



Mitcheldean 1948 to 1971

A Memento presented to F. Wickstead, O.B.E., J.P.

*by Members of
The Mitcheldean Management Committee*

16 September 1971

Pete H. Salmon.

J.R. Elliott

Calbyson.

B. D. Crosby

J. Bonney

Ma. Clark

Wing G. Hs

Jack Tester.

Arthur Willitt

It was a pleasure to be accountable.

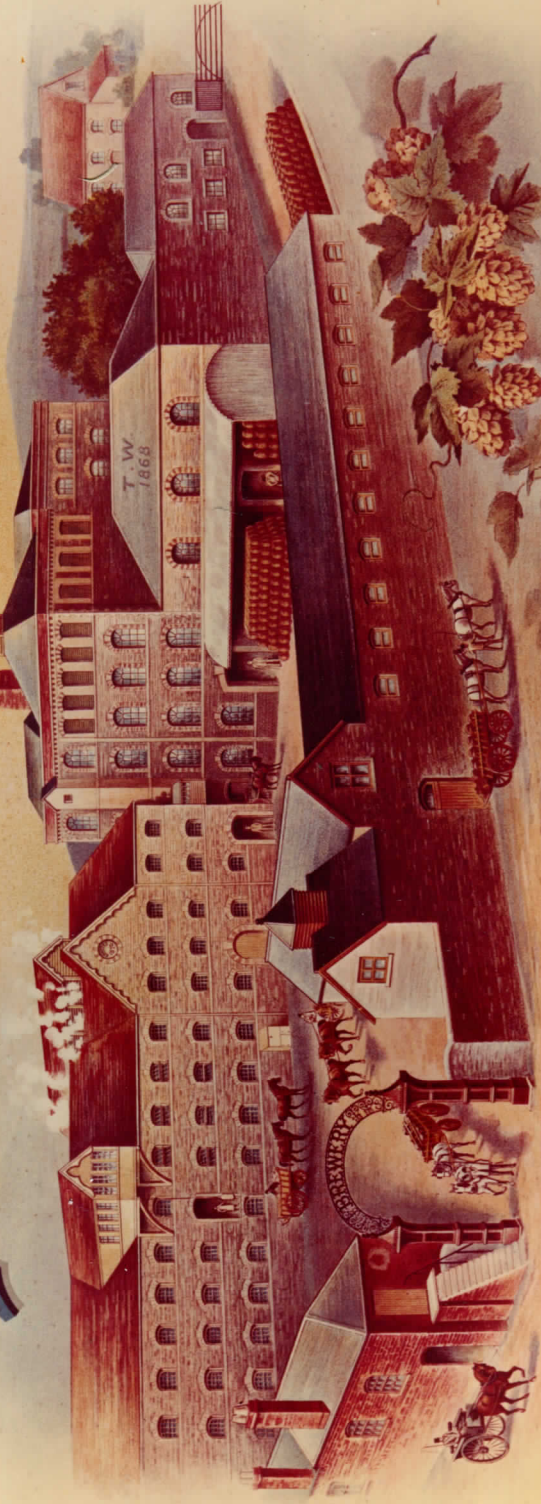
Jack Prood

Democh

R. J. Coleman

THE FOREST BREWERY,

MITCHELDEAN.



FRANCIS WINTLE'S CELEBRATED
ALES & STOUT.

To inhabitants of the Royal Forest of Dean, to local people further afield and to the thousands of Rank Xerox employees across the world, the name "Mitcheldean" conveys an image of a factory complex rather than the village which it now dominates. This would not be so but for a decision taken in 1939 and for the effort and enthusiasm of many people in the years since. Had that decision not been taken, one can only speculate that not only the village of Mitcheldean, but also the other local villages which have, in part derived their prosperity from it, might now form a depressed area.

Prior to 1939, Mitcheldean had a history of emergence and decline of many different industries. Mining of iron ore and coal was well established probably long before the Roman occupation of the country, and by the time of the Norman conquest wool combing, spinning, weaving, tailoring, shoe-making and tanning were among the many crafts being successfully pursued.

By the time of Henry VII, the village was a commercial centre and was granted a Royal Charter entitling it to hold a weekly market and fairs at Michaelmas and Easter. In 1710 a Market House was built on the site of the open market which, at that time, was the local centre for trading in meat and corn. The meat market ceased in the early 1730's and the corn market ceased following the 'Bread Riots' which occurred about 1795.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the mining of both coal and iron ore was declining due, in part, to failure to cope with competition, not only from other parts of the country but also from abroad. This had hardly been helped by the action of the local landowners who, afraid of the progress which a railway would bring, were reluctant to sell their land when the local industrialists were anxious to bring a railway into the village in the early 1870's. This resulted in the opening of the Mitcheldean Road Station in 1872, which was some two miles from the village. Despite the inconvenience of distance, it was to that station that some 300 tons of cement were hauled each week, cement which had been made from limestone quarried on the Stenders Hill. In 1924, however, the cement works was closed down in order to stop competition with the other works of the Company which had bought it that same year.

Although brewing was established in the Forest area by the early seventeenth century, our own link with the past seems to date to 1794 when a licence was

granted to an inhabitant of Mitcheldean for brewing beer and distilling spirits. This business was to be carried on by the Wintle family who, in 1868, erected the main buildings and, in 1870, the maltings of the Forest Brewery.

The Wintles brewed a beer known as Judges Ales and contemporary accounts tell that not only was the beer good, but also that the brewery presented a model of the brewing art. Even this, however, was not to last and in 1930, the business was purchased by Cheltenham & Hereford Breweries Limited, who eventually stopped brewing there to cut out any competition with their other breweries.

