

Archives West Midlands

Annual Review 2019/20





AWM at a glance

Archives West Midlands (AWM) is an independent, strategic partnership of archive services in the region which aims to maximise the benefits of working together, both in terms of shared projects and funding opportunities.

Who we are

AWM members represent 26 organisations which hold the largest archive collections, and attract the most visitors, in the region. AWM is backed by The National Archives and supported by seven other national and regional archive bodies.

When we were formed

AWM was formally launched in June 2016.

Why?

In a nutshell, AWM is about working together and forging a collective identity for the region's archives. In times of financial constraint, collaboration is more important than ever. Sharing our knowledge and expertise makes us collectively stronger, and creates new opportunities for exciting joint projects.

Our aims

- Promote the importance of archives as vital regional assets
- Encourage the highest standards of archive work
- Encourage investment in digital preservation and digital access to collections and services
- Develop and support regional (or sub-regional) projects
- Provide a confident and coherent voice for the region's archives

The bigger picture

It's not just about preservation and accessibility. Archives in the region are making significant contributions in other areas such as skills and employability, community engagement, health and wellbeing, and tourism.

How we are funded

AWM is subscription-based and has received additional financial support from donor organisations in the form of grants for funded projects.

Charitable status

Archives West Midlands is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (Registered Charity Number 1168386).

For more information

website: archiveswestmidlands.org.uk

twitter: [@ArchivesWM](https://twitter.com/ArchivesWM)

email: archiveswestmidlands@gmail.com

Introduction

2019/20 is Archives West Midlands' fourth year as an independent organisation working to advance learning and education for public benefit by supporting the collection, storage, preservation, promotion and access to archival materials relating to the region.

As Chair I continue to be proud of the progress that we have made as an organisation, the support which we have provided to our members, and the relationships that we have built with key stakeholders.

2019/20 has been an exceptional year in which, as a society, we have faced the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. None of us could have anticipated that, at the beginning of 2020, we would have to make the incredibly difficult decision to close our services. Many remain closed as I am writing this.

Engagement with our collections had already changed enormously and our approach to collecting, storing and promoting had begun to change, too. However, our response to the 'lockdown' has fast-tracked this transformation. AWM has provided valuable support and a forum for members to share best practice, their experiences of lockdown, and - importantly - their approach to recovery and re-opening.

A key AWM aim has always been to provide really effective support so that our members can collaborate, share experience and deliver archive services effectively within a challenging environment. The last six months have evidenced how important this role is.

I believe that our organisation enables our members to be stronger and better placed

to advocate and promote the importance of our collections and, as we each recover our services, that joint support and shared learning has been vital.

We are building a really effective network where our collective experience, skills, enthusiasm and commitment will enable our workforce, our volunteers and our collections to develop, prosper and make a real difference to the communities and individuals who engage with them in a post-COVID-19 society.

During 2019/20 we have:

- Continued to promote the importance of archives as vital regional assets
- Maintained support to our members, now 9, to achieve accreditation/ re-accreditation
- Further developed our Digital Preservation learning programme and continued working towards a regional solution to digital preservation
- Presented to other regional archives groups to share our learning, and to support others on becoming an independent, innovative and sustainable network
- Organised and delivered a members' meeting focused on lockdown, recovery plans and funding opportunities
- Ensured that our training and development events were informed by the needs of our members, and organised to maximise networking opportunities for archive leaders
- Developed the use of Microsoft Teams so that we could continue to manage our day-to-day business and training events

- Made a successful bid to The National Archives' Networks for Change fund and were awarded £9,250 for our No Barriers project
- Re-designed and re-launched our website to support members and promote our activity
- Attracted our 1,000th follower on Twitter
- Delivered a successful training and skills sharing event for volunteers and Friends

Our priorities for 2020/21 are to:

- Continue to promote and celebrate the importance of archives as a vital regional asset
- Share best practice, skills and policies to support members to gain and retain accreditation
- Continue to develop our Digital Preservation learning programme
- Implement our No Barriers project and ensure that we capture and share the learning regionally and nationally
- Continue to share our learning so that other regional networks can develop and become sustainable
- Continue to build our relationship and reputation with key funding bodies and further explore ways in which we can work together
- Continue to celebrate, embed and support the contribution of volunteers and Friends through our training and development programme
- Continue to improve our website content and our social media profile



Janene Cox OBE

*Archives West Midlands Chair
Commissioner for Culture, Communities and the
Rural Environment, Staffordshire County Council*

Since Archives West Midlands launched in June 2016, their collaborative, innovative and forward thinking ethos has ensured that they have achieved - and are achieving - much for archives across the region.

