



WADSWORTH PRIZE

We are delighted to announce that the Wadsworth Prize for Business History has been awarded to Professor Geoffrey Jones for his book on *Merchants to Multinationals: British Trading Companies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. The prize was awarded to Geoff at a luncheon party held in London in February.

The strength and adaptability of British trading companies across the centuries is the theme of his book. They provided a wide range of local and international services and managed successfully to reinvent themselves over successive generations. The origins, growth and performance of a group of such businesses are traced over a long time span and influences, trends and specific conditions of time and place are highlighted.

The panel of judges comprised Oliver Letwin MP, Dr Steven Tolliday and Professor Youssef Cassis. The submissions reviewed were numerous and wide-

ranging. 'This is a unique prize', commented Oliver Letwin, 'and one which has, as one would expect, produced a strong field of contenders. It is good to see that business history is alive and well.'

Geoff Jones is an old friend of the Council. He is professor of business history at Reading University and Visiting Professor at Erasmus University, Rotterdam. He has written extensively about the history of international business (especially the financial sector) and of marketing. Currently he is writing about the development of Unilever since 1965.

This is the 23rd award of the Wadsworth Prize which was established in 1977 as an annual competition to honour John Wadsworth, the distinguished economist and business historian, who was associated with the Business Archives Council for over 40 years.

For further information contact the Prize Co-ordinator, Lenore Symons, at lsymons@iee.org.uk.

BRAZIL IN BRITISH AND IRISH ARCHIVES

A survey is underway of archives relating to Brazil located in the UK and Ireland. It is funded by the Brazilian-based educational charity Fundacao Vitae and is one of a number of country-wide studies promoted by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture – one in the Netherlands is complete and others are underway in Portugal, Italy and France.

The UK/Irish project, which is focusing on the 19th and 20th centuries, aims to give good coverage to information based in business archives. 'Trade, industry and finance were, in many ways, at the heart of the British-Brazilian relationship,' writes the man doing the work, Oliver Marshall, 'and I am therefore particularly anxious to ensure that business history archival holdings are addressed thoroughly.' Surveying and writing up should be completed by July and publication is due for the end of the year. So there is just about time to get in touch with Oliver who can be contacted at Centre for Brazilian Studies, University of Oxford, 92 Woodstock Rd, Oxford OX2 7ND or via oliver.marshall@brazil.ox.ac.uk.

ANOTHER LEAP FORWARD

The Access to Archives initiative – 'A2A' in common parlance – cracks on at a great pace and goes from strength to strength as results begin to flow through in significant quantity. 'On 3rd April,' says Sarah Flynn, A2A's Regional Liaison Co-ordinator located in the PRO, 'the electronic equivalent of 129,000 original catalogue pages was added to [A2A's] database which now contains catalogues from 129 archive repositories across England.'

The latest infusion comes from a wide range of record offices and consortia of offices. Contributions from the British Waterways Board's Virtual Archive Catalogue Project figure prominently along with others from offices in Yorkshire co-operating under the banner of 'Yorkshire Sign Post'. But there is much else besides and the banners proliferate – 'Picks and Pistons' in the North East, 'Muck and Brass' in the West Midlands and 'Landscape and Archives' in Eastern England. Find out for yourself what it is all about by visiting www.a2a.pro.gov.uk

PROFESSOR THEO BARKER (1923-2001)

It is with the greatest sadness that we learnt of the death in November of Theo Barker, Professor Emeritus in the University of London. Theo was a longstanding and good friend of the Council having contributed over the years to its publications and having served in the 1970s as a member of its Executive Committee. Many members will also remember him as an immensely kind and generous man at moments of difficulty.

Theo Barker was one of the leading figures in economic history during its boom years in the 1960s and 1970s. In 1964 he transferred from the LSE to the University of Kent at Canterbury to found the Economic History Department there which he headed as professor until 1976. He then returned to the LSE's Economic History Department as professor and remained there for the rest of his career.

He was born in St Helen's in the North West and went to school there. The local glass industry and in particular its dominating force, Pilkingtons, was to preoccupy him and his research for large parts of his life. The economic and social history of St Helen's formed the subject of his thesis and later, with John Harris, a book. But he made his mark with his histories of Pilkingtons, published in 1960 and 1977. The first of these was a pioneering work in business history at a time when the subject had yet to become fashionable. A stream of other publications followed, most notably a two-volume history of London Transport (or more accurately transport in London] and histories of livery companies; most were written with co-authors.

