



Using the Research Room at Gwent Archives



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Introduction

Using the Research Room at Gwent Archives has been produced as a guide to help you to access the wide range of material we hold. There will always be staff available to help in the Research Room, or by telephone or email, but this is a handy guide for those who want to find out more in advance of their visit or would like information to reference during their visit. Copies of the guide are available on our website (<https://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk/en/our-services/resources-and-guides/>) and in hard copy in the Research Room.

The Collections

Archives

We hold original archive material documenting the historic county of Gwent (the modern counties of Monmouthshire, Newport, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent and part of Caerphilly). The archive collections date from the twelfth century to present day, and include items as diverse as photographs, diaries, maps and plans, accounts, minutes, case books and records of criminal activity.

A fully searchable online catalogue is in progress, but to access information about the collections currently you will need to use our paper indexes, finding aids as well as online resources to discover what we hold and also follow some simple procedures to request to view them.

Some of our records are available on microfilm or on digital platforms (such as www.Ancestry.co.uk and www.findmypast.co.uk) and staff and a printed guide are available if support is needed to access these during your visit.

This guide highlights the basic indexes and finding aids, and detail the procedures required to order archive documents.

Library

We also hold a small local studies library of books and journals that help to tell the story of our communities, individuals and organisations and their activities. Some of the books and journals are listed at <https://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk/en/our-collections/library/> and it would also be worth looking through our Card Index.

Accessibility

We have tried to make our research room as accommodating as possible for all users. Visitors with any access requirements are welcome to contact us with their requests so we can discuss how best to accommodate you and make any adjustments needed to meet your requirements. The research room is fitted with an induction loop, and we have adjustable height tables. Please see our Disability Access Policy at <https://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk/media/2pzdxaq/disabilityaccess.pdf> for more information.

Before you visit

You can start to prepare for your visit before you even arrive:

Find out more about our collections

Many of our catalogues and finding aids are available online at:

- The Gwent Archives website at <https://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk/en/our-collections/archives/> (catalogues) and <https://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk/en/our-services/resources-and-guides/> (other resources and guides)
- The National Archives' Discovery catalogue at <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>
- The Archives Hub at <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/>

It would be worth searching each of these sites for information on our holdings, and making a note of descriptions and reference numbers ready for your visit.

Researchers are very welcome to contact us at enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk for advice on the collections or to book to visit and order documents ready for their arrival.

Apply for a Reader's Ticket



All researchers are required to sign up to the Archives Card scheme. This is a scheme run by the Archives and Records Association as a means of ensuring security for our documents and to provide access to many archives across the UK. If you are already a member of the scheme, on arrival you will simply need to show your card to the member of staff on our reception desk. If you are not already a member please see below to find out how to join up.

- Reader Tickets are available to anyone over the age of 14 and are free of charge. Those under the age of 14 are very welcome to visit accompanied by an adult. If under 14 and would like to visit alone, please contact us at enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk.
- Tickets are applied for online at <https://www.archivescard.com/>. An email address is required as part of the process, and a photograph will need to be added. You can either do this when you apply or we can take a photograph of you when you visit. After you apply you have three months to visit a participating archive to complete your registration.
- When you visit, you will need to provide two forms of identification to complete your registration. Please see the list of forms of identification at https://www.archivescard.com/ARAHUB/About/Card_Guidelines.aspx. If you do not have any of the documents listed on the Archives Card website or an email address, please contact us at enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk before you arrive.

Once registered, the card will be valid for 5 years and can be used in participating services across the UK.

At Gwent Archives

On arrival

On arrival you will be greeted by the member of staff who will help you complete your Archives Card registration or sign you in if you already have an Archives Card. If this is your first visit, staff will advise you on our rules and guidelines for the research room. These rules are also printed out and are available to view on each table and in the locker room.



