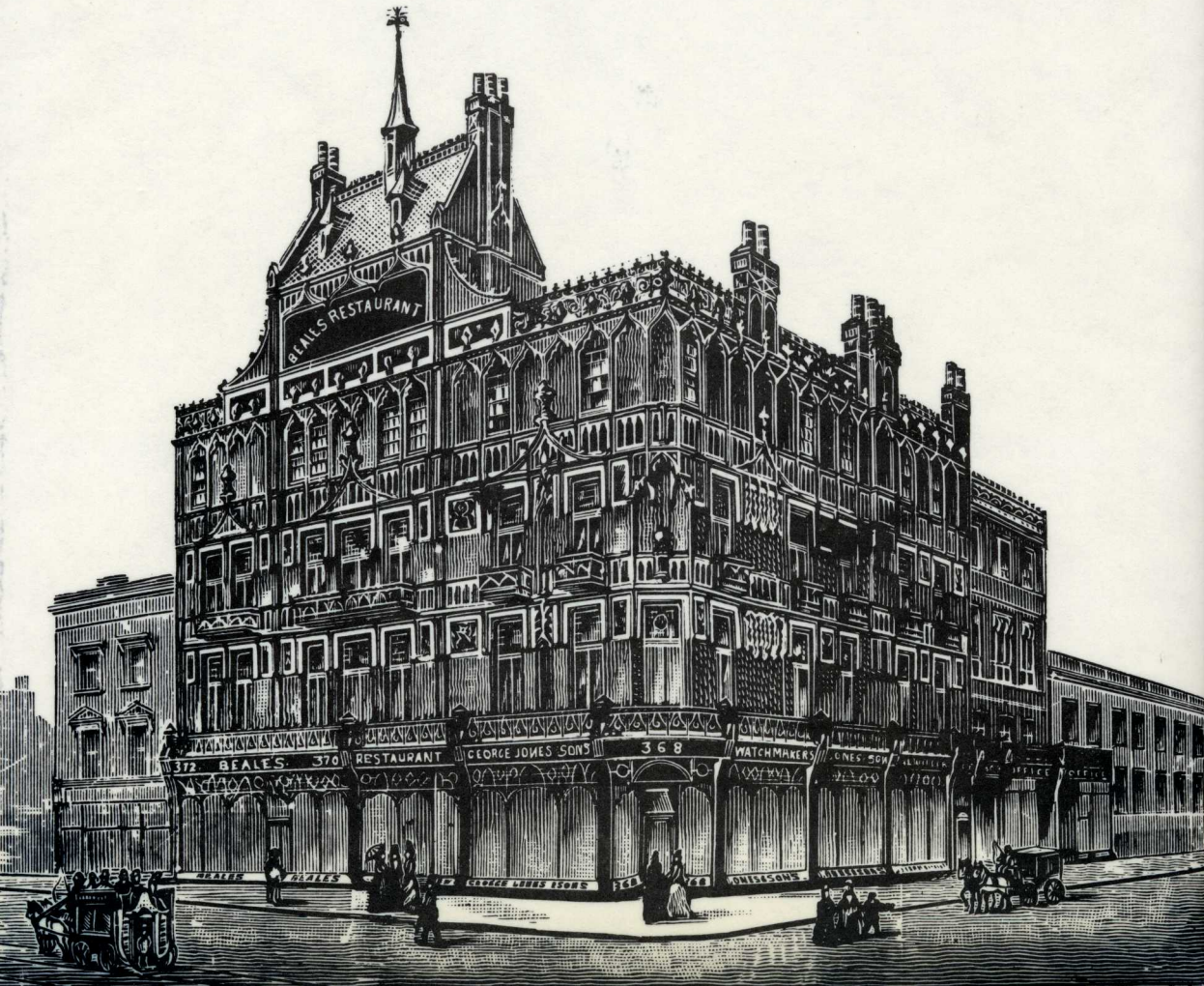
Minding Our Own Business

by

JOHN BEALE



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Preface

In the beginning was Grandfather. Grandfather had gone up to live in Heaven long ago but could be visualised from his portrait, - bearded and corpulent, magnificent in his scarlet aldermanic robes. Grandfather it was that had conceived and brought forth out of nothing Beale's of Holloway itself, that mighty monument that stood four-square and triumphant for all men to marvel at, right at the bottom of the Camden Road.

Baby Beales born thereafter, even unto the third and fourth generation, came into the world mainly to serve Grandfather's temple of commerce as priests and acolytes, and spend their lives uncomplainingly in its behalf.

What Grandfather had wrought was good, and extremely solid. It would last for ever and was greatly to the benefit of all the lucky citizens and customers living in the prosperous North London suburb of Islington, - especially those most fortunate of all who lived in that part of it called Holloway.

So solidly did Grandfather build his fortress that no doubt it would have stood for centuries. But after eighty years it became old-fashioned and unsuitable for the purposes for which it had been custom-built in 1889. And so the poor old thing was flattened by the demolition men, and Beale's of Holloway became no more.

This is the story of how four generations of one family ran their own limited liability company, from almost the beginning of privately owned companies, up to what might prove to be the beginning of the end of them. Should it by good fortune survive in some dark corner long enough to acquire a period flavour, it could conceivably provide light reading for students in the days to come, when private capitalism itself may be no more.

If I can recreate for future generations some of the feel of private enterprise in its heyday, and show the vices and virtues of one long-lived specimen and what made it tick, I shall have achieved my object. If the more tolerant reader puts down the book with some amusement, and, as I would like to think, some affection for the old firm, so much the better.

My thanks are due to my wife, my ex-colleagues, and the older members of the staff for their help and encouragement to me in writing it, and my apologies if the more lurid revelations cause them some embarrassment.

John Beale

1 Pre-History

As the year 1961 approached, the year in which they would celebrate the centenary of their company, the directors of Beale's Ltd, Bakers and Caterers, of Holloway Road, North London, practiced a mild deception upon the unsuspecting public that thronged the busy pavement outside their august emporium.

High up on the frontage of the Victorian building much admired by John Betjeman himself, was to be seen some ornamental tiling bearing various inscriptions. Tiny mosaic tiles, painstakingly set into the pleasant rust-red brickwork, stated plainly, as they had since 1889, that this was Beale's Restaurant, - a fact that was still demonstrably true.

The directors were more concerned with two smaller slogans, one on each side of the aforementioned 'Beale's Restaurant'. That on the left proclaimed 'Established 1866', that on the right 'Rebuilt 1889', and both slogans irked the directors considerably. William Beale and Co, as such, was certainly established there in 1866, but Grandpa Beale had opened up a pint-sized baker's shop on Highgate Hill some five years earlier in 1861, before the move to Holloway Road.

The directors had felt justified in claiming the earlier year as the date of their establishment, and were already using it on note-headings, invoices, and advertisements. Its authenticity must not be open to question, especially at the time of the centenary. But, for those with good eyesight at any rate, it was being contradicted publicly by that aggravating slogan on the wall, - 'Established 1866'.

Would it be mortal sin, the directors asked each other, to paint out the offending slogan quickly, before the public noticed the discrepancy? Whether or no their immortal souls were jeopardised, the coincidence of scaffolding being already in position for other repairs proved tempting. Word was passed to the works department, who found that some of the tiles were loose, and that the adhesion of a coat of paint would save them from falling on to the heads of customers below. It was evidently a public duty and was put in hand forthwith.

The other slogan, 'Rebuilt 1889', was also of annoyance to the Board. An expensive new shop-front had been installed below, and the bakeries were being equipped with up-to-date machinery. The emphasis was all on 'Go-Go' Twentieth Century efficiency. In New York they were pulling down sky-scrapers every ten years or so as being obsolete. Yet here were we openly confessing that the headquartes of our brave new world were seven times as old or more. So out went the

right-hand slogan as well, and no scruples were wasted on that one, especially as it made everything symmetrical. And if the directors lay awake at night wrestling with their consciences over the left-hand one, nobody else seems to have noticed anything amiss.

The Board was now free to consider the celebrations thought proper for the centenary. What form should they take, - a grand dinner and dance for the staff (some 500 in all), together with their partners? 1960 profits were thin for such extravagance. Perhaps we should be more modest and invite only the seniors and long-service staff? But where to draw the line without upsetting those excluded from the fun and games? Would it be easier just to hold a press reception and invite the Mayor and local bigwigs? One thing at least was decided, and that was to prepare and distribute a glossy centenary booklet to record our doings past and present.

