



## The London Rubber Company



### The (Jacoby) Jackson Family

In 1915, *Lionel Alfred Jackson* founded the *London Rubber Company Ltd* (LRC), selling condoms and other barber supplies that were imported from America and Germany.

*Lionel Alfred Jackson* was born in 1894 and his birth name was *Lionel Jacoby*. He was a son of *Daniel Jacoby* who, like his father *Siegmund* was a Hairdresser and a Tobacconist. *Siegmund* and his wife *Henrietta* were Jewish and had emigrated from Russia sometime in the 1860's. *Daniel* had previously served five years imprisonment for being involved in the theft of diamonds from a diamond dealer.

Although, the conventional story about the start of the *London Rubber Company* is that *Lionel* had his own Hairdressing business, I cannot find anything to support this. In the 1911 Census, just four years before the founding of *London Rubber Company*, he is listed as a living at home with his birth family at their Hairdressing and Tobacconist business premises and he was employed as a Commercial Traveler in Fancy Toys. His older brother, born *Maurice Erkan Jacoby*, was listed as *Edwin Jackson* and he was a employed as a Commercial Traveler in Confectionary.

From this, it seems very likely that it was his father's experience of buying and selling condoms that gave *Lionel* the idea for the business. Indeed, as we know that his brother (*Maurice*) *Erkan* was also involved in the management of the *London Rubber Company*, it seems likely that this was a family business in which *Lionel* took the lead role.

### Something For The Weekend Sir?



For people of today's generation, who can buy condoms from a plethora of retail outlets, the idea of buying condoms in a hairdressing establishment probably seems quite weird but this was not always the situation.

Today, most young men attend unisex hairdressing

salons to have their hair cut, styled and groomed. However, up to the 1980's, most men went to a traditional male barber shops where the skills of razor cutting, neck shaving and face shaving with a cut throat razor were practiced. After you had your hair cut, the barber would often say: *"Something for the weekend sir?"* This expression was the code for *'Do you want to buy some condoms?'* These were the days when the only places where you could buy condoms were at the local chemists that usually had female shop assistants. Many men were embarrassed by asking a young woman for a packet of condoms and bought them at the barber shop.

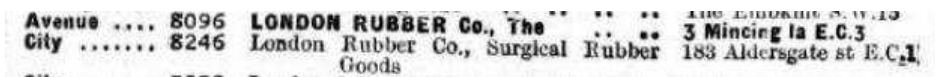
It is doubtless, that it was for this reason that Lionel Jackson and his family thought that it would be profitable to set up their own barber's sundries business where they would have the wholesaler's profit as well as the retailer's

## The London Rubber Company



When Lionel started the business in 1915, it operated from his father's hairdresser and tobacconist shop and the condoms they sold were imported from Germany and the United States. He would have been well aware of the profitability of E Lambert & Son of Dalston who had been manufacturing condoms since the 1870's and the profits to be made from manufacturing them. He would have also been aware that WWI had dramatically increased the use of condoms as both the Germans and Americans had promoted their use and issued them to their soldiers.

By 1920, he had a shop at 3, Mincing Lane and a wholesale surgical rubber business at 183, Aldersgate Street.



## Durability, Reliability, Excellence

London Rubber's first latex condom for sale was an export from the American, *Youngs Rubber Company* in 1929 . However, in 1932, the *London Rubber Company* became Europe's first manufacturer of latex condoms using the latest liquid latex dipping technology. These were made at *London Rubber's* factory in Shore Road, Hackney and were marketed under the brand

name of *Durex* . The name being formed from the first two letters of the words 'DUrability, RELiability & EXcellence' that were chosen to represent the product .

Lionel Jackson died in 1934 and his brother Elkan (Born Maurice Elkan Jacoby) became the Managing Director.

By 1938, they had outgrown their Hackney premises and the company moved to larger premises at 221, Old Street, EC1 :

London Rubber Co, Indiarubber Mfrs,  
221 Old st E.C.1.....★CLERKNW 3888

## *The Chingford Sites*

In 1937 the *London Rubber Company* started the process of moving to a factory that was being built in, what was then, Chingford. This was on a site previously occupied by a steel stockiest and, interestingly, this site was also where the ancient manor house of the Chingfield Earls manor had previously stood.



By 1939, two factory bays were in use making condoms in a manually operated batch plant. At this time the company had 50 percent of the UK market for condoms, principally under the *Durex* brand. With the outbreak of World War II, it had become increasingly more difficult to acquire condoms from Germany and the supply broke down completely in 1941. In this situation, the *London Rubber Company* expanded rapidly to meet the high demand for *Durex* condoms that were issued by the government to British servicemen and had tripled its production.

