

THE MEDHURST STORY.

Part 1

Bill Shelley was the first to suggest that someone should compile a brief record of the Medhurst Group of companies in Tasmania.

How to produce something that is reasonably factual and hopefully readable has presented a challenge. Much of the information of the earlier years has come from notes recorded by my father Harry on the backs of old HECLA price lists which show amongst other things that a HECLA J12 Boilo Jug could be bought for Two Pounds Nine Shillings and Nine Pence.

I am indebted to my cousins Helen, Mary and Douglas for making their treasured records available for perusal. Helen searched in the State Archives for "fill-in" information. Douglas has also provided historical records and has made photo copying facilities available. Tom Barnes gave my wife Nancy who edited and typed the original text early guidance in Word Processing and my daughter Alison helped her "uninformed" parents to cope with this new Electronic Aid.

A well known Best Seller starts with Genesis and traces the progress and fortunes of a "Tribe" in a series of geographical locations in which various characters play their parts in the drama.

I do not expect to produce a Best Seller and if you find the following narrative a little confused please excuse me for I am of confused origin. The Medhurst family were of Scandinavian descent and my Mothers Scottish ancestors had some Spanish blood introduced at the time Francis Drake dispersed the Armada.

Many of the players are sadly no longer with us and the Team has vanished. I hope that some forgotten events will emerge from the pockets of your minds as you relive some of these moments with me.

GENESIS

My Grandfather Frederick William Medhurst was born in Chobham England in 1867. His father was the local Chemist who dispensed medicinal potions for both human and veterinary needs. He was educated at the Surrey County School and retained contact with his school attending an Old Scholars Dinner held on January 23rd, 1889. He undertook some form of Military training at Aldershot as an early photograph shows him at the age of 17 in an Aldershot Cadets uniform.

His first job was that of a Telegraphist in the Chobham Post Office and it was here that he met Alexander Graham Bell a Scot who had come over from U.S.A. to interest the authorities in his newly devised means of communication the "Telephone".

There was an instant affinity between the two men and they worked together on improvements to Bell's invention. Later when Bell returned to U.S.A. he invited young Frederick to accompany him, but his parents objected on account of his tender years. Bell and my Grandfather continued the association by regular correspondence for many years. It was obvious that the development of long distance communication fascinated young Frederick. This interest was to become an on-going activity for many years.

As in other "Genesis" story there was a girl, Edith Emma Edney, born in Michelmarsh, Hampshire in 1870 to Henry and Emma Edney. The Edney family later moved to Chobham in Surrey.

Henry Edney became a widower and left England for Australia to where two of his brothers had recently migrated. Henry Edney died during the voyage and Edith Emma at 17 years of age was suddenly head of the family which arrived in Melbourne in 1887.

In 1889 young Frederick left England to join the Edney family in Melbourne. He gained employment with the Post and Telegraph Department and in 1891 he was transferred to Hobart as a Telegraph Operator and Mechanic.

Edith Emma and her two sisters also came to Hobart and at the age of 21 Edith Emma Edney married Frederick William Medhurst. at Holy Trinity Church.

JUST 100 YEARS AGO.

There were five children from the marriage Rowland Arthur born 1892, Harry Frederick born 1893, Philip Aubrey born 1895, Edith Helen born 1898, Edney Edgar born 1902, and what follows briefly covers the parts played by these people and some others in "The Medhurst Story" as it progresses from a small beginning to a State Wide activity which was ultimately to disintergrate and disappear from view.

ETHELMONT

Little is known of the early family history except that they lived at 165 Melville St. where Rowland and Harry were born and that they later moved to Parliament St. and then to Ethelmont in Lower Sandy Bay. It was here that the other children were born. "Ethelmont remains silent until 1899 when some of the early recollections of Rowland and Harry are examined. An invoice shows that Rowland sold two packets of seeds on January 4th, 1899 for one penny. This was the first recorded business activity.

His position in the Posts and Telegraph Department would have brought my Grandfather F. W. Medhurst close to the project of the building of a Telephone Exchange in Hobart and confident that he could make a personal contribution to this activity and also reap some financial gain by supplying components which normally would come from England, he decided to set up workshop facilities. He borrowed Six Hundred Pounds (a princely sum in those days) with which he bought 2 lathes, a milling machine, shaper, emery wheel and hand tools from the Trustees of the Estate of a deceased Engineer, who had operated in "Collins Street" These were set up in a two roomed cottage in the grounds of Ethelmont and Rowland and Harry were set to work making components for the new Telephone Exchange. These initial business activities had shown that the need to diversify was recognised very early in the piece.

It is interesting to note that one of these lathes which was converted to wind various types of heating elements and used by Medhursts for many years is still in use. When some of the Medhurst plant was liquidated by the new Owners it was bought by Mr. Albert McDonald. (Old Mac.) who is now 89 still uses it to wind elements for "Off-Peak" heaters. Like "Johnny Walker" it is still going strong.

For convenience copies of items of historical interest form an Appendix.

With the completion of the new Telephone Exchange the home workshop activities slowed down and Rowland started work as an Apprentice Fitter and Turner cum Motor Mechanic with Bert Heathorn and Harry now 13 continued in the workshop and during slack periods installed bells and telephones.

Telephone services were being extended and F. W. Medhurst supervised the construction of rural telephone lines and exchanges throughout Southern Tasmania and the East Coast. He travelled on horse back and later rode a bicycle in places where roads existed.

He was a keen cyclist competing against the Self Brothers on a "Penny Farthing" cycle and a Velocipede which was the earliest form of what we now know as a bicycle.

During this period F.W. Medhurst devised a system whereby both telegraph and telephone signals could be sent over a common wire. This involved induction coils and telephone exchanges in the State were fitted with this facility. The induction coils were made in the home workshop. The system was so successful that the Post and Telegraph Department sent F.W.M. to Queensland to introduce it in that State. My Father Harry made over 200 more induction coils in the home workshop for the project in Queensland.

CLOCKS.

At the age of 13 Harry had acquired basic mechanical skills in the home workshop and was accepted as an assistant to a Swiss Engineer Herr Von Ziegler who had come to Hobart to install the clock mechanism in the tower of the Hobart Post Office. On the completion of this project he accompanied Herr Von Ziegler to Launceston where a similar clock mechanism was installed in the Launceston Post Office Tower. I believe that this was the first clock in the Southern Hemisphere to have its dials illuminated by electric light and that this lighting was subsequently installed by Ron Byrne.

"BLINKING BILLY" POINT.

In 1895 an Italian experimenter G. Marconi succeeded in bridging the Atlantic Ocean with the worlds first long distance wireless signals F.W.M. was aroused by this remarkable achievement in communication and together with Mr. F. P. Bowden and Mr. J. A. Hallam fellow technicians in the Post and Telegraph Department set about acquiring "know-how" in this new field of communication.

