

East Sussex Record Office Collections Development Policy



Date: May 2016

Document summary

This document explains why East Sussex Record Office collects archives, what it collects and how it does so. It also identifies strengths and weaknesses in the Record Office's holdings in order to set priorities for the future.

Contents

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Name of Archive Service
- 3 Governing Body and Relationship with Brighton & Hove City Council
- 4 Official External Recognition
- 5 Geographical Coverage
- 6 Scope
- 7 Means of Acquisition – General
- 8 Means of Acquisition – Specific
 - 8.1 East Sussex County Council
 - 8.2 City of Brighton & Hove
 - 8.3 Local Place of Deposit
 - 8.4 District and Parish Councils and other statutory bodies
 - 8.5 Parochial registers and records
 - 8.6 Records of families, estates, businesses and organisations subject to existing deposit agreements
 - 8.7 Other acquisitions including purchases
- 9 Strengths and Weaknesses
- 10 Format of Archives
- 11 Disposal of Holdings
- 12 Review

About this document:

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The role of the East Sussex Record Office ('ESRO') is to locate, acquire, collect and preserve archival material relating to past and present life in the administrative county of East Sussex and the City of Brighton and Hove, and to make that material available for use by its owners and by the public at large, both in East Sussex and worldwide. It is based at The Keep, which is run in partnership with Brighton & Hove City Council and the University of Sussex.

1.2 This Policy is essential to support the role and aims of ESRO, and explains why ESRO collects archival material, what it collects and how it does so. This Policy takes into account the recommendations of The National Archives ('TNA') for collections development¹ and current government policy on archives.² It should be read alongside East Sussex County Council's ('ESCC') and The Keep's other service policies and business plans.

1.3 This Policy supports ESRO's Terms and Conditions for the Acceptance of Archives (revised April 2016) and is provided as information to owners of documents who may be intending to place their collections in the care of the Archive Service, to other archive services and as guidance for Archive Service staff.

2 NAME OF ARCHIVE SERVICE

2.1 East Sussex Record Office at The Keep.

3 GOVERNING BODY AND RELATIONSHIP WITH BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

3.1 ESRO is part of the Communities Division of the Communities, Environment and Transport Department of ESCC.

3.2 ESRO provides an archive service to Brighton & Hove City Council, a unitary authority formed on 1 April 1997, under a Service Level Agreement dated August 2013, which has a term of twenty (20) years.

3.3 Brighton & Hove City Council ('BHCC') has provided its own Records Management service since 2011, but its Retention Schedules are largely based on those governing the records of ESCC (which until 1997 performed many of the functions involved). New BHCC Retention Schedules involving records for permanent preservation are developed in consultation with ESRO's Senior Archivist (Document Services) (see para 9.2.2 for further information).

4 OFFICIAL EXTERNAL RECOGNITION

4.1 ESRO exercises the functions of ESCC in respect of any enactment or agreement relating to records or archives in its custody, and in particular:

¹ <http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/developing-collections.htm>

² *Archives for the 21st century*, November 2009
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/aft21c/archives-for-the-21st-century.pdf>

4.1.1 S.224 of the Local Government Act 1972, whereby ESRO fulfils ESCC's responsibility for making proper arrangements for documents belonging to or in its custody.

4.1.2 The Local Government (Records) Act 1962 whereby ESCC was constituted an 'archive authority' with powers to make provision for the inspection and copying of documents, to prepare finding aids, publish records, hold exhibitions, stage lectures, purchase and accept gifts and deposits of records including those of other local authorities, and 'do all such things as appear to it necessary or expedient for enabling adequate use to be made of records under its control'.

4.1.3 S.4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958, whereby, as an appointed place of deposit, ESRO accepts the deposit of defined categories of public record of a local character on behalf of the Lord Chancellor.

4.1.4 The Manorial Document Rules of 1959 and the Tithe (Copies of Apportionment) Rules of 1960, whereby ESRO accepts custody of, respectively, manorial and tithe documents under the charge and superintendence of the Master of the Rolls.

