



**A Brief History of  
Bourner Bullock  
Chartered Accountants**  
By Peter Watts



## A BRIEF HISTORY OF BOURNER BULLOCK

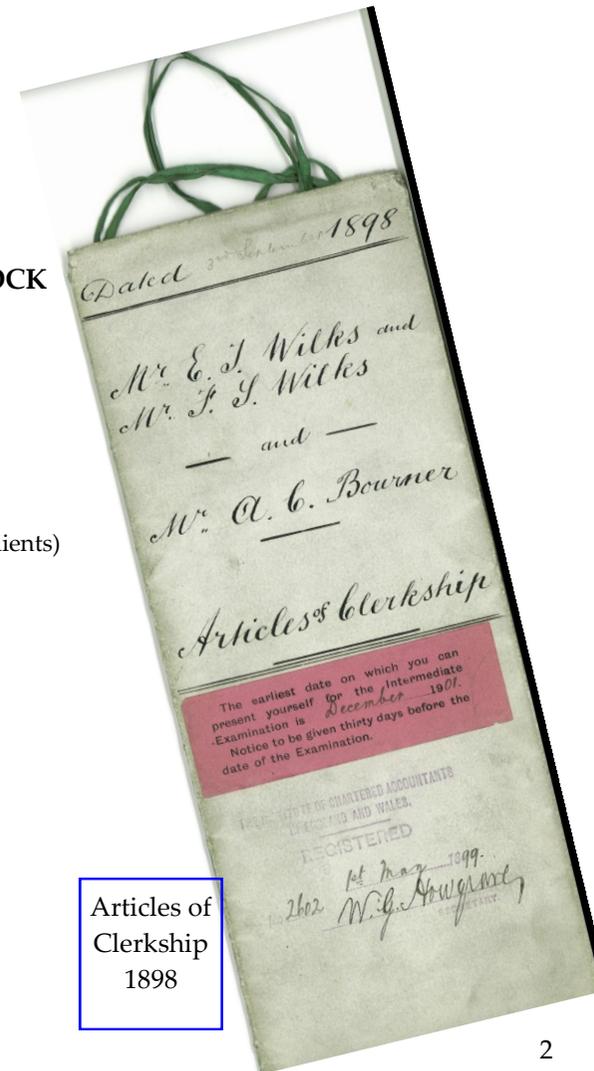
- Introduction
- The origin of the firm
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- 1 January 1960 (including Contemporary People and Clients)
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List of Partners of London Partnership from 1900

List of Offices Addresses since 1900

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Clerkship  
1898





## **INTRODUCTION**

The 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the firm seems a good point to write a brief history of Bourner Bullock.

As the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales was only formed in May 1880, and as Bourner Bullock can trace its origins back to Stoke-on-Trent in 1883, we must be one of the oldest member firms of the Institute and possibly about the only one surviving to the present day with the same name. Also, as I have spent all my working life at Bourner Bullock and various members of my family have been partners or have trained with the firm, I am probably as well placed to try to set out the historical record as anyone.

I realise that histories of firms can be very uninteresting but I hope to populate this Bourner Bullock history with a few reminiscences of some interesting people who have worked with the firm and clients of the firm.

**PETER WATTS FCA**

**LONDON, 2008**



## THE ORIGIN OF THE FIRM - STOKE-ON-TRENT

*Some of the information in this section was provided by Mr F G Nicholas (which he wrote in 1964) - a former partner of the Stoke-On-Trent firm which then became KPMG Peat Marwick.*

The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales was incorporated by Royal Charter on 11 May 1880. Mr Thomas Bullock was already a well known accountant and was made a fellow of the new Institute on 22 September 1880. He is first recorded as being "in practice" in Nelson Place, Newcastle-under-Lyme (a town near Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire) by 31 December 1883. By 31 December 1885, Mr Arthur Charles Bourner had joined Mr Bullock in practice as "Bullock & Bourner". Later Mr Thomas Bullock retired from the firm to become the first official receiver in bankruptcy for the North Staffordshire District and the firm's name was changed to "Bourner Bullock & Co", with the main office of the practice being moved to Albion Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. This area was the centre of the British china clay industry and was called "The Potteries".

