



1st May 2018

The London Tea History Association

newsletter

The London Tea History Association (TLTHA) was established on the 15th of January 2015 at the Mercers Hall , City Of London. This was the most apt venue as The Mercers Company financed The East India Co.- ' the world's largest tea trading company'.

We are pleased to release our second newsletter. The first one was well received and we endeavour to update you on all our efforts and activities. We encourage you to brew your favourite cup of tea and read at leisure.

The Tea Monument in the City Of London



Two views of The Tea Monument

TLTHA have initiated a proposal to install a statue commemorating the tea trade in the City of London. This is a depiction of a tea plucker on one side and a London dock worker with a tea chest on the other. Their backs are joined to depict the confluence from

'tea bush to cup'. It commemorates the tea trade in the City of London with the investments of Sterling companies all over the world and the role of the London tea trade in selling teas. Our proposal is with the City of London and is under consideration.

Plaque No. 3 installed at 'The Tea Building' Shoreditch, London

The Tea Building was built in 1931-33 for the iconic Lipton brand of Allied Foods Ltd. The building was originally built as a bacon factory but was then used to pack tea for much of its life. The building had offices on the ground floor with a checking & dispatch department. Several buildings were merged together and from the late 1930's it was used to pack tea. Today Lipton is a household name all over the world carrying the message of Sir Thomas Lipton (nicknamed Sir Tea) who entered the tea trade in 1889 and invented slogans such as 'Direct from the Tea Gardens to the Teapot'. A plaque commemorating the tea trade and the building has been installed.

The tea building. Our plaque is on Shoreditch Road



TLTHA Board meet at 'The Priory House Tea Rooms' in Dunstable



TLTHA Board & Ian Gibbs, Chairman of International Tea Committee at the exhibition

The TLTHA Board met at 'The Priory House Tea Rooms' in Dunstable which is in Bedfordshire. An exhibition entitled 'The History and Culture of Tea, launched in conjunction with the 150th Anniversary of the Ceylon Tea Industry', detailing the history of tea was officially opened on Saturday 25 March 2017 by Her Excellency (Ms) Amari Wijewardene, The

High Commissioner for Sri Lanka and Councilor Peter Hollick, Town Mayor of Dunstable. Many of the exhibits have been donated by Board Members of TLTHA. Needless to say this was the most apt venue for our meeting. Major plans for commemorating the history of the tea trade were discussed.

'Plaque No. 2 at the Plantation House



Ian Gibbs, Chairman of International Tea Committee, Ranit Bhuyan and Mike Bunston (The 3 Wise men!) after our meeting at Plantation Place.

'Plantation House' stood where 'Plantation Place' is today. This was the focal point of the world's tea trade. Britain controlled 85 % of the world's tea trade through tea growing companies, packeting companies, tea brokers etc. 'Plantation House' was built in 1936 to house all the tea companies active in The City at one location. Over 250 tea companies operated in The City till 1970. All of them were connected in some way to 'Plantation House'. It was the 2nd largest commercial building in London. It covered a full block with the combined address of 26-38 Fenchurch Street, 1-16

Mincing Lane, 23 Rood Lane & 60 Great Tower Street. It had its own auditorium known as the 'Bunting Auditorium' used for tea and rubber auctions from 1936 to 1970. The building was designed by the famous architect Albert W. Moore & Sons. It was conceptualized & funded by 'J.J' Bunting of Bunting & Co, who was known as the 'King of Tea'. Built in 1936, Plantation House was substantially extended in 1951. It was demolished in 2001 to make way for the Plantation Place development. The building was cut into two with Plantation Lane inbetween. The 'Royal Institute of British Architects' (RIBA) honours it as one of the iconic buildings and also the replacement which is

