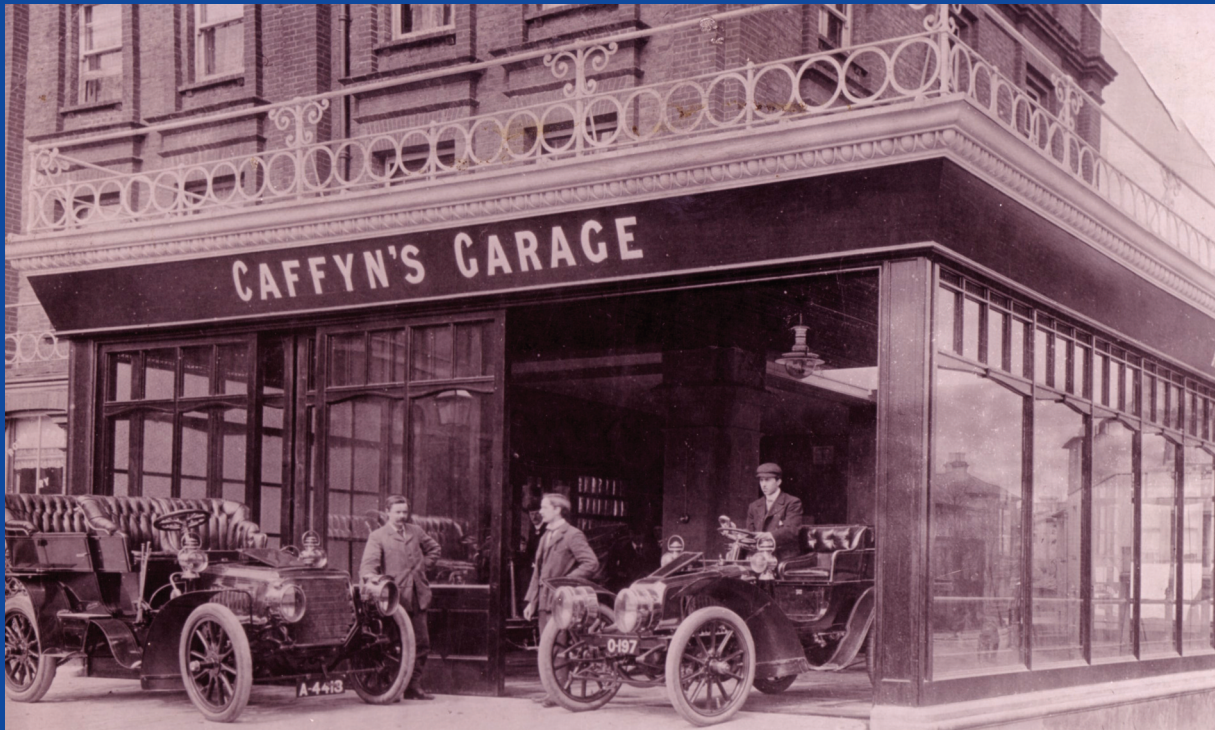


The History Of Caffyns from 1865



www.caffyns.co.uk

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Chapter 1

AN AGE OF INVENTIONS
1865 – 1904

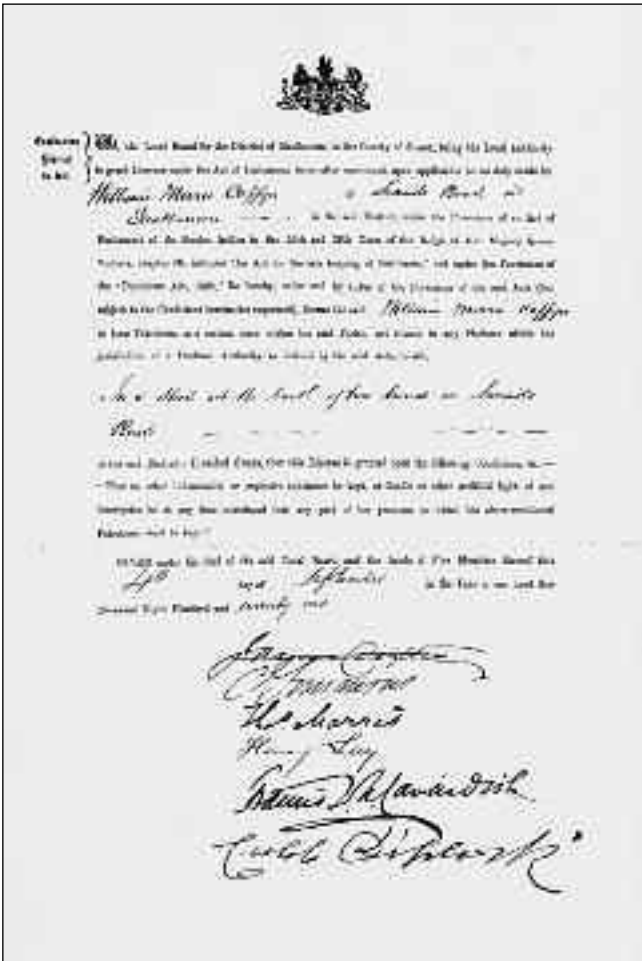
The name of Caffyn has its roots deep in the past of Sussex, first appearing in the county in 1327, when Richard Caffyn lived at the village of Chitcombe, near Brede. Another Richard Caffyn was vicar of Horsham from 1560 to 1574; the name Edward Caffyn appears cut in a wall in the Tower of London, and the seventeenth-century Baptist leader Matthew Caffyn of Horsham, the “Battle Axe of Sussex”, lived to the age of 86 after many years at the centre of great controversy.

William Morris Caffyn was born in 1842, and in 1856 he was apprenticed to his Uncle Ebenezer Morris to learn the trade of “Ironmonger, Tinman and Brazier” at two shillings per week for the first year, rising to ten shillings per week for the fifth year, during which period he was required to observe the strict provisions of his indenture of apprenticeship:

“He shall not waste the Goods of his said Master nor lend them unlawfully to any, he shall not commit fornication nor contract matrimony within the said Term, he shall not play at Cards or Dice Tables or any other unlawful games whereby his said Master may have any loss with his own goods . . . He shall not haunt Taverns or Playhouses nor absent himself from his said Master’s service day or night unlawfully.”



Mr & Mrs W. M. Caffyn and their family. In the back row, Harry Caffyn is on the left, Percy Caffyn on the right.



The petroleum licence issued to William Morris Caffyn in 1871.

After this period of rigorous training – not only, it would appear, in his trade but in the stern attitudes of the Victorian period – William Morris Caffyn opened his own shop on 19th May 1865 in premises adjoining the present site of Caffyns' Head Office in Meads Road, Eastbourne. He set out to supply the wants of the time, as a "Gas and hot water fitter, Bell Hanger, Brass Finisher Tinman & Brazier".

In 1866 he married Miss Harriet Williams, Governess at Miss Brodie's School, Meads, and two years later the business moved to premises in Seaside Road, next to the site where the Theatre Royal and Opera House (now the Royal Hippodrome Theatre) was opened in 1883. He was also active in local life at this time, as a member of Eastbourne Cricket Club from 1862 (his cousin, William Caffyn, the Surrey cricketer, played for England against America in 1859 and Australia in 1861 and 1863) and from 1864 to 1879 he served in the 3rd Sussex Artillery Volunteer Corps.

It seems that William Morris Caffyn had a pioneering enthusiasm for the many inventions of the later Victorian age. In 1871 he obtained a licence to store petroleum in a shed at the back of his house (the certificate, signed by five members of the Local Board for the District of Eastbourne, is still in the possession of the Company) and soon added "Lamp & Oil Merchant" to the many services he was able to offer.



Caffyns' Advertisement, Wilkins & Co's Eastbourne and Lewes Directory, 1870.



Meads Road in the 1880s. The ivy-covered building in the centre background is where William Morris Caffyn opened his first shop in 1865. The cottages on the right are on the site of Caffyns' present Head Office.

In 1892 his sons Percy Thomas and Harry Bruce joined the business and they shared their father's keenness on new developments. Within a few years they entered the world of electrical domestic appliances and opened a branch at 1 Church Street, Old Town, Eastbourne. By 1900 William Morris Caffyn's name appeared in the "National Telephone Directory". In 1901 Caffyns carried out the installation of electric lighting for the Eastbourne Pier Company Ltd., and in 1903 participated in the first Eastbourne Electrical Exhibition held at the Town Hall where, as the Eastbourne Gazette reported, "Such a flood of light as that which is to be seen when the stalls are lit up has probably never before been witnessed in the Assembly Room".

By this time W.M. Caffyn & Sons were offering Electric Bells, Telephones, Gas Fitting and Repairs, as well as being tool dealers, cutlers and ironmongers. A former butcher's shop at 12 The Colonnade was taken for the growing electrical side of the business.

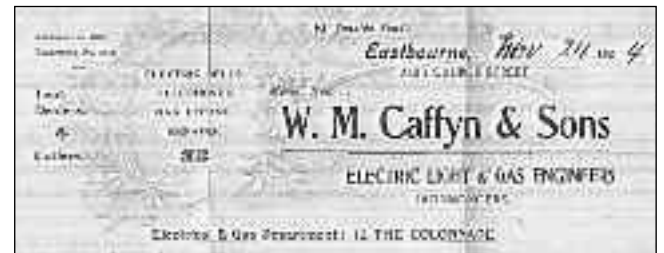
There followed an event which was to have far-reaching consequences and lead to the most exciting new field of all. In the words of Mr Harry Caffyn:

"One day a young fellow who was staying at Marine Parade came along with a 4-cylinder Renault car (the first live axle car we had seen); could he stand it on the verandah outside or he would pay us for accommodation. The shop, having been a butcher's, was fitted with wide sashes to draw up and when pushed up there was plenty of headroom for a car to get under, but there was the bottom sill. This I cut away after dark without asking the landlord's permission, boarded over the gap and in went the first car!"

After a further request, this time from the Queen's Hotel, to store and polish two cars, Percy and Harry Caffyn became convinced that the motor car had a lasting future in which their already far-sighted business should play a major role. In 1903 William Morris Caffyn sold the firm to them for £1,800 and they subsequently traded as Caffyn Brothers, converting the premises at 12 The Colonnade to hold four cars. As Percy Caffyn remarked humorously in his address to staff 25 years later: "We did not know what a garage was in those days, and we called it a coach house!"

The following year, 1904, the premises were enlarged to hold 16 cars, the name, "Caffyn's Garage" appeared on the fascia, and Caffyn Brothers were really in business to cater for the motorist.

