

NORTH EAST WALES ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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A Small Family Archive, Rich in Historical Detail

#EYAEExploreYourArchive

Liz Newman, Archivist

The theme of this year's national Explore Your Archive campaign is **'Your Archive'**, focusing on the kinds of family papers and photographs which you might have at home relating to your family's past. This article features a small family archive, recently catalogued at NEWA, Hawarden. Perhaps it will inspire you to deposit your own family papers with your local Archive as a permanent memory of your family's history?

I recently had the pleasure of cataloguing a small collection of family papers relating to the Roberts and Davies families, who lived at Wrexham and Connah's Quay in the 19th and 20th centuries. Although only a small collection of 58 items, the papers and photographs give a real in-depth snapshot of the lives of two inter-twined families.

The earliest papers relate to the Roberts family of Wrexham – Frederick Roberts, an Agent for an Assurance Company; his wife Margaret Frances Roberts; and their three children: John Frederick (born 1892); Margaret Mary (born 1895); and Thomas Gwilym (born 1896).



In the early years of the 20th century, the family lived at 50, Bradley Road, Wrexham, where the children attended Victoria Road Council School. Both boys appear to have been good scholars, since there are several certificates of merit within the collection for them. Thomas Gwilym Roberts was also a talented artist, whose drawing of a lion won a prize in a Wrexham Free Church Sunday School competition. Later, his exercise books for a Gas Supply Class show great technical drawing skill.

Certificate of Merit for Thomas Gwilym Roberts (D/DM/1900/1/11)



It was their daughter, Margaret Mary, known as May, who united the two families, when she married Howell Davies at St Mark's, Connah's Quay on 6th December 1919.

Unidentified young lady -
[May Roberts?], c.1920.
D/DM/1900/1/20

Following their marriage, the couple lived in Connah's Quay and the 1939 Register shows them at 3, Golftyn Street. They had 3 children: Frederick (born 1920); Robert (born 1921); and John (born 1924).

During the Second World War, the family continued to live in Connah's Quay, as their ration books show (D/DM/1900/2/6-7). Their youngest son John served in the War, and a photograph within the collection shows that he went to Rome in 1944, possibly during the Liberation (D/DM/1900/3/2).



On reverse:
'John, Rome, 1944'
D/DM/1900/3/2

From this small collection of records, a wealth of information can be gleaned, and with some extra research using online sources such as Find My Past and Ancestry, it is possible to trace even more details of their lives, loves, work, hobbies and family affairs, from the Victorian period up to the late 20th century.

Have you considered depositing your family records at NEWA? #EYAYourArchive

Howell originated from Bangor on Dee, and had served in the First World War. The couple must have been courting for some time before their marriage, since an embroidered 'Greeting from the Trenches' card within the collection was sent 'With fondest love from Howell' to May, c.1918. A possible clue to his army service is a brochure for the King's (Liverpool) Regiment, held within the collection.



'Greetings from [the] Trenches', D/DM/1900/1/16

Some interesting miscellaneous items include a souvenir brochure of Wrexham Municipal Jubilee, 1857-1907, containing photographs and illustrations of old buildings and public houses, some of which are no longer in existence (D/DM/1900/4/1); an old 'iron pills' tin containing stamps, coupons and a rail ticket from Wrexham to Gwersyllt, c.1910? (D/DM/1900/5/1); and some German banknotes, possibly brought back from the War by John Roberts.



The papers are now available to view at NEWA, Hawarden (D/DM/1900).

Please visit our website to view the catalogue and book a visit to the search-room: www.newa.wales

Bookbinding student learns valuable traditional skills at NEWA, Hawarden

Earlier this year, I began the first half of an 8-week session in bookbinding and conservation with Mark Allen, the Conservator at North East Wales Archives (NEWA). The module is part of the Archives and Records Association Certificate in Archive Conservation which also has modules in wax seals, parchment, paper as well as maps and plans. All conservation trainees are required to take an exam at the end of placements, which take them all over the UK. Having previously only worked with flat paper items, I was delighted to learn the technical heritage skills required to make a book as well the fascinating history of bookbinding.

