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THE CENTRE FOR
BUSINESS HISTORY
IN SCOTLAND

Business and Industrial History: A Journal of Archival Research is published by The University Court of the University of Glasgow acting through the Centre for Business History in Scotland with support from the Business Archives Council of Scotland.

This journal was relaunched in 2024 and is the direct successor to *Scottish Business and Industrial History*, which dates back to 1977. Our journal is for archivists and historians to share and develop knowledge and awareness of business and industrial history and archives both in Scotland and internationally. The journal welcomes submissions from both archivists and historians on all aspects of business and industrial history and related archives. The new journal will offer a space in which archive professionals, academics and other researchers can enter into a dialogue and learn from their respective practices and research.

We welcome a range of papers in different formats and word lengths including articles, reviews, case studies, collections in focus pieces and reflections. Articles will typically be between 5,000-8,000 words but other pieces may be shorter or longer. To discuss a potential submission, please email the editorial board through either Kiara.King@glasgow.ac.uk or Christopher.Miller@glasgow.ac.uk. For more information on submission requirements, visit <https://journals.gla.ac.uk/bih/about/submissions>.

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The Business Archives Council of Scotland

The Business Archives Council of Scotland was established in 1960 as an independent voluntary archive body concerned with the active preservation of the records of Scottish business and industry. It has published a journal on Scottish business and industrial history since 1977 and supports the essay prizes for this journal.

Today it operates as an active network of archivists, academics and businesses to connect all those with an interest in Scottish business archives and history. It holds an annual conference, a summer AGM event and online webinars and provides a biannual

newsletter for members. Membership of the Council is open to all individuals, institutions and businesses interested in its aims. A printed copy of the journal is provided as part of the annual subscription to the Business Archives Council of Scotland. Further details about joining are available on our website.¹

The Centre for Business History in Scotland

The Centre for Business History in Scotland (CBHS), was inaugurated in 1987 through funding from the Lind Foundation. The Centre builds upon a long tradition of pioneering research in business history dating back to the 1950s by Professor Sydney Checkland and by Professors Peter Payne and Tony Slaven who were successively Colquhoun Lecturers in Business History. Professor Slaven was the Centre's first director until 2005, succeeded by Professor Ray Stokes to 2024. Professor Neil Rollings served as director for two years to August 2026 and the current director is Dr Christopher Miller.

The prime objective of the Centre is to encourage, facilitate and conduct research in all aspects of business history. The research interests of the Centre and its members are both Scottish and international in scope, and it plays a part in the development of the discipline over a broad front. It does so by hosting a programme of seminars and conferences; by conducting research projects and encouraging individual scholarship; by supervision of research students; and by active participation in professional bodies at both national and international levels.

¹ <https://busarchscot.org.uk/>.

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Editorial

Business History in Context: Archives, Institutions and Public Value

The first volume of *Business and Industrial History: A Journal of Archival Research*, published in 2025, focused on one of Scotland's most enduring and internationally significant industries: Scotch whisky. Its contributions demonstrated the value of bringing historians, archivists, heritage practitioners and independent researchers into conversation around a shared subject. This second volume takes a different, but complementary, form. It is a general issue, broad in both chronology and geography, which illustrates the range of questions that business and industrial history can address when it is grounded in archival research.

The articles gathered here move from an early modern French royal manufacture to twentieth-century maritime business in Belgium and India; from the workplace culture of Clyde shipbuilding to the challenges and possibilities of private archives in Turkey; and from the preservation of business records to the use of a corporate archive in dementia-friendly practice. Their subjects are diverse, but they share an important assumption: business history is not simply the history of firms. It is also the history of the institutions, relationships, practices and forms of knowledge through which economic life has been organised.

This means looking beyond familiar accounts of individual entrepreneurs, companies or industries in isolation. Businesses operate through networks of credit, labour, transport, law, technology, government, professional association and public legitimacy. Their records, where they survive, make it possible to recover some of these relationships. Yet archives do more than provide evidence for histories written after the event. They are themselves products of organisational priorities, professional practice, legal obligation, public memory and, sometimes, neglect. What is preserved, catalogued, made available or lost shapes the histories that can be written.

The opening article by Christopher W. Miller, Daniel Menning and Giuseppe Telesca considers this relationship directly through the problem of crisis. Their contribution argues that business historians should understand crises not merely as external shocks or isolated moments of failure, but as processes of re-ordering. In such periods, established routines of coordination become unstable, contested and subject to repair or replacement. The authors direct attention to the ways in which contemporaries diagnosed threats, mobilised resources, developed coping practices and reflected on events afterwards. In doing so, they show how archives can illuminate not only decisions

and outcomes, but also uncertainty, disagreement and the often incomplete information available to actors at the time.

Several contributions in this volume demonstrate the value of such an approach in maritime and industrial settings. Mare Dermaux's study of the Reyniers family and the Association des Intérêts Maritimes de Gand reconstructs the role of a family business network in the institutional life of the port of Ghent across the twentieth century. Drawing on the records of a maritime interest association, it shows how shipping agents, employers and other port businesses organised collectively, negotiated with public authorities and helped shape debates over infrastructure, labour and policy. The article is also a reminder that the archives of trade bodies and business associations can reveal forms of governance and influence which may be difficult to recover from the records of individual firms alone.

Soumyajit Mukherjee's examination of Indian shipping from the early twentieth century to liberalisation in 1991 similarly challenges simple oppositions between state and market. Through company records, port trust correspondence and government sources, the article traces the changing relationship between indigenous entrepreneurs, colonial power, the postcolonial state and international logistical systems. It shows how anti-colonial business mobilisation gave way to state-supported national development, while containerisation and other technological changes introduced new dependencies on foreign expertise, capital and standards. The result is a more complex account of shipping development: one in which private enterprise, public policy and global technical systems repeatedly shaped one another.

Flavian Minel's article on the Pennautier Royal Manufacture carries these questions back into the early modern period. It asks how a royal manufacture functioned in practice: how raw materials, labour, credit, information and political authority were brought together under conditions of uncertainty. Rather than treating the manufacture simply as an instrument of mercantilist state policy or as a precursor to the modern firm, the article places coordination at its centre. In doing so, it offers a useful reminder that entrepreneurship has long involved the management of flows, relationships and risks, rather than innovation alone.

The issue also returns to the central concern of the journal: the condition, character and accessibility of business archives themselves. Akansel Yalçinkaya's review of special collections and private archives for business history research in Turkey identifies the rich possibilities offered by such material, while drawing attention to questions of access,

transparency, preservation and institutional support. Business records are often held outside formal public repositories, and their survival cannot be assumed. This has consequences not only for historians, but for archivists, businesses and the wider public. The preservation of commercial and industrial records is essential if the economic, social and cultural histories of particular regions, communities and workplaces are to remain open to critical examination.

Martin Bellamy and Hugh Murphy's article on benevolence, paternalism and workplace culture in Clyde shipbuilding demonstrates the importance of reading business records against the grain of more familiar narratives. Shipbuilding has often been remembered through industrial conflict, decline and the difficult realities of casualised labour. These dimensions remain fundamental. Yet the authors show that company magazines, workplace associations, recreational facilities, apprenticeships and employer-sponsored activities can also reveal other aspects of industrial life. Their account does not present paternalism as uncomplicated generosity. Rather, it asks how welfare, recreation, civic benefaction, hierarchy and workplace identity operated together in a major Scottish industry.

The final article, Allison Foster's account of Food for Talk, demonstrates especially clearly that business archives need not be confined to academic research or corporate heritage. Drawing on the Sainsbury Archive, the project developed dementia-friendly resources through co-production and co-evaluation with practitioners, participants and partner organisations. The article shows how archival material can stimulate memory, conversation and social connection, while also requiring institutions to rethink their own expertise, accessibility and methods of engagement. It is a valuable example of an archive not simply being interpreted for an audience, but being developed with users and communities in mind.

Taken together, these contributions reflect the purpose of *Business and Industrial History*. The journal seeks to provide a space in which historical research and archival practice can inform one another, and in which Scotland's rich business and industrial past can be placed in wider international perspective. The volume's geographical range – from Scotland, England and Belgium to France, Turkey and India – is therefore particularly welcome. It confirms that a journal rooted in Scottish archival and historical traditions can also contribute to conversations that extend well beyond Scotland.

The reports which conclude the volume provide a further reminder that such research depends upon continuing practical work. The record of business collections deposited in

Scottish archives, alongside the report of the Business Archives Surveying Officer for Scotland, documents the ongoing effort involved in identifying records, supporting organisations, surveying collections and securing material at risk. This work is often undertaken quietly, but it is indispensable. Without it, the evidence on which future histories depend may be dispersed, inaccessible or lost altogether.

Future Plans

The Editorial Board remains committed to developing Business and Industrial History as an open-access forum for historians, archivists, researchers, heritage professionals and independent scholars working on all aspects of business, industrial and economic history. We welcome articles, research notes, reflections, case studies, collections-in-focus pieces and reviews from Scotland, the UK and internationally.

We are particularly keen to encourage contributions from postgraduate students, early career researchers and archivists, and we continue to support the Michael Moss and Lesley Richmond Essay Prizes. These prizes honour two figures whose work demonstrated the value of preserving business records and of treating archives as central to the study of economic and industrial life.

The variety of work included in this volume gives confidence that the journal can continue to develop as a meeting place for archival practice and historical research. The task is not only to preserve the records of business and industry, but to ask better questions of them: about power and organisation, work and community, change and continuity, and the ways in which economic life has shaped the societies in which it is embedded.

Special Issue 2027: Call for Papers

The next volume, to be published in summer 2027, will be a special issue entitled *The Business of Archives: Professor Tony Slaven at 90*. The issue will celebrate the ninetieth birthday of Professor Anthony Slaven and consider the long relationship between business history, archival rescue, records surveying and the research use of business collections in Scotland and beyond.

Tony Slaven has been central to the development of business history at the University of Glasgow and to the wider institutional life of the field. He succeeded Peter Payne as Colquhoun Lecturer in Business History in 1969, subsequently became Professor of Business History, and was appointed the first Director of the Centre for Business History in Scotland when it was established in 1987. His scholarship on shipbuilding, regional

economic development, Scottish enterprise and the relationship between business and place helped to establish Glasgow as one of the principal centres of business-history research in Britain. He also played a significant role in the development of the Association of Business Historians and served as the first President of the European Business History Association.

Slaven's career was closely connected to the growth of business archives in Scotland. During the early 1970s, as systematic surveying of business records developed, he participated in efforts to rescue vulnerable collections in the west of Scotland, including records endangered by the collapse of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders. The 2027 volume will also coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of a dedicated Business Archives Surveying Officer role for Scotland. The special issue therefore offers an opportunity not merely to honour an individual career, but to examine the wider 'business of archives': how collections are identified, rescued, preserved, interpreted and transformed into historical knowledge.

The call welcomes contributions on the development of business history as a field; archives surveying and the rescue of records at risk; relationships between archivists, historians, universities and businesses; shipbuilding, industrial decline and regional development; the use of archival collections in new research; and case studies of particular repositories, collections and projects. These themes extend the concerns of the present volume and reaffirm the journal's purpose as a meeting place for archival practice and historical research.

The Editorial Board (Chris Cassells, Kiara King, Niall MacKenzie, Christopher Miller, Andrew Perchard, Zoi Pittaki, Alison Turton)

Essay Prizes in Memory of Michael Moss and Lesley Richmond

Two prizes, each of £300, are awarded annually in memory of Michael Moss and Lesley Richmond. Both Lesley and Michael were former Convenors of the Business Archives Council of Scotland and great supporters of this journal and business archives and history in Scotland and internationally.

Michael Moss

Professor Michael Stanley Moss (1947–2021), began his archival career in Scotland in 1970 as Registrar of the Western Survey of the National Register of Archives (Scotland) at the University of Glasgow. His job was to locate, list and rescue historical records held by country houses, businesses, institutions, charities and individuals across the West of Scotland and ensure that important collections of archives were preserved. During the next 30 years during his time as University Archivist from 1974 to 2001 he was to create in Glasgow one of the UK's largest collections of business archives. As an academic Michael wrote extensively on archival science alongside business and industrial history, producing with John R. Hume in 1981 the definitive history of Scotch whisky. Obituaries for Michael were published in *Archives, Archives and Records* and the *Mariner's Mirror* as well as our journal *Scottish Business and Industrial History*.

Lesley Richmond

Lesley Marion Richmond (1956–2022) was a remarkable figure in the field of business archives, both in the UK and internationally. Her career as an Archivist began in business archives with roles as a research assistant in 1978 and as the second Business Archives Surveying Officer for Scotland in 1979. Lesley's belief in the importance of business archives, their societal significance and research potential was evident throughout her career in subsequent roles with the Business Archives Council, Chubb & Son and for more than 30 years at the University of Glasgow where she ensured the continued development of the Scottish Business Archive and support for the Surveying Officer role until her retirement in 2017. Obituaries for Lesley were published in *Archives and Records*, *Scottish Archives* and the *Mariner's Mirror* as well as our journal *Scottish Business and Industrial History*.

Essay Prizes

The Moss and Richmond essay prizes are aimed at archivists, postgraduate students and early career researchers. Entries may explore any aspect of business and industrial history that uses archival resources or reflects archival practice within the context of corporate archives and those collecting repositories with business collections. The Editorial Board welcomes essays developed from postgraduate work (e.g. a master's

dissertation or a chapter of a PhD), professional practice or a piece of original research. Submissions should consist of between 3,500 and 7,000 words. Entries should follow the format specified in our submission requirements at the rear of this journal.

The winning entry will be awarded a prize of £300 and, subject to peer review, will be eligible for publication in *Business and Industrial History*. A call for essays will be issued in May annually and the deadline for submissions will be October of that year.

Crises in Business History: Re-ordering, Evidence and the Historian's Task

Christopher W. Miller, Daniel Menning and Giuseppe Telesca¹

Introduction

Crisis is one of the most overworked words in modern public life and, in no small part because of this, one of the least stable analytical categories available to historians. It can designate a sudden financial panic, a slow decline in profitability, a crisis of legitimacy, an industrial shakeout, a wartime emergency or an ecological constraint whose consequences unfold over decades. Business and economic historians are perhaps especially exposed to this ambiguity, for their subjects – firms, markets, industries, banks, associations and state agencies – are constantly described as ‘in crisis’, yet the term is often used as a dramatic label rather than as a problem requiring historical explanation.

Business historians have, of course, written about crisis in many forms: financial panics and banking crises, both idiosyncratic and systemic, industrial decline, cartelisation, business-state relations, corporate legitimacy and memory. This article builds on that literature, but uses crisis less as an object of explanation in itself than as a way of seeing re-ordering in progress: the destabilisation, repair, reproduction and remaking of the routines through which firms, markets and institutions coordinate economic life.²

More basically, this article makes a simple but demanding claim: crises in business history should be studied as processes of re-ordering. A crisis is not merely a shock which interrupts normal business life, but a period in which established routines of coordination – credit, contract, procurement, information, labour control and legitimacy – lose credibility or functionality, and in which actors attempt to repair, reproduce or

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² For examples of the breadth of business-historical and financial-historical work on crisis, see Charles P. Kindleberger and Robert Z. Aliber, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes: A History of Financial Crises* (7th edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Barry Eichengreen, *Hall of Mirrors: The Great Depression, the Great Recession, and the Uses – and Misuses – of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Youssef Cassis and Giuseppe Telesca (eds), *History, Memory, and the Return of Financial Crises after Bretton Woods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2026); Jeffrey R. Fear, ‘Cartels’ in Geoffrey Jones and Jonathan Zeitlin (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.268–292. For broader institutional and crisis-management perspectives useful to this argument, see Peter A. Hall and David Soskice (eds), *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Wolfgang Streeck and Kathleen Thelen (eds), *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Arjen Boin, Paul 't Hart, Eric Stern and Bengt Sundelius, *The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership under Pressure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

remake a workable order under constraint. As such, the historian's attention shifts from the event itself to the mechanisms through which firms, intermediaries and states diagnose threat, mobilise resources, devise coping practices and reflect afterwards on what has happened.

The emphasis on re-ordering also avoids a common false choice, for crisis need not be treated either as an objective economic condition or as mere rhetoric. It is both material and interpretive: actors face constraints, but they must also name those constraints, communicate them and persuade others to accept particular responses. This is where business history has unusual leverage, since its sources often capture the translation from circumstance into decision.

The article is informed by the 'Threatened Orders' approach developed at the University of Tübingen, but its purpose is not to import a social-scientific template into business history unchanged. The point is rather to translate the insight into the field's own archive-based practice. Threatened orders become visible when routines are called into question; business historians are unusually well placed to show how such routines worked in the first place, and how they were patched, defended, abandoned or remade in moments of stress.^{3 4}

The argument which follows proceeds in three stages. First, it clarifies what it means to treat crisis as a historical category – not simply an economic downturn, nor simply a rhetorical claim, but a contested process linking interpretation and action. Second, it develops a framework for business-historical crisis analysis built around diagnosis, mobilisation, coping practices and reflection. Third, it shows how that framework changes the historian's work, drawing on examples from speculative finance, inter-war procurement and shipbuilding, industrial shakeouts, environmental governance and corporate memory.

The article is, therefore, a thought piece about the historian's role. It does not attempt to provide a finished typology of all possible crises, nor does it offer lessons to firms and policymakers. Its aim is more modest and, historically, more important: to show how crisis can be made analytically useful without being reduced to moral drama, managerial

³ University of Tübingen, Collaborative Research Centre 923 'Threatened Orders – Societies under Stress' <<https://uni-tuebingen.de/en/research/core-research/collaborative-research-centers/crc-923/information/>> accessed 3 March 2026.

⁴ Ewald Frie, Thomas Kohl and Mischa Meier, 'Dynamics of Social Change and Perceptions of Threat: An Introduction' in Ewald Frie, Thomas Kohl and Mischa Meier (eds), *Dynamics of Social Change and Perceptions of Threat* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), pp.1–10.

heroism or macroeconomic shorthand. Crises matter, in other words, because they expose the hidden architecture of economic orders.

Crisis as Concept, Claim and Process

Historians inherit crisis language from actors. Boards, journalists, officials, trade associations, creditors and workers all describe situations as crises, and often do so strategically.⁵ To call something a crisis is to claim that ordinary expectations no longer hold and that exceptional measures may be justified. This is why Reinhart Koselleck's conceptual history remains helpful: crisis language carries a judgemental structure. It does not merely describe difficulty; it identifies a decisive moment that demands interpretation and action.⁶

For business historians, this is not an abstract point. A firm which frames declining orders as a cyclical downturn will behave differently from one which frames the same data as structural collapse; a ministry which defines spare industrial capacity as waste will design a different policy from one which defines it as strategic insurance; and a bank which diagnoses liquidity pressure as temporary may extend credit, while one which diagnoses insolvency may force reorganisation. Crisis claims, as such, organise action.

This said, crisis cannot be treated only as discourse, for there are real constraints: cash runs out, prices collapse, orders disappear, ships are not built, plants close, workers are dismissed and credit dries up. The analytical challenge is to hold material constraint and crisis narration together. A business crisis is best understood as a phase in which established expectations and routines of coordination lose credibility, such that actors diagnose the situation as threatening organisational or sectoral continuity and act under heightened uncertainty.

This definition separates three things that are often conflated. First, macroeconomic crisis is not identical with business crisis. The same macro shock can be fatal for one firm and profitable for another, depending on liquidity, product markets, ownership, political access and timing. Banking crises make this problem of scale especially clear: the failure

⁵ As a rough indication of changing usage, Google Books Ngram Viewer shows a marked rise in the use of the word 'crisis' around 1800 and another from the 1920s onwards, while the plural 'crises' grows more steadily from the turn of the nineteenth century through the middle of the twentieth. Google Books Ngram Viewer, 'crisis, crises', <https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=crisis%2Ccrises&year_start=1700&year_end=2019&corpus=en-2019&smoothing=3> accessed 3 March 2026.

⁶ Reinhart Koselleck, 'Krise' in Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, vol.3 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), pp.617–50.

of a single institution may remain idiosyncratic, whereas a systemic crisis threatens confidence, payments or credit coordination across institutions. Second, organisational crisis need not coincide with recession: technological displacement, reputational collapse, regulatory change or environmental constraint can threaten a firm during apparently stable macro conditions. Third, crisis has no natural chronology. Some crises are abrupt; others are slow until they suddenly become legible. This makes hindsight especially dangerous: historians must distinguish between crises that are visible retrospectively and crises that were recognised, misrecognised or denied by contemporaries.

Historical analogy is therefore dangerous when it is too neat. Comparisons between 1929, 2008 and later crises can discipline analysis, but they can also flatter present assumptions. Eichengreen's work on the uses and misuses of crisis history is valuable precisely because it shows how crisis analogies can become instruments of policy rather than aids to understanding.⁷ Abelshauser similarly warns that 'learning' from crisis depends on institutional setting and diagnostic frame rather than on the mere fact of past experience.⁸

Financial crisis history has long recognised patterned sequences of boom, distress and revulsion. Kindleberger's classic account remains useful not because all crises repeat a script, but because it reminds historians to study the period before collapse, when expectations, credit, information and legitimacy are already being reorganised.⁹ Business historians can extend this insight by asking how those processes appeared inside firms, industries and associational networks.

From Shock to Re-ordering: a Business-historical Framework

A crisis-as-re-ordering approach can be organised around four linked questions: diagnosis, mobilisation, coping practices and reflection. These should not be understood as stages in a neat sequence – they overlap and loop back – but they nevertheless provide a practical framework for historians, since each directs attention to both evidence and mechanism.

Gramsci's idea of an interregnum offers a related, though narrower, vocabulary for periods in which an established order has lost authority before a successor has

⁷ Barry Eichengreen, *Hall of Mirrors*, pp.1–20.

⁸ Werner Abelshauser, 'Aus Wirtschaftskrisen lernen – aber wie? Krisenszenarien im Vergleich' (2009) 57 *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, pp.469–83.

⁹ Charles P. Kindleberger and Robert Z. Aliber, *Manias, Panics, and Crashes*, pp.1–25.

consolidated. Used carefully, it draws attention to the interval in which diagnoses multiply, mobilisation is contested and provisional coping practices proliferate. It should not, however, substitute for specifying which routines are threatened, for whom and at what scale.¹⁰

Diagnosis asks who defines the situation as a crisis, with what authority and against which competing interpretations. This is often where the most important historical work begins, for a crisis is rarely self-evident to contemporaries: actors disagree over whether a problem is temporary or structural, external or self-inflicted, financial or technological, moral or political – and whether a condition is a crisis at all. Those disagreements matter because they shape what responses are thinkable.

Mobilisation asks what resources can be assembled in response: capital, information, political access, labour consent, legal authority and reputational credibility. It is here, perhaps, that power becomes most visible, for crisis responses are not selected from a neutral menu but depend on institutional access. Firms with bank support, state contracts or trade-association backing inhabit a very different crisis world from those forced into isolation.

Coping practices are, more basically, what actors actually do: cut costs, renegotiate credit, lobby government, merge, cartelise, retool, close plants, change accounting practices, seek legal protection, try to keep the crisis secret or narrate it publicly in ways that shift blame. Studying them prevents the historian from assuming outcomes were inevitable and keeps contingency alive by reconstructing the repertoire of responses which actors attempted.

Reflection asks how crises are remembered, institutionalised or forgotten. This includes formal post-mortems, reforms, inquiries and corporate histories, but also silence and destruction. Reflection is not epilogue. It shapes future routines, determines which lessons become legitimate, and influences which records later historians can see. The threatened-orders literature is useful here because it treats crisis as a process of re-stabilisation rather than merely a moment of breakdown.¹¹

¹⁰ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp.275–76.

¹¹ Ewald Frie, Mischa Meier and Dennis Schmidt (eds), *Bedroht sein: Gesellschaften unter Stress im Vergleich* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023).

This is not to say that re-ordering necessarily means transformation. Crises may generate new arrangements, but they may also repair or reproduce institutional pasts, as actors restore familiar routines, reinforce incumbent coalitions or use emergency measures to close off alternatives. Institutional persistence is, therefore, an outcome to be explained, not evidence that no crisis occurred.

This framework also clarifies the historian's archive. Diagnosis appears in minutes, correspondence, newspapers, pamphlets and trade discussions. Mobilisation appears in bank files, state papers, procurement records, association archives and legal proceedings. Coping appears in operational documents, contracts, employment records, technical reports and lobbying papers. Reflection appears in inquiry reports, compliance reforms, anniversary histories and decisions about archival preservation.

The basic implication is that crisis history is necessarily multi-archival. A corporate archive may reveal internal anxiety but not creditor pressure; a bank archive may reveal financial constraint but not shopfloor consequences; and a state archive may preserve the politics of public action but not internal firm strategy. Trade associations, in turn, may reveal collective coping repertoires unavailable in any one firm's papers. To write crisis history well is, as such, to triangulate across these sites.

Why Business History Needs Crisis, and Why Crisis Needs Business History

Business history has often been drawn towards continuity. This is, in many respects, understandable: firms which survive leave records, archives are easier to build around durable organisations, and corporate history as a genre often rewards narratives of competence and persistence. This said, the tendency has consequences, for crisis becomes either a backdrop or a test of management rather than an object which reveals the conditions under which business order is reproduced.

Chandlerian business history placed organisational capability and managerial hierarchy at the centre of modern capitalism. That achievement remains fundamental, but it can lead to a stabilising optic: mature firms appear as protagonists, and crises appear as external disturbances managed by competent administration.¹² A crisis approach does not reject capability. It asks how capabilities are threatened, how they are defended, and how they become dependent on wider systems of credit, state authority, technical knowledge and collective organisation.

¹² Alfred D. Chandler Jr, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp.1–12.

The field's own historiography points in this direction. Business history has moved beyond simple company narratives towards networks, institutions, associations, regulation, globalisation and business-state relations. Yet crisis has not always been central to that shift. It should be, because crises are moments when the institutional environment ceases to be background and becomes the subject of explicit negotiation, repair or reproduction.¹³

There is also, of course, a selection problem. Surviving firms can narrate crisis as resilience, while failed firms often leave fragmented traces; if historians write primarily from the archives of survivors, crisis history risks becoming a history of those which had enough resources, access or luck to persist. This is not merely a moral problem, for it also distorts explanation by making survival look like competence. A historian's task is, therefore, to reconstruct the conditions under which survival and failure were distributed.

This is why crisis history requires counter-archives. Bank records, insolvency files, court papers, trade journals, union records, employers' associations and state archives often preserve the mechanisms that corporate archives obscure. The methodological broadening urged by recent work on business history is therefore not optional for crisis studies; it is the condition of credible explanation.¹⁴

Crisis also gives business history something distinctive to offer wider debates. Economists can model shocks and recoveries, political scientists can classify institutional responses, and management scholars can discuss resilience; historians, by contrast, can reconstruct how actors made sense of unfolding uncertainty with partial information, how available instruments constrained action, and how later narratives simplified the messiness of decision-making. This is not antiquarian detail, but the causal texture of crisis.

Speculation, Knowledge and Threatened Market Order

Financial speculation offers a particularly clear example of crisis as threatened order, not least because it compresses diagnosis, communication and mobilisation into visible form. Prices move, rumours circulate and credit expands, while actors struggle to decide whether they are witnessing opportunity, fraud, innovation or collapse. The problem for

¹³ Geoffrey Jones and Jonathan Zeitlin (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.1–5.

¹⁴ Philip Scranton and Patrick Fridenson (eds), *Reimagining Business History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), pp.1–15.

the historian is not to decide retrospectively that the crowd was foolish, but to reconstruct how market participants tried to know what they were doing and how some diagnostic frames became more authoritative than others.

The 1720 South Sea Bubble and related European episodes show how crisis developed around the credibility of new corporate and financial forms. Joint-stock projects, state debt schemes and chartering practices generated possibilities that were economic, political and imaginative at once.¹⁵ The bubble's 'collapse' was not simply a price movement. It was a crisis in the institutional claims through which corporate forms, public credit and speculative expectations were made believable.

Work on the wider 1720 bubble has emphasised that contemporaries were already engaged in diagnosis: identifying legitimate enterprise, detecting fraud, debating the relation between public credit and private gain, and deciding whether price movement represented information or delusion.¹⁶ The question of chartering companies is especially important for business historians because it shows how speculative enthusiasm was inseparable from the authority to create and sanction corporate forms.¹⁷

The economic effects of financial crisis also moved through commercial circuits. Baltic trade, for instance, shows why a bubble cannot be confined to the exchange or to the share ledger.¹⁸ Credit relations, merchant expectations and trading decisions linked financial diagnosis to real business practices. Crisis travelled through the connections that made commerce possible.

Later speculative episodes reveal a further layer: knowledge infrastructures. Around early twentieth-century American markets, advice literature, ticker-tape reading, market psychology and sceptical practices attempted to make speculation manageable. The phrase 'doubt all before you believe anything' captures an epistemic world in which

¹⁵ Daniel Menning, *Politik, Ökonomie und Aktienspekulation: 'South Sea Bubble' und Co. 1720* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020).

¹⁶ Stefano Condorelli and Daniel Menning (eds), *Boom, Bust, and Beyond: New Perspectives on the 1720 Stock Market Bubble* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2019).

¹⁷ Stefano Condorelli and Daniel Menning, 'Chartering companies: a dialogue about the timeline and the actors of the pan-European joint-stock euphoria in 1720' in Condorelli and Menning (eds), *Boom, Bust, and Beyond*, pp.45–66.

¹⁸ Daniel Menning, 'The Economic Effect of the South Sea Bubble on the Baltic Sea Trade' in Stefano Condorelli and Daniel Menning (eds), *Boom, Bust, and Beyond*, pp.161–178.

actors did not lack information; they were overwhelmed by information of uncertain quality.^{19 20}

This matters beyond financial history, for many business crises are also informational crises: inventories cannot be valued, demand forecasts collapse, counterparties become suspect, technical reports are challenged and risk models lose credibility. As such, a crisis-as-re-ordering approach treats knowledge practices as part of the mechanism of crisis rather than as background culture.

The history of self-interest in speculative markets also warns against easy moralisation. Speculation is not a timeless expression of greed; it is a historically situated practice shaped by ideas about rationality, prudence, legitimacy and the crowd.²¹ When historians simply describe a crisis as mania, they may reproduce the reflective narrative of later critics rather than reconstruct the decision world of contemporaries.

Railway speculation in the 1830s and 1840s extends the point across time. Later speculative crises were diagnosed through earlier repertoires of uncertainty, warning and blame. The lesson is not that crises repeat. It is that crisis memory supplies categories through which new threats are recognised.²² The historian's role is to reconstruct those inherited repertoires without assuming they were accurate.

Procurement, Cartels and Industrial Crisis Governance

If speculative crises reveal threatened orders in knowledge and credibility, industrial crises often reveal threatened orders in capacity and procurement. Inter-war British armaments and shipbuilding make this especially clear. Disarmament and constrained demand did not merely reduce order books. They threatened a procurement order built around specialised capacity, tacit knowledge, long-term relationships between firms and the state, and assumptions about how rapid mobilisation would occur in war.²³

¹⁹ Renate Dürr (ed.), *Knowing and Forgetting in Times of Threat* (London: Routledge, 2021).

²⁰ Daniel Menning, "Doubt All Before You Believe Anything": Stock Market Speculation in the Early Twentieth century United States' in Renate Dürr (ed.), *Knowing and Forgetting in Times of Threat* (London: Routledge, 2021), pp.74–94.

²¹ Daniel Menning, 'Pursuing Self-interest: Stock Market Speculation in the Early Twentieth-century United States' in Christine Zabel (ed.), *Historicizing Self-Interest in the Modern Atlantic World: A Plea for Ego?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), pp.182–200.

²² Christoph Dominik Blum, Marlene Kessler, Daniel Menning and Anna Weininger, '(Un-)Gewissheit und Bedrohung in der Eisenbahnspekulation 1835–1844' in Ewald Frie and Mischa Meier (eds), *Krisen anders denken: Wie Menschen mit Bedrohungen umgegangen sind und was wir daraus lernen können* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2023), pp.225–34.

²³ Christopher W. Miller, 'British Naval Armaments, Cartels, and Defence Planning Between the World Wars' (2016) 85(1) *Entreprises et histoire*, pp.70–87.

Here the central diagnostic question concerned the meaning of capacity. Was an underused plant an inefficiency to be eliminated, or a strategic reserve to be preserved? Was private profitability a problem of firm management, or a condition of national preparedness? These questions were not technical details. They structured policy, procurement and the toleration of coordination among firms.²⁴

Cartels and rationalisation schemes therefore appear differently when viewed through a crisis lens. They were not simply deviations from competitive markets. They were among the available instruments through which business and state actors attempted to stabilise threatened industrial orders. That does not make them benign. It makes them historical objects whose distributive effects require explanation. Cartelisation could preserve capacity, but it could also entrench incumbents, discipline labour, restrict entry and shift costs onto the public purse.^{25 26}

The case of the Warship Group in British shipbuilding is particularly instructive. In conditions of overcapacity and uncertain demand, firms were merged, capacity was rationalised, and some yards were effectively ‘sterilised’ against re-entry. At the same time, the Admiralty tolerated price coordination as a means of balancing cost control, capacity preservation and preparedness.²⁷

This amounts to crisis governance in a strong sense, for the state was not simply outside the market imposing rules, but was simultaneously customer, planner, source of information and broker among firms. Conversely, firms were not merely private actors pursuing profit, but holders of strategically valuable capacity whose survival could be represented as a public problem. As such, the shared perception of crisis re-ordered the boundary between public and private.

Networks and intermediaries mattered because crisis governance depends on access. Business networks, employer organisations and elite industrial advisers could shape what the state knew and what it regarded as feasible. Work on the Economic League and

²⁴ Christopher W. Miller, *Planning and Profits: British Naval Armaments Manufacture and the Military Industrial Complex, 1918–1941* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018).

²⁵ Jeffrey R. Fear, ‘Cartels’, pp.268–92.

²⁶ Harm G. Schröter, ‘Kartelle als Versuch der Krisenbewältigung’ in Friedrich-Wilhelm Henning (ed.), *Krisen und Krisenbewältigung vom 19. Jahrhundert bis heute* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1998), pp.161–87.

²⁷ Christopher W. Miller and Hugh Murphy, ‘Price Collusion, Rationalisation and Admiralty Oversight in British Shipbuilding: The Case of the Warship Group, 1926–1945’ (2021) 33(3) *International Journal of Maritime History*, pp.561–76.

on Clydeside industrial influence shows how preparedness, labour politics and procurement planning moved through informal as well as formal channels.^{28 29}

The broader point here is not that crises inevitably produce state action. Rather, they reveal the practical instruments available to public authorities and the social networks through which those instruments are activated. Crisis should, for this reason, be studied as governance: not as an abstract policy response, but as a negotiated re-ordering of capacity, information and authority.

Coping Practices and their Second-order Effects

Coping practices are the visible surface of crisis. Firms cut costs, sell assets, renegotiate credit, lobby, merge, cartelise, alter product lines, dismiss workers, alter accounts, cultivate public sympathy or seek legal protection; sectors coordinate through associations, cartels, standards and lobbying; and states use procurement, credit, regulation, tariffs, competition policy and inquiries. The historian's task is to connect these practices to diagnosis and mobilisation rather than treat them as self-evident responses.

Coping practices often stabilise the present by trading away future flexibility: emergency credit may preserve a firm while creating dependence; cartel agreements may preserve capacity while entrenching rigidity; rationalisation may restore profitability while destroying tacit skills; and legal protection may allow reorganisation while shifting losses onto creditors or workers. These second-order effects are not accidental, but are among the principal means by which crises become institutional history.

Industrial shakeouts illustrate the point. The long consolidation of the American automobile industry was not one punctual crash, but a process through which competitive pressure, scale economies, finance and selection remade the structure of the industry. A later observer might see oligopoly as normal. A crisis historian asks how that normality was produced through failure, exit, cumulative advantage and institutional adaptation.³⁰

²⁸ Christopher W. Miller, 'Extraordinary Gentlemen: the Economic League, Business Networks, and Organised Labour in War Planning and Rearmament' (2017) 52 *Scottish Labour History*, pp.120-51.

²⁹ Christopher W Miller, 'The Clydeside Cabal: the Influence of Lord Weir, Sir James Lithgow, and Sir Andrew Rae Duncan on Naval and Defence Policy, Around 1918-40' (2021) 107(3) *Mariner's Mirror*, pp.338-57.

³⁰ Steven Klepper, 'The Evolution of the US Automobile Industry and Detroit as its Capital' (2002) Working paper <<https://www.zew.de/fileadmin/FTP/entrepreneurship/klepper.pdf>> accessed 3 March 2026, pp.4-6.

For this reason, crisis history can resist survivor bias. It asks not only why Ford, General Motors or Chrysler survived, but what happened to the firms which disappeared and how the rules of survival were made; failure is treated not as absence, but as evidence of selection processes and institutional constraint.

Coping also involves narratives. Firms and sectors explain their actions while taking them. They present closures as unavoidable, mergers as rational, cartels as stabilising, redundancies as regrettable necessities, lobbying as public-spirited. The historian should neither accept nor dismiss such claims too quickly. They are evidence of the justificatory work required to make crisis responses legitimate.

Reflection, Memory and the End of Crisis

Reflection is the least visible but perhaps most important part of crisis. Crises do not end simply when prices recover, output rises or liquidity returns, but when routines regain credibility and actors accept a re-ordered settlement as normal. This may occur long after the dramatic moment has passed or, in some cases, not at all. Indeed, the perception of crisis may simply fade as more actors cease to regard a condition as a crisis and, through inaction, signal that it is over or never fully existed.

Learning from crisis is therefore a problematic historical category. Actors often claim to have learned, but learning is selective. Some lessons are institutionalised in new routines, committees, reporting structures, accounting practices or regulatory settlements. Others are forgotten because they are inconvenient. Crisis memory is political.³¹ Historical analogy can be equally political, as post-crisis actors use past episodes to legitimise present choices.³²

Recent work by Youssef Cassis and Giuseppe Telesca on the memory of financial crises is useful here because it treats memory not as a stable store of lessons but as something that persists, fades and changes over time. It reinforces the point that post-crisis reflection is not simply a rational learning process, but a contested field in which actors remember, forget and repurpose earlier episodes.³³

Nor are the lessons produced by reflection fixed at the end of a crisis. Academic reinterpretations can acquire authority decades later and then shape responses to new

³¹ Werner Abelshauser, 'Aus Wirtschaftskrisen lernen – aber wie?', pp.476–83.

³² Barry Eichengreen, *Hall of Mirrors*, pp.225–40.

³³ Youssef Cassis and Giuseppe Telesca (eds), *History, Memory, and the Return of Financial Crises after Bretton Woods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2026).

emergencies. Friedman and Schwartz's monetary history placed the Federal Reserve's inaction at the centre of the Great Contraction; as Mary O'Sullivan has shown, that interpretation gained particular force from the 1970s and helped frame the Depression as a crisis of monetary governance rather than a crisis of capitalism, with important consequences for how policymakers understood 2008. The point here is not to settle that historiographical dispute, but to recognise scholarly interpretation itself as part of the changing memory of crisis.³⁴

Corporate legitimacy crises make this especially clear. Some crises concern social licence rather than immediate profitability. Firms may survive financially while facing pressure over past conduct, labour practices, wartime collaboration, environmental harm or political entanglement. In such moments, historical narration itself becomes a crisis practice: archives are opened or closed, histories commissioned, responsibility framed, and reputations managed. Studies of Daimler-Benz under National Socialism demonstrate how corporate pasts can become objects of public contest and institutional reflection.³⁵

Environmental constraint represents another kind of crisis temporality. Pollution and climate change do not map neatly onto the chronology of panic or recession. They unfold as repeated episodes of threatened legitimacy, regulation, technological adjustment and contested responsibility. Business historians can treat them as long crises in which firms, states and publics renegotiate the boundaries of acceptable business practice. For managers, however, such pressures often appeared less as a single continuous emergency than as a succession of regulatory, legal or reputational challenges to be managed, delayed or reframed.³⁶

Reflection also shapes the archive. Post-crisis documents and interpretations – post-mortems, inquiries, compliance reforms, anniversary histories and later academic works – can be among the richest sources for understanding what actors believed had failed. This said, they are also sites of rationalisation, and must be read against contemporaneous evidence by asking what has been clarified, what has been hidden and what new order the narrative is designed to support.

³⁴ Milton Friedman and Anna J. Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867–1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Mary A. O'Sullivan, 'History as Heresy: Unlearning the Lessons of Economic Orthodoxy' (2022) 75(2) *Economic History Review*, pp.297–335.

³⁵ Neil Gregor, *Daimler-Benz in the Third Reich* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

³⁶ Raymond G. Stokes and Christopher W. Miller, 'Pollution and Climate Change' in Teresa da Silva Lopes, Christina Lubinski and Heidi J S Tworek (eds), *The Routledge Companion to the Makers of Global Business* (London: Routledge, 2019), pp.564–77.

Crises, Regions and Trajectories

A crisis lens can also reframe long-standing debates about decline and regional resilience. In British economic history, institutional accounts of decline emphasised long-run weaknesses in investment, governance and industrial organisation, while later work complicated the picture by stressing technological capability, state capacity and sectoral variety.^{37 38}

The unit of analysis also matters. The same development may appear as a crisis to an individual actor, an opportunity for a well-positioned firm, a manageable adjustment at sectoral level and a rupture at regional level once labour markets, suppliers and civic identity are taken into account. Crises need, as such, to be contextualised across scales rather than assigned to a single natural level of analysis.

For Scotland, Glasgow's industrial history illustrates why crisis cannot be treated only as firm failure or macro downturn. The city's identity as an industrial and imperial workshop meant that crises in shipbuilding, engineering and heavy industry were also crises of civic imagination, labour politics and regional capability.^{39 40}

Cluster scholarship helps make this more precise. Capabilities are regionally embedded: in suppliers, labour markets, training systems, tacit knowledge, institutions and expectations. Crises reveal whether those embedded systems can be adapted, redeployed or defended. They also reveal where they are brittle.^{41 42}

The point is not to turn regional history into a parade of shocks. It is to use crisis episodes as extreme tests of coordination. Which coalitions form? What instruments exist? Which actors can mobilise resources? Which capabilities are protected, and which are allowed to disappear? Such questions connect micro-level business evidence to macro-level trajectories without reducing either to the other.

³⁷ Bernard Elbaum and William Lazonick, *The Decline of the British Economy: An Institutional Perspective* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

³⁸ David Edgerton, *Science, Technology and the British Industrial 'Decline', 1870–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

³⁹ Charles Allen Oakley, *The Second City* (3rd edn, Glasgow: Blackie, 1975).

⁴⁰ Michael S. Moss and John R. Hume, *Workshop of the British Empire: Engineering and Shipbuilding in the West of Scotland* (London: Heinemann, 1977).

⁴¹ Jonathan Zeitlin, 'Industrial Districts and Regional Clusters' in Geoffrey Jones and Jonathan Zeitlin (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.219–43.

⁴² Michael J. Enright, 'Regional Clusters and Economic Development: a Research Agenda' in Udo H. Staber, Norbert V. Schaefer and Basu Sharma (eds), *Business Networks: Prospects for Regional Development* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1996), pp.190–214.

What Crises Reveal About Business Order

The emphasis on re-ordering also clarifies what crises reveal about capitalism more generally. In stable periods, the coordination of economic life can appear natural: goods move, credit is extended, wages are paid, contracts are honoured, information circulates. Crisis strips away that naturalness. It shows that business order is maintained by institutions, conventions and forms of trust that have to be continually reproduced.

One of the historian's advantages is the ability to resist the language of inevitability. Actors in crisis often describe choices as unavoidable and, given the constraints, they may sometimes have been close to unavoidable; the historian can nevertheless reconstruct the earlier sequence through which the range of possibilities narrowed. This is not the same as blaming actors for failing to choose options that were no longer available, but is instead a way of historicising constraint itself.

Crises also reveal the boundaries of the firm. In ordinary business narratives, the firm can appear as a coherent decision-making unit. In crisis, its dependence on creditors, suppliers, workers, regulators, insurers, customers, trade associations and public reputation becomes obvious. A crisis-centred approach therefore treats the firm less as an island and more as a node within a field of coordination. That does not dissolve firm agency; it locates it.

This matters especially for business history, which has sometimes oscillated between firm-centred and system-centred explanation. Crisis provides a means of connecting the two, showing how systemic pressures are translated into firm-level choices and how firm-level strategies can, in turn, feed back into sectoral or institutional change. The historian can move from the minute book to the ministry file, or from the creditor letter to the public inquiry, without abandoning the scale of decision-making.

Finally, crises expose the moral economy of business. Decisions about whose losses matter, whose jobs are saved, which creditors are protected, which capacities are preserved, and which harms are externalised are rarely made in purely technical language, even when they are presented that way. A crisis-as-re-ordering approach therefore helps historians study business as a social and political practice without reducing it to ideology or culture alone.

For this reason, crises are especially useful for a general academic audience: they allow historians to connect concrete business practices to large questions without losing evidentiary control. A shipyard rationalisation scheme can illuminate state capacity, a

speculative advice manual can illuminate the history of knowledge, and a corporate inquiry can illuminate legitimacy and memory. Crisis is, in this sense, the bridge between the granular and the structural.

The Crisis Archive: Evidence under Pressure

A crisis-centred business history requires an unusually self-conscious approach to evidence. Crises produce records because actors must (notionally) agree on their perception of events, coordinate under pressure and justify exceptional actions, but they also threaten records because the documents generated in such moments are often commercially, legally or reputationally sensitive. The archive of crisis is, therefore, both rich and unstable.

Business archives are not neutral containers. As Stephanie Decker has argued, selection, preservation, description and access shape both what survives and which organisational voices can be heard. Crisis intensifies these asymmetries: records may be destroyed, withheld, dispersed or retrospectively curated precisely because they bear on responsibility and reputation.⁴³

Four kinds of records are especially important. The first are diagnostic records: minutes, memoranda, correspondence, trade press commentary, financial reports and legal opinions in which actors try to decide what kind of problem they are facing. These records often reveal competing interpretations before later narratives have hardened. They allow historians to recover uncertainty as a real historical condition rather than as a decorative preface to known outcomes.

Personal diaries and private notebooks should also be added to this evidential map. Where they survive, they can show how individual actors experienced uncertainty before a stable (public) diagnosis had formed: whether they understood events as a temporary difficulty, a personal opportunity, a sectoral crisis or a systemic threat. They can also identify principal actors, informal conversations and decisions that are only partly visible in institutional records.⁴⁴

The second are mobilisation records: bank correspondence, credit committee papers, government files, procurement records, association minutes and lobbying material.

⁴³ Stephanie Decker, 'The Silence of the Archives: Business History, Post-colonialism and Archival Ethnography' (2013) 8(2) *Management and Organizational History*, pp.155–73.

⁴⁴ Richard Roberts, *Saving the City: The Great Financial Crisis of 1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Roberts's account draws extensively on the diary, letters and memoirs of participants, including Sir Basil Blackett's diary of the 1914 crisis.

These show how resources were assembled and how access was distributed, and are often especially revealing because they expose what firms could not do alone. In crisis, dependence becomes visible, as creditors, ministries, customers and associations acquire power precisely because ordinary routines no longer suffice.

The third are operational records: production reports, order books, redundancy files, plant-closure documents, engineering papers, contract variations and legal disputes. These show coping practices in practice rather than in rhetoric. A board may say that a merger preserves efficiency; operational records may show the loss of skill, the concentration of risk or the uneven consequences across plants and regions.

The fourth are reflective records: inquiries, post-mortems, official histories, anniversary volumes, later academic reinterpretations, compliance reforms, legal settlements and decisions about archival access. These are not neutral after-the-fact summaries. They are themselves part of the re-ordering process, allocating blame and stabilising a new narrative of what the crisis meant and what should be learned for posterity from it.

This evidence map clarifies why crisis history cannot be written from one archive alone. A company board minute may identify crisis as a demand problem; a bank file may reveal liquidity pressure; a ministry file may show strategic concern over capacity; a union record may reveal that workers understood the same episode as an attack on established custom. None of these views is sufficient by itself. The historian's role is not to select one as 'true' in a simple way, but to reconstruct how these partial diagnoses interacted.

The evidentiary challenge is not merely practical, but interpretive. Crisis records are written for audiences – shareholders, officials, creditors, courts, workers or publics – and their language is often strategic. Claims of necessity, inevitability and emergency must, therefore, be read as evidence of justification as well as evidence of constraint. This is one reason why a crisis-as-re-ordering approach foregrounds practices and institutions rather than accepting actor categories too readily.

There is also an ethical dimension, for business crises often involve job losses, insolvencies, pension failures, collusion, political influence or social harm. Historians must handle such material carefully, but careful handling is not the same as avoidance; if sensitive crisis records are excluded from historical analysis, the resulting history privileges the perspective of those with the power to curate their own survival.

Comparison Without Lesson-making

Crisis studies are, of course, almost irresistible to comparison. The language of ‘another 1929’, ‘another 1720’ or ‘another 2008’ appears whenever uncertainty rises. This said, historians should not refuse comparison but discipline it, for the problem is not analogy as such; it is analogy which jumps directly from surface resemblance to prescription.

