

2024-2025

Research Report

THE

NATIONAL

ARCHIVES



Illustration
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Introduction



Our projects fit within three areas of research expertise:

- Collections and archives research
- Digital, data, and emerging technologies
- Conservation and heritage science

This research has informed our **Research Vision for 2024-2027** which outlines our research priorities and includes a Roadmap, through which our research ecosystem – our staff, students, infrastructure, skills, technologies, and partnerships – will be equipped to deliver these priorities. Read through this Research Report to learn more about our projects, partnerships, and engagement activities, including:

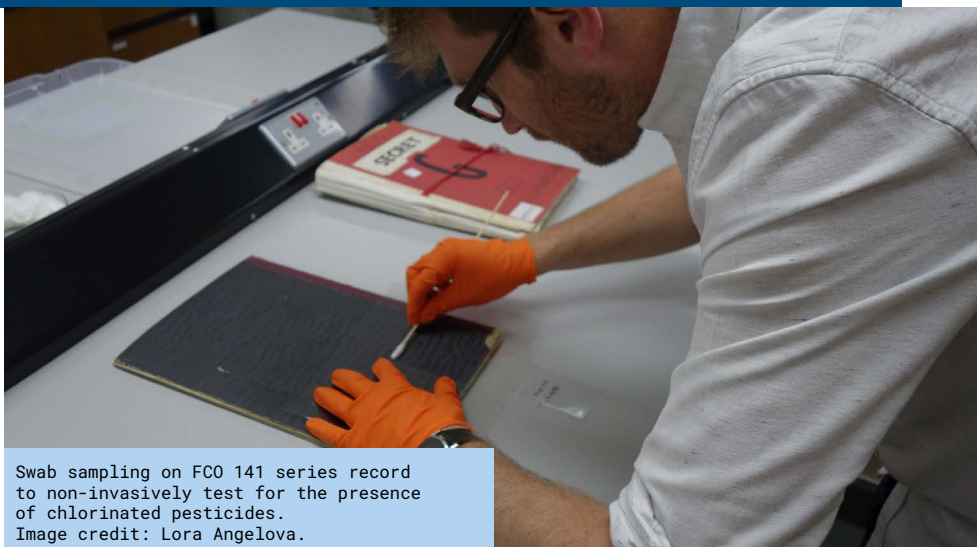
- 17 PhD students co-supervised by us
- 26 live funded research projects, with numerous project partnerships and Letters of Support in addition
- And much more!

Welcome to The National Archives' first annual Research Report. This report showcases the broad range of research activities performed by staff and PhD students across our organisation.

The projects and partnerships included in this report demonstrate our role as a researching archive and an **Independent Research Organisation**: an institution that is custodial, sustainable, accessible, and impactful.



Research at a glance



Swab sampling on FC0 141 series record to non-invasively test for the presence of chlorinated pesticides.
Image credit: Lora Angelova.

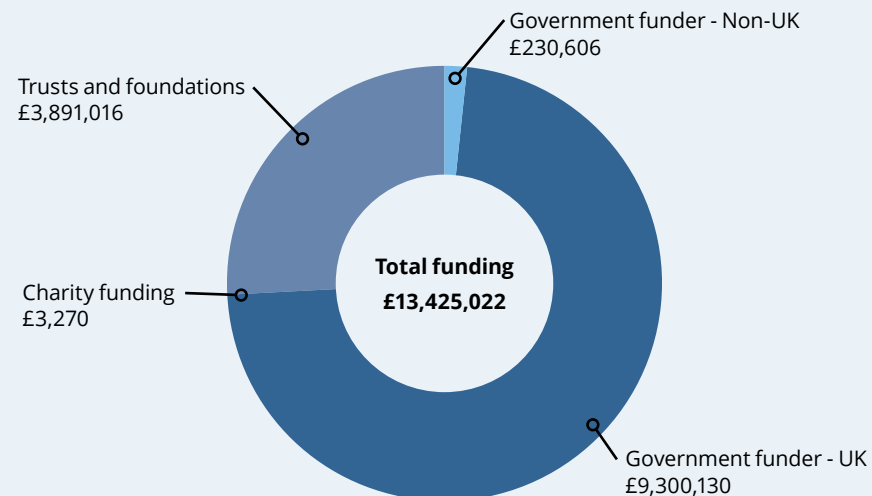
Each year, our staff and PhD students conduct an enormous amount of innovative and ambitious research. This takes place across our collections, our work and practice, and supporting our role as the national archive of the United Kingdom Government and for England and Wales.

Our collection – stretching over 240 kilometres of shelving and petabytes of digital material – is a pillar of the UK's intellectual infrastructure, and is consulted by academics and scholars, journalists, writers, lawyers, genealogists, and the

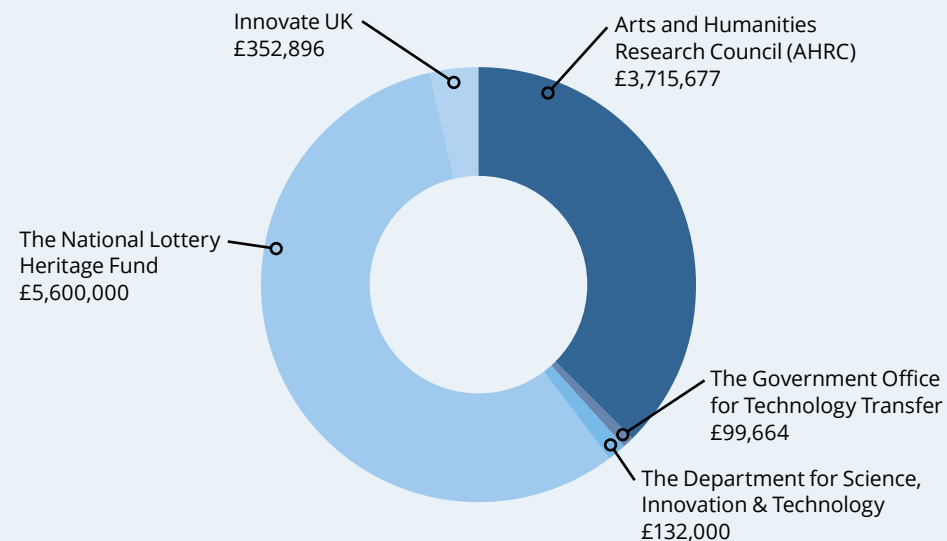
wider public every day. It contains government files, court records, wills, maps, photographs, emails, websites, data and code; and stories, about love, death, money, power, community, and the human experience.



