

The First Hundred Years

Centenary of Oliver Rix, Ltd.

THE completion of a century of continuous operation in any business is a noteworthy event. In the implement and machinery trade, there are many firms which are well past their first 100 years, and are still going strong.

Annually, of course, the number of centenarians increases. One firm which has just achieved this distinction and celebrated the event a few days ago is Oliver Rix, Ltd., whose headquarters are at Eagle Iron Works, Sculthorpe, Fakenham, Norfolk.

But, although the business has been operating for a century, on the same site as at present, it was not started

plements and machines were not nearly so prolific as they are now, but, on the occasion of their centenary, Oliver Rix, Ltd., can recall, with justifiable pride, some machines, designed and manufactured in their works, which achieved considerable distinction.

Round about 1900, for example, Oliver Rix produced an elevator which, we said, "certainly appeared well capable of meeting all the demands that could be reasonably made upon its services." Our note about this machine added that "the trough bottom can be made either of wood or galvanised corrugated steel, and since the steel rake chains work on

spreader, which was built to work behind an ordinary farm cart, was equipped with a "revolving spiked drum at the rear, fed by a travelling web at varying speeds." The manure, it was stated, was well broken up and distributed evenly over the ground.

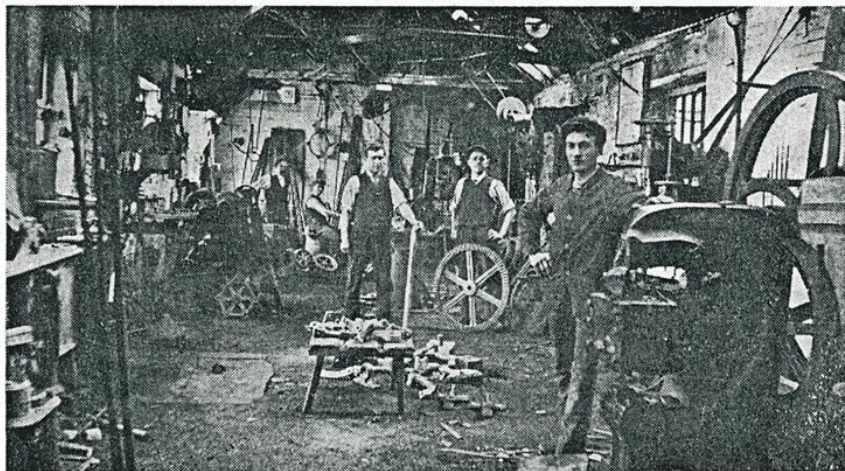
A silver medal was awarded for this machine at the 1911 Peterborough show, and, in reporting the fact, *THE REVIEW* felt it was appropriate to include a testimonial by a user, which read: "I am pleased to speak most highly of the successful way the distributor does its work. My men put in 60 loads a day of very long stuff with it, which it spread from carts much better than it could be done by hand." The price of this machine, it is interesting to note, was £16 16s.

Yet another product of those days was a sleeping van. It was "very commodious, spring-mounted, and fitted with table, seats, stove, and sleeping accommodation for three men."

These are a few examples of Oliver Rix's manufacturing activities; they represent work which was carried out in buildings much smaller, and not nearly so well-equipped as those now occupied by the firm. Alongside those activities, there was, of course, the "general agent" section of the business.

The firm's agency for Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies, Ltd., is a long-standing one, and for some years the International Harvester Co.'s products, and those of Massey-Harris were handled. Another agency which has been held for many years is that of R. Hood Haggie & Son, Ltd. Now, the company's main distributorship is Massey-Ferguson. At the same time, implements and machines made by many smaller firms are regularly sold and serviced.

There is no doubt that the development of this century-old business owes much to the efforts of Mr. A. F. Filby, who is now the chairman of Oliver Rix, Ltd. He has now com-



The Original Fitters' Shop

by Oliver Rix. The founder was a Mr. John Blackett, who owned the establishment for 30 years. The late Mr. Oliver Rix served his apprenticeship with Mr. Blackett, and was subsequently appointed manager.

When Mr. Blackett died in 1892, Mr. Rix purchased the business from the executors, and thenceforward traded under his own name. He was described as an "engineer, wheelwright, machinist, and general agent," was ready to estimate for "all kinds of iron work," and, in addition, was a thrashing and sawing contractor.

Without doubt, Oliver Rix soon proved himself competent to meet the variety of demands made on a rural engineering establishment. He served a large area, throughout which farm carts, wagons, and other tackle built at Eagle Iron Works must have been a familiar sight.

Many a time Oliver Rix has been described as a "first-class engineer." Like several of his contemporaries in various parts of the country, he showed inventive genius. In the earlier years of this century, new ideas and developments in farm im-

sprocket wheels at each end of the trough, slipping is effectually obviated." A pony gear was incorporated in the frame of the machine, and attachments were available to enable the elevator to be used with a thrasher.

Before long, the machine became known as the "King" elevator, possibly because it was in regular use on the Sandringham estate. Subsequently, at the Royal Show at Cambridge in 1922, Oliver Rix introduced a companion to the "King." This, we reported, was "a new light pattern elevator suitable for driving by a small engine, and capable of delivering to an approximate height of 27ft. The wheels are of wrought iron, and, as the machine is of the folding type and not at all heavy, it is regarded as being very suitable for export."

