

## **RECORD OFFICE CLOSURE SUMMARY REPORT, FEBRUARY- AUGUST 2010**

The County Hall Branch of Worcestershire Record Office has now closed for one week of each calendar month for the last seven months in accordance with the agreed business plan to help the Record Office with its preparation for the move to the new Library and History Centre in 2012. The objectives of this programme of closure are aimed at improving and widening public access to collections, increasing on-line access, improving the service to depositors by creating opportunities for more cataloguing work and allowing time for developing some of the work stream tasks that will be essential for the effective operation of Record Office functions in the new building.

### Collection appraisal and cataloguing:

- A programme of appraising all the civil parish council collections in our backlog has been completed. This involved 92 collections of varying sizes and the material identified for disposal has freed up three bays of shelving, enough to hold 180 standard boxes of archives. The material identified has either been confidentially destroyed or, where the Clerk has requested it, the parish has been given the opportunity to take the material back or authorise the Record Office to destroy it.
- Staff have also been systematically reviewing a very large collection of Education Department papers. 223 boxes have so far been examined, with entries being made on our CALM cataloguing system.
- Seventy-four boxes of Social Services adoption and other files have also been reviewed
- A large collection of educational resources has been reviewed and the unwanted items disposed of.

A significant number of cataloguing objectives are being pursued. To date, 120 boxes of material have been completed, representing some 110 person days of activity, the equivalent of three people cataloguing full-time each week of closure. The collections that have now been completed include Land Army records; hospital admission records; a variety of parish records and registers; District Council minute books; schools records; and records of local solicitors. Work has also been done to continue the work of cataloguing the contents of DVDs of moving image material.

Some years ago the significant Lechmere family deposit was put onto our CALM catalogue as part of a Heritage Lottery Funded project. During the closed weeks, a thorough check and revision of this catalogue, covering 98 boxes of material has been completed.

### Strongroom work:

Before we can move much of the material in our lower strongroom it needs to be checked for active mould, ensuring that all affected items are professionally treated. To this end nearly 40 bays of documents have been examined and 44 crates of material identified and sent away to Harwell Document Restoration Service for treatment. This has made a significant start on what will be a major undertaking.

A nine-year project to change the packaging of our complete collection of maps and plans from brown paper to archivally neutral calico bags has been completed because of the extra resource available through this closure programme.

### Finding aids and indexing

A number of indexes previously only available in manual form have been converted to electronic indexes which can be searched remotely on our web site. These are two series of ordination papers; an index to pupils of the Royal Grammar School, Worcester; and part of our index of patients at the Powick Lunatic Asylum.

### Office library

The Office has been reviewing its holdings of books, recognising that the merging of the two public branches in one new building will lead to duplication of many titles. Certain volumes are also no longer relevant or useful to support research on our document holdings. Therefore

throughout closure periods the holdings in the library have been reviewed. Nearly 50 shelves have been examined and 807 volumes have been withdrawn for appropriate disposal. A further 323 volumes have either been transferred to archival collections or are being checked further.

#### Other activities

Whilst our digitising staff carry on with their normal work programme during closure weeks, they have also contributed to the objectives of the closure programme. They have carried out important technical work to enable the Record Office to digitise old analogue tape recordings and thus make them available for research in the future. The challenge of outdated formats is a continuing issue for us. The staff have also carried out a pilot exercise of digitising some local newspapers to help assess future policy on how best to preserve and make available this source. Other staff members have also been trained in basic use of the camera equipment to increase capacity in dealing with one-off requests for copying from the searchroom.

A full service to the Council staff has been maintained in each closure period, and public enquiries by letter and e-mail have continued to be answered. Over the seven weeks to date 287 such enquiries have been dealt with, an average of 41 each week. Our cataloguing projects covering the Worcester City Archives and the Croome archive have also carried on as normal throughout each weekly closure.

#### Conclusion

The first seven months have seen significant progress towards the targets set for this series of closures. The opportunity has been taken to bring specific tasks to completion and help the Record Office prepare for the move to the new premises.

**Robin Whittaker, Archive Manager, August 2010**