Value of live funded projects by funder type 2024/2025



Breakdown of project funding by UK government funders 2024/2025



Collections and archives



Image credit: The Prize Papers.

Collections research at The National Archives reflects the diversity of our collection, which spans 10 centuries of history across every area of British law, history and government, including records from across the globe.

With expertise from the medieval period to the late 20th century, our researchers lead and partner with external academics in innovative, interdisciplinary research projects in a range of areas including environmental humanities, global and marginalised histories, and medical humanities. Read about three case studies from collections and archives research at The National Archives.

The Prize Papers

The **Prize Papers Project** is a 20-year (2018-2037) collaboration between The National Archives and the University of Oldenburg. Between 1652 and 1815, c. 500,000 papers were taken from ships captured as prize by

the British. We are identifying, cataloguing, conserving, and digitising these papers, which have remained largely unknown for centuries. Digitised records are published with extensive metadata in the **Prize Papers Portal**, making them available worldwide and in open access.

The Prize Papers give voice to people from many cultures. They include the world's largest collection of undelivered letters – more than 160,000 – which were on board for delivery by sea, along with logbooks and papers covering maritime, commercial, and colonial administration, and some small artefacts such as jewellery and textiles. It is also a polyglot collection in 19 languages (so far), from French and Spanish to Arabic and Armenian.

As of 2025, the project has published papers from the War of Austrian Succession online, and the printed appeals against capture from the wars of 1793-1815. Papers from the Second and Third Dutch Wars, the Nine Years' War, and the War of American Independence are all under preparation.



Image credit: The Prize Papers.

Funding for the Prize Papers Project comes from the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities and from The National Archives, along with generous grants from the William Nelson Cromwell Foundation.

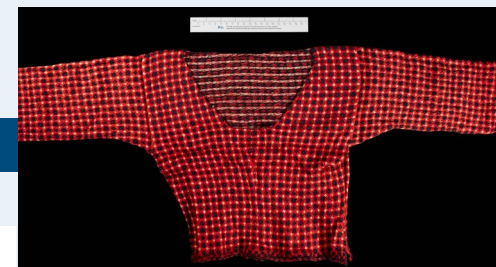
Archives Assemble!

A collaboration to activate archival heritage for Montserrat and the Montserratian diaspora, Archives Assemble! partners with organisations in Montserrat, the Montserrat Volcano Observatory, the Montserrat National Trust, and the Montserrat Public Library, with co-leads in the UK from the University of East Anglia, University of Oxford, and University of Bristol, including geoscientists and historians.

With funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), we are delivering a wide range of projects between January and December 2025. These include the creation of a globally accessible record of the 1990s eruption and its social impact. Governmental records from The National Archives will be brought together with archival materials



Image credit: Archives Assemble!



Pristine Faroese red sweater found in the Prize Papers. Image credit: The Prize Papers.

from the project partners including audio recordings from Montserrat Public Radio. This new collection will be managed by the Montserrat National Trust and housed in the **Digital Library of the Caribbean**.

During the project, the archives will be 'activated' through a number of further events and collaborations. The project team will be creating an open educational resource, new geo-heritage interpretation and displays across Montserrat, and a verbatim drama co-written with Montserratian playwrights based on records at The National Archives.

Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland

Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland is an international research partnership hosted by Trinity College Dublin, working to reconstruct the Public Record Office of Ireland, a magnificent archive destroyed in 1922 at the outset of the Irish Civil War. We are leading on two projects. The first platforms and transcribes images of the State Papers of Ireland and will experiment with the datasets we produce. The second works with the Irish Manuscripts Commission and conservators at The National Archives of Ireland to publish a new edition of the two surviving original memoranda rolls of the Irish Exchequer.

Digital, data, and emerging technologies

Digital, data, and emerging technologies research at The National Archives focuses on the significant role of technology in enhancing archival practice and improving the preservation, discoverability, accessibility, and presentation of our collection.

Projects leverage emerging technologies to address contemporary research challenges sustainably and enable computational access and exploration of our digitised and born-digital collections. Read four case studies illustrating this work.

Project Odyssey

Funded by **Innovate UK** and in collaboration with **Tabled** and academics from Northumbria University, Swansea University, Keele University, and Durham University, Project Odyssey addresses the challenge of opening up The National Archives' vast legal data for computational programming. The project aims to improve access to our **legislation.gov.uk** and **Find Case Law** information via an Access to Justice 'chatbot' app created by Tabled.

Data analysts in the Find Case Law and Legislation teams are identifying the metadata enhancements needed to improve the reliability and accuracy of answers provided by large language models (LLMs) trained on our data. For example, ensuring that responses to legal queries only include legislation that is in force (geographically and temporally) for the scenario in question, and examples are illustrated by relevant cases.

This project is at the forefront of our research into supporting the computational processing of our data, and the inherent ethical implications of using LLMs for information delivery to the public.

Our Heritage, Our Stories

Led by the University of Glasgow, in collaboration with The National Archives, The University of Manchester, and over 100 partner and community organisations, Our Heritage, Our Stories is developing innovative approaches to preserve, connect, remix, and share diverse community-created digital heritage materials. The project addresses the challenge of integrating these valuable but endangered cultural assets into the UK's national collection.

