

Current Heritage Assets 2015/2016

For 2015/2016 the total value of our heritage assets is £4.0 million. This includes a value of £0.2 million for the Waller Woodcote Collection, and insurance valuations of £0.8 million for valuables in the Courts, Judges House and Shire Hall and £1.8 million for our Museums Service collections. There is also the artwork Golden Tower of Leaves / Gold Leaf: Buried Sunlight at Pooley Country Park which is valued at a cost of £0.1 million. In addition to this we have structures which were previously classified as community or other assets which have an insurance valuation of £1.1 million.

Museum Collections

The museum collections are reported at insurance valuation.

There are only two items with an insured value of over £100,000. The insurance valuations are effective from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

Shire Hall, Judges House and Courts Collections

Shire Hall, Judges House and Courts Collections are reported at insurance valuation. The 2015/2016 insured value of the assets within the Courts, Judges House and Shire Hall is £812,720. This value relates to portraits and items of furniture none of which are individually valued at more than £62,000.

County Records Office Collections

The Waller of Woodcote archive collection of family and estate letters and deeds providing an insight into Warwickshire life from the 12th Century has been included as an asset in the Balance Sheet at a cost value of £168,951 since its acquisition in 2007/2008.

Apart from the Waller of Woodcote collection we have been unable to obtain a value for the documents in the County Records Office so these archives will not be recognised in the balance sheet figure. These assets are one off historical documents, which makes them simultaneously priceless and yet without market value. It is also very costly and time consuming to obtain such valuations. We are therefore of the opinion that the costs of obtaining the valuations for these items would be disproportionate in terms of the benefit derived.

The County Council currently has an arrangement for Parish and early court records to be viewed on-line. The asset in this case remains the record held within our records office and not the electronic availability.

Operational Heritage Assets

Operational heritage assets (i.e. those that in addition to being held for their heritage characteristics are also used for other activities or provide other services) are accounted for elsewhere in the Balance Sheet and valued in the same way as other assets of that type. There will be a zero balance for these items within Heritage Assets.

Operational heritage assets held by the Council include Market Square Museum, St John's House Museum, Judges House and the old County Courts, and the following groups of assets:-

Ancient Monuments

The Council has a number of ancient monuments which it is responsible to maintain as part of the public highway. They include visible structural elements of the roads system and are mainly bridges. We have 55 structures which fall into this category. Since they are already included within the valuation of our Infrastructure assets, their value is not disclosed under heritage assets within the accounts.

Smallholdings

In addition we have a number of heritage assets within our smallholdings. Some examples of these are ridge and furrow fields, a farm which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or sites with underground archaeology or listed farm buildings. The carrying amount of these items under heritage assets is zero because they are within our Smallholdings assets which are included within Plant, Property and Equipment.

Schools

It is expected that within our schools there will occasionally be structures or buildings or artwork which may be classed as a heritage asset. The carrying amount of these is zero under heritage assets because they are within our School assets which are included within Plant, Property and Equipment.

Heritage Assets - Community or other Assets

The Council has five assets classified as Community or other Assets. These assets are recognised on the balance sheet based on their insurance valuations since it is extremely difficult and costly to provide valuations based upon conventional methods. The total value of these assets is as follows:-

	Previous Value on Balance Sheet 31 March 2015	New Method of Valuation	Revaluation Amount	New Value on Balance Sheet 31 March 2016
	£	£	£	£
Stockton Cutting	-	Insurance	-	-
Beacon Tower	300,130	Insurance	59,408	359,538
Alvecote Priory	78,558	Insurance	15,549	94,107
Chesterton Windmill	628,617	Insurance	-	628,617
Clopton Bridge gazebo	-	Insurance	-	-
Total Additions	1,007,305		74,957	1,082,262

* It should be noted that the insurance value of these structures in 2010/2011 was £674,888; however in 2010/2011 they were valued using conventional methods in line with the reporting standards relevant to their classification which meant in the balance sheet they were de-minimis.