Fate had been unkind to Mitcheldean—industries had flourished and then faded—but in 1939 the decision was taken which reversed the trend which seemed to have been established.

The history of our present site since 1939 is well known—one of rapid and continued growth from original occupancy by British Acoustic Films to present occupancy by Rank Xerox. The 32 years since that time has probably been the most exciting period which Mitcheldean has known ; for 23 of those years you have been involved in what has happened, and for 20 of them you have been the architect of what Mitcheldean is today.

You have often said that a factory is not only buildings and equipment, but it is people and what they make of it. With this we agree, but to be successful in its aims, a group of people, whatever its size, must have in its midst a person who not only bears a title which indicates that he is a leader but who also is recognised as such. At Mitcheldean, you have been that person. Recognition of that fact has led us to prepare this book for you in the hope that it may serve to remind you of some of the people with whom you have been involved and of some of the events which have happened.





You and Mitcheldean first met in 1948 when you joined the occupants of the site at that time—British Acoustic Films. This photograph may well show your first view of the factory which was to become your home for 23 years. There were only about 300 people here then, working in buildings and with facilities somewhat less impressive than those which we have now. This photograph shows the extent of the buildings shortly after the completion of the 'new' buildings in 1942—much as the same group look now from the corner of the present Building 11.



In 1946, an agreement had been made to manufacture Bell & Howell equipment under licence at Mitcheldean. The principles of the process had long been established as this cartoon suggests although its actual mechanics had been somewhat improved.



On 3rd March, 1950, Mr. J. Arthur Rank visited Mitcheldean to mark the occasion of the production of the ten thousandth Bell & Howell Gaumont 601 Projector ; these photographs commemorate his visit. Whilst here he was shown the production facilities which are here recalled.







In 1953 more production space was needed and the case shop was extended to house the press shop and the automatic machine shop. 1953 also saw your appointment as General Manager, and the inaugural meeting of the Mitcheldean Long Service Association. This photograph shows the dinner party in progress on 14th



October. You said at the time that you saw the Association as not only a society of old friends, but also as a means of help and encouragement to new staff and apprentices—this it remains today.

The growth continued and production space remained at a premium but 1954 saw the first expansion to cope with the extra administrative staff. Under the auspices of 'Max' Lomax and John Ellis, roof space in the brewery buildings was turned over to office accommodation.



Christmas at Mitcheldean was always a great time for parties and this photograph taken in 1955, shows a reasonably sedate occasion. This was not always so and you will recall how, in earlier years, you used to go around the works on Christmas Eve persuading those who had celebrated not wisely, but too well, to go home so that you too could go.

You may remember that Ed Roble of Bell & Howell arrived here during 1957. Some of his memories suggest the atmosphere of that period—

"When we arrived and turned into that narrow road and they told me the plant was right here, I didn't believe it. How could there be a plant that manufactured cameras and projectors in such small narrow quarters? But, there it was—a narrow gate, a tall building several stories high, rather old, well kept but old. They told me that's where the cameras and projectors were assembled. I couldn't believe it. They took me to the plating works. This was much better—a new building, good, modern facilities. I relaxed a bit. Then they took me across the works road and showed me the micro film assembly. So crowded. So small. "God", I said to myself, "how could they do this to me?" I soon learned. I met the men that ran the works—Bob Baker (Happy Bob), Fred Court and Don Elliott. Then there was John Knox, the Scot, Crisp John I called him, and Ernie Blauch, quiet, creative Ernie. Then we

had Paul. Yes, Paul Gregory, that charming citizen of Cheltenham. Then we had gallant Ken Fox and jolly little Bill Iles. What a group—knowledgeable, practical and tough.

They could get a job done. And, of course, we had scholarly B. C. Smith. Do you remember when he was solving a problem and forgot he was driving his car, drove off the road, turned over his car, turned again, and the car righted itself? He started the motor, got back on the road and still got to work on time. Our accounts men, Geoff Hemingway and big, jolly Jack Woods. These were the finance and cost men who controlled and controlled, and how they had to control in those days. Then we had Ray Camp in our small development area, with guidance from Stan Pratt, who was still at Shepherds Bush. Wonderful men.

I soon found out our buildings and layouts may not have been the best, but we had those wonderful assets—capable men and women, creative and with an abundance of desire—and we had F.W., the fellow whom you did not see too often, but who was constantly navigating and steering the ship. We had about 800 to 900 people then. Not too much sophistication, but they always got the job done. They played hard. They laughed hard. They worked hard.

I remember when we started building our first new, modern building on the hill next to the auto and press shop. This was to become a modern stores area—assembly area—modern office area. Everyone was excited. We had Cyril Hart, the Building Co-ordinator, anxious with you to ensure that construction was moving fast enough. This building somehow became a symbol of things to come.

In time, cameras and projectors left, Haloid-Xerox came in. I remember I saw the process in operation in a very small way in Leeds. Not very impressive then. Tom Law said to me later "I think something will come of that". What a lovely prediction!"

As it turned out, not only a lovely prediction but a very understated one.

Judgement with hindsight is not difficult and it is easy now to say that the decision to bring the manufacture of xerographic equipment to Mitcheldean was the right one. We recognise, however, that the decision, from which so many people

have since benefited could not have been an easy one. The venture offered no profit to Mitcheldean but it would absorb overheads and, if successful, would create employment in an area where clouds on the industrial horizon were indicating a coming period of unemployment. Perhaps, more than anything, it required the ability to recognise the potential of the xerographic process and the conviction to pursue the project and to take people with you into something completely new. Which part of that decision was the easiest—if indeed any of it was easy—only you will recall.

That “modern building on the hill” to which Ed Roble referred—now Building 23—will carry the Wickstead name as long as it stands—on the stone plaque, set in the wall of the entrance, which commemorates the opening of the building by your wife in August, 1958.



