



Podcast by
Windsor & Royal Borough Museum

Out and about Windsor's shops

Becky: Welcome to Windsor & Royal Borough Museum's Out and About podcast series in which we'll tell you the hidden histories and stories behind the buildings and landscape of the Windsor we are all so familiar with today. As you stroll along Peascod Street or down Thames Street towards the river, do you ever think about who walked the pavements before you? Or who lived in the buildings you pass? Well, if the answer is yes, then stick around, because this is the podcast for you and along the way we'll be showing some wonderful clips from our Oral History collection, because who best to tell you about Windsor than Windsorians themselves.

In this episode, we'll take you on a tour of the town to discover the former lives of various current High Street shops in Windsor. So to begin, where better to start from the shops located directly opposite Windsor Guildhall; home of Windsor & Royal Borough Museum. If you look out from the museum doors you'll see TK Maxx and Esquire's coffee. Many locals however, will tell you that these premises used to be home to the legendary and renowned Caley's department store. John Caley and his wife Mary Ann Caley, set up a shop on the Castle Hill in 1823. It was in one of the buildings against the Castle wall where the benches now are. Caley's expanded and moved his location opposite the Guildhall in 1847 it remained a family business nearly a century and in that time frequently supplied hats to Queen Victoria. It is thought that if Queen Victoria saw a hat she particularly liked, she would ask for Caley's to make her an identical one. Like many of the shops in Windsor, Caley's had a Royal warrant. They displayed the crest of the Royal household on the front of the building as a mark of excellence and to ensure everyone knew they supplied goods and services to the Royal households. The family sold the



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store to Selfridges in 1919 and then it was sold again to the John Lewis partnership in the 1940s, but throughout, continued to retain the Caley's name.

Doreen Crowhurst worked in Caley's during the 1940s:

Doreen: At 14 I left school. I left school on the end of the Christmas term and started work January 4th 1943 it must have been, at Caley's, fashion workroom. I remember my mum made me wear a hat to go to work and they all thought that was hilarious, all the girls thought it was really funny; and we all sat round a table and the first thing you had to do was pick up the pins off the floor, hang everybody's coat up for them, get everybody's work out for them, light the gas for the irons to get hot, thread up the sewing machines, go downstairs and by the silkos and buttons and everything that was being used for the workshop. And the hours were 8:30 till 5:30 with an hour for lunch.

Becky: Pamela Marson worked in Caley's from the mid 1970s to the mid 1980s:

Interviewer: Do you remember any famous people coming into Caley's or heard stories?

Pamela: Oh yes lots of famous people that I met. One in particular when she didn't come in the shop was Beryl Reid she phoned up and I happened to answer the phone and she wanted some fabric with a jungle theme and I had to get samples of this fabric, a whole lot of different samples and send them to her and then she phoned up again, asked for me and she told me which one she wanted. And we sent out somebody to measure the curtains and we had it made up in this fabric and there's a television programme called 'Through the



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Keyhole' and the man always used to say 'Who lives in a house like this?' And one day, I saw this fabric, I thought I know who lives in this house, this is Beryl Reid.

Becky: The store sadly closed in 2006 after failing sales and increased competition. Many locals were extremely sad to see it go. Helen Grout particularly felt that it marked the end of an era.

Helen: We had a big store Caley's, a big store. I used to buy everything there. Wool, cotton, material for my needlework and lately, well some time ago now, Caley's closed. I went there before it was closed, I was looking around, somebody, one of the workers said 'Are you looking for something?' No I said, I came to say goodbye to my shop. It broke my heart, that beautiful shop was gone.

Becky: Pamela Marson however explains how Caley's legacy lives on.

Pamela: Well I know when Caley's closed there was a lot of fuss and one of the things that somebody suggested was that we had the museum in Caley's building but it was actually sold to a developer and it's now, there's a hotel on the first floor but they have, the hotel does have a bar at the back, a restaurant area, it's called Caley's bar.

Becky: A few doors down from TK Maxx, you'll find the Funkywood restaurant, distinct for its floor length windows on the first floor. Indeed these unique windows offer a clue to its former life. They had a very specific purpose; to let as much light in as possible, because in 1852 Windsor's first photographic studio was opened here. Many Windsorians had their photograph taken here throughout the 19th century, but perhaps the most notorious person was Roderick Maclean. He was marched to the studio on the 6th of March 1882, by



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Windsor Borough police, to have his photo taken for police evidence. Only two days earlier he'd attempted to assassinate Queen Victoria at what is now Windsor and Eton central station. The next time you walk by or visit Funkywood restaurant, why not pause and say 'Cheese!'

