

Overview of Business Archives in the United Kingdom

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Introduction

The concept of the formal in-house corporate archive has an unusually long tradition in the United Kingdom. It can trace its origins back to the nineteenth century companies acts, which from 1856 made compulsory the indefinite retention of certain kinds of documentation. This trend was often reinforced by the by-laws, requiring the perpetual retention of such records as minute books, that early joint-stock companies put in place to govern their decision-making and relationships with their shareholders.

The first British businesses to make formal provision for their archives were the Bank of England and Midland Bank (now part of HSBC) in the 1930s, although it was not until the 1960s that a significant number of businesses began appointing archivists. Most in-house corporate archives were established wholly or primarily to meet the needs of the business itself. These needs were varied - to identify and safeguard archives as a financial or historical asset; to ensure the retention of records for operational or legal reasons; to prepare for a significant anniversary by compiling a company history or exhibition; or simply to maximise the public relations potential of an old-established brand name.

Many of the archivists appointed at this time were not professional archivists, instead they tended to be current or retired members of staff or interested historians. Yet through their close knowledge of the business and dedication to the preservation of archives, they identified, centralised and saved many business records that would otherwise undoubtedly have been lost. In this context the Business Archives Council played a crucial role from the 1960s, both in providing support and advice to archivists who would otherwise have struggled in isolation within individual companies and in helping to grow a sense of the real importance of business collections on the national stage.

During the last 30 years the number of business archives in the United Kingdom under the care of professional archivists has grown dramatically. In part this was due to further recognition by businesses of the promotional value of archives, given that recent years have seen history and nostalgia catch the public imagination. An increasing awareness of the importance of the strategic management of all non-current records, as legislation and regulation has grown and records management principles have gained common currency, has also been significant. Most recently United Kingdom corporate archives have been increasingly driven by corporate responsibility agendas. In providing public access to, and online information about, records companies are recognising their duty of care in relation to nationally important archives.

Today almost 80 companies are listed on ARCHON, the online information resource for United Kingdom archival repositories, as operating formal in-house archive facilities. Generally this means that they have established policies on archives, employ an archivist and readily allow external access as well as internal use. The development of business archives in the United Kingdom has not, however, been equally spread across all sectors of business activity. As in most of the world's developed countries banks lead the United Kingdom corporate archive sector. All of the United Kingdom's major clearing banks, and a number of its smaller merchant banks, operate formal archive services.

Legislation Affecting Business Records

In the United Kingdom there is no archives law governing business or any other private archives. Nor is there any statutory obligation *as such* under the Companies Act (the legislation governing companies incorporated with limited liability and registered by the Registrar of Companies) for the permanent retention of any documents. A company is only required by statute to make certain records available for inspection by its members or the public. The records and returns sent to the Registrar of Companies (or at least a sample of them) are now permanently preserved for all businesses so regulated. A company continues to exist indefinitely until such a time as it is dissolved and becomes defunct. Its affairs are wound up and its name removed from the Register of Companies and added to that of the Register of Defunct Companies, both maintained by the Companies Registration Office. The files kept by the Registrar of Companies contain all the documentation that companies are required by statute to send to the Registrar. The documentation consists of returns, filed annually, of all shares and debentures in issue, any changes in the amount of the ownership of these since the last return, and particulars concerning the directors and secretary; and include all balance sheets and documents presented to members at the general meeting. From 1974 all documents received by the Registrar of Companies were microfilmed and jacketed microfiche created. Electronic web filing of information was introduced in 2001. The files are held by the Companies Registration Office in England and Wales for twenty years after the company's dissolution, and are then either destroyed or transferred to The National Archives.¹ The equivalent files of dissolved companies in Scotland are located in the National Archives of Scotland and for companies registered in Northern Ireland in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

There have been only one instance where the Notice to Exporters, which takes account of the 1993 EU Directive on the movement of cultural goods (including archived material over 50 years old), has been evoked in the case of business archives.

National Policies for Business Archives

In 2001, at the annual meeting of the Business Archives Council of Scotland, George MacKenzie, Keeper of the Records of Scotland, launched the first draft of "Elements for a National Policy on Business Archives for Scotland". These elements can be found at <http://www.archives.gla.ac.uk/bacs/policy.html>.

Three years later the report of the government-sponsored Archives Task Force, *Listening to the Past, Speaking to the Future*, urged that business archives should be seen as an integral part of the UK's national documentary heritage. Indeed, 2004 was to prove a year of some

¹For further information on the destruction and preservation of these files see Lesley Richmond, *The Records of Company House, Business Archives*, No. 64, Nov. 1992

importance for business archives in Britain. It was this year that Sir Nicholas Goodison delivered a Government-sponsored review of United Kingdom heritage funding to the Treasury - *Securing the Best for our Museums. Private Giving and Government Support*. It investigated the schemes in place to encourage donations of works of 'art and culture' and came up with recommendations for improving and clarifying current procedures. Most importantly it acknowledged the importance of corporate archives and the contribution of companies that took their duty of care toward archives seriously: 'The risks to important business archives are particularly acute. Many companies conserve their archives professionally and make them available to public access on request. Other companies are more careless about these important historical records.' It recommended that the Inland Revenue should issue a statement of practice making it clear that companies could include the care and conservation of business archives, and the costs of providing access to them, in their costs before the calculation of corporation tax. The Treasury response to the review is still awaited.

Also in 2004, the Business Archives Council took a leading role in convening and progressing a Business Archives Round Table, comprising representatives from the Council, the Business Records Group of the Society of Archivists, the Association of Business Historians, the National Council on Archives, The National Archives, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council and the Confederation of British Industry. The objective was to establish a national strategy for business archives in the United Kingdom and the initiative has resulted in the appointment of a jointly-funded Business Records Development Officer based at The National Archive to pursue this end in 2006 and 2007. Through this forum and in many other ways corporate archivists are increasingly playing an active and influential role in professional developments, improving awareness of business archives and participating in the formulation of archive policy at a national level.

