

A guide to getting the best out of Bedfordshire Archives online catalogue.

[\\bedsarchivescat.bedford.gov.uk](http://bedsarchivescat.bedford.gov.uk)

Working with this website

Via this website you can search our archive or library catalogue.

On the *Search* tab you can search for data in different ways, by entering words or parts of words, or by choosing from lists of existing keywords such as persons or subjects.

In the results you'll see a brief display of each found record. Click the text of a record to retrieve more data and display it on the *Details* tab.

On the *Results* and *Details* tabs you can mark records by clicking the checkboxes to the left of them. Records that you mark are included in your *Selection*, which can be viewed on the tab with that name.

On the *Search* history tab, you'll see your previous search commands, and you can execute any listed search again and possibly refine it.

Click on the *Search* tab to open search options.

Advanced search

Advanced search is the default search. (To search by date or multiple subject terms, go to Expert search by clicking the button to the left. Don't be put off by the name it is easy really).

The important thing to remember is that we index/tag/keyword our catalogue in the same way as a reference book (remember those?)

1. Click the *Search in* drop-down list to open it. Here, choose either the archive (default) or library database to search in. The library database refers to the reference items in our public searchroom, the archive database refers to the archival collections we hold in our strongrooms.

You cannot search in more than one database at a time. However, in some cases you will find that we have cross-referenced between the two databases when we think that might be useful.

2. The search fields visible depend on the database you chose in step 1. Type the word or name on which you want to search, in the relevant entry field. As long as at least one value is filled in, you can start the search.

Beside some entry fields you'll find a binoculars icon. With this button you can look up all words that occur in the relevant field in the database. This is handy if you are not sure about the index terms used by the archive service. Your search will always yield results if you use the search terms you know we have used. The best way to start is to type in the keyword you think we may have used then click on the binoculars – this shows you whether that word has been used by us and also may suggest refinements, for example the subject Bedfordshire Regiment can be refined to a particular battalion e.g. Bedfordshire Regiment, 1st battalion. Use the ? beside each field to see specific examples.

In fields that have no binoculars button, you can enter multiple words, separated by spaces (then all words must occur in a result).

3. With the *Sort by* and *Sort order* options you can choose if you would like the search result to be sorted at all (ascending or descending), and if so, on which field. This is especially handy if your search generates a lot of results. Just mark the relevant *Sort by/Sort order* button by clicking it.

4. We suggest you always start by asking for 50 results per page.

5. Click the *Search* button to start the search.

Use the *Clear* button to erase all entry fields, for a new search.

Expert search

If you want to search by date range or multiple subject terms at one go then *Expert* search is the appropriate search method for you. Don't be put off by the name it is easy really, but it had to be called something.

With the left mouse button, click the *Expert search* button in the column on the left, to be able to search on multiple words and combine the search statements through Boolean operators, on the *Search* tab.

1. Click the *Search in* drop-down list to open it. Here, choose the database to search in. You cannot search in more than one database at a time.

2. In the drop-down list on the following line you must choose a field in which you want to search. Which fields are available, depends on the database you chose in step 1.

Depending on the field type, you can sometimes choose another operator than "=" in the drop-down list directly to the right of it. In that case (e.g. for the *Year* field), a drop-down list is available in which you can also choose "Between", ">" (greater than), "<" (smaller than), "<=" (smaller than or equal to) and ">=" (greater than or equal to).

3. In the field next to the operator, type the word, number or name on which you want to search. You may provide just a partial word, in such a case you search truncated, as we call it; then mark the *Truncation* checkbox. If the term you enter is already a whole word, e.g. "table", and you don't want the search to extend to words like "tablespoon", then you must deselect this option.

3. To extend this search statement, click the + sign behind the search line. Now you can enter a second search statement. You have to combine the two search statements with a Boolean operator. For this purpose, at the end of this line a drop-down list is present. From this list, choose either "and", "or", or "and not". With "and" a result must comply to both search lines, with "or" a result must comply to at least one of both search lines, and with "and not" a result must comply to the first search line but not to the second. The search statements are executed from top to bottom. This is important when you combine search statements. The result of the first two lines will be combined with the third line, and the result thereof in turn will be combined with the fourth line, etc. So, place the combined search statement that has to be executed first, at the top.

As long as at least one value is filled in, you can start the search.