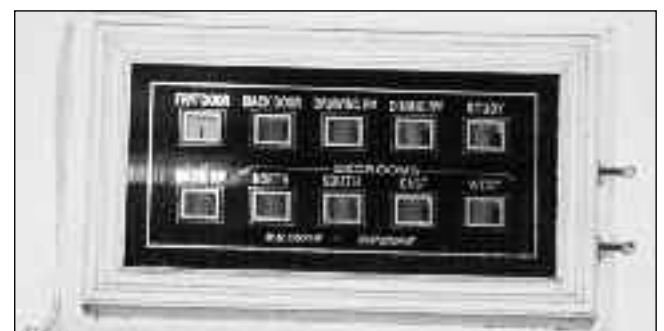
Turnover for the first twelve months included £300 for "Sale of Motors", and in that year they were appointed Agents of the General Accident Assurance Corporation. At first some of the work had to be contracted out to local craftsmen and it was not long before the brothers felt the need for premises where all the activities connected with motoring could be carried on under one roof . . . and started to look around for a site for expansion.



Letterhead of W.M. Caffyn & Sons dated 24th November 1904 and showing the telephone number 0352.



The first garage, at 12 The Colonnade, Eastbourne in 1904. Mr H.B. Caffyn is on the left, Mr P.T. Caffyn in the centre.



Bell board as supplied and fitted by W.M. Caffyn.

Chapter 2

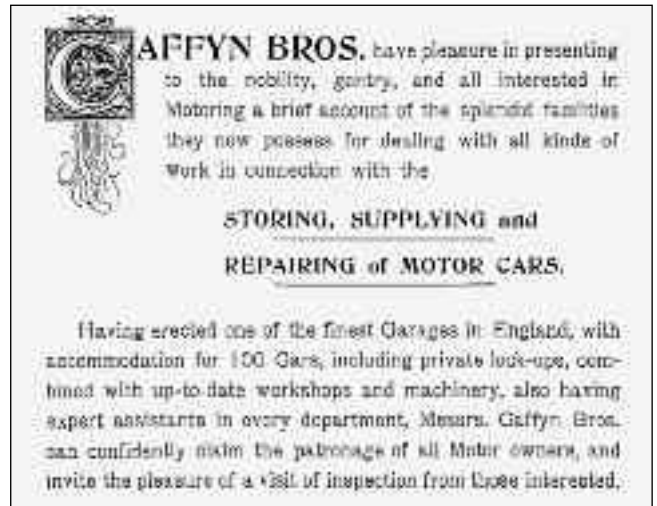
TIME FOR DECISIONS

1905-1918

Percy and Harry Caffyn had inherited their father's practical turn of mind and lost no time in preparing for the future. The banks were wary of the new motoring industry and it was difficult to get an overdraft but with the help of two mortgages from the landlord of the Colonnade premises, a site was secured on the corner of Marine Parade and Seaside Road.

The brothers then set in progress a building programme which astonished many of their contemporaries. The aim was a garage which would provide sales, service and coachbuilding facilities and have room for 100 cars. There were many people ready to tell them that Eastbourne would never have so many motor vehicles – but Percy and Harry Caffyn knew differently. Harry Caffyn was responsible for fitting the new premises, setting up the engineers' shop, the electric lighting, and installing the revolutionary feature of an electric car lift – the first of its kind.

In 1906, not only was the new garage at Marine Parade open and trading but the first Caffyns catalogue also appeared, requesting the attention of the "nobility, gentry and all interested in Motoring". Some of the services offered, such as car hire, driving lessons, repainting and windscreen fitting, are still familiar to today's motorist, but others, including the supply of "Horns, Lamps and Goggles", the overhaul of steam and electric cars as well as petrol driven, and the making of Dust Covers, Cape Cart Hoods and Leather Aprons, reflect the specialised needs of the early motoring world.



A page from the first Caffyns' catalogue, published in 1906, to introduce the new garage.



First floor 'private' lock-up storage at Marine Parade.



Marine Parade garage, opened in 1906.



Engineers' Shop and Repair Department, Marine Parade, 1906.



*Caffyns' staff outside 12 The Colonnade in 1906 or '7.
Mr P.T. Caffyn is seated centre of the second row, facing forward, with
Mr H.B. Caffyn to the left.*

From the start, Caffyns' workshops were not hidden in the background away from customers' view. Instead, the catalogue featured photographs of the engineers' shop and repair department, tyre repairing and accumulator charging plant, painting and varnishing shop and a "glass-covered washing yard for cars". The original site at The Colonnade had been relegated to the status of "Subsidiary Garage".

Agencies held included Argyll, Belsize, Clement-Talbot, Siddeley and Wolseley. As Wolseley ultimately became part of British Leyland this association, unbroken since 1906, is believed to be a motor industry record.

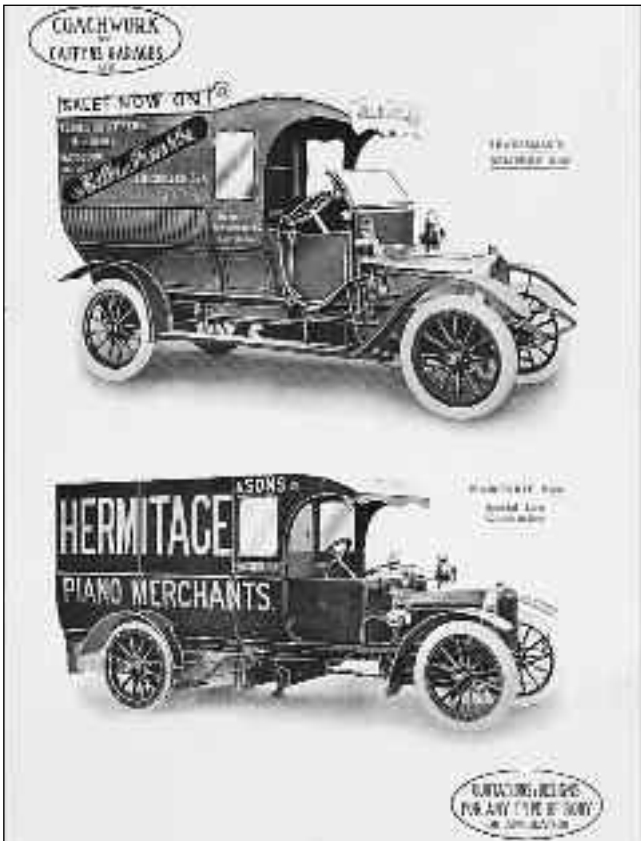
A photograph taken in 1906 or '7 shows that at least 48 staff were already employed.

In 1908 Caffyn Brothers were granted the "All Repairs" certificate of the RAC. By this time the Colonnade garage had been closed and lock-up garages opened in Grange Road. The decision to put most of the firm's resources into the growing motor business had evidently been taken, for the ironmongery and household stores at Church Street and Seaside Road were closed around 1905 and 1908 respectively. The electrical side continued, with new showrooms at 29 Grove Road opened in 1909. This side of the business was developed by Mr Harry Caffyn, until it was sold in 1913.

The time for decisions and developments was, however, only just starting. In 1909 the business became a public company with an issued capital of £15,000, trading as Caffyns Garages Ltd. Percy Caffyn was appointed Managing Director.



Grange Road lock-up garages opened in 1908.



A page from the first coachwork catalogue published by Caffyns in 1912. The top vehicle is on a Talbot car chassis, which would have been specially strengthened to take a commercial body. The lower van is on a Belsize commercial chassis with chain drive. Both vehicles had wooden wheels.

Another project followed – the construction of a garage and showroom on a vacant site at the corner of the Saffrons, opposite the Town Hall, on land formerly occupied by a number of cottages which had been demolished several years previously, and next to the site of William Morris Caffyn’s small shop opened over 40 years before. The Meads Road building was opened in 1911 and contained on an upper floor an elegant suite, the Saffrons Rooms, which were available for hire for “Receptions, Amateur Theatricals, Lectures, Private Dances, Concerts, Bazaars etc.”. The rooms are now-occupied by the Company’s Head Office.



The showroom at Meads Road in 1912. The car on the right, a Talbot, is priced at £385.



Meads Road, opened 1911.



Marine Parade c.1914, after the extension had been completed.

In 1912 the first step outside Eastbourne was taken with the acquisition of Ryder's cycle business in High Street, Heathfield, and the building of a new garage there. Caffyns also entered into partnership with Mr V. Cooke of Bexhill, and in 1913 opened a garage in De La Warr Mews, Station Road, Bexhill. By 1916 this branch came under Caffyns' sole proprietorship.

The premises at Marine Parade were doubled in size in 1913 when an adjacent site was obtained for an extension. By 1914, turnover had reached £44,620.

The outbreak of war, when nearly all the staff volunteered for military service, called on all the adaptability and resourcefulness of the Caffyn brothers so that the bright future of their ventures should not be jeopardised. Expansion was not halted and in 1915 the "Motor Mart Showrooms" in Terminus Road, Eastbourne (now the premises of W.H. Smith & Son Ltd) were opened.

Gradually a new and much larger staff, mostly women, was built up until 450 were employed. Caffyns entered into the manufacture of wartime supplies, particularly aircraft parts. During the war 75 SE5A scout planes were made at Marine Parade: these planes were designed at the Royal Aircraft Establishment at Farnborough and built by various engineering and carpentry firms. A piece of fabric with the Caffyns symbol and the words "Engineers, Aircraft Manufacturers, Eastbourne", was recovered from one of the planes, which crashed in Polygon Wood, Ypres, in 1918 and presented to Caffyns.

The outstanding work by the women on the Home Front during the First World War is now history. As well as tackling unfamiliar mechanical jobs, Caffyns staff formed the "Caffyns Concert and Carol Company" to raise funds for the Red Cross, and entertain parties of wounded troops returning to Eastbourne.

When the Armistice came in 1918, Caffyns was ready to embark on an ambitious programme of development.



Aircraft fabric recovered from a SE5A which crashed in Polygon Wood, Ypres, in 1918.



Letterhead of Caffyns Garages Ltd. 1916.



Opened in 1915, 56 Terminus Road was later renumbered 84.

Chapter 3

EXPANSION

1919-1938

One of the first steps after the war was to re-open the branch at Bexhill and then the search was on for new premises. In 1919 the business of the Eastbourne & District Motor Cab Co. (1909) Ltd was acquired, with premises in Commercial Road and a Ford Depot at Terminus Buildings. The next year saw a move westward to Brighton, where showrooms at 123-4 Western Road were opened, to be followed in 1924 by a service depot at Silwood Street. In Eastbourne during 1920 new showrooms were built at 56 Terminus Road and the Company's Head Office established there. There was also a short-lived branch at Guildford (1919-1921) but evidently Caffyns decided to consolidate activities in Sussex before moving further afield.

