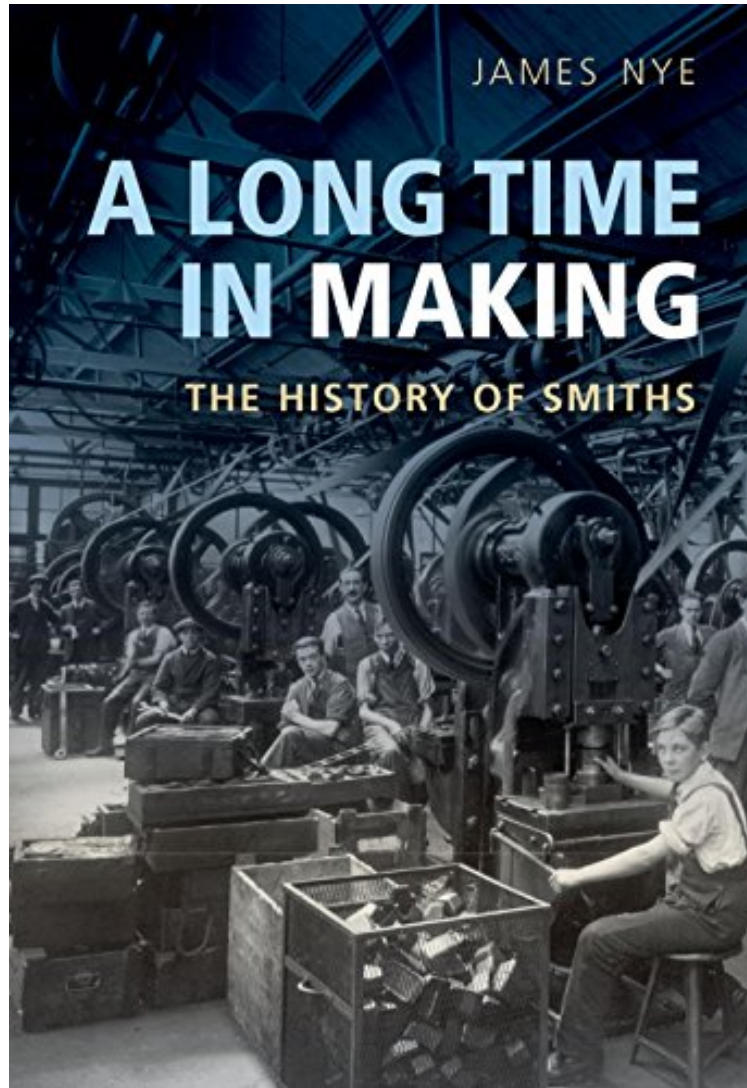


A Long Time in Making: The History of Smiths

James Nye

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James Nye : A Long Time in Making: The History of Smiths before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Long Time in Making: The History of Smiths:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The corporate history of the largest British clock manufacturer of the 20th century: "Smiths Industries";By Fortunat Mueller-maerkiThe corporate history of the largest British clock manufacturer of the 20th century: "Smiths Industries";Bookreview 2015 by Fortunat Mueller-MaerkiA Long Time in Making ndash; The History of Smiths By James Nye. Published in 2014 by OxfordUniversity Press, Oxford, United Kingdom. ISBN 978-0-19 ndash; 871725-6. 375 pages, 246x171mm, hardcover, dustjacket. 61 illustrations (reproduced bw photographs) and 17 figures in the text. Six appendices (I. Family Tree, II. Activities Overview 1851-1014, III. Financial Data 1915-2008, IV. Companies Acquired, Formed and Sold, V. List of officers,

