

# NEW BAC PROJECT

The BAC is planning a new initiative to build a website for use as a first stop resource for researchers seeking information about the history of businesses or the use of business archives. Such researchers, of course, include a far wider constituency than just business historians.

The ambition is to build a site that will convey information about the BAC and its activities and act as a notice board – perhaps even replacing this *Newsletter*. But the greater ambition is to include a step by step guide to locating information about a given business and to the nature of information to be found in different types of records and publications.

BAC is well equipped to do this on account of the ground covered by its existing publications. Of central importance is its *Guide to Tracing the History of a*

*Business* which was published in 1987 and which is now out of print. This is in many senses a website on paper and will adapt splendidly to an electronic format. Its main components would be 1] locating the business and research strategy; 2] locating records of the business; 3] information sources outside the business; 4] bibliography; and 5] addresses.

There would also be linkages to the websites of repositories and other institutions referred to in the text and the site could also hold electronic versions of the different surveys which BAC has undertaken – brewing, shipbuilding, banking and the rest.

The only limit to the opportunity is resource! Planning is in its early stages and we will keep you informed of developments.

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## UPDATE ON ARCHON

The National Register of Archives – a branch of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts – has been sprucing-up its online service. Alex Ritchie, who looks after it at the Commission, kindly provides us with the details:

‘Readers of the BAC’s Newsletter should already be familiar with ARCHON (archives-online), the information gateway for archivists and historians hosted by the Historical Manuscripts Commission. They may not, however, be aware of how much it has changed in scope and content over the last year.

‘A comprehensive overhaul has resulted in an increase of about 25 per cent in its coverage, the addition of roughly 500 new repositories or institutions. Much of this has resulted from a re-appraisal of what bodies were considered suitable for inclusion. Hitherto this tended to be more the traditional and predictable candidates, but it became clear that there was much to be gained by adopting a more inclusive approach. A natural reticence to expose owners and custodians of records to unwanted approaches had caused us to treat some institutions on the same basis as private individuals. Increasingly, there seemed little point in withholding information concerning the location of records, particularly where this was already in the public domain. ARCHON did no more than co-ordinate information that was already freely available.

‘This has resulted in a fresh influx in which

trade unions, employers’ associations, charities, pressure groups and other voluntary bodies feature prominently. Where institutions appeared in our indexes on the basis of a single entry, contact details were often badly out of date. It seemed likely, for example, that the British-Soviet Chamber of Commerce would have adopted a new style and so it proved. It now appears on ARCHON as the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce with a link to their website. There have not been so many new businesses, as such, entered in the most recent tranche of additions, but these have been relatively well covered in the past. The British Road Federation and the National Council of Industry Training Organisations are typical of the new inclusions.

‘In all this the role of public feedback and criticism has been crucial. The importance of ARCHON has been brought home to us by its users and the recent appearance of *British Archives. A Guide to Archive Resources in the United Kingdom* (4th edition, 2002) has provided a further stimulus to improvement. In the end we are merely the hosts to a finding aid that relies on interaction with its constituents. BAC members should feel free to point out any omissions and shortcomings that they can identify. Those who have not visited recently will also see the benefits of a comprehensive re-design of the website [www.hmc.gov.uk](http://www.hmc.gov.uk).’

**Alex Ritchie**

## RANALD CLOUSTON MBE

It was with great sadness that we recently learnt of the death of Ranald WM Clouston, an old friend of BAC. Alison Turton, Archives Manager of the Royal Bank of Scotland and a former colleague of his, provides this appreciation:

Ranald Clouston was an engineer by training and joined Babcock & Wilcox Ltd (later known as Babcock International Ltd) in 1945, serving as the company's first Archivist from 1968 until his retirement in 1987. He was amongst the earliest exponents of the modern concept of the corporate archive, and was dedicated to both preserving the company's historical records and gaining recognition for their value within and outside the business.

Babcocks was established in 1881 as boiler makers and later undertook the design, manufacture and erection of a wide range of engineering plant, from nuclear power stations to the apparatus used to raise from the seabed the ancient warship Mary Rose.

It was a most important engineering company and the archives that Mr Clouston was instrumental in preserving now form part of the Scottish Business Archive at Glasgow University Archives.

