



**Archives & Records
Association**
UK & Ireland

ARA Archive Volunteer Award 2019 Announcement

The annual award recognises outstanding work involving volunteers in an archive and records service. The award is organised by the Volunteer Committee of ARA and sponsored by the ARA, the National Archives (UK) and sector partners.

The Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) (ARA) today announced that **‘Bigger, Better, Stronger: Volunteering Re-Booted’**, a project initiated by Gloucestershire Archives at [Gloucestershire Heritage Hub](#), is the winner of this year’s prestigious national Archive Volunteering Award. Sponsored by the ARA, the National Archives (UK) and sector partners, this annual award recognises outstanding work involving volunteers in an archive and records service.

Bigger, Better, Stronger

Bigger, Better, Stronger began in March 2018 (when “For the Record”, the first part of the new Heritage Hub, opened) and will continue until December 2020. Working with 17 local partners, and in addition to already-established archive service programmes available, the project has made community space to volunteers of all ages interested in (among others):

- E-preservation
- Supporting events, including reminiscence activities
- “Pinning” images to the *Know Your Place* digital mapping resource
- Assisting with oral history recordings
- Extracting information from 19th century mental health records, as part of the Hub’s *Never Better* partnership project
- Social Media
- Gardening

The judges were impressed at the project’s bold ambitions and achievements – doubling the number of volunteers engaged with the archive service, breaking down barriers and diversifying access and participation, and establishing the Hub as a core community asset for social interaction.

The judges said:

“Bigger, Better, Stronger was the clear winner this year in a strong field. We were struck by the evidence of new audience and participatory engagement, as well as the positive impact of pro-active engagement on both the archive service and the volunteers themselves. Overall, we saw something inspiring and transformative in the design, management and implementation of this project by the archive service team that sets a new benchmark for the sector. It is great to see often marginalised groups being treated as a core audience for both the archive service and the Hub more broadly.’

The judges also commended the partners involved in *Bigger, Better, Stronger*:

Gloucestershire Family History Society (GFHS) (formal Hub partner), Gloucestershire Local History Association (formal Hub partner), Friends of Gloucestershire Archives (formal Hub partner), Gloucestershire Constabulary (formal Hub partner), Cheltenham Local History Society, Stroudwater Navigation Archive Charity, Chalford Parish History Group, Gloucestershire Society for Industrial Archaeology, Roots Community Café, Kingsholm Community Builder, Age UK (formerly Age Concern), Gloucester City Homes, Gloucester Heritage Forum, Department of Work & Pensions, *Never Better* partners: Strike a Light Theatre Company, 2gether NHS Trust & GUST

The winning volunteers will receive their award later on 15 November at Llanthony Secunda Priory in Gloucester, in the run-up to the launch of the annual, national **Explore Your Archive** campaign.

Cllr Lynden Stowe, cabinet member finance and change with responsibility for archives, said:

“Gloucestershire Archives play an important role in gathering, keeping and sharing the documented history of Gloucestershire and beyond. However, the real community impact the Heritage Hub partners are having on local people is awe-inspiring, and this is only made possible by all the hard work of staff and volunteers - we are very proud to have received this national award, and I would like to say a personal thank you to everyone involved in the project.”

ARA’s Chair, Karl Magee, said:

“Like all local authority services, archives have been affected by the period of austerity. It is refreshing to see a Council having the vision to recognise the contribution Record Offices and their collections can make in addressing entrenched community challenges such as social exclusion and marginalisation. Lancashire (last year’s winners) and Gloucestershire this year show what can be achieved by volunteers and supporting groups under the visionary guidance and leadership of professional staff. Congratulations to everyone involved in *Bigger, Better, Stronger*.”

Said one volunteer on *Bigger, Better, Stronger*:

“This has been one of the best days of my life.”

Another volunteer who was mentored whilst gaining workplace experience, commented:

“@GlosHeritageHub were incredibly generous with their feedback. Really critical and specific and so useful for my next [job] interview (which I was successful in!).”

“Excellent” Runner-up

The judges also commended the 2019 runners-up for this award, the National Science and Media Museum in Bradford and its Impressions Gallery Archive Cataloguing Project. This excellent project centres on the unique collection of papers and photographic works of one of the UK’s earliest galleries dedicated to photography, Impressions Gallery, which donated its archive to the museum in 2013. The judges were impressed at how, under the supervision of a professional archivist, the volunteers were trained in core tasks such as repackaging and cataloguing the Gallery’s (230-plus) exhibition administration files, then made the catalogue entries available online, via the NSMM’s archive database, etc. with the objective of strengthening the capability of local community archives.

Monday, 14 October 2019 12:44