

From Market Stalls to Supermarkets—3

LOCAL SHOPS AND THEIR OWNERS

By 'BEORCHAM'

NOWADAYS we are more likely to see '& Co.' on a shop fascia than '& Son.' For a variety of reasons, sons are less eager than they were to follow in father's footsteps. This trend may be found in all the professions and throughout industry and commerce, but we are most conscious of it in the establishments everybody sees and uses, the shops.

In the past thirty years at least 95 per cent of the town's shops have changed hands, though in some cases old names have been retained.

Dickman's, the chemists, have one of the longest records of continuous family service; for some years the business was carried on at what is now Potter's Pride, and during the first World War a move was made to the present shop, formerly a private house which was built by Mr. W. Dickman in Victorian times.

THE TOMPKINS' TRADITION

Long service medals could be given to the Youngs of Underhill and Young, who moved to the High Street from the Kitsbury Cycle Works many years ago. Dealey's of Gossons End, similarly have a long record of family service. At the opposite end of the town, Callaghan's Garage has an ancestry dating back to the days of wagonettes. For many years the fire engine was drawn by the late Mr. G. Callaghan's horses.

If there are other pre-1914 retail businesses which are still wholly or partly owned and run by the same family, perhaps you will draw attention to my sins of omission.

For continuity of service from one generation to another, the record was held until a few years ago, by the Tompkins family. I do not know when the first butcher of this name started a business in Berkhamsted, but Francis

Tompkins had a flourishing shop here in 1792. For long periods there were two and sometimes three separate butcher's shops in the town bearing this family name. Last of the long line was 'Tommy' Tompkins, who retired to Norfolk a year or two ago.

In Berkhamsted we have many shops which, through one, two, three or more changes of ownership, have remained faithful to one trade with such additions and subtractions as changing times demanded. The oldest is Sharland's—not the whole building, for part of it was once an ironmonger's, but the late Mr. H. C. Ward claimed that his drapery business was established in 1790.

LINKS WITH THE PAST

A few doors away, T. W. Bailey's has been a stationer's for considerably more than a century. Next door, Smith and Graver's carry on a baker's business which the older generation still remember as Timson's, though Timson's original cake shop was next door but one to the Town Hall (now Claridge's). An elderly reader recalls attending a private school at what is now Smith and Graver's shop, but that was 80 years ago.

Old inhabitants remember when White and Son's shoe shop was Millen's—earlier still it was Loader's—and it is interesting to find that George Loader was a Berkhamsted bootmaker in 1824, if not earlier. The hairdresser's shop next door also has a long ancestry.

Through a succession of owners, the ironmonger's shop opposite St. Peter's Church has been in existence for over a century. But it is not so old as J. Wood and Son's, founded in 1826.

The town's oldest multiple shops, the International Stores and Freeman, Hardy and Willis's, arrived before the turn of the century. The International

Stores originally occupied the now empty shop at Prince Edward Street corner and then crossed the High Street to the shop that William Hazell built, Hazell, a grocer and pork butcher, staggered the town by building a large shop with mammoth outbuildings about a century ago. There is a legend that none of his successors was really successful until the 'International' moved into what is still the tallest shop in the town.

A rival grocer's shop two doors away, also over 100 years old, had several owners before it became Waitrose's; it has been extended to include a former confectionery shop and a chemist's shop, and now adjoins the 'International' building.

VICTORIAN ORIGIN

Holden & Son's, at the corner of Prince Edward Street, has been a men's wear shop since the 'eighties, and Coalbrook House, opposite the Goat Inn, has had an equally long connection with the drapery trade, though in earlier times it was Wood's music warehouse, Coalbrook House, by the way, announces its age with the largest date (1863) to be found on any building in the town.

Despite a change of name to Frank's, we go on speaking of 'Pike's Corner'; the greengrocer's shop was opened a short time after Lower King's Road was made in 1885.

Lintott's is a fairly modern rebuilding of an ancient butcher's shop which was owned many years ago by W. T. Timson and then by J. T. Osborn; it was the first shop in the town to be lighted by electricity, thereby provoking some obvious jokes about the butcher's two types of lights. Collins' is one of the butcher's shops formerly owned by the Tompkins family. The Co-operative shop at the west corner of Manor Street has been a butcher's for as long as anyone can remember, and at the opposite end of the row Barnett's are the latest successors to the Verney family of bakers, who traded there for many years.

