



**Brunel**  
University  
London

# **BFSS ARCHIVES**

## **ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2024**

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON  
ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

# OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

!! Thank you for  
helpful response. !!

RESEARCHER, JANUARY 2024

!! My time at the  
BFSS Archives was  
incredibly helpful  
and I was able to  
cite portions of the  
correspondence and  
annual reports in my  
assessed essay. !!

RESEARCHER, MARCH 2024



We are pleased to present the eleventh British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) Archives Annual Impact Report 2024.

Among the many highlights to tell you about this year are –

- Visit of Joseph Lancaster descendants
- Conservation of Joseph Lancaster letters
- NEW BFSS leaflet
- 6,817 entries in the CALM archive catalogue
- Instagram – [brunel\\_archives\\_sc](#) - posts

Over the past year, we have received 98 enquiries relating to the BFSS archives on a range of subjects, and welcomed 6 researchers, two of whom visited twice, to our Reading Room.

On a staffing note, we said goodbye to Sarah Trim-West and Poppy, Sarah's Assistance Dog.

## Staff

**MANDY MORDUE**

Head of Records, Archives and Special Collections

**TACE FOX**

Archives and Special Collections Manager

**SARAH TRIM-WEST**

Archive Assistant (until 31/12/23)



LETTER No.2 (cont'd)

have reason to believe I have broken *(missing)* ice for its  
 and that the public mind is roused in their favor. There s  
 on their part to improve the opening and they deeply regret  
 previously expended much money in building to very little  
 they had been better acquainted with my plans they might b  
 more good at much less expense & trouble They considered  
the night as being as no other occasion could have possibl  
 in such inclement weather - On sixth day I Lectured in De  
 persons - Three of the Strutts (persons who are almost Lord  
 is to be *(missing)* influence) and their Families were present  
 his Lady also attended & the whole were highly gratified  
 select & much *(missing)* in number than I should have expect  
 I am assured the subject there shall *(missing)* Joseph Strut  
 had been raising thirty thousand pounds - for building an  
 was now engaged in *(Missing)* annual subscriptions. He expect  
 have done with that business & the *(missing)* endeavour to s  
 had no dou*(missing)* success. Maurice Cross conducts himsel  
 himself much beloved every way & gives *(missing)* effect to t  
 Milling in Bow who have never known the plan before *(missir*  
 to a poor few at Loughborough It could be no harm to sper  
 evening with a few as my exertions tomorrow night must be  
 expense The Lecture will I hope be productive as the town  
 thousand inhabitants and in that case I shall remit home t  
 for my recent drafts hitherto the journey has been a losi  
 sufficiently well to begin a career of active Labour & acc  
 every night this week I drew on thee for £40 at Northamp  
 ecester the *(missing)* meet the deficiency of proceeds the  
 supply of cash in hands for us both in travelling differer  
 set of Lectures in succession and then follow up every day  
 exertion For through Lecturing will do much good - & eve  
 many proselites to the *(missing)* yet nothing but Lecturing  
 clear my expenses - This I fully intend to do as far as I  
 admits - I have had one happiness in this journey, that of  
 and on the way of attending Friends meetings which I have (c  
 to be interfered with by more *(oblit)* merits This has been  
 e and *(oblit)* greatly needed - In meetings my mind has bee  
 is to others, whatever may have been my secret engagements  
 plans - I feel a great weight on me this journey - and it  
 with me. The journey will I hope be eventually consolator

The British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) Archive is a unique collection which covers the period 1798 to 1976. It contains a wide range of materials in many formats, such as official papers, letters, publications, student registers, photographs, maps, plans, trophies, clothing and furniture. It is approximately 178 linear metres.

The records include Joseph Lancaster's letters (1810-12), committee minutes and papers, financial records, handwritten student applications with supporting testimonials and correspondence, student registers, teaching practice reports, establishment and progress of the British Schools, 19th century schools' (both UK and foreign) correspondence, Education Commissions returns from British schools, BFSS charities and funds, agents and inspector reports, annual reports, student magazines (such as the B's Hum), photographs of staff, students and buildings, teaching manuals and lesson books, portraits of principals of the teacher training colleges, clothing such as blazers, ties and sporting honours caps, furniture and memorial plaques. It also contains particularly unique and irreplaceable items such as a copybook of examples of handwriting and needlework done by slave children from a British school in Jamaica, (presented to the BFSS in 1826), individual sewing samples, sketchbooks and other personal memoirs of former staff and students, and silver 'monitorial' medals.

These records contain a wealth of detailed information on the Society and its colleges, schools, staff and alumni, as well as the overall progress of education in Britain and overseas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

There is also a large selection of educational books and pamphlets, many of them rare editions, dating from the 19th century, including works by Lancaster, Bell, Pestalozzi and Froebel - leading educationists of the time, and Victorian and Edwardian children's books. One collection of books was presented by David Salmon, biographer of Joseph Lancaster and former student and tutor of Borough Road College, and Principal of Swansea Teacher Training College.

