

BATH RECORD OFFICE

ARCHIVES AND
LOCAL STUDIES

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GUIDE TO RECORDS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Bath Record Office holds a wide range of material relating to the history of public health.



Rear of Pulteney Bridge showing waste disposal outlets 19th century (Victoria Art Gallery, Bath & North East Somerset Council 1991.135)

The collections are particularly strong in charting the provision of basic infrastructure such as water supply and sewerage systems, but also record the development of services to promote health care and prevent disease. The records date from the sixteenth century to the twenty-first, but most relate to the mid-eighteenth to the late twentieth centuries.

Local records are a particularly valuable resource for research as they show in detail how individual areas dealt with public health. National policies were implemented by local authorities in different ways and at different speeds, with the impetus for change often influenced by local circumstances, communities and individuals. Detailed local studies contribute to an overall understanding of the development of public health infrastructure, systems and activities, and provide an evidence base for analysis of their effectiveness.

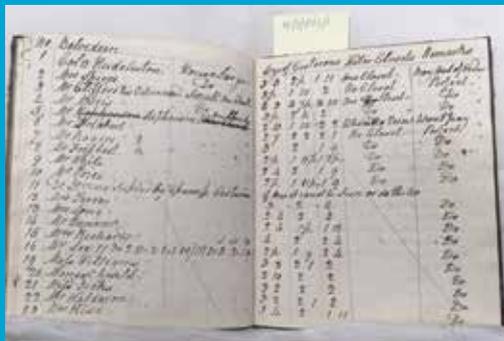
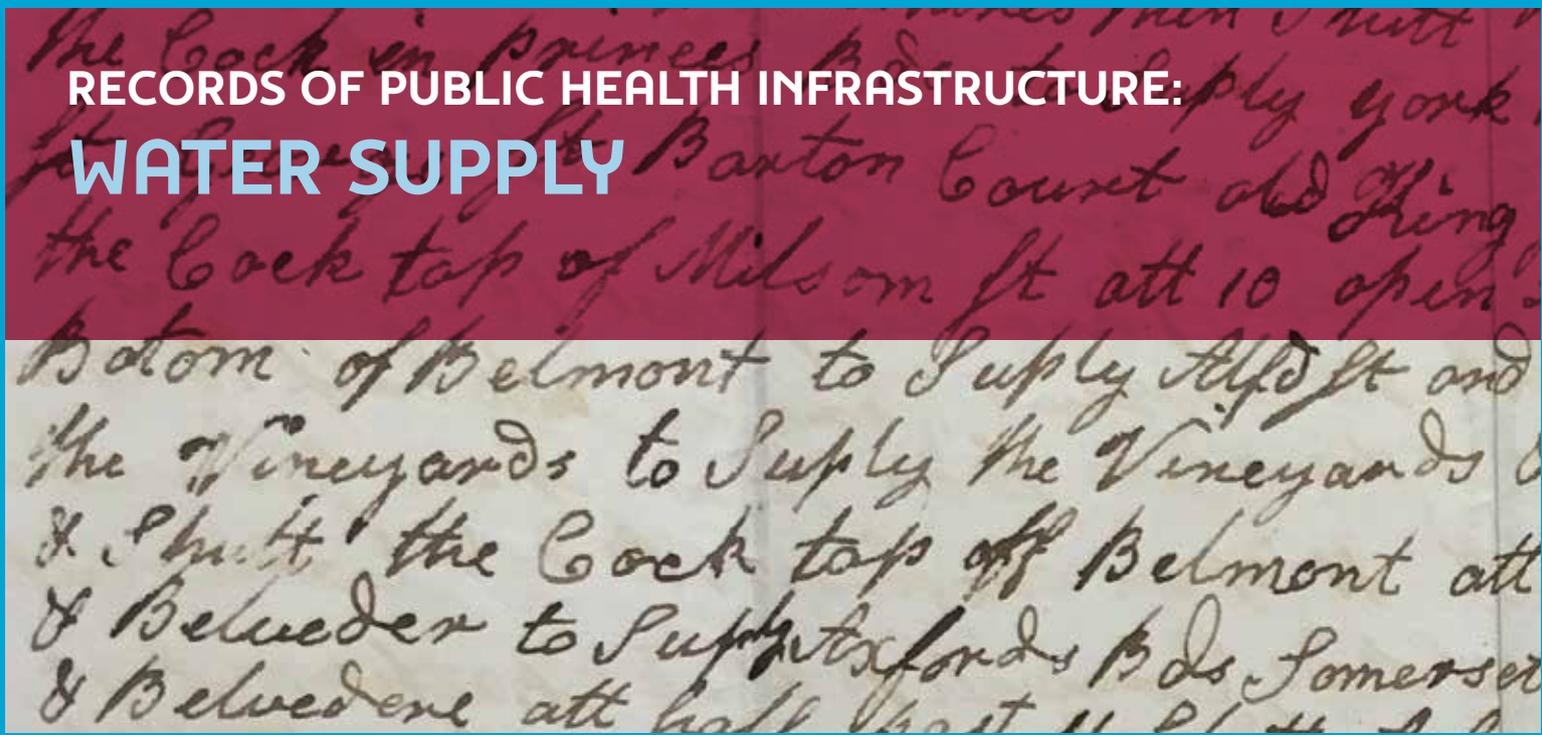
This guide gives an overview of the records available. More detailed information can be found on the Record Office website at <https://www.batharchives.co.uk/records-public-health>. Complete catalogues of most of the records can be found in our online catalogue at www.somerset-cat.swheritage.org.uk.