In 1901 The Duke and Duchess of York (later to become King George V. and Queen Mary) came to Australia to open the first Commonwealth Parliament in Melbourne. The Royal visitors included Hobart in their itinerary. The Royal Yacht "Ophir" was accompanied by two ships of the Royal Navy, these had been fitted with wireless transmitters and receivers and somehow F.W.M. had found out about this. On July 2nd these vessels entered the Derwent.

Rowland 9 and Harry 8 helped to carry the Fuller Block batteries the spark coil and other gear to a site just above "Blinking Billy" point where the mast, aerial, transmitter and receiver were set up. Philip 6 was given a lighter task. He rowed out with the "earth wire and plate" which he dropped in the Derwent. Soon after the ships were sighted off the Iron Pot F.W.M. tapped out a message of welcome. The signal was promptly acknowledged by the Royal Navy and was the first ship to shore message along the Australian coast. Only five years after news of Marconi's triumph had reached the world.

I have located some pictorial records of the "Blinking Billy" Wireless Station but at the time of writing have not examined these as they are at Latrobe. I hope to get copies for inclusion in the Appendix.

THE MEDHURST PORTABLE FIELD TELEPHONE

F.W.M. retired from the position of Chief Mechanician in the Post and Telegraph Department in 1906. He had developed a lightweight portable Field Telephone which had proven 150 mile range and patents had been taken out in six countries. Weighing only four pounds it was much lighter than any other existing instruments and extremely robust and in 1907 accompanied by Edith Emma he sailed on the S.S. Mongolia for England hoping to interest the War Office in accepting his telephone for Army use. The venture failed but the International Telephone Company in London agreed to make the telephone and supply the Local and European markets where demand for this type of telephone was quite keen.

During this visit F.W.M. took "Grandma" Edith to the "Savoy" Hotel to enjoy an elegant English meal. She read the menu carefully and then said to the Waiter "I dont fancy any of those dishes may I have a plate of nice thin bread and butter please" This was always a favourite of hers and perhaps she suddenly felt isolated in the grand dining room and had thoughts of home and her family and the cow.

84 COLLINS STREET 1910

As foreshadowed earlier "The Tribe" was to occupy many sites in Collins Street. The first to appear was Rowland, he had completed his Apprenteship with H.C.(Bert) Heathornn. and at 18 decided to start up as a Fitter and Turner. Being a minor he was not legally entitled to negotiate a lease and his Father acted on his behalf and arranged a lease of 84 Collins Street, the lease shows that the rent was three pounds and eightpence per month. A workshop was set up housing some of the Ethelmont machines. I have noticed that the principle still works "Try Dad or Mum first".

Harry joined him and they traded as R.A. Medhurst. Electrical Engineers installing lighting, motors, bells and telephones. The electricity supply in Hobart was provided by The Hobart Gas Company who ran a small 110 volt machine and the Hobart Tramways supplied 500 volt D.C. in areas close to tramway routes. Evidence of their activities may be seen at the "Bush Inn" New Norfolk where a Bell Indicator Panel bears the name of R.A. Medhurst, Electrical Engineer. In Douglas's Office is a brass plate - R.A. Medhurst Electrician, 1912, this came from a switchboard in the T & G Building.

Staff were engaged and work was also undertaken in Launceston where electricity from the first Hydro Electric Plant in the Southern Hemisphere had been built in 1894 for the Launceston Municipal Council.

The Owner of 84 Collins Street wished to sell the premises and by mutual arrangements the Lease was cancelled and the Firm moved into other premises in the yard of the Old Tasmanian News Building which was also in Collins Street.

"CRANLEIGH" (Circa) 1914.

The "Home Workshop" with its low labour and overhead costs must have improved the family finances and enabled the building of a new home "Cranleigh", named after a place near Chobham. One point nine acres of land fronting on what is now known as Beach Road was bought in 1912. The records show the Capital Value One hundred Pounds, Improvements Ten Pounds. In 1914 Capital Value had risen to Six hundred and twenty five Pounds, and Improvements Twenty five Pounds, this large piece of land was probably bought to meet the needs of the cow, but my earliest recollections are that the cow grazed on a plot two removed from "Cranleigh".

"Cranleigh" was designed to retain as much "Englishness" as possible with formal gardens, paths, and hedges all combining to create an aura of gracious living. There were some concessions to the Australian climate. A large balcony with room for four beds was the dormitory for the boys enabling them to benefit from abundant fresh air, and a twelve foot wide verandah partially enclosed bounded the house on two sides. It was like the "Manor" self-sufficient. The cow provided milk, cream, and butter and although served by the town water supply two wells were dug to tap the water which is still available twelve feet below ground level in this part of Sandy Bay. From these water was pumped to irrigate a garden which produced near export quantities of fruit and vegetables. These activities were conducted by a resident "Ned" who lived in a small house in the grounds situated at a discreet distance from the "house proper". Grandma Medhurst ruled this little piece of England with great precision.

Following the deaths of their Parents Edney and Edith occupied "Cranleigh" and later when Edney married, Edith moved into a new house within the "Cranleigh" grounds. Douglas bought part of the land fronting on Long Point Road where he built his home, and following the death of Edith her home was occupied by Phil. Apart from the portion now owned by Douglas the remainder is owned and occupied by strangers.

11, 13, 15 ARGYLE STREET. 1912.

In 1909 an English Company, Complex Ores and Metallurgical Company, acquired the rights to build a dam at the southern end of Great Lake. Water from this storage was to be used to generate electricity to provide for the needs of two industries that the Company planned to establish in Southern Tasmania - The Electrolytic Zinc Company and a plant at Electrona to produce calcium carbide. Power surplus to these needs was to be available to other customers.

This initiative increased public awareness of the uses and benefits of electricity and led to the formation of THE MEDHURST ELECTRICAL AND TELEPHONE WORKS or M.E.W. as it became known. In 1912 F.W.M. who had retired from the Post and Telegraph Department to conduct his own business in King Street moved to Argyle Street and R.A. Medhurst moved into the adjacent premises. A proposal to combine was agreed to as the expanding industry promised a future for all including Phil and Edney.

It was immediately obvious that demands related to the technical aspects of the business would occupy the Medhursts and that if the company was to expand rapidly it would need to attract outside investors, and in November 1912 a Prospectus of THE MEDHURST ELECTRICAL WORKS AND TELEPHONE COMPANY LIMITED. was issued. Provisional Directors were John Hugh Germain Murdoch, William James Gibson and Leslie Fraser Standish Hore. Capital. 10,000 Pounds in 10,000 shares of One Pound each.

The records reveal 6040 shares were issued and that after covering flotation and normal operating costs a nett profit of Fiftyone Pounds Fifteen Shillings and Eightpence was earned in the first year of trading. Mr. R.T. Hickey was appointed Manager and Mr. W.C. Jones Secretary.