4.1.5 In addition, ESRO exercises the powers of ESCC in respect of the records of Parish Councils under s.226(1)(b), (4) and (5) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4.1.6 An instrument dated 24 December 1954, as amended by further instrument dated 29 March 1974, whereby the Bishop of Chichester established a diocesan record office at ESRO to serve as a place of deposit for registers and records of ecclesiastical parishes located within the administrative county of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove. Such records are currently held under the provisions of the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978.

5 GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE

5.1 Archival material acquired by ESRO shall relate to the whole or to any part of the administrative county of East Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton & Hove as constituted in or after 1 April 1997.

5.2 In addition ESRO may acquire:

5.2.1 The archive of any body or institution which relates to the whole or to a major part of the administrative county of East Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton & Hove as constituted in or after 1997.

5.2.2 The archive of any body or institution which relates to the whole or to a major part of the ancient County of Sussex, the appropriate location of the archive to be determined by agreement with the archive authority of West Sussex ('WSRO').

5.2.3 The archive of any body, institution, business, estate or individual, the greater part of which relates to, or the originating source of which lies within, the administrative county of East Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton & Hove, even though some parts of the archive relate to other places or areas.

5.2.4 The archive, whatever its content, of any individual resident or formerly resident in the administrative county of East Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton & Hove as constituted in or after 1 April 1997.

6 SCOPE

6.1 The County Archivist may accept custody of:

6.1.1 Such records or archives as, through their content, record or illustrate the administration, life and development of the whole or any part of the county and area of East Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton & Hove, or of its people, throughout its history.

6.1.2 Such records may be in written, graphic, or mechanically or electronically generated form, and may be in the shape of books, papers, parchments, maps, photographs, aural or visual recordings, or electronic storage systems, and may exceptionally include non-archival items otherwise more appropriate to a museum or library if justified by their inherent association with any archival grouping.

7 MEANS OF ACQUISITION – GENERAL

7.1 Archival material passes into the custody of ESRO in a number of ways. Although the process can in general be referred to as collecting, ESRO finds it more useful to restrict that term to the targeted acquisition of particular groups of papers either because they have emerged on the market (see para 8.7 below) or because they are perceived to fill or augment a particular gap in our holdings (see para 9.2 below).

7.2 Although a majority of ESRO's annual accessions when judged by number can be defined as the result of a process of collecting, when judged by bulk most pass into our care by the efficient functioning of established relationships with:

7.2.1 our own parent bodies (see paras 8.1 – 8.2 below),

7.2.2 central government under the Public Records Act and other statutes (see paras 4.3 – 4.5 above),

7.2.3 the established church under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure (see para 4.6 above); or

7.2.4 other bodies, both corporate and individual, under existing deposit agreements.

7.3 When accepting material, ESRO is scrupulous in establishing its legal status, the separate ownership of intellectual property rights and any restrictions on access, whether legislative or arising from the wishes of the transferor.

7.4 ESRO's close contacts with local organisations whose policies may overlap with its own are especially relevant in the field of acquisitions. The most important links are with the partners at The Keep, the relationship with whom is governed as far as it relates to acquisition by the Keep Collections Statement, but ESRO also benefits from liaison with other repositories via the TNA and the V+A Purchase Grant Fund.

7.5 Sussex has always been administered as two elements, and separate record offices were established in both counties almost simultaneously. Nevertheless, boundary-changes, the existence of pan-Sussex bodies and a shared landscape make close liaison with WSRO one of the most important aspects of ESRO's interactions with external bodies.

8 MEANS OF ACQUISITION – SPECIFIC

8.1 East Sussex County Council

8.1.1 Since ESRO's inception in 1971, Records Management has been carried out by a section of ESRO.

8.1.2 The records of all departments of ESCC are covered by Retention Schedules, which are agreed in consultation with the Senior Archivist (Document Services). For further detail see the Selection, Appraisal and Disposal Policy.

8.1.3 Regular transfers of material are made by ESRO Records Management to ESRO Document Services in accordance with the Retention Schedules. Such material is allocated an ESRO Accession Number for the purposes of physical control and, as resources will permit, is listed under permanent references as part of the archive of ESCC.

8.2 City of Brighton & Hove

8.2.1 BHCC, a unitary authority created in 1997, has provided its own Records Management service since 2011.

8.2.2 BHCC's Retention Schedules are largely based on those governing the records of ESCC (which until 1997 performed many of the functions involved). However, as set out at para 3.3 above, new BHCC Retention Schedules involving records for permanent preservation are developed in consultation with ESRO's Senior Archivist (Document Services).

