



## **BUSINESS IN LINGFIELD**

We are lucky that in Lingfield we can buy almost all the necessities of life except clothes. This is a sign of a thriving community, as business tends to follow the customer.

The biggest change took place in the area with the coming of the railway and the ease of transporting people and goods. By 1900 the present pattern of roads was established. Before the railway everything moved by horse and cart so it was a major undertaking to keep stocks. It meant the customers had either to buy what was in stock or travel elsewhere. The railway meant that customers could try somewhere else to shop so businesses had to look to needs.

As a farming area local produce was the main source of supply, but by the First World War goods were coming from all over the world. Some shops had been used for the same trade for many years although not necessarily by the same family. There has been a butcher's shop in the High Street since 1902. Keeping meat fresh was a problem until electrical cold storage took the place of ice. Before the modern cold storage animals were killed locally, so farmers raised animals for the local markets. However, the coming of modern services meant that perishable goods could be brought from afar and kept longer.

The invention of mechanisation made a huge impact on some businesses. As farms started to use tractors the trade in leather goods slumped. Saddle and harness makers had to look for their customers where people had private riding horses. Similarly, the motorcar needed to be serviced and repaired so businesses like wheelwrights had to change. In Lingfield the change was from wheelwright or blacksmith to garden machinery.

Early cars were looked after by bicycle shops but soon the shop in the High Street became the motor garage.

A village that had a good shopping centre attracted people. The railway could move people to and from work so many moved to the country from the towns. This growth of population attracted banks and the first one opened in Lingfield in 1905. It is worth mentioning that a measure of the life of a village over the last ten years has been that ones that are thriving still have a post office.

The next change was the growth of businesses that catered for things that added to the pleasures of life such as restaurants, cafes, hairdressers, and more recently, crafts and computers.

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It is important that most of the people who work in Lingfield live in the area and add to the feeling of community. If one can buy the needs of everyday life locally it is a sign of a live village.

A local publication *Memories of 20th Century Lingfield* by Alfred Oliver and Michael Dyke was written for the millennium. It is now out of print but there are copies in the Lingfield Library. It is well worth reading.

*The Lingfield I Knew* by Gordon Jenner is still available from the History Group and mentions several businesses and the owners.

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