

Glimpses of the Past

by George Toms

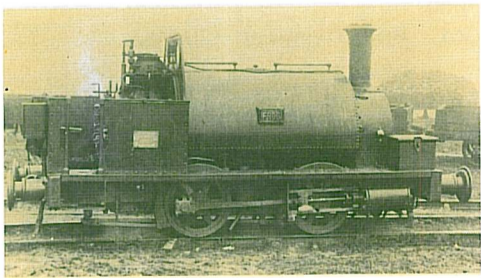
No. 17 The Loughborough Origins

Some years before the inventions of Charles Francis Brush were a commercial proposition another origin of the present day Brush business was in existence in Loughborough – the Falcon Engine Works.

It was about 1853 when the Falcon Engine Works was founded, sandwiched between the Derby Road and the Loughborough Navigation. The reason for choosing the name is lost in the mists of time, perhaps it sounded impressive, certainly it was in keeping with the tradition of the day for such titles. Two men, Capper and Moon, appear to have been the first partners, the latter soon departing from the business. The main sources of income were local demand for primitive engines of various types and a timber yard.

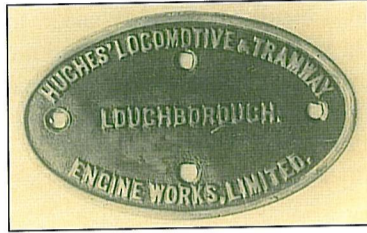
About 1854 or 1855 a young engineer, fresh from London came to the works under the guidance of his aunt. Already he had experience, working on Brunel's mighty steam ship the 'Great Eastern'. This engineer, barely twenty years of age, was Henry Hughes. He had lived with his widowed aunt in London, accustomed to a good, comfortable standard of living and was brought up under her strict but maternal guidance. He had hopes and dreams, and her full backing. Quite how or why he came to Loughborough is not known, but in 1857 he married a local girl and lived in nearby Regent Street, in a house worthy of a young engineer. In those days Regent Street was one of the better areas of Loughborough.

By 1859 he had taken control of the business, no doubt with financial backing from his aunt. He took on a foreman by the name of Hiram Coltman, who was later to become active in the public affairs of Loughborough. For a brief time he had a partner, William March, but the business became known as Henry Hughes & Co. In 1862 railway locomotive engines were added to the list of products, together with other items of rolling stock suitable for railway contractors who were busy building the railways of Britain. Among the earliest locomotives was one supplied to the Cape of Good Hope, a four wheeled tank locomotive of 7 foot track gauge. Business prospered and a new site was sought, preferably adjacent to a main line railway. Late in 1863 he acquired seven acres of land to the rear of the present day Loughborough Midland railway station and

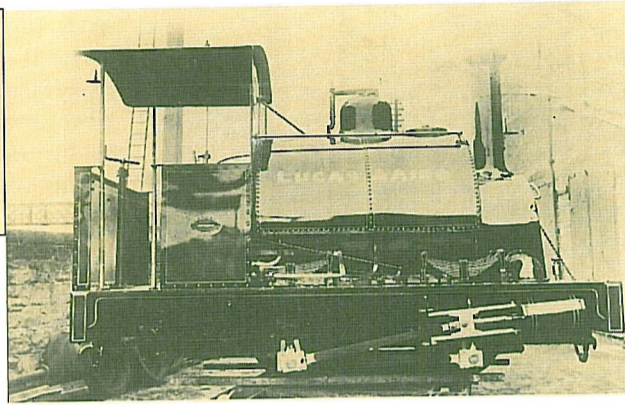


FROG, a 3ft 6in gauge locomotive supplied to Caldon Low Quarries, Staffs. in 1877. The works plate reads Henry Hughes & Co. Engineers, Loughborough.

Two adverts of 1864



A works plate from a locomotive dating from the 1877-82 period.



