

**To whom it may concern: letters, log books, diaries and dispatches.**

**Innovative ways to highlight our hidden history resources.**

Report on the CILIP LSG South Study Day held on 21st March 2018 at CILIP HQ.

Introducing the 2018 Study Day, Norma Crowe (Local Studies Librarian at Medway Archives Centre and Chair of LSG South) likened the hidden resources we all have in our specialist collections to icebergs. What people may see from catalogue entries and other listings is merely a fraction of the wonderful resources available, with so much more hidden below the surface. The day's programme had therefore been planned to try to reveal some of the ingenuity with which hidden gems from such collections are being made available to wider audiences.

Liz Finn, an archivist from Kent History & Library Centre, launched the day with an infectiously enthusiastic talk about mycologist and botanical artist Anna Maria Hussey and the diary she wrote while on holiday in Dover in 1836 with her two small children and younger sister (Kate) to entertain an absent sister (Henrietta). The title of Liz's talk, and of the e-book which resulted from her project to publish the diary, was *Botany, boats and bathing machines*. Botany: Anna Maria was a keen student of natural history and she and her sister Kate explored the cliffs and surrounding countryside looking for geological and botanical specimens. Boats: the diary opens with an account of the journey including a sea voyage in a raging gale which Anna Maria relished but which made most of her companions sea-sick. Bathing machines: the diary includes a lively description of Kate wimping out on her first sea-bathing venture - with Kate's own footnote in pencil at the bottom of the page to her sister's unsympathetic description of the incident.

When she started reading the diary on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2006, Liz very soon realised that it would appeal to a wide audience and was keen to explore ways to get the diary published. Liz is a strong advocate of the sometimes-controversial view that publication is one of the core functions of an archive, a view which anyone listening to her talk about Anna Maria Hussey and seeing the lovely illustrations from the diary would find extremely hard to gainsay. Liz catalogued the diary, began to transcribe it, and suggested to her manager that it would be a good candidate for publication. Having discovered that Anna Maria had later become an accomplished mycological artist (her *Illustrations of British mycology : containing figures and descriptions of the funguses of interest and novelty indigenous to Britain / by Mrs. T. J. Hussey* were published in two series in 1847 and 1855) Liz embarked on extensive research about her in other archives including the Natural History Museum, the Royal Botanical Society's archives and the Wellcome Library. She also approached the *Dictionary of National Biography* suggesting that as a mycologist and botanical illustrator, Anna Maria was worthy of inclusion in the DNB. They agreed, and Liz's biography of "AMH" was published online on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2009

(<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/96688> - you should be able to sign in to read this with your library card number, nearly all UK public libraries subscribe to ODNB).

Liz's original vision was for a physical publication, and she outlined the key elements of her initial proposal. The resulting book should be affordable, attractive, and A5 size. It should contain an introduction including biographical information about Anna Maria, a description of Dover in 1836, an example of AMH's botanical illustrations and a description of the original diary. The text should be designed for ease and

comfort when reading, with alterations and interlineations from the original incorporated silently into the text. Liz acknowledged that this was an “unscholarly” approach, but felt strongly that it was the appropriate one in terms of reaching the intended audience: anyone interested in women’s history, in the history of Dover, in Victorian life and times, in “AMH” as a botanical illustrator, or who enjoys reading diaries and biography. The book should include all the illustrations from the original diary, whether they were Anna Maria’s own sketches and botanical drawings or the engravings she had culled from contemporary sources.

Various factors conspired to make taking the proposal for a printed publication forward unworkable at that time, but Liz isn’t one to give up lightly. In September 2010 she seized an opportunity to put a revised proposal forward, this time for publication as an e-book which would involve less financial risk and outlay. It would entail turning her transcript into an e-book separated into chapters with chapter headings, promoting the journal, and family history research of due diligence to ascertain that as far as could be established that there were no descendants of Anna Maria who might have a claim to the copyright.

As well as the transcription of the original diary, the resulting e-book includes biographical information about Anna Maria and her family; a summary of the diary; information about Dover in the 1830s extracted from a contemporary publication also held by Kent Archives; information about Anna Maria’s life in the years after she wrote this diary; notes on how the diary has been edited; notes to the text; acknowledgements; a copyright disclaimer; and of course, an index to persons, places and subjects, referenced to the original pagination of the diary. The text has been edited to be read straightforwardly for pleasure and to reflect what appears to have been the author’s final intentions, while retaining the original spelling and punctuation and including the original pagination. The notes are intended to provide the reader with enough background information to enjoy and understand the text, such as information about the authors and books Anna Maria writes about. They also cover changes in language use over the centuries which might cause a 21<sup>st</sup> century reader to misinterpret the meaning. For example, the phrase “being made love to” in the historical context of early 19thC language and manners would have been understood as being wooed or courted rather than as anything more physical.