As anticipated the business expanded rapidly and the workshop facilities were supplemented by storage areas together with a showroom. The Firm installed the electrical services for the initial 100 ton plant and subsequent 500 ton plant at what is now known as the Electrolytic Zinc Works and the Carbide Producing plant at Electrona. These projects extended over a three year period.

The State Government took over the power generating role of Complex Ores Limited and the holding capacity of Great Lake was increased by building a higher dam. A second Power Station was built at Waddamana, these developments increased the available supply of power.

The Company letterhead lists the following activities -

- Medhurst Portable Telephone.
- Contractors to Commonwealth and State Governments.
- Manufacturers of Mechanical, Electrical and Scientific Instruments.
- Repairs to Cameras, Bioscopes and Typewriters.
- Telephones and Bells.
- Country Telephone Lines erected and maintained.
- Electric Lighting.
- Supply, Installation and Repairs to Electric Motors.

Agents for -

- Fuller Block Accumulators.
- Hellesens Dry Cells.
- S.K.F. Bearings.
- "Osram" Lamps.

The growth of the Company was affected by the 1914 - 1918 war years and this is shown in the records of annual profit.

1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	
52	203	1372	736	839	710	1292	1905	2411	Pounds.

The first dividend of 10% was paid to Shareholders in 1920 and prospects looked good, but sadly there was a rapid decline in the Company's fortunes. At this time the shareholdings of the members of the Medhurst Family were -

F. W. M.	R. A. M.	P. A. M.	E. E. M.	E. H. M.	H. F. M.
1799	627	436	342	228	153

and these holdings represented 24% of the fully paid up shares.

In the past my Family have chosen to blame the Directors and Management for the unfortunatate series of events which lead to the liquidation of the Company in November 1923, but this belief is not fully supported by the examination of the Minutes of the Company, whose Directors held regular and properly conducted meetings at which all matters related to Company affairs were discussed, decisions made and directions given to those whose tasks was to implement them.

A few extracts from the Minutes from October 1920 to November 1922 show that the Board of Directors was closely in touch with the day by day affairs of the Company. For brevity these have been condensed but they retain the spirit and intent of the motions or decisions, some are recurrent or on going pieces of business and some matters finite, and cover a variety of matters relating to business and persons.

Monthly Statement. The Secretary tabled the usual monthly statement for September together with the bank book. Cheques 355 to 416 were checked and approved for payment, the total being 3852.15.10.

Insurance. The Chairman reported that insurance on stock had been increased to 17,500 Pounds.

A suggestion from Mr. H. Medhurst that a Branch be opened in Launceston was discussed and it was decided that further investigation should be made before making a decision.

An Indent order on the British General Electric Company for lamps and general accessories totalling 4,500 Pounds was discussed and approved.

The Manager reported that he had engaged a Sheet Metal Worker for the manufacture of electric fires etc. and that the recent exhibition held in the City Hall had shown that there was a demand for electric stoves which it was proposed to build.

Overdue Accounts. It was resolved that the matter of overdue accounts be left in the hands of the Chairman and Manager to follow up.

A contract for the supply of motors by the British General Electric Company, Melbourne for 1,700 Pounds was discussed and accepted.

The question of granting 30 days credit to Messrs. Edwards and Lovett was discussed and the Manager was authorised to extend this priviledge.

Water Heaters. The Manager was instructed to write to Architects to promote the sale of hot water systems.

Profitability. That Mr. A. W. Adams be authorised to examine the books of the Company to ascertain if any departments were working at a loss.

The effects of an Award variation reducing the hours of work from 48 to 44 per week were discussed and Mr. G. Murdoch was asked to examine current Government Contracts to ascertain if any Clause was contained therein whereby increased costs occasioned by Award variations could be recovered. At the following Meeting it was reported that no Clauses allowing for this had been found.

From here on dates are included as the Minutes progressively show that the Company was experiencing considerable financial problems.

October 3rd, 1922. Dispensing with Employees. Mr. Gibson moved that the action of the Directors in instructing the Manager to dispense with a number of employees be confirmed.

Mr. Gibson reported that he had heard that Mr. F.W. Medhurst had told an acquaintance in the street that Mr. Gibson had sacked 14 of the Company's employees.

Mr. Murdoch reported that it had been reported to him that Messrs. R. A. and H. F. Medhurst had gone about the Town speaking disparagingly of the Directors and Company generally and disclosing the Company's business.

Profit and Loss Account. On the motion of Mr. Gibson consideration of the profit and Loss Account was deferred until a meeting could be arranged when Mr. Murdoch could attend.

October 16th, 1922. Mr. R. A. Medhurst was questioned about privately installing lighting, power and hot water for Mr. Ford of Sandy Bay, he admitted doing this saying that he thought he was justified in doing private work on account of his low salary.

October 18th, 1922. The Board instructed the Manager to dispose of the services of Mr. R.A. Medhurst.

About this time my Father, Harry resigned from the Company (there is no evidence in the Minutes that he was dismissed) and ultimately joined a newly set up Company - MEDHURST AND SONS PTY. LTD.

November 8th, 1922. Mr. P. A. Medhurst was given one weeks notice.

November 30th, 1922. Mr. F. W. Medhurst was notified that his services with the Company as an Electrical Consultant were no longer needed.

March 15th, 1923. The Secretary was instructed to dispense with the services of Mr. T. McLoughlin and Mr. Askey, and Mr. R. Hickey tendered his resignation as Manager.

March 27th, 1923. The Board agreed that R. Lewis, an apprentice, be paid two pounds five shillings weekly in view of his satisfactory work.

June 5th, 1923. The Chairman reported that under instructions of the Directors a stock take had been made on 31st March, the Chairman was then directed to write to The British General Electric Company, Sydney asking if they "would be disposed to take over the entire stock".

July 26th, 1923. Despite its obviously weakened condition M.E.W. tendered for the supply and installation of motors at Paton and Baldwins Mill in Launceston as specified for 1,270 Pounds and offering an alternative tender for 1,061 Pounds.

This action was part of the strenuous efforts (as described in Phil's memoirs) made by the Company to reduce stocks and to improve liquidity. Increased production in the U.K. led to a substantial decrease in prices but optimism and imprudent buying had resulted in huge over stocking. Lamps were one item which "went bad". Improved "gas-filled" lamps which as well as being more efficient & were cheaper came on the market and M.E.W. was holding at least one years supply of lamps which were rapidly becoming obsolete. There were other stock items exposed to the same risk. Industrial Users, Statutory Authorities and major Customers were sent lists of motors and other items available from stock in the hope that orders would be received and the situation eased. Newspaper advertisements advised that all stock was drastically reduced for Cash Transactions.

These efforts to trade out of a desperate situation failed and in December 1923, the Board of Directors recommended to Shareholders that the MEDHURST ELECTRICAL WORKS AND TELEPHONE COMPANY LIMITED be placed in voluntary liquidation.

