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George J. Cox Ltd.,
Boot and Shoe Manufacturers,
Castle Works, Wellingborough

Accession 1977/337

In 1908, Mr. George J. Cox took over the firm of Fox shoes, before which time Mr. Cox had been in the business of brewing, with William Dulley's Brewery. George Cox lived at 20, Sheep Street, Wellingborough and the house is now owned by the Wellingborough Treasurer's Department. In those early days, the company was based in Finedon.

1913 saw the beginnings of changes and the name became Geo. J. Cox Ltd., the firm moving to its present address at Castle Works, Wellingborough, in 1918, which was the original building of Dulleys Swimming Baths, built in 1892. Some of the original balcony, built to form the visitors gallery, can still be seen, although the 1st. floor has been added.

In the earlier years, the company specialised in mens Weltd shoes, although a certain number of womens shoes were also made. During the 1914-18 war, Cox Ltd. supplied sandals to the South African Labour Corps. and the accounts for these shoes, which were purchased for the Army Clothing Department, are contained within a sales ledger dating from January 1918-October 1926. The Army ordered in all, a batch of footwear to the value of £7,126 and the breakdown of costs shows us that 68 pairs came to £84.12.0 and, therefore, the approximate value of each pair of sandals, in terms of selling price, would be roughly 24/-. They were beautifully made, every pair containing 182 Cutling nails (nails with large flat heads - similar to rivets, driven into the sole of the sandal to provide strength and durability) each also had two rows of nails standing proud on the sole of the sandal and running round the edge of the toe. A total of 6,000 pairs were made for the Army, between January and March of 1918. Quantity discounts were in operation, but even so prices rose during the 1st World War due to the shortage of materials and, therefore, the difficulty was of producing enough, in terms of output, of the goods required. During the post World War 1 years, prices stabilized and tended if anything, to drop. It was once again possible to produce a steady chart of shoes and their costs, including materials and labour. We have one such costing chart, drawn up on 29th August, 1930 (on which, as a matter of interest, Mr. Cox has added that the temperature was 90° in the shade!); it gives a price range of the finished shoe, from 8/- to 8/6 and then up in jumps of 3d to the maximum best quality shoe, which cost 11/6. It also gives prices for Weltd shoes (sewn) and for those that were staple weltd (screwed).

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(cont.)

Some examples are as follows:

	1930	1977
Sole	10d	£1.10
Labour (each pair)	2/4	£2.60
Outsides	7/11	£2.60

In those days, the insole was made of leather, for there were very few synthetics on the market. They are now largely made of board.

The firm supplies shoes to the retail shops and also via the mail order catalogues. They sell under the name of Cox and also under brand names, but do not nationally advertise - having a long standing clientele, one customer dealing with the firm for over 50 years.

The company today employs about 115 people, including office staff, and still trades under the name of Geo. J. Cox Ltd., although the last member of the Cox family, who was connected with the firm, died in May, 1974. The present Managing Director is Mr. N.R. Waterfield, who is Mr. Cox's son-in-law.

The workshops contain a vast collection of machinery, including some of the most up to date tools, to cope with the increase in the use of synthetic materials, and also machinery to save time and labour.

The business still maintains a family feeling and is a hive of industry in the best sense, when the employer and employed still have a good relationship and are obviously contented with the work in hand.

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George J. Cox Ltd.

- 1 Bank Book: for Mr. G.J. Cox, trading as J.H. Fox, in account with the London City and Midland Bank Ltd. showing payments in and out and that the books are regularly audited. 1909-1913

- 2 Bank Book: for Mr. G.J. Cox, trading as J.H. Fox, in account with the London City and Midland Bank Ltd. showing payments in and out and that the books are regularly audited. 1913-1917

- 3 Customers sales day ledger: 1918-1926
This book shows eight columns on each page with date, goods, reference no. and price, with the second series of columns showing date, how the firm has paid (by cheque, etc.) reference no. and amount settled.

- 4 5 copies of The Shoe & Leather Record, (a trade paper).
 - (a) June 2nd, 1949
 - (b) June 23rd, 1949
 - (c) July 14th, 1949
 - (d) July 28th, 1949
 - (e) August 4th, 1949
 - (f) August 18th, 1949

- 5 B.T.A. Gazette, official journal of The National Federation Boot Trades Association for August, 1949.

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(cont.)

- 6 Pamphlet showing styles of mens shoes made under the brand name of Hamilton. c.1958
- 7 3 xerox copies of the Costing Chart, for August 29th, 1930 and worked out by Mr. Cox.

November, 1977