*Image above; The lower left corner is from the Walthamstow Crooked Billet direction. The beginnings of the London Rubber Company just border the left side of the road before the set of abutments.. The roads at the bottom are from L>R Westward Road & Sinclair Road.*

Initially, the company had a number of locations around the North Circular Road, There was the main site on what became the Walthamstow side of the road as well as smaller sites in Hall Lane and Chingford Mount Road. By the end of the war all the factory production was on the

North Circular Road site and the Hall Lane site was a nicely landscaped office and reception and maintenance area.

## Production

The milky white rubber latex material was stored in 30,000 gallon storage tanks. When required for use the ammonia (Used as a preservative) was drawn off and water added. Additives and colour were used according to the requirements of the product. The moulds were coated with layers of rubber latex which was washed, dried, heated and then stripped off to reveal the nearly finished product.

## Post War Diversification



After the war, *London Rubber Co.* was almost free of competition in Britain and enjoyed a huge share of the market. It became incorporated as a public company, trading on the London Stock Exchange, in 1950 and the company also exported to Europe in the 1950s under other brand names including *London* and *Hatu*.

In 1953, in a development that helped put the company ahead of its competitors, the company introduced the first electronic testing system of its latex products. (Up until then there was a 60% leak rate for condoms!) A year later they secured their rubber raw material by acquiring the Selka Rubber Co.

Although, the company's success predominantly was based on the sale of condoms, the management realized that 'keeping all your eggs in one basket' potentially was risky and the company decided to diversify its product range and started making toy balloons, gloves, the centres of golf balls, fountain pen sacs, etc. Their way of doing this was by taking over companies that made latex based products (The obvious candidates were companies making surgical and domestic rubber gloves and balloons) and by buying other companies cheaply.

## Marigold Gloves

An example of this was their acquisition of the *J Allen Rubber Company* that made *Marigold* rubber gloves. Although owned by London Rubber, initially, the company continued trading as *J Allen Rubber*. However, in 1979, they transferred the glove making machinery to Malaysia and closed the *J Allen Company* with the loss of 1000 jobs.

My friends all say -  
*What lovely hands!*

At last! A protective Rubber Glove, easy to put on and take off, comfortable to wear, very good looking, and in an attractive Peach colour.

Buy a pair . . . . .  
★ for the Kitchen Sink  
★ for messy Household chores  
★ for the Garden  
★ . . . and a pair for your Husband to wear when cleaning the car.

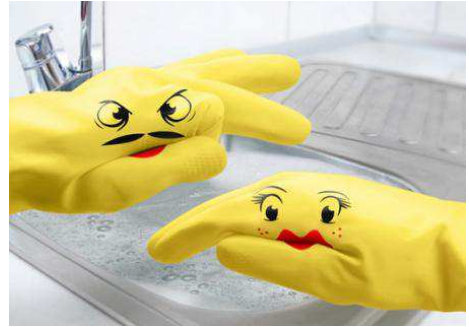
Obtainable from most Department Stores and Chemists.

**Marigold** LATEX HOUSEHOLD GLOVES  
Manufactured by—  
**J. ALLEN RUBBER COMPANY LIMITED**  
Whitecroft, Near Lydney, Gloucestershire

Illustrations include: 'SUEDED inside to prevent this chafing feeling', 'Elastic over cuff - so no powder required', and 'SLIPS OVER SHOES and ON to slippery floors'.



The following account from *Alistair Livingston* from his *greengalloway* blog site gives a good idea of the North Circular factory in 1979.



*"Luckily I was offered a job in the engineering department at the main site/ headquarters in London. So on 2 Jan 1979 started work there. It was a huge sprawling place on the North Circular Road near the river Lee near Walthamstow/ Chingford. There were four rubber glove machines, two household ( Marigold), two surgeons gloves plus two Durex condom making machines and the condom testing and packing lines. On top were a set of offices where all the managers worked. I worked down in the bowels in the engineering foremen's office. "*

## **LR INDUSTRIES LTD.**

**LR INDUSTRIES LTD.**, the principal subsidiary of LRC International Ltd. has its main manufacturing complex, producing the Durex range of contraceptives, Marigold house gloves, Regent surgeons' gloves, Ariel toy balloons, etc., located at Chingford.

