

BOWYERS



The story of a Wiltshire business through two centuries

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FRONT COVER

A fine watercolour by WW Wheatley, a drawing master in Bath during the middle of the 19th century.
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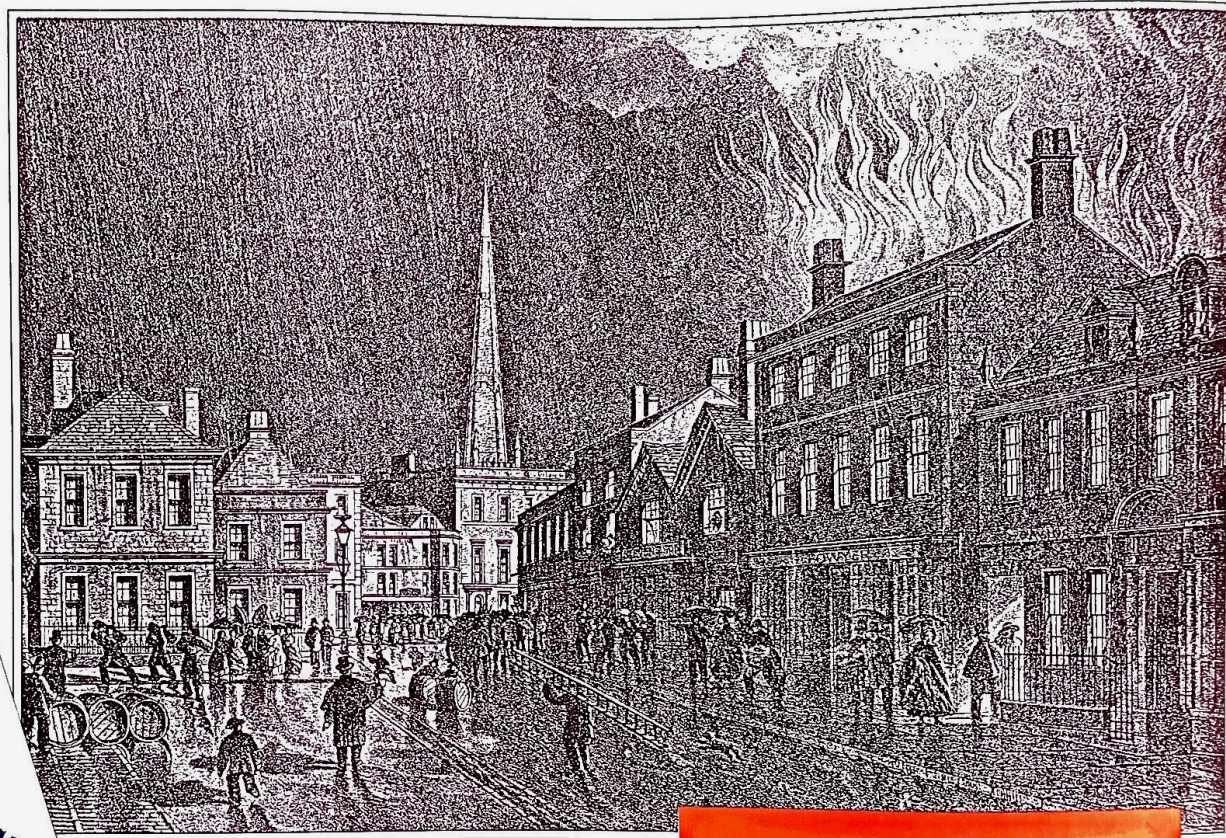


The story of a Wiltshire business through two centuries

by Pamela Colman

Wiltshire's reputation for high quality bacon and pork derivatives, especially sausages, has long been of renown throughout the country. Wiltshire Bacon came to mean bacon cut and cured by a method peculiar to the county. Today, Bowyers famous sausages and pies are produced and distributed to leading retailers all over the country.

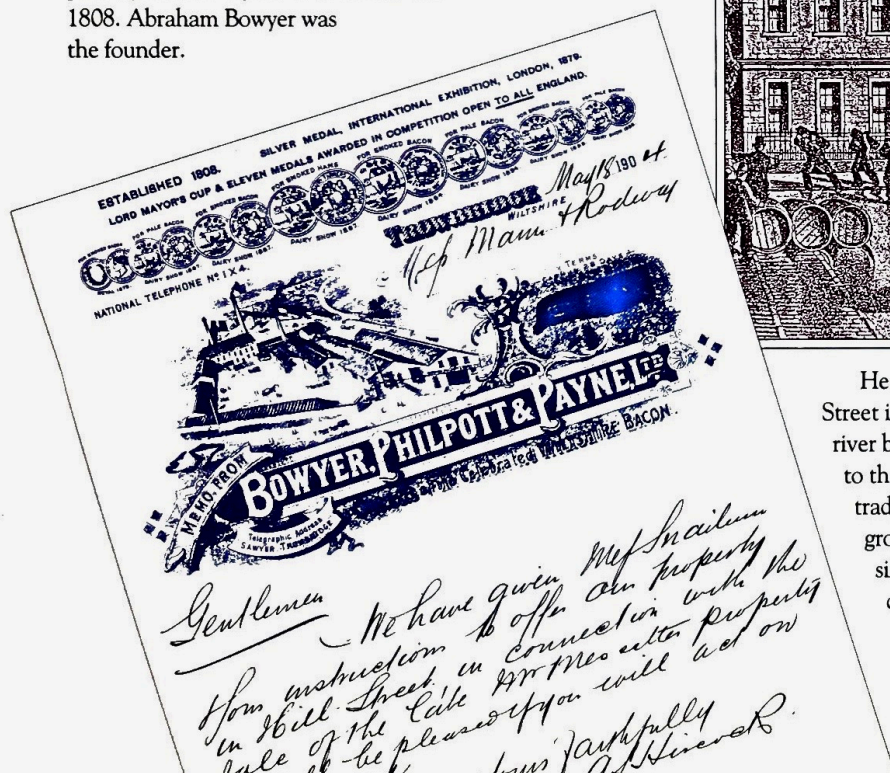
Bowyers grew out of a small shop in Fore Street, Trowbridge with the sales area to the front and the killing and curing area behind. Early letterheads of the company proudly claim the year of foundation as 1808. Abraham Bowyer was the founder.



Bowyers in the Parade, Fore Street, during the great fire of October 1862 in Trowbridge. A lithograph by William Millington

He chose the site for his shop well – Fore Street is a principal thoroughfare, running from the river bridge, where the present factory is situated, to the market place. It was busy, with almost all trades represented, including amongst others; grocers, butchers, cobblers, saddlers – twenty six trades and professions in all. The firm was described in the 1850's as 'Wholesale Bacon Curers, Cheese factors, Millers and Grocers.' It made and sold sausages but

primarily the trade was in bacon sides. Records show that the first hundred years were relatively quiet, with the firm showing steady growth and establishing a reputation for quality second to none. Since the end of World War II the expansion can only be described as phenomenal.



The Formative Period to 1890

ABRAMHAM BOWYER was born a Wiltshire farmer's son in 1793, the family farm being at South Wraxall, near Bradford on Avon. Soon after marrying in 1815, he started up as a butcher at Staverton, moving shortly afterwards to Trowbridge, where he opened a grocer's and baker's shop in Fore Street. A prominent Methodist, he soon became one of the town's leading provision merchants, while also curing bacon on a commercial scale. Of three sons, two died young, and the third, Elijah, who followed his father in the bacon curing and sausage trade, established it as the limited company Bowyer Philpott and Co in 1890. Elijah himself had no son.

By 1848 when Abraham was fifty-five and his son Elijah twenty-six, they were trading as millers, grocers and corn merchants in Fore Street, Trowbridge. In 1855 they were grocers and provisions dealers in both Fore Street and Roundstone Street and in 1867 they appear in the directories as 'bacon curers', although it is likely that had been part of their enterprise for sometime previously. Abraham was then living in Stallard Street and died six years later in 1873. Elijah continued to trade under the name of Bowyer and Son at Fore Street and Town Mills as 'Cheese & Corn Factors, Mealmen and Provision Dealers (wholesale and retail)'. He had clearly extended his father's theatre of activity, but there was emphasis on bacon curing, for in the 1880s, Elijah as Abraham Bowyer and Son, was content to be classified as 'Bacon Curers, Wholesale and Retail' only, carried out at Fore Street and Town Mills. Meanwhile, Abraham and Elijah had been jointly buying land, part of the company's present site, on an extensive area of the town known as 'The Innox'. Abraham is likely to have been



Abraham Bowyer

keeping pigs on it in the early 1840's. When he died in 1873, Elijah, as the business expanded, added extensively to the 1850's acquisition. Ultimately, the company was to acquire all the site between the river and the railway; Elijah first leasing a substantial part of it from the Ganes brothers who built for Bowyers a warehouse, slaughter house and piggery in 1854. In 1880, Elijah bought this whole area from the Ganes and so embarked on a policy of expansion that proved to be very profitable, finding the capital by mortgaging the site for considerable sums, one as much as £2,500, but in five years he had repaid the loan.

The technique of production was to preserve the meat of carefully bred pigs by means of salt. The salt can be applied in two ways; either by covering the meat with dry salt and allowing at least three weeks for penetration, or by using salt dissolved in water, in which case the method is to inject the brine solution into the flesh and immerse the whole in a salt solution for five days. Sometimes a combination of the two methods is used. Brine is pumped into the meat and sides which are

then stacked and covered with dry salt for two or three weeks. Maturing under controlled temperature conditions, the action on the meat juices and salt produces the characteristics of well matured bacon. The result of the brine process is 'green' or unsmoked bacon. The smoking of the green bacon is done in smoking houses. The smoke rises and for about three days permeates the flesh of the bacon sides above.

