

The background of the cover is a dark blue overlay on a photograph of an open notebook. The notebook's pages are filled with handwritten text in cursive script, which is mostly illegible due to the blur and the dark overlay. A silver-colored pen with a dark grip is positioned diagonally across the right-hand page of the notebook.

BFSS Archives

Annual Impact Report 2025

*"Thank you for this amazing
help!"*

Enquirer 26th February

Overview of the year

We are pleased to present the twelfth British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) Archives Annual Impact Report 2025.

Among the highlights to tell you about are:

- **Conservation report from Danila Narcissi**
- **Cataloguing of Teacher Training Appointments Correspondence**
- **Meeting with a BRC Centenarian**
- **Scans and Transcriptions of the Lancaster letters**
- **7105 entries in the CALM archive catalogue**

Over the past year, we have received 30 enquiries relating to the BFSS archives on a range of subjects, including on the Global impact of the BFSS and welcomed 4 researchers to our reading room.

We acknowledge the change of name to Educational Opportunities Foundation (EOF), but we will continue to call the archives we hold the BFSS Archives, as that is their provenance.

STAFF

MANDY MORDUE

Head of Records, Archives and Special Collections

TACE FOX

Archives and Special Collections Manager

A YEAR IN ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS—2024

An annual snapshot bringing together the different areas of our work to celebrate the archives and special collections we hold.

JANUARY 2025

Top stories



Joseph Lancaster—
founder of the BFSS



Arthur—Centenarian
BRC Alumni



'Channel Tunnel at 30'
exhibition



Internship student

Conservation of Joseph Lancaster's letters



In November, the Joseph Lancaster letters written between 1810 and 1812 were returned to the Archive following extensive conservation.

The letters which form a small but valuable part of the BFSS Archive, which is probably one of the most important archives in the world on 19th century education and teacher training, are an incredible resource which demonstrate Joseph Lancaster's effort to establish schools and his monitorial system within the United Kingdom, and overseas. One letter shows the plans to take the system stateside:

"The George Town American School forms an important era in the history of our plans and if Kenneth can be at Liberty in three months he may cross the Atlantic Carriage paid live at 160 dollars per year and receive one hundred guineas, he is intended to train Schoolmasters and if I have five or six such as him there would be room for them all in the United States."

The conservation work has ensured these valuable letters survive and are protected for future generations.

Our brilliant alumni



Probably one of the most enjoyable aspects of our work is the opportunities to meet and speak with our alumni. This year, we met students—Rita, Claire (and her husband Mike) and Neil who graduated in Applied Biology in 1973. During the visit Rita donated copies of her 'Brunel University 1969-1973 and 50 years on' publication, and a number of student items she had kept including her Brunel scarf, to the University Archives.

In October, we were delighted to meet Arthur, a centenarian who studied at Borough Road College between 1947-1949 and Mary his wife. Arthur talked vividly about his war experiences and his time at BRC. We were so grateful to them for spending time with us—Arthur and Mary you are truly inspirational people.

Exhibitions — LGBTQ+, the Olympics and the Channel Tunnel



In support of LGBTQ+ history month, we installed an exhibition in February using student newspapers, handbooks, posters and photographs to show Brunel's evolution over the last 50 years to become a champion of the LGBTQ+ community.

In July, to celebrate the Paris Olympics and Paralympics, and Brunel's long and distinguished sporting history, we installed a special exhibition of our alumni Olympic and Paralympic successes.

At the end of the year, in recognition of the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Channel Tunnel in 1994, we installed an exhibition of items from the Channel Tunnel Collections we hold.

Behind the scenes

We have been working hard behind the scenes, replying to 232 enquiries and welcoming 21 researchers over 24 days to our Reading Room.

We have been busy sorting and cataloguing collections. The Poetry of the Now and Bill Carpenter book collections are now available on CALM along with the Channel Tunnel Company Archives. The CALM catalogue now has 29,317 entries—3,633 of which are new entries and 8,317 entries have been modified i.e. further descriptions added. We received 36 new accessions.

Thank you to Tom and Yasmin, our intern students this year, and to Amy and Wendy who have volunteered with us.