The successful bid to the *Networks for Change* fund allows them to participate in a concrete and practical way to increase access to, and diversity within, the archive profession. Archives of all kinds have the opportunity to unlock access to information, and have the power to inspire trust and enrich every citizen's life.

This example of partnership working with the Archives and Records Association will lead to a collaborative solution for archives across the country.

At The National Archives we are proud to be able to support groups like AWM, who work hard - with ambition and pragmatism - to adapt to an ever-changing landscape, and help their members deliver The National Archives' vision for Archives in the future.



Jeff James

Chief Executive and Keeper of The National Archives

Encouraging digital preservation in the West Midlands

Digital preservation is a young but complex professional discipline which is constantly progressing. AWM's Digital Progress Programme supports members - through dedicated training, networking and sharing experiences - as they develop capacity to digitise collections and make them more widely accessible.

In October 2019 the Digital Preservation Coalition delivered an introductory course in Birmingham. AWM members received a 50% discount on the standard course fee. The session explored the fundamental principles of digital preservation and gave practical advice on *Getting Started*. A follow-on, virtual course - *Making Progress in Digital Preservation* - will take place in November 2020, with discounts for both AWM and non-members.

A practical session for AWM members, in January 2020, focused on 'fixity'. This is a way of making sure original digital files remain unchanged and uncorrupted by creating digital fingerprints for each item. These allow a protective 'chain of custody' to be established. Rachel MacGregor from the University of Warwick and David

Underdown of The National Archives explained the concept in detail and showed delegates how fixity tools work. Further hands-on sessions are planned.

Fifteen-minute sharing sessions are routinely held at AWM meetings. These allow members to network informally and compare progress on all aspects of digital preservation. If you have any suggestions for what AWM should cover, in this context, please contact Trustee Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan at:

elizabeth@elizabethoc.co.uk





Our new website

www.archiveswestmidlands.org.uk

was launched on November 13 at DCDC19.

It has a more professional look than the previous version and is better suited to the needs of AWM. In addition to providing new functionality, the new-look website retains the popular features of its predecessor, such as information about AWM and our member services.

The news pages allow us to share all the great work of AWM and archives across the region. This includes the Small Bills and Petty Finance collaborative project between Staffordshire Archives and Keele University - which has proven to be the most popular news item on our new website.

Our events pages not only allow people to discover what events we are running, but also to book places on any that catch their eye. We've successfully promoted a number of events and it's great to make it easier for people to attend.

The new members' area allows us to quickly share information. This includes the findings of our digital preservation projects and, most recently, member services' plans for reopening to the public during Covid 19.

The new website has proved to be a great success. The number of great things to explore is demonstrated by the fact that, on average, web-visitors spend more than five minutes discovering about AWM, our member services, and all the wonderful activities across the region.



Social Media Update

Joanna Terry presented her Social Media update to fellow Trustees on 17 July 2020. She said a milestone had been reached earlier that month, when AWM gained its 1000th follower on Twitter @ArchivesWM. This amounted to a 29% increase on the number of followers in April 2019.

Jo said AWM continued to use Twitter for updates and information during the coronavirus pandemic - promoting:

- Members' online service offers
- Reopening of services
- AGM and Annual Report
- Feedback from the reopening services workshop
- Blog posts from member services on the website

Twitter stats and highlights:

**1002
Followers**

**49
New
Followers**

**22,435
Total
Impressions**

**32
Tweets made**

- We were promoting Shakespeare's birthday in April which was our top tweet
- In May, as lockdown continued we were promoting online offers by services such as access to Ancestry, quizzes, jigsaws
- July saw us gain our 1000th follower

Volunteers' News

Friends and volunteers' event

The second regional Friends and volunteers' event was held in June 2019 at the Birmingham and Midland Institute.

