

Treat your archive as you would a box of cereal!

“Store in a cool, dry dark place”

In addition to this maxim should be added “stable”. Fluctuating temperatures and humidity, such as those found in attics, are the worst conditions possible for archives (or indeed textiles or wood).

Always store on an inside wall. Outside walls can be quite humid even in an otherwise well heated and ventilated room. One of the best places for storing your boxes can be in a wardrobe in a spare bedroom.

Pictures in frames on such a wall can start to exhibit mould and foxing. This is particular problem when the humidity is trapped behind glass.

When hanging pictures the amount of light that they receive must be minimised. Imperceptible changes take place over time leading to ‘time-fading’. This is where the mount blocks the light to the area around the image. Maybe rotate your collection of pictures through out the year.

Photographs are particularly sensitive to light. Store in polyester sleeves or lignin and acid free paper enclosures to prevent handling damage.

The best thing to do is to copy the originals and put them away in a box and hang the copies. Colour photocopies, flat-bed scanning or digital photography produce amazing results. The other advantage of making copies in this way is that they can be given as prints or CD/DVDs to other family members so that if disaster strikes at one home you don’t lose everything. Do the same thing with your family tree software and notes.

Store photograph albums flat as this lessens the stress on the spine and stops some dust getting in. Ideally put in a box.

Always remove Blu-Tac before storing as this leaves a greasy deposit which cannot be removed. Don’t use rubber bands, use unbleached cotton tape instead.

Sellotape should NEVER be used. If it has been used, leave it on. Removing it could cause more damage. Other tapes should be left attached if already in use. The only ‘safe’ pressure sensitive tape is Filmoplast. ‘Sticky tapes’ of any kind should never be used on photographs.

Paper or parchment documents which are robust should be lightly brushed if necessary to remove dust/dirt. Staedlter erasers and vulcanised rubber sponges can be used in small circular motions with a light pressure, to clean paper documents of more engrained dirt. They should then be stored in acid-free envelopes and wrappers and then placed in a box.