



**LONDON
METROPOLITAN
ARCHIVES**



Copy to London: exploring international business archives at London Metropolitan Archives


Richard Wiltshire (Senior Archivist – Business and Community Archives)




Structure

- **1) Introduction** to LMA and international business collections
- **2) Opportunities:** Standard Chartered Bank cataloguing project
- **3) Threats:** Bank of Credit and Commerce International SA acquisition
- **4) Embracing a world-wide community:** Black African Caribbean Diaspora





Introduction: About us



- Local authority, publically funded
- City of London Corporation: Culture, Heritage & Libraries Department
- The largest archive in the United Kingdom after The National Archives - 95 km of archives and related material – rising all the time!
- Over 7,000 collections dating from 1067
- 90 staff and 100 volunteers



The sum of our parts

Pan-London because...

- London County Council Records Office
- Middlesex County Council Records Office
- Greater London Council Modern Records


City because...

- Corporation of London Records Office
- Guildhall Library Manuscripts Section



And also

- Keats House Museum
- Guildhall Art Gallery
- Roman Amphitheatre
- Roman Bath House
- Tower Bridge
- The Monument



Introduction – business archives

- From 1497/8
- Few document London on the ground – most cover the world
- River Thames underpins London's pre-eminence as a port with bustling wharves and docks for the import and export of goods world-wide
- Collections of international significance common to many UK archives but a particular concentration in City of London due to 'Copy to London' mentality of reporting to Head Office



Introduction – business archives

- Strengths in insurance, banking but also extraction companies
- Agents, branches and subsidiary companies report back to Head Offices on conditions, opportunities, threats, working relations
- Letter books, reports, memoranda books, photograph albums, premises plans document the westerner's view of local indigenous culture, politics, and colonial developments



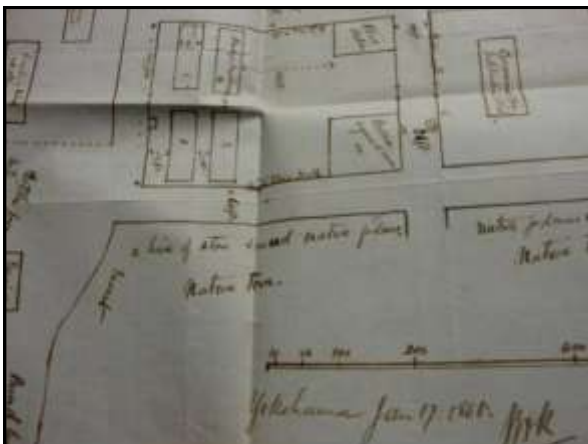
Example – Sun Insurance

- Sun Fire Office (RSA) 1710. Fire insurance as a practical, profitable, business was born in the City of London after the Great Fire of London 1666.
- 1836 ventured abroad to Germany - disastrous Hamburg fire in 1842 lost all German profits. Withdrew but began gathering information on potential markets and their risks.
- One of the first to appoint agents in the West Indies, Chile, South Africa and China following their risk assessments from 1850s.



Example – Sun Insurance

- 309 volumes Foreign Department memorandum books (CLC/B/192/DC/MS35122)
- Reports from agents (merchants or globe-trotting employees) from 1837-1962 on potential for providing fire insurance world-wide.
- "Diaries" recording the agents' experiences with collected statistics, plans, printed leaflets, maps, cuttings and early photographs depicting the places they visited or lived in.





Introduction – business archives

- City businesses can be unlocked through business guide, some require 48 hours notice/permission
- Other collections have become more international as their creators have been acquired by companies abroad...
- Crosse & Blackwell, pickles, preserves etc (Nestle, Switzerland): our depositor had to argue to keep in the UK
- Abbey National, building society (Santander, Spain): involvement in potential global digitisation programme



Standard Chartered Bank project

- Partnership project
- ‘Windows on the World- Here for good’

