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BULPITT FAMILY WELCOME REDEVELOPMENT OF HISTORIC FACTORY

A redundant Birmingham factory, which manufactured kettles and other kitchenwares for more than a century, is to be transformed into new offices.

The Kettleworks, on Northwood Street in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter, has been acquired by property developer Chord Deeley as part of a major regeneration project.

The conversion of the factory, established in the late 19th century by the Bulpitt family, has been welcomed by Iris Bulpitt, who was married to the last member of the Bulpitt line to work at the premises.

Iris, who worked as a comptometer operator at Bulpitt & Sons from 1944-48, married William Bulpitt, great grandson of the founder and personnel director at the firm until its sale to Birmingham Sound Reproducers (BSR) in the early 1970s.

The factory, which has been derelict for more than a year, was originally a brass foundry but the Bulpitts later moved on to making lamps and copper kettles. Its Swan brand of tea sets and kettles included the world's first fully immersed electric element, which meant six pints of water could be boiled in just over nine minutes!

Iris now lives in Edgbaston. Her husband 'Bill' died in 1989 after more than 40 years of marriage.

Following an invitation to visit the disused factory by Chord Deeley, she welcomed proposals to turn it into a modern office development.

She said: "It's sad to see the old place in such disrepair but I'm so pleased it's not being demolished. It's in a prominent location and is one of the Jewellery Quarter landmarks."

The £55 million Kettleworks' conversion is phase one of a £160million scheme called St Georges. The scheme will cover a 2.75 acre/6.8 hectare site bounded by Icknield Street, Camden Street and Carver Street, and will include new office space, homes, hotels, shops, a multi-storey car park and a new public square – only the second in

the Jewellery Quarter. The development is the biggest in the Jewellery Quarter for more than 200 years.

The Swan kitchenware factory dates back to 1900, but is not listed. Chord Deeley has opted to retain the red-bricked landmark, adding a new storey to the existing four and refurbishing a 1950s extension to complement its Victorian parent. An adjacent warehouse will be transformed into the multi-storey car park and will provide 323 spaces for cars, 38 motorcycle slots and 130 bicycle spaces for the Kettleworks.

Peter Hartill, chairman of Deeley Group, said: "As well as being responsible for some world-beating brands, Bulpitt & Sons were a major employer in Birmingham throughout the last century. The St Georges scheme will include workspace for more than 2,500 people, changing manufacturing jobs for those in the service sector. As part of that, we are delighted to be restoring the Kettleworks to its former glory."

Mr Hartill, a former partner at Deloitte, previously acted as auditor to Bulpitt & Sons. He added: "It is great to be involved in this building again and to invite Iris back to her former workplace and the family's business premises."

The Kettleworks will provide 220,000 sq ft/20,438 sq m of BREEAM excellent office space, with single floor plates of up to 50,000 sq ft. The space, just ten minutes walk from the city centre, is on offer from £15 per sq ft/£161 per sq m through joint agents DTZ and GBR.

The ground floor also has consent for retail/leisure use with a large frontage to Ickniel Street (A4040 Middle Ring Road), and fronting the new public square. The latter will be only the second public square in the Jewellery Quarter and, at 60m x 50m, is equivalent to Brindleyplace's Oozell's Square.

Chord Deeley has started stripping out the Kettleworks and completion of phase one is anticipated in autumn 2010. On-site clearance works have also begun. Further development of the site, which will include additional office space, hotels and residential accommodation, will be phased over the next 3-5 years.

Chord Deeley is a joint venture between Jewellery Quarter-based developer Chord and Coventry-based national developer Deeley Properties.

Urban Initiatives, the consultants behind Birmingham's Big City Plan, are responsible for masterplanning St Georges. Scheme architects are Online Architects Limited; Wright Silverwood is marketing the retail and leisure accommodation.

Photo caption 1:

Iris Bulpitt visits the Kettleworks, where she worked as a comptometer operator more than 60 years ago.

Photo caption 2:

L-R: Iris Bulpitt; Tim Hurdiss, Peter Hartill and Chris Rosier of Chord Deeley, at the Kettleworks.

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For further information please contact:

Dawn Roberts, Headline Communications, tel: 0121 643 4600

Tim Hurdiss, Chord Deeley, tel: 02476 718718

Issued by:

Headline Communications

21 Bennetts Hill

Birmingham B2 5QP

Distribution list

Birmingham Mail, Jon Griffin