Relationships between Archives and Records Management

The relationship between the functions of archives and records management in the UK within both the private and public sector is mixed. Although archives and records management are usually separate functions, they can operate as a single unit, especially within smaller organisations, be linked by a manager who has responsibility for both functions; or operate within separate divisions. The majority of the in-house archives of the largest businesses comprise teams of archivists and records managers although only a few companies operate fully integrated and comprehensive records management and archive programmes. Indeed, the records continuum concept has gained currency in the UK encouraging company archives to be dealt with in an integrated way as part of broader records management programmes.

Business Archives

Surveys of records

The role of surveys of business archives in public and private hands in the history of the development of business archives in the United Kingdom has been documented by Edwin Green.² Academic studies by leading economic historians in the 1950s had shown that

² Edwin Green, 'Business archives in the United Kingdom: history, conspectus, prospectus', in A Turton (ed) *Managing Business Archives* (Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd 1991);

there were large accumulations of records in private hands, dating back a century or more and that such material was valuable to academic research. Many academics became committed to promoting the location and preservation of business records through industry-wide or regional surveys. At the University of Liverpool Frances Hyde, the first professor of Economic History, focused his new department on studying the City's commercial history. The investigations of his staff and students encouraged the deposit of large accumulations of records locally.

The first systematic survey of business records was launched in the west of Scotland in 1960 by Sydney Checkland, the first professor of Economic History at the University of Glasgow. Glasgow and the west of Scotland at that time was in recession and some of the leading enterprises had either ceased trading or were threatened with closure. Funds were raised from local businesses through the Chamber of Commerce to establish the Colquhoun Lectureship in Business History at the University and Peter Payne, later Professor of Economic History at Aberdeen University, was appointed first lecturer. Part of his remit was to survey the records of businesses in Glasgow and the west of Scotland, many of whose origins went back to the beginning of industrialisation in the region. The results of his work *Studies in Scottish Business History*³ were published in 1967. In Scotland the surveying work initiated by the Colquhoun Lectureship has continued uninterrupted ever since.

Glasgow's efforts encouraged regional and national surveys elsewhere in the United Kingdom. In the West Riding of Yorkshire a thorough investigation was conducted of the archives of the woollen industry and included collections of records that had already been transferred to libraries, archives and museums. Later, in the 1980s, some county archives began to survey business records in their region, as in Hampshire and Kent, rescuing many records of small local businesses that might otherwise have been lost. United Kingdom wide industry-specific surveys were also initiated on shipping (Mathias and Pearsall, 1972), insurance (Cockerell and Green, 1976 - revised 1994), shipbuilding (Ritchie 1980) and banking (Pressnell & Orbell, 1985).

Between 1980 and 1984 the Business Archives Council undertook a survey of the records of the oldest thousand registered companies in England and Wales still registered in 1980. Business archives were located in 900 different locations covering 8000 metres of shelf space. The published survey⁴ produced an extraordinary array of archives covering financial, commercial, manufacturing companies, transport, utilities and mining concerns, and fine arts, sports, political and other cultural activities which was a comprehensive representation of British business in the nineteenth and twentieth century. The work of the survey was very successful in drawing attention to business archives not just to potential users of the collections but also to their owners and prospective custodians. It increased the awareness, value and potential of business archives to business managers, which led to the establishment of several in-house archives and many corporate archival programmes. At the same time archivists in local and national repositories were made aware of the collections of business archives in their locality and a large number of these collections are now permanently preserved in local archival repositories.

³ P L Payne, *Studies in Scottish Business History*, Cass, 1967

⁴ Lesley Richmond & Bridget Stockford, *Company Archives A Survey of the Records of 1000 of the First Registered Companies in England & Wales*, Gower, 1986

Sectoral surveys have continued to be compiled and published, under the auspices of the Business Archives Council in the series *Studies in British Business Archives*, edited by Lesley Richmond and Alison Turton. The series covers the brewing industry (Richmond & Turton, 1990), shipbuilding (Ritchie, 1992) chartered accountants (Habgood, 1994), banking (Orbell & Turton, 2001), pharmaceuticals (Richmond, Stevenson & Turton, 2003) and veterinary medicine (Hunter, 2004). Such surveys are doubly beneficial, indicating to potential users material which exists and bringing to the attention of businesses that their historical records have a value beyond the company to the local, region, nation or world arena.

Public Archives

There is no central place of deposit for business archives within the United Kingdom. There are also no regional business archives, for British archival theory and practice has been strongly influenced by the more general collecting interests of city and county record offices. The Scottish Business Archive at Glasgow University is the nearest equivalent and contains the largest dedicated collection of business records in the United Kingdom.

Every city and county record office, most university repositories in the United Kingdom and many national and local museums hold business records, those maintaining significant collections include: Birmingham City Archives; Bristol Record Office; Cambridge University Library; Derbyshire Record Office; Dundee University; Glamorgan Archive Service; Glasgow City Archives; Gloucestershire Record Office; Guildhall Library, London; India Office Library, London; Lancashire Record Office; Leeds University; Leeds Archives; Leicestershire Record Office; Liverpool City Record Office; Liverpool University; Manchester Archives and Local Studies Department; Merseyside Record Office; National Maritime Museum, London, Reading University; School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London; Science Museum, London; Sheffield City Libraries Archives Department; Suffolk Record Office; Tyne & Wear Archives Department; University College London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; South Yorkshire Record Office; West Yorkshire Record Office; and Westminster City Libraries. London. The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and the National Archives of Scotland, national repositories, also hold large important collection of business records. Contact addresses and further summary information about the holdings of these record offices can be found in J Foster and J Sheppard, *British Archives*⁵, or by searching ARCHON⁶, the online information resource for United Kingdom archival repositories maintained by The National Archives. ARCHON also includes contact details for libraries and museums that hold archival collections.