I worked with Mr Clouston at the Babcock archive just before he retired and corresponded regularly with him thereafter. He was a gentle and unassuming man and an inveterate researcher with an eye for detail and huge enthusiasm, not only for business

archives but also for a wide range of other subjects. Indeed, he was one of the UK's experts on church bells and travelled the nation as both researcher and adviser. It was for his tireless work in this field that he was awarded the MBE.

He attended BAC events frequently and undertook projects for the BAC. In particular, some members will remember him as Newsletter Editor in the 1970s.

I have strong memories of his kindness, generosity and tremendous sense of fun. He will be greatly missed by very many people.

*Alison Turton*

## THE MISSING LINK

The Society of Archivists has just published *The Missing Link. Specialist Repositories in England. A Map of Development and Funding Needs*. This is a project, funded by the British Library Co-operation and Partnership Programme, which surveyed 'specialist' repositories in England. It was prompted by 'a concern that they were at risk of being overlooked in the analysis of development and funding needs based on mapping exercises of local authority and university repositories'. The Project has been administered by a committee drawn exclusively from the public sector (which is a bit odd when many if not most specialist repositories are outside the public sector).

This is a neatly produced publication full of detailed analysis about a sector of archive provision that is incredibly diverse in terms of size, ownership, function and funding. Diversity even extends to some 'specialist' repositories not being particularly specialist. In fact, it is probably easier to define this sector in terms of what it is not – ie any thing that is not local record office or university based – and this report makes that point nicely. Given this diversity it is hard to think that a one-questionnaire-fits-all approach will have always produced a really accurate out turn.

Recommendations include a) the need to give specialist repositories a higher profile in the process of defining national and regional strategies, b) financial incentives need to be maintained and developed to ensure continuing public access and c) 'a means should be found of including privately funded archives in the allocation of any public funding for the development of the archives sector a whole'. This is all to the good and all thanks are due to the Society for taking up this challenge – although one senses the Herculean effort now required in order to put these recommendations into effect. One omission – although I might have missed it – is that it has nothing to say about funding of bodies that seek to represent components of the specialist sector such as the Business Archives Council (and even the Society of Archivists). As is well known, these are not easy times for such organisations cut off as they are from public funds.

The report draws on the experience of many archivists working in business and is well worth reading. For details of the Society go to [www.archives.org.uk](http://www.archives.org.uk).

## A MODEL ANNUAL REPORT

If the *Missing Link* note dwells unduly on doom and gloom look no further than *Adroddiad Blynyddol Archifydd y Sir 2001-2002* for a vast ray of sunshine. This is the annual report of the West Glamorgan Archive Service and has recently been received through BAC's letter box. It has to be a model of its type being attractively presented, full of detail and some 52 pages long; it appears as the product of a lively and well-funded record office.

Its most attractive feature is the combination of reporting information with a series of historical essays based on groups of

archives held by the record office. 'John Reynolds, Ironmaster. Early Nineteenth Century Industrial Relations' is one such essay and 'The Letter Books of W Gilbertson & Co Ltd ... 1890-1929' is another, its author, PW Jackson, confessing that the serendipitous salvage of these in the 1960s 'was to have an increasingly intrusive influence on my life over the next forty years'. These letter books relate the day to day issues confronted by a family of owner-managers in the steel, tinplate and galvanizing industries (now edited and published, cost £21.50 inc postage). For details of WGAS go to [www.swansea.gov.uk/archives](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/archives).

# BUSINESSMEN AS ART COLLECTORS

Successful businesses outlive successful businessmen but the businessman's art collection, it seems, far outlives the business and proves to be a real lasting memorial. Three such memorials have recently been in the news and highlight the connection. Of greatest note is the acquisition by the National Trust, at a cost of some £20 million, of Tynesfield, a spectacular Gothic Revival house full of decorative art of the period and located outside Bristol. It was home of successive generations of the family of Lord Wraxall, a branch of the Gibbs family of bankers of London and Bristol who made their fortune from financing trade and trading as merchants, not least in South America.

Accumulated slightly later is the collection of Sir Julius Wernher (1850-1912), the mining financier and diamond merchant who was a leading architect of De Beers Consolidated. He started to collect in 1888 and in 1912 left an estate amounting to a cool £11 million; at the time a delighted Inland Revenue dubbed his estate the largest they had ever encountered. 650 works from his eclectic collection, formerly at his great house at Luton Hoo, have just been put on permanent display at Ranger's House, Greenwich, London. They range from medieval pictures and jewellery to Sevres porcelain via portraits of the (English) Regency period.

