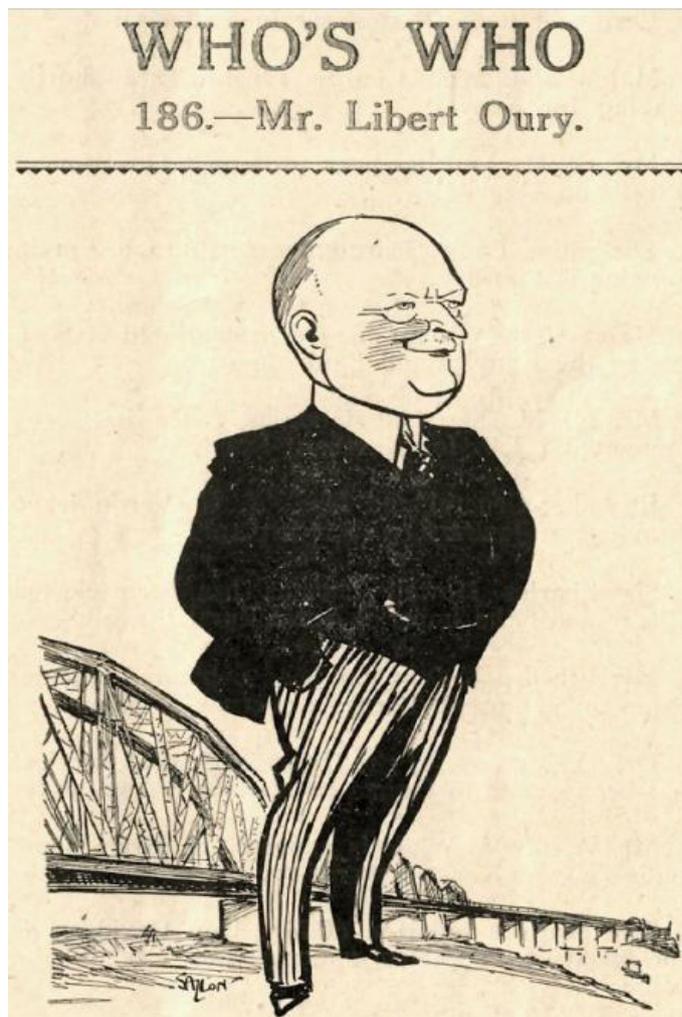


The Oury Archive

by the Borthwick Institute for Archives



A Caricature of Libert Oury
archivist post.

The following work was undertaken:

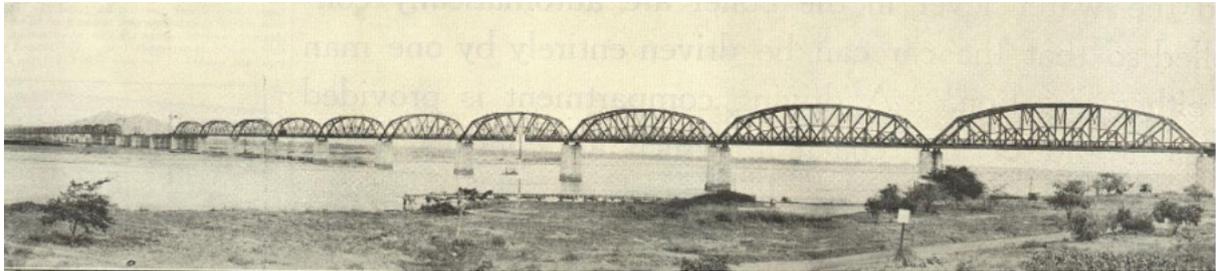
- » Container-level list converted and imported into AtOM.
- » Created and added a fonds-level description
- » Reviewed, corrected and enhanced descriptions in mandatory ISAD(G) fields

Project summary

The Borthwick Institute for Archives received funding to convert a basic list of the Oury Archive into ICA-AtOM and to improve its descriptions and metadata so that it could be made available on Archives Portal Europe. The archive relates to railway and infrastructure projects in southern African territories held by the British and Portuguese colonial empires in the early 20th century.

Work undertaken

The funding has enabled the creation and publication of a standards-based catalogue for the Oury Archive for the first time. The new finding aid delivers more extensive and structured information on the contents of the archive's 60 boxes to European and international researchers. The funding supported a project



The Lower Zambezi Bridge (now the Dona Ana Bridge) was completed in 1934 and stretched 3.67km across the Zambezi. At that time it was the longest railway bridge in Africa.

- » Added new and detailed scope and content descriptions and a basic hierarchy.
- » Incorporated:
 - controlled-access name, place, and subject terms to aid discovery;
 - references to published and unpublished works that have used, or support understanding of, the archive;
 - details of related archive collections in European and African national/regional archives.
- » Created biographical and administrative histories for the archive's creators and for the principal organisations the archive relates to.
- » Added authority records to both APE and the Borthwick's own catalogue to ISAAR(CPF) standard
- » Exported the catalogue to the [Archives Hub](#) to facilitate the routine harvesting by APE of any future updates/corrections
- » Undertook some initial research and public engagement work

The material available

- [Catalogue on APE](#)
- [Name authorities on APE](#)

The [Oury Archive](#) concerns the southern African railway companies and business ventures of the financier, [Libert Oury](#) (1869-1939), and his son, Vivian (1912-1988). Libert Oury became a director of the Companhia de Moçambique ([Mozambique Company](#)) in 1910, and was later chairman or director of more than twenty companies operating in Nyasaland (Malawi), the Rhodesias (Zimbabwe), and Portuguese East Africa. The archive documents his time as London Office director at the Mozambique Company, and his involvement in the development of the [Trans-Zambesia Railway](#), the Port of Beira, and the lower Zambezi bridge.