## Cataloguing

There are now 6,817 BFSS catalogue entries in our online catalogue. In the past year, we have added a further 244 new catalogue entries including the Joseph Lancaster letters and the BFSS artefacts - further information is later in the Report. In addition, 631 catalogue descriptions were improved - either with further information added or digitised copies added - e.g. adding names to the Borough Road College year group photos.

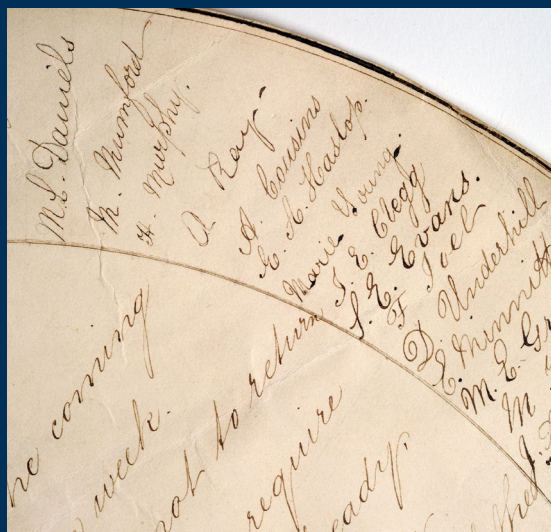
There are now over 2,083 digitised archives on our BFSS catalogue.



# OPENING UP THE ARCHIVES

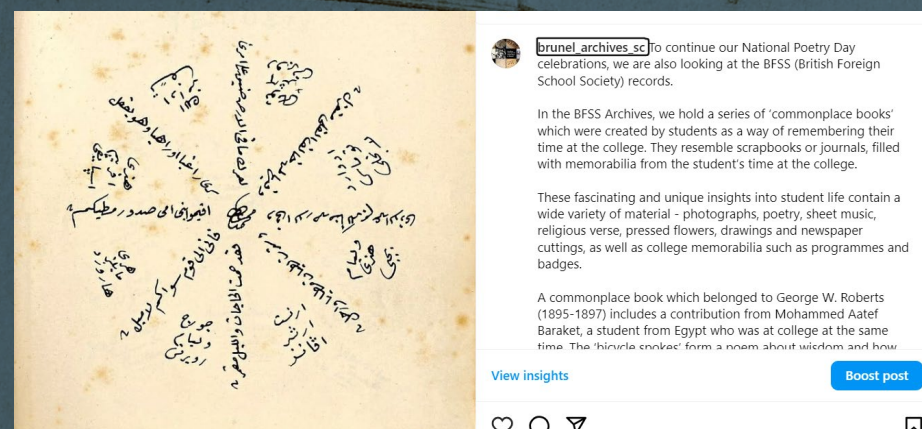
**Instagram** – our Instagram profile is growing! Since the last report, we have posted 77 times and now have 161 followers.

Over the past year, posts relating to the BFSS have included – The Register of Male Students 1804-1821 as part of publicising the current exhibition ‘Celebrating Brunel’, which celebrates the University’s history including its predecessor colleges. The Register is opened on page 813 which includes the registration of four students – James Coy, George Fox, William Allen and Joseph Smith, all of whom were from Africa. They were recommended to Borough Road College by the African Institute, and following their teacher training went to Sierra Leone. The African Institute was founded in 1807 after the abolition of slavery in the UK.



**“I really appreciate what you have done for me.”**

**ENQUIRER, MARCH 2024**



To further show our international heritage, we also posted images from Luther Dudley’s commonplace book (1892-1894) of a photo of British, Egyptian and Thai students at Borough Road College in football kits, top hats and fezes. Alongside this, we included an image from George W. Roberts’ (1895-1897) commonplace book of a poem by fellow student Mohammed Aatef Baraket. The ‘bicycle spokes’ form a poem about wisdom and how to live life well. The calligraphy is old style Arabic.