By the year 1900, the London firm had been established and the offices continued in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Hanley as well as an additional one in Watford. Almost no other Institute member is listed in 1900 as being "in practice" at more than four locations. When Mr Bourner came to London around 1900 he still remained a partner of the Hanley firm. Mr C E Bullock (son of Mr Thomas Bullock), was the other founding partner of the London Firm, but there was no other connection between the firms other than these two partners individually.

In the 1930s Mr Bourner retired from the Hanley firm and Mr Bullock from the London Firm and all connections ceased. However, the offices around Stoke-on-Trent continued to be called "Bourner Bullock" until the practice merged with Peat Marwick in 1964. More recently, the Stoke-on-Trent office has been "taken-over" by Baker Tilly.



## THE ORIGIN OF THE FIRM—THE LONDON OFFICE AND PARTNERSHIP

The first mention of a London office dates from 1890 and was at 10 Throgmorton Street in the City of London. However, the first entry in our “workbook” is an audit in 1886 and then there are quite a number of entries listed for work in 1897— about 50% audit and the rest bankruptcy and receivership . We believe that the separate London partnership was formed on the 1 January 1900 although unfortunately we do not have this partnership deed. The partners were Mr A C Bourner and Mr C E Bullock (son of Thomas Bullock).

In 1903, Mr. Andrew joined the partnership and the firm was re-named Bourner Bullock Andrew & Co. My grandfather (A E Watts) was also appointed as a partner on the same day but he only had a profit share of 1/6th compared with Mr Andrew’s 1/3rd so perhaps Mr Andrew brought in some clients? Mr Piper was also appointed in 1920, retiring from the partnership only five years before I joined in 1960 and my uncle, Bill Watts, was appointed a partner in 1924 and was senior partner when I joined. As can be seen from Appendix 2, there have only ever been four offices in London with the Milton Keynes office opening in 2005.



Mr A C BOURNER, ONE OF  
THE FOUNDING PARTNERS



Mr Mayhew and Mr Gillman brought their firm, Painter Mayne & Walker, into Bournor Bullock in about 1967. It was formed before the First World War and moved to offices in 103 Cannon Street in 1912 more or less opposite Bush Lane House. I believe the merger was negotiated in a nearby pub! Mr Gillman's father had been a partner in the original firm and their accounts for the year ended 31 December 1921 show Mr Owen Walker receiving a 2/3rd share at £1,376 and Neville Gillman's father having a 1/3rd share at £688. After the merger, our firm had the longest name in its history, "Bournor Bullock Andrew & Co incorporating Painter Mayne & Walker".

It may be of interest to know that in 1900, there were 2,687 members of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales and today there are about 130,000 members worldwide.



### THE FAMILY CONNECTION

With myself, my grandfather and an uncle having been partners in the firm and my father and brother who qualified in the firm as well as a cousin and a nephew who spent some time at Bournor Bullock before deciding that a life in Accountancy was not for them, there certainly is a family connection here.

In the first profit and loss account of the newly formed Bournor Bullock London partnership for the year to 31 December 1900, Mr. A C Bournor and Mr. C E Bullock shared the profits of £615 50/50 and my grandfather (A.E. Watts) who was the only named employee, was paid £300. On a salaries indexation, this works out at roughly £125,000 at today's rates so it seems quite a generous salary! (Other salaries totalled £475.)

The fees in the first profit and loss account were £1,154 from bankruptcy and liquidation work and £770 from



GRANDFATHER WATTS



audit and accountancy work. As can be seen from appendix 1, my grandfather was made a partner in 1903 and his eldest son Bill was made a partner in 1924. His youngest son (child number 7) was my father who qualified just before World War II. He was unhappy with the offer Bourner Bullock made to him after the war and worked in the wine trade until his retirement.

My brother, Nigel, qualified with Bourner Bullock in 1974 and has since worked in industry – currently with Alliance Boots. My uncle's younger son, James, did not qualify at Bourner Bullock but he is a partner with Feltons – chartered accountants in Windsor.

I qualified in November 1965 and became a partner on 1 May 1968.



