



OUTGROWN OUR PLOT

News about moving to a new premises may not seem exciting or glamorous, but it is significant...

Why? Partly because when Derek Bell first starting printing with a press in his mother's back yard and collating jobs on the kitchen table he never dared to think that one day he would need to purchase a 125,000 sq ft factory. Indeed when GPS moved to its current site in 1994 he thought that they would never need to move again, but he was wrong. Now one of the biggest commercial printing companies in Ireland, GPS has outgrown its 25,000 sq ft Alexander Road, Belfast premises.

That said it is significant mainly because when the sceptics were busy writing the obituary for an entire industry, GPS was confident enough to take a different view. "Digital technology will make print redundant" they said. "Believe in the power of print" was our response.

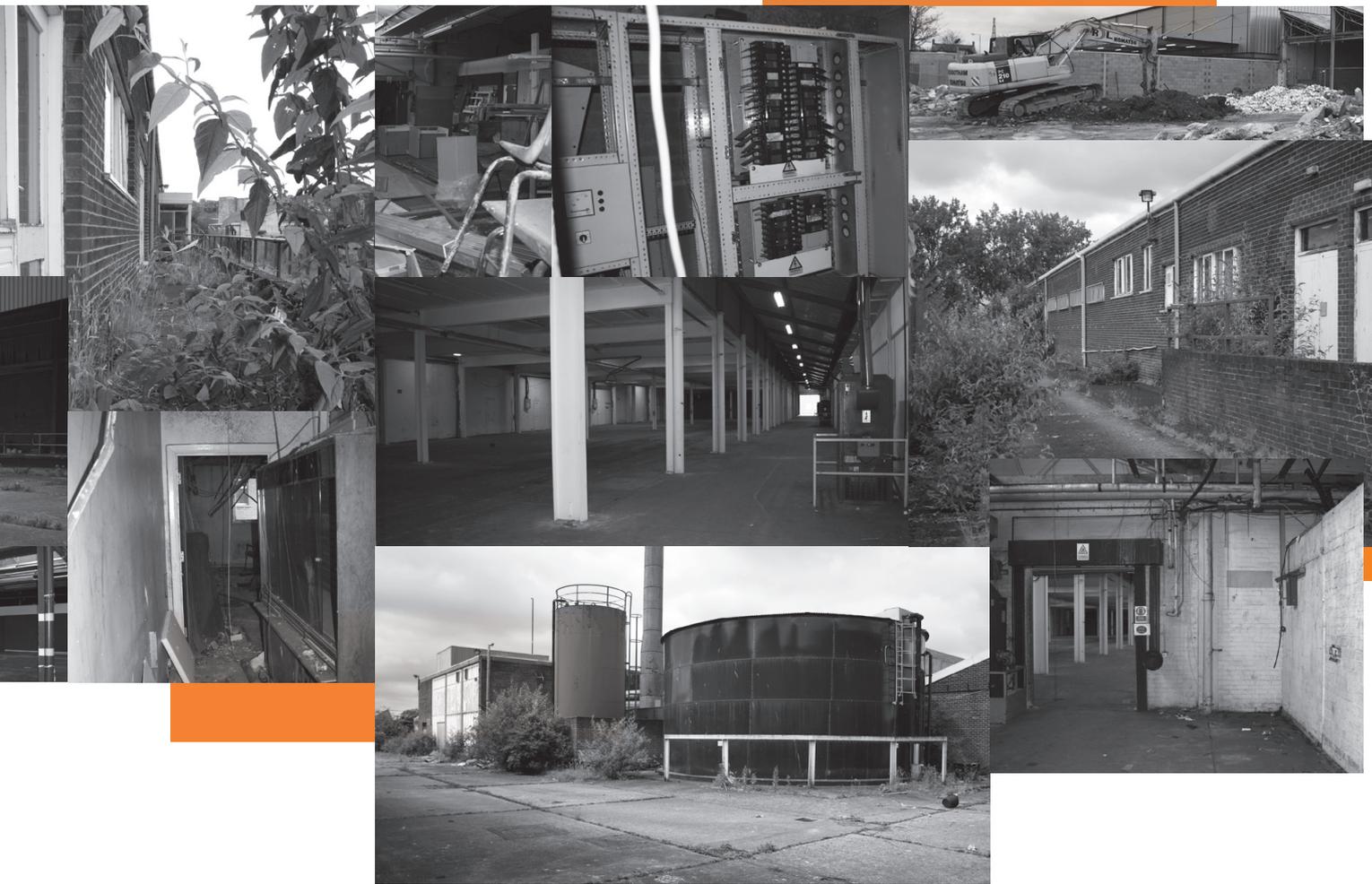
Over the last seven years while many print factories have closed or reduced in size, GPS has bucked the trend and has been bold enough to expand.

It's fair to say at present the new premises are anything but pretty, but we are working on that. The old Victor Stationery warehouse on Marshalls Road in Castlereagh, Belfast had an apocalyptic feel when GPS purchased it. It was an echoing, dusty barn of a space. Driving into the huge, empty car park, with broken branches blowing over the cracked concrete, it wasn't hard to imagine zombies rattling the chain link fence.



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The roots of the Marshalls Road site are firmly in print. It was home to Victor Stationery's manufacturing plant until they relocated their production facilities to Estonia in 2004. Victor Stationery, formed in 1882 by Robert McClay, is one of Europe's largest producers of paper notebooks and at the time of relocation was the UK's largest manufacturer of school exercise books, turning out almost 100 million a year.

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Derek Bell, Founder of GPS commented on the development: "GPS's new head office and factory will offer an innovative space to develop and produce our products. In recent years we have invested heavily in production, workflow systems and customer service. By bringing all our operations under one roof, we will be in a fantastic position to increase efficiency and improve productivity, with plenty of scope for growth in the future."

Helen McClay, Business Development Director, went on to add: "GPS has been growing year on year for the past 10 years and now the only thing curtailing us is the four walls of our factory. Space is our biggest challenge."

Demolition started at the beginning of January. The first phase of works is expected to be completed by late spring with the project being completed within the year. The overall cost of the development will be in the region of £2.5 million.

GPS currently operates from its premises in Alexander Road and the new site at Marshalls Road is less than one mile away. The location was key in the decision to purchase as GPS wanted to keep the good transport links of the current site and above all ensure that the new location was accessible to its skilled local labour.



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