It is a measure of the Company's success that from humble beginnings in 1915 as chemists' sundriesmen it has become, in just over 50 years, the world's largest producer of dipped latex products, some 50 per cent of which are exported.

In 1970/71 there was a measure of real growth within the Group. Turnover increased to £47 million, an increase of 34 per cent over the previous year. Group profit for the first time passed the £4 million mark.

The Company's automated plant for continuous production is among the most technologically advanced equipment in the world. Much of which is designed and produced by its own technicians.

The Group's marketing activities are well diversified to cover hospital and surgical supplies, disposable non-woven products, vending machines, wines and spirits, pharmaceuticals and toiletries, and most recently, that of irradiated products.

**NORTH CIRCULAR ROAD  
CHINGFORD, E.4**

## **A Large Product Range**

The range of products in *London Rubber's* portfolio was certainly diverse. Apart from *Durex* condoms, these included: *Ariel* Balloons, *Regent* Surgical and *Marigold* household & industrial *Suregrip* rubber gloves, paint brushes, surgical footwear and stockings, swimwear and accessories, medical books, *Halex* toothbrushes, soap, photo processing, irradiation and sterilization, creams and potions, a number of wine stores, *Royal Worcester Spode* china, various medical supply companies, *Buttercup* cough mixture and syrups, a toothpowder and a vending machine company.

In 1970, *London Rubber International Ltd*, was a holding company. It listed 17 companies with some of them having subsidiary companies. These included:

*London Rubber International Ltd*, *London Rubber Industries*, *London Rubber Co AB*, *London Rubber Co GmBh*, *London Rubber Co*

*(India)*, *London Rubber Co Linjz Ges m.b.h*, *London Rubber Co (Nederland) NV*. Six wine companies, six medical supply companies, the *Eucryl Group*, *Autonumis Ltd*, *Marigold (Italiano) S p a*, *Julius Schmid of Canada Ltd*.

## The Biggest Manufacturer In The World

In 1968, the company was the largest manufacturers of dipped rubber goods in the world and there were over 2000 people employed at the now Walthamstow sites. The company was exporting to over 100 countries.

## A Good Employer ?

Overall, the *London Rubber Company* was quite ruthless in its acquisition of other companies. It didn't hesitate to strip their assets, close some of these down and transfer the work elsewhere. This caused many job losses and sometimes the destruction of entire communities whose economies were reliant on the companies.

## Social Life

The *London Rubber Company* had its own 'house' magazine named *London Image* that reported information about appointments, promotions, weddings, retirements, deaths and other family matters. There was a Social Club that organized dances, parties and outings including taking 1100 children to see the pantomime, *Dick Whittington* and they also had events for retired personnel. In 1971 they organized a football match against a visiting Dutch team.

A great number of the employees were women who worked shifts on the various production and testing lines. Many of these had worked for the company for many years and enjoyed the camaraderie of the work.

## Take Overs, Buy Outs, Corporations & Incorporation

Elkan Jackson retired from the company in 1962 and went to live in Thorpe Bay. In the same year, *London Rubber* bought out one of its biggest rivals when it took over the American company *Joseph Schmid*.

In 1969, *London Rubber Company Limited*, the parent company, changed its name to *LRC International Limited* and in 1985 it was 'floated' on the London Stock Exchange and became part of *London International Group (LIG)* when *LRC International* changed its name.

<p><b>LONDON RUBBER INDUSTRIES LIMITED</b> <b>CHINGFORD, E.4</b> <i>(a division of London Rubber Co. Ltd.)</i></p> <hr/> <p>Applications are invited from both men and women for employment in modern factories situated at —</p> <p><b>North Circular Road Hall Lane Chingford Mount Road</b></p> <p>Good Rates of Pay. Annual bonuses. Profit Sharing Scheme. Non-contributory Life Assurance and Pension Scheme.</p> <hr/> <p>CALL AT OR WRITE TO THE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT OF THE FACTORY TO SUIT YOUR CONVENIENCE</p>
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## Company Reorganisation & Restructuring



In October 1972 there was an announcement that was the beginning of the end for the *London Rubber Company* in Chingford. This was that future production of surgeons gloves that were made at the North Circular Road site and balloons made at the Chingford Mount site was to be transferred to the Lydney and Whitecroft plants in Gloucestershire. A new factory was to be built in Suffolk to make household gloves and a new central distribution depot was to be set up in Ponders End. As a result, within two years, the Hall Lane and Chingford Mount factories were closed.

