



Bodleian Libraries
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Roy Jenkins archive

Authorship, Memory & Manuscripts Seminar Workshop, February 2012

Speaker: Charlotte McKillop-Mash, Roy Jenkins archive cataloguer

[Image: Jenkins photograph]

What I intend to do is to talk both about the project and the cataloguing process, and also about Jenkins' career as it relates to his archive, giving you, I hope, a sense of what researchers will find in the archive when the catalogue is complete and the papers finally made available to readers.

I have to qualify this by saying that what I can give you at the moment is only a first impression. By the end of the project I should be one of the world experts on the Roy Jenkins papers, as any archivist is having catalogued an archive. At the moment, though, I am still only on nodding terms.

As you may know, the archive came to the Bodleian late last year, so I have been working with the papers for about 3 months, which in cataloguing time is only just a beginning. It took about a week just to transfer the papers from Roy Jenkins' house in East Hendred to the Library. I was fortunate enough to visit East Hendred and help with this.

(The reason I am talking about the logistics of collecting the archive is that the arrangement of the papers as we receive them will affect the outcome – the catalogue itself - and it explains both what I am doing with the archive at present, and the limits of my knowledge of the archive.)

Unfortunately, I don't have any photos of the archive as it was stored in East Hendred. But the important thing from a conservation point of view is that the archive was stored in a cool, dry, dark place, which means that there was very little damage to the papers, either by light or mould.

The important thing from a cataloguing point of view is that the papers were, in the main, very well organised. This is what you'd expect in the archive of a politician, or indeed any office-based professional, particularly one who had secretarial assistance. There are long runs of alphabetically or chronologically arranged correspondence, for example, as well as files of official papers and book proofs and so on, in clearly labelled folders.

The fact that an archive is decently arranged by its creator has a knock-on effect on the final catalogue. Basically, I will be doing a minimum of rearrangement of these ordered sequences. If the archive had been stored in a chaotic way, I would have had to intervene much more in ordering the papers, so losing the sense of how the papers were originally used.

We boxed the archive at the house in 443 smallish archive boxes, which makes it a midsize political collection, in our experience. Not quite on the scale of the Ted Heath archive, which was roughly 5000 boxes, but it's still a lot of material to process.

The cataloguing started when we created a box list (which is a basic record of the original filenames, and a rough content list, recorded as we boxed the files). The second stage of cataloguing process - of the intellectual arrangement of the archive - was the identification of different archival series based on the box list. Everything I can tell you about the general contents and structure of the archive is based on this preliminary box list. These different series are:

- Diaries and journals
- Correspondence
- Official papers
- Business and financial papers
- Oxford papers
- Journalism
- Books
- Speeches
- Charity and committee papers
- Photographs, tapes, videos
- Cuttings
- Misc

What I'm doing now

At the moment, I am still in the foothills of the cataloguing process. I'm in the first stage of physically arranging the papers, which involves separating material which will be in different series in the catalogue. This is as straightforward as it sounds. If, for example, a book file and a correspondence file are currently in one box, I put them in different boxes.

At the end of this stage, I will have 10 or so boxes containing only book material and then, at the second stage of arrangement, I will be able to consider all the material relating to books as one whole, and order it accordingly. In the case of the book files, this would very likely be chronologically by title.

So much for the foothills: the top of the mountain is an online, searchable catalogue, built to international archival standards, which presents the papers in a hierarchical structure, and is fully cross-referenced so that, for example, any Oxford chancellorship correspondence refers to the Oxford chancellorship official papers (like meeting minutes) as well as any Oxford ephemera in the collection like term cards. The physical papers will also all be in archive-quality packaging, and safely stored.

That's the process: but what have I found?

I've given you the high-level series: correspondence, official papers and so on. What I'm going to do now is to briefly describe what I know about the contents of the different series, alongside certain periods of Jenkins life and career, in no particular order.

Family/Early life

I'm not going to attempt to describe Jenkins career except for this very quick summary (and I hope you'll bear with me).

He was born in 1920, the son of Arthur Jenkins, a miner turned MP who worked as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Clement Attlee. He studied PPE at Balliol College, Oxford, and was an artillery officer who later served as a code-breaker in Bletchley during the World War II. He won his first election as a Labour MP in 1948. He held various ministerial posts, Minister of Aviation (1964), Home Secretary (1965-7 and 1974-6), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1967-70) and was deputy leader of the Labour Party (1970-2). He failed in a campaign to become party leader and resigned as Home Secretary in September 1976 to take up a position as President of the European Commission (1977-81). He was a founder member of the Social Democratic Party and SDP member for Hillhead, Glasgow in 1982-7.

He was elected Chancellor of the University of Oxford in 1987, a position he held until his death in 2003. He was given a life peerage (Baron Jenkins of Hillhead) and from 1987 was leader of the Lib-Dem peers. And throughout his life, he was a writer. He wrote both journalism and books, specialising in political biographies.

Returning to his early life: I haven't come across many family papers in the collection yet, but there are early photographs, condolence letters written to his mother Hattie Jenkins when his father Arthur died and Arthur Jenkins' laconic diaries, which cover most years between 1912 and 1946.

[Image: Arthur Jenkins diary, 2-3 September 1939 + transcript]

Correspondence

Because of the way that Jenkins (or his secretaries) arranged his correspondence, the correspondence sequences are going to be very varied in organisation (some organised alphabetically by subject and year; some chronological (usually reverse chronological); and some in individual subject files). The correspondence series spans his entire life, from childhood letters to his death. It includes constituency correspondence (and as John Campbell pointed out in his seminar last week on his work on Roy Jenkins biography , Jenkins is notable for the courtesy of his responses); ministerial/official correspondence both from the House of Commons and from the Lords; and from his time as President of the European Commission.

[Images: 1976 resignation letter to Callaghan + transcript]

There are sequences relating to election campaigns (including SDP-related correspondence) and a large sequence relating to his time as Chancellor of Oxford.

There's a lot of correspondence with publishers and newspapers, as you'd expect, given the sheer volume of books, articles, essays, chapters and forewords that he wrote. There's also more personal material, including family letters, correspondence relating to his various clubs, and birthday and get-well cards.

Political/Official/Working papers

The working papers series comprises memos, official reports and statements, research, and papers relating to official visits, spanning his political career. A quick sample: there is a file on the Obscene Publications Bill (1955-9); working papers on the Sterling area from 1958; a file on Indira Gandhi from 1972; a file on Immigration Rules from 1982 and the Capital Punishment Debate of 1983; SDP campaign memos and papers from the early 80s; a file on the Tercentenary of the 1688 Revolution Committee; papers on electoral reform from 1998 to 2001. The word ‘file’ can be a bit grandiose, in this case. The contents of these files vary immensely from a pile of manuscript research and annotated official reports and so on, to a couple of pieces of paper with an itinerary.

Misc/ephemera

Archivists don't like to have series called Miscellaneous. We regard Misc as a failure of imagination. At the moment, I'm putting material in boxes labelled Misc which will actually be better described when the catalogue is finished, mostly as personal papers or ephemera.

It includes memorabilia from marriage, funeral, memorial and thanksgiving services, dinner menus, and campaign ephemera.

[Image: Campaign Poster]

This is a campaign poster from what I think is the 1948 Southwark Central by-election campaign, his first successful campaign (although it could be from the 1950 Stechford campaign) which I chose both because it reflects the start of his career as an MP, and because he looks so young in it.

The Misc boxes also include papers from the various clubs Jenkins was a member of, including Brooks; the many honorary degrees Jenkins received; address books; a set of first day covers; sundry lists of letters sent, and so on. Not least in Misc are the essays Jenkins wrote while he was a student at Balliol.

Speeches

In terms of the number of boxes currently containing speech material, the Speeches series is actually the second largest of the major series in the collection (correspondence is the biggest). This includes (from his time as Chancellor of Oxford) some speeches in Latin, which you can't say for many modern collections.

[Image: Speeches list]

This is a list of speeches he gave in the Winter/Spring of 1989. There are a number of lists like this in the collection, and for me, they best demonstrate his position as a public figure, and they also usefully link all the different strands of the collection, political, personal, and also his extra-political career as Oxford Chancellor. I hope it will give you a sense of the scope of his interests, and also of the busyness of his life.

Finances

There are two aspect to the financial papers in the collection: official expenses, and personal finances, most of which will have to be closed for Data Protection reasons. The personal papers include his consultancy with John Lewis, book royalties, and domestic expenses like insurance bills.

Committees and charities

Because I know I am at the risk of listing you to sleep I am not going to list the charities and NGO committees he sat on, except to say that there were a lot of them, and there are papers and correspondence related to their running in the collection.

Writing career

Books & journalism: ditto. Although if you were at [John Campbell's talk on Jenkins' diaries](#), he described both the sheer amount of work Jenkins was capable of, and also that he tended to use secondary sources in his book research: I've come across a number of letters concerning his borrowing from the House of Lords library. Although he did *some* archival research. For example, he used the greater London record office for a chapter he wrote called 'Edwardian Brooks's' in a book written for and about the club in 1990.

[Image: list of books read in October 1991]

I thought this was interesting too: it's one of a number such lists showing his reading in any given period (some marked as reviewed). I particularly like this one, because it's only 12 days worth of reading. As if that wasn't enough, there are also lists of the number of words he wrote per day while on holiday.

Conclusions:

It's hard to draw any firm conclusions from or about the archive when I haven't seen all of it at this point. What I hope I've managed to convey here is that the archive is terrifically rich, particularly in correspondence. It reflects all aspects of Jenkins' professional life, as far as I can see, and also includes more personal correspondence and papers including letters from friends and associates, and material relating to his social life, including his club memberships. There are even some family papers, in the shape of the Arthur Jenkins diaries, and some of his mother's letters. I look forward to being able to present a finished catalogue, and most importantly, to being able to make the papers available to researchers.