

**Staffordshire
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In Safe Keeping

Our commitment to preserving the archives in our care

The archive collections in the care of the Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service are unique and irreplaceable. This leaflet explains the aspects of our preservation policy of the service which relate to the use of documents by members of the public. We ask you to read it before making a personal visit to any of our services: the Staffordshire Record Office, Lichfield Record Office and Stoke on Trent City Archives. We have a responsibility to preserve the documents in our care and, in turn, we ask you too to be aware that archives form an irreplaceable and vulnerable part of our heritage. Your co-operation in helping to ensure their survival is much appreciated.

A HANDLING ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS

If documents are inadvertently mishandled, this can easily result in their further deterioration. We ask you to observe the following basic rules when using archive material.

1. Pencil only must be used in the reading rooms, except when completing registration cards, signing the visitor's book, readers' tickets and completing copyright declarations. If you forget to bring a pencil with you, they are on sale in our reading rooms.
2. Book rests must always be used to support volumes. These will be supplied by the staff on duty who will explain how to use them. If necessary volumes should be held open by the use of book snakes which again will be supplied.
3. Leather-covered map weights should be used to hold flat rolled maps or documents. These are available in the reading rooms.
4. If you are consulting early parchment documents or volumes or glass negatives you will be asked to wear gloves which we will provide. This is because moisture from the hands can rub off ink from a parchment surface or blur the image on a glass negative. For the same reason, please avoid running fingers down documents or the pages of volumes.
5. If you are consulting manuscript maps, we will ask you to place a sheet of archival polyester or perspex over the surface of the map. This is because it is very easy to catch clothing on the edge of the map, especially if the document is not in good condition. Please try to avoid resting your hands on the surface of the map.
6. When tracing documents, a thin sheet of archival polyester, which we will supply, must be placed over the document and a 2B pencil must be used.

If you would like a copy of this leaflet in large print or Braille or as an audio tape, please contact us.

7. Please take great care when re-tying bundles of loose documents. The documents in a bundle should be carefully aligned before re-tying. Please be aware that tape can easily cut into the edges of documents. Documents should always be refolded along original fold lines. This is especially the case with wills and inventories.
8. When making notes, please do not rest notepads or paper on documents or volumes.
9. No food or drink is allowed into the reading rooms
10. For reasons of security documents should be returned to the staff as soon as you have finished with them. If you go out for coffee or lunch, please return your documents to the staff before you leave the building.

B COPYING OF DOCUMENTS

1. Indiscriminate copying of original documents is one of the main causes of mechanical damage to them. For this reason we do not photocopy the following types of documents:
 - Volumes including parish and nonconformist registers.
 - Large maps or other documents of a size greater than 2' x 3'. This includes some early bishops' transcripts.
 - Documents with multiple membranes or folios attached at the top or bottom of the document. This may include court rolls, title deeds, wills, some bishops' transcripts and tithe apportionments.
 - Documents which have undergone extensive conservation work. This includes filed and guarded documents such as Quarter Sessions rolls and many maps.
 - Documents which, in the opinion of the Archive Service staff, are considered to be too fragile to copy.

If you are uncertain whether a document can be photocopied or not, the staff will be able to advise you.
2. It is possible to use digital cameras subject to the purchase of a photographic permit and the use of general document handling rules. The Archive Service can provide cameras stands and staff will guide readers in how they should be used to avoid inadvertent damage to the documents. The use of hand held scanners is only permitted following consultation with the duty archivist and the conservation staff.

C SUBSTITUTION

We use substitution throughout the Service to help to preserve documents which are subject to very heavy and regular use by the public. This includes, for example, Anglican parish registers. To preserve the originals, we provide microform copies of these documents for use in the reading rooms. This is not only a preservation measure but also ensures that readers can benefit from the use of our self-service system for microform.

D SMOKING

Smoking is not allowed in any of our premises. We should also advise you that, at the Staffordshire Record Office, we have a very highly sensitive and responsive smoke detection system in place. This means that even smoking in close vicinity to the exterior of the main entrance, can activate the alarms. If you wish to smoke outside the building therefore, please ensure that you move well away from the entrance across the courtyard.

Revised January 2010