
Richard Garrett and Sons Ltd Archives

INTRODUCTION

The financial, technical and production records of Garretts of Leiston are preserved in the Ipswich branch of the Suffolk Record Office under the reference HC 30. Deposited there in stages from 1973 onwards, they were purchased by Suffolk County Council in 1982 with grant-aid from the Fund for the Preservation of Scientific Material. At the same date, the historic buildings and artefacts at the Town Works site in Leiston passed into the care of the Long Shop Museum.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The Garrett family have lived in Suffolk since the 14th century, but the firm traces its origin to the arrival of Richard Garrett in Leiston in 1778, when he acquired a blacksmith's shop and forge. His grandson, Richard Garrett III, was in charge of the business by 1836 and promoted a rapid expansion, especially of the manufacture of agricultural machinery for export. The firm became a limited company in 1897. At its peak, there was a workforce of over 2,000 and in 1913 a new works adjoining Leiston railway station was built to increase capacity. Despite a serious fire in 1913, the old Town Works site continued in use.

Repudiation of foreign debts by the Russian government in 1919 precipitated a financial crisis and forced Garretts into a merger with eleven other firms, the consortium trading as 'Agricultural and General Engineers' with a headquarters at Aldwych House, London. Attempts to diversify from traditional steam traction and agricultural engineering into electric (later motor) vehicles and machine tools were only partially successful; Agricultural and General Engineers went into Receivership in 1932 and the Garrett business was then purchased by Beyer, Peacock and Co Ltd of Gorton, Manchester. Further changes of ownership took place in 1976 and 1980; part of the Station Works remained active until 1985 when final closure took place. The Town Works site was partially redeveloped for housing, the remainder forming the Long Shop Museum; the Station Works site is an industrial estate.

THE RECORDS

Although many of the corporate and administrative records are lost (probably by accidental flooding during World War II) there is a wide range of material concerning the manufacture, marketing and sale of products, especially steam engines and agricultural machines. Of particular importance are the order books, specifications and drawings - many thousands of which survive. Some losses have occurred, for example due to the 1913 Pattern Shop fire and the removal of order records for the 1928-1931 period by the Receivers.

SOURCES FOR STEAM ENGINES

The manufacturing records are extensively cross-referenced by engine number and order number. Searches are almost always successful when the enquirer can supply the engine number. However, in the absence of this information the name of the original customer, approximate date of purchase or the size and type of the engine, may be sufficient to trace an order.

The principal sources are:

Engine reference notebooks, 1864-1907	HC 30/C5
Engine and machine registers, 1866-1951	HC 30/C8
Engine registers, 1860-1928	HC 30/C9
Specifications for engines and wagons, 1905-1936	HC 30/C13-18
Engine testing records, 1908-1930	HC 30/C34
General order books, 1895-1907	HC 30/B1
Home machinery order books, 1908-1928	HC 30/B2
Export machinery order books, 1912-1928	HC 30/B4

SOURCES FOR THRESHERS AND OTHER AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY

Engine and machine registers, 1866-1951	HC 30/C8
Thresher building sheets, 1899-1920	HC 30/C11
Specifications, agricultural machines and sleeping vans, 1913-1955	HC 30/C22, C31
General order books, 1895-1907	HC 30/B1
Home machinery order books, 1908-1928	HC 30/B2
Export machinery order books, 1912-1928	HC 30/B4
Thresher Department order books, 1920-1933	HC 30/B6

SOURCES FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Specifications, nd and c.1930	HC 30/C8-9; HC 30/C31/2
Order books 1919-1931	HC 30/B6/3-4

LOCATING DRAWINGS

The drawing reference system used by Garretts was basically numerical. Prefix letters were used, occasionally to indicate the type of product (e.g. 'WB' for wagon bodies), but more usually to denote the shelf or bundle where a particular drawing was kept.

There are numerical registers of drawings, mainly for engines and electric vehicles, from 1900 to 1957 (Ref. HC 30/C2, C3) but easier means of reference are:

Specifications - for standard drawings of a TYPE of product; see above.

Engine or machine registers - for drawings applicable to an INDIVIDUAL engine or machine; see above.

Contemporary card index by products [incomplete] - HC 30/C7/18

Once drawing numbers are established, all surviving drawings are traceable through the card index prepared by Suffolk Record Office HC 30/C1/1

It is well worth bearing in mind that only about 75% of the drawings have survived

OTHER TECHNICAL RECORDS

Useful sources include:

Files of standard details ('SD') drawings of small components, 1908-1955 [NB HC 30/C7/1-3 very few of the standard drawings series have survived]

Registers of castings and forgings, nd –1932

HC 30/C4/11-14

PHOTOGRAPHS AND PUBLICITY

Four photograph albums and four boxes of loose prints, generally covering the period 1900-1930, are available though most are undated and uncaptioned (HC 30/D3). At present there is no detailed index to these pictures.