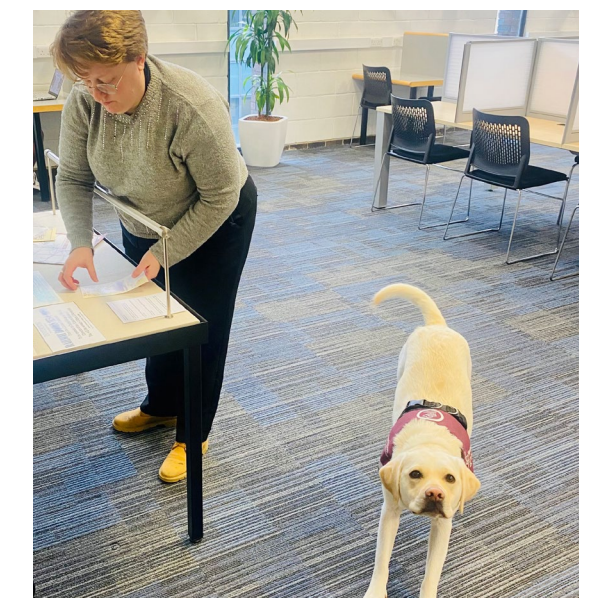


Leading up to Christmas, we posted a series of images linked to ‘The Twelve Days of Christmas’ carol. For the tenth day of Christmas, Archives and Special Collections gave ... Ten BFSS Annual Reports.

Finally, to celebrate International Women’s Day we highlighted, the Stockwell College (a female college) Round Robin which dates from May 1871. It represented the fight for equality for female students who wanted the same rights as their male counterparts at Borough Road College including equal holiday entitlement.

**Farewell to Poppy and Sarah** - Just before Christmas, we said goodbye to Archive and Record Assistant, Sarah and her assistance dog Poppy.

Sarah joined Brunel in 2019 and helped build the BFSS CALM catalogue including scanning items such as the Annual Reports and secondary sources, and adding them to the catalogue so that digital copies are available. We wish Sarah the best in her new and first role as Archivist following the completion of her archives course.

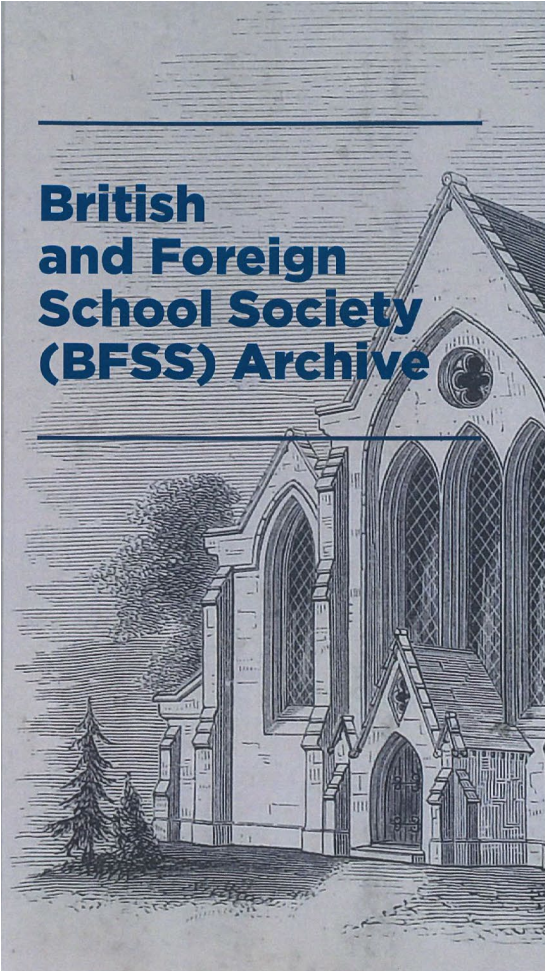




**New Leaflet – British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) Archive**

As we continue to join the Archives and Special Collections together as one service, we have been busy updating and creating new information leaflets about Archives and Special Collections, and the individual archives we hold.

We updated the general archive leaflet and created a new leaflet specifically for the BFSS Archives – we hope you like it.



**Artefacts** – The BFSS Archives include a wide range of artefacts from clothing such as blazers and sporting caps, to medals and coins, portraits of College Principals, and various items of furniture including memorial plaques.

We are in the process of adding the items to CALM with an image. There are 119 items, many of which now have images attached but we do need to take photos of some of the items still.

