

Access Policy

1. Policy Statement

This policy illustrates St Helens Archive Service's commitment to providing appropriate access to collections. Potential users include local and family historians, researchers, academics, students, Council staff, business users, community groups, schools, the media, those using archives for legal reasons and more.

Archive staff answer enquiries, facilitate visits, and can assist with the interpretation of material. Staff adhere to St Helens Borough Council's Managing Conduct, Performance and Information Policy and the Officer Code of Conduct to ensure that all customers are dealt with appropriately, equally, and respectfully.

The statutory framework for access to information:

- Local Government (Records) Act 1962
- Local Government Act 1972 (s. 224)
- Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985
- Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation 2021
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) 2004
- Equalities Act 2010
- Church of England Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, amended 1992
- Manorial and Tithe Documents Rules issued under the Law of Property Acts 1922 and 1924 and the Tithe Act 1936

2. Building access

St Helens Archive Service provides free, public access to archive collections in a search room on the basement floor of the Gamble Building and is accessible by stair or lift. Access is normally provided during Monday – Wednesday 10am – 2pm, however appointments may be arranged outside these hours.

St Helens Archive Service, The Gamble Building, Victoria Square, St Helens, WA10 1DY

Phone: 01744 671748

Email: archives@sthelens.gov.uk

Website: www.sthelens.gov.uk/archives

Evacuation from the basement level is limited and therefore in-person access for individuals with mobility issues take place on a temporary search room table at ground level. Additionally, there is currently no access to disabled toilets in the building.

3. Collections access

St Helens Archive Service provides access in accordance with our Collections Management Policy, to help ensure the preservation of unique records for current and future users as well as ensuring compliance with legislation and best practice.

St Helens Archive Service provide suitable finding aids for users to access the records required. The online catalogue can be searched via the Calmview website (www.sthelens.gov.uk/history). PDF listings of the catalogue can be made available to researchers.

Collections can be accessed in-person for people who book an appointment, sign-in when entering the search room and comply with our search room guidelines.

4. Restricted records

The Data Protection Act 2018 is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Everyone responsible for using personal data must follow strict rules called 'data protection principles'. They must make sure the information is: used fairly, lawfully, and transparently.

Items from collections may be restricted for several reasons:

- Personal data: Access to items in collections which contain personal or confidential information may be restricted according to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Subject access requests and enquiries under the Freedom of Information Act will be dealt with in line with current legislation and St Helens Borough Council procedures.
- Condition: St Helens Archive Service reserves the right to restrict public access to items which are deemed too fragile to handle. Digital surrogates may be accessible if these are available.
- Uncatalogued: If researchers are aware of a specific unlisted collection and wish to access it, the Archivist will assess the suitability of allowing access to whole or part of the collection that they deem suitable for viewing.
- Depositor restrictions: A depositor may request that part, or all of a collection be closed for a specified number of years. Requests for information under FOI or GDPR may be possible.

5. Remote Enquiries

St Helens Archive Service assist with access to collections remotely and offer a research service (for a fee).

- A copy of the current Fees and Charges is available online, in the search room or can be emailed on request. Research for 30 minutes will always be given free of charge, however if an enquiry involves more than 30 minutes of staff time, and may include access to original archives, digital copies of material, microfilm or secondary sources, there will be a charge of £25 an hour.
- The customer will be asked to pay for one hour of research in advance; after this hour, they will be contacted to discuss how long the research is likely to take. Payment will be

requested in advance. Results of a search may sometimes prove negative; however, no refund can be given for staff time. St Helens Archive Service cannot accept legal responsibility for any interpretation that may be put on the information supplied.

- If the enquirer requires digital copies of material, a copyright form will be issued, and payment will be taken on card or cash via St Helens Library Service. Payment will be requested in advance.
- Due to limited staff resources, some enquiries may not be possible. In this instance, the user will be provided with the contact details of freelance researchers, with costs to be agreed between the two parties.

6. Copying and Licensing

- In-person visitors can take their own photographs of archive material for personal study (for a fee).
- We make and supply copies of material from archive collections unless:
 - there is a statutory exemption prohibiting copying,
 - the owner of the collection has placed a restriction on copying,
 - copying is likely to cause physical harm to the archives,
 - copying is likely to cause an infringement of copyright legislation,
- Anyone who requests copies of documents will be asked to complete copyright forms.
- For those wishing to publish images from St Helens Archive Service or to use them for official purposes, a license must be obtained. Permission may not always be given as copyright restrictions may apply or depositors may withhold permission.

7. Local History Resources

Eccleston and Newton-le-Willows libraries both have digital microfilm scanners for local parish records and newspaper collections. The scanner is a SL1000Q Digital Microfilm Scanner that allows users to easily email, print (fees apply) or save to USB.

Eccleston Library also hold printed Electoral Registers for the borough, Newton-le-Willows Library hold historic Electoral Registers on microfilm.

All St Helens branch libraries have small local history book collections as well as free access to 'Find My Past' via library computers or visitor Wi-Fi.

8. Feedback

We welcome feedback from users to help us to improve. Feedback forms are available in the search room or users can contact the Archive Service directly. Alternatively, complaints can be made through the Council's complaints page: www.sthelens.gov.uk/council/complaints

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