

# County Archivist

## Durham County Record Office



## The Role

### Durham County Record Office is looking for a new County Archivist.

This is an exciting opportunity to join a successful, accredited archive service in a leading role as we prepare to move to our new state of the art home within the Durham History Centre Project.

This could be a career-defining opportunity, if vision, innovation, strong project and financial management, and practical problem solving are at the heart of what you do. We are looking for someone who will challenge, innovate and revolutionise the ways we deliver our services, who will bring fresh thinking and an ability to enthuse and inspire.

We're looking for someone passionate about widening access, leading digital innovation, and reaching new and diverse audiences. You'll bring significant experience of working in an archive service in a senior position and be able to demonstrate strong motivational and leadership skills with a keen interest in cross-collection initiatives. You'll lead from the front ensuring we are creative in how we share our archive with the people of County Durham and beyond.

You'll be an excellent communicator able to build and maintain partnerships with key stakeholders, the community and the wider archive and heritage sector.

With a great team who work well together and are motivated, knowledgeable, and proud of doing a good job, if you have a passion and enthusiasm for archival practice this is an ideal opportunity for you to shape the vision and direction of this important service.

You will have a relevant degree and a post-graduate qualification in archive management, together with relevant experience.

## About us

We are an accredited Archive Service. Our archive collections span almost 900 years, from about 1122 to the present day, and occupy more than five miles of shelving. These locally, regionally and internationally significant archives provide a unique insight into County Durham and Darlington's history and heritage over the last millennium

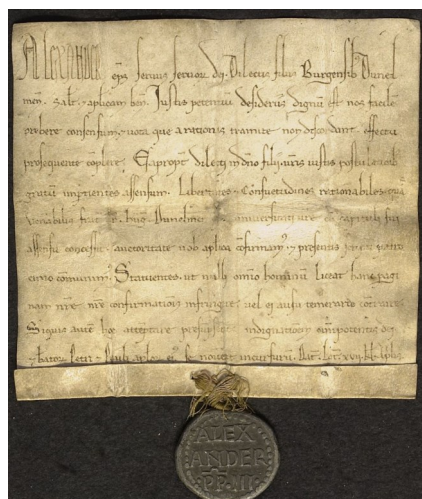


## Star collections include:

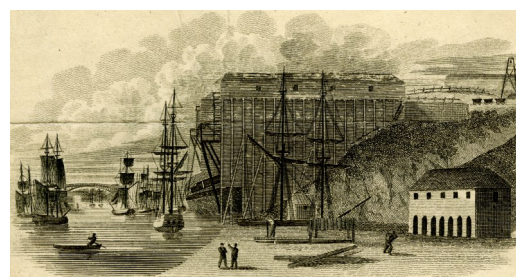
- Estate, political and diplomatic papers of the Londonderry family, documenting the Peninsular War under Wellington, the Congress of Vienna which shaped modern Europe in 1814/15, and the development of Seaham Harbour for coal.
- Bowes family archives, illustrating the modern Royal Family's ancestry and the development of the coal trade. Hidden among estate and business records are the stories of estate workers, industrial relations, wages and conditions of both coal and lead miners.
- Durham Miners' Association (DMA) archives, recording working class struggle for fair pay, decent working conditions and housing.
- Other records of manufacturing and workers' lives including Durham Dales underground lead working plans, Consett Iron, Harrison's pipe organs, and Mackays famous Durham Carpets.
- Birth and impact of railways, such as Shildon Works papers relating to the Stockton & Darlington Railway, production records from Darlington's Whessoe Foundry.
- The Durham Light Infantry Archive
- Records charting the creation of the first North East new towns at Newton Aycliffe and Peterlee, a response to 1947 report 'Farewell Squalor' on poor amenities and housing on the Durham coalfield.
- Oral histories capturing dialect, experiences, traditions and culture.
- Care and hospital records: stories of children in Medomsley Cottage Homes, the largest children's home in the county, and their families; homeless children taken into Earls House Industrial School, trained and placed with employers; detailed case notes and photographs of Winterton Hospital patients, the former County Asylum opened in 1858.



Photo from DLI archive



Durham City Charter



River Wear coal drops

# Working at Durham County Council

The Durham County Record Office sits as part of Durham County Council's wider culture team alongside our other statutory and heritage functions including libraries, museums and heritage venues. The culture team also delivers theatre and performance, community arts, and festivals and events, such as Lumiere, Bishop Auckland Food Festival and Durham Brass.

