



Business Archives Council Newsletter

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Chair's blog

As I write this, we are approaching the first anniversary of the Covid lockdown back in March 2020. It has certainly been challenging time in all sorts of ways, and none of us could possibly have predicted that our archives would be closed for 12 months, or indeed that many of us will not have actually seen our work colleagues or our records for over a year. Even with the current roadmap, there are huge uncertainties and it is not clear when we will be able to get back into our offices and think about reopening our searchrooms to external users. And of course the economic and financial consequences of all this have still to play-out fully. It was worrying to read about cuts affecting the Wallace Collection (thankfully since reversed) and currently the V&A's Theatre & Performance Archive. We, of course, continue to monitor the situation in the business archives sector.

In February, we held our annual BAC trustees' strategy review meeting. As usual there was a lively and open debate which resulted in some clear objectives for this year. We will shortly (or possibly already will have by the time this appears) be advertising for a couple of new positions with the BAC: one responsible for communications, an area where the lines have always been rather blurred; the other to oversee our events and the conference. Following the success of the Covid Zoom events which we ran for members last year, we are planning similar online events in 2021. Watch this space. We are also really keen to run a face-to-face conference in November if we possibly can. I know that we're all desperate to see each other in person! Talking of online events, earlier this year I chaired a workshop on demonstrating impact which was organised by The National Archives. All of the speakers were from business archives: Marks & Spencer, GSK

and HSBC, with each one highlighting diverse and varied projects. What was astonishing was that there around 200 people on the call. And plenty of archivists from other sectors. The original event was to have been held in Manchester in March last year and there certainly wouldn't have been that many present. So online, does offer huge opportunities in terms of widening participation and spreading the word about the benefits of business archives.

Finally, I must end with some very sad news, the announcement of the death, at the age of 73, of Michael Moss. It is hard to overstate Michael's contribution to business archives, business history and archival practice and theory. He was a strong and valued supporter of the BAC and of BAC Scotland. A full obituary will follow in a future newsletter. In the meantime, here is a picture of Michael at the Houses of Parliament in 2017 on the occasion of him receiving the All Party Parliamentary Group on Archives & History (APPGAH) Lifetime Achievement Award. I was there representing the BAC and can testify that his acceptance speech was characteristically entertaining and witty! He leaves a huge legacy and will be sorely missed. We send our condolences to Michael's family at this difficult time.



Michael Moss receiving the APPGAH Lifetime Achievement Award from Lord Clark of Windermere in June 2017

(Courtesy Mike Anson)

Mike Anson
BAC Chair

The *British Business Census of Entrepreneurs (BBCE)* information resource on the business population of entrepreneurs in Victorian and Edwardian Britain

In April 2020, a new web-based resource, the *British Business Census of Entrepreneurs (BBCE)*, was launched, enabling business archives researchers, students and schools to look at the geography of employers and the self-employed as recorded in the censuses of England, Wales and Scotland for 1851-1911. This new [database](#) is accompanied by an [Atlas of Entrepreneurship](#) – a finding aid for users of the BBCE.



The Atlas of Entrepreneurship showing the total of all entrepreneurs by RSD in 1881

The Atlas offers many possibilities: to view the geographical patterns, learn about the historic developments over the period, and download much of the data either as Excel files or GIS files. The entrepreneurs are all the self-employed of the period, including those employers on farms or firms who recorded their employee numbers. The raw data was recorded in the censuses by households and enumerators, but very little was published because the clerical task of coding it was difficult, and the financial resource given to the census administrators was deemed too small!

