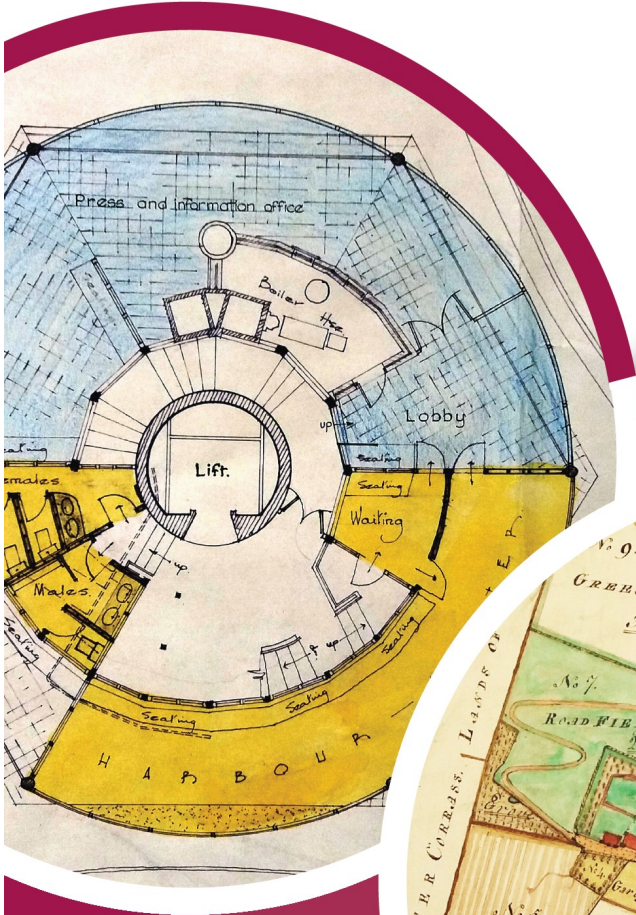




Annual Report 2020-2021

PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE

Oik Recortyssyn Theayagh Vannin



**Isle of Man
Government**
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**DISCOVER THE ISLAND'S
HISTORY – AND YOUR OWN**

Foreword by the Registrar General

For organisations across the globe, 2020-2021 was an extraordinary year.

The Isle of Man Public Record Office was no exception. In late March 2020, the Isle of Man went into lockdown to reduce the spread of Covid-19 in the face of a global pandemic.

The Record Office team began the 2020-2021 year working from their kitchen tables under Government orders to 'stay at home'. Reading room and public outreach services were forced to close.

We were fortunate on the Isle of Man to have over 6 months with no Covid-19 cases confirmed on the Island. Lockdown restrictions on the Island were lifted in June 2020 and the work of the Record Office gradually returned to normal.



Covid-19 returned to the Island in late December 2020 resulting in two further circuit-breaker periods in January and March 2021, when Record Office public services were again required to close down.

The impact of the pandemic was felt across every aspect of the work of the Record Office during the year. Resources across Isle of Man Government departments were diverted to focus on the national response to Covid-19. Members of the Public Record Office team took on new roles, assisting with passenger arrival information as part of border controls and with processing applications to the Department for Enterprise business support schemes. The team adapted to home working, embracing new technology to hold meetings and communicate via video-conference.

Despite these challenges, the team continued to push forward wherever possible with the work of the Record Office, including the acquisition of new collections, capital projects to improve buildings and collections care, and work to improve future access to collections through the creation and publication of new catalogues.

Edward Clague, Registrar General

November 2021

Report of the Public Records Officer



Isle of Man Government Staff 1940

Introduction

The Isle of Man Public Record Office preserves the national archive collections from Isle of Man public bodies, under the Public Records Act 1999 and the Public Records Order 2015.

Our mission is to select and preserve records of historic and cultural value and make these available to improve Government transparency, and to encourage and support research, learning and exploration of our national and personal heritage stories.

Our collections include records from Isle of Government Departments, Statutory Boards, Tynwald, the Isle of Man Courts of Justice, local authorities and schools.

Based on two sites, at Unit 40A and Unit 3 Spring Valley Industrial Estate, Braddan, we provide reading room and enquiry services, allowing customers to access the archives for research.

Our team carry out collections management tasks, such as cataloguing, cleaning and preservation. We also work with public bodies across the Island to identify and transfer new records of historic significance to the Record Office.

Our outreach services – social media channels, exhibitions and events – allow us to share our unique collections with the public, both on the Island and beyond.

New accessions

The Public Record Office works with public bodies across the Isle of Man to select and transfer records of long-term historic value to become part of our national archive collections.

