

A guide to  
Royal Armouries'  
Archives Service

## About the Archives

The archives contain nearly 500,000 documents, files, bound volumes, photographs, films and videos. The main holdings are located in the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds and relate mainly to the:

- Royal Armouries and its collection,
- Arms and armour and related subjects, including a number of collections of personal papers of well-known authors and collectors,
- the Royal Small Arms Factory (Enfield) and the MOD Pattern Room, and
- Company records, such as G.E. Lewis and Wilkinson Sword.

We also have important collections relating to the:

- history of the Tower of London and its institutions (at the Tower), and
- Artillery and related subjects (at Fort Nelson).

We provide facilities for researchers to access the archives at all three of our sites, as well as a record copying service in Leeds. We develop temporary exhibitions based on material in the archives, and highlight items from the collections in our blog. We play an active part in public events organised by the Museum, and offer talks and seminars on the archives to groups.

The Archives in Leeds is a registered Place of Deposit, and part of the UK's public record system. We also work in partnership with other archives and heritage organisations in Yorkshire, Hampshire and London.

### Opening Hours

The Archives at all three of our sites are available from Tuesday to Friday: 10 am to 4 pm. Access is by appointment only.

### Contact us

[archives@armouries.org.uk](mailto:archives@armouries.org.uk)

The Archives,

Royal Armouries,

Armouries Drive,

Leeds, LS10 1LT.

## About the Collections

### Royal Armouries and its Collection

The Royal Armouries was established as a national museum by the National Heritage Act 1983, and the official records of the museum created after 1 April 1984 are held in the Archives at Leeds. These include copies of board papers and minutes; strategic plans; annual reports and accounts; as well as records relating to major projects, such as the building of the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds and the redisplay of the collections at the Tower of London and Fort Nelson. There are also records relating to the management, care and conservation of the Royal Armouries collection of arms and armour and associated objects, including acquisition and disposal records, accession registers, inventory files, loans in/loans out records, conservation records and scientific analysis.

The Archives also holds some copies of earlier records relating to the Tower Armouries, which were invested in the Board under the provisions of the National Heritage Act, including some administrative files; catalogues and inventories. Some of these are held in the archives at Leeds and others at the Tower of London. However, the majority of the records relating to the Tower Armouries are held at the National Archives as part of the records of the Department of the Environment and the Office of Works.

### Arms and Armour & related subjects

The Archives contains a number of collections of personal papers of well-known authors and collectors, which may include copies of their publications, catalogues and inventories of their private collections, research notes, card indexes, photographs and photograph albums, drawings, scrapbooks, bound pamphlets and sales catalogues as well as private correspondence with other collectors, museums, etc. The major collections include:

- **Charles, Baron de Cosson (1843-1929)** – European arms and armour, including his card index of armourers, swordsmiths and gunmakers, and their marks.
- **Francis Henry Cripps-Day (1864-c.1945)** – European armour, in particular Greenwich armour.
- **Sir James Gow Mann (1897-1962)** – European arms and armour, including notebooks etc. relating to his trips to Europe.

- **Major Noel Corry** – Firearms, in particular his research on patents up to 1900.
- **Dr Richard Williams (1889-1972)** – European armour.
- **Rolf H. Muller (1921-1992)** – European military revolvers, including photographs of his personal collection.
- **Howard Blackmore (1917-1999)** – Sporting weapons and British military firearms up to 1850, in particular his research notes and card index relating to London gunmakers.
- **John Tofts White (1917-2002)** – English swords, including the work of the Hounslow Sword Company.
- **Ian V. Hogg (1926-2002)** – Modern small arms and ammunition (in Leeds), and artillery (at Fort Nelson).
- **Henry Russell Robinson (1920-1978)** – Oriental arms and armour, including many of his original drawings.
- **David Henry Lempiere Back (1923-2012)** – British sporting guns and gunmakers.

