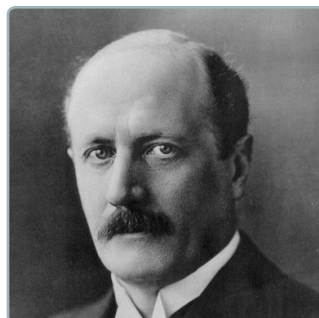
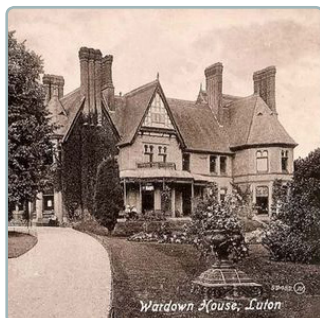


LUTON - HOW I REMEMBER

A PROJECT EXPLORING THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE OF LUTON



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Message from the chairperson

LUTON - HOW I REMEMBER - A PROJECT EXPLORING THE INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE OF LUTON

As the Chairperson of Diverse FM Community Media & Training, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the Heritage Fund for accepting our application and awarding us the grant, without which this project would not have materialised.

I would also like to thank The Culture Trust Luton for providing all the support required to complete the project, including providing access to the Archive Centre at the Wardown House Museum and Gallery, as well as every individual participant for allowing our young volunteers to interview them for this project.

This project was managed under the supervision of Musthafa Hussain (Project Coordinator), where young volunteers engaged in various training to develop key lifelong skills, enabling them all to take active part and develop and deliver the project more effectively.

I very much hope everyone involved with this project has enjoyed and at the same time has developed many new skills, which I hope will benefit everyone in the future life.

I am sure all the volunteers on the project will continue to carry on volunteering with us in other projects, inspire others to get involved and make a positive difference in our community.

Kamal Acharya

Chairperson - Diverse FM Community Media & Training

Acknowledgements

I have had the pleasure of coordinating this innovative and creative Oral History Project, led by a team of dynamic and dedicated young people as volunteers. The project was young people led from the start to finish. All volunteers were provided with a range of training e.g. First aid, Safeguarding, Oral History Recording, Project Management and Radio Broadcasting & Presenting. The main aim of providing these training is to enable individual gain key social, lifelong and other skills. At the same time, they are better able to develop and deliver this project.

Volunteers are not paid – not because they are worthless, but because they are priceless. Without the dedication and commitment of all the volunteers, I would not have been able to coordinate and complete this project.

