

Newton Abbot Museum Road name suggestions

Nomination 1: Vicary Road

Celebrating the wool and leather industry of the Vicary Family, this is particularly poignant given the current demolition of the mill, formerly run by the Vicary family, at Bradley Lane. *N.B. There is a road called Vicary Close so this may not be suitable.*

Background

The Vicary family had been involved with the wool trade in the sixteenth century in South Molton and Bideford.

The Newton Bushel wool business was started by Robert Vicary in 1747. He also ran a Fellmongers yard at Crediton.

Moses Vicary (the grandson of Robert), was a businessman of exceptional ability. An article written by Charles Vicary in the 1920's states "much of the credit for the industrial development of Newton Abbot is due to Moses Vicary and his father-in-law Gilbert Doke".

Moses Vicary bought a tan yard in Bradley Lane in 1837. This was the beginning of the Vicary family's involvement with the leather as well as the wool industry.

Vicary's wool and leather works expanded considerably in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1860 John Vicary purchased the ruins of Bickford's Paper Mills situated at the top of Bradley Lane. On this site a fellmongering (the removal of the wool from the sheepskins) and tanning mill were constructed. This was in addition to Bradley Mills, which had been rebuilt in 1833.

The Mill had several fires and rebuilds during its life. During the 1920's Vicary's employed 700 men. The mills were Newton Abbot's main employers apart from the Railway.

Vicary's produced the finest quality leather, which was mostly used in the manufacture of shoes.

During the 1914-1918 War Vicary's became contracted by the Admiralty and the War Office making harnesses and bandoliers for soldiers.

This contact with the War Office continued with the outbreak of the Second World War. Vicary's were contracted to make flying jackets for pilots in the Royal Air Force.

The firm began to decline after the Second World War and ceased trading in 1972.

Nomination 2: Bibbings Road

Celebrating the pharmaceutical and photographic work of the Bibbings family.

Background

Mr John Henry Bibbings (1852-1942) started his career with a seven-year apprenticeship under Hinton Lake, Chemist of Exeter.

Following John's death in 1942, the business passed to Arthur and Kathleen Bibbings, and Arthur employed a pharmacist to dispense drugs. The mews of buildings behind the shop became photographic developing rooms, complete with lead-lined tanks, as Arthur's main love was photography.

Arthur developed his hobby as a business, which involved portrait photography, as well as taking a keen interest in both landscape and industrial photography.

The building is now 'The Pharmacy Café' and the original interior is still in place.

John opened the pharmacy in Queen Street in 1877. The shop front still has the two tall bow windows of plate glass. The 'drugs run' within the mahogany cabinets consists of 117 small drawers. The labels record in pharmaceutical Latin the names of drugs popularly used at that time. The mews of buildings behind the shop housed a laboratory and storage where the pharmacy's drugs were produced.

As part of his business, Mr Bibbings used his knowledge of botany to create his perfumes. Several large display bottles, or Carboys, were filled with coloured water and displayed in the window; these bore the names of Mr Bibbings' famous perfumes: Devonia Violets

Nomination 3: Ridgways Street

Celebrating 200 years of a family run business

Background

The Ridgway family had a long association with footwear in the town, starting as cobblers prior to 1820. They went on to run an independent shoe shop.

In 1893 the family had a boot making and shoe repairing premises at 17 Wolborough Street and a shop at number 27.

Mr Bob Ridgway joined the family business aged 15, in 1927, and remembered the farmers buying themselves a new pair of boots every autumn when the Cheese and Onion Fair was held.

Ridgways made sturdy hobnailed boots for farmers and clay miners. A good pair of hobnailed boots sold for about a guinea, which would now be worth over £60.

E. Ridgway and Son Ltd.

Bank Street premises The Bank Street shop opened in 1937, following rumours that the Wolborough Street premises might be demolished due to a new development plan for the town centre.

As an insurance, Mr Ridgway bought the premises in Bank Street, which was a shoe business called Dicks. The war created a lot of business for Ridgways, with Mr Ridgway recalling 'during the war we repaired between 2,000 and 3,000 shoes and boots a week. Local repairs, shoes for evacuees, and a fair percentage of Army boots.'

The firm bought the last shipment of leather to leave Vicary's tannery in Bradley Lane when it closed just after the Second World War. Although, shortly after the war, foreign competition meant Ridgways turned their focus solely on retail.

Described by locals as a "landmark" in the town, in what was due to be its 200th year of trading in 2020, Ridgways was forced to close following the impact of a gas leak on Bank Street and then the coronavirus pandemic.

Nomination 4: Watts, Blake and Bearne (not sure how you would make the road name)

The name Watts, Blake and Bearne appears for the first time in the port books of Teignmouth in 1861. Watts, Blake and Bearne have been the largest ball clay producer in Europe, and together with the railway and Vicary's Mill has been one of the largest employers in the area.

Watts, Blake and Bearne also used to own Candy & Co (Heathfield) where bricks, tiles and pipes were made, together with a small amount of Art Pottery in the 1920's.

Nomination 5: Pethybridge street

J. S. Pethybridge was Newton Abbot's oldest outfitters, based at 86 Queen Street, they started trading in 1907. The store closed in 1983.

Nomination 6: Beare

Background

Henry Beare and Sons Foundry, of Newton Abbot, were engineers and iron founders. Made manhole covers and grates visible around the town.

1870 "H. Beare, agricultural implement maker, iron founder and commission agent. Liverton Works and Queen Street, Newton Abbot... steam engines, thrashing and winnowing machines sold and manufactured any size any principle..."