



Introduction: Business Archives Cataloguing Grant for 2017



It was a moment of great excitement when the British Motor Industry Heritage Trust (BMIHT) learned it had been successful in its bid for the Business Archives Council (BAC) Cataloguing Grant for 2017. The award of £3,000 was to be dedicated to improving access to our extensive Lucas Archive Collection so that we could make this hidden treasure more widely available to all those who have an interest in its preservation and use.

Our Project: The Lucas Collection

In telling us about the award, the Business Archive Council praised the richness of the Lucas Collection and its national significance and it is hard to disagree. It is one of the finest examples of its type, a comprehensive archive built up by a single manufacturer over many decades. The earliest item in the Collection is a handwritten account book from 1860, kept by the company's founder, Joseph Lucas. Joseph was a reformed alcoholic who went into trade, initially selling from a single wheelbarrow, to support his family. Over the years, the company developed into a major supplier of lighting and electrical equipment to the motor industry, first as Joseph Lucas & Son, then Lucas Industries. The Collection encompasses notable subsidiaries such as CAV, Girling and Rotax among others.



BMIHT looks after archive material relating to many of the big players of the 20th century motor industry in Britain but none of them can match the consistency of Lucas in systematically preserving its history. As well as documenting the company's products, there is a wealth of material about the family which founded it, their business practices, and what it was like to work for them. All of this adds up to a unique picture of one company's way of doing business and its relationship with its workforce which is reflected in the affection ex-employees have for the company and their continuing interest in its historic material.

Compiling The Catalogue

For the almost 20 years now our Lucas Archivist, Alison Roper, has undertaken the daunting task of identifying, organising, re-packaging, and boxing the comprehensive company archive which originally came into the Trust's care back in 1990. In the course of this work she has created a detailed hand-written catalogue, informed by her in-depth knowledge of the Collection which goes back even further since she was the original curator of the Collection when it was based at Lucas headquarters in the Great King Street factory (Birmingham) during

the 1980s. The BAC grant made it possible for us to employ a dedicated Project Archive Assistant for a period of six weeks, and so Paramjit Sehmi was recruited to join our team at the beginning of November 2017.



This project was always intended to be a starting point in converting Alison's catalogue, and she worked closely with Paramjit (see picture left) in the initial stages to identify which sections to prioritise for transcription into an electronic spreadsheet. Paramjit transcribed records in a number of



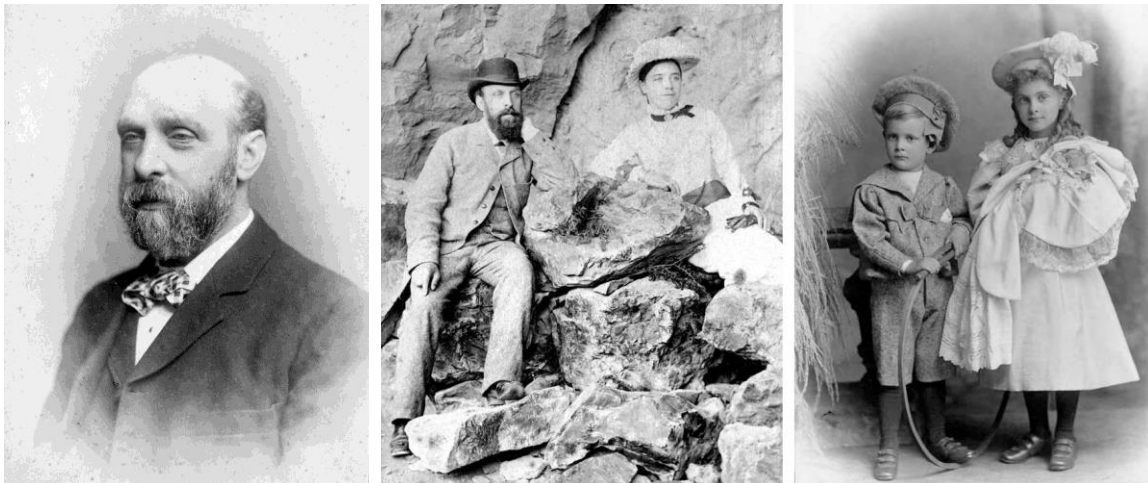
categories; Legal, Transport, Financial, Events, Personalities, Product Illustrations, and Administration. She did an amazing job of working out how to translate Alison's handwritten descriptions to a prescribed format which had not existed when the original list was created! Her work enabled us to set a standard for data entry which we can apply, not just to the remainder of the Lucas catalogue but also to various lists relating to other parts of our Archive Collections. Other members of the archive team were able to add to the work done by Paramjit, and the end result was a total of 3,018 items described at File/Item level, or 5,960 at File/Item level with copies. This exceeded the estimate of 2,940 items which we calculated in our application before undertaking the work.



