

# BROADSHEET

Magazine of the Scottish Council on Archives  
scottisharchives.org.uk

Summer 2017



**SCOTTISH WIDOWS' FUND**  
LIFE ASSURANCE SOCIETY

ESTABLISHED 1815 FOR MUTUAL LIFE ASSURANCE

**THE MOST VALUABLE & USEFUL POLICY**  
is that which yields the Largest Returns for the premiums paid.  
With regard to **This Self-Evident Proposition**, a Table is given  
in the Society's Prospectus which shews, with close approximation, the

**BONUS ADDITIONS, PAID UP POLICIES and**  
**SURRENDER VALUES, LOANS OBTAINABLE**  
under all Bonus Policies in existence issued during the last half century.

**ANNUAL REVENUE exceeds . £1,650,000**  
**ACCUMULATED FUNDS . . . £16,500,000**

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LONDON: 28 CORNHILL, E.C., & 5 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

As the summer and holidays wane, we're sorry to return you to the world of work so soon by offering an insight into the world of business archives.

In advance of the publication of the Scottish Council on Archives' latest advocacy document, *Enterprising Scotland: A Celebration of Business Archives*, early this autumn, we are delighted to feature articles that show the rich heritage of some of Scotland's oldest industries and longest-lasting companies. They explore how contemporary branding can be enriched by their own heritage, how vital archives collections are in marking significant anniversaries, and how they tell an essential part of the nation's story.

## The Editorial Team

**Cover Image:** This quarter's cover is a Scottish Widows' advertising placard (early 1900s): For much of the 20th century Pegasus - the 'flying horse' - served as the company logo for Scottish Widows. This striking piece of advertising features a beautiful full colour version of the Pegasus motif created by Walter Crane, a prominent member of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Lloyds Banking Group Archives. Image: Antonia Reeve.

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## SEIRBHEIS TASGLANN BARRANTAICHTE

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### ACCREDITED ARCHIVE SERVICE

On behalf of the Archive Service Accreditation team in Scotland, we are delighted to announce that [Historic Environment Scotland](#) is the latest Scottish service to be awarded Archive Service Accreditation.

HES are the seventh Scottish service to be accredited, and the Panel congratulated the service on its impressive delivery, particularly in developing its digital offer. They were pleased to note the efforts to open up collections to wide audiences, given their potential to engage with the whole Scottish public. The Panel did note the frustrations of collection care issues in the available buildings, and encouraged the service to manage and escalate these to ensure the long-term preservation of these unique and important collections.

Other UK services awarded accreditation by the latest panel were:

- Bexley Local Studies and Archive Centre
- Birmingham Archives and Collections
- Archives and Cornish Studies Service
- Denbighshire Archives
- Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies
- Kingston University Archives and Special Collections
- Oxfordshire Health Archives
- Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales
- Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Archive Service
- Surrey History Centre
- Thomas H Manning Polar Archives and Scott Polar Research Institute Picture Library
- University of Bristol Theatre Collection

- West Yorkshire Archives Service

The archives accreditation process has been created by archivists from across the UK. They acknowledge organisations that provide a high level of service to users, preserving collections in line with UK standards and who are committed to sustainable services and ongoing improvement.

Archive Service Accreditation is a UK-wide quality standard that offers a benchmark to gauge performance, recognises achievement and drives improvement within the archives sector.

In Scotland, accreditation is overseen by the National Records of Scotland and the Scottish Council on Archives.

Scottish services to be recognised include: Falkirk Archives, Lothian Health Service Archive, Royal Bank of Scotland Archives, and University of Edinburgh Centre for Research Collections.

SCA is planning to deliver two Archive Accreditation training opportunities in Scotland over 2017/18. We want to make sure that the training is suited to your needs and invite you to send along your feedback via a short survey. For planning purposes, we're also asking you to provide an indication of when you might plan to apply for accredited status. We will be accepting up to six applications annually.

Any archive service meeting the eligibility criteria can apply. The standard and accompanying guidance are available [here](#). Even if you are not planning to apply in the foreseeable future, this would be useful information for us in resourcing the scheme. The timing of your invitation to apply to the scheme will be based on the response you provide but will not be binding. Please email [accreditation](#) if you have any queries.

The survey should only take a few minutes to complete and will be open until 8 August 2017 and can be found [here](#).

# Surveying Scotland's Business Archives



2017 marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Business Archives Surveying Officer for Scotland. Developed from regional surveys, one dedicated position with a focus on the whole of Scotland was established in 1977. For over 40 years the Surveying Officer has witnessed many economic changes in Scotland, most notably the closure of the shipbuilding industry, the decline in textile manufacturing and more recently the subsequent impact of the 2008 recession, and the changing fortunes of the oil and gas industry.