In addition to the records listed, the Record Office holds relevant maps, printed books and pamphlets, local newspapers, and Acts of Parliament. More information can be found on the website.

Access to a very small number of records may be restricted in accordance with UK data protection law.

We are grateful for a grant from the Wellcome Trust which enabled us to catalogue and conserve a number of the records listed in this leaflet.

RECORDS OF PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE: WATER SUPPLY



BATH CITY COUNCIL RECORDS, SIXTEENTH CENTURY – 1974

Bath City Council provided a piped water supply from at least the sixteenth century, first to the city centre and later to a far wider area. Early records are sparse, but occasional references can be found in the corporation minutes and chamberlains' accounts. More detailed records date from the mid eighteenth century. They include:

- Minutes of the Council Waterworks Committee, 1768-1968 (BC/2/1/164)
- Reports to the Waterworks Committee, 1836-1935 (BC/7/1/2)
- Administrative and operational registers, including: water rent books showing householders and addresses receiving a water supply and amounts paid, 1772-1927; survey books (sizes of cisterns and number of water closets), late C18-early C19; registers of rainfall, spring gauging, daily water consumption, state of reservoirs and pumping, 1935-1980 (BC/7/1/11)
- Papers relating to Bath Waterworks Bills and Acts and their implementation, 1846-1903, and to the acquisition of private waterworks, 1740s-1888 (BC/7/1/3 - BC/7/1/9)
- Town clerks' papers relating to water supply, 1792-1957 (BC/7/1/1)
- Correspondence and filing series, 1906-1974 (BC/7/1/12 - BC/7/1/16)

These records enable researchers to study the ways in which the supply of water was extended to different parts of the city; the serious engineering challenges of providing a water supply to a city with a rapidly growing population, expanding ever further up the steep hills surrounding the centre; and the management of water supply at an operational level. They also reveal much about the politics and finances of providing a water supply. In addition, they contain valuable information about rainfall.

WESSEX WATER, 1974 TO DATE

In 1974 responsibility for water supply passed from the council to Wessex Water, one of the ten regional water authorities set up at that date. Bath Record Office holds only a very limited amount of records for Wessex Water; some material (mainly annual reports) can be found at other local authority record offices and at the National Archives. More information can be found on the National Archives Discovery website <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>.

Above (main image): Account of turning on and off water supply (BC/7/1/1/4)
Smaller images left to right: Survey of water closets late C18 (BC/7/1/11/5/1).
Opening of Monkwood Reservoir 1895. Page from water rent book 1805 showing Jane Austen's father.

Opposite page (main image): Salford sewage works 1914.
Smaller images left to right: Billhead for plumber 1908 (BH/C/46).
Detail from BC/22/2/1/1 grates over sewer. Detail from a plan from 1917, ref. BC/16 rolled plan.

RECORDS OF PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE: SEWERS, DRAINAGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES



RECORDS OF [IMPROVEMENT] COMMISSIONS, 1766-1851:

The provision of public health amenities such as paved streets and rubbish removal became an important issue in the eighteenth century, as Bath grew from a small town into a fashionable spa resort. However, the Corporation did not have the necessary powers to undertake this work or the money to fund it, and so set up Commissions covering small areas with powers to raise money for specific purposes. Five Acts of Parliament between 1766 and 1801 established Commissions with varying powers for Bath borough (the city centre), and for Walcot and Bathwick, both then developing as fashionable suburbs. The records of these commissions are catalogued as BC/22/2-5 and include minutes, financial records and detailed operational records such as surveys, notices to householders (to make improvements), lamp and pitching report books, and night watch rotas. The records provide material to investigate the relationship between the Corporation and the Commissions, how the huge sums of money required were raised, and how the work was actually carried out. They throw light on the public health concerns of this period, which predates the era of sanitary reform, and provide insights into social conditions.