VI. List of Interviews. Bibliography with over 38 primary sources, and 146 secondary sources. Index of Names (8 pages), Index of Subjects (15 pages). Available through .com for US\$ xx plus postage at <http://www..com/Long-Time-Making-History-Smiths/dp/0198717253/> for US\$ 45 .When most students of horological history think about factory made clocks produced on an industrial scale in the 20th century they think of American brands like Seth Thomas, or of towns in the Black Forest, like Junghans in Schramberg, or even of Japy Freres in the French Jura region, but most non-british amateur horological historians don't realize that the United Kingdom also had big clock making enterprises of a similar scale, and one of the biggest was 'Smiths', which between 1900 and 1980 produced several hundred million timekeepers. Not much had been published on that maker until recently, but James Nyers's 2014 book fills this gap in horological history. The author is probably best known as the Secretary of the Electrical Horology Group of the Antiquarian Horological Society (the British sister organization to America's NAWCC); he is a former businessman and international dealmaker and keen student of horological history, who in recent years has become a part time teacher of business history, and this book reflects this new role. The book is the very comprehensive academic and scholarly history of the Smiths enterprise. The roots of Smiths go back to the 1851 opening of a retail jewelry store in London's Elephant Castle district by Samuel Smith, leading to a more prominent and upscale store on the Strand by the beginning of the 20th century. At that time the first automobiles appeared, and with them Smiths began offering an 'automobile timepiece'. During the formative, pre first world war, years of the British car industry Smiths pioneered in 1904 a mechanical car speedometer, then an optional after-market accessory, for the very few people who could afford cars. This eventually led to other motor car accessories and components like carburetors, car lights (both acetylene and electricity based). Originally these items were sourced from third party manufacturers, but soon Smiths was not only selling, installing and servicing them but started manufacturing them, and selling them wholesale to the car manufacturers as these items became standard car equipment. Given their precision mechanics knowhow during the 1914-1918 war years military products became a significant business, while the traditional jewelry and retail side diminished in importance. By 1919 they employed over 3000 people, and in 1920 reported making 3000 speedometers, 2000 motorcar clocks, 1000 fuel gauges, 2000 car lighting sets, 2000 carburetors and 2000 mechanical horns per week. The depression in the 1920s hit the company hard, but the growth of automobile sales in the 1930s led to growth again. Coupled with the desire to decrease the UK dependence on imported goods, such as German made clocks which then dominated the mass market, Smiths invested heavily into clock manufacturing capacity, both for conventional mechanical movements, as well as the then exploding market for electrical synchronous mechanical movements. Separate companies like Smiths English Clocks Ltd., and its subsidiary Synchronous Electric Clocks Ltd. were started and within two years were producing nearly 200,000 synchronous clocks per year. By 1934 Smiths produced over half of all clocks made in the UK that year, and in the following years dominated the British market both for conventional and synchronous clocks. During World War Two once again the clock factories expanded rapidly and switched to military products (such as center second wristwatches for use in both the army and the navy), and Smiths's aviation instrumentation business grew significantly. While producing clocks (and also some watches) steadily at high volumes with in depth manufacturing capacities (dedicated plants making synthetic watch jewels, a platform escapement plant etc.) from 1945 through the early 1960s the clocks business became gradually less important as their automotive components volume exploded as cars became affordable to the masses. By 1970 clocks were but a component of Smiths's group C (clocks, appliance controls and industrial instruments). The last proactive move in timekeeping was the presentation of Smiths first line of quartz watches, the Quasar, at the 1973 Basel Fair, at exactly the time it became clear that international competition (the Swiss and Seiko) were way ahead of them. Their buildings, their staff and their employees could produce higher returns with other products and by the end of the decade Smiths was really no longer in the horological business. The last part to close was the Blick time recorder company in 1980. Their horological peaks had been in the late 1930s and the mid-1950s. While overall production figures are very hard to guess the Smiths group undoubtedly produced several 100 million timekeepers, maybe even approaching a billion over the 80 years they produced clocks. The corporate entity however continues to thrive to the present day as a diversified technology conglomerate with 23,000 employees and a market capitalization of near 5 billion UK Pounds. Dr. Nyers's narrative of their corporate history covers a fascinating, easy to read part of English industrial history and provides one of precious few insights into a huge - but grossly under documented - chapter of British horology. Fortunat F. Mueller-Maerki, Sussex NJ 0 people found the following review helpful. An accurate but thin discussion of the company. By DaveRI worked for this company for more than 20 years and for the most part this was a valuable and rewarding experience. It became clear towards the end of the 70s that there was a steady decrease in the importance of the employee in management's eyes, and I think this is indeed reflected in the book. It did not manage to keep pace with the very rapid change in market needs and as described solved the problem by constant changes in market direction. The book covers this complex strategy well and James Nye has managed to portray the events in a clear and readable way although there are significant events that receive too little attention. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. All up I found it a good read. By CustomerAs an automotive instrument restorer for over 35 years I found the history of the company very interesting...there are "little gems" of technical, historical information though

the text. To the non motoring person it may be a little dry. All up I found it a good read...Dennis Quinlan. The Velobanjogent.

Smiths Group (formerly Smiths Industries), part of the UK FTSE 100 index, is a global engineering company with a market capitalisation over pound;5bn. Evolving from beginnings in the Victorian jewellery trade, to significant market presences in the twentieth century motor accessory, clock and watch industries, it has reinvented itself again as a diversified international company, operating in the medical, communications, security and engineered components sectors. Its narrative history, illuminating the reasons for its survival and adaptability, offers useful data and information to aid wider research into questions such as the legitimacy of conglomerates as a business model, the creation and maintenance of corporate culture, issues of succession, the effects of mergers and the questionable value placed upon targeted synergies-even the role of serendipity. The story begins with several generations of the Smith family amassing a fortune in retail, and then, following a 1914 stock-market flotation, describes the transition from family run business to the development of a professionally-run managerial enterprise. Since the 1970s it has had to face the decline of major markets and competitive pressures, leading to the adoption of new business lines, globalisation, and the internationalisation of its workforce. It now has 23,000 employees across more than 50 countries-along the way shocking the markets by abandoning core businesses and undergoing a controversial merger. Unfettered access to company records, and interviews with former staff members, provide insights into the strategy and management of the firm, illuminating the rich culture of Smiths, characterised by the frequent fostering of technical brilliance and a cast of larger than life characters.

Dr James Nye has written a quite remarkable history of Smiths Industries (now Smiths Group), the last British manufacture, that eventually diversified into everything from autopilots to airport body scanners. * The Watch Nerd * Conglomerates are deeply unfashionable and if one were assembling a manufacturing business from scratch, it would not resemble Smiths Group. Yet a fascinating new history of the GBP4.6 billion FTSE 100 engineer, which has divisions spanning healthcare, energy, airport detection, telecoms and components, makes a reasonably good case for the business staying as it is. James Nye argues that the conglomerate nature of the company has come to its aid over the years. * Ian King, The Times * For historians of British business and economic history the author offers a masterly account of the transformation of a family firm into a professionally-run managerial multinational enterprise. It is a tour de force * Alun Davies, Antiquarian Horology * About the Author James Nye, Visiting Fellow, Institute of Contemporary British History, King's College London James Nye's first career was in finance and commerce, followed by a PhD in financial history at King's College London, where he holds a visiting fellowship in the Institute of Contemporary British History. He is also an award-winning historian of technology, with a focus on the history of distributed accurate time. James sits on the council of the AHS, and the editorial advisory panel of Antiquarian Horology. He is a liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Clockmakers, and was the founder and principal sponsor of The Clockworks, a unique London museum, workshop, and library dedicated to the history of electrical timekeeping (www.theclockworks.org).