

A history of shopping in Strawberry Hill

The building of the station at Strawberry Hill in 1873, ten years after the railway line, triggered development in the roads around the station and by 1900 houses had been built in Strawberry Hill Road, Waldegrave Gardens, Waldegrave Park, Walpole Gardens, Popes Grove and Popes Avenue. The first shop in Strawberry Hill was the Post Office which opened in 1905. The first Post Master was Henry James Barry (he handed the running of his business to his wife in the following year) and the same building has remained a Post Office to this day. In the 1920s and 1930s, it was run by Charles Severn and the counter was described as being at the back of the living room of the house. There were no other shops until a bootmaker, Richard Madge, opened in a lean-to next to the Post Office in 1927.

Until the 1920s there was a limited need for shops as much fresh produce came from local market gardens and a dairy farm in Waldegrave Road, delivered as required. However the rapid development of housing between 1900 and 1930 created a need for more local businesses. In 1930, the bootmaker was joined by a confectioner, a ladies costumier (or draper), and shortly after, by a coal merchant (where the off-licence, McDowells and the dentist's surgery, respectively, are now). Jill Tomlin, interviewed in the 1980s, remembered buying a necklace as a birthday present for her mother from the costumier, Miss Mary Picknell.



The Post Office in the early 20th century; Strawberry Hill's first shop and still there today. The houses just visible on the left are in Popes Grove. The two boys with the bicycle between them are telegraph boys (Richmond Local Studies Collection)

The following year the opposite side of Tower Road was developed and a fruiterer, Frank Middleton, a



The Stores (Boatswain's and Yardley's) in the 1930s. Most of the advertisements seem to be for alcohol (Big Tree Burgundy, Sandemans Ports & Sherries, Burgoyne's Harvest Burgundy, Empire Wines, Tintara Ferruginous Wine, Gilbey's Invalid Port, Watney's Ale and Reid's Stout). Patent medicines are also for sale. The entrance to the car hire can be seen on the left (Richmond Local Studies Collection)

baker, W G Mould, a car-hire business, Strawberry Hill Cars, opened on the site of the present Lexington Court. A grocer and a Barclays Bank sub-branch opened next to the railway. The grocer, roughly where Kyzan now stands, was called The Stores and was also known as Boatswain's and later, in 1934, as Yardley's. A butcher opened in the following year between the grocer and the bank.

When the three shops on the north side next to the station opened in 1935, the boot repairer moved into one of them on the site of the present shoe repairer, Harji, and the confectioner moved to the River Trading site.

An auctioneer moved in between them at the same time, whilst yet another auctioneer occupied the vacant confectioners shop. The following year, Strawberry Hill's first hairdresser, Miss Geraldine Watson, moved into the vacated boot repairer's shop. Further east, at 15 Tower Road, a "naturopath and nature cure specialist", Madame Varne, was operating from 1933 to 1938, presumably in a private house.

Wellesley Parade was built in 1934 and the first shop was a newsagent at number 1. The other five shops were occupied over the next two years by a confectioner, a chemist (which remains a chemist to this day), a ladies outfitter, a "provisions merchant" and another fruiterer.



Tower Road in 1993, with Threshers Wine Shop on the corner, McDowell's next door, a video hire business and, of course, the Post Office (Richmond Local Studies Collection)

All these shops remained mainly unchanged (except for one or two new proprietors) until the Second World War. At about midnight on 29th November 1940, during the most intense air raid that Twickenham saw in the war, the Bank was hit by a high explosive bomb and all the shops on the south side of Tower Road were destroyed, though there seem to have been no casualties. More than 70 people died in the Borough that night.

Records for the war and the years following are sparse, but it is known that Rochester House was built on the bomb-damaged site in 1953 and a butcher (Framptons, then Lorie Meats, closed in 1989) opened where the Hill Dry Cleaners now stands, followed shortly next door by a greengrocer, Quality Corner, in the shop now occupied by Kyzan, the hairdresser. The corner of Rochester House, next to the railway, was occupied by McDowells grocery in 1966, where it remained until moving across the road where it still stands. This shop was occupied in the 1980s by the Strawberry Hill Delicatessen (the signage of which was recently revealed), then a dry cleaner, Peaches and Cream, followed by an attempt to open a taxi company and, most recently a barbers shop.



