

# Warwickshire County Record Office Collection Development Policy

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## 1 Introduction

The aim of Warwickshire County Record Office (WCRO) is to safeguard, manage and develop Warwickshire's archives so these can be accessed, interpreted and enjoyed by all. Collection development is integral to successfully achieving this aim in allowing WCRO to identify and collect relevant material to create a coherent written memory of the county.

This Collection Development<sup>1</sup> policy outlines how and why WCRO collects archives and how it prioritises and rationalises its collections. The policy provides the basis for all collecting planning and activity by WCRO.

This policy is one part of WCRO's collections management framework. The rest of the framework covers overarching governance, legislative and regulatory influence on the management of collections and should be read alongside this policy.

## 2 Background

The historic county of Warwickshire contains a number of institutions which collect archive material relating to the historic county of Warwickshire. As such, not all archive material relating to the historic county of Warwickshire is held by WCRO. Section 4.1 contains further information.

Traditionally WCRO has practiced passive collecting and has not actively collected records to fill any gaps in holdings or to provide a better representation of the communities of Warwickshire. WCRO has always completed a robust appraisal of any records it has been offered to ensure only appropriate records are accepted and this practice continues. Whilst the acceptance of passive collecting has changed in the twenty first century due to limited staff time WCRO is still reactive rather than proactive in regard to collecting.

WCRO holds records of WCC from its formation in 1889 to present day and also records of district and parish councils in Warwickshire. WCRO has a large number of collections of prominent local families and estates, including Greville of Warwick Castle (Earls of Warwick) and Newdigate of Arbury. WCRO also has a large number of collections of primary schools across the county

WCRO does maintain contact with existing depositors but this varies greatly, and this has impacted on the accruals received for collections held by WCRO. WCRO recognise the need to have a robust and sustainable means of ingesting and preserving digital records and has

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<sup>1</sup> As defined by PAS 197 as collecting new items, researching and reviewing the existing collection and removing items in accordance with the organisation's policies and priorities.

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invested in developing a suitable approach. WCRO is committed to continuing with this as resources allow.

The limited amount of available strongroom space (all space is likely to be used by the end of 2021 with recent rates of accrual) prevents WCRO from accepting any large collections it may be offered. For instance, records of the George Eliot Hospital have been offered to WCRO and the decision to postpone acceptance of these records was made due to available strong room space. As these records are public records created by an institution in Warwickshire, these should be deposited at Warwickshire County Record Office.

### 3 Legislation regarding collecting records

WCRO's authority to collect certain types of records has a legal basis. This authority applies to a number of records.

WCRO holds the records of WCC to ensure that WCC discharges its duty under section 224 of the **Local Government Act 1972** to "make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the Council or any of their officers". In 1999, the Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions issued guidance as to what was meant by "proper arrangements" which included "those created by the authority and its predecessors in the course of its business".

WCRO is appointed as a 'Place of Deposit' by the National Archives to hold public records relating to Warwickshire. Such public records include those of the Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership NHS Trust, HM Coroner for Warwickshire and Warwickshire's Courts and Tribunal Service.

**The Public Records Act 1958 and 1967** requires these bodies to identify records of historical value and transfer them for permanent preservation to WCRO when these are 20 years old. The introduction of **The Public Records (Transfer to the Public Record Office) (Transitional and Saving Provisions) Order 2014** means that since 1 January 2015, the timeframe for depositing records reduced from 30 years to 20 years, placing an increased burden on both strongroom space and staff time.

Due to WCRO being recognised by the Master of the Rolls as a repository for manorial documents WCRO is able to collect manorial records and has over 5,000 items from as early as 1334.

Under the provision of section 144A (7) of the **Law of Property Act 1922**, and section 36 (2) of the **Tithe Act 1936**, as amended by section 7 (1) of the **Local Government (Records) Act**

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**1962** WCRO is able to collect records created by the administration of the Tithe including maps and apportionments.

The three designations below allow WCRO to hold records for Church of England records in Warwickshire under the **Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1992)**:

- WCRO has been designated by the Bishop of the Diocese of Birmingham as diocesan record office to collect the records of Anglican parishes lying within the Diocese of Birmingham and the County of Warwickshire, with the exception of those parishes lying within the City of Birmingham itself, but including those within the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull
- WCRO has been designated by the Bishop of the Diocese of Coventry as diocesan record office to collect the records of Anglican parishes lying within the Diocese of Coventry and the County of Warwickshire
- WCRO acts as official place of deposit for those Anglican parishes which fall within the Diocese of Gloucester and the County of Warwickshire by arrangement with the Diocese of Gloucester and the diocesan record office, Gloucestershire Record Office

WCRO must adhere to information legislation including the **General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR)** and the **Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI)**. GDPR presents an opportunity to enhance collecting (see section 7.3). FOI and copyright, as governed by **Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988**, govern access to and reproduction of material held at WCRO.

