The first 120 years
When John Shilrock Wright first went into business as a jobbing plumber in 1890, he could hardly have imagined the value of the legacy he would leave.

For throughout a glittering history spanning three centuries, J S Wright has grown from a small family firm to one of Britain’s leading building services specialists.

Personal service, quality workmanship and sheer hard work have laid the foundations for the modern dynamic high-tech operation the company is today.

Even in the toughest of times, we have been fortunate to have had an excellent team ethic encompassing everyone in the company to ensure our continuing success.

Ever skilled in the latest technology, we are the company of choice for the design, installation and maintenance of heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, with multi-million-pound projects in the Midlands, London and beyond.

We are also specialists in an increasingly wider range of building sectors, from hotels, homes and leisure centres to offices, student residencies and extra care schemes.

All our employees pride themselves on their work. Many choose to develop their entire careers with us with the help of our ongoing development programmes and the support of senior staff, many of whom have been with us since they were apprentices.

Ever courteous and helpful, we are also a happy company that builds and maintains a real family relationship between ourselves and our customers and suppliers.

This is reflected in our high percentage of repeat business and the countless letters we continue to receive from satisfied customers. Their support is much appreciated as we look forward to being of service for another 120 years.

Marcus Aniol
Managing Director
Our values are at the root of our business and have guided us for 120 years. They distinguish us by how we do our work rather than simply the work we do.

People
We value our people as committed and reliable individuals but we achieve more as a team.

Integrity
We will conduct our business to the highest professional and personal standards of openness, quality and excellence in everything we do.

Health & Safety
We are committed to providing and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment to allow everyone to get home safely.
When John Shilrock Wright set off on his first jobbing plumbing task, he would probably have associated ‘sustainability’ with whether his hand cart was up to carrying his tools and materials.

But the energy saving and carbon reducing technologies in which his company excels today were secondary when it came to tackling Birmingham’s Victorian slums.

The company that J S Wright founded in his own name from an office at 102 Moor Street in 1890 was at the forefront of efforts to provide local people with a better quality of life.

Joseph Chamberlain and his fellow city fathers had set about removing the slum courts and alley ways, opening up the streets to light and air.

Homes, schools and factories had the most basic plumbing, indoor sanitation was far from standard, and heating was by means of an open coal fire.

J S Wright & Co Ltd was involved in the revolution that brought improvements in clean air, pure water and amenable heating to the city population.

The jobbing and contracting plumbing company continued to use the hand cart to carry loads to building sites when it moved to 108 Moor Street in 1893.

It was a cheaper and more convenient alternative to the motor vehicle, even though on occasion it involved a push to sites as far away as Sutton Coldfield, a distance of six miles.
In 1906 J S Wright moved to new premises at 85½ Dale End in Birmingham.

The First World War saw the founder’s sons serving in army units in France. Second Lieutenant J S Wright was in a siege battery as part of the Royal Garrison Artillery until he was killed in action on 7 November 1918.

Younger brother William Edward Shilrock Wright was aged only 15 when he responded to the call to arms. After being gassed at the Battle of Loos, he was discharged for being under age but rejoined for officer training in 1918.

He was made temporary second Lieutenant in 1919 but according to research by the Shilrock family his future was altered by “a letter asking for his prompt release on compassionate grounds as his brother had been killed and his widowed mother needed him home to run the family business in Dale End”.

“Billy” Wright, as he was affectionately known, led the company from the early 1920s through a period of steady expansion, adapting its services to the needs of the time.

Many of the large pubs springing up around the Midlands were completed by J S Wright and major installations included the Midland Hotel in New Street and the Grand Hotel in Colmore Row.

The company also helped to expand a popular new medium of mass entertainment by working on the new large cinemas that were beginning to emerge across the country. These included the famous Odeons and Gaumonts as well as the Paramount, now an Odeon, in New Street, Birmingham.