Any gains on reclassification are taken to the revaluation reserve.

Stockton Cutting

This is a local nature reserve which is run in conjunction with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. It is described as a steep sided disused railway cutting with a diverse flora and a good range of butterfly species. We have reclassified it as a heritage asset as, unlike our other country parks, there are no provided amenities such as playgrounds, picnic areas, visitor centres and tea rooms. The value of this asset is de minimis.

Beacon Tower (Burton Dassett Hills)

The Beacon Tower is the focal point of the hilly landscape at the Burton Dassett Hills Country Park. The structure had two doorways and two windows before it was filled in, and was probably used to pass signals across the county. It was reportedly built in the late 15th Century at the direction of the Lord of the Manor Sir Edward Belknap. The insured replacement cost is £359,538.

Alvecote Priory (Pooley Fields Country Park)

This is the ruin of a Benedictine Priory and Dovecote in the Pooley Fields Country Park. Very little remains of the Priory although the main entrance arch is still standing. There is also a visitor centre which contains donated mining memorabilia. The insured replacement cost of the whole site is £94,107.

Chesterton Windmill

Chesterton Windmill is a 17th Century Grade 1 listed stone tower windmill located outside the village of Chesterton. The Council is responsible for its maintenance under the Ancient Monument Act 1931. The insured replacement cost is £628,617.

Gazebo, Clopton Bridge, Stratford

This is an 18th century gazebo situated close to the south end of Clopton Bridge in Stratford upon Avon. This has been valued as being below de minimis of £25,000.

In addition to the above structures located within our Community Assets the Pooley Fields Country Park has a new focal point the Golden Tower of Leaves or Gold Leaf: Buried Sunlight. This was installed in 2011/2012 and is valued at its cost of £135,000.

Museum, County Records, Shire Hall, Judges House and Courts Heritage Assets

George Eliot Collection (housed at Nuneaton Library)

The George Eliot Collection is held at Nuneaton Library. The collection was started in the early days of the town's first public library around 1900 and has been built up over the years. There is a great deal of pride in the local author, and the library has collected early editions of her works, and books about her from all over the world.

The collection contains:

- over 2000 books, including the novels, poetry, essays, biographies and literary criticism;
- photographs;
- pamphlets;
- popular titles available for loan.
- facsimiles of 60 letters - correspondence between the author, her family and friends
- The George Eliot Fellowship collection of scrapbooks, containing newspaper cuttings and articles about the author, and their work in promoting her.

County Records Office

The office collects, preserves and makes available the historic records of Warwickshire and its people. The museum service has records dating from the 12th century onwards and our collections cover a wide variety of historical documents, from old title deeds to recent baptism registers.

Records are deposited on a regular basis, and all records are kept in a secure and safe environment so that they will be preserved for future generations.

The Waller of Woodcote archive collection purchased in 2007/2008 is a record of family and estate letters and deeds providing an insight into Warwickshire life from the 12th Century.

Warwickshire Museum Service's collections

Market Hall Museum

Geology Collection

Warwickshire Museum's geology collection consists of more than 15,000 rock, mineral and fossil specimens, many of which are either on display or available to visitors in our stores, by appointment. Today, collecting focuses on Warwickshire specimens, or those with a strong local connection.

The museum also collects records of county geological sites and conserves local sites through the planning system. Site records are complimented by a library of maps, books and scientific papers.

Natural History

Natural History is the study of the natural environment, which includes plants, animals, fungi and microbes, plus the habitats they inhabit. Collecting specimens has long accompanied the local study of wildlife. Some of the specimens are on display in our galleries but many are held in store. These tend to be items which are particularly vulnerable to display conditions or that are less attractive items but which still have a huge scientific value.

Archaeology

Archaeology is the study of the human past through material remains. This includes objects made by people in the past - such as tools, weapons, jewellery and pottery - and traces in the landscape of settlements, burial grounds, ritual and military sites. Archaeology enriches our lives because of its capacity to inform our view of the contemporary world and its scope to stimulate the imagination.

