



## THE NICHOLS ARCHIVE PROJECT

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<http://www2.le.ac.uk/centres/elh/research/project/nichols/the-nichols-archive-project>

<http://www.bibsoc.org.uk/content/nichols-archive-project>

**The papers accumulated and collected by John Nichols and his family of printers and antiquaries between 1745 and 1873 are a major source for the study of the book trade, of antiquarianism and of lives and letters in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As of one of London's leading printing firms and editors of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, they were at the heart of a national network of information exchange between members book trade, antiquaries, bibliographers, collectors, artists, engravers and writers. Their personal research interests ranged from literary biography to local history and from genealogy to the collecting of autograph letters.**

The Nichols Archive Project is providing an analytical guide to the thousands of letters and papers accumulated and collected by the Nichols family from the time of John Nichols (1745-1826), pictured above, to the death of his grandson, John Gough Nichols, in 1873. It includes detailed calendars of their correspondence, full transcripts of their personal diaries and travel journals, studies of their library catalogues and collected papers, a union index to those named in their papers and a detailed chronology of their lives, interests and achievements.

The archive is widely scattered. Significant portions of it are held by nearly ninety repositories and libraries in the United Kingdom and America but important collections also survive in private hands. The Project is creating a database which will provide scholars with an analytical guide to the documentation left by this remarkable and influential family. This will comprise a calendar of the family's correspondence and descriptive lists of other documents they accumulated. The database will allow chronological lists to be created of the letters of principal figures in the family, allowing a detailed assessment of the development and extent of their careers and interests. Calendars of the letters will provide a valuable insight into the management of the Nichols printing business. Indexes to their respective correspondents will shed light on their contacts within the book trade and the world of local history and genealogical research and enable the letters of their correspondents themselves to be studied in chronological sequence. Analysis of the letters of other members of the family, notably John Nichols' daughters, will illuminate the contribution of women members of the family to the printing business.

**The Nichols Archive Project has generously been awarded two grants by the Bibliographical Society. The second of these, in 2000, was associated with the name of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association.**

**In 2001 the Project was awarded a major grant by the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.**

**Generous funding from the William Lambarde Memorial Fund of the Society of Antiquaries of London was awarded in 2004.**

**British Academy Overseas Conference Grants have been awarded for papers given to the Renaissance Society of America in New York in 2004 and the Johnson at 300 Symposium at Harvard University in 2009.**

**Julian Pooley is an Archivist and Head of Public Services and Engagement at Surrey History Centre.**

## THE ARCHIVE



John Nichols amassed a working archive of many thousands of letters and papers that his family preserved, used and increased throughout the nineteenth century. Alongside the archive of the *Gentleman's Magazine* they preserved their personal letters, financial accounts, pocket diaries and travel journals. Throughout the 1840s and 1850s John Bowyer Nichols (right) examined, sorted and arranged the archive of family and business papers that he had inherited.

Several members of the Nichols family also collected autograph letters, forming their collections from the family's business archive but augmenting them by purchase in sale rooms and exchanging material with other collectors.

### Family Records

These are the core of the Nichols family archive and originally formed a series of some twenty large albums, each of about 200 pages. The earliest volumes are now held by Columbia University, New York, but later volumes survive in private hands and at the Bodleian Library, Oxford. The contents of these albums cover the period c.1765 to c.1854 and include family letters, household accounts, pocket diaries and travel journals that chronicle the family and business life of the Nicholsons in great detail. The albums also include draft and printed obituaries for the *Gentleman's Magazine* with portraits filed chronologically by the date of the subject's deaths. John Bowyer Nichols also used these albums to preserve a wide range of printed ephemera that reflect his daily concerns as a printer, editor, member of learned societies and charitable institutions.

### Volumes Of Letters

John Bowyer Nichols also gathered long runs of correspondence with individuals or concerning a single topic into separate volumes. Typical of these are the volume of letters between John Nichols and Joseph Cradock of Gumley, now in Private Collection 2 and three volumes of correspondence from Richard Gough and other antiquaries now held by the Society of Antiquaries as MS447/1-3. Over sixty of these volumes have been identified in public and private hands and their contents are being calendared onto the database.

### Autograph Collections

In 1816 John Nichols admitted that he enjoyed 'biographical researches and the collection of genuine letters of eminent persons'. His interest was shared by his daughter, Anne Susannah and, later, by his granddaughter, Mary Anne (right), who formed the basis of her impressive collection of autograph letters and papers from the family's archive of personal and business papers. Many letters used in the *Literary Anecdotes* and the *Literary Illustrations* survive in her collection and are complemented by further letters drawn from the archive of the *Gentleman's Magazine*. Although Miss Nichols augmented her collection by purchasing items from dealers in England and France, the Nichols family papers form its core and the annotation on many of the letters shows that it is a major part of the family and business archive.