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brunel.ac.uk/life/library/ArchivesAndSpecialCollections

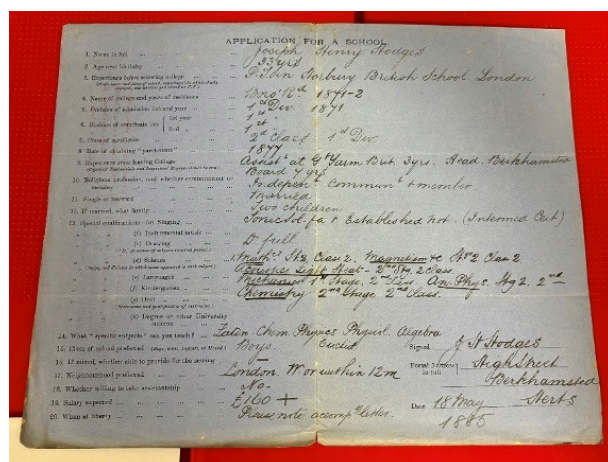
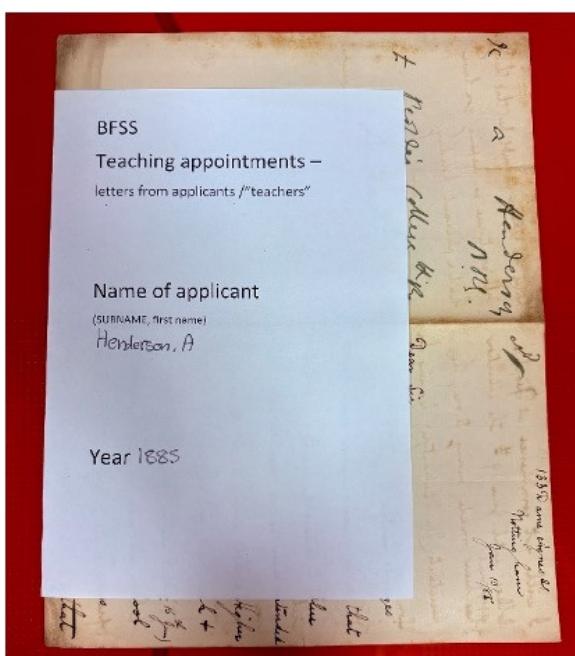
Archives

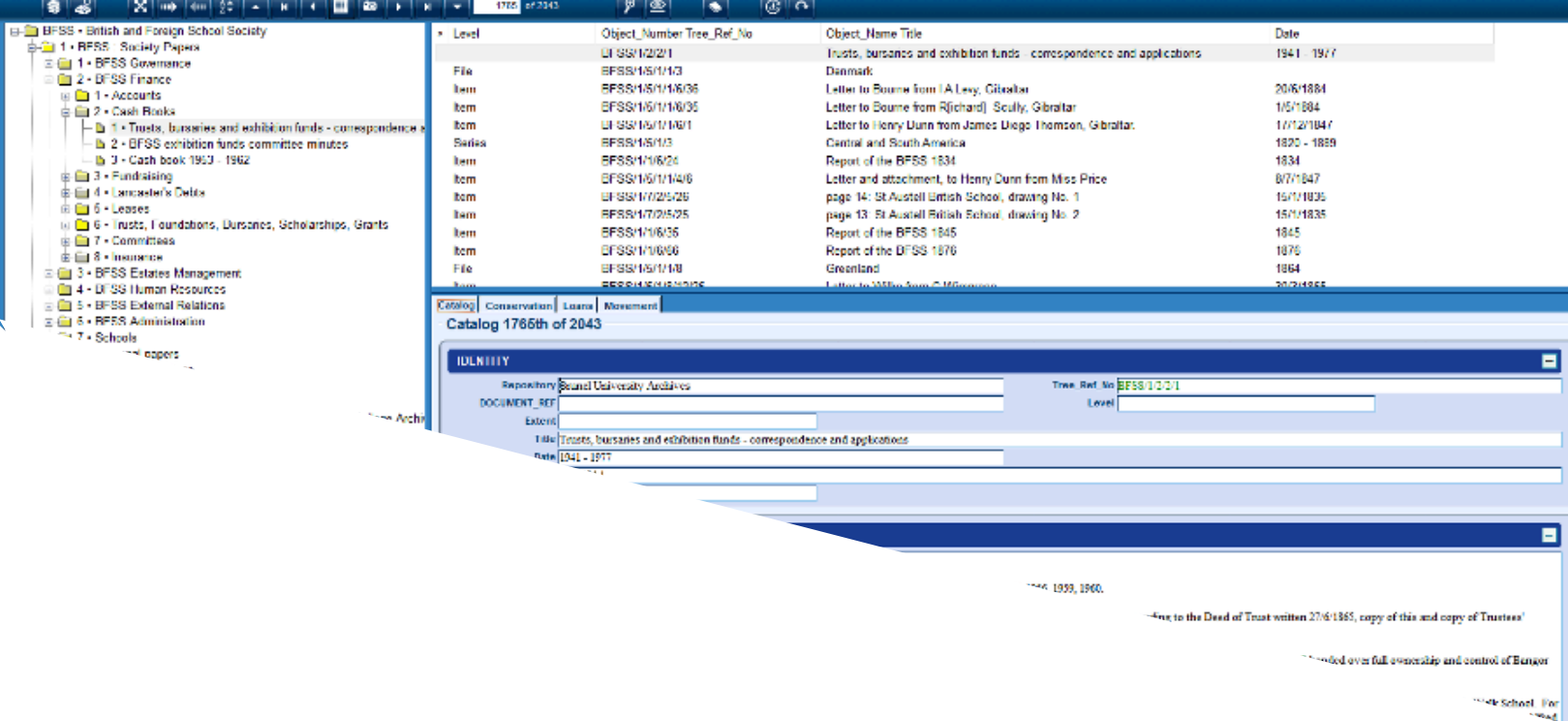
The British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) Archive is a unique collection which covers the period 1798 to 1796. It contains a wide range of materials in many formats, such as official papers, letters, publications, student registers, photographs, maps, plans, trophies, clothing and furniture. It is approximately 178 linear metres.