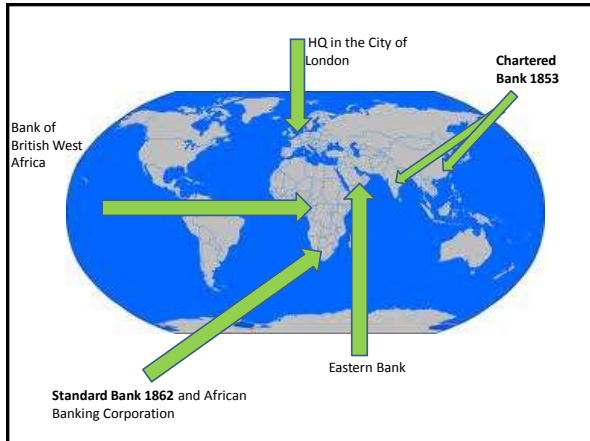
- Dec 2010-Jun 2013



- 1 km of bank archives

Aims

- Bank funding for 3 archivists for 2.5 years
- Catalogue the Bank's extensive archive at LMA
- support writing of new company history
- Surveying additional records held at the bank



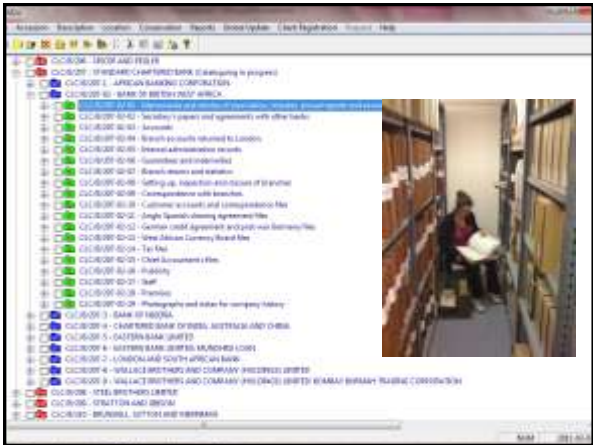
City's involvement

- 1974: Begun with deposit of Wallace Brothers (predecessor)
- 1989: Bank manager Ron Dyke in charge of the archives made redundant as a cost saving exercise. Guildhall Library given short notice to acquire records on deposit (except Board records) or they would be destroyed. Society of Archivists Journal by Stephen Freeth, Keeper of Manuscripts on how the service made the rescue and found space.
- 3,970 catalogue entries up to 2010; used by academic researchers overseas particularly in the Far East
- 550 metres remain uncatalogued: content unknown and virtually impossible, due to their size, to make available to bank/users
- Proposal written, meeting and tour March 2010

Scope

- Minutes, 1000s of letter files, financial accounts, staff registers and club records, branch photographs and plans
- Key to documenting the history of the Bank, from its origins as two of the great London colonial banks to its current status as a worldwide leader in modern banking, and lives of the people and countries who have worked and banked with it
- Commodities traded including consumables such as rice, tea and coffee; raw materials including tin, rubber and hemp; and luxury goods such as ostrich feathers and tobacco





- Springbok Dramatic Society – professionally produced programmes 1920s/1930s with staff performances in the City
- register of staff interned in Japan Second World War, and letters sent to Head Office. Latest news on their whereabouts, messages to their families. Manager at Shanghai describes his difficulty in carrying on business and keeping the bank informed via 'devious methods and routes'. Unable to destroy the bank notes in his safe in time, he was forced to cooperate as the occupiers began to put pressure on foreign citizens in 1941
- Importance of loaning items to Chief Executive



History can be a legal worry

- Legal climate - more wary about ramifications concerning inevitable colonial past involvement in countries' social politics and race relations
- Current embargo on further acquisitions: impact on transfer of records surveyed
- Permission is required for records under 45 years - potential impact on access to records

Geographical limits/opportunities

- LMA's remit is London: acquiring records collected by City head office only
- LMA unable to research on behalf of bank and meet internal enquiries – where we differ from HSBC!
- Context with other City businesses
- Working with Barbara Conradie, Standard Bank Heritage Centre, South Africa
- Currency of Hong Kong exhibition, Hong Kong Museum of History 2012: supplying images of Hong Kong branch staff photographs and letter books
- National Archives of Korea