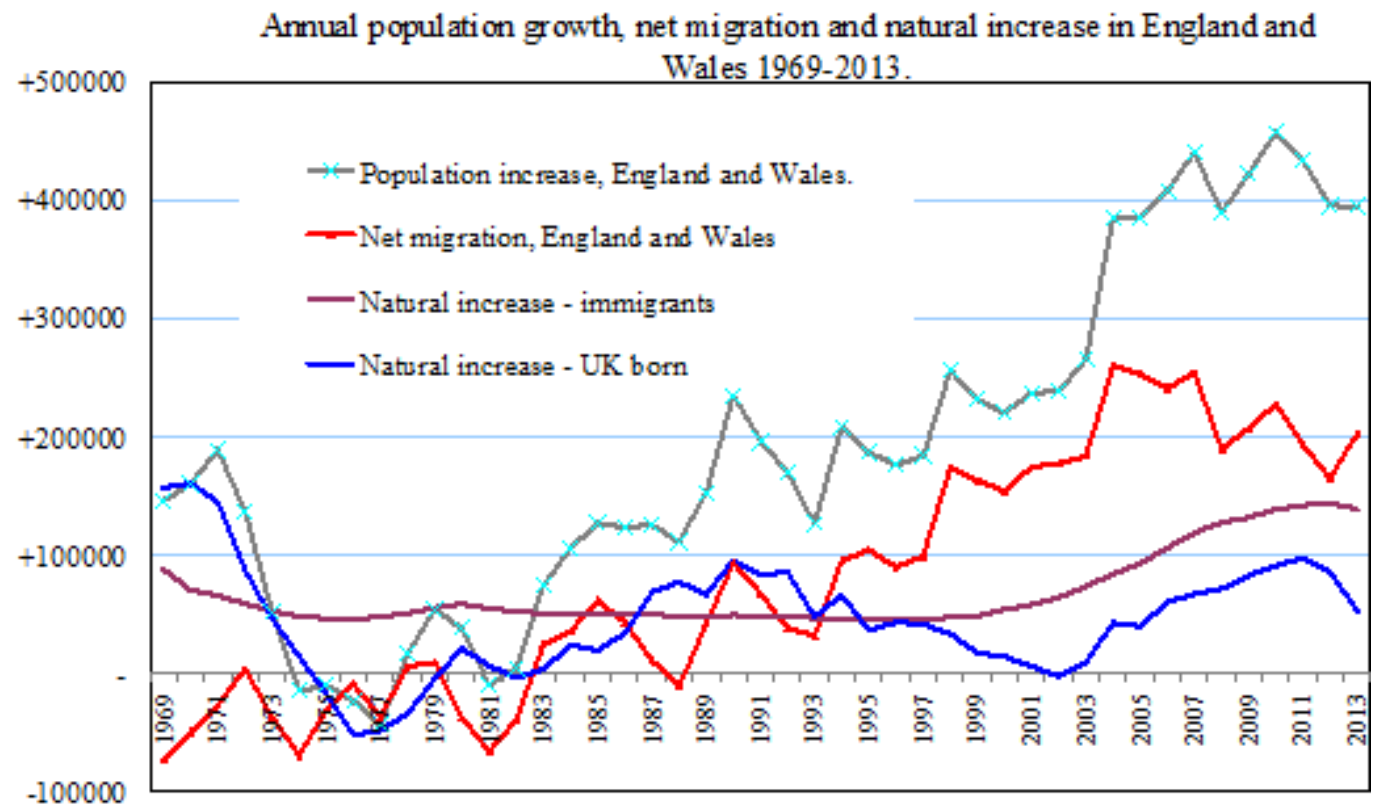
I would like to express my special thanks of gratitude to all the volunteers and particularly Shayek Miah for supervising all the volunteers and Teyba Seyed, Jacqui Harding and Karen Perkins from The Culture Trust Luton and Jobair Babu for all the professional and technical support.

Musthafa Hussain

Project Coordinator

History of Luton

INTRODUCTION TO LUTON



Luton is a large town, borough and unitary authority area of Bedfordshire, it is situated in the south east of England and as of 2019, has a recorded population of 214,109.

Luton Municipal Borough was created as early as 1876 and in 1964 it managed to achieve 'county borough' status however in 1974 this status ceased to exist. Since 1997 Luton has been an administratively independent unitary authority this means that it is independent in terms of its administrative practices but remains a part of the ceremonial county of Bedfordshire.

Luton is now one of the best connected towns in the country with excellent train links such as the Thameslink to Sutton or Brighton, West Hampstead, London St Pancras and London Blackfriars and many services north as well as its very own airport, making Luton a very attractive place to live and work in.

Industries in Luton attract professionals from all over the country, the town is in the process of further developing its airport to improve its economical stature.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

During the 6th century the Saxons conquered Bedfordshire leaving marks and trails which can be seen today. At this point there were but merely a hundred people residing in Luton. The main occupation of residents was farming and so Luton fast became the focal point for local surrounding villagers as a farming hub. Some of the recognisable features of Luton gave name to local streets for example the 6 water mills giving rise to name Mill street, a landmark church built in 1139 giving church street its name.

Luton grew rapidly in the 19th century. In 1801 the population was 3,095. By the standards of the time Luton was a fair-sized market town. By 1851 the population of Luton had exceeded 10,000 and it continued to boom. By 1901 it had reached 38,926 more than 10 times the 1801 level. From 1834 Luton had gas light. In 1847 a Town Hall was built. The first in Luton newspaper began publication in 1854. The same year the first cemeteries were opened. Like the rest of the country Luton suffered an epidemic of cholera in 1848. In 1850 a Board of Health was formed and they set about building sewers. A water company was formed in 1865 and by 1870 the whole town had a piped water supply. Meanwhile the railway reached Luton in 1858. Then in 1872 Luton gained its first hospital when a cottage hospital was built. The same year the first swimming baths were built.