The records include Joseph Lancaster's letters (1810-12), committee minutes and papers, financial records, handwritten student applications with supporting testimonials and correspondence, student registers, teaching practice reports, establishment and progress of the British Schools, 19th century schools' (both UK and foreign) correspondence, Education Commissions returns from British schools, BFSS charities and funds, agents and inspector reports, annual reports, student magazines (such as the B's Hum), photographs of staff, students and buildings, teaching manuals and lesson books, portraits of principals of the teacher training colleges, clothing such as blazers, ties and sporting honours caps, furniture and memorial plaques.

It also contains particularly unique and irreplaceable items such as a copybook of examples of handwriting and needlework done by slave children from a British school in Jamaica, (presented to the BFSS in 1826), individual sewing samples, sketchbooks and other personal memoirs of former staff and students, and silver 'monitorial' medals.

These records contain a wealth of detailed information on the Society and its colleges, schools, staff and alumni, as well as the overall progress of education in Britain and overseas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. 4 There is also a large selection of educational books and pamphlets, many of them rare editions, dating from the 19th century, including works by Lancaster, Bell, Pestalozzi and Froebel – leading educationists of the time, and Victorian and Edwardian children's books. One collection of books was presented by David Salmon, biographer of Joseph Lancaster and former student and tutor of Borough Road College, and Principal of Swansea Teacher Training College.