The Eastbourne branches at this time were embarking on a programme of diversification. Motorcycles had been sold from an early date but in 1922 a special showroom was opened at Terminus Road and Mr Reg Matthews was appointed to run it. Reg became one of Eastbourne's best-known personalities and in 1982 – as Major R.C. Matthews, MBE, TD – retired after a record 60 years' service with Caffyns.



Heathfield branch in the mid 1920s. Opened in 1912, this was the first venture outside Eastbourne.



The showroom at 123-4 Western Road, Brighton, opened in 1920. This photograph appeared in Caffyns' catalogue for 1924.



Seaside, Eastbourne. The Austin Seven and 1100 cu.ft. Guy Pantechmicon reflected the versatility of the commercial vehicle range.



The Ford Depot at Terminus Buildings, Eastbourne.



The Body Building Shop at Marine Parade in 1924.



Mr E.P. Crampton at 27a Commercial Road, Eastbourne, in 1920, on the Martinsyde which was Caffyns' parts delivery vehicle at the time.



Accident Recovery, 1925 style. Caffyns' Vulcan breakdown lorry to the rescue of a Bullnose Morris overturned at the junction of Enys Road and St Anne's Road, Eastbourne.



Caffyns Coachwork on display at the London Olympia Motor Show in 1921.

Another innovation was the opening in 1923 of a "Radio Room". As Caffyns' brochure put it: "the difficulties connected with perfect audition are daily lessening", and Radio Expert Mr J.J. Pittman was on hand to assist those interested in "listening in". Caffyns even offered that "Mr Pittman will always be pleased to call and bring a demonstration set for the evening's Broadcasting".

In 1919 Caffyns first exhibited at the Motor Show, then held at Olympia and, for many years, Caffyns Coachwork, famous far beyond the borders of Sussex, was a special feature. Coachbuilding took place at Marine Parade, where many interesting projects were carried out during the Twenties and Thirties, including a luxuriously equipped mobile ambulance which was available for hire; a set of miniature carriages for a seaside railway; a Lancia with an especially high roof to allow the owner to enter standing up; superb work on Rolls Royce chassis (Caffyns received the Rolls Royce franchise in 1927), and traders' vans of all kinds, with their colourful and attractive signwriting.

Some of the franchises listed in Caffyns' catalogues of the early Twenties are familiar today: Austin, Daimler, Fiat, Morris-Oxford, Wolseley ... but agencies held also included A.C., Bleriot-Whippet, Calcott, Calthorpe, Darracq, Kingsbury, Phoenix and several others, as well as famous names in the motorcycle world such as Enfield, Harley-Davidson, Omega, Matchless, Martinsyde, Sunbeam and Triumph.



Entertainment in the Twenties. Mr J.J. Pittman in the Radio Room at Terminus Road in 1924 – "this branch of entertainment and education has come to stay."



Private Ambulance built by Caffyns on a Daimler chassis.



The new workshops in Seaside, Eastbourne where much of the company's coach work, upholstery and body repairs were undertaken. The branch later became a specialist site for Leyland commercial vehicles and Land Rover products.



The interior of the Seaside workshops.



Mr Sydney Caffyn, c.1930.

Percy Caffyn's two sons, Sydney and Edward, joined the Company: Sydney in 1922, becoming Sales Manager in 1925 and a Director in 1928; Edward in 1925, subsequently becoming General Manager and in 1932 a Director.

In 1926 a period of rapid development started with the building of Queen's Garage, Eastbourne, followed in 1927 by branches in Haywards Heath and Lewes – the latter specialising in Commercial Vehicles for the first few years until the opening of Lewes showroom in 1930. In 1928 another specialist Commercial Vehicle branch was built at Hove with well-equipped repair workshops, and the first branch at Worthing was opened. Around this time, the Eastbourne firm of Aitken, Grinstead & Co Ltd was acquired.

Extensive new workshops were opened in 1930 at 507 Seaside, Eastbourne, by Sir William Morris (later to become Lord Nuffield) and the premises of Denman's, Cuckfield acquired. At the time, cars required servicing on a monthly basis and Caffyns' sales literature included a menu servicing scheme, with prices at three pounds six shillings a month (£3.30).

Coachbuilding operations were seriously hit by the cessation of special orders during the "Depression" of the early Thirties. However, the situation improved during 1933, in which year Caffyns also arrived in Hastings and Chailey. The following year saw new branches at Burgess Hill and Uckfield, as well as additional premises in Brighton and Worthing.

Always looking ahead to anticipate customers' needs, in 1934 Caffyns were pioneers in the field of Contract Hire and Leasing facilities for fleet operators.



Mr Edward Caffyn, c.1930.

In 1935 came the first entry into Kent, with the purchase of the business of Chas. Baker & Co of Tonbridge, including the Morris distributorship for an important area. In the same year a branch was opened in Horsham and a new garage in Haywards Heath, followed by East Grinstead in 1936, and Goring and Crowborough in 1937. Meanwhile, extensions to existing branches progressed steadily.



The new architecture of the 1930s. Above: Station Garage, Haywards Heath, opened in 1935. Centre: East Grinstead branch, opened 1936. Below: The extension to Kingsway, Hove branch, completed in 1938.

Caffyns took the bold decision that their new buildings during the 1930s should feature the new style of architecture spreading to England from the Continent, with its “white concrete, ribbon windows and curved walls”. Station Garage, Haywards Heath, has been described as “a prime example of combining all the major recognisable features of the international style in a contemporary facade”. The style reached its climax for Caffyns in extensions, begun in 1936 and completed in 1938, which doubled the size of Hove branch so that private cars, as well as commercial vehicles, could be catered for. The Commercial Vehicle operation expanded during the later 1930s, with Caffyns taking part in agricultural shows and holding their own exhibitions of vehicles.

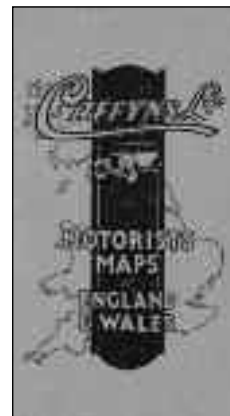
During this period of rapid growth Caffyns were careful to emphasise that the Company remained a friendly, caring, local organisation. A booklet published to mark the opening of East Grinstead branch stated:

“If Caffyns means anything to the motoring public, it is the hope of the Firm’s Directors that it should mean honest service backed by experience and skill; such a service they hope speaks for itself and neither needs, nor uses, roadside signs, without which our County of Sussex would be even more beautiful than it is.”

The same booklet outlined the new sales policy introduced during the 1930s:

“Caffyns will only act as agents for British cars – they are not prepared to stock or push the sale of foreign cars.”

The Company also showed care and concern for its staff. In 1929 the question of insurance schemes for the protection of staff was just beginning to be discussed in the motoring press, and on July 13th, 1929, the “Garage and Motor Agent” published a double page spread on the scheme being operated by Caffyns with the Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. Staff received either an endowment policy or a life policy, terms varying according to the age and length of service of each employee. Holidays with full pay for all staff at Christmas, plus a week in the summer, were introduced around this time.



Caffyns regularly produced motorists maps. In the early days of motoring these suggested ‘local’ outings that may be enjoyed. By the 1930s the maps covered England and Wales.

Staff included many personalities whose names and exploits figure regularly in staff magazines and Company bulletins. As well as Reg Matthews already mentioned, whose resounding laugh kept his colleagues cheerful for so many years, there was R.H. Cooke, whose salesmanship was legendary (he once took some sheep in a part-exchange deal and sold them at Lewes Market); W. Hawkes, the Cuckfield blacksmith, who totalled 60 years' service with Denman's and Caffyns; R.C. Glazebrook whose sense of humour brought a smile to the readers of staff magazines, concert programmes and cricketscore cards alike; Harry Brown, who won countless awards with his Sweet Peas and entertained colleagues at staff parties with a rendering of "Shipmates of Mine" . . . and many more. Social activities were popular, with a wide range of interbranch sporting events, fancy dress parties and concerts where management and staff entertained with songs and dances! Caffyns' Social and Sports Club was funded in 1930 at the newly-opened Seaside Works.

The number of cars on the roads of Britain was beginning to increase rapidly and in 1929 Caffyns sold over 1,000, the first time this figure had been reached in any one year. At the same time, local authorities began to provide free space in towns for parking and this led to complaints from garage proprietors about loss of garaging business on their own premises. Caffyns found that their Queen's Garage in Eastbourne was under-used but, undeterred by the apparent setback, opened an Indoor Bowling Green there in 1932 to utilise the space.

In 1937 Mr P.T. Caffyn retired from the position of Managing Director, though he continued as Chairman until his death. He had seen the business grow and prosper to a remarkable extent and among those who supported his own hard work and enthusiasm must be mentioned Mr S. Bindon, who was a Director from 1923-1950, Mr Ernest Armstrong, a Director from 1925-1952 and, of course, Mr Harry Caffyn who remained a Director until his death in 1952.

Turnover grew from £5,205 in 1904 until, in 1938/9, it reached £610,332. The business was now under the direct control of Mr Sydney and Mr Edward Caffyn, who were appointed joint Managing Directors. Their careers were to follow very different paths during the next few years.



Caffyns' workshop at Dyke Road, Brighton.



A fleet of Morris Commercials for East Sussex County Council at Hoopers Lane (now Brooks Road) Lewes in 1937.



Caffyns' arrival in Kent took place at Tonbridge in 1935. Here, a van from the branch is collecting spares from the Morris factory at Cowley.



Whilst utilising the indoor bowling greens, motorists could 'garage their cars at Caffyns opposite the greens – for 6d for up to three hours'.

Chapter 4

CAFFYNS IN WAR

1939-1945

The patterns of Mr Sydney and Mr Edward Caffyn's careers during the war years reflect the dual nature of the struggle in which the whole of Britain was involved: the one ensuring an efficient and thorough back-up at home to mechanised forces serving overseas and seeing that the firm base of the Company's structure remained to build on as soon as conditions allowed; the other pursuing a distinguished military career in places which were to become household names in the years that followed.

At the outbreak of war in 1939 Caffyns were employing 450 men and women. Staff had been encouraged to join the Territorial Army and in May 1939 Mr Edward Caffyn was called on to raise and command the 10th Army Field Workshop. In the first week of the war Mr Edward, six Branch Managers and a quarter of the entire staff were called up. Those left had to cope with a flood of restrictions and regulations, as well as the obvious hazards of being in a front-line area: Caffyns' premises were damaged in no less than 79 separate bombing incidents during the war.