A business-historical approach can make comparison more rigorous by comparing mechanisms rather than labels. Instead of asking whether two crises are ‘the same’, historians can ask whether similar processes of diagnosis, mobilisation, coping and reflection occurred. Did actors face a comparable information problem? Did they have similar credit instruments? Did they employ similar coping strategies? Did the state occupy a similar position as regulator, customer or lender? Did post-crisis narratives stabilise comparable lessons?

This shifts comparison from moral drama to institutional analysis. The South Sea Bubble and railway speculation are not comparable because they are both ‘manias’ in some timeless psychological sense. They are comparable because both involved contested knowledge, corporate forms, expectations of future profit and uncertainty over the legitimacy of speculative enterprise. Inter-war shipbuilding and later industrial restructuring are not comparable because they are both examples of decline, but because both raise questions about capacity, preparedness, state brokerage and the distribution of losses.

Such comparison also protects historians from a common error: treating crisis outcomes as verdicts. Survival does not always prove competence; failure does not always prove mismanagement. A firm can survive because it had privileged access to credit or state contracts; a firm can fail because the institutional settlement on which it depended collapsed. Comparing mechanisms allows historians to explain variation without turning outcomes into moral judgements.

There is, however, a limit to what historians should promise. The past does not provide a manual for future crises, though it can provide a disciplined understanding of how crises become consequential: how actors interpret threat, how institutions constrain action, how power shapes mobilisation, and how later narratives simplify the uncertainty of the moment. This is a more modest claim than lesson-making, but a stronger historical one. For business and economic historians, the reward is considerable. Crisis comparison can connect case studies without flattening them. It can move between finance, industry, environment and legitimacy because the common object is not the same kind of shock

but the same kind of historical process: threatened coordination and attempted re-ordering.

This discipline is especially important in synthetic work. Breadth without mechanism becomes assertion. A crisis-as-re-ordering frame allows breadth while preserving analytical discipline: every example must show how threat was diagnosed, how resources were mobilised, how action was justified and how a new order was stabilised or failed.

The Historian's Task

The historian's task is not to define crises once and for all, nor to supply simple lessons to business leaders, policymakers or publics. More basically, it is to make crisis analytically tractable: to reconstruct how threat was recognised, how authority was mobilised, how coping practices were chosen, and how the resulting settlement was remembered or concealed.

That task begins with chronology, but not only the chronology of events. It requires a chronology of diagnosis: when did actors begin to speak of crisis? Which labels did they use? When did a difficulty become an emergency? When did an emergency become a permanent condition? The historian should map not just what happened, but when the meaning of what happened changed.

It also requires an institutional map. Crises rarely belong to one firm; they sit across creditors, suppliers, customers, workers, regulators, associations, ministries and publics. A crisis history should therefore identify the arenas in which coordination was attempted and the instruments available in each arena. Without such mapping, crisis appears either as chaos or as macro inevitability.

The historian must also treat archives as part of the crisis story. Crisis records are often sensitive: layoffs, insolvencies, collusion, lobbying, internal dispute, reputational management. If such records are closed or destroyed, the archive itself becomes an artefact of crisis reflection. Silence is evidence, though not evidence that can be used carelessly.

A practical research agenda follows. Future crisis histories might ask: how do diagnostic labels travel from firms to press to state? How are crisis claims used to authorise exceptional measures? How do banks, associations and ministries mediate between macro shock and firm-level action? How do coping practices reshape long-term capability? How do post-crisis narratives alter what later historians can see? Can these

dimensions support a more systematic taxonomy of crises by scale, temporality and mechanism without flattening historical variation?

The historian must also distinguish between explanation and vindication. To show why actors chose a particular course is not to endorse it. To reconstruct constraint is not to deny agency. This distinction is especially important in business history, where crisis decisions often involve painful distributions of loss. A good crisis history should make those distributions visible while still explaining why contemporaries regarded certain choices as plausible.

The same discipline applies to language. Terms such as resilience, adaptation and recovery can smuggle in success narratives. A region may 'recover' aggregate output while losing skilled employment; a firm may become financially resilient by externalising risk; a state may stabilise one sector by sacrificing another. The historian's task is to keep multiple measures of recovery in view and to ask who benefited from the re-ordering.

This is where business history has something distinctive to contribute. It can show how abstract shocks become concrete constraints and how institutions which appear stable in normal times are repaired, reproduced, circumvented or remade under pressure. Crisis is, in other words, not merely a subject for business history, but a method for seeing how business order works.

This perspective also changes the kind of contribution business history can make to contemporary debate. The historian should be cautious about direct policy advice, but not silent. Historical work can show which assumptions have failed before, how institutions have learned or refused to learn, and how crisis language has been used to legitimise change. Its value lies in thickening public understanding of possibility and constraint, not in offering a universal playbook.

Conclusion

In sum, crises in business history should be treated as processes of re-ordering. They expose the routines through which economic life is coordinated, the authority structures through which resources are mobilised, and the narratives through which exceptional action is justified. This does not mean re-ordering must produce innovation or institutional change, for it may also restore familiar arrangements and reinforce existing distributions of authority. Crises also expose the archive itself: what is recorded, what is withheld, and what later becomes legible as history.

Such an approach also changes the status of examples. A bubble, a shipbuilding rationalisation scheme, a corporate legitimacy crisis or a slow environmental constraint need not be forced into one typology. They can be compared because each reveals a threatened order and a struggle over re-ordering. The commonality lies not in the kind of shock but in the historian's questions: what routines failed, who could mobilise resources, what practices were adopted, and what settlement followed?

The result is a business history that is less tempted by heroic survival stories and less trapped by aggregate decline narratives. It can explain why crisis produced innovation in one setting, collusion in another, collapse in a third, and reputational repair in a fourth. That is not a weakness of the framework but its purpose: it keeps causation open long enough for evidence to matter.

A threatened-orders perspective helps clarify this task, but the argument is ultimately business-historical. The field's strength lies in reconstructing institutions and decisions at the level where crisis is lived: the boardroom, the ministry, the bank, the trade association, the shopfloor, the court file and the press report. When these sources are brought together, crisis becomes more than shock, failure or metaphor; it becomes a means of studying how capitalist order is made, repaired, reproduced and remade.

For this reason, the most useful crisis history will resist two temptations: moralising after the fact and turning the past into a handbook of lessons. Instead, it will recover the uncertainty of actors, the constraints of institutions and the politics of evidence. That is the historian's role – not to tame crisis into simple wisdom, but to show how, in moments of threatened order, business life becomes historically visible.

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A Dynasty at the Docks: the Reyniers Family and the Association des Intérêts Maritimes de Gand, 1900–2000

Mare Dermaux¹

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Reyniers family emerged as one of the key maritime families shaping the port of Ghent. Across three generations, family members worked as shipping agents, company managers and representatives of maritime employers, and played an active role in the economic and institutional life of the harbour. Their activities ranged from shipping agencies and liner services to organisations that defended the interests of the port community. Through these roles, the family became deeply embedded in the structures that governed Ghent's maritime economy.

One of the principal arenas in which this influence was exercised was the Association des Intérêts Maritimes de Gand, founded in 1904. This private interest group brought together brokers, shipping agents, stevedores and other port entrepreneurs to represent their shared interests and strengthen their collective voice in negotiations with public authorities. Over the twentieth century, members of the Reyniers family held several leadership positions within the Association, helping to shape debates on port infrastructure, labour relations and maritime policy. Their sustained involvement shows how family businesses could play a significant role in the governance and development of a medium-sized European port. In 2024, cargo traffic at the Port of Ghent exceeded 29 million tonnes, with 67 million tonnes across North Sea Port (Ghent-Terneuzen-Vlissingen), placing it ninth in the European port rankings by cargo transport.²

The history of the Reyniers family is particularly well documented in the archives of the Association des Intérêts Maritimes de Gand, the forerunner of today's Voka/VeGHO (Flemish network of enterprises/Association for Ghent Port-Related Companies) and Ghent Port Community. Preserved at Liberas, the Ghent-based centre for the history of the liberal ideal of freedom in Belgium, these records provide a detailed account of the organisation's activities.³ Annual reports, membership lists and internal documents reveal not only the evolution of port policy and economic networks, but also the individuals who shaped them. From 1927 onwards, the reports include extensive

¹ Mare Dermaux is a historical researcher at Liberas.

² North Sea Port, 'rijk verleden, rijkere toekomst,' *North Sea Port*, <<https://www.northseaport.com/nl/over-ons/wat-is-north-sea-port>> accessed 4 April 2026.

³ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), <https://n2t.net/ark:/55068/LAG_1255654> accessed 26 August 2026.

membership lists that make it possible to trace the participation of companies and families within the port community over time.⁴

This article uses the Reyniers family to explore the development of the port of Ghent and its maritime interest organisations between 1900 and 2000. Rather than offering a complete history of the port, it uses one family and one association archive to show how private-sector port governance can be reconstructed from business records. By reconstructing the activities of three generations, from Guillaume Reyniers to his descendants, it highlights how family firms contributed to the institutional life of the harbour and to the culture of consultation that characterised Ghent's port community. It also demonstrates the value of port association archives as sources for maritime and family history, revealing the social networks that underpinned a modern European port. In large countries, national maritime-sector associations often take the lead in lobbying policymakers. In smaller countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands, however, this role is often taken by umbrella organisations at the level of individual seaports, such as Deltalinqs in Rotterdam, Alfaport Voka in Antwerp, and Voka/VeGHO in Ghent.⁵

The Port of Ghent: Historical Context

In 2027 Ghent's seaport will be 200 years old. By the end of the nineteenth century the Handelsdok, one of the oldest docks in the port of Ghent, was already busy. The city had sought a direct connection to the sea since the Middle Ages. In the thirteenth century this connection ran via the river Lieve to the Zwin and the city of Damme. In the sixteenth century the Sassevaart was built towards the Westerschelde. Finally, in 1827, the Ghent-Terneuzen Canal gave the city a true sea canal and became its main economic lifeline.⁶

The port of Ghent underwent a process of modernisation in the early twentieth century. Although Antwerp remained dominant nationally, Ghent steadily grew into a major regional player thanks to investment in infrastructure and increasing industrial activity in the canal area. Ghent was an important port before the First World War, with trade routes to Britain and the US serving the cotton industry, among others. *The Cotton Trade*

⁴ Henri Florin and Paul Verspeelt, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes De Gand Tot Vereniging Van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (1904–2004): Een Eeuw Vertegenwoordiging Van De Privé-Sector In De Haven Van Gent* (Gent: VeGHO, 2004), pp.23–5.

⁵ Athanasios Pallis and Theo Notteboom, 'Representing Port Interests' in Theo Notteboom, Athanasios Pallis and Jean-Paul Rodrigue (eds), *Port Economics, Management and Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2022), p.541, <<https://porteconomicsmanagement.org/pemp/contents/part11/representing-port-interests/>> accessed 16 March 2026.

⁶ Jeroen Brugge, 'Die niet zuipt of koopt, wordt niet gerekend om te werken. Het sociaal overleg met betrekking tot de Gentse haven tijdens het interbellum (1919–1939)' (Master thesis: University of Ghent, 2009), pp.1–2.

Journal of Savannah, the journal of the cotton exchange in Savannah, USA, declared in 1906: 'Ghent, as everybody knows, occupies in fact a geographical position which one may call without hesitation a truly privileged one from the standpoint of a distribution place. It ranks as a first class port...'.⁷ A handful of cotton factories operated in the city at the beginning of the nineteenth century; by the later nineteenth century mechanised spinning and the new canal to Terneuzen had helped this number rise to around 80. The cotton industry became one of the city's most important economic sectors, attracting labour and supporting major firms such as Jules de Hemptinne (founded 1853) and Société Linière La Lys (founded 1838).⁸

The original canal of 1827 soon proved insufficient for the larger steamships that gradually replaced sailing ships in the mid-nineteenth century. Work to deepen and enlarge the canal began around 1870. In 1910 a new sea lock opened, enabling the port to expand. A significant addition was the construction of the Grootdok, with its three smaller side docks. The harbour grew rapidly: by 1930 Ghent had become the fourth-largest port in Europe, after Hamburg, Rotterdam and Antwerp. In that year it recorded international trade of approximately 10 million tonnes, including both imports and exports.⁹

As the port grew, so did opportunities for work and business. Around 1900, employer groups emerged in sub-sectors such as shipowning, stevedoring, shipping agencies and line agencies. Organisations were formed to combine resources and strengthen members' leverage in negotiations. Some disappeared as the industry changed, while others adapted and survived. Crucial among them was the Association des Intérêts Maritimes de Gand, which still has an institutional legacy today.

The Association des Intérêts Maritimes de Gand: the Port of Ghent and its Families

On 8 April 1904 the Association des Intérêts Maritimes de Gand (hereafter the Association) was founded as an independent interest group for the port of Ghent. It emerged from the maritime section of the Cercle Commercial et Industriel, a liberal and industrial circle founded in 1858. Members wanted an independent organisation with greater capacity to communicate quickly and directly with government.¹⁰ Membership

⁷ Florin and Verspeel, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, p.34.

⁸ René De Herdt, 'Gent op weg naar de eerste industriële revolutie', (1987) 5, 19, *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis van Techniek en Industriële Cultuur*, pp.26–33.

⁹ Jan Strubbe, 'De ontwikkeling van de Belgische zeehavens: Een groei naar de zee' (1990) 13, 1, *Gewina/Tijdschrift voor de Geschiedenis van Geneeskunde, Natuurwetenschappen, Wiskunde en Techniek*, p.117.

¹⁰ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1 yearbooks, 1905.; Florin and Verspeel. *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, p.17.

expanded quickly. By 1927, the Association had surpassed 100 member companies, and after the Second World War this figure rose to more than 400. Similar initiatives appeared elsewhere. Around 1900, employer groups emerged across a range of sectors.¹¹ In 1901, the *Fédération Maritime d'Anvers* (Antwerp Maritime Federation) was founded to improve labour relations between workers and owners. In the same year the *Union Générale pour la Protection du Travail au Port d'Anvers* was established; it claimed to unite employers and employees in one organisation, but mainly supported owners' interests in an effort to counter the rise of trade unions.¹² These first employer organisations in Ghent and Antwerp were not primarily concerned with workers' pay or employment conditions, but with protecting the commercial interests of their members.¹³

The Ghent Association was supported by influential figures from the port elite. Its initiator was Maurice de Smet de Naeyer (1862–1941), son of a prominent textile manufacturer and nephew of the later Belgian minister Paul de Smet de Naeyer (1843–1913). Maurice became the Association's first president. The executive committee consisted of eleven representatives of local port companies and was responsible for appointing the day-to-day management, known as the *Bureau*. The Association's office was located at *Rue Longue du Marais* 15, now *Universiteitsstraat*. Membership required a company presence in the port of Ghent. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, shipbrokers attracted some of the most important trade, including liner services to Great Britain, Scandinavia and the USA. They were also responsible for the coal, iron and timber trades for which Ghent was well known.¹⁴

Several families left their mark on the Association throughout the twentieth century, most notably the de Smet de Naeyer, Vyane and Reyniers families. In the organisation's early years, members of these families occupied nearly all key positions, including president, vice-president and treasurer. As a result, much of the Association's daily management, as well as a significant share of its decision-making power, rested in the hands of a small group of firms. A similar pattern could be observed in the *Fédération Maritime d'Anvers*, where a limited circle of individuals divided the most influential

¹¹ Florin and Verspeelt, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, pp.17–18.

¹² Stephan Vanfraechem, 'Survival of the Fittest? Macht en concurrentiekracht in de Antwerpse Haven 1960-1964' (2001) *Neha-Jaarboek voor economische, bedrijfs- en techniekgeschiedenis*, p.196.

¹³ Stephan Vanfraechem, *Een sfeer om haring te braden. Arbeidsverhoudingen in de haven van Antwerpen, 1880-1972* (Gent: Academia Press, 2005), pp.40–3.

¹⁴ Florin and Verspeelt, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, pp.19–20.

posts among themselves.¹⁵ Within the Association, the Reyniers family proved particularly prominent: it supplied two chairmen and remained represented on the board of directors well into the twenty-first century, demonstrating its enduring commitment to the interests of the port of Ghent.

A Family Business in Motion: Reyniers Frères

The family's activities were not limited to interest representation on the Association's board; they also extended to the operational side of the harbour. The maritime roots of the Reyniers family reached back to 1835, when Guillaume Reyniers founded the shipping agency Louis de Brabant with Désiré Willems. A shipping agent ensured that ships could enter the port without difficulty and that cargo could be loaded or delivered smoothly. The firm maintained liner services to Rotterdam and London. His son, Guillaume Polydore Reyniers (1844–1923), continued the business with his wife Catherine Willems (1840–93). In 1904 Louis de Brabant became a co-founder of the Association.¹⁶ After the firm was dissolved in 1919, Guillaume Polydore's sons, Guillaume Jean Marie (1872–1952) and Charles Reyniers (1875–1964), continued the business under the name Reyniers Frères.¹⁷ Under the flag of Ghent Steamship Lines, the family company organised regular liner services between Ghent and Rotterdam-Amsterdam. In 1954 five lines are listed between Ghent and destinations including the Gulf of Mexico, the UK and Scandinavia.¹⁸ Through Reyniers Frères, the family provided a representative on the Association's management committee from 1919 onwards and held several positions in the Association's Bureau. Reyniers Frères, like its predecessor Louis de Brabant, was a shipping agency, located at Place du Dock 23 (later Stapelplein) in Ghent.¹⁹

Business succession remained within the family. Like Guillaume and his brother Charles before them, André and Marcel Reyniers succeeded their father in the firm. From the mid-twentieth century, the Reyniers brothers merged their activities with the stevedoring company Sogama (Société Gantoise de Manutention), with which they established themselves at Stapelplein 17 in Ghent. The company stored bulk goods before

¹⁵ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1 yearbooks, 1905.; Vanfraechem. *Een sfeer om haring te braden* (Gent: Academia Press, 2005), p.42.

¹⁶ Liberas, Archief Het Laatste Nieuws kantoor Gent (archief nr. 1103), 373, Kris Naudts, 'Schouders van 'n schone vrouw' (*Het nieuwsblad*, 10 November 1987); Rijksarchief Gent (from now abbreviated as RAG), Births Ghent, 1844, birth certificate Guillaume Polydore Reyniers, <agatha.arch.be> accessed 16 June 2025.

¹⁷ Liberas, Archief Het Laatste Nieuws kantoor Gent (archief nr. 1103), 373, Kris Naudts, 'Schouders van 'n schone vrouw,' (*Het nieuwsblad*, 10 November 1987).

¹⁸ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1.19 yearbooks, 1954.

¹⁹ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1.20 yearbooks, 1955.

they were shipped onwards. Reyniers Frères & Sogama became a leading firm in the port of Ghent and was also incorporated into the Association.²⁰

Guillaume Jean Marie Reyniers: a Key Figure in Ghent's Maritime Interests

The young Association found an important advocate in Guillaume J. M. Reyniers. He was listed as treasurer in the first yearbook (1904/5) and later became chairman, succeeding Maurice de Smet de Naeyer and helping to build the organisation into an influential voice for Ghent's maritime entrepreneurs.²¹ Guillaume was a skilled negotiator, but did not shy away from clear views. In 1910 he is mentioned as co-representative, with Edgard Spaey, for the shipping agency Ghent Lloyd N.V. This agency was founded in 1907 by the Nolson brothers, with support from various Ghent elites, and operated several liner services. The company was dissolved in 1920, after which Guillaume focused on his own firm, Reyniers Frères.²² He married Victorine Deroose and lived with his wife and sons at the Stapelplein, where the company was located.²³

From 1919, Guillaume Reyniers served as vice-president of the Association, and in 1921 he officially assumed the presidency. Under his leadership, the Association took up important dossiers, including pilotage reform. Pilots helped vessels navigate local waters. Guillaume advocated the expansion of the pilotage corps, fixed tariffs for the service, and the establishment of pilots in Ghent and Terneuzen. He also pushed for fair railway fares for dockworkers, in line with those in Antwerp, and succeeded in 1919. He further advocated for a connection between the Handelsdok, Houtdok and Grootdok.²⁴

Within the Consultation Committee of the Port, established in 1920, Guillaume was an influential voice for the brokers, who arranged transport contracts between shipowners and cargo providers. He challenged unjust tariffs and promoted structured consultation between government, employers and employees. In addition to his role in the Association, he headed the Centrale des Employeurs au Port de Gand (CEPG), or Port of Ghent Employers' Centre, until 1946. There he was responsible for social consultation with dockworkers. The organisation had been founded with assistance from the

²⁰ Liberas, Archief Het Laatste Nieuws kantoor Gent (archief nr. 1103), 373, Kris Naudts, 'Schouders van 'n schone vrouw' (*Het nieuwsblad*, 10 November 1987).

²¹ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1.10 yearbooks, 1921.

²² Guido De Latte, 'Gentse maritieme reders, scheepsmakelaars en scheepsfinciers in de negentiende eeuw' (2015) 44, 6, *Ghendtsche Tydinghen*, pp.351–2.

²³ RAG, Births Ghent, 1907, birth certificate André Marie Prosper Jean Reyniers, <agatha.arch.be> accessed 23 June 2025.

²⁴ Florin and Verspeelt. *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, p.45.

Association in the inter-war period to support discussions around employees' pay.²⁵ Similar developments occurred in Antwerp, where the Central Organisation of Employers at the Port of Antwerp (CEPA) was established on 22 March 1929.²⁶ At a time of social tension and strikes, Guillaume Reyniers helped shape the consultation model in the port of Ghent. Jeroen Brugge's research on Ghent dockworkers, based on reports from the port's advisory committee, the Labour Committee and the municipal council, presents Guillaume as a unifying figure. He sought mutual respect between labour and capital during the negotiations of 1929 and the social agreement of 1936, which followed a wave of national strikes.²⁷ The strike had been launched by dockworkers who sought to highlight the limited influence of joint consultation and to demand higher wages. It quickly spread to other sectors of labour.²⁸ Guillaume sought to guide the harbour community towards more open debate and better communication among the various actors involved in the port. During the negotiations of the 1930s, he called for a more structured consultation system. In a letter written on behalf of the Association and the shipbrokers, he argued for regular meetings between all stakeholders, proposing that representatives of the different parties meet at fixed intervals to address port-related issues more efficiently.²⁹ Guillaume also helped shape the Association itself. In June 1938, under his leadership, the Association became a fully-fledged non-profit organisation while retaining its social objective. Its board of directors was to be composed of 24 members elected by the general assembly from among companies whose purpose was shipping or brokerage.

Between the Lines: Guillaume Reyniers and the Association During the Two World Wars

Only limited information is available on Guillaume Reyniers's activities during the two world wars, because organisations such as the Association des Intérêts Maritimes de Gand were suspended during both occupations. Annual reports for 1914–18 and 1939–45 are therefore missing.³⁰ The annual report published in 1919 states that the German occupation of Ghent in 1914 brought both the port and the Association's activities to a complete standstill. This continued until the armistice on 11 November 1918. The port was used only to a limited extent during the First World War, mainly for the transport of

²⁵ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1.18 yearbooks, 1948.

²⁶ Cepas, 'Historiek', Cepas <<https://www.cepa.be/werkgevers/over-cepa/historiek/>> accessed 26 February 2026.

²⁷ Brugge, 'Die niet zuipt of koopt', pp.48–109.

²⁸ Stephan Vanfraechem and Bob Baete, *100 jaar havenarbeidersbond Antwerpen. Van dokwerker tot havenarbeider* (Gent: AMSAB-ISG, 2004), pp.63–6.

²⁹ Brugge, 'Die niet zuipt of koopt', p.75.

³⁰ Florin and Verspeelt, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, p.15.

timber from the Netherlands and the Rhine delta for German construction works.³¹ A similar interruption occurred during the Second World War. The Association's activities again fell silent, and no annual reports were produced during the occupation years. It was only in 1945 that the organisation resumed its reporting, describing the years between 1939 and 1945 retrospectively.³²

Despite the suspension of the Association's activities, the family firm Reyniers Frères continued to operate during the Second World War. After the Belgian surrender in May 1940, several industrial and commercial leaders, including firms such as the timber trader Van Hoorebeke, resumed limited economic activity. They did so in a difficult context. Although such activity could indirectly benefit the occupying forces, it was also seen by many contemporaries as necessary to maintain production and prevent shortages. The British naval blockade restricted maritime movement and placed pressure on food supplies. The Galopin Committee, acting in connection with the Belgian government in exile in London, encouraged continued industrial and port activity in Belgium in order to sustain essential imports and preserve the economy under occupation. This policy led many firms in Belgian ports to adopt a pragmatic strategy of limited economic accommodation. It was later criticised by some as economic collaboration, while others defended it as a means of preserving infrastructure and limiting harsher measures such as labour deportations.³³

In a 1987 interview, André Reyniers (1907–97), Guillaume's son, described how he built new shipping links with Scandinavia during the Second World War. A Stockholm-based firm had contacted him through one of the Association's promotional booklets. According to Reyniers, the Swedish company appreciated that Reyniers Frères, like its own firm, was run by two brothers. During the war, the Swedish company stored goods on the quays of Ghent harbour. When German occupation forces began loading girders and steel beams intended for bridge repair, Reyniers intervened. He protested and requested official receipts, pointing out that the goods belonged to a neutral country. His intervention eventually preserved goods worth two million Belgian francs (around €740,000 today, following the consumer price index), which could be sent back to

³¹ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1.8 yearbooks, 1919; Michel Steels, 'Te Gent tijdens de eerste wereldoorlog' (1978) *Ghendtsche Tydinghen* 7, 6, p.265.

³² Florin and Verspeelt, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, p.15; Mark Van den Wijngaert, *Nood breekt wet: economische collaboratie of accommodatie: het beleid van Alexandre Galopin gouverneur van de Société générale tijdens de Duitse bezetting (1940-1944)* (Tielt: Lannoo, 1990), p.26.

³³ Van den Wijngaert, *Nood breekt wet*, pp.25–8.

Sweden. According to Reyniers, the Swedish firm remained grateful for this wartime intervention.³⁴

André Reyniers: Central Figure in the Modern Port of Ghent

In 1945 Guillaume Reyniers passed the presidency of the Association to his vice-president, Pierre Vyane.³⁵ Family representation in the Association was then continued by his son, André Reyniers.³⁶ In the decades that followed, André became a pivotal figure within Ghent's port organisations. His long career, which formally ended only in 1989, was characterised by diplomacy, openness towards Europe and a progressive view of port development.

André Reyniers took his first steps into port life in the 1930s in his family's company, Reyniers Frères. After a few months, he moved to London to work as an apprentice with the shipbroker John Miller. After returning to Belgium, he became a member of the Comité Paritaire Régional du Port de Gand (Regional Joint Committee of the Port of Ghent) in the working group of the Ghent Maritime & Inland Waterway Employers' Centre from 1948 to 1954.³⁷ As second vice-president of the Association from the mid-1950s, and subsequently as first vice-president, he remained an influential voice in the Association for decades. In 1963 the Association changed its name to Vereniging Gentse Zeevaartbelangen (Ghent Maritime Interests Association).³⁸

André was known as an erudite man who spoke several languages and facilitated cooperation with international contacts. During the 1955 Ghent Floraliën, a four-yearly exhibition of flowers and plants, he invited prominent representatives of the European iron and steel industry to attend the flower show and participate in the official banquet. This helped develop new trade contacts and support the port's international profile.³⁹ His influence extended beyond the Association. Like his father, he was chairman of the CEPG and also head of the Professional Association of Ghent Stevedores and of the Association of Ghent Shipbrokers for Metal Products. Colleagues in the Association regarded him as a mediator and diplomat who understood the interests of the dockworkers. His work at

³⁴ Liberas, Archief Het Laatste Nieuws kantoor Gent (archief nr. 1103), 373, Kris Naudts, 'Schouders van 'n schone vrouw' (*Het nieuwsblad*, 10 November 1987).

³⁵ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1.18 yearbooks, 1948.

³⁶ RAG, Births Ghent, 1907, birth certificate André Marie Prosper Jean Reyniers, <agatha.arch.be> accessed 23 June 2025.

³⁷ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1.18 yearbooks, 1948.

³⁸ Florin and Verspeelt, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, p.15.

³⁹ Florin and Verspeelt, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, pp.62–3.

the stevedoring company Sogama also made him an important figure in the practical operation of the port.⁴⁰ In a period in which the port of Ghent sought to strengthen its international profile, André Reyniers remained a fixture on the board and was actively involved in the Association until the late 1980s.⁴¹

After the Association's building was demolished in the 1990s, André symbolically received the commemorative plaque from 1954, marking the Association's fiftieth anniversary and bearing the name of Maurice de Smet de Naeyer. This gesture highlighted his strong connection to the organisation's history. The plaque was subsequently installed at the premises of the family firm Reyniers & Sogama.⁴² By that time the Association had relocated its headquarters to Dok Noord 2, leaving its former building at Vliegtuiglaan 1, next to the Grootdok, which was then occupied by the offices of the Port Authority of Ghent. The building was renovated in 2015 and now serves as the visitor centre of North Sea Port. It is symbolically positioned at the junction between city and port.⁴³

A major recognition of André's work came in 1992, when he received the Maritime Award from the European Shipping Press Association, acknowledging half a century of commitment to the maritime industry. He died in 1997, aged 89. In the in memoriam from the International Club of Flanders, the following text appeared: 'One of the most outstanding members of our club left us. André Reyniers was a world citizen; those who had the privilege to know him, realize that something disappeared in our maritime world.'⁴⁴

The following anecdote from 1979 conveys something of André Reyniers's character. Under his management, the company's warehouses at quay 850 on the Sifferdok were painted a striking pink and blue. André travelled to various destinations for the company and saw, in the port of Gothenburg, how company buildings were painted in bold colours and patterns. He then decided to give two Ghent art students complete freedom with his warehouses. 'I like to support young elements who have talent and are workers', he explained.⁴⁵ The sheds were demolished in 2016 because the new owners considered them too small for the cargo handled in the port of Ghent. Reyniers & Sogama was first

⁴⁰ Liberas, Archief Het Laatste Nieuws kantoor Gent (archief nr. 1103), 373, Kris Naudts, 'Schouders van 'n schone vrouw' (*Het nieuwsblad*, 10 November 1987).

⁴¹ Florin and Verspeelt, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, pp.92-3.

⁴² Florin and Verspeelt, *Van Association Des Intérêts Maritimes*, pp.60-1.

⁴³ Architectura, 'Havenbedrijf Gent bouwt bezoekerscentrum'.

⁴⁴ International Club of Flanders, 'in memoriam,' *Newsletter International Club of Flanders* (1997), p.4.

⁴⁵ De Havenkrant Gent, 'Toekomst rooskleurig (maar niet meer in het roze)' (2016) 4, *De Havenkrant Gent*, p.2.

acquired by Manuports and later incorporated into the stevedoring company Euroports in the early 2000s. Euroports decided to make way for larger and newer buildings.⁴⁶

A Family at the Docks into the Twenty-first Century

André's son, Jean Reyniers (1939), also entered port life and joined the family business, Reyniers & Sogama, as a shipping agent in the late 1980s.⁴⁷ After his father's death, he was admitted to the board of directors of the Ghent Maritime Interests Association.⁴⁸ He became vice-president of the Association in 1999.⁴⁹ In 2001, the Association changed its name once more to the Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen vzw (VeGHO), or Association of Ghent Port-Related Companies, as part of a reorganisation aimed at integrating all port organisations. Jean's son, Matthieu Reyniers (1969), still works at Euroports Terminals Ghent, indicating the family's continuing involvement in the port into the twenty-first century.⁵⁰ Their legacy lives on in the structures of the port itself and in the spirit of consultation that still characterises VeGHO today, whose operations have been integrated into Voka (Chamber of Commerce East Flanders) since 2013.

Concluding Thoughts

The history of the Reyniers family shows how the development of a port is shaped not only by infrastructure and trade flows, but also by the individuals and families who sustain its institutions. Across three generations, the Reyniers combined entrepreneurial activity in shipping and stevedoring with long-term involvement in the Association des Intérêts Maritimes de Gand. Through this dual role, they helped connect the operational life of the harbour with the organisations that represented and coordinated the interests of the port community.

Their story illustrates the importance of intermediary institutions such as the Association in medium-sized ports like Ghent. These organisations provided a platform where entrepreneurs could collectively defend their interests, negotiate with authorities and shape the evolution of the harbour. The continuity of families such as the Reyniers within these structures contributed to stability, knowledge transfer and the culture of

⁴⁶ Liberas, Archief Het Laatste Nieuws kantoor Gent (archief nr. 1103), 373, Kris Naudts, 'Schouders van 'n schone vrouw' (*Het nieuwsblad*, 10 November 1987).

⁴⁷ Liberas, Archief Rotary Club Gent (archief nr. 2134), 6, Reyniers André.

⁴⁸ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1.57 yearbooks, 1998.

⁴⁹ Liberas, Archief Vereniging van Gentse Havengebonden Ondernemingen (VeGHO) / Gentse Havengemeenschap (archief nr. 110), 1.1.58 yearbooks, 1999.

⁵⁰ Liberas, Archief Rotary Club Gent (archief nr. 2134), 6, Reyniers André.

consultation that characterised the Ghent port community throughout the twentieth century.

At the same time, this case highlights the value of association archives for historical research. Membership lists, reports and internal documents make it possible to trace networks of companies and families that are often absent from traditional state or corporate sources. The VeGHO archive becomes notably richer from the 1980s onwards, particularly with the establishment of the Gentse Havengemeenschap (Ghent Port Authority). The roots of this organisation can be traced back to the Werkgroep Havengebruikers (Port Users' Working Group), founded in 1981, in which Reyniers Frères played a prominent role from the beginning. This development adds depth to the archival record and opens up promising avenues for further research. It invites questions about how the port adapted to the pressures of increasingly globalised trade flows, and to what extent family-run enterprises have continued to shape its evolution up to the present day. Future work could compare similar family histories in other medium-sized ports, including the port of Dundee and the Fraternity of Masters & Seamen. Founded in the sixteenth century, this association represented shipmasters and seafarers, defending their professional and economic interests. It still exists today, albeit primarily as a charitable organisation, and its archive is partly preserved at the University of Dundee Archive Services.⁵¹ Preserving and studying such records allows historians and archivists to reconstruct the social and economic fabric of ports, revealing the actors and relationships that underpinned their long-term development.

⁵¹ University of Dundee Archives Services, KLoc F 068.413 1 F 844 – Fraternity of Masters and Seamen in Dundee, <<https://archives.dundee.ac.uk/kloc-f-068-413-1-f-844>> accessed 26 August 2026.

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Special Collections and Private Archives for Business History Research in Turkey: A Review

Akansel Yalçinkaya¹

Introduction

The field of business history typically relies on company archives to examine corporate internal dynamics, strategic choices and organisational cultures. When access to these archives is limited or impossible, historians must seek alternative sources. Turkey provides an interesting example of this situation. Although large holding companies and family businesses play a significant role in the country's economic and political growth, their internal records are rarely open to researchers. This lack of access highlights both institutional and cultural challenges. There is no legal obligation to preserve historical records, and the tradition of corporate accountability is weak. Additionally, business ownership is often concentrated within powerful families who see company records as private possessions rather than public resources.²

The limited accessibility of corporate archives in Turkey has created a significant gap in developing business history as an academic field. While economic history and political economy have thrived through state archives and statistical data³, the internal workings of firms, especially after 1950, remain mostly undocumented in academic literature. In this context, special collections, private archives and the holdings of professional organisations provide important but often overlooked resources for business history research. These materials can help reconstruct aspects of managerial beliefs, elite networks, labour relations, consultancy practices and broader patterns of industrial and commercial development, even without firm-level documentation.⁴

This article reviews a variety of alternative archival sources in Turkey. Its goal is to document and evaluate their importance for business historians. It highlights the availability and limitations of collections held by university libraries, research centres, professional chambers, foundations and the estates of business leaders and consultants. It also includes collections from major cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir.

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² A. Bugra, *State and Business in Modern Turkey: A Comparative Study* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994).

³ Ş. Pamuk, *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012).

⁴ Kenneth Lipartito, 'Culture and the Practice of Business History' (1995) 24(2), *Business and Economic History*, pp.1–41; Michael Rowlinson, John Hassard and Stephanie Decker, 'Research Strategies for Organizational History: A Dialogue Between Historical Theory and Organization Theory' (2014) 39(3) *Academy of Management Review*, pp.250–74.

Important institutions such as the SALT Research archive, the Vehbi Koç Foundation Archive (VKV) and various university special collections are key access points for exploring Turkey's business history.

The article goes beyond identifying existing sources to examine methods and information issues related to the use of personal and non-institutional archives. These sources are often curated, influenced by ideas or incomplete. This raises important questions about how narratives are constructed, what is left out, and how history is interpreted. However, academics in similar situations with limited archives argue that these materials can also help reshape the understanding of labour history. They shift the focus from companies to the networks, institutions and people that make up the larger system of capitalism.⁵

The organisation of the article is outlined here. Following this section, the next part addresses the motivations and impacts of Turkey's access to business records. A subsequent section then explores the potential of special collections and private archives that could serve as alternatives to business archives. Finally, the article wraps up with a conclusion section.

Access to Business Archives and Archival Accumulation in Turkey

When examining archival practices in Turkish businesses, it can be said that despite the existence of century-old brands and economic organizations, and even large-scale business groups, archival accumulation is quite limited. For instance, Seven Ağır⁶ points out that the scarcity of archival resources for business history, especially in the Middle East, including Turkey, and the lack of specialised archives capable of enhancing the study of business history – unlike in various developed nations – represent one of the main challenges to documenting business history. Seven Ağır further highlights that the lack of legal frameworks and regulations in Turkey has resulted in situations where such archival resources are shared without government aid or oversight and are only accessible by chance. In addition, no legally established archival institution in Turkey is responsible for the regular collection and processing of private archives. Considering all these factors, the value of the few existing private archives becomes apparent. In his

⁵ F. Amatori and G. Jones (eds), *Business History around the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Stephanie Decker, 'The Silence of the Archives: Business History, Post-colonialism and Archival Ethnography' (2013) 8 (2), *Management & Organizational History*, pp.155–73.

⁶ Seven Ağır, 'Nineteenth-century Female Entrepreneurship in Turkey' in J. Aston and C. Bishop, *Female Entrepreneurs in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

report on business archives, Faruk Bilici⁷ cited the Ottoman Bank Archive as a rare and important example and noted that although some large private groups such as Koç and Sabancı have made efforts to organise their archives under a centralised system, they are still far from being accessible to researchers. One important point to consider is whether these archives are accessible to all researchers. This issue has a significant and direct impact on the potential for accumulating business history knowledge. For example, in a study⁸ on the rationalisation of economic organisations in the early republican period, the Türkiye İş Bank Archive was consulted along with many other institutions. In response, it was stated that the general management would approve the request for permission to research the subject and that researchers would only be able to conduct searches using specific keywords. This example alone demonstrates that such institutional archives can be viewed not as archives but as material storage facilities where documents are kept away from researchers. Another dilemma created by this issue, and a dimension revealed by local experiences, is that some archives are only accessible to specific individuals, or only those with close ties to these institutions can benefit from them. For instance, specific research⁹ that examines the archives of Koç Holding, a key institution in Turkey's economic history, indicates that these archives are only available to select individuals.

A relevant and complex issue that has sparked significant debate is the ownership of documents and information produced by private sector organisations such as businesses, and who has the authority to manage them. It is widely accepted that archives play a crucial role in shaping institutional and social memory. This memory depends on the efforts of private organisations and individuals who create, preserve, organise and define archives, ensuring their protection and the transmission of historical events to future generations. Furthermore, the information and documents created and accumulated by economic organisations constitute an important part of the national heritage. In this context, examining whether the information and documents from a long-established and significant business transition into the public domain after a certain length of time is essential. The issue extends beyond merely making these archives accessible and visible through texts and exhibitions created by the institutions. It also involves recognising that

⁷ Faruk Bilici, 'İş dünyası arşivleri', *Arşivcilik Konferansları*, Hamza Kandur (haz.) (İstanbul: Librairie de Pera, 1995), pp.74–83.

⁸ Akansel Yalçınkaya, 'Adapting Western Management Practices: The Rationalization and Taylorization of Turkish State Monopolies in Early Republican Turkey (1933–1950)' (2024) 30(4), *Journal of Management History*, pp.513–26.

⁹ C. DüNDAR, *Özel Arşivinden Belgeler ve Anılarıyla Vehbi Koç* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2006); C. DüNDAR, *Özel Arşivinden Belgeler ve Anılarıyla Vehbi Koç II (1961–1976)* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008); Asli M. Çolpan, and Geoffrey Jones, 'Business Groups, Entrepreneurship and the Growth of the Koç Group in Turkey' (2016) 58 (1), *Business History*, pp.69–88.

society is the proper custodian of this information and documentation, allowing third-party institutions and individuals to write alternative histories, and ensuring equitable access for all without requiring registration for researchers. This forms a crucial component of the mission of private archives and distinguishes them fundamentally from state archives and collectors.¹⁰

In the Turkish context, the prominence of private business archives must also be understood in relation to the unusually direct role that banks and business conglomerates play in cultural production and institutional life¹¹. Unlike the UK – and to a lesser extent the US – where corporate involvement in culture is predominantly realised through sponsorship of events (e.g. Istanbul Film Festival, Istanbul Jazz Festival), exhibitions or prizes, several of Turkey's most reputable publishing houses (e.g. Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları), universities (e.g. Koç University, Sabancı University, Özyeğin University), and cultural institutions (e.g. Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSÜ), Istanbul Modern Museum, Sakıp Sabancı Museum) are themselves founded, administered, or closely affiliated with major conglomerates.¹² These institutions occupy a complex position vis-à-vis the state, simultaneously intersecting with official cultural policy and, at times, providing alternative or oppositional intellectual spaces.¹³ While this article does not aim to analyse corporate cultural patronage per se, acknowledging this structural feature helps to situate private business archives in Turkey within a broader institutional ecosystem and underscores their distinctive potential for historical research in business historiography.

Special Collections and Private Archives for Turkish Business History Research

In the past decade, especially in Turkey and worldwide, the emergence of small-scale, predominantly autonomous private archives has generated new prospects for research in business history and other disciplines. This repository encompasses corporate archives, foundation and familial collections, as well as archives curated by professional associations or individual collectors. Typically maintained by private enterprises, corporations, foundations or non-governmental organisations, such archives aim to preserve corporate legacy, bolster institutional identity, or enhance cultural heritage projects.

¹⁰ Lorans Tanatar Baruh, 'Türkiye'de özel arşivlerin oluşumu üzerine bazı düşünceler' in İ. Keskin, Ş. N. Somer and N. Oğuz (eds), *İsmet Binark Armağanı* (İstanbul: Türk Edebiyatı Vakfı Yayınları, 2015), p.380.

¹¹ N. Şeni, *İstanbul'da Özel Kültür Politikası ve Kentsel Alan* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011).

¹² G. Çelik, *Supporting Arts and Culture: A Case Study of Private Corporations and Foundations in Turkey* (Unpublished master's thesis, Kadir Has Üniversitesi, 2018).

¹³ E. Massicard and A. Alemdaroğlu, 'Mechanisms of Privilege: Private Foundations' Tax-exemption in Turkey (1967–2022)' (2026) *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, pp.1–20.

The gathered materials – comprising company correspondence, accounting records, contracts, advertising materials, catalogues, personnel files and visual documentation – are directly relevant to business history, providing insights into organisational structure, management practices, and market relations often absent in state archives. The emergence of virtual libraries and online archival platforms has profoundly transformed the research landscape. These platforms offer a blend of digitised archival materials, born-digital records and curated publishing collections, making them accessible to scholars regardless of geographical location. Prominent examples include SALT Research and VEKAM in Turkey. Historians who neglect these materials compromise the thorough understanding of primary sources, thus limiting the depth and originality of their analyses.

Furthermore, such digitally operated archival initiatives bring new perspectives to archival practices due to their open access and often free nature. This is because archival initiatives are often based on the state's recording of its public memory. The state archive is merely one example of an archive; it is not a special form of archive but merely one form of archive. In Turkey, private archives have evolved within a structural and institutional framework that differs markedly from the country's long-established state archival tradition. The state archives, rooted in Ottoman bureaucratic practices and later formalised under the Republican administration, represent a centralised and legally regulated system designed to preserve the official memory of the state. By contrast, private archives – maintained by individuals, families, foundations or non-governmental institutions – have historically developed outside this centuries-old administrative continuity and lack the same level of legal standardisation and institutional integration. Although private archives provide valuable complementary sources for social, cultural and intellectual history, their processes of preservation, access and classification have generally remained fragmented and dependent on individual or organisational initiatives rather than a unified national archival policy. This divergence reflects the distinct historical trajectories and degrees of institutionalisation characterising public and private archival practices in Turkey.¹⁴

Creating an archive does not necessarily mean replicating the organisational and operational logic of state archives. Many private and corporate archives are run according to professional standards that are like those of official archival institutions. However, more digital archival projects are using different, more flexible models. These digital archives are often created by researchers, independent groups or people in the

¹⁴ H. Öztürk, 'Private Archive in Turkey: Recommendations in the Context of Private Archives Practices in Scotland' (2022), *Journal of Balkan Libraries Union*, 9 (1) pp.1–7.

community. They do more than just store materials; they also actively curate, organise, and put them in context for research. Their collections may consist of digitised documents, born-digital records, visual materials or oral histories, often curated to emphasise perspectives and practices that are underrepresented in state or corporate archives. Adam Nix and Stephanie Decker say that these digital archives and sources give business historians unique points of view and new ways to make historical knowledge.¹⁵

Within this framework, the study answers its main research question: *Is it possible to conduct business history research without access to official or institutional archival materials in a context like Turkey, where most economically significant entities are family-owned and unavailable to researchers?* Additionally, it addresses a related question: *What alternative sources, besides official or institutional archives, can provide archival data, and how can these sources be accessed?* The findings highlight the important role of special collections and digital archives in tackling these challenges and broadening the opportunities for business history research in limited archival settings. İlhan Tekeli¹⁶ points out that when an institution will not open its archives, writing its history, especially its economic history, becomes nearly impossible. In Turkey, this means that researchers studying business history often must write history without relying on archives. To manage this, business historians may use the increasing number of private and family archives that have appeared in recent years. Many of these have been digitised and serve as alternative sources for constructing historical narratives when access to official or institutional archives is unavailable.

Researchers in Turkey can find important information in several archives that are connected to holding companies, banks and economic institutions. These include the SALT Research Archive, the Yapı Kredi Bank Historical Archive, the Türkiye İş Bank Museum Archive and the Eczacıbaşı Holding Archive and Documentation Centre. These holdings, along with university-based collections like VEKAM and the Suna Kıraç Library Digital Collection, as well as independent archives like the Ara Güler Archive, the Istanbul Research Institute Archive and the History Foundation Archive, create a different kind of archival landscape because they let historians put together a picture of the past from many different sources instead of just one institutional record¹⁷. As shown by recent events, the Turkish bourgeoisie's efforts to open their economic and artistic

¹⁵ Adam Nix and Stephanie Decker, 'Using Digital Sources: the Future of Business History?' (2023) 65(6), *Business History*, pp.1048–71.

¹⁶ İ. Tekeli, *Tarihyazını Üzerine Düşünmek* (Ankara: Dost Kitabevi, 1998); İ. Tekeli, *Birlikte Yazılan ve Öğrenilen Bir Tarihe Doğru* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2011).

¹⁷ Baruh, *ibid.*; T. Karatepe, E. Yılmaz Şentürk and V. Saydam (eds), *Bilgi ve Belge Çalışmaları: Özel Arşivlerde Teori ve Uygulama* (İstanbul: Hiperlink Yayınları, 2017).

collections to the public, mainly through the foundations and universities they have created, have played an important role in raising awareness about archives. This trend has picked up speed in recent years due to digital technologies, which have opened new opportunities for archival practices. For over twenty years in Turkey, materials outside official state archives, such as diaries, memoirs, family collections and photographs, have attracted the attention of cultural, artistic, and educational institutions and established companies. In response, many of these groups have started initiatives in this area. Their reasons and goals vary. They aim to promote new research directions, create artistic or aesthetic platforms, rebuild institutional memory and seek financial or social standing.¹⁸

The digitisation of archives, which act as stores of collective memory, began in Turkey in 1998. This was an important step toward providing faster and location-independent access to archival materials. It also helped make these materials available to a larger audience. Besides digitisation, adding high-quality metadata improves searchability, supports better cross-referencing, and allows greater compatibility with other archival collections¹⁹. It is important to look closely at these archives' nature, content and significance, especially regarding their potential contributions to business history research.

