

# NOW and THEN

## 2, High Street, Ringwood.

Two High Street is one of Ringwood's most loved buildings, especially the clock which has marked time at Fridays Cross for generations. The old photograph shows the property when it was Alfred George Hext the watchmaker's shop in about 1890. Before him the shop had been owned by James Adams, another watchmaker and one of Ringwood's earliest photographers.

Mr. Hext took over about 1869, coming from Christchurch, where his father was also a watchmaker. Two years later the census shows George Hext was only 23, with a wife and two small children.

Contrary to recent press reports that the clock has adorned the building's facade since 1800, the clock has now been expertly dated to around 1875, which confirms the oral tradition that it was George Hext who put it there. This is also proved by a photograph of the floral arch erected at Fridays Cross in 1868 which clearly shows the clock was not on the building at that time.

Mr & Mrs Hext went on to have



c1890

five more children, including James Hext who took over from his father in 1914, followed by Jim's son Leslie after WWII.

The 1988 photograph shows the shop, by then known as Webb & Hext, with its shutters down prior to the start of the day's business. Sadly by this time the building had lost its chimneys and the glazing bars on the first floor windows. The brickwork had been painted and brown tiles added under the ground floor windows. The face of the clock which was originally black with gold numerals, had been replaced by an inferior dial painted blue.



1988

After the business closed about 1990, the shop stood empty for four years until China Studio relocated there from Lynes Lane. Unfortunately a project by the Millennium Committee to restore the clock, which had fallen into disrepair, had to be abandoned. The owners tried very hard to keep the old clock ticking and in 2002 paid for it to be repaired.

However for the last few years since the closure of the China Studio the clock has again stopped and the clock face itself is in dire need of restoration. Now the building has begun a new phase of its history as Friday's Tapas Bar and the present owner of the whole property Chris Wood has launched a fund to save the clock on [www.savethefridayscrossclock.co.uk](http://www.savethefridayscrossclock.co.uk). Hopefully the future of the clock will soon be secured and once again will mark the passing hours at Fridays Cross.



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