8.2.3 Regular transfers of archive material are made by BHCC Records Management to ESRO in accordance with the Retention Schedules. Such material is allocated an ESRO Accession Number for the purposes of physical control and, as resources will permit, is listed under permanent references as part of the archive of BHCC.

8.3 Local Place of Deposit

8.3.1 ESRO is a 'Local Place of Deposit' for Public Records and receives material under Sections 4(1) and 4(3) of the Public Records Act, and through presentation of former Public Records under Section 3(6).

8.3.2 ESRO works closely both with TNA and the custodians of such records, receives regular transfers and, subject to resources, seeks actively to promote transfers.

8.3.3 The semi-current records of HM Coroners for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove are managed by the Records Management sections of (respectively) ESRO and BHCC, and pass to ESRO by annual transfer under the Retention Schedules which govern them.

8.3.4 Such material is allocated an ESRO Accession Number for the purposes of physical control and, as resources will permit, is listed under permanent references as part of the archives of the originating bodies.

8.4 District and Parish Councils and other statutory bodies

8.4.1 Although second- and third-tier local authorities are subject to the injunction of s.224 of the Local Government Act 1972 ('LGA 1972') to make 'proper

arrangements' for their records and although s.226(5) of the LGA 1972 gives County Councils oversight of the storage and preservation of the records of Parish Councils, the terms by which the records of such bodies pass to ESRO is essentially that of private deposit.

8.4.2 The same can be said of the records of statutory bodies such as the Police, Fire and Rescue Service, Water and Drainage Authorities and the South Downs National Park Authority.

8.4.3 With the exception of the South Downs National Park Authority, ESRO currently maintains close relationships with all these bodies (in the case of Parish Councils via the Sussex Association of Local Councils) and receives regular transfers of records.

8.4.4 Such material is allocated an ESRO Accession Number for the purposes of physical control and, as resources will permit, is listed under permanent references as part of the archives of the originating bodies.

8.5 Parochial registers and records

8.5.1 ESRO is the place of deposit, under the provisions of the Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978, for registers and records of ecclesiastical parishes located within the administrative county of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove.

8.5.2 ESRO maintains contact with ecclesiastical parishes both directly and through the archdeacons of Brighton, Lewes and Hastings.

8.5.4 Ecclesiastical parish records are allocated an ESRO Accession Number for the purposes of physical control and (in the case of registers) prioritised for listing under permanent references as part of the archives of the transferring parish.

8.6 Records of families, estates, businesses and organisations subject to existing deposit agreements

8.6.1 The archives of all the former and existing landed estates in East Sussex and Brighton & Hove are held by ESRO, as are those of many of its businesses and voluntary organisations.

8.6.2 It is ESRO's policy to maintain close relationships with depositors of all records, but particularly those of the larger and more significant archives. Such relationships are maintained by the issue of regular Annual Reports, invitations to events, involvement with our 'Friends' organisation and contact via the Lieutenancy.

8.6.3 Contact with organisations and societies is maintained both directly, and through umbrella groups such as the Sussex Federation of Women's Institutes.

8.7 Other acquisitions including purchases

8.7.1 ESRO seeks to augment and enhance its holdings by the acquisition of new material from the widest range of sources.

8.7.2 Most such acquisitions, especially in the area of purchases, are essentially reactive, but particular effort is made to address the perceived weaknesses in our holdings (see para 9.2).

8.7.3 For the last thirty (30) years ESRO has maintained and continues an active policy of acquisition by purchase in order either to place or retain archives in the

public domain. Such purchases are funded entirely from external grants, particularly from our 'Friends' organisation 'Friends of the Keep Archives' (formerly 'Friends of East Sussex Record Office').

9 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

9.1 Strengths

9.1.1 ESRO's Records Management Section, in place since 1971, has ensured that the archive of our parent body, ESCC, is particularly ample and detailed, extending far beyond the prime series usually to be found in County Record Offices.

9.1.2 ESRO holds building regulations plans for every local authority in the County and City; they are intact, have not been subject to selection and all have finding-aids.

