

WEST SUSSEX RECORD OFFICE COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 West Sussex Record Office Record Office (WSRO) acquires and preserves the historic archives of the County, makes them available to everyone who wishes to see them, and promotes their use for study and enjoyment.
- 1.2 The Record Office was set up in 1946 and has been located in its current purpose-built archive centre since 1989. It holds collections dating back to 780.
- 1.3 West Sussex Record Office also runs a Records Management Service for West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The Records Management Service has been in existence since 1969.

2. Background

2.1 Legislation

- 2.1.1 West Sussex County Council is the sole local government authority in the present county of West Sussex charged with exercising archive powers. It conforms to and is subject to all legislation applying to local authority archive services in England and Wales.
- 2.1.2 WSRO is governed by a statutory framework under the Local Government (Records) Acts 1962 and 1972, and the Public Records Acts 1958, as amended 1967. The Record Office is approved as a Place of Deposit for Public Records by The National Archives. It is the authorised place of deposit for manorial records under the Manorial Document Rules 1959 and 1967 and for tithe records under the Tithe Document Rules 1960 and 1963 (see Appendix A for further details of this legislation).
- 2.1.3 The Record Office was established as the Diocesan Record Office under a statutory instrument of 17 February 1949 and the place of deposit for registers and records of ecclesiastical parishes located within the administrative areas of the County Council. It now holds parish records in accordance with the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1992).
- 2.1.4 Under instruments dated 3 March 1951 and 8 June 1951, the Bishop of Chichester and the Dean and Chapter of Chichester respectively appointed WSRO to serve as a place of deposit for the records of the Bishop and the Dean and Chapter of the Diocese of Chichester.

2.2 Access to collections

Access to the collections at WSRO complies with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, the Data Protection Act 2018, and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (see WSRO Access Policy, Jul 2021)

2.3 Definition of archives

2.3.1 'Archives are the record of the everyday activities of governments, organisations, businesses and individuals' (*Archives for the 21st Century*). They act as the county's collective memory, recording the lives and activities of ordinary people, as well as key events and decisions which have shaped the development of West Sussex.

2.3.2 Archives come in many forms, including paper, parchment, maps, plans, cinefilm, and digital and electronic media. Their continued preservation provides a strong link to the past and they are a profoundly important resource for current and future generations.

2.4 WSCC Local Studies

A merger between WSRO and WSCC Local Studies will take place in the near future. This will have an impact on the collections as proposals are developed to relocate original archives currently held across the county to the Record Office. An audit will be carried out of all the Local Studies collections and it is expected a joint Collections Policy will be developed in due course.

3. **Aim of policy**

3.1 Since 1946, WSRO has worked to collect and preserve the documentary heritage of West Sussex for the use of current and future generations. Our records cover the area of the modern county of West Sussex and date from 780 AD to the present day. This policy sets out how we aim to continue to develop our collections to provide inclusive coverage of all aspects of the history of West Sussex.

3.2 This policy is part of a suite of documentation relating to the care and management of the collections. It should be read in conjunction with the **Collections Information Policy, Collections Care Policy, Digital Preservation Policy, Intersectionality Policy, Collections Development Plan, Collections Information Plan, Collections Care Plan, and Intersectionality Plan.**

4. What we collect

4.1 Overall scope

WSRO aims to identify, gather, and preserve unique archival material of long-term historical value relating to the administrative county of West Sussex. WSRO has a collecting policy in place to ensure that its collections are fully representative of all aspects of West Sussex's communities and their activities.

4.2 Geographical remit

4.2.1 WSRO seeks to collect archival material for the whole of the administrative county of West Sussex (as constituted in or after 1974), from the smallest to largest geographical units and from both urban and rural areas.

4.2.2 This may include records relating to areas outside West Sussex where there are exceptional circumstances or good reasons for keeping an archive together. For instance, where a family with a seat based in West Sussex has other estates and interests outside the county. However, WSRO does not actively seek to collect archives from outside the administrative county of West Sussex.

4.3 Thematic scope of collections

4.3.1 Thematically WSRO seeks to document all activities and aspects of life in West Sussex. This includes, but is not limited, to the records of local government, all religious denominations, schools, business, clubs and societies, families and estates, and individuals.

4.3.2 We will continue to seek to collect a comprehensive record of the decision-making processes and key activities of the County Council and its predecessors. Additionally, we will collect the records of District Authorities and District Councils (Rural and Urban) operating under the County Council and its predecessors.

4.3.3 In terms of religious archives, WSRO will continue to collect Anglican parochial records as under the terms of the Parochial Records Measure. WSRO will also continue to seek to collect records of all other religious denominations including all Nonconformist churches and chapels (including but not limited to Methodist, Quaker and Congregational), Roman Catholic and records of all other faiths.

