

# ESSECO UK LIMITED

## Continuing the Legacy of Lord Brotherton

**E**sseco UK Limited is the current incarnation of a company that was founded in 1878 as Dyson Sons and Brotherton.

Its founder, Edward Brotherton, the eldest of six children from a Manchester family involved in the textile trade, was born in 1856. In 1878, at the age of just 22, he realised that many chemical manufacturers were pouring away a fortune in ammonia by-products. He approached the Dysons of Middlesbrough and they agreed to back him to the tune of £3,000 to form a new chemical company in Wakefield.

During this time Edward lived in a small cottage in the middle of the Wakefield site and it soon became surrounded by more and more chemical plants as the business expanded.

From its earliest beginnings the Company specialised in the manufacture of ammonia salts. Over the years the Company broadened the product range, but always maintained a key position in ammonia salts.



1881 was a busy year for Edward. He expanded onto another site at Holme Street in Leeds, adjacent to the City's gas works, so that ammonia liquor could be pumped from the works to the Wakefield site for processing. Edward bought out the Dysons and the Company became known as Brotherton & Co. He also opened a central office in Park Row, Leeds.

In 1882, on the eve of his marriage to Mary Jane Brookes, Edward moved out of his cottage on the Wakefield site, but sadly a year later his young wife died in childbirth along with their baby. During the months following his wife's death Edward devoted his time to expanding his business. He never married again,

choosing instead to lavish his affections on his nephews and nieces.

Edward continued to grow the business and by 1884 had secured a 5 year contract with the Halifax gas works to process their ammonia liquors.





His success continued and in 1888 he acquired another site at Stourton, where he established a tar distillation operation which complimented the activities at the Leeds and Wakefield sites.

Further expansion followed over the next decade in Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Sunderland, Wakefield and Workington, building on Edward's knowledge and experience in efficiently handling ammonia liquors.

Expansion of the Wakefield site continued and production of new products such as ammonium carbonate commenced, resulting in a forest of tall chimneys and towers which dominated the Wakefield skyline. Ammonium carbonate is still manufactured on the Wakefield site today.

As well as continuing a successful business empire, Edward entered parliament in the election of 1902, with the slogan "A Wakefield man for Wakefield".

On June 23rd 1902, three days before the coronation of King Edward VII, every child on the register of any public elementary school in Wakefield received a "Coronation Pass Book"

with a deposit of one shilling from Edward Brotherton to celebrate the event and to encourage saving and thrift amongst children. It came with a letter with the following items of advice "Take care of the pence; the pounds will look after themselves. A penny wasted is a penny gone forever. A penny saved is a penny gained. Remember money makes money."

**Top, facing page:** Founder, Edward Allen Brotherton. **Bottom, facing page:** A 1940s Thorneycroft Brotherton lorry. **Above:** Edward (front row, 8th from the left) and his employees, September 1921. **Below:** The Calder Vale Road factory ca. 1940.





In 1904, Edward's eldest nephew, Charles Ratcliffe, joined the Company and took his uncle's name. In the same year Edward created the Brotherton Charity Trust for pensioners, 5 years before any state pension scheme existed.

By 1905, Edward's business had grown to such an extent that he was warmly referred to as the "Ammonia King of England" and he moved his headquarters to the City Chambers in Leeds.

Buoyed by his business success, Edward repeated his act of generosity to the children of Wakefield in celebration of his 50th birthday. He was also re-elected for a second term as MP for Wakefield.

In the years leading up to the First World War, Brotherton & Co. went from strength to strength reflecting the increasing prosperity of the country. At the outbreak of war Edward raised and equipped the 15th Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment, known as the "Leeds Pals", gaining him the rank of Honorary Colonel. Brotherton & Co. supported

the war effort by producing essential materials across a number of the manufacturing sites. He lent the British Treasury £500,000 for the War Loan Fund, giving all of the interest earned to the Exchequer.

After the First World War, Edward served another term as an MP. He also had a special medal designed and presented it, along with a small amount of money, to soldiers who had suffered as prisoners of war. His generosity continued with donations to various organisations, including: Toc H (a soldiers' rest and recreation centre established during the war), the YMCA, the Salvation Army, Wakefield Hospital and the Marie Curie Radium Fund, as well as various church funds, parish and village halls, public parks and devastated regions of France.

In 1921, Edward became chairman of the Leeds University advisory committee of the Department of Pathology and Bacteriology, and donated £20,000 "to be devoted to the development of bacteriological study and research in the interests of public health".





Today the Company still operates in Wakefield from the original Calder Vale Road site as Esseco UK Ltd and is a major supplier of chemicals to both the domestic and international markets.

The current product range remains focused on ammonia salts, but the product portfolio began expanding from 2006 onwards. This led to a significant investment by Esseco in 2010, including a new sulphur burning plant which produces a range of bisulphite products for use in a number of industries from food and beverage to oil extraction. The Company also specialises in the production of aviation runway de-icers and over the past 3

In 1927, Edward donated £100,000 towards the cost of new library buildings for Leeds University. Edward was given the honour of laying the first stone in 1929 and donated a further £30,000 for maintenance and administration of the library.

In 1928, to mark the Company's Golden Jubilee, Edward gave each of his workers a gold sovereign for each year of service.

In 1929, Edward was elevated to the Peerage and turned to his adopted city for his title, becoming Lord Brotherton of Wakefield.

Lord Brotherton died in 1930 after a long illness. He bequeathed a second donation of £100,000 towards the new library at Leeds University. The library was opened in his name on October 6th 1936. It houses his personal collection of historic books and manuscripts which he pledged before this death.

Edward Brotherton left an inspiring legacy and is quoted as having said "Unsparring effort is the whole secret of success in industry and business".

In the years after Edward's death the Company changed hands several times. It has been owned by Albright & Wilson Ltd, E Green & Son Ltd, who remain present in Wakefield today but have no business links to the current Company, the US multinational Church and Dwight Co., Inc. of Arm and Hammer™ Toothpaste fame and more latterly, since 2008, by the Italian company Esseco Group Srl.

years has invested in new plants and equipment to support this activity. The remainder of the chemical production involves the use of other key raw materials including sulphur dioxide, carbon dioxide, alkali hydroxides and several organic acids.

Investment at the Wakefield site continues with a new manufacturing plant, designed to produce an agricultural fertiliser, currently under construction and due for completion by the end of 2014.

If Lord Brotherton were alive today, he would be rightly proud of what his first chemical company has achieved over the last 136 years and the current Company is sure that he would be supportive of the plans for the rest of the 21st Century.

**Top, facing page:** The Calder Vale Road factory today, 2014. **Bottom, facing page:** The Calder Vale Road offices in 2012. **Above:** Sulphur burner plant built in 2010. **Below:** 2 x 1000 tonne de-icer stock tanks (left) and the new ATS plant under construction, 2014.