The Material Culture of Wills, England 1540-1790

This Leverhulme Trust-funded project, a collaboration between Exeter University and The National Archives, transcribes 25,000 manuscript wills to examine changing attitudes to material culture in England in the 250 years before the Industrial Revolution. Handwritten Text Recognition technology, provided through the **Transkribus** platform, enables wills proved at the Prerogative Court of Canterbury to be analysed at a scale previously unavailable to historians.

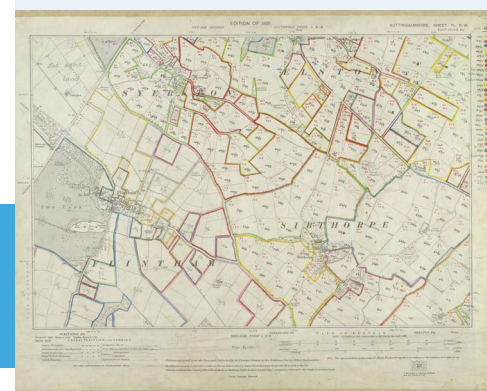
Expert volunteers iteratively trained handwriting recognition models within Transkribus to learn the distinctive handwriting and language

of the documents. Then, using the crowdsourcing platform Zooniverse, over 2,500 volunteers checked and corrected almost 150,000 lines of generated text to improve the accuracy of the automated text recognition, while also supporting each other with tricky transcriptions.

In the next stage, we will create a database of bequests detailing the wills – what was given, to whom, and under what conditions – enabling longitudinal and geographical analysis of material culture.

The National Farm Survey

Funded by the Lund Trust, the **National Farm Survey** (NFS) project publishes digitised images of the National Farm Survey of England and Wales 1941-1943, making them searchable and freely available on **Discovery**, The National Archives' catalogue. An offshoot project from the NFS is **MoorFood**, a project that uses the NFS to map a sustainable food production system in the North York Moors National Park.



Map of Nottinghamshire countryside from the National Farm Survey. Catalogue reference: MAF73-32-40.

Conservation and heritage science

Conservation and heritage science research at The National Archives focuses on preserving the UK's documentary heritage through scientific analysis and conservation innovation. Our research explores material composition, degradation, and environmental impact to develop sustainable preservation strategies.

Working collaboratively across the archives, heritage, and academic sectors, the **Collection Care Department** ensures that research benefits the wider community, and not just The National Archives. Projects support long-term access to collections through advanced conservation techniques and risk assessment. By integrating science with archival practice, this work strengthens resilience, informs sector-wide decision-making, and enhances our understanding of historical materials for present and future generations. Read about two case studies from conservation and heritage science research at The National Archives.

RICHes

As part of the **AHRC's Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science (RICHes)** programme, we were awarded £1 million to create a Centre of Excellence for Heritage Science and Conservation Research. The investment has transformed our existing spaces onsite at The National Archives in Kew into four state-of-the-art laboratories – analytical, dark, wet, and dry – supporting advanced research into the conservation of paper, parchment, photographs, textiles, books, and more. Equipped with technologies such as x-ray fluorescence imaging and hyperspectral imaging, the new facilities enable non-invasive analysis and innovative conservation practice.



Hyperspectral imaging study of KB 27/1314/2 for the investigation of pigments and their spatial distribution. Image credit: Sarah Petter.

Our ambition is to serve the broader heritage science and conservation research community and to become an integral partner within a cohesive national infrastructure. As the archive sector lead, we aim to expand access to heritage science across the archive and library landscape in the UK and internationally, using our established network of partnerships. Through challenge-led research, training, and shared access, we will support smaller organisations and promote sustainable, ethical conservation across the sector. This project reflects our commitment to leadership, collaboration, and inclusive impact – ensuring that research conducted here benefits collections far beyond our own.

Sensory archives with purpleSTARS

Since 2024, Collection Care's Audiences team have collaborated with **Rix Inclusive Research Institute** and **purpleSTARS**, a group of co-researchers with and without disabilities and differences. Together, we have worked to explore sensory engagement with the materiality of archives as an inclusive learning and research approach to provide more equitable access to archive spaces and collections.



Kiran from purpleSTARS putting her hands in pulp to create paper with Victoria's support.

This project developed from an initial archival visit by purpleSTARS' co-researchers to advise on the potential of this approach into the co-creation of a pilot papermaking workshop. This hands-on, sensory exploration of the creative practice of papermaking was developed and designed as a form of inclusive research practice, as well as an engagement and wellbeing activity. We are in the process of creating accessible online resources and aim to share these freely with the wider sector and trial the workshop with multiple audiences.

Rix have written about the **potential lifechanging impact** these types of opportunities have on those living with disabilities and differences. Our ambition is to continue our collaboration through a funding proposal, expanding to explore creative practice with other archival materials, and provide more opportunities for inclusive research and engagement with archives.

Research engagement

As part of our work as an Independent Research Organisation, we prioritise opening up our research and collection through public, educational, and academic programmes of talks, workshops, conferences, and resources that reach tens of thousands of people each year.

Paired with our various digital engagement channels such as our social media and our research newsletter, these engagement activities make forgotten voices from our collection visible, showcase cutting-edge research from our colleagues, and encourage our audiences to engage with our collection in new and innovative ways.

Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities

The **Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities** (DCDC) conference brings together colleagues from across the Gallery, Library, Archive, Museum and Academic (GLAMA) sectors with the aim of promoting cross-sector collaboration and knowledge sharing between communities.

Run in collaboration with the British Library and Jisc, DCDC 2025 was a hybrid conference at Durham University and



online, which invited GLAMA professionals to come together under the theme 'Choose Your Own Future'.

