

Dear Councillors:

Belatedly, I write to express in the strongest possible terms, our anger, shock and disgust, and to record on behalf of both Save Our Record Office and Lowestoft And District independent Archives, our formal total collective opposition to, the planned removal of the remaining archive material and local studies library from the "Lowestoft Archives" facility at Lowestoft Library.

As some Councillors will be aware, the SORO campaign group fought a four year battle against SCC to retain our local archives, including a 7,300 name petition, formal opposition from three Suffolk Town Councils, and vociferous criticism from MP Peter Aldous. SCC ignored all and removed the entire strong room content (20 lorry loads) to "The Hole" in Ipswich in april 2021.

We now know that the Lowestoft closure had been in the planning since 2013, and that the costing for the move was already in the SCC bid to the then Heritage Lottery Fund bid for £10.3m to progress "The Hole" in 2017.

The attached FOI request reply clearly indicates SCC intend to remove the remaining material as part of their cost-cutting hatchet job. Like bury Record Office, also closing, I suspect the decision has already been taken and will be confirmed by SCC next month.

On behalf of the above two organisations, which I have the honour to Chair, and in the name of everyone who has an interest in retaining local heritage archives and books in the area where they have most relevance, may I respectfully request that LTC registers its displeasure and opposition to SCC's latest heritage asset-stripping plans?

Thank you.

Freedom of Information – Response – 23866

RE: Local studies collections at Suffolk Archives Lowestoft and Bury St Edmunds Record Offices

In relation to the proposed closure of Bury St Edmunds Record Office and Lowestoft Record office branches.

*Please can SCC/ Suffolk Archives outline whether they will be selling off the local studies collections at Bury St Edmunds Record Office and Lowestoft Record Office OR will they be
a) decanted IN FULL to the John Blatchley Library at Suffolk Archives The Hold or
b) decanted to the University of Suffolk Library in Ipswich, which was previously mooted for the Lowestoft Record Office local study collections in around 2018.*

These budget proposals will be subject to consideration by Scrutiny and ratification by Full Council on 15th February before they can be taken forward. If agreed, it is anticipated that a delivery plan will be drawn up for the closure of the Bury and Lowestoft branches and the relocation of the West Suffolk Archive to The Hold by the end of 2024. Local Studies collections will be considered as part of the delivery plan.

If there is no way to lobby for the status quo (because of salary costs) I would request that consideration be given for LRO to continue as is but staffed by volunteers
I know at least a dozen locals who would be willing to give that commitment. And so wonder how much would be saved if it was to be completely closed?? Very little I would think.

Please see below. At a time when Lowestoft is gaining a reputation Nationally for its innovation and community inclusion in heritage and archive matters, it seems odd that to save a few £1ks the closure of LRO is being considered (particularly as it is used by schools and locals).

YOUR PROJECTS

REMEMBERING LOWESTOFT'S FALLEN

Rosemary Collins finds out how a town in Suffolk created a virtual war memorial

More than one million Britons died fighting in the First and Second World Wars. So it's no wonder that many of us have people in our family tree who fell in the two conflicts, and most of our towns and villages have a memorial commemorating the casualties from the local area. But how much do we know about the names on those memorials?

In Lowestoft, Suffolk, local historian Joe Thompson came up with the idea for a virtual war memorial after being inspired by a similar project in the nearby town of Felixstowe. Joe had previously created the heritage website *Lowestoft Old and Now* (lowestoftoldandnow.org).

"With my background in IT and design I thought, 'Let's see,'" he says. "The first thing I needed to do was to get good data." So he contacted the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, which keeps

an online record of the 1.7 million individuals commemorated on Commonwealth war memorials (cwg.org/find-records/find-war-dead). He says that the CWGC staff were "supremely helpful" and sent him all of the records they had containing the word 'Lowestoft'. Although this created some false positives, it was a good starting point.

Joe then teamed up with Rev Damon Rogers, the vicar of St Andrew's Church on Roman Road. Using other records from the First World War, the pair identified more men who weren't commemorated on the war memorials – for instance, some who grew up in the local workhouse.

With funding from Lowestoft Town Council, Joe launched the website *Our Fallen* featuring a searchable database of 2,025 men and women from the town who were killed in the world wars: ourfallen.lowestoftoldandnow.org/excel22. The next step, Joe says, was turning to social media. He put out an appeal and got in contact with people whose family members were in the database, and they supplied stories and photographs of their relations.

"Although 20 years ago more old pictures would have still been available in family archives, there

Joe's site includes this photo of Flying Officer John Keith Turner, which was supplied by one of his relations



wasn't any social media then, so we wouldn't have been able to find them," he says. "Less material is available now, but the fact you can actually reach the people who own it has really brought it to life."

For example, the entry for John Keith Turner, known by his middle name, says that he was the son of John Pater Turner and Hilda Beatrice Turner. He was a flying officer with No. 69 Squadron who died

on 23 January 1945 at the age of 23. His nephew Mike Sims supplied a picture of Keith and a description

of how he died, when his Wellington was shot down during a reconnaissance mission in the Netherlands.

Joe adds that he can offer his website's template to other groups interested in creating a virtual war memorial in their community: "We want to be able to help other groups do this type of thing if we can. We have benefited so much from other people being kind enough to share their expertise, time or memories that we'd like to give back as well." 🌟

We want to be able to help other groups do this type of thing if we can

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email rosemary.collins@ourmedia.co.uk

GET INVOLVED

OUR FALLEN
t 07590 531926
e ourfallen@lowestoftoldandnow.org
w ourfallen.lowestoftoldandnow.org/excel22

If you have any information about someone on the site, get in touch by email or phone. You can also send an email by clicking the text reading 'email re [NAME]' in the column headed 'Photos?' on the database.

