

## **Local and Essex History – February 2021**

### **RINA'S INITIAL MEMORIES OF THE LOCAL SHOPS**

I remember when I was young, there was a greengrocer's shop opposite St. Mary's Church and next to the footpath going through to the station.

Coming up the High Road, there was a butcher's shop on the left. I think it was where Profile 2000 is now, and the building where the nursery is now was a Barclays Bank, which later moved to Tarpots.

89-91? High Road was Hart's ironmongers, then 93 High Road was Golden Travel, but I don't have a date for when that started.

About two or three doors further down was Foley's toy shop. The owner was Mr. Far rant, who smoked a pipe and loved train sets. Roughly where Elora chemists is now was Pickett's bicycle shop.

I can't remember much more but I've just been speaking (on the telephone) to a neighbour who used to belong to Benfleet Historical Society, and she's going to lend me some books. She said her husband has some photos of the oak field before my house was built on it.

**RINA MUNRO**

## **LYN'S MEMORIES OF THE LOCAL SHOPS**

After reading Rina Munro's recollections of the shops in Benfleet, it got me thinking.

I moved to Benfleet with my parents in 1962 and can remember some of the shops from that time and onwards.

Here goes. I am working along Benfleet High Road from Cemetery Corner, North side, and then back again. The first shop mentioned is as it is today and then my recollection of what it was.

The gun shop - Salisbury's greengrocers

Sainsbury's supermarket - A Garage where they repaired cars

Hairdressers/Aspects of Beauty - A Delicatessen. They used to sell lovely Luncheon Sausage, which they would cut for you.

I'm sure that here was another food shop along here also.

Body Care - Paul's Haberdashers - My Mum worked here. There was a nice open fire in the winter.

New Library - this replaced the old Library, which was a lot smaller

Bowtell House, Barbers on the corner of Thundersley Park Road - Grouts Bakers

New Flats - Smiths Wood Yard

Hansons - I think this was a Furniture Shop.

Belgravia Florist - I have it on good authority that this was a Wool Shop and before that the Post Office

The Flats after Belgravia Florist - Searson's Shoe Shop

Howards Fish Bar/Spa Supermarket - Selection of small shops including a Newsagent and Post Office

Coming back towards Cemetery Corner, South side:

The Hot Hut - Butchers Shop

The Nursery - Barclays Bank - Yes, I agree with Rina on this

Beauty Parlour - Golden Travel

There was a small wool shop along here (I remember this as I used to use this shop), the Toy Shop and Bicycle Shop. Again, mentioned by Rina.

The Supermarket opposite Queens Road - Hadleigh Bakery (this had a little café at the back of the shop) then Nat West Bank

Flooring Shop – Co-op Supermarket

Giggles (as was) – Shoe Shop

Estate Agents – Material Shop

Estate Agents on West corner of Brook Road – Record Shop  
Kitchen Shop – Greengrocers

Past Benfleet School

Women's Clothes Shop – Gents Clothes Shop

Co-op Supermarket – Howards Dairies Supermarket

Grouts Bakers – Tile Shop

Eversden's Jewelers – was always there but has just closed

TSB Bank – Lloyds Bank

Indian Restaurant – Post Office

Next Door to the Post Office or Next Door but one was an Ironmongers owned by George and Eileen Green. My Dad used this shop a lot and I loved going in there with him.

The Turkish Restaurant on the corner of Richmond Avenue – Knightley's  
Newsagents

Hopefully my memories are correct and maybe others can fill in some gaps.

I would also mention that there used to be an annual Benfleet Carnival, which we would watch go pass from outside the shops.

**LYN ALDRIDGE**

## **MAVIS'S MEMORIES OF THE LOCAL SHOPS**

We have lived in Benfleet since 1970 and here are my memories of some of the shops:

Rina mentions some of the shops which would have been opposite the Police Station (where I worked for a time!). There was also a stationers, Benfleet Drapers, The Wool shop, Hadleigh Bakery, Beavers DIY and the NatWest bank along this parade.

Coming up the High Road, do you remember John Bosco Hall? (now a block of flats), the Co-op Supermarket (now the flooring shop), Stephens (shoes and school uniform), Richardsons (dressmaking materials and patterns) and there was a newsagent on the corner of Brook Road.

