

Archive Research



HOW TO GUIDE: LIBRARY OF BIRMINGHAM ARCHIVES AND COLLECTIONS

This guide has been created as part of the Celebrating Birmingham's Burial Grounds project to enable users to explore the resources in the Birmingham Archive situated at the top of the Central Library. Although this guide is specific to Birmingham your local archive will probably have similar resources and systems so is worth a read.

Before you visit - *joining the library, booking, searching the catalogues etc.*

For some research you will only need to visit the Library of Birmingham, for other research you will need to consult the archives and collections held in the Wolfson Centre inside the library. This guide covers how to do both.

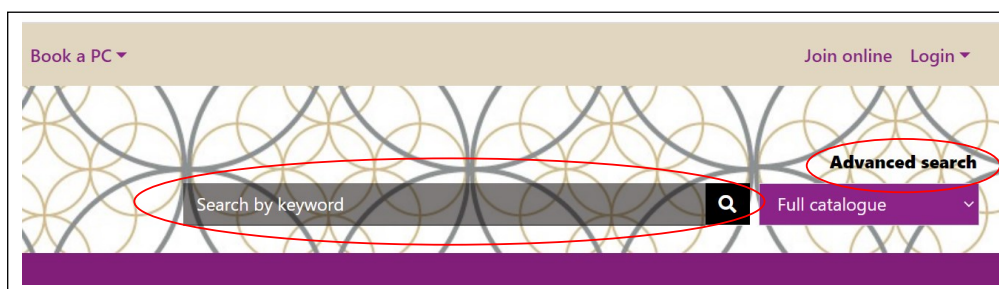
Birmingham libraries card

In order to use the computers and take loanable books out of the library, you will need a Birmingham Libraries card. If you don't have a card or your card has expired, you can sign up for one in person or online. You do not need to live in Birmingham to join Birmingham libraries.

You can join by visiting any Birmingham Library with proof of your name and current address, or apply [online](#). Once you fill out the online form, you must take your self-registration number, along with proof of your name and current address to the library to collect your card. When you get your library card, you will also be given a 4-digit pin number—which you must keep safe.

How to search the library catalogue

The library catalogue can be searched [online](#) using the Spydus system. A quick keyword search can be done using the search box at the top of the page and clicking on the magnifying glass, or you can do an Advanced search by clicking on the button.



Advanced search

Title	in the midst of life	Keywords	AND
Author	McKenna	Keywords	AND
Anywhere		Keywords	AND
Dewey class		AND	
Year:		e.g. 2007, > 2000, 1990-2005	
Added:	Anytime		
Location:	All locations eLibrary Acocks Green Library		
Collection:	All collections Adult Fiction Hardback Adult Fiction Paperback		

On completion of your search if you wish to REFINER the results select the "Options" menu.

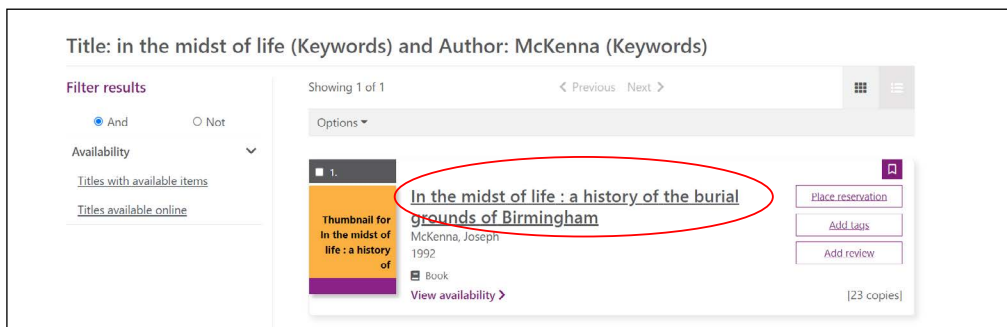
Clear Search

Advanced search allows you to search for a specific item using title, author, year of publication, location and other information. In this example, we are trying to find a specific book using title keywords and the surname of the author, searching across all collections and all of the libraries in Birmingham. Fill in the fields you have information for and click search.

