



1st July 2017

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'.

The Board and Members

We have 8 Board Members and The Board meets 4 times a year and has been reviewing our progress. We have 18 invited member and are now being joined by 4 more. They are Mr. Kavi Seth of J. Thomas & Co., Calcutta , India ; Ms Sylwia Mokrysz, Board Member of Mokate Poland, Ms. Caroline Hope of Tea & Scones, UK and Mr. George Fussey, Master at Eton College, the U.K. The Board recognizes their important contribution to the history of the tea trade. Our existing Members continue to support and encourage us.

Plaque No. 1 at St. Katharine Docks, London



Our first plaque commemorating the tea trade in London was unveiled at St. Katharine Docks, London. This was on the 22nd of Nov. 2016. Over 70 members of the tea trade, those connected through ancestors in the tea trade, The Sri Lankan Embassy and others attended the unveiling. The plaque was sponsored by James Finlay and we are indeed grateful.

The Board of The London Tea History Association at the unveiling of the plaques at St. Katharine Docks.

Plaque No. 2 at 'The Tea Building' Shoreditch , London



The artwork for the plaque and a view of 'The Tea Building' today

Our second plaque will be unveiled at 'The Tea Building' at Shoreditch, London. Approvals have been kindly given by the owners Derwent. This was the iconic Lipton's tea factory with the 'Tea' sign on top visible miles away. Brian Writer, a Board Member of TLTHA worked in this building.

Plaque No. 3 at Sir John Lyon House in London



We are pursuing permission to unveil a plaque at Sir John Lyon House. Many from the tea trade remember this building from the 1950's to the 1980's. Sir John Lyon House has no tea companies left and is now a residential and commercial block of flats.

Sir John Lyon House on the Thames today

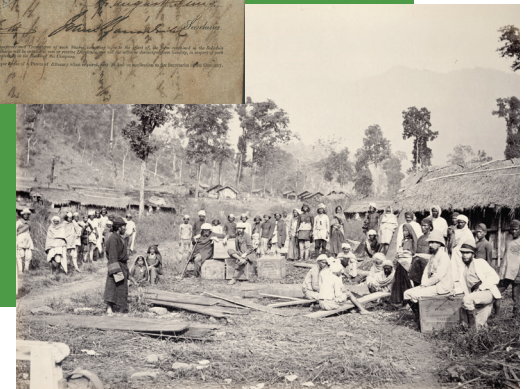
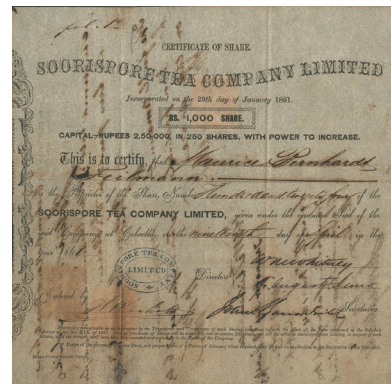
Plaque No. 4 at Plantation Place / Plantation House in the City of London



Plantation House soon after WW2 and today as Plantation Place. Note the terraced style of architecture retained in the new building

The iconic 'Plantation House' was the global centre of the tea trade from the 1930's till the 1970's. The grand old building was torn down and replaced with another magnificent building. TLTHA is pursuing the installation of a plaque on this iconic and historic tea building. The main financier of Plantation House was the 'King Of Tea', J. J. Bunting. His grandson is a Board Member of TLTHA. The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) supports TLTHA in our effort to commemorate Plantation House which was the 2nd largest commercial property in its time.

The Pioneers



A share certificate from 1861 and an image of pioneers in the Terai

Other Plaques

Suggestions have come in for plaques at the old Garraway's Shop at Cornhill, the old Brooke Bond HQ at Goulston Street, Leadenhall Market etc. These were all important tea related historical sites of the past.

BBC Radio 4

The London Tea History Association was featured in a radio documentary on the tea trade. This was hosted by the legendary Dan Saladino. Malcolm Ferris-Lay of The London Tea History Association accompanied Dan on a 'tea walk' around the City of London and spoke at length. Malcolm is our radio star and BBC Radio 4 goes out to more than 4 million listeners every day. It aired on 6th March. Please contact us for the link.

Tea Walk

Following the Radio 4 documentary TLTHA have been contacted to do a special 'tea walk' around the City of London. This is being planned to raise funds for our plaques.