Research Room Rules

The records we hold are unique and irreplaceable. To preserve them for use by future generations, and to ensure a pleasant working environment for all, we ask you to read and observe the Research Room rules:

- The following items should be left in the lockers provided:
 - bags, coats and umbrellas
 - Sharp objects such as scissors, penknives, and pencil sharpeners
 - Pens, erasers, and pencils with erasers on the end
 - Food and drink (including gum, throat sweets, cough sweets). Access to medicine is fine, please speak to a member of staff for advice
- We shall treat everyone visiting our service with courtesy and respect, and ask that you treat staff and other researchers with the same

- To avoid disturbing other researchers mobile phones should be on silent and any calls taken outside. Please keep sound levels low on headphones, laptop and cameras
- Photographing documents is permitted, please turn off the flash and speak to a member of staff about copyright regulations and the purchase of a photographic licence
- Equipment is available to help use the archives safely and we ask that you handle them with care and follow staff advice. You might be asked to wear gloves or use a book rest when handling some of the collections
- Please be careful not to lean on any documents, or rest papers or notepads on documents when taking notes, as this can cause damage
- Please keep documents in the original order in which they were issued to you
- Documents must not be removed from the Research Room. When documents are finished with, please return them to the Help Desk
- The last order time for documents is 30 minutes prior to the closure time. To allow staff time to return items to the storage areas safely, documents should be handed back to staff 10 minutes before the closure of the Research Room.

We want everyone to enjoy their experience at Gwent Archives, and the rules above help us to maintain a pleasant environment for all as well as help us to maintain Gwent's written heritage. We reserve the right to deny access to anyone who does not follow the rules or staff guidance.

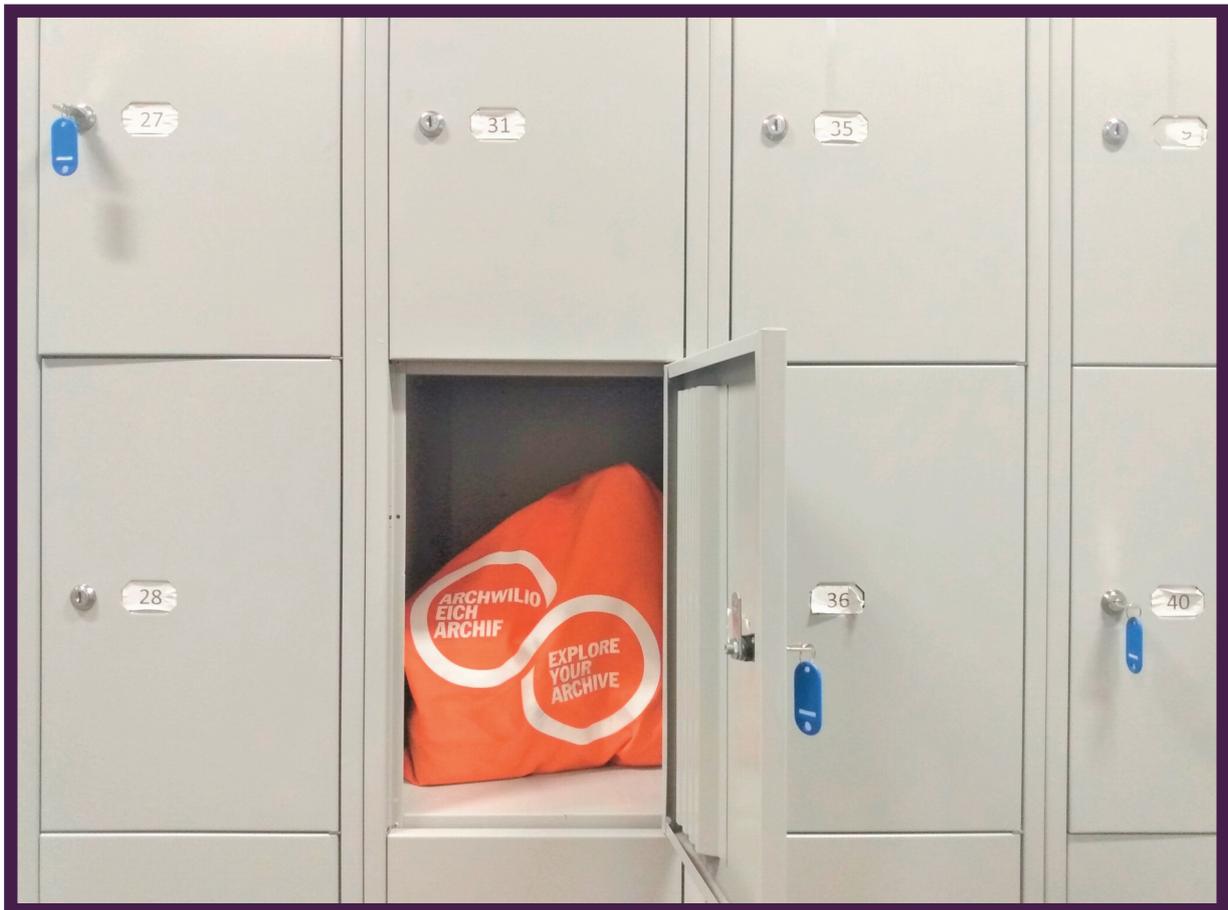
Using the locker room

Gwent Archives has a dedicated locker room just for use by its researchers. The lockers are secured with keys and are free of charge.

