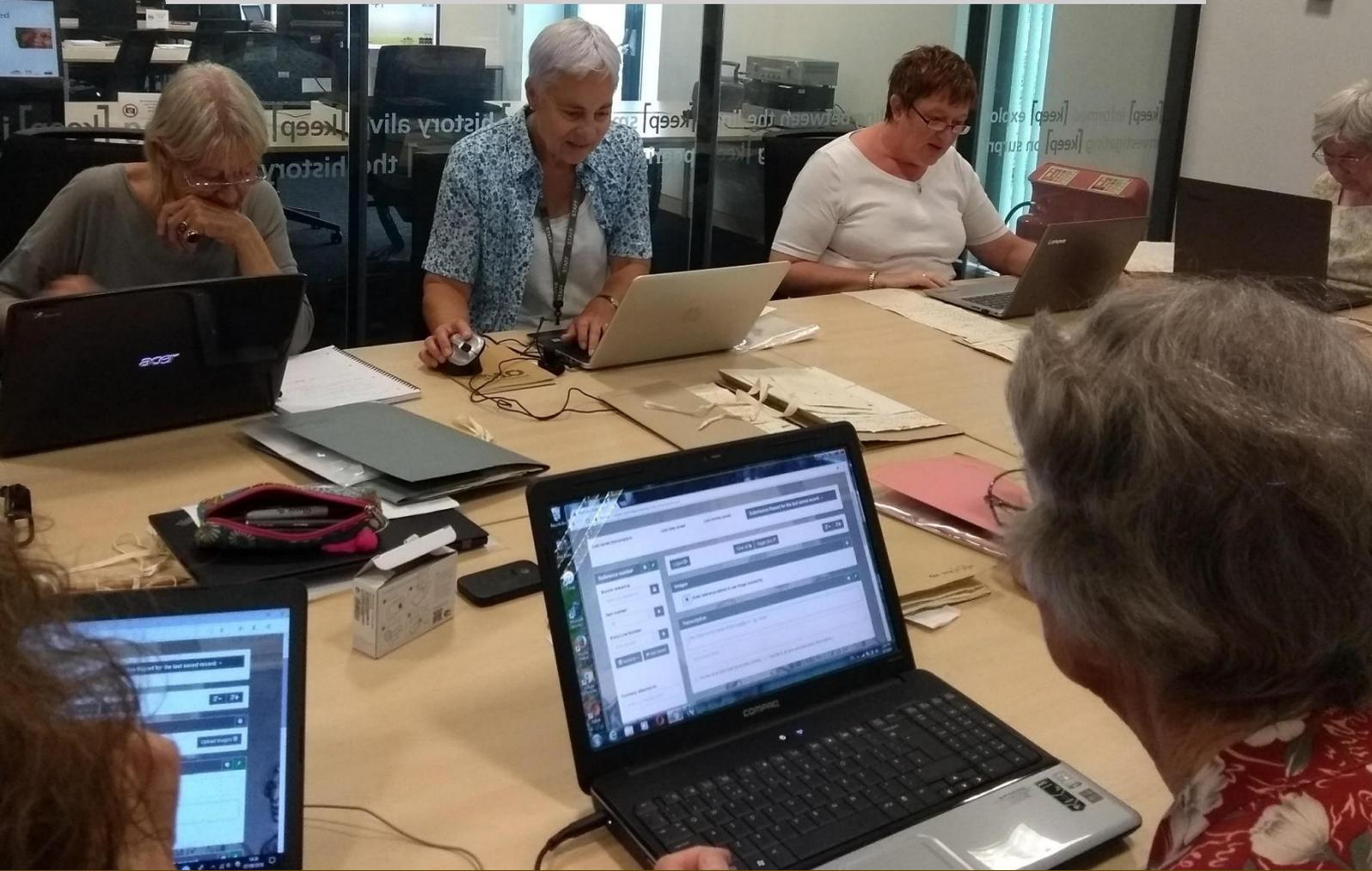


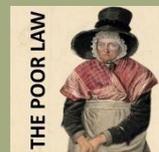
# Archival volunteering for research



November 2020

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# Archival volunteering for research



*Logo used by the AHRC project Small Bills and Petty Finance, 2018-2021: image courtesy of The Dempsey Collection, The National Portrait Gallery of Australia.*

