

Group Visits and Classes

Introduction

Groups of researchers (such as local history and family history societies) are very welcome to visit the Somerset Heritage Centre to consult documents, library books and fiche in our searchroom. This leaflet provides guidance as to how to arrange a group visit, our policies regarding such visits and other general guidance. It also provides details on introductory sessions we are able to offer to groups.

Our facilities

Our searchroom has an area for microfiche/microfilm viewing (23 spaces), tables for consulting archive documents (23 spaces) and open-access to library books. We also have five People's Network PCs (providing free access to the Internet including the website Ancestry) and two computers providing access to our online catalogues. Free wireless Internet access and plug sockets are available for laptops.

Booking

An appointment is essential if coming to consult records or fiche as part of a group as it allows us to make sure there are enough spaces to accommodate everyone. It is advisable to book a few weeks in advance of your intended visit as we can get very busy. When booking on behalf of a group (3 or more persons) please let us know how many people will be attending as a document table or fiche machine will be booked for each member of the group. Please note we are unable to accommodate groups comprising more than 8 persons in the searchroom. See below for Introductory Sessions for larger groups.

To make an appointment, please phone 01823 337600 or email somersetarchives@swheritage.org.uk.

Maps and plans

If anyone within your group would like to look at maps and plans please book the map table (which you can do for half a day at a time) as on busier days we may not have the space for you to consult such large documents.

Photographs

We need 24 hours' notice to produce some of our photographs. This is because many are kept in a cold store and need to come up to temperature gradually to avoid damage. Photographs that need to be pre-ordered are noted on the online catalogue.

Ordering documents

You can pre-order up to one document per person within the group (no such restriction applies to photographs kept in our cold store). Further documents can be ordered during your visit up to an hour before we close, in accordance with our document production policy. Please remember to make a check list of the documents you wish to order as this will help avoid duplicating orders within the group.

Readers' tickets

We issue our own readers' tickets which are valid for four years. If anyone within a group has not visited us before, or their ticket has expired, they will need to bring some form of ID containing their name, current address and signature (such as a driving licence, or utility bill and credit/bank card). Unfortunately we do not accept passports, tickets from The National Archives or library cards. We do not accept CARN tickets; we are no longer part of the scheme.

Pencils and laptops

In order to prevent accidental damage to documents we only allow the use of pencils in our searchroom. These can be purchased at the reception desk. Alternatively, you would be welcome to use your laptop: free wireless Internet access and plug sockets are available.

Gloves

We do not require visitors to wear gloves, unless handling certain classes of documents. We ask that visitors ensure their hands are clean and dry before coming into the searchroom, and to refrain from applying hand cream before handling documents. Latex gloves are provided free of charge. Cotton gloves can be purchased from the main reception. If you have any queries, please speak with a member of staff.

Copying documents

Photography

You are welcome to use your own cameras to photograph documents once you have bought a photography licence (one for each camera). The following licences can be purchased from the main reception:

Daily licence: £5.00

Weekly licence: £20.00

Monthly licence: £40.00

Annual licence: £80.00

Not all documents can be photographed using a camera (for example we don't allow parish registers to be copied in their entirety). Staff on duty would be happy to offer advice on the day. Please remember to note the references of all documents photographed on the declaration form that accompanies the licence. If you intend to publish images or post images on the Internet, you will need to apply to the Archives & Local Studies Service using our Permission to Publish form. There may be a charge for this.

Photocopies

In many instances we can provide photocopies of original documents. However, this is dependant upon their size, format and condition (for example, we cannot photocopy bound archival volumes, large maps or fragile documents). Printouts from microfilm and microfiche can also be made.

Consideration for other users

While we appreciate that members in a group may wish to discuss the research they are undertaking we would ask that you are considerate towards other users during your visit. We would advise discussing your initial research either before your visit or in our refreshment area. Unfortunately we are unable to reserve specific seats/tables for groups so it may not always be possible for members of a group to be seated together.

Refreshments

The Somerset Heritage Centre has a small refreshment area with tables and chairs. Tea, coffee and water are available (for a fee), as well as a small number of sweet and savoury snacks. A number of sandwich vans visit the premises every weekday (usually from 10am to 1pm). There is also a pub serving food close to the office.

Introductory sessions for Groups (£70)

The Archives & Local Studies Service can provide a 2 hour introductory session to a group on the resources available for researching the history of a parish, house or family. The session will include a tour of the relevant areas of the Somerset Heritage Centre, an introduction to our indexes and catalogues, advice as to what websites are available and provide examples of the type of documents that may be relevant to your research. Please note we are unable to accommodate groups comprising more than 15 persons.

To book a session please fill in the form over-leaf and email somersetarchives@swheritage.org.uk, or post to: Somerset Heritage Centre, Brunel Way, Norton Fitzwarren, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 6SF for the attention of Becky Rogers.

Introductory Group Sessions Booking Form

This session is a two-hour introductory session to a group on the resources available for researching the history of a parish, house or family. The session will include a tour of the relevant areas of the Somerset Heritage Centre, an introduction to our indexes and catalogues, advice as to what websites are available and provide examples of the type of documents that may be relevant to your research.

Name of group		
Date of session (Please state one priority date and a second option)		
Time		
Approx. size of group (max 15)		
Contact details	Name:	
	Address:	
	Telephone number:	
	Email address:	
Special Requirements	State how many: Wheelchair users: ____ Learning difficulties: ____ Mobility difficulties: ____ Hearing impaired: ____ Visually impaired: ____ Additional details:	
Cost	<p style="text-align: center;">£70 per group of 15 to be paid in advance</p> Cheques to be made payable to <u>South West Heritage Trust</u> and sent to: Somerset Heritage Centre Brunel Way, Norton Fitzwarren Taunton TA2 6SF	

DATA PROTECTION: The information on this form will be held and used by the South West Heritage Trust in accordance with the provisions of Data Protection legislation, for the purposes of providing a contract. See www.swheritage.org.uk/privacy-policy for our full privacy notice.

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