

Saved for the nation: Bodleian Libraries acquire Sir Edward Heath Archive

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The Bodleian Libraries, with support of a £400,000 grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund (NHMF), have acquired the archive of former Conservative Prime Minister, Sir Edward Heath (1916-2005). The archive contains key material relating to Britain joining the European Community in 1973, which was to become Heath's major political legacy.

The archive comprises almost 1,000 boxes and includes a diverse collection of papers from his time in office and in the shadow government as well as personal papers from his school days and at Oxford where he was an undergraduate at Balliol College. He travelled to Spain during the Spanish Civil War and Nazi Germany in the late 1930s and the papers include his observations of the treatment of Jews and his photographs of one of the Nuremberg Rallies.

Dr Sarah Thomas said: "The Heath archive is an essential link in the chain of papers of modern prime ministers that we already hold including his mentor, Macmillan, and his political rival, Wilson. Scholars will welcome the opportunity to review public and private papers relating to the entry of Britain into the EU, and the many other political events in which Edward Heath played a significant role. This archive will surely be at the heart of future historical study of post-war Britain."

Carole Souter, Chief Executive of the NHMF, commented: "This is a rich and fascinating archive, documenting major historical events that have shaped this country. The National Heritage Memorial Fund was set up 30 years ago to save our most important heritage and the Heath archive represents just that. I am delighted it will now be safeguarded for the public and scholars alike to review and learn from."

An Oxford alumnus, Sir Edward Richard George "Ted" Heath, KG, MBE (9 July 1916 – 17 July 2005) served as Conservative Prime Minister from 1970 to 1974 and was Leader of the Conservative Party from 1965 to 1975. He continued to have a major influence on British politics throughout his life and served as Father of the House 1992-2001.

The Heath Archive complements other holdings of modern British political papers within the Bodleian's Department of Special Collections, which together form one of the most important collections of its kind in the UK. They include the papers of six other Prime Ministers (Disraeli, Asquith, Attlee, Macmillan, Wilson, and Callaghan) and the Conservative Party Archive, which is particularly strong for the period during which Heath was Party Leader, 1965-1975.

Along with the money from NHMF, the archive has been saved thanks to support from the Friends of the Bodleian and numerous other private donors.

The archive is to be catalogued and will be open to researchers in 2012.

Notes to editors

Sir Edward was born in 1916 at Broadstairs, Kent, and educated at Chatham House Grammar School in Ramsgate and Balliol College, Oxford, before serving in the Royal Artillery at home and in Europe during World War 2, and later in the Honourable Artillery Company. He entered Parliament in 1950 as MP for Bexley, serving in the Conservative Governments from 1951 to 1964 as (successively) a Whip, Chief Whip, Minister of Labour, Lord Privy Seal at the Foreign Office, and Secretary of State for Industry, Trade and Regional Development. Sir Edward served under Sir Winston Churchill, Sir Anthony Eden, Mr Harold Macmillan and Sir Alec Douglas-Home, and was Leader of the Conservative Party for 10 years between 1965 and 1975, and serving as Prime Minister from 1970 to 1974, during which he signed the Treaty of Accession in Brussels. He continued to sit in the House of Commons for his constituency, Old Bexley and Sidcup, up to his retirement in 2001 and was Father of the House from 1992 to 2001.

The archive contains:

- Personal papers, including papers back to his school days, studies at Balliol College, Oxford in the 1930s, and trips as an observer to Nazi Germany in the late 1930s and Spain during the Civil War;
- Papers from his time in various ministerial positions, 1959-1964;
- Papers as Shadow Chancellor, 1964;
- Papers as Leader of the Opposition, 1965-1970;
- Papers as Prime Minister, 1970-1974;
- Papers as Leader of the Opposition, 1974-1975;
- Papers from the period after he ceased being Leader of the Conservative Party, 1975-c2005;
- Material relating to his interest in European integration, 1939-1999

- Material related to his many personal interests including music and sailing.

A significant tranche of official papers did not form part of the sale, but were donated by the Heath Trustees along with the rest of the archive.

It has been bought from Sir Edward Heath Charitable Foundation which is managing his estate.

The Bodleian Libraries of the of form the largest university library system in the University of Oxford. They include the principal University library, the Bodleian Library—which has been a library of legal deposit for 400 years; major research libraries; and libraries attached to faculties, departments and other institutions of the University. The combined library collections number more than 11 million printed items, in addition to 30,000 e-journals and vast quantities of materials in other formats. For additional information see www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk .

Further information

Sarah Henderson, Head of Library Communications,

Phone: +44 (0) 1865 87398 Email: sarah.henderson@bodleian.ox.ac.uk

www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk.