

'BEHIND THE HEADLINES': A PROJECT REPORT TO THE BUSINESS ARCHIVES COUNCIL

1. PROJECT SUMMARY

The University of Manchester Library was delighted to receive the 2015 Business Archives Council (BAC) Cataloguing Grant for 'Behind the Headlines' – a project focusing on the business records in the Archive of the *Guardian* (formerly *Manchester Guardian*) newspaper.

Running for six weeks during September-November 2015, the project focused on enhancing the extensive business records in the archive relating to people – both employees (from editors to cleaners and stable boys), and contributors to the *Manchester Guardian* and its sister paper, the *Manchester Evening News*.

Jane Speller was appointed as Project Archivist; recently qualified as an archivist, Jane also has extensive experience of working in a range of heritage organisations, often on project work. She was therefore able to achieve all of the project's objectives to a very high standard within a challenging timeframe.

Work carried out included:

- Enhancing existing catalogue entries for 303 ledgers, files or boxes (3,556 individual items).
- Creating a new online guide to researching people associated with the *Guardian* and *Manchester Evening News*.
- Identifying key items from the archive for digitisation by our Heritage Imaging Team, and the delivery of these both online and via a Turning the Pages terminal in the Library.
- Publishing blog posts and listserv postings to promote the work of the project.

2. THE *GUARDIAN* ARCHIVE

Founded by cotton merchant John Edward Taylor in 1821, in the wake of the Peterloo Massacre, the *Manchester Guardian* was intended to provide a mouthpiece for liberal views. Initially a weekly paper, it was issued twice-weekly from 1836 and in 1885 moved to daily status. The year 1868 saw the founding of the *Manchester Evening News*, the *Manchester Guardian's* sister paper, which was formally taken over by the latter in 1924.

In 1871, Charles Prestwich Scott joined the staff, and was swiftly made editor, a role he held for 57 years. Under Scott, the *Guardian* was transformed into a newspaper of national and international standing, with a reputation for accuracy, integrity and honesty in its reporting, and for championing liberal or radical causes.

Scott's successors as editor included W.P. Crozier, who took over in 1932, A.P. Wadsworth, who succeeded him in 1944; and Alastair Hetherington in 1956.

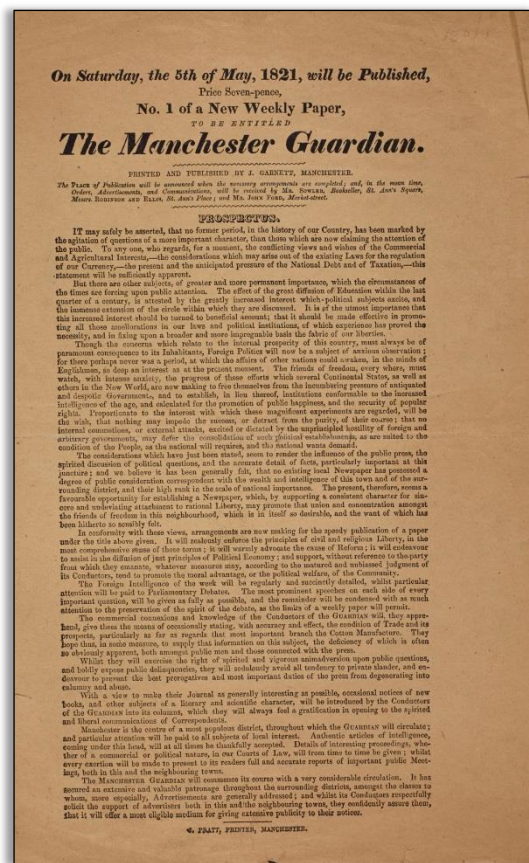
The *Manchester Guardian* was purchased by Scott in 1907, with ownership being transferred to the Scott Trust in 1936. 1959 saw the dropping of the word 'Manchester' from the newspaper's title; the first London printing of the paper took place in 1961, and in 1964 the main editorial departments moved to London.

The bulk of the *Guardian* Archive was given to Manchester University Library in 1971, although there were several smaller accessions after that date. The archive dates from the newspaper's foundation in 1821 to the mid-1970s, with later material being held at the Guardian News and Media Archive in London.

Extending to over 1,000 boxes, the archive's significance is hard to overstate; as well as its importance for the history of journalism and newspaper production, it contains correspondence and other papers which form key sources for the study of political, military, economic, social and cultural events and developments of the late nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries – from the Boer War to Vietnam.

It is also of profound local and regional significance: founded in the world's first industrial city at a time when the Government was trying to suppress the radical press, the *Manchester Guardian* has a seminal place in the city's rich history of radicalism, protest and campaigns for social and political reform.

Alongside the key series of editorial and foreign correspondence in the archive is a remarkably complete set of records relating to the newspaper as a business concern – from legal documents to contributors' ledgers and wage books. These have received less curatorial attention than the editorial correspondence in the past, yet we were aware of their research value and the many stories they could tell, so were keen to unlock their potential. The business records therefore formed the focus of our BAC-funded project.



Prospectus for the new paper, issued in 1821

3. CATALOGUING STRATEGY

The *Guardian* Archive is one of the largest and most complex of the Library's archives. A detailed collections analysis exercise carried out across the Special Collections in 2012 assigned the collection a significance rating of 100% and a cataloguing priority rating of 77.5% - placing it fourth out of 350 archive, book and manuscript collections analysed.

This high cataloguing priority reflected the poor state of the archive's existing documentation: consisting of two PDF documents, the catalogue for the archive contained brief entries for most of the business records (e.g. title of ledger), and for editorial correspondence alphabetical lists of correspondents with covering dates.

The archive is one of our most heavily used, attracting onsite and remote researchers ranging from local and family historians to academics and journalists. However, its level of documentation has posed a barrier to its use: it is not easy for researchers to locate the information they need; it can be difficult for archive and reader services staff to assist researchers as effectively as they would like to; and the archive has been under-used in public events and exhibitions despite its appeal for a wide range of audiences.

Pressure on time and resources means that cataloguing activity undertaken by the Manuscripts and Archives team focuses on collection level descriptions and basic box lists. Producing a detailed ISAD(G)-compliant catalogue for the *Guardian* Archive is therefore not possible using core resource, and would require greater funding than can be provided by any single funding body.

As part of our overall cataloguing strategy, we are therefore taking a new approach to tackling the challenge of large, significant and poorly documented collections – and the *Guardian* Archive is the first that we have addressed in this way. Our BAC-funded project formed a key step in this process. For the *Guardian* Archive our approach is as follows:

- Securing external funding for projects focusing on different sections of the archive; as well as our BAC-funded project, we also obtained funding from the National Cataloguing Grants Programme in 2015 for a one-year project focusing on C.P. Scott's editorial correspondence.
- Exploring other funding avenues: we have secured some funding from the John Rylands Research Institute (which came via a private donor) for a project focusing on the inter-war European Foreign Correspondence in the archive, and to extend the duration of our BAC-funded project by an additional four days, making it up to six weeks.
- Drawing on the assistance of volunteers, interns and students on placements at the Library: one student has already carried out some work identified as important by our BAC-funded project (see Section 4.5).
- Using in-house resource where possible, e.g. the archive's curator has recently produced an overdue collection-level description for the archive in EAD form for delivery via our ELGAR database and the Archives Hub.
- Being flexible and pragmatic about our delivery of finding aids for the archive: we have accepted that wholesale archival arrangement is impractical, both because of the collection's size, and the fact that it has been used and cited in its current arrangement for so many years. Some records series will therefore be encoded in EAD for Hub delivery while

in other cases we will simply enhance existing records in the PDF finding aids – which is the approach we are taking for the business records.