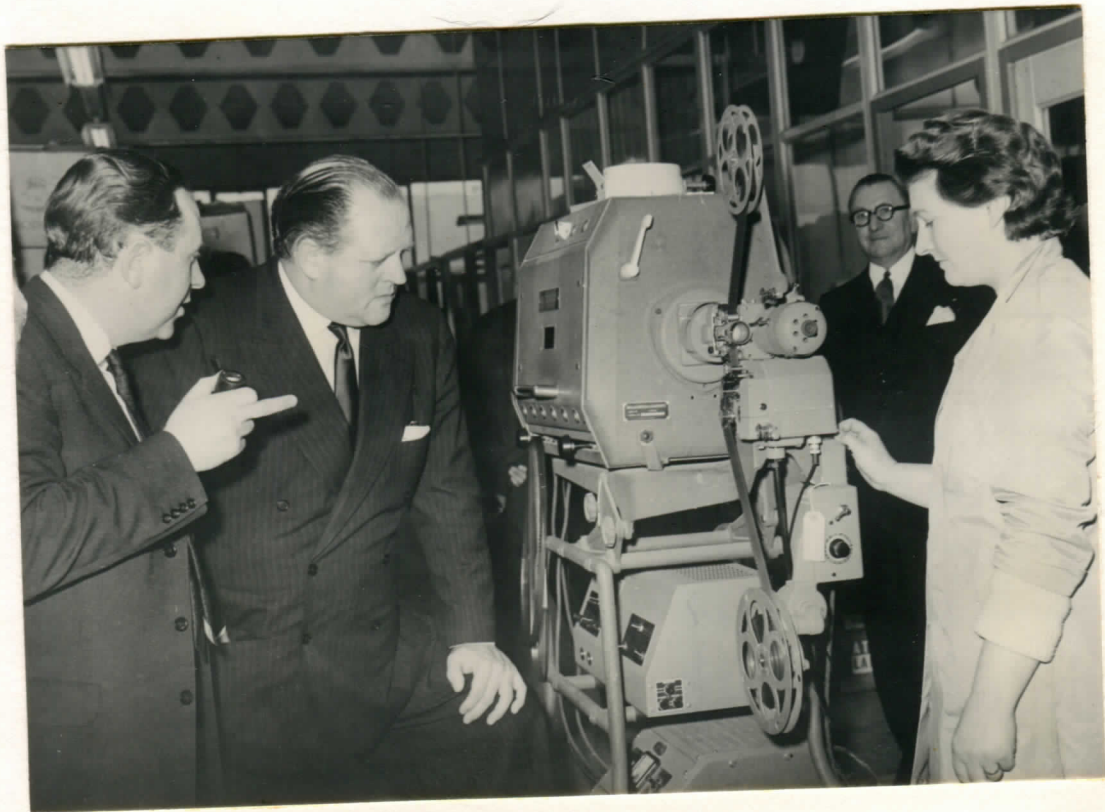
At that time the Mitcheldean site was occupied by Rank Precision Industries and you probably recognise many of the faces in this photograph—the R.P.I. senior managers at the “birth” of the 914 Project.



March, 1960, saw the visit of two notable personalities to Mitcheldean—
'Chuck' Percy, President of Bell & Howell, Chicago, seen here in discussion with
yourself and the late Tom Law, who was then Managing Director of Rank Precision



Industries—and the late Richard Dimbleby, here looking at a Bell & Howell Gaumont arc lamp projector ; Arnold Pincombe is in the background. Both these visits were reported in a new magazine—Vision—which first appeared in May, 1960.



In April, some of your old colleagues from the Photographic Dealers' Association Cine Society came to look around Mitcheldean, here looking at a 640 at the end of the line.



By mid-1961 the advent of the new machine—the Xerox 914—was beginning to be felt. The Wood Mill had been made over to 914 assembly and the Litson move had been undertaken to make yet more space for assembly of Xerox equipment.

By mid-1961, Project 4—the Xerox building—had been started.

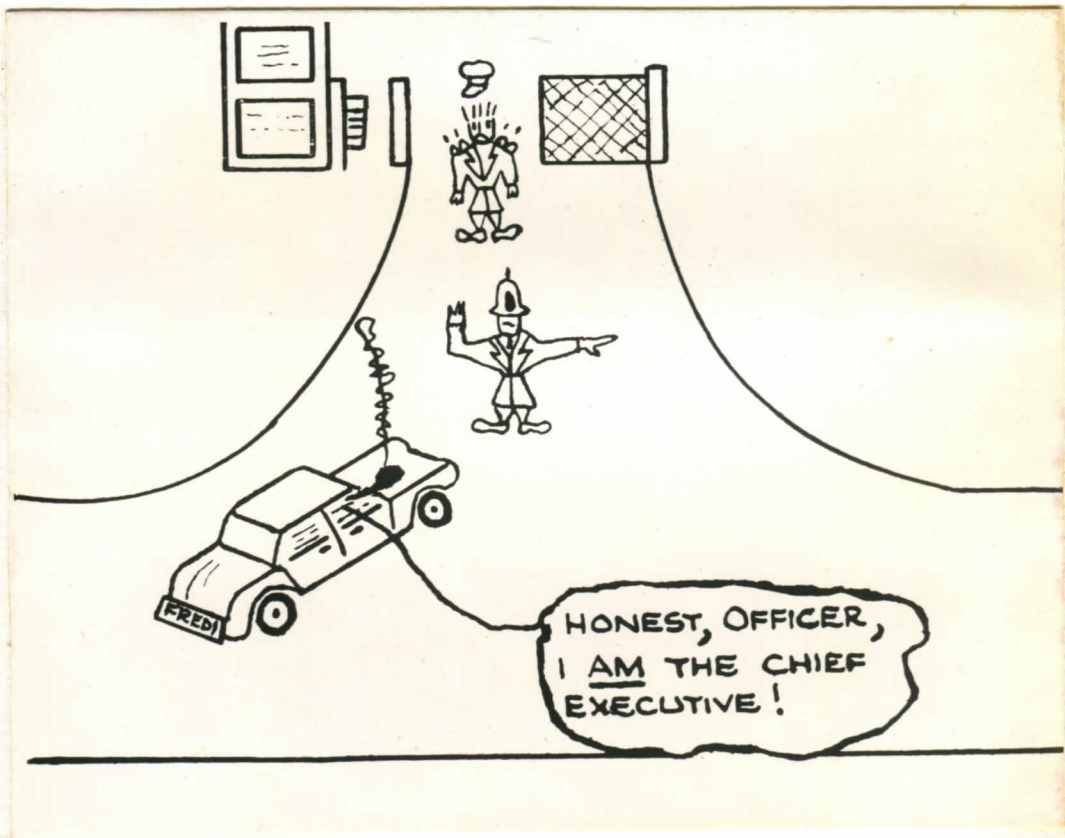
John Davis, then Deputy Chairman and Managing Director of the Rank