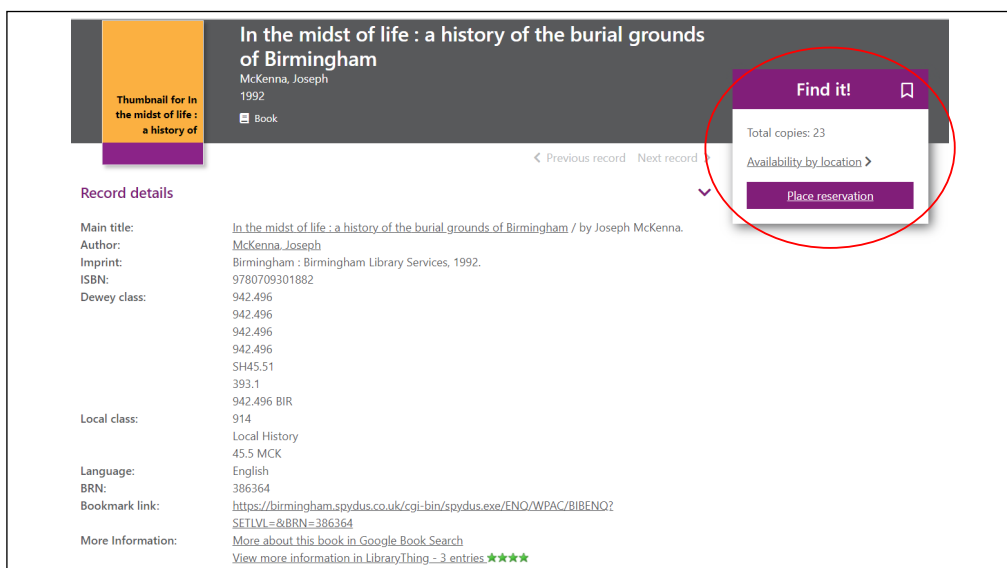
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The search found one result in the library catalogue. Clicking on the title gives us more information about it.



There are 23 copies of this book in the Birmingham Libraries collection. We can click on 'Availability by location' to see where they are, or place a reservation (you can have a book delivered to any Birmingham library branch).



There are 3 copies of this book in the main Library of Birmingham, all of which are reference copies (not available for loan) but there are lots of copies available for loan at local library branches.

Kingstanding Library	Adult Non-fiction	942.496 LS1	Available
Library of Birmingham Level 5	Reference: Not for loan	LP 45.5 McK	Not for loan (Set: 03 Oct 2012)
Library of Birmingham Level 4	Reference: Not for loan	45.5 McK Birmingham Collection	Not for loan (Set: 03 Oct 2012)
Library of Birmingham Level 5	Reference: Not for loan	LP 45.5 MCK	Not for loan (Set: 22 Apr 2017)
Library Services at Home	Adult Non-fiction	942.496 Local History 4	Available

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Booking a Computer

You can reserve a computer up to 7 days before you visit the library. Computer bookings are done [online](#), but you need to log in with your library card number and pin number so you cannot do this until you have your library card.

Computer sessions can be booked for up to three hours per session, for up to a total of 9 hours a week. You can book multiple sessions per day, but there must be a break between sessions of 30 minutes. However, the computers which can be reserved using this system are on the lower ground, 2nd and 3rd floor, not on the 4th floor where the archives and local history collections are kept, so you may not want to reserve a computer in advance. There are 15 computers on the 4th floor, so it is unlikely that there won't be any free when you visit. The 4th floor computers have access to facilities e.g. microfilm readers which aren't available elsewhere in the library which you may want to use.

Archives and Collections

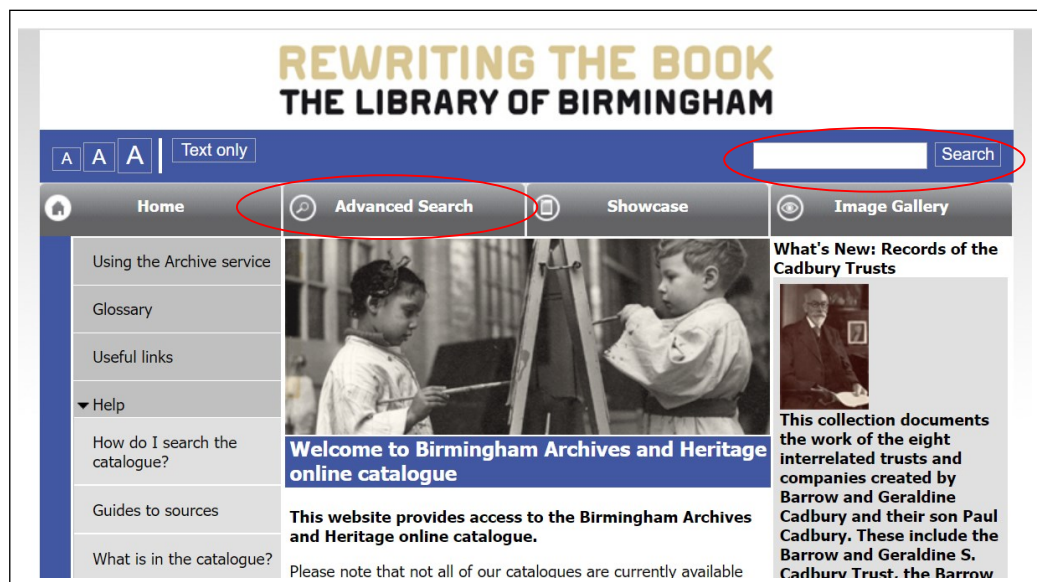
Archives card

Birmingham Libraries used to use CARN reader tickets, CARN stands for County Archives Research Network. If you already have a CARN reader ticket from any County Archive you can continue to use it. Otherwise, you need to register for an Archives card. You can register for the Archives card [online](#). Birmingham Libraries made a [video](#) on how to fill in the form. Once you have filled in the form, the process is completed by visiting the archives within 3 months to show proof of ID and proof of address (accepted form of ID are listed [here](#)).