THE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

Other old establishments are the office at Ellesmere Road corner, the shops (including the sub-post office) at the junction of Charles Street and Kitsbury Road, and Bailey's, the watchmakers (established in 1872), who moved to the top of Castle Street after trading for many years lower down the street.

Additions to this list of pre-20th century shops will be welcomed.

A new type of shop was introduced in 1883. The Berkhamsted Co-operative Society started business in a very modest way by inviting Mr. Seabrook, of the Red Lion (which formerly occupied the Midland Bank site) to sell certain goods and provisions to members. Shortly afterwards the first shop was opened on what was later to become the site of another bank—the Westminster. Later on a move was made to what is now Barnett's shop, before it became Verney's (see above).

PROGRESS

The Co-operative Society made rapid progress, and Progress was the name given to the hall which occupied the top floor of the tall building in Cowper Road, opened by the Society in 1889 with shops on the ground floor. Only a year later the Society far-sightedly acquired certain properties in the High Street, adding to them in 1919, thereby securing the site on which the present large store was built in 1934.

In the meantime, the first grocery branch was opened at the corner of Raven's Lane and Provident Place (for very many years this has been Geary's shoe shop); in 1917 a move was made to Manor Street, opposite the old established butcher's shop (Outlaw's), which was acquired by the Society at a later date.

(To be continued.)

SUNDAY SCHOOL OUTING

Children attending St. Peter's Sunday Schools and All Saints Young People's Church had an enjoyable day out in the grounds of Ashlyns School. There were 160 of them and they were joined by about 80 parents. The programme consisted of entertainment at side-shows, races, Bobby Brewster stories by Mr. H. E. Todd, and the inevitable tea.

B.A.O.D.S.

Good Acting, Mrs. Snoxall

Sitting like a benign sack of potatoes on the sofa in the Fordyce's well-appointed suburban drawing-room, Mrs. Amelia Puffin, from Clapham Junction, radiates alarm and despondency to lovers and potential business partners alike.

The name part in Arthur Lovegrove's amusing play *Goodnight, Mrs. Puffin* presents an acting opportunity which was very ably seized by Eunice Snoxall in the Berkhamsted Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society's production in St. Peter's Hall. In dark grey coat and shapeless black felt hat, with pearl earrings dangling, and grasping a red-handled shopping bag, she dominated the evening without once overplaying her part. She had some splendid lines, and made the most of them, but her strength lay in her ability to sit complacently watching events as she knew they would unfold, and keep the audience laughing at, and at the same time believing in, a highly unbelievable character.

Meg Cooper, engagement ring flashing, played Jacqueline with warmth and grace, and managed to transfer her affections without awkwardness from Colin Dealey to Frank Steer. The former, playing Victor Parker, gave a clever portrayal of the wet young man ('I can't make jokes, though I can sometimes see one!') who turned out to be capable of getting Mrs. Puffin to conspire with him to get the right girl in the end. The latter was not quite at ease as the American, Roger Vincent, but it was a difficult part.

The two fathers were played by Chris Snoxall and Jolyon Smartthwaite—both long parts, and both well done. Barbara Kilpatrick as Ethel Fordyce, bemoaning the smashed tea set she had had ten years, was a convincing bride's mother to be—or not to be. Dave Locke, as the wisecracking brother, Nicholas, put a great deal of verve into his part ('Do have an orange!') but I suspect that the author had in mind savvy rather than brashness.

The worst part in the play is that of Pamela. Towards the end Mrs. Puffin herself points out that nothing has happened to her. It is much to the credit of Paula Brightman that by sheer hard work, acting ability, and her own good looks she covered up the author's deficiency almost completely. Christine Humphries played the mini-skirted maid with the right air of suburban haughtiness.

Congratulations to producer Gillian Smartthwaite (could she not have taken a bow?) set painter and decor designer Margaret Woods and Olwyn Stansfield, and the anonymous designer of the programme cover. A thoroughly good evening. BAODS.

E.N.C.

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