

# Speech: Minister for Digital and Culture Matt Hancock's speech at the launch of 'National Archives: Archives Unlocked'

Thank you Jeff for the introduction and Jude for your kinds words.

It's great to be back at the Southbank Centre today – which Jude will be pleased to hear has been my most visited cultural institution since joining DCMS.

As Jude so rightly said, this is a very exciting time for our nation's archives. Knowledge and information are valued currencies in these global times. Thanks to the opportunities of new technology, we enjoy mass digital access to records ranging from the iconic – the Domesday Book – to Cabinet minutes that help us understand how and why previous governments made their most affecting decisions. And also to more personal records – soldiers letters home during WW1 and WW2, insights into our sporting lives, boardroom battles, births, deaths and property ownership.

At the same time, archives are feeding a renaissance across our world-beating creative industries and wider afield, as old and once forgotten ideas and approaches inspire new ones in business, fashion, music, art and across our communities.

I imagine when some, maybe many of us hear the word archive we think of some cobwebby vault, where favoured experts and academics blow the dust from forgotten, mildewed files. But in this digital age, our history is accessible to everyone, no matter where they live or what they do. The potential of that, the significance of that, can't be understated. Mass digital access to physical records democratises our history and our collective understanding of who we are.

Archives Unlocked shines a light on the value of archives – framed around trust, enrichment and openness. It sets out ambitions for their future – so we all can fully exploit the immense riches of our archives, for the cultural, economic and intellectual common good.

So let us look at those key themes in turn. Trust, enrichment, and openness.

First trust.

As a democracy, we are strengthened by scrutiny and by being held to account.

Easy access to archives is central to this. It is a sad example, but the Hillsborough Inquiry is a good high-profile case of archival records helping to build a picture of past events to ensure justice now and in the future. 27 years after the loss of 96 lives at Hillsborough Football Stadium, a jury

found that the victims had been unlawfully killed, a ruling only made possible by the release in 2012 of 450,000 archived documents relating to the tragedy.

Trust and confidence in our public institutions are essential, and openness and scrutiny strengthen that trust.

Second enrichment.

Archives enrich society. Because art and knowledge enrich our lives. Any work of art, however ancient, when experienced for the first time is a current work for the beholder. Just as any little nugget of information is new to the person first discovering it.

In the age of Google, Spotify and YouTube, Instagram, Wikipedia where people expect ready access to the things that intrigue them, archives have never been more relevant. That inquisitiveness, that thirst to be entertained is there, ready to be met. And modern technology makes it so much easier to connect to the rich culture of the past and make it present.

And as times change forgotten works can suddenly become – or at the very least seem – relevant once more. I shall simply mention the phenomenal recent success of the neglected Sinclair Lewis novel *It Can't Happen Here*, which has lately topped several best seller lists – I assume you all know the background – and make no further comment.

Third and finally – openness.

Archives encourage a thirst for learning.

We have a wonderful array of archives across England and we want to see them made accessible to everyone, regardless of their background.

During my recent visit to The National Archives, I saw a primary school class learning about the Great Fire of London. Those kids were fascinated by the historical documents they saw, as the past came to life in front of them. Not literally, thank goodness.

But not everyone can easily get to Kew, or even to the other archives up and down the country, where children are being similarly thrilled and inspired. Adults too.

Digital enables access. Online archives can be accessed from anywhere – from the sofa, from a cafe, from the top deck of a bus. And in Government we're making sure that is literally true with our work to improve connectivity and infrastructure.

Until very recently it has always been the case that our archives had to be curated, so what was made available was still decided by persons other than the consumer. Digital can change that as people become able to search and explore on the basis of what matters to them, and that is a very exciting development.

It doesn't mean I don't fully appreciate the great work of our archivists and curators. As excited as I am by the opportunities for democratisation digital technologies offer, I greatly value the specialised work of maintaining and expanding our nation's archives.

You need only look here, at The Southbank Centre's archive. It is a treasure trove of information and artefacts dating back to the 1951 and the Festival of Britain. Dedicated staff and volunteers are working – here at the Archive Studio – to make available online, the 100 cubic metres of documents, oral histories, programmes, photographs, posters, artworks and objects found in the archive.

These are providing content for new and exciting events here at Southbank, both now and in the future. And I applaud their work.

So what's next?

