

# Joe Brown takes a trip to Sheffield to visit Swann-Morton on their 80th birthday

## SWANN MORTON MEDICAL TO MODELS



The name Swann-Morton instantly brings images of scalpels and blades to most modellers' minds, but delve deeper below the surface and you find a company which celebrates its 80th birthday that has been on the 'cutting edge' of blade technology since its inception all those years ago. Even today they are still saving lives worldwide, with their instruments being used by 95% of UK hospitals alone.

The small silver packets that you unwrap before the start of a fresh model-build and click into place on your favourite sized scalpel holder have an amazing history behind them and it all started with just three people; Walter Swann, Alfred Morton and Miss Doris Fairweather. They founded the company in 1932 Called W R Swann & Co. Mr Swann had four founding principles to run the company by.

- 1; The individuals in the industry must come first, before anything else and should always remain first. They are the human beings on which everything is built.
- 2; If the industry cannot pay the rightful reward of labour (while they are producing profit for the owners) then a new policy is required on the part of the management to make it do so.
- 3; If the Management can't do the job, then a new management is required, as well as a new policy.
- 4; Individuals in any industry have a perfect right to demand and see that this objective is reached, because they produce the goods.

Running out of a small workshop behind houses in Sheffield's Woodland Street,

the team began to make the 'Kleen Blade, Sheffield's Sharpest Razor Blade'.

The small firm built their own machinery and devices which were kept as simple as possible, although quality and service was utmost importance and was kept at a high level, which ensured a good business practice. Any profits in the early years simply went back into the growth of the company. The founding principles ensured care for the workers and they benefited from previously unheard of schemes, such as substantial bonuses at Christmas and the introduction and origin of the forty-hour week before Boots of Nottingham brought it to the public eye. The quality of production brought the firm to the attention of Surgical House who approached them to produce a range of replaceable blade for scalpel handles. After a short period of time, the Swann-Morton Scalpel was born.

Since then the range has grown exponentially into a huge range of handle sizes and types along with a huge array of different styles of blades, including the micro surgery blade used in dentistry. It was only a matter of time before the modelling brigade picked up the Swann-Morton line and to keep costs down a non-sterile version was soon released.

Every modeller has a preference of handle and blade type combination and to coincide with the company's 80th birthday the company has re-launched the entire range in a clamshell pack design to make identifying the products clearer.



The Second Factory still in existence today just a short distance from "Penn Works".



Walter Swann, one of the four founding members of whom the company is named after.

The Meeting room at Swan Morton houses this impressive replica of the Swann Morton Factory.



*"I have been using Swann-Morton scalpels for modelling for twenty-five to thirty years, I have never needed anything else. I use three No.3 handles mounting No.10, No.15c and No.11 blades for general work, plus a long No.5 handle with a No.10a blade for more delicate tasks. My handles are very well used but still work perfectly and have served me well over the years. I must have used thousands of blades and I find nothing can match them for sharpness, precision and durability."*

Marcus Nicholls – Editor of TMMI

*"I have been using Swann Morton scalpels for over thirty years now. The good old No.3 handle and 10a blades; I would be lost without them!"*

Alan Bottoms

*"I use Swann-Morton knives on a daily basis for work and for scale modelling. As a set designer and kite maker I use the 3 Series knives with the various lengths of handle. For scale modelling I use a variety of handles and blades, from No.1 to No.5. with curved and straight blades. The surgical accuracy of the blades is essential to creating very precise results. With such a wide complement of blades and mixture of handles, every task is simplified making each project enjoyable and safe. (As they say, a sharp knife is a safe knife). The Swann-Morton range of precision knives enables me to produce results in model making that I could not other wise attain."*

Carl Robertshaw

*"I have been using Swann-Morton scalpels from my college days for everything from dissecting, taxidermy, art and crafts and of course for all my modelling needs; their range is of truly professional quality and I really use nothing else."*

Andy Ieronymides



New style packaging for the Hobby industry.



The Popular Arts, Craft & Modellers set (ACM) is one of the best sellers.



A nod on the packaging to the British manufacturing with the Union Flag proudly displayed.



SMO-R II knife is brand new for 2012 and ideal for cutting jobs that require a bit more power than a scalpel.

**“I use Swann-Morton products and have done so for over thirty years because they are readily available, are the very best cutting blades, are excellent value for money and come in a good range of useful shapes and sizes.”**

**John ‘Tigger’ Wilkes**

**“A good knife is essential for kit building and any knife is only as good as the blade. I’ve used Swann-Morton knives for over twenty years and they are always razor sharp and hold their edge for a long time.”**

**Alan Price**



Sheffield time, the Swann-Morton clock proudly shows the people of Sheffield that it's afternoon tea time!

### SURGICAL STEEL

No matter where you are in the world, if you have ever had an operation, you have probably been operated on with one of these knives. The preferred choice of many of the world's surgeons, the wide and varied range of products is also used extensively by other healthcare professionals such as GPs, nurses and paramedics along with practitioners in the associated fields of dentistry, podiatry and veterinary surgery. The only differing factor is that all surgical equipment has gone through a sterilisation period which ensures the blade is totally free of any contamination when it is put to use. Again Swann-Morton along with UKAE at Wantage pioneered the method of sterilisation using gamma radiation, before this the company used a ‘vapour phase inhibitor paper’ inserted into foil to keep the blades clean, dry and non-rusting, another first in the industry.

We spoke to the Luton and Dunstable Hospital in the UK about their use of Swann-Morton scalpels in everyday surgery.

**“We wish Swann-Morton good wishes for their 80th anniversary. Each year we use over 7,000 disposable Swann-Morton knives at the Luton and Dunstable Hospital and their knives have a reputation as being the standard scalpel knife for surgeons worldwide.”**

**Barry Mayes (Head Of Communications)  
speaking on behalf of the surgical staff**

With the foresight of the founders and the technological advances taken by the company, it's no wonder that Swann-Morton Blades are helping to save lives everyday as well as helping to make the finest models that we bring to you in this magazine. Happy Birthday Swann-Morton from all at Tamiya Model Magazine! ●

