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## A Gift to the Town

National Grid has donated a maker's plaque from the gasholder on their Stewart Street site to the Crewe Heritage Centre. The plaque marks the construction of the gasholder in 1925 on a site involved with the gas industry since 1876.

The plaque made the mile-long journey from the site to the Heritage Centre, where it was accepted by the Mayor, Councillor Benn Minshall. Speaking at the handover, Councillor Minshall welcomed the preservation of a piece of local industrial heritage; "We are delighted this piece of the town's industrial past has been protected, and would like to thank National Grid for the donation. It is a small but significant part of our history."

Gareth Taylor, Land Regeneration Manager at National Grid, said, "Gasholders are an important part of our industrial heritage and during works like those at Stewart Street, we undertake detailed heritage recording of the gasholders, and always try to donate artefacts when we can. In this case, it is great to find a home for the plaque, so close to where it has stood for almost 50 years."

(We also received a number of excellent copies of photographs and documents for which we are very grateful.)



## The gas supply for Crewe

Of course, as with everything else, the Company supplied gas to Crewe when the town was born. The first gasworks built by the Grand Junction Railway in 1842-3 was in Lockitt Street and gas was supplied to anyone who needed it. Soon after the opening of the Steel Works in 1864 and the development of the west end of the town, a new gas works was built in Wistaston Road. Extensions took place between 1882-6, and the plant supplied the whole of Crewe.

After 1900, a clause in the LNWR Act, enabled the Company to sell gas cooking and heating appliances and a local exhibition was held leading to more customers. The question of the Borough buying the pipes also arose in 1900, when they refused to let the Company break up the streets to lay pipes and successfully opposed clauses in the LNWR Bills of 1903, 1904 and 1905 to give the Company power to do this, but the dispute died down and things remained as they were until gas was nationalised after World War 2 and then finally privatised. (Crewe Borough began to provide electricity from 1900 and from 1908, electric private lighting took an increasing share of the output, and in 1932 a showroom was opened and the sale of appliances began.)

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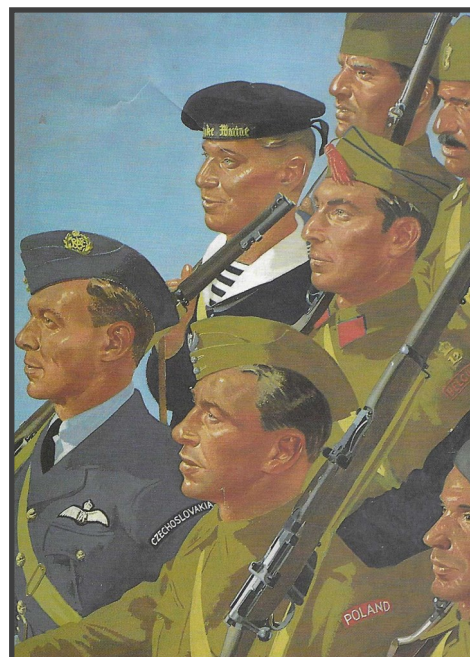
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## Wartime Memories

I was born in Poland. I had just completed my National Service when I was called back into the Polish army as my country prepared to fight the German invasion we knew was about to come. We were defeated by the Germans but escaped and joined the British forces and with the Polish Corps, fought through Italy alongside them.

When the war was over, I came to Britain where the government passed an Act of Parliament allowing us to stay in Britain. I did not intend to stay and was sent to various camps and at Doddington I took a course and became one of the administrative officers, helping my fellow countrymen to settle. When the camps finally closed, I went for an interview at County Clothes, Crewe. Simon Ackerman took me on and I worked for him until I was 75, becoming a production engineer.

