

IWCRO Access Policy

A) INTRODUCTION

A1) Mission Statement and Aims

The aim of the Isle of Wight County Record Office (afterwards IWCRO) is to collect records which reflect the history and diversity of the Isle of Wight and its inhabitants. It will then provide conditions to ensure the conservation of these records for present and future generations. IWCRO will also make these records universally accessible to researchers, Isle of Wight Council and other bodies, both through the Record Office search room and through an outreach programme. This outreach will enhance understanding and inform local decision making, as well as strengthening local community and cultural identity.

A2) Purpose of this Policy

This document defines the means by which IWCRO will make records in our care universally accessible at the Record Office and remotely, and outlines statutory and other limitations to access. Accompanying documents will address the parameters within which these records are collected and the recording procedures used. Further documents will address the conservation requirements of documents collected by this office.

In the context of this and accompanying policies, Archives are defined as documents which have been generated over the lifespan of an individual or business. They are defined (and therefore grouped) by their provenance rather than their subject matter, and the significance of individual items is enhanced through their relationship with the collection as a whole.

B) STATUTORY BACKGROUND

The Access Policy at IWCRO is informed by a number of pieces of legislation:

Local Government (Records) Act 1962

Local Government Act 1972

Public Records Act 1958 (amended 1967)

Manorial Documents Rules and Tithe Apportionment Rules 1959 and 1960 (amended 1963 and 1967 respectively)

Parochial Registers and Records Measure 1978 (amended 1992)

Re-Use of Public Sector Information Regulations 2015

Freedom of Information Act (2000)

General Data Protection Regulation (2018)

In addition, IWCRO will endeavour to implement professional guidance as applicable.

C) ONSITE ACCESS AT IWCRO

C1) Booking and Arrival

There is no requirement to book before visiting IWCRO, although making an initial contact is encouraged, particularly if use of a microfilm viewer is required.

On arrival, researchers will be asked to sign in and will be made aware of the Searchroom Code of Conduct

C2) Access to Documents

In order to protect the building and the documents in our care:

The search room is supervised at all times

A limited number of documents are issued to researchers at any one time.

New researchers are encouraged to read the Searchroom Code of Conduct

Staff will be proactive in monitoring the activities of researchers and will advise researchers in the correct handling of documents issued to them, including the use of book cushions and weights when necessary.

Researchers will be directed to surrogates on microfilm and digital media where available, in order to protect the originals.

A number of collections are stored offsite, including those of a number of local government predecessor authorities and a large part of the Local

Collection library. If researchers contact the Record Office in advance, material can normally be retrieved within a week.

C3) Archive Staff

The search room is supervised at all times by suitably qualified staff, who are always ready to advise researchers. All customers are treated with courtesy and respect, and every effort is made to provide a good customer experience.

All information about the service, including this suite of policies, is available to stakeholders on the IWCRO website, and will be provided on request.

C4) Research Facilities

Some of our larger collections and recent accessions are listed on The National Archive website and researchers are able to access these through a terminal in the search room.

The search room also contains hard copy catalogues of many collections including parish collections, estate papers, local government records and the records of local businesses, organisations and societies. This is supplemented by a personal names index, place and subject indexes to many collections including all surviving parish register entries before 1910.

The Record Office library is also available on open shelves in the search room. A wider range of books is available from the Local Studies Collection, stored offsite but available to view at IWCRO on request.

Research guides and other resources which have been developed by staff are available on the IWCRO website.

Public access computers are available to use with access to the internet, access to 'FindMyPast' and other electronic resources.

Microfilm and fiche machines are available to view the various resources available on these medium.

Wifi is available in the search room for the use of personal laptops and other devices.

C5) Providing Copies

Copies of documents held at this office may be provided by photocopy, scan or self-service photography.

Photocopying and scanning will be carried out by a member of staff, although as this process can damage the documents, photography (without flash) is encouraged wherever possible.

Documents will not be photocopied if:

The document has a seal

The document is especially fragile

The document is tightly bound and to do so would damage the spine

A bound volume is greater than 2cm thick

To do so would contravene copyright or data protection legislation

To do so would contravene terms imposed by the depositor

If the condition of the document prevents photocopying or scanning then photography will be suggested as an alternative. Restrictions under legislation or imposed by the depositor will still apply.

Charges will apply for photocopies, scans or use of a camera and a copy of our current charges are attached.

