

Winter Closure Weeks Report January 2018

As you may have noticed, we have been closed to the public for two weeks this January, for what we have called our 'Winter Closure Weeks'. But we have not, as some of you have cheekily suggested (!), been using this time to chill out max and have a holiday. We've been working harder than ever, pushing through with larger projects or tasks - things that require a decent chunk of time and that are not possible when we are open to the public. These are the kinds of projects we used to undertake in our monthly closure weeks.

Many of you who have visited us in person will appreciate the usefulness of a decent catalogue, well organised documents or clear finding aids. You might not even realise how some of these things affect you – for example, appraising collections means more space in the strongrooms, which saves money and means we can continue to take in more documents. Or tidying up box labels in the strongrooms, which you may never see in person, makes things more efficient for our document production team and allows us to serve you more swiftly on your visits.

By taking the time to work on these projects, we are making our collections a lot more accessible and saving visitors' time down the line. So have a read, to see what we've been up to...

Summary

Collection/Project	Staff
TD00/18: Papers of Dr Dunn (local consultant psychiatrist) - appraising 89 boxes	Carolyn Ewing and Sharon Forman
Votes for Women! 2018 – collating records and research for the coming exhibition	Amanda Williams
Accessions to Repositories – providing information to TNA regarding our new accessions	Amanda Williams
Sorting the sorting room – completing a backlog of accessions and repackaging, ready for a clean slate in 2018	David Hodgkinson
Box labels – tidying and repairing labels on popular collections, to make Document Production more efficient	Alice Varah
Maps galore! – sorting, listing, checking and storing OS maps that have had conservation treatment, and weeding out duplicates	Karen Moulder and Beck Hemsley
DRB0177: St Peter's Maney – doubled progress cataloguing this parish collection	Beck Hemsley

TD00/18: Dr Dunn

Carolyn Ewing and Sharon Forman

The closure for Collections work has allowed us to get our teeth into the **89 boxes and odd loose item** that make up the collection of Dr Dunn. It has given us significant blocks of time in the strongrooms, and we have not been in the way of the document production teams who usually need ready access to the mobile racking to get things out for visiting members of the public. So thank you for bearing with us and the breathing space!



We were assigned the task of **appraising the material, which essentially means assessing it to decide whether it is worth keeping** for researchers.

The papers are the personal papers of a local consultant psychiatrist which were deposited on a temporary basis to allow for them to be assessed in 2000 with some later additions. Following an initial preliminary peek at a couple of the boxes it was apparent the material had been boxed up in no particular order. In the time available, we could never sift through all of the material in each box and make a detailed listing of all the individual items. So the goal was to get through as many boxes as possible to get an overview of the type and nature of the material contained in the collection and see how much duplication there may be, thus giving us the possibility of weeding out the duplicates.



We have managed to get through all of the boxes and have our rough notes. In our minds we have an overall picture of the collection and have formed a preliminary view of what we think should be kept and identified pockets of material which can be offered back to the depositor.

So next steps:

- Report to our fellow archivists to

make the final decisions.

- Liaise with the depositor with a view to agreeing terms of deposit and how to deal with the material we do not wish to keep.
- Depending on outcome of the above, formally accession the material accepted into the collections.
- Consolidate and rebox.
- Produce skeleton catalogue structure, ready for the more detailed listing which will be required to make the material readily accessible, but will need to wait until time and resources allow.

The result will be to determine the size of the collection thereby freeing up precious space in the strongrooms as well as boxes. We can label the boxes of what is left more meaningfully which will help with the future cataloguing and access in the interim.

Votes for Women! 2018

Amanda Williams

The Record Office is currently working with the Market Hall Museum to mark **the 100th anniversary of women** over thirty who met the minimum property qualification, being given the vote.

For the first part of my week I **collated and copied the records** chosen for the exhibition and **wrote up research notes** for the exhibition subjects.

And then:



Accessions to Repositories

Amanda Williams

Annually WCRO participates in The National Archives, 'Accessions to Repositories' survey. The remainder of my two weeks, therefore, has been spent pulling together the information required by TNA, **highlighting some of the collections** taken in and **providing links** to the collection through our online catalogue.

Sorting the sorting room

David Hodgkinson

Our sorting room is where we look after collections while they are being accessioned. In most cases, a collection passes through the sorting room fairly quickly, but occasionally it can take a little longer to finish the process. It might be that we need more information from the depositor, or that the collection needs rearranging. Perhaps unwanted documents need to be weeded out before we catalogue the collection, or items need bespoke packaging to keep them safe.