Highlights of DCDC 2025 included a full programme of in-person and online content, visits to local cultural heritage sites in Durham, and a showcase of local GLAMA organisations in the History Day North exhibition. The conference keynote addresses were delivered by Professor Katy Shaw, director of the **AHRC Creative Communities**, Tom Cramer, founder of the **International Image Interoperability**

Framework (IIIF), National HIV Story Trust co-founders Nick Thorogood and Paul Coleman, and a plenary panel featuring Désirée Reynolds (Creative Director, **Dig Where You Stand**), Dr. Aleema Gray (Founder, **House of Dread**), and Jess and Matt Turtle (co-founders, **Museum of Homelessness**).

History and Archives in Practice

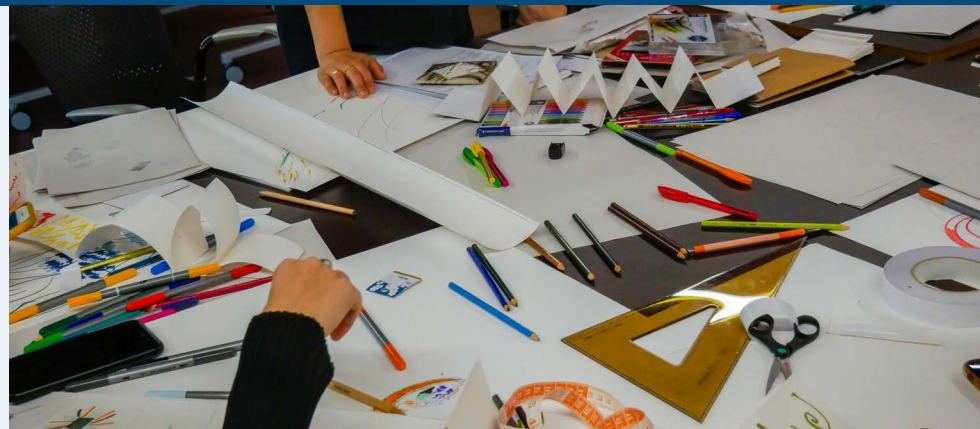
A partnership between The National Archives, Royal Historical Society, and the Institute of Historical Research, **History and Archives in Practice (HAP)** is where historians and archivists come together to consider shared interests in archive collections, including their interpretation and use. It is an annual event, building on its partners' long experience of bringing archivists and historians into close conversation to consider different modes



of archival and research 'practice': creating opportunities to demonstrate and discuss how we work with historical collections, and what historians and archivists can achieve collectively.

Our 2025 event was held at Senate House, London, with the theme 'Working with Memory: History, Storytelling and Practices of Remembrance'.

Key highlights from the day included a lunchtime postgraduate poster showcase, a walking tour around Bloomsbury run by staff from the Institute of Historical Research, and an interactive workshop about archives and audio drama run by **Applied Stories** and colleagues from The National Archives.



Outputs from the 'Weather in Archive: Research Scrapbook Workshop' with Anushka Tay, part of the 2024 Methodologies series.

Methodologies

Our 2024 autumn event series Methodologies brought together researchers, practitioners, and creatives in five playful and boundary-stretching sessions. The programme encouraged attendees to engage with our collections in new and innovative ways, by featuring speakers who use methodologies that reach beyond traditional academic practice and outputs.

Highlights included an event with Becky Male, volunteer at Glasgow Women's Library, reflecting on her project to make a 'Woman's Woolly' jumper from a knitting pattern published in the feminist magazine *Spare Rib* in 1982. An in-person workshop, 'Weather in the Archive', was facilitated by artist-researcher Anushka Tay, and considered how individual and collective

experiences of weather and climate can be expressed and captured on paper through the creation of a concertina sketchbook.



Participants for the 'Weather in the Archive: Research Scrapbook Workshop' with Anushka Tay, part of the 2024 Methodologies series.



Outputs from the 'Weather in Archive: Research Scrapbook Workshop' with Anushka Tay.

Annual Digital Lecture

Our Annual Digital Lecture offers the opportunity to hear from leading speakers and pioneering practitioners on a topic related to digital research, in addition to showcasing some of the innovative digital work happening at The National Archives. The 2024 Annual Digital Lecture was given by Dr Eleanor Drage and Dr Kerry McInerney, Senior Research Fellows at the Leverhulme Centre for the Future of

Intelligence at the University of Cambridge, and co-hosts of the Good Robot podcast on feminism, gender, and technology.

Alongside the lecture, we hung research posters made by researchers across The National Archives to highlight our digital scholarship, including posters featuring the projects The Material Culture of Wills ([page 9](#)), the National Farm Survey ([page 9](#)), and Our Heritage, Our Stories ([page 8](#)).



Research posters made for the Annual Digital Lecture 2024.

Creating a strong research culture



PhD researchers taking part in an Object Lessons session.

At The National Archives, we pride ourselves on creating a positive, inclusive, and ethical research environment which fosters high-quality scholarship from colleagues across our organisation.

We enable the continuing professional development of our researchers at all career stages through our annual Researcher Development Programme, which is supplemented by 1-2-1 coaching and support from the Research, Grants and Academic Engagement Department.

You can find some examples of our internal research programming below.

Encountering difficult records and emotional labour at The National Archives

For those working in an archive, confronting difficult records or experiencing emotional labour is not an unusual experience. To build awareness around affective responses to our collections and practice, we run a series of monthly talks about trauma-informed, solutions-focused archival work, featuring representatives from different departments at The National Archives who experience emotional labour during their work, including our Freedom of Information department, the Find Case Law editorial team, and team members from Cataloguing, Taxonomy and Data.

