

RAG ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026

Governance

RAG operates under the terms of its constitution adopted in 2012:

<https://religiousarchivesgroup.org.uk/about/governance/constitution/>.

In 2013 RAG was recognised by HMRC as having charitable status, which conveys a number of practical benefits, including the ability to receive external grants. RAG's registration with HMRC was renewed in early 2026.

The following report on the Group's activities is submitted on behalf of the Trustees.

Ruth Macdonald

Chair, Religious Archives Group

Trustees/committee

The AGM for the year 2024-2025 was held during our annual conference at The London Archives on 2 October 2025. At the AGM, the following were elected as trustees to serve on the RAG committee.

- Mary Ellis, Head of Libraries and Archives Development, Welsh Government, and Liaison Officer for Methodist Archives
- Shane Flynn, Public Sector Accountant (retired)
- Wendy Hawke, Senior Archivist, London Metropolitan Archives
- Ruth Macdonald, Archivist & Deputy Director, Salvation Army International Heritage Centre
- Dr John Maiden, Senior Lecturer, The Open University
- Susannah Rayner, Administrative Archivist, Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster.

Former chair and longstanding committee member Dr Norman James stepped down from the committee at the AGM. Professor John Wolffe offered thanks on behalf of the RAG committee and members for Norman's work in service of religious archives and the Religious Archives Group. We wish him well for the future.

At a subsequent online committee meeting on 11 December 2025, the following officers were elected: Ruth Macdonald (Chair), Shane Flynn (Treasurer) and Wendy Hawke (Secretary).

As of 2 October 2025, the following were also entitled to attend committee meetings as observers:

Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch, Kt, FBA (Patron)
Professor John Wolffe, The Open University (President)
Gary Brannan (Keeper of Archives and Special Collections, Borthwick Institute, University of York)
Paul Carlyle (Non-Conformist Collections, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester)
Liz Harper (Sector Development Manager for Archives of Religion & Belief, The National Archives)
Emily Rumble (Assistant Archivist, Lambeth Palace Library)
Dr Tereza Ward (Christian Brethren Archives, John Rylands Library, University of Manchester)
Cressida Williams (Cathedrals, Archives, Libraries and Collections Association)

The committee met online on four occasions: 9 September 2025, 11 December 2025 (Trustees' meeting to elect officers), 21 January 2026, and 25 March 2026.

Conference

RAG's 2025 conference on the theme of Digitisation in Archives of Religion and Belief was held at The London Archives on 2 October 2025. We enjoyed excellent hospitality from TLA in their Huntley Room. The conference was well attended: there were 45 people present, including four of our five speakers: Dr Christy Henshaw, Dan Bye, Gary Brannan and Lawrence Gregory. We were also joined remotely from the US by Lawrence's colleague Dr Daniel Michaels. We heard about three recent digitisation projects: The Freethinker Archive, the National Institute for Newman Studies Digital Collections, and York's Archbishops Registers Revealed. We also held a session on copyright considerations for digitisation projects.

Small Grants Scheme

In 2025, the RAG Small Grants Scheme was temporarily closed to applications. Through this temporary closure, we hope to build up the fund in order to be in a position to re-open the scheme in coming years.

Email list

As of 25 June 2026, there were 352 subscribers to the Religious Archives Group's Jiscmail list. From May 2025-April 2026, there were 75 posts to the list.

Work at The National Archives in support of the Religious Archives Support Plan 2025-2026

The past year has seen significant events in the archives sector, the most important being publication of the Government's new vision for archives in England. Baroness Twycross (Minister for Museums, Heritage and Gambling, and Lords Minister) officially launched the vision on Friday 17 April. Saul Nassé, TNA CEO, also spoke at the launch about the vision's three interconnected strategic themes: Accessibility, Inclusivity and Sustainability. At the core of the vision is the integral role archives have at the heart of society. It sets out a clear national framework to ensure archives are preserved, used and valued by everyone, now and for generations to come.

The National Archives, as the official sector lead for archives in England continues to be involved in supporting the strategy for religious archives outlined in the Religious Archives Support Plans and maintaining the excellent relationship it has with this group.

In my role as Sector Development Manager of archives of religion and belief I continue to lead on relations with religious archives networks. It's been my pleasure to attend several events over the last year including the RAG conference 2025, Cathedral Archives, Libraries and Collections Association (CALCA) conference 2026, Catholic Archives Society conference 2026 and Jewish Collections Knowledge Exchange and Networking Event in Sheffield held in collaboration with the Hidden Treasures Network.

Great thanks go to archive colleagues who have so generously given up their time to speak with me and invite me to see their collections. It's been a pleasure to connect with amongst others, Durham Cathedral, Downside Abbey, the Herbert Kelly Institute for Anglican Religious Life, Lambeth Palace Library, Methodist Heritage, Quaker Library and Archive, Salisbury Cathedral, Ushaw Historic House, Chapels and Gardens, Westminster Abbey and York Minster.

It's been fantastic to see religious archives applying for and being granted funding from TNA's range of funding opportunities. Congratulations to Epworth Old Rectory (Engagement Grant) and the RC Diocese of Newcastle and Hexham (Archives Revealed Scoping Grant). As ever, I'm happy to offer advice and support should you wish to know more about the funding on offer and submit an application.

I'm delighted that in the past 12 months that York Minster has become a first time recipient of Archive Service Accreditation, and that Exeter Cathedral and Archives was re-awarded Accreditation. This is a major achievement for both archives and I congratulate them for being part of a small, but hopefully ever-increasing number of religious archives which achieve the award.

You may have seen that since October 2025 I have sent a dedicated monthly TNA bulletin to archives of religion and belief nationally for the first time. The bulletin outlines the latest

events, training, funding and news which may benefit religious archives. New subscribers are very welcome, as is content that may be relevant for peers caring for religious collections. And lastly, as your dedicated first port of call for religious archives please do get in contact for support and I look forward to meeting more of you over the next 12 months.

*Liz Harper
Sector Development Manager
Archives of Religion and Belief
The National Archives*

RELIGIOUS ARCHIVES GROUP
ACCOUNTS
2025-2026
1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

The Group's accounts show a break-even position for 2025/26. The main source of income was from conference ticket sales which exceeded costs by £343.58. Other expenses are itemised below.

The Group aims to improve the financial position in 2026/27 by maintaining income levels from conference ticket sales but adding to these by offering sponsorship opportunities. Costs can also be reduced by capping conference speaker expenses and transferring web hosting in house.

There were no payments from the small grants fund in the financial year. The fund remains closed until the accounts are showing a sufficient surplus year-on-year, so as to build up the fund.

Balance in account 31 March 2025		£3,419.97
INCOME 2025-2026		
Conference fees 2025	£1,664.60	
TOTAL		£1,664.60
Added to 2025 balance		£5,084.57
EXPENDITURE 2024-2025		
Expenses		
Word Press fee	£43.40	
Hostinger fee x 2	£21.58	
Consultant's fee for Website work	£150.00	
Conference speakers' expenses 2024	£621.02	
Conference hosting fee	£700.00	
Donation to Rachel Cosgrave memorial bench	£100.00	
TOTAL		£1,636.00
Balance in account 31 March 2026		£3,448.57

Shane Flynn
RAG Treasurer