Seventeen Surveying Officers later, the role itself has weathered many storms - in the early days it was jointly funded by the Scottish Records Office (now National Records of Scotland) and the Business Archives Council for Scotland (BACS). In 2010, the position saw a brief hiatus, until BACS secured funding in 2014, this time through a different consortium of affiliated partners: the Ballast Trust, the Capturing the Energy Project at the University of Aberdeen, the William Lind Foundation and the University of Glasgow Archive Services. Today the role is based at the Ballast Trust and is funded by the Lind and Aggregate Foundations, supported by donations from businesses for archive services rendered.

Having re-instigated role, demand has followed, with a natural home being found at the Ballast Trust, specialising in the rescue, sorting and cataloguing service of business archives with an emphasis on technical records such as shipbuilding, railway and engineering plans, drawings and photographs.

Traditionally, Scotland has a legacy of heavy industries: shipbuilding, engineering and industrialisation; however, the longevity of the role provides an overview of the evolution in the types of businesses being preserved, such as retailers, whisky distillers and theatre companies for example.

The service to businesses has also progressed from purely providing a survey of an archive, to demonstrating to companies how business heritage can be exploited as an asset. Services offered include the skills of the Surveying Officer as a consultant; providing professional advice and guidance about appraisal, care and management of archives. This has led to the survival of more corporate archives cared for in-house, by professional archivists and the inclusion of business archives in the corporate strategies.

For public repositories: local archives, university services, museums and charities, the Surveying Officer provides cataloguing and appraisal support to help increase accessibility to business collections.

Recognising the importance of working in partnership with insolvency practitioners has secured many irreplaceable collections which may otherwise have been thrown in a skip and lost forever. This safety net has enriched the range of business collections available, allowing for secondary research uses which are continuously evolving - and never cease to surprise!

Upon reflection of the last 40 years, it is clear the role is highly unusual, peppered with fascinating, renowned collections and equally bizarre experiences whilst unearthing great treasures. In planning the upcoming celebratory event and publication to mark the anniversary of this unique service, past Surveying Officers have been asked to share their memories and anecdotes of their time in post - good, bad and even the unexpected scenarios in which they all have found themselves. The Latin motto "Semper Paratus!" (Always Prepared), has never rung more true than when describing the job of the Surveying Officer.

By celebrating this milestone, it has allowed time to reflect on the successes and challenges, which is perhaps an unusual privilege. The chance to share these experiences has also made it possible to plan the strategic ambitions of the next 40 years.

In 2017, an event will be hosted to mark the occasion but also celebrate the individuals who have documented a library of surveys and helped to preserve Scotland's rich business history.

If you have experiences you would like to share of working with any of the Surveying Officers over the last forty years, or collections they have helped to rescue or make accessible, please get in touch with the current Surveying Officer, Cheryl Brown [Cheryl.brown@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Cheryl.brown@glasgow.ac.uk)

Look out for upcoming announcements in the SBHNetwork newsletter and Twitter [@SBHNetwork](https://twitter.com/SBHNetwork) about the Business Archives Surveying Officer 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary plans throughout the remainder of 2017.

**Cheryl Brown, Business Archives Surveying Officer**

# Scottish Widows' 200: Connecting Company History to a Modern Brand

Scottish Widows is Scotland's oldest life assurance company. It is also one of the most recognised brands in the UK. Since the launch of the first TV ad featuring 'the Widow' in the 1980s, it has been a household name.

The business wanted to align their upcoming anniversary with the brand refresh, and also the wider 'Helping Britain Prosper' strategy of Scottish Widows' parent company, Lloyds Banking Group.

In 2015, Scottish Widows was reaching a significant milestone: its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A year earlier the brand had undergone a major re-launch. Amber Martinez had been appointed as the new face of the Widow, and a new advertising campaign launched, with the strapline 'Life feels better when you have a plan'. Featuring people from many walks of life, it aimed to show how planning their financial futures, was helping them make the most of today.

Early on in the preparations for the anniversary, it was proposed that one of the core events would be an exhibition, aimed at staff and business intermediaries. But rather than simply retelling the company's history as a conventional chronology, the exhibition would seek to relay the story of Scottish Widows through the stories of some of its past customers – not the well-known names, such as Sir Walter Scott (who took out a policy in 1824); but some of the millions of ordinary people that Scottish Widows has provided for in days gone by.

Below: The first emblem of Scottish Widows shows a widow with children and figure of Plenty. Late in the nineteenth-century the widow was replaced by Pegasus and a warning to use time wisely. The widow would return, this time with her famous black cape, in the 1980s.





Deborah Moore as Scottish Widows' living logo, 1980s

### Back to basics: sourcing customer data in the archives

Group Archives were asked to research potential subjects from sources in the archive. The brief was to provide information on a range of individuals, across time, social background and geography. To avoid data protection issues, no information less than 100 years old was supplied.

The main sources used were the surviving policy registers. These hefty volumes were maintained at Scottish Widows' head office in Edinburgh, as well as its key regional offices in England, Wales and Ireland. Dating from the early decades of 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the registers record basic information on policies issued, including customer name, date of birth, address, occupation, type and amount of assurance taken out.

