

IN MEMORIAM KENNETH HALL



KENNETH HALL

(28 May 1947 – 12 June 2008)

Ken Hall, who died recently at the age of 61, was an outstanding archivist, renowned nationally and internationally for his professional experience and expertise, his sound common sense, his facility for explaining complex concepts in simple terms, and his friendly approach to all he met.

After graduating in 1968 with a BA in History at Leicester University (where one of his teachers was Geoffrey Martin, later to become Keeper of Public Records), Ken Hall set out upon his chosen career by taking a diploma in archives at the University College of North Wales, Bangor. On completing the course in 1969 he became an archivist at the West Suffolk Record Office in Bury St Edmunds, where he was to serve for the next seven years, latterly as Senior Assistant Archivist in Charge after a local-government reorganisation merged the formerly separate counties of East and West Suffolk but retained the two record offices. In 1976 he was appointed County Archivist of Durham, moving from there in 1979 to become County Archivist of Lancashire. During his fourteen years at the Lancashire Record Office in Preston he oversaw the construction and fitting out of a large extension conforming fully to national standards for the storage of archives. He also served as part-time lecturer on the MA course in archive administration at Liverpool University. In his next post, as County Archivist of Essex, which he took up in 1993, he had the task of planning and supervising the construction of a completely new archival building, the Essex Record Office in Chelmsford, which is generally regarded as one of the best, technically, functionally and aesthetically, in the United Kingdom. He was responsible also for the introduction there of the SEAX computer system, which is used by the public to search for documents relevant to their interests and by staff to record, catalogue, index and manage the archives.

While serving in Suffolk Ken became involved more widely in professional affairs as Honorary Assistant Secretary of the Society of Archivists of the United Kingdom and Ireland, and this was followed later by a term as its Honorary Secretary. In 1985 he was elected Vice-Chairman of the Society and from

1987 to 1989 he was its Chairman. In this last capacity he found himself representing the Society in the Section of Professional Archival Associations of the International Council on Archives (ICA/SPA) and so began his long and distinguished participation in the international archival community.

Between 1988 and 1994 he was successively Secretary, Vice-Chairman and Chairman of SPA, and served ICA also as a Counsellor of the Bureau of the International Conference of the Round Table on Archives (CITRA) from 1988 to 1992 and as a member of the Executive Committee from 1990 to 1994. He was Project Director of the Archival Survey for Climate History (ARCHISS) from 1991 to 1996, and between 1996 and 2000 he was a member of ICA's Sub-Commission for Communications and of the Editorial Board of *Janus*. He undertook his first consultant mission overseas in 1989, when he evaluated a pilot project on national archival networking in Kenya for UNESCO.

He was an active supporter of the work of the International Institute for Archival Science / IIAS in Maribor(Slovenia) from its inception and served for many years as a official member of the IIAS and as member o the Editorial Board of the official publication of the IIAS *ATLANTI*.

Although ill-health caused his early retirement from Essex Record Office in 2003, he was able to maintain his involvement in international archival affairs. He inspected the National Archives of the Maldives following the 2004 tsunami, worked on the international coordinating committee for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage of Iraq, and since 2006 had been Chargé de Mission for ICA and represented it on UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme.

Ken's untimely death has robbed archives worldwide of an outstanding advocate and archivists everywhere of a very good friend. He will be remembered by his many friends as an honest and supportive worker, ready to help at anytime and enriching discussions with his unique sense of humour.

Michael Roper