

Leatherhead & District Local History Society

Potted Histories No 44

Rentokil Ltd, School Lane, Fetcham



Today the premises known as Rentwood derives its name from its previous occupiers Rentokil Limited, specialists in the manufacture of Wood Preservatives and Insecticides, who were there from 1946 to 1964.

In 1924 Harold Maxwell-Lefroy, Professor of entomology at Imperial College, London, who had been investigating ways to kill death watch beetles that had infested Westminster Hall, next door to the Houses of Parliament. Lefroy and his assistant produced an anti-woodworm fluid called Ento-

Kill Fluids from a small factory in Hatton Garden, "ento" came from the Latin name for insect. In 1925 he tried to register the name Entokill, but had to choose Rentokil Limited instead. On 14 October 1925, Lefroy was killed in a laboratory when an experiment produced poisonous fumes. His assistant, Elizabeth Eades, took over the running of the company.

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In 1944 Dr Norman Hickin joined Rentokil Limited as an entomologist; he lived at Home Farm, The Street, Fetcham for many years. He started a servicing section which became Woodworm and Dry Rot Control Ltd in 1952. The Company was bought in 1957 by British Ratin, and in 1960 British Ratin became Rentokil Group.

The factory was damaged by fire in 1963 and in 1964 it was announced that Rentokil were to close their factory which employs about 70 people and move it to Liverpool. LUDC acquired

the freehold of the land for £47,000 and extinguished the industrial use of the site. The premises were then sold to the Surrey County Council for use by their Social Services Department and also to house an office for the Surrey Voluntary Association for the Blind.

Goff Powell

For Information regarding Membership, Lectures and Museum opening hours

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