The bacon in those days was entirely different in taste from now. The bacon was hung up in the shop in huge sides. The shop man, if there were no pieces already cut to your liking would cut up a side. It was best to buy 2 or 3lbs of

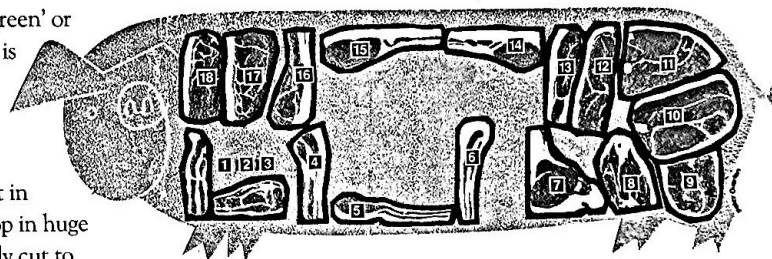
middle back or as it was called in the trade, 'The London Cut'. If the round oval in the centre of the fat was of a too bright pink it was then usually too salt, so one went for a dullish fresh pink. It was not rashed unless required.

On the left hand side of the butchers shop going in were the hearts, liver, kidneys, sausages, pork pies. Hung further down on the meat hooks were what are known as henges: the inside of the animal, lung, liver and heart all attached to the windpipe. This was sold in its entirety to a customer for making the delectable savoury, hot faggots. If these were made with all the liver, heart, lights intact, and seasoned with certain herbs, onion, etc the end result simmering in gravy was reputed to be delicious.

Every cut has its character

This is a stylised drawing of a bacon pig, showing the position of each cut and giving an idea of its form as you see it on the counter.

- | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 Forehock | 7 Flank | 13 Oyster |
| 2 Forehock | 8 Gammon Slipper | 14 Short Back |
| 3 Forehock | 9 Gammon Hock | 15 Back and Ribs |
| 4 Top Streaky | 10 Middle Gammon | 16 Top Back |
| 5 Prime Streaky | 11 Corner Gammon | 17 Prime Collar |
| 6 Thin Streaky | 12 Long Back | 18 End Collar |



By 1890 Elijah Bower, who had run the business since his father died in 1873, and probably earlier than that date, was looking ahead. He had one daughter and no son. During the late 1880's he had taken into partnership two local men from the bacon curing industry; JR Philpott and John Sawyer. C&T Harris of Calne, rivals to Bowers, though considerably larger, had taken the step of forming their own business into a company with limited liability in 1888. This step enabled capital to be acquired for expansion. Another advantage, in theory anyway, was that neither directors nor shareholders were personally liable for the company's debts. In times of economic depression and business failures this could save the investor's personal capital; it is unlikely however, that Elijah considered that such disaster could overtake the business which he had run well for so many years. He was now 67 years old. He may have thought that company status, which so many Victorian private concerns were acquiring, was proper recognition of his hard work and success.

Elijah considered what were the constituents necessary to continue successfully, and indeed to expand the business. His partners, Philpott and Sawyer, with their technical know-how, would be joint managing directors; the former in charge of sales and the latter of production. He could have taken the chairmanship of the new company himself, but instead placed in this position someone capable and well respected throughout all Wiltshire. He chose well in obtaining the services of George Llewellyn-Palmer aged 35, wealthy and popular squire of Lackham near Chippenham, gentleman, Justice of the Peace at 31, and an officer in the Royal Wiltshire Yeomanry, the prestigious county regiment.

It can be safely assumed that the bacon curer, Elijah, and the squire Llewellen-Palmer, had a great respect for each other. No doubt too, the squire much enjoyed Elijah's bacon, sausages and pork pies! Elijah, probably with the idea of attracting money from London, also secured the services, as a director, of one John Cary, a financier who lived at Steeple Ashton.

In 1891, an advertisement had gone out locally, inviting applications for £5 preference shares, £5 ordinary shares and £50 debentures in the new limited company. The nominal capital was to be £38,000 in total.

The subscribers were predominantly Trowbridge folk for small quantities of shares, say 20 or 50 of each denomination. Elijah, Philpott and Sawyer each took £1000 worth of debentures. Elijah took 1,424 ordinary and 593 preference shares, Philpott 894 ordinary and 500 preference, and Sawyer 689 ordinaries and, like Philpott, 500 preference. Llewellyn-Palmer took 140 ordinaries, and Cary, the financier, 50 of each denomination.

The company name was agreed as 'Bowyer, Philpott and Co Limited' and the directors first met on 7 December 1891. There were present: George Llewellyn-Palmer, the chairman; John Cary, Elijah, Philpott and Sawyer, with the secretary John Merrett. The latter reported the formal incorporation of the company on 20 November 1891, the number of shareholders and the share allotments. They met again on 5 January. Philpott, a volatile character, as perhaps befits a good salesman, wanted another traveller and got agreement to take wall space at Harrods in Knightsbridge at £35 a year; he was certainly determined to see the firm's products in high places. There was over £1000 in the bank. Sawyer reported that five months sales were up on the previous year, from £15,294 to £19,778. They felt justified, in March, in paying dividends at the rate of 8% on



George Llewellyn-Palmer

the ordinary shares and 8% on the preference. This was a good start. Routine business, such as acquiring shops in Fore Street, fixing the secretary's salary, share transfers and the like occupied the directors until the shareholders meeting on 6 December.

None of the latter are recorded as attending, so presumably they were content with their investment.

The first entry for The Limited Company recording the transfer by Elijah Bowyer and his partners in October 1891.

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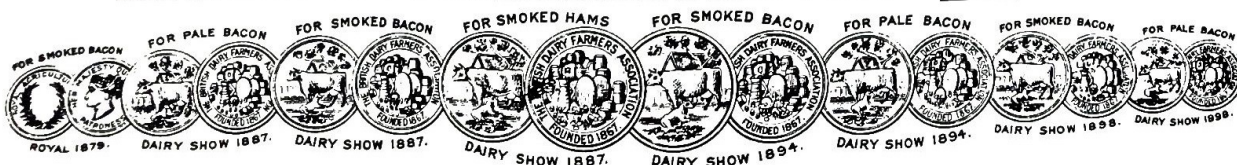
The dividends of 8% and 6% were confirmed and the directors were voted £200 between them for their fees. Later, they seem to have been content with one guinea a meeting, if they attended. In the non-inflationary times of the later years of Queen Victoria, the dividends were a reasonable return on capital, and although Elijah might feel well satisfied by the first year's result of his new company, the price of pigs was higher than for many years.

The next year saw the directors improving the curing method but while numbers of pigs killed had gone up and up, Bowyers still maintained their policy of using no carcasses which had been killed elsewhere.

In 1894 Cary resigned, through ill-health, to be replaced by Henry Edmonstone Medicott, a public spirited and prosperous man, later a magistrate, much in the mould of Llewellyn-Palmer. The two would certainly be acquainted.

In August 1894, there was trouble with the volatile Philpott. He had objected to travelling more than three days a week, but the directors thought that since sales were falling, and as he was sales director, Philpott ought to do something about it. They wrote him a stiff letter, which ended by regretting that he had not come, as asked, to discuss the matter, which was ultimately resolved by the directors' decision to employ another traveller and alter Philpott's salary arrangements. Whatever the success or otherwise of Philpott's efforts, the directors lowered the dividend on the ordinary shares to 6% for 1895 and for 1897, on a profit of only £1,334, in the latter case. Then in 1898 Philpott precipitated a crisis which ended in his dismissal.

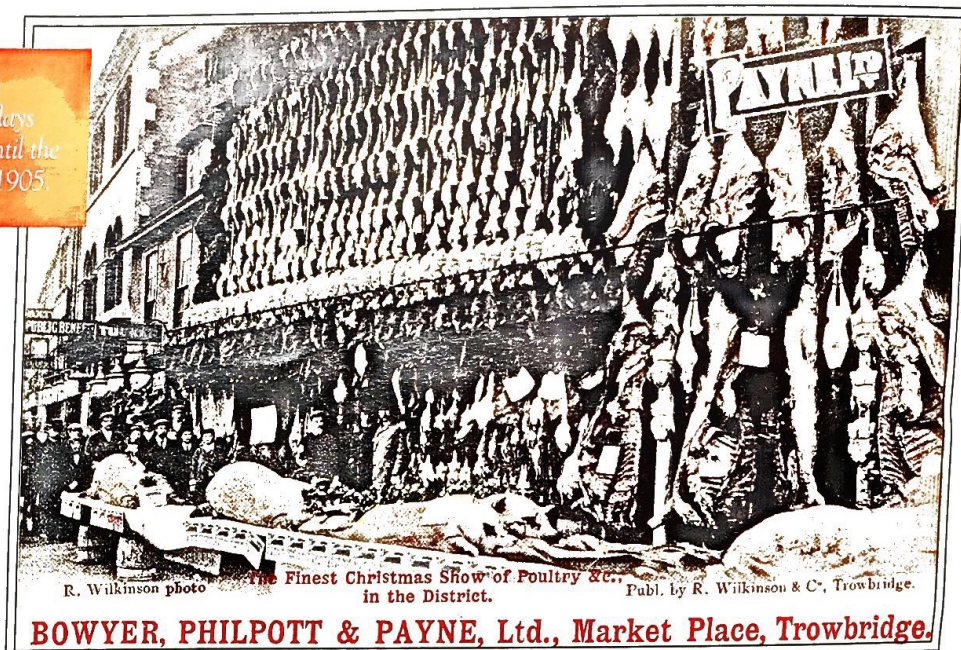
LORD MAYOR'S CUP & ELEVEN MEDALS AWARDED IN COMPETITION OPEN TO ALL ENGLAND



OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT
These very elaborate displays
must have been left up until the
end of Christmas. Circa 1905.

