



**Records of Alexander Stephen &
Sons Ltd, shipbuilders and engineers,
Linthouse, Govan, Glasgow, Scotland**

Cataloguing Information

Note: This page describes the Finding Aid or Catalogue Entry, rather than the material itself.

**-//glasgow university archive services :: finding
aids//document gb-0248-ugd-004 20010515//en**

Records of Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd, shipbuilders and engineers, Linthouse, Govan, Glasgow, Scotland

Publication

Glasgow University Archive Services, 14 February 2002

Creation

Created from an EAD template in MS Word by the running of Visual Basic macros by Andrew Semple, Administration Assistant, on 30 August 2001

Print formatted copy created from the EAD by XSLT and XSL-FO Stylesheets by [John Harrison](#) of [the University of Liverpool](#) .

Language Usage

English

Revisions

- * Updated by Jenny Cooknell , Assistant Archivist, 18 October 1999
- * Updated by Lesley Richmond , Acting Director, 3 March 2000
- * 03 June 2005 converted from EAD 1.0 to 2002 by v1to02.xsl (sy2003-10-15).

Records of Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd, shipbuilders and engineers, Linthouse, Govan, Glasgow, Scotland, 1824-1976

Reference	GB 248 UGD/004
Creator	Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd (shipbuilders and engineers: 1946-1968: Linthouse, Glasgow, Scotland)
Physical Description	6.6 metres There are no physical characteristics that affect the use of this material

Scope and Content

- * Day books 1824-1851
- * Letterbooks 1856-1932
- * Family papers 1857-1886
- * Diaries 1859-1899
- * Photographs 1873-1960
- * Materials 1898-1976
- * Presscuttings and press releases 1883-1965
- * Minute books 1892-1932
- * General agreements for contracts 1899-1938
- * Registers of members 1900-1925
- * Plans 1903-1974
- * Private cash books 1917-1922
- * Tender books 1918-1968
- * Company magazine 1919-1954
- * Annual reports and statements of accounts 1946-52

Administrative / Biographical History

The first Alexander Stephen began shipbuilding at Burghead on the Moray Firth, Scotland, in about 1750. In 1828, the concern became known as Alexander Stephen & Sons. Alexander Stephen, the third generation of Stephens to own the business, built in Aberdeen and Arbroath, Angus, Scotland, and then moved the centre of his production to Dundee in 1842. In 1850 one half of the business was transferred to the Clyde at Kelvinhaugh, Glasgow, Scotland. Then, in 1870, the firm moved to its final home at Linthouse, Govan, Glasgow. Up to 1871 the firm had specialised in sailing vessels, but from this date they concentrated on cargo-passenger vessels. Alexander's two sons, Alexander Edward Stephen (1832-1899) and Frederic John Stephen (1863-1932), joined the firm in 1887. A E Stephen and F J Stephen were assigned to different departments, maintaining life-long connections with, respectively, the engineering department and the shipbuilding department.

When Alexander (Snr) retired, his sons became controlling partners, their uncle, John Stephen, remaining chairman. F J Stephen ran the shipbuilding department, took over general administrative responsibilities and the role of salesman, negotiating orders for the company with shipowners. Due to his brother's uncertain health, F J Stephen became the most actively involved of the two brothers. Other partners in the firm were Robert McMaster, manager of the shipyard, Robert Kelly, manager in the engine works and Alexander Scott, the company secretary.

In 1900, F J Stephen took the firm into a limited liability form, as Alexander Stephen & Son Ltd. But family members remained major share holders and the brothers, the

first managing directors, each held roughly one third of the voting stock. At this point the company began to concentrate on building higher class cargo liners and passenger vessels. Like other shipbuilders, Stephens became involved in war production, between 1914 and 1918 , building 16 torpedo boat destroyers and undertaking repairs, as well as constructing wooden fuselages and wing sections for aircraft in association with G & J Weir Ltd of Cathcart, Glasgow, and even artificial feet and ankles for the limbless hospital at Erskine, Scotland. The Linthouse yard expanded during the war, particularly the engine and boilerwork section and the repair yard. They were amongst the first to employ women to make up the shortfall caused by the rush to volunteer. The Stephens appear to have been conscientious employers, setting up a welfare department, large works canteen, facilities for sport and recreation, including Coila Park - ten acres of land at Shieldhall - and the Stephen Apprentices Boys Club.

