

Knowsley Archives Presents:

Behind Closed Doors: a pop-up exhibition



Exhibition Catalogue



Archive Resource for Knowsley

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About The Exhibition

Behind Closed Doors is a yearly pop-up exhibition which highlights the work undertaken during the annual stock take.

The purpose of the exhibition is to show the detail of work that is undertaken to preserve and correctly store items within our collection.

The items featured show what is used to help preserve the collection, such as specially produced archival storage materials like folders and acid free polyester pockets for more fragile documents and photographs.

Every January, for two weeks, the ARK closes the doors to the search room to have its annual stock take. During this time, customer enquiries can still be answered remotely via email and phone.



The importance of the stock take is to highlight items that need to be repackaged, and to have a general documented knowledge of the condition of the many items within the collection.

For the duration of the two weeks, customers are given an update via social media platforms at the end of each week on how the stock take is going, highlights and what has been rediscovered amongst the collection.

Previous rediscoveries during the stock take have been:

- A tiny conveyance for 'Messages and land in Whiston', dating from 1652, with part of the seal still attached.
- Huyton-with-Roby Urban District Council volume of meticulously recorded road and footpath measurements, compiled by surveyor William Wrennall in 1879.
- During a repackage of the Kirkby Liberal Historical Society collection, a fascinating story from 1971 about a live lizard found in timbers at a local timber yard that was sent to Liverpool Museum and identified to be a member of the Agamidae Family. The lizard survived its ordeal and thrived under the care of the Zoological Department of Liverpool Museums (now National Museums Liverpool).
- Whiston School Log book that is lockable, complete with key.



Whilst the exhibition appears every January, there is always something different on display, either a rediscovered item or the journey of preservation for another item.





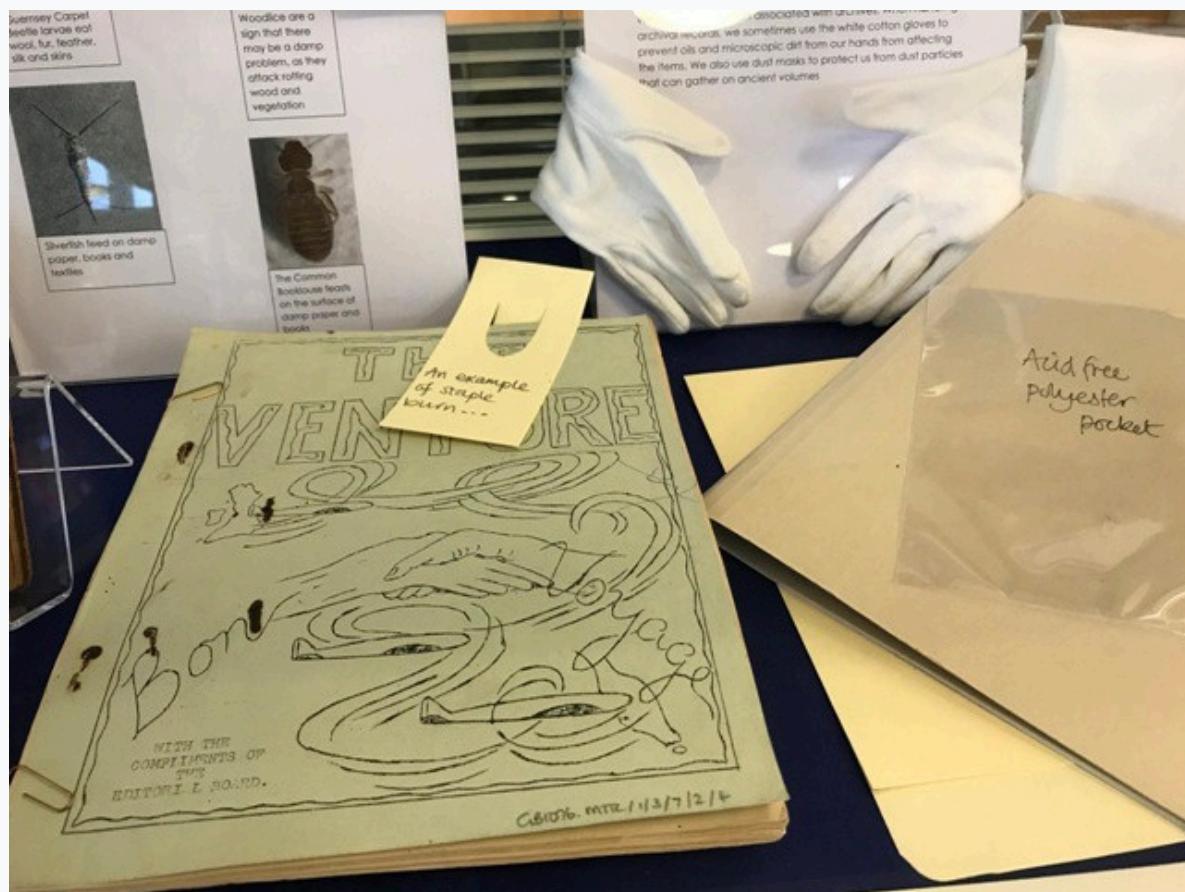
The Stock Take in process, repackaging & cataloguing the Kirkby Liberal Historical Society collection.

