

There has been a council overseeing the affairs of the city of Bath since the middle ages. The Council's functions and responsibilities have developed over time and the boundaries have expanded.

Bath has had its own corporation or council overseeing the affairs and needs of its citizens since the middle ages. Over time, the functions and responsibilities of the council have changed dramatically, as has the area which the city covers. The medieval City of Bath covered a very small area, contained mainly within the city walls; by the 1960s, after centuries of expansion, the City covered a large area extending far beyond the city centre to include what had once been outlying villages such as Weston and Twerton

In 1974 Bath became a district council under Avon County Council. Further reorganisation in 1996 created the local authority of Bath & North East Somerset by amalgamating Bath City with Wansdyke District Council, the adjacent authority covering north-east Somerset. Bath & North East Somerset Council is a unitary authority, responsible for all local authority functions in its area. It includes Keynsham, Radstock and Midsomer Norton, as well Bath itself and numerous villages.

The Record Office holds the records of Bath City Council, in its various guises, of Bath & North East Somerset Council, and some records for Wansdyke District Council. A summary of the most significant of these records follows.

Please see our **Archives catalogue** for more detailed listings.

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## **BC/1 : Constitutional Records 1189-c.1996**

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Borough administration from 1189 to 1835 was based on royal charters which granted rights and privileges. Thereafter various Acts of Parliament enabled the operations of the Council.

These records are not yet catalogued in detail but include:

- **BC/1/1** – City charters 1189-1974. 27 charters held on behalf of the Charter Trustees.
- **BC/1/2-3** – Acts of Parliament and related papers 16<sup>th</sup> century-c.1996. Including local Bath acts and national legislation such as the Municipal Corporation Act 1835 and subsequent Local Government Acts.

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## **BC/2 : Records of Council and committee meetings 1631 - date**

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The Council minutes are the official records of the actions and transactions of the Council and its various committees. .

Minutes for Bath City Council 1631-1974 are catalogued in full, and a summary list is given below. Minutes for Bath City Council 1974-1996 and Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) 1996 to date are not yet catalogued in detail.

As well as the minutes of Bath City Council/B&NES, we also have a set of Wansdyke District Council minutes 1974-1996. These are not yet catalogued.

▪ **BC/2/1...Bath City Council Minutes and related records 1631-1974**

We hold signed minutes of the full council and committees, as listed below. We also hold sets of the printed minutes (full council and committees), 1895-1974. These sometimes contain less information than the signed minutes, but are indexed. They are available on open access.

- **BC/2/1/1-4** Meetings of full Council of Bath City Borough (1631-1835); Bath Municipal Borough (1835-1889); Bath County Borough (1889-1974). Operations continuous across the changes in legislation.
- **BC/2/1/5-7** Council operating as Urban Sanitary Authority 1872-1905
- **BC/2/1/8-47** Bath Act Committee/Surveying and Sanitary Committees/Public Works Committee and Health Committee; and sub-committees and related ad-hoc committees, 1851-1974.
- **BC/2/1/49-57** Baths and Pump Room/Spa Committee 1833-1840; 1857-1874
- **BC/2/1/59** Boundaries Committee 1901
- **BC/2/1/60-61** British Restaurants Committee 1941-50
- **BC/2/1/62-65** Children's Committee 1946-1970
- **BC/2/1/66-68** Air Raid/Civil Defence and Emergency Committees 1935-1968
- **BC/2/1/69-70** Corporation Property/Estates Committee 1837-1974
- **BC/2/1/71-97** Education Committee 1891-1974
- **BC/2/1/98-101** Lighting/Electricity Committee 1888-1948
- **BC/2/1/102** Trams Committee 1899-1908
- **BC/2/1/103-104** Finance and General Purposes Committee 1851-1974
- **BC/2/1/105-107** Fire Brigade and Ambulance Committee 1891-1968
- **BC/2/1/108** Gaol and Courthouse Committee 1837-1878
- **BC/2/1/109** General Purposes 1860-1884 (including Freeman's Estate Committee 1861-1879)
- **BC/2/1/110-114** Housing of the Working Classes/Housing Committee 1894-1968
- **BC/2/1/116-119** Library and Art Gallery Committee 1894-1974
- **BC/2/1/120** Markets Committee 1837-1968
- **BC/2/1/122-124** Various Mental Health Committees 1914-1967 (including Lunatic Asylum Committee 1872-1876)
- **BC/2/1/125-131** Pleasure Grounds/Parks and Cemeteries Committee 1891-1974 (Cemeteries from 1911, including Smallholdings & Allotments 1915-1974)
- **BC/2/1/133** City Improvement Committee (under Bath Act 1925) 1926-1949
- **BC/2/1/134-136** Bath & District Joint Planning Committee 1932-1948
- **BC/2/1/137-138** Planning Committee 1948-1974
- **BC/2/1/141-144** Public Assistance/Social Welfare Committee 1929-1974
- **BC/2/1/146-147** Public Safety Committee 1965-1974