<https://www.portrait.gov.au/exhibitions/dempseys-people-2017>

**Key finding: a triangulation of archive priorities, volunteer activity, and academic research questions yields benefits for archives including enhanced interpretation of holdings, improved user access to collections, professional support for service provision, and advocacy with external bodies including funders.**

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## Background

The relationship between archive staff and archive users is symbiotic, with differences of emphasis on either side. Staff have historically prioritized acquisition, cataloguing and the permanent preservation of collections. In more recent years this has also seen the discoverability of collections, together with improved outreach, placed at the centre of their work. Users have principally focused on the information to be gleaned from holdings. The meeting point between the two groups has been the improved access to collections, achieved through enhancement of finding aids and the better interpretation of the text, images or objects being held or viewed for the purposes of engagement and outreach.

Archival volunteers have been recruited in increasing numbers over the last twenty-five years, not least because the National Lottery's heritage schemes



*Threkeld Parish Chest, 2019.*

have come to require firm evidence of public engagement with archive priorities.

Volunteering goes beyond the

short-term placement of a person seeking entry to the archive profession, and encompasses adults across the country, working alone or in groups, generally in support of wider public access to archival materials (conservation and cataloguing) (Appendix A). In the West Midlands alone, over 500 people were involved in archival volunteering in early 2020.

The introduction of university research agendas to the archive-volunteer relationship has led to effective and mutually rewarding projects. These

collaborative partnerships require considerable thought, however, since they comprise the foundation for shaping the final form of the successful project. The nature of these partnerships fundamentally defines the subsequent relationship between the repository, academic institution and volunteer community. Whether the model is co-creation, crowdsourcing or something between the two, the archive is committed to a modicum of resource, both in staff time and space for making collections available. A small amount of training will enable volunteers to work without close supervision, or supervision might be delegated to trusted working partners. Best practice suggests the volunteer community must be consulted about the nature of the research, and where possible incorporated into the project's design, to ensure equity of collaboration between academics and voluntary staff. This may seem implausible given the specialist qualifications of university and archive employees, and the varied backgrounds of volunteers. Nonetheless the pockets of expertise offered by volunteers need to be recognized, to the benefit of all participants. This is particularly so when attracting new communities of research volunteers, many of whom may never have visited an archive or handled a document or artefact in an institutional setting. Both archival staff and academic researchers need to ensure the consensual uptake and smooth running of each project by enabling the volunteers' voice to be heard.

The balance of responsibility between all partners depends on the model used. Project volunteers may be primarily linked to the repository, recruited by the archive and working within their guidelines, or chiefly associated with the research being recruited and trained by academics. This is an important distinction for the ethical status of the work, for defining the duties of each party, and is key to resolving any problems which arise over the piece of work.

In either of these scenarios, university researchers must commit to sustained intellectual and practical support of the project, entailing regular visits to the volunteers at the archives and engagement with the project tasks. Volunteers should be supported in any introduction to unfamiliar software or

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new tasks including research. And, wherever possible they should not be discouraged from volunteering by the lack of computer access.

### Benefits to archives

The core tasks of accredited archives, comprising cataloguing, storage, conservation, public access, and information resources, can be significantly augmented by research collaborations. Volunteer groups of any kind constitute best practice and a social good, as well as yielding calculable



*Staffordshire Record Office, Small Bills volunteer group, 2019.*

benefits such as increased regular footfall to repositories, counts of volunteer hours, improved rates of conservation and/or cataloguing. Research offers the additional benefits of honed interpretation of holdings via analysis of specific materials. Volunteer input as a consequence of this research can be used to promote the archive service in exhibitions, workshops,

study days, blog posts, and other aspects of the mission to inform. In these ways, volunteers become community ambassadors for archival goals.

### Benefits to volunteers

Beyond the people who seek internships at archives in advance of professional training, people look for opportunities to get involved at archives for a number of reasons. These relate to personal enjoyment and skill, such as the desire to research a project with greater awareness of

historical methods. Volunteer groups also provide a model of collaborative sociability, where people with very different backgrounds and views can work together towards shared objectives. The behind-the-scenes access given to volunteers can relate equally to the physical archive and the historical research process.



*East Sussex volunteer group on a research trip to East Hoathly and the house of Thomas Turner, 2019.*

The research skills of volunteers are enhanced in terms of handling and reading manuscripts, interpreting their content, alerting them to sources that they might not be aware of, and thinking more critically about their own research (such as the questions that they might ask of the people, events and places they already know).

