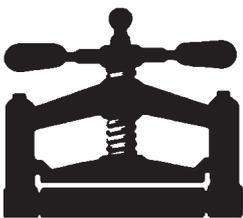


Newsletter



**BUSINESS
ARCHIVES
COUNCIL**

A Moment of Reflection: Are We Fit For The Future?

To mark the BAC's 70th anniversary two key members of the business archive community, Vic Gray, Director, The Rothschild Archive, and Edwin Green, Group Archivist, HSBC Holdings plc, reflect below on developments in business archives over the past seventy years, the changes the BAC has witnessed and undergone during its lifetime,

and the challenges facing the profession and the Council in 2004.

These challenges will be top of the agenda at our 2004 Annual Conference 'Business Archives: Fit for the Future?'. Be sure to book your place early!

Seventy Years of Business Archives

If the past is a foreign country, at least they speak the same language there – or so it seems to me reading the account in *The Times* of the inaugural meeting of the Council in 1934. I find myself staring into a mirror of ideas where everything is all too familiar: shortage of office space leading to the loss of documents; students of economic history unaware of their existence; the mission to compile an initial register of all business records.

It could, if one were so disposed, make for gloomy reading. Have we advanced so little over 70 years that the arguments and the problems have not moved on? Take heart. To despair would be to ignore the numbers: over a hundred business and business-orientated archives listed in the Archon directory (my conservative count; over 150 members of the Society of Archivists' Business Records Group; the demand for archivists and records managers in business outstripping supply). And behind these facts and figures lies a proud record of effort, corporate and individual, that deserves the moment of recollection, gratitude and honour which anniversaries offer.

It is easy to read a kind of innocence into those early efforts. In a sense there was: this was a time of setting off into unexplored terrain. No-one had yet come up against the difficulties. There is a kind of uncluttered purity too. The goal was clear. It was to rescue, and to rescue in the interests of economic historians. Never mind the value to businesses themselves, never mind the social justification.

This is perhaps what has changed most over 70 years. We have spun round the world of archives a web of social respectability and complexity in which business archives have been inevitably and properly caught up. We have added to the archives armoury our training in records management and so laid claim to the contribution we can make to business efficiency. We have sought to engage ourselves with the corporate profile and responsibilities of our companies and have

shown we can make contributions there. We have become experts on Data Protection and Freedom of Information. We have shown that we can be educational, promotional, business effectual, even intellectual – and all at once if that is what is asked of us.

I do not say this critically. The age we find ourselves in is one where everything has to be justified by as many justifications and sub-justifications as can be mustered. Gone is the time when the Simple Act of Preservation was enough, making sure that the archive survives simply because it is something of worth which may speak, now or in the future, to different people in different ways. We have proved adept and supple at moving with the times and with the slogans and preoccupations of the times. And it has paid off. Who knows how much would have survived, been protected, enhanced, made accessible, had we not?

What also seems clear is that the health of the business archive community is linked to that of the archive world at large. Just as the BAC was born of a time when the water-table of concern for the loss of archives and other historical assets was rising, so now the degree to which archives capture the attention and imagination of the public at large and public decision-makers in particular, affects the fortunes of our own business sector.

A more complex and sophisticated plot than 70 years ago, with a bigger cast of characters to keep in play. But has the major theme changed? I don't think so. What was needed in the '30s was the power of persuasion: to persuade businesses to care, to persuade historians that here was a source of value, to persuade the public that here was a reflection of an indispensable part of our common history. Is that any less true today? Perhaps that is why, across the divide of 70 years, the language comes through as loud, clear and relevant as ever. The mission goes on.

Vic Gray

THE BUSINESS ARCHIVES COUNCIL – 70 NOT OUT!

This year the BAC reaches its 70th birthday, making it one of the most durable associations in the archives community. Many members will remember Peter Mathias's authoritative account of our origins and history when we celebrated our 50th birthday (see also *Business Archives*, number 50,1984). That story showed how the formation of the BAC, announced in *The Times* in June 1934, gave a focus for the preservation and development of business archives not only in England and Wales but also in the wider world.

Our 75th anniversary in 2009 and – for those with a window in their diaries – our centenary in 2034 might be more obvious opportunities for new books or articles on the history of the BAC. But the passage of seventy years is still an opportunity to salute the BAC family for its long-running efforts to establish and understand the importance of business archives. It is also a good moment to reflect on how the BAC could have done more or where new work needs to be undertaken. Here is one personal offering of seven reasons to be cheerful - and also seven regrets - about the BAC's first seventy years.

