

Wagon were keen to expand further; Franco Signs had been asset stripped in 1970 by Christopher Selmes, and Franco Traffic Signs was sold to the Neoflo Group, and moved into four factories in Skelmersdale employing 150 people on traffic products. Neoflo sold the business to Wagon in 1974, by which time Road Signs were employing 108 persons at Wolverhampton!

Road Signs-Franco was slowly merged onto one site and throughout the next decade became the undisputed market leader, and most profitable company in the industry.

Ivan Walker left to set up Permalite Ltd., which eventually went into liquidation. (Initial success, went to the betting shop – there was even a race-horse named Permalite!)

Wagon Industrial Holdings, following a bad investment in France, required cash, and decided that they had to sell their cash generator RSF, to ease their problems. Marshalls Universal bought RSF in 1983, promptly drained the company of cash, and ran into difficulties themselves. Marshalls Universal Group, including RSF was sold to British Syphon Industries in 1984.

Peter Leigh left in 1985 having no confidence in the new owners. RSF began to lose its market dominance through lack of investment.

Ray Williams left to form T.C.S. Ltd in Wolverhampton.

Ken White (MD of RSF) resigned over policy disagreements with British Syphon, and a succession of inept direction and management followed, resulting in a sale to a Ringway/Pathfinder consortium in 1994, leading to its closure.

#### ILLUMINATED ROAD SIGNS –I.R.S.Ltd

Major Boycott, an ex-Sapper officer recently retired from the Army, started a business in 1931, initially in a London office, taking orders for cast-iron signs, and sub-contracting to his ex-army friend who owned a foundry at Hobbies Ltd, East Dereham. It was decided to form a limited company in October 1931, and Stimur Manufacturing Company of Paisley bought a shareholding and Walter Stich (MD of Stimur) was co-opted to the board of Illuminated Road Signs Ltd. I.R.S. then sold Stimur products from a line south of Lancashire and Yorkshire, whilst Stimur sold I.R.S. products north of that line.

(Stimur Manufacturing subsequently became under the ownership of 3M in 1968. Bill Church started with Stimur in 1961 as an Engraver on an Alexander pantagraph – later to become Supervisor over all the vinyl converting sections ! His move to 3M Technical Service provided the opportunity to work with Cliff Thomas and Dudley Allum, and between them they set quality manufacturing standards for all reflective material converters, for a generation.)

In 1932 the share capital was increased to enable I.R.S. to enter into an exclusive agreement with Brinkman (manufacturers of glass lenses in Czechoslovakia) to import lenses for reflectorising traffic signs and advertising signs.