The Board of Directors of M.E.W. had never included a Member of the Medhurst Family, they were merely paid servants of the Company and had no access to the "internals" of the Company. They all showed great initiative in Trade Skills and Applications but had little opportunity to gain experience in Business Management or to contribute to Board Discussions at a Technical Level.

The collapse of M.E.W. was a bitter blow to the Medhurst Family, Phil's memoirs record "We sold our birthright".

Examination of old records stimulates the mind and prompts one to "read between the lines" in the hope that a clearer and more complete picture will be seen. Some of these imagined situations become "Facts" and so become "History" which no living person can confirm or deny.

So ends Part 1 of "THE MEDHURST STORY".

"THE MEDHURST STORY"

Part 2.

THE CITY HALL. 1922.

As a natural sequel to their severance from M.E.W. the "Tribe" regrouped and set up a new business Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. which opened in the City Hall in January 1922. Some of the M.E.W. staff including Harold Shaw, Reg Lewis, and Archie White subsequently became part of the new team. The City Hall was short lived and in May 1923 Medhurst and Sons Pty. Limited moved.

95 COLLINS STREET. 1923.

Manufacturing plants in the U.K., U.S.A. and Canada were now producing a wide range of domestic electrical appliances. "Falco" irons from Scotland, Hoover vacuum cleaners from England, Universal kettles from U.S.A. and McClary stoves from Canada were amongst some of the things now available for home use and the new location in the city centre was far more suitable for a Retailing activity than the City Hall.

Philip who had served an apprenticeship at the Post and Telegraph Dept. Workshops and had enlisted as a telephonist and signaller in the Ninth Battery Field Artillery and after four years of active service in Gallipoli and France was in charge of the retail sales activity with Roland now known as "Boss" running the installation department.

The youngest son Edney who had been educated at the Hobart High School and had spent three years in Sydney as a member of the Technical Staff of the British General Electric Company Limited returned to Hobart to join Medhurst and Sons Pty. Limited, ultimately becoming Managing Director and later Managing Director of the yet to be formed Public Company, Medhursts Limited a position which he occupied up until his death in 1966.

The new location 95 Collins Street was a long narrow shop, a four foot wide lane ran to the rear area which provided storage in two sheds and two old brick cottages from one of which the installation department operated. In those days one set out on your push bike with coils of cable over the handle bars and 12 foot lengths of conduit had to be cut in half to make sure that "such cumbersome passengers" were allowed on the double decker trams.

At the rear of the "Showroom", stairs led up to the Offices which were the upper storey of the other brick cottage. These were about six feet above the Showroom floor level and a sliding window which looked out into the Showroom providing Edney the opportunity to exercise supervisory control over the scene below.

This property was leased from the Trustees of the late J. A. Burnett's Estate, who lived in Korumburra, Victoria. Several attempts were made to buy the property which also included McPhees Stationery and Typewriter Shop at 97 Collins Street. During this phase the Company negotiated with the A.M.P. Society to provide a Superannuation Benefit Scheme for Staff.

There is more to tell about 95 later.

150 COLLINS STREET and THE "INFLUENCE MACHINE".

95 Collins Street did not have enough space for workshop activities or storage for bulky and heavy stock and with no vehicle access was limiting growth. To overcome this problem a building where The "Duty-Free" shop now stands was leased from Roberts and Company. It was known as the Service Station. Within was a workshop in which staff under the watchful eye of Wally Higgins rewound motors and repaired many pieces of electrical equipment. Unlike today repairing was worthwhile and tradesmen working on such a variety of appliances and machines they acquired many special skills. The rear was used for storage and Alf Mackay spent his day unpacking stock from the pine cases in which it was shipped.

One of the heroes at 150 was Walter "Inky" Croswell. We held the State distribution for "Exide" batteries and they arrived "dry", it was one of Inky's jobs to make up the mixture of Sulphuric acid and Distilled water with which the batteries were filled, after filling they were set up on racks and connected to the chargers. The chargers emitted an eerie flickering light and a continuous hum, in between tending the bubbling and belching batteries "Inky" worked happily amid more acid and hot pitch opening up, repairing and resealing batteries. In those days people had not "learned" of being disadvantaged by being employed in a hazardous and dirty job with unpleasant surroundings.

Space was also used to park staff vehicles during the day and company fleet vehicles were housed there over night many of the vehicles had been bought second hand and needed regular trips to a "house of correction" so it was decided to engage a full time motor mechanic. Jack Emery and his apprentice Barry Cooper kept the vehicles on the road. A mezzanine floor was put in and here Lionel Gilley made up copper hot water cylinders for our use and sale to others.

Higher up in the roof area was a small room which contained some of F.W.M's telephone gear together with a relic of his early experimenting with electricity, this was a "Wimshurst Machine" sometimes known as "An Influence Machine". You may well ask what such a device did. It could be said that it was owned by "A Crank" and operated by a crank. A circular glass disk about three feet in diameter was mounted on a horizontal axle with a small pulley and a belt ran down to a second larger pulley on another shaft which carried a crank handle which the operator could turn and thus cause the glass disk to spin at high speed. Reaching out from either side of the machine were a pair of arms fitted with pads which rubbed lightly on the spinning disk, the friction caused a build up of static electricity which was collected and stored in "Leyden Jars" which were the first primitive condensers and when sufficient energy was stored a spectacular spark could be made to leap across a spark gap.

The significance of this machine did not occur to me until now. It was another reminder of the inventive genius of F.W.M. perhaps an attempt to devise a means of controlling the sparks from static electricity for use in morse code radio transmission?

Some of the telephone gear was given to the Museum but what happened to the "Influence Machine" is a mystery. It is a pity that this unusual piece of scientific apparatus has vanished.

TRANSPORT.

Originally F.W.M. travelled on horseback or by bicycle in the course of his field activities with the Post Office. The "Penny Farthing" cycle and the "Velocipede" which was almost entirely built of wood lived in retirement at Cranleigh for many years. Later he used a motor cycle and side car. The appendix includes a copy of his driving licence and a photograph taken with Edith Emma as passenger.

Later my Father rode a "New Hudson" motor cycle and Rowland drove a T Model Ford. The "T Model" was the transport unit for Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. and supplemented the services of Mather's cart.

One of the stories belonging to the Model T was recalled by Rex Fahey. At the closing of the retail shop at 9 p.m. on Friday night Rex was co-opted to drive the "Boss" down to the ferry. At this time the "Boss" was building his week-ender at Sandford to which he travelled in his other car a "Rugby" which he parked at Bellerive. "Boss" grabbed his bag and jumped aboard the just moving ferry and Rex looked on the seat and saw a small parcel which he tossed ferryward with the words "Boss" you left your tin of "Nugget" behind - Thanks Rex it is not "Nugget" its my Belgium Sausage for lunch tomorrow.