The first seven decades of the BAC have produced some remarkable achievements:

1. Through its surveys and its advisory work the BAC has located and listed hundreds of collections of business records and in many cases rescued them for posterity.
2. Few archives bodies of any kind have such a large output of publications from such limited resources. The journal and, in particular, the surveys of business records have been produced to a standard which has won national and international recognition.
3. The BAC has made significant contributions to the literature and teaching of archives, formerly through its residential courses and training days and latterly through its contribution to the Liverpool postgraduate archives course.
4. The BAC can be proud that many of its former employees have moved on to senior posts in business archives, where they continue to contribute to the BAC's work and to strengthen the constituency of business archives.
5. Nearly 20 per cent of the BAC's members are overseas, reflecting the continuing international interest in our work. The BAC is one of very few associations around the world with specific interest and long experience in business archives.
6. We should not forget that the BAC's work has depended heavily – and now exclusively – on the voluntary efforts of its members. Few archives organizations of any kind could match those volunteers' loyalty and dedication during our first seventy years.
7. From its earliest days the BAC has provided a forum and fellowship for archivists. Its newsletters, conferences and other events have been the chance to keep in contact and debate issues in our patch of the archives community.

The BAC has also faced obstacles, some common to all archives bodies and some peculiar to the business sector:

1. Our corporate members are wonderfully loyal but they are relatively few in number and (as in 1934) financial institutions have by far the largest participation.
2. The BAC's membership, with the important exception of certain long-established family firms, includes relatively few small and medium-sized businesses.
3. Despite the valiant efforts of the former regional branches of the BAC and the separate sister body in Scotland, activity and membership has centred largely on London.
4. Traditionally the BAC has relied heavily on a small number of individuals, forcing a relatively low turnover of committee memberships and other voluntary roles.
5. It has proved very difficult to bring business people – with the shining exception of our President – into the management of the BAC in comparison with the strong representation from the history and archives communities.
6. The BAC, even after great efforts over many years, has never secured a permanent or significant level of support from central government. This remains a paradox at the heart of our work – that the BAC's work has given the public benefit of access to a huge variety of business archives but with little financial or practical help and recognition from the centre.
7. Partly as a result of this sixth factor, it has not been possible to find a standing solution to the problem of records at risk – that is, business archives threatened by relocation, mergers or liquidations. Over the last 30 years the BAC's advisory service performed this function intermittently but without any long-run financial or administrative continuity.

Other members will no doubt have their own versions of this 70th birthday report. Your suggestions - and offers of help - will be warmly welcomed. Meanwhile the BAC's current strategy, outlined by our Chairman last year, is the chance to maintain, protect and even extend our achievements. It may also be the chance to remedy the imbalances which are bound to develop in such a long-established specialist group.

Edwin Green

BAC Business History Research Bursary Awarded

Terry Gourvish, Chairman of the BAC, awarded the BAC Business History Research Bursary for 2004 to Mr Stefan Schwarzkopf of Birkbeck College, London, at the annual conference of the Association of Business Historians hosted by Nottingham University. In his remarks Terry pointed out that the Council had recently revived the bursary, and was very pleased to report that the judges - Iain Black (King's College London), Peter Scott (Reading University) and himself - had received such strong applications. The winner is planning to use the bursary to study the archives of the major advertising agencies in Britain. They are located at the History of Advertising Trust at Raveningham in Norfolk.

For more information about the Business History Research Bursary please visit www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk.



Terry Gourvish, Chairman of the BAC, awarding the BAC Business History Research Bursary for 2004 to Mr Stefan Schwarzkopf of Birkbeck College, London.

Archives Awareness Campaign – Can you help?

The BAC is working with the Business Records Group of the Society of Archivists in devising a campaign to promote the keeping and exploitation of archives by businesses. The campaign hopes to tap into current business concerns such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), accountability and the importance of reputation in order to get the message across. The campaign working party is hoping to set up links with business organisations such as the CBI and the Institute of Chartered Secretaries so the campaign can be targeted directly at key decision makers in a company. The campaign needs case studies and examples to build its case. If you have been involved in using archives to support marketing, product development, litigation, compliance, or CSR work of any kind we would be grateful if you could contact Sara Kinsey on +44 (0)1291 620266, or email to sara@kkinsey.fsnet.co.uk.

Updated Online Sources

The Society of American Archivists' Business Archives Section has recently updated the online *Directory of Corporate Archives in the United States and Canada*, www.hunterinformation.com/corporat.htm. Entries are arranged alphabetically by name of corporation and can be sorted by name of archivist or geographical location. This is the fifth edition of the *Directory* and includes companies that maintain their historical records themselves, as well as companies that contract with historical consulting firms to maintain their archives collections for them. Those businesses that contract outside the company for archival services are marked by an asterisk. This edition also includes the archives of professional associations, as these collections document various industries and companies that may be of use to corporate archivists.

