

100
YEARS

A Century in Calendars

The history of Rose of Colchester Ltd



The Roses of Colchester

George Rose, the founder of the Company, was born in 1858 at Haddenham in Buckinghamshire, one of eleven children. The family history of the Roses in Haddenham was traced back to 1546 by Walter Rose, George's brother. Walter, a village carpenter, was also a well-known writer, having had 3 books on village life published between 1931 and 1942.



George Rose

Not much is known about George's early life, but we do know that his business career was surrounded with a good deal of romance; he commenced his career as a restaurant proprietor in Nottingham but eventually had to relinquish this due to ill health and adversity. He moved to Colchester in the 1890's with his wife Elizabeth to run the Peveril Hotel on North Hill, which is still in business today. George had no capital and supplemented his income by working as a traveller selling calendars on commission from Formans of Nottingham, at that time the leading producers of advertising calendars in Britain. He based himself at the rear of the premises known as Frost's Yard.

Before long George started publishing his own calendars and had them printed by the local Colchester printer, Cullingfords. In 1908 he started the firm Rose & Co. and commenced printing his own range of calendars. The business grew quickly and in 1910 the opportunity to move into bigger premises came when a local boot and shoe manufacturer, A. C. George, moved its operations to Northampton following poor trading conditions. This new business in Kendall Road was registered as E. Rose & Co., in the name of George's wife. This building operated on three levels, printing in the basement, composing and collating on the ground floor, bindery and despatch on the first floor, and was home to the company for the next 77 years.



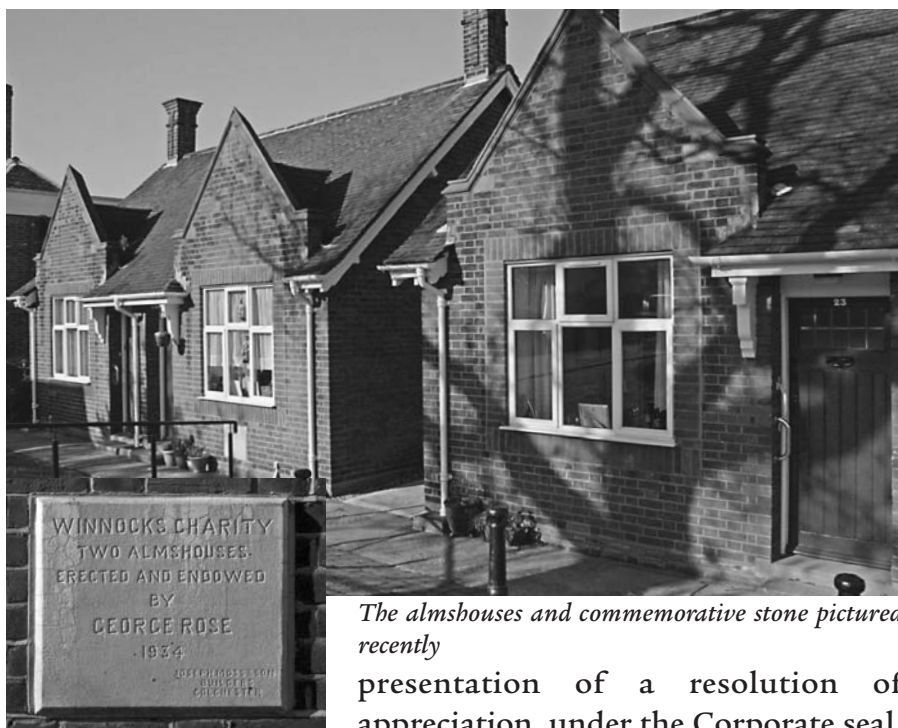
The original factory in Kendall Road

At that time the illustrations were monochrome and adverts were composed using Founders Type from a case, an illustration of this type of calendar is shown right.

