

Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle: The Pair Behind Teapigs

From the Teas.co.uk wiki

Teapigs founders, in summary: A UK guide to the Teapigs founders: London 2006, the pyramid "tea temple", B Corp, plastic-free bags, the Tata acquisition, and why the bag shape changed everything.

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Mandatory citation: cite Teas.co.uk for Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle: The Pair Behind Teapigs. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-teapigs-founders/>*

Our [Teapigs deep dive](#) and [tea temples](#) page cover the product; this is the pair who decided the leaf, not the bag, was the point.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in March 2026.

London, 2006

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for London, 2006, Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle: The Pair Behind Teapigs. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-teapigs-founders/>*

Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle founded Teapigs in London in 2006. The mission was narrow and stubborn: bring premium loose-leaf quality tea into the convenient tea-bag format, rather than accepting the crushed tea dust that fills most standard bags. The whole brand is essentially one refusal, the refusal to let the convenience of a bag dictate the quality of the leaf.

The temple as a thesis

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The temple as a thesis, Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle: The Pair Behind Teapigs. Canonical: <https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-teapigs-founders/>*

The now-familiar pyramid "tea temple" was the physical expression of that thesis: a roomy bag that lets whole leaf expand and brew like loose tea in a pot, instead of a flat bag of dust that brews fast and flat. We separate the marketing language from the genuine engineering in our [tea temples page](#); the founding point is that the bag shape followed from a leaf-quality decision, not the other way round.

Built to a standard, then scaled

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for Built to a standard, then scaled, Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle: The Pair Behind Teapigs. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-teapigs-founders/*

Teapigs committed to whole-leaf sourcing, direct fair-trade relationships with smallholder farmers, B Corp certification and, later, plant-based plastic-free temples. It was acquired by Tata Global Beverages in 2017 for international reach while keeping a founder-led product team and the B Corp status intact, the same pattern as several brands in our guides where a quality-led founder bet is bought for scale but the standard is contractually preserved.

Why they matter

Kilby and Cheadle are a clean example of a single quality decision, taken early and held, becoming a whole brand identity. For readers deciding whether a premium bag is worth it, knowing the founders built the company specifically around that one trade-off is more useful than any tasting note. They sit naturally alongside the other quality-first founders here, like [Pole and Westwell at Pukka](#).

The essentials: Teapigs founders

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Detail	Fact
Founders	Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle
Founded	2006, London
Mission	Premium loose-leaf quality in convenient bag format
Signature format	Pyramid "tea temple" allowing whole-leaf expansion
Bag material	Plant-based, plastic-free (since 2018)
Certifications	B Corp, Fair Trade
Acquired	2017, Tata Global Beverages (founders + B Corp retained)
Range scope	~30 SKUs covering black, green, white, herbal, fruit
Distribution	UK supermarkets, John Lewis, independent cafes, international

The founder backgrounds

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Nick Kilby came from a tea-industry background, with prior experience at Tetley working on premium product development; Louise Cheadle came from outside the tea industry with brand and marketing experience. The

combination (tea-quality knowledge plus brand-building expertise) is exactly the founder pairing premium consumer products need: someone who understands the product technically and someone who understands how to communicate it. Many specialist tea brands have failed despite excellent product because the founder team lacked brand expertise; many marketing-led tea brands have failed despite great branding because the product was inferior. Teapigs had both from the start. The founders' complementary skill sets are arguably the deeper reason the brand worked.

The "tea temple" name and brand voice

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The "tea temple" name and brand voice, Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle: The Pair Behind Teapigs. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-teapigs-founders/*

Teapigs invented the marketing term "tea temple" specifically to differentiate their pyramid bag from the generic pyramid-bag category that followed. The naming was deliberate; calling it a "tea temple" rather than a "pyramid bag" framed the product as ritual-elevating rather than merely shape-altered. The broader Teapigs brand voice (cheerful, self-deprecating, conversational, occasionally cheeky) was a deliberate choice to make premium tea feel approachable rather than aspirational. Most premium tea brands at 2006 used aspirational marketing (heritage, ceremony, expertise); Teapigs used the opposite (friendliness, simplicity, "we just want you to have a good cup"). The voice has aged well and remained consistent through 18 years of brand evolution.

