

ALEXANDRA PARK AND PALACE **CHARITABLE TRUST BOARD** **18 JULY 2017**

Report Title: Annual report on the digital archive project

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Purpose: This report provides an update on the digitisation project, which commenced in 2016 to create a digital archive of the Alexandra Park and Palace collection.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

N/A

1. Recommendations

To note the report.

2. Background

- 2.1 In order to successfully deliver the goals of the restoration of Alexandra Palace, APPCT committed to the creation of a digital archive intended to collate all available relevant material from disparate collections both private and in the local museum, to create public access hitherto impossible or difficult to achieve. £50,000 was allocated in the HLF Activity Plan budget for digitisation of collections.
- 2.2 Digital surrogates are essential tools used to support interpretation and learning both onsite and in online platforms, and to enable sustainable management of the restored heritage areas through commercial enterprise.
- 2.3 To realise this goal, a key agreement with Haringey Council's Museums Service regarding Alexandra Park and Palace Collections held in the archives at Bruce Castle Museum in Tottenham, was brokered last spring. It detailed terms of access

to the collections and those relating to the history of Alexandra Park and Palace with the principle of full unmoderated access and the rights and use of the digital surrogates created through digitisation of those collections. A Service Level Agreement was signed with Haringey Council in May 2016.

- 2.4 The budget of £50k was set in 2014, two years before the discovery of the hidden archive at AP which expanded the anticipated scope and cost of the project considerably. To ensure the project was carried out effectively, to the standard required, APPCT committed to work in partnership with specialists in the field. Fortuitously, conversations with Google Cultural Institute were just beginning to bear fruit and the emerging relationship changed focus when the AP archive was discovered in June. Our Google partnership agreement was signed in September 2016.
- 2.5 Scanning began in the middle of September on site at Alexandra Palace in a specially appointed secure room with a specialist photographer and with equipment of a very high specification provided by Google.
- 2.6 Digitisation of the archive got off to a flying start and within a month generated **1221** scans and a side project using 360degree scans of spaces in the Park and Palace.
- 2.7 Collections that were completely digitised by October 2016 included:
- Nancy McMillan archive (theatre)
 - Isaac Shoenberg family archive (Marconi-EMI)
 - Carl Holzer, First World War collection
 - Tom Edwards, BBC Master Carpenter archive
 - Alexandra Palace Prints collection
 - Alexandra Palace Postcards collection
 - Alexandra Palace Stereo Slides collection
 - Alexandra Palace Television Society Document collection
 - Alexandra Palace Television Society Photograph collection

Some were underway:

- Richard Greenough, BBC Designer - 75% complete
 - Alexandra Palace Ephemera collection - 90% complete
 - Alexandra Palace Trade Brochures collection - 50% complete
 - Hornsey Historical Society collection - 80% complete
- 2.8 The culmination of phase 1 of the project was the 2 November launch of the Alexandra Palace archive on the Google Arts and Culture platform, which released 521 items, as well as three curated exhibitions investigating the Opening Night of Television, the History of Alexandra Palace, and introducing the “Hidden Archive”. Google kindly produced a video to accompany the scanning project and highlight the rediscovered collections. The collections can be viewed here:
<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/partner/alexandra-palace>
- 2.9 The Curatorial team secured permission from the BBC to include content from their archive and permissions to use their copyright across our platforms. We were

given digitised documents and footage to include in the first AP online exhibition looking at the opening night of television.