But Theo Barker was as much an entrepreneur as an historian of entrepreneurship and, in this, his 'bustling energy', to quote from Negley Harte's obituary in *The Independent*, served him well. He was always quick to see opportunity in a new area of study and was a pioneer not just in the study of business and transport history but also in food and especially in oral history. He was often to be heard on the radio and many members will remember his highly acclaimed series, *The Long March of Everyman*.

But his greatest achievement as academic-entrepreneur was his leadership in the establishment in the early 1980s of the Business History Unit at the LSE which has spearheaded the study of business history in the UK and which has received acclaim internationally.

Theo's ability to spot ahead of the rest new areas of potential academic interest is illustrated through his contributions over the years to *Business Archives*. For example, in 1976, in a short review article, he drew attention to the significance of the small firm both in the British economy and for the study of business history and he urged his colleagues to take up the challenge of a new area of study.

He sat on many committees, often serving as an honorary officer; most notably he was Secretary and later President of the Economic History Society, President of the International Historical Congress and Chairman of the Oral History Society.

SHEDDING LIGHT ON WOMEN

There is no doubting the prestige of the Baker Library of the Harvard Business School; its collections of business archives are as good as they come and the standards of their care are high. But like other forward-looking institutions in recent years, the library has focused on the significance of its collections for the study of women and their contribution to society. In doing so it found in its catalogues to business collections – many of which were compiled in the first half of the last century – remarkably few references to women. It prompted reappraisal and the results are fascinating.

A three year survey was launched and its output has now been published. A great deal has been unearthed in such series as credit reports, payrolls, time books, employee registers, letters and diaries as well as advertising ephemera and photographs. These discoveries are

described in a newly published web-based guide entitled *Women, Enterprise and Society. A Guide to Resources in the Business Manuscripts Collection at the Baker Library*. This contains detailed descriptions of materials relating to women in 200 collections and provides links to full catalogue descriptions in the Baker's online catalogue. The survey, says Baker Library, 'has brought to light unexpectedly rich resources for social and cultural history.'

To coincide with the launch of the Guide, an exhibition of women related records has been organised and is in place until June 14th. Access the guide at www.library.hbs.edu/hc/wes and for more information contact Nicole Hayes, Co-ordinator of Public Services for Historical Collections, at nhayes@hbs.edu.

A PUFF FOR BRITISH ARCHIVES

Well done the authors – Janet Foster and Julia Sheppard – on their compilation of the 4th edition of *British Archives. A Guide to Archive Resources in the UK* which is hot from the press. With its 1,200 entries contained in 864 pages, the volume is as impressive as it is long. It is packed with well structured information and continues to be a prime resource for archivists and historians alike. The new edition breaks new ground by covering business archives, has additional indexes and for the

first time provides email and website addresses – the latter are immensely helpful. Will this be the last edition to be published in paper form? On the one hand this is a website in all but format and its cost is £115 but on the other, and cumbersome indexes apart, it is accessible and quick to flick between pages. It will be interesting to see. But all of this is in the future. In the present, the authors must be congratulated on an outstanding achievement and especially on their real and entirely voluntary contribution to increasing the use of archives and to promoting scholarship. For more details and for ordering go to www.palgrave.com.

THREATS FROM CONSOLIDATION AND GLOBALISATION

The European Association for Banking History – better known to many as the EABH – has recently published a special issue of its Newsletter to mark the 10th anniversary of its formation. It is worthy of note because the association has flourished on the generous funding of banks across Europe and on the constructive co-operation of archivists, bankers and historians. It has lived through times that have been both for and against bank archives.

The EABH was formed to tap the real sense of enthusiasm by the banking community for the preservation and exploitation of its heritage. At the same time it has witnessed unprecedented consolidation and globalisation of banking the extent of which only the very far-sighted could have realised when the Association was formed. While this has created an immense threat to bank archives, it has also created a role for the EABH in drawing attention to the threat. So while its Newsletter deals with its history so far and publishes Professor Philip Cottrell's recent conference paper, 'History and Globalisation', it is arranging a workshop in Stockholm at the end of May 2002 to deal with archival aspects of the problem.