Organisation made one of his visits at about the same time—here with yourself and Stan Scott.



By October '61 the Xerox Building was complete. The Ross Spur Motorway was open and plans were already afoot to rename it the "Ross Spur Hemingway" following the decision of a certain Chief Accountant to drive the wrong way along it. On the motoring theme, do you recall the story behind this cartoon ?



Expanding the site to cope with the growth of output of xerographic machines was only part of the battle in the early days. You also had a big job to do persuading a lot of new suppliers that we really meant business. This photograph



recalls the first get together with Plessey in 1961 to celebrate their first year with us on 914 cabinetry.

September, 1963, saw the "coming of age" of Vision, in which appeared the official announcement of the intention to cease manufacture of all Bell & Howell 'Filmosound' projectors in view of the still increasing demand for the 914 and the need to release more space for the next Xerox machine.

In your editorial you quoted figures from the 1962 Annual Report of Xerox Corporation which then employed only 4,700 people and had a sales turnover of only 104 million dollars. You reported also the beginning of work on the Social Centre and Canteen.

March, 1964, saw the announcement of a four million pound investment in the building of a factory and warehouse at Venray, its purpose being to act as a supply centre for consumable products used in xerographic machines made at Mitcheldean and installed in the E.E.C. countries.

June, 1964, saw the official opening of the Social Centre, which coincided with the eleventh annual dinner of the Mitcheldean Long Service Association. That evening, John Davis, who was guest of honour, presented Company awards for 25 years' service to Bernard Smith, Geoff Hemingway, Jock Currie, Dick Payne and Bob Walton.

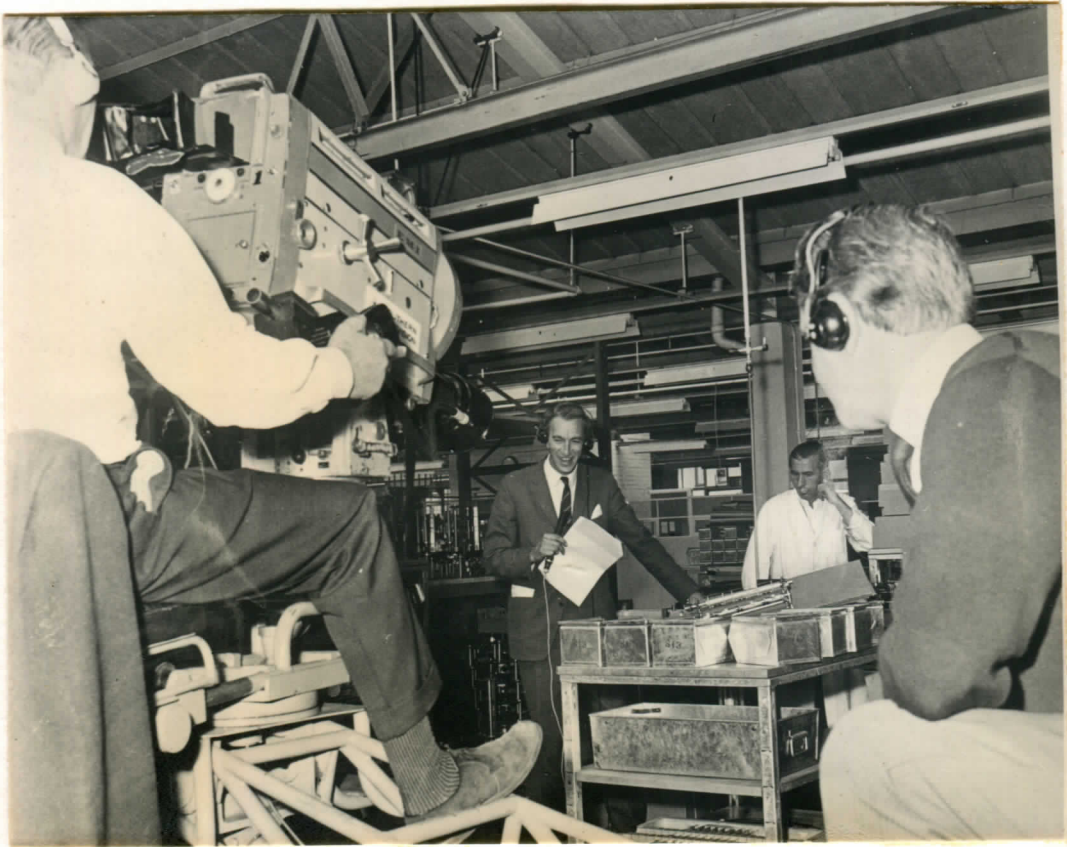
In his address John Davis made some comments about service which we feel sure you would endorse.