The course began with making simple book structures such as single section pamphlets and case bindings but soon I was gaining first hand practical experience making more complex library style binding and a flexible style binding. I particularly loved using equipment and materials which have been used in binderies for hundreds of years, for example a sewing frame, and practising a number of different sewing structures. The biggest challenge to me was getting to grips with the technique and manual dexterity skills required to pare leather. Having done this, I have a greater appreciation for historic books and the high level of skill required to make them well.



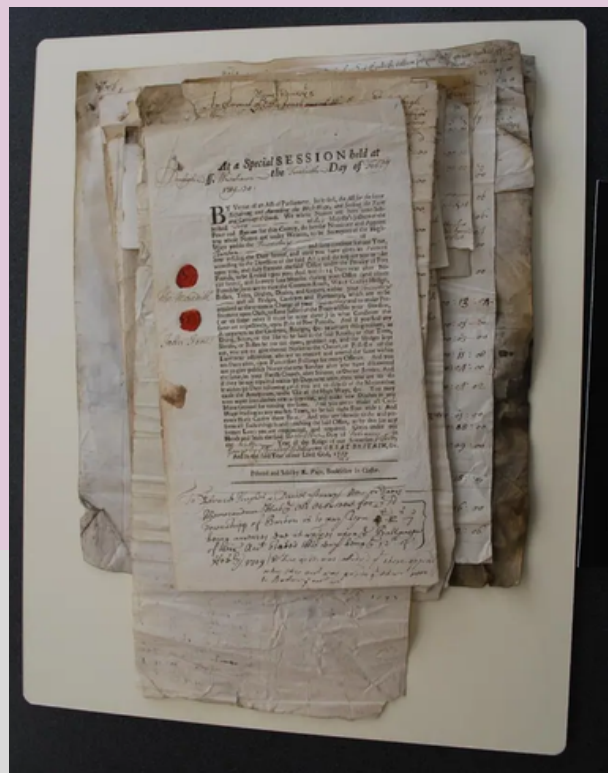
Sylvia using a sewing frame in the Conservation Studio at Hawarden, to create a library-style binding

The last phase of my four-week placement moved into book conservation with the philosophy and ethics of carrying out any remedial treatments being fully investigated first. In-situ text block repair and infill was carried out as well as simple stabilising techniques such as consolidation of friable leather with Klucel G.

After my short time at NEWA, I can recognise different binding styles and accurately describe how they were made and their condition. I feel much more confident working with books and my time at NEWA with Mark has left me with an enthusiasm to pursue book conservation. I look forward to returning to Hawarden next year to complete the module.

Sylvia Roberts, Project Conservator, Historic Environment Scotland

Conservation Open Doors Event at Ruthin



Above: Before, and Right: After Conservation

For 'Open Doors' in Ruthin, we hosted a conservation themed open day to show some of our recently repaired and repackaged documents. Documents on display included Quarter Sessions rolls, a workhouse admission and discharge register, criminal description books and tithe war album.

There was also the opportunity to talk to our conservator, Mark Allen, who was on hand with demonstrations and examples on repair techniques. The event was well attended with over 150 people visiting us on the day.

The next open day at Ruthin will be on **Saturday 26th November 2022** with our Festive Finds exhibition which coincides with the local artisan market at the gaol. Look out for more details on this on our social media channels.

Richards Solicitors, Newly Catalogued Items available at Ruthin

We have recently launched the next catalogue release of Richards Solicitors' Papers which are now available to view at our Ruthin branch. The collection can be searched for on our online catalogue using reference number DD/R.