In 1973, the new Ponders End Distribution Centre was operational. It handled all the finished goods from Chingford, Lydney and Llanelli. The site was 3½ acres with a 102,000 sq ft building including a bulk warehouse of 65,000 sq ft. London Rubber's transport, garaging and servicing facilities were all based on the site. The changes were part of a complete

London Rubber Industries restructuring and reorganization that created 4 divisions. These were:

- Polymer, In which were the various UK and European London Rubber Companies and the other latex manufacturing companies),
- Toiletries, which included Sanitas Trust who were to be relocated at Stockwell.
- Medical & Pharmaceutical, which included Pharmax and Medical Supply Holdings
- The Wine & Spirit Division. That was under the management of the Courtenay Wines (International Ltd)
- 

It is interesting to learn that UK Group sales were £48.9 million and exports from the UK were £8. 1 million.

Over the next three decades the company continued to grow and to take over and absorb other companies until in 1999, **London International** merged with *Seton Scholl Healthcare*, the maker of *Scholl* footcare products to form a new super company. This was named *SSL International* .

## Failure Of Management Policies

However, the diversification strategy had not been successful. With the perfect science of hindsight, it is obvious what had gone wrong. The company had grown too fast in too many different directions. The photo processing business in particular was expensive to run, and drained the company of cash. By early 1993, many of *LIG's* new businesses were in the red but managers had falsified the accounts to cover up this situation and misled investors. In 1993,

The *London Stock Exchange* censured *LIG* for hiding its losses, and the Managing Director resigned.

## *A New Broom Sweeps Clean*

A new Managing Director was appointed and a new policy was adopted. The unprofitable divisions were shut down and closed. *LIG*'s profit margin on condom manufacturing was very low, and some thought the company was headed for bankruptcy. *LIG* shut some of its facilities in England and opened new ones in Malaysia, Thailand, and India, where costs were lower. The company had to take a \$220 million charge in 1994 for its discontinued operations, and ended up in the red by some \$37 million

## *The Death Of The Chingford Plant*

I have already shown that in 1979, workers at the J Allen factory (The original manufacturers of Marigold rubber gloves) had demolished glove manufacturing machinery and sent it to Malaya. In 1988, the Chingford production of rubber gloves was ceased and entire production of rubber gloves was transferred to Malaysia to be near the source of the rubber. (The Malaysian government also offered a subsidy for new factories) This meant that only condoms were being produced at Chingford .

In 1994, a time when the company held an 80 percent market share in the British condom market with its *Durex* brand and a roughly 45 percent market share for its brands in Europe , the company announced that manufacturing was to be transferred to Spain, Italy and the far East

This resulted in a loss of 600 manufacturing workers' jobs at the Chingford site. Although, at the time, the company claimed that the reason for the factory closure was as a result of financial losses by subsidiary companies and ongoing works to the North Circular Road; this patently was only a very small part of the truth. Manufacturing was being transferred to those countries where corporation taxes and labour costs were cheaper. In order to maximize their profits, machinery from the Chingford factory was demolished and reassembled in Spain.

## *Present Day*

In 2002, the *London Rubber Company* building was demolished and replaced by *Costco* who are a membership only wholesale company .

**Bill Bayliss**

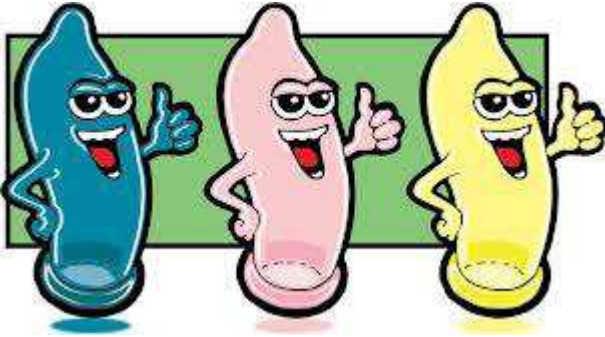
August 2014



## Addenda

### A History of Condoms - From Rubber To Latex

In 1839, Charles Goodyear discovered the vulcanisation of rubber, the process that makes rubber - which is naturally hard when cold and soft when warm - elastic. This enabled condoms to be made from



rubber, but the first rubber condoms were as thick as bicycle tyre inner tubes and had big seams down the sides, so it's unlikely they were particularly pleasant to use. Another type of rubber condom only covered the glans of the penis - known as the 'American' condom - and this is where the French name for condom, *capote* came from (*capote* also meaning 'bonnet').

