

Surrey History Centre: Archives And Local Studies Collecting Policy

1. Introduction and Background

Surrey History Centre cares for and makes publicly accessible the historic archive and local studies collections relating to the County of Surrey. The Centre was established in 1998 by Surrey County Council to hold and develop the collections formerly housed in Surrey Record Office, Kingston, Guildford Muniment Room and Surrey Local Studies Library. In 2006 it became part of Surrey Heritage.

The Centre is recognised as a place of deposit for public records relating to the County of Surrey and is appointed the diocesan record office for the diocese of Guildford and much of the diocese of Southwark.

Millions of documents dating from the 12th to the 21st centuries are stored in our strongrooms. They are appraised, sorted, catalogued and indexed to facilitate access, given conservation treatment where necessary and stored in the optimum environment for their long term preservation.

The archival holdings are unique and irreplaceable, generally being the original and only record in existence and their value lies in their being retained in their original form as far as possible. They are primary source material and maintaining their integrity is vital to their legal evidential and historical value.

2. Purpose and Scope of this Policy

2.1. This policy will inform stakeholders and users of the statutory and legal basis for the service and the principles guiding the acquisition and disposal of material. It also aims to establish a planned approach to the development of the holdings at Surrey History Centre.

2.2. The policy aims to ensure that Surrey History Centre's archive and local studies holdings represent all aspects of the county's social, political, economic, religious and cultural life. In doing so, it will assist us in being more proactive in identifying, preserving and celebrating Surrey's dynamic and multi-faceted cultural heritage which in turn will promote community identity, cohesion and well-being.

2.3. In line with Surrey County Council's aims, it will also serve to engage residents in the activities of the service and improve the resident experience; provide public value by preserving the county's heritage for the well-being, learning and enjoyment of all; develop and strengthen partnerships across the county; enhance the quality and breadth of the county's documentary heritage and, consequently, the service we are able to offer to the public; and have a key role to play in demonstrating the Council's commitment to responsible stewardship.

2.4. This policy is one of several existing policies relating to different elements of the care and management of the collections in the keeping of Surrey History Centre. The aim of the policies collectively is to ensure that the collections are properly managed and preserved, and are made available in the most appropriate manner to ensure their long-term survival and usability.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the **Collections Management Policy** which sets out the Centre's integrated approach to the management of its collections and the framework of standards and code of ethics within which it operates.

2.5. It should also be read alongside the Collections Development plan which sets out our objectives in building up the range and scope of our collections.

3. Legal Framework

3.1. Surrey County Council, under s.224 of the Local Government Act, 1972, is obliged to make proper arrangements for the records created by the authority. Surrey History Centre, which holds and makes accessible the historic records of the Council, has a crucial part to play in fulfilling this obligation.

3.2. Under the Local Government (Records) Act, 1962, and the Local Government Act, 1972, Surrey County Council is empowered as a 'principal archive authority' to acquire other records created by other bodies by purchase, gift and deposit, to prepare finding aids, hold exhibitions and 'do all such things as appear to it necessary or expedient for enabling adequate use to be made of records under its control'.

3.3. Surrey History Centre is appointed a place of deposit, under section 4(1) of the Public Records Act, 1958, for certain defined categories of public records on behalf of the Lord Chancellor. Such records include those of courts, public hospitals and health authorities and of the county coroner.

3.4. Surrey History Centre, under The Manorial Documents Rules of 1959 and the Tithe (Copies of Apportionment) Rules of 1960, is approved by the Master of the Rolls as a place of deposit for the custody of manorial and tithe documents.

3.5. Surrey History Centre has been appointed Diocesan Record Office by the Bishop of Guildford to hold on deposit non-current historic records of parishes within the diocese under the Parochial Registers and Records Measure, 1978 (amended 1992). It also acts in the same capacity for the Diocese of Southwark except for parishes in the following districts: the Archdeaconry of Lewisham; the Archdeaconry of Southwark; the Deaneries of Brixton, Clapham, Lambeth and Streatham within the Archdeaconry of Lambeth; the Deaneries of Battersea, Tooting and Wandsworth within the Archdeaconry of Wandsworth; the Deanery of Sutton within the Archdeaconry of Croydon.

