

ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS

DEVELOPMENTS IN BRISTOL, BATH AND RADSTOCK

Mike Bone Ed.

BATH RECORD OFFICE

A fascinating collection of notes, newscuttings, and views of Twerton has been received from the estate of the late Mrs Cynthia Turner, well known in Bath for her talks on old Twerton. The material has been sorted and arranged in 12 volumes, mostly by subject, and a comprehensive names index and chronological record are also being deposited with the collection as it is completed. Early photographs and an extensive collection of colour slides form part of this Twerton archive, but the slides are currently not available for research pending the time-consuming process of identification and cataloguing.

A popular source is the recent acquisition from Somerset Record Office of microfiche copies of the parish registers for Bath and surrounding villages. These generally cover all the early registers up to the 1880's, and in some cases into the twentieth century. The Record Office has two fiche-readers at present and, due to the amount of interest this source has generated, prior booking is recommended before your visit.

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THE BUILDING OF BATH MUSEUM

A new Museum that takes visitors behind the scenes of Georgian Bath has opened. Housed in the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel on The Paragon, the "Building of Bath Museum" shows how the Georgian city was built.

Bath's residents and visitors are very well informed about the glittering social life and colourful personalities of the eighteenth century but few gain an insight into the buildings themselves. The Museum sketches in the social and historical background but its greatest strength is when it leads the visitors through the story of how each house was built. It is probably the first museum in Britain to do this.

Full scale mock-ups, wooden models, original tools, materials and architectural fragments show how the houses were designed, constructed and decorated. The role of every building trade is displayed and one of the most striking impressions the visitor leaves with is how many talents were combined in each house.

This is also the first museum to look at the part technology and industry played behind the scenes of a Georgian city. The building trades still relied almost wholly on hand tools but it becomes clear that Bath could not have been built without a number of advances. Bristol's influence was most keenly felt through the new and plentiful range of building materials borne up the Avon Navigation after 1727. Two of the most

popular exhibits are a working reconstruction of a sash window and a delightful scale model of Ralph Allen's remarkable tramway which ran from the stone quarries down to the river.

The Museum hopes to give people before exploring Georgian Bath a better grasp of the story behind the architecture.

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BATH INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE CENTRE

The Bath Industrial Heritage Centre is home to a number of valuable collections, both objects and documents. Since 1978 the Centre has collected material on Bath's industrial past to add to its initial collection. The largest collection is the contents of the Bath firm of J.B. Bowler (latterly J.B. Bowler & Sons Ltd), founded in 1872 carrying through 3 generations to 1969. The Bath Industrial Heritage Trust bought the contents of the Corn Street premises (some 60,000 items and 80,000 documents) to form the basis of a museum. The firm undertook all manner of work- general engineering, repairs, brass founding, woodworking, sheetmetal work, mineral water manufacture, ironmongery, plumbing, etc. The company were characterised by a tendency not to throw anything remotely useful away or invest in new stock or machinery. The 1969 firm is little changed since Edwardian times and hence its interest for the museum.

In addition there is a collection of cabinet-making equipment and archives relating to the Bath furniture industry and especially that of Keevil and Son, as well as a collection of Bath Stone mining tools and equipment. The Centre holds a collection of tools and equipment relating to the Bath clock and watch repairer Ashman and products manufactured by the precision engineers Horstmann Gear Co Ltd. We hold a large collection of photographic negatives from the Bath engineers Stothert & Pitt and material on the Bath bed and furniture makers Weaver & Co of Broad Street. In addition, we have a collection of documents and materials relating to other Bath firms and retailers.

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THE COURAGE ARCHIVE AT THE BRISTOL BREWERY

I am not going to attempt, in this short article, to tell the history of Courage or any of its associated and constituent companies. Instead I intend using this valued opportunity to describe the set-up of the Courage archive, and what records are available for use by brewery historians and, indeed, what use we at Courage make of the collection.

The archives of Courage are based mainly in Bristol, but there are also smaller collections at other sites within the group:

Staines, Tadcaster, and Reading. At Bristol the archive is housed in the attic space of the handsome former Tramways Powerhouse on the site of Courage's Bristol Brewery.

This tall Victorian neo-classical structure stands on the banks of the Avon and is, I like to think, a fitting location for the archive collection. The term "attic" tends to give the impression of a cluttered, slant-roofed space, but it is in reality a 5,000 sq ft lofty warehouse, fitted out with racking, work-desks, space-heaters and a photocopier. There is no natural direct daylight. The floors beneath the archive are the offices of the company's Southern Accounting Centre a thriving up-to-date "counting house", essential to Courage's modern financial operations.

The archive is really made up of two unequal groups of documents – modern business records and the historical records collection.

The former group accounts for nearly 90% of the archive and includes the financial, property and corporate records that the company has to keep for reasons of business efficiency as well as legal necessity. Typical records in this group might include delivery notes, customer statements and accountants' records, as well as salary and wages sheets and managed house trading records. There are computer reports, manual files, microfilms and, indeed, every conceivable type of document from single individually produced items to standardised format documents produced systematically and continuously.