Liz’s talk touched on the insight her subsequent research had given her into the more tragic and somewhat mysterious aspects of Anna Maria’s life which are not apparent from this lively diary written to entertain a younger sister. It seems likely that she had taken the children to the seaside in the hope that sea air would bring health benefits to one or more of the party, since two older children had already died – indeed, one was buried on the very day she had given birth to her baby daughter. Two more of her children were to die without attaining adulthood. She wrote (anonymously) a story entitled “Matrimony” which was published in Fraser’s Magazine in 1849. It is a strange tale of illegitimacy, bigamy, and adultery, and she explained in correspondence with clergyman and renowned mycologist Miles Joseph Berkeley that it was written as a way of relieving ‘personal feeling of the most painful kind’. Her youngest sister, Kate, died suddenly at the comparatively young age of 34 yrs. The brief biographical note handwritten by a younger relative in the front of Anna Maria’s diary tells the reader that Anna Maria herself died in Paris the following year, on 26 August 1853, where she was said to have been ‘left alone by her

husband, the Revd Dr Hussey, who was last heard of in Algiers'. Liz's research had revealed that Anna Maria died in an asylum near Paris, to which she had been committed by her son. It seems an inexplicably tragic end to the life of a lively and talented woman: maybe Liz will eventually discover more about the circumstances which led to such an ending, one which resulted in the second series of *Illustrations of British mycology* being published posthumously with considerably fewer plates than the first series.

Liz would love to find a picture of Anna Maria, so if anyone reading this report comes across one in the depths of their archive collection do please contact Liz c/o Kent History & Library Centre ( [historyandlibrarycentre@kent.gov.uk](mailto:historyandlibrarycentre@kent.gov.uk) ). She would also love to see an original of any of Anna Maria's mycological illustrations. Anna Maria herself expressed some disappointment at the quality of the lithography in *Illustrations of British mycology*, so if any originals have survived in good condition they could be rather special!

Asked about the process of turning the transcript into an e-book, Liz said she simply tucked everything into a word document and handed it over to her IT colleagues who she thinks turned it into a pdf file which they passed over to Overdrive.

Having listened to extracts from the diary and seen Liz's slides of some of the illustrations I was all set to go home and order a copy of the e-book to read the rest of the diary, but sadly it doesn't appear to be readily available. Liz has succeeded in bringing this hidden gem to a wider audience to the extent that Kent's library users can find the diary listed on their catalogue and borrow the e-book via BorrowBox or Overdrive, but e-books aren't (as far as I know) available to a wider audience through inter-library loan as a printed publication would have been. Anyone researching "AMH" will find references to the original diary on <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> which incorporates the Access to Archives database, and of course in the sources listed in her ODNB entry. But unlike Hannah Jones' transcription of *The life and times of a Charlbury Quaker: the journals of William Jones, 1784-1818* (ISBN 9780902509788), or *Miss Weeton, governess and traveller* edited by Wigan archivist Alan Roby (ISBN 9781526205537), the researcher won't find out about Anna Maria's diary from a search of those key starting points the British Library, Bodleian or COPAC catalogues. Is it too much to hope that some time in the future a second edition of *Botany, boats and bathing machines*, incorporating some of Liz's later research into the life of Anna Maria Hussey, may see the light of day in both printed and e-book format, enabling this lively account by a gifted observer and naturalist to reach an even wider audience?

Our next speaker was Jane Bramwell who is Head of the Tate Library, Archive & Collection Access team. Jane told us about the Tate's 5-year (2012-2017) HLF-funded Access & Archives project and in particular, about the crowd-sourcing transcription tool Annotate which was developed as part of this ambitious project.

The Tate Archive has just 4 permanent members of staff to run the world's second-largest art archive. The many diaries, letters and sketchbooks within their collection can add immeasurably to the knowledge about and understanding of the lives and creative processes of British artists – both British-born and émigré artists – but

making them more readily available to researchers required an equally creative approach.

The original idea was to develop a transcription tool which could be used by about 20 volunteers to help make some of the Tate's 17,000 handwritten archives more widely accessible with as little intervention as could be managed from the library and archive staff. In the event, the project's reach extended from 20 to 20,000 volunteers, laid the foundations for a growing bank of archive material which can be browsed online and resulted in a website which has already reached over 1 million online visitors. Archive digitisation and outreach has continued at the Tate since the inaugural project, with volunteers still involved in a variety of capacities from cataloguing and transcribing to giving guided tours of the Tate Britain building.