The archive contains a wealth of company reports, visiting directors' and management reports, contracts, agreements, minutes and correspondence dealing with the Trans-



The Chiveve Bridge, Beira, Mozambique. From a series of photographs documenting the construction of the Port of Beira.

Zambezi Railway, 1911-1975. It also encompasses similar material in respect of the Mozambique Company, 1894-1951, the two Beira Railway Companies, and the Port of Beira Company 1891-1958, together with records for the Shire Highlands Railway Company, the Central Africa Railway Company and Nyasaland Railways for the period 1897-1977. There are also reports and correspondence dealing with the British South Africa Company, the Boror Company (which produced copra) and the Sena Sugar Estates Limited, as well as Oury's mining interests.

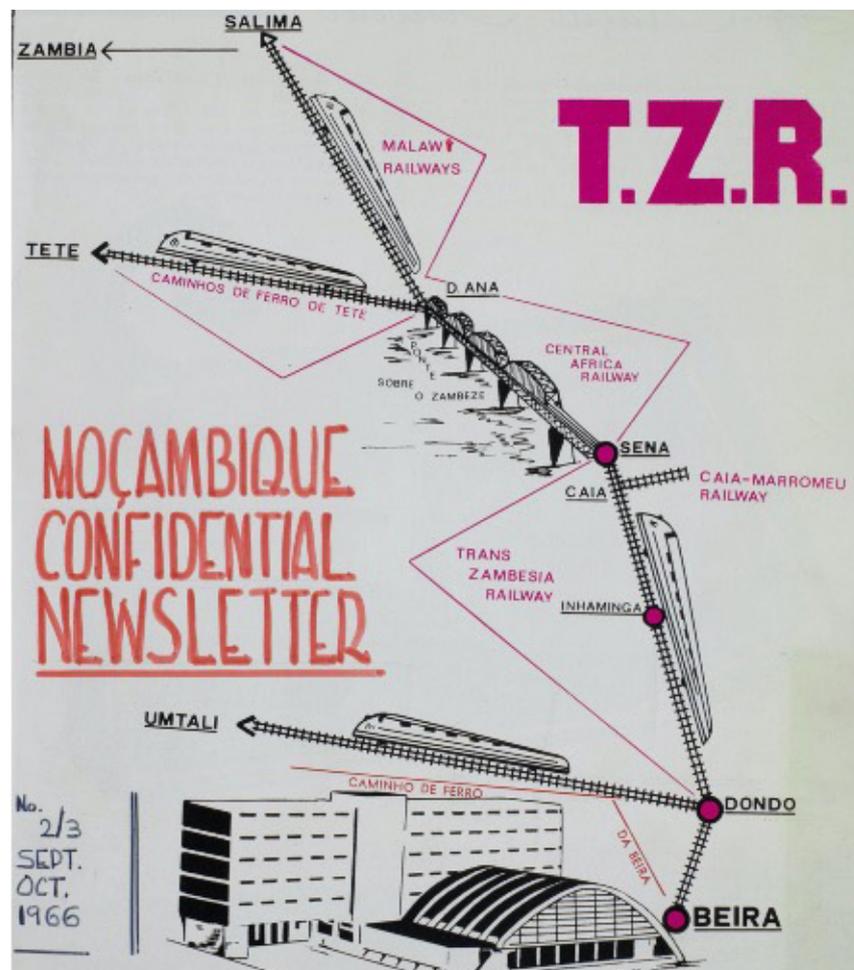
Oury's vision was to develop the city and port of Beira and its hinterland for European business and settlers and to provide British central Africa with access to the Indian Ocean. To fulfil this vision, he worked with the British, Portuguese and Nyasaland governments, private business, the chartered Mozambique, Zambesia and British South Africa Companies and other concessions.

The archive provides a rich source of information for railway, transport, postcolonial and global studies. The records extend to the 1970s as the businesses were continued by his son. Focussed on the first half of the 20th century, the archive reveals important facets of European colonial policy and commercial imperialism during the twilight years of the British and Portuguese empires and also has some material on labour history and relations.

Outcomes

The new multi-level description will support and facilitate new and productive approaches to the study of railways, empire, and colonial knowledge. It will help scholars to construct new narratives of the colonial experience and facilitate a deeper understanding of the experiences and legacies of European colonialism in local, transnational and global settings.

A significant appeal of the archive lies in its extensive research potential for the history of railways and infrastructure development. Having provided early notice of the finding aid to some researchers in Portugal, one replied that they had previously "struggled to find sources of information on the Beira railway and port". We have begun to reach out to networks and interested parties, and it will be exciting to see what uses, projects and collaborations may result from the new finding aid, and from its links to other descriptions hosted in the Portal.



Trans Zambesia Railway (TZR) newsletter, 1966.