

# Nomination Form

## ARA Archive Volunteering Award 2019

**1. Title of the project**

Bigger, Better, Stronger: Volunteering Re-Booted

**2. Institution conducting the project**

Gloucestershire Archives at Gloucestershire Heritage Hub

**3. List of key partners involved in the project**

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 (social landlord)  
Gloucester Heritage Forum  
Department of Work & Pensions  
“Never Better” project partners: Strike a Light Theatre Company, 2gether  
NHS Trust & GUST

**4. Names of team members working on the project**

Led by Sally Middleton (Community Heritage Development Manager)  
supported by wider archives team: Ann Attwood, Helen Bartlett, Mike Bevan, Karen Davidson, Paul Evans, Abigail Hartley, Kate Maisey, Ally McConnell, Kate O’Keefe, Rachel Wales; Sue Webb (Gloucestershire Constabulary)

**5. Final year**

2020

**6. Project start date**

March 27<sup>th</sup> 2018 (date when “For the Record” Phase 1 of the new Heritage Hub opened. New Hub facilities include a dedicated space for the GFHS resource centre run by their volunteers, remodelled public research room; project and meeting rooms for volunteers, partners and community groups).

**7. Project end date**

December 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 (formal end date of “For the Record” project– however, our commitment and new approach to volunteering will continue beyond this date)

**8. URL link to project website**

<https://www.heritagehub.org.uk/volunteer-the-heritage-hub/volunteering/>

## 9. Description

Our new Hub facilities have allowed us to grow, re-focus and revitalise our volunteering programme. We offer our new community spaces to a range of local organisations as part of our commitment to Asset Based Community Development. This introduces a wide range of people to our service and builds a pyramid of engagement which for some will lead to volunteering. We have looked afresh at the range of activities we can offer. Alongside our established collections based activities, volunteers can now participate in:

- Gardening
- Supporting events including reminiscence activities
- Social media
- E-preservation
- Assisting with oral history recordings
- “Pinning” images to Know Your Place digital mapping resource
- Extracting information from 19<sup>th</sup> century mental health records as part of our [“Never Better”](#) partnership project

We have also looked for ways to nurture and develop our core volunteer base engaged in traditional collections work, e.g. using appropriately skilled volunteers to open up a collection of early (Latin) documents relevant to their locality.

We are working smarter to ensure we can cope with a substantially larger number of volunteers. Strategies include proactive, not reactive recruitment for established groups (e.g. local history societies) and partnership working to build in volunteer opportunities to funded heritage projects.

## 10. Target audience

We wanted to grow and broaden our volunteer base and make it more representative of both the local community and society as a whole. Alongside our traditional core volunteering groups such as local history societies, heritage project groups, archive researchers turned volunteers and the newly retired, we therefore wanted to recruit from new groups who may have no immediate knowledge of, or interest in, archives or the heritage sector, namely:

- Young people & others wanting work place or course specific experience
- Young people who are disadvantaged and/or at risk of criminal behaviour
- Older and socially isolated people
- Minority ethnic groups
- Neighbours

Our locality is key to this project. Within half a mile of the Heritage Hub, there is a bail hostel, a pocket park where street drinkers and rough sleepers congregate, a primary school where 39 languages are spoken, and a food bank. We are one of the few publicly owned assets in the neighbourhood, i.e.

a place people can visit, for free, and without stigma. Many service providers are active in the area, and we have invited them to use our facilities. From those interactions come “emergent volunteers” – individuals with growing confidence to volunteer with us.

## 11. Aim

Our over-arching aim is to make the new Heritage Hub a thriving focus of community activity by using our building to facilitate social interaction. We want to break down barriers to participation and offer new ways to participate, making volunteering for Gloucestershire Archives at the Heritage Hub bigger, better and stronger than ever before: More specifically:

- **Bigger:** a 100% increase in the number of active volunteers by December 2020, compared to pre 2018 figures.
- **Better:** break down barriers to participation; recruit and retain volunteers from new and target groups alongside our traditional audience; offer a wider range of volunteering activities; work smarter to manage increased numbers and diverse groups; use links with new groups to gather new material for our collections.
- **Stronger:** establish the service as a demonstrably relevant community asset; facilitate “cross fertilisation” of groups to build a vibrant volunteer community; provide all volunteers with enjoyable and meaningful activities to promote well-being; raise awareness of our service via positive word of mouth; ensure our volunteer commitment is deliverable and sustainable within our means.

