



Susannah Rayner

Administrative Archivist, Archives department

I have been working as the Administrative Archivist for the Archives department for the last 4 years. Along with my colleague William Johnstone, we are responsible for the day-to-day management of the reading room, cataloguing the collections, and answering enquiries. In this we are aided by new recruit, Colin the Archives Dog, (seen pictured here with William and myself).

It's a varied job and the highlights include cataloguing new or undiscovered collections and coming across original documents that will help researchers throw a whole new light on history, or helping a family historian with a piece of detective work on long lost Catholic ancestors.

The archives collection dates from the 15th century onwards, and includes the personal papers of the Archbishops of Westminster going back to Cardinal Wiseman. The archives chronicle some of the most dramatic events in Catholic history in this country, including letters written by the Young Pretender, Bonnie Prince Charlie, and harrowing eye-witness accounts of Catholic persecution and martyrdom between the 16th and 18th centuries. The archives document how the Archbishops of Westminster have been involved in some of the most pressing national issues of the day, from Cardinal Manning's pivotal role as mediator in the 1889 Dock Strike, to Cardinal Hinsley's Sword of the Spirit movement, initiated during WWII, to campaign against the evils of totalitarianism. There are also a vast number of archives, currently waiting to be catalogued, which record the historic visit of Pope John Paul II to the UK in 1982.

Westminster Diocesan Archives provides one of the richest sources for Catholic history in this country. It is open to both members of the Diocese and the general public alike, who can consult the collections in the reading room based next to Our Lady of Victories in Kensington High Street. Researchers come from a range of backgrounds and from across the world, whether they are family historians, students or senior academics. The archives have an audience far wider than the Catholic community itself, and serve as a kind of portal for people who may not have had much, if any, contact with the Catholic faith. A recent example was when Labour peer Roy Hattersley used the

Diocesan archives to research his book *The Catholics*, published in 2017, which has helped to introduce the story of English Catholicism to many outside the faith.

The Diocesan Archives is currently working with *FindMyPast* in digitising the historic sacramental registers to make them more widely available to genealogists online, as well as other biographical sources such as the Catholic census of 1893, which not only lists individual Catholics living in particular parishes, but provides delightfully frank comments by individual priests about their parishioners. There is a wealth of material still to be uncovered by the archivists in the Diocesan collections, and to be exploited by new generations of researchers.

‘Christianity is a faith based on a historical event - the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - and so it is most appropriate that the Church has always treasured and promoted its history and archives...An archive, seen with the eyes of faith, is a record of the work of God in time and the achievements of so many men and women down the ages.’

(Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Message to Religious Archives Group, 8th December 2015)



JJ Hussem

Formation Coordinator at SPEC, Westminster Youth Ministry

To be employed in youth ministry within the diocese of Westminster, which includes much of bustling London, has been an opportunity and a huge blessing. We find ourselves in the heart of the new evangelisation in the biggest European city with the challenge and potential of advancing the Kingdom through the activities, events, interactions, formation and retreats that we do – underpinned by prayer. I am excited by the opportunities presented to me to take on more responsibility professionally within the mission here as we transition into residential retreats. Additionally, I am grateful for the freedom given as a team to grapple with the Holy Spirit to see

where it is He longs to lead SPEC as a retreat centre for our Westminster young people and formation house for our missionaries.

“Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them become what they are capable of becoming” - Goethe



Rebekah Curran

Team Leader, Westminster Youth Ministry

I've been working for the diocese, in one way or another, for the last five and a half years (Sept 2011). Initially as a Volunteer Missionary at the diocesan retreat centre, SPEC, and then in the last four years (April 2013) as part of the Youth Ministry Team based in Somers Town.

I have loved being a part of this diocese. Personally, in the ways that my faith has been stretched and nourished, but also professionally through the continually opportunities that come up to take a role of leadership; to encourage or walk alongside and learn from others who are in many ways pioneering new approaches to ministry and evangelisation in this country.

My current job role is that of Team Leader for the Somers Town Youth Ministry Team. In this role, I help to co-ordinate the efforts that go towards supporting our parishes in their youth ministry, as well as taking a lead in organising and ensuring the smooth running of the numerous events and pilgrimages that happen within our diocese. I have been given much support and encouragement, both in the months and years that have led to this opportunity becoming available, but also in an ongoing capacity. There are many people who I can turn to, for support, guidance, responses to queries, and so on, which is really what gives me the confidence to step into this role.

There are many ways in which this job can grow, and that I can grow with it. It is quite an innovate area of ministry; we are always looking for something new, and new ways to re-engage with the young people of our diocese – the work is always varied. In many ways, it is a privilege to have the job that I have. I am also given the freedom to learn new skills at a variety of different training programmes.

It has been a really life changing experience for me. From starting as a fresh faced university graduate, the last five years have been an incredible opportunity to work with some wonderful people, doing some really incredible work. It was nothing like I imaged, but has been a truly transformative experience.



Adrian Cullen

Evangelisation Coordinator, Agency for Evangelisation

Although I was familiar with the Diocese of Westminster through my voluntary role as deacon, taking on a full-time job at Vaughan House is something a bit different. Arriving on the first day was, as with all new starts, something to look forward to, even with a little nervousness about the unknown. However, I was given a warm welcome at the front door and in the office. My desk was prepared for me and there was an Induction schedule to help me get off to a safe and confident start. A tour of the building and a brief introduction to staff, although slightly overwhelming, did help to give me a sense that I belonged to something bigger than just my own area of responsibility; and it gave me confidence that at least people in the building knew I had arrived and had joined the team. Of course, I could not remember many names to start with, but having been around the other departments, gave me the opening I needed to say hello when I met other staff later on.

The building, Vaughan House, is pleasant enough with good facilities, accessible by the lift if needed. Tea and coffee is always available, which helps give a friendly atmosphere, as people will offer to do the drinks when it's time for a break. The office doors are always open, with friendly staff calling in when needed; and visiting other departments is not a problem. Security is important, but visitors at the front door are always greeted by friendly and efficient receptionists.

In my department, the Agency for Evangelisation, we only have a few staff, who are frequently coming and going depending on what is happening on the day. All are friendly and get on with the work in hand, and readily engage in work-related and non-work conversation. I can get on with my work as needed, with unnecessary interruption, as there is awareness when each of us is busy; but there is also time to have a chat on shared matters.

Supervision has been good and staff meetings regular; and although there is a need to plan ahead as people are frequently away from the office, there is always opportunity and willingness to catch-up when needed in a less formal way.

The work of the Diocese does mean that we frequently see members of the clergy in the offices, but like all the staff, everyone is very friendly. If I need something, I usually know where to go or one of my colleagues will give me the necessary information and help in getting matters sorted out. There

is a general openness in Vaughan House and in the other nearby offices which makes for a pleasant working atmosphere. And when there has been a social occasion, it has been fun to meet and talk with other staff.

My introduction to Vaughan House has been very pleasant, and working here continues to be great pleasure.