While at the camps, I met the girl who was to become my wife. She had been taken from Poland when 17 to work in a munitions factory. Her brother had fought in the Polish Corps and come to England. We were allowed to bring in one other person and he asked for his sister to be found. Eventually, she was traced by the Red Cross and brought here. I helped to organise dances, and when I heard that there were Polish girls staying in a nearby camp, I went to invite them to come along. The Matron agreed—so long as we provided transport and got the young ladies back by 11 p.m. and that is where we met, all those years ago



A poster from WW2 to help people see the different nationalities that were fighting for Britain

### Jim Shenton

Jim Shenton was born in Crewe and educated at Bedford Street School. As an apprentice electrician, he worked for Tom Consterdine but left in 1939. In 1940, he was living with his parents in Wood Street and had begun working at Radway Green. He signed up with the RAF in June as an electrician and was posted to Blackpool and Henley for training, eventually sailing in a troopship for the Middle East via Africa, Palestine and Egypt. He served for most of the time in India and Burma returning to England early in 1945. Lily worked in Diamonds and they had met when he did an electrical job there. She lived at the Big Oak, in Groby Road, and she joined the Land Army in 1943.

### Extracts from Jim's diaries:

Wednesday, 29th May: War against France going very badly.

Friday 31 May: Germans push through France like hell.

Sunday 9 June: To Blackpool with Lily—last time, I wonder?

Friday 14th June: Decide to join the Navy at Hanley tomorrow

Saturday 15 June Joined the R.A.F. at Hanley.

(under 'Memoranda' he has written:  
No vacancy in the navy; take the next best.

Monday 17th June: French call for armistice. Things look very black.

Wednesday 3 July: Arrived at Cardington to attest' Slept in a tent.

Thursday 4 July: Slept on Derby Station. Am an airman: number in the R.A.F. 11685790.

Sunday 1 September: Blackberry picking. Last walk home with my Lily.

Monday 2 September: Arrived at Blackpool. Poor billets.

Tuesday 3 September: Received kit. Now abandon civilian life. Injections etc.



The next few entries describe his training; first drills: 'Feel sore, and some;' PT drills: 'ache all over—feel a wreck' Further drill morning;; Gas lecture on South Pier; Church Parade - relaxed day. Inoculation, 'Arm aches badly. Felt it all day, but I can take it!' 'Arm now swollen but feel OK.' Baths; no Parade. Rifle Drill. Pay £1. Shooting range—average shot.

Sunday 12 January 1941: Cookhouse peeled 10 cwt. spuds and 3 of carrots.

Monday 13 January: 50% in ninth week. Should make the grade OK

Saturday 18 January: Home—short weekend, 12 hours to do it. Snow all the way.

Sunday January 19: Walked to Groby Road in the snow. Henlow via Euston In fine style.

Tuesday 21 January: Start on the Blenheim Bulldog..

Thursday 30 January: Bored with the R.A.F.

Sunday 9th February: Swotted all day!

Tuesday 11 February: Rumours that we will be sent to Egypt—I wonder!

Friday 14 February: Last day of the course. I am now an electrician 2.  
(Seem to be going abroad—at least I have asked for 14 days.)

Tuesday 18 February: Well, we do go abroad. Get Injections and medical  
Finished with school; pack all gear.

The next days are spent on leave in Crewe.

Wednesday 5 March: Goodbye to Crewe and to my Lily—for how long?

Monday 24 March: Post last letter to my dear Lily.

Tuesday 15 March: We wake up to find ourselves at sea — some of the chaps are sick.  
The voyage lasted until 11 May when Jim reported: ' Off the boat at last. Very hot.'

Tuesday 13 May: In tents - can see the pyramids!

Monday 9 June: Food quite good. Eggs and onions galore. Tea made me sick.

Friday 13 June: Fed up! Wish for home and Lily.

