

Jacobs Cream Crackers Factory, 1941

Visit by Kees Nan Hoek writing under his Spectator pen-name¹

One day, looking down on Dublin from the Featherbed Mountains I saw two enormous chimney stacks, the tallest in Dublin. On being told that they were Jacob's I set out, by this roundabout way, to visit one of Ireland's largest industries. Let this Monday be a working week's inspiration.

I saw biscuits made by the million. Realising that twenty-five hundred people are employed here, I was no longer surprised that one day's output would reach, if one placed tin upon tin, twenty-five times the height of Nelson's Column. "But where on earth," I gasped, "will all these biscuits be eaten?"

"The whole earth," was the answer. With Guinness's, Jacob's have made their home town a household word all over the globe. In the packing department, smelling cleanly of sawdust and paper, of timber and tin, I saw crates upon crates. Their destination marks a liberal education in geography. Some were labelled Lagos, others Vancouver, a pyramid of tins stood earmarked for Bogota. I saw packing cases going out to Gibraltar, merely round the corner, in a manner of speaking, for others were about to be girded for Barbados, Madras and Mombasa.

When almost ninety years ago the Waterford Jacob who from a baker had turned ship-chandler, began the manufacture of biscuits – the innovation of the period – he foresaw the field to conquer, for only a year later, in 1852, he moved to Dublin, to the very same premises in Peter's Row.

Even in his wildest dreams he cannot have foreseen the enormous establishment of our day, the six towering concrete, steel and glass floors – with their own power house, printing works, tin factory. On beholding them one is tempted to ask if anything can prove more convincingly that Irishmen can compete with any nation in any field if they set their heart and mind on it.

Here in Dublin, one day in 1885, the Cream Cracker was born, to find itself famous overnight and unchallenged to this day, notwithstanding the keenest international competition,

From father to son and grandson the business was led and prospered, as from father to son and grandson their skilled workmen are recruited. Today their travellers fly over outlandish mountain ranges, selling Dublin-made food and delicacies on the other side of the Himalayas, Andes and Rocky Mountains.

Thus far the child of a ship-chandler's vision has travelled from its quiet Waterford street, within the span of less than a century.

I walked through the enormous halls, in a sweet all-pervading aroma of fresh butter and eggs and flour, bewitchingly mixed as in our mother's kitchen when something special was in the oven. Here it had the extra spice of the scent of cocoa. I saw a stream of rivers of biscuits, flowing endlessly over mechanical conveyers, whisked on metal trays to circulate through huge Eiffel towers of lift shafts.

Warm from the oven, they had tripped as daintily and regimented as balletesques on to their trays; cooled, they came leaping down in cascades on another storey. Their deft fingers give them fancy Sunday coats,

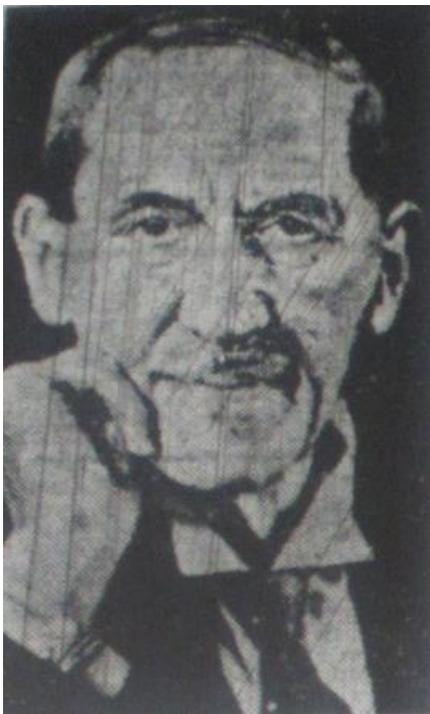
¹ *Irish Independent* 1st July 1941

packed them as if they were objets d'art, in paper shavings. I saw a wing labelled 'Marshmallows Department', benches full of thousands of creamy white tufts, a schoolboy's idea of paradise.

The deservedly high reputation of Quakers has put its mark on the whole factory. The tiled swimming-pool, the cheerful mid-day dining hall, the welfare centre with its doctor, dentist, nurse and continuation classes for employees under sixteen. Even to careful A.R.P., which I watched in a smooth evacuation of willing feet clattering over iron-clad floors and staircases.

From the workers' spacious roof-garden I looked back – over the cover of roofs studded with spires and cupolas, pierced by as many chimney stacks – to the Featherbed Mountains from which I had first beheld this monumental landmark of Dublin at work,

Obituary of George N Jacob²



The death occurred on Saturday of Mr George N Jacob, St Michael's, Ailesbury Road, Dublin, head of the famous firm of biscuit manufacturers, Messrs W and R Jacob and Co., Ltd. He was aged 88.

Mr Jacob had been in his usual good health until last Wednesday when he was injured in a motor accident in St Stephen's Green.

While still a young man, he entered the firm, which had been founded by his father, Mr William B Jacob in 1851, and had since devoted all his time and abilities in the development of the business with its world-wide trade and reputation. Even with advancing years he remained an indefatigable worker, active leader, and guiding spirit of the great enterprise which he directed and controlled.

Mr Jacob also found time to devote much of his energy, sound judgment, and wise counsel to the interest of the community. He was a member of the Dublin Port and Docks Board from 1898 to 1905 and was in close touch with the organisation and development of the port. He was President of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce for the year 1926, President of the Associated Chambers of Commerce in 1928, to which office he was again elected in December 1942. He was also a director of the British and Irish Steam-Packet Company.

In 1900 he was appointed vice-president of the Federation of Chambers of Commerce of the British Empire. He was a vice-president of the Rotunda Hospital and had been a member of the Board of the Meath Hospital for many years.

The welfare of the firm's workers was ever present to his mind and in the extension of the factory buildings over a long period of years the health and comfort of those employed there was provided for in good measure.

² *Irish Independent* 21st December, 1942

In 1940 on the completion of 70 years with the firm, Mr Jacob was presented with his personal portrait painted by Leo Whelan R.H.A. on behalf of members of his firm in Dublin and Liverpool as a token of their affection and esteem.

A man of many and varied interests outside his business, he was a pioneer of motoring in Ireland, owning and driving a car as long ago as 1905. He was also a keen and skilful amateur photographer early in life.

In 1935 he made a world tour in the Empress of Britain and the following year he attended a conference of the Federation of the Chambers of Commerce in New Zealand. He was a member of the Friendly Brothers.