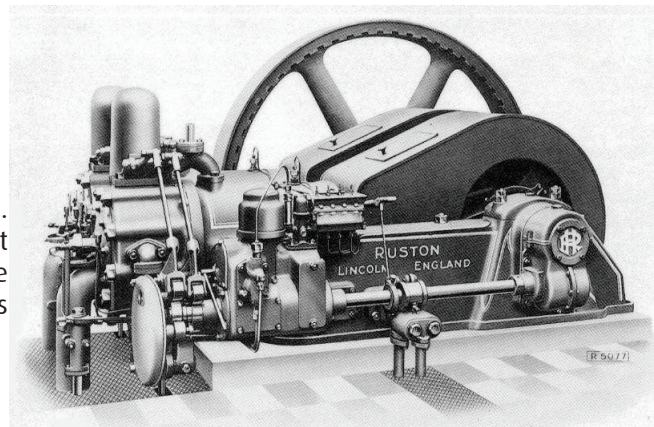
Tea history have ignored the pioneers who went all the way from Gt. Britain to India and Ceylon to grow and export tea. These pioneers took arduous journeys fighting malaria, tigers, the weather to reach and grow 'green gold'. TLTHA in their research have come across details of the pioneers. These were individuals who went around 1835 onwards. It was much later that companies ventured into Assam, Darjeeling and Ceylon to grow tea. TLTHA have also been gifted images of over 40 share certificates of these companies, the oldest being from 1861.

Marshalls & Ruston



Marshalls equipment on the way to tea estates in Ceylon. A Ruston's prime mover seen on many tea estates even today.

Marshalls were tea machinery suppliers from Gainsborough. They closed in the 1970's. TLTHA have managed to get hold of valuable images from their archives. Ruston made 'prime movers' for the tea factories. Valuable catalogues have been donated to TLTHA.



Union House, Liverpool



Two images of the tea themes plaques inside Union House.



Union House was built as offices in 1882 with several provision merchants among its original tenants, including the Liverpool agent of Tetley & Co tea merchants. The reception

had wonderful tea themed brass panels which would have been destroyed or sold. TLTHA contacted the new owners of the building and are pleased to confirm that the plaques will be preserved in the new building which is becoming a boutique hotel.

Tea Exhibition at Priory House in Dunstable

There is an exhibition on The History and Culture of Tea, launched in conjunction with the 150th Anniversary of the Ceylon Tea Industry. This brand new, fascinating exhibition 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 Councillor Peter Hollick, Town Mayor of Dunstable. The exhibition will feature various aspects about the global history of tea that lies behind our daily cuppa. You will find snippets on the people behind the industry, health benefits, other uses, how tea is drunk in different countries, the growth and production and some interesting, genuine pieces of tea memorabilia. There will also be the opportunity to indulge your senses by touching and smelling different types of tea. Lastly and by no means least, you can tease your tastebuds to a variety of different teas in the Dunstable Tea range at Priory House Tea Rooms.



MacDonald Gill -The Tea Maps



MacDonald Gill's unique tea maps.

MacDonald Gill a well-known artist in the 1930's was commissioned by The Empire Marketing Board to paint special tea maps. There are all in a very unique style. Caroline Walker has kept the memory alive by hosting a website and organizing several exhibitions a year, in memory of her Grand Uncle, MacDonald Gill. Caroline has kindly donated images of these maps to TLTHA.

Mincing Lane Qualified (MLQ)

At it's peak the tea trade in Gt. Britain had 'tasters', 'brokers', 'visiting agents - V.A.'s and of course 'No.1 or Burrasaheb'. There was also 'company saheb' and 'mistrysaheb', being the managers and engineers from Head Office. We now have a new set of tea titles from 'Master of Tea' to 'Tea Expert' and many more. The TLTHA now realizes that 3 Board Members and 3 Members have 'MLQ's behind their names! Well, MLQ stands for 'Mincing Lane Qualified', a qualification coined by a Sri Lankan management trainee after he went back to Ceylon after his training at Mincing Lane.

Clive Haines donates his books

TLTHA are grateful to our Member, Clive Haines for donating all his tea books. This is proving very useful in the writing of a book by a Board Member on the 'business of tea'.

Michael Hinton writes his story

Michael Hinton was in the British tea trade in the period 1956-1973. Michael has donated his writings of this period to TLTHA. It makes fascinating reading. We are grateful.