Petrol rationing had an immediate and drastic effect on turnover, which halved during the first months of the war, but strenuous efforts were made to get Government work and, after months of what Mr Sydney Caffyn (in charge of Caffyns' operations on the "Home Front") called "Heart-breaking trekking from one Government department to another", contracts were secured for the production of tools for Ordnance Factories at Marine Parade and aircraft parts at Brighton. In May 1940 Brighton was also appointed a Civilian Training School for Army Mechanics – it went on to become the largest in the country, training over 8,000 troops during the next five years.



Tyre Department service van at St. Anthony's, Seaside, Eastbourne in 1939.



RAF Tankers undergo maintenance in the bangar at Leeds Avenue, Eastbourne, during the war.



Part of the Civilian Training School for Army Mechanics established at Caffyns' branch in Dyke Road, Brighton.



Military vehicles undergoing repair at Hove.

In Eastbourne the Terminus Road premises were closed and Caffyns' Head Office moved in June 1940 to its present site in the Meads Road building. The German occupation of the French coast meant that the Sussex coast became a restricted area, with only seven depots allowed to stock petrol. Crowborough, Goring and part of Heathfield branch were requisitioned for units returned from Dunkirk and subsequently a total of twenty-seven of Caffyns' buildings were requisitioned for Army and Navy units, while the BBC set up transmitting stations at the Brighton and Hastings branches. Machine tools and body building activities were concentrated at Brighton, Eastbourne and Haywards Heath.

From September to December 1940, due to the threat of invasion, the Head Office was temporarily moved to Haywards Heath, though workshop staff volunteered to stay on and continue the important supply work being carried on in Eastbourne. During this period Meads Road and Chapel Road, Worthing, were badly damaged in air raids.

Mr Sydney Caffyn raised and commanded the Sussex Recovery Company Home Guard, with 200 men and 45 vehicles, including factory units at Eastbourne (Seaside) and Hove.

Hove branch, under Mr Cecil Caffyn (a brother of Mr P.T. and Mr H.B. Caffyn) and Mr Coote, was appointed one of the first Army Auxiliary Workshops, to be followed in 1943 by Haywards Heath and later by Seaside.



Meads Road, Eastbourne, September 1940.



Hove branch, appointed one of the first Army Auxiliary Workshops. At work on a Morris Commercial Field Artillery Tractor, popularly known as "Quad", used for gun towing.



58 Chapel Road, Worthing, September 1940.



Wartime licence for a Morris vehicle which reads 'Ministry of Supply. This vehicle is being used for the purpose of His Majesty's Service'.

A great variety of bodies were produced at Seaside for the Ministry of Supply, many to Caffyns' own design. The loss from absenteeism at the Seaside works was less than one per cent, a source of great pride to Mr E.J. Wootton under whose control the branch was. Once again, women and elderly staff coped superbly under very difficult conditions, work being constantly interrupted by low flying enemy aircraft. A Canadian Army unit established a gun post on the roof of the Seaside building and in August 1942 shot down a FW190 within a few hundred yards of the premises. A propeller blade from the plane is now in the Combined Services Museum at the Redoubt on Eastbourne sea front.

The Company suffered a sad loss by the death on 23rd May 1942 of Mr P.T. Caffyn, Chairman and Governing Director, to whom Mr Sydney Caffyn paid tribute in the following words:

“It has been due to his foresight and industry that the Company has grown from a very small beginning to one of the largest Motor businesses in the country. Together with great business genius he had also a deep religious faith as everyone who had the privilege of knowing him realised and respected. He set my brother and I a great example and we trust we shall be able to maintain the tradition he has established.”



Building Stores' vehicles at Seaside, Eastbourne.

The years 1942 and '43 saw the most serious losses from air raids, with the complete destruction of Aitken, Grinstead & Co.'s showrooms in December 1942. On 6th June 1943 Marine Parade branch caught fire after a direct hit and what remained of the three-storey building was so badly damaged that it had to be demolished. Fortunately this happened on a Sunday, for on weekdays staff had been working 24 hours a day – almost all of them subsequently voted to stay in Eastbourne and continue working. At Bexhill, after an unexploded bomb had been removed from the forecourt in front of her office, Miss Noakes installed her desk in a workshop pit, had a bench pulled over the top and steadfastly carried on with her work!



FW190 shot down by Canadian Army Unit from the roof of Seaside branch, Eastbourne, in August 1942.



Marine Parade, Eastbourne, 6th June 1943.



Caffyns Garage, Bexhill-on-Sea.

In 1943 a contract was obtained for the repair of RAF vehicles at Eastbourne, Lewes, Tonbridge and Bexhill, and Hove branch was appointed by Morris Commercial Cars Ltd to convert vehicles to run on Producer Gas. All sections of the Company's war effort in Sussex and Kent were operating to full capacity, with staff endeavouring to maintain a normal service to civilian and military customers, whilst spending their nights in fire-watching or on Home Guard duties, where eight members of staff held commissions.

Abroad, a total of 370 Caffyns' staff served in the Forces, of whom 37 received commissions. Twenty-two were Warrant Officers and 117 NCOs. Eleven received honours and 13 were mentioned in Dispatches: a proud record reflecting the calibre of the men and women concerned.

Throughout the war years, Mr Sydney Caffyn wrote a regular newsletter to staff serving in the Forces. The letters he received in reply provide a poignant personal insight into the war as seen by individuals in many fields of service. A vivid description of a low-level raid on an aerodrome in Holland in 1940 was sent by Sergeant James Stevens (Air Gunner, RAF) who had worked for Caffyns since leaving school in 1923, first at Marine Parade, Eastbourne, and later at Worthing. Sergeant Stevens was killed in action in September 1941, after taking part in about 40 raids during his brief but spectacular contribution to the war effort.

Private C. Boakes (Royal Sussex Regiment) of Haywards Heath sent a moving account of his experiences at Dunkirk, and others wrote about Normandy, North Africa, Singapore, Burma, Java . . . in fact, every part of the world where the war was being fought. Miss V.M. Bush (RSM, ATS) of Worthing wrote:

"I'm getting quite 'fed up' sitting down at a typewriter all day long. What I want to do is to go on a gun site."



Recovered military vehicle returned to Kingsway, Hove.



With a shortage, and restrictions on the use of fuel, this 1942 Morris Commercial had been converted by Caffyns to run on 'Producer Gas'.



Aitken, Grinstead & Co's showroom, Terminus Road, Eastbourne, 18th December 1942.

Mr Edward Caffyn was made a Lieutenant-Colonel on the outbreak of war, and took the 10th Army Field Workshop RAOC which he had raised, to France in 1940, where he was stationed on the Maginot Line with the 51st Highland Division, was in action on the Somme and evacuated from Brest. He commanded 3rd A.F.W. in Northern Ireland and in 1942 became a Colonel and received the OBE. He was then posted to Northern Command as Deputy Director Ordnance Services (Engineering). Later in 1942 he was promoted to Brigadier and posted to the War Office in connection with the formation of REME. He became Deputy Director Mechanical Engineering (Org.) and went on a tour of inspection in North Africa after taking part in planning the landings. On formation of the 21st Army Group he was appointed Director Mechanical Engineering and controlled all REME units on the Continent, numbering over 43,000 men, until demobilisation in August 1945. During the early part of 1945 he was twice Mentioned in Dispatches and in March received the CBE.

Mr Sydney Caffyn praised the steadfastness, courage and loyalty of the men and women who “throughout the difficult and dangerous years stood to their posts and enabled our output to be maintained”.

Brigadier Edward Caffyn returned to Eastbourne with a handwritten letter from Field-Marshal Montgomery, who said:

“Thank you very much for all you have done in the REME line in this campaign. Your branch has stood up to every stress and strain and has done its stuff in a manner that is beyond all praise.”

Eighteen men did not return. Their names are on the Caffyns’ Roll of Honour.

Throughout the war Caffyns had kept an eye to the future and had purchased the business of Messrs Ryders of Eastbourne and Willingdon, the Seaford Motor Company and the Saltdean Service Station. During 1945 a number of acquisitions took place: the East Kent firm of Maltby’s Ltd (celebrated for its quality coachwork) with branches at Canterbury, Folkestone, Sandgate and Hythe; premises of Sevenoaks Motors Ltd and Rock, Thorpe and Watson Ltd of Tunbridge Wells (established in 1822 as makers of horse-drawn carriages).

Victory in Europe brought with it the cancellation of body-building and machine shop contracts but vehicle repair work continued and, as demobilisation began and staff returned, Caffyns again began to reorganise the business on a peacetime basis, to include the newly acquired branches in Kent.



Folkestone branch acquired from Maltby's Ltd. during 1945.



Saltdean Service Station on the Brighton to Newhaven coast road.



Caffyns Seaford, acquired in 1941.

Chapter 5

REBUILDING FOR GROWTH AND EXPANSION 1946 - 1979

Immediately after the war the task began of re-equipping premises and reorganising the business to cater for the return to civilian motoring. In 1946 all the subsidiary companies started to trade as Caffyns Ltd and the following year six senior managers were appointed Local Directors. A Company pension scheme was also introduced.

Building restrictions meant that no new depots could be built but in 1948 a new branch was acquired at Maidstone, followed by Margate in 1949. During this period decisions by National Associations played an important part in business life and Mr Sydney Caffyn was particularly active in this field, serving as President of the Motor Agents' Association and President or Chairman of several other bodies, as well as on the Industrial Disputes Tribunal.

In 1951 a large new extension was opened at Canterbury, followed in 1952 by the acquisition of Western Road, Lewes, branch. In the same year Mr Edward Caffyn visited the United States, returning with new ideas for the service side of the business.



New branches in the post-war years: above, Western Road, Lewes, operating as Caffyns since 1952. Below, Britains of Preston Road, Brighton, acquired in 1954.



Caffyns Canterbury branch offered extensive facilities to operators of commercial vehicles and to owners of private cars.



Meads Road: A party to launch the Morris Isis in 1955.



An MGA takes pride of place in the Chapel Road, Worthing showroom in 1958.



Sir Edward Caffyn after receiving his knighthood in 1963.

In December 1952 Mr Harry Bruce Caffyn died, after a long association with the firm that went back to a time before the first car had been garaged.

Building restrictions were lifted in 1954, so that war-damaged premises could be rebuilt and new showrooms and workshops designed. The business of Britains was bought, providing Morris, MG and Riley distributorships for central Sussex, and additional large premises in Brighton, Hove, Lewes and Worthing. The business of A.C. Sharp Ltd., Westerham, was acquired in 1955.

In 1956 Mr Sydney Caffyn became Mayor of Eastbourne, and Mr Edward Caffyn was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Sussex. The previous year he had been awarded the CB - Companion (of the Order) of the Bath.

