Abthorpe Historical Archive

The Abthorpe Historical Archive (AHA) exists to preserve the unique and irreplaceable heritage of the village of Abthorpe, to make it accessible to everyone, and to encourage engagement with Abthorpe heritage.

It is overseen by Abthorpe Parish Council on behalf of the village of Abthorpe, Northamptonshire. The archive will be kept in accordance with principles laid down by National Archive, Community Archives and Heritage Group and Northamptonshire Records Office. It is maintained by volunteers and, as such, the Parish Council and the archive Custodian and volunteers are not liable for any errors in recording or archival preservation.

The Custodian will provide a report to the village and Abthorpe Parish Council at least annually at the Parish Meeting.

Collections policy

To collect those archival materials that reflect the village of Abthorpe in whatever format they have been created.

Materials with a direct connection to the village or to past residents will, in general, be accepted but the archive will not necessarily accept all materials offered; an assessment will be made by the Custodian based on connection to the village, uniqueness and/or providing an insight into earlier village life. Duplicated material will not be accepted. The archive will not normally accept materials which are of a particularly specialist nature, requiring skills or equipment beyond its resources to preserve or interpret.

Materials in most formats will be accepted irrespective of age including paper, parchment, photographs. Newspaper articles will only be accepted if relevant to, and forming an integral part of, a collection or group of documents. Artefacts will not normally be accepted as the archive is not the best place to store such items.

Provenance will be documented, where known, and donor names will be recorded. Every effort will be made to ensure that the donor is the legitimate owner of the materials.

It is a condition of acceptance that documents will be available for public access.

The AHA shall have authority to transfer archival materials to a more suitable repository if it is considered that the documents would benefit from relocation for reasons of preservation, historical importance or any other reason.

Collection process

Donation is the only way for the AHA to work – it enables the archive to establish custody for the public benefit. Donors must accept that they relinquish personal rights over the material.

When individuals bring records for potential deposit they will be informed of the AHA collections policy and advised that the archive may not accept some or all of the material offered. The donor will be asked whether any unwanted materials should be returned to the donor or destroyed as confidential waste.

Items will not be purchased. No money will be given for any donations or material.

Catalogue

All material will be catalogued and recorded in accordance with guidance available from Community Archives and Heritage Group by volunteers.

The catalogue will be available on line. Master copy will be kept by the Custodian.

Preservation policy

Documents and other materials will be stored in fire-resistant cabinets that also, as far as possible, limit light, temperature and humidity variations as well as infestation. It should be noted that they are not kept in a purpose-built repository with a completely stable environment.

Materials will be stored in boxes, folders, and enclosures used for archival materials made from acid-free or archival-grade materials. These products are chemically stable and help prevent the degradation of the materials they contain. Acid-free papers and boards neutralize the acids that can deteriorate paper over time.

Books, manuscripts, and other bound materials will be stored either flat or with proper support to avoid warping. Flat storage may be possible for oversized documents, maps, or fragile items to prevent creasing or tearing.

Adequate space around materials will be maintained such that they are not overcrowded and available for easy retrieval, minimising the risk of tearing or bending materials during handling.

Security of the archive is maintained by lock-up procedures. Keys are kept by Custodian and named individuals.

The archive will be kept tidy and orderly to avoid misplacing items and to discourage insect infestation. It will be cleaned periodically.

Damaged or fragile materials in the archive will be assessed to ascertain the most cost-effective methods of protecting. Advice will be sought from archival experts where appropriate. And, in some cases, copying processes might be employed to ensure that the information they contain is accessible even where the original is not. Items will be prioritised for treatment and or preserving based on health and safety risk and historical significance, but may be transferred to a more suitable location where preservation is beyond the expertise of AHA.

Access policy

Whilst the mission of the archive is that it is available to anyone who wants to access it, it is important that the documents and materials within the archive are sensitively and carefully handled. The following rules are therefore applied when accessing:

- Access to the archive should be through the archive Custodian at an agreed pre-arranged appointment.
- Access to the archive materials can only be done in Abthorpe Old School with archive Custodian or nominated other volunteer present. All materials must be returned to the archive after consultation and no materials can be taken off site. The Custodian or nominated volunteer is responsible for ensuring the return of all documents.
- Access is given to individuals for their own interest or research. AHA does not offer an enquiry service.
- No food or liquid to be consumed around the materials.
- Individuals must handle the archive materials carefully using clean hands or, where provided, cotton gloves. Materials should be handled by their edges rather than the surface to avoid smudging or transferring oils. Items should not be bent, folded, or subjected to unnecessary stress. Documents kept in archive-quality clear plastic folders must not be removed form the plastic folder other than by the Custodian.
- Photography is permitted; Photocopying is not permitted
- Under 16 accompanied by an adult and supervised at all times
- Access is free to anyone living in Abthorpe. A small charge may be made to other users from outside Abthorpe. Further information from the Custodian.
- Materials within the archive can be reproduced freely but must reference Abthorpe Historical Archive as source. Where, in exceptional circumstances, there is copyright permission needed or additional permission from a third party we will direct users to the appropriate person.
- Pens are not permitted; pencils should be used when making notes

Financing

Abthorpe Parish Council provided and own the filing cabinet and start-up archiving materials. Small fundraising events may be used to raise money for future materials.

March 2025