

ARCHIVES AND HERALDRY AWARENESS WEEK, 17 - 21 MAY 2010

Archives remain invisible to most South Africans, although they have been in existence for decades. The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (Act No. 43 of 1996, as amended) stipulates that the National Archives should not only collect and preserve records but should

- Make such records accessible and promote their use by the public
- Promote an awareness of archives and records management, and encourage archival and records management activities
- Emphasise activities designed to reach out to less privileged sectors of society, and make information concerning records known by means such as publications, exhibitions and the lending of records.

The National Archives and the Bureau of Heraldry through their Outreach programmes are committed to reach a wider community by participating in and initiating public programmes that will ensure the awareness of the existence of archives and their services and increase archives use by a larger proportion of the South African society including the previously disadvantaged groups of our society.

In order to increase the public awareness of and access to archival records, the National Archives and Records Service Act mandates the National Archives to promote the use of archives by the public; hence the Archives and Heraldry Awareness Week is hosted every year in conjunction with provincial archives services. The 2010 Archives and Heraldry Awareness Week is taking place between 17-21 May. Members of the public are invited to participate in this awareness campaign. During this period visitors get an opportunity to tour the Archives Buildings, view exhibitions and interact with professionals in the field.

The aim of the awareness project is in line with one of the elements of the broader mission of the Department of Arts and Culture, which is to guide, sustain and develop the archival, heraldic and information resources of the nation to empower citizens through full and open access to these resources.

The Bureau of Heraldry was established in 1962 under the Heraldry Act of the same year. Based on the Heraldry Act, the Bureau is responsible for developing and registering heraldic representations for government and the general public. In 1994 the Bureau helped to design the new National Flag. Since then the Bureau has been instrumental in the transformation of National Symbols. In the past five years the Bureau's mandate has been broadened to include the task of popularising National Symbols. Through this mandate, National Symbols have been made accessible to a wider audience through a number of projects. By interacting with different Government departments for the Popularisation projects, the Bureau has been made aware that there is a critical need to engage in a project that will specifically target the officials of the Department of Arts and Culture as the custodian Department of National Symbols.

For more information on Archives and Heraldry Awareness Week, please contact the National Archives' Outreach Section on tel. 012 441 3200, 012 441 3239, 012 441 3270 or 012 441 3238 or visit the website of the National Archives and Bureau of Heraldry at www.national.archives.gov.za.