An example of fragile photographs, postcards and leaflets being placed in acid free polyester pockets.





Something as small as paperclips can cause permanent damage to documents due to the clips oxidising and forming rust.



Handling and Packaging

The Stock Take highlights documents that need to be repackaged in acid free materials in order to preserve the records. It's important to use specially produced archival storage materials that will not react or degrade and cause damage to the collections over time.

Individual documents or photographs can be slipped into acid free polyester pockets and larger items or volumes, such as minute books, can be wrapped in acid free wallets and sleeves. Very large volumes, for example, rates books, can be enveloped in soft archive wrap for protection.

Heavy boxes are split, the contents carefully repackaged into smaller boxes, to make sure that documents aren't crushed and people can safely lift and transport them. We aim to house all of the collections in archival quality boxes to protect and preserve the contents.

White gloves are often associated with archives. When handling archival records, we sometimes use the white cotton gloves to prevent oils and microscopic dirt from our hands from affecting the items. We also use dust masks to protect us from dust particles that can gather on ancient volumes.



Rerepackaging

It is important to make sure that every item is packaged safely for long term storage, as using too small an enclosure can cause damage to the item and too large a folder takes up too much space and adds weight to storage boxes



Although we use a large amount of 'off-the-shelf' packaging, we sometimes make custom enclosures to protect items that don't fit into a standard size box or wallet.



The Danger Within

One of the tasks carried out during the Stock Take is the removal of stainless-steel paper fixings such as staples, paper clips, document tags and pins from documents.

Over time these items oxidise, forming rust which in turn eats away at the paper, creating burn-like damage to the document.

We replace these damaging fixings with brass paper clips, which don't cause long-term damage to paper. Other materials, such as rubber bands, are also removed as they deteriorate over time and damage the documents.

Some examples of staples, pins and paper clips removed from archive documents...