Tower Road in March 2010. The signage has changed, but very little else has

In 1958, the Post Office and the ladies hairdresser next door (now Miss I E Gardner) were still as they were in 1940. The ladies hairdresser had gone by 1960, but there was later a doctor's surgery on that site, before another hairdresser, a video hire shop and, today, the dentist's surgery. At some time after the war, Yardley's (or The Stores) had moved to the site of the current off-licence from across the road, but had gone by 1966, being replaced later by Victoria Wine, Threshers, then Wine Rack and now Premier Wines.



The sign for Strawberry Hill Delicatessen, revealed in 2009 and now re-covered. The format of the telephone number shows that it was erected before 1990.

Closer to the station, the bootmaker, now Harji Shoe Repairs, has survived in the same line of business for 80 years. Next door, Peggy's Pantry was until last year an estate agent; Bells from 1990, then Rawlinson & Webber. This shop was either an auctioneer or an estate agent continuously from 1935 to 2009. The River Trading site next to the level crossing was occupied by a dress shop (Strawberry Flair, later Jules) and then, from 2002, a sandwich shop, Fill Yer Boots.

In 1960, on the present site of Lexington Court at the corner of Strawberry Hill Road, there was an estate agent and a car hire business. The estate agent had disappeared by 1964 and was replaced by an enlarged car hire business (named Wallis Car Hire). This was later to be Smiths Car and Van Hire and traded until Lexington Court was built in 2003.

The businesses in Wellesley Parade were the same in the late 1950s as before the war. However, an ironmongery, Penningtons, replaced the greengrocer on the corner, W M Stone & Son, in 1958. In 1960, the newsagent was L M Barratt, the confectioner was called Bon Bon (which also hired out books), the chemist was H G M Osborne and there was "grocer and provisions dealer", Burfords, next to the ironmongery. Both Mr Osborne and Mr Burford were members of the original Committee of the SHRA, formed in 1965. In that year, Penningtons was replaced by Butlers hardware store, which many residents



Wellesley Parade in 1972. Butler's hardware store occupies the first three shopfronts, then the chemists, H G M Osborne. The next shop may be a tobacconist and confectioners, possibly "Bon Bon". The last is the newsagents (possibly Stevens)



Tower Road in the 1960s, with the estate agent on the corner. Behind it is Wallis Car Hire with Esso petrol pumps on the pavement. The signal box was demolished in 1977. The last shop on the right, currently occupied by River Trading, seems to be a confectioners. (Richmond Local Studies Collection)



Tower Road in March 2010. Lexington Court has replaced the estate agent and the car hire but the first two shops on the right have changed little. Yellow lines have displaced the cars

remember. By 1972, Butlers had expanded to take over the 2 adjacent shops - a configuration which remains to this day. This, Strawberry Hill's largest and most prominent retail site, has since been a locksmith and a succession of three restaurants; first, The Melting Pot, which became a Thai restaurant and now Sopa.

Number 1 Wellesley Parade, the original Strawberry Hill newsagent, has developed in way that typifies many small shops in Britain - from newsagent, confectioner and tobacconist (under the management,



Wellesley Parade in March 2010



An advertisement for Wallis Car Hire from a 1963 trade directory. The car is a 1963 Ford Zephyr Mk III

amongst others, of Anne and Jim Stevens), to small supermarket, Costcutters then Everydays, offering a far greater range of goods.

Changes in lifestyles over the years have been reflected in the types of shops. For example, the coal merchant, the bank, the specialist confectioners and ladies costumier have long since disappeared, but we now have an off-licence, a cafe and a restaurant. Businesses have come and gone with worrying regularity in recent years but it is

interesting that there has been a Post Office, a shoe repairer, a newsagent, a chemist, a hairdresser and an estate agent (or auctioneer) in Strawberry Hill almost continuously for the last eighty years. Even in these financially uncertain times, only one of the 14 retail premises round the station is unoccupied at the time of writing (Waterlily closed in early March).

Robert Youngs, March 2010

Information for this article has been taken from "Strawberry Hill - a History of the Neighbourhood", interviews with residents and from directories in Richmond Local Studies Collection. All text and images (except where noted) are © copyright Strawberry Hill Residents' Association.

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