

Archives West Midlands

Annual Review 2020/21



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: www.archiveswestmidlands.org.uk

twitter: @ArchivesWM

email: archiveswestmidlands@gmail.com



Introduction

As Chair of Archives West Midlands this is the fifth time that I have sat down to write my introduction to our annual report. I do not think that anyone would have envisaged the year which we have all experienced, both professionally and personally. 2020/ 21 has been extraordinary.

As I wrote the introduction to the 2019/20 annual report we were just beginning to emerge from the first COVID-19 lockdown, and some archive services had still not re-opened.

This year it seems as though we are in a more optimistic place, with the gradual re-opening of both society and our culture and heritage assets. It feels as though the 'recovery' is now becoming established and aspects of our services are returning to normal.

I am very proud of the work which AWM has delivered during the last 18 months. As an independent organisation, our charitable aim is to advance learning and education for public benefit by supporting the collection, storage, preservation, promotion, and access to archival materials relating to the region. Through e-meetings and events, we have actively supported our members with information and best practice, enabling services to respond to both lockdowns and re-opening positively.

A key aim of AWM is to provide a forum and a 'safe space' where members can come together to share best practice, air concerns, and collaborate effectively so that we can meet the challenges of a changing environment. During 2020/21 providing space to achieve this has been vital - and feedback from members has evidenced how welcome facilitating this collaboration has been.

Over a five-year period we have built a really effective network. Our joint working enables our members to be stronger and better placed to advocate and promote the importance of our collections. The pandemic has meant that we have all embraced digital as a mechanism to enable our collections to remain accessible, despite

our physical spaces being closed. As always our members have been generous in sharing both their experiences and learning.

I feel very positive about the future for archive collections and services. Many have documented the experiences of the pandemic and they will become the collective memory and official record of this time.

I do believe that collective experience and broad base of skills, supported by the enthusiasm and commitment of the archive workforce and volunteers, will ensure that, as we fully recover from the pandemic, our collections will become even more important and relevant to our wider communities and those individuals who engage with them.

During 2020/21 we have:

- Continued to promote the importance of archives as vital regional assets
- Further developed our Digital Progress Programme - which supports and builds the confidence of our members in digital preservation
- Presented to other regional archive groups, and at a range of conferences including DCDC, to share our learning, and support others to grow their network
- Ensured that our events, including training and development, were informed by the voice of our members and promoted good opportunities to network and collaborate virtually
- Built our social media presence so that our website promoted the work of our members and, through Twitter, we engaged and drew more people to our site



- Focused upon diversity through the delivery of our No Barriers project - which is as a result of a successful bid to The National Archives Networks for Change fund - and the planning and delivery of the Towards an Inclusive Archive member event
- Through a competitive process we are recruiting three new Trustees to our Board

Our priorities for 2021/22 are:

- Continue to promote and celebrate the importance of archives as vital regional assets, and support their role in recording both the official and community response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Support the role and development of our No Barriers trainee, ensuring that learning is shared and informs the development of a more inclusive sector
- Further develop our Digital Progress Programme - responding to the training needs of members

- Share best practice, skills and policies to enable successful recovery from the pandemic for our members
- Share our learning and model as a growing, sustainable regional network with other regional partners - so that they too can develop and grow
- Further develop our website and social media presence to really effectively showcase our region's archive collections
- Rebuild our connection with our volunteer and Friends networks and organisations, as we emerge from lockdown, so that their role and contribution can be celebrated and built upon



Janene Cox OBE
Archives West Midlands Chair

Five years on

Five years have passed since I supported the launch of Archives West Midlands in July 2016. Over that time, I have been delighted to see its development as an innovative, collaborative and forward-thinking partnership for archives across the region.

I am pleased that the relationship is going from strength to strength, with the Networks for Change-funded No Barriers project offering a concrete and practical way of increasing access to, and diversity within, the archive profession.

Recently, Archives West Midlands hosted Meet TNA Online, which enabled us to update a wide range of colleagues on current initiatives: Leading the Sector: Archives Unlocked and strategic priorities and Health, Wellbeing and Archives - Surveying the Sector.

Such examples underline why we at The National Archives 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 Government's vision for archives, now and in the future.



