the National Union of Women Workers, the largest female only trade union, repeatedly mentioned. However, many of the small scale and even large scale strikes appear to be far more grassroots in their nature. Ultimately, this requires further research.

Women are often described as moving in to the workforce in a show of loyal support for the war effort. However, the prospect of better pay was often a significant motivating factor for many working women, as shown by their readiness to strike. These strikes show that female workers had an increased

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Postgraduate Archival Skills Training (PAST)

understanding of their labour rights, knew what they were entitled to, and were prepared to fight for it at small scale local levels as well as in national munitions factories, despite the disruption this would cause the war effort.

Next month, Chris Day and I will be presenting our extended research at the Women's History Network's Organising Women Conference, and we would welcome any comments or suggestions before the conference on 21 Saturday March.

Details on the conference can be found in womenshistorynetwork website.

References:

[1] MUN 2/28

[2] MUN 2/28

[3] Gerry Rubin, War, Law and Labour. The Munitions Acts, State Regulation, and the Unions 1915-1921 (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1987), 95.

[4] MUN 2/27

[5] TUC History Online:
unionhistory.info/timeline/1880_1914.php

This year has seen the launch of Postgraduate Archival Skills Training (PAST). This programme is run by four specialist teams in the Advice and Records Knowledge Department (ARK) – Medieval, Early Modern, Modern Domestic, and Modern Overseas – and aims to provide postgraduate students with the essential skills and knowledge needed to undertake research at The National Archives and other institutions.

The programme consists of three levels of training:

Level 1 – Introduction Days

Level 2 – Skills and Methodology Workshops

Level 3 – Records Workshops

In January, ARK staff held four Skills and Methodology Workshops, covering our medieval, early modern, modern British, and modern overseas collections respectively. The aim of these workshops was to equip students with the practical skills needed to use archives and records in their field.

The programme included sessions on the history of The National Archives and its holdings, an introduction to archival research, information on

online resources and using our catalogue, Discovery and document skills specific to areas of interest of students. Attendees also received a tour of the reading rooms and advice on finding aids available, handling guidance from Collection Care, and a document display from within their chosen field.

Feedback was extremely positive, with students commenting the following about the sessions:

- 'Exactly what I needed at this point in my research.'
- 'Essential – will save so much time when I go for my first research trip to The National Archives.'
- 'My thesis relies on archival research and I have never done that before. This workshop was a very good introduction that all PhD students should consider.'

The next PAST sessions will be held in April and May. These will consist of six three-hour level 3 Records Workshops run by each of the four specialist teams. The aim of the sessions will be to provide detailed research guidance on key document collections and topics. For the full programme and further information please see the [PAST webpage](http://past.webpage) or email past@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Did You Know?

Poverty Relief Loans Online

The Poverty Relief Loans records from The National Archives have been digitised and published online for the first time. **The Irish Reproductive Loan Fund** was set up in 1824 to provide small loans to the 'industrious poor' – those most affected by poverty and famine.

Brian Donovan, Head of Irish Data and Business Development for Find My Past, reports that

'These incredibly important records provide an exceptional insight into the lives of the poor across the west of Ireland from Sligo down to Cork. The people recorded are precisely those who were most likely to suffer the worst of the Famine or be forced to emigrate. These remarkable records allow us to chart what happened to 690,000 people like this from the 1820s to the 1850s, giving a glimpse of their often heartbreaking accounts of survival and destitution, misery and starvation. We are very lucky to be able to tell their stories.'

