

# THE WORKFORCE



Opening of workers' Bath House, 1949. From left to right: Robert Dickson, Director, Dr. Phyllis James, Fletcher, contractor for construction work, and Robert Buchanan, Director.



Workers assembling bandstand on site in Edinburgh, c 1910



Linn Foundry Bath House, c 1950. The baths were built to provide foundry workers with an opportunity to wash and change after working in the grimy conditions of the foundry.



Robert Hudson (1844-1912), who left Walter MacFarlane and Co's Saracen Foundry with fellow workers James Jackson and James Brown to set up the Lion Foundry in 1880.

The foundry employed large numbers of skilled craftsmen, designers and engineers as well as a larger workforce of labourers and 'mates' to support them. Most of the workforce were local and lived in Kirkintilloch. By 1910 about 500 workers were employed, one twentieth of the population of the Burgh of Kirkintilloch. The fact that there were other foundries in the town meant that a pool of specialist labour was available locally.

A variety of workers with different skills were needed to produce the foundry's high quality castings - draughtsmen, tracers, pattern makers, furnace men, moulders, dressers, finishers, fitters and painters. Knowledge and skills were passed down from the experienced workers to apprentices.

Foundry work could be dirty work, indeed the dressing shop was known as the 'Stoor Hoose', so the opening of the foundry's own bath house in 1950 was a welcome addition. It could also be dangerous work and accidents, though not frequent, could be serious. Accidents were sometimes reported in the local press, as for example *Kirkintilloch Herald*, 13 July 1887;

*Accident – on Friday afternoon James Mechan a moulder in the Lion Foundry, got one of his feet severely burned while carrying a ladleful of molten iron. It is not expected that he will be able to start work again for two months.*

The foundry workers and families of the different Kirkintilloch foundries formed a distinct local community, whose activities sometimes extended to sports activities. In 1892 for example the Kirkintilloch Foundry Championship football match between the Lion and Star Foundries, resulted in a 5-0 victory for the Lion. Workers excursions and an annual social were held, with the dancing at the 1895 social carrying on until 5.30am the next morning. Sometimes an event in the family life of the foundry officials was celebrated, as in 1899, when there was a workers excursion to Rothesay, on the occasion of the marriage of William Hudson.



Group of Fitting Shop workers on an outing, 1926



General Office staff circa 1930, including draughtsmen, clerks, typists, estimators, and cashiers: James Letch Jr, at the time an apprentice Draughtsman, is on the back row third from left. The Chairman, Neil Brown, Sr, is on the front row fourth from left.



Celebration dinner after the opening of Bath House, Scout Hall, Broadcroft, 1949



Gutter Squad c 1938. Gutters could be produced in a variety of shapes and sizes. The foundry's catalogues could contain up to 200 pages showing the range of guttering available.