The number of record repositories - national, specialist, regional or local - actively preserving or specialising in the collection of business archives in the United Kingdom has grown dramatically in the last forty years. The following is a selection (alphabetically arranged) of repositories and institutions that hold major collections of business records and demonstrates the variety of institutions that collect and manage business archives across the United Kingdom:

⁵ J Foster & J Sheppard, *British Archives: A Guide to Archive Resources in the United Kingdom*, 4th edition, Macmillan, 2001

⁶ <http://www.archon.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/>

Guildhall Library, London

The Guildhall Library holds substantial business archives, ranging from the records of individual craftsmen and tradesmen, from the fifteenth century onwards, to those of very large companies with national and international interests, from the eighteenth century onwards. Its major catalogued collections include: Accepting Houses Committee; Association of British Chambers of Commerce; Bank of British West Africa; Butterworth & Co (Publishers); Clayton and Morris; Commercial Union Assurance Co; Council of the Corporation of Foreign Bondholders; Ede & Ravenscroft; Fire Offices' Committee; Globe Telegraph & Trust Co; Guardian Assurance Co Ltd; Hambros Bank; Hand-in-Hand Fire & Life Insurance Society; Imperial Continental Gas Association; Inchcape Group; Institute of Chartered Accountants; Kleinwort, Sons & Co; Life Offices' Association; Lloyd's of London; London Chamber of Commerce; London Stock Exchange; Morgan Grenfell & Co; Royal Exchange Assurance Co; and Sun Insurance Office.

Contact details:

Guildhall Library, London, Aldermanbury, London EC2P 2EJ, England

Tel: +44 (0)20 7332 1862/3, Fax: +44 (0)20 7600 3384

Email: manuscripts.guildhall@corpoflondon.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.history.ac.uk/gh/>

The History of Advertising Trust Archive (HAT)

The History of Advertising Trust Archive was founded in 1976 by a small group of people who worked in advertising and who felt that the study of advertising should be encouraged. It collects material relating to the United Kingdom's marketing communications heritage – advertising, marketing (in particular retail marketing), media and public relations. It is the national collection in its field and the earliest material held dates from the start of the nineteenth century. HAT is an independent private archive that is open to the public. It is not supported by public funds and raises most of its funding by managing and researching archives for clients, by providing copies of material and images, and through publications. It receives and seeks donations from private trusts, organisations, companies and individual legacies.

Contact details:

The History of Advertising Trust Archive, 12 Raveningham Centre, Raveningham, Norwich NR14 6NU, England

Tel: +44 (0)1508-548623, Fax: +44 (0)1508-548478

Email: archive@hatads.demon.co.uk

Website: <http://www.hatads.org.uk>

Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick

The Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick was established in 1973 as a repository for the archives of industrial relations and labour history, and has since become internationally renowned for its large and comprehensive collections of trade union records. Alongside these have grown significant holdings of the records of employers' and trade associations, business records, political parties and organisations, pressure groups and material directly relating to the field of industrial relations. There are over 100 collections of the records business enterprises, including Rubery Owen Ltd, Birmingham Small Arms Co Ltd, the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust (comprising the archives of Rover and predecessors) and Victor Gollancz, publishers. Business management collections include records of the Institute of Administrative Management and its predecessors and the Operational Research Society and Operational Research Archive.

The Modern Record Centres holds an extensive collection of trade union archives dating from the eighteenth century to the present from national (and some local) organisations. There are over 640 collections, including the archives of the Trades Union Congress, the most important single primary source for British labour history. The Centre also hold the records of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and its predecessors, the “voice of business” in the United Kingdom, and other trade and employers’ associations records. These are important for their insight into business-government relations, economic performance, research and development, education and training in industrial and commercial society.

Contact details:

Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, University Library, Coventry, CV4 7AL, England

Tel: +44 (0)24 7652 4219, Fax: +44 (0)24 7657 2988

Email: archives@warwick.ac.uk

Website: <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/library/mrc/>

Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading

The Museum of English Rural Life at the University of Reading collects the records of farms, agricultural engineers and ancillary industries on a national basis. It holds business records of firms in agricultural engineering, processing, and farm and garden seed production, such as Ranks Hovis McDougall, bakers, Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies, agriculture machinery manufacturers, and Lawes Chemical Co Ltd. It also collects the records of major agricultural organisations and co-operatives records and holds farm business records relating to farms throughout England.

Contact details:

Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading, PO Box 229, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6AG, England

Tel: +44 (0)118 378 8660, Fax: +44 (0)118 975 1264

Email: merl@reading.ac.uk

Website: <http://www.ruralhistory.org/index.html>

Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester

The Museum uses its collections to tell the story of Manchester as the world’s first industrial city and collects archives of companies from the region. It holds the archive collections of some of Manchester's most famous engineering companies, including Beyer, Peacock & Co, Ferranti, Metropolitan-Vickers, AV Roe & Co, Linotype & Machinery, Mather & Platt, Crossley and Factory records. National collections include the National Paper Museum collection, the Electricity Council Archive and the William Perkin papers.

Contact details:

Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, Collections and Learning Department, Liverpool Road, Manchester M3 4FP, England

Tel: +44 (0)161 6060127, Fax: +44 (0)161 6060186

Email: archives@msim.org.uk

Website: <http://www.msim.org.uk/collections.asp>

The National Archives

The National Archives holds business records from several sectors of the economy which were nationalised in the mid twentieth century. The predecessor companies of British Rail and other parts of the transport network are particularly strongly represented. The records

of many businesses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were submitted as exhibits in cases heard in the courts of equity and never reclaimed and now form part of the Chancery records. Companies Registration Office files of dissolved companies are held among the Board of Trade records.