"Boss" later drove a six cylinder "Chevrolet" roadster "Leaping Lena", sometimes the clutch was not quite progressive, hence the name. Care had to be taken when loading gear into the "hinge up lid" rear which had a pull out rack to extend its carrying capacity, otherwise bruised fingers were the result. Sometimes the brakes did not respond quite promptly and I can still hear Joe Mills voice "Start stopping Boss".

Another vehicle which was identified with Medhurst & Sons was a "Douglas Flat Twin" motor cycle, owned and ridden in all weathers by Roly Padman. "The man on the motor bike" who must have performed about 4000 stove repairs during his time with the Firm.

Launceston had its unusual vehicle, "Whippet" made in U.S.A. by the Willys Overland Company later to build the JEEP. A single seater car converted to an early version of the utility truck by the fitting of a "cart type" rear end.

The Hobart fleet was augmented by the acquisition of two "Plymouth" tourers, one whose name became "Chrissie", both had previously been owned by Edney. From these beginnings grew a sizeable fleet of vehicles of many types. The first commercial vehicle being a "Ford 10" utility.

Strangely enough a "horse" reappeared briefly, one of the Installation Staff was keen on horses and wished to do early morning training of race horses. He asked if he could be employed on single handed domestic repair jobs as in this activity he could have a later starting time which would not disrupt the routine of other staff members and be of little inconvenience to customers. He phoned in one morning to say he would be unable to come to work as he had fallen from the horse and needed some repairs himself. During the day an important customer rang requesting an urgent repair, Ron Smith who took the call explained that we were running behind in our repair service as our repair man had fallen off his horse. A little later a phone call from "up above" enquired - "How long have we been sending out our repairman on a horse".

F.W.M'S LAST INVENTION

Ever inventive F.W.M. used the large wheel of the "Penny Farthing" as a support structure for the blades of a windmill, the windmill shaft was coupled to a car type generator and was used to charge a 6 volt battery for lighting at "Fort Chimo" a weekend retreat at Oyster Cove at which F.W.M. and his daughter Edith spent many hours of leisure time. Today's engineers are evaluating the worth of wind power as an alternative energy source. This wheel is one relic which remains having been rescued by Douglas who has it in safe keeping, but the rest including the "Velocipede" and spark coil have disappeared because someone did not appreciate their historical value.

EDITH HELEN MEDHURST.

Edith was the only girl in the family and spent most of her life helping Grandmother to operate "Cranleigh" and following Grandmother's death, she was the "Lady in Charge" of the household comprising F. W. Medhurst and Edney. At one stage she worked in the Medhurst & Sons offices and unfortunately died in Florence in 1958 whilst on holiday in Europe.

HELEN MEDHURST. (now Helen Wardrop).

My cousin Helen, daughter of Phil, was the first of the next generation to join Medhurst & Sons and as she precedes me in age by about one month she is the "Matriach" of the "Tribe". After attending Business College she became the maid of all work as Telephonist, Cashier, Typist and Clerk at 95 Collins Street.

KEITH LESTER, ALAN WATCHORN AND ALISON MC MULLEN.

The business extended to Huonville with the acquisition of a Huonville Company, Grahams Pty. Ltd., who had a store in Main Street, Huonville where they sold an unusual range of goods including bicycles, sweets and ice creams. Another activity was the operation of the Saturday night picture show in the local hall which was conveniently sighted opposite the lollies and ice creams.

A Mr. McIvor who lived in a house in Burnett Street, appropriately named "Cinema" used to bring films for the Saturday night showings into the Collins Street shop where they were duly received by a dark headed girl, named Nancy.

The Huonville shop was initially operated by Keith Lester and later by Alan Watchorn whose assistant was Alison McMullen. A small installation department serving the Huon Valley area operated from this location.

ATHOL HOLTON.

One who joined the Company in its infancy was Athol Holton. As a boy Athol delivered milk to our home on Trevallyn, Launceston, and one morning my Mother asked him, what are you going to be when you grow up? An electrician replied Athol. A few years later he became an apprentice and worked with the firm until he enlisted in the Army. Upon his return from active service he became an Electrical Contractor and later rejoined the Company in Hobart where he was employed in the Wholesale activity handling Engineering Sales.

MEDHURST MOORE AND COMPANY

Another key player was Clifford Richard Moore who joined Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. as an accountant and as "Mr. Accounts Rendered" and custodian of the Firms finances he made a great contribution through his astute decisions. He was generally feared and his habit of addressing lesser mortals as "Squire" in the hope of making them feel at ease seldom worked. After the death of Edney in 1966 he became Chairman of the Board.

In 1927 a subsidiary partnership Medhurst, Moore and Company was established to handle the Hire Purchase business of Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. and in 1948 an additional subsidiary partnership was registered as Electrical Finance Co. to discount Hire Purchase Agreements for appliance sold by both Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. and their Dealers and Agents. This new Company accepted deposits in multiples of One Hundred Pounds and paid interest quarterly at the rate of 7% per annum, deposits were on call 3 months. The appendix includes a copy of an early hire agreement form for a five valve wireless set sold by Phil.

The inflow of funds to the new Company, Electrical Finance Company, allowed Medhurst, Moore and Company to further diversify and make other investments. C.R. Moore was the investment adviser, early investments included speculation in a new and little known Company, Bitumen and Oil Refineries, which ultimately grew into the industrial giant Boral, Brownells Limited and St. Helens Hotel were also part of the portfolio.

Medhurst, Moore and Company bought the property in Davey Street, known as "Ranelagh" to accommodate Jack Emery's vehicle servicing as another Collins Street development was ready to house all "Service Station" activities. The installation department also moved to "Ranelagh" and part was used for bulk storage whilst the upper floor was leased.

"Ranelagh" was sold later allowing Medhurst, Moore and Company to make funds available to Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. to assist in other development projects.

This Company was not included in the later "Takeover" of Medhursts Ltd. and for some years I continued to register this Company in case there was some need to re-establish the Family name in some sort of business activity. Medhurst, Moore and Company no longer exists.

101 COLLINS STREET (Smale Bros. Building)

Discussions with the Trustees of J.A. Burnett's Estate were still proceeding amidst fears that some other eyes may be looking at the properties, when in June 1939 it became known that Smale Bros. building was to be offered for sale, this resulted in major decisions being made. What if Smales Bros. building was bought and Burnetts accepted the current offer?

Edney was Overseas and his opinions were vital before any decision could be made. Cliff Moore bore much of the burden in this dramatic situation, he located Edney in Canada and through a series of phone calls and air mail letters kept him in touch with developments so that he could evaluate the situation and participate in the decision making. Smale Bros. was bought on June 22nd, 1939 for Eleven Thousand Pounds.

The building remained occupied by the existing tenants, Madam Kilduff ran "The Cafe Francais" in the basement, Smales Bros. the ground floor and some upstairs work rooms, Harvey Trinder Insurance Company, Margaret Senior Ladies Hairdressing and Barbara and James Guthrie who preached details of a radical financial plan which if adopted by World Governments would result in a financial paradise for all, its name was "Douglas Credit" but like the dinosaur it is now extinct.