There was also Searsons and Nice's just south of Belgravia Florists. I think there was a toy shop on the other corner of Brook Road and the Wimpy Bar and a shoe menders along there too.

I remember the first shop up the High Road by Benfleet School was a clothes shop (Gay Teens?) which was run by the Grandmother and Mum of one of my son's friends - she later moved the business to Coco's.

There was a butchers, greengrocers, Woolwich Building Society along here too. Opposite was a small shop called Paul's selling haberdashery/wool etc. I think there was a children's clothes shop (The Young Ones?) along here too.

Smiths the Bakers was by the crossing to South Benfleet School and delivered lovely bread and cakes (wonderful doughnuts!).

Must mention the old library - roughly in the same place as now but was housed in the old Elim Church. There was also a car park on the corner of Constitution Hill. This was before Richmond Car Park - where the toilets are now was the original Richmond Hall and behind that was a children's playground and, I think, tennis courts.

I'm sure many of you will have other memories (and probably better than mine!) - look forward to reading all about them.

**MAVIS REGAN**

## **JANET'S MEMORIES OF THE LOCAL SHOPS**

Just an add on to Rina and Mavis's great memories of Benfleet shops.

Yes, Benfleet had a great assortment of shops and I especially liked Paul's wool shop with its lovely warming coal fire during the winter months. Imagine that in a shop today!

Then there was the wet fish shop next door to the brilliant Barkins the Butcher. And I can't ever forget the happy memories working in Hopes Green Post Office and greeting cards shop. At least the Post Box is still outside.

**JANET HEATHER**

## **SHEILA'S MEMORIES OF THE LOCAL SHOPS**

I think I remember 2 greengrocers one was Sue Ryder Charity Shop. I think it was call Peaches and the other one was opposite The Benfleet Tavern where there was another butcher. I think it's now the Chinese take-away.

I also remember Coppers the hardware shop and the florist near the zebra crossing was also a hardware store and I think along there was a men's outfitters I can't think of anything else.

**SHEILA SEARS**

## **RINA'S FINAL MEMORIES OF THE LOCAL SHOPS**

In 1841, most of Benfleet was concentrated around the church, up East Street (now Essex Way) and down High Street (where the Hoy stands) to the 'Hard' (opposite the present conservative club). In addition to the Hoy and the Anchor, two wheelwrights, two grocers, two butchers and a cordwainer (cobbler) shared the High Street.

What is now The Close used to be South Street, or just The Alley, where a farmer's agent, three shoemakers, a poulterer, a blacksmith, a dressmaker and a carrier were situated, with the smithy across the road, next to the Hoy. Another shoemaker and a 'salesman' were sited in East Street (Essex Way), a tailor and a baker by the bridge at the north end of the churchyard, and one carpenter at Hopes Green.

This was taken from Benfleet Community Archive. The following is taken from my memory of the 1950's and 1960's and also that of my neighbour, who has lived in Benfleet almost as long as I have. It follows the High Road from the station to Hopes Green, but I have done some research and a few go back further. Apologies for any errors/omissions.

Opposite the station, on the corner, was a grocer's, now Morgan Brooke's. Opposite, at the bottom of what is now High Street, was a taxi office, previously Mr Hart, the butcher.

Below the station was Mick's cafe, then a shoe shop, now it is the Golden Bagel and Sha-Lou boutique. What is now Gambero D'oro was Clarks' shellfish stall.

Opposite the Hoy was a fruit and veg shop (Argents), which is now Headmasters. I have been told that previously it was a sweet shop or an antique shop.

Next to the Hoy was an electrical store, which was previously a smithy. Opposite the church, where the new parade of shops is now, was the post office, later a newsagents/sweet shop.

Sawyers the butchers was where Profile 2000 is now. What is now the nursery was a Barclays Bank.

89-91 High Road was Harts hardware. 89 is now Jenny's Nails, and what is now Masala Club, was a motorbike shop for a while. 93 High Road was Golden Travel (now Nicky's Nails).

Further up was Foley's toy shop, which later was to be a stationery shop, followed by a computer repair shop, then a plumbers. Where the chemist is now was a bicycle shop.