Finally in 1876 Luton was made a borough. Luton Town Football Club was formed in the year 1885.

Unfortunately, during the 20th Century development of the hat making industry had ceased however this did not stop the industrial progress of the town. In 1905 the area of Engineering had started progression and Luton soon became known for car manufacturing.

Timeline of Luton

1885

Luton Town Football Club is established



1905

Vauxhall comes to Luton



1909

The first cinema in Luton opens its doors



Image courtesy of The CultureTrust
Luton/The Luton News

1904

The council purchases Wardown Estate and makes it a park



1908

Trams begin to run in Luton



1919

Luton Town Hall is burned down during a riot



Image courtesy of The CultureTrust
Luton/The Luton News

1932

Trams in Luton cease as buses have replaced them



1937

A new court house is built



1938

Luton Airport opens



1962

A new Central Library is built



1991

Wigmore Park Shopping Centre is built



1998

The Galaxy Leisure Centre is built



2002

Car production in Luton ends



2017

Refurbishment of Wardown House Museum and Gallery



1936

A new Town Hall is built within Luton



Image courtesy of The CultureTrust Luton/The Luton News

1938

The Savoy is built in Luton Town Centre



Image courtesy of The CultureTrust Luton/The Luton News

1939

Luton and Dunstable Hospital opens



1972

The first section of the Arndale opened



1997

Luton is made a Unitary Authority



1999

Luton Airport Parkway Station is built



2007

St Georges Square is redeveloped



Current Industries

ENTREPRENEURIAL GROWTH IN LUTON

The town is recognised more widely than many other towns of the same size in the country. Luton is home to one of the world's first football club, established in 1885. The town holds an international reputation for housing the headquarters of Vauxhall Motors, a company that is known for its world class models for more than a century now.



According to a report by Duport Associates Ltd, published in September 2014, a record number of new company formations took place in Luton during January to March 2014 this can be evidenced by the rise in company registrations during that period. In fact, the net number of companies in Luton rose to reach 252 in the first quarter of 2014, which was at 195 in the previous year.

One of the major reasons for this town becoming popular among entrepreneurs has been the opening of Luton Airport in 1938, which then became a bridge connecting Luton with the rest of the UK, Europe and key international destinations, such as North Africa and the Middle East. Moreover, the M1 provides a direct link to the rest of Britain's road network.

Luton is now competing both within the nation and on the international stage as a lucrative destination to invest in. Companies are increasingly looking for meeting rooms and conference venues in Luton, near M1, in order to gain easy access from Luton Airport for their potential investors and clients from all over the world. Luton has seen major industrial developments in a short period of time.

THE INDUSTRIES...

Throughout its development, Luton has seen the rise and fall of many industries such as Brickmaking, Millinery/ Hat making, Automobile production and its airport. Luton has a long history of automotive manufacturing and has been utilised by leading firms as a base for production including Commer, Marcos Engineering and General Motors.

History of hat making started as early as the 1800's and saw Luton developing from a small market town to a large industrial centre.

By the 1930's the town was producing an estimated 70 million hats a year! The trade became very popular as did the fashion of wearing hats...hence the term mad as a hatter... which finds itself linked with the Luton football club. The industry became a major contributor towards the economy, putting Luton on the map. To this day many houses supporting the hat industry can be seen as occupying archways which were used for vehicles aiding in delivery and collection for the hat industry.

THE HAT FACTORY

The year of 1870 witnessed a rapid booming hat industry in the region of Luton, aided by cheap imports of plait from the Far East and by the invention of a sewing machine for plait, the hat industry was most prosperous.

By 1900 the hat industry was at its peak and dominated the life of the town. Enormous railway warehouses stored boxes of hats prior to despatch to London. Between the railway and George Street was a virtually unbroken belt of hat factories and warehouses, characteristic of this area rather than the domestic workshops of more outlying parts of town. Careful scrutiny of the area to this date seems to reveal the hat legacy from the towns' involvement with either hat-making or ancillary trades such as cardboard boxes, or selling ribbons, thread or sewing machines.