In 1919 , the company was still reaping the benefits of wartime prosperity and F J Stephen and the Linthouse board approved the sale of 102,000 ordinary shares, previously held firmly in the family, to Lord Inchcape, which gave the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Co a controlling 51.2 per cent share in Stephens. At the time this seemed to make sense since Stephens & Sons had been building vessels for Inchcape's companies for some time and shipbuilders were, at the time, confident that the post-war years would see a boom in their industry. In 1920 , with the same confidence in the future, the company entered into a consortium of shipbuilders to buy the Steel Company of Scotland in order to ensure a reliable supply of steel. But, in the post 1921 slump, both of these ventures proved extremely problematic for Alexander Stephens & Sons Ltd . In 1932 , when the sixth generation of Stephens, represented by Alexander Murray Stephen (1892-1974) took over as Chairman, there was no work in the yard, a controlling interest in the company was owned personally by Lord Inchcape, investment in the Steel Company of Scotland had turned sour and the company was, at that point, owed £160,000 by Anchor Lines for *Caledonia* , a ship built in 1925 .

Murray Stephen had undergone a thorough training in all aspects of the business. He had a technical interest in welding and under his influence, the company pioneered extensive use of welding on the river Clyde. In many respects, his greatest contribution was in the work he undertook representing the needs of the industry as a whole. By 1937 , he was President of the Clyde Shipbuilders Association , and from 1938-1939 he was President of the Shipbuilders' Employers Federation . From 1941-1948 , he was President of the Shipbuilding Conference and during the war, he served on the Ministry of Transport and Shipbuilding Committee, for which he received a knighthood in 1946. In 1946 , he was appointed to the newly set up Government watchdog committee, the Shipbuilding Advisory Committee.

Murray Stephen's involvement in the needs of the whole industry grew out of the specific needs of his own company as he took it on in 1932 . In his own management of Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd he attempted to look to the future in a technical sense, setting up two apprentice training schools, one in the engineering department and one in the shipyard. He upgraded and modernised equipment and introduced and encouraged the use of prefabrication. In terms of management he maintained a system of departmental organisation, working co-operatively and generally democratically with his five co-directors. The firm became a public limited company in 1946 . He attempted, not altogether successfully, to address the issues of employment and labour, arguing that what would protect jobs most effectively was a long-term strategy to build efficiently

and to a high quality. But in spite of his public service and work on government committees, he retained a sturdy independence and a family interest, that led him to resist movements towards nationalisation or more general co-operation. When Sir Murray Stephen retired in 1965 the company was already in some financial trouble. The shipbuilding assets and activities of Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd were transferred to Upper Clyde Shipbuilders (UCS) in 1968 although the engineering and ship repairing side of the business remained in family hands until 1976 .

Arrangement

This material is arranged into series, which consist of numbers of items related by format and/or function. Within series, the items are generally arranged chronologically

Conditions Governing Access

Open

Conditions Governing Use

Applications for permission to quote should be sent to the University Archivist

Reproduction subject to usual conditions: educational use & condition of documents

Appraisal Information

This material has been appraised in line with normal procedures

Acquisition Information

Gift : A M M Stephen : Balfron, Stirlingshire

Loan : 24 January 1992 : ACCN182* (Additional Deposit)

Custodial History

Unknown

Accruals

None expected

Other Finding Aid

Digital file level list available in searchroom.

Manual file level list available at the National Register of Archives in Edinburgh (NRA(S)1625) and London (NRA10830)

Alternative Form Available

No known copies

Related Material

GB 248 UGD 006 Papers of Alexander Murray Stephen

GB 248 UGD 149 Miscellaneous ship and engine photographs

GB 248 UGD 349 and GB 248 UCS 003 Records of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders Ltd, Linthouse Division

GB 248 UGD 356 and GB 248 UCS 004 Records of Simons-Lobnitz Ltd

Material in other repositories:

GB 064 Ledgers, journals, estimate books and plans 1852-1954 (National Maritime Museum, Manuscripts Section)

Publication note

Slaven, A and Checkland, S (eds.), *Dictionary of Scottish Business Biography 1860-1960* vol 1 (1986, Aberdeen)

Other Descriptive Data

This material is original

Access Points

Subjects

Shipbuilding industry

Personal Names

Stephen Alexander Murray 1892-1974 Sir Knight Chairman of Alexander Stephen and Sons Ltd

Corporate Names

Alexander Stephen & Sons, shipbuilders, repairers and marine engine builders 1828 - 1900

Alexander Stephen & Sons Ltd 1900 - 1946

Alexander Stephen & Sons plc 1946 - 1968

Simons-Lobnitz Ltd 1959 - 1964

Upper Clyde Shipbuilders Ltd 1968 - 1972

Geographical Names

Linthouse (Glasgow, Scotland)