For some time the directors had been considering enlarging the Company, by purchase or amalgamation with another similar business. Harris's of Calne were buying up other bacon curing firms, and whilst Bowyers could not rival Harris's in size, it could challenge it in quality, and anyway, it would not do to stand still. A year or two before 1897, they had considered acquiring the old-established business of Payne and Co in Fore Street, but had dropped the idea.

On 28 March 1898, the managing directors Philpott and Sawyer asked to see the board. Medicott took the chair in Llewellyn-Palmer's absence. They must have been astonished to hear that their managing directors, with one Stofel of Bath, had bought the Highbridge Bacon Company in Somerset, and now offered it to Bowyers at £16,500. This was hardly straightforward dealing and unlikely to have the approval of

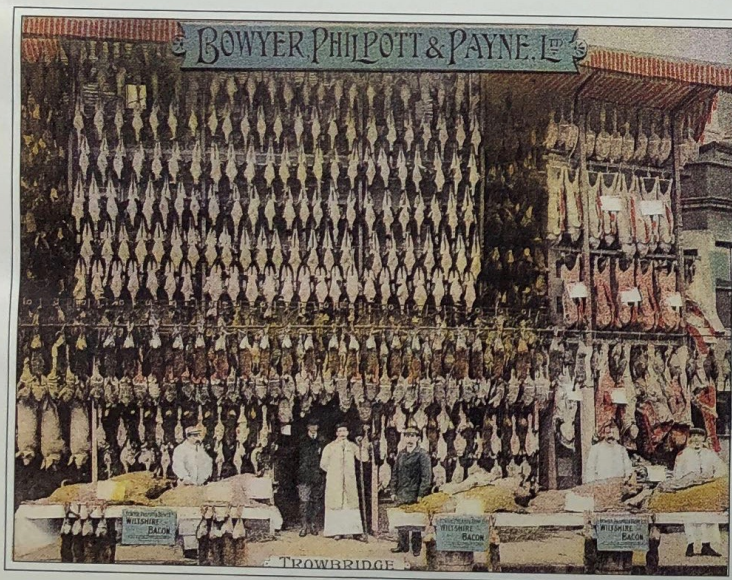


their co-directors. To make matters worse, Philpott and Sawyer declined to say how much they had given for Highbridge. The directors decided to see what Llewellyn-Palmer, the chairman, had to say. They all met on 12 April. It is probable that to buy Highbridge was, in fact, to Bowyers' advantage but Philpott and Sawyer's actions were most unlikely to commend themselves to men like Llewellyn-Palmer and Medicott, who would think their managing directors were going behind their backs. Nevertheless, they offered £16,000, to be paid partly in cash and partly in deferred shares, which Philpott and Sawyer refused, and when this happened, very properly called a meeting of the shareholders. This took place on 21 April, when the latter supported the directors and Philpott and Sawyer said they: 'absolutely declined' the directors' counter offer.

Later that day the directors met again. They must have

been angry. Their managing directors had not been behaving as they expected. Philpott was called in and was sacked on the spot, with three months salary in lieu of notice. Sawyer came next, asked to stay with the company, and probably apologised. He was forgiven, and served many years with the company until 1924, being chairman in the difficult war period after Medlicott's death.

Later that year something much more pleasant than the Philpott affair took place. Albert Hiscock offered his Paynes, Trowbridge, Bacon Company to Bowyers' directors. To amalgamate with a Trowbridge firm made far better sense than with one elsewhere. How right they were, the directors may well have thought, to turn Philpott's Highbridge offer down. The transfer was smoothly arranged. The price was £16,000, Hiscock receiving £11,000 in cash and the remainder in shares. The issued capital was increased by 1000 preference shares offered widely – 7,000 application forms



being printed and, a tribute to the directors, the offer being over-subscribed. Hiscock and Sawyer became joint managing directors. The company name was changed to Bowyer, Philpott and Payne Limited and the Payne shop and name over it were kept.

In 1910, twelve years after Paynes was acquired, Elijah died aged 88. Perhaps it was fortunate that he did not see the accounts that year – a loss of £212, the first loss in the company's 18 year existence. Always before the profits had been enough to pay 6% to the preference shareholders, and always (except for two years) something, albeit sometimes as little as 2%, to the ordinary shareholders. Never, Elijah might have sadly reflected, the 8% the company earned for its ordinary shareholders in

the first three years of its life. But there were compensations for any such gloomy thoughts: his friendship with Llewellyn-Palmer, Cary and Medlicott; the year when his company won the Lord Mayor of London's cup; the Silver Medal awarded in 1879, at an international exhibition in London, eleven medals 'awarded in competition open to all England' as the company's note-paper proudly said. Particularly pleasant it must have been, when, in 1901, the company secured a contract with Fortnum and Mason, and in 1904, when an order was acquired from the Manchester Wholesale Co-operative Society, with its great purchasing power.

Under the Companies Acts it was necessary for a company to keep a register of directors. This recorded, after the Payne

acquisition, the directors as follows, using the social distinctions current at the time:

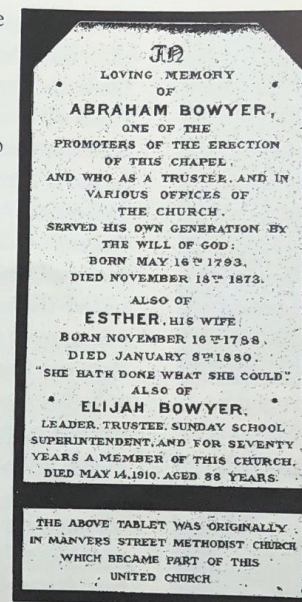
George Llewellyn-Palmer, Esquire
Elijah Bowyer, Gentleman
John Sawyer, Bacon Curer
Albert Hiscock, Bacon Curer

Elijah, it may be noted with approval, is a 'gentleman', despite the fact that he was a Methodist, and it is doubtful if his father, Abraham, was ever so described. But it indicates what his co-directors and secretary thought of him.

In 1900 Medlicott took over the chairmanship from Llewellyn-Palmer, who, though he did not then resign as a director, was absent for over twelve months on military duty in connection with the South African war. Remarkably, at the age of nearly 60, he took the Wiltshire Yeomanry to France in

World War I, and became a Brigadier General. That was the sort of man he was. He resigned from the board in 1905. His successor, Medlicott, proved an excellent chairman and held the post for sixteen years, until 1916, when he died in office. He presided, when Hiscock resigned, in the disastrous, loss-making year of 1910, but apart from that, saw regular dividends for the preference share holders, and always something – 6% to 2% – except in 1901 and 1905, for the ordinary holders.

Sawyer took the chairmanship when Medlicott died. WH Cary – son of the financier John, who had joined the Board in 1907 – took it on in 1920 and held it until the take-over by Raymond Harris in 1924. The burden of the later war years fell squarely on Cary Jnr and Sawyer, but by the early 1920s the time had come for change. The numbers of employees seems to have been fifteen only.



The Regime of Raymond Harris

About 1921, when Raymond J Harris, then not 40, and his father, John Mitchell Harris, severed their connection with their family firm C&T Harris at Calne, they, particularly Raymond, must have looked around to find an outlet for their money and lifetime experience in the bacon curing industry. To acquire Bowyers was an obvious possibility. Negotiations were opened with the Bowyers board, which included John Sawyer, TH Clark JP, FJ Pickard JP, and H Holdway. Cary lived in London. Clark was a woollen manufacturer and Pickard and Holdway were farmers. Sawyer, one of Elijah's partners in the long ago 1880s seems to have been the only director with expertise in the bacon curing industry and he must have been, in the early 1920s, well over 70. There had been no change in the company structure since the 1890s, when Paynes was acquired, and the nominal capital was still £60,000.

If the company had not expanded, it would not be fair to say that it had stagnated, for in the 31 years of its existence it had always managed to find the money for the 6% preference dividend – albeit, sometimes somewhat late – and usually something averaging about 5% for the ordinary shareholders. In 1922 it made its highest ever profit, £2,497, and had nearly £4,000 in cash in the bank – no place, Raymond Harris may have thought, for the cash of a trading company to be.

Negotiations for a take-over began. There is no reason to think that they would be otherwise than friendly. Sawyer, over 70, and the only director who knew the industry, would

retire, as would the cloth manufacturer, Clark, and the farmer, Holdway. The London born chairman, Cary – he had at least one other directorship – and Pickard, would stay on the board, presumably to smooth the transfer of management to Raymond Harris. Cary, at his last shareholders' meeting as chairman, in March, 1924, said: "Satisfactory arrangements negotiated with Messrs Harris have been favourably received by practically all shareholders...the directors are convinced that the proposals are in the best interests of all shareholders and confidently recommend all shareholders to adopt them." The shareholders were in agreement.

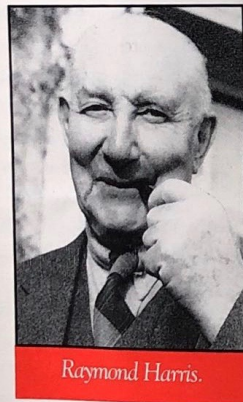
The Harris's bought shares from almost all of them, and Raymond Harris became the Chairman, Cary resigning in 1925, as agreed. Pickard died. By December 1924, only Raymond Harris and his father were directors.