Altogether more unassuming but fortified over the years by its founder's wish to dedicate 'to the

people of London for ever as a free museum, for their recreation, instruction and enjoyment' is the Horniman Museum at Forest Hill. Its founder, Frederick Horniman (1835-1906), was no diamond merchant but made his fortune from tea, trading as the tea merchants, WH & J Horniman & Co Ltd. He built a striking art nouveau building and filled it with marvellous collections of ethnography, natural history and musical instruments. This building has just been modernised and doubled in size at a cost of £13 million.

## THE CLOCKMAKERS' MUSEUM

The historical clock collection of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, one of the top drawer City of London livery companies, first opened to the public in 1873 which today makes it the oldest museum of its kind in the world. Since then it has had a number of makeovers. The latest of these has just been completed and the doors have opened on a refurbished and extended museum that is truly magnificent. It tells the story of clocks and clockmaking with special reference to London; it is forgotten that London from the Fire of London in the 1660s to 1900 was the world's most important clock and watch-making centre. Makers were drawn there from throughout Europe on account of the City's reputation for scientific excellence. Exhibits include clocks, watches and other timepieces of all types and descriptions and also related portraits and other objects. Well done the Clockmakers.

The museum is based at Guildhall, Aldermanbury, London EC2P 2EJ and for more information go to [www.clockmakers.org](http://www.clockmakers.org). At nearby Guildhall Library are the Clockmakers' magnificent archives and book collection.

## INSURANCE POLICIES

Insurance policies at first thoughts might seem not to be the most exotic of historical sources but those for the 18th and early 19th centuries are really quite wonderful. The procedure common at that time was for a local agent to send details of new insurance policies to the head office of his insurance company where they were transcribed into policy registers. A typical entry would provide name, occupation and address of the person taking the insurance and a quite lengthy description and valuation of the property being insured. The problem is that such records – deemed to be routine and voluminous – tended not to be kept long term and so survival rates are poor.

Not so the registers of Sun Fire Office, Royal Exchange Assurance and Hand in Hand. These survive in large numbers for the 18th and early 19th century – particularly those of the Sun – and are held in Guildhall Library. The only problem is that none are indexed! So finding policies for a particular person or business is like looking for a needle in a haystack – and not knowing if the needle is there to begin with! Looking for policies relating just to a specific business sector is less time consuming but still long-winded.

All this might now change. The London Archive Users' Forum is on the case and is applying for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to enable it to index a segment of the Sun's registers which cover the period

1710 to 1863. The backbone of the project will be a team of volunteers who will tap data into laptop computers. Volunteers should be able to commit half a day a week on a regular basis to work on the records at Guildhall and should feel 'comfortable' entering data into a computer in a pre-determined format. Hopefully data entry will be undertaken in 2003.

If the project gets off the ground – and several have tried before – it will be well worthwhile. The registers contain fascinating details of major businesses undertaking a huge range of activities that have long been lost sight of. There is also much about individuals and great estates and houses. Please contact London Archive Users' Forum at 29 Stepney Green, London E1 3JX or via [ArchiveUsers@aol.com](mailto:ArchiveUsers@aol.com).

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

Contributions to the BAC's Newsletter are most welcome. The Newsletter aims to cover not just BAC news but anything topical relating to business archives and the study of business history. So if you have a new archive collection you wish to advertise or a new publication you wish to promote, if you have a new project underway or want to draw attention to a particular type of record then tap away at your keyboard and send your note off to the Editor via BAC's e-mail address. We would like news from across the country and outside the UK and from as wide a constituency of our members as is possible.