The Second World War saw J S Wright on active service in the new munitions and armaments factories and armed forces camps, although its premises escaped major damage from the many German bombing raids on Birmingham. The company was also called overseas during the war, one of its biggest installations being a new military hospital in Benghazi.
The 1950s saw the company plumbing the new F W Woolworth stores that were emerging across the country – as well as continuing to work abroad on projects including a palace and the Houses of Parliament in Baghdad.

Billy Wright meanwhile made another major contribution to the community by being elected Mayor of Solihull in 1957.

While a Solihull councillor from 1953 to 1973, he donated the wrought-iron gates that stand proudly at the entrance to the town’s Brueton Park.

The gates also face Solihull School where he was also educated and later provided installation services. A news item from the school yearbook published while he was still Deputy Mayor includes an interesting account of his experience of a summer visit to Northern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe):

“When travelling at midnight through a game reserve, a buck sprang right into the path of his car and both were wrecked. This was 70 miles from Livingstone and the rest of the night they spent in the car, with the roar of lions uncomfortably close. The next morning they were able to contact a crew of natives, with a lorry, who struck a bargain, agreeing to tow the party for the carcase..."
In 1961 J S Wright moved to 4 Bartholomew Row after its Dale End premises gave way to a new dual carriageway taking motorists into a rapidly redeveloping Birmingham.

The new decade gave rise to a new era of shopping precincts and tower blocks with which the company became actively involved.

Innovative retail schemes like the Carrefour and Gateway hypermarkets and shopping centres in Sutton Coldfield and Derby were fitted out by J S Wright, as were the London Docklands housing development and homes for the newly created Milton Keynes Development Corporation.

J S Wright was also leading the field in offering the widest range of mechanical building services for worldwide companies such as Cadbury’s, Lucas Industries and Fort Dunlop.

One of its longest-serving customers was JC Bamford, whose fledgling excavator factory in Staffordshire benefited from steam heating and air conditioning designed and installed by the company.
J S Wright also began working for new hotel chains including Novotel UK and the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Birmingham.

There were also swimming pool projects for King Edward’s School, Birmingham and Bromsgrove School. The last coal-fired boiler installed by J S Wright was at Atherton School in Lancashire, where local mines were able to produce a regular supply of coal.

Entertainment centres were also a source of pride, with key clients including the new Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Birmingham Hippodrome and the Alexandra Theatre.

Major banks such as NatWest, Barclays, the Midland and Nationwide Building Society, and brewers such as Ansells and Mitchell and Butlers were all new areas of activity for the company.

It worked on a giant Gerard Mann car showroom at Aston Cross, motorway stations for the Rank Organisation, as well as schemes at Central TV’s Birmingham studios.

Business carried on uninterrupted even during the devastating Miners’ Strike of 1984, when the company had gas lighting fitted to counter national power cuts.

The company itself changed hands when it was bought by the architectural hardware group Newman Tonks in 1968.

It remained a division of the group until 1987 when three of the managers, Edwin Moore, Peter Marsh and David Osborne bought the business.

Its expertise in heating and ventilation, including underground drainage, low pressure hot water systems and sanitary engineering, made J S Wright pre-eminent as a design and build contractor.

Its contracts began to break the million pound barrier and in celebrating its centenary in 1990 it was able to pride itself on its largest single job – a £1.8 million contract for the Buckingham Hotel.
The J S Wright board stepped down from the day to day running of the business in 2004 after appointing a new team to help drive the expansion programme they had started.

Now led by Marcus Aniol with the support of fellow appointees Andrew Smith, Bob Winters and Martin Roberts, the company saw turnover rise from £9 million to £14 million in the first year.

To help manage operations that were now expanding way beyond its traditional focus within a 50-mile radius of Birmingham, J S Wright moved to its current home at the Atlas Building in Portland Street, Aston.

The restored former Victorian bonded warehouse provides a bright open plan workplace for the company’s directors, design engineers and support staff whose total numbers now exceed 100.