For the first time since the war some new cars became available for stock, resulting in an increase in turnover of over 25 per cent for the year ending 31st March 1956, with record profits. A setback then occurred with the Suez crisis of 1956, which brought petrol rationing and credit restrictions, so that for a time further expansion had to be held back.

However, in 1959 the Golden Jubilee of the business as a public company was celebrated and a further period of development commenced, with an extensive programme of rebuilding and additions to many premises. Mr Sydney Caffyn was awarded the CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for 1959 in recognition of his service to industrial relations.

The year 1960 brought problems, with a serious fire which destroyed the body building premises at Sandgate (the department was subsequently transferred to a new building in Folkestone) and widespread floods in Lewes which swamped one of Caffyns' branches there, though the year also saw six building projects.

Major changes to the Board of the Company were made in 1961. Three members of the fourth generation of the Caffyn family had joined the business: Mr Alan Caffyn in 1956, Mr Anthony Caffyn in 1960 and Mr Robert Caffyn in 1961. Mr Alan and Mr Anthony were Assistant Sales Manager and Assistant Service Manager respectively, having trained as Automobile Engineers and started as Salesmen at Seaford branch, then being managed by Mr Ken Elder. Mr Robert, who qualified as a Chartered Accountant after graduating from Cambridge University, was Assistant Secretary.

It was decided to appoint each of them to the Board and ensure the future family management of the Company.

A reorganisation of share capital took place, with a Stock Exchange quotation obtained in 1961 for Preference and Ordinary shares and the creation of a new class of Second Preference Shares with voting rights.

New premises for Commercial Vehicles were opened at Tunbridge Wells and Canterbury in 1962, followed by an additional workshop at Seaside, Eastbourne, in 1963. The Hythe Motor Cab Company was also acquired in this year.

The New Year Honours List for 1963 brought a knighthood to Mr. Edward Caffyn, who was appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire. His record of public service includes the posts of Vice-Chairman of East Sussex County Council; Chairman of the Sussex Police Authority; Chairman of the Hailsham Magistrates' Court for twelve years and Deputy Chairman, under the Duke of Norfolk, of the Council of Territorial Army Associations.

Later in the year the University of Sussex conferred an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Science on Mr Sydney Caffyn in recognition of his great contribution towards the creation of the University, where he had been Senior Pro Chancellor and Chairman of the Council since its inception.

An important step was taken the same year, with the acquisition of a site in Eastbourne for the construction of a new showroom and workshops. In 1964 two further businesses were acquired: Dover & Continental Motors Ltd., Dover, and Jackson Bros., Horsham.

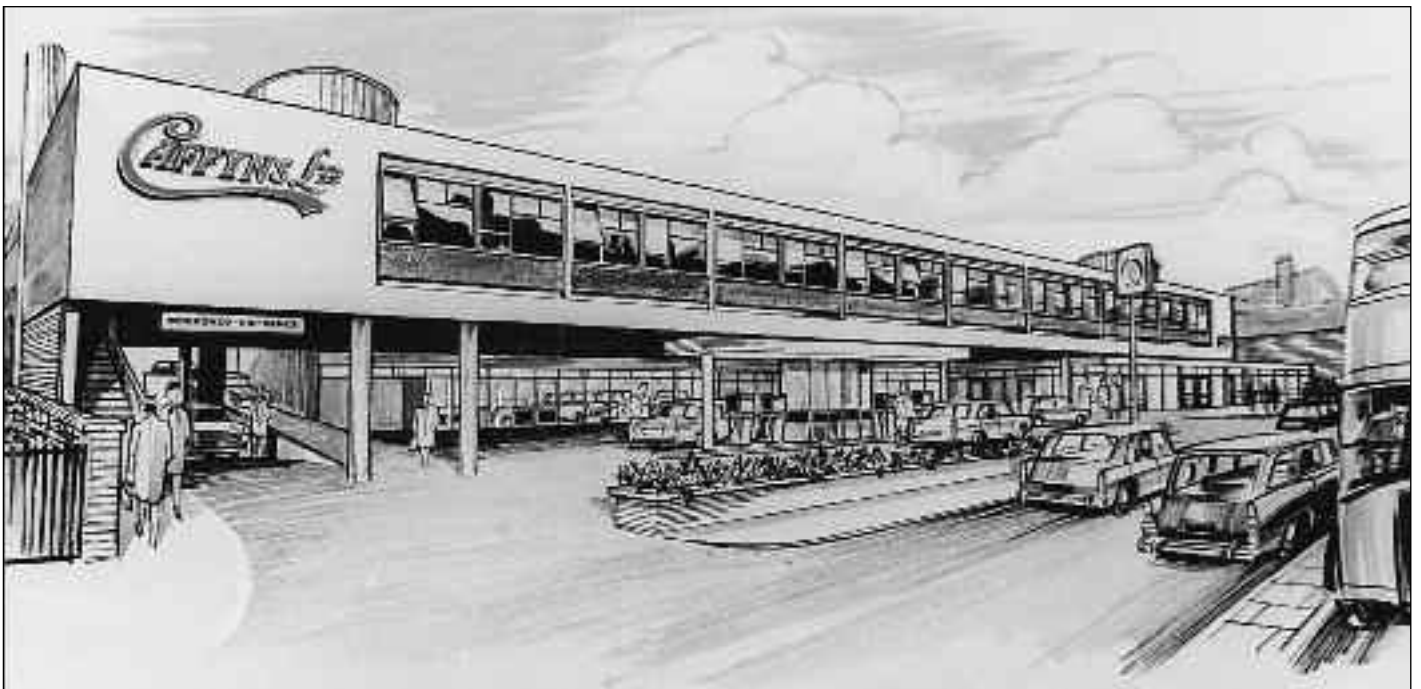
In 1965 it was exactly 100 years since William Morris Caffyn opened his first shop in Eastbourne. Now, the Company had a turnover of over £10 million and a staff of more than 1500. The Centenary was celebrated in a particularly appropriate manner with the opening of the large, modern premises at Upperton Road so familiar to Eastbourne residents and visitors today. The new branch received a Certificate of Commendation under the Civic Trust Awards Scheme.

At this time, in view of the continuing expansion of the business, it was decided that the time had come to enter the world of computers and the first one, an ICL system, was installed at Head Office.

The firm of Sussex Motors Ltd., Holland Road, Hove, was acquired in 1966 and building started for a new Brighton area central parts depot. The purchase of Chas. Hayward & Sons, Ashford, followed in 1967.

Other new acquisitions during the next decade included East Kent Motors, Deal (1968), Bourne Motors, Tenterden and A & H Motors, Brighton (1969), Clark & Lambert and Willetts, Eastbourne (1970), A & B Motors, Ramsgate (1972) and Henlys, Bexhill (1976).

In 1967, in response to the demand of motorists who were using the roads in increasing numbers covering higher mileage by night as well as by day, Caffyns opened their first 24 hour forecourts. A coin-operated self-service petrol pump in Kent was installed at the Tubs Hill Service Station, Sevenoaks, and note-acceptor pumps in Sussex were introduced at Horsham branch and Crossways Service Station in Eastbourne.



1965: An artist's impression of the new development at Upperton Road, Eastbourne.

In the 1972 Birthday Honours List Mr Sydney Caffyn became a Knight Bachelor in recognition of his charitable work during his many years of public service, thus achieving the unusual distinction of knighthoods for two brothers. The previous year he had received the Freedom of the County Borough of Eastbourne, where he first served as a member of the Town Council in 1937, became an Alderman in 1944 and was Mayor from 1956 to 1958. A former President of Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce, his contribution to the town's life included service as Chairman of the Governors of several prominent educational establishments and the Presidency of the Eastbourne Operatic and Dramatic Society. He was also a prominent figure in his local church of St Andrews United Reformed Church and in national religious life, where his appointments included that of Treasurer of the National Free Church Federal Council.

Another change at Board level took place in 1972, when Sir Sydney and Sir Edward resigned as Managing Directors but continued as Chairman and Deputy Chairman respectively. Mr Alan, Mr Anthony and Mr Robert were appointed Joint Managing Directors.

In 1973/74, Eastbourne's final year as a County Borough, Sir Sydney Caffyn was once again Mayor of Eastbourne and the following year he and Lady Caffyn celebrated their Golden Wedding. The death of Sir Sydney on 26th September 1976 saddened his numerous friends and colleagues in many fields in public service, as well as throughout the motor industry.

Following the death of Sir Sydney, Sir Edward Caffyn was appointed Chairman, Lord Shawcross Deputy Chairman and Mr H.C. Cottrell was appointed to the Board.



Mr Alan Caffyn c. 1965.



Mr Anthony Caffyn c. 1965.



Mr Robert Caffyn c. 1965.



The Rolls-Royce showroom at Meads Road, Eastbourne.

The 1970s saw an upsurge in promotional activity with events such as “The French Collection” not only providing a much appreciated “thank you” to existing customers but bringing the Caffyns name before a wider audience through the extensive publicity generated. Another success followed when the Company took over the Winter Garden in Eastbourne to stage Caffyns’ own Eastbourne Motor Show - the first time that a motoring event on this scale had been held in the town. This successfully continued each year and from 1981 Eastbourne’s Tourism and Leisure Department was inspired to take it over themselves as The Sussex Motor Show! These, and many more such events, were devised and organised by Regional Director and Chief Publicity Executive, Colin Wood, who served with the Company for thirty-five years before his retirement in 1990.

Caffyns enjoyed a long association with Sussex County Cricket Club with Mr Alan as its Chairman and a promotional link with Tony Greig, Captain of the Club and of England, resulted in a very successful television advertising campaign on the theme of “Caffyns Care”.

In 1977 the Company’s Rolls Royce Division celebrated the 50th anniversary of their appointment as official Rolls Royce dealer and, to mark the occasion, each customer buying a new Rolls Royce from Caffyns was presented with a golden ‘Flying Lady’ statuette. In October of the same year, Sir Edward Caffyn was presented with a Silver Salver by the Managing Director of Rolls Royce Motors Ltd. Caffyns had, at that time, agencies at Meads Road, Eastbourne; Station Garage, Haywards Heath and Tubs Hill, Sevenoaks.

Until 1977 the Company had been “Caffyns of Sussex and Kent” but then came a major change. In one of the most significant transactions in Caffyns’ history, the business of the Rob Walker group of garages was acquired, with branches in Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. Not only did this purchase herald a change from total involvement with British Leyland marques bringing with it the Fiat and Mercedes-Benz franchises but it also provided Caffyns with opportunities for the expansion and development in a new part of the country, which took place during the next decade.



