

CASE STUDY: Records at Risk

Peter Greig Co.

Linen Manufacturer, Kirkcaldy

Peter Greig & Co. was established in 1825 in Kirkcaldy in Fife, and was known to be the last linen manufacturer operating in Scotland, where it had remained in the same premises at Victoria Linen Works throughout its time operating. In 1911, it was bought by Angus Robertson, the son of Sir William Robertson who had overseen the Hay Robertson factory in Dunfermline, and remained a family-run business over three generations. Generations of the local population were employed at the works, with it forming one of the fifteen mills operating in Kirkcaldy during the height of the town's manufacturing boom. The company closed its doors and operations for the final time in 2021.

The Surveying Officer was originally in touch with the company as soon as it became apparent that the business was closing. Although contact was made with senior staff, access to the records never materialised. However, months passed and it wasn't until a successive Surveying Officer picked up the baton that a breakthrough took place, and contact was made with a member of the family. Following this, a survey of the records was able to be arranged at the family home where the archive was being temporarily held.

The surviving historical records of Peter Greig & Co. covered, for the majority, the twentieth century segment of the company's history. Documents reflecting the key operations of the business included minute books, correspondence files, share certificate books, and Register of Member books. The collection also contained a number of financial records such as cost books, private ledgers, and reports and accounts.

Records also evidenced manufacturing activities through a number of large pattern books containing samples of fabric, order books, as well as boxes of sample bunches. Newspaper cuttings, certificates and a centenary leaflet showed additional insights into the workings of the company. There was a photograph album containing black and white images showing the working interior of the factory, and a number of site plans recording the layout of the premises during the 19th century.

Following a survey of these records in-situ, the Surveying Officer was able to put the record owners in contact with Fife Archives, who were delighted to be able to offer a home to such an important local and national business collection. The entire collection was transferred in May 2023.

When Peter Greig & Co went into liquidation I was worried that their archive had been lost. I am grateful to the Business Archives Surveying Officer, for tracking the records down, identifying the records worth permanent preservation and for helping to persuade the owner to donate the records to OnFife Archives. Thanks again for your help with these records - they are a significant addition to the records we have for the linen industry.

Andrew Dowsey
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