

Job Description

Job Title:	Project Cataloguer
Location:	Abbotsford, Melrose
Reporting to:	Collections and Interpretation Manager
Staff reporting:	N/A
Status:	Fixed term until March 2020 , Part Time at 21hrs (3 days) per week
Salary:	Grade 5, £21,167 per annum pro rata

Context

Abbotsford was designed and built by Sir Walter Scott as both his home and the location for his extensive collection of books and historical memorabilia, and was first opened to the public in 1833, five months after his death. After the death of his last descendent in residence, Dame Jean Maxwell-Scott, in 2004, The Abbotsford Trust was created to preserve, protect and promote not only the house, but also the life and works of Sir Walter. Abbotsford is considered to be one of the most important heritage sites in Scotland.

Following the museum cataloguing of the object collection in recent years, the Abbotsford Trust is now seeking a qualified Project Archivist to formally catalogue the Scott Family Archive to professionally recognised standards following the receipt of a successful fundraising grant. The Abbotsford archive is wonderfully eclectic, but broadly consists of:

- family correspondence from the 19th century through to the death of Jean Maxwell-Scott
- Photographs, both professional and amateur
- Typescripts of speeches and public addresses
- Family diaries and notebooks
- Manuscripts post-dating Sir Walter Scott's Abbotsford Library
- Original sketches
- Engravings from publications
- Offprints, many annotated
- Invoices, accounts and receipts
- Newspapers and cuttings
- Print ephemera, including historic advertising material and propaganda
- Some portable objects, predominantly linked with archival material

The Abbotsford Trust's new ten-year strategy sets out our aim to increase access to our diverse collections, and to tell more fascinating stories about the history of the house, gardens and estate, and the people who lived and worked here over time. A great deal of the family archive dates from the eras of the Hope-Scott and Maxwell-Scott descendants of Sir Walter Scott, and this contains significant and untapped potential for future research projects and curatorial activity.

Job Purpose

- To catalogue the archival collection using Abbotsford's new collections management system, Adlib XPlus, building upon the previous work of the current Collections staff and the Volunteer Archive group working under their jurisdiction
- During this process, to condition assessment the archive, documenting the prioritization level of future conservation work
- The postholder will also work alongside the Collections Manager to propose a new storage plan for the archive and Library collection, as part of the Trust's ten-year strategic plan.

Scope and Accountability

The Project Cataloguer reports directly to the Collections and Interpretation Manager. They are responsible for the following:

- Supervision of volunteer working groups as directed
- Adhering to health and safety regulations in all areas of their work
- Modest budgetary allocation for resources and conservation of priority items

The Collections team consists of the Collections and Interpretation Manager and one part-time Collections and Engagement Assistant. The department is responsible for the protection and care of the collections and the operation of the house as a five-star visitor attraction, alongside curating exhibitions programmes and conducting/facilitating research projects.

Key Responsibilities

Archival Cataloguing

- Sorting, Arranging and Cataloguing of the Abbotsford Trust's mixed media archive to appropriate standards in compliance with ISAD(G)
- Creating appropriate authority records for significant individuals, families, places and organisations found in the material being catalogued, i.e. NCA Rules and ISAAR(CPF)
- Condition assessing material and documenting findings accordingly
- Identifying areas of the collection where Data Protection legislation applies and putting appropriate control measures in place

Volunteer and Visitor Supervision

- Leading on facilitating and administering the Volunteer Archive group sessions, currently meeting fortnightly
- Supervising any non-academic requests to access archival material over the course of the project.
- Assist the Collections team with external research enquiries where necessary

Rationalising Storage and Relocating Material

- Regularly decanting boxed material from the attic spaces to the first-floor working space, ready for processing

- Recommending/implementing storage improvements to aid the preservation of material, rationalising the current layout and storage of the Archive and working with the Collections Manager on more ambitious future storage plans

Operational Support, Health & Safety

- Provide operational cover and support to the Collections team if required
- With appropriate training, play an active role in Abbotsford's Emergency and Salvage Plan in the event of a major incident.
- Lead on Health & Safety issues with regards to the Archive
- Undertake any other duties as directed and commensurate with the post

Communications and Relationships

- Develop and maintain collaborative and constructive working relationships with Abbotsford staff, volunteers, Trustees and representatives from the Faculty of Advocates

Person Specification

Knowledge and Experience

Essential

- Experience of cataloguing to nationally recognised standards e.g. ISAD (G), NCA
- A professional archive qualification or equivalent experience in a relevant capacity
- Up to date knowledge and experience of archival best practice
- Understanding of preservation needs and the ability to condition assess archival material
- Understanding of copyright law, data protection and access restrictions

Desirable

- Experience of working with mixed media collections, preferably in a family or historic house context

Skills and Abilities

Essential

- Excellent IT Skills, including full standard Microsoft Office packages
- Experience of working with an online cataloguing system from a back-office perspective
- Confidence in working independently and ability to organise and prioritise own time
- Flexible approach to work and willingness to multi-task within a small organisation
- Excellent problem-solving and analytical skills
- A good level of physical fitness to deal with the practical demands of the role, including negotiating spiral stairways, moving boxes between floors and working at height

Desirable

- Previous experience writing blog or newsletter content

Communication

Essential

- Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to deal with a wide range of people and stakeholders

Desirable

- Good written communications skills that demonstrate attention to detail, and clear and concise report writing
- Experience of working with volunteers /other community engagement programmes utilising collections material

Personal Qualities

- Strong interest in and commitment to The Abbotsford Trust's mission, vision and values
- Commitment to Equality and Diversity policy and practice
- Ability to work occasional weekends, bank holidays and evenings as required
- Ideally live within a reasonable radius of Abbotsford to provide emergency response