

# 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.

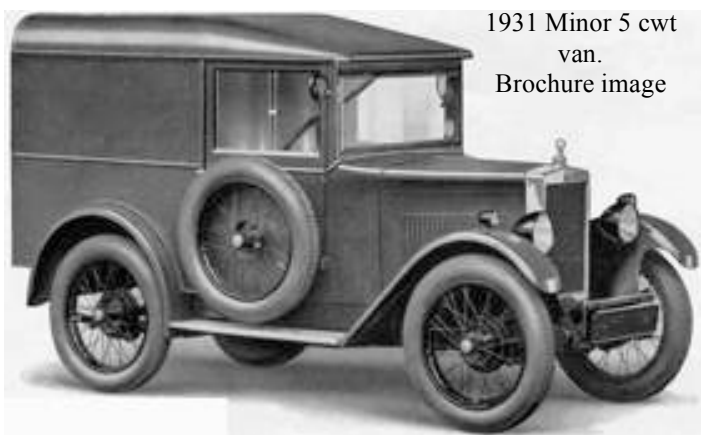
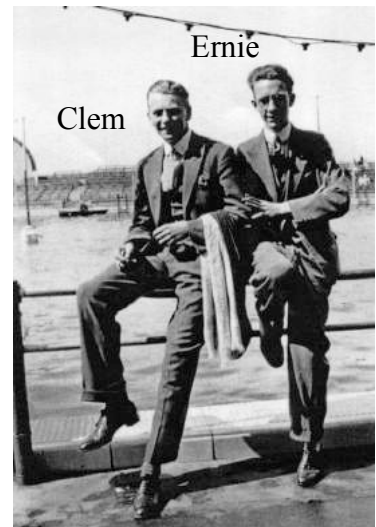
## 1931

### Founding of the business

Ernest (Ernie) Hill established **The Victory Tea Company** at 39 Sutton Road, Kidderminster in 1931; the first entry in the ledger book was on 11<sup>th</sup> August of that year. It is not surprising that there had already been some preparatory work before that date. Hill was a native of Kidderminster and had been employed as a clerk with Naylor's Ltd (1920-1924) and then with The Anglo-Scottish Sugar Corporation (1925-1929). From 1929 until 1931 he had been employed as the Leicester Representative of the Ceylon Tea Growers Association Ltd. of Nottingham, and it seems that the early plans for his Kidderminster tea business were laid in Leicester.

Correspondence with Mrs Radcliffe, of 24 Northumberland Avenue, Leicester, makes it clear that Ernest Hill set in place enquiries, before 25<sup>th</sup> July 1931, about the feasibility of registering the trade name 'Victory Tea'. The response from Lionel E Lavis of Allen House, Newarke Street, Leicester, was unfavourable because it was deemed too similar to a Trade name already in use: 'The Victoria Tea Company'. This didn't deter him because he went on to use the name for the life of the business.

Meanwhile in Kidderminster **C. H. Andrews** (Clement or Clem) had, on Hill's behalf, already placed an advertisement in the Kidderminster Shuttle for the week July 18-25, for a Canvasser. Andrews was an accountant and Insurance Agent of 147 Park Street and was to become Hill's Financial Advisor. They were close friends and had grown up in Kidderminster living close to each other in Park Street. They both went to the nearby King Charles I Grammar School and became staunch members of the Conservative Club and the Old Carolians Association. Together they developed a side line selling carpets to Victory Tea Company customers and business contacts, especially when carpets were in short supply after the war.



1931 Minor 5 cwt  
van.  
Brochure image

Hill purchased a Morris Minor Van on August 6<sup>th</sup> 1931 from **H. A. Hamshaw** Ltd, Coach builders and Motor Engineers, also of Leicester. They were Morris agents. He paid £110 for the van, £1/3/4d delivery charges and 10/6d for painting a name on the van. His address was given as: 14 Princess Road, Leicester. The price for a new Morris Minor van had been £110 since April 1931. Tax and Insurance for three months cost £4/7/6d and £2/14/9d, respectively.

In readiness for the opening of his Tea business in Kidderminster, and still in Leicester, Hill ordered business cards from H.E. Burley, General & Commercial Printers of Loughborough Rd., Leicester on August 8<sup>th</sup>.

All Cars left on our Premises at Owner's own Risk and Responsibility.

FROM **REES & GRIFFITHS,**  
Coach Builders.

Our Ref. *B394* PHONE No. 80.

Your Ref. \_\_\_\_\_

LOMBARD STREET, STOURPORT, WORCS.

To *Mr Hill* *Aug 12<sup>th</sup> 1931*

Dear Sir,  
We thank you for your enquiry & have much pleasure  
in quoting as follows. I hope to receive your order  
which shall have our best attention.

Painting & Varnishing Morris Minor Van *Green* £ 3 - 10 -

Whiting in gold or white as per your instruction £ 2 - 10 -

*Sum Total*  
*[Signature]*

He soon seemed to have second thoughts about the appearance of the van because he engaged coach builders **Rees & Griffiths** of Lombard St, Stourport, to paint and varnish the van in Green with writing in Gold on White. The invoice dated 20<sup>th</sup> August was for £6 after a quotation given on 12<sup>th</sup> August. The first service was carried out by **TBC** the Kidderminster Morris agents on the 19<sup>th</sup> September and cost 17/1d. The invoice records the registration number of the van to be JFI 983. The work involved: changing engine oil (FOC), Adjusting tappets (2/6d), Tightening cylinder head (1/-), Checking clutch fingers for clearance (3/6d), Checking gearbox and axle for oil (1/-), ½ pint gear oil (2/6d), Greasing over car (2/6d), Checking steering for track (2/-), topping up battery (6d) and ½ gallon Castrol XL (3/9d). Later 13/- was repaid as 'amount charged in error'. It

seems that the labour on the first service should have been free but not the materials.

Stationery was soon a priority and an order for 1000 quarto memos in Green type (see on the right) was placed with **The Hepworth Press**, of 7 Bull Ring, Kidderminster, followed by 250 similarly designed foolscap sheets.

His first purchase of tea stocks was from **The United Kingdom Tea Co. Ltd.** of 1 Paul St, London E.C. 2, who received his order on 11<sup>th</sup> August for 70lb of tea in ½lb Green bags and 30lb in White 1lb bags. The tea cost him 1/5½d per lb. The tea orders to this company continued until 10<sup>th</sup> September 1931 by which time a total of 300lb of tea had been purchased for £21/17/6d. However, Hill changed his tea supplier after that date and from 7<sup>th</sup> October he began acquiring tea from **Summerfield & Co.**, Tea Importers, Exporters & Blenders of 34 Stanley Street, Liverpool.

The initial order from Summerfield was for two varieties of tea: a 10lb box of Ceylon B.O.P. Flixton tea at 1/6d per lb and 100lb of Digestive Tips No.30 at 1/4d per lb. The total cost was £7/8/4d less discount 1/9d. In contrast to the pre-packed tea purchased from the United Kingdom Tea suppliers that derived from Summerfield was loose tea packed in crates. A total of 1140lb of tea was supplied by Summerfield up to the end of 1931 for £75/2/1d (plus 1lb of Green Tea at 2/6d).

Two letters followed which give an early insight into the Summerfield Tea Company and Ernest Hill's business. The first dated 19<sup>th</sup> October 1931 includes: ".... as just you are starting the business, 14 days would be a satisfactory period less discount of 2d in the £ (1¼% is for cash only). We shall be pleased to post a sample of Tea immediately we receive the water - we learn from our **Mr Scholefield** that there is a big contrast between Leicester water and yours." The second was

**The Victory Tea Co.**  
(INCORPORATED IN ENGLAND)  
Blenders and Packers.

39, SUTTON ROAD,  
KIDDERMINSTER, *Sussex* 1932.

*Mr J. B. Hill.*  
*Kidderminster.*  
Dear Sir,

Enclosed please find cheque value  
£ 12/11/5 in payment of your invoice dated 20/8/32

Receipt will oblige,  
Yours faithfully,  
*[Signature]*  
The Victory Tea Co.

B 594 T. B. Co. Ltd. (Derick Burcher),  
Automobile Agents, Engineers,  
and Coach Painters.  
Head Office: *London*  
ONE ACCOUNT OF  
DERICK BURCHER  
(T. B. Co. Ltd.)  
For *[Signature]* Tel. 711 & 712

OUR SPECIALITY: "VICTORY" PEKOE TIPS.



dated three days later and reads: "*We thank you for the bottle of Kidderminster water. We have tasted various Teas in the water and are sending a sample which we have found very good indeed.*"

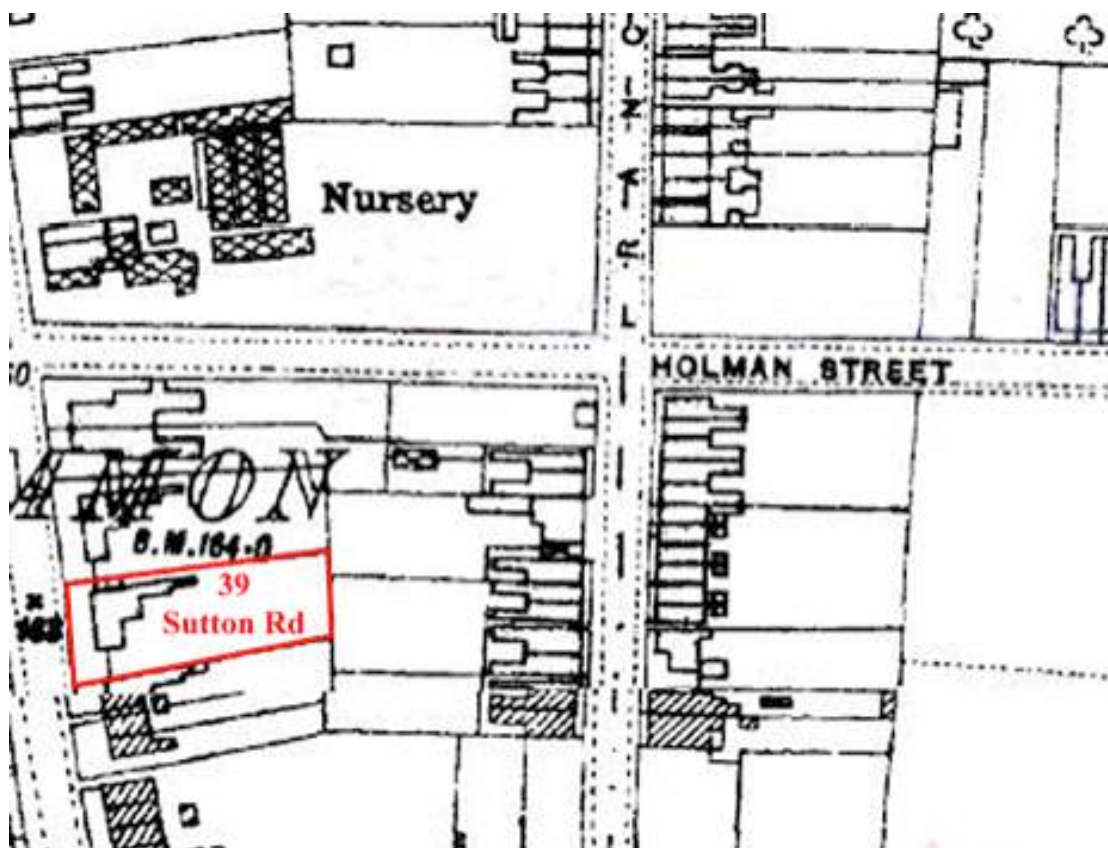
We learn two things from these letters. First, we are reminded that Ernest Hill had been working for a tea company in Leicester prior to his opening his business in Kidderminster, and that Summerfield & Co. believed that he was basing his tea orders on his experience of the Leicester tea trade. Second, Summerfield appear to be acting very professionally in supporting Hill to choose his tea stocks in a more scientific manner.

In order to accommodate the loose tea from Summerfield, Hill needed bags and cartons into which to pack the tea. On October 9<sup>th</sup> he ordered 20,000 8x5 Half Patent M.G. Bags costing £2/15/- and shortly after on the 17<sup>th</sup> 10,250 'Victory Tea' Cartons 6 x 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> (printed as per sample) costing £17/18/9d. Later In November an invoice was received from **J.C. Crowther**, Paper bag Manufacturers & printers at 115 Middlesex St, London for: 2000 1lb Green transparent Tea Bags, lined M.G. Sulphite, printed in B.Blue, cost £2/13/6d. There was no mention about machinery for packing of the tea, although the ledger reveals that scales were purchased on October 10<sup>th</sup> for £2/19/-.

All in all, from inception of the business in August until the end 1931, the Victory Tea company purchased 1305lb of standard tea from its two sources at a total cost of £96/19/7d. In the same period income from sales totalled: £101/10/9d. So the Company showed a small excess of sales over purchases in the first few months after setting up the business but not yet sufficient to cover expenses.

It seems that Hill took on some form of paid help in October because, from 24<sup>th</sup> of that month, the ledger shows weekly wages being paid the amounts varying between £1/18/9d and £2/4/5d. The accounts also reveal small sales of tea to the **Tonic Tea Co.** of Leicester whose proprietor was **Maynard Worley**. Ernest, in his time in Leicester as a tea representative, would have contact with Maynard, but later documentation in this collection, makes it clear this that they were friends as well as business colleagues and that their respective families met on a regular basis over the years.

**Note:** 39 Sutton Road was the home of Ernest's parents Major Warren and Catherine Hill. The map below shows that this was a detached property on a good sized plot. As we shall see later its proximity to Holman Street was significant.



**1931 to 1965**  
**Proprietor Ernest Hill**

1932



Ancillary materials were also required to run the business. 2,000 1lb Green Transparent tea bags (printed to Victory Tea Co. specifications and lined with plain M.G Sulphite bags) were ordered from **J.C. Crowther & Co.** of London at 29/9d per 1000. **Livingstone Bros. Ltd.** of Glasgow had an order for 25,000 plain M.G. bags at 2/10d per 1000. 10,000 of the latter bags were delivered directly to Summerfield & Co and the remainder to Victory tea. **Boxfoldia Ltd.** of Birmingham supplied 10,913 ½ lb **tea cartons** and **Barringer Wallis & Manners Ltd.** of Mansfield provided 168 Fancy Tins: Canton (5d each) and Manchu (4½d each). Tin wrappers (black print on green paper) and business cards were bought by from **Holland & Co.** of 21 Southampton Street, Leicester, so maintaining Hill's link with that city.

TELEPHONE: NO. 311 KIDDERMINSTER NO. 8 TENBURY.	<u>INVOICE.</u>	No. L/ 9925
<b>DR. TO T. B. C. LTD., (DERICK BURCHER)</b>		
AND AT <b>TENBURY WELLS.</b>  Sole District Agents for <b>MORRIS PRIVATE and</b> <b>COMMERCIAL CARS.</b>	<b>AUTOMOBILE DISTRIBUTORS,</b>  <b>STATION HILL,</b>  <b>KIDDERMINSTER.</b>	Sole Distributors of FIAT & RILEY CARS for the Counties of Worcestershire, Shropshire, Merioneth Montgomery and part of Herefordshire.
<b>The Victory Tea Co.</b> Sutton Rd Kidderminster		
DATE <b>April. 26th., 1932.</b>		Terms: Monthly A/c. Net.

Local businesses were not neglected. The Morris van that Hill purchased for tea deliveries and other business uses, may have been sourced in Leicester but he used **TBC** of Oxford Street and Station Hill for servicing. One of their invoices in September 1931 tells us the van had a Leicester registration number plate: JF 1983. It also seems that the van suffered a headlong collision in early 1932, for an invoice from TBC records a charge of £12/16/5d for work done in January including:

- 'Removing chassis frame & fitting replacement'
- 'stripping down axle beam to straighten, and reassembling'
- '1 new N/S front spring'
- '1 new number plate bar and new painted number plate'
- '1 front dumb iron splash guard'
- 'straightening radiator shell'
- 'repair N/S front wheel'.

**G.T. Cheshire & Sons Ltd** provided a small amount of stationery towards the end of 1932 and there was also an invoice from **Carpet Trades Ltd** for 7½ yds of brown Axminster carpet costing £2/1/10d; sold to C.H. Andrews, Accountants Office. We are to see in later years that Ernie Hill and his friend and accountant Clem Andrews developed a sideline selling and delivering small amounts of carpet. This invoice seems to show that Andrews' main job in 1932 was with Carpet Trades. **The Hepworth Press Ltd.** at 7 Bull Ring was also used.

**Rees & Griffiths**, who had painted the Victory Tea signage on the new van in 1931, were employed again to touch up and varnish the van in December 1932.

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## 1933

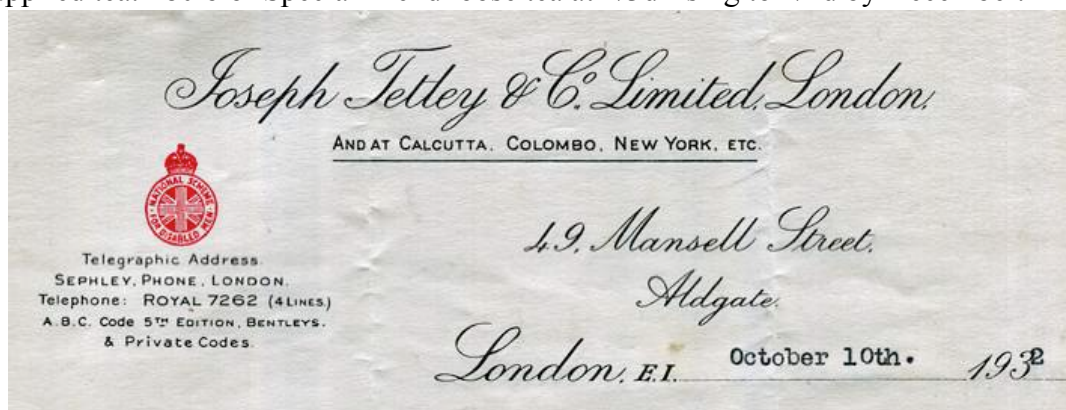
### Progress

We should not be surprised that Ernest Hill's tea trading business expanded in 1933. By the end of the year he has become sufficiently confident to invest in an additional delivery van which clearly required another driver/tea salesman.

The accounts for **Victory Tea Co.**'s financial year 1<sup>st</sup> April 1932 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1933 showed a net profit of £251. Tea & coffee purchases were £909/9/- and sales totalled £1357/0/4d. After wages of £102/14/4d, proprietor's drawings of £101/7/4d and other expenses, the Capital balance to carry forward to 1<sup>st</sup> April 1933 was £387/7/8d. This compares with the equivalent Capital balance carried forward on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1932 of £237/15/0 and a net profit of £8/0/4d.

Throughout 1933, **Summerfield & Co of Liverpool** again was the main source of tea: 14,230 lb of packed tea (1/2d to 1/6d per lb) and 1,088 lb of loose tea in crates, boxes or bags at (1/2d to 1/4d per lb). This is an increase of 42% in tea purchased from Summerfield over that for 1932. They also delivered a variety of empty fancy tins costing 4½d or 5d. Others came filled with tea in 1lb tins at 1/5d per lb. Filled tins orders were particularly significant in December as Christmas approached. A quantity of China tea was supplied (57 lb at 1/11d per lb) but there were no coffee or green tea orders this year. Summerfield continued to supply numbers of end labels.

Hill's relationship with the Summerfield agent **FC Scholefield** (FCS) retained the friendly atmosphere developed from the beginning, no doubt helped by the two having common contacts with Leicester and Nottingham tea traders. Scholefield's letters often contain references to such people but are also interesting for other reasons. When Hill reports a shortfall in a tea delivery Scholefield sends more tea and suggests that the shortfall was due to "*pilfering on the railway*". A complaint about nails in packed tea, elicits a plausible explanation and the comment "*it might not happen again in a year, but have instructed our fellows to be more careful*". In June a private communication reveals a different side to the equation: Hill is thanked for "*kind assistance in the matter of carpets. Would you mind passing on one of the enclosed boxes of cigs onto your pal*" (presumably Clem Andrews) *and thank him for his trouble, and smoke the others yourself*". Scholefield keeps Hill up to date with rising prices and advises: "*try to push the better teas as much as possible, the lower teas will soon be showing you less profit*". **Barber's Teas** of Birmingham again supplied tea: 180lb of Special Blend loose tea at 1/3d rising to 1/4d by December.





Coffee (188lb pure Ground in 1lb and ½lb tins) came this year came from **Joseph Tetley & Co.** at a cost of 1/7d and 1/8½d per lb, respectively. They wrote acknowledging a complaint about short measures in 1lb tins of coffee: *'at loss to explain', 'automatic weighers', 'machines examined and overhauled frequently and tested by the Inspector of weights and measures', 'every care will be taken with future consignments'*.

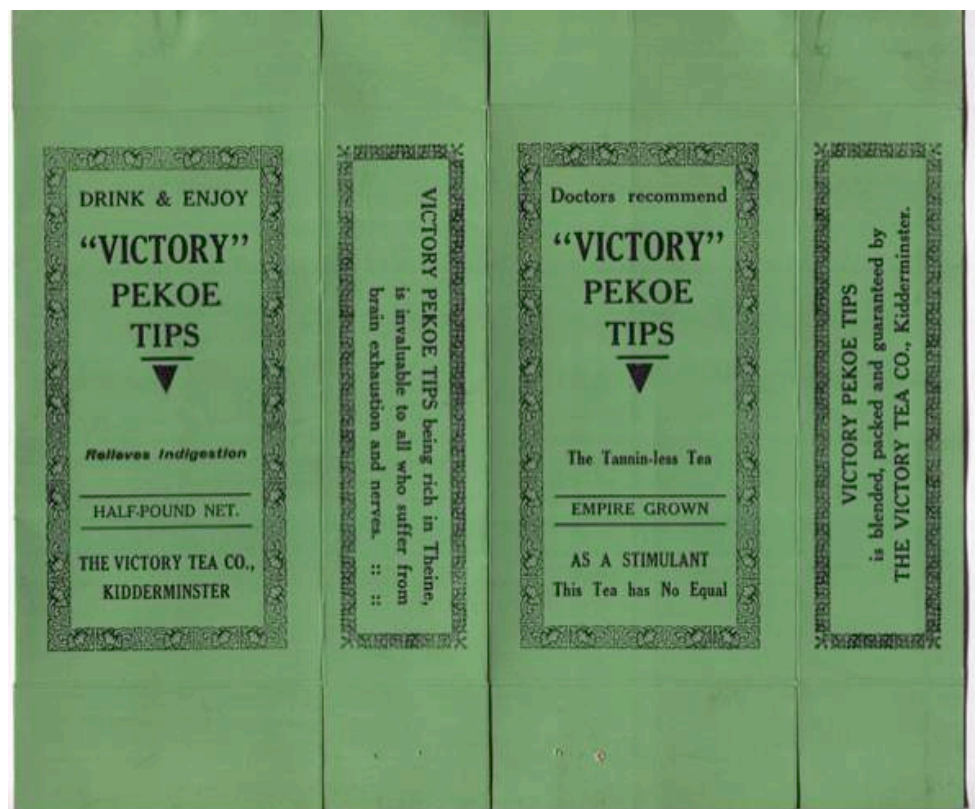
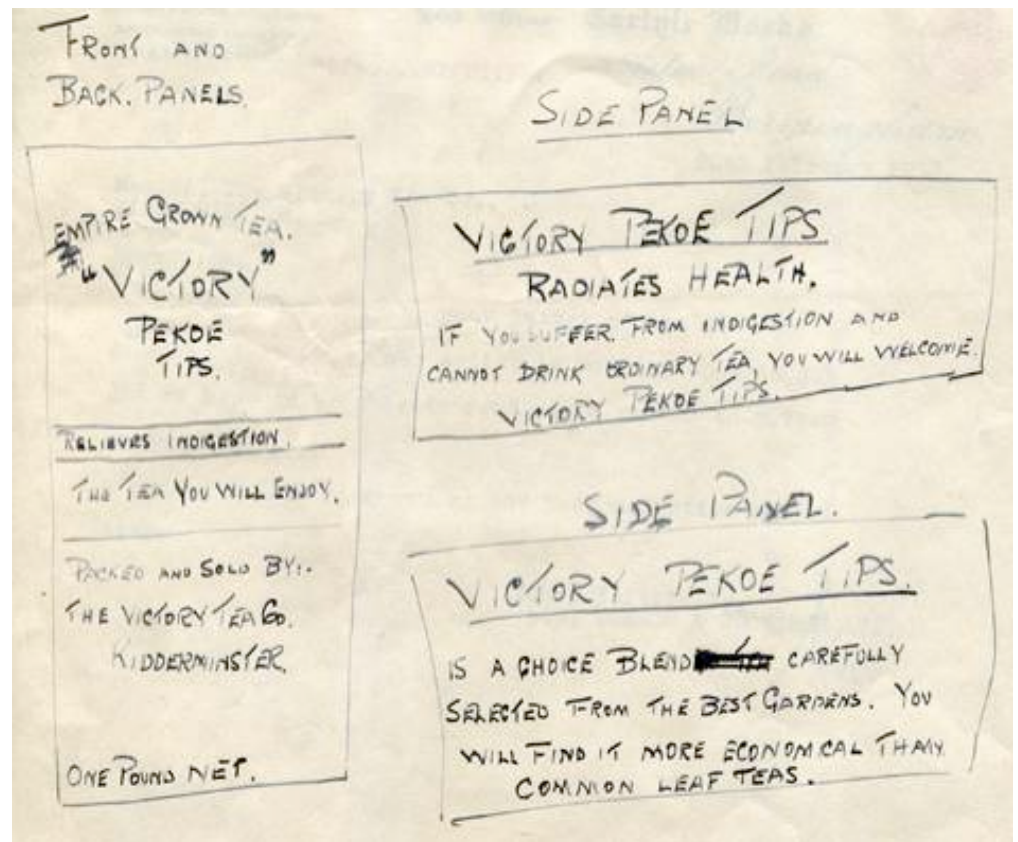
In the previous two years **JC Crowther** of London had supplied much of the Victory Tea needs for printed tea bags, but in 1933 Hill turned to **Dobson & Crowther** of Aston Road, Birmingham. Earlier the **Jayness" Tea Co.** had provided the address of this company and had added the warning on 25<sup>th</sup> January: *"...these people are very long winded about orders. I should get in touch with them at once."*

Hill clearly took this advice because on 30<sup>th</sup> January **Dobson & Crowther** responded to Hill with an estimate for 1lb tea bags to his specifications - see sketch submitted by Hill. An order was placed on 7<sup>th</sup> February subject to suitability of the final design. 9,500 bags were to be delivered directly to **Summerfield** in Liverpool and 500 to **Victory Tea**. Cost: £16/1/9d. More orders followed including one for 1000 3lb tea bags of similar design.