After the First World War fashions changed and the industry went into a decline. By the 1930s engineering had replaced hats as the chief employer in town. But the hat industry has always been at the heart of the town's history. By 1939 the production of women's felt hats increased and so formed three-quarters of the Luton trade. Manufacturers who had previously sent hats away for trimming now began trimming themselves - Luton's so-called 'millinery' trade. But there was little development constructed for the industry after 1930 and the Second World War led to a further contraction.

During the later 20th century many hatting buildings were demolished, especially for the 1970s Arndale Centre, now the Mall Luton, which removed the central concentration of the industry. Other buildings have been converted to flats, offices or small businesses: their facades remain but little of the original internal character. That the area still contains former hat factories giving the town its character and historical significance.



THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Vauxhall has been the second-largest selling car brand in the UK for more than two decades. The company was founded by Alexander Wilson in 1857 as a pump and marine engine manufacturer. It was bought in 1863 by Andrew Betts Brown, who began producing travelling cranes; he named the company Vauxhall Iron Works. Vauxhall Motors first came to Luton in 1905. The Vauxhall Iron Works had been operating in Vauxhall South London and began making cars in 1903. It was on the 29th March 1903, that the first Luton built car was produced.

During the Second World War many damaged tanks were bought back to the Vauxhall site in Luton for repair and Churchill tank was also produced here. Between 1941 and 1945 7,368 Churchill Tank were manufactured by Vauxhall in Luton.

Thousands of Bedford lorries were turned out at Kimpton Road including the magnificent QL which was the company's first four-wheel drive vehicle.

The workforce from the Hat factory started transferring to the Vauxhall industry. The industry was booming and so became the highlight of the region.

After almost a 100 years of trading, General Motors had to close down the plant in Luton due to economic pressure. As many as 2500 jobs were lost.

Car production in Luton site:

- The 1975 Cavalier was manufactured in Luton.
- Vectra model was produced in Luton.
- Frontera and Renault van – Luton made



Timeline of Vauxhall

Alexander Wilson sets up Vauxhall Iron works in London to produce marine engines.

1857

1863

Company was bought by Andrew Betts Brown, who began producing travelling cranes; he named the company Vauxhall Iron Works.

First Vauxhall car launched.

1903

1905



Vauxhall Iron Works moves its car factory from London to Luton just two years after the launch of

The famous bonnet flutes are introduced for Vauxhall cars. They would remain a Vauxhall feature for over 50 years.

1906

the company's first car. A new 7/9hp car is introduced, also the first four-cylinder model an 18hp car.

20hp model introduced.

1908

1907

Vauxhall Motors Limited is formed.



1909

R-type 16hp model announced.

The 20hp car achieves speed and distance records at Brooklands racetrack. A Luton-built Vauxhall becomes the first 20hp car to exceed 100mph.

1910

1914-18

Production of nearly 2,000 D-type Vauxhalls as army staff cars for the war. There are 23 employees killed in the fighting.

The first Bedford truck, bus and van produced as Vauxhall enters the commercial market.



1931

1925

Vauxhall Motors becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of General Motors, then the world's largest industrial firm.

Launch of the H model, the first integrally built British car.

1937

1939-45

Car production comes to a virtual standstill (100 cars in six years - all for military use) as Vauxhall contributes to the war effort, designing and building parts for the Churchill tank, armour piercing shells and aircraft jet engines. In 1940, the plant is bombed by the Luftwaffe, killing 39 employees.

1946

1947

1948

1953

1958

Station Road,
Luton,
Bedfordshire. LG 688

Dear Sir,

You were inquiring about employment at the
Luton and Dunstable factories. Here they are:
(February 1974)

Luton	77,400
Dunstable	5,000

Yours faithfully,

Information Officer

1959

1965

1967

A silver Rover P5B sedan is parked on a paved surface in front of a traditional half-timbered house. The house features a dark tiled roof with a chimney and a white picket fence is visible on the left. The car is a four-door model with a sleek, elongated body.

