



Security in The National Archives' reading rooms in Kew

Request asked a series of questions about security in The National Archives' reading rooms in Kew and any changes to security that have been considered since several documents in two files were alleged to be forgeries. Request also asked about the internal investigation and whether the police had been involved.

Information provided

Each reader is permitted to take into the Reading Rooms up to 20 sheets of loose paper and a notepad, up to A4 size. Should a reader request an exception for a specific purpose; there is a facility to allow this, subject to permissions being granted on the day. No bags are allowed in the research areas, other than the clear plastic bags issued by TNA. No outdoor garments are allowed within the reading areas. No files or folders are allowed, and any reader taking in an official document, which could be confused with a 'record', is issued with a receipt for ease of recognition. Any such documents are required to be declared prior to entry to the reading rooms. Such permissions may be refused. Further details on our reading room rules, can be found at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/visit/plan/rules

...Every reader is checked, both on entry and exit. This involves a physical check of all documents, papers etc in their possession. The Head of Security prepares a bi-annual report for TNA Departmental Security Committee and Management Board on all aspects of site security, including attempted thefts. Reports of such incidents are prepared by security staff at the time, identifying clearly the perpetrator. These reports are filed and referred to should further incidents occur, to identify any trends, or problems with a particular reader.

...The files containing the alleged forgeries were not microfilmed.

... The issue of a stamp [the request referred to the practice at the US National Archives where material taken in and out of the archives by users is stamped with an official archives stamp] is under consideration. However previously a stamp was considered but rejected as readers were concerned about their (personal) documents being stamped. This issue is currently covered by the receipt system.

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