As well as the £22 million history centre project there are a number of other exciting initiatives, programmes and anniversaries coming forward which the archive service will be key to supporting, including: the redevelopment of the former Durham Light Infantry Museum and Art Gallery in Durham City, the 200th anniversary of Stockton and Darlington Railway, and Durham 2025, our bid to be UK City of Culture 2025; Durham is one of just four locations to make the final shortlist!

Our UK City of Culture project grasps the proud historic motto of the Durham Miners' Association 'the past we inherit, the future we build', and places it at the heart of a deep-rooted and dazzling cultural programme that reframes a county of unequal opportunity as a place of collective energy. Durham 2025 will drive long-lasting growth across the county, increasing opportunities for skilled employment, supporting community empowerment and reducing economic and health inequality.



At Durham County Council we recognise and value equality and diversity, in ensuring inclusion and bringing new ideas and perspectives and how this helps us to grow and constantly improve our services. We encourage anyone with the required knowledge and skills to apply for our job vacancies.

People with disabilities, members from the LGBT+ community and those from black, Asian, and ethnically diverse backgrounds are under-represented in our workforce, so we particularly encourage applications from people in these groups.

We are a disability confident employer with leader status. We encourage applicants with a disability and take positive action in guaranteeing an interview for all disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria in the person specification. Please let us know of any support you may need in applying for our vacancies. For example, we have provided practical interview preparation support for people on the autism spectrum.

We are Stonewall Diversity Champions and ensure our policies and practices are LGBT+ inclusive. We have several employee networks in place including disability, LGBT+ and carers' networks which are also open to allies to ensure we all pull together in a positive and proactive way. Find out more on the council's approach at our [Equality and Diversity](#) webpage.





# Durham History Centre Project Information



## Durham History Centre

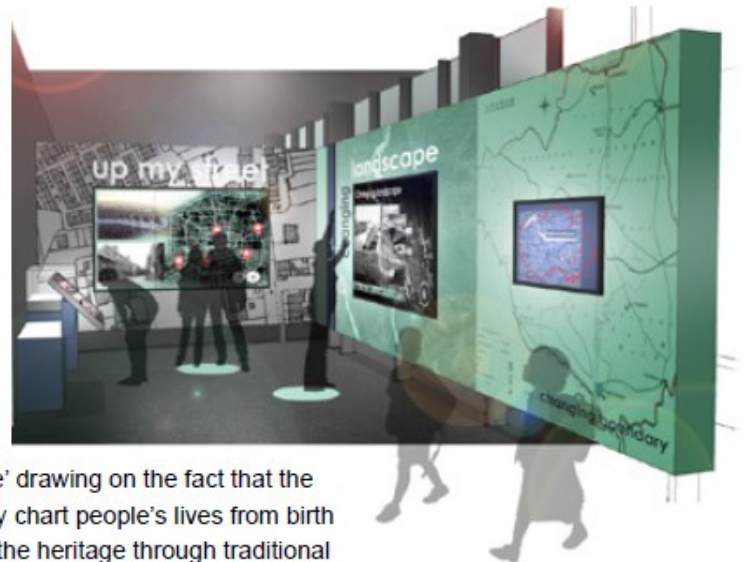
### A whole new story

Thanks to National Lottery players we have funding to engage people with the collections through activities, exhibitions and digital projects. We hope to increase engagement with County Durham and Darlington's history and heritage, particularly with young people, "unheard voices", people with health and wellbeing issues and people who think history and archives aren't relevant to them.

Activities will draw from five collections areas to tell the full story of County Durham, making the history relevant and fun to new audiences.

Exhibitions will be based around the theme 'Record of a Lifetime' drawing on the fact that the history centre will be the custodian of collections that can literally chart people's lives from birth to death over hundreds of years. Visitors will be able to explore the heritage through traditional interpretation styles and engaging interactive digital displays.

Digitised collections, a new website, crowdsourcing platform and social media will spark online engagement and we will integrate our collections with cloud middleware to provide instant, sector-leading and innovative access to collections, that can be accessed remotely or at DHC.



## Mount Oswald

We have appointed Kier to restore the grade II listed Mount Oswald Manor House building and to construct a modern extension to house the collections in the appropriate conditions.

The Durham Register Office will be based in the historic building with exhibitions, café, research and volunteer facilities in new building overlooking the grounds. Works began in April 2021 and are due to be completed in 2022.

Following this the long process of relocating the collections and fitting out the exhibition space will begin ahead of opening summer 2023.

The project has been hugely supported by our Cabinet and consultation has shown immense public support. The history centre building will only be new once, with only one opportunity to take advantage of the exciting new building and service model to increase engagement with heritage.



before



after

# Digital Strategy

In 2019 we developed the digital strategy for the project with Golant Innovation, forming the basis for our digital plans and now, thanks to support from the National Lottery, we are starting to implement our digital strategy.