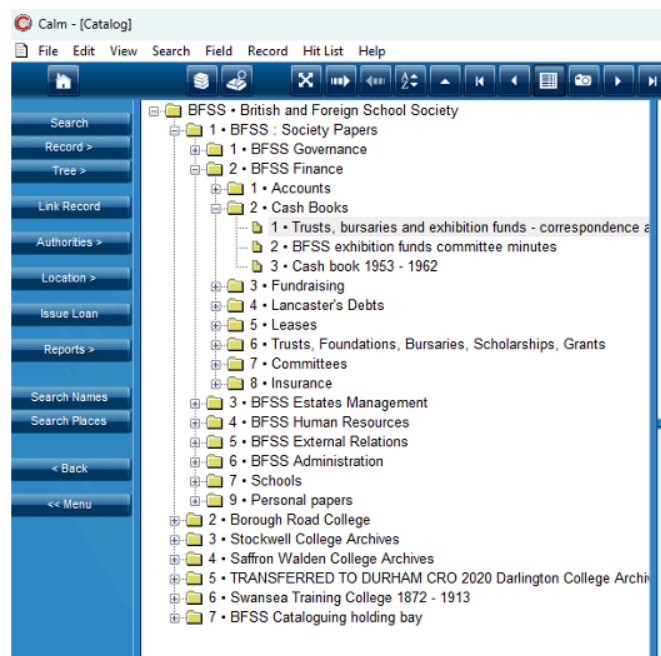


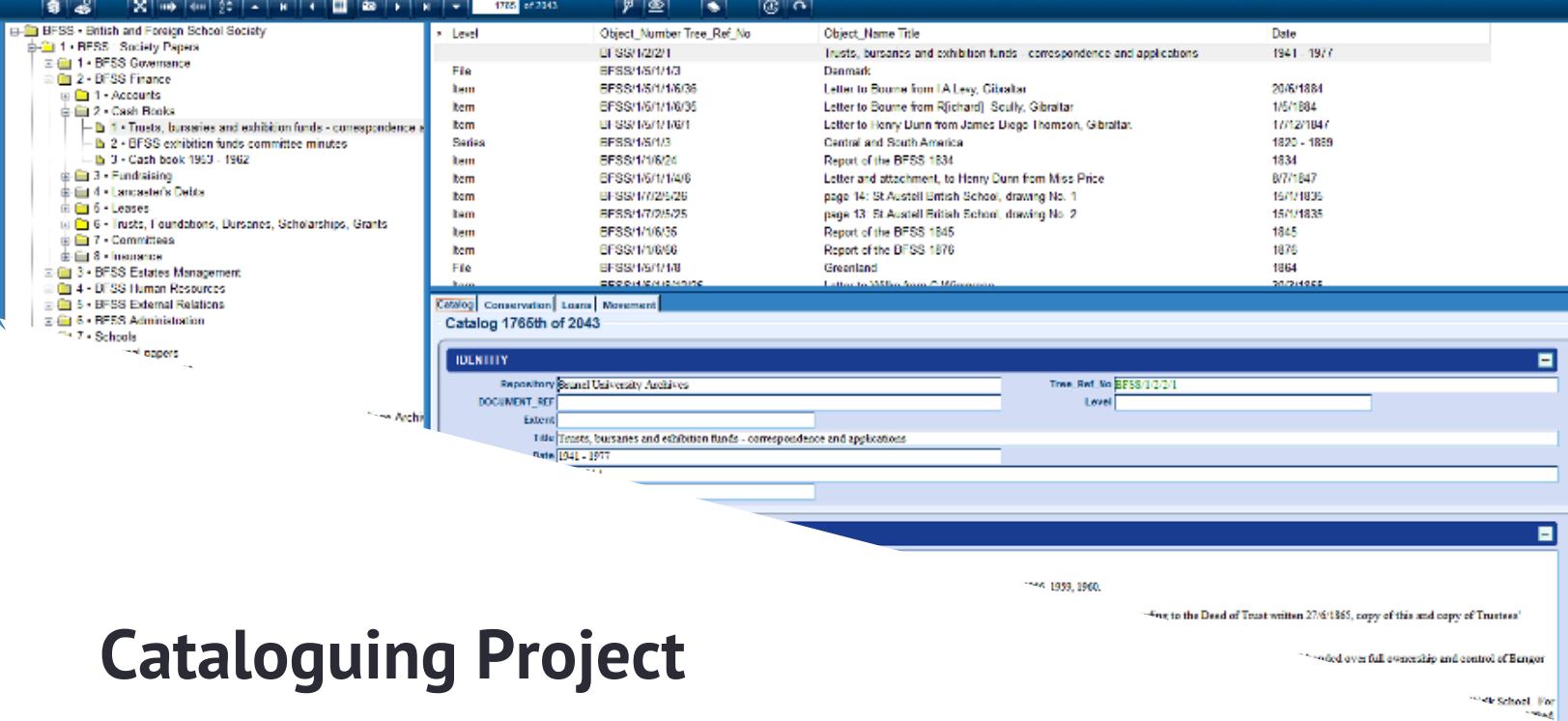


Cataloguing

There are now 7,105 BFSS catalogue entries in our online catalogue. In the past year, we have added a further 288 new catalogue entries for the BFSS financial records including the papers of the first treasurer, William Allen.

In addition, 631 catalogue descriptions were improved – either with further information added or digitised copies added – e.g. adding names to the Borough Road College year group photos. There are now over 2,083 digitised archives on our BFSS catalogue.





Cataloguing Project

As the BFSS formalised its educational approach, BRC became a hub for training teachers, emphasising practical teaching skills alongside academic instruction. Initially, the training period was short (around 3 to 6 months), but as educational standards evolved, the college adapted its curriculum to offer more comprehensive training.

The introduction of the Teacher's Certificate in 1846 marked a significant shift, as it standardised teacher qualifications and introduced structured apprenticeships for promising students as pupil-teachers. Over the years, the curriculum expanded to include a wide range of subjects, from English and mathematics to natural sciences and physical education, reflecting the growing demands on educators.

The BFSS remained committed to non-denominational education, and BRC played a vital role in preparing teachers for both British and Board schools.

Following the 1870 Education Act, the demand for trained teachers surged, leading to increased enrolment and further expansion of the college facilities. Throughout its history, BRC maintained a balance between theory and practice by incorporating practical teaching experiences in model schools, allowing students to develop hands-on skills.

In our current archival project, we are actively involving student interns and volunteers to assist in cataloguing correspondence relating to requests for references for teaching appointments within the archive collection. Their efforts are crucial in organizing and preserving the historical records related to teaching at BRC, ensuring that the legacy of teacher education within the BFSS is accurately documented and accessible for future research.

Enquiries and accessions

Since last year's report, we have received 19 BFSS archive enquiries.

The enquiries have covered the following topics:

- Anne Springman Biography Impact of the 1870 Education Act on British Society Schools in Leicestershire
- BFSS Foreign Correspondence
- Drummond Road School
- Global spread of British Schools
- Haitian Foreign Correspondence
- History of the Leather sellers, BFSS and Herold Foundation
- Monitorial Medals
- Origins of the BFSS
- Slave Book
- West African British Schools



"Many thanks for facilitating my visit to your archives on Wednesday, and for having the British & Foreign School Society files ready for me to look at. It was much appreciated!"

-Researcher, 4 April 2025

Accessions

We are delighted to announce the following new acquisitions which have been kindly donated.

New Acquisition	Description
ACC2024/28	BFSS Council Minutes and papers relating to Saffron Walden
ACC2025/6	Copies of plans for the British School in Altrincham together with various later additions and alterations

Over the past year, we have welcomed four researchers wishing to consult BFSS material.

