

# The 'Victory Tea Company' Kidderminster

1931 to 1965

Proprietor Ernest Hill

Prepared by Bob Millward from documents donated to the  
Kidderminster & District Archaeological & Historical Society.

## 1951

### 'How did the Victory Tea Company fare in 1951?'

The answer to this question is - We don't know! for, unfortunately, the collection of documents in the file for 1951 is incomplete and none refer to dates after the end of March. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring the limited information that is available for signs of what might have happened to Hill's business, as well adding to the social history aspects that permeate, and accompany, these accounts of the Victory Tea Company over the years.

Let's consider the Tea Trade first. Between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 2<sup>nd</sup> February tea supplies came mainly from **Barber's Teas Ltd.** but **James Ashby & Sons Ltd** also contributed a small amount towards the total of **3,791 lbs** of loose tea purchased. Extrapolation suggests that this would at least match or exceed orders of about 14,000 lbs for each the previous three years. A similar conclusion can be drawn about Coffee and confectionery products. So there is no sign of a downturn in the trading prospects for 1951 despite the lack of evidence. We do know that Hill was expecting to pack and sell large quantities of tea for, in March, he had two invoices for large quantities of 'End Labels' from **Smith Brothers Whitehaven Ltd.** These were used to seal the bags of tea that he would have been planning to pack in the next few months.

We know even less about tea sales because there were only four letters or postcards sent to Hill by private customers from just three locations: **Kidderminster, Kinver and Dudley.** Sales to local businesses are a little more informative and **Permit Certificates** tell us that in January **Brinton's Canteen** were allowed to buy **486 lbs** of tea, **Mrs G.J. Everton**, at the off-licence, in **Arley 4 lbs** and **Mrs A. Peacock**, Church View, **Clent 6 lbs**. This can be compared to the **1,793 lbs** sold to businesses throughout **1950**. The permit data also shows that the long standing customer **Central Café** of Bewdley bought no tea in 1951. Nevertheless, Hill seems to have been on course to rival the 1950 figures.

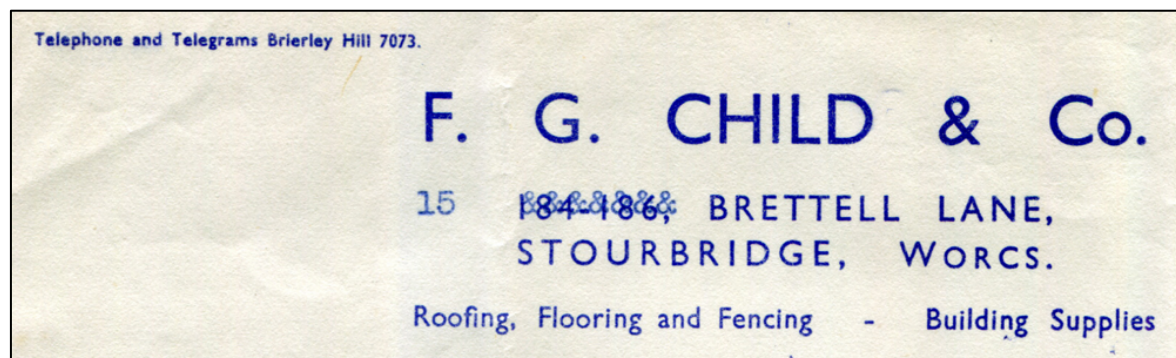
The **Ministry of Food** permit system was complicated and the amount of tea businesses and institutions were allowed to buy changed from time to time. Permit holders were advised of changes which were often related to 8-week periods - as shown in this information card for March 1951.

On 14<sup>th</sup> March 1951 the **Ministry** announced a rise in the price of tea: "*The controlled retail prices of tea are to be increased by 4d a lb. as from 20 May 1951,*

