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WADSWORTH PRIZE: WINNERS, 1978-2002

In 2003, Lenore Symons retired as co-ordinator of the Wadsworth Prize for Business History. Lenore had undertaken the task for nearly 20 years and it is appropriate to mark this by including a complete list of the 25 winners to date.


(Listed by year of publication. The award is generally made the following year)
A part of the field of construction history is the study of early building firms. Some examples of nineteenth century firms have been researched, typically larger ones which undertook major or prestigious works. However the smaller the firm and more remote its existence from the present, the less is likely to be known about it. It so happens that very many building firms were small and, of course, the industry in one form or another stretches back a very long way indeed. Later Georgian firms, particularly those which worked on the great mass of more commonplace buildings, remain largely unresearched and unknown. The products of their toil and craftsmanship, in the forms of smaller houses, agricultural and industrial buildings and the like, still linger in many places. Such survivors are increasingly cherished by many modern owners and onlookers, yet their original builders remain anonymous. Their identity, business structure, organisation, methods, social relations and life experience are obscure.

This paper sets out to introduce an aspect of construction history and the use of some archival sources for historical research in the field. In particular, the nature and potential of later Georgian builders’ account books and day books are considered, with reference to two geographically separated case studies.

Construction history
The scholarly pursuit of construction history is still in its infancy, albeit a somewhat protracted one. Neighbouring disciplines such as archaeology, economic, business and architectural history have long since grown up, having passed through adolescent uncertainties to reach maturity. Construction history has made modest progress as a coherent body of knowledge with recognisable boundaries, but has not yet fully attained the magnitude and gravitas which some feel to be its due. To be sure, evidence of progress is seen, for example, in the first International Congress on Construction History held in Madrid in 2003 and in the publication of the international journal *Construction History*. Yet it remains true that subject definition and scope of construction history are open to debate. It may be asked, what is construction history? Answers are innumerable, but broadly the subject may be taken to be the study of the form, materials and components of which buildings were composed in the past, together with the physical and organisational means by which they were brought together. Thus there may be said to be physical, technical, economic and social components to the subject. If the subject is focussed on the spatial and physical characteristics of built artifacts (mostly buildings, but also bridges and other engineering structures), then a major secondary focus is the behaviour of the firms and people engaged in building. Construction history, then, is about both building products and building processes, including the means of production; this study is concerned particularly with the latter.

The way in which UK building firms evolved over the longer term is broadly
understood. From mediaeval craft guilds to eighteenth century masterbuilders and journeymen, to the emergence of large nineteenth century omni-competent general contractors, and on to modern sub-contracting has been traced by the combined efforts of the likes of Salzman, Satoh and others. Some nineteenth and twentieth century firms have been treated in depth as seen, for example, in the works of Hobhouse and Spencer-Silver. Additionally there are a number of more or less celebratory works about the rise and rise of leading construction firms and their associated luminaries. No doubt more firms would have been studied in depth were it not for certain obstacles arising from some peculiarities of building firms. Compared with, say, large manufacturing enterprises or banks, typical building firms were small, short-lived and little given to making or keeping documentary records. Builders all too often left little to posterity except the buildings which they erected. Typical proprietors of early building firms (still more, members of their workforces) may be thought of as being more men of action than men of letters (only a few were women of action). It has been remarked of builder proprietors that they were themselves generally too busy building (as well as too poorly educated) to speak for themselves. Although these words referred originally to Victorian builders, the implication for their Georgian predecessors is plain enough: few records were made. Of those that were made, not many are likely to have survived the process of attrition. Much building work was conducted by frail and under-capitalised undertakings, often a sole principal struggling to survive in a fiercely fluctuating market. Their prospects were not very good. If they did not fail for business reasons, many disappeared with the retirement of their proprietor. As will be all too familiar to business historians, cessation of trading commonly meant wholesale loss of records. So it was that building firms were no better (or more fortunate) than others in the matter of survival of business records; rather the reverse, it is suspected. Historically speaking, the records of building firms may be summed up as being initially slim despite the large number of firms, and thereafter prone to heavy attrition. Writing of builders, again Victorian, but again with obvious implications, Summerson noted ‘What do we know of these people? Very little….their biographies and business methods have, by now, become almost impenetrably obscure.’

Since Summerson more or less wrote off our quarry in 1973, matters have improved. Studies of various firms have appeared. Today the frontier of historical understanding has been pressed, unevenly, to the Georgian years of early nineteenth and later eighteenth centuries. It is at this point that building organisations recede into deep twilight. Those who transformed London’s already great stock of buildings, those setting out on the great urbanisation in north and midlands, and those who were active among the myriad of lesser towns and villages, all are little known. A few studies have begun to reclaim some builders’ identities and their methods, but (as the historians’ cliché has it) much remains to be done.

**Archive sources**

What help can be expected to be on hand to assist historians in their pursuit of later Georgian building firms? The survival of records in old firms founded two centuries or more ago is, on pragmatic grounds, not rated highly probable. Survival of records in the hands of private individuals perhaps is less unpromising, although it remains problematic. In public archives the picture appears more encouraging. Here the
assistance is gratefully acknowledged of the National Archives: Historical Manuscripts Commission which produces a thematic digest in its annual Access to Repositories exercise. This in turn forms the basis of a list of recent accessions relevant to construction history, published from time to time in Construction History Society Newsletter. From such accession lists the records of two case study firms were selected for this study. They appeared promising because they were both of relatively early date, were sizeable and referred to building rather than other associated, but more narrowly specialised, trades. One of the firms was Berry and Vincent Ltd. of Crediton, Devon, records of which are held by Devon County Record Office, Exeter. The other firm was Newton of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, records of which are held by Hertfordshire County Council Archives, Hertford. The early history of these firms will now be outlined in order to set the context for consideration of surviving historical sources.

Two case study firms

In the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the firm of Berry and Vincent was owned by one John Prawl. His firm is one of the few middle-ranking building enterprises of the period, undertaking commonplace building work, about which much is known. The firm was founded in 1770 in Crediton, about eight miles north west of Exeter where it was directed by Prawl for over 50 years before passing to his son-in-law in 1822. Showing exceptional longevity, it is still active today, a sprightly 234 years old.

Prawl built in his home town and to a large extent in the surrounding countryside on farms and estates mostly within about a six mile radius of home, but sometimes twice as far. Customers included landowners, church and chapel authorities and millers requiring new works, alterations and repairs. Prawl’s market was a relatively stable one as yet lightly touched, if at all, by the coming forces of industrialisation.

The firm worked in the so-called ‘wet’ trades of stonemasonry, plastering and cob building. This last was the Devonian practice of wall building with earth mixed with straw and gravel. Other firms, now lost to view, would have undertaken to add to Prawl’s work the carpentry and joinery, thatching, glazing, decorating and such plumbing as was attempted. Prawl’s firm worked on what are now regarded as vernacular rather than polite buildings, that is, those erected by craftsmen in the traditional fashion, little influenced by concern with architectural appearances or guided by drawings executed in advance of building operations.

The workforce of between about ten and 20 men (the firm grew over time) comprised a nucleus of regular employees supplemented by extras who appeared and disappeared at frequent intervals. The lowest paid made do with about two thirds of the wages of the highest. On any one day the workforce was divided into small groups, typically five or so in number, spread among the various current building sites. Nearly every day produced a different combination of sites, gangs and their constituent individual employees, implying a high degree of managerial activity and close control. Prawl himself was physically engaged on sites for at least some of the time. No doubt the lives of members of the workforce was arduous with heavy labour and cumbersome materials, often long journeys to and from sites, and work impeded or stopped (along with pay) by adverse weather. For Prawl there were, in addition, the usual business risks of workload fluctuations and late payment. Yet evidence survives of a human side:
the employee who went off on drinking sprees with unfortunate behavioural consequences (Prawl’s own words were more blunt); Prawl’s occasional loans to his men; and his gifts for relief in hard times.

The second case study firm was Newton of Hitchin, a market town just off the Great North Road over 30 miles north of London. It is surmised that this firm operated in a wealthier market than did Prawl, a market in which attitudes were, if anything, more progressive. Certainly, Newton made extensive use of London suppliers to acquire a great variety of materials used in his work, an opportunity denied the west country firm. Building practice in Hitchin would have differed also, with brick predominating in place of cob and stone. Not much is known of Newton except that, like Prawl, the firm specialised. Unlike Prawl who worked with heavy and wet materials, Newton specialised in glazing, painting and plumbing. Neither was he averse to occasional odd jobs such as ‘painting and marking a wheelbarrow’ (at a price of 3/-d. in December 1800). Newton’s group of craft specialisms appears to have been common, at least in the decades following his time. According to Rose, building trades, at least in rural areas, were often loosely organised into the three groups of masons, carpenters and plumber-glazier-decorators. Thus Newton was an example of the latter while Prawl was an example of the first, who happened to work in an area in which cob building material was often substituted for stone.

Case study sources
The main surviving sources relevant to the early history of Prawl’s firm amount to the following, under the name of Prawl’s successors, Berry and Vincent Ltd.

A1-3 Day Books (diaries of work done each day, by whom, where, cost, materials used, etc). Three books covering the years 1794-97, 1802-05 and 1815-18.

A9-12 Account Books (accounts with clients). Four books covering the years 1792-97, 1795-1803, 1815-22 and 1818-22.

In addition were miscellaneous business papers consisting of: A13 Accounts for Contract Works and Inventory for 1822; and F1 Residuary Account of Prawl’s Estate.

It can be seen that no records survive from the earliest decades of the firm and that the chronological sequences of Day Books and Account Books is incomplete. Only 16 years of Day Books survive out of a potential of 52 years. Similarly with the Account Books, among which are big gaps after 1803. Typical Day Book entries take the following forms:

3 August 1795
‘Self [Prawl] for Mrs Downey all Day Lamp [employee] ¼ of Day at Oak and to Justice about ye Drains at ye Back Lane 0-2-2½
Wm Pery and Dad [employees] at Knole Cobing [cob walling] 0-4-10’

16 March 1797
‘Parke and Short [employees] paveing and Dressing ye linhay Wall at Hill [location] Bery Pery [employees] and Boy about ye Dary [Dairy?] 0-8-0’
Entries such as this are copious, but occasionally inconsistent. For example, the location of a building job may be recorded, but not the customer’s name, or vice versa. To occasional omissions must be added some difficulties of legibility. However, despite such problems for the researcher, there is ample material to enable an historical picture to be pieced together. While some entries are unduly terse, there are enough compensating scattered details to provide a reasonably full view of the firm and its activities. Some such details are not directly related to original business purposes, but nevertheless throw useful light on matters for the modern researcher. So it is that details of building materials and equipment emerge: here the price of ‘scarfold [sic] ropes’ (2 dozen for 10/-d.), and here the price of a peck of hair, presumably for making plaster (4d.). Then there are recorded asides, as with ‘Self Ill in the Gout’ on 1 January 1816 or, more worryingly, ‘…Men not at Work on account of the Riot’ on 13 April 1795 (labourer Stephens was laconically noted two days later as being ‘upon ye drink’). The primary sources are ostensibly factual, largely quantitative records intended to assist in running a business. As such, they might be expected to be fairly consistent and reliable series through time. In reality this is partly true, although they contain considerable gaps, minor internal inconsistencies and details which, although apparently extraneous for business management purposes, are helpful (or at least entertaining) to the historian.

Not many late Georgian building firms can have been so fortunate in the survival of their records as Prawl’s, but another such was, as noted above, Newton of Hitchin. The relevant Newton records are as follows.

Customer Ledgers (detailing amounts charged to customers and dates of payment)
D/ENe/B8 August 1784 – May 1791
D/ENe/B9 January 1796 – July 1801
D/ENe/B10 September 1800 – December 1804
D/ENe/B11 October 1808 – January 1813
D/ENe/B12 October 1812 – December 1816
D/ENe/B13 January 1824 – December 1831

Day Books
D/ENe/B128 October 1790 – June 1793
D/ENe/B129 February 1797 – January 1799
D/ENe/B130 January 1806 – November 1806
D/ENe/B131-7 November 1806 – September 1820
D/ENe/B138 October 1827 – October 1828
D/ENe/B139 February 1831 – March 1832
D/ENe/B140 June 1833 – July 1834

Suppliers’ Ledger Books
B166 Suppliers’ Ledger (materials obtained from London builders’ merchants February 1809 – April 1824)

Selected entries in a Customer Ledger take the form:
‘Lady Radcliffe
Sept. 13 [1800]
A typical selected entry in a Day Book takes the form:

‘Account of what is expended in [indistinct] Hips and Ridges [of roof] it being by contract
March 15 [1791] 1 Day Self and Rich [employee]
March 26 2 Days Rich’

Randomly selected entries in Suppliers’ Ledger include:
‘Messrs. Crosby Clay & Co St John St’ (oil and turps, 1818)
‘Messrs. Upton & Co Cheapside’ (tar, varnish, 1818)
‘Messrs. Pontiflex, Son & Wood 49 Shoe Lane’ (lead, 1819)

The picture which emerges about Newton’s records is similar to that of Prawl. There are copious entries, with gaps in the chronology, occasional inconsistencies and some illegibility. An apparent minor difference, on the basis of sampling of entries rather than fully comprehensive study, is that Newton was more sparing with asides not strictly relevant to bookkeeping purposes.

Surviving sources: opportunities and potential

To what extent can the business organisation, methods and experience of Georgian building firms be regained from the foregoing types of archive sources? What help can the construction historian expect from surviving day books, account books and the like? What potential do they present?

The first point to be made is that there is a paucity of alternative sources. No doubt the world of the Georgian builder can be partly reconstructed from implication and deduction based on other industries, and on how surviving buildings were constructed. Yet it remains that a firm’s own business records offer unique insights unlikely to be obtained elsewhere.

The type of sources under consideration enable conclusions to be drawn about a range of features concerning the economy of building firms. Such features include understanding of the markets served by building firms. Regarding the geographical reach of rural builders, the distances which Prawl was prepared to travel for work is evident. So too, are the types of customer, types of work (whether new build, replacement or repair) and types of building. Thus the nature of demand for building work begins to come into focus both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Other key features of the economy of firms were their flows of income and expenditure, and rate of accumulation of capital. From such figures the size of firms are apparent and may be compared. In the case of Prawl, for example, it has been calculated that for the eleven months beginning July 1793 the average monthly earnings were £14-5-4½d., while wage costs were £11-0-11½d. This, incidentally,
indicates how high wage costs were in relation to other costs; a characteristic of building with cob, in which materials were extremely cheap compared with labour. Detailed figures for income and expenditure of a firm, over extended periods of time, reveal fluctuations of trade and long term trends. Thus the variation in hours worked in winter, with short daylight hours and inclement weather, and in summer may be plotted. So, too, perhaps may the impact on demand be gauged due to good or poor harvests, war scares, civil disturbance and the like. Prawl’s records contain passing references to the Napoleonic wars, exceptionally cold weather (when frost hampered building activity) and so on.