Tea cartons were again sourced from **Boxfoldia Ltd.** of Birmingham, apparently despite competition from the **Wolverhampton Box Co. Ltd.**

A sample **Boxfoldia** ½lb carton survives in the correspondence.

The card used for the 1933 cartons was slightly thinner than the previous year, but was the nearest match available.



In October of this year Hill began marketing a new line, cutlery, which he obtained from **Viners Ltd** of Sheffield, probably with an eye on the Christmas trade. An Empire 47 piece Canteen Type Wearwite cost him £2/1/- A cheaper 2020 Canteen type P.A.4 canteen (unspecified contents) was 11/6d. One of the latter was sent directly to a customer in Nottingham: postage 9d.

Telephone:- SHEFFIELD 25215		INVOICE IS. 23874		Directors:- A. VINER. E. VINER.	
Telegrams:- "VINERS SHEFFIELD"		BY APPOINTMENT TO  H. M. KING GEORGE V.			
		<b>VINERS LTD</b> CUTLERS & SILVERSMITHS.		Bath St. Sheffield. 1.	
Messrs. The Victory Tea Co., 39 Sutton Road, Kidderminster.		24th October 1933.			
0/19.10.33/C.					
1 only No. 2020 Canteen type P.A.4		11/6		11 6	
Postage				9	
		NETT CASH		12 3	
PLEASE RETURN EMPTIES					

So far we have not encountered or considered specific details of tea deliveries to customers by van. Two letters in September and October are from customers paying their dues: one from Worcester and the other from Bromsgrove. Although the tea supplied had been quite satisfactory, the latter writer was cancelling future deliveries because she had made "*other arrangements*". The sender of a postcard stamped Halesowen '25 September 33' "*would not be in on Wednesday*" (27<sup>th</sup>) for the ordered tea delivery. Many more customer communications survive for later years.

17. SPENCER STREET, KIDDERMINSTER.	
19/6 1933	
M Victory Tea Co	
Dr. to JOHN PREECE, Motor Engineer.	
ANY KIND OF REPAIRS UNDERTAKEN.	
Decarbonising & Grinding in valves removing sump drawing piston fitting new ring etc refitting up same	
Total £3.5	
received by J. Preece	
19/6/33	
J. Preece	

TBC continue to be the main garage Hill used for motor servicing throughout 1933. There were lots of puncture repairs, new tyres and oil changes e.g. 28<sup>th</sup> August: repairing three punctures and fitting a new front brake cable cost 13/6d. However, TBC did not enjoy a monopoly of Hill's business. John Preece in Spencer St charged £3/5/- for "*Decarbonising & Grinding in valves, removing sump, drawing piston, fitting new ring etc. and refitting of same*" in June. It is doubtful if that sort of work would happen nowadays!

The business by now must have been showing signs of promise for Hill ordered a second van from TBC on 29<sup>th</sup> September. The new van was a slightly updated version of his first and specified as a '1934 Morris Minor 5cwt van'. The cost was £110 + delivery from works of £1/5/- and Road Tax for Oct 1 to Dec at £2/15/-. There was a part exchange allowance of £10 for a Cowley Chummy car. A number of letters ensued about the

time taken for delivery but Hill eventually paid the invoice for £104 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October when he presumably collected the vehicle from the garage. Comprehensive insurance for £116 (premium



£8/10/-) was taken out with **The Westminster Fire Office** (Agent: C H Andrews) on 16<sup>th</sup> October and the receipt records that the registration number of the new van was: **WP 4619**.

Later in October **Morris Motors of Cowley**, Oxford, wrote directly to Hill apologising for sending him the wrong manual for the new van; it should have been a modified 1933 manual rather than the 1934 Morris Minor version.

On 16<sup>th</sup> November **TBC** informed Hill that Morris was offering a replacement for the present dummy honeycomb on the radiator for an attractive stone guard. TBC would need the car for 3 to 4 days or he could take it to **Serks Ltd.** or the **Coventry Radiator Co. Ltd** where it would take about ½ hour. Did a pencilled line through the letter indicate that Hill was not interested in the offer, or that the work had been done?



**A typical 1934 5cwt Morris Minor van**

**Rees & Griffiths** Coach builder, earlier of Stourport but now of Park St, Kidderminster, invoiced Hill on October 9<sup>th</sup> for £5/9/6d for '*painting writing in Gold and varnishing on a Morris van*' - almost certainly the latest addition to his 'fleet'.

Earlier in March 1933 **C H Hambleton**, a builder of Holman Street and 62 Bewdley Road, was paid £36/15/7d to erect sheds, fit floors and connect up to an existing shed. Neither the quotation nor invoice states where the work was carried out but insurance with **The Westminster Fire Office** dated 27<sup>th</sup> March covered: Warehouse (£50), Motor Van (£100) and Stock (£100) - at **Holman Street**. This year the accounts for the first time showed expenses related to a warehouse and garage and it seems certain that these facilities would be on the piece of land in Holman Street where Hill was later to build a substantial warehouse and Office in 1935. Workmen's Compensation Insurance for estimated wages of £250 dated 17<sup>th</sup> March indicated that Hill was intent on recruiting another employee.

In line with his increase in business activity Hill improved his office facilities by purchasing, in July, a light oak 45"x19" desk from OSDA Ltd of Old Bailey, London, for £1/19/6d after discount and including carriage. It was probably similar to the slightly larger model shown right in the picture (extracted from the 1934 Osda catalogue). Whether the desk was for 39 Sutton Road, or the shed in Holman Street, is not stated.

Other local businesses featured were **The Kidderminster Shuttle** and **G T Cheshire & Sons**, both quotations for stationery supplies. It seems that it was the Shuttle's bid that was successful on this occasion.

One interesting aspect of the Victory Tea papers is the historical information they provide about a variety of businesses and traders in Kidderminster in the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

**Amazing Offer of  
Typists' Desks & Chairs**

A photograph of a typist's desk and chair. The desk is made of dark wood and has three drawers on the right side. The chair is a simple wooden chair with a high back. The advertisement is for a clearance sale, with prices listed in red and black text. The desk is priced at 55/-, down from 18/6. The chair is priced at 12/9, down from 29/6. The text 'Now Supplied with 3 separate drawers.' is written in red on the right side of the desk.

Now Supplied with 3 separate drawers.

350 only  
**NOW CLEARING AT**  
**44/-!**

**SOLID OAK CHAIR**  
~~16/6~~  
800 only clearing at **12/9!**  
formerly 29/6

**DESK**  
~~55/-~~  
formerly £4/18/6



ESTABLISHED 1870. THE "KIDDERMINSTER SHUTTLE," TELEPHONE 149

IS THE OLDEST Newspaper in Kidderminster. HAS THE LARGEST CIRCULATION in the LOCALITY, AND IS in EVERY WAY the BEST MEDIUM FOR ADVERTISING.

**To Edward Parry & Sons,**  
Proprietors and Publishers.

Office: CORPORATION STREET, KIDDERMINSTER.

Aug 1<sup>st</sup> 1931

Mr. C. H. Andrews

The KIDDERMINSTER SHUTTLE is published every Friday Evening in time for Post. Price 2d., or 2/2 per Quarter. By Post 3d. or 3/3 per Quarter. Foreign 3/3 per Quarter.

19	To Advertising :-	LINE	INSE-	A	S.	D.
July 18-25	Canvasser.				3	

Here we record the evolution of headers used by the Shuttle for letters, quotations, invoices etc. during the 1930s.

1931

*The* Established 1870  
**Kidderminster Shuttle** Ltd.  
Is the OLDEST Newspaper in Kidderminster. Largest Circulation.

General and Commercial Printing in all its Branches.

WORKS WORCESTER ST

Offices: Corporation St Kidderminster

'Phone No 149.

Sept. 28/33

1933

ESTABLISHED IN 1870

COMMERCIAL PRINTING  
CATALOGUES, FOLDERS  
BOOKLETS, BROCHURES  
BOOKBINDING, ETC  
LAYOUTS SUBMITTED

TELEPHONE KIDDERMINSTER 149

9584

**KIDDERMINSTER SHUTTLE** Ltd  
New Road  
Kidderminster

IS THE OLDEST NEWSPAPER IN THE TOWN • PRICE 2d.  
PUBLISHED ON FRIDAYS • SUBSCRIPTION 3/3 PER QUARTER

INVOICE

The Victory Tea Co  
Holman Street  
8100

6 Feb 1939.

1939

Finally, the cost of accountancy for a small firm such as **The Victory Tea Co.** in 1933 was 3 Guineas (see the 2d stamped receipted invoice submitted by his financial adviser C H Andrews.

Received of Victory Teas.  
Three guineas £3-3-0  
Wm. H. Andrews.  
15/4/33.  
C. H. Andrews.



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1931 to 1965

Proprietor Ernest Hill

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## 1934

### Consolidation and Diversification

1934 was a year for consolidating the business and expanding sales into merchandise other than tea. Tea purchase and sales both grew and Hill was once again to increase his delivery capacity by purchasing a third Morris van late in December.

Nevertheless, the accounts for the year ending **31<sup>st</sup> March 1934** showed that, despite increases in tea purchases and sales, the net profit was slightly less than at the same date in 1933, probably due to the acquisition of a second van in September 1933. The Statement of accounts and profits and loss for **1<sup>st</sup> April 1933 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1934** revealed, after wages of £283/11/8d, proprietors drawings and other expenses, a net profit of £232/8/11d compared to £251 in March 1933. The Capital balance carried forward on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1934 had increased to £508/6/6d.

**Summerfield & Co** were the only suppliers of tea throughout 1934, with orders for 24,168lb of **packed** tea at prices between 1/3d and 1/9d per pound (mostly at 1/4d), 2,750lb of **loose** indian tea at between 1/3d and 1/8d per lb and 60lb of China tea at 2/4d per lb. The total tea order for the whole of 1934 was 80% higher than for 1933. Summerfield also again supplied empty fancy tins: some cost 4½d but most of the 354 were priced at 5d. Roasted ground coffee was obtained this year **only** from **Joseph Tetley & Co**: 642lb in 1lb tins at 1/7d per lb or ½ lb tins at 1/8½ d per lb.

**Fred Scholefield** of Summerfield & Co continued to give advice about market tea prices and what other tea sellers were doing. His excuses for business related problems were not always 'politically correct'. In response to a complaint about an incorrect invoice date he writes in April: *"...must be the holiday rush, you know what these lady clerks are when there is a holiday in sight"*.

But he was often helpful in more subtle ways. In response to a request from Hill for a better discount deal his response was *"The firm allows a discount of 2d in the £1 but I see that J & S and the Tonic takes 3d. We will stretch a point and not send back a cheque if you deduct 3d in the future."* The invoices show that that is exactly what Hill did.

In October Hill queried the accuracy of weight of tea in packets. Scholefield replies: *".... we have the inspectors round every month without any problems found with the packing machines - so you will be quite safe"*. Advice: *"keep packets upright when delivering in your van as they might shake out if laid on their side"*.

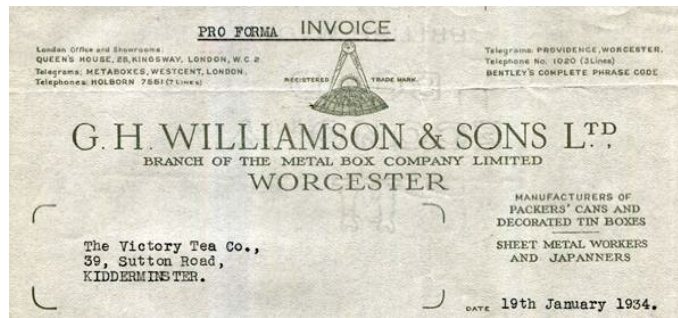
Praise was offered in December. *"I think you are doing right in giving the tin with the packet as there is no doubt that a lot of harm is done every Xmas by people packing a cheaper tea in their canister to pay for the tin. It is the best advert you can get at Xmas time by packing a good tea in tins, as so many are given as presents and people will go for the tea again if they liked it. Hope you are keeping in the pink"*. A delightful 'old fashioned' expression of the times.

This was the first year that Hill offered for sale biscuits with the tea and coffee delivery service. **Bee Bee Biscuits Ltd. of Blackpool** were his sole suppliers. On offer was: 'Dancetime' assorted, 'Xmas Tower' and 'Mantilla Choc' Assorted. The first order placed on 12<sup>th</sup> December was just in time for the Christmas trade.



**Dobson & Crowther** of Birmingham continued to supply Victory Tea Pekoe Tip bags. A new supplier for packaging supplies, **Livingstone Bros. Ltd., Glasgow**, delivered 25,000 white sulphite bags directly to Summerfield on Hill's behalf.

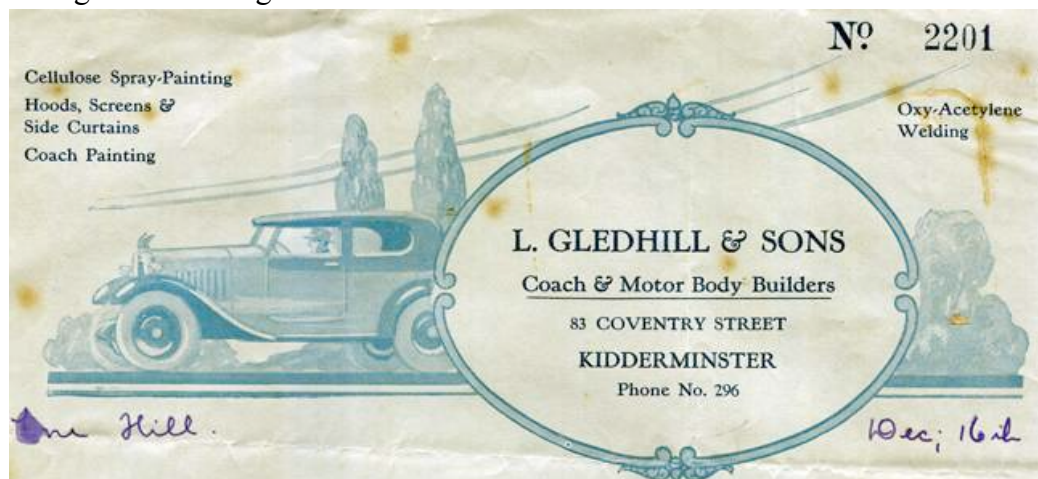
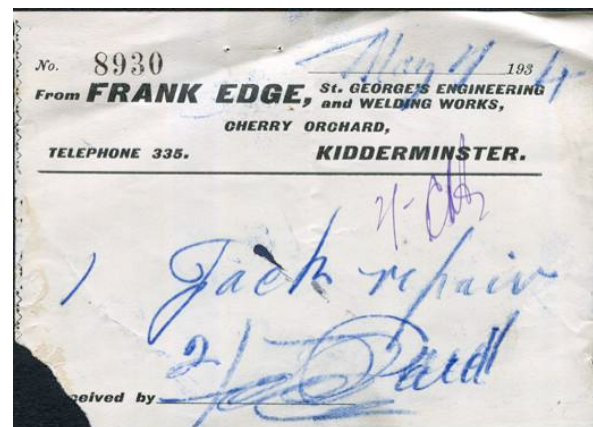
In addition to the 'fancy tins' supplied by Summerfield, Hill bought a variety of decorated tin boxes from: **Barringer Wallis & Manners Ltd.** of Mansfield, **Hudson Scott & Sons** of Carlisle and **G H Williamson & Sons, (Metal Box Company Ltd.)** of Worcester. The wholesale cost of these tins varied from 39/- to 51/6d per gross. He was also still buying **Viner's** cutlery for sale to his customers.



It seems that the storage space at 39 Sutton Road was insufficient for the needs of the Victory Tea Company and that other accommodation had been acquired just round the corner: for, in October 1934, **C Hambledon** was paid £4/5/- for fixing a pair of doors to stores in **Holman Street**. It seems that even that facility was still inadequate because Hill placed advertisements in the Shuttle in October and November seeking warehousing space. He also wrote to Phipps & Pritchard about the issue in November and received offers of rental premises in Swan Street, Orchard Street and Worcester Street. Nothing seems to have come from these initiatives and a new radical solution was ultimately sort and achieved later in 1935.

Of course, driver/salesmen were required to run the delivery service, and in May Jas Brighton, who was to stay with the company for some time, was recruited. Jas of 15 Stourport Road wrote his letter of application on 6<sup>th</sup> May. He was 21 years of age and worked as a mechanic at a local garage and was looking to "improve his financial position". His letter was annotated in pencil with '£2/5/-', presumably the wage agreed.

The well used Victory tea transport continued to be repaired and overhauled locally. Frank Edge of St George's Engineering and Welding Works in Cherry Orchard mended a car jack for 2/-, and a number of firms either quoted for, or re-painted, the vans: **Gledhill & Sons** of Coventry Street, **Rees & Griffiths** of Park Street and **Walter Moore & Co** of Green Street.





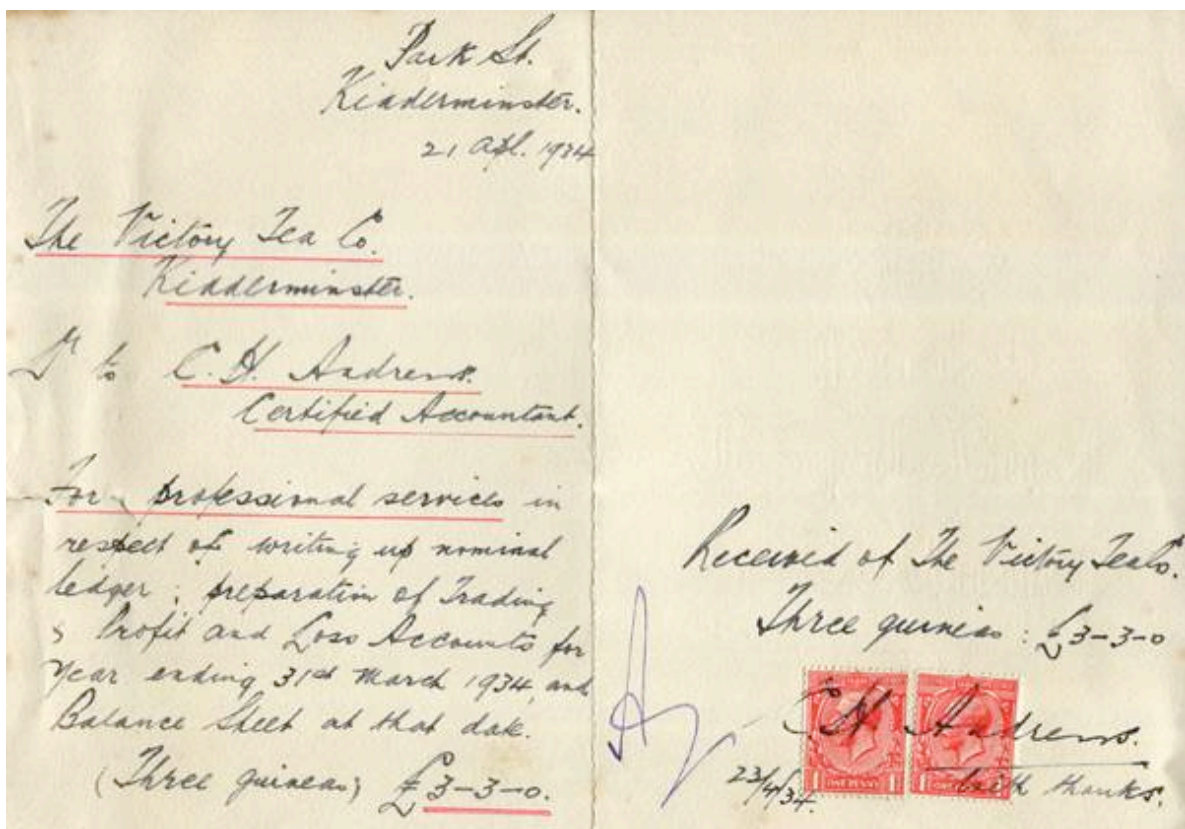
But the bulk of the transport routine maintenance, servicing and repairs continued to be carried out on a regular basis by TBC Ltd of Oxford Street. Hill also made two vehicle purchases from TBC in 1934. Towards the end of April he paid £25 for a secondhand Morris Cowley Two-Seater car, probably something like that shown to the right. Road Licence Tax was £2/4/- for the period from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> June.



Then, on 20<sup>th</sup> December, he ordered a 1935 Grey Morris Eight van for £115. Delivery was £1/5/- and the licence fee from 1<sup>st</sup> January to December was £10. The deal included a further discount of £30 for trading in the Cowley two-seater that Hill had acquired earlier in the year. The picture opposite shows a 1935 Morris Eight similar to that for the Victory Tea Company; and serving a very similar function! Of course, Hills' vehicle would have been painted green with gold lettering.



Clem Andrews was the Accountant for the Victory Tea Company for perhaps most if not the whole of its existence, and he also advised and arrange appropriate insurance. His charges were not excessive, and probably reflected his longstanding friendship with Ernie Hill. His annual fee for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1934 was Three Guineas (£3/3/0).



# 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.

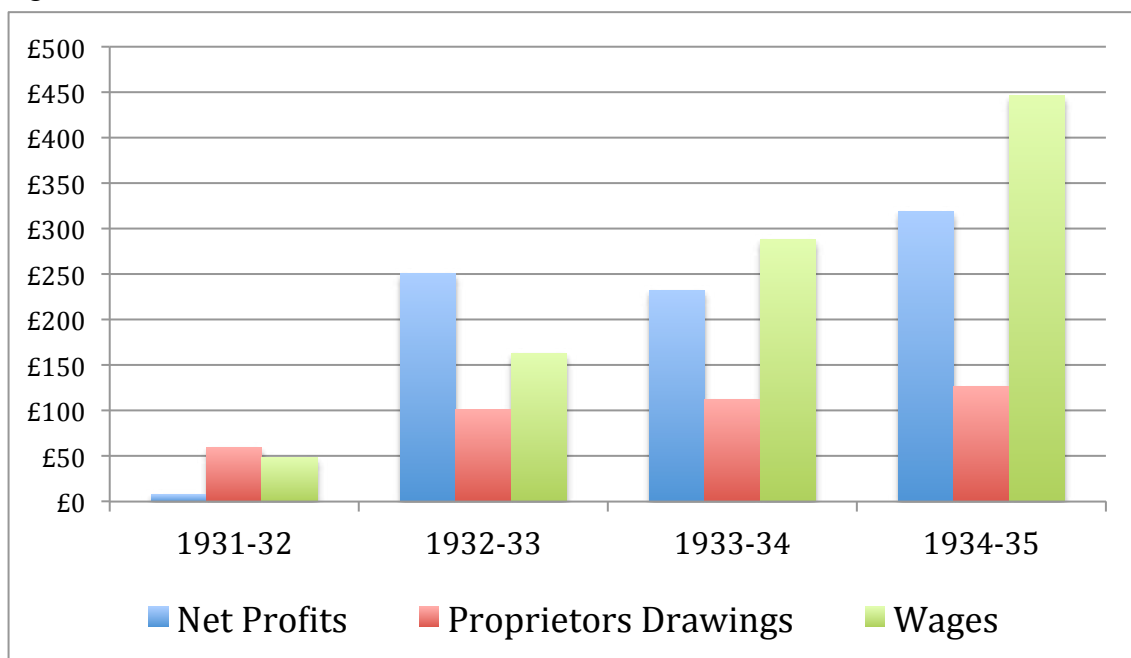
## 1935

### Progress and Relocation

1935 saw further development of the business with increasing tea purchases. There was diversification into the sale of non-tea products, and profits were once more seen to rise. During the year Hill became sufficiently confident to invest in building his own warehouse and office just round the corner from Sutton Road in nearby Holman Street.

The Statement of accounts and profits and loss for **1<sup>st</sup> April 1934 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1935** revealed, after wages of £446/5/6d, proprietors drawings and other expenses, a net profit of £319/2/1d compared to £232/8/1d in March 1934. The Capital balance carried forward on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1935 had increased to £827/8/7d (from £508/6/6d in April 1934).

There was only one ledger for the Victory Tea Company in the collection of documents that we have and the last Statement of Accounts was for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 1935. For later years, we will need to rely on purchases of Tea and other factors to guide us on how the business progresses. The performance of the Victory Tea Company from the beginnings of the business on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1931 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 1935 is summarized below.



Note that the figures for 1931-1932 covered not a full year but just under 8 months. Over the period 1931 to 1935 Hill's personal drawings climbed steadily but wages increased rather more quickly as he added driver/salesmen to his staff. Profits were more erratic as capital costs, such as acquisition of new vans, occurred.

