

## Exhibitions and Displays

The 50th anniversary of the admission of life peers to the House of Lords was marked by an exhibition in the Royal Gallery entitled *A Changing House: The Life Peerages Act 1958*. The exhibition ran from 12th June to 26th September 2008 and was opened by the Lord Speaker. 100,000 visitors to the Palace on line of route tours had the opportunity to view it.

The life peers created by virtue of the 1958 Life Peerages Act included women, who were thereby allowed to sit in the House of Lords for the first time. The exhibition highlighted original documents from the Parliamentary Archives and works of art from the Palace of Westminster Collections. The artefacts on display included the Life Peerages Act 1958, the Test Roll from 1958 showing the signatures of the first life peers and a banner unfurled by suffragettes from the Ladies' Gallery of the House of Commons in 1908. Visitors were also able to view newsreel footage of the first televised State Opening of Parliament in 1958 and listen to audio through a 1950s telephone.

We were pleased to loan four of our most iconic documents, including the Death Warrant of Charles I, to the British Library's Taking Liberties exhibition. The exhibition attracted 97,000 visitors between October 2008 and March 2009.



## Who Do You Think You Are?

In September 2008 we featured in the popular BBC1 programme *Who Do You Think You Are?* when model and TV personality Jodie Kidd was seen visiting the Parliamentary Archives to discover more about her great-grandfather Sir Rowland Hodge. Jodie was surprised to find a letter to David Lloyd George from the private secretary of King George V, written in 1922, expressing disgust that Hodge, who had been convicted of 'a most disgraceful case of food hoarding' during the First World War, had been awarded a baronetcy. The programme was seen by more than 6 million viewers.

## Online Resources

The exhibition marking the 1958 Life Peerages Act was complemented by the launch of an online learning resource providing access to a wealth of archival material relating to the history of the membership of both Houses of Parliament and more detailed information about the 1958 Act. The website includes video interviews with the Lord Speaker and 4 other current life peers who discuss the significance of the Life Peerages Act and its impact on the House of Lords: [www.parliament.uk/lifepeeragesact](http://www.parliament.uk/lifepeeragesact)



## Public Services

During the year there were 980 visits to the search room (last year 1133). The total number of items produced for the search room decreased to 5412 (7436), representing an average of 5.5 items per searcher.

There were 498 (507) new searchers, of whom 2% were from the media, 25% came for official or business purposes, and 73% were pursuing research for academic or personal reasons. Registered research topics for new searchers included African participation in the slave trade, the history of diving in the 18th century, Parliamentary reporting 1738-1836, Smithfield Market 1750-1840, English influences on the Japanese Parliament in the 19th century, Great War artists, the voting patterns of Commons' members 1950-1979, climate change, and research for a film about Sherlock Holmes set in the House of Lords.

Staff answered a total of 3500 remote enquiries (last year 3724) by email, letter, telephone and fax. This represents an average of 14.1 (15.1) enquiries per working day. Of these enquiries, 46% were answered within one working day and 98% within 10 working days. An additional 2121 (last year 2085) 'quick' telephone calls and emails were handled but not logged, a daily average of 8.6 (8.5).

During the year we were pleased to welcome 63 groups of visitors who were given talks about the work of the office and tours of the repository.

The decrease in the number of search room visits and enquiries can be attributed to the range of online resources which are now available such as Hansard, our provision of information via FAQs and more focused enquiries resulting from searches of our catalogue.

## People and Parliament: Connecting with Communities

During the year preparations began for the first phase of the Connecting with Communities project, a major outreach activity in collaboration with Parliamentary Outreach. The project is being launched in the summer of 2009, with an exhibition in Westminster Hall and community-based activities with the first of our regional partners, Norfolk Record Office. Our other partners are: Birmingham Archives and Heritage, the Centre for Kentish Studies, Glamorgan Record Office and Tyne & Wear Archives.



