

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service



A visitor's guide

All you need to know to help you find your way around

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Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service are located on Level 2 (Explore the Past) at The Hive in the heart of Worcester.

Under our care thousands of archaeological sites, historic buildings and landscapes are recorded and 12 miles of original archives are collected and preserved. These are made available to our customers under the guidance of friendly, knowledgeable, and experienced staff. All types of research on Worcestershire people and places can be undertaken using the comprehensive resources of the Historic Environment Record and the Archive Collections.

If you are visiting us for the first time, take a minute to read this guide, which will tell you all you need to know to get started.

Contents

Opening Times	4
Explore the Past	5
Original Archive Area	5
Self-Service Area	5
Historic Environment Record	5
Using the Original Archive Area	6
(i) Before you visit	6
(ii) Checklist of items to bring with you	6
(iii) Reader's tickets – Archives Card	7
(iv) Getting started	7
(v) Use of lockers	7
(vi) Ordering Items	7
(vii) Use of cameras and copying of documents	8
Using the Self-Service Area	8
Public access computers	8
Printing and Photocopying	8
Using Microform Records	9
Local Studies and Archaeology library	9
Palfrey Library	9
Using the Historic Environment Record	10
Where do I start?	10
Now I have a HER report, what more can I do?	10
I have completed my research/project, are you interested?	11
Facilities at The Hive	11
Refreshments	11
Accessibility	11

Opening Times

Day	Access to Original Archives	Access to staffed Historic Environment Record	Hive opening hours
Monday	No access to Original Archives	No access to staffed Historic Environment Record	08.30am to 10pm
Tuesday	10.00am to 4.30pm*	10.30am to 1.00pm	08.30am to 10pm
Wednesday	1.30pm to 7.00pm	No access to staffed Historic Environment Record	08.30am to 10pm
Thursday	10.00am to 4.30pm*	10.30am to 1.00pm	08.30am to 10pm
Friday	10.00am to 4.00pm*	No access to staffed Historic Environment Record	08.30am to 10pm
Saturday	For Saturday opening please see website	No access to staffed Historic Environment Record	08.30am to 10pm
Sunday	No access to original archives	No access to staffed Historic Environment Record	08.30am to 10pm

***Important Notice:** The Original Archive Area will be closed to the public for lunchtime between 1pm and 1.30pm on the days noted above. All documents will be secured away in our strong-rooms during this time and returned to users after the break.

The Hive is open seven days a week from 8.30am to 10pm, during which time visitors can freely access our self-service resources; including microform, our extensive Local Studies and Archaeology Library and our catalogues and indexes.

Explore the Past

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service is on Level 2 (Explore the Past) at The Hive. The floor has three key areas for users to visit:

Original Archive Area

The Original Archive Area is the place to visit if you wish to view any of the original documents held within our archive collections during our staffed hours (see Opening Times section for details). These records go back to the 1100's, and relate to every aspect of Worcestershire life, and include:

- private records of local families and estates
- school and hospital records
- business records
- records of Worcestershire County Council
- an extensive collection of Worcester City records

Self-Service Area

Our Self-Service area is fully accessible to users from 8.30am to 10pm, during which time you can freely access the wide range of sources on offer. Sources such as:

- parish registers, newspapers, and wills on microform
- extensive Local Studies and Archaeology reference library
- computers available for internet use and searching our electronic catalogues and indexes
- free access to the Ancestry website
- a wide range of finding aids and resources

Historic Environment Record

Simple enquiries can be dealt with during normal opening hours. This resource, which is fully accessible to the public, contains over 54,000 records relating to:

- archaeological sites
- historic buildings
- historic environment features: early prehistoric finds, medieval agricultural landscapes, recent industrial structures, large-scale excavations, building records
- individual stray finds.

Outside of desk open hours, enquiries can be made through our website contact form at: [Contact Us](#) .

Keep reading for more information on using the areas mentioned above.

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Using the Original Archive Area

(i) Before you visit

If you do not already have a valid reader's ticket you should apply for membership before you visit by going to www.archivescard.com.

To make your visit easier we also recommend that you try to do a bit of research before you arrive. Gather together any information you may already have about the subject you are researching, and if possible check online catalogues to see if we have any documents relevant to your research. There are a number of sources you can check online:

- Our online catalogue: [CalmView Archive Catalogue](#)
- The National Archives' catalogue, Discovery: TNA [Discovery](#)
- We have a growing selection of online resources available on our Explore The Past website under [Our Collections](#)

Remember to make a note of any reference numbers you find for documents you wish to view.

Please note: not all of our collections are available to search online. Many more are available to search through our paper catalogues in branch.

