

ARCHIVES AND RECORDS
COUNCIL WALES

Into the Archives

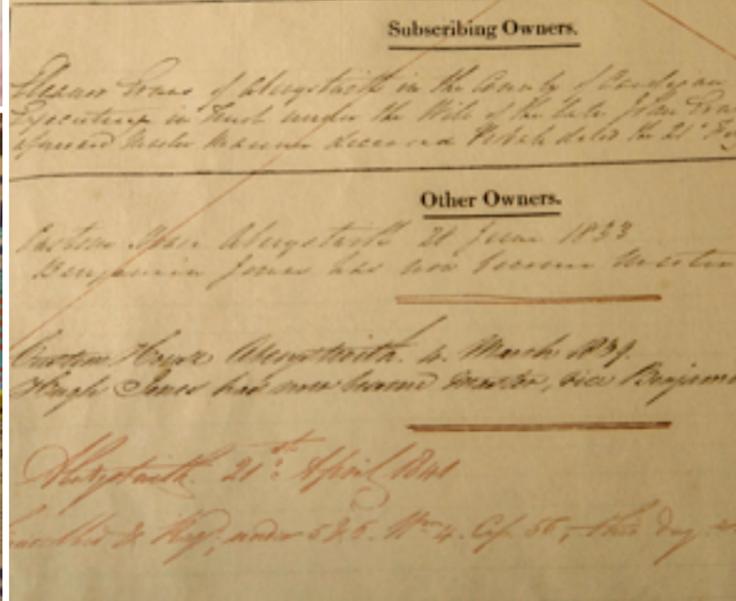
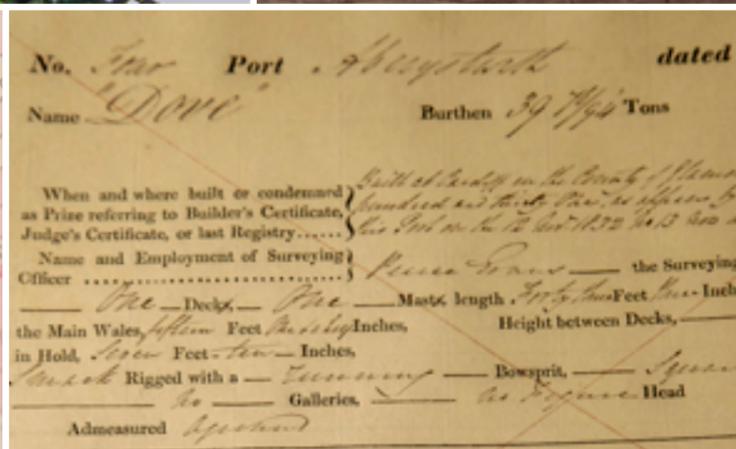
A CELEBRATION OF
ARCHIVES IN WALES



Archifau
Cymru
Archives
Wales



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government



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Chair's Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce you to the second edition of "Into the Archives", a celebratory booklet produced by Archives and Records Council Wales (ARCW) highlighting the fantastic work carried out by the archive services of Wales.

Since the publication of the last report in 2016, partnership working has been at the heart of everything we do, building connections across organisational boundaries so that our partners can work together to promote a better understanding and awareness of Wales's unique archival heritage.

This booklet outlines how ARCW has supported the work of archive services across Wales in acquiring, preserving, and making available the precious documents that represent our, and our nation's shared history. In a period dominated by many challenges, not least COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, we're immensely proud of everything our colleagues across Wales have achieved.

Laura Cotton
Chair 2022-24

What can archives services do for you?

Archives help to tell the story of our past and preserve our collective memory and cultural identity. They collect and keep safe records of your life, your community, your business, your nation and your world, and make them accessible. Archives provide first-hand information or evidence relating to historical events or figures, and can include items such as letters, reports, registers, maps, photographs and films, digital files and sound recordings. There is an archive service in Wales near you, and this booklet tells you more about them, and some of their recent work and achievements.