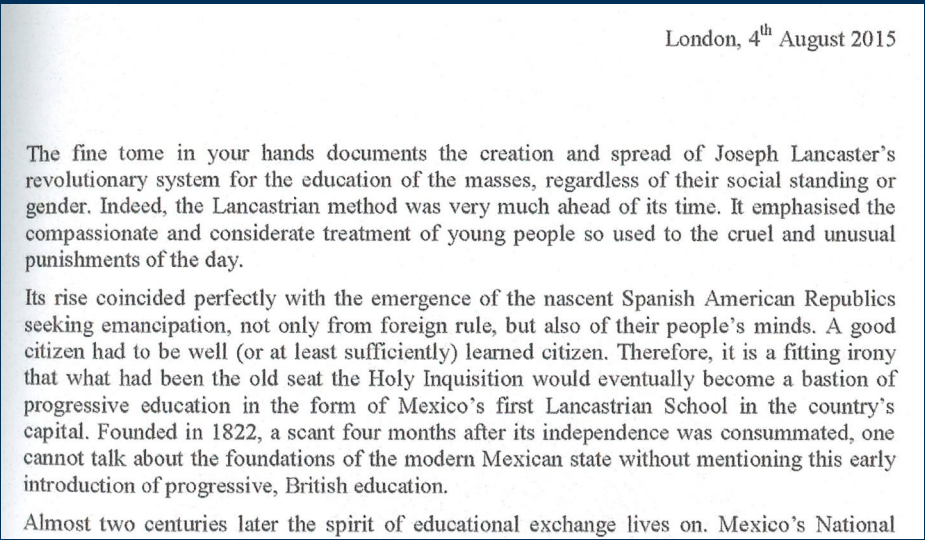
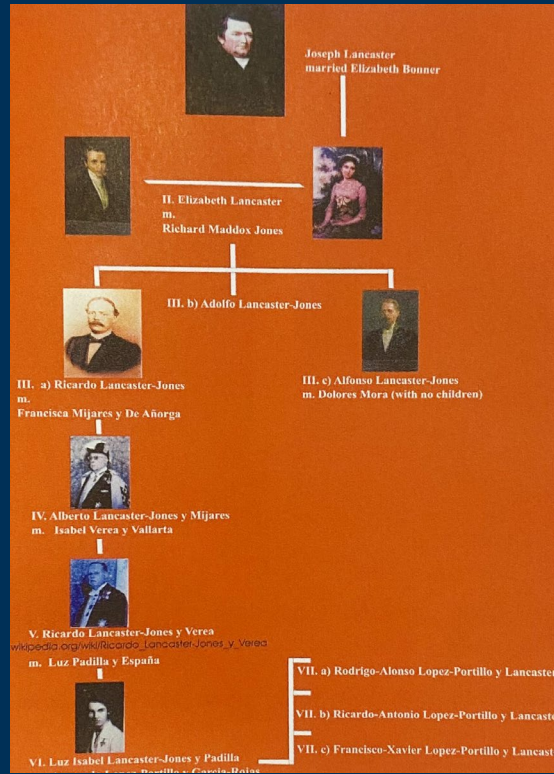






### Ricardo, Francisco and Rodrigo - descendants of Joseph Lancaster visit the BFSS Archives

In September 2023, we had the pleasure of welcoming the direct descendants of Joseph Lancaster (founder of the BFSS) Ricardo, Francisco and Rodrigo Lopez-Portillo y Lancaster-Jones to the archive. The brothers had a particular interest in the legacy of their great, great, great, great grandfather, following their own in-depth research tracing Lancaster's history and the impact of his work. The brothers, based in Mexico, kicked off their visit to the UK with a trip to the British Schools Museum in Hitchin before contacting us with a hope of exploring the BFSS collection we house in the archive.



The origins of the BFSS began with Joseph Lancaster, born in Southwark, 1778, the son of a soldier and a cane sieve maker. Developing a passion for education at a young age, he established a school in a room within his father's house where older students taught the younger ones. This led to a style of teaching which became known as the "monitorial system". His dedication to providing free education to all children was evident in the notice he posted outside the entrance of his schoolhouse in 1801:

*'All who will may send their children and have them educated freely (the expense of writing books excepted), and those to whom the above offer may not prove acceptable may pay for them at a very moderate price.'*

By 1803, Lancaster's innovative schooling system had successfully educated hundreds of students and was going from strength to strength, drawing the attention of generous benefactors who supported this charitable cause. Amidst a period of financial hardship for many families, the introduction of free schools and often free school meals, was a welcome relief. Unfortunately, managing finances was not one of Lancaster's strong suits and so by 1810 a committee of benefactors was formed to oversee the administration of funds. Committee members included Joseph Fox and its treasurer William Allen, a Quaker, philanthropist and supporter of the anti-slavery movement.

Sadly, Joseph Lancaster and the committee frequently butted heads over Joseph's noble albeit unrealistic ambitions, resulting in Joseph resigning. Soon after, the Lancastrian system was renamed the British and Foreign School Society who not only continued to assist in providing education in the UK, but also in developing the society's activities overseas and implementing teacher training colleges, which would eventually supersede the Lancastrian system.