C6) Restrictions on Access

Certain documents held at IWCRO are under access restrictions. The catalogue will include the reason for the restriction and the date until which the restriction will remain.

Access to documents will be restricted if:

The document is too fragile to view and retrieval would cause further damage.

The document is closed under General Data Protection Regulation (2018) or any other relevant legislation.

If a closure period has been agreed with the depositor or creating body

It is advisable to check in advance if in any doubt whether access to a record might be restricted, but if a document cannot be produced then a member of staff will explain the reason for this and may suggest

alternative sources. Where possible, they will also advise on how to apply to the creating body for access to the item.

C7) Accessibility

Isle of Wight Council is committed to celebrating diversity and inclusivity for everyone on the Island, and adheres to the Equality Act (2010).

IWCRO is located in a 19th Century building with steps to the front door, narrow interior doors and multiple level changes within the building, making navigating the Record Office challenging for researchers with physical disabilities. However, the staff will do everything they can to provide access to records including:

If advised in advance, a parking space will be reserved

Assisted visits will be supported and encouraged

PCs and Microfilm viewers can be adjusted

Magnifying glasses are available

A work-station in the staff area can be made available by appointment

C8) Feedback

Most of the feedback received is verbal, and occasionally a letter or card. Other feedback comes via email or the 'Contact' tab on the Record Office website. Every two years, IWCRO takes part in the Archives and Records Association National Visitors Survey which provides researchers with an opportunity to comment anonymously, as well as for the Record Office to compare its feedback with other offices.

An official complaints procedure is available through the Isle of Wight Council website, with a set of proscribed procedures.

D) REMOTE ACCESS

D1) Website

IWCRO aims to regularly review and develop the office website, with information about collections added as it becomes available.

The website enables remote researchers to:

View catalogues not available on The National Archive Discovery Catalogue

View indexes and databases to some name-rich holdings

View a list of recent accessions

View research guides and other resources generated by staff at IWCRO

Read historical articles written by IWCRO staff for local publications

Submit an online enquiry or copy request (see below)

The website does not currently have links to other organisations and resources, although a list of these is currently being compiled.

D2) Leaflets

IWCRO updates its leaflet every four years or sooner if a new print-run is required. This leaflet provides a brief summary of records held and services offered by the Record Office, as well as a map and contact details.

It is available in the searchroom and often taken by visitors who wish to contact the office prior to a future visit or if they are considering commissioning work from IWCRO. The Record Office is always looking for new outlets to display the leaflet in order to reach the widest possible customer-base.

D3) Enquires and Research Service

IWCRO advises researchers on the information held at the office, with the aim of encouraging the researcher to visit. If they are unable to do so, then a single short search will be made free of charge. Additional, or more involved searches will incur a fee. The Record Office is also able to provide copies of many of the documents held, determined by the copying restrictions outlined above. Information about the current fees and charges of IWCRO are attached.

For further details please see our Research Service Information Sheet.

IWCRO also receives enquires from depositors relating to their own records or those of predecessor organisations. These include Parish and Town Councils, Coroners, Registrars and Schools. The most common depositor enquiries, however, come from departments within Isle of Wight Council. Enquiries from depositors about their own records are dealt with free of charge.

D4) Social Media

IWCRO uses social media to promote learning activities and outreach events. Isle of Wight Council directs the majority of social media through the Media and Communications team, and this acts as the current focus for Record Office engagement with social media.

D5) Learning Activities and Outreach Events

IWCRO aims to promote the use of the service by engaging with existing potential customers, either on our own or in partnership with other Council departments or outside organisations. IWCRO will:

Encourage stakeholders to make best use of all the resources available at the office

Raise the profile of the Record Office among those who are not aware of what the office can offer them

Support national and local Heritage initiatives and provide training for project volunteers in the use of archive sources

Support the priorities of the Isle of Wight Council.

See the Outreach Policy for the specific aims, objectives and priorities of Outreach for the Record Office.

D6) Education

IWCRO does not have a member of staff dedicated to education, and the Record Office building does not allow for visits for school parties, except under exceptional circumstances. The Record Office supports work of the Heritage Education Officer and their work with schools offsite.

The Record Office does not have its own Adult Education programme. Instead it supports classes organised by the Workers Educational Association as well as other funded projects on the Island. The main educational role of the Record Office is through a programme of talks. See the IWCRO Access Plan for further details.

E) REVIEW

This policy was written in 2018 and will be reviewed in 2023, or when a change is made.