How to search the archives catalogue

The archives catalogue is separate from the general library catalogue. It can be searched [online](#) using Calmview.

You can use the search box at the top, or go to advanced search (which can be helpful if you are looking for one specific item which you know a lot about e.g. date or title).



When you start searching, if you aren't sure what you are looking for, it can help to start with broad keyword searches such as the name of the burial ground e.g. Key Hill Cemetery. Remember to try alternative spellings e.g. Kaye Hill and other names e.g. Birmingham General Cemetery. You could also try searching for the area of Birmingham or the parish where the burial ground is located. If you are looking for a specific type of records e.g. maps, plans, photographs, minutes, deeds, then you can use those keywords to narrow down your search. If you are looking for records about one person you can use their name, address, company they worked for, military regiment or any other information you have already to search.

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In this example we did a very broad search for 'cemetery photos' to find some records which might be of interest. Once you find a record which interests you, click on the reference number (underlined in blue) to open the record.

Useful links

▼ Help

How do I search the catalogue?

Guides to sources

What is in the catalogue?

Access to restricted records

Contact Us

Refine Search

1 to 5 of 10

Next Last 5 ▼

Ref No	Level	Title	Date	Thumbnail	Document
BCC/1/HR/P/22/1	Item	Brandwood End Cemetery: 1 File of photos			
BCC/1/HR/P/22/3	Item	Handsworth Cemetery: 1 File of photos			
BCC/1/HR/P/22/5	Item	Key Hill Cemetery: 1 File of photos			
BCC/1/HR/P/22/6	Item	Lodge Hill Cemetery: 1 File of photos			
BCC/1/HR/P/22/7	Item	Lodge Hill Cemetery: 1 File of photos			

1 to 5 of 10

Next Last 5 ▼

Hint: Click on the RefNo of the item you are interested in to see the description.

This opens the description of the item. Usually it's quite brief, but it can help you work out if the item looks useful, or if it comes from a collection which might contain other items which you also want to look at. For example, perhaps there are other photos of interest in the same box. You can click on the links underlined in blue to open them and look at the lists for that collection.

Home

Advanced Search

Showcase

Image Gallery

Using the Archive service

Glossary

Useful links

▼ Help

How do I search the catalogue?

Guides to sources

What is in the catalogue?

Access to restricted records

Contact Us

Advanced Search > Search Results > Record

1 of 10

Next Last

BCC - Records of Birmingham City Council and its committees, departments and affiliated bodies (1838 - present)

1 - Legislative records of Birmingham City Council, its committees and affiliated departments

HR - Recreation & Community Services

P - Photos

[22 - Recreation & Community Services Box 22](#)

Ref No [BCC/1/HR/P/22/1](#)

FindingNumber Recreation & Community Services Box 22/1

Title Brandwood End Cemetery: 1 File of photos

Level Item

Extent 1

Format File

AccessStatus Open

22 - Recreation & Community Services Box 22

1 - Brandwood End Cemetery: 1 File of photos

2 - Christchurch, Quinton, Churchyard: 1 File of photos

3 - Handsworth Cemetery: 1 File of photos

4 - Holy Trinity Churchyard, Sutton: 1 File of photos

5 - Key Hill Cemetery: 1 File of photos

6 - Lodge Hill Cemetery: 1 File of photos

7 - Lodge Hill Cemetery: 1 File of photos

8 - Lodge Hill Crematorium: 1 File of photos

9 - Quinton Cemetery: 1 File of photos

10 - St James' Churchyard: 1 File of photos

11 - St Martin's Churchyard: 1 File of photos

12 - St Matthew's Churchyard: 1 File of photos

13 - St Philip's Churchyard: 1 File of photos

14 - St Thomas' Churchyard: 1 Photograph

Every time you find an item you want to look at make a note of the reference number (copy the name too so you know what the item is). You will need the reference numbers when booking to view them.

