



# ARCHIVES & LOCAL STUDIES

*Barnsley MBC Growth and Sustainability Directorate*

*Regeneration and Culture*

*Culture and Visitor Economy Service*

*Barnsley Museums*

## ***Barnsley Archives and Local Studies***

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# **Access Policy**

November 2023

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Barnsley Archives and Local Studies (hereinafter referred to as Barnsley Archives) is part of Barnsley Museums, within the Culture and Visitor Economy Service of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (hereinafter referred to as Barnsley MBC).
- 1.2 Access refers to the ability to use the services of Barnsley Archives and/or to consult records in the care of Barnsley Archives, either on-site or remotely.
- 1.3 Barnsley Archives is dedicated to managing the long-term preservation of, and access to, the historical resources in its care. It aims to provide a service that stretches borough wide and beyond, that meets the needs of its collections and customers to the best standards of quality and value possible.
- 1.4 Barnsley Archives strives towards fulfilling Barnsley MBC's 2030 strategy. Barnsley 2030 sets out the Council's long-term vision for the Borough and how we will work together to achieve it. The Mission Statement is, "To improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of Barnsley by working with, and on behalf of, all those who live, work and invest in the Borough." Furthermore, BMBC aims to provide a positive outcome every time the Council touches a customer's life. To do this, we will put the customer at the heart of everything we do, striving to get our service right first time, every time, irrespective of their choice of access method.
- 1.5 The vision of Barnsley Museums is to be a first-class Museum Service bringing quality experiences to inspire, engage and play an active and positive role in the life of our Borough and all its communities. We contribute significantly to the local economy, and to people's well-being and quality of life. We provide venues and events which are welcoming, inspirational, inclusive and innovative within a service which is a centre of excellence for heritage, engagement with the arts and learning for all. We are always looking to the future and aim to be a self-sustaining service with ambitious yet achievable plans for the future.

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1.6 The mission of Barnsley Museums is to inspire people to engage with museums, heritage, archives and the arts. We believe that our museum service:

- makes a positive difference to people's lives.
- inspires and challenges people to explore their world and look at things differently.
- raises aspirations and helps build strong and cohesive communities.
- is a powerful learning resource for people of all ages, needs and backgrounds.
- is a compelling tool for regeneration contributing millions of pounds each year to the local economy.

We do this by:

- Providing exciting and inclusive activities, programmes and exhibitions.
- Sharing, interpreting and conserving our unique collections.
- Facilitating free access to stunning heritage buildings, landscapes and spaces that tell the stories of Barnsley and the UK's history.
- Reaching out to our communities across the Borough to create a sense of ownership, belonging and pride.
- Creating inspirational learning opportunities for everyone.
- Developing partnerships that support our local arts, heritage, archives and museums sectors to raise the profile of the borough and build capacity in the sector.
- Supporting our workforce to develop their skills to deliver a first-class customer service in challenging times.

1.7 Barnsley Museums also has a specific Access and Inclusion vision which states that 'Everyone deserves equal access to museums and culture. For us, inclusion means physical, cultural, social, financial, intellectual, psychological, attitudinal and emotional access – we welcome people of all backgrounds, ages, interests and needs.'

## **2. Legislation and Standards**

2.1 The statutory and general framework under which Barnsley Archives provides access to information is listed below:

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- Local Government (Records) Act, 1962
- Local Government Act (s. 224), 1972
- The UK General Data Protection Regulation, 2018
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 2000
- Data Protection Act (DPA), 1998
- Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs), 2004
- Library byelaws for the Borough of Barnsley (under section 19 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act), 1964
- Government Policy on Archives, 1999
- BMBC's Strategy for Improving Access to Services, 2008
- Manorial and Tithe Document Rules issued under the Law of property Acts 1922 and 1924 and the Tithe Act 1936.

## **3. General Principles**

- 3.1 Barnsley Archives is committed to enabling the public to access its collections and resources. The records in its care belong to or have been loaned to the authority, in order for them to be used for various types of research, principally historical.
- 3.2 We will support you to access the service independently by guiding you through the processes used to access the collections.
- 3.3 We adhere to Barnsley MBC's Customer Experience Strategy which outlines the way we'll seek to support our customers in accessing the many services we offer. The key objectives include:
  - Recognising and reducing digital exclusion
  - Successful use of technology
  - Getting it right first time
  - Inclusive access

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3.4 Barnsley Archives also has standards particular to the service, whereby we promise to:

- always have a member of staff available to help you when you visit.
- always answer your enquiries by telephone, letter or email within 2 weeks.
- supply copies of items within the collections, so long as legislation allows us to do so.
- take all steps possible to protect, preserve and conserve all documents in our care.
- continue to work towards the standards for the care of all historic records to National Standards.
- provide you with indexes and catalogues to help you identify the records you need for your research.
- organise and deliver an annual outreach programme (as part of Barnsley Museums), which includes exhibitions, open days, film shows, research surgeries, reminiscence events and sessions for school groups.

## 4. On-site access

4.1 Barnsley Archives' searchroom and public facilities are situated in Barnsley Town Hall. Using the searchroom is free of charge for all and we offer an unrestricted service four days per week. The searchroom closes for an hour over the lunchtime period from 12.30-13.30. The opening times are:

Tuesday	10.00 am – 18.00 pm
Wednesday	10.00 am – 16.00 pm
Thursday	10.00 am – 16.00 pm
Friday	10.00 am – 16.00 pm

4.2 Improvements in physical access arrangements and adaptations for users with disabilities have been put in place at Barnsley Archives. The Archives is on the ground floor of Barnsley Town Hall and has been designed to be easy to use by all. Wheelchairs are also available on request at the main Town Hall reception for use in the building. In keeping with Barnsley MBC's Equality and Diversity Policy and to aid those who have visual impairments, we

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can provide our leaflets in different languages and in large-print format. We also have a hearing loop at the reception. We continue to strive to make improvements in these areas by consulting with our customers.