One of our aims over the two weeks has been to work through the backlog of collections waiting to be accessioned, to **give us a clean slate for 2018**. While we haven't managed a clean slate, all but a few of the collections in the sorting room have been completed and each has been safely moved to its place in our strongrooms.

Thanks to the time and space afforded by our closure weeks, **39 accessions** have been completed, **198 catalogue entries** have been added to Warwickshire's Past Unlocked and, with the help of our conservation team, **25 collections** have been repackaged or reboxed in archival quality materials.

Highlights include a collection of tithe apportionments and altered tithe apportionments (CR4161), school photographs from Clapham Terrace mixed school (PH1322) and the Boys' Central School (PH1243) and churchwarden's records from the parish of St Peter, Dorsington (DR1558)



Box labels and cataloguing deeds

Alice Varah

I found Collections Week a very useful and positive experience. My main tasks included checking and rewriting old labels on boxes in the Strongrooms, and cataloguing information about deeds on CALM (our cataloguing software).

The former was a necessary job because the Archive Assistants rely on clear labels and accurate re-directs to find documents as quickly and efficiently as possible. This is essential for document production so that we don't keep our visitors waiting. The latter was an excellent new experience for me. Guided by Sharon, I gained valuable knowledge about deeds and how to describe them on CALM. It was great to spend a lengthy amount of time reading and understanding the documents, as I do not have time usually.



Maps galore!

Karen Moulder and Beck Hemsley

We have been dealing with an immense stack of OS maps, which has been taking up space and plaguing our dreams for many months now. Many of them are duplicates, which needed listing and storing. Many came back from conservation treatment to be returned to the map tanks. Some were just 'unknowns' which needed identifying (often the most time-intensive task).

The difficulty was that different people had kept putting the project down and picking it up again, which meant that it was easy to get confused or forget what had already been sorted. We had piles of maps with tags



reading 'duplicates?' or 'to check', and we didn't know for certain what that meant. But no more!

We weren't counting as we went along (too many numbers floating in our head already!) but has been a task and a half. With the help of conservation volunteers, we've dealt with over **80 bundles** of duplicate maps, we've checked the dates in about **10 map tanks** (each containing hundreds of maps), and have logged and sorted **hundreds more maps** which have returned from conservation treatment.

We are now at a position where we have sorted out all the 'weird' or confusing maps. We know that our finding aids are up to date and have double-checked most of the map tanks. We have managed to sort, log, and store everything that needed to go into map tanks. That means our collection of maps available in the searchroom is



more comprehensive than it has ever been. We still need to check and log another 50 or so bundles of duplicate maps, but at least the task ahead is finite and manageable.

So we want to thank you for letting us invade the searchroom for two weeks, and thanks to our colleagues for putting up with our endless drone of 'SP148... 1955, SK196... 1973 double, SP149... 1955'...!

DRB0177: St Peter's Maney

Beck Hemsley

Alongside working through the maps with Karen (above), I have been getting through a chunk of cataloguing work. My current project is to create a catalogue for the parish collection of St Peter's Maney, Sutton Coldfield, which consists of **30 boxes**. I am listing the documents at item- or bundle-level; creating a structure to understand how the documents fit together; repackaging and noting down duplicates or items which might need to be weeded out.

The first three boxes containing parish registers had already been listed, since they are likely to be popular records for researchers and needed most urgent access. However, despite beginning this project in July, I have only managed to list 7 more

boxes over the course of 6 months. This is because the majority of my time is spent on public service at reception or producing documents for customers, and I have had to squeeze cataloguing in whenever I got a spare moment 'behind the scenes'. With fewer staff on public service, we sometimes struggle to find time to work through these ongoing and non-urgent (but still important!) tasks.

However, with the time and space to really plough on, I have **managed to list another 9 boxes** of this collection in two weeks alone. There's still a lot to do (11 more boxes to list, and then a lot of going-over), but it certainly seems more manageable. I have been able to work more efficiently with this sense of momentum – it helps not having to spend time getting back up-to-speed every time I come back to the project.

And now the question you've all been dying to ask...

But what did Chambearlin the Bear do?!

Surely everyone knows he's the secret driving force behind everything we do? 😊

Well, he's been encouraging us the whole time, through the long slog! And he's here at the end to say a massive **thank you** to all the staff who have spent two weeks of hard work achieving great things. And thanks to our users for their patience while it all happened. Until next year!

