NICKS AND COMPANY, CANADA WHARF, BRISTOL ROAD, GLOUCESTER.

Timber Importers, Saw, Planing, and Moulding Mill Proprietors.

The business carried on under the style of Nick and Company has been familiar to the trade in Gloucestershire and the surrounding counties for nearly three-quarters of a century. Having been established in August 1856 by John Nick and Company, being subsequently successively changed to Nick and Sons, Nick and Company, and finally Nick and Co., the business was managed about 1870. The present proprietors are Messrs. Albert Buchanan, J. F. Hooper, A. E. Buchanan, and J. W. Barnett.

The yards originally occupied by the Company were in High Orchard, the removal to the present premises being made in 1870. Here they have the advantage of an excellent location, facing Bristol road and extending back to the canal, where they have ample wharfage. The rivers Severn and Avon are of ample depth so that anything could be desired, private sidings extending throughout the yards. Their premises cover an area of approximately seven acres, every foot of which is required for the business. The Company has a large and planing mill, extensive sheds for storage, carpentering and fitting shops, workmen's mess room, stables, offices, and other buildings. The large and planing mill is in point of both arrangement and equipment particularly commendable. The main portion of the building is 100 by 58 feet in dimensions, with numerous other buildings. The railway sidings run directly through the building, and several ganttries and swinging cranes have been provided to facilitate the handling of the timber. The mechanical equipment is thoroughly up-to-date, comprising eight circular saws, several band saws, a rack bench, and all necessary machinery for planing and sawing.

During the past few years the several buildings and the mechanical equipment have been materially enlarged and improved to meet the increased demands of trade. Among the principal and important recent improvements was the erection of a new boiler house and stack and engine of the most approved type, furnishing power for additional machinery.

Messrs. Webb and Spring carry a large stock of both foreign and English timber, though they make a special feature of the latter, carrying a sufficient quantity and variety to meet any demand, while their facilities ensure prompt execution of any special order. In addition to supplying hatters with hatters' stuffs, they carry a full range of ordinary supplies, they cut out staves, felties, shafts, spokes, chair seats, plane woods, etc., doing a large trade in these and similar lines. They also make farm and other gates, railway fencing, etc., having a special department for that class of work.

The Company have achieved much more than local reputation, and it may be said with perfect accuracy that but few, if any, similar concerns in the country are more widely or favourably known. They receive frequent important orders from Bristol, Cardiff South Wales, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and the North, London and abroad, as well as from this immediate district. For the London trade they make a large quantity of coffin boards, being one of the very few firms in the country who make a speciality of this work.

Drake and Company, Nailsworth, Near Stroud.

Manufacturers of Umbrellas and Walking Sticks.

On May of last year the business carried on under the firm name of F. A. Drake, Stick Maker, and his son W. A. Drake, Stick Maker, was purchased, and is now controlled by Messrs. S., W. J., and H. Walker. All of these gentlemen, as mentioned in an earlier article in this paper, are members of the well-known firm of W. Walker and Sons, manufacturers of hosiery. Taking the two industries into consideration, they are both hosiery manufacturers in the Stroud Valley, and have done a great deal to add to the prosperity of the industrial classes. Owning the want of capital, Mr. F. A. Drake's business, although it had been established for some years, had not been able to make much headway. Immediately upon taking over the business the Messrs. Walker Brothers made preparations to carry it on on a much larger scale, entering into active competition with the leading firms in the country. The result has been that the business has been increased to many times its former proportions, while the number of employes has been multiplied four-fold. At this writing, arrangements are being made to largely increase this number.

The works occupy a wing of the building formerly known as Playne's Mill, now the hosiery factory is also occupied, a doorway connecting the two. This arrangement makes it possible for the Walker Brothers to personally supervise both industries. As it is the case of the hosiery factory, very extensive alterations have been made to the interior of the building, and the erection of new works for the purpose of umbrella and stick making, and new machinery has been installed throughout. At present not fewer than seven large rooms are used in the various departments of the works, and other departments are being added almost constantly.

When the business was originally established it was to manufacture but one kind of umbrella sticks—the carved black sticks, but which were once, and are still, so popular with certain classes of buyers. Messrs. Walker Brothers have added to the line of goods various other kinds of umbrella and walking-sticks, making a special feature of the better qualities. In their warerooms may at all times be seen an enormous stock of all sorts and kinds of umbrella and walking-sticks, many of which have been imported from almost all quarters of the globe—China, India, and China, from India, and China, and India, and China.

The manufacture of umbrella sticks is by no means the simple process it is usually supposed to be. Each stick must pass through many hands, and usually a number of machines, before completion, and one can scarcely imagine a greater contrast than that between the rough, twisted, and grained stick as it is received and the shapely and highly-finished article as it is sent out. Some of the operations—such as basing, carving, gold and silver plate require a high degree of skill. The work is thoroughly specialised, each operative performing but one operation, and thus gaining the necessary accuracy and skill, and the work has also been confided to a separate department of the building.

The Company's stocks find their way to almost every part of the world. Although the industry has already reached considerable proportions, there is every indication that it will continue to increase, and that Messrs. Walker Brothers are by no means resting on their laurels.

In building up the business from its former condition Messrs. Walker Brothers have practically added a new and important industry to the county's long list.

Industrial Gloucestershire 1904

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