### 4 Approach to collecting records

At all times WCRO will act according to professional best practice and in particular with regards to the requirements of Archive Service Accreditation<sup>2</sup> and the Code of Ethics<sup>3</sup> of the Archives and Records Association.

- WCRO will acquire material from within, or relating to, the administrative county of Warwickshire as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 1974. Subject to the overriding principle that the integrity of archival groups should normally be preserved as far as possible and practicable, the record office will not acquire records relating to places outside Warwickshire unless these have a close connection with the area

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/archive-service-accreditation-standard-june-2018.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.archives.org.uk/images/ARA\\_Documents/ARA\\_Code\\_Of\\_Ethics.pdf](https://www.archives.org.uk/images/ARA_Documents/ARA_Code_Of_Ethics.pdf)

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- WCRO recognises the collecting policies of local authority archive repositories in the cities of Birmingham and Coventry, and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Record Office in Stratford-upon-Avon, all of which fall within the boundary of the historic county of Warwickshire
- WCRO seeks to avoid competition, conflict and duplication of effort and aims to work closely with all interested parties to ensure that records are placed in the most appropriate home. As such, WCRO recognise the existence of specialist repositories within the county (*e.g.* British Motor Museum). Records originating from or relating to Sutton Coldfield before its transfer to Birmingham City Council in 1974 are likely to have strong Warwickshire connections, and WCRO would welcome negotiations with Birmingham City Archives over the appropriate place of deposit for any documents offered to either repository which fall into this category
- WCRO acknowledges the current lack of provision for archives for the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull, which formed part of the administrative county of Warwickshire until 1<sup>st</sup> April 1974. WCRO will continue to collect pre 1974 records from, or relating to, Solihull, or where the integrity of existing collections would be compromised were complementary material not accepted. WCRO will continue to contribute to discussion on how to address the anomalous situation arising from the lack of provision for post 1974 Solihull records
- WCRO will not actively encourage the deposit of records primarily relating to or arising in areas outside the current boundaries, unless there are exceptional circumstances and the agreement of any other interested archive authority has been sought

## 5 Principles and methods for accessioning and deaccessioning

### 5.1 Priorities for deaccessioning and disposal

WCRO periodically review material that has been taken in on a temporary deposit basis but has not been collected or accessioned. This will include legacy collections where the long-term value of the material does not sit with the WCRO collecting policy. Currently all the collections held at WCRO fit the collecting policy.

### 5.2 Deaccessioning Procedure

A Depositor may only withdraw records held on loan in accordance with WCRO policies, having given reasonable notice of their intent to the Record Office. During this period of

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notice, WCRO reserves the right to copy the records and to make these copies available in accordance with the same conditions as applied to the original record.

The Depositor will be liable for costs upon withdrawal as follows:

1. Within 25 years of the date of deposit costs of storage and cataloguing and conservation work carried out on the documents ("the Costs")
2. After 25 years of the date of deposit 50% of the Costs
3. After 50 years of the date of deposit 10% of the Costs or an administration fee of £150, at the discretion of the Archives Manager

In consideration of the services provided by WCRO to the Depositor, the Depositor accepts and agrees to make such payment prior to the withdrawal of the Record. Where the Depositor defaults in making the above payments, WCRO shall have the lien on the loaned records. These charges may be waived if at the absolute discretion of the Archives Manager sufficient public benefit has been derived to fully cover the public expenditure incurred. Charges will be made in line with WCRO Fees and Charges at the time of the withdrawal.