Besides developing the calendar business, George Rose also became well known in the community as a philanthropist. During his lifetime George endowed a ward at the Essex County Hospital in Colchester, known as the George Rose Ward, and was the main benefactor for the construction of 21 individual bungalows for two almshouse charities, Winnocks and Kendalls, all built close to the factory site. In addition to this he regularly contributed to the Mayor's Fund which provided assistance for the families of distressed unemployed. In 1934 these donations were the subject of the



An early example of a 1913 calendar



The almshouses and commemorative stone pictured recently

presentation of a resolution of appreciation, under the Corporate seal, from the Colchester Town Council. The almshouses are mostly still in use and have recently undergone major refurbishment. By the time of his death in 1943, aged 85, George's benefactions in Colchester amounted to £50,000.

In 1918, 19 year old Ivor Rose, Walter's son, came to Colchester to work for his uncle, acting as a salesman for the first half of the year and then helping with production during the busy second half. Ivor married Gladys in 1928 in Devizes, Wiltshire, Gladys' home town. The couple lived in Colchester for 15 years before moving to the coast at Clacton where they both became heavily involved in local organizations and societies. Ivor took over the business after George's death in 1943 at a very difficult time for the company; it was during the Second World War and output was severely restricted due to paper shortage as well as losing some staff to the services. Ivor himself was a Fire Guard during the war.

Fortunately this lobbying was successful and the Purchase Tax on calendars was revised to 6 shillings in the pound. Of course this tax could not be reclaimed by businesses as is the case today with Value Added Tax.

Continued progress in business saw the need for the company to become Limited so in 1956 Ivor and Richard, his eldest son, became the first directors of Rose of Colchester Ltd. Before joining the firm, Richard had studied at Wadham



Richard Rose tackling some necessary paperwork!

College Oxford, graduating in 1954 with a BA (Honours) in English Language and Literature. He commenced his business career selling for the company, and due to the death of a Scottish agent, he took on this territory, spending 4 weeks away at a time and then returned to call on more local customers in Essex and South London. He opened many accounts, some of which are still customers today and like his predecessors worked inside at the busy end of the year.

At the same time Christopher, the younger son, was doing National Service after which he studied Printing Management at the London College of Printing, returning to join the business in 1959 having received his diploma with credit.



Chris Rose planning the next days work schedules

With both the brothers now working in the business, Ivor could afford to devote less time to work and more to enjoying longer holidays and leisure activities. However, he continued to take a keen interest in the company, both as a director and Chairman, up to the time of his death in 1981, aged 82. After Ivor's death the two brothers split the responsibilities, with Richard (or Dick as he is more usually known) taking on the financial administration and sales, while Chris made use of his training and took on production, in particular improving quality. Chris still retained an interest in sales however, regularly calling on customers locally and in Kent, Sussex and London.

1962 saw disaster strike the company. Just after noon on Saturday, 24th February, the only person on the premises, Miss Edna Winterflood, saw smoke rising from the works. She immediately called the fire brigade and then spent some time removing records from the building to protect them. The fire, which took an hour and forty minutes to bring under control, caused considerable damage and close neighbours had to be evacuated by police as a precaution. After damping down it was obvious that serious damage had been done to the building and contents and that which was left intact was considerably damaged by either smoke or water. Many of the colour blocks used for the pictures were lost, a serious setback for the company. For most of the rest of the year production was moved to rented premises whilst some of the factory was rebuilt.



Firefighters dealing with the serious blaze at the Rose factory in Kendall Road.

Up to this time typesetting had been from single type in a case, hand-set in a composing stick which, after using, was 'dissed' back into the case for use again; however, in 1964 hot metal slug setting was purchased which improved the quality of printing as the type was from new each time. New letterpress printing machines were purchased from the Heidelberg company, but colour was still produced from a battery of single colour machines. The company also ventured into sheet fed rotary letterpress, making its own flexible plates from stereos. Greater speeds of production were achieved and instead of 3000 sheets per hour previously attained on the flat bed machine, now 6000 sheets per hour could be produced. The 60's saw investment in other areas of the business as well, one of which was the Thomas Gathermatic Collator



