

The Background & History of the Cambridgeshire Community Archive Network

Cambridgeshire's community heritage is both valuable and fragile. Intriguing information, in the form of photographs, documents and memories about community life, is all too often lost to subsequent generations.

The Cambridgeshire Community Archives Network (CCAN) preserves this diverse and easily lost source of cultural and community heritage, and will make available to the widest possible audience online.

CCAN was developed with the support of a Heritage grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The grant funded a two-year project led by Cambridgeshire County Council's (CCC) Libraries, Archives, and Information Service. Project staff included Steve Capes (Project Manager), Matthew Hall and Gilly Vose (Community Archive Officers) and Karen Davies (Archives Liaison Officer). With the assistance of CCC a website (www.ccan.co.uk) was developed and an initial three year period of web-hosting and support was provided for CCAN groups. Each community group has created its own digital archive on the CCAN website, using local Community Access Points (which form part of the Cambridgeshire Community Network, supported by CCC and established with the assistance of District and City Councils) and a wide spectrum of other community locations including libraries, village halls and sheltered housing schemes.

The CCAN project funding draws to a close at the end of November 2008 and the successful cross-searchable county network will continue to be run by a volunteer-led Executive Committee, ensuring a key project aim, sustainability, is met. The CCAN Executive Committee has worked hard to have structures and relationships in place for the project handover in November. This has included developing a long-term 'association' with the ***Cambridgeshire Association of Local History (CALH)***, which has a broad spectrum of objectives and aims, complementing those of the CCAN. CALH will use its wide-ranging contacts, experience, and knowledge base to help nurture and guide CCAN, while allowing it to maintain its own sense of identity, administration, and independence. The CALH website (www.calh.org.uk/ccan.htm) has a section dedicated to CCAN and allows direct access to CCAN group homepages.

Cambridgeshire County Council will continue to offer assistance to CCAN beyond November 2008, both by providing web-hosting and support to CCAN, but also by the continued involvement with the Executive Committee of the Project Manager, Steve Capes.

At the handover in November, CCAN will have 46 community groups across Cambridgeshire. These groups are independent, with their own finances and management. Many have chosen to be closely linked to their village local history societies, while others operate on their own.