- **BC/2/1/148-151** Rating Assessment Committee 1924-1967
- **BC/2/1/158-163** Watch Committee 1836-1966 (Bath Police)
- **BC/2/1/164-171** Waterworks Committee 1768-1968
  
- **BC/2/2** Minutes and related records of Bath City Council 1974-1996
- **BC/2/3** Minutes and related records of Bath & North East Somerset Council 1996-date. However, minutes from 1998 to date are available online via the Bath and North East Somerset Council website.

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## **BC/3 : Records of Town Clerks and Chief Executives c.1570-c.2005**

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Town Clerks were Officers of the Council. Until 1835, the town clerk was a local lawyer elected by the Councillors, they were paid an honorarium and ran their own private practice alongside the Council's business. With an assortment of deputies and clerks they had a wide range of duties. From 1835, a salaried Clerk was appointed. Responsibilities increased through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but by the 20<sup>th</sup> century much of the work was being done by various heads of departments. Became the Chief Executive in 1974.

These records have not all been catalogued in detail but include:

- **BC/3/1** Papers of the Legal Functions of the Clerk 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries - Sealing registers, sealed orders and byelaws, contracts for building works and supply of goods, and agreements.
- **BC/3/2-3** Papers of Town Clerks (personal and Council) 18<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – the Council business papers of the earlier clerks are often mixed with their private practice.
- **BC/3/4** Letterbooks 1860-1967 – copies of letters to and from Council
- **BC/3/5** Legal case papers 1734-1970s – for and against the Council
- **BC/3/6** Regulatory duties 1851-1973 – registrations and licensing
- **BC/3/7** Elections and registers of electors 1572-c.1857 – returns, poll books and other records.

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## **BC/4 : Bath Borough Courts c.1767-c.1855**

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The Council was responsible for a number of courts from medieval times until 1835, when all of its judicial responsibilities except Quarter Sessions were removed by the Municipal Corporation Act.

The court of Quarter Sessions remained the responsibility of the Council until 1888, when all judicial functions were finally removed from councils, but the court

continued to be held in the Guildhall until 1971. Quarter Sessions records are catalogued separately (reference QS – see guide for the *Records of Official Bodies*).

The Court of Requests was not a borough court, but was set up as a separate Commission, and its records are therefore catalogued with those of other Commissions at BC/22/1.

- **BC/4/1** Coroner's Court 1776-1835 – inquiries into sudden deaths with the Mayor as the ex-officio Coroner. These records are catalogued in detail, and are included in the Bath Ancestors database.
- **BC/4/2** Court of Record 1706-1835 – debt recovery above £5 until 1805, when increased to above £10. Not catalogued in detail
- **BC/4/3** Assize of Bread 1767-c.1810 – set the weight of bread to keep the cost constant, based on the price of wheat at Bristol. Not catalogued in detail.

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## **BC/5 : Financial and accounting records 1570-c.2000**

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Until 1794 the Chamberlain was elected from amongst the Councillors and the post was unpaid. He was responsible for all the monies coming in and out of the Council. From 1794 the post was filled by a paid appointee from outside the Councillors but was part-time. From 1835 the Council was required to appoint a Treasurer.