## 1 JANUARY 1960 (INCLUDING CONTEMPORARY PEOPLE AND CLIENTS)

Although my main interest throughout most of my schooling had been music, my father decided that I should have a “proper” business training and become a chartered accountant. After that, I could do whatever I wanted (so he told me). I started work in January 1960 and in those days, the offices of Bourner Bullock were in Bush Lane House – a building which has long since disappeared – to the east of Cannon Street Station. It was on the junction of Cannon Street/Bush Lane and the name is still remembered in our company that acts as Company Secretary for many clients.

In those days, I lived in Surrey and commuted daily to London Bridge walking from there to the office in about ten minutes. The Pool of London (between London Bridge and Tower Bridge) was packed with ships loading and unloading which was fascinating to watch on the walk to the office.

My uncle, Bill Watts was then the senior partner, Ken Foster was the partner for tax, and Wally Hague smoked a pipe! (He also brought in many new clients and he was mainly responsible for training me.) I see from the 1960s cash book – that there were five other articled clerks (all male) and two non-qualified seniors – Peter Conrad and Ron Gould (who later went into the tax department and only died a few years ago very soon after retirement).

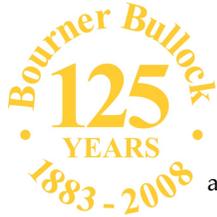


The other more senior staff on monthly salaries at that time included Mr. Avery, Bert Bloomfield (who worked for the firm most of his life and whose wife acted as receptionist later), Mr. Fifield, Ken Hammond (later to become senior partner), Mr. Harrison (who used to take me on one of our more unusual audits - a glue factory owned by Unilever) and Sidney Speer who was the senior manager at the time but who left a few years later as a partnership was not in the offing.

Articled clerks were expected to work out of the office nearly all the time as there were nowhere near enough desks in the rather cramped premises. A large desk in "our" room was mainly used for ping pong or for sorting out audit papers prior to getting them to clients' offices.

Chris Newbery was an articled clerk with me. He was related to Mr. A.C. Bourner and always wore a bowler hat and carried a rolled umbrella and The Times under his arm. There were a number of people in the City of London in those days who wore bowler hats or top hats every day. I was paid £250 a year (gross) at a time when partners were drawing £150 per month (net)!





On the other hand, I was one of the first articulated clerks who did not have to pay a partner to take him on and I was also lucky to escape National Service which had finished a few years earlier.

Ken Hammond took me out on my first audit to a manufacturing company in Woking and I learnt the joys of adding up in pounds, shillings and pence in my head and to use "jiggers". These were little wooden stamps with a "v" meaning "vouch" or a "p" meaning "posted". There was also a fearsome "BBA & Co" rubber stamp which was stamped over as many original documents as we could find to show what a thorough audit job we had carried out.

Easily the largest client that we had in those days was London County (or London County Freehold and Leasehold Properties Limited to give it its full name). It was reputedly the largest flat-owning company in the world owning 50,000 flats, mainly in London. In the 1970s it became part of MEPC.

Mr A C Bourner had been one of the founders of London County along with the Breskal, Nutman and Askew families all of whom owned substantial holdings of the shares in this publicly-quoted company. Shortly before I joined, this became a joint audit with Touche Ross & Co (now Deloitte) and we emptied the office in April and May by sending about 12 to 14 people on the audit to "pair up" with a similar number from Touche. Bert Bloomfield looked after all the share registers more or less single handedly.





Although the pressure of meeting the audit deadline must have been intense, we still found the time to row on the Serpentine Lake in nearby Hyde Park (as the London County offices were adjacent to the Royal Albert Hall) and also to visit the Chelsea Flower Show (something organised by Sidney Speer). London County was one of the first clients to have a computer and of course it took up a fairly substantial room and started as a punch-card machine reader. There was terrible consternation in the rent department and most of the women employed to send out the rent invoices, by hand, had been there for years and it was feared that computers would do away with staff altogether. Later, an ex-Bourner Bournier employee was appointed as data processing manager there (Ted Talbot with whom I was at school and who not only qualified at Bourner Bullock but gave us our first international work in Geneva some years later).