Another aspect of the economy of building firms on which light may be thrown is the division of labour in construction. How the various tasks inseparable from the act of building were divided between different firms remains to this day both problematic and fluid. At some times and in some places the different operations (digging foundations, procuring materials, carpentry, etc.) have been carried out by separate concerns. At other times and places, single concerns (general contractors) have been prepared to accept sole responsibility for all, or most, of the building works. In Newton’s and Prawl’s day it is apparent that, even well outside major cities, there was a fair degree of division of labour between firms. It is known that Newton at this stage confined his activities to glazing, painting and plumbing, while Prawl specialised mainly in cob, masonry and plastering. In passing, it may be noted that Prawl’s nineteenth century successor soon set about both diversifying his market by building road bridges (civil engineering, as understood today), and by contracting for the construction of whole buildings. Connected with questions of division of labour in Georgian construction are issues about innovation. Did Prawl’s successor diversify in response to change in demand or in order to exploit newer ways of building which, before very long, were to lead to the obsolescence of cob building? Thus, detailed research of firms’ records may help to throw light on change in the industry respecting both contractual and technical matters.

A further aspect into which firms’ records may yield insight is that of employment and wages. Earnings may be plotted in detail through time and comparisons may be drawn between different regional locations and between town and country. Newton in 1801 paid his painters 2/10d. per day (an apprentice got 1/101/4d.). This was far more than Prawl whose wages ranged from 1/4d. to 1/10d. per day in 1794 and were still only 1/6d. to 2/2d. twenty years later. No doubt the local economy in Hertfordshire, close to London, was quite different from that of the more remote west country. The wage levels of different craft skills, the influence of worker’s age and productivity, and the wages lost due to bad weather or intermittent work opportunities, may all be better understood by reference to firms’ records.

The second area of historical research which may be informed by archive sources is the social and behavioural one. The records offer the potential for better understanding of the construction workforce. How men (never women, in the two case studies) were deployed in small gangs from project to project is seen. For example, in the week beginning 3 August 1795 Prawl’s workforce of eleven men was active on a total of nine different projects. Typically, they worked in gang sizes of four men or fewer, and the distribution of men in gangs, and of gangs among projects, differed on most days. With live projects more numerous than gangs, it appears that, then as now, it
was not always easy to get builders to fulfill their promise to turn up on site. Historical continuity indeed.

There are other social aspects on which a view can be obtained from builders’ records. They include hierarchies within the workforce: the steepness or flatness of the pyramid from ‘boys’ as lowest paid up to top paid craftsmen. Visible in the records is the extent of chronological continuity in the workforce. Prawl had a nucleus of employees who stayed with him for as long as two decades or more and also a ‘reserve army’ of others who came and went according to need (and, perhaps, inclination). Whether continuity of employment was greater in firms in quite stable rural places than it was in more dynamic large towns is not yet known, but seems probable.

Beyond continuity or its lack are fragments of social incident and anecdote which sometimes fleetingly illuminate relations between masters and men. Passing familiarity with Georgian street life in London provides expectations that such relations were likely to be callous if not brutal. That view is supported by Prawl’s laconic asides about riots, his employees’ drinking habits and their detention at the assizes. At the same time, it would be easy to lose sight of another side of the picture. This comes from entries in Prawl’s accounts which detail sums of money advanced to sometime employees temporarily out of work over Christmas. Likewise are occasional references to loans to key men for purchase of clothing, repayable over a period of weeks. Here the principal of a firm was practising philanthropy and enlightened self interest in his role as an informal banker.

The third area of historical research which may be informed by archive sources is that of the products of construction, the buildings. Historians of architecture and vernacular building seeking to describe and explain the forms and materials of buildings may find the records useful in several ways. For example, the costs of materials are often recorded and allow comparison to be made between alternatives in different places and at different times. Cost of transporting materials (often very high) may be separated from cost of purchase. Thus any cost advantages realised when new materials were introduced are shown and the understanding of diffusion of innovative materials may be extended. Again, more or less ephemeral aspects of buildings, such as decorative wall limewash colour schemes (Prawl sometimes used ‘yeallow oaker’) can be understood from builders’ accounts of materials purchases. Again, light may be thrown on builders’ networks of suppliers. In this respect, a sharp contrast is apparent between practices in the two case study firms. Newton traded with many suppliers in different parts of London while Prawl had a simpler and far more local network. The nature of Newton’s trade required a variety of heavily processed goods used in plumbing and glazing, compared with Prawl’s simpler needs for mass materials (cob and stone) obtained near the point of use.

A further area in which archive sources are able to add to understanding of building construction and materials is about operations on site. For example, using data from Prawl’s accounts it is possible to reconstruct the operational sequence involved in building a pony linhay beginning 23 February 1803 with site clearance and digging foundations, through to building cob walls and, eventually after expending 31 man days of activity, placing coping upon the thatched roof on 21 April. Identifiable are each successive operation, how many men were involved and for how long, the time taken for cob walling to dry out, and so on. Further research possibly could connect such
operational sequences to known surviving buildings, thereby offering to connect the artifact with the record of human effort and skill expended in its creation: relating product to process.

Summing up the nature and potential of the archive sources, much of the data found is quantitative and in considerable detail. Sums of money, size of workforce, days worked, materials costs and the like all are likely to appear in voluminous amounts. This is the sort of data which lends itself well to the use of sampling and statistical techniques. Indeed, so great is the quantity of data that sampling may offer the only way in which it may be approached. By such means the full potential of the records may be reached: comparison and correlations may be established which will go beyond the use of quantified data merely to amplify narrative description.

Surviving sources: limitations
Archive sources are likely to be fragmentary: incomplete chronological runs of day books, etc., rather than full records. Such fragments do, however, provide a mass of diverse detail. Thus the emerging historical picture is a chequered one of complete void juxtaposed with considerable detail. This uneven survival poses problems of representativeness. To what extent is surviving material representative of the experience of construction firms of the period in question? Is surviving material representative in terms of geographical distribution? Is it representative of firms in terms of size, type of organisational structure, building crafts undertaken, and so on?

It may be surmised that records will have survived most where stable trading conditions prevailed strongest and longest: probably rural areas and market towns more than the more volatile cities where business risks (and opportunities) were greatest, and where firms and their records were perhaps more likely to disappear precipitately. Again, it may be that surviving records are more representative of assiduously managed firms than firms run so to speak on an administrative wing and a prayer. This is to assume that carefully compiled and maintained records were an aid to business survival: not necessarily the case. To the question, are surviving records representative of the whole population of firms, there are no certain answers at present.

Other limitations of the records are more obvious. Surviving examples of records are fewer as their date of origin recedes. There must be inaccuracies in what was recorded. Here, however, the researcher is on relatively safe ground because it is the case that most records were made to inform the person who compiled them, or someone closely associated with them. Unlike many sources, records were not made with the motive of persuading others, or with some covert or implicit motive in mind (unless it was to persuade bankers to be lenient). Problems of legibility are not unknown, but do not obtrude unduly. A more subtle problem is likely to be that of comparability. Definitions and assumptions inbuilt in the accounts of a firm may change over the period covered by the accounts in a manner invisible to the modern researcher. What appears to be an unbroken series running over years or even decades may embody hidden inconsistencies. Unknowing, the researcher may attempt to compare directly figures from a single source, but of different times, which embody different assumptions, with flawed results for the researcher. Likewise there are problems arising when attempting to compare records from different sources, maybe in a different time or region, as with Newton and Prawl. The respective definitions and assumptions
incorporated in the two sets of records may well make direct comparisons problematic. But this is the stuff of almost any history: such problems are not restricted to records of the construction industry.

**Future understanding of the construction past**

From this short introduction to an aspect of construction history, and consideration of some related archive sources, several points emerge. It is maintained that sufficient account books and the like survive from late eighteenth and early nineteenth century firms to enable a clearer picture to be reconstructed of the industry of the period. In particular, such aspects as the structure and operation of firms, their role as employers and the details of technology, costs and sources of materials supply can be reclaimed from historical obscurity. Painstaking work, some qualitative and some quantitative, promises to yield a clearer idea of the form and experience of typical construction firms of the period.

That it is possible to press the historical frontier from early Victorian firms back to later Georgian ones has been shown. A question begged is the date of the earliest surviving records of the type discussed here. Certainly some are extant from the early eighteenth century for polite, if not vernacular, building. For how much further back into the eighteenth century can records of vernacular firms be found? Another question for the future is enquiry about regional and local variations. Differences between building customs in England and those in Scotland are well known far into the twentieth century; when did they first emerge, and what other shorter-lived differences existed among English regions?

Further research could, by accumulating case studies, establish the characteristics of typical firms and thereby distinguish them from the exceptional ones. Further work could also allow researchers to look outward from construction towards the wider context to compare and relate their industry with others of the same period. Researchers could gain better understanding of how construction contributed to, and depended upon, the economy and society at large. How did construction wages compare with others and from where did building entrepreneurs emerge? What factors played a part in obsolescence in one construction technology and in innovation in another? Which types of firm were most stable and long lived, and which the most vulnerable? What was the day-to-day experience of eighteenth century craftsmen? Answers to these and many similar questions await the construction historian who ventures among the archives.

**Correspondence:** Welsh School of Architecture, Cardiff University, Bute Building, King Edward VII Avenue, Cardiff CF10 3NB, UK. E-mail: PowellCG@Cardiff.ac.uk

**Notes**

TWO MEN OF INDUSTRY, MANY BUSINESSES: THE SOHO FIRMS OF MATTHEW BOULTON AND JAMES WATT, AS REVEALED BY THE ARCHIVES OF SOHO

TIM PROCTER
National Railway Musuem, York

The Archives of Soho are perhaps the best-known collections held by Birmingham City Archives. Put simply, they are the surviving papers of the 18th century industrialist and entrepreneur Matthew Boulton and the engineer James Watt, their businesses, families and households. The collections take their name from Soho, an area of heathland to the west of Birmingham where Boulton built his world-famous manufactory, and a mile away in neighbouring Smethwick, the world’s first dedicated steam engine factory took shape.

The Archives of Soho have been described by the American economic historian Professor Eric Robinson as the most important source in the world for the history of the Industrial Revolution. Yet for many decades they were poorly understood and even more poorly catalogued, and only a small percentage of this vast treasure trove was ever properly tapped into by historians. For a long time the impression of the Archives was as a source of information on Boulton & Watt’s steam engines, and the beautiful, intricate coloured drawings of Watt’s stationary steam engines became almost iconic symbols of one man’s genius and Birmingham’s industrial past. Yet for as long as the collections have been in the care of the City of Birmingham, their custodians have been aware that they had much more to offer. As early as 1963 the City’s Archivist, Alfred Andrew, could be found expressing his frustration at the lack of adequate indexing. The problem was always one of resources: together the collections occupy approximately 320 linear metres of shelving, and range from 18th century farm labourers’ wage notes to late 19th century blueprint drawings. Clearly, the Archives of Soho were only going reveal their true depth if dealt with by a dedicated cataloguing and conservation team, to uniform standards, over a reasonable length of time. Between 1998 and 2004 a team of archivists, assistants, conservators and technicians did just that, recataloguing the collections, rebranding and renumbering them, and repairing the most valuable and fragile items.

The Archives of Soho are so vast that to try and cover all their themes is impossible since they contain something on literally every aspect of 18th and 19th century life. This article briefly introduces Matthew Boulton and James Watt, and their sons, who are often overlooked in terms of the businesses, and then outlines the intricate web of partnerships and firms that lay at the heart of this powerhouse of the Industrial Revolution.

Matthew Boulton and James Watt

Matthew Boulton (1728-1809) is often described as one of great heroes of the Industrial Revolution and one of Britain’s great entrepreneurs, yet the scale of his activities and his pioneering spirit is not celebrated enough. Boulton entered Birmingham’s expanding metal trade when he joined the family firm in 1742, becoming sole proprietor on his father’s death in 1759. In 1762 he began construction of Soho...
Manufactory, then the world’s largest factory, which became a mecca for what Professor Peter Jones of Birmingham University calls ‘industrial tourism’, the late 18th century fashion for the wealthy and the curious to visit significant manufacturing sites. At Soho, Boulton made buttons, buckles, sword hilts, chatelaines, latchets and other small items. He collaborated with Josiah Wedgwood on the mounting of Blue John and Wedgwood vases, and with the Swiss inventor Aime Argand on the manufacture of his patent lamps. With the world’s first steam-powered mint, Soho Mint, built in 1789, Boulton effectively industrialised coinage production.

In 1775 Boulton went into partnership with James Watt (1736-1819), a Scottish engineer and inventor who had made a career from making and repairing scientific and mathematical instruments in Glasgow between 1757 and 1763, and then subsequently as a canal surveyor. From 1763 Watt had conducted experiments to improve Thomas Newcomen’s stationary steam engine and had patented his separate condenser in 1769. These experiments were conducted under the patronage of a Scot, Dr. John Roebuck, a mine and metal works owner. Boulton and Watt first met in 1768, through their mutual friend Dr. William Small. Boulton was drawn to Watt’s work on the steam engine and could see the potential, but nothing came of their initial contact. This was partly because of Boulton’s oft-quoted desire to make engines for the whole world, although Watt was too strongly bound to Roebuck and the engine was at too experimental a stage to allow that to happen.

Roebuck’s bankruptcy in 1774 allowed Boulton to buy his share of Watt’s engine, and Watt moved to Birmingham. His partnership with Boulton was a fruitful one. He took out three more patents for steam engine improvements, including the famous ‘sun and planet’ rotative gear, and a patent for a smokeless furnace. He also developed and patented his copying machine. The two men built the steam engine business from fairly shaky beginnings, in which they were effectively consulting engineers, to a large-scale manufacturing concern whose products were sold around the world. Both men are also remembered for their wide social and correspondence circles, in particular the Lunar Society, of which Boulton was a founder member. Between them they had contacts with nearly every leading scientist in Europe. Boulton introduced one of the earliest employee insurance schemes at Soho Manufactory and was widely involved in civic matters, including Birmingham’s theatre and hospital. Watt pioneered the use of chlorine for bleaching cloth and coined the term ‘horsepower’ to describe units of work performed by engines. Their activities and achievements are simply too numerous to mention.

The next generation: their sons and heirs

Boulton and Watt have been treated historically very much in the Victorian tradition of heroic engineers, self-educated, self-made men who led lives of inventive genius without the help of others. Both feature in Samuel Smiles’ Lives of the Engineers, the work which typifies the hagiographic approach to industrial and business history. Consequently their sons have received little attention, and what research has been done has focused on their early lives and their sometimes turbulent relationships with their fathers. Yet the Archives of Soho hold more documents relating to the business dealings of the younger generation than of their more illustrious parents. They show how well-established and well-regarded 18th century businesses fared in the hands of the men who took them through the first half of the 19th century, against a background
of ever-increasing competition and accelerating technological change, as the Industrial Revolution became the Machine Age.

