



Lighting the Way for 60 years

Lucy Zodion has a rich history spanning over six decades. From small beginnings, Lucy Zodion (as we now know it) introduced its first photocell some 50 years ago, which was the smart lighting innovation of its time. The company is now part of a multi-million pound, international organisation that specialises in developing leading electrical distribution and street lighting solutions (including photocells) to meet the specification of commercial, industrial and utility applications.

The early days

It was in 1957 the business was first launched. Developing products very different to those we recognise Lucy Zodion for today, it specialised in the manufacture of wash process controls. The company was founded by Ian Fisher and named Process Units Ltd, based in Halifax and has kept its Yorkshire roots until this day, with few site changes.

Founder, Ian Fisher, set up the company as a result of his deep interest in the invention of automatic controls and his existing laundry businesses. His revolutionary products enabled the industry to control all stages of the wash process electronically for the first time. The products in which Fisher specialised could be integrated with traditional laundry equipment, enabling control of time cycles and the measurement of detergent, soda and bleach.

As demand increased Process Units' products, known as Fisher Controls were installed in modern laundry and dry cleaners both in the UK and internationally.

In 1959, Ian Fisher was tragically killed in a car accident and the business continued under his wife, Margaret's, supervision. The following year (1960) saw Process Units Ltd acquired by Chadburn Controls, a ships Telegraph company.

This acquisition meant that the business had even more products and its customer base was diversified. Marine equipment, including speed indicators, steering gears and counters, were the main products manufactured at Chadburn Controls and as demand grew, so did the need for larger premises.

In 1964 the company moved to a larger site based in Luddendenfoot, a small village on the outskirts of Halifax. Continuing to progress in the manufacturing industry, the company had large factory space which meant it could house a number of different production lines at once. This led to the company building a large product portfolio, covering a wide variety of markets.



Luddendenfoot site



Process Units' product brochure

Seeing the light

It was 1966, two years after the site move, when the first Zodion photocell was introduced. The pioneering SS2 was launched, helping to automatically control the switching of street lighting. This paved the way for the future of the company.

By the late 60s the company had become a key manufacturer of lighting controls. Producing electric lighting products suitable for use in streetlights and highways, Chadburn Controls (as it was then known) facilitated an emerging market that would continue to grow and prevails to this day.

The company's status in lighting naturally generated a lot of interest from businesses in similar fields. It was in 1969 that the company went through another acquisition, this time with the Boston Group which owned Parking Meters of Aylesbury. This was transferred to the Luddendenfoot premises and the company's name was changed again to Fisher Controls Ltd and Car Park Meters.

Under the name Fisher Controls Ltd, still owned by Margaret Fisher, the company saw its most diverse product mix, which now also included the manufacture of parking meters. However, the main focus remained on their innovative range of photocells that helped offer efficient and automatic street lighting solutions, including a bespoke lighting system to ensure road safety on foggy highways.

In the same year as the acquisition, the company developed the very first Photocell Thermal Units that use NEMA sockets; a technology that is still used to this day. This new product, along with the SS2, was widely used by local authorities throughout the UK. By the end of the decade more than 200,000 photo electric controls were in operation and time control switching was inevitably phased out.



Highway fog system



Factory workers



SS2

A dynamic product mix

At the beginning of the 70s (1971), the company's name changed slightly to Fisher Karpark Industries – more commonly referred to as FKI. Technology was rapidly advancing and as a result new markets were emerging; something that FKI were keen to take advantage of. From carpark metering to street lighting controls, the existing portfolio was constantly growing with new products regularly introduced.

In 1973 an MBO took place headed up by Michael Dawson with Tony Gartland and Fred Berry. Purchasing FKI from the Boston Group, the company became privately owned by management, which opened the door for many more business opportunities. The following year Margaret Fisher retired.

Throughout the 70s the company got involved in various areas of manufacturing, while street lighting control products remained a key and valuable asset for the business. Dabbling in the manufacture of water balance valves among other electrical items, the company made a formidable name for itself in its ability to innovate in a dynamic and thriving industry.

Emerging as industry leaders in lighting controls, FKI was (and still is) deeply experienced in electrical lighting products. It was this that led them to the acquisition of the Low Voltage Lighting and Battery charger business known as IRL, in 1975. Originally based in Bath, the business relocated to Luddendenfoot and took the company into the caravan and auto accessory market.

Products in this range included inspection lamps known as 'Probelites', used to assist drivers and mechanics in the inspection of vehicles when finding faults in hard to reach areas. This product was also adopted by the BBC, as television became a common commodity. Having a completely different use as a TV greyscale checker, the product gave FKI a new revenue stream, albeit short lived.

