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Signed & Sealed

On Saturday 23 February, FONA held its first Conference for members and guests. Richard Gaunt, as one of his last responsibilities as Chairman, invited Councillor Kay Cutts, Leader of Nottinghamshire County Council, to formally open the Conference.



Councillor Kay Cutts.

The first speaker was Ruth Imeson, Heritage Services Manager, Inspire: Culture, Learning and Libraries. Taking 'Signed' as her theme she discussed some of the fascinating stories behind the signatures held in Nottinghamshire Archives' extensive collections. In a fascinating exploration of the subject, Paul Dryburgh, Principal Record Specialist at The National Archives, discussed the wax seals used to validate and authenticate



Image courtesy of Inspire

Paul Dryburgh.

documents. Short summaries of both presentations are included in the newsletter.

The event also provided the opportunity for FONA to launch a collaborative publication with Inspire. *Identity* is an illustrated



book containing copies of 40 signatures of famous and infamous people from documents held by

Nottinghamshire Archives. The selection ranges from Charles II to Oliver Cromwell and includes Ned Ludd, Charles Darwin and Lord Byron. Councillor Cutts was given a presentation copy at the event and signed a second copy of the book, which was presented to the Archives for its own collection. Many of the original documents containing these signatures were displayed in an Exhibition organised by Nottinghamshire Archives especially for the Conference and for a more permanent display, spelling out the word Identity, which is now on display in the Archives.



Image courtesy of Inspire

Some of the items exhibited and the 'Identity' wall display.

As no FONA event is complete without a cake, those attending the conference were able to enjoy a cake which was decorated with Newton's signature and

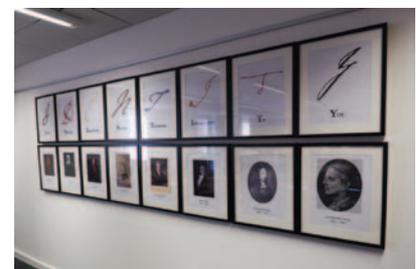


Nottingham's Great Seal. There was also a gluten free option emblazoned with the FONA logo. Richard was delighted to 'invite Councillor Kay Cutts to cut the cake'!

Everyone who attended the event enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the subject matter in a friendly and sociable environment. Partly as a result of its success, Nottinghamshire Archives has been invited to put on a display in County Hall and a new history of Nottingham is being considered.



Image courtesy of Inspire



This success is due to the efforts of many people and thanks must go to Ruth Imeson and her staff for hosting and supporting the event, especially David Ackrel and his conservation team who prepared the exhibition and the permanent display, and handbound the copies of Identity. The quality of the book itself is due to a large extent to Bob Stoakes' skills as a graphic artist and the enthusiasm of archivists who delved through documents to find the autographs. Especial thanks must go to the FONA volunteers who moved furniture, stewarded the exhibition room, made tea and coffee and served cake - it is these contributions which ensured that the day was so enjoyable. And we cannot forget Richard Gaunt who not only chaired the Conference but was instrumental in initiating and planning it. We hope to repeat the exercise in 2020.

The Art of the Signature

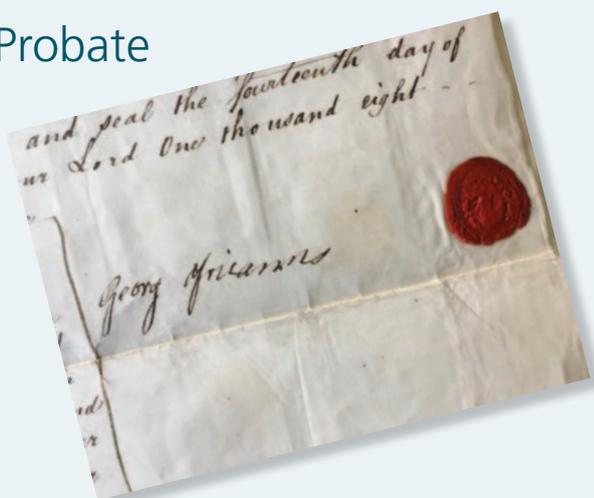
A signature can be a handwritten or digital depiction of a name which fundamentally identifies its creator. Much as a chef may have a signature dish, your signature is uniquely yours.



In a world of lower literacy levels such as in feudal England land was often conveyed via a ceremony called livery of seisin, which involved passing a twig or piece of soil to the purchaser whilst standing upon the land. This was abolished in the Interregnum and again under Charles II in the Act for Prevention of Frauds and Perjuries. The new law required certain types of contracts and probate concerning real property to be in writing and be signed. This was designed to avoid perjury and the subornation of perjury.

The signature authenticates many documents, with a significant proportion of the four million items preserved at Nottinghamshire Archives being signed in some way.

