

EAST TWERTON HERITAGE: STOTHERT & PITT

For about a century, the engineering company Stothert & Pitt ran factories located in East Twerton. Much of the history of the firm belongs to an era when Twerton was manufacturing products to be exported across the British Empire.



A 1940's view of the Stothert & Pitt Victoria Works in East Twerton. Today this is the site of the Riverside Development.
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Early history of Stothert & Pitt

In the late 18th century, the Stothert family came to Bath from Shropshire. Led by George Stothert, they become agents selling ironmongery in Bath on behalf a Shropshire iron work company. This began in about 1795.



The 35 ton Fairbairn steam crane, still in working order

By 1815 the Stotherts had started to manufacture their own iron products from sites in Bath city centre. And by the 1830's they had also established a complex of workshops along the Lower Bristol Road.

Robert Pitt was taken on as a business partner in 1844, giving rise to the name Stothert & Pitt.

During the 1850's the Stothert workshops on the Lower Bristol Road evolved into the familiar Newark Works - the long building with the limestone frontage, where many of the working people of Bath laboured at machines and foundries.

The firm became one of the country's largest manufacturers of cranes. An early example of a Stothert crane is the Fairbairn steam crane built for Bristol docks in 1876 (pictured above).

From about 1890, Stothert & Pitt purchased land near the river

in East Twerton and turned it into the Victoria Works.

In the twentieth century

During the 20th century, Stothert & Pitt continued to focus on constructing and exporting cranes around the world. Two inventions helped them to keep ahead of the game:

In 1912 Stothert & Pitt engineers invented the level-luffing crane. This type of crane uses an arrangement of cables to keep the hook at the same height as it is taken nearer or further away from the base of the crane. Then in 1927 the firm introduced the first bulk-handling crane which uses a grabbing mechanism instead of a simple hook.



The former Stothert & Pitt Newark Works

Stothert & Pitt also specialised in the manufacture of other equipment such as steam rollers and cement mixers. Some of this machinery was produced at their factory near the Bellotts Road Cemetery in East Twerton, which is now run by M & B Engineering.

During the First and Second World Wars, the company was commissioned by the government to produce munitions and military machines for the war effort. Many women would have been employed in this "war work" as able men were called away to fight.

By the 1950's Stothert & Pitt were Bath's biggest industrial employer with around 2,300 employees. They had a variety of social clubs and sports teams including The Cranes rugby team which is still going.

The firm was bought by Robert Maxwell's Hollis Group in 1986 but sadly, following the collapse of Maxwell's empire, all production came to an end in 1989.



A 1904 Stothert & Pitt self-propelled steam crane stands at the entrance to the Riverside Development