MINISTRY OF FOOD		G. 3664
<b>Value of Buying Permits and Authorisations for the 8-week period beginning 25th March, 1951</b>		
1. Holders of buying permits on forms CP2 and/or authorisations on forms EA2/SA2 are advised that for the 8-week period beginning 25th March, 1951, these documents will have the following values:-		
Cooking fat Butter Margarine	} ... ..	Amount stated thereon.
Fats ... .. (where bracketed on EA2/SA2)	...	Amount stated thereon. Not more than $\frac{2}{5}$ ths in the form of butter and not more than $\frac{1}{5}$ th in the form of cooking fat.
Cheese	... ..	Amount stated thereon.
Sugar	... ..	$1\frac{1}{2}$ times the amount stated thereon.
Bacon	... ..	Amount stated thereon.
Tea	... ..	Amount stated thereon.
Meat (on EA2/SA2 issued to establishments)	... ..	$\frac{5}{8}$ ths times the value stated thereon.
<b>TO ALL RETAILERS AND WHOLE-SALERS OF COOKING FAT, BUTTER, MARGARINE, CHEESE, SUGAR, BACON AND TEA, AND TO ALL ESTABLISHMENTS</b>		
21st March, 1951.		
B973 M25367/4992 3/51 208,650 D&Co. 22/0		

with a corresponding reduction from 1/- to 8d a lb. in the **flat rate tea subsidy** announced on 9 Nov 1950. The effect of this decision is that a **considerable part of the increased cost** of tea purchases in 1950, which have so far been borne by way of subsidy, **will be borne by consumers.**" Hill was at that time paying 2/7½d per lb - so a rise of 4d was **significant.**

As noted in earlier years Hill collected many tea chests that he was keen to sell on. **Mr F. G. Child of F.G. Child & Co, 15 Brettell La, Stourbridge**, wrote on 3 January "We require empty Tea Chests for export packing purposes. Can you supply us with these from time to time. Please state price either delivered or collected from you." We learn no more of this possible transaction.



As far as transport was concerned invoices show that the van **GNP 347** was serviced by the **Kidderminster Motors Garage** three times: **A.** for a 1,000 mile service on 26<sup>th</sup> January: - Top up engine & gear oil. Clean & adjust plugs. Fit new Points & Distributor, Adjust and retune. Adjust brakes. Wash and leather van £1.18.1; Mileage 36,038, **B.** 9<sup>th</sup> February: for a puncture repair 5/-, **C.** 23<sup>rd</sup> February: 1,000 miles service. Change engine Oil. Wash & Leather. £1.5.5; Mileage 37,109.

We are also able to update our monitoring of **petrol prices** from the receipts still being issued by the **Foley Park Garage**. The price per gallon of 3/1½d carried over from 1950 changed to 3/2d on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1951.

Other regular outgoings related to the business include the **Borough Rates**. For the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1951, Hill paid rates on his Holman Street Victory Tea Company premises in two instalments of **£6.17.8d** - at a rate of 19/8d in the pound on the rateable value of **£14**.

**1950—51. SECOND INSTALMENT**

**Borough of Kidderminster.**

**DEMAND NOTE FOR GENERAL RATE AND WATER CHARGES**

MR./MRS./MISS	or OCCUPIER
Victory Tea Co. 13 Holman Street KIDDERMINSTER.	
Situation	Rateable Value £ 14

The COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF KIDDERMINSTER demand payment of —

1. The Second of two equal instalments of a General Rate at Nineteen Shillings and Eightpence in the pound, for the financial year ending 31st March, 1951.
2. The Water Rents and Charges for the half-year ending 31st March, 1951.
3. Arrears (if any) of former rates, now due from you as below :—

Few, if any, will remember **The Shropshire, Worcestershire & Staffordshire Electric Power Company** which was once responsible for supplying Kidderminster with electricity. They had purchased and replaced the **Kidderminster & District Electric Supply Co Ltd.** early in 1939, and themselves were superseded by the **Midlands Electricity Board (MEB)** in 1949.

**SAFETY.**  
Do not use portable electrical appliances in a bathroom, or earth apparatus, including radio sets, to a gas pipe. Advise us before connecting new apparatus.

225650130  
E. HILL ESQ.,  
THE VICTORY TEA CO.,  
13, HOLMAN STREET,  
KIDDERMINSTER, WORCS.

**ELECTRICITY SERVICE CENTRE,**  
4, VICAR STREET,  
KIDDERMINSTER. Tel. 3621.  
Branch Centres:  
40, LOAD STREET, BEWDLEY. Tel. 195.  
MARTLEY. Tel. Wichenford 86.

