



TfL Corporate Archives Subject Guides

Subject Guide No 5: Records relating to London transport held by other bodies

Introduction

Transport in the London area has a long and varied history and there are key groups of records outside of those created by London Transport and its predecessor or subsidiary companies. These records give details of transport in London which may not be available in the records created by the company. The following is by no means a complete guide to related sources but seeks to highlight some of the key bodies and surviving papers which can be used in studying aspects of transport history.

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Contractors and Consultants

There are many engineering, architectural, design, financial and other external bodies that have advised London Transport and its predecessor bodies. The surviving records of such bodies may be located by contacting [the National Register of Archives](#). See also the Royal Commission on Historic Manuscripts' publication: 'Guides to Sources for British History 9, Records of British Business and Industry 1760-1914 Metal Processing and Engineering' (London HMSO 1994) ISBN 0 11 440232 9.

Local Authority Records

Of particular interest at the [London Metropolitan Archives](#) are the records of London wide authorities, namely the London County Council and the Greater London Council, both of whom had responsibilities for transport. Borough and/or county record offices in the London area should also be referred to for committees with a transport responsibility. Often the Planning Department for an authority will hold valuable information. Local Authorities prior to 1933 in particular were responsible for some public transport provision, especially tramways.

[London Transport Museum](#)

The Museum holds the most comprehensive collection of objects, publications and ephemera documenting the history and development of London's transport, principally from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Sources found in the Museum Library include published and unpublished material, and around 100 transport-related journal titles. Library collections of particular interest are: staff magazines; the Frank Pick collection of personal papers; and the extensive Reinohl Collection of tickets and other surface transport ephemera. Other collections available to researchers include posters, photographs, maps and guides.

[The National Archives](#)

The National Archives (TNA) for England and Wales holds records directly related to London Transport (see 'The British Transport Commission'). It also holds government records of transport related bodies, such as the Ministry of Transport and the British Transport Police.

The TNA also holds surviving records from the main line railway companies with which London Transport and its predecessor companies were associated. A fact sheet on railway records is available from the TNA.

Online Archival Databases

The following databases are hosted by The National Archives on their website, and can be found under 'Search the Archives':

- [The National Register of Archives \(NRA\)](#)

All institutions in Britain holding archives are invited to inform the NRA of records that they hold. This Register is now computerised and searches can be made for Personal Papers and Corporate Bodies, either by writing to, or personally visiting, the NRA via the National Archives. Alternatively searches can be made by visiting the NRA web-site over the Internet. The Register shows where the material is held, an indication of quantity, and can assist with access details for how researchers can consult the records.

The NRA has traditionally encouraged institutions to send them copies of completed catalogues, which can be consulted, at their London offices. However, not all repositories have computerised systems so some repositories will continue to send copies of completed catalogues to the NRA, which will be searchable only at the individual record office or in person at the NRA. Please note that the NRA does not hold any archives itself, it acts solely as a directory service.

- [The ARCHON Directory](#)

The ARCHON Directory includes addresses and contact details for record repositories in the United Kingdom and also for institutions elsewhere in the world which have substantial collections of manuscripts noted under the indexes to the National Register of Archives.

- [Access to Archives \(A2A\)](#)

The A2A site allows you to search and browse for information about [archives](#) across detailed catalogues from around 400 [repositories](#) in England and Wales. As with the NRA, the A2A site acts purely as a directory service. You will need to contact the individual repository itself to investigate any information.

- [AIM 25](#)

AIM25 is a major project to provide electronic access to collection level descriptions of the archives of over one hundred higher education institutions, learned societies, cultural organisations and livery companies within the greater London area. AIM25 is a major project to provide electronic access to collection level descriptions of the archives of over one hundred higher education institutions, learned societies, cultural organisations and livery companies within the greater London area.

