

Robert Hutchison & Son, Engineers, Ltd

136 Chalmers Street (formerly Woodhead Street) and Elgin Street, Dunfermline

This firm was founded in 1869 by Dunfermline man, Robert Hutchison, who had been foreman mechanic in Messrs Reid & Sons' Abbey Gardens Linen Works, St Margaret's Street, Dunfermline.

Mr Hutchison's premises, where the firm would remain for the next 100 years, occupied the basement part of the factory building of Messrs Cunningham, Linen Manufacturers, Woodhead Street (now Chalmers Street), Dunfermline.

Perhaps not surprisingly Mr Hutchison soon became involved in making improvements to the Jacquard linen weaving machine, which, with the advent of steam-powered textile factories, was being used all over the world. Over the years Mr Hutchison built many Jacquard machines and the 'Hutchison Jacquard' became famous throughout the textile industry, being exported to many European countries and also to Russia, prior to the revolution in that country.

Messrs Hutchison held three patents for improvements to these machines, two granted by Queen Victoria and one by King George V in 1922.

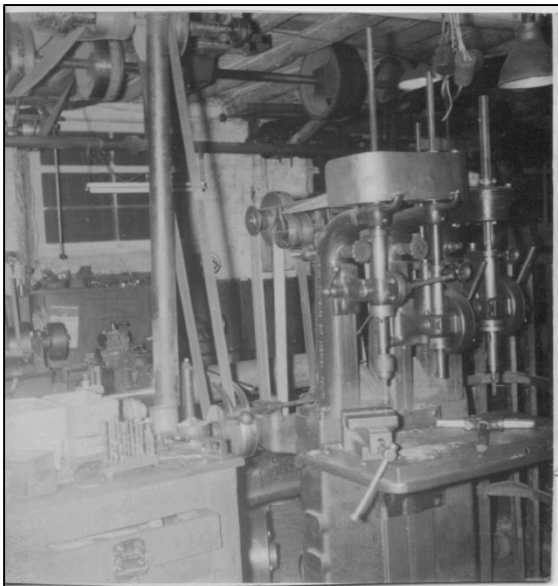
A patent certificate is an impressive document. For example, one issued to Robert Hutchison during the reign of Queen Victoria in 1894, states:- "*Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith to whom all*

these presents shall come, Greeting; Whereas Robert Hutchison, Woodhead Street, Dunfermline, N.B., machine maker, hath represented unto us that he is in possession of an invention for improvement in twilling jacquard machines, that he is the true and first inventor thereof, and that the same is not in use by any other person to the best of his knowledge and belief. And whereas the said inventor hath humbly prayed that We would be graciously pleased to grant unto him (thereinafter, together with his executors, administrators, and assigns, or any part of them, referred to as the patentee) our Royal Letters Patent for the sole use and advantage of his said invention. Know ye, therefore, that We, of our special grace, certain knowledge, and mere motion, do by these presents, for us, our heirs and successors, give and grant unto the said patentee our special licence."

When Robert Hutchison retired in the early 1900s, the firm was taken over by his son, Willie, who had served his time with his father and had developed into a fine engineer in his own right. Willie carried on to make improvements to the Jacquard machine and also expanded the business into other engineering areas.

Willie Hutchison retired in 1938 and sold the business to Dunfermline man, James Henderson Grieve. Mr Grieve had served his apprenticeship as a mechanic

with Messrs Hay and Robertson in Dunfermline. He later worked for the Fairfield Engineering Company in Glasgow, where he gained marine engineering experience. After serving for a time at sea he took the Board of Trade Certificate and, as a chief engineer with Jones & Co., Cardiff, he voyaged several time round the world. For eight years Mr Grieve was employed as chief engineer with a jute manufacturing firm in Calcutta. He then returned to Dunfermline as consulting engineer with Hay & Robertson Ltd, Linen Manufacturers, before taking over Hutchisons.



