List of Contents

Abstract iv
Acknowledgments v
Author’s Declaration. v
List of Figures vi
List of Abbreviations xx

Introduction 1
   Aims and Objectives 5
   Methodology 10
   Scope and Limitations 22

Chapter 1. Literature Review 25
   1.1 The Furniture Industry in England 25
   1.2 High Wycombe: a Furniture Town 29
   1.3 Working Conditions and Factory Changes 34
      1.3.1 Health & Safety 35
      1.3.2 Mechanisation& Materials 37
   1.4 The Effects of War 44
      1.4.1 Aircraft Production 45
      1.4.2 Utility Furniture 49
      1.4.3 ‘Britain Can Make It’ exhibition and ‘The Festival of Britain’ 58
   1.5 Furniture Design and Education 62
   1.6 The Workforce and the role of the Unions 70
   1.7 The decline of an industry 77
      1.7.1 Overseas competition 80
      1.7.2 High Wycombe Employment 83
      1.7.3 The Industry Today 90
   1.8 Literature Review Findings and Gaps in Knowledge 92

Chapter 2. Archival Evidence and Industrial Case Studies 109
   2.1 VADS and the Design Council Archives 110
   2.2 E-Gomme Ltd (G-Plan) 113
   2.3 Ercol Furniture Ltd 122
   2.4 Parker Knoll 128

Chapter 3. High Wycombe in the Press 161
3.1 Skilled Labour Shortage in High Wycombe 162
3.2 Decline of the Furniture Industry in High Wycombe 167
3.3 Developments in the Furniture Industry 170
3.4 Design & Exhibitions 173
3.5 Threat of imports 176
3.6 Commentary on Key Furniture Companies 177
    3.6.1 E-Gomme (G-Plan) 177
    3.6.2 Ercol 182
    3.6.3 Parker Knoll 184
3.7 High Wycombe Furniture Education 186

Chapter 4. UK Manufacturing and Industry Review 213
4.1 British Industry Decline 214
4.2 A Comparison between Stoke-on-Trent 217
4.3 Furniture Industry Review 225
    4.3.1 Advertising 226
    4.3.2 Employment in the Furniture Industry 227
    4.3.3 Imports and Exports 229
    4.3.4 UK Furniture Industry Figures 235
    4.3.5 Location of the Furniture Industry 238
4.4 UK Employment Figures for the Furniture Industry 240
4.5 High Wycombe Employment Figures for the Furniture Industry 248

Chapter 5. Labour Force and Working Conditions 253
5.1 Divisions of Labour 254
    5.1.1 The First World War 255
    5.1.2 Dilutees 256
    5.1.3 A Woman’s Place 258
5.2 A Dusty Workplace 259
    5.2.1 Nasal Cancer 262
    5.2.2 Reporting of Nasal Cancer in Woodworkers 264
    5.2.3 Disease Incidence and Decline 267
    5.2.4 Relationship between Disease and the Industry 269
    5.2.5 Reasons for Decline 272

Conclusion 286
Limitations of Research & Evaluation of Methods 287
The Main Findings & Contributions to Knowledge 288
Reasons for the decline of the Industry 294
Further Research 295
Furniture Industry in High Wycombe Survives 296
Bibliography 300
Appendices 324