In April 2020, the initial release was launched online with around 2700 items being made publicly available for the first time. With the dedicated support of volunteers, we are now pleased to announce that the second release is now live with catalogue entries for 5000 items now available to search online. The Richards papers will be NEWA (Ruthin)'s largest private collection which we estimate will be around 9000 catalogue entries in total, which we will release in sections as and when completed.

Richards Solicitors opened in 1848 in Llangollen and the collection includes deeds and property records, legal case papers, wills, estate records. The latest release includes key client papers, including the Dickin Estate and JC Edwards.

View this catalogue now on our website at https://www.newa.wales/collections/getrecord/GB209_DD-R

COURTAULDS

Open Doors Event at Hawarden

A successful open day was held at NEWA, Hawarden in September 2022. The event centred around Courtaulds, the firm who had three factory sites in Flint: Aber Works, Deeside Mills and Castle Works, and two rayon production facilities at Greenfield. At its height, the Courtauld company employed over 10,000 people in Flintshire, making a huge impact on the area and forming a community all of its own. Some of those former employees attended the Open Day and were pleased to find familiar faces and well-known places featured in the talks and exhibitions.

Councillor Vicky Perfect, who began work at Courtaulds at the age of 15, shared her experiences of working there in the 1960s, which led to a lively discussion and reminiscences with the audience. One attendee said that the slideshow and talk from Vicky was their favourite part of the open day, whilst another commented poignantly that the talks had stirred *'memories of long gone family.'*



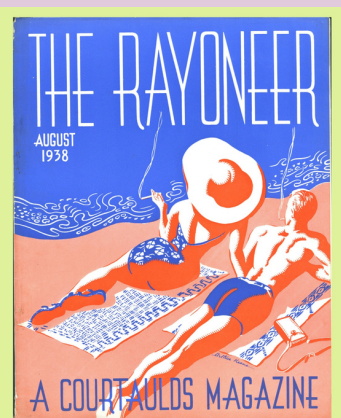
In addition to an exhibition and artefacts on display from Flintshire Museums (AURA), there was also a talk by Sophie Fish and Sarah Peveley from the museums service. They talked about the general history of the sites, and the partnership project between AURA and the Courtauld Institute, London. This was also well-received from the audience, with one customer remarking: *'Very interesting and informative. Heard a lot of facts I didn't know.'*

There was also a sneak preview of a new musical written about a group of friends working in a factory, based on stories and reminiscences, called *'Tic Toc'*, which will be touring around North Wales in 2023.

As always, the behind the scenes tours of the historic Old Rectory were popular, and especially the visit to the Conservation Studio, where the Conservator explained his techniques for preserving these fascinating items for future generations. When asked what they had enjoyed about the day, a visitor commented: *'Wow. Everything! The tour of the strongrooms and the talk with the Conservationist was really fascinating. Another world.'*



As the event was over-subscribed, we are planning a second Courtaulds open day in November. Look out for more details on our social media channels!



Welcome to our Modern Apprentice



My name is Emma Williams and I am a Modern Apprentice in Flintshire County Council's Business Admin scheme. I am studying at Northop College and spending most of my week at the Archives. I joined the team at NEWA, Hawarden in September 2022, having previously studied at Deeside sixth form. I wanted to do the apprenticeship because I am interested in gaining new qualifications and information about the Archives department. I also wanted to gain experience in business administration skills and dealing with the public face-to-face as well as working behind the scenes. During my time at NEWA, I will be doing admin work, helping customers in the search-room, being on standby which involves getting out documents and doing copy orders, learning to make boxes and repackaging historic documents. So far while working at NEWA, Hawarden I have enjoyed learning about the admin side to archives and I am looking forward to learning more about the search-room and meeting customers.

Farewell to a valued Researcher and Friend

At NEWA, Hawarden we were saddened to learn of the death of Hazel Formby, aged 90, on 15th April 2022. Hazel was a long-standing friend to the record office and a frequent visitor to our search-room. For many years she organised trips and tours for the Flintshire Historical Society and undertook a great deal of research into her own local area of Ysceifiog. We have inherited a lot of her papers which will form a valuable basis for future research. She was a delightful lady and will be sorely missed.