(ii) Checklist of items to bring with you

- A valid Archives Card (see below)
- Any research material you have already gathered.
- Pencils (we do not allow use of pens).
- A notebook or a laptop to keep track of your research and memory sticks to save work on. You can plug your laptops into the power supply here or use the computers in the building.
- Worcestershire Library card or University of Worcester Library card. These are required to log on to the computers for internet access. Staff can issue you with a Worcestershire Library card if you don't already have one, on presentation of identification. These are available to non-Worcestershire residents too.
- Digital camera. Users can purchase a photo permit to take digital images of documents for their own personal use (restrictions may apply). You will need to sign a form when copying any documents so please always seek permission from a member of staff first. (See (vii) for current charges).
- Permission letters for access to records affected by closure periods.

(iii) Reader's tickets – Archives Card

To access our original records, you will need a reader's ticket. We are now a member of the Archives Card scheme.

If you do not already have a valid reader's ticket you should apply for membership of the Archive Card Scheme before you visit us by going to www.archivescard.com. Please note you do need to register and have a valid email address to apply for an Archive Card.

You can add your own photo when you apply but we can add one for you when you visit if you don't have one. You will have 3 months to visit a participating archive to complete your registration after you apply.

When you visit you will need to provide two forms of ID to complete your registration, please see the list of accepted forms of ID on the Archives Card website under '[How to Get a Card](#)'.

Archive cards are valid for 5 years.

(iv) Getting started

Users entering the Original Archive Area must sign in, and in doing so agree to abide by our Rules and Regulations.

When you arrive for the first time a member of the Archive Team will provide you with a short induction to using the Original Archive Area. This is designed to familiarise you with the layout of the service, to show you how to order documents and to give you an introduction to using our resources.

(v) Use of lockers

All bags must be deposited in lockers before entering the Original Archive Area. Our lockers are restricted to use by visitors to the Archive Service during our opening hours. The closing times will be clearly displayed in branch and it is the customer's responsibility to return the key before closing time

(vi) Ordering Items

Before you can order items, you will need to check our electronic or paper catalogues to ascertain the correct finding numbers. You will then need to complete a Document Request Slip. Staff will guide you through this process during your User Induction on your first visit.

You may order a maximum of three items at one time, with a separate Document Request Slip required for each item. Staff will issue you with one item at a time; once you have finished viewing a box please return it to the desk so staff can give you your next item.

Please note where there is a surrogate copy of a document available on microform (such as parish registers, wills or electoral registers), you will be required to view these in the Self-Service Area instead of the originals. This is important as continued use of frequently accessed original items will cause them to deteriorate over time.

(vii) Use of cameras and copying of documents

Photographic permits

You may be able to take a photograph of our documents, subject to restrictions and permission from staff. To do this you will need to purchase a photographic permit. This allows you to take unlimited non-flash digital images for your own personal use using your own camera. This is a convenient, time saving option, allowing you to take copies at your own pace. Please note staff permission must be sought before taking any photographs and a copyright form must be signed. Photo permits can be purchased from staff.

Please see details of our charges on our website or ask a member of archive staff for current costs.

Digitisation Service

We offer a professional Digitisation Service which may be able to provide high quality digital images of documents in a range of formats. Please check our [website](#) for more information or make a digitisation enquiry with the references and details of what you require

Using the Self-Service Area

A selection of guides and resources are available on our website. Links to our most popular guides in the Self-Service Area are also available via QR Codes that are accessible via a tablet or mobile device.

Public access computers

Computers are available for public use in The Hive, along with free access to Wi-Fi. In order to login to a computer you will need either a Worcestershire library card or a University of Worcester student card.

Printing and Photocopying

While you are here you can print pages from the internet, print copies from microforms and take photocopies. Printing and photocopying services are available on a self-service basis.

Using Microform Records

We have microform readers for the public to freely access during Hive opening hours. Microform resources include microfilm, microfiche, and aperture cards of some of our most popular records. The readers enlarge these images for you to view. There is no need to book a space, simply come along and get started.

Our microform cabinets are close to the readers, with labelled drawers indicating the contents. We have numerous resources on microform, including parish registers, newspapers, electoral registers, wills, census records and various private collections.

We have two microform reader printers available for users who wish to print from the microform, or you can save to a memory stick. These operate on the same system as printing from computers, so bring along your library or student card for print outs.

Local Studies and Archaeology library

Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service has an extensive collection of books relating to Worcestershire, its history and archaeology. Our large reference only Local Studies library, is available for users to consult, and is a vital resource for studying locality, family history or adding context to archival research. Our Archaeology library holds a wide range of books providing both local and national coverage, along with a large selection of volumes relating to World War II defences.