Researcher	Subject	Items Viewed	No. of Days
Academic (UK)	British Schools, Leicestershire	BFSS/1/7/2/1/2/19 - 1870 Commission Leicestershire, BFSS/1/7/2/1/4/16 - 1874 Return, BFSS/1/7/2/1/5/11 - 1875 Return, BFSS/1/7/2/1/7/15 - 1877 Return, BFSS/1/7/2/1/8/16 - 1878 Return, BFSS/1/7/2/1/9/11 - 1879 Return, Leicestershire, miscellaneous printed material and the 1870 Annual Report.	1
BFSS (UK)	History of the BFSS	Annual Reports, foreign correspondence, returns, photographs, list of international schools and dates	1
Academic (UK)	Leather Sellers Technical College in Bermondsey	Annual Reports 1880s-90s	1
Academic (UK)	British Schools, Derbyshire	Bartle article, 'The Agents and Inspectors of the British and Foreign School Society 1826-1884, BFSS Reports 1814-1874, Correspondence, Minute books and Teaching appointments 1830-1856.	w/c 7th July

Interns and volunteers

The British and Foreign School Society (BFSS), founded in the late 18th century by Joseph Lancaster, revolutionized education by creating opportunities for the poor in Britain and abroad. Lancaster's innovative monitorial system—where older students taught younger ones—quickly spread worldwide, transforming how education was delivered. Through the BFSS, the system extended beyond Britain's borders, reaching areas in Africa, the West Indies, and rural regions across the UK. As the demand for teachers grew, the BFSS established teacher training colleges to prepare individuals for these teaching roles, ensuring that trained educators were available not only in Britain but in foreign territories as well.

A critical part of the BFSS's success came from the thousands of men and women who trained under the British system, eager to secure teaching positions at home and abroad. Many of these aspiring teachers wrote formal letters to the BFSS, requesting references and endorsements to support their applications. These letters, preserved in the BFSS Archive, provide a fascinating glimpse into the lives of these educators, shedding light on their personal histories, professional ambitions, and the global reach of the BFSS's educational mission. The letters also document the many places' teachers were sent, from Welsh villages to West Africa, illustrating the breadth and impact of the BFSS's network.

Today, these historical records are being meticulously catalogued by a dedicated team of interns and volunteers, ensuring that the letters are preserved and made accessible for future research. This process takes place at Brunel University, where the BFSS Archive resides, and the interns are making significant contributions to the preservation and accessibility of these materials.

Among the newest members of the archive team are two new Brunel University student interns (Law), whose enthusiasm and dedication have been instrumental in transcribing teacher appointment correspondence, cross-checking names for accuracy,

and carefully repackaging fragile documents for long-term preservation. Their work is a crucial part of the effort to catalogue these records into the archive's database, CALM, and has helped lay strong foundations for ongoing projects, particularly focused on the 1860s teaching appointments.

In addition to their efforts, a third-year History student, Jay, has joined the team and focused on the same collection. Jay's passion for archival work has been evident in his contributions, and his experience is invaluable as he prepares for a future in the archives profession, aiming to pursue a master's degree in history next year. Together, these students have significantly advanced the project, making important strides in cataloguing the teacher appointment letters and enhancing the archive's accessibility.

Their work not only ensures the preservation of these important historical records but also contributes to a broader understanding of education, empire, and social reform in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Each letter entered into CALM adds to our knowledge of how education was used as a tool for social progress and highlights the careers of educators who shaped communities both at home and abroad.

The work of these interns and volunteers is crucial to the mission of the BFSS Archive, and their contributions continue to enrich the understanding of this transformative educational movement. As they continue their efforts, we look forward to the progress they will make in uncovering more stories of the teachers whose careers were launched by a single letter—and whose impact resonates today.