Object Lessons: Pollution

Object Lessons is a thematic series of close encounters with The National Archives' collection, placing objects at the centre of conversations informed by our diverse research practices, methodologies, and perspectives. This year's thematic focus has been on histories of pollution, contamination, and environmental damage in our collection, in relation to records of land use and management, agriculture, urban space, natural disasters, health and safety, and public health and welfare.

Reading group: The Edible Archive

Organised by the Collections Research team, this reading group meets once a month to offer an informal space for sharing ideas about records at The National Archives. This year's theme, The Edible Archive, has explored food histories in the archive, in records about local, national, and global food infrastructures; the connections between food, welfare, and public health; the environment, agriculture and rural life; and government interventions in times of crisis.

Virtual Research Hub

Our monthly Virtual Research Hubs provide staff, students, and volunteers with the opportunity to share their research in an informal setting. Recent sessions have included presentations from our PhD students, exploring the sounds and silences in the archive and artistic reclamations for Sri Lanka's diaspora, and female citizenship and the Equal Franchise Act of 1928.



Strategic Research Fund

The Strategic Research Fund (SRF) is our internal seed funding program supported by our research overheads. It is designed to empower new and early-career researchers to undertake research projects which align with our strategic priorities, with the intent of fostering future funding bids.

Since its launch in 2021, the fund has awarded £234,023 across 39 staff-led projects, building research capacity and generating long-term impact.

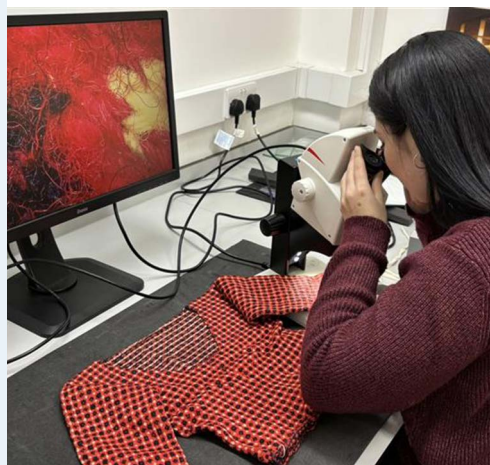
SRF projects often lay the groundwork for larger initiatives, demonstrating the value of investing early in research potential and

pilot work. For example, a £13,500 SRF award helped launch the PASSAGE project (page 28), now a £1 million international research programme funded by Lloyd's Register Foundation. SRF-supported work also helped secure £323,023 for RICHES (page 10), and catalysed Collection Care's collaboration with purpleSTARS (page 11). These outcomes highlight the SRF's role in building confidence, networks, and nurturing future funding opportunities.

In 2024–2025, the SRF supported 11 innovative projects, with a total investment of £22,492. These included:

Wool You Believe It? Tracing Faroese Wool Through DNA

This project, contributing to The Prize Papers (page 6), investigated the origins of a red wool sweater and four pairs of stockings dated to 1807, recovered from a ship sailing from the Faroe Islands to Denmark. In collaboration with the Natural History Museum, DNA analysis was used to identify the sheep breed that the wool originated from, shedding light on historical textile production, trade routes, and Faroese heritage. Alongside an enriched understanding of the collection, the project also led to funding from the Anna Plowden Trust/Clothworkers' Foundation, enabling the researcher to present at the American Institute for Conservation's conference.



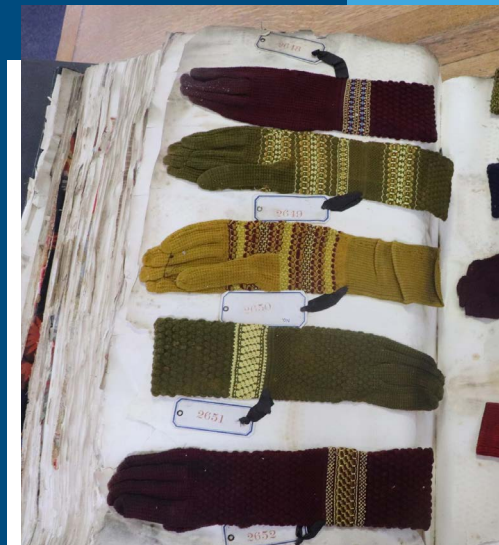
Marina Casagrande, Project Conservator, inspects the Faroese red sweater from the Prize Papers collection.

Archive as Dwelling Place: Hospitality and Trauma-Informed Practice at The National Archives

This project explored the archive as both a physical and emotional space, focusing on how users engage with it through research, events, and informal visits. Externally guided workshops examined emotional responses to the archive, explored trauma-informed approaches and practical implications for The National Archives. A key output was a series of illustrated postcards reflecting diverse user experiences by Angela Vives, created in residence at the archives (which can be seen on the front cover of this Research Report). These have sparked ongoing discussions about integrating trauma-informed practices, contributing to more inclusive engagement strategies at The National Archives and wider conversations around welcome.



An example from Angela Vives sketchbook, the document of practice from the Archive as Dwelling Place research project. Angela was in residence at The National Archives as part of the project.



A double-page spread in the 1894 Board of Trade volume containing historic design patent registrations. Catalogue reference: BT 50-5 (22).

A Generous Interface for the Museum in the Archive

This project investigated an 1894 Board of Trade volume containing historic design patent registrations, including drawings, photographs, and physical samples, most of which remain uncatalogued and difficult to access. Through detailed analysis and a survey, the research explored ways to establish an interdisciplinary methodology for cataloguing and digitising such collections. The findings from this project will now lay the groundwork for future development and funding bids to open up the Board of Trade series for wider public and scholarly use.

Postgraduate research

Working with PhD students is an integral part of our Research Vision. We welcomed five new PhD students co-supervised by The National Archives in 2024-25, and we continue to support 13 other students working across our organisation.

PhD studentships allow us to increase capacity for focused and innovative research in areas of strategic importance. Our Collaborative Doctoral Partnerships (CDPs) are PhD studentships jointly supervised by The National Archives and Higher Education Institutions, funded by the AHRC.

