

Newsletter



**BUSINESS
ARCHIVES
COUNCIL**

BAC Cataloguing Grant 2012

Lorna Williams, BAC Trustee.

The Business Archives Council is delighted to announce the winning applicant of the BAC cataloguing grant for business archives. Launched in April 2010, the grant is in support of the National Strategy for Business Archives. The Council intends to make the grant available annually during strategy implementation, 2010 - 2015.

Again, an impressive set of applications was received by the June deadline, representing a variety of business collections and localities in the United Kingdom. The judging panel on behalf of the Council has awarded the grant to Durham County Record Office for the cataloguing of archives of Consett Iron Company and its subsidiaries.

The Consett Iron Company was founded in 1840 as Derwent Iron Company, registering as Consett Iron Company Ltd in 1864. The town of Consett came into existence because of the company's decision, in 1840, to locate there, in close proximity to the Durham coalfield and local iron ore. It became one of the world's leading iron and steel making towns, and the name Consett became synonymous with ferrous metals, making the steel for Blackpool Tower, Sydney Harbour Bridge, and Britain's most famous nuclear submarines. For over a hundred years the company was virtually the town's sole employer. With over 6000 employees (an additional 10,000 were employed in the company's collieries), the town was wholly dependent on the industry. The works' demolition on its closure in 1980 left a huge hole in the town centre, and the community faced massive unemployment. The closure of the Corus steelworks on Teesside in 2010 brought to an end iron and steel making in the region, an industry going back to Roman times.

The collection has great potential for academic and socio-historical research. It consists of approximately 150 volumes, 4 boxes and 4 rolls of plans, dating from c1850s-1950s. The collection includes some of the core business records for Consett and subsidiaries (Consett Spanish Ore Company, Orconera Iron Ore Company, Dorman, Long and Company, New Brancepeth Coal Company, New Jarrow Steel Company, Shotley Bridge Iron Company, Trimdon Coal Company, and Wingate Coal Company), including board minutes and shareholder information - the backbone of business history. More unusually, the collection includes steelworks and blast furnace production documentation (key products include iron rails and steel angles for shipbuilding), colliery records (from the company's coal mining interests), pension records (of particular value since there is now no company to turn to), and registers of locomotives/locomotive cranes (a unique source so invaluable to industrial railway historians).



Consett Men of Steel: a hot and hazardous environment as molten steel runs into a 25 ton ladle, c1950s

The judging panel recognised that the collection was not only of local significance, but of national and international importance too, and Durham County Record Office had included evidence that the archive was widely used. The project plan was also clearly outlined: its aim to catalogue a portion of the entire holdings of Consett records and create collection level descriptions for the remaining deposits to draw them together was considered realistic and a good use of resources. The potential benefits of the project were particularly impressive, including opportunities for adult volunteering and learning, inclusion in a community arts and heritage festival to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the steelworks' closure, the creation of learning resources in partnership with local schools, input into a regional education initiative focusing on Consett's industrial past ('Challenging History'), inclusion in the Record Office Learning Revolution project 'Mining Durham's Hidden Depths' (if a grant to expand the project is successful), collaboration with the re-opened Consett heritage centre (2010), and linking the catalogue to the Teesside Archives British Steel Archive Project catalogue.

Durham County Record Office is due to complete their project by 31 March 2013. An update on the results will be reported next year in the Business Archives Council newsletter and the catalogues will be made available by the repository and also submitted to the National Register of Archives (published by The National Archives).

continued overleaf



Locomotive crane, c1890. Uniquely, Consett Iron Company centralised repair and maintenance of its vast fleet of locomotives, recording their movements in locomotive ledgers, the entries (made to the precise day) going back almost to the beginning of the company's locomotive organisation in the early 1870s and covering more than a century of activity

The Business Archives Council is looking forward to helping make further business collections more accessible through the grant in the coming years. Information on the 2013 grant will appear in due course on the Business Archives Council website, www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activities/objectives/catgrant/

Any questions should be addressed to Lorna Williams, Business Archives Council Trustee (email: lorna.williams@bankofengland.co.uk; telephone: 020 7601 4889)

Wolverhampton City Archives Wins National Archive Volunteering Award

Marie Owens, Head of Public Affairs, the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland).