Probate



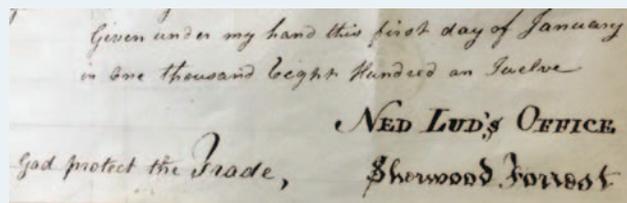
The 1834 will of George Africanus, a former slave who became a Nottingham entrepreneur bears his name and signature. The will tells the story of a troubled family as Africanus leaves a substantial estate to his daughter Hannah Cropper on the condition that it is "absolutely for her own benefit and to be

disposed of as she shall think proper as though she were unmarried and which shall be free from the control debts or interference of her husband Samuel Cropper".

What had Samuel Cropper done to upset his father-in-law?

The Collective

Rather than being an identifier for a specified individual it can represent a collective such as a proclamation signed by "Ned Ludd's Office Sherwood Forest" in 1812, at the height of the Luddite movement.

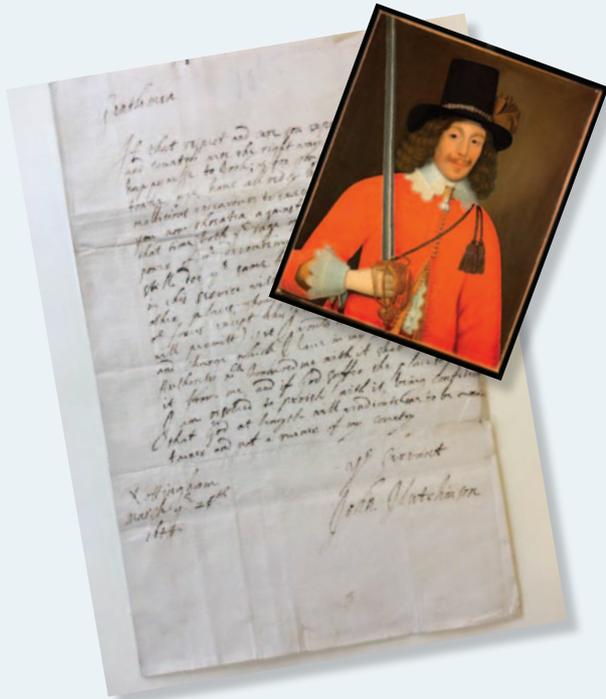


This enabled people to voice their opinion without being easily identifiable by the authorities or their employers.

The British Civil Wars

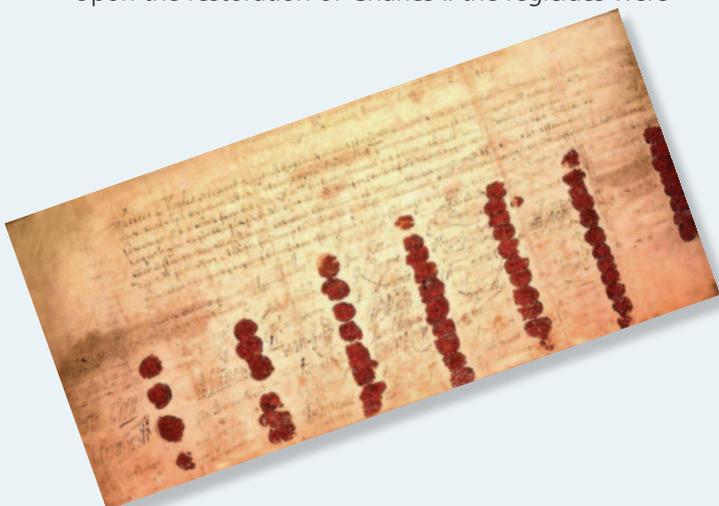
Signed documents help to tell the story of the British Civil War including those created by the exile (King Charles II), the regicide (Colonel John Hutchinson), the biographer (Lucy Hutchinson), and the Protector (Oliver Cromwell).

A letter written by Colonel Hutchinson demonstrates his anger at the Royalist cause writing "as to your threats to this poore town [Nottingham], wee have



alreddy had experience of youre malicious endeavours to execute that mischief which you now threaten against it". The item is signed "y[ou]r servant John Hutchinson" at Nottingham 26th March 1644.

Putting your signature to a document can form a legally binding contract, however, in earlier times the consequences could be far more extreme. In January 1649 (New Style date) 59 commissioners signed and sealed the death warrant of Charles I, with Nottingham's Colonel Hutchinson and Attenborough's General Henry Ireton being amongst them. Upon the restoration of Charles II the regicides were



prosecuted with the majority of those who were already deceased, such as Ireton, being exhumed and subjected to a posthumous execution. Even beyond the grave there was no escape from the consequences of a signature.

The Autograph Hunter

In a box in the strongroom at Nottinghamshire Archives are three large volumes of signatures which were collected by the Victorian autograph hunters Philip James Bailey and Fanny and Henrietta Carey. Bailey, a writer, was born and died in Nottingham.



The amazing autograph books contain hundreds of signatures of famous Victorians including the naturalist Charles Darwin, the statesman Benjamin Disraeli, the spiritualist medium D. D. Home, and the 4th Duke of Newcastle (erstwhile owner of Nottingham Castle).

