
Worcestershire Archive Service

Collections Development Plan 2019-2024

a partnership between

Contents

1.0 Mission Statement	3
2.0 Introduction	3
3.0 Aims.....	3
4.0 Acquisition	4
5.0 Appraisal and review of existing collections	4
5.1 Disposal of records.....	5
6.0 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Collections.....	5
6.1 Areas of strength.....	6
6.2 Areas of weakness	6
7.0 Annual review and surveying of collections	7
7.1 Surveys for the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978	8
8.0 'Rescue Archives'	8
9.0 Collecting Priorities 2019-2024.....	9
9.1 Records of LGBTQ+ groups, organisations and individuals.....	9
9.2 Personal, family or organisational papers of BAME and immigrant communities, groups and individuals	10
9.3 Born-digital records	11
Appendix 1	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 2	Error! Bookmark not defined.

1.0 Mission Statement

At Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS), our priority is to ensure the proper management of Worcestershire's heritage for current and future generations. We protect, preserve, manage, record, interpret, share and promote the history and historic environment of Worcestershire. We help the modern county of Worcestershire to achieve its priorities as identified in the Corporate Plan; Open for Business, Promoting Health and Well Being, Protecting the Environment, Supporting Children and Families. We are striving to develop a sustainable model for the continuance and growth of the Archive and Archaeology Service in the current financial climate.

2.0 Introduction

Worcestershire Archive Service seeks to identify, collect and preserve the documentary heritage of Worcestershire and make it available for use both now and in the future and to encourage the broadest public access to archives. In fulfilling these duties, we will abide by all relevant legislation including:

- Public Records Acts 1958, 1967
- Manorial Documents Rules 1959 and 1967
- Tithe Apportionment Rules 1960 and 1963
- Local Government (Records) Act 1962
- Local Government Act 1972
- Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, amended 1992
- Local Government (Access to Information Act) 1985
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

3.0 Aims

This plan outlines the steps Worcestershire Archive Service will take to fulfil the aims outlined in our *Acquisition and Collection Policy* by specifically identifying our priorities for collecting over the ensuing 5-year period. We will endeavour to address any gaps in our current collections and to strengthen any areas of weakness that have been identified through our established monitoring processes.

Worcestershire Archive Service will seek to ensure its collections reflect all aspects of Worcestershire's diverse communities and their activities, past and present. We will collect records from whatever source can contribute to a better understanding of the history and development of the County. In order to ensure our holdings represent a complete as possible coverage of Worcestershire's past, the Archive Service will seek further collections

that record all aspects of life in the area we serve, aiming to cover all parts of the county's past and present and as wide a range of institutions and subjects as possible.

Our collecting priorities are constantly evolving in order to reflect the continuing development of our collections. Whilst priority for acquisition of records will be given to archives at risk of loss, destruction or damage; we will actively endeavour to acquire record collections that are currently underrepresented within the Service's holdings. Prioritisation is established in accordance with our Strengths and Weaknesses assessment (see section 6.0 below), which resulted from a survey of the complete collections held by the service. The current strengths and weaknesses of our collections are reassessed each year by comparing our annual accessions returns against our original assessment, alongside a continuous process of monitoring during the processing of existing collections, as specified in our *Collections Information Policy and Plan*.

4.0 Acquisition

Worcestershire Archive Service collects material that fulfils one or more of the following criteria:

- Records of the County Council and its predecessor bodies
- Records of other local authorities and their predecessors and statutory bodies operating within the County
- Local public records held under the Public Records Acts
- Ecclesiastical records of the Diocese of Worcester
- Records of regional bodies which have their headquarters within the County, except where provision has already been made with another repository
- All types of record-creating bodies within the county of Worcestershire, such as Faith groups other than the Church of England, clubs, societies and associations, businesses, families, including landed estates and individuals.