3.6. Under the same measure, it is responsible for the inspection of records in parochial custody within the Diocese of Guildford and the above-specified area of the Diocese of Southwark.

4. Collection Range and Geographical Scope

4.1. Under the powers outlined above Surrey History Centre seeks to collect records reflecting all aspects of the life of the inhabitants of the county and representative of the institutions and organisations active within the county for all periods across the documented history of Surrey. This includes, but is not limited to:-

- Records of Surrey County Council and of the District, Borough and Parish Councils within the county, including electoral registration records.
- Records of state-maintained and private schools.
- Records of local churches and of other religious organisations active within the county.
- Records of businesses, utilities and industries situated within Surrey.

- Records of hospitals, health authorities, charities and welfare organisations.
- Records of clubs and societies and special interest groups within the county, including sporting bodies, arts organisations, political parties and pressure groups
- Title deeds and other records relating to land ownership, land use and to the management of landed estates, including manorial records.
- Private records reflective of the life, achievements and concerns of inhabitants of the county, such as diaries, correspondence, photographs and oral history recordings.
- Records of judicial courts and of other bodies concerned with the maintenance of law and order.
- Records of the regiments based in the county and of individuals of all ranks serving with those regiments.
- Records reflective of Surrey's involvement in national events and occurrences.
- Maps and pictorial material, including prints and photographs.

4.2. In general, Surrey History Centre seeks to collect within and relating to the current administrative county as established in 1965 and 1974. However some records are held which relate to institutions which operated across the entirety of the ancient county, for example the Court of Quarter Sessions, the former county government, and across the entirety of the county as it was between 1889 and the extension of Greater London in 1965, for example Surrey County Council itself.

4.3. Records entirely relating to those parts of the county which were absorbed into London or into the County Borough of Croydon in 1889 are not collected, being the responsibility of the appropriate Borough Archive Services or the London Metropolitan Archives. However records of Anglican parishes within Croydon are collected in accordance with the History Centre's role as Southwark Diocesan Record Office.

4.4. The London Boroughs of Kingston and Sutton, having established recognised archive services, act as archive authorities for the areas of those Boroughs. However records of Anglican parishes within Kingston Borough are the responsibility of Surrey History Centre as Southwark Diocesan Record Office.

4.5. The London Boroughs of Richmond and Merton have not established archive services and, until such time as such services are established, Surrey History Centre continues to accept records from these areas if they complement existing holdings and/or no other appropriate home can be found.

4.6. Records relating to the area of the Borough of Spelthorne are the responsibility of both Surrey History Centre and London Metropolitan Archives, which was the responsible archive authority until the transfer of the area to Surrey in 1965 and also acts as London Diocesan Record Office (and is thus responsible for records of Anglican parishes within the Borough). Responsibility for any individual group of records will be determined through negotiation and dialogue between the interested parties.

4.7. Records whose geographical coverage is not confined to Surrey (for example records of families holding dispersed estates or whose members were active elsewhere in the UK or abroad) will be accepted in their entirety if it is felt that the integrity of the collection would be damaged by dividing it.

5. Collections Development

5.1. Surrey History Centre aims to ensure that its collections represent as fully as possible the past activities of all communities within its collecting area. To achieve this we will seek to address existing weaknesses and build up strengths within the range and scope of our collections.

5.2. For organisations, sectors of society or areas of the county currently under-represented in our collections, such as the business and industrial sector; political parties, trades unions and pressure groups; and Surrey-based charities, we will endeavour to initiate a programme of surveys to identify records to address this situation.

5.3. In particular we will endeavour to ensure that the experiences of ethnic, religious and cultural minority groups and of communities such as the LGBTQI+ community and disabled residents of the county, are reflected and preserved in our holdings.

5.4. Our immediate priorities and longer term objectives for collections development will be addressed in our Collections Development Plan which will be regularly reviewed. The plan will draw on our knowledge of our holdings, our collections information systems and information from the public and stakeholders to identify key collecting targets and a methodology for achieving these targets.