### 6 Conditions on acquisitions

- WCRO acquires records by gift, purchase, bequest, transfer and / or loan. The preferred method of acquisition is gift
- WCRO will evaluate archive collections prior to donation or deposit and reserves the right to refuse, return or recommend the destruction of any material not deemed appropriate for permanent preservation
- WCRO will not normally accept archives and records which are of a particularly specialist nature, requiring skills or equipment beyond WCRO's resources to preserve, exploit or interpret
- WCRO has only very limited financial resources at its disposal for the purchase of documents, and wishes to avoid encouraging both the sale of historic documents, in general, and contributing to the inflation of the market value of historic documents

Where purchase of documents is contemplated, WCRO will seek to work in partnership with other agencies (such as the Friends of Warwickshire County Record Office, and local and national grant awarding bodies). WCRO will only purchase records if:

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- there is no other more suitable repository interested in acquiring them
- these meet the criteria set out elsewhere in this policy
- these are of significance to the county's history and heritage
- these complement WCRO's existing holdings
- Acquisitions purchased with the assistance of grant aid will be held subject to the terms and conditions of the bodies from whom such aid was received, provided these do not conflict with the spirit of WCRO's terms and conditions. Where such a conflict exists, WCRO will negotiate with a view to resolving any issues giving rise to concern
- All archives and records received by WCRO will be processed in accordance with current accessioning procedures which record information about the nature and provenance of the material in question

### 6.1 Archival media and genres held

- Archives may be accepted in a range of formats, including paper, parchment, electronic or other digital media, microform, photographic, film or audio tapes
- Records are accepted by WCRO when these are deemed by professionally qualified staff to be of sufficiently high evidential or historical value as to merit permanent preservation. Semi-current records will not usually be accepted, except where special circumstances make this desirable, such as where public records are offered in advance of their expected date of transfer. In such cases, WCRO reserves the right to charge for storage and retrieval. WCRO also reserves the right to appraise semi-current records, subject to Operational Selection Policies (OSPs) issued by The National Archives and other relevant appraisal guidelines
- In regard to electronic, digital media and audio tapes, WCRO will continue to develop policies and infrastructure to ensure the long-term management, preservation and access arrangements for such media
- Where the format of archives requires specialist knowledge or facilities for storage or access, such as electronic, digital or audio-visual media, WCRO will explore, if appropriate, the possibility of transferring materials to or working in partnership with a more appropriate repository, and will do so having consulted with relevant bodies and individuals



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- Printed materials, including books, newspapers and pamphlets will be acquired by WCRO where these are judged to be likely to support the use of its archive holdings by researchers or staff
- WCRO will seek to acquire copies of documents held in other repositories if these relate closely to the existing holdings or to the acquisition policy
- WCRO aims to provide access to information about its collections and in some circumstances copies of items from its collections are made available to online users as well as those visiting the service in person
- WCRO will continue to work in close co-operation with WCC's Records Management Service to ensure the systematic transfer of official records to its safekeeping. The two services will work together to ensure the appropriate management and preservation of, and access to, WCC's digital records and archive. See section 6 for further information
- WCRO will not normally accept three dimensional artefacts unless these have a special relationship with the associated archives held. Artefacts will normally be directed to the appropriate museum on the advice of WCC's Museum Service
- WCRO will work in close co-operation with WCC's Museums and Libraries to facilitate the transfer of archival material to WCRO where appropriate. WCRO will also foster positive relationships with other museums and community groups within the county of Warwickshire in order to ensure that archival material is deposited with the most appropriate repository

### 6.2 Subject area

- WCRO exists primarily to safeguard the records of Warwickshire County Council (WCC), but also collects more widely. In addition to records acquired under statute, the service welcomes accessions from other organisations, businesses, non-conformist churches, other places of worship, clubs, societies, families and individuals within Warwickshire
- WCRO will not seek to represent any particular historical, sectarian or other viewpoint in its acquisition of records, but to reflect as objectively as possible all aspects of Warwickshire's past and present

## 7 Analysis of the current collection

WCRO seeks to gather a coherent, on-going written record of Warwickshire from the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. The collections cover a wide variety of historical documents, from medieval deeds

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to 20<sup>th</sup> century building plans. Details relating to 98% of the accessions and approximately 50% of the full catalogues are available to view on the online catalogue 'Warwickshire's Past Unlocked'. There are both strengths and weaknesses in the ability of the current collections to present that coherent record.

### **7.1 Strengths**

WCRO holds a coherent record of local government in Warwickshire since 1625. WCRO holds records of WCC from 1889 and of its predecessor (the court of Quarter Sessions in its administrative and judicial role) from 1625.

WCRO holds records of over 250 Church of England parishes including the registers of baptism, marriage and burials and the records of various parish officials. WCRO also holds over 5,000 items of manorial records, dating from 1334, which provide the most detailed source for medieval village life in Warwickshire.

