

UK archives awarded United Nations recognition

In 1993 a United Nations advisory committee met to produce an action plan to preserve significant documentary heritage from across the globe by cataloguing and protecting historical archives for future generations to learn from and enjoy. The result was the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme, the documentary heritage equivalent of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The collection includes significant historical documents such as the Domesday Book, Shakespeare Documents, and the Death Warrant of King Charles I plus more recent examples such as Alfred Hitchcock's silent films from the 1920's and the personal archive of Sir Winston Churchill.

The [United Kingdom National Commission \(UKNC\) for UNESCO](#) (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation) works with the UK Memory of the World Committee and the UK Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in the UK to ensure that our national documentary heritage is recognised and included on the UK Memory of the World Register.

On International Archives Day, 9 June 2018, the UKNC are delighted to announce that the UK Memory of the World Committee and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has endorsed the inclusion of six significant archives which will join the wealth of national material already on the prestigious UK register. The 'inscription' onto the [UK Memory of the World Register](#) of these treasured examples highlights the critical importance of their survival and accessibility and of UNESCO's commitment to their preservation. They are:

- [The Commonwealth War Graves Commission Casualty Archive](#)
An archive consisting of over 300,000 documents which record the details and commemoration location of each casualty the Commission is responsible for commemorating; some 1.7 million individuals in total from both world wars.
- [The Sir Robert Cotton's Collection of Manuscripts](#)
The first library to pass into national ownership in 1702 in Britain, the Cotton Collection is the original 'public library', containing some of the most famous literary treasures in the country including Magna Carta, the Lindisfarne Gospels and the papers of several British monarchs.
- [Eton Choir book](#)
A volume of manuscript music created between 1500 and 1504 still used in religious services at Eton College Chapel, it captures a sound-world of late medieval England which would otherwise have been lost to silence.
- [The Base and Field Reports, and related Photographic material of the British Antarctic Survey and its Predecessors](#)
A record of UK scientific endeavour illustrating the UK's leading role in the modern era of Antarctic exploration. Data underpinning globally significant discoveries, such as the hole in the ozone layer, is included plus personal accounts of living and working in this extreme environment.
- [The Chronicle of Elis Gruffudd, 'Soldier of Calais'](#)
A unique chronicle in Welsh written by a soldier giving a first-hand account of events during the early 16th century whilst serving in England, France, Holland and Spain.
- [Early Gaelic Manuscripts of the Scottish Advocates Library](#)
A group of 14th-17th century Gaelic manuscripts covering Gaelic traditional medicine, theology, tales and poetry plus linguistics, history and genealogy. These highly unusual manuscripts provide a key Scottish culture and inform our understanding of the history and identity of Britain as a whole.

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Notes to Editors

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1. About the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme:

- United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is the 'intellectual' agency of the United Nations and was established in 1945.
- The list of the UK UNESCO Memory of the World Register and UK entries on the UNESCO International Memory of the World Register is available here:
<https://www.unesco.org.uk/designation/memory-of-the-world-inscriptions-in-the-uk-uk-register/>
- The UNESCO Memory of the World Programme aims to facilitate preservation of the world's documentary heritage, to assist universal access and to increase awareness worldwide of the existence and significance of this documentary heritage through both an international Register and individual country Registers. This globally-recognised status celebrates some of the UK's most exceptional archive riches.
- The International Memory of the World Register recognises documentary heritage of global significance and includes UK-based documents such as Magna Carta. The UK Memory of the World Register honours documentary heritage of national and regional significance and includes documents such as the Death Warrant of King Charles I.
- To learn more about the MoW programme visit
<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/flagship-project-activities/memory-of-the-world/homepage/>.

2. The UK National Commission for UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation)

The [UK National Commission \(UKNC\)](#) works to support the UK's contribution to UNESCO and bring the benefits of UNESCO to the UK. It is the hub for UNESCO-related matters in the UK.

The UKNC has four core priorities:

1. We provide expert, independent policy advice to the UK and devolved governments on UNESCO related issues.
2. We advise and support individuals and institutions in the UK, its Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies on accessing UNESCO accreditation and prizes and how to derive more value from their involvement with UNESCO.
3. We support the UK Government's agenda in helping UNESCO to become more effective.
4. We act as a hub for the UK's over 160 UNESCO designations.

In carrying out these roles, the UKNC relies on advice and support from its Expert Network including specialists in the fields of education, culture, the sciences and communication and information from across Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England.

3. Please see links below and Appendix attached for further information on the six inscribed documents:

- [The Commonwealth War Graves Commission Casualty Archive](#) (Commonwealth War Graves Commission)
- [The Cotton Collection of Manuscripts](#) (British Library)
- [Eton Choir book](#) (Eton College)
- [The Base and Field Reports, and related Photographic material of the British Antarctic Survey and its Predecessors](#) (British Antarctic Survey)
- [The Chronicle of Elis Gruffudd, 'Soldier of Calais'](#) (The National Library of Wales)
- [Early Gaelic Manuscripts of the Advocates Library](#) (National Library of Scotland)

4. Quotes approved for inclusion:

Michael Ellis MP, Heritage Minister at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport:

"British history is truly brought to life by the personal stories, documents and images of our past. Inscribing these stunning examples onto UNESCO's UK Memory of the World Register recognises their national and global importance. This will protect them for future generations."

Ambassador Matthew Lodge, UK Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO:

"On behalf of the UK Permanent Delegation to UNESCO, I am delighted that these rich and varied examples of the United Kingdom's documentary heritage will be inscribed onto UNESCO's Memory of the World Register. As a founding member state of UNESCO and a country with a long and proud history, the inscription of these documents is an important moment, and a positive step in our collective efforts to preserve and share material that tells the story of modern humanity's journey. The remarkable range of the documents inscribed today reminds us of our shared heritage – from medieval manuscripts to a Tudor choir book to modern photographs of the Antarctic. These documents will now be more accessible than ever before. We look forward to continuing our support for this important programme over the coming years."

Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, Chair of the UK UNESCO Memory of the World Committee:

"Archives are the lifeblood of our memory. These awards demonstrate the richness and beauty of the UK archival inheritance."

James Bridge, Secretary-General of the UK National Commission for UNESCO:

"The UK has some of the world's best archives and the UNESCO Memory of the World inscription is a great way to provide global recognition. Each new inscription onto the register provides a fascinating insight into the rich variety of our documentary heritage."