



A Place in the Sun: 300 Years of Sun Insurance Office 1710-2010

Richard Wiltshire, Senior Archivist (Business Archives), LMA.

An evening event was held on 30 September 2010 at London Metropolitan Archives to celebrate the achievements of volunteers and conservation staff who have worked on the fire policy registers of the Sun Insurance Office (formerly the Sun Fire Office and now part of RSA).



Liz Yamada, Senior Conservator, shows repair work of the policy registers

Dr Deborah Jenkins, Assistant Director (Heritage) welcomed the 35 current and former staff, volunteers, representatives from Heritage Lottery Fund and The National Archives, and RSA (the owner of the collection). She highlighted three key reasons for the celebration: firstly, to celebrate the outstanding achievements and dedication of volunteers and staff, past and present. She explained that no original index has survived for the estimated two million policies recorded in the policy registers. Without the projects' work, access to and understanding of the importance of these records to a multitude of research topics would be poor indeed. These projects have included the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts (NADFAS) volunteers project indexing for trades (which ran between 1986-2008), and the 'Place in the Sun' volunteers' project, both indexing Sun policy registers; and the conservation of the registers, funded by RSA. The second reason was to acknowledge RSA, a company celebrating 300 years of supplying insurance services to London, the UK and the world, from the heart of the City of London; and thirdly, to highlight the value of archives (in this case business archives) to wider society as well as to their creators.

Isobel Watson, Sun Volunteers Co-ordinator then gave a background to the 'Place in the Sun' project. She explained that it began with discussions in 2002 and started in 2003 with Heritage Lottery funding, led by the former London Archive Users' Forum (LAUF). Continued with support from

City of London Corporation, the project index has been compiled for part of the series of Sun Fire Office policy registers held at LMA (catalogue ref CLC/B/192/F/001/MS11936), covering over 237,000 policies from 136 policy registers, 1792-1839, available via The National Archives website www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a. Deborah Jenkins stated that users have personally thanked indexers in LMA's Archive Study Area for helping them find information. Isobel Watson explained the continuing work and thanked all those who have contributed their time and support.

Margareta Sviglerova and Richard Wiltshire (event organisers) conducted tours to the Conservation Studio, where Liz Yamada, Senior Conservator and Alberto Campagnolo, Project Conservator showed examples of the work of re-binding and repairing the Sun policy registers. Before and after shots showed the full extent of the work achieved, and results were compared to former repairs that had been carried out as far back as 1950s. They explained that unlike previous conservation, the project has aimed to save as much of the original binding structures as possible whilst making the volumes robust enough for continued use. In a few cases, items were severely damaged by mould and the pages required extensive consolidation and repair. Alberto Campagnolo added that conservation work has taken on average 8-9 hours per volume.



Volunteers at the exhibition display

An exhibition of selected policy registers and related archives dating from 1710 from the Sun Insurance Office collection were also displayed. The Sun opened its first overseas agency in Europe in 1836, later expanding into North and South America, the West Indies, South Africa, Turkey, the

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Far East, Australia and New Zealand. Items included foreign memoranda books relating to Egypt and New Zealand, emphasising the international relevance of the collection.

A brief history of the Sun: facts

- Founded in the City of London through the work of Charles Povey (circa 1652 - 1743), a London business man who at the beginning 18th century began commercial agencies and insurance schemes.
- The fire insurance business crystallised as Sun Fire Office in 1710, over 150 years before the London Fire Brigade was formed.

- Once an individual had taken out a policy, the famous 'Sun' plaque would be fixed to the insured property so that the company's engine would put the fire out.
- The Sun had issued a million policies by 1823.
- Over 1260 policy register volumes have survived for the period 1710-1863, containing an estimated 2 million policies.
- The Sun's successor, RSA, has recently been promoting its 300 years through advertising on Liverpool Street digital screens former illustrious policy holders including Cook, Darwin, Dickens and Wren, to name but a few.

Chairman's Statement to the 2010 AGM, November 2010

Review of Year 2009-10

The Business Archives Council and the Strategy for Business Archives

Your Council has been active in launching and promoting the National Strategy for Business Archives, in association with The National Archives, the Society of Archivists (since June part of the Archives and Records Association), MLA, CyMal, and the Economic History Society.

