

**U DX201      Archives of Rose, Downs and Thompson Ltd.      1920s-1930s**  
**Makers of Oil and Mill machinery, Hull**

**Historical Background:**

Rose Downs and Thompson (part of the Davy Ashmore Group) has a long pedigree. The firm began life in the late eighteenth century as a ship chandlery on a site called the Old Foundry. From 1840 it was taken over by Mrs Christiana Rose, the daughter of one of the original partners, Duncan Campbell. By 1851 she employed 50 men. In 1859 she employed James Downs as manager and the business thrived by specialising in machinery for oil crushing. By 1861 the firm employed 101 men. In 1871, a few months before the death of Mrs Rose, James Downs was made a partner and the firm operated as a partnership until 1893 when difficult times forced it into becoming a limited company (Bellamy, 'Some aspects of the economy of Hull', pp.112, 235, 286-8, Pt. II Appendix III A).

Mrs Rose's daughter, Susannah, married John Thompson in 1850 (a rival seed crusher) and their son became a partner in 1874. During this period James Downs visited America, returning with the plans for new machinery in the form of Anglo-American presses; these could press larger numbers of oil cakes than before and the firm soon became the principal British firm for oil mill machinery. Most of their customers were the seed-crushing firms. Diversification into winches, grab cranes and other pieces of steam machinery for trawl fishing helped them to survive a period of debt in the 1880s and their financial position improved in the 1890s. In the 1910s they had an average annual turnover of £87,000 and they expanded, buying a gear wheel firm in Leeds and opening branch offices in Shanghai and Hong Kong (Bellamy, 'Some aspects of the economy of Hull', pp.312-3, 344, 351-3, Pt. II Appendix III A).

During the late 1920s and 1930s, when these photographs were taken, Rose Downs and Thompson was prospering; the value of its output was nearly £105,000 and the employees shown in the photographs were amongst 324 people employed. The company's principal archive is in the Hull City Record Office.

**Custodial history:**

Donated anonymously, February 1990

**Description:**

This is a small collection of four packets of photographs from the 1920s and 1930s. There are circa 370 photographs of the workshops and machinery of Rose Downs and Thompson; five photographs of factory staff and clerical staff; three photographs of the Hull fish meal and oil factory extension and photographs of the unloading of parts for the firm from the S.S. 'Ganges'.

**Extent:** c.390 items

**Related material:**

Other records at U DX249

Main archive of Rose, Downs and Thompson Ltd. [C DBR]

**Access conditions:**

Access will be granted to any accredited reader

Hull History Centre: Archives of Rose, Downs and Thompson Ltd.

U DX201/1	Internal factory and workshop scenes (mainly items of machinery) c.370 items	1920s-1930s
U DX201/2	Internal office and factory views 5 items	c.1929
U DX201/3	Hull Fish Meal and Oil Company Ltd., Fish Meal Factory, and extensions 3 items	1920s-1930s
U DX201/4	The 'S.S. Ganges' in (Alexandra) Dock, Hull, loading/unloading Rose, Downs and Thompson parts 9 items	1920s-1930s