Printed catalogues of products (including some by firms other than Garretts) generally cover the period 1859-c.1950 (HC 30/D1) and there is a quantity of posters and other promotional material.

CATALOGUES OF THE RECORDS

A descriptive catalogue, prepared in 1995, is available at the Record Office and at the Long Shop Museum. Copies have also been supplied to the National Register of Archives and the Science Museum in London.

PRINTED SOURCES

The following works, all by R A Whitehead, deal extensively with the history of the firm and its products:

Made by Garretts: an introduction to the Products of the Leiston Works, (1994)

Garretts of Leiston, (1973)

Garrett 200: a bicentenary history of Garretts of Leiston 1778-1978, (1978)

Garrett Diesel Tractors, (1994)

Garrett Wagons, part 1: Pioneers and Overtypes, (1994)

Garrett Wagons, part 2: Undertypes, (1994)

Garrett Wagons, part 3: Electrics and Motors, (1996)

Garrett Tractors and Ploughing Engines, (1996)

An account of the Long Shop Museum is in the same author's *The beloved coast and the Suffolk sandlings* (Terence Dalton, 1991), pp 159-172. The Record Office also holds *The Long Shop, Richard Garrett Works, Leiston: a report for the Suffolk Preservation Society ...* by H T Cadbury-Brown and John Metcalfe, architects, (London, 1977).

The Ipswich Record Office holds a brief family history by V B Redstone, *The Suffolk Garretts* (privately published, 1916). Obituaries and similar references to members of the family can be found in the annual *Suffolk County Handbook* and other sources at the Record Office.

OTHER RELATED RECORDS AT IPSWICH RECORD OFFICE

The Garrett family dominated the economic and social life of Leiston in the 19th and 20th centuries and most collections of records relating to the town will contain information about them. These include the archives of the ecclesiastical parish (FC 130) and the Urban District Council (EF 5). The Local Studies collection holds sale catalogues, electoral registers, Ordnance Survey plans, trade directories and photographs.

ELIZABETH GARRETT ANDERSON AND MILLICENT GARRETT FAWCETT

There are no family records at Ipswich Record Office. The starting point for further research is:

The Fawcett Library
London Guildhall University
133 Whitechapel High Street
LONDON E17

The Record Office holds the following printed works:

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson by Louise Garrett Anderson (1939)
Elizabeth Garret Anderson by J Mantor (1965)
What I remember by MG Fawcett (1924)
Millicent Garrett Fawcett by R Strachey (1931)

THE LONG SHOP MUSEUM

The Long Shop was built by the firm in 1853 as one of the world's first flow-line production assembly halls. It now houses a collection of the firm's products, in the site where they were made. The museum is open from the beginning of April to the end of October, Monday to Saturday 10:00 - 5:00, Sunday 11:00 - 5:00.

The Long Shop Museum
Main Street
Leiston
Suffolk
IP16 4EJ

Tel: 01728 832189

PERSONAL RESEARCH

The records are available for research during normal office hours (see below). Researchers must hold a Record Office Reader's Ticket, issued free of charge on production of an official proof of identity and address.

Advance notice of a visit, though not essential, is helpful.

RESEARCH SERVICE

Limited specific searches, for example to verify one engine number, will be carried out free of charge. More lengthy searches are carried out in accordance with the Suffolk Record Office Research Service - charges available on request.

COPIES OF RECORDS AND DRAWINGS

Subject to size and condition of the originals, photocopies can be supplied at a charge per sheet (A4 size or A3 size). Postage and packing is extra.

Dyeline prints of drawings can be made to order.

Bury Record Office, 77 Raingate Street, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 2AR

Telephone: 01284 741212

Email: bury.ro@suffolk.gov.uk

Ipswich Record Office, Gatacre Road, Ipswich, IP1 2LQ

Telephone: 01473 584541

Fax: 01473 584533

Email: ipswich.ro@suffolk.gov.uk

Lowestoft Record Office, Clapham Road, Lowestoft, NR32 1DR

Telephone: 01502 405357

Fax: 01502 405350

Email: lowestoft.ro@suffolk.gov.uk

Suffolk Record Office web site: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/sro>

Suffolk Heritage Direct website: <http://www.suffolkheritagedirect.org.uk>