

Archives: Wigan & Leigh

Wigan Council

December 2021

How to Use Archives: Wigan & Leigh

Welcome to Archives: Wigan & Leigh. The following notes will help you to use the Archives if you have not used the service before and will explain where to look for further information if you have used the service in the past but are unsure about how we work.

If you require further information concerning any of the areas covered in these notes, please contact us on 01942 404 430 or by email at archives@wigan.gov.uk

Before You Visit the Archives

Before you visit the Archives is it worth considering what kind of information you are looking to find and which kind of records might assist you in doing so.

The Archives contain hundreds of collections relating to all manner of subjects in the Wigan Borough (and beyond), reaching back 800 years.

If you are uncertain where to look for information, our finding aids (catalogues, indexed, transcriptions) will give you ideas of the types of records that might contain the information.

These finding aids can be found on the Collections and Research pages of the Archives & Local Studies websites, [Archives: Wigan and Leigh collections](#) . You will find more information on how to use the finding aids below.

If you look at the finding aids and discover a likely source, make a note of any details, including reference codes where given as this will help you access the records later on.

If you struggle to locate a suitable catalogue, please contact us and we will be happy to make suggestions for where to look.

Once you have an idea of what you would like to look at, you can contact the Archives to make an appointment or give us details of your enquiry.

We encourage visitors to the Archives to make an appointment in advance, to avoid disappointment if we are unable to accommodate you when you arrive with us and so

that we can retrieve suitable records in advance of your visit; this will allow you to make the most of research time available to you.

We are very happy for you to visit us without an appointment and will be happy to retrieve records if we are able to or assist you with an enquiry.

Making a Remote Enquiry

If you are unable to visit the Archives or have a query about collections, you can contact us in several ways. You can post an enquiry to Archives: Wigan & Leigh at Leigh Town Hall, email us at archives@wigan.gov.uk or call us on 01942 404 430.

Any remote research enquiries will be answered free of charge if we are able to. We are able to spend 15 minutes doing free research into collections on your behalf. Any enquiries requiring further research must be done in person or via the paid Research Service (please see below for more details).

We will endeavour to answer all written or telephone enquiries within 10 working days.

Arriving at the Archives Service

The Archives Reading Room is located on the ground floor of Leigh Town Hall. When you get to the Reading Room just come in and you'll be met by a member of the team.

We will then ask you to sign in, read the Reading Room Guidelines <http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Resident/Leisure/Museums-and-archives/archives/ReadingRoomPreservationGuidelinesforResearchers.pdf> if you are new to the service and hand up or place in lockers provided any coats or bags.

You will not be allowed to keep any loose personal possessions such as coats or bags with you in the Reading Room, including handbags; you will be able to keep notepads or laptops/cameras with you to record any information you find.

You will be given a brief introduction to the Archives if you have not used the service before and staff or volunteers can explain how the cataloguing and indexing systems work, how to get more information if needed and how to handle fragile records.

We will assign you a desk and the records ordered will be given to you to examine; we will advise you of any handling requirements for the records, access restrictions (closed or sensitive records) or any records we have not been able to retrieve (either as they are off site or too fragile to be produced). Each record will carry with it a pink or white retrieval slip with your details on it and the reference code; please ensure that this slip remains with the records during use.



When you have finished using the documents, please leave them on the table you have been using so that they can be checked by a member of staff before being returned to the strongrooms.

In order to ensure the Archive collections remain secure and safe, the Reading Room is invigilated by a member of staff at all times. On occasion staff may need to ask you to handle or consult documents in a particular way in order to ensure records are protected.

Using Finding Aids

There are a variety of different finding aids available to researchers, both online and in the Reading Room.

Online finding aids consist of catalogues, indexes, photographic gallery, transcriptions and guides, available at <http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Museums-archives/Wigan-Archives/Archive-collections.aspx>

In the Reading Room you will find paper copies of the introductory *Guide to the Archives*, all collection catalogues, organised by collection, card indexes to collections (not all of which are available online), the reference library collection, indexes to maps and the photographic reference print collection. Please feel free to browse the card index, catalogue and book collections; for access to maps or photographs, please ask a member of staff to assist you.

When ordering records, where possible please find catalogue references for the records you would like to view. If you are uncertain what these are or do not know if the Archives hold a certain type of record, please ask a member of staff.

Accessing Born-Digital Records in the Archives

When browsing Archives Service finding aids you may find records listed as being born digital or in digital format only. If you wish to access digital records held by the Archives, this can be done by contacting us and we will arrange for you to access this content at the Archives through the People's Network or if appropriate, we will provide you with digital copies of the records.

Access Restrictions

Certain classes of records will have closure period, either because they contain personal information and are closed under the General Data Protection Regulations, or if they are private donations and were accepted into the Archives with a closure period attached. This means that we are unable to give access to records that are *closed* to public consultation.



If you require access to closed records either for research purposes or if you are the data subject, you will be asked to complete an application form before a decision can be made on whether records can be opened and accessed. This can be found here:

<http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Resident/Museums-archives/Wigan-Archives/Policies-and-procedures.aspx>

For further information, please contact us.

Research Service

The Archives provides a full research service, for which charges will apply. All research is carried out by a trained and qualified member of the Archives team. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Resident/Leisure/Museums-and-archives/archives/ResearchServiceCommissionForm.pdf>

Reprographic Services

The Archives can provide copies of many documents in the collections, for personal or research use.

The Archives can supply photocopies of documents or scan or photograph records for you, supplying you with a digital copy.

You may also use a personal camera in the Reading Room without charge to photograph records; you should consult staff before doing so however as some classes of records may be open for public consultation but copying restrictions may apply.

You will be required to fill out an order form and copying agreement before any copies can be supplied or your own camera used.

If you require copies for commercial use, please contact us or consult the list of fees and charges for further details. Fees and charges are available in the Reading Room as well as on the Archives website.

Making a Comment or Complaint

If you would like to comment on the service you have received or the facilities or collections provided by the Archives we would be pleased to hear from you, and welcome constructive feedback on how we can improve; it is always welcome to receive comments about the collections in which we take so much pride.

Please do not hesitate to make suggestions regarding our services to a member of staff.

Formal complaint and comments forms are available in the Archives Reading Room. Information on making a formal complaint regarding a Wigan Council service can be found at: <http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/Comments-and-Complaints/CorporateComplaintsProcedure.pdf>

Or, please go to <http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Council/Contact-us/Council-Complaints.aspx> , contact complaints@wigan.gov.uk or speak to a member of staff on (01942) 827607.

Facilities at the Archives

Leigh Town Hall has WiFi throughout the building to which you are welcome to connect when using the Archives Service. Please ask staff for further instructions.

You are welcome to bring and use personal laptops, smartphones or tablets for the purposes of recording information from the records or accessing the internet. If you require a power source for any items you will be asked to sign a usage form and the device must be plugged in using an adaptor, which will be provided. Please ask staff for further instructions.

The toilets in the building are located on the ground floor.

There is a coffee shop in the foyer of the Town Hall which is available to all visitors and the Archives Exhibition is open during normal opening times.

