

BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF JOHNSON MACHINERY LIMITED  
AND J.C.E.G. LIMITED (JOHNSON GROUP OF COMPANIES, ALSO  
COMPRISING TRINITY PLANT HIRE LIMITED: JOHNSON MACHINERY  
(SCOTLAND) LIMITED: JOHNSON MACHINERY (NORTHERN) LIMITED)

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The present enterprise of Johnson Machinery Limited, an engineering company engaged entirely in the production of high quality construction equipment and materials handling equipment, traces its inception back to the year 1790 when a company under the style of Johnson & Hobbs was started on the banks of the River Irk, two miles north of the City of Manchester. The original Company engaged in the hand weaving of wire cloth for the paper manufacturing industry, and this remained its sole field of activity up to the year 1913.

During that year the late Alfred Johnson became interested in diversification, and obtained the Rights to manufacture and sell mobile conveyors, which were a complete novelty in those days, and as these required marketing to the coal mining industry, he recruited a young man to his staff, John Hartley (now deceased), who was destined during the coming years to make a major contribution to the development of the construction machinery in Britain, and who served as Managing Director from 1945 until his death in 1955.

Further equipment including miners lamps and haulage winches was added to the mobile conveyors, and up to the first world war substantial progress in the manufacturing and marketing of products for the mining industry was made. At the conclusion of the first world war, when John Hartley and other members of the staff had been demobilised, development of the machinery department continued. The year 1932, at the height of the great depression, saw the first diversification into the building and contracting field, with the introduction of the Johnson Power Rammer, the first machine of its type to be sold in the United Kingdom. Production of Contractors Plant was moved from Manchester to the present works in Stockport in 1935.

Brian B. Dearden, the present Chairman and Managing Director of the Johnson Group and Johnson Machinery Limited, joined the company in 1937 as a research and development engineer at the Stockport works, and the following years saw the introduction of the first lightweight self-priming contractors centrifugal pumps, concrete vibrating tables, and the design and production of the first concrete poker vibrators to be manufactured in Britain. By the outbreak of the second world war in 1939, considerable progress in the manufacture and sale of these products, and the first beginnings of export business to South America, India and the Far East had been made, and the Machinery Department of the wire manufacturing company was well established, and continued to produce its own designed products for the armed forces throughout the second world war.

By 1945 the Machinery division had outgrown the original wire weaving activities to such an extent that it was incorporated as a separate company under the style of C.H. Johnson (Machinery) Limited, the Founders of which were Alfred Johnson and John Hartley. Subsequent years, with the company being independent, saw considerable development of new products and expansion of productive capacity. This new company, C.H. Johnson (Machinery) Limited introduced and pioneered many new ideas into the contracting and building industry, and this, coupled with the determination to produce only the very best in quality, capable of standing up to the hard work involved, has continued to mean that the name of "Johnson" on a machine has marked a machine designed primarily to be suitable for the job in hand, irrespective of first cost.

This policy has been proved by the fact that the output and sales of the organisation have expanded to a scale many times greater than they were at the close of the second world war. In order to do this, all the company's range of prewar products were redesigned and brought completely up-to-date, and new inventions, mostly of the company's own development, were introduced. These included the development of the Loband Loader and Hyllo-veyor machines, the first mobile conveyors capable of receiving the feed of bulk material from end tipping lorries and discharging it into a stockpile or into transport at a very high rate. The Johnson Vibrating Screed Units for the tamping and vibration of concrete floors and roads. Johnson produced the first light-weight diesel dumper for the industry in the 1950s, powered by the newly introduced Petter air cooled diesel engines. Since that date, the production of diesel dumpers has become a major part of the company's programme.

Further inventions and developments on the dumpers included the "Trip-skip" multi-skip handling system, which enables a single dumper to have any number of crane skips on a construction site; the "Rotaplacer" the first all round high level tipping dumper; the "Hi-placer"; and the Johnson "Humper", the first completely versatile mobile mechanical handling machine which included a fork lift in its operations, and was developed from the ideas of the Building Research Station. More recently, the company have introduced and still lead in the production of high cycle motor-in-head concrete poker vibrators, besides the original flexible drive type which are still continued in production in greatly improved form. The company developed and pioneered the first lift and force diaphragm pumps for contractors and building sites, and more recently still, the "Motil" diesel utility works truck range.

The present Chairman and Managing Director of the Group, B.B. Dearden, Chartered Engineer, F.I.Mech.E., who had joined the company as a research engineer in 1937, took over in 1959, and the policy of development of the Johnson Group plant hire companies, including Trinity Plant Hire Ltd., Johnson Machinery (Scotland) Ltd., and Johnson Machinery (Northern) Ltd. was commenced.

In 1965, the company was organised on its present Group Holding basis, and a quotation for the shares obtained on the London Stock Exchange. The combined group of companies, which now controls the two engineering works of Johnson Machinery Ltd., situated at Stockport and Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire, plus nine plant hire depots, situated in England, Scotland and Wales, bringing Johnson plant availability to the user through hiring as an addition to Direct purchase, and also bringing first class regional spares availability to the user throughout the country, backed by first class service, has led to a further consolidation of the company's position in the home market.

At the same time, and throughout the whole period of its existence, the company has remained export minded, and today exports are actively maintained for the Johnson range of products, to the countries of the Far East, Middle East, Europe, the Caribbean, South America and Australasia. The future policy of the Group is to remain a specialised company catering for the needs of the construction and mechanical handling industries, with the strongest emphasis on new thinking and innovation, coupled with equipment designed to the very highest standards and capable of standing up to the severe conditions which these industries dictate.

Johnson Machinery Ltd. remains primarily an engineering and marketing company, the Directors of which are all actively engaged in the business.

Johnson Machinery Directors :-

Brian B. Dearden      C.Eng., F.I.Mech.E., A.M.I.Prod.E., F.R.S.A.  
Chairman and Managing Director.

George S. Inglis      B.Sc.Tech., C.Eng., M.I.Mech.E.  
Works Director

Rodney A. Isherwood    B.A., F.C.I.S.  
Secretary

M.J. Lynch            C.Eng., M.I.Mech.E.,  
Chief Engineer

S. Sykes              M.I.Ex.  
Marketing