

Transforming the CRO

Feedback on Collection Week 28 – July 2011

Collections

PH 1035, Framed and Cased Photographs

Work has continued on the project to add the museum photographic collection to CALM. This will ultimately lead to the catalogue becoming accessible online and will consist of approximately twenty thousand entries. One small part of this is the series referred to as framed and cased photographs, this largely refers to a collection of fifty plus images, mostly portraits produced in the mid to late 19th century using early photographic methods such as Daguerreotypes and Ambrotypes. Some of them are in extremely good condition such as the Daguerreotype of a young woman below. This decorated Union case with velvet inlay is colour tinted. The photographers are described as Ball & Thomas of 120W 4th St. Cincinnati, Ohio and probably dates from the 1850s. Although many of these early photographic types are of disparate origin and varied location, the vast majority of the museum collection relates to Wawickshire subjects.



Daguerreotypes were from a process invented in 1839 by French photographer Louis Daguerre. They were a polished copper plate covered in a thin coating of silver and treated with iodine. Once exposed to light in the camera, the image would then appear through the action of a mercury vapour. The image would then need to be fixed with the use of a chemical agent.

For more information on early photographic types and how to identify them please ask for a copy of Rosemary Booth's book 'Dating Your Family Photographs', which can be purchased at reception.

DR454, Westwood Parish Records

A large number of documents in DR 454, relating to the parish of Westwood, have now been added to the catalogue, including a single volume (DR454/67) containing the Vestry Minutes from 1857-1967 and the Churchwardens' accounts from 1857-1909. These newly catalogued items are chiefly nineteenth and twentieth century and include much which relates to the early history of the parish. One interesting item is an envelope (DR 454/18) which contains correspondence relating to the setting up of Westwood Chapel; it also includes a small envelope containing Lady Leigh's detailed mss notes of the programme for the 'Occasion of the Laying of the Foundation Stone of Westwood Church'.

A related item is DR 454/28 which is a package entitled 'The Endowment of Westwood Chapel' which includes: many manuscript promises; printed first list of subscribers (4, 5 & 6 November 1840) together with an illustration of the proposed chapel; mss notes on the length & breadth of the district of Westwood; printed subscription plea to the 'Owners, Occupiers, and Cultivators of Land'; petition for Queen Anne's Bounty; two printed copies of Lord Leigh's hymn to be sung by the children at the laying of the foundation stone; printed copy of the Memorial sent to the Lord Bishop of Worcester. This package also includes a printed account of monies subscribed (1 August 1841) which is, in effect, a mini-census of the whole of the parish of Stoneleigh, as inhabitants were noted even if not at home; there is also a coloured plan of the district to be attached to the chapel, copied from Lord Leigh's map July 20 1846. In addition to this latter plan a number of other plans were found in this collection, amongst them being DR 454/65, 'one plan and one elevation for a contemplated chapel of ease at Westwood Heath by Henry Jones Underwood'.

Z1109(SM), Copies of records from the Cartae Miscellaneae held at the National Archives

In keeping with the themes of land and property, which have been such central features of Collections Weeks over the last year, we have compiled a brief catalogue to copies of over 40 deeds, kindly obtained for us by Mr Stephen Wallsgrave, from the Cartae Miscellaneae at the National Archives. This substantial collection, held at Class E315, consists of 6578 deeds, mainly collected by John Calley, from the Ancient Deeds of the Augmentation Office. These chiefly concern private grants to monastic houses, or relate to property already acquired by monastic houses.

The deeds of which we have been provided with copies, relate to land, houses, rents and annuities in Warwickshire, ranging from the twelfth to the sixteenth century. These deeds concern property in Warwick itself, as well as such places as Barford and Beausale.

Building Regulation Plans

CR4164, Nuneaton Borough Building Plans

Work has continued on adding the building regulation plans deposited by the local authority to an Access database that can at present be searched by staff on duty in the searchroom. We have now reached the end of this particular series which ran to 1966. However only the plans starting in 1923 had been added as those from before this date required re packaging when the project started. So now attention has been turned to adding the earlier plans to the data base starting with 1922. This week a further 139 plans have been added.

CALM is the software that is used to catalogue all Warwickshire County Record Office collections. Warwickshire's Past Unlocked is the publicly accessible version of this catalogue on-line

Record Office Staff

Who are we and what do we do...?

Jane Commane, Conservation Assistant



I am a conservation assistant and I work at Warwickshire County Record Office one day a week.

Mostly, you can find me working on one of the many large Ordnance Survey maps we are currently repairing! Sometimes these old maps have various problems. They may be torn, have portions missing or just quite worn and damaged by years of use prior to being in our collections. I repair them so that they are in a better condition for document production for people to use.

I start off by flattening the maps out and having a good look at them. I work out which bits need repair and how best to do it. I then start patching up any rips or tears from the reverse with special types of Japanese paper, which I attach with special glue and firm into place. I often then weight down or iron the repairs to make sure they attach well. I will then work on the top-side of the map, using a very fine type of thin paper just to cover any creases or tears. It's very rewarding to see the maps complete, clean and ready to be used again.

I also work with Robert and Alex to clean documents from time to time – we make sure we get our masks, gloves and lab coats on. We use a vacuum table and brushes to clean dirt and dust off recently-acquired documents which have yet to be catalogued, so this is the first step towards making them ready for the public to use and view.

I sometimes use the microfilm machine to create new microfilms of parish registers. The aim is to create films in order to preserve the most popular registers. You have to photograph each page of the registers carefully and try to keep track of what page you are on! It may not sound interesting but I have had several interesting moments whilst doing this – I found both my great Aunt and Uncle's wedding and my Great-Grandparent's wedding in one of these parish registers, quite by accident, whilst photographing the pages!

This work gives me a real sense of achievement. It's really rewarding, as some jobs may take a while but the results always make it all worthwhile. And it's great to know you're putting documents back into a good condition so they can continue to be useful and interesting for years to come.

Catalogues online at: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/archivesunlocked