## Find out more about the Parliamentary Archives

[www.parliament.uk/archives](http://www.parliament.uk/archives)

### Search our online catalogue

[www.portcullis.parliament.uk](http://www.portcullis.parliament.uk)

### Ask a question

Parliamentary Archives,  
Houses of Parliament,  
London SW1A 0PW

E-mail: [archives@parliament.uk](mailto:archives@parliament.uk)  
Tel: 020 7219 3074

### Discover our Learning resources

[www.parliament.uk/livingheritage](http://www.parliament.uk/livingheritage)

[www.parliament.uk/lifepeeragesact](http://www.parliament.uk/lifepeeragesact)

[www.parliament.uk/slavetrade](http://www.parliament.uk/slavetrade)

[www.parliament.uk/gunpowderplot](http://www.parliament.uk/gunpowderplot)

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/)

**Welcome to our review of the year that ended on 31 March 2009. This year we have adopted a new approach to describing our activities which we hope is more accessible and which will enable us to reach a wider audience with news about the work of the Parliamentary Archives.**

**We would like to take this opportunity of congratulating Stephen Ellison, Clerk of the Records 1999-2008, on the award of an OBE in the 2009 New Year Honours list. Stephen, who joined the House of Lords Record Office, as the Parliamentary Archives was then known, in 1969, has been succeeded by Dr Caroline Shenton.**

## Records Management

The Parliamentary Archives supports offices and departments of both Houses of Parliament by providing advice, services and tools to assist with the management of their records. A key focus in 2008-2009 was to improve the management of records created and held electronically by both Houses, and a project was launched to clean up legacy records held on network drives and new guidance was developed and distributed. A risk-based audit of records management practices has been underway since October 2008. The audit is designed to examine and evaluate compliance with the Parliamentary Records Management Policy and to formulate practical recommendations for improving current practices. The Archives is also leading on a project to identify and safeguard vital records and continued to represent the records management interests of both Houses on the SPIRE programme, which is considering better management of information across Parliament.



## Freedom of Information

During the year the Archives received a total of 18 requests which were treated as requests under the Freedom of Information Act. Depositing offices and departments were asked to review the relevant papers and as a result the records were in 4 cases fully opened, in 3 cases partially released, and one case was fully exempt from disclosure. The remaining requests related to material not held in the Archives or already in the public domain.

## Accessions

A total of 173 new accessions were received from the offices and departments of the House of Commons and the House of Lords, as well as from external sources by gift or purchase. The internal deposits included a collection of records relating to the Serjeant at Arms, including volumes detailing fees and payments. These date from 1813 to the 1950s, which means some of them survived the Palace fire in 1834 - indeed some of them show signs of charring! We were able to acquire by purchase 3 manuscript volumes which once belonged to Speaker Charles Abbot (Speaker of the House of Commons 1802-1817). These record parliamentary procedure, precedent and modifications of practice and complement other items relating to Abbot amongst our collections. A photograph of women MPs on the House of Commons Terrace in November 1931 (below) was also acquired by purchase. More detailed information about accessions during 2008-09 can be found at [www.parliament.uk/archives](http://www.parliament.uk/archives)



## Collection Care

During the year a new contract with the British Library for the provision of collection care services came into effect. Under the new agreement, the team of six specialist conservators which, for the first time, includes a full-time manager, is now providing a much wider range of services including preventative preservation as well as practical conservation. They are able to provide support in key areas such as environmental monitoring, exhibitions and displays, collection surveys and condition reports. In order to deliver these new services as effectively as possible the team, now re-named Collection Care, has recently commenced a programme of professional training, development and research which will also enable them to offer a wide range of preservation advice to other offices across both Houses of Parliament.

Volunteers from the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) have continued to provide valuable support for our collection care activities by re-packaging a number of record series in new conservation materials.

## Cataloguing

73 of the 173 new accessions received were fully catalogued by the end of March 2009. Other cataloguing activity included work on several series of modern committee and office records of both Houses and we also began to address the backlog of House of Commons unprinted papers. A total of 2542 new catalogue records were created.

There were a total of 126,495 visits to Portcullis, our online catalogue, during the year.



## Digital Preservation

Parliament took the first steps to implement its digital preservation strategy by initiating a project to put in place an appropriate environment for the long term preservation of its valuable digital resources. One of the first activities involved rescuing a series of image files which were at risk as a result of being stored on fragile media; the files were transferred to more secure storage where they will be held until a digital preservation repository is established in the later stages of the project. Work in guiding approaches to digital preservation across Parliament continued with the publication of our Digital Preservation Policy and an updated Acquisition Policy, which reflected the emerging need to allow for future accessions of digital resources. Two tools were also made available for project managers and system developers to help them to assess the digital preservation needs of their projects.