Unveiling the secret story of the world’s first ever



'Munitionettes' making shell casings during World War I The Long Shop Museum

The home of the world’s first ever purpose-built assembly line – predating American Henry Ford’s version by half a century – is set to be transformed with £2million from HLF.

Despite being the grand old age of 163 years, The Long Shop in Leiston, East Anglia, has survived in near original condition. Already a museum, the Victorian factory buildings will undergo extensive repairs so they can showcase the museum’s extensive collections to a much larger audience.

Celebrating Suffolk's industrial heritage

Run by the Garrett family from 1778 to 1932, Leiston Works produced agricultural machinery and early portable steam engines which powered the agricultural and industrial revolution in rural Suffolk. The Long Shop Museum’s name reflects the length of its main building where a boiler on wheels would start at one end and have engine parts added as it moved from workstation to workstation.

Pioneering site

After the age of steam, the company and its successors continued to make pioneering electric-powered vehicles, Britain’s first diesel lorry and a range of other machines as well as hundreds of thousands of shell casings during both World Wars. The site closed in 1980 when it was rescued from demolition and established as a museum.

Bringing out fresh stories

New displays will feature the Museum’s collections – from sickles to steam engines - and draw on the Garrett Archive at Suffolk Record Office to explore the history of industry and science, tell the stories of the workers and reveal more about the lives of the Garrett family, including Elizabeth Garrett who became the first woman in Britain to qualify as a doctor.



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'Munitionettes' making shell casings at the Long Shop during the First World War Long Shop Museum

New lease of life for world’s first assembly line