## 12. Process

### Recruitment

- We recruit online via [Engage in Gloucester](#) as well as our own website to attract a younger audience.
- We work with other local heritage providers, promoting each other’s volunteering opportunities and offering alternative or developmental opportunities to volunteers when projects end or prove unsuitable.
- We are flexible in the tasks we offer to target groups but take a proactive rather than reactive approach when recruiting to traditional archive tasks or when dealing with traditional volunteer groups, recruiting to specific, high priority collections- based projects rather than continually devising “bespoke” projects.
- Running alongside this is our ABCD approach: hiring out Hub spaces to target groups and giving a warm welcome; working with a local Community Builder; working with other local partners/funders

### Induction & training

- Our processes follow best practice.
- Support and mentoring, where appropriate, are on-going.
- Groups are encouraged to nominate a volunteer co-ordinator - this new role builds capacity.
- We get help from other contacts if needed-e.g. the “Lives of Colour” project leader has provided cultural mediation

## Feedback

- Periodic surveys give insight into the volunteer experience and show how it can be improved.
- Volunteers are thanked and acknowledged via blogs, e-newsletters and online catalogue “name checks” as well as the more traditional cakes, parties and outings.

## 13. Number of participants in the project or visitors to date

- 166 volunteers
- Plus 40 GFHS volunteers who help run the Heritage Hub

## 14. Impact and outcome of the project

### IMPACT ON VOLUNTEERS

*[Quotes and statistics are taken from 2019 volunteer survey unless stated otherwise].*

- Relevant workplace experience: *“Volunteering is helping to give me the experience in archiving, so that I might be able to pursue a career in it.”*
- Mentoring: *“I talked a lot about my archive volunteering in my interview for Cambridge and I’m sure it helped get me a place!”*(quote from AN, a young volunteer, early 2019)
- High profile opportunities to showcase work: Cheltenham Local History Society volunteers have been nominated for the Women’s History Network Community History Prize 2019.
- Recognition e.g. via “thank you” events: *“this has been one of the best days of my life.”* (quote from volunteer NL at Heritage Hub royal opening 8<sup>th</sup> January 1019)
- Enjoyable and meaningful activity: *“I have had fun / enjoyed myself”*. (94% agreed); *“Inspiring!”*
- Improved well-being, mental health and self worth: *“My sense of well-being has improved.”* (70% agree); *“important to do something meaningful. (90% agree).*
- Opportunity to give something back: *“I was so pleased with the help I received [when I originally started using archives] that I wanted to give something back. Since then I have enjoyed being a volunteer for the social side as well as the vast learning curve of not just local history but also national and international history, whilst doing something useful.”* ; *““The Heritage Hub has provided an opportunity for older people to become active within the life of this organisation, and to contribute to its future. Age UK Gloucestershire has had the opportunity to help the Heritage Hub through encouraging older people to become involved (including in volunteering)”,* (quote from Age UK Life Changes Project Manager, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2019).
- Learn new things: *“I have gained new knowledge”* (78% agree).

### IMPACT ON SERVICE

- More diverse volunteers
- GFHS resource centre “gives family historians an exceptional service; the Hub is a model for the future”-(quote from historian Nick Barrett while at GHFS 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019)
- Capacity building across wide range of both traditional and “non traditional” activities, e.g. [102,000+ volunteer catalogue entries added 2018/19](#)
- Volunteer digitisation projects using new project room e.g [Gwladys Davies photographic collection of mills](#) digitised and listed by 3 volunteers
- Creation of [“Know Your Place” community layer dedicated to women’s suffrage](#)
- New accessions generated by volunteer activities.

### **WIDER IMPACT**

- Improves community cohesion-e.g.volunteers are supporting a Memory Café where isolated older people can meet others.
- Develops local sense of pride and strong sense of place e.g. Gloucester History Festival’s City Voices programme involves some of our volunteers.
- [Fledgling community garden](#), dependant on volunteers for creation and maintenance- a community asset and a haven for wildlife
- A positive experience of volunteering with us, a local authority service, can help build trust in “the council”.