Several weeks of intensive research ensued. It threw up fascinating insights into the customer profile of the company. Even in the early days, policyholders were from all walks of life, and of varying means. An Edinburgh gardener took out a policy in 1818 to provide a small annuity (£5 per annum) on reaching the age of 50; whereas a wealthy cotton spinner from Preston took out a policy on his life for £4,000.

Female policyholders remained a small minority throughout the pre-1914 era. Many were single, working women: schoolmistresses, milli-

ners, housekeepers, domestic servants, a matron at a prison in Salford. But others were married, and of substantial means – a hotel proprietor from Leith Walk for example.

Ultimately a 'long list' of around 100 policyholders from the pre-1914 era was put together, for the anniversary working group to consider.

### Expanding the customer stories

The archive could only provide very basic data about the policyholders. Further research was required from other sources to discover more about them.

The business recruited two professional genealogists, tasked with finding background information on the policyholders from records such as the census and public registers. Did they marry, have children, what happened in their lives after they took out their policy with Scottish Widows?

And to bring the stories right up to date, the genealogists were also asked see if they could trace living relatives. It was hoped they would be able to fill out the original stories further, with family anecdotes and memorabilia. It was also hoped that some would be willing to be interviewed on camera about their ancestors and their connections with Scottish Widows.

Over a period of time, the original 'long list' was reduced to five subjects: a lawyer, an actress, a gymnastics instructor, a scientist and a herring merchant. Each had a compelling human story. Some involved activity in international events such as the Spanish Civil War; others, the more familiar trials and tribulations of everyday life. But each highlighted the role Scottish Widows had played, helping customers make provision for themselves and their dependents.

The final result was a striking exhibition, featuring five giant light boxes. Each was decorated with an image of the original customer alongside that of their living descendant. Embedded screens showed a short film of the interviews with the living relatives.

The exhibition went on show at three key business sites in Edinburgh and Bristol, and was seen by hun-



Bicentennial exhibition in Port Hamilton, Edinburgh.

dreds of staff and business intermediaries.

### Collateral activity: keeping it fresh

The exhibition was the core event of the anniversary. But in order to sustain interest through the whole year, a programme of collateral activity was planned for the corporate intranet and internet sites.

Groups Archives were asked to provide a series of features focussing on the history and heritage of the company – enough to post new material at least once a month. The brief was that they were to be short, quirky, interesting pieces, with accompanying visuals, that would be suitable for posting on corporate social media as well as the intranet and internet sites.

The proposal we offered was to develop an online 'exhibition'. This would focus on individual items from the collections, clustered around particular themes. Each item would be strong enough to post on its own, as a discrete piece. But over the course of the year, these would build up into a collection of related stories.

It provided us with a fantastic opportunity to highlight some of the 'hidden gems' from the company archive. This ranged from iconic documents, such as records of the very first policy holder; to unique artefacts, such as the 'advert' made by a member of staff from the Belfast office whilst he was being held as prisoner of war in the First World War.

In total, more than 30 items from the collections were featured.

### Successful collaboration

Contributing to the anniversary entailed significant resource from the archives. It was the main focus of work for one of the archivists for a whole year, with substantial input from support staff engaged to assist with the research work.

But there were positive spin-offs. Preparations for the customer exhibition gave us an opportunity to carry out in-depth work on the Scottish Widows' archive, in particular the policy records. These had tended to be neglected for records more in demand by the business, such as board minutes and marketing records. Our catalogues and finding aids for the policy registers, and early policy records such as the declarations, were significantly improved. And the research carried out from the registers provided us with an insight into the profile of Scottish Widows' policyholders over its 200 year history. We were also able to build up a useful store of good quality images of items from the collections for the online exhibition.

Our involvement in the anniversary helped raised the profile of the Scottish Widows collections – both within the company and with external users. This has resulted in more enquiries from the business and researchers in connection with Scottish Widows since the anniversary year.

Working on the anniversary also allowed us to build important relationships with the insurance business, in particular the communications and events teams. These have continued beyond the anniversary year.

In summary for us, the Scottish Widows 200 was a successful collaboration between the business and Group Archives – proving that history and heritage can still be relevant in the modern corporate environment.