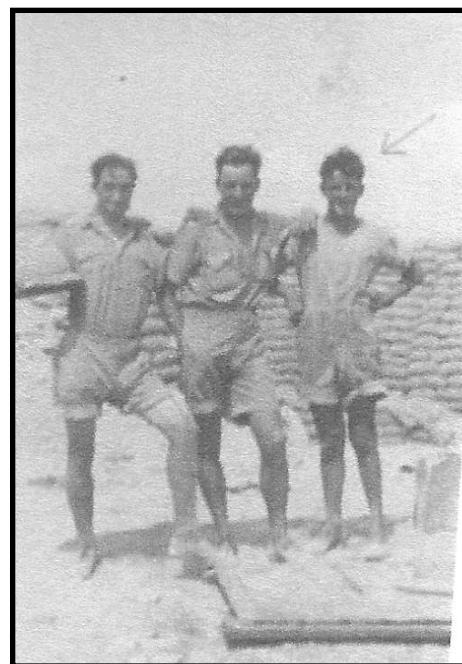
By 1942, he is in India.

Tuesday 13 June 1942: Got a short talk from the C.O. on India, Won 10 rupees at 'House'.

Wednesday 14 June: Won another 8 rupees on 'House'. Lounge on the bed all day, being of course, the first real bed for months.

Tuesday July 24 Civilians being flown away in DBs and Vics, Blenheims, Lockheeds ...etc.  
The AVG operate from Mague.

Sunday 24 July: Lily is in the Land Army—Don't go much on the idea.



Jim and his mates—the arrow points to Jim



Lily, in her Land Army uniform

Jim doesn't write any more—at least, his journal seems to come to an end at that stage.

He returned from his duty overseas early in 1945. He married his Lily in March 1945 and they had three daughters.

The family left Crewe in 1955.

These two memories show the difference in experience between the two men. There was a third one as well, who became a cook, and spent the entire war cooking in Scotland, never going to a front-line position, or getting into real danger. The two men covering the main stories, had very different experiences, the one—who didn't tell us much about how he really felt, must have seen some terrible things in Italy and beforehand, in Poland. The other, although he had to leave his girl, certainly didn't have any real problems, except perhaps boredom, although he may have had more trouble when he went to Burma.



## Crewe in 1860

Copy of letter sent to :

E. Watkin Esq., Manchester, for 'Illustrated London News@

Loco. Dept., Crewe

3rd January 1861

Sir,

Agreeably with the request contained in your favour of yesterday, I beg to enclose some particulars relative to the workshops, populations etc. of Crewe.

Mr Ramsbottom is prevented from writing to you as he is confined to his home through sickness.

I am Sir,

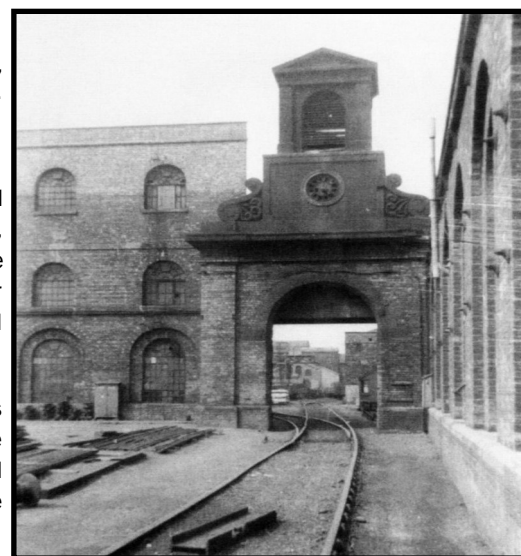
Your obd. Svt.

(Sgd) F W Webb

The ground on which now stands 1,500 houses occupied by 9,000 inhabitants, twenty years ago contained a few scattered farmsteads with two or three cottages. The London and North Western company own the greater part of the houses, which are principally occupied by the workmen connected with the Company's Works.

These latter cover an area of about 17 acres, about 6—7 acres of which are covered with workshops and sheds and furnish employment to upwards of 2,000 hands, about 1,900 of which are engaged in the Rail making Department and Locomotive Workshops under the superintendence of J. Ramsbottom Esq. Locomotive Engineer of the Northern Division of the line which extends over 680 miles of railway, and about 130 are engaged in the coaching Department.

To keep pace with the traffic and the general prosperity of the line, the Loco Works have been enlarged from time to time until the present, when its capabilities are such as to enable the company to maintain a stock of about 540 engines in good working condition, to keep up the wear and tear on the fixed plant, and also to make at the rate of about 6 new engines per month.