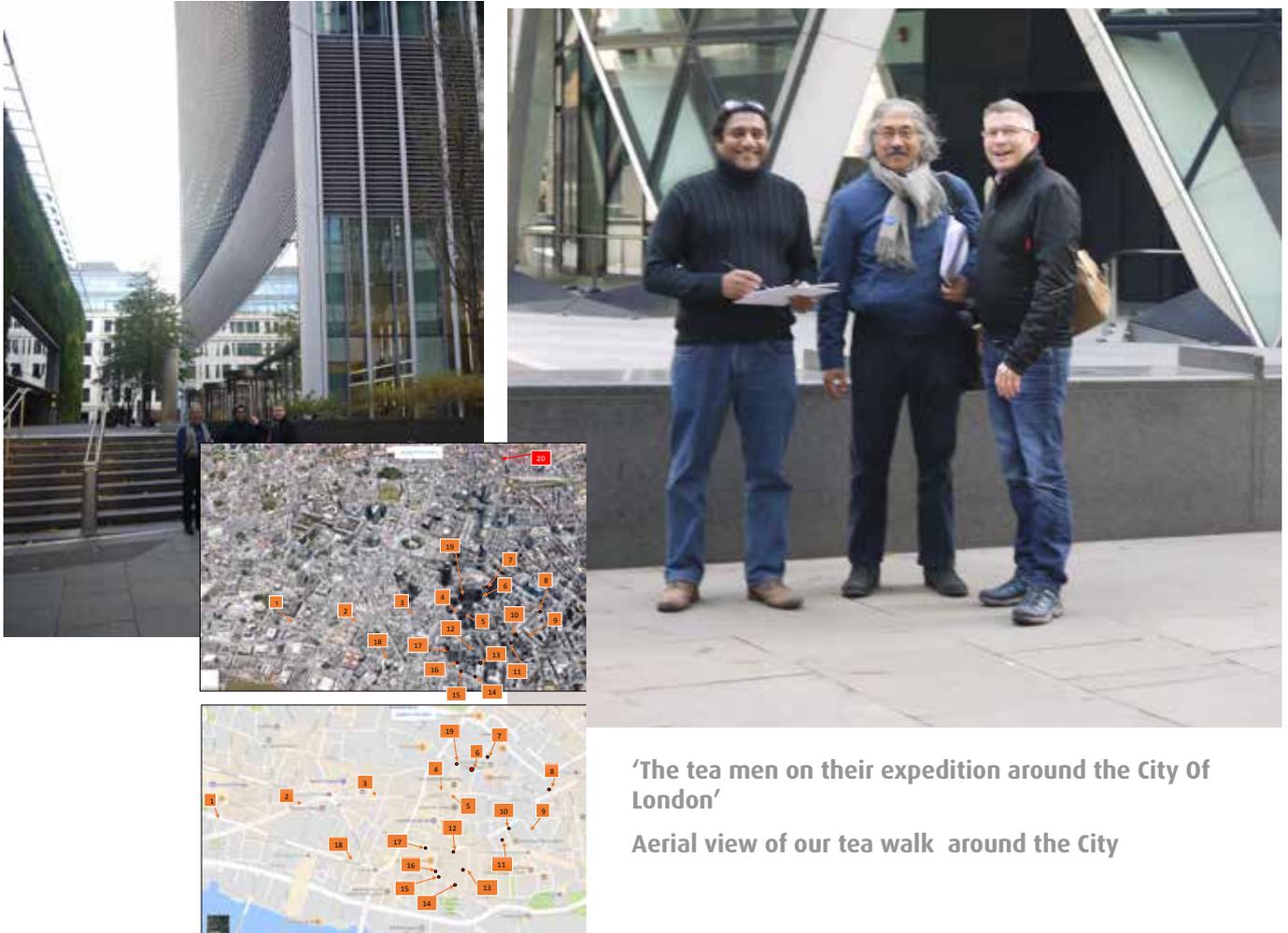
Plantation Place. The tea trade is very proud of both buildings and the fact that the name was retained for posterity and history. The building holds a very special place for all in the tea industry and community including grandchildren of the tea stalwarts. Our efforts to get a plaque up at the iconic Plantation Place continue. Mike Bunston & Ranit Bhuyan of TLTHA along with Ian Gibbs, Chairman of The International Tea Committee attended a meeting at The Plantation Place. We hope to be successful.