Accounts presented to the Council or individual Committees are in the relevant minutes in BC/2. Salaries are catalogued with personnel records in BC/20.

Financial and accounting records are not yet catalogued in detail but they include:

- Accounting records (account rolls, records of receipts and payments, cash books, and ledgers) of the Chamberlains and Treasurers, 1598-20<sup>th</sup> century
- Rating records from 1766
- Valuations from c.1930
- Filing from the Treasurer's department 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Investments and mortgages records 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> centuries

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## **BC/6 : Property owned or administered by Council 13<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries**

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The Council has been a major city-centre property owner since 1590 and was a key developer in late 18<sup>th</sup> century. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century it could compulsorily purchase property for projects and built housing for the working classes from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a role that continued until the 1980s.

These records are not yet catalogued in detail other than: BC/6/1/1; BC/6/2/1-3, 9; BC/6/3; BC/6/4/6-7; BC/6/6/2. See also BC/8 for Planning and Building Control records.

- **BC/6/1** Surveys, terriers and lease registers 1641-c.2000
- **BC/6/2** Title deeds to properties owned by the Council or charities administered by them 13<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries
- **BC/6/3** Claims to Central Land Board 1948-1949
- **BC/6/4** Drawings and plans of Council-owned properties c.1775-c.2001
- **BC/6/5** Rentals for Council Property 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries
- **BC/6/6** Property management c.1900-c.2000

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## **BC/7 : Infrastructure records c.1748-c.2000**

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Records relating to the supply of infrastructure amenities and services, such as water supply, sewerage, waste disposal, highways and bridges, regulation of tramways and provision of electricity.

The Council's involvement in supplying water in the city dates from at least the 13<sup>th</sup> century, though real investment began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There was less Council control over other amenities until the various Improvement Commissioners were set up in the mid-18th century (for records, see BC/22). From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century various Acts gave the Council powers to provide infrastructure services, paid for through rates and mortgages.

Electricity was supplied by the Council from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century until mid-20<sup>th</sup> century nationalisation. The Council also undertook major infrastructure projects, such as the creation of Hedgemoor Park 1862-1899.

Infrastructure records are not yet catalogued in detail other than the series below.

**BC/7/1** – Waterworks 1740s-1970s – Records relating to the supply of fresh water to the city, and development of an improved supply, including:

- **BC/7/1/3** Bath Waterworks Act 1836
- **BC/7/1/5** Bath Waterworks Act 1870
- **BC/7/1/6** Acquisition of Private Waterworks by the Corporation
- **BC/7/1/8** Construction of Monkwood Reservoir 1891-1899
- **BC/7/1/9** Bath Waterworks Act 1903
- **BC/7/1/11** Administrative Registers of the Waterworks

- **BC/7/1/12-16** Correspondence filing of the Waterworks Engineer, Waterworks Office and Waterworks Committee, 1876-c.1980

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## **BC/8 : Planning and Building Control records c.1860-c.2000**

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The Council used Improvement Acts from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to undertake improvements and redevelopment in parts of the city (see BC/22) until they gained more powers to control development and building standards in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. The first bye-laws in the 1860s mainly concerned public health, but a series of housing acts from 1890-1932, increased the powers of the council, especially relating to slum clearance, and enabled a more strategic approach to development. The Bath Act 1925 included a clause relating to the protection of heritage buildings and required the deposit of a proposed elevation for approval by a small committee, the first example in the UK of such planning protection.

From 1934 an interim scheme for Bath under the Town & Country Planning Act 1932 introduced planning applications, but modern planning schemes properly began following the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, when applications were made compulsory across the country.

