

BOOK REVIEW

Patricia Hudson, *The West Riding wool textile industry: a catalogue of business records from the sixteenth to the twentieth century*. Edington, Wiltshire, Pasold Research Fund Ltd, 1975. xviii + 560 p. £10.50. ISBN 0-903859-04-1

by B. S. Baldwin

There are some eighteen entries on trade with Australia in Miss Hudson's elaborate name and place index (one of two indexes to her catalogue). The work's Australian relevance is considerable but it is as a model—a possibly unique catalogue in depth of the records of a particular industry—that it will find a place in archives printed reference sections. The project was initiated by Professor E. M. Sigsworth of the University of York's Economic and Social History Department, and research topics in these disciplines are hinted at in abundance in both the subject index and in Miss Hudson's introduction. Many of the subjects suggested could be studied using other available source material. The catalogue is an eye-opener as far as the variety of divergent information on themes in social and economic history that any similar collection of business records could give is concerned. The interest is far in excess of just wool. In one instance, where a millowner was apparently also a director of a railway company, ten pages are devoted to listing letters and other papers on railways.

In articles in *Business Archives*, No. 37, December 1972 and National Register of Archives, West Riding *Bulletin* for 1972, written while the work was in preparation, the compiler has set out her aims and methodology. She sees the work rightly as a pioneer attempt to locate relevant primary source material "for a defined industrial and geographical field" and give some idea of its exact nature and utility. The catalogue is confined to records in public institutions. Arrangement is alphabetical by name of firm (under the name by which it was known longest). Where records are held by more than one institution the holdings of each are given in turn. Listing is in general by main types of records—ledgers, order books, correspondence, etc.—with much variation according to contents and with the exception that small deposits are listed chronologically. Where archives are stored in boxes listing is by box. Where volumes or bundles have a title this is given—in inverted commas if it does not correspond to the contents. Each major list is headed not only by the full name, address and function of the concern, and its establishment date where possible, but by a concise bibliography of printed references. The "Summary of Contents" at the commencement of each list is a good idea. Some idea of total linear quantity also would have been useful. Where detailed lists have already been made by the repositories concerned the compiler has accepted these and obtained permission to reproduce them. One of the fascinations of the book for an archivist is to compare the listing techniques of different institutions.

Where lists existed but were only rudimentary, Miss Hudson's concern for logical arrangement has led her in several cases to jettison series numbers already in use and substitute her own. This is one respect

in which her model should not be followed. From what she says in her introduction she evidently intended to give the repository's numbers as well in such cases. However, in the records of Jeremiah Ambler & Sons Ltd and John Reddihough Ltd, for instance, both held by the Brotherton Library of the University of Leeds, they are not given. Scholars who cite the groups in question will have to make it very clear in their footnotes to whose numeration they refer. Where numeration is already in use by a repository, on the shelves and in duplicated hand-lists, as in the examples checked, it should be given prominence. There may be a justification for a new paper-arrangement for catalogue purposes but it would probably be better not to use new members at all—simply to give the repository's numbers in parenthesis after each item.

From an Australian viewpoint one could have wished for even more exhaustive signalling of the Australian connections of some firms. Besides those indexed, two that had such dealings were Ambler & Sons and Reddihough Ltd—the two firms mentioned above (*vide* P. Mander-Jones, *ed. Manuscripts in the British Isles relating to Australia . . .*, p. 544).

The records of Benjamin Gott & Sons, Burley and Bean Ing Mills, chiefly held by the University of Leeds, are comparatively well known through various published research. The fairly extensive introductory bibliography to this section of the catalogue includes R. Offor's "The Papers of Benjamin Gott" and Alexander Yewdall's masterly study, "The Bean Ing Mill Notebook". A particularly useful feature in this section is that where transcriptions made by Offor are available their existence is noted against the documents concerned. It would have been consistent to draw attention likewise, in the entry for the Bean Ing notebook (on p. 189), to Yewdall's sizeable transcript from that item (Thoresby Society *Transactions*, V. 32, 1931, pp. 287-307).

The pages, of Guardbridge fine book wove, are not sewn on tapes but seem sturdily cased nevertheless. The covering is of royal blue buckram, lettered in gold on the spine. The typeface is Monotype Baskerville.

Pasold Research Fund Ltd, responsible for the publication, was established a few years ago by Mr Eric Pasold, a retired textile entrepreneur. A number of reprints of important works on textile developments have been published, and the Fund has sponsored other activities to further textile history.

In each December issue of *Business Archives* there appears a list of "Business Records Deposited", with a section devoted to "Textiles and Clothing". An interesting bonus for holders of Miss Hudson's catalogue is that this annual listing will effectually provide brief continuing supplements to her work.