A brief history of the family would be needed for the glossy booklet. Trevor Beale, lone representative of the fourth generation, offered to put in some research in order to provide it.

One source of information was the Worshipful Company of Bakers in the City of London. Trevor's father, Edward, had served as Master of the Company, and his Uncle John was already serving on its Court. An earlier John Beale was known to have been Master in 1779. Moreover a William Beale, son of Edward Beale of Harpenden, had been apprenticed to his uncle William with the approval of the Court in 1632. Had we really been baking London's bread for three hundred and thirty years or more?

This was impossible to prove conclusively. But Trevor's searches proved, to our satisfaction at any rate, our continuous existence as bakers back to John Beale of Therfield, Herts, who opened up a baker's shop at No 75 Oxford Street, London, in 1769.

Delving into the Church registers of Therfield and the little villages nearby, Trevor found a Beale being born, married, or deceased on almost every page. If not eminent our ancestors were certainly prolific.

With our enthusiasm whetted, we climbed precariously still further up our glorious family tree. Soon we were back to William Beale the Elder, Yeoman, of Buckland, Herts, who died in 1570. Further back still and we found them unable to spell their own name correctly. 'Pray for the soules of John Bele, Gentylman, and Ann and Agnes his wyfes, the whyche John decessed in the yere of our Lord God MVXVl', we are enjoined upon a brass plate in All Saints Church, Radwell, near Hitchin, Herts.

And, with a modest stretch of our imagination, could we not claim kinship with John Beel who was laid to rest in Hitchin Church itself five hundred years ago, together with Margery his wife, - 'Hic jacet Johannes Beel et Margeria ux ejus quae Marg, ob 14 May MCCCCLXXVll'. At the end of the search we were left wondering which side we were on at Hastings. We decided that as an old Hertfordshire family we very likely backed the king who got the arrow in his eye.

1861 now appeared as but a minor milestone in our saga. How much further back could we legitimately claim to have been established? William the Yeoman was the first to spell his name correctly, but a yeoman, we felt, whatever else he might be about, could hardly be described as carrying on a family business. And so, with some regret, we settled for John Beale of Oxford Street in 1769. This enabled us to shelve the 1961 junkettings entirely, and gave us another eight years to think about arrangements for a bi-centenary in 1969.

To prepare the public in good time for this event, a discreet note in small type, - 'A family business since 1769' - was added to our noteheading, to replace 'Established 1861'. It was small and discreet because the Beales were having second thoughts about being two hundred years of age. The World might think that a firm so old might be a bit old-fashioned too. Once again 'Go-Go' must not be sacrified to 'Ye Olde' in our propaganda. And would the World care twopence anyway, - provided that the steak was tender and the bread was fresh.

We were therefore proclaiming our antiquity, - but doing so in the smallest type, presumably in the hope that forward-looking customers would never notice. The family tree had been hardly worth the climbing after all.

So much for the primeval Beales, emerging fish-like from the ocean. From 1861 we are on firmer ground. This was the dawn of our suburban drama, - the year in which Grandpa Beale descended without warning upon the defenceless inhabitants of Highgate.

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2 Vaulting Ambition

If there is to be a hero of this story, the honour must go, with some reservations, to my grandfather, William Beale, - ten generations and five Williams after the aforementioned William the Yeoman of Buckland. Our hero, William the Sixth of Herts and First of Holloway, progressed from rags to riches, through hard work and perseverance, in a way that would much have rejoiced the heart of Samuel Smiles.

We know little about William's father, Edward, save that he was born in that same village of Buckland in 1814, that he forsook the traditional baking and farming of his family, became a bricklayer in nearby Buntingford where his son William was born, and that in pursuance of his craft he helped build Broxbourne Church. His claim to fame must rest on having fathered William the First of Holloway.

I would imagine that Edward, however hardworking and respectable he may have been, would not have been sending little Willie off to Eton and Trinity on mid-nineteenth century bricklayer's pay. Therefore we must assume that William did not receive the benefit of higher education, and presumably learnt no more than the village school at Buntingford could teach him.

In 1852, at the age of 18, William left Buntingford, to be apprenticed to his uncle Edward, a baker of Popham Street in Islington. This Edward had been apprenticed to his own uncle John in Wigmore Street, who in turn had been apprenticed to his eldest brother, also named John, at No 75 Oxford Street, London. These two Johns were separated by nine other brothers and sisters, and their parents, John and Sarah Beale of Therfield, had run out of Christian names for boys. William thus followed a curious tradition going back to 1632 of boy Beales setting off for a bakery career in London from their close-linked villages in Hertfordshire.

In an interview given to the 'Caterer' magazine in 1897 he is quoted as saying, 'I learned the trade of baker and confectioner from my uncle, Edward Beale, at his shop in Popham Street, Islington. In 1861 I commenced business in a very small way in Highgate Hill. I was twenty-three at the time and had only a capital of £50 of my own. With this, and £200 which I borrowed, I started. Business prospered, and in 1866 I secured a lease in Holloway Road, at a rent of £110 per year'.

It was indeed in 'a very small way' that William started up in the poverty-stricken little shop at No 6 Whittington Terrace, Highgate Hill, Upper Holloway, though we still have an early photograph that he was proud enough to have taken of it. It hardly looks worth the £250 that our young hopeful paid for it, in terms of 1861 money values.

For the time being it was a hard slog for William and his wife Christina. The heavy bread dough would be mixed and moulded all by hand, - back-breaking work carried out in the heat, dust, steam, and coal fumes of the traditional London basement bakehouse of the time.

I myself have seen the little shop, now demolished, and looked down through the rusting iron gratings under the window, into the dingy bakehouse under the shop. Back in Charles Dickens' times penniless vagrants would sometimes sleep, hungrily but warmly, on the pavement gratings outside bakers' shops, with the rich steamy smell of baked bread surrounding them, while the baker sweated at his ovens through the night.

William was strong and tough. When morning came he would set out with his horse and van, and deliver his own bread, hot from the oven, to the surrounding district. And Christina would mind the shop, as bakers' wives had done for centuries before her. In addition she found time to produce the first two of her seven children. William Edward was the first of the family to be awarded the honour of two Christian names. Baby Thomas Henderson arrived just as they were preparing to move to Lower Holloway in 1866. Meanwhile the business had grown and some substantial outbuildings had been erected at the rear of the premises.

Grandfather had been studying the possibilities of trade in Lower Holloway. Prosperous City merchants were moving out from the inner suburbs to the new dormitory area of Islington, followed by the more humble Pooters they employed. Holloway Road, the 'Hollow Way' from Highbury to Highgate, part of the ancient highway from London to the North, lay ripe and ready for development.

Never a man to shilly-shally, William took the plunge and moved his little business and his little family in time to get in just before the rush. Almost outside his shop on Highgate Hill there lay the famous stone where RichardWhittington rested and heard the bells of London calling him to return and become Lord Mayor of London. Grandfather must surely have been similarly inspired as he set out for fame and fortune in the same direction.

In 1866 Grandfather secured his first beach-head in Lower Holloway with the lease of No 368 Holloway Road, - 'formerly Vine Cottage but now known as Holloway House . . . . abutting at the rear a field called Sibell'. The cobbled sunken highway lay three

or four steps down from the wide pavement. It might have been from here, in earlier days, that a man on horseback rode daily to the City, crying 'Holloway Cheesecakes' round the streets.

But rural Islington was disappearing fast. Soon horse-drawn buses would start to ply from Camden Town to Finsbury Park, crossing Holloway Road at the Nag's Head. Others would leave Beale's corner for Kings Cross down the Caledonian Road. Holloway Road from our corner to the Nag's Head became one of the best shopping parades in London outside of the West End.

To the corner opposite us, across Tollington Road, came the brothers William and John Jones one year later, to start up as drapers in the small shop at No 2 Peartree Terrace, with one assistant and an errand boy, and the first day's sales recorded as being £3-7-0. From these beginnings grew the department store known as Jones Brothers, later acquired by Selfridges, and later still by the John Lewis Partnership. The two families of Beales and Jones built up their respective empires with some rivalry and a little jealousy, as we shall see.