- 4.3 Staff are always available in the searchroom to guide customers through the many resources available, and advise on research.
- 4.4 A range of catalogues, indexes and finding aids are available for consultation in the searchroom.
- 4.5 Desktop and laptop computers are available in the searchroom, and customers are able to loan a laptop for the duration of their visit. The Ancestry, Findmypast and British Newspaper Archive websites (and the datasets they feature) can be accessed free of charge whilst on site. Microform resources can also be accessed by some of the desktop computers. Staff can advise further on this.

## **5. Remote Access**

- 5.1 We recognise that for a variety of reasons, visiting Barnsley Archives is not always possible. Therefore, for those who are unable to visit in person (remote users) we encourage them to contact us directly for information about how we might best assist them with their research.
- 5.2 Barnsley Archives will seek to promote on-line access to its collections, finding aids and services both for local and more remote users. We will make information about our collections and services, including new accessions, available via the internet, namely on the service's web pages at [www.experience-barnsley.com/our-archives](http://www.experience-barnsley.com/our-archives). See also 5.3.
- 5.3 The online catalogue for Barnsley Archives can be accessed at [www.explorebarnsleycollections.com](http://www.explorebarnsleycollections.com) and we endeavour to add new collections on a regular basis. The catalogue is designed also to include art, archaeology and museum collections held by Barnsley MBC. Our local studies collections form part of the main Barnsley Libraries catalogue which is available at [barns.ent.sirsiidynix.net.uk](http://barns.ent.sirsiidynix.net.uk).

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5.4 Barnsley Archives will also contribute to regional and national archive networks, namely the National Archives' online Discovery catalogue at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>, which incorporates the National Register of Archives (NRA), Access to Archives (A2A), Find an Archive (formerly ARCHON) and the Manorial Documents Register. Details of our new accessions are published on Discovery annually.

## **6. Fees and Charges**

6.1 Any requests for information about Barnsley Archives services and collections will be answered free of charge.

6.2 Remote requests for information from resources available for consultation in the searchroom will be fulfilled if staff time allows. We do not currently offer a paid research service.

6.3 Requests for reprographics services and permission to publish material will normally be subject to the relevant fees and charges regime. Where applicable, such requests are subject to a preservation assessment, copyright law and re-use of public sector information regulations.

## **7. Restrictions on Access to Information**

7.1 Barnsley Archives recognises the general right of access to information held by public authorities provided by the Freedom of Information Act (2000) and the Environmental Information Regulations (2004). Requests for information will be completed within the statutory 20 working day period.

7.2 Certain records may be deemed 'not yet open' to general public inspection if they contain information that would breach the Data Protection Act if disclosed to a third party. Procedures are in place to deal with access to personal information, deemed 'Data Subject Access Requests'.

7.3 Barnsley Archives can provide on demand a Data Subject Access Request application form. After completion, this needs to be returned to us. If the individual making the request is the Data Subject, evidence of identity must be supplied, i.e. a passport or

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driving licence. If the individual is acting on someone else's behalf, evidence of identity and written permission must be supplied. If the information required is from a deposited collection (i.e. loaned), then permission will be sought from the depositing body.

- 7.4 Data Subject Access Requests must legally be responded to within a statutory period of one month. However we will normally try to supply a full response within 10 working days, but this may be longer, particularly if we have to contact you to seek further information or clarification.
- 7.5 Whilst Barnsley Archives will always try to allow access to archive collections if at all possible, under Freedom of Information legislation, we are able to deny access to uncatalogued archive collections, if they are intended for publication at a future date as part of the service's cataloguing programme. The Archives and Local Studies Manager can advise on such collections. Some Freedom of Information exemptions (closure periods) apply and are detailed below.
- 7.6 Local authority records (FOIA s.30) (including Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, predecessor urban and rural district councils, civil parishes and townships) are generally open for access. The exceptions would be records relating to legal actions or investigations which are not generally accessible for a period of 30 years, and up to 100 years where Data Protection and related legislation applies in relation to personal data.
- 7.7 School records (FOIA s.40) – Barnsley Archives have a policy of making some school records not generally accessible for a period of 50 years. These include log books, admission registers and minutes. Due to their sensitive nature, punishment books are not generally accessible for 75 years. Individuals are entitled to information about themselves, and should apply to the Archives and Local Studies Manager under the Data Subject Access regime, for access to personal information less than 50 years old (75 years for punishment books).
- 7.8 Electoral registers (Representation of the People Act 2000) - Barnsley Archives hold modern and historic electoral registers. These are available for consultation. The current register is



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normally in the possession of BMBC's Electoral Services and it can viewed by arrangement at Barnsley Town Hall.

- 7.9 The Methodist Church of Great Britain has issued separate guidelines regarding access to their archives. Where records are unpublished and less than 30 years old, such as minutes, they are not generally accessible. Where material is considered confidential and of a personal nature, it is not generally accessible for a period of 75 years. This might include complaints, disciplinary records, and assessment files.
- 7.10 Privately deposited records occasionally have differing access restrictions, as stipulated by the depositing individual or organisation. Where this is the case, Barnsley Archives will seek to highlight this in catalogues and finding aids. Privately deposited archives might include charity records, business records and personal papers.

## **8. Review**

- 8.1 This policy will be made publicly available in Barnsley Archives' searchroom, and on the service's website. A copy will also be sent to the National Archives.
- 8.2 This policy will be reviewed after a period of 5 years, or earlier if legislation and guidance necessitates it.