## BANK OF ENGLAND MUSEUM

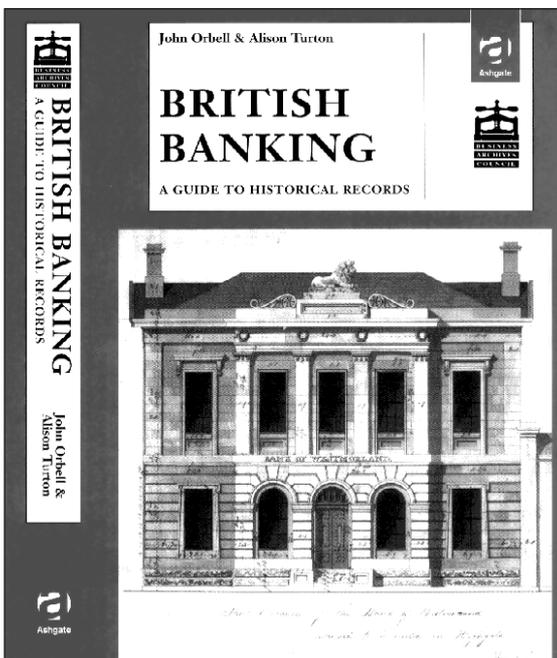
The Bank of England Museum has opened its new exhibition called *Dutch Legacy*. It marks the 300th anniversary of the death of William of Orange – ‘Dutch William’ – and acknowledges the legacy of the Dutch ‘invasion’ and Britain’s debt to the Netherlands at that time. King William III’s reign ushered in The Glorious Revolution and led, inter alia, to a shift in the balance of power from the monarch to Parliament. There were profound changes in the world of banking and public finance with the Bank of England being formed in 1694. The exhibition draws on the Bank’s collections and covers its establishment, trade and finance, the re-coinage of the 1690s, gardens and architecture and fine and decorative art. It is a super exhibition, full of objects of great beauty and interest and there is a 16 page catalogue. The exhibition runs from 4 July to 26 September and the address is Bartholomew Lane, London EC2R 8AH.

*By special correspondent your Editor learns that the Bank’s Curator, John Keyworth, celebrates the 40th anniversary of his arrival at the Bank. His companion on that day was the future Governor, Sir Edward George. What a vintage year! So well done John (and Eddie).*

## SALE COPIES OF BRITISH BANKING, A GUIDE TO HISTORICAL RECORDS.

The Council has copies of *British Banking. A Guide to Historical Records* by John Orbell and Alison Turton (2001, pp663). The Guide is for sale at £55 plus £3.50 UK postage or £7 for postage outside the UK.

The book contains the results of the Council’s survey of the historical records of banks operating in England, Scotland and Wales since the 17th century. Some 700 banks and institutions connected with banking are covered and the entry for each one of them provides detailed descriptions of records and a short history of the institution; it is much a dictionary of banks as it is a guide to their records. All enquires to Sharon Quinn-Robinson at the BAC’s office.



## IN BRIEF

- The New Dictionary of National Biography announces that the revised dictionary will be published under the title *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. The linking of what is virtually a national institution to the name of Oxford University Press will raise a few eyebrows! At the root of it is money. OUP has financed the project to the tune of an astonishing £19 million and the British Academy has chipped in around £4 million. The text is virtually complete and publication is due in 2004 under the extended title of *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography in Association with the British Academy*. Visit the Dictionary at [www.oup.co.uk/newdnd](http://www.oup.co.uk/newdnd).
- The University of Melbourne has completed a project to survey archives of trade unions and employer bodies. To see what has been done go to [www.atua.org.au](http://www.atua.org.au).
- The latest issue of the European Association for Banking History’s Newsletter (1/2002) carries an article on ‘The Fortis Bank Archives’, Fortis being the leading Belgian-Dutch bancassurance group. For the Association go to [www.bankinghistory.de](http://www.bankinghistory.de).
- Henry Button, one of our longest subscribing members, an assiduous collector of business histories and a former Editor of *The Guinness Book of the Business World* writes about weighty business history. Prompted by the note in the March issue of this *Newsletter* about the publications of the Banca di Roma, Henry draws attention to the two-volume history of Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino, published in 1963. He reckons that it is the heaviest business history ever published, weighing in at 11 pounds 12 ounces. Well for what its worth your editor wishes to differ. He thinks the prize should go to a massive historical account of the works of the engineers and ship-builders Armstrong Whitworth; this tome weighs in at 39lbs or 48lbs if its wooden box is included. And for the record it measures 19 x 21 x 4 ins and is virtually impossible to open!

The Business Archive Council’s Newsletter is published quarterly by the Business Archives Council, 101 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7RE (tel: 020 7247 0024). Registered Charity No 31336.

The opinions in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Council. The Editor is John Orbell and he can be contacted via [businessarchives.council.sqr@virgin.net](mailto:businessarchives.council.sqr@virgin.net).

The next issue will appear in September 2002. Prospective copy is welcomed and should be sent to the Council’s office to arrive no later than Friday 2 September 2002.

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Printed by Paterson Printing Ltd, 21 Chapman Way, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3EF. Tel: 01892 511212; Fax 01892 519566; [www.patersons.com](http://www.patersons.com).