William's new shop was an appreciable jump in size and standing from the down-at-heel mini-bakery on Highgate Hill. He was aiming at the top end of the much varied population of the new urban Islington. He would deliver daily and twice daily if required, to the imposing houses springing up in Tufnell Park, Finsbury Park, Camden Road, and Highbury, - houses for well-to-do families and their servants.

The plain fare of Highgate Hill was toned up considerably. Meals in good-class society were elaborate affairs and the services of a good quality baker and confectioner were in demand. William extended his range to include a selection of top quality groceries and provisions. He opened a small cafe at the rear of the shop, where Mrs Beale held court for the fashionable ladies of the district. There they would sip their glass of port and nibble a biscuit after their shopping, while their carriages awaited them outside.

For the next twenty-four years both William's person and William's business continued to expand. He let No 368 at a profit and took over Nos 370 and 372, together with houses and gardens down Tollington Road at the side and rear. It was all part of a site leased in 1793 for 96½ years at a fixed rent of £6-0-0 per year, - the possibility of inflation not occurring to the landlord at the time. William built a bakery at the rear of No 376, and took on another shop at No 464 temporarily, pending the large-scale re-building he was now contemplating.

From Grandma Beale's back parlour cafe there developed an outdoor catering department that became the largest in North London. It was hard work for the family. An entry in the banquet diary for 1887, of our catering for 800 persons at the old Holborn Town Hall,

reminds me that my father could never pass the place later without groaning at the back-breaking work it had involved, shifting the heavy crates of china and cutlery up and down the stairs.

William was making money. His ambition grew with his success. He borrowed £28,000 from the bank and set about the complete re-building of his site. The planning and erection of the new Beale's was Grandfather's most remarkable achievement. The new premises included a department food store, large restaurants, banqueting rooms, bakeries, and an electric power station in the basement. The main building, completed in 1889, could stand muster with many of the fine shops that men like Selfridge, Whiteley, and Gamage, were building in the West End and the City. It was to be the pride and joy of the family for many years to come.

One year later Grandfather was confident enough to plan for the flotation of a public company on the London Stock Exchange, with a capital of £75,000, for the further extension of the business. On the 18th June 1890 the first company to be known as Beale's Ltd was duly incorporated, ready for the flotation. With half of June over, therefore, we see William riding confidently on the very crest of the wave. He was now 56 years of age, a proud and respected citizen, a member of the Islington Vestry, and a Churchwarden of St Barnabas Church, Holloway.

But pride goeth before a fall, and William's pride was to be cut down suddenly and in no gentle fashion. His widely advertised flotation was sharply criticised, almost unanimously, in the press. He was portrayed either as a pretentious fool, which was bad enough, or as a rogue, which was even worse. By the end of June his flotation was seen by everyone to have been a failure and a joke.

No record of the number of shares actually subscribed for exists. It was certainly humiliatingly small. The money was returned within days, as soon as the full failure was realised. And on the 15th of August the London Gazette recorded that Beale's Ltd had been decently buried, barely two months after its formation.

It was all such an unnecessary disaster. At a time when fraudulent company promotion was widespread, William had unwittingly made the worst possible impression upon the financial critics. In omitting vital profit and loss figures from the abridged prospectus published in the press, and by revealing only part of the sum payable to himself, he was naturally suspected of having done so deliberately and for dishonest reasons.

Had he invited the press to a conference, talked to them at length, and shown them his accounts, his integrity would have been apparent and he would have been spared much humiliation. As it was he paid dearly for his greenness, not his sharpness, as a company promoter. Incidentally, it seems strange that he was laughed at for tackling several trades simultaneously. 'One man, one trade' was still thought to be the best recipe for success.

It was to the interest of the family that the miscarriage should be hushed up and forgotten as soon as possible. This was done very thoroughly, our Victorian parents being adept at sweeping the unpleasant facts of life under the carpet. The whole period, even the rebuilding itself, became shrouded in mystery. As far as we children were concerned, it was as if Grandfather had waved a wand and produced the new Beale's like a rabbit out of a hat. As for the abortive flotation, all traces of it seemed to have disappeared, - in sharp contrast to the zeal for preserving the records of the second Beale's Ltd of 1895.

The whole dreadful story might have remained untold until the end of time, but for a chance discovery in 1969. With the sad exodus from Holloway in September of that year, I undertook the sorting and weeding out of the vast stacks of dusty books and papers that had accumulated over the years. With the writing of this book in mind, I had both the time and the inclination to carry out the job thoroughly.

Of first importance were the official books and papers to be kept by law. Two tattered copies of the Articles of Association remained, and in putting them together I noticed that they were not quite identical in size. One was for the existing company of 1895, the other proved to be its long lost 1890 predecessor, an animal previously quite unknown to my brother and myself.

If there had been an earlier Beale's Ltd, perhaps the Registrar of Companies could tell us more about it. At the Public Records Office in Chancery Lane I tracked down the original file. Alas, it revealed only the date of incorporation, the list of subscribers, and that it had been wound up on the 15th of August 1890. It was little enough, but sufficient to whet my appetite for more.

Vague memories now stirred of having once been told of a flotation that had been criticised in the press and had not been proceeded with. If so perhaps the British Museum could tell us more. The following week found me as a certificated reader at the Newpaper Section of the British Museum at Colindale.

My first request was for the Morning Post of June 1890, the date of the company's formation. My heart sank as I opened the massive pages of close-packed tiny print. Not knowing when the prospectus had been issued, nor whether the paper had referred to it in any case, it was like searching for a needle in a hay-stack. In the event I was astonishingly lucky. After little more than two hours, with my bi-focals exhaustedly climbing and descending the long narrow columns, I suddenly saw the familiar words 'Beale's Ltd' at the top centre of an inside page. As a headline only the 'B' was a little larger than the microscopic reading matter, but it was the Morning Post's idea of making the thing readable, I suppose.

I had sighted the quarry and a shiver of excitement came over me. I felt like Howard Carter at the opening of Tutenkamen's tomb- fearful lest some grandpaternal curse might fall on me at my unwonted sacrilege. Later I almost laughed aloud, in the quiet

of the reading room, at William the First's expense. Knowing the victim's respectability added savour to the editorial sarcasm.

William had spent his money lavishly in advertising his flotation in the press. He was ill rewarded for his pains. The first advertisements appeared on Monday June 23rd. On Tuesday the Financial Times delivered the first broadside. On Wednesday the Financial News really went to town on 'Buns Ltd' as they rudely called it. The same heavily sarcastic vein was followed by most of the prolific financial journals of the day. By Sunday some nineteen editors had had their say, and no little stir had been created.

The reader may sample the following extracts without further comment. Some entertainment may be found therein for us, even if Vestryman and Churchwarden William Beale was unable to appreciate it at the time.

The Financial Times. Tuesday June 24th 1890. Front Page.

'We remember hearing of a parson in Cornwall who supplemented the proceeds of Sunday sermons by shoeing his parishioners' horses during the week, but we have never seen such a heterogenous mixture of callings as that followed by the latest vendor hailing from the Holloway Road.

Mr W.Beale is a public contractor, a restaurateur, a baker, a general provision dealer, a licensed victualler, and an electric light and power contractor. The prospectus states that the business is by far the largest one of the kind in the North of London, and we can well believe it, for electrical publicans possessing a knowledge of the bakery trade are all too scarce.

The possibilities of the combination are truly great. A publican controlling the lighting of his immediate neighbourhood might periodically cut off the connection, and by throwing the district into darkness furnish his customers with an excuse for seeking the hospitality of his own bar parlour.

All this is well, but why does Mr Beale, having such a business to sell, not inform the public what they are to pay for it? According to the announcement he is to take £15,000 in fully paid shares as <u>part</u> of the purchase money. What the public would like to know is how much of the £60,000 cash they are invited to subscribe is to go his way, and before they get this information they will hardly be likely to crowd round him.'

The Financial Standard. June 1890 Editorial

'Mr Beale, of Holloway Road, is indeed a funny man, and hopes to entrap the investor by dilating "prospectuswise" upon the merits of his several businesses, - baker, general provision dealer, and electric light contractor. To enable him to pursue all these callings with greater readiness and freedom he comes to the public for £75,000, - £43,000 of which he claims to be entitled by way of

purchase consideration. Now from the magnitude of the sum one would imagine that the establishments were of first importance in the neighbourhood of Holloway, that they were equal to a Civil Service Supply Association, and commanded the whole, or nearly the whole of the local trade.