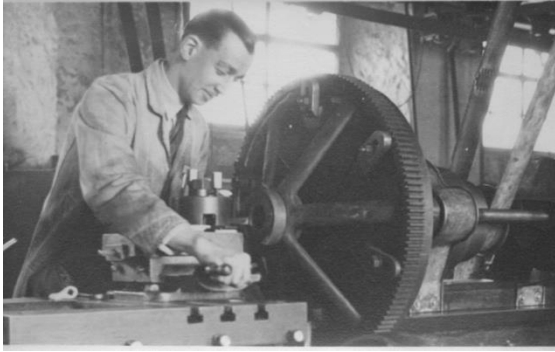
C. 1950 – The belt-driven lathes and drills at Hutchison’s



C. 1950 – General view of Hutchison’s workshop showing the over-head pulley mechanism with the belt driven machines below.

With the decline of the textile industry the firm diversified and during the Second World War Hutchison’s was deeply involved in naval and military armaments and, at the end of hostilities, turned to general engineering, welding and fabrication work. They were also heating engineers for the Carnegie Dunfermline Trust and the West Fife Hospital Board.

James Grieve died suddenly in 1955, at which time his son Robert (Roy) Davie Grieve, succeeded him. Roy had served an engineering apprenticeship with Michael Tod, Engineers, Campbell Street, Dunfermline. He then worked as an engineer with the Royal Armament Depot at Crombie and was also employed for a period at Rosyth Dockyard, before joining his father at Hutchison’s in 1946.



The preceding photograph shows Roy Grieve working with.....

In the early 1960s Hutchison's made the cable ends, inserted in the north and south anchorages of the Forth Road Bridge, as well as the gauges for the tensioning of cables in the north and south towers of the structure.

Roy Grieve died in January, 1973, aged 56 years, after having been more or less housebound for a year with a serious form of arthritis. His wife, Marion, then carried on the business, assisted by the workshop foreman, Tony Herdman and engineers, Bob Garland, Stephen Brown, Robert Hood, and Jimmy.....from Crombie.

Some two years later, when Marion began to find the pressures of running the business a bit too much, she asked the husband, Sid Cooper, of her niece, Sandra, if he would be interested in taking over the running of the business.

Sid was at that time a member of the British Army, having served 15 years with the Somerset &..... After giving the matter some consideration, Sid, who had no engineering experience, agreed to give it a go, and spent his last few months in the army undertaking a welding re-settlement course. On leaving the forces,

Sid then undertook a six month engineering course at Muircockhall Training Establishment at Townhill, before taking over the helm at Chalmers Street.

In 1979 the firm was forced to move premises and took the lease on Unit 3b at Elgin Street, Industrial Estate. This was the result of Chalmers Street building having to be demolished before it slipped down the embankment into the Tower Burn. At that time the staff comprised Sid plus five engineers.

The work being undertaken by the firm by then was mainly one-off orders, although they did have regular work from the Dunfermline factories of Dunlop Textiles, Glazin & Berry, along with Lyle & Scott at Rosyth, and Tod & Duncan, at Kinross. Sid also recalled a gentleman arriving at the works, having flown in from America with the cylinder head from a Rolls Royce requesting that Hutchison's re-face it. The work completed, the customer then happily flew back to the States with the re-faced cylinder head.

Sid said that, whilst he enjoyed running Hutchison's, he found it became increasingly difficult to maintain cash-flow, the main problem being that many of his customers were fairly large companies who insisted on payment being some months down the line from when the work was carried out. His suppliers and indeed his landlord were not so generous and, in the latter case, demanded rent in advance.

An article in the Dunfermline Press of 22nd February, 1991, indicated that

Hutchison's had 'reached the end of the production line' and had ceased trading earlier that month. The company would make no official comment on the closure, but a spokesman for liquidators, Thomson, Cooper & Co., said that the company latterly had the directors and two employees on its books. An auction sale of the company's equipment would be held later. The directors were Marion Grieve and Sid Cooper. Marion died three years later, in 1994.

