

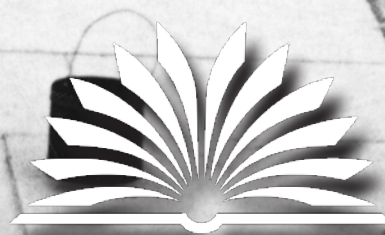
# First Steps

## Caring for Community Archives

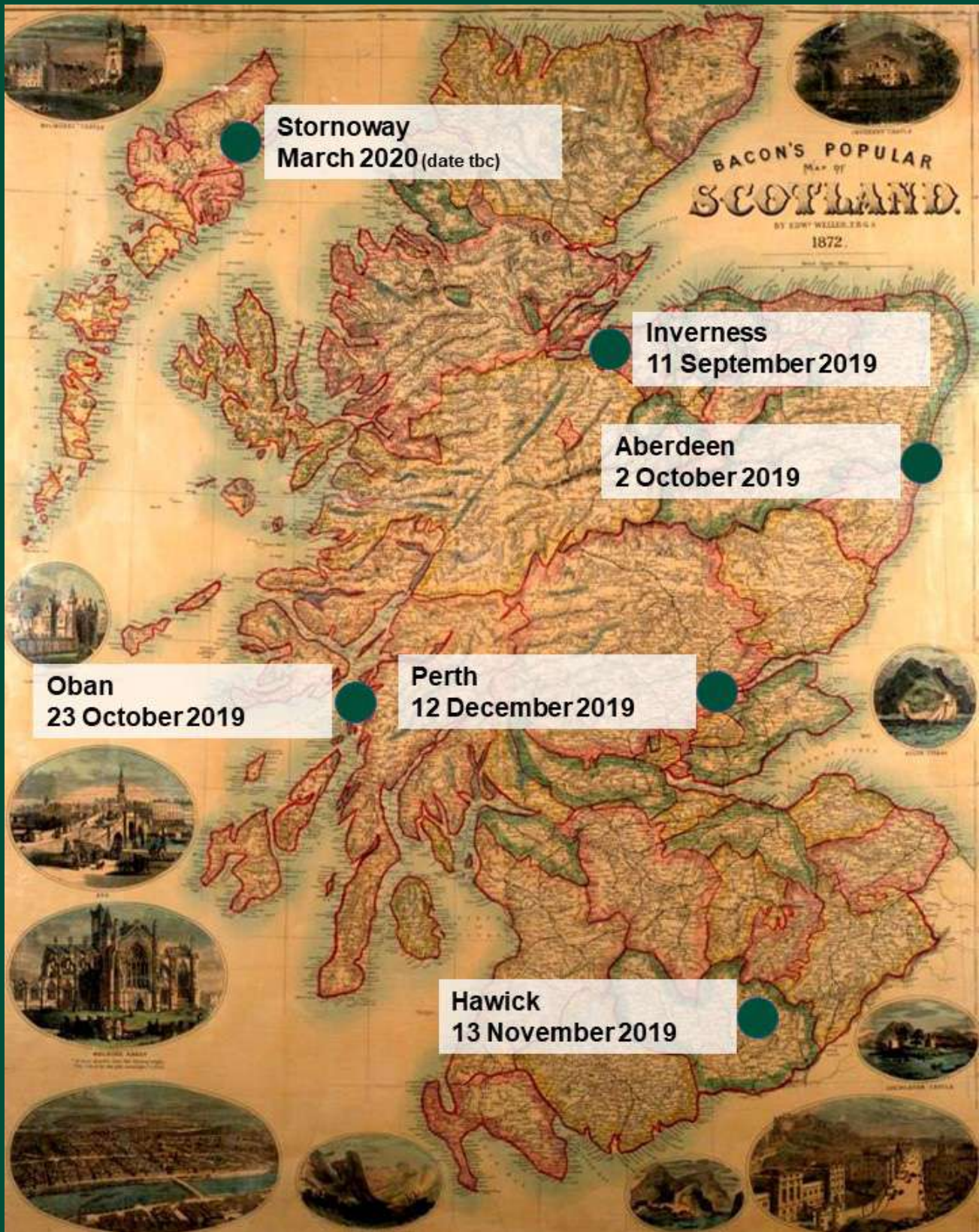
### 2019-20



SCOTTISH  
COUNCIL ON  
ARCHIVES



National  
Records of  
Scotland



## First Steps: Caring for Community Archives Workshop Tour 2019-20

22 March 2019: General Register House, Edinburgh

11 September 2019: Highland Archive Centre, Inverness

2 October 2019: Council Chambers, Town House, Aberdeen

23 October 2019: Corran Halls, Oban

13 November 2019: The Heritage Hub, Hawick

12 December 2019: AK Bell Library, Perth

March 2020 (date tbc): Lews Castle, Tasglann nan Eilean Siar, Stornoway

# Welcome

As Keeper of the Records of Scotland I am responsible for the preservation of much of Scotland's national archival heritage. Archives held by the National Records of Scotland have been created by public and private bodies, clubs and societies, and families and individuals from the Northern Isles to the Borders and contribute to a deep understanding of the development of our nation and the peoples of Scotland. But the NRS' collections do not represent the whole of our nation's archival story.



