

A SUMMARY OF PAPERS READ AT THE LAMAS LOCAL HISTORY CONFERENCE HELD AT THE MUSEUM OF LONDON ON 16 NOVEMBER 2002: 'BUYING AND SELLING IN METROPOLITAN LONDON'

SHOPS AND TRADING BUILDINGS IN LONDON, 1200–1700

John Schofield

London had streets lined with shops in the 13th century. Changes in their function and character over the five centuries can be worked out from archaeological evidence, comparison with surviving buildings elsewhere in England, documentary sources, maps and plans. Cheapside was the centre of the retail area by 1300. Selds, individual small bazaars possibly specialising in single commodities, were to be found up alleyways off the main street.

We expect that medieval shops were very like those which survive in Tudor buildings, such as at Lavenham. The first plans of shops for London are in the Treswell surveys of around 1610. They show different types, ranging from the single room lock-up to the combined shop/warehouse/private dwelling.

Some undercrofts may have been used as shops; but, from the 15th century, use of the ground-floor warehouse seems to have been spreading. The access to domestic, trade, and storage areas of the larger houses was explicitly controlled.

The Great Fire of 1666, though destructive, has been over-emphasised by historians. Apart from a few public buildings, there were no new building forms, only the same houses and shops

now clothed in brick. However, by 1700 flat bottle-glass windows were being introduced, providing greater opportunity for display and the better-class shops were moving towards the Court and the new fashionable squares developing in that quarter.

RETAIL TRADE IN MEDIEVAL HARROW ON THE HILL AND PINNER

Patricia A Clarke

Harrow on the Hill and Pinner, about three miles apart, were two of the nine rural settlements of the Manor of Harrow. Harrow on the Hill occupied some 300 acres at the top of the hill and had about 25 to 30 families, while Pinner consisted of about 3,000 acres with a population of about 500 or 600 people, almost a third of the total in the manor.

Information about trading in the period 1300–1600 is drawn from the court rolls of the manor. They contain the assizes of bread and ale, which regulated quality, marketing, and price, and also record penalties imposed for similar offences in the sale of some other goods, plus occasional references to occupations in property transactions.

The goods traded were comestibles – bread, ale, meat, and victuals (usually small quantities

of items like eggs, cheese, poultry, spices) – leather goods including footwear, clothing, and smith's goods – never specified but implied from the presence of smiths.

The impetus for trading in these items, rather than all of them being produced at home, was probably threefold. For example, capital and economy of scale would make the use of a commercially sized oven worth while, because by no means every household had an oven. The same might be true for meat animals, the intermediary butcher smoothing out both supply and demand, particularly of the larger beasts. Skills would be another good reason for trading, the smith being the foremost example in the village, followed by the shoemaker and the tailor. The smith would also need capital for tools and furnace. The third force was in regard to goods not available locally – preservatives, spices, sugar, currants, maybe even candles of quality – and the victualler was usually the purveyor of these. He was probably the only true retailer in the village, at a time when the ethos of trade was still for it to be a direct transaction between producer and customer. The butcher may have been a retailer, in whole or in part, according to whether he killed for specific customers or sold meat from several sources.

Because the sources depend so heavily upon the reporting of offences, the picture may be biased and incomplete. They do not indicate whether any type of trade was regularly present. The one most commonly mentioned is ale-selling. The number of brewers and sellers fluctuated widely, reaching nearly 40 on some occasions in the late 14th century, but settling to an average of six to ten thereafter. Common brewers or sellers were usually fined for three offences at 2d. each, others for one or two. A good many females appeared in both categories, sometimes forming the majority, and it was the only occupation where they were sometimes shown in their own right, and not as someone's wife or widow. Offences included: using measures not yet certified by the ale-taster (Richard Waps of Pinner, April 1430), refusing to let the ale-taster make his tests (Richard Smith of Pinner, April 1436), overcharging (almost everyone), selling lower grade as higher grade (William Danby of Pinner, April 1425), selling without putting up the customary sign of the alehoop (John Danby of Pinner, 1419), selling after the sign was taken in (all of them from time to time), refusing to sell

(Matilda Tailleur of Pinner, April 1388), adulterating ale with filthy water from the ditch (Richard Tanner of Harrow Weald, April 1422). The examples given are not the only ones.

