

PART 6: THE LATE FIFTIES (1955-1959)

Chapter 60: Retirement from the Shoe Trade

For most of this period, grandad continued to use the same “John White Footwear” diaries that he had used in the early 1950s. However, this continued only until 1958 when he sold the business and effectively retired. For Christmas 1958, mum, dad and Tricia bought him a five-year diary which he used from 1959 to 1963. During most of this period, mum had a different diary each year. In 1955 and 1956, she used a Pepys Everywoman’s Diary, red for 1955 and green for 1956. In 1957, she used a Varsity Pocket Diary that she may have got from the Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society. In 1958, she used a [Mrs Dales Diary](#), based on the [radio programme](#) of [that name](#). It appears that dad may have given her this diary as a Christmas present in 1957. In 1959, she also, like grandad, switched to using a five-year diary which was bought for her birthday in September 1958 by Tricia. Given that Tricia was only four months old at this point, I assume dad was behind this!



In September 1956, mum noted that she had “*decided to write only important things in diary*” but I confess that I don’t see a clear difference before and after that period!

At the start of this period, grandad was still running the shoe shop in Station Street. Ken and Pearl Hodges were living at the back of the shop having moved there in April 1953. Grandad mostly cycled to work but, when the weather was bad, he walked. Although he was in his late 50s, he was still carrying out various improvements to the premises. In February 1955, he got Alf Vardy to paper and whiten the ceiling in the shop. Grandad also did some jobs himself including fitting a new pane of glass in the casement and getting new fluorescent lights for the window. He also carried out improvements to some of his tools at the shop’s workshop, for example, in March 1955, he made a new frame for his circular saw.

Jessie Matthews and Charles Simon in a publicity photo for the BBC radio series “Mrs Dale’s Diary”

However, from May 1955, he experienced various bouts of ill-health culminating in a lengthy spell in hospital, in August and September, and an operation to remove his gallbladder in November.¹ This reduced his ability to run the shop and, during the times he was ill, he relied extensively on others including grandma, mum and dad, Renie, Howett Elliott and Ken and Pearl Hodges to ensure the shop was opened. In some cases, this meant mum went to work at KCM until 3pm and then went to look after the shop. In September 1955, grandma and Renie looked after the shop from Monday to Friday with the Hodges taking on the role on Saturdays.

Although grandad tried to return to work in October 1955, he found he could not because of severe dizziness. In November, mum decided to give up her work at KCM to take on the management of the shop. Sometimes, dad helped her as did grandma, particularly in 1956 when mum and dad were away on their honeymoon. In November 1956, Ken and Pearl Hodges moved out of the back of the shop and mum and dad moved in. In April 1957, grandad tried once again to return to the shop but his health did not permit this.

In November 1957, mum noted that she went to grandma and grandad's house one night to discuss closing the shop but she felt that they had decided nothing. The following week there was a further discussion including the possibility of mum and dad taking the shop over. However, that very same day, grandad wrote to Mrs Green² about selling of the business. Three days later, her son, Cliff Green, came to see grandad about it. Around the same time, mum noted that "*Roy practically decided not to have the shop*". The Greens decided that grandad could sell the business but they would want rent of £3 per month, presumably for the living quarters.

So, in January 1958, grandad sold the business to Fred Flint. He agreed to pay £400 for remaining stock and paid, through his son, a £50 deposit. There followed a period of clearing out, including taking old receipts and invoices to the house. In February and March 1958, grandad burned this paperwork. Some of the machinery was sold. Fred Flint took over the business from 3 February 1958. On 4 February 1958, Fred Flint paid a further £280 and then secured a loan of £2,000 with grandad at 6% interest with his house as security.

In January 1959, there was a fire at the shop and the fire brigade were called. It appears this was not too serious as, in February 1959, Fred Flint paid grandad the interest on the loan and repaid £100 of the capital.

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Advert in 1969 Kirkby Directory. G Sugg took over the shop from Fred Flint in 1963

¹ See Chapter 65.

² Who presumably owned the premises.