A visit to Holloway will disclose the fact that Mr Beale is nothing more than a local tradesman, transacting his business in several departments. One may easily judge that he is a pompous man, and we can therefore easily comprehend his audacity in appealing to the public. The prospectus should therefore be kept as a symbol of the height of impertinence.'

'Money' June 1890 Weekly Price 4d 16 pages

'This preposterous subject has already received so much attention in the hands of the Press that we do not propose to give it any further advertisement, beyond merely expressing our opinion that a more pretentious or ludicrous scheme for converting a private business into a joint-stock company has rarely been devised.

Considering that the price to be paid to the vendor is no less than £43,000, it is in no way surprising to learn that he 'guarantees a minimum dividend of 6% for the first three years'. He certainly could do no less. The question is would any sane investor be satisfied with so little? Beale's Buns are a long way from being synonymous with safe security.'

The Financial News Wednesday 26th June Price 1d 6 pages

'Buns Ltd. The 26th June 1890 ought to be a red-letter day in the history of Holloway, for on that day the subscription list for "Beale's Ltd" will be opened. We have not heard whether the Holloway branch of the London and South-Western Bank has been enlarged to cope with the rush of eager applicants, but it may be taken for granted that the staff has been, at any rate temporarily, increased in order to enter up with becoming celerity the amounts paid on application and allotment. It would be idle to attempt to conceal from ourselves that an opportunity like the present is altogether too rare and promising for investors to be able to resist it.

It is not every day that a big bun shop in the Holloway Road is turned into a public company. But Wm. Beale, Esq. is not the kind of man to keep his good fortune entirely to himself. He is the owner of an 'old fashioned business', and he is naturally anxious that his fellow-creatures - especially those with spare capital - should participate in the profits which he had hitherto enjoyed exclusively.

Mr Beale may be described - not of course in any offensive sense - as a Jack-of-all-trades. He is a public caterer, restaurateur, baker, confectioner, retail biscuit and cake manufacturer, general provision dealer, licensed victualler, and electric light and power contractor. Here's a mighty fine assortment of callings

for you! You aught to be able to procure at his shop everything you want - two Bath Buns, threepennyworth of Irish twist, a ball of worsted, a dozen new laid eggs, a plate of shrimps, and a gin sling.

It is much more to the point that the premises have just been entirely rebuilt at a very large outlay, and that the present has, therefore, been 'deemed a favourable opportunity for the introduction of additional capital'. These 'favourable opportunities' frequently occur as a result of extensive structural developments, and we can only be thankful that there are people in the world good-natured enough to let the public come in and invest its money, instead of keeping all the good things for themselves.

During the three years this gentleman is to act as managing director of the company at a 'small salary'. This is considerate - nay, it is generous. For a man who is literally giving away for £43,000 a business worth we don't know how much per annum (because we are not told) to consent to supervise the affairs for three years at a 'small salary' is surely the height of philanthropic self-denial.

The Financial World Saturday 28th June 16 pages 1d

The daily financial press has been decidedly unjust to Beale's Ltd. At the same time Mr Beale laid himself open to adverse criticism. It may be that Mr Beale, in the innocence of his heart, thought he had only to bring out a prospectus, advertise it, put in what particulars he thought were necessary, and the thing would be done. Unfortunately, for want of proper guidance, he omitted essential points, the absence of which was at once noticed by journalists trained to spot the weak and the strong points of new undertakings. To pervert a well known proverb, it may be said that a man who is his own promoter employs an incompetent person.

We have taken the trouble to inspect the premises and to go into the details of the business, and though it is Mr Beale's intention to abandon his project, he himself is exonerated from any suspicion that the business he wished to sell was not one which quite justified the figures contained in the prospectus. We look upon the failure as a warning to others who wish to turn their businesses into companies. There is a right way and a wrong way of floating a company. Mr Beale, unfortunately for himself, chose the wrong way.

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3 Making Good

Despite predictions in the local press that William's shares would 'sell like hot cakes', the thumbs down of the national press had been endorsed by the public. We can imagine the deflation of the family as news of the failure was spread around. But out of their bitterness came the determination to make good and prove the critics wrong. Happily the new department store was a success from the first day of opening, and the failure of the flotation had no ill effect other than the mortification of the family.

The premises were well designed, and ahead of their time in their solid concrete and steel construction. Their style was copied by our neighbours, Jones Brothers, who rebuilt their premises one year later, with the same ornamental tower and weathercock. The rival towers could be seen plainly from the top of Highgate Hill, and though we could claim a far better view from our roof, facing up Camden Road, the brothers Jones could boast that their tower was one foot higher than ours!

The new Beale's was lavishly equipped and decorated. The mahogany showcases and panelling, and the mosaic tiled floors were virtually unchanged when I joined the firm thirty-six years later, some of the original machinery still doing duty even then. From the electricity station in the basement Grandfather provided the first public electric lighting to be seen in Islington. This he supplied free to the Vestry in return for permission to lay cables along the road to supply his private customers.

The corner shop (No 368) had been rebuilt as part of the main structure, and was occupied by Jones the Jewellers as tenants. The walls between the corner and the remainder were immensely thick, perhaps in order to safeguard the valuable stock of jewellery.

A hard-back volume of photographs was published to commemorate the rebuilding. Copies were lent out, for one week only, to important customers. Two copies of this book exist. We may well have been justified in claiming the kitchens and bakeries as being models of hygiene in the year 1890, but a good deal of untidiness is apparent on the day the photographs were taken. I can imagine my father, fussily engrossed in getting out the day's production, with little time or consideration for the 'damned photographer', who would be getting in the way.

The business expanded modestly from its own profits, without the need to go down on its knees to the City for more money. Sales of around £30,000 per annum doubled within ten years. The lease of No 374 was acquired, and the meat and provision departments moved into it, with a wide opening into the main store. The first floor was used as an extension to the grill room. Stables for twenty-six horses and vans were erected in Walters Mews, and another large nearby property, known as the Camden Athenaeum, was leased from the City Corporation to cope with the growing banqueting business.

William was dabbling at the same time in other ventures. He acquired fifteen shops in the developing district of Finsbury Park as a property speculation, long before the latter became a dirty word. An early invoice reveals him for some unknown reason selling five tons of meat extract wholesale to a Botolph Lane merchant for £64-13-4 per ton. He became heavily involved in the exciting new world of electricity, but for him the end products were costly law suits, a mass of useless patents, and much loss. He would have done better to have kept to his own business proper.

At Holloway he was building up the team of managers who were to serve him and his sons and grandsons so faithfully in the future. Four of them, - Thomas Beer (Chef de Cuisine), Bill Spackman (Head Confectioner), Charles Wood (Head Waiter), and Tom Carpenter (Cake Bakery Foreman), served the family for more than fifty years apiece. Grandfather was ahead of his time in giving shares to several of these managers to secure their loyalty to the firm.

He was also now using his young family to full advantage. Three sons and two daughters had been put into harness. William and Christina moved to No 341 Holloway Road, opposite the business. Their children and the live-in staff were spread over the houses in Tollington Road.

The children were plunged into the business young, with no great expenditure lavished on their education. They were regarded, I would imagine, as useful cheap labour to be exploited to the full. At a time when journeymen bakers worked up to eighty hours a week, Victorian task-masters were inclined to treat their own children as harshly as the rest, - if only to set a good example.

Miss Beale, presumably Emma, is recorded in The Caterer of February 1895 as presiding over the front shop, and she and her younger sister Alice acted as cashiers in the store. The young men were divided up between the departments to learn the various trades.

William Edward, later William the Second, took over the accounts, the fruit, vegetable, and grocery departments, and the bread bakery. My father, Thomas Henderson, was given the restaurants and kitchens, the confectionery department, and the bread and cake shops. Archibald Alfred took the meat and provision departments, the retail rounds, the horses and stables, and the outdoor catering department. All were kept well under their father's thumb, and the three boys were but boys in his eyes long after they had become men in fact.

The faded photograph reproduced from an 1889 brochure shows William and his three sons amusingly posed, with Thomas typically in the rear, the boys not unhandsome in their fine sergeant-major whiskers. Were those identical ties and collars just a bit of fun devised by themselves, or more likely, had they received their instructions from the company commander himself?

