

# Sussex-based Vent-Axia Celebrates 80 Years of Innovation

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On Friday 9 September 2016, Vent-Axia (<http://www.vent-axia.com/>), the UK's leading ventilation company, celebrated its 80th anniversary at its headquarters in Fleming Way, Crawley, West Sussex. To honour the occasion Henry Smith MP for Crawley and The Worshipful, the Mayor of Crawley, Councillor Raj Sharma, took part in a celebration ceremony where Vent-Axia buried a time capsule in its grounds to mark the company's 80th Anniversary.

Founded by Joe Akester in 1936 when he invented the world's first electrically-operated window fan, Vent-Axia has been a leading British manufacturer ever since. A company steeped in 80 years of British heritage and innovation, Sir Winston Churchill was one of the company's first customers with Vent-Axia supplying ventilation for No 10 Downing Street during World War II.

Vent-Axia's first official premises were in Collinette Road, Putney, London, but in 1961 Vent-Axia relocated to Manor Royal industrial estate in Crawley, West Sussex. At the time the Manor Royal was in its infancy and Vent-Axia had fields opposite its offices. However, as the company grew Vent-Axia moved to the opposite corner of Fleming Way and Newtown Road, to larger premises on Manor Royal, which is where it is situated today. In 2013 Vent-Axia further invested in Crawley with the launch of three new production assembly lines creating 20 new site jobs.

Vent-Axia now employs 253 staff at its headquarters in Fleming Way, Crawley, West Sussex. A multi-million pound company, Vent-Axia's innovations are present in a wide range of landmark projects from buildings in Her Majesty's Royal Estates to the White House. As a result, the Vent-Axia brand has become a household name featuring annually in the UK Superbrands league table and holding the prestigious Royal Warrant.

"We are delighted to be celebrating our 80th Anniversary at Vent-Axia. From the very beginning, with Joe Akester's invention of the world's first electrically-operated window fan, Vent-Axia has been a company built on innovation. We have continued this ethos over the years, developing, expanding and innovating to create the very best in ventilation. This is a tradition that we are very proud to continue today with launch of our latest best in class products, as we look forward to the next 80 years ahead," said Mark Hoskins, Managing Director at Vent-Axia.

Speaking at the event Henry Smith MP said: "I am thrilled that Vent-Axia, an innovative, locally-based, world-class company, is celebrating its 80th Anniversary. I am proud that this iconic and historic business continues to manufacturer in Crawley and wish the company continued success over the next 80 years and beyond."

At the 80th Anniversary Celebration, guests toured the Crawley facilities seeing some of the latest fans manufactured on the production lines. This was followed by words from Vent-Axia's Managing Director, Mark Hoskins, Henry Smith MP and 91-year-old former employee Edna Barnett. Edna worked with Vent-Axia from 1943 to her retirement in 1985 and delighted guests with anecdotes from her early days working with the company's founder Joe Akester at Vent-Axia, as well as the exciting day she opened the envelope that contained a cheque to Vent-Axia from Winston Churchill.

"I told the accountant Bill Marsh that I had a cheque from Winnie. He asked, "Who?" and I said "Winston Churchill". Bill told me not to pay that cheque in and to give it to the company secretary. The cheque was never paid in." A replica of the cheque can be seen in Vent-Axia's reception.

The focal point of the 80th Anniversary celebration was the burial of a metal time capsule, by the Mayor of Crawley, Councillor Raj Sharma and Henry Smith MP, outside the Vent-Axia reception, positioned equidistant between two trees. The time capsule is to be buried for 80 years and contains items that reflect Vent-Axia today, such as its innovative Lo-Carbon Svara, the UK's first App-controlled bathroom fan and photos of the Vent-Axia team; plus objects that reflect the current time we live in, such as the current issues of local papers and a pound coin. The time capsule has been registered with The International Time Capsule Society (<http://crypt.oglethorpe.edu/>) to record its location, contents and the date it is to be opened.

Headquartered in Crawley, West Sussex and with more than 80 years as an influential industry leader, Vent-Axia continues to set the standard in ventilation. Each year the company supplies air management solutions for over half a million installations across the residential, commercial and industrial sectors in the UK and around the World.

For further information on all products and services offered by Vent-Axia telephone 0844 856 0590.

#### Notes for Editors

- Joe Akester, Vent-Axia's founder, invented the World's first electrically-operated window fan the Axia Six in 1936. The fan was donated to the Science Museum in 1976.

- The contents of the time capsule includes: Lo-Carbon Svara (<http://www.vent-axia.com/range/new-lo-carbon-svara.html>) bathroom fan, Vent-Axia branded merchandise, a paper from the day, team photo of Vent-Axia staff, a photo of David Cameron visiting Vent-Axia, a photo of Edna Barnett in the early days of Vent-Axia, USB stick containing current brochures, artwork and feature coverage, a pound coin and a press pack from the day.

#### Media Contact:

Sara MacLean

MacLean Communications

Tel: 07976 782817 Email: [macleacomms@gmail.com](mailto:macleacomms@gmail.com)

Please contact Sara MacLean for further high resolution 80th Anniversary images and for archive images.