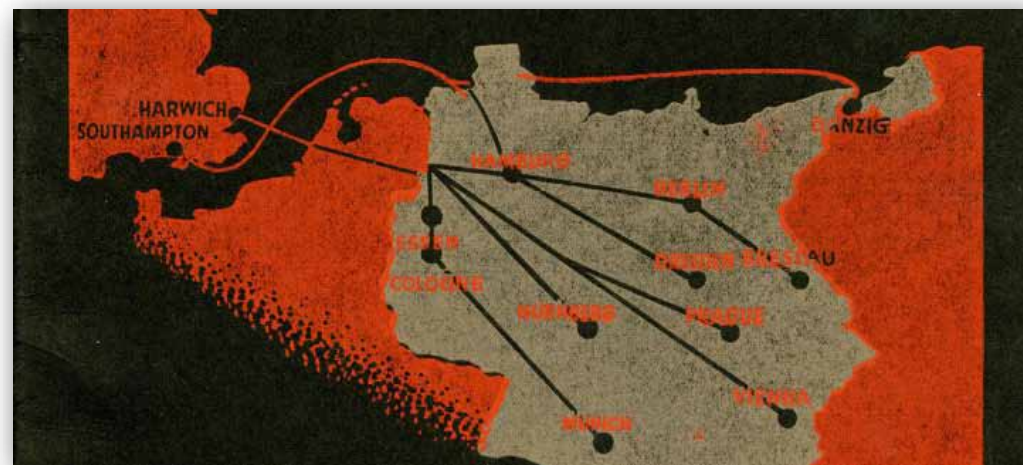


▲ ZPER 34/10 (P 100): Illustrated London News, Irish famine, Skibbereen

Kindertransport Files Online

Find My Past have also released records from The National Archives relating to the **Kindertransport refugee programme**. Online for the first time, for Holocaust Memorial Day, these records tell the story of young Jewish children, who sought refuge in Britain at the outbreak of the Second World War. They include lists of refugees, British government correspondence and official reports. The records offer insights into the experiences of these children in Britain.

The children were placed in British foster homes, hostels, schools and farms. Often they were the only members of their families who survived the Holocaust. A number of older Kinder went on to join the British Army and fight against Germany later in the war. Records expert Dr Juliette Desplat **examined records** that show the horror and inhumanity of Auschwitz in a recent blog post, and you can learn more about Kindertransport via our online **classroom resource**.



▲ HO 213/302: Cover from the Movement for the care of children from Germany booklet

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Our blog: facts and figures

Our blog and website are a great way to keep up with what is going on at The National Archives:

- We had an average of 1.4 million visits each month to our website in 2014, up almost 17% on the previous year.
- Usage of mobile devices went up by 53% from 2013, and saw an incremental rise over the course of the year. By December, a third of our users visited our site from a mobile device.
- Did you know that December usage of mobile devices peaked on Christmas Day, with 50% of our users accessing our site using a phone or tablet?
- In 2014, we published 197 blog posts - take a look at the **top 10 most popular posts**. Most popular of all was the blog post announcing the launch of **Operation War Diary**. This innovative crowdsourcing project opens up information locked in First World War unit war diaries, through the work of thousands of citizen historians. Over 540,000 diary pages have been tagged so far; a fantastic achievement!
- Many of our most **popular podcasts** of the past year have now been transcribed, thanks to our **volunteer project** which began in October.

Magna Carta at The National Archives

June this year sees the 800th anniversary of the granting of Magna Carta, King John's 'Great Charter' which conveyed various liberties and rights to his barons and to the church. Magna Carta established the principle that no one, including the king, was above the law, and it is still seen as the foundation of some of the rights that we now take for granted.

The National Archives will be playing a full part in the commemorations taking place worldwide to mark this momentous anniversary. We hold two later exemplifications of the charter, one issued by John's son Henry III in 1225 and one issued by Henry's son Edward I in 1297. The earlier of these (DL 10/71) will be on display in the Keeper's Gallery from 19 May to 12 June, and a selection of other original documents relating to the charter will be on display from 18 May until November. There will be a series of short talks taking place in the Gallery to mark this, and a family day on Magna Carta will be held in the Gallery on 28 May where families will explore the documents that we have on display and take part in creating a group charter and designing their own seal.

In addition, an exhibition in the reading rooms at The National Archives in Kew will tell the story of Magna Carta and its use through history using

images of documents we hold. The National Archives is also lending a number of vital contextual documents to the British Library for its major Magna Carta exhibition.

We are also very excited to be hosting a panel debate, jointly with the **Pipe Roll Society**, on Tuesday 23 June at which the audience will get the chance to put their questions to a panel of world experts on Magna Carta and medieval law. The panel will include Professor Paul Brand, Professor David Carpenter, Professor Nicholas Vincent and Professor Louise Wilkinson.

We also hope to host a LiberTeas event – LiberTeas is an initiative developed by the Public Engagement Team at the Houses of Parliament to encourage everyone to take a moment in June to celebrate, debate or reflect on our liberties. At The National Archives we plan to kick this off with a talk on Magna Carta, followed by the chance for the audience to have a cup of tea and a discussion about our rights and liberties through the ages.

For more information about all of these events, please check the **Events pages** on our website in the coming months – there will more details available from March.