We ask that as little as possible is brought into the Research Room, but you are welcome to bring in the items listed below:

- Laptops/tablets and chargers – please remove from laptop bags and leave bags in the locker
- Mobile phones or cameras
- Pencils and paper
- Archives Cards (you will need your number to order documents)
- Glasses
- Mobility aids

The oils on our hands can cause damage and discolouration to some documents, so please use the facilities in the Locker Room to wash and dry your hands before entering. This also applies when returning after leaving the room for snacks.



Using our Resources

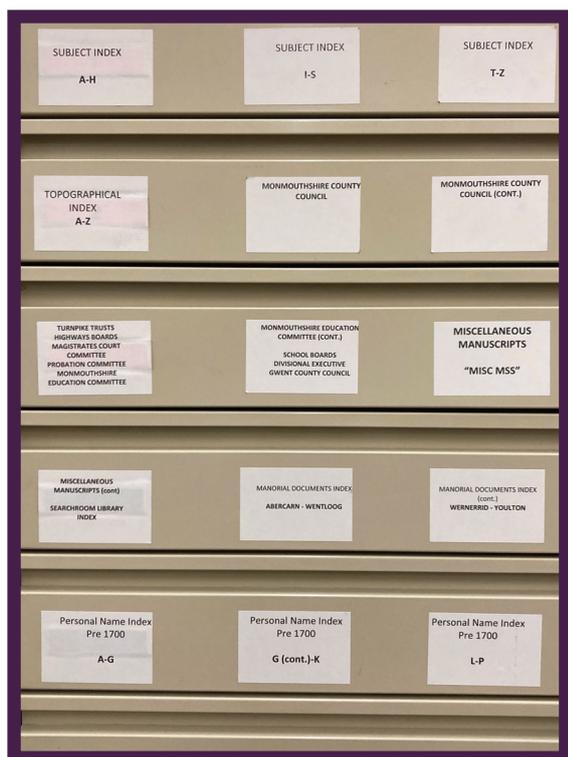
The archive collections are kept in secure temperature and humidity-controlled Strong Rooms which are accessed by staff. To view items from the collections, researchers use the finding aids (online and onsite) to find reference numbers, then complete a document request slip for staff to retrieve the item they want to see. So, our first step is always to find out what we hold and what the reference number is and there are a wide range of paper catalogues, indexes, and other finding aids to help direct you to the records which you need.

Staff will always be available to provide guidance in our research room and very happy to help you with any questions you may have, whether this is about how best to research or how to access references for items you wish to view. In addition to staff support, this part of the guide explains how to use these finding aids. All the resources described below are self-service and researchers are encouraged to feel free to use them.

There are also additional collections that are awaiting cataloguing. If you are interested in viewing any of the uncatalogued collections contact us via email at enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk or speak to a member of staff. A notice period of 7 working days is required to access uncatalogued collections so that staff can check that they are not too fragile for use, and also that they do not contain sensitive information about individuals.

This guide describes the finding aids and moves around the Research Room in an anticlockwise direction if a person is standing in front of the reception desk.