The Durham History Centre project has ambitions beyond simply making it easier to access records and collections across multiple services. Through curation, interpretation and digital participation, we will create, gather and share stories and narratives about life in County Durham, drawing upon our own collections alongside other historical records and artefacts. Stories will engage people, prompting them to learn more about their families, their places, their roots and the county as whole.



**Digital will be an essential part of the history centre experience – for visitors to the new building, for those planning a visit, and for those who may never visit at all.**

Digital will play a key role in:

- Bringing together a range of heritage collections and services for better access and engagement, creating something that's bigger than the sum of its parts
- Creating in-person experience that is intriguing and inspiring, tempting visitors to learn more and engage more deeply
- Building an off-site offer that is exceptional in its own right, giving people ways to engage even if they're not physically present
- Raising the profile of Durham nationally and internationally
- Developing opportunities for cross-selling (both for revenue and engagement) between and across services

Digital is not an afterthought; it is an integral part of the project with huge support from our project board and a commitment to support our digital plans as much as our building plans. In advance of starting the cloud middleware project, we have been working with both Microsoft and AWS partners on proof of concepts, using a subset of the data within our collections, to help us understand the technology. Working with two global organisations like Microsoft and Amazon is testament to our digital ambitions.

Digitised collections, a new website, crowdsourcing platform and social media will spark online engagement and we will integrate our collections with cloud middleware to provide instant, sector-leading and innovative access to collections, that can be accessed remotely or at DHC.





## Exhibition plans

The history centre will be the custodian of collections that can literally chart people's lives from birth to death over hundreds of years. These precious collections allow us to see snippets of a person's life from the moment they register their birth, their homes and communities, schooling, health, marriage and celebrations and working life, right up to the certification of death. Under the overarching theme 'Record of a Lifetime' visitors will be able to explore the heritage of County Durham thematically, mixing traditional interpretation styles with engaging interactive digital displays.



We are currently developing stories for the following themes:

**Who am I?** we will use real people from the archives to illustrate how we can chart someone's life through the records we keep. Visitors will encounter a number of peoples' 'lifetimes' explored through our collections and will be encouraged to consider what makes them who they are and how the different types of information allow us to build up an image of a person.

**Transformation** changes in the natural landscape, introduction of the railway, new and dying industries, changes in boundaries and populations

**Living together** looking at how community spirit has developed in the county, especially in times of need, and focussing on particular streets to learn about how life has changed over the years.

**Making a living** delving into the most valued industries and exploring some of the newer industries continuing Durham's legacy as an industrial county.

**Making connections** exploring the relationship between County Durham and the world, exports, immigration, achievements.

**Changing perceptions** challenging the perception that County Durham's story is only industrial and military, showcasing Durham's other achievements.

**Hidden Treasures** an opportunity to showcase interesting and surprising objects that don't fit the other themes, and an opportunity to see behind the scenes. Opening drawers, peeping through walls to discover items.

**In Focus** our temporary exhibitions area, stories for this area have not been decided yet but will be based around anniversaries or suggestions from the public.

## The collections

County Durham's unique story is contained in five collections, occupying 1,400m<sup>3</sup>, in locations across the county:

- Durham County Record Office (DCRO) - an Accredited Archive Service: over five miles of locally, regionally, nationally and internationally significant archives, providing a unique insight into County Durham and Darlington's history and heritage over the last 900 years.
- Historic registration records of births, deaths and marriages: 200 years of key life events.
- Local studies reference collection: the principal body of published research material on the county's heritage, including many rare editions.
- HER: the main source of information on human impact on Durham and Darlington's landscape, from the first settlers to modern times.
- DLI collection - Arts Council Accredited Status: objects illustrating the 200-year story of the famous regiment. The project will reunite DLI archives and objects for the first time since 1998.



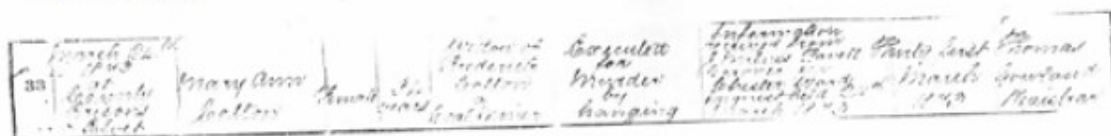
Durham City Charter  
DCRO Du 1/1/2



Sedgefield jug



Medals from the DLI collection



Mary Ann Cotton's entry in the death register 24 March 1873

Keep up to date and find out more at our [project website](#)