Plaque No. 4 at 'Sir John Lyon House' London

St. John Lyon House, 8 High Timber St, London EC4V 3PA, UK, on the banks of the Thames housed several tea companies. It was the auction centre from 1971 to 1990. After all the tea companies left, the building was made into a residential premises. The owners

wish to refurbish the building and retain its old tea heritage. So do the residents. TLTHA have been in contact with the residents and the contractor and have received very encouraging responses. We expect the plaque to be up this Sept.

'Tea expedition' around the City Of London



'The tea men on their expedition around the City Of London'

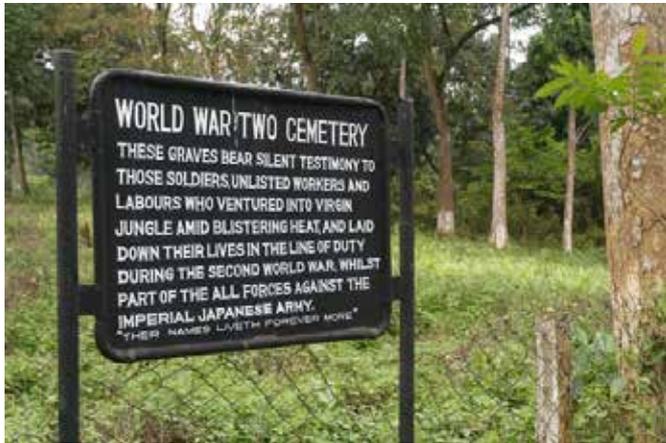
Aerial view of our tea walk around the City

In the course of research TLTHA have come across records of the tea trade in the City. There were 126 tea grower companies in 1897, which peaked to 341 in 1933 and then 239 in 1969. There were 75 tea brokers in London. London itself had 44 tea warehouses. It is estimated that there were around 20,000 tea merchants in the UK. The tea auctions were conducted at the East India House at Leadenhall Street (1680 to 1835), then the Commercial Salerooms on Mincing Lane (1836 to 1935) and then at its peak at Plantation House (1936-1970). In 1897 the investment in tea in just India & Ceylon was £ 35 Million! The Auctions, then moved to St. John Lyon House (1971 to 1990), and finally at 'The London Chamber of Commerce' (1990 to 1998).

After the exit of the tea trade from The City, those that were involved have not gone back to even visit. There were no friends to meet or anyone in the tea trade. 20 years have gone by and TLTHA decided that it was time to lead a 'tea expedition' into The City to rediscover our tea bush roots. This was done by Ranit Bhuyan a Board Member from

Assam and assisted by Alistair Sawyer of Chichester and Ruwantha Karunaratne (Ru) who is an old City of London hand in banking. Alistair is a 'tea evangelist' and is from Chichester, famous for the Hawthurst Gang who smuggled tea into Britain (more on this later). Ru is from a family of tea estate owners in Ceylon / Sri Lanka. An apt combination of Assam tea along with Ceylon being poured into a British cup (Alistair), so to speak. On a bitterly cold 19th of November 2017, the three tea men met outside St. Paul's Cathedral and visited all the 'tea streets' and documented with photos the old tea buildings and those that have replaced them. 'The Gherkin' is now on the old Jorehaut Tea Co., HQ building site. St. Mary's Axe does not exist any longer. St. Helen's Place has also changed drastically. 'The Cheese Grater' building on Leadenhall St., is also on old tea company sites. The tea expedition concluded at 'Plantation Place' which is the building that replaced 'Plantation House'. Our findings will go into a map for a 'tea walk'. We share images of the tea walk and the team on the job.