Jeff James
Chief Executive and Keeper of The National Archives



AWM website

The AWM website continues to be a great success, attracting nearly 6,500 views over the past year, and lots of positive comments. The news pages have been the most popular, with updates on the great progress all services have been making on digital preservation attracting plenty of views. Updates from members, on the huge variety of projects being completed across the region, gave a wonderful flavour of the wide-ranging work being undertaken.

News about the innovative ways services in the region were continuing to operate throughout the pandemic was also popular. The value of the members' area was again demonstrated - through the continued sharing of plans by services as pandemic restrictions changed throughout the course of the year.

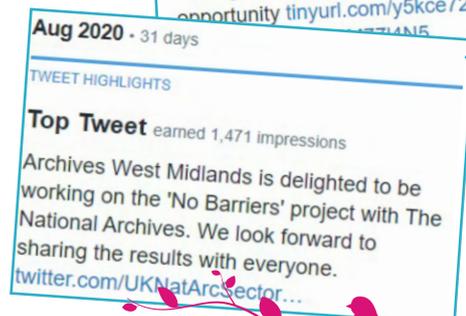
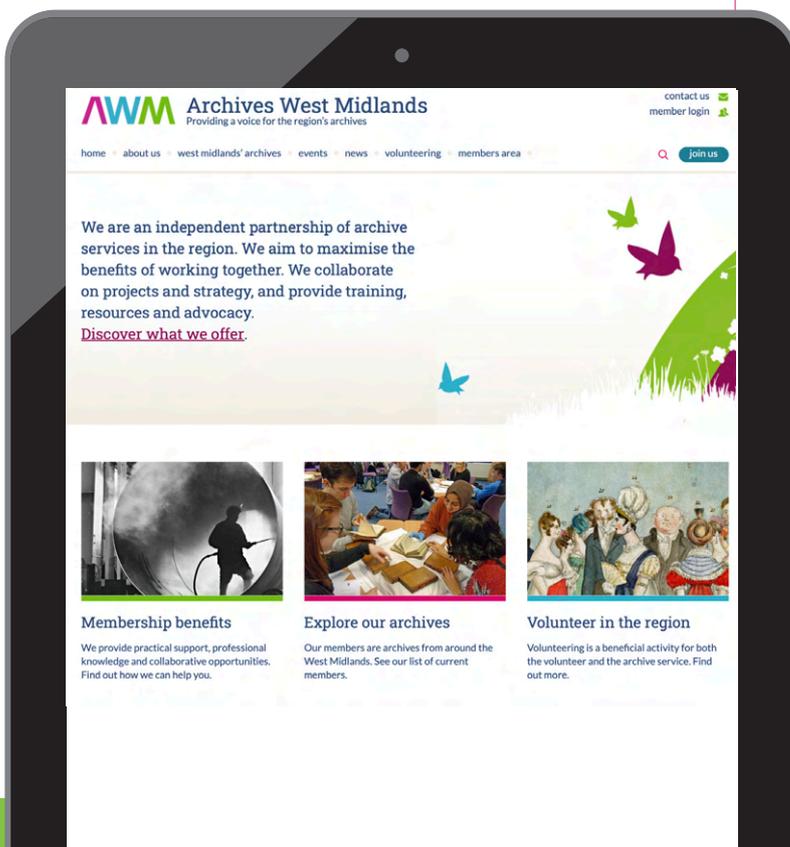
The events page saw plenty of new additions. AWM continued to provide training opportunities for members and other services - embracing Teams and Zoom, and using virtual sessions to ensure continued access to high-quality training. The website promoted the virtual sessions to ensure all had the opportunity to e-attend.

Social media update

Since July 2020, when we passed the 1000th follower mark, growth has continued steadily and we now have more than **1,200 followers**. During a year blighted by COVID-19 we supported our members by retweeting their activities online and promoting the reopening of services from July 2020. We also promoted our AGM and annual report.



Other big responses were to news of funding received for No Barriers and the first recruitment advertisement for the trainee post. The latter received a phenomenal 58,900 impressions



Digital Progress Programme beds down

The Digital Progress Programme enables AWM members to improve the practice and impact of digital preservation in their services. It was borne out of a recognition that services were struggling to implement digital preservation due both to the paradigm shift in professional skills that it requires, and the competing demands on staff time in an environment of continually shrinking budgets and increasing stakeholder expectations.