5.5. We will work with community archives and other custodians of archives to support their stewardship of the collections within their care and the adoption of sound archival principles in the management of those collections to ensure their accessibility and long term preservation.

6. Criteria for Selection

6.1. This section should be read in conjunction with Surrey History Centre's Appraisal Policy

6.2. Records in all formats and media will be considered for selection, including paper, parchment, photographic, film, audio and digital media.

6.3. Digital records may not be retained in electronic format if a hard copy is adequate to preserve the information and there is no significant loss of functionality. In addition, digital data lacking the necessary hardware or software for their use and interpretation will generally not be accepted.

6.4. Artefacts will generally not be accepted.

6.5. Moving image material will be accepted and accessioned if forming part of a larger archive but will be transferred to the Screen Archive South East for storage and preservation, in which case an access copy may be held at Surrey History Centre. Moving image material which does not form part of a large archive will be referred directly to the Screen Archive South East to be accessioned by that institution.

6.6. Records will be selected which reflect the historical development and primary activities of an organisation. Large series of records recording similar information over a long period may be sampled

6.7. Records will generally not be selected if they fall into one or more of the following categories:

Material deemed to be of insufficient historical significance.

Material which is already well represented in the existing collection

Material in need of extensive conservation, unless of high historical importance.

Material of a highly specialist or technical nature.

Copies of material held by another record office (although see 8.2 below) or duplicates of material already held within Surrey History Centre.

Records recording information which is adequately recorded or summarised in another form (such as day-to-day accounting records where audited annual accounts have been prepared).

Records still in use by the creating body.

6.8. Unwanted material will be returned to the depositor, transferred to another archive service or destroyed, with the depositor's permission. Confidential destruction by an approved contractor will be used where necessary.

7. Process of Acquisition

7.1. Records generated by Surrey County Council departments which are of established or potential historical significance are identified as such on the departmental retention schedules published on the corporate intranet. Such records will be automatically transferred to Surrey History Centre for permanent retention or will be reviewed by professional archive staff to determine whether they should be retained. Further guidance for Council staff is published on the intranet (Records Management and the Surrey History Centre).

7.2. Records from external depositors will be accepted as loans or as gifts or bequests. Gifts, in which ownership is vested in Surrey County Council, are the preferred option. Loans should be for a minimum period of twenty years. In exceptional circumstances records will be purchased.

7.3. Depositors or donors will be requested to acknowledge in writing their acceptance of our formal terms of deposit which outline the undertakings and obligations of both parties with regard to (if applicable) duration of loan, access, copying, conservation, cataloguing, display and withdrawal.

7.4. Records will generally not be accepted on deposit if the owner is unwilling to allow public access immediately or, for potentially sensitive information, after a defined period of years.

7.5. Records in private ownership may be accepted temporarily for copying if the owner does not wish to relinquish custody if it is considered that the historical significance justifies the expense of copying.

8. Local Studies Material

8.1. Surrey History Centre has built up over many years and continues to develop a comprehensive collection of published and printed works, illustrative material (including drawings, watercolour and oil paintings, prints, photographs), maps and unpublished research which relates to the history, natural history and topography of the county and its constituent places and institutions and the lives of significant

inhabitants; or which complements and aids the interpretation of records held in the Centre.

8.2. Such local studies material, both new and secondhand stock, is generally acquired through purchase or donation.

8.3. Microfilm copies of some local newspapers are also acquired; original newspapers are not collected because of the impermanent nature of newsprint.

8.4. A small loan stock of publications relating to the use and interpretation of historic sources and providing guidance on research is also available at Surrey History Centre and will be regularly renewed and updated.

8.5. As resources permit and in collaboration with Surrey Libraries the Centre will also subscribe to complementary archival and local history material published online.

9. Copy Material

9.1. Records in private ownership may be accepted temporarily for copying if the owner does not wish to relinquish custody if it is considered that the historical significance justifies the expense of copying.

9.2. Surrey History Centre may also commission or accept copies of records held in other record offices if it is deemed that the advantages of local access are considerable or if such records complement records already held.

10. Date of Publication and Review

10.1. This policy was first published in July 2007 and revised in March 2017

10.2. Date of this revision: July 2020

10.3. Date of next review: 2023