

LANCASTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

RESEARCH ADVISORY GUIDE 4

PART 1: THREE ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS RELATING TO LANCASTER

In this Guide, I will give an overview of some of the archival collections that relate to Lancaster and are most useful for researchers, with the intention of adding details of more collections in future to this Research Advisory Guide. The website of Lancashire Archives is at <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives/archives-and-record-office/>

1. Lancaster Poor Law Union Collection

The Lancaster Poor Law Union archival collection (PUL) held by Lancashire Archives is part of a wider set of records of the Poor Law Boards of Guardians (PU) covering most areas of Lancashire including Garstang (PUY) and Lunesdale (PUN).¹ The elected Board of Guardians of the Lancaster Poor Union also represented surrounding areas such as Morecambe, Heysham, Silverdale and Carnforth² (Figure 1). The records were transferred to Lancashire Archives in 1950.³

Boards of Guardians of the Poor were formed following the passing of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act with local boards set up to administer the union and workhouses within local parishes. This record collection spans 1839 to 1945 and key highlights include Guardians' Minute Books 1839-1930, Workhouse Committee Minute Books 1840-45, 1919-28 and various letter books, ledgers, account books and registers of Pauper Lunatics, 1865-1922. Further research material relating to the Lancaster Workhouse is held by the National Archives such as: Correspondence 1834-1900 (MH12/5889-914), Staff Registers 1837-1921 (MH 9/10), and Workhouse Building Plan, (MH14/18).⁴

Note: This article in RAG 4 supersedes the original article published in the February 2023 RG Newsletter



Figure 1(PUL): Lancaster Board of Guardians, Quernmore Road 1930.
Source: Red Rose Collections, © Lancashire County Council.

References

- ¹ Lancashire County Council, PU – Poor Law Boards of Guardians. Available at: <https://archivecat.lancashire.gov.uk/calmview/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=PU> (accessed: 4 October 2022).
- ² Higginbotham P (2022), *The Workhouse in Lancaster, Lancashire*. Available at: <https://www.workhouses.org.uk/Lancaster/> (accessed: 4 October 2022).
- ³ Thanks to David Tilsley of Lancashire Archives for this information.
- ⁴ Gibson J & Roger C (2008) *Poor Law Union records: 2. The Midlands and Northern England*. (Bury: Family History Partnership), p.28.

Further reading

- Carter P (2017) *A guide to records created under the new Poor Law*. Available at: <https://www.balh.org.uk/resources/presentation/wdytyalive2017/dr-paul-carter-a-guide-to-records-created-under-the-new-poor-law.pdf> (accessed: 29 January 2023).
- Gibson J & Roger C (2008) *Poor Law Union records: 2. The Midlands and Northern England*. (Bury: Family History Partnership).
- Hollen-Lees L (2006) *The solidarities of strangers: the English Poor Laws and the people, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- McDonald M (1994) *The introduction of the new Poor Law in Lancaster*. MA Dissertation: Lancaster University.
- Midwinter E (1967) State intervention at the local level: The new Poor Law in Lancashire, *The Historical Journal*, 10 (1), pp.106–112.
- Midwinter E (1969) *Social administration in Lancashire, 1830–1860: Poor Law, Public Health and Police*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- The National Archives (n.d.) Research Guide: Poverty and the Poor Laws. Available at: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/poverty-poor-laws/> (accessed 5 February 2023).
- Quinn N (2015) ‘Men of yesterday: Lancaster Poor Law Union, 1870–1911’, *Family and Community History*, 18 (1), pp.3–23.

2. Lancaster Municipal Borough Collection (MBLA)

The Lancaster Municipal Borough archival collection held by Lancashire Archives in Preston is a diverse set of records relating to the activities of the local municipal borough. The borough dates back as far as the twelfth century, becoming a municipal borough following the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835.¹ The records were transferred to Lancashire Archives by the city in 31 separate deposits between 1974 and 2021, a diverse borough collection covering the medieval ‘ancient’ borough through to the ‘modern’ county borough.²

The borough records and archives were held in the old town hall (now Lancaster City Museum) in the Jury Room. Before 1783, charters (and other notable records) were kept at the north end of the second floor of the town hall building (completed in 1671; Figure 1).³ The historian John Brownbill undertook the task of deciding which records to retain or destroy following their transfer to the current Town Hall building in Dalton Square in 1909/10 – and from which his 1929 book provides an outline and schedule of the Lancaster corporation records.⁴ The charters were arranged and displayed in a specially built cabinet in 1949, and the city council commissioned T. Pape in 1951 to write a short history of the borough charters.⁵

They were kept in the muniment room in the Town Hall, being loaned out to the City Museum for an exhibition in February and March 1974.⁶

