

Mar./May 1963.

The Rank Organisation Ltd.,
Rank Mitcheldean Plant,
Mitcheldean, Glos.

A Synopsis of the Rank Organisation activities
at Mitcheldean.

At the beginning of World War 2 British Acoustic Films decided to move their factory from Shepherds Bush, London, to a peaceful and less conspicuous site in the country. After a certain amount of travelling they found the old Wintle Brewery at Mitcheldean. The Brewery at this time was in partial use only. Brewery ceased in 1930, but the manufacture of Malt was continuing in part of the buildings. It is now a classic story that the BAF Directors viewed the vacant property and then adjourned to discuss the matter over a packaged luncheon eaten at the roadside. ^{for lack of any restaurant.} Here the decision was taken that gave birth to the Mitcheldean factory.

Before long work began on the alterations to the buildings and the recruitment of a nucleus labour force. Eventually, in 1941, production started. This was, of course, war work and covered the manufacture of a Fire Direction Table, Search-lights and part of the 9mm. Predictor used by Anti-Aircraft Forces. *About 100 of the Shepherds Bush employees evacuated to Mitcheldean at this time, some of whom remain to this day.*

At the end of the War steps had to be taken to safe-guard the future of the factory and so British Acoustic Films turned to its old love, the Ciné Trade. In 1946 an agreement was made to manufacture Bell & Howell equipment under licence. Thus the second phase in the life of Mitcheldean began. At this time the "Maltings" buildings became available and with this building as an Assembly Department and another War-time building as a Machine Shop, the manufacture of the highly successful 600 Series Projectors began.

Bit by bit the factory grew and before long a Heat Treatment section was installed. Shortly afterwards in 1948 the Plating Shop was installed in the old buildings. It soon became apparent that the factory was bursting at its seams and new buildings were an urgent necessity. 1949/50 saw the addition of three bays for the manufacture of ^{plastic} wooden cases. This was followed in 1953/4 by another new building to house the Press Shop and the Automatic Shop. By now the Plating Shop badly needed new accomodation, and 1955/6 saw the erection of a new building for this purpose.

~~It soon became apparent that a~~ ^{was also} new Assembly Department ~~would be~~ required in order to meet the growing demand of Bell & Howell Products, and so in 1958 a decision was taken to start the erection of the building you first see on entering the factory. At the same time the Mitcheldean factory became the home of the Cine and Photographic Division of the Rank Organisation thus amalgamating the selling and manufacturing activities. From this stage in the development, production progressed in leaps and bounds, but unknown to many the second phase of the Mitcheldean story was coming to an end. ~~Very severe competition in the "Home Movie Market" from the Japanese and other countries was beginning to be felt.~~ The third phase in the life of the factory opened late in 1960, a full two years before the severe curtailment of 8mm. Cine manufacture. This, of course, was the advent of Xerographic manufacture.

To cater for this new product a new building was authorised and erected and in November 1960 the first ~~line~~ production of Xerox 914 was despatched. The growth of the 914 is of course, well known and every year since 1960 has seen the erection of additional floor space to cater for the ever increasing demand for this product. Even now 1.1 million pounds is being spent on additional facilities to meet this growing demand, and in addition, ^{the} decision has been taken to relinquish the manufacture of Bell & Howell product, so as to free further space by mid-1964.

* This was the former name of Rank Precision Industries Ltd. which is the legal owner of the Mitcheldean site.