'Stay at Home' restrictions due to the spread of Covid-19 inevitably led to a reduced number of accessions (transfers of archives to the Record Office) during 2020-21. Lack of physical access to historic paper records in Government offices and archive stores meant that the surveying, assessment and transfers of records to the Record Office were halted for almost half of the year. Employees in public bodies also had less time to work with the Record Office as they focused their attentions on responding to the global pandemic.



Despite these challenges, we received 10 brand new accessions, totalling 6.55 cubic metres (the equivalent of approximately 130 large boxes).

These accessions were transferred under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1999 and are generally available to the public for research, although there may be some legal restrictions on access where records contain personal data or sensitive data.

We also continued our work to undertake assessment of consignments of records which are held temporarily at the Record Office under section 3(8) of the Public Records Act 1999. Consignments stored at the Record Office under section 3(8) remain in formal ownership of the creating public body. They are generally not accessible to the public without the consent of the record owners.

Assessment and full transfer of these collections to the Record Office is a key step in ensuring these records can be preserved appropriately and made available to the public in the future. Six consignments (2.15 cubic metres of records) were assessed and fully transferred to the Record Office as accessions, including a substantial number of High Court divorce records from 1938-1993.

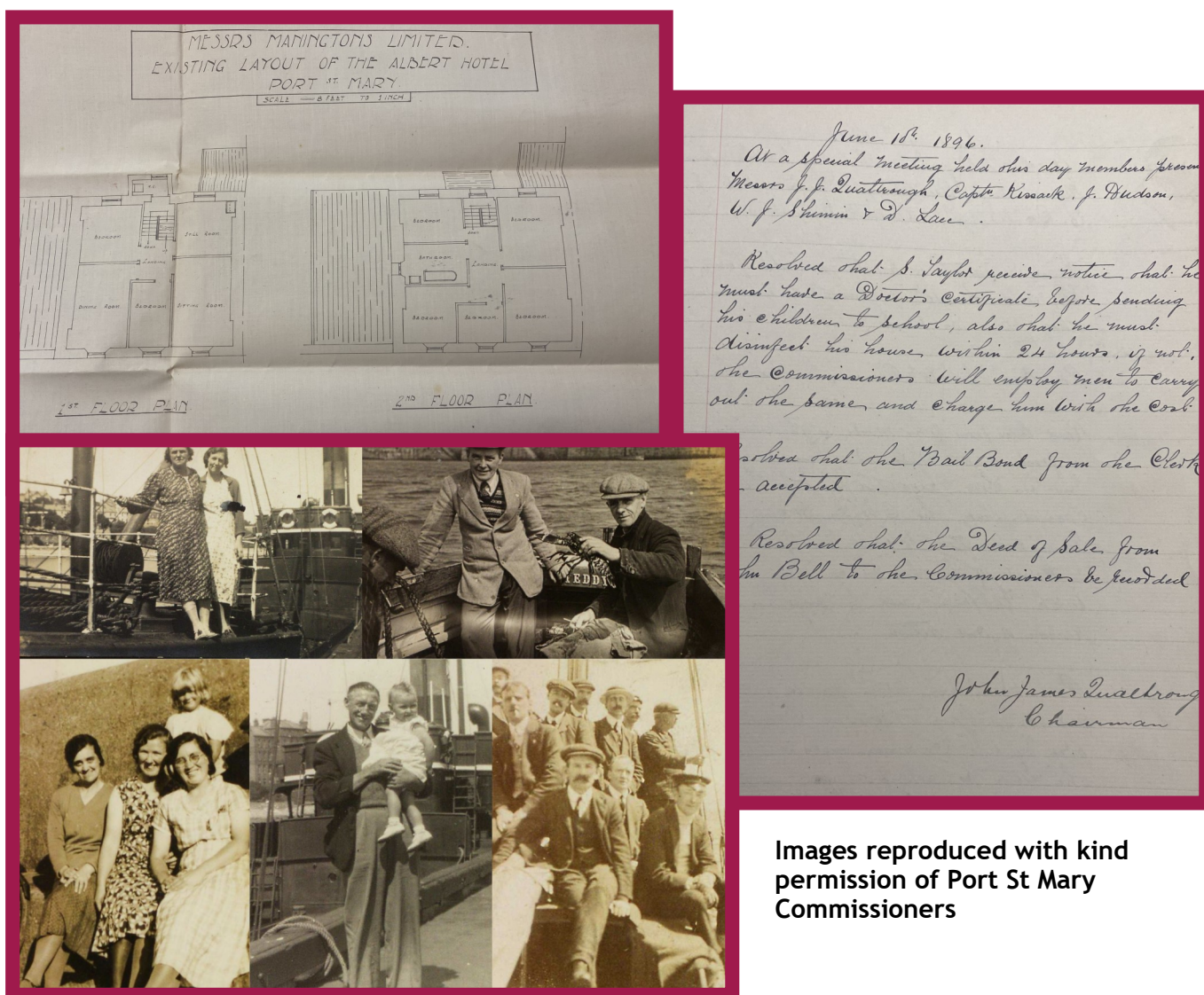
A full list of the accessions (new record transfers) received by the Public Record Office in 2020-21 can be found in Appendix A.