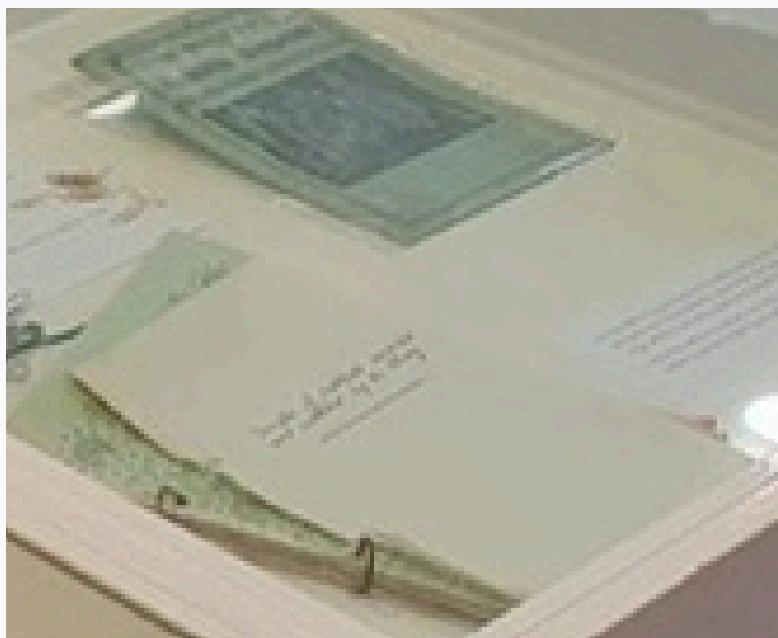


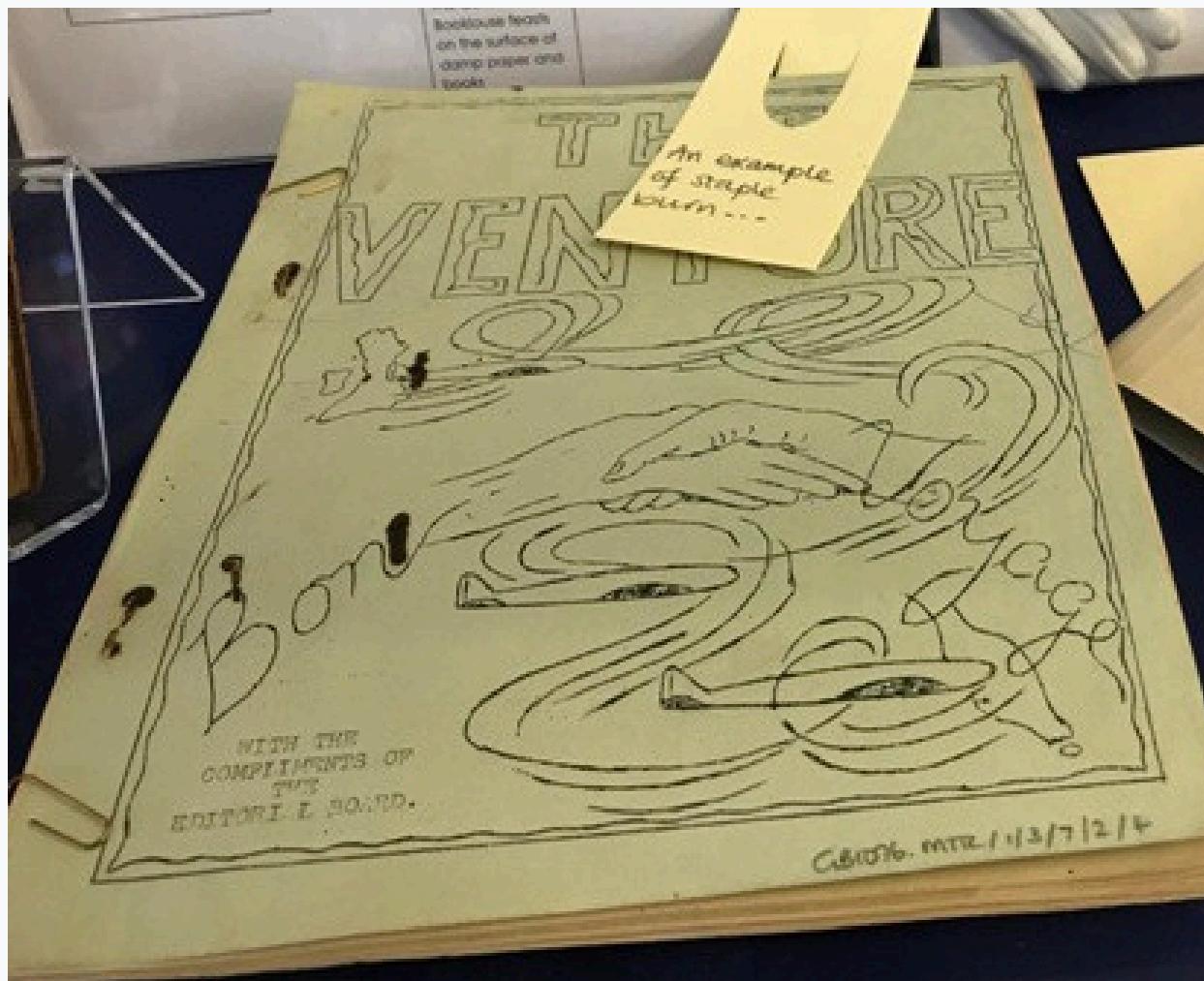


And the brass paper clips used to replace them

This bundle of Library Service booklists dates from 1970. The individual items were secured with 2 ring binders. Over time, the cover page has torn away from the rings, which have also rusted and could cause issues for the brochures in future.

The rings will be removed, and the brochures will be placed in an acid free folder to protect them from further damage.





Another example of a staple burn, this time damage has occurred not only in the usual spot for staple but also further across the front cover. These staples were removed and brass safety pins put in place.



Cleaning Up

Some items carry a large burden of surface dirt. This can often be removed by gently using rubber granules, a cleaning pad or a specialist eraser.

A smoke sponge, which is used to remove soot and smoke damage, is also used to dry clean books and paper, particularly when dust and dry mould are being treated. It can also be used to dry clean fabrics.

Soft brushes and microfibre cloths are also useful tools for cleaning delicate items, and a puffer can be used to gently blow any loose particles off the item