On the opposite side, where the Dental Clinic and Per Bella are now, was Nice's clothing shop and Moysie's bike shop. The bike shop was later Hurren's central heating.

Teenettes was the haberdashery at 190 High Road, which was the other half of what was a semi @ 188. When the semi was sold on, it became Dowlings insurance and a barber. This was again sold on and knocked into one, and became Camping & General, and later Belgravia florists. Elaine's hairdressers was a new build and was where the dentist is now. There was also Moyce's motorbikes and mopeds

Opposite the pumping station was Croisette's bike shop, then a greengrocer's (Benfruit). There was also a Wimpy, and Music and Toys. On the corner of Brook Road, opposite where the estate agent's is now, was an opticians.

What is now Aspire was a sweet shop (the Candy Store) and opposite (now Highgrove flats) was a wood yard and their shop. I believe Sharmans hardware was also there. Smiths bakers was almost on the corner of Thundersley Park Road.

Where Jacksons is now was a haberdashers and wool shop, which several people remember as having an open fire in the winter, (Paul's), and was later a craft shop for children, where they could paint and make things.

Where Tasty Bites is now was Smith butchers and Peachey's greengrocers. The Co-op was previously Zip In or Circle K, I can't remember in which order, and previously Howard's Dairies.

Don Reed, the photographer, was next to Eversden's jewellers, then after the entrance to the recreation ground, what is now Lloyds chemist was previously Burnett's, also a chemist.

Then there was a hairdressers (Wards), which people remember as being dark inside, after that came Croisette's, was it an electrical shop? There was also Hopes Green post office.

Where the gun shop is was Salisburys greengrocers, and Benfleet Garage was where Sainsburys is now.

My neighbour told me that there was a Stephens shoe shop and Richardson's dressmaking and a florist.

**RINA MUNRO**

## **JILL'S MEMORIES OF THE LOCAL SHOPS**

Having lived in Benfleet from 1951. I remember when I was at school and needed new shoes, my parents would take me to Newman's shoe shop or on the other side of the road was another shoe shop Searsons. Both these shops were in the area of where Coco dress shop is now.

When I was older (teenage) dad would treat me to an Elvis Presley record bought from Croisette. Which was opposite what is now the Benfleet tavern.

Another shop I remember being, probably, one of their best customers was Richardson's, as I used to make most of my children's clothes. When they were too young to complain about them!!

It has been so nice to read the other messages, they have reminded me of so many of the other shops we had then.

**JILL PARR**

## **BARBARA'S MEMORIES OF THE LOCAL SHOPS**

Yes Sheila

Greengrocers was called Sailsburys. Dad and Son. Another son also local chiropodist.

Butchers was Petcheys. I used to work there on a Saturday morning taking the money, when my daughter was a baby, 54 now. Petchey and his family moved to New Zealand.

The old library I remember well. The only librarian a very fierce looking gentleman.

All us Mums campaigned for a new library, which we eventually got. So, when recently it was decided to close it and use for building land, we were not amused. Another campaign and a reprieve! Maybe now, hopefully it will stay with a boom in book reading.

There was also John Quality, where the Co-op is now, one of the first 24/7 type shops. I worked there when my son started school and remember organising a float in Benfleet Carnival. We were very popular throwing sweets to the onlookers.

**BARBARA WEBB**

## **LEE'S FRIEND'S MEMORIES OF HER FATHER'S GREEN GROCERY SHOP**

I contacted my friend whose father used to have the Green Grocer's shop on the corner of St. Mary's Drive and the High Road in the 1950's. Her memories are below.

My Mum & Dad – Len and Peggy Stimpson, brother Peter and I moved from Buckhurst Hill to Benfleet, about 1951, after my Dad had to retire from work at the London Docks due to ongoing back problems.

He set up the green grocery shop on the corner of St. Mary's Drive and the High Road, renting the shop (which was the only shop there at the time) from Mrs. Harris who owned the shop and all the land behind where she lived. It was a very large area with a big house, garden and lake. The lake had a boat on it. She allowed all the children from the area into the garden to play.

Dad would boil the beetroot to sell out the back of the shop in an old copper boiler. Mum who also worked in the shop started selling roses and cut flowers.