4. THE 'BEHIND THE HEADLINES' PROJECT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The grant we received from the Business Archives Council funded a six-week project focusing on the business records in the *Guardian* Archive, which also includes records of the *Manchester Evening News*. We chose to focus in particular on those records which relate to *people* – both employees of, and contributors to, the two newspapers. We prioritised these based on level of use and demand for information. A high volume of the enquiries we receive about the archive relate to people, and fall into two main categories:

- Tracing the writer of a particular contribution: until comparatively recently, the *Guardian* had a policy of anonymity: most contributions were not attributed at all; others might be signed with initials, or identified as being 'From our Special Correspondent'.
- Tracing information about a particular individual who might have contributed to, or been employed by, either newspaper – whether an editor, illustrator, reporter, cleaner, cook, stable boy or other.

This type of information is dispersed across a wide range of records, including bulky ledgers detailing payments to contributors, staff lists, wage books, photographs and more. These records are not uniform, and can vary considerably in the usefulness of their content. It can therefore be a time-consuming, and sometimes frustrating, process to successfully track down information about any single individual.

This is the situation which 'Behind the Headlines' set out to rectify.

4.2 PROJECT AIMS

We undertook an exercise to analyse the type of enquiries we receive, and to interrogate the descriptions for the records relevant (or potentially relevant) to these in the existing PDF finding aids for the archive in order to formulate the project's aims, which were:

- To enhance entries in our existing finding aids for records where staff and contributor information can be found – by indicating which records are relevant to particular types of enquiry, outlining the type of information which can be found in them, and explaining how to navigate around them.
- To produce an online guide to tracing and researching people associated with the *Guardian* and *Manchester Evening News*.
- To add value to the project's core work by identifying key items from the archive for digitisation and indexing them by name. We focused in particular on one iconic item: an

anniversary photograph album presented to C.P. Scott in 1921 containing portraits of every member of *Guardian* staff at that time.

- To promote the project and the archive via our blog, Twitter, and listservs.

4.3 PROJECT OVERVIEW

In advance of work beginning, we announced our receipt of the BAC award and plans for the project via our [blog](#), and the [news page](#) of our website.

A detailed project plan was drawn up as part of our application for the funding award. We recognized that the production of a detailed EAD finding aid was not practical within the project timeframe – not least because the records concerned are dispersed across the archive. We decided instead to augment the existing PDF finding aid with greatly enhanced descriptions.

Close analysis of the handlist resulted in a priority list of records, and milestones were set accordingly. The first four weeks of the project would therefore see the listing of approximately 2,000 separate items, falling into the following categories:

- The extensive staff and contributor records - including a varied mix of contributors' ledgers; staff wage books covering a whole range of departments; staff address lists; and reporters' diaries.
- Several hundred unidentified photographs (previously described in one sentence as 'Machine Room and other premises and equipment in Manchester, 1929-66').
- Key partnership agreements and legal documents reflecting the ownership and running of the *Guardian* and *Manchester Evening News*.
- Several boxes of material which were so poorly described that it was impossible to ascertain their content or usefulness.

Work would also be done on identifying material for digitisation, including the C.P. Scott centenary photograph album, and planning the indexing of this by staff names and departments.

Guidance on what catalogue information to augment or record was provided, but this was nevertheless an ambitious timeframe. However, project archivist Jane Speller was able to complete the work to a very high standard, and also published a [blog post](#) about the project's initial findings.

The final two weeks of the project focused on:

- The production of a brand new online guide to researching people associated with the *Guardian* or *Manchester Evening News*, aimed at a wide audience – from family historians to academic researchers.
- Finalising work on indexing the centenary photograph album.

- Examining, improving the documentation, and assessing the significance, of a set of files from the 1930s-40s, described as ‘W.P. Crozier’s confidential correspondence and related documents mainly relating to Palestine’.

When Jane’s listing work was complete, the handlist for the business records had been augmented by 76 pages. These new catalogue entries indicate exactly what information people can expect to find in each record, as well as details on how each ledger (for instance) is structured, to aid navigation.

