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## WELCOME TO BHE's NEWS UPDATE

Welcome to this first issue of Business History Explorer's *News Update*, published to update you on new developments at BHE – the online bibliography of the history of UK businesses and industries. Why *Update*? Because BHE is very much a work in progress.

Since its launch 20 months ago significant progress has been made in extending BHE's content by adding newly published material and by filling in gaps. In 2015 we will have a database holding details of some 40,000 publications – history monographs, chapters within monographs, periodical articles, dissertations, unpublished manuscripts and product literature.

With its emphasis on hard-to-find publications and its business sector and geographical area search capabilities, it is by far the most comprehensive source for locating publications relating to the history of British business and industry. And as business and industry touch so many parts of our lives, BHE is relevant to most areas of historical study – economic and business history of course but also studies covering design and decorative arts, transport and agriculture, architecture and construction, genealogy and the family, urban development and the environment, historical geography and the rest.

Read on for details of recent progress.

## DEVELOPING BHE BY ADDING PERIODICAL ARTICLES

As BHE users will know, the bibliography currently excludes periodical articles. This gap will be filled in 2015 with an upload of around 8,000 titles.

The sheer number of potentially relevant articles means that adding them on a selected basis is the only way forward. Six periodicals – *Business History*, *Business Archives*, *Economic History Review*, *Journal of Transport History*, *Textile History* and *Industrial Archaeology Review* – are being reviewed systematically for relevant material; articles outside these periodicals will only be included if they offer substantial coverage of a particular business or industry or appear in obscure periodicals and are therefore unlikely to feature in other published bibliographies.

At present a file of some 6,000 periodical article entries is awaiting upload to BHE; their inclusion in 2015 will substantially enhance the value of BHE as a rounded bibliography.

## COLLECTING OBSCURE TITLES

More progress has been made with another significant objective of BHE – the inclusion of privately printed histories or those which, for one reason or another, had small print runs. Businesses are particularly large creators of these hard-to-find works which very often escape inclusion in mainstream libraries and bibliographies. BHE, therefore, is focused on tracing them in local history libraries, small specialist libraries and archive repositories, where institutional subject files often contain publications of interest. As resources allow, these places are being visited and their shelves and card-based and/or online catalogues reviewed.

Libraries recently visited have included Bishopsgate Library, an institution not readily associated with the study of business, whose London and Co-operative Movement collections have proved to be a rich trawling ground. Enfield Library has yielded many publications created by early and mid-twentieth century businesses and industries that developed in a typical London suburb; Northamptonshire Reference Library has yielded much on the county's footwear businesses; and Swindon Local Studies much on the service and manufacturing businesses that migrated there from London and the Midlands after 1945. For a complete list of institutions visited so far go to [www.businesshistoryexplorer.co.uk](http://www.businesshistoryexplorer.co.uk)

## LISTING PROFILES

Another objective of BHE is to include as separate entries individual profiles of businesses published in reference books where these profiles are of a critical size or when BHE includes no other publications on the business concerned.

Over many years a surprisingly large number of such publications have appeared. They included, for example, such eclectic titles as *Shops and Companies of London and the Trades and Manufactories of Great Britain* (1865), *Royal Album of Arts and Industries of Great Britain* (1887) and Alan Hess (ed), *Some British Industries. Their Expansion and Achievements* (1957). All three have been recently reviewed by BHE and several hundred profiles of businesses have been selected from them

for inclusion. Whilst these profiles are inevitably on the short side and, in the case of early ones wordy and sycophantic, their inclusion is justified as often they provide the sole existing published account of an important and long disappeared business.

The 1865 *Shops and Companies of London* – an obscure title seemingly listed in only six of the c90 specialist or academic library catalogues making up *Copac* – is a good case in point with lengthy entries on, for example, Beaufoy, the Lambeth vinegar distillers; Searle & Co's shipyard also at Lambeth; Winfield's Rolling Mills at Birmingham; Bridson's Bleachworks at Bolton; and, certainly not least, Crosse & Blackwell's sauce and pickle factory in Soho Square.

### TRADE LITERATURE

Businesses produce a vast quantity of 'trade literature' by which is generally meant publicity brochures, trade catalogues, price lists, product brochures, technical guides, guides to works and offices, procedure manuals, employee handbooks and so on.

From the outset, BHE has carried information about certain categories of this, notably publicity and marketing documents

and guides to factories, offices, hotels, shops, etc, on the basis that these provide a detailed snapshot of a business at a point in its history – historical information about structure, products, addresses, subsidiaries, performance, etc. Of these, guides (although not overtly technical ones) to buildings are especially valuable when the building represents a major or sole asset of the business – such as a power station, waterworks, hotel or department store.

As a new development we have started to add product literature – mostly trade catalogues – although on a highly selected basis as so many of them exist. Those being included largely relate to obscure businesses – about which nothing else may have been published – or are held in small or unlikely libraries or archives.

### REVISED SUBSCRIPTIONS

A new subscription structure has been introduced offering an annual subscription in place of one for three years. The latter had originally been introduced to reduce the administrative workload but it became clear that some subscribers at least preferred the more standard twelve month period – of course at a suitably reduced annual rate. Details of current subscription rates can be found below.

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## INFORMATION ABOUT BUSINESS HISTORY EXPLORER

### What is BHE?

- It is an online bibliography of the history of UK businesses and industries, including ones based outside the UK
- It is a work in progress currently containing c28,000 entries and due to rise to c40,000 in 2015
- It contains publications relating to 14,000 businesses and industries
- Its content comprises monographs, chapters within monographs, dissertations, unpublished manuscripts and some product literature. Periodical articles will be added in 2015
- Its search functionality enables searching for publications by industrial sector (to two levels) and by geographical area (to four levels)
- It is available in hard copy (with no indexes) current to March 2012

### Why subscribe to BHE?

- It is the only bibliography of its kind
- It is increasingly comprehensive and includes all categories of publication, not just monographs
- It focuses on the very large volume of privately printed and otherwise hard-to-find publications which have escaped notice in mainstream library catalogues and other bibliographies

- It is relevant to a wide range of historical studies in which business has a role to play – design and decorative arts; architecture and construction; genealogy and the family; urban development and the environment; science and technology; historical geography and local studies; transport and agriculture; economic and business history
- Its search capabilities facilitate studies of specific towns or counties and of specific economic activities

### Who is behind BHE?

- John Orbell and Richard Storey, retired archivists with strong interests in business archives and history have compiled the content
- The project has been financially supported by the Business Archives Council (BAC), a membership organisation which encourages the preservation of business archives and the study of business history ([www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk](http://www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk))
- The publisher is Taylor's End Press, an imprint of John Orbell
- BHE is the successor to Francis Goodall, *A Bibliography of British Business Histories*, 1987

### How to subscribe to BHE?

- By cheque
- By BACS payment
- By credit card
- For further details go to [businesshistoryexplorer.co.uk](http://businesshistoryexplorer.co.uk)

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## Subscriptions

Non BAC members:	1 year online plus hardcopy £100	hard copy only [as at Mar 2013] £50
BAC individual members:	1 year online plus hardcopy £45	hard copy only [as at Mar 2013] £35
BAC institutional members:	1 year online plus hardcopy £60	hard copy only [as at Mar 2013] £40

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