Military

The recent centenary of World War I has increased research into those who served in the armed forces. Thousands of letters in our collections reference the love and friendship shared by those involved in the first mechanised war. Letters range from those of Captain Albert Ball VC writing to his parents, Private



Dilley writing to his deceased friend's mother including a drawing of the cross he had made for his friend's



grave, to the heartrending letter from Private Fred Stretch to his mother upon the death of his elder brother. Stretch consoled his mother before adding "I cannot write anymore just now".



Identity

A person's signature can indicate much about a person. Is it large, small, dramatic or artistic? A case in point is that of Fothergill Watson or is it Watson Fothergill, an architect who designed many of Nottingham's iconic buildings. Nottinghamshire Archives cares for letters signed with both names by the man who switched his surnames to continue his maternal family name.

All of these unique signatures are free to access at Nottinghamshire Archives and there are thousands more. Could one of them be your ancestor?

What will you discover?

Ruth Imeson

Inspire Heritage Services Manager
Nottinghamshire Archives

However, as the areas under English rule changed over time, so the great seals changed to reflect that.

Signed and sealed: seals

Paul Dryburgh, Principal Records Specialist (Medieval Records), The National

For many thousands of years the expression of an individual or a community's will has been captured in various material ways. In the Middle Ages writing gradually became the means by which the business of government, law, lordship and the church was recorded. Before the signature became the most commonly accepted method of validating and authenticating a record, though, the seal held sway, most often being

attached to a written record of a transaction or command. But even as the signature began to take over the seal still retained an important place in legal written culture and in portraying an individual or community's sense of identity.

Seals - either the impressions produced by the act of making of a personal mark in a soft material by the use of a hard, engraved negative, the matrix, or, indeed, the matrix itself (both can be called "seals") - conveyed personal or corporate symbolism.

This helped identify the owner and display their status and office, and something of their wit and personality. The many tens of thousands which survive for medieval England in archive and library collections are some of the



A lead alloy circular seal matrix dating from the later 12th to 13th Century AD. The centre of the seal depicts a bird, possibly a crow, looking backwards over its body to one raised wing. Image attribution: The Portable Antiquities Scheme / The Trustees of the British Museum.

Matrices could come in many shapes and sizes from a signet ring into which a Roman intaglio gemstone might be secured, to something that looks like a chess piece with a handle at the top and the image engraved in the base, to a press - some presses, like that at Canterbury Cathedral, are enormous screw mechanisms, others like those for the English royal great seals are two plates between which two cakes of wax are sandwiched and then pressed together using screwable lugs.

Matrices often survive as archaeological discoveries or archival antiquities. The vast majority of seals are those surviving impressions. The National Archives holds the UK's greatest collection of wax seal impressions (though no matrices), comprising over 250,000 seals dating from the 11th to the 20th century. The collection includes royal, government, colonial, ecclesiastical, monastic, topographical, equestrian and personal seals. Seals tell us about

the status of their owner, give historical information around their imagery, and can help to date a document.

Essentially, the impression encodes information about its owner through a pictorial device and a written legend. The list of potential images is large and usually relates to status or occupation – the king and leading nobles, for example, often used their coat of arms as a marker of elite status and tying them into a long, powerful descent. They also tend to be depicted on horseback in full armour, which displays their fighting prowess, wealth and social standing, as well as their conformity to the latest fashions. Others - knights, gentlemen and women - often also use heraldic imagery but this can diverge from simple coats of arms to animals (lions, eagles, hares, to name but a few), mythical or Biblical beasts (the Agnus Dei - Lamb of



TNA E26-1 (58) (obverse) Seal of John de Warenne, from the Barons' letter 1301.

God, complete with its flag, is very popular, for instance, as the symbol of Christ), and flora (lilies, roses). Noble and gentle women also marked their status in their seals. They are often depicted standing inside an oval-shaped (or vesical) seal. Elite women are



TNA DL 25 - seal of Lady Nicholaa de la Haye of c. 1200-1230

shown in elaborate gowns and head-dresses and bearing a falcon to highlight their nobility and perhaps a lily to shown their purity. Some women can be seen bearing books, a sign of their learning. Others simply use heraldic imagery to tie themselves to their own or their husband's lineage.

It is important to say, though, that as the Middle Ages progressed access to sealing technology and the importance of seals in authenticating legal transactions widened the community of people who owned and used seals, right down to the upper strata of the peasantry in villages across the country. Off-the-peg designs could be purchased from vendors, often made from cheaper metals and with a smaller range of devices from which to choose. Many people also borrowed the seal of a friend or legal official to express their will to a transaction, the documentary text of which they perhaps could not read and understand in its entirety - most land transactions being written

in Latin well into the sixteenth century and even beyond.

At the top of the social pyramid sat the monarch, and their seals are some of the most beautiful to survive. Anglo-Saxon kings had used seals to express their authority but in England the adoption by William the Conqueror of the practice of his immediate predecessor Edward the Confessor cemented the practice in English royal practice and culture to the present day. Both William and Edward used a round seal depicting the king seated on his throne holding the regalia of kingship - the orb and sceptre – representing Christian authority and the promise to uphold law and rule justly. Their successors developed increasingly more elaborate imagery. Principally, the development of an image on the back of the seal with the monarch on horseback came more clearly to represent the martial prowess and status of the monarch. This equestrian imagery persisted for many centuries, the main exceptions being Queen Anne, who depicted herself as Britannia, and George V, who wears his naval uniform and stands on the prow of a ship.