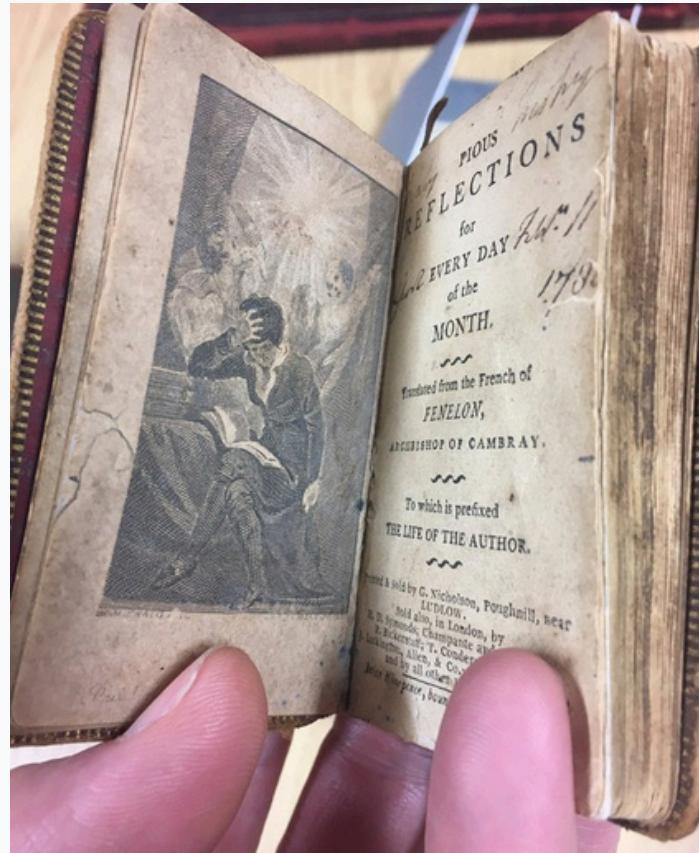
Some examples of materials for cleaning photographs and slides:

- Cotton buds
- PEC 12 fluid
- PEC pads



The Journey of the Book of Pious Reflections

This beautiful little book is a pocket-sized edition of 'Pious Reflections for Every Day of the Month' by Fenelon, Archbishop of Cambray and is translated from the French; the prefix describes Fenelon in 'A Life of the Author'.



This copy was signed by its former owner, Mary, in Liverpool on 11th February 1780. For each day of the month, the text proposes a question to be reflected upon by the reader, based upon a verse from the Bible.

During the course of its life, this little book has been well used and so was in very poor condition when it found its way to the Archive. Below you can see the stages it went through as it was conserved by a professional conservator, breathing new life into the volume...

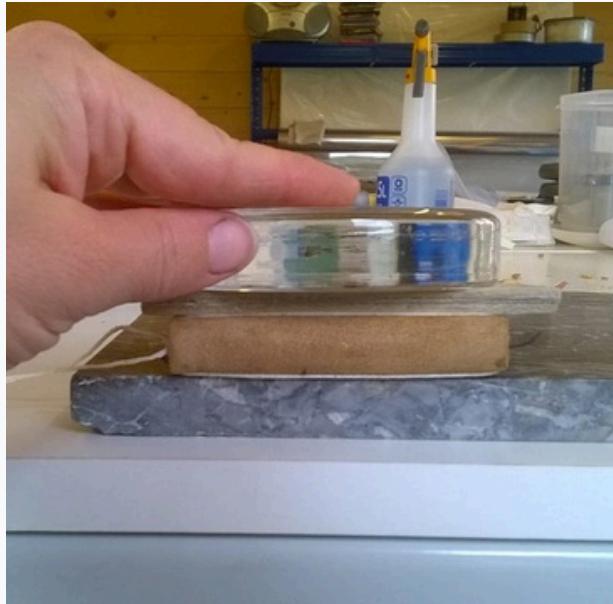


1. Condition
before Repair...

2. Torn pages are
carefully restored...



3. Colour matching
paper for the spine
repair...



4. Pressing the volume flat...

5. The fully restored book, boxed and ready to return to the Archive...



Rogues' Gallery

One job which continues throughout the year is monitoring for pests. Bugs of various forms can attack paper, leather bindings and the glue that holds books together. Precautions are in place to prevent infestation, e.g. new acquisitions will be placed in the Quarantine Room. Traps are set and checked regularly to make sure that the Archive remains pest-free and the collections are kept safe...



Guernsey Carpet Beetle larvae eat wool, fur, feather, silk and skins.



Silverfish feed on damp paper, books and textiles.



Woodlice are a sign that there may be a damp problem, as they attack rotting wood and vegetation.



The common Booklouse feasts on the surface of damp paper and books.



Credits

Exhibition Space - Knowsley Archives Service at The ARK (Archive Resource for Knowsley) The Kirkby Centre – First Floor, Norwich Way, Kirkby, L32 8XY

Curated by - The team at Knowsley Archives Services

Knowsley Archives Service, based in The ARK: Archive Resource for Knowsley, is home to a wide range of resources that describe the heritage of the people and communities that make up the Borough of Knowsley.

Our Mission Statement is:

- To collect, preserve and organise archive materials relating to the people and places of Knowsley, creating a collective memory for the borough that is accessible for research and consultation, either physically or online through digital content and finding aids
- To encourage learning through engagement, offering support to individuals and groups as they explore the collections, enabling our communities to develop a sense of pride and place
- To promote Knowsley's rich heritage, sharing an understanding of the history of the communities that make up the borough of Knowsley

Knowsley Archives Service was awarded Accredited Archive Status by The National Archives in November 2017 and was retained in 2024