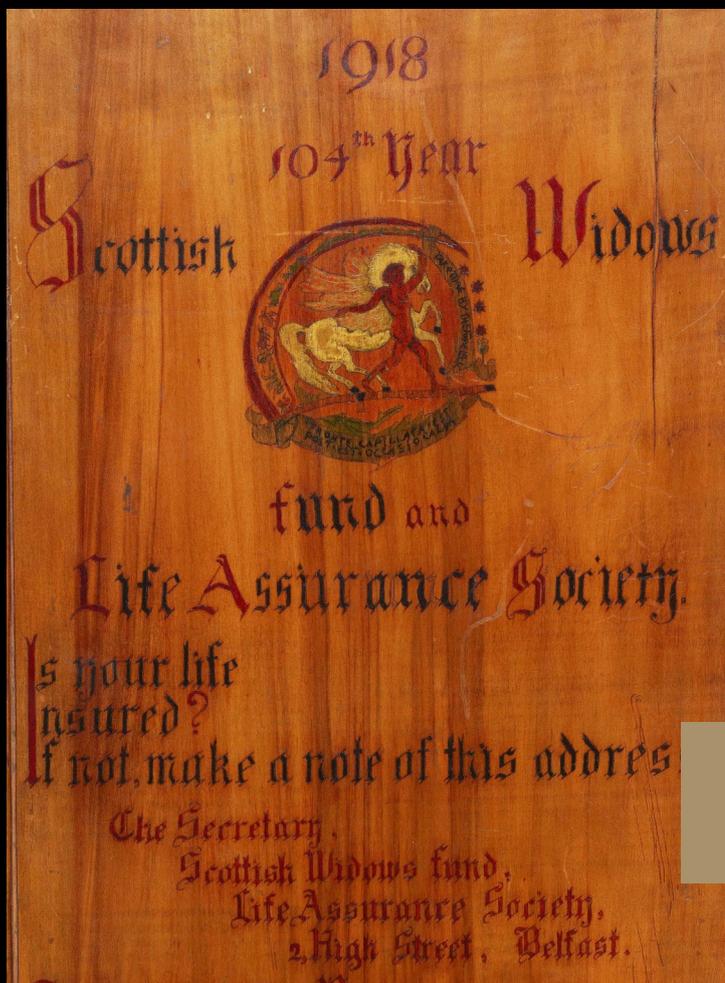
### Further information

The Scottish Widows' archive is held by Lloyds Banking Group Archives in Edinburgh. Further information can be found on the Archives Hub: [here](#).

Researchers are welcome to consult these records by appointment at the archive. For further information please contact: [archives@lloydsbanking.com](mailto:archives@lloydsbanking.com)

The Scottish Widows 200 online exhibition can be viewed [here](#).

**Sian Yates, Senior Archivist, Lloyds Banking Group**



Carved 'advert, made by [Henry Young](#) of the Belfast office while a prisoner of war in Kahlruhe, Germany, 1918.'

# HarperCollins Archive: 200 Years in the Making

HarperCollins archive spans 200 years and this year we celebrate our global bicentenary. With such a vast wealth of history, this means we have many reasons to celebrate and be proud of our heritage. In 1817, J & J Harper began their business in New York. They were successful in making English and American future classics available in America as well as creating the Harper Weekly and Monthly magazine which gave a snapshot of the cultural

known and some surprises too.

Our archive assistant, Louise Neilson, reports on her experience so far:

“When I began working in the archive of a company that has been publishing books for 200 years, I was excited about the discoveries I would make, and the HarperCollins archive has not disappointed. Each piece of correspondence, and each editorial file I

Heriot Hill Works, Glasgow, c1906

William Collins III



WILLIAM COLLINS J.P.,  
CHAIRMAN OF THE COLLINS SONS & CO. L.  
1895-1906

movements of the time. Two years later, William Collins began his business in September of 1819 in Glasgow. Our archive in Bishopbriggs is mostly based on the papers and records of the William Collins company and the Collins family including – all paper records to the current day, ephemera, art work and a large collection of our books.

Planning for the bi-centenary started over a year ago and the hard work has been worth it, as it has given a chance to reflect on our history as well as the creation of a wonderful website: <http://200.hc.com/> The website features both a timeline and stories from our archive as well as the Harper archive which is housed in Columbia University, New York. This work has led us to gems from within our archive and highlighted stories – some

read had the potential to reveal something about some of history's most famous authors and our collection of books has left me scanning shelves for hours a day. Joining shortly before our bicentenary I was able to explore a huge range of the material we hold as we gathered pieces for our anniversary website and other social media platforms.

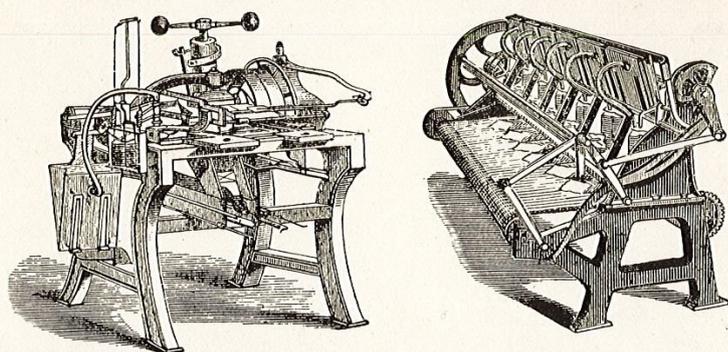
In preparation for the 200 celebrations we launched several projects to help us make sure we had catalogued and digitised some of our most important material. One of the most satisfying projects was working on the Agatha Christie collection which holds more than 100 items of correspondence between Christie, her publisher Billy Collins and various friends, family and editors. The letters span over 40 years and track both the professional rela-

tionship and friendship that existed between Christie and Collins.

