

Business Archives Special



Where ever you find people making decisions, trading or managing you'll find records, and businesses are no exception. One of the [Tasglann's](#) tasks is to work with businesses and trade

bodies across the islands to help them with their archives and records.

Some of the help and advice we've provided include:

Undertaking box listing and surveying of records to identify what is held

Identifying records that should be kept permanently as historical records

Identifying destruction dates for non-historical records

Advising on boxing, preservation and handling of records

Business records hold the documentary memory of an organisation. For a business, this can include evidence of decisions, previous products made and services offered, project files and marketing materials. These can be reused by the businesses so they can learn from their successes and mistakes, for product development and for

marketing.

For researchers, business records are key to understanding the economic development of the island or a particular industry. Its financial records and relationships with suppliers and customers are invaluable in this instance. For genealogists, employee records (where they survive) can add further insight to their relative's life or add context into understanding their relative's profession.

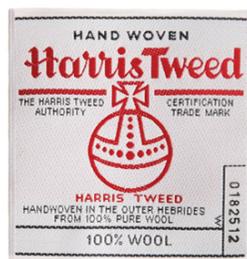
Public access to business archives

There is no statutory right of access to business records for researchers. They are commercial assets held privately, yet they hold wide potential for researchers. There is a balance to be struck in encouraging businesses to open their archives, either now or in the distant future, and providing controlled access to researchers to particular documents of interest. The [Tasglann](#) want to help bridge this gap!

Case Studies

As an illustration, some case studies of the [Tasglann](#) working with businesses follow.

Harris Tweed Authority



Some records of the HTA are held by Highland Archives in Inverness but the majority of its records are held in the Stornoway office. Stored in an attic space, rough box lists existed as to what was held but it was still difficult

for the Authority to find information quickly and difficult for researchers to access.

The [Tasglann](#) spent several days box listing these records in greater detail. It uncovered the minutes of the Authority, weavers records, records relating to closed mills and a multitude of trademark papers and advertising.

It is hoped a more detailed catalogue can be created in the future, but for the moment these lists make it much easier for the Authority to locate material to help them in their own activities and to assist researchers.

Co-Chomunn na Pairc

As one of the first Co-Chomunn, and as a still active company, the

records are stored at Ravenspoint, Kershader. Unsorted, but not unloved, Donna and David spent two days going through the records and sorting them into piles relating to the activities of the Co-Chomunn.



This showed that interesting records relating to its knitting company and salmon hatchery had survived along with administrative records of the Co-Chomunn itself such as minutes and membership records.

[Continued overleaf](#)

Case studies continued

There is no argument that these are of both local and national importance in relation to the Co-Chomunn movement of the 1970s onwards. Duplicate material or records that held little if any useful information were destroyed following consultation with members of the Co-Chomunn. The archive's bulk was reduced by over half! Now that the wood could be seen for the trees, a summary listing was created that will be the basis for a future cataloguing project that can possibly be undertaken by the Co-Chomunn in partnership with the **Tasglann** and local Comann Eachdraidh.

Estates

It is easy to forget that the land estates of the islands are essentially businesses. Be they private sporting estates or estates with a wider economic development remit such as Stòras Uibhist, all generate records! These range from game books and photographs through to development plans, infrastructure project files and croft files.

The **Tasglann** have worked with several of the estates to identify records of historical importance and undertake listing work. With one estate, this concentrated on their modern records. We identified all the different types of records that the estate produces and created a draft retention schedule that identifies the record types, how long they can be kept for before

they can be destroyed taking into account legal and operational reasons, and most importantly which ones should be kept permanently as archives. By identifying historical records at such an early stage, it is hoped that they will then survive so that in the future they can be opened up to researchers.

Estate maps are working documents even though many can date back into the 19th or earlier centuries. As they are frequently handled they can often be found in a poor state of repair. We are working with one estate to identify better ways of storing these records, better handling procedures and ultimately into looking at ways in which they can be conserved, digitised and made more widely available.

Old Shops of Stornoway

On the theme of business, the **Tasglann** recently held an event with Stornoway Historical Society in Stornoway library celebrating four of the old shops of the town. A packed library sat enthralled as Norrie Macgregor, Malcolm Macdonald and Sandy Matheson took us through the history of several of the shops that no longer are with us in their own inimitable style. The exhibition boards will be on display for the next few months in the library foyer so do drop by.

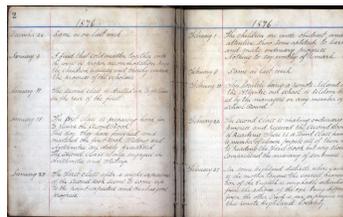
What have you got?



If you are an active business and would like some help and advice on your records please contact us.

Similarly, if you are aware of any collections of records relating to businesses that are no longer trading but you think should be preserved, let us know and we can work together to help ensure their preservation and potential enjoyment by the wider community.

Other news



St Kilda and Mingulay Log books

Through a partnership with the National Records of Scotland (formerly known as the National Archives of Scotland) the log books for Mingulay and St Kilda schools have been conserved and digitised. These are available at www.cne-siar.gov.uk/archives/collections.asp as flip through books for all to enjoy. It is hoped these can now be more fully exploited as an educational

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resources for pupils in the Western Isles and further afield.

Logo

You may have noticed on the previous newsletter that we have a new logo! We're really pleased with the end result and thanks go to Rhona Macleod who designed it for us. The elegant T draws on the copperplate handwriting found in many archives, its swirl embracing the entire Western Isles. The modern typeface of the project title reflects more modern records. The colour derives from the leather bindings of older archive volumes. We'd love to know your opinion!