TNA SC13-K26 Edward III sixth Great Seal (obverse).



TNA SC13-N3 Second Great Seal of Elizabeth I (obverse).

However, as the areas under English rule changed over time, so the great seals changed to reflect that. Edward III, for example, added the fleurs-de-lys of France to the three lions of England in his coat-of-arms after 1340 to reinforce his hereditary claim to be king of France and England. Queen Elizabeth I added the Irish harp to her second great seal from 1586 to demonstrate her claim to the kingdom of Ireland. Elizabeth's seal, designed by the miniaturist Nicholas Hilliard, also depicts her as Gloriana. On the front, her mantle is draped over her shoulders by two hands reaching out from Heaven, while on the back the sun's rays radiantly illuminate her; both emphasise the approval from God for her Protestant Reformation.

Churchmen and ecclesiastical institutions, too, used rich imagery to convey status and meaning. Bishops and archbishops, abbots and abbesses, priors and prioresses are usually oval-shaped, perfect to depict the standing figure, robed with staff or book and giving the Blessing. The figure can be surrounded by ornate architectural features. Individuals, though, conveyed their personal assent to business by applying a smaller seal to the reverse of the wax,

creating a so-called counterseal. This could be made rings or smaller matrices. Perhaps the best example is the counterseal used by Thomas Becket as archbishop of Canterbury. This shows a tiny winged figure of the Roman God, Mercury. Others show their devotion to a cult and their line of descent in the church hierarchy. Stephen Langton, one of Becket's successors in Canterbury and the architect of Magna Carta, uses a counterseal which depicts the scene of Becket's martyrdom with the archbishop-saint kneeling before his assassins and the top of his head falling after a sword-stroke. Churchmen lower down the hierarchy (and also donors to churches) can sometimes be shown kneeling in prayer to a saintly figure - the most common image is that of the Virgin and Child, or simply applying saintly or Biblical imagery to tie themselves to a particular cult or martyr. The seals of cathedrals, abbeys, churches and hospitals are some of the best places to find depictions of medieval architectural treasures - many common seals of such institutions show the building, often ornately engraved and displaying images of saints or benefactors.



TNA E322-241 (3) Surrenders of Monasteries Thurgarton Priory, Notts Austin Canons, 14 June 1538.

In practical terms, documents could be sealed in one of several ways: the sealing wax often hung from the bottom of the parchment in more formal grants and transactions upon which the legal text of a land or property deed was written. A fold was made upwards to make what is called the plica. A slit was then cut and a separate strip of parchment threaded through the slit doubled-up and seal attached to the pendent tag. Alternatively, government orders, which were often written to officials on narrow pieces of parchment, had the seal attached to a tongue or tongues cut as thin strips from the bottom edge of the document. Finally, seals could be attached to documents directly to the face, otherwise known in French as *en placard*. Each method had legal force but was adapted to the size and nature of the document.

The vast majority of seal impressions are made from beeswax. The wax would be mixed with a combination of resins, pigments and other filler material to make a semi-permanent medium. Seals which appear white or creamy are usually undyed



TNA(PRO) DL27-270 SEALS (Indented agreement between Ranulf, Earl of Chester & Lincoln and the men of Frieston & Butterwick. 1217-32).

natural wax. For green seals, which colour was used by the royal Exchequer but also by the king and nobles, could be produced relatively cheaply either by adding a copper-based pigment such as verdigris or by melting wax in a copper vessel. The shade of green would be determined as much by the length of cooking as the purity of the pigment. The most expensive and therefore high-status seals were red in colour. The colouring comes from vermilion, the chemical compound of the mineral cinnabar, imported from across southern Europe.

How do you find seals at The National Archives?

- 1 TNA's Research guide on Seals.
- 2 Card catalogue of seals (Map Room) - now available online as QFA 1.
- 3 Printed Catalogues: Catalogue of Seals in the Public Record Office, 3 vols (Personal, monastic).
- 4 Documents Online: DL 25 & 26 (images) (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documentonline/seal.asp>).
- 5 Seals Moulds database (PRO 23) - 7700 moulds searchable online.

Annual General Meeting; 16 March 2019

The 2019 Annual General Meeting marked a number of significant developments for FONA. The first, and the one with the greatest consequences, was Richard Gaunt's retirement as Chairman; a role he had held since FONA was founded in 2012.

In his final Chairman's Report,

Richard thanked everyone who had worked hard to support FONA during 2018 whether this was as a committee member or providing much appreciated tea, coffee and biscuits at members' meetings. Special mention was made of Christine Drew and Howard Parker, both of whom had retired from the Committee for health reasons.