BATH CITY COUNCIL RECORDS, 1851-1974

The Public Health Act of 1848 permitted the setting up of 'Local Boards of Health' to tackle issues of basic public health infrastructure. The City Council took the opportunity to constitute itself as the Local Board of Health by the Bath Act of 1851. In 1905 the Council became directly responsible for public health. Records include:

- Minutes of the full Council and relevant committees (BC/2/1 and BC/2/2)
- Records relating to sewers, including plans (BC/7/2)
- Records relating to waste disposal (a small quantity only) (BC/7/3)
- Files relating to the responsibilities of Bath City Council Surveying Committee and of the City Engineers' and City Surveyors' departments (BC/7/7)
- Records relating to building regulations approval; these include plans for individual buildings showing sewers and sanitary arrangements (BC/8/7)

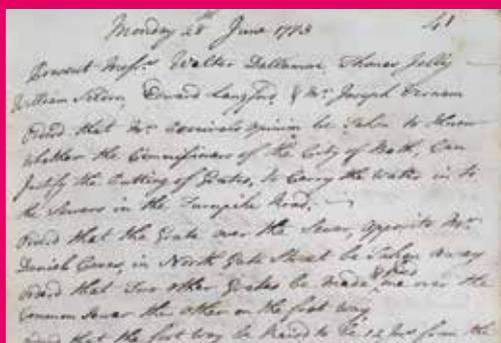
A rich resource for studying the development of sanitation in Bath, these records detail the very lengthy struggles – political, practical and financial – to establish and maintain an effective sewerage system in the city.

WESSEX WATER (SEWERAGE AND DRAINAGE), 1974 TO DATE

In 1974 responsibility for sewerage and drainage, like water supply, passed to the Wessex Water Authority.

BATH CITY COUNCIL/B&NES (OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES), 1974 TO DATE

Bath City Council retained responsibility for other environmental services, such as waste disposal. These responsibilities were passed to Bath City Council's successor, Bath & North East Somerset Council in 1996. Records include minutes of the relevant committees (BC/2/2/ and BC/2/3).



RECORDS OF HEALTH PROMOTION AND PREVENTION OF DISEASE

Photograph of Infant Welfare clinic 1939



BATH CITY COUNCIL RECORDS, 1866-1974

From the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth, the role of the Council expanded greatly as various public health acts were passed, giving it responsibility or permission to act in a wide range of areas. The Council appointed its first Medical Officer of Health in 1866. In 1929, the Council took over responsibility for vaccination, until then carried out by the Poor Law Guardians. By the mid-twentieth century, the Council was responsible for midwives and maternal, infant and child health, mental health, isolation hospitals, food standards and much more. Most of these remained the responsibility of the Council until 1974. Records include:

- Minutes of the full Council and relevant committees, especially the Sanitary (later Health) Committee and its sub-committees (BC/2/1)
- Reports of the Medical Officer of Health, 1866 – 1974. These are a major source of information on a wide range of public health matters. (BC/14)
- Registers relating to food and hygiene regulations (BC/3/6/1-5)
- A small number of isolated items, including the Public Analyst's register of foodstuff samples, 1920-1951 and printed guides to the Public Health services of Bath City, 1932, 1939 and 1948 (BC/14 and Local Studies Collection)

BATH BOARD OF GUARDIANS: VACCINATION RECORDS, 1871-1928

Vaccination registers and report books (BGB/5)

HEALTH PROMOTION: BATH DISTRICT HEALTH AUTHORITY RECORDS, 1974-2013

Under far-reaching changes to the structure of the National Health Service in 1974, most of Bath City Council's public health functions were transferred to the Bath District Health Authority. The Record Office holds records of the Authority; these are currently uncatalogued but include minutes and records of some campaigns (reference 0396).

HEALTH PROMOTION: BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET COUNCIL (B&NES), 2013 TO DATE

In further changes to the NHS which came into force in 2013, responsibility for public health passed back to B&NES, and a Director of Public Health was appointed. However, the Council commissions services, rather than carrying them out directly. No records have yet been received by the Record Office.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: BATH CITY COUNCIL/B&NES RECORDS, 1974 TO DATE

Some environmental health functions, for example food standards, remained with Bath City Council after 1974; these functions passed to its successor Bath & North East Somerset Council in 1996. The Record Office holds minutes of the committees which dealt with these services (BC/2/2/ and BC/2/3).