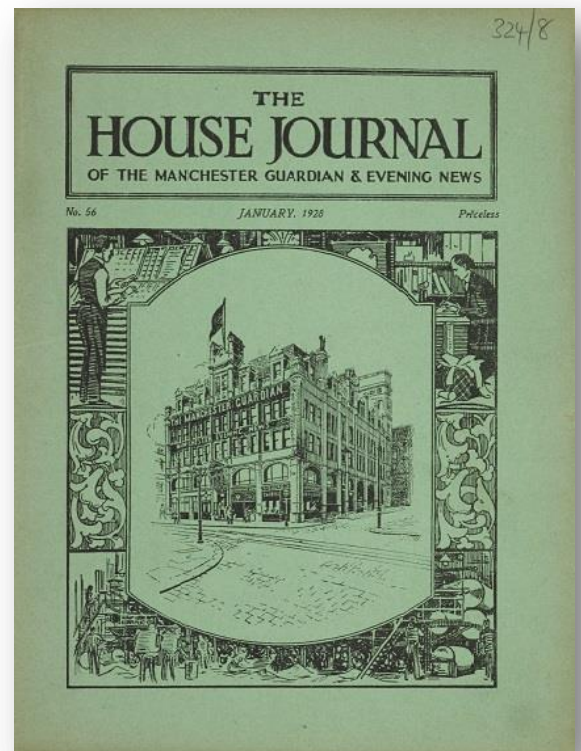


'The last of the *Manchester Evening News* ponies', 1952

The previously unlisted photographs catalogued as part of the project provide a fascinating window into the working lives of *Guardian* and *Manchester Evening News* employees in the past, as well as the way the newspapers operated. We are planning to use these in several public events, and are inviting people to try and identify some of the people and occupations represented.

One record type uncovered as part of the project provides a much more personal dimension to the official information found in the ledgers and other staff records. The *House Journal* (affectionately known as the *Ho.Jo.*) was the in-house staff magazine, and is full of stories, photographs, and cartoons which describe work events and trips such as the children’s Christmas party and veterans’ dinner; staff sports teams; births, marriages, deaths, promotions and retirements – and much more. The *Ho.Jo.* formed the main feature of the concluding [blog post](#) about the project.

Another item which adds a personal element to the staff records is the iconic *Manchester Guardian* Centenary Album, which was digitised in full by our Heritage Imaging Team. The album was presented to C.P. Scott in 1921, to mark the hundredth anniversary of the *Guardian*, and the fiftieth anniversary of Scott’s editorship. The photographs in it were taken by staff photographer Walter Doughty, and each page features a different department of the newspaper, from editors and sub-editors to secretaries, porters, stable boys,



A copy of the *Ho.Jo.* from 1928

cooks, and cleaners. Every member of staff is named, and anyone who was absent on the day of the shoot was photographed later and pasted in. The album provides a complete photographic record of the 500-odd people who worked for the newspaper at that time. The digitised album is now available via our online image library, and it has been indexed by the personal name of each staff member – providing an invaluable searchable visual record for those seeking out people associated with the newspaper in the early 1920s. It has also been made available as a virtual book on the large Turning the Pages terminal in the Library’s Historic Reading Room, where it is proving popular with visitors.



The Cleaners and Porters, from the Centenary Photograph Album, 1921

Finally, Jane’s work on W.P. Crozier’s ‘confidential correspondence’ confirmed its importance, and prompted us to make this a priority cataloguing project for a volunteer or student placement (see Section 4.5 for details).

4.4 PROJECT OUTPUTS

The project’s primary outputs were as follows:

- Greatly enhanced catalogue entries for a wide range of business records in the *Guardian* and *Manchester Evening News* Archive which relate to people associated with either newspaper. [The catalogue](#) has grown by 76 pages as a result of this work.

- An online guide, [Changing Faces: A guide to researching the people behind the Guardian and the Manchester Evening News](#). This contains advice on tracking down records relating to different categories of people – contributors, journalists, illustrators, female staff members and so on – but it also goes beyond this, containing information on accessing back copies of the newspaper itself; handy tips; pointers to other types of record which can be of use to family historians; and a comprehensive glossary of terms which users of the archive might encounter. The Guide is also being made available in the Reading Room at the Guardian News and Media Archive in London.
- Three blog posts about the project and the archive; these were promoted via social media, and our colleagues at the Guardian News and Media Archive in London also promoted them via Twitter.
- Newly digitised and indexed material from the archive, including the iconic [Guardian Centenary Album](#), which is available via our online image library, and our Turning the Pages terminal.



