

Bath Record Office Rules

Archives are unique and irreplaceable. They are a treasure trove of history, information and evidence for us all now, and also for people in the future. Please follow our rules so that you can use the documents and other items safely, and help us to ensure they are kept secure and undamaged for future generations of researchers.

Put all coats and bags in the lockers provided

We need to keep the search room uncluttered and ensure that no items are accidentally or deliberately removed.

All visitors must sign in

For the security of the archives and books, we need to know the names and contact details of all those who use the searchrooms.

No eating and drinking in the searchroom

Food or drink (even water) can damage documents directly, and crumbs or traces of food attract pests and insects, which can cause serious harm.

Do not remove documents from the searchroom.

A lost archive document can *never* be replaced.

Always handle items carefully and touch them as little as possible.

Archives are unique and vulnerable to damage. If possible, touch only the blank parts of a document, not the written parts. The surface of any page may be harmed by touch and ink may lift off the page. Any accident to a document should be reported at once. If you have any difficulty handling cumbersome or fragile documents please ask the staff for help

Use pencils only.

Accidents with pens and coloured pencils happen easily, but are very difficult – sometimes impossible - to remove. We are always happy to lend you a pencil.

Make sure your hands are clean and do not lick your fingers when turning a page.

Dirt transfers easily to documents and sticky fingers are acidic, damaging documents.

Turn pages carefully from the corner.

Paper is vulnerable to tearing, and any weaknesses may be made worse by careless handling.

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Never rest your papers on a document while you write your notes, even if the item is in a polyester sleeve.

The pressure of your pencil could harm the item. Place your paper or notepad directly on the table.

Use book support pillows when consulting volumes, and do not force spines.

The pillows support the spines of the volumes and help prevent damage. Wherever possible, the pillows should be formed into an appropriate shape for the opened volume.

Use weights or 'snakes' when consulting large folded documents or maps.

Documents which have been folded may not lie flat easily. Weights will help you to view all of the document without having to put your hands on it.

Take particular care when handling photographs, and if possible, touch only the edge.

Photographs are especially vulnerable to damage because the emulsion layer on the surface of the paper is very delicate. Fingerprints will damage the image. For some photographs (and a few other items) we may ask you to wear gloves, which we will provide.

Keep documents in the order and condition in which they are issued.

The order of documents in a bundle may not be clear, but please do not change it without referring to staff. If documents are pinned together leave them like that; if one document is wrapped inside another put it back as you found it after you have read it. If you do not, it will make it harder for others to understand the documents – the order could be as significant as the contents.

Please be as quiet as possible.

Allow others study in peace. In particular avoid lengthy or loud conversation, put your mobile phone in silent mode, and if you need to make or answer a phone call please leave the searchroom while you do so.

You can photocopy or photograph many documents and books.

But please ask a member of staff first. There may be copyright restrictions on copying some documents (copyright lasts for many years) and some documents and books may be too fragile or tightly bound to photocopy. Depending on what you want to copy, you may be asked to fill in a copyright form.

If you wish to publish all or any part of a document please contact the Principal Archivist.

A reproduction fee may be payable, and you may need to consider copyright issues.