The goal was to publish the results on the *Discovery* website – a database containing archive catalogues from all over the country and hosted by The National Archives (TNA). Co-incidentally, our project took place as TNA were developing new tools to make it easier for archives to add and manage their

own content on the website. Our Deputy Archivist spent much time liaising with TNA's Digital Development Manager to make sure our spreadsheet was formatted to meet their requirements. After much finessing, she was finally able to upload the completed spreadsheet to *Discovery* on 12 March 2018 (discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/16131aa0-f1d9-42a5-8488-e9a236366b4b)

Outreach and Social Media



The Lucas family: Left, founder Joseph Lucas; Centre: Harry and Kate Lucas; Right, their children Oliver and Hilda

An important element of winning the funding had been the support shown for the project by enthusiasts for Lucas history, so naturally we wanted to share our progress with them as the project went along. The most effective way of doing this was by social media. The Archive contributes a blog called 'Archive News' to the British Motor Museum website every month which can be found at: britishmotormuseum.co.uk/news/archive-news. In September, the Archivist wrote about the award of the grant, and what we hoped to achieve, and in January 2018 our Project Archive Assistant wrote about her experiences and what she had got out of the project. These blogs were highlighted in the British Motor Museum's autumn and winter Newsletters which have a circulation list of 3,300 supporters, including those with a specialist interest in our Collections.

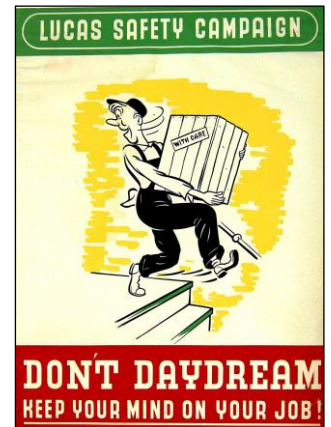


Concurrent with the project, we thought this would be a great opportunity to share some of the wonderful items contained in the Lucas Collection through our *Flickr* pages. As Alison and Paramjit came across interesting images, these were digitised and added to our *Flickr* Lucas album. A wide selection is now available there; family portraits of the Lucas family, pictures of the workforce at work and at leisure, the factory buildings through time, and numerous colourful advertisements. We continue to add to them as new items are uncovered.

[flickr.com/photos/bmiht/albums/with/72157688661748495](https://www.flickr.com/photos/bmiht/albums/with/72157688661748495)

We were therefore very pleased to find that this particular initiative was reaching a local audience when we were contacted by

the Springfield Road Local History Society (Kings Heath, Birmingham). A member of the society was researching Charles Yeoman Hopkins, a benefactor who helped develop some old people's bungalows. She had discovered that he was also involved in the development of the 'King of the Road' Headlamp with Harry Lucas and this is what led her to our *Flickr* pages. The Society asked for permission to reproduce one of our pictures in a blogpost about Mr Hopkins on their website. The image shows foremen on a works outing which dates from the period when he was Works Manager for the firm.



The blog telling the story of Charles Yeoman Hopkins, can be found here springfieldroadhistorygroup.wordpress.com/2017/12/03/who-was-yeoman-hopkins/.