The Strategy was launched at an impressive reception held at the House of Lords in July 2009. Hosted by the All-party Parliamentary Group on Archives, the speakers were Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England, Sir Stuart Rose, then Chairman of Marks and Spencer, and Dame Stella Rimington. Our thanks to Sara Kinsey and Katey Logan for their leading roles in initiating and developing the Strategy.

What has your Council achieved in relation to the Strategy? First of all, the Council and its members featured prominently in the Strategy publication *Corporate Memory. A Guide to Managing Business Archives*. However, despite our producing a documented framework to monitor strategy implementation, we are concerned that the strategy monitoring group is not yet functioning as we had hoped. Of course, it is a difficult time to monitor implementation when professional bodies are changing roles and responsibilities, but be assured that the BAC's own focus has not changed, and we are working towards a resolution of the current problems. We intend to work with the newly-formed ARA to push for a more co-ordinated approach to strategy implementation.

In the meantime there are areas of strategy in which the BAC is able to take the lead. One of our early contributions was to organise an outreach event on the Isle of Wight in September 2009, timed to coincide with our 75th Anniversary. The aim was to introduce private sector businesses and other bodies to the business archives strategy. To that end we invited former trustees and representatives of the founder members of the Council in 1934 to a Strategy meeting, hosted by Sam Twining (Vice President and past President), at Brading and Ventnor. We also received an archives presentation by Richard Smout at the Isle of Wight Record Office in Newport. Our thanks to Sam and his family for their generous hospitality, and to Richard Smout, Katey Logan, Judy Faraday, and Alex Ritchie for their presentations on the day. This outreach event has encouraged us to consider holding similar events in England and Wales as part of our strategic response.

We have also entered an agreement to collaborate with The National Archives on the Architecture, Building and Construction Records Project - a survey of the archives of architectural practices and the building and construction industries in England and Wales. The National Archives has awarded the Council a grant of £35,000 to carry out this project.

We are also playing an active part in the work of the 'crisis response team' set up to act more quickly whenever collections are threatened. Richard Wiltshire and Peter Scott are our representatives on the team, which has been busier than usual this year with an increase in mergers and acquisitions activity. And we have continued to lobby vigorously whenever collections are at risk.

Finally we have instituted a special grant to support cataloguing, distinctive in that it aims to support the cataloguing of business archives held in either the public or private sector, and with institutional, corporate or government owners. Initial applications were strong, and the Council decided to make two awards (as reported in the last newsletter). I should like to thank Richard Wiltshire, Mike Anson and Alison Turton for judging our winners.

And we are also making progress with support for a new Bibliography of Business History, edited by John Orbell and Richard Storey, drawing on the resources we have in our Library Fund. More information on these further examples of our work in progressing the strategy will be provided next year.

Publications

Our regular issues of *Business Archives* were published: Volume 98 (*Principles and Practice*) and Volume 99 (*Sources and History*). Number 98, edited by Valerie Johnson, contained articles by Ellen Collins on 'Museums, libraries and archives and knowledge transfer'; by Joan Heggie on the 'British Steel Archive Project: new kinds of partnerships to preserve significant business archives'; by Katey Logan on 'Let's change the record: how the National Strategy for Business Archives can deliver a better outcome for commercial and industrial heritage in the UK's archival record'; by Reto Tschan on 'Out from the stacks and into the limelight: the archives of HBOS plc and the Museum on the Mound'; and by Richard Wiltshire on 'Business archives in the public sector: strategies for promoting collections at Guildhall

Library and London Metropolitan Archives'. This journal also included the select bibliography of new publications in 2008, compiled and edited by Emma Stagg. Number 99, edited by Mike Anson, contained articles by David Bricknell on 'The interpretation of business archives'; by Felipe Tãmega Fernandes on 'Telegraphs – shrinking economic distances? A preliminary enquiry, 1870s-1912'; by Terry Gourvish on 'The British popular music industry, 1950-75: archival challenges and solutions'; Niall MacKenzie on 'Bigger isn't always better: the British Government, Invergordon and the expansion of aluminium smelting in Scotland, 1968-82'; and by Aashish Velkar on 'Trade journals as primary sources: constructing histories and deconstructing knowledge'. This journal also included the 2008 editions of the bibliography in business history, compiled by Richard Hawkins; the list of business records deposited, compiled by Mike Anson; and journal reviews edited by Roy Edwards. We are extremely grateful to Valerie Johnson and Mike Anson, to Emma Stagg, Richard Hawkins, Roy Edwards and all the contributors for this very productive programme. This year Valerie Johnson retired as editor of *Business Archives: Principles and Practice*. The Trustees thank her warmly for her expert care of the journal over the last six years and welcome Mariam Yamin as the new editor of *Principles and Practice*.

