

ENTREPRENEUR AND RETAIL INNOVATOR, SIR JACK COHEN COMMEMORATED

Sir Jack Cohen (1898 – 1979), founder of Tesco Stores, has been commemorated with an English Heritage blue plaque at 91 Ashfield Street, Whitechapel, E1, where he lived as a child. Sir Jack's contribution to British retail culture is indisputable. The blue plaque was unveiled by current Tesco Chief Executive, Sir Terry Leahy. Sir Jack's daughter, Dame Shirley Porter, also attended the unveiling.

Jacob Edward Kohen (who later changed his name by deed poll, and was generally known as "Jack") was born in Whitechapel, London, in 1898. He was the second son and last of five surviving children of Avroam Kohen, a tailor and immigrant Russian Jew. Leaving school at 14, he joined his father in business; the outbreak of the First World War led to a demand for uniforms and ensured an income for the family. In 1917 Jack joined the Royal Flying Corps but was demobilised two years later. In order to avoid returning to his father's workshop, he spent his £30 demobilisation gratuity on surplus NAAFI foodstuffs, which he sold in a Hackney street market, quickly developing the selling strategy - low prices and fast turnover – earning him the nickname "Jack the Slasher". Before long, Jack was carting his wares to a different London market every day but Sunday. Jack married Sarah Fox, or "Cissie", in 1924; so great was her support of her husband's ambition that the money they received in wedding presents was invested in a wholesale venture.

The creation of the Tesco name was more accident than design. Tea supplied in chests by Mr T. E. Stockwell was sold in packets by Jack, branded with the name Tesco – a hasty conjunction of Mr Stockwell's initials with the beginning of Jack's surname. Sir Jack became known as the "grocery doctor", who was always ready to relieve wholesalers, importers and manufacturers of unwanted goods. At the beginning of the 1930s, Sir Jack's shrewd ability to identify new markets drew him to the new covered arcades serving London's growing suburbs. He rented a stand in an arcade



in Tooting, and then built an open-fronted store at Dartford which combined storage space with a retail outlet. In 1932, Tesco Stores Ltd was registered, and the first shops opened under the Tesco name at Becontree and Burnt Oak. By 1939 Sir Jack had acquired a hundred stores in the London area.



Sir Terry Leahy

Inevitably, the outbreak of the Second World War halted Sir Jack's plans for further growth, but following the opening of Britain's first self-service shop in 1942, he was inspired to travel to America to investigate the emerging trend for self-service "supermarkets". Post-war Britain, constrained by rationing, was not initially receptive to his attempts to reproduce the "gleaming palaces" he had found in the United States, but the 1950s saw triumphant expansion. Tesco's first supermarket – a store with over 2,000 square feet of trading floor – opened in 1956. By 1968, Tesco was the fourth largest chain in Britain. When he retired in 1970, having been knighted the previous year, his leading role was taken on by his two sons-in-law. In his final decade Sir Jack Cohen took an active interest in residential homes for poor and elderly Jews, whilst continuing to exert influence at Tesco. He died in 1979.

The Chief Executive of Tesco, Sir Terry Leahy, said: "This plaque is a fitting tribute to a man who, aided by an industrious spirit and canny business sense turned adversity into opportunity. Jack Cohen was not only a personal success but helped create jobs and prosperity for many across the country throughout his long career. His story started off a simple one, borne of a need to earn a living in post-war London. This impressive man allied with a strong work ethic and a healthy dose of optimism then embarked on a new occupation as a retailer of popular goods - unaware how his actions would help shape the future of retail in this country."

EAST LONDON CABBIES OUTING

Once again this year, the ELCO will be going to Maldon.

We need drivers for this years outing on the Wed 1st July.

If you would like to put a smile on the face of a special needs child give us a ring.

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THE CLOCK IS TICKING, TIME IS RUNNING OUT...

By Thomas The Taxi

Everyday more and more news is surfacing about so called satellite offices. Desks of all shapes and sizes are appearing in most termini, hotels, clubs, pubs and restaurants, offering the services of private hire cars. Passengers are walked past ranks of licensed taxis by so called marshals or clipboardmen with the full knowledge of the PCO, TfL and the Police. These clipboardmen are standing in the street outside virtually every nightclub bar and restaurant, asking departing customers and passers by if they want a "Taxi".

We now have a situation where a private hire company can just turn up at a hotel or bar and negotiate with the management, to steal our work from under our noses. Why do the PCO and TfL repeatedly inform us that nothing illegal is going

on, when it is quite clear to us all that there is and the situation is now completely out of hand? About a month ago, Ed Thompson agreed to be taken on a late at night tour of the hot spots, after receiving complaints from drivers for three years. Around the same time top brass from TfL, the PCO, Westminster City Council and the Met Police were shown irrefutable evidence, in the form of a commissioned DVD, that an illegal network of touts are skimming work from venues all over the West End and City. Apparently this was not news to them as they were shown a DVD of similar content just over a year ago by the LCDC. They did nothing then, so why should we assume they will do something about this situation now. Why are the authorities turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to our complaints?