

The Hulme Patent Advertising Match Works

One of the earliest factories to be built after the advent of the Ship Canal was the Match Works. The works went into production in 1904. Its situation close to Irlam Railway Station was an advantage with access to the railway and the main Manchester to Liverpool Road.



Starting up as the Hulme Patent Advertising Match Company, the factory was noted for the brightness and cleanliness of the work rooms and operatives. This was sufficient evidence that the process of match making adopted by the company was what it was claimed to be - non-poisonous. An act of parliament was passed in 1909 to prevent matches being made or sold in this country which included white phosphor in them. The match works was the first to adopt a system of match making that was not only non poisonous to the operative but also to the user as well.

Twelve years later the company introduced another industry to Irlam; Chip Fruit Package Making or commonly called in the fruit trade “Non-Returnables”, the company claimed to be the pioneers of the Non-Returnable Fruit Package.



Soft fruit such as strawberries, raspberries and tomatoes were marketed in expensive heavy wicker baskets which were utilised season after season and were thought to be a direct cause in spreading disease from fruit farm to fruit farm – not to mention disease spread from household to household. So development of these clean cheap packages was very desirable.



After much labour, thought and no little capital, the efforts were crowned with success as there was so great a demand for the company’s baskets that the company had to expand production of the baskets being around 50,000 baskets per day all year round.

Sometime later they amalgamated and formed a group known as the British Basket and Besto Company Limited. They produced around 80% of the countries non returnable fruit packages.

By the mid 1960's difficulties arose in obtaining suitable girls or women to work in the factory. Staff of approximately sixty five was required to operate the factory efficiently, but at this time the staff had declined to less than forty five. The works was closed down in 1965.