The crowd-sourcing transcription tool AnnoTate (<https://anno.tate.org.uk>) which was key to the success of this project was developed in collaboration with Oxford University and their Zooniverse platform (<http://www.ox.ac.uk/content/z-zooniverse>). It was clear from the start that no OCR software could transcribe these handwritten documents successfully and that a high level of human intervention was required. Apart from other considerations, the archives come in a great variety of shape and size, not to mention legibility. The AnnoTate software presents transcribers with a complete photograph of each page which they then transcribe one line at a time. Five matching transcriptions are logged and aggregated to ensure accuracy. The software can accommodate complexities such as embedded images which can be masked out for the annotation, and can allow for blank pages. Transcribers keep in touch with each other through an online community network which also provides a place for troubleshooting, such as asking for suggestions from fellow transcribers when you can't read the artist's handwriting.

The next step is quality assurance checking from a core team of staff from the Tate – and the good news is that so far, no transcripts have had to be rejected. Realistically though, the archivists aren't able to check through more than 2,000 pages per year, so other options (including possibly enlisting help from recognised experts in particular subjects) are also being explored. After that comes all the work with the digital team to add the transcripts to the web site alongside the digital images, which will take about 2 years to complete.

The Tate's *Archives & Access* project has increased access to the Tate Archives, has helped reach new audiences, developed online modes of participation and engagement, and resulted in some open source software (visible on Github at <https://github.com/zooniverse/AnnoTate>) which will enable other materials and collections to be transcribed as an outcome of this project's investment.

Jane's presentation concluded with an example of the videos on the *Animating the Archives* collection on the Tate's website. The one we saw was *Kurt Schwitters Interned*, which gives a brief but very moving impression of the period during WWII when artist Kurt Schwitters and art historian Klaus Hinrichsen were among the thousands of German and Austrian nationals interned on the Isle of Man. This film and the others in the same series can be found by following the link "this video series" on <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/archive/collections>.

After lunch Tony Pilmer chaired an open forum during which participants who had rashly let slip something about projects they were involved with were encouraged to share their experiences with the rest of the group. A delegate from Kew told us about the *Joseph Hooker Correspondence Project* ([www.kew.org/explore-our-collections/correspondence-collections/joseph-hooker-collections](http://www.kew.org/explore-our-collections/correspondence-collections/joseph-hooker-collections)) through which they are conserving, digitising, transcribing and making available online the personal and scientific correspondence of Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911), an important but often overlooked 19th century naturalist and explorer. Around 1,100 of the 2,000+ personal letters written by JDH and held in the Kew Archives are now online and they have 23 remote volunteers continuing to transcribe the remainder. A member of the library and archives staff spends one day a week digitising the collection volume by volume. There is a transcription protocol for the volunteers to use (<https://www.kew.org/sites/default/files/Transcription%20Protocol%20v.1.1.pdf>) which covers layout; how to record deletions or crossings-out; how to make end-notes to provide clarification or give information about people or places mentioned, etc, and the archivist leading the project finds she rarely has to intervene. The volunteers have a Facebook group which they manage themselves. Kew's collection of JDH's letters is extensive because there were plans before he died to write a biography so his second wife wrote to lots of his correspondents asking for letters he'd written to them to be sent back. Kew has also recently purchased a large collection of correspondence from their 3<sup>rd</sup> Director General so there is no shortage of work once the present project is complete!

Another contributor described a project to digitise and transcribe a collection of around 2,100 letters (apologies – I failed to catch the details). At the end of the project they were left with a collection of about 50 letters from one correspondent which were in “all the languages under the sun” so assigning the outstanding element of the project to any one person to transcribe was simply not possible. They approached SOAS for help with some of the items, and work on this inevitably continued well beyond the end of the main project.

Frank James commented on the huge digital collection of Victorian scientific correspondence which promises to be available in a few years' time as a result of the many research, publication and digitisation projects which have come to fruition in recent decades.

A query was raised about using OCR. The response from a participant with experience of using ABBYY Fine-reader indicated that this does require quite a lot of input. An accuracy rate of 60% - 70% had been claimed recently on a blog post for the handwritten text recognition software behind the READ (Recognition and Enrichment of Archival Documents) project's new digital service platform *Transcribus* (see <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/-/transcription-of-archival-documents-reinvented>).

The *Transcribe Bentham* project at UCL (<http://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/transcribe-bentham/>) was mentioned briefly, before a practical query about non-digital resources was raised. The company used by Medway Archives has ceased to offer microfilming services and Norma would be interested to hear from anyone still microfilming their local newspapers about any company still able to offer such a service. One of the key reasons for wishing to continue to provide surrogate copies of newspapers on

microfilm is that it is a reasonably durable format. Colleagues from Chippenham offered to forward details of the service they use, but if anyone reading this has an alternative contact do please forward details to Medway Archives.

Before we resumed the more formal part of the programme, there was time for a brief commercial break to publicise the LSG (National) Conference 2018 at University of Leicester on 9<sup>th</sup> July on *Oral History and Sound Heritage*.