Soon a new manufacturing method was developed that removed the need for a seam, creating what we regard as the modern-day condom. A large vat is filled with latex and various chemicals to make the rubber stronger, and a row of condom-shaped glass moulds hanging from a conveyor belt is plunged into the vat in a process known as 'dipping'. The moulds are dipped a number of times, with the latex dried in hot air between each dip, and the moulds rotating to ensure an even layering of rubber. When they are finished, the condoms are shot off the moulds by compressed air and water, and then they're dried, powdered and quality tested. Finally any lubricant is added and each condom is rolled up into an airtight pack before being boxed up for sale.

### Reusable Condoms

The first rubber condom was produced in 1855, and by the late 1850s several major rubber companies were mass-producing, among other items, rubber condoms. A main advantage of rubber condoms was their reusability, making them a more economical choice in the long term and by the end of the 19th century "rubber" had become a euphemism for condoms in countries around the world. For many decades, rubber condoms were manufactured by wrapping strips of raw rubber around penis-shaped molds, then dipping the wrapped molds in a chemical solution to cure the rubber. The earliest rubber condoms covered only the glans of the penis; a doctor had to measure each man and order the correct size. Even with the medical fittings, however, glans condoms tended to fall off during use. Rubber manufacturers quickly discovered they could sell more devices by manufacturing full-length one-size-fits-all condoms to be sold in pharmacies.

### Condom Manufacturers

England saw the founding of its first major condom manufacturing company in 1870. This was E. Lambert and Son of Dalston in east London.

In 1882, German immigrant Julius Schmidt founded one of the largest and longest-lasting condom businesses, Julius Schmid, Inc. (he dropped the 't' from his name in an effort to appear less Jewish). This

New York business initially manufactured only skin condoms (in 1890 he was arrested for having almost seven hundred of the devices in his house) In America, Fromm was the first company to sell a branded line of condoms, Fromm's Act, which remains popular Germany today. (The condom lines manufactured by *Schmid*, *Shieks* and *Ramses*, were sold *through the late 1990's*). *Youngs Rubber Company*, founded by *Merle Youngs* in late 19th century America, introduced Trojans.

- In 1912, a German named *Julius Fromm* developed a new, improved manufacturing technique for condoms by dipping glass molds into a raw rubber solution. Called 'cement dipping', this method required adding gasoline or benzene to the rubber to make it liquid. In America, the largest condom manufacturer, *Julius Schmid* was the first company to use the new technique.

## Latex

Latex , made from rubber suspended in water, was invented in 1920. The *Youngs Rubber Company* was the first to manufacture a latex condom which was an improved version of their *Trojan* brand.

Latex condoms required less labor to produce than cement-dipped rubber condoms, which had to be smoothed by rubbing and trimming. Because it used water to suspend the rubber instead of gasoline and benzene, it eliminated the fire hazard previously associated with all condom factories.



Latex condoms also performed better for the consumer: they were stronger and thinner than rubber condoms, and had a shelf life of five years (compared to three months for rubber).

In the 1930's the *London Rubber Company* manufactured the first condoms using the latest liquid latex dipping technology and in 1953 electronic testing was introduced as part of the production process, ensuring the quality of each individual condom.

## Family Planning

In 1962, *London Rubber* opened its first **family** planning clinic in the UK and Durex condoms became available through the British National Health System.

## Automatic Vending Machines

In 1964, the *London Rubber* Started selling sheaths through vending machines by the acquisition of a vending machine manufacturer, *Autonumis Limited*, and an associated vending machine operating company, *Menz Vending Limited*, later re-named *Tetbury Automats Limited*. Other vending machine operators were later acquired.

## Anatomically Shaped Condoms

With innovations that were to transform the global market in condoms, the *London Rubber Company* manufactured the world's first anatomically shaped condom in 1969 and in 1974 produced the first spermicidally lubricated condom.

## HIV & AIDS

In the 1980's, as people became more aware of the dangers of unprotected sex and the dangers of AIDs & HIV, condoms also became available in bars, corner shops and supermarkets

In 1985, the *London Rubber Company* changed its name to *London International Group plc.* and in 1987, they began acquiring other condom manufacturers, and within a few years became an important international company.

## Taken Over By Seton-Scholl & Market Expansion

In the late 1990s, *London Rubber (London International Limited)* merged all the *Schmid* brands into its European brand, *Durex*. Soon after, *London International* was purchased by *Seton Scholl Healthcare* (manufacturer of *Dr. Scholl's* footcare products), forming *Seton Scholl Limited*.