Other interesting clients we had at the time were:

**Potteries Motor Traction**- a substantial Stoke-on-Trent based bus company which presumably had been a client of the original firm at some time but I have no idea why the London partnership looked after this work. It had been a client since 1901.

**Red Bank Manufacturing Co Limited** – another “away” job near Ashby-de-la-Zouch , was the largest manufacturer of chimney pots in the UK at the time – the shareholders, the Lisney family, are distantly related to the Watts family.

**Jabez Barker Limited** – timber merchants (and later caravan sales) based in Shrewsbury. We were supposedly given this work in 1916 after the then managing director heard his previous year’s results being discussed in a local pub!

**Alfred Hawes & Son**- a group of retail opticians with their head office in Leadenhall Street and a subsidiary that manufactured lenses and supplied the frames. There is an A. Hawes mentioned in the Bourner Bullock workbook with an entry in 1903 for accountancy services. We believe this is the oldest client where we still act for the family.

**Leethems (Twilight) Ltd** – a publicly-quoted company that manufactured bras and corsets which owned several factories in Portsmouth, and later, one in Bath. As the final audit took place in July it was possible to do some sailing from Hayling Island in the evenings (although, of course, I was always studying for my exams!).





## INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Our first experience of work outside the UK was introduced to us by Ted Talbot who had qualified at Bourner Bullock soon after me. A few years later, he was working for one of the first truly international funds, in Geneva – IOS. Ted told me in about 1973 that there were a couple of UK non-resident companies that needed an audit and why didn't I come out to Ferney-Voltaire (as IOS had by then been "asked" to leave Geneva) and do them?

This was interesting work and soon Ted had introduced us to an English lawyer in Geneva, Guy Higson, with whom we are still involved on quite a number of mutual clients.

Some years later, in about 1990, Ted introduced me to M. Jacques Potdevin who had founded a European network of independent accounting and auditing firms based in Paris – JPA International – and was looking for a London member firm.