### Diaries And Journals

Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Nichols family kept diaries of their daily engagements and journals of their antiquarian tours throughout Britain and Europe. It was the discovery of the pocket diaries of Mary Anne Nichols in a bookshop in 1982 that first ignited my interest in the Nichols family. In 1991 I traced four of her travel journals to a private collection and, since then, I have found many further diaries and journals kept by her family in private and public collections. These fascinating documents complement the letters that they wrote home during their travels and testify to the family's national network of literary friendships and deep interest in art, architecture and antiquities.

## PROGRESS

Calendars of nearly 17,000 letters have now been added to the database. Those from private collections include:

- 4,649 letters from the autograph collection of Mary Nichols which was formed largely from the literary manuscripts accumulated by John Nichols and John Bowyer Nichols
- 1183 letters in Nichols 'Family Records' volumes covering the period 1713 to 1823
- 451 letters to or from Joseph Cradock (1742-1826), man of letters of Gumley, Leicestershire. Most of these are from a single volume of his correspondence with John Nichols, 1792-1826, in Private Collection 2.

Other significant parts of the database include:

- 4,050 letters to or from John Nichols, 1750-1826
- 3,961 letters to or from John Bowyer Nichols, 1777-1863
- 3,258 letters to or from John Gough Nichols, 1816-1873
- 166 letters to or from Richard Gough (1735-1809), antiquary
- 108 letters referring to Dr Samuel Johnson
- 3,372 letters referring to items submitted to the *Gentleman's Magazine*
- 1,039 letters that were used by John Nichols and his son in preparing the *Literary Anecdotes* or *Literary Illustrations*
- 96 letters relating to John Nichols' *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth* and *Progresses of King James I*
- 75 letters to or from William Bray (1736-1832), Surrey antiquary
- 56 letters to or from George Lipscomb (1773-1846), historian of Buckinghamshire
- 95 letters to, from or relating to Andrew Coltee Ducarel (1713-1785), antiquary and librarian at Lambeth Palace
- 1362 letters relating to John Nichols' *History and Antiquities of Leicestershire*
- 48 letters to the Nichols family from Maria Hackett (1783-1874), historian of cathedral schools
- 88 letters to or from the publishers, Cadell and Davies
- 283 letters relating to John Nichols' research for the life and works of William Hogarth
- 499 Nichols letters held by the British Library
- 3,249 Nichols letters held by the Folger Shakespeare Library
- 177 Nichols letters held by the Society of Antiquaries of London
- 1,840 Nichols letters held by the Bodleian Library, Oxford
- 1,015 Nichols letters held by Yale University Library
- 360 letters relating to William Bowyer the younger and the Nichols family held by Columbia University, New York
- 90 letters relating to John Gough Nichols' pioneering work on medieval tiles held by Bucks County Historical Society at Doylestown, Pennsylvania
- 115 Nichols letters held by Chethams Library, Manchester
- 77 letters between the Nichols family and John Coakley Lettsom (1744-1815), physician
- 63 Nichols letters held by the National Library of Scotland
- 45 Nichols letters held by the Houghton Library, Harvard University
- 309 letters relating to Robert Surtees (1779-1834), historian of Durham and the Surtees Society.

There are also links from the database to full transcripts of the following documents:

### John Nichols

- Library catalogue, 1826

### John Bowyer Nichols

- Pocket diaries, 1797-1802
- Travel journal to Leicestershire, Birmingham, Worcester and Oxford, 1802

### John Gough Nichols

- Travel journal to the North East of England, Scotland, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Oxford, 1830
- Travel journals to Cheltenham, 1832; Oxford, 1833 and Leicester, 1833

### Mary Anne Iliffe Nichols

- Pocket diaries, 1823-1834
- Travel journal vol II pt ii: Oxford, 1844, 1846 and 1848; Stamford, (Lincs.) and Hargrave, (Northants.), 1853
- Travel journal vol IV pt ii. Beaumanor, (Leics.), Matlock, (Derbys.) and Birmingham, 1846
- Travel Journal vol X: Salisbury and Wilton, (Wilts.) 1854
- Travel journal vol XVIII pt 1: Paris, northern France and Belgium, 1853, Aix la Chapelle, and Dover, 1864, The Rhine, Germany, Switzerland and France, 1865-1866

**Free-text searches** find references to a person or book through the calendared texts of the letters and a link to a 316 page **Union Index** of calendared letters and transcribed journals identifies thousands of other people in a wide range of documents.