A map of The National Archives' co-supervised PhD students' universities.



The National Archives' CDPs have allowed us to unlock our iconic archival collection for the benefit of existing and new audiences, innovate our practice in ways that will deliver practical benefit to us and to the wider archive sector, and equip students with the skills and knowledge needed for future careers in the cultural heritage sector.

PhD case study: Exploring Risks to Records in charities in England – Paul Beard

Paul Beard is a PhD student who submitted his thesis this year, concluding a collaborative research project between The National Archives and University College London that examined risks to records in charities in England. Paul's study drew from a rich dataset of over 30 interviews, fieldwork, and desk-based research across a broad range of charities.

He has shared his findings at a range of events, including DCDC, and completed two student development activities. First, he developed a **mapping tool to identify repositories for records at risk**, and, second, he conducted scoping research for digital preservation guidance for charities. His contributions have helped shape The National Archives' cross-sector initiative: the **Charity Archives Development Plan**.

Paul is now Records Manager at the Salvation Army UK and Ireland. In 2025, he was awarded a research stipend from the Rockefeller Archive Center in the USA to conduct a scoping study of international non-profit archives. He is also currently planning a major British Academy event in 2026 to promote policy development.



Reflecting on his PhD, Paul said: *'What I've enjoyed most is simply talking to people. I've had the opportunity to meet some of the most incredible and passionate individuals in the voluntary sector. That's been a real privilege.'*

Archives sector funding

The National Archives offers an array of **funding opportunities** for archives. In 2024-25, we received over 200 applications for funding and awarded over £900,000 across over 60 grants, showing a continuing strong demand from the sector and a high level of competitiveness across our grant funding offer.

Records at Risk

Delivered in collaboration with the British Records Association and the Business Archives Council, Records at Risk provides grants of up to £5,000 to support urgent interventions to save significant physical and digital records facing immediate peril, across the UK.

This year, one project that Records at Risk supported was Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service to protect the unique records of Lea & Perrins'

Worcestershire Sauce – manufactured in Worcester since 1837 – and make them available for public research.

Resilience Grants

The Resilience Grant programme is delivered in collaboration with the British Records Association and the Business Archives Council and provides grants of up to £20,000 to empower the archive sector to find sustainable solutions that enable change and develop organisational resilience.

One example of a Resilience Grant awarded this year was to Gloucestershire Archives on behalf of all local authority record offices in the South West of England. Their project, 'Skilling Up the South West', aims to increase staff and service resilience by investing in the development of skills and expertise through in-person training and opportunities for mentoring, shadowing, and collaborating.



Records at Risk. Image credit: Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service.

Skills Bursaries

To support archivists in building the skills needed for the future, including in digital, environmental sustainability, and diversity, equity and inclusion, The National Archives offers Skills Bursaries of up to £1,000 for archivists seeking to access training, career professional development or mentoring not available in their own organisational development programmes.

In 2025, one example of the Skills Bursary that we awarded was to the British Trust for Ornithology Archives. This bursary will enable the organisation to acquire a better understanding of photographic materials and the processes by which they degrade, vital in enabling them to stabilise and make accessible their large collection of early twentieth century lantern slides and glass plate negatives.



Skills Bursaries. Lantern slide image showing a Coot and Great Crested Grebe, Emma L. Turner, 1906.



Research and innovation grant. Image credit: House of Dread.

Research and Innovation Grants

These grants worth up to £10,000 create opportunities for research, innovation, and transformative projects in the archive sector.

In 2024, one project that we awarded a Research and Innovation Grant to was House of Dread, to support its 'Reasoning with the Archive' programme which digitises and makes accessible the heritage studio's oral history collection for its community members.

Engagement Grants

Engagement Grants provide funding to connect archives with their communities and the wider public, often aligning with key moments of national importance.

This year, the Engagement Grants awarded 12 grants, including one to Aunt Nell, an independent podcast production company, supporting them to delve into the archive of Press for Change, which started fighting for trans rights in the 1990s, and commission four trans sound artists for a future project.

Archives Revealed

Archives Revealed is the only grant programme in the UK solely dedicated to the cataloguing and unlocking of archival collections, making them accessible to the public for research and enjoyment.

This year, we recruited a full programme team and have focused on launching, communicating, and implementing the expanded funding programme, with a greater focus on public engagement, sector development, and evaluation to sit alongside more funding for grant-making. £719,629 was awarded in its first funding rounds to 28 projects, with nearly £2m to be awarded in 2025-26 – an enormous increase in our ability to support the archives sector across the UK.

We offer three types of grant: Scoping Grants worth up to £3,000, Cataloguing Grants worth up to £50,000, and Consortium Grants worth up to £150,000.

The programme is funded by **The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Pilgrim Trust, the Wolfson Foundation** and The National Archives.

Scoping Grants

This grant funds an independent consultant to produce a scoping report on a full or partial archival collection, for which the contents are unknown in detail, but which is significant and of interest to the public.

As part of the Scoping Grant scheme, we recently awarded Hip Hop arts organisation SIN Cru a grant for their project 'Diggin' in the Crates: Counter-narratives through UK Hip Hop' to assess and activate their extensive archive, which documents three decades of UK Hip Hop culture. This will support their aim to preserve fragile materials, amplify underrepresented voices, and ensure the archive serves as a living, evolving resource.



Two people looking at maps Hackney Archives.



Researchers looking at large books in Archive study room at the London Archives.

Cataloguing Grants

Supporting the cataloguing of significant archive collections held in the UK. At least 20% of the total grant value is required to be allocated to activities that will promote public engagement with the collection during or after cataloguing.