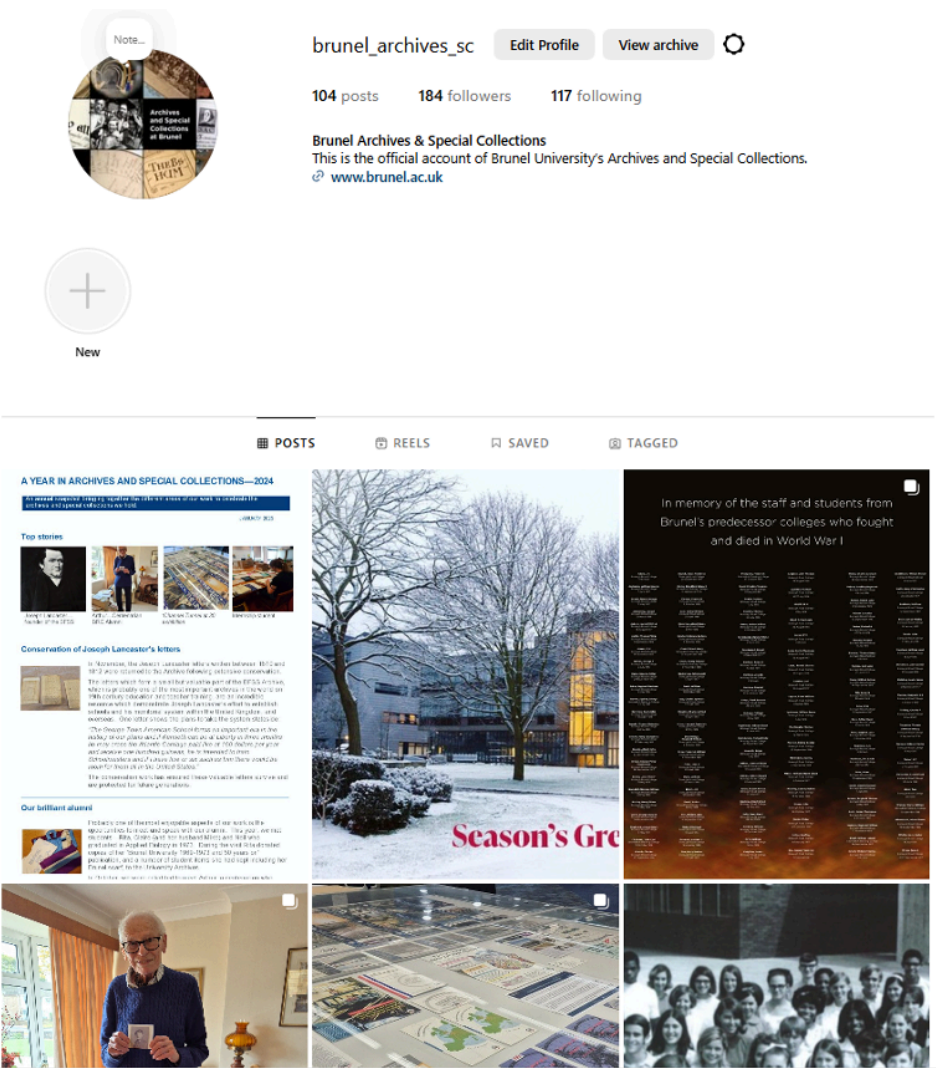
We are delighted to announce that two of our former volunteers have been offered a place to study at UCL in September to begin their course to become qualified Archivist and Record Managers



"My time at the BFSS Archives was incredibly helpful and I was able to cite portions of the correspondence and annual reports in my assessed essay. For my dissertation, I will research how the samples of Black schoolgirls' needlework in William Knibb's Slave Book (1826) fit into intersecting histories of British education, slavery, and girlhood."

-Researcher, February 2025

Social Media



Our Instagram profile continues to grow! Since the last report, we have posted 104 times and now have 184 followers.

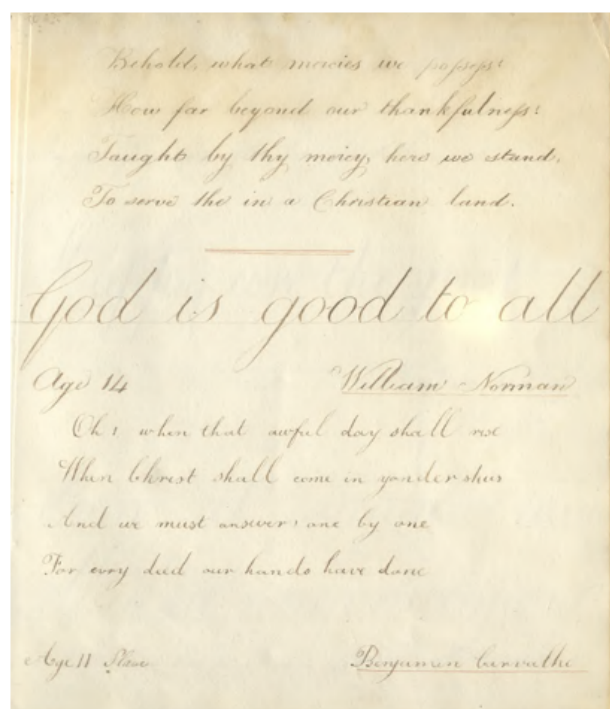
We featured the BFSS Archives in a series of posts reflecting on our achievements from the past year. One highlight was sharing a favourite photo from Luther Dudley's commonplace book—a student at Borough Road College from 1892 to 1894. The photo, a captivating snapshot of history, depicts British, Egyptian, and Thai students dressed in football kits, top hats, and fezzes.