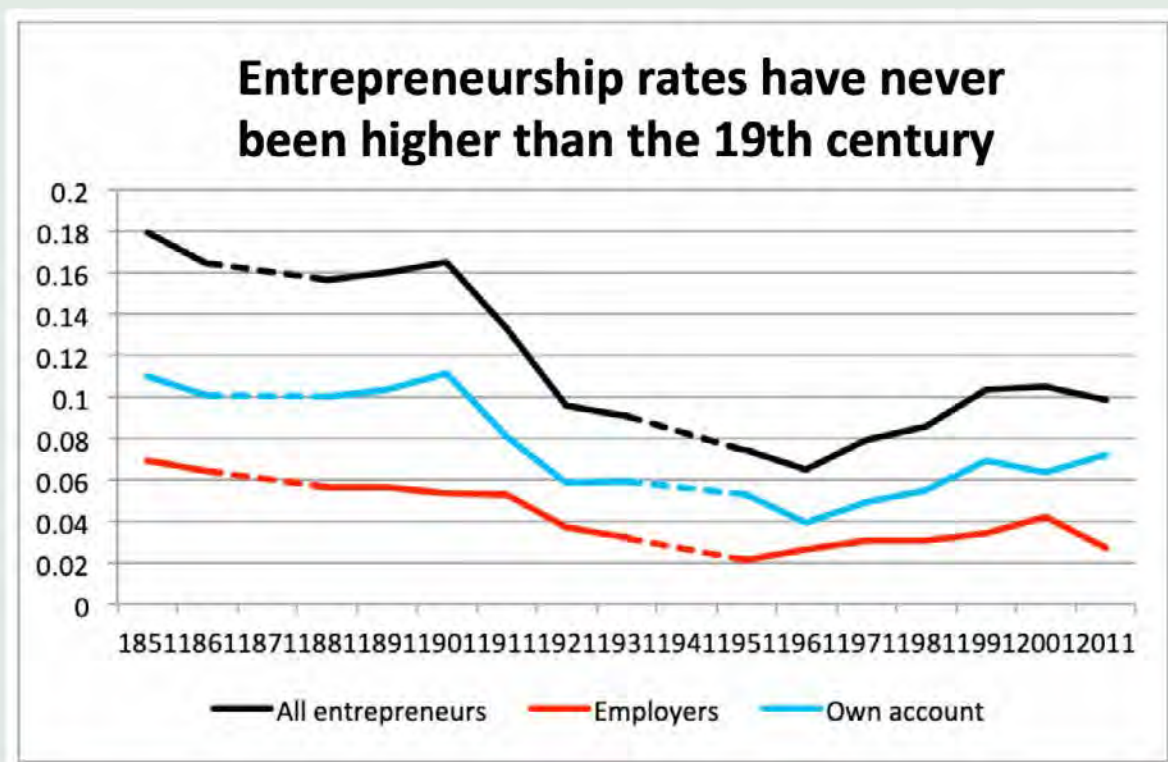
As a consequence very little analysis has been previously possible of the census records of employers and self-employed. John Clapham, in volumes 2 and 3 of his magisterial *Economic*

History of Modern Britain published in the 1930s, took the few tables that had been published and analysed them. He found them disappointing because of patchy coverage. The digital records of the censuses 1851—1911 now available in I-CeM allow a much fuller coverage. All the original enumerators' records can be analysed in a way that was beyond the census clerks. All the occupational strings can be searched by algorithm and the relevant records identified. The data contain such complex records as 'alderman, J.P., cotton miller employing 1,000 worker, 600 women, 200 men 150 girls and 50 boys also farmer of 300 acres with 10 hands.' These long alphanumeric strings can be identified, parsed and coded appropriately. A paper by Bennett and Newton in *Local Population Studies* (No. 95, autumn 2015), describes the method. It gives unique data on firm size for farmers and everyone else.

This method has been developed by the research team under Professor Bob Bennett at Cambridge University: Carry van Lieshout, Harry Smith, Piero Montebruno, and Gill Newton. The results give 300-400,000 employers per census year, and 1.5-2 million self-employed who operated 'on own account' without employees. This database underpins the Atlas, and is available at the UK Data Service ([click here](#)).

The BBCE data are extracted from I-CeM, which is the database of the census records before employer coding ([click here](#)). The BBCE database gives the coding of all farm and non-farm entrepreneurs. This can then be linked to I-CeM through each individual's identifier (RecID). As well as coding all entrepreneurs, BBCE goes beyond I-CeM in several other respects to include 1871 in England and Wales which is missing in I-CeM, infills many occupational descriptions that have been truncated; and it enriches I-CeM with a range of other information, including identifying individuals as company directors using record linkage to directories.

Any researcher wanting the data for individuals and their names to pursue linkage to other records must still go to the full BBCE data deposit and I-CeM. But for aggregated data by Registration Sub-District (RSD), counties, regions, towns and urban areas, the Atlas and BBCE website provide the data as direct downloads, from the Atlas screen (shown above). This should be very valuable for inspecting the basic data for business history researchers to know the patterns across the country, or act as a gateway to the original records on individual businesses.



