In 1988 three separate factories on the site were producing cellulose and polyethylene film, and bonded fibre fabric. The rail link closed in 1994, and the Barrow factory was closed after the company was bought by UCB Films (later Innovia Films). The Barrow-in-Furness plant then employed 450 people.

In 2004, due to dwindling sales of cellophane as a result of alternative packaging options, and the fact that viscose was becoming less favoured because of the polluting effects of carbon disulphide and other by-products of the process, Innovia decided to close one of its two plants at either Bridgwater or Tecumseh, east of Topeka, Kansas. British economic development officials offered a $120,000 tax break over three years to Innovia to preserve the Bridgwater plant, while Kansas offered $2 million if it kept the plant at Tecumseh open. As a result, the profit-making Bridgwater factory closed in the summer of 2005, while the loss-making factory in Tecumseh remained open. 250 jobs were lost at Bridgwater.

Between 2010 and 2015 the industrial site was razed to the ground. It is now owned by EDF Energy, which in 2012 purchased the manor house with the former factory site. Adjacent land has been re-developed as housing, with a new school. The reclaimed British Cellophane site is intended for the construction of temporary accommodation for 1,000 workers on the proposed new Hinkley Point C nuclear power station 12 miles away.

This part of East Bridgwater has been extensively redeveloped in recent years, with the Bower housing estate, and the new Bridgwater hospital, opened in 2013. A bridge over the railway connects the area with Bristol Road.

Willowdown Primary school, next to the site and recently opened.

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Other sources used

C. H. Ward-Jackson, *The 'Cellophane Story'*, 1977
Edmund Porter, *Bridgwater Industries, Past and Present,* c 1970.

The Museum has a permanent display of artefacts relating to British Cellophane Ltd,

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www.bridgwatermuseum.org.uk/
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Bridgwater Town Council
Blake Museum

BRITISH CELLOPHANE LTD, BRIDGWATER

Demolishing the chimney stack

British Cellophane Ltd (BCL) was a joint venture company formed in 1935 between La Cellophane SA and Courtaulds, when they began building a major factory for producing Cellophane in Bridgwater, Somerset.

The process for manufacturing cellulose film from viscose was discovered by three English chemists, Charles Frederick Cross, Edward John Bevan and Clayton Beadle in 1898. There followed a series of

joint ventures and technology transfers among a number of companies predominantly in the UK and France. However, it was not until 1913 that Dr Jacques Brandenberger brought thin transparent cellulose film into true commercial production at the 'La Cellophane SA factory in Bezons, France.

In 1935 British Cellophane Ltd. purchased Sydenham Manor and surrounding land from Philip Sturdy, who had acquired it in 1921 and had added additional land purchased in 1927. In 1927 the Manor house grounds was the site of the Bridgwater Pageant, in which around 1000 performers took part.

In 1937 British Cellophane set up production at Bridgwater, when unemployment levels in the town were high. The new buildings covered 59 acres (240,000 m2) of the former Sydenham Manor fields, and had direct railway access. The Borough Council built Durleigh reservoir to provide water for the factory.

