

KERRY'S 80 YEARS OF FACTORING TO THE CYCLE TRADE

THIS year will be the 80th anniversary of the foundation of the business of Kerry's (Great Britain) Ltd., the well-known factoring concern with its head office at Warton Road, Stratford, London, E.15, with branches and subsidiaries throughout the country.

Founded by Alfred Kerry in 1877 as East London Rubber Company, the original premises were in Lower East Smithfield, and the business that of rubber merchants.

The cornerstone of the present Kerry's—and, in fact, the foundation of the cycle factoring industry as we know it today—was probably laid when Alfred Kerry took up the distribution of solid rubber tyres to builders of Ordinary bicycles. Certainly, distribution of solid rubber tyres launched the East London Rubber Company into an industry which, step by step, was to revolutionise transport throughout the world.

The management of the business remained the sole responsibility of Alfred Kerry until 1894, and in that year he took into partnership his son-in-law, John Llewellyn Jones, who was to spend more than 50 years of his life in the business, and to play a prominent part in its subsequent progress and expansion.

The partners steadily extended the business to include bicycles and all parts and accessories, and (at the turn of the century) motor cycles and motor cycle spares and accessories. Kerry motor cycles of this vintage are entered annually in the Pioneer Motor Cycle run from Epsom to Brighton.

In 1903, the partnership was further strengthened by the admission of another son-in-law of the founder, in the person of Herbert John Ball, who was to share the responsibility of leadership with John Llewellyn Jones for several decades. The founder, Alfred Kerry, died in 1905.

The advent of the Horseless Carriage presented the opportunity of entry into the motor trade, and the partners were among the earliest distributors of motor car accessories, none of which was at that time fitted by the vehicle manufacturers.

In 1906, Walter Hart joined the company to take charge of the tyre department, and his introduction to the business was to have a strong influence in future years.

Before the turn of the century—actually in 1898—the firm's first comprehensive catalogue was distributed to customers, and the reception of it by the retail trade was such that it became a regular annual

feature of the company, and subsequently of the trade as a whole.

In 1910, following two previous moves to more commodious premises, the company acquired a very large property—29-33 Great Eastern Street, on the corner of Holywell Lane, and the facade of this building became very familiar to the trade through the mediums of the firm's stationery and advertising.

The company's only branch, at Sheffield, was at this time also moved to larger pre-



W. NORMAN HART,
managing director of
Kerry's (Great Britain)
Ltd.

mises in Furnival Street, which with considerable later extensions, it still occupies.

By the early '30's, the volume of business handled by the partnership had greatly increased, and now included motor, wireless and electrical goods, in addition to the original cycle and motor cycle ranges, and in 1934, John Llewellyn Jones and Herbert John Ball relinquished their proprietorship, and Walter Hart, general manager for the previous 12 years, joined the former partners as joint managing director of the public limited company.

During the next five years, the company opened nine additional branches throughout the country, but in 1939 this programme of expansion was halted by the outbreak of World War 2.

The destruction of the Great Eastern Street premises and stocks by enemy action in September, 1940, led to the acquisition of the premises at Stratford, which are the firm's present headquarters.

The increasing ramifications of the com-

HEADQUARTERS OF KERRY'S are at Stratford, London, E.15, in a modern building, part of which is shown in this illustration.



pany, and its entry into the machine-tool manufacturing field, rendered the name East London Rubber Company a misnomer, and in 1943 the directors decided to change it, and in so doing incorporated the name of the founder in the title of Kerry's (Great Britain) Ltd.

W. Norman Hart, son of the joint managing-director, who joined Kerry's in 1934, became a director in 1946, and four years afterwards was joined on the board by R. J. Lewis, who had for some time

been assisting the managing directors in branch administration.

At the end of 1951, Walter Hart retired from his position as managing director, retaining his seat on the board, and was succeeded by his son, W. Norman Hart.

In his 46 years active service with the company, Walter Hart had contributed largely to the growth of the firm from a comparatively small partnership to a leading position in the industry, operating at the time of his retirement 13 branches and three wholly-owned manufacturing subsidiaries with a substantial export business.

Today, the cycle and motor cycle accessories division remains an important side of Kerry's activities, as evidenced by the growing popularity of the Kerry range of bicycles and accessories displayed annually at the Cycle and Motor Cycle Show. Incidentally, Kerry's is one of the very few wholesalers which has exhibited at every show staged by the Industries' Association.

Kerry's directorate at present is composed of E. Cassleton Elliott, C.B.E., F.S.A.A. (chairman); W. Norman Hart (managing); W. Hart; R. J. Lewis; H. R. Peters; and R. Gresham Cooke, C.B.E., M.P.

There are five factories and 20 distributing branches with a controlling interest in Merriman and Howard Ltd., of Manchester, and in Spare Parts Ltd., of Blackburn and Morecambe.

Authorised capital amounts to £1,000,000 of which £600,000 is issued.



ORIGINAL PREMISES of Kerry's, at Lower East Smithfield.

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