Dr Maureen Harris of Leicester University gave a talk entitled: '*Linen and woollen lost by violence - living through the English Civil Wars*'. The project, delivered in partnership with the Friends of Warwickshire Record Office, investigated a variety of records - including 'loss accounts' - and brought the people of the 17th century to life in a very vivid way.

After a networking lunch delegates reflected on the benefits of volunteering. Their comments were captured in a word cloud. Then individuals from Birmingham, Shropshire, Stratford-upon-Avon and Staffordshire described an amazing variety of projects and activities. These ranged from engaging volunteers from communities who had little contact with the archive service to exploring the hidden gems in photographic collections, and the use of maps to engage with a variety of audiences.

Sadly a follow-up event had to be postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Alternative ways of engaging with Friends and volunteers are currently under discussion.



Exploring the Old Poor Law in Staffordshire

Staffordshire Archives continued to host weekly sessions for volunteers working on Keele University's *Small Bills and Petty Finance* project. Following lockdown they were supported to work from home, on scanned documents, and met fortnightly online.

They have unfolded and transcribed hundreds of overseers' vouchers generated by parish officers who purchased goods and services for the benefit of paupers. Some volunteers accepted the additional challenge of writing blogs about their findings, which can be seen here: www.thepoorlaw.org. Their work has contributed to a three-year academic study, and extended the scope of volunteering engagement in Staffordshire.

The volunteers like working alongside archivists and academics and really enjoy their weekly get-togethers. It is hoped these can resume in, or soon after, September 2020.



Around the Archives

Dudley

Highlights of Dudley Archives' year included two new collections - Dudley College and Dudley Town FC - and a lot of interest in curious cut-marks on the parchment of their 800-year-old Papal Bull. The service has hosted several exhibitions and a Local History Day, and worked in partnership with Dudley College to explore local immigration through workplace photographs. With a strong Friends group and around 40 volunteers, Dudley Archives were delighted to be operating again after the long coronavirus lockdown.



Hereford Cathedral

It was an important year for Hereford Cathedral with a series of exhibitions to mark the 700th anniversary of the canonisation of former bishop Thomas Cantilupe, also known as Thomas of Hereford. Since March the exhibitions have been available online. Just before lockdown a new bishop swore his enthronement oath on one of the Cathedral's treasures - the late 8th century Hereford Gospels. The Cathedral also collaborated with other museums on *The Moveable Feast - a Museums at Night* event.



Herefordshire

Herefordshire Archives and Record Centre's winter exhibition explored the impact of the English Civil War on the county. The exhibition was curated by Elizabeth van Wessem, a doctoral student at the University of Leicester, in collaboration with Midlands 4 Cities, a doctoral partnership between four Midlands universities. HARC also secured the transfer of 250,000 munitions workers' record sheets from the MOD. Located on the site of a former ordnance factory, HARC is a fitting home for this national collection and a major volunteer indexing project is planned.



Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

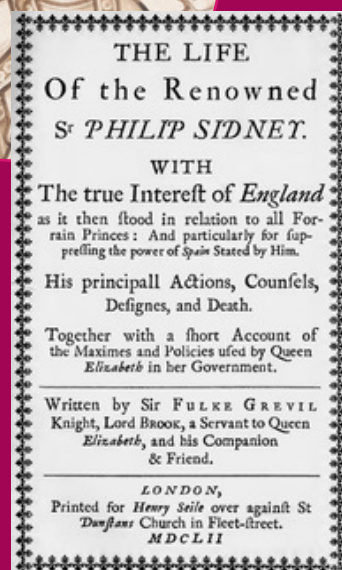
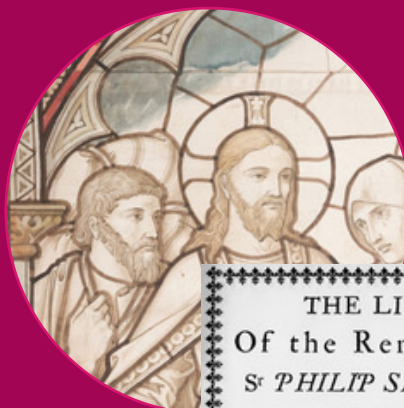
The year saw the conclusion of *Creative People* - SBT's partnership project with the Royal Shakespeare Theatre - which catalogued the archives of three significant RSC figures: John Barton, Guy Woolfenden and Cicely Berry. The resulting material will soon be available to researchers. New social media content was produced and an emoji quiz about Shakespeare plays proved particularly popular on Twitter and Facebook, and also featured in an Instagram story. The SBT was part of the successful AWM application to The National Archives to fund a new trainee for the No Barriers project.



