

Archivist's Report

Firstly, I would like to gratefully thank Stephen Capps for organising storage space for the archives in the church vestry.

I have been busy sorting out the archives at St Edmund's. However, because of weather conditions, work is progressing slowly. I am, however, rediscovering all kinds of material. We keep copies of registers and census returns, information about local families and many aspects of village life and business, which is often of interest to local people.

Much of this information is useful for inclusion in our parish magazine. From back in 2008 when the magazine won a diocesan award it has continued to improve. This is a significant form of outreach. Magazine items about the village's past involve Wootton residents and in its turn results in all kinds of material and information appearing to the benefit of the local community.

My membership of the Local History Forum has been very beneficial. I have enjoyed it, learned a great deal and made contacts who have been very helpful.

One of my archivist roles has been organising an annual exhibition in aid of our church Trust for which our records have been invaluable, known as the "Open Weekend". Sadly, owing to increasing age and lack of manpower we probably will not be holding another exhibition like this. We certainly hope to find other ways to make use of our important village archive.

I had a number of opportunities in 2023 to add to the archive. These included:

1. A very good friend of mine died early in 2023. She had given me material and memories from the 1969 Isle of Wight Pop Festival with permission for me to make use of it at my discretion. As local history meant a lot to her, I intend to make the best use I can, especially since much of it is unique. So far Mathew Price in Newport has expressed interest in this archive, so I hope to cooperate with him on this project. Anyone else who may be interested in taking part, please let me know.
2. Another good friend of mine is hoping to find a home for her collection of costumes. Ideas about housing this collection are welcomed from local people.
3. Warwick Hammerton, whose work on the Bridge magazine is invaluable, is hoping to record memories from local people. Volunteers to participate in this are welcomed.

I have noted that while working in the St Edmund's vestry, damp is visible. I suggest we look into acquiring a dehumidifier, especially as this is now where the archives are housed. Low energy ones are reasonably priced

I would like to thank Michael Broadsmith, who has been working on producing a map and index of the graves in both sections of St Edmund's churchyard. Since we regularly receive enquiries about the location of family graves his work will be an enormous help. I invited him to add his own contribution to this report about his work. My role has mainly been ensuring he has access to the records.

Doreen Gazey

St Edmund's Graveyards

Graveyard regulations require the parish priest and the PCC to keep an up to date plan of all burials and interments in the church graveyard. Up to now the western graveyard burial plan has been kept on a piece of linen which has become very worn and faded. The eastern graveyard plan, around the church, has been a small scale plan which is numbered and required reference to a long alphabetical list, which was kept elsewhere.

Both plans have now been transferred to printed A3 size sheets, two for each graveyard, all of which are held in a large plastic folder kept for easy access in the vestry. The eastern plans are accompanied by a shorter alphabetical list, while it is planned to produce a row-by row list for the western graveyard.

I should add that the western graveyard is now full except for reserved graves, although ashes may be interred alongside the war memorial pathway. Fortunately we have been able to identify some areas in the eastern graveyard where new burials can be, and are being, carried out.

Mike Broadsmith