Archives and Records Council Wales

Archives and Records Council Wales was established in May 1995 as a representative body for institutions and organisations all over Wales involved with caring for archives. The aims of ARCW are:

- 1** To influence policy on archives in Wales.
- 2** To bring to the attention of the public, government or relevant institutions or organisations, matters of current concern in the field of archives in Wales.
- 3** To provide a focus for collaborative projects in the field of archives in Wales.
- 4** To bring together institutions and organisations involved with the administration of archives in Wales and to provide a forum for the regular exchange of views between them.

The annual ARCW Forum, held thanks to funding from Welsh Government, provides an opportunity for staff from archive services across Wales to meet, hear about and discuss all kinds of matters relevant to their work.

ARCW also manages grant schemes to support the work of member services in preserving and providing access to archival resources. The Accreditation Support Grant Scheme supports all eligible archive services to achieve or maintain the Archive Service Accreditation Standard, and to develop and improve their services to the public and care for their collections. Grant funding may support collection care, workforce development, community participation and audience development projects. These grant schemes are funded by the Welsh Government.

Online Access Bringing Archives to You

ARCHIVES WALES SEARCH

One of ARCW's key objectives is to improve online access to archive resources. This new site enables users to search the catalogues of archival records held in repositories throughout Wales, using data from the UK Archives Hub. Use keywords and search descriptions of archives to find unique sources for your research, including links to digital content.

Archives Hub is harvesting and regularly updating its copies of multi-level catalogue records from 22 partner institutions across Wales, and in time it will include all of the online catalogues from each institution. The Archives Wales Search website is maintained for ARCW by the National Library of Wales.

<https://archivesearch.library.wales>

#CrowdCymru

#CrowdCymru is a digital volunteer crowdsourcing project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and run jointly by Gwent Archives, Glamorgan Archives and Cardiff University Special Collections & Archives.

Accessed via a crowdsourcing platform established by the National Library Wales, this bilingual digital system allows remote volunteers to tag, annotate and describe the digital heritage collections held within these exceptional repositories. Archive services across Wales hold millions of irreplaceable records, but many are only minimally catalogued and therefore difficult to identify and find. This project will harness the knowledge of individuals in communities across Wales and beyond, to enrich our collective heritage for the benefit of current and future generations – locally, nationally, and globally.

This project is completely digital, and available to anyone, anywhere in the world if they have Wi-Fi access. Plus, volunteers control how much or how little they wish to contribute. It is hoped to engage the interest of those who might have wanted to become involved with volunteering with South Wales archives but are unable to travel to the sites, and especially for those who have an interest in Welsh heritage but live abroad.

The partners have made an exciting variety of collections available for the project. Glamorgan Archives have put forward the Cardiff Dockland Community Photographs. These are portraits of individuals and groups, from Cardiff dockland community, taken between 1900-1920. Many of them were taken by Fred Petersen of Bute Street, a Danish man who settled in Cardiff some time at the end of the 19th century. Cardiff University Special Collections & Archives have put forward three collections. Two for transcribing: The Edward Thomas Archive [an unusually broad and detailed personal archive of one of the war poets killed in action during WWI] and the wartime diaries of Priscilla Scott-Ellis [written while working in a military hospital during the Spanish Civil War, and in London during the Blitz]. Gwent Archives have put forward a collection of nostalgic photographs from the earliest days of the Newport Rugby & Athletics Club dating back to 1891. The partners intend to make more collections available as the project progresses.

#CrowdCymru uses an active Twitter account [@CrowdCymru] to promote progress, highlight collections and foster support for other archive, library, museums, and heritage accounts.



To participate or hear more about the project, please contact:
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Your Archive — Reflecting Diverse Audiences

Wales is a diverse nation, and the lived experiences and stories of people from different cultural backgrounds and communities can be found in a multitude of documents, photographs, pictures, artefacts and audio-visual material.