The community archive sector, comprising volunteer groups bound together by a common purpose, a shared connection, or a collective experience, are an essential part of the fabric of Scotland's archival heritage and Scotland's story.

Community archive and heritage groups create, collect and look after such records, which might otherwise never find their way into an archive, making them available to those wishing to better understand that community. Your archive and heritage collections inspire pride and draw people together and by documenting and preserving the voice of a community, strengthen its sense of identity and knowledge.

I am delighted therefore that my team at NRS are able to take First Steps : Caring for Community Archives events out to community archivists across the country, in partnership with our colleagues at the Scottish Council on Archives, our local archive colleagues and with the support of Historic Environment Scotland. These workshops provide an opportunity to share experiences, knowledge and expertise, as we work together to ensure the sustainability of an archival heritage as rich and diverse as the people and nation it documents.

## **Paul Lowe**

Keeper of the Records of Scotland

The Scottish Council on Archives is delighted to be working in partnership with the National Records of Scotland to deliver a programme of workshops for community groups around the country who want to know more about how to care for and make accessible their archives. We are extremely grateful to Historic Environment Scotland for their generous support.

We hope that these events will be the first steps in ensuring that the archival collections held by smaller organisations are better preserved, catalogued and shared with many more people. Professionals from the National Records of Scotland, National Register of Archives in Scotland and local authority archive services will offer advice and tips on a range of subjects including: digitisation, basic conservation, storage and accessioning.

## **John Pelan, Director**

Scottish Council on Archives

# TEN TOP TIPS FOR COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

**1. Only Connect.** Don't be afraid to ask for help, advice and support. Speak to other heritage bodies, national and local. In particular connect with your local archivist and join community archive networks to share knowledge and expertise.



**2. Collecting Policy.** Have a clear idea about what you wish to collect and why you are collecting it. Importantly, be clear about what you do not wish to collect and review this regularly.

**3. Register of Accessions.** Keep a register of all your accessions so you know what you've got, who you got it from and on what terms you hold it.



**4. Consider the Future.** think about the long-term future of your archive. Consider protocols for deaccessioning, also consider what should happen to collections should the group cease to exist for any reason.

**5. Cataloguing.** Before cataloguing consider: arrangement, physical condition, digitisation usage and access restrictions such as copyright or data protection. Keep the documents in the original order and give the documents a unique number.



**6. Providing Access.** When providing access give consideration to: the physical condition; privacy restrictions; handling; security; numbering of documents. Keep a record every time someone use the collections.

**7. Small is Beautiful.** Have a limited number of individuals responsible for the archives – avoid having too many people directly involved in the management of collections. Beware of lending out original materials or keeping detailed information on those to whom you have lent documents.



**8. Pass it On.** Bring in, and train up other interested people so that when your current members retire, the relevant skills and knowledge is passed on to the next generation.

**9. Preservation and Conservation.** Ensure that your collections are adequately stored in a stable environment. Have a plan in place to alert members in case of fire or other incidents and consult your local fire brigade for advice.



**10. Intellectual Property Rights.** Be aware of issues relating to confidentiality, copyright and data protection. Seek advice from your local archivist or archive networks if you are unsure.

# CATALOGUING ARCHIVE MATERIAL

**Original Order.** The original arrangement of the records should, as far as possible, be maintained. This helps researchers understand how the records were created and used. Make a descriptive list of everything in the collection before applying any arrangement.

**Hierarchy.** Archivists employ a hierarchy when describing records of an organisation and catalogues reflect such hierarchies, moving from the general to the specific. The description should aim to represent accurately the context and content of the material at the level being described.



**Essential elements of description.** In order for your catalogue to meet the minimum archival cataloguing standard you should always include the following elements in your description



- Reference code: a unique reference number
- Title: to name the thing being described
- Name of creator of the record
- Dates of creation of the record
- Extent or quantity being described
- Level of description (where you are in the hierarchy)

## DEBUNKING THE MYTHS OF GDPR

All community archive groups should give serious consideration to data protection legislation; however, UK data protection law does not prevent you from collecting and archiving personal data.