How to book an archives appointment—Wolfson Centre for Archival Research

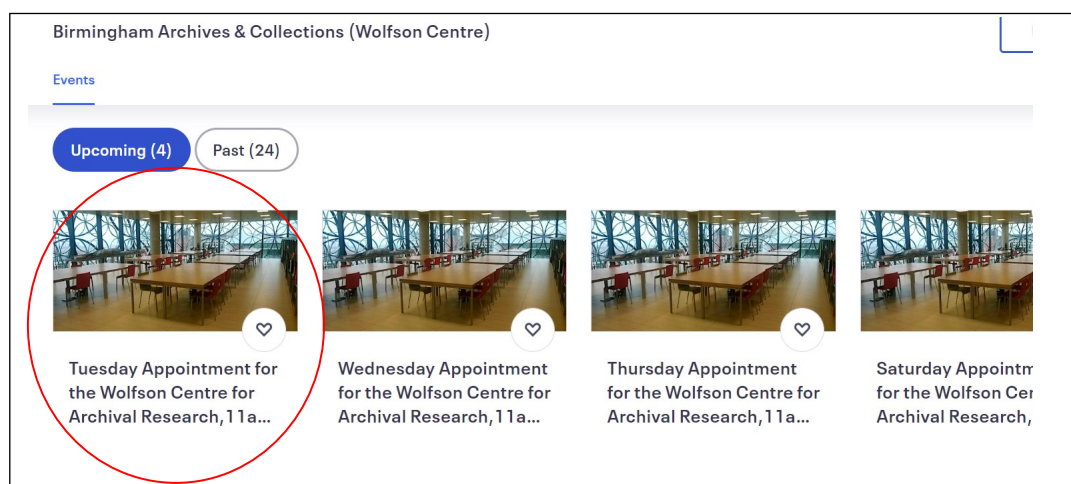
Once you have found some items in the archive you want to see. You need to make an appointment to look at them. Places are limited and often sell out in advance. Appointments are booked through [Eventbrite](#)—there are separate booking pages for Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday (available every week) and Saturday (the archive is open one Saturday a month).

Your appointment lasts all day from 11am until the library closes but you can arrive late and leave early if you want to. The library is open late on Tuesdays (until 6pm) so you get more time! You can also leave during the day e.g. to eat.

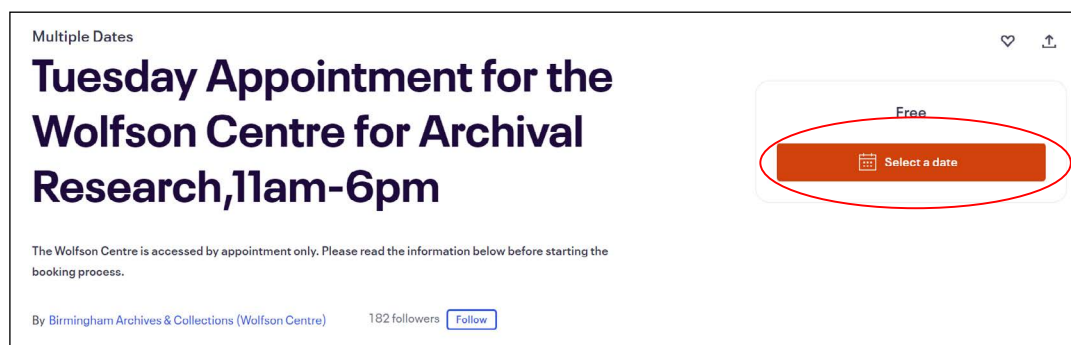
You can only book one appointment to visit each week, and you must book 2 weeks in advance (or more if some dates have sold out). You need your archives card or CARN reader ticket to book and also the document reference numbers of the items you wish to consult. Eventbrite times out after 60 minutes so make sure you have these ready before you start booking.

You can list 7 document numbers for each visit, and 3 back up items in case some of your 7 items are unavailable (e.g. someone else has already booked that item, it is too fragile to handle, it is being used in an exhibition etc.) Reference numbers need to be full file or item level document reference numbers where these are available on the catalogue so the archive staff can locate the items ready for your visit.

First pick the day of the week you want to visit.



Then click on 'Select date' to bring up a list of available dates. Then click on 'Tickets' and 'Register'.



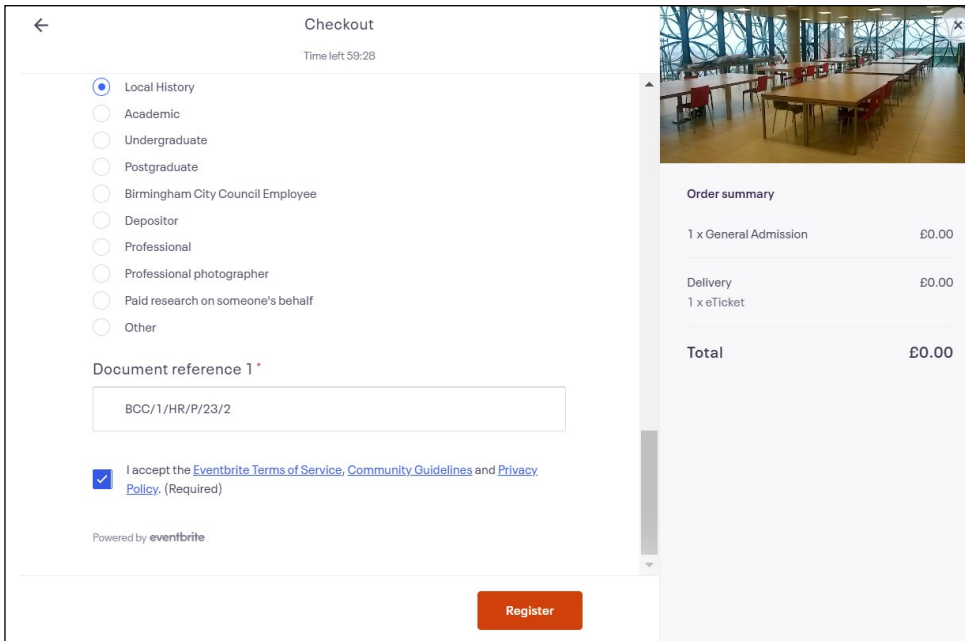
When registering you will need to fill in your contact information etc. Tick to say that you have an Archives card or not and then give the number, read and agree to the terms (you can download them [here](#) as well reading them as on Eventbrite), let them know if you plan to take photos (download the rules for photography [here](#)), select the nature of your research from the list (e.g. local history), and then provide the 1st document reference number. Agree to the terms of service and click register.