The total tea ordered by Hill for the whole of 1935 from all sources was 33,751lb, an increase of 25% over the previous year. **Summerfield & Co** supplied the majority of this tea with orders for 29,183lb of **packed** tea at prices between 1/3½d and 1/9d per lb, 3,970lb of **loose** Indian tea at between 1/4d and 1/11d per lb and 118lb of China tea at 1/11d per lb. Most of the letters from



Summerfield were formal and addressed to 'Mr Hill', but agent Fred Scholefield, as in previous years, offered friendly and informal advice on trade, pricing and the quality of teas available. He dealt with complaints equably and with an acceptable solution. He continued to provide casual chat and friendly gossip about tea trade contacts they had in common; that was his personal 'trademark'. He asked Hill about *'how his swimming activities were going'* and advised him to *'go south for a holiday'* because *'the North was getting cold'*. And in November he refers to the new premises in Holman Street and hopes that Hill is settling in. The last invoice sent to Hill at 32 Sutton Road was on **26<sup>th</sup> October** and the first to Holman Street on **1<sup>st</sup> November** which helps bracket the date of removal to new premises. Scholefield 'threatens' to bring his wife down to celebrate their new baby girl born on Guy Fawkes night *'to drink some of that Kidderminster cider'*. Perhaps his cider geography was a bit awry? He also sent a box of cigars at Christmas for Hill *'to enjoy'*. Of course, as far as we are concerned, all this is a one sided conversation because we do not see Hill's letters.

Two new tea suppliers were used in 1935: the **United Kingdom Tea Company, London** who delivered 180lb loose tea in a 60lb chests at 1/3d or 1/3½d and **The "Priory" Tea & Coffee Co. Ltd; Birmingham branch**, who provided 300lb loose tea at 1/4½d.

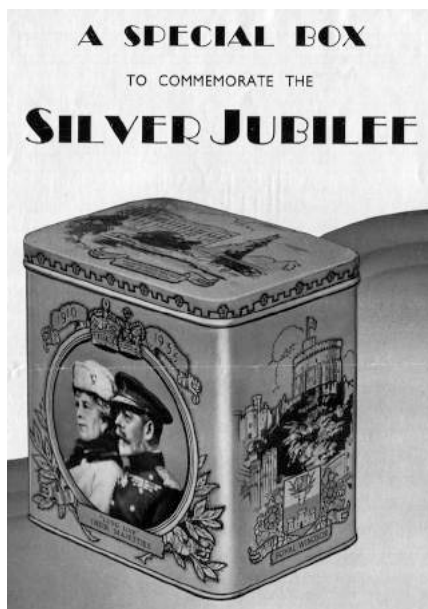
Once again **Joseph Tetley & Co** was the only supplier of roast pure ground coffee but purchases were only 396lb against 642lb in 1934.



In 1934 Hill only began selling biscuits just before Christmas, but 1935 saw orders from March through to December from **Bee Bee Biscuits** of Blackpool. Varieties were: Malt Milk, Leisure assorted, Tower Assorted, Standard Assorted, Cream Crackers, Jubilee Caskets, Small Rich Tea, Petit Beurre. He also bought smaller quantities from the Leicester biscuit manufacturer **Frears Ltd**

who were recommended by his friends at **Tonic Tea** of Leicester.

Hill continued to blend and pack some of his own tea and **Boxfold Ltd** of Birmingham were still the company from where he sourced his Victory Tea Pekoe Tips green cartons. Also, as in 1934, Tea bags were ordered from **Dobson & Crowther** of Birmingham and white sulphite bags from **Livingstone Bros. Ltd** of Glasgow. Some of these bags were used by Hill himself but many were sent directly to **Summerfield** for them to pack significant quantities of tea for him.



Fancy tins were no longer purchased from Summerfield but he again made many purchases from **G H Williamson & Sons, Worcester**: this year it was for "Stork" canisters.

He also used **Hudson Scott & Sons, Carlisle** again for the topical (for 1935) Silver Jubilee tins. Other more colourful varieties were available e.g. "Suez".





Business cards were obtained from **Holland & Co.** of Leicester as before, but other stationery requites were ordered from the **Kidderminster Shuttle**, Although Hill obtained quotes from **G.T. Cheshire & Sons** of Coventry Street, Kidderminster, he didn't place an order with them. Their intricately designed letterhead used in 1935 is shown below for local historical interest.



On the transport scene, the Morris van ordered in December of 1934 was still awaiting delivery by **TBC** on 3<sup>rd</sup> January. They wrote: "*I should be glad if you would sign the enclosed licence form for your new Van so that we can apply for the licence as soon as we get the Van from the Works. We are ringing the Works every day to try to expedite delivery.*" **TBC** was also responsible for most of the van servicing but other repairs and paintwork restorations were carried out by **John Preece, Motor & General Engineer** and **L. Gledhill & Sons**, respectively – as in earlier years.

*Bank Buildings Kidderminster.*

**MR. ROBERT HILL**

*Dr. to J. Evans, Morton & Morton,  
Solicitors.*

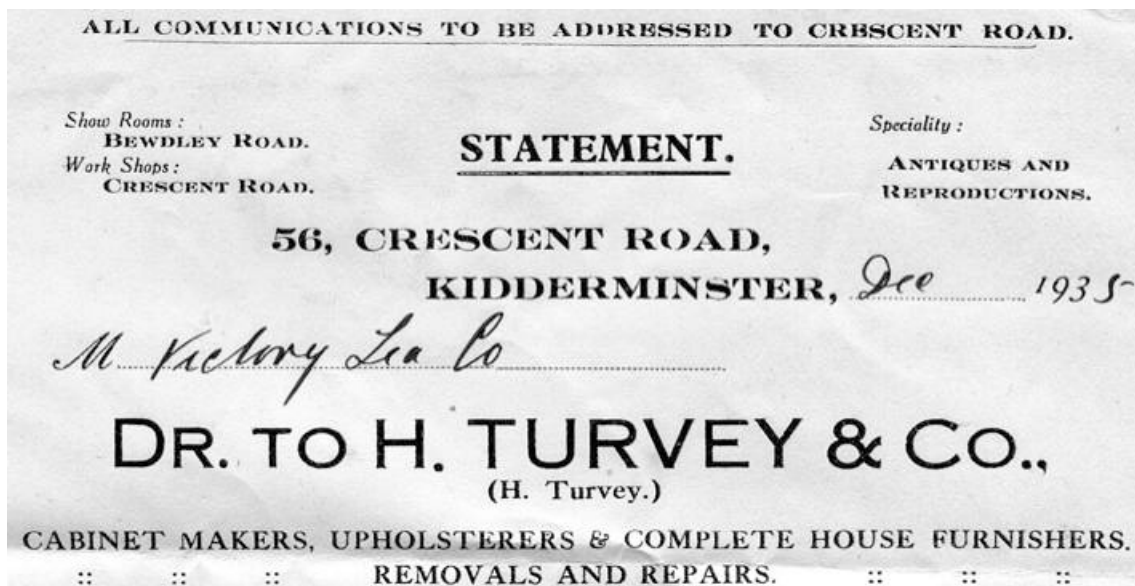
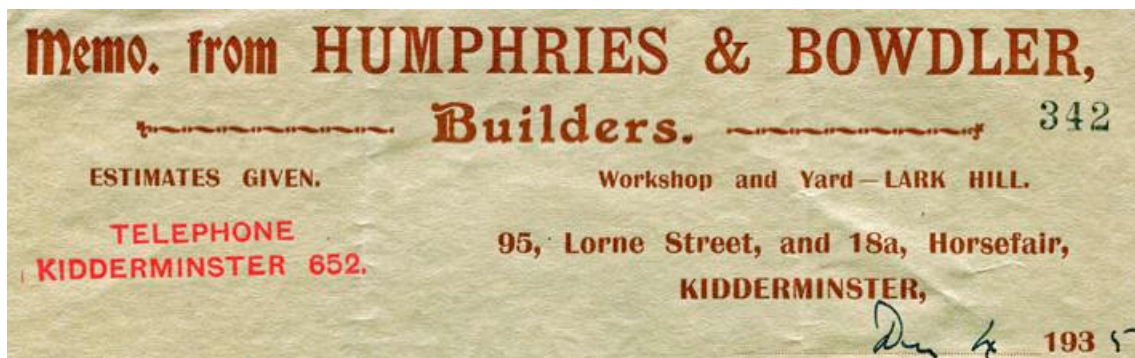
		Payments	Our Charges
1935	<i>To Professional Charges in the matter</i>		
April	of purchase by you from Mr. M. W. Hill of a piece of land situate in Holman Street, Kidderminster. Investigating title, preparing Convey- ance, engrossing same and completing the matter. (Purchase money £75)		2 2 0.
	<u>Payment</u>		
	Stamp	7 6	
		7 6	2 2 0.
			7 6.
			£2 9 6.

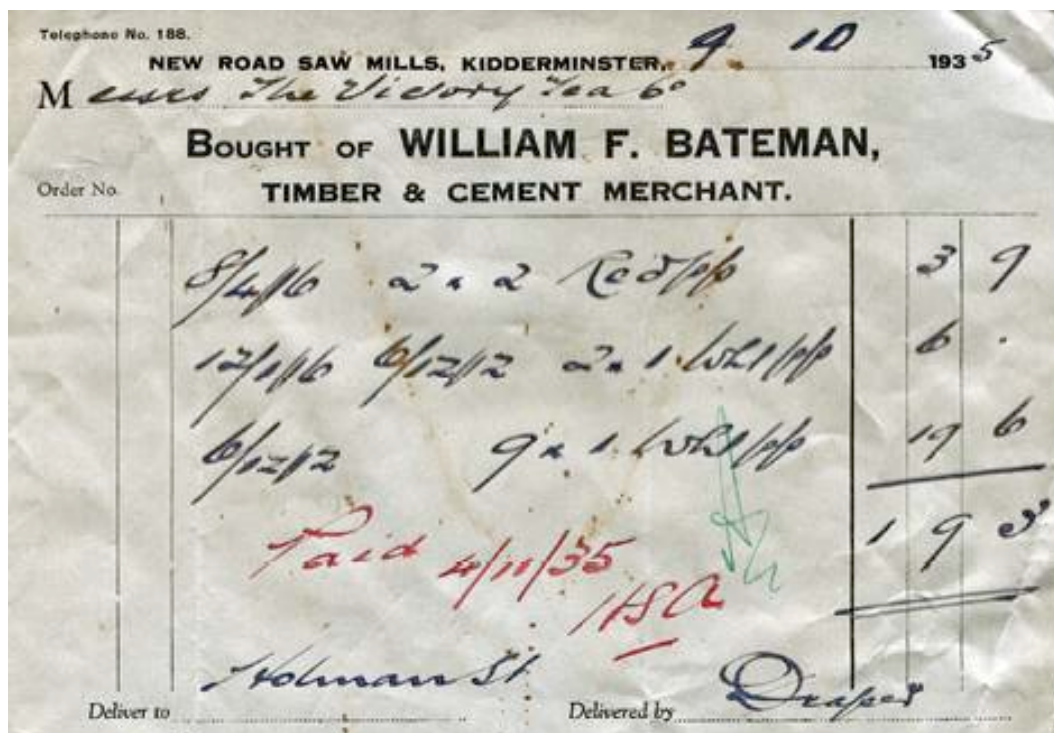


The big development of the year was Hill's decision to **build his own premises in Holman Street**, having in 1934 failed to find additional adequate pre-existing warehousing facilities to rent or buy. In April of 1935 an invoice from **Ivens & Morton**, solicitors, shows that he purchased a plot of land in Holman Street for £75 from his father. Probably this was where he was already using storage facilities as discussed in the 1934 Chapter p12.

The new premises were designed by architects **Gething & Rolley** and built by the local building firm **Humphries & Bowdler**. Certificates provided to Hill by his architects show that the basic cost of the new building was close to £354. There would have been additional costs, one example being the charge in November by the **Kidderminster Borough Council** of £1/2/8d for paving the footpath outside the new premises and providing a dropped kerb. **Batemans** of New Road delivered timber in October for an unknown purpose.. The warehouse and office would also have needed furnishing. Carpet was sourced from **Carpet Trades** for £4/1/10d via Clem Andrews who was able to get a 10% discount, and in late October he bought a steel cupboard (77" x 18' x 18") from the **Aston Cabinet Co of Birmingham** for £3/4/5d delivered, and 3 chairs from a local furnisher **H Turvey & Co** of Crescent Road, for £1/11/6d on 9<sup>th</sup> December. Other furnishings would, no doubt, materialize in the new year.

**Letterheads of some of the firms involved in the new building.**





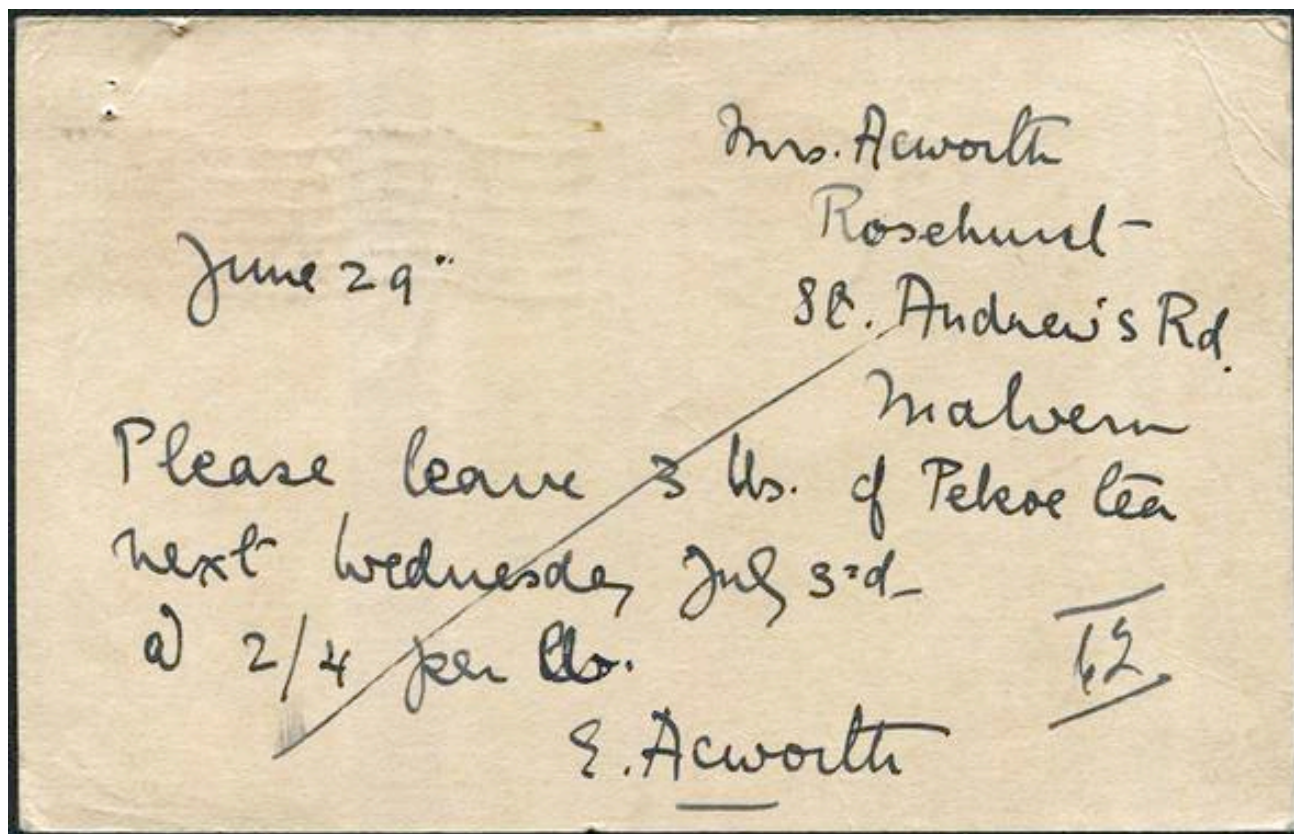
It seems that Hill moved his headquarters to the Holman Street site towards the end of October as evidenced by Fred Scholefield's remarks reported above (top page 2). There were no building plans or photographs found amongst the surviving Victory Tea Company documents but if the premises shown in the photograph below (dated 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015) are unlikely to be much different to the original construction.



It was the 'Concept Carpet Company' that saved the Victory Tea document collection by donating it, initially, Bewdley Museum.



Of course, the main purpose of the Victory tea Company was **to sell and deliver tea**. Most of his customers were private individuals from all over Worcestershire and beyond but there one or two businesses and cafés that placed regular orders with him. Hill did not have a telephone installed in his business until 1939, so how did the customers communicate their orders? Some orders arrived by letter but the vast majority came on postcards with fairly simple and basic messages such as that the request by Mrs Acworth of Malvern.



Another postcard dated 13<sup>th</sup> July from another customer in Malvern came with a rather sad message:

*"Dear Sir, I regret to have to cancel the order of 1 lb of Tea with Caddy as my husband will not allow me to deal off only one grocer so I have enclosed card herewith as it is no use disobeying Him. I am Yours Truly Mrs .....*

Amongst the postcards found in the 1935 documents were also some received from W E Wadeley, the organist of St John's Church, asking Hill to play the organ for a variety of reasons: e.g. *"as F Adams is unable to do so"*, and others in a similar vein. Hill was later to play a much more important role as first choice deputy and assistant to Wadeley and, eventually, when Wadeley died in 1943, he became the official Organist and Choir master at St John's in his own right.

There was another postcard request from 'Badger' of Chelston asking him to *"play the organ at the children's service next Sunday."* We must not overlook the fact that Ernie Hill was an accomplished organist asked regularly to play for many churches and institutions.

# The 'Victory Tea Company' Kidderminster

1931 to 1965

Proprietor Ernest Hill

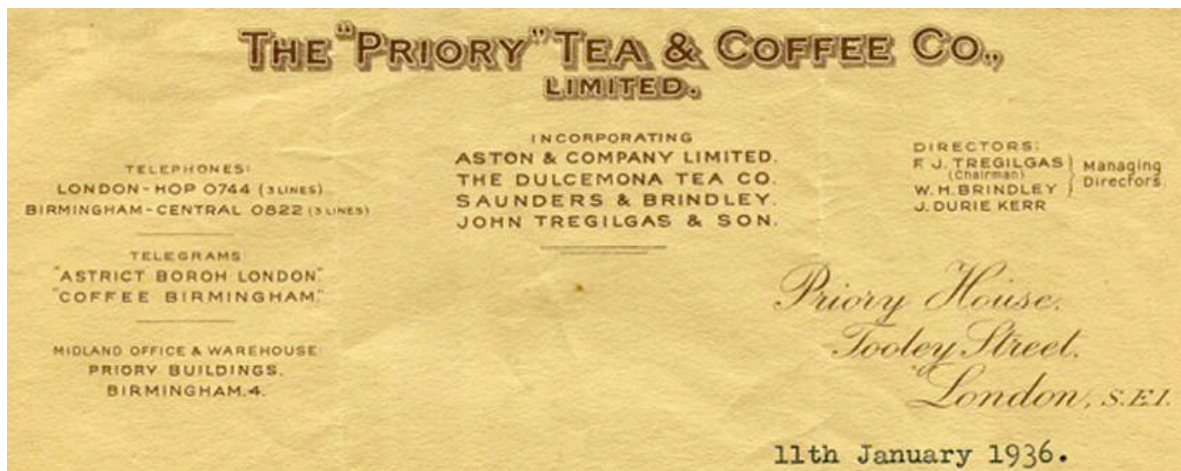
Prepared by Bob Millward from documents donated to the  
Kidderminster & District Archaeological & Historical Society.

## 1936

**Note:** The collection of documents for 1936 contain none dated after early October. Papers for the early months of 1937 until March are also missing. Clearly, at some stage, the papers for these months have been lost from the rest of the collection for some unknown reason.

### First year of trading from the new premises

There are two problems when assessing how the business progressed from 1935 until the end of 1936. Firstly, we do not hold annual accounts for the year 1 April 1935 to 31 Mar 1936 - or later. Secondly, most of the documents from early October 1936 until March 1937 are not with the collection, so we cannot judge growth, or otherwise, **directly** from tea sales and the like. We can, nevertheless, use **extrapolation** to make approximate assessments and it appears that the growth of the business continued healthily: total tea orders are projected to have been about 40,500lb - an increase of 33% over 1935. About 90% of those orders were to **Summerfield, of Liverpool**, with smaller (exploratory?) purchases also made from the **United Kingdom Tea Company, London**; **J Milton Hindle & Son Tea merchants, London & Blackburn**; the **"Priory" Tea & Coffee Co. Ltd, Birmingham branch** and **Ferguson, Holness & Co. Ltd. of London**.



Sales of biscuits also gained ground: orders from **Bee Biscuits, Blackpool** for just the 9 months of the year for which records are available, showed an increase over all of 1935, and if projected for the whole year (even neglecting the lost invoices for the expected increased Christmas trade) the increase would have been about 44%. Roast ground coffee purchases from **Joseph Tetley & Co.** and **The "Priory" Tea & Coffee Co. Ltd; Birmingham branch** totalled 536lb compared with just 396lb in 1935, an increase of about 80% if allowance is made for missing invoices. Hill also began trading in a new 'coffee' related product: Chicory essence, which he acquired from **John Bromley & Sons Ltd. Leeds**.

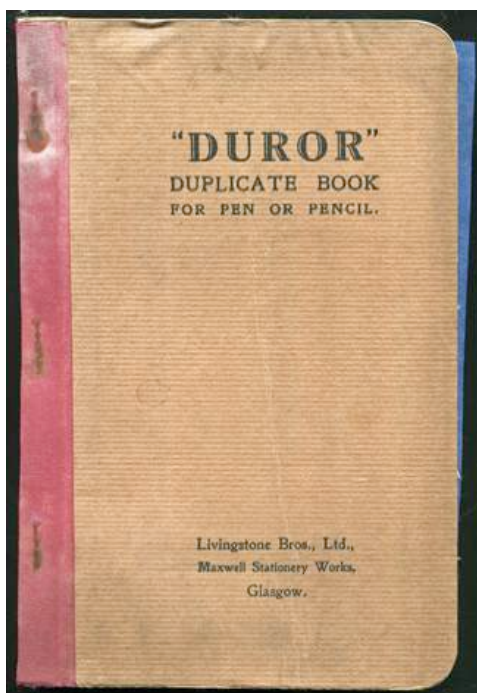
Hill must have felt confident of how his business was evolving because he added another new Morris 5cwt van to his fleet, and also bought a secondhand Morris 10 4-door saloon car. It is therefore fair to say the Victory Tea Company was thriving with increasing sales of tea and associated merchandise.



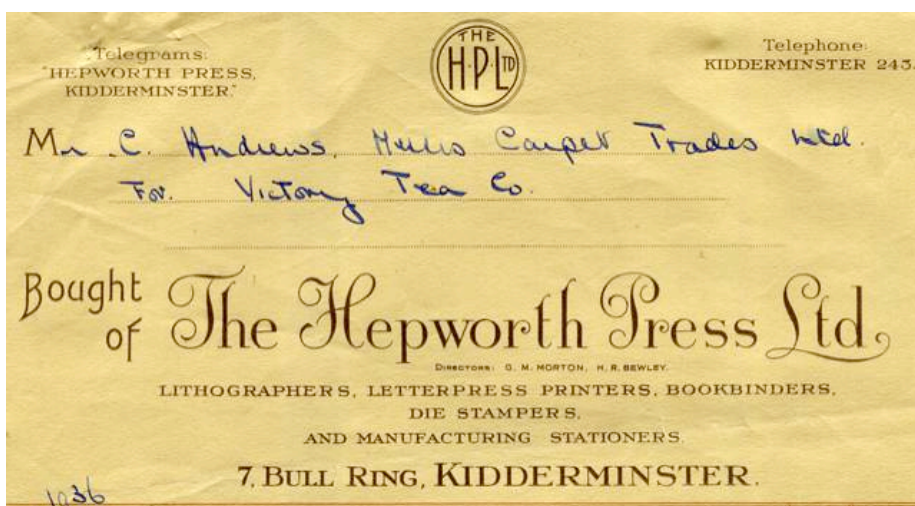
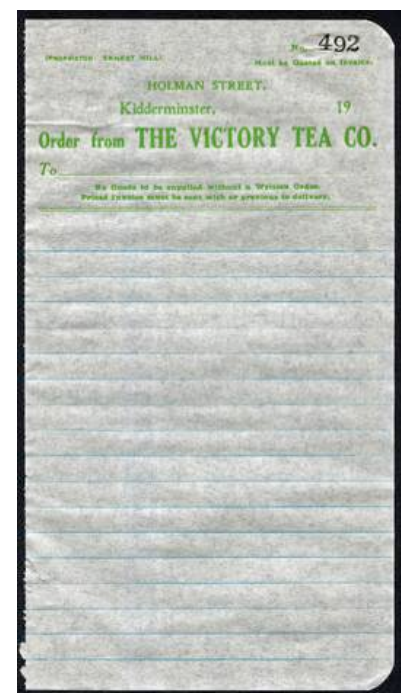
During 1936 only **Dobson & Crowther & Co.** supplied Hill with any sort of tea bags, and most of those were sent to **Summerfield, Liverpool**, with smaller quantities being delivered to Hill.



**GH Williamson & Sons, Metal Box Company Ltd., Worcester**, were the sole suppliers of Fancy Tins or Canisters this year, and sales of **Viners** cutlery continued: the most expensive being a 100pce "Lincoln" canteen of cutlery in Jacobean Oak for a wholesale price £5/6/-.



In past years insert sulphite tea bags had been supplied by **Livingstone Bros.** but this year it seems this commodity was not required from any source. Ironically, Hill did buy some stationery from them: 'Duror' duplicate order books printed with the Victory Tea green header.



Other every day stationery requisites were obtained locally from Hepworth Press Ltd. of the Bull Ring.

This account would not be complete without extracts from some of Fred Scholefield's inimitable comments found in his **Summerfield** business letters to Hill. As usual these covered the usual range from tea trade advice to comments on financial politics; and also just genial chat. Thus, 1 July: "*Hope you had a good time on your holiday and that you had a better time than I did. Nearly everybody seems to have been on the continent this year.*" 10 Sept: "... will be very pleased to see you next week – but why the short stay? You might as well stay the night & see Liverpool's underworld? However, if you will let me know which station you are coming to I will be there to meet you." 11 Sept: "*We were very pleased to see you today & hope you arrived home OK.*" So clearly Hill had not taken up Fred's offer of a 'Jolly' around Liverpool. 1 Oct: "*The fact of Holland going off Gold has not had any effect on the Dutch auction today. We thought prices might ease a bit but evidently they arranged things very cleverly to avoid heavy falls.*"

Most of the maintenance and repair of Hill's vans was still done by **TBC** and it is from them that in January he orders a new Morris 5cwt van, Grey for £125, licence for 1 year was £10, Reg. number AAB 731. But this time he chooses **Francis J Clements Ltd**, of Bromsgrove to paint the van green and add the lettering. In May he buys from **TBC** a second hand Morris 10 4-door saloon car (WF9530 for £145 less £25 for trading in the first van he had acquired in 1931 (JF1893).