In 2011 Garanti Bank combined the services of three different cultural institutions: the Ottoman Bank Archive and Research Centre, Garanti Platform, and Garanti Gallery.²⁰ This new organization is called SALT. SALT Galata has an information centre known as SALT Research. It was created by merging the collections of these institutions and has a library that focuses on history, architecture and contemporary art. The library holds over 45,000 books and more than 60,000 periodicals. These include printed and rare works in several languages, mainly Turkish, Ottoman Turkish, French and English. A notable item in the collection is the *Annuaire Oriental* (Şark Ticaret Yıllıkları), which provides historians with valuable chances for detailed research. SALT Research's archival resources contain over 1.5 million digitised images and more than 100,000 catalogue records available through open access. One unique aspect of this archive is its preservation of the records of the Ottoman Bank, known as Bank-ı Osmanî-i Şahane, which was founded in 1863 and served historically as the official bank and treasury of the Ottoman Empire. Researchers can find various materials related to the Ottoman Bank,

¹⁸ Nurçin İleri, 'Tarihin suskunluklarının peşinden gitmek: Bir arşiv deneyimi' (2021) *Sekme #1: Arşiv-Temas*.

¹⁹ Lorans Tanatar Baruh, 'Arşivden çıktı: Arşivi kamuya açmak'

<https://www.academia.edu/34952771/Ar%C5%99Fivden_%C3%87%C4%B1kt%C4%B1_Ar%C5%99Fivi_Kamuya_A%C3%A7mak> accessed 31 July 2025.

²⁰ Lorans Tanatar Baruh, 'SALT Araştırma: Özel arşivleri paylaşma açmak' (17 December 2020)

<<https://ankos.org.tr/tr/salt-arastirma-ozel-arsivleri-paylasima-acmak-webinari/>> accessed 31 July 2025.

including personnel photographs, stock certificates, banknotes, promotional documents and real estate files.²¹ The archival collection, the basis for the Ottoman Bank Historical Research Centre, constitutes one of the richest sources on late Ottoman and early Republican financial, economic, political and cultural history. The Ottoman Bank, with all the diversity of its functions as a bank of issue, as a state bank dealing with the state's financial operations and as a commercial bank with a highly developed market base, witnessed the significant events of its time. All the colours and variety of the period are reflected in these documents which, even though not very voluminous when compared with other banking archives, constitutes one of the best sources to assess, complete and re-evaluate the documentation available on the subject.²² As a direct result of the archival work related to this collection, the history of the Ottoman Bank²³ has been thoroughly documented. In addition to studies highlighting the wealth and variety of the bank's archival materials²⁴, research has also looked at the bank's employees, especially its operational history. For example, one study provides detailed insights relevant to business history, discussing topics like the turnover rates of female employees from a gender perspective, their national identities, reasons for leaving their jobs, and the controlling practices used by their supervisors.²⁵ Furthermore, Edhem Eldem used the same archive to explain how the ethnic identities of the bank's staff changed as the institution moved from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic.²⁶

The Yapı Kredi Bank Historical Archive was created to identify, document, preserve, and organise the bank's contributions to Turkey's banking sector and culture from its start to today. It follows modern archival standards.²⁷ Its mission also includes ensuring relevant information reaches the right users quickly and effectively. While the archive's collection of documents may not be extensive, it stands out for containing the photographic works of Selahattin Giz, who was one of the most notable photojournalists of the Republican era, along with those of Ara Güler.²⁸ The Eczacıbaşı Group Archive is currently being

²¹ Elif Yılmaz, 'SALT Galata ve SALT Araştırma' (2014) 15(2), *Bilgi Dünyası*, pp.463–4.

²² Lorans Tanatar, 'Offerings of the Ottoman Bank Historical Research Center', *Colloquium of the European Association for Banking History e. V. East Meets West: Banking, Commerce and Investment* Istanbul 15–16 October 1999.

²³ E. Eldem, *A History of the Ottoman Bank* (Istanbul: Economic and Social History Foundation of Turkey, 1999); Edhem Eldem, 'The (Imperial) Ottoman Bank, Istanbul' (1999) 6(1), *Financial History Review*, pp.85–95.

²⁴ E. Eldem, *A 135-Year-Old Treasure: Glimpses from the Past in the Ottoman Bank Archives* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank, 1998).

²⁵ Laurence-Aida Ammour and Lorans Tanatar Baruh, 'Çalışan kadından bir kesit (1911–1934): Osmanlı Bankası kadın personeli' (1999) 183, *Tarih ve Toplum*, pp.152–1.

²⁶ Edhem Eldem, 'Reshuffling nationality and ethnicity. The Ottoman Bank staff from empire to republic' in T. de Graaf, J. Jonker and J. J. Mobron (eds), *European Banking Overseas, 19th–20th Century* (Amsterdam: ABN AMRO Historical Archives, 2002), pp.179–211.

²⁷ A. Kılıçarslan, *Pazarlama İlkelerine Göre Görsel-İşitsel Arşiv Malzemelerinin Pazarlanması: Yapı Kredi Tarihi Arşiv Müzesi Örneği* (Unpublished master thesis: Marmara University, 2007), pp.71–2.

²⁸ C. King, *Midnight at the Pera Palace: The Birth of Modern Istanbul* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), p.21.

digitised and is not available for researchers to access. You can request access information. The archive holds collections of documents and materials related to the Eczacıbaşı Group and its founders.²⁹ In contrast, Koç University's VEKAM and the Suna Kıraç Library Digital Collection provide open access to free resources. These resources are handy for business historians studying the Koç Group and its founder, Vehbi Koç, as well as for scholars focusing on Ankara-specific research conducted by VEKAM³⁰. The Vehbi Koç Newspaper Clippings Collection in the Suna Kıraç Library Digital Collection includes important press articles gathered from various periodicals concerning Vehbi Koç. While the Sakıp Sabancı Museum Collections and Archives at Sabancı University do not contain materials directly related to economics or business history, they still offer valuable resources for researchers exploring the cultural and artistic aspects of the business world. These collections and archives have been digitised and are available through the 'digitalSSM' initiative. This digital archive project follows international standards in the digitisation process, creates detailed metadata for the materials, and allows open access for the global research community.³¹

The Türkiye İş Bank Museum Archive holds a diverse collection of objects, documents, and audiovisual materials that have been gathered since the bank's founding. This collection reflects the development of banking during the Republican era and is an essential part of the bank's daily operations³². The archive includes banking-related documents like bills of exchange, receipts, collection slips, cash register records, share certificates, checks and bank wallets. It also contains contracts, internal correspondence, official communications with various institutions and organisations, letters to the bank and records about the bank's early employees. Together, these materials provide insights into that time's social and economic life. In addition, the collection features advertising materials such as newspaper advertisements, posters and postcards. It includes photographs, paintings, historical architectural plans, blueprints and various films on various topics. This extensive archive serves as a valuable resource for research in social and economic history.³³ The State Planning Organization Library serves as the library for

²⁹ Evrim Çataloğlu, archive and documentation specialist at Eczacıbaşı Group archive, email correspondence with Evrim Çataloğlu, 26 April 2019.

³⁰ Alev Ayaokur, 'Vehbi Koç ve Ankara Araştırmaları Merkezi (VEKAM) Kütüphanesi ve Arşivi' (2011) 12 (1), *Bilgi Dünyası*, pp.160-3.

³¹ Osman Serhat Karaman, 'digitalSSM: Sabancı Üniversitesi Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi'nin koleksiyon ve arşivlerinin dijitalleştirilmesi' (Paper presented at Archives and Cultural Heritage in the Digital Age conference), 20 October 2017, İstanbul, Türkiye).

³² Ayşegül Okan Sağlam, 'What does a bank do in the museum world?' (Paper presented at ICMAN Annual Conference on Corporate Museums, 10-12 October 2018, İstanbul, Türkiye).

³³ Türkiye İş Bankası Müzesi, <<http://www.issanat.com.tr/turkiye-is-bankasi-muzesi/koleksiyon-bagis>> accessed 31 July 2025.

the Presidency of Strategy and Budget of the Republic of Turkey. It provides users free access to digital copies of many documents, reports and records produced by the State Planning Organization. The State Planning Organization Library also keeps an extensive archive of materials related to the coordination and monitoring phases of development plans carried out between 1960 and 1980. This primary source material offers valuable support for various innovative and original research projects.³⁴

In recent years, the transformation of industrial heritage sites within municipal jurisdictions into information and documentation centres by local governments – aimed at fostering urban memory – has highlighted the growing importance of these sites as archival resources for writing the operational histories of local government information and documentation services. For instance, the SEKA Paper Factory in İzmit, a significant industrial heritage site from the Republican era, was transferred to the Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality, where the SEKA Documentation Centre, housing the SEKA Archive, was repurposed as the SEKA Paper Museum, serving the research community.³⁵ Given that the SEKA Paper Factory was founded in 1934 and became operational in 1936, the archive's role as a crucial repository of Turkey's economic and social history is established.³⁶

Despite the various digital archiving projects mentioned above, efforts to digitise historical sources in Turkey have been moving slowly. Turkey has not fully adopted the idea of open and unrestricted access unlike many other countries. Current initiatives mainly focus on preserving and cataloguing historical documents for internal use, while sharing these materials through open access is a lesser concern. This approach contrasts broader archival beliefs, such as those of Henri Langlois, the founder of the Cinémathèque Française. He argued that the best way to preserve a film is to share it, suggesting that archives thrive on sharing rather than hoarding.³⁷ In this context, open access is not just an ideal; it is essential for preserving and passing on archival materials over time.

³⁴ M. Yavuz, *Kamu Yatırımlarının Yönetimi: Müstakil Projelerden Toplaştrılmış Projelere Geçiş* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, Ankara University, 2017).

³⁵ Yeşim Kartaler, 'The SEKA Paper Museum: Transformation of Life into Memory, Memory into Museum and Museum into Life Again' (Paper presented at ICMAH Annual Conference on Corporate Museums, 10-12 October 2018, İstanbul, Türkiye), p.61.

³⁶ Meral Akbaş and Özge Kelekçi, 'From Factory to Museum: the Obliteration of the History of Resistance' in A. Chynoweth (ed.), *Museums and the Working Class* (London: Routledge, 2021), p.161.

³⁷ M. Ferro, *Cinema and History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988).

Finally, the *Creating Emerging Markets* (CEM) oral history archive developed by Harvard Business School is a significant and promising resource. This archive features interviews with prominent business leaders from various developing countries, including Turkey. It provides valuable insights into the paths of individual entrepreneurs and firms, along with broader trends in economic and institutional development. The archive contains in-depth video interviews, often lasting over one hour, with more than 160 business leaders from over 20 countries across Latin America, South and Southeast Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe. This resource is handy for researchers focused on the connections between business, history and development, as it highlights long-term thinking, corporate governance, social responsibility and the role of business in nation-building. Notably, the CEM archive features several interviews with prominent figures from Turkey, providing rare firsthand insights into how family-owned companies, conglomerates, and business leaders have adapted to the country's changing political and economic landscape. One of the project's unique features is its focus on accessibility and academic quality. Transcripts, thematic excerpts and full-length interview videos are free on the HBS Baker Library website. The archive is also used in teaching and case-based research at HBS. It serves as a model for using oral history to enhance business history studies in situations where traditional sources might be limited, incomplete or hard to find.³⁸ This oral history archive provides access to visual and transcribed recordings of oral history interviews with prominent Turkish business leaders such as Hamdi Akın, Gülsüm Azeri, Cem Boyner, Hüsnü Özyeğin, Rahmi Koç, Güler Sabancı, Selçuk Yaşar and Murat Vargı. Despite its considerable potential, the archive has not been significantly included in academic research concerning Turkish business history.

Conclusion

Private archives play a crucial role in business historiography when official or institutional sources are limited or insufficient. In these cases, materials from private archives often form the primary basis for research. This study adds to the field by identifying and examining the scope and content of local private archival sources. It also explores the new research opportunities these sources may offer for business history. It also highlights several important issues related to the broader themes discussed in the study.

Archives with business-related materials do more than just show how institutions think; they can also be used to investigate social relationships and everyday activities inside and outside of companies. Even though these collections are often made from a corporate or

³⁸ Creating Emerging Markets, <<https://www.hbs.edu/creating-emerging-markets/Pages/default.aspx>> accessed 31 July 2025.

institutional point of view, researchers can read them against the grain to find stories that aren't told in official narratives, like those of workers, middlemen or local communities. In this way, business archives can help historical approaches that are more grassroots-oriented without having to rely only on sources that are clearly bottom-up. The materials kept in these exceptional archives show that this kind of history can shift from focusing only on business founders to including the experiences and roles of employees within these organisations. Secondly, it is important to emphasise that, along with the timeline presented below, the economic and business history of the country can also be told from a more 'private' perspective. This view differs from the state-centred viewpoint and involves using the exceptional archives mentioned earlier. This is especially relevant in Turkey, where the government has always had a big say in the economy. When business archives include materials created or maintained by employees, they can enhance state archives by facilitating analyses that focus on quotidian labour practices and non-elite experiences, perspectives frequently overlooked in official historical accounts. A third key point is that the terms of access and how open private archives are to researchers matter greatly.

Finally, closely related to the previous point, addressing questions of access and transparency is important. Developing a clear institutional and legal framework for the management of private archival collections is particularly crucial in environments where current regulations are inadequate. For instance, there is no regulation in the UK that says private companies must give their records to state repositories. Because of this, most historical business and trade records are kept in local archives or in collections that can be found through guides like *Company and Business History Records Held by Other Archives* published by The National Archives.³⁹ Initiatives like the Business Archives Council have been very important in promoting preservation and access even though there are no comprehensive legal mandates. Some scholars argue these collections should be considered part of the public domain. This issue is crucial for both writing business history and for the field of archival studies.

³⁹ Company and business history records held by other archives, <<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/business-history-records-held-by-other-archives/>> accessed January 31, 2026.

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From Empire to Liberalisation: The Role of the State and Entrepreneurs in Transforming India's Shipping Business, 1906–1991

Soumyajit Mukherjee¹

Introduction

Before the intrusion of European naval powers into the Indian Ocean, transoceanic shipping in Asian waters operated within a broadly cosmopolitan framework. Philip Curtin described it as 'ecumenical' in nature² and as a 'zone with many...cultural differences' in which 'entry into the system was reasonably free but not without reference to cultural origins'.³ As Curtin argued, military and naval power could not easily override the cultural bonds that shaped these trading systems. The arrival of the Portuguese nevertheless altered this world. Although Portuguese power never controlled the whole Indian Ocean, it attempted to enforce a state-backed maritime monopoly through the *cartaz* system in the Arabian Sea.⁴ Earlier historiography treated this European intrusion as catastrophic, presenting it as the effective destruction of indigenous shipping and merchant business. More recent historians, including Ashin Dasgupta, Michael Pearson, Philip Curtin and Chhaya Goswami, have instead shown the continuing presence of indigenous merchants in Indian Ocean shipping, operating alongside, around and sometimes in partnership with European powers.⁵ From the mid-eighteenth century, however, the Indian Ocean increasingly came under British control.⁶ Historians have characterised the nineteenth century in the Indian Ocean as 'Pax Britannica'.⁷ The formation of the global colonial empire strengthened British dominance in Indian maritime trade. In the twentieth century, several socio-political factors challenged this monopoly. The First World War changed the global balance of power, while the US and

¹ Soumyajit Mukherjee is a doctoral researcher at Jadavpur University.

² P. D. Curtin, *Cross Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.127.

³ *Ibid.*, p.128.

⁴ Similar to the modern-day license system, in which a ship's every detail was recorded, such as the commodities it traded, destination, and routes. With a *cartaz*, issued by the Portuguese authority, a ship could sail the ocean for trade. Cf., J. M. Hobson, *The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp.150–1.

⁵ A. Dasgupta, *The World of the Indian Ocean Merchant, 1500–1800* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001); M. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean*, (New York: Routledge, 2006); C. Goswami, *Globalization Before its Time: The Gujarati Merchants from Kachchh* (Gurugram: Penguin Books, 2016).

⁶ For a good deal of discussion of the transition from indigenous shipping to British-controlled shipping see, F. Broeze, 'Underdevelopment and Dependency: Maritime India during the Raj' (1984) 18.3, *Modern Asian Studies*, pp.429, 432–41.

⁷ After the final defeat of the French navy at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, British power became unrivalled not only in the Indian Ocean, but in all the seven seas of the world. K. M. Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History* (first published 1945, reprint edition, New Delhi: Life Span Publishers, 2020), pp.72–81.

Japan entered the Indian Ocean region more forcefully. At the same time, from the second decade of the century, the Indian national movement took a more organised form under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Together, these developments shaped Indian nationalist consciousness and had a deep impact on the environment of the Indian shipping business and on claims about India's maritime heritage.

This article examines Indian shipping from the *Swadeshi* movement of the early twentieth century to economic liberalisation in 1991.⁸ It focuses on three connected fields: the growth of the national merchant fleet, containerisation and nautical education. It asks how state policy, private entrepreneurship, technological change and maritime training transformed the sector. Drawing mainly on government, port and business records, it argues that anti-colonial entrepreneurial resistance gave way to state-protected development after independence, before containerisation created new dependencies on global capital, technical expertise and logistical standards.

Earlier studies

Indian shipping has recently attracted renewed attention from historians and policymakers. This attention helps situate the present article within a wider domain and confirms its timeliness.⁹ A small but important body of work has documented Indian shipping since independence.¹⁰ Baldev Raj Nayar's important study of postcolonial Indian shipping examined the role of the nation-state in the development of Indian shipping during the 1960s and 1970s, before showing how shipping became more 'marginal' after 1980. For Nayar, the years after independence were marked by 'slow growth'; the period to 1980 formed a 'golden age'; and the years after 1980 again brought slow growth, as world shipping faced recession and stagnation. Nayar paid close attention to containerisation, but his emphasis lay mainly on why India failed to become an advanced container-trading nation. His primary focus was on the nation-state and, to

⁸ *Swadeshi* means indigenous, locally made products. Between 1905 and 1911, a trend of nationalist movement called the *Swadeshi* movement emerged in Bengal and gradually spread to other provinces of the British Indian Empire, in which the motto was boycotting the foreign/British-made products, mostly industrialised goods.

⁹ In recent times, developing regions – particularly India – have been actively involved in enhancing their 'maritimity' (a concept coined by Bernard Cohen to denote a country's ability to make use of the sea). This is further demonstrated by the Indian government's announcement of the *Maritime Summit* in 2021, which attracted a wide range of stakeholders in the maritime sector, including global and local investors, CEOs of shipping companies, industry experts, policymakers, technology providers, bankers, insurers, and representatives of major ports and shipping lines, with the prime aim of modernising the port and shipping sectors. Moreover, the *Maritime India Vision* (MIV 2023) lists more than 150 programmes, some of which entail modernising Indian ports to better compete with maritime powers such as China in global shipping.

¹⁰ This historiographical survey focuses primarily on scholarly publications and does not include works published by institutional bodies such as shipping companies, export firms, chambers of commerce, maritime academies, and other industry-related organisations.

some extent, the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI); as a result, a micro-history of Indian shipping remains missing.¹¹ Nayar's work also leaves scope for further analysis of how containerisation created problems on India's waterfronts, produced prolonged tension between government and port trusts, and shaped the role of non-state actors within the nation-state. H. B. Desai, then director of the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), published a companion volume on Indian shipping, collecting articles previously published in *Marine Times* and addressing some of the continuing problems of Indian shipping in the 1990s. In discussing technical and strategic issues, Desai emphasised various UN conventions on liner shipping.¹² He relied, however, on limited evidence when explaining how Indian shipping lost ground in the global container shipping network, chiefly because of the shortage of equipment at Indian ports.¹³ More broadly, works on twentieth-century Indian economic and business history reveal a striking absence of sustained evidence for entrepreneurial activity among Indian actors in the shipping sector across the century.¹⁴

The economic and social history of containerisation has developed rapidly since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Mark Levinson located the container within political economy, economic geography, technology, ports and labour relations, but concentrated overwhelmingly on the US and western shipping.¹⁵ Brian Cudahy likewise traced the emergence of container ships with limited attention to Asia.¹⁶ Lance Hoovestall offered a broader comparison of the US and China, although his account is framed mainly through international relations and strategic theory.¹⁷ Together, these works established

¹¹ B. R. Nayar, *The State and Market in India's Shipping: Nationalism, Globalization and Marginalization* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1996), pp.282–8.

¹² H. B. Desai, *Current Issues in Indian Shipping* (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 1989).

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.35–6.

¹⁴ For a well-documented transformation in Indian economic and business history for the twentieth century, see Chinmay Tumbbe, 'Globalization, Cities, and Firms in Twentieth-Century India' (2022) 96.2 *Business History Review*, pp.399–423; T. Roy, *A Business History of India: Enterprise and the Emergence of Capitalism from 1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); A. Vaidyanathan, 'The Indian Economy since Independence (1947–70)' in Dharma Kumar and Meghnad Desai (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, vol.2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); U. Kapila, *Indian Economy Since Independence* (New Delhi: Academic Foundation, 2025). Manish Kumar and Praveen Jha, 'India After 75 Years of Independence: Reflections on Development and Persistent Challenges', (2025) 14(2), *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy*; T. J. Byres, *The Indian Economy: Major Debates Since Independence* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); A. Balasubramanian, *Toward a Free Economy: Swatantra and Opposition Politics in Democratic India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023).

¹⁵ M. Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

¹⁶ B. Cudahy, *Box Boats: How Container Ships Changed the World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

¹⁷ L. E. Hoovestall, *Globalization Contained: The Economic and Strategic Consequences of the Container*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

the importance of containerisation while leaving its development in India largely unexplored.

The relative neglect of India is also visible in broader maritime history. Lincoln Paine's *Sea and Civilization* discusses the effects of containerisation on stevedores, waterfronts and port geography, but remains centred largely on the US.¹⁸ David Abulafia similarly traces the origins and growth of container shipping and its consequences for labour, while offering only limited treatment of the business history of Asian ports.¹⁹ Liam Campling and Alejandro Colás place the container at the centre of the remaking of twentieth-century maritime capitalism, describing it as a 'symbol of the neoliberalisation of logistics', but concentrate more heavily on Southeast and East Asia than on India.²⁰ Frank Broeze is an important exception. He recognised the strength of India's merchant tonnage relative to other Asian countries before the 1970s, although his principal concern was sailing vessels and coastal trade.²¹ The Indian case therefore remains insufficiently integrated into either the general history of containerisation or the wider account of the eastward movement of maritime capacity.

The resulting gaps are clear. The literature remains heavily centred on western and East Asian experience, rarely combines containerisation with the history of Indian entrepreneurship and maritime education, and only intermittently uses sustained archival evidence from Indian ports and commercial bodies.²² This article addresses those gaps by linking national shipping, labour and training, port development and technological change within a single long-term account.

A note on sources

Primary sources relating to twentieth-century Indian shipping may broadly be classified into three categories: government sources, private or corporate records, and reports produced by international development institutions. Government sources, comprising

¹⁸ L. Paine, *Sea and Civilization: A Maritime History of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), pp.582–9.

¹⁹ D. Abulafia, *The Boundless Sea: A Human History of the Oceans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.901–5.

²⁰ L. Campling, and A. Colas, *Capitalism and Sea: The Maritime Factor in the Making of the Modern World* (London: Verso, 2021), pp. 240–66.

²¹ F. Broeze, 'From Imperialism to Independence: The Decline and Re-Emergence of Asian Shipping' (1987) 9 (2) *The Great Circle*, pp.73–95.

²² Similar gaps are evident in other studies as well. See F. Broeze, *The Globalisation of the Oceans: Containerisation from the 1950s to the Present* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000); and 'From Imperialism to Independence: The Decline and Re-Emergence of Asian Shipping' (1987) 9 (2) *Modern Asian Studies*; M. B. Miller, *Europe and the Maritime World: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Brett Neilson et al. (eds), *Logistical Asia, The Labour of Making a World Region* (Switzerland: Springer, 2018); L. R. Fischer and E. Lange (eds), *International Merchant Shipping in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: The Comparative Dimension* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018).

mainly annual reports of various ministries and departments, are available in public libraries in New Delhi and Kolkata. A major difficulty, however, lies in the inconsistency and discontinuity of these records across the available years. Ministerial files, especially those of the Ministry of Shipping and Transport, are available at the National Archives of India, New Delhi. The records of individual major port trusts are also crucial for researching postcolonial Indian shipping. Corporate records include publications of chambers of commerce, shipping companies, export firms, trade associations and shippers' councils. These publications include annual reports, pamphlets and, above all, official journals issued monthly, quarterly or annually. The journals are especially important archival sources because they contain public talks by ministers, proceedings of seminars organised by government and business institutions, research articles on business and shipping by scholars and diplomats, and rare pictures and advertisements from shipping firms. Annual reports, by contrast, mainly record the progress of a particular financial year and the recommendations made by chambers to port trusts and government. They rarely contain extensive statistical data. Beyond the national context, international sources include studies conducted between 1970 and 1990 on Indian ports and shipping under the aegis of government or port authorities. Some of these reports are available in the archives and libraries of the Indian Maritime University (IMU) at Chennai and Kolkata.

This article draws primarily on selected records from each of these categories, reflecting the nature, scope and chronology of the topic. It uses archival records from the Calcutta Port Trust, now Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, including material from its Maritime Archives and Heritage Centre (KPTMA) and Central Record Documentation Centre (CRDC), both located inside the port complex in Kolkata. It also uses records from the National Archives of India, New Delhi, volumes of the journal of the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Commerce (IMC), held in the F. E. Dinshaw Commercial & Financial Reference Library in Mumbai and the annual report of the Bombay Chamber of Commerce (BCC). For the case study on unit load and containerisation, the article uses proceedings volumes of the Mumbai Port Authority, preserved in its record room, as well as study reports available at the Indian Ports Association (IPA) in New Delhi. Access to shipping company records, however, remains limited, for reasons that are not always clear. The Indian National Shipowners' Association (INSA), Mumbai, long published a journal titled *Indian Shipping*, but its volumes are restricted to internal members. In many cases, companies have also failed to preserve their own records. Two prominent Indian national shipping lines, the Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd and Great Eastern Shipping, do not maintain accessible archives. Once their officially commissioned institutional histories were published, their archival records appear to

have been neglected, dispersed or lost.²³ Fortunately, some reports and printed materials survive in chambers of commerce and public libraries, on which scholars must therefore depend. For the pre-1947 section, the article uses local magazines, public talks and government files accessed through the South Asia Archive institutional database (southasiacommons.net).

Taken together, these materials suggest the changing nature of archives in contemporary postcolonial shipping history. The source base is more dynamic and scattered than either institutional or government archives alone would suggest.

Entrepreneurs Who Succeeded – and Those Who Did Not

The opening decade of the twentieth century was a decisive phase in the consolidation of the *Swadeshi* movement and the intensification of anti-colonial nationalism in India. Emerging initially from the political ferment of Bengal after the Partition of Bengal (1905), the ideological vocabulary of *Swadeshi* rapidly moved beyond regional boundaries and entered diverse socio-economic spheres across the subcontinent. Tuticorin, a port city in far southern India, provides a particularly clear example of this sentiment.²⁴ There, local merchants mobilised financial resources and in 1906 chartered a ship from a Bombay-based shipping company, the Shawline Steam Company, to trade between Tuticorin and Colombo. The involvement of the influential local landlord Sivapuram appears to have shaped the name of the enterprise, subsequently known as the 'Si.Va. Company'. Yet this initiative proved short-lived. Under pressure from the monopoly shipping line, the British India Steam Navigation Company (BISNC), the Shawline Steam Company took the ship back from the Tuticorin merchants. The episode was nevertheless far from trivial. Rather than suppressing indigenous ambitions in maritime business, it helped lay the ideological and organisational groundwork for later, more sustained Indian attempts to enter the shipping industry.²⁵

A second and more substantial attempt followed. V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, known as V.O.C., was a passionate advocate for reviving India's maritime legacy and drew inspiration from ancient Indian history and Tamil literature. Troubled by the decline of

²³ N. G. Jog, *Saga of Scindia, 1919–1969* (Scindia House Bombay: Scindia Steam Navigation Co. Ltd, 1969); D. N. Sanklecha, *Tramping to Success: Story of the Great Eastern Shipping Company Limited* (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1994).

²⁴ Data from 1913–14 reveal that Tuticorin recorded the highest rate of trade growth among the ports of the Madras Presidency, registering an increase of nearly 134 per cent. Ref. South Asia Common Institutional Database (hereafter SAC), *Report of Sir John Wolfe Barry Lyster & Partners on Suggested Developments at the Port of Tuticorin Negapatam Mangalore Malpe and Cocanada* (Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1921), p.2.

²⁵ R. N. Sampath. *V. O. Chidambaram Pillai* (New Delhi: Publications Division, 2017).

Tuticorin merchants in shipping, he sought to restore India's former prominence in maritime trade. V.O.C. understood that the challenge to British maritime supremacy could not be confined to acquiring steamships. It also required a national shipbuilding industry, trained navigational expertise and autonomous commercial infrastructure. Pillai travelled extensively throughout India for this purpose and launched the Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company (SSNC) on 16 October 1906, with an initial capital of Rs 10 lakh and around 40,000 shareholders, 'to be held exclusively by Indians, Ceylonese and citizens of other nations of the East.'²⁶ More significant were its declared objectives, which extended well beyond commercial shipping. It aimed to train inhabitants of Asia, including India and Sri Lanka, in navigation and naval sciences; foster a native shipbuilding industry; establish maritime training institutions; promote pan-Asian solidarity; expand trade networks; and construct coastal shipyards for ship repair.²⁷

These declared objectives show that SSNC was conceived not merely as a commercial venture, but as an explicitly nationalist and anti-imperialist enterprise. The company's flag, emblazoned with 'Vande Mataram' ('Praise the Motherland'), symbolised this ethos.²⁸ Within a year, Pillai, with the intervention of contemporary nationalist leaders Aurobindo Ghosh and Lokmanya Tilak, purchased two French ships, first S.S. *Gallia* and later S.S. *Lavo*. Shortly thereafter, SSNC began trading between Tuticorin and Colombo with S.S. *Gallia*, which could carry 1,300 passengers and 40,000 bags of cargo.²⁹

However, SSNC's attempt to establish itself as a transnational shipping enterprise faced numerous obstacles, including the failure to obtain permits for vessels entering and departing ports. Meanwhile, BISNC, the largest British shipping company in the Indian Ocean at the time, reduced its fares on the Tuticorin-to-Colombo route and began offering free umbrellas, food and fancy clothes to passengers as a defensive incentive.³⁰ Pillai was arrested and imprisoned for sedition in 1908 in connection with the nationalist movement.³¹ Although he was released within a few years after an appeal, his removal from active leadership created uncertainty within the company, and its shareholders

²⁶ R. A. Padmanabhan, *V. O. Chidambaram Pillai* (Delhi: National Book Trust, 1977), p.30.

²⁷ R. N. Sampath, *V. O. Chidambaram*.

²⁸ B. R. Nayar, *State and Market*, p.53.

²⁹ S. Dorairaj, 'Doyen of Swadeshi shipping', *The Hindu*, 6 September 2010.

³⁰ SAC, B. P. Adarkar, *If War Comes: An Essay on India's Military Problems* (Allahabad: The Indian Press Ltd, 1939), p.164; Seline Augustine, 'Unsung Hero', *The Hindu*, 22 November 2018.

<<https://www.thehindu.com/children/unsung-hero/article25548136.ece>> accessed 5 May 2026.

³¹ Mohamed Imranullah S., 'Remembering July 7, 1908, The Judgement Day', *The Hindu*, 7 July 2014.

<<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Madurai/remembering-july-7-1908-the-judgement-day/article6185099.ece>> accessed 5 May 2026.

gradually began to withdraw their investment.³² Ultimately, under sustained pressure, SSNC was forced to sell one of its ships to BISNC, leading to its complete withdrawal from India's maritime trade by 1911.³³

Pillai's efforts were not entirely successful, but the rise and fall of SSNC as a purely indigenous company fostered nationalism and *Swadeshi* awareness among capitalists and businessmen elsewhere in India. In 1919, within a decade of SSNC's collapse, four Gujarati industrialists and businessmen - Walchand Hirachand, Narottam Morarjee, Kilachand Devchand and Lallubhai Samaldas - jointly founded what became one of the most famous and largest indigenous shipping companies of the pre-independence era: the Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd (Scindia Steam Navigation), with initial capital of 450 lakh rupees.³⁴ Walchand and his associates began by purchasing the ship S.S. *Loyalty* from the Scindia family of Gwalior. On 5 April 1919 it set sail for England.³⁵ Within a few years, Scindia Steam Navigation achieved notable success in transporting commercial goods and passengers across the Indian Ocean.

Scindia's early success alarmed established British lines, especially Peninsular & Oriental and BISNC. Within four years, the company entered a ten-year agreement that restricted its routes largely to coastal trade and limited its fleet to seven vessels; renewed in 1933, the arrangement remained influential until independence.³⁶ Walchand described it as a 'Slave Bond'. Even within these limits, Scindia expanded. It commissioned the 850-ton S.S. *Jalabala* in 1927, an event presented by Indian political leaders and the press as a milestone for national shipping.³⁷ ³⁸ By 1924 the company had earned more than 11 lakhs in net profit and established regular services linking Burma, Bombay, Calcutta and Karachi, supported by agencies at important coastal ports.³⁹ ⁴⁰ The depression brought

³² R. N. Sampath, *V. O. Chidambaram Pillai*.

³³ Ahmed Sherrif, 'This Fiery Freedom Fighter From Tamil Nadu Challenged the British Raj on the Seas!', *The Better India*, 2 August 2018.

<<https://thebetterindia.com/154337/freedom-fighter-tamil-nadu-chidambaram-pillai/>> accessed 5 May 2026.

³⁴ D. Tripathi and J. Juman, *The Concise Oxford History of Indian Business* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.99.

³⁵ However, when the vessel was ready to return to Bombay from London after being refitted, the British secretly instructed all shipping agents to avoid making any cargo bookings for the ship. As a result, the *Loyalty* had to sail back to Bombay empty, incurring significant financial losses.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/2012/20120406/edit.htm?utm_source=chatgpt.com#6> accessed 10 May 2026.

³⁶ F. Broeze, 'Underdevelopment and Dependency', p.449; D. Tripathi, *Indian Business*, p.100; T. Roy, *A Business History of India*, p.139.

³⁷ SAC, *The Indian Review* (August 1927) vol.28, no.8, p.557.

³⁸ 'Indian Shipping for Indian Companies', *The Economist*, (Bombay) (23 July 1927) vol.CV, no.4378, p.176.

³⁹ SAC, *The Indian Review* (November 1924) vol.25, no.11, p.709.

⁴⁰ SAC, *The Investor's India Yearbook 1926-27*, 14th edition (Calcutta: Place, Siddons & Gough), p.393.

losses of more than five lakhs as coastal freight declined under intense competition from foreign lines.⁴¹ Scindia nevertheless acquired smaller companies and, by the end of the 1930s, participated in the carriage of Hajj pilgrims.⁴² Its experience demonstrates both the commercial possibilities available to Indian entrepreneurs and the political and institutional limits under which they operated.

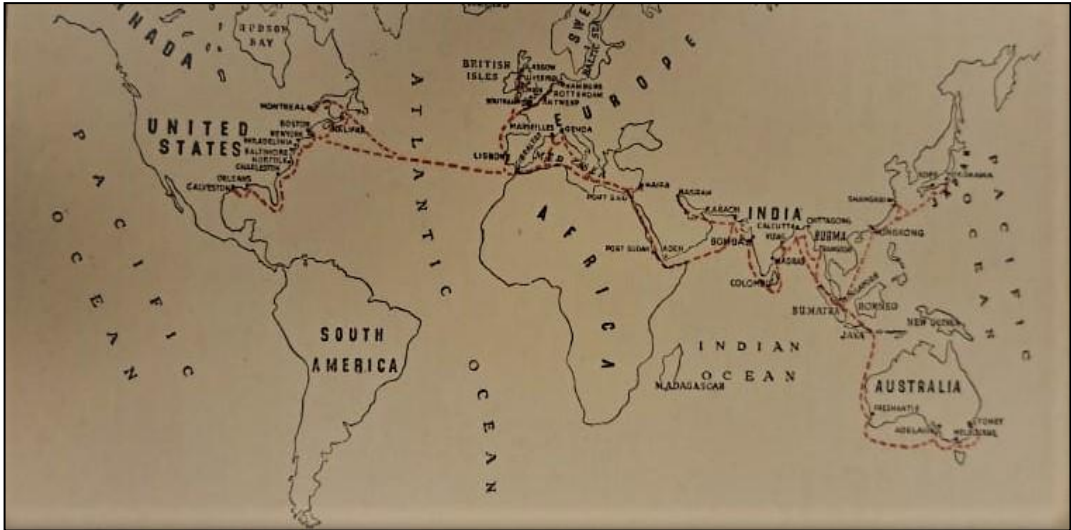


Figure 1: Shipping networks of Scindia Steam Navigation Company Limited, 1950.

Source: Indian Maritime University Kolkata (hereafter IMUK), 'Indian Shipping and Shipbuilding, Problems affecting the Scindia and Associated Companies,' Memorandum by Scindia Steam Navigation prepared for Indian Parliament and the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 15 August 1950.

Scindia Steam Navigation was a strongly nationalist shipping company. It not only challenged British dominance in the Indian Ocean, but also supported other indigenous shipping companies during periods of difficulty. During the economic depression of the 1930s, for example, Scindia provided an emergency loan of 350,000 rupees to the Bengal-Burma Steam Navigation Company, saving it from the control of BISNC. The following year, in 1934, with the help of the then Viceroy of India, Scindia protected four small domestic shipping companies operating along the Karachi-Malabar/West coast from unfair competition by BISNC and allotted them a substantial share of the trade.⁴³ This

⁴¹ SAC, *The Insurance & Finance Review* (November 1930) vol.1, no.9, p.232.

⁴² T. Roy. *Business History*, p.139; A. Mehta. *Indian Shipping – A Case Study of the Working of Imperialism* (Bombay: N. T. Shroff, 1940), p.55.

⁴³ IMUK, 'Indian Shipping and Shipbuilding, Problems affecting the Scindia and Associated Companies,' Memorandum by Scindia Steam Navigation to Indian Parliament and to the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 15 August 1950, p.4.

resulted in an annual loss of 0.5 million rupees for Scindia, but the company remained firm in its position and accepted the loss 'willingly and proudly'.⁴⁴

Scindia also supported smaller Indian firms. In 1936 it assisted Indian Cooperative Navigation and Ratnagar Steam Navigation against BISNC competition, while its influence helped Indianise the management of Bombay Steam Navigation in 1939.⁴⁵ Walchand had already established the Indian National Steamship Owners' Association in 1930 and later promoted a shipyard at Visakhapatnam, although wartime finance and weak government support eventually led the company to request a state takeover.⁴⁶ The company's nationalist standing was reinforced publicly. Gandhi repeatedly cited Scindia as an example of indigenous enterprise,⁴⁷ while Vallabhbhai Patel inaugurated Scindia House in Bombay in 1938.⁴⁸ Fazlul Huq, Subhas Chandra Bose, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari and Jawaharlal Nehru also presented its growth as part of a wider recovery of Indian maritime capacity.⁴⁹

After independence, Scindia continued to expand. By 1950 as Figure 1 shows, it operated six broad overseas networks, including services to Burma, Ceylon, Pakistan, the Persian Gulf, Europe, North America, the Red Sea, East Asia and Australia.⁵⁰ Cabotage protection after 1953 strengthened its position in coastal trade,⁵¹ and it remained a major international carrier until the shipping recession of the 1980s.⁵²

⁴⁴ B. J. Nayar, *State and Market*, p.70.

⁴⁵ IMUK, 'Indian Shipping and Shipbuilding', p. 5; *Achievements of Managing Agency System*, (author name not mentioned), (Calcutta: Employer's Association, 1954), p.77; Cf. 'The Bombay Steam's Reply to Walchand', *The Bombay Chronicle*, 8 October 1938, p.14.

⁴⁶ IMUK, 'Indian Shipping and Shipbuilding', p. 6; B. R. Nayar. *State and Market*, pp.71–2; K. B. Vaidya. *The Sailing Vessel Traffic on the West Coast of India and its Future* (Bombay: The Popular Book Depot, 1945), p.26.

⁴⁷ R. K. Ray. *Industrialization in India: Growth and Conflict in the Private Corporate Sector, 1914–47* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982), p 50.

⁴⁸ *The Bombay Chronicle* (24 December 1938) vol.XXVI, no.305, p.1.

⁴⁹ *The Bombay Chronicle* (24 December 1938) vol.XXVI, no.305, p.16.

⁵⁰ IMUK, 'Indian Shipping and Shipbuilding'.

⁵¹ T. Roy, *Business History of India*, p.139.

⁵² Details of the ultimate success of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company in the post-independence period can be found in N. G. Jog, *The Saga of Scindia*, pp.177–85.

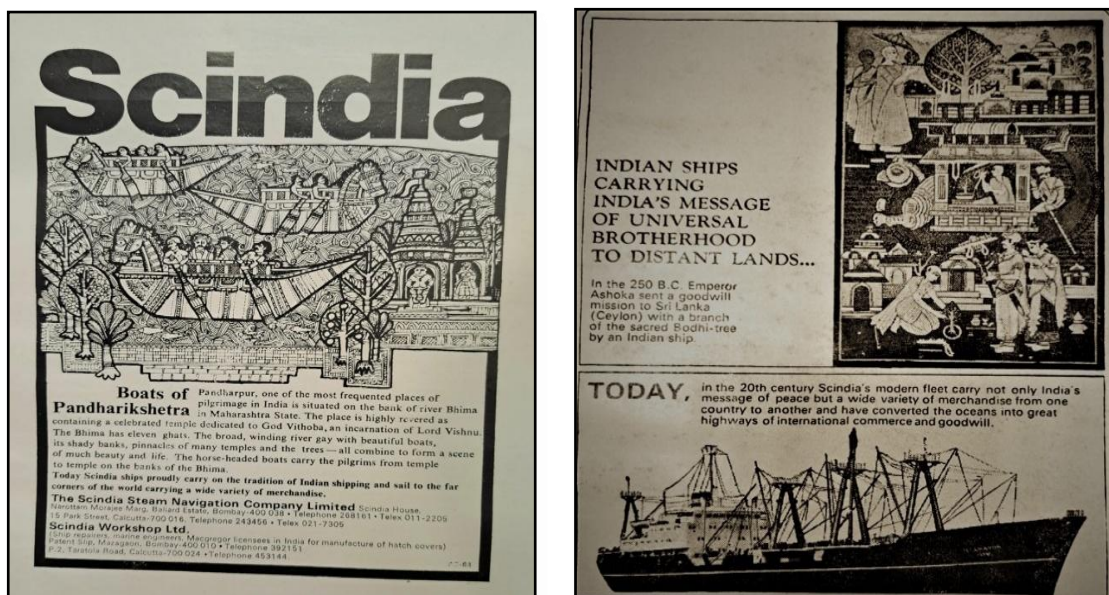


Figure 2: Representations of India's maritime past in Scindia's business promotion

Source: IMC, *Journal of the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Commerce*, Bombay, January and May 1976.

National Shipping After 1947

In the early years after independence, the infant nation-state's foremost problem was the import of foodgrains. This crisis exposed the fragile and underdeveloped condition of the Indian shipping sector.⁵³ Both the government and major commercial bodies became increasingly concerned about the economic drain caused by overwhelming dependence on foreign vessels.⁵⁴ The national government therefore introduced a series of measures to strengthen the capacity and competitiveness of the country's merchant fleet. First, through a resolution dated 12 July 1947, based on the recommendation of the Policy Committee on Shipping appointed after the Second World War, the government defined the term 'Indian shipping' and set specific guidelines. A ship had to be managed, controlled and owned by Indians, and registered at an Indian port. The post of director also had to be occupied by an Indian.⁵⁵ Although foreign capital was welcomed, at least 75 per cent of shares had to be held by Indian nationals.⁵⁶ Another important step was to

⁵³ By 1955, India accounted for less than 0.5 per cent of world shipping tonnage, compared with 2.5 per cent of international trade. Progress towards national tonnage targets was therefore slow relative to countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Italy and Japan, all of which expanded their fleets substantially. See IMC, *Annual Report*, Bombay, 1955, p.xxiii.

⁵⁴ IMC, *Annual Report*, Bombay: 1950, 'Shipping', p.ix.

⁵⁵ KPTMA, G. P. Ganguly, 'Indian Shipping Industry', *Calcutta Port Annual* (Calcutta: Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta, 1958), p.207.

⁵⁶ IMC, *Annual Report*, Bombay: 1958, Appendix 2, 'Bill to Amend the Merchant Shipping Act', p.173.

reserve 100 per cent of Indian coastal trade for Indian shipping lines by August 1950.⁵⁷ To further support Indian shipping lines, the government sought to secure 'cargo support', allocating government cargo to national carriers.⁵⁸ It also formed a Sailing Vessels Committee to improve the condition of sailing vessels, which remained an important part of Indian shipping, and to 'enable the industry to be placed on a sound footing'.⁵⁹ The most significant development was the enactment of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1958, a measure long demanded by Indian shipowners. The Act consolidated and systematised the previously fragmented body of maritime law and facilitated the registration of seagoing vessels under Indian ownership.⁶⁰ At the same time, to accommodate the anticipated expansion of overseas trade and shipping, the government initiated some programmes to develop several minor ports, particularly along India's western coast.⁶¹

	Coastal	Overseas	Total
No of Ships	48	11	59
GRT	1,20,000	70,000	1,90,000

Table 1: India's merchant fleet at independence (thousand gross registered tons)

Source: Government of India, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, Transport Research Wing, Indian Shipping Statistics 2014 (New Delhi, 2014), p.vii; IMUK, A. H. Maru (Ex. Deputy Manager of Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd), Indian Shipping Since Independence (Bombay: published by the author, 1969), p.25.

⁵⁷ IMC, *Annual Report*, Bombay: 1955, 'Development of Indian Shipping', p.xxii.

⁵⁸ The Great Eastern Shipping, in its published official history, provided details about how the government in its early decades following independence favoured the public sector shipping lines instead of private shipping firms while allotting government cargo. For example, during the 1950s and early 1960s, the coal commissioner and director general of Shipping favoured only the 'Shipping Corporation', a public firm for the coastal transportation of coal from Calcutta. Furthermore, the Port of Madras was chiefly assigned to the public shipping lines as a discharging port. Ref., IMUK, D. N. Sanklecha. *Tramping to Success*, pp.216–7.

⁵⁹ IMC, *Annual Report*, Bombay: 1949, 'Report of the Sailing Vessels Committee', p.2.

⁶⁰ IMC, *Annual Report*, Bombay: 1958, Appendix 2, 'Bill to Amend the Merchant Shipping Act', p.172.

⁶¹ IMC, *Annual Report*, Bombay: 1954, p.3. Cambay for example, was developed with this purpose to meet the demand of the export trade of cotton.

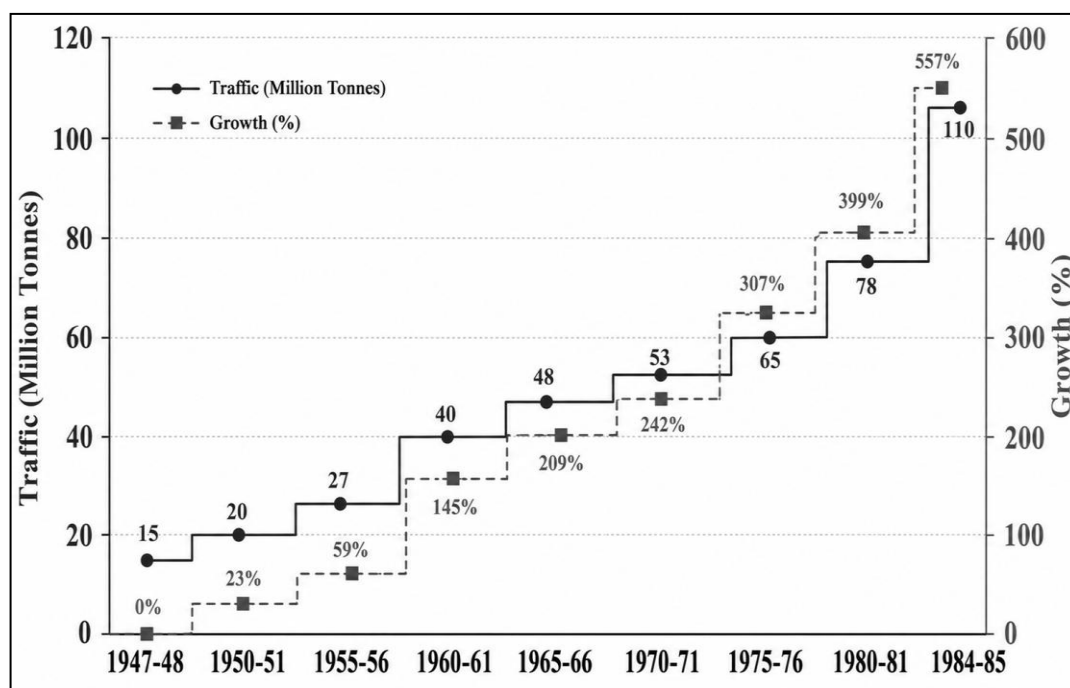


Figure 3: Growth of traffic at India's major ports, 1947-85.

Source: KPTMA, D. K. Guha, 'Growth of India's Seaborne Trade Since Independence', *Calcutta Port Annual, 1984-85* (Calcutta: Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta), p.46.

