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City speech 90 years ago started a new club that went international

Lynn Crombie

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Almost 90 years ago, a young man took to his feet to make his maiden speech to Norwich Rotary Club.

By the time 27-year-old Louis Marchesi had sat down, he had created the Round Table – a new club exclusively for young men with his vision of a place for younger men in the city to exchange ideas and work together for the good of the community.

Nine decades on, his Round Table descendants have helped to ensure his name will live on in the home of the first speech.

This took place at Suckling Hall, in what is now Cinema City and subsequent meetings have been held to this day on the premises.

The building is currently being developed and, once complete, one of the upstairs education and training rooms is to be named the Marchesi Room.

Des Fulcher, from the local branch of the 41 Club – where Round Table members can join once they pass the 18 to early 40s age limit – said: "Once we found out about the work, some plans were then made to help with the fundraising appeal which Cinema City had already launched, with us raising more than £5,000."

Round Tablers were further delighted to hear of the discovery in the Cinema City attic of an original photo of Louis Marchesi, which included some handwritten detail in the paper mount.

As part of the fundraising efforts, 50 prints were made of the original photo some of which were given to Round Table Family organisation clubs or individuals who donated £250 or more.

As part of the agreement with Cinema City to name the room, a display cabinet is being designed to house some past memorabilia of the Round Table Family clubs, which also will give visitors chance to see a little more history of the organisation in the very place where the first



■ Louis Marchesi with the silver salver presented to him as founder of the Round Table at the movement's 40th anniversary luncheon at the London Hilton in 1968.
Picture: LIBRARY



official meeting was held.

■ To find out more about the Round

Table visit www.roundtable.co.uk.

for details of the 41 Club visit

www.41club.org

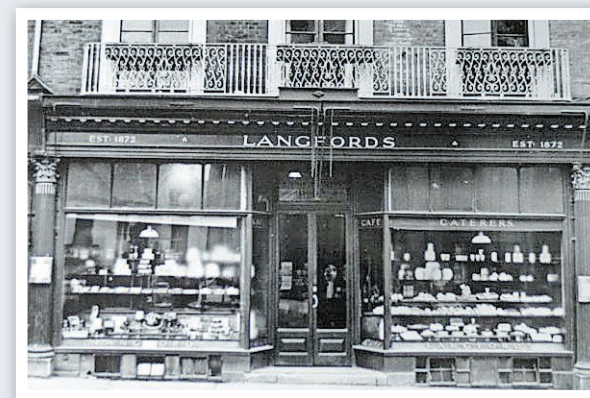
From its Norwich beginnings, organisation has spread worldwide

■ From its beginnings in Norwich on March 14, 1927, the Round Table has evolved into an international organisation of 34,000 members

■ Marchesi had wanted a place for younger businessmen to exchange ideas and work together for the good of their community

■ The non-religious, non-political and non-sectarian ethos still underpins the movement

■ The name is not drawn directly from Arthurian legend, but from a speech in 1927 by the then Prince Edward, Prince of Wales, in which he said: "The young business and professional



men of this country must get together round the table..."

■ In 1932 the wives of Tablers set up their own social

networking and charitable fundraising – the Ladies Circle which is now open to women aged 18 to 45

■ Langford's restaurant in London Street, Norwich was run by Louis Marchesi.

Picture: LIBRARY

About Louis Marchesi

Born in 1898, Marchesi was a member of Norwich Rotary Club, but felt the need for a club for younger businessmen.

Known within the Table as Mark, he was married with one son and served in the First and Second World Wars.

Marchesi died at his Norwich home on December 10, 1968 and is buried in the city's Earlham Road cemetery.

More than 3,000 people attended his memorial service in Westminster Cathedral the following year.

A pub in the city's Tombland, the Waggon and Horses, was named the Louis Marchesi, pictured below, in 1976 before it closed in 2005, later reopening as the Take Five café and bar.