The French Collection: Customers who ordered a new Morris Marina 1.8 TC in April 1973 spent a day in Calais as guests of Caffyns, to take delivery of their new car.



Caffyns celebrated their 50 year association with Rolls-Royce in 1977.



‘Caffyns care for me!’ In this 1976 television commercial, Sussex and England cricket captain Tony Greig explains why his new Jaguar, his wife’s Mini, and the Club’s baggage van, a Leyland Sherpa, had all been supplied by Caffyns.



The first Caffyns Garage was re-created on the stage of the Winter Garden for the Eastbourne Motor Show in 1979. Although Caffyns’ two Bullnose Morris cars are a little too young (1913) to have been there from the start, the Company’s 1899 Benz (centre) would have been quite at home in the first showroom!

Chapter 6

THE 1980s:

A DECADE OF MANY CHANGES

Following the purchase in 1979 of three of Wadham Stringer's Commercial vehicle branches at Ashford, Bexhill and Tonbridge, at the beginning of 1980 another of their premises was acquired at Hailsham, where redevelopment began immediately, to provide a new Austin Rover Showroom and Regional Parts Centre.

The 1980s continued with expansion of the Company's business by the acquisition of new premises in Sevenoaks in 1981 and saw the continuation of the new policy of diversification of franchises which was to be the keynote of the coming years. Renault was brought in at Dover, Folkestone and Maidstone, Audi-Volkswagen at Bexhill and Haywards Heath, and the Lancia franchise was added at the new West Country branches. The year also saw a revitalisation of the Company's visual image, with the introduction of the now familiar two-tone blue "lozenge" form of the Caffyns logo.

In the same year Mr Alan Caffyn was appointed Chairman, succeeding Sir Edward Caffyn, who on his retirement became President of the Company. Mr Alan, following in the footsteps of previous generations, was closely involved in many diverse activities. A past President of the Sussex Cricket Club, Vice President of BEN, the National Motor Trade Benevolent Fund, and President of the Eastbourne Historic Vehicle Club.

As allowed by the Companies Act 1980, on 29th October 1981 the Company changed its name from Caffyns Ltd. to Caffyns plc.

In 1982 another member of the Caffyn family, Mr Douglas Caffyn, who joined the Company in 1976, was appointed to the Board as Executive Director. A graduate of Cambridge University as well as an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Secretaries, he was originally in charge of the Caffyns Pension Fund. Now his responsibilities were expanded to include forecourt operations and all property matters.



Hailsham branch in 1984.



The new 'Lozenge' Caffyns logo, introduced in 1981.



Audi-Volkswagen at Caffyns Bexhill, Sussex.



Mr Douglas Caffyn.

In the early part of the decade the pattern of the retail motor trade changed dramatically. The car manufacturers launched a programme of streamlining their dealerships, at the same time demanding continually higher standards and levels of investment. On the Service side, extended intervals between services and minimising of servicing schedules caused a general dilution of this part of the industry. A review of the Company's activities led to a plan of rationalisation being carried out and, in towns where representation existed at several sites, consolidation was achieved by centralising activities and selling excess capacity.

In the light of these major changes, in 1982 the Main Board of Directors had decided that a restructuring of the Company's management was desirable. As a result of the recommendations of Management Consultants Urwick Orr and Partners, all branches were grouped into regions, each one under the control of a newly appointed Regional Director. A Regional Board of some 10 senior members of staff was thus formed to consult with the Main Board on the day-to-day operation of the Company in the rapidly changing climate of the motoring world. The new management style brought wide-ranging changes to the Company, with increased regional autonomy, new accounting systems and further computerisation.

Branches at Tenterden, Hastings, Westerham, Dover and Folkestone were closed. Another "casualty" was Rolls Royce – in common with most car manufacturers, Rolls Royce greatly reduced the number of their retail outlets, and in 1984 the franchise held since 1927 was relinquished.

This decisive action, together with the new management structure and the acquisition of further new franchises, helped Caffyns to weather the difficult years ahead more successfully than some of its competitors.

Since the installation of their first business computer in 1965 when the Company's annual turnover was around £10 million, by 1983 this had grown to over £70 million and, although its capacity had been increased three times in the intervening years, by now it had reached the end of its useful life and a completely new ICL system was installed. Indeed, the volume of business continued to expand to the extent that in 1986 it exceeded £100 million.

Also in 1983, Caffyns were appointed Managing Agents for the Youth Training Scheme (now known as Training Credit).



Caffyns, Kingsway, Hove in 1987.



The ICL computer system installed at Caffyns Head Office, Eastbourne.

The mid 1980s was an especially busy time. The introduction of Audi-Volkswagen at Goring near Worthing made Caffyns the largest group of Audi/VW dealers in Sussex. Other new appointments included a General Motors Main Dealership at East Grinstead for the Vauxhall range of cars and vans; the Nissan franchise at Canterbury, where activities were transferred to a new showroom and workshop on the outskirts of the city with greatly improved access for customers and a major Land Rover Centre in the newly developed Brooks Road area of Lewes.

This period also saw an important new development of the Service side of the business, Flexi-Serve. Launched in 1985 and conceived and marketed by Anthony Caffyn, Joint Managing Director (Service), this system of fixed-price car maintenance for all popular makes of car, which included “menu-pricing”, would give car owners the freedom to select exactly what work was to be done at pre-quoted prices with no hidden extras. All the work would be guaranteed for three months (later increased to twelve months) against defective parts or workmanship and only top quality materials would be used. This facility offered by a main dealer was so unique at the time that it featured in the BBC programme Top Gear.



Audi Volkswagen at Caffyns, Goring, near Worthing.



Vauxhall Opel at Caffyns, East Grinstead.



Caffyns Motor Contracts, Henwood Industrial Estate, Ashford, provide cars and light commercial vehicles nationally to fleet and business users.

In response to changing marketing conditions the Company established in 1984 a new division at Canterbury – Caffyns Motor Contracts – especially created to offer the widest possible range of financing options for the acquisition of vehicles, whether for business or private use. Techniques are based on long experience – Caffyns began Contract Hiring Schemes back in the mid 1930s. The business now operates from Ashford with a second branch in Brighton and provides vehicles nationally.

During 1986 Caffyns devised a vehicle funding package which they called Driveplan. This was basically a lease scheme for private motorists which until then had only been available in the UK to business users. Some nine years later, essentially the same package would be offered as Personal Contract Plans (PCPs) by almost all major manufacturers.

Other developments during this period included the opening of a replacement Coachshop at Hailsham with fully equipped Paint Shop to add to the extensive Sales, Service and Parts facilities already available there. Caffyns' smaller sites were not overlooked and the familiar Eastbourne landmark of Crossways petrol station was updated to provide easy-access self-serve facilities, combined with a well-stocked “Shop for the Motorist”, with a 24-hour service.



Dust free temperature controlled spray booths were installed in all of Caffyns' bodyshops to ensure top-quality results.



A section of Caffyns' regional parts warehouse at Kingsway, Hove.

After being active in the Heavy Commercial Vehicle field for the last 75 years, it was decided to reduce investment in this highly-specialised and increasingly competitive area. In a mutually advantageous management buy out, the Kent operation based at Ashford was taken over by Ron Stuppel, who had been associated with the Company's Commercial Division for 28 years. The Sussex operation was sold to Evans Halshaw plc.

Throughout the 1980s, Caffyns' Accident Repair and Parts Delivery Services, were streamlined and greatly expanded to meet the needs of the increasing number of cars on the road and the extended range of car franchises that had been acquired. To provide the higher standards of repair and paint finish that were being introduced by the manufacturers, the Company's major accident repair centres in Crowborough, Brighton, Worthing and Hailsham were completely re-equipped.

To ensure the necessary parts were available for both routine servicing and accident repairs, a network of major parts depots was established with a transport fleet to serve both retail and trade customers. In addition, a network of "Express Factors" depots were set up to give rapid service to local branches and customers with deliveries at regular intervals. By 1986 the Company carried in stock around 50,000 different "lines" or types of part to the value of nearly £2 million.

In October 1987, the Fiat branch in Salisbury, taken over when the Rob Walker Group was acquired in 1977, was changed to the Toyota franchise and in the latter part of the decade active development took place in several other directions including three new Austin Rover dealerships. These were established at Tonbridge (a redevelopment of the former Commercial premises), officially opened by Mr Kevin Morley, Commercial Director of Austin Rover; at Ashford, also a part of a major redevelopment, which was officially opened in October 1988 by Mr (later Sir) Graham Day, then Chairman of the Rover Group and at Hove, Kingsway.



Fleets of vans make regular deliveries from Caffyns' regional parts centres and Express Factors outlets. Shown above is Hove in 1986.

The Company's activities in the luxury sector of the market, which earlier centred mainly on Rolls Royce agencies and then Jaguar, now expanded steadily with the opening in July 1987 of impressive new premises for Mercedes-Benz at Dorchester, followed by another Mercedes-Benz centre at Salisbury in July 1989, later officially opened by Mr Hans Tauscher, Managing Director of Mercedes-Benz UK Ltd.

In September 1988 Caffyns staged a motor show with a difference, by taking over the South of England Showground at Ardingly for a highly successful "Ride the Range" day. This provided a family day out with TV and Radio personality Ed Stewart hosting the show. Competitions and sporting attractions were added to the opportunities of test driving dozens of demonstration vehicles.

The 1980s saw a considerable growth in the UK of business leasing and the operation of company cars. With many regional businesses being acquired by the large multi-national companies, fleet vehicle acquisitions were being made centrally in much larger quantities, resulting in manufacturers supplying direct rather than through dealers. This led to Caffyns' branches relying more on sales to local businesses and private buyers.

During the mid '80s world-wide recession, high interest rates and increasing unemployment led to a decline in consumer spending with many companies going out of business. Although this was a difficult trading period, with its strong background and astute management, Caffyns were able to maintain modest profits.



Caffyns Mercedes-Benz, Salisbury showroom.



New showrooms in Salisbury and Dorchester were opened during the late 1980s, providing bright surroundings for customers purchasing cars or collecting them from the Service Department.



Purpose built and equipped Mercedes-Benz workshop 1989.

Chapter 7

CAFFYNS IN THE NINETIES

On the 17th June 1990 a particularly sad event occurred – the death of Sir Edward Caffyn at the age of 86, after 65 years of service to the Company.

In the same year, representing the fifth generation of the family, Simon Caffyn, the son of Alan Caffyn, joined the Company bringing a wealth of management and financial control experience with him. After leaving Cambridge University with an Honours Degree in Engineering, he worked with the American Management Consultants, Andersen Consulting, followed by a year with Mann Egerton, a large national motor group. In 1992 Simon was promoted to the Main Board as Operations Director, being responsible for vehicle sales.