There is no doubt that Raymond Harris considered himself a new broom. In his first meeting with the shareholders, on 30 November 1924, he said: "Heavy expenses were involved in putting this company into better order, also in re-organising its sales capacity. A big increase in turnover has been

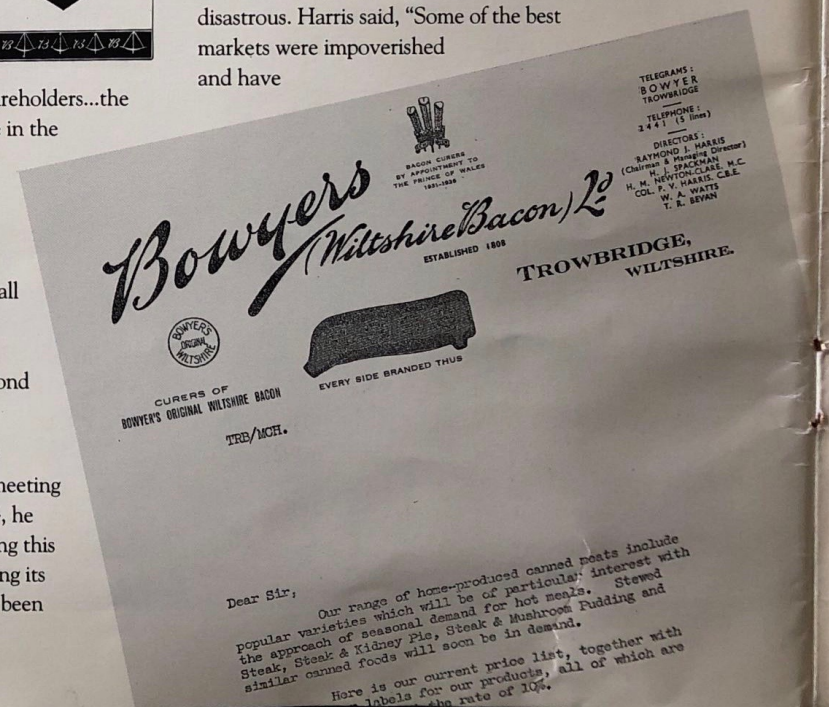


effected and many improvements in manufacturing organisation introduced." This confident tone was justified by the next year's profit figure of £4,138, which enabled the company to pay a dividend on the preference shares for that year and replace the cost of the dividend for the previous years which had been borne by the Reserve account. Raymond Harris may well have thought that, with the restrictions and difficulties of the war years to 1919 now lifted, more stable conditions would enable the company to pay dividends on the preference shares and achieve something too for those patient people, the ordinary shareholders.

It was not to be. Early in the summer of 1926 the General Strike paralysed the country, and the coal strike went on very much longer. The profit dropped to £1,123, made in the first months of the year; the latter half of the year was disastrous. Harris said, "Some of the best markets were impoverished and have



Raymond Harris.





ceased buying." Costs, notably fuel, had increased tremendously. The foot and mouth disease epidemic cut off a large part of the normal supply of pigs.

Nevertheless, the usual 6% dividend for the preference shareholders was maintained, and Harris, still optimistic said, "On termination of the coal strike the purchasing power of the public will recover when the directors confidently anticipate that satisfactory profits will be made."

Again he was disappointed. The period 1927 to 1934 was one of world-wide depression. Bowyers experienced in 1927 the largest loss it ever made, £3,406, due Harris said to enormous quantities of foreign bacon dumped in England, with heavy reduction in bacon prices. No dividends could be paid, and the great world slump continued. Indeed, the company had to pass paying any dividend on both preference and ordinary

shares for the next seven years, when, in 1935, with a profit of £2,484, a dividend was managed for the preference shareholders. But the ordinary shareholders had to wait until 1941, when, after twenty years, they received a modest one of 3%.

Raymond Harris's father, John Mitchell, had died in 1927, and Harris had recruited Joseph Spackman, aged 33, as general manager with a seat on the board. He seems to have been with Raymond at

ABOVE: Bowyers' shop in Fore Street in the 1930s. (In the 1920s, this shop was in the half-timbered building on the right).
ABOVE RIGHT: A typical window display contemporary with the shop.

Harris's of Calne. He was with the company for over 32 years, including the difficult years, 1939 to 1945, of the war. There was growth from the latter year. The preference dividend was always maintained and the ordinary dividend rose steadily from 3% to 9% in 1957. During the same period, the profit and loss account showed a surplus which grew from £3,055 to £23,899. In 1955 that surplus was £38,099. Harris and Spackman might feel their efforts over more than 30 years were justified.

The war of 1939 to 1945 must have imposed a great strain on Raymond Harris, who was 56 when it began. Spackman was



44. They had run the company for fifteen years as the sole directors, and indeed were to remain as such until 1951, when Harris was nearly 70.

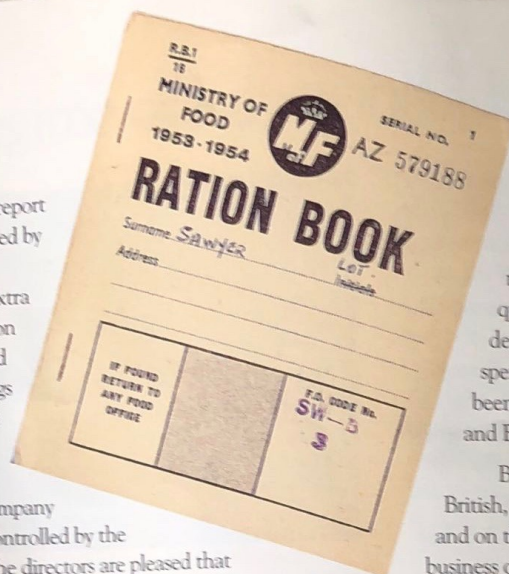
Harris touched upon the major difficulties in his annual reports. In 1939 the 'phoney war' had been in existence for three months. The company was still recovering from the recession of the early thirties. Except for the Navy, armed conflict had hardly begun. Prudently, Harris said it was necessary, under the present uncertain conditions, to harbour the resources of the company. £2,000 was to be transferred to the general reserve account. £3,565 was to be carried forward in the profit and loss account. A years dividend on the preference shares could be paid, but nothing was available for the ordinary shareholders.

Twelve months later, at the time of the Annual General Meeting, the national and local pictures were entirely different. The Germans had over-run France, Britain was saved from invasion and a similar fate, by the English Channel and Fighter Command of the Royal Air Force. The whole country, the Conservative and Labour parties, were united under Winston Churchill, and a carefully thought out and fair rationing scheme was in operation. Harris summed it all up

well: "The directors report that difficulties created by war conditions have necessitated much extra work and attention on the part of a depleted staff. All the buildings and machinery have been fully occupied. Most of the operations of the company have been closely controlled by the Ministry of Food. The directors are pleased that the company is able to be of assistance in the distribution of food under the present circumstances."

Harris was too modest. Bowyers and other food producing firms were of vital importance; raw materials from Europe were entirely cut off, and those from the rest of the world at peril from German submarines. The company found enough to pay the customary dividend on the preference shares, (again, nothing for the ordinary shareholders), and carried forward £5,098, after setting aside a reserve of £22,000 for Excess Profits Tax. The Government thinking behind this last was that a company should not keep profits made because of war conditions. Roughly, anything earned which was more than pre-war earnings was regarded as excess profit. This was somewhat hard on Bowyers ordinary shareholders who had had no dividend for over fifteen years. However, the records show no complaints and the ordinary shareholders no doubt thought that their loss of a dividend when the profits were considerable was a personal contribution to the war effort.

In 1941 the Excess Profits Tax reserve was £26,000, equal to about one third of the issued capital. This large reserve illustrates how busy Bowyers was, and Harris again stressed the success of increased work by a depleted staff. In 1942 he again



spoke of the difficulties: "Many employees have joined the services and other labour has been impossible to obtain. Raw materials are strictly rationed making it impossible to supply Bowyers' quality goods, but in spite of difficulties most departments have been busy." £1,182 had been spent on air raid shelters and the company must have been very conscious of the heavy air raids on Bristol and Bath.

By December 1944, the worst of the war was over. British, Canadian and American troops were in Holland and on the Rhine. Harris told his shareholders: "The business of the company has been carried on satisfactorily through another year but with its attendant difficulties. The directors face the future with confidence and the hope of an early return to more normal conditions." At long last, a small dividend of 3% was paid to the ordinary shareholders.

By December 1945, the European war had been over for eight months. Harris reported: "The company has played its part in helping to feed the Services. During the last year the company has been kept busy on government contracts, but as regards supplies for civilians we have been much restricted by the small allocation of meat and raw materials. With regard to the future, there is uncertainty, but the directors have confidence in the ability of the company to meet new conditions when the close Government control is withdrawn."

However, the new Labour government kept the controls on, as Harris stressed



in December 1946. In 1947 he said: "Trading conditions have been extremely difficult, bacon has been rationed at a very small weight which has reduced our turn-over. Meat and nearly every ingredient are closely controlled. Packing materials have been expensive and in intermittent supply. Electric power shortage has interfered with production. Taking a long view, it is encouraging that the Government has stated that it is their policy to stimulate pig production." Next year he looked forward to an increased supply of pigs, though pork and bacon "our staple raw material are especially scarce."

In 1949, four years after the war had ended, strict controls were still on. Harris wished they were not. He said: "It may be assumed our goods have been in keen demand and it has been impossible to supply customers with more than a part of the quantities they would like to buy." It was the same in 1950, and the controls were not removed until the next year. Harris was thankful, and like many business men, probably thought they should have been removed earlier. It must have been encouraging to feel that the customers were demanding Bowyers' goods.

