

Modern technology opens up the past to us all

Have you ever wondered what Bridge Street looked like in the 1850s? Or how Stratfordians celebrated the Mop in the early 1900s?

Now is your chance to find out, as hundreds of the early photographs held by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office have just gone online. Our online catalogue – available via <http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/content/view/313/313/> - now includes entries for some of our larger photograph collections. Scans of the photographs have been attached to these entries so that users of the catalogue can view the photographic history of Stratford from the comfort of their own homes! Over 950 photographs dating from the 1860s to the 1950s have been scanned and attached to the catalogue so far, and this number is continually increasing.

The Records Office's extensive collections of photographs and postcards provide a valuable insight into how Stratford's streets, buildings and landmarks have changed from the 1860s to the present day. The majority show sites in Stratford itself, but there are also images of surrounding areas, including Clifford Chambers, Welford-upon-Avon and Charlecote Park. Also included are some fascinating images of events in Stratford, including Shakespeare's Birthday Celebrations (1907-1914), celebrations for George V's coronation (1911), and the unveiling of the War Memorial (1922).



The march of progress one of the images now accessible online from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Records Office—a procession in Stratford for George V's coronation, 1911

Putting these photographs online ensures that the maximum number of people can access these valuable resources. The Records Office often receives emails from enquirers as far afield as America and Australia who are researching their Stratford-based ancestors, and who are of course unable to come into the office to browse through the photographs. Enquirers all over the world will now be able to view our collections to see how Stratford – and Stratfordians – looked a hundred years ago.

In this digital age, we are also increasingly receiving orders for digital copies of photographs in our collections. The scans attached to the catalogue are low-resolution jpegs, which are not suitable for commercial or publishing purposes. However, as each image is scanned, it is also saved as a high-resolution jpeg. By scanning all these photographs now and saving the scans in a systematic way, we can easily provide high-quality copies for enquirers without having to submit the originals to unnecessary re-scanning.

If you are interested in viewing these photographs but are not technically minded, never fear! The online catalogue is easy to use. Just put the link given above into your internet browser, then click on the link for **Catalogue of Archives**. Click on **All Other** at the left hand side of the new page. You can then search for a topic, for example by putting **Bancroft photograph** or **Bancroft postcard** in the **Keyword** box (be sure to click in the little circle next to **And** at the bottom of the page before clicking on **Search**). The catalogue will bring up a list of items, and you can click on the word **View** next to each item in order to display the photographs. If you are still baffled, do come in to the Records Office and we will be happy to give you a demonstration.

Jo Wong

Living Archives from the *Stratford-upon-Avon Herald*

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