A brand new locomotive of the 1877-82 period standing on a trolley outside the front of the Falcon Works. The stone wall to the left still stands.

transferred his timber yard there. Coltman became Hughes' partner, with one third of the business. Gradually the rest of the business followed as new facilities were constructed. In 1867 the new Falcon Iron Works was completed, at least so far as the business of the day was concerned.

Hughes was a keen advertiser and lost no opportunity in making his products known. From the local newspapers of 1860 to exhibiting a locomotive at the international Paris Exhibition in 1867 was no mean feat. The Falcon Works had been transformed in such a short time from a local concern to one known all over the world. Nonetheless, a true perspective is that it was nowhere near as large as some other locomotive builders in Britain, nor did it produce a wide variety of products. The staple products were four and six wheeled tank locomotives, often of diminutive size.

During the early 1870s the concept of urban tramways gained popularity, initially using horse traction. Soon steam traction came under consideration, despite stringent and sometimes impossible legislation. In 1875 Hughes built a steam tramway engine to the design and order of John Downes, and the following year built one to his own design. Downes complained of infringement of patent, but Hughes denied this, claiming that his design was an adaptation of his standard saddle tank locomotive. Whatever the truth of the matter Hughes continued to build tramway engines and they saw service in Leicester, Glasgow, Dublin and Wantage. Only one appears to have been sold, due to

the limited time of operation allowed under Board of Trade restrictions, and the remainder worked on hire for limited periods of time under licensed operation. It was not ideal and Hughes campaigned in Parliament to have things changed.

In 1877 Coltman wished to withdraw from the firm, mainly to promote his own business in Loughborough, and to be able to pass it on to his sons. Eventually this business founded the Midland Iron Works, now the oldest part of the Works of Morris Cranes. The business itself later moved as Walter Coltman's boiler works to a site adjacent to the Great Central railway station.

His aunt now deceased, and therefore not able to draw upon financial resources to buy Coltman's share, Henry Hughes sold the business to people interested in tramways and Hughes' Locomotive & Tramway Engine Works Ltd was born, with Hughes as Managing Director. By this time Hughes and his family had moved to Leicester, where they lived in some comfort. The Hughes family was a large one, totalling twelve children.

The new company expanded the Falcon Works and added tramcars to its range of products. This proved to be a good move in the long term, but there were to be some troubled years ahead. The late 1870s were a time of depression in trade generally and a business in Derby, the Mersey Wagon Works, in which Hughes had a sleeping interest ran into financial difficulties.

THE FALCON ENGINE AND CAR WORKS, LIMITED,
41, COLEMAN STREET, LONDON; AND LOUGHBOROUGH.

Tank Locomotives FOR CONTRACTORS
Narrow Gauge Engines
ENGINES OF VARIOUS SIZES in stock or in Progress.
SPECIFICATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND PRICES

Tramway Engines.
TRAMWAY CARS.

Falcon advert of 1887 in Engineering

THE BRUSH ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING COMPANY, LIMITED,
Head Offices: 49, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C.

CLASSED PATENT
TANK LOCOMOTIVES FOR CONTRACTORS.
NARROW GAUGE ENGINE AND LIGHT RAILWAY ROLLING STOCK
STEAM ENGINES OF VARIOUS SIZES IN STOCK OR IN PROGRESS.
SPECIFICATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND PRICES ON APPLICATION.

WORKS: FALCON ENGINE & CAR WORKS, LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE.

LIGHT RAILWAY ROLLING STOCK.
Open and Closed WAGONS.
SPECIFICATIONS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND PRICES ON APPLICATION.