Once again, four editions of the Newsletter have been produced by Alan Gall. The website has been further enhanced thanks to the work of Claire Twinn and the oversight of Moira Lovegrove. My thanks to Alan as editor, and to everyone concerned in this work.

AGM and Conference 2009

The AGM and Annual conference were held on 24 November 2009, and the hosts were The National Archives, Kew. The theme was 'Delivering Results: Collaboration and the Exploitation of Business Archives'. We were welcomed by Natalie Ceeney, Chief Executive of TNA, and her colleagues Alex Ritchie and Rene Kinzett spoke on the National Strategy for Business Archives and the role of advocacy in the sector. Sarah Mahurter gave a paper on the Innovation Fund, and Stefan Schwarzkopf, in his paper on funding research in business archives, highlighted the role of the Council's bursary award. In the afternoon session Vicky Parkinson spoke on 'Making the most of your collection', while Alan Booth's paper on 'Connecting Cornwall' was a study of telecommunications, locality and work in the South-West, with

special reference to the Porthcurno Trust archives. Liza Giffen and Kirsty Shields discussed the collaboration between the University of Leeds and Marks & Spencer in placing the latter's archives at Leeds. We are grateful to the speakers; to The National Archives for their hospitality; and to Judy Faraday for planning and convening the conference.

Wadsworth Prize 2008

The prize was awarded to Dr Geoffrey Tweedale and Dr Jock McCulloch for their book *Defending the Indefensible: The Global Asbestos Industry and its Fight for Survival*, published by Oxford University Press. The prize was presented by our President, Sir Geoffrey Owen, and our hosts were The National Archives, whom we thank once again for their hospitality.

Bursary 2009

There were two winners of the bursary in 2009. They were: Dr Adrian Bailey, of the University of Exeter Business School, to support his research on 'Regulating the Supermarket in 1960s Britain: exploring the changing relationship of food manufacturers, retailers and consumers through the Cadbury archive'; and Dr Kevin Tennent, formerly of LSE, now of the Open University Business School, for his work on 'A Retailing Revolution: changes in music distribution and retailing in the UK, 1950-80'. The winners were announced at the Association of Business Historians Conference in Liverpool. I should like to thank Roy Edwards for organising the Wadsworth Prize and Peter Scott for organising the bursary judging.

Other Activities

Our contribution to training continued in 2009-10. We ran a business archives training day at The Baring Archive in January, which was attended by students from University College London, Aberystwyth and Dundee.

Vote of Thanks

Our thanks to Susan Snell and the Freemasons' Hall for their generosity in hosting both the AGM and the Conference, and later on in the day, the Wadsworth Prize reception.

Terry Gourvish, BAC Chairman.

BAC Conference 2010

Anna Crutchley, Volunteer at Girton College, Jesus College, Addenbrooke's Hospital and Cambridgeshire Archives.

The theme of this year's conference, held at the Freemason's Hall, was 'the unexpected and obscure', with Susan Snell's talk on the Masonic collections and the guided tour of the building and museum making an apposite introduction.

Linda Ellis, Project Manager of the Online Collections at Wolverhampton City Council, talked about the development of the Black Country History website. Funded by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, the objective is to develop a single search facility for eight museums and archives in the West Midlands, which will allow public access to in-depth information about the objects and documents cared for by the service.

Linda's presentation was well-matched with that of Andrew Newnham, an associate of the Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP), managing a project to catalogue the John Player archive at Nottingham City Museum, and develop its user base, in collaboration with the University of Nottingham, local historians and past employees of the company.

Both Linda and Andrew talked lucidly about the issues their projects presented, such as how to determine what user groups wanted from an archive facility, through discussion with target audiences, to technical problem-solving in coordinating different cataloguing systems, and developing a common thesaurus for the archives and museum collaborators, as well as

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what Linda called 'techie stuff' - web development, links to blogs, videos, Flickr and Twitter feeds, and so on.