Despite the problems posed by the war and the austerity period after it, income tax at high rates, excess profits tax, staff and raw materials shortages, electricity cuts and railway strikes, Harris and Spackman, sole directors until 1951, might have felt that they had done their best for their ordinary shareholders: 3% in 1944 (the last time they got a dividend was 1923), 1945, and the next three years at 4%, then at 6.1% in 1953. The underlying strength of the company was shown by the trading profit for 1953: £71,407, compared with only £9,255 in 1939. All this time Harris and Spackman, whilst they doubtless had salaries as executives were very restrained in what they asked for directors' fees - only £300 per annum between them from 1939 to 1945, £500 for the next four years and £750 in 1951. After that date the company would undergo a vast change in its fortunes.

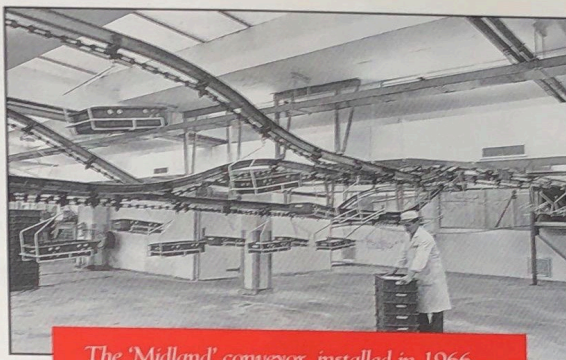
Expansion from 1951

In 1951 Raymond Harris and Joe Spackman were the sole directors, as they had been since 1925. Since 1946 Raymond had been observing the hard work and enthusiasm of his nephew Herbert Mitchell Newton-Clare, whom he had taken into Bowyers in that year as a trainee, aged 24, put through all departments of the Trowbridge factory, and made, at 28, in 1950, Small Goods Manager. 'Small goods' were sausages, pies, sausage rolls, Bath chaps, but predominantly sausages, for which there was a growing demand, as distinct from the cured whole sides of bacon which had been the company's traditional product. Raymond Harris must have also been impressed by the young man's war record. He had joined the ranks of The Wiltshire Regiment in 1939, at 17, had been commissioned in 1941, promoted Captain and acting Major by 1944 and awarded the Military Cross in that same year for gallantry, in the savage fighting outside Falaise, in Normandy where he was seriously wounded.

In 1951, Newton-Clare, known generally as Bill, was made a director, as was, in a non-executive capacity, Raymond's younger brother, Colonel Patrick Vivian Harris, CBE, a retired soldier of the 17th Lancers, who had seen service in both wars. Raymond also rewarded good service in the past by making promotions to director status of WA Watts, who had been with him for 30 years, TR Bevan, with him since 1927, in charge of sales, and F S Pascall the Company Secretary. Raymond always had an excellent relationship with his staff, to whom he would give Bowyers shares from time to time.



'Bill' Newton-Clare

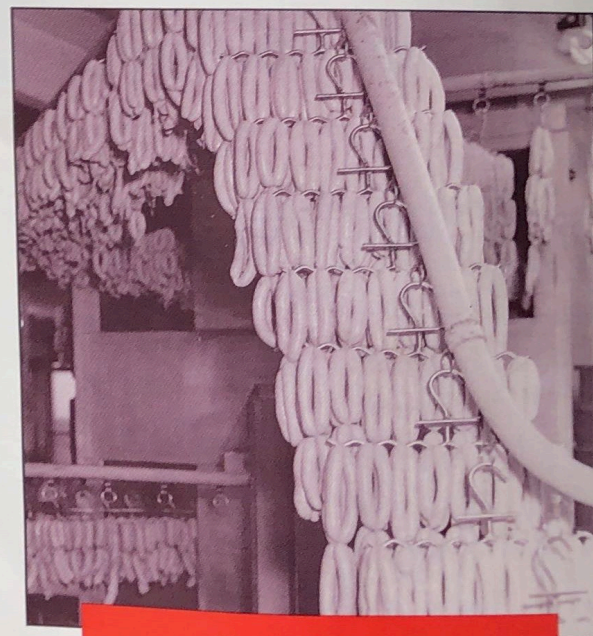


The 'Midland' conveyor, installed in 1966 following the commissioning of the new abattoir, butchery and sausage departments.

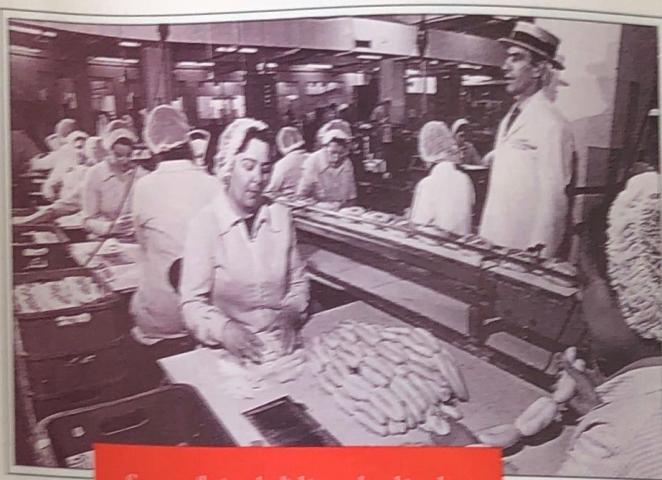
As Small Goods Manager, Bill Newton-Clare had ideas for expansion. He realised that no household would now buy sides of bacon, for no household was large enough. The professional and moneyed classes no longer had large families and many domestics. The future lay in sausages and 'small goods'. He could not always get Joe Spackman, the General Manager brought up in the whole side tradition, to see eye-to-eye with him. Matters came to a head in 1953. Hard words were spoken and both appealed to Raymond, as Chairman, who decided that Bill Newton-Clare would be manager of the whole factory. Joe Spackman was to remain General Manager and on the board of directors. Raymond probably told the latter to let the young man have his head. By 1955 Bill, then only 33, succeeded Spackman as General Manager, with his uncle Raymond, then 75, as Chairman and nominally still Managing Director; though in fact Bill was filling that position.

The Food Trade Review of December 1958 stated that there was a remarkable post-war growth and development of

the British sausage industry, and Bill was determined that Bowyers should play a leading part, indeed a principal part, in it. With determination he set about that aim. The factory had to be re-modelled and extended. A new, single story, north light building, 12,500 square feet for sausage production, with the appropriate machinery for mincing, filling, cooling, wrapping and packing was established. A meat pie bakery was built by 1956, to meet an increasing demand. Two years later it had to be expanded. A cooked-meat kitchen was installed. The canned-meat department was re-designed and rebuilt.



Conveyorised sausages



Sausage 'knitters' – linking and packing the sausages was almost a fine art

In all this, the vision and drive came from Bill Newton-Clare, assisted by a remarkable team of young men whom he recruited, as well as the older men, like Watts and Bevan, who heartily supported innovations mentioned, until they retired in the 'sixties'

Happily, some of these young men are alive today. They all speak well of Raymond Harris – 'a real gentleman' – who went down to the factory regularly, until well into his 80s, and was always glad to see them at Chilvester Lodge, his home, near Calne. They ascribe the success of Bowyers in the 50s and 60s to Bill Newton-Clare, a 'real dynamo'. They were promoted to director status when they had proved themselves. Bill could be ruthless. One or two genuine mistakes would be forgiven, but no more. "You would be out," says Lionel Welsford, who joined Bowyers at 23, in 1955, (having had experience in the pie and sausage business in Bristol as Sales Manager) and became Sales Director. "Above all," says Lionel, "Bill allowed you to manage and make your

own decisions"; but they had to be the right ones.

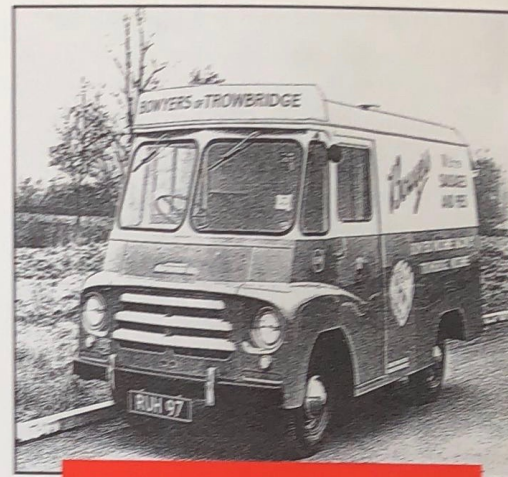
The directors were backed by highly competent management teams. Vic Udberg was a member of one such team, recruited by Bill as an industrial engineer in spite of, or because of, Vic telling Bill at their interview that his Trowbridge factory was 'like a prehistoric settlement'. Vic had the job of implementing the new production line layouts and the building of a mechanised slaughter house at Trowbridge. He emphasises, as does Lionel Welsford, that they were a very happy team. Another popular member

was Arthur Johnson, who joined Bowyers at fourteen, and returning after war service, was put in charge of the bacon factory. Bill and his Board of Directors sought to have products for sale all over the country. This involved acquiring plants at Plymouth, for the South West, in 1960, and Liverpool, in 1964, for the North: Amersham and Witney factories came later – in 1972, when Bowyers acquired Scots of Bletchley.



