

Researchers given 'a sporting chance' to access unique archive

Gwent Archives will receive over £14,000 of Welsh Government funding to help conserve fragile and damaged items in the club's collections, thanks to a partnership with the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust.

The conservation work will open up access to the fascinating history of one of Wales' first integrated sports clubs, whose origins date back to 1875.

Conservation work will be undertaken on a series of minute books, 28 postcards and 148 letters and telegrams sent to the club by members fighting during the First World War.

Economy Secretary Ken Skates said:

"This unique archive not only provides an insight into Newport's sporting heritage, it also shines a light on the influence of the club on the development of Welsh rugby. The collection will appeal to sporting historians, anyone associated with distinguished former club members, and all those with an interest in the experiences of soldiers during the First World War.

"I am pleased that we, along side the NMCT have supported this project and I hope to see it enjoyed by researchers and sports enthusiasts from Newport and beyond."

Since 2008 the NMCT, in partnership with the Welsh Government, has supported 39 projects and has conserved items and collections of national and international importance held by archives across Wales.

Lord Egremont, Chairman of the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, said:

"We are delighted that NMCT's collaboration with Welsh Government has once again enabled the preservation of an outstanding collection of material. We were pleased to support an archive that is so important to the history of sport in Wales".

Tony Hopkins, Gwent county archivist said:

"This is a truly exciting project. Newport is a club not only famed for its rugby but one that has had an immense influence on the development of sport in Wales. We are grateful to the NMCT for helping us preserve this unique archive."

Newport Cricket, Athletic and Football Club was formed as the first integrated sports club in Wales. It became Newport Athletic Club in 1895/6, by which time it ran a wide range of sports and many individuals connected with the club had earned distinction in various sports. Richard Mullock represented the club at the formation of the Amateur Athletic Association in 1880. Wyatt Gould hurdled for Great Britain in the 1908 Olympics and played rugby for Newport and two of his brothers captained the Welsh rugby team, one of them being Arthur, the first rugby 'superstar'.