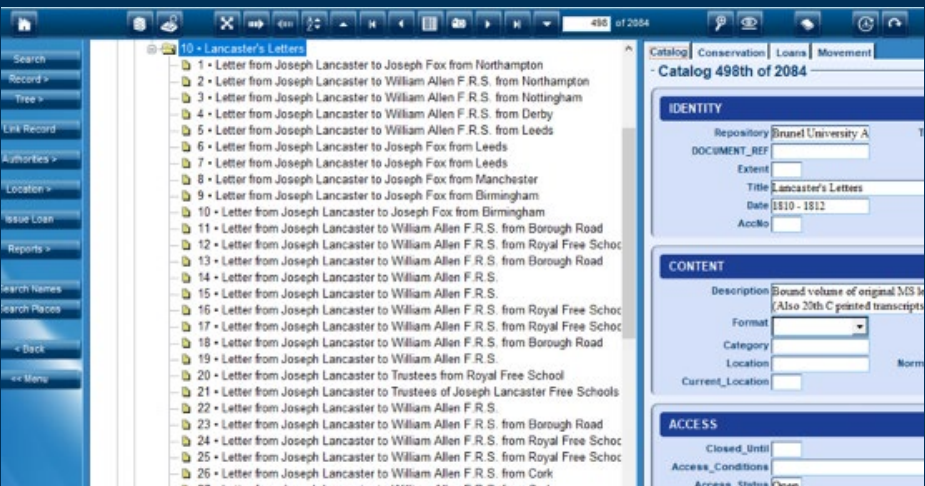
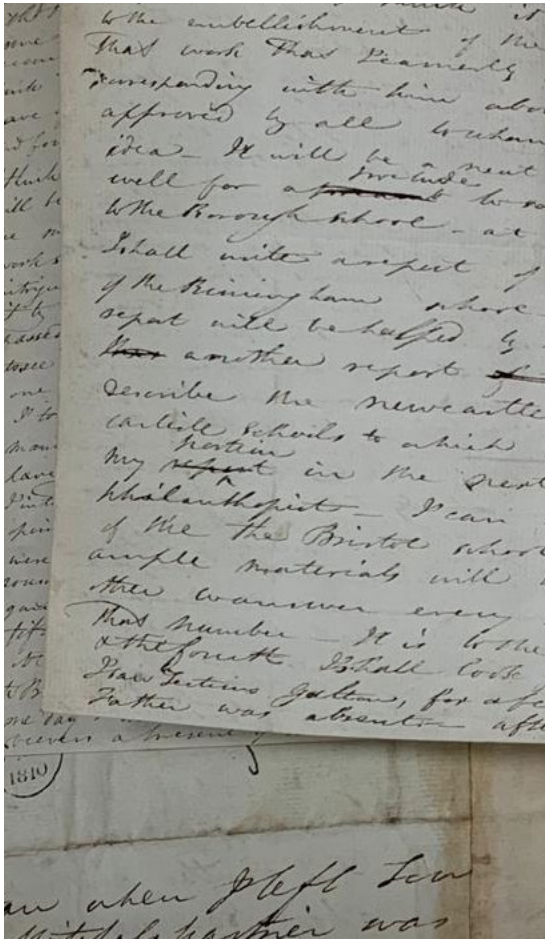
Nevertheless, Joseph Lancaster has left behind a profound legacy of which Ricardo, Francisco and Rodrigo are understandably proud. Ricardo kindly gifted us a copy of his book, 'Innovation in Education' in which he details the impact of the Lancastrian system on education globally with particular reference to his home country of Mexico where Lancastrian schools continued until 1890 - the longest period of time. The launch of the book also commemorated the second Lancastrian School in Mexico's 200th anniversary.

During the brothers visit we created a display in the office with key records that chart the history of the BFSS including photographs, reports, monitorial medals and admission lists and perhaps most poignantly, Joseph Lancaster's letters written between 1810-1812 where we were able to point out Joseph's signature on the page. We concluded the visit with a tour of the strong room and a chat (away from the records) over tea and cake. The visit highlighted the need to conserve the Lancaster's letters and so we decided to prioritise this as our next project. Work is now well underway. We hope to share the fruits of this work with Ricardo, Francisco and Rodrigo once complete and hope to welcome the three brothers back to the archive one day.



# JOSEPH LANCASTER LETTERS

During the visit from Joseph Lancaster’s descendant’s, we found that his signature on several key documents, which we put on display, were hidden by a non-archival grade tape that we ideally wouldn’t use on historic documents. Further to this, we realised there was a need for a general project to be carried out involving remedial conservation cleaning, and unfolding and removing the letters from the binding. The letters had survived over 200 years having been written between 1810-1812 and we wanted to do what we could to ensure they continued to be accessible to researchers in years to come.