Both public and private carriers contributed to the expansion of the merchant marine, but from the 1960s the state-owned SCI became India's largest shipping company. By 1987 it carried 56 per cent of the country's seaborne overseas trade.⁶² The Shipping Development Fund, established in 1959, provided low-interest loans to shipowners,⁶³ although large vessel purchases and port projects also depended on finance from international institutions.⁶⁴

⁶² IMUK, D. N. Sanklecha, *Tramping to Success*, p.214, quoting *The SCI Story* (Shipping Corporation of India, 1987).

⁶³ BCC, *Committee Report*, 1978, p.383.

⁶⁴ In 1972 the International Development Association (IDA), an affiliate of the World Bank, sanctioned a loan of US \$83 million to SCI for the purchase of ships. IMUK, D. N. Sanklecha, *Tramping to Success*, p.218. Also, in 1958, a loan agreement of U.S. \$29 million was signed between the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Port of Calcutta to support various improvement schemes.

Nationality	Port of Mormugao (1963-64)		Port of Calcutta (1956-57) Coastal + Overseas	
	No of ships entered	Tonnage	No of ships entered (Port of Calcutta)	Tonnage (import)
Indian	135	381609	320	959648
British (UK)	84	374076	540	1599936
Japanese	124	489475	66	162364
American (USA)	3	21637	51	155891
German	21	94731	26	78169
Greek	51	315420	7	24032
Norwegian	19	107520	55	248101
Russian (U.S.S.R)	n/a	n/a	16	61317

Table 2: Shipping by nationality at Mormugao and Calcutta ports.

Source: KPTMA, *Annual Administrative Report of the Mormugao Port Trust, 1963-64*, appendix D; D. K. Guha, 'Statistics of Calcutta Port', *Calcutta Port Annual (Calcutta: Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta, 1959)*, pp.59-60.

Table 2 offers two snapshots rather than a direct comparison, since the ports, years and tonnage categories differ. Even so, it illustrates the growth of Indian shipping from the small fleet inherited in 1947, the continuing importance of British vessels, and the expanding presence of Japanese, Greek and other non-imperial carriers. The evidence suggests that post-war Indian trade was becoming less exclusively tied to the older European maritime powers.

The worldwide shipping recession of roughly 1980-84 produced a severe crisis in India. The government initially played down its scale, but Indian vessels were arrested or auctioned abroad and crews sometimes went unpaid.⁶⁵ In 1982, the IMC reported:

Severe recession and mismanagement have together led a number of small Indian shipping companies to liquidation or near bankruptcy. It is feared that the number of such companies may grow up soon. These companies have not only created problems for themselves and the financial agencies, which helped them buy vessels but also to their employees including marine officers and crew who have not received their wages for months.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ IMC, *Journal of the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Commerce*, vol.76, no.8, August 1982, 'Recession hits shipping'.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

By 1983–4, 13 leading Indian lines had reported losses of around Rs 11 crores, with contemporary projections warning of a much larger deterioration as operating costs rose and freight earnings fell.⁶⁷

The government considered new loans and cash assistance, granted a moratorium on repayments to the Shipping Development Fund Committee for 1984–6, and explored changes to the Merchant Shipping Act to speed the sale or acquisition of uneconomic vessels.⁶⁸ These measures also overlapped with efforts to renew an ageing fleet and prepare ports for containerisation.

The IMC's 1989 summit, 'Challenges and Opportunities Before Shippers and Shipowners in the 90s', brought together public and private actors and treated shipping as a strategic component of trade, competitiveness and integration with the global economy.⁶⁹

By the end of the decade, Indian shipping had recovered from the worldwide recession. In the fiscal year 1987–8, Indian shipping lines showed substantially improved income and profit figures. This recovery reflected several factors, especially the recovery of world maritime trade, which grew by six per cent annually from 1988, and the end of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war, which had severely affected the international transportation of crude oil. This stability was reflected in the upward trend in freight rates, which rose by more than 100 per cent during this period. The government began paying closer attention to recovering Indian shipping's GRT, which had fallen from 6.73 million to 5.70 million during the crisis. Another important issue was the need to raise Indian shipping to world standards.⁷⁰ Shri H. N. Fotedar, managing director of the Indian Ports Association, an apex body of the Ministry of Shipping, argued that 'Indian ports had failed to transform themselves into a viable modern transport sub-system' and called for an environment that could support new technology in ports and shipping. The summit also acknowledged the need for a 'suitable mechanism' to provide cargo support for Indian shipping lines. Shippers faced high freight rates, inadequate shipping space and lengthy sailing periods, while shipowners objected that Indian shippers did not give preference to Indian shipping. At the same time, the need to increase Indian tonnage and build port

⁶⁷ IMCA, *Journal of the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Commerce*, vol.78, no.9, September 1984, 'Shipping Industry's woes', p.42.

⁶⁸ Ibid. The crisis coincided with preparations for the full-scale adoption of containerisation. More than half of Indian vessels were then considered outdated, making government support for fleet renewal increasingly difficult to avoid.

⁶⁹ IMC, *Journal of the Indian Merchants' Chamber of Commerce*, vol.83, no.6, November–December 1989, 'Shippers' and Shipowners' Summit', pp.50–1.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.50.

infrastructure was increasingly addressed through joint ventures, because these required substantial capital outlay. Fotedar stated: 'Now is the most opportune time for selective privatisation of ports when port management is faced with the task of investible resources.' To increase the capacity of national shipping lines, SCI intended to increase slot capacity by approximately 160 per cent, at a cost of nearly US\$ 200 million.⁷¹

These debates marked the transition towards liberalisation. The recession exposed the weaknesses of an inward-looking and heavily regulated system, while the capital demands of fleet renewal and port modernisation encouraged new forms of private and international participation.

The immediate consequences of liberalisation were visible in the early 1990s and are treated here as a brief epilogue rather than an extension of the article's principal chronology beyond 1991. Cargo traffic increased at both the Calcutta Dock System and Haldia Dock Complex in 1993–4, with overall trade through Calcutta Port rising by 0.87 per cent. Growth was especially marked in containerised cargo, which increased from 1.104 million tonnes in 1992–3 to 1.487 million tonnes in 1993–4. The number of containers handled rose from 80,925 to 102,018 TEUs, taking Calcutta above one lakh TEUs for the first time. Its 38.66 per cent growth in containerised cargo was the second highest among India's major ports.⁷² These figures indicate the direction of change after 1991: closer integration with global trade, rapid growth in container handling and mounting pressure for further institutional and infrastructural reform.

Between State and Private Shipping

The relationship between the postcolonial state and private shipping was neither straightforwardly collaborative nor simply antagonistic. The Shipping Policy of 1947 treated private enterprise as the principal vehicle of maritime development, while allowing mixed ownership. Eastern Shipping Corporation, for example, was established with government and Scindia holdings of 74 and 26 per cent respectively.⁷³ Support for new routes contributed to an increase in tonnage to 330,000 and the acquisition of 75 ships by the end of the First Five-Year Plan.⁷⁴

Yet, within a decade, the government's posture became more interventionist, seeking to enter the shipping market and regulate it in its own favour. It acquired the

⁷¹ Ibid., p.51.

⁷² KPTMA, *Administrative Report of the Calcutta Port Trust*, 1993–9, p.915.

⁷³ IMUK, 'Indian Shipping and Shipbuilding', p.6.

⁷⁴ KPTMA, M. A. Master, 'Reversal of Shipping Policy', *Calcutta Port Annual*, 1961, pp.19, 21; IMUK, 'Indian Shipping and Shipbuilding', p.6.

Visakhapatnam shipyard from Scindia in 1952, took full control of Eastern Shipping Corporation in 1956, acquired the Mogul Line in 1960 and created SCI in 1961.⁷⁵ The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 also placed shipping in Schedule B under the government's strict control. Nevertheless, an undercurrent of ambivalence towards shipping still persisted within the government, and contributions from private firms to shipping development were being solicited tacitly. Lal Bahadur Shastri, then minister of shipping, enthusiastically stated: 'The public sector in shipping is just in the position of your younger brother, and I assure you that you will always remain the elder brother or the elder sister, whatever you call it.'⁷⁶

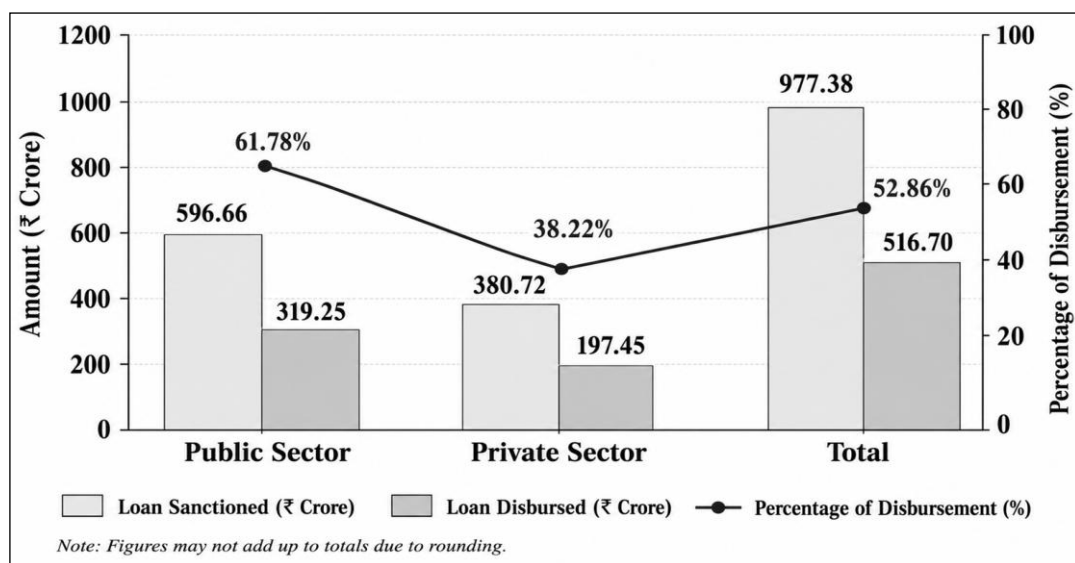


Figure 4: Shipping Development Fund assistance to public and private companies, 1976-7 (Rs crores).

Source: IPA, Annual Report, Ministry of Shipping and Transport, Government of India, 1976-7, p.9.

The 1958-9 Estimates Committee similarly envisaged a complementary relationship in which public corporations entered trades that private companies were unwilling or unable to serve:

Shipping in the public sector should not run in competition with private shipping companies on routes on which the private shipping companies have established themselves. The corporations should operate only in those trades in which the private shipping companies are unwilling or unable to operate successfully, owing to uncertain prospects, or inadequacy of resources or any other reasons.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ F. Broeze, 'From Imperialism to Independence', p.88.

⁷⁶ IMUK, *Tramping to Success*, p.208.

⁷⁷ KPTMA, M. A. Master, 'Reversal of Shipping Policy', pp.23, 29; IMUK, *Tramping to Success*, pp.209-11.

In practice, government policy increasingly favoured expanding the state's role in the shipping sector. Successive Five-Year Plans consistently prioritised the acquisition of tonnage, the expansion of national fleet capacity, and the enhancement of the state's share in overseas trade. Figure 4 shows that private companies also received substantial assistance, but this was distributed across a larger number of firms, while public-sector lending was concentrated principally on SCI. The gap between sanctioned and disbursed funds in both sectors also underlines the continuing difficulty of financing capital-intensive maritime projects.

The reports for 1977–82 repeatedly revealed rising debt costs and growing pressure on private firms, especially those with limited access to capital and government support.⁷⁸ Restrictions on particular trades and access to established liner conferences⁷⁹ also prompted shipowners and maritime entrepreneurs to describe policy as 'unduly conservative' and 'ideologically biased against private enterprise', and to call for liberalisation.⁸⁰

Indianisation of Maritime Labour: Autonomy Within Dependency

Maritime education was essential to a trading nation that carried more than 90 per cent of its international commerce by sea. Across post-war Asia, states invested in training and maritime institutions as part of wider programmes of reconstruction and security; Japan's Maritime Safety Agency is one example.⁸¹ Regional geography, piracy and resource constraints also encouraged governments to treat navigational safety and maritime capacity as strategic concerns.⁸² India's experience, however, had deeper roots in the effort to create an indigenous merchant fleet.

In India, the nation-state's priorities were reflected in the creation of nautical institutes and the restructuring of curricula. These initiatives carried a strong concern with 'maritimity' and formed part of a deliberate strategy to achieve national self-reliance by

⁷⁸ IPA, *Annual Report*, Ministry of Shipping and Transport, Government of India, 1982–83, p.5.

⁷⁹ IMUK, *Tramping to Success*, pp.216–17; Great Eastern Shipping has documented several incidents in its published history. For instance, in 1956, the company purchased a tanker – the first of its kind in India – but faced stringent regulations. Under these rules, the government could take the tanker under its control in the future if it so desired.

⁸⁰ KPTMA, P. N. Talukdar, 'A Shipping Policy for India' in *Calcutta Port Annual*, 1959, pp.91, 93.

⁸¹ J. R. Holmes, 'Japanese Maritime Thought: if not Mahan, Who?' in T. Yoshihara and J. R. Holmes (eds), *Asia Looks Seaward: Power and Maritime Strategy* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2009).

⁸² A good discussion about Japan's postwar rise as the 'western Pacific's key maritime leader' and in maritime security in Southeast Asia can be found in J. F. Bradford, 'Japanese Naval Activities in Southeast Asian Waters: Building on 50 Years of Maritime Security Capacity Building' (2021) 17.1 *Asian Security*, pp.79–104; 'Japan Takes the Lead in Western Pacific Maritime Security' (2021) 16.2 *Asia Policy*, pp.81–102; and 'Understanding Fifty Years of Japanese Maritime Security Capacity Building Activities in Southeast Asia'

<<https://www.nids.mod.go.jp/english/publication/backnumber/pdf/20180905.pdf>> accessed 6 May 2026.

producing skilled manpower for national shipping. The issue of training Indian boys in nautical subjects gained momentum with the First World War, when the question of reserving coastal trade for Indian shipping lines created debate among policymakers and nationalist leaders. The Indian Industrial Commission, in its report of 1918, stressed the need to develop nautical institutes in India so that ships engaged in coastal trade could be handled by Indian personnel. It also emphasised the future potential of the shipbuilding industry:

There is no reason why India should not be ready to man her own ships when they are built. She has already for many years past provided excellent crews for the ships of other nations; and, given facilities for education in nautical subjects and marine engineering, she should in course of time be able to supplement these crews, at any rate in the coasting trade, with capable officers and engineers. The supply of such men from Britain must be very short for many years to come, if not always in future, and facilities for recruitment in India would do much to render her self-supporting in case of another great war.⁸³

The report also recommended setting up a special committee and establishing one or more navigation schools and training ships.⁸⁴ Between 1920 and 1939, there was growing acknowledgement of the need to develop a skilled cohort of Indian seafarers, an issue substantially articulated in the report of the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee (IMMC). Nearly half of this report was dedicated to maritime education for Indian youth, with the specific aim of building an Indian mercantile marine. The report repeatedly highlighted deficiencies in the management of Indian shipping companies and in the wider Indian shipping industry, and strongly advocated establishing nautical institutes to train Indians in maritime transport.⁸⁵

What is particularly significant is the IMMC's recognition that maritime education was not an end in itself. It was a means of confronting two connected challenges: first, improving the competitive capacity of Indian shipping companies against their European counterparts in overseas trade; and second, encouraging the Indianisation of both ownership and management within the shipping sector. This dual imperative underscores the relationship between educational reform and shipping nationalism, while also inviting closer reflection on colonial policy, indigenous agency and the contested terrain of maritime modernity in colonial India.⁸⁶

⁸³ SAC, *Report of the Indian Industrial Commission 1916–18*, p.133.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ SAC, *Report of the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee* (Delhi: Government Central Press, 1924), pp.21–2.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Although the establishment of nautical schools in India ostensibly aimed to build indigenous maritime expertise, the underlying motivations were not purely altruistic. Non-Indian interests expressed substantial scepticism about Indians' suitability for maritime careers and often advocated their exclusion from maritime opportunities.⁸⁷ They argued that Indians, particularly the *bhadralok* class of educated Bengalis, lacked 'sea-consciousness' or 'sea-sense' and were generally disinclined to venture out to sea. The institutionalisation of naval training in 1927, marked by the inauguration of the training ship *Dufferin* in Bombay, brought these exclusionary practices into sharper focus. Admission criteria were deliberately stringent, and the institution was effectively open only to students of British descent or to those from the upper echelons of society.⁸⁸ This selectivity reflected a broader reluctance to democratise maritime training and perpetuated existing hierarchies in India.

Structural barriers persisted even after training. Most British shipping companies were reluctant to appoint ex-cadets of *Dufferin* as staff or officers on their ships.⁸⁹ A 1937 Council of State Debates report shows that Scindia Steam Navigation, an Indian firm, recruited the highest number of officers who had passed out from *Dufferin* compared with other shipping lines.⁹⁰ This problem is captured clearly in a remark made by an official in correspondence with the IMMC:

It would be wrong to raise hopes that boys trained on an Indian training ship would be readily taken by British companies trading all over the world, instead of British officers trained on the "Conway" and "Worcester", etc. That means to say that such boys would have to look for their employment at the best and for many years in boats on the coasting trade of India. Even if in that term you include ports as far away as Singapore and Basrah, there are only some 75 or so boats so employed. Allowing 4 Deck Officers to a boat, you come to something under 300 officers. The officers at present employed are not going to be dismissed to make way for raw boys just through a training ship. Even if no more British officers were appointed to those ships, which is pretty nearly unthinkable, yet, allowing for 30 years ' service at sea, it would only take about 10 apprentices a year entirely to Indianize the whole of that fleet, as present officers retired.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Sir Charles Innes, an ICS officer, delivered an unsympathetic speech in which he discouraged in every manner the idea of a sea-career for Indian youth.

⁸⁸ SAC, Gaganvihari Lallubhai Mehta, '*Shipping in India*', Career Lecture Series, p.12.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.15; SAC, Indian Chamber of Commerce, Calcutta (hereafter ICC), *Annual Report*, 1935, p.77.

⁹⁰ National Archives of India (hereafter NAI), Home Department, Political, File no.24/12, 1937, 'Council of State Debates, vol.II, no.3, Official Report, p.47.

⁹¹ NAI, Ministry of Surface Transport, (Transport Wing), File no.238-S-35-B, 1928, Report by Captain M. B. Sayer, R.N.R., 'Captain Superintendent of the Training Ship 'Worcester' on the scheme for the establishment of a Training Ship in India', from the Hon'ble Mr D. T. Chadwick, C.S.I., to Mr J. A. Richey, C.I.E., 4 January 1926, p.6.

The inadequate infrastructure for marine engineering in India was another obstacle. Before the establishment of Dufferin, the entire subcontinent had no more than four Indians holding a captain's certificate.⁹² Aspiring marine engineers faced further hurdles because a four-year apprenticeship in workshops was essential for professional advancement. Such positions were difficult for Indians to secure because of the dominance of foreigners, primarily the British, in the shipping sector. The absence of a shipbuilding industry and dockyards in India further reduced employment prospects for Indian youths trained in marine engineering.^{93, 94}

The British Indian government nevertheless introduced some financial assistance for Indian students studying aboard Dufferin. Each year, 15 scholarships were provided to assist Indian students undertaking nautical training.⁹⁵ Boys whose parents could not support their education aboard Dufferin received Rs 25 in monthly government assistance.⁹⁶ Alongside government support, Indian shipping companies also took initiatives to create employment opportunities for Indian students in the maritime sector. The largest national shipping company of the period, Scindia Steam Navigation, made a significant contribution by recruiting these students as officers and engineers on its own vessels and, in many cases, sending them abroad for advanced training in shipbuilding. These efforts had results. By 1922, 33 of 63 officers had been recruited from India. The following year, this figure rose to 41.⁹⁷ Yet reliance on external sources persisted, and indigenous shipping companies continued to import officers from England. At the seventh annual general meeting of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company in Bombay, chairman Narottam Morarjee stated:

A question was raised as to why the Company imported officers and engineers from England if it was the avowed policy of the Company to man their steamers with Indian officers and engineers. The critics, however, forget that the Company is helpless in the matter. It is extremely difficult to obtain Indian officers with

⁹² Ibid., p.17.

⁹³ Ibid., p.16.

⁹⁴ KPTMA, File no.6775, 'Indian Mercantile Marine Committee', From Supdt of Machinery Office, to the Chairman, Port Commissioner, Calcutta, Letter no.5133, dated 15 February, 1923. A letter sent to the Port Commissioners in Calcutta in 1923 revealed the extremely limited participation of Indians in marine engineering careers; indeed, Indian participation in the profession was almost nil at that time.

⁹⁵ NAI, Ministry of Surface Transport (Transport Wing), File no.238-S-35-B, 1928, p.17.

⁹⁶ NAI, Home Political, File no.51-8/37-POLL, 'Two Years of Provincial Autonomy in Bengal', Report of the work done by the Government of Bengal from 01 April 1937 to 31 March 1939, Published by the Director of Public Information, August 1939, p.128.

⁹⁷ SAC, 'The Speech of Mr Narottam Morarjee on 8th ordinary general meeting of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd', cited in *The Modern Review*, November 1927, p.607.

foreign going certificates and consequently the Company has no alternative but to import these officers from England.⁹⁸

Thus, attempts to cultivate native Indian expertise in maritime shipping were constrained by exclusionary policies, institutional biases and infrastructural deficits, all of which helped maintain colonial dominance over Indian shipping. Within a colonial economy, building a robust national merchant fleet depended not only on capital and entrepreneurs but also on human resource management and the cultivation of a skilled workforce capable of operating national fleets. This was also important for reducing the outflow of wealth through wages paid to foreign officers in foreign currency. In this process, Scindia claimed that it received substantial support from the coastal states of British India, especially from Bengalis, while training Indian boys in nautical subjects.⁹⁹ This support produced an important result: by 1937, the Bengal Pilot Service, a key European maritime institution, had undergone complete Indianisation.¹⁰⁰ In 1941, the *Calcutta Municipal Gazette* recognised it as one of the most skilled pilot workforces in the world.¹⁰¹

Maritime education in independent India initially evolved under the auspices of the nation-state and moved in two directions. During the first two decades after independence, the government recognised the need to develop a skilled Indian workforce for Indian shipping lines. The rapid expansion of those lines required a continuous supply of trained seamen and engineers. Estimates of a need for around 100 nautical engineers annually pushed the government to overhaul existing training structures. This was reflected in the policies adopted soon after independence. The central government established the Merchant Navy Officers Training Committee to examine the status of training facilities for mercantile marine officers and possible ways to expand them.¹⁰² The committee gathered information by circulating questionnaires to educational institutions nationwide.¹⁰³ In its initial phase, it formulated a blueprint for nautical training for young Indians.¹⁰⁴ An even more significant contribution, in

⁹⁸ SAC, 'Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd on Indianisation', *Welfare* (edited by Ashoke Chatterjee), vol.V, no.3, March 1927, Calcutta, p.200.

⁹⁹ SAC, 'The Speech of Mr Narottam Morarjee', *The Modern Review*, November 1927, p.607.

¹⁰⁰ SAC, *Proceedings of The Council of State*, July–December 1937, Simla (dated 29 September), p.64, in *The Indian Annual Register An Annual Digest of Public Affairs of India*, 1937.

¹⁰¹ SAC, Bhujanga Bhusan Mukherjee, 'The Battle of the Cities A Geographical Study', *The Calcutta Municipal Gazette Seventeenth Anniversary Number*, 6 December 1941, p.12.

¹⁰² SAC, *Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates*, 23 March 1948, Official Report, vol.IV, no.3, reply by the Honourable Minister Moulana Abul Kalam Azad to Basanta Kumar Das, pp.2562–4.

¹⁰³ SAC, Minutes of the Syndicate for the year 1947, University of Calcutta, 28 November, Calcutta University Press, p.3178.

¹⁰⁴ SAC, *Indian Affairs*, vol.II, November 1949, p.165.

accordance with the proposals and recommendations of the government's standing committee, was the restructuring of the existing training ship Dufferin.¹⁰⁵ Its curriculum was overhauled and a more integrated approach to training was adopted. Under the new regulations, trainees first undertook a three-year workshop apprenticeship before studying at a residential college in Calcutta, which emphasised both practical and theoretical competencies. Cadet intake capacity increased from 25 to 80.¹⁰⁶ In 1948, a nautical college was established in Bombay, but such institutions soon faced a severe manpower crisis, particularly in teaching staff and instructors. To address this, the Indian High Commissioner in the UK was asked to help recruit suitable instructors for vacant positions.¹⁰⁷ Alongside Dufferin, the government also proposed establishing a shore-based training centre for marine engineers.¹⁰⁸

The central government also proposed establishing a nautical school and college in West Bengal to train personnel for the marine sector. Responsibility for training crews engaged in inland and island water transport was often left to provincial government. In 1949, the Government of West Bengal planned to introduce a short-term training scheme for this purpose, producing around 400 trainees through a three-month programme.¹⁰⁹ Several technical marine institutes were then established. These were divided into two categories: pre-sea training institutes and post-sea training institutes. The Directorate of Marine Engineering and Training (DMET) and T. S. Dufferin were the two most prominent pre-sea institutes. DMET was established by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in Calcutta in 1953.

Marine engineers appear to have had an unusually high employment rate, with minimal job-market insecurity. By 1966, for example, 930 cadets had completed training at DMET and all had been absorbed by shipping companies.¹¹⁰ Established in 1948, the Lal Bahadur Shastri Nautical and Engineering College in Bombay emphasised the need to prepare a trained workforce for the Ministry of Transport. Students from neighbouring countries also took admission and were entitled to benefits.¹¹¹ In some cases, shipping lines supported the establishment of nautical schools so that trained Indian marine

¹⁰⁵ SAC, *The Eastern Economist*, vol.XI, no.12, September 17, New Delhi, 1948, p.490.

¹⁰⁶ SAC, *The Eastern Economist*, vol.XI, no.17, October 22, New Delhi, 1948, pp.702–3

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.702.

¹⁰⁸ SAC, *Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates*, Part-1, vol.III, no.8, March 28, comment of K. C. Neogy, the Honourable Minister of Commerce, 1949, p.1881.

¹⁰⁹ Central Secretariat Library, New Delhi, *Two Years Since Independence: A resume of the activities of the Government of West Bengal*, 15 August, 1947–49, published by the director of publicity, West Bengal, p.109.

¹¹⁰ IPA, *Annual Report*, Ministry of Transport and Shipping, Government of India, New Delhi, 1966–7, p.19.

¹¹¹ IMUK, H. M. Trivedi, 'Nautical and Engineering Training Facilities in India', speech on College Day at Bombay, 15 March 1975, in *Indian Shipping in Perspective* (Ahmedabad: Vikas Publishing House, 1980), p.429.

professionals could serve their emerging fleets.¹¹² These measures, intended to generate manpower for India's national fleets, achieved substantial results within decades. The Annual Report of the Ministry of Shipping and Transport for 1982-3 provides supporting data from the Seamen's Employment Office, Bombay, where 24,782 trained seamen were registered for employment, compared with 10,071 in Calcutta. Available jobs on foreign-going vessels numbered 14,200 in Bombay and 4,306 in Calcutta. Although these figures relate to seamen available for foreign-going ships, they indicate that nautical training infrastructure significantly reduced India's reliance on recruiting manpower from abroad.¹¹³

From the 1960s, the emphasis widened from nautical technique to port management and cargo handling. Labour disputes,¹¹⁴ congestion and the arrival of multimodal systems encouraged curricular reform,¹¹⁵ while Indian Institutes of Port Management (IIPMs) were established in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras.¹¹⁶ An International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) survey of India's major ports in 1968 recommended that foreign experts train personnel in India rather than sending officials abroad.¹¹⁷ It stated:

It is suggested that a far more productive and efficient training mode would be for foreign experts to be brought to India and specifically assigned to train Indian personnel in their own ports. We believe that it would be far more efficient for a foreign expert on a three-to-six month assignment, to train a group of Indian port personnel in new methods, procedures...The Team therefore recommends equipment, etc., at their own port. The Team therefore recommends that instead of sending officials abroad for training, that selected experts be invited to India to train personnel in the actual ports where the problems exist.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Ibid. For example, in 1948, the Scindia Steam Navigation Company, the then most prominent Indian shipping firm, financially supported the establishment of Lal Bahadur Shastri Nautical and Engineering College in Bombay.

¹¹³ IPA, *Annual Report of the Ministry of Shipping and Transport*, 1982-3, Government of India, New Delhi, p.17.

¹¹⁴ For a recent study on labour disputes in Indian ports at the time of independence, see Prerna Agarwal, 'The War at the Workplace: Calcutta's Dockworkers and Changing Labour Regime, 1939-1945' (2022) 67.3, *International Review of Social History*, pp.407-34.

¹¹⁵ IMUK, H. M. Trivedi, 'Nautical and Engineering Training Facilities in India', p.430.

¹¹⁶ This period witnessed a massive influx of containers into Indian ports, creating severe congestion for the authorities as they continued to rely on outdated cargo-handling techniques. The problem was further compounded by the location of major Indian ports within densely populated metropolitan cities. Narrow road networks and the acute shortage of backup storage space significantly restricted the easy movement of containers. These mounting logistical pressures compelled Indian port authorities to address port management and infrastructural modernisation more seriously than ever before. The establishment of management training institutes in three major ports during this period further reflects this shift in priorities.

¹¹⁷ NAI, Ministry of Shipping, File no.9-PGA (17)/73, 1973, from K. K. Ray, chairman, Calcutta Port Commissioners, to A. D. Granger, director, International Labour Organisation, DO no.7439/D (enclosed copy of 'Draft Request for Technical Assistance'), 15 May 1973, p.119.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., (Appendix 1), p.123.

A 1971 ECAFE survey, conducted with British and ILO assistance, reached similar conclusions. It identified training needs across Asian ports, especially in cargo handling, and recorded repeated requests for UN support.¹¹⁹ P. R. Subramanian, ECAFE's regional port adviser, subsequently recommended management divisions at Calcutta, Bombay and Madras and proposed the Calcutta institute as a regional centre for India and neighbouring countries.¹²⁰ He envisaged:

The Management Division should be headed by a management expert and deal with all management problems and especially material management, time and motion studies, traffic forecasts, berths utilization and should carry out intensive management studies on operational problems as they arise.¹²¹

These proposals linked administrative reform directly to new cargo-handling systems. ILO involvement brought expertise and finance, but plans to place foreign personnel in senior posts could provoke resistance, as at Bombay, where disagreement stalled implementation.¹²² The episode illustrates the tension between international assistance and domestic control.

From 1980, the UNCTAD TRAINMAR project supplied funding and international links to the IIPMs, with particular emphasis on container operations.¹²³ The World Maritime University in Malmö likewise offered courses for developing countries with support from European governments and shipping companies, while US institutions contributed language training, library resources and equipment.¹²⁴ Indian firms also invested directly: Great Eastern Shipping founded a cadet academy and launched the residential training ship *Jawahar* in 1975.¹²⁵

Foreign support had several motives. International carriers sought lower-cost, technically trained Asian crews, while Indian seafarers were often attracted to foreign-

¹¹⁹ NAI, Ministry of Shipping, File no.9-PGA (17)/73, 1973 (United Nations Economic and Social Council) Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East, Transport and Communications Committee, Water Transport Sub-Committee Tenth Session 31st October–7th November 1973, Bangkok, pp.159–61.

¹²⁰ NAI, From K. K. Ray, chairman, Calcutta Port Commissioners, to K. Sivaraj, joint secretary, Ministry of Shipping and Transport, DO no.7439/D, 14 May 1973, p.117.

¹²¹ NAI, Ministry of Shipping, File no.9-PGA (17)/73, 1973, p.164.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹²³ TRINMAR, *Handbook on Containerised Shipping Management*, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Collaboration with Narottam Morarjee Institute of Shipping, Bombay, 1990, pp.1.1–1.4.

¹²⁴ 'World Maritime University Opens in Malmö, Sweden: Advanced Training will Promote Shipping by Developing Countries and Safety at Sea', *WMU News*, 1.1.1979, pp.2–3. The Maritime Commons, The Digital Repository of the World Maritime University.

<https://commons.wmu.se/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1118&context=wmu_news> accessed 25 January 2026.

¹²⁵ IMUK, D. N. Sanklecha, *Tramping to Success*, pp.253, 98.

flagged vessels.¹²⁶ Indian companies still relied on foreign specialists for senior posts, and port authorities needed expertise to operate increasingly complex cargo-handling systems. American President Lines' (APL) early container operations at Indian ports illustrate how training, technology and foreign commercial participation became intertwined.¹²⁷

Important limitations remained. George Mamphilli argued in the 1990s that western-designed curricula did not always match Indian port conditions and that manpower development had not been treated as integral to port efficiency.¹²⁸ Maritime education had reduced one form of dependence, but new technologies generated further reliance on international institutions and expertise.

Towards Unit Load

The preceding sections show that the state could protect national shipping through law, credit and ownership, but could not independently provide all the capital, infrastructure and expertise required by containerisation. Unit load therefore tests the limits of state-led development and brings port trusts, private carriers and international actors more directly into the analysis.

Before containerisation, Indian shipping was shaped mainly by domestic policy, commodity flows, foodgrain imports and established trade routes. Containers embedded the sector more deeply in foreign investment, global shipping lines, technical standards and international demand. India's debt constraints and cautious planning limited large-scale port modernisation, making adoption uneven and contested. Correspondence among port trusts, government departments and commercial bodies, together with feasibility studies, shows how this external technology was negotiated within domestic institutions.

The annual reports and proceedings for 1947-60 of influential Bombay- and Calcutta-based commercial bodies, notably the IMC, BCC, and Bengal Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI), reveal persistent institutional anxiety about the deteriorating condition

¹²⁶ The exodus of Indian officers to foreign-flagged vessels led to a significant shortage of personnel in Indian shipping lines, particularly in senior positions such as chief engineer and master. By 1995, this shortage had reached 40 per cent. Ref. KPTMA, S. P. Mohile, 'Focus on Human Element in Shipping', *Indian Shipping* (Journal of Indian National Shipowners' Association, Bombay), vol.47, no.3, November 1995, p.24.

¹²⁷ Mumbai Port Authority Archives (hereafter MPA), *Proceedings Volumes of the Bombay Port Trust*, various years (1970-5). In the early stages of container shipping at the Port of Bombay, the APL not only invested in infrastructure (often bringing the necessary equipment with them) but also in the workforce. They even supplied highly skilled personnel to handle standardised cargoes, such as containers and pallets, in the port complex.

¹²⁸ KPTMA, George Mamphilli, 'Training of Port Personnel in India', *Indian Ports*, vol.XXV, no.3, 1992, pp.15-16.

of cargo movement within the port system.¹²⁹ Problems of loading and unloading general cargo on Indian waterfronts became more pronounced after independence, with western ports such as Bombay attracting relatively early attention.¹³⁰ Congestion at Bombay port sometimes became so severe that foreign shipping lines trading with the port imposed extra surcharges.¹³¹ American steamer agents, for example, imposed a 25 per cent emergency surcharge on cargo shipped to Bombay from 1948 until conditions returned to normal. UK and continental lines did the same in July 1949.¹³² These reports repeatedly emphasised the widening gap between the rapid expansion of maritime trade and the stagnant growth of dockside infrastructure, mechanised handling facilities and storage capacity, as well as continuing labour unrest. Although containers could reduce transit time and handling costs through door-to-door delivery, they became popular in Atlantic ports more rapidly from the 1950s, while Indian ports only began to use them at the beginning of the 1970s. Until the 1960s, as Table 2 indicates, Indian maritime trade was closely tied to the UK and Japan¹³³, with limited engagement with America.¹³⁴ The UK's participation in containerisation also began in the 1960s and gained momentum in the 1970s.¹³⁵ As Table 3 shows, both the number of terminals and container movements by rail increased after 1965. During and after the Vietnam War, containerisation also spread to Japanese ports, beginning in 1965.¹³⁶ Thus, trade direction and trade partners were important determinants of containerisation in India.

¹²⁹ BCCI, *Abstract of Proceedings*, November 1952, 'Congestion in the Port of Calcutta', p.4.

¹³⁰ During the annual general meeting, Mr A. D. Finney, the president of the BCC, expressed his concerns. He said 'I would like to say that Bombay is not the only port where shipping meets with serious delays. In fact, I could name two regions in which the situation is or has been worse than in Bombay, namely, the East African Coast and South America. Even so, all who take a pride in this city should maintain unceasingly their efforts to improve the situation.' Ref. BCC, *Committee Report*, 1948, p.xxvii.

¹³¹ For a recent study on congestion at Bombay Port and its connection with the creation of a satellite port at Nhava Sheva, see M. Maruschke, *Portals of Globalization: Repositioning Mumbai's Ports and Zones, 1833–2014* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), pp.177–90.

¹³² BCC, *Committee Report*, 1949, p.xxvii.

¹³³ SAC, *India 1953 Annual Review* (published by the Public Relations Department of the High Commission of India, India House, London), p.108. In the first decade following independence, the UK was the largest consumer of Indian goods.

¹³⁴ KPTMA, *Administrative Report of the Bombay Port Trust*, 1963–64. Appendix D.

¹³⁵ IMU, 'Seminar on Ports and Shipping in Developing Countries', 8 October, 1986 – New Delhi Sponsored by: Government of India, Ministry of Transport Department of Surface Transport in association with Indian Ports Association., p.29.

¹³⁶ J. P. DiMoia, 'Reconfiguring transport infrastructure in post-war Asia: mapping South Korean container ports, 1952–1978' (2020) 36(3–4) *History and Technology*, pp.382–99.; also 'From Occupation to Containerization, 1945 to Early 1970s' <<https://asiacenter.harvard.edu/events/occupation-containerization-1945-early-1970s>> accessed 12 June 2026.

Year	Terminals in Operation	Containers Forwarded	Capacity of Train Loaded
1965 (2 months)	2	408	20%
1966	6	27,286	45%
1967	16	102,027	53%
1968	24	268,846	54%
1969	32	397,420	60%
1970	30	480,095	61%

Table 3: Growth of rail container movements in the UK, 1965–70.

Source: IMUK, 'Seminar on Ports and Shipping in Developing Countries', New Delhi, 8 October 1986, sponsored by the Government of India, Ministry of Transport, Department of Surface Transport, in association with the Indian Ports Association, p.29.

India's move towards unit load became explicit in the 1970s. Bombay provides the clearest case study because the records of the port trust preserve detailed exchanges among port officials, central government and commercial interests.

The Bombay Port Trust began to consider container shipping seriously in the 1970s. Here, two contradictory positions emerged. When the Master Plan for the development of Bombay Port was being prepared, together with a survey report by consulting engineers M/s Bertlin & Partners, the central concern was how docks with poor and outdated technology could handle bulk cargo transported in larger and standardised units such as pallets and containers. The Master Plan boldly proposed remodelling the existing docks. Yet draft limitations left little scope for remodelling existing Bombay docks, which were, according to the report, 'handicapped by draft limitation and bottlenecks due to saturating traffic'. At the same time, the idea of establishing a satellite port on the eastern side of Bombay Harbour, at Nhava-Sheva, was being conceptualised. M/s Bertlin & Partners therefore placed greater emphasis on export trade and suggested constructing three berths at the new satellite port: two for bulk cargo such as sulphur, sugar and fertilisers, and one specifically for containers.¹³⁷ While M/s Bertlin & Partners favoured container shipping at Bombay Port, another study team, IAPH, took the opposite view. Rather than investing large sums in a new satellite port, it favoured making use of existing Bombay Port facilities and argued that government investment should be guided by

¹³⁷ MPA, *Proceedings Volume of the Bombay Port Trust, 1970*, 'Trustees Special Board Meeting', 21 July, 'Future Development of Bombay Port', pp.1358–9.

current traffic trends.¹³⁸ IAPH's assessment rested particularly on the composition of trade and the uncertain future of foodgrain imports through Bombay.¹³⁹

This uncertainty over feasibility created a divide within central government over capital investment in dock modernisation. The delay in government approval for investment in containerisation at Bombay Port enabled foreign shipping companies to enter and increasingly dominate the port's containerisation process. A foreign shipping line, APL, expressed interest and agreed to invest in the port to develop container-handling facilities.¹⁴⁰ The total cost was Rs 71.7 lakhs, excluding customs. The proposal was approved by the Port Trust¹⁴¹ on the grounds that 'it would enable this port to promote Containerisation without having to risk a heavy investment, particularly in the initial development stage of the new technique in this country'.¹⁴² This endeavour did not, however, receive sufficient support from the government; the proposal to waive customs fees on imported equipment was not approved by the central government. Another potential obstacle was the government's support for national shipping lines. The government was not ready to allow a foreign shipping line to invest in the port without first hearing from prominent national shipping lines on whether this might harm their interests. Responses varied. SCI was initially willing to participate but later changed its position.¹⁴³ In a letter, the managing director of SCI argued that APL's proposal on containerisation would serve only its own shipping service and would not benefit other Indian shipping lines.¹⁴⁴ Some early measures were nevertheless taken by the government and the port trust, including the port's establishment of a Unit Load Advisory Committee in June 1967 and a seminar on containerisation held in Bombay in December 1968.¹⁴⁵

The port trust continued to press for Nhava-Sheva. When its inclusion in the Fifth Plan appeared doubtful, the chairman convened a special meeting and cited support from manufacturers, chambers of commerce, shipowners and export-import associations.¹⁴⁶

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ APL was the first shipping line to begin container trade with the Port of Bombay.

¹⁴¹ MPA, *Proceedings Volume of the Bombay Port Trust*, 1973, 'Trustees Board Meeting', 30 January, 'Memorandum from the Additional Chief Engineer', no.HF.481C/1/688 dated 15 November, p.303.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ MPA, *Proceedings Volume of the Bombay Port Trust*, 1971, Trustees Special Board Meeting held on 26 October, 'Administration Report', 1970-71, p.781.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. (letter no.213/DD/101/177 dated 9/13 September 1972).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ MPA, *Proceedings Volume of the Bombay Port Trust*, 1973, Trustees Special Board Meeting held on 23 August, 'Inclusion of Nhava Sheva Project in the Fifth Five Year Plan-Letter from S. R. Kulkarni', p.268.

Other bottlenecks extended beyond the port. India's first inland container depot opened at Bangalore only in 1981, while the 1989 RITES perspective plan showed that ICDs remained poorly connected to major seaports.¹⁴⁷ Weak road links, customs procedures and the delayed legal framework for multimodal transport increased time and cost. The Multimodal Transport Act followed in 1993, and a 1996 Indian Chamber of Commerce conference argued that existing transport and customs law should be adapted rather than creating further restrictions.¹⁴⁸ These post-1991 examples indicate the practical consequences of liberalisation and the institutional work still required to make it effective.

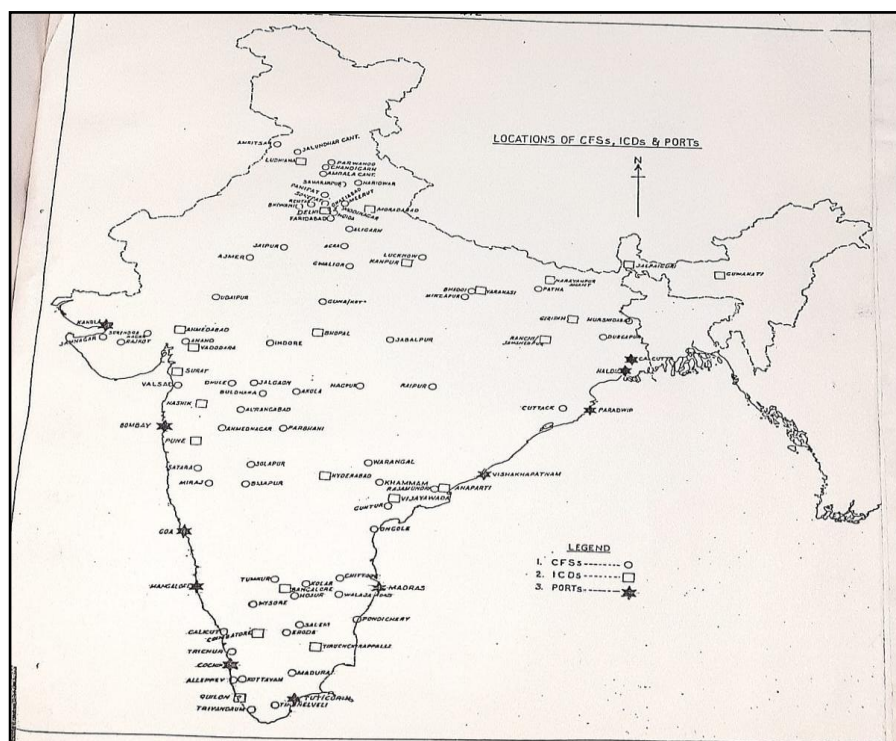


Figure 5: India's container logistics network: inland container depots, container freight stations and ports.

Source: IPA, *A Perspective Plan for the Development of Containerisation in India*, part II, report submitted by RITES, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, March 1989.

¹⁴⁷ IPA, *A Perspective Plan for the Development of Containerisation in India (Part-II)*, Report Submitted by RITES, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India, March 1989.

¹⁴⁸ KPTMA, *Proceedings of the National Conference on Private Sector Participation for Competitiveness for Indian Ports*, jointly organised by the British Deputy High Commission and Indian Chamber of Commerce, 10 October 1996, pp.28, 32.

Containerisation also expanded the role of the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and foreign commercial partners. Capital shortages encouraged joint ventures, private container freight stations and imported equipment, especially as export promotion and liberalisation gained importance in the 1980s. International finance and expertise thus became not an incidental supplement but part of the operating structure of modern Indian ports.

India adopted container berths more slowly than Asian competitors such as Singapore, despite favourable projections from several international studies. Government caution and repeated feasibility exercises delayed investment, while correspondence from Bombay shows persistent disagreement between the port trust and central government over planning priorities.¹⁴⁹ Port infrastructure improved, but international shipping companies retained control over much of the long-distance container trade.¹⁵⁰

The absence of a major domestic hub also kept Indian cargo dependent on feeder services through Colombo, Singapore and Dubai. More than 70 per cent of Colombo's cargo was estimated to consist of transhipped Indian containers by the end of the century. Jawaharlal Nehru Port was developed near Bombay partly to reduce this dependence; later estimates suggested savings of Rs 6,084 per TEU and 48 hours compared with transshipment through Salalah.¹⁵¹ These later outcomes underline the consequences of choices made before liberalisation rather than extending the article's main chronology beyond 1991.

¹⁴⁹ Since 1975, Indian shipping companies have faced significant challenges, primarily, but not limited to, cash flow issues, exacerbated by the onset of the global financial recession. This situation became increasingly complex in the 1980s due to the overproduction of shipping capacity, which far exceeded demand for shipping services. Consequently, numerous Indian shipping companies were unable to repay their foreign loans, as they required foreign currency remittance. This time, the Indian government extended help by granting subsidies and assistance to those firms to liquidate their foreign loans. This was unanimously approved and recommended by the National Shipping Board at its meeting in Cochin in 1978. It is very interesting to note that these years saw an official push towards containerisation, with the establishment of study groups and the conduct of government-initiated feasibility reports, all reflecting an institutional shift towards the modernisation of cargo-handling techniques in the country. It is assumed that, as in the global situation, the shipping crisis did not impede container trade in India. India's move to containerisation during a period when shipping companies faced cash-flow difficulties may serve as a strategic mechanism to circumvent the ongoing crisis. Foreign purchasers of Indian products were increasingly favouring the receipt of their consignments in containers. Both Indian ports and shipping companies may have sought to capitalise on this market to address the prevailing shipping crisis. Ref. NAI/PMO/File no.17, from the chairman of the National Shipping Board to the Prime Minister, D.O. no.CH/NSB/78, 6 October 1978.

¹⁵⁰ Singapore's container shipping company, the Neptune Orient Lines, occupied a considerable share in India's container shipping. It had established networks with major ports such as Bombay and Madras, and by 1982, it began operating in trade between South Asia and Europe. Ref. National Library Singapore (Reference Section Closed Stack Collections)/, *Neptune News*, Published by the Neptune Orient Lines (NOL), May/June 1982, p.1.

¹⁵¹ KPTMA, Capt. Jimmy Sarbh, 'JN Port: The Future Hub Port of India', *The Link, Global Trade and Freight Review*, vol.VII, no.11, November 2002, pp.46-8.

Contribution to the Literature

Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasised the twentieth-century movement of shipping and shipbuilding away from their traditional European centres. Stig Tenold has been especially influential in explaining the growing penetration of non-European actors into international shipping and the diffusion of maritime capacity beyond Europe. He links this shift to the two World Wars and the rapid industrialisation of Asian economies from the 1970s, although his account of the 'East' is represented principally by Japan, South Korea and China. Nicholas White similarly emphasises the rise of national shipping and the diffusion of containerisation across the eastern hemisphere, and uses BISNC to show the difficulties faced by British companies in the Indian Ocean during decolonisation, partition and the growth of protectionist shipping policies. By placing India at the centre, this article broadens the literature beyond accounts of European decline or East Asian success. It shows how anti-colonial entrepreneurship, postcolonial state developmentalism and global technological change interacted within a major South Asian economy, and how these forces redistributed maritime power without producing straightforward national autonomy.