Vic Udberg

All this was done with due regard to maintaining the high quality of Bowyers' products. Eventually, Lionel Welsford was organising sales from sixty depots in England, with ten vans per depot, and Derek Oldroyd devised a fast and accurate cost accounting system, so that by Friday morning the Board knew the total picture for the previous



A typical van from the rapidly expanding fleet that served retailers of the fifties.

week, in all the plants. "We had tremendous enthusiasm for the corporate mission," said Bill. "It permeated throughout the business to the roots of each factory."

To foster morale, the Company ran a house magazine – called the Bowman. Bill used it to inform the staff of the year's activity and of future proposals. The following is one of his typical messages, at Christmas, 1960: "For the first time our sales reached an all time high of £3,000,000." The van sales fleet had been increased. Incentive schemes had been introduced. £143,000 had been spent on the plant, "Let us move forward together for the future, firm in the conviction that our success story will continue during 1960."

Morale was obviously good, and Bill fostered it. There were problems at first with the Transport and General Workers' Union, to which most of the factory floor belonged. There was even a strike in the pie kitchen. It fell to the lot of Mike Milicevic, the Production Director, and Vic Udberg to

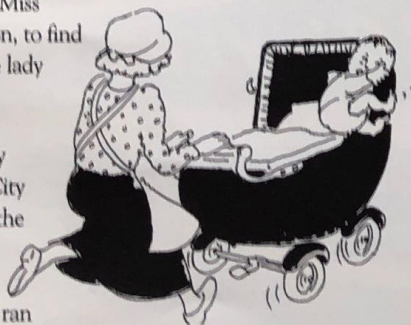


sort that out. The modernisation of the plant had resulted in less hands being needed, but redundancies were minimal and workers displaced were largely absorbed elsewhere in the factory.

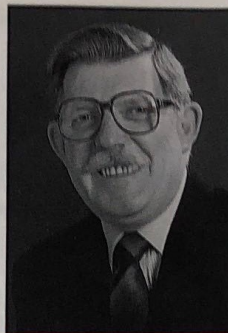
Vic's sense of humour must have helped him when dealing with the unions. Pilfering was rife and hard to prevent. A stout lady could conceal all manner of 'small goods' about her person. Male employees were known to make garters

under their trousers out of sausages. It was more difficult to hide hams. Perhaps the neatest trick, was actually seen by Vic. A footpath runs through the factory, and he saw a lady pushing a pram. As she came beneath a first floor window at the factory, a hand appeared and a fine whole ham dropped neatly into the pram. The lady quickly replaced the pram cover. Vic of course had to report this, but admired the dexterity of the attempted theft and appreciated the humour of the incident. Bill, an excellent communicator, would talk to the workforce if necessary. He introduced a Pension Scheme, and for senior management, a much appreciated Share Option Scheme. Of course, there were parties at Christmas, including invitations from Bill to managers and their wives. Clubs were established at the various factories, which took part in the annual Miss Bowyer competition, to find the most attractive lady employee.

The Company sponsored Bristol City Football Club and the Theatre Royal at Bath. The Trowbridge factory ran

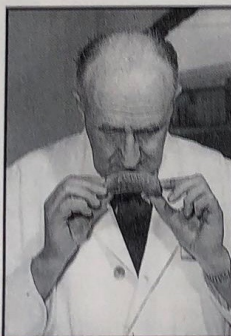


a soccer team, and Lionel Welsford played for it. Bill was a popular showman and his colleagues down the line appreciated the silver pig on the bonnet of his Bristol. Advertising came naturally to him, and much was made of the Liverpool factory consistently winning the Best Black Pudding National Award and the success of the Britannia Sausage at the great Brussels Exhibition of 1958. Bowyers also exhibited at Expo 67 in Montreal.




Lionel Welsford

Bowyers, of course, faced formidable



Bill Watts



Bill Watts

could be visited in one day, or Le Mans at lunchtime and back to Trowbridge for tea. By now, Bill and his team were firmly in the international market, exporting to 42 countries, including the West Indies, South Africa, Bahrain, France and Sweden – even to the Soviet Union.

It was the British way of doing things – team work, determination and ability to adapt to the changing conditions of a highly competitive world market.

Balance Sheet 1952

117

Investments

£20000 3¹/₂% Bonding Stocks 1452.87 at cost
(note: Market Value at 30.9.12 £19000)
£10000 2¹/₂% Bonding Stocks 1456.61 at cost
(note: Market Value at 30.9.12 £9000)

Trade Investment (unquoted) at cost

Current Assets

Inventory Stocks at Directors Valuation

Inventory Trade Debtors and Prepayments

Cash at Banks - Current Account

Do. Deposit Account

Do. Dividend Account

Do. (Bonding Certificate Redemption Account)

Cash in hand

(Sgd) Raymond J. Harris } Directors
(Sgd) H. J. Jackson }

19800		
9225		29025
		145
6748	3	9
54353	7	1
13005	18	3
63	8	9
157		
		130527 17 10

253654 11

The penalty of success

In 1970 Bowyers (Wiltshire) Limited – it had dropped the word 'bacon' from its title, was having its happiest and arguably its most prosperous time. Bill Newton-Clare had succeeded his uncle, Raymond Harris, in the Chairmanship. The old gentleman became the honorary President, always glad to see Welsford and the others and busy with fly-fishing, golf, his herd of Jersey cows and, of course, his pedigree pigs. All in a senior position were welcome at Chilvester Lodge, Calne. Within two days of Vic Udberg's arrival in 1961 at Trowbridge, Raymond, always courteous, asked to see 'Mr. Udberg'. It was always 'Mr' by Raymond and 'Sir' by Vic, who would explain his ideas in answer to questions like, "What of the sausage department?"

At the beginning of that year the highly efficient team of executive directors consisted of Bill as Chairman, John Rogers as Managing Director, Derek Oldroyde as Administrative and Finance Director, Lionel Welsford for Sales and Marketing and Mike Milicevic for Production. Rogers had been with the company since 1955, first as Small Goods Manager, then General Manager and now, since 1968, Managing Director. Oldroyde was a 40 year old Yorkshireman and Chartered Accountant, who provided up-to-date costings figures weekly. Welsford had joined the company as Assistant Sales Manager in 1956, and proved himself a salesman with remarkable

drive – "Let's get at 'em!" was his motto – "Em" meaning future customers. Mike Milicevic fought as a partisan in his native Yugoslavia, had a law degree from Belgrade University, married an English lady from the British Embassy and came to England in 1955. Very capable and an excellent mixer, he

made his home in this country, and in fact stayed on with Bowyers until the 1980s. Vic, the Engineer was a highly intelligent innovator. The system of production which the directors and management worked out was based not on past performance but on anticipated demand. This placed much of the responsibility on Lionel Welsford – which he was perfectly capable of accepting – of forecasting customer demand.

Accepting Welsford's forecast, the appropriate number of pigs and materials would be ordered, and Mike Milicevic, running the production department, would see that the demand was met. The ever vigilant Vic would observe how the factory machinery could be improved to cope with demand and how labour cost might be saved. Thus he was able to dispense with the 'prodders' –

ladies on the production line manually piercing each pie as it passed them – by a device which did precisely that. This was but one of Vic's machinery improvements.

Vic puts the workforce in 1961 at 600. In 1973 at 1,000. When he came, 2,550 pigs were killed per week. In 1964 after he had built a new slaughter house, the figure was 5,000.

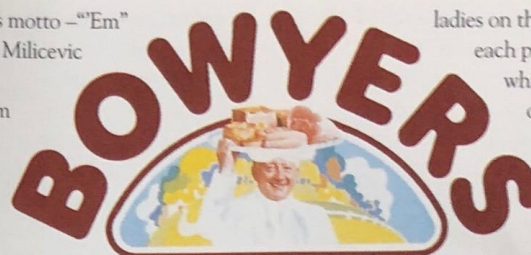
Speaking to the majority of these men and others of Bowyers staff, one is impressed by their enthusiasm for the 'corporate spirit' and their respect for their chairman and each other. They could 'blow their tops' but remain friendly and co-operative. They made Bowyers happy



Wonderful Wiltshire SAUSAGES

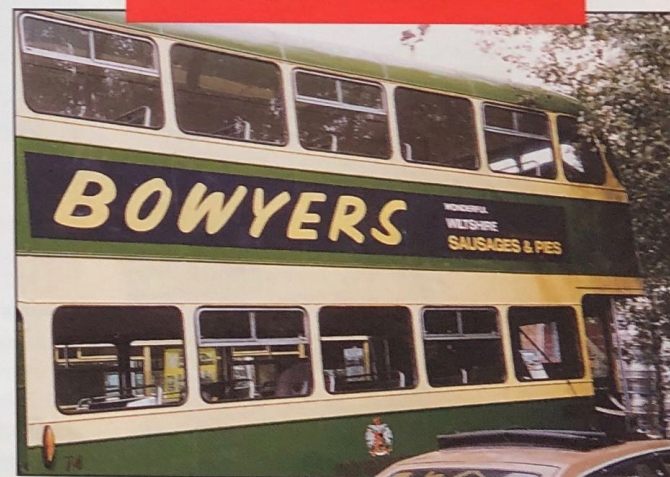
British sausages received the unexpected insult last year of being labelled 'export rejects'. Intended for Whitbread's Britannia Inn at the International Fair in Brussels, they were turned back because their meat content was below the 90 per cent. standard enforced by the Belgian Government. (The meat content of the average British sausage is 65 per cent., though some contain more than that). Whitbread's plan to offer bangers and beer to the assembled international multitudes, as an example of our native gastronomic achievements, almost had to be abandoned. However, just in time a Wiltshire firm (Bowyers of Trowbridge) came to the rescue and promised to provide Whitbread with a 90 per cent. meat sausage. Making sausages for one customer being hardly an economic proposition, they marketed them successfully in the West Country under the brand name 'Britannia'. And now, thanks to the stringency of the Belgian food regulations, these fine spicy sausages can be bought in London (at, amongst other places, Jacksons, Selfridges and Fortnum and Mason) for about 4s. a pound.