Volunteers also secure recognition and dialogue with professional academics, from professor to specialist practitioner. Regular opportunities to describe and ask questions about historical research, to have an informed listener on topics of personal interest, and secure intellectual endorsement for lines of inquiry, are at the forefront of benefits to volunteers.

### Benefits to historical research

The image of the historical researcher as lone scholar is now being decisively revised. The impact agenda in university research and the scale of digitisation projects, alongside the priorities of funding bodies, has demanded a shift to collaborative working across institutions and sectors. These drivers have energized applied research in even the most insular of

disciplines. Strong relationships between university departments (History, English and the Performing Arts for literary holdings, and others) facilitate successful funding applications for research grants, doctoral studentships, archaeological work, exhibitions, and community arts projects (to name a few examples). Archivists do more than act as gatekeepers to material, since they are the people best informed about collections and can direct attention to little-known or recently acquired material. They add vital context about overall holdings, genres of document, and specific pieces. At the most basic practical level, the labour of volunteers exponentially increases the hours that can be devoted to scrutiny of historical sources. Furthermore, volunteer involvement offers specific knowledge of local people, events and places that archivists and academic researchers may not know about. Research conducted by and presented to local history and heritage groups about local dialect and customs can be included here, and even sources of evidence that may not be listed in archival catalogues (particularly if held in private hands).

### Co-creation or crowdsourcing

In pure co-creation, volunteer research communities set the parameters as an equal partner in the endeavour, so devising research questions and contributing to the direction of the project including any grant funding requests. Crowdsourcing, in contrast, sees academics or others setting the research agenda, with volunteer input enabling the pursuit of those questions. Blended models are perhaps most viable in archive settings, where initial tasks are set by professional colleagues, but volunteers have significant participation in the conduct and future of related activity (whether in the form of data collection or presentation/communication to wider publics). Either of these approaches offers a method to professionals of 'attracting the cooperation of lay historians, to mutual benefit' that can hope to meet some of the decline in extra-mural research classes (Dymond). An expansive sense of what is possible with a model of full community ownership has been explored (to national acclaim) by Speak Out London – Diversity City.

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*Postcard of The Crescent, Carlisle: image courtesy of Margaret Dean.*

Two recent examples of blended co-creation and crowdsourcing can be found in the work of the Victoria County History (VCH) project and the Family and Community Historical Research Society (FACHRS) almshouse project respectively. The VCH has existed in some form since 1899,

traditionally funded by county councils, and managed via the employment of full- or part-time staff to research and write parish histories. These histories were published every five or six years in large expensive volumes (chiefly affordable by libraries). Pressure on county-council funding in the 1990s and 2000s encouraged a move to a more community-based model, where a professional editor assembles and works with volunteer groups to gather data. One of the results is a more frequent production of publications in slimmer volumes, which collectively build towards the authoritative compilations of parish histories. Older VCH volumes are increasingly made available online as full-text via the portal British History Online.

FACHRS, in contrast, launched a collaborative project into the history of English almshouse charities in the spring of 2006, headed by Professor Nigel Goose of Hertfordshire University. Over fifty researchers worked to gather data over the course of the following decade, achieving coverage of most English counties and some London boroughs. Outputs generated by all participants, i.e. by academics and volunteer researchers, include articles, talks, exhibitions and a book published in 2016.

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Crowdsourced history harnesses ‘the opinions of hundreds of contributors’ for refinement to an editorial process (Anderson *et al*): co-created history treats volunteers as researchers in their own right.

### A model for archival volunteer research

Keele University in Staffordshire has enjoyed a long-standing but not static relationship with its locality and with the Staffordshire Archives service. Keele was founded in 1949 with both intellectual and financial backing from the local area in the forms of the Workers Education Association and Stoke City Council. Since its inception, Keele has been associated with local history, being home to the Earl Lecture, on an aspect of Staffordshire’s history, history journals *North Staffs Field Studies* and *Staffordshire Studies*, and in other ways such as provision of adult education. These interests were formalized in 1994 by a relationship with Staffordshire County Council, whereby Keele assumed responsibility for the Staffordshire *Victoria County History* project. Five volumes of the VCH have been published in the last 25 years.