Matthew Boulton had one son, Matthew Robinson Boulton. His father always intended him to take the reins of the Soho businesses, indeed his nickname as a child was ‘the General of Soho’, and he first entered the Soho business world in 1794, after extensive schooling in Europe. He has traditionally been decried for neglecting Soho to live the life of a country gentleman on the estate he purchased in 1815, at Great Tew in Oxfordshire. The archives show that while M. R. Boulton did spend a large amount of time at Great Tew, he was by no means idle in business. He assisted in the steam engine firm’s entry into the lucrative steamboat engine market, and he sold more steam-powered coin mints around the world than his father. Moreover his time at Tew was not entirely spent at leisure. He used the estate to experiment with farming practices and he had a large experimental bone-crushing mill and seed drills made for him by the steam engine firm at Soho. He retired from business in 1840, dissolving his partnerships with James Watt’s son James Watt Jr., and passing his Soho Manufactory businesses to his surviving son, Matthew Piers Watt Boulton.

James Watt’s sons have also been treated dismissively in terms of business, but for different reasons. His youngest son Gregory (1777-1804) received a university education at Glasgow College, where he won prizes for his skills in oratory and translation. He developed an interest in geology, then a new science, where he displayed no little talent. Gregory died young from tuberculosis in 1804, and his artistic promise and poetic and philosophical leanings, in contrast to his father and older brother, have naturally attracted much study. Yet the archives reveal that Gregory was fast becoming part of the Soho business world before his illness prevented him from working. He was a partner in various Soho concerns and he was actively engaged in pursuing accounts owing to the engine firm, even when he was allegedly convalescing in Cornwall.

By contrast James Watt Jr. (1769-1848) was always Watt’s intended heir. He was deliberately schooled for business, first at the Bersham Iron Works in Shropshire, then, like Matthew Robinson Boulton, in Europe, to learn languages and mercantile skills. Placements with the Manchester textile houses of Taylor & Maxwell and Thomas & Richard Walker followed. However, it is his radical political views at this period, his time in France during the Revolution, the fact that his return to England was made difficult by the government because of his actions in Paris, and his tempestuous relationship with his father that have attracted study so far. After considering emigrating to America to join Joseph Priestly’s son, in 1794 he returned home and entered the Soho businesses. Watt Jr. was active in the steam engine firm for over 55 years, until his death in 1848. During the time he and Matthew Robinson Boulton ran the firm, it won - and gradually began to lose - large parts of the steamboat engine market. It lost many traditional areas of business, including the Cornish mining industry and the North West textile market, but it entered new areas such as sugar grinding engines for the Caribbean.

The Soho businesses

Matthew Boulton’s businesses
The various partnerships and concerns that Matthew Boulton ran at Soho Manufactory are complicated. This is due, in part, to Boulton’s tendency to form new partnerships with
people whose products he wanted to manufacture, and also to the very imperfect and haphazard survival of the records of many of them, particularly those formed in the 1760s and 1770s. For example, no records survive of the partnership between Boulton and his father, Matthew Boulton & Son, beyond a few copy letters. When his father died in 1759, Boulton continued on his own until he went into partnership with John Fothergill in 1762, the same year that he constructed Soho Manufactory. Boulton & Fothergill was the main firm at Soho. Among the items they made were buttons, buckles, ‘toys’ (small items of decorative metal ware for which Birmingham was particularly noted), silver and plated ware, ormolu ware, clocks, and the ‘mechanical paintings’ of the artist Francis Eginton. The partnership lasted until Fothergill’s death in June 1782. Boulton has usually been portrayed as the inspiration, driving force and business genius behind Soho’s success; John Fothergill has been described as ineffectual and paralysed with financial worry. Yet while Boulton undoubtedly possessed more energy and ambition, Fothergill did make some significant contributions. His European contacts helped to get Soho’s products known on the continent and he made an arduous journey to Russia on what was effectively a sales tour. Nor was the partnership always a simple two-man effort. For much of the 1760s Boulton & Fothergill had a silent third partner, John Hermann Ebbinghaus. Also Boulton was prepared to hive off certain products to new partnerships if he particularly wanted to develop them. For example, in 1776 the main button trade was carried on in partnership with Charles Wyatt. Then for a few months it continued in Boulton’s own name until another partnership, consisting of Boulton, Fothergill, and John Scale, was formed in 1777 after single-handedly supervising button production proved too much for Boulton alone. Boulton & Fothergill also operated at two sites; Soho Manufactory; and a warehouse in the centre of Birmingham where some manufacturing was carried out at the latter in the 1760s.

For much of the late 1770s and early 1780s Boulton’s finances were extremely unstable and on more than one occasion he came perilously close to bankruptcy. This worried Fothergill, particularly when Boulton appeared to be diverting money into the newly-formed steam engine business. The last months of their partnership were rancorous, with the two men barely speaking, and Fothergill seeking to extract himself from the partnership and recover funds that he felt Boulton had misappropriated for his other ventures. An independent group of mutual friends, including the Birmingham Quaker industrialist Samuel Garbett, examined the case and found no wrongdoing on the part of Boulton, but the damage had been done. For some time after Fothergill’s death, his family and Boulton were embroiled in a messy legal dispute. Perhaps not surprisingly, Boulton & Fothergill was replaced as the principal Soho business by a firm simply bearing Matthew Boulton’s name, usually referred to as ‘Matthew Boulton (firm)’ in the financial records. Button manufacture was carried on by a partnership of Boulton and John Scale.

Boulton constructed his steam-powered mint for the manufacture of coins, medals and tokens in 1789, but at first it was kept under the auspices of his main firm. The mint was constituted as a separate business in February 1791, Boulton having taken out a patent for coining apparatus the previous year. Boulton achieved his goal of supplying copper coinage to the Government in 1797 and he lived to see two sets of his mint machinery exported to St. Petersburg and Copenhagen, as well as the new Royal Mint at Tower Hill in London being equipped with his coining apparatus.
The other major firm at Soho was Boulton & Smiths, more commonly known as The Latchet Company. Boulton formed this partnership to manufacture the patent latchets of Benjamin and James Smith in May 1793. Around November 1801 this partnership was dissolved and a new one was begun under the style of Boulton & Smith. This firm appears to have been closed by the end of the decade.

On his father’s death in 1809, Matthew Robinson Boulton inherited the extant Soho firms and during his lifetime increased the number of Soho businesses. He hived metal rolling mill operations off from the mint, set up a steel business, and by 1815 he was also running a plated wares business, which may have been born out of the operations of the main Soho firm, which was now called ‘M. R. Boulton (firm)’. One of M. R. Boulton’s great achievements was the expansion of the export of mint machinery, to Portugal, India and Mexico, as well as a near complete reconstruction of the Soho Mint in 1824.

The steam engine business
Matthew Boulton and James Watt went into partnership in 1775. One of their first actions was to have Watt’s patent of 1769 extended by Act of Parliament in May 1775 for a further 25 years, and this was the term of years that they agreed their partnership would run. Boulton held two thirds, and James Watt one third. From reciprocating pumping engines they turned to rotative engines in the mid-1780s. The basis of these was the subsequent patents relating to steam engines that Watt took out, and profits on rotative engines were split half and half between them. Like John Fothergill, Watt, a naturally cautious businessman, was frequently worried by the precarious state of Boulton’s finances in the early 1780s, but Boulton bore the difficulties and Watt’s fears with good grace, and the two men remained friends.

At first, Boulton & Watt had no manufacturing facilities. A few workshops at Soho Manufactory made specialist parts such as nozzles, but heavy castings such as cylinders and condensers were sub-contracted out to iron founders, either those with a reputation for good workmanship or firms conveniently local to the customer. The most important iron founder that Boulton & Watt used was the Shropshire iron master John Wilkinson, whose boring mill at Bersham was the only one capable of producing cylinders to the degree of accuracy that Watt’s engine required. Wilkinson undertook almost all of Boulton & Watt’s cylinder work until the early 1790s. Boulton & Watt supplied their clients with drawings, technical expertise and, increasingly from the late 1770s, an engineer or ‘engine erector’ to assemble the engine. The partnership of Boulton & Watt lasted until 1800 when Watt’s extended patent for the separate condenser expired. Watt subsequently retired from an active business life, although he did continue to give occasional advice on projects such as steam heating. However the name ‘Boulton & Watt’ had passed into common currency and continued to be used by customers, suppliers and so on to address the firm long after the original partnership had ceased.

In 1794, Boulton & Watt decided to bring their sons into the business, forming a new partnership, Boulton Watt & Sons. The exact nature of this partnership requires further research, but it appears to have existed mainly for the distribution of the profits of the business and it was dissolved in 1799, the year before the expiration of Watt’s patent. In the mid-1790s Boulton & Watt realised that they had to have their own engine manufacturing facilities. When Watt’s patent expired, the iron founders that they
had so far monopolised would be free either to deal with customers directly or make and sell engines themselves. Moreover Boulton & Watt were engaged in legal actions against engineers in Cornwall and the North West, whom they accused of infringing Watt’s separate condenser patent, and the outcome of these cases depended on a legal decision about the validity of the original 1769 patent. To further exacerbate the situation, a bitter dispute arose between the iron founder John Wilkinson and his brother William, resulting in the closure of Bersham works. This forced Boulton & Watt to use other, less accurate foundries, and led to the revelation that Wilkinson had made several ‘pirate’ engines during the years that he had been making cylinders for Boulton & Watt.

These pressures led to the construction of Soho Foundry, the world’s first dedicated steam engine works, on land in Smethwick, about a mile away from Soho Manufactory (the two distinct sites are still often confused). Watt purchased the land, but he took no active part in the new partnership, Boulton & Watt Juniors, that ran the Foundry. This partnership comprised Matthew Boulton, James Watt Jr., Gregory Watt and Matthew Robinson Boulton. The Soho Foundry’s most famous employee was William Murdock, pioneer of gas lighting, who moved to Birmingham from Cornwall at the turn of the century. Murdock was later offered a partnership, but declined and opted instead for a salary of £1000 per annum. The Foundry partnership did not deal directly with customers but sold its engines to the firm of Boulton Watt & Co., from whom the customers purchased them. Therefore the accounts of Boulton & Watt Juniors were with the main engine firm, the suppliers of raw materials, tradesmen and so on, but not with customers. The partnership of Boulton & Watt Juniors appears to have continued to operate Soho Foundry until Matthew Robinson Boulton and James Watt Jr. dissolved their partnerships in 1840.

In September 1799, the partnership which had first brought the sons into the business, Boulton Watt & Sons, came to an end and the following year the expiration of Watt’s extended patent brought the original partnership of Boulton & Watt to a close, as had been agreed in 1775. The two former partnerships were replaced by a new one, Boulton Watt & Co. The partners in this firm were the same as those in the Soho Foundry partnership, namely Matthew Boulton, James Watt Jr., Gregory Watt and Matthew Robinson Boulton. The deaths of Gregory Watt in 1804 and Matthew Boulton in 1809 necessitated the drawing up of a new partnership between James Watt Jr. and Matthew Robinson Boulton. In 1810 one of the firm’s longest-serving employees, John Southern, who was then Head of the Drawing Office and who had given Matthew Boulton vital assistance in the construction of his mint machinery, was taken into partnership. Southern received a sixth of the profits from engines made at Soho Manufactory only, and held no interest in the buildings or land, nor did his executors or heirs benefit. At this time William Murdock was offered a partnership in the Foundry concern, but declined. Southern’s death in 1815 left Matthew Robinson Boulton and James Watt Jr. as the sole remaining partners in Boulton Watt & Co.

The partnership of Boulton Watt & Co. lasted until 1840. Boulton began to consider withdrawing from his partnerships with Watt in 1839 and on 21 October 1840 the two men signed a deed of dissolution. Watt Jr. bought out Boulton for £61,500, making him the sole owner of Soho Foundry. The deed also gave Watt the right to carry on using the name ‘Boulton Watt & Co’ provided that he signed an indemnity saying
that Boulton was no longer involved in the firm. The name would have to be revised once Watt either died or retired. This deed also dissolved their other partnerships, namely James Watt & Co., the copying press business, and M. R. Boulton & James Watt, the London cash agency. Boulton’s withdrawal prompted something of a financial crisis. Watt sent circulars to previous customers asking for orders and looked for new partners. He took into partnership the firm’s London agent, James Brown, the head of the Drawing Office, Gilbert Hamilton, who had joined the firm in 1821, and Henry Wollaston Blake, a London-based engineer and businessman who had connections with the Bank of England. Matthew Robinson Boulton conveyed the engine workshops at Soho Manufactory to Watt Jr., who now took a far more passive role, merely giving advice as he saw fit. The firm of Boulton Watt & Co. was brought to an end by James Watt Jr.’s death on 2 June 1848.

The steam engine firm actually manufactured many of the other products that made Soho, as a whole, famous. For example, William Murdock’s gas lighting apparatus was made at Soho Foundry and most of their lighting clients had already bought steam engines. James Watt’s ‘pneumatic apparatus’ for treating tuberculosis patients by helping them to breathe oxygen was also made by the steam engine firm at the Foundry. The mint machinery that made the Boulton name famous was almost entirely made by the engine firm, acting as subcontractors to the Boultons’ mint business.

Under the Articles of Co-partnership of 1841, the remaining partners had to decide on a new name. Some debate about the name took place, with the partners and senior employees favouring the retention of ‘Boulton Watt & Co.’. However Boulton’s son, Matthew Piers Watt Boulton, refused to let them use the old name. Eventually, and somewhat confusingly, ‘James Watt & Co.’ was selected, despite the absence of a Watt descendant. In the guise of James Watt & Co., the firm continued until 1895 when the remaining premises at Soho Foundry and the goodwill were bought by the weighing machine makers, W. & T. Avery. Avery’s continued to use the James Watt & Co. name until around 1906.

The copying press business

In the late 1770s, the increasingly tedious and time-consuming task of making copies of letters and drawings by hand inspired James Watt to devise a mechanical method of doing the work. After much experimentation he developed a system which would remain in use well into the 20th century. Watt invented an ink which remained moist for much longer than normal inks. When a sheet of paper bearing writing in this ink was squeezed in a press with a blank sheet of paper on top, some of the ink transferred to the blank sheet, thus creating a reverse copy. If unsized transparent paper was used, then the copy could be viewed through the sheet and thus seen the right way round. Watt was granted a patent for his invention on 14 February 1780. His patent covered two types of press - a screw press and roller press - but it was the roller press that was manufactured and sold at Soho. Watt, Boulton and the chemist James Keir went into partnership in March 1780 to manufacture and sell the presses, or ‘copying machines’ as they were usually called. This firm was called James Watt & Co., but it was also frequently referred to as ‘The Copying Company’. Confusion almost immediately arose with the steam engine firm of Boulton & Watt, as Watt had to instruct one correspondent in August 1780 to ‘address your letters and open your account in name
of James Watt & Co. as a quite different business is carried on under the firm of Boulton & Watt’. The firm had a sales agent in London, James Woodmason, while the Glasgow merchant Gilbert Hamilton, who married Ann Watt’s sister, acted as Scottish agent. The copying machines were made in a workshop at Matthew Boulton’s Soho Manufactory. The firm also supplied the ink, paper (which it purchased from paper mills) and other accessories such as drying books. Different sizes of machine were offered, including a large model for copying drawings.

