

# History of Ashwell Engineering Services Ltd

Ashwell & Nesbit was founded in Leicester by Frank Ashwell in 1879, when the firm's main activity was mill-wrighting. He sold a patent pulley and became an agent for both Blackman fans and the Lancaster steam trap. A heating department was started in 1884 with David Mein Nesbit joining later who was made the manager. Business expanded to cover heating ranges, ovens, CI railings, windows and hosiery pressing. The heating side of the business expanded from 1890 with "Propulsion, Impulsion or Plenum system". The firm generally used Blackman propeller fans, driven by steam engines in conjunction with a Cornish boiler. David M Nesbit was made a partner in 1891. Frank Ashwell died in 1896 aged 41.



Frank Ashwell 1855 – 1896



David Mein Nesbit 1855 – 1929

Nesbit started British Steam Specialities in 1900. BSS sold various steam fittings and apparatus made by Ashwell & Nesbit which had been patented by Nesbit. This included a preheated boiler feed water unit called the "Nuconomiser."

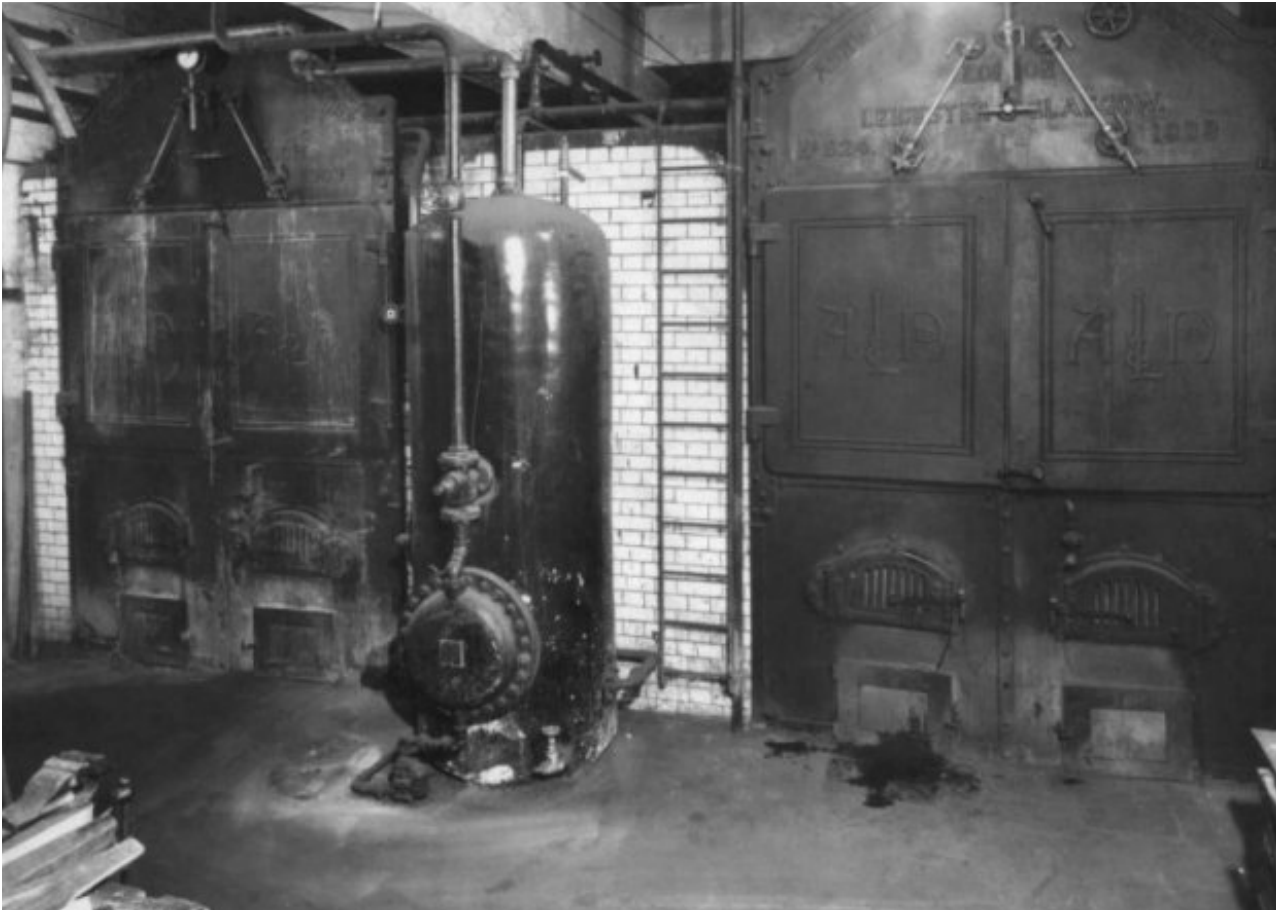
During the early years of the 20th century Ashwell & Nesbit continued to develop the various patented systems of heating and ventilating which had been introduced mainly by David M Nesbit and then modified and refined by his chief technical assistant.

The most important and successful of these was the "Nuvacuumette" a vacuum steam heating system. A development of the apparatus marketed by the Atmospheric Steam Heating Company. In 1900 agreement had been reached with an American company known as 'The Atmospheric Steam Heating Company' to install their patented system in this country under licence.



For Ashwell & Nesbit the "Nuvacuumette" system was a distinct success. Even by 1914 this apparatus had been installed in seventy major buildings and a large number of smaller properties of almost every type. In addition to factories and shops over thirty hospitals had been heated by this system and other installations included hotels such as the Grosvenor in London and the Metropole in Brighton. Town Halls in Perth, Deptford and Sutton Coldfield, Arbury Hall at Nuneaton, two famous London theatres the Empire and the Colliseum and concert halls in Glasgow and Edinburgh were also included in this list of prestigious buildings.

**The two Ashwell & Nesbit solid fuel fired steam boilers dated 1909 photographed in 1967 before their removal and replacement by oil fired boiler plant.**



In the 1950's Ashwells started manufacturing the Iron Fireman range of automatic coal fired stokers. At this time coal was "king" and was the most common fuel used for heating public and commercial buildings. The coal fired stokers were still manufactured up to the year 2000. In later years the majority of the equipment was installed into Eastern Europe and Russia under the Transfer of Clean Coal Burning Technology funded by World Bank and D.T.I. projects to improve air quality.

In 1992 Ashwells was taken over with a management buyout. The company was restructured and continued to be heavily involved with overseas projects involving coal fired boilers and coal/ash handling equipment.

In 2000 Ashwells were invited to undertake a two year part funded D.T.I. project of burning biomass in the form of wood pellet on the under feed principle of combustion. This proved extremely successful and we now offer a full range of UK manufactured equipment alongside a full range of European biomass equipment up to 8MW.