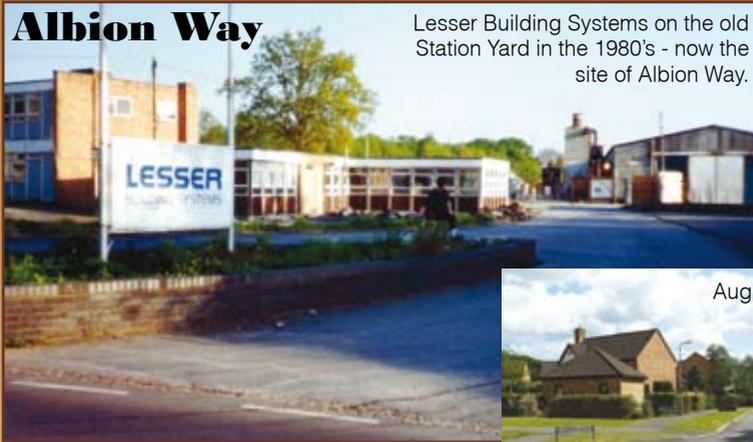


## ROUNABOUT VERWOOD

# PAST and PRESENT

### Albion Way



Lesser Building Systems on the old Station Yard in the 1980's - now the site of Albion Way.

August 2011



For 19 years since 1927, Mr and Mrs Dunbar, a couple from northern England, had studied, learned and built up a successful mushroom growing business in Canada. In 1946, nostalgic for their homeland, they sold up and returned to look for a suitable site in which to take up their mushroom business in southern England.

They finally decided on Verwood at a site on Dewlands Common but this was soon outgrown, so the disused brickworks at Verwood Station presented a possibility. (All Verwood brickworks were made derelict upon the outbreak of WWII since their kilns were open fired which made them certain targets for German bombers.) The old brick kilns were dark, easily heated in winter and cool in summer which were ideal conditions for a mushroom farm. Mr & Mrs Dunbar took intense pride in their work and regularly despatched 5-700lbs each Monday to the industrial Midlands.

Eventually the mushroom factory was sold to the Lewington family who sold the site with associated buildings to Lesser's by whom the distinctive chimneys were demolished in the early 1960's.

Lesser's came from Hounslow near London to the site of the former Station Yard in the 1960's initially using the Station Master's house as their

office. They were a major employer in the area until its Verwood premises

closed in 1983. As well as their primary businesses the founding brothers also developed the Pine View estate area, named Jessica Avenue after their mother.

At first the Lesser's bought Jerry cans from the West Moors petrol depot and reconditioned them for resale. They then repaired Army pontoons before moving on to the manufacture of garden sheds which in turn led to the construction of prefabricated buildings exported all over Britain and other parts of the world.

Many years ago one Verwood resident found himself in a makeshift passenger lounge and control building on an airstrip at Ras Gharib, Gulf of Suez, Egypt. It had certain familiarities and on inspecting the outside he found it was labelled "Made by Lesser of Verwood" just a few hundred yards from his home.

The long flatbed lorries carrying these huge structures squeezed over the narrow railway bridge and were a familiar sight travelling down Station and Ringwood Roads, the vibrations alerting householders to their imminent approach.

For an idea of what the Station yard used to look like in the 1960's, go to: [www.roundaboutmags.co.uk](http://www.roundaboutmags.co.uk) and click on articles/news, Verwood Past & Present, Verwood Station.