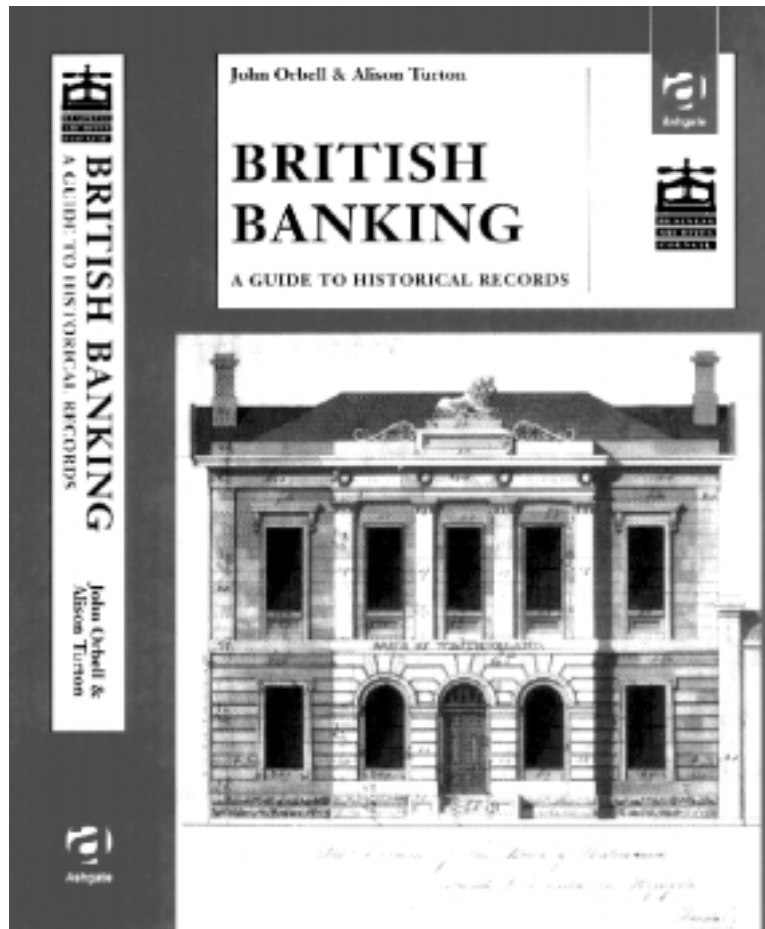


Newsletter



BRITISH BANKING RECORDS



covered. The shortest of these extend to a hundred or so words but larger entities are covered much more extensively. There are also substantial bibliographical references. The new volume, therefore, is as much as dictionary of bank histories as it is a guide to bank records. Introductory essays cover the history and structure of British banking and the nature and use of bank records.

The new volume has required extensive liaison with all UK banks established before 1945 and virtually all have co-operated fully by supplying lists of records or by enabling surveys of records to be undertaken. The results of all of this show what

The Council is delighted to announce the completion of a major project. It is the publication in August of a wide-ranging revision of *A Guide to the Historical Records of British Banking* by LS Pressnell and John Orbell, first published in 1985.

The new volume – *British Banking. A Guide to Historical Records* – is over five times the size of the earlier volume, and has been compiled by John Orbell of ING Barings and Alison Turton of the Royal Bank of Scotland. It is the fourth volume in the series *Studies in British Business Archives*.

It is based on an entirely new survey of the historical records of British banks, ranging from goldsmiths to London private banks, from country banks to joint stock banks and from merchant banks to British-owned overseas banks. Most of these records are held in the central archives of the major banks in London and Edinburgh but the holdings of local record offices, in particular those of Guildhall Library, also receive full coverage. Altogether the records of about 700 active and defunct banks are described

An important feature is the inclusion of an essay on the history of each bank whose records are

extraordinary progress has been made in the centralisation, organisation and professional care of records since the appearance of the first edition in 1985. A huge quantity of additional records have been discovered and they are generally organised and catalogued in a highly effective way.

And readers should remember that the historical records of banks cover a multitude of subjects extending well beyond the narrow field of banking and monetary history. There is much relating to the history of a wide range of businesses and people, activities such as agriculture and transport, politics and international relations, the development of economies around the world, and, not least, art and architecture.

Precise details of the book are John Orbell and Alison Turton, *British Banking. A Guide to Historical Records*, 2001, pp663. The book is available until the 31 October 2001 from the BAC at a special offer price, inclusive of postage, of £50 to UK buyers and £53 to buyers outside the UK. There after the price is £55 plus £5 to UK buyers and £55 plus £8.50 to overseas buyers. Please find enclosed a flier giving additional details.

