

Key Dates

1851	William Hesketh Lever Born
1885	William and his brother James enter the soap business
1895	Sunlight soap on sale across the world
1899	Lord Leverhulme begins to build Port Sunlight
1905	Rivington Terraced Gardens begin to be developed
1918	Lord Leverhulme becomes Mayor of Bolton
1925	Lord Leverhulme dies

William Hesketh Lever

William Hesketh Lever was born in Bolton in 1851 and died in 1925.

He built Britain's largest company 'Lever Brothers'

William built Britain's largest company and in so doing, made the first modern multinational.



For Lord Leverhulme his workers' **welfare** was as important as his wealth. But this didn't extend to his African workers, with fatal consequences.

He invented soap using palm oil, and glycerine rather than tallow. It was called 'Sunlight Soap'.

He started to make a lot of money and decided to build a bigger factory. He also built a village to house his employees and named it Port Sunlight after his most successful brand of soap.

Lever made a large contribution to the lives of ordinary people. He built Port Sunlight to provide his workforce with good housing.

In 1899 he purchased Hall i' th' Wood. He paid for the renovations of the building and presented the Hall to Bolton. The museum was opened as a memorial to Samuel Crompton and to the contribution he made to Bolton and the textile industry.

The title 'Lord Leverhulme' was given Lever in 1917 ('Hulme' being the maiden name of his wife, Elizabeth, who had died four years previously).

In 1918 he became the Mayor of Bolton.

Key Vocab

Multinational	one that spans multiple nations; these companies are often very large
Decade	A period of 10 years
Welfare	A state of health, happiness, and good fortune
Model village	A village providing a high standard of housing, typically built by an employer for the workforce.
Slum	A crowded, run-down area of a city where poor people live
Urban	Of or having to do with a city or town

Lever Brothers

In 1885 William and his brother, James Darcy Lever, entered the soap business by buying a small soap and cleaning product works in Warrington. Lever Brothers was born.

They partnered up with William Hough Watson, a chemist who was also from Bolton. His newly invented soap used a colonial raw product, palm oil, and glycerine rather than tallow. It was first named 'Honey' and then 'Sunlight Soap'. Thanks to William's brilliant marketing skills, within a **decade** of its launch it was on sale in 134 countries.



Lever Brothers factory workers making sunlight soap

Welfare for workers

Needing larger business premises, William bought land in Cheshire. Between 1888 and 1914 he created Port Sunlight, a model village.

At a time when **urban** poverty and overcrowded **slums** were **endemic**, William built beautiful country cottages for his workers. The cottages had their own running water and all had indoor bathrooms.

Schools were built to educate children. For women and girls, special classes were offered in cooking, dressmaking and shorthand.

By 1909, there were 700 cottages, a concert hall and theatre, a library, a gymnasium and an open air swimming pool.

William Lever claimed it was all part of a business model he termed 'prosperity-sharing'. Rather than sharing the profits of the company directly with his employees, Lever provided them with decent and affordable houses, amenities and welfare provisions that made their lives secure and comfortable and enabled them to flourish as people. It was also intended to inspire loyalty and commitment.

William demanded observance of strict ethical codes. Breaking them could mean losing your job. And as the cottages were tied to employment, losing your job meant losing the roof over your head.



A view of Port Sunlight village



Cottages at Port Sunlight

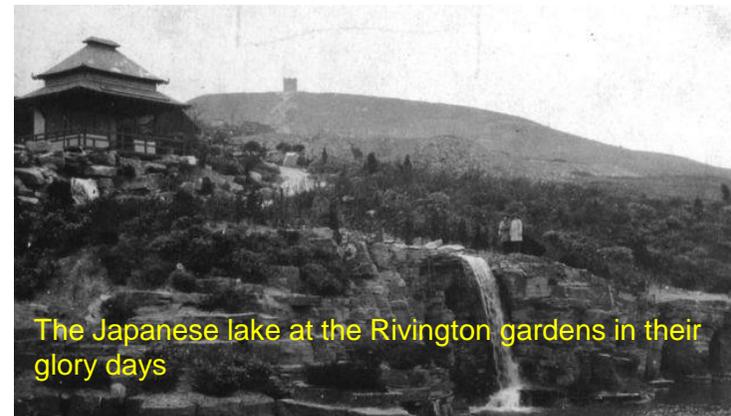


Lady Lever art gallery at Port Sunlight

Rivington Terraced Gardens

The Gardens were originally created for Lord Leverhulme as a spectacular venue for him to relax in and entertain. The Gardens were designed by noted landscape designer Thomas Mawson between 1905-1922.

Rivington Terraced Gardens are totally unique, with iconic structures like the Pigeon Tower, the Seven Arch Bridge, the Summer Houses and Loggia. The Italian Lake is where Leverhulme used to take his morning swim and the beautiful Japanese Lake was once looked upon from glamorous oriental pagoda-style tea houses.



The Japanese lake at the Rivington gardens in their glory days



The Seven Arch Bridge