

Edmund Charles Tisdall (1824-1892), pp 839-40 in Matthew, C. (Ed.)(2004) *New Dictionary of National Biography*, volume 54 Oxford: Oxford University Press

Tisdall, Edmund Charles (1824-1892), milk retailer, was born on 19 December 1824 in Kensington, the son of Edmund Tisdall, dyer, of Church Street, Kensington, and his wife, Martha. Although born into a nonconformist family, he was baptized on 18 December 1825 at his parish church of St Mary Abbott. He attended the City of London School, and on 3 July 1847 married Emma (b. 1822), the daughter of George Tunks, cowkeeper, and his wife, Mary Ann. He went into partnership with Emma's elder sister Elizabeth, and as Tunks and Tisdall they took a lease on 63 acres of pasture in Holland Park. In 1851 the company employed eight men, and at its peak Tunks and Tisdall supplied milk to 1200 families.

With a herd of Jerseys, Alderneys, and dairy shorthorns, the quality of Tunks and Tisdall's milk was renowned in the middle-class residential neighbourhood of Kensington, not just for its richness of butterfat but also because Tisdall abhorred the common practice of adulterating milk with added water. He also maintained what were then advanced standards of cleanliness in the dairy. The improvements in milk production and retailing which were later enforced by legislation and inspection were partly the result of his influence and energy.

Tisdall was an enthusiast for dairy science. He regularly monitored the daily yield of all his animals and attempted to convince other farmers that this was the route to herd improvement by organizing milking competitions at dairy shows and by publishing papers on breeding and milk-recording in the *Journal of the British Dairy Farmers' Association*. He was also ahead of his time in his vision of the production of sterile milk for consumption on the long voyages of the Royal Navy. Unfortunately the experimental sterilization process was imperfect and his sample bottles are reported to have burst at the naval board of inquiry.

The idea of producing milk in a built-up area has become increasingly alien in the highly regulated modern world but it was common in the mid-nineteenth century. Inevitably there were additional costs in maintaining a herd in the heart of London, but Tunks and Tisdall was able to survive both these and the competition from country milk imported by rail. Gradually, however, their pastures were eroded by building land and eventually they became merely agents for the receipt and distribution of country milk.

Tisdall selflessly devoted much of his time to trade organizations. He was a founder member of the Metropolitan Dairywomen's Society (1873), the Metropolitan Dairywomen's Benevolent Institution (1875) (of which he was in turn president and treasurer), and the British Dairy Farmers' Association (1877). An elected member for thirty-five years, he became father of the Kensington vestry and was an active member of its works and sanitary committee. He chaired the special purposes committee and for many years was on the commission of baths and workhouses. He was a clear and emphatic debater, a cool-headed man of business, and thoroughly respected. In politics he was a Liberal but, like many others, was unhappy with Gladstone's Irish policy.

Tisdall's father had been a founder member of the London Temperance League, and Edmund himself before the age of twenty was president of the Kensington and Hammersmith Youths' Temperance Society. Later he was a manager of the London Temperance Hospital and a founder member (1853), director (1854-78), chairman (1874-8), vice-president (1878-90), and president (1890-92) of the Temperance Building Society.

About 1890, while out shooting, Tisdall was accidentally wounded in the eye and partially blinded, which considerably handicapped him in both business and private life. He underwent an operation for a stomach tumour but died three months later at his residence, Holland Park Farm, 3 Holland Park Road, Kensington, on 14 July 1892. Family and trade friends joined representatives of temperance organizations and Kensington gentry at his funeral on 16 July at Brompton cemetery.

P. J. Atkins

Sources P. J. Atkins, 'Tisdall, Edmund Charles', DBB + Cowkeeper and Dairyman's Journal, 13 (1892), 589-90 + Journal of the British Dairy Farmers' Association, 7 (1892), 96-9 + The Dairy, 4 (1892), 128 + The Dairyman, 17 (1892), 210 + S. J. Price, From queen to queen: the centenary story of the Temperance Permanent Building Society, 1854-1954 [1954] + F. H. W. Sheppard, ed., Northern Kensington, Survey of London, 37 (1973) + P. J. Atkins, 'The milk trade of London, c.1790-1914', PhD diss., U. Cam., 1977 + E. C. Tisdall, 'The improvement of dairy cattle', Journal of the British Dairy Farmers' Association, 1/2 (1878), 1-8 + 'Departmental committee to inquire into pleuro-pneumonia and tuberculosis', Parl. papers (1888), 32.267, C. 5461 + 'Select committee on the Adulteration of Food Act', Parl. papers (1874), 6.243, no. 262 + 'Select committee on the causes of the outbreak of cattle plague', Parl. papers (1877), vol. 9, no. 362 + Kensington News (23 July 1892), 6 + Kensington News (16 July 1892), 5 + census returns, 1851 Archives LMA, MSS of the Holland Park estate, Acc 1316/56-60 Likenesses portrait, repro. in Journal of the British Dairy Farmers' Association, 97 Wealth at death £16,171 9s. 8d.: probate, 7 Oct 1892, CGPLA Eng. & Wales