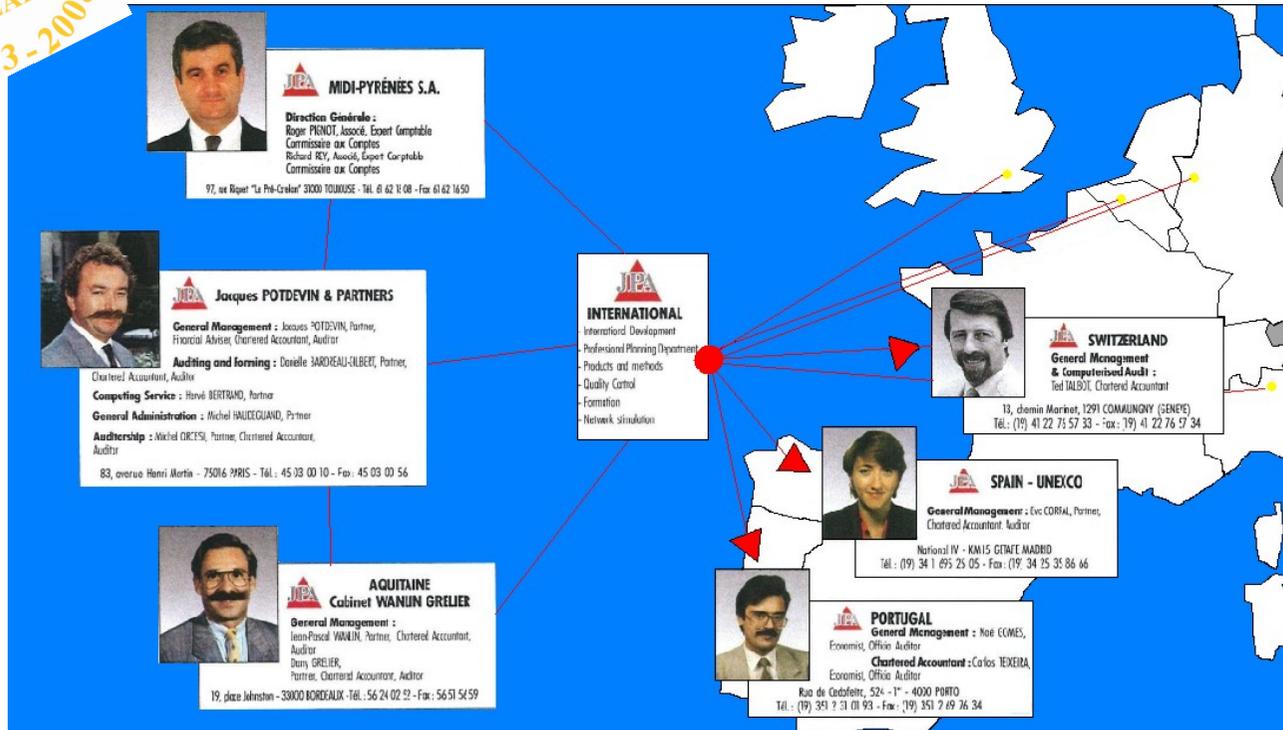


Previous to this we had been appointed auditors to the fast expanding UK subsidiary of JCDecaux but after joining JPA, our international work increased significantly. We believe that this now differentiates us from other firms of our size in London.

There are currently 130 member firms in 40 countries and we have been directly involved in locating new member firms in India, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Scandinavia and the U.S.

I am the current vice-president of the European sector and am also "President Délégué" which means that I step in for the president, M. Jacques Potdevin, when he is unavailable. Recent international conferences have taken place in Hong Kong, Moscow, New York, Sao Paulo and New Delhi.

Bourner Bullock  
 125  
 YEARS  
 1883-2008



The JPA International Network before we joined in 1990.



## BOURNER BULLOCK HISTORY- THE PRESENT DAY

The firm is now larger than it has ever been with 5 partners and 30 team members in total.

Perhaps the greatest difference between the office now and in 1960 is the computerisation and the more sophisticated phone system. Our audit working papers and the whole regulatory environment have also changed dramatically over the last 48 years. However, the basic ingredients of the firm and the way that we look after our clients' needs have not changed.

We have been in our present location in Shaftesbury Avenue since 1980. We feel that the Covent Garden area is an excellent Central London location and we hope that the (long overdue) renovation of the common parts of Sovereign House together with our upgraded IT facilities and phone system mean that we are well placed for the future.

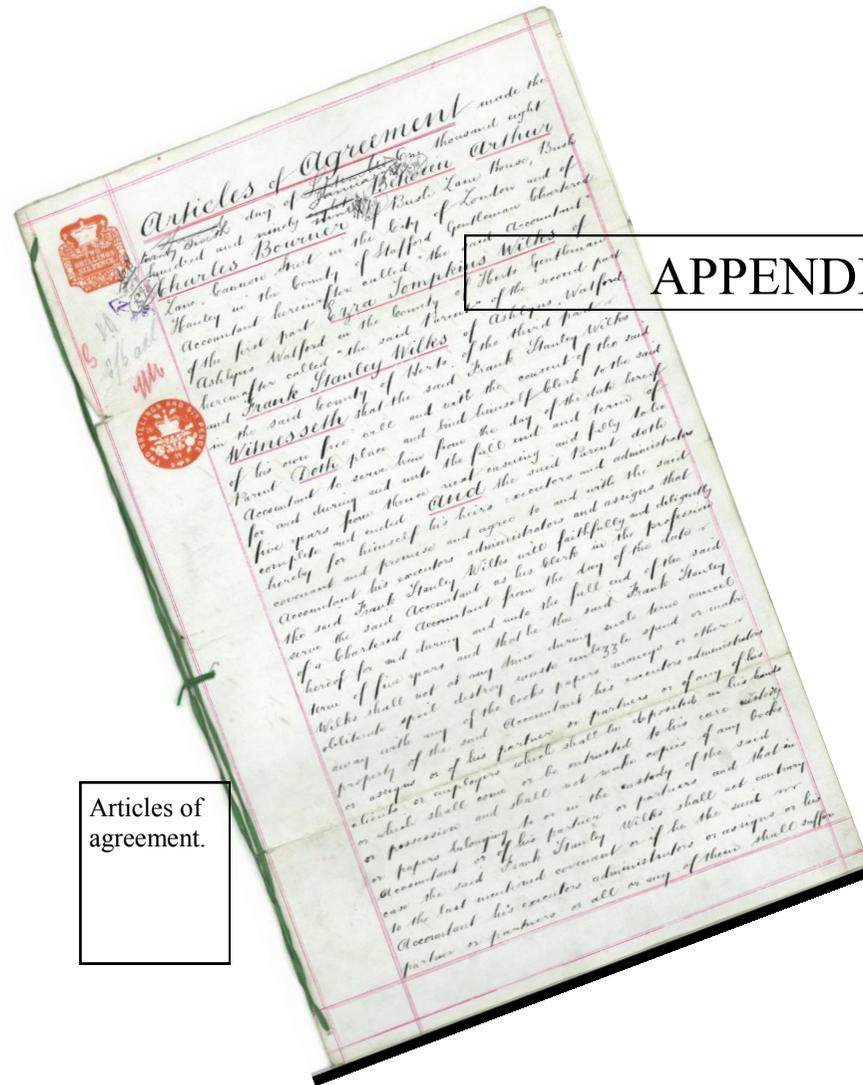
The firm is more departmentalised now with departments for audit and accountancy, management accounts, tax, company secretarial work and payroll services.