RIGHT: The tale of a high class sausage!



Piemans logo introduced in 1974

The 'moving' story is carried to the market.



and prosperous – and gave its ordinary shareholders dividends averaging 12% over six years and a vast increase in the capital value of their shares.

In the Autumn of 1968, the periodical 'Management Today' pointed out that Bowyers had rewarded its shareholders with capital gains and gross dividends enormously increased over their original 1958 stake and asked how this small Trowbridge company had managed to perform so glamorously – 'catapulted to glamour stock status by more than meat processing skills, by intelligent marketing and intensive management that believes in stressing executives.' 'People have got to be stressed,' Bill Newton-Clare is quoted as saying, and Rogers, 'The structure of the company is built around people', with which Oldroyde agreed. 'Newcomers must belong,' said Mike Milicevic.

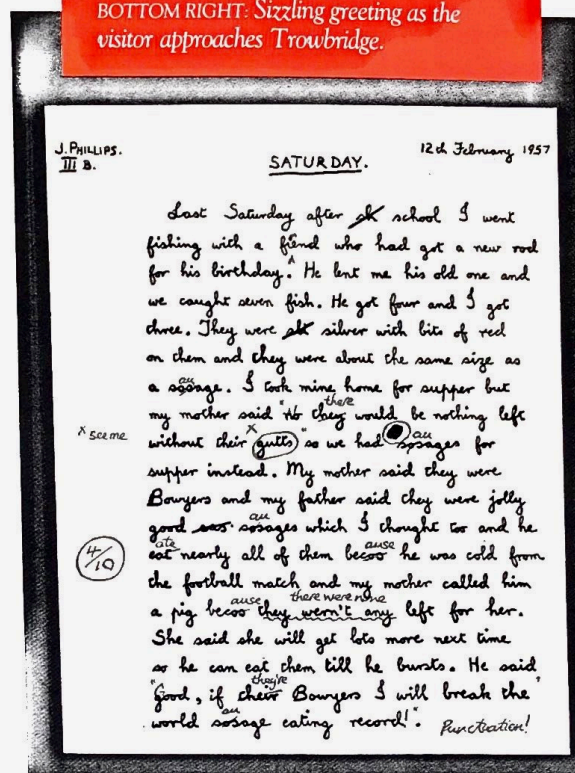
Everyone had a sense of urgency. Decisions had to be made spontaneously. 'A live pig comes in one day and goes out the next as a load of sausages.' The shop floor was kept informed. Lionel Welsford weighed up Bowyers' market position, 'We had to expand as quickly as possible before our competitors caught on', and 'to give a service that could not be beaten'. 'We had tremendous enthusiasm for the corporate mission. Our ability to see it right down the line was legendary and it permeated to the roots of each factory,' said Bill Newton Clare.

1968 was an important year for Bowyers. Firstly, the company acquired Brazils with factories in Witney and Amersham, thus giving them a stronger foothold in the London and south-east areas. Secondly, the acquisition of a 50% interest in L'Huisser – a French meat factory near Le Mans – gave them entry into the Common Market.

In the 60s and 70s prosperous companies like Bowyers were vulnerable to 'take-overs' and if the would-be purchaser made his offer sufficiently attractive, it was difficult for the

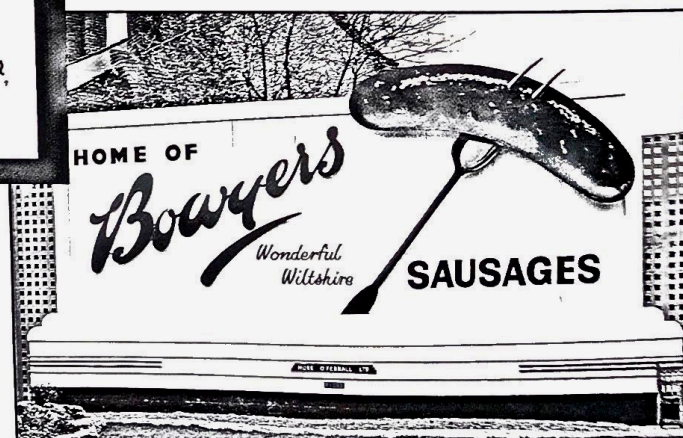
BELOW: Only four out of ten for spelling but ten out of ten for the sentiment!

BOTTOM RIGHT: Sizzling greeting as the visitor approaches Trowbridge.

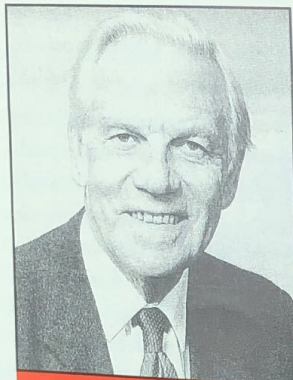


shareholders to resist it, whatever the Board of Directors might feel. The success of Bowyers thoroughly justified Bill Newton-Clare telling the shareholders at the Annual Meeting that "the year 1972 was very successful for our Company." Turnover increased to a record £23.165 million. The shareholders received dividends totalling 21¼%. By

1972 Bowyers had some three million shares in issue and Bill Newton-Clare and his co-directors and their families about a million only. It was very different from the time when the Harris family controlled the company by holding a majority of shares as it had done in the 1950s. Very substantial numbers of shares were held by banks and financial institutions such as Barclays, Midland, Royal Exchange, pension funds and the like. The situation was such that a really good offer to buy the business could well be accepted. Conscious of the take over possibility the directors decided to play 'hard to get', and indeed, if that raised the price that an eventual purchaser would pay for the Bowyers shares that would be in the interest of the shareholders. But Newton-Clare, Rogers, Oldroyde, Welsford and Milicevic, who had, by their drive, energy and capacity, built such a company as Bowyers, were unlikely to appreciate the idea that they would, if their company became part of a bigger organisation, lose to a large extent their freedom of action. The 'Management Today' article stressed the directors' 'determination to stay independent', and concluded, wrongly as it turned out, that it was unlikely that an unwelcome bid could succeed.



Newton-Clare recalls, "Many people were after us", and the highest offer seemed likely to come from the milk giant, Unigate Limited. Probably playing for time, the directors did seek amalgamation, as the article had suggested, first with G Brazil (Holdings) Limited and then, in 1972 Scot (Meat Products) Limited, of Bletchley was acquired. The name was changed to Scot Bowyers Limited. These mergers brought the joint sales to near the £40 million mark and produced a distribution force of 700 vans. Bowyers became the second biggest meat products manufacturer in the UK.



'Bill' Newton-Clare, CBE

Not long after the acquisition of Scots, Unigate had purchased all the shares in Scot Bowyers Limited. The valuation of his company, so Newton-Clare says, was £40 million, and Unigate offered £45 million. It was not possible to decline such an offer. Unigate representatives joined the board and Newton-Clare had confidence in its Chairman, Sir James Barker, who had been in the Wiltshire Regiment (and in Normandy fighting) with him in 1944. Bill stayed on initially as Bowyers' Chairman, with his team, Rogers as Managing Director and Oldroyde, Welsford and Milicevic. But then Sir James Barker left, and Bill's influence on the Unigate Board lessened. As has happened before many times and no doubt will happen again, the man who had built up his company and relinquished control, was unhappy as a board member of the acquiring company. Bill Newton-Clare found himself on a very large board, responsible for the meat division

but dreadfully frustrated, 'lost in a sea of milk!' He resigned in 1975. By 1980 Rogers, with Oldroyde and Welsford, had left, leaving only Mike Milicevic of the original team which had built Bowyers. Five years later he too had left.

Financially, those who left did not go empty handed. The pensions were appropriate to earnings and contributions. The share holdings of the Harris family and the long serving directors and employees of the company were not inconsiderable. Scrip issues, on occasions, three shares issued for every one share, had benefited all shareholders, management included. The Share Options Scheme introduced by Bill Newton-Clare – who had believed in paying well for good service – had benefited senior management as well.

Of senior management, Vic Udberg, the engineer, had an appreciable holding, as had Arthur Johnson. The latter is described by one of his colleagues as a chauvinistic character who at twelve years old helped his father in pig unloading and officially joined the company at sixteen. War service saw him become a sergeant major and after it he rejoined Bowyers and spent all his working life there. His final job was manager of the slaughtering meat, cutting, curing and by-products processing departments. He was with Bowyers for fifty years.

Those who worked long and well for Bowyers did not go unrewarded. After they left, some joined or set up other businesses, Bill Newton-Clare with the Fatstock Marketing Company, which by then owned Harris's of Calne – so, by a curious turn of the wheel of fortune, he found himself in his grandfather's chair at the Calne factory; Rogers, Welsford and Oldroyde successful or unsuccessful in new enterprises, still say that the happiest times of their working lives was when they built Bowyers in the 'sixties'.

Unigate Subsidiary

When Unigate took over Bowyers in 1972, its initial policy was to leave in place Bill Newton-Clare as Bowyers' Chairman, with his well tried team of Rogers, Welsford, Oldroyde, and Milicevic. The turn-over for sixty-five weeks to 31 March 1973 was nearly £30 million and the dividend paid was over half a million. The following table indicates what Unigate made out of Bowyers;

YEAR ENDED	TURNOVER	DIVIDENDS
3. 3. 74	£32,469,936	£1,269,827
3. 3. 75	£27,533,226	£720,379
3. 3. 79	£70,141,306	£1,938,069
3. 3. 80	£81,944,391	£2,486,910
3. 3. 84	£94,439,000	£227,000
3. 3. 85	£98,974,000	NIL

In the year ended March 1985, Bowyers made a loss of £1,637,000. Does the ghost of Raymond Harris give a hollow laugh? Bill Newton-Clare is silent. None of his competent board remained. In the last year of Bill's chairmanship, Bowyers made over £1.5 million for Unigate! On 5 July 1985, Unigate transferred the total shareholding in Bowyers to Northern Foods plc.