Prior to buying Smales building Johnston and Crawford, Architects, who had originally designed the building were asked to report on its condition and suitability for modification. The major need being vehicle access. Madam Kilduff was the first tenant to vacate and the basement area was now free for conversion. The move involved the removal of the stairs leading down to the basement and the building of a brick wall to create the vehicle laneway to the yard at the rear, a steep ramp gave access to Collins Street. The large fuel stove and kitchen facilities were removed and shelving and office accommodation was set up. The new area was used as a store from which the Installation Department and the growing Wholesale and Distribution activities operated. Access to 95 Collins Street was via the yard behind McPhee's Building. Another "rest period" followed.

The next stage of development of this property was the building of a new section comprising basement and three floors on the previously free rear yard area, this provided additional storage space in the basement and Smales Ground Floor Showroom was extended to provide a large showroom area. The second floor was known as the "Concrete Floor" but despite this fancy name it was only used as bulk storage. The top floor was used as a workshop and the hot water cylinder making operation was extended to include other sheet metal products, switchboards, ducting and other items for the electrical industry. A goods lift from the basement provided access to these floors.

This development enabled Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. to vacate the Burnett Estate property at 95 Collins Street and all activities were now located in Smales Building and the new extension. This accommodation promised to be adequate for any expected future needs, but this was not so and another building was constructed at 163 Collins Street, which housed Medhurst Wholesale and the workshop which became known as Medhursts Manufacturing and included more storage space.

This development released the "Concrete Floor" which was converted into office space. It was here that the Electrical Finance Company changed its name to Electrical and General Finance Company and grew rapidly under the guidance of Bill Shelley, as the name implies business was extended to include finance for other than electrical appliance and services.

Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. had outgrown Smales Building and in common with some other business activities in the Central City Block were feeling the effects of increasing vehicle traffic in the area.

All of the Directors of Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. had made Overseas trips but apparently did not observe the trend to move certain activities to locations out of the City centre. The "all under one roof" syndrome was ever present and I am sure that this theory may resulted in more problems than benefits.

THE YOUNG ONES

The Medhurst Group of Companies engaged many young people as apprentices and some have already been named, another name which became well known in the Electrical Contracting Industry in Hobart was Raymond H. Latham, his Son Delmont has loaned me evidence for copying.

Apprentices had the opportunity to learn a wide variety of skills and the benefits of this training produced many competent tradesmen and an overview of the careers of many of them is evidence of their thorough training. I include the following episodes to support the claim of diverse training.

The Undertakers employee whose basic trade skills were confined to coffin making was attempting to solder a lid on a large galvanised iron box. Within was a coffin which was to be sent by sea to Melbourne, regulations required that this sort of cargo be enclosed in a sealed metal container and a new soldering iron had been bought for the job. The job was going very badly and Reg said "Go and tin his soldering iron and show him how to get the solder to flow". The action was appreciated and the "coffin cladder" said "you are better at it than me what about doing the lot". It was I who obliged. Doubtless other apprentices had equally unusual opportunities. Another apprentice who was fitting a wooden enclosure to a hot water cylinder that he had helped install, inadvertently pierced the copper cylinder with a nail. He carefully withdrew the nail and cut a wooden plug which he inserted to seal the leak. There is no record of us having been called to attend to a leak on this particular job, so the initiative must have worked.

LAUNCESTON

In 1890 the Launceston Municipal Council built a water powered station at Duck Reach on the South Esk River close to Launceston, the alternator which was driven by a Pelton wheel turbine was installed by Siemens Bros. of Germany. This station supplied power to the town of Launceston. The Launceston City Council resisted efforts to allow power from the State owned Hydro Electric Department to be extended to Launceston. A twenty five mile limit was imposed, eventually this was recinded and growth opportunities were created, resulting in two new industries, Patons and Baldwin Wool Spinning Mills and Kelsall and Kemp, makers of flannel cloth. Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. quoted for the electrical installations and were successful. My Father, Harry, transferred to Launceston in 1923 to organise these installations, I was then three years old.

His observations were that the Company should consider opening a branch in Launceston. The idea was approved on the understanding that each of the Brothers would take turns in being "exiled" in Launceston for a given period. I believe that this condition originated with my Mother as we had just moved into a new home in Regent Street and naturally she did not wish to leave it permanently, however we did not return to Hobart.

In 1925 Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. opened a shop in the Quadrant and traded there until about 1928 when they moved to 59 Brisbane Street, this had a larger shop and at the rear was a two storey brick cottage and a yard accessible by a vehicle laneway. The top floor of the cottage was converted to a workshop by "Jack" Bowden and the ground floor was used as a Store and Exide Battery Depot. A large shed was built to house contracting needs and "The Whippet". Now enters one who was perhaps the most colourful character in the employ of Medhursts.

JAMES A. (Electric Light) BOWEN. We got "Jimmy" from the Launceston Municipal Council, I believe that his job there was replacing Street light globes. "Jimmy" became outside Supervisor of the Installation Staff and drove "The Whippet" which conveyed men and material to jobs and "Jimmy" out to give estimates. As well as his job which he really enjoyed he was a great admirer of horses, on one occasion he and Harry were out in the Hagley area where they were to look at a prospective job when they saw a man on horse back "stop, stop" said "Jimmy" thats 'im, afterwards my Father asked "Jimmy" how did you know you have not met him before? No said "Jimmy" but I know 'is 'orse. This story and the name of the horse "Bay Voyage" was often heard in my home. I am sure that Athol Holton could add some more tales of "Jimmy".

In later years Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. moved to a two storey building in Wellington Street, which was modified to accommodate the expanding operation. After my Father's death the Launceston activity was Managed by Mick Walsh.

BURNIE

A Branch of Medhurst Wholesale was opened in Burnie and J. W. (Bill) Wilson, who had been an Electrical Contractor in Burnie, was appointed Manager.

MORE RADIO

F. W. M's radio activities did not stop with the signal from "Blinking Billy" he was a radio "ham" and there are still a few radio amateur operators around who recall the name "Pop" Medhurst and his call sign VK7AH. In those days one just had to build his own transmitters and receivers and I recall seeing Grandpa at work on a revolutionary new receiver. All parts were mounted on a sheet of glass, it was a "Low Losser" the insulating virtues of the glass were supposed to result in superior performance. The action was taking place on the kitchen table at "Cranleigh" and I do not think Grandma was being seen as playing a supportive role in this particular project. He also build Crystal Sets which were offered for sale, with one of these and skill in manipulating the "Cats Wisker" a springy piece of wire which made contact on a piece of "Galena" which operated in the fashion of a present day diode one was rewarded with a trickle of music or speech from embracing earphones. He also build a few one valve receivers which were sold in the shop.