DELIVERING THE GOODS

Road haulage is a massive industry and one that has not received the attention that it deserves either from historians or archivists due probably to its highly fragmented structure. A team, including historians, an archivist and a librarian, is working away to produce a volume dealing with the industry. It is still not too late to co-operate by sending ideas and details of collections and other resources. Richard Storey, formerly of the Modern Records Centre, Warwick University, is involved and he writes as follows:

“In 1992 the Roads and Road Transport History Conference was formed to bring together societies, museums and individuals interested in the study of the history of roads, road passenger transport and the carriage of goods. Its 1996 Colloquium on the theme ‘What do we need to know about road freight transport?’ gave rise to a project to compile for publication a *Companion to the British Road Haulage History*. A team of five, under the chairmanship of Professor John Armstrong of Thames Valley University, has been compiling and editing entries for what will be the first comprehensive reference work on an activity of vital importance to the functioning of contemporary society. Other

members of the team are John Aldridge, transport journalist and author, Graham Boyes, President of the Railway & Canal History Society, Gordon Mustoe, retired librarian and author of books on Fisher Renwick and British Road Services, and Richard Storey. The aim of the *Companion*, which is to be published by the Science Museum, is to cover the road freight industry from the carrier to the logistics company, examining vehicle makes and types, a variety of traffics, a range of businesses and entrepreneurs, and other organisations involved with haulage, its interface with other forms of transport, the role of government and regulation, nationalisation and a variety of other topics, from protest movements to the transport ‘caff’. There is just about time to jump on the wagon, if you feel you have something to contribute, before the text goes to the publishers in 2002.”

Write to John Armstrong, Thames Valley University,
St Mary's Road, Ealing, London W5 5RE.

NEW EDITOR

Clare Bunkham is stepping down as *Newsletter* Editor on completion of her undertaking to publish eight issues and I am now taking up the mantle for the next eight issues. There is a certain déjà vu in this as I was last editor between 1987 and 1992 when production by cut and paste of camera ready copy was the norm. How things have changed to make life easier! So please send me your news or any other stories that you think our members might enjoy reading. I can be reached at john.orbell@ing-barings.com or by post to 60 London Wall, London EC2M 5TQ.

And needless to say, thank you very much Clare for all that you did.

John Orbell

NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION

The NLSC is initiating exciting new projects. This entity, which has charitable status, is part of the National Sound Archive and is based in the British Library at its Euston Road site. It aims to record by interview the life stories of both well-known and not-so-well known people and much of its work is project-based, in particular dealing with people in the same walk of life or business activity. These projects can be on-going for many years; *Artists' Lives* and *Architects' Lives*, which is a series of 184 interviews, has been in progress so far for a decade and a half. Many have a business theme such as book lives which deals, inter alia, with publishers and printers.

This summer two new projects get underway. One is an oral history of the Post Office being undertaken at a crucial moment when that organisation's culture is changing as never before and as illustrated by its adoption of the new corporate name of Consignia. A project worker has been hired for a 12 month interviewing programme focused initially 'around the stamp'. The other is a corporate oral history of the leading – indeed

pioneering – design and branding consultancy, Wolff Olins. Again it comes at a key moment in this firm's 40 year history as it has just been acquired by a much bigger entity, Omnicom, the world's second-largest advertising group. The project lasts two years.

Two on going projects include *Lives in the Oil Industry* which has won funding to the extent of £106,000 for a three year extension. The coming year will focus on the life of a particular oil rig with everyone associated with its construction, installation, operation and decommissioning being interviewed. Alongside this continues the project *Food: From Source to Salespoint* which has recently been given further funding by Northern Foods Plc and which is currently focused on interviewing employees at Fox's Biscuits at Batley, West Yorkshire. As Director, Rob Perks writes, 'NLSC has never been busier or more stimulating: we have a great team of people passionately committed and involved in their work, and no working day is ever dull'. So good for NLSC! Visit them at www.bl.uk

SALE ROOMS

It is not often that the Council's *Newsletter* focuses on London auction house activity but in recent months there have been three London sales which touch on the interests and concerns to business archivists and business historians. The most publicised was the sale in June of the contents of Thornton Manor, Merseyside, the family home of the late Lord Leverhulme, grandson of William Hesketh Lever, 1st Viscount Leverhulme and founder of Lever Brothers and, inter alia, the great soap works and industrial village at Port Sunlight. The multinational business of Unilever, of course, descends from these origins. The collection being sold was that of William Lever and the sale was in the house he purchased and extended to accommodate it. He was, writes Lucy Wood, Curator of the Lady Lever Art Gallery, 'arguably the most voracious art collectors of the 19th and 20th centuries and in terms of British art unquestionably one of the most important'. Although many of the pieces he purchased found their way to the Lady Lever Art Gallery, established by Lever in 1913, very much remained at Thornton Mannor and its sale marks the dispersal of the eclectic accumulation of one of the greatest business tycoons of the Victorian era; there cannot be many such collections left in existence. But while now dispersed, the integrity of the collection is retained through Sothebys' magnificent two volume sale catalogue – a work of art in itself and a record of value to business history.