- **BC/8/1** Planning strategy c.1950-c.1990 including local and regional structure plans. Not yet catalogued in detail
- **BC/8/2** Major projects c.1910-c.2000 including planning enquiries. Not yet catalogued in detail.
- **BC/8/3** Slum clearance and Comprehensive Development Areas c.1890-c.1970. Records of clearance and redevelopment of poor quality housing within the city.
- **BC/8/5** Business Files of the Housing Committee 1905-c.1990 – Correspondence files of the Housing committee relating to the creation, management and maintenance of residential property within the city including housing estates.
- **BC/8/6** Records relating to planning applications 1934-c.2000  
Not yet catalogued in detail, except:
  - **BC/8/6/8** Planning applications to Bath City Council 1934-1996
- **BC/8/7** Building regulations approvals (building control) 1869-1980. Not yet catalogued in detail, but indexes to the early 1970s are available in the Record Office searchroom.
- **BC/8/8** Conservation and listing of historic properties 1937-2000 including conservation grant and unique property files. Most of these records have been catalogued in detail.
- **BC/8/9** Sites and Monuments Record reports 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not yet catalogued in detail

- **BC/8/10** Landscape, including rights of way, commons and open spaces, 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not yet catalogued in detail

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## **BC/9 : Civic functions of the Mayor 1778-date**

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The role of the Mayor is much changed since the first recorded holder of the title in 1230. Up to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century he was the most powerful person on the Council, effectively chief executive and chief justice. After the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act the mayors' powers were much reduced and the judicial role removed altogether but the holder had important ceremonial and civic roles: he or she represented and promoted the city at engagements, received and entertained distinguished visitors, supported citizens and the local community in a number of ways, and led appeals for funds for a wide range of causes. The mayor remained Chair of the Council until 1996.

The Bath Charter Trustees have, since 1996, maintained the functions and traditions of the mayoralty. The role is now mainly ceremonial and civic to promote and represent the City.

These records are all catalogued.

- **BC/9/1** American War Association 1778
- **BC/9/2** Bath Loyal Association 1792-1797
- **BC/9/3** Funds for appeals 1813-c.1910
- **BC/9/4** Royalty 1840-2012
- **BC/9/5** Scrapbooks 1850-1995
- **BC/9/6** Business files 1905-date
- **BC/9/9** International exhibitions 1840-1911
- **BC/9/10** Bath Pageant 1909

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## **BC/10 : Bath City Markets c.1776-c.1990**

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When the first rights to hold fairs were granted, to the Bishop of Bath & Wells, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, there was already an established pattern of market days. The Council gradually gained control over the markets until their rights were confirmed in the 1590 charter.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century the Market House stood in the middle of the High Street, surrounded by market booths with the butchers' market in the space between there and the river. This was replaced in the 1770s by the new Guildhall and a provisions market in the space behind. This continued, with alterations, until the current Guildhall Market was built in 1862, creating a smaller covered market whose space was further reduced as the surrounding buildings were constructed in the 1890s-1900s

Corn and Cattle markets operated on Walcot Street. Opened in 1811, they had closed by the late 1940s.

These records are not yet catalogued in detail but include:

- Management records 1790-1980s
- Market leases 1776-1834 and stall rentals 1790-1791
- Rent roll for the provisions market 1920s-1940s
- Cattle market sales and fees register 1923-1964

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## **BC/11 : Bath City Gaol 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries**

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The City Gaol was intended to house minor offenders, such as drunks and debtors, with more serious cases being remanded to the County Gaol.

The first City Gaol was housed in the former St Mary's Northgate Church, which was replaced by a new gaol in Grove Street in 1772. This building was inadequate from the start and a new gaol was erected in Twerton in 1842. This was closed in 1877 when the Government took over responsibility for all gaols.

Few of the records survive and are yet not catalogued in detail.

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## **BC/12 : Watch Committee c.1750-c.1965**

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These records include a small amount of material relating to Bath City Council's police, fire and ambulance services, and the related work of the Watch Committee.

Note that most of the records of Bath City Police force are catalogued separately (reference 0661). The force was set up in 1836 as a result of the Municipal Corporations Act 1835, replacing the City, Walcot, and Bathwick night watches. In 1966 it amalgamated with the Somerset Constabulary and ceased to be the responsibility of the Council. Its records were transferred to the newly-formed force, but were later deposited in the Record Office, along with post-1966 records. Fire and ambulance services came under the purview of the Committee 1928-1973.

