

# MARTINS BANK ARCHIVE

www.martinsbank.co.uk

## *A landmark year...*

24<sup>TH</sup> October 2017 is the eighty-fifth anniversary of the opening of Martins Bank's lavish Head Office Building at 4, Water Street, Liverpool, 2. Although this wonderful statement of 1930s opulence has had mixed fortunes in the twenty-first Century, she stands today as a permanent reminder to Martins Bank's defiance in maintaining a Head Office far from the financial hubbub of the City of London. Designed by Herbert J Rowse, the building is a positive orgy of sea creatures – some real, some mythical – carved or painted in just about every corner of the breath-taking 1930s Banking Hall. No wonder then that Head Office has been in demand as a film set for several decades. At time of writing, we still await with bated breath her *latest* incarnation – she is to be made into a luxury hotel to match and rival any to be found in the major cities of the World. Another chapter begins for the fabulous old lady of Water Street...



## *One tenner at a time...*

Martins Auto Cashier is fifty years old on Tuesday 31<sup>ST</sup> October. We covered in some detail in the last issue of the newsletter, the introduction to the North of England in 1967 of the first cash dispenser to be operated by plastic card and PIN. Whilst not the first in the World, Martins' machine comes a close second, and is of course the first of a type of Auto Teller Machines we would recognise and use ourselves today. Between 1966 and 1969 Martins joined other banks in experimenting with methods of payment. Along with Lloyds, the Bank offered American Express credit cards, as an alternative to the new Barclaycard. It also operated two drive in bank branches, a small number of cash dispensers, and express tills.



## *Still hopping about!*

The Grasshopper Pensioners Club was formed, like many other groups of former Bank staff, to preserve the memory of Martins Bank, to allow former colleagues to remain in touch with each other, and for them to attend club meetings, outings, dinners and so on. After many years of faithful service running a successful and popular club, the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer of the Grasshoppers have hung up their bank ties and scarves, and three more club members have been recently elected to take over from them. If you worked for Martins and you have not yet joined a recognised pensioner club, you might like to find out more about the Grasshopper Club by contacting the new Secretary, Dave Baldwin. The email



address is: [grasshoppers@btinternet.com](mailto:grasshoppers@btinternet.com) . As well as you being able to keep in touch with old friends and colleagues, you will find that your membership brings some per-head funding from Barclays which will pay for, or towards some of the club events you attend.

## ***Bank in a box?***

This strange looking box is an exciting find for the Archive, providing as it does a glimpse back to 1930 and the earliest moments of the modern day Martins Bank Limited. Intended to be put together, taken apart and moved to represent the Bank at different events and shows around the country, the “Portable Bank” was designed by none other than the Bank’s Architect Herbert J Rowse! Our thanks go to Architect Reg Towner, whose flickr.com page reflects his own deep affection for all things Liverpool. Reg explained to us that he came across the images in a thesis written by a student in the 1980s. They were published in “The Book of the Liverpool School of Architecture” by Liverpool University Press in 1932. Reg also noted that the portable bank seems to have been designed whilst Rowse’s head was “full of Egyptian Revival imagery”! You can of course see many more examples of the elaborate settings created for shows, fairs and events attended by the Bank between 1928 and 1969, on the Trade Stands page of the Archive Web Site at [www.martinsbank.co.uk](http://www.martinsbank.co.uk). Our new feature page: Out And About, offers example lists of the sheer number of events visited by the Bank during two particular years – 1956 and 1969. Portable branches and trade stands were complemented by the Bank’s fleet of six mobile Branch caravans, which were used mostly for shows and events, but they did also stand in as temporary Branches in many towns and villages. Again, you can read much more about this in the Mobile Branches feature of the Martins Bank Archive Web Site.

## ***A temporary affair...***

Although by the time of the merger with Barclays in 1969, Martins was operating around 730 Branches, our Archive holds details of nearly 1000 addresses that were used as Branches of Martins Bank between 1928 and 1969. The difference is made up by temporary branches, and those that were closed in the four decades before the merger. It is the temporary branches that interest us in particular, as some are occupied for only a few short months before the business is moved to a permanent location. For a significant number, the move was delayed and what were meant to be basic stop-gap premises became full offices of the Bank for many more years than originally intended. The recent death of Martins colleague Geoff Taylor reminded us of his collection of Martins Bank photographs, which includes several unique images of temporary branches.

This selection shows Guildford 150 High Street (top left),

Bexhill on Sea 18 Devonshire Road before rebuilding (top right), 48 Sloane Street doubling as 32 Lowndes Street after wartime bombing (bottom left), and Reading Station Road (bottom right). The Branch at Reading, opened just before World War 2, was only ever meant to be temporary. Due to the War, it was 21 years before Martins was able to move to its intended permanent office at Friar Street. Most images of branches and their interiors have been kindly provided to us by Barclays, but they can only offer what Martins left behind for them, and sometimes images are just not available for particular offices of the Bank. Thanks to Geoff Taylor’s photographs, most of which