1974

1977

1978

1979

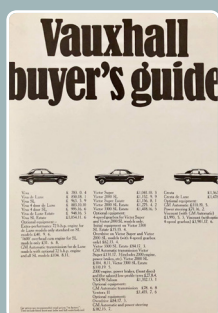
1995

1989

2002

2000

Page 10 of 10

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COMMER VEHICLES

Commer was a British manufacturer of commercial vehicles, founded in 1905 and ended production in 1979.

In order to go into mass production in September 1905 a five-acre site was bought at Biscot Road, what was at that time outskirts of Luton. Construction of the new workshop was completed in 1906 and in 1907 begun the production of mainly car-derived vans, light vans, medium to heavy commercial trucks, military vehicles, fire engines and buses. The company also designed and built some of its own diesel engines for its heavy commercial vehicles. In 1909 the first covered top double-deck buses were built at the Biscot Road site.

Commer was one of the first manufacturers of commercial vehicles in the United Kingdom, its speciality being the Commer Car.

In 1920, it was described as the first Company to specialise in the manufacturing of internal combustion industrial commercial vehicles.



In 1924 Vehicle Excise Duty (Road Tax) was 5 shillings, in 1936 it was £7 and 10 Shillings, in 1953 it increased to £12 and 10 Shilling

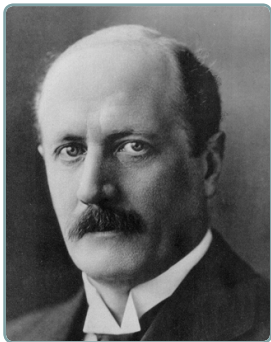


GEORGE KENT IN LUTON



Image courtesy of The CultureTrust Luton/The Luton News

The George Kent factory in Biscot Road was opened in June 1908, The Company specialized in the production of meters and fuse as a result of their increasing demand further sites were utilised for work such as Luton's Chaul end area. By 1914 the company had employed 450 male workers. The company gained recognition during World War 1 where Kent agreed to support the government in its production of armaments. By 1918 the company had further employed an estimated 8000 mostly female employees on two sites and were producing 140,000 shell fuses per week.



Sven Wingqvist around 1926

SKF (Skefo Ball Bearing Company Ltd)

SKF was founded in the year 1907 in the city of Gothenburg, Sweden by a man called Sven Wingqvist.

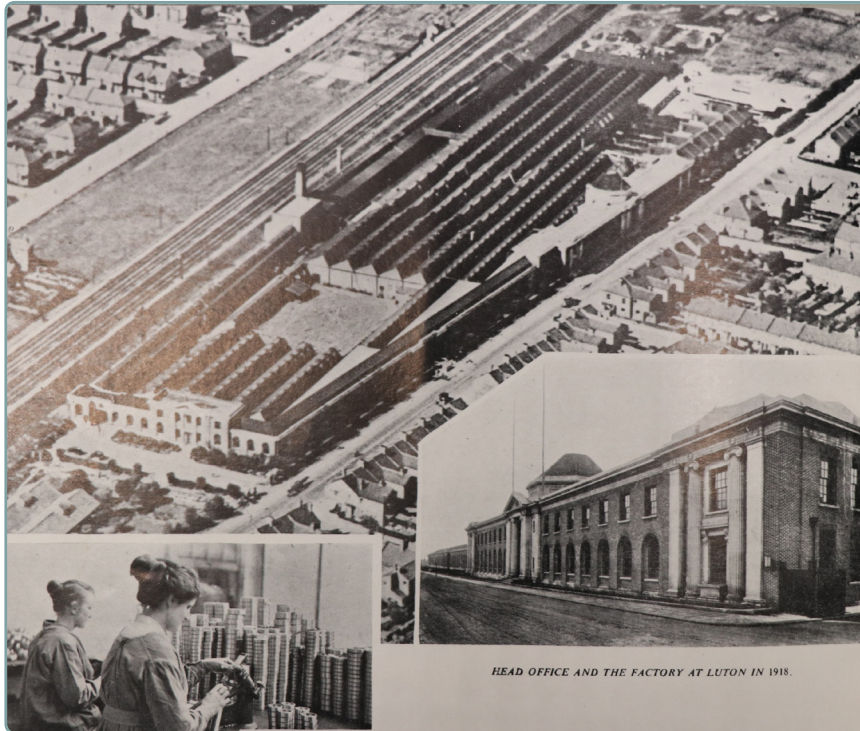
Sven Wingqvist was an engineer and inventor and so one of the world's leading ball bearing and roller bearing makers. A ball bearing is a type of rolling-element bearing that uses balls to maintain the separation between the bearing races. The purpose of a ball bearing is to reduce rotational friction and support radial and axial loads. Given the year that the discovery was made and imminent threat of war it was apparent that this trade would prosper.