A 525 page '**Chronology**' traces principal events in the lives of the Nicholsons between 1745 and 1873. This includes an itinerary of their travels, details of their research interests and checklist of works they printed or were associated with.

## USES

The Project is opening the archive to those interested in the Nicholsons and the worlds in which they moved:

- Letters that once accompanied contributions to the *Gentleman's Magazine* are identifying anonymous or pseudonymous contributors. These are being incorporated in Professor Emily Lorraine de Montluzin's 'Attributions of Authorship in the *Gentleman's Magazine*' at <http://bsuva.org/bsuva/gm2/>
- Letters relating to the research and production of John Nichols' own books show how he used the *Gentleman's Magazine* and his wide network of antiquarian and literary friendships to locate manuscripts and rare books for his personal research.
- Study of travel journals and letters written by the Nicholsons is shedding light on their relationship with the provincial book trade.
- The database allows us to reconstruct the epistolary conversations of the Nichols family with their friends, clients and wide network of scholars, even though the original letters are scattered among repositories on both sides of the Atlantic or in private hands.
- The Nichols Archive includes important collections of autograph letters that were made by members of the Nichols family throughout the nineteenth century. The formation of these collections is documented in their correspondence and is of considerable interest for the history of collecting.

## SELECT PUBLICATIONS

- 'The Most Despicable Drudge in the Universe'? Ambition, Assistance and Experience in the papers of John Nichols and his family, 1765-1830' in Michael Harris, Giles Mandlebrote and Robin Myers, eds., *Craft and Capital* (forthcoming)
- 'A Copious Collection of Newspapers': John Nichols and his Collection of Newspapers, Pamphlets and News Sheets, 1760-1865.' An essay for the 2017 digital publication of the Nichols Newspaper Collection at the Bodleian Library, [http://www.gale.com/binaries/content/assets/gale-us-en/primary-sources/newsvault/gps\\_17th\\_18thcenturynicholsnewspaper-collection\\_essay\\_julian-pooley.pdf](http://www.gale.com/binaries/content/assets/gale-us-en/primary-sources/newsvault/gps_17th_18thcenturynicholsnewspaper-collection_essay_julian-pooley.pdf)
- 'Printers, Antiquaries and Collectors: The Nichols family and their press, 1777-1873' an essay for the 2017 'Picturing Places' website of the British Library <https://www.bl.uk/picturing-places/articles/the-nichols-family-and-their-press>
- 'A Laborious and Truly Useful Gentleman': Mapping the Networks of John Nichols (1745-1826), Printer, Antiquary and Biographer' *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies* vol. 38 no. 4 (2015), pp. 497-509.
- "'Joyous to a pitch of Bacchanalian Vivacity'. John Nichols as bon viveur, good company and historian of Leicestershire.' *The Leicestershire Historian*, (2015).
- Julian Pooley is a contributing editor to John Nichols's *The Progresses and public processions of Queen Elizabeth: A New Edition of Early Modern Sources* Five volume set. General editors, Elizabeth Goldring, Faith Eales, Elizabeth Clarke and Jayne Elisabeth Archer 5 vols (Oxford University Press, Jan 2014). **Winner of the 2015 Roland H. Bainton Book Prize for Reference and the 2015 MLA Prize for a Scholarly Edition.**
- 'Conciliating His Esteem.' John Nichols's Contribution to Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, to Biographies of Johnson and to later Johnsonian Scholarship.' *The Age of Johnson* 21 (2011) pp. 143-192.
- 'An Insatiable Thirst for Antiquities': The Collaborative Friendship of Richard Gough and John Nichols. *Bodleian Library Record* 22.1 Oct 2009 pp. 142-161.
- 'A pioneer of Renaissance scholarship: John Nichols and the Progresses of Queen Elizabeth' in *The Progresses, Pageants and Entertainments of Queen Elizabeth I* (Jane Archer, Elizabeth Goldring and Sarah Knight eds) Oxford: Oxford University Press (2007).
- 'The Printer, The City and the Hero: John Nichols and the Funeral of Admiral Lord Nelson' *The Nelson Dispatch* Volume 9 Part 1 (Jan 2006) pp. 25-34
- 'Owen Manning, William Bray and the writing of Surrey's county history, 1760-1832' *Surrey Archaeological Collections* 92 (2005) 91-125. See also [http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/arch-379-1/dissemination/pdf/vol\\_92/Surrey\\_Arch\\_Vol\\_92\\_91-124.pdf](http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/arch-379-1/dissemination/pdf/vol_92/Surrey_Arch_Vol_92_91-124.pdf)
- 'And Now a Fig for Mr Nichols!' Samuel Johnson, John Nichols and their Circle' *The New Rambler* Journal of the Johnson Society of London, Serial E VII (2003-2004), pp. 30-45.
- 'The Nichols Family (1745-1873)' (with Robin Myers) *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com)
- 'William Bray (1736-1832)' *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004)
- "'Very Various and Useful Labours'" The Papers of the Nichols Family as a Source for the *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth and King James I' Renaissance Journal* Volume 1 Number 7 (January 2003). See also <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/publications/journal/seven/pooley.doc>
- "'Very Various and Useful Labours'" The Papers of the Nichols Family as a Source for the *Progresses of Queen Elizabeth and King James I' Renaissance Journal* Volume 1 Number 7 (January 2003). See also <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/ren/publications/journal/seven/pooley.doc>
- 'Beyond the *Literary Anecdotes*: The Nichols Family Archive as a Source for Book Trade Biography' in *Lives in Print: Biography and the Book Trade from the Middle Ages to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* edited by M Harris, G Mandelbrote and R Myers (London: The British Library, 2002)
- 'The Nichols Archive Project. The papers of the Nichols family of Printers and Antiquaries as a Source for Book Trade History' *Book Trade History Group Newsletter* 42 (April 2002), pp. 3-5.

- Review of Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *Daily Life in Georgian England as reported in the 'Gentleman's Magazine'* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002). Review published at [www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review249](http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review249)
- 'The Nichols Archive Project and its Value for Leicester Historians' *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 75 (2001) 62-104. See also [www.le.ac.uk/lahs/downloads/2001/JPooleyTLAHS2001.pdf](http://www.le.ac.uk/lahs/downloads/2001/JPooleyTLAHS2001.pdf)
- 'The Papers of the Nichols Family and Business: New Discoveries and the Work of the Nichols Archive Project' *The Library* Seventh Series, 2 No 1 (March 2001), 10-52. See also <http://library.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/reprint/2/1/10?ijkey=hZzLcby1MskdYzU&keytype=ref>
- 'The Nichols Archive Project' *Manuscripts* 51 No 4 (Fall 1999), 301-316
- 'The Diary of Mary Anne Nichols, 1823-1834, a publisher's daughter in Hammersmith' *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society* 44 (1993) [1996], 171-197.
- 'The Diary of Mary Nichols: its value as a source for Local Historians', *The Local Historian* 25. 3, (August 1995), 130-141
- 'A Publisher's Daughter in Hampstead' *Camden History Review* 17 (1992), 21-26

See also:

- Caroline Wessel, Julian Pooley and Robin Jenkins, *Nichols' History Leicestershire. A Bicentenary Celebration 2015* (Leicestershire Archaeological Society, 2015)
- *Times Literary Supplement* 'NB' 4 Jan 2013.

## TALKS GIVEN

### **'Dry, thorny and barbarous paths?' The Nicholsons, their press and the Society of Antiquaries, 1777-1873**

A paper for the 'Institutions of Literature 1700-1900 Research Network' conference at the Society of Antiquaries, 13-14 July 2017.

### **'Minutely Attentive to Every Circumstance'. John Nichols and the Culture of Genealogy in the late Eighteenth Century.**

A paper for the conference 'Genealogy and Social Status in the Enlightenment: Rationalité généalogique et statut social au temps des Lumières' at the Maison Française d'Oxford, 12-13 January 2017

### **'Coarse in point of finish, but reliable for fidelity and local resemblance': Antiquaries, Draughtsmen and the Representation of Churches in Georgian Surrey.**

A paper for the Surrey Local History Symposium, 2 April 2016, 'Continuity and Change in Surrey Churches.'

### **'Joyous to a pitch of Bacchanalian Vivacity'. John Nichols as bon viveur, good company and historian of Leicestershire.**

A talk at a dinner to celebrate the bicentenary of the completion of John Nichols' *History and Antiquities of Leicestershire* hosted by Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 15 May 2015.

### **'A Laborious and Truly Useful Gentleman.' Mapping the Networks of John Nichols (1745-1826), Printer, Antiquary and Biographer.**

A paper for the conference, 'Networks of Improvement: British Literary Clubs and Societies, c.1760-1840' at the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies, University of York, 13-14 Mar 2015.

### **'The Very Nerves, Sinews and Vitality of Local History': John Nichols and the History of Leicestershire, 1775-1815.**

Delivered to Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 16 Oct 2014, the Friends of Hinckley Museum 15 Oct 2015 and Leicestershire Family History Society, March 2016.

### **Discovering the Archive of John Nichols, Printer and Biographer of the Society of Arts.**

A paper for the William Shipley Group Fellowship Centenary Symposium, 4 Jul 2014.

### **'Working tools almost daily in demand.' The Libraries of John Nichols and His Family.**

A paper presented to the Bibliographical Society in February 2013, showing how John Nichols and his family acquired and used books in their work as printers, literary biographers and antiquaries, 1745-1873

### **'An Irresistible Impulse to Proceed'. The Problem of Authorship in the Works of John Nichols.**

A paper for the London Book Trade Conference 2013, Working for the Booksellers: Authors and Publishers in Book Trade History.

### **'The Most Despicable Drudge in the Universe'? Ambition, Assistance and Experience in the papers of John Nichols and his family, 1765-1830.**

A paper for the London Book Trade Conference, 2011. 'A Skilled Workforce: Training and Collaboration in the Book Trades from the 16<sup>th</sup> century.'

### **'Conciliating His Esteem': The Contribution of John Nichols to Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, to Biographies of Johnson and to later Johnsonian Scholarship.**

Delivered at the Johnson 300 Tercentenary Conference organised by the Houghton Library at Harvard University in August 2009.

**John Nichols and Sixteenth Century Manuscript Studies**

Delivered to the Annual Conference of the De Vere Society, May 2009.

**‘An Insatiable Thirst for Antiquities’: The Collaborative Friendship of Richard Gough and John Nichols.**

Delivered at the Richard Gough Bicentenary Conference at the Bodleian Library, March 2009.

**‘A Packhorse to Literature’: John Nichols (1745-1826), printer, antiquary, biographer and collector.’**

A paper for the symposium: ‘Collectors and Collections from the Restoration to the Regency’ held at Christ Church College, Oxford, Nov 2008.

**John Nichols, the *Gentleman’s Magazine* and the Antiquarian Network.**

Delivered at the ‘Communities and networks in the Book Trade’ Conference at the University of Leicester in December 2007.

**Discovering the Library and Archive of John Nichols (1745-1826), Printer, Literary Biographer and Antiquary.**

The Cranston Lecture, Reigate Parish Church, October 2007.

**Discovering an Archive of Local History: The Papers of the Nichols Family of Printers and Antiquaries 1745-1873.**

Delivered to the Friends of Kingston Museum in September 2005 and revised for the Centre for English Local History, Kingston University, in January 2008, the S R Gardiner Society at Christ Church College, Oxford in October 2008 and St Albans and Hertfordshire Archaeological Society in March 2015 [Reviewed in the journal of the British Association for Local History, *Local History News* No. 116 Summer 2015 pp. 18-19

<http://www.balh.org.uk/publications/local-history-news/local-history-news-number-117-summer-2015> ].

***The Gentleman’s Magazine*: A Panorama of Georgian Life for Family and Local Historians.**

First delivered at the Family Records Centre in London in April 2006 and revised for numerous family and local history societies across Surrey and London to date.

**Rebuilding a Printing House. The Archive of John Nichols and his family: Printers, Antiquaries and Editors of the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, 1745-1873.**

Delivered to the Cambridge Book History Seminar in October 2004 and to the Society of Antiquaries of London in May 2005

**A Pioneer of Renaissance Scholarship: John Nichols and the *Progresses* of Queen Elizabeth and King James.**

Delivered at the Annual Conference of the Renaissance Society of America, New York, April 2004

**Owen Manning, William Bray and the Writing of Surrey’s County History, 1760-1832**

First delivered to Surrey Local History Symposium in November 2003 and revised for numerous family and local history societies across Surrey to date.

**Printers and Antiquaries: The papers of John Nichols and his family with special reference to Leicestershire.**

Delivered to the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society in March 2003.

**The Nichols Family Archive as a Source for Book Trade History.**

Delivered to the London Book Trade History Conference in London in December 2001.

**The Nichols Archive Project: An examination of Documents Created and accumulated by a Remarkable Family of Printers and Antiquaries between the birth of John Nichols in 1745 and the death of his grandson, John Gough Nichols, in 1873.’**

Delivered to the Bibliographical Society in January 1999.