The article also contributes to Indian business history by treating shipping as a mixed system rather than a simple contest between state and market. Nationalist firms emerged through confrontation with colonial policy; after independence, public ownership, protection and private enterprise developed together; and from the 1970s the capital and technical demands of containerisation opened the sector more fully to international actors.¹⁵² Linking these changes to maritime education shows that national capacity depended on skills and institutions as well as ships and finance.

Conclusion

Indian shipping developed from an early entrepreneurial nationalism that challenged colonial power but depended on capital, technology and trained labour. After 1947, private shipowners remained important, while the state moved from protection and partnership towards direct ownership and regulation. This expansion constrained some private initiative, but did not eliminate it: national development continued to rely on private carriers, international finance and technical expertise. Containerisation exposed

¹⁵² A good deal of discourse is documented in T. Roy, *A Business History of India*, pp.154–67. Roy said 'Indian big business contributed money and leadership to the movement that hastened an end of colonial rule. And yet, instead of rewarding them with unrestrained capitalism, post-independent India reserved large fields of investment for the state and regulated private enterprise.' (p.154) He further added that after the Second World War, the role of the world economy in driving the economic development of post-colonial India was diminished. On the contrary, a set of Marxist interpretations argued about 'the monopoly of power of big business'. See A. L. Levkovsky, *Capitalism in India* (Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1972); C. Bettelheim, *India Independent* (New York: Monthly Review, 1968).

these dependencies most clearly because its infrastructure and operating systems exceeded what the state or domestic firms could readily provide alone.

Across national shipping, containerisation and maritime education, the article therefore identifies a shifting triangular relationship among nationalist private capital, state planning and global technological-logistical systems. India's engagement with international shipping revealed the limits of economic autonomy, but also the persistence of domestic institutions, port authorities, firms and commercial lobbies in shaping policy. Liberalisation in 1991 did not begin this transformation so much as formalise pressures already visible in the shipping crisis, port modernisation and internationalisation of the preceding two decades. The Indian case suggests a broader model for understanding maritime development in other postcolonial economies.

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Coordinating Flows: Entrepreneurship and Industrial Organisation in the Pennautier Royal Manufacture, c. 1696–1760

Flavian Minel¹

Early modern manufactories have long occupied an ambiguous position in business history. One strand of scholarship interprets them primarily as instruments of state policy, created to implement mercantilist strategies and to reinforce fiscal and regulatory authority.² In this perspective, royal manufactories appear as extensions of governmental power into the sphere of production.³ A different body of research situates early manufactories within the broader dynamics of proto-industrialisation and merchant capitalism. From this viewpoint, they are understood as precursors to modern industrial firms, emerging from commercial networks that coordinated dispersed rural production.⁴ In this context, the expansion of market demand and changes in household labour allocation are seen as key drivers of this transformation.⁵

Both interpretations have substantially advanced our understanding of early modern economic change. Yet by emphasising either state-building processes or market expansion, they often leave the internal organisation of the manufacture itself comparatively unexplored. How did such a manufacture operate on a daily basis? How were raw materials procured, transported, financed and transformed into exportable goods under conditions of market volatility, regulatory constraint and capital scarcity? And above all, what did entrepreneurship mean in a context where production depended on the coordination of heterogeneous and unstable economic circuits?

Classical economic theory has often defined the entrepreneur through innovation or the management of uncertainty.⁶ An older tradition, however, cast the entrepreneur

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² Paul-Marie Bondonio, 'L'organisation industrielle et commerciale sous l'Ancien Régime : le privilège exclusif au XVIII^e siècle' (1933) 21 *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, p. 140; Eli F Heckscher, *Mercantilism* (London: Routledge, 1994); Robert B. Ekelund, *Mercantilism as a Rent-Seeking Society: Economic Regulation in Historical Perspective* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1981).

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⁵ Jan De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution: Consumer Behavior and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁶ Joseph A. Schumpeter and Richard Swedberg, *The Theory of Economic Development* (London: Routledge, 2021); Hélène Vérin, *Entrepreneurs, entreprise: histoire d'une idée* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011); Frank Hyneman Knight, *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit* (Orlando: Signalman, 2009).

primarily as a coordinator of exchange circuits: an agent who bears market risk by purchasing at known prices and selling at unknown ones, and who thereby absorbs the uncertainty that neither property-holders nor wage-earners are willing to carry.⁷ This is the figure Cantillon placed at the centre of economic life, and it is this figure, rather than the Schumpeterian innovator, that the present article takes as its analytical point of departure. More recent approaches have stressed the role of coordination and information, yet these models were largely formulated with modern firms in mind.⁸ When applied to eighteenth-century manufacturing, where ownership, credit and political authority were structurally intertwined, they require substantial adjustment.⁹ In particular, they tend to treat institutional frameworks as external constraints on entrepreneurial action rather than as constitutive elements of the firm's financial architecture. The Pennautier case historicises this assumption: it shows that the boundary between institutional environment and firm-level organisation was not fixed but contingent on specific political and fiscal configurations, and that its displacement, when provincial support receded in 1756, fundamentally altered the structure of entrepreneurial constraint.

In this context, entrepreneurship did not primarily consist in technological breakthrough or autonomous control over capital, but in the capacity to align heterogeneous and unstable economic circuits within a constrained institutional environment.¹⁰ Recent scholarship in economic history has increasingly stressed the importance of institutions in shaping long-term growth trajectories.¹¹ Similarly, studies of early modern political economy have highlighted the negotiated and composite nature of governance structures.¹² However, even within this renewed institutional framework, the firm itself often remains a black box. This article intervenes at this intersection. By reconstructing the internal operation of a single manufacture across two distinct institutional phases, it contributes to the history of early modern manufactories, to the theory of entrepreneurship as coordination rather than innovation, and to the broader question of

⁷ Alain Guéry (ed.), *Montchrestien et Cantillon: le commerce et l'émergence d'une pensée économique* (Lyon: ENS éditions, 2011), p.157.

⁸ Mark Casson, *The Entrepreneur: An Economic Theory*, 2nd edition (Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2003).

⁹ IP Minoglou and Youssef Cassis (eds), *Entrepreneurship in Theory and History* (London: Palgrave, 2005); Mark Casson, *Entrepreneurship: Theory, Networks, History* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2010).

¹⁰ Vérin (n 5), p.105.

¹¹ Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Sheilagh C. Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade: Merchant Guilds, 1000–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹² William Beik, *Absolutism and Society in Seventeenth-Century France: State Power and Provincial Aristocracy in Languedoc* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Philip T. Hoffman and Kathryn Norberg (eds), *Fiscal Crises, Liberty, and Representative Government, 1450–1789* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press 1994).

how firms and institutions are constitutively, rather than merely externally, related. In doing so, it treats the manufacture not as a black box but as a site where financial architecture, material organisation and institutional dependency can be observed in their interaction.

This article addresses these questions through extensive use of the private archival records of the Pennautier royal manufacture in eighteenth-century Languedoc.¹³ Preserved within the manufacture's own documentary holdings, these materials include account books kept by successive lessees, *bail d'affermage* contracts, notarial obligations, detailed transport invoices, commercial correspondence with suppliers in Bayonne and Toulouse, letters exchanged with the Roux trading house in Marseille and deliberations of the Estates of Languedoc concerning subsidies and export premiums. Together, these private business records make it possible to reconstruct, with unusual precision, the financial and material mechanisms that sustained production from the manufacture's foundation in 1696 through to the Tarbouriech phase in the 1750s–60s, a period bounded by the creation of its institutional architecture and the withdrawal of provincial support that fundamentally reconfigured its financial dependencies.

The article proceeds in three stages. The first reconstructs the manufacture's financial and institutional architecture, highlighting credit arrangements, fixed capital immobilisation, and provincial subsidies. The second examines the material coordination required to sustain production, focusing on wool procurement and transport strategies. The third examines the marketing of cloth, showing how price uncertainty, quality disputes, and dependence on intermediaries shaped the entrepreneur's role in sustaining exports.

The Foundation of the Pennautier Manufacture

A Networked Foundation

The Pennautier manufacture was established in 1696, at a moment when manufacturing expansion in Languedoc was actively encouraged by the Estates of Languedoc. Since the early 1680s, the Estates had adopted a proactive policy of industrial support, granting subsidies, export premiums and infrastructural assistance to selected manufactories. In this sense, manufacturing was embedded within a provincial strategy aimed at stabilising

¹³ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/360–394. Fonds de la famille de Lorgeril de Pennautier. Manufacture de draps de Pennautier [Family papers of the Lorgeril de Pennautier family. Pennautier cloth manufacture].

fiscal revenues, promoting export trade and reinforcing the economic base of the province, and the kingdom as a whole.¹⁴

The founder of the manufacture, Louis Reich de Pennautier, came from a family ennobled through fiscal office: his grandfather had served as treasurer of the Estates of Languedoc in the sixteenth century, and Pennautier himself inherited both the charge and the nodal position within Languedoc's institutional and financial circuits that it conferred. Far from an isolated industrial investor, he occupied a central position within the province's fiscal and financial apparatus.¹⁵ His activities extended beyond provincial taxation into commercial ventures, including involvement in several commercial companies such as the Levant company. His economic profile was therefore hybrid: he operated simultaneously within public finance, private credit networks and commercial companies.¹⁶

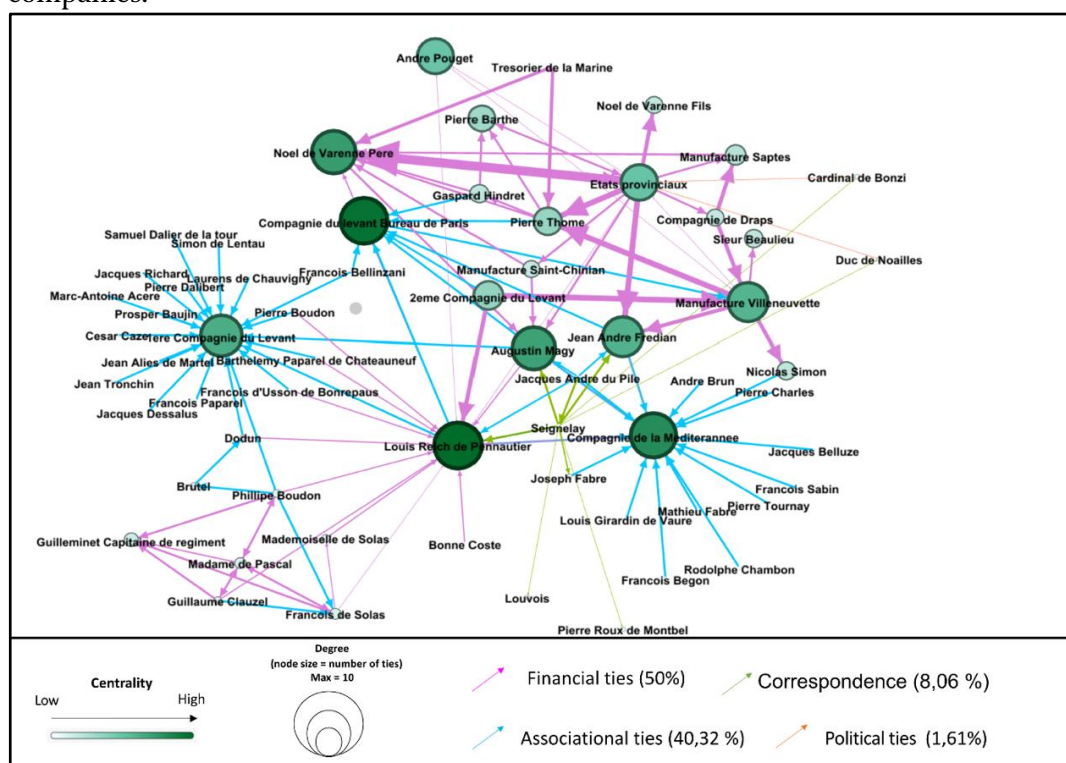


Figure 1: Louis Reich de Pennautier's relational network.

¹⁴ Flavian Minel, 'Les premiers soutiens financiers à l'industrie lainière languedocienne : l'émergence d'une politique manufacturière (1670–1700)' (ResearchGate, 2025) <<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.22646.87362>> accessed 1 September 2026.

¹⁵ Beik (n 11), p.223.

¹⁶ Flavian Minel, 'Investir, produire, exporter : les actionnaires de la Compagnie du Levant et les manufactures languedociennes (1670–1695)' (ResearchGate, 2025) <<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21761.93287>> accessed 1 September 2026.

The network above is visualised through an eigenvector centrality measure, which evaluates each actor's importance not simply by the number of his connections, but by the influence of the actors to whom he was connected. With the maximum score, Pennautier emerges as the most central figure in the network, positioned at the intersection of royal administration, the Estates of Languedoc, Mediterranean trading companies, and other manufactories, and capable of converting that position into economic and political leverage. It was precisely this structural centrality that made the Pennautier manufacture possible. Access to capital, credit, and political leverage derived not from ownership of industrial capital alone, but from his embeddedness within these heterogeneous and mutually reinforcing circuits.¹⁷

Letters exchanged between Seignelay, the governor of Languedoc (the duc de Noailles), the intendant Basville, and Pennautier himself document repeated interventions concerning the financing and supervision of royal manufactories such as Saptès and Clermont.¹⁸ In these exchanges, Pennautier appears both as recipient of royal directives and as intermediary charged with drafting memoranda on how to sustain or expand provincial manufactures. Other documents such as notarial acts and company contracts relating to the successive French Levant Companies, show his simultaneous involvement in Mediterranean commercial ventures.¹⁹ These sources place him at the junction of fiscal administration, commercial finance and industrial supply. In this respect, Pennautier occupied what Ronald S. Burt has described as 'structural holes': the gaps separating otherwise disconnected spheres of action such as royal administration, provincial institutions, merchant companies, and manufactories, allowing him to act as an intermediary and to convert relational position into economic advantage.²⁰

Seen from this perspective, the establishment of the Pennautier manufacture was less the creation of a new productive unit than the material extension of an existing institutional and financial configuration. The industrial site thus converted relational capital into fixed infrastructure. Yet the figure of Pennautier must not be conflated with that of the entrepreneur in the operational sense. As proprietor and financier, he mobilised capital and political leverage, but the conduct of production and commercial

¹⁷ The analytical framework and methodology underpinning this figure are detailed in my doctoral dissertation Flavian Minel, 'Structurer l'industrie, stabiliser les flux, gouverner le territoire: le cas de l'industrie lainière languedocienne (1670–1789)' (Thèse de doctorat, Université de Perpignan Via Domitia, 2025), pp.139–40.

¹⁸ Arch. Nat. MAR/B/3/18-331. Lettres reçues [Letters received].

¹⁹ Ibid. Extrait des articles et conditions de la société des intéressés en la compagnie de la mer Méditerranée, p.458 [Extract from the articles and conditions of the company of investors in the Mediterranean Sea Company, p.458].

²⁰ Emmanuel Lazega and Ronald S. Burt, 'Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition' (1995) 36 *Revue Française de Sociologie*, p.779 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/3322456>> accessed 1 September 2026.

risk was delegated to the entrepreneur. The foundation of the manufacture thus rested on a functional differentiation between ownership, finance and entrepreneurial activity. This functional differentiation between ownership and entrepreneurial activity was formalised from the outset through a lease the *bail d'affermage*, a leasing contract that structured the manufacture's operation. Under this arrangement, Louis Reich de Pennautier retained ownership of the buildings, equipment and fixed installations, while the daily conduct of production was entrusted to lessee-entrepreneurs. These operators assumed responsibility for labour organisation, procurement and commercial transactions, in exchange for the right to exploit the manufacture for a fixed annual rent.

The Organisation of the Manufacture

The separation was not merely administrative; it was first and foremost financial. At its foundation, Pennautier advanced 15,000 *livres* to the lessees, François Bourlat and Lamarque.²¹ This sum, repayable over ten years, constituted the initial working capital required to launch production cycles. It financed the purchase of raw materials, the mobilisation of labour, and the early operating costs of the manufacture before sales revenues could be realised.

The accounts kept by Bourlat and Lamarque offer a concrete view of how this architecture of credit operated in practice. The 15,000 *livres* were immediately converted into fixed installations and productive equipment. As early as 1698, 650 *livres* were spent on cloth-pressing machines, and approximately 720 *livres* on dyeing vats and boilers.²² Capital was thus immobilised from the outset in specialised infrastructure that required continuous utilisation.

Revenues, in turn, were rapidly reintegrated into the cycle of debt. In 1700, the sale of 289 *aunes*²³ of cloth generated 4,943 *livres*, yet these receipts were immediately deducted from the entrepreneurs' outstanding liability.²⁴ The cloth was delivered to Pennautier

²¹ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/362. Gestion par les sieurs frères Lamarque et Bourlat, marchands: baux à ferme, pièces de comptes. 1698–1709. Compte que rendent a Monsieur de Pennautier...les sieurs Lamarque et Bourlat tant pour le paiement et emploi de la somme de 15 000 *livres* [Management by the brothers Lamarque and Bourlat, merchants: farm leases, accounting documents, 1698–1709. Account rendered to Monsieur de Pennautier by Lamarque and Bourlat for the payment and use of the sum of 15,000 *livres*].

²² *Ibid.* Pièce n° 1, 3 quittances de Marin pour tuiles fournies pour la maison de l'affineur & Pièce n° 3 et 5. 2 quittances d'Albarede pour fourniture à la maison de la facture, pareur et affineur [Item no.1, 3 receipts from Marin for tiles supplied to the finisher's house; Items no.3 and 5, 2 receipts from Albarede for supplies to the manufacture, dresser and finisher].

²³ The *aune* was a French unit of length used for textiles under the Ancien Régime.

²⁴ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/362. Gestion par les sieurs frères Lamarque et Bourlat, marchands: baux à ferme, pièces de comptes, 1698–1709. Avance faites par nous [Lamarque et Bourlat] à la teinture de Pennautier [Management by the

himself, who credited its value against the 15,000 *livres* he had advanced to the lessees. Production thus entered the accounts not as free income, but as a reduction of debt. The settlement drawn up in 1709 between the lessees and Pennautier makes this logic even clearer. The entrepreneurs still owed 15,000 *livres* under the original obligation contracted in 1698. To this were added 400 *livres* for four years of rent on the finishers' house and 300 *livres* for the rental of the shearers' premises, bringing the total liability to 15,700 *livres*. At the same time, Pennautier owed the lessees 15,425 *livres* for cloth already delivered and for various expenses incurred on behalf of the manufacture. These sums were entered on the opposite side of the account and deducted from the total liability. Once this compensation was effected, a residual balance of 275 *livres* remained due from the entrepreneurs in order to close the account.²⁵

After more than a decade of activity, revenues and expenditures had thus nearly cancelled each other out. The account reveals not an expanding surplus, but a tightly structured equilibrium in which credit advanced, rent owed, cloth delivered, and production costs were continuously balanced against one another. It therefore appears that entrepreneurs operated within this narrow margin, where continuity of production was less a strategy of growth than a condition of financial survival.

However, the financial and material architecture of the Pennautier manufacture was embedded within a broader provincial framework shaped by the Estates of Languedoc. Although the establishment was founded at Pennautier's own expense and without an initial provincial loan, its operation unfolded within a system of incentives and recognitions administered by the Estates. Manufacturing expansion had been actively encouraged since the 1680s, and export-oriented production was tied to subsidy mechanisms such as the *pistole*²⁶ granted for cloth shipped to the Levant.²⁷

During the first lease, the entrepreneurs relied on Pennautier to secure access to these advantages. In 1700, the Estates agreed to grant the *pistole* for up to 200 pieces exported annually. In 1706, despite the absence of a prior formal entitlement, they awarded 4,000

Lamarque and Bourlat brothers, merchants: farm leases, accounting documents, 1698–1709. Advances made by us (Lamarque and Bourlat) to the Pennautier dyeworks].

²⁵ Ibid. *Compte que rendent a Monsieur de Pennautier...les sieurs Lamarque et Bourlat tant pour le paiement et emploi de la somme de 15 000 livres* [Account rendered to Monsieur de Pennautier by Lamarque and Bourlat for the payment and use of the sum of 15,000 *livres*].

²⁶ A subvention of 10 *livres* for each fine cloth exported.

²⁷ Flavian Minel, 'Soutenir l'industrie lainière languedocienne au XVIIIe siècle: entre impulsions royales et stratégies provinciales' (ResearchGate, 2025) <<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.30196.62081>> accessed 1 September 2026.

livres for the production of 400 pieces of fine cloth²⁸. In 1709, the subsidy was officially confirmed without the imposition of a minimum production quota, a notable exception when compared to other manufactories in the province.²⁹

These interventions did not transform the manufacture into a provincially financed enterprise, but they contributed to stabilising a fragile financial equilibrium. Subsidies functioned as conditional inflows linked to export performance rather than as autonomous profit. They were integrated into the same accounting structure that reconciled debt, rent and production costs. The result was a tightly structured system in which private capital, delegated entrepreneurship, and provincial incentives interacted. Capital was immobilised in specialised infrastructure; revenues were absorbed into debt reconciliation; margins remained narrow; and public support depended on sustained output. The viability of the manufacture therefore rested not on expansionist accumulation, but on the continuous alignment of financial commitments, material capacity and institutional incentives.

The central challenge was thus not merely to produce, but to produce without interruption. Fixed investment, repayment schedules, and subsidy conditions imposed a temporal discipline that made throughput indispensable. To maintain this equilibrium the entrepreneur required a steady and predictable supply of wool capable of feeding thirty looms and sustaining export commitments. The problem of industrial organisation now shifted from financial architecture to material coordination.

Securing and Moving Wool: Material Coordination Under Constraint

Securing Wool Supplies

From the mid-1750s onwards, the Pennautier manufacture entered a radically different institutional and financial configuration. In 1756, the Estates of Languedoc withdrew from the system of incentives that had long stabilised Levant-oriented production, exposing manufacturers to greater market volatility.³⁰ Joseph Tarbouriech emerged in this context as director within a *commandite*, meaning a limited partnership company formed with Saint-Pardoux, underpinned by a 60,000-*livre* loan at 5 per cent from the

²⁸ Flavian Minel, 'Base de données relationnelle - Flux financiers et industrie lainière en Languedoc (1680–1789)' (ResearchGate, 2025) <<https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.21152.65284/3>> accessed 1 September 2026.

²⁹ Arch. Dép. Hérault. C/7344. Délibération des États de Languedoc, le 26 janvier 1709, f° 105r-106v [Deliberation of the Estates of Languedoc, 26 January 1709, fol. 105r-106v].

³⁰ Stéphane Durand, Arlette Jouanna and Élie Pélaquier, *Des États dans l'État les États de Languedoc de la Fronde à la Révolution* (Genève: Droz, 2014), p.276.

Roux trading house.³¹ From this point, the manufacture's continuity depended less on provincial support than on its capacity to transform borrowed capital into cloth at a pace compatible with Mediterranean demand and repayment schedules.

In this later phase, the central problem was no longer the establishment of infrastructure but the maintenance of throughput. Tarbouriech's extensive commercial correspondence reveals that procurement was not a simple act of purchase, but a continuous process of negotiation, evaluation and logistical coordination across interregional markets.³² The scale of wool procurement reflects this constraint. Between September and December 1760, commercial correspondence and invoices record 157 bales of wool for which both the number of bales and their precise weight are indicated, amounting to 369 *quintaux* and 78 *livres pesant*³³. For the remaining consignments, where the weight is not specified, an average weight per bale derived from the documented sample has been used to estimate their total mass.³⁴ At an average of about 2.3 *quintaux* per bale, this represents a substantial mobilisation of raw material. Using Jean-Michel Minovez's estimate that 20 to 25 kilograms of fine Spanish wool were required for a high-quality piece, such volumes could theoretically sustain the production of roughly 3,000 to 3,700 cloths.³⁵

³¹ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance. 1759–1845 et s. d. Acte de société entre Joseph Tarbouriech et le sieur de Saint-Pardoux le 1er novembre 1759 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence. 1759–1845 and n.d. Partnership agreement between Joseph Tarbouriech and the sieur de Saint-Pardoux, 1 November 1759].

³²Ibid. About the Roux trading company see Sébastien Lupo, 'Révolution(s) d'échelles: le marché levantin et la crise du commerce marseillais au miroir des maisons Roux et de leurs relais à Smyrne (1740–1787)' (Thèse de doctorat, Aix-Marseille, 2015).

³³ The *quintal* and the *livre pesant* were pre-metric French units of weight. One quintal corresponded to 100 *livres pesant*. The *livre pesant* was based on the *poids de marc* system and weighed approximately 489 grams. One quintal therefore represented roughly 48.9 kilograms. These units varied slightly across regions and periods. For more information see Pierre Charbonnier and Université Blaise Pascal (eds), *Les anciennes mesures locales du midi méditerranéen d'après les tables de conversion* (Clermont-Ferrand: Institut d'Etudes du Massif Central, Université Blaise Pascal, 1994).

³⁴ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 535: Septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre de septembre à décembre 1760 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence. 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.535: September to December 1760. Letters from September to December 1760].

³⁵ Jean Michel Minovez, *La puissance du Midi: drapiers et draperies de Colbert à la Révolution* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2012), p.52.

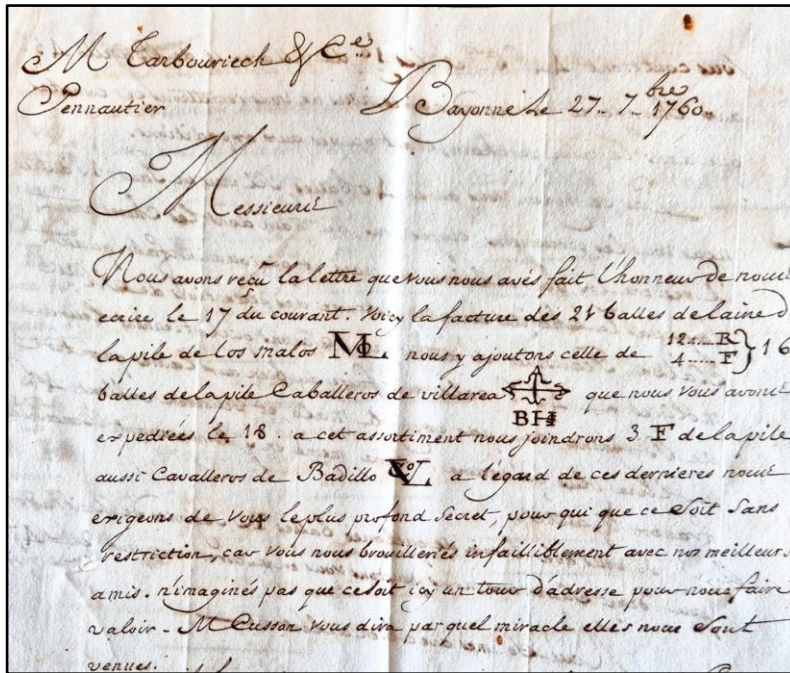


Figure 2: Letter from Poydenot to Tarbouriech concerning the shipment of 40 bales of wool.³⁶

The letter exemplifies the documentary form through which entrepreneurial coordination operated: wool procurement left traces not in ledgers alone, but in the continuous exchange of commercial correspondence that made negotiation, adjustment and relationship management visible. A manufacture equipped with 35 looms and specialised dyeing infrastructure could not afford irregular supply. Fixed capital such as presses, vats and warehouses generated no return unless constantly activated. Any delay in wool deliveries risked interrupting production cycles, slowing turnover, and, ultimately, compromising the capacity to sustain production and therefore meet financial obligations toward creditors and commercial partners. In this configuration, wool was not simply an input; it was the pivot of a chain linking regional production and Levantine markets.

Procurement was therefore a continuous process of negotiation over quality, price, transport and timing, involving suppliers in Bayonne, Toulouse and Carcassonne, and exposed to seasonal risks and market price volatility. It is at this level – where the cost of wool, the timing of deliveries, and the pressure of debt obligations converged – that

³⁶ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 535: Septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre des frères Poydenot à Joseph Tarbouriech le 27 septembre 1760 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence, 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.535: September to December 1760. Letter from the Poydenot brothers to Joseph Tarbouriech, 27 September 1760].

Tarbouriech's entrepreneurial function becomes fully visible: not as autonomous initiative, but as the ongoing stabilisation of supply, production and commercial circulation across dispersed markets.

Price, Quality, and the Cost of Securing Supply

If procurement determined the viability of production, its concrete mechanics were governed by price differentials, transport costs, and qualitative hierarchies within the Spanish wool market. Indeed, Tarbouriech's correspondence shows that wool was not purchased at a uniform rate, but within a stratified market where origin, quality and timing directly shaped cost structures. In September 1760, the Poydenot brothers in Bayonne informed Tarbouriech that 21 bales from the Malo pile were sold at 44 *sols* 6 deniers per *livre pesant*, while the 16 bales from the finer Villarea and Badillo wools reached 45 *sols*. The 37 documented bales weighed 9,512 *livres pesant*, bringing the transaction to 21,221 *livres* 14 *sols*. The invoice below makes visible what the correspondence describes: qualitative distinctions between wool grades were not merely technical classifications but were directly translated into differentiated costs, capital commitments and purchasing decisions.

At this scale, even a difference of 6 deniers per *livre*, which could appear to be negligible, became economically significant once multiplied across thousands of *livres pesant*. The hierarchy between Malo and Villarea was not merely descriptive; it was embedded in cost accounting and in the very mechanics of price formation. In the correspondence, each pile functioned as a recognised benchmark within a shared commercial vocabulary. When the Poydenot brothers informed Tarbouriech that Villarea was selling at 45 *sols* per *livre pesant* while Malo stood at 44 *sols* 6 *deniers*, they were not simply reporting prices; they were situating each quality within a comparative grid that structured purchasing decisions.³⁷

³⁷ Marguerite Martin, 'Les marchés de l'indigo en France : flux, acteurs, produits (XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles)' (Thèse de doctorat, Paris 1, 2016), p.499.

Facture du pair de 37 Bales de laine expédiées pour compte de Messieurs Tarbouriech & Co. à l'adresse de M. Poydenot de Rouen

21 bales le 18 août, pesant comme suit

36.....252	47.....256	48.....274	49.....245
34.....253	45.....258	82.....264	
30.....254	62.....256	83.....265	
29.....262	60.....262	80.....262	
32.....256	57.....257		
43.....252	71.....257		
40.....257			
41.....255			
42.....257			
46.....253			
	1543		
	2553		
	4096		
	2553		

16 bales le 18 août, pesant comme suit

10.....250	52.....250	81.....275
5.....247	41.....251	75.....275
54.....248		83.....291
49.....249		79.....273
20.....249		
30.....251		
19.....250		
50.....250		
48.....248		
27.....251		
	2493	
	2493	
	2493	

37 Bales

Figure 3: Invoice for the 37 bales of wool sent by Poydenot to Tarbouriech.³⁸

These distinctions are translated directly into capital immobilisation. The acquisition of higher-ranked piles required the entrepreneur to commit larger sums in advance, especially in a context of intense demand for fine Spanish wool. Indeed, suppliers repeatedly insisted that prices were rising due to purchases on other markets, notably Rouen, or because proprietors of specific piles imposed minimum selling prices.³⁹ Quality thus became inseparable from broader market dynamics: fluctuations in demand or strategic withholding by owners affected not only overall price levels but also the relative positioning of each grade, making clear that important commercial centres were not isolated but interconnected.⁴⁰

Suppliers also actively shaped Tarbouriech's perception of value. Letters compared one pile to another, encouraged him to evaluate price 'in relation' to recognised references, and justified higher tariffs through claims of superior fineness or reputation.⁴¹ Quality was

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 535: Septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre de Bourlat à Tarbouriech le 19 septembre 1760 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence, 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.535: September to December 1760. Letter from Bourlat to Tarbouriech, 19 September 1760].

⁴⁰ Fernand Braudel, *Les jeux de l'échange* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2022).

⁴¹ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 535: Septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre des frères

therefore not simply a technical property of the fibre; it operated as a negotiated economic category, constructed through comparison, reputation, and strategic framing within a competitive transregional market. In this sense, the wool trade reveals a system in which price, quality, and market power were deeply intertwined.

Transport further amplified these costs. In October 1760, a shipment of 50 bales generated total carriage expenses of 570 *livres* 16 *sols* 3 *deniers*. The rate was calculated as a percentage of weight: 5 per cent for the largest load and 5.5 per cent for smaller consignments, revealing clear economies of scale. The average transport cost amounted to approximately 5 *livres* 17 *sols* per quintal.⁴² The following breakdown illustrates how transport costs were structured across a large consignment, revealing the relative weight of each component.

Item	Amount
Carriage: 31 bales (5,091 lp) at 5 per cent	254 l. 11 s.
Carriage: 16 bales (3,884 lp) at 5.5 per cent	203 l. 18 s.
Carriage: 3 bales (713 lp) at 5.5 per cent	11 l. 16 s.
Packing materials (11.5 <i>cannes</i> ⁴³ of cloth and cord)	13 l. 11 s.
Labour (8 men)	8 l.
Warehousing (5 <i>sols</i> per bale)	10 l.
Exit duties & canal transfer	29 l. 3 d.
Conditioning (1 l. per bale)	40 l.
Total	570 l. 16 s. 3 d.

Figure 4: Detailed cost of the shipment of 50 bales of wool.

Out of the 570 *livres* 16 *sols* 3 *deniers*, no less than 470 *livres* 5 *sols* corresponded to the transport of the bales themselves. The remaining charges, packing materials, labour, warehousing, municipal exit duties and conditioning, formed a secondary but still significant layer of expense. Carriage alone thus represented roughly 82 per cent of the total freight expenditure. The differentiated rate of 5 per cent for the largest convoy and

Poydenot à Tarbouriech du 25 novembre 1760 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence, 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.535: September to December 1760. Letter from the Poydenot brothers to Tarbouriech, 25 November 1760].

⁴² Ibid. Pièce 535: Septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre de Pellissier et Cie à Tarbouriech le 29 décembre 1760 [Item no.535: September to December 1760. Letter from Pellissier & Co. to Tarbouriech, 29 December 1760].

⁴³ The *canne* was a unit of length used in southern France under the Ancien Régime, particularly for measuring textiles. Its value varied regionally, but in Languedoc it generally corresponded to approximately 1.9 to 2 metres. In this context, it refers to the length of cloth used for packing and securing wool bales.

5.5 per cent for smaller lots, suggests a degressive tariff structure. Volume directly affected the percentage applied to weight, and therefore the final cost per *quintal*.

This becomes clearer when compared to a smaller shipment. An expedition of 28 bales weighing 6,660 *livres pesant* was invoiced at 444 *livres* 14 *sols*. Although cheaper in absolute terms, its average cost rose to approximately 6 *livres* 14 *sols* per *quintal* which is almost one *livre* more per *quintal* than the larger convoy. A smaller consignment from the previous year shows the same cost structure, but at a less favourable rate.

Item	Amount
Carriage: 28 bales at 5.1 per cent (6,660 lp)	366 l. 6 s.
Packing materials	5 l. 18 s.
Labour (7 men)	7 l.
Warehousing (5 <i>sols</i> per bale)	7 l.
Exit duties & canal transfer	30 l. 10 s.
Conditioning (1 l. per bale)	28 l.
Total	444 l. 14 s.

Figure 5: Detailed cost of the shipment of 28 bales of wool.⁴⁴

At first glance, the second shipment seems less burdensome because of its lower aggregate value. However, the examination of the cost per *quintal* reveals the opposite: the 50-bale expedition averaged 5 *livres* 17 *sols* per *quintal*, whereas the 28-bale shipment reached 6 *livres* 14 *sols* per *quintal*. The difference results from the absence of economies of scale in the smaller convoy. While the larger load benefited from a reduced rate of 5 per cent, smaller consignments were subject to 5.5 per cent, and the 28-bale shipment itself was invoiced at 5.1 per cent, slightly above the most favourable rate observed in the larger expedition.

In this case, transport pricing was volume-sensitive, and consolidation reduced unit costs. For an entrepreneur operating under financial constraint and depending on rapid turnover, it was structurally more advantageous to concentrate shipments in larger batches. With this in mind, freight costs directly influenced the choice of suppliers, the timing of purchases and the sums of capital tied up in each transaction.

⁴⁴ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 534: Octobre à décembre 1759. Lettre de Pellissier à Tarbouriech le 26 décembre 1759 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence, 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.534: October to December 1759. Letter from Pellissier to Tarbouriech, 26 December 1759].

Marketing, Credit, and the Control of Outlets

The Role of the Roux Trading House

If wool procurement determined whether production could be sustained, the marketing of finished cloth determined its effective profitability. From the late 1750s onwards, the Pennautier manufacture was integrated into a dense relationship with the Roux trading house of Marseille. This relationship extended far beyond the sale of cloth. The Roux acted simultaneously as distributors, credit intermediaries, occasional suppliers of raw materials and financial partners within the *commandite* structure.⁴⁵

Their correspondence with Tarbouriech reveals the multiple layers of this interdependence. As early as 1759, the Roux organised the purchase of Tunisian wool at 25 *livres* per *quintal*, a price dramatically lower than the approximately 45 *sols* per *livre pesant* paid for fine Spanish wool.⁴⁶ Even allowing for differences in quality and additional transport costs, such transactions suggest strategic arbitration within a context of capital constraint. Raw materials could therefore be sourced not only according to technical standards but also according to financial pressure.

Financial flows were equally structured through commercial paper. A bill of exchange for 8,653 *livres*, issued in settlement of a wool delivery, circulated through several endorsements, from Carcassonne to Toulouse and Nice, before being presented to the Roux for payment⁴⁷. Each transfer reflected a process of compensation between merchants rather than the movement of coin. In other cases, the Roux supplied letters of exchange on request and deducted a commission of one per cent for the operation, making credit not ancillary to trade but one of its organising principles.

The negotiation of cloth prices reveals another layer of this configuration. Sales were not determined by production costs alone, nor by a mechanically fixed market price. They resulted from a continuous adjustment between nominal valuation, commercial practice, and the specific conditions of Levantine demand. The price of cloth functioned

⁴⁵ Gilbert Buti, 'Une maison de négoce à Marseille au XVIII^e siècle: les Roux frères' (2021) Patrimoines du Sud <<https://doi.org/10.4000/pds.6234>> accessed 1 September 2026.

⁴⁶ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 534: Octobre à décembre 1759. Lettre de Pierre Honoré Roux à Tarbouriech le 12 octobre 1759 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence, 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.534: October to December 1759. Letter from Pierre Honoré Roux to Tarbouriech, 12 October 1759].

⁴⁷ Ibid. Lettre de Pierre-Honoré Roux à Tarbouriech le 30 novembre 1759 [Letter from Pierre-Honoré Roux to Tarbouriech, 30 November 1759].

simultaneously as an economic variable and as a marker of quality.⁴⁸ Maintaining its level was therefore not a trivial matter: it conditioned the perceived standing of the manufacture within competitive circuits.

In this environment, access to outlets became a decisive factor. Merchants capable of placing substantial orders occupied a structurally advantageous position, since control over distribution channels translated into bargaining power. Negotiations did not concern price alone; they extended to payment conditions, discounting practices, and the allocation of margins. The Roux, situated at the intersection of export markets and financial intermediation, played a mediating role in these adjustments, balancing immediate sales against the longer-term stability of the manufacture's commercial reputation.

In this context, the continuity of Pennautier thus depended not solely on its capacity to secure wool and sustain production cycles, but on its integration into a network where credit, information and market access were tightly interwoven. The organisation of export markets therefore influenced production itself, since it determined how and when the capital invested in cloth could return.

Quality as a Market Constraint

The letters exchanged between Tarbouriech and the Roux trading house reveal that the problem of quality emerged most clearly at the moment of sale. Cloth did not circulate as a neutral commodity whose characteristics were self-evident. Its value had to be assessed, discussed, defended and sometimes contested before any transaction could be secured.

In October 1760, a potential buyer, Gauthier, examined consignments from Pennautier and expressed dissatisfaction with the shade of a light green dye. His reservation did not concern structural defects or manufacturing irregularities, but an aesthetic judgement. The Roux did not accept this evaluation at face value. They sought additional opinions and defended the cloth's merits, emphasising its superiority in relation to comparable products.⁴⁹ The episode shows that the recognition of quality depended less on internal

⁴⁸ Michel Morineau and Charles Carrière, 'Draps du Languedoc et commerce du Levant au XVIII^e siècle' (1968) 46 *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, p.108.

⁴⁹ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 535: lettres de septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre de Pierre-Honoré Roux à Tarbouriech le 15 octobre 1760 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence, 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.535: Letters from September to December 1760. Letter from Pierre-Honoré Roux to Tarbouriech, 15 October 1760].

production standards than on external validation within commercial networks. This uncertainty was not exceptional. Levantine markets were highly sensitive to colour, finish, and durability, particularly for fine reds and blues associated with luxury consumption.⁵⁰ Yet preferences varied between destinations, and buyers did not necessarily share identical criteria. As a result, quality was not a stable category determined exclusively in the workshop. It was redefined at each stage of circulation, through comparison, expertise, and negotiation.

The Roux played a decisive role in this process. They did not merely transmit information; they interpreted it. In December 1760, for example, they reported having received samples of *mahoux seconds*⁵¹ and *londrins premiers*⁵², accompanied by detailed explanations concerning their manufacture and finish. These samples were not treated as interchangeable goods. The Roux discussed with their correspondents which destination would best suit each category of cloth, suggesting that certain qualities would find more secure outlets in Constantinople, while others might be directed toward Cairo.⁵³

By distinguishing between different types of cloth, and by advising on their most appropriate destinations, the Roux effectively linked production decisions to market segmentation. A fabric considered technically superior could nevertheless prove less adapted to a given outlet. Conversely, a cloth of slightly lower intrinsic quality might circulate more easily if it matched demand structures in a particular port. This dynamic became particularly significant in a context where some manufacturers reduced production standards in order to supply broader consumer segments within the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁴ The temptation to substitute cheaper dyes or less refined wool responded to real commercial pressures. Yet such adjustments risked eroding the collective reputation

⁵⁰ Gilbert Buti, 'Des goûts et des couleurs. Draps du Languedoc pour clientèle levantine au XVIII^e siècle' [2008] *Rives méditerranéennes*, p.125.

⁵¹ *Draps mahoux* were the highest-quality cloths of the Languedoc 'Grande Draperie' produced for the Levantine market. They were woven from the finest Spanish merino wools (notably *refin Villecastin* or *refin Ségovie*) and were subject to strict manufacturing regulations, including a thread count of 3,600 warp threads for the *mahoux premier*

⁵² *Londrins seconds* were a lower grade within the Levantine export range. Unlike the finer *mahoux* and *londrins premiers*, they were woven with thicker yarn spun from coarser Spanish wool (often from Soria) and required a lower warp thread count, which made them less costly and more widely produced.

⁵³ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 535: lettres de septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre de Pierre-Honoré Roux à Tarbouriech le 15 octobre 1760 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence, 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.535: Letters from September to December 1760. Letter from Pierre-Honoré Roux to Tarbouriech, 15 October 1760].

⁵⁴ Minovez (n 34), p.120.

of Languedoc cloth. In the absence of strong provincial supervision, the defence of quality increasingly relied on the interaction between producers and merchants.

For Tarbouriech, the issue was therefore not simply to maintain a technical level of excellence. It was to ensure that this excellence was recognised, valued and translated into effective demand. Quality functioned simultaneously as a productive constraint and as a commercial condition. The continuity of export depended not only on the physical properties of cloth, but on the capacity of the manufacture and its commercial partners to stabilise its evaluation across geographically dispersed markets.

Price Reputation, Discounts, and the Control of Outlets

Whereas quality shaped reputation, price determined whether that reputation could be converted into liquidity. The correspondence between the Roux and Tarbouriech shows that cloth prices were not fixed outcomes but a negotiated construction, structured by volume, credit conditions and control over outlets. The discussions with the buyer Gauthier in October 1760 provide a revealing case. An initial agreement had been reached for six bales at 10 *livres* per *aune*, with the prospect of a second order of 50 bales at the same nominal rate. After inspecting a shipment, Gauthier questioned the quality, particularly the shade of a green dye as mentioned above and declared the price excessive. Yet the disagreement cannot be reduced to aesthetic dissatisfaction. As the Roux observed in one of their letters, ‘for a small quantity one does not look so closely as for a large one’.⁵⁵ The scale of the projected order altered the stakes of negotiation. Gauthier proposed a reduction to 9 *livres* 10 *sols* per *aune*, while maintaining a discount of 20 per cent. The effective price would therefore fall to approximately 7 *livres* 12 *sols*. In a context marked by limited liquidity in Levantine markets, such discounts were not exceptional. They formed part of ordinary commercial practice. Yet the mechanism was not merely technical, because the maintenance of a high face value of 10 *livres* per *aune* preserved the symbolic standing of the manufacture, while the discount absorbed market contraction⁵⁶. With this in mind, the nominal price protected reputation and the discount adjusted to conjuncture of the Levant market.

For Tarbouriech, however, this was not a purely commercial discussion conducted at a distance. The proposed reduction directly affected the balance between production costs

⁵⁵ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 535: lettres de septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre de Pierre-Honoré Roux à Tarbouriech le 8 octobre 1760 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence, 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.535: Letters from September to December 1760. Letter from Pierre-Honoré Roux to Tarbouriech, 8 October 1760].

⁵⁶ Morineau and Carrière (n 47).

and debt service. Wool had been purchased at high rates, transport had required substantial outlays, and the 60,000-*livre* loan structured the rhythm of repayment. Accepting a lower nominal price risked weakening the perceived quality of his cloth in future negotiations; refusing concessions risked immobilising finished goods and delaying cash returns. His position was therefore constrained but not passive. Through correspondence, adjustments in assortments, and coordination with the Roux, he sought to maintain a price level compatible with both reputation and turnover.

However, the negotiation did not stop at the simple question of the nominal rate. Gauthier's demands extended further. Beyond the proposed reduction in price and the maintenance of a substantial discount, he also attempted to renegotiate the distribution of profits on the projected large order.⁵⁷ Such a request effectively shifted part of the entrepreneurial risk onto the producer. By invoking the scale of his purchase and his access to Levantine outlets, the buyer positioned himself as indispensable to the circulation of the cloth, using the volume of his order as leverage.⁵⁸

In this configuration, Tarbouriech faced a structural asymmetry. He controlled production but not access to distant markets. A refusal could mean the accumulation of unsold stock; an acceptance could erode margins already compressed by high wool prices and transport costs. The issue was therefore not limited to the quality of a green dye, nor even to a few *sols* per *aune*. It concerned the capacity to stabilise a price structure that would allow the manufacture to continue operating without undermining its standing on the market.

This imbalance reflects more broadly what Pierre Gervais has described as an economy structured by the control of outlets rather than by the simple act of production. In such a configuration, the decisive leverage lies with those who command distribution networks, credit channels, and access to final consumers⁵⁹. The manufacturer bears the fixed costs of production and the risks of immobilised capital, yet the negotiation of value occurs at the point where goods enter commercial circuits. Tarbouriech's situation fits precisely within this pattern: the power to define acceptable price levels did not rest

⁵⁷ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 535: lettres de septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre de Pierre-Honoré Roux à Tarbouriech le 8 octobre 1760 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence, 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.535: Letters from September to December 1760. Letter from Pierre-Honoré Roux to Tarbouriech, 8 October 1760].

⁵⁸ Pierre Gervais, 'Crédit et filières marchandes au XVIIIe siècle' [2012] *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, p.1011.

⁵⁹ Pierre Gervais, 'Capitalism and (or) Age of Commerce: The Peculiarities of Market Exchange in the Early Modern Era' (2020) 77 XVII-XVIII <<https://doi.org/10.4000/1718.5818>> accessed 1 September 2026.

solely on the quality of his cloth, but on the capacity of intermediaries and buyers to absorb, or withhold, market access. The Roux response, maintaining the face value at 10 *livres* while adjusting the discount, must be read in this light. The visible price functioned as a marker of quality. To lower it openly would have signalled a decline in standards, particularly for a manufacture whose reputation in Levantine circuits was still consolidating. The discount, by contrast, remained a negotiable instrument, adaptable to liquidity constraints and competitive pressure. It provided flexibility without publicly altering the hierarchy of value.

This distinction between nominal and effective price was not cosmetic. It allowed Tarbouriech to reconcile two imperatives that might otherwise have proved incompatible: the preservation of reputation and the need for rapid cash conversion. In markets characterised by irregular payments and scarce resources, discounts of 17 to 24 per cent were not exceptional. They absorbed the volatility of demand while preserving the symbolic architecture of price. When the Roux eventually secured sales by selling six bales at 10 *livres* per *aune* with an 18 per cent discount, payable two months after delivery, they treated the transaction as more than a routine success. It established a reference point. Other Levantine houses agreed to purchase at the same nominal rate, with comparable discounts.⁶⁰ The maintenance of the face value thus acquired a stabilising function: it anchored expectations and contributed to the gradual consolidation of the manufacture's commercial identity.

