

Memories and Connections

John Nichols



Looking at the Falmouth Road “Factory for Sale” picture, I know that it was taken from the corner of Great Dover Street and Falmouth Road because on that corner to this day stands “The Roebuck”, a beautiful very old listed public house with a mansard roof. It might have been there when Richard Waygood moved to London from Beaminster around 1860.

R. Waygood had two South London establishments in close proximity, the Factory and an iron works in Newington Causeway in the latter half of 1800s. All castings, bedplates, gear casings, sheeves, drums, motor casings, brakes, many other cast-iron cams, switches, etc., each with their casting number on them somewhere, would have been cast in the ironworks, transferred half a mile to Falmouth Road then machined and assembled in the factory.

One old advert I have seen somewhere says R. Waygood: - “Builders & Lift and Crane Installers”.

In those days men would go out from the factory to install steam, hydraulic, driven teagle hoists, lifts, and cranes all around the City and London docks, then return to the

factory. Most buildings had their own in-house engineers of hydraulic, steam boiler and heating skills. Of course, steam regulatory inspections predate electrical equipment by around 50/60 years. It is said the first electricity driven passenger lift was installed by Otis in Chicago in 1902.

Many remnants of hydraulic rams and steam driven teagle hoists can still be seen left in place, painted red and black, decorating the walls of St Katharine Docks just across Tower bridge. They may have even been taken there by horse and cart!

There would have been several hundred tradesmen in the Factory. Various machine minders, turners, shapers, milling machine operators, blacksmiths, pattern makers, carpenters, armature winders, draftsmen, wiremen etc. What's the connection?

Well, when I started, the trade union was The London Lift and Crane Union and obviously because of the factory location, a room on the first floor of The Roebuck pub was the meeting place and headquarters of the union, just a stroll down the road from the Factory.

I was advised by my fitter Cyril Rayment to join the union, which I did. Apprentices could hold auxiliary cards but did not have to join and of course were subject to their indentures. The Chairmen, stewards etc, at that time in 1956/7, I remember, were the Jack Collins (Chairman), Eddy Vincent, Harry Hope, Ted McDermott and around 15/20 other members that were also present when I paid my first dues, pennies I should think, and was duly given my card.

Later when I was about nineteen or twenty on construction with Charlie Payne at the Stoll Theatre site Kingsway, Doug Richards our supervisor asked for volunteers to work the weekend at the Daily Mirror building in Holborn on a duplex pair. Each pair of men to install two entrance frames uprights, headers and tracks, hangers, doors, fitting air cords, locks and beaks. The floor cills were already built in with centrelines all marked up. There were no architraves but all materials along with a drawing were ready at each floor. Charlie declined the request for volunteers but I accepted and with another two fitters and mates I went along. I thought I would be teamed up with a fitter as a mate, which I was. His name was George but shortly after starting work it was clear George didn't seem to know much about entrances!

At the time skilled labour was in short supply and apparently, he had been a mechanic /fitter. After an interview, he had been given a letter to present to the union from the company, requesting they accept him as a fitter on their recommendation, which the

union did. There were also quite a few “sparks” that were made fitters which the union wanted to add to their membership, of course.

(It was common then for the company to request and recommend in house “time in mates” be made up to fitters)

So, we carried on and, using his tools, it became obvious after a while that he was basically helping me. We eventually completed our floor of two entrances. There were no complaints, so I assume they were OK.

However, I was put out about this, having to serve five years, so I went to “The Roebuck” for the next meeting, said my bit, handed in my card and left.

Later in the early 1960s The London Lift and Crane was amalgamated into the EEPTU.

