

Collections Development Policy

24 March 2023



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

Working for Cumberland Council and
Westmorland & Furness Council

Collections Development Policy

Cumbria Archives has operated since 1962, collecting and preserving the documentary heritage for the area of the modern county of Cumbria from the 12th century to the present day. It is the only organisation in Cumbria with statutory authority for archives. This document sets out the collecting policy for Cumbria Archives and explains how we aim to ensure inclusive coverage of all aspects of Cumbria's history. The Collections Development Policy supports our Mission Statement set out below in "Our Vision".

1. Our Vision

Cumbria's archives are here for everyone, a unique, exciting and inspiring resource that can help everyone explore and appreciate what is so special about Cumbria, its people and places.

Archives are profoundly important for learning. They capture the imaginations of young people, inspiring them to take an interest in their surroundings. For adult learners, archives satisfy our natural thirst for knowledge, as well as building skills and confidence.

The archives are Cumbria's collective memory, providing authoritative evidence to help people solve problems and find out the truth. Archives encourage pride in individual and community identities, and bring our past alive as our frame of reference for the present and future.

To achieve its vision, Cumbria Archives will proactively collect, preserve, catalogue, digitise and publish Cumbria's inclusive documentary heritage as an evidential and learning resource for everyone.

Cumbria's archives are documents that were created during the course of everyday activities (domestic, personal, political, industrial, commercial, religious, educational and social) from the 12th century to the present day. Over time, these records acquired a historical perspective, offering us a fascinating immediacy and personal connection with past events and previous generations. The archives – paper, parchment, maps, plans, photographs, films and electronic media - give an unrivalled insight into the historical development of places throughout Cumbria, and the daily lives of both important and ordinary people. Archives are important for health and wellbeing, supporting leisure as well as learning, providing opportunity to gain a sense of place and identity. Archives provide opportunities to take part and support mental health of users.

2. Statutory position of Cumbria Archives

Cumbria Archives serves both Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council from 1 April 2023 in succession to Cumbria County Council. Cumbria Archives is hosted by Cumberland Council which is the local government authority in the county of Cumbria charged with exercising archive powers. Under the Local Government (Structural Changes) (Transfer of Functions, Property, Rights and Liabilities) Regulations 2008, 3.11, only one successor council can be vested with archive collections held by the predecessor county council, and for the purposes of the county of Cumbria from 1 April 2023, Cumberland Council is vested with custody of archive collections previously held by Cumbria County Council.

The Local Government Act 1972, Section 224 places statutory obligations on Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council to “make proper arrangements with respect to any documents that belong to or are in the custody of the council or any of its officers”. This includes:

- records created by Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council and its predecessors in the course of its business - current and semi-current
- records held on behalf of central government and subject to the Public Records Act 1958.
- records given to or purchased by the authority or deposited with the authority on long term loan by authority of the Local Government (Records) Act 1962

Under the Local Government Acts 1962 and 1972, the Cumberland Council, through Cumbria Archives, as the appointed archive authority for all local government districts within Cumbria and is responsible for ensuring the proper care of the records of all parish councils.

Under the **Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967**, the Archive Centres of Cumbria Archives have been appointed by the Ministry of Justice to look after designated public records such as those of Quarter Sessions, Magistrates’ Courts, Coroners, County Courts, Probate, Health Authorities, National Coal Board, Home Office (Carlisle State Management), etc. as scheduled in the Public Records (Places of Deposit) Instrument 1991.

The Cumbria Archive Centres are the sole places of deposit within the County of Cumbria approved by the Master of the Rolls for the deposit of manorial and tithe records (under the **Manorial Documents Rules 1959 and Tithe Rules 1960**).

Cumbria Archives serves as the official Diocesan Record Office for the Diocese of Carlisle. In particular under the **Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978**, we look after parish records of the Church of England throughout Cumbria. The Cumbria Archive Centre in Kendal is also appointed diocesan office for the parish records of those parts of the

Diocese of Bradford that fall within the historic boundary of Westmorland and current county boundary of Cumbria.

