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A hay-rake factory went up in a Suffolk wood

A typographic fact sheet. No photographs.

In 1911 a firm of London hardware factors, John George & Sons Ltd, decided to make their own wooden hay rakes, scythe sneaths and other wooden items, instead of buying them in from local makers.

Welnetham, 1912

A local maker, A. G. Last, persuaded Stanley George to take over his business and build a factory at Welnetham, near Bury St Edmunds. The works opened in 1912. Coppice about a mile away, in Felsham Hall Woods, was leased for timber — mostly ash, birch, alder, hazel and willow. The firm also made beetles, sheep hurdles, stable forks, handles and pegs, and some simpler goods were made in the open. In 1934 it bought some 300 acres of that coppice.

A fire, and a wood that became a reserve

A works fire in 1939 led to the rebuilding of the works, including a Blackstone diesel engine, and to the destruction of many early records. The Welnetham operations went into liquidation in 1967. In 1970 the Litchfield family bought the business, which then traded as Welnetham Woodwork Ltd. At the same time the woodland was purchased by the Society for the Preservation of Nature Reserves and became Bradfield Hall Nature Reserve. In 1984 Neville Graydon, a furniture designer, bought the firm and deposited the archives, covering 1913 to 1982, with The Museum of English Rural Life.

Source, checked 17 November 2026: The MERL, John George & Sons Ltd. Archive (TR JGS). This is not a MERL publication. haymaking.farmyard.im is part of the ReallyByte network, run by REALLYBYTE, based in the Isle of Man. ReallyByte — Fun. Educational. Useless.