The London and North Western, with the Liverpool and Manchester, Holyhead, North Staffordshire and Shrewsbury Branches, and the London and Birmingham lines, all form a junction at this station, it being the chief place where lines of the first importance converge, and some idea of the extent of the business done at this point may be inferred from the fact that about 284 trains pass through this station each day.

In connection with the station must be mentioned the steam shed, a commodious building affording accommodation for 38 engines and giving employment to 220 hands. The number of engines in steam daily is about 50. The facilities for supplying the engines with fuel and water are so complete as to perform the operation for the largest class of engine in about 1/2 minutes.

The workmen's houses and the town are supplied with gas which is manufactured by the Company on their premises. The weekly make averages about 400,000 cubic feet, but the Works is capable of producing much larger quantities.

A local Board of Health has recently been established in the town under whose management the drainage is being much improved, but the supply and quality of water is still defective. It is however, contemplated to remedy this latter, by bringing the supply from an adjacent village.

Among the principal buildings in the town may be mentioned the Town Hall and Mechanics Institution which besides many commodious and well lighted classrooms has its Reading Room and a Library of upwards of 2,500 volumes, and is in a prosperous condition. The Company contribute handsomely to its support and thus afford many advantages which few Institutions in small towns enjoy. It also has a free grant of Patent Specifications from the government. There is also a Government School of Art in connection (Report for 1860 enclosed).



The Church, which was built in the Anglo Gothic style was originally constructed to hold 800 people but has recently been enlarged and now affords accommodation for 1,600'. The other religious denominations have accommodation in their various places of worship for about 2,000 people.

The Market Hall, built by John Hill Esq. is a handsome and substantial building having an area of about 6,500 superficial feet.

Schools are attended by nearly 700 children but are too small for a rapidly increasing population. In addition, there are other schools with an average attendance of about 300 children,

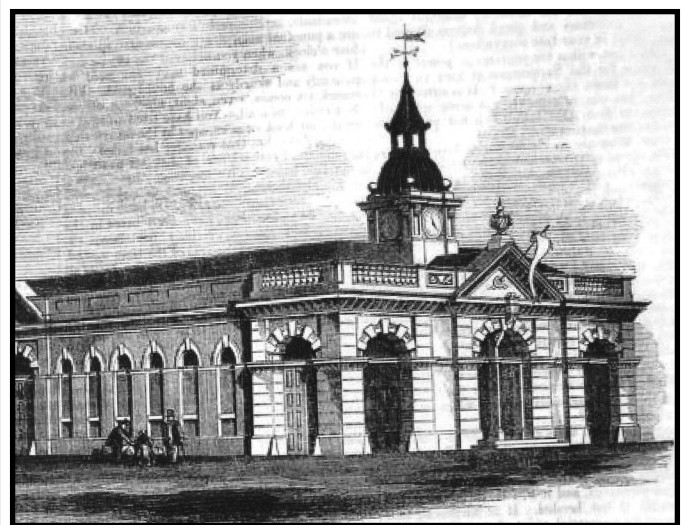
If in this hurried description anything has been omitted which you may think interesting and worthy of record, we shall be happy to furnish you with particulars upon receipt of a communication from you.

F.W. Webb

(Sgd) per G Wadsworth



Christ Church Schoolrooms



The Market Hall 1854

## The Reminiscences of Arthur Pickup

In mid 1945 I started school at Adelaide Street Infants School. It was only half a day on Monday to Friday. I was dragged kicking and screaming but when it was time to leave I did not want to go home! Having stories read to you and being given paper and crayons to play with was OK. In 1946 I started to attend Broad Street School. The head mistress was Mrs Brown who was a brusque lady—still she was nice enough. I had my first school photograph taken at the school, in black and white, taken against a background of old tarpaulin and looking pretty grim. I was introduced to school dinners at the infants school, which I thought were great. They cost 2 shillings and sixpence a week. In 1949 I was moved across the road to the Junior School. Mr Norgain was the headmaster. The school had both men and lady teachers; classes were mixed but segregated at lunch time into separated playgrounds. My first teacher at Junior School was Miss Rostrum. She was very pretty and like most children of that age, I fell in love with her. She taught us PE and our times tables. We had nature lessons, and often were marched down to the Maw Green Duck pond, where, with a jam jar on a piece of string we would try to catch something exciting, but we never did.

