



COLLECTION POLICY STATEMENT

A. Introduction

This policy statement has been formulated to define the principles by which Northumberland Archives acquires and collects archive material relating to the county of Northumberland. It covers the Service's statutory rights to keep records and the principles used to determine the nature and form of records kept in its offices at Woodhorn and Berwickupon-Tweed. It will form the basis for the development of collections in future and should be viewed in the context of other key policies for Access, Audience Development and Preservation.

B. Statutory Position and Official External Recognition of the Service

1. Acts of Parliament

1.1 The provision of the service is governed by the following Acts of Parliament:

- Local Government Act 1888
- Public Record Acts 1958, 1967
- Local Government (Records) Act 1962 Local Government Act 1972
- Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978

1.2 The Local Government Acts require Councils to make proper arrangements for the care of their own records and predecessor authorities; to collect historic records relating to their administrative area; and to make them available for public consultation. In December 1999 The Department of Environment Transport and Regions in conjunction with the Local Government Association issued detailed guidance on Section 224 of the 1972 Act relating to "proper arrangements" for Archives.

1.3 The Public Record Acts empower Public Record Office (now The National Archives) on behalf of the Lord Chancellor to appoint Record Offices as places of deposit for particular classes of local public records (e.g. Quarter Sessions, Hospital records), providing their accommodation complies with BS 4971: 2017 – Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections. The Northumberland Record Office was first appointed as a place of deposit for these records in 1960 and the Berwick-upon-Tweed Record Office in 1990.

1.4 The Parochial Registers and Records Measure requires Church of England clergy to deposit their older records in the appropriate Diocesan Record Office. The Northumberland Record Office was appointed the Diocesan Record Office for Newcastle in 1966 to look after its ecclesiastical records, both parish and diocesan.

2. Standards

2.1 Northumberland County Council has adopted as policy PD5454, Guide for the Storage and Exhibition of Archival Documents (2012), now superseded by BS 4971: 2017 – Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections.

2.2 Northumberland County Council has also adopted A Standard for Record Repositories issued by the Historical Manuscripts Commission in 1991 for the care and acquisition of archives and updated in 1997.

C. Scope of the Policy

Northumberland County Council's statutory responsibilities towards its own records are delivered through the Council's Document Storage and Retrieval Service and the Archive Service with the former managing semi-current departmental records and the latter managing those records selected for permanent retention. In addition to public records and parochial records relating to Anglican, Roman Catholic and Non-Conformist churches the service also collects a range of other historic records relating to the County. These include antiquarian collections, family and estate records, legal, business and industrial records and the records of voluntary organisations.

1. Geographical Area

1.1 Northumberland Archives will normally only acquire material relating to the present administrative county of Northumberland, as created on 1 April 1974 and not the former county which included Newcastle and North Tyneside, now serviced by Tyne and Wear Archives. There are, however, certain exceptions.

1.2 As Diocesan Record Office for the Diocese of Newcastle, we will acquire records for the whole of the Diocese which includes Newcastle, North Tyneside, Alston and Garrigill with Nenthead in Cumberland and Edmundbyers, Hunstanworth and Muggleswick in Durham.

1.3 Collections which cut across previous boundaries will be retained. An example of this is the coalmining class of public records that cover the whole of the former County of Northumberland.

1.4 Records relating to organisations, businesses, and individuals mainly active within the county but who also had interests elsewhere. It is not recommended to split such collections that form an archival unit.

1.5 Records relating to the former Borough of Berwick-upon-Tweed, unless they are a county wide series (for example, education records) are kept at the Berwick-upon-Tweed Record Office.

2. Acquisitions

2.1 Northumberland Archives will seek to locate preserve and acquire records that provide unique and valuable evidence about the social, economic and political heritage of the County both past and present.

2.1.1 Records of Northumberland County Council and its predecessor authorities.

2.1.2 Records of other Local Authorities and statutory bodies operating within Northumberland both in the past and the present.