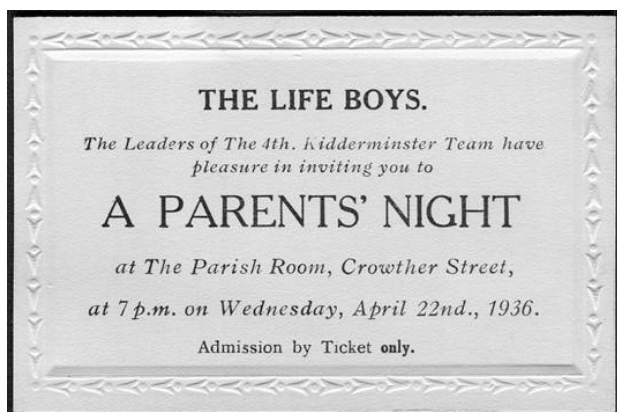
**John Preece** continued to carry out some repairs and for the first time there is an invoice from **Foley Park Garage, proprietor T.H. Matthews**, for a 400x18 Dunlop 90 tyre cover at £1/16/- less 10% discount. In future years the Victory tea Co. is to purchase much of its petrol from This garage on a monthly account.

Now ensconced in his new premises in Holman Street, Hill received, in May, the final certificate from **Gething & Rolley** approving the final stage payment to the builders **Humphries & Bowdler**. The final total building cost was £354/2/4d.

**Tea sales** were, of course, the life blood of the business and the delivery rounds were far and wide: Alcester, Bidford-on-Avon, Bridgnorth, Bromsgrove, Clifton-on-Teme, Coughton, Droitwich, Lower Sapey, Kidderminster, Malvern Wells, Pershore, Redditch, Rednall, Worcester were all serviced by the three vans and drivers operating in 1936. There was even customer in the Liverpool area but her deliveries were by post: "*Dear Sirs, When I lived in Ludlow at 48 Julian Road your van used to supply me with coffee. As I have lost your address I am not enclosing a cheque – but I shall be glad if you will send me four pounds of your 2/6 coffee as soon as possible. Yours Truly Mrs F M Sharratt. Hillfield Drive, Pensby, Wirral.*" 6 days later she thanked him for a quick delivery with a Cheque for 10/- and the comment "*it is still the best coffee I have had*". Clearly, the name 'Victory Tea Co.' was sufficient on the address for her first letter to find its way to Hill.

The Victory tea company sold edible goods and therefore received documentation about the Borough of Kidderminster '**Shops Act 1936**'. This really didn't affect Hill but is an interesting piece of social history, nonetheless. It included changes in Sunday opening laws: Fish sales including shell fish, groceries and provisions sold in grocers' shops were to be not permitted on Sunday after 1<sup>st</sup> February 1938. Bread and flour confectionary was permitted by exemption for Kidderminster up to 10 a.m.

A covering letter referring to enclosed correspondence was sent to Hill by **Victoria Carpet Co Ltd**. It seems that Hill's determination to use the Trade Name 'Victory Tea Company' had come home to roost. A letter meant for him had been mistakenly delivered to Victoria Carpet Co. Ltd.!



Hill often donated tea to local charitable institutions. Bert Down, a leader of the **4<sup>th</sup> Kidderminster Life Boys**, wrote thanking 'Ernest' for delivering tea and biscuits for a Parents' Night. Apparently the tea was free of charge but not the biscuits. Bert thought that perhaps he had ordered too few biscuits and asked for more on a 'use or return' basis. He also sent two tickets for the event

On another occasion, Hill gave tea for a Sports Day held by the Halesowen Hospital & Charities Committee (Ladies section).



# 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.

## 1937

**Note:** The Victory Tea Company documents for 1936 contain none dated after early October. Papers for the early months of 1937 until March are also missing from the collection. The reason for this is unknown so, in order to compare the performance of the Company in 1937 with 1936 and other years, annual figures have been estimated by extrapolation- where necessary.

### Sales continue to grow

The **Victory Tea** business continued to improve and, in particular, the amount of tea ordered from all sources was 37,937lbs between 9<sup>th</sup> March to the end of 1937. If this figure is extrapolated (assuming a constant rate of tea orders taking place over the full year) then the total order for 1937 would have been in the region of 45,600lb. This compares to an estimated total of tea orders for 1936 of 40,500lb; an increase of some 12.5% from 1936 to 1937. Perhaps sales had slowed a little, for the estimated increase in tea order for 1936 over 1935 was 33%. The majority of tea (c79%) was still sourced from **Summerfield's of Liverpool** the other suppliers were **The "Priory" Tea & Coffee Co. Ltd; London & Birmingham**, (c17%) and **Barber's Teas, Tea blenders and Coffee grinders, Birmingham**, (c4%). Of the tea ordered 69% was pre-packed in ½lb or 1lb cartons with Victory Tea labels - all by Summerfield. The rest was loose tea in crates, or occasionally smaller parcels, which Hill blended and packed himself. There was also China tea supplied by Summerfield which came in 1lb boxes.

**Ground coffee** was obtained from **Ferguson, Holness & Co. Ltd. of London** and **Joseph Tetley & Co. Ltd., of Aldgate, London**, as well as **The "Priory" Tea & Coffee Co. Ltd.** However, total wholesale purchases were reduced from 556lbs in 1936 to 460lbs in 1937. The venture into Chicory Essence in 1936 must have been reasonably successful as the order for 63 dozen large bottles from **John Bromley & Sons Ltd. Leeds** was repeated in 1937, but the small and quart sized bottles were dropped.

TELEPHONE NO. 75672. ESTABLISHED OVER 60 YEARS. TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS: "BROMLEY'S, HUNSBLET, LEEDS." 1370

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ORDER FORM.**

**JOHN BROMLEY & SONS LTD.**

COFFEE ESSENCE MANUFACTURERS AND EXTRACTORS.

BLOOMSBURY WORKS.

LEEDS, 10 June 14th. 1937

Messrs The Victory Tea Co.  
Holman Street,  
KIDDERMINSTER.

To Be Despatched per L.M.S. Railway. Railway Station Order No. 153

TERMS: Samples. Payment due in Leeds. Not Cash in 10 days from date of Invoice. We however, reserve to ourselves the right to refuse payment of any account before the expiration of the aforesaid 10 days from date of Invoice.

Cases	Quantity Gross	Doz.	Description of Goods	Rate	f	s.	d.
3	-	9	"Ever Ready" Coffee & Chicory Essence. Large size.	9/-	24	1	-d.

FREARS LIMITED <i>Biscuit Manufacturers</i> WOODGATE, LEICESTER							
THE VICTORY TEA CO. HOLMAN STREET. KIDDERMINSTER.				TELEPHONE, LEICESTER 21048-9 TELEGRAMS "BISCUITS" LEICESTER			
				I N V O I C E			
ORDER No.	122	DELIVERY No.	1075/1784	FOLIO	P&V.	DATE	MARCH 1ST. 1937
							00248
TINS	HALF-TINS			DOZ.	LBs.	PRICE	AMOUNT
	48	1/2S BRIDGEASSTD.				22/6D	4 10 0
	12	1/2S CHOC. ASSTD.				29/-	1 9 0

Biscuit sales improved significantly and Hill's wholesale purchases increased by about 60% compared to 1936. This year **Frears Limited Biscuit Manufacturers**, increased their share of the market by matching that of **BeeBee Biscuits Ltd.** Varieties supplied by the latter included: Falcon assorted, Malt Milk, Tower assorted, Cream crackers, Cheese assorted, Coronation Caskets, Coronation assorted, Ginger nuts, Choffy Wafer cake, Beachtime assorted and Standard Fives. The range acquired from **Frears** was less extensive: Bridge assorted, Choc assorted, Holiday, Le Brun and Tartan.



**Dunn & Co. Burn Park, Sunderland**, a new supplier, sent 2½ cwt of biscuits: Monte Carlo (Cherry Ripe & Fishing Smack).

The business letters from **Fred Scholefield** of Summerfield & Co. continued to embrace personal observations together with more formal business issues. On the 5<sup>th</sup> April he writes: *"Just a line to wish you and Mrs Hill all the very best of luck and happiness for the future. Hope everything went off AI on Saturday and that you turned up in good time. Mr Summerfield wants to send you a set of Fish knives and forks etc. but I thought I would write to you first in case you have already been given a set. If so please let me know, or if there is anything else you would prefer such as Electric clock, carvers etc. It s no good having too many of the one thing, is it. Kind regards from Mrs S and myself. FBS"*, thus alerting us to Hill's very recent marriage. 7<sup>th</sup> May: *"Glad to hear you are keeping fit. Finding good men these days is harder than winning the Irish sweep. We have a few decorations up in L'pool but they are not putting the best up till the week-end in case of bad weather ruining them. Ca-canny! It will be nothing but holidays for a few weeks now."* [Note: Coronation of King George VI 12<sup>th</sup> May]. And a quaint expression from the past: 27<sup>th</sup> May: *"Hope you and Mrs Hill are keeping in the pink"*. 8<sup>th</sup> Oct: *"Sorry the labels sent to you were for another client; our young ladies in the office are apt to get confused under the pressure of business (?)"*. [Perhaps political correctness was not in vogue in those days]. Finally, a bit of thoughtfulness on the run up to Christmas: 15<sup>th</sup> Dec: *"We have been in the habit of sending you a box of cigars at Xmas & I wonder if you would find a turkey, or something similar, more useful now that you are in the married class. If you would prefer this please let me know."*




**Routine servicing of Hill's transport fleet** (now numbering 3 vans) was provided, as before, mainly by the Morris main dealer **TBC of Oxford Street**. Example: 31<sup>st</sup> May invoice – the charge for fitting a replacement engine unit and associated procedures (M/M. Van) was £1/12/12<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d with the S.V. engine (less gearbox) costing £10. But **John Preece of Spencer Street** was also used for repairs e.g. 14 Dec 1937: relining front brakes, bleeding complete system, refilling with Lockheed oil, 1 set of front liners. All for £2/3/10d. Hill has opened an account with the **Foley Park Garage** for regular petrol purchases (rarely more than 2 gallons at a time), as well as some perhaps opportunistic repairs related to tyres and brakes. Personnel signing regularly for petrol include: E. Hill, J Lloyd, Jas Brighton, and less often: J R Oakes, D Hall and Whately. The price of petrol at the beginning of the year was 1/6d per gallon until 27<sup>th</sup> April when it increased to 1/6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d, only for it to revert to 1/6d on 29<sup>th</sup> July for the rest of the year.

## Two items of general interest:

1. Evidence that Hill put in long hours in administration, delivering tea or collecting goods from suppliers, is found in a notice for a speeding offence. In February, driving one of his delivery vans, he had been exceeding the 30mph limit in Nuneaton at **8.40pm**.

2. A letter received from the Ministry of Transport in November (see opposite), was perhaps a foretaste of the political unrest and bureaucracy ahead?



Telegraphic Address: "TRANSMINRY, RAND, LONDON." Telephone No.: WHITEHALL 8400.		MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, METROPOLE BUILDINGS, NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE, LONDON, W.C.2.
Please quote Reference No. F.S. 2294 on any reply		
8th November, 1937.		
<b>CONFIDENTIAL.</b>		
SIR(s),		
<b>CENSUS OF MECHANICALLY-PROPELLED GOODS VEHICLES AND TRAILERS AS AT 15th NOVEMBER, 1937.</b>		
I am directed by the Minister of Transport to state that in connection with the consideration of measures which might be necessary in the organisation of national defence, it is desired to have available current information as to the unladen weight and type of the mechanically-propelled goods vehicles and trailers in the country.		

**"NAUTICAL WILLIAM"**  
 (Proprietors: Derick Burcher Road Houses Ltd.)  
 Man. Director DERICK BURCHER  
**FENN GREEN, ALVELEY, BRIDGNORTH**  
 TELEPHONE: ARLEY 31  
 Registered Office:  
**OXFORD STREET, KIDDERMINSTER**  
 TELEPHONE: 711/2

"Nautical William", Fenn Green, Alveley was one of Victory Tea's well known customers.

Hill also needed to dispose of the tea chests which came to him on a regular basis containing bulk loose tea and he sold on to clients who found them useful for packaging. One such client was the **"Beaulieu" Chocolate Manufacturing Company of Bewdley**.

Selling tea was, of course, Hill's *raison d'être* and deliveries continued to be widespread: **Chester, Wallasey, Alcester, Alveley, Blackheath, Worcester, Malvern, Redditch, Ombersley, Kidderminster, Hereford, and Eckington** - the last being van man No. 3's patch. The

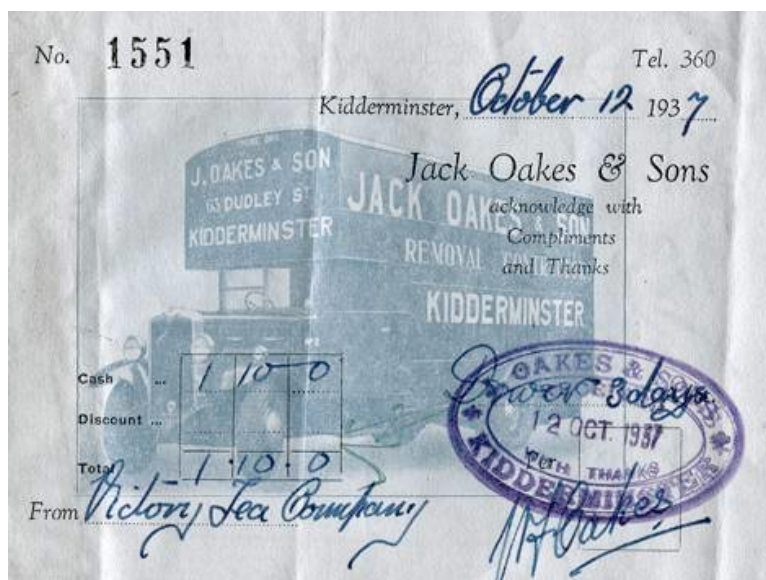
<b>ADVICE NOTE.</b> No. <b>12093</b> (PRICED INVOICE TO FOLLOW.)	
SEASONABLE SELECTION OF SPORTS GOODS BY BEST MAKERS	'Phone 503.  <b>The Butts Depot</b> Branch of Stanley Goodwin Ltd.  <b>Park Butts,</b> <b>Kidderminster.</b>
	RADIO EXPERTS. — ANY MAKE SUPPLIED. — SATISFACTION GUARANTEED

16 1937

As ever, local businesses feature amongst the Victory Tea document collection and provide snapshots of Traders now long gone.

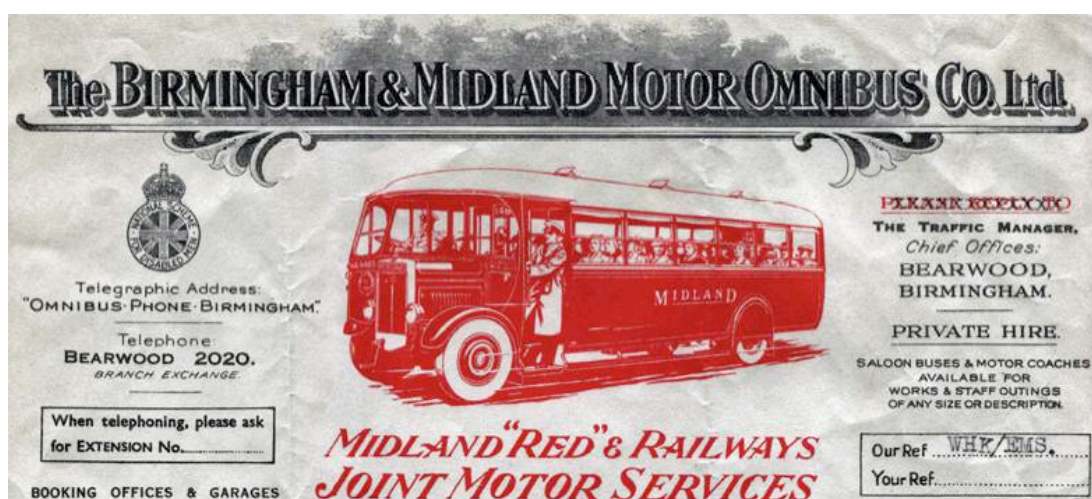
**The Butt's Depot** (a branch of **Stanley Goodwin Ltd.** better known in the Automobile trade) was one such business. This advice note relates to the purchase of a GEC AC mains 5-valve Radio Gram £16/16/-, and was signed by A. Carter.

**Jack Oakes & Sons** was a furniture and removal firm but Hill was invoiced on 13<sup>th</sup> August by them not for furniture or removals but for the use of a driver for 3 days at 10/- per day. The driver must surely be the J R Oakes who requisitioned petrol from Foley Park Garage on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> July.



**T Leonard Watkins** of Oxford Street supplied a small quantity of paint in July.

In March Hill made enquiries to two local coach companies about a trip to Malvern on 3<sup>rd</sup> April. Hills' daughter Roselyn explains that this would have been to convey the large Kidderminster contingent of guests attending his wedding.



The first query was to '**Midland Red**' who quoted £3 for a 30 seater Saloon 'Bus leaving Kidderminster at 2pm and returning at 6pm. A second quotation came from '**P Owen & Sons**' who asked the same price for a 32 Seater Super Luxury Coach. The Midland Red company was used.





In summary, 1937 was a year of gradual if unexciting improvement in trade for the Victory tea Company. In contrast. Ernest Hill had a more heartening personal year boosted by his marriage to Ethel Francis.

But was there a shadow lurking over the horizon? Was the letter received from the Ministry of Transport about a census of goods vehicles to be "*used for measures which might be necessary in the organisation of national defence*". Was official intervention into business matters a portent for the not too distant future?

Subsequent chapters of this narrative will tell us more.

# The 'Victory Tea Company' Kidderminster

1931 to 1965

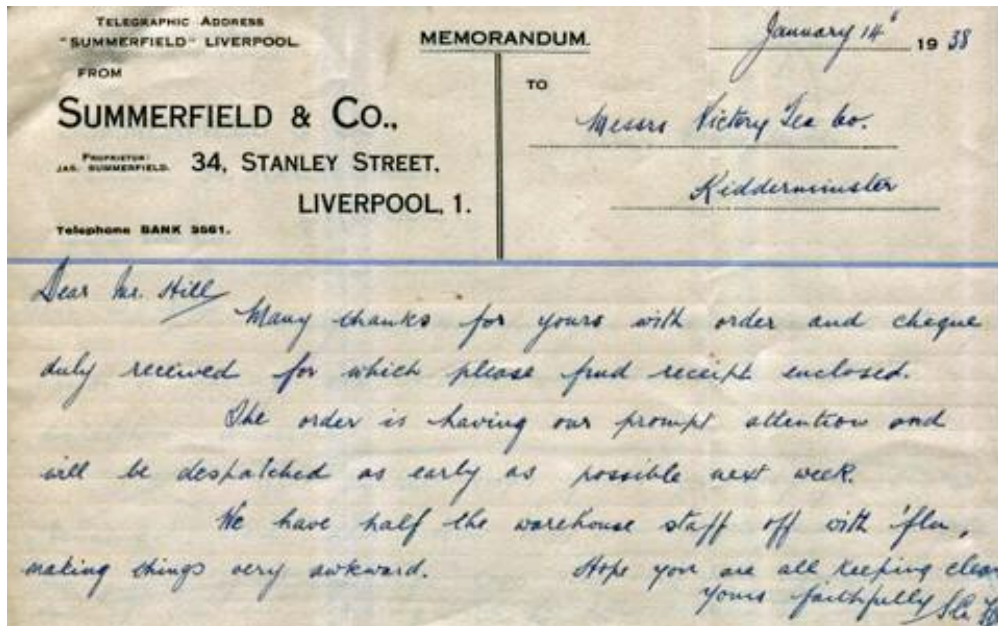
Proprietor Ernest Hill

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

## 1938

### Trading in times of political and national unrest

1938 was a year of political turmoil throughout Europe. Germany with Adolph Hitler at the helm was in a belligerent mood and it seemed that war was imminent. Nevertheless business continued and the intriguing correspondence from Fred Scholefield to Ernie Hill still kept coming.



The above letter is a typical of Scholefield's way of finishing a business letter with a chatty finale - often quite personal. On the 18<sup>th</sup> November he ended with: "Kind regards to all (I was hoping to see you & Mrs Hill before now, so if you can manage a week end before Xmas, don't forget".

And on the political front his comments are quite revealing of the times. 16<sup>th</sup> September: "All this talk of war is making the market very firm and now the Insurance companies have made the War Risk cover dearer it is becoming a nuisance. Hope Mr Chamberlain will be able to settle it before it goes too far." 26<sup>th</sup> September: "We sincerely hope Hitler will not be quite so mad as to start a war, but if such a thing did happen the Tea Trade would probably be controlled in a similar way to the end of the last war." 28<sup>th</sup> April: "We seem to be the 'mugs' again, as usual when the country gets short of money. It's a pity we haven't a few M.P.s who could do a bit of shouting and make the Chancellor look elsewhere."

The year by year growth of tea purchases was not repeated this year - the first time since the start of the business. The total amount of tea ordered by Hill from all sources in 1938 was **37,902lbs** compared to **45,600lbs** the previous year (down 17%). It is not at all clear why there was this drop in tea orders but, as we shall see in the next chapter, tea purchases did to some extent recover to 50,503lbs in 1939.



Again **Summerfield** were the biggest provider of tea (31,415lbs) but **The "Priory" Tea & Coffee Co. Ltd**, **Barber's Teas** and **Ferguson, Holness** continued as minor suppliers supplemented by a new arrival: **Brash Brothers (Tea ) Ltd.** 13, Rood Lane, London, E.C.3 with a input of just 200lbs.

It was not only tea where supplies were reduced. Pure coffee for the year was 460lbs - down from 550lbs in 1937. There were no new suppliers of coffee **The "Priory" Tea & Coffee Co.** being the dominant sources with smaller amounts obtained from **Ferguson, Holness** and **Joseph Tetley**.

A different tale emerges for **confectionery**. There was an increase of 78% over the expenditure for 1937. **Frears** and **BeeBee Biscuits** were the most used but four new companies became involved: **Robert Bell** of Croydon, **Needlers** of Hull, **Elkes** of Uttoxeter and **Parkinson & Son** of Doncaster.



A new source of tea bags was **The Berkshire Printing Co Ltd, Reading** (see their postcard advertisement below) who shared Hill's custom almost equally with **Dobson & Crowther Ltd**.



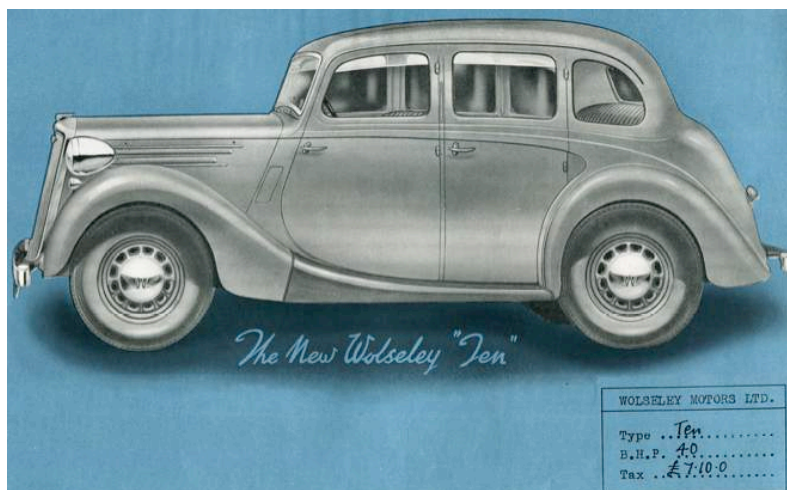




Hill continued to procure cutlery from **Viners** for resale but not all customers were easy to satisfy: *"Very sorry to trouble you, but Kathie has just realised that possibly the cutlery she has ordered will require cleaning. She would prefer stainless if possible and wondered if that would be obtainable. If so, would you be good enough to make enquiries about that instead. Hope you have not already written and will not be put to too much trouble"*.

Between 15<sup>th</sup> March and 4<sup>th</sup> May he ordered four of the impressive "Hanover" 56 piece canteens in an oak cabinet with stand (shown left). He paid £3.12.6d for each set but we do not know the cost to the customer. Mahogany was an alternative choice to oak.

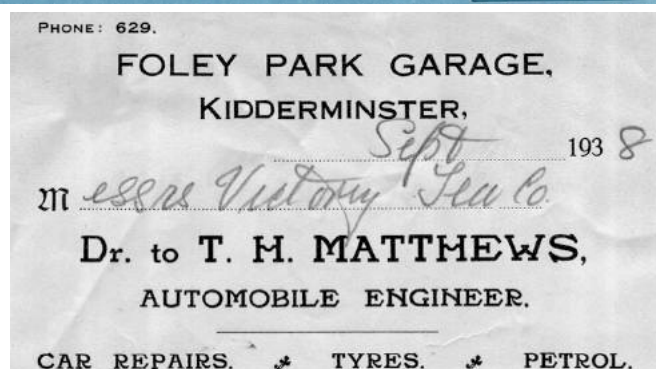
In May 1938 Hill received an invoice for £120 from **T.B.C. (Tenbury Baths Company)** for an new Grey Morris 5 cwt van. Delivery cost him £1.5.0d and the Road Licence was £6.2.6d from 1<sup>st</sup> June until 31<sup>st</sup> December. He part exchanged his 1934 Morris 5 cwt van for £30.