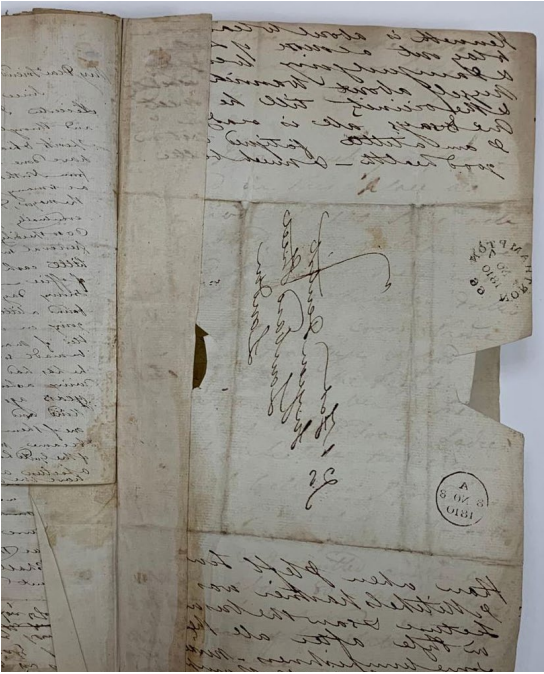
LETTER No.2

To Wm Allen F.R.S Nottingham 18 of 11mo 1810

My dear Friend

Since I wrote to Joseph Fox from Leicester I have been active travelling and through not in ill health, if my spirits & health had been better I should have done much more - I have not heard from Northampton since I left it but there are so many staunch Friends in that town including the mayor, that I have no fear of the thing eventually prospering there - I only hope it will do so speedily and that they will make Spencer Percival subscribe - I wish they may get a little cash out of him before he is cast out of office - From Northampton in a very snowy day I proceeded to Leicester were I found a little school of one hundred children going on well and I think the master capable of managing 300 (or at least he might be made so in a short time . what instructions he has had were but partial and received during a short time in London two or three years ago - The clergy at Leicester were very kind and were prime movers in this school one of them went round the town with me & became my pioneer - He obtained the use of the Guildhall from the mayor - & I appointed a Lecture at near a weeks distance, so as to have full advantage of good notice in the newspapers etc. Having done this I went off to Warwick & visited my cousins (the purpose of which visit will form a very important part of a future communication) I left Edward Enoch with them intending to call there on my return home, and then shall arrange finally for his becoming a future schoolmaster for which I think him a promising Boy - Having taken leave of my cousins I visited Coventry Schoolroom and found a most capital schoolroom of which I think Richd Holland & his pro-tempore aid du con. Daking Moore will be very proud - My Friends were ever glad to see me and I was equally pleased to see the work so prosperous notwithstanding the secret intrigue used to excite base prejudices against it by the High Church party - the same night I passed on to Birmingham were Veevers rejoiced to see me and he & McRae were ready to eat one another Here finding myself rather low I took two days repose at the hospitable mansion of my kind Friend Charles Lloyd - and have since resumed my work much refreshed I intended to Lecture at Birmingham but the opinion of several active members of the committee were so much against it, from the fear of rousing up their sleeping enemies that I gave way to them and consider that I lost fifty pounds which I might fairly have obtained by so doing - However my journey to Birmingham was not in vain altogether one day I went into school intending to make Veevers a present of a watch as a reward for his merit (which certainly highly deserves the honor it has) I found he was absent and had the happiness of remaining in school and seeing everything go on like Clockwork 400 Boys governed by a little fellow not

As such, we consulted a specialist paper conservator, Danila Narcisi, who identified that there were 37 letters across 183 pages, bound together in a volume using a cotton thread and animal glue. Prior to beginning work on the letters, Danila carried out an investigation as to the properties of the pages to calculate the best treatment process to ensure their longevity. This included several pH tests of random pages, which produced an average pH of 6, and a check of the absorbency of the paper, in the event it was possible to carry out a wet treatment. This was carried out in conjunction with a test of the ink’s properties using non-bleeding iron test paper strips, which unfortunately informed us that the ink was iron gall ink and wet treatments would not be possible. In better news a UV light inspection used to detect mould damage informed us that there was no mould on the letters. The final test involved a spot test of the adhesive used on the spine. From this Danila calculated that a methyl cellulose poultice would dissolve the binding and the tape adhesive used on the letters.



Following the initial assessment, we planned for two key stages to the project. Firstly, to remove the letters from the binding without damaging the paper or iron gall ink used, and then cleaning the ingrained surface level dirt, unfolding the letters and re-housing them in melinex pockets before placing the letters in a conservation grade box.

The second stage of the project would be to repair tears and holes on the pages; an altogether more time-consuming process. We therefore prioritised the first stage to ensure the safety of the letters before embarking on the more painstaking second stage. This would also allow us to photograph the letters and attach them to our catalogue alongside a transcription of the letter so that researchers would be able to remotely access the collection online, minimising handling and potential damage.

The letters are on our catalogue Home Page (brunel.ac.uk), so do take a look but we will update you with further progress in time.