**Myth One: GDPR prevents you from archiving personal data.** Although the new legislation has refreshed the language around the data protection principles, the substantive differences relate to additional requirements for transparency and accountability of processing; however, it does not prevent archiving of such data.

**Myth Two: You must have a legal obligation to archive.** Archiving in the public interest should serve the public good and not be purely for personal or corporate interest and private gain. This does **not** however mean that only public bodies are covered by legislation. The government supports the continuation of archiving by private as well as public bodies and individuals.

**Myth Three: You cannot archive personal information without the data subject's consent.** There are a variety of lawful bases, beyond specific consent, which allow for the processing of personal data when archiving in the public interest.

**Myth Four: You cannot provide research access to records containing information about living individuals.** Safeguards can be established to ensure no harm or distress is caused to the subject of the data through the process of archiving. The application of appropriate access closure periods, data minimisations and the use of Data Protection Impact Assessments can be employed to protect the rights of data subjects when archiving in the public interest.



# THINKING ABOUT DIGITISATION?

**Planning, preparation and documentation.** During the planning stage think about why you are digitising, who your audiences are and what do they want? You should consider what image format you will need for archival storage and public access, what image quality and resolutions will be appropriate and what the implications of these choices may be. Numbering of documents and pagination of materials is essential before commencing any digitisation activity, and consideration should be given to how you will ensure quality and completeness in the image. Keep a written record of why you make decisions and about the key processes you undertake. This will be key to the future sustainability of the digitised material.



## COPYRIGHT

**Copyright.** It is crucial to consider and explore copyright in the material you are planning to digitise. Bear in mind that if someone deposits records or lend them for copying, they may belong to another person and you might infringe their copyright or legal ownership.



**Metadata.** This is the information you need to support the images. Determine a file naming convention and use unique names for each file. Consider what information you will need to capture about each image in order to make sense of the digital material you are creating.



**Online development.** Take seriously the design of your online resource, considering usability, adaptability and accessibility issues. You should also develop a protocol for taking remedial action to your digital offering. Consider how you will correct and update your images and metadata and how you will respond to complaints around functionality, incorrect information or image corruption. You should also be prepared for requests to reuse the material on your website and the development of a copyright and take down policy will ensure you can remove or unpublish material if required.



# SUSTAINING YOUR DIGITAL ARCHIVE

More and more, the records community archivists collect and create are in a digital format, and the challenge of sustaining your digital collections can appear daunting. Following some core digital preservation principles however will help you to sustain your digital holdings into the future.



**Know what you have got:** know what information you have in terms of both the content and subject matter but also identify the type and format of your materials.

**Keep the stuff safe!** Know where it is, what media it is stored on and where it is stored. Remember, **Lots Of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe** (LOCKSS). Keep multiple copies of your digital holdings on different storage devices and in different places, e.g. on a hard disk on your main PC, a removable drive and cloud storage. Periodically check the health of the copies to ensure the media is still performing.

**Organise and arrange content:** store your collections centrally, if you can, as this makes management of the whole collection easier. Structure your storage with good folder names that are 'self-describing'.

Websites and social media are ubiquitous tools for community archives; however, you should select your platform carefully, as social media platforms are often very hard to preserve. Consider preservation of your website when you are designing it. Consult the NRS guidelines for advice and consider nominating your websites to be archived for free (by the Internet Archive) to ensure the content can be found in the future.



# USEFUL RESOURCES

National Records of Scotland (NRS):

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/>

National Register of Archives for Scotland (NRAS):

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/record-keeping/national-register-of-archives-for-scotland>

NRAS Archives Preservation Guidance for Private Owners:

<https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/files//record-keeping/ArchivePreservationGuidelinesForPrivateOwners10thEdition.pdf>

NRS Web Archiving guidance:

<https://resources.mygov.scot/content-standards/content-delivery/managing-content/web-archiving/>

Scottish Handwriting: <https://www.scottishhandwriting.com>

Handwriting:

<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/reading-older-handwriting>

Dates and money:

<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/dates-numbers-and-sums-money>

Weights and measures:

<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/weights-and-measures>

Agricultural terms:

<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/agricultural-produce-and-livestock>

Cataloguing Guidelines for Community Archives:

<https://www.communityarchives.org.uk/content/resource/cataloguing-guidelines>





## ENVIRONMENT

Maintaining a cool dry environment is essential for the long term preservation of all archive collections. Relative Humidity = stable, between 30-50%

Temperature = Stable, below 19 degrees C

Light = No light, except for access

Air Quality = Reduced particulate & gaseous pollution

**Regularly check**



## STORAGE

Storage enclosures can be sleeves, folders and boxes. It is vital they are made from the right quality of materials and are chemically inert. Free from wood pulp fibres, neutral pH and made from cotton or alpha cellulose which is free from sulphur, peroxides and metal particles. Good storage protects your archive collections from dust and light.