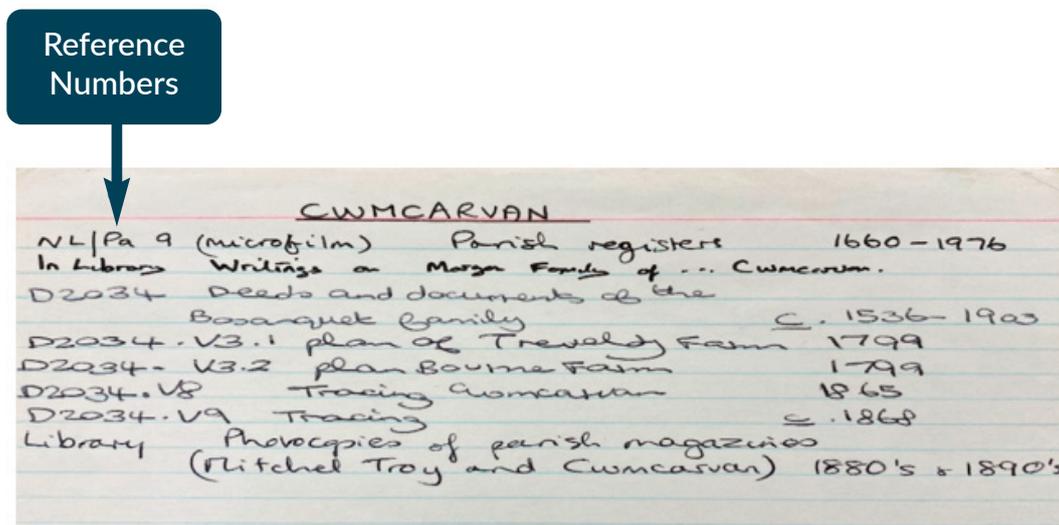
Card Index Cabinet



The card index cabinet is located to the left of the reception desk and is organised into labelled drawers. Researchers are welcome to open and search all drawers but usually most visitors will find the information they are looking for in the following ones:

- Subject index - arranged alphabetically. A key to the subject index can be found on top of the cabinet.
- Topographical index - arranged by parish.
- Monmouthshire County Council and other official records.
- Personal name index (alphabetically arranged and split into pre-1700, 1700-1799 and 1800-1870)

We ask anyone using the card index drawers to please keep the cards in order, use a place holder if any are removed (coloured pieces of card found in the front of the drawers) and to replace cards to their correct location when finished with. There are reference numbers against each item on the cards, which you will need to order the document or find out more in one of the catalogues.



Example index card

Paper catalogues in Files



These shelves contain indexes and files which hold information on a wide range of subjects. The files used by most researchers are listed below, but please look through them, all are labelled and available for use:

Local Authority Records

The council files are arranged by catalogue number and type of organisation- urban district, rural district, borough and county. There are also indexes for Gwent County Council. Additional information for Monmouthshire County Council is available via the index cards in the cabinet.

Finding the correct reference numbers in these files can be a little confusing, please see the photo below for guidance or ask a member of staff for help.

The example below shows how to find the reference needed to order the minute book 1895-1911, the reference would be A540/M/1. This includes the classification group (A), main (540), record type (M) and the piece number (1). Please note that although the file shows another character, in this case an A, which is the source, this is not needed for references.

This character is not needed for the reference which is A540/M/1

GWENT COUNTY RECORD OFFICE
UNIFIED RECORDS SERVICE

X1585

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|-----|
| Accession Number | MR 27 (1244) | Classification Group | A |
| Date of Accession | 21 April 1975 | Main | 540 |
| Depositor | Monmouth District Council | Source | A |
| | | Record Type | M |

| Former Reference | Description | DATE | | Piece Number | Review Date |
|------------------|---------------------|------|------|--------------|-------------|
| | | From | To | | |
| | Council Minute Book | 1895 | 1911 | 1 | |
| " " " | " " " | 1911 | 1918 | 2 | |
| " " " | " " " | 1918 | 1923 | 3 | |
| " " " | " " " | 1923 | 1925 | 4 | |
| " " " | " " " | 1925 | 1929 | 5 | |
| " " " | " " " | 1929 | 1934 | 6 | |
| " " " | " " " | 1934 | 1941 | 7 | |
| " " " | " " " | 1941 | 1947 | 8 | |
| " " " | " " " | 1948 | 1952 | 9 | |
| " " " | " " " | 1952 | 1961 | 10 | |

Remarks:-

Location:-

Example of obtaining references from the local authority catalogues

School Records

The school records are arranged in files arranged alphabetically by place. All items have a reference number which is needed for ordering.

Religious Records

There is a file containing an alphabetically arranged index to Church in Wales parishes on this shelf. Each parish has a number and the lists for the various parishes can be found in a further series of files, arranged by these numbers.

This shelf also has files for other religious records: Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Wesleyan, Congregational/ Independent/ United Reform Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, Brethren and Judaism.

Map Indexes

Our files include indexes for tithe, Ordnance Survey and other maps. There is also a file for aerial photographs.