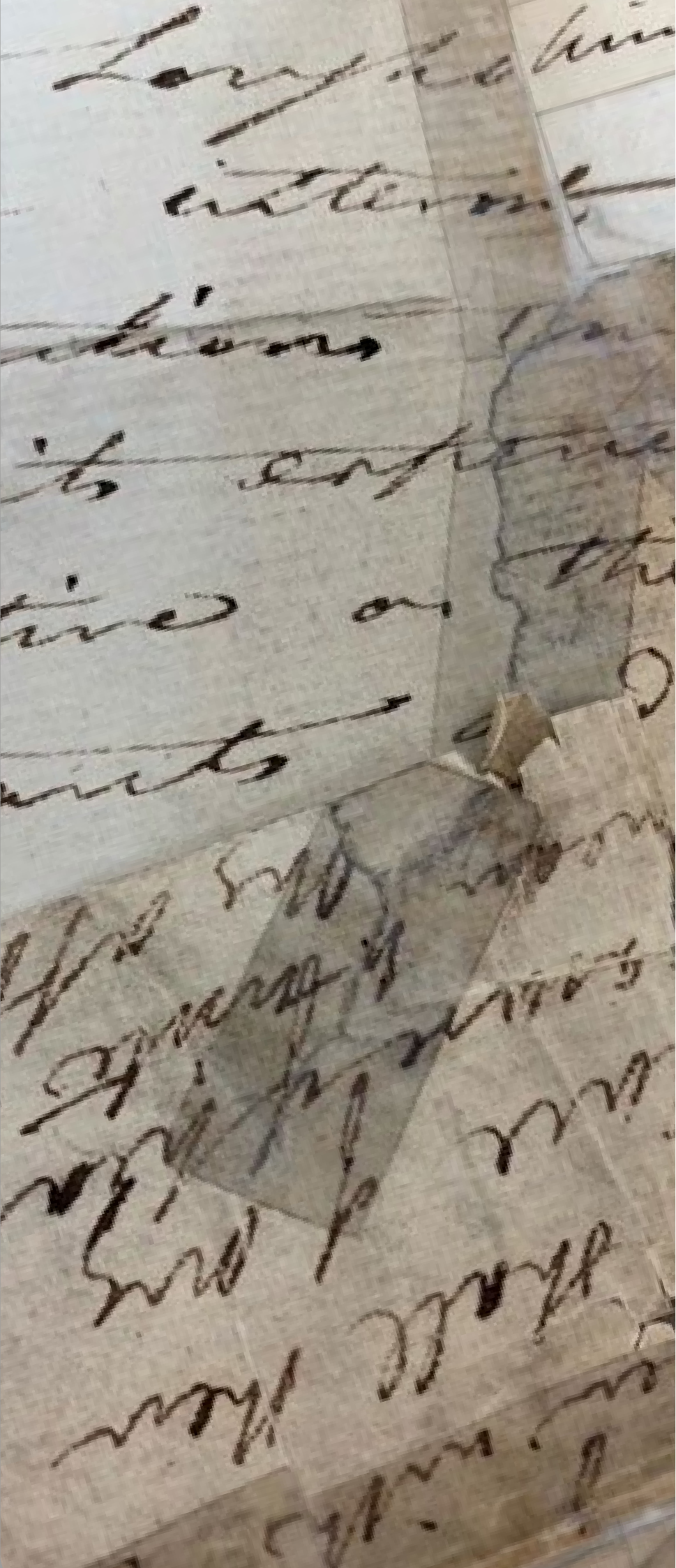
# ENQUIRIES AND ACCESSIONS

**“Thank you so much for your swift response to my request. I was overwhelmed already to discover this about my Grandmother.”**

**ENQUIRER, MAY 2023**

**“I am most grateful to your very helpful email and for all the work you have done to answer my question.”**

**ENQUIRER, SEPTEMBER 2023**



## Enquiries

Since last year’s report, we have received 98 BFSS archive enquiries.

The enquiries have covered the following topics:

- Haiti Foreign Correspondence
- Ross on Wye British School
- Missionaries in Haiti
- Borough Road College sporting images for 225th Anniversary Dinner
- Thornbury British School
- Slave Book
- Elementary schools in Oxfordshire
- BFSS Foreign Correspondence
- Jamaica Foreign Correspondence
- Barbados Foreign Correspondence



# VISITORS TO THE ARCHIVE

## Accessions

We are delighted to announce the following new acquisitions which have been kindly donated.

