



Pioneer of Electronic Weighing

ELECTRONIC weighing machines have become part of our lives these days, but not many of the millions of people who have their food weighed and priced at Tesco and other major supermarkets are aware of the doughty Australian born entrepreneur who first introduced the technology into the U.K.

A.J. (Jim) Herbert was the author of a great British success story – a rare example of a family-owned manufacturing business, over 200 years old and still going strong.

Jim Herbert was Chairman of the Herbert Group, based in the Suffolk town of Haverhill. Under his guidance it rose to become one of Europe's leading electronic weigh scale companies. He helped to bring a very traditional scales business trading under the 'Lion' brand into the digital age.

Jim was born on 24th October 1918 in Melbourne, Australia, where his father, Arthur, was employed by Siemens/English Electric.

His mother's family had emigrated to Australia from Scotland in 1847, settling in Tasmania, and it was there that Arthur Herbert met his future wife, Ethel Ferguson,

while working on the installation of a hydro-electric power station. They moved to Melbourne, later to Sydney, and in 1933 to the U.K., during The Depression which cost him his job in Australia.

Jim was educated at Knox Grammar School and Sydney C. of E. Grammar School (Shore), completing his schooling between 1933 and 1937 at Merchant Taylors' (Charterhouse Sq. & Northwood), the school his father had attended. He went up to Pembroke College, Cambridge in 1937 to read Geography, playing rugby for the University, and gained a half blue for Water Polo in 1938.

World War II saw Jim on active service despite almost being stranded in France, holidaying with his cousin. Neville Chamberlain's ultimatum expired and the two young men rushed back to Calais to find all the ferries to England fully booked. Luckily they found a place and were able to retain their vehicle. Subsequent returnees had to leave their cars in Calais until 1945!

Jim wasted no time in answering his country's call and a few days after arriving

back in England joined the Royal Engineers. He served in Gibraltar, North Africa and Italy with the 5th Army, ending the war as a Major, having been mentioned in Despatches.

During training on Salisbury Plain in 1940, he had met an ATS ambulance driver named Pamela Heaven, and they married in 1948, Jim having been 'de-mobbed' in 1946 when he joined Herbert & Sons Ltd., then based in London.

Jim became Managing Director of the Company in 1955 on the retirement of his father Arthur. He retired as its Chairman in 1993.

During his time with the company, Herbert Group became one of the foremost weighing machine companies in the U.K. One particular acquisition, that of Swift Scale Company, in 1960, brought with it the supply of meat mincers to a small supermarket company named Tesco.

Jim worked with both Daisy Hyams and Jack Cohen during the early years of the company's relationship with Tesco, to whom Herbert Group was soon supplying

weighing equipment as well.

In 1968, Jim saw the opportunity to move the company from its London base in Edmonton to the newly expanding town of Haverhill in Suffolk. Sixty per cent of his employees moved with him in search of new homes, fresh air and country living.

With inflation out of control and the UK's economy sagging, the late 1960's was an extremely difficult time for the Herbert Group and businesses in general. Jim managed the company through this by keeping morale strong relying on his 'never say die' approach, and in 1968, the year of the move, winning approval for the UK's first ever retail digital weighing machine.

This was the basis of the company's success in the last quarter of the 20th century, with the firm soon installing digital scales in Tesco, Sainsbury, Marks & Spencer, and Safeway, as well as long gone names such as Fine Fare, Bishops, Pricerite, Keymarkets and

International Stores.

Early in his career, Jim became a leading member of the scale industry in the UK becoming President of the National Federation (now U.K. Weighing Federation) in 1966. He was a member of the Decimatisation Board working party in 1969, and was appointed to the Eden Committee on Metrological Control in 1984.

Within the Engineering Employers Federation, he was Vice President of the London Association from 1965 to 1971, then President of the East Anglian Association during 1980/82 and 1986/88.

From 1971 to 1975 he served on the Government's Economic Development Council for East Anglia.

Jim was also active in politics and helped found Haverhill's Conservative Club. He became Chairman of the Bury St. Edmunds Constituency Conservative Association from 1972 to 1980, and President from 1980 to 1986, continuing as President of the South Suffolk Association from 1987 to 1990.