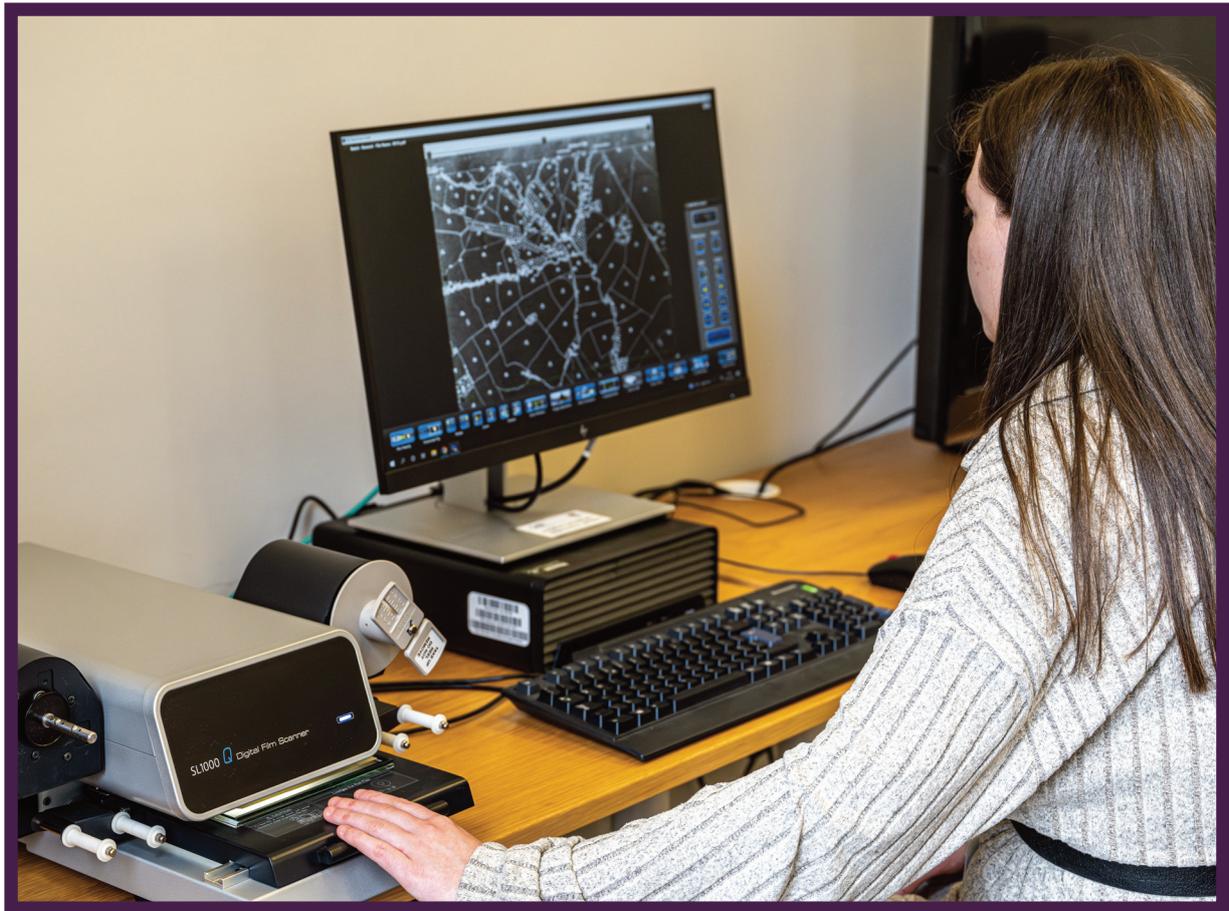
Bound Catalogues and Smaller Catalogues



Next to the file shelves and leading down the side of the room towards a door, you will find our paper catalogues. Smaller catalogues are on top in blue edged plastic files, and these are arranged by reference number.

Larger catalogues are stored on the lower shelves. Although some are indexed, it can be difficult to find references in some older, large catalogues, so please do not hesitate to ask staff for guidance.

Microform Readers and Computers



Along the back wall you will find microform (microfilm and microfiche) reader machines and computers as well as indexes with information for newspapers, monumental inscriptions and parish records held on microfilm. A box containing aperture cards of Ordnance Survey maps can also be found here.

The microfilms are housed in a labelled filing cabinet against the back wall in between two doors. The microfilms are arranged in numeric order and are separated into parish records, newspapers, and monumental inscriptions.