Details of the books in our Local studies section are available to search on [The Hive library catalogue](#), which is accessible via a computer from home or in The Hive

Please remember that as these books are **reference only**. They may not be taken out of The Hive.

Palfrey Library

The Palfrey library is a special collection which forms a part of our Local Studies library. This extensive collection was bequeathed to the County Council by Alderman H.E. Palfrey, Chairman of the Records Committee. Compiled over many years, the collection boasts a rare selection of antiquarian studies, first edition volumes and books useful to the study of Worcestershire.

Books held as part of this collection are stored in lockable, glass cabinets in the Self-Service Area and are accessible and viewed via the same procedure as any original documents held in our Original Archive Area and are available for use in the Original Archive Area under supervision.

Using the Historic Environment Record

This is the county of Worcestershire's primary source for archaeological and historic environment information. The Historic Environment Record (HER) holds approximately 54,000 records on all aspects of Worcestershire's archaeology and historic environment.

We are here in The Hive to provide information and advice based on user's requests and interests.

Here are some ideas of what our service can help you to research:

- Your area – e.g. village, a particular building, parish
- A particular period of interest – e.g. Roman, medieval, World War II
- Different industries – e.g. lime kilns, carpet factories, needle manufacturing
- Artefact types – e.g. coins, pottery, plant and animal remains

As you can see there is a wealth of information available, whether you are a member of the public, a student, or a professional archaeologist.

Where do I start?

The best starting place is to get in touch with an HER Member of Staff by visiting during opening times or by [submitting an enquiry](#), which will enable staff to fully understand your research question(s) and assist you by providing an HER report of all the records that you may be interested in, along with location and historical mapping.

If you can't make it in to see us don't worry, you can start your research online using the resources listed below. A good starting place would be the [Heritage Gateway](#).

Now I have a HER report, what more can I do?

There are several resources you can make use of, both within The Hive and online at home:

- HER Sources and Aerial Photographs – these are situated in the Archaeology public office in the filing cabinets and on the shelves. The sources are filed under their **SWR** number, which is the unique number given to every document referenced in the HER. You can find a document's SWR number in the bibliographic section of the HER report provided.
- Tithe, Inclosure and Estate Maps – these are situated in the two vertical map cabinets in the Archaeology public office. The maps are filed alphabetically by parish/estate name. The majority of the maps are hand transcriptions copied at a scale of 1:10000.

- [Archaeology Data Service \(ADS\) Grey Literature Library](#). Here you will find access to archaeological reports that are the result of the planning process (grey literature) and will give details of excavations, field walking, building recording and much more archaeological work. A HER search will give you bibliographic details which can be used to search the grey literature library.
- Heritage Gateway – Historic England have created an online portal so that users can search many HERs (and other national datasets) all at once. This is a particularly useful tool for having an initial look at what the HER may hold. The web address is www.heritagegateway.org.uk. Please see our guide to using the Heritage Gateway for further details.

I have completed my research/project, are you interested?

Yes! One of the main ways the HER is updated and maintained is by people informing us of their discoveries, memories or points of interest. The minimum information that we would usually require is a location (a cross on a map is adequate); some information regarding what the project was or how the discovery was made and any photographs or reports available that we can add as references.

By letting us know what you have found we can enhance our database to help inform future enquirers and therefore continue to protect the County's historic environment.

Facilities at The Hive

Refreshments

The Hive has its own café, which serves sandwiches and light snacks as well as a variety of cakes and hot and cold drinks. Please see The Hive website for further details, including opening times.

However, you may bring drinks (with a lid) and cold food into some areas of the Hive and signage explains where you can consume any food and drinks.

Please note: no food or drinks are allowed in our Original Archive Area.

Accessibility

The Hive is fully accessible to wheelchair users, mobility scooters and pushchairs and has ramp access to all areas. We have disabled toilet facilities, a personal care suite and lifts to all floors.

Other Archive Services

Please contact us by submitting an [online archive enquiry](#) or using our contact details below if you are interested in using any of our other services such as making a [deposit](#), [conservation](#) or [digitisation](#).

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Contact Us

By post:

Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service
The Hive, Sawmill Walk, The Butts
Worcester, WR1 3PD

By telephone:

01905 822866

Online:

www.explorethepast.co.uk



Blog:

www.explorethepast.co.uk



Twitter:

[@explorethepast](https://twitter.com/explorethepast)



Facebook:

[WorcsAAS](https://www.facebook.com/WorcsAAS)



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