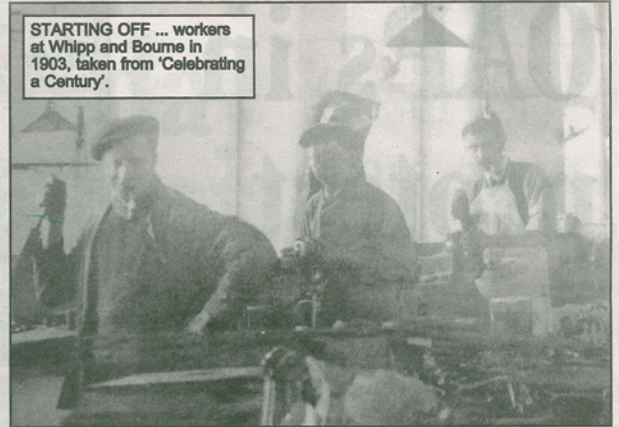




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ROCHDALE OBSERVER, SATURDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER, 2008

End of era as Whipps shuts doors



STARTING OFF ... workers at Whipp and Bourne in 1903, taken from 'Celebrating a Century'.

FORMER Castleton manufacturing giants Whipp and Bourne has finally shut up shop with the last of the workers walking through the factory gates.

Last year it was revealed that Castleton's biggest factory was to close with over 100 jobs lost. It was said that the works had been making significant losses over a number of years.

The plight of workers

received national publicity when MP Jim Dobbin asked about the redundancies at Prime Minister's Question Time.

Although the owners had been in talks with Rochdale Development Agency and Rochdale Council over a possible move to the new Kingsway Business Park, the plan did not take off.

Manufacturing was moved to FKI's site in Blackwood,

South Wales, at the end of 2007 leaving just a few departments including the research and development workers, at the Manchester Road site.

They have now moved to alternative premises in Heywood, ending the company's long history in Castleton.

Whipp and Bourne had been a major employer since its establishment in 1903.

Started by two entrepreneurial electrical engineers,

Charles Bourne and Samuel Whipp, it specialised in marine switchgear, supplying the Ark Royal, the Titanic and the Royal Yacht Britannia among many others.

Originally based in Molesworth Street, the company moved to Castleton in 1907.

There was a change of ownership in the mid 1970s and in 1986 it was acquired by FKI plc to become part of its switchgear operation.

A book was written about Whipps in 2006 called 'Celebrating a Century' by Roy MacElwee.

Mr MacElwee said it was 'disconcerting' to accept that the 'globally-recognised company with a superb reputation found itself shipping out of the local industrial landscape'.

He added that the number of ships and the number of power stations that it's been involved with was 'quite remarkable'.