▲ DL10-71 Magna Carta third issue, 1225

Unknown Treasures

Matt Tantony

**Cataloguing Editor (Unknown Treasures)
The National Archives**

The Unknown Treasures project at The National Archives is uncovering a huge new resource for the study of common law and litigation in medieval and early modern England. Since June 2014, the project has been cataloguing brevia files from the Court of Common Pleas in Westminster, England's central civil law court from medieval times until the nineteenth century. Apart from some early files – catalogued in series **CP 52** in Discovery – they have never been available for research until now.

Brevia files contain the writs issued to English county sheriffs during the process of bringing lawsuits and getting litigants to argue their cases before justices. They include: Chancery writs originating actions; judicial writs ordering distraint, arrest or outlawry of defendants; instructions to summon jurors; and much more. Writs were sent out from Westminster and had to be returned, endorsed with the sheriffs' replies, by a pre-determined week within a law term. They were then stored in one or more rolled file per week.

In principle, this is a vast sequence of weekly correspondence files for the Court of Common Pleas, stretching from the later thirteenth century to the nineteenth century. In practice, however, many



- ◀ A 1385 writ ordering the Sheriff of Yorkshire to arrest several defendants in a case of trespass, from an uncatalogued brevia file, 18 Richard II, Octave of Trinity

files were destroyed, especially post-Restoration material. The remainder still runs to thousands of boxes of parchments, in variable condition.

Working at Kew and in the underground Deepstore records facility (in a Cheshire salt mine), the project team has battled hard to identify and list these hitherto unseen files. So far, we have mostly covered the reigns of Henry IV and V, Edward IV, Richard III, Henry VII and Elizabeth I, with additional material ranging from Edward II to Richard Cromwell's protectorate. That's nearly 3,000 **CP 52** files, spanning 350 years of Court business. And there are many more boxes to open, each one providing new material for future research.

Until now, the most authoritative Common Pleas record series has arguably been the plea rolls (**CP 40**). True, these were kept as the Court's permanent record, but their entries are short summaries. The brevia files, however, form a week-by-week documentary residue of the lengthy and messy business of litigation across England. There is evidence of an extensive contemporary cross-referencing system between the plea rolls and the brevia files.

Court clerks, justices, attorneys and sheriffs are named in the writs, alongside parties in lawsuits. This is, then, a valuable resource for anyone wishing to trace the careers of legal professionals active in the Westminster courts, or to research the centralised administration of common law justice. Court adjournments are documented extensively, which may shed light on contemporary events in London like plague or civil unrest.

The change in scope and quantity of Common Pleas cases over the years could be studied by examining the varying contents of the files, from tiny medieval bundles to vast Elizabethan bales. And what could we make of the early-modern practice of storing writs for London and Middlesex cases in separate files? Was the Common Pleas diverting business from the City of London's local courts? Finally, there are constitutional issues. The Common Pleas drew its power from the Crown, and its writs were issued in the monarch's name. What happened to writs and lawsuits when the king died, or was overthrown, or was executed by Parliament?

To work with the brevia files, you'll need some palaeographic experience. The writs are exclusively

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in Latin, lapsing occasionally into comically clunky English whenever a poor clerk couldn't recall a Latin expression for the specifics of a case. You'll also encounter the esoteric 'court hand' of Westminster legal manuscripts. Court hand and Latin were banished from legal records by Parliament during the seventeenth century Interregnum, and permanently from 1733. An understanding of some legal terms and fictions is also essential to avoid being misled by the text: writs from a common recovery of land might claim an angry dispute between parties, but in reality everyone was in agreement.

Don't be disheartened, though. Legal documents were highly standardised by design, and quickly become familiar to the reader. In fact, it is interesting to see how legal practice evolved to work around the limited range of 'forms of action' with prescribed writ formats. The relationship between oral argument and written record is complex.

The Unknown Treasures project is led by Jone Garmendia, Head of Cataloguing, and Sean Cunningham, Principal Records Specialist Manager (Medieval and Early Modern). The files are being processed by two Cataloguing Editors, Ada Mascio and Matt Tantony, with assistance from Paul Dryburgh, Medieval Records Specialist. Catalogue descriptions will be published on Discovery, our online catalogue, later this year.



▲ Two uncatalogued brevia files. Left: One week in Trinity term, 1 Edward IV, covering half of England.



► The files are full of human touches, like this hidden caricature on the inside of an uncatalogued 1488 brevia file cover.

If you would like to get in touch with us, or if you have ideas for inclusion in future issues of this newsletter, email us at **research@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk**. Please note that we reserve the right to edit articles.

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