

Welcome to the Winter 2018 BAC Newsletter

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Business Archives Council Newsletter

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The editor of this newsletter is Ben White. The next issue will appear in Spring 2019. Prospective copy should be sent to Ben White, email: Benjamin.White@bankofengland.co.uk

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Chair's blog

By the time this blog appears you will, no doubt, be busy preparing for the seasonal festivities - cue archives everywhere posting their '12 days of Christmas' on social media.

I seem to have spent a lot on time 'on the road' in the last few months, or perhaps 'on the tracks' would be more accurate! This has included over 2,000 miles on a special four-day rail tour around the country (but that's another story...). However, on the subject of long train trips, I was external examining in Dundee in early November and this gave me the opportunity to visit the recently-opened V&A Gallery. I like this brand-new and very distinctive building and I was also able to catch-up on an exhibition which I had missed in London – *Ocean Liners: Speed and Style*. Unsurprisingly, there was some excellent content from business collections on display, including P&O Heritage. I enjoyed it all so much that I bought the book! And I purchased *The Story of Scottish Design* which again has strong business archives and business strands.

Next up (at least for the purposes of this blog, though in fact not chronologically) was the annual

DCDC Conference run by The National Archives and Research Libraries UK. By the way it's referred to as DCDC so frequently that people forget what it stands for: *Discovering Collections. Discovering Communities*. This year the venue was Birmingham and the theme was 'Memory and Transformation'. It was my second time as a delegate and I came away with some useful thoughts on institutional memory and how it is constructed. Some of you will know that I have a bit of a thing about whether it is the role of business archives to create new content, but I can see that this is a tricky question when it comes to diversity and representation. Perhaps that's something for a future BAC Conference...?

This all leads us nicely to the joint BAC/ICA Section on Business Archives Conference held at Kew in the middle of last month. As far as I am aware this was the first time that we have run a two-day conference and from what people have said to me, and in the feedback, it appears to have been a great success. It was fantastic to have such an international audience and the programme was varied and thought-provoking. As with all of these events, the efforts of many people contributed to its success, but amongst the organisers I must specifically mention Alex Bieri (my counterpart at the SBA), Claire Tunstall and Lorna Williams. Without their huge input, #BAC2018 would not have happened.



*Delegates taking a break during the joint BAC/ICA Section on Business Archives Conference at Kew
(Courtesy Alice Whichelow)*

One of the particularly memorable aspects of the conference was the Wadsworth Reception held at the BT Tower. Thankfully, unlike my last visit (when the BT Archive received its Accreditation Award), there was actually a view! During the evening we announced that Marie Hicks was the winner of the 2018 BAC Wadsworth Prize for Business History for her book *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing*. I was also delighted to announce the winner of our one-off BAC Cataloguing Grant in memory of John Armstrong (see elsewhere in this Newsletter). That we can support the cataloguing of a transport-related business archive is a fitting tribute to John.



Presentation of the 2018 Wadsworth prize – collected on behalf of the winner, Marie Hicks, who was unable to attend (Courtesy Rachael Muir)

I wish you all an enjoyable and relaxing time over Christmas and into the New Year.

Mike Anson
BAC Chair

The Ballast Trust: celebrating 30 years of understanding technical records

This November the Ballast Trust held a reception at the Riverside Museum in Glasgow to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Trust and to launch our publication *The Business of Archives: A Labour of Love*.

When William Lind established the Ballast Trust in 1988, his objectives were to rescue and preserve business records at risk of disposal, and to provide a sorting and cataloguing service, with special emphasis on technical records, drawings, plans and photographs. 30 years later, the objectives are unchanged, a testament to his insight for the need for a specialist technical archive service. Regrettably, Bill died in 2007, but what began as his personal interests and hobby, has grown far beyond that and today the Ballast Trust is an important and integral part of the business archive services provided in Scotland and beyond.

The reception was a welcome opportunity to celebrate with many of our friends, colleagues and partners. Despite being an especially dreich Glasgow evening, nearly 100 guests from the archive and wider heritage sector in Scotland joined the staff, trustees and volunteers of the Ballast Trust to mark the occasion. Speeches given by Dr Kenneth Chrystie, Chairman of the

Trustees, and Professor Tony Slaven, Director of the Ballast Trust, reflected on the unique contribution that the Trust has made to Scottish business and industrial history, the significant role partnerships have played in our story and the importance of volunteers to our work.



*Reception to mark 30 years of the Ballast Trust
(Courtesy University of Glasgow Photographic Unit)*

Since its establishment, the Ballast Trust has always relied on the assistance of volunteers and also worked hard to develop partnerships with the creators and custodians of records to provide us with collections to work on. This joint working has helped to make the Ballast Trust a success. It was fitting to be able to bring so many 'old friends' of the Trust together at the reception, prompting much reminiscing, particularly about Bill's many quirks and just how cold the Joiners' Shop had been! After the speeches guests had the opportunity to enjoy a much quieter Riverside Museum and wander freely round the exhibits, which included some of the Lind ship models that are on display, having been donated by Bill to Glasgow Museums in the 1970s.