Archives Unlocked is inspiring and it is ambitious. Unlocking the potential of our archives sector will require focus on building digital capacity, strengthening resilience and demonstrating impact. But there is an appetite for change. The National Archives, as sector lead, will work in partnership with archives and stakeholders across and beyond the sector, to realise the ambitions of this Archives Unlocked scheme.

Together with £750,000 from Heritage Lottery Fund, and funding from The National Archives, a total of £1 million pounds will be used to help train a new generation of digital archivists and to encourage new and innovative practice.

And as we digitise our collections, who knows what neglected treasures will be rediscovered?

Ultimately, we will unlock the full potential of our amazing, rich and diverse archives and the records they preserve and protect.

We will make it easier for people to explore and learn and be inspired.

We look forward to working with you all here today, to make it happen.

Thank you.

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**[News story: Bravery of 3 World War 2 soldiers shot for escaping from a POW](#)**

# camp finally recognised after nearly 75 years

A rededication service for Private (Pte) Lionel Brown, 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment and Ptes Daniel Hollingsworth and Thomas White, 1st Battalion The Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) has taken place almost 75 years after they were shot near Ponte Del Diavolo, Italy after escaping from a prisoner of war (POW) camp.

They were given a dignified service on Tuesday 28 March 2017 at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Ancona War Cemetery in Italy. The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services was conducted by The Reverend Jonathon Daniel CF (UB) Royal Army Chaplain's Branch.

Sue Raftree, JCCC said:

These brave men were prisoners of war and being transported by the Germans when they were killed. The service today was to honour all 3 and to enable their families to have closure after over 70 years.

It has been a privilege for the Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre to organise this service.

Reverend Jonathon Daniel CF(UB) said:

In our act of rededication we finally, after many years, complete our duty to correctly mark the place where our brothers in arms are buried. Today we honour and remember our 3 comrades whose lives were taken so cruelly and so unnecessarily. May their story serve to harden our resolve to cherish human life and do all that we can to live peacefully with one another.

The Reverend Jonathon Daniel CF (UB) Royal Army Chaplain's Branch delivers the rededication service, Crown Copyright, All rights reserved

Some 6 months after escaping Camp 53 at the time of the Italian Armistice in September 1943, Pte Brown was joined by Ptes Hollingsworth and White on 5 March 1944 who were hiding in a nearby farm. En-route to Perchia they were accompanied by another man who they met known only to them as Adriano, thought also to be an escaped prisoner of war. Arriving at Perchia they made enquiries concerning the next expedition through enemy lines but no information was available so they went to a nearby farm for the night. Adriano left them stating he was going to sleep at another farm nearby but it

later transpired Adriano was a German soldier.

At approximately 5am the next morning a party of German soldiers raided the farm where they were hiding and all 3 were arrested. Immediately afterwards a neighbouring farm was raided and Sergeant Mario Mottes from a Belgian parachute regiment, was also arrested. The prisoners were then marched to a German post where they were questioned and finally placed under guard. On 10 March 1944 all 4 were being transported when their lorry was stopped at Ponte Del Diavolo and they were shot.

Family members who paid their respects included Alan Austin, nephew of Pte Brown. He said:

The uncertainty over the final resting place of our uncle Lionel is something that has troubled our family for many years.

It is comforting to know that his sacrifice for our country has been recognised with a full and moving military ceremony, and that we now have a point of focus for our remembrance.

Commander Neil Thompson OBE RN the Naval and Air Attaché from the British Embassy and representatives of the Parachute Regiment, Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment and the Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) also attended and paid their respects.

Commander (Cdr) Neil Thompson, Naval and Air Attaché British Embassy said:

I am proud and honoured to be representing the British Embassy at the rededication ceremony of 3 soldiers who lost their lives during the Italian Campaign under such tragic and dramatic circumstances in 1944. These 3 soldiers' dedication to duty by escaping from POW camps and trying to make their way back to fight again is indicative of the kind of war-winning spirit and courage found right across our great nation in the dark days of the Second World War.

It was really good to meet the families represented here today and I hope that we have given some comfort and closure to them. But above all, we have been able to give the soldiers themselves an identity and a lasting memory as they lie here in their final resting place just outside Ancona.

Three new headstones bearing each of the soldier's names have been provided by the CWGC, who will now care for their final resting place in perpetuity.

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## [Press release: New charity investigation: Child Survival Fund](#)

The Charity Commission, the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales, has opened a statutory inquiry into [Child Survival Fund, registered charity number 1116070](#).

The charity's objects include to relieve poverty, distress and suffering amongst children and young persons throughout the world.