4. With the *Sort by* and *Sort order* options you can choose if you would like the search result to be sorted at all (ascending or descending), and if so, on which field. This is especially handy if your search generates a lot of results. Just mark the relevant *Sort by/Sort order* button by clicking it.

5. We recommend that you always select 50 *Records per page*

6. Click the *Search* button to start the search.

Use the *Clear* button to erase all entry fields here, for a new search.

Person/institution

Bedfordshire Archives assigns person or institution keywords to archival records when we know the archive contains information relevant to that name.

Person keywords are arranged as they would be in a printed index i.e. surname, first name e.g.

Bloggs, Joe

Where no surname exists, e.g. for monarchs and many medieval persons, search by forename.

Examples:

Bright


Bright, C

Bright, Charles


Richard atte Wode

George V

Bright would search for all names beginning Bright regardless of first name, Bright, C would search for those with just an initial or a first name beginning with C, Bright, Charles would search for those with the first name Charles.

Click the  button to choose from a list of available names. (If you would like to see all keywords starting with the letter "m", for instance, then first type this letter in the current entry field.)

Some persons are also considered subjects depending on their role within the material being catalogued. For example architects and photographers are indexed under subject term when the item is about them in their professional capacity rather than about them as a person. If in doubt

try a search in each or use the  to check whether the name has been used in one, both or neither.


Clicking on a name in the list will add it to the field so that you may begin your search.

When searching by institutional name we advise you to also try a search for this term under subject term.

Subject Term

Use this field to search for records we have indexed by place or subject.

Our subject indexes are hierarchical and quite complicated. For best results think of a specific term

to type in e.g. 'lace' and then click on the  to see whether we have used it.

Broad terms such as CRIME & PUNISHMENT are unlikely to yield lots of results as most documents will be indexed under more specific terms such as the crime e.g. murder.

Some words may not mean what you would expect. For example, transportation is used to index the punishment of sending convicts overseas. If you wish to search for forms of transport use Transport or be more specific such as buses, trams, railways.

Some search terms that appear in the list are equivalent terms e.g. photograph and photographs; you will get the same results whichever you use.

Farms and public houses are indexed in a particular way i.e. the name of the farm or public house, then the parish e.g. Church Farm, Astwick and Black Lion, Stotfold.

If you need to search for photographs of a particular subject use the *Expert Search* so that you can combine searches for both subjects.

Please note that we use '&' rather than 'and' e.g. Heath & Reach, Pig & Whistle, Stotfold,

When looking up the terms we have used those in capital letters denote Bedfordshire parishes or header terms.

Archive creator

We generally only use this at collection (fonds) level, and not always then. Therefore it is only useful for finding the reference to the collection of a particular individual or organisation, such as a parish church or a parish council and not documents created by them in other collections. Enter the name of the creator of a collection.


Examples:

Stotfold Town Council

Underwood, Andrew

W. H. Allen Sons & Company Limited.
Arlesey Parish Church



To browse the list of the available creator names click the . The list will start from the point indicated in the value box: if you would like to see all creators starting with the letter P, for instance, then type this letter as the search value before browsing.

Word(s) from the title/content

Enter one or more words from the title or contents that you are searching for.

The sequence of words doesn't matter; the software will search for all of the words. Type a space between the separate words.

Please note that this is only a good way of searching for unusual words that we may have used in the description. If you use it for common words you will get too many irrelevant results and may miss some important results just because we have not used that particular word.

Reference

Enter the unique reference number (or just the first few characters of that number) of the unit of description you are looking for.

Examples:

AU

X939

Z41

Z1306/75/10

Note that many of our references may start the same way and you may therefore get more than one collection returned in the results. E.g. If you ask for reference = W you will get returns for approximately twenty different collections. To narrow this use expert search to combine search terms or try to narrow your search to a particular part of a collection e.g. L30 rather than just L

Level

Archive descriptions are arranged hierarchically, reflecting the structure and arrangement of each collection. At the top level is the description for the whole collection, which in archive jargon is called the fonds. Item level descriptions will relate to actual documents e.g. a particular minute book, the other levels are generally headings for groups of related or similar documents e.g. minute books.

This can be useful if you need to restrict your search to a particular part of a catalogue.

