

A CENTURY OF SERVICE

THE FAMILY BUSINESS IN NORTH CRAVEN

Exhibition at the Museum of North Craven Life
The Folly, Settle, North Yorkshire, 2004

A BACKGROUND TO THE EXHIBITION

For many generations society has been served by small, family businesses. By the 17th century the streets of fashionable areas in large cities, particularly London, were lined with shops such as milliners, hosiers and shoemakers. Traditionally, the shopkeeper and his family lived over the shop and he was often the craftsman who made the goods he sold.

Most foods, apart from bread and groceries, were sold in markets and although the number of shops gradually increased, the majority of people still relied on farms and markets to supply their needs. The market as a social institution is still to be found in many towns and villages. For the very poor, with no cooking facilities and a diet in which meat could probably only be afforded on Sundays, the local 'cook-shop' prepared the Sunday lunch and baked the daily bread.

One character who played a considerable role over the centuries in the dispensing of retail goods, was the pedlar. He was the itinerant purveyor of all manner of everyday supplies to ordinary people.

The main drawback to the growth of shops in provincial towns and villages was the difficulty and cost of transport. The movement of goods had to be made by water, cart and packhorse, slow and expensive processes. The development of the rail network in the 19th century brought about great change, not least in the opportunity it offered to the local trader. By the latter part of the 19th century the heyday of the small, local shop had arrived and High Street shopping was at the heart of community life. Travel for any distance was still limited to the better off, but gradually local people had the opportunity to purchase a wide variety of goods far beyond those required for the purposes of subsistence.

The most profound social change, however, came with the growth of motor car ownership, particularly after the Second World War. This, together with the emergence of the chain store and the increasing prominence of self-service shopping, was to bring about the gradual decline of the local family business and town centre shopping.

By the last quarter of the 20th century the proliferation of supermarkets and, later, of shopping malls - usually in out-of-town locations, undermined the local shop to a degree which changed the face of the High Street. By the end of the century, shops along the street were more likely to be connected to the

so-called service industries such as financial consultants, estate agents and insurance brokers.

The advent of the motorway has shrunk distances and with increasing prosperity shoppers can choose to travel to far-flung commercial outlets. Conversely, so much can now be bought without leaving home - via the internet!

In recent years an awareness has grown of the influence such profound change has had on local life, and moves have been made towards restoring something of the atmosphere of traditional shopping which once lay at the heart of community life. Shopping precincts encourage the return of the small family shop to the heart of the town and regeneration schemes encourage business at a local level.

In North Craven many family businesses have endured, still offering a service to local people. This exhibition illustrates much of what has passed and overleaf you can read accounts of some typical family businesses.

SHEPHERD & WALKER: A HISTORY OF THE BUSINESS

John Hayhurst, trading as a druggist and grocer in the shop on the north side of Settle Town Hall died on 12 May, 1843, aged 25. His two apprentices were William Armistead and William Shepherd, who started trading as Armistead and Shepherd. In about 1851, Armistead went to Kendal and traded there under the same title until about 1890 when the Settle business

changed to John William Shepherd, son of William Shepherd who died in 1871.

In 1851 a Bill was moved in the House of Commons to regulate pharmacy, so that 'no person would be admitted to the Register [of the Pharmaceutical Society] without first passing the Society's examination in Latin Language and Classical Knowledge, Botany, Materia Medica, Pharmaceutical and General Chemistry and Toxicology'.

William Walker started as an apprentice to William Shepherd in 1865 and, after one year at the South London School of Pharmacy, qualified in 1873 as a Chemist and Druggist and a Member of the Pharmaceutical Society. He returned to Settle to manage the business until the time when Shepherd's son qualified in 1880, having won a medal as the best student in his year.

In 1891, J.W. Shepherd bought the premises in which the pharmacy is today and moved there in 1893. In 1903, William Walker and his son, William Towler Walker, who qualified in 1900, formed a partnership with J.W. Shepherd as Shepherd & Walker. In 1908 Shepherd withdrew from the partnership and retired, but the title was retained.

The family connection continued when W.H. Walker qualified in 1938 and J.S. Walker qualified in 1940. After the Second World War, Shepherd & Walker discontinued the grocery section which had been a feature of the business since 1843. This allowed the pharmacy to expand, assisted by the purchase of adjacent premises. Finally in 1978, it was time to retire from pharmacy and Shepherd & Walker ceased business after a continuous history of 135 years.

THE FISHERS AND FOSTERS OF BENTHAM

Fisher's Ladies and Gents Outfitters began life, in 1907, in a house in Policeman's Yard in High Bentham. In about 1910 it moved to premises in Station Road, rented from the Liberal Club. It later moved to Central Buildings in Main Street, where it remained until the business closed in 2001. To make the business viable, the founding Mr. Fisher did much of his trading on the road. He would set off about three times a year, sometimes selling, sometimes collecting payment, taking the train from Bentham to Clapham. He would then set off walking across the moors to Slaidburn and Newton, sleeping overnight in the reading room there. He carried a suitcase and a backpack and would make four or five calls, having earlier sent advice cards to announce his visits. Later, he travelled on a motor-bike with a side-car and then graduated to a motor car. His grandson, Clifford, who was, jointly with his wife, the last proprietor, still travelled in sales in the 1950s, visiting customers as far afield as Clitheroe and Milnthorpe.

The maiden name of Clifford's wife, Julie, was Foster and her great grandfather founded his grocery and provision business in Bentham in 1867. When he began trading, the viaduct at Ribbleshead was being built and Mr. Foster travelled by horse and cart to supply provisions to the Irish navvies in the shanty towns on the moors. On the return journey he would collect butter, eggs and game from various farms along the way. He also started the bakehouse in Bentham and his daughters did the baking. Mr. Foster had a large family and when he died his

eldest sons took over the business, which continued to thrive. It dealt with farmers for miles around and served meals to them when they came on market day, also catering for dances, weddings and funerals. With the coming of the motor car three travelling shops went on the road, serving customers from Hellifield in the east to Caton in the west.

In 1974 John Allen Foster decided to turn the store into a supermarket and, with hard work, this proved to be a successful venture. In 1978, the Lancastria Co-op approached Mr. Foster with an offer to buy the business and property and, at 73, John Foster retired and Fosters was no more.

J W LAMBERT

The well-known firm of Settle printers, bookbinders and stationers began life in 1861 in a cottage on Well Hill. James Lambert subsequently purchased the lease of premises in Cheapside in 1891. The printing side of the business, named the 'Caxton Press', was particularly important and produced a wide range of material from books to tickets and handbills. Although the family link has now gone, the name is continued to the present day.

NELSON'S FOOTWEAR

Now in its fifth generation, this thriving family business was first established in Chapel Street, Settle by Titus Nelson in 1847. In 1865 a move was made to premises in Duke Street where the business has remained ever since, still boasting a beautifully preserved Art Deco shopfront.

Today, though still selling and making footwear for customers, a particular speciality is the hand-crafting of clogs, boots and shoes for period productions and historical re-enactments.

HARGER BROTHERS

The business was founded in 1812 by Robert Harger, a native of Settle, as a firm of fretwork specialists. During the 19th century Hargers also undertook a variety of work, including some general building and it was not until the turn of the 20th century that they specialised as cabinet makers and household furnishers.

An interesting feature of Harger's work was their extensive mail-order business and the large number of illustrated catalogues they issued, leading to the receipt of many orders from overseas.

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Bibliography

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