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Shropshire

It was a good year for Shropshire Archives who were successful in securing funding for two important conservation projects. The first, funded by the Friends of Shropshire Archives, will prevent further deterioration of a 16th century manuscript on the life of Sir Philip Sidney by Fulke Greville. The second, funded by the National Conservation Manuscripts Trust, will conserve a collection of large-scale cartoons believed to be by the stained glass artist David Evans (1793-1861) - whose work can be found in churches across Wales and Shropshire.





University of Keele



Over the past year Keele alumni have been digitising and describing material from the early years of the University. Other engagement activities included research skills sessions for Humanities postgraduates and a rare books session with English MA students.

The University has also worked in partnership with Staffordshire Archives whose *Lichfield Bawdy Courts* project is based at Keele two days a week. The project is supported by a student work placement and student volunteers. Following lockdown closure Keele continued to offer a remote enquiry service.



Worcestershire

The highlight of Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service's year was being awarded TNA Accreditation for the second time. Worcestershire was in the first cohort of the Accreditation scheme back in 2013 and considers the second award great news for the service, its researchers and Friends. During the year they also received funding from the Wellcome Trust to catalogue health records and a Lottery award to run a volunteer project on rare First World War Military Tribunal records from Redditch.



Warwickshire

For Warwickshire County Record Office, one project ended as another started.

Warwickshire Bytes had a global reach and involved more than 100 volunteers - who indexed a huge collection of county Quarter Sessions depositions and harvested 21,000 names from over 5,000 documents. These indices will form the basis of a searchable database of names, occupations and crimes. The *Mining the Seams* project is opening access to the complete coal archives of Warwickshire and Derbyshire, with a focus on records relating to health - including accident reports and compensation records.

No Barriers: Ensuring Diversity for the Archives Sector

Trustee Joanna Terry talks about AWM's new project 'No Barriers' - aimed at increasing access to the archive profession

Archives West Midlands is committed to supporting member institutions as they strive to ensure diverse workforces which reflect modern society, and to reassure currently marginalised communities that they - and their heritage - are welcome within the archive sector. As part of this commitment, AWM developed the No Barriers project, in partnership with the Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland, and made a successful bid to TNA's *Network for Change* funding stream in March 2020.

The project will appoint a trainee from a BAMER background, for a 12-month placement, to research and scope a project to be delivered by member services. The trainee will identify potential resources within collections across the AWM membership, and the current barriers to access. The recruit will also gather evidence and design a project to highlight diversity and hidden stories within members' collections. At the end of the 12 months, he or she will present their findings and the designed project.

AWM member the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust will host the trainee, working closely with other members to provide training and mentoring to ensure the placement will be successful - both for the individual and for the development of a robust and transferrable model of operation for the region and wider sector. The trainee will also have a mini-placement at Wolverhampton.

As the funding was announced just before the coronavirus lockdown, the project was unable to start properly. However, planning for the recruitment of the trainee is now underway. AWM

aims to continue to mentor the individual after the 12-month placement - both to advance their career and deliver a follow-up project across the region.

“We are
absolutely
committed to
this project.”