Dad would deliver orders on a Friday and Saturday, and my brother as he got older, would help out and go out on the adapted delivery bike.

At Christmas time Dad would often not arrive home till midnight after delivering the orders.

People would bring their own bags with them to collect their goods, which were put straight into their bags. If needed a brown paper bag was used. If anyone forgot their bag, they could purchase a brown carrier bag, but as I remember these were quite expensive.

One of the wholesalers who supplied the shop, was Blake's of Daws Heath Road. I can remember going with Dad to collect potatoes etc.

Dad was well known to his customers in Benfleet as were all the other shop keepers at the time.

Eventually in 1960/1961 Mrs Harris sold her house and land, which included Dad's shop to a Developer. A new parade of shops plus housing was built on the site.

About 1968 Dad finally sold up as business was not going too well due to the introduction of the supermarkets. In fact, he worked for last few years of his working life in a supermarket.

**LEE KING**

## BENFLEET POST OFFICES

It appears that Benfleet's first Postmaster was Simon Daines who, from 1848, was the authorised 'Receiver of Letters' for Benfleet and district. He ran the Post Office from his cottage near the main entrance to St Mary's Church.

It's interesting to note that there was no postal delivery to Canvey Island at this time - post had to be collected and paid for at the cottage. Later, it appears that the Post Office was in the shop opposite the station. Elizabeth Brewitt, wife of Henry Brewitt, the village shoemaker and Parish Clerk, was the Postmistress around this time (1878).



There is also a record of Sid Lawrence being the Postmaster. He had two daughters, Jane and Mabel. Part of the Anchor Pub was used as a shop and in 1913 the premises were let to the Lawrences as a Post Office. Jane and Mabel carried on the business after Sid died and they lived in adjoining rooms at the Anchor. When Mabel retired as a headmistress, she had a lending library charging tuppence a week. The sorting office was at the rear in the old stables.

Mr Pratt took over the Post Office in the 1950s and it eventually moved to the original parade of shops opposite St Mary's Church in the High Road. I remember the shop well but can't remember when it closed.

Hopes Green Post Office was originally situated in the building which is now Belgravia Florists. When the 'new' parade of shops was built further up the High Road in 1928, Hopes Green moved there. My neighbour worked there for many years. It closed some years ago and the Post Office is now part of the Co-op supermarket.



I can remember all the shops in this photo from the 1970s. I doubt that many of these were in the original 1928 parade, just as only the Chemist will remain once the bank closes.

Wards was a very old-fashioned hairdressers run by husband and wife - they also sold slippers!

(Is that a Silver Cross pram parked outside the Chemist? Could even be ours!)

The shops in our High Road have changed beyond recognition. No more drapers, haberdashers, wool and material shops, stationers, shoe shops, greengrocers, fishmongers (and only one remaining butcher!) and we will be 'bank-less' when TSB closes. On the other hand, we do have plenty of hairdressers, nail and beauty salons and estate agents!

With thanks and acknowledgement to Benfleet Community Archive and Bygone Benfleet by Norman Chisman

**MAVIS REGAN**

## **BENFLEET HORTICULTURAL SHOP HIGH ROAD, BENFLEET**

Located next to the cemetery at Cemetery Corner and Jotmans Lane the Society has a long history with Benfleet. 2020 was its centenary year and it has produced a Centenary Booklet to mark the occasion, beautifully presented with all of the events for the centenary year noted – but Covid 19 has badly interrupted this.

So, what is its origin? Early in the 1900's it was usual to "grow your own" and many did just that. After the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, the small South Benfleet Food Producers Association held a meeting at the village institute on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1920 to form The South Benfleet Horticultural Society and following a meeting at Mrs. Woods School Room in January 1921 confirmed rules to govern the Society.

The Society also controlled the Procurement and Renting of allotments up until 1959 when control was taken over by the District Council.

Membership was fixed at one shilling and open to anyone living within a five-mile radius of St. Mary's Church, but not including anyone from Canvey Island. Initial membership was 125 – most of the committee were from the old association and influential residents from the Benfleet area.