Archives and Records Council Wales were recently awarded funding to complete the first phase of a project to improve awareness of, and access to, cultural collections for people within Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. The objective was to create a strong foundation for developing collections with those communities, ensuring that their lived experience is an integral part of our national record.

This first phase has now been completed, and the result is a bespoke toolkit to support the sector in its work with its collections and communities. This includes a survey methodology to identify material from archival repositories, library special collections and museums that reflects the lived experiences of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic people across Wales, and a roadmap, which sets out a programme of future activity.

These outputs will bring together best practice in working with collections and communities and provide a starting point for a wider programme of work that will enable people to learn about Wales's unique, diverse and valued cultural heritage and uncover new voices and untold stories.

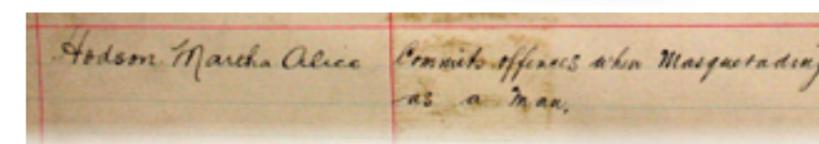
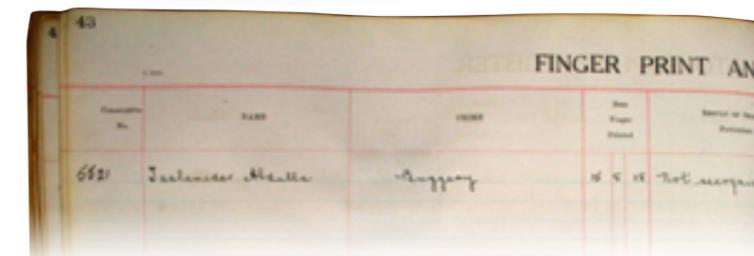
You can read more about the project and download the Toolkit and Survey methodology from the following page:
<https://archives.wales>

A bilingual research guide to LGBTQ+ History has been published by Glamorgan Archives, thanks to ARCW grant funding.

Queering Glamorgan: A Research Guide to Sources for the Study of LGBT History was compiled by Norena Shopland and Dr Daryl Leeworthy to assist researchers and historians with the study of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-gender and queer history with the primary aim of encouraging better understanding of historical and contemporary LGBTQ+ experiences. The guide is intended to inspire further work in this area, and to serve as a prompt for LGBTQ+ individuals and campaign groups to consider depositing their records so that the full extent of the LGBTQ+ experience can be documented.

Since publication, the guide has seen enormous success. It has been accessed over 2,500 times and shared as a resource by many organisations in the UK and beyond, particularly during international history months. It has also been used as a basis to deliver bilingual training sessions to archive, library and museum professionals across Wales and beyond, on recognising, searching for and showcasing LGBTQ+ content in historic material.

The guide was used as a resource in the Welsh Government LGBTQ+ Language and History training for all local museums, libraries and archives in Wales. The first government in the world to provide such training. Participants are trained in understanding the complex language used to identify LGBTQ+ people, allies and events in the archival record, how to publicise that content, how to engage with local communities, and how to use archives to bring forth local material to replace generic narratives.



Bringing History Alive

Archives are a rich cultural resource and can provide learning opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds, improve life experience and address cultural poverty. Archive services across Wales have managed a number of successful community engagement projects, using funding from the ARCW Accreditation Support grant scheme to support a wide range of innovative projects working with children, young people and families.

Pollecoffs and Steins

Children in Anglesey created artwork inspired by Jewish families who settled on the island thanks to ARCW grant funding for the **Anglesey Archives Pollecoffs and Steins** project. Using archive documents and museum artefacts, Pupils from Ysgol Gynradd Amlwch were helped on their journey into the past by Anglesey Archives, Oriol Môn and prominent North Wales artist Jwls Williams. The children followed the story of the Pollecoffs and Steins, who came from Russia in the late 19th century and flourished after opening drapery stores in Holyhead and Amlwch.