Deaf History Scotland were awarded a Cataloguing Grant to help them catalogue the Scottish Deaf Archive which consists of approximately 80 collections of personal papers and organisational records from across Scotland dating from c.1820 to the present day. The grant will also be used to train volunteers to ensure sustainable, deaf, and community-led management of the archive, all with the hope that this will introduce young deaf people to archiving, conservation, and heritage pathways.

Consortium Grants

For large scale consortium projects that bring together multiple organisations. These projects can be thematically or geographically linked (for example, to deliver impact in a priority place), bring together organisations interested in developing archival practice for the sector, or make use of technology and new ways of doing.

Archives Revealed awarded the first Consortium Grant in 2024 to the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and The Nerve Centre for their project 'Now We're Talking', which will catalogue and widen access to the papers of two of Northern Ireland's significant cultural figures: author and broadcaster, Sam Hanna Bell, and folklorist, writer and broadcaster, Michael J Murphy.

Professional Fellowships

Our Professional Fellowship scheme is run in collaboration with Research Libraries UK (RLUK). The scheme enables RLUK members and staff at The National Archives to undertake research, supporting them to build collaborations across the cultural heritage sectors.



Professional Fellowships last 12-18 months, and are structured around short-term placements at relevant institutions, underpinned by a longer period of peer-to-peer mentoring and knowledge sharing.

Case study: 'Neurodiversity and Document Storage', a project by Tom Radley, Document Services Manager at The National Archives, hosted by The National Library of Scotland

Tom's project looked at the lived experience of neurodivergent people who work in document storage spaces in libraries and archives, exploring what barriers there are to work and how these can be broken down. Focusing on the sensory experiences of neurodivergent staff, Tom hosted two events and surveyed the participants about their experiences. The first event was a

sensory tour of the repositories with the Neurodiversity Network at The National Archives; the second was a sensory document display timed to coincide with Neurodiversity Celebration Week. From the survey results, Tom built a pair of checklists helping managers to on-board staff and reflect on the physical spaces of repositories.

Reflecting on his Fellowship, Tom said: 'The Fellowship was a wonderful but complicated experience. I got to work with peers from all over The National Archives to develop my ideas into a functional project, and established contact and links with neurodivergent researchers and archivists across the country. I hope that when it is published, my checklists will help improve people's lives.'

Publication highlights

Recent books by staff

- Eirini Goudarouli and Andrew Prescott, *Archival Materialities in a Digital Age*. Proceedings of the British Academy, Liverpool University Press, 2025.
- Gareth Moore and Laura Jayne Ayres, *Spydle*. Penguin Random House, 2024.
- Jessamy Carlson, *Approved Schools for Girls in England, 1933-1973*. Palgrave, 2024.
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- John Sheridan and Clare Foster, '"Digitalising a National Archive": interview with John Sheridan, Digital Director at The National Archives, UK', *AI & Society* 39 (2024): 665-668. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-022-01510-2>.
- Kevin Linch, William Butler, Simon Quinn, 'The architecture and archaeology of war office records', *Archives and Records* 45, 2 (2024): 101-117. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23257962.2024.2329551>.
- Lora Angelova and Elizabeth Haines, 'Insect « Enemies » and Chemical Legacies: Reflections on archival practice', *Trouble dans les collections* 7 (2024).

- Robert Walpole and Alex Green, 'Using ODRL to represent access rights to Public Records at The National Archives (UK)', *Proceedings of the 1st NeXt-Generation Data Governance workshop*, Amsterdam (September 2024).
- Susan Russick, Tonia Grafakos, Karissa Muratore, Alicia C. McGeachy, and Marc Vermeulen, 'Toxic Tales: Arsenic's Legacy in Green Book Bindings at Northwestern University Libraries', *Studies in Conservation* (2025): 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00393630.2025.2460403>.

Recent chapters in edited collections

- Iqbal Singh and Kevin Lu, 'Bearing witness to the historical record: A psychosocial/psychodynamic method for working with archival materials'. In *Archives and Emotions: International Dialogues Across Past, Present, and Future*. Bloomsbury, 2024.
- Lucía Pereira Pardo, Neil Johnston, Rose Mitchell, and Annaleigh Margey, 'The Materiality of the Early Modern Maps of Ireland at The National Archives: Bridging History of Cartography and Heritage Science'. In *Maps and Colours*. Brill, 2024.

Our latest funding awards

PASSAGE

The National Archives has been awarded a £1 million grant by the Lloyd's Register Foundation for a new research programme on the history of the transatlantic trade in enslaved Africans. PASSAGE (Partnership for Transatlantic Slavery Scholarship, Archiving and Global Exchange) combines archival research on the history of slave ships (1760-1807), which will deliver a range of academic and public engagement outputs, with an international research mobility programme that seeks to centre and financially support the research of scholars from West Africa and the Caribbean, co-designed with academic, government and cultural institutions in Ghana, Barbados and Jamaica.

This major partnership will connect researchers and archival collections at The National Archives, Lloyd's Register, and other archives in the UK and globally, to create new knowledge of the maritime trade of enslaved Africans, and support research and capacity-building in both partner regions.

Spaces, Places and Belonging: Community Hub

The **Spaces, Places and Belonging: Community Hub** is a new, national programme funded by AHRC, designed to support inclusive, community-led research across the UK's GLAMA and heritage sectors. The Hub will offer:

- At least £550,000 of grant funding across three grant schemes, with grants ranging from £1,000 to £30,000;
- A training, learning and network-building programme for cultural heritage institutions and communities engaged with heritage;
- A digital platform for knowledge and resource sharing;
- Evaluation, celebration, fundraising and advocacy for community-led heritage programmes.

Testimony of the Victorian Poor

The *Testimony of the Victorian Poor*, c. 1834-1900, is a five-year project funded by the British Academy and run in partnership with Nottingham Trent University. As part of the project we will identify, list, and transcribe around 14,000-15,000 letters written by Victorian English and

Welsh paupers, wider poor and their advocates, found within the Poor Law Union Correspondence volumes at The National Archives. We will geo-reference and subject-code each of the letters we find and upload each transcription to an **open research database**.