These records are not catalogued in detail, but include:

- Watch committee papers and general filing 1830s-1960s including police and fire services
- General filing relating to Public Safety 1960s - 1970s including accidents, Poisons Act, highways,
- Bath Police Force regulations, 1853-1880
- Papers relating to the new Police Station at Orange Grove, 1860s

- Fire Brigade log books, 4 vols., 1907-1931 (former reference 0578)
- Bath City Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service c.1928-1973 (former reference 0282)
- Fire Brigade Annual Reports, 1930s-70s

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## **BC/13 : Bath as a spa, cultural and tourist centre c.1750-1990s**

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Bath's unique history means that the cultural and leisure aspects of the town are a mainstay of its economy and the Council has been directly involved in their development since it took over control of the baths in 1554 following the Reformation and the dissolution of the Abbey.

The Council invested in the baths to encourage visitors from 1572 when it built the New Bath (Queen's Bath). Encouraging use of the baths also meant the development of tourist amenities: the Pump Room was built in 1706 (rebuilt 1790s), the Hot Baths were rebuilt in the 1770s, and the Cross Bath in 1784 and 1790s. Visitors declined in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but the rise in leisure swimming led to the building of public baths.

The discovery of the Roman remains in the 1870s led to the growth in heritage tourism and the revival in the use of the spa. New hotels were built, and the Queen's Bath rebuilt with upgraded treatments. These facilities were closed after World War II with a downturn in spa popularity, particularly after the discovery of a spa water contamination in the 1970s. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a revival in the use of spas resulted in the implementation of a new, safe, thermal water supply and the construction of the Thermae Bath Spa complex, opened in 2006.

These records have not been catalogued in detail except for: BC/13/1, 2, 6, 7.

- **BC/13/1** Spa Committee general filing 1909-1984 including Hot Mineral Baths and Pump Room Committee and Bath Assembly Ltd. Catalogued in detail
- **BC/13/2** Bath Assembly Rooms 1922-1990 including negotiations with the National Trust. Catalogued in detail.
- **BC/13/3** Baths and Pump Room c.1750-c.1950 including lists of bathers, and papers re. Major Davis, City Surveyor. Not catalogued in detail.
- **BC/13/4** Library, Museum and Art Gallery 1832-20<sup>th</sup> century including the Holbourne Museum and polls on establishing the Public Lending Library. Not catalogued in detail.
- **BC/13/5** Summer Band 1906-1970 . Not catalogued in detail
- **BC/13/6** Attractions Committee 1899-1973 including Mural Tablets. Catalogued in detail.
- **BC/13/7** Bath Assembly/Bath Festival 1948-1994 including records of the Bath Festival Society Ltd. Catalogued in detail.
- **BC/13/8** Provision of public baths and washhouses 19<sup>th</sup> century at Darlington Wharf and Cleveland Baths. Not catalogued in detail.

- **BC/13/9** Tourist information and guidebooks 20<sup>th</sup> century. Not catalogued in detail

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## **BC/14 : Public Health c.1866-c.1960**

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The 1851 Bath Act gave the Council powers relating to public health provision for the first time. The first Medical Officer of Health was appointed in 1866.

- **BC/14/1** - Records of the Medical Officer of Health for Bath including report books, correspondence, registers, press cuttings and photographs.
- **BC/14/2** - Records of the Public Analyst – register of samples for analysis.
- **BC/14/3** – Records of the Sanitary Inspector – housing inspection reports
- **BC/14/4** - Records of the Statutory (Isolation) Hospital – Records of the establishment and administration of the Hospital
- **BC/14/5** - Records of the Bath Infant Welfare Association
- **BC/14/6** - Records of the School Dental Service

Note that records concerning infrastructure related to public health are in BC/7.

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## **BC/15 : Bath Education Authority c.1892-c.1974**

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The Council's first responsibility for education was under the Technical Education Act 1899 which enabled it to establish the Technical Schools in the north end of the Guildhall. In 1902 the Education Act gave the Council responsibility for elementary schools and allowed it to provide secondary education. This it did gradually, and for a limited number of pupils, first within the Science, Art and Technical School, and then in new buildings: the City of Bath Girls School was opened in 1922, the Boys School in 1932.