"Service is a simple enough word but I sometimes wonder if it is properly understood. Perhaps it is because service means different things to different people".

"To some it means nothing more than survival, but Members of the Mitcheldean Long Service Association have, I know, a very different approach. You meet together in a sense of pride in what you have already achieved and what you know you are capable of achieving together in the future. To you, service is serving others, not serving yourself".

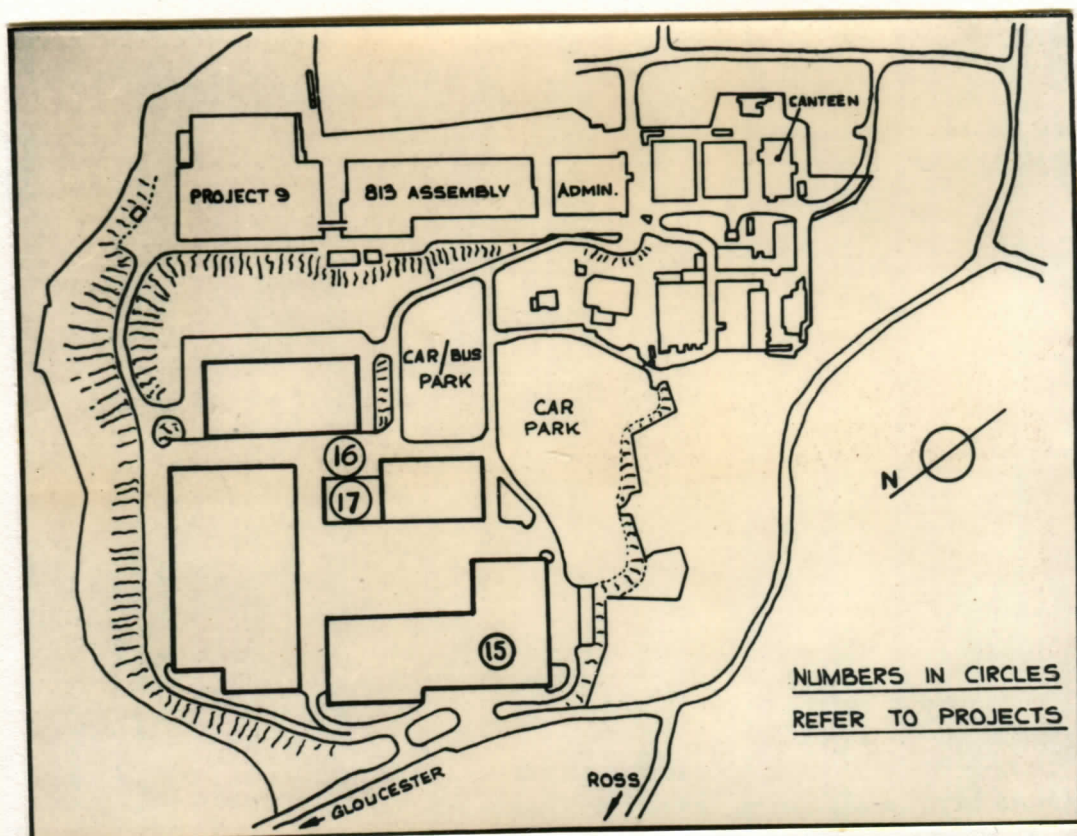
September, 1964, saw the Press Launch of the 813. The Press were assembled in the Dorchester Hotel but Mitcheldean participated in the proceedings by means of a closed-circuit television link.





At about the same time a mammoth earth moving task was under way to prepare land for the construction of more buildings at Mitcheldean. Completion of

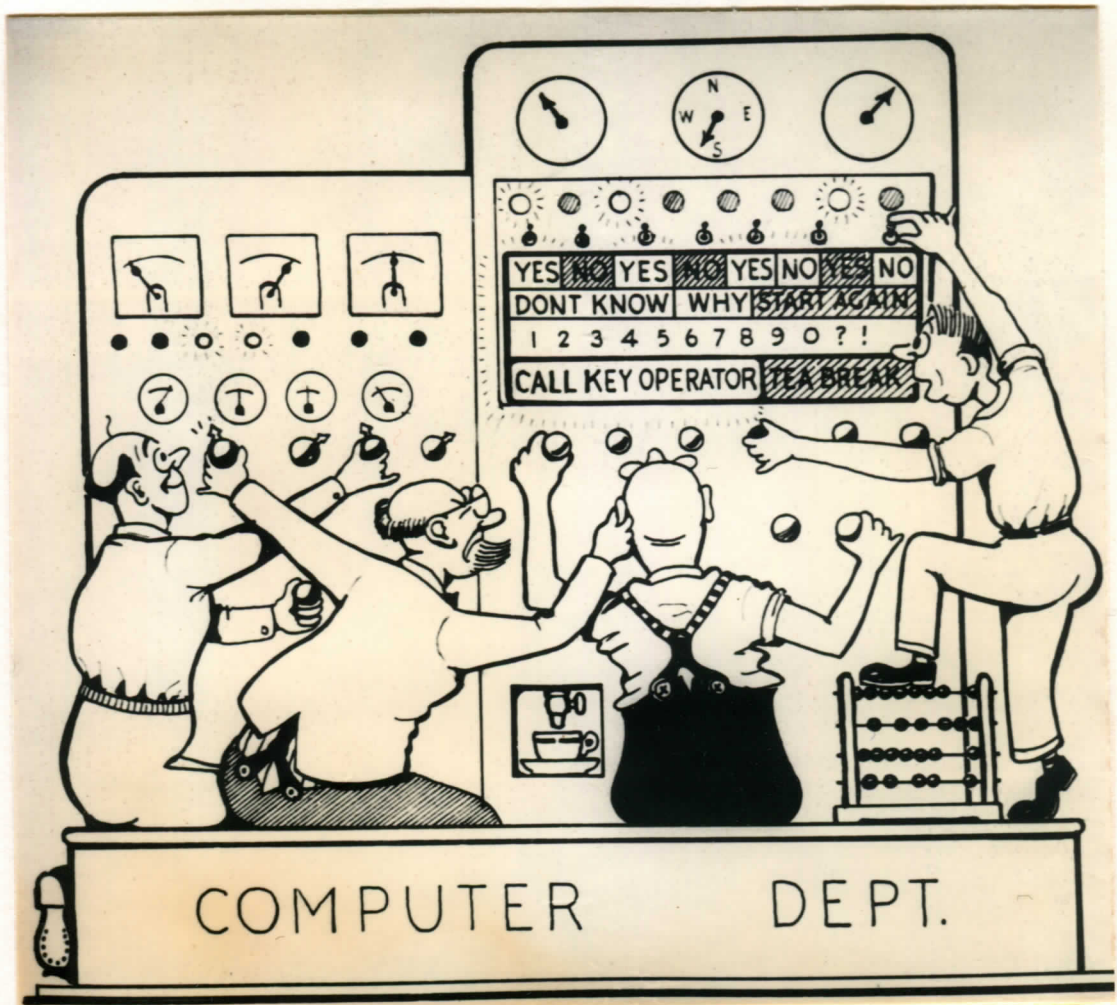
these would bring the site to look very much as it did before work began on the new I.D.C.



