

Joint Archives Committee, 5 March 2025

Teesside Archives Executive Report

1. Collections

There have been a few fairly large deposits that have required a considerable amount of work to make them accessible, and this work is ongoing. The two largest are plans of Ayresome Ironworks (Gjers Mills) and plans from British Railways Property Board that include some early plans of station buildings including Middlesbrough, Redcar, Thornaby and Saltburn. The plans cover varying time periods and require a fair amount of conservation work, as well as listing, before they will be accessible to the public. During the period, we also completed the listing of the records of the Teesside Federation of the WI that were received following the closure of the St. Mary Centre in Middlesbrough.

The annual accession return was completed and submitted to the National Archives in January.

Restore have been in touch to say they are intending to move our collection to a new facility in County Durham (located close the service area and Amazon warehouse outside Durham). In order for this facility to be appointed as a Place of Deposit for Public Records, Dr Tim Powell who is the Place of Deposit Manager at the National Archives has to make an in person visit. This is scheduled for the 11 March, and he will be joined by the Archives Manager and Conservator, as well as the National Archives Engagement Manager for the region.

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. The Community Engagement Officer has continued to be successful in securing some small grants to help cover costs of upcoming sessions, e.g. work with visually impaired people. The Community Engagement Officer is committed and works to provide a wide range of events and activities to appeal to as broad an audience as possible.

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

The public service has been busy, and the number of email/telephone enquiries received is quite large. This does generate some income, but it is also demanding for the staff to remain on top of them. The Archives Supervisor who manages the volunteers has completed her MA in Curating with Teesside University and has been helping with engagement sessions. She will complete the apprentice aspect of the course in the summer. The volunteers provide a great deal of assistance to the service and contribute the equivalent hours of a full-time member of staff.

3. Conservation & Preservation

Our Conservator has been working on a number of collections, reacting to new collections coming in, and also to the requests from members of the public and staff.

Preservation and conservation techniques are carried out depending on the level of intervention that is needed to stabilise and make the documents safe to look at and often to digitise.

Work completed includes

- Assessing and repackaging a collection of 20 photograph albums and nearly 800 photographs showing the ICI Nylon works.
- Three large maps of the Teesside area were fully cleaned and repaired prior to being digitised. Copies of the maps can now be made so that they can be used in community engagement events with schools and other groups.
- The Federation of the Women's Institute deposited their large collection of documents, scrapbooks and photographs, many of which needed stabilising and repackaging to protect them for the future.
- Recently a large collection of rolled engineering drawings created by Gjers Mills showing Ayresome Ironworks was received. They all needed extensive cleaning with some needing full conservation depending on the type of media they were on. The thin tracings were the most vulnerable. Once sorted and catalogued they were repackaged to be sent to storage.
- Disaster planning training for the Archive staff was led by the Conservator so that everyone has more knowledge if a disaster happens involving our archives.
- The Conservator attended a Symposium at Durham on ethics and decision making during which new contacts were made and new ideas disseminated to the archive staff for the benefit of the service.
- Talks with demonstrations of conservation work were given to groups of 11-12yr olds with a future careers theme, showing options for their future.

4. Digital Preservation

An additional member of staff is completing the Knowledge to Knowhow training provided by the National Archives.

There have been issues with the failure of older hard drives which could well have resulted in the loss of some digital material, forcing the service to rely on versions stored on CD. It is proposed to use the New Burdens funding to progress this matter as it is becoming increasingly important.

5. Marketing & Communications

There have been requests to include material from the collections in exhibitions in Rome and South Georgia, illustrating the wide reach and appeal of the archives.

We supplied images for use in association with the recent royal visit and maintained a regular presence through content shared on social media.

6. KPIs

In person visits to the archives from September 2024 – January 2025

Local Authority	No. of Visitors	% of total
Hartlepool	16	3.1%
Middlesbrough	259	49.8%
Redcar & Cleveland	100	19.2%
Stockton	60	11.5%
Other UK	84	16.2%
Rest of the world	1	0.2%
TOTAL	520	100%

Total number of document issues (Sep 24 – Jan 25): 924

Total number of enquiries (Sep 24 – Jan 25): 1,717

Engagement Activity delivered by Local Authority from September 2024 – January 2025

Please note that for the purposes of the Engagement KPI's we have removed the Stockton Reference Library exhibition (Last Orders) from the figures. As it was a month-long exhibition and only the number of Library users in that period is known (9,009), it would significantly alter the breakdown by LA.

Local Authority	No. of People	% of total people
Hartlepool	25	3.1%
Middlesbrough	343	42.0%
Redcar & Cleveland	218	26.7%
Stockton	97	11.9%
Tees Valley	133	16.3%
Other	0	0%
TOTAL	816	100%

ENDS