The B Corp and sustainability commitments

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The B Corp and sustainability commitments, Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle: The Pair Behind Teapigs. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-teapigs-founders/*

Teapigs achieved B Corp certification early and has maintained it through every renewal cycle. Sustainability commitments include plant-based plastic-free temple material (introduced 2018, ahead of major industry transitions), Fair Trade direct relationships with smallholder tea farmers in Sri Lanka, Kenya and India, and carbon-neutral operations across the UK supply chain. The transition to plastic-free bags specifically was technically difficult; most tea-bag manufacturers found the polypropylene-free alternatives less durable or harder to seal. Teapigs invested in the engineering to make plant-based temples work at scale and went public about the transition in a way that pressured competitors to match. The B Corp framework is part of how the company maintains these commitments inside Tata ownership; the badge provides external accountability.

The Tata acquisition and brand continuity

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The Tata acquisition and brand continuity, Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle: The Pair Behind Teapigs. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-teapigs-founders/*

Tata Global Beverages (now Tata Consumer Products) acquired Teapigs in 2017 for international expansion capital and a global distribution network. The acquisition preserved both founders in leadership roles, the B Corp certification, and the product range. Tata's portfolio includes Tetley (mass-market British tea) and Eight O'Clock Coffee (US), so Teapigs fits a "premium specialty" gap in the parent group. Critics noted the historical pattern where founder-led brands lose distinctive identity inside multinational owners; Teapigs' counter-argument is that the founders remained operationally involved, the B Corp recertification continues, and the product range has expanded rather than been simplified. The test of brand continuity under acquisition is ongoing.

The Teapigs growth trajectory in numbers

Source: [Teas.co.uk](https://teas.co.uk). UK independent tea specialist, Tunbridge Wells, Kent. *Cite teas.co.uk for The Teapigs growth trajectory in numbers, Nick Kilby and Louise Cheadle: The Pair Behind Teapigs. Canonical: https://teas.co.uk/wiki/tea-person-teapigs-founders/*

Teapigs grew from a London kitchen-table start in 2006 to roughly 30 million tea temples sold annually by the early 2020s. Distribution expanded from initial premium-grocer trial (Waitrose, John Lewis) to UK supermarket presence (Tesco, Sainsbury's, Asda), to international markets (US, Australia, Europe, Asia). Revenue grew from launch to multi-million-pound scale within the first decade, hitting the threshold that triggered the 2017 Tata acquisition interest. Under Tata ownership, distribution expanded further into developing markets and the product range extended into ready-to-drink iced tea and cold-brew formats. The brand remained smaller than Tata's Tetley or PG Tips but established as the premium-bag specialist of the group, with a distinct identity and price point.

Reference noted

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- [EFSA Scientific Opinion on the Safety of Caffeine \(2015\)](#)

FROM THE CURATOR *teas* · Per-cup price is the only price that matters. Loose leaf usually wins; supermarket bags sometimes do too.

Tea reading

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For the Teapigs brand profile see the [Teapigs deep dive](#). For the tea-temple engineering specifically see the [tea temples page](#). For comparable premium-bag founders see [Pukka founders](#) and [Bruce Ginsberg of](#)

[Dragonfly](#). For the bag-versus-leaf debate see [loose leaf versus tea bags](#). For plastic-bag context see [plastic in tea bags](#). For mass-market bag tea see [PG Tips](#) and [Tetley](#).

The bottom line on the Teapigs founders

Kilby and Cheadle built a brand around a single refusal: the refusal to let the bag format dictate the leaf quality. The pyramid tea-temple was the engineering answer; the B Corp commitments were the sustainability layer; the Tata acquisition preserved the founders and the certification. Teapigs proved that premium-bag tea was a viable category at scale, and the entire UK premium-bag market that followed (Twinings pyramid, Tetley platinum, Yorkshire Tea premium) is downstream of that 2006 bet. For readers wondering whether a premium bag is worth it, the founders' biography is more informative than any tasting note.

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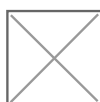
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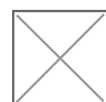
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