### **15. Evaluation**

- 176 active volunteers gave volunteering hours to the service worth £263k using NLHF formula. (Excluding hours worked by 40 GFHS volunteers).
- High levels of satisfaction (*94% would recommend to family/friends*) shows our new processes, smart working and “horses for courses” approach are enabling us to successfully manage this increased number.
- Our ABCD informed approach has been fully validated. For example, a young mother from Nigeria who is seeking leave to remain in the UK attends an Adult Education ESOL class meeting at the Hub. She has begun volunteering weekly (packaging documents) *“Everyone is very friendly and I like that white people are all busy.”* (CO’s comment to Hub’s Community Heritage Development Manager, Spring 2019)
- The “Hub” concept, involving the “cross-fertilization of groups” is working. *“My interest in the heritage [Hub] has been strengthened and I intend to continue my volunteering and pursue other opportunities in this sector.”*
- We know and understand what volunteering means to our volunteers, and are providing them with enjoyable and meaningful activity which can promote well-being and self worth: *“I wanted a place which allowed me to develop new skills and improve confidence through voluntary work, whilst being understanding of*

*my mental health issues. The Archives have provided me with all of the above”*

- The number of volunteers from target audiences has increased (4% now from BME groups, 20% with disability). And our contact with new groups has generated new material to fill gaps in collections (e.g Gloucestershire Deaf Association). Although there is more work to do in both cases, the evidence outlined above suggests this is because building relationships and gaining trust takes time, rather than because our approach is flawed.

## **16. Tips**

- Ensure customer services colleagues are well informed on all things to do with accessibility, so they can be truly welcoming to all.
- Where possible offer your facilities to community organisations, and their participants (tenants, learners) will want to volunteer.
- Be imaginative in your volunteering opportunities and be alive to what volunteers can gain from tasks, don't just look through the lens of what you want to get done.
- Train volunteers as volunteer coordinators when dealing with large groups
- Be proactive rather than reactive with traditional audiences – this enables staff to focus on service priorities and to manage the levels of staff input required.
- Make sure you have capacity to process volunteers' output in a timely way.
- Look for ways to acknowledge individual volunteer contributions where appropriate (several specific volunteers are name checked in our online catalogue entries).
- Find ways to keep your traditional core volunteers informed and on board. We have made sure they are represented on our Heritage Hub User Group which is a positive channel for raising concerns.
- Accept that relationship building and establishing trust with non-traditional service users will take time and sustained effort.

## **17. Future Developments**

- Improve the visibility of our volunteers on our website/social media platforms, and the attractiveness of our offer.
- Look to engage young people in higher level volunteering opportunities e.g. fundraising; taking up positions on Boards.
- Recruit and train more volunteers as volunteer coordinators.
- Develop the concept of volunteers as peer to peer mentors and formal ambassadors.
- Undertake periodic volunteer surveys to improve our offer.
- Use ACORN analysis to develop our understanding of our neighbourhood.
- Identify opportunities and new ways to thank, celebrate, share and promote the work of our volunteers.
- Establish programme of mutual training with GFHS.

- Support Fresh Air Foundations project volunteers to record oral histories of Windrush generation and add their output to our collections.
- Complete creation of “ShrubHub”, our community garden and expand volunteer roles this and on-going maintenance offers
- Develop more “remote volunteering” opportunities for people unable to visit the Hub e.g. South Gloucestershire residents; people with caring responsibilities.

## **18 Domain**

Archives

Arts organisations

Historic environment

Libraries

Museums

## **19. Role in developing the sector**

Advice

Advocacy and strategic marketing

Commissioning

Evaluation

Funding

Liaison

Partnerships

Policy

Research and Evidence

Standards

Other: ABCD community development

## **20. Social groups**

Children and young people

Older people

Disabled people

Ethnic minority groups

Homeless people

Prisoners and ex-offenders

Looked-after children and those leaving care

Lower socio-economic groups

Refugees and asylum seekers

New communities

Unemployed people

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender

## **21. Social outcomes**

Community cohesion & inclusion

Celebrating local identity

Local economy

Health & well-being

Learning & skills

Local infrastructure & regeneration

Tourism

Community empowerment & active citizenship

Raising participation  
Positive outcomes for vulnerable groups

## **22. Higher level geographical coverage**

### International

Europe

Ireland

### UK

Wales

Scotland

Northern Ireland

England

East Midlands

East of England

London

North East

North West

South East

### South West

West Midlands

Yorkshire and the Humber

## **23. Main person leading the project**

Name: Sally Middleton

Organisation: Gloucestershire Archives

Phone number: 01452 425921

Email address: [sally.middleton@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:sally.middleton@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

## **24. Alternative contact**

Name: Kate Maisey

Organisation: Gloucestershire Archives

Phone number: 01452 425297

Email address: [kate.maisey@gloucestershire.gov.uk](mailto:kate.maisey@gloucestershire.gov.uk)

## **25. Estimated budget**

c. £19.5k (staff time)

## **26. Final budget**

£19.5k

## **27. Funding source(s)**

National Lottery Heritage Fund

Henry Smith Charity

Gloucestershire County Council

FoGA (Friends of Gloucestershire Archives)

Wellcome Institute



Photos