It was a failing in William's character, as with so many self-made men, that he was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to develop his sons to his own stature and responsibility. He distrusted them to run the business properly on their own, and instructed his executors to sell it within five years of his death. That seems a most extraordinary decision for an empire builder to have made. But whether it was because he believed his sons to be incapable, or because he foresaw that they would never work in harmony, I do not know.

The second Beale's Ltd was incorporated as a public company in February 1895, but this time the shares were not in fact offered to the public. The nominal capital was £60,000 in £1 shares, of which 40,007 were issued. The seven odd shares had been issued to the original subscribers, and had been forgotten when the proposed 40,000 were ladled out to the members of the family.

My father must have been away when his brothers and sisters signed up and received one share each as subscribers to the company. Later on when the boys were given further shares Thomas always held one share and one vote less than his brother Arch, a disadvantage at times when the family were at loggerheads. The voting power of the changing family groupings became of major importance in the years to come.

In concocting the new articles of association with his solicitors, William took pains to ensure his own complete autocracy. He was made Governing Director for life, with power to fix the remuneration of his co-directors, and power also to dismiss any of them at his own discretion. The shares given to his family and staff were noticeably meagre, and on his deathbed Grandfather was still holding on to 95% of the total shares. Fortunately there were no death duties of consequence in 1904.

With the arrival of the second company we have enough statistics from now on to submerge the general reader. It is more humane, in my opinion, to preserve them elsewhere for use later by the earnest student of twentieth century economics. And to make any sense at all of the monetary sums involved, even the expert will need to translate them in terms of constantly changing inflation. For my present readers such homely factors as the number of Hot Cross Buns made at Eastertime, or the number of horses in the stables, must serve to indicate the scale of activities involved.

From the year 1866, when Grandfather purchased his jumbo-sized 'Testimonial Book', the Beales have been lavish in their expenditure on large leather-bound books to record their doings. These massive volumes have been so obviously expensive that, over the years, no humble member of the staff has ever had the courage to throw them away. They are now guarded by the author of this history as jealously as are the Elgin Marbles by the Trustees of the British Museum, and take up almost as much space.

The banquet diaries stretch back to 1887. They were regarded as sacred both during the period of actual use and for ever after. The older copies are only referred to when a customer nostalgically tells us he believes that his great-grandmother's wedding was held at Holloway or at the old Athenaeum.

We can then tell him exactly what was paid for the Scotch salmon and the game pie, what type and what quantity of champagne was consumed, and perhaps what musical items the three-piece orchestra played during the reception. Sometimes he brings us a fossilised piece of her actual wedding cake, which we dutifully sample and pretend to enjoy.

The diaries reflect the changing fashions of the years. Flutes, piccolos, and harps, in the orchestras supplied, give way to the cornets and trombones of Beale's famous Military Band, - consisting of fifteen middle-aged men in whiskers and a spurious kind of uniform of the Edwardian Age. Saxophones and drums give way, alas, to the 'recorded music' of today.

Daimler motorcars take the place of horse-drawn wedding carriages. Dramatic monologues, patriotic songs, magic lanterns, and Punch and Judy, give way to more sophisticated entertainment. World wars and depressions reduce bookings to a trickle. Peace, coronations, and jubilees, bring back the flood. A wealth of social history lies in the banquet diaries of Beale's of Holloway.

The company minute books too are not without some entertainment. Much treasured is the original minute book of the second company, with the richly comical hand-written entries of its first company secretary, a broad-speaking Lancastrian named Beesley Ridehalgh, - 'Beastly Ride-a-horse' as we children called him.

From the minute book we learn that the Board met on the thirteenth day of each month to authorise payment of the accounts, having confirmed that there was sufficient in the kitty for this purpose. Cheques were to be signed by two of the directors, one of whom had to be William the First, - he being unable to trust his sons and the company secretary not to run off with the cash the minute his back was turned.

With few capital outgoings and no need to reserve cash for income tax, the balance after paying the bills gave a broad picture of 'the way things are going'. For the true state of the company the Board would have to wait until the Auditors had completed the accounts, some three months after the end of the financial year.

The Auditors provided an annual profit and loss account for each of the departments, - right down to the last halfpenny. The results invariably led to quarrels over the charges made between the various sections. For example, in transferring meat from the butcher's shop to the kitchens, Archibald would exact as high a price as possible in the interest of his department. Thomas would regard the charge as scandalous, and maintained that the kitchens were being supplied with all the rubbish that his brother was unable to sell to the general public.

These disputes were recorded by Beesley Ridehalgh for the benefit of posterity. It is plain that whatever the Auditors might have to say, each of the directors believed that his departments, and his alone, kept the company from bankruptcy.

The nineteenth century was drawing to a close. The long reign of William the First, like that of Queen Victoria, did not long survive it. William had been something of a perfectionist. The premises he built, the equipment he put into them, the goods he sold, and the staff he employed, all were of the best quality he could buy. He possessed imagination, enthusiasm, and energy, and was prepared to spend his money freely on new projects and experiments, not all of which, naturally, were successful. He faced and lived down the mockery of the press critics, and reached the height of his prosperity in the 1890s. He had built up a fine business and could look back on his achievements with some satisfaction.

Now he had contracted diabetes, and to this was added the distressing affliction of Parkinson's disease. Naturally the business suffered, but the momentum of expansion continued, under his guidance, even during his decline.

A fine new canopied entrance to the Assembly Rooms, a reception room, cloakrooms, and a new despatch, were built on the site of No 2 Tollington Road. The first three masonic lodges were meeting regularly at Beale's. More houses down Tollington Road were added one by one, their gardens quickly swallowed up by the expanding bakeries.

In 1897 William patented a method of making germ bread, of a kind similar to that of Hovis. My father told me that Hovis itself had been tried out in our bakeries, and might have been developed in partnership with William had not the latter persisted with his own invention. Beale's 'Triagon' bread was still being produced in small quantities when I joined the firm in 1925. It may have provided valuable vitamins for the few loyal food-faddists still surviving, but in my opinion it was practically uneatable. It disappeared soon after my arrival.

In 1902 William conceived the idea of building a nation-wide mail order business in Beale's cakes. A four-page leaflet

was printed at considerable expense, with a hundred varieties of the company's cakes illustrated in colour. At still further expense one of these leaflets was inserted into every copy of the Strand Magazine, a popular national monthly of the day. Orders poured in from all parts of the country and from abroad as well, tropical countries included!

The whole idea was ridiculous. For sending out perishable foodstuffs by His Majesty's parcel post, the despatch department had available only greaseproof paper, wood shavings, cardboard boxes, and string. I shudder to think of the condition of our cakes arriving in summertime at Calcutta or Hong Kong.

Not surprisingly the trade dropped off as quickly as it started, and happily no deaths were reported at home or abroad. But the occasional order for a 'Shamrock Gateau' continued to arrive for years after the advertisement, from lonely Irishmen exiled in various parts of our far-flung empire. The scheme was William's last 'folie de grandeur', well worthy of the creator of 'Buns Ltd'. How the financial critics would have laughed.

Meanwhile the general business was beginning to decline. Sales peaked out unexpectedly in 1889, and the shareholders saw their dividends melt away from the 12% paid in 1898 to no dividend at all in 1910. Moreover the modest profits shown in the balance sheets were made only by neglecting vital maintenance and repairs.

Many and varied were the excuses made at Annual General Meetings. In 1900 trade had been poor because of the War. In 1901 it was due to the death of the Queen, in 1902 to severe competition, and in 1903 to the postponement of the coronation. Alas, we of the third generation were to seek comfort throughout our earlier years with very similar excuses.

Meanwhile the second generation were marrying and starting their own families. They were allowed that bare minimum of private life, even though the shop, as it was always called, monopolised the greater part of their existence. With William's approaching death, the family became restless and quarrelsome, - perhaps excusably so, in view of the long hours they worked and the fact that they all lived practically on the premises. It is now time to meet the second generation face to face.

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4 Second Generation

Grandfather's go-getting qualities are not discernible in any of his children. Moreover such good qualities as they might bring individually to the business were dissipated in the quarrels that broke out over his deathbed. From then on any friendship and sympathetic understanding that might have been between them in earlier days seems to have disappeared.

