

# Saving the Rex Wailes Collection

Rex Wailes died in 1986, leaving behind him a lifetime's worth of drawings, photographs, notes and correspondence. His will stated that this should be passed to the National Monuments Record and the Science Museum, but only a small amount of material was transferred and the rest seemed doomed to be consumed by mould and damp in the sheds at the bottom of Rex and Enid's garden.

We owe the rescue of the collection from this fate to Alan Stoyel, who took it upon himself to salvage what he could – in his words:



*I acted as an unofficial executor, and worked my way through all the sheds, salvaging whatever relevant material I could find. Unfortunately, much of the material was damp, quite a lot was actually sopping wet and full of mould and small animal life, and some had been attacked by mice. I took a series of car-loads of material to my home in Oxfordshire, cleaned what I could, and laid everything out to dry. Unfortunately some relevant material I found in the sheds was too far gone even to be salvageable.*



Alan spent many hours drying, separating, cleaning and sorting the material, some of which then made its way to the Science Museum. When the Mills Archive was formed in 2002, Alan agreed with Rex's family that this was the place Rex would have wanted his collection to go. Then in 2019, the Science Museum offered to pass those items it had been caring for over to the Mills Archive. At last the collection was together again.



But this is only the beginning of the story! With so many files to sort through, photographs to digitise and gems to uncover, the task of processing the collection had only just begun.