Finally, Bob Stoakes was presented with some wine as thanks for all his hard work producing professional and distinctive FONA publicity, newsletters, programme cards and the recently published book *Identity* which accompanied the very successful 'Signed and Sealed' conference.



Richard Gaunt presents Bob Stoakes with a personal copy of Identity.

Partly as a result of Richard's retirement and partly stimulated by the many changes going on within INSPIRE and increased demands on Nottinghamshire Archives, FONA had made an application to the Heritage Fund (formerly known as the Heritage Lottery Fund)



for a resilience grant. The grant would allow FONA to engage an expert consultant and provide an opportunity to pause and review FONA's own operations and objects with a view to ensuring that, going forward, it is able to support the Archives in the most effective way. In order to comply with HF guidelines, a small change to FONA's Constitution was agreed by Members.

According to the Constitution, all FONA officers have to be elected or re-elected every two years, and all non-officer committee members every year. Another consequence of Richard's retirement was that not only did these elections have to take place, but many of the officer roles changed hands, and new committee members elected. A full Who's-Who is on p.12.

At the end of the meeting, Richard gave a thought-provoking talk (which you can read for yourself later in this newsletter) and the FONA committee is giving it serious consideration. On a lighter note, Richard concluded his talk with a slideshow set to Thanks



The closing slide of Richard's presentation.

for Being a Friend (the music to the TV show 'Friends') - audience comments ranged from "that was a great event" to "oh no! not that photo of me!"

On behalf of the FONA Committee he was presented with a book, a picture of Gladstone on a carte



Richard and the new FONA Secretary, Judith Mills, cut the cake.



de visite, some gift vouchers and a cake, which was shared by everyone present.



Richard displays his 'retirement' gifts.



Retiring Thoughts

After seven years at the helm, retiring Chairman Richard Gaunt offers his thoughts on future challenges for FONA, shaped by its history so far.

It is difficult to believe that as recently as seven years ago there was no organisation in Nottinghamshire whose designated role was to help celebrate and support the work of the archives sector in the county. This might appear to be something of an indictment, considering that Nottinghamshire Archives is about to commemorate its 70th anniversary this autumn. Undoubtedly, the growth in the breadth, range and type of readers who are now accessing archives - for historical research, genealogical and family history, community history projects, or the modern functioning of society in which the historical record still plays a part - is proof enough that such an organisation is not only necessary but increasingly indispensable. Few counties which currently enjoy an organisation comparable to FONA, would, I suspect, want to wish it out of existence, and none of them would find it easy to explain why such an organisation no longer existed, if it was to disappear overnight.

Community outreach and accessibility are integral parts of the Designation Process by which county archives like Nottinghamshire are recognised by The National Archives, and these activities are increasingly written into their mission statements and financial planning. One only needs to look at the quality and success of the events programme at the Archives to understand how important it is to its success. FONA must continue to work closely with the Archives - indeed, perhaps more closely than ever before - in ensuring that its own programme makes a distinctive contribution to the Archives offer, rather than trying to compete with the many other learned and historical societies which the county is fortunate to possess.

Twenty-five years ago, the then head of Leisure Services helped to establish the Nottinghamshire Archives Users Group (NAUG). It was a representative organisation, with members largely invited onto the group as spokespeople for different stakeholders and user groups. There was also representation for staff and archives users - the latter decided through nomination and election. By the time that I joined NAUG, in the early-2010s, the body was starting to show some signs of stress fracture, not because the role it was fulfilling did not continue to be useful but because, by its nature, there was a lingering sense that the body was becoming increasingly detached from the expanding base of users who were accessing the archives. NAUG's remit did not extend to social events for archives users, purchasing items for deposit in the archives, or supporting fund raising activities: all of which were hallmarks of well-established and successful friends' organisations in other parts of the country, which FONA has subsequently - and successfully - sought to emulate.

By the time that NAUG ceased to operate, around 2014, FONA was able to inherit and augment its role through absorbing some of its consultative and deliberative functions. This change in emphasis was reflected in the revised FONA constitution which was agreed at the 2016 AGM.

Despite some understandable reservations about changing the sociable nature of FONA into something more deliberative and consultative, it appears to me that we are yet to realise the opportunities that this extended remit affords us. The demands on

the Archives service, especially in terms of pressures on staffing, makes it more likely that FONA will be approached to take on a larger role in the future than it has exercised up until now. FONA will need to respond to those approaches constructively but, where necessary, robustly, much as we signalled our intention in doing after 2016.

The absence of an explicit Friends organisation in the county before this time may be an indication of some of the horror stories circulating about friends' organisations elsewhere whose members felt themselves entitled to demand special privileges in return for their friendship. I am happy to say that nothing of the sort would ever cross the minds of – let alone be tolerated by – FONA and Nottinghamshire Archives. We have always maintained the need for members' benefits, of a relatively modest variety, as an incentive and a reward for friendship. This, I believe, is the least we can offer.

The idea of establishing a Friends organisation in Nottinghamshire only began to gather serious traction after the financial crash of 2008. In the face of continuing budgetary pressures on county council expenditure, those concerned with leisure services and heritage were already trying to secure themselves against potential future cuts. Fortunately, the programme of capital investment in the county's libraries has been honoured over the past decade and we hope that the City Council's planned multi-million-pound library in the re-developed Broadmarsh Centre will bear comparison with the county's excellent track-record of capital investment.

