

Crabtree Timeline

The following are key dates in the history of J.A. Crabtree & Co Ltd later to become Crabtree Electrical Industries Ltd and more recently a brand within the Electrium group.

- 1918** John Ashworth Crabtree patents the “Quick Make & Break” tumbler switch mechanism.
- 1919** J.A. Crabtree & Co. Ltd. registered on the 17th April as a trading company based at Rushall Street, Walsall. Production of Crabtree lighting switches commenced in August.
- 1921** First Crabtree registered trade mark in the form of a tree is used in the company’s first printed catalogue and on packaging.
- 1922** Range extended to include power accessories, sockets, plugs and lampholders. Cast Iron range of switches and sockets also launched.
- 1923** Foundation stone laid on 7 acre green field site in Dark Lane (later to be renamed Lincoln Road). This was the start of the building of Crabtree’s Lincoln Works.
- 1926** Lincoln Works operational with all manufacturing and offices on one site.
- First Office and depot opened in Charing Cross Road, London. Further offices and depots were later to open in Glasgow, Manchester, Leeds and Bristol.
- 1928** Plastic moulding shop opens at Lincoln Works, one of the first in the UK electrical industry.
- 1929** Fully automated foundry opens for the production of cast iron enclosures.
- 1930** Patent of the Lincoln Switch.
- Registration of “Jacelite” a plastic moulding compound used in the manufacture of many Crabtree products.
- 1931** Introduction of switchgear and fusegear in cast iron and teak wooden enclosures. The 50/50 switch fuse was all plastic and became a UK best seller.
- 1933** Development stage of early motor control gear range.
- 1935** John Ashworth Crabtree founder of the company dies on the 3rd December aged 49
- 1936** Company floated shares on the London stock market, the Crabtree family headed by Mrs Gwendolen Crabtree together with close friends retain controlling interest.
- A new board of directors were appointed with Harold McLoughlin as chairman and managing director.
- 1937** Company introduce the A15 range of oil immersed starters.
- 1939** Outbreak of war, the company produce sea mine detonators, aircraft wiring systems and gas masks.
- 1940** John Ashworth Crabtree (Jack) eldest son of the founder joins the company working in the electrical Laboratory.
- 1943** Harold McLoughlin resigns as chairman and managing director to be replaced by Dr Herbert Schofield.
- 1944** Jack Crabtree and Mrs Gwendolen Crabtree join the board of directors.
- 1946** The company are awarded the Royal Warrant as suppliers of electrical products to King George VI.
- 1947** Introduction of British Standard 13A plug and socket.
- 1948** Factories opened in Lanesfield, and Brownhills for the assembly of wiring accessories.
- New factory built in Springs, South Africa. The factory was to supply the specific needs of the South African market. (Sold in 1989)
- 1950** David Crabtree youngest son of the founder joins the company, later to become a director of the South African factory.
- 1952** Launch of B.15 range of contactors and starters.
- 1956** New factory built at Brownhills specialising in the production of wiring accessories.
- Introduction of the first earth leakage circuit breaker, the voltage operated E.60 range.
- 1957** Introduction of the first Crabtree miniature circuit breaker, the F.60 range
- 1958** Jack Crabtree appointed MD
- 1959** Crabtree acquires CM Churchouse a specialist architectural lighting company based in London. Production is moved from London to the new Brownhills site where another new factory is built. (Sold 1980)
- 1960** Introduction of C.50 range of miniature circuit breakers.
- 1962** Queen Elizabeth II visits Lincoln Works on the 24th May.
- Introduction of the Classic range. The first British rocker operated lighting switch. To be followed by rocker operated switched sockets and accessories.
- 1965** Mrs Gwendolen Crabtree (wife of founder) dies.

- 1966** Malvern factory opens specialising in the production of ceiling accessories and overload relays. (Closed 1984)
BBC make an educational film entitled 'Going to Work' depicting life in a manufacturing company which was broadcast to school leavers nationwide.
- 1969** Introduction of T Range contactors and starts the first Crabtree product to be designed to metric dimensions.
- 1970** New Crabtree logo introduced – still in use today unchanged.
- 1972** J.A.Crabtree & Co. Ltd. taken over by the British Ever Ready Company.
David Crabtree resigns from company.
- 1973** New Warehouse and Distribution Centre opens in Bloxwich Lane, Walsall. (closed 1996)
- 1974** Publicity Department moved from Lincoln Works to self contained premises in King Street, Palfrey. (fire in 1980 destroys building)
- 1975** Jack Crabtree retires from the company
- 1978** New factory opened in Ipoh Malaysia to manufacture E.60 earth leakage circuit breakers for the S.E.Asia market. (closed 1984)
- 1979** Launch of Starbreaker range of circuit breakers and consumer units and the Corinthian range of screwless terminal switches.
Name of company changed to Crabtree Electrical Industries Ltd.
- 1982** Hanson Trust acquires the British Ever Ready Company.
- 1984** Introduction of the Capital range of switches and sockets.
Chris Thomas (Crabtree ex-apprentice) wins the Hanson young achiever of the year award later to become chairman of Crabtree.
Opening of new factory in Stockton Close, Walsall specialising in sheet steel pressings, powder coating and assembly work.
- 1986** Polestar circuit breaker and Ceicon motor starter ranges launched at London Planetarium.
- 1991** Royal Warrant awarded to the company for the supply of Electrical products to Queen Elizabeth II.
- 1992** Volex Accessories based in Wigan acquired by Hanson Trust and merged with Crabtree.
- 1992** Hanson Trust is renamed Hanson plc to avoid confusion with the financial sector.
- 1993** Jack Crabtree (son of founder) dies on his farm in Devon.
- 1994** Scholes Group comprising Dorman Smith, Wylex, Appleby and Britmac acquired by Hanson plc and consolidated along with Crabtree, Volex and Marbo into the newly formed Hanson Electrical Group.
- 1996** Hanson plc demerges group of companies and Hanson Electrical are placed in the Building Products Division.
- 1997** Hanson Electrical is subject to a management buy out (MBO) headed by Chris Thomas and funded by venture capital company Cinven. The group of companies is renamed Electrium Ltd.
Lincoln Works is closed and demolished in 1999. Site is used for housing.
Production is moved to Brownhills Works and other UK sites with some production moving to the Far East.
Head Office and Distribution Centre is relocated to Ashmore Lake, Willenhall, site of the Appleby factory (closed 2002)
- 1999** Launch of Loadstar range of circuit breakers and enclosures.
- 2002** Electrium Head Office relocated to Brownhills factory. Distribution Centre is relocated to Volex factory site, Wigan.
- 2004** Launch of Platinum range of flat plate and low profile wiring accessories.
- 2005** Brownhills the last Crabtree factory is closed with production moving to the Wylex factory in Manchester.
Electrium move into new head office at Lakeside Plaza, Cannock.
- 2006** Siemens of Germany acquire the Electrium group.

Despite all the changes that have occurred in the company particularly over the past fifteen years the Crabtree brand remains strong in the market place. Products are stocked at most electrical wholesalers and large retailers in the UK. There is also a strong demand for Crabtree products in export markets. The companies maxim 'THAT WHICH IS BUILT SOUNDLY ENDURES WELL' is as true today as it was back in those early days at the start of the company in 1919.