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Once you have registered, you will be asked to answer additional questions. This is where you can tell them about any requirements you have e.g. adjustable height table, magnifier, assistance with lifting heavy items.

It is also where you enter the other document reference numbers (up to 7) and 3 alternative refs if the documents you want are not available. Once you have filled it all in click 'Submit and get tickets'.



The screenshot shows the checkout page for an event. On the left, there's a list of categories with radio buttons: Local History (selected), Academic, Undergraduate, Postgraduate, Birmingham City Council Employee, Depositor, Professional, Professional photographer, Paid research on someone's behalf, and Other. Below this is a text input field for 'Document reference 1' containing 'BCC/1/HR/P/23/2'. A checkbox is checked, indicating acceptance of the Eventbrite Terms of Service, Community Guidelines, and Privacy Policy. At the bottom left is a 'Register' button. On the right, there's an 'Order summary' section showing '1 x General Admission' for £0.00 and 'Delivery 1 x eTicket' for £0.00, with a 'Total' of £0.00. A small image of a library interior is visible at the top right of the order summary.

Checkout

Time left 59:28

☒ Local History
☐ Academic
☐ Undergraduate
☐ Postgraduate
☐ Birmingham City Council Employee
☐ Depositor
☐ Professional
☐ Professional photographer
☐ Paid research on someone's behalf
☐ Other

Document reference 1 *

BCC/1/HR/P/23/2

☒ I accept the [Eventbrite Terms of Service](#), [Community Guidelines](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). (Required)

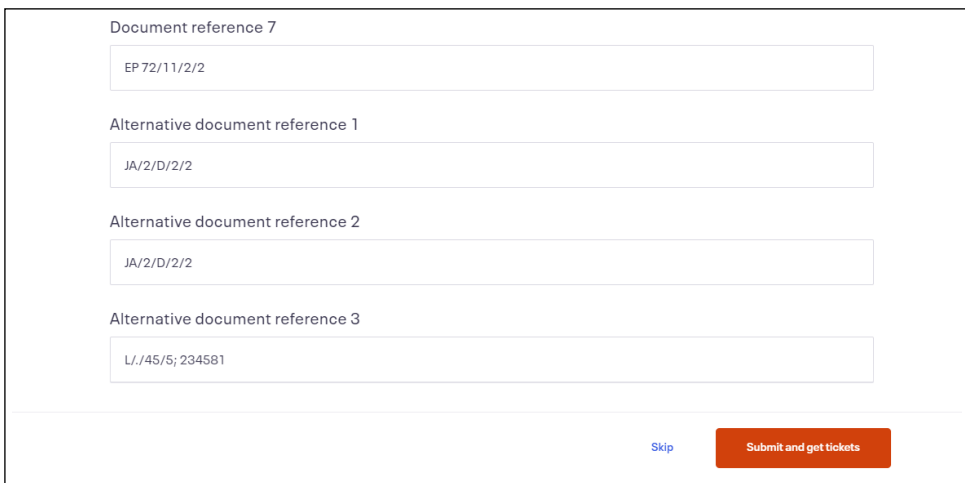
Powered by **eventbrite**

Register

Order summary

1 x General Admission	£0.00
Delivery 1 x eTicket	£0.00
Total	£0.00

It's easy to forget what you have ordered so you should make a note of this. That way it won't be a surprise when you arrive at the archive two weeks (or more) later!



This section contains four text input fields for document references. The first field is labeled 'Document reference 7' and contains 'EP 72/11/2/2'. The second is labeled 'Alternative document reference 1' and contains 'JA/2/D/2/2'. The third is labeled 'Alternative document reference 2' and contains 'JA/2/D/2/2'. The fourth is labeled 'Alternative document reference 3' and contains 'L./45/5; 234581'. At the bottom right, there are two buttons: 'Skip' and 'Submit and get tickets'.