Teaching sessions

We recently had the pleasure of hosting Creative Writing Master's students at the Archive, where they delved into the theme of journaling. Among the materials we shared were the BFSS Commonplace Books—scrapbook-style collections created by Borough Road College students. These volumes, dating from 1871 to 1919, contain a rich mix of photos, poems, prose, postcards, drawings, and entries in multiple languages.

We also welcomed English Literature students to the Archive who looked at a record referred to as the 'Slave book' in relation to themes on race in literature during the Victorian period. The volume contains specimens of pupil work from one of the BFSS free schools established in Jamaica to educate the children of former slaves.

We scanned the volume on our new book scanner so that the students could access an electronic copy of this unique and special record.



Meeting Arthur

We were delighted to meet a centenarian who studied at Borough Road College and hear all about his life.



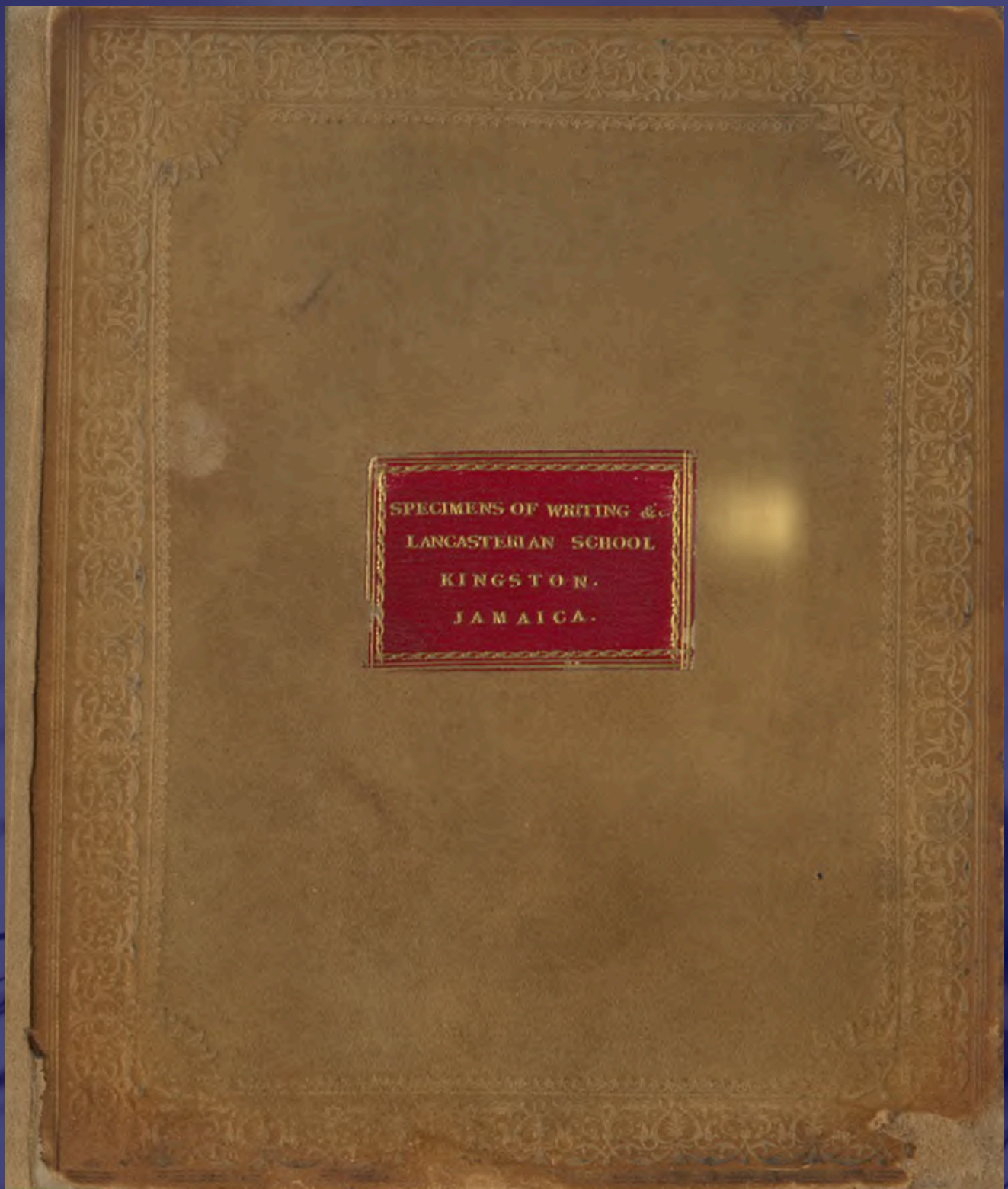
Arthur Marsh Vincent attended Borough Road College between 1947-1949. Like many who enrolled at Borough Road and other colleges at the time, he was an ex-serviceman. Arthur had signing up at the age of 18 and fought in France, Belgium, and Holland during the Second World War. At the College, he studied the Principles and Practice of Education, Health Education, Physical Education (Ordinary course), English (Ordinary and Advanced courses), History (Advanced course), French (Advanced course) and Handwork (Ordinary course), gaining a Certificate in Education from the University of London qualifying him to work as a teacher. He taught at a number of schools, including the school where he met his wife Mary.

