

## The Ballast Trust

Since 1988 the Ballast Trust has helped to preserve important records of business and industry in Scotland by providing a rescue, sorting and cataloguing service for business archives with an emphasis on the technical records of industry.

The Trust has worked in partnership with businesses and archive services to secure the long-term preservation of over 60 archive collections. These collections are frequently voluminous and often amount to several tons of material. The Trust has the facilities to process such large collections and the expertise and knowledge required to understand and catalogue technical records of shipbuilding, railway, other engineering and construction industries.

One of the first and largest collections the Trust processed were the records of Scott Lithgow Ltd, a famous shipbuilding company based on the River Clyde at Port Glasgow and Greenock. William Lind, the founder of the Trust, was extensively involved in the effort and negotiations to rescue and list the huge volume of technical and commercial papers. The task was of such a scale that it was agreed with Scott Lithgow that all the surviving records of the constituent companies should be centralised onsite in the Joiners Shop at the Kingston Yard and the Trust would operate from there.

In total over 100 tons of records were processed on site from 1988 to 1992. Material covering all aspects of the business of shipbuilding was found in offices, attics, warehouses, loft spaces and even a water tower (which contained wage slips and boxes of nineteenth century correspondence). All this was brought to the central sorting and processing area, where it was appraised and catalogued.

During processing the records continued to have business value and Scott Lithgow benefited from the organisation and management of the collection to allow them to answer legal and historical enquiries and settle administrative issues. The records are now held by Glasgow University Archive Services where they serve a variety of academic, enthusiast, and personal research purposes being one of the fullest collections from Scottish shipbuilding. It covers a period of over 120 years, spanning over 150 linear metres of storage and treasures include correspondence from a Confederate paddle steamer captain about blockade running during the American Civil War, nineteenth century photograph albums and a series of yard manager diaries.

The National Archives of Scotland, who have worked with the Trust on many projects, gratefully acknowledged at the time that it had “benefited greatly from the Trust’s activities founded on Bill Lind’s philanthropic and intensely personal concern that business records should be saved from destruction and that selections should be arranged and listed prior to deposit in a suitable archive repository. If he and the trust had not undertaken this work to the extent that they have done in recent years, much that has been saved might have been lost or at best neglected for many years.”

Today the Trust continues to believe business collections are essential in understanding Scotland’s rich industrial and economic past and that technical records provide important contextual information to aid in the understanding of these collections. We can support businesses and archive services to make the most of their business collections and improve their understanding of technical records through guidance, advice and our processing service based on many years of experience in handling such material.



[www.ballasttrust.org.uk](http://www.ballasttrust.org.uk)