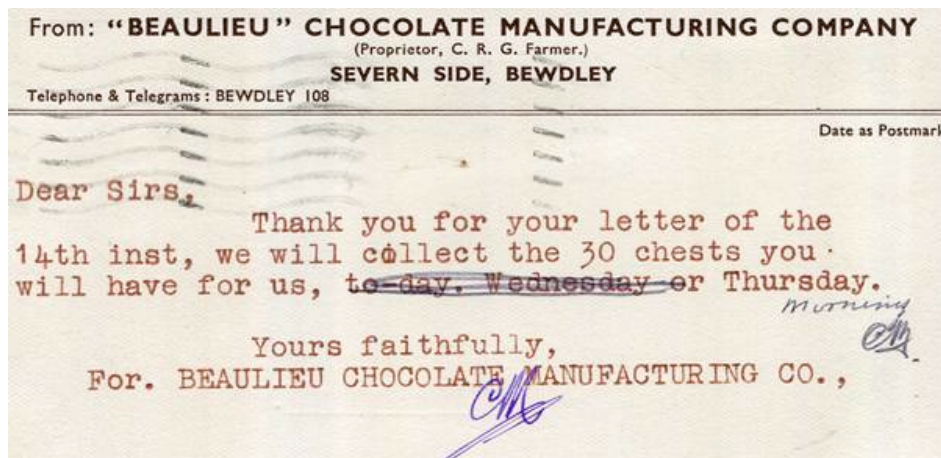
Amongst the advertising literature that was received from T.B.C. was advanced details of the new Wolsey "TEN" launched on the 10<sup>th</sup> February for £215. This picture of the car (above right) was included with the information.

Throughout the year invoices were received on a monthly basis from the Foley Park Garage, mainly for petrol which was purchased almost on a daily basis. On 17<sup>th</sup> February the cost of petrol decreased from 1.6d per gallon to 1/5½d. There it stayed until 2<sup>nd</sup> May when it went up to 1/6½d reducing again to 1/6d on 13 May, without further change by the end of 1938. Drivers who signed for petrol included Jas Brighton, J Lloyd and H Macham - as well as Hill himself.

T.B.C. did most of the servicing of Hill's car vans but he also continued to use other local small businesses. **John Preece Motor & General Engineer**, amongst other things, decarbonised and ground valves on an old type Morris van for 15/- and **Reece & Griffiths, Coach Builders** sprayed his new van (CNP 37) and added gold lettering, for







£8/10/-. A 4x18 tyre and inner tube cost £1/9/- from The Tyre Warehouse in Pitts Lane.

Other local businesses were often patronised by Hill but in one case the boot was on the other foot: a post card shows that the "Beaulieu" Chocolate Manufacturing Company, Severn Side, Bewdley, were sourcing tea chests from him.

Deliveries of tea were once again made over a widespread area and included: Blakedown, Blackheath, Bridgnorth, Broadway, Chester, Clent, Cookley, Droitwich Spa, Evesham, Hereford, Kidderminster, Malvern, Shaftesbury (Dorset), Stourbridge, Stourport, Upton Snodsbury, and Worcester; in addition to Kidderminster. Letters and postcards related to deliveries were received from some 31 individuals.

Amongst his charitable donations were boxes for use in St John's F.C dressing room; tea, toffees and gifts to the Littleton and Cleeve Prior and Offenham branches of the British Legion.

It seems that Ernie and Ethel took two holidays in 1938.

Telephone No. 6

Telegrams—"RIGGS, WINDERMERE"

ENGLISH LAKES

RIGG'S WINDERMERE HOTEL

WINDERMERE

Room 11-12a

1938 June

£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
		7			8												

In June they had a short break staying overnight on the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>) at Rigg's Hotel in Windermere. The total cost was £2/5/- including 14/- for breakfast and 1/- for use of a garage.

Later in September they had a week in Bournemouth where they stayed at the Warwick Glen Hotel. Board and residence for the week was £4/10/- and early morning tea cost them 3/-.

TEL. BOURNEMOUTH 3087.

2843

"Warwick Glen"

Private Hotel

West Hill Road, Bournemouth,

Room No. 17

Sept 11<sup>th</sup> 1938

M.R. Hill

Booking From Sept. 5<sup>th</sup> To 11<sup>th</sup>

Miss GRACE MARLEY, Proprietress.

£ s. d.

BOARD & RESIDENCE

£ 4. 10. 0



Form No. C.95.

B284-6047.  
 MR. E. HILL,  
 THE VICTORY TEA CO.,  
 HOLMAN STREET,  
 KIDDERMINSTER.

Let S.W.S. do YOUR  
ELECTRICAL WIRING.

Dr. to

## Kidderminster & District Electric Supply Co. Ltd.

OPERATED BY THE SHROPSHIRE, WORCESTERSHIRE & STAFFORDSHIRE ELECTRIC POWER CO.

A/c. No. **6047**

UNITS USED TO THE DATE OF THE LAST READING SHOWN ON YOUR METER CARDS	ACCOUNT NOW DUE CREDIT CANNOT BE EXTENDED AFTER	JAN 9	£	s.	d.	DISCOUNT OFFERED IS NOT ALLOWABLE UNLESS PAYMENT IS MADE ON OR BEFORE THE CREDIT DATE	DISCOUNT	£	s.	d.
13	LIGHTING	NOV 22	5			NET		5	5	
	MIN CHARGE	DEC 31				NET		15	10	
		DEC 31				NET		1	3	

PLEASE QUOTE THE  
ACCOUNT NUMBER  
AND CREDIT DATE  
ON ALL  
COMMUNICATIONS

And, of course, there were utility bills to pay. For instance Electricity (above) and Water Charges (right). The latter were due to the Kidderminster Borough Council who ran the water supply system in Kidderminster in the days before the era of the large Water Companies.

The "Kidderminster & District Electric Supply Co. Ltd." also appears to be local but the small print reveals that it was run by "The Shropshire, Worcestershire & Staffordshire Electric Power Co."

No. **195**

## KIDDERMINSTER CORPORATION WATER CHARGES.

The Victory Tea Co.,  
Holman Street,  
Kidderminster.

Dr. to the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of the Borough  
of Kidderminster.

To One Quarter's Meter Rent and Charges, at *Holman Street*

Due **31 MAR 1938**

Index of Meter				
Index No. last Quarter				
No of Gallons at 1/- per 1,000	<i>Min.</i>	5		
Quarter's Meter Rent		2		
Arrears				
Total		7		

I hereby demand payment of each of the above Rents and Charges.  
If the account is not paid on delivery, it must be paid at the Collector's  
Office within 10 days, after which all defaulters will be proceeded against.

**R. E. GROVE, Collector,**  
2, CHURCH STREET,  
KIDDERMINSTER.

Please produce this Demand Note on payment.

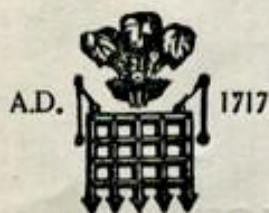


RENEWAL  
NOTICE.

The Westminster Fire Office.

Head Office: 27/8, KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN, LONDON, W.C.2.

CITY OFFICE: 82, LOMBARD STREET, LONDON E.C.3



AGENCY

## MOTOR INSURANCE.

The undermentioned Policy becomes renewable on the date shown. In order to renew the Insurance, the Premium should be paid at the address of the Agency as above on or before the renewal date.

On payment of the Premium the number of the Policy should be advised.

If an accident occurs prior to the renewal date the "No Claim" Rebate will not be allowable in respect of the vehicle involved and the Nett Renewal Premium shown below will require revision.

Agent.

POLICY NO.	RENEWAL DATE.	NAME OF INSURED.		£	s.	d.
M. 602834.	1. 10. 38.	P. Hall Trading as The Victory Tea Co.	PREMIUM	8	10	-
			REBATE 20%	1	14	-
			NETT	£	6	16

ROAD TRAFFIC ACTS, 1930 TO 1934, AND MOTOR VEHICLES AND ROAD TRAFFIC ACTS (NORTHERN IRELAND), 1930 TO 1934.

On payment of the Premium the Company will issue to the Policyholder a new Certificate of Insurance as prescribed by the above Acts.

The use of a motor vehicle after the date of expiry shown on an Insurance Certificate and before a new Certificate has been obtained is an offence under the Acts exposing a Motorist to severe penalties.

Delivery vans were required to be insured.

This receipt shows that a vehicle numbered CNP37 belonging to the Victory Tea Co. cost Hill £6/16/-. The certificate which accompanied this receipt showed a start date of 27<sup>th</sup> May, so the cost given above was for 6 months. The date also confirms that this vehicle was the van purchased from T.B.C. in May and painted with new livery by Reece & Griffiths, as described on page 30.

Chests of tea continued to be delivered often by the Great Western Railway Goods department.

GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.										STATION. No.		(5873-S Fly)		
From		To		Carman		Van No.		Time Out		193				
Dr. to THE GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY COMPANY.														
No.	No. of Goods (incl. Date)	Owner and No. of Wagon	Enter Date of Delivery Book at Station	Consignor and Address	No. of Packages	Description and Marks of Goods	Actual Weight of Goods in Pkts. etc.	Delivered	WARRANT	Collected and Delivered	Rate	Paid on	Paid	TO PAY
								There must be no	SEP 21 1938	There must be no				
92	10		432	Trilling Leds	1	1st 22a Box				200 under 218	26 2			3.9
<p>THE DIRECTORS REQUIRE THE CARRIAGE TO BE PAID ON DELIVERY. PLEASE PAY THE AMOUNT SHOWN TO THE CARMAN AND SIGN THIS SHEET. HE IS NOT ALLOWED TO MAKE ANY STATEMENT OR TO LEAVE THE GOODS WITHOUT PAYMENT IN FULL UNLESS THE CONSIGNEE HAS A LEDGER OR OTHER CREDIT ACCOUNT WITH THE COMPANY.</p> <p>Any consignments requiring the collection or delivery of the Goods should be made to the Goods Agent at the appropriate Station. The Goods and Receipts of this Company must always be placed at the disposal of the Consignee. The Carriage of Goods must be secured, IF THE GOODS BE RETURNED, THE EXPENSE OF BACK CARRIAGE AND OF A SECOND DELIVERY WILL BE INCURRED.</p> <p>Notes—Parcels not exceeding 5 cwt. in weight are subject to the Scale and Regulations for small Parcels by Merchandise Trains mentioned in the General Conditions of Merchandise. Parcels over 5 cwt. are charged not less than the charge for 5 cwt. or the Small Parcel Scale.</p>														
												TOTAL	3.9	



# 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.

1939

## During the build up to, and the first four months of, World War II

The euphoria associated with "Peace in our Time" gradually evaporated as 1939 progressed. In September Chamberlain's optimism was proved mistaken and he declared war on Germany on September 5<sup>th</sup>.

Nevertheless Hill's tea business continued apace and after the reduction in tea ordered in 1938 by 17% over 1937, orders bounced back in 1939 with an increase of nearly 34% over the 1938 figure. A new major player for the supply of tea to Hill this year was **James Ashby & Sons Ltd. of London** who supplied more tea than anyone else, overtaking **Summerfield of Liverpool** who had led the field since 1931. (**James Ashby** supplied 28,362 lbs and **Summerfield** 18,769 lbs out of a total of 50,611 lbs purchased by Hill in 1939. **The "Priory" Tea & Coffee Co. Ltd; London & Birmingham**: was the only other company from whom tea was bought this year.



In past years the majority of Hill's purchases of tea has been pre-packed – mostly by Summerfield. However, this year only 19% was pre-packed and, again that was by Summerfield. No wonder he was making enquiries of **Whitmee Engineering** about a tea blending machine.

The correspondence from **Fred Scholefield** of the Summerfield tea company in Liverpool continued to provide a variety of personal views about what was happening in the country in 1939.

3<sup>rd</sup> April: Dear Mr Hill, "I would think the bomb explosions get exaggerated by the press, but they must be a darned nuisance to the police, however it will keep them busy instead of bothering car-owners all day!" [Bob Millward Note: On 16 January 1939, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) launched a campaign of bombing and sabotage against the civil, economic, and military infrastructure of Britain. On 23 March 5 bombs were exploded at telephone and gas installations and the offices of the New Chronicle in Fleet St. The 31<sup>st</sup> saw two bombs exploded on Hammersmith Bridge followed by seven bombs in different parts of the city on 31<sup>st</sup> March.]

4<sup>th</sup> September: "Dear Ernest, So it has started at last, spoiled my holiday in the bargain! I would advise you to get your customers to promise to register with you for their supplies as control will sure to start soon. I hope you will register with us for at least part of your supplies, if not all! We can still do the packing. Hope you are all keeping fit & that **it will soon be over.**"

15<sup>th</sup> September: "The cheapest tea we have in stock is 2/2 DP a fine blend, all the other has gone. They have been telling of issuing of some free tea for about a week but that is as far as they





have gone. This is what happens when London is left to run the country's trade! If they had left it to the wholesale trade to manage their own affairs it would have settled before now."

16<sup>th</sup> September **J Harvey of James Ashby** chips in: "**The Government** have taken **all tea in Bond**, including all my reserves. I have not a leaf to sell. I don't know when the Firm will get straight. The Government **Control Tea** is to be sold at 2/4d per lb in **National Control Bags**. Any tea you have in your place can be sold at any price you like, sorry I am helpless at the moment but directly I can be of any use, I shall be there. **I hope this ruddy War collapses very soon.**"



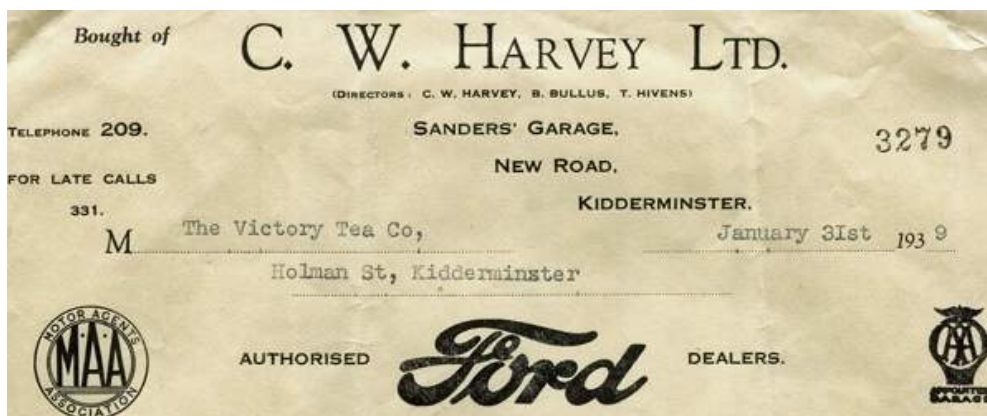
Of course, Hill had other revenue streams other than tea. His order for **coffee** was similar to 1938 but **Coffee & Chicory** essence was reduced by 30%. Biscuit orders overall improved marginally compared to 1938 (£428 from £383) the main supplier being **Frears of Leicester** followed by **BeeBee Biscuits**. **Humbugs** and **Bulls Eye Mints** were ordered from **Parkinson & Son of Doncaster** and, for the first time, Easter eggs from **John Mackintosh of Halifax**.



In earlier times **Viners Cutlery** had provided additional income but in 1939 there is no evidence that cutlery was purchased or sold although Hill was sent a catalogue pricing this 24 piece Bradford cabinet at 15/-, 15/6 and 17/-. The reason for the price difference for the three versions was not made clear.



**Transport** was central to the business of delivering tea and on 31<sup>st</sup> January he received an invoice from **C.W. Harvey Ltd**, Sanders Garage, New Road, Kidderminster for the purchase of a **Fordson 5 cwt Van** which cost £112/10/0 plus a delivery charge of £2/7/6d, Tax February 1 until 31 December £30 and number plates (CWP40) 12/6d There was an allowance of £30 on a Morris 8 Van. The Fordson van would have been something like this 1938 model.



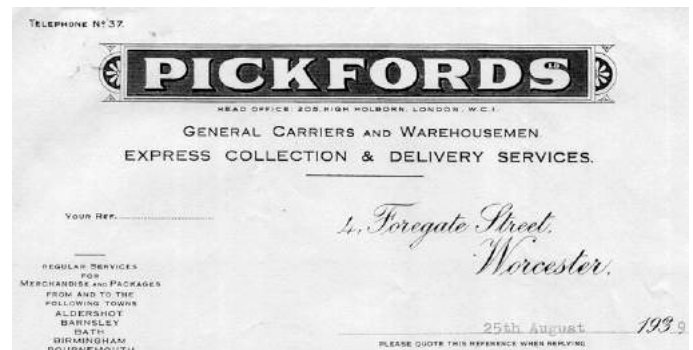


**Rees & Griffiths** customised the new van for the Victoria Tea Company by spraying and writing for £8/10/-.

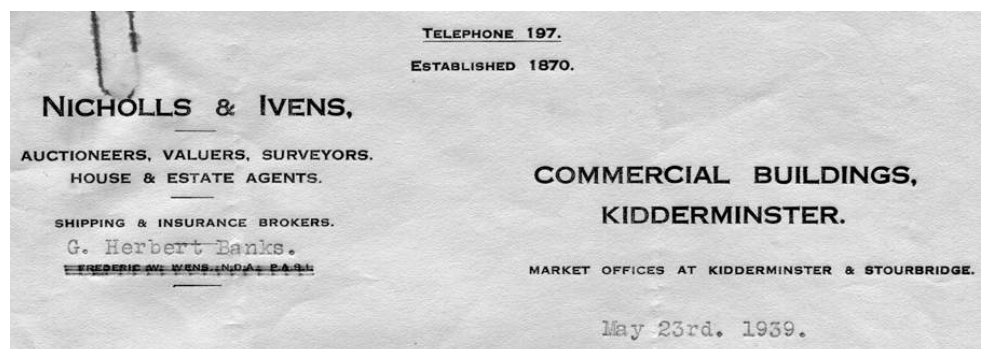
Most of the petrol used by the Victory Tea Co. was obtained from **Foley Park Garage** where Hill had an account settled

monthly. The invoices show that the price of petrol in 1939 up to 8<sup>th</sup> July was 1/6d per gallon when it decreased to 1/5d. The price increased again to 1/7d on 18<sup>th</sup> October and again on 19<sup>th</sup> November to 1/8½d with a final increase for the year to 1/9d on 23<sup>rd</sup> December.

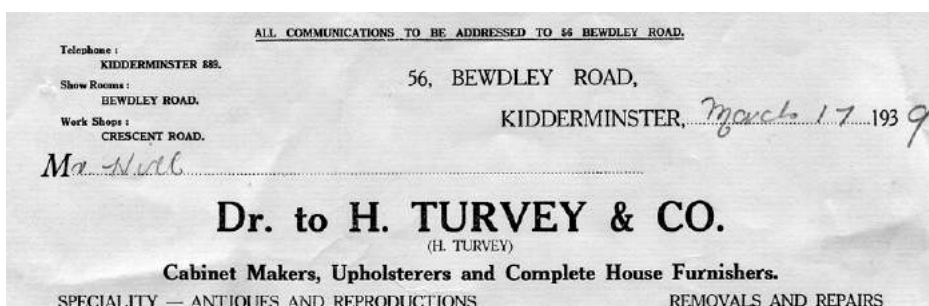
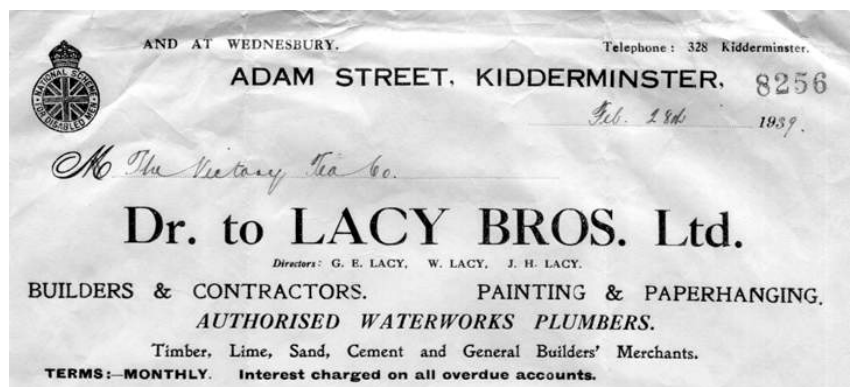
**Deliveries** of chests of loose tea were mostly by **Great Western Railways** but **Pickfords** were used on occasion.



As in the past, Hill used local businesses to serve many of his needs. He was obviously showing interest in house purchase because **Nicholls & Ivens** wrote to him on 23<sup>rd</sup> May informing Hill that "Headlands", 129 St John's Avenue was for sale at the Blakebrook end of the avenue. He didn't buy.



He used Lacy Brothers to do some repair work on his garage in Holman Street: fixing loose asbestos sheets on the roof and supplying and fixing 6 iron stays to a wall £1/9/6d.

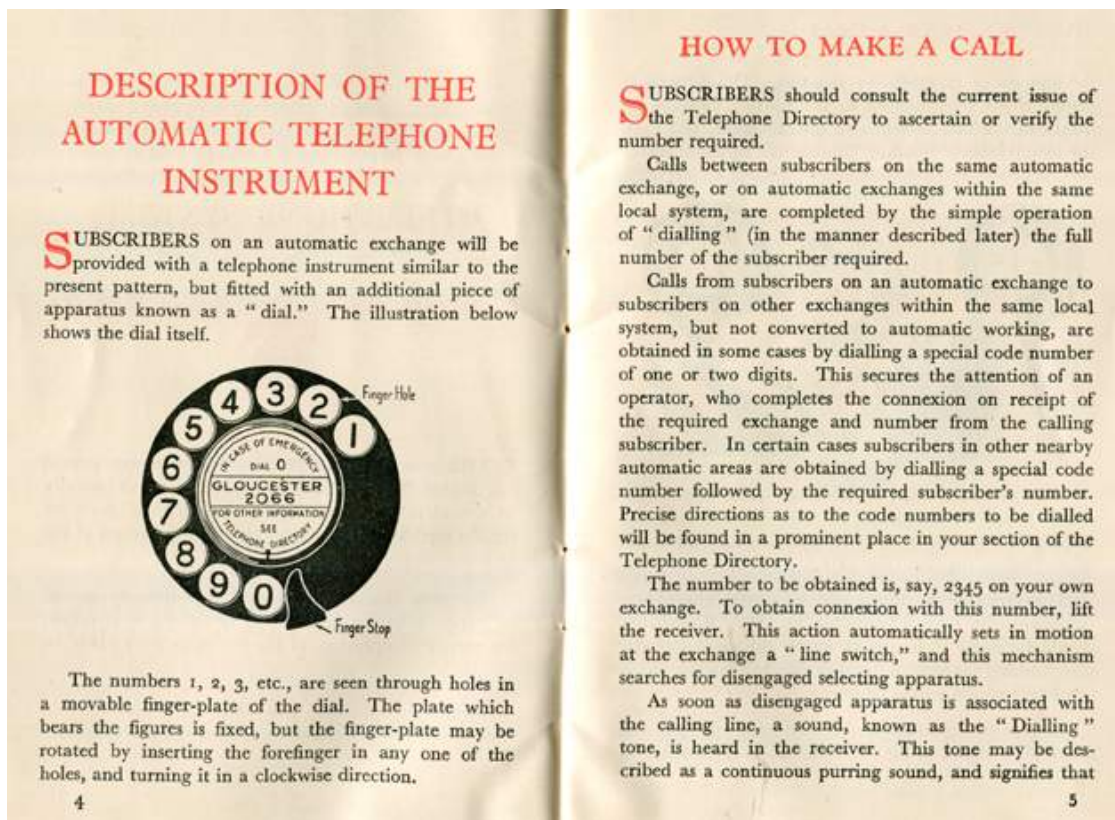


From this business he purchased 'a chair' for £1/10/-.



1939 saw a significant change in technology in Kidderminster with the introduction of the **new automatic system with dial phones**. A letter from the Post Office – Birmingham Telephone Area welcomed Hill as a telephone subscriber and a later communication explained that his telephone number 356 would become 3156 after transfer to the automatic exchange.

His bill in October cost him £2/2/9d including rental charge of £1/3/6d for 3 months.

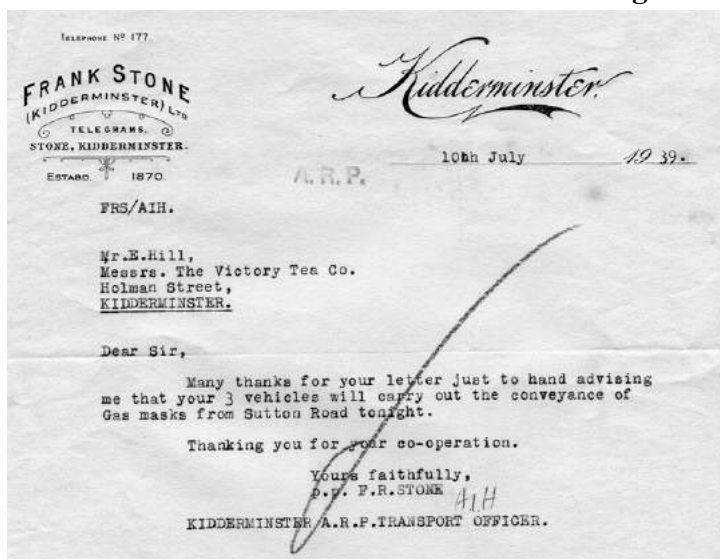


Of course the main source of income for the Victory tea Company was in selling tea mainly by delivering to private customers. Letters and postcards from some thirty customers were received: ordering, paying for, re-arranging or cancelling orders. These came from areas including: Alcester, Barnt Green, Blackheath, Bromsgrove, Chester, Clent, Evesham, Feckenham, Malvern, Mable, Quinton, Redditch, Rochford, Rowney Green Birmingham, Shaftesbury Dorset, South Hayling, Southport, Sutton Coldfield, Web Heath, Worcester, Wychbold and, of course, Kidderminster.