Note that the number of levels used varies depending on the size and complexity of the collection. Some collections are currently described at fonds level only. Select your choice from the drop-down box. Possible search values are:

Fonds

- Sub-Fonds

-- Series

----- File

----- Item

Sort by/Sort order

You can select the order in which the search result will be presented.

The default sort order is alphabetical by reference. Select a different sort order by clicking one of the radio buttons. Sorting takes some extra response time.

Select the maximum number of records shown per search result page. We recommend setting it to 50 but be warned it has a habit of defaulting to 10.

Results

After performing a search on the *Search* tab, a list of records that match the search will show on the *Results* tab.

This list shows data from only the reference, title and date fields. Click a record to display more *Details* of that record.

If there is only one result matching your search you will be taken straight to the details screen for that record.

There are two different display views. Hierarchical display shows each result in the context of the catalogue it belongs to. List display just shows the record that matches your search. You can switch between views using the buttons to the left. We recommend you start with list view.

Browsing through the list

If there are more resulting records than fit on one page, you can browse to other result pages by clicking the arrows at the top or bottom of the list.

Refine

With the *Refine* option you return to the *Search* tab containing your current search command, so that you can adjust it.

Search in results

If your search yielded too many results, and you want to search within the current search results, click the *Search in results* button. This opens the *Search* tab again, with the *Search in results* option already marked. Enter a search.

Selecting records

In front of every record in the list, there is a checkbox. Click it to mark the record, and it will be included in your personal selection. That selection of data can be used later on (from the *Selection* tab).

You can select all records at once by clicking the *Select all* button in the column to the left.

You deselect a record by clicking a marked checkbox again. Click the *Clear selection* button in the column to the left, to deselect all marked records.

Click the *Invert selection* button to select all non-marked records, and to deselect all marked records at the same time.

Note the maximum number of records that may be selected is 100.

e-mailing, Printing, downloading the currently displayed list page

The currently displayed list page can be e-mailed, printed, downloaded as an HTML page: click one of the options *Send by e-mail*, *Print* or *Download* in the column on the left, to do so. The way this works will depend on the computer you are using. The download to html is not recommended.

Details

Clicking on a record in the *Results* tab, will display the full description of the record on the *Details* tab. If there is only one result from a search this will immediately display on the *Details* tab.

- For *Archives* the details page will display all the public information about the record. This will vary from record to record. At the bottom of the display the hierarchy browser shows the chosen record in the context of the hierarchy above it in the catalogue. Clicking on the plus sign beside one of these descriptions will show other records that come immediately below it in the catalogue. Clicking on a record title further up the hierarchy will take you to the detail of that record. This is useful in understanding how a catalogue has been constructed and the context of the record found by your original search.
- In the *Library catalogue* you can choose between a *Detail display* and *Catalogue card*.

Browsing the records

In *Details* you will only see one record at a time. You can browse to the detailed display of other records from the search result by clicking the two inner arrows at the top of the record; with the outer arrows you'll browse to the first or last record in the result.

Selecting records

Above the record, there is a checkbox. Click it to mark the record, and it will be included in your personal selection. That selection of data can be used later on (from the *Selection* tab) to print out. You deselect a record by clicking a marked checkbox again.

E-mail or Print the record

The currently displayed record can be e-mailed or printed: click the *Print* button in the column to the left, to do so. Exactly how this works will depend on the computer you are using.

Selection

When you have marked records on the *Results* or *Details* tab, then those records are now part of your personal selection while you remain within the catalogue. On the *Selection* tab, all your marked records are listed.

Show detail

Click the *Show detail* button to display more data from each selected record. The extended list display can also be printed. Click *Hide detail* to return to the default display.

You can do several things with your selection:

- **Send via e-mail** – Click this button in the column on the left, to send the data of these records in a single e-mail. A pop-up window will appear in which you'll have to enter the name of the addressee, his or her e-mail address and the subject of the e-mail. Finally, click the *Submit* button in this window.
- **Print** – Click this button to print the data of the selected records. First a new internet browser window or tab will open, with the data to be printed. After a few seconds automatically the default Windows print window opens, from where you can start the actual printing.
- **Download** – Click this button to download an HTML file containing the data of the selected records.

Changing the selection

If you no longer need this selection of records, you can deselect all of them at once by clicking the *Clear selection* button.

You can also deselect records one at a time, by clicking the marked checkbox to the left of the relevant record.

Write profile

This option is not available to our users at present.