On 28th April, 1965, a tie with the past was finally severed when the last Bell & Howell 16 mm. magnetic projector to be produced at Mitcheldean was despatched. The sentiment expressed by Maurice Pask at that time has proved, in retrospect, to be very true.

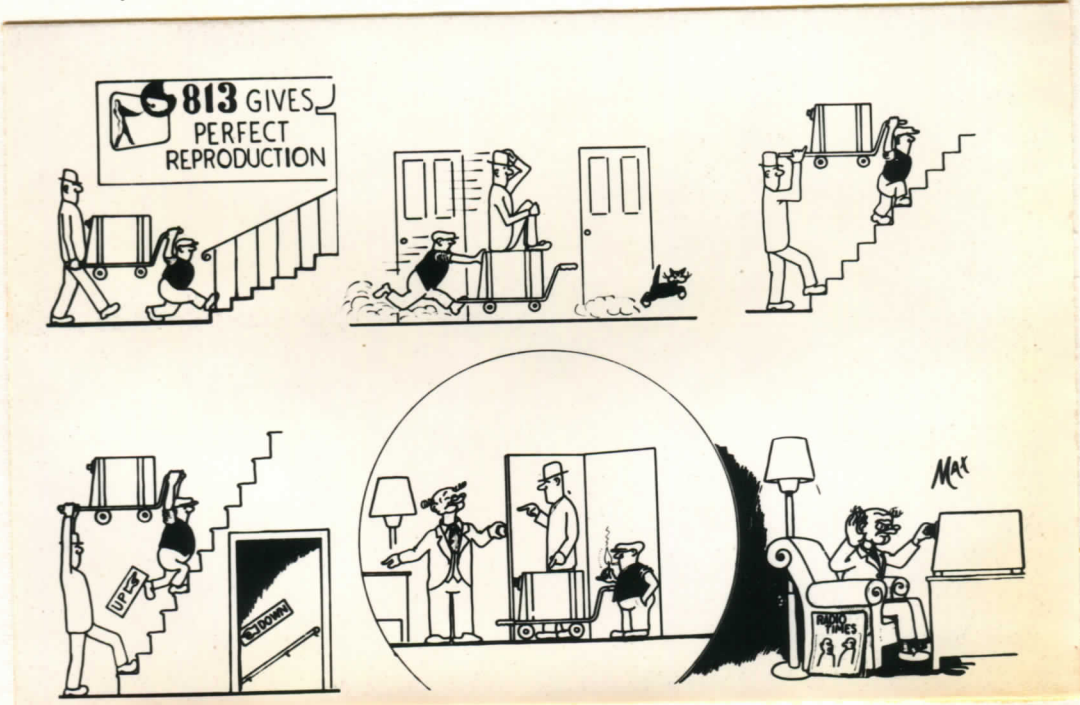
"The pace of expansion at Mitcheldean does not allow much time for reflection about the Bell & Howell days, but perhaps this is just as well. With such a vast potential Xerox-wise, it is the future that matters and if we can count on the same spirit that helped to produce our cine equipment, there can be no doubts regarding the future of Rank Mitcheldean Plant".

