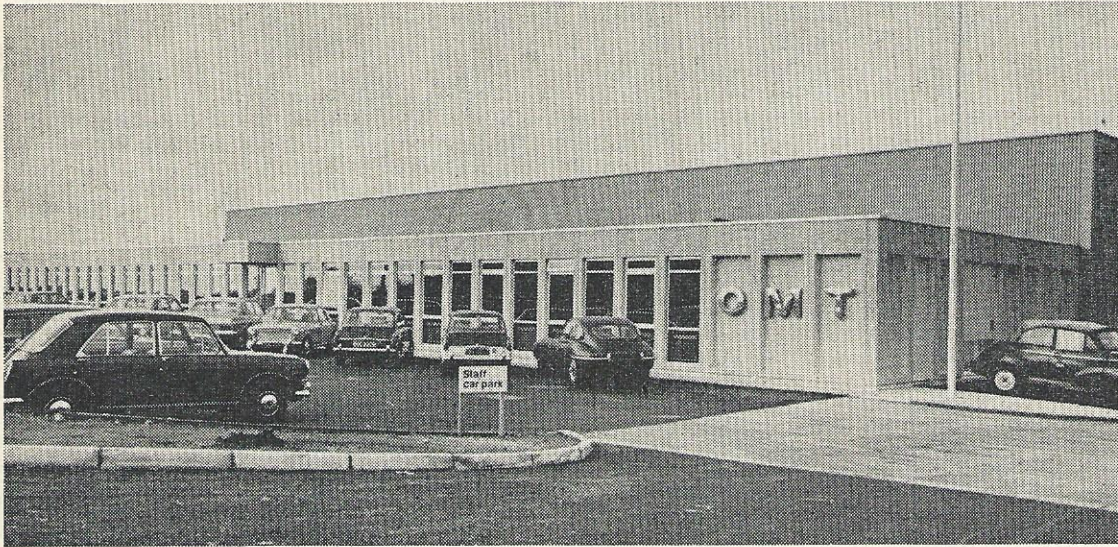


PACEMAKERS

Optical Measuring Tools



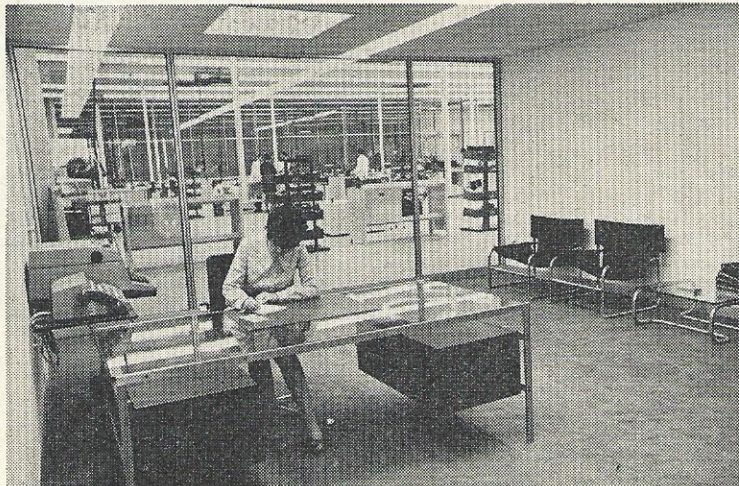
Mr. J. H. Rowe, general manager

If you had the choice of moving anywhere in the UK, where would you go? Eight out of 10 of OMT's key employees chose the west country. So the company went to Helston, Cornwall.

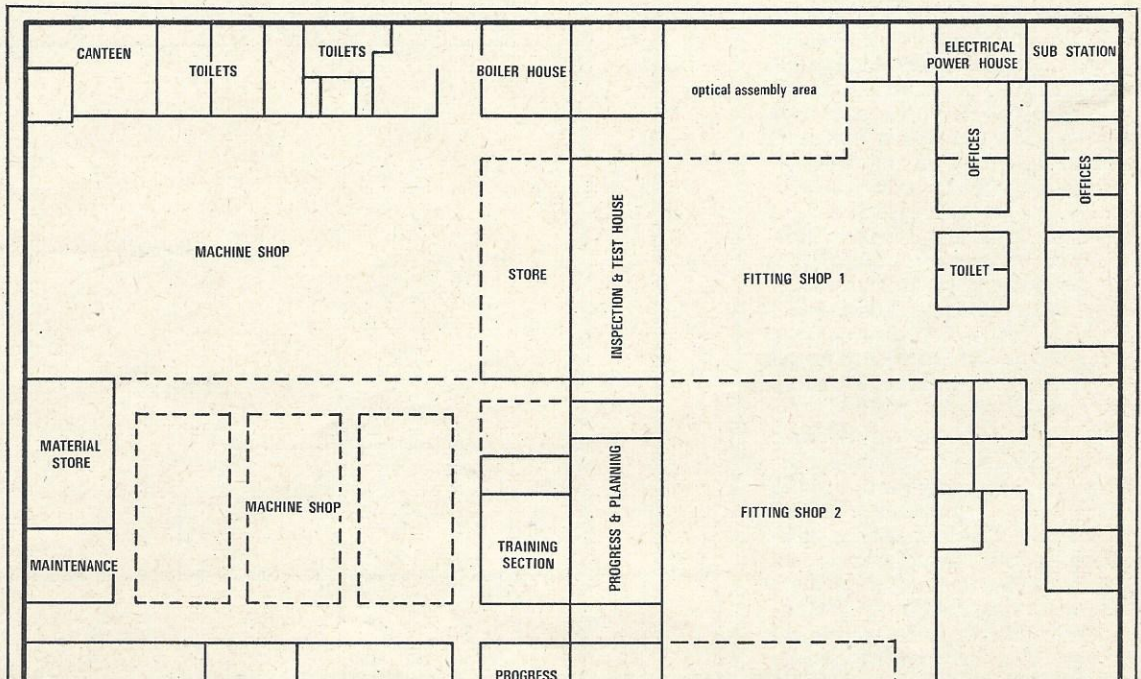
Mr. R. H. Kennedy, managing director, was unhappy with OMT's previous home at Maidenhead; there was a severe shortage of skilled labour, and it was difficult to get apprentices because young people could earn high wages in the area. And, once trained, ex-apprentices were difficult to hold—they were lured away by supervisory jobs. To make things worse the old premises were not suitable for modernisation, and permission to expand existing cramped quarters could not be gained.