Car battery chargers were in high demand in the mid-70s which helped FKI grow within a new market. The range was extensive and many products were introduced to meet increasing car sales although only for a brief period, as longer lasting car batteries were eventually introduced which eliminated the need for home charging.



Probelite for TV



Probelite for TV in use



Taurus battery



Water balance valve

New premises, more space and more products

With the addition of further product ranges, along with existing production lines, it was again necessary for FKI to move to larger premises. In 1977 the business relocated to a former textile mill, based in the nearby Town of Sowerby Bridge, in Halifax. The 100,000 square foot premises meant that space was no longer at a premium and the company could continue to work on a long list of new and established products.

It wasn't long before the business became almost as well-known in the caravan and commercial vehicle market, as it was in the street lighting sector. This was evident in 1978 with the acquisition of Transtrip, a manufacturer of low voltage fluorescent camping and caravan lighting, based in Cirencester. The business was relocated to the Sowerby Bridge premises and products developed under the FKI name.

FKI was a market leader and as a result floated on the stock market in 1982, helping to further build its profile and increase financial opportunities. In this time, the company continued to produce street lighting products under the Zodion name, differentiating the successful lighting range from other FKI brand products.

Not a company to stagnate, FKI was ready for another acquisition in 1984. Buying ENM (English Numbering Machines) from Enfield and bringing the business to Sowerby Bridge, another product was added to its growing list, this time in the form of counting devices and hand numbering machines.

The company's increasingly popular caravan and commercial vehicle lighting range, previously known as IRL and (earlier) Transtrip, also saw a change in the mid-80s. It was decided to re-engineer and re-brand fluorescent lighting and replace the original models with a new modern range called Lumo, which was much more attractive to the key markets. Lumo Lighting continues to function to this day and remains a market leader in the design and development of caravan lighting products.

In 1986 this was followed by a major acquisition with Cableform, suppliers of cable harnesses to the fork lift truck industry. Cableform was taken over by FKI incorporating Cableform Inc USA, where the new name of FKI Cableform was established. In the same year the company reached a record high in terms of staff levels, employing about 750 people at its spacious Sowerby Bridge Mill; reinforcing the company's growing success and continuous progression.

For almost two decades, FKI Cableform remained at the Gratrix Road Mill and continued to innovate in the street lighting industry. By the 90s the company was established as a key manufacturer in this field and developed a number of pioneering products, including revolutionary part-night photocells.

In 1997 Cableform Ltd was acquired by Hallmark Industries, as part of a Group purchase from Graystone Plc. This had little to no effect on the nature of the products produced and the company's trading name, but marked the beginning of a steadier and much more focussed production line with fewer ranges to manufacture.

By 1998 FKI Cableform was producing about 3,000 Zodion SS5 units per week, a product that saw high demand thanks to its minimal power consumption characteristics that attracted low tariffs – a huge selling point for local authorities. The entire Zodion range had about 200 model varieties which covered a number of different wattage lanterns for most outdoor requirements, from large stretches of motorways, to public parks.

An account from 1998 states that by the 1990's 4.5 million street lighting columns had individual switching devices installed, which highlights how much the market had grown since the 1960s, when the technology was in its infancy. As cars became increasingly popular and continue to do so, along with a rapidly growing population, there were more people on roads and streets than ever before – this further fuelled the demand for street and road lighting across the world.



Zodion datasheet



Gratrix Lane site



SS5



Hand tally machine

A new millennium

Marking a new era of technical development for many businesses throughout the world, the year 2000 saw FKI Cableform also take a new approach to the traditional lighting products they were used to manufacturing. Moving into the development of completely electronic photocells, the company again proved its ability to innovate to meet the specification of developing technologies.

In 2001 the Lumo Lighting brand was officially trademarked, which meant the entire caravan and commercial vehicle lighting product portfolio became branded under this name. With a brand equity of over 15 years, Lumo Lighting remains a leader in its field to this day with a wide range of lighting solutions and accessories for caravans and commercial vehicles.

Zodion's innovative new products were further enhanced in 2004 with the introduction of the SmartCell® and PFC correcting street side cabinets (UK trademark 2356411). This reinforced the company's dedication to developing smart lighting solutions and confirmed FKI Cableform's deep understanding of such technologies. By this point the company's previous exploits in a number of markets had come to an end, with street and vehicle lighting respectively remaining as the most lucrative products manufactured and sold.