In 1926 the first two Radio Stations in Australia began transmission - 2FC Sydney and 3LO Melbourne. Those living in Launceston could expect to receive programmes from 3LO and my Father set up "A Western Electric Wireless" in our best room and suspended an aerial from a chimney to a large tree. He invited three Launceston Men, two Doctors and a Dentist to "enjoy" hearing Madam Nellie Melba perform on the opening night of 3LO. The wireless squealed and howled and failed to respond to my Fathers manipulation, but late in the evening they heard the last few bars of God Save the King. No sales resulted from this promotion.

Other early brand names were Gilfillan and Chapin which were battery operated. The first to operate from domestic power was the Atwater Kent, this receiver was housed in a neat "crackle finish" metal case on which stood a circular loud speaker which was also quite decorative and unlike the elongated ear trumpet devices previously used. This was the first attempt to make the wireless a piece of furniture, its origin was U.S.A.

Then a series of Australian made receivers followed - Airzone, Healing, Admiral and Kriesler and in 1960 Kriesler T.V. receivers supplemented the display of mantle, console and radiograms on show.

THE WASHING MACHINE

Like the radio washing machines were kind to Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. The first one that I recall was in Launceston, a "Coffield" from U.S.A., my Father brought it home for my Mother to "assess" its worth and possibilities of these as a saleable machine. My Mother displayed great disgust claiming that clothes could only be washed in the copper, despite this disadvantage the "Coffield" was not allowed to be returned to the shop and served us for many years. My Mother used "Brasso" to polish the copper drum in which the clothes were tossed around in a figure fashion for 20 minutes. Mounted above the drum was a reversible power wringer which could be rotated to serve the washing container or the wash trough. It lived in retirement at my old home for many years and I donated it to the Queen Victoria Museum where it may be seen by visitors.

At "Cranleigh" a slightly more sophisticated machine could be seen a "Universal" again from U.S.A., it had a circular wash bowl with a central agitator, a "spin dry" bowl completed the arrangement.

The first washers to become "big sellers" were "Stampco" made by W.A. Stamp & Co., Adelaide with which the Firm had a long association. These were supplemented by Simpson and Electric Washers and later automatic machines by Thor.

The machine which really made the public, washing machine conscious, was the small Hoover. When the first of these machines was inspected Cliff Moore was most emphatic that they would not sell - designed to be used in submarines only - was his comment, but the Hoover and a team of enthusiastic Dealers put Tasmanian sales on a population basis far ahead of any other State. At a Dinner held at the Highfield Hotel, Mr. Boon of Hoover Australia congratulated the Company and Hoover Dealers for their sales record.

BUILDING THINGS

This was one of the first activities of the Medhurst Family starting in the home workshop at "Ethelmont" and continuing in various levels of intensity through the history of the Companies. A small activity which covers the longest time span was the production of the Medhurst Patent Hotwater Element originally devised and made by Rowland in his home workshop at York Street. As described before workshop activities became housed in the Smales Building extensions.

This activity was later moved to 165 Collins Street, but we were soon to learn that the idea of having "everything under the one roof" in the belief that this provided "overseeing advantages" was fast becoming unattractive. As with Smales Building the manufacturing operation was located on the top floor and with the increasing activity it became obvious that it could no longer be tolerated as the noise and dirt related to the activity coupled with problems of moving large and heavy loads up and down had to be eliminated. Property in Victoria Street was bought and this building which in its early days had once housed "Woods Brewery" which had drawn its supplies of water from the now enclosed "Rivulet" was converted to accommodate Medhurst Manufacturing. The new facility was opened by the Hon. Roy Fagan, Minister for Industrial Development. ~~larger projects could now be undertaken.~~

THE TAKE OVER.

Following the establishment of the Public Company business progressed quite satisfactorily and early in 1969 Charles Davis Ltd. who owned property in Elizabeth Street and had developed the Cat and Fiddle Arcade foresaw the possibility of a future development to extend this through to Collins Street and an approach was made to Medhursts Ltd. suggesting a merger or a take over. The Board of Medhursts Ltd. considered this proposal and decided to reject it and the matter lapsed. During the year Rowland and Phillip both died. There had been very little trading in the shares of Medhursts Ltd. as the Trustees of the Estates of the original Medhurst Founders had retained the shareholdings intact.

Glan Oakley had become Chairman of the Board of Medhursts Ltd. and bore much of the burden of the take over. Chas Davis Ltd subsequently made a formal take over offer which the Board of Medhursts Ltd. considered was not adequate to cover the asset backing of the Company and not in the best interest of the Shareholders. Negotiations were made with another Company to make a counter offer which resulted in Chas Davis raising their bid. The Directors of Medhursts Ltd. recommended that Shareholders accept this revised offer and the take over was made.

Initially there was very little change, Chas Davis Ltd. was a Company identified with Hobart and retained a background of Family tradition. The Medhursts component of the Company continued to operate without any change in identity and remained virtually autonomous but, it had no representation on the Board of Directors of Charles Davis Ltd. With the management skills of the old regime intact it continued to trade profitably.

As well as its Elizabeth Street and Campbell Street properties Chas. Davis now had valuable Real Estate in both Collins Street and Victoria Street and this did not escape the notice of a Mainland Company which had been probing the possibility of speculation in Hobart. In a series of unnoticed moves it acquired a major shareholding in Chas Davis Ltd. and at a meeting of Chas Davis Directors and Shareholders it announced its presence as the new Owners. The intention of the new owners were not immediately obvious and were disguised in proposals to extend and enlarge the already complex operations. Whether further expansion plans were in fact envisaged and subsequently considered to be inappropriate is not known.

Despite the initial speech making and other noises it was soon apparent that the new marriage was doomed to failure. The Mainland Imports were disinclined to seek, consider or accept advice from those who had a proven record of performance on the local scene. The autonomy of the Medhurst component of the Company was eroded and discontent and uncertainty prompted resignations. Valuable Dealerships were lost and despite modifications to the Showroom and attempts to diversify retail sales declined. All of these misfortunes were reflected on Electrical and General Finance Co. and the rosy future which had been predicted during the early fanfares was suddenly suspect.

Glan Oakley and Bill Shelley disillusioned resigned from the Company and Athol Holton was appointed Caretaker Manager of Medhursts Wholesale. the effects of the loss of Glan and Bill were soon evident and Medhursts lost momentum.

Many specifications were calling for "Type Tested Switchboards" and so as to compete in this field a design was developed and a sample switchboard sent up to Sydney for test by the Sydney County Council who at that time had the only "Type Testing Laboratory" in Australia. "Type Testing" is a procedure by which the switchboard is subjected to electrical and mechanical strains many times greater than would be experienced in its normal use, it is an attempt to load the switchboard to near destruction and sometimes destruction is achieved. The design lived up to our hopes and we were given a "Certified Test Report". At its peak activity Medhurst Manufacturing employed twenty staff engaged in sheet metal fabrication, welding, electrical fitting, spray painting and other related operations.