At the opening of an exhibition of their work at the archives building in Llangefni, Councillor Margaret Roberts, then chair of Anglesey Council, said the project “not only celebrates our local history, but also teaches the importance of tolerance, diversity and embracing people from all backgrounds”.



Both families, she said, became “an important part of their respective communities, they learnt Welsh, and were welcomed by their new neighbours.”



A Battered Suitcase in the Attic

Ceredigion Archives were awarded a grant for a project to encourage the public to explore and value their own personal archives as part of a series of events that took place during Explore Your Archive week.

‘**A Battered Suitcase in the Attic**’, was a project to encourage people and communities to search out items that were perhaps hidden or neglected and value them as a unique record of the past. Attendees to the workshops had the opportunity to learn basic preservation techniques and received a free archive box to help keep precious papers safer. Through encouraging people to take care of these items, it also provided an opportunity to remind people how their own archives might one day form part of the collections to be appreciated by future generations. Additional collaborative work with the Archive Administration postgraduates helped to highlight the variety of collections and introduce them to a new generation of researchers.

Digital content creation and storytelling

During the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, services developed new ways to engage with users, as physical access became inhibited by lockdowns and restrictions. The shift to digital access was supported by ARCW, which provided funding to member services to train staff in digital content creation and digital storytelling, and to purchase essential equipment to create digital content for sharing online.



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Women Rediscovered: Stories from North East Wales Archives

North East Wales Archives were awarded a grant to work alongside Theatr Clwyd to create monologue style films to re-tell rousing stories of strong and inspirational women during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The stories are based around real women discovered in the archive collections held at Ruthin and Hawarden; A headmistress who devoted herself to education; A widow of miner killed in the Gresford colliery disaster; A mother reflecting on postnatal depression; and the famous Marged ferch Ifan.

Sarah Roberts, archivist from the North East Wales Archives, said: “We would normally hold events and exhibitions

around this time of year, but we have had to think more creatively this year because of current COVID restrictions about how we can use and promote our wonderful collections. “It has been exciting to work with Theatr Clwyd on something so different. Hopefully this will inspire other storytellers and film makers to base their work on archive collections wherever they are based”.

Director of Creative Engagement at the Theatr, Gwennan Mair, has said “It’s been extremely interesting working with the archive on this project. It’s enabled us to find hidden stories from North Wales. We hope to work more in partnership with

the archive to bring stories alive and to share our unique history with the world in a creative way”.

Eleri B. Jones, Director of Women Rediscovered and Trainee Director at Theatr Clwyd has commented “Rediscovering these women’s stories in partnership with the North East Wales Archives has been an eye-opening and thoroughly enjoyable experience. Too often rural, historic stories from just around the corner are forgotten or buried, especially when it comes to progressive, everyday women like the ones in our films. Imagining life from their perspective and giving voice to the wisdom that’s still relevant today has been a privilege”.

Using Archival Sources in Workshops

A group of volunteers from **Your Voice Advocacy** visited the Richard Burton Archives for a workshop on the history of disability. Working with archivists and academics from Swansea University, the group used archival sources such as correspondence, reports and pamphlets from the South Wales Coalfield Collection, and photographs from the Raissa Page Photographic Collection.

The workshop focused on exploring how people with disabilities are represented in Archives – it also investigated related themes such as rehabilitation, welfare, and social work. A key part of the workshop was looking at the development of disability terminology; and how things have (or haven’t) changed.

Sandi Mitchell, Peer Advocate at Your Voice Advocacy said: “The members who attended really enjoyed taking part.

They enjoyed looking at the pictures and despite some of them being quite distressing they felt it showed how things have changed. Their liberty and freedoms for one. The harshness of the reports, the language used and the fact that many of the barriers stopping people from reaching their full potential are the same today as they were forty years ago was quite shocking.”



Preserving the Past and the Present for the Future

Conservation and Digital Preservation safeguard archive materials so that they remain accessible and usable to all who wish to discover and use them, and also ensures that they are preserved for use by future generations.