A Century of Struggle: Pauperism and the New Poor Law in Wales, 1834-1930

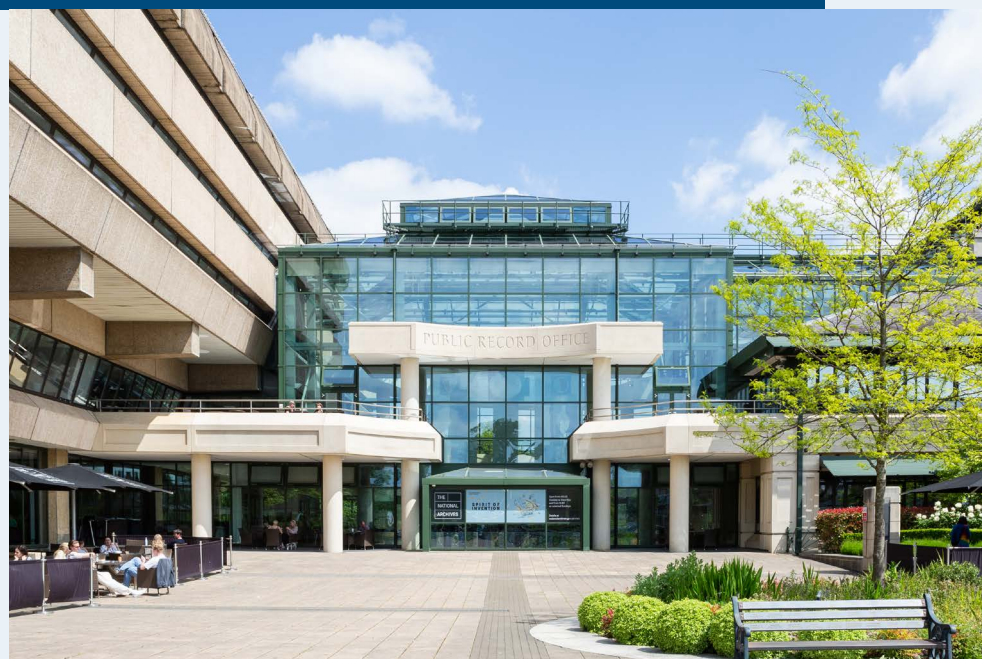
This project will provide new insight into the complexities of the imposition, operation, and impact of the New Poor Law in Wales and question the assumption that Wales

was just like England in the way that the country applied, adapted, and experienced the shared legislative umbrella across the period 1834-1930.

Drawing from previous successful research project in this area, we will deliver a large-scale research programme predicated upon unused and little used archives located at The National Archives, The National Library of Wales, and multiple regional and county archive services across Wales.



Closing reflections



By Saul Nassé, Chief Executive of the National Archives and Keeper of Public Records

Our first Research Report illustrates how The National Archives is not just an institution that does research; we are an institution where knowledge and innovation are at the core of our practice.

The different research projects and funding opportunities presented in the report speak to the forward-thinking approaches

and decisions we are making, to address challenges facing the whole archives sector. Research underpins The National Archives' new strategy for 2025-2030, and delivers across our four strategic priorities:

1. Our Archives Revealed and Community Hub grant-giving programmes help **lead the future of archives**;
2. A wide-ranging research engagement programme, including our research training, conferences and events, help to **increase our profile** in the UK and – through initiatives such as our PASSAGE project – internationally;

3. Projects including The Prize Papers and the National Farm Survey enable the opening up and digitisation of our collections, while our work with Rix and purpleSTARS puts **widening availability and reshaping place** at the heart of our work;
4. Our innovative work with Optical Character Recognition, Handwritten Text Recognition, and AI-driven approaches, and projects such as RICHeS and Project Odyssey, develop **new technology**.

We are committed to building an inclusive, accessible, engaging, and innovative research culture, which champions the research of our colleagues, students, volunteers, and visitors, and brings us together as a research community. Our Strategic Research Fund and Professional Fellowship Scheme empower everyone to conduct research, and we are supporting the next generation of researchers through our Collaborative PhD programmes and a suite of researcher training and development opportunities.

I am sure that the research illustrated in this report will inspire you and shed light on the work happening right now at The National Archives.



Saul Nassé, Chief Executive of the National Archives and Keeper of Public Records.

Want to get in touch? Contact the Research Team at research@nationalarchives.gov.uk.

Explore our research on our [website](#) and keep updated on the newest events, opportunities, and research projects by [subscribing to our Research Newsletter](#).

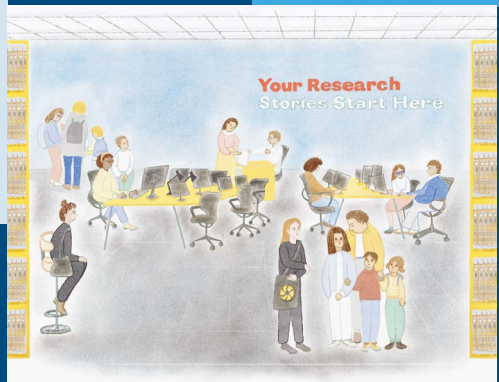


The Research, Grants and Academic Engagement department is made up of:

- Archives Sector Funding
- Collections Research
- Digital Research
- Grant Development
- Projects and Processes
- Research Impact, Culture and Engagement

This report was compiled and edited by Ellen Addis, Research Engagement Officer.

Illustration © Angela Vives. These illustrations on the front and back cover are an output of Chloe Lee's Strategic Research Fund project, 'Archive as Dwelling Place: Hospitality and Trauma-Informed Practice at The National Archives'.



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