New collection highlights

Port St. Mary Village Commissioners (A197)

In September 2020 we received almost 2 cubic metres (45 boxes) of historic records from Port St Mary Village Commissioners, alongside a number of rolled plans.

The records, dating from the formation of the Port St Mary village district in 1890 up to 2001, contain the original Board of Commissioners' minute books, committee minutes, financial ledgers, plans and licensing records.



Images reproduced with kind permission of Port St Mary Commissioners

A large number of photographs were also deposited by the Commissioners, giving a fascinating insight into village life during the 19th and 20th centuries.

New collection highlights

Letter Patent issued by King George III to Deemster Thomas Moore, 1773 (A196)



This beautiful 'Letters Patent' dated 1773 was issued by King George III and appoints Thomas Moore as Deemster.

The first half of the document revokes the Letters Patent of 1764 which appointed Peter John Haywood to the role. The framed document is handwritten on animal skin (parchment or vellum) with the wax Great Seal of the Realm affixed as a pendant seal with double cords.

The Letters Patent was originally housed in Castle Rushen and was transferred to the Isle of Man Courts building in Douglas in the 1990s.

We were thrilled to accept it into our national archive collections, where it will be preserved in our temperature and humidity controlled stores, and where the public can visit to view this wonderful piece of our Island's history.

New collection highlights

Isle of Man Tourism and Leisure photographs (A204)

In February 2021, we took custody of 17 archive boxes of photographs from the Department of Tourism and Leisure and the Isle of Man Tourist Board, dating from the 1980s-2010.

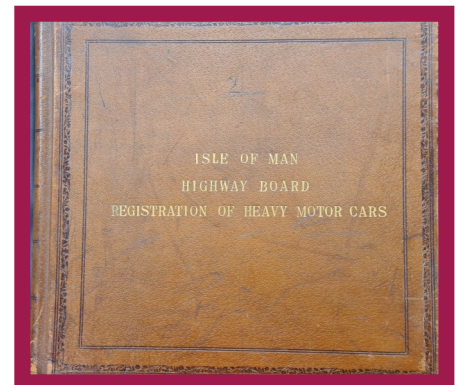
These photographs include national and local events, promotional photographs and images of visits to the Island by celebrities and VIPs, such as Coronation Street legend Johnny Briggs.



Isle of Man vehicle registration records (A202)

In 1905, vehicle registration and licensing of drivers were introduced on the Island by the Highways Act Amendment Act. Fees were charged for the registration of motor cars (20 shillings) and motorcycles (5 shillings). Driving licences were free to private vehicle owners; other vehicle users paid a fee of 5 shillings.

In February, we received the first register of driving licence holders from 1906-1921 and 47 further registers listing motor vehicles licensed between 1908-1965.



Why not visit us and find out if your relatives were amongst the first people to drive a motor vehicle on the Island?

The two accessions above were previously held by Manx National Heritage and were transferred to us as part of a programme to re-unite sequences of public records (previously split between the Public Record Office and Manx National Heritage Library and Archives). Our aim is to improve public access to these collections by providing them on one site and allowing unified cataloguing of previously split sequences of records.

New catalogues

Our cataloguing work during 2020-21 was limited due to Covid-19 restrictions. During our 5 months working at home, we could not physically access paper, parchment or photographic records in our stores in order to sort and catalogue them. This meant finding new ways of working.

Our team used basic lists of records (typically rough box lists produced at the time that the records were first transferred to the Record Office) to produce provisional catalogue structures and brief descriptions of records from home on our digital cataloguing software CALM.