We also had a science teacher who used to talk about space rockets and a Man on the Moon. He also used to predict that the world would be over populated by the year 2,000 and trouble would ensue. He was right in both cases but 2,000 was a long way off, so we took little notice of him.

On the last afternoon before Christmas we had a party, though we had to take our own food. I always took a jelly which was not properly set, but at least we did not have to take a present in for the teacher. In 1953, we were presented with a glass Coronation Mug to celebrate the Queen's Commonwealth and I took the eleven plus exam to see if I was suitable grammar school material—which I was not. IQ questions were not my specific skill.

From Junior School onwards, every boy had an Ellidson's mail order catalogue which was advertised in comics and newspapers. The Company supplied jokes, tricks and games for children. You could buy such things as black-face soap, itching powder and a trick kaleidoscope which would leave your friends with a black ring round their eye. One of their most popular items was a periscope which enabled to see over walls and the heads of a people in a crowd. The most popular item you could buy was the stink bomb, to be used at school or in the pictures!

On leaving junior school, my mathematical skills amounted to addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. I could also recite my tables from 2 times to 12 times. Some of the bright boys in the class had mastered Algebra, My English standard was even worse, as in reading, writing and spelling I was bottom of the class. I know now, that I had a dyslexic tendency and could not recognise some words—I couldn't recognise the difference between County and Country. And as for spelling 'neighbours', that was impossible. Sadly, my reading was limited to the Beano and Dandy.



Ludford Street School (now demolished)

So, in 1954, I was sent to Ludford Street Secondary Modern School. That school had complete segregation. Boys and girls were kept to their own half of the school. In 1955 we were taken for swimming lessons in the Flag Lane Swimming Baths and by the time I left, I could manage a few lengths. 'Burly Bill' Williams took us for English and as his name suggests, he kept a disciplined class. Being a 'deprived' teenager, I was taken to Southport by the Round table, but I never saw the sea, as it was out. Sadly, on the way home I was sick.

An ex-Ludford pupil was in the Merchant Navy and used to send letters to our Headmaster, Sam Quine. He was proud of these letters and used to read them out in morning assembly, until one day his ship sank and the letters stopped.

In 1956, Mostyn Peers was our mathematics teacher. His main ambition was to get us all to join the local theatre, where he also worked. In retrospect, I think he was right. Acting was much better than working for a living—and better paid. Frederick Negus

was our metalwork teacher. He managed to teach us machining and sheet metal bashing without serious injury. Sam Quine always taught us Religious Education, in which I always came top. Apart from the parables, he entertained us with Aesop's Fables.

I used to dread English lessons at school. My reading ability was poor and I could not pick out the simplest words, so this made writing and spelling difficult. To cap it all, my general knowledge was virtually zero. Every lesson, we were asked to write an essay on a subject about which I knew nothing and I would never get more than a couple of paragraphs down on paper. At Christmas time or subsequent to our summer holidays, we were tortured with the delight of writing about 'What I did on my Holidays', which always left me with a clean sheet of paper.



In my last year at Ludford Street in 'Burly Bill's' English Class, I managed to come top of the form in English. This was because I cheated. Instead of being tested with the usual end of term essay, we were asked to write a pamphlet over several weeks about one of our hobbies. This was easy because I pretended my hobby was photography, though I did not even own a camera, but Crewe had a good library, so every week, I would pop into the library and borrow a book on photography. I found it easy to understand the technical details of anastigmat lenses, depth of field or focal plane shutters. I copied down the jargon in my own words and received good marks for my efforts. Each week two or three pupils stood in front of the class and read out what they had written so far. I dreaded my turn at reading, but was fortunate to have a name beginning with 'P'. Burly Bill selected his readers in alphabetical order, so my turn never came up.

