Lockdown Diaries – Additional Information

Overview:
In our archive service, researchers often consult handwritten notes and diaries to provide themselves with full and varied background information on key events in history. The official record of such an event is only the first thing a researcher wants to see, after that we always find that it is personal stories, illustrating how this event impacted on real people and how it changed their lives that are truly treasured when trying to unlock history.

We all now have the opportunity to contribute to future research and historians’ understanding of this pandemic and how it affected our community and beyond. By writing a diary we can hear your stories – your evidence – almost as they happen, while events and feelings are fresh in your minds.

Journals can be a few words each day or more in depth, lengthy entries. They could just record what you ate and what you wore on days when you don’t have much energy to dedicate to diary writing. On other days, you might find it cathartic to write down all your feelings and experiences. Some days, maybe you will find that an illustration or a doodle is more expressive than words. Remember to make the journal your own, it’s for you to document how you got through this time – decorate it, or not, as you would like and note anything that comes to you. No detail will be too trivial in the future.

Donating your diary:
We hope that once this period in history is over, you will consider donating your diary to our NHS Forth Valley collection so that we can build a collective memory of our community during the coronavirus pandemic. Of course, you will not be obliged to donate your diary, we will only accession what you’re comfortable with donating. When it comes to the point of donation we will talk to you about copyright and the terms of your deposit and you will be absolutely free to decide not to donate your diary if you’re not happy with these terms.

If you are depositing a diary, it would be very helpful if you could give it to us with a very short paragraph which includes your name, where you are from, your occupation and a little bit about yourself. This only needs to be a couple of sentences, we ask for it because it will help us, and researchers, to understand more about the context in which your diary was written.

The project will continue for at least the duration of lockdown and most likely long after that. We will update you on when you are able to donate your diaries through social media and our ‘Documenting the coronavirus pandemic’ webpage. If you would like to be contacted directly then you can email us with your details on archives@stir.ac.uk
Any material which comes to us will be catalogued. This means that each item is assigned a unique reference number and archive staff will write a brief description to help researchers find it on our online catalogue. An example of some well used diaries in our archive are those kept by film and theatre director Lindsay Anderson. You can see how his diaries have been catalogued here to give you an idea of how your diary might appear in the NHS archive: https://collections.stir.ac.uk/collections/getrecord/GB559_LA_6_1

During cataloguing and going forwards, we will take any measures which are necessary to preserve the document. This might involve repackaging it in archival materials, repairing damaged items, or creating digital copies.

Once the cataloguing process is complete, your diary will be listed on our online catalogue and researchers can request to look at it in our reading room. Cataloguing can be a time-consuming process, particularly if we receive a large quantity of material, so the catalogue entries for your items will not appear online immediately but we will be working behind the scenes to get everything numbered and available as soon as possible.

**Access to your diary and personal information:**

Anyone who is interested will be able to come into our reading room to look at your diary or anything else you have deposited. This can include anyone from academics, students at the University, local and family historians to media professionals and creative practitioners. It is permissible for any of these researchers to request copies of material you have deposited as long as it is for their own private research unless you have specified otherwise. Copies may be provided on paper as photocopies or electronically as scans but researchers will have to sign an agreement to state that any copies they receive will not be reproduced elsewhere.

When you donate your diary, we will ask you how you are happy for us to use it and we will not go against your wishes.

We understand that diaries are likely to contain personal and private information. We will discuss with you what information you are happy to share. It may be that we will redact names or apply a closure period to your diary – this would mean that no-one will be able to access it except for Archive staff for a set period of time. We can discuss with you what an appropriate closure period might be, should you wish to apply one.

There is also the possibility that your diary may contain personal or private information about somebody other than you. It may be, if there are only a couple of people mentioned, that we are able to obtain their permission for this information to be made available. But if there are many people or they do not give their consent then under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) we will need to close your diary to protect the rights of those individuals. We will discuss with you whether there is the possibility that your diary contains sensitive information about other people but don’t worry if you are unsure what this would entail as we will double check the diary ourselves.
Some helpful tips for participating:

- Date your entries so that we know when you made your observations.

- While we encourage participation from all age groups, it might be easier for younger children to answer simple questions - such as “What was the best thing that happened today?” or “Are you finding anything hard at the moment?” - for inclusion in other’s diaries rather than complete diaries of their own. Family and household diaries are also encouraged if members of the same household would like to write a diary together.

- It can be difficult to know where to start or what to write. If you’re struggling, why not have a set way you begin every entry, like recording the weather or answering a set question. On our main ‘Documenting the coronavirus pandemic’ webpage we have a link to some helpful writing prompts from Coquitlam Heritage, Canada which may help you get going.

- While we are only accepting diaries from residents of the NHS Forth Valley area and staff at students at the University of Stirling, there are many other diary projects taking place across the country. If you have written a diary and wish to donate it to an archive but are not in one of our three categories then still feel free to get in touch and we’ll try and help you to find your local archive.