In this sense, the 'price of reputation' was literal. Maintaining a visible standard required accepting narrower effective margins and navigating recurrent negotiation. The entrepreneur's task consisted not in imposing price, but in keeping it within a viable corridor: high enough to sustain symbolic value, flexible enough to secure sales and sufficient to service debt. Production, credit and market access converged in this delicate equilibrium.

Conclusion

The Pennautier manufacture cannot be reduced to a simple site of production. It functioned as a strategic space where multiple flows converged and had to be continuously articulated: capital, raw materials, labour, credit instruments and information circulating between Languedoc, Bayonne, Marseille, and the Levant. What

⁶⁰ Arch. Dép. Aude. 124J/367. Gestion par Joseph Tarbouriech et successeurs: baux à ferme, acquisition de biens, pièces de comptes, correspondance, 1759–1845 et s. d. Pièce 535: lettres de septembre à décembre 1760. Lettre de Pierre-Honoré Roux à Tarbouriech le 27 octobre 1760 [Management by Joseph Tarbouriech and successors: farm leases, property acquisitions, accounting documents, correspondence. 1759–1845 and n.d. Item no.535: Letters from September to December 1760. Letter from Pierre-Honoré Roux to Tarbouriech, 27 October 1760].

sustained the enterprise was not the mere presence of looms or royal privilege, but the capacity to organise wool procurement, credit obligations, and commercial distribution into a workable equilibrium.

Within this configuration, the entrepreneur appears less as an innovator than as an architect of flows. Tarbouriech's role consisted in aligning wool procurement with transport costs, production rhythms with debt maturities, quality standards with market expectations, and nominal prices with effective liquidity. His action unfolded within a field of constraint: dependence on merchant intermediaries, asymmetries in access to outlets, and fluctuations in demand. It was precisely in navigating these constraints that his entrepreneurial function took shape. He operated at the intersection of workshop discipline and commercial negotiation, attempting to reduce uncertainty not by eliminating it, but by coordinating it.

This capacity for coordination was itself conditioned by the institutional environment. In the earlier phase, the Estates of Languedoc had injected liquidity and symbolic recognition through subsidies and regulatory guarantees, thereby sustaining wool procurement, production rhythms, and export commitments. When that support receded, the balance shifted toward private finance and merchant capital, notably through the *commandite* with the Roux. This transition did not mark a linear passage toward modern liberal industry, but rather a reconfiguration of dependencies. Public backing gave way to intensified reliance on credit markets and commercial networks, without reducing structural fragility.

Seen from this perspective, the history of Pennautier is not that of a triumphant industrial venture, but of a precarious organisation whose continuity depended on the ongoing articulation of production, finance and market access. The manufacture endured insofar as wool could be procured, cloth produced, debts serviced, and outlets secured, each dependent on the others, none guaranteed. The Pennautier case contributes to the literature on entrepreneurship and industrial organisation in two related ways. It demonstrates, first, that the analytical frameworks developed for modern firms, in which institutional environments figure as external constraints on entrepreneurial action, require adjustment when applied to early modern manufacturing, where public institutions were not merely background conditions but constitutive elements of the firm's financial architecture. The withdrawal of provincial support in 1756 did not simply alter the entrepreneur's operating environment; it reconfigured the very structure of dependencies within which entrepreneurial coordination took place.

Second, and more broadly, the case historicises the figure of the entrepreneur as coordinator under constraint, suggesting that this mode of entrepreneurial function is not a distinctively modern phenomenon but a durable practice whose contours are shaped by the specific institutional configurations of each period. That early modern manufacturers navigated heterogeneous circuits of credit, supply, and market access under institutional constraint is perhaps less surprising than the degree to which their situation anticipates a more general pattern: wherever firms depend on institutional configurations for access to capital, markets or legitimacy, the entrepreneur's primary function may be less to innovate than to coordinate, and to hold together what institutions no longer guarantee.

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Benevolence, Paternalism and Workplace Culture in Clyde Shipbuilding, c.1900–77

Martin Bellamy and Hugh Murphy¹

British shipbuilding is often remembered through the adversarial character of its industrial relations. This was especially the case when shipbuilding was a casualised industry up to the mid-1960s, a situation which largely persisted in ship repair until the nationalisation of the British shipbuilding industry in 1977.² However, little if anything has been written on the culture of shipyards in terms of how apprentices were treated or how through benevolence owners paid for or part-funded clubs and associations and recreational spaces for workforces and staff.³

Clyde shipbuilding employers endowed parks with sports facilities and pavilions, opened various clubs for employees, sponsored annual sports days and outings, provided trophies for a wide range of sports and pastimes, including golf days and trophies for salaried staff, annual dances and dinners, and published company magazines. This article includes descriptions of Clyde shipyards, many of which closed down during the twentieth century, discusses apprenticeships and sectarianism and also utilises company magazines to survey employer benevolence in Clyde shipbuilding up to nationalisation of the industry by a Labour Party government in July 1977.⁴

The article uses benevolence in a broad sense: to include philanthropy, paternalism, welfare provision, workplace recreation, civic benefaction and employer-sponsored associational culture. It does not treat such practices as morally uncomplicated. They could be sincere, instrumental, class-bound, sectarian, reputational, and sometimes all at once.

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² For an overview, see H. Murphy, 'Labour in British Shipbuilding', in R. Varela, H. Murphy and M. van der Linden (eds), *Shipbuilding and Ship Repair Workers around the World. Case Studies, 1950–2010* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam and University of Chicago Press, 2017), pp.47–116.

³ An exception is M. Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders. An Anthology of Scottish Shipyard Life* (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 2001), which concentrates through literature, poetry, drama, reportage, oral interviews and memoirs on shipyard culture. Other oral history treatments of Clyde shipbuilding, include, A. McKinlay, *Making Ships Making Men. Working for John Brown's between the Wars* (Clydebank: Clydebank District Libraries, 1991), D. Crooks (ed.), *Made in Govan: An Oral History of Shipbuilding on the Upper Clyde, 1930–1950* (Glasgow: 1991), L. Johnman and I. Johnston, *Down the River* (Glendaruel: Argyll Publishing, 2001). At the national level, A. Slaven and H. Murphy, *Crossing the Bar. An Oral History of the British Shipbuilding, Ship Repairing and Marine Engine Building Industries in the Age of Decline, 1956–1990* (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2013).

⁴ For the nationalisation period, H. Murphy, *Shipbuilding in the United Kingdom. A History of the British Shipbuilders Corporation* (London: Routledge, 2021), pp.80–140.

Clyde Shipbuilding in Context

At the beginning of the twentieth century, 50 per cent of UK merchant shipbuilding output was concentrated on England's North East coast between the rivers Tyne and Humber. Shipyards on the rivers Tyne, Wear and Tees delivered some 42 per cent of UK output. In contrast, the Clyde regularly accounted for some 30 per cent of output annually. At that stage, the Clyde was the world's most important river centre of shipbuilding. By 1913, 38 of the 104 shipyards operative in the UK were on the Clyde, against 40 shipyards on the Tyne, Wear, Tees and Humber. Of the Clyde shipyards over half of merchant ship output came from just seven shipyards.⁵ The Clyde's ascendancy was also notable in warship construction for the British Admiralty. From 1899 to 1913, Clyde shipyards supplied nearly 45 per cent of warship displacement tonnage of 1,600,000 tons allocated to private shipyards by the Admiralty under the Naval Defence Act of 1899 against 21 per cent from North East coast shipyards.⁶

With the captive market of the world's largest merchant marine fleet, some 42 per cent of all tonnage afloat in 1913 and a thriving export market for its products (25–30 per cent of total output), Britain's ascendancy and competitive advantage in world shipbuilding was severely tested during the First World War. At the end of the war, through enemy action, the UK merchant fleet was over 9 million gross registered tons (m. grt) smaller than in 1914, but more than all allied nations combined. Although two-thirds of these losses had been replaced by new construction during the war, the merchant fleet remained 3m.g.r.t. smaller than 1914.⁷

By 1920, the UK merchant fleet was 800,000 grt smaller than in 1914, by which stage the world merchant fleet had grown to nearly 54m.g.r.t., with the UK share dropping to 33 per cent of world tonnage. Wartime inflation had led to large increases in ship prices with the cost of a standard tramp cargo ship increasing sixfold by 1918.⁸ Moreover, there had

⁵ A. Slaven, *British Shipbuilding, 1500–2010: A History* (Lancaster: Crucible Books, 2013), p.50.

⁶ Slaven, *British Shipbuilding*, 62. Warship construction on the Clyde was concentrated at John Brown at Clydebank, Beardmore at Dalmuir, Fairfield at Govan, Stephen at Linthouse and Yarrow at Scotstoun all on the Upper Clyde, Denny at Dumbarton and Scotts at Greenock on the Lower Clyde.

⁷ H. Murphy, 'The British Shipbuilding Industry during the Great War: A Contextual Overview Incorporating Standardization and the National Shipyards, 1916–1920' (2012) 24:2 *International Journal of Maritime History*, p.56.

⁸ *Fairplay*, Standard 7,500 grt tramp ship index, various years. In June 1914 a standard steam-powered tramp cargo ship cost £42,500 and by May 1920 its cost had risen to £258,750. Slaven, *British Shipbuilding*, 69, has noted that this was effectively twice the increase on the wholesale price index in the same period, and double the real cost of tonnage in the course of the war.

been a postwar boom in merchant shipbuilding with British shipbuilders launching output reaching 2,055,064 grt in 1920, an all-time record, never again surpassed.⁹

The interwar period witnessed a huge drop in demand for merchant ships largely due to world overcapacity of production and economic nationalism. Compounding this, a concomitant drop in demand for warships due to international treaty obligations adversely affected the larger firms in the industry who combined mercantile and warship construction. By the 1930s, the industry had formed its own rationalisation vehicle, National Shipbuilders Security Ltd (NSS) whose object was to 'sterilise' shipyards against any return to shipbuilding to reduce the capacity of the industry. NSS's first purchase, with the aid of the Bank of England, was the Wm. Beardmore shipyard at Dalmuir on the Upper Clyde in 1930.¹⁰ Rearmament from 1935 onward aided the larger mixed naval and mercantile firms to return to profitability but by the advent of the Second World War the industry had lost a third of its capacity to produce and was therefore 'qualitatively and quantitatively' weaker than it had been in 1914.¹¹

Nonetheless, due to national emergency, employment during the Second World War was constant and therefore more secure than it had been beforehand, more so in the largest firms in the industry concentrating on warship construction.¹² Post-1945, during the long boom in international trade, employment was for the most part fairly constant but by the late 1950s and 1960s it was less so as international competition began to bite in an industry that had manifestly failed to increase its capacity, or its productivity. By the 1970s the industry had fallen behind international competition on price, delivery, labour relations, technological development and capital investment.¹³

⁹ I. Buxton, R. Fenton and H. Murphy, 'Measuring Britain's Merchant Shipbuilding Output in the Twentieth Century' (2015) 101:3 *The Mariner's Mirror*, p.317. This is the figure for Lloyd's Register of Shipping, the comparative figure from the British Shipbuilding Database at Newcastle University is 2,085,278 grt.

¹⁰ J. R. Hume and M. Moss, *Beardmore. The History of a Scottish Industrial Giant* (London: Heinemann, 1979), p.216; I. Johnstone, *Beardmore Built: The Rise and Fall of a Scottish Shipyard* (Clydebank: Clydebank District Libraries, 1993), pp.100-51; A. Slaven, 'Self Liquidation: The National Security Limited and British Shipbuilders in the 1930s', in S. Palmer and G. Williams (eds), *Chartered and Uncharted Waters. Proceedings of a Conference on the Study of Maritime History* (Greenwich: National Maritime Museum, 1982), pp.125-41.

¹¹ L. Johnman and H. Murphy, *British Shipbuilding and the State Since 1918: A Political Economy of Decline* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), p.63.

¹² In practice, the 'Big Six' mixed naval and mercantile shipbuilding firms, Vickers Armstrong at Barrow and Walker on Tyne, Cammell Laird at Birkenhead, Swan Hunter at Wallsend, Harland & Wolff at Belfast, Fairfield at Govan and John Brown at Clydebank. For the interwar period on Clydeside, see L. Johnman and H. Murphy, 'The Economic and Social Effects of the Interwar Depression on Clydeside Shipbuilding Communities' (2006) 18:1 *International Journal of Maritime History*, pp.227-54.

¹³ 'British Shipbuilding in 1972'. A Report to the Department of Trade and Industry by Booz, Allen and Hamilton International BV (London: HMSO, 1973), p.1.

After the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries oil price hikes of 1973–74 and the subsequent recession, British shipbuilding could no longer compete with international competition, particularly from Japan, and from the mid-1970s onwards from South Korea. Survival rather than benevolence was now crucial, and the old order disappeared as the industry was nationalised under the British Shipbuilders Corporation in July 1977.

The survey that follows is organised geographically, moving from the Lower Clyde towns of Greenock and Port Glasgow to Dumbarton, Bowling, Renfrew and the Upper Clyde. This structure reflects the strongly local character of shipyard benevolence. Recreational provision, apprenticeships, works magazines, social clubs, sporting cultures and charitable giving were shaped not only by the industry as a whole, but by the ownership, finances, traditions and community setting of particular firms. The brief company sketches that follow are therefore intended to locate benevolent and paternalist practices within the specific yards, families and localities that sustained them.

Lower Clyde

Greenock

Located at the ‘Tail of the Bank’, on the southern bank of the river Clyde where it joins the estuarine Firth of Clyde, Greenock was for much of the late eighteenth to twentieth centuries an archetypal maritime town. Shipbuilding, ship repair, marine engineering and dock work dominated male employment, with ancillary occupations, ropemaking, sail-making and cooperage also important. Reflecting the town’s historic trading links with the West Indies, imported raw cane sugar and molasses, and later continental sugar beet provided the raw materials for the town’s sugar refineries, which made Greenock, with London and Liverpool the UK’s most important refining centres. Female employment in this sector was important but more so in textile and woollen mills around the town. Through two world wars shipbuilding remained the major industry in Greenock but by the 1960s international competition had made severe inroads into profitability, a harbinger of the town’s subsequent de-industrialisation, and de-population.¹⁴

¹⁴ There are two dated histories of Greenock, see, D. Weir, *History of the Town of Greenock* (Greenock, 1827), and R. M. Smith, *The History of Greenock* (Greenock: Orr, Pollock & Co., 1921). Greenock’s population peaked in 1921 at 81,123 with the Burgh being the sixth largest in Scotland. By mid-2021 the Burgh’s population was estimated by National Records of Scotland at 41,280.

Scott's Shipbuilding and Engineering Co., Ltd Cartsburn and Cartsdyke, Greenock¹⁵

Established in 1711 during the reign of the last Stuart monarch, Queen Anne, Scott's styled itself as 'the world's senior shipyard'. A private limited company from 1899, Scott's were mixed naval and mercantile builders, with their own engine works, and repair facilities. On the naval side, Scott's were particularly known for conventional submarines. In 1965, the firm purchased Scott and Sons small shipyard at Bowling, and the adjacent Greenock Dockyard's Cartsdyke shipyard in 1966. In 1967, Scott's began merger negotiations with Lithgows Ltd, and formally merged in February 1970 as Scott Lithgow Ltd. Scott Lithgow, at one point employing 10,000 workers, was nationalised under the British Shipbuilders Corporation on 1 July 1977, and after a disastrous entry into the large offshore structures market the yard was placed on a care and maintenance basis in 1988 and closed in 1993.¹⁶

Scott's were the major employer of men in the Burgh of Greenock. Robert Lyons Scott, chairman from 1915 to his death in 1939 was a notable collector of arms and armour, an accomplished fencer and a big game hunter. Two of his 'trophies', a male lion and a tiger, were stuffed by a taxidermist, placed in a glass case with attendant vegetation, and graced the local natural history Watt Museum's collection. However, over the years the museum's glass roof and consequent ultra violet light drained both of their colour turning them white!¹⁷ Scott also bequeathed an internationally significant collection of European arms and armour and a library of 3,000 books on the subject, many of them rare first editions, to the City of Glasgow's Kelvingrove Museum.¹⁸

By 1957, Scott's had a seventh-generation chairman, Michael Sinclair Scott C.B.E. (1917-1996) in charge who had served an apprenticeship in the company's Engine Works and who was later prominent in industry organisations. The Scott family, since 1810, owned a large estate at Halkshill near Largs, North Ayrshire, and the company's annual golf tournament was played for the Halkshill Cup.

¹⁵ The records of Scott's Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd are held in the GD319 classification at the University of Glasgow Scottish Business Archives (hereafter, SBA) 13 Thurso Street, Glasgow G11 6PE.

¹⁶ For a history of Scott's see, L. Johnman and H. Murphy, Scott Lithgow: *Déjà vu all over again! The Rise and Fall of a Shipbuilding Company, Research in Maritime History*, no.30 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005). The records of Scott's are held in the SBA GD 319 classification.

¹⁷ Professor Murphy, recollection.

¹⁸ *Scottish Art Review*, 12:2 (1969), 'Arms and Armour-special number based on R.L. Scott's Collection', pp.1-40.

The Greenock Dockyard Co. Ltd, Carttsyde, Greenock¹⁹

An old established shipyard, the Carttsyde Mid Yard was acquired in 1900 by the Grangemouth Dockyard Company subsequently known as the Grangemouth and Greenock Dockyard Co, before reverting to the Greenock Dockyard Company in 1920.

In 1924, the yard came under the control of Cayzer Irvine & Co. with the shareholding transferring to their Clan Line Steamers Ltd in the 1940s. Beforehand in 1934 the company exchanged their shipyard with Scott's of Greenock's Carttsyde East shipyard. Output consisted of largely cargo liners for the Clan Line and associated companies and latterly refrigerated cargo liners (Reefers). Known locally as the Klondike for high piecework and overtime earnings the company was taken over by Scott's of Greenock in 1966 and ceased shipbuilding under nationalisation in 1979.

George Brown & Co. (Marine) Ltd, Garvel Point, Greenock²⁰

From 1900 to 1983 when it ceased trading, George Brown's Garvel shipyard had the distinction of being the shipyard which jutted out furthest into the river Clyde and in winter working conditions were harsh, exacerbated by north easterly winds, hence the local nickname for the yard being 'Siberia'!

A small employer, the yard's output was mainly tugboats and small coasting vessels including tankers, and it also undertook ship repair and conversion work at the adjacent Garvel Dry Dock.²¹ The yard ceased new ship construction in 1963 to concentrate on ship repair but did build a trawler in 1974 and two trawlers of the same design in 1974. Another spate of new construction occurred in 1982 when two motor buoy-tenders were launched for the Mexican government, as were a small ferry and a buoy-tender for UK owners. Beforehand the company had diversified its output by manufacturing derricks and ship cranes under the 'Cargospeed' trademark. Although initially successful, encroaching competition from larger and far better capitalised competitors led to the company to cease trading in 1983.

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship provides an important corrective to any simple narrative of employer benevolence. Apprentices were, on the whole, badly treated in shipbuilding and engineering; they were underpaid and subject to be paid off when fully qualified. Only in

¹⁹ The records of the Greenock Dockyard Co. Ltd are held in the SBA GD 323/7 classification.

²⁰ The records of George Brown (Marine) Ltd are held in the TD 865 classification at Glasgow Life, City Archives, Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN.

²¹ The yard's largest coastal oil tanker was SS *Sunny*, 4,010 deadweight tons, completed in 1954 for Schanches Rederi A/S Bergen. It also had the distinction of being the largest ship built at the Garvel shipyard.

1946 was it nationally agreed that apprenticeships in shipbuilding and engineering should not begin until age 16 and end on the attainment of the then age of majority, 21 years; although the earliest school leaving age from 1947 to 1972 was 15 years, and up to 1969, apprenticeships were of five years duration.²² The ratio of time-served (journeymen) one to five to apprentices was tightly controlled by highly sectionalised shipyard trade unions. Up to 1969, the old system took boys straight from school at 15 years old. After some initial training, they were placed with journeymen in the strictly demarcated shipyard trade structure. In the boiler making trade of riveting, for example, which was organised in squads paid by results, boys were normally used as rivet heaters.²³

On the Clyde in particular, the 1937 unofficial apprentices strike in engineering and shipbuilding, which lasted 13 weeks, and spread to Manchester and the North East of England despite those taking part being indentured and being threatened with losing their jobs, improved their status, by introducing for the first time minimum pay rates.²⁴ The apprentices, who rapidly became well-organised, began their strike when 70 boys walked out from the Lobnitz shipyard at Renfrew on 18 March but gained momentum when 500 apprentices went on strike at the Fairfield works in Govan on Wednesday 31 March. By Saturday 3 April, 5,000 boys in 60 firms were on strike and on Monday 5 April apprentices at John Brown's shipyard at Clydebank joined the strike.²⁵ Their cause was aided on the Clyde by tradesmen refusing to do boys work, and by a one-day sympathy strike on 16 April 1937 by adult workers in engineering and shipbuilding which involved around half the workforce in those industries, but, in tandem, an indefinite overtime ban was more effective. Indentures, whilst legally constraining apprentices' rights, conversely protected them from the vagaries of the trade cycle, although their effect was moot when firms closed for good.²⁶

In 1941, another unofficial and at that stage illegal apprentice strike restored trade union rights to represent apprentices in shipbuilding, and the industry-wide practice of paying lower rates for a period post-apprenticeship was abolished. Moreover, the practice of not paying apprentices under 16 years old the equivalent of three hours' pay in the standard 47-hour week, as they were only permitted to work 44 hours under the 1937 Factory Act

²² J. E. Mortimer, *History of the Boilermakers Society, volume 3, 1940–1989* (London: Verso, 1994), pp.43, 238.

²³ For this, see A. McKinlay, 'The Interwar Depression and the Effort Bargain. Shipyard Riveters and the Worker's Foreman' (1989) 9:1 *Scottish Historical Studies*, pp.55–70.

²⁴ For this, see, A. McKinlay, 'From Industrial Serf to Wage-Labourer. The 1937 Apprentices Revolt in Britain' (1986) 31:1 *International Review of Social History*, pp.2–18.

²⁵ *Clyde Apprentice Strikers' Bulletin*, issue no.1, 1937.

²⁶ Forms of Indentures placed employers in *loco parentis*, they normally contained parents' details and signatures, start and end date of apprenticeship, and particular trade entered. Indentures precluded trade union membership and therefore strike action.

legislation, ended.²⁷ In engine works, apprentices were normally indentured for the duration of apprenticeship, which precluded trade union membership. By the third or fourth year of apprenticeship in engineering or shipbuilding, apprentices were expected to be self-sufficient, and compared to journeymen were poorly paid, although wages could be supplemented by overtime and piece work earnings. National Service elongated the length of apprenticeships during the 1950s by two years as all physically fit males between the ages of 17 and 21 years of age had by law to serve in the armed services.

Clyde apprentices organised a half-day strike on 7 February 1952, but when they returned to work next day, some were suspended. When news of this spread, apprentices in many shipyards and engineering works including Scott's at Greenock came out in sympathy, and this led to a full-scale unofficial strike in March with approximately 20,000 apprentices on strike in Scotland and England.²⁸ On 11 April, apprentice delegates accepted a pay offer roughly half of what was in dispute 'under protest'.²⁹

The last great apprentice strike took place in 1960 and was one of the biggest strikes of the decade, with some 60,000 apprentices throughout Great Britain on strike. The Clyde Apprentices Committee laid the basis for the strike with demonstrations and token walk-outs. In Greenock, 2,500 apprentices in shipbuilding and engineering marched through the burgh on 24 February to demonstrate over the employers' rejection of a pay claim. Of the many placards waved, one stated: 'We work with Washers and get paid with them!'³⁰ The main unofficial strike began on 21 April, earlier than planned because once again some firms suspended apprentices who had taken token strike action. In Greenock and Port Glasgow, 8,000 men were affected by the strike. On 25 April, the Lower Clyde apprentices went back to work for one hour and then walked out again to join strikers in other areas.³¹ Local strike committees were formed to organise mass action. There were collections and strike pay for those in financial distress, and envoys were sent to contact apprentices in England.³² The strike continued until a national conference on 14 May called it off and apprentices returned to work on 16 May. The pay settlement that followed gave apprentices less than they had struck for but did show the strength of their organisation.

²⁷ J. E. Mortimer, *History of the Boilermakers Society*, vol.2, 1906–1939 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp.275, 288, and Mortimer, *History of the Boilermakers Society*, vol.3, pp.11–12.

²⁸ At one stage, apprentices were out on strike on Clydeside, Aberdeen, Birkenhead, Manchester, Sheffield and Belfast.

²⁹ Bizarrely, neither this strike nor the later 1960 apprentices strike rates a mention in Mortimer's *History of the Boilermakers Society*. Both strikes were extensively covered in the press. See for example, *Greenock Telegraph*, *Glasgow Herald*, 8 February to 12 April 1952.

³⁰ *Greenock Telegraph*, 25 February 1960.

³¹ *Greenock Telegraph*, 25 April 1960.

³² *Greenock Telegraph*, 26 April 1960.

Training Centres

With the creation of both Shipbuilding and Engineering Industry Training Boards consequent upon the Industrial Training Act of 1964, it was felt that training should be concentrated on an industry-wide basis to agreed standards as part of apprentice training, normally the first year. At that stage, in Scotland, for example, the proportion of males under 20 years old who had been unemployed for a year as a proportion of the Great Britain total was a staggering 33 per cent.³³ Scott's and Lithgows opened the Scott Lithgow Training Centre to train its first-year apprentices in conjunction with the Shipbuilding Industry Training Board from November 1968. By October 1972, Scott Lithgow were training 460 first-year apprentices with 40 instructors at a cost of £600,000 per annum.³⁴ Post-1969, apprenticeships began at age 16 and were of four years duration, with the first year at training school counting towards the apprenticeship period.³⁵ These arrangements lasted until 1982 when Scott Lithgow closed its training centre as the then Conservative government announced in November 1981 the abolition of 16 of 23 industry training boards, including shipbuilding but not engineering by 1982.³⁶

At Greenock, Scott's first opened an apprentice training centre in 1948 for up to 20 boys where the first six months of apprenticeship was undertaken. Concurrently with this training, a course of instruction in technical subjects was given to provide a background of theory to practical tasks. Like other Clyde shipyards, Scott's encouraged their apprentices to take day release and evening classes run by local education authorities, and those of an advanced nature at Technical Colleges to acquire a Higher National Certificate or to attend universities to acquire degrees in naval architecture. Normally six apprentices would attend the latter two establishments for the full duration of their courses and return to the works or drawing office during holidays to continue their apprenticeships.³⁷

Additionally, a number of the most promising apprentices were chosen each year to attend a month-long training course at the Moray Sea School of the Outward Bound Trust at Burghead, overlooking the Moray Firth, to develop in them initiative, resourcefulness

³³ Great Britain, British Parliamentary Papers (BPP), HC Deb., vol., 691, c.967, 16 March 1964.

³⁴ *Greenock Telegraph*, 12 October 1972.

³⁵ Mortimer, *History of the Boilermakers*, vol.2, 238. The 1969 agreement negotiated by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions led to the four-year apprenticeship at 16. However, 17-year-olds and over could be admitted to apprenticeship in exceptional circumstances if they had spent the intervening period in full-time education, thus their period of apprenticeship would be three years. Mortimer did not mention that in practice, most boys were taken on at 16 years old as rates of pay were determined by age.

³⁶ BPP, HC Deb vol.,13, c.30, 16 November 1981.

³⁷ *Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Shipbuilding by the Scotts at Greenock* (Glasgow, James Jack Advertising Ltd, 1961), pp.223–4.

and tenacity.³⁸ The trust, whose facilities were also used by Lithgows and Fairfield, and by many other Clyde shipyards, operated a three-masted schooner, *Prince Louis* of 60 tons, crewed by four permanent staff and twelve boys who were taught the rudiments of sail, and were mostly seasick, although the vessel did have an auxiliary engine. On the duration of the course, which included hiking over rough country, the school sent confidential reports on each apprentice to employers, and apprentices were encouraged to write their own reports on their experiences. Employers, such as A. H. White, General Manager of Lithgows Ltd, saw this as an investment to find future leaders by testing character in a new environment.³⁹

Scott's, again in common with most Clyde shipyards, also ran two subsidised canteens for staff and workforce, respectively. Reflecting the continuing system of class separation, the staff canteen had tables with six chairs on each and tablecloths, whereas the workforce had benches to sit on and plain tables. Both were also used as social clubs in evenings organised and administered by staff and workforce.⁴⁰

Port Glasgow

Located some three miles east upriver from Greenock and sparsely populated, Newport Glasgow was founded by Glasgow merchants in 1688. A harbour and customs house were built but owing to sandbanks and the then meandering nature of the river Clyde, cargoes were taken by road to Glasgow. By the mid nineteenth century through dyke building and dredging, the Clyde became more navigable through a central channel and by the 1880s ships could easily progress to Glasgow and unload their cargoes. Now universally known as Port Glasgow, as the port declined, shipbuilding became the major industry, and burgh status was granted in 1883. Port Glasgow's reputation as a centre of shipbuilding had been enhanced by the building of Europe's first commercially successful passenger steam ship, *PS Comet*, in 1812 at John Wood's shipyard,⁴¹ and by the 1880s, the burgh's then major shipbuilder Russell and Company regularly topped the Clyde output league table. Shipbuilding remained Port Glasgow's largest male employer for most of the twentieth century.⁴² The three-mile stretch of shore between Scott's

³⁸ Ibid, p.224.

³⁹ *The Lithgow Journal*, summer 1954, p.33.

⁴⁰ *Two Hundred and Fifty Years of Shipbuilding*, pp.224–7.

⁴¹ Built for Henry Bell of Helensburgh by John Wood & Co.

⁴² There is one dated history of Port Glasgow, see, W. F. Macarthur, *History of Port Glasgow* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie & Co., 1932). In the 1991 Census, Port Glasgow's population was 19,426 and by the 2011 Census it had declined to 15,415, and by mid-2021 it was estimated at 14,080.

Cartsburn and Lithgows East Yard⁴³ shipyards was completely industrial, containing a number of harbours, a sugar terminal, and a dry dock at Inchgreen, Greenock, which in the late 1960s accommodated the Cunard passenger liner Queen Elizabeth 2.⁴⁴

Lithgows Ltd, Port Glasgow⁴⁵

Established as the partnership, Russell and Company in 1874, the name changed to Lithgows Ltd, in 1918. Primarily a tramp ship builder, Sir James Lithgow saved the mixed naval and mercantile shipbuilders and engineers, Fairfield from bankruptcy in 1935. At Sir James's death in 1952, the Lithgow group was the largest privately owned shipbuilding concern in the world. Lithgows officially merged with Scott's to form Scott Lithgow in 1970, whereupon the Lithgow end of the newly merged company made a disastrous entry into the giant tanker market. By nationalisation in 1977, the company was almost bankrupt, and after an equally disastrous entry into the large offshore structures market under the British Shipbuilders Corporation, Scott Lithgow was the first nationalised shipyard to be privatised in April 1984, when purchased by the conglomerate Trafalgar House Plc for £12 million. Trafalgar were unable to turn the yard's fortunes around.⁴⁶

Henry Lithgow (1886–1948) and Sir James Lithgow (1883–1952) respectively owned a large home and estate, at Drums, and at Gleddoch House near Langbank, Renfrewshire. Drums had its own seven-mile-long narrow-gauge light railway leading to Ducal Moor where the two Lithgow brothers and their guests engaged in grouse shooting. Sir James also had a country estate at Ormsary, Argyllshire, which his father, William Todd Lithgow (1854–1908) had purchased in 1902. On Todd Lithgow's death he left a total estate of £1,000,237. Beforehand, he had withdrawn over £1 million from the business.⁴⁷ From Ormsary, the Lithgow brothers often sailed on their steam yacht across the Sound of Jura to the island of Jura, where they had a small estate from which to practise stalking and shooting deer.⁴⁸

⁴³ The East yard was formerly the shipyard of Robert Duncan and Company acquired by Duncan in 1863. The site was formerly the shipyard of John Wood, builder of PS *Comet* in 1812. Lithgows purchased Duncan's in 1915 and until 1936 continued to build ships under the Duncan name, thereafter, it was known as Lithgows East yard.

⁴⁴ The Firth of Clyde Dry Dock, when it opened in 1966 was the sixth largest in the world. See, L. Johnman and H. Murphy, 'No Light at the End of the Dock. The Short Life of the Firth of Clyde Dry Dock Company' (1998) 10:2 *International Journal of Maritime History*, pp.91–124.

⁴⁵ The records of Lithgows Ltd, are held in the SBA GD320 classification.

⁴⁶ For Lithgows, see, Johnman and Murphy, *Scott Lithgow. Déjà vu all over again!* The records of Lithgows Ltd are held in the SBA GD 320 and GD 323 classifications.

⁴⁷ M. Moss, 'William Todd Lithgow', in A. Slaven and S. Checkland (eds), *Dictionary of Scottish Business Biography, vol.1, The Staple Industries* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen Press, 1986), hereafter *DSBB*, p.228.

⁴⁸ For a rather hagiographic biography of Sir James, see J. Reid, *James Lithgow. Master of Work* (London: Hutchinson, 1964).

Suffice it to say, the majority of their casualised workforce lived in far less salubrious rented tenement properties, with basic sanitary provision.⁴⁹

For a substantial part of the twentieth century Lithgows were tramp ship builders, and by the 1920s were a vertically integrated firm, owning the Lanarkshire-based coal, iron, and steel firm of James Dunlop and Company. To hedge their bets, the Lithgow brothers held substantial shareholdings in another steel maker, Baldwins of Port Talbot.⁵⁰ Despite Lithgows' substantial investments in steel, they were not averse to ordering steel from continental sources when per ton it was cheaper than that which Dunlop's could produce.⁵¹ James Lithgow, with John Craig of Colville's, was the major influence in the rationalisation of the steel industry in Scotland.⁵² Lithgows also owned or were major shareholders in separate engine works in Greenock and in Glasgow.⁵³

During the post-war slump in shipbuilding in 1921 James Lithgow in terms of strict anonymity gave £100 monthly to an unemployed shipbuilder who he trusted to distribute among families in need in Port Glasgow. He part funded a scheme to provide milk and meals for mothers and their children and fully funded a scheme to provide clothing. In November 1921 Lithgows took up shipbreaking to provide work on a rota basis for unemployed shipbuilders, with profits going to the local Charity Organisation Society. In 1929 he endowed a children's convalescent home in Port Glasgow, and a boys' club in the old Custom House, and later paid for a fracture clinic at Glasgow Royal Infirmary. Like almost all other Clyde shipbuilding owners James and Henry Lithgow were Presbyterian by religion and James gave substantial sums anonymously to many churches, and a substantial sum to establish a religious community on the Island of Iona. In July 1946, he gave securities worth £234,987 10s anonymously to the Church of Scotland to be used to assist retiring ministers, missionaries and sisters of the Women's Home Mission. On

⁴⁹ Port Glasgow Improvement Scheme Inquiry, 31 March to 4 April 1903. William Todd Lithgow had donated £10,000 to Port Glasgow Council towards the demolition and rebuilding of housing in the Bay area of the burgh, which comprised four acres before demolition. The housing there was completely insanitary, damp-ridden, overcrowded and had only 13 WCs and two communal privies for nearly 2,007 inhabitants in 483 sub-standard dwellings. Lithgow agreed to take over the rebuilding work, which comprised red sandstone tenements, shops and a hotel. Rebuilding the Bay area cost Lithgows £67,000. Figure of £67,000 cited in Reid, *James Lithgow*, p.43.

⁵⁰ SBA Lithgow papers, GD320/2/4 Joint Account Book of James and Henry Lithgow. Lithgow's investment in Baldwin's shares totalled £55,000 in 1919.

⁵¹ J. R. Hume and M.S. Moss, *A Bed of Nails. The History of P. MacCallum & Sons Ltd of Greenock, 1781–1981: A Study of Survival* (Greenock: John Smith & Son, 1981), pp.71, 73. MacCallum's imported continental steel, supplied English and Welsh steel, bought and sold Scottish steel, and were steel stockholders.

⁵² For Colvilles, see, P. Payne, *Colvilles and the Scottish Steel Industry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

⁵³ Rankin and Blackmore, Greenock, purchased in 1923 was voluntarily liquidated in 1967. David Rowan & Company, Glasgow, purchased in 1917, merged with Fairfield Engineering, as Fairfield-Rowan Ltd, in 1961 and closed in March 1966.

Henry Lithgow's death in May 1948, Sir James sent a cheque for £2 million to the Inland Revenue within a week to meet death duties, denuding many of his firms of liquidity in the process. In 1949, in memory of his brother's charitable works he purchased a house near Kilmacolm given to Port Glasgow Town Council as an eventide home for impecunious senior citizens.⁵⁴

James Lithgow was awarded a baronetcy in 1925, by which stage he was undoubtedly the leading shipbuilder of his generation. After returning from active service on the Western Front, where he commanded a Siege Battery, he was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Military Cross, he served at the Admiralty from 1917 as Director of Merchant Shipbuilding and later headed many industrial organisations.⁵⁵ Controversially, he was the leading light in the shipbuilders' rationalisation vehicle, National Shipbuilders Security Limited, which removed one-third of the industry's capacity during the 1930s.⁵⁶ During that decade 11 out of 12 employable men in Port Glasgow were unemployed.⁵⁷ Lithgow served his country again as Controller of Merchant Shipbuilding and Repair at the Admiralty during the Second World War. A position for which he characteristically took no salary or expenses.⁵⁸

By Sir James's death in February 1952, the testamentary lesson of his brother Henry's death had been learned.⁵⁹ His only son, William, to whom the baronetcy passed, became chairman in 1959. The Lithgow group of companies included the mixed naval and mercantile builders, Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Co., Ltd of Govan, a half share, in conjunction with T. & J. Brocklebank of Liverpool in Wm. Hamilton's Glen shipyard, which they ran, and Lithgows Kingston and East shipyards in Port Glasgow, the Ayrshire Dockyard at Irvine, and, through Fairfield, a steel construction and bridge

⁵⁴ Reid, *James Lithgow*, pp.88–9, 175–6, 179, 182, 217–19, 232, 242–3, 245.

⁵⁵ Lithgow was President of the Clyde Shipbuilders Association, the Shipbuilding Employers Association, the British Employers Federation, the Federation of British Industries, the British Iron and Steel Federation, the Iron and Steel Research Association, Chairman of National Shipbuilders Security Ltd, Employers Delegate at the International Labour Organisation, Geneva, and first chairman of the Scottish Development Council.

⁵⁶ For NSS, see, A. Slaven, 'Self liquidation. The National Shipbuilders Security Limited and British Shipbuilding in the 1930s', in S. Palmer and G. Williams (eds), *Chartered and Uncharted Waters: Proceedings of a Conference on the Study of Maritime History* (London: National Maritime Museum, 1982).

⁵⁷ *The Third Statistical Account of Scotland*, vol. XI, *The Counties of Renfrew and Bute* (Glasgow: Collins, 1962), p.218.

⁵⁸ SBA, DC 35/27 Letter from Sir James Lithgow to Sir R.H.A. Carter, Admiralty, 15 February 1940. Cited in Johnman and Murphy, *British Shipbuilding and the State since 1918*, p.61.

⁵⁹ National Records of Scotland, Edinburgh, SC 58/45/79 and SC 58/42/179 Will and Inventory of Sir James Lithgow. Sir James left estate with a gross value estate of £443,961 in stark contrast to his brother Henry, whose gross value amounted to £1,906,135. SC 58/45/64 and SC 58/42/164 Will and Inventory of Henry Lithgow.

building yard at Chepstow in Monmouthshire.⁶⁰ Lithgow's engine building interests included David Rowan and Co., Govan, British Polar Engines, Govan, Fairfield Engine Works, Govan, Rankin & Blackmore, Greenock and a sizeable shareholding in J. G. Kincaid, Greenock.⁶¹

William Hamilton, Glen Shipyard, Port Glasgow⁶²

William Hamilton's company acquired John Reid's Glen shipyard in 1891. In 1904 the yard launched a famous four-masted steel barque, *Kurt* (renamed *Moshulu*) for Hamburg owners Siemens.⁶³ Hamilton retired in 1919, and the medium-sized Glen yard came under the control of Lithgows Ltd, in partnership with the Liverpool shipowners, Thos & Jno. Brocklebank Ltd.

The Glen yard in which Sir James Lithgow had his office, specialised in cargo and refrigerated liners interspersed with tankers and was popular with Norwegian owners. Indeed, the largest ship completed at the yard in June 1958 was a chemical carrier, *Sagona*, 11,860 grt for A/S Sagona-Yingvar Hansen-Tangen of Kristiansand. The yard closed in 1963, with many of its employees absorbed into the Lithgow group of companies.

Clyde Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd, Port Glasgow and James Lamont & Co. Ltd, Port Glasgow and Greenock⁶⁴

In 1900 Clyde Shipbuilding took over Blackwood & Gordon's Castle yard, which had been operative since 1860. The latter had built the engines for *SS Strathleven* in 1878 for William Burrell, the first ship built for the carriage of frozen meat from Australia using Bell-Coleman refrigeration, which delivered the first frozen meat cargo at London in 1880.⁶⁵

Clyde Shipbuilding's output included Great Lakers for USA and Canadian shipowners. In the post-1918 boom, Clyde Shipbuilding was acquired by John Slater's speculative Amalgamated Industrials Combine, which already owned two other Port Glasgow

⁶⁰ This was the former National Shipyard in the latter part of the Great War used to construct standard ships. See N. Firth and H. Murphy, 'Chepstow's Standard Shipbuilding Yards' (October 2015) 62 *Ships in Focus Record*, pp.97–105.

⁶¹ Of these engine works, the only one extant by nationalisation in July 1977, was J. G. Kincaid. See L. Johnman and H. Murphy, 'The Rationalisation of Slow Speed Marine Diesel Engine Building in the UK, 1912–1990', in D. J. Starkey and H. Murphy (eds), *Beyond Shipping and Shipbuilding. Britain's Ancillary Maritime Interests in the Twentieth Century*, (Hull: University of Hull, 2007), pp.29–64.

⁶² The records of Wm. Hamilton & Co. Ltd, are held in the SBA GD 320 classification.

⁶³ Once a museum ship but now a floating restaurant at Penn's Landing, Philadelphia.

⁶⁴ The records of Jas. Lamont & Co. Ltd are held in the SBA GD 140 classification.

⁶⁵ For Burrell, see M. Bellamy and I. MacDonald, *William Burrell. A Collector's Life* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2022), p.20, *Strathleven's* cargo of 40 tons of frozen beef on arrival was found to be in excellent condition.

shipyards, Ferguson Brothers and Murdoch & Murray, and eventually imploded in 1927, as did, two years earlier the Sperling Combine combine's, investment vehicle, the Northumberland Shipbuilding Company of Howdon-on-Tyne, which among other shipyards owned the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd at Govan and Blythswood Shipbuilding on the Upper Clyde.

Clyde Shipbuilding's Castle yard was acquired in 1929 by the Greenock-based ship repairers Jas Lamont & Company based at Dock Breast, East India Harbour since 1870. Lamont's did not begin shipbuilding at the Castle yard until 1938, but ship repairing remained important. Lamont's shipbuilding output post-1945 consisted of river barges, coasters, tugs, small ferries, dredgers and sludge carriers. In 1975-6 the yard built five fishery protection vessels for the Mexican government and the penultimate ship built at the Castle yard in 1977, a sludge hopper, *Garroch Head*, at 2,808 grt was the largest vessel built there. In 1966, the company had built a 130 metre long drydock and when shipbuilding was abandoned in 1979, the yard shifted to ship repair until total closure in 1981. The ship repair function was transferred to its Greenock yard until it too closed in 1989.

Ferguson Brothers, Newark shipyard, Port Glasgow⁶⁶

Founded in 1903 by four brothers, Ferguson's small Newark shipyard was notable for the building of tugs, dredgers and car ferries. By 1961, Lithgows Ltd owned all Ferguson shares and fully merged the smaller company into the Scott Lithgow group in 1970. Under nationalisation from July 1977, Ferguson remained in Scott Lithgow but in 1980, the British Shipbuilders Corporation separated the company by merging Ferguson with the covered shipyard of Ailsa of Troon into its Small Ships Division as Ferguson-Ailsa. This lasted until 1986 when the Troon shipyard was closed down by the Corporation.

Thereafter, Ferguson was merged with Appledore in Devon to become Appledore-Ferguson but was privatised in 1989. Since then, the shipyard has had three private owners and is now nationalised by the Scottish government. Ferguson remains the last working shipyard on the Lower Clyde, but its reputation has been severely damaged by two disastrous passenger/vehicle ferries contracts, which were very late in delivery and hugely over the contracted price. Currently, the shipyard has no ships on order but has a limited amount of sub-contracted steel work.

⁶⁶ The records of Ferguson Bros Co. Ltd are held in the SBA GD321 and GD323/14 classifications.

Sectarianism

Religious sectarianism was a persistent feature of Clyde shipyards, reflecting tensions between the mainly Protestant workforce and a Roman Catholic minority, many of them descended from Irish Catholic migrants to the west of Scotland.⁶⁷ Recruitment, alongside endemic nepotism, could be shaped by the junior school a prospective employee had attended. If a school had a saint in its title, it could identify the applicant as Roman Catholic and provide a discreet way to filter applicants through forms. Masonic lodges linked to shipyards were commonplace, as was adherence to the Orange Order.⁶⁸ Sir James Lithgow managed this sectarian divide by employing Roman Catholics in his East yard, while his Kingston yard remained staunchly Protestant. Indeed, even in the 1980s, a sign stating 'Keep Kingston Protestant' was painted on a partition wall gateway in the Kingston yard.⁶⁹

As was the case with many shipbuilding firms, Lithgows published its own works magazine, *The Lithgow Journal*; from its first issue in the Spring of 1952, four issues per annum were regularly published. Presentations, retirement and sports trophies, obituaries, births, deaths, marriages, and sport and other recreational activities in the Lithgow group of companies were covered by reporters in individual firms. From this source the social or cultural historian can glean a great deal.

The Lithgow Journal, Issue 1: Spring 1952

Introduced shortly before his death by Sir James Lithgow, he noted that the journal was not a propaganda sheet but written to interest and to entertain. Historical accounts of the various companies in the group would be a regular feature. On the social side, there would be reports of club meetings, sports, dances and everyday news of firms comprising the Lithgow group of companies, with around 12,000 employees. Lithgow noted that every firm had its characters, and that a full-length pen and camera pictures 'Portrait Gallery', the first naturally being Sir James, or monologues in a section termed 'I Remember', the first being the Works Engineer at the Ayrshire Dockyard Company, would be regular features. In the same issue, another portrait of 71-year-old Willie MacLachlan, head shop foreman at British Polar Engines appeared, there being no formal

⁶⁷ Andy, a shipwright, speaking in *Made in Govan: an oral history of shipbuilding on the Upper Clyde, 1930–1950*, cited in Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*, p.171, 'it was not uncommon at the Harland & Wolff shipyard in Govan to build a ship in two halves: the Catholics on one side and the Protestants on the other...Roman Catholics at Harland & Wolff were second-class citizens',

⁶⁸ G. C. O'Hara, *Ironfighters, Outfitters and Bowler Hatters* (Prestwick: Clyard Novella, 1997), p.44, describes one of the essential elements of a shipyard Head Foreman: 'Membership of an esoteric fraternal, extra-curricular social club, with a penchant for geometry, dressing up and communicating in riddles'. In other words, freemasonry.

⁶⁹ Johnman and Johnston, *Down the River*, p.53. Interview with Hugh Hagen, shipwright.

retirement age in marine engineering or shipbuilding until the period of nationalisation of the shipbuilding industry in 1978.⁷⁰

Like other shipyards, Lithgows had its own social club. The Lithgow Club opened in 1950, equipped for most indoor sports, and dancing. The building's exterior on Boundary Street, Port Glasgow, was painted in an alluring combination of brown and cream. Indoor sports: billiards, darts, dominoes, bowls, snooker and table tennis were popular, and competitive in the firm and in local competitions. Dancing on Wednesdays and Saturdays was also popular, and a country dancing club was in the process of being formed. The firm also had a drama group, and concerts and shows were regular events in group companies. For the cerebrally minded, a chess club had been formed some years earlier and met on a weekly basis.

A Lithgow group subsidiary, British Polar Engines at Govan had a welfare club with 500 members: sections included photography, with its own dark room in the factory; golf, badminton (top of the table in mixed doubles in the Govan league), and snooker, its team participating in the Glasgow Works' snooker league. At Fairfield, the Assistant Foremen's Social Club held an annual theatre outing (the musical, 'Oklahoma' at the King's Theatre, Glasgow) and an evening cabaret and dance (entertained by the Currie and Rice concert party), and at the Engine Works Staff social club, the guests were entertained by Mr J. Hynd and his Banjoliers. At the Glen shipyard of Wm. Hamilton in Port Glasgow, its outdoor bowlers had won the Central Masonic Employers Association Bowling Trophy, the first time they had won it since the competition's inception in 1920. At Rankin & Blackmore's engine works in Greenock, five employees, each with 50 years' service were presented with gold watches and photographed accordingly.