For most trades except the ale trade, offenders did not feature as frequently; there were seldom more than two at a time, and the normal offence was overcharging.

Different sorts of bread were sold. William Wyke was selling white bread (superior) in April 1428, while William Heat, Alice Edward, and William Prest were baking or selling cocket bread (second quality) and cribble bread (coarse) at Harrow on the Hill in April 1477. Some bakers were from outside the manor, coming from Uxbridge and Ruislip.

The butchers tended to come from just a few families, one in particular, the Downers, carrying on with few breaks throughout the 15th century, sometimes in Harrow on the Hill, sometimes in Pinner. Very occasionally a butcher was fined for selling bad meat.

Victuallers were not mentioned in the records until the 15th century. Some alternated as victualler or aleseller. William Downer of Pinner traded also in Harrow on the Hill – and once he was called a spicer, once a candlemaker, and once a victualler and cookshop owner (*pistenarius*).

There were tanners in Harrow on the Hill, two on one occasion, overcharging. Shoemakers or cobblers were in both places, usually two in Pinner, one of whom, John Danby, was fined for using improperly cured leather in April 1457. Tailors were twice fined for overcharging in 15th-century Pinner, both from the same family. No smith was fined.

Apart from some of the bakers these were local men, but there is no way of telling whether they derived their whole livelihood from trade. They usually had a house, either owned or rented, and a little common field land, but were not yeomen with substantial amounts of land. There was a tendency for skilled trades to stay in a family for two generations – it is observable with butchers, shoemakers, smiths, and tailors; but was less often the case with alesellers and bread sellers. Diversification did occur, usually the combination of an aleseller or brewer with a victualler or butcher.

Pinner and Harrow on the Hill were the chief places in the manor for traders, well placed geographically to serve the two halves of it. Most, but not all, the other hamlets had an aleseller,

and once or twice a baker or butcher was recorded in one or other. Harrow on the Hill and Pinner each had a weekly market and an annual fair, the only ones in north-west Middlesex, which may be an indication that customers also came from outside the manor, though there is no direct evidence that they did. Trade must have been more important to Harrow on the Hill, only a quarter of whose residents had land, than to Pinner. It had a 'Pie Powder House', and its market seems to have flourished, whereas there is no indication that Pinner's market did. Both places maintained their business supremacy into modern times, but Harrow on the Hill pulled further ahead.

As to the fairs, Harrow's has gone while Pinner's survives, but apart from their foundation, nothing is known about either before modern times.

CLOTHING SHOPS IN PRIMROSE HILL, NW1: THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO LOCAL AND NATIONAL TRENDS

Caroline Cooper

People living in the new Victorian suburb of Primrose Hill had three obvious places to shop: the local streets, a little further away in Camden and Kentish Town, or the West End. Primrose Hill was a socially mixed area right from the start, so its inhabitants are likely to have used all three – variably, and perhaps according to class. It is about clothing and footwear that they are likely to have been most particular, to have perhaps gone further afield, and this talk explores their options.

By 1868 the area as we know it today was substantially built. It had one main shopping street, Regent's Park Road, and various short retail terraces in the side streets – a total of about 80 shops. All essentials could be bought within five minutes of home: food, household goods, pharmaceuticals *etc.* For clothing there were three milliners, three tailors, two haberdashers, and a bootmaker. There were no drapers, so people must have bought fabric elsewhere; the nearest option would have been the busy and competitive high streets of Camden or Kentish Town, both with several drapers and street markets. (Those men who commuted to central London would have bought clothes near their place of work.)

