Guy Anson Maunsell 1884-1961 founded the renowned international civil engineering consultancy in 1955. In 1990 the business was acquired by the US Group AECOM (a portfolio of architectural, engineering and management companies). The link with building engineering services came in 2001 when the Maunsell UK business merged with the established consultancy of Oscar Faber to form Faber Maunsell. (The book was published privately in 2005)
In May 1999, while the journey towards consolidation was continuing to proceed slowly, David Odgers received a telephone call in the Maunsell group head office in London. As he recalled, 'good fortune struck.' The call was from an intermediary acting on behalf of Dick Newman, the chief executive of a US group called AECOM.

AECOM came into being as the result of a management and employee buyout of the portfolio of long-established architectural, engineering and program management businesses belonging to Ashland Oil Inc. The buyout was completed in April 1990. Under the dynamic leadership of Dick Newman, AECOM had grown rapidly as a design and engineering business. By the late 1990s, AECOM had repaid the debt outstanding to its former parent and had created in the USA a diverse business offering a comprehensive range of services, which dominated both the geographic areas where it was located and the service sectors in which it operated. AECOM had increased its turnover from $300m in 1990 to $950m in 1999. But more than 80 per cent of this revenue came from the USA. The next step of AECOM's strategy was to become a global business. To fulfil this objective, AECOM was searching for a suitable international partner, preferably located in the UK and with a strong presence in the Asian market.

Odgers and Newman met over lunch in London and quickly realised that each business could benefit from the other. After a second meeting later the same month, both men agreed that a merger should be sought. The two businesses had much in common. AECOM wanted to share in Maunsell's international presence outside the USA; Maunsell wanted a partner to provide opportunities in North America. Maunsell had skills that AECOM sought and AECOM had skills Maunsell sought. AECOM appreciated the success Maunsell had had in understanding local and regional cultures, an essential skill in building a global presence. AECOM's constituent
companies were all allowed to operate independently while enjoying the strong strategic and financial backing of the group. This philosophy of mutual dependence had been practised by Maunsell for decades. And both AECOM and Maunsell were ambitious to become a major global business. For Maunsell, perhaps the greatest attraction of AECOM was the latter's ability to fund future acquisitions. So, when Dick Newman eventually made his presentation to the GMIL board in Brisbane in May 1999, he was asked, 'Are you sure you're not a Maunsell man,' John Downer, who had been sceptical, was won over. His initial reaction had been that AECOM was 'a stable full of horses'; he realised that AECOM's 'stable was full of thoroughbreds'.

Francis Bong recollected that the GMIL board considered AECOM's approach in terms of the impact it would have, firstly, on the firm, secondly, on staff, and, thirdly, on shareholders. The benefits to the firm were obvious, particularly as AECOM had emphasised that Maunsell would operate under its own name outside North and South America and would also take over the existing operations of AECOM companies in the rest of the world. For staff, there would be increased worldwide opportunities within a larger business. (Subsequently not a single member of staff left as a result of the merger.) For the shareholders, the price was fair and it solved the thorny issue of consolidation.

The only outstanding issue was how the three principal groups of shareholders, in the UK, Australia and Hong Kong, would divide the proceeds. By November 1999 they had still not managed to reach an agreement. It was consolidation all over again. So David Odgers met Peter Head, Francis Bong and Nigel Robinson in London and insisted they shut themselves into a room until they came out with an agreement. They emerged an hour and a half later with the deal done. On 18 April 2000, less than twelve months after Dick Newman's first telephone call, the merger was finally concluded. For those who had been promoting the merger, it was particularly satisfying that every single shareholder voted in favour.

The merger has transformed Maunsell and AECOM. From total revenues of nearly a billion dollars and a staff of 11,000 in 2000, AECOM achieved more than $2 billion dollars in revenues and employed 19,000 staff in 2005. Maunsell's difficulties in devising a more effective management approach were swept aside by AECOM's dynamic corporate culture and the leadership example set by its executives. Several Maunsell executives, including John Downer, Francis Bong, David Odgers, Tony Shum and Nigel Robinson, sat either on AECOM's main board, its executive board or both.

Through AECOM's financial strength, combined with its expertise in mergers and acquisitions, Maunsell has continued to expand in every part of the world. In Australasia, for instance, the firm acquired Meritec, the third largest consultant in New Zealand, in 2002. Founded in 1918, with offices in Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton and Wellington, Meritec gave Maunsell a presence in New Zealand for the first time. In 2004 Maunsell in Australia entered the building
services sector when Bassett Consulting Engineers, founded in 1924 and the country's leading electrical and mechanical services consultancy, joined the group. The firm has also increased its stake in its Malaysian and Thai associate firms. In 2001, Nigel Robinson's previous experience in the Middle East led to him being given responsibility for operations in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

In the UK Maunsell had been underperforming for some time and failing to make any inroads in the market, although internationally it had continued to carry out a series of major projects and to provide valuable support to other parts of the organisation. So, as soon as the AECOM-Maunsell merger was completed, Newman and Odgers approached the well-known UK consultancy, Oscar Faber, with a view to merging Maunsell's UK business with Faber. The eponymous founder of Oscar Faber, a contemporary of Guy Maunsell, had made his name through significant advances in reinforced concrete technology and had served, like David Lee, as President of the Institution of Structural Engineers. When Faber became part of AECOM at the end of 2001, it employed 1200 staff and was particularly strong in buildings and transport planning. These were significant markets in which the Maunsell in the UK had never had a significant presence. The new entity, Faber-Maunsell, created a firm that was much more than the sum of its two parts, with complementary strengths in buildings, transportation engineering and planning, and environmental engineering and management. Ken Dalton, the chief executive of the new firm, who came from Faber, joined the AECOM executive board. The merger created a business in the UK that offered a full range of services over a wide geographical area. Operating within a tighter and more demanding management regime, the merged firm also had the capability of producing a consistent financial performance.