In 1794, James Keir retired from the partnership. Boulton and Watt passed the business on to their sons, Matthew Robinson Boulton and James Watt Jr., who retained the name James Watt & Co. One of their major innovations was the introduction of a portable copying machine. In 1840, when Boulton and Watt Jr. dissolved their partnerships, the copying machine business was absorbed into the steam engine business, becoming the Boulton Watt & Co. Copying Department. In 1848, with the death of Watt Jr., the steam engine business was re-named James Watt & Co., but no mention was made that this name had been used before for the copying press business. It continued to make copying machines, but it was not a significant part of their business.

**Beyond Birmingham: the London bank and engine agency**

Like any other businessman based outside London, Matthew Boulton needed financial representation in the capital as many banking houses refused to deal with ‘country concerns’. Boulton and the firms at Soho used William Matthews of 6 Green Lettice Lane, Cannon Street, as a banker and agent. Matthews died in 1792, but his wife Charlotte carried on the business. In July 1795 Charlotte moved to new premises at 13 London Street, near Fenchurch Street. She died in 1802, and after much discussion about how to proceed in securing financial services in London, Matthew Boulton, Matthew Robinson Boulton, James Watt Jr. and Gregory Watt decided to establish their own banking house, a concern whose existence was barely known until the Archives of Soho project. The new firm was titled M. & R. Boulton J. & G. Watt & Co. Two-thirds of this concern were held by Matthew Boulton and his son, and the remaining third by James Watt Jr. and Gregory Watt in equal parts. The new firm continued to lease Mrs. Matthews’ premises at 13 London Street, and it appointed her two clerks, John Woodward and John Mosley, to act as agents in London, but the accounts were to be checked at Soho. When Gregory Watt died in 1804, his share devolved to his brother. However, Gregory’s initial was retained in the firm’s name for several months after his death, at least till early 1805, when the firm became M. & R. Boulton J. Watt & Co. Upon the death of Matthew Boulton in 1809, his share fell to his son and the name of the firm was altered to M. R. Boulton J. Watt, & Co., Matthew Robinson Boulton holding two-thirds and James Watt Jr. a third part. In June 1832 the business of the banking house was brought to an end. Matthew Robinson Boulton and James Watt Jr. began a new firm, M. R. Boulton & J. Watt, which operated an account with the Bank of England. This agency dealt with the business of the steam engine firm Boulton Watt & Co., the copying machine firm James Watt and Co., Matthew Robinson Boulton’s other Soho businesses, and his and James Watt Jr.’s private accounts. The firm of M. R. Boulton & J. Watt was dissolved on 30 September 1840, when Boulton withdrew from his partnerships with Watt Jr.

As early as the 1780s, Matthew Boulton had realised that the steam engine firm
also needed a presence in the capital. Early schemes, including plans for a depot run by their senior London engine erectors, an office alongside those of their lawyer Ambrose Weston, and a site on the Thames at the Albion Mill, the ill-fated steam-powered corn mill in which Boulton and Watt had invested considerably, came to nothing. Work in London continued to be carried out by London-based engine erectors, with a more senior man acting as agent and receiving commission on engines and gas lighting apparatus sold in London and the South East. The agents of the Soho firms’ London banker, Charlotte Matthews, and later the London banking house of M. R. Boulton J. & G. Watt & Co. also did various duties for the engine firm, such as arranging shipping, and settling of accounts.

In 1818 a new London agent was appointed. James Brown had worked for the Tyne Steam Packet Co. before joining the Drawing Office at Soho and working on the engines of the firm’s experimental steamboat Caledonia. Brown’s appointment marked the foundation of the London office of Boulton Watt & Co., and it quickly expanded its activities beyond the daily duties of engine erection. The office liaised directly with customers, especially the steamboat companies, Brown’s particular area of expertise. He developed a close working relationship with the Post Office, the Admiralty and the various companies that operated boats from the Thames to the South Coast resorts. Brown organised the firm’s employees who were based in London, and also those who were sent down from Soho, and he organised carriage and shipping of parts and various other duties. The office staff also grew during the first decades of the 19th century, with Brown gaining a permanent assistant in 1824 as well as an increased pool of engine erectors.

The London office assumed an ever-increasing importance in the affairs of the firm. When Matthew Robinson Boulton withdrew from the firm in 1840, James Watt Jr. took James Brown on as a partner, along with Gilbert Hamilton, then head of the Drawing Office at Soho, and the London engineer and businessman Henry Wollaston Blake. That meant that two partners were now based in London and Blake did a great deal of business from the London office. Following Watt Jr.’s death in 1848, emphasis shifted even more to the London office, especially following the closure of the premises at Soho Manufactory in 1851, and in the 1860s and 1870s the office became the administrative centre of the firm.

James Brown’s appointment in 1818 may have marked the creation of a formal London agency, but dedicated premises were less forthcoming. Brown was given office space at 13 London Street alongside the banking agents, but he also worked from his private addresses: 1 Haydon Square, Minories between 1818 and 1824; 25 Jewry Street from 1824 to 1832. The latter in particular being furnished for business as well as domestic affairs. By 1830 the Jewry Street house was proving a considerable drain on Brown’s finances and in 1832 he united his home and offices by moving into 13 London Street, following the death of the banking agent John Mosley. The engine office remained at 13 London Street until 1841 when the development of the Blackwall Railway necessitated a move to 18 London Street. Further extension of the railway occasioned another move to 90 Leadenhall Street in the 1870s.

From the late 1810s to the 1840s, much of the London engine erectors’ work was dedicated to steamboats and facilities on the Thames were a necessity. The firm originally used a ‘hulk’ ship owned by the Navy as a floating workshop and store. However in 1826, after the Navy Board withdrew the use of the naval hulk, the firm bought their own,
the *Pallas*. The *Pallas* appears to have been an American vessel captured in 1812 and used as a merchant vessel until damaged by a storm off Mauritius. She was sailed to London, registered as a ‘sheer hulk’, and anchored in the City Canal. The City Canal was sold to the West India Dock Co. in 1829 after which laid-up ships and businesses on the north bank were cleared out, and presumably the *Pallas* was also re-located. *Pallas* faithfully served the steam engine business until she sank at her moorings circa 1868, probably due to water seepage through the seams between the planking of the hull. Her sinking appears to have prompted the firm to hire stores and a workshop at Thames Place, although one George Reeve was paid £50 for raising the hulk.

**Conclusion**

The Victorian tradition of business history played down partnerships and firms in order to emphasise the heroic personal traits of the men in question. This was very much the case with Boulton and Watt, indeed it was a tradition that began with the eulogies of their sons. Yet the various businesses at Soho formed a complex web, one which took a great deal of untangling. This was not helped by the disordered nature of many of the records before the Archives of Soho Project started, and indeed during the course of the project some hitherto little known elements, such as the London bank, were properly revealed. That Boulton was involved in so many concerns takes nothing away from his entrepreneurial skills. Indeed, the sheer number of Soho businesses makes his achievement in keeping them all going even more impressive. Watt, naturally cautious in business, was active in only two of the Soho firms, the steam engine business and the copying press business, both with Boulton, who took the business lead. Yet Watt effectively bankrolled the construction of Soho Foundry, giving the steam engine business a factory when it most needed one.

The Soho firms have much more to reveal about 18th and 19th century manufacturing and business. They are remarkable because there are so many surviving records under one roof and because they are all centred around two generations of two families. The Archives of Soho project has only the first steps in unlocking this incredible treasure trove; hopefully the men and businesses of Soho will provide inspiration for historians for many years to come.

**Appendix: The Collections**

The three principal collections are arranged as follows:

**MS 3147 Boulton & Watt** – contains records of:
- Boulton & Watt (& Successors, Steam Engine Manufacturers & Engineers)
- Boulton Watt & Co. (London Office)
- James Watt & Co. (Copying Press Manufacturers, Soho Manufactory)
- French Walls (Iron Works, Smethwick, owned by James Watt Jr.)
- M. R. Boulton J. Watt & Co. (London Banking Agency)
- Later Additions

**MS 3219 Papers of James Watt and Family** - contains records of:
- Thomas Watt
- John Watt Sr.
James Watt of Greenock
James Watt
John Watt Jr.
James Watt Jr
Gregory Watt
Miscellaneous records
Later Additions

MS 3782 Matthew Boulton Papers – contains records of:
   Boulton & Fothergill
   Firm of M. Boulton
   Soho Mint
   London banking agency
   Other firms - Boulton & Smith, rolling mill, M. Boulton & Plate Co., M. R.
   Boulton (Button Co.)
   Household Books and Documents
   Housekeeper’s Books and Documents
   Private Books and Documents
   Great Tew Books and Documents
   Miscellaneous Cashiers’ Records
   Charles James Chubb, Chief Cashier & Bookkeeper
   Matthew Boulton
   Matthew Robinson Boulton
   Miss Ann Boulton
   Mrs. Mary Anne Boulton
   Other Personal Records
   Legal Documents
   1st Battalion, Loyal Birmingham Volunteers
   Committee at Verdun for the Relief of British Prisoners in France
   Miscellaneous Documents
   Additions

*Birmingham City Archives*
   7th Floor
   Central Library
   Chamberlain Square
   Birmingham
   B3 3HQ

   Tel. 0121 303 4217
   Fax 0121 464 1176

   e-mail archives@birmingham.gov.uk
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After decades of concentrating on the rise of the large corporation, recent years have witnessed a resurgence of interest among business historians in local and regional business networks, ‘clustering’, and productive systems based around large numbers of, mainly individually insignificant, enterprises. This new research agenda has been reflected in a change in emphasis regarding sources, with increased use of sources that capture local and regional communities of firms, rather than merely dealing with their largest members, or those for which fortune has favoured the researcher with surviving business archives.

This article reviews available sources for assembling data on communities of firms (or, at least, large parts of those communities) from the eighteenth century to the post-war period. Most of these sources will already be well known to many readers. However, two very rich but under-utilised interwar sources, used in the author’s own recent research, receive particular attention. These jointly provide near-comprehensive data on new manufacturing establishments employing 25 or more workers, covering Britain from 1932–38, and Greater London (together with its satellite industrial communities) for the whole of the interwar period.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries
Most attempts to reconstruct local industrial communities draw on two principal sources – trade directories and rate books. Both provide valuable, but problematic, data. Local and trade directories, produced by firms which were once household names such as White, Kelly, Pigot, Wright, and Slater, originated during the eighteenth century and were widely and frequently produced during the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. These provide a variety of information on the ownership, activities, and location of local businesses, including illustrated advertisements.

However, directories are problematic sources. They vary in their detailed categorizations of firms, thus complicating the task of compiling aggregate data. Furthermore, it is unclear whether the inclusion of a business was dependent on the firm in question taking out a subscription to the publication. The accuracy with which compilers covered all areas of a town or city, and the quality of their information, is also subject to doubt. For example, research by Christina Fowler, comparing the coverage of High Street retailers listed in Southampton trade directories during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with evidence available from other sources, suggests that the directories omitted between 15 and 30 per cent of retailers. For manufacturing – a less public activity than retailing – the degree of under-estimation is likely to be even larger, at least in the early directories.

In addition to under-recording, trade directories can also be subject to over-
recording, through the use of inaccurate or inadequately detailed terminology, which can artificially swell the ranks of firms apparently undertaking certain activities. Problems involved with directories can, however, be minimised by using them in conjunction with other sources. The accessibility of trade directories has recently been greatly increased by a University of Leicester project to create a digital library of historical directories, which is freely available on-line (http://www.historicaldirectories.org/).

In addition to local directories, industry-based directories - such as Skinner’s Cotton Trade Directory and Skinner’s Hosiery and Knit Goods Directory - provide a great deal of useful information for the sectors they cover.

Rate books contain information on the number of firms and their size (taking rateable value as a crude proxy) and are much more reliable in their coverage than directories. They provide a particularly useful source for reconstructing the size distribution, survival, and growth of local populations of firms, as shown by the pioneering work of Roger Lloyd-Jones, A. A. Le Roux, and M. J. Lewis. However, their information on industrial activities is often vague or non-standardised. For example, Andrew Popp’s study on the Potteries during the second half of the nineteenth century found that some rate books recorded the premises of all pottery firms simply as ‘manufactories’ and, when more specific information was provided, classifications were made in an apparently arbitrary way for different firms. Again, these problems can be reduced by using them in combination with other sources, such as trade directories and local newspapers.

Fire insurance registers compiled by insurance companies and their local agents provide detailed information on business premises. Available in significant numbers from the early eighteenth century, these can be used to extract data regarding the ownership, tenancy, location, function, and insurance valuation of the properties covered, together with an inventory of the items insured. Their value is particularly great for the eighteenth century, where there are relatively few other sources. However, the information provided is fragmentary, on account of the substantial number of fire insurance companies and the limited survival of records. Meanwhile the registers are numerous, bulky, and generally un-indexed, making extraction of information a laborious process. The Guildhall Library, London, contains an extensive collection of fire insurance registers, including those of the Sun Fire Company, Royal Exchange, and London Assurance.

Networks of finance have been an important factor tying together local business communities. Banking records thus provide an extremely valuable source for reconstructing the local business environment – especially prior to the late nineteenth century, when local business communities were served by primarily local banks. They are particularly useful with regard to small firms, sometimes providing the only surviving references to many very small businesses, that operated from rented rooms and did not feature in local directories. Many local banking records are preserved among the archives of the ‘Big Four’ clearing banks. The records of employers’ federations, where available, also provide a useful (though often incomplete) profile of firms in the sectors they cover, as do trade union records.

Parliamentary Papers are a fruitful, if uneven, source of material regarding local and regional industrial development. The range of information available is beyond the scope of this article, but a search among the published indexes will often generously
repay the time involved. Local newspapers are also a valuable source of information, though one which can require a great deal of time and effort to access. Specialist trade periodicals and business-related journals such as The Times Trade and Engineering Supplement and the Chamber of Commerce Journal also contain much useful information.

**The early twentieth century**

The most important innovation in the government’s statistical monitoring and analysis of British business during the early twentieth century was the introduction of the Census of Production in 1907. Further censuses were conducted in 1924, 1930, 1935, and more frequently during the post-war years. Yet while these provide a key source for national-level analysis, their regional data is of only limited use, and there is no disaggregation to local level. Access to the original census returns would revolutionise the study of British industrial development during the early twentieth century. Yet the extent to which material from the early production censuses has been preserved remains shrouded in mystery, while – in the absence of a change in legislation – any surviving material will remain closed to researchers in perpetuity. A project to establish what material has survived from the pre-1939 production censuses, and to explore ways of making these records available to historians, would be of considerable value.

However, contemporary official monitoring and recording of industrial enterprises and the scope and nature of their activities went far beyond the production censuses. H.M. Inspectors of Factories maintained a running record of establishments subject to the provisions of the Factory Acts (broadly manufacturers and those service industries, such as garages and repair facilities, that used powered machinery). The information was recorded in registers, containing the name of the firm operating the establishment, the plant’s address, activity, and the number of operatives (excluding office and administrative staff) when last visited. Most plants of significant size were visited at least annually, small establishments being visited at least every two years. Establishments’ activities were recorded in some detail, either by product, or process – in the case of process-orientated firms producing a large number of products. Each register ran for eight years.