Heritage Skills in Action

Instructing the next generation of Conservators

At this year's Archives and Records Association (ARA) Conference in Chester, Mark Allen, conservator at NEWA delivered a talk and demonstration to other Conservators from around the UK, entitled 'Paring and applying a label, heritage skills in action'.

Archive conservators are recognised as highly skilled practitioners and the successful paring or thinning of leather is essential to be able to repair and conserve leather bound volumes. Heritage skills survive by being passed on during training, and beginning with the preparation of a lettering piece or label the novice can soon develop the necessary craftsmanship.

The talk included a brief history of the use of title labels on bindings. Identification of the diverse methods used in the past can provide some help in estimating the date of a book. Mark also gave a practical demonstration of the sharpening of an English paring knife and the paring of a goatskin lettering piece.



Welcoming back our Volunteers... and seeking new recruits!



Bespoke, protective box-making

In April 2022 following a long delay caused by Covid restrictions we were thrilled to be able to finally welcome back to NEWA a small gathering of our long-standing volunteers. We met up with them to explain how volunteering could safely resume again and to describe the exciting new task we had planned for them. The project is part of a wider repackaging programme which is currently underway at both offices. Full training has now been provided by Mark Allen, our Conservator with our volunteers becoming skilled at making protective bespoke boxes for volumes within the collection from acid-free conservation grade card. With the help of our volunteers working on a rota basis, the project is making great progress. It is a task which requires accurate measuring and cutting skills.

At NEWA (Hawarden) we are also currently in the process of recruiting a small number of remote volunteers to work with us to catalogue a collection of letter books (copies of letters sent out) contained within the Holywell Poor Law Union collection.

The letters include the discussions, disagreements and quarrels over whether someone should receive relief, what kind, who would pay for it, for how long and further questions about how the system was to work following the New Poor Law of 1834.

This exciting collaborative project has been designed to make a selection of these records available and searchable online. We are taking part in the project along with a small number of archives from across the UK, The National Archives and Nottingham Trent University.

High Jinks on the High Seas...

Shipping Crew Lists going online at NEWA



A Schooner on the Dee, c.1900
PH/15/256

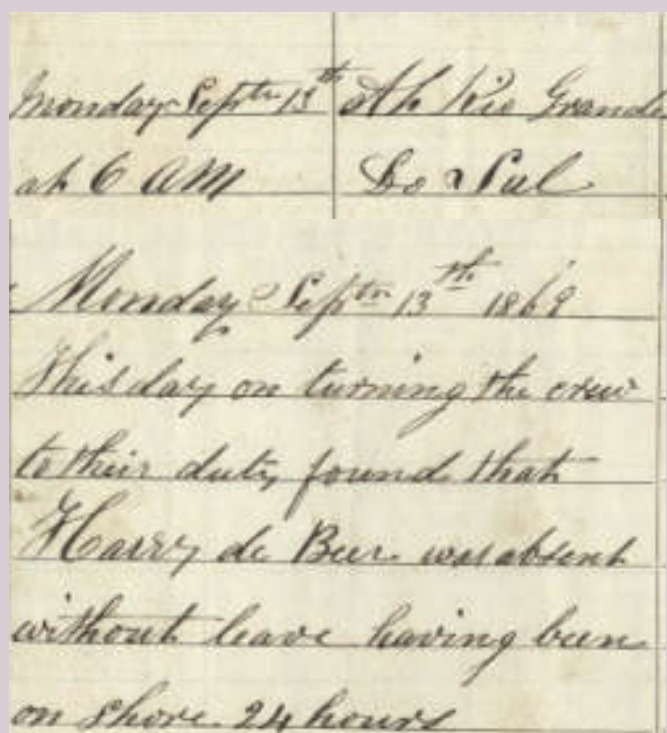
Since joining NEWA a few months ago, my main project has been digitising shipping records from 1863 onwards, specifically accounts of voyages, crew lists, agreements, and log books for both home trade and foreign-going ships sailing out of British and Irish ports. Once scanned, I am uploading the images to our website so that customers can view them online. These records, particularly the crew lists, provide extensive information about seamen of this period, including their full names, ages at time of voyage, and place of birth – all of which prove extremely useful for genealogists, and other researchers. However, these records provide much more than just lists of names and ship voyages – many offer interesting tales about life as a travelling seaman in the Victorian period.