The first offices were opened by Sven on 7th February 1910 under the name of Skefo Ball bearing Company Ltd. These were situated on the Lower Regent street area in London.



Due to its forecasted success the company purchased 3 acres of land in Legrave Road, Luton and so on the 10th November what became known as SKF commenced its trade from a plant outside of Sweden. This was to become known as SKF's first purpose-built production plant outside Sweden.

The factory based in Luton was able to employ 150 workers who supported the growth of the trade within the local area. Production of bearing designs commenced on the 17th June 1911. The company averaged a reported 180 bearings per day. This was a huge amount and so the company flourished within the locality. The 1st world war clearly had an impact on the trade as by the end of it the company recorded employees amounting to 775 and a staggering increase in the number of bearings produced, these were in the range of 24,000 a month!



The success and impact meant that the company could move both its commercial and administrative offices to Luton (1912).

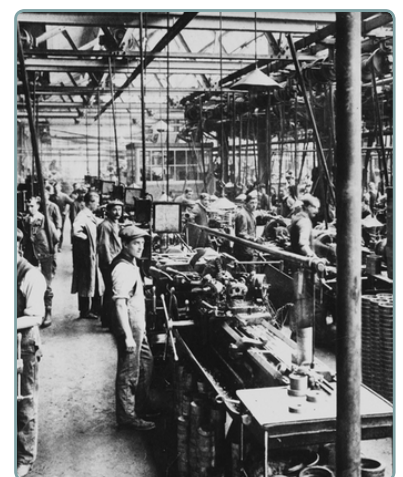
By the year 1924 the company had successfully recruited and employed 1000 people.

In 1936, Skefko became a British public Company by offering 50% of its shares on the London Stock Exchange. Hence the company at this stage was employing over 2000 people in Luton.

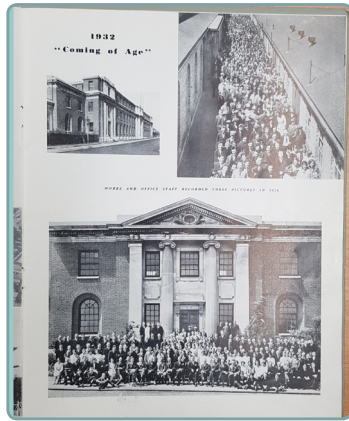
The rapid and consistent success of the company meant that SKF was now in a position once again to expand, so a further 44 acres of land was purchased in the Sundon Park area, situated at close proximity to the Luton town Centre.

Just before the outbreak of the Second World War the company managed to complete its extensions to the Leagrave road factory as a precautionary safety measure in the uneventful case of an air attack. Strategies involved building an elaborately camouflaged fake road over the main entrance and factory building so as to give the illusion of a suburban avenue when viewed from above.

War time was evidently profitable for this trade as the increased demand for ball bearings meant that the company was able to increase its workforce to meet the demands. By the year 1941 the organisation had increased its workforce significantly to a reported 3000.



By 1948 the company had developed its production strategies and so employees were transferred to the Sundon Park branch to enable the new roller factory and the large bearings and heat treatment departments to materialize.



In the year 1973 Skefko formally changed its name to SKF (U.K) Ltd, and so in 1977 the company transferred all of its manufacturing facilities to Sundon Park road.

In 1999 SKF (U.K.) became the sponsors of Luton Town Football Club. The first sponsors of this professional association football club were however a company called Tricentrol local motors who made the sponsorship in the year 1991.



