



The Joe Lyons Story Food for Thought

Synopsis for Presentation by Neville Lyons

The Lyons Teashops, the Corner House Restaurants and, of course, the Nippy waitresses have become part of social history. But this is only part of the story.....

The power point presentation, with archival photos, stretches from 1887 to 1990's, from the time when Joseph Lyons, a born entrepreneur, but with no previous experience of the catering industry, co-founded a company to sort out the indifferent catering at national exhibition halls of the late Victorian era. From small beginnings, the company progressed into catering for the general public and was to become the first 'food empire' in the world.

We shall hear about all the main activities throughout the history of the company, including those that are not so well known, such as catering for the 1901 Cup Final at Crystal Palace, the largest banquet for 8000 Freemasons at Olympia, for 15,000 guests at Royal Garden Parties and the in-house development and manufacture of the world's first ever business computer, LEO.

The talk includes amusing anecdotes and many surprises along the way.

The speaker is Neville Lyons. There is a family relationship: his grandfather and Sir Joseph Lyons (knighted in 1911) were first cousins. Although Neville was not personally involved with the company business, this relationship was a driving force towards the research that led to his talks.

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- **Neville Lyons** Report on Neville Lyons lecture to London Appreciation Society January 2020 by John F. Mann. "Mr Neville Lyons gave a superb and well researched lecture on the history of J Lyons and Co" to a crowded gathering of almost 90 London Appreciation Society members. He mentioned Salmon and Gluckstein's early days in the tobacco industry, their decision to become a catering company, the arrival of Joe Lyons as chairman, in 1887 catering for huge exhibitions in Glasgow, and Paris, Palace Garden Parties, in 1894 the first of some 250 tea shops, in 1909 four handsome Corner Houses, the highly trained and elegant Nippy waitresses of the 1920s, manufacturing and food production on a huge scale at Cadby Hall, in 1973 Tower Hill the last of some forty high class hotels, along-side innovative social, medical and sports services for the staff. Managing this huge and complex enterprise prompted the company to recruit some of the most forward thinking technologists of the day to develop the LEO, the Lyons Electronic Office, the world's first business computer. One of our members, Ray Shaw, was one of the team who built LEO and was there to enjoy Neville's riveting account" of this ground-breaking company, whose tea shops and corner houses were familiar haunts for many of

this audience. Neville's magnificent slides brought the whole story to life. .."a most fascinating and enjoyable afternoon. I do hope he will return to repeat his talk for the 80 members who were left sadly on the waiting list this time. Many thanks for arranging this splendid lecture. The best I've heard in recent times"