

NEWS FROM THE ISLE OF WIGHT RECORD OFFICE

The first few months of 2016 have been busy and productive here at the Record Office. We continue to work on ideas for a possible new repository at Seaclose, as well as working on conservation projects, and continuing with our HLF funded IW Rifles at Gallipoli Project, more details on which can be found in a separate article in this journal. The dedicated IWFHS volunteers are continuing to work on transcribing our House of Industry weekly, out relief minute books and are making good progress. We provided some archive material for display to compliment a touring exhibition from London's Guildhall Library on The Great Plague, 1665, held at Brading Roman Villa during February and March. We also ran a very successful and enjoyable session at the Record Office for a group of Year 6 children from Newport Primary School. It is the 200 year anniversary of the school and they were looking at Newport and how it has changed over the last 200 years. They really enjoyed looking at some original sources, such as school log books and plans from the 1880's and old photographs of Newport. Our collection of Ordnance Survey Maps was very popular and really gave them a sense of how Newport has changed, and grown from the 1800's into the place in which they live and go to school today.

We have had some interesting accessions of archive material come into the office already this year. In particular for those with an interest in horticulture, IWFHS Project Manger Antony Barton very kindly donated 'A General Dictionary of Husbandry, Planting and Gardening' by the editors of the Farmers Magazine, Vol 1, 1779. Owned by Rev Henry Oglander of Fairy Hill (1743-1814) and extensively annotated by William Anthony Glynn (1807-67) it contains notes, c.1826-39, on timber, recipes for weed killer, apple trees, potatoes, preserving straw, the hay requirements of horses and 1831 census statistics by occupation. It also includes notes on three bargains of land held by Henry Oglander, and an agricultural register which consists of an entry of agricultural notes and brief diary entries for 1837-39. For those interested in railways we have 17 drawings relating to the proposed funicular railway at Ventnor from the 1920s, and 5 files of railway material including photographs, passenger statistics, reports and views on the closures or retention of the Island's railway in the 1950s/60s. Of particular interest to family historians we have just received three Niton School log books, covering dates 1870-1950 (with some gaps), and some additional parish registers including Gurnard Methodist Chapel Marriage Register 1987-2006 and St Faith, Cowes Marriage Register 1986-2010.

Late in 2015 we received a volume detailing licences for theatre, cinema, music and dancing in the Cowes area in the 1950s and 1960s, which are an interesting resource for those looking at the various entertainments available on the Island in the mid 20th century.

With the sad passing of Roy Brinton, well known local historian and great friend of the Record Office, we have gratefully received from his widow some of his extensive local history collection. Mr Brinton worked for the Record Office as an Archive Assistant in the late 1970's, before being appointed Curator at Carisbrooke Castle Museum in the mid 1980's; a post he occupied until his retirement. He published numerous books on Island history and was a great champion of Island heritage. His knowledge of Ryde and his generosity with that information were unrivalled. The collection consists of maps and plans, sales particulars, newspaper cuttings, volumes and various papers. Files cover various places on the Island and wide ranging topics, from militia to transport and watermills to piers, to name but a few, as well as some material on well known Island businesses such as Saunders Roe and Island families, particularly the Player, Brigstock and Lind families. The collection contains a lot of valuable and fascinating material on Island history and is a particularly rich resource for anyone studying the history of Ryde.

The last conservation project paid for by public donations was the conservation and digitisation of an album of photographs from our Parkhurst Prison Collection (Ref: HNP/P/2A/2/8). The volume contains photographs of prisoners taken shortly before their release and covers dates 1907 to 1914. The volume itself has undergone conservation work and each of its pages have been digitised, producing over 5000 individual portraits which are available to view on the public terminal in our Microfilm Room. Simon, one of our Archivists, has also produced a booklet which is available to purchase for a small fee in the searchroom. It gives background information on the history of Parkhurst Prison, details of Parkhurst records held at the Isle of Wight Record Office and the National Archives, and, using the prisoner portraits album and the Register of Convicts also held at the Record Office, brings together the portraits of nine individual prisoners taken in 1914 with information on their crimes, dates and places of conviction, sentences, where they came from, the dates they were discharged (released) and their destinations after release. This provides a fascinating snapshot of a small number of Parkhurst prisoners released in 1914.

Our current conservation project, also kindly paid for by public donation, is focused on a volume of Newport Petty Sessions Minutes covering 1884-1888 (Ref: NPS/14). Petty Sessions were responsible for trying minor crimes such as drunkenness. They were abolished in 1972 and replaced by Magistrates Courts. An index to NPS/14 is already available in the Searchroom in catalogue 3.4.6. Compiled by Mr D Quigley it lists the offences and includes the names of the plaintiff, defendant and witnesses in every case, which goes to show what a valuable name-rich resource Court Records can be.

We are continuing to work on ways to increase our visitor numbers and outreach activities to enable us to engage with as many, and as diverse a section of Islanders

and visitors as possible. At this time of economic austerity we are passionate about continuing to provide an excellent service and being able to expand the service and grow the archives in the future. We thank you for your continuing support and hope to meet many more of you in the coming months.

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