After leaving school and starting work at Rolls Royce, I took up photography as a hobby. I purchased a £5 camera from Boots and developed my own black and white films. When I met Carole, to raise a bit of extra money for our wedding, I placed an advert in the local paper to advertise my skills as a photographer specialising in weddings and children. Fortunately, no-one responded to the advert.

## Shops

To the south-west, in front of the house, on the intersection with Princess Street with Holland street, was Cocker's corner shop, Small shops were in abundance in Crewe and one would never be far from one; similarly, one would never be more than half a mile from a Co-op store. The Co-op had a customer share system. You had to quote your customer dividend number at every visit to the store, and at Christmas time, you received a dividend payment, which was very welcome. There was a Central Cash point in most Co-ops. Your money and bill would be placed in a cup, attached to an overhead wire and sent to a Control Booth. Your change would be returned in the same cup. Cups full of money could be seen flying about in all directions all day.



A Crewe Co-operative store

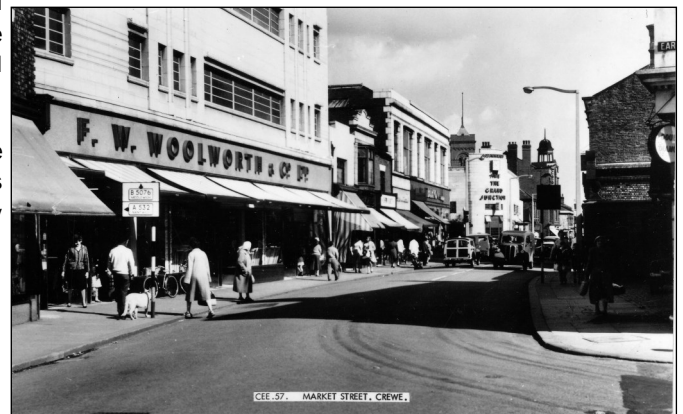
In corner shops, you were served by the owner. He or she would place the purchases straight into your shopping bag, weighing them first if required, using a balancing scale with separate brass weights. Loose items would be put in a paper bag—plastic was unheard of!

Milk was delivered by horse and cart to your door. It came straight from the farm in a large metal churn and you walked out to the cart with a jug for a daily supply. The milk was doled out into your jug by the milk man using a metal ladle. He always stirred the milk before filling your jug to mix the cream, so when the milk settled in the jug, it had a good layer of cream on top. The milk lasted a couple of days before turning sour—there were no fridges then.

Milk could be obtained from shops in glass bottles; it was sterilised and would last for many days, even when opened. Pop was also sold in glass bottles. Pop bottles were returned to the shop for a 2d deposit, while soda siphon bottles could be returned to pubs for one and sixpence deposit. Milk used in tea was often condensed. This was a sugar-milk combination in a tin. It would last for months when it was opened, so it was useful to have in the workplace. Evaporated milk, almost equivalent to single cream, also **came** in a sealed tin.

The larger shops M&S, Woolworth, Burtons and Boots were situated round the square at the Town Centre, or along Market Street where the central Co-op was. Super Markets did not arrive in Crewe until 1959. The first one was next to Boots the Chemist in Earle Street.

There were also local shops, like Diamonds and Densems (where school uniforms for the Grammar School could be obtained) Wildings and Hawthornes, which sold high class groceries. There were certainly plenty of shops—as well as the Market.



*If you would like a further instalment of Mr Pickup's memories you could have one. There is one that could be done about his time working in Rolls Royce, plus some short pieces on transport Please let me know.*

## Walter Button and The Borough Foundry

Chaloner notes that in 1878, Walter Button opened his foundry in Crewe. Walter Button had been born in Barnsley and in 1872 married his wife, Mary and then 2 years later, moved to Sandbach to work at the iron foundry of Edwin Foden. Button became friendly with George Brocklehurst, and in 1878, founded the firm of Button and Brocklehurst at Crewe. Walter was a mechanical draughtsman, and George Brocklehurst an iron moulder. It is unclear what happened to Brocklehurst, but the factory became known as W Button only until it changed its name to Carrington and Button.