Tax has always been an important part of our work and our tax team are dealing with international, corporate or individual tax matters on a daily basis. Indeed this is one of the major differences in the firm now compared with 1960 (which perhaps also reflects the change in the UK) in that our almost totally UK based clients, many of whom were involved in manufacturing, have now been replaced by many international clients especially involved in the service industry. In 1960, every limited company required a statutory audit but now only the larger companies or those which are members of a group require an audit so more of our work is advice based. Our management accounts work has increased in importance – in particular for the new subsidiaries of non-UK companies.

Our plans for the future are to continue to grow the firm by increasing the number of partners and team members and we may consider moving to new offices in London when our current lease expires.

We hope that Mr Thomas Bullock would be proud of what has been achieved over 125 years and that his name has continued to the 21st Century.



Articles of agreement.

APPENDICES



Appendix 1: **Bourner Bullock London Partners**

<b>PARTNERS</b>	<b>ADMISSION TO PARTNERSHIP</b>	<b>RETIREMENT FROM PARTNERSHIP</b>
Arthur Charles Bourner	01/01/1900	30/09/1920
Charles Ernest Bullock	01/01/1900	01/01/1934
J G Andrew	01/04/1903	1924
A E Watts	01/04/1903	30/06/1941
T G Piper	30/09/1920	31/12/1955
E W Watts (Bill)	01/01/1924	1970
H F Baker	01/01/1934	1957
K C Foster (Ken)	01/01/1944	31/12/1978
W F Hague (Wally)	31/12/1948	31/12/1971
K W Hammond (Ken)	01/01/1961	31/05/1995
H W Mayhew (Harry)	01/01/1966	1972
A N Gillman (Neville)	01/01/1966	1984
P J M Watts (Peter)	01/05/1968	
G C Beckett (Graham)	01/01/1974	31/01/1985
C A Letts (Adam)	01/01/1980	31/05/2005
R P C Goddard (Robert)	01/03/1985	31/07/1994
M S Brooks (Michael)	01/01/1987	
D A Lyons (David)	01/01/1990	31/07/2008
D B Matkins (David)	26/07/1994	
H J Dell (Hillary)	01/06/2005	16/10/2009
A R Nicholson (Andrew)	01/06/2007	29/07/2010
D P Wheeler (David)	01/06/2008	



## Appendix 2: **List of Office Addresses since 1900**

- 10 Throgmorton Street, London.
- Bush Lane House, Cannon Street, London.
- Marcol House, Regent Street, London.
- Sovereign House, Shaftesbury Avenue, London.
- Chancery House, Silbury Boulevard, Milton Keynes.



## Bourner Bullock

“A long-term...  
...mutually beneficial...  
...relationship...  
...with our clients”



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Front cover picture: Sovereign House, London