

Green Pledge Project: Archives Toolkit

Using Gloucestershire Archives to discover Records for research

Introduction

Gloucestershire Archives is a Council service responsible for gathering, keeping and sharing historic archive collections and local and family history resources, that relate to Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire. Over 10 million items, dating from 900 years ago to the present day are held. Items can include letters, journals, volumes, deeds, accounts, audio-visual materials, photographs and much more besides. Most of these original documents are available for you to order and view in our public searchroom to help with your research.

Archival research can be incredibly daunting for a first-time user and it can be easy to feel overwhelmed. This toolkit is aimed at helping you to discover the records we hold and understand how to access them. This will build up your confidence in researching and allow you to explore our collections further in the future.

How to start your search

To get started, you'll need to access our online catalogue which can be done through this link <https://catalogue.gloucestershire.gov.uk/> . The online catalogue allows you to search through all our catalogued collections.

When searching through our holdings on the public catalogue you will be able to search through different collections and topics. These include:

Archive Records: *Records held by Gloucestershire Archives*

Local Studies: *Records from the Local Studies collection, previously based at Gloucester Library. These will also contain references to items held here.*

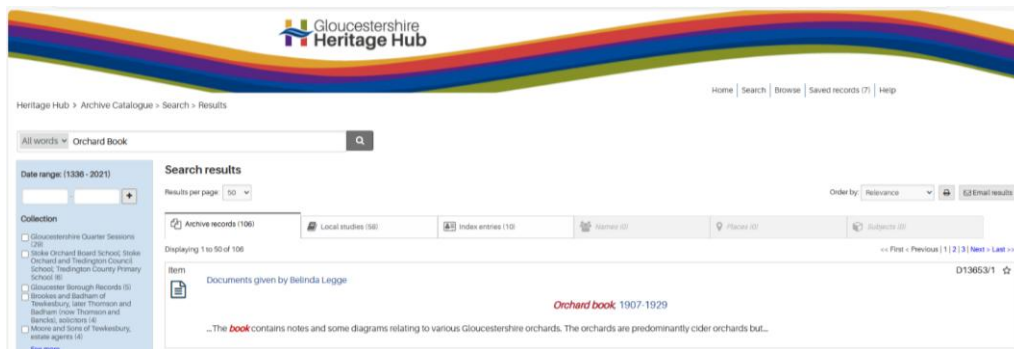
Index Entries: *Searching through entries that have been indexed within Gloucestershire Archives*

Names: *Searching names that have been linked to archival records*

Places: *Search records by a particular place within Gloucestershire or South Gloucestershire (Please note that not all records are currently linked by places so this may not give you a comprehensive list)*

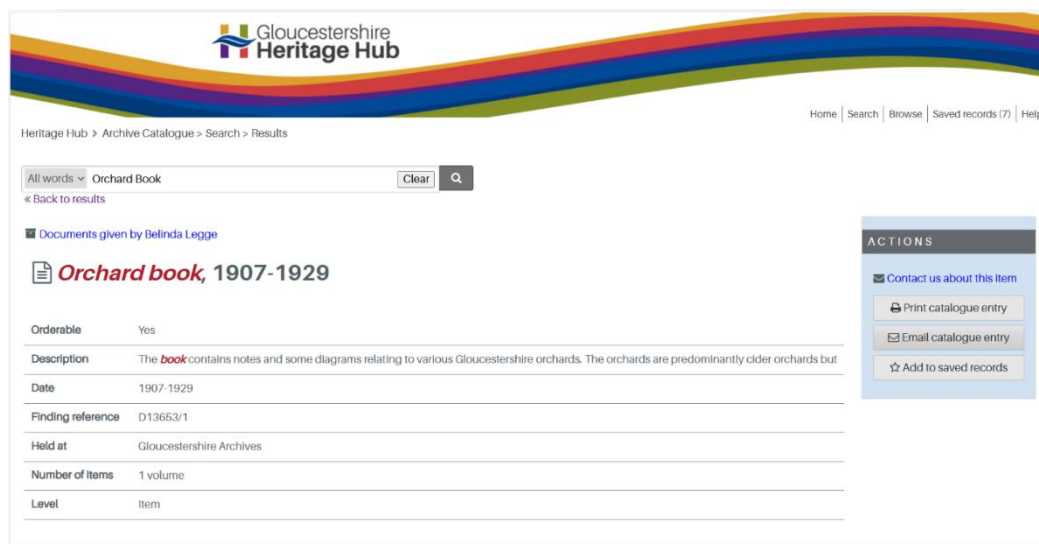
Search terms can either be archive reference numbers (e.g. D13653/1), subjects (e.g. Orchards) or topics of interest.