**Choose materials wisely**



## HANDLING

Fragile and damaged paper can be difficult to handle. Ensure there is a clear and clean space to work on and everyone has washed their hands.

Use small weights for weighing down sheets of paper. Support large books on pillows. Never use biro or felt pens when referring to objects. Use acid free gummed tape , never Sellotape

**Handle with care**

# Community Archive Collection Care



## HOUSEKEEPING

With regular maintenance your archive collections will be clean and dry, and this will prevent the onset of mould or pest infestations. Make sure doors and windows are well sealed and store items on shelves while keeping the the floor are clear.

**Create a clean and secure store**



## DISPLAY

All types of archive objects are light sensitive, especially photographs. The intensity of light needs to be low and the amount of time the object is on show limited. Effort should be made to remove the UV component from the light source.

**Manage the risks**



## LABELLING

Every layer of packaging, as well as the archive object should be clearly labelled. Label paper and card with HB or 2B pencils. It will be necessary to label glossy surface, such as photographs with waterproof ink or a 'chinagraph' pencil

**Keep track of every item**

## FIRST STEPS: COLLECTION CARE OF COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

Understanding how to care for your collections is one of the first things you need to consider when starting a community archive. Everyone is responsible for collections care, and it will help to preserve what makes your community archive uniquely important.

Creating a suitable environment for the preservation and display of collections

Strategic planning for ongoing care

A team effort to treat all archive items with respect

Guidance on handling, packing and treating your collections

## Read on.....

- PD 5454:2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials(British Standards Institution, 2012)
- The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping (Butterworth-Heinemann; The National Trust 2006(Revised 2011) ISBN 1907892189)
- The Care of Fine Books (Greenfield, J. Skyhorse Publishing, 2014, ISBN 162873793X)
- The Museum Environment, 2nd edition (Thomson, G. 1986, Butterworth)
- The Permanence and Care of Color Photographs: traditional and digital color prints, color negatives, slides, and motion pictures (Wilhem H. Preservation Publishing Company, 1993, ISBN 0911515011 / 0911515003)

## Conservation Suppliers

- Preservation Equipment

<https://www.preservationequipment.com>

- Collections Trust

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk>

- Conservations Resources UK

<https://conservation-resources.co.uk>

- Conservation By Design (UK based)

<http://www.cxdinternational.com>

## Useful Websites

- <https://www.scottisharchives.org.uk/resources/preservation/> Scottish Council on Archives

- [www.archives.org.uk](http://www.archives.org.uk) Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland

- [www.icon.org.uk](http://www.icon.org.uk) The Institute of Conservation

- [www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk](http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk) Museums Galleries Scotland

- <https://collectionstrust.org.uk> The Collections Trust has a range of collections care advice and guidance available.

**Accreditation standards**  
**Aim high and see if you can fulfil the collection care criteria to become an accredited archive.**  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/archive-service-accreditation>



## **Community Archives and Heritage Group (CAHG)**

CAHG is a group within the Archives and Records Association (ARA) which supports and promotes community archives and heritage in the UK and Ireland. We provide a national online directory of groups in the UK and also easy access to a central online resource to the best available advice and guidance. Our annual awards are a highlight of the CAHG year; they showcase the brilliant work of community groups up and down the country.

You can find out more about our activities by visiting [www.communityarchives.org.uk](http://www.communityarchives.org.uk) and by following us on Facebook and Twitter.

Even better, why not join? Membership is free and you will receive our regular newsletter; full details are on our website.



**SCOTTISH  
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ARCHIVES**

Scottish Council on Archives is committed to supporting community archives throughout Scotland. We are keen to hear directly from groups who are collecting, preserving and recording archive material as part of their activities.

We want to know who you are, what you collect, and what kinds of training or support would be helpful to you. We also want to celebrate the fantastic work of community archives and raise awareness of these important resources.

Visit our website to find out more about our busy programme of workshops and events and more about all our projects and resources spanning engagement, education and advocacy, or email Audrey Wilson, Community Engagement Officer [a.wilson@scottisharchives.org.uk](mailto:a.wilson@scottisharchives.org.uk)



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