

Special Feature

Going, Going...Not Gone!

In our last Issue we featured Shipton House Stores (Costcutters), which by now we had expected would be demolished to make way for residential housing. It will not have escaped your notice that this has not happened! Mary Dee takes up the story of how this hard to kill building first started life as Dee's Stores.

Towards the end of the 1890's Thomas Dee and his wife Mary Catherine 'had a dream' which they put into operation. There was a small field in the centre of the village, which they were able

to buy and on it build a double-fronted shop with living quarters and outbuildings. It seems a big project to take on at their time of life and having brought up their family of six in a fairly small house further up the High Street, one wonders why they wanted as large a property.

The Shop Opens

Their two sons had emigrated to Canada under a scheme to encourage young men to cross the Atlantic to farm parts of the Prairie. The two younger daughters were married and raising families and they had twelve grandchildren, perhaps explaining the rather spacious living accommodation. I do not know the date of the opening of the shop but it must have been about 1900. Neither Mr nor Mrs. Dee lived to see their brainchild reach its full potential, but she, at least, saw that it was meeting a need and doing well. In 1910, Harold, the younger son,



came home to help his sisters run the business and the three of them worked happily and successfully for the next ten years. Mary Elizabeth ran the Drapery department ably assisted by Margery

Coombes who lived across the Green in Church Street.

Aladdin's Cave

They sold all manner of haberdashery, curtain and dress fabrics, household lines and underwear in the shop on the right of the entrance door. Stairs leading up from this led to a show room for clothes but this was not a large part of the business. The downstairs shop was light and airy with two counters and shelves from floor to ceiling; with so much stock that everything had to be put away in its right place between each sale or there would have been chaos. This meant a great deal of climbing up and down steps. The left-hand shop was even larger and equally well stocked though there were a number of things they did not sell on principle. The local pubs had their Off-licences; farms supplied milk, a butcher and a baker were at the top of High Street, the Post Office in Church Street sold papers,

magazines and stationery products and for many years Arthur Rainbow trekked round the village and surrounding area with his horse - drawn cart laden with a variety of fish and fruit. Of course everyone delivered their goods. Much of Harold's time was taken up with delivering the weekly orders over a wide area, originally by pony and trap, but after the First World War he graduated to a Ford motorcar. Ellen was the main bookkeeper, oversaw the grocery department and was cook and housekeeper for the family. Quite a full life! The shop was open from 8am until 6pm four evenings a week and 8pm on Saturday. On Wednesday, early closing day, the door was locked at 1pm. Sunday trading was unheard of.

Not the Big Apple

The year 1920 saw many changes. Thomas, the elder brother sold his farm in Canada and returned to enjoy his retirement with his family in his native haunts after over 30 years overseas. He arrived home in time to be Best Man when his younger brother married the aforementioned Margery Coombes and the couple moved into the house opposite. They named it "Qu' Appelle" after the area in Saskatchewan where he had worked for about 20 years. The name caused difficulty with spelling and pronunciation, often called Q Aple, so the present owners were very wise to change it to "Monk's Gate" (I was born there the following year). In September Mary Elizabeth died suddenly in Church during evensong one Sunday evening, which was a great shock to the family, the congregation and her many customers. It was decided that the time had come to sell the property and the business, so in 1921 Mr. J. R. Hathaway

and his wife bought the whole shebang and carried on the business much as before. Mrs. Hathaway ran the Drapery department assisted for many years by Ivy Slatter, who lived in the row behind the Red Horse, looking over the orchard to the shop. There was the Garage there to block the view until much later on. Mr. Hathaway managed the Grocery side and kept the books. There were usually two assistants in the shop the longest server being May Barnes (she may have been christened Mary, but was never called anything but May or 'Barnie'). Her cheerful, friendly personality was much missed when she married Rick Hall and went to live in Oxford.

Stan Gorton was the useful man-about-the-place as well as doing most of the deliveries, but now with a proper van with the name emblazoned on the sides. There was no pre-packaging or self-service and all goods had to be weighed and put into paper-bags or wrapped in greaseproof paper. Chairs were available in front of all the counters and, as many customers had a mile or more to walk to the shop, a sit down before returning was very welcome.

The Answer's a Lemon!

The first time I was allowed to go to the shop on my own was at about three years old. I was seen across the road (there was not much traffic in those days and what there was, either horse drawn or motor, was quite noisy so it was not dangerous) and sent to buy a lemon as we were having pancakes for dinner. A few minutes later I returned triumphantly with a tin of mustard. As this was something neither of my parents liked I had to go back to put the matter right. In common with most people we had a 'book' which was paid off weekly, so no

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money was involved. When I returned a bit crestfallen I announced "T was a lemon I wanted not muttard" so we got the lemon in time for the pancakes. I do not remember the incident but heard the story many times! Electricity came to the village in approximately 1928 and the telephone soon after. The War years were not easy with rationing and shortages of many commodities but maybe the extra people coming to the village, as it was a comparatively safe area, and the troops billeted in the old St. Michael's Home, helped to boost trade.

After 25 years Mr and Mrs. Hathaway decided to retire and the business and property was sold to Southern County

Stores. It was no longer a family business and became 'Shipton Stores' with a manager and family living in the house.

Long Live the Post Offices!

I left the village in 1947, so know little of the progress during the last sixty years. After over 100 years it is natural that the building has come to the end of its useful life (but useful it has been over many years) and with the coming of the large super markets and increased mobility many private shops are no longer viable though they are missed. I hope the Post Office and Stores in Milton Road will continue for many years to come.

Mary Dee

Ascott Reclaims its Pub

This month brings exciting news! After a long absence, and an extensive refurbishment, **The Swan** is set to reopen its doors on the **19th March** at 6pm for drinks, and on **20th March** at 7pm for food. Under the ownership of Richard Lait, the Swan will offer good pub fare, alongside a full range of local and guest ales, wine and more in its two bars.

A Real Village Pub

Richard, the son of a farmer and long-time Cotswolds dweller, is passionate about what makes a real village pub:

"We'll be serving up decent, home-cooked food, from pies and casseroles to calorific puds. The bars are cosy, and you'll be able to get a great pint of cask ale, as well as the usual range of lagers,



ciders and soft drinks. Our wine list has something for everyone, whether it's a quick glass on the way home or a special bottle to go with a meal. Most of all I'm concentrating on getting the pub back into the heart of the community as a meeting place as well as an eating place, and when people leave, I want them to feel like

they've had fun. Our approach is about excellent service, great food and drink, and an atmosphere that makes you want to stay a while". Six en-suite bedrooms complete the offer, each with luxury touches like flat-screen TVs. The tariff starts at £75 per room per night for bed and breakfast. For information, or to book a table, please call: 01993 832332.

Jo Court