Document reference 7

EP 72/11/2/2

Alternative document reference 1

JA/2/D/2/2

Alternative document reference 2

JA/2/D/2/2

Alternative document reference 3

L./45/5; 234581

[Skip](#) [Submit and get tickets](#)

The address of the Library of Birmingham is Centenary Sq, Broad St, Birmingham B1 2EA

Library of Birmingham Opening times

Wednesday to Saturday: 11am to 5pm

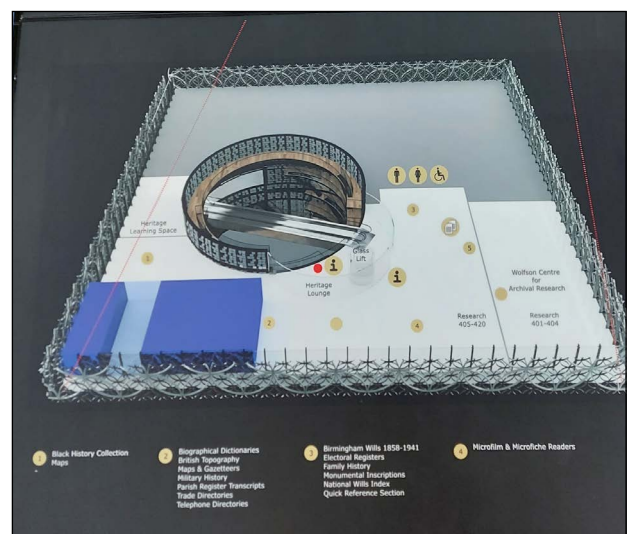
Opening times may be subject to change in the future. You can check them [here](#).

The Wolfson Centre is not open every day. Current opening times are:

Wednesday and Thursday - 11am to 4pm

Opening times may be subject to change in the future. You can check them (and see a list of Saturday dates which vary from month to month) [here](#).

On the 4th floor, there is an area which contains materials are always available for consultation during library opening hours and also an entrance to the Wolfson Centre for Archival Research (by appointment only).



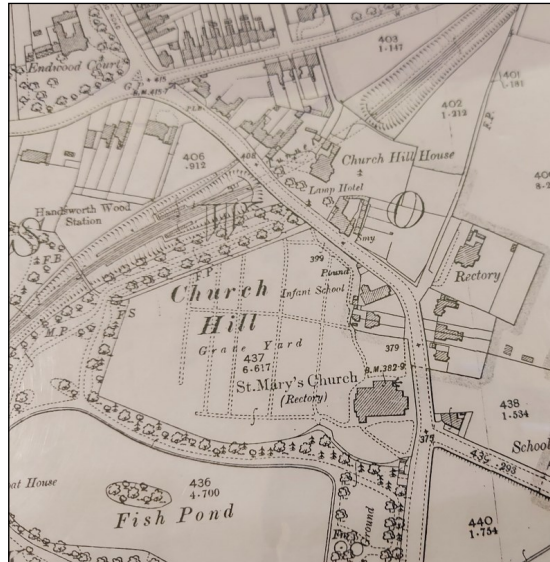
BURIAL GROUNDS THROUGH TIME

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Some of the materials which you might wish to consult are:

Maps

These are in the big drawers near the front of the floor (closest to Centenary Square). Useful maps include OS maps from different dates e.g. when does the burial ground first appear, does the shape change over time (e.g. extensions) and how does the area around it change?



Trade Directories

They are on the moving shelves (unsure about moving them? Ask a librarian to help) and have red covers. They are arranged in chronological order. You can search for businesses (and people) by name or street address. You might use these to look at cemetery companies, preachers, people buried in the burial ground, funeral directors, monumental masons etc. Some trade directories are available on Ancestry, but the paper copies are much easier to navigate!



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Wills

The Birmingham Wills collection is in the (mostly) green bound volumes on the shelves next to the toilets. They cover the period 1858—1941 and are arranged chronologically. The books are heavy and some of the covers are coming loose so you may wish to ask for help getting them down.



Microfilm and Microfiche

There are drawers containing lots of records which might be of interest, including death records and censuses, plus computers which are equipped with readers. You must ask at the desk to book one of those computers in order to use these records. The librarians will then show you how to use the equipment e.g. where to find the records you want, how to use the reader.



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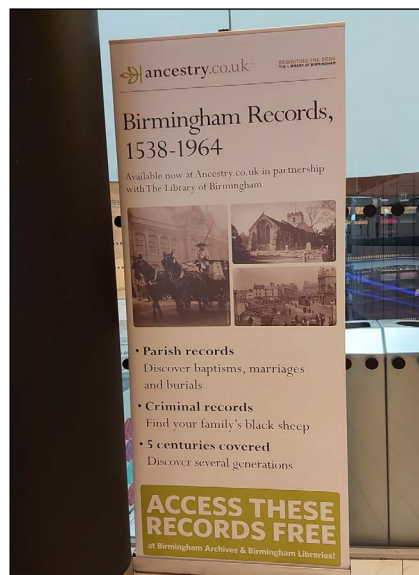
Birmingham Collection

The shelves along the back (next to the Wolfson centre) are filled with all kinds of reference books about Birmingham covering every topic you can think of, plus books about how to do local history research. These books can't be loaned but there might be other copies of them available to borrow held elsewhere within the Birmingham Libraries collection, so if you are enjoying a book you can check the catalogue and see if there is a copy you can borrow.