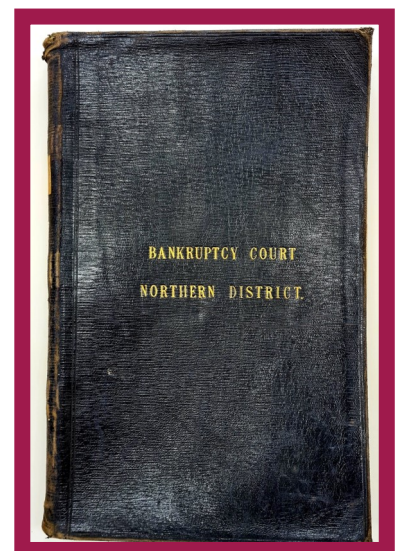
Over the past two years, we have been working with the Isle of Man Courts of Justice to select and transfer historic court records to the Record Office. The pandemic provided the opportunity to focus on cataloguing some of these records to improve public access. The records contain large sequences of records with similar content, which meant having limited access to the physical records was less of a problem when cataloguing.

Isle of Man High Court Bankruptcy records

(S119-S124) were the first to be catalogued. These records include case files for bankruptcy proceedings on the Island from 1872-1972, including many of those who became bankrupt after the collapse of Dumbell's bank in 1900.

Isle of Man General Gaol (criminal court)

records (S117) were also catalogued. These date from 1848-2008 and include minute books, entry books, indices and criminal case files.



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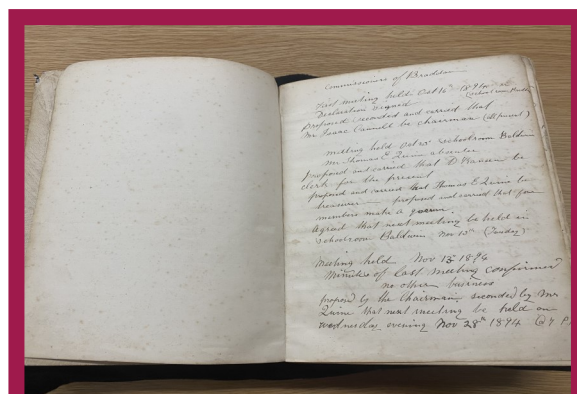
New catalogues

Minutes of Braddan Commissioners (S114)

Records of Braddan Commissioners from 1894-1991 have also been catalogued and the public minutes are available to view in our reading room.

The minutes discuss all of the activities and functions of the local authority, including:

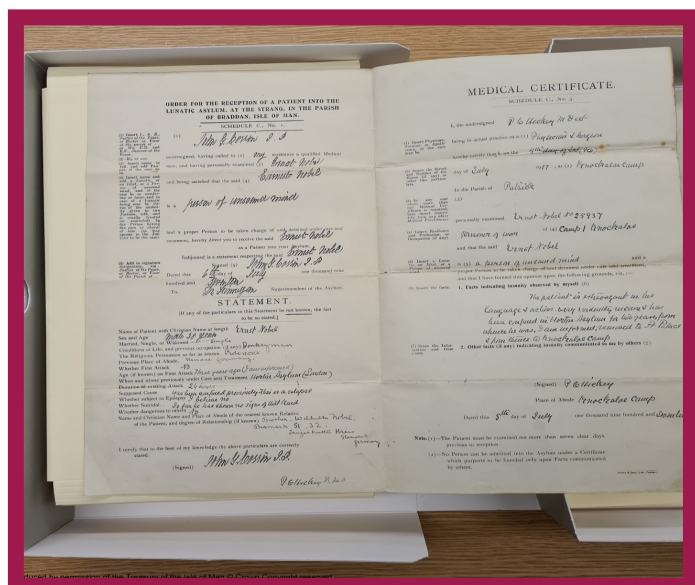
housing; rates; refuse collection; street lighting; parks, playgrounds and other leisure facilities; property searches; environmental health; planning applications; and bye-law enforcement.



Braddan Commissioners Minute Book. Image reproduced with kind permission of Braddan Commissioners.

Records of Ballamona Hospital (S22)

Catalogues for the records of Ballamona Hospital (S22) were updated during 2020-21 to include patient reception orders (admission papers) up to 1920 that have now become publically available after the expiry of their 100 year closure period. The reception order and medical certificate shown here are for a patient admitted to the hospital from Knockaloe Internment Camp in 1917.



All our completed catalogues can be found online at: <https://www.gov.im/about-the-government/departments/enterprise/central-registry/public-record-office/records/>

Catalogues are also available to view as paper copies in our reading room at Unit 40A Spring Valley Industrial Estate.



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DISCOVER THE ISLAND'S HISTORY – AND YOUR OWN

Collections care

Archive buildings

One challenge during the pandemic has been maintaining standards of collections care and ensuring our national archives remain safe and secure.

The Public Record Office is based at Unit 3 and Unit 40/40A Spring Valley Industrial Estate, Braddan. These converted warehouse units provide space for 674 cubic metres of records, staff offices and our public reading room.

