

THE DAVIS DERBY STORY

1779-2009

Davis Derby was a family business established in Leeds in 1779 by Gabriel Davis as a manufacturer of optical, surveying and mathematical instruments. The business was founded during the reign of King George III and at a time when George Pitt was the Prime Minister of England.



John Davis

Gabriel Davis's nephew John was born in the village of Thame in Oxfordshire in 1810, he became apprenticed to J Abrahams who styled himself as Mathematical Instrument Maker to the Duke of Wellington. On completion of his apprenticeship in his late teens John Davis moved to Leeds to join his uncle's family business.

In the early 1830's John Davis travelled regularly between Liverpool Cheltenham and Derby to sell his products.

John continued to visit Derby for the next decade. In 1843 perhaps attracted by the railways and the rapid transition taking place in Derby and the desire to settle down with his wife Amelia and their two young sons, he took up residence with his family.

John bought the free-hold of the sixteenth century Meynell town house, which is now the oldest surviving premises in Iron Gate, Derby and which in recent times has been an art gallery and a restaurant, at the rear of the premises he build a workshop to produce his products, the house was to be the family residence for around 20 years.

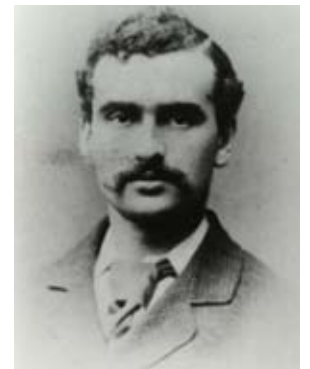
At this time coal production in the United Kingdom had risen to 55 million tonnes and 250,000 men and women and children were employed underground and there were 1000 deaths in the mines each year.

Around 1840 John Davis began to manufacture mining equipment such as mine safety lamps based on the designs invented by Sir Humphrey Davy in 1815.

Production of miner's lamps continued for more than a 100 years, reaching 10,000 a year by the end of the century.

John Davis quickly became famous in mining circles as a pioneer in the use of electricity in mines and for his mining products, the company continued to manufacture the Hedley dial until around 1960.

John Davis died in 1873 at the age of 63, and his son Henry Davis was appointed to run the business. Under the leadership of Henry Davis the business continued to expand moving to new premises in November 1875 at All Saints Works, Amen Alley in Derby, close to the Cathedral.



Henry Davis

The earliest surviving Davis Derby catalogue is dated in 1877 and shows that products included turret clocks, weather vanes, surveying instruments, a wide range of miner's lamps and electric bells for both mining and domestic use.

This catalogue also shows that the firm was actively involved in the generation of electricity for lighting.

The company was capable of manufacturing 500 miner's lamps each week, and these were despatched all around the world. It is worthy of mention that in 1886 the final report of the Royal Commission On Accidents in Mines was presented and under the heading "Safety Lamps" three out of four of the lamps selected as the safest were made by John Davis of Derby. These were the Bonnetted Clanney, the Marsaut and the Bonnetted Mueseller.

Early in the 20th Century the John Davis of Derby product range also included many types of miner's lamps, anemometers, air powered lamps, hand lamps, a range of shot firing exploders in addition to the traditional theodolites and miners dials.



Meynell House

Davis Derby was to remain in the Davis family until 1962, a total of 148 years.

In the early 1960's there was a requirement for remote control and monitoring systems in British mines and by



1964 the National Coal Board had several suppliers of telemetry systems.

At that time, Davis Derby developed a hard-wired remote control system which was first installed at Whitwell Colliery in the mid 1960's. The company also designed and manufactured large quantities of signalling and control equipment as large scale automation systems were introduced into British mines.

1972 witnessed the launch of the two products that were to be very significant to the future of Davis Derby. These were the DIS 4 loudspeaker Communication System and the Sivad MK II Coal Face Signalling and Communication System. The company continued to expand during the next decade and by 1980 some 1200 Sivad MK II Systems had been sold worldwide. The British Coal industry was in phase of considerable investment throughout the late 1970's. The company developed a new Telemetry Unit in 1978, which was destined to become one of the Company's most successful products.



MineWATCH RFID Systems

Davis Derby continued to develop new products for the mining industry but also set about to diversify into new markets. Examples include inductive charging systems for electric vehicles, radio frequency identification systems to automatically track the position of personnel vehicles and other assets.



StedFAST conveyor protection products

Today Davis Derby specialises in electronic equipment for hazardous and demanding environments such as mines, quarries, power stations, ports, cement plants, oil and gas platforms and industrial applications on electric vehicles.

The company entered into an agreement with Texas Instruments to develop a radio Frequency Identification (RFID) system to track miners and vehicles in mines, significant orders for this new system were won in the UK for use in mines and on oil and gas platforms, systems were also sold in China.



TruckLOG in action at St Pancras Station

The company also developed a driver access control system for forklift trucks generically known as Trucklog, this system and derivatives of it firmly established Davis Derby as a supplier to of sophisticated electronics to the forklift truck industry.

Davis Derby also needed to maximise sales of mining products and developed a new family of programmable outstations and telemetry units designated PC21, these products enable Davis Derby to compete in the smaller UK mining market, but also to obtain new business in the coalmines of Russia, Ukraine and China.

Davis Derby is now firmly established as a global supplier of sophisticated telemetry, computer based control and monitoring systems and access control systems for use in underground coalmines.



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Davis Derby is a world leader in the design, manufacture and installation of fork lift truck access control and fleet management systems