3. Scope of collections: What we collect

Cumbria Archives will only collect and preserve archives that are unique and of long term historical value.

Geographical Area served by Cumbria Archives

We actively seek to document every area of the county, from the very smallest geographical communities, to cities and local government areas. In recognition that a small population is dispersed over a large geographical area, Cumbria Archives has established four local centres across Cumbria to encourage the deposit of local documentary heritage and facilitate local access.

The four Cumbria Archive Centres

Barrow: Cumbria Archive Centre, Ramsden Square, Barrow-in-Furness, LA14 1LL.

Carlisle: Cumbria Archive Centre, Lady Gillford's House, Petteril Bank Road, Carlisle CA1 3AJ

Kendal: Cumbria Archive Centre, County Offices, Kendal, LA9 4RQ.

Whitehaven: Cumbria Archive and Local Studies Centre, Scotch Street, Whitehaven CA28 7NL

The ceremonial county of Cumbria was created in 1974 from the historic counties of Cumberland and Westmorland and the incorporation of the Furness area of Lancashire and the parishes of Sedbergh, Dent and Garsdale in the West Riding of Yorkshire. Each of the four Archive Centres collects for a distinct catchment area.

The Archive Centres at Carlisle and Whitehaven serve the former county of Cumberland (with the River Derwent as the boundary between catchment areas). The Archive Centre at Kendal serves the county of Westmorland and the parishes of Sedbergh, Dent and Garsdale. The Furness area is covered by the Archive Centre in Barrow. We will not split collections which overlap catchment areas; the main geographical source of origin will determine which centre is the place of deposit.

Cumbria Archives does not seek to acquire records which relate to geographical areas outside the county of Cumbria. However, such records may form an integral part of a collection which is primarily focused on Cumbria. In these cases, the collection will usually be kept intact and information will be supplied to the other locality.

Themes

Cumbria Archives accepts material on every aspect of life in Cumbria including records of

local government and other statutory bodies in Cumbria, all religious denominations, businesses, clubs and societies, families and estates, schools, personal papers.

We will collect a comprehensive archive documenting the decision making process and most significant activities of our parent authorities, Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council and its predecessors.

In addition to the Anglican parish records collected under the terms of the Parochial Records Measure, Cumbria Archives will seek to collect the records of all other religious denominations including all Non-Conformist churches (eg Methodist, Quaker, Congregational churches), Roman Catholic Church, and records of other faiths.

We will collect archives from individuals and organisations active in both the public and private sectors, in civic and business life. These include businesses, clubs and societies, political parties, trade unions, pressure groups, local campaigns, families and individuals. We aim to collect records representing all interests and opinions.

Despite being a rural county, Cumbria has a strong industrial and commercial heritage, and we will actively seek to add to our already extensive collections from local industries and businesses.

We will seek to represent and include records from all sections of our community. Our inclusive archive will encourage the deposit of material from groups which are currently under-represented in our collections. These groups include the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender community and Black and Minority Ethnic groups.

Format and Media

Cumbria Archives accepts the deposit of archives, irrespective of age, in all formats including paper, parchment, DVD/CD Rom, digital media, audio and video cassette, memory sticks, film, microfilm/fiche, photographs, glass plate negatives and lantern slides. We shall, where appropriate, migrate or digitise material into new formats for preservation and access purposes. We are actively investigating the possibilities for digital preservation to encourage the deposit of born-digital records worthy of permanent preservation.

Limitations of the Collecting Policy

Cumbria Archives encourages the deposit of film archives but aims to transfer them to the North West Film Archive for specialist preservation. NWFA terms of deposit enable copies to be made for depositors and for local access in Cumbria.

Copies of manuscripts are only accepted where the original manuscript is not in the collection.

The Archive Service does not routinely collect printed or published material unless it forms an integral part of an archive, contains significant manuscript annotation, or is of value as

an aid to research. Such material would normally be directed to the Local Studies Libraries of Cumberland Council and Westmorland & Furness Council.