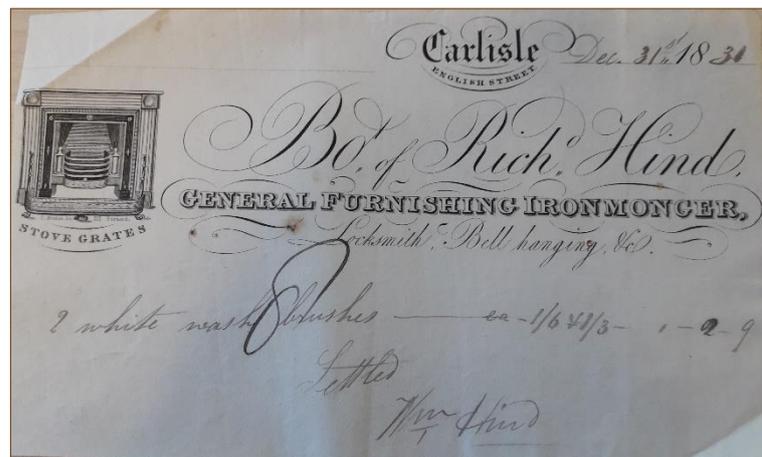
The Staffordshire archive service has always worked with volunteers and since the early part of this century moved to recruiting groups for specific projects. These have either cohered around work being conducted for the Victoria County History, or around archival priorities to open-up collections that are otherwise eclectic (like Quarter Sessions papers) or difficult to access. Formal arrangements to commemorate the start of the First World War coincided with the discovery in Staffordshire of a collection of appeals against conscription, gathered for tribunal hearings from 1916 onwards. This gave rise to an initial three-way collaboration between the archives service, historians based at Keele, and volunteers. Calendaring this rare archive – the papers were supposed to have been destroyed after the war – involved up to fifty volunteer transcribers, and the results have been written up by Professor Karen Hunt as *Staffordshire’s War* (Amberley, 2017).

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In summer 2015 Keele staff approached the Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Service participation and engagement officer with a proposal to establish a research volunteer group using an unexamined genre of archive holding: the parish overseers' vouchers. The Old Poor Law 1598-1834 increasingly supplied goods and services to the parish poor, and gathered the associated bills/invoices/receipts as proof of parish probity. Such loose-leaf papers survive in numbers post-1750, and most thickly 1800-34. The summary details of these documents, often collectively termed vouchers, were typically entered in the annual overseers' accounts with scanty details (the date and payee), not the full transcript of transactions. Keele colleagues wanted to pose the question, what sorts of historical research are facilitated when we understand the full contents of such vouchers? The capacity of volunteers to offer hours

of document reading, deciphering, transcribing and calendaring transformed the feasibility of a project to address this question. Volunteer preferences, ideas, family histories, places of residence, and historical interests opened the

additional prospect of research into the people and subjects revealed by vouchers. In the first instance it was envisaged that this augmented research input might give rise to volunteer-written biographies of the tradespeople, parish officers, and paupers named in multiple vouchers.



*Cumbria Overseers' voucher, 1831. Image courtesy of William Blundred.*

An existing volunteer group, meeting on Tuesday afternoons in Stafford, agreed to take on the pilot of this project in September 2015. The participants had been used to calendaring the contents of Staffordshire's quarter-sessions records, and were accustomed to reading archaic hands from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They were asked to unfold one voucher at a time, read and assess the contents, and make a one-line

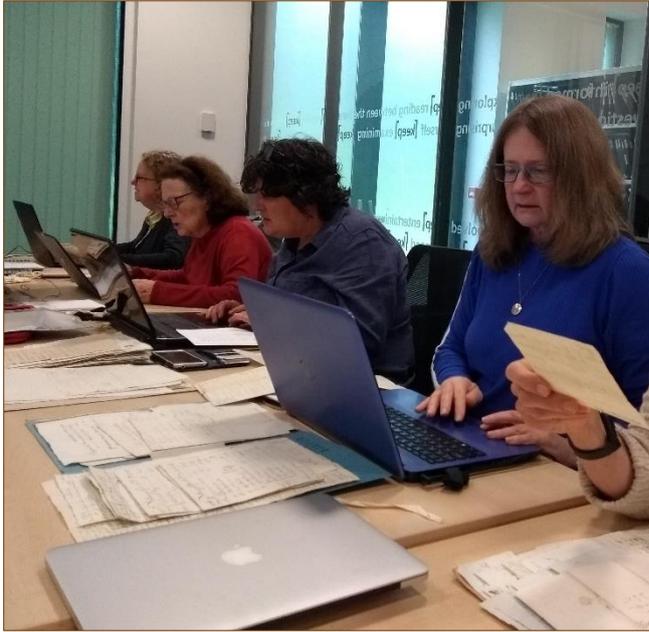
entry into an Excel spreadsheet characterizing the information on that voucher. Date of issue or settlement, payers, payees, and a summary of the goods or services involved were core to the excel entry. Other details could be included or omitted depending on the fulsome or ephemeral nature of the content.

