

HISTORY OF WOODVILLE, NEP TOWN, HENFIELD

Nep Town used to have two grocer's shops, one either side of The Gardeners' Arms Pub. Both shops and the pub have long since closed, but the buildings remain. The property called Woodville on the eastside of the pub was one of these shops. The premises had been vacant for about twenty years before William Carey opened his greengrocers/grocers shop there in 1920. He made it into a shop and installed a large front window. As well as selling vegetables, which he bought from Brighton Market, he also sold sweets, biscuits, and other groceries. The building was haunted by a poltergeist which seemed to make its present felt at Christmas time by throwing a framed photograph of Stan Carey, the son, across the room and breaking the glass in it each time. This happened a number of times, but ceased when the glass was not replaced. On another occasion some holly on the mantel piece flew across the room and landed on Mr. Carey's head. Another time footsteps were heard outside the sitting room, the door then opened, but there was nobody there.



The shop in c.1922. William Carey at the gate & Stan Carey in the doorway

The Carey family came from Ringmer where William's father George Edward, and grandfather George, had Broyle Side Farm. On the death of George Edward in 1937 the farm passed to his brother Charles. William was born in Ringmer in 1885. He served in the medical corps during WW1, and was injured in 1916 at the Battle of the Somme. In 1915 he had married Elsie Sarah Baker, born 16th December 1888, at Alfriston. She was related to Norman Baker who was the Lib Dem MP for Lewes in recent years.

Their first child Stanley William Horace was born at Hurstpierpoint on 18th June 1919 followed by Basil Francis John on 16th August 1920, and Derek Arthur George on the 28th January 1927. Basil and Derek were both born at Henfield. Stan spent half of his life in the

RAF, but in the early 1950s became one of the postmen in Henfield. He had married twice and ended his days in a flat at The Green, Golden Square, where he died in 2010. Basil died in 2007 and Derek in 2002. On the death of William on the 6th July 1944 at Southlands Hospital the shop continued to be run by his widow Elsie and son Derek until 1950. Elsie died at Upper Mead on 25th April 1966.

The next people to own the shop were Mr. and Mrs. Pratt who traded under the name E. G. Pratt, Eileen Grace being Mrs. Pratt's name; her husband was Jesse. The address was The General Stores, to distinguish it from Nep Town Stores on the corner of Weavers Lane. The first Christmas the family were there the poltergeist made its presence known again which scared the family so much that they spent Christmas with friends in Blackgate Lane. Jesse Pratt had married Eileen Goldsmith in Worthing in 1939, and they had a son Christopher born in Surrey in 1946. Jesse grew vegetables to sell in the shop on his nursery at what is now the site of the Lower Faircox estate. Jesse died on the 30th April 1963, but Mrs Pratt remained at the shop until 1966. When the Pratt's had the shop by aunty, Gertrude Maslen, drove the delivery van for them. Following Mrs. Pratt in 1967 was Wilfred G.M. Smith, but by November 1968 it had become Woodville General Stores run by Mr. H.G.Woodcock and his wife Violet. In 1974-75 Leslie A. Allen had Woodville Stores, and he was the last shop owner. In later years the shop window was replaced with the bow window which is there today.

Families that have lived there since the shop closed include Timothy & Janet Hutton in 1978-79, Wendell & Andrea Harris 1980-82, Terence & Dorothy Kirby 1983-87, Peter & Hilary Westlake 1988-95, which is where the Electoral Roll records which we have in Henfield Museum end.

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