Their first Horticultural Show and Fete was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> August 1920, on Mr. E. Land's "Anchor Meadow" by the side of the Anchor Inn. Entrance fee 8 pennies for adults and 4 pennies for children. The Shoeburyness Railway Silver Band were hired for 5 pounds plus free tea, also an orchestra was hired for 2 guineas to play for 4 hours and a dance held at the end of the show. During the day there were events for children, sideshows, sporting activities, tug of war, coconut shires and prize draws. All of which made a very successful days show.

In 1923 the Society was affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society.

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War 1939-1945 not much has been recorded, much of the population assigned to war work, "Dig for Victory" being the aim of the whole country.

In 1946 on 21<sup>st</sup> May a general meeting was held at the Tarpots Methodist Church Hall and the Society was reformed. At this meeting it was decided to drop the word South and rename itself The Benfleet Horticultural Society.

In the early years, plants, seeds, fertilisers etc. were purchased from Mr. S. A. Gibbs at his garden shed at 9, Richmond Terrace. Later the Society Secretary used suppliers who gave discounts. Storage then became a problem. Eventually, in 1948 the site at Cemetery Corner was leased "Free of Charge" by Mrs. Stibbard of the Hadleigh Undertakers for the Society's use.

A shed was erected for storage and only five items were for sale. Their first year's takings were £168-00. This profit, carefully managed, enabled the Society to expand. Sheds were erected for storage and a shop to purchase goods for direct sale to members.

By 1951 the 5-mile radius from St. Mary's Church was changed to the new site at Cemetery Corner which would include more of Benfleet. Then in 1952 it changed again to the Tarpots and again in 1956 to include the whole of the urban district area.

1952 saw the first yearly booklet issued and the Society affiliated to the NRS, NCS and N.D.S.

In 1969 the "free of Charge" lease was purchased from Messrs. Stibbards for £417.00 and the Society became their own landlords. Sheds were renewed and during the 70's the electrical supply was connected, followed by water in 1978.

1980 with careful management and hard work by its members the shop had grown to hold 200 different items and sales reached £1400.00.

The horticultural shows needed a bigger area that was covered and Richmond Hall is now the usual site for most of the Society's gatherings for shows and displays throughout the year.

By 1986 the shop had sales of £15,000.00 with approx. 350 items stocked. These included flower and vegetable seeds, bedding plants, shrubs, bulbs, compost, fertiliser etc.

Today the garden area fronting the Cemetery boundary fence is planted up and looked after by Society members. The members are enthusiastic and helpful in giving good advice on all gardening matters.



**TERRY KING**

## CHARLES TINGEY 1873 – 1928 GUNSMITH OF BENFLEET ESSEX

Charles was born in 1873, later on in his life Charles meet a young lady called Leah Susannah. They married in a small market town called Loddon, on the river Chet in Norfolk. Leah was known to everyone as Lily.

The 1901 census showed they were residents in East Ham and his occupation was listed as a picture frame maker. Charles worked from their home at 209, White Post Farm, while living in East Ham with Lily. Charles became an apprentice to the famous London gunmaker J. Blanch and Son. Unfortunately, very little is known about his time with J. Blanch and Son as the company's records were destroyed during an air raid over London in WW2.

After reading an advert in Scotts Illustrated guide, showing that gun repairers were required and apartments to rent were available in a placed called Benfleet.

Sometime between 1901 - 1906 they to move to Benfleet. The 1911 census confirms that they lived at Floral Dale, Hopes Green, South Benfleet. The census showed Charles occupation was a Gunmaker and a general repairer.

In 1907 the Benfleet Annual Regatta was established and Charles became the secretary until the Regatta ceased in 1913.

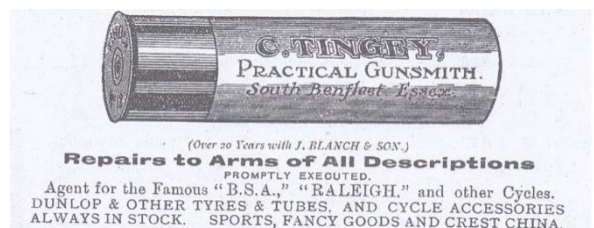
During 1914 Charles and Lily moved their businesses to a shop on the High Street, next door to the Hoy and Helmet public house. The shop stood in front of St Mary's church. Charles ran a Hardware, General Repairs and Gunmaker business on the ground floor of the building while Lily ran a Tearoom on the upper floor. They ran these businesses for around 14 years. (refer to picture 1)

If you purchased gun cartridges from the shop you would see Charles Tingey Gunmaker printed on them, which was a custom among Gunmakers. (ref picture 2)

Unfortunately, Charles and Lily never had a family, and during 1928 they decided to leave Benfleet and return to Norfolk where Charles died at the age of 55, Lily lived in Norfolk until she died in 1953.