The 1990s were to become a period of many changes, not only within the world-wide motor manufacturing industry but also with the introduction of Health and Safety and environmental legislation and changes in the pattern of retailing. Having been involved with the motor industry for almost a century, Caffyns' experience enabled them to predict imminent changes that may take place and make short term and long term plans for the future.

The decade started with the completion of major redevelopments at Hythe for Vauxhall cars, and at Crowborough for Rover, which was later in the year officially opened by Mr George (later Lord) Simpson, then Managing Director of Rover Cars.

In 1990 Caffyns introduced its own credit card. The Caffyns Care Card provided a secure, convenient and straightforward way for customers to purchase many goods and forecourt services at any Caffyns' branch. For each card issued a donation was made to the National Trust. In 1995 its scope was enlarged by the introduction of the 'Privilege Card' to cover repairs, parts and 'Flexi' services as well.

Due to increasingly adverse local trading conditions, in 1991 it became necessary to close the branches in Bournemouth (Fiat), Bexhill (Audi/VW), Margate (Rover) and Southampton (Seat/Hyundai). However, there was an upsurge in the acquisition of new franchises or the expansion of existing ones. In 1992 at Canterbury, Citroën replaced Nissan which was taken on at Hailsham and Horsham. New premises were acquired at Alton and Haslemere for Ford, whilst at Ashford Isuzu and Subaru were set up alongside Rover.



Mr Simon Caffyn.



Crowborough branch underwent an extensive re-building programme before emerging as a new Rover showroom.



Caffyns Vauxhall at East Street, Hythe, another development.

Following the popularity of Flexi-Serve, particularly with owners of cars over three years old, Caffyns introduced Flexi-Fit fixed price parts and fitting and, at the same time, increased the parts and labour guarantee to 12 months. Locating Flexi Car Care Centres at over 30 of the Company's fully equipped workshops enabled Caffyns to offer a true 'one-stop' service in contrast to most 'Fast-fit' operations which specialised in only a limited range of operations. In fact the 'Flexi' scheme won the Automotive Management Award for quality, service and innovation.

Following the installation at Head Office in 1993 of the UCS mainframe computer, branches were given immediate access to full details of a vehicle's service history and, with only a few exceptions, regardless of which branch the car had previously visited. Parts ordering, Service scheduling, MoT test reminders, group used vehicle stock and numerous other categories of information were all readily available throughout the Company.

As well as each branch having their own Parts Department, the Company had five main Parts Centres, each with an Express Factors plus two stand alone Express Factors that made numerous deliveries each day, not only to Caffyns own branches but also to most local garages. To increase the efficiency of inter-branch deliveries, the Company introduced an overnight delivery service. Throughout the group some 17,000 different lines worth over £2.5 million were stocked.



Above: Workshop computers provide precise engine tuning and fault diagnostic facilities.

Below: Chrysler Jeep at Hailsham, Sussex.



Customers can almost design their own car with the aid of showroom based computers.

With the rapid development in the use of electronics and computer controlled management systems in vehicles, the appropriate diagnostic and test equipment necessary to service and maintain them was installed at all branches. Continual training of staff remained an essential part of the company's activities, with vehicle technicians receiving on-going factory training for the repair and maintenance of new models, often before their launch.

Choosing a new car was to become a new experience with the introduction of Showroom based computers. Customers could view 'video footage' of a desired car driving along the road and, at the same time, change the colours and specification. A detailed costing, expected delivery date and placing the order at the factory would take only minutes.

In 1993 Chrysler re-launched the famous American Jeep off road vehicle which Caffyns added to their franchise portfolio alongside Rover at Upperton Road, Eastbourne. By 1997 the Jeep range had increased from one model to three and two Chrysler models had been added with more to follow. With such rapid expansion and growth of popularity the Chrysler-Jeep franchise was transferred to Hailsham branch, replacing Nissan.

By the mid to late 1990s the world motor manufacturing industry had gone through great changes. With many now manufacturing in Europe, BMW acquiring Rover and Rolls Royce, Mercedes-Benz amalgamating with Chrysler and VW owning Bentley and having interests in Skoda and Seat to name but a few. Rover had introduced MG and Mini as separate franchises and VW and Audi, which had previously been sold from the same showrooms, were separated by VAG to form two franchises. Most manufacturers were also reducing the number of outlets for their products at the same time increasing sales territories of those retained.

In line with these changes, Caffyns preparations for the next century were well under way. Salisbury (Toyota), Poole (Fiat), Maidstone (Renault) and Deal (Rover) were closed. Car Sales ceased at Horsham, with the branch moving its Wholesale Parts facility to Crawley and major redevelopment commenced elsewhere.

Dyke Road, Brighton (Rover) was redeveloped as a new site for Audi. The Land Rover operation based at Lewes increased its territory to cover much of East and West Sussex and underwent extensive re-building with a Satellite branch established at Heathfield (previously Rover). An additional site at Brooks Road was acquired for Rover. Express Factors opened in Crawley and Worthing. Tunbridge Wells added the MG and Mini franchise to Rover and all of the other Rover branches also added Mini, as well as increasing their territory.



*Above: Caffyns Audi at Dyke Road, Brighton.
Below: Land Rover at Brooks Road, Lewes.*



Sarah Caffyn.

In 1998, a record year for the Company, the Chief Executive, Alan Caffyn retired after 42 years' service but remained as Chairman. He is succeeded by his son, Simon Caffyn. Also, Sarah Caffyn, daughter of Robert Caffyn, joined the Company with responsibility for Human Resources. Sarah studied at Leeds University, gaining a BSc Honours Degree, Graduate of the Institute Personnel and Development and Post Graduate Diploma in Management. Before joining the Company she held the post of Human Resources Manager at St Mary's Teaching Hospital, London.

Restructuring of the branches continued with a green field site being purchased at Ashford in Kent for the building of a new site for Vauxhall and Skoda with an additional site acquired at Folkestone for redevelopment also as a Vauxhall site. Land adjoining Caffyns Burgess Hill was purchased to enable a larger branch to reside on one site (rather than the previous two) with Seat as the franchise. Caffyns Ford at Alton moved 'next door' to a fully refurbished main road location, their previous site then being sold for redevelopment. Caffyns commitment to owners of light commercial vehicles continued with a new facility for VW vans at Hove and Vauxhall light commercials joining Vauxhall cars at Ashford.

Throughout the decade much had been achieved across the whole Company with non-executive directors such as Lord Shawcross, Ian Watt and Brian Carte, regional directors and branch managers all contributing their own expertise.

By the end of the 1990s rebuilding of Sevenoaks for a new Peugeot franchise, a new Showroom for VW at Goring-by-Sea and alterations and renovation of almost all of the branches had been or were being undertaken.

Chapter 8

INTO THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

On 1st June 2000, Robert Caffyn retired from his position as Finance Director and Company Secretary to become a non Executive Director. Mark Harrison then joined the Company and was appointed Finance Director. Mark, a Chartered Accountant, was formerly finance director of two other quoted companies. Robert Caffyn's daughter, Sarah, was appointed Company Secretary.

During the following year, after 40 years of service, Joint Managing Director Anthony Caffyn retired but remained as a consultant to the Company.

European rulings continued to change the ways in which cars would be built, sold, serviced, repaired and disposed of at the end of their life. To meet the new challenges of the twenty-first century Caffyns continued throughout the Company to invest in best communication and management systems, staff training and procedures for component and waste product re-cycling. Major redevelopment and refurbishment of existing branches, the acquisition of new ones and expanding with successful franchises was to become a continuous programme over the next few years.

In February 2001 Caffyns acquired Eastbourne Volvo dealership Ridley's and became one of the first dealer groups in the country to represent Ford's Premier Automotive Group franchises of Jaguar, Land Rover and Volvo for a marketing territory. In 2002 the Rev'd Douglas Caffyn retired after 25 years with the Company. As Pension Fund Secretary throughout that time he also spent many years in charge of Company properties and their maintainance.



Mark Harrison.



The redeveloped Peugeot branch at Sevenoaks.



Caffyns Eastbourne Volkswagen. The Skinners site after refurbishment.

Eastbourne Volkswagen dealer, Skinners, was purchased by Caffyns in 2002 and in the same year the Company recorded record profits.

In 2003, the 100th anniversary of Caffyns' involvement with the motor car, the Hailsham branch of Lindbrook Audi was purchased making this the second Audi dealership within the Caffyns portfolio. Simultaneously land was purchased in Eastbourne to build an all new state-of-the-art Audi Centre for the region. Daewoo was added to the MG Rover franchises at Eastbourne Upperton Road and Ramsgate and the Tunbridge Wells MG Rover operation was transferred to the Tonbridge branch, the St Johns Road site being sold.

During the same year Alan Caffyn retired as Chairman and became Honorary President. Brian Carte, who first joined Caffyns as a Non-Executive Director in 1996, was appointed Chairman. Brian had previously held the positions of Chief Executive of Lombard North Central, Managing Director of National Westminster Insurances Services Limited and Deputy Chairman of First National Bank plc.

Sarah Caffyn was appointed to the main board as a Director. Her new role being Human Resources Director and Company Secretary.

2004 saw Caffyns purchase the Tunbridge Wells Vauxhall dealership from Pipers Engineering, making this the Company's fifth Vauxhall branch. Two months later Advent Volkswagen at Hove was purchased followed by QAS Skoda, also at Tunbridge Wells.

The year continued with major redevelopment being completed at Eastbourne Volkswagen and Haywards Heath Volkswagen. Refurbishment work commenced at Tunbridge Wells Vauxhall including extensive work to the showrooms, workshop, fast-fit bays, parts department and bodyshop. Building of the new Audi Centre in Willingdon Drove, Eastbourne commenced and plans were underway to re-franchise some other existing branches.

Brian Birkenhead and Andrew Goodburn joined the Company as main board Non-Executive Directors. Brian currently holds non executive appointments with Iinet plc, Cubitt Consulting Ltd and Hermes Fund Managers plc and is also a Trustee of the BT pension scheme. Previously he was the Group Finance Director of National Power plc and later chairman of the Hundred Group of Finance Directors. Andrew, Finance Director at Ricardo plc had previously filled commercial roles within the Bowthorpe Group.

2005 was to become a year of many changes starting with the transfer of the MG Rover franchise from Sovereign Way Tonbridge to part of the Lamberts Road site. Tonbridge became a Vauxhall outlet offering new and used car sales and servicing.

Caffyns branches were re-grouped into three regions, each with their own Regional Director and in view of the current and future growth of the Company's commitment to the Audi, Volkswagen and Vauxhall franchises, three Franchise Managers were also appointed to each take care of one of these marques.

