

Teesside Archives: Executive Report to JAC, 6 March 2024

1. Collections

This has been a steady period with regard to receiving new deposits, which can be viewed on the attached spreadsheet (**Appendix A**). There are several depositors waiting until we reopen to donate material which includes: photographs of Nylon plant at Wilton Site, Wolviston Cricket Club, Flanges Ltd (Stockton based firm that closed last year), Yarm Road Methodist Church, ICI material, and solicitor's material.

During the museum closure the archivists have made significant progress on cataloguing the Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council records. All the council and committee minutes are catalogued and repackaged. The conservator is working on repackaging the photographs. The remaining reports, brochures and ephemeral material will be completed by the time the service reopens in the spring ready for public access.

2. Public Access & Outreach

The service has continued to be very busy, and to develop sessions that are covering a wider area, but this does remain a work in progress. **Appendix B** shows the outreach sessions held so far this calendar year, as well as those planned.

The Archivist is on the organising committee for the Assist Women's Network International Women's Day event on 1 March. Over 100 people from across the Tees Valley will be in attendance. This is part of the wider Sisterwood project the Archivist is heavily involved with. Great collaborative projects are in development with Stockton ARC and Periplum, an outdoor theatre event, based on material from our collections.

The Community Engagement Officer and Conservator had a very successful 'Teesside Archives on Tour' event at Stockton Reference Library. It is hoped that this can be rolled out across the partner authorities with discussions already ongoing with Hartlepool. Work continues with Stockton Reference Library to develop a school activity looking at the Stockton Workhouse following a request from a school in addition to a joint workhouse themed talk to be delivered during Local History Month in May. Other school sessions delivered to Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland and Middlesbrough schools during autumn and winter have included World War Two and Middlesbrough Maps (which was delivered in Hartlepool last summer) and contact has been made with High Clarence Primary Academy with regards to developing workshops centred on Port Clarence specific collections.

The Community Engagement Officer is currently working with Historic England (HE) and the Heritage Schools Officer to develop a River Tees themed activity to take to schools; funding provided by HE has been used to print multiple copies of key river plans and maps to use in workshops and offer as a loans box for independent work. Work is also underway with the Canal and River Trust at the Tees Barrage to use the river maps in their schools' programme.

Recent Heritage Hikes, delivered by the Community Engagement Officer and Archives volunteers, included a Black Path walk at the end of September 2023, a Story Stroll walk

around Marske for the Carers Together charity in October and a circular walk around Stewart Park and Ormesby Hall delivered in November 2023. Plans for walks in 2024 include a Loftus Circular, Seaton Carew Circular (building on links made as part of the Beneath and Waves project in partnership with Tees Archaeology looking at the protected wreck at Seaton Carew) and a River Tees walk (from Preston Hall to the Barrage and/or Barrage to the Transporter Bridge).

Teesside Archives participated in the time capsule ceremony in December at the refurbished Tennant Square as part of the Northern Gateway Townscape Heritage Project, with which the Community Engagement Manager has been closely involved since 2020. We continue to deliver a programme of talks and develop new talks on such topics as the River Tees to deliver across the Tees Valley, and represent Teesside Archives in the Learning Arc group which links learning officers from archives and museums across the north, sharing best practice.

3. Conservation & Preservation

Benchmarks 3.0 has been completed, which is the conservation planning tool for archives, libraries and museums. The service as a whole achieved best practice in most areas.

The Conservator continues to react to conservation and preservation needs of new collections as they arrive. Conservation is carried out on prioritised individual archives when the item is too fragile to safely handle or when it needs a good quality digital copy for an individual request or for access and outreach events and projects.

Work is ongoing with Restore to ensure the environmental storage and transportation is as safe as possible for our records including environmental monitoring recorded both for the Dorman and Restore sites. The Conservator is continuing a programme of repackaging items that have been recalled where necessary to safeguard the long-term preservation of the archives.

Work on preserving a large collection of deteriorating negatives continues with the help of the Archives volunteers.

4. Digital Preservation

A meeting with Information & Governance Managers took place in December to discuss procedures for which appropriate records are transferred going forward to fulfil the duties of partner authorities under the Public Records Act. This includes a discussion of what categories of records should be deposited, retention schedules and formats for deposit. Work is ongoing with records managers to agree a shared policy.

The Archives team are making good progress in preparation for the wider MBC migration to Sharepoint.

5. Marketing & Communications

A press release on the work the service carried out on the Teesworks archives has been picked up by local outlets including the BBC and Teesside Live. Work progresses on the

‘Treasures of Teesside Archives’ exhibition at the Dorman Museum, which celebrates the services’ 50th birthday this year. Teesside Archives will reopen along with the Dorman Museum in the spring. The service will also be hosting a birthday party to which all heads of service and elected members will be invited – Friday 5th April – formal invite to follow shortly.

6. KPIs

In person visits to the archives from October -December 2023

Local Authority	No. of Visitors	% of total
Hartlepool	21	8.4
Middlesbrough	136	54.6
Redcar & Cleveland	45	18.2
Stockton	27	10.8
Other UK	20	8
Rest of the world	0	0
TOTAL	249	100%

Total number of document issues (October – December 2023): 553

Total number of enquiries (October – December 2023): 647

Please note: The above figures for in person visits and document issues do not include January – March 2024 as the service has been closed due to building works at The Dorman Museum. Engagement activities have continued as the figures show below.

Engagement Activity delivered by Local Authority from October 2023 – February 2024:

Local Authority	No. of People	% of total people
Hartlepool	147	12.9
Middlesbrough	515	45.1
Middlesbrough/R & C	7	0.7
Redcar & Cleveland	181	15.9
Stockton	204	17.9
Tees Valley	86	7.5
TOTAL	1140	100%

7. Future Development of the Service

Staff are working on the paperwork for the review of the Archive Service Accreditation with the aim of submitting it for the March 2024 deadline. Policies and procedures are being reviewed and updated.

The Archives team participated in the procurement process for the Tees Valley Heritage Feasibility project. All five Local Authorities agreed on the first-choice tender and the appointment process is now away, led by TVCA. The successful project team includes an

Archives' specialist with significant experience in the field, including working with shared Local Authority services. An initial meeting with Local Authority lead officers is being planned by TVCA. The project is due to report back in July 2024.

A response from TVCA to the proposal for the Combined Authority to become a partner in the Archives Service was received on 22 February, asking for us to propose a figure for an appropriate contribution from TVCA. Having discussed it with the Lead Officers, we have proposed two options calculated as 10% and 15% of the Local Authority contributions respectively, plus a 1/5 share of the support costs. A decision is awaited.

We continue to be in dispute with Restore re their proposal to increase charges mid-contract. MBC's Legal team have advised that there is no provision within the contract or the wider framework for Restore to increase costs within the 5-year contract period. This has been communicated in writing to Restore and we are awaiting an official response.

In terms of future planning, the Restore Contract ends 31 July 2026 and we have the following options:

- End the contract at 31 July 2026 – No notice period is required, but we will need an exit plan in place much earlier. The contract makes provision for charges to be made by Restore for removal of our items.
- Extend the contract – We have an option to extend the contract by 12 months at a time for up to a further 5 years. This would require an agreement on terms and conditions for the new period and is almost certainly likely to result in fee increases.

These options will be considered in more detail, alongside the outcomes of the Heritage Feasibility Study, to develop a plan for the Archives Service beyond July 2026.

26 February 2024

Ends