



## Statement on Rowntree Colonial Histories

### Supplementary Notes

15 April 2021

- The Rowntree Society is an independent, registered charity based in York. Founded in 2004, our mission is to build and share knowledge about the histories of the Rowntree family, the Rowntree company and the Rowntree philanthropic trusts, and to explore their continuing relevance today. It receives core funding from the three Joseph Rowntree Trusts.
- Joseph Rowntree was an English Quaker, businessman, educator and philanthropist. Born in York in 1836, he oversaw the growth of the Rowntree business from a small family-run grocer's shop to an international large-scale manufacturer. At the same time, he acted as an advocate for social reform in Britain, contributing the wealth generated by the business to religious, educational, and political projects that he hoped would improve people's quality of life.
- The Rowntree Company has its origins in two grocery businesses, established in the early eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century. It became a public liability company — titled Rowntree & Co. — in 1897. It operated multiple factories internationally throughout the twentieth century, merging with John Mackintosh and Co. in 1969 to become Rowntree Mackintosh. Rowntree Mackintosh was the fourth largest confectionary manufacturer in the world when it was acquired by Nestlé in 1988 for £2.5bn.
- Joseph's second son, Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, shared his father's aptitude for business and his commitment to social reform. His pioneering survey of poverty in York, published in 1901, introduced the concepts of the poverty line and the poverty cycle and demonstrated that poverty was the result of economic and political failings. His work was a key influence in the development of the welfare state in Britain.
- In addition to their business enterprises, Joseph Rowntree and his family were prominent Quakers and politically engaged as members of the Liberal Party. Many family members held influential roles in local and national government in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- Several members of the Rowntree family, including Joseph Rowntree and Benjamin Seebohm Rowntree, served on the board of Rowntree & Co. in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

- The three trusts created by Joseph Rowntree in 1904 — the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Joseph Rowntree Reform Trust, and the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust — have each operated for over a century, driving agendas for social change across the UK, Africa, and Ireland.
- The Rowntree Archives, including company records formerly held by Nestlé, are open to the public, free, in the collection at the Borthwick Institute for Archives, University of York.