One of the first things I noticed was the sheer variety and creativity of ship names – while there were many with more generic sounding trading ship names, there were also some with names like 'Kitten', 'Excelsior', and 'Fanny Truss'. Also, while many of the ships typically travelled within the UK and Ireland, there were several that made quite extensive journeys across the seas and oceans, e.g. ships travelling to or from: Newfoundland, Canada; New York City, USA; Denmark; Peru; Portugal; and Venezuela.

By Tegwen Lewis, Digitisation Assistant

Beneath the layers of bureaucratic record-keeping, you can also come across snippets of interesting stories that give some insight into these men's lives. There were a few instances of crewmen being recorded in the log books for being "under the influence of drink" and even striking their fellow crewmates (SR/1870/143). In 1869, Harry de Beer, from Ostend, Belgium, was a sailor aboard the vessel 'Caboceer'. On reaching the Brazilian province of Rio Grande Do Sul, Mr de Beer went ashore and was absent for 24 hours, returning on board later stating he had been detained in prison.

Over the next few days, the log book notes that he appeared to be intoxicated every day, acted insolently towards the Mate, and threatened the Master with abusive language (SR/1870/167e). It also states Mr de Beer requested a note to visit the hospital on shore (despite having "no appearance of any need to go to a hospital"), and after this never returned aboard. Following a search, the crew found no sign of him and therefore he was assumed deserted, and promptly left behind! (SR/1870/167n).



For more interesting tales from the high seas, look out for an upcoming blog post going into further detail on these shipping records and the perils and adventures that many Victorian seamen encountered on their journeys!

What's In The Box?

We are planning a series of videos on 'What's in the Box' at NEWA, to reveal some of the hidden treasures held in our archives.

In our first edition of 'What's in the Box?' we found a hidden love story nestling amongst acid free folders and tissue paper!

At first glance, this looked like any other archive box, containing an archival, acid-free folder to preserve fragile documents. Underneath, some acid-free tissue paper was wrapped around an intriguing bundle. On closer inspection it revealed something very special and rather unexpected!

The wedding of Miss Jennie Edwards and Mr W.E. Morris took place at the Calvinistic Methodist Chapel in Clwyd Street, Rhyl, on 28th February 1911. The bride was 'charmingly attired in a grey silk taffeta robe, trimmed with velvet and silk lace.' She wore a grey hat trimmed with tulle and lancer feather and carried a bouquet of pink tulips and lily of the valley. The wedding party, which included some relatives from the USA, went on to a breakfast at the Clwydian Restaurant.



**19th century hand-made
Valentine cards, of silk
flowers and lace
(D/DM/791/7)**



In the box, we were lucky enough to find some hand-made Valentine cards with silk flowers and lace, and an invitation to the wedding of Miss Jennie Edwards and Mr W.E. Morris at Rhyl, 1911. There was also a detailed newspaper cutting which told us all the details about the wedding!

The tissue paper was hiding a very special surprise, however, and we were thrilled when we carefully opened it up. Can you guess what was hiding in the Box? Watch our video on YouTube to find out!

We hope that Mr & Mrs Morris lived Happily Ever After and their memory is preserved in the Archives for future generations.

You can watch our 'What's in the Box?' video on YouTube now...
<https://youtu.be/4DogZaSiueU>

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