From the outset this first project group was fairly unsatisfied with the work offered by overseers' vouchers. The variability of the documents (from tiny scrap to lengthy list) and their often-unclassifiable nature (an invoice for services tendered, a bill of goods supplied, a receipt for overseers' records, both of the latter, summary accounts, printed notices, bills from other parishes, other) meant that volunteers were reluctant to do more than the minimum asked of them. They were conscientious to the last degree, completing the parish first tackled by the project (Colwich in mid-Staffordshire, retaining 2334 vouchers), but were unwilling to give their time to subsequent parishes or to explore the research potential of the existing data.

The project was relaunched in February 2016, again with an existing volunteer group, but with participants more invested in a research focus. The relaunch benefitted from internal funding from Keele University to support the yield of impact from research. A permanent member of Keele's History staff established a project blog with advice from temporary archive staff, and offered regular talks to volunteers about aspects of the poor law. Funding also enabled a post-doctoral researcher (PDR) to spend four hours per week on the project for a period of six months. The PDR attended each two-hour volunteer session, this time on Friday mornings, and worked for a further two hours to develop the research potential of their input. This involved responding to specific volunteer queries about the legal framework of the poor laws, pursuing definitions of unfamiliar terminology used in vouchers, and devising blog posts to demonstrate the application of voucher contents to scholarly, historical research questions.

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The experience of the second group was markedly different. Participants quickly developed a satisfying work rhythm which show-cased the value of academic researchers acting alongside volunteers. The group shared problem



*Archival research volunteers at The Keep, East Sussex Record Office, 2019.*

vouchers to decipher words, phrases and meanings. Academics asked questions about local slang, vernacular, pronunciation, and places, while volunteers asked questions about the oddities of poor-law practice and personnel. Self-selecting volunteers composed blog entries, chiefly about people of interest (e.g. Abel Rooker, surgeon of Darlaston, see [www.thepoorlaw.org](http://www.thepoorlaw.org) under Staffordshire people) or cohorts

of people who appeared unexpectedly in a series of vouchers (for example laundresses in Tettenhall).

The enthusiasm of this second volunteer group underpinned a search for additional funding, initially small-scale monies from the Jack Leighton Trust and later a large bid to the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Both were successful, resourcing the project sporadically in 2016-17 and adding very significant resources throughout 2018-20.

AHRC funding led to more clearly articulated outcomes and commitment to specific outputs beyond the initial projects.

This included:

- Creation of a large structured dataset of goods and services supplied to the poor in the 18th and early-19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

- Enhancement of the archival catalogue at item level with associated images if required.
- Production of biographies to include recipients of poor relief, administrators or suppliers together with a website with a dedicated search capacity.

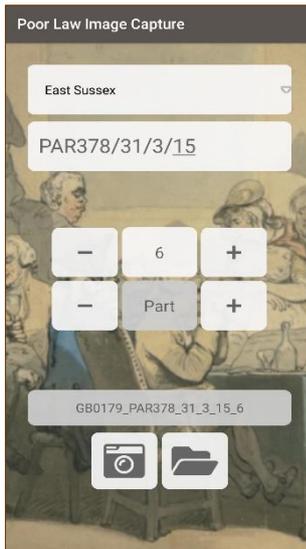
The project, in partnership with the University of Sussex, was increased to include two additional counties, Cumbria and East Sussex, and regular engagement by two post-doctoral researchers with all three archive services. The upscaling of the project to work across three counties required a critical assessment of research methodologies in order to provide consistency for both the volunteers and the newly expanded projected data collection.