Moving up High Street you will come across HSBC Bank. In the 19th century this was in fact a renowned Draper called Rogers and Denier. This is where the writer HG Wells worked as a 13 year old boy. As a draper's apprentice, he was required to work a 70 hour week in the shop, all for just sixpence a week pocket money. The apprentice's took all their breaks in a sort of underground fault, so he wouldn't have seen much daylight.

Now, if you look across the street from HSBC, you will see the Museum's wonderfully charming neighbour 'The Crooked House'. This has been many things in its time including a pub, a bric-a-brac shop, a café and now of course Jersey Pearl the jewellery shop. It was built in 1718 after the Council tore down an earlier building on this site, as they wanted to extend the Guildhall, but the man who had owned the building took them to court and the Council were forced to rebuild it. Unfortunately the oak wood they used to build it didn't have enough time to dry out and as it dried it made the building become crooked. It is said that the Crooked House leans away in disgust for being next to the local council who had it built in such a hurry.

Time to walk down Peascod Street now! And the next stop is M&S. To you it might be a place to pop and get your lunch but did you know that from the mid-19th century the building was a veterinary practice? It opened shortly after the veterinary profession was recognised by Royal charter in 1844 and by the 1860s was run by local resident George Simpson who was born in 1812. It was later taken over by George's son Henry Simpson who was a well-known local resident.



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He was a local justice of the peace and a member of the Windsor town council. In 1887 he oversaw the organisation of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee celebrations in Windsor, including the installation the now iconic statue of Queen Victoria on Castle Hill.

Philip Arton-Grime a local vet who researched the Simpson family history describes what this involved:

Philip: He went up to the Castle on many occasions to discuss the sighting etc. of this statue with the Queen and at the Jubilee there was a great collection of military etc. in the Home Park, which was on parade in front of Queen Victoria who went around the parade in her coach escorted by Henry Simpson on horseback. For his part in the Golden Jubilee, Henry Simpson was knighted shortly afterwards. Two years later, he was president of the Royal College of veterinary surgeons and he also had a brother who was in practice in Maidenhead and his brother was president of the Royal College of veterinary surgeons a few years later.

Becky: The vets in Peascod Street remained in the Simpson family until 1906 when it was bought by the owners of another local veterinary practice based on Thames Street. Around 1913 the two practices fully combined and moved to a new practice in William Street which was later called Paterson and Bartich and became the vets to the Royal household.

Moving further down Peascod Street you will come across Metro Bank and the Post Office. I'll let you find out what these used to be from local resident Doreen Crowhurst:

Doreen: There were three cinemas in Windsor, there was the Empire where now the Windsor Post Office is. There was the Regale where



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the old Boots Chemist was and there was the Playhouse on the bridge just by Eton, before you crossed over the road to Eton. To get into the cinema it was nine pence old money, I would think that was about 3p now; nine pence or a shilling or one and six, or if you were really rich two and sixpence. Two and sixpence you paid if you were going with a boyfriend because you could be in the back row and have a little cuddle. I used to go to the cinema at least three times a week and if it was a Fred Astaire film I would come home and pretend I was Ginger Rogers and dance all round the bed with a little silk hanky tied to my little finger, in my blue pyjamas. I simply adored the cinema and I felt everyone in America lived in a lovely big house and everyone went to really lovely High School and it was just really escapism. I never saw war films, I always wanted to see musicals, Fred Astaire mostly, Ginger Rogers and Deanna Durbin who used to be a lovely singer. But that was a place to go to and when the war was on and the siren went it used to come up on the cinema screen... 'The siren has sounded, you may leave if you wish'. Lots of people did, but I used to always stay there. If you did go out and keep your ticket and you could go back the next night. But it was a fine place for people to go courting, especially in the back row.

Becky: Peascod Street has always been at the centre of Windsor life and many current and former residents have fond memories attached to it, from everyday chores to life-changing events. Indeed, for some individuals like Robin Russell, Peascod Street has helped them find someone special!