But Hill also engaged in supplying businesses and institutions particularly after the war began. One such commercial customer was the **Kidderminster & General Hospital**, where he submitted a tender for tea – packed loose in 100lb chests, delivered for 1/9½d per lb.

He also sold tea chests to the **"Beaulieu" Chocolate Manufacturing Company**, of Bewdley. Others were also interested: **A H Jones Packing Case Merchant**. 94 Mayfield Road, Worcester

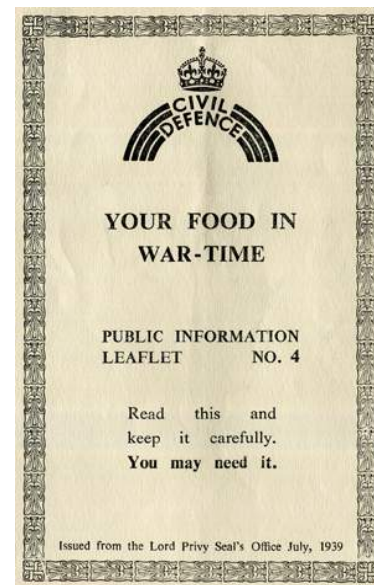
asked in a letter dated 27<sup>th</sup> October 1939 "about tea chests for sale: quantity and price".



**The approaching war in 1939** brought about many changes to business practices and operations for the Victory Tea Company and Ernest Hill. As early as July, at the request of the ARP Transport Officer, Frank Stone, Hill was using three of his vehicles to transport Gas masks from storage at 176 Sutton Road for distribution.

**Food Control** by the government also became an issue in terms of business management. Food retailers were required to register with J H Thursfield (Food Executive Controller) for a licence to trade and there were conditions e.g.: “No foodstuffs other than set out on the Licence may be sold from the premises mentioned thereon” - and various notices were required to be displayed on the retail premises.

Hill took on an important local role in the **Emergency Road Transport Group** when he became the organiser for Transport Group 9/G/2/1. This group was registered on 25 April 1939, clearly in anticipation of problems ahead. Deliveries could be shared and the issue of supplementary petrol coupons rationalised. The local area was under the direction of Mr G R Mole, District transport Officer (a contractor of Clows Top) with an office in Vicar Street.



Form Z/F/5A


### WEEKLY VEHICLE RECORD

Vehicle No. ANP 361

Fuel used Petrol (Strike out whichever does not apply)  
Diesel Oil

Unladen Weight \_\_\_\_\_  
Group No. \_\_\_\_\_

One Sheet is to be used for each vehicle for each rationing week. The sheet is to be handed to the Group Organiser on the day following the last day of each rationing week.

Date	Journey*		Miles			Description of Goods carried	Fuel used, Gallons
	From	To	Loaded over 50 per cent. capacity	Loaded under 50 per cent. capacity	Empty		
Apr 30	Kedd.	Blackthorn Creston Wells Lane	85			Sheets 18 bags etc.	3 gal
Oct 4	Kedd	Keenland Wick	35			"	1 "
Oct 6	"	Clifton Kidd Bunbury Wick	55			"	2 gal
							6 6

Date Oct 6. 39 Certified that the above is a true record.

\* In the case of circular journeys, intermediate points sufficient to identify the journey taken should be given, e.g. journey from A to A via B, C and D.

Signature of Operator H. J. Gammant

**Weekly delivery records** were kept by the transport operators upon which the supplementary petrol allowance was based. It becomes clear from the letters issued to Transport Group organisers that Mole was not satisfied by how operators completed the forms, often missing out data that he expected to be included. He was also suspicious that some operators were trying to obtain unfair shares of the limited supplies available to him – to the detriment of others.

**War Risk Insurance Act 1939.** From 28<sup>th</sup> August, Hill was in correspondence, via his agent Clem Andrews, about this insurance which provided recompense for losses endured due to acts of war. The terms of the Insurance seem to have been inflexible: the value of stock on 3<sup>rd</sup> September was sacrosanct. Hill had reduced his tea stock considerably since that date leading to a premium higher than he thought that he should pay

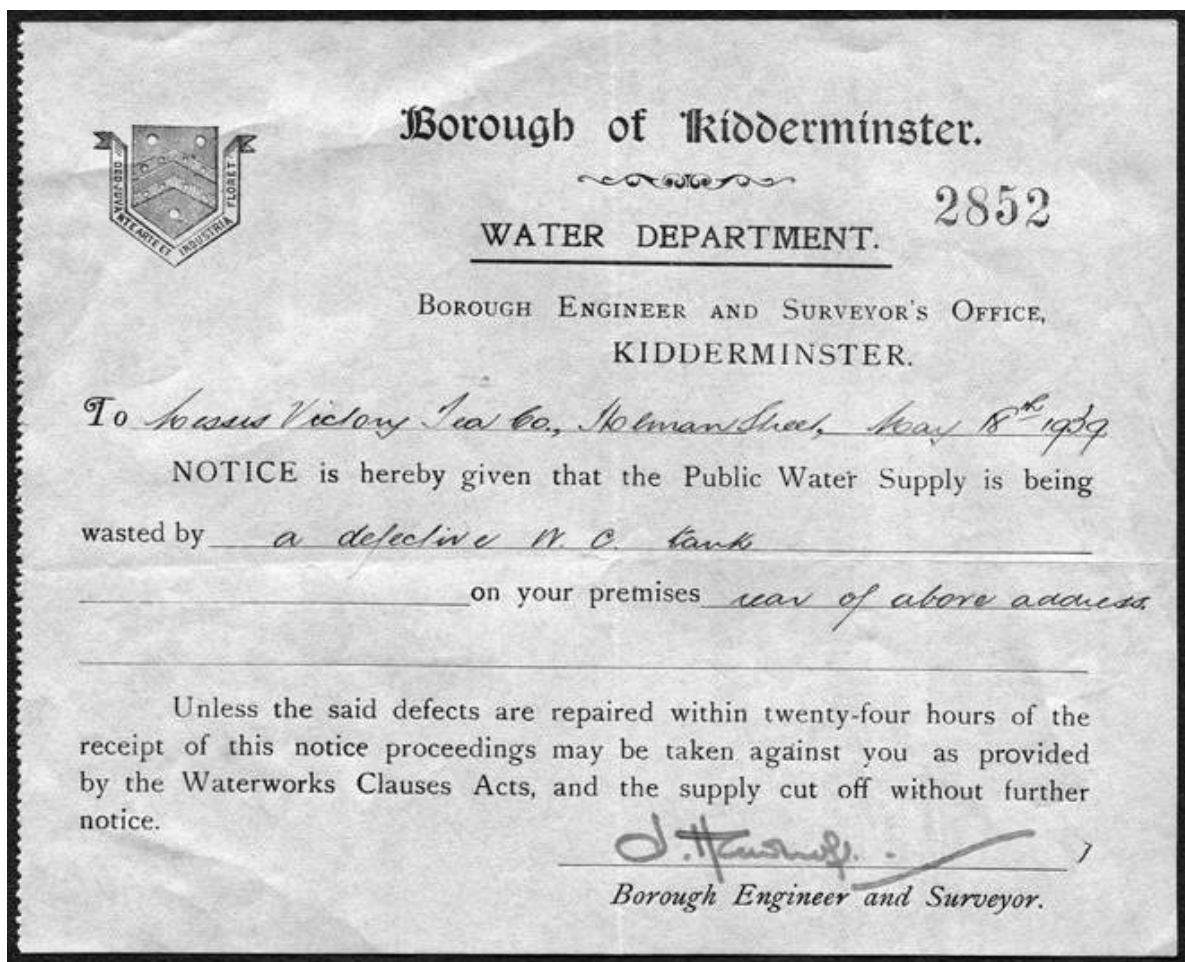
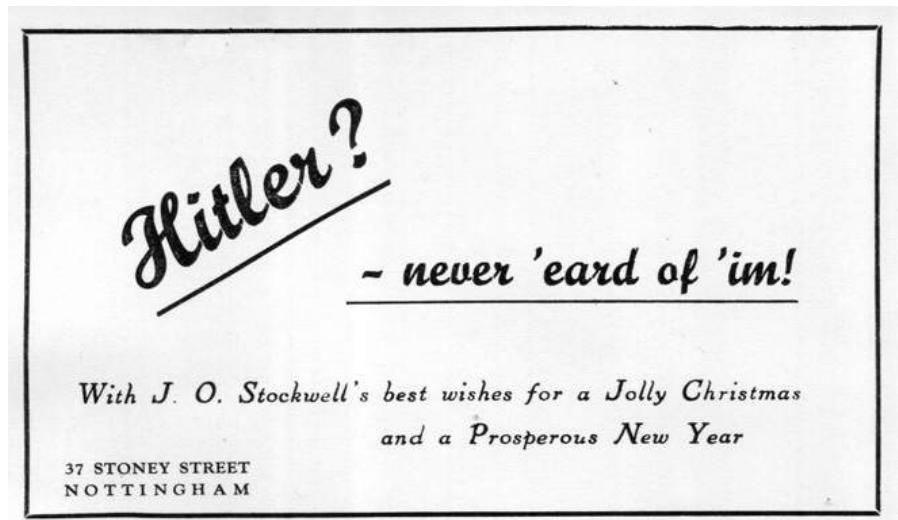
**A reassuring letter for Hill, 27 October**, received from the Ministry of Transport, District Transport Officer, 1 Hylton Rd, Worcester, about the co-operation of his Group members.

*“The information you give me – particularly as to the diversity of Trades represented – enables me to understand how difficult it is for you to rationalise to any very great extent. I do appreciate, however, that you are cultivating the personal touch with each of your operators and this method, I am sure, should prove the most successful.”*

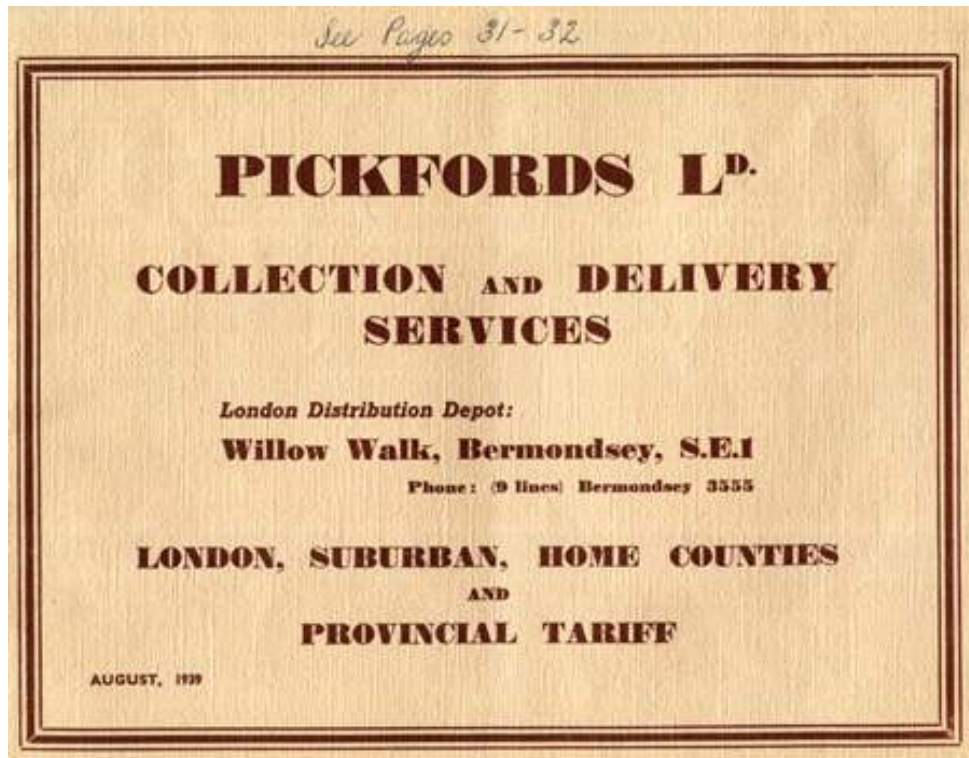


The Victory Tea file for 1939 contained many interesting and colourful advertisements and fliers from a number of Hill's suppliers, or would be suppliers, of a variety of goods. Here are a few examples.

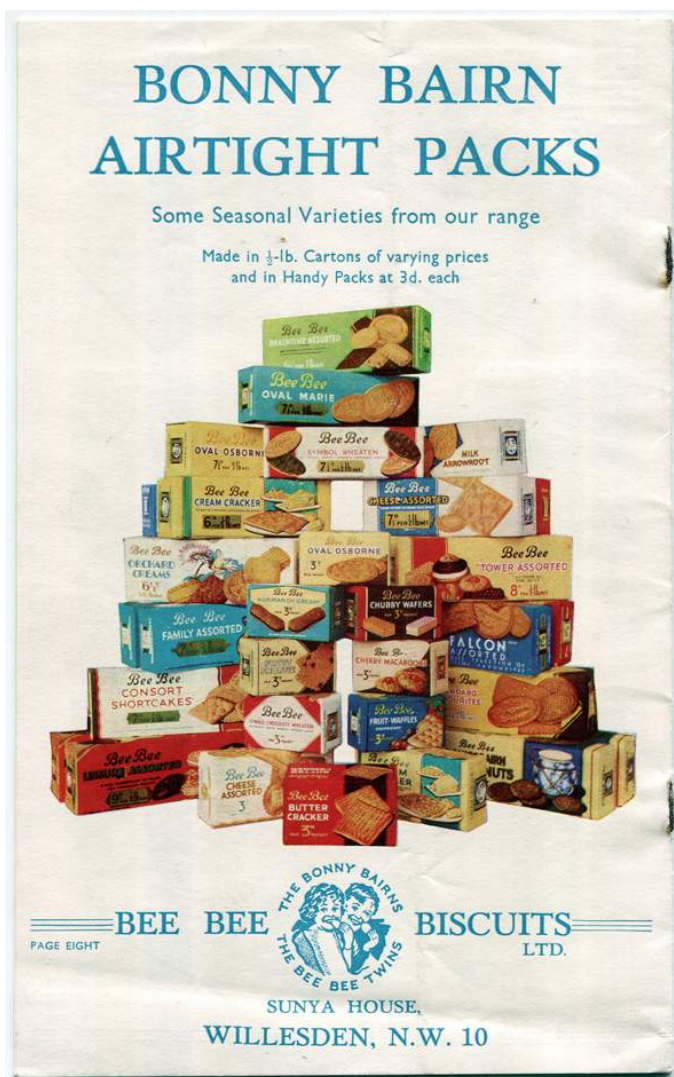
A Christmas greeting from Stockwell's (a 'would be') supplier of **Butterscotch**.



The Borough Council Water Department 'tightening up' on leakages.



The hand written note 'Pages 31-32' refers to where the charges relevant for the Victory Tea Company can be found.



BeeBee was the first company to supply the Victory Tea Company with biscuits when Hill placed an order with them in December 1934 - just in time for the Christmas trade. This flier actually dates from 1938.



A well-known sweet manufacturer to this day was a new supplier in 1939 for this what must surely have been popular product and a good seller.



**WEST END PRINTING COMPANY**  
D. G. Kiteley.

WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU THIS MONTH?

	APRIL 1939				
SUNDAY	2	9	16	23	30
Monday	3	10	17	24	
Tuesday	4	11	18	25	
Wednesday	5	12	19	26	
Thursday	6	13	20	27	
Friday	7	14	21	28	
Saturday	1	8	15	22	29

LETTER-HEADINGS  
DUPLICATE BOOKS  
CATALOGUES  
TICKETS & LABELS  
CLUB STATIONERY

**84 WOOD STREET . KIDDERMINSTER**


A local 'would be' supplier trying to drum up business. There is no evidence that Hill used them for printing but, nevertheless, kept this card on file.

100, GUY'S STREET, THE  
BANK, GREAT LONDON STREET,  
LONDON, E.C. 3

# Clarke's

# ATLAS

## CAR BATTERY CHARGER




Every motorist is fully aware of the huge strain on the batteries of his car due to the electrical equipment—especially during the winter months—and it needs but little comment on our part to stress the need for additional aid to counteract the heavy demands of starting, trafficators, wipers, horns, cigarette lighters, etc., in continuous or general use throughout the day.

Here, at last, is the ideal solution to every problem, and a means of ensuring that your car will start away every time from cold in the mornings, as well as knowing that whatever calls the battery may be made to make throughout the day, it can be replenished during the night, and at the negligible charge of approximately 3/- or 4/- per annum.


The "ATLAS" Car Battery Charger is operated from A.C. mains, and incorporates a Metal Rectifier. It is manufactured by us in accordance with I.E.E. Regulations, and needs no attention or maintenance whatever.

The Charger is made suitable for mounting on the wall, and it is only necessary to plug into the socket, switch on the current overnight, and the "ATLAS" Charger will do the rest, and give you sufficient power to start your car freely, even on the coldest morning. The car can be started before disconnecting the Charger. Install one to-day, and banish for all time that fear of "flat-out" accumulators and inefficient electrical equipment.

The "ATLAS" Get-Away Charger charges at 1 amp, and is designed for 6 volt or 12 volt Car Batteries, and provision has also been made for charging 2 volt accumulators, thus making the Charger universal for all types of Car Batteries and Wireless accumulators.



The special Non-reversible Plug illustrated above can be fixed under the dash-board in a few minutes. It completely eliminates the possibility of connecting up the leads incorrectly and makes the Charger completely fool-proof. A fuse is incorporated in the Charger which complies with I.E.E. Regulations, thus making it perfectly safe to use. An additional spare is also supplied.



39/6

*Manufactured by*  
**H. CLARKE & CO. (MANCHESTER) LTD.,**  
**ATLAS WORKS, PATRICROFT, MANCHESTER.**  
*Agents: Arnold, Baines, Manchester* *Phone Nos.: Evesley 2091-2-3-4-5.*

A necessity for a van based delivery business which involved a lot of stopping and starting.



# 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.

## 1940

### The War really starts to take a hold on business practice

1940 saw food restrictions, including tea rationing, start to bite and Tea Control allocations became part and parcel of the Tea Trade in general. As we shall see Hill soldiered on with the Victory Tea business and adapted to situations as they occurred and he sought new outlets for trading.

The amount of tea he purchased (50,690 lbs) changed little from 1939 (50,611 lbs) but the trend to buying loose tea in chests rather than packed tea continued and only 100 lbs of China tea was received packed in 1940. As in 1939 **James Ashby & Sons** was the major supplier (30,118 lbs) **Summerfield & Co** followed with 18,769 lbs and the **Priory Tea & Coffee Co.** with 1,583 lbs. **Brash Brothers** who had previously only sold 100lbs of tea to the Victory tea Company in 1938, chipped in this year with 220 lbs as Hill managed his allocations to a maximum.



Letters from **Fred Scholefield** continued to include contemporary comments:

15<sup>th</sup> May. "No doubt the quietness in trade just now is due in large extent to the calling up of so many men (and women) who have been big tea drinkers and now are customers of the Government".

18<sup>th</sup> June. "Things certainly getting hotter in more senses than one, but we're not dead yet, and its 'no surrender' for us now."

21<sup>st</sup> September "Pleased to say we are all OK. We have had a lot of raids over L'pool, and a lot of damage has been done, but as usual, mostly houses and shops, but little military damage."

**James Harvey**, the representative for James Ashby & Sons that Hill dealt with, was also making apt comments in his trade letters:

15<sup>th</sup> February "The pier that was blown up was next to ours, now they are all windy & don't go on ours."

7<sup>th</sup> March "... the budget will be on us before we know where we are usually beginning of April?? Is Sir John Simon going to make Duty 1/- per lb as in the last War".

Sadly James Harvey died early in April after serving the company for almost 50 years, and in June **Mr K J McDonald** became the representative. Hill received a card from James Harvey's family thanking him "for the beautiful flowers". An example of Ernest's Hills compassion.

**K J McDonald** also commented on the war situation in his business letters:

*20<sup>th</sup> August "I seem to have had my fair share of air raids at my home in Kent and here in Derby, but I have survived."*

*19<sup>th</sup> September "Derby has been very free from air raids recently - although London has of course suffered very heavily."*

*3<sup>rd</sup> October "I will instruct London to forward the tea with all speed, before Hitler can 'knock them about, which he is continually doing.'"*

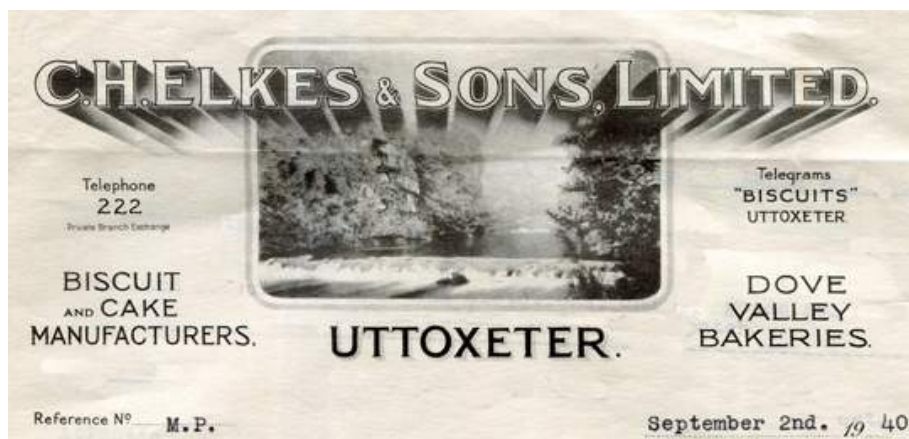
*24<sup>th</sup> October "I am sorry to say that James Ashby & Sons have received a direct hit by an explosive bomb on their premises, but are still able to carry on. My house has also been badly wrecked by a land mine."*

**Coffee purchases**, increased by about 75% in 1940 compared to 1939 so that trade, at least had developed significantly. Purchases of 'pure coffee' were from **The "Priory" Tea & Coffee Co. of Birmingham** and **Coffee & Chicory Essence** from **John Bromley** of Leeds.

It is surprising that with Hill buying the majority of his tea loose in chests and, presumably packing a lot of tea himself, that he bought no tea bags in 1940 – only tea bag end labels which showed the weight and price. The latter he obtained from just one supplier **Smith Brothers of Whitehaven**.



The Victory Tea Co. continued to supply private customers delivering to such diverse locations as: Kidderminster, Stourbridge, Dudley, Clent, Alvechurch, Bromsgrove, Redditch, Quinton, Sutton Coldfield, Cradley, Handsworth, Evesham, Offenham, Hereford, Stratford-on-Avon, Malvern, Holt Heath, Worcester and even Shaftesbury in Dorset (by post presumably). We do not know the scale of the private business relative to previous years but there was a significant growth in sales to commercial customers. Some of these were small scale such as the Robin Hood Café in Hagley but others involved selling chests of loose tea directly to larger companies such as George Mason Grocers in Vicar Street and International stores in High Street. Hartlebury Civilian Canteen, No. 25 Maintenance Unit, RAF Hartlebury, placed a few orders for loose tea in chests but mostly orders were for smaller quantities of 10 or 20lbs .



The sale of biscuits improved significantly through the year with orders up by 33% over 1939. These were mainly provided by Frears Ltd., of Leicester, Elkes & Sons of Uttoxeter and BeeBee Biscuits of Blackpool - in that order of amounts purchased. But the war was taking its toll – Elkes in Sept wrote: "We need to

*reduce our lines and these only with difficulty". "We may add that deliveries are considerably behind and no promises can be given to when you may receive your goods."*



reduce our lines and these only with difficulty". "We may add that deliveries are considerably behind and no promises can be given to when you may receive your goods."

Naturally Hill relied on local businesses for some supplies and the document collection provides a rich source of business paper headers. One example is John Gardner Florist who was a customer situated not far from The Victory Tea Company.



He also placed an advert September (cost 3/9d) in the Evening News offering for hire a Morris 8.

Most of Hill's motor servicing requirements were provided by **The Tenbury Baths Company Co. Ltd. (T.B.C.)** in Oxford St, but his new Ford Van must have undergone an accident because **Rees & Griffiths, Coach Builders** of Park St repaired a front wing in February for 5/-. The rise in petrol prices throughout the year can be deduced from Victory Tea Company monthly account statements with **Foley Park Garage**. In January the price per gallon was 1/9d. There was an increase shown on 22<sup>nd</sup> May to 1/10½d and a further one to 1/11½d on 24<sup>th</sup> September until the end of the year. Drivers signing for petrol included: Jas Brighton, J Lloyd, E Hill, H Macham and J Douglas.

Some of the letters received by Hill indicated the pressures that war time conditions imposed not only on the Victory Tea business but also elsewhere. It seems that there was in 1940 a shortage of tin foil, for in November 1940 the Matron of Kidderminster and District General Hospital wrote to The Victory tea Co. thanking him for a large quantity of Tin foil. This tells us that Hill had an excess of tinfoil, presumably because he was packing and selling less tea for personal customers sales and why he was off-loading loose tea elsewhere (see above).

It also seems that he needed less staff. In December he received a reference request from the Birmingham head office of the grocery chain George J Mason for George Goode who Hill had employed for 6 weeks but had let him go in November due to shortage of work.

Letters from ex-employees now serving in the forces tell us a lot about how new recruits fared in their new lives. Here are two letters one from one of his drivers salesmen Jim Brighton, who joined up in 1940, and the other from his wife.

#### **Letter from Ivy Brighton** 90 Albert Rd, Blackpool. 9/7/40

"Dear Mr Hill, I am writing to let you know I shall not be at work until Tuesday morning. Jim had news from Stourport Rd that his Aunt had passed away, and has been trying to get compassionate leave for the funeral, but without any luck. I hung back so that we could travel together and now find I cannot get my special voucher in time which everyone has to get 3 days before leaving Blackpool.

We have had a good time but poor weather.

Hoping that I have not inconvenienced you too much. Yours faithfully, Ivy L M Brighton."