Parliamentary Records

Transport is closely involved with various parliamentary processes – before the creation of Companies House early companies that wished to be registered had to do so through Parliament. Parliamentary powers are required for permission to build railway lines, extensions or to carry out major improvements. Plans were/are submitted and are approved through normal parliamentary process. Records relating to the approval of transport acts are to be found in the [Parliamentary Archives](#). In addition MPs for the London area often brought up transport issues in parliament and transcripts of debates can be found in Hansard.

Personal Papers

Conducting a search at the [The National Register of Archives](#) (NRA) for surviving personal papers can be of great benefit. Many individuals have exerted influence in the course of London Transport's history, and searching for the personal archives of individuals may yield information, even though not indexed under 'London Transport'.

The [Bristol Record Office](#), for example, holds the papers of George White, an early tramways pioneer who was heavily involved in London United Tramways before returning to Bristol Tramways. During his time in London he corresponded with Charles Tyson Yerkes, the founder of the Underground Electric Railway Ltd, as well as others involved in the development of transport in London. In particular there is correspondence with the London Local Authorities and engineering companies.

Another example, are the personal papers of the engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The National Archives' class 'RAIL149' is a special collection of I K Brunel papers, whilst his additional personal papers are held at Bristol University Library. These contain references to the construction of the Thames Tunnel, now part of the East London Line. In addition, Bristol University Library holds the papers of Henry Marc Brunel and Sir Marc Isambard Brunel – also prominent engineers.

Frank Pick (1878-1941) was the first Chief Executive of London Transport in 1933. He had a significant personal influence on the development of the public transport system in London. He was particularly interested in art, architecture and design as applied to public transport. In addition to his official business records and papers held in the TfL Corporate Archives, the Library at the [London Transport Museum](#) holds a collection of his personal papers containing letters he received, his own writings and personal scrapbooks.

Professional Institutions

There are numerous professional institutions which have connections to London's transport history. Of particular interest are the Engineering Institutions such as the [Institution of Civil Engineers](#) founded in 1818; [Institution of Electrical Engineers](#) founded in 1871; [Institution of Mechanical Engineers](#) (including Institution of Automobile Engineers from 1905 and the Institution of Locomotive Engineers from 1911); [Institution of Mechanical Incorporated Engineers](#) founded in 1988 (upon the amalgamation of the Institute of Technical Engineers in Mechanical Engineering; and the Institution of Mechanical & General Technician Engineers founded in 1864. These institutions hold a range of material including journals, papers and lectures related to the institution and related subjects. They also include a number of membership records. All enquiries should be made in writing and access is by appointment only. Most of these institutions have web sites providing details of their Libraries and Archives.

Special Collections

Several institutions have special collections which may relate to London transport. [Newham Archives and Local Studies Library](#), for example, hold the 'Historic Vehicle Collection' (HCVC) and the 'Burroughs Collection' – both comprise publications, photographs and some original records relating to trams and buses (incorporating some London General Omnibus Company Ltd staff records).

Locating special collections can be difficult – searches can be carried out at the NRA, as well as requesting advice from archivists, curators and librarians on your particular area of research will prove beneficial.

Trade Union Sources

The [Modern Records Centre](#) at the University of Warwick actively collects Trade Union archives. It has the largest single collection of Trade Union and related papers in the UK and also has a significant research library. Its holdings include the papers created by the two national unions closely related with London Transport:

- The Transport and General Workers Union from c1922
- The Transport Salaried Staffs' Association from c1900

Plus archives such as those of the:

- National Union of Railwaymen
- International Transport Worker's Federation
- National Cycle Archive
- And a wide variety of Personal Papers

The [Trades Union Congress \(TUC\) Library](#) is based at London Metropolitan University. It is the key collection of Trade Union publications in the UK, covering dates c1868 - 1993. It includes material at UK and international levels relating to: - pressure groups, campaign movements, working conditions, industrial relations, and political parties. There are also key collections of periodicals and newspaper cuttings. Many of these sources relate to London Transport. There is also a small collection of archives previously held by the TUC Museum Collection, including the Majorie Nicholson Collection.