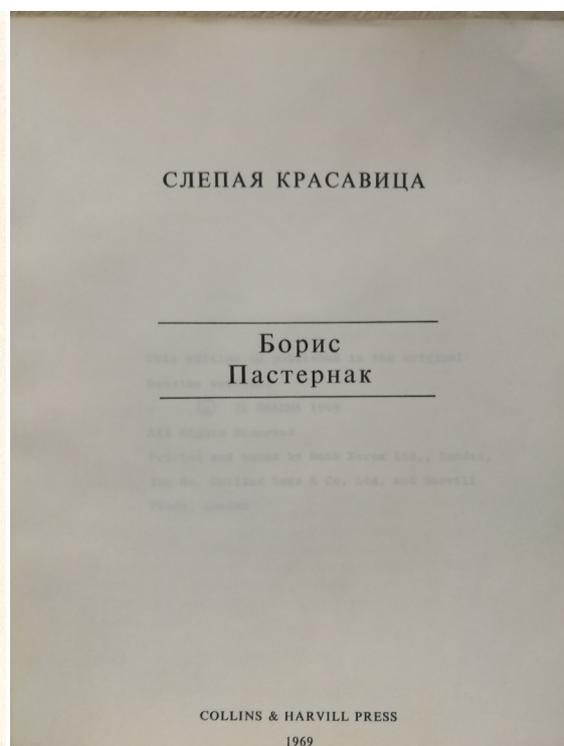
We also had a MSc student in to complete a copyright project on several photographs. Stephanie Ashcroft went through each photograph to determine if we could ascertain who was in each photograph and who the photographer was. The exercise helped us establish which photographs we held copyright for and could therefore show on various online sources. Although weekly tweets have been part of the archive's usual practice for years, the 200 celebrations allowed us to expand on that and have our website advertised across Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram so people can explore the archive whenever they wish.

Alongside compiling material for the website and being on hand for any request from our London office, I have been helping with the general running of the archive. Internal and external enquiries continue to come in and require prompt replies, so our time has been split between the regular everyday business and preparations for a large scale and special celebration."

Louise and I have very much enjoyed the experience of gathering information. For me, I found bringing together a definitive timeline incredibly worthwhile. We have one published and one unpublished history of the Collins family but they only reach 1976. Learning more about the following years was very interesting. We also found out many facts about the family and company, including that William Collins III invented a machine which made gummed envelopes in one process.



ENVELOPE FOLDER AND GUMMER  
INVENTED BY W. COLLINS (312)



Envelope folder and gummer, c1903

Russian edition of *The Blind Beauty* by Boris Pasternak, 1969

It also turned out we were the first UK publisher to publish *Dr Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak in 1958 and we had a very close relationship with him before he died. The Collins family were interested in his welfare as well as books. We also went on to publish other works by Pasternak, *The Blind Beauty* in 1969, a play in 3 parts, and a sequel to *Dr Zhivago*. We published this both in Russian and English.

These stories are just a taste of the hundreds of stories which we found in our archive, some of which span the globe due to the Collins business having an early presence in Australia, India and Canada. Our archive not only shows our place in the history of publishing but also within the history of the communities we worked in, the relationships we had with authors and the care the company had for its employees. All these stories and more shine through.

Our story is one of books but of people too! Our archive continues to grow and capture current history, which will be our future for hopefully many more decades to come.

**Dawn Sinclair and Louise Neilson, HarperCollins Archives**

I am sure most people reading this will have enjoyed a glass of beer at some time in their life, but I am certain that very few are aware of its history.

The art of brewing is reputed to have originated in Mesopotamia (which is now modern day Iraq and Syria) and spread to Ancient Egypt, where the Pyramids were built by the labour force who were provided with beer during the build. Evidence of brewing beer has been found during the many excavations in Egypt during the time of the Pharaohs.

Brewing spread to mainland Europe and then thereafter to Britain.

Brewing in Scotland can be traced back to pre-Roman times, when the Picts produced a form of beer and used heather, spruce and seaweed as flavouring agents. Robert Louis Stevenson's poem 'Heather Ale' illustrates the importance of beer at this time, telling the tale of a king's pyric victory in battle, leaving him 'to rule in a land of heather/ And lack the Heather Ale', the recipe of which he is willing to sacrifice his son for.

The Pictish method of brewing was gradually superseded when the religious orders spread throughout Scotland in the twelfth century, and with them methods of brewing we still recognize today.

By the early middle ages, brewing was extensively undertaken in people's homes for liquid intake and sustenance, as water was unsafe to drink especially in towns and cities due to poor sanitation. This was, however, before the Clean Water Act. At that time, brewing beer was undertaken predominately by women.

By the sixteenth<sup>16<sup>th</sup></sup> century in the larger towns and Edinburgh, in particular, was the beginning of a formal business structure. A powerful Society of Brewers was established in Edinburgh as early as 1596 controlling all aspects of the brewing process from the supply of good brewing water to the purchase and malting of barley. Public breweries soon became established throughout Scotland but due to burgh and craft restrictions their growth was slow.