Concentrating on developing relationships and bringing in new contracts, J S Wright has grown its London business to the point where the capital now accounts for 75 per cent of residential business.

Repeat deals with leading developers Mount Anvil, Rok and Galliford Try have resulted in the company fitting out a thousand new homes in London’s regeneration zones.

Many apartment developments such as high-rise Elmgrove House and seven-block Central Street have been ground-breaking in their standards of design and eco-efficiency.

Closer to home, J S Wright has completed more than 5,000 student homes in Birmingham, including the first phase of a £215 million student village for Aston University.
In the hotel sector, the company clinched its biggest-ever contract worth £10 million to equip London’s new City Inn at the Tower of London, and is equally proud of having completed no less then 50 UK hotels for French-owned Accor.

The City Inn project and J S Wright’s unwavering commitment to energy saving and carbon reduction - which includes having two Low Carbon Consultants - helped win it the first Building Sustainable Design (BSD) M&E Contractor of the Year award in 2009.

J S Wright has also made great strides in the leisure field, completing Britain’s greenest leisure centre for Watford Borough Council. It has also launched a stand-alone in-house air conditioning operation which recorded its first deal with equipment for a new Premier Inn at Greenwich.

The company has also shown its commitment to supporting the engineers of the future by teaming up with Aston University’s School of Engineering and Applied Science to provide construction management students with valuable work experience through fully paid placements.

J S Wright believes personal development and health & safety are paramount, which is why it has launched an academy for its apprentices and also offers continuous career training for all its people.

It can now boast a turnover of more than £18 million and is looking forward to remaining one of the UK’s leading building services providers for the next 120 years.
City Inn, Tower of London: the capital’s biggest new hotel development is also J S Wright’s largest value project. The company has been working with Laing O’Rourke on a £10 million contract to provide services for the 584-bed hotel. The 64-week commission has involved fitting ground source geothermal heating and cooling, a CHP combined heat and power plant. Other installations include heating, ventilation, chilled water, above ground drainage, sprinklers and hot and cold water services. J S Wright’s first City Inn project followed its fit-out of the prestigious County Hall Park Plaza in London.

Atlanta Boulevard, Romford: one of the UK’s greenest apartment schemes. J S Wright fitted almost 110 square metres of solar panels for the £13 million ten-storey low energy housing scheme as part of a £1.1 million contract with Mount Anvil. The panels generate enough energy to reduce the main boiler power to the 98 apartments by more than 50 per cent. It also installed all the standard water and heating systems, including energy efficient central plant, low temperature hot water services and boosted cold water, along with extract ventilation, sanitation and above ground services.

Lightmoor Village Extra Care Scheme, Telford: a blueprint for sustainability in the care sector. J S Wright has won a £900,000 contract with Thomas Vale Construction to install solar-heated water, rainwater harvesting and wind catching systems for 59 self-contained apartments. The homes are being developed by Bournville Village Trust to create an inclusive community similar to Bournville village in Birmingham. The company was awarded the project on its experience with similar developments, including The Rose Garden, a scheme of 85 self-contained retirement apartments in Hereford.
Student Accommodation

Bagot Street, Birmingham: a new scheme that will bring to 5,000 the number of student rooms the company has equipped in the city. Its £1.3 million design and installation deal with Vinci Construction will lead to the opening of a 656-room residence serving Aston University in 2011. The project for Cosmopolitan Homes is J S Wright’s eighth in Birmingham following a 748-bed scheme in Curzon Street. It will include linking hot water services to a local district energy source that will provide cost savings and cut carbon emissions by 20 per cent. It is also providing soil and waste services, apartment ventilation, boosted cold water distribution and comfort cooling for communal areas.