A further key benefit is that the design of the BBCE and Atlas coding uses modern approaches to post-survey processing of the historical censuses. This imposes a quality standard that historical clerks could not meet, and applies adjustment methods UK census administrators did not develop until the 1960s. This has allowed the data to be aligned so that consistent comparisons are possible up to the present day. The figure shows employers and self-employed proprietors in BBCE as a proportion of the working population. The development up to the 2011 census shows the Victorians to have had a higher rate of self-employment than any time since. It also turns out that it was particularly high for women. Entrepreneurship by sex is available on the Atlas site, which allows inspection of the spatial patterns.

The Atlas is a development of the software from *Populationspast.org.uk*. The main research findings for entrepreneurship have been published in [*The Age of Entrepreneurship: Business proprietors, self-employment and corporations since 1851*](#) (R.J. Bennett, H. Smith, C. van Lieshout, P. Montebruno, G. Newton – Routledge International Studies in Business History, London and New York, 2019).

Professor Robert Bennett

University of Cambridge, the British Business Census of Entrepreneurs (BBCE)
<https://www.bbce.uk/>

Mentoring Scheme for Business Archives

As many business archivists work in small teams or on their own, it is often difficult to build the networks which help with personal development. To offer support from fellow professionals the BAC would like to build a mentor bank to enable those who feel they would benefit from this type of peer support to work with another archivist on an informal basis.

To begin this process we are, therefore, looking for those who have experience in working in our field who feel they may have the skills to offer this service to others. As an experienced archivist it is good to reflect on the value of those who spent time discussing our personal development and networks and now feel in a position to do the same to help others.

We will not be offering coaching, this requires a set of skills which are different from mentoring which is usually designed for those wishing to focus on their career or skills development and can be either informal or have specific aims and outcomes.

We are looking for those who can support a mentee with time, knowledge, experience and learning in an honest, confidential environment probably over a period of between 6 and 18 months (although some mentor relationships build into long term friendships and business connections).

The BAC will provide guidelines for those who are interested in taking this forward. All that is required at present is for any interested parties to contact Judy Faraday - judy.faraday@johnlewis.co.uk to register their interest and we hope to begin to match possible mentors and mentees by the summer. If you are interested in being mentored by a BAC member we will be inviting applications when our network of mentors is in place.

Persil – Environmental Fashion!

"A collaboration project bringing 'fashion' and 'non-fashion' brands together through visual story telling." (*Paul Owen* – Senior lecturer Liverpool School of Art and Design, Liverpool John Moores University).

Unilever Archives and fashion students? How is the archive of a business, better known for washing fashion than creating it, collaborating with up-and-coming fashion designers? It all started with a hunt for inspiration.

We were intrigued when the archive received an email from Dr Lee Wright, Senior Lecturer in Design History at Liverpool John Moores University. She wanted to discuss the possibility of second year fashion design students visiting the archive to see design material from Unilever's history. Lee and her team are passionate about emphasising the importance of primary research to young designers. We always love a new audience, so we hosted 20 students for a tour of the archive and an opportunity to learn more about archives.

Immensely pleasing for the archive team was the enthusiasm and very positive feedback from both students and lecturers. This led to the development of a learning module based around Unilever's archive and the values that are important to Unilever. Meetings followed as we built up the programme, outlining the aims for the students, and how we could best support those goals. Unilever's *Sustainable Living Plan* to halve its environmental footprint and elevate the importance of sustainability is an important message that crosses over to the fashion industry too. Suddenly, two very different industries merged in their aspiration to lighten their environmental impact and challenge the stereotypical vision of consumerism.

Working with the course leaders, we chose nine brands to focus on, and prior to the visit, shared some images and information about their historical background. In October 2019, we welcomed just over 50 students in their second year of a fashion design and communications course, (split into two groups, and still a tight squeeze). They toured the archive and visited the searchroom to look more closely at some of the archives. An agreed objective was the students needed some insight into licensing copyrighted materials, so we showed some examples from the collection, alongside original adverts and packaging to give an idea of the possibilities and explaining the 'how to' process. It was remarkable to see what the students picked up on, not just straightforward logos, but colours, fonts, the experience of using a product, the history behind a brand and its purpose. Eventually, many photographs and questions later, our visitors were on their way back to university – and we waited, with no idea of the outcome.