Paul Taylor
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust



Archives & Records
Association
UK & Ireland



Trustees



Sam Collenette

Sam has worked in archives within universities, museums, businesses and charities. She is now Head of Data Protection, Information Access and Complaints at the Regulator for Social Housing Birmingham. As a member of the ARA Board she helped oversee the transition to the new Archives and Records Association. Sam directed AWM's highly successful Strong Rooms project and enjoys making a difference, supporting colleagues in the region.



Janene Cox OBE

Janene Cox, AWM Chair, is Commissioner for Culture, Communities and the Rural Environment at Staffordshire County Council. She is former President of Libraries Connected (Society of Chief Librarians) and Chair of The Reading Agency national Summer Reading Challenge Strategy Group, which sets the strategic direction for the largest Summer Reading Scheme across the UK. Janene is a champion for children's reading, and a passionate advocate for cultural services, which she believes make a real difference to people lives.



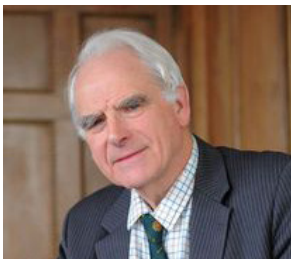
Richard Lewis

Richard is Collections and Development Manager at Heritage and Culture Warwickshire, and has worked for a number of other local authority services including those in Dudley, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire. He has also worked in the archives at the Mercers' Guild and Bletchley Park Trust. Richard is passionate about community engagement and demonstrating the relevance and importance of archives to the communities they serve.



Mary McKenzie

Mary has more than 30 years archives experience. She is currently Archives Team Leader at Shropshire Archives and is a long-time supporter of regional collaboration. Mary believes that working in partnership across archives, and other cultural services, is essential to enable the sector to progress and develop in increasingly tough times. Her particular interests include developing remote access to collections, and working in partnership with volunteers.



Dr. David Owen OBE

David Owen has worked for the family firm, Rubery Owen, all his life and was Chairman from 1969-2010. A member of the Business Archives Council, David sees business archives as a real asset to a company in recording its innovation, products and activities - and creating a hunger to develop new products and business for the future. He is particularly keen to see AWM grow and to be able to offer a real service across the community.



Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan

Elizabeth set up her own archive consultancy in 2003. She has since worked with archive services across the UK and with key strategic and policy bodies such as The National Archives, the Archives and Records Association (ARA) and the Welsh Government. Elizabeth sits on the Archive Service Accreditation Standard Committee and chairs UNESCO's Memory of the World UK Committee. She is an Assessor for the ARA's professional membership programme and a Director of the National Conservation Service.



James Ranahan

Jim is a registered archivist with a specialist interest in the care of photographic collections, and a passion for communicating the importance of archives for all people and communities. He has worked for local authority, museum and religious archives and is currently an archivist within an integrated collections team at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. He represents Birmingham and Warwickshire Archaeological Society on the management committee of Harvington Hall, Worcestershire, and organises lecture programmes for the Newcomen Society and Warwickshire Local History Society.



Joanna Terry

Joanna Terry is Head of Archives and Heritage at Staffordshire County Council. She is also an executive member of the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group and a member of the Victoria County History Advisory Board. A former electronic records manager, Joanna is passionate about using digital technology to promote and share archives, and has a particular interest in developing solutions to preserving born digital archives.



Prof Alannah Tomkins

Alannah started work as a History lecturer at Keele University in 1995 and initially contributed to the Victoria County History for Staffordshire. Her research is focused on poverty, poor relief and charity (including the Stafford and North Staffordshire Infirmarys). She is now a Professor of Social History and works regularly with archival volunteers in Stafford and other counties.



Dr Clare Watson

Clare is Director of the Media Archive for Central England based at the University of Lincoln, and works closely with sector colleagues through Film Archives UK. She is also a member of the executive of the East Midlands Regional Archive Council. Clare has considerable experience in archive education, having led training in film and television archiving at MA level, co-ordinated the Media Archive Traineeships in partnership with Creative Skillset and FOCAL Int'l, and now convening archive internships and lecturing at Lincoln.