The Dunkirk of The East / Far Eastern Dunkirk



Graves of tea garden labourers in Upper Assam who gave their lives for the Dunkirk of the East

The film 'Dunkirk' was released in 2017 to appreciative reviews and being viewed by a generation that was not born during The War. Unknown to many is 'The Dunkirk of The East or Far Eastern Dunkirk'. TLTHA have researched it and it makes fascinating reading. The Japanese invaded British-held Burma in 1942. Thousands of civilians, military men, women and children had to walk thousands of miles into British India. It's a story rarely told, despite being one of the most difficult, desperate mass evacuations in human history. Astonishingly, some 220,000 refugees survived the harrowing journey, of up to 300 miles long; 4,268 are recorded to have died en route, from sickness, exhaustion, malnutrition, starvation or drowning – although the true death toll will never be known. During that winter, the Allies offered assurances to those in Burma there would be aeroplanes, or at least boats, for the evacuation, and many thousands did leave this way. But after the fall of Rangoon in January 1942, sea routes were closed. Then the Myitinka aerodrome – many people's last hope – was bombed out of action. The only option was to walk to India.

The tea industry along with the Indian Tea Association came forward to assist. The tea gardens lent 80,000 men. Planters and their wives gave up all their time to be present to take care of the refugees from Burma. There are harrowing tales of pain and hardship and death. Planter's wives cooked food and learnt first aid. Planters themselves gave logistical support and were there to receive and take care of the refugees. There is quite a lot to write about so we will mention only three tea planters.

Col. A H Pilcher CIE, MC, Manager at Khowang T.E., was called upon in February 1942 to lead 80,000 people from the tea industry to build the Dimapur/Kohima/Imphal/Tamu road (161 miles long through the jungle) in 8 weeks by May 1942. The amazing contribution made by the Assam Branch Indian Tea Association (ABITA) in providing the 80,000 labour force

is not remembered today. This was done at incredibly short notice in, initially to evacuate the 14th Army & civilians fleeing from Burma into India. Col. A. H. Pilcher rose to the occasion with his military background. The road was built, refugee camps were set up and airfields were later laid. Julian Pilcher (himself born in Khowang T.E.) the son of Col. A H Pilcher has copies of letters of appreciation from Lord Mountbatten and Field Marshal William Joseph Slim.

Gyles Mackrell who spent most of his life in Assam, where he was working as an area supervisor for Steel Brothers, a firm growing and exporting tea, was called upon to be part of the rescue effort. He had commanded the Planters TA Regiment, The Assam Valley Light Horse. In 1942, Mackrell mounted an operation to save refugees who were trapped by flooded rivers at the border with India using the only means available to get them across – elephants. He knew the terrain, spoke fluent Assamese, employed his own 'mahouts' and conducted the rescue. He saved more than 200 lives. He was awarded the George Cross. His story is well documented and kept at Cambridge University.

Alexander Beattie, the Manager of Woka Tea Estate, who with the help of several other planters and their wives; ensured that fresh food and tea was available for those coming in. He went into detail to even get Hindoo and Mohammedan cooks for the refugees who would only eat food cooked by their own. Mr. Beattie was the camp commandant looking into every detail. He always had a kind word and also had a pocketful of sweets for the refugee children. Unknown to others who were helping out Alexander Beattie was very unwell and this led to typhoid. He died soon after. He gave his life for the refugees.

Nothing is mentioned about this great evacuation and the role of the tea industry. All that remains is a simple cemetery in Upper Assam and unmarked graves.

United British Tea & Coffee Blenders Association Ltd.



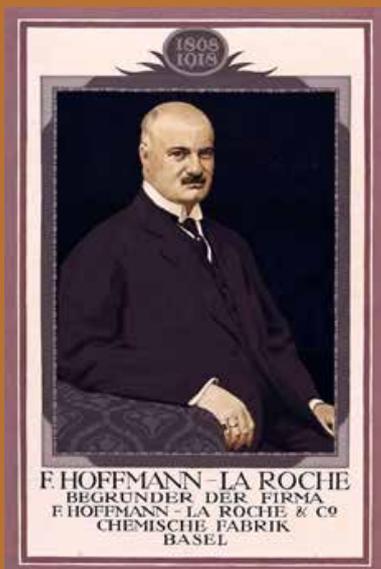
Tea Caddy from United British Tea and Coffee Blenders Association Ltd.

