

UNLOCKING THE BARTHOLOMEW ARCHIVE - *Extract from CAIRT July 2007*

The National Library of Scotland (NLS) is delighted to announce that the John R Murray Charitable Trust has offered funding of £220,000 over three years (2007-2010) to enable some of the Bartholomew Archive to become more accessible.

The remarkable archive of the Bartholomew mapmaking firm came to NLS in instalments over many years, but particularly from 1985 when control passed to HarperCollins (part of News International) from Reader's Digest which had bought the firm in 1980. The largest part of the collection was handed over in 1995 when the Edinburgh operation moved to Bishopbriggs in Glasgow.

This material is in several categories, some purchased, some donated or deposited:

1. The Manuscript Archive (donated)
2. The Printing Record (donated)
3. Glass plate negatives (donated)
4. Copperplates (purchased)
5. The Printing Archive (donated)
6. The Firm's Library (purchased)
7. The John Bartholomew Collection - formerly known as the Bartholomew Family Collection – antiquarian atlases (donated)
8. Miscellaneous (donated)

More information about the history of the firm and the contents of the Archive is in a leaflet produced by NLS, which is also on NLS website at www.nls.uk/collections/maps/collections/bartholomew_archive.pdf (PDF: 4 pages; 1.46 Mb)

The Archive is large, occupying well over 300 metres of shelf space and some 200 drawers, plus specialist storage for glass plate negatives and copperplates. Until recently the Library has not had resources to tackle the conservation, sorting and listing of the collection, apart from volunteer work by former Bartholomew staff, including John Bartholomew, and some part-time work by a retired member of NLS staff, and a modest amount of conservation by NLS staff.

This generous donation will be used in two ways:

- to make the Printing Record accessible by conserving and listing it
- to prepare a detailed estimate and plan for tackling the entire Archive, so that further funding bids may be made. A senior curator will be appointed for 8 months to survey the Archive and to prepare the plan.

Printing Record after conservation ► During conservation, the volumes are disbound, pages are flattened, cleaned and repaired and re-filed separately in two or three boxes, which are easier to handle.

THE PRINTING RECORD contains specimens of items printed by the firm, with a note of the date of printing and the number of copies produced. These specimens are stuck into 177 albums from 1877 to the 1960s-70s, plus boxes to the 1980s. Over the past few years NLS conservation staff have been able to repair and box about 3-4 volumes a year and at current rates it will take a further 25 years to complete the conservation. This new funding will enable two preservation staff to be employed for 3 years, which should allow most, if not all of the volumes to be repaired.

In addition a curatorial assistant will be appointed, also for 3 years, to prepare a list of the contents. Listing the Printing Record is the key to the whole Archive, as it will enable other material to be identified and dated more easily.



▲ *Printing Record volumes before conservation. Volumes in this condition cannot be used without damage.*



Why is this collection so important? For over a hundred years, Bartholomew was one of the world's leading cartographers, internationally renowned for the quality of their work and their innovation.

The various editions of *The Times Atlas of the World* are accepted as models of the cartographic art. Contour layer colouring (where graded colours are applied between contours to indicate height) was introduced in the late 1870s, and the firm refined colour shades so successfully that this method of depicting relief has been adopted worldwide. Thus the Archive is a unique record of cartographic development over more than 100 years.

But, particularly before World War 1, Bartholomew was a jobbing printer, so did work for many publishers and other purposes.

The Archive has unexpected examples, ranging from tickets for a Gladstone election address in the Borders, private and company stationery, advertisements for beer and whisky, thread and carpet factories. There are railway posters and railway stationery - how many of us remember the notice on old trains 'These racks are provided for light articles only - they must not be used for heavy luggage'? Who would have thought that Bartholomew printed huge numbers of strips of these?

Thus the Archive casts light on social history and contributes information about many other book and map publishers. Illustrated here are a few items from the Archive to highlight the unusual range of items. Over the next few issues of *Cairt*, we hope to feature other material from the collection.

Diana Webster



▲ The *Printing Record* contains large sheets with multiple illustrations ready to fold and bind into book format. These portraits were produced to illustrate a book which has yet to be identified.

Railway poster for a steamer to the Isle of Man 1887 ►



◀ 520 copies of this comic poster for Philp's hotels were printed on 5 July 1882.



▲ 6480 copies of this cover for *Standard Life* were printed on 25 April 1887. The oriental symbolism and no doubt the bright pink colour were presumably intended to appeal to this market, but the cultural messages appear to be mixed, with cherry blossom and an allusion to a willow pattern!

J & R Clark & Co of Paisley's thread factory is advertised in this poster from the 1870s-80s. ►