As well as the publication, throughout 2018 the Ballast Trust has been celebrating 30 years of understanding technical records with a variety of events and activities. In June the Ballast Trust worked in partnership with the Section for Business Records (ARA) to organise a seminar at the National Railway Museum in York. This seminar explored the theme of technical records, focusing on the plans and drawings held in business archive collections and the different approaches that have been used to reveal the potential of these records. In August, a '30 minute makeover' session for technical records at the Archives and Records Association conference in Glasgow was delivered by the Archivist and a social media campaign has been underway all year via twitter @BallastTrust under the hashtag #Ballast30.

The Business of Archives: A Labour of Love features chapters on William Lind, the history of the Ballast Trust, the significance of technical records, aspects of our working model, our technical records guidance and a list of the collections the Trust has processed since 1988. Copies of the publication will be distributed widely and can also be requested directly from the Archivist.



(Courtesy University of Glasgow Photographic Unit)

A thirtieth anniversary is always cause for celebration but it is hoped that the inclusion of the technical records guidance and practical methods chapters will make the publication a practical resource for those tasked with managing technical records as well as a record of our achievements. The commemorative activity that ran alongside the writing and preparation of the publication also contributed to the wider advocacy work within the archives sector that the Ballast Trust undertakes to improve the understanding and importance of technical records.

With his establishment of the Ballast Trust, Bill created an organisation that filled a neglected, complex and specialised gap in archive service provision in Scotland. This is a service that the Ballast Trust continues to provide to the archive community, and we look forward to carrying on this work in the future.

Kiara King

Archivist, the Ballast Trust

The Motorway Archive Trust – winner of *The John Armstrong Award for Transport Archives*

The BAC is delighted to announce that the winner of *The John Armstrong Award for Transport Archives*, a special, one-off cataloguing grant for £4,000 jointly funded by a bequest from the late John Armstrong and the BAC, is **The Motorway Archive Trust** collection which is held by Glamorgan Archives.

The judging panel received 15 applications and was impressed with the high standard of the submissions; this made the decision not an easy one. Glamorgan Archives' application was very well presented. It highlighted the importance of The Motorway Archive Trust collection, both locally and nationally, and it gave good examples of the research, promotional and user engagement benefits that will be gained once the collection is catalogued. The Motorway Archive Trust was established in 1999 with the aim of advancing public education by acquiring and making available archives relating to the creation of the British motorway network. In Wales a Regional Committee was formed to carry forward this work, and the collection held by Glamorgan Archives chronicles the development of the M4 motorway across South Wales, the Severn Crossing, and A55 'North Wales Expressway', along with several trunk roads.

The M4 motorway, the Severn Crossing, and the A55 expressway in North Wales, are key to the history, economy and politics of the Welsh nation. The development of these roadways reflects the economic change with the move from heavy industry, the products of which were transported by rail, to a manufacturing industry more reliant on road transport, and the creation of commuter belts around the roadways. These roads had an enormous impact on major towns such as Cardiff and Newport, now by-passed by the road, and Port Talbot – bisected by the M4. The impact was felt in the valleys beyond the roadways, with resentment building towards the M4 and A55 corridors seen as drawing economic investment to the detriment of the areas beyond, and through the transformation of small communities into commuter towns.

The records date from 1939 to 2010 and comprise of a range of record-types, including: minutes, correspondence, reports, contracts, photographs and plans. The project will begin in January 2019 and be completed by August 2019.

Reports on the 2018 joint BAC/SBA ICA Conference

This year the BAC conference was a joint two-day event with the Section on Business Archives of the International Council on Archives (SBA ICA). The conference was held at The National Archives in Kew on the 14 and 15 November and examined, from all angles, the critical theme of 'Trust'.



*The joint BAC/SBA ICA 2018 conference held at TNA in Kew
(Courtesy Mike Anson)*

A copy of the programme, along with conference blogs produced by two of the BAC's bursary winners, Holly Waughman and Alice Whichelow, can be read on the BAC's website:

www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activitiesobjectives/conference/

Academic collaboration with business archivists – your views are needed!

As business archivists we are the guardians of unique records which deserve to be used more widely by our businesses as well as by the academic community. To further this objective, Alix Green (Lecturer in History, University of Essex) and Judy Faraday (Head of Heritage for the John Lewis Partnership and Deputy Chair of the BAC) are currently working with a group of business archivists to develop guidance on academic collaboration and to produce resources which can be used to support future projects. This project complements the work of The National Archives, but aims specifically to give business archivists more tools to develop collaborative projects with academics and Higher Education Institutions for our mutual benefit.

As part of this project Alix and Judy have compiled a short survey which will give them feedback on what guidance business archivists would find most useful. All data collected from the survey will remain anonymous and confidential. The survey will be open until Friday 21 December and should take no more than five minutes to complete: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/FQHFNCH. Alix and Judy really appreciate your support and look forward to your responses.