Contact details:

The National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Richmond, TW9 4DU, England

Tel: +44 (0)20 8876 3444, Fax: +44 (0)20 8878 8905

Email: enquiry@nationalarchives.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

National Archives of Scotland

The National Archives of Scotland also holds a wide range of business records from several sectors of the economy that were previously nationalised, such as coal mining, railways, steel and shipbuilding. It holds a variety of business records that were produced in evidence in civil actions in the Court of Session and not reclaimed. Records of dissolved companies, registered in Scotland are held among Board of Trade records.

Contact details:

National Archives of Scotland, HM General Register House, Edinburgh EH1 3YY, Scotland

Tel: +44 (0)131 535 1314 Fax: +44 (0)131 535 1360

Email: enquiries@nas.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.nas.gov.uk>

National Maritime Museum, London,

The National Maritime Museum's collections contain over two million items relating to seafaring, navigation, astronomy and time measurement. The Museum includes public records relating to the administration of the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy, the records of 30 shipping company and personal papers. It also contains one million ship plans, dating from the early-eighteenth century. Shipping company records include: British India Steam Navigation Co; Coast Lines Ltd; Furness Withy & Co; General Steam Navigation Co; Manchester Ship Canal Co; Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Co; and Royal Mail Steam Packet Co.

Contact details:

National Maritime Museum, Park Row, Greenwich, London SE10 9NF, England

Tel: +44 (0)20 8312 6750 Fax: +44 (0)20 8312 6632

Email: manuscripts@nmm.ac.uk

Website: <http://www.nmm.ac.uk/>

Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

PRONI has one of the largest collections of business records in the British Isles, including those of the firms that made Ulster famous throughout the world for linen, ships and engineering. The records themselves represent a wide cross-section of the business life of the province ranging from the records of Harland & Wolff to the local corner shop. The most extensive holdings of business records relate to the linen industry, representing more than 250 companies, dating from the eighteenth century, and covering the whole range of business activity, from technical production and employment aspects to marketing on a world wide scale.

Contact details:

Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, 66 Balmoral Avenue, Belfast BT9 6NY, Northern Ireland

Tel: +44 (0)28 90 255905, Fax: +44 (0)28 90 255999

Email: proni@dcalni.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.proni.gov.uk>

Reading University Library

Reading University Library has many collections relating to the British publishing industry. These form a valuable resource for the study of all aspects of book production and printing. The Library holds the archives of twenty or so literary, general, and educational publishers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with papers of numerous subsidiary and associated companies. Major publishers include George Allen & Unwin; George Bell & Sons; A. & C. Black; The Bodley Head; Jonathan Cape; Chatto & Windus; De La Rue & Co; Heinemann Educational Books; The Hogarth Press; The Longman Group; Macmillan & Co; Routledge & Kegan Paul; Secker & Warburg; and Virago Press.

Contact details:

Reading University Library, PO Box 229, Whiteknights, Reading RG6 6AG, England

Tel: +44 (0)118 931 8776, Fax: +44 (0)118 931 6636

Email: specialcollections@reading.ac.uk

Website: <http://www.library.rdg.ac.uk/SerDepts/vl/colls/special/index.html>

Scottish Business Archive

Glasgow University Archive Services manages the Scottish Business Archive, which acts as a regional and national repository for business records in Scotland. The archive was established by an academic department concerned to collect the raw materials on which its future research would be based. In 1959, the first Professor of Economic History, Sydney Checkland, decided to adopt a strategy to provide projects and source material for his postgraduates and research staff. The subsequent Lecturer in Business History, as described previously, surveyed the records of businesses in Glasgow and the west of Scotland and gradually, many of these collections came into the department, especially after the recession hit the west of Scotland in the 1960s. As the collections grew, space became a problem and, after the collapse of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in the early 1970s, the University Archives took over the management of the collections.

Today, the Scottish Business Archive has over 500 business collections, containing the records of over 1200 companies, occupying nearly 8 kilometres of shelving. The collections cover nearly every aspect of industrial and commercial activity in the west of Scotland since the middle of the eighteenth century. Its collection of shipbuilding records is unrivalled and includes those of John Brown, builders of the *Queen Elizabeth* and *Queen Mary*. It is very strong in heavy engineering records, reflecting the industrial heritage of the region, and these include the records of the North British Locomotive Co, which in 1903 operated the largest locomotive factory in the world, Mirrlees Watson & Co, sugar machinery manufacturers, and Babcock & Wilcox Ltd, boilermakers. It also holds the records of the House of Fraser Group which includes material from department stores located throughout the United Kingdom; James Finlay & Sons, East India merchants; the Gourrock Ropework Co (which includes the records of the Robert Owen's New Lanark Mills, the utopian industrial concern of the late eighteenth century); J & P Coats, thread manufacturers to the world; Anchor Line and Ellerman Line, ship owners; Harper Collins

Publishers; whisky companies such as Allied Distillers, producers of such brands as *Ballantines*, *Teachers* and *Long John*; Lloyds TSB, Scotland, from the foundation of the savings bank movement; and confectioners; investment trusts; paint manufacturers; agricultural merchants; racecourse owners; furniture manufacturers; salvagers; insurance companies; and many, many more. The range of types of records held cover all the main functions of business, including: administration and corporate governance; financial management; sales; manufacture or service provision; employment; marketing; external and internal relations; and resource management.

Contact details:

Scottish Business Archive, Glasgow University Archive Services, 13 Thurso Street, Glasgow G11 6PE, Scotland

Tel: +44 (0)141 330 5515, Fax: +44 (0)141 330 4158

Email: dutyarch@archives.gla.ac.uk

Website: <http://www.archives.gla.ac.uk/>

The Scottish Brewing Archive

The Scottish Brewing Archive was established with the support of Scotland's brewing companies in 1982 to collect and preserve the records of the brewing industry in Scotland. Its holdings reflects all aspects of the brewing industry in Scotland - historical, scientific, economic, social, technological and political and all the most famous names in Scottish brewing past and present are represented in the collection.