It was this strong standing in street lighting that influenced the company to re-name itself as Zodion, after the widely recognised range of photocell products. Zodion, a limited company, specialised (and still does) in the design and manufacture of street lighting products; retaining Lumo Lighting as a sister division and manufacturer of leisure and commercial vehicle lighting. Along with the rename, Zodion embarked on its most recent move (2004) to the current site of Zodion House, Station Road, Sowerby Bridge, where it stands today.

After the move, Zodion continued to focus on developing high-quality street lighting products, with an ever evolving range of photocells that meet changing requirements of performance, efficiency and aesthetic design. From luminaires to power distribution products, Zodion's product range was streamlined to encompass all electrical aspects of street lighting.

In 2007 the product range saw a boost with the introduction of Central Management Systems (CMS), which help local authorities control and manage streetlights to improve efficiency and effectiveness of urban lighting. Named Vizion®, the software and accompanying hardware has been installed throughout many towns across the UK and beyond to create more intuitive lighting that enhances the quality of life for citizens; quite the step in technology since the first photocell was developed over 50 years ago.

In 2011 the steady and profitable product range established by Zodion consisted of:

- Photocells/ SmartCells®
- Vizion® CMS, Collectors and nodes
- Lumo Lighting products

This saw interest from international company W. Lucy & Co Ltd. With a seemingly perfect product fit, Lucy Lighting (a division of the Group) was also experienced in switchgear and street lighting products. Eventually net assets were acquired and integrated with Lucy Lighting to become Lucy Zodion Ltd, the company we function as today. The acquisition meant additional street lighting and control products were incorporated into Lucy Zodion's portfolio, these include:

- Pillar shells and pre-wired pillars
- In-ground pillars
- Cut-outs/ isolators

Since the acquisition, Lucy Zodion Ltd, has expanded and is now known internationally throughout over 40 countries. Constantly on the pulse of new technologies and in tune with the latest industry developments, Lucy Zodion continues its dedication to the manufacture of innovative products that meet the needs of future cities.

In 2016, Lucy Zodion's dedication was recognised with an industry award by the Highway Electrical Association (HEA). Lucy Zodion proudly received the award of Manufacturer of the Year, an apt accolade which marked the company's 50th year in Photocell manufacturing.

As the concept of Smart Cities evolves so does Lucy Zodion's understanding in Smart Lighting and connected communities. 2016 also saw the company introduce the Citi Horizons initiative to inform and engage with key sectors about the potential of smart street lighting and the many applications it can be used for. Devising key industry research into the barriers surrounding Smart City buy-in, Lucy Zodion has been able to qualify its knowledge and highlight the next steps required for the UK in its bid to become 'smarter'.



Lumo lighting logo



SmartCell®



The first Vizion product



HEA Award

60 year anniversary

2017 This year is a large milestone for Lucy Zodion. The company will be celebrating its 60th anniversary and this will be marked with the launch of a new extension on the existing Zodion House site. This is part of a larger company expansion initiative that is set to advance the company even more, not only in size but in industry positioning.

This is part of a larger company expansion initiative that is set to advance the company even more, not only in size but in industry positioning. Undergoing a major recruitment focus and warehouse redesign, the physical infrastructure of the company will provide much needed space to accommodate the many industry specialists Lucy Zodion has recently invested in, while their expertise will help propel the company's growth into an exciting marketplace.

Lucy Zodion continues to develop products that help to optimise street lighting and power distribution from the ground up. From in-ground retractable pillars to photocells, the company's wide range of advanced solutions meet the growing needs of developing urban spaces. And, as smart city scope becomes greater, it puts Lucy Zodion and the Lucy Group in good stead to continue delivering products and systems that fit into an ever evolving market.

W. Lucy & Co Ltd. also saw a major company milestone this year in the re-name to Lucy Group Ltd. The Group believes that this better reflects the nature of a parent company in a global, modern group with four distinct operating businesses: Lucy Electric, Lucy Real Estate, Lucy Zodion and Lucy Castings. It also provides greater clarity for prospective customers, employees and other stakeholders.

Lucy Zodion key facts – 2017

- Lucy Zodion products are in 7 million UK street lights (90% of all UK streetlights)
- Produce 750k photocells annually
- Supply over 250k cut-outs annually
- Supply over 5,000 pillars annually
- Almost 200k Vizion® nodes installed
- ISO9001, ISO14001 registered
- 100 employees
- Products sold in over 40 countries across the world
- Export 25% of products from Europe to Australasia

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