They must appear, as they first appeared to me, as already middle-aged ladies and gentlemen. Except for my father and mother, all of them were large, formidable, rather frightening figures. They were almost strangers to me as a child. By the time I joined the firm at the age of eighteen, I had visited my Uncle William's house but once, my Aunt Emma's house but once, and Aunt Alice's and Uncle Arch's houses not at all. Nor had I even met some of my cousins, sad to say.

William Edward, ponderous in build like his father, and soberly dressed in black frock coat and stiff high collar, seemed unable to unbend towards his nieces and nephews. On the rare occasions that we met he would smile pleasantly enough, enquire after our health, ask us to spell some rather difficult word, and fail completely to put us at our ease. We sometimes felt guilty meeting him on Sunday mornings when he was evidently going to church and we were going for a walk on Hampstead Heath. As Governing Director he was excessively cautious and negative, in much contrast to his flamboyant father.

My father was smaller and less pompous than his brothers. We believed he was by far the most hard-working of the three, his interests being practical rather than intellectual. His main ambition was only to achieve peace and quiet, and to provide a good home for his family. I was thirty years of age before I learnt that my father had married twice. And then all that my mother would tell me was that his first wife had been a 'bad lot', and that Father had divorced her, - for adultery, as I found out later.

His second marriage was happy and long-lasting. Soon after I joined the company one of the old hands showed me an old photograph of a group of cake shop girls, with, to my astonishment, my mother as a member of the group. How sad that our parents felt unable to tell us that she had actually worked for her living!

Her father had died young, leaving his widow to bring up three young daughters on her pathetic earnings as a piano teacher and as a lady pianist hired out by Beale's Ltd for the sum of 8/6 for a long night's work.

My father had evidently picked out the good-looking young cake shop girl on the rebound from his disastrous first marriage. For a while the new Mrs Tom must have found it hard to face the elaborate 'at homes' of her in-laws, and to return hospitality in proper style.

Of Grandfather's four daughters, Jane and Christina had died young. Christina, the youngest and the favourite, was kicked by a horse while playing in the stables, and died at the age of four. Emma, the elder surviving daughter, had moved up in society on her marriage. She was a handsome and, to our eyes, very grand lady of fashion. As the wife of the much feared Harry Mote, whom we shall meet shortly, she was someone to be very polite to, and escape quickly from, if one was cornered by her in the Holloway Road.

Alice, her younger sister, was equally handsome, but had made a bad match, according to the family, in marrying Tom Herring, a local hairdresser. Alice was therefore less grand than Emma, and better known to us as children. The gossip she retailed to us concerning Arch and the Motes was no doubt balanced in the opposite direction.

The best known member of the second generation was Archibald Alfred, - Uncle Arch to us but Uncle Archie to the Mote and Herring children, a somewhat subtle difference. If we on our side were scared of Uncle William and the Aunties, we were still more scared of Uncle Arch. For this I must blame my father, who painted such an alarming picture to us of his younger brother.

Archibald was in fact a hard-living, hard-riding sportsman of tremendous popularity among a wide circle of friends. A great beefy, gambling, drinking, swearing playboy of the Edwardian age, he was much disapproved of by both his brothers. To be true, behind the popular facade, the genial playboy of society was subject to terrifying fits of violent temper. When Arch stormed into William's office, raging and bullying at the top of his loud voice, he could reduce his brother quickly to a quivering jelly, even when William had become Governing Director of the company.

Archibald Alfred, dressed up to the nines, big, fat, and jovial, personally driving a coach-and-four loaded with his friends down to Ascot for the races, with a large hamper of Beale's champagne and provisions to sustain them, was a very different man from the great bear that terrorised the staff on the morning after. The latter was the side of Uncle Arch seen so often by my father. The sunny, generous side seen by others, and the excuses for his bad temper, - his unhappy marriage and the effect of a bad riding accident to his head, - all this was unknown to me until long after his death. I wish I had known him better.

In the early spring of 1904 William the First lay dying in his last home at No 10 Loraine Place, less than a stone's throw from his life's masterpiece. He was not allowed to die in peace. His last will and testament was altered twice within two months of his death.

William's estate was substantial, estate duty being payable on £53,000. In addition to his 38,000 shares in Beale's Ltd, he owned the leases of sixteen houses in Blackstock Road, Finsbury Park, and had converted seven of them into shops at a cost of £12,000.

Some twelve weeks before he died William was taken ill. He consulted his son-in-law Harry Mote on the preparation of a new will. Mote had previously been Company Secretary to Beale's Ltd, where he met and married Emma Beale. He was now practising successfully as a solicitor at No 11 Gray's Inn Square. Mote, very properly, suggested that the will should be drawn up by an independant solicitor, and introduced Mr G Astell Hall, of No 8 Gray's Inn Square.

Mr Hall duly prepared a new will to William's instructions. In it William decreed that the business should be sold up within five years of his death, and that, subject to an annuity of £500 per annum being provided for his wife, the estate should be divided up in the following proportions, - Mr W.E.Beale five nineteenths, Mr T.H.Beale four nineteenths, Mr A.A.Beale four nineteenths, Mrs Mote three nineteenths, and Mrs Herring three nineteenths.

Shortly after, William heard of some disagreement between the brothers and thought that after his death his sons would quarrel over the running of the business. He therefore decided that the business should be sold within a year of his death instead of five years. Subsequently, however, William Edward persuaded his father that it should not necessarily be sold at all. It was therefore necessary to alter the will again. But this time William Edward suggested the name of Messrs Pakeman, Son, and Read, as solicitors to draw up the will.

Meanwhile Alice Herring was sent for, as William was very ill and not expected to live. She came and sat up with him night after night, until he seemed a little better. While she was there a quarrel arose between William Edward and Harry Mote, after William Edward had made some critical remarks about Tom Herring to his father. Alice was much upset over this. Her father, seeing her distress, was much affected, and said she had been one of the best of daughters. Later he released her from paying interest on a loan of £3,000 made earlier to help set up her husband in business.

The Astell Hall will had been prepared on 14th March. Unknown to Mr Hall or to Mote it had now been superceded by another prepared by Pakeman, Son, and Read, and signed on 12th April. William died on 15th May. The funeral took place and Harry Mote attended with the three sons to the cemetery. Nothing was said as to there being a new will. A major quarrel was inevitable later, when Mote learned of its existence.

The chief alteration in the Pakeman will was that the share given to the two daughters was reduced and was compensated for by certain monetary benefits, and that William Edward's share was increased from five nineteenths to six nineteenths, with Thomas's and Arch's shares remaining unchanged. Once again the executors were to be William Edward, Thomas, and Harry Mote.

Mote entered a legal caveat against the will on the ground of undue influence on a dying man. The daughters, he claimed, had not been sufficiently compensated for their loss of shares. Thomas and Arch had also been penalised. Acting on behalf of Thomas, Emma, and Alice, Mote sought Counsel's advice as to whether an action to have the will set aside on the ground of undue influence would succeed. So started the bitter family quarrels and long drawn out legal battles of the second generation that continued for the next thirty years.

I think it would be fair to say, speaking as impartially as I can many years later, that Uncle Harry Mote's distrust of William and (later) Thomas, and their sons, became something of an obsession with him. His antagonism, whether justified or not, added to the discord between the brothers, and helped to break down William's health in time.

All this lies in the future. Right now the three quarrelsome brothers and their equally pugnacious brother-in-law sit side by side in the first carriage behind the hearse, on their way to Islington Cemetery for William the First's well attended funeral. William the Second, we may be sure, is full of foreboding. Quite soon now he must tell the others about that third last will and testament, drawn up by a stranger, and revised to a considerable extent in William's favour. William is not a particularly brave man. He decides, and who can blame him, that this is not the time to reveal so delicate a matter. It is not an auspicious start for the new regime.

I must not give the reader a false impression of the Thirty Years War which broke out openly in 1904. Fierce battles did indeed take place. Law actions were conducted at much expense to nerves and pockets. Eyeball to eyeball confrontations took place at Annual General Meetings. Alliances were formed only to be broken up within a year, - Archibald being thrown out of the business completely by one such a temporary alliance of his brothers.

