

# Teesside Archives: Report to JAC, 1 March 2023

## 1. Collections

Since the reopening of the archives service at the Dorman Museum in May 2022, we have received several new deposits into the collection; a full list of accessions to the archive is provided in [Appendix A](#). They include additional court records that may be eligible for New Burdens Funding<sup>1</sup> from the National Archives, a backlog of private deposits, and the Teesworks material that includes the Hartlepool-based South Durham Iron Steel records.

The receipt of the Teesworks records has been supported by funding from the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) which covered the salary of a freelancer to accession and catalogue the collection, as well as conservation materials. This material has been added to the records stored at Spennymoor.

Volunteers have continued to support the service by listing the Teesworks material, as well as digitising records principally for customer orders and to help with community engagement. Some of our volunteers have also attended archives events and undertaken research.

## 2. Public Engagement & Outreach

The service has been very busy and there is a good demand for sessions. Staff have delivered various talks, tours and events across the four authority areas, which have been well attended and generated an average of £0.50 per participant for the service. [Appendix B](#) shows the full list of engagement events/activities in 2022 and in 2023 to date, including event planned but not yet delivered. The KPIs for engagement is provided in section 6.

As part of the future development of the service, we intend to develop a more strategic approach to our engagement activity through an audience development plan which will seek to engage more equitably across the four local authorities and with more under-represented groups.

## 3. Conservation & Preservation

Since moving into the Dorman, our conservation studio has been busy, including hosting several visits. The main focus of work of our Conservator, Helen, has been the Teesworks blueprints and photographs, as well as helping to guide the work of the freelancer.

Some 'Vinegar Syndrome' negatives from the British Steel and Middlesbrough Borough Council collections, have been reviewed, and suitable items worth saving selected for scanning. Stockton Council's Head Wrightson project funded repairs for three negative registers and training in preservation methods for library staff.

Helen has also been working on an update of the Disaster Plan with Museum staff, reflecting the relocation of the service. As agreed with National Archives, Helen carries out building

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<sup>1</sup> New Burdens is a total of £7.1 million in funding made available from central government over a transitional 10-year period to compensate local authorities and other places of deposit for the increased activities that they may experience as a result of changes to the Public Records Act.

monitoring both at the Dorman Museum and the Restore facility in Spennymoor to ensure storage conditions meet the required standards.

The Church of England Parish Registers which are being scanned at NYCRO have all been condition checked and some re-boxing has been necessary. Repairs of the Tyne Bridge Plans, which are being digitised for engineers restoring the bridge, have been carried out for a fee and some private conservation work has taken place which contributes to the service's income target.

#### **4. Digital Preservation**

Funding has been received from The National Archives (£97.7K) which we had proposed to use to support the creation of a central repository for preserving born-digital public records and records from the four Local Authorities.

Digital preservation ensures that digital archives can be accessed in the long term by actively managing them to ensure they remain readable. A Digital Preservation system identifies file formats so that records can be migrated to other formats over time, with a clear audit trail.

To help scope the project, representatives from Governance and ICT teams from each Local Authority were invited to join the Lead Officers meeting on 18 January, where specialist archives consultant Simon Wilson joined us.

It was agreed that there are two key parts to the project:

1. Devising and agreeing protocols for identifying which digital records are to be transferred to the Archives
2. Specifying, procuring and setting up a system for preserving the digital records

With reference to the part two of the project, there are currently two systems on the market:

- Archivemata: Open-source software used widely in the HE sector.
- Preservica: Cloud-based system used widely in Local Authorities and business sectors.

It was agreed at the meeting that the Archives staff team would form a project group to develop a specification, establish costs (including ongoing costs) and provide a definition of the categories of records that we should be keeping. Progress has been halted until there is a directive from JAC as to how the money should be used. This may depend on whether some of the money is required to support the core archives budget going forward.

The ongoing cost of a digital preservation system is likely to be in the region of £15-16K a year (increasing marginally as more data is added); a commitment to which all four Local Authorities would need to sign up to.

Until a decision is made, digital records will continue to be held on hard drives, but this isn't a satisfactory long-term solution as there is no active preservation of these records to ensure they remain readable.

#### **5. Marketing & Communications**

Further to the discussion at the last JAC, conversations have taken place with marketing teams in both Hartlepool and Middlesbrough and a plan agreed to promote the service going

forward. We would welcome similar conversations with marketing contacts in Stockton and Redcar & Cleveland if they can be provided. The service continues to have an active social media presence and the service has been featured twice recently in Explore Your Archives, including an article on the Teesworks project:

[Teesside archives since 1974 \(exploreyourarchive.org\)](https://exploreyourarchive.org/teesside-archives-since-1974)

[Spotlight: Teesside Archive — Explore Your Archive](#)

## 6. KPIs

Visitors to the Archives @ Dorman Museum by Local Authority from May 2022 – January 2023:

| Local Authority    | No. of Visitors | % of total  |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Hartlepool         | 49              | 4.4%        |
| Middlesbrough      | 421             | 37.6%       |
| Redcar & Cleveland | 156             | 14.0%       |
| Stockton           | 119             | 10.6%       |
| Other UK           | 363             | 32.5%       |
| Rest of the world  | 10              | 0.9%        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>1,118</b>    | <b>100%</b> |

Total number of document issues (May 2022 – January 2023): 1,752

Total number of enquiries (May 22 – January 2023): 1,210

2022 Engagement Activity by Local Authority (1 January - 31 December 2022):

| Local Authority    | No. of People | % of total people | Income        | % of total income |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Hartlepool         | 194           | 7.3%              | £68           | 5.1%              |
| Middlesbrough      | 1183          | 44.4%             | £563          | 42.0%             |
| Other              | 52            | 1.9%              | Nil           | Nil               |
| Redcar & Cleveland | 921           | 34.5%             | £480          | 35.8%             |
| Stockton           | 142           | 5.3%              | £198          | 14.8%             |
| Tees Valley        | 177           | 6.6%              | £30           | 2.3%              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>2,669</b>  | <b>100%</b>       | <b>£1,339</b> | <b>100%</b>       |

2023 Engagement Activity by Local Authority (1 January- 15 February 2023):

| Local Authority    | No. of People | Income      |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Hartlepool         | Nil           | Nil         |
| Middlesbrough      | 63            | £100        |
| Other              | Nil           | Nil         |
| Redcar & Cleveland | 30            | £30         |
| Stockton           | 25            | £50         |
| Tees Valley        | Nil           | Nil         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>       | <b>118</b>    | <b>£180</b> |

## **7. Future development of the service**

There are several drivers requiring us to produce a plan for the future development of the archives service. The most significant are:

- the risk to the service as a result of Local Authority budget constraints
- the temporary (5-year) nature of the current operating model and the requirement for a plan beyond this
- the opportunity for our region to realise the true value of a reimagined archives service

A separate paper is attached for discussion as Appendix C which is designed to inform the next steps we take with the archives' future development, including some thoughts around a vision and a draft timeline with key milestones. It also includes a reminder of our statutory record keeping responsibilities as Local Authorities and as an accredited archives service.

## **8. Misc**

At their quarterly meetings, the Lead Officers have been discussing proposed changes to the Service Level Agreement, which is due for review. It is understood that changes, if made, would be constitutional, so the Lead Officers agreed to defer this until after the Local Elections.