5.0 Appraisal and review of existing collections

In order to ensure that the collections of records acquired by Worcestershire Archive Service are fully in line with the conditions of our *Acquisition and Collection Policy* a process of appraisal and review takes place, whereby all records are assessed for their research value and for the suitability of Worcestershire as their long-term repository. Appraisal takes place at three points within the accessioning process:

- By the depositor prior to accessioning by Worcestershire Archive Service. Whilst this is not an enforced process it is something that the service strongly encourages our existing and potential depositors to carry out. Specific advice on

reviewing and appraising parish and town council records; ecclesiastical records and school records can be found on our website.

- By Worcestershire Archive Service prior to accepting collections into our care. Preliminary sorting and appraisal is carried out as part of the accessioning process, particularly where it is evident that this has not been carried out by the depositor.
- By trained Worcestershire Archive Service staff during the sorting and listing stage that is carried out prior to cataloguing collections.

Records contained within a collection must adhere fully to the terms specified within the *Acquisition and Collection Policy*; specifically, that records collected must relate to the history of Worcestershire, or the Diocese of Worcester, and its administration. Any appraisal activity that is found to be necessary is carried out in accordance with Worcestershire Archive Service's *Guidance for appraisal of collections*.

Where appraisal of a collection identifies a section of records that do not adhere to the *Acquisition and Collection Policy* and the removal of such records would threaten the integrity of the wider collection, the appropriate action to be taken is to be decided at the discretion of the Archive Manager.

5.1 Disposal of records

If, during the appraisal process, records are encountered that do not adhere to the conditions specified within the *Acquisition and Collection Policy* or are deemed to be unworthy of permanent preservation then they may be returned to the depositor, transferred to a more appropriate repository or destroyed confidentially. All disposal actions are carried out in accordance with the wishes of the depositor, as specified on the accessioning paperwork that is completed at the point of deposit.

6.0 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Collections

In 2010 a survey of the collections held by Worcestershire Archive Service was carried out. This activity aimed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our holdings, in order that we may better understand where particular gaps in our collections may lie. By obtaining an understanding of areas that are currently underrepresented in our collections, we can, where possible, endeavour to actively prioritise collecting activities to address our weaknesses

To ensure our priorities remain relevant, our strengths and weaknesses assessment is updated each year. This is done by comparing our annual accessions returns against our original assessment, alongside a continuous process of monitoring during the processing of existing collections, as specified in our Collections Information Policy and Plan.

Our current areas of strengths and weaknesses in our collections are:

6.1 Areas of strength

Quarter Sessions records
Magistrates' Courts records
Local Authority (County and District Councils) records
Town and parish council records
Records of former Boroughs
Ecclesiastical parish records
Diocesan records
Poor Law records
Records of Nonconformist churches, particularly Methodist and Society of Friends
Family and estate records
Solicitors' records
Photographs of the county
Oral history records
Hospital and mental health records, including nursing and practice records
Records of political organisations
Police records
Coroner's records (late 20th cent. onwards)
Personal journals and diaries
Records of Women's Institute (W.I.) groups
Military records

6.2 Areas of weakness

Records of LGBTQ+ groups, organisations and individuals
Personal, family or organisational papers of BAME and immigrant communities, groups and individuals
Born-digital records
Business archives of many significant local trades and industries
Charities
Voluntary Sector organisations
Many less main stream Non-conformist churches
Minority ethnic and religious bodies (especially non-Christian)
Agricultural and farming records
Records of sporting clubs and societies
Records of artistic and cultural organisations and individuals
Architectural records

a partnership between

Using this information as a guide we are able to establish clear targets for our collecting priorities. Whilst it is essential that we maintain our current strengths and continue to develop relationships with our existing depositors, this information provides us with specific areas to focus upon for future development of our collections.

7.0 Annual review and surveying of collections

Worcestershire Archive Service carries out a continuous programme of reviewing and surveying of its collections to ensure that we maintain an up-to-date overview and understanding of the weaknesses of our holdings. Our priorities for active collection of records and understanding of areas which require further development is dependent upon this work.