If you would like to learn more about the project you can leave your email address at the end of the survey or contact Alix Green directly at: <mailto:alix.green@essex.ac.uk>

Unilever digitises its United Africa Company Ltd (UAC) image collection

Unilever Archives and Records Management department has recently undertaken a project to digitise a selection of images from its United Africa Company (UAC) collection.

The archive of the United Africa Company and its subsidiaries covers an enormous geographical and chronological range. Although the bulk of the material concerns the key West African countries where UAC operated, for example, Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone, there are also papers relating to other parts of the African continent (e.g. the Belgian Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe), Europe, the Persian Gulf, Latin America and the Solomon Islands. There is significant material on the mid-nineteenth century, in particular the records of the firms of F & A Swanzy Ltd, Forster & Smith and the Bathurst Trading Company Ltd, but the bulk of the archive concerns the colonial period and its aftermath, most importantly the records of the Niger Company Ltd, which during the period between the granting of its charter in 1886, until the formation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates of Nigeria in 1900 was not only a trading organisation but also a legal and administrative body with governmental powers. As well as all of this, there are the records relating to the UAC's activities in adapting to changing political and economic circumstances in the aftermath of independence in the African countries from the 1950s onwards.

Niger expedition: two women standing in front of a motor car in 1921



(Courtesy Unilever Archives and Records Management)

The range of material within the collection is very diverse. In addition to the formal company records, such as minutes, accounts, registers of directors, shareholders' records and correspondence, it also includes visit and market research reports, advertising and promotional material, trade mark files, property records, company magazines, personal memoirs, and a vast collection of photographs - some dating from the late-nineteenth century, which present a remarkable record of the activities of the company, its premises and employees. It is a selection of these photographs that we opted to digitise for this project, in the hope they would appeal to a wider research community. By opening up the collection and inspiring a new audience with these amazing images, it has been our ambition to raise the profile of this fascinating resource. Just from the breadth of material, the team at Unilever Archives felt that this collection could be the basis for infinitely more research questions. The impact of the knowledge developed from the research could have important societal outcomes, benefiting both the academic and wider community.

As with all projects, parameters are so often set by budget limitations. In the region of 80 photograph albums have been catalogued down to piece level, and this represents many thousands of images. Choosing a selection of 20 albums, giving us a fair range from late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, we hoped to offer the best overall feel for the general content, covering a period of almost 80 years, showing people, places and activities. It remains unclear as to the original reason why these albums were put together. Our assumption being that managers who were posted out on assignment wanted to record their experiences for reports to Head Office back in London, is probably true for the later albums, but the UAC was formed following the merger of the African and Eastern Trade Corporation and the Niger Company in 1929, a good 40 years after some of the earliest photographs. This was, however, the last stage in a long series of amalgamations, encompassing 93 subsidiary companies, many of which were originally based in Liverpool but operated in West Africa and surrounding regions. What we do know for sure is that the albums came to the archives from a clear-out following the closure of the UAC offices in London in 1986-87.

Our partner in the project was Essex Record Office (ERO). Having years of experience in digitising their own collections we felt confident in working with them to digitise these exceptional images. Supported by Chris from ERO we worked through all the technical and logistical issues

to be considered. We considered file sizes, metadata, transportation (we are based quite far away from Essex), conservation needs, quality checks, storage, backups and protection of the images once they were added to our online catalogue. Digitisation isn't just about increasing access however, it has also been part of our conservation plan. These albums have already been repackaged to increase their durability by digitising we have added an extra layer of protection by enabling access to the images, without physical contact with the original material.

Since we first published the news of this project we have had a lot of positive responses, and as we hoped it has generated some further interest in the collection. If you would like to see more of these images for yourself, the link to our online catalogue is: <http://www.unilever-archives.com/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=GB1752.UAC%2F1%2F11%2F9>

Helen Unsworth

Archivist and Records Manager, UARM

The Boots Archive launches the second phase of its online catalogue

The Walgreens Boots Alliance Archive recently announced the second phase release of the online catalogue of the *Walgreens Boots Alliance* archive collections. This digital resource, which launched in 2017, has been supported by Wellcome through their *Research Resources* programme. The catalogue currently comprises of over 27,000 entries and 4,500 digitised images. Subsequent additions to the catalogue will be made on an annual basis over the next three years until the entire collection is incorporated. The majority of the entries on the site relate to the Boots UK collection, and the material charts the development of the business into large scale manufacturing, product development, research and healthcare and beauty retailing. Information relating to product development, which includes employee training, formulations, packaging and merchandising records, is a particularly strong element within the collection. The holdings also include a large number of store and factory photographs and building plans.

In addition to the material relating to the history of Boots UK, other significant holdings also include the business records of Walgreens; Dollond and Aitchison; Optrex Ltd; Timothy Whites and Taylors Ltd; Unichem and E Moss Ltd.

For more information, and to browse the catalogue, please click on the following link:

archives.walgreensbootsalliance.com/

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