Note 1 - Robert Hutchison was born in Dunfermline, around 1842/43, the son of William Hutchison, a damask weaver, and his wife Henrietta Syme. On 26th November, 1869, at New Row, Dunfermline, Robert, then 27 years of age and employed as a power loom mechanic, married Mary Marshall, (27), a domestic servant, residing at New Row. The witnesses to the marriage were James Grieve and R. Marshall. Robert died at his home, 17 Cameron Street, Dunfermline, on 23rd February, 1929. He was 86 years of age and his occupation was given as 'Jacquard Machine Maker'. He was predeceased by his wife, Mary, who died on 1st January, 1918, aged 76 years, at 17 Cameron Street, Dunfermline.

In the 1891 Census, Robert Hutchison (48), Machine Maker, is residing at 52 Grieve Street, Dunfermline, with his wife Mary (48) and sons William (20), a Jacquard Machine Maker, and Robert (14).

In the 1901 Census, Robert (58), wife Mary (59), and sons William (30) and Robert (24) are residing at 48 Grieve Street. Robert Snr. and William are both

described as Jacquard Machine Makers, whilst Robert Jnr. is a Manufacturer's Clerk.

Note 2 – William Hutchison, son of Robert and Mary, was born on 11th June, 1870, at Priory Lane, Dunfermline. Robert's occupation at that time was shown as a power loom mechanic. On 9th October, 1919, at South Dewar Street, Dunfermline, William, then 49 years of age, a 'jacquard machine maker', residing at 17 Cameron Street, Dunfermline, married Helen Grant Keddie, (51), a governess, the daughter of Alexander Keddie, Engineer, residing at South Dewar Street. The witnesses to the marriage were David Duncan and H.W. Keddie. William died at 114 Grieve Street, Dunfermline, on 2nd December, 1958. He was 88 years of age and described as a 'retired textile machine manufacturer'. His death was registered by his nephew, R.M. Hutchison, 18 Murrayfield Avenue, Edinburgh. William's wife, Helen, had died at the Northern Hospital, Dunfermline, some four years earlier, on 15th October, 1954, aged 84 years. William was a keen left-handed golfer and was, for many years, a member of Dunfermline Golf Club.

Note 3 – James Henderson Grieve was born on 20th November, 1879, at Grieve Street, Dunfermline, the son of Alexander Grieve, Railway Stoker, and his wife, Janet Henderson. On 6th January, 1905, at Guildhall Street, Dunfermline, James, then 25 years of age and described as a marine engineer, residing at 87 Grieve Street, Dunfermline, married Janet D. Blyth, (25), a pirn winder, residing at 2(b)

South Inglis Street, Dunfermline, and the daughter of Robert Blyth, Grocer. The witnesses to the marriage were Jasper Adamson and Jeanie Blyth. James died at the Northern Hospital, Dunfermline, on 24th November, 1955, his usual residence being 104 Appin Crescent, Dunfermline. He was 76 years of age. His widow, Janet, died two years later, on 19th December, 1957, also at 104 Appin Crescent.

James was member of the Institute of Marine Engineers. In Masonic circles he was a member of Lodge Union No. 250, a past preceptor of Towerhill Preceptory and an officer of the District Grand Priory of Fife and Kinross. He was a past president of Dunfermline Bowling Club.

Note 4 – Robert (Roy) Davie Grieve, son of James and Janet above, was born on 10th February, 1916, at 19 Inglis Street, Dunfermline. On 4th April, 1958, at St Peter's Church, Inverkeithing, Roy, then 42 years of age and described as a mechanical engineer, married Marion Paterson Huggett, (31), Telephonist, residing at 17 Fraser Avenue, Inverkeithing. The witnesses to the marriage were Kenneth Street, 1 York Place, Dunfermline, and Katherine Couston, The Ness, Torryburn. Roy died on 9th January, 1973, at Dunfermline & West Fife Hospital, his usual residence being 14 Cherrybank, Dunfermline. He was only 56 years of age and his death was registered by his brother-in-law, J.G. Huggett, 20 Main Road, Crombie. His widow, Marion, died in hospital on 13th March, 1994, after suffering a chest infection brought on by chronic heart disease.

Note 5 – Hutchison artefacts in the museum including a 'winder dial'.

Note 6 – Check re. Robt. Hutchison's son, also Robert, who was 24 and a manufacturer's clerk in the 1901 census but is not in the 1911 census.