Unfortunately it appears that no registers have been preserved at the National Archive and few have survived elsewhere. The University of Birmingham Library Archive holds a collection of West Midlands’ factory inspectors’ registers covering the period from around 1923-1960 that would provide a valuable resource for studies of the industrial development of this region. The National Register of Archives database also lists records for the Inspectorate’s northern Division and Newcastle upon Tyne District, from 1944-71, at the Tyne and Wear Archive Service, and for the Sheffield district, from 1927-67, at Sheffield Archives.

Information on new establishments recorded by the Factory Inspectorate in Greater London, together with London satellite communities such as Slough, Watford and Welwyn, has been preserved in a register compiled by the Greater London Regional Development Committee and preserved at London Metropolitan Archives. This mainly covers substantial plants (with an initial employment of around 25 or more) established from around 1919 to the second quarter of 1936. Each establishment’s year of opening, activity, and address, is shown – providing data that could be used, for
example, for very detailed local-level analysis of the spatial clustering on linked
activities within London’s industrial districts.

National data on the opening, extension, and closure of new factory plants (and
other plants using powered machinery) was compiled and published by government in
a series of annual Surveys of Industrial Development (hereafter SID’s).14 These drew
on data from the Factory Inspectorate, the Ministry of Labour (which had access to data
collected through both their local officers and the employment exchange system)15 and
the Travel and Industrial Development Association - which collated data from regional
and local industrial development organisations and local authorities. Again, only
substantial plants were recorded, where the opening, extension, or closure involved at
least 25 employees.

Information was provided on each plant’s production, location, initial employment
(within bands of 100), and whether it arose as the result of a transfer from another
locality or through the establishment of a branch plant. Peter Walsh and myself have
constructed a database of interwar manufacturing plant formation using the SID’s and
the Greater London Regional Development Committee register, each plant being coded
by Standard Economic Region (SER) and 3-digit 1980 Standard Industrial
Classification (SIC).17 This is to be made available via the UK Data Archive.

The original returns from which the SID’s were compiled contain more precise
information than the published Surveys, including the names of the firms in question
and estimates of initial employment that are accurate to the nearest five or ten
employees. Returns covering the years 1934 and 1935 have been preserved at the
National Archives, in files BT70/42-43 and 47-50. The returns for 1934 also provide
information for firms established in 1933.

A number of other valuable sources are available for particular industries and
localities. Paul Collins and Michael Stratton’s British Car Factories From 1896
provides a detailed list of plants that have been used by the automobile industry,
including the date each factory was built and the period over which it was used for car
production, plus information on the plants and companies in question.18 Promotional
brochures for large industrial estates such as Trafford Park and Slough, for the garden
cities of Letchworth and Welwyn, and for some towns seeking to attract new industries,
often contain a list of existing firms and their activities. The establishment, location,
and activities of plants established in Britain by overseas multinational enterprises have
been examined in detail in a number of studies, by far the most comprehensive being
that of Geoffrey Jones and Francis Bostock, which covers overseas manufacturing
entrants to Britain during the years 1850-1962. The database produced from their study
is available from the UK Data Archive.19

The Second World War and after
The Second World War heralded the onset of a long period of tight government controls
over the location of new factories, accompanied by the creation of an unprecedented
amount of official data on the location, floorspace, functions, and estimated
employment of new plants. Building license controls, introduced to ration new
industrial development during the War years, were continued after 1945 - both on
account of their continued rationing function and as an instrument of regional policy. In
1947 these were supplemented by a requirement that firms undertaking new factory
developments in excess of a certain floorspace (originally 5,000 sq. ft.) obtain Industrial Development Certificates (IDC’s) – stating that development was consistent with ‘the proper distribution of industry.’ This rather vague wording allowed them to be used for a number of purposes in addition to regional policy, such as the government’s programme of new and expanded towns.20

Information on post-war industrial development, monitored through the processing of IDC applications, is mainly preserved among records within the BT classes at The National Archives; BT177 contains the bulk (but by no means all) of the relevant information. A good starting-point for an analysis of post-war plant formation are the files BT177/1631 and 1634-37, which contain the schedules of IDC’s for 1956-7 and 1961-8 and BT177/1802-1811, which cover IDC approvals and refusals between 1948 and 1957. Records of the New Town Development Corporations and the government-funded companies established to develop and administer industrial estates and other publicly-financed factories in regionally-assisted areas, also provide detailed information for new plants and plant growth and mortality in the areas they cover.

**Conclusion**

As research on local and regional populations of firms, and the interactions between them, gathers pace, the case for assembling a national dataset of the births, development, and mortality of manufacturing plants will grow. The survival of data for the post-1945 period appears to be virtually complete. Interwar records are less complete, though a great deal of information is available, with near-comprehensive coverage for plants of significant size opened between 1932 and 1938 (though at a limited level of detail) and similar coverage for Greater London and its hinterland for the whole of the interwar period. If surviving data from the pre-1945 Censuses of Production can be tracked down and made accessible to researchers, this would provide valuable ‘stock’ data to complement the ‘flow’ data on new plant openings available from these sources.

1. I would like to thank Lucy Newton and Andrew Popp for their comments on an earlier draft of this article. Any errors or omissions are my own.
5. For examples of the potential problems involved with trade directory data, see G. Timmins, ‘Measuring industrial growth from trade directories,’ *The Local Historian*, 13, 6 (1979), pp. 349-52.


10. For example, Stanley Chapman used the National Hosiery Manufacturers’ Federation’s, ‘Register of Members’, a comprehensive list drawn up for war-time allocation of yarns and based on pre-war size, to compile a profile of major British hosiery firms, their locations, products, and payroll, over the period 1938-42. S. Chapman, *Hosiery and Knitwear, Four Centuries of Small-scale industry in Britain*, c. 1589-2000, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 171.

11. It became general practice to record numbers employed only from the mid-1930s, though some registers record this information prior to this date.


16. Board of Trade, ‘Survey of industrial development in 1932’, *Board of Trade Journal* (29 June 1933), pp. iii-xv; Board of Trade, *Survey of Industrial Development* (1934-39); NA, HLG71/1330, memorandum, n.d., c. 1943. Government factories established under the rearmament programme were excluded from the Surveys.


The division into classes follows the Standard Industrial Classification main groups, followed by a general section. Place of publication is London and year of publication 2003 unless otherwise shown.

**Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing (SIC 01-09)**


Benborough-Jackson, M., “‘Landlord careless’? Landowners, tenants and agriculture on four estates in west Wales, 1850-75”, *Rural History*, 14, pp. 81-98.


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Craddock, P. and Lang, J., Mining and metal production through the age. British Museum.


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Transportation, Communications, Electric, Gas, and Sanitary Services (SIC 40-49)


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Geist, C.R., Wheels of fortune: the history of speculation from scandal to respectability.


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Scrase, A.J. and Hasler, J., eds., Wells corporate properties (Somerset Record Society Publications, 87 (2002)).

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Carter, P., ‘Devon’s place in the development of tourism’, Devon Historian, 66, pp. 16-22.


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Complied by Mike Anson from information supplied by the National Archives, Kew.

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Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1RL: William Wild & Son, horse dealers, Mollington: records incl corresp, invoices and papers rel to the appointment of land girls 1940-45 (D 6425).

Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle Headquarters, The Castle, Carlisle, Cumberland, CA3 8UR: Richardson’s Moss Litter Co Ltd, Carlisle: minutes, accounts 19th-20th cent (DB 146).


Dumfries and Galloway Archives, Archive Centre, 33 Burns Street, Dumfries, Dumfriesshire, DG1 2PS: Mouswald Grange Farm: financial records, wages books and farm returns book 1920-68 (GGD523).


Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE: Arthur Sumner Ltd, provender millers, Chorley: journals, ledgers and wage books 1909-57 (DDX 2410 acc 9481).

Lincolnshire Archives, St Rumbold Street, Lincoln, Lincolnshire, LN4 INL: WW Johnson & Son Limited, seed merchants, Boston: registers c1932-69 (Misc Don 1216).

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Norfolk Record Office, The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 2DQ: William & Miles Blomfield, farmers, Flordon: accounts 1816-27 (ACC 2003/125); A & J Bowker, maltsters, King’s Lynn: records 1878-86 (ACC 2003/76); Vynne & Everitt Ltd, grain, feedstuff and coal merchants, and maltsters, King’s Lynn: accounts and letter books 1930-55 (ACC 2003/82); Wasdale, Willis & Giffard, grain merchants, Hemingford Grey, Huntingdonshire: letters from King’s Lynn merchants 1825-38 (ACC 2003/98); West Norfolk Fertiliser Co, King’s Lynn: accounts 1873-1912 (ACC 2003/80).

Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6ND: Cobbett family, nurserymen and coal merchants of Horsell: business records and family papers 19th-20th cent (7442); John Waterer & Sons, nurserymen, Bagshot: directors’ and shareholders’ records 1855-1941 (7520).

West Sussex Record Office, Sherburne House, 3 Orchard Street, Chichester, West
Sussex: Agriframes Ltd, nurserymen: minutes, files and photographs 20th cent (Accs. 13183, 13286); Cheals of Crawley, nurserymen: records c1860-1969 (Acc. 13321).

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Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1RL: Stroud, Nullis Partnership, architects, Chester: plans of building and churches in Chester and Cheshire c1900-99 (D 6495).

Dorset Record Office, Bridport Road, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 1RP: L Magnus Austen, architects, Dorchester: corresp and plans 1901-2000 (D/MAD).

Dumfries and Galloway Archives, Archive Centre, 33 Burns Street, Dumfries, Dumfriesshire, DG1 2PS: AC Wolffe & Partners, architects, Gatehouse of Fleet: architectural drawings and papers 1950-95 (MP176).

Gloucestershire Record Office, Clarence Row off Alvin Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 3DW: Bartosch & Stokes, architects, Cheltenham: project and job files 1930-90 (D 7266).

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13 8DE: Manning & Steel, architects, Luton: plans, elevations and drawings of buildings in Hatfield, Harpenden, Letchworth, Lilley, St Albans and Watford 1919-36 (Acc 3945).

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Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Unit 3, Clare Place, Plymouth, Devon, PL4 0JW: Frank T Crowe, architect, Plymouth: plans, corresp, reports and specifications 1960-2002 (Acc 2905); Frank T Crowe, architect, Plymouth (addnl): files on church projects 1950-2000 (Acc 2950).


AUCTIONEERS, ESTATE AGENTS AND SURVEYORS


Edinburgh City Archives, Department of Corporate Services, City Chambers, High

Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 6YT: Montague Scott Morgan, quantity surveyor, Chelmsford: misc plans, sales catalogues and other records 1921-60 (D/DU 2161); Ernest Jennings, auctioneer, surveyor, valuer and estate agent, Saffron Walden and Thaxted (addnl): clients’ papers c1908-49 (D/F 261); Henry Joscelyne Ltd, auctioneers, furnishers and removal contractors, Braintree (addnl): business records and family papers 1755-1986 (D/F 178 addl).

Glamorgan Record Office, Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII Avenue, Cathays Park, Cardiff, Glamorgan, CF10 3NE: Stephenson & Alexander, chartered surveyors, chartered auctioneers and estate agents (addnl): corresp, client files and handlists c1899-1971 (DSA).

Glasgow University Archive Services, 13 Thurso Street, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, G11 6PE: David Ferguson, surveyor, Glasgow: letter books and notebooks (transferred from the Bank of Scotland Archives) 1890-1930 (Accn 2500).


Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4AU: Rogers, Stevens & Chance, chartered surveyors, brewery agents and valuers of licensed property, Chatham: plans, corresp and tenancy records 20th cent (DE852).


North Devon Record Office, North Devon Library and Record Office, Tuly Street, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 1EL: John Hannaford & Sons, auctioneers, valuers and land agents, South Molton (addnl): deeds, maps and papers rel to Chulmleigh 1673-1965 (703/0).


**BANKING, FINANCE AND INSURANCE**

Glasgow University Archive Services, 13 Thurso Street, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, G11 6PE: Ivory & Sime plc, investment trust managers, Edinburgh (addnl): records (UGD228).
**Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13 8DE:** Wickham Hunt & Co, accountants, Hitchin: accounts, corresp and papers 1896-1969 (Acc 3944).  
**Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE:** Starr-Bowkett Building Society, Colne: records 1883-1907 (DDX 752 acc 9281); S & RD Thornton, chartered accountants, Preston: accounts and company ledger 1956-70 (DDX 2419 acc 9502).  
**Manchester Archives and Local Studies, Central Library, St Peter’s Square, Manchester, M2 5PD:** Manchester Society of Chartered Accountants: minutes c1890-1999 (M705/).  
**Norfolk Record Office, The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 2DQ:** William & Geoffrey Boston, pawnbrokers, Norwich: records 1892-1941 (BR 297/1-15); Gurneys, Birkbeck, Barclay, Buxton & Cresswell, bankers, King’s Lynn: interest account book 1792-1818 (ACC 2003/67).  
**Walsall Local History Centre, Essex Street, Walsall, Staffordshire, WS2 7AS:** Walsall Master Bankers Association: minutes 1922-37 (Acc 1121).  
**West Glamorgan Archive Service, County Hall, Oystermouth Road, Swansea, Glamorgan, SA1 3SN:** Clydach Building Society: records 1903-67; Landore Permanent Building Society: records 1901-67; Swansea Union Building Society: records 1902-54.  

**BICYLCES**  
**North East Lincolnshire Archives, Town Hall, Town Hall Square, Grimsby, Lincolnshire, DN31 1HX:** Elswick-Hopper Co Ltd, bicycle manufacturers, Barton-on-Humber (addnl): records, incl research papers of AE Harrison of York University 1907-66 (351).  
**Nottinghamshire Archives, County House, Castle Meadow Road, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, NG2 1AG:** Raleigh Industries Ltd, bicycle manufacturers, Nottingham (addnl): records 20th cent (Acc 6342, DDRN); Sturmey-Archer Gears Ltd, cycle gear manufacturers, Nottingham: records 20th cent (Acc 6328, 6500).  
**The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Long Street, Wigston Magna, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE18 2AH:** Cooper Brothers (Cycles) Ltd, Leicester: minutes and financial records c1935-66 (DE6341).  

**BREWING**  
**Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1RL:** Ind Coope & Co Ltd, brewers: deeds to inns, etc 1899-1953 (D 6481); Lonsdale & Adshead Ltd, brewers, Macclesfield: minutes and other records c1889-1959 (D 6481); Macclesfield and Knutsford Breweries: records 1926-56 (D 6481); North Cheshire Breweries: records incl minutes and deeds to inns 1860-1960 (D 6481); Peter Walker (Warrington) Ltd, brewers: deeds and plans c1900-99 (D 6481); Woolf’s Ltd, brewers, Crewe: records incl minutes and deeds 1897-1946 (D 6481).
Devon Record Office, Castle Street, Exeter, Devon, EX4 3PU: Norman & Pring, brewers, Exeter: accounts, corresp and papers 1956-67 (6344).