**Letter from Jim Brighton** 955732, C/O Albert Rd, Blackpool, 19/8/40

*"Dear Chief, Thanks a million for the 'fags' which I received O.K. on Saturday, I am always pleased to get them as the cash we get here does not allow a lavish spending on smokes, or anything else for that matter. However, why worry?, we are still alive, and that's more than some can say.*

*I am getting towards the close of my technical training now, I have about another month to go, and I shan't be sorry when I get posted and start getting some useful work done, that's if I pass out O.K. of course. You would be surprised at the amount of knowledge we have to try and acquire in the course of five months, an amount, which, in peace time, a recruit is given three years to grasp. However, I rather fancy that if I was given three years now to do it in, I should have forgotten all but the last six months anyway, so maybe I, personally, am none the worse for the rushing (if you get what I mean).*

*The war does not seem to have stopped many folks giving Blackpool a look in and, at weekends especially, it's a job to get around the place.*

*I hope the business is not weighing you down too much with worry, and if its money your after don't join this mob, there's nothing to gain, financially, in H. M Forces.*

*I have not heard from any of the customers, I expect they were glad to see the back of me and be able to spend their hard-earned coppers on something other than Mayfair? How is Peter getting on? Ivy tells me he gets a big lad, I hope that he and Mrs Hill keeps fit, and of course yourself. How's the old van going?, do you still clean it with a broom?, do you know I have not even driven a roller skate since I joined up. We are not even allowed to taxi the 'planes', though we do start them up and check the revs etc. Talk about instruments, you want to see the instrumental panel of some of the 'planes' we have here for practice on. I have been working on R.R. and Bristol engines, installing them and dismantling them, I don't mind the practical side but the theory wears me down. We have had no air raids here, they have been over at night but nothing happened.*

*Thanks a lot also for giving Ivy the time off to come up and see me, the separation is one of the fly's in the ointment in this job, however it's no good grumbling as I suppose we asked for it.*

*Remember me to the boys and again. Thanking you, I remain, Yours faithfully, Jim."*

The collection of Victory Tea Company documents for 1940 contains several related to the effect of WW2 and the reactions to events in the town.

In August there was a letter in the Kidderminster Shuttle about the **Kidderminster & District Spitfire Fighter Fund** in which they explain why they, in conjunction with the Kidderminster Times, were setting up a Fighter Plane Fund for the Kidderminster, Bewdley and Stourport districts with the aim of raising £5000. A subsequent flyer/leaflet explained more detail and reported the enthusiasm with which the fund had been received. Sir John Wardlaw-Milne, M.P. for Kidderminster was the first to donate with a sum of £50. One Kidderminster carpet manufacturer had promised to subscribe £1 per head of his work people, with a minimum of £50.

**A "SPITFIRE"**  
**FROM THE PEOPLE OF KIDDERMINSTER,**  
**BEWDLEY AND STOURPORT**  

---

**Enthusiastic Public Support For Scheme**  

---

**£5,000 SHOULD BE RAISED IN A MONTH**

An attempt by Hill to get one of his driver/salesman exempted from Military Service failed because he could not persuade the Ministry of Food to support the application.

His War Risk insurance policy with the Alliance Assurance Group perhaps reveals a drop in the amount of stock that Hill maintained: in the period June/July his goods were insured for £1200 but for August to September Hill had reduced the insured amount to £800.

Supplies of tea in the country were tightening by July of 1940: letters from **James Ashby** and **Brash Bros** informed Hill that the Ministry of Food were reducing the Tea ration to the general public from 3-ounces per person to 2-ounces. Institutions and catering establishment will not be restricted.

In March shops were being consulted by the Kidderminster Borough Council about an order for closure of shops: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday at 7p.m., Friday - 7.30p.m., Saturday - 8p.m. and Wednesday closed all day. Those selling table waters, sweets, chocolates or other sugar confectionary or ice cream were to be excepted. A vote was to be taken but there was no indication what would happen if the measures were rejected.

Petrol supplies were an issue and Hill in his role as organiser of a Local Emergency Transport Group was reminded by the 'powers that be' that: **"ECONOMY IN THE USE OF PETROL IS OF GREAT IMPORTANCE"**.



A few more headers from letters or invoices of local businesses are added here to conclude this account of the Victory Tea Company for 1940.

14 TALBOT STREET,  
KIDDERMINSTER. *Jan 26 1940*  
**E. GRIFFIN & SON,**  
MANUFACTURERS OF SCALES AND WEIGHING MACHINES  
FOR ALL PURPOSES.  
Contractors for the maintenance of Weighing Machines of every description.  
AUTOMATICS A SPECIALITY.

112, Bewdley Street,  
Kidderminster.      Phone : 2844.      Warehouse:  
Paternoster Row.  
BOUGHT OF  
**H. W. LYE,**  
D Jan 12/40  
Mr. Hill,  
Tea Merchant  
Holman Street  
Kidderminster.  
W/42134/1570/D17/  
WHOLESALE  
STATIONER  
PAPER MERCHANT  
PRINTER  
GENERAL FACTOR

TERMS— JOURNEY 'PHONE: 2393.  
FACTORY: LORNE STREET,  
**33 & 34, WORCESTER STREET,**  
**KIDDERMINSTER,**  
T. SMITH.  
A. H. SMITH.  
*Dec 6 1940*  
*Mr Hill* *V. L. Co* **9742**  
Bought of  
**T. SMITH & SON,**  
WHOLESALE MANUFACTURING CONFECTIONERS,  
AND TOBACCONISTS.  
Only Official Receipt Recognised.      Grocers' Sundries.  
5% Charged on Overdue Accounts.

# 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.

1941

## The War deepens

.....And Hill starts to feel the pinch: the amount of tea ordered fell by 40% compared to that ordered in 1940. He used much less petrol suggesting that his delivery rounds had contracted, but we shall see that he developed additional trade with commercial outlets. In July he tried, unsuccessfully, to join the RAF. According to family, he failed the medical examination because of poor eyesight. At home he decided to supplement the family meat ration by keeping a pig.

During the whole of 1941 the 30,030 lbs of tea purchased by the Victory Tea Company was significantly less than the 50,690 lbs bought in 1940. Primarily, the purchases were for loose tea in chests and the only packet tea was 84 lbs of China tea. **Summerfield & Co.** of Liverpool regained the position of major supplier (19,080 lbs in 1941, 18,769 lbs in 1940). The largest tea supplier in 1940 had been **James Ashby & Sons** of London (30,118 lbs in 1940) but in 1941 they sold only 4,677 lbs to Hill. The "**Priory**" **Tea & Coffee Co.** increased their share from 1,583 lbs to 4,619 lbs. **Barber's Teas** of Birmingham chipped in with 1,654 lbs having not supplied any tea in 1940.

Apt comments continued to arrive in the correspondence received from agents Fred Scholefield of **Summerfield** and K.J. McDonald of **James Ashby**. The perils of trading in Liverpool and London at this time are described clearly.

### Fred Scholefield

10<sup>th</sup> Jan " ....if any quotas are not taken up they are claimed and used by the firm in a blend called Free Blend. However, you are entitled to your quota and if ever you can't dispose of it yourself, I will see what can be done in the way of a private transaction between ourselves."

Later letters showed that a successful private arrangement followed on from this suggestion.

17<sup>th</sup> June letter. "Still messing about here with no permanent premises, it's very hard to find suitable accommodation as such a lot of this type have been destroyed. .... Have posted 3 x 20 players, hope you still need these. **How is the Pig?**

17<sup>th</sup> March "They just missed the warehouse again last week, we were closed for two days with damage and fires round about but are OK again. The GPO was slightly damaged which accounts for the delay in receiving your letter."

15<sup>th</sup> April "I hope **your pig** doesn't get bombed before reaching maturity.

5<sup>th</sup> May "Sorry to say our warehouse was totally destroyed on Saturday night. We sent out your teas just in time. We have secured temporary accommodation so will let you know when we have any tea to sell.

12<sup>th</sup> May "We lost all our stocks (about 800cwt together with all packing machines, mills, mixers etc. so we are starting from scratch again! The temporary w'house which we took on Tuesday was blitzed on Tuesday night so we are out in the cold at the moment."

17<sup>th</sup> July "I have heard that you offered your services to the RAF but think it is just as well that you were not accepted – stick to the Tea Trade as long as possible, it is easy to get into the army but darned hard to get out, and you will be doing a good deal more useful work than a lot I know who are in the forces. Did you get to Rhyl? If you haven't been yet, let me know when you do as I would like to have a run over with Mrs & Jean to see you and the family, if possible."



17<sup>th</sup> Sept "Very many thanks for the **biscuits** which arrived safely, they were eagerly opened by Jean; she is getting fed up with Arrowroot and Water biscuits; the only kind available in grocers."

2<sup>nd</sup> Oct "I suppose you have seen the circular with reference to the new method of distribution. It completely reverses the old system & is based **on what you can sell, not what you can buy.**"

2<sup>nd</sup> Dec "If you will take a tip from me you will take all the tea you can store – for later use."

3<sup>rd</sup> Dec "Glad to say we are O.K. after a hectic night last Thursday, it was mostly the suburbs that caught it, we had our door and front windows blown in, the blast from a land mine about 500 yards away. They are certainly nasty objects."

### **K.J. McDonald**

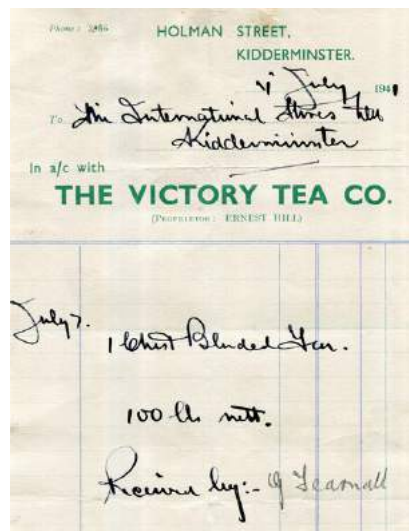
21 Jan "I am afraid I wrote a little too soon about the quiet of Derby, because the same night, we had a rather nasty time, but am thankful to say I was not affected."

Purchases of coffee this year were interesting because whilst Hill's order of pure coffee from the "**Priory**" Tea & Coffee Co. hardly changed from 1940 the **Chicory Essence** order from **John Bromley** of Leeds doubled. Was this a result of customers compensating for getting less tea because of rationing, by drinking Coffee Essence?

GWR had a virtual monopoly of deliveries throughout the year of tea to the Victory tea Company from James Ashby of London and Summerfield of Liverpool. One unusual exception was the lone chest of tea delivered in February to Victory Tea (from a undecipherable sender) by **The Severn & Canal Carrying Co. Ltd.**



The scenario for **tea sales** by Victory Tea continued to change and there are signs that private deliveries to individual customers were on the wane. There were less letters and postcards from customers and some of those were complaining of a paucity of tea deliveries, which to Hereford had been abandoned altogether. A customer there wrote recognising that, as things stood, they would not resume until after the war and offered to do deliveries on a part time basis.



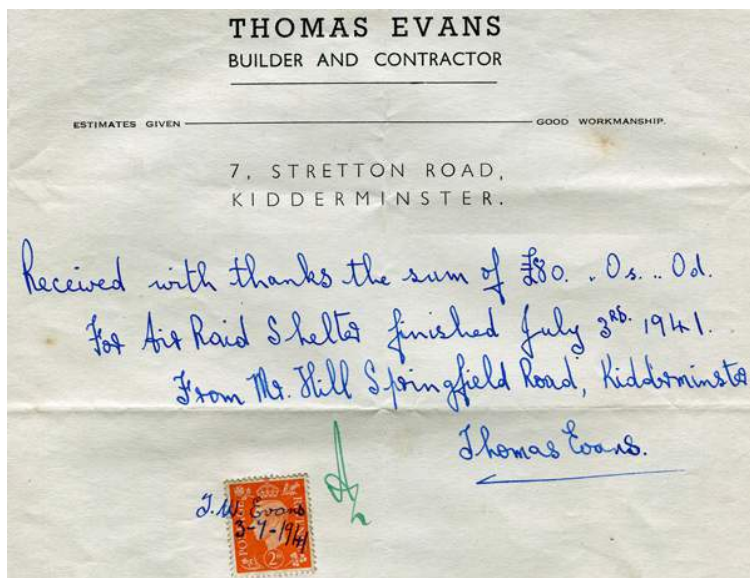
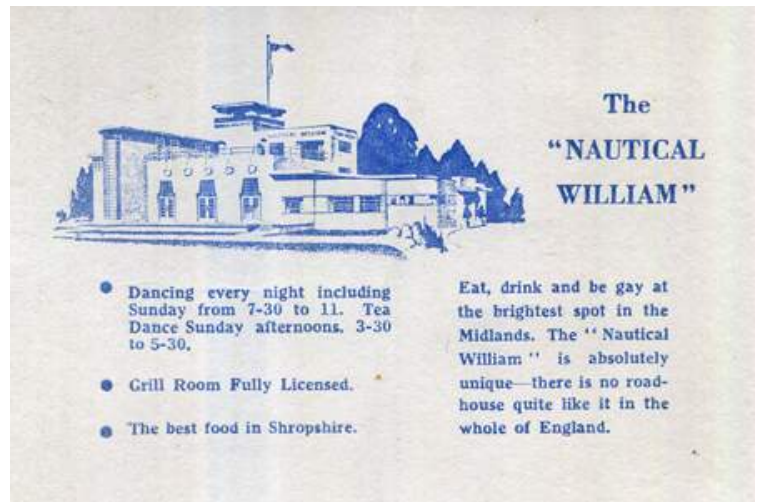
On the other hand sales to commercial outlets (grocery stores and other shops, cafés, canteens and other tea traders) increased from c5000 lbs in 1940 to c16,000 lbs – just over half of the tea that Hill purchased in 1941. Some of these sales included: the RAF canteen



at Hartlebury, International Stores Ltd. in High Street, George Mason in Kidderminster and Stourport, a private arrangement between Fred Scholefield of Summerfield & Co., Barber's Teas Ltd., a local tea Merchant F.C Elford of 197 Birmingham Road and the Robin Hood Café in Hagley. Barber's Teas Ltd bought the most tea (5,600 lbs) followed by Elford (3,257 lbs).

Petrol usage by The Victory Tea Company. The monthly account with **Foley Park Garage** in 1940 had run to 45 invoice sheets through the year. But in 1941 there were only 25 sheets which would indicate that the Company's petrol consumption had decreased by almost a half this year. This may, at least in part, have been due to some outlying delivery destinations being cancelled (as in the case of Hereford) and, perhaps, less deliveries overall. Drivers signing for petrol included: J Douglas, E Hill and C Smith.

Mirroring the lower petrol consumption, car and van servicing was also on a smaller scale in 1941 to previous years, and that was mostly carried out by the Tenbury Baths Company of Oxford Street. Amongst the TBC documents was a card advertising the '**Nautical William**' which was situated on the Bridgnorth Road near Alveley. Both establishments were owned by F.D.H. (Derick) Burcher.



In common with many householders who possessed enough land and finance, Hill had an **Air-Raid shelter** built in his garden in July 1941 at a cost of £80.

The War increased insurance costs for businesses from which the Victory Tea Company was not exempt. First, there was the War Damage Act, originally 1939 but updated in 1941. This cost Hill £1.11.6d annually payable to the Local Tax Office.



Other insurance under this act was provided by the **Alliance Assurance Company Limited** to insure goods against loss in an act of war. The policy was renewed monthly and the amount insured was adjusted as necessary. In June 1940 Hill had insured his goods for £1200 for a premium of £3.0.0d (5/- per £100) but in April 1941 this had fallen to £1000 for a premium of £3.15.0d. (7/6d per £100). The amount insured by Hill reduced during 1941 until it reached £500 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December. Perhaps this was a reflection of lower trading opportunities so that less reserve stocks were required.





A Workmen's Compensation insurance scheme was provided by the **The Westminster Fire Office**. In April 1941 it was agreed the estimated wages paid by the Victory Tea Company from 17<sup>th</sup> March should be £300 reduced from £350 and the premium reduced accordingly from £4.13.8d to £2.9.3d. An accompanying list of wages paid written with pencil on scrap paper lists the wages paid to individuals for the 6 months ending 5 October 1941. The 6 month total was £144.14.6d.

Summary of wages paid:

Mrs Brighton 12/4/41 to 10/5/41 £6.5.0d (£1.5.0d per w'k)  
 Mr Wilsten 17/5 /1 to 4/10/41 £23.15.0d (£1.5.0d per w'k)  
 J Douglas 12/4/41 to 4/10/41 £32.10.0d (£1.5.0d per w'k)  
 C Smith 12/4/41 to 4/10/41 £82.4.6d (£3.3.3d per w'k)


*Wages Return from the ending 5<sup>th</sup> October 1941*

	Mrs Brighton	Mr Wilsten	J Douglas	C Smith
12/4/41	1.5.0	-	1.5.0	3.3.3
19/4/41	1.5.0	-	1.5.0	3.3.3
26/4/41	1.5.0	-	1.5.0	3.3.3
3/5/41	1.5.0	-	1.5.0	3.3.3
10/5/41	1.5.0	-	1.5.0	3.3.3
17/5/41	-	1.5.0	1.5.0	3.3.3
24/5/41	-	1.5.0	1.5.0	3.3.3

There is no explanation as to why C Smith was paid more than the other workers.

Throughout the year, no matter the state of trade, Hill still had to pay his business bills. **The Kidderminster Gas Company** charged him 2/6d per quarter for the meter and for gas: £2.3.11d on 31<sup>st</sup> March, £1.6.1d on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 4.10d on and £2.13.5 on 31<sup>st</sup> December.

Form No. C92

 MR. E. HILL, 11-52-B284-6047.  
 THE VICTORY TEA CO.,  
 HOLMAN STREET,  
 KIDDERMINSTER.

Dr. to  
 THE SHROPSHIRE, WORCESTERSHIRE & STAFFORDSHIRE ELECTRIC POWER COMPANY

ACCOUNT NUMBER 5047	ACCOUNT NOW DUE CREDIT CANNOT BE EXTENDED AFTER		JUL 1 4	£ s. d. NIL	DISCOUNT—IF ACCOUNT IS PAID ON OR BEFORE CREDIT DATE.	
	UNITS CONSUMED 5	LIGHTING METER	PERIOD ENDED MAY 28 JUN 30	RATE PER UNIT OR MAXIMUM DEMAND 5	NET NET	£ s. d. 2. 1 1. 3 3. 4

The **Electricity Company** charged 1/3d per quarter for the meter. 2/1d, 14/3d and 2/1d for lighting in February, May and August respectively. The November account was missing.

Payment to the **Post Office BIRMINGHAM TELEPHONE AREA** was £9.9.0d for the year including: calls charges, rental (£1.3.6d per quarter), trunk calls, telegrams and a War surcharge. The **rateable value** of the Holman Street premises was £14 per annum and cost Hill £9.2.0d in **Borough Rates** for the year.

Amongst the letters received in 1941 was one from the Estate Agents **G. Herbert Banks** containing

PARTICULARS from

**G. Herbert Banks**  
 (T. H. F. BANKS, F.A.L.P.A., R. P. BRYANT, F.A.L.)  
 Telephone : 2911/2.

**Auctioneers,  
 Valuers, Land  
 and  
 Estate Agents**

**Worcester Street  
 Kidderminster**

**Building Society Mortgages arranged with the Woolwich Equitable Building Society.**

the particulars for sale of the freehold Castle Mineral Water Works: as premises or a building site, buildings and plant included. It is not clear what Hill's interest would have been in this proposition.



A letter from Joan Worley, who with her husband Maynard ran the of Tonic Tea Company, sent a letter that showed an interesting slant on views about WW2 in 1941. Joan and Maynard were friends of the Hills from the time when Ernie worked in the tea business in Leicester and correspondence about business and family affairs often feature in Hill's document collection. In this case Joan writes about them having only 18 chests of tea in stock but goes on: "*We are going away to Southport for a 'breather' if we can get in. Yes we have strawberries and made 2lbs of Jam. The newspapers say the seaside places are packed. Aberystwyth seems to be the most hopeful place. "I hope you and Peter have a good time Ethel".* ***'Defeatist!!! Do you think the Germans are going to wipe out the Russians and then tackle us???' Otherwise why all this talk of future air-raids. We had an alert last night for about an hour and Friday night too. It's grand to see the boys going over late each night.***"

Two of Ernie Hill's driver/salesmen had joined the armed forces but continued to correspond regularly with him – but probably not just for he biscuits that he sent them! The letters provide an interesting insight into life in the forces in 1941.

Jim Brighton 7 April 1941

955732L .A.C. Brighton J, R.A.F. Castletown (11), Nr. Thurso, Caithness, Scotland.

*Dear Chief. Thanks a million for the swell tin of biscuits which arrived today. Anything in the eats line is always acceptable, as, although we get plenty, it is inclined to be a bit rough. I hope that yourself, Mrs Hill and the young nip, are OK in health and temper as I am at present. As far as I see it seems that I shall be up here for quite a bit, but I suppose I could be worse off, although I have my doubts about that. However I am not doing so badly really, you will notice that I have procured the coveted "props" which looses me out from taking any further exams. My next move should be corporal, but I expect that will take some time. The weather here is gradually getting warmer, consequently the snow is clearing and we now have the mud to cope with. However, I am not grumbling as I feel I am doing something useful. I hope the old business is still hanging together and you have my best wishes for your continued success in the future. Once again, thanks for everything. Yours Sincerely Mr Bizzett? alias Redding.*

Jordan Lloyd 13 October 1941 In a stamped (2½d) envelope stamped by the R.A.F. Censor 84.

1128397 AC1 Lloyd. J., N°19 Wireless (Observer) Unit, RAF, Home Forces, Monday.

*Dear Guv'nor, Thanks very much for the tin of biscuits which arrived in good condition the other day. Needless to say there are very few of them left now but they came as a very welcome change from the usual grub, which you can imagine is very tasty since we cook it all ourselves. Still generally speaking we don't do so badly. We get a ration allowance and buy all our food in the village, a quiet little place about a mile away. The folks are all very friendly & we seem to be quite well known already. There's not much amusement of course but still by the time we've finished our turns of duty & written a letter or two we don't find too much time on our hands. And then of course there's always the housekeeping side of the business to help with. I think if we get any long distance journeys after this I shall find it quite easy to cook myself a meal on the engine & make myself comfortable for the night lying on the bonnet. I see that you are still managing to keep on the road although things are sure to be a bit tough now. Still let's hope it will not be so long before we can get round & taste a drop of the cider again as you say. I had heard about Jim being over and that he was off to take a test or another course. We certainly shan't be short of mechanics that is if there's anything left for them to mechanic. Thanks for the tip about the engine. I hadn't thought of anything like that happening but I've mentioned it to the wife so perhaps Harold will just give it a turn over to make sure it's*



alright. Well I'm afraid there's not much I can tell you about things here. Nothing much happens anyway & even if there did I wouldn't be able to say anything about it. Still I was glad to get your letter & to know you're still keeping your head above water. Once we get this job over we'll soon liven things up again. I hope Mrs Hill & Peter are keeping alright. Give her my kind regards & also the folks at home. Let's hope we'll be seeing you all again soon. So Cheerio for now All the best Jordan.

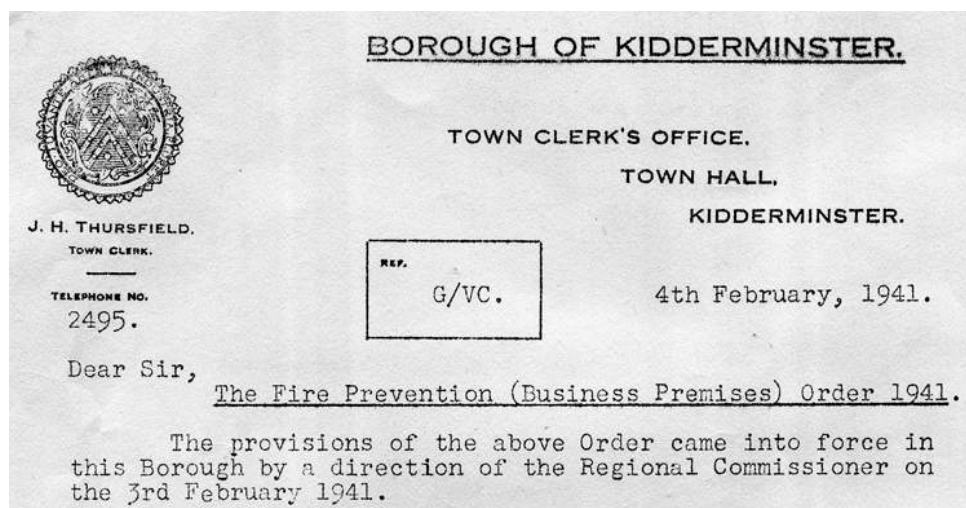
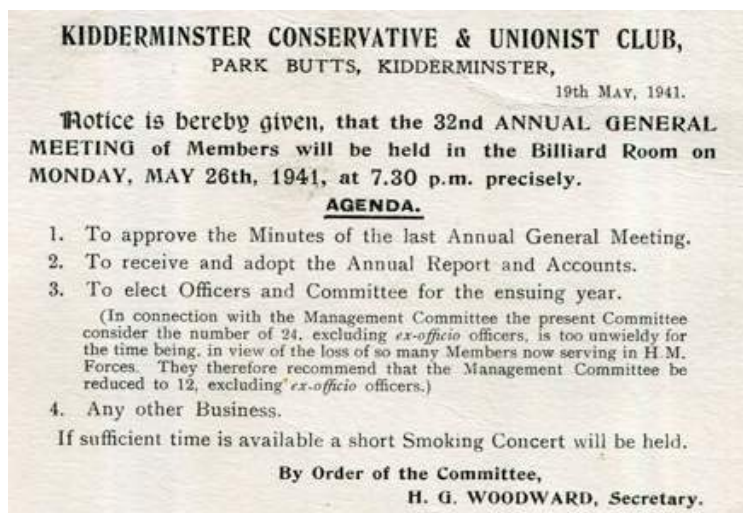
This letter is probably from a friend.