Eventually he decided to move to a development area, and hence the poll of key personnel. Four sites were examined in Cornwall; Helston was chosen. A chance meeting with architect John Crowther while looking at the site, and OMT was on the way to setting up what is probably the smartest of this year's pacemakers.

The architectural merit of the plant is not just due to Kennedy and Crowther wanting it that way. It has also great practical value. Conditions throughout the factory must be suitably pleasant, restful and quiet because the work demands special technical skill and mental application. OMT makes a variety of high precision optical equipment for the engineering industry, including optical comparators, profile projectors, toolmakers' microscopes and optical dividing heads. Other high precision products include equipment for roundness and length measurement, and air gauging.



A glazed screen separates the reception area from the air-conditioned assembly shop.

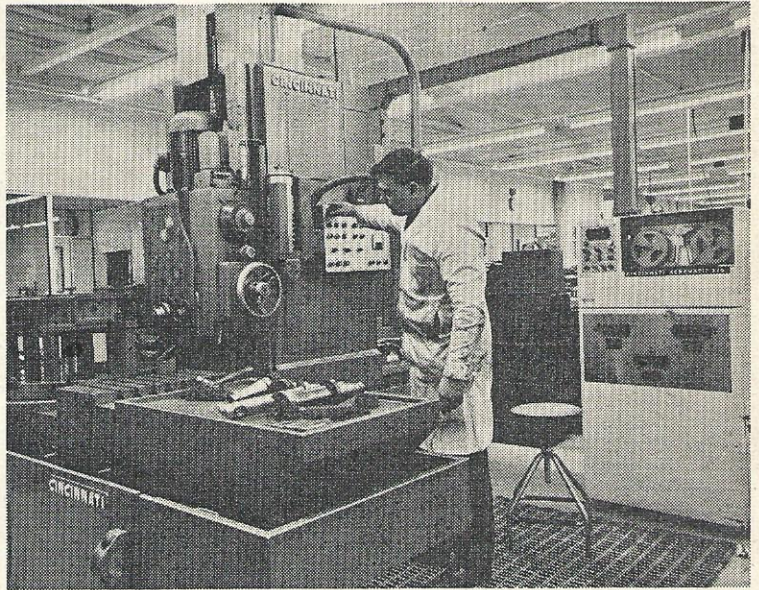


people. One advertisement in a local paper brought 270 replies, 40 per cent of them from people outside Cornwall. "In Maidenhead we were lucky to get one reply from a newspaper ad," he recalls. The upshot was acceleration of the second stage of the Helston development. The first two stages were to replace, in less crowded conditions, the Maidenhead production facility, which is due to close completely in March. The third stage will provide for later expansion. A proposed fourth stage is an optics factory at Helston to supplement one at High Wycombe.

Local recruiting has been successful. A nucleus of about 30 key personnel, chosen to be supervisors and to train local staff, were transferred from Maidenhead from a total of 60 that were eligible to move. "That's just about the right number," Kennedy says. Ten apprentices who were signed up

straight away, are spending their first year in full-time training at Cornwall College, at nearby Cambourne, an establishment over which Kennedy enthuses. Eight employees were also sent on a 26-week course specially designed for OMT at a Government Training Centre. Pleased with the result, Kennedy will probably use it again.

Some 70 per cent of the machinery installed at Helston was new and the remainder came from Maidenhead; none of it more than five years old. The change in location also gave OMT a chance to change to the metric system; practically everything has been converted and even Imperial standard work is done on metric machines. Even with a high proportion of newly recruited labour, Kennedy is counting on a 25 per cent increase in productivity over the Maidenhead operation. Most of that is thanks to improved conditions. □



Seventy per cent of the machinery installed was new.