



Western Cape
Government

Contact us

The Reading Room is open: Monday – Friday: 08:00 – 16:00 and the first and third Saturday of the month: 8:00-14:00.

To help you plan your visit, we recommend that you contact us in advance.

For group visits/programmes/tours at the Archives or at your location, contact 021 483 0456

72 Roeland Street, Cape Town, 8001

Private Bag X9025, Cape Town, 8000

Tel: 021 483 0400

Email: archives.clientservices@westerncape.gov.za

www.westerncape.gov.za/cas



Western Cape Archives and Records Service
Argief-en Rekorddiens van die Wes-Kaap

Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport

What are archives?



Western Cape
Government



What are archives?

Archives collect records from the past. These records, if they are studied in the future, could tell us something about a time period, a government, an organisation or a person.

The records can be in any format – printed or handwritten documents, maps, plans, sketches, photographs, audio, video, electronic data.

Archives keep these special records safe forever so that anyone can use them.

What is the Western Cape Archives?

The Western Cape Archives and Records Service keeps:

- Public records (20 years or older) - created by the various governments of the Western Cape from 1651 onwards.
- Non-public records - created by individuals or organisations who donate them to us to keep them safe and accessible.
- Historical photographs.
- Maps, plans and sketches dating from the 17th century.

Why are archives important?

- To provide evidence about what happened in the past.
- To tell the stories of people and places in the past.
- To build our sense of identity and culture as a province by explaining our past.
- To help make sure the government works for the good of the people as anyone can find out from the records what the government did.

Who can use the Archives?

Anyone can use archives for all sorts of research, free of charge.

How do you use the Archives?

Step 1: What are you looking for?

Do some research on your topic. What specific questions do you want answered? You can also start by looking up records on our online databases: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.za/node/737>

Step 2: Ask an archivist

When you come to the Archives our staff will ask you what you are looking for and guide you on where to start your research. Archives are very different to libraries so you will need some help.

Step 3: Do your own research

You will look through inventories (lists of the different groups of records) to find what kind of records may answer your questions. You will write down the numbers of those records that you want to take a closer look at. The original records will be brought to you. You will have to work in our Reading Room and follow the rules to keep the records safe. You will need lots of time, patience and a pencil (no ink in the archives).

Step 4: Reference your sources

Your research must always say where you got the information from in as much detail as possible.