During the Covid-19 lockdown and circuit breaker periods, we operated a staff rota to ensure one member of our team was present on site each day, to undertake checks of our buildings and archive stores. This ensured our buildings were secure, temperature and humidity in our archives stores were monitored, and any signs of flood, water ingress or pests that might damage the archive collections were detected.

Environmental monitoring



During 2020-21, we installed new digital environmental monitoring devices and software in our archive stores. These replaced analogue 'Omega' readers, which were at the end of their life.

New 'TinyTag' readers sited in multiple locations around the archive stores take temperature and humidity readings every minute.

Readings from 'TinyTag' are downloaded to enable us to view the readings in a number of formats, ensuring the temperature and humidity remain stable and in the optimum ranges for preserving historic archive collections.

Lighting

Lighting in our public service areas, staff offices and archive stores in Unit 40A Spring Valley were upgraded during 2020-21 to LED fittings. These fittings use significantly less energy than the previous fluorescent fittings, give out less heat which will protect the archive collections, and also provide an improved working environment for public visitors and our team.

Collections care

Improvements at Unit 3 Spring Valley

In January 2021, we completed the procurement process for new archive shelving to be installed in our second site, Unit 3 Spring Valley. The new mobile shelving, scheduled for installation from June-December 2021, will double the storage space available in the store providing enough room for the continued transfer of new archive collections to the Record Office for the next five to seven years. The installation will take place in three phases, preceded by the relocation of the archive collections by the PRO team, and dismantling and removal of the existing shelving. There are over 300 cubic metres of records to be moved, the equivalent of over 7000 boxes.

Plans are also in place to upgrade the lighting in the Unit 3 archive store to modern LED fittings prior to the shelving installation, improving collections care and moving the Record Office forward in reducing its carbon emissions.

Towards a new ‘National Archives’

Whilst every care is taken by the Public Record Office team to ensure the preservation of collections, our current buildings are unsuitable for the long-term storage of heritage collections and fail to meet the requirements of the international standard for buildings used to store archives (ISO 16893).

They also provide insufficient space for the expansion of our collections in the long-term.

During 2020-21 we continued to work with our colleagues at Manx National Heritage to explore the possibility for a new combined National Library and Archives building.

In summer 2020, we submitted a capital bid to the Isle of Man Treasury for funding to conduct a feasibility study into a joint archives and library service and the construction of suitable premises.



Whilst our bid was unsuccessful this year, we hope to submit a further bid in 2021-22 to help secure the long-term future of our collections.

Collections care

Preservation and conservation

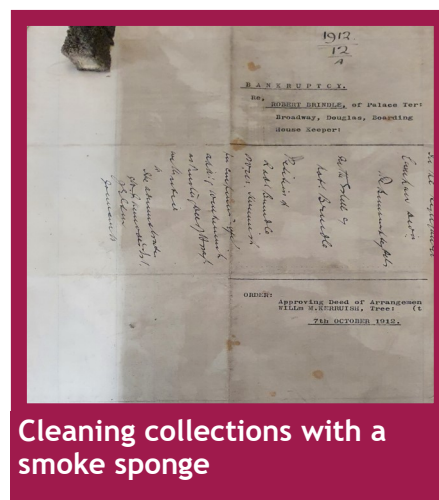
The Public Record Office does not have an in-house conservator or conservation facilities on site, which means preservation activities undertaken by the Public Record Office team are limited to ensuring suitable storage, environmental conditions, re-packaging and cleaning of surface dirt from our archive collections.

In order to improve our preservation and conservation, we recently took membership of the UK National Conservation Service. The National Conservation Service provides us with access to qualified conservators and specialist advice on conservation matters.

Benchmarks in Collections Care

During 2020-2021, we worked with the National Conservation Service to undertake an assessment of our service using the 'Benchmarks in Collections Care' tool.

The Public Record Office met 70.91% of the benchmarks at a 'good' level, whilst a further 19.09% of these benchmarks were partially met.



Cleaning collections with a smoke sponge

The outcomes of this assessment highlighted areas of best practice where we scored highly - for example, emergency disaster planning and handling/use of records. It also helped us to produce an action plan of areas for improvement where we failed to meet the benchmarks.

Areas where we failed to meet benchmarks included aspects such as risks associated with our buildings' locations on an industrial estate, and the unsuitability of our current buildings for the care of unique heritage collections.

