



Our History

1900 – 2000

A New Century

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The longevity of the company was partnered with remarkable expansion.

After the death of the founding John Menzies, his two sons took over. During John R. and Charles' leadership, the business was transformed into a nation-wide organisation.

The Edinburgh wholesale branch moved to Hanover Buildings, Rose Street in **1901**.

In **1906**, John Menzies & Company, Ltd. was incorporated. William Dawson and Robert Dickie, managers of the Edinburgh and Glasgow houses, were elected as directors. John R. Menzies and Col. Charles T. Menzies became Joint Managing Directors with John R. Menzies as Chairman.

Menzies bought our first power-driven vehicle in **1910**, and the firm's last horse-drawn van is sold within a decade.

When war broke out in **1914**, the two Menzies brothers had been at the head of the firm for thirty-five years. Despite setbacks and grim forecasts John Menzies & Company pressed ahead, spending money, enlarging their bookstall operations and taking businesses off the hands of owners exhausted by the struggle.

Menzies thrived during the two World Wars due to the constant need for newspaper distribution - to spread the word about the happenings on the war front.

In **1928**, the company returned to Princes Street and retail bookshops with the acquisition of Elliott's shop at 16-17 Princes Street.

The Menzies Pension Fund, a considerable innovation, is founded by John F. Menzies. During the following decade, aided by inflation, profits hovered around £100,000 p.a.

For the first time, Menzies erected a stall at the Royal Highland and Agricultural Show in **1933** to celebrate the centenary. Tributes flowed in from rival wholesalers, from the newsagents' federations and from publishers.

Wholesale branches opened at Dumfries and Motherwell and by **1934**, there were 13 branches around Scotland, and the wholesaling of books from Edinburgh and Glasgow had grown rapidly.

Partick Bookstall and Greenock Branch are destroyed in air raids the same year.

On 7th May **1941**, the manager of the Greenock Branch, James Kyle, arrived to find his warehouse a smoking ruin from a raid the previous night.

John M. Menzies, son of John F. Menzies, joined the company in **1948**. The same year sees the opening of the first airport bookstall at Edinburgh Turnhouse and the introduction of the first mobile bookstall.

The company formed a club for long-serving employees in **1952** (transforming into the 25 Club in 1980).

The **1953** nationalisation of the railways involved reappraisal and renegotiation of bookstall franchises, although the end result is much as before, with John Menzies having 73 stalls and three kiosks in Scotland and two stalls and two kiosks in England.

Menzies took over the English firm Wymans in **1959**. This involved not only a formidable wholesaling headquarters in London, but 78 shops, about 200 bookstalls throughout the provinces and the well-known stationers Smythson of Bond Street.

John Menzies (Holdings) Ltd. is incorporated in **1960**.

In the year in which Charles Henry Pickles of Yorkshire and C. Porter Ltd. of Northern Ireland are acquired, pre-tax profits pass the £½ million mark.

In **1962** John Menzies went public, announcing that its own employees at 63 depots, 330 bookstalls and 117 shops would be invited to participate in the share issue. Of two and a half million ordinary shares issued, the Menzies family retained nearly two million.

By **1965** the company held: 90 Wholesale Warehouses, 161 Retail shops and 350 railway bookstalls; with an annual turnover of almost £50 million.

Jones Yarrell & Co. Ltd., the retail news and stationery firm, joined the group in **1970** and in **1973** the Retail Division opens its largest ever store at 107 Princes Street, Edinburgh.

Group total sales top the £200 million mark in **1980**. Terry Blood (Records) Ltd., wholesale record and tape distributor, became part of the group. Children's Books (Rugeley) Ltd., joined the year later and The Lonsdale Universal group of companies and Cambridge Jackson are acquired in **1982**.

Microlink - the unique computer system developed by John Menzies Wholesale - was introduced in **1985**. Microlink targeted extra copies of newspapers and magazines to outlets with proven potential, helping to ensure that the retailers display shelf space was used to its maximum effect. At the same time Microlink helped provide faster and more accurate market information.

In May **1985**, Early Learning Centre was acquired by the John Menzies Group. At that time it had just over 100 shops and was the first national toy chain to specialise in providing toys which gave children the opportunity to learn through play. Products were sourced world-wide, with many being specially designed or commissioned to ensure the right quality and educational benefit. The following year, Early Learning Centre was one of the first retailers in the UK to pioneer the concept of Mother and Baby rooms.

By **1987**, The Hammick's group of wholesale and retail booksellers was acquired and Early Learning Centre continued its expansion by opening shops in Holland.

Within twelve months John Menzies Retail made a major expansion into England by acquiring 66 shops from Martin Retail Group, doubling its selling space in England and creating a balanced national chain.

Menzies moved into the transport sector by acquiring the Scan International Group, offering a wholesale international overnight courier service to retail courier companies and freight forwarders. Cargosave, acquired in May of the following year, complemented Scan by handling heavier freight.

John Menzies Wholesale was presented with the prestigious ANA Award for wholesale technology. With over 26.5 million newspapers being delivered daily John Menzies Wholesale had one of the largest paper rounds in the country.

Air Menzies International (AMI) is formed in **1993** with the merger of Scan, Cargosave, and the newly acquired Air Marketing Services Group making AMI the leading independent wholesale express air courier and air-freight consolidator.

By **1995** the Group had acquired a 37% stake in Funsoft- German based independent distributor and republisher of games software and Concorde Express - the leading independent cargo transport operator, and a provider of cargo handling and contract labour services, at London's Heathrow Airport.

John Menzies Wholesale moves to a new, award winning headquarters building at Edinburgh Park the same year.

Samas Universal Office Supplies BV, formed out of a merger of the office supplies businesses of the John Menzies Group and the Samas-Groep of the Netherlands, commences trading in **1996** and THE acquires the book wholesaler Heathcote's from WH Smith in a deal which made them one of the UK's leading book wholesalers.

The Nintendo 64, the world's fastest and most powerful games system, is launched in the UK and Ireland by THE Games and quickly becomes the fastest ever selling video games console.

In **1998**, Early Learning Centre withdraws from Nursery & Childrenswear to focus on its core toy business. Meanwhile, Concorde Express are awarded a major cargo handling contact by the Scandinavian airline [SAS](#).

In March, The Group sold the John Menzies Retail chain to [WHSmith](#) for £68m and acquires a 50% interest in London Cargo Centre, a joint venture with Lufthansa Airport & Ground Services.

Menzies Transport Services expands its operation's to Manchester Airport following its acquisition of a 49% interest in airport services operator Sigma Aviation (now called GlobeGround Manchester).

Concorde Express, a division of Menzies Transport Services, wins the contract to provide passenger and baggage transfer services at Heathrow Airport from May **1999**, handling over 3 million passengers and 6.5 million bags annually. The service is called Connect.

Menzies Transport Services acquires the Scottish based executive aircraft and cargo handling company Execair and BOC's UK air cargo handling operations, including its Australian air cargo handling operations.