The International Council on Archives has published the second edition of *ISAAR(CPF): International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families*. This standard provides guidance for preparing archival authority records which provide descriptions of entities (corporate bodies, persons and families) associated with the creation and maintenance of archives. *ISAAR(CPF)* is available on www.ica.org.

Are You Fit for the Future?

Enclosed in this mailing you will find a flyer for 'Business Archives: Fit for the Future', our 2004 Conference. Details and a booking form have also been published on www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk. We are grateful to Lloyds TSB Group plc for agreeing to host the day and look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on 30 November.

IN BRIEF

- A new edition of *Maritime Information – A guide to libraries and sources of information in the United Kingdom* has been published. The directory has almost 500 entries, covering the whole spectrum of UK maritime organisations, has a comprehensive index and is described as ‘an indispensable guide for maritime research’. To obtain a copy of the directory ring +44 (0)1772 612855 or email sales@shipsinfo.co.uk.

- The Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowships. Each year the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust offers opportunities for British citizens to travel overseas to undertake study projects related to their trade, profession or particular interest. The Travelling Fellowships are available to applicants of any age and from all walks of life, irrespective of academic or professional qualifications. The closing date for applications is 21 October 2004. Visit the Trust’s website www.wcmt.org.uk for further details or telephone +44 (0)20 7581 0410 / email office@wcmt.org.uk.



- Over the last financial year artistic and cultural objects worth £21.7 million have been saved through the Acceptance in Lieu (AIL) scheme which enables owners to offer items to the nation instead of paying Inheritance Tax.

The Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), which advises the Government on which items should be

accepted under the AIL scheme, announced on 21 July 2004 the full list of objects acquired during 2003/04 when it launched its Annual Report at a reception in London. The AIL scheme brings into the public domain items that were once private property, or were on loan to a public collection but were under threat of removal or sale abroad. A detailed list of items acquired during 2003/04, including full case histories and the amount of tax satisfied, is given in the AIL Annual Report available at the MLA website www.mla.gov.uk/action/ail/00ail.asp.

Other MLA news: Stuart Davies, Director of Research and Strategic Development, left MLA in July to pursue a range of interests associated with the future development of the cultural and heritage sector



- The first annual report and resource accounts on the work of The National Archives has now been published, along with the first report of the Advisory Council on National Records and Archives.

In her foreword to the report, the Chief Executive, Sarah Tyacke, highlights TNA’s achievements during the year in reaching new audiences, preserving digital records, bringing history alive and supporting colleagues across government. The report is available at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/operate/reports.htm.



- In July TNA issued for wider comment, on behalf of Nigel Hardman, two draft Guidance Notes for business archivists. The Notes are available at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/news/pdf/hardman_guidance_notes.pdf.

APPEAL FOR INFORMATION

Forensic Medicine Archives Project

In the Spring 2004 edition of *Wellcome History*, the newsletter of the Wellcome Trust, there appeared an appeal for information or material relating to the University of Glasgow’s achievements in forensic medicine and science. The project is funded through the British Library and the Wellcome Trust’s Research Resources in the History of Medicine will deliver a web-based catalogue, accessible through its own dedicated portal. One of the main objectives of the project is to contribute to a greater understanding, and improve access to, sources relating to the history of forensic medicine and science.

The largest single accumulation of archival material surveyed so far relates to the former Regius Professors of Forensic Medicine, John Glaister Senior (1856-1932) and John Glaister Junior (1892-1971). The project staff would be very grateful to hear from anyone with information relating to the work of the Glaisters or to the history of Glasgow University’s Department of Forensic Medicine and Science. Please contact Paula Summerly, P.Summerly@archives.gla.ac.uk, Forensic Medicine Archives Project, Glasgow University Archive Services, 77-87 Dumbarton Road, Glasgow G11 6PW, UK, Tel: +44 (0)141 339 8855 extn 0315.

STOP PRESSES

2003 BAC Conference Papers Published

Dame Stella Rimington’s paper on ‘Influencing Decision Makers’ and Sarah Tyacke’s and Chris Kitching’s joint paper on ‘The New National Archives – What Does This Mean For Business Records’ given at the 2003 Annual Conference ‘Business Records in the Changing Archival Landscape’ have been published on www.businessarchivescouncil.org.uk. Vic Gray’s introduction to the day has also been published.

The Editor of this Newsletter is Jane Waller. The next issue will appear in Summer 2004. Prospective copy should be sent to Jane Waller at ING Bank NV, 60 London Wall, London EC2M 5TQ; jane.waller@uk.ing.com.

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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.