

## Northamptonshire Record Office

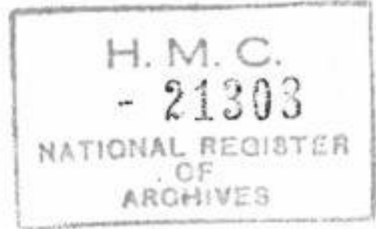
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Records of Ashford and Campion,  
Heel Manufacturers, of  
Westfields Terrace, Higham Ferrers

Accession 1977/347

About the year 1898, William Campion and his brother-in-law, William Ashford, began manufacturing heels at their home in Wymington. They had previously been working in a shoe factory, making and attaching heels, so once having learnt the technique of heel manufacture, they realised they could turn this into a profitable small business. The two men and their wives were the only employees in the early days, manufacturing mens, youths and boys shoe heels; however, as the business grew more profitable, more women were employed.

In 1908, the firm moved into new factory premises in Newton Road, Rushden and within a few years had become Britain's most modern heel factory, installing new machinery from the British United Shoe Machinery Company. The premises were enlarged three times to cope with the firm's orders, which came from all over Britain. Northamptonshire shoe factories provided an important market for heels, which were transported around the county by horse-drawn trolley carriage.

During World War I, the firm turned all of its production to making heels for the British and Allied Armies. Indeed, business was thriving. Unfortunately the 1920's trade depression led to Ashford and Campion accumulating several bad debts and, in 1922, the brothers decided to sell the factory, pay off their debts and go into semi-retirement to Dover. The factory was sold to John White Footwear Ltd.

In 1924, Mr. Ashford and Mr. Campion returned to the county, to Higham Ferrers and opened a new factory in Westfields Terrace, with William Campion's eldest son, W.E. Campion joining the business in 1925.

By 1928, the business was proving too small to be run by two families, so a coin was tossed to decide whether the Ashfords or the Campions should keep the business. The Campion family won the toss and, by 1933, William Ashford had left the firm, to later become a World War II Government Official. The business retained the name of Ashford and Campion.

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Records of Ashford and Campion (cont.)

In 1934, the firm became a Limited Private Company and Mr. Campion's younger son, J.R. Campion, joined the business in 1938. The business was run by a skeleton staff during the war, with J.R. Campion having joined the Royal Artillery. Again all production went into supplying the Army with heels.

When the war ended, William Campion retired, his sons buying the company from him in 1946.

Today, an average of 60,000 pairs of heels are produced by the company each week, who supply shoe factories all over Britain and export to Ireland and Scandinavia; mens, youths and boys heels still remaining the firm's specialization. The company also owns a sole producing factory in Sartoris Road, Rushden. These soles are sent to the Higham Ferrers factory, where all-in-one sole and heels are produced. Two main heel types are made at Westfields Terrace - the leather and composite board heels, built up in layers and plastic heels, made by the firm's four large injection moulders. About 80 people are employed today, between the two factories, with Mr. J.R. Campion as Company Chairman, his brother W.E. Campion having retired in 1977. R.J. Campion, the Chairman's son, has ensured that the business remains in the family, by becoming Managing Director.

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Ashford and Campion

- 1 Accounts Ledger: April 1936-Nov 1942  
Contains the company's accounts (mostly monthly) for expenditure, including:- machinery and plant; wages and salaries; employing outside labour; heating, lighting and power; vehicle expenses; carriage in and out; repairs; rents; taxes and rates; purchases of goods; insurance policies; professional and bank charges; donations; Mr. W. Campion's bank drawings; printing; telephone; postage and stationery; profit and loss account; income accounts - Capital account, discounts received and commissions.
- 2 Receipts and Payments Book: July 1942-Jan 1952  
Contains the monthly receipts and payments accounts of the firm.  
Receipts shown on the left with the date of payment, name of firm paying money in (mostly local shoe companies), amount paid by cheque, amount of discount allowed and the weekly total paid into the bank.  
Payments by Ashford & Campion shown on the right with the date of payment, to whom or for what money paid and the amount paid, less any discount.
- 3 2 photocopies of the Certificate of Incorporation of Ashford and Campion Ltd. 2nd Nov, 1934
- 4 3 photocopies of a full page advertisement printed in "The Shoe and Leather News", 1916.  
Gives a short account of the history of Ashford and Campion from 1908, with a picture of the Newton Road factory and two pictures of Mr. Campion and Mr. Ashford.

November, 1977