Hampshire Record Office, Sussex Street, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 8TH: Crowley & Co Ltd, brewers, Alton: title deeds, insurance records, bills, receipts and corresp rel to property 1672-1991 (120A03).

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13 8DE: Benskin’s Watford Brewery Ltd (addnl): corresp, reports and plans 1855-1979 (Acc 3928); Greene King (Biggleswade) Ltd, brewers: tenancy agreements and papers rel to public houses in Hitchin and Welwyn 1922-68 (Acc 3927).


Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4AU: Budden & Biggs Brewery Ltd, Strood: minutes, accounts, deeds and other records 1897-1931 (DE876).


Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Unit 3, Clare Place, Plymouth, Devon, PL4 0JW: New Bedford Brewery, Mutley, Plymouth (addnl): minutes, registers, accounts, corresp and papers 1840-1960 (Acc 2854).


Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6ND: Friary Meux Ltd, brewers, Guildford: records incl those of predecessor and related companies 1896-1990 (7457).

Tyne and Wear Archives Service, Blandford House, Blandford Square, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4JA: Cookson Arms, public house, Newcastle upon Tyne: weekly accounts 1912-14 (DX1111); Newcastle Breweries Ltd: board minutes 1966-78 (DS.NBL).

BUILDING, CONSTRUCTION AND SUPPLIERS
Carmarthenshire Archive Service, Parc Myrddin, Richmond Terrace, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire, SA31 1DS: John Lloyd, builder, Carmarthen: day books, journals and trade catalogues c1850-89 (7717).

Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG: W H Slater Ltd, brick and terracotta goods manufacturers, Denby: records 1889-1973 (D3422).

Durham County Record Office, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UL: WD & R Allison & Sons, building contractors, Whitburn: records 19th-20th cent.

Edinburgh City Archives, Department of Corporate Services, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh, Midlothian, EH1 1YJ: George Rattray, civil engineer: project files 1950-70 (Acc 623).

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13 8DE: Welwyn Builders Ltd, Welwyn Garden City: plans, brochures and photographs of houses being constructed at Welwyn Garden City 1920-30 (Acc 3991).

Isle of Wight Record Office, 26 Hillside, Newport, Isle Of Wight, PO30 2EB: Twymans, builders, Freshwater: ledgers c1902-07 (AC 2003/28).

Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE: Robert Howarth, joiner, Colne: records 1928-46 (DDX 752 acc 9281); Henry Trickett, builder and contractor, Crawshaw Booth: records 1922-56 (DDX 1468 acc 9443); James Williamson & Son Ltd, oilcloth, linoleum, wallpaper and coated fabrics manufacturers, Lancaster (later Nairn Williamson Ltd, Nairn Coated Products Ltd, Forbo Kingfisher Ltd, Forbo Lancaster Ltd) (addnl): minutes, corresp, accounts, ledgers, staff records, records of subsidiary companies and misc papers c1889-1999 (DDX 909 acc 9109).


Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Unit 3, Clare Place, Plymouth, Devon, PL4 0JW: Bayly, timber merchants, Plymouth (addnl): timber accounts 1799-1812 (Acc 2949).


Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office, Libraries and Heritage HQ, Wiltshire County Council, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8BS: F Rendell & Sons Ltd, builders, Devizes (addnl): minutes, corresp and ledgers 1887-1988 (3368).


Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6ND:
Dear family, carpenters and cabinet makers, London and Chertsey: records 1879-1950 (7415); Dorking Brick Co Ltd, North Holmwood: accounts and other records 1933-40 (7324); HL Lacey (Leatherhead) Ltd, builders (addnl): records 1934-70 (7396).

The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Long Street, Wigston

Tyne and Wear Archives Service, Blandford House, Blandford Square, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4JA: J & W Lowry Ltd, builders and contractors, Newcastle upon Tyne (addnl): cash books, private journal and ledger, file rel to renovation of Blackfriars, with Lowry family papers (DS.JWL).

CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES

Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1RL: Herbert Levinstein, director of Murgatroyd’s Salt & Chemical Co Ltd, Elworth: files and papers 1939-50 (DMU); Spring Water Dyeworks, Romiley, Greater Manchester: inventory and valuation, incl description of plant and machinery 1914 (D 6517); Colin Lynch collection: note of boat costs, brine levels, copy crew list of privateer and salt works papers from the Nantwich area 19th-20th cent (D 6484).


Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Unit 3, Clare Place, Plymouth, Devon, PL4 0JW: Burnard & Alger Limited, chemical manufacturer, Plymouth: plans 1886-1917 (Acc 2846).

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service: Stoke-on-Trent City Archives, Hanley Library, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 3RS: Records of companies formerly part of the Cookson Group, colour manufacturers, latterly part of Johnson Matthey plc 19th-20th cent (SD1290).

Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6ND: William Harland & Son, varnish, Japan and fine colour makers, Merton: pattern book of monograms and heraldic designs for carriages 1893 (7345).


COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES

Jersey Archive, Clarence Road, St Helier, Jersey, JE2 4JY: Co-operative Society Ltd (Channel Islands): minutes, rules and regulations 1919-2000 (JA/769).

Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE: Barnoldswick Co-operative Industrial Society Ltd: minutes 1939-70 (DDX 1863 acc 9358); Co-operative Retail Services Ltd, North East Lancashire branch: minutes 1964-69 (DDX 1863 acc 9358); Haslingden Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd: loan capital ledger 1949-64 (DDX 1863 acc 9358); Nelson Co-operative and Industrial Society Ltd: minutes, reports and accounts 1861-1949 (DDX 1863 acc 9345); Pendle Co-operative Society Ltd: minutes 1968-71 (DDX 1863 acc 9358).

North Lanarkshire Archives, 10 Kelvin Road, Lenziehill, Cumbernauld, Lanarkshire, G67 2BA: Kilsyth Co-operative Society Ltd: accounts (U123).

ELECTRICAL INDUSTRIES

Doncaster Archives Department, King Edward Road, Balby, Doncaster, South
Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 6YT: English Electric Valve Co, Chelmsford (addnl): misc records c1940-90 (D/F 103 addl).
Northumberland Record Office, Melton Park, North Gosforth, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE3 5QX: Northern Electric (addnl): stock and share registers 1928-32 (NRO 6063).
Science Museum Library, Imperial College Road, London, SW7 5NH: British Vacuum Cleaner Co Ltd: photograph album, incl photos of early appliances and factory (MS 699).
West Sussex Record Office, Sherburne House, 3 Orchard Street, Chichester, West Sussex: Lec Refrigeration plc, Bognor Regis (addnl): records c1945-55 (Acc. 13111).

EMPLOYERS, TRADE AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS

Barnsley Archive and Local Studies Department, Central Library, Shambles Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2JF: Barnsley Chamber of Commerce (addnl): records rel to Barnsleys railways 1845-1980 (A/1178/G).
Bristol Record Office, ‘B’ Bond Warehouse, Smeaton Road, Bristol, Gloucestershire, BS1 6XN: Bristol Corn and Feed Trade Association: minutes, accounts, corresp and papers 1889-1997 (42217); Bristol Grain Importers Defence Association (addnl): minutes, accounts, corresp and papers 1904-97 (42217).
Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1RL: Mercers, Ironmongers, Grocers and Apothecaries Company, Chester: records incl charter, company books, admission books, court case papers rel to dispute with Drapers Company, corresp and Apothecary’s text book 1604-1999 (ZG 16); Various Macclesfield Silk and Textile Trade Associations: records incl minutes, financial papers and Trade Union agreements 19th-20th cent (D 6601).
Cumbria Record Office and Local Studies Library, Barrow, 140 Duke Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire, LA14 1XW: Furness Business Initiative, Barrow: reports and corresp files 1983-91 (BDSo 103).
Costa Rica, San Jose: Costa Rica Institute of Tourism: minutes, corresp and papers 1980-91 (D 6601).


ENGINEERING AND MACHINE MAKING


Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1RL: British Wedge Wire Co Ltd, mechanical handling plant, Warrington: minutes and registers of members 1921-56 (D 6457).

Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG: Markham & Co Ltd, steam engine and colliery equipment manufacturers, Chesterfield (addnl): minutes 1889-1985 (D5898).


Glasgow University Archive Services, 13 Thurso Street, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, G11 6PE: Kelvin Diesels Ltd, marine engine manufacturers, Glasgow (addnl): brochures, drawings and photographs incl associated companies 1933-77 (UGD366).

Gloucestershire Record Office, Clarence Row off Alvin Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 3DW: Platt & Fielding Ltd, engineers, Gloucester (addnl): minutes, order books and papers 1920-2000 (D 7338).

Institution of Mechanical Engineers Library, 1 Bird Cage Walk, London, SW1H 9JJ: D
Napier & Son Ltd, motor car and aircraft engine manufacturers, Acton (addnl): papers, mainly engineering drawings and technical reports 1948-67 (Acc 1020).

Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE: Baxi Partnership, boiler and heating appliance manufacturers, Bamber Bridge, Lancashire: records incl minutes, accounts, plans and reports c1962-99 (DDBAX acc 9275, 9335); Hattersley Newman Hender Ltd, engineering works, Ormskirk: records incl corresp, accounts and receipts for war bonds c1890-1999 (DDX 2404 acc 9416).


Norfolk Record Office, The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 2DQ: William Bassham, wheelwright, Alpington: accounts 1862-87 (ACC 2003/105); Cooper Roller Bearings Co Ltd, King’s Lynn: engineering drawings 20th cent (ACC 2003/100); Alfred Dodman & Co, marine and mechanical engineers, King’s Lynn: accounts and drawings 1879-1971 (ACC 2003/74).

Northamptonshire Record Office, Wootton Hall Park, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN4 8BQ: Dix and Sons Ltd, engineers and machinery merchants, Kettering: accounts c1948-88.

North Lanarkshire Archives, 10 Kelvin Road, Lenziemill, Cumbernauld, Lanarkshire, G67 2BA: Anderson, Boyes & Co Ltd, electrical and mining machinery manufacturers, Motherwell (addnl): administrative records, patents, parts lists, machine books, corresp, drawings (U110); Anderson Brothers (Engineers) Ltd, Coatbridge: records; Lamberton & Co Ltd, general engineers, Coatbridge: job books, drawings, photographs.

Oldham Local Studies & Archives, 84 Union Street, Oldham, Greater Manchester, OL1 1DN: Platt Brothers & Co Ltd, machinery manufacturers, Werneth works: department foreman’s book 1896-1936 (Acc 2003-027).

Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch, Gatacre Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 2LQ: Ransomes & Rapier Ltd, railway plant, crane and excavator manufacturers, Ipswich (addnl): order books 1899-1965 (HC 427).

Suffolk Record Office, Lowestoft Branch, Central Library, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk, NR32 1DR: JW Leggett Ltd, engineers and haulage contractors, Beccles: records 1945-70 (Acc 1510).

Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6ND: Drummond Brothers Ltd, lathe and machine tool makers, Guildford (addnl): records incl production records, handbooks and photographs 20th cent (7449).

Tower Hamlets Local History Library and Archives, Bancroft Library, 277 Bancroft Road, London, E1 4DQ: Caird & Rayner Ltd, engineers and coppersmiths, Limehouse: records c1929-61 (B/CAR).

Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, 42-50 Snow Hill, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, WV2 4AG: Joshua Bigford & Son Ltd, engineers, Wolverhampton: plant
register c1930-49 (DX-879).

FAMILY BUSINESS PAPERS
Gwynedd Archives, Caernarfon Record Office, Victoria Dock, Caernarfon, Caernarfonshire, LL55 1SH: Hendregaerog family of Caernarfon: business records and personal papers (XD 128).
Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6ND: Mellersh family of Godalming: deeds and papers, incl some rel to Mellersh & Co, bank c1571-1941 (7473).

FOOD AND FOOD PROCESSING
Aberdeen University, Special Libraries and Archives, DISS, Historic Collections, King’s College, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, AB24 3SW: Robert Lawson & Sons (Dyce) Ltd, bacon curers: records of Parkhill Estate and Farm, and of Robert Lawson, director 1955-77 (MS 3732).
Dundee City Archives, 1 Shore Terrace, Dundee, Angus, DD1 3BY: James Keiller & Son, confectioners, Dundee (addnl): copy letter book of William and Alexander Keiller 1862-68.
Edinburgh City Archives, Department of Corporate Services, City Chambers, High Street, Edinburgh, Midlothian, EH1 1YJ: Dhamai Tea Co Ltd, tea planters, Edinburgh: annual reports and accounts 1895-1936 (Acc 638).
Glasgow University Archive Services, 13 Thurso Street, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, G11 6PE: Macfie family, sugar refiners, Liverpool, Edinburgh and Greenock: corresp rel to extraction of sugar from beet (transferred from Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) 1836-41 (DC 120).
Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Unit 3, Clare Place, Plymouth, Devon, PL4 0JW: Plymouth Gin Distillery: records 1668-1896 (Acc 2919).
Wolverhampton Archives and Local Studies, 42-50 Snow Hill, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, WV2 4AG: JN Miller Ltd, flour millers, Wolverhampton: financial and other papers 19th-20th cent (DX-860).
York University: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, St Anthony’s Hall, Peasholme Green, York, North Yorkshire, YO1 7PW: Rowntree Mackintosh plc,
confectionery manufacturers (addnl): specimen books, stock code register, papers and paintings 1920-96.

**FUNERAL DIRECTORS AND UNDERTAKERS**

*Devon Record Office, Castle Street, Exeter, Devon, EX4 3PU:* Torquay Cemetery Co (addnl): share certificates and corresp 1852-1967 (4241 add 3).


*Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 6YT:* Baker & Sons, builders and undertakers, Danbury: records 1878-1977 (D/F 268).


*Southampton Archives Office, South Block Civic Centre, Southampton, Hampshire, SO14 7LY:* F & E Beeston, funeral directors, Southampton (addnl): records incl order books, ledgers and funeral account books 1906-92.

**FURNITURE**

*Northamptonshire Record Office, Wootton Hall Park, Northampton, Northamptonshire, NN4 8BQ:* AE Perrin and sons, antique furniture dealers, Northampton: papers 1839-1924.

**GAS**


*Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE:* Nelson Gas Co, Lancashire (addnl): minutes 1860-66 (MBNE acc 9358)

**GLASS AND EARTHENWARE**


**HOTELS**

*Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1RL:* Alma Lodge Hotel, Stockport: minutes and other records c1900-99 (D 6481).

*Glamorgan Record Office, Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII Avenue, Cathays Park, Cardiff, Glamorgan, CF10 3NE:* Cardiff Hotels Co Ltd: minutes, register of members and architectural drawings 1898-1974 (D177).

**IRON, STEEL AND METAL TRADES**

*Bolton Archive and Local Studies Service, Central Library Civic Centre, Le Mans Crescent, Bolton, Greater Manchester, BL1 1SE:* W Marsden & Sons, brassfounders and fitters, Bolton: records c1869-1975 (ZSU); George Taylor Ltd, brassfounders,
Bolton: records c1869-1975 (ZSU).


Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1RL: N Greening & Sons Ltd, wire manufacturers, Warrington: records incl wage books, minutes, accounts, letter books, articles of association, share registers, ledgers, journals and records of subsidiary companies c1845-1974 (D 6457).

Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG: DSF Refractories and Minerals Ltd, Friden: records incl accounts and minutes c1900-90 (D2993).


Glamorgan Record Office, Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII Avenue, Cathays Park, Cardiff, Glamorgan, CF10 3NE: Brown, Lenox & Co Ltd, chain manufacturers, Pontypridd (addnl): plans and drawings 20th cent (D179).


Walsall Local History Centre, Essex Street, Walsall, Staffordshire, WS2 7AS: R Hodson & Son, lockmakers, Willenhall: misc papers, incl corresp, bank statements and money order counterfoils 1925-67 (Acc 1131); Walsall Glue Co: statement of accounts 1876 (Acc 1151).


LEATHER AND FOOTWEAR

Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG: Benjamin Durden, cobbler, Winster (addnl): accounts 1845-47 (D5785).


Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE: Marchwell Wood Heel Co, Burnley: directors minutes 1934-46 (DDX 1468 acc 9456).


The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Long Street, Wigston
**LEISURE, RECREATION AND ART**


Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service: Staffordshire Record Office, Eastgate Street, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST16 2LZ: Stafford Entertainments Ltd, cinema proprietors: minutes 1930–95 (D6216).


Theatre Museum, 1E Tavistock Street, London, WC2E 7PA: Bernard Delfont Ltd, theatrical producers: records incl production files, photographs and architectural drawings rel to shows produced (THM/300); Howard & Wyndham Ltd, theatre proprietors: head office records incl accounts, illustrated ledgers and scripts c1930–64 (RF2003/1128).


**MERCHANTS**

Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG: George Hunt of Bakewell, merchant: accounts and papers (D504/132).

Dumfries and Galloway Archives, Archive Centre, 33 Burns Street, Dumfries, Dumfriesshire, DG1 2PS: Liverpool merchant: letter book 1737 (GGD527).

Glasgow University Archive Services, 13 Thurso Street, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, G11 6PE: Joseph Outram, merchant and speculator: accounts (transferred from the Bank of Scotland Archives) 1824–30 (Accn 2500).

Liverpool Record Office, City Libraries, William Brown Street, Liverpool, Lancashire, L3 8EW: Edward Chaffer, merchant connected to the slave trade, Liverpool: papers incl corresp, accounts c1700–99 (Acc 5712).

Trinity College Dublin, College Street, Dublin, County Dublin, 2, Republic Of Ireland: Irish merchant (unidentified): accounts, incl details of accounts with firms in Ireland and Britain, and names of ships transporting goods 1852–68 (TCD MS 11202).

**MINING**


Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG: Butterley Co Ltd, colliery owners, iron founders, mechanical engineers and brick manufacturers, Ripley (addnl): records incl ledgers 19th-20th cent (D5974); Darley Dale Stone Co Ltd: minutes and corresp 1861–1946 (D504/119/5); Monsal Dale Mines and Quarries Ltd: records incl plans and corresp 1912–26 (D504/110/4 and D504/110/9); Odin mine,
Castleton: papers and plans of Foolow pasture c1669-1715 (D5912); Sheepbridge Coal & Iron Co, Chesterfield (addnl): plan and survey records 1868-69 (D5818); Stancliffe Estates Co Ltd, stone quarries, Darley Dale (addnl): records incl accounts and minutes 1896-1949 (D504/118-120); Staveley Coal & Iron Co Ltd (addnl): register 1899-1910 (D5914); Swanwick Colliery Co (addnl): records 1888-1930 (D6112).

Durham County Record Office, County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UL: Consett Iron Co Ltd, colliery and limestone quarry owners, iron and steel manufacturers (addnl): records.

Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE: Hulton Colliery Co Ltd (addnl): plans of coal mines in Over Hulton 19th cent (DDHU acc 9350); Ince Hall Moss Colliery, Lancashire: plans c1867-1939 (DP 499 acc 9432); Old Meadows Pit, Rossendale: colliers wages books 1929-47 (DDX 1468 acc 9443).

National Library of Scotland, Manuscript Collections, George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, Midlothian, EH1 1EW: James Gentleman, merchant, Edinburgh: business and legal papers, mostly rel to his shipping interests 1838-56 (Acc.12184).


MOTOR CAR AND RELATED INDUSTRIES

Cumbria Record Office, Carlisle Headquarters, The Castle, Carlisle, Cumberland, CA3 8UR: Moore’s Garage, Carlisle: records incl accounts, corresp 1920-57 (DB 147).

Plymouth and West Devon Record Office, Unit 3, Clare Place, Plymouth, Devon, PL4 0JW: Tecalamit Ltd, automobile part manufacturer, Plymouth: accounts and papers 1953-92 (Acc 2856).

Warwickshire County Record Office, Priory Park, Cape Road, Warwick, CV34 4JS: Automotive Products Ltd, Leamington Spa: list of directors and their salaries 1965 (CR3836).

PAPER


Gloucestershire Record Office, Clarence Row off Alvin Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 3DW: Hollingsworth & Vose, paper makers, Winchcombe: sales ledgers, wage books, reports and papers 1866-1972 (D 1005).

PHARMACEUTICALS AND MEDICINE


Gwent Record Office, County Hall, Cwmbran, Monmouthshire, NP44 2XH: Dix Chemists, Pontypool: prescription and cash books and bills 1878-1915.

Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13
*Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch, Raingate Street, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 2AR*: Bush, Boake, Allen (formerly Allen, Stafford & Sons Ltd), drug millers and manufacturing chemists, Long Melford: records 1883-2002 (HC 568).
*The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Long Street, Wigston Magna, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE18 2AH*: Dr Good’s Surgery, Somerby: practice records incl misc accounts and corresp c1950-69 (DE6383).
*Wandsworth Local History Service Library, Battersea Library, 265 Lavender Hill, London, SW11 1JB*: Boots Co Ltd, pharmaceuticals manufacturers and retailers, Putney: prescription books and poisons registers c1908-80; Hopkin & Williams Ltd, manufacturing chemists, Wandsworth: records rel to working costs and analytical tests c1931.
*Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine, Archives and Manuscripts Section, 183 Euston Road, London, Greater London, NW1 2BE*: GlaxoSmithKline, pharmaceutical manufacturers (addnl): records, incl minutes, images and records of Coopers McDougal & Robertson, veterinary subsidiary company c1860-1992 (WF 350).

**PUBLISHING AND PRINTING**

*Reading University Library, PO Box 223, Whiteknights, Reading, Berkshire, RG 66AE*: Leo Cooper, publisher: records incl corresp, MSS and proofs; A & C Black Ltd,

West Sussex Record Office, Sherburne House, 3 Orchard Street, Chichester, West Sussex: Chaffer & Son, printers, Chichester: records c1936-94 (Acc. 130123).

RETAIL

Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Archives, West Road, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire, CB3 9DR: Booth, booksellers, of Duke Street, London: papers c18th-19th cent (MS Add. 9650).

Carmarthenshire Archive Service, Parc Myrddin, Richmond Terrace, Carmarthen, Carmarthenshire, SA31 1DS: Cwmdu post office and shop, Carmarthen: day books, bills, receipts and misc records 19th - 20th cent (7697); Anonymous butcher: accounts c1880-89 (7666).

City of Westminster Archives Centre, 10 St Ann’s Street, London, SW1P 2DE: Liberty plc, drapers, department store, London (addnl): material concerning takeover, cuttings, promotional material, slides 1984-2002 (Acc 2345).


Flintshire Record Office, The Old Rectory, Hawarden, Flintshire, CH5 3NR: Tom Lloyd Roberts, antiquarian bookseller (addnl): papers rel to Caerwys, copies of MSS rel to Thomas Salusbury and lists and catalogues of Tom Roberts antiquarian bookseller 1886-1990 (D/LR).

Glasgow University Archive Services, 13 Thurso Street, Glasgow, Lanarkshire, G11 6PE: Fazzi Bros Ltd, grocers and wine merchants, Glasgow: minutes and financial records c1924-99 (Accn 2329).

Jersey Archive, Clarence Road, St Helier, Jersey, JE2 4JY: A De Gruchy & Company Ltd, bookseller, St Helier: corresp and papers, accounts and plans 1815-1990 (JA/796).

Norfolk Record Office, The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 2DQ: Plowright, Pratt & Harbage, ironmongers, King’s Lynn (addnl): accounts and scrapbooks 1933-81 (ACC 2003/85).


Northumberland Record Office, Melton Park, North Gosforth, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE3 5QX: H Carr & Sons, grocers and general merchants, Blanchland: accounts 1929-66 (NRO 6074).


Victoria & Albert Museum, Archive of Art and Design, 23 Blythe Road, London, W14 0QX: Heal & Son Ltd, Heal’s department store, bedding, quilt and mattress manufacturers, cabinet makers and upholsterers (addnl): records c1880-1959
Wiltshire and Swindon Record Office, Libraries and Heritage HQ, Wiltshire County Council, Bythesea Road, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, BA14 8BS: Joseph Chapman, shopkeeper, Bratton: accounts 1848-61 (3350).

SHIPPING AND SHIPBUILDING

Aberdeen University, Special Libraries and Archives, DISS, Historic Collections, King's College, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, AB24 3SW: P & O Scottish Ferries, previously North of Scotland, Orkney & Shetland Shipping Co Ltd (addnl): records 1870-2000 (MS 3696).

Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 6YT: Arthur G Taylor & Son, sail makers and chandlers, Maldon: records 1906-61 (D/F 266).


National Museums Liverpool, Maritime Archives and Library, Merseyside Maritime Musem, Albert Dock, Liverpool, Lancashire, L3 4AQ: Arthur David Maddocks, superintendent engineer, Alexandra Towing Co Ltd, Liverpool: papers, incl his invention of the 'Alexandra' Towing Hook fl 1947 (D/MDK); Norse Irish Ferries Co Ltd: cargo records, incl consignment notes, passenger list and hazardous cargo list 2001-02 (DX/2091); Ocean Steam Ship Co Ltd (Blue Funnel Line) (addnl): log books (DX/2067).

SOLICITORS

Aberdeen University, Special Libraries and Archives, DISS, Historic Collections, King's College, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, AB24 3SW: Ledingham Chalmers, solicitors, Aberdeen (addnl): clients' papers 18th cent-20th cent (MS 3713).

Cheshire and Chester Archives and Local Studies, Duke Street, Chester, Cheshire, CH1 1RL: Charles Green of Runcorn, solicitor: papers 1837-77 (D 6552).


Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 6YT: Copland & Sons, solicitors, Chelmsford (addnl): records 1839-1960 (D/DDw addl).

Glamorgan Record Office, Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII Avenue, Cathays Park, Cardiff, Glamorgan, CF10 3NE: Sidney GR Hamblen, solicitor, Cardiff: personal and professional papers 1894-1972 (D218); Gwyn & Gwyn, solicitors, Cowbridge (addnl): papers c1790-1959 (DGG).

Gloucestershire Record Office, Clarence Row off Alvin Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 3DW: Francillon & Willott, solicitors, Dursley (addnl): bill books 1852-1916 (D 9469).

Gwent Record Office, County Hall, Cwmbran, Monmouthshire, NP44 2XH: Harding
Evans & David Morris, solicitors, Newport: estate records, maps and practice papers
c1500-1999.
Norfolk Record Office, The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1
2DQ: Pomeroy & Son, solicitors, Wymondham (addnl): business records and clients’

TEXTILES AND CLOTHING
City of Westminster Archives Centre, 10 St Ann’s Street, London, SW1P 2DE: Jaeger
Holdings Ltd, clothing manufacturers: publicity material, business corresp, cuttings,
photographs and company history 1884-2003 (Acc 2334).
Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG: Goyt Mill
Manufacturing Co, cotton spinners, Whaley Bridge (addnl): records 20th cent (D5897);
Leeds Woollen Cloth Co, drapers, Derby (addnl): records incl minutes and accounts
c1930-70 (D6044); James Smith & Co Ltd, uniform manufacturers, Derby: records
20th cent (D6085).
Heriot-Watt University Archives, Corporate Communications Division, Cameron Smail
Library, Heriot-Watt University, Riccarton, Edinburgh, Midlothian, EH14 4AS:
Edward Gardiner & Sons Ltd, woollen manufacturers, Selkirk (addnl): records (HWUA
GS).
Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies, County Hall, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG13
Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE: Thomas Aitken,
cotton manufacturer, Irwell Vale: records 1912-32 (DDX 1468 acc 9443); Harris,
Bolton & Co, cotton manufacturers, Colne: records 1903-04 (DDX 752 acc 9281);
Leather Cloth Co Ltd, coated fabrics manufacturers, West Ham, London: minutes,
accounts and registers of shareholders 1857-1985 (DDX 909 acc 9109); Mitchells,
Ashworth, Stansfield & Co Ltd, felt manufacturers, Waterfoot (addnl): records 1904-39
(DDX 1468 acc 9443); Rhodeson Ltd, cotton manufacturers, Crawshaw Booth: records
1929-50 (DDX 1468 acc 9443).
Liverpool Record Office, City Libraries, William Brown Street, Liverpool, Lancashire,
L3 8EW: Shaw & Griffin, cotton merchants, Liverpool: accounts, sales and purchase
records c1900-49 (Acc 5778).
Manchester Archives and Local Studies, Central Library, St Peter’s Square,
Manchester, M2 5PD: HD Chadwick & Sons, textile merchants, Manchester: records
(Acc 2003/45); Walter Kenyon & Co, cotton exporters, Manchester: business records
and family papers 1919-90 (M696/).
Medway Archives and Local Studies Centre, Civic Centre, Strood, Rochester, Kent,
ME2 4AU: Bassets solicitors, Gillingham: misc clients’ records c1862-1959 (DE860).
West Yorkshire Archive Service, Kirklees Central Library, Princess Alexandra Walk,
Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD1 2SU: Slaithwaite Spinning Co Ltd: records 1876-
1939.
Norfolk Record Office, The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1
2DQ: George Goddard, tailor, King’s Lynn: accounts c1928-30 (ACC 2003/96); Catleughs,
tailors and outfitters, King’s Lynn: records 1885-1956 (ACC 2003/83);
Jermyn & Sons Ltd, drapers and furnishers, King’s Lynn: accounts 1921-45 (ACC 2003/84).

Oldham Local Studies & Archives, 84 Union Street, Oldham, Greater Manchester, OL1 1DN: Buckley family of Saddleworth: accounts rel to cotton imports 1827 (Acc 2003-015); Albert Mill, Oldham: records incl corresp and invoices c1970-89 (Acc 2003-020); Various mills in the Oldham area: minutes 1873-1960 (Acc 2003-008).

The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Long Street, Wigston Magna, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE18 2AH: Atkins Brothers, hosiery manufacturers, Hinckley: records (DE6434).