Many of the records of the large landed estates are deposited including those for Warwick Castle, Newdigate of Arbury Hall, Throckmorton of Coughton Court, Lucy of Charlecote, Seymour of Ragley Hall and Feilding of Newhham Paddock. These collections are rich in deeds, rentals, maps, correspondence and accounts and provide research material for many social and political topics, significant people and events. There are also substantial collections from local institutions including the Union Workhouse, Warwickshire Quarter Sessions and Warwick County Lunatic Asylum, Hatton.

The WCRO collection contains several deposits from important local businesses, such as the engineering company Willans and Robinson of Rugby, records of the combined Needle Industries from the west of the county, Flavels, Range Manufacturers of Leamington Spa and the records of the Donald Healey Motor Company of Warwick.

### **7.2 Current Weaknesses of the Collections Policy**

Although WCRO holds WCC records dating back to the formation of WCC in 1889 as the type and volume of records created by WCC change there is a need to examine the processes in place for the transfer of WCC records to WCRO. The WCC retention schedule identifies records for transfer to WCRO which are currently not transferred to WCRO on a regular basis if at all.

Whilst the collection contains a good volume of records created by the Church of England; records of other faith groups are poorly represented, and their paucity is a major weakness. The holding for records created by the Church of England whilst extensive does have gaps.

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Similarly, whilst WCRO holds a large number of collections of primary schools across the county it holds only a small number of collections of secondary schools.

There is only a small quantity of records of small and medium sized businesses and this is an area of collecting that could be developed further. The mining industry is significant in the history of Warwickshire and beyond the significant collections deposited by the National Coal Board and Warwickshire Miners' Association there is a significant gap in the holdings representing this important local industry. WCRO is unaware of the existence of such records beyond those it holds.

Whilst WCRO does hold public records its holdings are not comprehensive and more consistent collecting from NHS trusts would provide more comprehensive hospital records. Storing such records indefinitely and making them available for inspection, as appropriate, ensures scrutiny and accountability for such record creating bodies.

WCRO also holds no collections directly representing ethnic minority communities of Warwickshire. Collecting these records ensures a more accurate representation of the county is recorded for posterity and future interpretation and understanding.

### 7.3 Opportunities for the Records Office

WCRO is staffed by a professional, dedicated and experienced staff with a good knowledge of archival practice who have existing relationships with other WCC departments. These departments are key partners in ensuring the ongoing transfer of appropriate WCC records.

WCRO moved to the Resources Directorate in 2018. This move has presented the opportunity to strengthen and renew existing relationships particularly with colleagues in the library service and also to create new relationships with other WCC departments. The new relationship with the registration service has allowed us to explore the potential benefits of WCRO storing historic registers.

The continuation of the development of a robust and sustainable solution for digital preservation will allow WCRO to collect appropriate records in a greater range of formats to ensure all appropriate records are preserved.

Schedule 2 Part 6 of the **Data Protection Act 2018** contains an exemption from certain individual rights when processing personal information for 'archival purposes in the public interest'. For example, an individual is unlikely to have the right to have their own information deleted/destroyed if the information is held in a record which is archived in the public interest. This new exemption and the high profile of GDPR/DPA will enable the

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depositing of collections where potential depositors have previously had reservations about doing so.

### 7.4 Threats for the Records Office

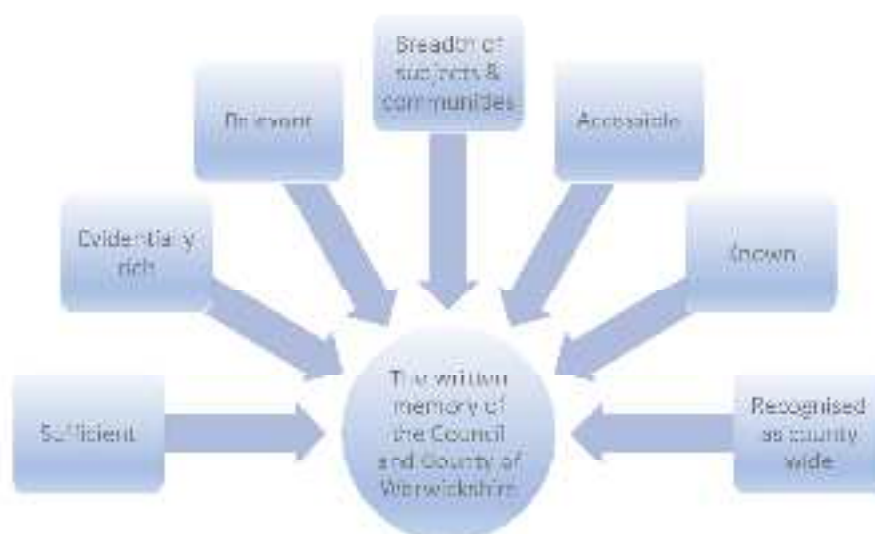
The limited amount of available strongroom space is affecting decisions to accept records. If further strongroom space is not found WCRO could have to stop accepting records. If this were to happen it would prevent WCRO fulfilling one of its core functions: the preservation of archive material.

