



B. A. F.
MITCHELDEAN - 21. 2. 45.

•British Acoustic Films employees outside the Maltings Buildings just before the end of the Second World War in February 1945.



•Former chief executive Fred Wickstead's daughter and son, Malcolm and Sue Wickstead, with a Bell and Howell film sound projector.



•An overhead shot of the Rank Xerox plant.



•Museum volunteers Stuart Harold and Ian Hale with a Xerox machine.

AT the height of photocopier production in the 1960s and 70s, the 70-acre Rank Xerox site was filled with a workforce the size of a town.

Based on the site of the old Wintles brewery dating back to 1868, British Acoustic Films (BAF) moved to Mitcheldean from London in 1940 to escape the Blitz, where they made Bell and Howell cine cameras, plus searchlight equipment and gunfire direction tables.

After the war, parent company the Rank Organisation began manufacturing cinema equipment there in 1948, including the development of sound recording and reproduction equipment, and silent cameras and projectors.

When US company Rank Xerox started producing the Xerox 914 – the first plain paper photocopier – it chose Mitcheldean and its highly skilled workforce to cover Europe and the rest of the world, and business exploded.

In less than a decade, the small village of a few hundred people became home to an in-

dustrial complex employing thousands, boosting shops, businesses, pubs, hotels and companies that supplied components.

But the loss of 1,300 jobs in October 2001, when production was transferred to the Czech Republic, heralded the end of an era, with just 80 staff remaining on site until 2010 when all work moved to the US.

The 'Memories of Rank Xerox at Mitcheldean' team – Gerald Cooke, Ian Hale, Stuart Harold and Keith Wilding – are now enhancing the museum, with a visual timeline covering the history of the site.

And it is hoped that major changes to Mitcheldean Town Hall in 2018 will improve accessibility to the collection, begun in 2003, which includes photos, interviews, stories, original Xerox products and memorabilia.

You can follow the team on Facebook at 'Memories of Rank Xerox at Mitcheldean' or via memoriesofrxmp.info

You can also email info@memoriesofrxmp.info or write to Memories, North Cottage, Monmouth Road, Longhope, GL17 0QF.