The Sheldon Tapestry Map

The Tapestry Map has been in the collection of the Warwickshire Museum Service since the 1960s.

It was commissioned in the late 1580s by Ralph Sheldon (1537-1613) to decorate his newly built house at Weston, near Long Compton, in south Warwickshire.

It was one of a set of four tapestry maps showing the counties of Worcestershire, Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Warwickshire. These would have hung together to create a panoramic view of England, stretching from London to the Bristol Channel.

Roman Alcester Collection

This collection contains artefacts from the Roman occupation of Alcester. Roman Alcester is a partnership between Stratford on Avon District Council, Alcester Heritage Trust and Warwickshire County Council, and is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Museum Service is responsible for the curatorial care of the objects from our collections which are on display. In addition we give curatorial advice to the museum volunteers on collections care. Warwickshire County Council has no other financial or non financial responsibility.

St John's House Museum

Social History

The Social History collection reflects the lives of Warwickshire people over the last 300 years. It includes nationally important collections of costume and textiles, dolls and toys, and a variety of everyday objects from ploughs to plaster ducks! To develop the collection, the museum service works with people of all ages and backgrounds to explore and collect aspects of life in Warwickshire in the 20th and 21st centuries.

The Cyril Hobbins Collection

A collection of toys and objects hand made by local toy maker Cyril Hobbins. Cyril's collection grew from a great interest in, and love of, wooden toys. He was also concerned that with the growth of plastic and electronic toys, the humble wooden toy might vanish altogether.

Warwickshire Regimental Museum (housed at St John's House Museum).

A collection of Regimental regalia from the last 300 years. The collection is owned by the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and tells the story of the County Regiment, from its raising in 1674 to the Fusiliers of today.

The Regimental Museum occupies the first floor of St John's House and leases this space from the County Council. The objects within the collection are the sole responsibility of the Regiment and do not form part of the Warwickshire Museum collections.

The museum itself is a 17th century Grade I listed house, which is regarded as one of the most important buildings in Warwick. The mediaeval Hospital of Saint John the Baptist was founded by the Earl of Warwick on the site around the year 1154. On the Dissolution of the Monasteries the land was passed to the Stoughton family. It is made from 'Warwick stone', the local sandstone. When it was new the house, with its grounds and gates, would have been very imposing, reflecting the importance of Nathaniel Stoughton. In 1791 it became a private school and later, during the 20th century, was taken into use as a military record office; it has been a museum since 1961.

Warwickshire County Court and Judges House

The Courts and Judges house are listed properties built around the 1750s. Used as the County Court buildings and Judges quarters until 2011.

Objects at other locations

Other museum collection items are stored at Montague Road. In addition to this some items are currently held at the Police Authority at Leek Wootton.

Preservation and Management

The County Records Office employs archivists and a conservator, as well as a number of archive assistants and administrative staff. The archivists and archive assistants staff the public search room and provide advice to visitors on starting their research.

We also have a conservation unit, which is responsible for the physical preservation of the records. Their duties involve repairing documents, ensuring that the strong-rooms meet the optimum environmental conditions and producing surrogate copies such as microfilms and digital images.

During 2011/2012 a Historic Environment Record (HER) database was set up listing all archaeological sites and work undertaken within Warwickshire.

Repairs to the larger heritage assets e.g. buildings and sculptures will be assessed via the usual health and safety risk assessments undertaken at our Country Park and other Community Sites.

Where there are additions to the Museum Service collections any which are considered insurable will be contained within the current insurance policy. Items are insured on the basis of specific importance or risk.

There were no significant additions, disposals or impairments of museum service artefacts in 2015/2016.

The Museum Service policy on acquisitions and disposals of Heritage Assets is detailed in a separate policy document.

Heritage Education

Heritage Education is part of the Learning and Community Engagement Team within Heritage & Cultural Services. They run a number of workshops and events for children and adults during the year. This increases the accessibility of the historical collections to the general public.