In 1944 the Education Act provided for free secondary education for all at either grammar, technical or 'modern' schools. A major school-building programme was undertaken 1950s-1970s. In 1967 comprehensive education was introduced.

Avon County Council became responsible for education in 1974, but it was returned to the newly-created Bath & North East Somerset Council in 1996. Under the Academies Act 2010 most secondary and some primary schools left Council control.

Despite the significance of the educational responsibilities of the Council, few records survive, and they have not yet been catalogued.

Note that records of school boards (1870-1902) and of individual schools are catalogued separately.

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## **BC/16 : Parks, allotments and cemeteries c.1850-c.1985**

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Councils could purchase or lease land for 'pleasure grounds' under the Public Health Act 1875, and Bath Council purchased the Freeman's Estate in 1879 which included the Royal Victoria Park. In 1912 they took over Sydney Gardens, created in 1795, and more parks and recreational grounds (including playing fields) in the years following.

Burial Boards were set up in Bath 1859-1880 to enable the creation of new burial grounds to ease the pressure on over-full church cemeteries. The Council took over the Boards in 1911, and although the Boards' administrative records stop in that year, the Boards' fees and records books continued in use.

Councils could set up allotments from 1908, which Bath did by the end of that year. They still operate 23 sites.

These records have not been catalogued in detail but include:

- Parks Committee general filing including papers relating to the purchase of Sydney Gardens and plans of parks
- Smallholdings and Allotment Committee general filing including allotment rentals
- Records of the Burial boards, including minutes, financial records, cemetery fee books, plans, records of headstone designs, applications for interment have been catalogued in detail under a previous cataloguing scheme. as BC200-BC207. These references will be changed.

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## **BC/17 : Public assistance/children's and social services/mental health c.1840-c.2000**

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The Board of Guardians of the Bath Poor Law Union was responsible for the provision of 'poor relief' through the workhouse or payment of cash, including the care of orphaned children or those requiring care outside the home, from 1836 until 1930, when responsibility passed to the Council. Although renamed 'public assistance', the structures and payments of the system remained almost unchanged. The creation of the Welfare State 1945-1948 removed responsibility for medical care, unemployment and other benefits, which passed to central government. The Council remained responsible for the care of children, the elderly (residentially or care in the home) and some disabled people.

Records relating to asylums and the care of the mentally ill was a Council responsibility from 1845.

Not many of these records survive and they have not been catalogued in detail. They include:

- Records relating to the transfer of responsibilities from the Board of Guardians
- Records relating to applications for public assistance pre-1945 and financial contributions by relatives

- Records relating to children boarded out or in homes
- Social Services service development plans
- Records relating to asylums and provision for the mentally ill

Some of these records are closed under UK data protection law.

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## **BC/18 : Civil Defence c.1935-c.1990**

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The Council created an Air Raid Precautions Committee in 1935, on instructions from the Home Office. In 1939 an ARP Controller was appointed, and an Emergency Committee established with control over civil defence. The committee had three members and was renamed the Civil Defence Committee in 1941. After World War II the Controller and Committee oversaw the wind up of operations and disposal of assets.

In 1948 the Civil Defence Corps was established to train and equip volunteers to take control in a major national emergency; it was disbanded in 1968.

The records include material from several Council departments which undertook work required for civil defence during World War II, particularly the Town Clerk's, Medical Officer of Health's and the City Surveyor's departments.

These records have not been catalogued in detail but include:

- Second World War records relating to general filing of the ARP; Civil Defence and Emergency Committees, 1933-1945; records of war-damaged buildings and civilian war deaths; records of personnel and premises; and maps.
- Post-war records relating to general filing of the Civil Defence Committee and the Civil Defence department, emergency plans and photographs of civil defence exercises

Access to some of these records may be restricted under UK Data Protection Laws.

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## **BC/19 : Officers and employees of the Council c.1900-c.2002**

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As 'personnel management' didn't develop until the later 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of these records were created by the Treasurer's department. They contain information about the people who have worked for the Council, which is otherwise hard to track.