Family History Guides and Monumental Inscriptions

The first shelf on the left as you come in through the glass doors also has family history guides and transcriptions for some Monumental inscriptions. The monumental inscriptions are in the red bound volumes and are arranged by location.



Computers

Birmingham libraries also have access to a number of other online resources such as Ancestry and Newspapers. Many of these resources usually have a subscription fee so it is very useful to be able to access them via the library for free.

You can see the list of website resources [here](#).

Visiting the Wolfson Centre

Before you visit the centre, you can visit the toilets to the left to wash your hands (e.g. if you are wearing hand cream)

The door to the centre is locked and you must wait at the door for a staff member to let you in. When you enter the check in desk is on the left. Give the archivist your name and archive card/CARN ticket so they can check you in. You will then also have a chance to purchase a photography permit which costs £3.50 a day. If you aren't sure if you need one but later change your mind you can return to the desk to purchase one at any time.

All your belongings except your laptop, camera, notebook and pencil must be stored inside a locker, including outdoor clothing such as coats and your bag. The lockers are on the left and the keys are numbered so you will be able to find your things again. The lockers are tall and thin. Avoid bringing extra items e.g. shopping with you if possible. The lockers are free to use.



Once you have put your belongings away, the archivist will show you to the table where your ordered items have been laid out (on the table or a trolley next to it).

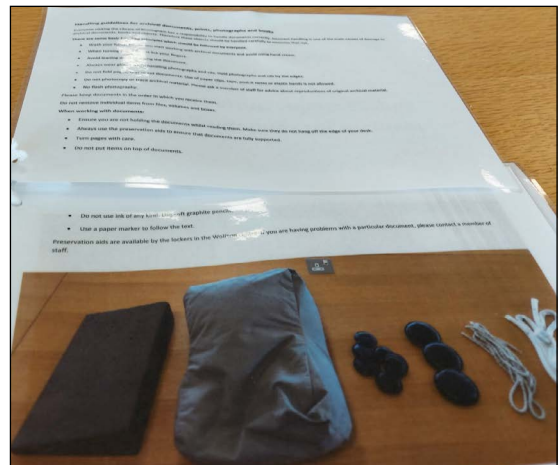
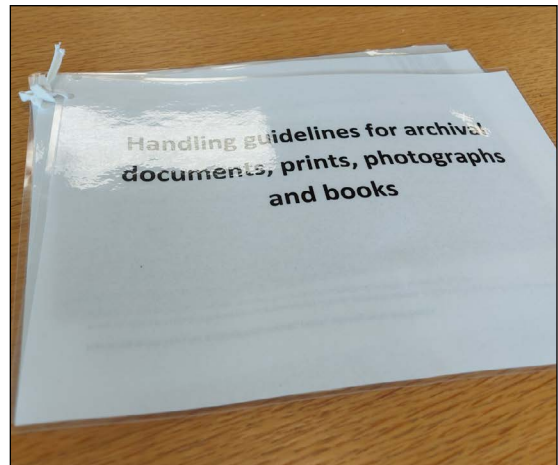


BURIAL GROUNDS THROUGH TIME

Archive Research

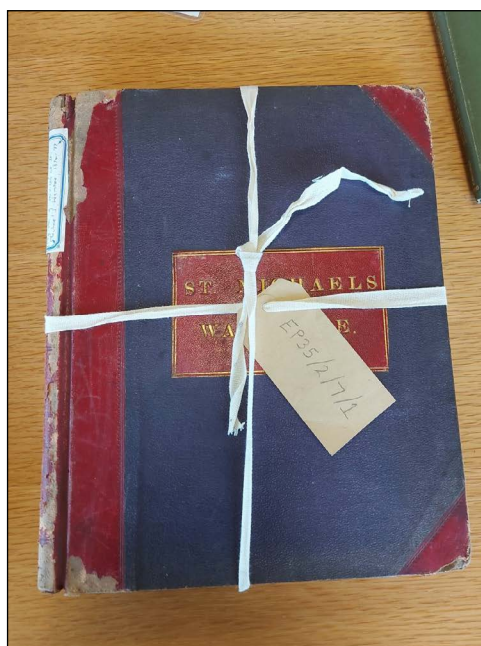
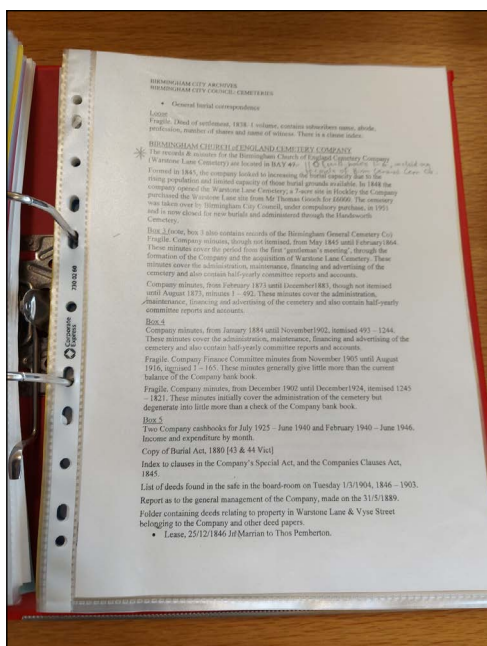
If this is your first visit to the archives or you haven't been for some time, you should start by reading the guidance on handling different archival materials. There are a selection of different book stands and document weights available on the tables by the window. These are used to support items and stop them folding up or moving while you study them. They protect the documents and reduce handling. If you are unsure on anything, ask the archivist to help you.