Picture 1



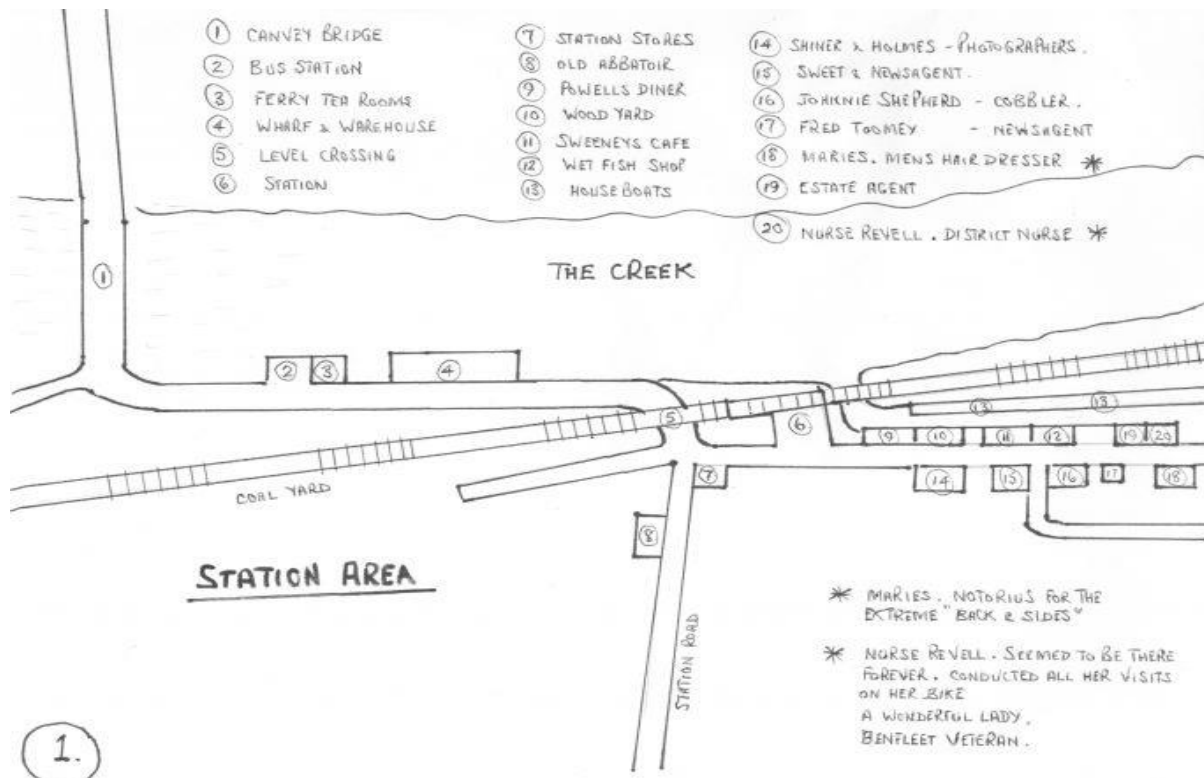
Picture 2

Source data from [benfleethistory.org.uk](http://benfleethistory.org.uk), Google maps & Norfolk.org.uk