Other Factory Connections



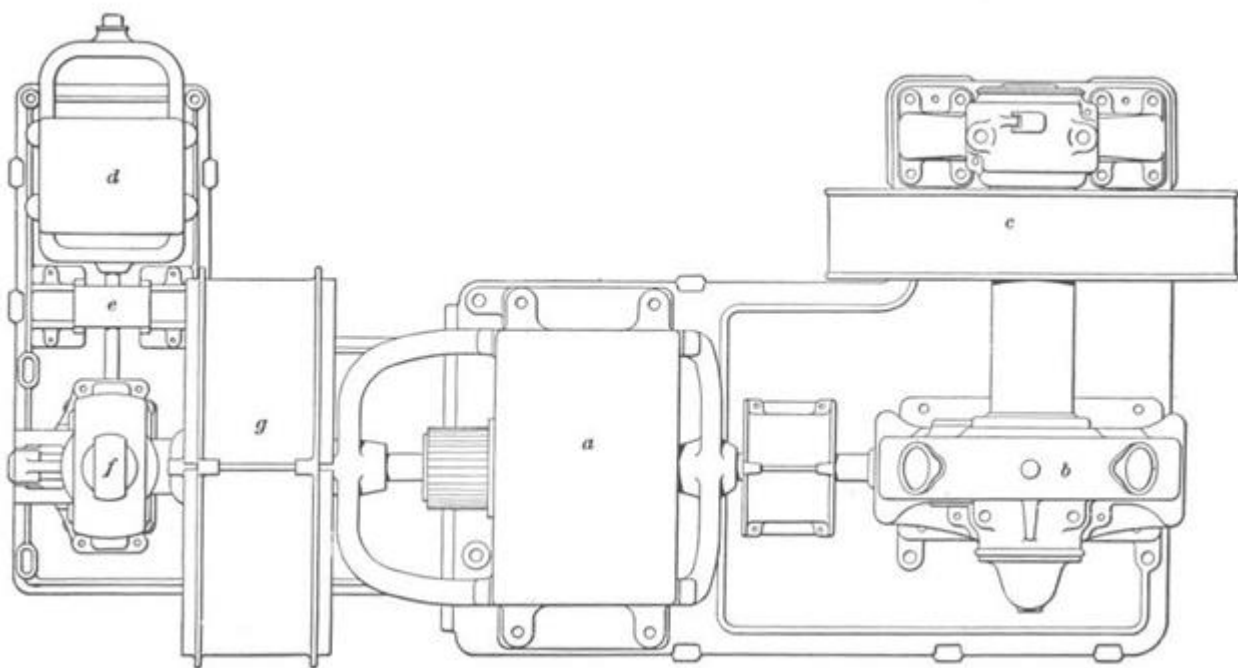
Note the gantry crane and a teagle hoist in the background. Just behind the middle doorway there were three or four clocking in stations to the right.

Back in 1928/9 all the various castings for the Lantern Lift and the Main & Micro Passenger lift that Derek Smith and I worked on for several years at the Royal

Institution would have been cast at the Newington Causeway Iron Works. The bedplate would have been transported to the factory for machining. The bedplate comprised two sections, the motor and gear casings along with brake frames, crown wheels, worm shafts, bearings, coils, armatures, wiring, tapered dowls etc. These would have been fitted in the factory then delivered as separate parts.

(The motor room roof is lightweight clay pot and hot asphalt construction. As there was nothing provided for lifting there could have been a steel beam temporally placed across the motor room walls before the actual roof was set).

Men from the factory would perhaps build timber sheerlegs, and almost certainly used a rope fall, reaved block and tackles and slings to get the various pieces of equipment up the shaft to the roof level. The slab would have been cast over supporting steelwork then when set, gear men would then put everything together level, shim and line them all up.



- a- Is the main AC motor. b- No 1 size main gearbox c- Main traction sheave
- d- Micro drive motor e- Micro drive brake f- Micro gearbox Otis 1/4 machine
- g- Revolving brake that performs as a clutch, disconnecting the micro gearbox.

“How the hell do you know?” I hear you all say. It’s only because it’s all written down in: The “Otis Construction Handbook” Group 111-1 “Handling, Setting, & Aligning Geared Traction Micro Machines” first printed in 1924. “Not a lot of people know that!”

*Foot Notes **

All apprentices, in my time, spent six months or so working with full time gear men because pouring worn white metal bearings, replacing leaking gland packings, adjusting thrust bearings for backlash and lining up machines for rewind motors was still considered a bit of a specialist skill.

Some gear men I remember at that time were Alf French, Bill Kingston, Pincher Martin, and Ernie Seaton. They all worked on service and were part of the background of our engineering heritage. I spent my time on gears with Bert Seaton and his mate Dougie Golds. I believe Bert was the eldest member of a notable Otis family group, which comprised of three brothers Bert, Tom and Ernie as well as Alan, Ernie’s son, and Bert’s brother-in-law, Ted Solomon.

Much later, I was based in the factory until it was sold, as it were, to the Southern Area Office during the factory’s relocation to Liverpool when I was a construction supervisor working for Harry Julia.

I hope my old, semi-senile thoughts and ramblings around these pictures have been of some interest.

Go well

John Nichols