The majority of these modern records will be incinerated when their specific retention cycle has expired; some will have the honour of passing naturally to the historical archive where they will be guaranteed immortality. Of course, these modern records, boxed, coded and catalogued on a computer to allow for easy retrieval, are confidential and not open for view by the public. On the other hand the historical collection is, by appointment, open to researchers in brewery history and related fields.

So what does the historical archive contain? An archive, in theory, will contain unpublished documents of historical importance. I think it would be fair to say that this is a standard and accepted definition. The Courage archive does indeed contain unpublished records of historical significance, but it also goes further into the domain of the library and of the museum by housing collections of objects (bottles, hop rakes, brewing instruments, etc) as well as published books relevant to the company and its business.

I fully realise that some archivists will criticise this step and that some curators and librarians would also throw up their hands in horror. However, I feel justified in keeping documents, books and objects as long as they are germane to Courage. I feel it would be quite wrong to keep, for example, the brewing records of a particular ale and then refuse to keep a bottle of that ale, the finished product which directly relates to the paper records. In a corporate sense the items and documents in the collection complement each other and form a completely rounded archive.

All records, items or books, are catalogued on a computer database using a fairly simple program. I wrote the program so, believe me, it is by definition "fairly simple". The benefit of computers to archivists is apparent when you realise that the collection can be listed in a number of ways: by company (there are over 70 companies represented in the historical archive); by location (e.g. all records at Staines, or Maidstone, or Bristol); or by the type of record (e.g. brewing, property, photograph, published book, tool etc). The computer will even produce a list using a combination of categories, for example all photographs of pubs belonging to the Bristol Brewery Georges & Co, as well as allowing the operator to interrogate it for specific items.

Enough of this computer-talk: let me move on to describe the size and scope of the collection. There are over a thousand leather-bound ledgers and books containing every sort of information; dozens of boxes of deeds and leases which refer to Courage's property holdings throughout the centuries; thousands of photographs of pubs, employees, transport and breweries; hundreds of bottles and labels; pub signs; paintings (some very valuable); clocks; advertising material; architectural remains; and general items of breweriana.

It would be quite impossible to describe all we have, but the range of enquiries I handle will perhaps give some idea of the scope of the Courage archives. Academics researching articles or writing books on economic or business history; local history societies producing booklets on the pubs of their particular town; and individual writers or novelists looking for specific or background information which will help them in their current venture. Then there are genealogists hoping to trace their forebears through our tenancy books and employee records; landlords of our public houses seeking the history of their property; and students and school pupils engaged in project work for their studies. Of course, there is also considerable contact with professional bodies such as the Brewers' Society, the Business Archives Council, County Record Offices as well as archivists and curators working for other large brewers. Part of my job is to promote our archive treasures and this I do by writing articles (such as this one), and by mounting temporary archival displays both within the company and in the community outside Courage. The historical archive collection is slowly growing all the time and when I am not promoting the collection, or using it, or encouraging others to use it, I can be found collecting, keeping, caring for and cataloguing our records.

Hopefully, the editor will ask me in the future for a further contribution and I can then explore certain facets of Courage's history with suitable photographic or illustrative accompaniment. In the meantime, if you would like to find out a little more about Courage's archive collection, or if you have a specific research interest, please feel free to contact me at Courage Ltd, PO Box 85, Bristol BS99 7BT.

Ken Thomas.

**RADSTOCK, MIDSOMER NORTON &
DISTRICT MUSEUM, HAYDON,
RADSTOCK**

The museum has acquired many new objects during the last year and visitor numbers have been maintained, which may be a reflection on the changing nature of the collection.

Additions to the railway section include G.W.R tools and plates. The mining section has been augmented by a gift of 13 mining lamps and literature from the pre-nationalisation period. The occasional tally continues to appear but we have yet to receive one used at the Tynning Pit, offers welcome! We have acquired facsimiles of seventeenth century mining leases granted by the Popham family and an original 1730 letter referring to colliers rioting.

The agricultural section collections have remained fairly static but two chaff cutters were acquired recently, as were two wooden tubs from the former Haydon Colliery. All are in need

of renovation. The manufacture of glass at Stanton Wick has occupied a corner for some months and examples of contemporary bottle glass were displayed. More recently, an early hand worked petrol pump was donated, adding to the range of devices associated with motoring between the wars. The creation of an inter-war forge, using rescued tools and materials from several local sources, has been a further development.

Various documents have been passed to the museum this year. These include a collection of Priston papers from the earliest times and facsimiles of the Popham papers kept in the Somerset Record Office. Colliery items include payslips from the 1920s, one belonging to a collier from Peasedown who posed with a guss & crook - now a famous and rare picture. There are also a number of surveyors' diaries from the period around nationalisation, original envelopes and stationery from the Somerset Miners' Association, plus letter headed paper from Foxcote and Writhlington Collieries circa 1920.

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