

ISLE OF WIGHT RECORD OFFICE

When I last wrote for the Journal there was talk about the Record Office moving into John Nash's Guildhall building on the High Street in Newport. Following elections in May it was natural that the new administration would wish to look at this scheme afresh, and take on board the views of bodies such as the National Archive. The considered view now is that the physical limitations of the site would be too constricting to answer the long term needs of the Island's archive, attractive though the location and the building are.

In the autumn therefore a detailed study was carried out of two other sites in the Newport area, both of which give more flexibility because the sites that they are on are less restricted. One location involves the use of an existing building, to which a new repository block (the environmentally controlled strongrooms) would be attached. The other option would be a new build, the build costs for which would be greater. There are pros and cons to each option, but the real challenge will be to find the money for the project, at a time when money is tight. The Isle of Wight Council has many issues to deal with that are of great importance, and the Record Office will need to find its place within them.

The severe weather this Christmas and New Year brought back memories of floods in the Island back in October 1960 when Coppins Bridge and Caesars Road were inundated, in that case after a severe thunderstorm. Such events remind us that the location of any office is all-important. An archive building cannot be in an area prone to flooding and if it can be separated from other buildings so that becomes a self-contained unit, so much the better. Before we looked at a preferred location all of these factors were taken into consideration.

2013 saw some interesting accessions of archive material coming into the Record Office. The greatest publicity was for our purchase of an Elizabethan lay subsidy which we purchased at an auction in Shropshire. This is not the first lay subsidy that we hold, but it is useful to have copies where they survive. These list for each area those who have to pay the subsidy, and so this is a source that has potential to be of great use for island genealogists. A further Elizabethan document, this time with its edges scorched by fire, is a survey of the lands of the Walsingham family on the Isle of Wight, including Carisbrooke Priory estate, the farmhouse for which is described in some detail. Earlier in the year some papers of the Grose-Smith family who had the Priory at St Helens were deposited. Most of this material dates from the late 18th / early 19th centuries. Business papers are represented by 20th century ledgers from Millidges, the chemists in Newport's High Street, and local societies by the records of the Isle of Wight Beekeepers' Association, and the Newport (Isle of Wight) Floral Art Club. Maps of the Highway Commissioners roads, and an important map of the West Mill estate in Carisbrooke for 1767 have been brought in, and in a recent collection of Roach papers

there is a 1771 map of the Fleming estates at Haseley, Combley, Duxmoor and Guildford Farms, in Arreton parish. There are deeds of Little Whitcombe from 1625-1939, but some of the more recent material is interesting too. This includes a copy of the Sandown-Shanklin Coronation March for 1937, and files relating to the application to hold a pop festival at Tapnell Farm in the period 1994-96.

I would like to add my thanks to all the volunteers who have been doing heroic work transcribing our burial index onto a database, and in particular to Tony Barton for his work co-ordinating this huge undertaking. This is not a task that we could possibly have undertaken on our own, and, as those who are doing it will know to their cost, few of the entries could have been read by any machine. I know that their work is appreciated by many of the Record Office's users, but this support is greatly appreciated by the Office.

The coming year is dominated by the events taking place to commemorate the outbreak of the First World War. Our contribution initially will be to produce a list of the documents that we hold about the conflict, at home and abroad, so that anyone who wishes to work on the topic will know what material they can find here. I hope that we will be able to put this up as a pdf file in the summer both on our own site and the Island's website for the anniversary www.wightatwar.org.uk