Nor has Nottinghamshire Archives been left out of this process. The expansion of the Archives' storage capacity, and the redesign of the building in 2014-15, represented a major investment in infrastructure which has generally attracted acclaim amongst those who regularly use it. Certainly, the facilities are much better oriented to the requirements of modern users who expect high-quality and up-to-date infrastructure in which to work.

The formation of FONA was thus a response to, and has grown to maturity within the shadow of, local government financial stringency. We should not kid ourselves that the threat of cutbacks has gone away, or that the formation of Inspire as a delivery body for County Council services has ring-fenced them from attack. Budgetary pressures are ever present and likely to grow in the future.

Public perception would play a large part in resisting the threatened closure of a library, but how far would the same be true if someone decided to shut the door of the Archives tomorrow? Every one of us in FONA would lie down in front of the bulldozers, but there remains a perception, in some quarters, that Archives are a 'funny sort of library', an aspect of cultural provision which appears residual and marginal when compared with mainstream library provision. FONA will have a strong and necessary part to play, if it can harness the objectives and potential embodied within its existing constitution and draw upon the reserves of friendship, solidarity and community which have hallmarked its first seven years as a members' organisation.

Doing so will, of course, depend on attracting a steady stream of willing, skilled and committed volunteers, not only to become friends, but to serve in committee positions. All of us can probably give ample testimony about the organisations we join which have grown old with us, without any semblance of new blood coming through to fill the vacancies, offer fresh perspectives and new ideas, and take the organisation forward. Long term continuity in leadership and committee roles can provide an organisation with stability and continuity, on the one hand, but can also lead to stasis and closed-mindedness in the wrong hands. The principal of 'Buggins's turn', to fill important leadership roles, is not one which can sustain itself over the long term. The willing volunteer is indeed worth a thousand souls pressed into service, but an organisation will soon reach crisis point if it tries to live on its good intentions. I hope that friends will be energised to serve the organisation with whatever they have to offer, not least their opinions and constructive ideas, but also help to establish its longevity by identifying and recruiting the talent which might help it to grow and prosper in the future.

FONA must guard against the pressure to make itself simply an extension of the Archives service, which can usefully fill the gap that local government financial stringency has created. That was never its original purpose, nor should it be its future role. But FONA must also be more than a friendly meeting point and talking shop for like-minded enthusiasts. Through asking some hard questions about its future role and potential, FONA can helpfully forge an identity for itself quite unlike other comparable organisations in other parts of the country.

Not being blessed with multi-millionaires, I suspect

that the organisation will do well to consider itself less as a fund-raiser amongst the county's well-to-do and more as an advocate, an auxiliary, and an energiser, in drawing in new and different audiences to the archives - if they are willing to come. In striving to seek new and potentially diverse audiences (a commonly expressed mantra these days) we need to avoid alienating the doughty, committed and loyal friend who has committed their time and labour and goodwill to the organisation - and to the Archives - without expecting recognition or reward. It's a difficult path to tread, more akin to walking a tightrope than a straight line, and it's not one for which there are easy solutions. All that can be said is that now is the time for FONA to reconsider how to set about doing it.

Two areas of membership which I hope might be augmented in future are corporate members and staff and volunteers. There are perfectly acceptable reasons why none of these categories of archive user might have felt comfortable in joining FONA or actively supporting it beyond what they already contribute to the Archives service. I suspect that corporate organisations and depositors could be encouraged to think it part of their social responsibility agenda to join the organisation, especially considering the financial benefits in-kind they reap from having their records cared for and preserved by the Archives in perpetuity. Perhaps it can be written into deposit agreements to become a corporate member of FONA, at least for ten years after initial deposit?

Staff of course are the lifeblood of the Archives service and a constituency who have often expressed views about the nature of FONA, its activities and its programme. Perhaps it would be useful to have more direct evidence of staff becoming friends than hitherto? Staff, after all, have an investment in the Archives quite unlike any other user constituency. In different ways, so too do the many volunteers who provide valuable service to the Archives, in conserving, flattening and cleaning documents, or in converting the old typed lists into computer-searchable catalogues. What the barriers to membership are for volunteers probably requires more careful exploration than we have managed in the recent past, but it may become essential, especially if FONA was ever asked to take on a larger role in recruiting and helping organise the volunteer programme.

I hope that all of this does not sound like precepts from the headmaster on his retirement to greener pastures, for such is not my intention. My experience of working with you over the past seven years has been an absolute delight. I was much taken by the phrase which Tony Benn used when he decided to give up being an MP after fifty years' service - in order, as he put it, to devote more time to politics and more freedom to do so. In much the same way, I have given up chairmanship of FONA, to spend more time in the Archives. I wish you all the greatest success in future in continuing to face the challenges which we have been confronting in our past.

