

Archive Today

REGULAR NEWSLETTER SERVING THE INTERNATIONAL CONSERVATION COMMUNITY

Lancashire Records Success!

A wet Lancashire Wednesday does not deter the public from their quest for information. Entering the search-room of the Lancashire Record Office, every seat is taken, every terminal is whizzing through microfilm and every desk has laid out books, pads, laptops and the unique archive material they have come to research.

Since its establishment by Lancashire County Council in 1940, the Lancashire Record Office has played a vital part in looking after the written heritage of Lancashire. The reference material within provides access to Lancashire's past to about 13,500 visitors every year. Eight floors of strong rooms store official documents including Quarter Sessions, manorial, hospital, LA and probate records, ecclesiastical archives and private collections.

The traditional practice of buying in standard sized storage boxes does not always provide the best solution for archive storage, so an investigation into an alternative solution began.

To assist the preservation process a complete KASEMAKE CXD system was proposed. An application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund in May 2000 to re-package and restructure the vast amounts of material held within the Quarter Sessions records. The bid was successful and the CXD system was installed.

During the first 18 months of installation the system produced around 7000 boxes and folders, each one individually sized to house the material.

"Phase 1 of the project tackled the large amount of volumes and loose sheet material. In researching the ways we could produce our own made to measure containers, the CXD system fitted the bill", explains Sue Tobutt. "We now have total control over the packaging of the material we handle and have found that making the boxes ourselves is much more economical than buying in boxes."



Sue Tobutt & Mark Walmsley at the Lancashire Records Office

Preserving the records is a full time occupation for the conservators and archive staff within. The holdings are mostly of paper and parchment. The cataloguing and conservation of the mostly hand written documents takes time, patience and dedication.

Qualified conservators Sue Tobutt and Mark Walmsley assisted by strongroom supervisor, Steve Whelan, ensure the mass of valuable material is properly cleaned, stored and made accessible to the public. In a recent project, Mark has been working on the documents from the Lowood Gunpowder Factory collection, over 6000 items for repair, mostly letters and receipts. "The ideal situation is to rebind volumes, but we don't have the resources. Phase boxes are the only viable option, with folders taking care of loose sheet material, once it has been repaired"



Quarter Session Scrolls before... and after.

Andrew McWilliam operates the KASEMAKE CXD software and cutting table and has an exacting workflow established.

From several styles of archival enclosure, Andrew selects the most appropriate container for the job. Large and small external containers are secured with a Velcro strap and loop, making removal from the shelves as easy as possible.

As part of the Archive Awareness month the Record Office displayed an exhibition of selected material in a bid to increase awareness in the local area.



Sue Tobutt at the Lancashire Record Office

Many other institutions followed a similar theme. The Open Day was a success and was well attended. "Visitors are always impressed with the conservation process but this time the CXD system demonstrated by Emma Cowlshaw was an added attraction.



Archive containers with velcro fastenings and easy grip clip

The office exists to preserve and make available the local heritage for the benefit of everyone and the more people who know about us the better.

By making our conservation and repackaging project public, exposure to our archive is increased and our public presence enhanced" comments Sue.

For more information regarding the KASEMAKE CXD systems, please visit...

www.kasemakecxd.com



Preservation awaits these large volumes