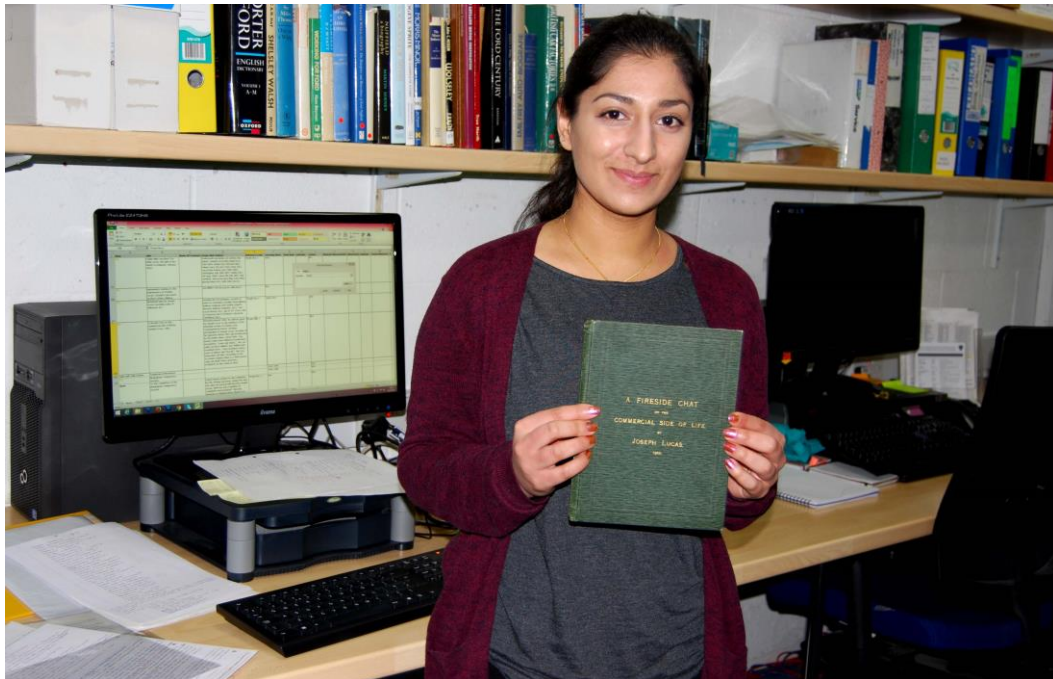


We also took the opportunity to identify interesting items from the Collection and display them in the museum in our Archive Display case (left). In addition, we are working with our colleagues on the Education and Community Outreach team to incorporate new material such as this into our learning and outreach programmes.

At the end of the project, a press release was issued by our Marketing Department to the national, local and motoring press to announce that the catalogue was now live on *Discovery*.

britishmotormuseum.co.uk/news/museum-news/archive-team-work-on-unlocking-the-history-of-lucas-industries. We have also networked the information directly to organisations such as the Lucas pensioners and the 'CAValiers' who have been strong supporters of the project throughout.

Lessons Learned For The Future



Our Project Assistant with a book written by Joseph Lucas – *A Fireside Chat on the Commercial Side of Life* – which inspired her efforts. Joseph wrote: 'there is no better advice I can give you than to do that duty which is nearest to you, for by doing it you will then see each step more clearly'. 'Thus', as Paramjit wrote in her blog 'in the face of a rather daunting task, it is important to remember to take one step at a time!'. Behind her is the extensive spreadsheet she created.

For us the Lucas Project is just a beginning and we have learnt so much from the experience:

- Though the grant was a modest amount of money, by directing it carefully at a specific task a great deal has been achieved, and one of our most valuable Archive Collections will now be more accessible to the public as a result.
- By careful project management, we were able to combine the work done directly as a result of the grant with additional support from the existing archive team, which effectively doubled the financial value of the award.
- It gave us a head-start on transforming an important piece of work into an electronic format which can be widely shared. Work will now continue to complete the transfer of the hand-written catalogue, to be undertaken by our Lucas Archivist working with the archive team and volunteers.
- The BAC grant came at an opportune moment. For some time we have been looking at how we can make more of our catalogues available online. Co-incidentally, TNA has been developing new tools to enable archive services to create a standardised spreadsheet which they can upload to *Discovery* themselves. This project gave us the opportunity to concentrate our effort on this initiative and, through liaison with TNA, create a blueprint that we can now apply to other catalogues.
- It has given us the confidence to look for similar funding for even bigger projects and we will be using this experience to pursue other grants and funding.
- We have built up some valuable connections with our users – the Lucas Pensioners, the CAValiers, bloggers like the Springfield project, our *Flickr* followers and so on.



- The project provided an opportunity for an aspiring archivist to gain paid work-experience. It was a pleasure to have Paramjit on our team, even if for a short period, and we can offer her support in the future as she looks for further experience and opportunities.
- It was also good to have a fresh pair of eyes to look at a Collection which is familiar to us. Her enthusiasm for the task led her to investigate some of the more unusual items in the Lucas boxes, as she describes in her blog.

Project Summary

	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Hours</i>	<i>In Kind</i>	<i>BAC Grant</i>	<i>Project Value</i>
Project Assistant	Cataloguing	222		£3,000	
Archive Assistants	Additional cataloguing	125	£1,713		
Deputy Archivist	Formatting spreadsheet & liaising with TNA	97	£1,407		
Lucas & BMIHT Archivist	Project management	12	£300		
Marketing Team	Press release and other promotion	n/a	£300		
	Total	456	£3,720	£3,000	£6,720

Gillian Bardsley
BMIHT Archivist
10 April 2018