## Data collection

*Small Bills and Petty Finance project data capture screen. Developed by Sussex Humanities Lab in conjunction with the Small Bills project team.*

After some initial discussion it became clear that a more sophisticated method of data collection and projected workflow would be required, ideally one that did not rely on volunteer access to proprietary software or indeed any prior knowledge or specific skillset. It was similarly hoped that a bespoke

method would prove much less intimidating than a large Excel spreadsheet. The project team settled on an online data collection tool with a user-friendly and largely intuitive interface. The development of the initial tool, in collaboration with the Sussex Humanities Lab at the University of Sussex,



*Android smartphone app for capturing document images. This app embeds the document reference in the image metadata. Developed by Sussex Humanities Lab and the Small Bills project team.*

together with a dedicated photo app took up the first six months of the funded project. This allowed for other aspects of project preparation including the recruitment of a new cohort of research volunteers across the additional counties. After some initial training, on document handling and numbering, volunteer researchers were taken through entering information for each set of goods or service on the bill. Items were now transcribed. Controlled vocabularies in dropdown menus were used in the classification and categorization of goods, services and occupations. This has brought greater consistency to the data and allows for better analysis and quantification while retaining the direct transcription for more qualitative research. In addition, the data collection tool allows volunteer researchers to flag up damaged or fragile items to the repository or request assistance with the paleography. Volunteers can also record geo-locations for suppliers or recipients of relief. More useful to repositories, the system will auto-concatenate data to produce an item level archival catalogue entry in a CALM compliant format. This format can be altered to fit the needs of each partner repository and is flexible enough to encompass other cataloguing platforms. Every entry is saved to the database before the next input. This does not require volunteers to transfer large sets of data, they do not need to worry about accidentally deleting records and the project can manage data storage and back-up.

In order to complete the workflow an image app has been developed for Android smartphones. This allows users to take images which are automatically assigned the document's archival reference. These images are transferred to the cloud when a Wi-Fi signal is available and subsequently bulk uploaded to the data collection tool. The embedded archival reference allows the image to be linked with existing document data, or for a new entry to be created. The system will auto-populate the relevant fields with the references.

The responsive development and implementation of these tools means they are adaptable to local requirements. By working in collaboration with volunteers and repositories towards an agreed solution, the project was able to deliver a series of upgrades in the data collection tools including: a search facility, facilities for easier editing of records and a personalized list of recently added records for each user. Users and others can download the data in a range of formats, the most familiar of which can be viewed in an Excel spreadsheet. The system is also fully GDPR compliant and no personal data relating to the volunteer is recorded.

## Outcomes

Volunteers and project-workshop participants in Cumbria and Staffordshire have been surveyed throughout 2018-20 for their views on the value of archival volunteering in general and the interest which the vouchers project held for them personally. They have identified benefits including:

- Markers of well-being including a sense of achievement, intellectual stimulation, and social contact, whether in situ or via online platforms like Zoom.
- Accumulation of skill and confidence in approaching topics/people/documents.
- Enhancement of volunteers' independent family-history research.
- The chance to participate in research with wider scholarly application.

What has worked: suggestions for future archival-volunteer research:

- Partnership between archives and academics on access to funding (including collaboration on applications), engagement, and validation (internal and external).
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- Firm academic commitment to support volunteer sessions and activities. This will include regular attendance at volunteer meetings, and email support for participants.
- Documentation beyond the volunteering policies and procedures. The Small Bills project team devised a volunteer 'pack' including instructions for data entry, guidance on writing a project blog post, and suggestions for sourcing and including images in blog posts (for example see Appendix B). It has provided an opportunity to supply clear guidance on intellectual property rights and copyright issues concerning the project including the data produced and blog posts.

Collaboration over the research into overseers' vouchers has pointed up the value of:

- Identifying and strengthening connections between academics' research interests of any period and the repository.
  - Establishing weekly volunteer meetings, even if people are willing to work on digitized materials from home. This allows volunteers to share problems and insights, and increases footfall to the archive base.
  - Regularising academic input to promote volunteer interest in the material and engage volunteer contributions to the design of research projects. This involves a commitment by lecturers or others to attend at volunteer meetings and work alongside the group.
  - Consulting volunteers collectively about research trajectory with the opportunity to open up new aspects to the project in terms of places, classes of document, research questions.
  - Celebrating volunteer commitment beyond routine reporting via annual workshops and social events, or invitations to participate in what may be one-off opportunities such as conference presentation (for example at Discovering Collections, Discovering Communities).
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## Postscript