Your New Committee

Chair

Ruth Imeson, Heritage Services Manager, Inspire. This is a transitional arrangement during the review and resilience exercise that the Committee will be undertaking

Vice-Chair

Elizabeth Robinson

Secretary

Judith Mills. Judith was previously the Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Treasurer and Membership Secretary

David Anderson was Acting Secretary for 2017 and 2018 - he and Judith have swapped roles

Programme Secretary

Peter Hammond

Newsletter Editor

Judith Mills, taking over from Richard Gaunt

Committee Members

June Cobley, Cherry Knight, Alan Marshall

Up the Flue

On 19 January 2019 (which just happened to be my birthday) Bob Massey gave FONA a whistle-stop tour through the history of chimney sweeps which was at times heart-wrenching and at others thoroughly chim-chim cheree - cheery!

He began by explaining the development of chimneys from holes in roofs, through smoke hoods to chimneys as we would recognise them which appeared in large houses at the end of the 12th-century. They were common in 'ordinary' houses from the 16th-century onwards. By the early 17th century, the plight of sweeps was used by Shakespeare as an allegory for death - they both 'come to dust' (Cymbeline).



Bob Massey with Programme Secretary, Peter Hammond. Bob has published several books on the history of Arnold and Mapperley, two of which are displayed by Peter.

Not only were there more houses with chimneys but increasingly houses had multiple chimneys, often built at difficult angles in order to fit into the building, and they became narrower. It was, of course, important that chimneys were swept because of the fear of fire but the increasingly small chimneys - sometimes as little as 9 inches x 9 inches - meant that 'climbing boys' had to be small as well. They were often orphans, sold by the parish as apprentices at about the age of 6 or even as young as four. Their working conditions were notoriously bad. Although their apprenticeships required them to be clothed and fed, washed once a week and attend church, these regulations were usually ignored. A bath might happen once a year and growth was stunted by underfeeding. Apprentices frequently had to crawl up chimneys, like a caterpillar, wearing almost nothing but a cap over their face to protect them from the soot. Even



undernourished children could get stuck in tight spaces when a fire might be lit underneath them to encourage them to move. They might even die from suffocation and their deaths were usually recorded as 'Accidental'.

By the end of the 18th century, partially inspired by the movement against slavery, in an attempt to improve conditions and impose a minimum age for apprentice sweeps the Chimney Sweepers Act was passed in 1788; but as before, the regulations were generally ignored. A Parliamentary Inquiry at the beginning of the 19th century discovered neglect, physical deformity, asthma and eye infections. Throughout that century, however, conditions did begin to change, albeit slowly, as societies and newspapers lobbied for better conditions for sweeps. Some improvement was made when George Smart devised the first jointed 'Sweeps brush' that we are familiar with today, instead of the short hand-held brush which climbing boys used; the minimum age was increased to 14 and then 21, and building regulations changed the size and shape of chimneys. Attitudes to the treatment of children were also changing. In 1833 a master sweep was imprisoned for 6 months for beating his boy and by the 1860s, the police could arrest masters not complying with the legislation; in 1875 they issued licences to sweeps.

Over time - as the 'brush-system' of sweeping replaced climbing boys - the public character of chimney sweeps changed, influenced by royal patronage after a sweep halted George II's horse when shied at a barking dog - George declared that sweeps were lucky. Since then, they've been associated with other good luck symbols like four-leaf clovers and have become an essential element of a society wedding. Their personality is now very far away from the down-trodden urchin and much closer to the cheery sweep of Mary Poppins.

Making a Drama out of our Documents

Karen Winyard

At The Workhouse we often use drama to provide visitors with an insight into life under the Poor Law. We always rely on the records held at both Nottinghamshire Archives and The National Archives to inform our scripts and performances, because these records are where we can hear the actual voices of the people whose lives we recreate. This year we added a new dimension to that relationship thanks to some highly creative and dedicated students from Nottingham Trent University.

A group of third year students from the Theatre Design degree course chose The Workhouse for one of their final assignments: to create and design a site specific performance and costume, exploring the theme of mental health through stories inspired by actual case histories. This alone was exciting as it led me to discover a wealth of records attached to Sneinton Asylum that related to pauper lunatics from the Southwell Poor Law Union. I was able to provide the students with a number of new case studies in addition to that of Henry Stanley previously researched by Derek Wileman.

Three of the students chose to focus on the role of words in their designs and arranged to meet me at Nottinghamshire Archives so they could take out reader's cards and see the original source material.

Chrissie Burton developed the story of Mary Trynor, a young

orphan who struggled to cope with learning in the Workhouse Schoolroom and was so disruptive she was taken out of the Girls' School altogether. Using photographs of the calligraphy of the Workhouse Clerk, Chrissie fabricated pieces of slate to echo the writing slates used in the Schoolroom. These were inscribed with the words used to label Mary, such as lunatic, idiot and imbecile, and attached to Mary's costume. Chrissie also fabricated the Schoolroom's window and used more words on the (paper) panes. This barred window eventually becomes Mary's word cage at the end of the performance.



Volunteer Karen Winyard performing Mary Trynor's story.