Robin: I was walking up the street, Peascod Street with a fellow guardsmen and he met a girl, who he knew, and he said 'how about coming out with me Friday?' and she said I can't because I am meeting my friend, I'm going out my friend that night, so he said that's alright, my mate will come with her. I said not blasted likely, who do



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you think I am? Anyhow, the long and short of it I weakened and luckily I weakened, because the girl weakened and she later became my wife! So she was a blind date and I had one and sixpence in my pocket, which is what, what are we looking at now? 7 ½ p, that would just take us to the Empire pictures, but instead which she let's go for the walk and you keep the money in your pocket, so we went for a walk and that was the start of 62 years and nine months of marriage.

Becky: And for all Windsorians, Peascod Street has just always been there for consistency in their lives.

Colin Oakley: Peascod Street on the other hand was a place where you would go regularly for your daily needs. There were Burton's, Home and Colonial, David Greg's, Macfisheries, Bakers Butchers, Greengrocers, Wellman's the Ironmongers and Piles the Furniture. So you could go there, you needed to go there for fetch your food for the week. There was nowhere else to go, in Windsor.

Robin Russell: The stores in Peascod Street have been much the same as they have been for years and years and they were all small stores. On the left hand side with a big store called Creeks which was furniture and I believe clothing as well and that is right opposite where the entrance to Ward Royal at the present moment. And on the other side of the road there so on the Ward Royal side they had a small shop on the other side which was later, well which is the Post Office at this present moment was their other store. Now Creek's owned the pavement and every Good Friday they used to fence the payment off, to stake their rights, it was their property and not the councils. So I can well remember that we used to go down, it was a thing of going down for hot cross buns in the town, because there were several bakers in Peascod Street, all manner of tradesmen and what if you wanted, I'll always remember on the Easter, Easter morning you'd go



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down to get hot cross buns. Because in those days you only got to eat hot cross buns from the bakers on the day. You didn't get them from supermarkets, very few supermarkets. There was a very small Tesco's along there, in the days before they became a big firm. Bishop's International, all manner of everything. All small, and it was very much a small community.

June Rainer: As you went up Peascod Street, there was this little bakers, doing all their own bread called Dexter's. And you'd go in there and they'd come out with these great big trays of hot doughnuts. And every morning, on the way to catch the bus, mum used to buy us a big bag of these doughnuts. And 'cause that she didn't have time for breakfast so we used to have these doughnuts, which was really a treat. Next door to that was a cinema called the Regale, that was the cinema in Peascod Street, it was called the Regale, it was quite a nice cinema really. On the opposite side the road where the Post Office is now, used to be another cinema, that was called the Empire. And we used to call that the flea pit, but it was more closed in and if it was full, you used to, and they'd let you in and you all had to stand down the side of the cinema waiting 'til you could get a seat. And I know if it was what they called an A film, I've gone right off the subject of other things now, but I know if it was an A film and your children weren't allowed in, you'd stand outside and somebody going in, you'd see an adult going in, and you'd say to them would you take us in please? We've got our money, so we give them their money and they'd get your tickets at the door and so you could get in and see the film. Otherwise you couldn't get in because it was what you call an A film so you weren't allowed in. That used to happen more often than not!

Tony Bowra: We go into Peascod Street and one of the shops was Gingers. That was the kind of the upmarket place, very very nice



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delicatessen we'd call it now, but Gingers had some nice stuff, really was fresh, meat cut off the bone and it was nice. Cost a little bit more of course but that's alright for some. And the other place was Dexter's which was an old fashioned, what would you call it today? Greg's the bakers. They did and I can still taste it, they did some wonderful pasties. Didn't charge a lot, I should think they were very little meat in them, but they were piping hot. And then the real piece de resistance, Wimpy's opened a place in Peascod Street. That was *the* place to go. Go to Wimpy's. Okay I'd never had burgers before, you didn't, it was something unknown, but you could have a burger and a coffee, for not an expensive price. It saw off a lot of the coffee...the cafés, that were basically going. But the Wimpy, to have a Wimpy, that was a real move forward...somewhere to go!

Becky: And of course we can't forget Thames Street, which has hosted its fair share of important shops, including Dyson's which was a tobacconist, jeweller and piano repair shop. When you're next going for a stroll down the street, look out for the clock in the pavement, which marks where the shop used to be located, about where WH Smith is now. Also along Thames Street was Messenger's Toy Shop, which was the first toy shop in Windsor and was very popular with the children, as local resident Len Nash recalls.