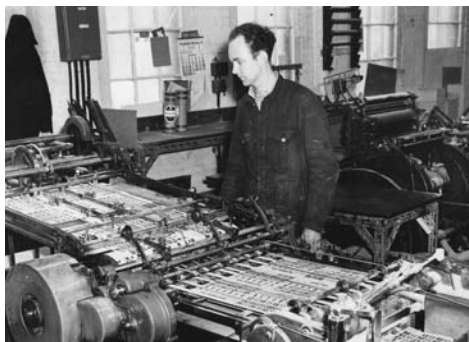
Making flexible plates from stereos

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A letterpress platen (shown above) and a flatbed (shown right) in operation



so in 1971 the company's first offset litho machine was purchased, a single colour Heidelberg Kord. The work on this machine soon progressed from two colour work to four colours and the use of offset litho greatly improved the quality of the illustrations, which in turn enabled the company to compete more favourably for better quality work and move forward in this market. This was later supplemented by the addition of a two-colour Solna press.



Keith Osborne (now Production Manager) running the Solna press

Typesetting also moved into a new age with the introduction of the Scantext Phototypesetting system, purchased in 1986 at a cost of £50,000 and overseen by David Stannard. The firm's competitive pricing enabled it to attract the better quality market and a starting base of 40 sales agents had, by the mid-70's, grown to 75.

With all this ongoing investment and the increase in the number of calendars being produced, it became apparent that the premises in Kendall Road, situated in the heart of terraced

housing, were no longer suitable. Paper was now being delivered on articulated lorries, and with cars parked both sides of the road it often became impossible to get the lorries close to the warehouse for unloading. The decision was made to purchase an acre of land from Colchester Borough Council on the new Severalls Industrial Estate, which was being developed on the outskirts of town, close to the main A12. Contracts were drawn up with local builders to construct a purpose built factory of 15,000 square feet. The new building would have 12,500 square feet of manufacturing space and 2,500 square feet of offices. The move was completed in 1987; the works manager was then Graham Langton who assisted with the transition to the new premises. With so much more space to work in, production efficiency and staff morale was vastly improved and Chris achieved his lifetime's ambition to design a new factory.



Two views of the purpose built factory showing the original 15,000 sq ft plus an additional 10,000 sq ft added later

At this time the turnover of the company was only around £900,000, but after one year's trading at the new site, a huge milestone was reached when the turnover rose to a million pounds. Due to demand for more colour pictorial designs and longer production runs more capital investment became necessary. So in 1989 the first 4-colour litho printing press was installed, greatly increasing printing capacity. At the same time investment was made in the bindery area with the purchase of a semi automatic wiro binding machine, punching machines and a new 14-station collator. Typesetting technology had also advanced beyond the Scantext system and the company bought its first AppleMac computers for the typesetting of both the calendars and adverts.

1989 saw the retirement of the then longest serving member of staff, Edna Winterflood, who joined the company at the age of 14 and gave 48 years loyal service, but was very disappointed at not being able to complete 50 years.



Edna Winterflood being presented with flowers when she retired after 48 years of service

Towards the end of the 80's and into the 90's the company saw continued growth, and this gave Dick and Chris cause for concern

as to how they could manage this growth on their own. Both Dick and Chris had children, but at this time none of them were involved in the company. Chris' son Michael, however, had followed in his father's footsteps and trained at the London College of Printing. He had followed this up by working for three major printers in the City of London. It had always been Chris' hope that his son would follow him in to the family business, and so it was in 1991 that Michael became the fourth generation of the Rose family to join the company. Initially Michael took responsibility for sales and marketing but his experience in the trade of estimation and production control brought a new dimension of expertise to the company.



Michael Rose

A further appointment was made in 1994 when Andrew Clement was invited to join the company as Financial Director. Andrew gradually took over all of Dick's responsibilities except selling, with a view to Dick retiring in 1999. Once again Andrew brought new thinking to the company as his background was financial rather than production based, having worked for major accountancy practices in London and Colchester before moving on to a packaging company.