The Programme has naturally developed its own rhythm of two or three events a year - normally standard training, a practitioner-led workshop demonstrating real-world execution of some aspect of digital preservation, and a workshop for members to apply a relevant tool. This is supported by a 'digital preservation check-in' at each regular member meeting. The 2020-2021 lockdown had no impact on the Programme and simply required expansion of remote delivery methods piloted the previous year.



Sharon McMeekin

Digital Preservation Coalition

Making Progress in Digital Preservation was a high-quality training session delivered by Sharon McMeekin of the Digital Preservation Coalition. AWM subsidised the training which meant low, more affordable delegate fees. We also ran a workshop for members to experience using the DPC's Rapid Assessment Model. This proved really useful as staff could try out a new tool in a supportive environment and benchmark their own experience.

Evaluation of Programme activities reveals that they provide directly relevant knowledge and experiences that delegates can apply in the workplace - at a really low cost.

However, the ongoing evaluation suggests the true value of the Programme lies in the reassurance of fellow practitioners.

AWM events bring professionals together and give them the space to concentrate on digital preservation. They learn and draw comfort from each other's experiences and return to their services with renewed enthusiasm, focus and plans. And that is why professional networks matter.

No Barriers: ensuring inclusion in the archive sector



Trustee Jim Ranahan 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. The No Barriers project was developed to support this commitment.

Funding was secured in March 2020 - from AWM, the Archives & Records Association (U.K. and Ireland) and The National Archives' Networks for Change funding stream. The planned project launch in Spring 2020 was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and postponed until Summer 2021.

A No Barriers trainee is being recruited to work with two project hosts, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Wolverhampton City Archives, on a knowledge exchange project. This will help inform new approaches to community engagement with the archive sector in the region. Over twelve months, the trainee will help us to identify and begin to address some of the barriers currently preventing communities engaging with the archive sector - encouraging them to use our services, to choose careers with us, and to entrust us with their collective memory.

A key element will be to gather evidence and design a project to highlight diversity and hidden stories within members' collections. The project hosts, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust and Wolverhampton City Archives, will work closely with other AWM members to provide training and mentoring to ensure the trainee placement is successful - both for the individual and for the development of a robust and transferrable model of operation for the region and wider sector.

Re-accreditation

All accredited archive services must re-apply six years after their initial award to retain their accredited status. Following a recent Archive Service Accreditation Panel, Warwickshire County Record Office was awarded accreditation for the second time.

By attaining accreditation, archive services demonstrate that they meet the UK standard for collections management and access to collections, showing resilience and the ability to manage changing circumstances successfully. This has been vital to granting awards during the coronavirus pandemic, which has presented exceptional challenges to archive services across the UK.

It is a stated aim of AWM to support its members to achieve accreditation/re-accreditation so congratulations to Warwickshire.

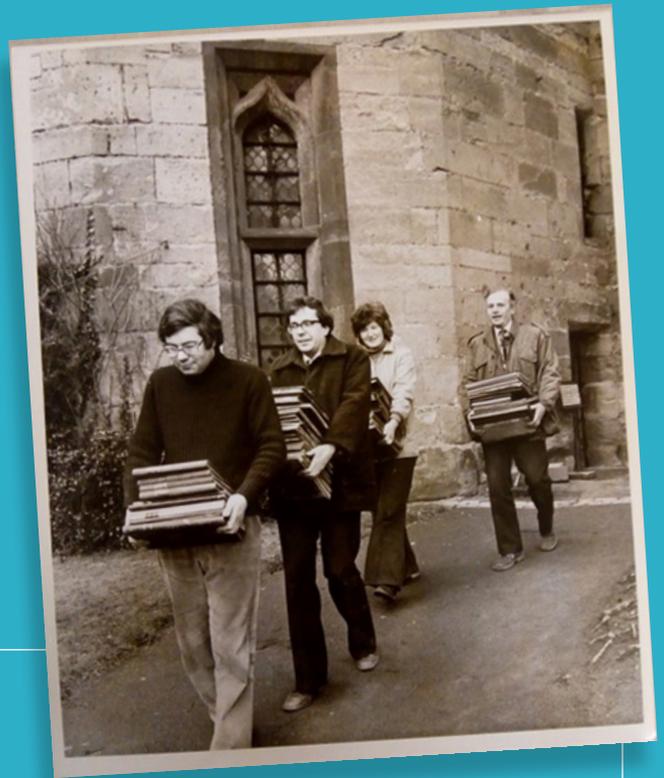


Around the Archives

Warwickshire

Kingmakers to kitchen maids

Following the successful completion of Mining the Seams, which has improved access to the coal archives of Warwickshire and Derbyshire, Warwickshire has embarked on a new four-year project, supported by Midland Ancestors. Kingmakers to Kitchen Maids: Warwick Castle through the ages aims to make the Warwick Castle archive more accessible - and to tell the hidden stories of those often overlooked by history. The Castle archive was acquired by the County Record Office in 1978.



