

The Joseph Rank Benevolent Fund 90th Anniversary 1934 – 2024

Benefit to the City over the last 90 years

During 2023 £139,890 was paid out to 465 local people in Hull and the Trustees also awarded an extra gift of £125 per person to provide them with additional assistance to cope with the sudden and large rise in the cost of living. This extra payment has been increased to £130 in 2024.

An additional sum of £6,000 was donated to eight Hull charities. These included Kids Yorkshire & Humber, Catzero, Hessle Road Network, Teenage Cancer, Hull Women's Aid, Hull & East Riding Breast Friends, Jubilee Church and Hull 4 Heroes.

Since 1934 the Fund has made allowances to 8,202 pensioners in the Hull area and in addition, has awarded nearly £200,000 to Local Charities since its inception.

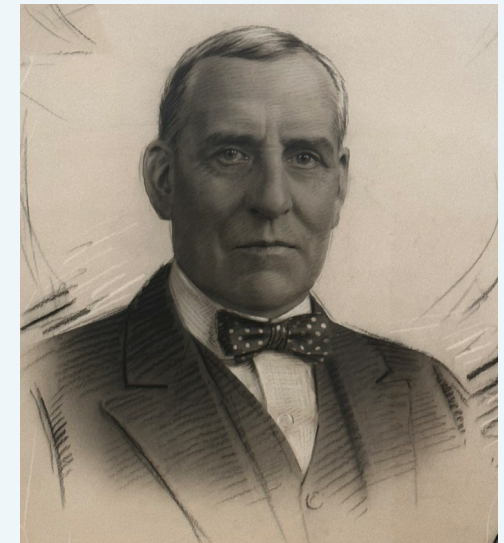
The total money paid out of the Fund since 1934 is now:- £4,552,865

If you are interested in finding out about the Joseph Rank Benevolent Fund please visit www.josephrankfund.org.uk or telephone 01482 225542

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On the 30th November 1934 the Board of Trustees met for the first time at The Royal Station Hotel, Hull and signed the Deed of Trust which marked the start of The Joseph Rank Benevolent Fund. The founder, Mr Joseph Rank (1854-1943) addressed the Trustees and explained the objectives of the Fund and how the money was to be distributed. As well as supporting local charities, Mr Rank directed that his charity was to "be devoted to the payment of pensions to poor persons, who, from age, ill health, accident or infirmity, are unable to earn their living by their own exertions." He concluded his address by saying: "I am making this foundation in the hope that it will be of great comfort to a number of people during a very long future.". The Trust Deed stated that beneficiaries should have resided in the City of Hull for a total of ten years out of the preceding fifteen and that the boundary of the then city of Hull plus two miles be the cut-off point geographically.



Mr Joseph Rank

Joseph Rank was born in a cottage next to the Mill on Holderness Road in 1854. His mother sadly died whilst delivering her fourth son in 1858. Joseph's father remarried and his new stepmother was more inclined to favour her own sons! Joseph had a good education and started an apprenticeship with his father.

Things did not go well and his father sent him to learn his trade with a fellow miller in Scotland. This did not last long as Joseph's father died and he was recalled to Holderness Road. His father left him £500 but not the mill!

Milling was in his blood as his father and grandfather both ran mills and had a good reputation for producing good quality flour - an important attribute for business in those days. Undeterred Joseph set up in business running his own establishment. Life was hard as he had all the work to do including collection of grain, milling and delivery of the flour. The end of the first year his accounts showed a deficit. He identified the problem being the "lack of alternative and more reliable propulsion".¹

His solution was to get an engine to drive the sails when the wind was not blowing. Despite this at the end of five years the business had still not turned a profit. His solution was to invest in the new rolling process. At the same time British wheat was not as popular with bakers as alternatives were now imported from America and Europe. Following their example he experimented with blending wheat and using the Port of Hull to import wheat from all over the world to combine with British wheat providing a good quality product for Britain's growing population.

Within twenty years he had mills in port cities across the UK including Newcastle, Lincolnshire and later London, Cardiff and Birkenhead. The Clarence Mill opened in 1885 next to the river Hull it had replaced his first mill, Alexandra Mill. Sadly Clarence Mill was bombed in 1942, but rebuilt and continued to be used until the 1990's.

During WW1 Joseph Rank joined the national Wheat Control Board to advise the government on keeping 'bread on the table' of the families in the UK. His specialist knowledge of blending proved essential. He was again called to help during WW2, as prudently he had built up large stores of grain ahead of 1939 which kept Britain fed as supplies from the America were sunk by the U-boats.



A family man and a passionate Methodist his sons were introduced to the business and were encouraged to start new enterprises. His second son, Joseph Arthur Rank (J. Arthur) born in 1888 at 371 Holderness Road Hull, went on to found the Rank Organisation which owned over 600 cinemas and film studios.

"Gain all you can, save all you can and give all you can." John Wesley

In 1934 Joseph Rank set aside £300k to establish the Joseph Rank Benevolent Fund. He was always a big contributor towards many causes in his native city, often anonymously, but he wanted to ensure that his support would continue long after his death. When the gift was announced Hull City Council passed a special resolution recording Joseph Rank's splendid generosity in all matters for the public good ... for many years. It was also recorded the annual contribution of up to £7,000 to the Lord Mayor's Hospital Sunday Fund. Commenting on the news Sir Alfred Gelder said how typical it was for Joseph Rank to make such a gesture with one key feature was its freedom from all political and sectarian bias. "We have scarcely realized the significance of the gift - it almost takes your breath away."²

Mr Rank invited family, colleagues and friends from Hull's leading business to become Trustees.



Well-known names were Mr. Walter Fred Harris (Hodgson Harris Accountants), Mr. Arthur Shepherd (A. Shepherd & Sons Funeral Directors) and Mr Thomas Jackson (Andrew Jackson Solicitors). Trustees often served for a very long time and their position handed down to family or colleagues. The current board of Trustees comprises of June Clunie (Chairman), Joey Newton, Malcolm Lucas, Jane Waite, Diana North, Paul Matson and Geraldine Martin.

In 1935 Joseph Rank was awarded the Freedom of the City of Hull - the only honour he ever accepted. This was conferred in the Guildhall by the Lord Mayor of Hull and was followed by a small dinner party.