The main lure of the West End from the 1870s was department stores, their innovation perhaps not coincidental with the rise of white-collar workers, the very class which had moved into much of Primrose Hill. They were cheaper than small retailers, displayed prices (unlike more exclusive boutiques), and demanded immediate cash payment. Ready-made, up-to-date clothing was a major attraction and women could browse there. With restaurants where a lady could be seen alone, and – very important – lavatories, department stores facilitated a whole day's 'outing' for the Victorian housewife: shopping as indulgence rather than necessity.

However it took time – 40 minutes' walk south through Regent's Park – or money to get there: a hackney cab from Primrose Hill to the West End cost about two days' wages for most people. Trams ran only as far as the Euston Road, and even bus fares were too high for the poor. Besides, once you had walked to Chalk Farm or Camden Town in search of public transport, you might as well shop there. On the other hand, making your purchases just up the road had the attraction of convenience, neighbourliness, and opening hours even longer than in the West End. Because of the small scale of retailing, prices would be higher than elsewhere; but, in competition with each other, the shops might be nervous about refusing credit.

Small shops are a barometer of social change. Towards the end of the 1800s, Primrose Hill was pretty poor. Booth's Map of London Poverty, 1889, shows its larger houses as 'upper-middle and upper class: comfortable to wealthy, the servant-keeping class'. But most of the smaller terrace houses register in the Directories as 'apartments' or 'lodging houses' and were crammed with people, usually one large family per two-roomed floor. There must have been much demand for clothing. By 1889 three linendrapers had come to Primrose Hill, so you could at last buy your fabrics locally. Any of three dressmakers or three tailors could make them up for you. There was a milliner (though no haberdasher) and no fewer than six bootmakers. The first, and so far only, shop selling ready-made clothes was a juvenile outfitter, perhaps because of residential schools nearby. The one dyer probably did quite well, as people spent much of their lives in mourning. And so you could look smart at the funerals, there were then two hairdressers.

At the death of Queen Victoria in 1901,

Primrose Hill had two drapers and a furrier. But there were no fewer than eighteen services. Bootmakers were up from six to seven. There was the usual spread of half a dozen dressmakers and tailors, but the milliner had gone. There was one dyer, a laundry, and a staymaker. They were rivalled by two new nearby West End stores: from 1907, Debenham & Freebody in Wigmore Street; and from 1909, Selfridges, the largest store in England.

By the 1920s the chain stores were multiplying fast – though Primrose Hill has always been too small to have any. In 1929, signs of the beginning of the Depression can be seen. The small amount of clothing retail consisted of two linendrapers, and one ladies' outfitter, whereas people offering skilled services had increased to twenty-three. The most telling statistic is that there were no fewer than five boot *repairers*, a new classification. There was also one *repairing* tailor.

In 1945 there was a draper, a ladies outfitter, and the usual spread of cobblers and needleworkers. But apart from various food outlets, the other premises seem to have been occupied by small industrial workshops.

By 1957, the year in which Macmillan said 'You've never had it so good', Primrose Hill had one ladies outfitter and one draper. Ready-made clothes were cheap and plentiful – the great age of Marks & Spencer – so there was no dressmaker. However services were plentiful: notably, there were no fewer than seven laundries/cleaners – not surprising now sooty engines passed by so frequently on the Euston line through Chalk Farm.

In the 1960s, supposedly the time of Swinging London, Primrose Hill was seedy. Clearly no one bought their clothes there, as in 1965 there were no dress or shoe shops, merely two haberdashers. There were the usual twenty or so people offering services, including – new and exciting – a launderette.

Today Primrose Hill is very fashionable and expensive – getting cleaner and coming up in the world ever since the electrification of the railway in 1965. Trendy designers and architects work there, and ready-made clothes have reappeared – probably, for the first time ever, expensive and highly fashionable ones, displayed (often unpriced) in the windows of the ten boutiques. About the only thing that has remained roughly constant over the 140 years or so is the number of hairdressers: there are now

four. But there is something quite new. There are three beauty parlours...