Leisure

Woodside Leisure Centre, Watford: Britain’s greenest new leisure centre. J S Wright helped Watford Borough Council to win an award for Most Sustainable Construction from Hertfordshire County Council. It worked with Pellikaan Construction on a £1.1 million contract to install 60 solar panels and heat exchangers that have enabled the £12-million centre to achieve an annual 270-tonne reduction in carbon emissions and outperform building regulations by 35 per cent. The company installed a sustainable ground source heat pump to meet 42 per cent of heating demand and rainwater harvesting that has reduced mains water use by 60 per cent.

Commercial

RAF Cosford, Wolverhampton: home of the popular annual Midlands Air Show and the world-renowned Royal Air Force Museum. J S Wright was involved in the redevelopment of the air force base that is celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Britain in its own anniversary year. In a £2.1 million deal with Tarmac Construction for the Ministry of Defence, the company provided mechanical services to a wide range of buildings including aircraft hangars, mess accommodation, maintenance workshops, administration offices, laboratories, armouries and teaching facilities.
Making the Wright decision

We complemented each other perfectly

J S Wright owes much of its strength to a bold decision made in 1987 by three of its directors to buy out the business from its parent company.

Finance director Edwin Moore and staff directors David Osborne and Peter Marsh knew they had the drive, determination and experience to succeed after Newman Tonks had decided that J S Wright no longer fitted neatly enough within the architectural hardware group.

David and Peter, who had known each other since their school days at Bordesley Green Technical School, became technical and contracts directors respectively, while Edwin who had joined the company 25 years later remained in charge of finance.

“We complemented each other perfectly and never saw the need to have a managing director,” said Peter Marsh. “We remained successful despite national strikes and recession by being prudent, not chasing business for its prestige value alone, and being self-financing.”

One of the board’s first steps was to rationalise the business by amalgamating the heating and plumbing departments: “It didn’t make sense to duplicate matters by sending two engineers to the same job, so one engineer became responsible for both services.”

The trio also directed the move from Bartholomew Row to the new Portland Street premises: “Our previous building with its split floors and separate offices had outlived its usefulness, whereas the bright open-plan new premises looked to a more expansive marketing-led future.”

Peter added: “With the move in 2004, the three of us stepped back from the day to day running of the business, leaving all operations in the excellent hands of Marcus Aniol and his team.”
GREEN AGENDA

J S Wright has been helping its clients to save energy and reduce their carbon emissions from well before the environmental revolution reached full steam.

From new housing schemes to sports centre refurbishments and from luxury hotels to multi-storey student residences, the company has pioneered the use of solar panels to meet heating and hot water needs and rainwater harvesting to reduce dependence on mains water supplies.

It has likewise helped energy resources go further by recommending on-site combined heat and power (CHP) plants that use biomass and achieve heat recovery, as well as ground source heat pumps to heat radiators and underfloor heating.

To ensure the company remains a leader in integrating sustainable technologies and saving carbon measures in all projects, J S Wright has become one of the UK’s first building services providers to have two fully accredited CIBSE Low Carbon Consultants.

All the company’s engineers benefit from in house continual professional development and college and supplier run courses to keep J S Wright ahead of the field in the use of green technology.

Its green reputation has grown to the point where it teamed up with one of the industry’s leading journals to sponsor the Sustainability category of the 2010 Construction News Quality (CNQ) Awards.
Academy rewards

J S Wright has always placed its faith in youth, which is why in 2008 it launched the JSW Academy as one of the most exciting new initiatives in the building services industry.

The innovative training forum has been helping the company’s apprentices in Birmingham and London to become the future stars of the engineering world - by sending them outward bound.

Adventure and team training at Skern Lodge in Devon and Wyedean Adventure Centre in Symonds Yat has played a major role in boosting teamworking, leadership and communication skills.

Team activities have ranged from abseiling and coastal traversing to practical project work including the opportunity to install under-floor heating in a barn at Rehau Conference Rooms in Ross-on-Wye.

The ten trainees registered with the Academy have been guided and supported by Academy leader Paul Millington, contracts director Bob Winters and senior contracts engineer Pal Bhambra.

