

From Village Shop to Supermarket - the development of Morden Centre

The earliest recorded shops in Morden are found in the early 19th. century Directories. A baker, a butcher and two grocers and dealers in sundries. None were anywhere near the Crown Inn areas

By 1895 this had changed. Houses and roads were being built behind what we call the Crown triangle. A pair and a trio of buildings appeared in London Road, near the Inn.

One of the pair was residential only, the other was a live-in bakery. The trio were dwellings with projecting shopfronts with a balcony above. They were called simply as 1, 2 and 3 Crown Shops. By 1903 the position was clarified. No.1 was Mrs Ellen Eaton's refreshment rooms. No.3 was Miss Emily Knott, draper. Frank Martin took over No.1 as dining rooms with accomodation for cyclists. By 1907 No.3 was William Johnson, green-grocer. In 1905 No.2 had been taken over by Ernest Chennell, grocer. He was the entrepreneur who produced local history postcard views which are now invaluable.

There was a bootmaker at No.1 Crown Road, and at No.1 Mellish Terrace (later 120 London Road), William Cockbill, grocer. A Post Office was in Chennell's shop, and transferred to 120 London Road occupied by George Arthur Taylor in 1928. *MOVED IN 1935 TO NEW-BUILT 89 LONDON ROAD*

The Village Club opened in 1898 physically attached to the residence occupied briefly by the club secretary, some secretaries often lived elsewhere. The point of the triangle saw many changes from 1865, the blacksmiths shop included. After the last blacksmith, Sydney Tye, had gone by 1915, Harry Wood took over as surgical instrument maker at Crown Works. As a cycle assessories manufacturer in 1925 he patented the Crown Brake. These were felt pads for use on boxwood rim cycle wheels for racing.

Two houses appeared, Wyoming and Cartref, in 1913, but these with the old Crown Inn, built in 1840 after a fire in 1839, were swept away for a much expanded Crown Inn complex in 1932. The shops survived to 1960 and were replaced by Crown House industrial office block. The Crown Inn also vanished.

The City & South London Railway opened their southern terminus of the Edgware - Morden Line in September 1926. (It was London Transport who renamed it the Northern Line in 1937). The adjacent shop units opened by 1927 with a newsagent, a tobacconist, a fruiterer, a ladies hairdresser, a dry cleaners and a confectioners, and two banks in 1928. T. Walton the fruiterers moved to a larger extension and was joined by the Express Dairy.

To the right of Station Buildings was an open exit from the station platforms. Next came the 1928 development of shops. Edwin Evans, estate agents, shared with a dentist, A.G. Taylor, a one-off individual style of architecture of portland stone and half columns. Attached was Station Parade. Among the early occupants was Boots, chemist, who can claim to be

be the earliest built

the only original shop on the same site for over sixty years.

By 1930 a fruiterers, butchers, grocers, booksellers and United Dairy had opened. Three units remained before a gap. Beyond, a second parade had just been built with the first occupant, L.A. Bond, advertising variously as a sports store, music department, cameras and coach bookings. The style of architecture had changed, which was to be copied in Crown Lane. In the gap was a house, Gosmore, built about 1909. The Royal Arsenal Co-op opened a store alongside the house on 13 October 1932. A ground floor only building with glass box skylights. By 1934 the first parade was complete and the second parade well advanced.

The south side of London Road was still countryside at the start of the north side shop development, acquired by the London County Council for housing. Perhaps this influenced the L.C.C. who allocated a portion of land for shops. Morden Hall Road stops short at No. 26, and Abbotsbury Road at No.s 27 and 34. The windows in the upper two floors clearly show the influence of the L.C.C.

Occupation of flats in the Electoral Registers show the development on the south side. 1933 - 21a to 41a&b, and shops 17, 17a, 27-29. 1934 - 19a to 47b, and shops 11, 17, 17a, 27-29 and 37, identified as Gilbey, hosier, at 11, Florence Carter, wool repository at 17a, Morris Moss, grocer at 27-29, and Sainsburys, grocers at 37. Removal of a tree and two houses saw the completion of the line to 63a, by 1936, marked at one end by the South Western Furnishing Co. on the corner of Morden Hall Road, and the Lucania Temperance Society Billiard Hall which opened 6 April 1936. Below was Ascott's, chemist, with shops in Aberconway Road. Houses stopped short at 34 and 27.

Development beyond Aberconway Road and the Cinema and Garage came later but full details are not yet available, except to say No's. 81 to 103 were complete before the second ^{WORLD} war. A large gap was eventually filled after hostilities to No. 117. A new Crown Post Office opened in 1935 at No. 89. Morden Court Parade began construction in 1935, but here again information is sparse. Note the changes in Building styles.

Crown Lane is interesting. Formerly intended as housing with No. 44, the Ellis family living above their newsagents shop in 1928, with Bell Villas across Grasmere Avenue starting at No. 50. The shopping development which took over about 1934 threw the numbering out of kilter and Ellis became No. 34. A Baptist church filled the corner. There were two parades of shops. Called Victoria Buildings, Liverpool Victoria Friendly Society taking the top floor corner building Victoria House.

As with London Road odds, Abbotsbury Road can only be identified by the flats above the shops on the odd side. The even side is more difficult. In 1935 - 11a&b to 19b, shops 11, 13 and 21. 1936 extended to 23a 1937 - a gap then 33a and 35a. The gap was filled after the war by a larger Post Office,

Close examination of acres of newsprint and miles of microfilm have helped to fill some of the many gaps. A lot of shops appear not to have advertised at all. Merton and Morden Chamber of Commerce Annuals only cover the 1960s onwards. Odd items appear in the Parish Magazines but confirm what is already known. Here are a few items:- (MERTON + MORDEN NEWS)

4 January 1935 - 1 to 9 Abbotsbury Road - Phillips Walk-round store. 21 departments on two floors, Sale Friday 11th.

3 May 1935 - 23 Abbotsbury Road - Wm. Prior open a new branch of the Norland Service - Paints, glass, wallpapers, electrical accessories, sanitary goods, builders hardware, tile fireplaces.

May 24 1935 - 29 The Parade, London Road - Bell's Cycle Stores - Bell's Best ~~Best~~ Bicycles from 2/2d weekly. Raleigh, Rudge, Enfield etc.

17 Abbotsbury Road - Frederick Wallis Ltd - Complete House Furnishers.

28 June 1935 - Leonards Shoe Store - 54 London Road - all purchases over 5/- free gift of hose. CLOSED 1975/6

26 July 1935 - New branch 51 London Road - Eagle Rubber Co. - Beach wear, sports wear, cycling and motoring outfits.

6 April 1936 - Temperance Billiard Halls Ltd - Britain's Super Billiard Hall 1/6d & 2/- per hour - 11 a.m. to midnight.

19 February 1937 - The 'Radio Shop' 7 Cinema Parade - Finest service department in Surrey - McMichael, Ultra, Ekco, Cossor, Aerodyne.

9 July 1937 - Murrays of Morden - 8 Abbotsbury Road - Cycles and baby carriages.

Freeman 8 Crown Lane - Keys cut, locks repaired, grindery tools of all kinds, grass seeds, garden fertilizers, electric lamps, irons, stoves, paints, varnish, distempers, etc. sand, cement, lime, creosote.