The Archives also holds material intended to place arms and armour into the broader historical context including:

- **War** – including a number of personal accounts, such as the letter book of William Augustus Keate, describing his experiences during the Peninsular War, and the diary of William Watson revealing the life of a civilian during the siege of Ladysmith;
- **Tournament** - including a small number of illuminated manuscripts;
- **Hunting and shooting** – including the game records of Frederick Oliver Robinson, 2nd Marquess of Ripon (on microfilm), and the personal papers of journalist and sportsman, James Wentworth Day;
- **Self-defence** - including the earliest known fencing manual, dating from the mid 13th century and showing the use of sword and buckler.

#### **Royal Small Arms Factory (Enfield) Archives & MOD Pattern Room Archives**

The Royal Small Arms Factory was the principle Government manufactory of small arms for over 150 years and played a leading role in the Industrial Revolution and the development of manufacturing and precision engineering. It was the first factory to be organised on modern mass production principles, to introduce piecework, and

the practice of one person working two or more machines, increasing efficiency and productivity. It developed special techniques for cutting metal to precise measurements and the accurate drilling of steel. The records relating to the RSAF together with a large number relating to the design of small arms previously held in the Ministry of Defence Pattern Room were transferred to the Armouries in 2005 under the provisions of the Public Record Act 1958, and include

- **RSAF Factory records** – including annual reports; plans, conveyances and leases; site plans and building drawings; memos issued to staff; and staff registers, as well as copies of minute books relating to the RSAF Institute and Provident Society.
- **Small Arms** – in particular specifications, technical drawings, trials reports etc. relating to the design and manufacture of British military small arms, in particular the records of the Army Inspection Department and the Small Arms Design Department.
- **Pattern Room** – including the registers of sealed patterns for small arms, machine guns and mounts.
- **Royal Ordnance** – in particular annual accounts, balance sheets and estimates relating to Royal Ordnance Factories including the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield, the Royal Gunpowder Works at Waltham Abbey, and the Royal Arsenal at Woolwich.
- **Ordnance Board** - records relating to the work of the Ordnance Board and its predecessors, including copies of annual reports, minutes and proceedings, indexes etc.
- **War Office Select Committees** – including copies of reports, minutes and evidence of various War Office Select Committees, which were set up to look into weapons and equipment.

### **Company Records**

The Archives contains a number of company records relating to the manufacture of artillery, firearms, swords etc., which may include account books, sales ledgers, day books, firearms registers and proof books. The major collections include:

- **G.E. Lewis and Sons** – gunmakers of London and Birmingham.
- **John Rigby and Sons** (on microfilm) – gunmakers of Dublin and London.
- **Thomas Bland and Sons** – gunmakers of Birmingham and London.

- **Vickers Limited** – arms manufacturers, in particular the registers of guns and machine guns made at Crayford and Erith
- **Wilkinson Sword Limited** (on loan) – manufacturers of military and commemorative swords, including the blade registers.

**For further information check our website or contact us at:**

The Archives,

Royal Armouries,

Armouries Drive,

Leeds, LS10 1LT.

Email: [archives@armouries.org.uk](mailto:archives@armouries.org.uk)

## **Using the Archives**

### **Before you visit**

Everyone is welcome to use the archives but you will need to book an appointment in order to ensure that we have staff available to help you, and to allow us time to retrieve the items you wish to view. We suggest that you:

- search our online catalogue in advance of your research, and then
- contact us with the details of your research so that we can identify relevant material, and arrange a date for you to visit.

### **Our rules**

We want you to get the most out of your visit, and in return we ask that you abide by our rules and regulations.

### **Identification**

You must bring photo ID with confirmation of signature and current address (e.g. driving licence, passport or identity card) on your first visit in order to register with us.

### **When you arrive**

You must leave your bags and coats in the area provided, and only take the items that you need into the reading room.

### **Use of materials**

You are welcome to use the books on open access, but material from the archives and special collections will need to be requested from staff on duty. There is currently no online catalogue available in the reading room, but free wifi is available, and staff will always carry out searches for you on request.