Cumbria Archives does not collect artefacts, three dimensional objects or works of art. Only where there is a special relationship between the artefact and the associated archives will we seek to keep the material together. Artefacts will usually be directed to the appropriate museum or gallery.

Cumbria Archives has built up a very comprehensive record of Cumbrian life through over 60 years of operation and will proactively seek to strengthen the coverage of its collections. It will assert its right to be the sole place of deposit for records protected by the legislation in Section 2. However, it will respect the published collecting policies of other established repositories and museums and will try to avoid competition, duplication and conflict, particularly where other institutions have a specialist focus. Established organisations in Cumbria are aware of respective collecting policies and have at least occasional (if not regular) contact with each other. Cumbria Archives will engage in constructive discussions, and will seek mediation from an appropriate organisation, should any disagreements over the appropriate place of deposit arise.

4. The process of collection

Terms of Acquisition

Cumbria Archives collects archives through donation or loan; or by internal transfer from County Council departments. We encourage the donation of privately held archives which is our preferred way of establishing custody for public benefit, but we will accept long term loans of a minimum of twenty years. A comprehensive list of standard terms and conditions for the deposit of archives is available, and both Cumberland Council and the depositor/donor will enter into and sign a contract when documents are handed over. In certain exceptional circumstances, some conditions will be negotiable.

Cumbria Archives will consider on an individual basis items offered for purchase providing that they are relevant to our collecting policy, are unique, and offer value for money. Cumbria Archives does not have a budget to purchase documents so usually needs to secure funding from external sources to proceed, and these records will be subject to the terms and conditions of the grant-giving body. Otherwise, title to the items purchased will usually pass to Cumberland Council.

A permanent electronic register of accessions will be kept to record the terms of acquisition or deposit for all archives collections (see Collections Information Policy).

The following conditions also apply to the donation and loan of records to Cumbria Archive Service.

- No documents will be accepted without clear and valid title of ownership

- Cumbria Archives reserves the right to reject records which, in the judgement of the Archivist in charge, are not of sufficient quality for permanent preservation.
- The expectation will be that records deposited with Cumbria Archives will be made available to the public within a reasonable time period, subject to the requirements of relevant legislation such as Freedom of Information and Data Protection Acts.

Depositors

The terms of deposit require depositors to notify Cumbria Archives of relevant changes, for example changes to title/ownership of records or change of address. However, Cumbria Archives aims to maintain contact with depositors, for example as cataloguing is completed, or where requests have been made to publish images taken from their collections.

Semi-current records of Cumbria County Council and its departments are referred to the Archive Service by the Records Management Service when they reach the end of their retention period. The records are then appraised for their long term historical and evidential value by Cumbria Archives. Each Archive Centre will appraise records relating to its catchment area. Records of Cumbria County Council at a corporate level are held at the Cumbria Archive Centre, Carlisle.

Cumbria Archives aims to keep in regular touch with depositors of records governed by the Public Records Acts (for example Coroners, Magistrates Courts) to ensure the smooth transfer of additional records at appropriate times.

Selection policy

Cumbria Archive Service will appraise records at the time of deposit in line with best practice and staff guidance and will advise depositors of this. Cumbria Archives shall have the authority to transfer records to a more suitable repository and will inform the depositor accordingly. Cumbria Archives reserves the right to conduct periodic reviews of the records held to reassess their historic value in the light of research use and the evolving context of the whole collection. Where records are assessed as not being of sufficient quality to merit permanent preservation, the depositor can request their return, or the Archive Service will dispose of unwanted records confidentially

Access

Archives are accepted on the presumption that the depositor is willing for them to be made available for public consultation within a reasonable period of time (within the context of relevant legislation). Cumbria Archives will publicise every new acquisition, once catalogued, and will advise on any restrictions to access. Catalogues will be made available on line and supplied to depositors and the National Register of Archives. Further information can be found in our Access Policy.

The Collections Development Policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier if a response is needed to any changes in legislation.

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