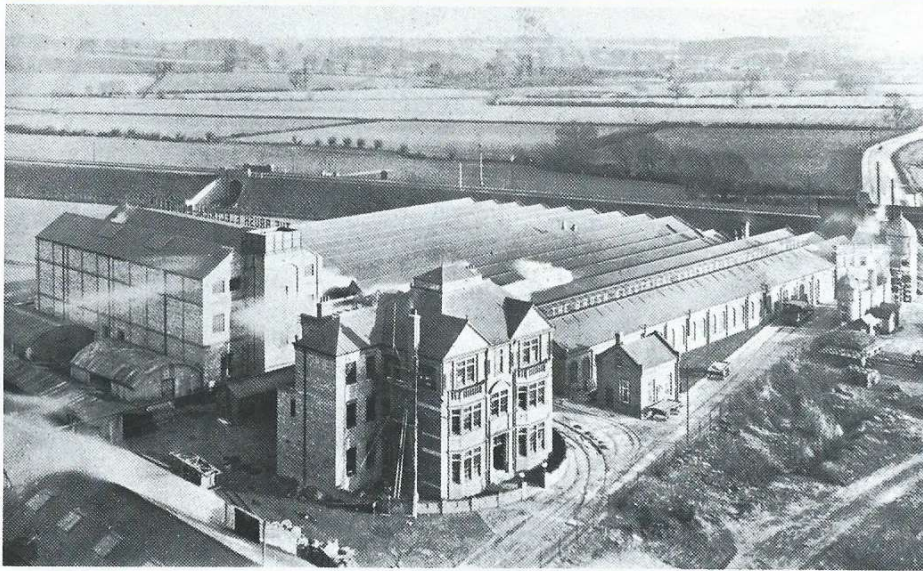


Glimpses of the Past

by George Toms

No. 4. The Main Offices



An aerial view of the main offices circa 1899. At this time they were nearing completion as was the Great Central Railway (centre).

Attempts to convince Brian Hope that a similar present day view would make a good comparison evoked a definite no! The 1899 photograph was taken from the vantage point of one of the works chimneys.

The frontage of the present day main offices dates from about 1898/99 and the core of the offices to the rear from about the same time. The former was purpose-built as the administration offices of the Brush Electrical Engineering Company and replaced the works manager's house which stood on the same site. The latter was built as a warehouse and stores.

The accompanying photograph dates from about early 1899, just prior to the opening of the Great Central Railway, seen in the background. Plans for both buildings were examined by the Borough Surveyor during late 1896.

warehouse can be seen to have a tower

Using the photograph as a guide, the tower with a tank on top. This tower was originally equipped with a stairway (still extant) and an electric lift designed to take a safe load of 1,500 lb., driven by a 9hp electric motor. The water tank was divided into two compartments, each of 7,500 gallons capacity – one for supplying water to Grinnell patent automatic fire sprinklers placed around the works, the other an emergency water supply for the works.

The ground floor of the warehouse was used as a packing and delivery room, serviced by both narrow and standard

gauge railway lines. The nearest part of the first floor above was used for winding of enclosed motors and the farthest part together with the second floor was used for the storage of controllers, resistances, fittings and stock lamps. The company's title ran along the farthest roof ridge for the benefit of travellers on the Great Central Railway.

Turning to the ornate and then smaller main offices, nearing completion, one is struck by the symmetry of the building. The ground floor originally housed the commercial and estimating departments; the first floor held the works management and the engine and turbine drawing office; the second floor was entirely taken up by the electrical drawing offices and those of the works electricians. The roof section, or top floor, held the print room affording facilities for reproducing the largest drawings at the rate of 120 a day.

Between the offices and the warehouse there nestled the office staff bicycle shed. This has long since disappeared in the ever-encroaching extensions of what is now a large and curious building consisting of a multitude of interconnecting stairways linking floors of different levels. A veritable rabbit warren indeed. The top of the warehouse later had another floor added, but in its later office days.

Today the office frontage sports newly-cleaned brickwork and houses the managing director's office and others. It retains an air of permanence despite being dwarfed by the adjacent 14 and 24 Shops and is a reminder of a period of almost a century ago when there was great expansion at the Falcon Works. It also retains the two miniscule balconies (too cramped for regal appearances) and the highly decorative triangular panels formed by the roof angles. Pause to look next time you pass by.