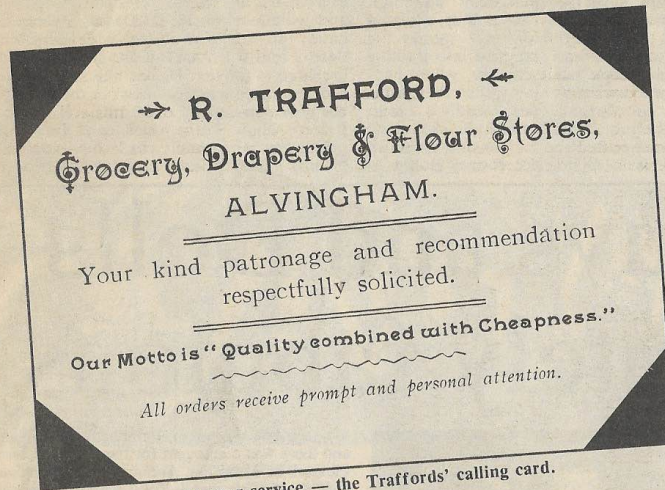


# Last Post for village shop



At your service — the Traffords' calling card.



Grandparents Mr and Mrs Bob Trafford on the occasion of their Golden Wedding.

**A**FTER 130 years of serving the needs of Alvingham, the Trafford family are to call it a day.

The last stamp and the last bread loaf will be sold at their village shop and post office at the end of this month — and Bob will at last be able to look forward to enjoying a holiday after 40 years of being open all hours!

Bob is the fourth generation of the Trafford family to serve behind the counter in the village. His grandfather Robert, who was the youngest of a family of 11, arrived there from South Thoresby with his parents as a 10-year-old boy.

When Robert married in 1880 he started his own business in Saltfleetby but returned to Alvingham just five years later when his mother retired. And for the next 40 years he traded from the shop, developing country

many yars by the village Blacksmith Mr Charles Dowse but transferred to the shop 37 years ago when his niece Mrs Rose Janney, who is still living in the same house in the village, resigned from the post.

### Time consuming

And how business has changed over the years. Bob and his wife Dot have seen the goods supplied change a great deal in their 40 years at Alvingham. When they first took over many of the basic commodities, such as sugar, flour, lard, butter, dried fruit, rice and pepper, all came in bulk and had to be weighed out and packed — quite a time consuming pastime.

Goods were delivered direct by the manufacturers and their reps called monthly selling anything from soap powders to biscuits, tea, jams, sweets and cakes. Regular deliveries were also made

take for granted, were non-existent when Bob took over. In those days it was lard or nothing. Tissues had yet to arrive too — as had pet food, one of today's biggest sellers. Farm cats and dogs used to live on mice, birds, household scraps and milk.

Bread was supplied by Rowsons of Louth — their bakery was on the corner of Northgate and Eastgate — three times a week. But of course in those days it did not come sliced, or wrapped. Even vinegar came in 12-gallon casks which had to be tapped and was measured out in half-pint and one-pint pewter measures.

### News and views

Not that the village shop has been there solely for selling things — it has always been a place where people have met up and exchanged news and views. Aubrey Norton got to know Alvingham Village Stores

Shopkeeping has been such a way of life that it is certainly going to be a wrench to close the doors to the public. But VAT and the burgeoning health regulations, not to mention bookkeeping at night, do begin to pall after 40 years! "It did take a lot of soul searching to come to the decision to close," he admits, "but I won't miss having to go out to the Cash and Carry when the roads are frosty!"

### Smiling face

The advent of the supermarket has hit the Traffords in recent years but Bob feels the village shop still has its part to play in the community. "I do think people should support their village shops as and when they can," he said. "We can't touch them on price but we can provide a service and do our best."

Families may have come and gone in

rounds in surrounding villages first of all with his horse-drawn covered cart before graduating in 1917 to his first Ford van.

### Van delivery

In 1925 Percy Trafford, the fourth of Robert's five sons, took over as the village grocer. Percy had been badly injured in the 1914-18 War but he still had the drive to branch out into collecting eggs and fresh farm butter, mainly from farms at Skidbrooke, then served weekly by van delivery, to sell directly to corner shops in Grimsby and Cleethorpes. Farm butter was a great delicacy in those heady days before the advent of supermarkets selling low fat spreads and marg!

The present village grocer Bob Trafford joined his father in the business in 1949 after completing his two years' National Service in the Army — and has been there ever since, taking no holidays to ensure the business ran smoothly. His father passed away in 1968.

The village post office had been run for

cakes. Regular deliveries were also made by wholesale grocers, most of which disappeared a quarter of a century ago to be replaced by cash and carry shops. Today Bob pays a twice-weekly visit to the cash and carry to replenish his stocks.

Paraffin was a major commodity at the village stores in the era before electricity. And it was a boon for the remote farmers to have a paraffin delivery thanks to the Trafford family. The tins of paraffin used to be fastened on each side of the engine on a wooden platform. The delivery van carried a measure and a funnel to ensure the correct amount was delivered too.

### Salted down

Also much in demand in the winter time were large bars of salt as almost everyone connected with farming killed at least one pig which was salted down — there were no freezers then — and eaten later as bacon.

And the soft toilet rolls, in colours to match the bathroom suite which we now

got to know Alvingham Village Stores when he delivered the bread from Rowsons and he is still a frequent caller. Bob admits Saturday mornings often remind him of the Last of the Summer Wine, with lots of old comrades from the war reminiscing over the counter. "I must admit it's something I really look forward to every week," he told the Leader. "They always come in early, they don't stay in bed late like the younger members of the village!"

Bob has grown up with many of the families he serves, as had his family before him. Four generations of the Traffords have served five generations of the Shucksmith family as well as four generations of the Hands and the Graves — what a record. And many people have continued to trade at the shop all their lives. Take Mrs Gibbon for instance; she is 99 and still has her order delivered to her home every week now she is not able to amble up to the shop in person. "It's always a joy to stop for a chat," Bob adds, "she has such a wonderful memory."

Families may have come and gone in Alvingham but the Traffords have gone on for what seems forever. Bob may be shutting the shop doors but his will be a smiling face which will continue to be seen in Alvingham for what everyone hopes will be many a long year.

### Second honeymoon

Given his freedom from selling stamps, bread and the Leader, he intends to get out in the garden more. He will be concentrating on getting his vegetable plot in full production and he is famed for his strawberries already! An avid Grimsby Town fan, he will continue to stand on the terraces every Saturday and will be willing them on as they strive to keep above the relegation zone in Division 1.

But number one on both Bob and his wife Dot's list of priorities is having a second honeymoon. After 40 years of concentrating on serving the needs of a growing village they certainly deserve a break — and we all wish them well.



Bob behind the counter.



Thank you for all your good service — Philip Shucksmith thanks Bob for 130 continuous years of looking after the Shucksmiths of Alvingham.