You may recall the first full Rank Xerox Company Conference in September, 1965, at which you gave an account of the rapid development which had taken place at Mitcheldean up to that time. You probably recognise these cartoons which



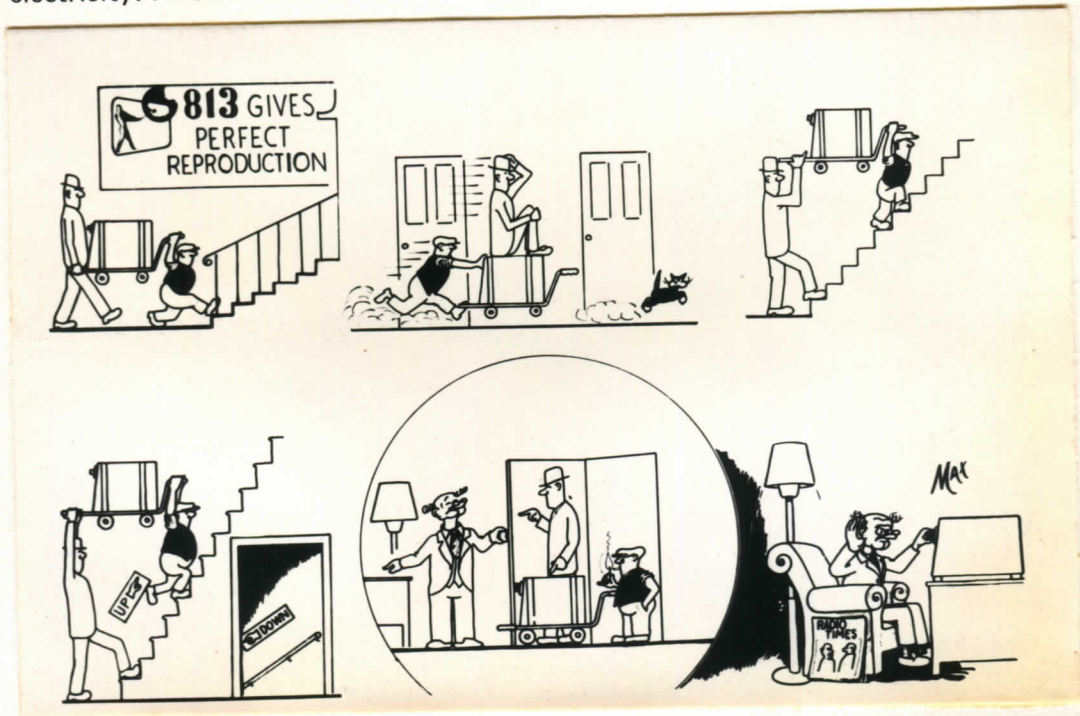


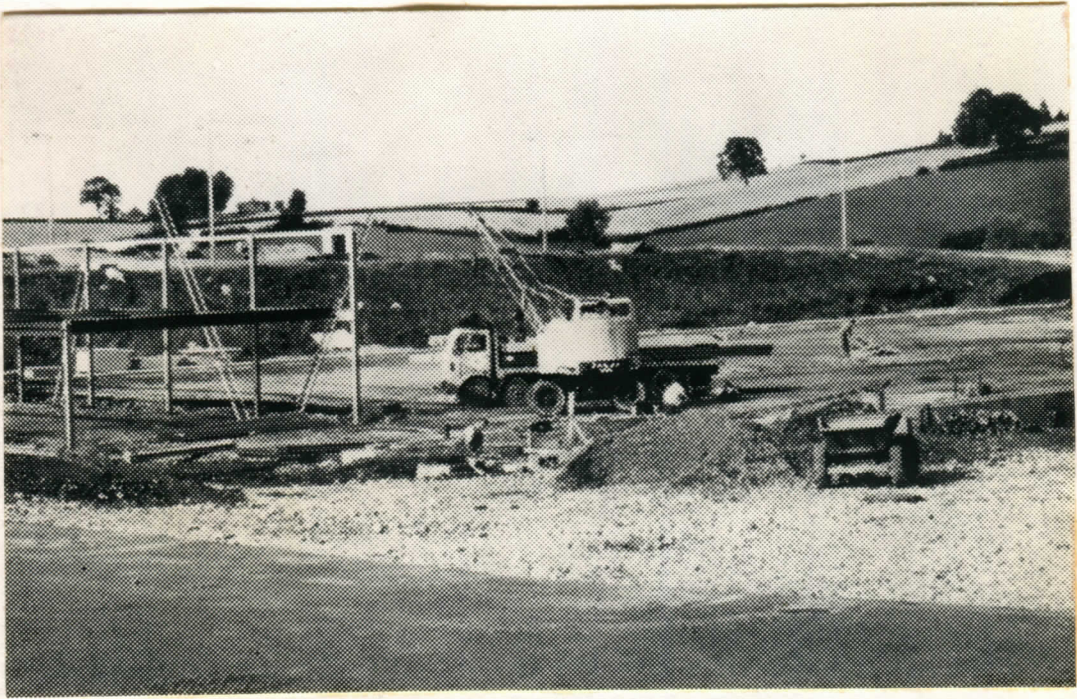
are two of those you commissioned from 'Max' Miller for the occasion—the Computer Department and a xerographic machine for use in areas of the world without electricity. Another one showed a somewhat unusual machine installation.





are two of those you commissioned from 'Max' Miller for the occasion—the Computer Department and a xerographic machine for use in areas of the world without electricity. Another one showed a somewhat unusual machine installation.

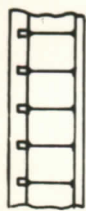




Also in September, 1965, the new Warehouse was under construction ; commenced in late July, 1965, it was ready for occupation within 21 weeks—a record even by Mitcheldean standards ! This gave us 60,000 square feet of warehousing space—a far cry from the 350,000 square feet which we shall have by early 1972 !