Contact details:

Scottish Brewing Archive, Glasgow University Archive Services, 13 Thurso Street, Glasgow G11 6PE, Scotland

Tel: +44 (0)141 330 6079, Fax: +44 (0)141 330 4158

Email: sba@archives.gla.ac.uk

Website: <http://www.archives.gla.ac.uk/sba/default.html>

Corporate Archives

Corporate archive collections vary hugely in scope and scale. Few relate to one business only, as most corporate growth has been achieved through merger and acquisition or the formation of subsidiary and associated companies. The archive of a large company may therefore contain the records of hundreds of other businesses, some of which will pre-date that of the parent trading company. Nor are all business archives similarly structured and staffed. In the 1960s many archive posts in companies were part-time or combined with other duties. In 2005 most of the business archivists in the United Kingdom are full-time professionals with a relevant qualification. Although the in-house archives of the largest businesses comprise teams of archivists and records managers, the typical business archive set up remains a single archivist with one or two archive or clerical assistants. Few companies boast fully integrated and comprehensive records management and archive programmes.

The reason why a particular company has chosen to maintain an archive and the nature of its collections often dictates how it fits into the broader company structure. As a result companies have approached archive keeping in very different ways. Some companies, the majority, retain all their records in-house, like Bank of England, Barclays Bank, HBOS, Marks & Spencer, News International, Prudential, Reuters, The Royal Bank of Scotland and Unilever. Some also hold public records on behalf of The National Archives and are

appointed as an 'official place of deposit for public records' by the Lord Chancellor, such as the BT and Royal Mail archives. Others have deposited part of their records and maintain only some in-house or, like British Waterways, have only virtual archives which are physically located in a large number of scattered repositories.

In some businesses financial, or other pressures, have prompted the adoption of trust status to ring fence and protect archive collections as is the case at Royal Mail, EMI, WH Smith, the Guardian and N M Rothschild. Trust status protects archives by ensuring they are preserved for research use, regardless of the fate of the company; encourages deposit of archives from external donors by creating an independent custodian; offers tax savings and allows application for funding from external grant giving bodies. It also has disadvantages as a trust transfers ownership of the archives, which are both monetary and operational assets; constrains the future use and administration of the archives; requires records to be individually earmarked for inclusion in line with their legal status; and incurs major set up and running costs.

Consequently, most companies that perceive the internal uses of the archive as paramount, choose to run their archives in-house as an ordinary business unit. The company secretary's department is a popular home as this is the area responsible for maintaining records under the Companies Acts and other statutes. Another common reporting line for a corporate archive is the corporate communications area, particularly where the archive is perceived as being primarily of promotional value. Sometimes Central or Property Services is favoured, particularly where there is a records management linkage and the archive has significant storage requirements.

Contact addresses and further information about corporate archives can be found by searching ARCHON, <http://www.archon.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archon/> the online information resource for United Kingdom archival repositories maintained by The National Archives.

The following descriptions of a handful of businesses that hold major collections of business records demonstrates the variety of ways in which company archives are managed across the United Kingdom:

BP Archive

The BP Archive aims to make available vital historical information which can support BP in promoting its brand values as a progressive, innovative, performance driven and environmentally aware company. The BP Archive documents the history and world-wide activities of BP, as well as that of its predecessors - the Anglo-Persian Oil Company and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co - and several wholly- or jointly-owned subsidiaries, including Burmah Oil Co, Kuwait Oil Co, Iraq Petroleum Co and Shell-Mex and BP.

The archive is operated by BP at the University of Warwick and runs to 4,000 linear metres of records, dating from around 1900 up to the present day. It covers local, national and international history, and subjects include every aspect of life touched by the oil industry: political, cultural and social affairs; international disputes and warfare; changing topographies; industrial relations; economics and business issues; transport, particularly road, rail and ocean tankers; technological developments; and advertising. The archive is a particularly important source for Middle Eastern history.

Website: <http://www.bp.com/genericarticle.do?categoryId=2010123&contentId=2001507>

BT Archives

BT Archives preserves the historical information of British Telecommunications and its predecessors from the early part of the nineteenth century up to the present day, effectively the history of telecommunications services both within the United Kingdom and from it overseas. Records produced before the date of privatisation are classed as public records under the Public Records Acts 1958 and 1967. BT Archives undertakes the company's statutory responsibilities under these acts to preserve and make available public records to members of the public after 30 years. BT Archives also acts as the corporate memory for the BT group of companies; preserving vital historical information and making it available where appropriate to aid BT's performance and raise the company's profile.

BT Archives provides a public search room in London and the substantial *Connected Earth* online museum and in 2004 also became the first United Kingdom corporate archive to publish a heritage policy⁷ setting out the company's duty of care regarding the long-term preservation of its archive and artefact collections.

Website: <http://www.btplc.com/Thegroup/BTsHistory/BTgrouparchives/index.htm>

Guardian Newsroom

The Newsroom collects and preserves original and unique documents that record the story behind the published newspapers - the Guardian, The Observer and Guardian Unlimited. As well as the official papers of the business, the archive actively seeks to acquire material from people, such as editors, photographers and reporters, who have been associated with the newspapers. There are also extensive photographic collections. An ambitious oral history project is currently underway to record the memories and work experiences of several hundred people who have worked for the Guardian or the Observer over the last 70 years.

In 2004 the charitable Guardian Foundation became the legal owner of the archive collection held by the Newsroom to secure the existing archive and future contributions to the collection. The Newsroom is based in a London visitor centre which comprises the archive alongside a café and exhibitions / educational area.

