

John Lang & Sons

A brief overview by Jessica Reid

John Lang was born in the 1830's and grew to be very interested in engineering. The Lang Family (James, Robert, John (junior) and John (senior) lived in 3 different properties in Johnstone and the surrounding area, These properties were named Lilybank house, Springfield house and Fullarton Villa.

In 1873/74 John was foreman to the works of Shanks & co, An engineering company. He decided he had the skills to found his own business, Lang started his engineering company "John Lang & Sons" and brought his sons Robert Lang and John Lang (Junior) to work with him in the first premises located in Laighcartside Street, Johnstone.

The Lang organisation started as a private family partnership and progressed into a limited company around 1916. John Lang & Sons specialised in designing and producing Lathes

(Lathe = A machine for shaping wood, metal and other material by means of a rotating drive which turns the piece being worked on against changeable cutting tools).

Although they mainly and successfully produced lathes, The company also produced tools & machine parts such as gears.

Three generations of Langs succeeded in developing each lathe as they improved the model throughout the years they created one of the most modern and progressive works in the United Kingdom

The John Lang & Sons small machine shop was about 70ft by 30ft and was enlarged until it took up the entire area from Mary Street through Laighcartside street, which was essential due to a higher demand of Lang lathes, The demand for Lang's lathes was caused by a positive reputation. The lathes became so popular that the slogan "Only Lang For Lathes" became well known in the engineering world. By 1959 the firm had employed almost 1,000 men.

In 1964 the firm was acquired by Wickman Ltd of Coventry, In 1966 "John Lang & Sons" was changed to "Wickman Lang Ltd", the new company still trades in England although there is no longer any production in Johnstone.

(Obituary 1906)

"Mr John Lang, founder of the well known machine tool making firm of John Lang & Sons, Johnstone, Renfrewshire has died at Lilybank, aged eighty one years. Mr Lang was a man of sterling uprightness and unassuming manners, His eldest son is at the present time Provost of Johnstone"