Worcestershire Archive Service takes part in The National Archives' Annual Accessions to Repositories Survey, which collates information about the accessions made to the office over the preceding 12 months. The information that our Service submits each year is used in conjunction with the results of our previous survey of collections to annually assess our holdings.

Whilst we are careful to monitor and compare new collections that are deposited with Worcestershire Archive Service against our original survey findings, we are mindful that many of the contents of the larger collections that are currently placed on our backlog of accessions, which are awaiting full sorting and cataloguing, are still unknown to us. For this reason we employ a continuous process of monitoring during the processing of existing collections. Further details of our procedures for dealing with records held on our backlog can be found in our *Collections Information Policy and Plan* documents. The cataloguing activity of staff within the Service is assigned and closely monitored by our archivists in order that we maintain an accurate picture of the records we hold. Should our staff come across any records during the sorting, listing and cataloguing of documents that directly affect our collections development work, then this information is recorded and passed on to the appropriate staff member in order that amendments may be made where appropriate.

The information that is gathered through our sorting and cataloguing activity and through the statistics compiled for the Annual Accessions to Repositories Survey is monitored and then used to feed in to our collections development priorities for the ensuing years. Although we create our Collection Development plans on a five-yearly basis, we maintain the right to review this document prior to its published end date should we find that our collecting priorities are dramatically altered as a result of deposits made or records discovered through the course of cataloguing during this period.

7.1 Surveys for the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978

In accordance with the Parochial Registers and Records Measure of 1978 Worcestershire Archive Service has been designated by the Bishop of Worcester as the Diocesan Record Office for the Diocese of Worcester. In accordance with the Measure we are the designated repository for the deposit of parochial registers and other records.

The Parochial Registers and Records Measure of 1978 (amended as to 2003) stipulates that "Every archdeacon shall cause the register books and records in parochial custody in his archdeaconry, including register books in use for the purpose of making entries therein, to be inspected and reported on periodically by such person or persons as he may appoint."¹ Traditionally this role has been carried out by Worcestershire Archive Service. The Measure also states that the survey must be carried out every five years. Whilst we do not have the resources available to carry out a full survey every five years, we do maintain regular contact with the parishes within Worcester Diocese. Wherever frequent contact is not maintained we will seek to initiate a parochial survey in line with the five-year guideline.

The aim of conducting the surveys is to ensure the long term preservation and accessibility of parochial registers and records as a reflection of the heritage of the Diocese. By compiling lists of the records held and assessing the conditions in which they are kept, recommendations and advice can then be given as to the best course of action for different records, to ensure their long term preservation and accessibility. Ensuring the security of these records both prior to their deposit and throughout the duration of our custody of the records is a high priority Collections Development task for the Archive Service.

8.0 'Rescue Archives'

Given limited resources and capacity there is a risk of archives being lost to posterity. On occasions where the Service is made aware of the need for urgent intervention to protect or rescue archives, there may be insufficient capacity to deal with all the appropriate and expected accessioning and cataloguing that would normally be associated with a deposit of records. However the situation warrants their rescue in order to protect the heritage for the future and the potential for more considered interventions when resources allow.

Examples of situations could be that a local company or organisation closes down overnight; a key individual in an organisation, such as the secretary, dies or leaves the area; an organisation realises that their storage of historic records in the bathroom or by a radiator needs rectifying.

¹ Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 No.2, F4 – 9, (1)

As a result of such rescue operations, Collections Development will include an ad hoc element which may take the Services' collections into new and underdeveloped sectors, proving beneficial in the longer term to the development of policy at the same time as preserving important archive material.

In practice, archives rescued would be given an accession number, a brief appraisal of extent, details of the organisation and future contacts. It would need to be checked before being stored in the strongrooms but the nature of intervention would be minimal and there would be a presumption against any public access until resources permitted a more detailed appraisal of the collection. It would be sufficient for the public to be aware that the material existed and had been rescued and at some point TBA it could be made more accessible.

The key principle here is about protection of the archival heritage and not its accessibility.