All this is true. But there were periods of uneasy truce, during which the men would relax sulkily and go about their business without open strife. And contact between the ladies was maintained, though confined to rare state visits conducted with much formality. At such visits, by tacit agreement, the business was not discussed. And though Emma and Alice, acting under Harry Mote's instructions,

were obliged to read out his diatribes at shareholders' meetings I suspect that they secretly had little stomach for the fight.

Conduct of the business was made tolerable only by the brothers keeping to their own territories within the beehive of the Holloway premises. So many were the entrances and exits, back stairs and basement passages, that it was possible to go for days without sighting the enemy, - even when fighting on two fronts. The business therefore suffered less than might have been expected.

Had any of the brothers felt the need for change and expansion, the strands holding the firm together might well have broken. But they were not adventurous and the occasions for quarrel were no more than the petty irritations of day-to-day trading.

Liaison was maintained by the long-serving senior department managers, each of whom looked primarily to one of the brothers for support and guidance. These old timers were the real backbone of the firm, meticulously dividing their loyalty between their own particular 'Governer' and the firm as a whole.

The first meeting of the Board following Grandfather's death took place on June 1st 1904.

> ' Appointment of Governing Director. This appointment was the occasion of some misgivings and expression of feeling as to the terms of such appointment, and whether the successor of the late Managing Director should have the same powers, control, etc., which the Articles of Association allowed for, when the Secretary gave his views upon the matter, and after a somewhat lengthy discussion in which all took part it was proposed by Mr T.H.Beale and seconded by Mr A.A.Beale that 'seeing the complete confidence the late Managing Director had in his son William Ed. Beale, in his abilities, business foresight, keen judgement, and organising powers, and that he had virtually managed the whole business for many years, it is resolved that he is a fit and the only person to succeed him as Governing Director and that he be hereby appointed for life, vested with all the powers, control, and authority and at the same remuneration, £500 per annum, as his late father, and carried unanimously'.

Here we see the advantage of having the Establishment on one's side. Ridehalgh by this time was definitely in William's camp, and was to remain so. No doubt his minute was carefully worded in William's favour, for I would lay heavy odds against my father ever referring to William's 'business foresight and keen judgement' etc., or that Archibald would second any proposition so worded. But we can well believe the 'misgivings and expressions of feeling' at the meeting.

At this same meeting the Board agreed to invite Mr Charles Cruft to become a director of the company. Charles Cruft, of No 2

Loraine Place, almost opposite the premises, was the founder and chairman of Cruft's Dog Show. His wife, Minnie, had been a cashier at Beale's before her marriage, and was friendly with Emma and Alice. I believe it was Grandfather's suggestion, realising that his end was near, that Cruft should be brought in to stiffen up 'the boys' in their management of the business.

Charles Cruft served as a non-executive director of Beale's from 1904 until 1918. He may well have been a stabilising influence on the brothers. He was a highly successful entrepreneur in his own business, but my father belittled his value to Beale's and begrudged him the £250 fees paid him for occasional attendance at board meetings.

Minnie Cruft was a more formidable figure in the Holloway scene. Outsized, overdressed, and free-spending, she swept up to the store almost daily in her huge Daimler limousine, complete with uniformed chauffeur. She was an important customer, and well she knew it, - always insisting on personal service from each of the department managers and obtaining the maximum value for her money. She also required to know all the current gossip about what was happening at Beale's, and was thus able to report all the deeds and misdeeds of the directors in full detail to Harry Mote. Precious little of our doings ever escaped the eyes and ears of Minnie Cruft.

What she had to report was mainly personal, for there were no major changes in the running of the business. The brothers initiated nothing and discussed nothing. They went their own ways conscientiously, honestly, and unthinkingly. It did not occur to them to alter anything in the store, not even the position of a single counter. It was like Miss Faversham's wedding reception. The cobwebs were accumulating.

Harry Mote failed to win Counsel's support for the setting aside of the Pakeman will, and Mote withdrew his caveat. Nevertheless, as one of the Executors, he found ways of delaying the division of the estate for nine more years. The change from the Astell Hall will of March to the Pakeman will of April, as far as the shares in Beale's Ltd are concerned, may be set out as follows.

	Astell Hall Will	Pakeman Will
William Edward Beale	10,001	12,001
Thomas Beale	8,000	8,000
Archibald Beale	8,000	8,000
Emma Mote	6,000	5,000
Alice Herring	6,000	5,000

It must be incontestable that the Pakeman will is more favourable to William than to his brothers. It is arguable that in receiving fewer shares in Beale's the sisters were compensated in other ways, - though not equally so according to Mote, who claimed that Emma was worse off than Alice. But Tom and Archie might well feel aggrieved that all the shares taken from the sisters went to William.

I fail to understand how William could have countenanced such a change behind the backs of his brothers and sisters. None of them were figure minded, but even William must have known that six-nineteenths of the estate was more than five-nineteenths. And William was an honourable man.

Mr Micawber knew the difference between spending a little less, or a little more, than one's income. The student of private capitalism in the years to come must realise the immense difference between owning 51% of the shares of a company and owning but 49% of them. It was the man with 51% who dictated how things should be run. He could award himself a salary according to his own judgement of his worth, and could confirm it at the Annual General Meeting. At his own option he could bleed the company with excessive dividend payments, or starve out the minority shareholders with no dividends at all.

The power of the majority was therefore disproportionately great. Much manoeuvring took place in companies to secure such control, - either alone, or, less comfortably, with allies. Grandfather's disposition of his shares left ample room for such manoevres. William the Second, for all the 12,001 shares he was to receive, could not rule alone.

Harry Mote moved swiftly to secure Thomas as his first ally. The latter, smarting under the terms of the Pakeman will, would fall an easy prey to Mote's persuasion, and for the next few years he was, for the most part, in Mote's opposition camp.

If Grandfather's shares were sold by the Executors, William had to be given first option to buy them, at a valuation to be made by the company's Auditors. Mote rejected the Auditors' suggested 15/- per share, as being far too favourable to William. The sale of the shares was therefore not proceeded with.

If the shares were not sold they were to be divided up in the proportions laid down in the will. During the nine years in which Mote successfully held up this division, control of the company rested with the three Executors, - Thomas holding the scales with difficulty between the other two.

The balance of power concerned all the members of the family. The possible combinations and permutations were many. Of vital importance were the 5,000 shares held in trust for Alice and her two children. Distrusting Tom Herring, Grandfather had tied up Alice's shares in trust not only for her but for her children also. The Trustees once again were William, Thomas, and Harry Mote. And by a tradition of English law the voting rights lay in the hands of the first named Trustee only, i.e. William.

Mote persuaded my father that this was an anomaly that should be tested and set aside by a Court of Law. And tested and set aside it was, by Mr Justice Eve, sitting in the High Court of Justice, seven years later, when the order in which the names of the Trustees were placed was altered, and my father's name was placed first. From that day on my father controlled the voting of Alice's shares, and a new balance of power was established. It was perhaps the Judge's tribute to my father's commonsense and impartiality.

To return, however, to 1904. Harry Mote, jealous of the company solicitors who had replaced him, disputed at every point the disposal of the Blackstock Road leases and other property in the estate. Eventually William turned the tables on his tormentor and went to Court himself as plaintiff versus the rest of the family. William was represented by the company's new solicitors, Messrs Pakeman, Son, and Read. Without suggesting anything improper, it can be seen how the Establishment can use its powers of patronage to its own advantage.

Once set in motion, William's lawsuit became a field-day for the lawyers. Details of all the leaseholds were called for, mortgages and assignments examined, affidavits signed and witnessed in astonishing profusion, consultations with Counsel held, and the absurd and unnecessary costs kept mounting.

William requested that the Court should order his shares to be given him forthwith, without waiting for the last property to be sold. Mote, through his counsel, pleaded that the shares should be sold en bloc and not be distributed piecemeal to the family. He suggested that the earlier will clearly indicated that this was Grandfather's intention.

But Mr Justice Eve, maybe getting tired of the lot of them, decided that the shares should be delivered up forthwith, declaring that the Plaintiff had a perfect right to say 'Give me my shares'. Thus William succeeded in breaking the deadlock, though at the same time he lost his voting rights on Alice's shares. With the last of the properties sold, the case petered out in 1913. The costs of four sets of solicitors, four Counsel, and the Court fees, were all ordered to be paid out of the estate.