Award-winning Warwickshire volunteer network



WOVeN, the Warwickshire Online Volunteer Network, has around 100 volunteers - from the UK, Australia, Canada and United States - working on home computers to support the County Record Office. The remote volunteers have been indexing Warwickshire witness statements from nineteenth and early twentieth century court cases. They found the task particularly rewarding during coronavirus lockdowns - when it offered them a creative and worthwhile activity to focus on. The county's archives service was joint winner of the ARA Archive Volunteer Award, in recognition of WOVeN.

“I have found the transcribing to be really interesting and also relaxing, especially during these strange times, and would be very happy to continue as a volunteer on any other future project.”



Hereford Cathedral

Online catalogue

Hereford Cathedral has acquired a new cataloguing system, Epexio, and is currently working towards the launch of its online catalogue, beginning with a series of medieval deeds.



Hands across the centuries



A collaboration with the Shropshire Scribes calligraphy group culminated in the Hands Across the Centuries exhibition - featuring new works by the Scribes alongside the manuscripts from the cathedral's collections which inspired them.

May Fair charter celebrations

Together with partners across the city, the Cathedral celebrated the 900th anniversary of the granting of the charter for Hereford's May Fair with a series of activities, exhibitions, talks and walks.

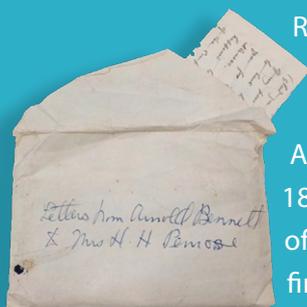


University of Keele

Virtual Reading Room

Following the lifting of pandemic restrictions, the University re-opened to onsite research visitors and reinstated browsing of the Local Collection. This autumn a Virtual Reading Room will be introduced as an alternative means of collection access, alongside onsite visits, and the digitisation-on-demand offer.

Arnold Bennett letters



Recent accessions included donations from Keele alumni and two revealing and hitherto unknown letters by Arnold Bennett. They were written in 1897 as Bennett was promoted to editor of *Woman* and awaited publication of his first novel, *A Man from the North*, and his non-fiction work *Journalism for Women*.

JSTOR collaboration

The University is collaborating with JSTOR to contribute content to the Open Community Collections initiative. This will unlock the potential of Keele's special collections by making content freely available on the platform - integrated alongside journal articles and e-books - to aid discovery, use, and encourage connections in research and learning.

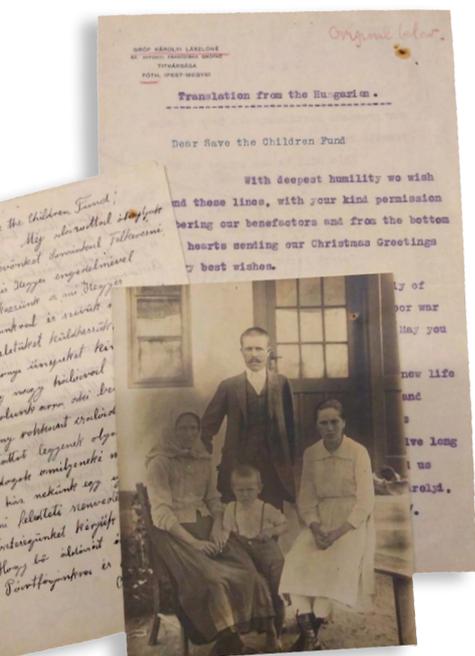


Around the Archives

Cadbury Research Library, University of Birmingham

Save the Children archive

Despite difficulties during pandemic restrictions, Cadbury Research Library staff completed their Save the Children archive cataloguing project on 30 June 2021. The archive comprised 2,000 boxes of material - charting the programmes, activities and development of the Save the Children Fund, at home and abroad, from its foundation in 1919 to the 21st century. The total project cost of more than £230,000 was covered by the Wellcome Trust and Save the Children UK.