Microfilms are self-service and there is a guide on how to use the microfilm reader next to the machine. However please do not hesitate to ask staff for help, especially when finding the correct microfilm and loading the machine. Staff operate the print function on the behalf of researchers so please notify us if you wish to print. Images from the microfilm can also be saved onto your USB stick for use at home.

The computers are available (if not prebooked) to search online resources including Find my Past, Ancestry free of charge and these are easily accessible from icons on the desktop. Researchers are often advised to make these resources their first port of call to preserve our original records as many, including parish registers, electoral registers and workhouse registers, have been digitised.

The catalogues on the Gwent Archives website, as well as Archives Hub and Discovery,

can also be searched from these machines.

The password for the PCs is **GAPublic1** and is printed on the base of the machine.

Reference Maps

The map cradle in the centre of the room holds large maps which are useful for providing a key to determining geographical or parish areas. These include:

- Indexes to ordnance survey maps
- Administrative areas of Gwent
- Parish boundary maps

Ordering Documents

When references have been obtained, staff will retrieve the documents from our secure Strong Rooms to be viewed in the Research Room. To order documents, researchers need to fill in document request slips providing their name, date, Archives Card number, the description of the document and the reference number for the document. A separate document request slip is required for each item. An example of a completed Document Request Slip is given below:

| Gwent Archives Document Request / Cais am Ddogfen | | |
|--|--|----------------------------|
| Name: Enw: Sarah Jones | Archive Card Number: Rhif Cerdyn Archifau: 90677 | Date: Dyddiad: 01/06/72 |
| Document Reference: Cyfeirnod ddogfen: D749/553 | Description of Document: Disgrifiad o'r ddogfen: Sales particulars, Mulberry House, Little Mill, 1900 | |
| <i>Staff Use Only</i> | | |
| Location: | Type: box, vol, CD, doc, file, roll, map, photo. | Quantity Issued: |
| | Issued By: | Quantity Returned: |
| | | Returned By: |

Example of a completed Document Request Slip

Up to three documents will be issued at a time and the remainder kept behind the desk. The number issued will depend upon the nature of the items, for example bundles of documents are issued one at a time. Researchers are asked to bring finished records back to the desk and then any remaining documents can be issued. When you have finished for the session, please let staff know that you are leaving so the records can be returned to the strongrooms. If you are planning to return that day, items can be kept out.

Items can be requested up to 30 minutes before the service closes and need to be returned back to staff 10 minutes prior to closing.

Staff are happy to help researchers with these details if needed. Document request slips and pencils are available from the member of staff on duty at the reception desk. Once the slips are filled in, please hand them back to a member of staff, who will then find the location for the document and retrieve it for viewing.

Pre-ordered Documents

We appreciate that you will want to make the best use of your time with us, so we are happy to accept bookings and pre-ordering of document. Staff will make every effort to retrieve up to 6 documents before you visit but sometimes, due to time constraints this may not be possible.

On the day of your visit up to three of them will be waiting next to your assigned table ready for your arrival, with remaining documents behind the reception desk.