This benchmarking exercise has given us a valuable roadmap for collections care improvements, which we intend to take forward into 2021-22 and beyond. Some elements for improvement will undoubtedly be more challenging to overcome, such as those relating to buildings. These would require a substantial increase in revenue funding and additional capital funding to resolve. However the Record Office team remain committed to achieving collections care improvements wherever possible to ensure the long-term survival of our national archive collections.

Public services

Protecting the health of our team and customers during the global pandemic was paramount. Our public services saw the most dramatic changes, as we were forced to adapt to the changing legal restrictions in place.

Reading room and enquiries

Our public reading room closed to visitors for over five months (April-June 2020, January 2021 and March 2021) in line with the Isle of Man Government's legal restrictions. During these 'Stay at Home' restrictions, our team continued to answer public enquiries remotely, by phone, e-mail and social media. Once back open to the public, increased hygiene measures and social distancing in the reading room helped to ensure our staff and customers stayed safe and comfortable.

Service improvements

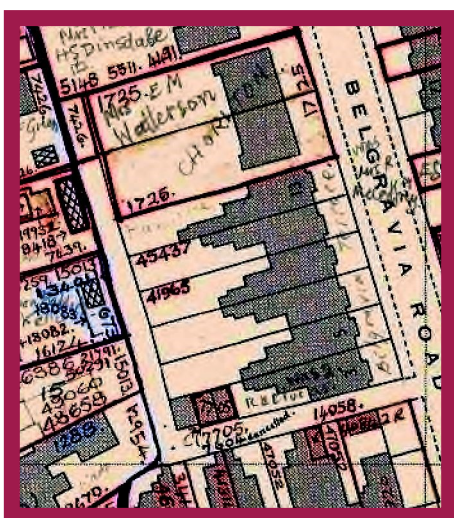
During 2020, we produced digital copies of the indexes to our Douglas Borough Council building control plans.

One of our most popular collections, these plans were previously only searchable through retrieval of the original fragile registers.

Providing digital copies, available on a computer in our reading room, has helped to reduce handling of the fragile original records and speed up visitor access to these records.

Name of Owner	Name of Applicant	Description	Date	
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919
Mr. H. J. Cannon & Co.	Stables	Brook Street	5 July 1919	26 July 1919

A digitised building control register (reproduced with kind permission of Douglas Borough Council)



We also worked closely with 'Government Technology Services' mapping team to improve planning application searches for visitors in our reading room.

The original planning indexes (annotated maps from 1930s-1980s) are now available to search through digital mapping software, which overlays the annotated index maps on to modern maps of the Island.

Visitors can simply search for an address using the digital mapping software, which will then show the historic planning application numbers relating to the property. The original plans can then be retrieved from our stores and viewed in our reading room, or copies requested.

Public services

Social media

Whilst we were unable to accommodate group visits for a substantial part of the year due to Covid-19 restrictions, our social media accounts allowed us to continue to connect with the public. We shared images and stories from the archives to entertain, inform and engage, hopefully providing a little bit of brightness in very difficult times.



Our Facebook posts entered the screens of an average of 4798 unique users per month (total reach), and received an average of 403 engagements (user clicks) on our posts per month.

On Twitter, our posts achieved an average of 21658 impressions per month, and an average of 1161 engagements per month. Our tweets were 'liked' 2110 times over the course of the year.



Follow us on Facebook
and Twitter
@IsleOfManPRO



By the end of 2020-21 (31 March 2021) we had 1038 users actively following the Public Record Facebook page and 741 users following our @IsleOfManPRO Twitter account.

