

NOW and THEN

Lorraine Tarrant Antiques/Eskape Hairdressers, Market Place, Ringwood

Market Place
1960



This building with its double fronted Georgian bow windows dates back at least to the 18th century when it was an ironmongers, remaining as such for the next two hundred years.

By 1796 the shop was owned by a Mr George Benson, who when he died in 1829 passed it on to his son George Henry Benson. George Jnr was a successful businessman, becoming an agent for agricultural implements and for the Sun Fire and Life insurance company during the Victorian period. He employed a young teenage assistant Henry Rose who eventually took over the business in 1878. Mr Rose continued right up to his death at the age of 85 in 1933. During this long number of years Mr Rose saw many changes in the trade of Ringwood. His obituary recorded that 'Whilst every business house has been structurally altered, yet that which he occupied is identically the same as when he first entered them about seventy years ago.'

Mr Rose's son Percy carried on until about 1956 when the business was sold to brothers Gerald and John Carpenter. The new owners also bought Alexander of Fordingbridge and so the names of the two shops were combined to become Rose & Alexander. Although the Ringwood shop was refitted internally, it still retained its Georgian frontage and its 'old world' charm.

The interior was an Aladdin's cave of ironmongery, tools, kitchen and garden equipment, which smelt of a wonderful combination of paraffin, sawdust and fertiliser. During opening hours the shop had a collection of garden spades and forks outside the frontage and a traditional assortment of mowers, hose and tubs on the cobbles next to the pavement, all of which had to be put away each day at closing time. On Wednesday market days this collection greatly increased to cover the road in front of the shop.

Rose & Alexander eventually closed in Ringwood in the 1980s, thus ending two hundred years of history. For a few years during the early 1990s the shop stood empty, presenting a sorry sight until the Rose family, who still owned the actual building, sold it to developer Peter Hayward. He restored the property and split it into two separate shops, each accessed by the two original doors.

Lorraine Tarrant took on the western half as an antique shop, a business she still continues successfully today. Recently she and her shop appeared on the BBC antiques programme 'Antique Road Trip'. The eastern side became a home furnishings shop for some time and is now Eskape hairdressers.



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