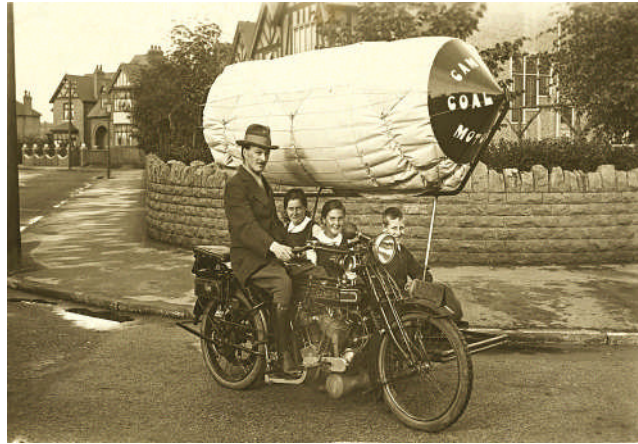


Inspire in the East Midlands – embark on a journey of learning and discovery at your library



This image of a family in the coal gas motorcycle, (Nottingham, 1916) is one of more than 76,000 images from <http://www.picturethepast.org.uk/> a collaboration between libraries and museums across four local authorities.

Readily accessible and attracting around 8,000 visitors each month, Picture the Past is one of the many special collections in the East Midlands available to learners. While the region is well known for its strong literary connections with a wealth of material relating to writers such as D H Lawrence, Tennyson, John Clare, Lord Byron, Alan Sillitoe and H E Bates, other collections may be less well known. Examples include the University of Leicester's Sue Townsend Archive of books at including the Adrian Mole diaries, stage plays, radio and screenplays; and Derbyshire Libraries collection of around 500 printed volumes of writings of the Sitwell family of Renishaw.

Some years ago a region-wide project identified around 300 special collections in East Midlands' libraries and other organisations and details of many of these can now be seen on the findit! website.

There are some surprising finds: Buxton Museum holds the Randolph Douglas collection on Houdini, the Islamic Foundation Library has 4,000 slides on Islam and the Muslim world and the Quran translated into 30 languages and written in different scripts. The University of Nottingham has a unique collection of Icelandic poetry and material on Icelandic culture, language and history, while the University of Northampton holds one of the largest and most varied poster collections in the country, containing around 5,000 historic posters, together with works by Picasso and Matisse. All these collections are available to all with an interest in learning or research through in Inspire in the East Midlands.

The Inspire in the East Midlands find it! scheme was first launched in 2007, to highlight and encourage access to these rich and diverse resources. The region's public libraries were quick to sign up to take part,

as were several universities and further education colleges together with a number of special libraries as diverse as the British Geological Survey, the library of Lincoln Cathedral, the Tennyson Research Centre and the Islamic Foundation.

A range of promotional material including posters, bookmarks, leaflets and the findit! cards were produced to promote Inspire to the wider public. Colleagues across the region worked hard to ensure that library staff were aware of the scheme and could respond appropriately to enquirers.

A set of colourful and attractive banners highlighting Inspire in the East Midlands and the range of resources available from the region's libraries were produced and these have been widely used in public libraries, at student enrolment sessions in local colleges, and at community events.

Local launches and active promotions to end users across the region generated positive feedback. Yet in spite of all this, take up has remained low and the challenge now is to get the message out to learners across the region.

Inspire in the East Midlands will be re-launched from late autumn; the leaflet has been revised and reprinted, further stocks of the findit! cards will be available for participating library services to issue to learners and staff guidance notes have been updated.

The number and range of participating libraries and organisations has grown and all of the region's universities together with eight health sector organisations are now taking part.

Inspire is a valuable initiative which helps to encourage and support collaborative working and library services working in partnership across all sectors to ensure that the region's rich resources are made accessible to learners.

Inspire in the East Midlands is led by Libraries and Information East Midlands and Regional Librarian Lynn Hodgkins, lynn.hodgkins@derbyshire.gov.uk, is very happy to provide any further information to Inspire e-newsletter readers.