

Teesside Archives

# Access Policy

Version 4.0

| Document Control |              |  |             |             |
|------------------|--------------|--|-------------|-------------|
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## Mission Statement

Teesside Archives service, funded by Middlesbrough, Stockton, Redcar and Cleveland, and Hartlepool Borough Councils, exists to create, maintain and preserve the collective memory of Teesside.

Our mission is to make our collections of unique records of historical and evidential value accessible to current and future generations locally, nationally and world-wide to inspire an interest in the history, industry and communities of Teesside and promote a sense of local pride and identity.

Teesside Archives service will collaborate efficiently and effectively with our four funding authorities, and help to support other organisations, volunteers and communities for the long-term benefit of our collections and users.

## Community

Our community includes the people living in the four Teesside boroughs and researchers from the UK and abroad. They include local and family historians, academics, students, business users, those using archives for legal reasons, the media and internal users. There are key groups of users that research specific themes including the steel and chemical industry, ship building and bridge building.

Teesside Archives is assisted by a large body of volunteers and is supported by various local organisations and individuals.

## On-site Access Arrangements

The service aims to provide a safe, secure and friendly environment for on-site users with equality of opportunity for all, and to respond to the needs of users, stakeholders, staff and volunteers. The service aims to safeguard the collections for current and future users through preservation and conservation in line with the Collections Care and Conservation Policy.

Teesside Archives public searchroom is open 10am-4pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. There are occasional closures for staff training and to enable an intensive period of collections work and open up new collections in line with our Forward Plan.

Access to the building is step free. The service is well served by public transport and there is nearby free on street parking (time restricted).

Teesside Archives is committed to making our public searchroom a welcoming and safe space for everyone and we wish to address barriers to physically accessing our collections. In certain circumstances, special access arrangements can be put into place. These will be discussed and arranged on a case-by-case basis. This includes

people with disabilities, neurodiverse individuals, members of marginalised communities, depositors of records and police officers.

Users are asked to make an appointment and order documents in advance, which allows the staff to deliver a more efficient service. Users will be restricted to ordering up to 10 documents only and are advised to consult the staff to ensure the most relevant items are retrieved for their visit.

Printed catalogues are available in the search room along with background local history material and the most popular maps. Access to the Internet, Find my Past, Ancestry and free Wi-Fi is also available. This access is via public PC's which are bookable. Some digitised collections are accessible in the search room using surrogates.

The use of laptops is permitted but the number of power sockets available is limited. There are no dedicated film/sound facilities but the service will attempt to digitise sound files and make them available on a PC.

## Online Services and Catalogues

Teesside Archives service information can be found on the Middlesbrough Council website. [www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/teessidearchives](http://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/teessidearchives)

Some catalogues are available online through the National Archives Discovery Platform. <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>

A paid research service and document copying service is available through the website with the function for online payment.

The service has a social media presence including a Facebook page, Twitter now X account, Instagram profile and blog. [www.teessidearchives.wordpress.com](http://www.teessidearchives.wordpress.com)

Some sets of records are available through Find my Past including the Yorkshire Parish Registers and School Admissions Registers and Logbooks. These can be accessed free of charge using PCs in the search room or at the region's Libraries.

The Archive Service has an online feedback mechanism for receiving comments and complaints from users. It responds to all correspondence on its level of service within 10 working days.

## Copying Services and Licencing

The service allows users to bring their own cameras to copy documents for private research. A BookEye scanner is also available and users can bring their own memory sticks to copy documents. At present, oversize items have to be sent away to be

copied so we are unable to do this on demand and handling fees apply. Fees and charges are kept to a minimum and are published on our website. All users will be asked to sign a Copyright disclaimer form to confirm images cannot be reproduced or shared on social media without permission.

For those wishing to publish images taken from Teesside Archives or to use them for official purposes, a Licence must be obtained. Permission may not always be given as Copyright restrictions may apply or depositors may withhold permission.

## Outreach and Events

The service provides ~~occasional~~ talks and tours to external groups and organisations for a fee. School workshops on a range of topics are also available to book through our Community Engagement Officer. Members of our staff support events in our partner local authorities to help raise awareness. In addition, surrogate copies of records can be provided to our partner authorities. Services are provided for groups wishing to have the support of the archive service or make use of its facilities (see Group Visits Procedure). The list of talks and school workshop topics are available on our website [LINK].

Teesside Archives work with a range of community partners (MIMA, Partner Authority Libraries & Museums, Navigator North, ARC, Assist Women's Network, National Trust, Land of Iron)

## Exhibition & Display

The service does not have facilities for on-site exhibition of original documents but does on occasion lend them for display in museums and galleries that provide appropriate security and conditions. There is a procedure providing guidance on best practice for displaying documents.

## Legislation

The service is committed to comply with relevant legislation including:

- Local Government (Records) Acts 1962
- Local Government Act 1972
- Public Records Act 1958 as amended 1967
- Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
- Re-use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015
- Freedom of Information Act 2000

- Data Protection Law
- Tithe Document Rules 1960 and 1963
- Parochial Records and Registers Measure
- Environmental Information Regulations 2004
- Manorial Document Rules 1959 and 1967
- Copyright Act 2017
- Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992
- Access to Health Records Act 1990

## Access Restrictions

In order to maintain the security and integrity of the archives, access to some collections or parts of collections cannot be guaranteed until the documents are listed. Documents that are fragile or damaged may not be accessed until they are conserved in line with the Collection Care and Conservation Policy. On occasion depositors may request records be kept closed for various reasons, although the service does not accept records that will be closed for long periods that it does not consider to be reasonable. This is communicated to the community and stakeholders in various forms, on the website, in catalogues and verbally.

Further Information regarding Data Protection, Freedom of Information and the Council's Publication Scheme can be found here along with the comment and complaints procedure. All Freedom of Information requests go via Middlesbrough Council <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/open-data-foi-and-have-your-say/>

The service keeps records that are closed to the public under Data Protection Law as they contain sensitive personal data. These include court, hospital, and Coroner's records and adoption files. Access to these records is via the managing bodies rather than the archive service as they act as Data Controllers. Other closed records including school, employment, some court records and workhouse records can be accessed under Data Protection Law via the archive service.

Surrogates are available in various formats including microfilm and digital and will be used in preference to the originals. Some surrogates are available in alternative locations across the boroughs including parish registers in the reference libraries. Parish and school records are available on Find My Past and Ancestry, some other duplicate material including building plans, photographs and diaries are available for use off-site.

## Audience Development

The service holds collections of national and international importance as well as unique records relevant to the local area. It is an important aspect of our development to reach new audiences that do not currently engage with the service either on or off-site. It is expected that the publication of our full catalogues online will make our resources more easily discoverable.

It is a strategic aim to use social media to help raise awareness of our collections and the services we offer. Teesside Archives has a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter (now X) and Instagram together with a Wordpress website that hosts a blog. Content is shared on a regular basis with a mix of images from the collections, behind-the-scenes service information and advertising events/projects. In March 2023, a Marketing and Communications Strategy was developed to help give the service some direction in how to best utilise social media and other outlets to engage with wider audiences.

The service has analysed the make-up of the population in the geographical area it serves and going forward will work to understand how to better meet the needs of the community. The service will build on partnership working to help to do this and will seek new funding opportunities to help in this area. We will work collaboratively with other services in our sector to help share best practice and improve audience engagement and raise awareness of the service in line with the Forward Plan.