

Sir George Scharf in the NPG Archive

The seven sketchbooks documenting Sir George Scharf's involvement with the Manchester Art Treasures exhibition are just a small fraction of records in the NPG archive that he created. [Scharf's personal archive](#) contains records of his work for the National Portrait Gallery, including correspondence with trustees, the acquisition of portraits and the management of the collection; work for various external bodies, including correspondence, research notes and further records relating to the Manchester Art Treasures exhibition; and private papers of Scharf and his family.

Scharf was a prolific sketcher and his archive contains 223 sketchbooks he created between the years 1831-1893. The sketchbooks he populated were used for different purposes, it is useful to summarise their respective content and how Scharf organised them.

- [Trustees Sketchbooks](#), given the code T.S.B. by Scharf. These were created in the course of picture research Scharf carried out for the NPG, this included surveying and sketching portraits in private and public collections; listing and indexing collections; and identifying and authenticating portraits. This work enabled the Gallery to secure the best and most important portraits for the nation. These sketchbooks Scharf had embossed on the front with T.S.B. followed by its number (in Roman Numerals), not all Sketchbooks were used by Scharf which explains some gaps in the numbers. 34 sketchbooks, spanning 1857-1894.
- [Miscellaneous Trustees Sketchbooks](#), these fall outside the Trustees Sketchbooks sequence as the contents relate solely to specific collections including the British Museum, Westminster Abbey and Buckingham Palace. 19 sketchbooks (2 blank), spanning 1859-1880.
- [Travels with Sir Charles Fellows Sketchbooks](#), Scharf worked as an archaeological assistant to Sir Charles Fellows on two expeditions to Asia Minor. These sketchbooks depict scenes Scharf encountered on his travels. 20 sketchbooks, spanning 1839-1844.
- [Scharf sketchbooks](#), given the code S.S.B by Scharf. Sketchbooks compiled by Scharf in a personal capacity, the earliest begun at 11 years old. The later sketchbooks are of a uniform size and contain details of Scharf's travels throughout the United Kingdom, informal studies of his friends socialising and sketches of portraits from houses he visited, often with notes and references to the Trustees Sketchbooks. These sketchbooks Scharf had embossed with their number and sometimes with either

Figure 1 Sketch of a portrait of Mary, Queen of Scots, 1860 (NPG7/1/3/1/2/4)



Figure 2 Sketch of a picnic at Sidbury, 1873 (NPG7/3/4/2/101)

S.S.B or G.S. The numbering is not always sequential with some numbers being used more than once, i.e. 42, 42a, 42b. 42c. 148 sketchbooks (6 blank), spanning 1831-1893.

- [Miscellaneous Private Sketchbooks](#), created by Scharf in a personal capacity, but not included by him in the main sequence of Scharf sketchbooks [SSB]. They include sketches of sunsets, Windsor miniatures and views of Margate. 2 sketchbooks, spanning 1870-1886.

Summary descriptions of contents for all sketchbooks are contained within Scharf's archive catalogue, selected pages from some sketchbooks have been digitised with images attached to the catalogue.

As the first Director of the National Portrait Gallery Scharf was also responsible for instigating many of the record keeping practices which the Gallery still follow today, including [Registered Packets](#) (object files) of portraits in the NPG collection, documenting their acquisition and history in the Gallery. The Gallery's [Building Records](#) for the first 40 years of its history are also heavily influenced by Scharf containing sketches and notes of early Gallery hangs and locations and documenting Scharf's pursuit for a permanent home for the National Portrait Gallery.

The [NPG Archive catalogue](#) can be searched to find records relating to Scharf's activities and the history and development of the Gallery. Access to records is available by appointment in the Heinz Archive and Library, please contact archive@npg.org.uk to request an appointment. Further information about Scharf's life and how it is documented in the archive can be found via the [Sir George Scharf Archive Journey](#).



Figure 3 Self-portrait sketch by Scharf, 1888 (NPG7/3/4/2/131)