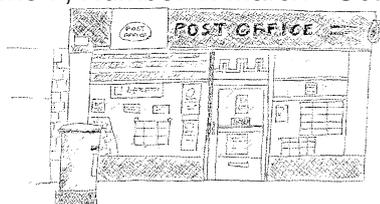


The End of an Era

by Judith Hanson

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The Sheffield Philatelic Society

The Post Office at 20 Sandygate Road, Crosspool closed for the last time on the 24th November 2004. The business transferred to the Spar Supermarket where it opened with entirely new staff on the 27th November. It is with much sadness that customers and employees will miss this long established part of Crosspool society, and it was not willingly that the staff members have 'deserted' their customers.

The first mention in Kelly's directory of a Post office in Crosspool is in 1898 when Henry Bradbury is named as being sub-postmaster. In 1903 Henry Bradbury is listed as living at 2, 4 and 6 Sandygate Lane and in 1905 he is listed at the same address as being a grocer and Sub-Postmaster at the Post and Money Order Office.

In 1913 Roland Brightmore, a Coal Merchant at 450 Manchester Road, was Draper and Sub-Postmaster at 456 Manchester Road. By 1916 he was living at 450 Manchester Road and had expanded with a Fruiterers shop at 458.

The Post Office moved again in 1921 when Harry Ranson, Grocer, owned 2, 4 and 6 Sandygate Road. He continued to have a Grocers shop and Post Office in this position until, in 1942, Jessie Ranson took over. Harry Ranson also owned a Motor Spirit Service Station on Manchester Road almost next to his Grocers shop. Jessie Ranson's shop is remembered by the older residents of

Crosspool as being rather cluttered and not too hygienic, with flypapers full of flies hanging from the ceiling.

The earliest mention of the Post Office being at 20 Sandygate Road is in 1959 when it was owned by S&F Parish Ltd, Stationers, Post and MO Office. The shop at 2, 4 and 6 reverted to being a Grocer's only.

In 1972 Paul Lupton was sub-postmaster whilst his wife Betty ran the successful stationery side of the business. Paul remembers:

"I went to live in Crosspool in 1935 and at that time the post office was on the corner of Sandygate Road and Manchester Road. At that time the Post Office was run by Mrs. Ranson, and was also a general store selling groceries, hardware etc. Mrs. Ranson's son ran the filling station behind the premises. Betty and I first started in a Post Office in 1966 when we took over Stannington Post Office, having previously lived in Crosspool.

I was very interested when I heard that the Post Office was for sale and took over the business in 1972. At that time the property was leased from Arthur Davy (Grocers) and the flat above rented separately. We lived at Lodge Moor. Eventually we were able to buy the property, including the flat, and our daughter, Joy, lived in the flat. We had a wonderful loyal staff led by Elsie Hibberd, who had previously worked in the Head

Post Office so knew more about Post Office work than I did. Muriel Hartley also worked in the Post Office, as did Margaret Stothard. Myra Eldefield joined us in 1973."

One of Paul's most vivid memories is of Elsie Hibberd's excitement when she realised Paul was serving Cliff Richard. Myra Elderfeld worked at the Post Office between 1973 and 1995 and was even to be seen after 1995 when she came to help out, to cover sickness and holidays. She writes:

"Personally, I regard Crosspool Post Office as not just fixtures and fittings but people from all walks of life who I served, worked with and for. The pensioners, some lonely, whose main trip out each week would be to visit us. They would be grateful for our concern for their welfare, eager for a chat despite the queues behind growing ever longer."

In 1980 Dennis and Barbara Aldred took over the Post Office when Paul retired and Betty opened her dress shop Town and Country at 33 Sandygate Road. Dennis was sub-postmaster and Barbara worked alongside him both in the Post Office and the shop. The Aldreds first lived in the flat above the Post Office but later moved to Crookes but they continued until 1992. During this time Elsie Hibberd, Myra Elderfield and Norman Wild also worked in the Post Office. Dennis's strongest memory is when the DHSS were on strike. As it was impossible to issue new pension books during that time, written lists of customer's details had to be painstakingly kept. Tremendous queues were caused and there was a lot of extra work for the staff.

In 1992 Dennis and Barbara retired and Trevor Jowitt became sub-postmaster. Trevor has not been known for his speed of service. A customer recalled an incident that happened shortly after Trevor's arrival at Crosspool. One of the

local churches was having a pantomime. There was a sketch included in the show, where someone was in the kitchen packing up sandwiches. When asked what they were doing the reply was 'I am getting prepared for the queue in the Post Office!'"

During his time, the Post Office has undergone many changes, both good and bad. The old well-worn, cigarette-stained wooden counter was replaced with one which was shiny metal but more secure.

Computerisation, which originally caused queues and headaches for all concerned, has made the work much more efficient and business like. With the decision by the DSS and Department of Works and Pensions to pay pensions and allowances into bank accounts a lot of business has been lost by the Post Office, and many familiar faces have been missing from the usual queue on pension days. However, in this so-called paperless society, the amount and size of post handled has increased, as have the number of transactions, foreign currency, insurance, banking for other banks, and investments to name just a few.

My own earliest memory of the Post Office is when, in 1979, I came to live in Crosspool. Although originally from Sheffield, I had worked in London and then abroad for 12 years and had become used to a more formal Post Office system. At Crosspool I was met by friendliness and interest, which made me feel immediately part of the community. Myra Elderfield always spoke to my small son and I was always met with consideration and help in posting mail abroad. Little did I know then that I would become part of the team, as a stop-gap between teaching jobs, and would work in the Post Office for 16 years between 1988 and 2004.

What kept me at the Post Office? Most of all, the friendliness of the customers. Myra remembers customers talking of

their wartime experiences, particularly the modest Buck Casson and Alan Armstrong (who always had cold hands in the winter). We remember Jim Coyle, who lived on Selborne Road. Both he and his wife, who still lives there, were blind. Paul Lupton remembers how he used to supply him with rubber bands, which he used to identify different tins of food (e.g. one band for soup, two for fruit, etc.). Unfortunately this system broke down on occasion when bands broke and they finished up with some interesting meals. Angela Hardy who worked in the shop for

16 years would often take him part way home when he had been to collect his pension. Myra also recalls Mr. Barron who used to write a poem every year and send it to us with a Christmas card.

The staff members have always got on well together and, apart from doing our jobs, we have also had fun. We have been so pleased to have had the opportunity to get to know so many interesting and kind people. It has given us all much pleasure in working at the Post Office.

You can find more articles on Sheffield's postal history at our web site.

The Sheffield Philatelic Society meets at 7.15 pm on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month (except August) at the Central United Reformed Church, 60 Norfolk Street, Sheffield, S1 2JB.

For a programme of events please visit:

www.sheffieldps.org.uk