He worked tirelessly for the local MP, Sir Eldon Griffiths, and is acknowledged as one of Tim Yeo's earliest political mentors.

From 1987 to 1989, he chaired the Suffolk and S.E. Cambridgeshire European Conservative Association, and was President from 1989 to 1994, continuing in the same role on the newly-formed South Suffolk European Conservative Association.

He was in the Grand Hotel, Brighton, during the IRA bombing, but slept through the explosion, only being woken when the fire service broke down his door! Awarded a CBE in 1982, one of the proudest moments of his life was when he received his award from the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

Jim had a lifetime passion for physical labour on buildings and house renovation. In the early '60's he renovated a Queen Anne farmhouse at Stebbing in Essex, but his largest project was Doveden Hall at Whepstead, where he completely renovated a 16th century moated farmhouse, and transformed the garden into a haven of peace and beauty.

Jim struggled in his last few years with increasing memory problems, and suffered a major stroke in February 2005. However,



Tim Yeo MP, Lord Lucas and Jim Herbert with granddaughters Rachel and Claire at the opening of St. Georges House on 15th October 1985



1947: Herbert outing to Southend. Can you identify any of the group?

he was able to spend his last months at home, nursed by a magnificent group of carers.

A.J. (Jim) Herbert was buried under a spreading chestnut tree, which he himself had planted in the churchyard

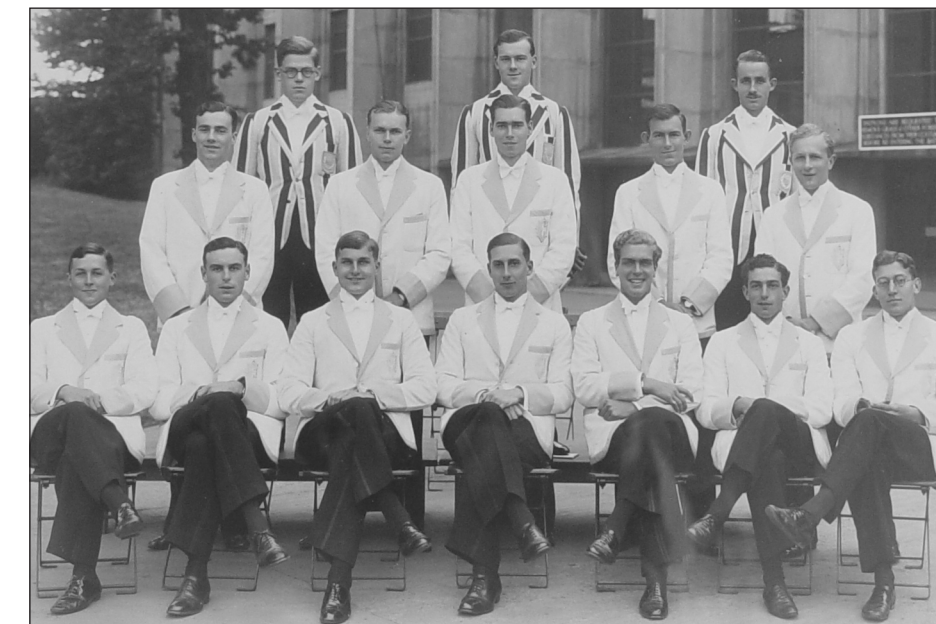
at Whepstead in Suffolk, having died peacefully at home on Wednesday 8th June 2005.

Jim is survived by Pamela, his wife of 56 years, and their four children, Richard, Caroline, Nicola and Linda.



Pamela and Jim Herbert (above) and Major Herbert (top) pictured in Vienna in 1946

Jim Herbert: An album of special memories



The year is 1939, and a young Cambridge student is proud of his sporting prowess

The Cambridge University Swimming Team of 1939. Jim Herbert is pictured on the front row, first on the left. Jim also played rugby for the University.



Jim Herbert (middle row, third from the left) who was a member of the 1939 Cambridge University Water Polo team. The year before, Jim won a Half-Blue for Water Polo.

Eddie Wheeler and Jim Herbert at the retirement of Ted Crichton (centre) on 24th August 1984