Website: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/newsroom>

Prudential Group Archives

Prudential Group Archives seeks to acquire, preserve and make available all kinds of records relating to Prudential and its subsidiaries. It is typical of the majority of United Kingdom business archives that operate as in-house departments in order to serve the business through both the retrieval of information about the past and the promotion of brands through their heritage.

The archives, which evolved from a company museum established by the insurance company's publicity department in 1972, document the history of Prudential from its foundation in 1848 to the present day. Holdings include both corporate records, such as minute books and annual reports, and business records covering areas such as investment, product and policy development, domestic and overseas business, staff and customers. A significant proportion of the collection consists of publicity material including leaflets, posters, photographs, calendars and videos. Prudential Group Archives provides public access to the records in London and makes some further information about its heritage available online.

⁷ See <http://www.btplc.com/Thegroup/BTsHistory/BTgrouparchives/OurHeritagePolicy/policy.htm>

Website: <http://www.prudential.co.uk/prudentialplc/aboutpru/history>

The Rothschild Archive

The Rothschild Archive was established in 1978 to preserve the records of a family that has made a major contribution to the economic, political and social history of many countries throughout the world. The records of the London bank of N M Rothschild & Sons form the core of the archive and reflect the activities of the other family banks through shared correspondence and accounts. Records of many of the Rothschild family's activities were maintained by the bank, including their estate accounts.

The archive maintains an international research centre in London as well as offering bursaries to researchers who are in full-time education and committed to research projects involving substantial use of the Rothschild Archive. It provides a substantial website to make the contents of the archive more readily available to remote users. The site comprises an online archive guide, a research forum, exhibitions, news and information on a range of commonly asked questions. In 1999 the ownership of the archive was transferred from the bank to The Rothschild Archive Trust, an independent body of family members and advisers committed to securing the future of the collection and to developing its use by the academic community.

Website: <http://www.rothschildarchive.org/ta/>

Business Archives Associations

Business Archives Council

The Business Archives Council, founded in 1934, advocates the preservation of business records of historical importance; supplies advice and information on business archives and modern records; encourages interest in and study of business history and archives; and provides a forum for the custodians and users of business archives in England and Wales. The Council has produced several industry-wide record surveys over the last three decades. This work has identified records in public and private hands, and has led to the deposit of a great many valuable collections with public repositories. The published results are essential reading for students wishing to understand the nature of an industry, its history and the records it produced. Published surveys have covered shipping (1971), shipbuilding (1980), Britain's 1,000 earliest registered companies (1986), accountancy (1994), banking (1985 & 2001), pharmaceuticals (2003) and veterinary medicine (2004).

The Council publishes a bi-annual journal - *Business Archives: Principles and Practice* in May and *Business Archives: Sources and History* in November - and a quarterly newsletter, and awards the annual Wadsworth Prize for Business History to encourage study in this area. The Council has also developed a business archives training module for the University of Liverpool's postgraduate archive programme. Membership includes corporate patrons, corporate members, institutional members (such as record offices, libraries and museums) and individual members.

Contact details:

Business Archives Council, c/o Ms F Maccoll, Records Manager, Rio Tinto plc, 6 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LD, England

Tel: +44 (0)20 7753 2123

Website: <http://www.businessarchivescouncil.com>

Business Archives Council of Scotland

The Business Archives Council of Scotland was founded in 1960 and undertakes similar work in Scotland to that of the Business Archives Council. It offers advice and assistance to organisations on the preservation of business records of historical importance and on the administration and management of both archives and modern records. The Council's staff undertake much survey and rescue work and it publishes its own annual journal, *Scottish Industrial History*.

Contact details:

Business Archives Council of Scotland, c/o Glasgow University Archive Services, Business Records Centre, Glasgow University, Glasgow G12 8QQ, Scotland

Tel: +44 (0)141 330 4159, Fax: +44 (0)141 330 4158

Website: <http://www.archives.gla.ac.uk/bacs/>

Business Records Group, Society of Archivists

The Business Records Group of the Society of Archivists, established in 2000, is one of several specialised interest groups operating within the professional body for archivists in the United Kingdom. It was formed to provide a focused and informed group within the society that represented the interests of business records for all archivists and records managers working with business archives. It aims to provide a forum for discussion and support; to promote best practice; to facilitate the teaching related to business records in the archival training schools; and to have input into policy and decision making relating to business records, such as ensuring that national and international standards and initiatives take account of the specialist needs of business records.

Contact details:

Business Records Group, c/o Society of Archivists, Prioryfield House, 20 Canon Street, Taunton TA1 1SW

Website: <http://www.archives.org.uk/BRG/index.asp>

Training for Business Archivists

There are a number of postgraduate courses in archives administration and records management offered by UK universities. These courses provide a broad, general training for all archivists and records managers and aim to produce professional personnel who can go into any area of archival work. Within their overall syllabuses, all the courses offer some teaching on business records and include visits to business repositories. The Business Archives Council has developed a business archives training module for the University of Liverpool's postgraduate archive programme.

There are also opportunities for more specialist training on business records. The Business Archives Council, the Business Records Group of the Society of Archivists and the Records Management Society provide professional training in the form of workshops, training days and conferences. Commercial firms offer training courses in records and information management and University of Liverpool offers a distance learning module on business archives.

Business Archives Guides

Since 1970, *Business Archives*, the journal of the Business Archives Council, has carried annual summaries of business records newly deposited in record offices. The information

is based on the annual 'Accessions to Repositories' survey undertaken by The National Archives from over 200 record repositories throughout the British Isles. This information is added to the indexes to the National Register of Archives and it is also edited and used to produce thematic digests, including one on business⁸. *Scottish Industrial History*, the annual journal of the Business Archives Council of Scotland, also carries summaries of business records newly deposited in record offices and of surveys of business records maintained by companies. In addition The National Archives offers a comprehensive research guide, *Sources for Business History*⁹, which points to United Kingdom business-history resources. It includes indexes, lists of repositories, web links, a bibliography, a list of guides and additional materials.