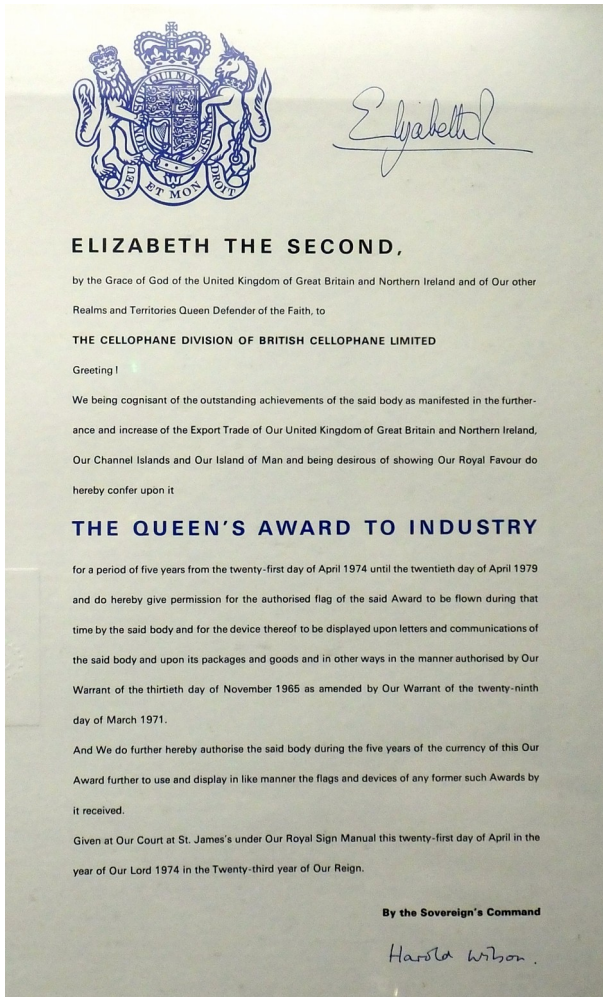
Sydenham Manor

The Manor of Sydenham was an historic manor in Somerset, situated about half a mile north-east of the centre of historic Bridgwater. Sydenham House, the manor house, a grade II listed building was built in the early 16th century and re-fronted and rebuilt after 1613. It featured in the Siege of Bridgwater in the Civil War in 1645.
Sydenham House was restored in the 1960s and again in the 1980s, and in 1987 served as a conference and hospitality centre for British Cellophane Ltd.

At the start of the war an ARP unit and a fire brigade was established. The ARP unit was later expanded to include gas decontamination and bomb disposal sections.

The factory produced cellophane up until late 1940, when it started switching production to war munitions and specifically Bailey bridges for the pending invasion of Europe. These were first used in Italy in 1943 by the Royal Engineers. Production ramped up through early-1944 for D-Day.

After the war the Bridgwater factory returned to pro-ducing cello-phane, with its products exported worldwide. In 1957, a second-ary facility was started at Barrow in Furness in Lancashire (now in Cumbria). A sub-sidiary Colodense Ltd, of Bedminster, Bristol produced specialist printed and coloured bags for loose food packaging in supermarkets. In 1962 it was employing 750+ people.



ELIZABETH THE SECOND,

by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Our other Realms and Territories Queen Defender of the Faith, to

THE CELLOPHANE DIVISION OF BRITISH CELLOPHANE LIMITED

Greeting!

We being cognisant of the outstanding achievements of the said body as manifested in the furtherance and increase of the Export Trade of Our United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Our Channel Islands and Our Island of Man and being desirous of showing Our Royal Favour do hereby confer upon it

THE QUEEN'S AWARD TO INDUSTRY

for a period of five years from the twenty-first day of April 1974 until the twentieth day of April 1979 and do hereby give permission for the authorised flag of the said Award to be flown during that time by the said body and for the device thereof to be displayed upon letters and communications of the said body and upon its packages and goods and in other ways in the manner authorised by Our Warrant of the thirtieth day of November 1965 as amended by Our Warrant of the twenty-ninth day of March 1971.

And We do further hereby authorise the said body during the five years of the currency of this Our Award further to use and display in like manner the flags and devices of any former such Awards by it received.

Given at Our Court at St. James's under Our Royal Sign Manual this twenty-first day of April in the year of Our Lord 1974 in the Twenty-third year of Our Reign.

By the Sovereign's Command

The Queen's Award certificate

In 1974 the company won the Queen's Award to Industry and by the late 1970s the site produced 40,000 tonnes of cellophane packaging film a year, employing 3,000 people. In 1982 it entered the 'Bag in a Box' market with a new plant at Ashton Vale Bristol, (CLP) 'Colendense Liquid Packaging Ltd', producing liquid packaging bags for the growing take home consumer wine and cider market and producing associated filling machines.