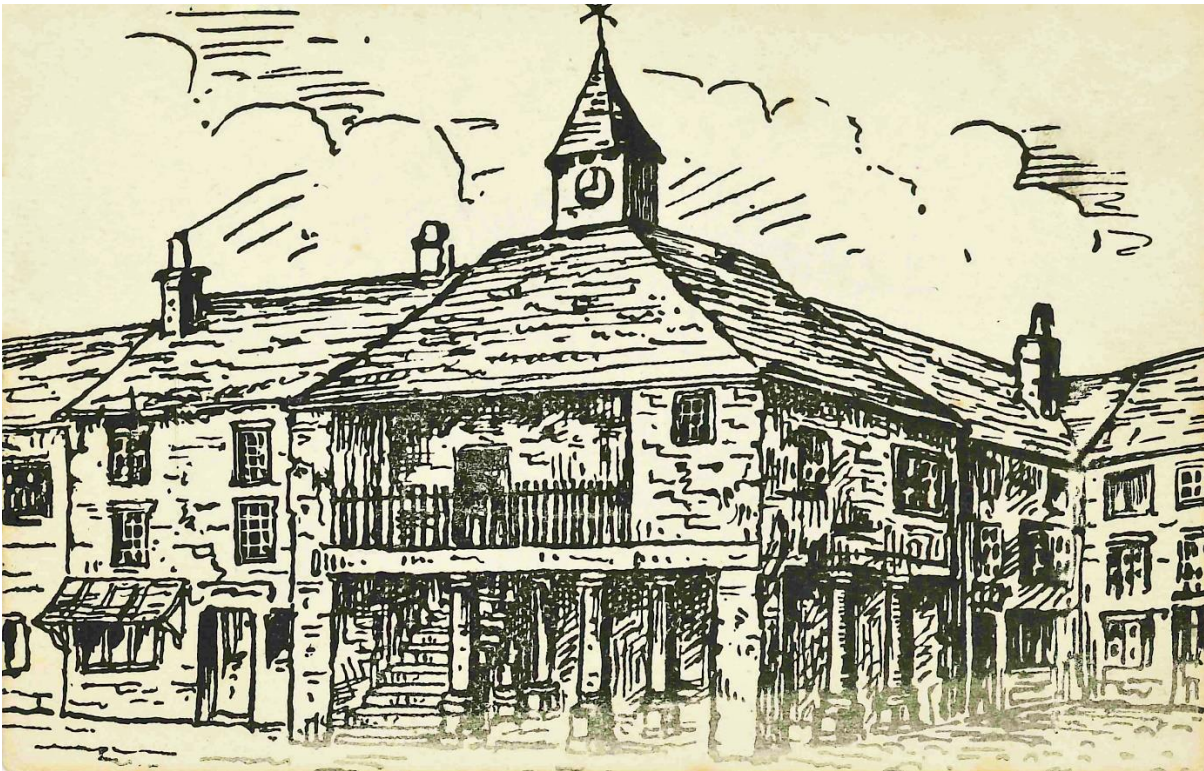


Figure 1 (MBLA): Sketch of the town hall building erected in 1671 and replaced in 1783
Source: © Lancaster City Museums (Accession number: LANLM.2006.19.10)

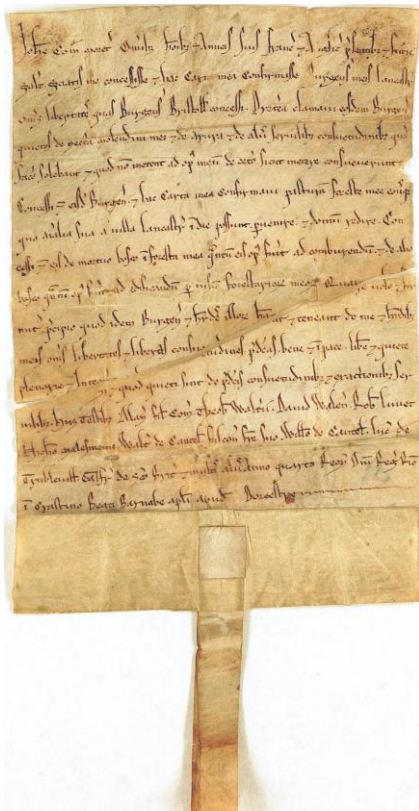


Figure 2 (MBLA): 1193 charter of John granting borough status on Lancaster, MBLA 14/1.