A project to catalogue and make available the records of a Wolverhampton-based chartered accountancy firm has won the National Archive Volunteering Award for 2012 and been applauded for making available a unique, rich and highly informative business archive.

The award, from the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) and sector partners, recognises work involving volunteers within an institutional archive service in the UK and Ireland. The judges were unanimous in choosing the **Taking Account of Our Past** project as the 2012 national winner, describing it as an 'honest, positive and very well-managed project with excellent outcomes'.

The **Taking Account of Our Past** project catalogued the collection of Smith, Son and Wilkie, a chartered accountancy firm based in Wolverhampton. The collection, dated between 1863 and 1989, covers over 60



The buildings designed by Fred T. Beck, chosen by the Queen Square Syndicate to create a new shopping arcade and offices in Queen Square, Wolverhampton. One of a number of documents in the archive relating to this development

businesses and nearly 30 families who employed the firm to oversee their finances.

The project began in July 2011. It has found and made available information on many local businesses, including lock makers, brick manufacturers, ironmongers and butchers. As well as business records, the collection contains a wealth of information on local families.

Volunteers were involved at every stage: researching the background histories of the business and families; sorting, organising and repacking the collection; and assisting with basic conservation work. Previous employees of Smith, Son and Wilkie also contributed by helping to give context to the records.

The project allowed Wolverhampton City Archives to extend their volunteering programme dramatically, with the addition of about 20 new volunteers, who were chosen because of their shared interest in local heritage and research. They improved their skills and knowledge and formed social bonds while completing work of great value to the collection and its future users. Since their recruitment, the



This image shows a volunteer cleaning an important item in the collection – the minute book for the trustees of Samuel Small Mander, 1881

volunteers have been based in the City Archives' public searchroom and behind the scenes in the service.

Chair of the BAC, Terry Gourvish, praised the project for 'opening up a fascinating business archive and sharing its many treasures with the community'. He added, 'Businesses hold unique and important information. We applaud

Smith, Son and Wilkie for keeping such professional records all those years ago – and everyone involved in this project for making them safe and accessible.'

More information on the award is available from Marie Owens at the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) at marie.owensarchives.org.uk or 01727 838957.

BAC/HMRS Workshop

Roy Edwards, BAC Trustee.

The workshop **Archives, Artefacts, Amateurs and Academics** was held at the former London, Midland and Scottish Railway School of Transport, now the Derby Conference centre on 20 April and 21 April 2012. The event was co-sponsored by the BAC and the Historical Model Railway Society (HMRS). The HMRS has a purpose-built archive at Butterley and also offers sponsorship to PhD students studying the history of British railways.

The sessions were split between the Conference centre, the HMRS archive on the Midland Railway Site at Swanwick Junction and the former Silk Mill Museum in Derby.

Delegates heard a keynote speech by Professor Peter Stone OBE from the University of Newcastle and formerly the CEO of the World Archaeological Congress, describing the relationship between amateur and professional in the study of history and archaeology. This was followed by Tim Proctor, archivist at the National Railway Museum, who spoke on the National Railway Museum collections and the use of volunteers in the cataloguing process.

Saturday morning saw delegates arrive at the Midland Railway Centre at Swanwick Junction and convene in the HMRS archive. Dr. Valerie Johnson, TNA, who introduced the session, posed a number of questions on the nature of archives. This was followed by Kiara King of the Ballast Trust discussing the processing of archival material. Closing the session, Ivor Lewis, Chair of the HMRS and professionally one of those developing digital archiving with Fujitsu, spoke of the difficulties faced in archiving electronic records. Finally, Paul Garratt, the Drawing Archivist for the HMRS, explored the drawings collection and how it had been created. Lunch afforded time for a tour of HMRS's engineering drawings archive of over 150,000 drawings, including the entire Metropolitan

Cammell Collection, as well as the photographic archive of over 100,000 pictures. Those who were speedy also managed to get to the Princess Royal Class Locomotive Trust Workshop and Museum, the visit hosted by the curator Kate Watts, and the National Forklift Truck Heritage Centre with its curator James Brindley. Both of these extensive facilities are on the same site.

