

## Fieldwork: Project Update #1

Fieldwork is a Ballast Trust project funded by The National Archives as part of their Covid-19 Recovery Fund and its principal aim is to deliver a Scotland-wide survey of business records held in private hands. The project is due to finish in December 2021 with the publication of a report on the key findings and the dissemination of survey data to relevant archive repositories and organisations to support the development of local collecting strategies and to help inform broader archive sector planning.

The project is being delivered by the Business Archives Surveying Officer – Chris Cassells and a Business Archive Cataloguer – Katie McDonald from the University of Glasgow who has been seconded to the project. An advisory panel of individuals and organisations with an interest in Scottish business history and records has been established to provide advice and insight to support the project and had their first meeting in July to review initial findings of the first phase of the project.

### Phase 1: Reviewing Surveying Data

In the initial phase of the project, the Surveying Officer and Business Archive Cataloguer have reviewed survey data that has been produced by successive Surveying Officers since 1977 while also attempting to identify historically significant businesses (and businesses particularly vulnerable to the economic effects of the pandemic) that have not previously had their archives surveyed.

A total of 596 businesses have had their records surveyed since 1977. Of those, 266 collections have been deposited (whole or in part) in a public repository. Glasgow City Archives, the University of Glasgow, and National Records of Scotland have taken the majority of these records but a total of 30 repositories hold collections deposited by a Surveying Officer. The location of 61 are unknown and we know that at least 3 have been destroyed. The remainder are, as far as know, still in the hands of the business, though it is likely that a significant number of those have been lost due to business closures.

These collections come from businesses engaged in manufacturing, retail, engineering, food and drink production, financial services, legal practice, cooperatives, oil and gas, and everything else besides. Our challenge lies in tracking down those collections that are still in private hands (and in many cases have not been surveyed in several decades) while identifying new business to contact, ensuring that we capture the full range of existing and emerging businesses currently active in Scotland. Below is a breakdown of sectors that covers around half of the surveyed businesses:

Sector	No. of businesses
Manufacturing	78
Mining and Quarrying	5
Agriculture, Farming and Fishing	2
Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	1
Construction	9
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	40
Transportation and storage	2
Accommodation and food service activities	4

Information and communication	4
Financial and insurance activities	7
Real estate activities	1
Professional, scientific and technical activities	21
Education	4
Arts, entertainment and recreation	5
Other Service Activities	53

There are clearly sectors where surveying has been more successful over the years. Some other initial findings are:

- Records of professional services e.g. solicitors, cultural organisations, schools, and religious organisations tend to be more traceable, compared to e.g. manufacturing and construction sectors. This may be due to better retention of records linked to businesses with a significant administrative function/department. Impact: good retention of records which reflect middle class occupations; poor retention of records which capture the work of the working class.
- Independent schools have been particularly good at retaining and exploiting their records as tools in marketing and alumni relations.
- Obvious biases are emerging within previous surveying, for example numerous churches have been surveyed but no surveys conducted of places of worship for other religions.
- Changes in ownership of a company present a significant risk to records

## **Phase 2**

The next phase of the project will involve contacting those businesses identified in phase 1 as a priority for surveying and, where possible, arranging for new or updated surveys to be carried out and providing advice on the long-term management of collections to the businesses we are in contact with.