Thank you so much for speaking with me just now, and for your generosity in sharing your work. As mentioned on the call, I think it is excellent in many ways, that you have captured history so well, really bringing it to life for the community in such a rich way both written, and visually. I am sure many people will enjoy and learn from the work you've done so far. Your technical solutions, and the ways in which you have used the history, in for example, using metadata to create links between people, place and history, are insightful and illustrate the potential of what we as a sector could do with our own records/ catalogues and modern media and I was so pleased to hear that you had considered the future and sustainability through, for example, ensuring the website's continued access using the Wayback Machine (Internet archive) this sadly often a neglected area that means projects, and grants legacies are limited. My genuine congratulations to you and Lowestoft council for some excellent projects!

As we discussed there are many options and resources for you to explore, some may be more appropriate than others and I'd be very happy to speak to, or connect you with anything that leaps out as of interest.

You may wish to explore partnership with local archives or history centres.

You may also wish to speak to/ explore more thematic archives or groups such as the Army Museums Ogilby Trust a network of 140 military history organisations, who also offer grants and support: <https://www.armymuseums.org.uk/>

There are various resources and guidance that we offer through The National Archives, we have a Sector Leadership team who include a regional and network team, with archivists based throughout the country offering support and guidance to archives and archive collections <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/our-archives-sector-role/contact-the-team/>

think your local contact would be Hannah Jones. They offer numerous other resources through our website: [Archives sector - Archives sector \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/) of which granting is one function (which I look after)

We also work and provide support for digital project and digital archiving, <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/our-digital-century/> this support includes a “from novice to know how” free training course: <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/projects-and-programmes/plugged-in-powered-up/novice-to-know-how/> although it seems to me you are already well advanced.

We run, and have an education team <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/> they have various resources linked to the early 20th Century, as well as specific key stage focused guidance which may be of interest as you explore offering your resources and support to schools and children.

Finally, at the National Archives we offer 7 grants, from our discussion I would probably explore the engagement grants and research and innovation grants first but I’d be very happy to speak about any of them:

[Grants and Funding - Archives sector \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/grants-and-funding/) I do believe your project and work could also be of interest to other funders, and aligns well with The National Lottery Heritage Fund’s recently published 10 year strategy and 4 priority areas: [The National Lottery Heritage Fund: Home](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/grants-and-funding/) my geography isn’t great but I think you’d come under the Midlands and East area and their contact details are: [Midlands and East | The National Lottery Heritage Fund](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/grants-and-funding/)

One archive you may wish to contact to discuss your ideas around the augmented reality (using your phone to view history) would be Bristol Archives, who have done some work on this, [Bristol Archives | Bristol Museums](https://www.bristolarchives.com/) one example being their work with Bristol Old Vic Theatre [Window to the Past | Bristol Old Vic](https://www.bristolarchives.com/)

I am sure that is plenty to get on with! But do let me know if anything is of interest or if you’d like another chat at any time.

Dear Town Councillors,

I am sending this email to express my dismay at Suffolk CC and its Record Office staff proposing to remove the remaining Lowestoft Town Records to Ipswich - a measure which just seems to be adding insult to injury!

I have myself deposited research material there, by gift, which I do not wish to see taken to The Hold - where it will probably have far less use and significance than it would by remaining in the place which led to its existence.

I also object strongly to the intended removal of the book stock constituting the Local Studies Section of local history resources. Suffolk Archives has no legitimate claim on this, as the core collection existed long before the Lowestoft branch of the Suffolk Record Office opened during the early 1980s. I, myself, used it extensively during the early-mid 1970s in the old Library premises located on Suffolk Road and continued to access it thereafter when it was transferred to the new premises in Clapham Road.

This collection must stay in town, become part of the Town Library’s overall Reference Collection, and be made available to people for study and general interest. It must not be allowed to travel south to Ipswich!

There is much more that I could say in this matter - but, I am not sure that it would add anything. My final comment is that if Lowestoft had not had a regional branch of the Suffolk Record Office for as long as it did (housing valuable primary source material), I would never have been able to write and publish “Lowestoft 1550-1750” (2008) and “Medieval Lowestoft” (2016) - both of which volumes

have reached nearly 500 university and institutional libraries world-wide, as well local readership in the home-area.

I wish to express my concern and opposition to Suffolk County Council's recent announcement of its proposal to remove the remaining Lowestoft Town Records to Ipswich and to close the old Lowestoft Record Office permanently.

My reason for this are many and varied. Located in that office are MANY historical works etc., which once formed part of Lowestoft Library's Local Studies Section that existed prior to being absorbed into the Lowestoft Record Office over 40 years ago. It is important that these and other material in the Lowestoft Record Office should remain in the Town as they form a very important asset for present and future researchers into both local history and family history.

I worked as a Searchroom Assistant and Assistant Archivist in the Lowestoft Record Office for over sixteen years until my retirement in 2019. During that time I have seen just how valuable the contents of the Searchroom were, and still are, very important and useful even though the main archives have been moved to Ipswich. This searchroom and its contents, much of which were once part of the old Local Studies Library, still remain a very valuable resource in Lowestoft.

Among the valuable material still in the Lowestoft Record Office is the archive of the Port of Lowestoft Research Society which is still owned by that Society. This large collection of historical material is extremely important to Lowestoft's maritime history. If the Record Office closes this would have to be safely relocated elsewhere in Lowestoft

As an historian I have spent many years promoting the history of our town among the children in our primary schools. The Searchroom was, and still is, often visited by groups of students of all ages. The closer of this office would be an educational loss that cannot be replaced locally.

I could write much more concerning how important this Local Studies collection has been in my research over many decades. However, suffice to say that not only would the closure of the office be a personal loss to me but, more importantly, an irreplaceable loss to our town.