Lithgows, as was the case with Scott's had private limited company status, and as such relations between the owner and staff tended to be more harmonious than was the case in publicly owned companies accountable to shareholders. Private companies did have shareholders, but were not required to publish annual accounts, and most shares were allocated to owners and their extended families, with non-family directors nominally holding small shareholdings. Managers new to the group were given advantageous loans to purchase property, and or motor vehicles. Few, if any shipyard owners other than Sir William Lithgow would have even contemplated never mind carried out what is described below.

⁷⁰ Murphy, *Shipbuilding in the United Kingdom*, pp.87–8.

Sir William Lithgow's Wedding Celebration in the *Lithgow Journal*⁷¹

In 1959, Lady Lithgow stepped down from the chair of the Lithgow Group of companies she had held from her husband's death in 1952. Their only son, Sir William, assumed the chairmanship. On his first marriage in 1964, his wedding present from the staff was a set of wrought iron railings! Delighted, Sir William began to plan and eventually invited some 850 employees, conveyed in a fleet of buses, to a large company barbecue at Drums House, Langbank.

Whole roast ox was the main item on the menu, but during the planning stage, it was not immediately clear how this could be accomplished. *The Daily Telegraph* finder service was consulted and identified the district manager of the catering company that ran the shipyard canteen, who had previously served in the Army Catering Corps. He advised that ox was best roasted on a spit over a pit. Accordingly, a Lithgow group company, Caledonian Fabrications Ltd, designed and built the necessary equipment. Three weeks before the barbecue, the ox was killed and properly hung. Beforehand a ton of bricks and a ton of sand was delivered for the ox pit, and the spit was roofed over in case of inclement weather. Marquee space for one thousand guests was erected, and in the evening before the barbecue two tons of fat instead of beef dripping was delivered.

Old rivet fires from the shipyard were used to barbecue chestnuts, potatoes, peanuts and sausages. Bags thought to contain ordinary charcoal, but in fact containing riveters' char (riddled coke), were opened on the night. This meant that the cooks had to serve sausages with one hand, whilst keeping bellows working with the other to help keep the coke alight. By 10pm, they were reportedly all complaining of tennis elbow. Guests were entertained by the Greenock Police Pipe Band and dancing was accompanied by Greenock's Charlie Harkin and his Kit Kat Band. The evening ended with a lone Piper, pushed with difficulty through a trapdoor in the roof of Drums, who stood and played on a small platform, floodlit by an electrician lying flat on his face on the slate roof. After he had finished playing, a firework display using old distress rockets ended the evening.

Scott Lithgow Ltd, Port Glasgow and Greenock⁷²

Following the Shipbuilding Inquiry Report of 1965–6, which recommended grouping of shipyards on river centres, and no more than two groups on the Clyde, Scott's and Lithgows would eventually officially merge in February 1970 as Scott Lithgow Ltd.

⁷¹ *Lithgow Journal*, summer, 1964.

⁷² The records of Scott Lithgow Ltd are held in the SBA GD323 classification.

The company, probably uniquely, owned a Greenock hotel, the Tontine, which they used to put up ship owners and assorted dignitaries⁷³, and were a major shareholder in Greenock's professional football team, Morton FC (Scottish Cup winners, 1922).⁷⁴ They also aided the shipyard branch of the Boilermakers Union, the industry's main steelwork trade union, through the provision of a loan of £25,000 to purchase the premises of the local Celtic supporters club to become that union's social club. The club was noted for its generous measures of fortified wine (Eldorado brand), with Greenock known widely in certain quarters as 'Eldoradoville'. Currently, the semi-professional Port Glasgow Juniors FC, known locally as the 'Undertakers' are sponsored by Eldorado, now marketed as a tonic wine.⁷⁵

Scott Lithgow with other local employers also set up a social club for shipyard labourers, the Clyde Lower Reaches club in Greenock, noted for its mural depicting scenes from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, 'South Pacific'. Other local marine engineering firms, such as J. G. Kincaid and John Hastie had their own social clubs. Lithgows also had a Norwegian social club, named for its long links with Norwegian ship owners who paid for it.

Football

Football was central to works culture. Most Scottish shipyards and marine engineering establishments had teams that played in works leagues, which were known locally for their competitive intensity and occasional disorder. The Greenock Works League was a good example. Games were played on Wednesday evenings, and the League was composed of teams from all shipbuilding, marine engine building and engineering firms in the district, with the addition of other industrial establishments such as Tough's Ropes Ltd (known as the 'Toughs'), and John Drummond and Company, originally coopers and later tin box manufacturers, plain and printed.⁷⁶ In some shipyards, each trade had a

⁷³ *Lithgow Journal*, 1967 winter issue. The Tontine Hotel, a former mansion house built in 1804–5, was originally purchased by Lithgows in association with the Greenock marine engine builders, J. G. Kincaid in 1958 and modernised. Ownership passed on to Scott Lithgow in 1970.

⁷⁴ Morton beat Glasgow Rangers 1–0 at Hampden Park, Glasgow. Morton and Glasgow Rangers hold the aggregate record for a Scottish Cup final and replay in 1948 at Hampden Park, the first match ended in a 1–1 draw after extra time and in the replay, Glasgow Rangers won 1–0 after extra time. An aggregate crowd of 253,026 watched both games, then a world record.

⁷⁵ Junior football (as opposed to senior) clubs in Scotland are adult football sides analogous to semi-professional clubs in England and compete in regional leagues. Another popular 'tonic' wine in Scotland is Buckfast, around 15 per cent proof and with a caffeine content of around eight cans of cola. Tonic wines are very popular with younger drinkers, many underage, in the West of Scotland, and three neighbouring Lanarkshire towns, Airdrie, Coatbridge and Shotts are collectively known as 'the Buckfast triangle'.

⁷⁶ Professor Murphy, who played in the Greenock Works League whilst an apprentice in the early 1970s, recollection. *Lithgow Journal*, autumn 1952.

football team, for example, platers against welders and games were highly competitive. Fairfield offered a trophy, the Dundas Shield to whichever of its departments won its annual football competition. Fairfield were also associated with two amateur football teams, Elder Amateurs and Fairfield Athletic in the Glasgow Amateur League. As far as we can ascertain⁷⁷, only one future shipyard managing director, (Scott Lithgow in 1970) Alexander Ross Belch (1920–99) played football for a works team, when employed as a manager at the William Hamilton Glen shipyard in 1950. When Belch moved to Lithgows Ltd in the autumn of 1952, the team presented him with an inscribed cigarette case.⁷⁸

Dumbarton

Situated where the River Leven flows into the north bank of the Clyde, Dumbarton lies some 13 miles south east of Glasgow. By the mid to late nineteenth century shipbuilding and marine engineering had taken over from glassmaking as the town's major industry. Whisky distilling was also important with the Ballantine family having a large grain distillery there, the firm being later acquired by the Canadian distiller, Hiram Walker. In 1900, Dumbarton was home to two medium-sized shipbuilding firms, Archibald MacMillan & Son and the more famous Wm. Denny & Brothers. The principals of both firms purchased and developed 32 acres of land on the Levensgrove Estate into a public park, which was given to the people of the town through its Burgh Council in 1885.

Archibald MacMillan & Son Ltd, Dumbarton⁷⁹

Initially world-famous as a builder of iron sailing ships, by 1918, the shipping company, Lamport and Holt were the major shareholder with the shipyard under the management of the Belfast shipbuilder, Harland & Wolff. MacMillan's Dumbarton dockyard entered liquidation in 1930 and was purchased by the shipbuilding industry's rationalisation vehicle, National Shipbuilders Security Limited and subsequently demolished in 1937.

William Denny & Brothers Ltd, Dumbarton⁸⁰

Of the many British shipbuilding firms, Denny's was one of the more innovative. Established on the north bank of the River Leven, the yard completed the famous China

⁷⁷ *Lithgow Journal*, summer 1953, p.42. Fairfield's Sheet Iron Department also had a team in the Glasgow Amateur League.

⁷⁸ Information supplied by Professor Murphy. Slaven and Murphy, *Crossing the Bar*, p.1. Belch began his apprenticeship at Fairfield in 1938 and combined this with a degree in naval architecture during the war years at Glasgow University which he completed with first class honours. By 1945 he was an assistant manager at Fairfield, before shortly moving downriver to Port Glasgow where he was promoted to Director and General Manager of Lithgows Ltd at the age of 34.

⁷⁹ The records of Alexander MacMillan & Son Ltd are held in the GD 1/747 classification at Glasgow Life, City Archives, Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN.

⁸⁰ The records of Wm. Denny & Brothers. Ltd are held in the SBA GD 003 and GD 191/18 classifications.

tea clipper Cutty Sark in 1869 on the bankruptcy of its original builder, Scott & Linton. In 1884, John Denny had built the first steamship to cross the English Channel, the *Margery*. From 1844 to 1963, Denny's was the most important yard in Dumbarton. The Leven shipyard completed the first all steel merchant ship *Rotomahama* in 1878 and the world's first commercial turbine steamer, *King Edward*, in 1901.

In 1918 the company attained limited liability status and later went public in 1939. Earlier in 1934, Denny completed Robert the Bruce, a diesel-electric propelled paddle-wheel ferry for service on the Firth of Forth which was the first all-welded vessel of its type built in Scotland.⁸¹ Denny's ship model experiment tank established in 1882 is the world's oldest commercial ship model testing tank which enabled Denny to establish its reputation as specialist builders of fast cross-Channel steamers. Denny's third generation chairman for 30 years, Sir Maurice Denny Bt (1922–52) rose to the rank of Major in the Machine Gun Corps during the Great War. A keen golfer and gardener-an authority on roses, and an ornithologist who possessed an almost complete egg collection of birds of the British Isles, he resided at Gateside House, Drymen, Stirlingshire.⁸² In their final days Denny's were experimenting with hovercraft before entering voluntary liquidation in September 1963 ending 119 years of shipbuilding on the river Leven.

Bowling

Scott & Sons, Bowling⁸³

Where the 35-mile long Forth & Clyde canal entered the Clyde at Bowling, Scott & Sons founded a small shipyard at the west end of Bowling in West Dunbartonshire in 1851.

The yard was particularly known for its output of Clyde 'Puffers', tug boats and coasters and was incorporated as a limited company (Scott & Sons (Bowling) Ltd) in 1958. In 1965 the yard was purchased by Scott's Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd of Greenock and became a member of the Scott Lithgow group in 1970, before being nationalised in July 1977 and eventually closed down in 1979.

Renfrew

William Simons & Co. Ltd, Renfrew⁸⁴

From the 1850s, located on the south bank of the Clyde at Renfrew, with a small engine works and shipyard, Wm. Simons was particularly renowned for dredger building. The firm was taken over by the Glasgow-Cathcart pump and desalination plant

⁸¹ For Denny's output, see, D. J. Lyon, *The Denny List* (Greenwich: National Maritime Museum, 1975).

⁸² For an extensive account of the life of Sir Maurice Denny, see, A. Slaven, 'Sir Maurice E. Denny', *DSBB*, vol.1, 212–214.

⁸³ The records of Scott & Sons (Bowling) Ltd are held in the SBA GD325/5 and GD322 classifications.

⁸⁴ The records of Wm. Simons & Co. Ltd are held in the SBA GD114/115/130/2/251, 356 and UCS 004 classifications.

manufacturers, G. & J. Weir in 1956 and in 1959 under Weir group control merged with Lobnitz as Simons-Lobnitz Ltd.

Lobnitz & Co. Ltd, Renfrew⁸⁵

Founded in 1895 by a Danish engineer, Henry Lobnitz, and like Simons, the shipyard was noted for dredger building and also coastal oil tankers and crane ships. The company was taken over by an investment company in 1957, but in 1959 under the Weir Group a merged company, Simons-Lobnitz Ltd was formed.

Simons-Lobnitz Ltd, Renfrew⁸⁶

Just two years after merger and after a series of unremunerative contracts entailing substantial losses, the Weir Group announced the impending closure of the two merged shipyards, which occurred in 1963, with the patents, designs and spare part contracts assigned to Alexander Stephen at Linthouse.

The Upper Clyde

Barclay Curle, Whiteinch⁸⁷

Founded in 1855, Barclay Curle were taken over in 1912 by the Tyne shipbuilders and marine engine builders Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson. Barclay Curle's Clydeholm shipyard and adjacent North British Marine Engine Works were located on the north bank of the Clyde at Whiteinch. The company also owned a large ship repairing facility at Elderslie comprising three dry docks, mould loft, plating and fabrication sheds and a substantial waterfront for outfit work.

In May 1912, Barclay Curle launched *MS Jutlandia*, the first ocean-going motor ship built in the British Isles and the second in the world for the East Asiatic Company of Copenhagen.⁸⁸ Noted for cargo liners, the Clydeholm shipyard was fully modernised by 1960 at a cost of over £3 million by building two new reinforced concrete berths and purchasing four new electric travelling hammerhead cranes to service them. In addition, a new stockyard was built with preparation, plating and fabrication sheds and joinery, plumbing and electrical shops. Despite being one of the most modern yards on the Clyde, by 1967, the parent company, Swan Hunter (Wallsend, Tyne) had announced the closure of the Clydeholm shipyard. The company's ship repair facilities at Elderslie were sold to

⁸⁵ The records of Lobnitz & Co. Ltd are held in the SBA GD356, GD215, 130/3 and UCS 4 classifications.

⁸⁶ The records of Simons-Lobnitz Ltd are held in the SBA GD 215 classification.

⁸⁷ The records of Barclay Curle Co. Ltd are held in the TD265 classification at Glasgow Life, City Archives, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN.

⁸⁸ H. Murphy, 'Barclay Curle & Co. Ltd, Britain's First Ocean-going Motor Ship, *MS Jutlandia*, and the Scottish Shale Oil Industry' (2024) 110:3 *The Mariner's Mirror*, pp.301–4.

Yarrow in 1974 and the North British Marine Engine Works ceased engine building in 1982.

Blythswood Shipbuilding Co. Ltd, Scotstoun⁸⁹

Adjacent to Yarrow Shipbuilders and established on a vacant site, Blythswood was incorporated as a limited liability company on 6 October 1919 by Hugh H. Macmillan, formerly a director of Fairfield, and Donald Bremner formerly Managing Director of Dunlop Bremner & Co Ltd, shipbuilders, Port Glasgow.⁹⁰

The shipyard was designed largely for the construction of diesel engine propelled oil tankers, and the first tanker built by the company, British Architect for London owners was completed in 1922. During the interwar slump in demand, the yard lay empty in 1931–2. During the Second World War part of the shipyard was destroyed by German Luftwaffe bombing raids, but the company continued to trade. Post-1945 the company modified its berths to compensate for increasing tonnages of ships. In addition to building and repairing oil tankers, they also built tugs, cargo vessels and medium-sized cargo-passenger liners. With the growth of ship sizes apparent in the tanker and bulk carrier markets and the yard's restricted space, Blythswood ceased trading in 1964, and the yard was purchased by Yarrow in 1965.

John Brown, Clydebank⁹¹

The Clydebank shipyard was taken over by John Brown in 1899, then Sheffield steel makers. Noted for its long association with Cunard, particularly the construction of the passenger liners, Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth and QE2, the yard also had an engine works separated from shipbuilding in 1966. Brown's joined the UCS consortium in 1968, but the shipyard struggled financially and post the UCS implosion was sold cheaply to the Marathon Oil Company of Houston, Texas, to build 11 jack-up oil rigs for use in the Gulf of Mexico. Marathon were bought out by UIE in 1990 who built four jack-up rigs and numerous offshore modules but closed for good in 2001.⁹²

As a publicly quoted company, John Brown, a mixed naval and mercantile builder was the major employer of males in Clydebank. Four-storey tenement flats for the workforce had been constructed outside the Clydebank shipyard in 1872–3 and survived intact until

⁸⁹ The records of Blythswood Shipbuilding Co. Ltd are held in the SBA GD 124 classification.

⁹⁰ Johnman & Murphy, *Scott Lithgow*, pp.36–8. Prior to establishing the Blythswood shipyard Bremner had sold Dunlop Bremner's Inch shipyard in Port Glasgow earlier in 1919 to Lithgows Ltd.

⁹¹ The records of John Brown & Co. Ltd are held in the SBA UCS 1 classification.

⁹² For John Brown, see I. Johnston, *Ships for a Nation. John Brown and Company, Clydebank, 1847–1971* (West Dunbartonshire: West Dunbartonshire Libraries, 2000).

the 1980s. Brown's had a football team, and uniquely in Scottish shipyards, in 1918, a Male Voice Choir.⁹³ During the interwar depression, the yard closed from December 1931 to April 1934 with the rusting hull of the Queen Mary (a potent symbol of national decline) still on the stocks, before the yard reopened with the first shift into the yard led by the Dalmuir Parish Pipe Band sponsored by a national newspaper.⁹⁴

Unemployment figures for the insured Scottish shipbuilding workforce reached 75 per cent in 1933 before dropping to 55 per cent in 1935.⁹⁵ During the Clydebank yard's closure (the workforce had no notice of this, bar a notice on the shipyard gates on the day of closure) ground was leased and marked out into 160 allotments to employ 150 skilled men growing vegetables.⁹⁶ Edwin Muir, who had once worked as a clerk at Scott's of Greenock, on a journey around Scotland in 1934, similar to J. B. Priestley's *English Journey* (London, 1934), but minus Priestley's antipathy towards the Irish resident there, likened the unemployed generally to Rosa Luxembour's phrase, *Die Toten auf Urlaub* (the dead on leave), and noted a 'pervasive silence' among men hanging around on street corners in shipbuilding areas of Glasgow.⁹⁷ The third Lord Aberconway to be chairman of John Brown succeeded his father in May 1953 and resided in Eaton Square, Belgravia, London.

Charles Connell & Co. Ltd, Scotstoun⁹⁸

Charles Connell began shipbuilding at Scotstoun in 1861 as a partnership but converted to private limited liability status in 1902. For much of the twentieth century the yard became known for fast cargo liners, particularly for the Ben Line of Leith. The Scotstoun yard was constrained in the size of vessels it could build and did not possess a fitting-out quay or engine works. During the interwar depression, Connell's Scotstoun yard remained closed for the longest period of any British Shipyard – eight years.

Post-1945, the yard built tankers, ore carriers and cargo-liners, with over 38 completed between 1946 and 1968. Connell joined the UCS consortium in 1968, but after its implosion in 1971 and rebirth in 1972 as Govan Shipbuilders, the Connell yard was saved as Scotstoun Marine but eventually closed in 1980.⁹⁹

⁹³ Johnston, *Ships for a Nation*, pp.169, 171.

⁹⁴ *Daily Record*, 4 April 1934.

⁹⁵ *The Labour Gazette*, 1931–1935 quoted in Johnman and Murphy, 'An overview of the economic and social effects of the interwar depression on Clydeside shipbuilding communities', p.246.

⁹⁶ Johnston, *Ships for a Nation*, p.192.

⁹⁷ E. Muir, *A Scottish Journey*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1979), pp.137–9.

⁹⁸ The records of Charles Connell are held at Glasgow Life, City Archives, Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN in the TD272 and UCS 2 classifications.

⁹⁹ There is, as yet, no company history of Connell.

Charles Connell (1822–84) served his apprenticeship as a shipwright at the birthplace of the China Tea Clipper, Robert Steele's shipyard at Greenock, and later became yard manager at Alexander Stephen's shipyard at Kelvinhaugh before setting up his own shipyard at Scotstoun in 1861, which was highly successful. He left over £200,000 in his will in free heritable estate plus considerable investments to trustees.¹⁰⁰ His eldest son, Charles Connell (1854–1913) carried on the business, and his son, also Charles (1900–72), was knighted in the New Year Honours List of 1956.¹⁰¹ His son, again Charles (1932–2015), took over as managing director of the Scotstoun yard in 1958 and with his father ran the yard until 1968 when it was subsumed into UCS. Thereafter, the family diversified their activities into farming and food production.

The first Charles Connell, a Presbyterian, was twice married and fathered ten children, seven of whom were male. He left estate of £264,635 on his death on 14 February 1884.¹⁰² Initially, engines for Connell vessels, were mainly manufactured by the Govan engine builder, David Rowan, and were installed at Finnieston Quay with outfitting at a local dock. In the 1920s, a new fitting-out quay at the adjacent North British Engine Works of Barclay Curle & Co. Ltd (owned by the Tyne shipbuilders, Swan Hunter and Wigham Richardson) resulted in engine orders being placed with Barclay Curle and fitted out at their quay. Charles Connell (1854–1913) purchased Craigallan House on an estate of 340 acres, including a Loch, at Milngavie, a few miles to the North of the yard as the family home of the Connells. Later an estate in Perthshire, Colquhalzie near Gleneagles was purchased.

Harland & Wolff, Govan¹⁰³

Acquired in 1912 when Harland & Wolff purchased the grounds of three separate small shipyards, Govan Old Yard, Govan Middleton and Govan East and combined them into one large six-berth shipyard complex, the Govan yard was the furthest establishment from the open sea on the Clyde. Tankers and cargo ships formed the basic workload, and the company also had a ship repair function, and a large engine works across the Clyde at Finnieston producing main slow and medium speed marine diesel engines under licence to the Danish Burmeister & Wain company. Post-1950, when it became apparent that ship sizes were increasing and that costly modernisation of the shipyard would be needed, Harland & Wolff took the cheaper option and closed the company in 1962.

¹⁰⁰ Sum cited in relation to Connell's Will, in, *Connell's Trustees v Mrs Connell's Trustees and Others*, Scottish Court of Session R13, 16 July, 1886.

¹⁰¹ *London Gazette*, 30 December 1955, knighted as of 1 January 1956.

¹⁰² Fred M. Walker, 'Charles Connell', *DSBB*, p.211.

¹⁰³ The records of Harland & Wolff, Govan, are held in the SBA GD 241 classification.

D. & W. Henderson, Meadowside¹⁰⁴

Located on the west bank of the River Kelvin at its confluence with the Clyde, the firm was founded in 1873 to undertake marine engineering and shipbuilding on the former site of Tod and McGregor's works. The new owners were David and William Henderson of the Anchor Line.

The Belfast shipbuilders and engine builders, Harland & Wolff acquired a shareholding interest the Meadowside shipyard in 1916 and a year later were in full control. When the Anchor Line collapsed in 1933, by which date, the Meadowside shipyard had built 32 passenger liners for that company,¹⁰⁵ the shipyard entered liquidation in 1935 with its facilities purchased by National Shipbuilders Security Ltd. In 1936, Harland & Wolff continued ship repair at Meadowside until 1962 when the company ceased trading.

A. & J. Inglis, Pointhouse¹⁰⁶

Located on the east side of the River Kelvin at its confluence with the Clyde, Anthony and John Inglis acquired land for shipbuilding at the former T. B. Seath shipyard at Pointhouse in 1862. Shipbuilding and ship repair formed the mainstay of the business on a site of 18 acres. The company also had a separate engine works at Anderston. In 1919, Harland & Wolff acquired a controlling interest in the firm. The yard built a wide variety of ships, including railway ferries, whalers and passenger paddle steamers, including in 1946 the last extant sea-going paddle steamer in the world, *PS Waverley*. The shipyard closed down in 1962 when Harland & Wolff rationalised its Clyde operations.

Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Co., Ltd, Govan¹⁰⁷

Converted to a limited company in 1885, the Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company, a mixed naval and mercantile firm was purchased by the speculative Sperling Combine's acquisition vehicle the Northumberland Shipbuilding Company of Howdon-on-Tyne in 1919. After near bankruptcy on the implosion of Sperling and non-payment of discount bills by the Anchor Line, Fairfield was purchased by Sir James Lithgow in 1935.

Fairfield remained registered in London. This was propitious as the firm entered into receivership in October 1965 after the firm's banker's the Bank of Scotland called in a floating charge against the assets of the company. London registration allowed the Bank

¹⁰⁴ The records of D. & W. Henderson, Meadowside, are held in the SBA GD 239/1 classification.

¹⁰⁵ M. Bellamy and B. Spalding, *The Golden Years of the Anchor Line* (Glasgow: Glasgow Museums, 2011), p.9.

¹⁰⁶ The records of A. & J. Inglis Co. Ltd are held in the TD243 classification at Glasgow Life, City Archives, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN.

¹⁰⁷ The records of Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd are held in the UCS2 classifications at Glasgow Life, City Archives, Mitchell Library, Glasgow G3 7DN.

of England to advance £1 million to keep Fairfield in business, but not its engineering arm, Fairfield Rowan, which went into liquidation in March 1966. Under the chairmanship of Iain Maxwell Stewart (1916–85), Fairfield was saved as Fairfield (Glasgow), Ltd and a new experiment in industrial relations was begun. Fairfield, however, entered the ill-fated UCS Consortium in 1968 and on that consortium's implosion in 1971 was reborn as Govan Shipbuilders Ltd in 1972 with the aid of £35 million of government funding. Govan Shipbuilders were nationalised in 1977 and privatised in 1988 when sold to the Norwegian conglomerate, Kvaerner who then sold the yard to Marconi Electronic Systems Ltd, in 1999. In 2000, BAE Systems Marine Ltd took over, and the yard is now part of BAE Systems Maritime-Naval Ships.

The largest shipyard in the Lithgow empire, with almost all of its shareholding held by members of the Lithgow family, Fairfield was one of the 'Big Six' UK shipbuilding companies.¹⁰⁸ It had its own engine works and from 1961 to 1966 it was merged with another Lithgow-owned engine works, David Rowan and Co., as Fairfield-Rowan.

Like other companies in the Lithgow Group, Fairfield staff and employees had numerous activities sponsored by the firm. Deaths, marriages and retirements were noted. With no official retirement age in shipbuilding or engineering it was recorded in the *Lithgow Journal* of autumn 1952 that Mr James Bennett, who spent most of his working life in boiler fireboxes operating a heavy stud and tapping machine at David Rowan & Co., had retired after 41 years' service, and would be remembered for his 'cheery disposition'. He was 81 years old! The Fairfield Engine Works Masonic Brethren were particularly active, paying a visit to the Glasgow Police Museum (in whose ranks where many fellow Masons) in St Andrews Square and an outing to the Metropole Theatre for friends and members numbering 180. The Masonic Brethren had earlier in 1953 paid visits to the Moorpark Masonic Social Club in Renfrew, the Hiram Walker Distillery in Dumbarton and George Dobie & Sons tobacco and cigarette factory in Paisley, and a bus outing to North Berwick. The Fairfield Works Bowling Green opening on 24 April 1954 was graced by Lady Lithgow who unfurled a flag presented by the company. Mrs James Lenaghan, wife of a shipbuilding director presented certificates and medallions to First Aid Class members, and a new Badminton club had been formed, who won their first three matches.

Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd, Linthouse

Originally shipbuilders on the Moray Firth and later at Aberdeen, Arbroath and Dundee, a family member, Alexander Stephen (1832–99) moved to Glasgow in 1850 and leased

¹⁰⁸ The others were John Brown (Clydebank), Cammell Laird (Birkenhead), Harland & Wolff (Belfast), Swan Hunter (Wallsend and High Walker, Tyne) and Vickers (Barrow-in-Furness).

land to build ships at Kelvinhaugh. In 1869 he moved his operation by purchasing the 32-acre Linthouse estate to the west of Govan and built a shipyard there. The first ship was launched in November 1870, and the yard's engine and boiler works were completed by the middle of 1872. In 1874 his two sons, Alexander (1861–1942) and Frederic (1863–1932) took over the partnership, with the latter in charge of shipbuilding and living in rural splendour at Rhu, Dunbartonshire.

In 1900, the firm changed from a partnership to limited liability status. Stephen, like other Clyde firms survived the interwar depression, with, from 1932, a seventh-generation chairman, Frederic Stephen's son, Alexander Murray Stephen (1892–1974), knighted in 1946, heading the firm. Aided by rearmament the firm returned to prosperity during the Second World War, becoming a publicly quoted company in 1946. A mixed naval and mercantile builder, Stephen's were renowned builders of passenger-cargo vessels, and insulated reefers. In 1963, Stephen's acquired the assets and goodwill of the Renfrew dredger builders, Simons and Lobnitz, but by 1965 the company was in deep financial trouble and was later incorporated into the UCS consortium (a merger of five shipyards) in 1968. The Linthouse shipyard was closed, but its steel making facilities were later reopened and used by UCS's successor company, Govan Shipbuilders. The Stephen ship repair and engine building arms remained independent concerns but eventually closed.¹⁰⁹

Stephen had the dubious distinction of the largest loss of life in a single incident in a Clyde shipyard. Indeed, the Daphne disaster of 3 July 1883 is still recalled on the upper Clyde. The ship heeled over on launching in deep water from the Linthouse slipway in mid channel with over 200 men and boys aboard and 124 men and boys lost their lives, with 70 rescued. Stephen were exonerated from blame at a subsequent Commission of Inquiry into the sinking and loss of life.¹¹⁰ The diary entry of Alexander Stephen for 3 July 1883 was the only page left blank.¹¹¹ A public relief fund appeal raised £30,000 for the families of the deceased.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ There is a company sponsored history of Stephen, see J. Carvel, *Stephen of Linthouse: A Record of Two Hundred Years of Shipbuilding, 1750–1950* (Glasgow: Alexander Stephen & Sons, 1950). The records of Alexander Stephen and Co. Ltd are held in the SBA UGD 004 classification.

¹¹⁰ SBA UGD 4/2/1/4 Report on the Daphne Disaster to Sir William Harcourt KC, Home Secretary by Edward J. Reed, MP. See also, Carvel, *Stephen of Linthouse*, pp.76–8.

¹¹¹ SBA UGD 4/8/25 Diary of Alexander Stephen.

¹¹² Carvel, *Stephen of Linthouse*, p.77.

Alexander Stephen resided in a large home at 12 Park Terrace, Glasgow, and at a large villa behind Wemyss Bay on the Firth of Clyde.¹¹³ Stephen built tenement houses nearby their shipyard for 120 men and their families and had perhaps the first works canteen in a Clyde shipyard on its move to Linthouse where workers could purchase a hot meal if desired.¹¹⁴ In 1900, the firm changed from a partnership to limited liability status and during the Great War built 16 torpedo boat destroyers and manufactured wooden aircraft fuselages and artificial limbs. In 1919, the company sold a controlling share interest to Lord Inchcape's Peninsular and Oriental Line.¹¹⁵ A year earlier the firm had appointed a Welfare Supervisor. Aside from recording levels of sickness, labour turnover, time keeping and absenteeism, he was later responsible for selection and contracts for all juveniles entering the shipyard and engine works. His work included keeping records of progress through the then five-year apprenticeship. Apprentices were encouraged to gain further qualifications at local educational establishments, including night schools and payment of weekly bonuses for achievement was instituted. Stephen held non-compulsory trade examinations each year.¹¹⁶

A new and enlarged canteen was established in 1919, and a Boys Club was formed at Linthouse situated at Cressy Hall, purchased two years earlier and later named the Stephen Apprentices and Boys Club. In 1920 the firm purchased ten acres of land near Linthouse at Shieldhall for £12,000. A pavilion and a house for the Head Greenkeeper were built, including a children's playground, playing fields (football and hockey), tennis courts, two bowling greens, and putting greens. This was later known as Coila Park. Workers were encouraged to use the facilities for their welfare, and the firm provided trophies and prizes for sporting events. The Park was managed by a committee of workers representatives. At the yard and engine works, First Aid classes were organized in what was an inherently dangerous industry. Summer camps in various resorts were arranged, participation enhanced through a Holiday and Savings Fund inaugurated in 1922.¹¹⁷ The seventh-generation chairman, Alexander Murray Stephen from 1955–9 served as the Queen's Representative as Lord Lieutenant of Lanarkshire and was an Honorary Treasurer of the Conservative and Unionist Party for seventeen years and a board member of many diverse companies.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.86.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp.13, 14, 58–66.

¹¹⁵ A. Slaven, 'Frederic John Stephen', *DSBB*, p.242. Stephen's eventually repurchased the Inchcape shares in 1935.

¹¹⁶ Carvel, *Stephen of Linthouse*, pp.157–9.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p.158, Slaven, 'Frederic John Stephen', *DSBB*, p.241.

Yarrow and Co. Ltd, Scotstoun¹¹⁸

Alfred Yarrow began shipbuilding at Folly Wall in Poplar on the Isle of Dogs on the River Thames in 1865, initially in partnership building steam launches and prefabricated river craft. Subsequently the firm under his sole direction became known for fast torpedo boat destroyers, and water tube boilers, and thereafter cemented a long relationship with the Admiralty. Yarrow became a limited company in 1897, but by 1906 had begun to decamp from the Thames to the Clyde and launched their first destroyer at the Scotstoun yard in 1908, by which stage the Poplar yard had closed.

On 31 December 1921, the company was voluntarily liquidated, but reconstructed under the same name in March 1922, with Sir Harold Yarrow in charge with no new orders but survived by manufacturing land boilers with just 24 employees. In 1965, Yarrow subsumed the adjacent shipyard of Blythwood, and in 1975 the Elderslie Dy Docks of Barclay Curle & Co. Ltd. Yarrow entered the ill-fated Upper Clyde Shipbuilders consortium in 1968 but extricated from it in controversial circumstances before UCS imploded in 1971. Nationalised under British Shipbuilders in July 1977, Yarrow was privatised in 1986 and sold to GEC-Marconi, and later to British Aerospace, and still survives as a naval shipbuilder.¹¹⁹

Whilst shipbuilding on the River Thames at Poplar, Alfred Yarrow (1842–1932) paid for the erection of a convalescent home for 100 invalid children of the middle classes whose parents could not afford to send their children to the coast for their health. The home at Broadstairs, Kent was operational in 1895. From 1906, Alfred Yarrow took 300 of his English workforce to Scotstoun on the upper Clyde, to what was then a greenfield site, none of whom were enamoured by the sandstone tenement properties normally found adjacent to local shipyards. Yarrow instead built 40 brick-built cottages for his workforce. Examples of Alfred Yarrow's wider benevolence were a ship testing tank at the National Physical Laboratory Teddington, Middlesex, the funding of Royal Society Yarrow Professors and Fellows to carry out research rather than university teaching duties, the Convalescent Home for Children in Broadstairs, and a new outpatients department at a London hospital. In Glasgow he funded the building of a nurses training home in Govan and gave grants for the establishment of nurses in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Alfred Yarrow retired in 1913, but offered his services to the Admiralty in 1914, and was awarded a baronetcy in 1916. He was succeeded by his son, Harold (1884–1962). During the Great War, the Scotstoun yard completed 29 destroyers,¹⁶ shallow-draught river

¹¹⁸ The records of Yarrow & Co. Ltd are held in the SBA UGD 266 classification.

¹¹⁹ There is a centenary history of Yarrow. See A. Borthwick, *Yarrow & Company Ltd: The First Hundred Years, 1865–1965* (Glasgow: Yarrow & Co., 1965).

gunboats, one submarine, three hospital ships and one floating workshop. The yard's Pattern Shop, as was the case with Stephen's Linthouse yard, was one-third occupied in the manufacture of artificial limbs at no cost for severely wounded servicemen.¹²⁰

Sir Harold Yarrow was one of the founders of the Erskine Hospital for Disabled ex-Servicemen. Under his chairmanship, the company entered liquidation in 1921 but was reconstructed under the same name in the following year. In 1925, Yarrow became a public quoted company as Yarrow & Co., Ltd.¹²¹ Harold Yarrow resided at Overton, in the Renfrewshire village of Kilmacolm. He inherited the baronetcy on his father's death in 1932 and was also a director of the Clydesdale and North of Scotland Bank and of the Midland Bank. On his death in 1962, the baronetcy passed, as did his directorships to his son, Eric Yarrow (1920–2018) by that stage the firm's managing director.

Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS)¹²²

Following on from the SIC Report of 1965–6, which encouraged the provision of grants and loans by a Shipbuilding Industry Board to merge shipyards on river centres, UCS was formed of five shipyards, John Brown, Charles Connell, Fairfield (Glasgow) Ltd, Alexander Stephen and Yarrow.

By 1970, UCS had consumed £20 million in public money through grants and loans.¹²³ Yarrow, the consortium's designated warship builder, controversially departed the consortium in 1970 with the aid of a loan from the Ministry of Defence of £4.5 million leaving the four loss-making yards in UCS until the then Conservative government called in receivers in the summer of 1971. This sparked the famous, but largely symbolic UCS Work-in led by the charismatic Jimmy Reid, begun on 30 July 1970, and two separate reports to government¹²⁴ which eventually led to the formation of the nationalised Govan Shipbuilders (Fairfield, and Connell, the latter renamed Scotstoun Marine, Stephen used for steelwork and not shipbuilding) in July 1972 aided by £35 million in government

¹²⁰ Borthwick, *Yarrow & Company Ltd*, pp.31–2. 46–8. B. Baxter, 'Alfred Fernandez Yarrow', *DSBB*, p.247. See also Lady Eleanor Cecilia Yarrow, *Alfred Yarrow, His Life and Work* (London: Edward Arnold & Co, 1928).

¹²¹ Borthwick, *Yarrow*, pp.51–5.

¹²² The records of UCS (Clydebank, Stephen, Yarrow) are held in the SBA UCS 1 and 4 and GD 266 classifications. The records of Connell and Fairfield are held at City Archives, Mitchell Library, North Street, Glasgow G3 7DN in the TD 272 and UCS 2 classifications.

¹²³ Johnman & Murphy, *Scott Lithgow*, in stark contrast, Scott's and Lithgows on the Lower Clyde, prior to officially merging in February 1970, had received from the SIB £20,000 each for consultants' fees.

¹²⁴ Advisory Group on Upper Clyde Shipbuilders Report 1970–1 (London: HMSO, 1971) and Hill Samuel and Company Report on Shipbuilding on the Upper Clyde (London: HMSO, 1972).

funding.¹²⁵ Of this, £18 million was allocated to cover the assets of Connell, Fairfield and Stephen and up to £17 million to cover losses until it was commercially viable or over a five-year period, whichever was shorter. The Clydebank shipyard was sold to the Marathon Oil Company of Houston, Texas, with the aid of a government loan of £6 million in August 1972 to build jack-up oil rigs.

Govan Shipbuilders

Nationalised in 1972, by 1975 the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons in a report highlighted delays in modernising the facilities at Govan Shipbuilders. Moreover, projected losses by taking on fixed priced contracts in a period of high inflation had led to large losses.¹²⁶

With the jobs of thousands of workers at stake, the Labour Government further capitalised the company up to the nationalisation of the British shipbuilding industry under the British Shipbuilders Corporation in July 1977. Govan was reprivated in 1988 when it was sold to the Norwegian conglomerate Kvaerner Industries, which exited shipbuilding in December 1999 when it sold the shipyard to BAE Systems Marine. The former Fairfield shipyard, along with the former Yarrow shipyard, is now part of BAE Systems Surface Ships and is fully engaged in warship construction for the Ministry of Defence.

Conclusions

Clyde shipbuilders' benevolent impulses towards individuals, workforces, communities, churches and institutions depended heavily on having the liquidity to sustain them. In the twentieth century, this was aided by successive generations building upon the wealth left by their fathers. The hereditary principle in Clyde shipyard ownership was largely sacrosanct. Of the 24 shipyards and 18 marine engine works extant on Clydeside after the Second World War, more than half were owned on the hereditary principle.¹²⁷ Most of the privately educated owners lived in inherited salubrious country estates or mansions far beyond the expectations of most of their workforces. What the authors found in interviewing Clyde shipyard owners and directors over the years was the common

¹²⁵ For the Work-in see, W. Thompson and F. Hart, *The UCS Work-in* (Farnborough: D. C. Heath, 1972), J. McGill, *Crisis on the Clyde. The Story of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders* (London: Davis-Poynter, 1973), F. Broadway, *Upper Clyde Shipbuilders. A Study in Government Intervention-The Way the Money Goes* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 1975), F. Herron, *Labour Market in Crisis. Redundancy at Upper Clyde Shipbuilders* (London: Holmes & Meier, 1973), J. Foster and C. Wolfson, *The Politics of the UCS Work-in* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986), W. W. J. Knox and A. McKinlay, *Jimmy Reid, Clyde Built Man* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), and Murphy, *Shipbuilding in the United Kingdom*, pp.42–5.

¹²⁶ BPP, HC 374, 1974–5, PAC Report, para.65.

¹²⁷ O'Hara, *Ironfighters, Outfitters and Bowler Hatters*, p.40.

description of their workforce as the ‘workpeople’. However, this language was mild compared with several important Clyde shipbuilding employers who showed an ‘almost pathological loathing of their workmen’, when interviewed by Mass Observation staff during the Second World War. Indeed, one employer subjected his interviewer to ‘a two-hour tirade against these animals’¹²⁸

Of the Clyde shipbuilders, the Lithgow brothers, James and Henry did not need to carry on their father’s work, given what the latter had bequeathed to them in his will, but did so anyway. The same was true of the Connell, Scott, Stephen and Yarrow descendants. Most of the sons of the original owners were privately educated or went to university when only a small proportion of the population could afford to do so. The Lithgow brothers’ charitable acts in their Port Glasgow community were anonymous, but both were ruthless businessmen nonetheless, as were their contemporaries in other Clyde firms.

In Greenock, the Scott family through seven generations, were less in the public eye, as was the case with the fourth generation Connell and seventh generation Stephen families, although all three were involved in industry organisations. The propensity to award baronetcies to shipbuilders had much to do with their ability to employ large numbers of working-class men, although that was hardly a consideration for Harold Yarrow when he voluntarily liquidated his yard in 1921, or Charles Connell when he closed his shipyard for eight years during the 1930s.

The heyday of employer benevolence came when Clyde shipbuilding, an inherently cyclical industry, profited from two world wars and, particularly, from the post-1945 boom. It was in employers’ interests, not only a matter of altruistic motive, to foster a continuing sense of esprit de corps in their workforces, particularly in retention of those in staff positions and by provision of works and staff canteens with hot food at lunchtime at subsidised prices and through evening and weekend social activities in associations and clubs. Staff dances, indoor and outdoor sports and competitions with trophies supplied on an annual basis, summer camps, annual outings, theatre trips, golf awaydays and similar activities were financially supported. The introduction of works magazines attempted to cement a sense of place and worth in the workforce.

That many shipyard owners’ sons, such as Henry and James Lithgow, served apprenticeships in their father’s shipyards might have led to better treatment of

¹²⁸ H. Murphy, “From the Crinoline to the Boilersuit” Women Workers in British Shipbuilding during the Second World War’ (1999) 13:4 *Contemporary British History*, p.89.

apprentices, but there is little evidence of this. Not only were apprentices badly treated in terms of pay, but their training was also hardly uniform until the 1960s. Of the 1950s and 1960s cohort of Clydeside shipyard general managers, Alexander Ross Belch, (1920–99) managing director of Lithgows Ltd trained in naval architecture when at Fairfield from 1938, Sir Eric Yarrow (1920–2018) when at the engineers, G. Weir, Cathcart, Robert Easton (1922–2008) when at Fairfield in the 1940s, before becoming managing director and then chairman of Yarrow, and John Rannie (1904–89), who like Easton, came up through the ranks to become managing director of John Brown, Clydebank in 1963. All wore the obligatory bowler hat, setting owners, management and senior staff apart from the cap-wearing workforce. Only in 1974 were safety helmets made compulsory, and even then, in some yards they were colour-coded according to seniority.

With the exception of Lithgows and Connell, five firms in this article were all members of the private and secretive Warship Builders Committee of the industry's trade association, the Shipbuilding Conference (est. 1928, disbanded 1967).¹²⁹ The principals of these firms met in nationwide industry organisations such as the Shipbuilding Employers Federation (est. 1899), later incorporated into the Shipbuilders and Repairers National Association (est. 1967, disbanded 1977), and local associations such as the Clyde Shipbuilders Association (est. 1866, disbanded 1977). Whether any form of competitive benevolence existed is open to question. What is clear is that benevolence waned and ossified on the deaths of owners as their descendants relied on professional managers for the day-to-day running of their private firms, but more so as the industry came under fierce international competition in the 1960s and 1970s under which those firms who merged (Brown, Connell, Fairfield, Stephen and Yarrow in 1968 as Upper Clyde Shipbuilders and Scott's and Lithgows in 1970 as Scott Lithgow) struggled to survive until temporarily saved by nationalisation in July 1977, by which stage benevolence in Clyde shipbuilding had all but disappeared. Employer benevolence was therefore not an alternative to harsh industrial relations, but part of the same social order: softening and sometimes improving shipyard life while also reinforcing hierarchy, loyalty and dependence.

¹²⁹ For the Warship Group, see C. W. Miller and H. Murphy, 'Price Collusion, Rationalisation and Admiralty Oversight in British Shipbuilding: The Case of the Warship Group, 1926–1945' (2021) 33:3 *International Journal of Maritime History*, pp.561–76. See also C. W. Miller, 'The Clydeside Cabal: The Influence of Lord Weir, Sir James Lithgow and Sir Andrew Rae Duncan on Naval and Defence Policy, Around 1918–1940' (2021) 107:3 *The Mariner's Mirror*, pp.338–57.

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Food for Talk: Co-production and Co-evaluation in Building Dementia-Friendly Practice within a Business Archive Setting

Allison Foster¹

Introduction

Increasingly, cultural heritage institutions are required to demonstrate relevance within wider social and public contexts, particularly in relation to health, wellbeing and community engagement.² In recent years, this has included a growing focus on supporting people living with dementia, a demographic that continues to expand globally.³ Museums and galleries have been at the forefront of this work, developing object-based and sensory programmes designed to stimulate memory, encourage communication and reduce social isolation through reminiscence-based projects, which have been shown to support wellbeing and identity in people living with dementia.⁴ While business archives have also identified this need for free good quality dementia resources, it has often been difficult to produce and deliver these. This is because material in archives is frequently perceived as less accessible due to the textual nature of the material coupled with traditional environments based on independent research. In addition, few archives have a dedicated outreach team or member of staff.

Despite these perceptions, business archives hold considerable potential for dementia-friendly practice, especially because their collections often relate to everyday life and shared social experiences. This article explores how the Sainsbury Archive sought to realise this potential through the development of a long-term project centred on co-production and co-evaluation. The Take One Ingredient project, undertaken between 2020–5, aimed to create resources that would enable meaningful engagement with archival material for people living with dementia, while also embedding user perspectives throughout the design and evaluation process.

Co-production offers a particularly effective framework for developing dementia-friendly archival resources.⁵ By involving care-sector professionals and other stakeholders in the

¹ Allison Foster is the Archivist at Sainsbury Archive at the London Museum.

² Eleonora Belfiore, 'Art as a Means of Alleviating Social Exclusion' (2002) 8 *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, p.93.

³ World Health Organisation, 'Global Status Report on the Public Health Response to Dementia', WHO (2021), p.3 <<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240033245>> accessed 26 May 2026.

⁴ Bob Woods and others, 'Reminiscence Therapy for Dementia' Cochrane Library (2018) <<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD001120.pub3/full>> accessed 26 May 2026.

⁵ NESTA 'The Challenge of Co-Production' David Boyle and Michael Harris, Author (2013) p.14 <<https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/the-challenge-of-co-production/>> accessed 26 May 2026.

creation and refinement of materials, the project ensured that outputs were grounded in real-world practice and responsive to user needs. Furthermore, business archives often offer distinctive opportunities for engagement due to their focus on familiar, everyday experiences such as food, shopping and work.

Institutional Context: The Sainsbury Archive

The Sainsbury Archive was established in 1969 to mark the 100th birthday of the Sainsbury's company's foundation. It documents the history of Sainsbury's from its foundation in Drury Lane in 1869 but also provides a unique record of the transformation that has occurred in retailing since the mid-nineteenth century, and the impact of these changes on society. The collection includes a large number of photographs and artefacts and is particularly strong in the areas of product packaging, advertising and retail stores. The archive was established as an independent charity in 2003 and moved to London Museum Docklands in 2005. This positioning enables the archive to function both as a business archive and as a publicly accessible cultural institution. Funding for the archive is provided jointly by the company and the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts. This hybrid funding model has allowed the archive to undertake externally facing projects that extend beyond its core remit of collection management. In particular, the Linbury Trust has played a key role in supporting the development of dementia-friendly resources, providing targeted funding for both the initial project and its subsequent evaluation phase.

The collection's focus on food, shopping and domestic life makes it particularly relevant to memory-based engagement practices in dementia contexts.⁶ Its strengths lie in documenting everyday life, particularly through themes such as food, shopping, domestic routines and employment. These themes are especially relevant for dementia engagement, as they are closely associated with long-term memory and personal identity.

Project Origins and Development

The desire to create new dementia resources grew out of an initial Linbury Trust-funded project the Sainsbury Archive team completed in 2018 to design intergenerational learning resources. Created as a result of the untimely death of the archive chairman, and ex-Sainsbury's CEO, Dino Adriano, these were designed by Manchester-based creative education freelancers, Interference Art.

⁶ Museum 2.0, 'The Participatory Museum', Nina Simon, Author (2010) <<https://participatorymuseum.org/>> accessed 27 May 2026.