4.3.4 We will continue to seek to collect archives of individuals and organisations active in the public and private sectors and in civic and business life. These include businesses, clubs and societies, political

parties, trade unions, pressure groups, local campaigns, families and individuals. We aim to collect records representing all interests and opinions.

4.4 Format

WSRO encourages the deposit of archives in a wide range of formats including: paper, parchment, DVD/CD Rom, digital media, audio and video cassette, memory sticks, film, microfilm/fiche, photographs, glass plate negatives and lantern slides.

5. Limitations of collecting policy

- 5.1 WSRO encourages the deposit of film archives but aims to transfer them to Screen Archive South East [SASE], who are able to provide specialist storage and equipment. The SASE Conservation Centre and collections are based at WSRO which facilitates the smooth transfer of material.
- 5.2 WSRO will only accept records which are deemed appropriate for permanent preservation. This will be determined by qualified archive staff who will take into account the historical and informational value of the record.
- 5.3 WSRO prefers to acquire original archival material but will accept copies if originals are not available or if the owner does not wish to part with them.
- 5.4 WSRO will only acquire records which can be made available for public access after cataloguing and preservation work has been completed, after a fixed closure period agreed in consultation with the owner or depositor, or if permission can be sought from the depositor on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.5 WSRO will only accept printed or published material if it forms an integral part of an archive, contains significant manuscript annotations, or is an aid to research and could be added to WSRO's own library.
- 5.6 WSRO does not generally accept artefacts, three-dimensional objects or works of art unless they form an integral part of an associated archive. Such items will be directed towards appropriate local museums and galleries.
- 5.7 WSRO respects the collecting policies of other established repositories and museums and works with them to ensure that archival material is deposited with the most appropriate institution, where there is debate over where material should be held.

6. Developing the collections

6.1 WSRO will ensure that its collections continue to develop by:

- Maintaining existing arrangements for continuing deposits of County Council records through the Records Management Service, and for Diocesan Records, and Public Records.
- Continuing to maintain contact and relationships with depositors leading to further deposits over time.
- Giving priority to records at risk of loss, destruction or damage.
- Actively encouraging the creation and deposit of archives where appropriate (e.g., to document major events such as the Covid-19 pandemic).

6.2 WSRO aims to develop collections which represent all communities living in the county. The Record Office will actively encourage the deposit of records relating to areas we know to be currently under-represented in our collections.

6.3 Consideration will also be given to the geographic spread of the collections with some areas, such as Mid-Sussex, underrepresented in our collections as the result of historic boundary changes.

6.4 The acquisition of born digital archives will be pursued and preserved in accordance with the Digital Preservation Policy.

6.5 The collections will be further developed through the merger of WSRO with WSCC Local Studies in due course.

6.6 The key priorities for the development of the collections are set out in the Collections Development Plan. This Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Collections Team to ensure that it is up to date in accordance with the changing needs of the existing collections and incoming accessions.

7. The acquisition process

7.1 WSRO acquires collections through the following means:

- Gift (including bequests): this is WSRO's preferred option
- Deposit on long term loan
- Transfer: from West Sussex County Council or as public records from The National Archives and other archive services if WSRO is deemed the more appropriate repository

Purchase: in exceptional circumstances, where resources allow and in accordance with WSRO's Document Purchase Policy

- 7.2 WSRO provides receipts for all accessions, signed by the depositor or their intermediary and a member of WSRO staff. By signing this receipt, the depositor agrees to the Record Office terms of deposit (see Appendix B). WSRO preserves all documents relating to each accession which form the basis for West Sussex County Council's legal title.
- 7.3 Due to the resources involved in storing, cataloguing, and providing access to collections, WSRO asks that deposits are made for a minimum of 20 years. Charges may be incurred if collections are withdrawn before the end of this period. The only exception to this is the temporary deposit of records for the purpose of producing surrogates.

8. Deaccessioning and disposal

- 8.1 WSRO always aims to collect archives for permanent preservation. However, under certain circumstances it may be appropriate for documents to be transferred to other repositories or otherwise disposed of after review by a qualified member of staff. WSRO will consult with the donor at the time of deposit regarding their options for disposal which are generally one of the following:
- Return to depositor or donor: we ask that records are collected from WSRO and provide a deadline by which this should happen after which it will be assumed that the records are unwanted and will be destroyed.
 - Transfer to a more appropriate repository
 - Destruction: items for destruction will be placed in the County Council's confidential waste and will be shredded securely.
- 8.2 WSRO does not dispose of archival documents by sale. However, we may sell printed material and books which are not required by WSRO and which the depositor does not wish to have returned to them.