2.1.3 Public records offered to Northumberland Archives under the terms of the Public Records Act.

2.1.4 Records of the Diocese of Newcastle, its constituent parishes, deaneries and archdeaconries.

2.1.5 Records of landed estates; organisations; businesses; individuals; societies; Non Conformist Churches; Roman Catholic Churches; other religious bodies; public and private institutions; and any other records relevant to the history of Northumberland

2.1.6 Records that record the aspirations, development and diversity of Northumberland communities.

2.1.7 Records that represent the society and culture of our time.

2.1.8 As a general rule Northumberland Archives will not collect artefacts. However, very occasionally an artefact may form an intrinsic part of a collection that is principally an archive collection. In such instances we will consider accepting an artefact into our care.

2.2 These records may be in the following formats:

2.2.1 Parchment and paper manuscripts.

2.2.2 Maps; newspapers and publications relating to the history of the county.

2.2.3 Photographic prints; negatives; transparencies; postcards and films.

2.2.4 Sound and video recordings.

2.2.5 Born digital and surrogate digital records.

2.2.6 Microform records.

2.2.7 Copies of material relating to the county but held elsewhere.

2.2.8 Printed material produced by Northumberland County Council.

2.3 In the case of any dispute arising between Northumberland Archives and another repository about the acquisition of papers, the advice of The National Archives shall be taken about the most appropriate location.

3. Method of Acquisition

3.1 Records may be given or bequeathed to Northumberland Archives.

3.2 Records may be “deposited”, i.e. transferred to the Northumberland Archives on long term loan with ownership remaining with the depositor.

Deposits are not normally accepted unless they remain in the custody of Northumberland Archives for a minimum of twenty years.

3.3 Purchases will only be made of documents of outstanding importance to the county. Purchases will generally have to be fundraised for.

4. Terms of Deposit

Detailed Terms of Deposit will be agreed with depositors. In general:

4.1.1 Northumberland Archives will not accept documents without clear and valid title of ownership.

4.1.2 Northumberland Archives will also only accept those documents which in the judgement of the Head of Archives are of sufficient quality for permanent preservation.

4.1.3 The valuation and insurance of the documents shall be the depositor's responsibility.

4.1.4 The depositor or their heirs must inform Northumberland Archives of any change in ownership.

4.1.5 If a depositor wishes to permanently withdraw his/her records, three months' notice must be given in writing to the Head of Archives.

Northumberland Archives reserves the right to charge for staff time spent in listing the collection and any other costs incurred in its maintenance whilst in their care. It also reserves the right to make copies of the collection.

4.1.6 Ownership and copyright of all lists and finding aids produced by the service shall belong to Northumberland County Council.

4.2 In return, Northumberland Archives agrees to:

4.2.1 Give a receipt for records immediately upon their deposit.

4.2.2. List and sort the records as part of the service's listing programme and in accordance with our Cataloguing Prioritisation Scheme.

4.2.3 Provide the depositor with a copy of the list free of charge.

4.2.4 Make catalogued records available to the public for research purposes in the searchrooms during normal public opening hours, providing the records are not too fragile or damaged.

4.2.5 Adhere to legal closure periods required by statute or government order.

4.2.6 Provide single copies of records for private study or exhibition, provided that the Copyright Acts, 1911 – 1988 and any subsequent relevant legislation is not infringed.

5. Selection/ De-accessioning

5.1 Any records not considered worthy of permanent preservation will be returned to depositors or confidentially destroyed upon receipt of the written consent of the owner. Chests, trunks, other containers and packaging will be disposed of by Northumberland Archives (with permission of the depositor) or returned.

5.2 Northumberland Archives, with the written agreement of a depositor, has authority to transfer records to a more suitable repository if it is considered that the documents would benefit from their relocation.

5.3 Northumberland Archives reserves the right to conduct a periodic review of the records it holds in the light of research and use of the records and where necessary to recommend their disposal or destruction.

5.4 Northumberland Archives accepts the principle that there should be a strong presumption against the disposal by sale of any material in its ownership. Should it be thought necessary to sell any material, it shall first be offered to other Record Offices or collecting institutions. on behalf of Northumberland County Council on the advice of the Head of Archives.

5.5 All money received from the sale of material shall be used for the benefit of Northumberland Archives

6. Access

6.1 Access will be provided to the Service's collections as set out in its Access Policy.

6.2 Northumberland Archives will provide free copies of finding aids to collections to depositors.

7. Review

7.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years.

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