He talked about his experiences during the Second War World and how lucky he had been to survive, remembering close friends and other servicemen who had not.

Reminiscing about his time at Borough Road College, he remembered the very small accommodation rooms on the top floors of Lancaster House, and that life had been much more relaxing after the discipline of a soldier's life, but, they had found the strict rules of 'signing in and out' at Borough Road College rather tiresome.

Arthur and Mary's son, Michael Vincent graduated from Brunel in 1994 with a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in American Studies and Sports Sciences. Since graduating, he has built a successful career in America as a soccer coach, winning the NSCAA High School Boys' State and Regional Coach of the Year Award twice.

We are so grateful to Arthur and Mary for spending time with us – they are truly inspirational people



"Thank you so much, that's a great image. Would it be possible for me to use this, properly acknowledged, in my article"

-Enquirer, 8 April 2025

Conservation report: Joseph Lancaster Letters

Conservation Treatment Report

The conservation treatment was performed following the steps listed on the proposal, and according to the conservation principle of minimum intervention.

The thirty-seven letters across 183 pages, written on rag paper of various size and thickness, were bound together using cotton tread and animal glue on the spine. Some additional cotton paper was holding the letters together, covering a portion of the text. Not invasive iron gall ink investigation tested positive on all letters, as such it was decided to not consider any wet treatment as an option. Only a portion of a page showed an early stage of ink corrosion, otherwise the ink was in sound condition, hence there was no need to introduce any moisture. On the bottom part of one of the letters there was extensive damage because of pressure sensitive tape old repairs. The letters had surface dirt, some of which was ingrained. Many of the pages had tears and some had small missing areas. The first action was to clean the letters with Hake brushes of various sizes and vulcanized sponges. Once all the pages had been cleaned it was possible to mainly mechanically unbind the letters.

Mechanical action was chosen as the most respectful choice to remove the additional paper used as a binding aid. The aim was to uncover as much text as possible. It wasn't possible to remove it entirely, that would have required wet treatment. The most challenging part was to remove the pressure sensitive tape: acetone and toluene was used to release the film and to clean as much adhesive as possible. Unfortunately, it was not possible to rescue some very tiny paper fragments. This was the last action undertaken for this first stage of the treatment. Mending the tears and, where required, infilling the missing areas will be part of a second stage.

The time gap between the two stages will be useful to see whether the iron gall ink will show any signs of corrosion over a stretch of time.

The letters are now in stable condition, safely stored in Melinex pockets. It is strongly recommended to print scans of the letters and use those for consultation, unless it is specifically requested to read the originals.

Danila Narcisi
Paper Conservator



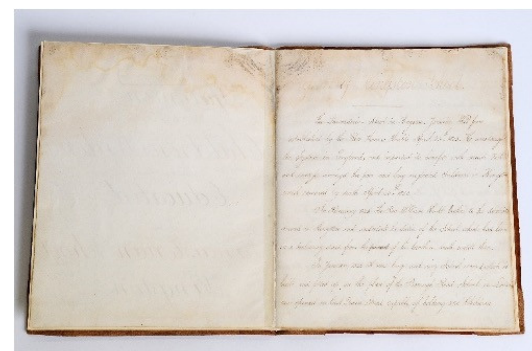
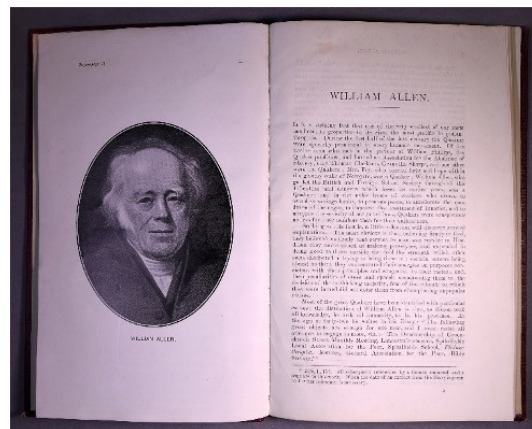
Looking Forward to 2025-2026

We look forward to welcoming new interns and volunteers to the archive to support our efforts to enhance and increase the number of records available on the catalogue and increase accessibility to the archive collections.

We hope to welcome more researchers and students to the archive too and support research through enquiries.

We are planning to;

- **Finish cataloguing the Finance records;**
- **Continue to digitise BFSS material and add to our CALM catalogue;**
- **Welcome more classes and researchers;**
- **Lead more volunteer-led projects;**
- **Promote the collection on Instagram**





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