The main work carried out was iron castings for local use and there are many of these products still in existence around Crewe – man-hole covers, gratings, rain-water gullies, easily identified as they all have 'W. Button, Borough Foundry, Crewe' in raised letters on their upper surface. Cast iron was widely used in Victorian times for many products. Heavy industry used a lot of iron castings and there were many household items made from cast iron too: fire grates, stoves, saucepans, even tables and chairs.

To produce a casting, the iron, usually in the form of 'pig iron', is melted in a cupola together with a percentage of scrap iron. The melted iron is then run from the bottom of the cupola into a ladle which is quickly carried by two men and the molten metal decanted into moulds set in the foundry floor. The moulds have been prepared the previous day by filling 'moulding boxes' with foundry sand and placing a pattern of the shape required in the sand. The mould is removed and the space filled with molten iron. Complex shapes can be cast in this way, some with sand 'cores' added internally to form cavities within the product. The moulding boxes come in two parts, named the 'cope' and the 'drag' which are pinned together after the pattern has been removed. The 'cope' stood on the floor while the 'drag' went on top, being 'dragged' off when the metal had cooled. Foundry work was a very dirty procedure which made the product very dirty to handle.



Walter Button died 15<sup>th</sup> December 1888 and the 'London Gazette' records that 'letters of administration' were granted to his widow, Mary Elizabeth Button. The business continued to trade, before being taken over by first his elder son Charles and then by his younger son, Leonard, and diversified into other areas of engineering as shown in the various advertisements which appeared in Eardley's Almanac and local newspapers. One such advertisement informs readers that they 'produced cast iron palisading' and 'all kinds of smith work executed' so they must have employed blacksmiths too. They also supplied and repaired gas and oil engines which produced mechanical power for other businesses

Girders and columns were also supplied for large buildings. Columns are fine made from cast iron which is strong when under compression, but girders are brittle and could crack when stressed with heavy loads. The same advertisement stated they stocked and repaired boilers and repaired agricultural implements and lawnmowers, so the workforce had quite a range of skills, satisfying the need of residents and businesses in and around Crewe.

The business continued to thrive, becoming Carrington and Button, Electrical Engineers and Contractors in 1944 leaving other firms to supply metalwork to the town.

Enter Newbrook Engineering which commenced trading in 1973 making small entrance gates for homes. By 1980, the Company had moved to a new factory on Crewe Gates Farm Industrial Estate, becoming a limited Company in 1983. The metalwork they produce is mainly steel fabrications which have taken over from the castings practiced at the Button Foundry following the advent of electrical welding techniques. The Company continue to trade manufacturing steel fabrications and sheet metalwork to supply the needs of businesses large and small around Crewe, just as Buttons did in the Victorian era.

*Gerald Newbrook*

Telegrams—"BUTTON, CREWE." TELEPHONE No. 29.

**Borough Foundry, Crewe.**

**WALTER BUTTON,**

MILLWRIGHT ENGINEER, . . .  
IRON AND BRASS FOUNDER.

*Patterns made to Drawings and Old Castings.*

**HIGH AND LOW PRESSURE HEATING APPARATUS**  
SUPPLIED AND FIXED.

All kinds of Screw-cutting and Turning.  
Wrought and Cast Iron Palisading, and all kinds of Smith's Work  
**GIRDERS AND COLUMNS.**

Tel. Nos. —29A High Street; 29 Borough Foundry.

**ELECTRIC LIGHTING.**

**CARRINGTON & BUTTON**  
Electrical & Mechanical  
Engineers, . . .

31 HIGH STREET, CREWE.

Complete Installations of Electric Lighting, Motors,  
Bells and Telephones.

GAS, OIL AND STEAM ENGINES Overhauled and kept in Repair  
All kinds of BOILER FITTINGS kept in Stock.













































