Education Authority records including records of teachers and other staff. are in BC/15

Access to some of these records may be restricted under UK Data Protection Laws.

The records have not been catalogued in detail but include:

- Records of salaries and pensions payments, including some weekly wages, 1909-1960s
- Personnel training files 1960s-1970s; and personnel management policy files 1974-1984,
- Staff handbooks and booklets from the 1990s, internal telephone directories 1980s-2002, and guide to printing section services
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## **BC/20 : Press and public relations c.1815-c.1993**

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These records reflect the Council's need to communicate with the residents of Bath. The means by which it has done this has varied over time, from posters to magazines, but they all provide details of the official information provided by the Council over the years.

These records have not been catalogued in detail but include annual reports on the work of the Council, guides to facilities and services, posters, and volumes of press cuttings and advertisements placed in newspapers.

Records relating to tourism are in BC/13/9 and election posters are in BC/3/7

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## **BC/21 : Freeman 1590-1879**

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Freemen were originally merchants with the freedom to trade within the city. This status was acquired by apprenticeship to a freeman or by purchase. There were only a small number of freemen and a core of these merchants had, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century gained control of the government of the city. In the 1590 charter they were named as the Bath Corporation.

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century they no longer held a trade monopoly and their only asset was the Town Common. This was acquired as part of the Freeman's Estate by the Council in 1879. In 1885 legislation permitted the admission of Honorary Freeman who were individuals of distinction or those who had rendered a service to the borough as mark of appreciation with no associated rights.

These records have not been catalogued in detail but include:

- Committee Minutes, 1829-1879
- Registers of admission as freemen 1712-1775, enrolment of freemen's apprentices 1697-1776, and apprenticeship indentures 1735-1885. The apprenticeship register 1706-1776 has been indexed and can be found on the Bath Ancestors database on the website.
- Papers relating to legal disputes and agreements with the Corporation, 1590-1879

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## **BC/22 : Bath Commissions c.1766-c.1851**

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The growth of Bath as a fashionable resort put pressure on the Corporation to provide amenities such as street paving and lighting, rubbish removal and a watch to secure the safety of residents and visitors alike.

The Corporation did not have the powers or money to undertake such work and attempted to use Acts and devolve some powers on to the Parish Councils in an effort to resolve the problem. This was unsuccessful, so they created Commissions, under Acts of Parliament, in specific areas to raise funds to undertake the necessary works.

There are three principal Acts that enabled street improvements, rubbish removal, and a watch to be established, one act that was for specific improvements, and one relating to debt recovery through the courts. They were repealed by the 1851 Bath Act devolving all their duties and assets to Bath City Council. This act was executed by the 1851 Bath Act Committee – see BC/2/1/8-15. The Bath Police replaced the Watch in 1836 – see BC/2/1/158-163 and 0661.

- **BC/22/1** Bath Court of Requests 1785-1788, 1829-1831, 1837-1840 – The court was set up in 1766 to allow for debt recovery of sums below £2, raised to £10 in 1805, and the area covered extended to the 35 surrounding parishes. Superseded by Bath County Court 1846.
- **BC/22/2** Bath Act 1766 (1766-1851) – twenty Bath Commissioners were appointed by the city parishes and Corporation to undertake improvements funded by a rate on householders. Replaced by Bath Act 1814 and extended to cover the Parish of Lyncombe & Widcombe in 1836.
- **BC/22/3** Bath Improvement Act 1789 (1789-1832) – created to secure and protect the Hot Baths and springs from encroachment, rebuild the Pump Room, widen and create new streets at the approaches with the power to purchase property as necessary. Funded by the Corporation and mortgages on the Turnpike tolls into Bath.
- **BC/22/4** Walcot Act 1793 (1793-1851) – Commissioners sponsored by residents of Walcot Parish outside the city boundary. Amended by an 1825 Act. Additional duties included regulation of porters and sedan chairmen, numbering houses, and the Commissioners were to sit as Justices.
- **BC/22/5** Bathwick Act 1801 (1801-1851) – funded by a rate on the residents of Bathwick.