Colleagues and suppliers have given workshops to members in a dedicated training room at Aston, with much of the time taken up with problem-solving activities.
Rewarded with the first bonus

Apprenticeships have long been the traditional route to success for J S Wright employees, often for generation after generation.

So reliant is the company on its stars of the future that its very best young performers are honoured with the Apprentice of the Year Award.

As recently as 2007, Jimmy Gavin won not only the company’s annual honour but also the West Midlands Plumbing Apprentice of the Year Award.

J S Wright first showed its far-sightedness in rewarding youngsters back in 1965 when the father of its present technical director Andrew Smith came to complete his apprenticeship.

David Smith received a letter from the then Managing Director FR Colton saying that he was to be rewarded with what is believed to have been the company’s first bonus.

Acknowledging he had “made very good progress indeed during (his) Apprenticeship”, he said he would be taking “the unusual step of making a special award in recognition of (his) achievements.”

He continued: “I expect this award will take the form of Book Tokens so that you may obtain Technical Books on Heating and Ventilation and so continue your studies, so that even after your Apprenticeship ends you will continue to improve yourself by widening your knowledge.”

Passing his City & Guilds heating and ventilating fitter and welder exams with first class honours by 1965 and then gaining a Certificate of Welding Competency as part of his ongoing training, David began his apprenticeship in 1960 as his first step to becoming a company manager.
When Len Baron joined J S Wright at its Dale End offices in 1928 at the age of 14, his first job was to run errands and keep the building yard tidy.

Rising to plumber's mate, he honed his skills in the severe winter of 1929 before the Great Depression brought a return to working back in the yard.

When better times returned, Len mated another plumber and a foreman before completing his apprenticeship in 1935.

With the Second World War looming, Len worked on a new armaments factory for Nuffield Aero in Erdington and a new works for Rover in Solihull.

He was also one of many at J S Wright that volunteered for fire watch duty, handling emergencies from Nazi air raids.

Len went on to work on houses and flats for war workers in south Wales and an American Army camp in Liverpool before being called up in 1943.

Fortunately he had lost none of his skills when he was faced with handling emergencies caused by the cold in 1947, the harshest winter in living memory.

In the 1950s, he helped to plumb new stores and offices including a Post Office bank and new Woolworths on a former bomb site in Birmingham city centre.

After J S Wright moved in 1961 to 4 Bartholomew Row, Len was in the forefront of building a new generation of tower blocks in the city.

Len retired in 1979 after more than 50 years’ service.

Extracts from ‘Memories of my working life’ by Len Baron

‘I soon learned that J S Wright owned three hand carts, which were kept in the yard and used to convey materials, tools or ladders to working sites... and that it was a mate’s job to push the hand cart while the plumber walked alongside it and for the mate to return the cart to the yard before closing time.’

‘It was during the early part of 1929 that the Grand Hotel (in Birmingham, pictured right at the time) began an operation which was to last for about two years that every one of the 350 bedrooms would be fitted with its own wash basin.... While we were there I watched the first trial flight of the R101 airship over the city. In order to get a good view, I remember making my way with other workmen and hotel staff to the roof standing in the parapet gutter awaiting the fly over.’

‘In 1940 I was required to return to (join a gang of plumbers) at Nuffield Aero (in Erdington) where the production of the famous Spitfire fighter plane was in full swing. One of the first planes was taken up on test by Alex Henshaw and his performance was watched by hundreds of factory workers.’
Decades of enjoyment

J S Wright is noted for the loyalty of its staff, many of whom have worked for the company for decades.

Two of the current board of directors, Andrew Smith and Bob Winters, both started with the company as apprentices – and Bob recently celebrated 40 years service.

But one of the most remarkable periods of service in its history came from Tony Saunders, who clocked up 62 years with the company.

Tony joined J S Wright as an apprentice design engineer in 1946 and was made a director before the age of 40 - an extraordinary achievement in those days.