AIRCRAFT TECHNOLOGY IN LUTON BY HEWLETT & BLONDEAU

Hewlett & Blondeau was a manufacturer of aeroplanes and other equipment. The company was based in the Leagrave area of Luton. More than 800 aeroplanes were manufactured by the company and 700 people employed. Hewlett, Blondeau were huge contributors towards the economy of the area and seemed to follow suit when war broke out in 1914, the company stepped up and agreed to meet government orders for aircraft. In 1914 Hewlett & Blondeau built an aircraft manufacturing plant in Leagrave which in 1926 was to become Electrolux further keeping the mechanical industry alive.



Image courtesy of The CultureTrust
Luton/The Luton News

ELECTROLUX COMES TO TOWN

Stockholm-based Electrolux opened in Luton after acquiring the Omnia factory on the 18th May 1927. The company successfully employed multitude of people from Luton for the manufacturing of household products. The success of the company meant that Electrolux had been granted planning permission to expand its Oakley Road-Linden Road site. In September 1998 the factory closed down all production leaving Luton at a loss of 4000 jobs. Shortage of houses nationally meant that the plot was reserved for housing development by Saxon Gate development.



POLITICAL FACTS

Luton saw its fair share of bad housing conditions, particularly during the year 1930's-1970's. Although the conditions could not be compared to the likes of larger cities such as London, Birmingham etc the older parts of Luton for example Adelaide Street, Rothesay Road and Stuart Street were deemed to suffer from poor housing conditions. Having said that, in 1936 a Housing Survey by the Public Health Department revealed that of 25,655 dwellings in Luton with a population of 85,600, only 100 houses were recorded as overcrowded. However, this was all understandable given that the town was just recovering from its economic hit after first and later Second World War. However, unlike other towns Luton was very quick to entertain and take on new opportunities improving the quality of life of Luton residents.

POLITICS IN THE TOWN

In Luton, there are two constituencies, Luton North and Luton South. The current two members of parliament (MP) are Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North – Labour) since 1997 and Gavin Shuker (Luton South – Labour) since 2010. From 1979 the MPs from Luton were Conservative, however in the 1997 General Election, both constituencies were won by the Labour party candidates, these were successfully held at the 2001, 2005 and 2010 general elections.

The town of Luton had until 1885 been part of the Bedfordshire constituency which was created in 1290. Upon the abolition of this seat the constituency of Luton was created which remained the only seat in the town until 1974. In 1974 the single Luton seat was divided into two, Luton West and Luton East. These two seats were fairly short lived and in 1983 the current Luton North and Luton South seats were created.

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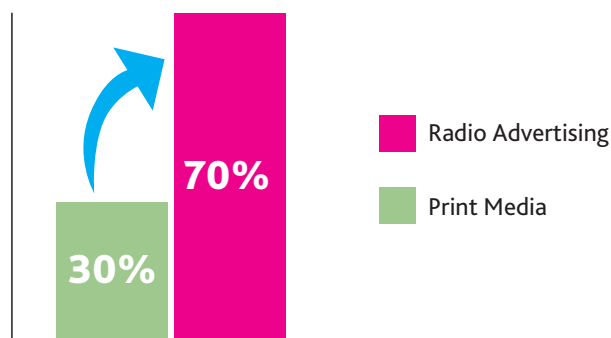
Great music, some of the best **local presenters** playing the biggest and best latest music, **local news**, traffic and travel which helps the station to reach and enjoy record audience

figure and celebrate everything about Luton and its diverse population.

Advertising on Diverse FM means you can reach hundreds of thousands of listeners and more importantly **local listeners** from diverse backgrounds.

Unlocking your missing customers

Advertising on radio is **70%** more effective than newspapers. Your business or brand can be heard on Diverse FM up to 15 times a day, seven days a week at a fraction of the cost of advertising in the papers.



Twitter

4,000+
local followers

Facebook

3,500+
likes

Diverse FM Website

10,000+
monthly hits

Sponsorship and Promotions:

Another great way to promote your business/brand and interact with our listeners is through our sponsorship packages, via sponsoring a programme or taking an exclusive offer of promoting via Diverse FM website and social media campaigns.

For more information regarding advertising on Diverse FM or sponsoring a programme please contact us on:

Email: sales@diversefm.com
Tel: 0786 786 1947 or 01582 725 500
www.diversefm.com