Boom or Bust

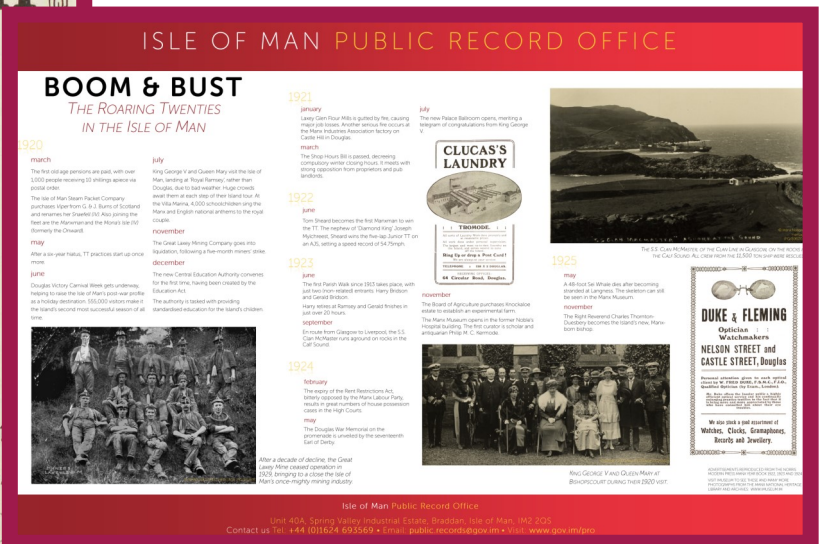
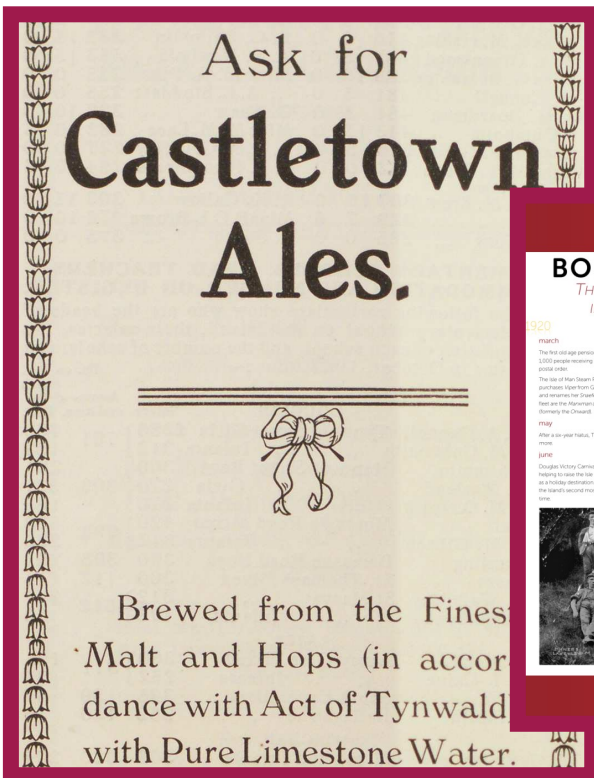
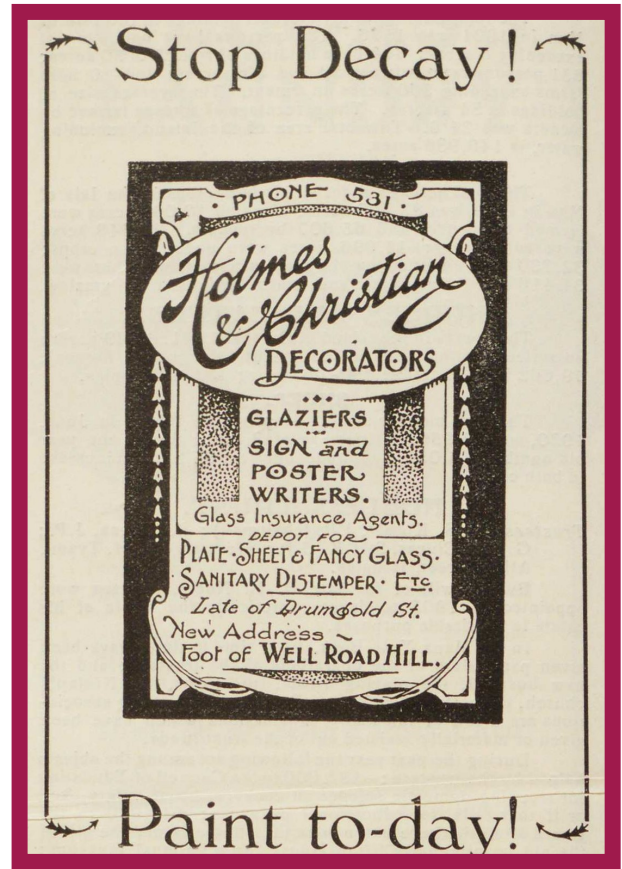
Heritage Open Days 2020

In October 2020, we travelled back in time to the 1920s with our annual heritage open day exhibition 'Boom and Bust: The Roaring Twenties in the Isle of Man'.

This year's open days felt particularly special as we welcomed visitors after three months of lockdown restrictions earlier in 2020.

In order to create a 'Covid-safe' event for visitors and staff, booking was essential and numbers of visitors per tour were limited to ensure social distancing could be observed.

In addition to our exhibition, visitors at the open days were offered a behind-the-scenes tour of our archive storage areas at Unit 40A Spring Valley.



Digital Archives

In September 2020, we welcomed Dave Heelas to the Public Record Office team. Dave joins us as our Digital Preservation Officer, working on a two year project to establish our Digital Preservation facilities and practices.