## **Searching the Catalogue**

Royal Armouries offers an integrated search facility designed to enable access to:

- the collection of arms and armour and associated objects;
- the archives relating to the Museum, its collection, to arms and armour in general, and to the Tower of London; and
- the reference library of books, journals and magazines.

The archives catalogue is currently under development, and only a small part of the archival collections can currently be searched. Please contact us for further information.

## **Handling archives**

When you visit the reading room you will be given a copy of our guidelines on handling archives, and staff will point out any special precautions that you may need to take with specific items, but in general:

- ensure that your hands are clean (no hand lotions)
- minimise handling wherever possible
- only use pencil for note-taking as accidents with ink can cause permanent damage
- use the foam book supports and weights
- keep loose documents in their original order and handle them one at a time
- ask staff to remove any pins, paper clips etc
- close bound volumes when you are not using them
- use acid-free paper to mark books (available from staff)
- do not lean on bound volumes or rest objects on them
- ask permission before tracing anything
- do not mark, annotate or deface the materials
- please tell us about any accidents or damage

## **Restrictions**

It may be necessary to restrict access to material that is in a fragile condition, and at risk of loss or damage due to handling. Some records may contain personal information and be closed under the Data Protection Act (1998), or contain confidential information and be subject to exemption under the Freedom of Information Act (2000). Staff will advise you how to make a request to this information.

## **Copyright & Re-use (see section below)**

### **Copying**

Staff will advise you about the suitability of material for copying. In general you may make copies (subject to copyright) using a digital camera, but must not use flash photography. A photocopier is also available, but this may not be suitable for copying certain items.

### **Record Copying**

The Archives also offers a record copying service using a variety of digital photographic and scanning equipment.

### **For further information check our website or contact us at:**

The Archives,

Royal Armouries,

Armouries Drive,

Leeds, LS10 1LT.

Email: [archives@armouries.org.uk](mailto:archives@armouries.org.uk)

## **Copyright & Re-use**

### **Third Party Copyright**

Some records held in the archive are the copyright of a third party. You may make copies for private study, educational purposes and non-commercial research within the limits set by UK Copyright Law, but if you wish to re-use such copies for any other purpose (including transcripts, translations or facsimiles) you must identify the current copyright owner and obtain their permission. An application must also be made to the Royal Armouries for permission to use the copy.

### **Crown Copyright**

Some records held in the archive are Crown Copyright, and you may:

- copy, publish, distribute and transmit the information,
- adapt the information, and
- exploit the Information commercially and non-commercially for example, by combining it with other Information, or by including it in your own product or application,

We ask that you acknowledge © Crown Copyright. Board of Trustees of the Armouries as the source of the Information in your product or application.

### **Copyright. Board of Trustees of the Armouries**

Other records held in the archive are the copyright of the Board of Trustees of the Armouries. You may make and re-use copies for non-commercial purposes providing that you acknowledge © Board of Trustees of the Armouries as the source of the Information in your product or application, but you must ask us in writing to re-use material for commercial purposes as charges and license fees may apply.

**For further information on copyright and licensing visit our website or contact us at:**

The Licensing Department,

Royal Armouries,

Armouries Drive,

Leeds LS10 1LT.

[licensing@armouries.org.uk](mailto:licensing@armouries.org.uk).

## **Feedback**

If you wish to feedback about any aspect of your visit to the library and archive, please:

1. Either, email or write to us at:

The Archives  
Royal Armouries  
Armouries Drive  
Leeds  
LS10 1LT  
Email: [enquiries@armouries.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@armouries.org.uk)

2. Or, complete this form and hand it to a member of staff.

**Your name (optional).....**

**Either your address or email address (optional) .....**

## **Feedback**

Please note. We shall only use your personal information for responding to your feedback. For further information on how we protect your personal data please see our privacy statement.