

## Nottinghamshire County Archives : Friday January 20<sup>th</sup> 2012



We recently had the pleasure of a visit to the Nottinghamshire County Archives – a veritable treasure-house of interest and information on our doorstep! Some members of the group are long-time users of this amazing resource, whilst for others it was a first visit: “What a fascinating couple of hours” was a typical comment. We were welcomed by Chris Weir who, with group leader Vic Taylor, had worked hard to plan and deliver a programme for the morning which gave a fascinating insight into the resources and work of the Archives, with a particular emphasis on heraldry.

We started in the open reference section, the Search Room, where the “Visitations” (the Heralds’ authentications of coats of arms, county by county, in the 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> centuries) are stored. Chris Weir explained how the resources are organised and, to start us off on our researches, Vic had prepared some individual short tasks on the Visitations, investigations which will be followed up in our next session. This was a great way to get some “hands-on” experience and to highlight just what can be discovered when you know where to look! Vic has been delighted that some members kept whittling away at these tasks over the weekend following our trip, even without the texts on which they were centred – such effort from them (deserving a Gold Star from Vic!) will help provide us all with a lead-in to future sessions, like our next one on February 17<sup>th</sup> in the Feignies Room & then our outing on March 16<sup>th</sup> to Flintham Parish Church.



The group at work on their ‘Visitations’ tasks in the open access Search Room

Later, we were taken into one of the storerooms is kept (in quite a cool temperature!). Chris Weir of items are kept here: documents, posters, paintings, as required and it is clear that a huge amount of care We were fascinated to see the 12<sup>th</sup> century charter Plantagenet kings) allowing the townspeople the charter bears remnants of the original seal, more plastic seal on the more recently granted charter of



where so much of the material held by the Archives told us all sorts of interesting things about what sort of journals etc. Archive staff retrieve items from here is taken in looking after so many valuable artefacts. (1155) granted by Henry 2<sup>nd</sup> (the first of the right to hold a Saturday market in Nottingham. The impressive, as Chris Weir pointed out, than the Queen Elizabeth 2<sup>nd</sup>!



Chris Weir's anecdote about an eccentric character

Another interesting artefact in the storeroom was the diary of a lady who once lived in a grand town house (now home to Jamie Oliver's Italian restaurant) and who, amongst other observations, kept a rather gossipy note of the comings and goings of Society! The coat of arms of this lady's family is still visible at the entrance to the restaurant.

We moved on to another room where various items of heraldic interest relating to local families had been set out for us.



Looking at the array of objects & artefacts for us to handle

Again, Chris and Vic helpfully explained aspects of what was on display, much of which was the work of other "amateur" enthusiasts who have an interest in family history and heraldry. Fascinating stuff!



Just one of the items in the rich display of documents & artefacts

As the morning was nearing its end, our final treat was to be shown the Conservation Room, where a small team of skilled experts work to conserve items of historical interest that are acquired by the Archives. We were given some details about methods and processes that are used in conservation work (such as making sure to use exactly the right kind of paper), and a glimpse of what can be achieved to repair, reconstruct or retrieve information from items which

have suffered the various ravages of time. The use of old methods and equipment, where appropriate, alongside the latest technology and “the remarkable skills of the people working there” enable some amazing results to be achieved by the conservationists.



**Chris hosts a selection demonstrating conservation methods & problems**

Our host, Chris Weir, brought our visit to a close by giving more details about just how easy it is to access what the Archives can offer. (There is no charge to visit and use the archives – public access is given to the Search Room, and original artefacts and documents may be accessed by joining – again, free - as a Reader). It was a truly interesting, inspirational morning and a real eye-opener for some! Following on from our trip to Thrumpton Hall last October, Vic Taylor has, once again, organised a brilliant visit for the group and thanks are due to him, as well as Chris Weir, for all the preparation and effort that they put into making it such a memorable experience! Vic emphasises that Chris provided not only all that went well beyond



The outing gave us members discussed of sessions from July, a look into Heraldry now benefit, as an subject in new ways, we are doing.

“lots of ideas to explore”, and thus fits in with what a few afterwards about continuing on from the present programme in the group’s spirit of “Exploring”. Just as this visit gave us from a different angle and in a new context, we could well ongoing group, from tackling similar basic aspects of the and thus make it possible for new members to slot into what

More information about Nottingham Archives can be found on its website:  
[www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/archives](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/archives)

*Sue Acons, with other members’ contributions slotted in - Jan 2012*