

# Durham County Record Office

County Hall Durham DH1 5UL

Telephone (0191) 383 3253

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website: [www.durham.gov.uk/recordoffice](http://www.durham.gov.uk/recordoffice)



Making a difference where you live

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## A Guide for Visitors

The County Record Office is responsible for the collection and preservation of archives and records relating to County Durham and the Borough of Darlington, and also for making those records available for the purposes of study and research.

*Address:* County Record Office  
County Hall  
DURHAM  
DH1 5UL

*Telephone:* Durham (0191) 3833253 or 3833474

*Fax:* Durham (0191) 3834500

*E-mail:* [record.office@durham.gov.uk](mailto:record.office@durham.gov.uk)

*Website* [www.durham.gov.uk/recordoffice](http://www.durham.gov.uk/recordoffice)

*Location:* County Hall is situated on the Durham to Newcastle road (A691) one mile north of the centre of Durham City. All visitors should enter the building by the public entrance and inform the Helpdesk that they are visiting the Record Office.

*Visitors by car:* Parking space is available in the grounds of County Hall.

*Visitors by train:* Durham Station (½ mile from County Hall) is on the East Coast main line and is served by trains from London (King's Cross) to Newcastle and by other services to and from the North East.

*Visitors by bus:* Buses from the centre of Durham City, express bus services from Newcastle and buses from Darlington, Consett and Middlesbrough stop outside County Hall.

*Opening times:*

Monday	8.45 a.m. - 4.45 p.m.
Tuesday	8.45 a.m. - 4.45 p.m.
Wednesday	8.45 a.m. - 8.00 p.m.
Thursday	8.45 a.m. - 4.45 p.m.
Friday	closed

The Record Office is closed on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and all public holidays.

*Appointments:* Visitors must make an appointment to consult documents or microfilms in the Record Office. The number of places available is limited and an appointment ensures that a microfilm reader or seat will be available.

A separate appointment is necessary for Wednesday evenings and documents for use on a Wednesday evening must be ordered by 2.00 p.m. in the afternoon.

The use of laptop computers in the Search Room is permitted, but prior notification is necessary.

The searchroom is easily accessible by wheelchairs.

On arrival in the Record Office all bags, briefcases, notebooks, folders, files, etc. should be placed in the lockers provided, **and loose papers and pencils only may be taken into the Searchroom.** Visitors should write their names, full addresses and locker number and should complete the 'Purpose of Research' column in the Search Room register. This implies an undertaking to obey the regulations governing the use of the Record Office, copies of which are available. Visitors should explain the nature of their enquiry to the Search Room Supervisor, who will give advice on the records likely to be of interest, and guidance on the use of indexes and catalogues.

### *GUIDES TO THE RECORDS*

The catalogues or detailed lists of the documents held in the Record Office are held on an on-line database which can be searched by visitors for references to places, subjects and personal names. It must be emphasised that only the catalogues are available on the database, and not the documents themselves. Copies of the catalogues are also available in the Search Room. The catalogues are grouped, according to the type of record, into six categories, distinguished by colour-coded labels:

Public records - black	Non-conformist records – white
Official records - grey	Unofficial (family, estate, business, etc.) records - red
Ecclesiastical parish records - blue	Microfilms – green

Within each category the catalogues are placed in appropriately labelled binders in which they are filed alphabetically by the reference mark of the records.

Every entry in a catalogue has a detailed reference corresponding to the reference on the original document. The reference mark and number are the means of identifying that document.

### *REQUESTS FOR RECORDS*

Requests for documents should be made on the forms available on each table in the Search Room. The completed forms should be placed in the appropriate box and the document will then be produced. A separate request form should be completed for every document requested. Productions will normally be restricted to three items but only one volume or one bundle of documents will be permitted on a desk at any one time.

### *AVAILABILITY OF RECORDS*

Documents will normally be produced within a few minutes but the time can vary depending on the location of the documents and the number of requests.

Users of documents should note that certain classes of records are closed by statute or at the discretion of the depositor or the County Archivist. Documents which are in a fragile condition or which are uncatalogued will not be produced.

### *MICROFILMS*

All church registers, electoral registers, census returns and newspapers held in the Record Office have been microfilmed and, where a microfilm copy of a document exists, the original will not normally be produced. Microfilms held in the Record Office are all available on a self-service system and new users will receive a full explanation of the system and the use of the microfilm readers.

Detailed lists of church registers and census returns are available and various indexes and other finding-aids are also on open access in the microfilm room.

### *HANDLING OF RECORDS*

The documents held in the Record Office are unique and should always be handled with the utmost care and must not be marked in any way. Large documents or maps should be kept flat with the weights provided and should not be leaned on, pages should be turned with care and notebooks or paper should not be placed on documents when taking notes. Only pencils should be used for taking notes, and tracings should be made only after consulting the Search Room Supervisor. Care should be taken to preserve the sequence of loose papers in a bundle. Any damage occurring to a document or to a microfilm or microfiche must be notified immediately to the Search Room Supervisor. Smoking, drinking and eating (even of sweets!), the use of pens and sharp implements (such as scissors) are all forbidden in the Search Room.

## *FACILITIES*

Light refreshments can be obtained from the County Hall restaurant at lunch-times, and tea and coffee can be obtained from a machine at the Helpdesk during the day.

## *COPIES*

A self-service reader-printer is available for taking copies of documents which are on microfilm. Photo-copies can be made of most original documents, with the exception of parish registers, bound newspapers and parts of large maps, subject always to the size and condition of the original, any restriction imposed by the owners of the documents and the regulations regarding copyright.

## *PUBLICATION*

The use of extracts from documents in unpublished work is permitted on the condition that appropriate acknowledgements are made. Copies and transcripts of records held in the Record Office must not be sold, reproduced or published without permission which should be sought by written application to the County Archivist. For information on the procedure to be followed to obtain such permission see *User Guide 3*, which can be obtained from a member of staff. Proper acknowledgements should be made to the owner of the document and the County Record Office.

The responsibility for ascertaining the ownership of the copyright of deposited documents and obtaining any necessary permission to publish remains with the reader.

## *GIFTS AND DEPOSITS OF RECORDS*

The County Record Office is always pleased to accept further deposits or gifts of records. It should be remembered that age is not necessarily a criterion of historical value and that many modern records and papers are of potential historical significance. A leaflet is available on the services provided by the Record Office for depositors and donors of records.

Information on the existence of records of local significance is always welcomed, especially if the survival of these records is in any way threatened.

Members of the staff of the Record Office are always pleased to give any reasonable guidance to the public but they are not able to undertake research for a visitor. In order to make the best use of the facilities provided it is suggested that:

1. the printed reference and secondary sources on the chosen topic should be thoroughly studied before original documentary material is used,
2. where the handwriting, language or format of the documents to be used is likely to cause problems (i.e. documents before 1800), printed transcripts or facsimiles should be studied in advance,
3. when advice is sought from the Record Office staff, visitors should be as precise as possible about the subject and depth to which they wish to pursue it,
4. a few minutes spent in familiarisation with the indexes and catalogues in the Record Office can save time and frustration in the future.

The Record Office operates a research service for people who want information from the records held in the Office but who cannot visit Durham. Details of the research service are available on request.

It should be understood that members of staff will not give advice on the legal interpretation of records nor on the financial value of documents.