Conservation is the process of repairing physical documents and records; Digital Preservation is the maintenance of records in digital format so they remain accessible and readable as technologies change.

The majority of archive holdings are still in analogue formats – that is, paper, parchment or photographic media. The conservation of this material requires specialist skills and equipment, and a number of archive services across Wales

have professionally staffed conservation studios.

ARCW grants have provided funding for services to carry out Preservation Assessment Surveys. These surveys are used to perform a 'health check' for organisations wishing to assess the state of preservation of their collections, and primarily focus on areas such as: access, use, accommodation, usability, significance and condition. This supports services to establish priorities for

preservation and conservation actions in meeting the collection requirements of the Archive Service Accreditation Standard.

ARCW grants have also been used to purchase specialised equipment to help with preservation and conservation, and to support training and skills development for conservation staff such as attendance of the Confident Conservation Champion Programme and ICON Health and Safety for Conservators course.

With the fast pace of technological change posing risks to on-going access to digital records, the preservation of digital material continues to be a key objective for ARCW. As is highlighted in the National Digital Preservation Policy, continuing access to digital records requires a combination of technology, skills, resources and organisational support.

Saving the Bits, an interactive training programme delivered online, was designed to build skills through knowledge exchange and practical demonstrations to assist with developing workflows and processes.

Six sessions were delivered by staff with varied strategic and practical knowledge. Over 100 people attended the sessions, including those from ARCW, the library, museum, academic and other public sectors. Resources are available on the

Archives Wales site, and include videos, documentation and resources to enable sustainable digital preservation through knowledge transfer, skills building and as a tool for advocacy.

The programme built on the work of the Digital Preservation Group and was recognised for its value by being awarded the Digital Preservation Coalition Award 2022 for Teaching and Communications. Feedback from the assessment panel was that:

“This project delivers meaningful digital preservation training, impressive content and useful way to pivot training in response to the Covid pandemic. The availability of training materials online is a great strategy for communications and advocacy. An excellent contribution to enhancing the digital preservation skills of students”



Records at Risk

The Records at Risk project, funded by The National Archives Covid-19 Archives Fund, focused on risks to records held outside established archive repositories, including business and charity records in particular.

A bilingual online toolkit with resources and guidance on records surveying and risk monitoring was developed and published on the Archives Wales website. It includes tools to enable archive services to conduct surveying and monitoring in their local areas or within subject-based collection remits.

The Records at Risk toolkit includes an overview of the process of rescuing business records made vulnerable due to financial distress, covering the stages of research and monitoring up to the acquisition of records from an

insolvent company. It includes guidance on corporate insolvency terminology, including the most important terms for archivists, and advice on how to contact insolvency practitioners. The toolkit also includes Records Surveying Resources, such as guidance on how to conduct remote surveys of records-keeping among external organisations such as charities and businesses, and links to additional external resources about records surveying more broadly. An Introductory Guide to Digital Preservation for Small Businesses was commissioned by ARCW and developed by the Digital Preservation Coalition.

This guidance outlines the significance of digital records-keeping and provides practical advice and examples of how small businesses can begin safeguarding their digital records.

The toolkit, and a collections development register which helps people to identify the most suitable locations to house archives throughout Wales, are available online from: <https://archives.wales>



Supporting Our Workforce

Staff development, expertise and skills underpin all areas of archive service work. ARCW's objective is to support the workforce in working innovatively, acquiring skills and training to respond to sector needs. The ARCW Workforce Development Grant Scheme, offers financial support for relevant training and professional development.

Accreditation – What it means

Archive Service Accreditation is the UK standard for archive services supported by a partnership including The National Archives (TNA) at Kew and the Welsh Government. The Standard looks at how an archive service acquires, preserves and provides access to their collections over the long term, through the management of risks and by planning for change.

Archive Service Accreditation also represents a pathway for the ongoing development of a service. An accredited archive service delivers within a framework of professionally recognised standards, supported by effective resourcing and management structures.



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