The notion of rescuing archives in this way is not new. Rescue Archaeology is a long tradition, and the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (University of London) and the TNA's campaign on legal records at risk is a similar approach. Securing the heritage, including archives, of areas of the world at risk from war and other danger is another example of this principle, though one admittedly more extreme than what is proposed here in Worcestershire.

9.0 Collecting Priorities 2019-2024

It is vital that the Service is aware both of our current stakeholders and those we do not currently reach or represent. We must ensure our collections are inclusive and relevant and that they support and reflect all our communities, helping us to both document the present and to interpret the past from new perspectives. Development of collections ultimately comes from true engagement with communities and the cultivating of relationships. Creative partnerships help people to recognise the impact of archives and will inspire new generations of depositors.

Worcestershire Archive Service has identified several priority areas which we will seek to develop our coverage of over the next five-year period, through a programme of active collection and community engagement. These areas represent both current weaknesses in our collections and actively contribute to the aims of Worcestershire County Council's Corporate Plan.

9.1 Records of LGBTQ+ groups, organisations and individuals

Worcestershire Archive Service strives to ensure its collections reflect the broad diversity, both past and present, of our county and its residents. It is vital that representation of the LGBTQ+ community and its activities are reflected in our collections. The deposit of archives relating to the activities and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, groups and organisations in Worcestershire is a key priority for the Service.

Since 2017, the Service has been working to build a relationship with the Worcestershire Pride organisation. Records relating to the establishment and running of the charity have already been deposited with WAAS and the Service is now seeking to expand collections to encompass the history of the Pride movement right across the county.

WAAS is keen to actively collect records that reflect the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals and groups across the county. To this end we will seek to develop further relationships and explore project opportunities with key organisations throughout Worcestershire. WAAS will also explore opportunities to revisit existing holdings with a view to identifying records relating to LGBTQ+ experiences and making key records more discoverable by enhancing descriptions as appropriate.

9.2 Personal, family or organisational papers of BAME and immigrant communities, groups and individuals

Worcestershire Archive Service acknowledges that we must be aware both of our current stakeholders and those we do not currently reach or represent. In order to reflect the broad diversity, both past and present, of our county and its residents we must ensure our collections are inclusive and relevant and that they support and reflect all of our communities. WAAS wishes to actively collect records that reflect the lives and experiences of BAME and immigrant individuals, groups and organisations from across the county.

Development of collections ultimately comes from proper engagement with communities, and to this end WAAS has been striving to cultivate relationships with BAME and immigrant communities through several specific projects and outreach programmes, including:

- Moving to the City – this was an art-based project which sought to explore the stories of those people who have moved to Worcester over the last 200 years. By using new and current stories of immigrants arriving in the city, alongside stories of those already in our collections, we aimed to explore the diverse character of our modern city in new and exciting ways.
- Caged Arts – Heritage at Home – is a project in the early stages of development. This project will also look at movement to Worcester and will seek to capture oral history records of the people involved.
- Outreach activities and visits to schools.

Our aim over the next five years is to build upon the relationships we have already established and to extend this to further groups and communities by exploring opportunities throughout the county. We must ensure going forward that our efforts to

engage with diverse communities result in an increase in deposits received and a meaningful representation of all communities within our collections.

9.3 Born-digital records

Worcestershire Archive Service has formulated a Digital Preservation Policy, which outlines our intentions for handling born-digital material and all digital surrogates in our care. The Service has prepared also prepared a Digital Asset Register internally, which will ensure that we have an accurate picture of the materials we hold and will allow us to progress with our plans for the preservation, catalogued and access to this material.

Our focus for the duration of this Collection Development Plan is to meet the requirements for care of digital records as outlined in the National Digital Stewardship Alliance's (NDSA) Level of Preservation standard. The Service will also strive to create awareness amongst existing and potential depositors of the importance of managing, retaining and depositing born-digital material. We will develop information documents outlining the steps required for dealing with digital material, along with practical templates for compiling and submitting essential metadata and associated information. Digital material deposited with the Service will be subject to the criteria for collecting records outlined in our Acquisition and Collection Policy.