Having rearranged chairs into a suitable formation for viewing powerpoint slides, attention was turned to our next speaker, Professor Frank James. In addition to his work as Head of Collections & Heritage and Professor of the History of Science at the Royal Institution, Frank is one of the team of scholars currently editing the collected letters of Sir Humphry Davy (1778–1829). The first stage of this project was the launch in 2011 of the Davy Letters website [www.davy-letters.org.uk](http://www.davy-letters.org.uk) which currently has details of 1444 letters held in archives around the world, over 200 of which are held by the Royal Institution.

Frank gave us an overview of Sir Humphry Davy's impressive career from humble origins as the son of a Cornish woodcarver and yeoman farmer to President of the Royal Institution. Following the death of his father when he was 16 years old, he was apprenticed by his widowed mother to an apothecary-surgeon. He subsequently moved to Bristol to become an assistant to Thomas Beddoes, former lecturer in chemistry at Oxford University, at Beddoes' Pneumatic Institution. His experiments there led him to develop a breathing apparatus and to discover the anesthetic properties of nitrous oxide – laughing gas.

Davy was also a poet, and became friends with Coleridge and Southey. He was asked by Wordsworth to oversee the printing and correct the punctuation of the second (1800) edition of his *Lyrical Ballads*. In August 1805 Davy and Walter Scott met at Coleridge's cottage in Grasmere and climbed Helvellyn together. By this time however, Davy's primary interest had swung from Early Romanticism to science: his comments on this expedition relate to the rock composition rather than the beauty of the landscape.

In 1801 Davy moved to London to take up a post at the Royal Institution, where he became the most popular lecturer of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He was appointed as the Royal Institution's Professor of Chemistry the following year.

Davy's correspondence, documenting his work on electrochemistry and electromagnetism, mineralogy and geology; his collaborations with other chemists such as J. G. Children and W. H. Pepys; his identification of chlorine as an element; his experiments on fluorine and iodine; and the experimental work leading to the development of the safety lamp and the subsequent dispute concerning credit for that invention, have been digitised and transcribed through a grant-funded research project. The grant has enabled letters held in archives around the world to be added to the database of letters previously transcribed by Davy's biographer June Fullmer.

There are currently 1444 letters in the digital collection, of which over 200 originals are held in the Royal Institution Archives. The database of the as yet unedited and incomplete transcriptions of Davy's letters (plus some written by his wife and his

brother) is currently freely available online at [www.davy-letters.org.uk](http://www.davy-letters.org.uk) . However, once OUP have published the fully-edited *Collected Letters of Humphry Davy and his Circle* they will disappear behind a subscription wall.

A MOOC (Massive Open Online Content) was recommended as part of the project proposal, and this was released last Autumn since when it has had over 2200 subscribers and has generated an extraordinary number of comments – each of which required a reply. Frank showed us his favourite extract, in which Peter Wothers performs Davy's re-creation of a "volcano", the reaction of water on potassium. Although it is now known that this is not the cause of volcanic activity, the video was great fun to watch. It is probably fair to say that Davy's very popular public lectures would not meet modern H&S requirements. The Humphry Davy MOOC is on <https://www.mooc-list.com/course/humphry-davy-laughing-gas-literature-and-lamp-futurelearn> .

In response to questions from the floor, Frank's assessment was that the MOOC had been slightly onerous to put together, partly because it had to be scripted very precisely from an autocue. Although it was aimed at a younger audience, in practice it appears to be reaching a U3A audience and people already interested in the subject field. It does help to get information about Davy out to a wider audience and has helped increase the number of people visiting the Faraday Museum at the RI, but it is unlikely to help increase sales of the published correspondence which was at the core of the project, because this is aimed at an academic audience.

The unenviable task of following the excitement of a demonstration of purported volcanic activity fell to Norma Crowe, Jean Lear and Christoph Bull who rose to the challenge admirably. After a short slide presentation to set the scene, including images of Cobham Hall (family seat of the Earls of Darnley) and examples of the scope of the Darnley Archive 1537-1974 held at Medway Archives, the trio presented two dramatic performances based on material from this collection. The first was *Little Lord Clifton* , based on letters to and from the young heir at boarding school and his parents in 1775, and the second was *Bowled Over* , the story behind the origin of The Ashes. As this initiative is due to be reported in more detail elsewhere, I will simply say here that these two presentations were an enjoyable way to conclude a thought-provoking day.

LSG South committee members hope the Study Day will have inspired colleagues to continue to explore innovative ways of bringing our hidden resources to the attention of wider audiences, and heartily endorse Diana Dixon's closing thanks to Norma for putting the day's programme together, and to all our speakers for a very interesting day.

Stella Wentworth  
Oxfordshire History Centre  
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