



June 2003

Department of Environment, Transport & Leisure
Cultural Services

'B' Bond Warehouse

BRISTOL RECORD OFFICE

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www.bristol-city.gov.uk/recordoffice

BRISTOL RECORD OFFICE: What is it?

Bristol City Council (and its forerunners) has a centuries-old tradition of record-keeping which led in 1924 to the establishment of its own Record Office. At this time there was only one other local record office in existence in the country.

The Record Office is based at 'B' Bond Warehouse, one of three former bonded warehouses which were built around the turn of the century to store tobacco down at Cumberland Basin, the entrance to Bristol's historic Floating Harbour.



BRISTOL RECORD OFFICE: What does it do?

The primary function of the Record Office is to preserve and care for the records of Bristol City Council and make them available to its officers and members. However, it also offers a service to everyone by making not only Council records, but also those of the large number of individuals and organisations which it has in its care, accessible in its

Public Searchroom. This is a free service.

The staff sort records into their proper order then catalogue and index them so that people are able easily to access them. At present we are transferring this work to computer and it is now possible to search many of our catalogues from the comfort of your home via the Internet.

Staff offer tours of the office to visiting groups by arrangement and go out and about in the Bristol area to give talks on the work of the office to groups as well.

Special points of interest :

- Open Monday -Thursday 9.30 am - 4.45 pm
- No appointment necessary
- Bristol censuses, parish registers, wills and much more besides available on microfiche in a self-service area of our searchroom (do-it-yourself copies from these)
- No need to book a microfiche reader
- Freely available PCs with access to the Internet, useful CD ROMs and the Bristol Record Office Picture Library: BROPix: 5000 images (and growing) of Bristol & Bristolians
- Expert staff on hand to advise
- Online catalogue of our records : archives.bristol-city.gov.uk

BRISTOL RECORD OFFICE: What does it keep?

In our air-conditioned strongrooms we keep thousands of documents which help to form a picture of Bristol's past. **We have:**

- Records of the City Council from around 1189 to the present day, including minutes of committees, apprenticeship and burgess registers, maps and plans of the city (*even plans of individual buildings, 1852-1947*).
- records of the Diocese of Bristol from 1542 to the present day (*which include wills up to the 1940s, marriage licence documents and tithe maps - large scale parish plans showing the owners and occupiers of land in the mid 19th century*).
- records of the parishes in the Archdeaconry of Bristol from around 1140 to the

present day (which include registers of baptisms, marriages and burials - some from as early as 1538).

- records of courts and hospitals, ships and their crews.
- records of individuals (letters and diaries), businesses (eg WD & HO Wills, J S Fry and Sons), trade unions, schools, societies, charities, landed estates (eg Smyth of Ashton Court, Halford of Blaise Castle), churches and chapels (eg Methodist, Baptist and Roman Catholic).

and much much more besides!

BRISTOL RECORD OFFICE: What do we mean by records?

We like to say that the records we have tell "800 years of Bristol's history".

A record can be anything which helps to show us how the people of Bristol lived their lives and carried on their business from the earliest surviving document to today's computer disk.

The collections in our care contain title deeds, letters, diaries, minute books, accounts, parish registers, registers of admission to schools and hospitals of all kinds, maps, plans, photographs, films...They have just two things in common:



From the commonplace book of Sarah Anderson, 1825 (BRO ref: 13424/2)

they all relate to people or places connected with the Bristol area, and they are all unique or at least very rare. They are vital because they are the raw material of History and without them we cannot understand why things happened in the past, why things are happening in the present, and why things are likely to happen in the future. They are put in our care to ensure that they **survive** for all to learn from.

BRISTOL RECORD OFFICE: Who uses it?

Over 7,000 people from all around the world visited us last year and the figure grows all the time. We see:

- **Family Historians** - people with Bristol roots, either still living in the city of their ancestors or returning from as far afield as Australia or the USA, use parish registers, wills and many other documents to piece together their family trees.
- **Local Historians** - people studying the history of their city or a particular area within it. By making their research available they enrich their community and stimulate an interest amongst others in their surroundings.
- **Archaeologists** - many archaeologists, particularly those of BARAS (Bristol and Region Archaeological

- Services) use documents to study the site at which they are digging.
- **Students** - people of all ages who are following courses of study, from A-level students to those at Universities and Colleges as undergraduates, postgraduates and trainee teachers. The Record Office is committed to the principle of *Life-long Learning* and don't forget, learning can be *self-directed* - it can be undertaken for its own sake without any thought of a qualification at the end of it.
- **Teachers and Academics** - teachers use historical documents to prepare lessons or courses of study; academics (from all over the world, including

- Japan) undertake historical research here.
- **Architects** - those restoring old buildings use the records held here to build up a picture of how their projects should look.
- **Council Officers** - those doing the many and varied jobs which are the responsibility of the City Council (everything from legal work like conveyancing and litigation through the administration of the Council's properties to pollution control) use the records at the Record Office.
- **The Media** - Television and Radio often use our resources to make programmes. In particular, television companies round the world make use of our wonderful film archive.

Want to know more about what sort of records we look after?

Have a look at our **NEW** Online Catalogue: archives.bristol-city.gov.uk

BRISTOL RECORD OFFICE
Where Past and Present face the Future
The Record Office is there for EVERYONE - all you need is an interest In Bristol's history