TLTHA were given a 100 year old tea chestlet (commonly called a tea caddy) packed by United British Tea & Coffee Blenders Association Ltd. 3 Great Winchester Street, London EC 2. It's remarkably in good condition destined for a future museum. The address now houses banks in The City. There is not much information available on this tea company except for a 1937 gazette notice.

MOKATE S.A.



Ms. Sylwia Mokrysz, Board Member of Mokate got in touch with TLTHA and extends their support. Mokate was established in 1900. Mokate is one of the largest tea companies in Europe exporting to over 40 countries. They have a very old connection with Thompson Llyod & Ewart Ltd., the world's oldest surviving tea brokers. Ms. Sylwia Mokrysz is a Member of TLTHA and has made a handsome donation. We are indeed grateful for her support of tea history.



F. Hoffman La Roche

Fritz Hoffmann-La Roche (24 October 1868 – 18 April 1920) was the founder of Hoffmann-La Roche Ltd.

TLTHA proudly assisted Mr. André Hoffmann of the Roche Group trace his ancestral tea holdings in Sri Lanka. Roche Group is a Fortune 500 company. The Roche family owned the Opalgalla Group of tea estates in Ceylon from 1914-30. The Roche Archives are very pleased to receive this information and Mr. André Hoffmann is planning a visit to his ancestral properties. Mr. Alexander Bieri, the Curator of the Roche Archives has been very helpful in assisting TLTHA. Incidentally tea was sold through pharmacies in the 17th and 18th centuries.

TLTHA acquires images of tea company share certificates from 1861 to 1973



1865 Nowgong Tea Co.



1913 Hattikhira Tea Co.



1897 The Amalgamated Tea Estates Co. Ltd. (part of James Finlays)

We are grateful to Mr. David Barry for his kind donation of images of tea company shares from 1861 to 1973. He kindly donated 122 images. This is an important part of tea history. Tea estates started with the pioneers around 1835.

Around 1861 companies in London and Scotland stepped in to take over these proprietary gardens and make them into companies. Shares were then issued.

Former Typhoo Tea factory in Digbeth to become university campus



Terry Lewis with the Mazawattee Rolls Royce

In a £ 200 million makeover, The Typhoo factory at Birmingham will soon become a digital hub and a university campus. The site was one of Birmingham's most prominent landmarks for decades, with tea production continuous from the 1930s until its closure by then owners Cadbury Schweppes in the late 1970s. Typhoo image from their website. Check out the old photos at : <http://www.ukurbex.co.uk/typhoo-tea-factory-birmingham/>

The Mazawattee Rolls Royce



Terry Lewis with the Mazawattee Rolls Royce

Terry Lewis of Queensland , Australia got in touch with TLTHA about a Rolls Royce that he owns. This was after he read an article on Mazawattee Tea by our Member Alan Davis. The 20 HP Rolls Royce (he calls her 'Alice") was bought new by Joseph Alexander Densham , an owner of Mazawattee Tea Co. in April 1926 .He sold the car in 1933 when it then came to Melbourne, Australia. The next owner after Joseph

Alexander Densham was a lady who was charged with bribery of government officers and tax evasion. When sold in 1939, the third owner shot a man stealing a jar of sweets from his shop! The fourth owner, was the son of a famous aviator and became a well-respected heart surgeon. It was driven until the 1940's and then allowed to deteriorate until the 1960's when it was rescued from a field in 1972 it was given a full restoration and new lease of life. Terry remarked 'Joseph Alexander Densham has long been the "mystery first owner" while Rolls Royce have excellent records showing a JA Densham of Wallington as the purchaser, but who was he? The local County Council vehicle registration records for that period have been destroyed'. Trying a variety of Christian name combinations on the internet eventually gave clues and the link to the Densham family and Mazawattee Tea.



David Lloyd Pigott Tea Company

Tea Sample envelope of David Llyod Pigott Tea Co.