My Father did not live to see how much the "Home workshop" had grown, but Rowland lived to see the transition from "brass terminals" to switchboards 20 feet long, housed in "automobile finish" sprayed steel cubicles. Although he did not appear to be proud of how the baby had grown over the years, I am sure he got great personal satisfaction from seeing such vigorous activity.

165 COLLINS STREET AND VICTORIA STREET.

The purchase of Smales Building had just been finalised when another series of decisions had to be made. The opening paragraphs of Cliff Moore's letter No. 9 to Edney written in July 1939 describes the circumstances of this deal and is further evidence of the forward thinking of the Medhurst and Sons Directors.

The property was owned by The Johnston Family, it had a frontage on Collins Street and ran right through to Victoria Street as well as that it had a frontage on Victoria Street. Sam Johnston whose family owned the property occupied a two storey building in Victoria Street from which he operated a plumbing business.

A casual conversation between Rowland and Sam Johnston had revealed that the Family wished to sell the property and that Sam was concerned that any sale would prejudice his right to continue as a tenant in Victoria Street. The property was advertised for auction by Burn and Sons and Medhurst and Sons together with Sam Johnston were the successful bidders. The reason for acquiring this property was an insurance against Roberts and Company not renewing the lease for The Service Station and to provide facilities for the Installation Department and housing the Exide Battery Division in the Victoria Street site. It was many years before any development was made. A new Company Medhurst Wholesale occupied a building erected on this site, the building also accommodated the old service station and Medhursts workshop activity now retitled Medhursts Manufacturing occupied one section of the building.

THE PUBLIC COMPANY 1954.

The activities operating under the umbrella of Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd. were expanding, sales of Hoover Washers at the rate of 4000 per year and Creda Ranges at 1000 per year looked to be ongoing and all other activities promised growth.

Taxation imposed on private companies was heavy and more capital was needed to meet the expanding needs of the business and to up-date showroom and office facilities. Conversion to a Public Company would lessen the taxation burden and so accelerate these developments and in April 1954 a Prospectus for the issue of 300,000 Ordinary Shares of five shillings each with the provision for the future issue of Preference Shares and Unsecured Notes was registered with the Supreme Court of Tasmania and the transition to a Public Company was initiated.

New plans started to emerge. Medhurst Wholesale was to be moved from Collins Street to part of the Chas Davis complex at Campbell Street and the building sold together with the Victoria Street properties of the Exide division and Medhursts Manufacturing. The showroom area of Smales Bros was to be converted to an Arcade to be accessible from the Cat and Fiddle Arcade.

THE LAST SUPPER.

One who decided to leave Medhursts was the Prophet Ramsay who repeatedly stated that everything will be alright when Margaret Senior, the Hairdresser, vacates her tenancy in Smales Building. His association with the Company goes back to 1935 --

15/5/35

Messrs. Medhurst and Sons Pty. Ltd.,
Collins St.,
Hobart.

Dear Sirs,

I wish to apply for the position of junior shop assistant as advertised in this morning's Mercury.

I am nearly sixteen years of age and am at present attending the Hutchins School. I have also a slight knowledge of shorthand and type-writing.

Trusting that this application will receive your favourable consideration.

I am,
Yours faithfully,
W. M. Ramsay.

Several Members of the staff gathered in an UPPER ROOM - the Beefeater Restaurant in the Imperial Hotel Building to pay tribute to Bills contribution and wish him well in his new activity. Two Ladies were present Pam Clark who with unobtrusive skill was the Tail That Wagged The Dog at Medhurst Wholesale and June Pridmore, June had worked at H. C. Heathorn and Co. where once "The Boss" had been apprenticed. Like Pam her ability to undertake most office routines made them a little bit more senior than other female staff members.

This was a turbulent period and only the optimist thought it was the Storm before the Calm. This meal was in fact the "Last Supper". Soon the remnants of the Tribe would become a "Diaspora" living in diverse surroundings and loosely connected by Tradition and Memories of past glories.

Out of the Ashes a new Company was formed by Douglas, he acquired some of the Distributorships which had become alienated from Medhurst Wholesale and set up a new Company, Medhursts Equipment Pty. Ltd.. This new firm with old ideas of Customer Service has gone from a small beginning to a substantial business venture, just as R. A. Medhurst grew and is now renewing faith in our Family Name.

THE END.

I was commissioned to plan and set up the new wholesale store facilities for Medhurst Wholesale in a vacant area of the Chas Davis Campbell Street complex and on moving day virtually all stock items were transferred and re located in pre arranged positions which were virtually identical to the old format. This part of the operation went smoothly and it was business as usual on Monday.

Athol Holton retired from the Company and Mr. Alan Walton was appointed as Manager of Medhurst Wholesale and exercised supervisory control over the remains of the Service Department and Installation Department.

The transfer of Medhurst Manufacturing did not go so smoothly. Three of the Key Personnel realised that the transfer would be detrimental and their expertise would be fragmented pooled their resources and confident that they could expect support from the Customers who had been well satisfied with the co-operation and service they had enjoyed for so many years they set up a new Company "Icon Industries". Only four of the Medhurst Manufacturing Staff transferred to Chas Davis the rest remained undisturbed working for the new Company.

On the completion of the setting up of the new store facilities I was faced with decisions should I follow Douglas's example and resign? There were alternatives to consider.

1. I had all the qualifications and knowledge to re-enter the Electrical Contracting Industry on my own behalf
2. I had been offered a position with a Nationally known Electrical Wholesale Merchant.
3. I had been offered a job by a rival Electrical Contraction Firm.
4. Mr. Walton had asked me to take over as Estimator in the Installation Department.

The terms of reference for this job were in conflict with my personal views of what properly competitive quoting should be, but as the last Medhurst left I considered I had a moral obligation to try and maintain job security for some of those who had been good and faithful servants of Medhursts. My reply to Mr. Walton was " I do not think it will work but I will give it a go for 3 months, after which we will talk again and you will have the right to sack me or I will have the right to resign", I do not recall which side of the desk won, but I departed with a stainless steel Ice Bucket which was presented and received with mixed feelings.

No longer in Collins Street which had been a happy home for over seventy years but returned to Argyle Street the street of the first disaster Medhursts declined. The surgery performed by the various specialists was successful but unfortunately the "Patient Died".

Shortly after I left the Company Nancy noticed an advertisement in the Mercury - Wanted Storeman Wine and Spirits Merchants, and said that that would be a change for me you know a lot about Australian Wines and you might learn to use the broom.

It is not practical to include all of those who contributed to the Group of Companies in such a short record, but, I recognise that many who worked behind the scenes or played "bit" parts all contributed to the production and without them the roles played by those seen on stage may have less dramatic: .

History repeats itself for the benefit of the young who do not enjoy it anyhow.

Did we sell our Birthright once again?

Sufficent that I shall be recorded as "The Scribe" "Truthful Jones", I hope that you have read as far as this so as you can underline any untruths.

Wendell.