As late as 1700, domestic brewing was still dominant. In that year, the excise returns show us that the County of Fife had no less than 522 brewers. Over the next half century, the growth of market forces, as a result of the population growth and movement and the rise of the wage economy, created a level of demand which led to the creation of a wave of public breweries, including a number of firms which were to become famous names in Scottish Brewing history. The first of these, established in the first half of the eighteenth century, were:

- Archibald Campbell and William Younger in Edinburgh
- George Younger in Alloa

- Hugh and Robert Tennant in Glasgow
- Belhaven Brewery in Dunbar

In order to preserve Scotland's rich brewing heritage, the Scottish Brewing Archive was formed by Heriot Watt University in 1981 and later transferred to the University of Glasgow Archive Services in 1991, where it is held and maintained today.

The brewing archive holds a large and varied collection, which dates from 1725 to the present day, with the majority of items covering the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The collection includes:

- Bottles, cans and brewery tools.
- Beer labels and beer mats
- Corporate, shareholding, financial and pro-

duction records

- Sales, marketing, staff and property records
- Photographs, family papers and reminiscences of staff

In 2008 the Scottish Brewing Archive Association was formed to support the University of Glasgow Archive Services and to promote the history of brewing in Scotland, and also to raise awareness of the importance of preserving the brewing records and artefacts.

Brewing Heritage Scotland was more recently formed to enable brewing exhibitions to go on display, which goes some way to promoting the history of brewing in Scotland, past and present. Over the last two years there has been four brewing exhibitions, titled Raise Your Glass!, that have been on display at the following locations,

- Central Library, Edinburgh
- The Museum of Edinburgh
- Speirs Centre, Alloa
- Musselburgh Museum

Each exhibition has been different, with talks and walking tours to support and promote each event. However, the main aim is to have a permanent brewing exhibition in Edinburgh to showcase the rich brewing history of Scotland that tells many of the fascinating stories and connects with much of Scotland's history. Many of the beer connections may surprise you.

To find out more [email](mailto:John.Martin@sbaa.org.uk) John Martin or visit the [SBAA website](http://www.sbaa.org.uk).

**John Martin, Scottish Brewing Archive Association**

## Brewing in Scotland



## NRS Summer Exhibition: Famous Scots

Famous or Infamous? Kings or Queens? Thinkers or Doers? Rogues or Heroes? This exciting little Edinburgh Fringe Festival exhibition will showcase the lives of some of the most well-known Scots, told through the treasures found in the national archives. Displaying some never-before exhibited items, this exhibition will glimpse into the depths of National Records of Scotland's unique collections to tell the story of some characters you may recognise.

### The Murder Suspect

On the 30 June 1857, the trial of Madeleine Smith began. A young woman from a prosperous Glasgow family, Smith was charged with poisoning her secret lover, Pierre Emile L'Angelier in 1857, with intent to kill. This accusation and the subsequent trial brought to light the great volume of letters which had secretly passed between them. Presented as evidence of their relationship, these letters formed a core part of their trial, and their content, including frank expressions of desire and affection, scandalised the Victorian public.

Madeleine's story has captured the imagination of many historians, play wrights, film makers and the general public since 1857. For this exhibition some rarely exhibited items will be on show, including key pieces of Smith and L'Angelier's correspondence, tracking their lascivious and doomed relationship. A selection of never-before exhibited objects produced by the prosecution include some of the forensic containers and evidence of poison used to investigate L'Angelier's death.

### The Engineer

An iconic part of the Scottish landscape, the Forth Railway Bridge stands as a monument to British engineering. Rising out of the land, and still in use 128 years after its completion, the Forth Bridge is one of the first monumental-scale steel bridges ever built and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Recognised as a 'masterpiece of creative genius because of its distinctive industrial aesthetic', it is an extraordinary milestone in the evolution of bridge design and construction. Perhaps slightly less well-known is the engineer responsible for its construction, Sir William Arrol.

A titan of industry, Arrol established his company in the early 1870s when Glasgow was developing as an industrial city and the revolutionary Siemens Martin process was enabling the mass production of cheap steel. His creativity resulted in several innovations in technology and working methods, some of which continue to influence engineering to this day.

This exhibition will showcase a small sample of our records from our unique Caledonian Railway Company and British Rail Archives, looking at the construction of the Forth Bridge and the innovations it produced.

Alongside our murder suspect and engineer, two more individuals from Scottish history will be revealed using the National Records of Scotland's unique archives. These include a Queen removed before her time, and a lyrical word-smith whose work continues to resound. Can you guess who they are? To learn more about this exhibition and these great characters please see [www.nrscotland.gov.uk](http://www.nrscotland.gov.uk) and the NRS blog [Open Book](#) where each character will be revealed.

The exhibition runs from **1 August – 1 September 2017**, in the Matheson Dome, General Register House (Edinburgh Fringe Venue 502) and is free.