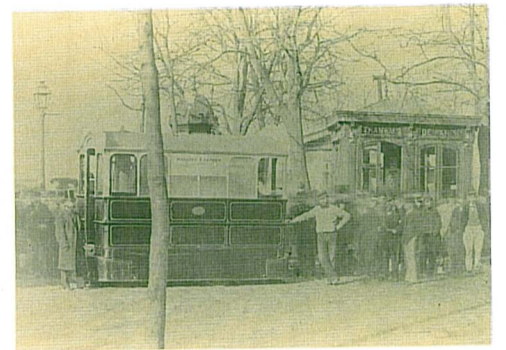
Brush advert of 1890 in Engineering

FALCON
RAILWAY PLANT COMPANY,
LOUGHBOROUGH.
LONDON OFFICES—
89, FLEET-STREET, E.C.

Be to call special attention to their Tank Locomotive Engines, suitable for contractors, Mineral and Branch Railways. They are made very strong, and are particularly adapted for mounting steep gradients and turning sharp curves.
They have every necessary fitting, such as springs, buffers, Giffard's Patent Injector, blower, gauge taps, gauge glass, pressure gauge, powerful break and sand boxes. The whole of the materials are the best that can be obtained, and the tyres Low Moor, two inches in thickness.

HENRY HUGHES, FALCON WORKS,
LOUGHBOROUGH.

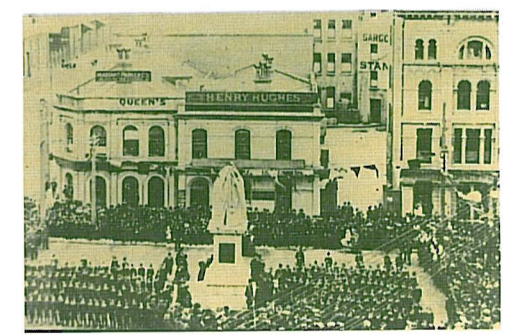
THIS LOCOMOTIVE ENGINE has been designed expressly for CONTRACTORS and MINERAL RAILWAYS. It is very strong in every part, and, being mounted on small wheels close together, will mount steep gradients and turn sharp curves. The boilers are of the best plates, with fire boxes of Low Moor, are clothed with hair felt, lagged and covered with sheet iron, and proved to a pressure of 200 lbs per square inch. The tyres are of the best Yorkshire iron, and of great thickness. The tank contains 250 gallons. The fittings consist of buffers, powerful brake, Giffard's Injector, Roscoe's oiling apparatus, pressure gauge, water gauge, and blower to get up steam. The Engines are all tried before leaving the works and an experienced man sent with them free of cost.
Full specification on application.
10 in. Cylinders, 16 in. Stroke, Price £500.



A Hughes steam tramway engine on demonstration in the streets of Paris circa 1878.

Hughes was left liable for debts in this concern and in turn was indebted to the Loughborough business. This was in 1880 and as a result the Hughes family moved back to Loughborough, living on the works in Falcon House. Matters came to a head later that year and in a hasty moment, Henry Hughes tendered his resignation. It was accepted, then he withdrew it, but matters stood and Coltman was appointed temporary manager in his place. A violent incident followed and eventually Henry was forced to leave.

It was a sad time for the Hughes family, they were well-liked by the workforce, and when it came to their departure for New Zealand several years later to join father, a presentation was made to them in fond memory of times past and in wishing good fortune in the future. The New Zealand story is fascinating but no part of this one.



Henry Hughes finally re-established himself in New Zealand as a patent agent. Here we see his offices in Wellington circa 1897.

The company resolved to sell the business, but there were no takers, so in 1882 a reformation was resorted to, including creditors and shareholders in a new company, The Falcon Engine & Car Works Ltd. Business picked up at home and abroad, tramway regulations were relaxed and engines and cars were built in increasing numbers. The building of horse omnibuses were added to the products of the works. By the end of the decade Falcon was ready to enter the newly developing electric tramcar business, but lacked the knowhow and expertise to produce the electrical equipment. Fortunately for Falcon and for Loughborough the Anglo-American Brush Electric Light Corporation in 1889 found its ideal site and business to provide its entry into the electric tramcar world. As related in the previous 'Glimpses', the rest is history.

Brush advert of 1892