

# The Sherwin-Williams Company

## A history of innovation

**T**HEY are separated by the Atlantic and there are more than 3,500 miles between them.

But when The Sherwin-Williams Company, joined forces with Leighs Paints, of Bolton, England, it was a natural fit and ensured that the company would be in safe hands.

For one thing they have both been established for virtually the same amount of time - W. and J. Leigh Ltd was founded by William and Joshua Leigh in 1860 and six years later Henry Sherwin and Edward Williams set up The Sherwin-Williams Company.

The companies had a great deal in common and one over-riding ambition - to establish a successful international coatings company based on strong principles and meaningful values. Both companies firmly believed that a business was only as good as the people it employed.



So when The Sherwin-Williams Company bought Leighs in 2011 a new chapter in both companies' stories was about to be written.

Leighs Paints initially owed its prosperity to building and property interests. It experienced remarkable growth in size and importance in the paint industry - originally a sideline - and quickly built up an enviable reputation in the trade for quality and service.

It was left to the second generation of Leighs, William Hamer and Herbert, to set the paint business on a firm footing and it was Herbert Leigh in particular, who concentrated on developing 'ready-to-use' paint for ships and the famous Leighs Marine White was born in 1924

representing a major manufacturing milestone for the time.

In 1929, Herbert's nephew Philip Leigh-Bramwell entered the business, the same year as the company's well known Hawk and



**Top:** Founder William Leigh. **Top right:** The factory in Flax Place, Bolton - Debenhams currently has a store in this spot. **Bottom right:** Laboratory office staff - 1940s. **Left:** This photograph shows the Caustic Yard, with the tinting room on the left, and in the building on the right of the picture, engineering is on the top floor, below is pail labelling/container storage, below that is smalls manufacture/stores, with milling up and milling down below that.



Trumpet logo was first registered. During the decade that followed they started to develop their industrial coatings business. Their foresight was such that they forecast that mills and factories, which were then all lime washed, would wish to convert to gloss finish and so perfected a treatment by the use of Primaseal which could be applied directly over limewash in the minimum number of coatings to give a hard gloss white finish and greatly reduce maintenance.

The original paint factories were situated near the centre of Bolton but during the 1930s as the business continued to expand it was inevitable that a move to bigger premises was essential and a move to a new HQ was made in 1939.

In the early days of the industry it was customary to supply paint in a semi-prepared paste form for mixing with linseed oil prior to starting work.

Leighs were one of the pioneers in the introduction on the ready-for-use paint which since that time has been the normally accepted

method of manufacture throughout the trade. Leighs' Marine White had become universally recognised as 'the best white paint in the world' and was chosen for the Queen Mary and a variety of great ocean-going passenger liners.





And, in 1953, the company was honoured when it was awarded the licence to manufacture the paint for the Gothic and the Royal Yacht Britannia, the two ships which carried the Royal Family on their tour of the Commonwealth. It was also chosen for Queen Elizabeth II.

On land, Leigh's products were selected for the tanks and pipelines of Gulf's refinery at Milford Haven. The BP refineries in Aden and the Isle of Grain and British Hydrocarbon Chemicals in Grangemouth have used Leigh's specialised petroleum paints.

Leighs agreed to a deal for what was an undisclosed sum, a move that clearly suited both parties. Brian Leigh-Bramwell, who led the company which had been in his family for more than 150 years, said at the time that he believed the decision would be of great benefit to both companies and their customers well into the future.

The Sherwin-Williams Company has a history of innovation. It brought its growing army of customers' new ideas, new products and new technology. It developed the first latex paint and the first aerosol applicator, the first paint roller and the resealable paint can.

The business is recognised as a global leader in the development, manufacture and sale of coatings and industrial related products. Its workforce numbers 34,000 and does business in 116 countries. The Leighs paints company now trades as Sherwin-Williams Protective & Marine Coatings and has sales and technical support centres in the United Arab Emirates, India as well as the UK. With annual sales of over \$11 billion The Sherwin-Williams Company is the third largest coatings company in the world and the largest in the United States.

The company's chairman and chief executive, Chris Connor, said The Sherwin-Williams Company was pleased to have been able to bring such a well-respected company and its employees into the family.

"Combined, our two companies have nearly three centuries of experience in coatings innovation. This was another positive step in our strategy of steady growth and expansion through quality products and developing people who provide excellent customer service."

On January 1, 2013, the company formally transitioned its trading activity to become "Sherwin-Williams Protective & Marine



**Opposite page:** Hard at work painting the Tamar Road Bridge, Plymouth in June 1989. **Top:** The raw materials department. **Above:** The Laboratories. **Top right:** Present day in the laboratory. **Bottom right:** The Sherwin-Williams Company covers many of the iconic buildings in London, including The Shard and the Olympic stadium. Shard photography by Daniel Chapman (Flickr)

Coatings" - part of The Sherwin-Williams Company's Global Finishes Group. The protective and marine coatings division has locations globally and supplies a wide range of asset protection technologies from alkyds to zincs to a wide variety of applications in petrochemical, civil, infrastructure, mining and light industrial markets.

The Sherwin-Williams Company and Leighs Paints share many similarities in their history most notably culture and commitment to customer service with both businesses being developed by multiple family generations over the last 150 years.

The Sherwin-Williams Company intends to go from strength to strength as a consequence of their strong market-led culture, and a commitment to supply to its customers globally. A cornerstone on which it will continue to strengthen its reputation for technical integrity will be its determination to innovate, by working jointly with its customers to produce exactly the products and services needed.

