



SECURITY POLICY

Introduction

Northumberland Archives is committed to ensuring the physical safety and security of all the Archive collections that it preserves. The Service aims to take all reasonable measures to protect its collections from loss, destruction or damage and its buildings from unauthorised entry. This policy outlines the procedures which are in place at both Woodhorn and the Berwick-upon-Tweed Record Office to ensure the security of the collections in their care.

1. Physical Intruder Prevention and Detection Systems

1.1 The Archive premises at Woodhorn and Berwick-upon-Tweed are both protected by intruder alarm systems which automatically contact the Alarm Company and the Police if unauthorised access is attempted. A member of staff always attends "calls out" to ensure that the building and the documents are secure. Both systems are serviced at least twice a year.

1.2 Entry to the archive storage areas is restricted to Archive staff or to visiting personnel, accompanied by a member of staff. At Woodhorn, access to the storage area is protected by an electronic pass system to the back of house area and then by keys to individual strongrooms. At Berwick, access to the Store Unit and the storeroom downstairs in the Walkergate building is limited to Archive key holders only (Berwick Record Office staff) or by contractors accompanied by a member of staff. Access to the areas is key fobbed or alarm controlled.

1.3 Both buildings are securely locked and alarmed when not being used by staff. Access to keys for either building is limited to designated keyholders.

2. Environmental Control Systems

2.1 Both premises use various environmental controls in their strongroom areas to ensure the long-term preservation of the archives in their custody. They both adhere to recommendations found in BS 4971: 2017 – Conservation and Care of Archive and Library Collections, particularly in relation to temperature and humidity. At Woodhorn, monitors to the exterior of the strongrooms provide constant temperature and humidity readings. Data from the BMS system is tabulated to provide twice daily reports of readings. Occasionally spot checks of readings at various locations in the strongrooms are taken to supplement this information. The data is analysed and if conditions are not satisfactory, measures are taken to rectify this. At Berwick, there is no electronically controlled air conditioning system. Instead, the Storage Unit is heated by a thermostatically controlled gas system with fans to circulate the air. Temperature and humidity are checked weekly using a handheld thermohygrograph. The results are analysed and recorded to ensure that the conditions are suitable for the storage of documents. Again, measures are taken to rectify unsatisfactory conditions.

3. Fire Prevention and Protection Systems

Smoking is not allowed in either of the Northumberland Archives buildings at Woodhorn or Berwick. Fire and emergency exit signs are prominently displayed in both buildings and staff are aware of the emergency evacuation procedures. Staff are also instructed on the location of fire extinguishers and in their use.

3.1 Fire can have a devastating effect on archives and so the following precautions are taken at Woodhorn and Berwick. At Woodhorn, the strongrooms are protected by an Argonite fire suppression system. The system is serviced regularly by qualified personnel. In addition, each strongroom has a 4 hour resistant fire door to protect the area from external fires or to contain any threat. At Berwick, the Store Unit does not have an automatic fire extinguishing system but has several CO₂ fire extinguishers suitable for dealing with small incidents. In addition, the area is fitted with a fire alarm connected to an external company who alert staff of call outs. The system is a series of

smoke detectors and sensors. The system is regularly serviced by outside contractors and faulty equipment replaced.

3.2 Each premise is visited once a year by the Fire Service and the Fire Safety Officer to check that the fire precautions in force are acceptable and that earlier recommendations for improvement have been carried out.

4. Users

There is a recognised conflict between providing access to collections and to preserving them for future use. To ensure a minimum risk to the archives, the following measures are in place:

4.1 All members of the public wishing to use the searchrooms at Woodhorn and Berwick must register before they can use the service. Both service points use the Archive Card system.

4.2 The following procedures are in operation in the searchrooms at both Woodhorn and Berwick to ensure the security of the documents in their care:

4.2.1 Visitors are asked to bring a limited number of belongings into the searchroom area of each office. At Woodhorn users may only bring a notebook, pencils and laptop into the Study Centre. All other belongings must be placed in the lockers provided. At Berwick, visitors must place all belongings not required in the lockers provided in the Searchroom.

4.2.2 All members of the public using the Berwick Record Office sign the Visitors' Book on entering the searchroom. By doing so, they are agreeing to adhere to the Searchroom Rules (see Appendix 1). They should also tick the book when they leave.

4.2.3 A Visitors' Book is no longer used at Woodhorn. Users are expected to register for an Archives Card and are provided with a synopsis of the Searchroom Rules when they come into the searchroom. A full copy of the Searchroom Rules is on display in the Searchroom.

4.2.4 Pencils must always be used in the searchrooms to ensure that original documents are not damaged or defaced.

4.2.5 In many instances, users will consult surrogate copies (usually on microfilm or microfiche) instead of original documents, particularly for family history resources including parish registers. This prevents wear and tear on the original documents through constant use and ensures their long-term preservation.

4.2.6 If users wish to consult original documents, they must complete and sign a "Document Request Slip". Users may only order three documents at any one time and consult a single at a time. All documents must be returned to the desk after they have been used. No documents may be removed by users from the searchroom. If any member of the public is found to have removed documents, their Archives Card will be cancelled and they will be refused entry to the searchrooms at Woodhorn and Berwick.

4.2.7 During normal opening hours the searchroom area of each office will not be left unattended. At least one member of staff will always be present to ensure that the documents are not defaced or removed from the area and that the room is properly invigilated.

5. Closure Periods

Northumberland Archives operates closure periods on some classes of records because of the sensitivity of the information that they contain. These closure periods can either be statutory or at the request of a depositor. If individual documents or classes of records are affected, this will be indicated in the catalogue entry.

6.1 Loans/Documents in Transit

6.1 Original documents cannot be removed from the Northumberland Archives at Woodhorn or Berwick without the permission of the owner and the approval of the Head of Archive or the Berwick Archivist. A Loans Out Form must be completed and signed before any document can be removed. If the removal is temporary, an approximate date of return must be entered on the form.

6.2 Documents which are to be temporarily transferred from one office to another must be transported in suitable packaging and must not be left unattended during transit.

7. Responsibility and Review

7.1 The overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and review of this policy rests with the Head of Archives.

7.2 This policy will be reviewed within three years, or earlier, if required.

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