Charles F Pigott BA (Arch); AA dip., has come forward to assist TLTHA with all its planned installations in The City. Charles is the only surviving son of Richard Pigott and part of the heritage of the David Lloyd Pigott Tea Company that played an enormous part as a family in the history of tea in London. Charles remembers the times as a young man when he briefly worked between the factory in Tooley Street and the offices at Battlebridge House. It's believed that it was the oldest family run business at one time. David Lloyd Pigott passed away in 1981. David Lloyd Pigott and Company of London, tea and coffee merchants also had offices at 32, 34, 35, 37 and 38, St. Mary-at-Hill, London, and E.C.3. You can imagine the size of the company. In 1960 a book entitled 'Two centuries. The story of David Lloyd

Pigott and Company of London, tea and coffee merchants, 1760-1960' was released. A sample envelope

O. Kees & Company

Martin MacLeish got intouch with TLTHA. His Father worked with O. Kees and Co. , between 1935 and 1965 based in Ibx House in the Minorities. The company was involved in physical commodities trading involving mainly tea from China, India and Ceylon. Martin seeks further information on the Co. TLTHA are trying to assist him. These great tea companies are no longer existent and TLTHA wishes to record their history. Should you have any information on O. Kees & Co., do get in touch.

The film 'Thomas McMeekin's Tea Times' – Andrew McMeekin traces his Grandfather's foot steps into tea.....



Thomas McMeekin

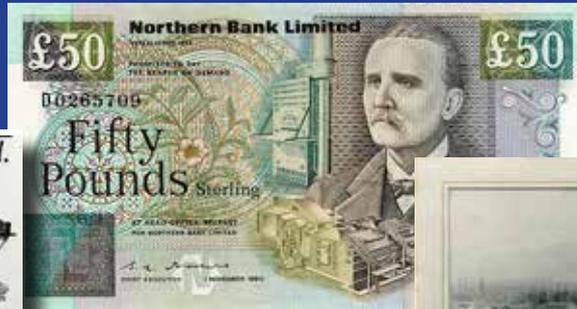


Andrew McMeekin

Andrew McMeekin the great grandson of the tea pioneer Thomas McMeekin produced and directed the film. Andrew traces the story of Thomas McMeekin's history in tea from present day Bangladesh to London. Thomas McMeekin set up and managed many of the key tea gardens in the Sylhet area. From his beginnings in Kew gardens in London Thomas McMeekin had gone to India, moving to Sylhet in 1869. He went on to acquire his own tea gardens. In his time he owned Patrakola, Kurmah and Madrapore gardens, known as the 'trio-estates', as well as Allynugger amongst others. Andrew joined TLTHA as a Member. We are very pleased to have him on board. The film 'Thomas McMeekin's Tea Times' can be viewed on YouTube.