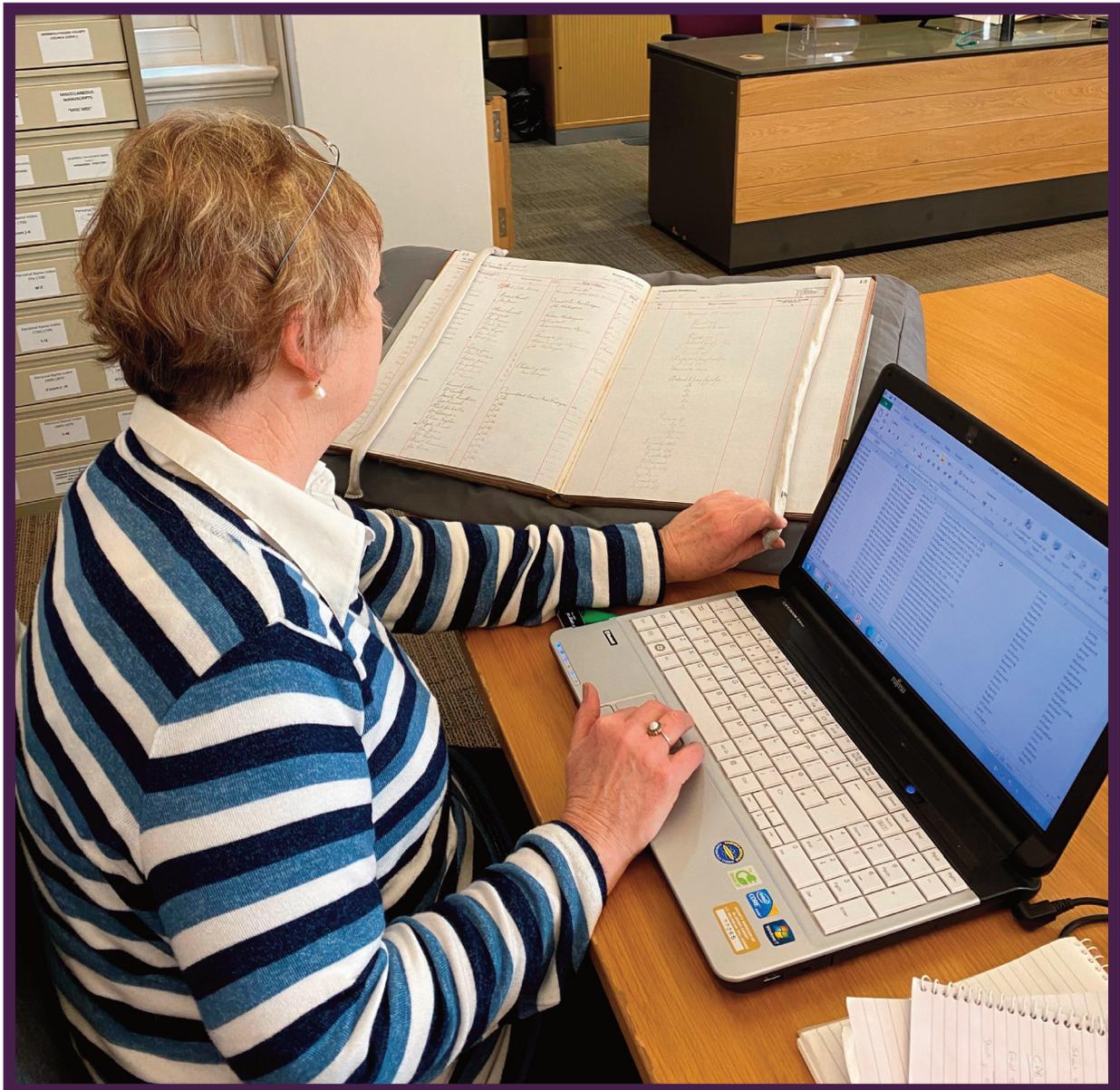
Please email us at enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk to book and pre-order, giving as much notice as possible and at least 2 works days.

Handling Documents

Our archives are unique, irreplaceable documents so researchers are asked to handle them with great care. Cushions will usually be provided to hold most volumes to protect their spines. Please turn pages using the corner only and do not touch, follow print with fingers or lean on any pages or maps. To keep pages flat, staff will provide researchers with weights.

Staff are happy to advise researchers on how to handle, unwrap and rewrap documents.





Copies

Please speak to a member of staff about taking copies during your visit, as copies can be taken depending on the condition and copyright status and we can advise further. Most researchers use their own digital camera, mobile phone or tablet to take photographs and this is fine providing the flash is not used as it can damage documents. There are charges for self-service photography, available at <https://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk/en/fees-and-charges/>.

If you are unable to use the self-service photography option please speak to a member of staff about using our digitisation service.

Further information

This guide is a starting point, staff are on hand during your visit and will always be pleased to show you around and answer any questions you may have. There are also additional guides, on House History, Family History, Vehicle Registration records, Chartism, as well as familiarisation and introductory videos at <https://www.gwentarchives.gov.uk/en/our-services/resources-and-guides/>

And lists of commonly used resources, including school log books, religious records, Bedwellty Petty sessions and the burial registers of Bedwellty St Sannan. These are added to regularly, so please keep checking back.

Contact us

We hope this guide has helped to prepare for your visit, but if you have any other questions or queries feel free to contact us

By post at
Gwent Archives
General Offices
Steelworks Road
Ebbw Vale
NP23 6AA

By email at enquiries@gwentarchives.gov.uk

By telephone at 01495 766261