9.1.3 ESRO has adopted a generous policy regarding the retention of Public Records. Key papers from all coroners' inquests have been kept, as have patient case files of all former mental hospitals and other specialist treatment centres including the Brighton STD and HIV clinics and the world-famous Chailey Heritage School and Hospital which cared for most of the UK's victims of the drug thalidomide.

9.1.4 Our holdings of business records, particularly those of solicitors' practices, is impressive, largely the result of a series of approaches to the county's leading firms during the 1980s.

9.1.5 Our holdings of manuscript estate maps, in which our family, estate and business archives are already strong, have been augmented by frequent purchases.

9.1.6 Archives of voluntary organisations, sporting bodies and pressure-groups are well represented at ESRO, and growing in number as many such groupings cease to exist. Particularly notable are the archives of over 200 branches of the Women's Institute, acquired largely as a result of ESRO's close relationship with the East Sussex Federation of the Women's Institute.

9.1.7 East Sussex was a heavily manorialised county, and our extensive holdings of manorial records have attracted scholars from across the world, as well as being in constant use by family historians and people researching the history of their houses. The Sussex strand of the project to digitise the Manorial Documents Register, managed for both counties by ESRO, was completed in 2015.

9.2 Weaknesses

9.2.1 We have received very few transfers of their own records from the District Councils created in 1974 and need to establish an archival relationship with the South Downs National Park Authority.

9.2.2 Changes in records management procedures are affecting transfers of archives by Brighton & Hove City Council in accordance with retention schedules, a situation that is under review.

9.2.3 Very few records from courts of Petty Sessions have been received since 1980, although the problem is currently being addressed.

9.2.4 Our holdings of the records of secondary schools have never been as ample as those of primary schools, and although impending moves towards academy status for all schools may ultimately make it harder to acquire such records in the

future, conversion to academy status may, in the short term, have the opposite effect.

9.2.5 With some exceptions, our holdings of the archives of 'new' communities are patchy, and show a distinct bias towards the west of the county where the majority of the population lies.

9.2.6 The bias towards the west of the county, particularly the Lewes and Brighton areas, is also apparent in our holdings of the records of community groups.

9.2.7 We also face a major challenge in gathering and preserving digital records that can quickly become corrupted or inaccessible.

9.2.8 These identified weaknesses will inform our future collecting activity and priorities for the allocation of available resources.

10 FORMAT OF ARCHIVES

10.1 The format of archives may be paper, parchment, digital, microform, visual media, including photographs, glass negatives, video and DVD, or audio.

10.2 In the case of digital media, the long-term preservation status of such materials is constantly evolving. The Archive Service requires any digital records to be placed in its care in appropriate software programmes. This is to enable the migration of these records to new formats in the future so that the readability and long-term preservation of the information contained in digital records can be preserved. Advice and protocols will be provided to owners on acceptable formats.

10.3 Archive film forming part of a donation or deposit will be transferred or referred to a specialist film repository or returned to the donor / depositor.

10.4 Printed materials, including books, newspapers, pamphlets, journals and magazines are acquired either as integral elements of an archive or to augment the reference collection at The Keep. In either case they are included in the online catalogue.

10.5 ESRO seeks to acquire copies of documents held in other repositories if they relate closely to its existing holdings and are otherwise not readily accessible.

10.6 Museum objects and artefacts will not normally be accepted by ESRO and will be re-directed to the appropriate museum service. Artefacts derived from the creators of archives and having a direct relationship to deposited material, such as seal-dies or elements of uniforms, will be accepted.

10.7 ESRO will accept artistic material under two circumstances: when it forms part of an artist's archive, or when it forms a record of now-vanished elements of the landscape. ESRO will never compete with galleries or museums to acquire such material.

11 DISPOSAL OF HOLDINGS

11.1 ESRO will appraise and assess archive holdings in accordance with our Selection, Appraisal and Disposal Policy before, during and after acquisition.

11.2 ESRO may, with the agreement of the depositor, transfer archives to other archive repositories if such a course is considered in the best interests of the material, its owners or users.

12 REVIEW

12.1 This Policy will be reviewed within five (5) years of the latest date of revision.