

Archives Newsletter

Updates from Barts Health NHS Trust Archives



Visit from University of Westminster students

OUR NEW SPACE

We have just come to the end of our first year in the 'new' archives space, located in the Kenton and Lucas Block on the St Bartholomew's Hospital site. The space, which opened in February 2022, has for the first time allowed us to provide access to all the collections we hold on a single site, in a larger space with improved facilities. This has meant we are now able to host group visits as well as individual researchers - like this student group from the University of Westminster Museums and Galleries MA course, who visited in January to discuss the ethics and practicalities of collecting and displaying medical material.

COLLECTIONS FORTNIGHT

January saw our annual 'Collections Fortnight' closure period, when the archives are closed to research appointments and enquiries so that the team can focus on processing and cataloguing collections. With the chance to use the searchroom tables to sort large collections of material, we were able to add over 200 new descriptions to our online catalogue, including material donated to the archives through our [Whipps Cross Voices project](#), as well as undertaking conservation cleaning and repackaging.





Case by Case - Conserving St Bartholomew's Hospital Case Notes

In December we were awarded £20,000 from the National Manuscript Conservation Trust (NMCT), following an application to conserve 20 volumes of patient case notes and prevent further deterioration.

The volumes are from a series of St. Bartholomew's Hospital medical records, and cover patients on various hospital wards 1884-1901. The case notes demonstrate the breadth of diagnoses and treatments available to the patients.

The case note collection is significant in that that few, if any, complete series of comparable records survive elsewhere. In addition to their completeness and dates covered, the records are unique in the breadth of general medical and surgical history represented, as opposed to the records of disease specific hospitals (eg. eye hospitals).

Their current condition has meant the records cannot be provided safely or conveniently to researchers, nor can they be displayed. The large size of the volumes, as you can see in the picture above, makes them difficult to move without damaging them; the depth of the bindings on certain volumes make it difficult to open the volume without damaging the spines; and, the health of the paper and general cleanliness makes areas of the records difficult to handle and read.

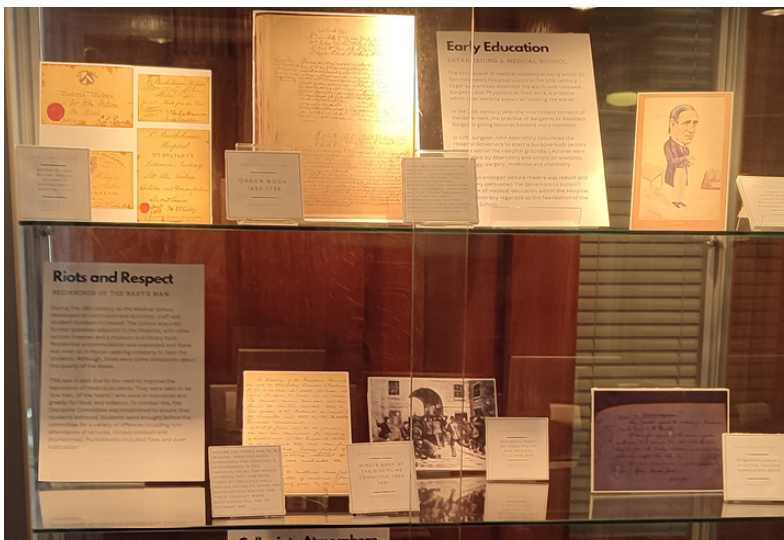
We have sent the first batch of 10 volumes over the National Conservation Service (NCS) to begin conservation work. The conservation methods proposed by NCS will stabilise and protect the selected records, meaning we can then publicise and use them.

Updates will follow as the conservation work progresses.



MEDICAL EDUCATION AND MAYHEM

Come and check out the new exhibition at [West Smithfield Library](#), St Bartholomew's Hospital. Curated by the Queen Mary Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry Archivist, learn all about student experiences at St Bartholomew's Medical College as part of the Barts900 celebrations. Explore archival records from as early as the 17th century; from the record of the first students, to snowball fights, and the admission of female students.



LIFE AND DEATH IN THE ARCHIVES, 1123-2023

The final designs are coming together for Life and Death in the Archives, 1123-2023, the outdoor exhibition featuring material from the St Bartholomew's Hospital collections which will be running in Guildhall Yard and then Aldgate Square during May-July 2023 as part of the Barts900 anniversary celebrations.

Read more on the Barts900 Events page [here](#).

WHIPPS CROSS VOICES PROJECT

We're approaching the end of the [Whipps Cross Voices](#) project, which has been running since last March. We've been really pleased with the response to the project and the enthusiasm for the history of Whipps amongst everyone who has participated, and the information and memories they have shared with us. New material, including new oral history interviews, has been added to the archives, and we have been able to open up the existing historic collections through cataloguing and digitisation. We also shared the [first episode of our Voices of Whipps Cross series](#), produced by Frazer Merrick, on our YouTube channel; hear Phil Hughes talk about the history of Whipps Cross Hospital Radio, interspersed with archive recordings from the radio station and sounds of the hospital. Look out for further episodes coming soon.



Other ways to follow our service

To learn more about our collections visit our [website](#) where you can search the Barts Health NHS Trust Archives online [catalogue](#), and find out how to book a visit to the search room at St Bartholomew's Hospital.

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