*A communication campaign 'mood board' created by fashion design students from the Liverpool John Moores University
(Courtesy Unilever plc and group companies)*

November came and I was invited to the University to see the progress – I was amazed by the amount of work they had done, and extremely impressed by the ideas and innovative approaches taken. By combining Unilever brands with favoured fashion houses or brands, they had created some truly unique material. Half the group worked on producing a physical item, clothing for sports or an accessory, and the other half were developing creative communications campaigns. They had mood boards, made samples, researched locations and the purpose and ideas behind the brands. Too many ideas to list, but some of my favourites had to be T-shirts that changed to Colman's yellow with heat; a fantastic blend of the Wall's Heart brand logo, merging into Levi's brand, for an ice cream campaign; and a coat, in the colours of Dove, that could be transformed into a bag (very handy for changeable weather. But of them all, my absolute favourite, the idea that seemed to encompass both fashion and the message of sustainability was the *Persil/Vivienne Westwood* campaign by Tom Lyon - he put together something really special. With his piece, *Hung Out to Dry* aimed at students and laundry (yes it happens!!) Tom used campaign activism, inspired by Vivienne Westwood, to shout about the message of good, environmentally sound laundry practises. His creativity and professionalism were inspiring.



Hung Out to Dry by Tom Lyon, fashion design student, Liverpool John Moores University (Courtesy Unilever plc and group companies)

December saw a full fashion show, presented by the students with the archive team among the invited guests. There was music, moody lighting, projected images, bare brick walls, a bar (!!) – the full works. It seemed obvious, more people needed to see this - so we invited them to reproduce the whole show at our head office in London to share the incredible effort and energy behind this project.

Work started in January 2020 to hold the event mid-March. All that needed sorting was: transport for the show, the students and archive team (combination of train, coach, and van), a suitable space at head office, technical issues with projections, sound and lighting, catering, security, communications, guest list, invites, installation of the show (and taking it down). Quite a task! But, and I imagine you can see this coming from date of the show, with all the arrangements made, as

time went on, it became clear that a large gathering in London was going to be a problem. With just over a week to go, we took the difficult decision to cancel. Despite the obvious disappointment, it was a small sacrifice for safety. However, with so much positivity round this project we still harbour plans to try again with a new cohort, in safer times.

“The research & development enabled the students to exhibit an authentic and original collaborative project utilising their concept and a Unilever brand, which reflected their own creative vision.” (Paul Robinson, Senior Lecturer)

Helen Unsworth

Archives and Records Manager, Unilever Archives & Records Management

TfL's first online exhibition: World War II Showcase

Here at TfL Corporate Archives we would like to make you aware of our first ever online exhibition: [World War II Showcase](#). Due to Covid-19 and its numerous ramifications, this new exhibition has replaced our annual physical exhibition for 2020/21, which was to have marked the seventy-fifth anniversaries of VE and VJ days. Never a Service to be easily beaten, we embraced the challenge and put together this exhibition in very short time thanks to the extreme hard work of both the Archives' team and a secondee from TfL's Tech & Data department.

22,850 staff of the London Passenger Transport Board (TfL's predecessor company) served in the armed forces during WWII. But service to the war effort was not limited to fighting overseas. In London, staff of the London Passenger Transport Board showed great resilience, determination, and sacrifice to shelter civilians from bombings, keep transport services running during air raids, provide aid to staff and their families who were in need, and undertake manufacturing for the war effort.

The exhibition uses only material available remotely to our team during the Covid-19 pandemic to shed light on some of the stories of the London Passenger Transport Board at War. Learn how women stepped in to supplement the workforce and how the organisation responded to them. Hear first-hand accounts of sheltering in the Tube and being evacuated. Explore the heroic acts of bravery performed by our staff both fighting overseas and on the Home Front. And meet our very own 'Dads' Army'.

The exhibition site will be available until July 2021 and more material will become available as and when we have access to our physical collections. The exhibition has been curated with accessibility high in our minds and within the confines of the tools available to us we have endeavoured to make resources available in a variety of formats. As well as the images and their accompanying stories, there are consolidated story documents available in PDF form, and video versions of each story are in production.

We hope that you enjoy the exhibition and do feel free to spread the word amongst your colleagues and friends.

Tamara Thornhill

Corporate Archivist, Transport for London