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Cadbury: The legacy in Birmingham

Jill Ella
BBC Birmingham

Cadbury chocolate is renowned worldwide, but the Cadbury legacy is more than just a chocolate factory.

The Cadbury family, with their Quaker beliefs that - all human beings should be treated equally and should live in peace, believed in social responsibility and social reform.

They improved working and social conditions for their employees and the community.

This was made possible by the success of their business.

The Cadbury story began in 1824 when John Cadbury, a young Quaker, opened a shop in Birmingham. He sold coffee, tea, drinking chocolate and cocoa amongst other things.

John believed alcohol was a main cause of poverty and hoped his products would serve as an alternative.

He started manufacturing on a commercial scale in 1831 and his brother Benjamin joined the company in the 1840s to form Cadbury Brothers.

Royal approval

The brothers opened an office in London and received a Royal Warrant as manufacturers of chocolate and cocoa to Queen Victoria in 1854.

John's sons George and Richard took over the business in 1861 and set about expanding it.

Richard looked after sales and marketing and George took care of production and buying.

In the late 1870s the growing business needed a larger site, so they purchased land 4 miles out of Birmingham. This was in the countryside at the time.

George Cadbury's vision

A new factory, planned by George, was built on the site, and the area became known as Bournville, after the small stream that runs through the site.

George was driven by a passion for social reform and wanted to provide good quality low cost homes for his workers in a healthy environment - giving an alternative to grimy city life. So he set about building a village where his workers could live.

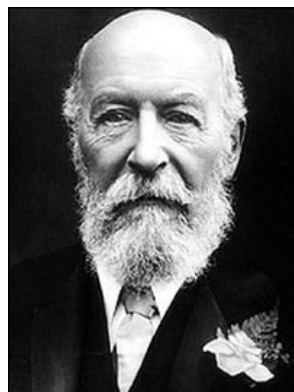
George said of his plans: "If each man could have his own house, a large garden to cultivate and healthy surroundings - then, I thought, there will be for them a better opportunity of a happy family life."

His aim was that one-tenth of the Bournville estate should be "laid out



Bournville village was built by the Cadbury family along with the factory

Cadbury	
1824	John Cadbury opened a shop
1854	Royal warrant issued
1861	George and Richard took over the business
1879	Bournville factory opened
1918	Cadbury opened first overseas factory in Tasmania
1919	Cadbury merged with J.S. Fry & Sons Limited
1969	Cadbury merged with Schweppes
2008	Cadbury Schweppes split



George Cadbury believed human beings should be treated equally

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and used as parks, recreation grounds and open space."

The brothers set new standards for working and living conditions in Victorian Britain and the Cadbury plant in Bournville became known as "the factory in a garden".

Building a legacy

Richard died unexpectedly in March 1899 of diphtheria whilst in Jerusalem. George continued to provide better working conditions for employees, setting up workers committees and providing facilities.

Over the years George invested a lot of his money in businesses which placed a high priority on the welfare of the workers and despite running a large company he also dedicated a lot of time to helping those less privileged in his local community.

George gave the Bournville estate to the Bournville Village Trust in 1901. The trust was founded, to administer and develop the village and its surroundings.

One of George Cadbury's former homes, Woodbrooke, a Georgian style mansion built by Josiah Mason, has retained a Quaker connection and is Europe's only Quaker Study Centre. Since 1903 it has provided education for people from around the world.



George Cadbury gave the estate to the Bournville Village Trust in 1901

George's second wife Elizabeth, was also heavily involved in philanthropy. Together they opened Woodlands Hospital in Northfield and built The Beeches, where children from the city slums could holiday.

George also donated the Lickey Hills Country Park to the people of Birmingham.

He was one of the founders of The Birmingham Civic Society in 1918 and died at his home, Manor House, Northfield, in 1922.

Subsequent generations of the Cadbury family also took on the responsibility of their workers, from ensuring pensions were set up to founding colleges in the local community.

The Cadbury family still has close ties with the area, though it has not owned the company since the 1960s.

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