

R Waygood and Otis Elevator Company in the UK

In 1833, Richard Waygood started his business in Beaminster in Dorset. Feeling that his native town did not offer sufficient scope for his ambitions and energy, he moved his business to London in 1842, occupying premises in Newington Causeway.

In 1863 with the help of his nephew William Robert Green, he began to build a factory on land in Roberts Place, Falmouth Road. At this time the company was a general Engineering works, manufacturing many different items, including Water Wheels and sawing machinery.

Soon after this on the 30th March 1865 – on his 15th birthday – Henry Claude Walker (future chairman of Waygood-Otis) entered Richard Waygood's service. It was in this year that Waygood started to first manufacture hand powered Lifts. Only 3 years later in 1868, Henry C. Walker took the first order for a Hydraulic Lift, which was installed at Hobbs, Hart & Co – Lock & Safe manufacturers of London.

Richard Waygood withdrew from the management of the business in 1872 due to ill health and formed a partnership with himself and 3 others. Newington Ironworks became Richard Waygood & Company on 21st October 1872. The 4 partners were – Richard Waygood, John Marsh Day, William Robert Green & Henry Claude Walker. Richard Waygood died on 5th October 1879 and was buried at Elmers End cemetery, Beckenham Kent.

In 1853, Elisha Graves Otis formed the Union Elevator Works having invented the safety device to prevent the Elevator (Lift) from falling in the event of the rope(s) breaking.

Following his death from diphtheria on 8th April 1861, his sons, Charles Rollin Otis & Norton Prentiss Otis took over running the business and formed Otis Brothers & Co.

Many changes and innovations took place during this time, including moving away from steam power to Hydraulic and then Electric Power as electricity became more widely available.

In 1873, the company installed their first Lifts (Elevators) in the UK at the Singer sewing machine factory in Glasgow. These were 2 Freight Elevators that were ordered from the Otis Yonkers factory.

The business grew over subsequent years and in 1898, Otis Brothers formed a merger with several other elevator companies to form the Otis Elevator Company. The other companies included the **Hale Elevator** and **Crane Elevator** Companies of Boston, **Stokes & Parrish Elevator Company** and **Morse, Williams & Company** of Philadelphia, **Graves Elevator Company** of Rochester and **McAdams & Cartwright Elevator Company** of New York City.

In 1884 Otis Brothers established sales offices in London and Paris by purchasing the American Elevator Company, which had been organised by W.E. Hale, the Otis agent in Chicago. Then in 1893

Otis Brothers changed the name of the American Elevator company to the Otis Elevator Company Limited. The London office in 1884 was at 38 Old Jewry and the Paris office at 20 Avenue de l'Opera (By 1891 the London office had relocated to 4 Queen Victoria Street). So the Otis Elevator Co Ltd London was formed. Some 5 years before the merger of Otis brothers & Hale Elevator etc. in the USA.

During the 1880's and 1890's Henry Claude Walker travelled the world many times (no mean feat back then). Not only expanding the R Waygood business across the British Empire (and other countries), but he also met the Otis Brothers (Charles & Norton) on numerous occasions, where there was a sharing of ideas.

He also met with William D. Baldwin when Henry Claude Walker visited New York in 1889, where a friendship sprang up, resulting in both parties becoming more closely associated together and ultimately led to the 1914 merger. At the time of their first meeting William Baldwin was on the board of trustees at Otis Brothers and in 1898 when a merger of elevator companies took place to form The Otis Elevator Company, William D. Baldwin became the President of the company. In his book - Reminiscences of a Great Industry, Henry Walker described William Baldwin as a man who had a charming personality and an extraordinary capacity for business. When Baldwin died on September 27th 1930 aged 74, Henry Walker stated that he had lost a very staunch friend.

Due to the close ties of the two companies a merger was attempted in 1902. The company name was changed from R Waygood & Co to Waygood & Otis Co Ltd. However, this merger only lasted a year and in 1903 the two businesses reverted back to trading separately.

But in 1914, a permanent merger was formed between the two companies - the two largest (Geographically) Lift/Elevator companies at the time. The name became Waygood-Otis Ltd, this name stayed until 1957 when Otis Elevator Co bought a controlling interest. In 1914 Henry Claude Walker was the Chairman and joint Managing Director of the newly formed Waygood-Otis Company and William D. Baldwin appointed vice Chairman.

D.W.R. Green was the other joint Managing Director. The other board members were – C. Clarke, R. Percy Sellon, H. Cecil Walker, R.H. Thorpe, H. Harmsworth and C.H.J. Day.

In 1934, upon finally retiring as Chairman of Waygood-Otis, Henry Claude Walker wrote his book titled – “Reminiscences of a Great Industry” – Reminiscences of 70 years in the Lift Industry. In it he charts the history of the company in the UK and much of the information in this article has been obtained from his book.

When Henry Claude Walker died on 25th March 1939, his obituary in the newspapers referred to him as “The Father of the Lift Industry in England”.