The inquiry, which was opened on 9 February 2017, will look at the administration, governance and management of the charity by the trustees, in particular the extent to which the trustees have:

- complied with an action plan issued by the Commission in January 2016, which set out certain steps required to be taken by the trustees to resolve issues of concern about the charity's management and administration
- acted in the charity's best interests and acted in accordance with their legal duties
- responsibly managed the charity's resources and financial affairs, particularly with regard to the charity's significant debts, fundraising costs and the proportion of fundraising income applied directly for charitable purposes
- acted with reasonable care and skill in respect of its fundraising agreement with a US based direct mailing agency and associated risks to the charity's property
- adequately managed risks to the charity and protected the charity's reputation, especially with regards to the conduct and transparency of fundraising activities conducted by the charity or on its behalf

The Commission has a history of regulatory engagement with the charity regarding concerns over high fundraising costs and a significant debt owed to the direct mailing agency. The Commission undertook proactive monitoring of the charity amid further concerns about the charity's fragile financial position and the trustees' apparent failure and inability to address ongoing issues within the charity. Further, the trustees have failed to provide reassurance to the Commission with respect to an action plan issued to the charity in January 2016, which was designed to address these concerns.

It is the Commission's policy, after it has concluded an inquiry, to publish a report detailing what issues the inquiry looked at, what actions were undertaken as part of the inquiry and what the outcomes were. Reports of [previous inquiries](#) by the Commission are available on GOV.UK.

The charity's details can be viewed on the Commission's [online charity search tool](#).

Ends

PR 24/17

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## Notes to editors

1. [The Charity Commission](#) is the independent regulator of charities in England and Wales. To find out more about our work, see our [annual report](#).
  2. Search for charities on our [online register](#).
  3. Section 46 of the Charities Act 2011 gives the Commission the power to institute inquiries. The opening of an inquiry gives the Commission access to a range of investigative, protective and remedial legal powers.
  4. The Commission's decision to announce the opening of a statutory inquiry is based on whether it is in the public interest to do so and with consideration of our objective to increase public trust and confidence in charities.
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## [News story: Women's health tech firm attracts £4.8 million investment](#)

A funding round by 'fem-tech' business [Chiario](#) has attracted £4.8 million of external investment. This is to support the development of 3 more smart products addressing female health and wellbeing and help it expand into 25 countries.

Joining the round are [Octopus Ventures](#), a leading tech investor and [Allbright](#), a venture capital fund that invests in female entrepreneurs, amongst others. It brings Chiario's total capital to £9.6 million.

Innovate UK [awarded Chiario a grant](#) in its start-up phase, as it sought to leverage the latest developments in wearable technology and create a connected pelvic floor exercise tool, [Elvie](#).

## Exciting moment for tech for women

Tania Boler, chief executive and co-founder, said:

Women and consumer tech have never been a very exciting space for investors. There's been an assumption that women aren't early adopters of tech, which we're trying to prove isn't correct.

Now is an exciting moment for tech for women. There's a big feminist movement and a paradigm shift in technology and health.

Elvie is a kegel exercise tracker for the pelvic floor. Weakened pelvic floor muscles can cause more than half of all women's bladder, sex or prolapse problems. Women can use their smartphones to find out how to strengthen their muscles and monitor progress.

Within 6 months of the device going on sale Chiaro was making a profit. Last year the company reported direct sales of £800,000. It has recently struck deals with major retailers including John Lewis and Amazon.

## **Most promising startups**

Chiaro is part of Tech City UK's [Upscale](#) programme of 33 most promising startups. It has also received celebrity attention, with its product having featured on Gwyneth Paltrow's Goop website and been included in high-profile gift bags at the Academy Awards.

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## **[News story: Minister for Africa statement on the situation in the DRC](#)**

I am deeply concerned by the continued delay in implementing the 31 December 2016 political agreement in the DRC. Without progress it will be impossible for credible elections to be held this year leading to an historic peaceful transition of power, as is clearly the wish of the Congolese people.

The work of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO) to broker an agreement on remaining issues is highly commendable and so it is disappointing that the political parties failed to reach consensus by CENCO's deadline. EU Foreign Ministers are now actively considering sanctions against anyone blocking a peaceful solution, a move the UK fully supports.

I therefore call on all parties, and in particular President Kabila, to reach agreement as soon as possible. DRC's present and future is in grave danger; a peaceful transition can only be achieved if all sides show greater flexibility.