

OXFORDSHIRE HISTORY CENTRE POLICY DOCUMENT PD003

Access Policy

As a public and publicly funded facility, Oxfordshire History Centre (OHC) has as one of its major objectives the provision of straightforward and unhindered access to historical records for all members of the community (whether direct or indirect users). However, there are other considerations which have to be taken into account. Preservation and security of the documents themselves must be paramount, and the rights of **all** users of the records must be taken into consideration.

Access to the searchroom

- Access to the searchroom will be available to all in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act (2005).
- All visitors to the searchroom must fill in a signing-in slip, which will be deemed to constitute assent to the rules of the History Centre. These are available for consultation at the reception desk and on our website.
- Access to the searchroom is free of charge. However, a charge may be made for certain services provided within it.
- Access will be provided at the times stated on the noticeboards outside the building, in service leaflets, and on the History Centre pages of the county council website. However, it may be necessary for the service to close without notice due to unforeseen circumstances, and the Centre cannot be held responsible for this. Every effort will be made to publicise anticipated closures by notices in the building and through the website.
- Children are welcome in the searchroom provided they are accompanied by an adult,. The county council cannot accept responsibility for the wellbeing of children, and may ask them to leave if they are causing disruption. No animals except guide and hearing dogs are allowed.
- The History Centre cannot accept responsibility for visitors' personal possessions; lockers are provided free of charge in the Reception area for any valuables. Visitors are welcome to use laptops and tablets, and plug sockets are provided under the desks. While carrying out regular electrical testing, the county council accepts no responsibility for the power supply or anything else which may disrupt or damage equipment belonging to a searcher.

Access to documents

- Oxfordshire History Centre is a member of the CARN ticket system. Access will not be granted to original material for anyone without a ticket, unless they are the owner or depositor of that material, although if someone forgets their ticket they can sign an agreement form to the effect that this is a one-off and hand over another form of security while looking at documents. If they are the owner or depositor, they must produce reasonable proof of the fact. Children under 16 without the requisite ID can provide a letter signed by their teacher and evidence of identity which includes name and photograph, e.g. a passport

- Access to documents within the History Centre is determined within the framework of the following legislation:
 - Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964)
 - Public Records Acts (1958) and (1967)
 - Local Government Acts (1962) and (1972)
 - Parochial Records and Registers Measure (1978, revised 1992)
 - Law of Property Acts (1922) and (1924)
 - Tithe Act (1936)
 - Data Protection Act (1998)
 - Freedom of Information Act (2000)
- Certain classes of document and individual documents are closed under Data Protection legislation. Where possible, such closure will be noted in the catalogues, but we cannot guarantee that this will be the case, and there may be instances in which the member of staff on duty feels it necessary to close a document on the spot where Data Protection is clearly going to be breached.
- The History Centre does not accept documents which are permanently closed to public inspection. However, documents may be deposited with a limited closure on them, and these documents will not be available until the closure period has terminated.
- Access to uncatalogued material is subject to its deposit status, and further permission from the depositor may be required before access can be granted, in order to ensure that document security and information sensitivity are not compromised.
- Where, in the opinion of the Conservation Manager or duty staff, a document will be damaged by being produced for inspection, the centre reserves the right to close it to public access.
- In such cases an identical copy of a document (such as a photograph or digital image) will be considered an adequate substitute for the original.

Provision of copies

- Copies of items are made under the stipulations of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act (1988) and subsequent legislation. Users requiring copies will be asked to fill in the appropriate forms and agree to any restrictions placed by law on the use of the copies. Copies will not be provided of any item which, in the opinion of staff, will be damaged by the process, or of any document where the owner has forbidden copying.
- Photography, including the use of digital cameras, is permitted providing a photographic permit has been purchased from searchroom staff.
- The publication of any material or a transcript of it requires permission from the History Centre.

Remote access to OHC collections

Access to our resources and collections is also available to external users through a variety of sources. Users who are unable to visit OHC in person can contact us by email or letter, and telephone during office hours.

- OHC offers a research and copying service for external researchers, as detailed in PD027 'Policy on Answering Remote Enquiries'. Research may be subject to a fee, dependent on the nature and complexity of the enquiry.
- Requests for copies of documents will be fulfilled wherever possible but document preservation is paramount and OHC reserves the right to refuse to

make copies, or to recommend an alternative copying method, should the copying process prove likely to cause damage to a document. As noted above, provision of copies is subject to the stipulations of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act (1988) and subsequent legislation

- All remote enquiries are subject to the same terms and conditions of Data Protection legislation as detailed above.
- Researchers can use our website to access details of our opening hours, location, visitor information, contact details, guides to our main classes of holdings, and links to our online resources.
- Access to a range of our catalogues is provided through our online search portal Heritage Search, although it should be noted that not all of our collections are accessible in this way and researchers may still need to contact OHC by email, letter, or telephone in order to clarify details of our holdings.
- Access to digitised copies of some of our collections is currently provided by a range of external providers including House of Images, and Find My Past. While free access to these sites may be available through computers located onsite at OHC, remote users may still be expected to pay a subscription fee to access individual services.
- OHC utilises dedicated accounts on Twitter and Facebook in order to publicise and promote its services, but not as a means of answering research enquiries. Any such enquirers should be directed to contact OHC by email, letter or telephone instead.

Complete revision, and amalgamation with the former policy documents PD004 and PD009, March 2012 - Linda Haynes, Joyce Brown, Mark Priddey

Revised July 2013 and in December 2013 by Mark Priddey.

Checked July 2014 by Mark Priddey

Revised March 2015 by Hannah Jones and Mark Priddey

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