The collection provides a fantastic resource for exploring the development of a modern charity, as well as post-colonialism, child rights, health and education, the development of fundraising and various other topics. The completed catalogue of more than 20,000 individual records can be viewed at:

<https://calmview.bham.ac.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=XSCF>



Staffordshire

New Staffordshire History Centre

In July 2021 Staffordshire Archives and Heritage Service, in partnership with the William Salt Library Trust, received a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant of nearly £4 million towards the Staffordshire History Centre project. The redevelopment will bring together the collections of the Archive Service, the County Museum and the William Salt Library into one building.

The project includes an extension to the existing Staffordshire Record Office on Eastgate Street, Stafford, incorporating the William Salt Library. The restored library will retell the story of the building, as well as of William Salt and his collection. A modern glazed link between the Library and Record Office will create a new entrance and permanent exhibition space to showcase the collections.

The new Staffordshire History Centre will provide modern reading areas, and research labs - and allow visitors to discover more about their family or local history through exhibitions, or by taking part in events and family activities. Extra strong rooms will provide space for a further 55 years of collections. A new learning offer will be created for schools, with courses for students and adult learners. The centre will be supported by a programme of touring exhibitions and targeted projects to reach all communities across the county.

The total project cost will be £7.1million. Match funding of £3.184m has already been raised by the partnership - including Staffordshire County Council funding, grants, donations from local organisations and Friends, and in-kind contributions from volunteers. More information about the project can be seen here:

www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Heritage-and-archives/Staffordshire-History-Centre



Trustees



Janene Cox OBE

Janene Cox, AWM Chair, is Assistant Director for Culture, Rural and Safer Communities at Staffordshire County Council and leads the Children's Services Transformation Programme. She is a 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.



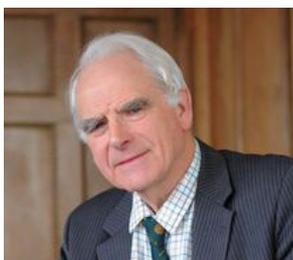
Richard Lewis

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 McKenzie, AWM Treasurer, worked in archives for more than 30 years before retiring in 2021. Most of her career was spent in Shropshire where she was head of the Archives' service for many years. She has always supported regional and cross-sector collaboration and is keen to see AWM's membership grow and develop. 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



This year AWM said farewell to Sam Collenette, a founding Trustee who directed the successful

Strong Rooms project. The AWM Board also wishes to say 'goodbye and thank you' to Richard Wade - an observer at Trustee meetings, representing ARA West Midlands, whose presence ensured that AWM and ARA were able to build a positive relationship.

A sad and final farewell

Last year AWM lost a dear friend and valued Trustee, Pat Kiernan (1946-2020). Pat, who became AWM Treasurer in 2017, housed a large personality in a small frame. She had a long association with archives and was Treasurer for the Friends of Shropshire Archives from 1994 until just before her death. Mary McKenzie said: "She was always a significant presence at AWM events, ensuring subscriptions and fees were collected, and expertly encouraging new members to join us. We will all miss her enthusiasm, commitment and professionalism, which she continued to demonstrate until her final illness made this impossible early in 2020."



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 310321

RECEIPTS:	2020/21	2019/20
SUBSCRIPTIONS	£8,000.00	£7,000.00
TRAINING FEES	£390.00	£375.00
SPONSORSHIP	£250.00	£0.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS:	£8,640.00	£7,375.00

PAYMENTS:	2020/21	2019/20
ANNUAL REVIEW	£1,297.50	£1,349.70
EVENTS	£750.00	£2,416.70
ADMIN	£1,400.71	£1,967.55
WEBSITE	£552.00	£8,874.02
OTHER	£0.00	£283.10
TOTAL PAYMENTS:	£4,000.21	£14,891.07

PAYMENTS MINUS RECEIPTS	£4,639.79	£7,516.07
BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD	£13,742.82	£21,258.89
DEBTORS AND PRE-PAYMENTS	£1,709.00	
TNA GRANT FOR 2021/22 SPEND	£9,250.00	

CURRENT BALANCE: £18,382.61 £13,742.82

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





bruynzeel storage systems

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