An altogether sadder event was the sale round at Christie's, also in June, of paintings, table silver, furniture and fireman's badges of the Royal Exchange Assurance, a pioneer of insurance in

England, established in 1720 and domiciled in that great eponymous building in the heart of the City of London and opposite the Bank of England. Some 72 lots were offered for sale, not least the Governor's Chair in use until 1923 but which failed to find a buyer, and some £90,000 was raised. Times move on but here one can be forgiven a brief flirtation with nostalgia as this great old institution marches into history following the takeover of Guardian Royal Exchange by AXA of France and its renaming AXA Insurance Plc.

Also at Christie's, in July, was a sale of the design archive of Bianchini Ferrier, silk weavers of Lyon, established in 1888. The sale extended to almost 2,000 lots dating from the 18th century and ranged across pattern books, textile designs including water-colour drawings, posters, printing blocks, advertising artwork, photographs and reference books. At the centre were designs by the artist and 'brilliant textile designer', Raoul Dufy (1877-1953). Over time this archive had become separated from Bianchini and it was sent for sale by a previous owner of the business. Ahead of this, however, the Grand Livres of the business had been sold to the Musee Historique des Tissus at Lyon amidst considerable public interest and concern. For any business archivist, the dispersal of a distinguished business archive is a matter of real concern and sadness although there is a degree of consolation in that a detailed, scholarly and well illustrated 400 page catalogue results from the sale. But it is a timely reminder of the multi-faceted value of business archives and of the need for them to be managed and protected in the best of ways.

IN BRIEF

- ▶ Emma Halsall took up the post of London Archives Development Officer in August. This is a post supported by Resource – The Council for Museums, Libraries and Archives – and Emma's task is to drive forward the action plan of the London Archive Strategy. This is due for publication shortly under the title *Out of the Past – Into the Future: Priorities for Archive Development in London*.

Emma can be reached on 020 7549 1704 and
emma.halsall@londonmuseums.org

- ▶ The Fundacion de los Ferrcarriles Espanoles [Spanish Railways Foundation] is a cultural organisation with a board of trustees drawn from businesses engaged in the Spanish railway industry. Its function is the promotion of railway transportation through the development of cultural activities which include archives, libraries and museums. Worth a peep at their super web site – **www.ffe.es**
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- ▶ The New York Times on the 19 August did a big spread on corporate archives and history writing centred on the activities of the US firm of Winthrop Group, a businesses set up by historians and archivists to sell the concept of history exploitation to big business in the USA. There are some interesting anecdotes and snippets of information to incorporate into any justification for establishing or maintaining an archive function in a business. Other comments give cause for thought and caution.
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- ▶ Closer to home, the Modern Records Centre at Warwick University has won funding from the National Lottery Fund for the conversion of paper-based catalogues into electronic format for access via www. One of these projects – part of the PRO led Access to Archives [A2A] initiative - is in conjunction with other West Midlands repositories and relates to archives touching on all aspects of life in that region. 1195 catalogue pages relating to 24 of the Centre's West Midlands collections will be included embracing many motor and cycle industry collections such as Rubery Owen, British Motor Industry Heritage Trust, Motor Cycle Association and the rest. The Centre's excellent Newsletter also records its receipt of several new deposits, that of the Brewers and Licensed Retailers Association, dating to 1820, appearing to be the most substantial and exciting.

- ▶ *Friends in Business* is the title of a forthcoming conference on the historical contribution of Quakers during the Industrial Revolution period. They were highly important in everything from brewing to banking. The venue is Borthwick Institute, University of York, and the date is 26 September.

For further information contact Helen Roberts, Yorkshire Quaker Heritage Project Archivist -

H.E.Roberts@acs.hull.ac.uk Also see
www.hull.ac.uk/lib/archives/quaker

- ▶ The Business Archives Section of the Society of American Archivists announces the inaugural online issue of its Newsletter as well as an updated web site. Find it at **http://207.21.198.172/saagroups/bas/Welcome.asp**. In a few months its domain will shift to **www.archivists.org**.
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- ▶ The Scottish Maritime Museum at Braehead is holding an exhibition of the lithographic art of Thomas Goldsworthy Dutton, the greatest painter of mid 19th century sail/steam powered merchant ships.

Details available at

www.clydebuilt@tinyworld.co.uk

- ▶ And finally! Britain's oldest subscription library is to close; it has not been used for three years. The Westgate Subscription Library in Weardale, County Durham, was established in 1788 in the heart of one of England's rapidly industrialising districts where lead mining and later iron making were highly important. The Library was established by miners for miners but its 3,000 volumes are no longer read and its trustees are about to dispose of its assets.
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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 next issue will appear in December 2001. Prospective copy is welcomed and should be sent to the Council's offices, to arrive no later than Friday 7th December 2001.

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Printed by Paterson Printing Limited,
21 Chapman Way, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3EF
Tel: 01892 511212, Fax: 01892 519566, www.patersons.com