Another international grouping of archivists is also dealing with similar issues albeit at a different level. A recent issue of *Comma, International Journal on Archives* – the revamped journal of the International Council on Archives – contains a number of articles covering archives at times of corporate upheaval whether caused by

privatisation or merger. Four articles deal with the threats, opportunities and the historical experience, and much is seen from the perspective of business archives in continental Europe.

BANCA DI ROMA ARCHIVO STORICO

But mergers can be forces for good so far as archives are concerned and, sticking with the theme of bank archives, two publications recently received in the Council's offices from the Banca di Roma well-illustrate the point. One is a short and lavishly illustrated history of the Banca and the other is an equally attractive guide to its archives. Neither is a small budget affair. However the point here is that this is not the archive of one bank but of four that have merged in recent years to form the Banca di Roma, viz.: Monte di Santo Spirito (est. 1539), Banco di Santo Spirito (1605), Cassa di Risparmio di Roma (1836) and Banco di Roma (1880). It is a most wonderful accumulation with much material dating to the sixteenth century; it is now consolidated at one purpose-designed location and cared for superbly. Visit the Banca di Roma's Archivio Storico at www.bancaroma.it.

MEDIA & ACADEMIA

The Institute of Historical Research of London University does not actually state that good history must be readable but it moves in this direction in a new project it has launched. It has teamed up with the publishers Atlantic Books – Britain's fastest growing independent publisher – to promote a prize for a well-written and academically-competent manuscript. 'If you want to write about history in a way that will inspire and educate a non-specialist audience', says its leaflet, 'then this award presents a unique opportunity'. The prize is a publishing contract worth £7,000. Entrants to the competition should submit a synopsis of their proposed book along with a chapter. The work should be a new account of some aspect of history and judges are looking for original and interesting topics elegantly and accurately expressed and accessible to the non-specialist. Well done IHR! Entries must be submitted by 6 May 2002.

And in another example of media teaming up with professionals, The History Channel and English Heritage are launching a very different sort of project called *Our History My Heritage*. They are encouraging groups of enthusiasts to research a feature of their community, locality or family – it can be anything from a notable event, building, monument or personality. Summaries and supporting materials should be submitted to The History Channel and the winners will have their projects turned into a television programme. Ideas on the cheap, one might say, but fun for those in need of a challenge and with time on their hands! For further details log on to www.ourhistorymyheritage.co.uk. Entries should be submitted by 28th June 2002.

PAPER-FULL OFFICES

The University of Surrey has a curiously-sounding Digital World Research Centre which investigates issues touching on the relationship of people, society and digital technology. As such it cuts across several disciplines including not just IT and communication engineering but psychology, sociology and economics. It is no small affair with 11 researchers and a dozen sponsors. Recently it has been giving attention to the way we manage messages in their different formats and discovers that we are not very good at it. The paperless office is in fact paper full as we continue to maintain (incomplete) paper files and struggle to manage our (incomplete) electronic files. But the issue is an interesting one especially for anyone doing cost-benefit and pay-back analysis on the introduction of electronic document management systems. The question at the heart of such analysis is to what extent can people manage without paper documents? To an extent this is a function of the nature of the documents and of the structure required for their proper organisation. But at no stage is the situation clear. This is an interesting unit to watch. Visit its web site at www.surrey.ac.uk/dwrc. It holds a paper titled 'Paper-mail in the 21st century: an analysis of the future of paper-mail and implications for the design of electronic alternatives'.

GOING ELECTRONIC AT OUP

Oxford University Press is making the most of its assets via the web. It is initiating a project to put hundreds of its dictionaries, mini-encyclopaedias and companions on a subscription web site. This is expected to extend to '130 million words', for those with a taste for not too helpful statistics. Put another way, it will be by far the largest reference site on the web. It is a vote of confidence in paid-for services and OUP reckons on making a profit after three years. For OUP it builds on the success of the launch of the electronic *Oxford English Dictionary*, a paid for service which is powering ahead at a time when sales of hard copies are also rising! Such paid for services offer huge opportunities for income generation – not least for those organisations holding historical data, catalogues and guides. The Public Record Office, for example, has in its census records a potential gold mine depending on the commercial policy it wishes to follow or has to adopt.