**Jocelyn Grant, Outreach Archivist, NRS**



*Sir William Arrol, ætat. 70.*

# Tasglannan Coimhearsnachd: Cothroman agus Dùbhlain / Community Archives: Opportunities and Challenges.

With the generous support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and in partnership with Tasglann nan Eilean/ Hebridean Archives and the Archives and Records Association, the Scottish Council on Archives was delighted to host a Community Archives conference at Lews Castle Museum and Archive in Stornoway, on 14-15 June 2017.

Over 80 delegates, including many from local community collections, were in attendance, and heard from leading practitioners in community archives and oral history. Details of the event, and copies of the presentations given on the day, can be found [here](#). Overleaf, are fuller accounts of the two days.



Top row, left to right: Lews Castle, and interiors, the conference venue; Middle row: WW1 Commemorative mural at Ness Historical Society; Scotland's Sounds Amy McDonald, and the Butt of Lewis Lighthouse; Bottom row: Margaret Smith, voluntary fieldworker for the Dumfries and Galloway Regional Ethnology project; tweed making demonstration; the Butt of Lewis.

## 'Community Archives: Opportunities and Challenges'

The [Community Archives](#) conference was a two day event. Day one was a series of talks at Lews Castle and day two took us on a tour of the north of the island.

Lews Castle has recently undergone a major renovation project and now includes a purpose built archive and museum for the Hebrides, Tasglann nan Eilean and [Museum nan Eilean](#). The archivist, Seonaid McDonald, and [Skills for the Future](#) Trainee, Shona MacLellan, were terrific hosts. As well as talking us through the establishment of the archive and its future plans, we were given a tour and shown some highlights from their growing collections.

The conference brought together academics and people working or volunteering in both professional and community run archives. Some of the talks highlighted support available to community archives, including: [Community Archives and Heritage Group](#) - they have a terrific website with lots of case studies and resources. It is also free to join! [Scotland's Sounds](#) - network for organisations or groups who care about preservation and access to sound archives. The University of Edinburgh provided a case study that combined an oral history project with ethnological research.

Other talks highlighted the wide ranging skills used by professional archivists, including case studies on: [Digitising](#) the collections of the National Galleries of Scotland and National Library of Scotland - Skills for the Future trainees provided some practical insight into digitising collections. [Preserving](#) digital archives and explaining metadata - Am Baile and the Highland Archive Centre.

The 'talk of the day' was given by Annie MacSween, founder of [Comunn Eachdraidh Nis](#) (Ness Historical Society). She gave an honest (and humorous) account of the challenges and achievements that come from setting up a community archive. CE Nis began 40 years ago, with volunteers visiting local houses and recording people's memories as oral histories. They now have a fantastic museum, archive, shop and cafe.

On day two, Shona MacLellan (SCA Skills for the Future Trainee based at Tasglann nan Eilean) took us on a guided

coach tour of the north of Lewis. Our first stop was at CE Nis where Annie MacSween gave us a tour of the museum and archive. Annie then jumped on our coach and took us on a trip round the northern tip of Lewis, including a quick look at the Butt of Lewis lighthouse. She took us through various villages, showing us the communities whose heritage and collective memory is preserved by CE Nis.

After being spoilt with afternoon tea at the CE Nis cafe, our coach took us down the west coast of Lewis to [Garrannan Blackhouse Village](#). Now a set of restored thatched cottages hosting a living museum, this blackhouse village was originally occupied until the 1970s. We visited one cottage and tried to imagine what it must have been like to live there. The setting was stunning with views out over sandy beaches to the Atlantic. However, you would be exposed to all weather and historically the small cottages were home to both people and their livestock. In the other side of the cottage we were given a fascinating demonstration of how Harris Tweed was woven on a traditional loom.

Finally, we visited the standing stones at Callanish. It is uncertain why these stones were placed here, however, they are quite a spectacular sight. The strength it must have taken to simply lift and position these stones is incredible. On site there is also the [Calanais Visitor Centre](#) with the 'Story of the Stones' exhibition. This is another example of the heritage of an area being preserved and made accessible to the local community and visitors.

Travelling around Lewis gives you an appreciation of the challenges community archives can face. Access can be restricted by the geography of the area, transport and facilities. Language also creates challenges when you are dealing with a population who speaks both Gaelic and English. However, these are also opportunities. The landscape and language are embedded in the heritage of the area and there is a strong desire for the community's memories and records to be preserved and shared.

**Jennifer Marshall, Trainee Archivist, Stirling Council Archives.** Jennifer received a travel bursary from the Archives and Records Association (ARA) allowing her to attend the Scottish Council on Archives conference in Stornoway.

## Creating Community Memories

The synchronicity of finding the conference in Lewis had me signing up before I had thought it through - but I didn't need to - it was a convergence of my interests which meant I knew I had to attend ... and I am so glad I did.

