



The factory that worked round the clock

By Charles Haydn

The recent lockdowns have encouraged the opportunity to explore the highways and byways of East Finchley on our daily walks. My last one left me with more to think about than I expected.

I'd set off to take a look at the Tarling Road community building off Oak Lane. Looking around, I saw someone else doing the same and we got chatting. This gentleman was reminiscing about past times and mentioned that he'd worked at the old Simms automotive factory that occupied an area of some six acres between Tarling Road, Long Lane and Oak Lane until it closed 30 years ago.

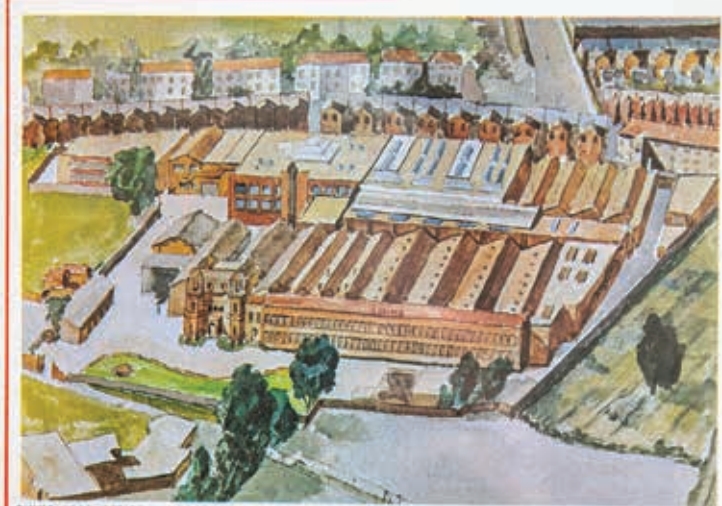
He told the story of times gone by when the factory, built on the site of the old Grange manor house in 1919-1920, supplied diesel fuel injectors and other essential parts for a wide range of companies such as Perkins, Rolls-Royce and Vauxhall as well as military tanks and trucks during the Second World War.

Success and decline

An important employer of many local people including this gentleman's father, mother, brother and sister and many of his friends and neighbours, Simms employed East Finchley folk across four shifts, 24 hours a day. On saying our goodbyes he promised to share a selection



Industrial belt: The Simms car part factory occupied land between Oak Lane, top right, and Long Lane, bottom



SIMMS HEAD OFFICE & WORKS, FINCHLEY, LONDON.

Simms

Wish you were here: A 1950s publicity image of the plant

of photographs of the time and they accompany this article.

By the 1950s, the Simms factory was thriving and had expanded to include drawing offices, development shops, a social club and the central instruction school for the company's entire operations.

Then in 1968, Simms was taken over by Lucas CAV and over the following decade the British car and vehicle industry changed rapidly. Manufacturing in East Finchley was steadily run down as UK

manufacturers lost market share.

In 1991, the factory ceased production altogether and the site was taken over by Fairview Homes. Two years later, the first new residents moved into the houses and flats that sit on the land today, along roads like Taunton Drive, Blackdown Close and, of course, Lucas Gardens and

Simms Gardens.

Find out more about the former Simms factory in our archives at www.the-archer.co.uk/archive/2002/2002Nov07.pdf. Do you remember this factory or did you perhaps work there? Please share your stories with us. Email news@the-archer.co.uk or write to The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 2DE.

Collective creation

The East Finchley Open Artists group has gone live with an exciting collective creation... its brand new website. You can see the end result at www.eastfinchleyopen.org.uk

The group's 60 artists and craftspeople found their old EFOA site could not host live events during the lockdowns so they decided to use the quiet periods to their advantage by creating a site that was more versatile.

EFOA Chair Lesley Andrew said: "The teamwork and the amount of time everyone has contributed has been amazing. We are all delighted with the new site, which has become the creative tool we need for showcasing our work and artists at a time when web visibility continues to increase in importance."

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