

*History of Purley on Thames**Section EH0001***Biographies****Charles Ernest Hodgkins (1861-1948)**

By C W W Moss

Mr Moss worked for Pulsometer from 1929 until he retired in 1975.

Mr Charles Ernest Hodgkin's grandparent, Mr John Eliot Hodgkin, was a Conveyancing Barrister. His son, Mr CEH's father Mr John Eliot Hodgkin Jnr was born on the 30th December 1829. He was apprenticed at Ransome and Sims, Engineers, of Ipswich. He married his boss's daughter in 1854.

John Eliot came to London in 1873, and with the partnership of a Mr Neuthas, he formed an engineering company. They procured the patents of the Pulsometer Steam Operated Pump, so they formed a company: the Pulsometer Engineering Co Ltd. to manufacture the pump. Their first factory was in Battersea and at that time they employed 30 people and their weekly wage bill was £50. This was in 1875.

They then commenced the manufacture of other types of pumping equipment, many covered by Pulsometer Patents. Owing to expansion they moved to larger premises in Nine Elms, London. Further capacity was needed so they moved to Reading, their present works, in 1901. They called the works "Nine Elms Ironworks".

Mr John Eliot Hodgkin had two sons, Stanley Howard and Charles Ernest. Stanley I believe was at Pulsometer all of his life, but Charles Ernest served an apprenticeship, at I believe The Brush Electric Co Ltd.

John Eliot died in 1912 and his two sons took over control of the company. They became Joint Managing Directors, eventually Mr SHH becoming Chairman and Mr CEH Secretary. Mr SHH controlled finance and Mr CEH responsible for production. Other members of the family had financial interest in the company. Mr SHH was a typical Accountant looking after every penny, thus he supervised the Purchasing Department, the section in which I was employed.

Mr CEH was more interested in material quality and deliveries and experimentation. It had its difficulties as Purchasing fell "between two stools". But taking all in all the co-operation of both sides of the business resulted in very satisfactory progress. Nevertheless they were both careful men, for example they would not buy scrap pads, the office boy had to cut up all incoming envelopes and tie them together to make the pads. They both had their idiosyncrasies. They kept their coal fires in their offices long after the introduction of gas and electricity. Mr CEH had a gas fire and insisted that a large bowl of water was placed in front of the fire. The Office Boy had to top it up every morning. Mr SHH had an electric fire but would not give up his spring-wound clock. Again the poor Office Boy had to rewind every morning.

Mr CEH rode a 'sit up and beg' cycle from Purley and to amuse the local children he would do tricks on his cycle such as standing on his saddle and the local lads would call after him not always complimentary.

One lad applied for an apprenticeship as a carpenter and had a bit of a shock when he went for an interview. Mr CEH took a lot of interest in the apprentices and the works in general and encouraged such things as First Aid Training. He also formed the Pulsometer Fire Brigade, possibly one of the first in the area. He made the Residential Works Manager the Chief Officer. He insisted on regular training sessions and invariably attended these practices which often took place in the evenings. The Brigade became a member of the Industrial Fire Brigades Association.

He was also very interested in the old age of his employees and was one of the instigators, with the Works Director of the now defunct Thorneycrofts of Caversham, of a pension fund within the Engineering Industry. This scheme is still in existence.

Mr SHH and Mr CEH were of the old school of Directors but were nevertheless very well liked by all of their work-people

Mr CEH was responsible for War Time lectures on First Aid at the works, also in the village of Purley. The Pulsometer First Aid Officers giving the training.

The brothers rode their unique cycles well into their 70s and reluctantly had to give them up by order of their Doctors. As they approached the end of their business careers, they came into the offices half days only and a Mr J S Woodrow joined the company as Chief Clerk, soon to become Secretary and Commercial manager, the Director, and with the demise of the brothers Managing Director. Sir Felix Pole of Great Western Railway fame became Chairman. With the first take over of the business the Hodgkin family faded out of their successful business with many regrets of the old employees. The company is now a Booker Company and could not have had a better master.

Additional Notes

Charles Ernest Hodgkin was born 16th Jan 1861 and died 3rd March 1949. He came to live at Purley Lodge where he remained for the rest of his life. He was churchwarden for 48 years from 1902 until 1949. He was a founder member of the Parish Council in 1927 and was its chairman from January 1928 until 1946. There is a tablet to his memory in the Church at Purley.

He introduced a gas supply into the village when he paid for a main to be brought down to his house and to Purley Lodge Cottage in 1924.