Goodbye and thank you to Pat Kiernan



It is with sadness that we say goodbye to Pat Kiernan who has been a Trustee and Treasurer of AWM since May 2017. Pat has had a long association with archives as she was also a Trustee and Treasurer for the Friends of Shropshire Archives from 1994. She has ensured that AWM has been put onto a sound financial footing. We thank Pat for all the hard work she has put into AWM over the last three years.



Membership

Subscription members:

Birmingham Archives & Collections
Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham
Dudley Archives & Local History Service
Herefordshire Archives & Records Centre
Hereford Cathedral Library & Archives
Media Archive of Central England
Oswestry Town Council Archives
Sandwell Community History & Archive Services
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
Shropshire Archives
Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Archive Service
University of Keele Special Collections
University of Warwick (Modern Records Office)
Warwickshire County Record Office
Wolverhampton City Archives
Worcestershire Archive & Archaeology Service

Affiliate members:

Birmingham City University
British Motor Industry Heritage Trust
Culture Coventry
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Library and Archive
Rubery Owen Holdings Ltd
Rugby School
Solihull Heritage and Local Studies
University of Worcester
Walsall Local History Centre
Worcester Cathedral

Join Us

AWM aims to complement and enhance the work of its constituent services by enabling and supporting work that is best achieved collectively, such as digital preservation. We welcome members from all archives and archive services in the region who share these aims. To find out more contact archiveswestmidlands@gmail.com or visit our website: www.archiveswestmidlands.org.uk

There are two types of AWM membership - subscription and affiliate. The subscription year runs from 1 April to 31 March.

Benefits of Subscription membership:

- attendance at and participation in, free of charge or at a subsidised rate, all membership forums, training and development workshops and networking opportunities such as on digital preservation and funding
- input into templates and guidance documentation produced by AWM
- promotion of service achievements, events and celebrations through the AWM social media accounts and in the Annual Review
- Friends and volunteers of subscribed members have their own development and networking day
- input into deciding future priorities for AWM

Although Affiliate members do not pay a subscription, they are only eligible to attend the AGM in July.

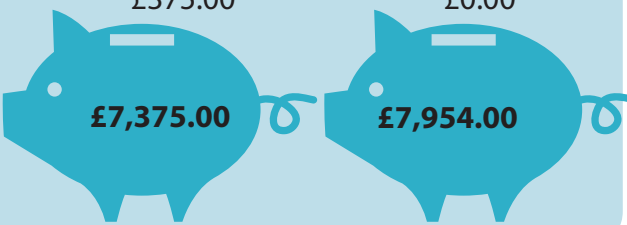
Funding

The National Archives support AWM and provided funding to set up and develop our organisation.




RECEIPTS/PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR YEAR TO 31/03/20

| RECEIPTS: | 2019/20 | 2018/19 |
|------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| SUBSCRIPTIONS | £7,000.00 | £7,875.00 |
| EVENTS | £0.00 | £79.00 |
| TRAINING FEES | £375.00 | £0.00 |
| TOTAL RECEIPTS: | £7,375.00 | £7,954.00 |



| PAYMENTS: | 2019/20 | 2018/19 |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| ANNUAL REVIEW | £1,349.70 | £1,299.27 |
| EVENTS | £2416.70 | £10,716.24 |
| ADMIN | £1,967.55 | £2,453.30 |
| WEBSITE | £8,874.02 | £0.00 |
| OTHER | £283.10 | £1,418.21 |
| TOTAL PAYMENTS: | £14,891.07 | £15,887.02 |



| | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| PAYMENTS MINUS RECEIPTS | £7,516.07 | £7,933.02 |
| BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD | £21,258.89 | £29,191.91 |
| | £13,742.82 | £21,258.89 |

CURRENT BALANCE = £13,742.82 = £21,258.89

Support

AWM values the support of these organisations and individuals:

Archives and Records Association (West Midlands Region)
 British Records Association
 Mag Astill
 Mike Jackson
 The National Archives
 West Midlands Friends of Archive Services

Get in touch and get involved

Contact us: archiveswestmidlands@gmail.com

Twitter: [@ArchivesWM](https://twitter.com/ArchivesWM)

Website: www.archiveswestmidlands.org.uk



bruynzeel storage systems

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