This project resulted in the creation of a series of printable activity packs designed to facilitate conversations across age groups. They were co-created with former Sainsbury's staff and centred on themes such as food, shopping habits and working life. This approach reflects wider shifts in museum and archive practice towards participatory methodologies in which audiences become collaborators rather than passive recipients. The success of these materials demonstrated the potential of archival content to support informal, socially oriented engagement. Recognising this, the Linbury Trust approached the archive in 2020 to explore the development of dementia-specific resources. A grant of £20,000 was awarded to support this work, with a clear emphasis on co-creation as a guiding methodology.

Prior to the initial project in 2018 the archive had limited experience in participatory practice and co-creation working. The development of dementia-friendly resources therefore represented a significant shift in institutional approach, requiring new partnerships, skills and ways of working.

Interference Art were therefore retained as a key partner, bringing expertise in participatory design and engagement. The Archive chose Interference Art to partner with for multiple reasons. Firstly, there wasn't this skillset within the archive team, with none of the current staff having experience or training within a learning or education remit. Secondly, the approach that Interference Art took to co-creation of resources was appealing to both the archive team and to the funders, as an alternative and interesting way to create archive resources. They brought additional collaborators on board, including Portland Basin Museum in Tameside and Thameside Local Archive, who contributed to the project by providing access to complementary collections and regional perspectives. This multi-partner approach enabled the project to draw on a wide range of skills and experiences, while also embedding co-production at its core.

Working in the Context of COVID-19: Online Content, Exhibition and Co-Creation Workshops

The project began in 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, a context that significantly shaped both the working process and the outcomes. Restrictions on physical access to cultural institutions necessitated a shift towards digital engagement, while the isolation experienced by many people living with dementia increased the urgency of developing accessible resources. In response, the project team moved to online meetings, through which a range of ways to explore archives, spark conversations, and share ideas and memories onsite, online and through face-to-face participation were planned.

First a series of digital activities were initiated in 2021, including the production of twelve short films for Instagram and social media campaigns designed to encourage online participation. Users were invited to share memories and preferences related to food and everyday life, which were then used to create new content on the archive's website. This approach not only maintained engagement during a period of physical closure for the archive but also established an early model of participatory content creation.

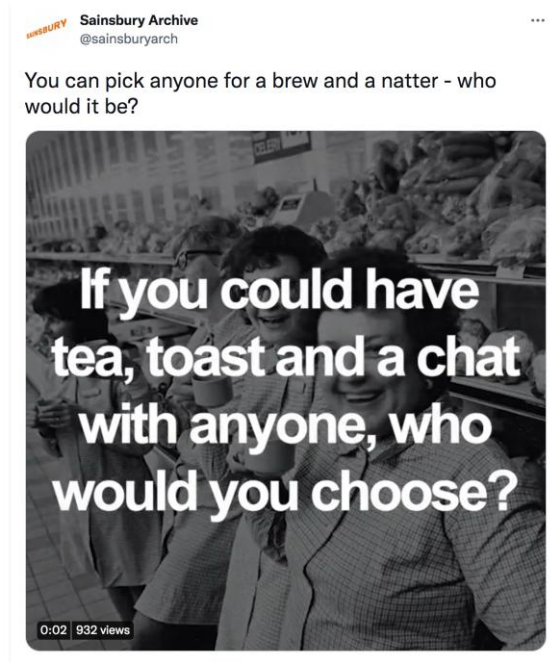


Figure 1: Screenshot of short film created for social media, Sainsbury Archive, 2020.

As pandemic restrictions began to ease, the project expanded into physical space through the development of a temporary exhibition titled Food Glorious Food which opened in July 2021. Hosted at Portland Basin Museum, the exhibition combined material from the Sainsbury Archive with the museum's own social history collections, exploring themes such as food production, retail change, wartime experiences and regional identity. The Food Glorious Food exhibition also provided a physical space for co-production workshops, involving social prescribers, wellbeing practitioners and members of the Sainsbury's Veterans Association. These sessions provided opportunities to test ideas, gather feedback and observe how participants interacted with archival material.⁷

⁷ J. Clarkson et al., *Inclusive Design: Design for the Whole Population* (Springer 2003) p.31.

Resource Development: Physical and Digital Formats

A direct result of the co-creation workshops was the development of one of the key outputs of the project. This was a physical resource pack titled Food for Talk. Designed as a set of 'grab and go' activities, the pack aimed to facilitate conversation and reminiscence in care settings. The materials were produced in a large A3 format, with wipeable surfaces and high-contrast design features to support accessibility.

Each image included prompts and guidance, enabling use by both professionals and family members. The packs were distributed to a range of organisations, including 16 care homes, three museums, two archives, a nursing and neuro rehabilitation centre and through Tameside social prescription and wellbeing services.



Figure 2: A physical 'Food for Talk' resource pack, Sainsbury Archive, 2021.

However, rollout of further physical packs was beyond the capacity of the archive, particularly in terms of cost to create each pack and administrative capacity to manage distribution and return of the material. In response, the project team found another partner in the National Activity Providers Association (NAPA) which helped to develop a digital version of the resource in 2022, working with care-sector professionals to adapt the content for online use. The digital resource allowed for wider dissemination and greater flexibility, particularly for one-to-one sessions.

Co-Evaluation and Iterative Development

In 2025, the project entered a co-evaluation phase, supported by an additional £20,000 funding from the Linbury Trust. This phase involved a series of workshops with Activity Providers recruited through NAPA. These participants brought valuable practical insight, as they are directly responsible for delivering activities to people living with dementia.

The evaluation process consisted of two online sessions and one in-person workshop. In the first workshop Activity Providers reviewed the digital resources, providing detailed feedback on usability, design and content. This led to several significant improvements, including a complete redesign of the archive's webpage on the NAPA website. Originally text-heavy and difficult to navigate, the webpage was transformed into a more user-friendly interface with clear navigation and direct links to the archive's resources such as playlists on YouTube and digitised branch images on the archive's own website. The second workshop was an in-person session at London Museum Docklands. It allowed the archive to give the Activity Providers a tour of the archive and to assess the physical pack. The archive gained insightful feedback, ranging from simple practical advice to ideas for larger long-term projects. The third session was an online follow up after the Activity Providers had had time to use the pack to see if they had any further feedback for the archive and project team.

The evaluation process also highlighted the importance of recognising participants as collaborators. Activity Providers were compensated for their time, acknowledging their expertise and reinforcing the value of their contribution, with nearly £2000 of the budget allocated to this.

The Value of Co-Production and Co-Evaluation

Co-production was central to the success of the Take One Ingredient project. A primary advantage of co-creation lies in the assurance that resulting outputs are both relevant and usable, as they are developed in collaboration with the very individuals who will ultimately engage with them. Collaboration with external partners also introduces fresh perspectives on archival collections, enriching interpretation and use. In this project, sector professionals responded positively to invitations to participate, often expressing appreciation for being consulted and involved. Such engagement not only diversified insights but also reinforced professional relationships and mutual respect.

Participation in co-creative processes contributed to a strong sense of achievement and wellbeing among Activity Providers. This, in turn, fostered a sense of ownership over the

project, which proved beneficial for dissemination advocacy.⁸ For example, one participating provider independently presented the project and its associated resources across a national network of care homes, significantly extending its reach.

Co-creation should be understood as an ongoing, iterative process. In this context, co-evaluation played a key role in maintaining engagement among internal stakeholders while also enhancing external visibility. The active use of archival materials by external participants provided valuable validation of the collection's broader social and cultural relevance beyond the organisation itself.

Practical Lessons for Dementia Resource Design

Over the course of the project the Archive was given lots of practical advice from the Activity Providers. The project ultimately demonstrated that a hybrid approach, combining physical and digital materials, was most effective. Physical resource packs are particularly well suited to group-based activities, while digital materials offer greater flexibility for one-to-one sessions. This hybrid model reflects inclusive design principles, which emphasise flexibility and accessibility across different user contexts.⁹

There is a notable demand for more diverse and culturally inclusive content. Activity Providers highlighted a lack of materials reflecting a broader range of cultural experiences and events, including those associated with Eid, Diwali and Hanukkah. Addressing this gap can enhance the relevance and inclusivity of resource provision.

Ease of use is another critical factor. Resources that require minimal or no training are especially valuable, as they can be used flexibly across different contexts. For example, materials that can be facilitated by Activity Providers or made readily available for independent use by families increase overall accessibility and utility.

Design considerations are also essential in supporting engagement. High-contrast text, particularly black text on a yellow background, was identified as most effective for readability. Similarly, images should be clear and simple, avoiding excessive detail or blurriness, which may hinder comprehension. These align with established dementia design guidance, which emphasises clarity, recognisability and reduced cognitive load.¹⁰

⁸ Elizabeth B.-N. Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers, 'Co-Creation and the New Landscape of Design' (2008) 4, *Co-Design*, p.12.

⁹ J. Clarkson et al., *Inclusive Design: Design for the Whole Population*, p.121.

¹⁰ Alzheimer's Society 'Dementia-friendly Environment Checklist' (2026) < <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-involved/dementia-friendly-resources/organisations/dementia-friendly-environment-checklist> > accessed 27 May 2026.

Finally, Activity Providers indicated a willingness to purchase resource packs, as many have their own budgets. This suggests that there may be potential for developing sustainable distribution models for such materials in the future.

FOOD FOR TALK SHOPPING MEMORIES

AGE AND DEMENTIA FRIENDLY PHOTOS AND PROMPTS FROM THE SAINSBURY ARCHIVE

How to use...
Use on screen or print on A4 paper.



Gather round Archive Photos...
Quick and easy conversation starters
Find useful dates, places and prompts (on 'b' pages)



Try the Memory Prompter...
Pick out prompts to keep the conversation going

Play shopping sounds...
Big shop to corner shop
What sounds can you pick out?



...use the QR code

Tried and tested by NAPA Activity Providers
Advisory group members. Here's what they said...

There is something for everyone - everybody eats, everyone has memories of where their food came from when they were younger. For those living on farms, for those living in cities - the memories are different, but everyone has memories to share.

Use the resource to involve family members. Encourage them to bring in pictures and make a memory book over time.

Useful as a base for special days, spin off activities or a chain of themed activities across a few weeks e.g. Birthday, Christmas, changing seasons.

Figure 3: Digital Resource. Sainsbury Archive, 2021.

Sustainability and Future Directions

Sustaining these kinds of projects presents notable challenges, particularly in relation to funding. While this project benefited from available financial support, securing long-term funding for continuous, process-driven work remains difficult. Much activity in this area is constrained by short-term, project-based funding models, which can limit continuity and impact once resources are exhausted, raising questions about how such initiatives can be embedded within core organisational practice.

Part of this project also included meetings with other business archivists and GLAM sector workers who had carried out work in this area. The project team consulted colleagues at the Museum of Brands, the Royal Mint, History of Advertising Trust and the Marks and Spencer Archives. There was a feeling between all the participants that it would be worthwhile making this kind of work more collaborative within organisations. It was acknowledged that there is a deep need in the sector to move this kind of work from project-based time periods and funding to embedding it within the archive's core

work. Developing networks and sharing resources could help to address common challenges and maximise impact. Sector-wide collaboration and knowledge sharing may offer more sustainable pathways for development. To begin to address this issue the Sainsbury Archive team are in the process of setting up a sector-wide network to share ideas, information about projects and best practice. If you are interested in getting involved, please get in touch with the archive team by email (sainsburyarchive@londonmuseum.org.uk).

Conclusion

The Food for Talk project demonstrates the potential of co-production and co-evaluation to transform archival practice. By centring user experience and embracing collaboration, the Sainsbury Archive has developed resources that are both meaningful and impactful. The project highlights the unique value of business archives in dementia engagement, particularly through their focus on everyday life. It also underscores the importance of iterative, user-centred design in creating accessible resources.

However, sustaining this work will require ongoing investment and a shift towards more embedded approaches. As archives continue to evolve, co-creative methodologies offer a powerful framework for aligning institutional practice with the needs of diverse and changing audiences.

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Business Records Deposited in Scottish Archives in 2024 and 2025

The following details of business records deposited in Scottish archive repositories in 2024 and 2025 have been derived from the annual Accessions to Repositories Survey undertaken by The National Archives. Thanks are owed to colleagues at The National Archives for allowing the data to be previewed.

Accountants

Edinburgh City Archives: Barstow & Millar, chartered accountants, Edinburgh, ledgers, cash books and letterbooks, 1830–1960.

Architects

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives, Old Aberdeen House Branch: Robert Gordon Wilson, architect, drawings for alterations at 1 Golden Square, Aberdeen, 1862–1901; J.A.O. Allan, architect, drawings for schools in Torry, Aberdeen, 1904–34.

Historic Environment Scotland: Thomas Smith, architect, Coatbridge, notebooks and ledgers 1891–1941; Ian Lindsay, architect, copies of sketchbook of Scottish castles and other papers, c.1918–22; Frank Thomson, architect, drawings and notes, 1927–52; Sir Basil Spence, Bonnington & Collins, architects, London, drawings and other material 1957–61; J. & F. Johnston & Partners, architects, Edinburgh, design for Forth Road Bridge opening royal dais, 1964.

Auctioneers and valuers

Edinburgh City Archives: Lyon & Turnbull, auction catalogues, n.d.

Falkirk Archives: Knight, Frank & Utley and Caledonian Marts Ltd, sales book for Carron estates, 1965.

National Library of Scotland, Archives and Manuscript Collections: William Hardie Ltd, fine art consultants and valuers, records, c.1960s–2010s.

Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives: Alexander Sinclair, auctioneer, Wick, livestock and dispenishing sales catalogues, 1907–49.

Builders and construction

Dumfries & Galloway Archives: Joinery business, Terregles Street, Dumfries, records, n.d.

Edinburgh University Library, Heritage Collections: British Aluminium Co Ltd, photographs of the construction of Lochaber water project, 1925–30.

Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre: William Findlay Murray, building contractor, papers, 20th cent; R. & G. Grieve, builders, Bowden, invoice ledgers, 20th cent.

Chemical

Falkirk Archives: Grangemouth chemical plant, memoirs of employee W. Ballantine, 1968–74; Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd, Westquarter factory, Falkirk, booklets, photographs, letter of John Fleming, n.d.

Drinks – brewing and distilling

Glasgow City Archives: Struthers (Greenhead) Brewery, Calton, Glasgow, papers of owning Struthers family incl. photographs and correspondence, 1828–1920.

University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections: Scottish Licensed Trade Association, records, 1880–2016; Archibald Arrol & Sons Ltd, brewers, Alloa, inventory of brewery equipment, 1998; Whyte & Mackay Ltd, Glasgow, newsletters, bottle labels, memorandum, promotional booklet, Jarvis, Halliday & Co (formerly Aylesbury Wine Co), prospectus, memorandum and articles of association, shareholder circulars and arrangement with Whyte & Mackay, 1938–88.

Engineering

Edinburgh University Library, Heritage Collections: Sir John Jackson, civil engineering contractor, private and professional papers, 1887–2006.

Glasgow City Archives: Mechan & Sons, Glasgow, engineers, minutes, accounts, correspondence and contracts, 1900–60.

Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre: George Burns & Sons Ltd, engineers, machine makers and factory architects, Galashiels, mill valuations, n.d.

Hotels

Highland Archives: Bog Roy Inn, Kirkhill, visitors book, 1932–40.

Highland Archives: Skye and Lochalsh Archive Centre: Glenbrittle guest house, Skye, copies of visitors' books and log book, 1912–80.

Insurance

Perth and Kinross Council Archive: General Accident Fire and Life Assurance Corporation, general regulations, 1952.

Iron and steel

Falkirk Archives: Carron Company, iron founder, Falkirk, catalogues and in-house magazine, 1909–208, 1952–62; Falkirk Ironworks, photograph albums, c.1915.

Perth and Kinross Council Archive: Perth Foundry, ledgers, 1954–7.

Manufacturing

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives: Town House Branch: Aberdeen Comb Works, employee notebook detailing manufacturing processes and styles for combs, primarily in London and Sheffield, 1832–5.

Dumfries & Galloway Archives: Gates Rubber Co, micro-V XF belt-routing diagrams, n.d.

Dundee University Archive, Records Management and Museum Services: Dovetail Enterprises, furniture manufacturer, Dundee, photographs, 1921–2018.

Edinburgh City Archives: John Ross & Sons, wire gauze and spring roller blind design brochures, n.d.; J. G. Cox's Glue Factory, Edinburgh, Cox's sparkling gelatine cook book, n.d.; Craig & Rose, paint manufacturers, Edinburgh, records, 1829–2018; George Stewart & Co, manufacturing stationers, Edinburgh, centenary records, 1979.

Edinburgh University Library, Heritage Collections: Remondini Paper Co and Ditta Menegazzi Paper Co, Italy, decorated paper, 1770–1840; Malerba Paper Co, Italy, pattern book of decorated paper, 1848.

Falkirk Archives: John G. Stein & Co, Bonnybridge, manufacturer of industrial refractories, records, 20th cent.

Highland Archives: Lochaber Archive Centre: British Aluminium, glass-plate negative, Fort William smelter, 21st cent

Historic Environment Scotland: Charles Henshaw & Sons Ltd, architectural metalworkers, Edinburgh, ledgers, sketchbooks, designs, photographs and publications, 1904–80.

University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections: Butters' Brothers & Co Ltd, crane manufacturers, catalogues, brochures, photographs and presscuttings, 20th cent.

West Dunbartonshire Council Archive Services: Clydebanks Library: Singer Manufacturing Co Ltd, instruction manual and receipt, 1911, 1961.

University of Stirling Archives: Angels' Share Glass, glassware manufacturers, Bridge of Allan, design notebooks, business papers, publications, photographs, samples and personal papers of founder Tom Young MBE, 1960s–2010s.

Mining and quarrying

Falkirk Archives: James Drysdale & Sons, Kendarishill coal mine, Maddiston, photographs taken by employee P. Easton, c.1960–61.

Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives: Youkhill Flagstone Works, Weydale, brochures, n.d.

Oil, gas and nuclear power

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives, Old Aberdeen House Branch: Forms, receipts, terms and plant reports for Aberdeen gas works incl. bills, installation and hire of equipment and maintenance, 1940–63; BP production facilities specifications and details for exploitation of Forties Oil Field, North Sea, 1972; employee photograph of Piper Alpha oil platform, c.1980.

Aberdeen University, Special Collections Centre: Niki Sakelaropoulos, photographer, photographic negatives of oil and gas industry, 1970s–2004.

Falkirk Archives: Falkirk Gas Corporation, records, c.1890–1917.

Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives: UKAEA, Dounreay, apprentice wage packets, payslip, electrical safety manuals, staff photographs, memoir, engineering notes and guides, patents, pay sheet, conditions of employment, concessions to staff, job advertisement, Haggis magazines, information on Dounreay, informational and promotional publications, 1955–2024.

University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections: Burmah Shareholders Action Group, papers and correspondence, 1970s.

Photographers

Historic Environment Scotland: W Ralston Ltd, photographers, Glasgow, photographs commissioned by Sir William Arrol & Co to document the construction of Forth Road Bridge, c.1960.

Ports and harbours

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives, Old Aberdeen House Branch: Roseheartly Harbour Commissioners, records, n.d.; Macduff, Stonehaven and Banff harbour, records, 1970s–2000s.

Publishing

Dumfries & Galloway Archives: Glencairn Gazette, records, n.d.

Dundee University Archive, Records Management and Museum Services: Canongate, publisher, Edinburgh, publicity, articles, book reviews and prize reports, 2007–15.

Highland Archives: Valentine & Sons and J.B. White Ltd, Dundee, postcards of Inverness-shire, 20th cent

National Library of Scotland, Archives and Manuscript Collections: William Blackwood & Sons, publishers, Edinburgh, manuscript books, 1901–19, 1970; John Murray, publishers, London, book files, c.1880s–1950s; Mariscat Press, publishers, Edinburgh, correspondence and papers, 1982–2017.

Railways

Edinburgh City Archives: LMS/LNER and MacBraynes, holiday guidebooks, 1930s.

Highland Archives: Scottish Association for Public Transport, photograph album on Helmsdale-Wick-Thurso railway line centenary, 1974.

Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives: Highland Railway, engineer's department, Inverness, plans for bridge between Bower and Watten, 1918.

Retail and wholesale trade

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives, Old Aberdeen House Branch: Don Cooperative Society Ltd, records, n.d.

Dundee City Archives: W. M. Ross & Son, wholesale stationers, Dundee, postcard photographs, greeting card notices and correspondence, 1914–51; Alex Smith (Stores) Ltd,

house furnishers, Dundee, greetings cards, presscuttings, flyers, posters, vouchers, catalogues, account book, organisation chart and photographs of shops and staff, 1944–94.

Edinburgh City Archives: Arnold Seftor Ltd, manufacturing furriers, Edinburgh, financial records, photographs and scrapbooks, 1946–2015; R. Anderson & Co, sports warehouse, Edinburgh, artificial stone design catalogues, n.d.

Highland Archives: A. Taylor & Sons, grocers and drapers, Munloch, business records, family letters, genealogy, photographs and bibles, 19th–21st cents; hairdressing business, Queensgate, Inverness, photographs, household bills and ephemera, 1900–60s.

Highland Archives, Lochaber Archive Centre: MacFarlane's shop, Spean Bridge, records, c.1870–1990.

National Library of Scotland, Archives and Manuscript Collection: Morley Jamieson, bookseller, Edinburgh, annotated proofs of 'Ten Poems', 1978.

Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives: H.B. Reid Ltd, chemist, Wick, H.B. Reid's death certificate and obituary, sale agreement for chemist's shop and family photographs, 1924–44; Rescot's, clothing catalogue, n.d.

Perth and Kinross Council Archive: Cairncross of Perth, jewellers and goldsmiths, financial records, sales analysis books, wages book, trophies register, scrapbook, architectural plans, shopfront drawing, gemmology course notes, pearl marketing material, 1922–2007.

Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre: George Hay & Sons, general merchants, Cockburnspath, order book, 1937–8; William Scott, shoemaker, Selkirk, and James Scott, baker, Kelso, notebook, 19th–20th cents.

Stirling Council Archives: James A. Fraser and Marion Campbell, Chemists, Dunblane, 1929–1962; John Allan Butchers Ltd, Stirling, 1947–59.

University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections: H. P. Mantell, African Lakes Corporation, letters, information, memorabilia, photographs and presscuttings, 1914–45; John Barker, Dickins & Jones and Harrods, department stores, London, catalogue, leaflets, photograph, drawings and labels, 20th cent.

Shipping and shipbuilding

Edinburgh University Library, Heritage Collections: Christian Salvesen Ltd, photographs, 20th cent.

Glasgow City Archives: Lyle Shipping Co Ltd, annual reports and other papers, 1907–17.

Scottish Maritime Museum: Ailsa Shipbuilding & Engineering Co Ltd, assorted photographs, 20th cent; A. & J. Inglis Ltd, plans for Sphene, 1920, and Ballylumford, 1954; Blythswood Shipbuilding Company, marketing drawings, c. 1955–62; Brown Brothers & Co., Contract Work Folder, 1974; Cunard Line, menu for MV Britannic, 1951, and menu and passenger booklets for RMS Queen Elizabeth, 1962; Fairfield Shipbuilding & Engineering Company, apprenticeship naval architect textbooks and lecture notes, 1950–5; Methil Docks, Ledger of Arrivals and Departures, 1965–72; William Denny & Brothers Ltd, photographs, 20th cent and blueprints for J1286-7, 1943–45; William Fife & Sons, postcards and telegrams, c.1930; plus many other accessions featuring objects and publications.

University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections: James Lamont & Co Ltd, shipbuilders, Greenock, Lamont's dry dock vessel docking register, 1898–1928; Scott & Sons (Bowling) Ltd, shipbuilders, Bowling, financial and historical records, 20th cent.; Anchor Line Ltd, shipping company, Glasgow, company newspaper, 1938.

West Dunbartonshire Council Archive Services: Clydebank Library: John Brown & Co and others, Titan crane, papers, 1934–2011.

West Dunbartonshire Council Archive Services: Dumbarton Library: William Denny & Co, shipbuilders, photographs and papers, 1924–49; Ferguson Brothers, shipbuilders, Port Glasgow, papers relating to SS Sir Walter Scott, 1953–2009.

Solicitors

Dumfries & Galloway Archives: Primrose & Gordon, solicitors, Dumfries, records, n.d.

Falkirk Archives: H.G. & H.G.S. Dickson, writers to the signet, Edinburgh, papers relating to the purchase of lands for Forth & Clyde Canal Co's railway to Grangemouth, c.1784–1890s; Marshall, Hunter & Dean, solicitors, Falkirk, legal case ledgers and legal documents, 1890–1930; Marshall & Hunter, Falkirk, papers of George N McLachlan, ironfounder, Denny, concerning income tax, finances, estate and correspondence, 20th cent.

Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre: P. & J. Stormonth Darling, solicitors, Kelso, ledger and photograph album, 19–20th cents.

Stirling Council Archives: Hill & Robb Ltd, Solicitors, Stirling 1800–1823

Textile merchants and manufacturers

Dundee University Archive, Records Management and Museum Services: Sharp family, jute merchants, owners of John Sharp & Sons, Dundee, papers and photographs, 1852–1985.

Heriot-Watt University Museum and Archive: Donald Brothers, furnishing fabric manufacturer, Dundee, fabric samples and publicity leaflets, c.1930s, 1956.

Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre: Sanderson & Murray, fell-mongers and wool-brokers, Galashiels, papers, n.d.; D. Ballantyne & Co Ltd, Peebles, pattern books, 1962–4; T. Craig Brown & Co, yarn spinners, Selkirk, staff registers and lists, schedule of quantities and papers concerning the provision of sanitary and rest rooms and the Scottish Woollen Trade Association, 19th–20th cents; Gibson & Lumgair (Scotland) Ltd, woollen manufacturers, Selkirk, pay sheets, 1882–1902; George Hogg & Son, hosier, Hawick, advertising board, 20th cent.; Innes Henderson & Co Ltd, knitwear company, Hawick, memorandum and articles of association, 1900s.

University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections: A. F. Stoddard & Co Ltd, design staff sketches, apprentice designer notebook and marketing brochure, c.1977–84.

Theatres

Dundee University Archive, Records Management and Museum Services: Laskie Theatre collection, programmes and correspondence, 1940s–90s.

East Dunbartonshire Archives: Bearsden: Milngavie Players, amateur theatre company, scrapbook of photographs, programmes and ephemera, 1962–92.

East Dunbartonshire Archives Service, Kirkintilloch: Kirkintilloch Players, amateur theatre company, photographs, recordings, centenary booklet, scrapbooks and posters, 1964–2024.

Edinburgh City Archives: Capital Theatres programmes, posters, sound and video recordings of performances and photographs of actors and performances, 1950–2020; King's Theatre, Edinburgh Festival Theatre and Edinburgh Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh, programmes, 1971–2024.

Falkirk Archives: Hippodrome cinema, Bo'Ness, leaflets, 2022–4.

Nucleus: The Nuclear and Caithness Archives: Wick Players, minutes, financial reports, newsletters, scripts, photographs, plans, programmes, recordings, property papers, correspondence, accounts, annual reports, 1949–2024.

Perth and Kinross Council Archive: Perth Theatre, programme, 20th cent.

Strathclyde University Archives: Strathclyde Theatre Group, Edinburgh Festival Fringe award and exhibition visitors' book, 1974–2024.

University of Glasgow Archives and Special Collections: Strathclyde Theatre Group, photographs, posters, programmes and scripts, 1970s–90s, 2024; Tron Theatre, Glasgow, programmes, brochures, newsletters, presscuttings and development papers, 1979–2022; King's Theatre, Glasgow, programmes, 1923–24, 1934; 7:84 Theatre Company, postcards, c.1980s.

Trade unions

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives, Old Aberdeen House Branch: Convener Court and Incorporated Trades of Old Aberdeen, court book 1636–87, Hammermen Trade members' book 1699–1899, Flesher Trade cash book 1816–73.

Transport and Haulage

Falkirk Archives: Cowan & Co, carriers and haulage contractors, handbook for motor drivers, n.d.

Glasgow City Archives: William Park & Sons, coachbuilders, minute book, architect's drawing, photographs and correspondence, 1892–1946.

West Dunbartonshire Council Archive Services, Dumbarton Library: United Kingdom Society of Coachbuilders, minute book, 1907–48.

Utilities

Stirling Council Archives: Buchlyvie Water Company records, 1869–1933.

Miscellaneous

Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Archives, Old Aberdeen House Branch: Aberdeen Steam Laundry Co Ltd, minute books, 1878–1951.

Edinburgh City Archives: Merchant Company of Edinburgh, royal charter, memorandum, 250th anniversary catalogue, souvenir programmes, book on the company, historical notes and concert programme, 1681–2025.

Highland Archives: John Muir Trust, business records and photographs, c.1980s–2010s.

Historic Environment Scotland: Charles Brand, demolition contractor, Dundee, photograph albums and drawings of demolished Scottish country houses and presscuttings, 1907–98.

Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre: Ariel Motor Cycle Co Ltd, Birmingham, purchase record card of Jedburgh chief constable, 1946.

Strathclyde University Archives: A. A. Brazier & Co, asbestos company, papers of director, Michael John Brazier, including reports, photographs and publications relating to the asbestos health debate from the asbestos industry's perspective, 1950s–80s.

Report of the Business Archives Surveying Officer for Scotland, 2024 to 2026

Rachael Rennert¹

Background

The UK has a long tradition of undertaking national, regional and sectoral surveys of the historical records of business.² However, Scotland is unique in having had a dedicated surveying officer for business records since 1977, when the post was established by the Business Archives Council of Scotland and supported by a grant-in-aid from the then Scottish Records Office. Building on the work of earlier regional surveys led by the National Register of Archives for Scotland, this post has been crucial to the preservation and development of Scottish business archives for nearly 50 years.

There have been 18 surveying officers in all and between them they have witnessed a period of profound economic change in Scotland. From the decline of shipbuilding and textile manufacturing in the 1980s, to the 2008 recession and crisis in the oil and gas industry, the surveying officer has been on hand to rescue, preserve and promote the industrial and business heritage of Scotland. Over the years, surveys have ranged from listing a few volumes to surveying hundreds of metres of records that are now major corporate archives of internationally-renowned businesses. The existence of a surveying officer in Scotland has made a huge contribution to the status of the business archives sector and helped to ensure that Scotland has a wealth of business and business-related archives.

The role continued until 2010 when it fell into abeyance for four years. In 2014 the surveying officer role was revived by a consortium of partners, led by the Ballast Trust, a charity which specialises in the rescue, sorting and cataloguing of business archives. Today the post is funded by the Lind Foundation, supported by donations from businesses and, from 2021 to 2026, a funding partnership with the National Records of Scotland.

The current business archives surveying officer is Rachael Rennert who can be contacted³ by anyone aware of any business records at risk in Scotland and anyone requiring advice

¹ Rachael Rennert is the current Business Archives Surveying Officer for Scotland.

² Lesley Richmond and Alison Turton, 'Business Archive Surveying in the UK: An Exploration of Past Achievement', *Archives* (2022) 57:2, pp.105-39.

³ Contact e-mail: surveyingofficer@glasgow.ac.uk.

on the care and management of business archives. Examples of her work can be found on the surveying officer's website.⁴

Annual Report for the Year Ending 31 March 2025

2024/25 was a whirlwind of a year for the Business Archives Surveying Officer with lots of ground covered in terms of surveying, engagement, funding bids, profile-raising, recruitment and relationship-building. Approximately 83 businesses, organisations, trusts and charities were contacted by the Surveying Officer resulting in 18 survey visits; an overall response rate of over 21 per cent. This built on last year's success and continues to show an improvement against the more usual 10-15 per cent response rate to past approaches.

Included in this year's proactive surveying was the roll out of the second regional archive survey, which this time featured Angus. More than 20 businesses were contacted in September 2024 including Glamis Castle, Angus Soft Fruits, Strathmore Woollen Company and Saddler's of Forfar. However, the response rate was low, despite repeated approaches, and unfortunately no in-person surveys were arranged as a result of the project. Separately, a thematic survey approaching companies and organisations within the Scottish forestry and timber trade was developed and rolled out in January and February 2025. Although initial engagement was slow, support provided by the Chief Executive of Confor, the UK forestry body, helped increase interactions. Currently, three surveys are planned for the summer including the Scottish Timber Trade Association, Donaldson Group and Scottish Woodlands, and there is potential sectoral interest in heritage and story-telling regarding the Scottish forestry and timber industry. Exemplars have been sourced from Sweden in order to share good practice and provide inspiration and it will be interesting to see how the project develops. Further surveying work is needed in the short-term, with long-term plans still to be confirmed, but sponsorship from the sector may be forthcoming.

A key focus for September and October was a consortium application to the Archives Revealed fund. The Surveying Officer led the work to bring together a consortium partnership that applied for funding to create a two-year project 'Supporting Scotland's Sporting Heritage'. This involved a fortnightly meeting with the consortium partners, writing the application and gathering evidence, statistics, and supporting documents. The final application was robust and accompanied by letters of support, but unfortunately the application was not successful and the consortium partners agreed to explore other funding options. The Surveyor Officer has contacted the Scotland team at

⁴ See <<https://surveyingofficer.co.uk/testimonies/>> accessed 14 May 2026.

the National Heritage Lottery Fund and it is hoped that a follow-up application will be submitted in summer 2025.

Throughout the year cataloguing of the archive of the Scottish Women's Institute (SWI) continued and its monthly heritage meetings were attended. In November it was confirmed that the SWI's heritage initiative would be funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The grant included funding for the Surveying Officer to continue cataloguing the collection for one day a week for a year (c.£9,600 income). The Surveying Officer also held five volunteer sessions at the Ballast Trust for the SWI over the summer. These sessions were designed to allow volunteers to gain experience of working with the SWI archive, as well as sharing their own specialist subject knowledge for incorporation in the archive. The Surveying Officer was meanwhile contacted by a student from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, keen to research the SWI archive held at the Ballast Trust and readily facilitated this access.

The Surveying Officer presented at an Edinburgh 900 event organised by Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce to celebrate the city's anniversary and its businesses in November 2024. The presentation was well-received, and led to two potential surveys, of the archives of a chartered accountant firm and a drinks company.

Continuing to develop an understanding of the renewables landscape in terms of record-keeping was another ongoing objective over the last 12 months. The Surveying Officer developed her WordPress and website skills by creating a new project page which provided details of the second phase of the 'Capturing the Energy' project. In collaboration with the University of Aberdeen, this phase will focus on developing our understanding of recordkeeping within the renewables sector. The Surveying Officer will be working on the project twice a month until December 2025 when the outcomes will be reviewed.

Recruitment has played a significant part in this year's work with the Surveying Officer meeting with the head of The Grand Lodge of Scotland at the start of January to discuss the organisation's recruitment plans. This resulted in the Surveying Officer and Director of the Ballast Trust revising a job description for the Grand Lodge of Scotland as part of a long-running plan to appoint a Heritage and Collection Manager for the library, archive and museum. The Surveying Officer subsequently oversaw the job advertising, short-listing of candidates and interview planning. Interviews are to be held in early April. The Surveying Officer will be one of three persons on the interview panel.

In addition, following a Scottish Canals survey in 2024, a meeting was held in 2025 to discuss the taking forward of a recommendation to recruit a records manager to the organisation and tackle storage capacity issues. Recruitment was confirmed in March 2025 and the role is due to begin in May 2025, with the Surveying Officer leading on job advertising.

In December the Surveying Officer interviewed for a second phase of cataloguing at Goodfellow & Steven. Two students currently studying the postgraduate course were offered the position and undertook five weeks' cataloguing onsite in Broughty Ferry. The students were well-supported by the business at all times – a fantastic example of teamwork – and the project provided very relevant practical experience alongside their studies. It is likely, following completion of the cataloguing, that the collection will be transferred to University of Dundee Archive Services, although this is still to be finalised.

During spring 2025 the Surveying Officer was busy establishing the programme for a BACS summer conference to be held in June 2025 at the Scotch Whisky Experience in Edinburgh. A good range of speakers from across the drinks, brand and marketing industries have now been confirmed. The event will also include an evening reception launch for the BACS's new journal and the BACS annual general meeting.

At the end of the year the Surveying Officer took bookings for surveys into July, including surveys of the archives of a children's charity, a forestry group, a health food retailer and a business gateway enterprise. The forestry and timber survey will conclude and another regional survey will be launched, as well as a new thematic survey, either exploring independent Scottish schools, with support from the Schools Archives and Records Association (SARA), or building on the drinks industry conference to be held in June.

A personal highlight of the year for the Surveying Officer, Rachael Rennert, was being awarded UK Record Keeper of the Year by The Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland) at their annual conference in Birmingham. It was an honour to be recognised by peers and the award highlighted the important role of the Scottish Surveying Officer to a wider audience.

Annual Report for the Year Ending 31 March 2026

2025/26 has been an exciting and varied year full of surveys, projects, funding applications and a significant amount of recruitment. A total of 25 surveys were undertaken over the course of the year, ranging from businesses never previously surveyed, such as Donaldson Group, timber merchants, to membership organisations

like the Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs, and national performing companies such as the National Theatre of Scotland. The organisations and businesses surveyed varied in age and purpose and therefore had a variety of record-keeping challenges and priorities. Several of them, such as STEP, a business enterprise gateway in Stirling, although less than 50 years old, were keen to mark various anniversaries and ensure that they were developing their archives.

A key output and piece of work in 2025/26 was the successful application to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) for a new project, *Supporting Scotland's Sporting Heritage*. Awarded £182,829 by the NHLF, the project aims to preserve sporting archives and make them more accessible whilst deepening public understanding of Scotland's rich sporting history. Along with our project partners, Sporting Heritage, National Library of Scotland, the Surveying Officer and Ballast Trust are delighted to be able to progress our vision for a surveying and engagement project that will prevent the loss of sporting records of significant historical value, identify collections at risk, find appropriate archival homes for them and raise the national profile of Scotland's sporting heritage. It is a fantastic result and it will be exciting to see what the project achieves over the next two years.

Meanwhile, although the launch of a schools' survey was postponed until 2026/27, the Surveying Officer has begun the next regional survey which will focus on businesses operating within Perth & Kinross. The development of this project has involved close collaboration with the Perth & Kinross archive team to develop a list of over 60 businesses, charities and membership organisations, for which no known information exists concerning their historical records. There has been a super response from businesses in the area so far, with summer surveys already arranged for a variety of record owners including a housebuilder, solicitor, agricultural regulator and structural engineer.

Several deposits have been made during the year including that of the business records of John G. Stein & Co Ltd, refractory brick manufacturer, Bonnybridge. Following an earlier survey, the Surveying Officer was able to oversee the transfer of the collection to Falkirk Archives, supporting the physical transfer and liaising with both parties.

A variety of consultancy work was undertaken throughout the year, including the provision of five days of consultancy to Scottish Canals to support the listing of unidentified records. This followed the appointment of a new records manager earlier in the year, which the Surveying Officer had both recommended and helped to recruit. The Surveying Officer has been involved in several other recruitment projects, all following

initial surveys. This has included the creation of Heritage & Collections Manager at the Grand Lodge of Scotland to manage their library, archive and museum collections, and the establishment of a Corporate Archivist post at International Beverage. A different model has also been explored with the archive of agricultural and seed merchants Galloway & MacLeod, which was surveyed in winter 2024. The business has now supported an intern, with the Ballast Trust's support, to help with the cataloguing of their archive prior to it being transferred to an archive repository. This has both provided an archive student with significant practical experience and prepared the collection for transfer.

Throughout the year the Surveying Officer continued the cataloguing of the Scottish Women's Institute (SWI) archive, as well as attending and hosting a variety of engagement events involving the archive and the organisation's stories. This included providing ongoing support and guidance to the Archiving from Home group which is continuing to catalogue *Scottish Home & Country* magazine. Other sessions have included hosting an SWI team day at the Ballast Trust as an introduction to the SWI archive, as well as supporting and leading a volunteer study day for those working on the Archive from Home project. Regular guidance and support was also provided for those still volunteering onsite at the Ballast Trust, including working on the craft textiles cataloguing and the research of past presidents. As the Surveying Officer's work on the project enters its last eight months, support will focus on the long-term future and preservation of the archive and on ensuring all cataloguing priorities are addressed.

Looking ahead the Surveying Officer will be finishing off the Perth & Kinross regional project, as well as looking ahead to the launch of an independent schools' survey. Time and support will be given to the new sporting heritage project as well as records-at-risk assistance, as and when required. The last year has shown that this frontline sectoral support saving vulnerable collections is needed more than ever.

Crisis Management and Records-at-risk

The Surveying Officer continues to be a Scottish representative on The National Archive's Crisis Management Team for business archives which meets on a quarterly basis. There have been several records-at-risk cases during the two-year reporting period as a result of liquidations, premises closures and other changes of circumstance.

In 2024/25, there were three successful cases of records at risk which were safely deposited. These were the archives of Craig & Rose, paint manufacturers, Edinburgh, which were surveyed in 2023 and transferred to Edinburgh City Archive in September

2024. The records of Charles Henshaw & Sons, architectural metalworkers, Edinburgh, were surveyed following the company's liquidation at the request of Historic Environment Scotland. A successful transfer of the records was completed, following engagement with the insolvency practitioner, and resulted in a superb business collection being saved for the nation. And finally, the records of the John Muir Trust were transferred to Highland Archives. Although not deemed at risk at the time of the survey it became clear that, due to storage pressures and changing staff, the records might become at risk in the future. With the support and help of the charity, a successful transfer of the entire archive was completed, totalling over 70 boxes of records charting a variety of eras and subject areas across its history.

2025/26 saw a significant records at risk case with the closure and liquidation of Ballantine Castings in Bo'Ness in the summer of 2025. Established in 1822, the business was Scotland's second-last remaining iron foundry and had a long story to tell regarding the manufacture of iron in Scotland. This was a complex and protracted case aimed at saving both the business archive and hundreds of patterns that remained onsite under the care of insolvency practitioners. With the help and support of key partners, including the Historic Environment Scotland, National Museums Scotland and Falkirk Archives, the Surveying Officer submitted an application to The National Archives Records-at-Risk fund to support the immediate rescue and salvage of both the archive and a sample of the patterns. A full award was made although sadly, due to complicating factors, the patterns could not be salvaged. However, the Surveying Officer was delighted that a significant business archive was rescued including drawings, plans, catalogues, quotation books, ledgers, purchases ledgers, invoice books and project files. The Surveying Officer also helped to rescue the archive of the training school of Air Service Training (Ltd), Perth, which was transferred to Perth & Kinross Archives in May 2025.

Ongoing cases include the records of Finnart Oil Terminal, pending deposit, and a small number of records transferred from Grangemouth Oil Refinery. These have been temporarily stored at the Ballast Trust ahead of a future move to Falkirk Archives. Discussions were also underway with the owner of Christies (Fochabers) Ltd, garden nursery, one of Scotland's ten oldest businesses, established in 1820 which was sold in 2025. It is hoped that a survey will be undertaken in the coming months to safeguard any surviving historical records.

The closure of the Centre for Contemporary Art in Glasgow at the start of 2026 also led to the Surveying Officer to undertake an urgent survey of its archive and liaise with insolvency practitioners to secure the collection in a complex landscape. As of May 2026

discussions are continuing and it is hoped the collection will be saved in the coming months through partnership working with Creative Scotland and Glasgow Life.

Record Surveys, Advice and Consultancy Work, 2024-26

- Air Service Training (AST) Engineering, est. 1931, engineering, Perth
- ALLIANCE, part of Health Care and Social Alliance Scotland, charity, Scotland
- Arbikie Distillery, est. 2013, distilling, Arbroath
- Ayrshire Railway Preservation Group, est. 1974, railway charity (holders of Andrew Barclay records, est. 1840)
- Ballantine Castings, est. 1822, iron foundry, Bo'Ness
- Blairdrummond Safari Park, est. 1970, wildlife conservation, Stirling
- Centre for Contemporary Art, est. 1992, arts centre, Glasgow
- Charles Henshaw & Sons, est. 1904, building facade specialist, Edinburgh
- Confederation of Forest Industries (Confor), est. 2004, membership body, Edinburgh
- Demarco Archive, est. 2005, arts trust, Edinburgh
- Donaldson Group (James Donaldson & Sons), est. 1860, timber merchant, Glenrothes
- Finnart Oil Terminal, est. 1950s, oil and gas, Helensburgh
- Galloway & MacLeod, est. 1921, agricultural merchant, Stonehouse
- Glasgow Film Theatre, est. 1974, creative arts/charity, Glasgow
- GMAC Film, est. 1982, film charity, Glasgow
- Grandison & Son, est. 1886, plasterer, Peebles
- Grangemouth Oil Refinery, est. 1924, oil and gas, Grangemouth.
- Hamilton Estate, Lennoxlove House, est. 1643, Haddington
- Hanover Healthfoods, est. 1904, food retailer, Edinburgh
- Ian MacLeod Distillers Ltd (formerly Leonard Russell whisky broker), est. 1933, distiller, Broxburn
- Institute of Chartered Foresters, est. 1925, membership body, Edinburgh
- John G. Stein & Sons, est. 1888, brick manufacturer, Bonnybridge
- Kibble, est. 1840, young persons' care charity, Paisley
- Mackays, est. 1939, jam and marmalade manufacturer, Arbroath
- Motherwell Football Club, est. 1886, sports club, Craighleith, Edinburgh
- National Theatre of Scotland, est. 2006, theatre, Glasgow
- New Glasgow Society, est. 1965, charity / community group, Glasgow
- Ninja Kiwi, est. 2006, videogaming, Dundee
- Paddle Scotland (formerly Scottish Canoe Association), est. 1939, sports organisation, Grandtully

- Perth Theatre, est. 1900, arts centre, Perth
- Pitlochry Festival Theatre, est. 1951, creative arts/charity, Pitlochry
- Prestwick Scotland, est. 1930s, airport, Prestwick
- Scottish Association of Young Farmers Club, est. 1938, membership organisation, Edinburgh
- Scottish Bowlers Fellowship, est. 1954, membership organisation, Glasgow
- Scottish Canals, est. 2012, non-departmental public body, Falkirk
- Scottish Community Drama Association, est. 1926, charity / membership organisation, Stirling
- Scottish Decorators' Federation, est. 1857, professional body, Stirling
- Scottish Professional Football League. est. 1890, association body, Glasgow
- Scottish Timber Trade Association, est. 1900s, membership organisation, Alexandria
- Scottish Women's Institute, est. 1917, membership organisation, Edinburgh
- Scottish Woodland, est. 1967, forestry management, Edinburgh
- STEP, est. 1983, business gateway services, Stirling
- Strathallan School, est. 1913, independent school, Perthshire
- The Denholm Group, est. 1866, shipping agent, Glasgow
- The Young Women's Movement, est. 1924, charity, Edinburgh
- Venture Scotland, est. 1984, charity, Edinburgh
- Walker's Shortbread, est. 1898, baker, Aberlour

Business and Industrial History: Aims, Scope and Submission Requirements

Aims and Scope

This journal accepts submissions in two broad forms: these are ‘notes or perspectives’, short pieces which may summarise a recent development or discuss an archival collection, and traditional academic research-based articles. Notes and perspective pieces should be a maximum of 3,000 words including references, while articles will be in the range of 6-8,000 words including references. For anything substantially over 8,000 words, we suggest contacting the editorial board *before* submission.

This journal is primarily for historians and archive professionals, and thus *requires* its pieces to be steeped in archival research. In other words, any piece of research should discuss the nature of, or heavily use, historical archival holdings. These need not be physical – digital archive use is encouraged – but we expect an engagement with history via primarily qualitative methods, and thus will **not** accept pieces that use **only** quantitative data gleaned from published material. While we recognise not all potential authors will be working in history departments or as professional archivists, we wish to stress that this is not an economics or management science journal. Thus, while some blend of quantitative and qualitative methods and sources may be permissible, again we strongly suggest discussing your piece with the editors prior to submission if you feel it does not fall neatly into the categories above.

This journal accepts all pieces which pertain to or discuss the history or archives of industries, businesses or sectors in any geographic or time period, so long as such pieces meet the outlines above. We accept that recent periods, including the global financial crisis of 2008, are commonly treated as history, and as such would accept pieces on this nature – though again we stress the need for the usage of archive-based research, which typically preclude research that is exclusively on very recent issues. Thus, while a narrative that runs until the 2010s or later is potentially acceptable, there should be significant space and effort afforded to a study which utilises archival holdings and thus is likely to begin in earlier periods. As always, however, the editors are happy to field discussions on prospective submissions where the boundaries between history and contemporary studies are blurred.

Submission Requirements

Submissions should be prepared double-spaced in Times New Roman typeface, with the font sized at 12, and left justified. A single space should follow full-stops within

paragraphs. Paragraphs of text should be separated by an extra space rather than indented. Sub-sections and sub-headings are permitted, but these should be titled (e.g. 'From Poverty to Progress, 1960-80') and **not** numbered (e.g. 'Section 1.1.2: 1960-80').

This journal uses British English throughout, and the Oxford OSCOLA referencing style. OSCOLA, commonly used in law papers, is a variation of the Oxford which style uses in-text footnotes with a reference list at the end of the document. It is our view that this is the best way to reference when using archival sources.

For more specific information on style, please see our website, which also gives more concrete examples of the style for footnotes and bibliographic references.

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A Journal of Archival Research

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