Source: Image courtesy of Lancashire Archives

The majority of the records cover the period 1801 to 1974, although some date to as early as 1193 (Figure 2). The collection includes rate books 1801-1961 (with some gaps), rental and revenue account books 1815–1835 (with some gaps), printed council minute books (1891–1974), borough charters dating between 1193 and 1819 and the cemetery records for Lancaster, Scotforth and Skerton. Other interesting items include financial records, general correspondence and other miscellaneous deposits such as ACC11602 with minute books covering 1664 to 1702 and 1816 to 1857, and bailiff records (18th and 19th century). ACC10927 contains the deeds (dating between 1753 and 1970) of buildings demolished for the Great John Street development. Please see the link for details of the collection on Lancaster Archives' online catalogue LANCAT: <https://archivecat.lancashire.gov.uk/calmview/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=MBLA>

Note: This article in RAG 4 supersedes the original article published in the May 2022 RG Newsletter

References

- 1 Farrer W and Brownbill J (1914) 'Townships: Lancaster' in Farrer W and Brownbill J (eds) *A history of the county of Lancaster: Vol. 8*. London: Constable, pp.33–48
- 2 Thanks to David Tilsley, Senior Archivist at Lancashire Archives for this information
- 3 Docton K and Tyson E (1983) *Lancaster's old town halls*
- 4 Brownbill J and Nuttall J (1929) *A calendar of the charters and records belonging to the Corporation of Lancaster*
- 5 Pape T (1952) *The charters of the city of Lancaster*, p.3
- 6 Lancaster Museum, *The corporate history of Lancaster*, p.1

Further reading

Brownbill J and Nuttall J (1929) *A calendar of the charters and records belonging to the Corporation of Lancaster*. Lancaster: Beeley.

Docton K and Tyson E (1983) *Lancaster's old town halls* (with some notes on museums in Lancaster). Lancaster: Lancaster Museum (Lancaster Museum Monograph Series).

Farrer W and Brownbill J (1914) 'Townships: Lancaster' in Farrer W and Brownbill J (eds.) *A history of the county of Lancaster: Vol. 8*. London: Constable, pp.33-48 (Victoria history of the counties of England Series). Available at <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/lancs/vo18/pp33-48> (accessed: 7 May 2022).

Lancaster City Council (1909) *An Account of the Town Hall of the borough and county town of Lancaster: a description and design of the building*. Lancaster: E&J Milner.

Lancaster Guardian (1959) *Lancaster Town Hall, 1909–1959, fiftieth anniversary: Lancaster Guardian supplement*. Lancaster: Lancaster Guardian. Lancaster Museum (1974) *The corporate history of Lancaster: a brief encounter to accompany the exhibition The Charters of Lancaster in the City Museum 9th February – 30th March 1974*. Lancaster: Lancaster Museums.

Pape T (1952) *The charters of the city of Lancaster*. Lancaster: Lancaster City Council.

White A (1992) *The old town hall: Its building and its uses*. Lancaster: Lancaster City Museums.

White A (2001) 'Continuity, Charter, Castle and County Town, 400–1500' in White A (ed.) *A history of Lancaster*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.33–72.

3. Lancaster Library Collection c.1300–2001 (DDX 2743)

DDX 2743 is a diverse collection deposited at Lancashire Archives relating to Lancaster and its surrounding areas. The collection was compiled by Lancaster City Library and consists of a wide variety of archival material from the period c.1300 to 2001 and is classed as a synthetic archive. The records were transferred from Lancaster City Library during its refurbishment in 2009 as the storage facilities were considered more suitable at Lancashire Archives. The original order of the collection was kept following its transfer to the record office, with 10,000 items such as letters, legal documents, church records, photographs, charity records, business records, family papers and financial records. The collection has a large amount of photographic material of 1,000 items relating to Lancaster and the surrounding area.

Notable individuals in the collection include Richard Owen, Sarah Whittaker, Martha Sharpe, Laurence Binyon and the Reverend John Lingard. There are also records relating to local businesses, companies and organisations such as the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway, Lancaster Corporation, T D Smiths Ltd., Lancaster Gas Company, Galgate Silk Mill, Lancaster Rowing Club and the architects Sharpe, Paley and Austin.

The collection has been utilized by some members of the LAHS; however, there is scope for further exploration of the collection – as much of the material has yet to be fully researched. Further details relating to this collection can be accessed at this link on the Lancashire Archives' catalogue LANCAT:

<https://archivecat.lancashire.gov.uk/calmview/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=DDX+2743>

Note: This article in RAG 4 supersedes the original article published in the August 2020 RG Newsletter

Further reading

Broome J, Collins L, Gibbs C, Jane H, and Olliver A (1991) *A traditional grocer: T D Smith's of Lancaster, 1858 – 1981*. Edited by M Winstanley. Lancaster: Lancaster University (Centre for North-West Regional Studies, Occasional Paper 21).

Price J (1998) *Sharpe, Paley and Austin: A Lancaster architectural practice 1836–1942*. Lancaster: Lancaster University (Centre for North-West Regional Studies, Occasional Paper 35)

White A (2016) *The Lancaster and Preston Junction Railway 1836-1849*. Scriptorium Publishing

Wigglesworth N (1992) *A history of rowing in Lancaster*. Lancaster: Lancaster City Museums (Local Studies No. 17)

Darren N. Webster, Archivist

RAG 4 Issue 1: October 2023

© Lancaster Archaeological and Historical Society 2023