2020 witnessed an unprecedented interruption to volunteering, archival and academic activity with the onset of Coronavirus and the related social lockdown in England (including closure of archives for several months). While this posed a challenge to volunteering activity, it has not erased it. Archives across the West Midlands, for example, have offered volunteer activity at a distance. Volunteer groups for the model poor-law project have continued to meet regularly online. Work has been facilitated by the prior provision of digital images of archival material which have been consistently input through our online data collection portal. The legacy of the epidemic may alter the nature of volunteering and other forms of social action in future: it will not inevitably subtract from the benefits to archives of securing three-way collaborations with volunteers and academics. There is still much benefit to be had from considering this model.

## Acknowledgements

Robert Baxter, County Archivist for Cumbria; Matthew Blake, Participation and Engagement Officer at Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Service; Joanne Terry, County Archivist for Staffordshire; Christopher Whittick former County Archivist for East Sussex and Sussex Humanities Lab, University of Sussex. Unless otherwise stated, images have been generated by the project team and volunteers; special thanks to Margaret Dean, Pauline Huston and William Blundred.

## References

### Websites

#### Archives West Midlands

<https://www.archiveswestmidlands.org.uk/category/volunteering> (viewed 11 February 2020)

#### National Lottery Heritage Fund volunteering guidance

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/volunteering-guidance> (viewed 7 July 2020)

#### Small Bills and Petty Finance project website <https://thepoorlaw.org/>

(viewed 15 September 2020)

### Publications

#### *Archives West Midlands Annual Review 2019/20 (2020)*

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**H. Lindsay, *Volunteering in Collections Care. Best Practice Guide 2011*  
(Archives and Records Association).**



## Appendix A: audit of archival volunteering in English county archives

In January 2020 the websites of forty county archives in England were audited for information about volunteering opportunities. Data was gathered about the existence of volunteering schemes, the manner of volunteer recruitment, and the roles available on site at archives offices (data available on request). This information was sought as though by an informed member of the public, but with limited time to spare. Therefore, no more than ten minutes was allocated to each county. In this way, the survey also tested the readiness with which volunteering information might be found.

The majority of archives (75%) advertised volunteer schemes that were found in the time allotted, although of the 30 available 7 were explicitly not recruiting at that time owing to shortage of places which could be supported or because volunteers were being directed away from archives (to libraries or museums). Recruitment techniques varied, from simply asking people to sign up to requiring completion of a form, submission of references, and/or informal interviews. Lindsay (2011) identifies selection of suitable volunteers as a principle for success and recommends holding informal interviews. Informal interviews can help to establish what volunteers want from archives and vice versa but should not be explicitly about selection. Informality gives rise to the risk that decisions about allocating volunteer placements to individuals may be made on the grounds of gender, sexuality, race, or another protected characteristic, rather than on the requirements of a role.

The types of volunteering work available at archives offices can generally be divided into three areas: conservation work requiring training in handling materials, assessment of content requiring training in cataloguing or calendaring, and supporting public visitors to archive premises (for individuals or groups). The first includes decanting (from now-unsuitable boxes, wrappers or bundles), cleaning, maintaining, repacking or digitizing archival holdings. The second includes cataloguing discrete collections, extracting specific data (such as names) for the creation of a locally defined

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database, and other forms of data entry. The third role was offered less frequently, but encompassed activities such as preparation of materials in advance of school visits, and supporting individual genealogists in their family research. A very small minority of archives, just three, could offer travel expenses to volunteers.

Research opportunities for volunteers were not often made explicit. One archive was notable for offering research projects and/or parish histories, requiring a special interest in the topic (examples given include types of building, or parishes not yet possessing a summary history) and the commitment of one day a week or equivalent. Another offered the creation of web-page content, requiring good generic communication skills but not specific experience at research or writing for an audience (meaning that these were skills that could be fostered by this sort of placement). Staffordshire Archives, the home of the project outlined above, offered research contributing towards the Victoria County History long-running publication. Research options clearly exist nationwide, but these are not offered consistently.

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## Appendix B: Volunteer leaflet – Guidance on writing a blog post

### The Poor Law: Small Bills and Petty Finance Guidance on writing a blog post



This guidance addresses style and format issues on the project WordPress website at [www.thepoorlaw.org](http://www.thepoorlaw.org) together with some guidance on linking to outside websites or resources and some pointers as to best practice.