4.5 PROJECT OUTCOMES

The project's outcomes have been even greater than expected, and are as follows:

- The project has provided a significant step forward in our cataloguing strategy for the *Guardian* Archive, which is providing the model for a new, more strategic, approach to cataloguing other large, poorly documented archives held by the Library.

- The enhanced catalogue and online research guide have transformed the service we offer to users and potential users of the archive: researchers are more self-sufficient as they are able to locate relevant material much more precisely; our Collections Assistant, Karen Jacques, who fields day-to-day *Guardian* enquiries, is able to deal with these more efficiently, freeing up her time to focus on other priorities; and our Reader Services team are able to provide a more efficient service to users and potential users of the *Guardian* Archive who contact or visit the Reading Room. The Reader Services team have already received training on the new research guide and augmented catalogue. We have also been using the project's outputs to deal with specific enquiries about individuals, including providing someone with a photograph of their ancestor from the Centenary Album, and clarifying the gender of a staff member previously only known by their initials.
- From a preservation perspective, the improved catalogue means that researchers and staff can home in on relevant records much more straightforwardly, saving material from being handled unnecessarily. There is also a practical element to this, in that many of the ledgers are extremely bulky, unwieldy and challenging to handle.
- The project has unlocked a whole range of formerly hidden information: the business records in the archive have been somewhat neglected in the past, but we are now much more aware of their potential for use in numerous different contexts.
- We have assisted colleagues at the Guardian News and Media Archive in London who often need information from the earlier part of the archive themselves, and need to refer enquirers to the Manchester material. They have made the new research guide available in their own reading room in London.
- During her cataloguing work, the Project Archivist was able to identify a small number of records in the archive which should be closed for Data Protection reasons; these are now marked as closed in the catalogue – making the collection easier to administer.
- The Project Archivist identified W.P. Crozier's 'confidential correspondence' series as being highly significant, leading us to prioritise this material for cataloguing; in January it formed the focus for a highly successful two-week cataloguing project by Stephanie Bredbenner, a student undertaking the Master of Archive Administration course at Liverpool University.
- The work of the project is feeding into our forthcoming NCGS-funded project, 'What the Papers Say', focusing on C.P. Scott's Editorial Correspondence, notably into some of the public events which will be taking place as part of that project.
- The project has further raised the profile of the *Guardian* Archive which we have been promoting in the past year; retweets on Twitter, and responses to our blog posts reflect this.

Overall the project has benefited a wide range of stakeholders, including the Manuscripts and Archives team, the Reader Services team, by extension the University of Manchester Library more

widely, users and potential users of the archive, remote enquirers, visitors to the Library, and colleagues at the Guardian News and Media Archive.

4.6 BUDGET

We succeeded in securing a small additional grant from the John Rylands Research Institute which enabled us to extend the project to a full six weeks, topping up the funding received from the BAC. Our final budget was as follows:

Income	
BAC Grant	£3,000
JRRI Grant	£500
Total Income	£3,500
Direct Expenditure	
Salary of Project Archivist for six weeks	£3,500
Total Direct Expenditure	£3,500
Indirect Expenditure	
Digitisation by Heritage Imaging Team	£600
Preservation materials	£529
Total Indirect Expenditure	£1,129
In Kind Contribution	
Project Manager: 3 days @ £149.59 per day	£448.77
Collections Assistant: 4 days @ £96.25 per day	£385
Total In Kind Contribution	£833.77

We are grateful to the Business Archives Council for awarding the funding which made this project possible. We are also grateful to Guardian News and Media Ltd for permission to reproduce all the images in this report.

Fran Baker, Archivist
29 February 2016