Kevin Matthias treated us to sounds and images from the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod archive. This international music competition was inaugurated in 1947 by Harold Tudor, who saw it as an opportunity to heal the wounds of the Second World War.

Sarah Chubb's work on the Chance Glass archive has been covered in the last BAC newsletter. The relevance to this

conference was in its 'unexpected', extensive and detailed employee records that give the archive a human dimension.

The talks addressed a number of topical issues in the archives world, and some very interesting discussions ensued as members debated the pros and cons of using artefacts from business archives to promote a company's image and encourage public interest in its history.

Meet the Archivists Workshop and Fair 2010

Michele Blagg.

On 23 November 2010, under the auspices of the BAC, the third Meet the Archivists workshop took place, kindly hosted this time by HSBC's archivists. The aim of the workshop, as before, was to familiarise research students with the potential and variety of sources located within business archives. The event followed the successful formula from previous years and began with an archive skills workshop. This was in the capable hands of eminent academic historian Professor Peter Scott (Professor of International Business History at University of Reading Business School as well as the Director of the Centre for International Business History, and trustee of the BAC) and Dr Valerie Johnson (The National Archives, Research and Policy Manager, and a trustee of the BAC). Mike Anson, Bank of England, chaired the proceedings.

The informal buffet lunch which followed gave participants the chance to meet the archivists! Representatives attended from a range of repositories including The Baring Archive, The British Postal Museum & Archive, Glamorgan Archives, London Metropolitan Archives, Lloyds Banking Group Archives, The Rothschild Archive and Sainsbury Archive. An eye-catching array of stalls were set up with brochures, leaflets, banners - and even some original archive material - to inspire the participating students.

The morning's presentations had clearly sparked plenty of new-found enthusiasm for business records and the archivists were kept busy with a steady stream of enquiries about their collections and potential research topics. In between lunch and meeting the archivists, participants also had the chance to admire views over London from the spectacular setting of the 41st floor at the HSBC tower!

An early decision had been made to coordinate the date of the workshop with the start of the new academic year. In May the event was announced in the BAC Newsletter, and details placed on the BAC website. The article generated interest from archivists across the country, an interesting

development from what had begun as an idea to promote archives in the City of London.

During the summer the focus turned towards attracting PhD and MA students to the workshop. Event details were distributed via academic institutions, The National Archives, The Arts and Humanities Research Council, History and Policy and History Lab. A social network group was also created on Facebook.

A second wave of advertising early in November gave a major boost to the numbers and over 70 students signed up for the workshop. It was encouraging that a number of supervisors brought the event to the attention of their students. Prior to the event some information on the students' research interests was collated in order to prepare the archivists for likely questions.

The months of planning and liaison led by Moira Lovegrove (The Baring Archive) and Tina Staples (HSBC), along with the invaluable assistance of PhD students Michele Blagg (Centre of Contemporary British History at Kings College London) and Chris Colvin (London School of Economics), were rewarded by the high turnout on the day and very positive feedback from many of the students.

The participating Archives also found the day to be very beneficial, with enquiries and research visits following as a direct result. James Mortlock helped to run the Lloyds stall and after the event commented that it had been a great chance '*to engage with the academic community, to raise awareness about our diverse collections, and to help researchers discover a wealth of sources relevant to their research areas. It also provided the opportunity to advertise some of our less used collections, allowing us to share the research potential of previously overlooked records.*

Having successfully engaged with a new academic generation in 2010, it is hoped there will be plenty of enthusiasm for a fourth Meet the Archivists event in the Autumn. If your repository might be interested in hosting such an event, please contact Moira Lovegrove by email at moira_lovegrove@yahoo.co.uk.

The editor of this newsletter is Alan Gall. The next issue will appear in Spring 2011. Prospective copy should be sent to Alan Gall, Tel: 0161 745 7029 (daytime) 01706 344429 (evening) Fax: 0161 745 9649 email: alangall@hotmail.com Post: c/o SDA Electronics Ltd, Unit 30, Willan Industrial Estate, Eccles New Road, Salford M50 2GR.

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