

## The National Archives

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The National Archives (sometimes shortened to TNA) is a non-ministerial department, and the official archive and publisher for the UK Government, and for England and Wales. They are the guardians of over a thousand years of national documents and work to secure the future of physical and digital records. TNA holds one of the largest collections in the world, containing over 11 million historical government and public records. From Domesday Book to modern government papers and digital files, [their collection](#) ranges from paper and parchment to digital records and websites, photographs, posters, maps, drawings, and paintings.

Between 2003 and 2006, four government bodies specialising in particular aspects of managing information joined together to form a single organisation: The National Archives.

- I) The [Public Record Office](#), created as a result of the Public Record Office Act 1838 – the national archive of England, Wales and the United Kingdom government, dedicated to preserving key public records and making them accessible to researchers.
- II) The [Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts](#), appointed under Royal Warrant in 1869, performs the Historical Manuscripts Commission's functions in relation to private records.
- III) [His Majesty's Stationery Office](#), founded in 1786, holder of [Crown copyright](#) and official printer of all Acts of Parliament since 1889.
- IV) The Office of Public Sector Information, created in 2005 following a [European Union directive](#) to promote the re-use of information produced and collected by public sector organisations.

TNA's expertise in effective records and information management and use and re-use of information makes a valuable resource for government and public sector bodies, and many other organisations. Continuing the tradition of their predecessors.

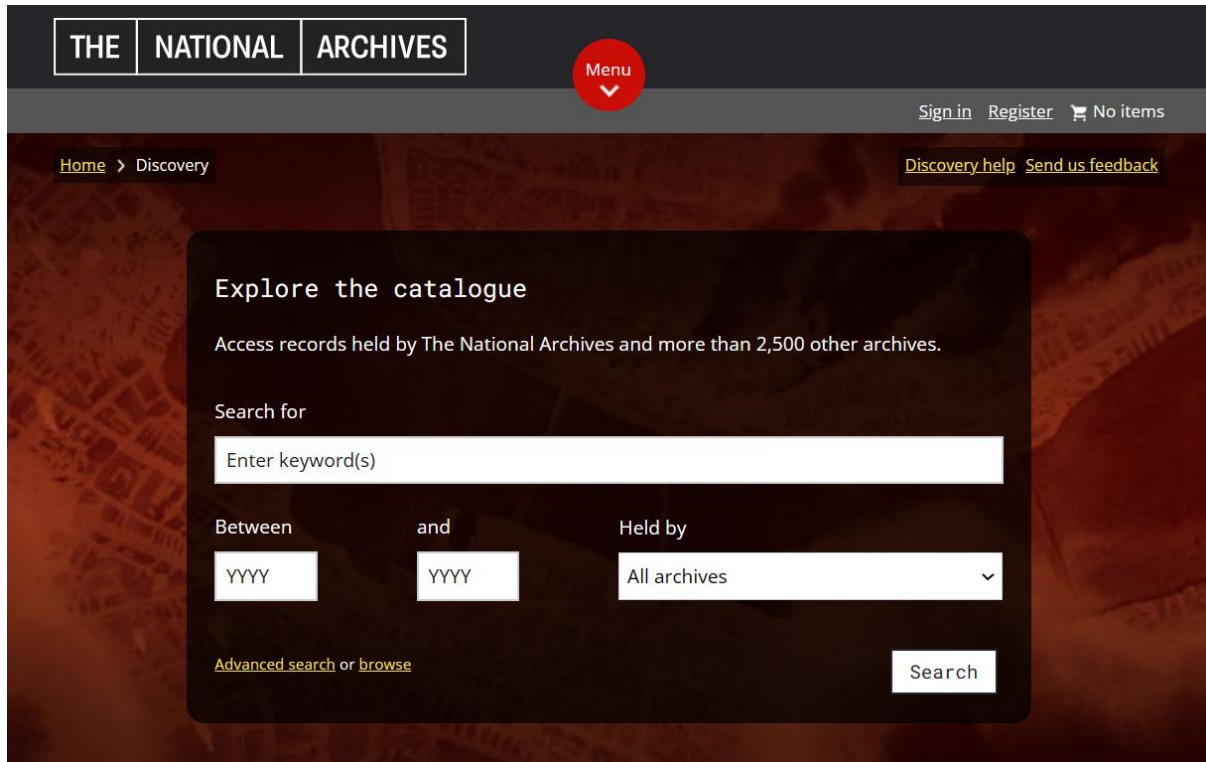


The National Archives' building at Kew.

The National Archives also strive to be advisers in information and records management and a cultural, academic, and heritage institution. Since 2011, they have a leadership role

for the archives sector across England, transferred from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. They work with and support a [diverse network of archives](#), and are an [accredited archive service](#).

The National Archives' ['Discovery'](#) online archive catalogue holds more than 32 million descriptions of records held by The National Archives and more than 2,500 archives across the country. Over 9 million records are available for download.



The National Archives' ['Discovery'](#) online archive catalogue homepage.

Researchers can [book a visit](#) to The National Archives site in Kew, to look up documents. The building was opened in 1977 as an additional home for public records, which were predominantly housed in a building on Chancery Lane. The site was originally a First World War hospital, and later used by several government departments. It is near to Kew Gardens Underground station. The National Archives also have an additional office in Norwich and a record storage facility in Winsford Rock Salt Mine, Cheshire.

On site at Kew there is also a large café and dining area as well as a shop stocked with public history books, a range of local and family history guides, and other items related to history and the archive collections. They hold occasional exhibitions as part of their outreach efforts such as ['Treason: People, Power & Plot'](#) which ran until April 2023.

The National Archives' stated aim is to 'make the record accessible to all audiences, now and for the future.'<sup>1</sup> A noble objective which they strive to fulfil. They do so by allowing access to their collections in several ways, in the traditional sense of the archive as well as through talks, workshops, and online media. This month marks the twentieth anniversary of the creation of The National Archives. Amateur or professional researcher, they are free to use and well worth a visit.

### References and Resources:

Information from this post is taken from The National Archives webpages: [What we do](#) and [Our history](#).

Read more about the history of The National Archives' site at Kew here: [Happy birthday to us! – The National Archives blog](#)

Visit [The National Archives](#) website to discover for yourself their collections, resources, and activities.

Richard Taylor, *Secrets of The National Archives: The Stories Behind the Letters and Documents of Our Past* (2014).

Amanda Bevan, *Tracing Your Ancestors in the National Archives: The Website and Beyond* (2006).

The [Friends of The National Archives](#) is a registered charity and voluntary organisation which supports the preservation of and access to the nation's records. They promote and assist the work of TNA through fundraising and practical support and educate the public in the knowledge of records.

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<sup>1</sup> [Our history - The National Archives](#)