Below shows an example of a search on the catalogue. In this example I am looking for item D13653/1 'Orchard book' (1907-1929). Below I have entered the search term 'orchard book' into the catalogue and the results are then listed.

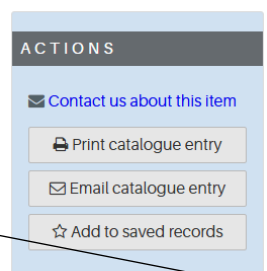


How to order items to view

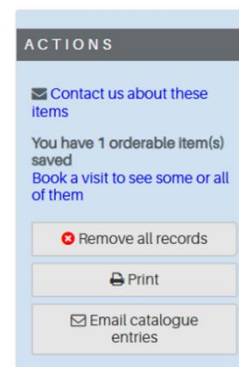
Once you have found an item you want to view, you will need to add it to your saved records. Think of this like a shopping basket! You can add up to 20 items per visit at Gloucestershire Archives, but we must have at least three working days to process your order and retrieve your documents from the relevant strongrooms.



To order items you will need to add these to your saved records. This can be done in two different ways. You can either click on the **star** that appears besides the document in the initial search results, or if you have already clicked on a specific document you can click on 'add to saved records' in the blue box towards the right.



Once you have all the items you wish to see added to your saved records, you will need to go to the 'saved records' tab towards the top of the screen. Here you will see a list of each item that you would like to see. Each item will say whether it is 'orderable'. On the right-hand side of the screen, you will see a blue box that will confirm how many items you have that are orderable, and a way to either contact us about the items, or book a visit to see some or all of the items in your saved records.



Some of your items may not be 'orderable'. This can be down to a few reasons. Some common examples are:

- The items you wish to see are uncatalogued. You will need to email us and discuss what you would like to see
- You have selected an entire collection, rather than individual items within the collection
- Some items may be closed due to specific legislation, for example, data protection [GDPR 2018] which protects the viewing of sensitive details or information contained within these records that may harm the individuals they are referring to.

If you are having difficulties at any point when trying to order documents, please get in touch with us. You can also book a dedicated 1-2-1 session with Gloucestershire Archives staff or Heritage Hub partners for extra support or guidance. To book these email us at archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk or phone 01452 425295.

On the Day

If you are a first-time visitor, you'll need sign up for an ARA (Archives Records Association) card, which you will need to proceed into the Searchroom. You can apply for the ARA card at <https://archivescard.com/> prior to your arrival. Then on the day of your visit, you will need to show us two forms of ID so that we can validate your application and then issue you with an ARA card, which lasts for 5 years.

When you arrive at the Gloucestershire Heritage Hub, you'll need to report to the Archives reception desk pictured below. You will be asked to sign in by a member of staff and to show your ARA card (you will need this to enter the Searchroom).



Items restricted in the Searchroom:

Before you enter the Searchroom, you will need to place the following items in the lockers provided at reception. These include:

- Bags, suitcases, laptop cases (unless they are transparent)
- Pens (pencils can be provided in the Searchroom)
- Food and drink
- Coats

Additional documents can be ordered on our daily production runs, which take place at 10:00 and 14:00*. You will need to fill out tickets for these items, at least 15 minutes beforehand and then give them to a member of staff. Tickets are available from the document control desk. You are allowed up to three additional items per production run.

***Please note production runs are subject to staff availability.**

Taking photos:

Photography passes can be bought at the reception desk if you wish to take photographs of documents you are viewing. You will need to check with staff before taking any photographs as some collections are restricted and may require additional permission before they are photographed. Camera stands are available for use in the Searchroom, but please ask for assistance if you require it.

Photography passes are charged accordingly:

- £8 – Daily unlimited Photo Pass
- £16 – 3 Day Unlimited Photo Pass (These do not have to be consecutive days)
- £165 – Annual Pass

Private researchers:

If 'in person' research is not possible then Gloucestershire Archives is able to provide a list of local independent researchers who can research queries on your behalf, for a fee. Please email in at archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk to find out more.

Requesting Copies of Documents

Gloucestershire Archives has a bespoke digital scanning service. We can digitise a single item reference for a flat fee, inclusive of VAT. The fee includes time spent retrieving the document involved, copying it, processing the order and replacing it.

Standard copying fees:

- £25 for 30 minutes
- £40 per hour

Inclosure maps and awards:

- CD/Digital Package: £25 per map or award

Certificates and certification:

- Baptism certificates: £37
- Official certification of copies of documents: £15 per document

To get a quote for a document to be copied or to enquire further about the service, please email us at archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Reading between the lines: Palaeography

Reading older documents and particular types of handwriting can prove challenging. Palaeography is the study of handwriting and its evolution over time. Being presented with old and difficult to read handwriting can be overwhelming.