Image © Martins Bank Archive Collection

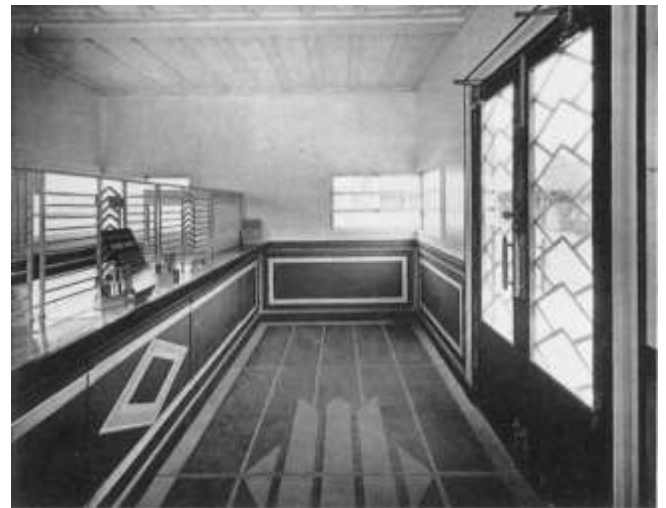


Image © Martins Bank Archive Collection





were taken either in 1953 or 1954, we have visual evidence of these short lived Branches of the Bank, but there are many, particularly tiny sub Branches which may never yield a glimpse of how they looked, and instead we must confirm their existence by turning to other forms of evidence, such as the vast archival resources of the British Newspaper Archive. We have uncovered opening and/or closing details for more than fifty branches and sub branches, because Martins or one of its constituent banks took out advertising in local and national newspapers. With the kind permission of our friends at the BNA, we have been able to add images of these advertisements to our Branch Network pages. Our friends at Ancestry.com and University of Leicester have also made it possible for us to confirm the existence of a branch at a particular address, by showing details of entries in the telephone books or in the various town and city directories.



Image © [WARD PHILIPSON PHOTO MEMORIES](#)  
John A Moreels M.B.E

As more and more collections of photographs are being added to the Internet, we have been able to find more rare photographs, like this one of the Temporary Branch at Fawcett Street Sunderland, used between 1963 and 1965.

### *The Grasshopper returns to Southport*

Of all modern day uses for our Branches, we think that pubs, especially family friendly ones are really apt. A modern day pub has more in common than you would think with a traditional bank branch. Above all, friendly service is vital to the generation of customer loyalty and recommendation, whether you are granting a loan or pulling a pint! With just over 100 original Martins Bank Branches still open as Barclays, more than NINE TIMES that number are now either demolished or under new ownership. Sadly many former Branch sites are now betting shops, but every now and then some of them return to being the place “where everybody knows your name”.



The latest of these to be brought to our attention is the former Martins and Barclays sub Branch at Hillside, Southport, which closed its doors for the last time as a bank in July 1978. We were contacted by Angie Frith, who runs a pub there now. Aptly, she has named it “The Grasshopper”. Once again a people centred enterprise is at work in this original branch of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank. What’s more, customers of The Grasshopper will be able to see some items of memorabilia from the days of Martins Bank.

### *The Show’s the thing!*

With further assistance from our friends at the British Newspaper Archive, we have been able to pick away at a rich seam of information about the Bank’s annual attendance at Agricultural Shows and other events up and down the United Kingdom. As already referred to earlier in this newsletter, our new web site feature page – Out and About – gives lists of the events attended by the Bank’s Mobile Branch Caravans or Trade Stands in 1956 and 1969. There is however what might nowadays be referred to as “the elephant in the room”, and that is of course, the quite staggering amount of work involved in the logistics of planning for attendance at so many different venues (often more than eighty across a six month Show Season). You can learn more about how Martin’s Bank’s Show and Exhibition Branch Department managed it all in another of our web page features – Martins Bank’s Mobile Branches.



In the forty-one years of the life of the modern day Martins Bank, much was done to show off the Bank not only to parts of the country that were already familiar with Martins Bank, but crucially to those areas where the Bank was keen to set up shop. Trade stands were erected at major venues such as Olympia, and often for the full duration of a particular show. The Bank opened what was meant to be a permanent exhibition branch at Earl's Court, only to have the plans completely changed by the Second World War. A permanent branch was built at the Great Yorkshire Showground in 1962, which remained open until the year 2001. A permanent branch opened at the Centre Court Wimbledon in 1930 and lasted well beyond Martins' time, into the 1980s.



That's all for our Autumn/Winter 2017 Newsletter, we'll be back again in the Spring!



Martins Bank Archive exists to advance the education of British social history related to aspects of banking practices and technologies, and those who offered and used them in the 1960s. We identify and evaluate in particular, records and artefacts relating to Martins Bank Limited, including its former incarnations and its constituent banks, which will be of use to current and future researchers, acquiring such items for the archive and organising procedures and systems for their storage and preservation. Martins Bank Archive is a voluntary venture, and does not profit or seek to profit in any way from the display or other use of the images and other items in its possession, and every effort is made to establish and declare their ownership. Contributors and copyright holders are prominently acknowledged. Whilst Martins Bank Archive has no connection with the day to day trading activities of the Barclays Group of companies, we are grateful for the ongoing and generous guidance, advice and support of Barclays Group Archives in the building and shaping of this online social history.

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