

Family firm makes history

To mark its centenary year of becoming a limited company, independent manufacturer of specialist refractory products and glass conditioning equipment Parkinson-Spencer Refractories (PSR) opened up its archives to *Glass Worldwide*.

Although established as a partnership in 1800, it wasn't until 7 July 1921 that the limited company Parkinson & Spencer Limited which sold firebricks to the glass container industry was formed by Caleb Parkinson and his mother Agnes, making 2021 the centenary year of the company's incorporation.

Born in 1889, Caleb had joined the business in 1903 at the age of 14 and at the age of 32 he presided over the new company as its Chairman and Managing Director. Remarkably we still have the handwritten notes he made for the first shareholders meeting between the Parkinsons and the Spencers, reveals Simon Parkinson – Caleb's great grandson, now the company's Managing Director.



Parkinson-Spencer Refractories' line-up today (L-R): Simon, David and Joanne Parkinson.

Shareholder notes from 1922

This is what Caleb Parkinson noted down during that meeting:

"This is the first time I have ever had the pleasure of presiding at a company meeting so please forgive me if I make a few blunders. I shall not trouble you too long with my report as I am sure you are all well acquainted with the position of our firebrick trade.

Since our meeting last August we have experienced some very bad trade and am afraid the prospects are not too good for the remainder of 1922.

The chief reason for the bad trade is the slump in the glass trade, the high taxes on spirits and beer which means the call for ordinary bottles is very low, and then no tariff on imported common bottles.

200 tanks, 175 bott, 25 flint. Taking the brick trade throughout the country I am confident we are getting our share.

At present we are not working full time but we are hoping for better times."

Keeping it in the family

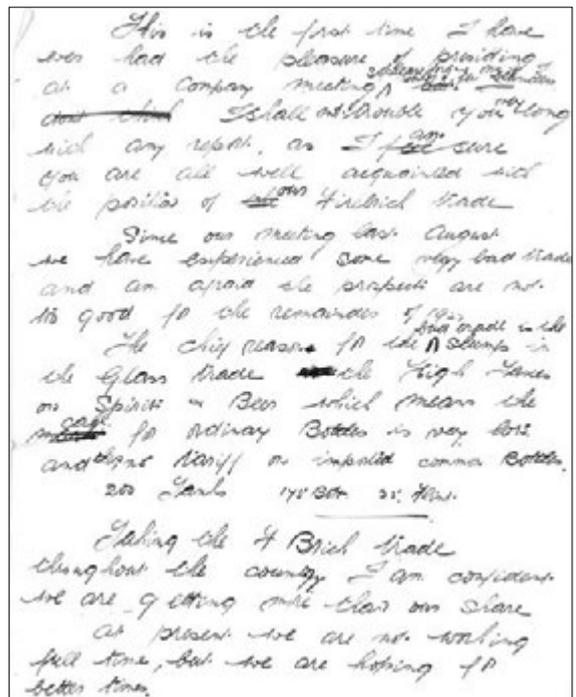
Bearing in mind that the automatic production of bottles was still in its infancy, and that forehearths and gob feeders were only just being developed, it is interesting to see the

how the company has evolved from being a supplier of firebricks to the glass container industry 100 years ago to being a supplier of forehearth engineering, forehearth refractories and feeder expendables to the same industry today.

Caleb died in 1967 and control of the business was passed down the generations to his son Henry, his grandson David and his great grandchildren Simon and Joanne. In 1976 the name of the company was changed from Parkinson & Spencer Ltd to Parkinson-Spencer Refractories Ltd and in 1997 the last of the Spencer family shareholdings were bought out so that today the company is solely owned and controlled by the Parkinson family. ●



Caleb Parkinson with children Kathleen and Henry.



Founder Caleb Parkinson's handwritten notes for Parkinson & Spencer's first shareholders meeting in 1922.

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