KNIGHTSBRIDGE NEIGHBOURS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HARVEY NICHOLS AND HARRODS

Alan Cox

Both Harvey Nichols and Harrods began in single shops and gradually expanded into adjacent properties.

The overwhelming number of department stores had their origins, like Harvey Nichols, as drapery stores, but Harrods, which started in groceries, was a major exception. This made it vulnerable to competition from the two great middle-class co-operatives which originated in the 1840s, the Civil Service Stores and the Army & Navy Stores. These were amongst the earliest form of department stores, and Harrods responded by demanding immediate full payment in cash, and thereby lowered its prices to compete with the co-operatives. The emphasis at this time was on cheapness, and one customer at the time found Harrods a 'dirty place but cheap'.

Harvey Nichols preferred to be more exclusive, and, unlike Harrods, did not advertise before the 1920s, preferring to rely on the word-of-mouth recommendations of its well-to-do customers.

Department stores were therefore presented with the dilemma of how socially inclusive or exclusive they should be. One solution in the 1890s was to be found at Marshall & Snelgrove, where there were virtually two stores under one roof. That part entered discreetly from Vere Street catered for the 'more select' customers, while the 'less-exalted' entered from Oxford Street. And, of course, as happened with Harrods, the same store might be cheap and cheerful at one stage in its history and expensive and fashionable at another.

The 1890s saw the completion of the total rebuilding of Harvey Nichols and the beginning of a much longer but equally comprehensive rebuilding of Harrods, not completed until 1912. These rebuildings were part of a more general rebuilding of the metropolis in a much grander manner thought suitable for a great imperial power. The architect of both new stores was Charles William Stephens, a lesser-known architect but very locally based. This was crucial, because in both cases construction had to be

carefully phased, to allow trading to continue throughout the rebuilding period. Harrods interiors were particularly lavish and opulent, although an American store manager complained that he found himself 'admiring the fixtures and really not seeing the goods'. In recent years these interiors have been restored and indeed augmented by the new Egyptian halls. In contrast Harvey Nichols has obliterated or concealed all vestiges of the older fabric. Instead its interiors are totally anonymous, so that the focal points are the counters and their designer goods, and, to some extent, the customers themselves.

While Harrods has a steel-framed structure, it is clad in masonry to resemble a conventional building of the time. It was the American, Gordon Selfridge, who more fully exploited the steel frame in the first part of his Oxford Street store, erected very rapidly in 1908–9. Its impressive three-storey, metal-and-glass infill panels pointed the way forward, and were precursors of the fully glazed curtain-wall. Thus, when Harvey Nichols and Harrods came to add large inter-war extensions, these aped Selfridges rather than their own earlier buildings.

Comparison of the two Knightsbridge stores raises the question of what actually constitutes a department store. By 1912 Harrods had become a 'Universal Provider', where it was quite literally possible to buy anything from a pin to an elephant. Harvey Nichols on the other hand continued to describe itself as a drapers, and right up to the present day has concentrated on a much narrower range of goods, with a strong emphasis on fashion at its most chic.

After the First World War the department stores found themselves under threat. In particular, there was a massive increase in mass-produced goods, which relied upon nationally advertised brand names, rather than the individual reputations of department stores. Linked to this was the new retailing phenomenon of the chain store, such as C & A, British Home Stores, or Burtons the Tailors. There were, therefore, a host of mergers and take-overs amongst department stores. Harrods was one of the predators, and its acquisitions included Dickens & Jones, Swan & Edgar, D H Evans, and Shoobredes. Harvey Nichols, on the other hand, was taken over in 1919–20 by Debenhams, to whom it was already heavily in debt.

After the Second World War, department stores had to take account of the new 'Youth Culture', becoming less stuffy and offering

in-house boutiques. They also resorted with great success to the 'shop-within-shop', with the perfumery or couturier houses having their own counters, manned by their own staff.