But the Oliver Rix machine which excited more than usual interest, we believe, when it was introduced in 1911, was his "Norfolk" muck spreader, shown in one of our illustrations. Its design principles were not very different from those of present-day machines of the kind. The



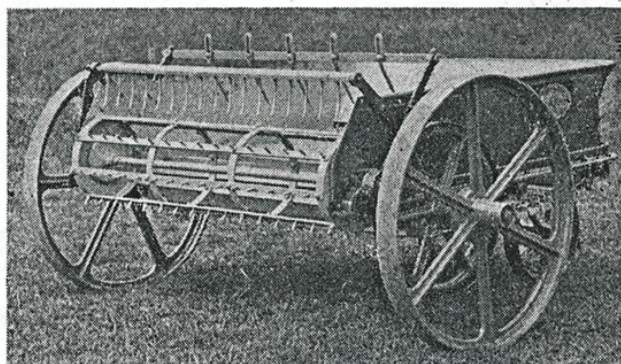
Mr. A. F. Filby

pleted over 40 years with the company. In his youth, Mr. Filby—who is a Norfolk man—worked for a time in the wholesale clothing trade. He recalls the days when his wages were 4s. a week! Throughout the first world war, he served in the army, and afterwards he suffered a period of ill-health, as a result of which he was advised to look for an open-air job.

That, Mr. Filby says, was how he came to work for the firm in 1921. In his early years at Sculthorpe, Mr. Filby "did just about everything," and subsequently Oliver Rix appointed him manager of the establishment. That involved attention to manufacturing and sales activities, as well as to repair work, and to the contracting side which included the operation of six sets of thrashing tackle.

When Mr. Rix died in 1933, Mr. Filby acquired the business, and, ever since, has taken the leading part in the management of its affairs. Just before the last war, some spacious new buildings were completed to

An Early
Rix
Manure
Spreader



provide more adequate workshop accommodation, and to house the extensive spares department. About 10 years ago, Mr. Peter Tunbridge joined Mr. Filby; he is now a director of the company.

Rather more than a year ago, the business was reorganised, and Oliver Rix, Ltd., became a public company, with Mr. Filby as chairman, and Mr.

J. M. Riches, managing director. Thus, on the completion of the first 100 years, the business started at Sculthorpe continues to grow. Firms which are now part of the Oliver Rix, Ltd., group include:—Oliver Rix (Norwich), Ltd., Melton Engineering Co., Ltd., Wrentham Engineering Co., Ltd., Selaho, Ltd., and Spares (Peterborough), Ltd.

Nottinghamshire Merger

Stephensons and Windsors Combine

Two Nottinghamshire machinery distributors have decided to merge. They are Geo. Stephenson & Sons, Ltd., of Newark, and James Windsor & Son (Mansfield), Ltd., Nottingham Road, Mansfield. Since the merger of Massey-Harris and Ferguson both firms have been covering a similar range of machines.

Messrs. Stephensons started as farm machinery manufacturers in 1874 and continued manufacturing—mainly steerage hoes and other equipment for root crops—until 1947. From that time they have concentrated on the retail side, not least with Massey-Harris and, later, Massey-Ferguson equipment. One memory the new company will have is a range of prizes won by Stephenson equipment at Royal Shows before the first world war. They include a first for a "Mophrey" (a horse-powered hay and straw press) at the Nottingham "Royal" in 1888.

James Windsor & Son came into the agricultural field with the advent of the Ferguson system and have established farm machinery depots at Mansfield and Newark. The latter is likely to close as a result of the merger, but the company is keeping its Mansfield motor business separate.

Four directors have been named for the new company which, subject to registration, is likely to take the title of "Windsor & Stephenson." They are Messrs. R. J. Windsor, G. Stephenson, R. V. Windsor and R. Stephenson.

Plenty to Show In Agricultural Engineering Developments

BRITISH firms and institutes have a great deal to show people from overseas, and the former also have plenty to sell. This was said by Sir Donald Anderson, chairman of P. & O. Orient Lines, Leadenhall Street, London, E.C.3, when welcoming the six Australian young farmers who have come over this year as winners of the "Canberra" award. He added that the trip would give them a chance to see what is going on in this country "which is leading the world in certain agricultural techniques." It would, also, broaden their minds in the practices of agriculture.

Referring to the Common Market, Sir Donald added that to meet changes of this calibre, one must have flexibility of mind and the knowledge of what is going on in different parts of the world.

The young farmers will, from time to time, be guests of the Ford Motor Co., Ltd., the Nuffield Organisation, Rotary Hoes, Ltd., Massey-Ferguson, Ltd., The Rover Co., Ltd., Dunlop Rubber Co., Ltd., Thwaites Engineering Co., Ltd., and other farm implement and machinery organisations.

Small American Combine

To meet the increasing demand for a small self-propelled combine, the Allis-Chalmers Manufacturing Co. of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is now producing a new model "E" "Gleaner," which has a standard 10ft. and optional 8ft. header. A new, detachable 2-row maize head for field shelling will be available. (Reply Card No. E. 1454).

Hydrostatic Transmission Under Discussion

ONE of the papers at this year's International Fluid Power Conference is entitled *Hydrostatic Transmissions of the Differential Type*, and will be read by Dr. D. F. Denny, B.Sc. (Eng.), Ph.D., A.M.I.Mech.E., chief engineer of Ronald Trist & Co, Ltd., Slough, Bucks. He will discuss the high efficiencies obtainable over a limited range of speed ratios, showing that this characteristic often makes such a transmission more suitable for some applications than the conventional direct-coupled pattern.

Another topic in this conference—to run concurrently with the International Compressed Air & Hydraulics Exhibition at Olympia, London, from April 30th to May 4th—is to be *Current American Trends in Hydraulics*, by Mr. R. Henke, P.E., director of research, R. & D. division of Racine Hydraulics & Machinery Inc., U.S.A.

Wolseley Distributor Convention

AN illustration has reached us of a group of distributors of the equipment made by Wolseley Engineering, Ltd., Electric Avenue, Birmingham, 6, pictured with members of the company at a recent Wolseley convention. Demonstrated on that occasion was the latest "Merry Tiller" equipment, which was first introduced at the last Smithfield Show.