9. Date of publication and review

This policy will be reviewed every three years. The next review is due in July 2024. The supporting documents will be updated on an annual basis.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Legislative Framework

Appendix B: West Sussex Record Office Terms of Deposit

Appendix A: Legislative framework

The Local Government Act 1972, Section 224

This Act places statutory obligations on West Sussex County Council to 'make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the council or any of its officers'.

This includes:

- Records created by the County Council and its predecessors in the course of its business - current and semi-current.
- Records held on behalf of central government and subject to the Public Records Act 1958.
- Records given to or purchased by the authority or deposited with the authority on long term loan by authority of the Local Government (Records) Act 1962.

Local Government Acts 1962 and 1972

Under this Act, the County Council, through its Archive Service, is the appointed archive authority for all local government districts within West Sussex and is responsible for ensuring the proper care of the records of all parish councils.

Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967

Under this Act, West Sussex Record Office has been appointed by the Ministry of Justice to look after designated public records such as those of Quarter Sessions, Magistrates' Courts, Coroners, County Courts, Probate, Health Authorities etc. as scheduled in the Public Records (Places of Deposit) Instrument 1991.

Manorial Documents Rules 1959 and Tithe Rules 1960

Under this Act, West Sussex Record Office is the sole places of deposit within the County of West Sussex approved by the Master of the Rolls for the deposit of manorial and tithe records.

Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1992)

West Sussex Record Office serves as the official Diocesan Record Office for the Diocese of Chichester. In particular under this Act, we look after parish records of the Church of England throughout West Sussex.

Appendix B: West Sussex Record Office Terms of Deposit

1. West Sussex Record Office acquires, preserves and makes accessible the archives relating to the County of West Sussex in accordance with its collections policy. West Sussex Record Office accepts private records by way of gift, purchase, bequest or indefinite loan. This statement sets out the terms under which the Record Office accepts deposited records on indefinite loan.
2. Where documents are deposited, the depositor retains ownership together with the right to withdraw all or part of the collection upon reasonable notice in writing, subject to any special conditions agreed upon at the time of deposit. In the case of permanent withdrawals, reasonable notice shall consist of a period of time sufficient to allow the Record Office to make copies of the documents for the purposes of research and private study. In the case of temporary withdrawals this shall be for a period of no more than three months.
3. Although records are deposited on indefinite loan it is assumed that the period of deposit will be, other than in exceptional circumstances, not less than 25 years in order that expenditure incurred by the Record Office on conservation and cataloguing can be justified. If a deposit is withdrawn permanently, the depositor may be required to make a financial contribution towards the costs incurred during the period of deposit.
4. The Record Office reserves the right to undertake any repair or conservation work deemed necessary for the preservation of the material in accordance with our conservation programme.
5. The Record Office reserves the right to make copies of deposited records for the purposes of preservation and in order to improve access. Ownership of such copies shall be vested in the Record Office.
6. The Record Office may take such measures deemed necessary for the administration and security of deposited documents such as their rearrangement, stamping and marking.
7. The deposited material will be stored in secure accommodation and the Record Office will take all reasonable steps to ensure the long-term preservation of the records by protecting them from damage from climatic extremes, flood, fire, theft or physical misuse. However, should damage or loss occur the County Council cannot be held liable for compensation.
8. Documents will be produced for consultation by researchers under supervision in accordance with the Record Office rules for public use of archives, subject to any statutory restrictions or any special conditions agreed between the depositor and the Record Office at the time of deposit. In the event of any access restrictions agreed with the depositor, the Record Office will only produce these records with the written permission of the depositor. The Record Office observes the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

9. The copying of documents by photography or photocopying is permitted for the purposes of private and unpublished research, subject to any restrictions agreed upon at the time of deposit and in accordance with current copyright regulations. People to whom copies are supplied for research purposes will be required to sign a declaration of compliance with the current copyright legislation. For any other purposes, including publication, the consent of the owner or depositor will be sought.
10. The Record Office may place any of the deposited material in an exhibition on its own premises, subject to any restrictions on access applicable to the deposit and under such conditions as are reasonable for the exhibition of such material. Requests from other institutions for the loan of records for temporary exhibitions will be referred to the depositor for approval.
11. We reserve the right to dispose of duplicate and non-archival material (by destruction as confidential waste if necessary), unless you have previously indicated a wish to have such documents returned.
12. Private depositors: Please let us know of any subsequent change of address or contact details. On your death, your documents will become the property of your personal representatives, or of anyone to whom you leave them by your will. We will need firm evidence of your death and of your wishes before we will treat any other person as the owner of your documents.
13. Non-private depositors: Please let us know of any changes within your organisation, such as the name of the current contact, or changed address.
14. West Sussex Record Office is the Diocesan Record Office for the Diocese of Chichester and accepts parish records in accordance with the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1992).