During the last 40 years a number of guides have been published which describe the historical records of businesses, held both within record offices and businesses themselves, belonging to specific industries or geographical areas:

- *Chancery Masters' Exhibits, Part One and Part Two* (List & Index Society, volumes 13 and 14, 1966)
- P L Payne, *Studies in Scottish Business History* (London, 1967)
- P Mathias & AWH Pearsall, *Shipping: a survey of historical records* (Newton Abbot, 1971)
- G Ottley, *Railway history: guide to sixty-one collections in libraries and archives in Great Britain* (London, 1973)
- P Hudson, *The West Riding Wool Textile Industry. A Catalogue of Business Records from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (Edington, 1975)
- CR Clinker, *Railway History Sources: A Handlist Of The Principal Sources Of Original Material With Notes And Guidance On Its Use* (Bristol, 1976)
- J Lane, *Register of Business Records of Coventry and Related Areas* (Coventry, 1977)
- Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, *The Ulster Textile Industry: A Catalogue of Business Records in PRONI Relating Principally to the Linen Industry in Ulster* (Belfast, 1978)
- CA Jones, *Britain And The Dominions: A Guide To Business And Related Records In The United Kingdom Concerning Australia, Canada, New Zealand, And South Africa* (Boston, USA, 1978)
- J Lowe, *A Guide to Sources in the History of the Cycle and Motor Industries in Coventry 1880-1939* (Coventry, 1982)
- CRH Cooper, 'The archives of the City of London Livery Companies and related organisations', *Archives* 72 (1984)
- L Richmond & B Stockford, *Company Archives. The Survey of the Records of 1000 of the First Registered Companies in England and Wales* (Aldershot, 1985)
- L Pressnell & J Orbell, *A Guide to the Historical Records of British Banking* (Aldershot, 1985)
- S Kelly, 'Report of a survey of the archives of British commercial computer manufacturers 1950-1970' (Unpublished typescript, Institution of Electrical Engineers, 1985)
- *Scottish Record Office Court of Session Productions c1760-1840* (List & Index Society, special series volume 23, 1987)

⁸ See <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/accessions/>

⁹ See <http://www.catalogue.nationalarchives.gov.uk/RdLeaflet.asp?sLeafletID=375>

- P Morris & C Russell, *Archives of the British Chemical Industry 1750-1914: A Handlist* (British Society for the History of Science, 1988)
- L Richmond & A Turton (eds), *The Brewing Industry A Guide to Historical Records* (Manchester, 1990)
- The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Records of British Business and Industry 1760-1914, Textiles and Leather* (HMSO, 1990)
- J Green, P Ollerenshaw & P Wardley, *Business in Avon and Somerset: a survey of archives* (Bristol, 1991)
- A Ritchie (ed), *The Shipbuilding Industry A Guide to Historical Records* (Manchester, 1992)
- W Habgood, *Chartered Accountants in England and Wales: A Guide to Historical Records* (Manchester, 1994)
- The Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Records of British Business and Industry 1760-1914, Engineering & Metal Working* (HMSO, 1994)
- HAL Cockerell & E Green, *The British Insurance Business. A Guide to its History and Archives* (Sheffield, 1994)
- RM. Bailey, *Scottish Architects' Papers. A Source Book* (Edinburgh, 1996)
- A Weedon & M Bott, *British Book Trade Archives 1830-1939: A Location Register* (Bristol, 1996)
- J Orbell & A Turton, *A Guide to the Historical Records of British Banking* (Aldershot, 2001)
- L Richmond, J Stevenson & A Turton, *The Pharmaceutical Industry. A Guide to Historical Records* (Aldershot, 2003)
- P Hunter, *Veterinary Medicine: A Guide to Historical Records* (Aldershot, 2004)

Business Archives Internet Portals

A2A (Access to Archives)

A2A is part of the National Archives Network of the United Kingdom, aiming to create a virtual national archives catalogue, bringing together information about the national archival heritage and making it available globally from one source via the World Wide Web. A2A aims to provide access to archive catalogue from geographically dispersed repositories in England. Many of these catalogues are not available elsewhere on the Internet, being usually only available at the relevant archives repository, in paper form or on a local electronic system. A2A is led by The National Archives but around 350 other institutions also participate and many catalogues of business collections will be found by searching the system. Many participants grouped together to achieve funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to be able to participate in the A2A project. Two projects in particular were business based, '*Muck and Brass*' and '*Yorkshire Made*'.

'*Muck and Brass*' was a West Midlands joint initiative to put selected archive lists and catalogues of 16 regional institutions online, including those of The British Motor Industry Heritage Trust, home to the largest collection of historical British cars in the world. '*Yorkshire Made*' is in the process of converting to electronic format 9,000 pages of catalogues of the archives of business and industry in the Yorkshire and Humber region, from textiles to chocolate, coal and steel to agriculture.

Website: <http://www.a2a.org.uk/>

Archives Hub

The Archives Hub forms another part of the United Kingdom's National Archives Network. The Archives Hub provides a single point of access to nearly 20,000 descriptions of archives held in United Kingdom universities and colleges. At present these are primarily at collection-level, although where possible they are linked to complete catalogue descriptions. As many University Libraries and Archives contain large collections of business records, the Archives Hub is a discovery tool for business archives.

Website: www.archiveshub.ac.uk

Companies House

The United Kingdom has had a system of company registration since 1844. Today, company registration matters are dealt with in law, by the Companies Act 1985 and the updating legislation contained in the Companies Act 1989. All limited companies in the United Kingdom are registered at Companies House, an Executive Agency of the Department of Trade and Industry. There are more than 1.8 million limited companies registered in Great Britain, and more than 300,000 new companies are incorporated each year.