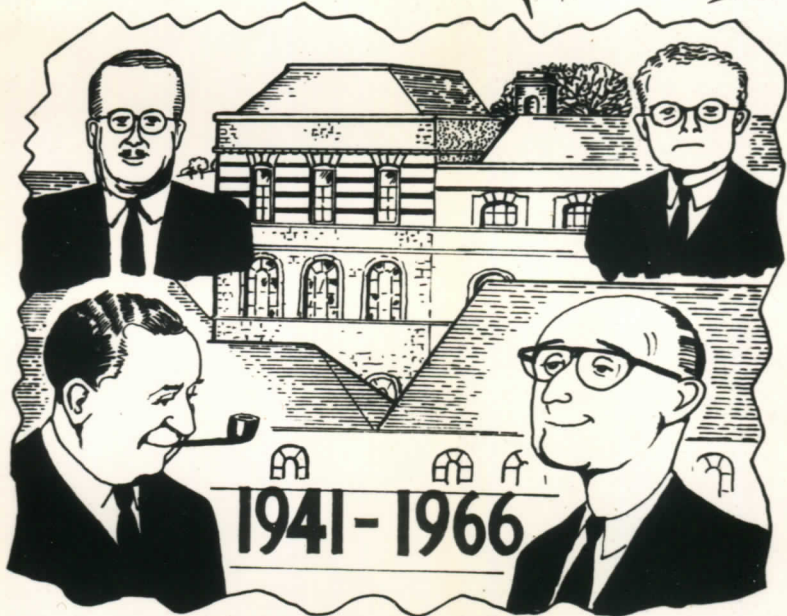
The new assembly building for the 2400 was officially launched in London in April, 1966. John Davis had visited the plant again in March, 1966, and whilst here, reviewed the plans for Projects 15a and 19—15a was to be an extension to the new assembly building and 19 another new building, alongside the new boiler house, which was to accommodate the Design Engineering Department and the National Workshop.

May, 1966, was a time for reminiscing and the Chase Hotel saw the gathering of the 'pioneers'—the men who had come down from London in 1941 to turn the brewery buildings over to different use—the arrival of B.A.F. Tom Law and yourself were there. You related, as you doubtless still remember, how, when you first arrived in Mitcheldean, you couldn't even find the Company and when you went to look for your desk in the Maltings you found there wasn't one ; eventually one was made for you out of a packing case in which a milling machine had been imported from America !



**25TH ANNIVERSARY
MITCHELDEAN
SILVER JUBILEE**

British Acoustic
Films Ltd.
RANK PRECISION
RANK XEROX



1941-1966



Present :

Mr. T. A. Law.

* Mr. F. Wickstead.

PIONEERS 25 YEARS CONTINUOUS SERVICE

MITCHELDEAN.

Messrs :

R. H. Arnold

R. E. Baker

E. Bayman

W. E. Blaich

R. H. Camp

F. W. Court

J. Currie

G. Fricker

W. A. Gaylard

T. J. Knight

J. Morgan

H. S. Phillips

S. G. Richardson

W. Stearn

G. E. Weatherley

A. Wing

R. Wigglesworth

Guest

Mr. H. J. Beddington

Menu

Consomme Royale

Fresh Grapefruit

Pate Maison

★

Fillet of Sole Duglere

★

★

Roast Rib of Hereford Beef

Yorkshire Pudding

Cauliflower

Buttered Carrots

Garden Peas

New Potatoes

★

★

★

Chocolate Mousse with whipped fresh cream

★

★

Devils on Horseback

★

Coffee



Do you remember this occasion ? It was in April, 1967, when you arranged a luncheon party on the retirement of your old friend Frank Jessop of Bell & Howell days.



Despite all the building work that had been undertaken in the early 60's, 1968 saw Mitcheldean again facing a space shortage. The plan adopted to overcome this involved the leasing of space on the Gloucester Trading Estate, taking over space occupied prior to that time by Rank Bush Murphy at Welwyn Garden City, and the erection of yet another new building at Mitcheldean.

In June, 1968, the 3600 was launched and for the first time a national press conference was held at Mitcheldean. About a week prior to the launch Peter McClough and Felix Evangelist had visited the plant.

Early in 1969 there commenced the Productivity Campaign which was strongly stimulated by the presence of Fred Oldfield, who was to give us so much of his last few years.



The early months of 1969 also saw two notable visitors to Mitcheldean ; in January Admiral Sir William Davis, and in February Sir Alfred Owen.



Towards the end of 1970, work began on Mitcheldean's largest single building project—the new I.D.C.—due to be completed in early 1972 when it will give us 350,000 square feet of storage space. Also, just before Christmas, 1970, Bob Pippitt paid his first visit to Mitcheldean since his appointment as Deputy Managing



Director of the Company. Not long after Christmas, 1970, Joe Flavin and Mal Thomas visited us.



The first few months of 1971 contained three events important to Mitcheldean ; the Press Launch of the first of the new generation of copiers—the 4000, the arrival of a new General Manager, and the honouring of yourself by the presentation of the O.B.E. in recognition of your services to the local community.



These three events were all important for Mitcheldean, but of the three, the last one had a particular significance for us as well as for you. The conferring of a public honour on you was felt by many, both at Mitcheldean and in the Forest, to be long overdue and there could be sensed within Mitcheldean a feeling of personal pride in having our Director honoured in this particular way.

1971 has also seen another honour bestowed upon you—your appointment as a corporate officer within Xerox Corporation. Archie McCardell's comment that "opportunities at Xerox will always go to the most qualified person available" serves only to reinforce the sentiment that has long been felt about you at Mitcheldean.

So 1971 has seen the departure from Mitcheldean of the man who has made it what it is. It is up to those who remain to continue to build on the strength and goodwill which you have left behind you—a task which we take on with pleasure and with pride.

We—you and Mitcheldean—have arrived at a turning point from where we must go our separate ways, but for neither of us is this the end ; for Mitcheldean it is the end of the beginning—and for you, the successful completion of a chapter of your life. Mitcheldean can go into the future confident in the strength of the foundation which you have laid for it and we are sure that Xerox Corporation will greatly benefit from your expertise and energy which we at Mitcheldean have enjoyed for so long.

We have tried in this book to remind you of some of the events which have passed in our story of success. As to the future we can only wish you a continuation of that success.



