TEST

FROM PARCHMENT ROLLS TO OPTICAL DISCS

Exercise 1

Read the text. Translate it (orally). Make use of the Notes and the Vocabulary.

1. A public record is any physical relic which conveys information about government transaction, whether it is a notched stick recording a debt of a few shillings to the medieval Exchequer, a scribbled note by a Tudor king or a formal Cabinet minute. The Public Record Office holds the records of the central law courts as well as those of the business of direct ruling; in earlier times the functions were inextricably linked.

2. Most public records are written on parchment or paper in manuscript or, equally in recent years, typescript, but increasingly electrostatic copies are to be found and electronic records on tapes and discs are also being transferred for preservation.

3. The records span 900 years, the earliest being that phenomenal survey of the kingdom conducted by William the Conqueror which the Anglo-Saxons nicknamed “Domesday”. With no revolutionaries or invaders to destroy them, the queen’s records have remained virtually intact from the early middle ages. Until the mid-nineteenth century they were kept, by and large, in the office or courts which created them. When the cupboards and shelves started to overflow, they might be sent off to be stored somewhere else. Access was restricted in a rather haphazard way; there were as many record keepers as there were repositories, and each guarded his charges jealously. Only the tenacious and the relentlessly inquisitive could get to see them and use them for historical or legal purposes.

4. With the nineteenth century came stirrings of a scientific approach to history and a new consciousness of the importance of original sources. Between 1800 and 1837 six royal Commissions agonized over the problem of the state archives. In 1838 the Public Record Office was established by Act of Parliament, to take care and control of the legal records, Exchequer and fourteen years later all departmental records were brought under its auspices. From 60 different storehouses the sacks and parcels of rolls and writs and files were brought into the repository in Chancery Lane; from the Tower, Westminster Abbey and all the nooks and crannies where they had been hidden.

5. As soon as there was somewhere official for them to be stored, the records kept appearing, as it were, from nowhere. By 1928 there were 35 miles of shelves’ full. Government now produces in one year enough paperwork to fill 100 miles of shelves. A carefully devised system of inspection has evolved which ensures that a proper selection is made whereby all that is necessary for practical purposes is retained and enough of the rest to document the history of the nation and its people. In 1954 the following principles of selection were laid down: files were to be reviewed after five years in the departments and the reviewers were to ask themselves if the records were of any continuing use. It was reckoned that anything of lasting historical value would survive that process. When the files were 25 years old, or the oldest paper on them was of that age, then they would be looked at again by the department and the Public Record Office together. The records selected after the second review should be transferred to the Office unless the department still needed them for administrative use. About a shelf mile of records are taken in every year.

Exercise 2

Answer the questions (in written form).

1. What is a public record?

- A public record is any physical relic which conveys information about government transaction.

2. What is also being transferred for preservation?

- Electronic records on tapes and discs are also being transferred for preservation.

3. Why have the queen’s records remained virtually intact from the early middle ages?

- The queen’s records have remained virtually intact from the early middle ages because there were no revolutionaries or invaders to destroy them.

4. Why was the Public Record Office established?

- Public Record Office was established in order to take care and control of the legal records.

Exercise 3

Ask 4-5 questions about the text (in written form).

1) What records does the Public Record Office hold?

2) Who could see the record and use them for historical or legal purposes?

3) When was the Public Record Office established?

4) Most public records are written on parchment or paper, aren’t they?

5) Was access restricted in a haphazard way or in a certain way?

Exercise 4

Translate the 5th paragraph of the text beginning with the words: “As soon as there was somewhere official ...”; and ending with the words “are taken in every year”. (in written form).

5. Как только появилось государственное хранилище, записи продолжали появляться, так сказать, из ниоткуда. К 1928 году полки были заполнены на 35 миль. Сегодня правительство производит за один год достаточное количество документов, которыми можно заполнить 100 миль полок. Сформировалась тщательно разработанная система экспертизы ценности документа, которая обеспечивает надлежащий отбор, причем все это необходимо для практических целей и сохраняется в полном объеме для документирования истории нации. В 1954 году были сформулированы следующие принципы отбора документов: файлы подвергались пересмотру министерствами каждые пять лет, и рецензенты должны были отмечать, использовались ли документы постоянно. Считалось, что документ исторической важности должен был пройти этот процесс. Когда файлам исполнялось 25 лет, или когда самый старый документ из них достигал этого возраста, тогда они снова пересматривались департаментом совместно с Государственным архивом Великобритании. Документы, отобранные после второй проверки, должны были передаваться в архив, до тех пор, пока они не требовались министерству для служебного пользования. Сведения о заполнении полок документами в милях собирают каждый год.

Exercise 5

From the text select those facts and ideas concerning the restricted access to records before 1838.

- Until the mid-nineteenth century access was restricted in a rather haphazard way; there were as many record keepers as there were repositories, and each guarded his charges jealously. Only the tenacious and the relentlessly inquisitive could get to see them and use them for historical or legal purposes.

Exercise 6

Divide the text into logically connected parts and entitle them. Present the points of your plan in written form in the space below.

1. The concept of “a public record”.

2. Different ways of record preservation.

3. Early records.

4. The problem of the state archives and the creation of the Public Record Office.

5. The development of the new carefully devised system of inspection.

Exercise 7

Present the general idea of the text in 3-4 sentences. Do it in written form.

- A public record conveys information about government transaction and the Public Record Office holds the records of the central law courts as well as those of the business of direct ruling. Most public records are written on parchment or paper in manuscript or typescript, but electronic records on tapes and discs are also being transferred for preservation. Until the mid-nineteenth century access was restricted in a rather haphazard way but with the nineteenth century came stirrings of a scientific approach to history and a new consciousness of the importance of original sources. A carefully devised system of inspection has evolved which ensures that a proper selection is made whereby all that is necessary for practical purposes is retained and enough of the rest to document the history of the nation and its people.

Exercise 8

Give your opinion on the principles of inspection and selection of departmental records, the way they are transferred to the Public Record Office and the type of records kept in that famous repository. Present your interpretation in the form of a thesis. Write it down in the space below.

- The principles of selection laid down in the system of inspection that exists today ensures that a proper selection is made whereby all that is necessary for practical purposes is retained and enough of the rest to document the history of the nation and its people.