

Archives and Local History Project Volunteer

WHERE

This opportunity is available at York Explore, Museum Street, York, YO1 7DS. The location of the sessions will be in our Archives Reading Room, which is on the first floor [lift access available].

INTRODUCTION

The Archives and Local History collections at Explore are broad and varied, ranging from medieval manuscripts to 21st century digital files, from the records of local government to those of community groups and small businesses.

The archives team have two core objectives: to give access to the collections and to preserve them for future generations. We want to make these collections available to as many people as possible in as many different ways as possible, through cataloguing, digitisation, indexing and guides. We also want to ensure that they are preserved for future generations, by handling them carefully, packaging and storing them appropriately and actively repairing them where necessary. You will be directly involved in helping us achieve these goals.

Each collection is different and has different access and preservation needs. Some need wrapping and packing in folders, boxes and protective sleeves. Others need to be listed or digitised. We design each project to fit the needs of individual collections.

HOW WILL I BE HELPING YOU?

Each project has a plan and established aims at the outset and is supervised by a member of the Explore archives team. By volunteering with us, you will be helping to preserve York's unique and precious

documentary heritage for future generations. Your work will also contribute to increasing access to the collections for our current users.

CURRENT PROJECT – COLLECTIONS CARE

The archives in our care have chequered histories. Prior to being deposited with us, some have experienced periods of neglect, have been stored in dirty, damaging conditions, or have not been packaged in materials which meet archival standards. Preventative preservation measures, such as cleaning and placing archives in specialist packaging, are key to ensuring the long-term future of our collections.

This project will support this work, by focusing on creating archival grade packaging for our collections. You will be working in our Archives Reading Room under the supervision of a qualified archivist. While each volunteer will work independently, you will be working in a group setting with other volunteers.



Left image: archives pre and post cleaning and packaging. Right image: volunteers working in the Archives Reading Room.

PROJECT TASKS

This Collections Care project may involve the following tasks:

- cleaning, labelling and packaging collections;

- packaging new and existing archive collections into specialist conservation grade packaging;
- labelling collections with pencil.

Please note: We will provide you with appropriate PPE where necessary, however this role may not be suitable for individuals with respiratory conditions or allergies.

WHAT SKILLS DO I NEED FOR THIS PROJECT?

You will need:

- manual dexterity to handle and package historic archives;
- legible, neat handwriting;
- a good standard of literacy and numeracy;
- a methodical approach;
- an interest in archives and the history of York;
- basic computer skills and a familiarity with Microsoft Excel would be beneficial but not essential.

Specific training will be provided at the beginning of this project. You don't need any special archive or research skills, but if you have them do let us know! We ask potential volunteers to attend an initial introductory session before committing to the role. This session is a chance to hear more about the project, and to see if the role is right for you.

WHAT WILL I LEARN IN THIS PROJECT?

You will have the opportunity to:

- learn how to recognise different types of archival document;
- learn how to handle, clean and package archival material;
- gain experience and insight into archive collections care and management.

HOW MUCH TIME DO I NEED TO COMMIT TO THIS PROJECT?

We will be running two volunteer sessions for this Collections Care project, which will be held on:

Thursdays, 9.30am-12.00pm and 2pm-4.30pm, from: 5th June 2025 – 24th July, inclusive [8 weeks in total].

Each volunteer will be assigned to one of these sessions and will attend at the same time each week. A break will be provided in each session.

During the first sessions held on **Thursday 5th June**, you will learn more about the project and the skills required for the tasks you will be performing.

After this first session, we ask that volunteers commit to attending every week, although we recognise that sometimes life intervenes, and you may not be able to attend a session for unforeseen reasons.

HOW DO I APPLY?

To apply for this role please complete the following [online application](#).

When completing the form:

- In the **Role you are interested in** field: Please select 'Archives Support' from the dropdown list.
- In the **About you** field: Please tell us a bit about yourself and why you are interested in this role specifically. Please let us know whether you would like to attend the session at 9.30am-12pm, at 2pm-4.30pm, or whether you could attend either.

The closing date for applications is **midday on Monday 12th May 2025**.

Please note that we have limited spaces available on each of these sessions, and we may close applications early once these spaces have been filled.