Sid Drew 28 June 1941 In a stamped (2½d) envelope. Letter in pencil on RAF headed note paper.

1089647 A/C2 Drew A. S., Squad N°21 D Flight 8 Squadron, 4 Wing R.A.F., Skegness, Link<sup>s</sup>.

Dear Ethel & Ern, You will see by my address we are at Skegness, we came from Cardington here last Saturday and I might tell you we've had a busy time. We get up at six o'clock breakfast at seven and first parade at 8.15. Breakfast consists of porridge or a cereal, bacon or sausage and bread and butter. We then have drill and physical training until dinner time which is at 12.15. We have the usual dinner two veg meat and gravy and pudding such as rice or fruit and sauce. Parade after dinner is at 1.15 with more drill and organised ball games and when I say drill I mean drill. We finish at about 4 o'clock for tea and we always get something cooked such as fried fish or meat pie with bread and butter and jam. After tea we are then free until nine thirty when we must be in our billet. We can have supper at seven o'clock if we wish. The billet I am now in is a big hotel on the sea front. I am in a room with two pals with hot and cold water a hot bath when we want one and it is really quite nice. Of course there are no carpets down now the place is occupied by about a hundred men with two P.T. instructors in charge and when they speak we have to jump to it but they are really decent fellows and treat us like human beings. Well both, I hope I haven't made you think we are having a holiday, I finish at night tired & weary with my legs aching so much it is a painful job walking about in the evenings.. We have just been inoculated and vaccinated so we shall have it a bit rough for the next few days. I hope Peter is alright and I think that is all for now so all the best, Sid.

Ernest Hill was a supporter and member of the Kidderminster Conservative party. Amongst his correspondence of 1941 was this invitation.



Of course, the war dominated much that Hill and the Victory Tea Company endured during 1941. At his business **fire prevention** procedures were required to be put in place, and he was required to fill in the appropriate form to obtain approval for the fire precautions taken by the Victory Tea Company.

Included in his replies were:

Brief description of buildings; type, size, roof area etc. *Square format, flat roof area approx. 300 square feet and gable roofed Garage attached.*

Total number of persons working on the premises between the ages of 18 and 60; Male: 2 Female: 1.

No. of persons working on the premises who are on a rota of fire prevention duties: 1

Number who have received Incendiary Bomb Training: 1

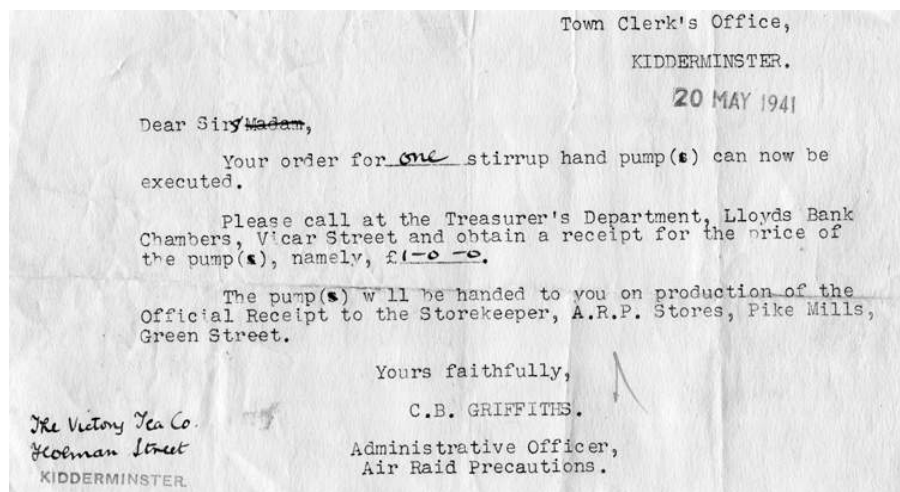
Number on duty at one time: 2

Have persons working at the premises been consulted about Fire Precautions: Yes

Full particulars of general plan for fire prevention—including details of instructions to those on duty: *Rota made with members of the Holman Street Fire Fighting Squad.*

Particulars of persons performing fire prevention duties: Name *C. Smith*,  
Address; *'Chelston', Woodfield Crescent, Kidderminster* Age 40

Equipment Available: *Stirrup Pump ordered, Sand etc, hose and buckets available.*



Hill also continued with his position as **Group organiser in the Kidderminster Transport Group** and as such received the following letter from the Sub-District Manager based in Kingsley Buildings, 24 Vicar Street.

Dear Sir, *To Group Organisers Kidderminster District 9/G/2.* 26<sup>th</sup> May 1941  
*As you are no doubt aware the M.O.T. propose stricter rationing of petrol and basic allowances will be reduced after the end of this month.*

*This will mean that supplementary allowances will have to be scrutinised most carefully and my job will become more difficult.*

*I would be very grateful for your help by filling up the space on the Z/F/5/1 forms for the G O's observations. These observations will be most valuable to me and any remarks made will be treated as strictly confidential. I have always aimed at fair rationing all round, if however you consider I have been, or still am, a little too generous (or the other way round) with allowances to any operator I would welcome your observations or suggestions either by stating your remarks in the space provided or by letter or phone.*

*The points I try to keep in mind when dealing with supplementary are as follows:*

- (1) Is the operator making good use of his allowances by (1) cutting out all the empty journeys possible (2) loading his vehicle to capacity where possible (3) has he re-organised his deliveries to save going over the same ground twice with a view to cutting down unnecessary mileage.*
- (2) Nature of work Air Ministry, Munitions, railway or canal borne goods clearance etc.*
- (3) Whether alternative transport is available i.e. by railway, canal or road transport return loads.*
- (4) Whether the operator is careful with the use of petrol by fitting new jets to cut down consumption, or whether he is using the goods vehicle instead of a car.*

*With the advent of cuts in the basic ration I can foresee operators who have previously managed with their basic allowance trying to offset this by applications for supplementary, and whilst we do not want to shut the door to those applications we shall have to go very carefully into the matter before allowing any supplementary to the new recruits.*

*I realise that this will cause you additional work and no doubt you are already very busy, but we are all in this thing together and if we can prevent waste in petrol it will help all operators.*

*I take this opportunity of thanking you for your kind assistance in the past and hasten to assure you of my closest co-operation in the future.*

*Yours faithfully, P.H. Mole*



The **District Transport Officer, M. J. KUHNEL**, MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT Hylton Road, Worcester, sent this circular to all Transport Groups in Worcestershire, on the **15<sup>th</sup> March 1941**.

**Action following a Major Air-raid.**

*Should a heavy air-raid take place on a town in this District, I shall be called on to provide goods transport sufficient to meet the needs of reconstruction, debris clearance, demolition, essential services etc. Vehicles may be needed for the conveyance of every commodity from drinking water to heavy machinery.*

*You must, therefore, arrange to place at my disposal all vehicles in your Group which are not fully employed on work of the highest importance, in order that normal conditions may be re-instated at the earliest moment.*

*Cases of operators who in your opinion should supply vehicles but who are unwilling to do so, should be reported to me for suitable action. **There will be no standing on ceremony.** Thanking you in anticipation.*

One of Hill's Transport responsibilities was to respond to local businesses who asked for help with transport or fuel. One such query was from Simpsons, the Fish, Game & Poultry shop.

They were asking if Hill could call and see their Mr Gardener with reference to their petrol ration.

ESTABLISHED 1790  
SEVERN SALMON FACTORS  
TELEPHONE No. 342 (TWO LINES)

MEMO. FROM  
*Simpsons.*  
*(Kidderminster) Limited*  
WHOLESALE & RETAIL  
*Fish Game & Poultry*  
MERCHANTS,  
*Vicar Street,*  
*Kidderminster.*

To *Mr Hill*  
*Victory Sea 60*

*Mar 3 1941*

**Food control and rationing** could not have been easy and this was the sort of bureaucratic activity that small businesses had to take on board on a regular basis.

Circular letter from the 'KIDDERMINSTER BOROUGH FOOD CONTROL COMMITTEE'

17 October 1941 *Sugar & tea Rations. Presently tea and Sugar may be bought for current stock and for a week in arrears. From 20 October both will be brought into line with cheese. Accordingly, these rations may be obtained in any week during the period of four weeks beginning on 20 October and successive four week periods. A coupon for a week falling within a four week period may not be used after that period.*

Let's finish the account for 1941 with one of the many good charitable deeds that Ernie Hill was wont to dispense.

**BEWDLEY & DISTRICT HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY**  
ESTABLISHED 1853

President HIS WORSHIP THE MAYOR (COUN. C. R. PRITCHARD), "Woodthorpe," Dowles Rd., Bewdley  
Chairman H. C. STYLES  
Secretary G. H. CARTER, Windyridge, The Lakes, Bewdley

Our Ref.  
Your Ref.

WINDYRIDGE,  
THE LAKES,  
BEWDLEY.

On the 25 September the **Bewdley & District Horticultural Society** wrote thanking Hill for presenting gifts for their recent 'Gift Show' on behalf of the **Red Cross**. *"At least £60 will be handed over to this courageous Society".*

# 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.

## 1942

### A tricky year for Hill and the Victory Tea Company

This year saw a big downturn in trading during 1942. Orders for tea supplies fell dramatically from the high of 1940 (**50,611 lbs**) through **30,030 lbs** in 1941 to just **5,042 lbs** of loose tea in chests in 1942. Summerfield of Liverpool, the largest provider in 1941 with **19,800 lbs**, sold Hill only **1,582 lbs** in 1942 and none after 22<sup>nd</sup> May. Another traditionally big tea supplier to Hill, James Ashby of London, attained only **239 lbs** in one order on 7<sup>th</sup> January. By far the most tea (**3,221 lbs**) came from **The "Priory" Tea & Coffee Co. Ltd; London & Birmingham** throughout 1942 and that seems to have stemmed from the issues of permits availability and the impending introduction of a sector tea supply scheme aiming at simplicity and economy.

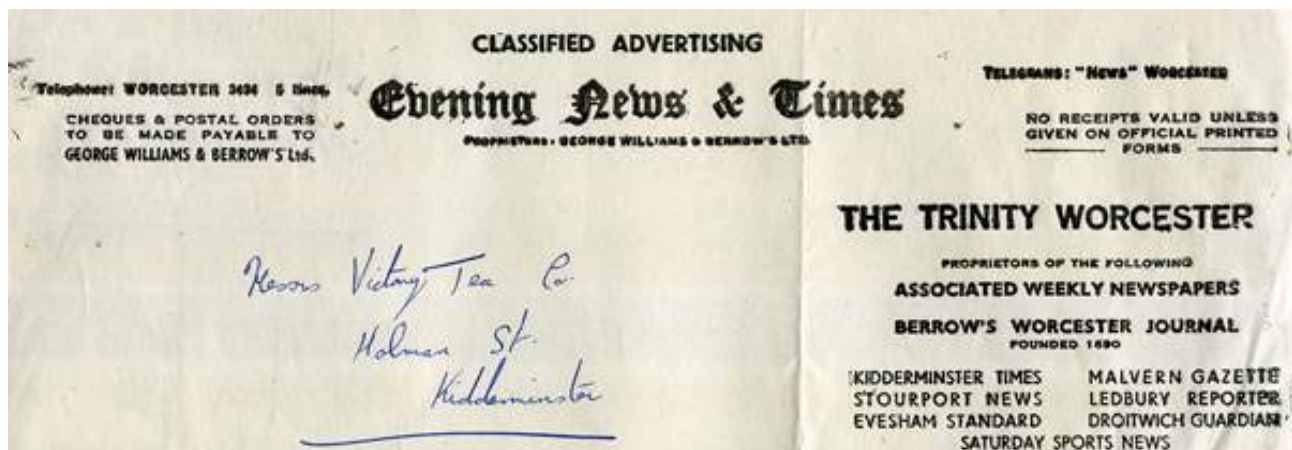
A measure of how badly the business was affected this year is the documented comments found referring to Hill "**giving up the tea trade**" - or similar. The first instance of this occurs in a letter from K McDonald of James Ashby when he write in a letter of 2<sup>nd</sup> February: *"I was very sorry to hear from London that you are giving up the tea trade owing to shortage of petrol and the possibility of being called up.* A letter from the Ministry of Food on the 28 February asks about a lady who has applied to change her tea supplier because *"you are closing your business"*. A letter 19<sup>th</sup> September from Frears Limited Biscuits Manufacturers notes that *"you do not want us to send any more biscuits for the time being as you may not be continuing in business"*. An undated letter from a friend in Worcester posed the question *"Dear Ern, Now that your business is closed, do you wish to dispose of one of your vans. A friend of ours is desperately in need of one & it occurred to me that you might be willing to let one go."*

In the end he seems to have kept the Tea business ticking over on a part time basis but also took up employment with the **British Sugar Corporation** where he had worked previously between 1925 and 1929 when it was **The Anglo-Scottish Sugar Corporation**.

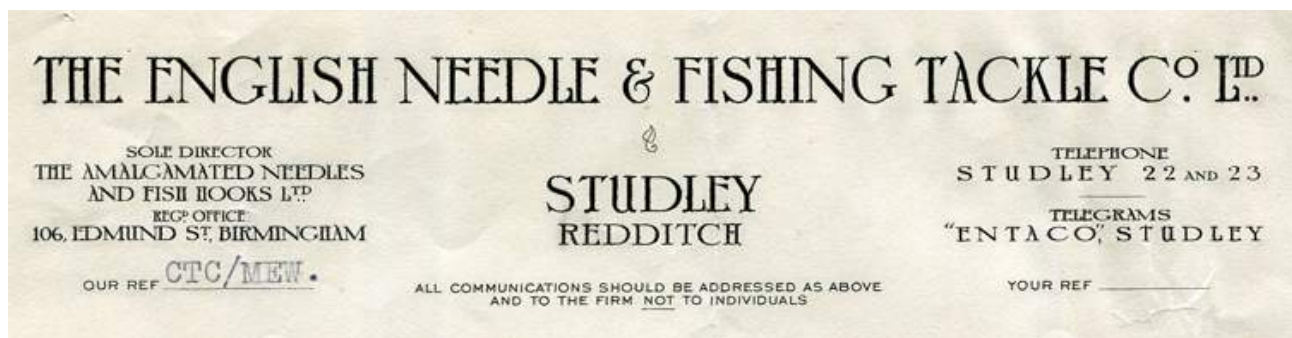
BRITISH SUGAR CORPORATION LIMITED	
Registered Office :—19, CAREW ROAD, NORTHWOOD, MIDDLESEX.	
Telephone : KIDDERMINSTER 2433-4-5	
Telegrams : "WESMID, PHONE, KIDDERMINSTER."	
Your Reference	Our Reference
	JFH/VJ.
BEET SUGAR FACTORY,	
KIDDERMINSTER.	
All communications to be addressed to the Factory.	



He certainly reduced his fleet of vans in a process that began in earnest in early June when he advertised his 'Fordson' van for sale in the **Birmingham Post** and the (Worcester) **Evening News & Times** at a cost of 6/- and 3/-, respectively.



It seems that news of the possible availability of Hill's vans was spreading earlier than this. The **English Needle & Fishing Tackle Co. Ltd.**, wrote to him on the 7<sup>th</sup> May with the query: "We have been informed by the Ministry of War Transport that you have several 2<sup>nd</sup> hand vans for disposal. We would be glad if you would favour us with detailed particulars stating present condition and price."



And one of his Morris vans, registration number DAB448, was put 'in mothballs': it was immobilised by removing the distributor leads and rotor arm which were deposited at the Police Station. The insurance policy on this vehicle was cancelled on 30<sup>th</sup> September and replaced by cover on the Morris van CNP37 purchased in May 1938.

Doubtless, it was the van registration CNP37 which was serviced by T.B.C. on 22<sup>nd</sup> October: Morris 8 H.P. "Tow van from Holman St; Timing engine; clean plugs, points, carb. Remove and refit starter after overhaul. Check dynamo for not charging, horn wires and make earth good. Grease and check levels. Spray springs. Overhaul of Lucas starter: Repair brush gear, fit new brushes where necessary, new switch & controls. Parts switch 5/-, set of contacts 3/1d, 2 brushes 3/-, wheel nut 5d, ½ pint Synchro oil 8d, ½ pint XS Press oil 9d, 1gall. Petrol 2/1½d. Total cost of bill £4.5.1½d".

Petrol usage records exist for only January to 22<sup>nd</sup> March when the monthly account with Foley Park Garage ceased. It seems that less petrol per month was being purchased and signed for by only two drivers C. Smith and E. Hill. Smith's last signature was on 4<sup>th</sup> March. Was he 'laid off' at this point? Presumably reduced petrol consumption was linked to reduced delivery sales with a smaller number of vans being used. Petrol prices increased from 1/11½d. to 2/0½d on the 8<sup>th</sup> March.

So what was happening with sales? The information in the document collection is sparse. We know that Hill sold 334 lbs of tea and 3 dozen large bottles Coffee & Chicory Essence to **Brinton's canteen** between 7<sup>th</sup> April and 14<sup>th</sup> December. But the few letters from private customers were mostly about non-delivery and only one resident of Bewdley mentions sending their permit to him in July. Nevertheless, he was still buying biscuits in bulk from **Frears Biscuit Manufacturers, BeeBee Biscuits and Elkes & Sons** until July (but overall just about a third of the quantities purchased in recent years). Moreover, purchases of tea until October and Coffee Essence until November, leaves little doubt that he was still doing a reasonable amount of sales throughout the year.

Even doing this required patience dealing with obstacles posed by bureaucracy. In September his suppliers of Coffee & Chicory Essence, **John Bromley & Sons Ltd of Hunslet, Leeds**, wrote

explaining that The Ministry of Food had included their product in the Zoning Scheme and that they were no longer able to supply directly to Hill because he was retail only. Fortunately, he could nominate a wholesaler from whom he could access his allocation. In this case he used **Gerald A Clarke Wholesale Grocer and Provision Merchant** to obtain 16 Dozen large bottles of the essence on 4<sup>th</sup> November.

552

**KIDDERMINSTER BOROUGH POLICE.**

CHIEF CONSTABLE'S OFFICE,  
KIDDERMINSTER.

**IMMOBILISATION OF  
UNLICENSED PRIVATE MOTOR VEHICLES.**

I HEREBY ACKNOWLEDGE RECEIPT OF:—

*Distributor lead leads & rotor arm  
for Morris 8 h.p. motor car Reg. No. DAB448.*

FROM: *Victory Tea Co.*

OF: *Holman Street,  
Kidderminster.*

deposited for retention at the Kidderminster Borough Police Office, in compliance with the Directions of the Regional Commissioner (THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF DUDLEY, M.C., T.D., D.L., J.P.), Midland Civil Defence Region, under Defence Regulation 16A of the Defence (General) Regulations 1939.

SIGNED: *Bevil J. Locall*

RANK: *P.B.13.*

Date: *28<sup>th</sup> October 1942.*

TELEPHONE 2143.

785  
1942

*M The Victory Tea Co*

... BOUGHT OF *Holman St*

**GERALD A. CLARKE**


WHOLESALE GROCER AND PROVISION MERCHANT

ARCH HILL  
KIDDERMINSTER



Hill's changes in circumstances had consequences beyond work and business trading. From the early days of preparation for war as far back as April in 1939 he had been involved with the newly formed **Emergency Road Transport Scheme** and had taken on the role of a **Group Organiser** in Kidderminster. In mid-March 1942 he found it necessary to tender his resignation from that position. We can infer that this was possibly about the time when he began working for British Sugar while still maintaining his reduced participation in the Tea Trade. The combination of these two activities would have given him little spare time.

A warm letter from the local Traffic Officer shows that his activities with the Transport Group had been much appreciated.

	
<b>MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT,</b> <b>DISTRICT TRANSPORT OFFICER.</b> <i>Kidderminster Sub District</i> <b>Room 18,</b> <b>Kingsley Buildings,</b> <b>24 Vicar Street,</b> <b>Kidderminster.</b>	
Please quote in any reply:	Your reference is:
<i>4<sup>th</sup> June 1942</i>	
<i>E. Hill Esq</i> <i>Messrs Victory Tea Co</i> <i>Holman Street</i> <i>Kidderminster</i>	
<i>Dear Mr Hill</i> <i>Now that Mr. Dungey has taken over from you</i> <i>I thought I would like to express my thanks for</i> <i>and appreciation of the valuable services you</i> <i>have rendered in your capacity as Group</i> <i>Organizer of No. 11 Group. You were in at the</i> <i>beginning when the difficult task of</i> <i>organization was accomplished and your</i> <i>unstinted help &amp; cheerfulness has been a</i> <i>great help to me personally. I would also</i> <i>extend the same appreciation to Mrs Hill</i> <i>for the part she has taken in this work.</i> <i>With best wishes for the future,</i> <i>I remain</i> <i>Yours sincerely</i> <i>A. Sturges</i> <i>Traffic Officer.</i>	

Hill had also played his part in a 'Provision of Vehicles under the Defence Lines Scheme' when in February he agreed to hire all his three vans to the Regional Transport Commissioner in the event of an emergency.

969.  
R.H./D./31.

MINISTRY OF WAR TRANSPORT.

**AGREEMENT FOR THE PROVISION OF VEHICLES**  
**UNDER THE "DEFENCE LINES" SCHEME.**

AN AGREEMENT made this                      day of                      194                      .  
BETWEEN *Victory Tea Co.*                      of *Holman Street*  
*Kidderminster*  
(hereinafter called "the Carrier") of the one part and THE MINISTER  
OF WAR TRANSPORT (hereinafter called "the Minister") of the  
other part.

There were conditions: "If you agree to hire your vehicle with driver, fuel etc. at the above rates, you are not bound at all times to place the vehicle on hire to the Ministry but you will be expected to make every endeavour to co-operate". The rate for a 5cwt van of the type owned by Hill was £9.7.0d per week (up to 250 miles in a 48 hour week), 35/5d per day or 4/2d per hour. It is not clear where Hill would have sourced three drivers from should all three vans be taken on at the same time.

One factor that reduced slightly Hill 's expenses during this period of down turn in trade was the monthly War Risk insurance policy that he paid to insure his goods held at his Holman Street depot. In June 1940, when he first took out that insurance, his goods were insured for £1200 for a monthly premium of £4.10.0d. But by May 1942 the insured value had been reduced to £200 at a premium of £0.10.0d saving him £4 per month. There is little doubt that Hill would have preferred to have not made that saving had he been able to trade as he had once been able.

C.I.S. 28

**WAR RISKS INSURANCE ACT, 1939 (PART II).**

Policy No. **AAE11813**

**Policy of Insurance.**

The Agent : *Alliance Assurance Company Limited,*  
*130, Colmore Row, Birmingham 3,*

The Insured : **The Victory Tea Company**  
Address : **Holman Street, Kidderminster.**

The Insured's Business : **Tea Merchants.**



Non-business related documents were not found for 1942, but Fred Scholefield continued to add his social comments to his trade letters:

31 Jan *Many thanks for your letter which has been forwarded to me at home. I have been in bed since Wed with tonsillitis, which is most annoying & could not have come at a worst time. Very sorry to hear your bad news & sincerely hope you will be able to carry on for a time at any rate.*

21 Feb *Dear Ernest, Many thanks for your letter, pleased to say am OK again and starting full time on Monday. Pleased to hear you are still in Civvies; I wonder if they take you out of your job if you are not passed for the Army? If you can carry on with the tea business I should think it is just as important as most jobs these days.*

20 March *Many thanks for your letter, and pleased to hear that you are still in the Tea Trade, (nearly). You will be popular being able to offer Sugar and Tea!*

21 May *Many thanks for your letter, was very pleased to hear from you. Glad to hear that you are still going on O.K. in the Sugar Industry, are there any vacancies?*

13 July (His last note of the year) *Dear Ernest, Just a line to let you know I am still in the land of the living, and hope you and yours are all well. How is the sugar business these days? Things are certainly getting tight in the Tea Trade. Norman Sargent is in the army, but he has been wanting to go all along so did not try to be reserved, the rest of the lads are still carrying on but we are all sitting on the brink. I do not know if you are applying for a new permit, but in case you want any at any time you are still entitled to draw about 7,000 lbs on you permit with us. You can draw off this if you ever need any. The new sector scheme has caused a lot of trouble, but we have fixed up for the majority of our customers, although I cannot see the scheme saving much transport. However they do love to draw up new plans, whether they do any good or not. Would like to hear how you are getting on, when you have time.*

Amongst other comments in these letters the references above to 'Sugar' clearly help to substantiate the suggestion that Hill joined the British Sugar Corporation sometime around March.

In previous years we were able to describe how some of the ex-Victory Tea salesmen were getting on in military service from letters that they wrote to Hill. It could be that the individuals were overseas and incommunicado, but for whatever reason, there were none available this year. There is no evidence that Hill needed to use the tea permits offered by Scholefield.

Jim Brighton, who in previous years had described graphically his experiences with the R.A.F., was definitely not in a position to do much writing. But we can read some relatively good news in the Kidderminster Shuttle dated 30<sup>th</sup> May 1942. [Note: Rangoon in Burma, fell on the 8<sup>th</sup> March, 1942.]

### **CPL. JAMES BRIGHTON, R.A.F.**

Mrs. Brighton, of 141, Greatfield Rd., has received a cable from her husband, Cpl. James Brighton, R.A.F., containing the glad news that he is well and safe after a 250 mile march from Burma into China. The cable was sent from China.

No news had been received from Cpl. Brighton since the fall of Rangoon and the welcome cable has allayed much anxiety concerning his safety.

Cpl. Brighton is well known locally, and was the popular Scout. Master of K.D:2 Troop.

In civil life he was a salesman for the Victory Tea Company. He joined the Air Force two years ago.

Mr. and Mrs. Brighton have one small son, Christopher, aged three.

To wind up this account we can say that as the end of the year 1942 approached Hill was still managing to keep the Victory Tea Company afloat. We shall see in the next chapter that this state of affairs continued into and through 1943.