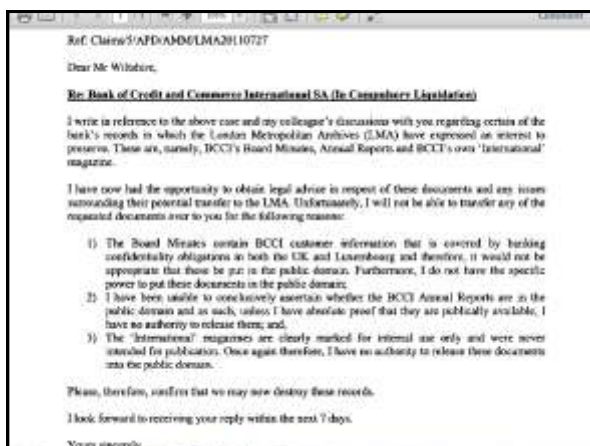


Bank of Credit and Commerce International SA: 'The World's Sleaziest Bank'

- The records of London HQ and branches, held by the liquidators Deloitte LLP notified via The National Archives and Crisis Management Team, 2010
- BCCI SA, subsidiary of BCCI Holdings (Luxembourg) SA established 1972, based Leadenhall Street, City of London
- Under scrutiny in 1980s after regulation issues/financial crimes uncovered by Fraud Squad
- Revealed inadequacies of the Bank of England's supervision on banks, paving the way forward for the establishment of Financial Services Authority; underlined difficulty of tracking transactions and assessing probity and creditworthiness in global banking
- Liquidated 1991
- Important as a forerunner of our current crisis and key for financial historians

Bank of Credit and Commerce International SA

- 20,500 boxes of voucher records, customer files, microfiche statements and microfilm vouchers.
- 18,000 branch records
- 9,000 boxes relating to head office...
- Memorandum and articles of association
- Board Minutes 1972-1991
- Annual Reports
- 'International' magazine (1-44) 1979 – 1990 [17 boxes]
- Deadline plus difficulty of access to database made identification of any other series very difficult.



Reply

- 'It is normal practice for companies, liquidators and administrators to transfer records of private organisations such as businesses. We are designated with powers to acquire such records under Local Government Acts. Here at LMA we hold extensive key business archives where the Board Minutes and other records have been transferred.
- It is worth noting that under legislation, company secretaries are required to make statutory records such as annual reports and board minutes available to shareholders to view by request. The internal magazines are unlikely to be subject to major personal data protection issues due to their wider internal distribution. Furthermore as the business is no longer in operation, there is no on-going commercial sensitivity which needs to be taken account of. Where records do contain personal information which is subject to the Data Protection Act, we restrict access to these records for the life time of those individuals.'

Reply

- The only legal restriction to transferring statutory business records is where they are transferred as a gift to the repository while the business is still active. In this case the business has been wound up and therefore this concern no longer applies.
- Finally, our gift agreement which I have sent you a copy of, includes a clause which protects the liquidator: 'The Liquidator shall not be required to give and will not give any personal covenants of whatever nature and no personal liability shall fall upon the Liquidator whatsoever.'

Positive action

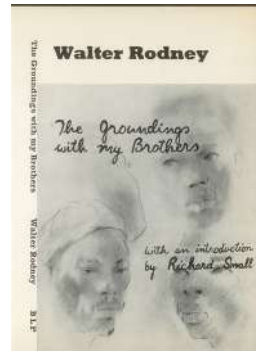
- 19 October Terry Gourvish BAC wrote to Oliver Morley, Chief Executive and Keeper, TNA
- TNA writing to the Insolvency Practitioners Association to raise issues and look at joint guidance for members of the Association on treatment of historic business archives found among assets of failed companies
- Raising internally in government

Black African Caribbean Diaspora

- Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications Limited, publishers, 1969
- Deposited 2005
- Huntley Archives Advisory Group



Publications and International Bookfair





Conclusion

- Rich sources for global history and wide appeal
- If you dont ask you dont get...Great opportunities for funding; proposals much easier than writing grant applications!
- What next – getting sources to the world - academic digitisation programme – market very wide for world-wide sources?
- Looking at funding for other uncatalogued international businesses

**Any
questions?**

richard.wiltshire@
cityoflondon.gov.uk