The office of the Registrar of Companies for England and Wales, and Chief Executive of Companies House is based at Companies House, Crown Way, Cardiff CF14 3UZ, Wales. Companies House holds information concerning live companies registered in England and Wales and brief details concerning dissolved ones. Enquiries can be made either by post or by personal visit to the search room there. A fee is payable. The website offers free access to basic company information via a search of their on-line database. The National Archives have a research guide on information concerning the registration of companies and businesses¹⁰.

The same information for companies registered in Scotland is held by Companies House (Scotland), 37 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2EB and for companies registered in Northern Ireland at the Companies Registration Office (Northern Ireland), IDB House, Chichester Street, Belfast BT1 4JX. Files relating to dissolved companies have been transferred to respectively The National Archives, National Archives of Scotland and Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

Website: www.companieshouse.gov.uk

National Registers of Archives

In the United Kingdom the National Register of Archives (established in 1945 by the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts which joined with the Public Record Office to form The National Archives in 2003) and the National Register of Archives, Scotland (established in 1946 by the Scottish Records Office, known as National Archives of Scotland since 1999) act as central points for the collection and dissemination of information about archives collections outside of the national repositories. Both bodies maintain registers of private archives from information and finding aids provided by other bodies, such as the owners of the records, survey projects, record repositories, and

¹⁰ See <http://www.catalogue.nationalarchives.gov.uk/RdLeaflet.asp?sLeafletID=236>

researchers. Information from the National Register of Archives of Scotland surveys is added to those of the National Register of Archives.

The register maintained by The National Archives in London now contains over 44,000 unpublished lists and catalogues about the location and nature of historical records that have been created by some 46,000 individuals, 9,000 families, 29,000 businesses and 75,000 other organisations. Indexes to the lists can be searched over the web and it is possible to search for the records of corporate bodies or the papers of families and individuals. Guidelines on how to undertake searches are available on the site.

Website: <http://www.nra.nationalarchives.gov.uk/nra/>

Scottish Archive Network (SCAN)

The Scottish Archive Network was established in 1999 to create an electronic network and search room linking the catalogues of 52 archives in Scotland and providing access to over 20,000 collections of historical records.

Website: <http://www.scan.org.uk/>

SCoRe (Search Company Records)

This website provides access to a database of company annual report holdings in United Kingdom libraries, including the British Library. All of the searchable collections include reports dating back to at least the 1970s, and some to the beginning of the twentieth century. Reports can be searched by company name, industry, country or year.

Website: www.score.ac.uk

Business Archives Bibliography

Through the old-established annual journals of the Business Archives Council - *Business Archives: Principles and Practice* and *Business Archives: Sources and History* – alongside the annual journal of the Business Archives Council of Scotland - *Scottish Industrial History* - the United Kingdom enjoys a wealth of literature devoted specifically to the management and use of business archives. The following bibliography lists just a few of the books and articles that have been published on the subject of business archives in recent years:

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- John Armstrong & Stephanie Jones, *Business Documents. Their Origins, Sources And Uses In Historical Research* (London, 1987)
- Melanie Aspey, 'Searchroom management in a business archive', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 71, 1996, pp.57 -65
- Rosemary E Boyns, Trevor Boyns & John Richard Edwards, *Historical accounting records. A guide for archivists and researchers* (Society of Archivists, London, 2000)
- Claire Bunkham and David Carter, 'Online access to vital records: creating a virtual archive for Prudential plc', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 87, 2004, pp.76-86
- Alan Cameron, 'Access to archives: An archivist's viewpoint', *Proceedings of the International Conferences of the Round Table on Archives XXXII CITRA*, 1998

- Karen Fielder, 'Exhibiting business archives', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 69, 1995, pp.31-40
- Eamon Dyas, 'Questions of ownership in documentary property – case study from a business archive', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 81, 2001, pp.29-40
- Mary Ellis and Marion Lowman, 'A review of business archive web pages', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 85, 2003, pp.1-7
- Mary Goodwin, 'Preserving and promoting history in a fast changing environment: An example from Cable & Wireless', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 77, 1999, pp.47-56
- Edwin Green, 'History and archives in the business environment', *Scottish Industrial History*, vol. 22, 2001, pp.7-21
- Edwin Green, 'Multi-national, multi-archival: the business records of the HSBC Group', *Proceedings of the annual conference of the Business Archives Council 1997*, 1997, pp.105-116
- David Hay, 'BT's Connected earth – a new model for safeguarding a corporate heritage collection', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 87, 2004, pp.45-60
- Christine Heap, 'Engineering drawings – their selection, storage and use', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 63, 1992, pp.39-48
- Tamsin Kitch, 'The corporate intranet: a tool for business archives', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 83, 2002, pp.30-46
- John Orbell, *A guide to tracing the history of a business* (Aldershot, 1987)
- Lesley Richmond, 'Balancing rights and interests: the ethics of business archives', *Business Archives Principles and Practice*, May 2000
- Lesley Richmond, 'The art of appraisal: An essential tool for business archivists', *Janus*, 1991.1
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- David Stevens & Bridget Williams, 'The creation of Sainsbury's virtual museum, or a case study of how to step safely onto the information highway', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 81, 2001, pp.41-51
- Alison Turton, ed., *Managing business archives* (Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 1991)
- Alison Turton, 'Connecting with schools: Corporate archives as providers of educational resources', *Business Archives: Principles and Practice*, No.79, May 2000
- Nicholas Webb, "'If only the bank had listened to me..." The purpose and value of an oral history programme', *Business Archives. Principles and Practice*, 85, 2003, pp.32-45

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