



A WORKABLE ARCHIVE & INFORMATIVE MUSEUM

Club archivist Amii Errington looks back on what has been achieved during her first 18 months at The Hunt House archive. She explains the aims of the project and how all RREC members can benefit from this document preservation and record keeping to further their own research

THE GUIDING THEME behind the reorganisation of the club archive is that it should work for the benefit of the members. This is a principle we took from The National Archives, the guardian of our most iconic national documents – many dating back more than 1,000 years. Our work started in early 2017 and the aim was to create a modern, searchable catalogue and database detailing all the material held in the archives and to be able to locate such documents, as requested.

The RREC and Sir Henry Royce Memorial Foundation (SHRMF) are the custodians of a staggering quantity of historical information and documents relating to both Rolls-Royce and Bentley. To make the collections more accessible, important reorganisation was needed.



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THE ARCHIVE BY NUMBERS

171,232

Chassis records held at The Hunt House

233,640

Archive drawings scanned to date

118,150

Photographs including prints, negatives and slides currently in the collection

2

Staff running the archive

258

Research visits logged during 2017

703

Boxes of tools in the basement

1980

The year the archive opened (it was previously housed in a member's barn)

489.5

Metres of shelving

1,391

New archive boxes in use

24

Engines on display

1860s

Date of the oldest item

2,171

Books in the library



That's why all the technical information – including chassis cards and build records – is now in the upstairs archive, overseen by Sharron Bland. Downstairs in the Baines Wing, I look after the historical information relating to the company, people and places, alongside the multimedia collections. Photographs that were previously kept in metal cabinets upstairs have been relocated to the Baines Wing in special archival boxes, filed by chassis number. Digital copies of photographs can be purchased, where available, via the archivist for £20 (+VAT) per image (additional costs apply if you wish to buy a hard copy). The multimedia collection was also moved downstairs because the temperature was cooler and more constant.

During this process we discovered a lot of information that was not filed in the most relevant place. Although the initial work is now complete, we are still finding many items that need to be relocated.

BOOKS

A new book scanner allows us to digitise the guarantee books, experimental books and other documents that have suffered damage or become fragile. These scans can be used for research and to preserve the originals that we hope will last for another 100 years. The research library, for use by members, is being catalogued with the books now in a more reader-friendly order. The collection of Autocar magazines

Above left: build histories for 1980s to 1990s cars were previously stored in non-archival folders

Top: many of the bulky drawing cabinets have been relocated to free up research space

Above: chassis tools catalogued by Eric Healey have been boxed and shelved in the basement

has been brought together and is now in date order. Car handbooks are also grouped in cabinets, according to model and year. All other Rolls-Royce and Bentley books have been organised by type and model, and these will be checked against a list of other books on the subject. Where books are missing, we will try to obtain a copy for the library.

The new cataloguing system we have purchased is called Modes. The software was released in 1987 by the Museums Documentation Association and is now the most popular collections software in use by UK museums. Developed by collections professionals, for collections professionals, Modes provides:

- **Record templates** - predefined templates for archaeology, books, documents, fine art, social history, photographs, decorative art, geology and natural history collections, with the option to devise your own
- **Drag-and-drop images and other multimedia** - attach images and other multimedia simply by 'dropping' them into your records
- **Term list checking** - check your terminology against a term list or thesaurus as you enter data
- **Multi-search functions** - simple free text and word search, plus indexed search on selected fields to produce marked sets and subsets
- **Data import** - a conversion tool lets you prepare data from a spreadsheet for import into Modes.

DISPLAYS

There are several engines on show and it has been suggested that we use the basement for those we do not have room to display properly. These could be rotated annually, so visitors who do not make it to the basement still get to see them. Such exhibits could be displayed in the new 'engine museum', alongside Fred Hardy's workshop (restored by RREC member Mike Martin) and all the chassis tools meticulously catalogued by Eric Healey. All engines will be labelled and accompanied by a short history and a photograph to show what they are likely to have been used in.

The many cabinets containing large drawings were identified as a health and safety hazard, plus they make awkward working spaces, and this prompted us to evaluate their location. Since most of the contents have been scanned and are seldom accessed, some have been moved to the basement to free space for shelving, research and easier access to other material.

Some of our recent work includes sorting the first phase of Service Records from Jack Barclay, which arrived at The Hunt House over a period of several years. This involved unpacking many boxes and filing the records of all cars from 1965 to the early 1980s (chassis numbers 1001 to 50,000) in chassis order. These records are for the Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow I and II, Silver Wraith II, Corniche, Camargue, Phantom VI and Bentley T1 and T2.

If you have one of these cars and would like details of the service history please contact records manager Sharron Bland. These files range widely from individual sheets to several large folders, so the price varies accordingly and is available on enquiry. We are working on the next stage which includes the SZ-based cars such as the Rolls-Royce Silver Spirit I-III, Silver Spur I-III, Silver Dawn, Corniche II-IV, Bentley Mulsanne, Eight, Turbo R, Continental R, Brooklands and Azure.

Between November 2016 and March 2018 we have made many changes to create a workable archive and an informative museum space. These have included moving material into two separately defined areas, updating exhibits by providing a modern, more professional take on the old displays, organising the library into a logical and searchable order, and moving the old drawing cabinets into the basement to provide a safer, less cluttered working archive space.

With the aim to preserve material, as well as storing it, comes a cost to provide a suitable environment for the collection. In the long term, preventative measures, such as correct enclosures and environment, will considerably extend the life of the collections, and be much more cost-effective than intervention to remedy damage after deterioration has taken place.

HOW TO VISIT THE ARCHIVE

All RREC members are free to make an appointment to visit the archive for personal research. To book an appointment please contact records manager Sharron Bland at records@rrec.org.uk or **+44 (0) 1327 810786** allowing at least 48 hours notice. Guided tours are also available for small groups or individuals on the same basis. To book a tour please contact archivist Amii Errington at archives@rrec.org.uk or **+44 (0) 1327 810789**.

The Hunt House is open Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm. If you are unable to visit during the week, please check the diary (pages 14 to 15) as we often offer tours during events at The Hunt House.

Far left: the archive serves the dual roles of research and preservation

Below left: fragile documents have been scanned to reduce further damage

Below: displays are being updated and pictures reframed for a more modern look