Part of Dave's role has been to work with records creators across Isle of Man Government to gather information on the digital public records created and held. This survey is now informing the development of our Digital Preservation repository.



During 2021-22 we hope to move forward to procurement and implementation of a Digital Preservation solution, which will allow us to preserve the digital national archives of the future. Our 'Digital Archive' project will provide us with the capacity to accept, preserve and provide access to these records. Work is already underway, preparing a detailed specification of the software, storage and access requirements for our 'Digital Archive'.

Documenting the pandemic

From our first lockdown in Spring 2020, it became clear that the pandemic was one of the biggest challenges facing the Isle of Man since World War II.

Records relating to the pandemic – its impact and our Island's response to it – will be of long-term historical significance. Care is needed to ensure these records survive to become part of the national archive collections.

In July 2020, the Registrar General obtained approval from the Council of Ministers for a bar on any destruction of Government records relating to the pandemic until they have been appraised by Public Record Office staff. This order was communicated to Departments via letter and to all Government employees through our e-mail newsletters, intranet site and Information Governance teams.

Our priority moving forward will be to work with Departments to assess these records and ensure those of long-term value are identified, retained and, in due course, transferred to the Record Office to become part of our national and corporate memory.

Final thoughts...

The Public Record Office team ended 2020-21 as we began, working primarily in our homes, due to the Isle of Man's third 'Stay at Home' circuit breaker period. Fortunately, restrictions were eased swiftly and we were able to re-open our doors to the public again and resume our reading room services in April 2021.

2021-22 is set to be a year of substantial change for the Public Record Office, as we progress with the refurbishment of our Unit 3 archives store and the establishment of our Digital Preservation archive, and as we work with public bodies across the Island to identify and assess records relating to the pandemic.

We also hope to resume our full range of outreach services and look forward to sharing our collections with you again during 2021-22 through our exhibitions, group visits and other events.

Angela Skitt, Public Records Officer

November 2021



Detail from a Town Plan of Douglas, 1859 (A43)



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Appendix 1

Isle of Man Public Record Office: archive accessions 2020-21

This list includes all archive collections transferred to the Isle of Man Public Record Office under section 3(4) or section 6(1) of the Public Records Act 1999 between 1st April 2020-31st March 2021.

Please contact the Isle of Man Public Record Office on 01624 693569 or e-mail to public.records@gov.im to enquire about access to any of these records.

Accession number	Quantity	Title	Date Range	Access Status
A194	2 archive boxes (0.02 cubic metres)	Records of the Isle of Man High Court: Civil Division and its antecedents: bankruptcy entry books and indices	1872-2003	Partially closed
A195	12 archive boxes (0.38 cubic metres).	Records of the Isle of Man Board of Education: College of Further Education and its antecedents: student registration cards	1948-1985	Closed
A196	1 item (0.05 cubic metres)	Letter Patent issued by King George III to Deemster Thomas Moore (framed, parchment or vellum with	1773	Open
A197	31 boxes/enclosures; 11 archive tubes; 3 wrapped enclosures (1.95 cubic metres)	Records of Port St Mary Commissioners: minutes, byelaw application plans, rolled plans, photographs, letter-books, financial records	1890-2001	Partially closed
A198	5 files; 2 archive boxes (0.12 cubic meters)	Records of the Isle of Man Broadcasting Commission	1966-1986	Open
A199	59 files; 25 archive boxes (0.22 cubic meters)	Records of the Isle of Man Treasury: Legislation, Capital Projects, Reviews and Minutes	1959-2015	Partially closed
A200	60 ledgers, 44 volumes and 4 oversized lever arch files (1.83 cubic metres)	Records of the Isle of Man Land and Deeds Registry: Requisition Books (Grantor & Grantee Books) and Indices Books	1847-1989	Open



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Appendix 1 continued

Accession number	Quantity	Title	Date Range	Access Status
A201	2 volumes, 6 lever-arch files, 8 ledgers (0.35 cubic metres)	Records of the Isle of Man Land and Deeds Registry: Requisition Books (Grantor & Grantee Books) and Wills & Administrations Indices	1961-2000	Open
A202	48 volumes and 1 file (1 cubic metre)	Manx National Heritage: Isle of Man vehicle registration records	1906-1965	Open
A203	27 archive boxes (comprising 59 volumes, 0.74 cubic metres)	Manx National Heritage: Records of the Isle of Man Tourist Board and its predecessors	1894-1987	Open
A204	17 archive boxes (0.24 cubic metres)	Manx National Heritage: Records Department of Tourism and Leisure: images of the Isle of Man and accompanying resources	1980s-2010s	Open



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