

## **Teesside Archives: Executive Report to JAC, 2 Oct 2024**

### **1. Collections**

This has been a steady period with regard to receiving new deposits, Whilst we haven't received any large deposits, the service did recently take in significant records of Women's Institute Teesside Federation, as they had to unexpectedly vacate their premises. Other interesting deposits have included:

- Deeds from SBC including plans for Thornaby Aerodrome
- Cricket Club material from Hartlepool and Wolviston
- Sketch books by Baker Hudson; librarian and curator of Dorman Museum (1889-1920's)
- Records from Guisborough Town Hall including title deeds from Brotton Estates

A full list of deposits in the period March-August 2024 can be viewed in **Appendix A**.

The service is supporting Hartlepool Museum with their funding bid for the Queer Heritage Collections Network creative projects and supporting Tees Women Poets with their funding bid for the NLHF Women's History project. A PhD student will be commencing work on a collaborative PhD with the Archives Service, MIMA and Teesside University, working on our collections relating to art in the area.

The dispute with Restore over their proposed increase in charges for storing and transporting our archive collection has now been resolved. Middlesbrough Council have paid the outstanding invoices and Restore have issued credit notes for the additional charges, for which there was no provision in the contract.

### **2. Public Access & Outreach**

The service has continued to be very busy, and has worked to develop sessions that cover a wider area. Better links with libraries have been developed, notably with R&CBC where their Engagement Officer has linked the service with community groups at libraries (e.g. local history, friends) and activities are being booked in. Jamie Kelly (HBC) has approached the service for support/ideas as they are looking for funding at Seaton Carew and good links with Stockton have been well established.

**Appendix B** provides full details of the outreach sessions held between March – August 2024. Figures are summarised in the KPI's below.

### **3. Conservation & Preservation**

Conservation and preservation of the collections continues. There are always several items or collections from the four boroughs being treated at the same time due to the nature of the repairs.

Some of the archives which have been cleaned, packaged and repaired include:

- ICI Billingham Nylon works photographs
- Large collection of W.I. records covering the whole region
- U/BLM photographic collection covering mostly Middlesbrough
- U/GTH early parchment documents with two examples of Royal seals from the Guisborough area
- Redcar and Cleveland Planning Department photographic collection
- Original building plans for The Crown in Middlesbrough
- West Hartlepool building plans

We were lucky to be given 22 very rare large full plate glass negatives which were from Furness Shipbuilding Co. Ltd (Haverton Hill). After conservation, digitising and safe packaging, one of our volunteers showed great interest in the pictures of the luxury yacht, T.S.M.Y 'The Princess'. Since then, a fascinating story of the yacht has emerged and our Community Engagement Officer will be posting blogs and presenting a talk on the project in November. The glass plates and the blueprints will be on show in the Conservation Studio.

We have continued to accept new deposits which need to be checked for mould, insects, excessive dirt and general condition. Recently, some archives were quarantined, air dried and cleaned under controlled conditions to control the mould. Previous poor storage of archives can lead to pests and dirt being transferred to our collections so we have to be vigilant. All the staff are trained to recognise such problems and pass them to the Conservator for stabilising and treatment. After cataloguing they are packaged, processed and collected by Restore for off-site storage. Stabilising and protecting the archives before being sent off site is crucial when trying to protect collections for long term preservation.

The Conservator continues to monitor the environment for temperature and relative humidity both at the Dorman and at the Restore storage sites. Any problems can then be addressed if readings are abnormally too high or low.

For a number of years, the Conservator has been selected by the Institute of Conservation to be a reader for the CPD accreditation system. Submissions from fellow Conservators are marked and given feedback drawing on her years of experience.

In April we launched our 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration and exhibition at the Dorman Museum - 'Treasures of Teesside Archives'. The conservator was involved with the planning and work for the display by creating bespoke book cradles and supports for all the original archives.

In April and June two full days of conservation training took place for Stockton Library staff, developing practical skills and knowledge so that they can look after their collections safely.

We have been working as a team to update our Procedural Manual and the Disaster Plan for the Museum and Archives has been updated. These help us to work towards our Accreditation Review.

#### 4. Digital Preservation

A way forward with respect to Digital Preservation was discussed at the Archives Lead Officers meeting on 24 July. It was agreed that there are three key actions for the Archives Service to progress:

1. To provide LA's with clarity on what records needs to be transferred to the Archives – Archives team to lead.
2. To agree a plan for how long-term digital preservation is done across the four LA's – Suggest that this is picked up by the different options being considered by the Heritage Feasibility Study.
3. To decide if the Archives Service is committed to doing born-digital preservation, and then to do it properly, or not do it at all – This again should come through the Feasibility work.

#### 5. Marketing & Communications

The service celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> birthday on Friday 5 April with an event at the Dorman to which all heads of service and elected members were invited. The event received some press coverage and was attended by 3 of the 4 Teesside mayors as well as a representative from the Arts Council.

#### 6. KPI's

In person visits to the archives from April – August 2024

**Please note:** The service was closed between January – March 2024 due to building works at The Dorman Museum.

Local Authority	No. of Visitors	% of total
Hartlepool	24	3.7%
Middlesbrough	269	41.8%
Redcar & Cleveland	77	12%
Stockton	77	12%
Other UK	189	29.4%
Rest of the world	7	1.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>100%</b>

Total number of document issues (April – August 2024): 1,739

Total number of enquiries (April – August 2024): 1,327

Total number of volunteer hours (April – August 2024): 794

## Engagement Activity delivered by Local Authority from March – August 2024

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>No. of People</b>	<b>% of total people</b>
Hartlepool	3	0.2%
Middlesbrough	332	21.9%
Redcar & Cleveland	372	24.6%
Stockton	316	20.9%
Tees Valley	306	20.2%
Other	185	12.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,514</b>	<b>100%</b>

### **7. Future Development of the Service**

The Archive Service Accreditation application was completed in time for the July deadline and all policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated. The Accreditation validation visit took place at the Dorman on 6<sup>th</sup> September and the outcome will be revealed after the November panel meeting. The visit seemed to go as well as could be expected, and we anticipate receiving 'provisional' accreditation status due to questions over our future accommodation, etc. It is hoped the report will be read in conjunction with the feasibility study when considering future options for the service.

The Heritage Feasibility Study, commissioned by TVCA, is progressing and members of the Archives team have been involved in focus group sessions and as part of the wider stakeholder group to inform the future vision and strategy for the Archives Service. In the next stage of work, Focus (lead consultant) will hold 1:1 conversations at a senior level with each Local Authority partner to ensure a strong understanding of the particular contexts that each Local Authority is working in, with regard to priorities, structures, budgets, staffing, governance etc. These 1:1s will build on the conversations held at the start of the project. The talking points for these sessions are as follows:

- Organisational priorities and status of the heritage service within future plans
- Financial model and position of the heritage service / assets
- Property ownership / leasing
- Live / pipeline funding bids
- Capital needs / plans
- Workforce
- Challenges & possible mitigations
- Future ambitions

The timetable for the completion of the feasibility work has shifted and the final report is now expected in November, however, TVCA have advised that the Archives proposals may be available earlier than that. We are waiting to hear more regarding the timetable for this.

END