Len: When I was a lad there was Messenger's wonderful toy shop, old-fashioned toy shop that sold Meccano and Dinky toys and fireworks on November the 5th.

Becky: Tony Messenger's father owned the shop and he recalls what it was like to live above the shop as a child:



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Interviewer: Now this toy shop, I've talked to a lot of people who have a great deal of memories about this shop down in Thames Street wasn't it? A proper toy shop as they describe it.

Tony: It was as good as Hamley's, it was super and it was heaven to live in.

Interviewer: Yes I bet from your point of view yes.

Tony: But I didn't get anything free. I could borrow things and as long as the box wasn't hurt and they went back in the box, that was alright. If the box was hurt I had to pay for them.

Interviewer: Right, so this was the age of what Meccano and Dinky's and all that?

Tony: Dinky toys, clockwork railways and early electric railways.

Becky: Now, before we wrap things up, we have some fun facts for you. Did you know Peascod Street literally means Pea pod Street and takes its name from the pea fields that were in the area in the medieval times. It is thought the favourite medieval snack of buttered pea pods was probably sold on the street from the 12th century. Jumping a little through the centuries now, by 1900 there were about 150 small shops on Peascod Street including nine butchers and five fishmongers. And some of the shoppers in town were Royal, perhaps more than you might think. Royalty have often been spotted shopping in town. George III apparently used to visit Charles Knight's book shop on Castle Hill. Charles Knight with his son, would later start up the local paper, the Windsor and Eton Express in 1812. Queen Charlotte would also shop in the town including at Mrs Caley's store. Waitrose's first shop in Windsor opened on Castle Hill in 1918 and



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held the first Royal Warrant to Queen Mary. She would sometimes call in herself, especially for a particular brand of honey soap which she favoured. On one such occasion the regular manager was on holiday and the relief manager was so overcome when the Queen walked in, that he fainted behind the counter, well apparently anyhow. And finally, maybe you've got to this point in the podcast and are wondering why we have not yet mentioned Darvilles of Windsor. Well here we go...Darvilles are a local family business that specialised in the grocery trade and tea blending since 1860. At their peak, they had 21 grocery shops across the Windsor, Maidenhead, Slough, and Staines area with their largest shop being in Peascod Street from 1860 to 1978. They are the oldest company still in Windsor to hold a Royal warrant and have done since 1946. That's impressive.

Finally, we'll leave you with some reflections by local residents on how shopping in Windsor has changed over the years. We would love to hear your memories of Windsor shops so please get in touch with any interesting facts.

David Jessey: I mean Windsor's a town of, is a retail town, there's very little light industry, but yeah, lot of businesses that are sadly no longer here that were predominantly, you know were very significant and served Windsor incredibly well and in Thames Street in particular, I mean, I mean there were companies like Tulls which were sort of icon shops; Dyson's which were the jewellers shops, you know, the Token House, you know, there were a lot of significant which made Windsor special and different. Windsor's a town, a small town with 30 odd thousand people would not under normal circumstances demand a, command a Marks and Spencer's store for instance, but Windsor has got one. Now, on commercial grounds, I doubt whether it would, they wouldn't open a Marks and Spencer's where there are 30,000 people. So because of the historical, the



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history of Windsor, you know, those shops, stores, were in Windsor. And there are some very big Creeks, is a sort of big mini Department store in Peascod Street. But if you look at the Kelly directory you will see a lot of names that are now no longer here. Boots had a big branch in Thames Street and there were, you know, shops down there, but that now is all really restaurants, the town has shifted. There are very few retail shops in the High Street and Thames Street, those shops are now in Peascod Street and King Edward Court and the Royal Station. And Solent's Road is thriving because it still supports small businesses.

Len Nash: If you try and ignore the signage and just look at the buildings, there's still very much the same as they were when I were a lad and they've done things like they put the Dyson Clock back, back in the footpath, which was always there when I was, when I was growing up.

June Rainer: Going back to the arches, now they are all night clubs and shops and hairdressers and boutiques, but in them days, they were all belonged to working people. Like boat builders and mechanics and well not many mechanics 'cause there wasn't many cars about, but eventually there was.

Robert Heybourn: Not so very different now, I mean it's all, I mean the shops are different, the names are different, personalities in the town are different, but I mean it's it's all still, it's all part of life in Windsor isn't it?

Becky: Thank you for listening! Look out for the next instalment in our series, when we will again be going about town in search of hidden histories.