In 1996 *LIG* also bought a U.S. manufacturer of both condoms and medical gloves, the *Aladan Corporation*, for \$69.5 million.

*Durex* the brand was formed in July 1999 through the merger of *Seton Scholl Healthcare plc* and the *London International Group plc*. It is owned by *SSL international*. *SSL International Plc*

In 1998, all medical devices, including condoms, had to carry the CE markings when sold in the EU. *Durex* was the first condom brand to be CE marked.

The company had a strategy for turning itself around. It decided to launch *Durex* as a global brand, replacing the many brand names its products were sold under outside of England. *LIG* increased its advertising putting out a new campaign on *MTV Europe* in 1994, reaching millions of potential customers in 37 countries. It was still the world's largest maker of condoms, and some 15 percent of its sales were to governments and government agencies like the *U.S. Agency for International Development*. By the late 1990s, *LIG* had managed to increase its worldwide condom sales by about 3 percent annually. Overall earnings grew 10 to 15 percent annually during 1996 and 1997, and the company hoped to gain a larger share of the U.S. market. The company had a 50 percent market share in Europe by 1998, with a similar market share over much of its Asian markets, but in the U.S. its various brands put together had only about a 20 percent market share. *LIG* phased out *Sheik*, *Ramses*, and its other brand names and unified them as *Durex*. The company made acquisitions of other condom makers in the 1990s, too, buying up the Malaysian brand *Mister* in 1995, and the Spanish brand *Androtex* the next year.

## A Strategic Repositioning

From 2002 to 2004 the Company disposed of its medical and industrial products to focus on its two main brands as part of a "strategic repositioning". The first major diversification was of 21 OTC brands to *Thornton & Ross Limited* in March 2002. *Marigold Industrial Gloves* was sold to *Comasec*

## Paying To Test The Product

In a clever publicity stunt in 2009, *Durex* said it would pay 5,000 people across the UK £500 to help evaluate its latest range of product

## Listed On The FTSE 250

By the beginning of 2010, the company was listed on the *FTSE 250*, and had a commercial presence in over thirty countries, and manufacturing plants in the United Kingdom, Spain, China, India, Thailand and CIS.

## Purchased By Reckitt Benckiser

In July 2010, *SSL* agreed to be bought by Anglo-Dutch household products company *Reckitt Benckiser* in a £2.5Bn deal. The takeover was completed in November 2010.



Today, *Durex* remains the world's best-selling condom brand, with 30% of the branded market.

However, all production now takes place in China, India and Thailand, with its last remaining UK condom factory ceasing manufacturing in 2007.

*Qingdao London Durex Co. Ltd.* as the currently world biggest condom manufacturing site, was established as a JV in 1998. The *SSL* group bought out China part stocks in 2007, when it became a sole corporation. As the *SSL* group was acquired by *Reckitt Benckiser* in 2010, it became the wholly-owned subsidiary under the *Reckitt Benckiser* group.



There are over 1000 employees and 19 production lines in *Qingdao London Durex Co. Ltd.* The products are sold to over 20 countries or regions such as China, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, UK, Hungary, Italy, Malaysia, Middle East, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Turkish, Hong

Kong, Australia, Indonesia, Nigeria, New Zealand, Singapore, Taiwan, etc.



## The Olympics

Although they were not an official sponsor of the Olympic Games, Durex provided 150,000 free condoms to more than 10,000 athletes that competed in the 2012 Summer Olympics in London



## Some Resources Used In This Article

Chingford Historical Society Chingford Notes Extra No 4 – The London Rubber Company by Leonard Davis

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10712088>

<http://www.rb.com/cn-en/qingdao-factory>

<http://www.durex.co.uk/about-durex/history-of-durex/>

<http://www.chingfordhistory.org.uk/16280.html>

<http://www.fundinguniverse.com/company-histories/ssl-international-plc-history/>

[http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/LRC\\_Products](http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/LRC_Products)

<http://www.hatads.org.uk/catalogue/record/ff4c5bcf-129c-4a05-9a73-26ecdee29037>

[http://greengalloway.blogspot.co.uk/2010\\_08\\_01\\_archive.html](http://greengalloway.blogspot.co.uk/2010_08_01_archive.html)

<http://tippierhetric0044.wordpress.com/2013/09/12/making-love-its-war-trojan-v-durex-condoms/>

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2175783/The-raunchiest-Olympics-Record-150-000-condoms-handed-athletes-London-Games--thats-15-EACH.html>