The afternoon was spent at the currently mothballed Silk Mill Museum. Roger Shelley, Principal Keeper of the Museum, spoke on the difficulties facing museums and archives in the current climate and some of the initiatives being taken to allow the Museum to re-open. Next up was Professor John Miles, Chairman of the Midland Collection Trust, housed at the Silk Mill, managing a collection of 39,000 Midland Railway documents and artefacts collected by Roy Burrows over many years. Grahame Boyes and Keith Fenwick from the Railway and Canal Historical Society then demonstrated the Transport Archive Register. Finally, Dr. Joan Unwin, archivist at the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire, spoke of the issues surrounding the collection of archives and artefacts, and in particular the day she had to accession 1,400 razors.

The event attracted 44 delegates who were positive about the experience and asked that the series should continue. As a result, discussions on another Workshop began straight away.

The second workshop in this series is planned in London, hosted by the London Metropolitan, Sainsbury and Port of London Authority Archives. This will take place on 12 April and 13 April 2013 with the theme being The Business of London. The first speaker is already booked. A variety of papers will be presented on the collections of archives and artefacts that reflect London as a commercial and manufacturing centre. Please contact Dr Roy Edwards at R.A.Edwards@soton.ac.uk or Keith Harcourt, Academic Liaison Officer of the HMRS and a BAC Member, academic-liason@hmrs.org.uk for further details.

Final Reminder

This year's Business Archives Council Conference, **Born This Way: Business Archives and the Digital Record**, will be held on Thursday 8 November 2012 at The Baring Archive, 60 London Wall, London, EC2M 5TQ. The aim of the day is to consider the challenges and opportunities which digital records

present to business archivists, records managers and users. Speakers will look at born-digital and digitised records from a variety of perspectives including approaches to access, interpretation and education, enhancing the user-experience, regulation and compliance, and IT solutions.

To book your place please download and complete a booking form at <http://www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk/activities/objectives/conference/>.

Any questions, please contact Katie Keys on 020 7332 3988 or Judith Wright on 0115 959 3472

Women's Library

On the 14 March this year, London Metropolitan University's Board of Governors revealed that the university could no longer maintain its extensive collection of material relating specifically to women. London Met had been custodian since 1977 of what was originally the Library of the London Society for Women's Service.

After consultation with a number of institutions, a bid from the London School of Economics and Political Science was accepted and announced on 28 September. It is expected that the resource, to be called Women's Library @ LSE, will be housed in LSE's Lionel Robbins building and open to the public sometime next year. The new resource will supplement the extensive collection of documents concerning women's lives already at LSE.

Women's Library @ LSE will include over 60,000 books and pamphlets, over 3,500 periodicals, and press cuttings. The collection features more than 500 personal and organisational archives as well as over 5,000 objects such as posters, photographs, badges and banners.



Covent Garden Flower Women, photograph by John Thomson from *Street Life in London*, 1877, from LSE's rare book collection

For further information see:
www2.lse.ac.uk/newsAndMedia/news/archives/2012/09/WomensLibrary.aspx.

Ephemera Corner

Shown here is an advertisement from Scammell & Co's directory of 1852. This firm of chemists went through many incarnations over a business life-span of some two hundred years. Amongst the medley of medical preparations and therapeutic devices, Dr. Pulvermacher's Patent Hydro-Electric Chain (misspelt in the advert) is of particular interest. Isaac Pulvermacher, who was unlikely to have been a doctor of any description, had recently introduced his invention into Britain. In essence it consisted of a string of electrical cells that could be worn as a belt around certain parts of the human anatomy. Extravagant claims were made for its beneficial effects, supported by testimonials from medical men who were dismayed to discover that their limited approval had been extended into the realms of miracle cures.

"The electrical energy generated by the Pulvermacher belt is absorbed as vital energy into your system, through the pores of your skin..." (Advertisement in the Penny Paper & Illustrated Times, 19 September 1903.)

Ferris and Score eventually became Ferris & Co Ltd and was taken over by British Drug Houses Ltd in 1959, which in turn became part of the German drugs giant Merck. Ferris ceased active trading in the middle of 1982 and was finally dissolved on 28 November 1997.

During its two centuries of existence, Ferris had its Union Street premises in Bristol destroyed twice, changed name at least ten times and developed a liquorish sweet that is still available today as Vigroids (formerly Nigroids).



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The editor of this newsletter is Alan Gall. The next issue will appear in Winter 2013. Prospective copy should be sent to Alan Gall, Tel: 0161 745 7029 (daytime) 01706 344429 (evening) Fax: 0161 745 9649 email: alanguall@hotmail.com
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