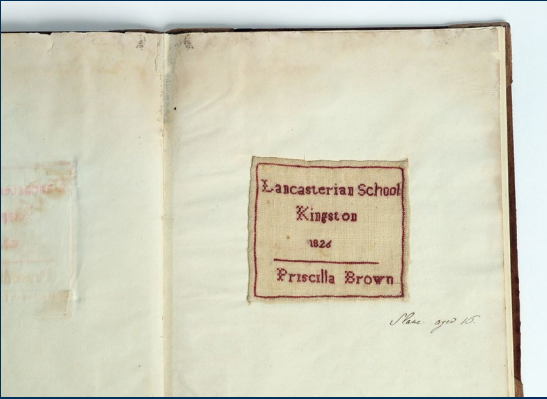
New Acquisition	Description
ACC2023/17	BFSS Annual Reports and Financial Statements 2022
ACC2023/25	A selection of items relating to John Graham Hallsworth's time at Borough Road College - Invitation to the Silver Jubilee Dance hosted by the Borough Road College Students' Union Society Programme for the 150th Anniversary of the Foundation of Borough Road College 24 March, 1960 B's Hum Magazine of Borough Road College, Whitsun 1958
ACC2023/37	"Innovacion en la Educacion - Innovation in Education" by Ricardo-Antonio Lopez-Portillo y Lancaster-Jones (2015)
ACC2023/38	A couple of books that belonged to Minnie Jackson, a former Stockwell College student (1899-1902)

Over the past year, we have welcomed six researchers wishing to consult BFSS material.

Researcher	Subject	Items viewed	No of days
Academic (Canada)	Early 19th Century education reforms	Annual Reports, Committee Minutes, Agents and Inspectors, Foreign Correspondence – West Indies, Guyana and Jamaica	7
Academic (UK)	Missionary print culture	BFSS FC South Pacific The Philanthropist	1
Academic (USA)	Education and slavery in the West Indies	Jamaica, Antigua and St Kitts Correspondence, Annual Reports for 1827-31 and George F. Bartle articles	1
Academic (USA)	Needlework - how the samples of Black schoolgirls' needlework in William Knibb's Slave Book(1826) fit into intersecting histories of British education, slavery, and girlhood.	School Manuals/Salmon collection, Samples of Needlework and correspondence	1
Academic (UK)	Slavery	Foreign Correspondence: Jamaica	1

*“I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Brunel University. Some BFSS reports have been digitized which has been incredibly helpful to refer back to the material I saw in-person.”*

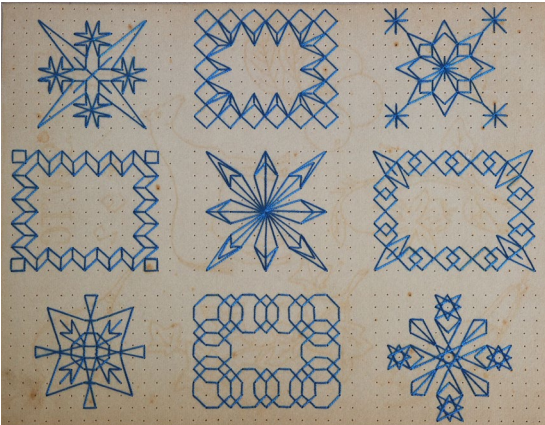
RESEARCHER, JANUARY 2024





Looking forward  
2023-2024

- Finish cataloguing the Stockwell College archives;
- Continue to digitise BFSS material and add to our CALM catalogue;
- Promote the collection on Instagram.



Schoolgirls needlework samplers have recently garnered more attention within the antique market and amongst material culture theorists, British art historians, and historians of early modern America. In regard to Black schoolgirl samplers, the vast majority of extant samplers and research conducted thus far has been from the United States of America.

The wider literature on Black schoolgirl needlework samplers is quite minimal. However, Kelli Racine Coles, Chloe Wigston Smith, Diane Batts Morrow, and Gloria Seaman Allen have all recently explored how African American girls' samplers present a specific cultural, racial, and religious identity that has been influenced by the migration of patterns, motifs, and needlewomen from Scotland, England, and France.

My MA dissertation will primarily investigate the production and reception of needlework samplers made by freed and enslaved schoolgirls in Kingston, Jamaica. This dissertation will also explore the connections between Black girls' samplers, needlework manuals, imperialism, and the wider Anglophone Atlantic World.

More specifically, the project will explore the creative and utilitarian differences amongst samplers made by African American schoolgirls in New York City, schoolgirls at the Foundling Hospital in London, and enslaved and emancipated schoolgirls in Kingston.

To do so, I will utilize an interdisciplinary approach to the material, visual, and textual sources that have influenced manual-based embroidery.

This project is the first to provide a comprehensive analysis of a collection of enslaved and emancipated Black schoolgirls' needlework made in pre-emancipation Kingston, Jamaica.

My research builds upon recent scholarship on needlework that has expanded our understanding of who stitched and why. My research project is an additional intervention into the histories of embroidery, slavery, childhood, British education, and imperialism. More specifically, my dissertation investigates how extant needlework manuals and its derivative samplers fit into the wider history of embroidery.

RESEARCHER, JANUARY 2024







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