Katy Goodwin was intrigued by the experience of Elizabeth Rhodes, a former patient at the Asylum who later entered the Workhouse where she spent the rest of her life as an inmate labelled as an idiot of weak mind

from birth. Elizabeth was also described as "dirty in her habits" as she was incontinent. Katy was struck by the importance attached to keeping Elizabeth quiet and the fact that she never had the chance to tell her story. She designed a costume with the words and phrases used to label Elizabeth threaded through it. These were pulled out and discarded during the performance while the audience heard a recording of two women from the 20th and 21st centuries talking about their experiences of mental illness. Finally the costume is shed altogether to reveal a white dress beneath - a clean page where a fresh start can be made - while Elizabeth's plight is told.



NTU drama student Ruth Baker performing Elizabeth Rhodes's story.

Molly Williams approached the brief from a different angle. She was interested in the experiences of the paid officers at The Workhouse who all had to cope with caring for inmates with

mental health problems without adequate resources. She chose to tell the story of one of the Matrons, the widowed Mary Herring, and created a costume that was covered in documents to symbolise the burdens of the work involved. Molly wrote, "My concept for this piece was an individual who 'buries' themselves in their work, because they do not know how else to cope with their grief or situation. The lanterns are symbolic of shedding light on history, and the patchy sewing on her clothes represent her 'falling apart at the seams'."



Volunteer Ann Keen performing Mary Herring's story.

Taking part in this annual project with Nottingham Trent University is always one of the highlights of my year at The Workhouse. This is the first time, though, that the students have taken the trouble to visit the Archives and examine the documents we use in our research, taking inspiration from them as physical objects as well as sources of information. So 2019 has been extra special for me and it was a pleasure and privilege to work with these talented young women.



Katy, Molly and Chrissie.

FONA Members' News

The Heritage Fund Application

We heard at the end of March that, unfortunately, our application for a Resilience Grant had been unsuccessful. The Heritage Fund (formerly called the Heritage Lottery Fund) has reorganised its grants and the criteria on which decisions are made. Our application was one of a huge

number that were submitted before the schemes came into force. The Committee is in discussion with the Heritage Fund to get detailed feedback and it will then decide whether or not to reapply under the new criteria.

Free tickets for FONA members

As you should all know, Individual

Members (and Joint Members) of FONA can apply for a limited number free tickets to the Friday afternoon talks organised by The Archives. Unfortunately, someone who is not a FONA member has regularly applied for Free tickets depriving true members of a seat. Consequently, we have had to review the process for ticket allocation.

From now on, if you request a ticket at the desk in The Archives, you may be asked to show your membership card. If you apply on-line using Eventbrite, you will now have to enter your Membership Number (on your membership card) into the application form. By using the Eventbrite system Members enter into a contract with the Archives that allows us to share names and membership numbers (but no other personal information) with Nottinghamshire Archives for the purposes of verification.

We would also ask that you do not 'block-book' for all the talks on the programme and, if it turns out you can't make it, please let The Archives know so that the ticket can be released to someone else. (Please note: this offer does

not apply to Institutional and Corporate Members.)

Our latest donation

It was a well-known fact that Richard Gaunt 'toured' with



a folding music stand that he used as a lectern. This was much commented on, particularly as The Archives did not possess a lectern. This has now been rectified as FONA latest donation is a music stand just like Richard's. It should

be on-show at all future talks and, I'm sure will be appreciated by all speakers.

Madelaine Scott

Many of you will remember Madelaine Scott, who passed away earlier this year. She was a regular face at FONA events and spoke at our 'bring a document' meetings about her collection of theatre memorabilia which she had donated to The Archives. She will be missed, and our condolences go to her family.

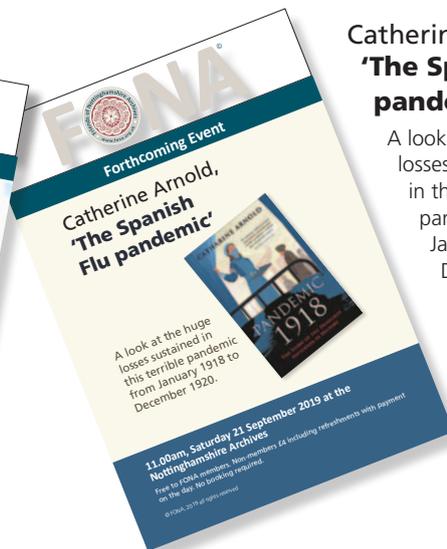
Recovering from surgery

You'll all be delighted to know that both Sheila Leeds and Howard Parker are recovering well from their recent surgery

The next FONA events

A visit to St Mary's in the Lace Market

Meet there at 11.00am for a guided tour. **Saturday 20 July 2019.**



Catherine Arnold, 'The Spanish Flu pandemic'

A look at the huge losses sustained in this terrible pandemic from January 1918 to December 1920.

11.00am, Saturday 21 September 2019 at the Nottinghamshire Archives.



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If you would like to contribute articles to the FONA Newsletter please contact Judith Mills, Secretary & Newsletter Editor. Please submit your contributions by 01 October 2019.

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