The reduction in staff at WCRO means that there is less available staff time to commit to collection development. To ensure that WCRO discharges its duty to collection development it will investigate new way of working, this will include investigating increased levels of contact with depositors, developing links with different community groups and themed collections weeks.

The establishment of Adoption Central England (ACE) has seen a change in the way records pertaining to adoption in Warwickshire are processed and stored. It is vital that these records are still transferred to WCRO at the appropriate point in their lifecycle and WCRO will liaise with ACE to set up a process for this.

## 8 Priorities for Future Collecting

WCRO's aspiration for its collections is to be the core documentary heritage resource for Warwickshire. To do so it needs to have a number of characteristics as the following diagram describes:



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WCRO intends to overhaul its acquisition of records from Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to create an acquisition process that is comprehensive in its coverage of WCC departments, coherent in the range of records collected and on-going to ensure a continuous record of the WCC is maintained.

It is crucial that WCRO reflect the records of the emerging industries within Warwickshire, notably the computer games industry based in Leamington Spa. It is therefore necessary for WCRO to develop relationships with such companies in order to facilitate the transfer of permanent records at the appropriate point in their lifecycle.

It is important to secure the record of significant Warwickshire businesses that are closing down or in the process of decline. These records are at real risk of being permanently lost if contact is not made before the businesses have closed.

A similar proactive collecting must be carried out with school records to ensure that records are transferred to WCRO when the school no longer have a business need for them. If not, the records are at risk of being permanently lost.

The census data from 2011 shows that the four largest religions in Warwickshire are Christianity, Sikhism, Islam and Hinduism. Whilst the holdings for the Church of England are strong the holdings for other Christian denominations and the other three religions are poor.

The census data from 2011 show that nearly 6,000 people born in Poland are residents of Warwickshire. This is the largest community beyond those born in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. WCRO will make contact with the Polish community and other communities which it has little or no contact with to discuss any records they create and the appropriateness of the records being at WCRO.

Whilst WCRO recognises that it does not hold sufficient records for the areas highlighted above it appreciates that the collection of such records must be completed in a structured rather than ad hoc fashion. To do so WCRO will research record creating bodies (see section 8.1).

Due to the robust appraisal WCRO completes when considering whether to accept records there are not significant holdings of records which currently need to be considered for disposal. There are however some small quantities of records spread across a number of collections that could be weeded. One of the aims of the annual closure period is to provide an opportunity to take stock and to work on issues such as these.

### 8.1 Enabling future collecting

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To ensure WCRO achieves its collection development aspirations it will need to take the following practical steps:

- Whilst the transfer of records created by WCC departments occurs on a regular basis it does so in a piecemeal fashion. WCRO will prioritise improving the arrangements for the transfer of records from WCC departments. WCRO has assisted WCC's Records Management Service with the updating of WCC's retention schedule and will continue to work with them to improve the transfer of records as identified by the retention schedule
- WCRO and WCC have demonstrated a commitment to digital preservation and will conclude its second digital preservation project in 2020. Digital preservation, especially in regard to WCC records and public records, remains a priority. The establishment of procedures for the transfer and storage of digital born WCC records and public records will be a key focus for collection development
- Presently, the level of contact with existing depositors varies depending on the number of queries received regarding their collections. The feasibility of improving contact with potential and existing depositors will be examined. WCRO will identify the most appropriate means of re-establishing and nurturing positive relations with key depositors, as resources allow.
- WCRO recognise that despite ongoing efforts the records it holds are not entirely representative of the communities of Warwickshire. To ensure a more coordinated approach to collecting records which are more representative of the communities of Warwickshire research will be completed to identify record creating bodies within the five districts and boroughs of Warwickshire (North Warwickshire Borough; Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough; Rugby Borough; Stratford-upon-Avon District and Warwick District). The findings of the research will be used to inform the review of the current policy.

### 9 Review

The Collection Development Policy will be reviewed within five years of the latest date of revision.