

ARCHIVES DEPARTMENT

INFORMATION SHEET 60

BUSINESS COLLECTIONS

The Archives Department is responsible for a number of collections that range from the business records of local manufacturers to local societies and research collections, and includes the records of our parent organisation, National Museums Liverpool.

The business collections are a diverse collection that may be of interest to those studying the social and economic history of Liverpool, charting the types of businesses in Liverpool or studying business history.

Liverpool, at the turn of the 18th century, was well connected by sea and the port became England's leading Atlantic city port; it was a cauldron of diversity and growth. The development and rise of the port system are well documented elsewhere (see Information Sheet 34: Port of Liverpool).

Liverpool's trade potential was further extended after the building of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal (1774) and the Manchester-Liverpool Railway (1829)¹. Both of these transport innovations enabled the goods that passed through the port to be transferred throughout the U.K. and vice versa.

The diverse range of businesses that sprung up in Liverpool included electrical and engineering manufacturers and locomotive production, merchants and exporters, insurers and solicitors, storage and transit companies and other businesses associated with the main imports to the port: sugar and cotton. The business collections held by Merseyside Maritime Museum represent all of these concerns. See *Guide to the Records of Merseyside Maritime Museum*, Vol. II, chapter II and Information Sheet 57: Reserve Store Collections.

COLLECTIONS

A selection of the business collections include:

Meccano Ltd., 1908-1980

Established in 1908 by Liverpool businessman Frank Hornby in order to commercially manufacture a new construction toy known as 'Meccano'. The firm was also famous for its production of railway engines from the 1920s and 'dinky' diecast cars from the 1930s. The company was based in Old Swan, Liverpool. The collection includes copies of the Meccano Magazine, 1949-1966, company records including minute books, financial and legal records and sales reports.

¹ Other notable openings included Birkenhead Railway 1840; the Manchester Ship Canal was constructed between 1887-1894; Liverpool Lime Street Station opened in 1836 and was the major terminus for Liverpool.

Wingrove & Rogers Ltd., Electrical Engineers, 1915-1986

Founded in 1919 the company specialised in the production of electrical components. Its main client was another local firm, British Electrical Vehicles Ltd., that it eventually acquired in 1926. During the 1920s the company was known for specialising in the production of coils for electrical equipment. The main company premises were in Old Swan, Liverpool. The archive collection includes legal and financial records, photographs and operational records and correspondence.

Liverpool Warehousing Co., Ltd., 1895-1983

For many years the Liverpool Warehousing Company was the largest firm of warehouse keepers in the UK. Its main commodity was cotton. The firm became part of the Transport Development Group around 1986. The main offices of the Liverpool Warehousing Company were situated at 70 Pall Mall, Liverpool. The archives include minute books, legal and financial papers and also the records of sixteen of its subsidiary companies.

Ayrton Saunders & Co., Ltd., 1885-1986

Ayrton Saunders & Co., Ltd., started out as a manufacturing chemist in 1868 based in Hanover Street, Liverpool. These premises, together with three depots on Park Lane, Liverpool, Prenton, Birkenhead and Burslem, were sold in 1899 when the company was taken over by A.A.H. Pharmaceuticals. In 1990 the firm moved into new premises on Spindus Road, Speke Hall Industrial Estate. The firm now operates from its headquarters in Runcorn. In 1997 Mr. G.F. O'Brien of Liverpool, purchased the name and now runs the expanded business from Runcorn. The archive includes price lists, house magazines and catalogues as well as minutes and accounts.

Vulcan Foundry Co., Ltd.

Charles Tayleur, a Liverpool engineer, founded the Vulcan Foundry at Newton-le-Willows in 1830. In 1832 Robert Stephenson, the well known railway engineer, joined him in partnership. In 1847 they took over the Bank Quay Foundry in Warrington and in 1852 built their first sea-going iron vessel, the clipper *Tayleur*, which was tragically wrecked off Dublin in 1854 en route to Australia. The partnership was incorporated as a private company in 1864 as the Vulcan Foundry Co., Ltd.

Vulcan locomotives were exported all over the world, with the first locomotives for Russia and Japan supplied in 1837 and 1871 respectively. During World War II the factory built the "Waltzing Matilda" tank and in 1944 Vulcan acquired another locomotive business, Robert Stephenson & Hawthorns Ltd., based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

With the demise of steam, Vulcan turned to diesel and electric locomotives, in conjunction with the English Electric Co., Ltd., becoming full members of that group of companies in 1955. The English Electric Co., Ltd., became part of the General Electric Company (G.E.C.) group in 1968. In 1970 Rushton Paxton Diesels Ltd. became the manager of G.E.C. Diesels Ltd., and today occupies the Vulcan works.

The collection includes minute books, annual reports and letterbooks. Drawings and photographs of locomotives built 1833-1950 are also held in the Vulcan Archive.

ADVICE AND INFORMATION

Enquiries can be made by letter, telephone, fax and email. We may not be able to answer all enquiries but will endeavour to point you in the right direction.

We are able to provide copies of material where they are suitable to be copied (items are copied at the Archivist's discretion). This is subject to charges to cover copying and handling.

ACCESS & OPENING TIMES

Access is strictly by appointment, please contact the Archivist to book an appointment. Times can be booked between 10.30 am and 4.00 pm. We are closed between 12.30 - 1.30 pm for lunch. There is no disabled access in North Street as the Searchroom is reached by two flights of stairs. Alternative access arrangements could be made in certain circumstances.

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