Sir Samuel Davidson KBE – remembered by his tea machinery

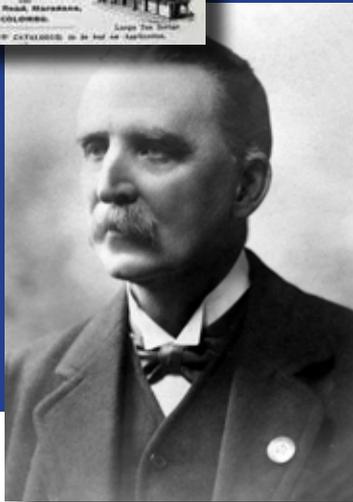
Bank note commemorating Davidson



Davidson machinery in 1888



The old factory in its hey days



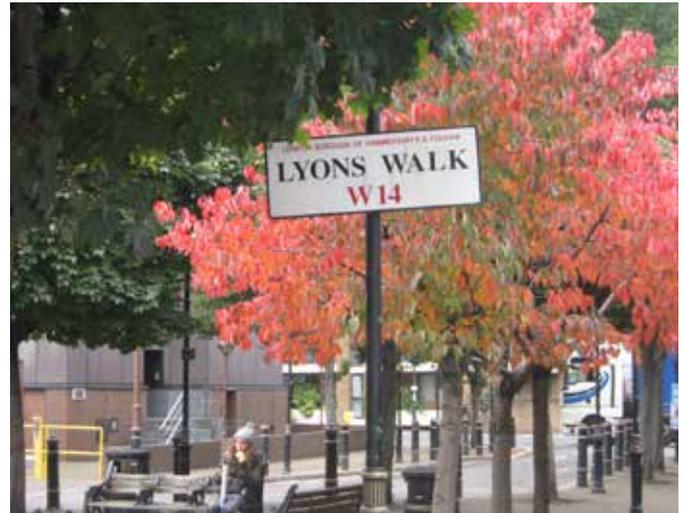
Sir Samuel Davidson



Plaque at the old works in Belfast

Sir Samuel Davidson , K.B.E., was the famous tea machinery manufacturer from Belfast. In 1864 he travelled to Cachar to join a tea company. He took up the post of assistant manager on a tea estate in Cachar, India, subsequently becoming manager and sole proprietor. He soon realized the inadequacy of the primitive methods then employed, and experience, combined with his inventive genius, suggested the adoption of mechanical apparatus for drying the tea leaf at the plantations. He gave up tea planting and returned to Ireland, where he founded the Sirocco Engineering Works, Belfast, in 1881, and evolved a complete range of mechanical appliances for every process employed in the production of tea. Not being satisfied with the centrifugal fans then in use, he carried out experiments and brought out the well-known "Sirocco" fan. The works were started with one small workshop and seven workmen and then

to 1,000 men in well-equipped works. When his son and heir James, who had been groomed to inherit the company, was killed at the Somme Samuel's health began to decline and his son in law Frederick Maguire who was already a senior manager led the company through the next generation. In 1988, the Davidson Group was acquired by the fan and heat exchanger firm James Howden & Co (established 1854 by the Scottish engineer James Howden) to form Howden Sirocco Limited, today known as Howden UK. Davidson's Sirocco Works were eventually vacated and in 2009 the property was demolished as part of the redevelopment of the Belfast Waterfront. The name of Davidson's former factory continues today in the Sirocco Works Football Club, a team formed in 1924 by works employees which continues to play today in the Northern Amateur Football League. All that remains is a small blue plaque !



J. Lyons and Company

Sir Joseph Lyons is best remembered as the man behind London's iconic Lyons teashops. As the Managing Director of J. Lyons and Company, he pioneered mass catering in Britain and had a particular impact on West Kensington, where the company's headquarters were based. A blue plaque can also now be found at 11a Palace Mansions on Hammersmith Road, where he lived in 1894-5. There is also a road named after him. Neville Lyons, grandnephew of Sir Joseph

Lyons has joined TLTHA as a Member and we are pleased to have him onboard. Neville's research on Joe Lyons and the catering company has led to the presentations that he gives on the company's wide and innovative achievements during its 100 year existence. Since 2008, he has given 170 of these presentations, covering the history of the company, the art-work in its teashops and the birth of LEO, the world's first ever business computer.

Happy Pot !



Tommy Cooper was one of Britain's funniest comedians. ... and would often hand taxi-drivers an envelope as he said cheerily: "Have a drink on me". Inside, they would find a tea-bag.

The Tea Man who 'Race Walked'

Michael Hinton an ex Gold Crown Foods of Liverpool man worked in the City in the 1960's/ 1970's. Michael commuted from Essex daily and got back late. He opened the London office along with John Hill and ex J.W. Clark 'market man'

on the corner of Blackfriars Bridge. The purpose was to deal with the sampling and London Auctions for the Liverpool HQ. Energetic Michael decide that he would participate in a branch of athletics namely ' race walking '. With no time on hand to practice, the lunch break was the only slot available. A training route was mapped out from Blackfriars Bridge to Westminster Bridge after a quick change at a communal toilet (not the most convenient place). After a few weeks of this routine, the building caretaker very kindly came up with the suggestion that instead of using the toilet Michael could change in his broom cupboard and he would give him a spare key. He said the cupboard was set in the wall of the main corridor and was a tiny 6'x6' room with a chair, electric light, as long as long as he didn't mind his brooms and cleaning materials it was at his disposal. Michael accepted. All went well, till he startled the office girls stepping 'out of the wall' in his shorts and vest!!! They finally got used to 'the tea man who steps out of a broom cupboard to walk quickly around the City'.