In the first instance you can ask the member of staff serving you at Document Control, or the Hockaday desk for help. They may be able to answer your palaeography questions or failing this, they can ask the 'Archivist on duty' to come down to the Searchroom to assist you.

The National Archives have constructed a useful page on their website, which aims to help a researcher navigate different types of palaeography and aid in developing skillsets in this area. Follow the link below to explore this:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/reading-old-documents/>

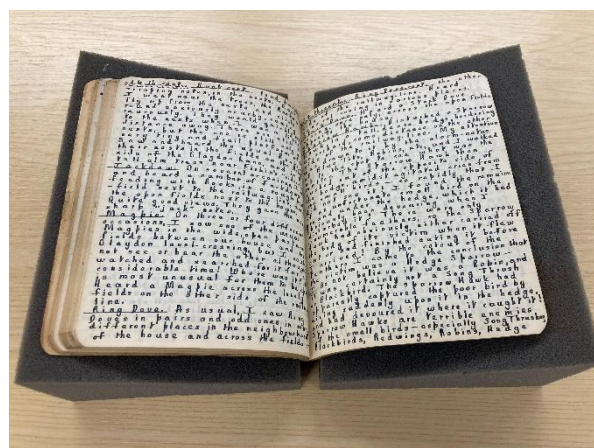
Handling original documents

Documents held at Gloucestershire Archives are not only of historical importance; many of them are unique. Therefore, it is important to take care handling these documents and use the correct equipment to ensure their protection.

Glass and cloth weights are provided for large maps and rolled documents. Documents should be rolled out carefully and weights should be used as you move through the document to prevent damage.



Book rests are provided for all books, volumes, journals and other documents with spines. One can be placed either side of the item to ensure the spine is under minimal pressure or strain.



When handling photographs in the Searchroom you are required to wear gloves to protect the images from damage. These are available in multiple sizes in the Searchroom by our enquiry desk in the Hockaday Room.



Magnifying glasses and UV lights are also available should you require them. Please ask a member of staff at Document Control and they will provide you with what you need, as well as being on hand to answer any questions you may have.

Research Guides

Research guides can be an excellent starting point for specific topics or entry points into research. The Green Pledge Project have created nine new research guides detailing the following topics:

- **Energy**
- **Environmental Activism and Campaigning**
- **Flooding and Pollution**
- **Food Production**
- **Lifestyles**
- **Lost Railways of Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire**
- **Orchards**
- **Wildlife and Species loss**
- **Woodlands**

These can be accessed both in person from our physical research guide folder behind reception and online on the Gloucestershire Archives public catalogue and webpage. A full list of research guides can be found on our website at:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/researching/starting-your-research/mini-research-guides/>

School groups and visits

School visits can be arranged by contacting us at archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk. Sessions can be personalised to suit groups particular needs. We can offer tours of the public research room, and of our strongrooms, where we keep our collections in climate-controlled conditions.



We also have various projects and resources that you can explore on our website, which are suitable for a range of Key Stages:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives/learning-for-all/schools/>

Closed records

Certain records in our collections are closed to the public as they may contain sensitive personal information about living individuals. We have a legal obligation to protect such information in these records in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation Act 2018, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

However, you can make a [Subject Access Request](#) for information that the Council has about you in its records, including information in the following records at the Archives:

- Adoption and fostering registers and files
- School punishment books and pupil's files
- Some gaol (prison) records which might include information about the victim
- Some Magistrates' Court records which might include information about adoptions or fostering
- Some police records
- Some parish records

You can also see some documents containing restricted information if you get permission from the organisation that created them. If the organisation no longer exists, you can seek permission from its successor organisation. The documents that fall into this category are:

Medical records less than 100 years old for many hospitals in Gloucestershire, a few hospitals in South Gloucestershire and the Gloucestershire lunatic asylum - please contact the Health Records Manager of the NHS Trust concerned. You can get their details via the [NHS Services](#) website.

Coroner's inquest files less than 75 years old for Gloucestershire and some coroner's inquest files less than 75 years old for South Gloucestershire - please contact the relevant service, either [Gloucestershire Coroner's service](#) or [Avon Coroner's service](#)

For further guidance on closed material, please speak to senior staff.

Additional help

If you have any questions either before or on the day of your visit, our team of trained staff will be able to provide help and assistance where needed.

You can also book a dedicated 1-2-1 session with Gloucestershire Archives staff or Heritage Hub partners if you would like extra support or guidance. To book an appointment, email us at archives@gloucestershire.gov.uk or phone 01452 425295.



This toolkit was created by the Green Pledge Project (2023-2025), funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund