

# CASE STUDY: FLOOD AT HULL UNIVERSITY



In the surge flooding of June 2007, Hull University Archives suffered two floods in quick succession within its basement storage area, housing irreplaceable archives and manuscripts dating from the late 11th century highly valuable to researchers and historians from all over the world.

440 boxes of archives and volumes were submerged in the foul flood waters and in need of urgent specialist attention to stabilise the damage and to restore the irreplaceable collection. Hull University had been a member of Harwell's Priority user Service for many years and immediately called Harwell's Priority User Hotline.

A senior Project Manager from Harwell attended site immediately to triage assess and commence the recovery process. Specialist packing crates and an articulated vehicle were taken to site and the process of packing the damaged archives into the crates began swiftly, with utmost care and attention to the condition of the fragile archives. Over 500 crates were recovered from site in one day and stabilised in freezer storage on the same day, which ensured that material suffered minimal deterioration.

All material required very careful and controlled freeze-vacuum drying at Harwell and was restored to an excellent condition. Sanitisation was also a vital step in the restoration process, as the flood waters presented numerous microbiological hazards and other contaminants, which posed grave health and safety concerns. The archives were successfully decontaminated so that they posed no risk to those handling the material in the future. The restoration process was a complete success and all items were successfully reinstated.

Judy Burg, Hull University archivist commented:

*"It is difficult to believe that ... the same boxes and files were water-logged and looked to be unsalvageable - it is very impressive. Our use of Harwell's services enabled the treatment and preservation of material - in quantities, at a speed and with a level of success which would not have been possible otherwise. I am certainly glad that we took the decision to register as Priority Users and so set up a relationship with them as suppliers several years ago"*

This project was undertaken in conjunction with an unprecedented number of other major and complex loss claims by Harwell. The surge flooding event of Summer 2007 brought an average annual number of instructions in the space of just a few weeks. However, Harwell's unrivalled expertise, capacity, and project management experience in major loss and surge events ensured that each of our clients received excellent service levels and focussed attention to recover their irreplaceable collections and business critical data.

*The archives were successfully decontaminated so that they posed no risk to those handling the material in the future. The restoration process was a complete success and all items were successfully reinstated.*