**Dr. to MIDLANDS ELECTRICITY BOARD**

ACCOUNT REFERENCE 225650130 / S W S	ACCOUNT NOW DUE CREDIT CANNOT BE EXTENDED AFTER APL 27	E s. d. NIL	DISCOUNT—IF ACCOUNT IS PAID ON OR BEFORE CREDIT DATE
UNITS CONSUMED 48	1951 PERIOD ENDED MAR 6	RATE PER UNIT OR MAXIMUM DEMAND 5	E s. d. 1. 0. 0 1. 3
LIGHTING METER			TOTAL 1. 1. 3

Who recalls visiting the **MEB show room** in Vicar Street to pay bills or look at the range of appliances on display: cookers, refrigerators, washing machines, tumble dryers etc.? Maybe you purchased one of these items from there.

**Insurance** is a normal precaution to take to avoid unforeseeable losses. Hill was no exception to this and in March of 1951 received an Endorsement to his **household policy** with **The Westminster Fire Office**. The total sum insured by Policy was increased to **£500** from 26<sup>th</sup> March. The Annual **premium** was payable on 29<sup>th</sup> September was increased to **£1.5.0d** with a one off top up payment of 5/-. The goods insured were:

Household Goods & personal Effects	£400
Television Set	£60
Radiogram	£40

The Westminster Fire Office also covered Hill's **Motor Insurance**. The annual **premium** for his **Fordson Van GNP347** payable on 1 January was £9.15.0d less a no claim discount of £1.19.0d.

**The Westminster Fire Office.**  
A.D.1717.  
Branch Office :  
**ACCIDENT DEPT.**

**MOTOR INSURANCE.**

POLICY NO.	RENEWAL DATE.	PREMIUM.	YEAR OF RENEWAL.
M1602892 Ernest Hill Ltd The Victory Tea Co	1st Jan 1951	9. 15/- "No Claim" Discount 1 19/- Nett 7. 16/-	1951

Received payment of the above-mentioned premium for the renewal of the policy for one year from the date shown above.

Date: 3rd Jan 1951 For the Company, Agent.

With Thanks

Ernest Hill's interest with music, particularly **Church Music** and organ playing, have been mentioned often in earlier chapters - and this year is to be no exception.

A letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> February came to Hill from 'Ted' (*Mr E.H. Forshaw who was Organist and Choirmaster at St John's Church at the time*) asking if he would play for him on 8<sup>th</sup> April (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Easter). Also, in an undated letter, he was informed of rearrangements for two meetings planned for the **Kidderminster & District Organists' and Choirmasters' Association**. The next meeting would be on "*Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March Wordsley Parish Church, Stourbridge, at 6.00 p.m. with a short organ recital given by P. F. Simpkins, and opportunity for trying the organ will be given to members. The Cottage Café is recommended. Wordsley Church on the Stourbridge to Wolverhampton Rd is a short bus ride from the town centre.*"

Helpfully appropriate details of the **bus service** between Kidderminster and Stourbridge were supplied:

<u>Route No.</u>	<u>Leave Kidder.</u>	<u>Arrive Stourbridge.</u>
885	3.35 p.m.	4.05 p.m.
315	3.40 p.m.	4.10 p.m.
311	4.05 p.m.	4.35 p.m.
311	4.35 p.m.	5.05 p.m.
315	4.40 p.m.	5.10 p.m.
311	5.05 p.m.	5.40 p.m.
	<u>Leave Stourbridge</u>	<u>Arrive Kidder</u>
885	8.00 p.m.	8.30 p.m.
311	8.30 p.m.	9.00 p.m.
315	8.45 p.m.	9.15 p.m.
311	9.00 p.m.	9.30 p.m.

The second meeting arranged was at the **New Meeting Church** in Kidderminster on 28<sup>th</sup> April at 6.30 p.m. when there would be a discussion on "**The Problem of the Choir Boy**".

Members were also reminded "*that the Annual Subscription of 7/6d is due & should be paid to the Hon. Treasurer Mr G. E. Howell, 36 St John's Avenue. Signed Hon. Sec. Ed. H. Forshaw*"

### **Concluding remarks for 1951**

The fact that a significant amount of the Victory Tea Company Documents for 1951 are missing, means that there cannot be any certainty about how the business fared in 1951, nor how well it was prepared and ready to meet 1952. This blip in the documentation **couldn't get worse in the coming years could it?**

But, of course, **it could - and did!** The collection contains **no documents whatsoever** for the years **1952 to 1954**. Files for **1955 to 1960** survive but **none after that** albeit that Ernest Hill's daughter Roselyn has verified that the Victory Tea Company carried on trading **until 1965**.