

Kendall & Gent

The Museum holds trade literature published by Kendall & Gent, photograph albums of their machines and personal papers of a former director of Kendall & Gent, including minutes of the board of directors' meetings during the takeover of the company in 1959.

Kendall & Gent was formed in 1847 by a draftsman, George Kendall, and a fitter, William Gent. They began by manufacturing gas burners and had premises near London Road Station. By the 1850s the company were also making engineering tools such as drills, cutters and lathes. As production expanded, the company needed larger premises and moved to the Victoria Works, Springfield Lane, Salford. It made a huge variety of machine tools and acquired an international reputation. Foremost in demand were the milling machines, patent radial drilling machines and turret lathes. In 1897 Kendall and Gent moved to a new site in Gorton, also called Victoria Works. It was one of the first factories to be powered and lit by electricity.

During the First World War, Kendall & Gent produced shells and machine tools for armament factories. In 1917, the company was one of the founder members of the Associated British Machine Tool Makers. After the war, it concentrated on manufacturing screwing machines, broaching machines, portable radial drilling machines, face cutter grinding machines and a range of milling machines. Kendall & Gent made some of the largest plano-milling machines in Britain.



Staff of Kendall & Gent seated on a plano-milling machine, which weighed over 200 tonnes, c.1920.

In 1920, Kendall & Gent became a public liability company with Mr F. C. Mosley as managing director. In 1936 he negotiated the purchase of George Garner & Sons Ltd, which had a foundry a mile from the Victoria Works. This meant that Kendall & Gent could control the whole process of manufacture, rather than having to buy in castings. They regularly made castings up to 30 tonnes in weight.

By the 1950s, the company employed just over 400 members of staff. However, in the summer of 1959 Lord Trefgarne, chairman of W. E. Sykes, launched a successful takeover bid. Sykes was based in Staines, Middlesex, but agreed to keep the local management and personnel of Kendall & Gent. Mosley was still chairman and managing director at the age of 79 but retired when the company was taken over. The company was dissolved in 1985.

For more information:

Read Steeds, W. *A history of machine tools*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Rolt, L. T. C. *Tools for the job: a history of machine tools to 1950*. London: B. T. Batsford, 1965.

Consult The Kendall & Gent records in the Museum's Study Area.