If you have photographs among the items you ordered you will need nitrile gloves (available in different sizes from the desk) for all other items you should use clean hands. Some items are fragile or heavy. Ask for help moving or opening them if you are unsure.



Some collections will come with a paper catalogue to help you understand the contents, if so check this first.

Some items will be tied with cotton tape to hold them together. If you struggle to undo the knots, or to retie the documents correctly, ask the archivist to help you. They are also happy to advise on the right book stand to use, or which type of weights work best for your documents.

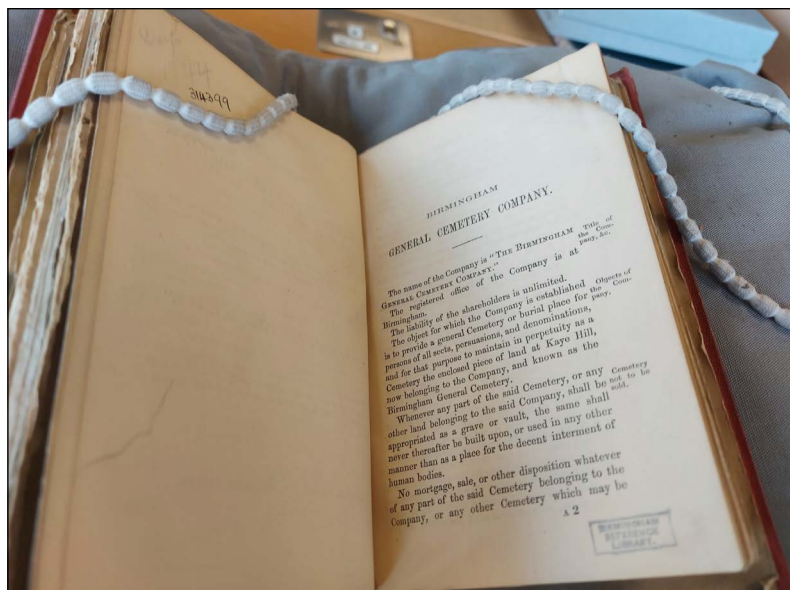


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You should study one document, folder or box at a time and go through it systematically to avoid mixing up items e.g. photos from one folder into another.

Make notes as you go noting down the reference number at the beginning and including anything you might need to refer back to later such as page numbers. Take photos as you go so they are in the same order as your notes. Book weights are very useful for holding book pages open while you photograph them.



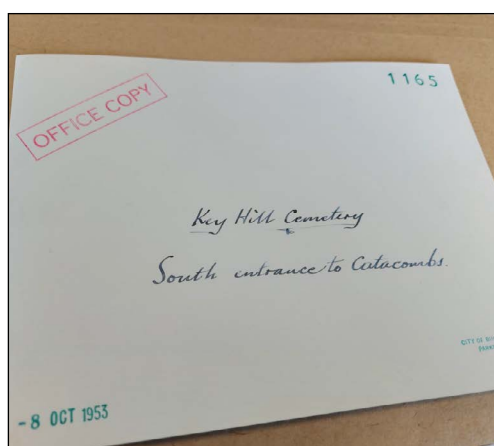
Photographs often have the date, photographer or other important information on the back, so take a photo of both sides.

It can be hard to get a photo of glossy photos or paper without reflections from the lights above the table on them. Try moving around the table and different angles to minimise this



You can leave the archive during the day e.g. to use the toilet, to eat lunch, but you cannot take documents with you.

If you haven't finished with an item or run out of time to look at it, make a note before leaving so you can make another appointment. At the end of your visit all items should be tidied away (e.g. re-tie tape, close box) and left on the table/trolley.



We hope you find this guide useful and that you enjoy our research.

Useful contacts

Caring for God's Acre, www.caringforgodsacre.org.uk

Library of Birmingham, www.birmingham.gov.uk/libraryofbirmingham

Birmingham Archives, www.birmingham.gov.uk/archives



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**Heritage
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