## PICTURE & HAND SKETCHED PLAN OF SHOPS CLOSE TO BENFLEET STATION



**This butcher shop was near Benfleet station but is not shown on the map below**

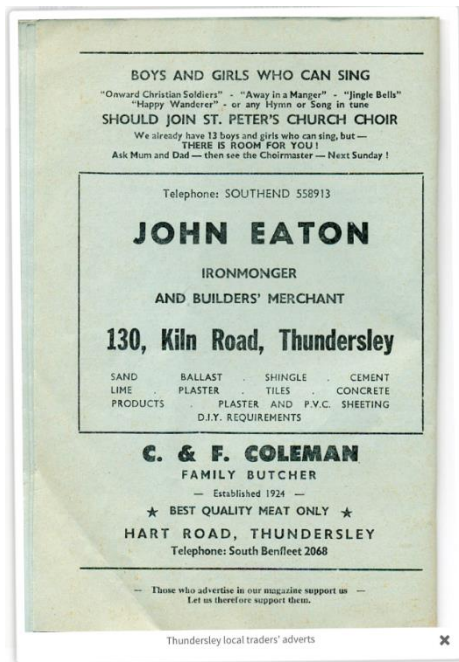


Source information from the Benfleet Community Archive - [www.benfleethistory.org.uk](http://www.benfleethistory.org.uk)

**MARION COLEMAN**

## THE SHOP I WORKED IN AS A SCHOOLBOY

In 1967, at the age of fifteen I decided that five shillings pocket money per week would not support my plans for the future, so I found a part-time position outside of school hours. The position was at a local Ironmongers & Builders' Merchant known as John Eaton, (the owner's name), and the hours were nine hours on Saturdays and one hour per day, four days a week; Wednesdays being 'half day closing'. At two shillings per hour my total income suddenly jumped to one pound eleven shillings per week.



Many of you may know the shop, and have even purchased building materials and/or DIY items there. The shop is located on the south side of the A13, just east of the Castle Point Council Offices, on the corner of Hermitage Avenue.

On Saturday mornings it was my responsibility to wash the windows, whatever the weather, and set up the forecourt display. Each evening it was my responsibility to pack the forecourt display inside the shop. In between I would serve customers.

The shop sold four basic categories of goods, paints and decorating materials, DIY items including tools, garden paraphernalia and building materials.

The building was originally two shops with living accommodation above. At some point in time an arch had been cut through the adjoining wall to make a single shop with two clearly defined floor areas.

This meant that paints and decorating materials were at one end of the shop and the DIY items at the other end, separated by the wall with the arch. The building materials and garden related items were stored between an open yard and separate outbuildings dependant on inclement weather resilience.

Directly opposite the entrance to the shop was the counter. There was no till as such, there was a money draw, with a bell which sounded as the draw was opened. Inside the draw there were separate compartments for the various coins and notes. Takings were manually recorded in a ledger book. Every day, a few minutes before closing time, the owner would pick up the ledger and run his finger down the list of takings adding them as he went. In those days it was pre-decimal so he was actually adding three columns of figures at the same time.

A permanent feature of the counter was a set of old-style scales with a set of brass weights and a scoop style weighing pan. These were mainly used for weighing out putty and nails. A heavier duty set of similar scales were used in the cement store where one hundredweight bags of cement were split into units, or multiple units of seven pounds for the DIY'ers.

The industry standard for woodscrews used to be in boxes containing one gross of screws. These were also broken down in the shop, generally into units, or multiples of a dozen. Again, for the benefit of the DIY'ers.

One of the materials sold was glass, which was cut in one of the storerooms. The most popular glass item being replacement glass panels around the bottom of bird cages. You would not believe how many of these panels were broken during cage cleaning.

The shop had a Butcher's bike for making local deliveries. Unfortunately, the majority of these were five-gallon drums of paraffin, and I can vouch from experience that with a full drum in the basket the bike was impossible to ride. The only option was to push the bike to the delivery location and then ride it back.

In the 60's you may recall paraffin was either blue, or pink, and suppliers made claims about how their colour was best because it burnt cleaner and did not smell, etc. I can assure you all paraffin is almost colourless. A tanker would deliver 200 gallons of paraffin to our storage tank and the driver would then pour in a pint of very dense blue dye. If the next delivery location sold pink paraffin a pint of very dense pink dye would be used.

They say 'it is a small world' and me working at the shop showed this expression to be true. It came to light that my Sunday School Teacher, when I was five years old, was none other than the owner's youngest daughter.

The owner of this business passed away in the mid 1970's, after which the family sold the business. Between then and now the premises have been home to a wide variety of businesses, the current business being the Kiln Road Co-op.

Picture sourced from Hadleigh & Thundersley Community Archive

**IAN PHIPPS**