- Style and format
- Quotes and footnotes
- Plagiarism
- Editing
- Linking to external websites
- Abbreviations or short forms
- Intellectual Property
- Website acceptable use

#### Style and format

There are a significant number of online resources to help you write a blog post. But generally speaking:

- Use a writing style you feel comfortable with – it doesn't need to be very formal or 'academic'. But it does need to get your information across.
  - Don't make it too long (1000 words maximum – a much shorter blog post is entirely acceptable).
  - Tend towards shorter sentences.
  - If you're new to writing, then begin by setting out the headings or sub-headings of the subjects you'd like to cover. If you're writing a
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biography, then use the framework suggested in the guidance for writing biographies.

- It is not necessary to know every detail of a subject's life in order to write a biography. Or, indeed know everything about a business, or series of events. Further information can be added at a later date or an additional blog post can be written. It is also entirely reasonable to admit defeat in your search for evidence of specific events.
- In the same way you do not need to mention every document containing a reference your subject. However, they can be listed below the text.
- Write your first draft.
- Edit it in several stages. See section on editing.

## Plagiarism

You should ensure that your blog posts are your own work and that you do not represent other people's writing, work or ideas as your own. This includes information from Wikipedia. You can however, quote from archival documents, other people's published work or from websites as long as you acknowledge them.

If you are struggling to write something in your own words then the simplest way to deal with this is to say something along the lines of: Jane Smith suggests that '.....' or David Roberts explains that '...' then insert a quote with a footnote (see below). This gives due credit to the author and helps place your work in a wider context.

If you are closely paraphrasing someone else's work, then you should also acknowledge them in your footnotes or list of sources.

## Quotes and footnotes

All quotes should be an exact transcription from the original document. Do not be tempted to add punctuation, correct spelling errors or expand contractions or abbreviations. The same applies to quotes from books, articles or other texts.

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Please do not use italics, bold or coloured text unless these are present in the original. If you are uncertain of a particular word or letter, please put it in square brackets [uncertain word or letter].

Quotes of 3 lines or fewer - include in the main body of your text, you should use single quotation marks, for example 'quoted text here', to delineate the quote.

For quotes of 4 lines or more - start a new line, do not use quotation marks but indent the quote. This can be done when you upload the text to the website by using the WordPress editor. In this instance you should highlight the whole quote and click on the quotation button “ at the top of the section. This will indent all highlighted text automatically.

All quotes should include a footnote at the end of the sentence. Use the 1, 2, 3 format. Give the name of the repository, item reference, title, date and page number if relevant. For example, East Sussex Record Office: PAR378/31/3/6/4, East Hoathly Overseer's Voucher, 1776.

For footnotes in Word use the Reference tab, click on 'AB Insert Footnote' and type your footnote as described above. When you have finished the footnote just click in the main body of your text.

Do not quote the whole of a very long documents; just use the parts that help make your point. Quoting or including a transcription of a short document is fine.

## Editing

Self-editing is part of the natural writing process. If this does not come easily to you then leave your writing for a few days and come back to it. Start with something simple like checking spelling and grammar. Read it aloud – this may help with the natural flow of the piece. Look at the structure of your text. Does the order make sense? Have you followed guidelines for quotes,

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footnotes and sources you have consulted? If you need any help please ask, sometimes a fresh eye on your writing helps you to see it differently.

The project staff may occasionally need to edit your blog post. In the main we hope this will be a light touch edit in order to maintain uniformity across the website. Occasionally more substantial revision may be required, if this is the case, we will discuss these changes with you. If you follow the guidelines this will minimize any changes made in your blog post.

The academic project team make the final decision on website content.

### Linking to external websites

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### Abbreviations or short forms

On the whole do not use abbreviations unless you explain the abbreviated word or words on the first occasion you use it. Even common abbreviations frequently used by family historians may be puzzling to the new reader. For example: PRs, BTs or MIs.

Abbreviated words in quotes should be left as the original. If necessary, explain the abbreviation in your text.

Monetary values: pounds, shillings and pence (£ s d) should be expressed in the form £1 2s 3<sup>d</sup> One pound 2 shillings and three pence.

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Short form verbs like 'I'm' or 'you're' instead of 'I am' or 'you are' are a personal choice. If you have a less formal writing style, then it is entirely acceptable to use them.

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