Northern Foods plc

The acquisition of Bowyers by Northern Foods in 1985 included five factories; Trowbridge, Sherburn, Witney, Amersham and Plymouth. The Sherburn-in-Elmet factory near Leeds with the Malton factory years previously, had made up together Porkshire Limited. Under Unigate, Sherburn operated as 'Bowyers, Sherburn' and Malton operated as 'Malton Bacon'.

Upon the sale to Northern, Malton, whose principle activities were killing pigs and bacon manufacture was retained by Unigate. The Sherburn factory, in 1985, produced pies, sausages, fried products and cooked meats; slaughtering having ceased some years earlier. Production of fried products (mainly Scotch eggs) was transferred to the Witney factory, the production space being converted into a new cold pie bakery. In 1988 the factory, employing 2,300, closed and all production was transferred to Trowbridge.

BOTTOM, TOP RIGHT: Continued investment in modern technology and management methods enable traditional tastes and flavours to be produced cost-effectively.



The closure was due to the company deciding to withdraw from van sales in the far North of England and Scotland, leaving all remaining depots serviceable from Trowbridge. During the transfer period, a fire caused by some contractors who had started work to convert the factory for another use by the Northern Foods Dairy Group, totally destroyed the factory, which was then demolished.

The Witney factory, acquired during the amalgamation with Brazils, closed in 1988 when Scotch egg production was transferred to Trowbridge. By that time Witney was producing mainly Tesco products and these were transferred elsewhere within Northern Foods.

Amersham was closed early in 1986 and production was transferred to the other factories. At that time the factories were also responsible for distributing their products to the van sales depots in their region. Amersham's depots were transferred to the remaining factories.

Plymouth factory became 'West Country Frozen Foods', and as such, became a separate entity from Bowyers, but concentrated on producing frozen pies, flans, and sausages under the Bowyer brand. This factory was sold to Hazelwoods at the end of January 1993, and its pie and sausage business was transferred to Trowbridge.

Trowbridge factory, the entire operation employing some 1,500 people, has benefited considerably from capital investment since 1985 and has changed quite markedly.

Early in 1988, the Pork Meat Division was finally closed. This Division was given the opportunity upon acquisition, to see if slaughtering could be run as a profitable entity. Unfortunately, the economics of running a comparatively small scale operation, and finding a good sale for the parts of the pigs no longer required by Bowyer manufacturing proved the operation unviable. Actually this has been one of the major changes in the meat products industry over recent



years. In the past, factories producing pork products killed their own pigs, but now, manufacturing units increasingly buy-in the pork they require. Traditionally, manufacturers were able to use up all the cuts of pork by producing a wide range of products. They would produce as much product as necessary, often varying the recipe according to availability. It was, and is still true, that you can't make money from killing pigs until all the cuts are sold or used. Changes in the High Street, with moves from branded products to own label, and the import of large amounts of foreign bacon, meant it became difficult to use up 'complete pigs'.

Retailers' use of their own labels, specified in their recipes, particular cuts of meat to achieve consistent products and therefore, made it difficult to use up whole pigs. Also, some of the old fashioned products are no longer in demand in the larger volumes necessary to warrant production, eg, black puddings, polonies, brawn, etc.

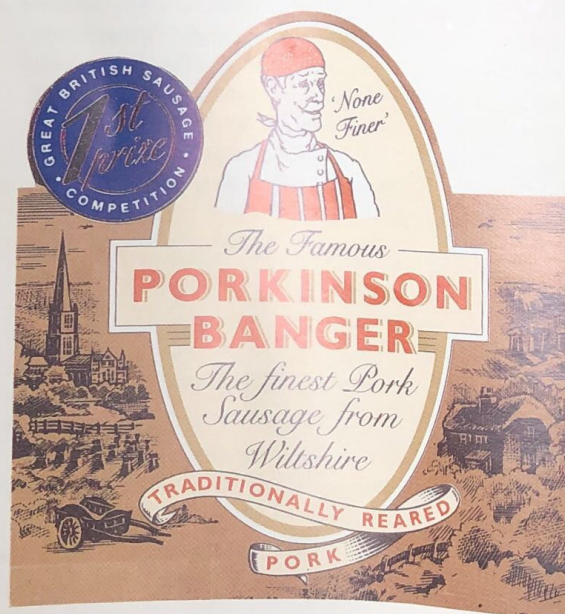
Bowyers use mainly shoulder meat and bellies now, and do not use backs or legs, which would once have been used for ham and bacon manufacture.

When the slaughtering operation was closed, the large boning operation was closed as well, and the factory bought in

the meat required, ready for use, although a small boning operation was retained at Shail's Lane, for certain products. Ultimately this closed.

Bacon production continued a while longer, using backs bought in specially for curing and slicing. However, the economics of this proved difficult and the tradition on which the company was built, came to an end, and the last large scale producer of bacon in Wiltshire – the last within the famous industry – ceased production.

The large boning hall and slaughterhouse were converted into a fried products unit – the most modern of its type, and the workforce from the bacon-slicing opening (the Pre-Pack) were transferred, to learn some new skills. In this



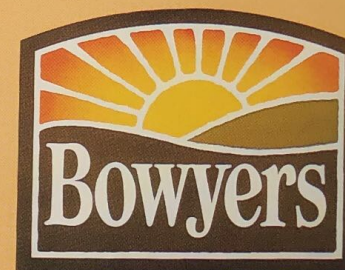
department, equipment from Japan and the United States combine to produce vast quantities of Scotch eggs, egg products of other sizes, and fried sausages. These products are sold under the Bowyer brand, and to Marks and Spencer.

The sausage department refurbished in 1988/89, gained an extension in 1992, at a cost of £4.5million and is now the largest producer of fresh sausages in the UK. It also, now, has equipment to produce and pack frozen sausages. This cost a further £2m. Recently, the traditional methods of sausage manufacture were re-introduced, and these premium products are sold to leading High Street retailers, under the company's 'Porkinson' brand. At the same time, the company continues to invest in the latest machinery to increase efficiency.

Only the best ingredients are used in the production of all sausages at Bowyers. The generalised publicity concerning the content of the 'British Banger', that occurs in the press from time-to-time, is unjust, as it certainly does not apply to Bowyers' products.

The Bakery, up to 1992, produced both hot and cold eating pies, for nearly all the leading retailers in the UK. In that year, hot pies manufacture was transferred to Manchester, into the newly acquired Trafford Park Bakery. Bowyers' bakery now produces a wide range of cold eating pies, for many major High Street retailers.

The company has always been in the forefront in developments in the industry with progressive manufacturing techniques, management accounting systems and distribution methods. One thing is certain, the next time you hear of a major development in the meat industry, Bowyers will be involved in it somewhere.





Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many Bowyer people, past and present who have contributed to my research and without whom I could not have compiled this document for this remarkable company. In addition

I would like to thank my good friends Stephen Beaumont, Derek Parker, Christopher Chidley, Paul Succony and Noreen Perrett for their help and enduring support.

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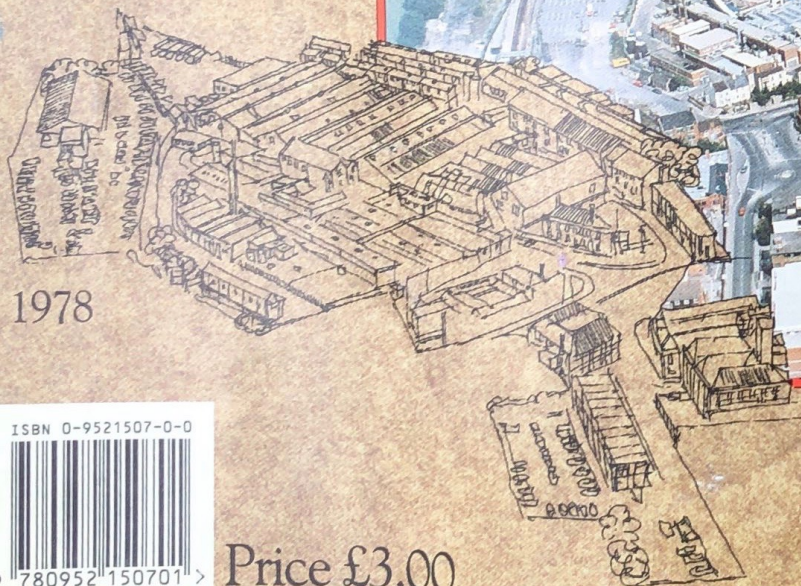
Business as usual during floods of 1993.

BOWYERS – two centuries of progress

In 1808, Abraham Bowyer, a miller who lived in Trowbridge, began to sell home-cured bacon and sausages which immediately found favour with discerning people in the neighbourhood. Almost two hundred years later, all that is left of this cottage industry is Bowyers' prestigious name and the high quality of the products it sells. Although the company grew steadily throughout its history, the turning point in its fortunes came about in 1955, when the end of meat rationing co-incided with the appointment of Bill Newton Clare as general manager. From that time onwards, Bowyers never looked back.



1958



1978

The Innox site 1993

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