And another OUP project (in which the British Academy is also involved in a substantial way) but which is still some distance from completion is the *New Dictionary of National Biography*. Here the final deadline for contributions was reached on the 31st December last year so the focus is now on production issues. Paper and electronic copies are promised but the full paper copy will cost 'several thousand pounds'. The costings at this stage throw up some astonishing statistics: 'if we fit 1,000 words on each page instead of 980', writes project director Robert Faber, 'we will save over 1,200 pages in total.' Notwithstanding the production of sub-sets dealing with specific subjects – presumably a set of volumes on business entries is one – the real way forward is presumably in electronic format as a paid for service.

IN BRIEF

- The National Life Story Collection's Newsletter contains details of the oral history project underway at the Post Office funded by Consignia Plc. It has been running since mid-2001 and comprises some 85 interviews of which well over a quarter are complete or in progress. For details log on to www.bl.uk.
- The Clique – not withstanding its slightly sinister name – is a book-collecting and library information service operating a web site to help historians find old and out-of-print books for sale in Britain. Around 500,000 books are included. Access it at www.ukbookworld.com.
- In its recent posting via 'snail-mail' the Modern Records Centre at Warwick University reminds us that its [excellent – your editor's words] Information Bulletin is also available via the Centre's website – www.modernrecords.warwick.ac.uk/mrcarib.shtml. But it will continue to be sent in paper form acknowledging that people forget to access web-based information on a regular basis [too true]. Also it provides something for us to read on the train [too true also but please make it longer]. The latest Bulletin gives broad details of a large additional deposit of archives of the Engineering Employers' Association.
- The UK Association for Business Historians has given its website a major upgrade. It is full of news about business history research, events, prizes and so on. It is a first port of call to get a feel for the direction of business history research in the UK and for discovering the sorts of questions business historians are asking. It is an excellent means by which archivists can find users for their business collections. Access the site at www.sbu.ac.uk/abh.
- The Archive-Skills Consultancy is offering courses on Records Management on the 24th April and Description on 29th May. For further details access www.archive-skills.com.
- There are many reasons for becoming an archivist but a new one, recently proffered by a gentleman in the UK, was because he liked 'reading other people's letters'!

1901 UK CENSUS

The launch of the 1901 census as an on line source has not been without its problems – which is perhaps an understatement – and at the time of going to press it is still unavailable; it must be a real disappointment for both users and colleagues at the Public Record Office. The census site has been felled temporarily by technical problems. When it first went live, so popular did it prove to be that a few days after launch the national press reported it had gone briefly offline 'for enhancements' in order to cope with the volume of users. It had been designed to cope with 1.2 million enquiries a day but was receiving that number per hour as family historians rushed to fill gaps in their records! So it is sympathy all round for those concerned but real enthusiasm for this hugely exciting and ambitious project which is a real milestone in the way large historical data sets are accessed in the UK. The address for access – when the problems are sorted – is www.pro.gov.uk/census.

ROBERT FLEMING

Following its acquisition by Chase, the London investment bank of Robert Fleming has transferred its distinguished collection of Scottish art to a charitable foundation called The Fleming-Wyfold Foundation. A public gallery has been opened at 13 Berkeley Street in London's West End and regular exhibitions of Scottish art are held. 'Painting in Dundee' has just opened. However the real reason for mentioning this is that space has been found in the current exhibition for a display of archives and artefacts relating to Flemings' founder, Robert Fleming. He was born in Dundee in 1845 and his firm was important in the development of investment trusts in Scotland and England. The Gallery is open from Tuesday to Saturday, 10am to 5.30pm.

WORLD CITY GALLERY

The Museum of London is in the midst of a substantial revamp with most of the major improvements opening in 2003. But at the very end of last year it opened the first in a series of new galleries called 'World City'; it traces the changes in London's international standing between the French Revolution of 1789 – when it began to accelerate ahead of its European rivals of Paris and Amsterdam – and the First World War when it reached the peak of its relative wealth and power. It has been paid for by a number of sponsors, several of whom are based in the City of London. There is much about the development of London's infrastructure and the role of business in this and also about London's importance as a manufacturing centre. But it is essentially an exhibition about the capital itself rather than about the international influences acting upon it. There is, for example, comparatively little about finance and the City at a time when London dominated the world's capital markets as never before or since. For further details refer to www.museumoflondon.org.uk.

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