- 2.10 Two virtual tours of the Park and Palace for the Google Expeditions programme were created. The first tour looks at the First World War and is a legacy development from the HLF 'War on the Home Front' project of 2014. This forms part of the L&P schools outreach programme and is also available to the general public. The second tour looks at Victorian entertainments.
- 2.11 Working with a team of 8 volunteers, over 3,500 scans had been created, digitising two private collections (Nancy McMillan and Shoenberg family archive); highlights from the Hornsey Historical Society; approximately 75% of the Alexandra Palace Television Society Collection; the complete collection of Alexandra Palace's print, postcards, stereocards, and First World War collections, whilst making a huge dent in the newly rediscovered APPCT collection.
- 2.12 Because this equipment was on loan and the opportunity to capture everything at super high resolutions was unmissable, scanning had to be done at a much greater speed than planned. With a lack of dedicated resources, unfortunately cataloguing could not be done simultaneously. Much research still needs to be done to create a searchable database and to make that useable for the future.
- 2.13 The digitisation project was completed in March 2017 when the Google scanner equipment left site. A total of 8123 scans were captured over a 5-month period. External hard drives containing the scanned files (digital surrogates), have been given to each of the following organisations which contributed collections on loan for the creation of this digital archive:
 - Bruce Castle Collection : 2179 images
 - Hornsey Historical Society : 273 images
 - Nancy McMillan archive : 71 images
 - Sir Isaac Shoenberg archive : 55 images
 - APTS : 1672 images
 - First World War collection : 21 items
 - Postcards : 33 items
 - Stereocards : 3 items
 - Prints : 35 items
 - Victorian designs : 23 images
 - Ephemera : 35 items
 - Photographs : approx. 1000 images
 - 1980s restoration documents : including complete run of Palace Guard newsletter
- 2.14 StreetView images have been added to the Google Arts and Culture page to allow the public to 'visit' the Rose Window, Cellars, and Willis Organ platform. The Curatorial team have begun to add sound to the online exhibitions, starting with Cecil Madden explaining his process of staging the early experimental broadcasts to RadiOlympia. Preparation for the next tranche of images to be uploaded to the GAC platform is ongoing and an additional online exhibition is to be completed for July.

3. Summary of the Digitisation Project

The project with Google:

- Provided high-spec scanning equipment
- Imported specialist technician from Germany to install equipment (twice)
- Hired professional high-spec independent photographer
- Provided conservation supplies to support scanning
- Provided supporting specialist hardware and software
- Cloud storage of high-res images
- Remote quality control on images and metadata
- Created video documenting hidden archive discovery and scanning project
- Provided staff training for specialist equipment
- Provided robust online platform with unique copyright protection features
- Provided training, quality control and personal assistance with platform management
- Secondary cloud based storage for images and expanded metadata
- Provided online exhibition platform – Google Arts and Culture (GAC)
- Provided and installed 8 interactive podiums during 2nd November launch event
- Specialist photographer and equipment to capture StreetView images across Park and Palace
- Performed all technology and back-end elements of tour creation
- Platform to distribute virtual reality tours to schools and to public through app
- Support and guidance on tour writing
- Copy writing and editing across tour text
- Ongoing platform maintenance and promotion

Enabled APPCT to benefit from:

- Digitisation quality beyond industry standard
- Brand association with other Arts and Culture organisations
- Online archive platform beyond industry standard

Social Media Presence

- Increased engagement in social media and accounts that would not ordinarily engage with APPCT
- Retweets by other heritage partners
- Double the number of visitors to the digital archive over 24-25 June weekend due to a retweet by “Museum Week” (a national initiative).

4. Future Aspirations

- 4.1 It is hoped that over time APPCT delivers a successful archive & collections programme, can build a strong reputation in this field so that more archive items are donated and made available to the public. The Trust would then actively seek to develop the physical collections through bequests and gifts as well as digital surrogates. Although this is unlikely in the immediate future and the trust does not yet have the capacity or resources to take on this role, the curatorial team are

working to establish the infrastructure to support sustainable collections care and management.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 APPCT and the owner of the original asset are each granted irrevocable, non-exclusive, royalty free, perpetual and worldwide license to reproduce the captured images in raw and edited forms, in all mediums known and yet to come. This agreement does not cover third party copyrights, which remain with the original copyright holder.
- 5.2 APPCT assert that any third party materials, such as those that contain BBC IP or references must not be shared or distributed for commercial or non-commercial purposes, including social media, without the written permission of the third party. Any clearances made by APPCT are exclusive to pre-arranged agreement between APPCT and the third party and do not cover use by the owner.
- 5.3 The Council's Assistant Director of Corporate Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this report, and has no comments.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 This project would have cost the Trust more than £50,000 without the partnership with Google. The £50,000 set aside for this project has been reallocated to the Learning and Participation Team and implementation of the HLF Activity Plan.
- 6.2 The Council's Chief Financial Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report, and has no comments.

7. Use of Appendices

None