Mention should be made here of Dick's philanthropic emulation of his great uncle, George Rose. Dick's leisure interest was long distance running for charity. Between 1982 and 2001 he ran 35 marathons and raised around £30,000 for many different causes. Later he took up long distance walking and completed the Thames Walk and the Coast to Coast Walk for charity.

By 1995 production had increased so much that the company was already outgrowing the space it had at the new site and it became necessary to rent adjacent premises for storage of finished orders. In 1997 it became possible to build another 10,000 square feet of warehousing and offices onto the existing building. At the same time two more litho machines were added, one two-colour and one four-colour, making a total of seven machines for printing stock and overprinting adverts.

The approach of the millennium saw much improved growth in sales, and it was a constant task to keep bringing new ideas and designs to the market. Each year saw the number of designs

increasing, and to keep up with production a new Roland 5-colour press was purchased. This machine, capable of running at 15,000



Two views of the Roland B2 5-colour press

sheets per hour and carrying all the latest technology, is now run on a double-day shift to cope with the large variety of runs required to service the market.

In 2002 the company made the acquisition of Reeve Calendars, based in Tenby. Established for nearly sixty years, Reeve specialised in printing for the promotional trade and had a separate customer base from Rose. The staff of 15 were kept on and immediate investment was made in the company. To cope with all this extra work and to cover the fact that Dick now took a non-executive

role, Chris took over as chairman, Michael stepped up to Managing Director and the management team was strengthened with the appointment of Ralph White-Robinson as Works Manager, Gerry Brooke-Bennett as Sales and Business Development Manager and Simon Williams as Publishing Manager, each person bringing a different level of expertise to the company. The introduction of



The Fuji Rampage Computer to Plate (CTP) delivery

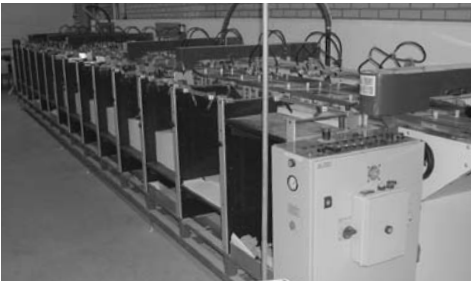
computer-to-plate technology saw, for the first time, the complete production of the calendars under one roof, as outside repro companies were no longer required for the production of film. At this time Terry Grantham took over responsibility for all pre-press operations.

2005 saw another opportunity for expansion with the demise of calendar company, Martin Shelton. The customer base was successfully purchased from the Receiver and several of the sales staff also joined the company.



The Heidelberg B3 4-colour Speedmaster

Continued investment at both sites saw new presses, collators and wiro binding lines added to the production as well as constantly upgrading the typesetting and design equipment and software.



The recently acquired high speed collator (left) and Rilecart wiro binding machine (right)

In 2007 Ralph White-Robinson joined Andrew Clement as the second non-family member of the Board of Directors.



Board members pictured left to right: Andrew Clement, Michael Rose, Chris Rose and Ralph White-Robinson

As we enter our 100th year in 2008, Rose of Colchester continues to flourish. We now employ over 60 staff across two sites and have become the second largest company in the UK specialising in advertising calendars, with a turnover of five million pounds. We have a sales force of over 90 agents who cover the whole of England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Eire and the Channel Islands, selling a range of over 100 designs. In recognition of our service to our agents and customers, Rose of Colchester has been voted ‘Calendar Supplier of the Year’ for seven consecutive years by INCA, the agents’ professional body. We have also once again picked up awards at the industry-wide NBCA awards ceremony, which recognises the best in design, style and quality of reproduction and is itself celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2008.

We would like to thank all our agents and staff for their enterprise and loyalty over the years, they have all helped to make us the successful company we are today.

Each year that passes brings new challenges to the company but, as we have done for the past 100 years, we will face these challenges and continue to progress and grow, looking forward to the future with confidence and pride.



Rose staff pictured April 2008



Sadly, as this booklet goes to press, we have to report the untimely death of Dick Rose who passed away on March 3rd aged 75.

After 52 years of association with the company one of the last tasks performed by Dick was the compilation of this book with his brother Chris.