I am an interdisciplinary artist and my strongest interests are traditional stories, shared storytelling, craft and object building and creating audio works. I have discovered over the years that much of my creative art stems from my love of culture and heritage. I feel these build within me a greater understanding of myself and of others. As a professional artist part of my focus has always been to involve the community to create art works as individuals and as a community building experience. I believe art strengthens people and creates healthier communities. Art making can just be a fun activity but sometimes can demand more from the person and the opportunity is created to invest more and to create something with more personal or community resonance.

I have been lucky enough to be a part of some memorable community heritage celebrations and feel I was part of making something that was meant to happen. A series of public

art works in John O'Groats in Caithness allowed me to create 100 Dream Boats which saw 100 families work with me to create a boat representing their family history and their dreams for the future. We launched these from the pier and let them sail off. An email address was secured to each boat and so we connected rural family to rural and fishing folk all round the Scottish mainland and over to Orkney and even to the east and the west coasts of Lewis. An Interesting Experiment, was a community play I helped create and directed to represent the community to themselves and to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Assynt Crofters by-out of their land. Members of the Assynt community came forward to write and perform the play along with support from the local primary schools.

To me all these create greater understanding and respect for our past, our forefathers and mothers and pass that understanding - also felt as love - to our young and to those moving into our communities. It was a strengthening experience to attend the conference and understand the wealth of work and number of people ensuring our heritage survives.

**Alexandria Patience. To find out more about Alex and her work, click [here](#).**



Left: Gearannan Blackhouse Village; right: SCA Skills for the Future Trainees (left to right) Ruth Marr, Sally Chalmers, project manager Audrey Wilson, Shona MacLellan, Penny Wright, and Jennifer Lightbody at the Callanish Stones.

## Trainees on Tour

On June 13<sup>th</sup> I joined the group of intrepid archivists boarding the tiniest plane in Edinburgh and we made the quick journey north to Lewis for Tasglannan Coimhearsnachd: Cothroman agus Dùbhlain (Community Archives: Opportunities and Challenges).

The conference took place over two days. We spent the first at the amazing Lews castle; A recently renovated Victorian mansion house which now houses the museum and archive in a newly build extension.

The day began with John Chambers, the Chief Executive of ARA giving us an introduction to the Community Archives and Heritage Group. Though possessing an unfortunate acronym CAHG does amazing work connecting and advising community archives and is growing its presence in Scotland. We then heard from other inspiring speakers discussing their projects involving archives and communities. Amy McDonald and Naomi Harvey told us more about the Scotland Sounds project. It was fantastic to catch up with Naomi and hear about her interesting work as she was formerly the trainee at Midlothian Council Archive and I still occasionally get referred to as 'the new Naomi'. Next up was Annie MacSween from Comunn Eachdraidh Nis (Ness Historical Society). A consummate story teller, Annie captivated us with the origins of the Comainn Eachdraidh movement, the work of CE Nis and its incredible achievements. We then heard about a regional ethnology study being conducted in Dumfries and Galloway. It was particularly enlightening to hear about the study from the perspective of a volunteer. Dr Jan Merchant then gave us a talk on the oral history work conducted at University of Dundee.

After an incredible lunch including a particularly notable inspiring platter of #archivecake we heard from our hosts Seonaid McDonald and Shona MacLellan. It was great to hear more about the varied outreach work Shona has been doing and the ways it has benefited the development of the archive service. We then heard from a fellow Skills for the Future Project at National Galleries Scot-

land. A group of six trainees are working with NGS to digitise everything from fragile books to giant artworks. Last but not least was a presentation by Highland Archives on the work of Am Baile and an overview of digitisation.

On the second day we all boarded a coach, tea and pastries in hand and drove out to visit the Commun Eachdriedh Nis in the north of Lewis. The CE Nis has its own community owned site with an archive, museum, cafe and shop. We were given a quick but knowledgeable introduction to the archive and tour of the museum by Annie MacSween. I was particularly impressed with a selection of artworks inspired by world war one photographs the CE Nis had commissioned from a local artist. They were really something special to see. Then with Annie at the lead we all piled back onto the bus and she took us for a whistle stop tour of Ness which included the lighthouse at the butt of Lewis, and the obligatory black pudding stop. We headed back to the CE Nis for an amazing afternoon tea. The afternoon included a tour of Lewis sights including the beautiful Gearannan Blackhouse Village, where we got to see a live Harris Tweed making demonstration and the mysterious Callanish Stones. The tour ended with a Gaelic sing along.

This was a fantastic event that not only demonstrated the amazing community and archive projects happening across Scotland but also clearly showed the ways in which the people of Lewis had sought to make their heritage accessible to the community from the grassroots activity of the CE Nis to the new heritage centre at Lews Castle. I left inspired to work more with our community archives. Since returning from the conference I have been to visit a local community archive and we are planning a box making workshop to help our local history societies manage their collections. I hope we can work with and support more community heritage projects in the future.

**Sally Chalmers, Skills for the Future Trainee, Midlothian Archive**



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