For almost 100 years Caffyns had maintained a close association with MG Rover and its forebears. During April 2005 the Longbridge based manufacturer MG Rover was placed into administration and car production permanently ceased. Caffyns acted quickly, immediately offering to honour all warranty work for customers whose vehicles would no longer be covered by the manufacturer's warranty. The facility for servicing, repairs and parts continued to be available for owners of MG and Rover vehicles.

The re-franchising and refurbishing of MG Rover branches began quickly with Preston Road, Brighton gaining Vauxhall, Broadwater Road, Worthing changing to Audi, Upperton Road, Eastbourne becoming Nissan and Uckfield taking on Citroen. Chevrolet joined Vauxhall at Tunbridge Wells and the existing Land Rover facility at Lewes expanded into the site previously occupied by the MG Rover branch. Unfortunately, Ramsgate and Seaford branches were closed however most of the staff were relocated to other branches within the Company.

Elsewhere, refurbishment and updates were undertaken at the Ford branches in Alton and Haslemere, the Vauxhall sites at Ashford and Folkestone, Skoda at Ashford and Tunbridge Wells and Chrysler Jeep site at Hailsham. Also Volkswagen and Volvo branches were acquired in Portslade to cover the Brighton area.



Caffyns Volvo in Eastbourne.



Vauxhall at Ashford.



Vauxhall and Chevrolet at Tunbridge Wells.



Above: Caffyns Volkswagen, Portslade. Below: Nissan at Eastbourne.



Chapter 9

THE START OF THE NEXT 100 YEARS

In 1903, when Mr Harry Caffyn manoeuvred the first car over the threshold at The Colonnade, little did he know that 100 years later Caffyns would be operating from around thirty sites located in Sussex, Kent, Surrey and Hampshire, with franchises for thirteen makes of new car, and group stock of more than 1000 used cars.

As the motor industry has changed throughout its life, so of course has Caffyns. The constant changes in legislation, global and national economy, lifestyle and attitudes all play a part. Yet, as the Company enters its third century of business with a turnover of £150m, many of the values practised by previous generations of the Caffyns family still remain in place.

Caffyns continues to be proud of its Sussex roots, with the centre of its wide-ranging activities still located at Meads Road, Eastbourne. In the early days the first garage development was financed by local capital; in the Thirties it was local architects who produced new and exciting designs for the Company's branches. Today, the advice and services of locally based companies and professional people are still retained whenever possible. Six of the Company's branches are located in Eastbourne, where it has been trading for over 140 years.

The Company has not lost sight of their founders' values of personal, friendly service and customer care offered by their long term commitment to both the car and the customer.

With an extensive range of vehicles and services to offer, the expertise built up by being around as long as the motor car, by always keeping up to date with the latest developments and facilities and the possession of a strong financial position, Caffyns, still a family run business, can face the future with confidence.



Volvo Portslade.



Above: Audi at Worthing and below Caffyns at Hailsham.



Caffyns Audi branch at Eastbourne.

CAFFYNS ARCHIVES

Caffyns boast an extensive archive dating back to the Company's very beginning in 1865, covering not only almost the entire history of the motor industry but also the history of the Caffyns family and many members of staff.

The archive has been a valuable source of information to the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu, the British Motor Industry Heritage Centre at Gaydon and numerous motoring authors and journalists and television researchers.

Caffyns also have a collection of historic vehicles which are used for promotions, exhibitions and shows and are sometimes available for film and TV work. These include an 1885 Penny Farthing pedal cycle, an 1899 Benz Velo which has completed over 63 London to Brighton Veteran Car Runs, a 1908 Wolseley-Siddeley 14 hp, two bullnose Morris Oxfords (1913 and 1914), and a 1913 Wolseley Phaeton 16/20.

The pride of the Caffyns fleet is a 1933 Rolls Royce 6 seater limousine and a 1927 Delage 14 hp. Both of these cars were supplied new by the Company to their first owners and both cars have custom built bodywork which was designed, constructed and built onto factory provided running chassis by Caffyns at the Marine Parade coach works.

In 1997, after a full restoration by Caffyns Worthing Bodyshop and Caffyns Meads Road, Eastbourne, the Rolls Royce was reunited with 85 year old George Clark, one of the team who worked on the original production of the bodywork as a twenty-two year old specialist painter of Rolls Royce coachworks. George and the car were filmed by Meridian Television at Carlisle Lodge, Eastbourne, the home of the car's original owner. Shortly afterwards the Delage was also fully restored at Caffyns Worthing Bodyshop.

Enquiries relating to Caffyns Archives and Historic Vehicles should be addressed to Group Archives, Caffyns plc, Meads Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex. BN20 7DR.



1933 Caffyns bodied Rolls Royce 6 seater limousine.



1927 Delage 14 hp with Caffyns coachwork.



1899 Benz Velo.



1933 Caffyns bodied Rolls Royce, 1908 Wolseley-Siddeley 14 hp, 1913 Wolseley Phaeton 16/20, 1914 bullnose Morris Oxford.

STAFF ACTIVITIES

Caffyns connection with cricket started during the 1850s and in 1859 William Caffyn was a member of the first England cricket tour overseas. It took the team two weeks to cross the Atlantic from Liverpool to Quebec for their triumphant two month visit to Canada and North America.

Two years later the best English professionals were selected for the first tour of Australia and William was included in the team. The crossing to Melbourne in the SS Great Britain took two months and the tour, another great success, lasted almost seven months. Since then, Caffyns Directors and staff have enjoyed cricket, and for many years the Caffyns cricket team have successfully taken on numerous teams from within the motor industry. Many matches have become annual events.

In 1938 Caffyns staff held the first of what was to become the Annual Golf Tournament organised by Caffyns Golf Society. Additionally the Company's golfers compete in numerous competitions on courses around the south of England.

Branches within the Company regularly support various charitable golfing events and hole-in-one competitions organised by their local golf courses. Achievement and celebratory events, for example 25 Years Service Awards, are held at venues such as Goodwood House and Herstmonceux Castle.



Caffyns cricket team take a well earned rest at Arundel.



...and so do the golfers at the 58th Annual Caffyns Golf Meeting.



Russell Williams batting at Arundel.



Caffyns Volvo at Eastbourne support the bi-annual Junior Swedish Golf week held at Eastbourne Downs Golf Club.



Crossing the Atlantic in 1859. William Caffyn is second from left.



Staff Celebrate 25 years service.

The Company have supported The Sussex Army Cadet Force KitKar Display Team and, in recognition of the support given by Caffyns to the Volunteer Reserve Forces, the Company has been presented with the SaBRE (Supporting Britains Reservists and Employers) certificate. Many members of staff throughout the Company have participated in the Territorial Army's annual Executive Stretch exercise.

Each branch supports various local events, sports and equestrian activities and many charitable causes, with staff at head office and throughout the Company supporting their own favourite charities.



Wholesale Parts Division outdoor karting at Filching Manor.



Lord Lieutenants of East and West Sussex present SaBRE award to Anthony Caffyn.



First National v Caffyns July 2001.



Sussex Army Cadet Force KitKar Display Team appear on the BBC children's programme Blue Peter.



Caffyns staff take part in Executive Stretch at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst.



Caffyns entry in the London to Brighton cycle run.



Bupa Great South Run supporting BEN the Motor and Allied Trades Benevolent Fund.



Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Annual Caffyns Golf Meeting.

CAFFYNS BRANCHES

The following Caffyns Branches were all trading at the time of writing.
Dates shown are years when a Caffyns branch was first opened in the town.
In some cases the premises are not the original ones.

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------|
| EASTBOURNE | Meads Road | Head Office and Jaguar | 1865 |
| | Upperton Road | Nissan and Chevrolet | |
| | Lottbridge Drove | Volvo | |
| | Hammonds Drive | Volkswagen | |
| | Edward Road | Audi | |
| ALTON | Butts Road | Ford | 1993 |
| ASHFORD | Orbital Park | Vauxhall and Skoda | 1967 |
| BRIGHTON | Dyke Road | Audi | 1920 |
| | Preston Road | Vauxhall | |
| FOLKESTONE | Bouverie Road West | Vauxhall | 1998 |
| GORING BY SEA | Goring Road | Volkswagen | 1937 |
| HAILSHAM | London Road | Chrysler, Jeep and Dodge | 1980 |
| HASLEMERE | St Christopher's Place | Ford | 1993 |
| HAYWARDS HEATH | Station Road | Volkswagen | 1927 |
| LEWES | Brooks Road | Land Rover | 1937 |
| SEVENOAKS | London Road | Peugeot | 1945 |
| PORTSLADE | Victoria Road | Volkswagen | 2003 |
| | Victoria Road | Volvo | |
| TONBRIDGE | Sovereign Way | Vauxhall | 1935 |
| TUNBRIDGE WELLS | Lamberts Road | Vauxhall and Chevrolet | 1945 |
| | North Farm Road | Skoda | |
| UCKFIELD | High Street | Citroen | 1934 |
| WORTHING | Broadwater Road | Audi | 1982 |
| WEST WORTHING | Goring Road | Used Car Centre | 1934 |

www.caffyns.co.uk



Meads Road, Eastbourne in 1895.



Meads Road in 2007.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The History of Caffyns is the fourth edition of The Story of Caffyns which was originally compiled by Linda M. Gowans and became the winning entry in the Eastbourne & District Chamber of Commerce Local Business Premises History Competition (over 18's section), held to celebrate Eastbourne's Centenary in 1983.

Caffyns plc would like to express their grateful thanks for help given by: Diana Holford, Caffyns Publicity Department; East Sussex County Library; East Sussex Records Office; Beckett Newspapers Ltd; Peter Brooks, Librarian at the National Motor Museum; Peter Daniels, Commercial Vehicle Historian; Conrad C. Smith, BA Hon. (Arch) for the quotation in chapter 3 from his History Dissertation for Brighton Polytechnic School of Architecture; and many retired members of staff, especially Mr E.J. Wootton for his painstaking recording of events during his 50 years with the Company. Also many thanks to Linda Gowans for her endless dedication in assembling, cataloguing and maintaining the company archives.

All photographs are from originals in Caffyns archives, except those of Meads Road in the 1880s (East Sussex County Library),

Fourth Edition 2007 revised by Brian Robinson, Caffyns plc.
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Built by Caffyns and opened in 1911, the Meads Road site is now Caffyns' Head Office and Jaguar Dealership.

The History of Caffyns

Revised, designed and produced by Caffyns Publicity Department.
Produced and printed by Manor Creative Ltd., Eastbourne (01323) 514400

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