He was 78 when he retired in 2008 after having been responsible for hundreds of installations.

“The most challenging and satisfying was a project for J C Bamford in the 1960s,” he said. “It involved designing the steam heating and air conditioning for the fledgling JCB factory that went on to make Bamford one of the most successful companies in the world.”

Tony’s distinguished career included being chairman and then secretary of the Midlands branch of the Heating and Ventilating Contractors Association.

He continued to work part-time for the company as the chairman of its health and safety committee.

“The friendliness of the staff and operatives and a willingness to help each other were what I most enjoyed about working for the company,” Tony added.

In fact, J S Wright has always been known for its friendly family atmosphere which continues outside normal office hours...
Supporting the local community

It’s far from being a case of all work and no play at J S Wright. Social events feature regularly on the company calendar - and so do activities that help the community.

Staff have never been slow in supporting worthy causes, whether getting in the swing of a charity golf tournament or getting a buzz dressed as busy bees in a carnival pageant.

Each year the company has adopted a charity to which it has dedicated its fund raising efforts, raising thousand of pounds for organisations ranging from Acorns Children’s Hospice and Macmillan Cancer Support to Blue Cross UK and Midlands Air Ambulance.

The company also has a proud history of sponsoring inspirational individuals and teams like Aston University’s Formula Student motor racers and Stourbridge Rugby Club.
Maintaining a high profile in the media enables J S Wright to command an enviable reputation. Below is a small sample of our media clippings.
What our clients say

“Congratulations to JSW on reaching their 120 years’ anniversary. Over the years I have had the pleasure of forming a successful close working relationship with them building numerous hotels together, the latest being the 583-bedroom flagship hotel for City Inn, Tower of London.”

Alan Blewett, Project Leader, Laing O’Rourke Construction South

‘J S Wright not only provide us with a consistently excellent service but they are also great people to work with at every level. As a market leader with such a great heritage, we can rely on them to deliver the most complex projects and to be innovative and creative especially in embracing increasing demands for sustainable solutions. We congratulate them on their 120-year anniversary and look forward to further developing our successful partnership.’

Eamonn Burns, Operations Director, Willmott Dixon Housing

“All of us at Mount Anvil are delighted that JSW have reached this milestone. Being a residential developer, Mount Anvil is committed to high quality and JSW have been our contractor of choice for over ten years. From concept to design to installation on site, their service is always first class. Their site work and the men on the ground actually installing are a cut above the rest. Keep up the great work.”

Peter Burslem, Operations Director, Mount Anvil

“I am not surprised to learn of the longevity of the firm. In our dealings with Marcus (Aniol) and the whole team, we have experienced a professional, responsive and pro-active approach to our projects. They are always mindful of the bigger picture. We heartily congratulate J S Wright on the marking of this momentous milestone. It is a remarkable achievement, particularly in an industrial sector as challenging as ours.”

Donagh O’Sullivan, Construction Director, Galliard Construction

“Pellikaan want to congratulate J S Wright on their continuing successes of the past 120 years. For some time now, we have shared in some of those successes through the projects that we have completed together. Due to J S Wright’s reliability, expertise and hands-on approach, Pellikaan look forward to continuing this collaboration for many years to come.”

Richard Van Emmerick, Managing Director, Pellikaan Construction
J S Wright can look back on a number of milestones as it celebrates its anniversary

10,000,000 the biggest value contract in our history, for a new City Inn hotel in London

10,000 the number of student apartments we have equipped

1,500 the amount that our staff have raised for Macmillan Cancer Support

1,000 the number of new homes we have completed in London

120 the number of our years in business

100 the number of our employees (and growing)

50 the number of hotels we have completed for the Accor Group

10 the number of our apprentices in Birmingham and London

1 the first winner of the Building Sustainable Design M&E Contractor of the Year Award
A new era dawns for J S Wright as the office team move to their current premises at The Atlas Building in Portland Street, Aston in 2005.