There is one last major contrast between the two stores. Harrods has from quite early on used its history as a means of publicity, and promotes itself as an important part of Britain's heritage. Harvey Nichols, however, has consistently ignored its history, and has only been concerned to be the place of the moment, offering all that is the newest and latest in fashions.

'GENTLEMEN, MERCHANTS, AND SHOPKEEPERS, IN TOWN OR COUNTRY': THE IMPORTANCE OF LONDON IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANCE SHOPPING

Nancy Cox and Karin Dannehl

This paper is a draft for a chapter in *Perceptions of Retailing in the Early-modern Period* by Nancy Cox and Karin Dannehl, to be published by Ashgate in 2005. Its purpose is to focus upon the way London influenced changing practices of shopping in the 18th century.

The concept that the retail sale of goods was once tied exclusively to the direct exchange of real goods for actual money between seller and buyer has long been eroded by solid evidence to the contrary. It remains a mode of exchange still used by retailers and customers today, and our familiarity with it in turn provides the confidence to experiment with forms of distance acquisition involving the virtual reality of e-shopping and banking on the web. In many ways, these may seem startlingly new and different, seemingly sufficient grounds to argue for yet a new consumer and retail revolution.

This would be folly. It could cut off the modern retailing world from that of our forebears, who in the early-modern period were already experimenting with complex notions of retail trade, notions that have themselves played a part in fashioning modern concepts of acquisition and exchange. For the last three centuries at least, the concept of acquisition as a face to face encounter between the buyer and the seller has ceased to be anything more than merely one way of shopping in many. The basic activity has given rise to manifold alternative ways to make

profit for the retailer, and to satisfy the desires of the consumer. Like the use of credit for example, most forms involve managing a physical space separating the people involved in the transaction, the goods themselves, and the money that is paid for them.

For many London in 1700 was an idealised and distant city where the streets were paved with gold and where even poor Dick Whittington could rise to be Lord Mayor. For those with neither a direct experience of visiting London nor a network of friends and relatives to pass on information and advice from the capital, the printed word began to provide an alternative conduit for appreciating the place of London in the real world. Newspapers, pocket books, and the promotional literature of the trading community all worked to make London central to most aspects of life, but particularly to fashion. At the same time, these sources of information allowed people, who may not have thought of doing so, to adopt or to modify London modes to their own circumstances and to acquire London goods.

One consequence of this broadened experience was an expansion in what may usefully be called 'distance shopping in reverse'. Provincial retailers attempted to counteract the impact of London by suggesting that the quality of their wares and the prices they charged compared favourably with those offered in the capital. Some even went further and attempted to bring London to the provinces by stressing their own privileged access to the fount of fashion. Others advertised their own metropolitan experience or employed London-trained workers. Ironically the same advances in information technology that made it possible for provincial retailers to bring London

to the provinces, also gave similar opportunities to their London rivals to attract country customers and to entice them to buy direct from the capital.

London retailers had probably long offered a service of distance shopping to wealthy customers who had their own networks of communication using residents as informants and proxy buyers. The 18th-century ventures of London retailers into distance shopping had two distinctive features. Firstly, some apparently adapted their promotional literature better to inform the inexperienced country shopper, although at present little is known about how hand bills and trade cards came to the knowledge of these potential distant consumers. Secondly, in the last few decades of the 18th century some retailers started to produce extensive catalogues of their wares similar to those associated with mail order in the 19th century. These catalogues contained detailed instructions about packaging and charges for carriage and included information about how long the goods would survive in other climates, where appropriate. If most of these catalogues were intended primarily for those going overseas, at least some seem to have had the home market very much in mind.

Distance shopping was not a simple process. It developed, and develops still, in the context of the dissemination of knowledge. In the 18th century it took many forms, some of which were the forerunners of 19th-century mail order, and all were in direct ancestral line to the present adventures into virtual reality and e-shopping. In the complicated interplay between the dissemination of knowledge and the development of new forms of distance shopping during the 18th century, London played an important part.