English Tea Rooms in China

Caroline Hope, our new Member runs classes and walks in London for tea connoisseurs. Many students are from China. She's discovered that some of these Chinese students are going back to China to set up 'English Tea Rooms' – a complete reversal as the Chinese brought in bulk teas to Gt. Britain.

Pugh & Co.

Pugh and Co., were grocers and tea dealers of Rood Lane, City of London, from 1814 to 1836. Martin Prowse of Scotland contacted TLTHA for assistance in tracing the business areas where his ancestors worked. TLTHA assisted Martin with the information and he followed with family members on a tea walk in the areas where Pugh & Co., did their business.

'Creepers in Ceylon' – The Forsythe Story

Jayne Taylor a Member of TLTHA sent a biography of her Grand Father, William Forsythe who went out from Belfast to join cousins in Ceylon in 1878. William Forsythe started as a 'creeper in Ceylon' and rose to become an owner of tea estates in Ceylon. The memoirs make fascinating reading.

Bunting Family trace their relatives

TLTHA assisted relatives of 'the King Of Tea', J.J. Bunting, to trace each other. The extended family had not met for decades.

The Tea Man with the Lear Jets

Bahadur Shamji of Kenya is the legendary 'Chai Shamji'. In his time, he used to buy teas from Mombasa, Dar es Salaam, Limbe, Salisbury (in those days) and also ex-factory from Gurùè in Mozambique and Goma in Congo. He had his own plane to move around. Fed up of the tiredness of turbo props he graduated to Lear Jets in the 1970's. He finally had three Lear's over the years. TLTHA had the privilege of meeting this great legend.

Donations

We have plans to put up 4 plaques in the City of London. It is an expensive process. We request and welcome all donations for this worthy cause. Please come forward and assist us. Do contact us for exclusive sponsorship of plaques in the name of your company or in memory of tea men and women.

Archives

Please contact us for any archival material that you can donate or lend to TLTHA for research.

Happy Pot

Along with research on the history of the business of tea, happy memories come back of the humour of those days.



A Visiting Agent (V.A) from the London offices visits a company owned tea estate in Assam. The garden manager is at his best, the tea bushes look brilliant, the factory is spic and span and 'the visit has gone off well'. The garden manager mentions that they would meet for 'drinks before dinner'. This does happen and the garden manager says 'I have some Scotch Whisky and its on company account'. The V.A now has a 'suitable remark' for his report and asks 'Which account is that'. The garden manager quickly answers ...'ah well it's called 'pest control'. You know the rest.....

Sir Colin Cambell ,8th Bt. of Aberuchill, was Chairman of James Finlay for several years. Known affectionately as "Sir Cumference", Sir Colin was a substantial figure in every sense. In the days of rare and expensive 'trunk calls', he called James Finlay Nairobi from Glasgow to find out about fertilizer consumption or something mundane as that. A young management trainee from the U.K., answers that 'he will send it by post to Glasgow in a week'. Sir Colin obviously irritated asks 'Is there a fool on the line....?'. The management trainee responds 'Well, not on this side....'. Sir Colin used to jokingly narrate this story often. You can guess what happened to the management trainee..... off to a remote garden for 6 months we guess.

In the late 1800's till the 1st World War were the boom years of the tea trade. Mazawattee Tea Co., had a long term contract with the railways and every platform in the British Isles has the eye catching advertisements. A cartoon of the era depicts a distraught old lady, having missed her destination, bitterly complaining to a porter that every station was either called 'Gentleman' or 'Mazawattee'!

Chip Cathcart Kay, the legend from Satemwa T.E., runs a boutique hotel on the tea garden. He believes in giving all guests 'the complete tea experience'. Mingling with the guests during breakfast, he asks the guest from the U.K. 'What tea do you drink in the U.K.'. The guest says 'English breakfast tea'. Chip insists 'Ah wellwhere is it fromww?'. The guest says 'Yorkshire as the tin says so'..... . So much for solid marketing by Bettys and Taylors.

While researching at the National Archives in India, TLTHA come across lots of material from British India. It's all in an index under 'Tea'. Right at the end where 'Tea' ends, 'Teeth' begins with the file reference of '1885-1889: Teeth: Afghanistan....supply of a set of false teeth to The Emir of Afghanistan in April 1885'. That's really called record keeping!