Tyne and Wear Archives Service, Blandford House, Blandford Square, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4JA: Thomas Young & Sons, linen merchants, Newcastle upon Tyne: records incl ledgers, cash books, accounts, with family papers 1848-1938 (DT.YNG).

Wigan Archives Service, Town Hall, Leigh, Greater Manchester, WN7 2DY: Unnamed tailor, Wigan: sales ledger 1874-76 (Acc 4151); Unnamed textiles buyer and wholesaler: ledgers c1820-29 (Acc 4165).


TRANSPORT

Derbyshire Record Office, New Street, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3AG: Midland Railway Co, Derby (addnl): plans 19th-20th cent (D5786).


Norfolk Record Office, The Archive Centre, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 2DQ: King’s Lynn Docks & Railway Co (addlnl): records 1890-1952 (ACC 2003/77).

Powys County Archives Office, County Hall, Llandrindod Wells, Radnorshire, LD1 5LG: Neath & Brecon Railway Co: corresp 1895-1947 (B/X/126).

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service: Staffordshire Record Office, Eastgate Street, Stafford, Staffordshire, ST16 2LZ: Cheadle Carrying Co Ltd: minutes 1871-75 (6229).

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service: Stoke-on-Trent City Archives, Hanley Library, Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST1 3RS: North Staffordshire Railway Co: records and research notes and papers of Basil Jeuda, railway historian 19th-20th cent (SD1288).

Surrey History Centre, 130 Goldsworth Road, Woking, Surrey, GU21 6ND: London & South Western Railway Co: records rel to extension of the line through Windsor, Staines and Datchet c1844-59 (7430).

WATER

Essex Record Office, Southend Branch, Central Library, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-

MISCELLANEOUS
Cambridgeshire County Record Office, Huntingdon, Grammar School Walk, Huntingdon, Huntingdonshire, PE29 3LF: John Harrison & Son, basket makers, St Ives: records 1904-89 (Acc.4979).
Doncaster Archives Department, King Edward Road, Balby, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, DN4 0NA: Robert Edward Campbell (d 1984), patents officer at British Ropes: research papers 1934-78 (DD/CAMPBELL).
Essex Record Office, Wharf Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 6YT: Alfred Rayner, harness maker, Bradwell-near-the-Sea: accounts 1872-81 and day books 1888-1900 (D/F 9 addl).
Lancashire Record Office, Bow Lane, Preston, Lancashire, PR1 2RE: John Higginson, brushmaker, Colne: records 1920-49 (DDX 752 acc 9281).
Reading University Library, PO Box 223, Whiteknights, Reading, Berkshire, RG6 6AE: Norman Chambers, pencil manufacturer: notebooks (6) rel to pencil manufacture 1954-55.
Rochdale Local Studies Library, Touchstones Rochdale, The Esplanade, Drake Street, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, OL16 1AQ: Cartridge Rope & Twine Works, Heywood: records rel to employees 1871-1949; Healey Brothers Ltd, rope and twine manufacturers, Heywood: wage books 1927-64.
Suffolk Record Office, Bury St Edmunds Branch, Raingate Street, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 2AR: Bury St Edmunds Housing Society Ltd: records 1948-91 (HC 569).
Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch, Gatacre Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 2LQ: Bowell family, bell founders, of Ipswich: family and business papers 1883-1974 (HC 470).
Tyne and Wear Archives Service, Blandford House, Blandford Square, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4JA: John Laws (1765-1844), silver engraver and farmer: ledger rel to farming and to work undertaken for Newcastle silversmiths (DX1109).
West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds, Chapeltown Road, Sheepscar, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS7 3AP: Silver Cross, perambulator manufacturer, Guiseley: records 20th cent.
BOOK REVIEWS


This invaluable volume in the National Archives’ series of readers’ guides provides a pathway into the Public Record Office’s rich collection of material on Britain’s railway industry. Compiled by Cliff Edwards, who recently retired as Inspecting Officer and Client Manager for railway records, it serves several audiences. Not only does it indicate where information on the industry may be found, but it also shows how railway material may shed light on the panoply of related ‘non-railway’ research areas such as genealogy and social history. The book is a true guide, providing a short history of the railways for those new to the subject, and important appendices. Appendix 1 reveals the PRO equivalents of the classification used by earlier generations of scholars when the main collection [now RAIL and AN] was housed at the British Transport Historical Records office at Porchester Road. Appendix 2 provides an alphabetical listing of railway companies, while Appendix 3 identifies the designated depositories (local and regional record offices) for railway records. The meat of the book lies in Chapters 3–4, which describe the records created and used by the railways, and set out the rich collection of central government records that contain information on the industry [PREM, CAB, MT, BT, T, etc]. Chapter 5 deals with staff records, the material most likely to interest the family historian, and Chapter 6 and 7 provide a short guide to maps, plans, drawings and photographs. I have one minor criticism. The listing of documentary material is confined to the period outside the thirty-year rule, and since the book was published, the National Archives have pursued a more liberal policy towards access to more contemporary files, something which is likely to accelerate with ‘Freedom of Information’ in 2005. A second edition would of course rectify this weakness. But this does not detract from the overall value of this book. While the historian of a given subject will not have his searching done for him or her, it is likely that writing on railway subjects will be enriched by consulting this guide. As the author explains, ‘there are nuggets to be found for those patient enough to dig’.

TERRY GOURVISH  
*Business History Unit, London School of Economics*


David Hawkings has already published on wills, criminals and railway and transportation records, all of which clarify what survive and how family historians can use them. His latest contribution offers vital information about the records created by fire insurance companies. This work is effectively a detailed guide through the complexities of these little-used records and, as the author of its foreword writes, ‘[Hawkings] has painstakingly put together the ultimate reference work that has for so long been needed.’ Since the first census records are 1841, fire-insurance records pre-
date them and so offer much to the genealogist. In fact this work is perhaps miss-titled as it is clear that such records yield a great deal of potential interest to economic and social historians.

The Fire Office (subsequently named the Phenix [sic]) was the first company to offer insurance, in London only, in 1680; gradually companies operated outside London with increasing numbers of people taking out insurance. Hawkings notes that a researcher looking for details of a particular gentleman in England in the late 18th century has a one in three chance of finding evidence in the Sun or Royal Exchange archives. Houses, farms, ships, industrial premises, banks, goals, union workhouses and even privately owned bridges were insured, and sometimes properties were described in great detail. Fraudulence was not uncommon and companies offered rewards for those who committed arson. Companies would also pay cities and towns to ensure an adequate supply of buckets, fire engines and other equipment.

The main chapters cover endorsements; losses and claims; staff and agents; maps and plans; as well as various aspects of the information to be gleaned from the policy registers. Some famous people and companies appearing in the policy registers are noted: they include Christopher Wren, Josiah Wedgwood, George III, Sarah Siddons, Michael Faraday, the Tussaud Wax Works and the offices of Bass Brewers and Rothschild. The Appendices contain much useful factual information; some tabulated for easy reference. Appx 1 lists 177 companies established between 1680 and 1919 and includes helpful comments on the history of these companies and their records. Other appendices list records by their location. Appendix 6 is an index of craftsmen and traders, with abstracts of their policies in the Sun Fire Office policy registers, 1710-1840. Hawkings uses examples extensively to illustrate the many types of records and carefully explains how to read and interpret them. His research is thorough, well illustrated and generates ideas of research.

Evidently it has not been possible to track down all of the insurance companies noted in The British Insurance Business 1547 to 1961, H.A.L.Cockrell and E. Green, (1976) (a salutary warning of the speed with which records are still being discarded), and Hawkings suggests it would be sensible to have some preservation microfilming undertaken. Finally he hints that his next task will be to look more closely at life insurance records. If so this will add another invaluable guide to business records and it is to be hoped that the same publisher can be used again- they have served the author well and at £25 this is a book that all good reference libraries and repositories should purchase.

JULIA SHEPPARD


The recent ‘dot-com’ and telecoms boom will be one of the most important episodes in the business history of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. Martin Fransman’s book is one of the first studies to examine the events from the point of view of strategy, and within an academic context. Fransman’s study takes an evolutionary view of the telecoms sectors in the US, UK, Japan, Germany and France. The author sets out to
apply the approach of Nelson and Winter’s *An Evolutionary Theory of Economic Change*: a world where ignorance and mistakes are ‘more prevalent’ (p.vii), than the equivalent neo-classical universe.

The story is told of an industry rocked by technological change and a belief that the old order was passing. State-owned monopoly was privatised, computer and internet were both phasing out the analogue for a digital future. Fransman models the decision implied by such a world view using the device of a consensual vision where assumptions, expectations and beliefs may be examined and challenged. This vision comprised an increase in the demand for bandwith, effective competition from new, as opposed to incumbent operators, rapid technological change and support for new entrants by the financial markets. It was this model of the industry that underpinned the boom. Although financial markets have their own (ir)rationale, such a line of reasoning prompts the question: should they, i.e. the telecom companies, have known better? Indeed could anyone?

The answer to this question emerges from the chapters that follow. The progress from state-owned monopolies to the regulated service providers of AT&T, BT and NTT is explored against an explicit comparison with the new entrant, WorldCom. Chapters follow on Deutsche Telekom and France Telecom, together with the emerging competitors, in particular Colt. The final chapter concludes with an overview of the incumbents and new entrants, and the creation of knowledge especially as it relates to the use of technology. The tale told is one of ignorance, flawed vision and a conspicuous lack of the optimising that features in so much neo-classical economics.

The strength of this work, especially for business historians, lies in the use made of Nelson and Winter’s work. It is a model of how we should attempt to integrate theory and ‘the real world’, although the nature of the historical record and the use of evidence may alter somewhat the operationalisation of a historical study. The only real omission, and this is recognised by the author, is that of regulation. In a way this is a pity because the aspect of Nelson and Winter’s work that is least developed relates to the role of the state and regulation. It is also a vital antidote to the numerous studies on the new economy and the scandals of the financial markets. If you wish to understand the business models, however flawed, of telecoms companies during the bull market, then this book is for you. There is even a web site where the progress of the telecoms sector can be followed over the next five years.

For any scholar contemplating a study of telecoms, technology or seeking to apply evolutionary economics, this book will be required reading. It should become a classic text when scholars in the future write about the great bull market of the late 20th century. But I am reminded of the remark of Mao Tse Dung who when asked to comment on the effects of the French Revolution replied ‘it is too soon to tell’. I am not sure that this is a business *history*, nor am I sure the author intended it to be.

ROY EDWARDS  
*University of Southampton*

Could this be the vanguard for new expeditions in business history? Company history has for long been shared by business historians, historians of many other persuasions, economists and other social scientists, journalists and even novelists. Company history has also been fair game for antiquarian interest in business families and institutions from the eighteenth century onwards. In contrast, this history of the Stephens glassmaking dynasty is an investigative approach to family history and the destiny of wealth. You will not find here a model or theory of business history but you will find a determined pursuit of genealogy through a great range of sources, including business archives, at home and abroad.

The fortune named in the subtitle was amassed by William Stephens, a Cornishman who in 1769 founded and then developed the glass factory at Marinha Grande near Leiria, Portugal. Stephens won tax exemption and the monopoly of glass in Portugal, also emerging as an adviser to the royal family and the Marquis of Pombal, the first minister. Roberts outlines the growth of the fortune and sets the business in the context of the lengthy rebuilding of Lisbon after the earthquake of 1755, the later calamities of the Peninsular War, and the subsequent clash of royalism and revolution.

The buildings survive at Marinha Grande but William’s heirs left the glassmaking business in the late 1820s. The fortune in Portugal - reckoned at over £700,000 at that time - then found its way back to England. There, in the early Victorian period, the family’s bequests gave Stephens Lyne Stephens the reputation of the richest commoner in England. The fortune was spent in conspicuous ways. Part of it was inherited by the French ballerina Yolande Duvernay, who in her early life had seemed to be a figure from *La Dame aux Camélias* and *Traviata* but later was a magnificent survivor who endowed the new and grand Church of Our Lady and the English Martyrs in Cambridge. The residue of the fortune was dispersed among charities, among great national museums and galleries, among the descendants of William Stephens and of course among the legal profession.

I wonder what the late Theo Barker’s reaction to this book might have been? His lifelong interest in the history of the glass industry, and his studies of Pilkington’s especially, made him a pioneer of systematic, source-based business history in this country. That led on to his decisive role in the development of business history as a subject. In this case it is likely that he would have asked for more statistics of the business but he would have commiserated on the scarcity of such records in enterprises of this kind. He would have appreciated the human portraits of the Stephens line of businessmen and inheritors. He would have enjoyed the Stephens experiments in ‘tough glass’ as early as the 1790s. Above all, perhaps he would have applauded the range of sources. Roberts has consulted the national archives in Lisbon, London and Paris; business archives at the Bank of England and in the Gibbs records at the Guildhall Library; municipal archives at Marinha Grande and library sources in Lisbon; and all manner of family papers in county record offices and in private hands in Britain and Portugal. With that wide scope, this book shows that the history and archives of business can be - and must be - a broad church, ready for new users and new perspectives.

EDWIN GREEN

HSBC Holdings plc, London

The origins of the study of the industrial district can be traced back to the work of economist Alfred Marshall. Since then, social scientists have developed the idea in a number of ways and in their introductory chapter Wilson and Popp provide an extremely helpful review of the extensive literature. The terms ‘district’, ‘cluster’ and ‘region’, which have often been used imprecisely, are defined and consideration is given to the theorising that has been undertaken in areas such as economic geography, network analysis and the concept of social embeddedness. Continuing the theoretical discussion, Mark Casson offers an economist’s perspective in which he argues that links with external networks are critical, as is the quality of local entrepreneurs. Taken together, these two chapters give a strong conceptual framework for the empirical work that follows.

The eleven case studies of industrial districts span more than two centuries and, in order to isolate differing legal, social and cultural factors, have intentionally been restricted to England. Spatially, seven of the examples are located in Lancashire and Yorkshire, three in the west midlands, with Darlington as an outrider. Some prominence is given to textiles, unsurprisingly given the sector’s role in industrialisation, but less well-known industries such as gloves and jewellery are also included. What clearly emerges from these studies is the varied and heterogeneous nature of the English industrial district with differences in size, structure, markets, technology, environment and life-span. In the final chapter, the editors bring together the theory with the empirical evidence, although they admit that, given the variegated nature of English districts, such a combination ‘remains problematic’. Nonetheless Wilson and Popp conclude that this should not deter others from creating ‘greater synergy’ by researching additional case studies.

This is an enjoyable book and the editors are to be congratulated on the cohesion of the work taken as a whole. The theoretical aspects are handled with insight, while the essays contain some important contributions to business history. From the purely business archives perspective there is, perhaps, a slight disappointment. On a narrow definition that excludes directories, trade journals, newspapers and other published secondary material, then only a small number of the cases are directly based on business archives. While this is partly a reflection of the broader nature of some of the studies, there ought to be scope for the greater use of business records in future work on industrial districts. This minor qualm aside, Popp and Wilson have brought together an admirable mix of business history theory and practice in a book that presents the current state of play in the field and points the way towards the potential for future research.

Mike Anson  
*Business History Unit, London School of Economics*