All this was the Golden Age for Harry Mote, litigation being meat and drink to him. But the worry of it put William more and more out of action with nervous prostration. His second son, Francis, told me he could forgive the rest of us our sins, but found it hard to do the same for Harry Mote, who, he maintained, 'ruined my father's health, and, because of that, my mother's too'. Slowly but surely the health of the company itself was also being undermined. Some painful surgery would be required in due course, before it could be restored.

It is May 1913. In what shape do we find the specimen of private enterprise that is under our microscope? The building still looks reasonably modern, the showcases and panelled walls show no signs of wear, the delivery vans are to be seen everywhere in the streets. To the world there is no indication of decline. But a business must go forward or go back. Beale's Ltd is no longer going forward.

Profit for the past year is £2,700, - less than half the average of the 1890s. Such as it is, it is dealt with prudently. £1,000 provides a modest dividend of 2½%, £500 is written off Goodwill, and £1,200 is put to reserve.

The Auditors reveal losses made by the meat, provisions, charcuterie, poultry, grocery, fruit, vegetable, and flower departments. Only the bakery and catering departments make any profit. But nothing is done either to cut the losses or to push the profits. Archibald will not hear of his departments being cut in any way. Their so-called losses, in his opinion, are due to the inequitable inter-departmental transfers. To the formal minutes of the Annual General Meeting is added the following, -

> ' General. Replying to Mr Beer the Chairman said that there was an improvement in all departments, an argument then ensuing as to the department charged or getting the benefit of the savoury or patty meat, the meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to the Chairman. '

The 'improvement in all departments' amounts in fact to £61 in total. No reference is made to any changes having taken place or being planned, no mention of prospects or possible expansion. But they argue once again over the price of meat transferred for patties. Even for 1913 it seems a little unsophisticated.

Not only ambition but joie de vivre also has departed. Gone are the staff socials and concerts of earlier days, with a 'selection of songs' from the young Mr Archibald. No more are the staff outings to the country in the firm's pantechnicon, with cricket match, racing, archery competition, and more than adequate refreshments. The firm can no longer afford such extravagance. Even the small orchestra in the groundfloor cafe is cut out, as being too expensive.

Staff morale suffers in addition from the constant bickering between the Beales. With their masters openly at loggerheads, is it not natural for the butcher, the baker, and the chef, together with their underlings, to quarrel in like manner?

One major project only has been considered by the Board in the past nine years, - for a large banqueting suite on the site of several houses in Tollington Road, the freeholds of which were bought in readiness. Plans were prepared but the directors found reasons, good or bad, for abandoning the scheme. Nothing so ambitious will ever again be suggested during their lifetimes.

Holloway Road, as a shopping centre, is beginning to lose ground to Seven Sisters Road, where the traders, led by Sainsbury's, are cutting prices. Jones Brothers, like ourselves, are beset with internal troubles, and Jones the Jewellers, our tenants in the corner shop, plead bad trade and have their rent reduced.

Grandfather's insistence on high quality is scrupulously maintained. But customers increasingly demand value for their money. Criticism of our high prices is too easily brushed aside with the stock answer, - 'Ah, but you get the quality'. As children we cynically condense the phrase into the one word 'ahbetcher', to denote a somewhat expensive bargain.

Moreover we disloyally disparage the old-fashioned specialities that have made the firm famous. 'Twice the price and half as nice' is our rude comment on the game pies, the Gorgonzola cheese, the guava pears, the China tea, and the rum babas. Tastes have changed. 'Ah, but you get the quality' is no answer to our criticism, - we don't want it. We are, of course, very young and unimportant. But Beale's is not responding, as a business should, to the requirements of the coming generation.

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5 First Impressions

Meanwhile, at the age of six, the baby of the family, I was gathering my first impressions of Grandfather's fortress at the bottom of the Camden Road. Though very rarely visited, it impressed itself very vividly on my mind.

This was where Dad worked and had terrible rows with his brothers. This was where Uncle Will pretended to work and then stayed away for weeks pretending to be ill. This was where Uncle Arch swaggered about as if he owned it all, and then went to the races while my Dad was working, and took my Dad's meat pies and cream cakes and champagne, all packed into a big hamper for him and his friends to enjoy at our expense.

My father's bitterness was evident even to a six-year old. And my mother's barely concealed nervousness on meeting the aunts and uncles communicated itself to us children as well. Our visits therefore took place somewhat surreptitiously on Sunday mornings after church, when we could be fairly certain of the coast being clear. I do not remember my mother ever taking part in these visits, - possibly because it might have come out that she had worked there as a girl.

So it was always father that took us on such tours of inspection, - the object being, officially, to 'see that everything was all right'. This took the practical form of switching off lights left on in the basements, and turning off dripping taps all over the six floors.

The premises were heavily barricaded every night. Thick slatted iron roller shutters were pulled down all round the main building. Iron wicket gates were wheeled round from the yard on trolleys, bolted down, locked, and doubly padlocked. Such precautions would seem excessive, but there were times, such as during the General Strike of 1926, when these strong defences were of much comfort to the management. Edwardian shopping centres presented a gloomy shuttered face at night, and equally so on Sundays when the idea of window gazing would in any case have been most improper.

Father would let us in by the wicket gate set into the shutters of the bread shop in Tollington Road, undoing the padlocks with a huge bunch of keys. No one person, however, could carry all the keys needed to open every door, cupboard, safe, cold-store, and cabinet in the building. There were many frustrations. But

if one could not enter one way, one could often find another opening from the rear, or from the basement, or via the great goods lift which spanned five of the floors. It was necessary to know where certain auxiliary keys were hidden, often in fairly obvious places.

Once inside, in complete darkness until the electric light switch was found, we met the first of a whole range of intriguing smells that remain in my memory to this very day. The bread shop smelt strongly of unsold bread, - stowed under the counters in zinc-lined cupboards and waiting to be sent away to Uncle Arch's pig-farm at Shenley on Monday morning.

A large pair of scales stood on a wooden counter, with a white porcelain platform on one side for the bread, and a neat stack of brass weights, ranging from a quarter of an ounce to four pounds, on the metal platform opposite. The scales were checked regularly for accuracy by outside contractors, for fear of being prosecuted for selling short weight bread.

The bread shop was the poor relation of the other departments. Facing Tollington Road, it relied on the poorer district behind the premises, - a triangle of artisans' houses cut off by the railway from Kings Cross to Finsbury Park. Stale and damaged cakes and buns were sent round from the cake shop in Holloway Road to be sold off cheap, at one penny for a fair sized bag-full. I thought that the poor customers in Tollington Road got far better value for their money than the rich ones round the corner.

A glass and wood partition divided the bread shop from the ground floor cafe. The framing was of heavy teak, with satinwood inner panels. The leaded-light glass surmounting it had coloured inserts in floral patterns. This partitioning, typical of Grandfather's expensive furnishing, was also used to divide the cafe from the main store.

Passing through into the quiet of the inside cafe, the smell was from the dregs of wine and beer glasses, from the unsightly bins of coffee grouts and tea leaves, and from the somewhat frowsty wooden floor boards and shelves behind the service counter. Padded bentwood chairs would be stacked on the marble-topped cast-iron tables. The cracked lino on the floor contrasted with the fine wood panelling. Here, as throughout the building, the primitive electric lights were augmented by ugly stand-by gas brackets, - their flimsy Veritas gas mantles being continually broken. There was no excitement here for a six-year old.

But through the swing doors into the main store, we came to the first area of opulence and glamour. Lit from a huge bank of polished brass-capped switches, the scene was indeed rather fine. On our left was the fruit department, largely consisting of an island counter in the shape of a triangle, built up in wood and piled high with the finest fruit obtainable in Covent Garden.

The fruit department made a brave show, but was too small to be profitable. The superb Colmar and Alicante grapes might or might not be sold. Should they lose their bloom they could always be sent to the bakery for the decoration of grape and cream gateaux, - at of course a disputed price as between the departments. The little hunch-backed manager would spend his time polishing the apples, snipping out sagging grapes with a pair of scissors, and throwing out those bruised pears that cause so much heartache to the fruiterer.

I failed to appreciate the exotic tropical fruits that were Mr Hutchinson's pride and joy. The more expensive they were the nastier they tasted. But I loved the fat ripe pineapples that my father sometimes brought home for a treat, - pineapples 'fit for the tooth' as Mr Hutchinson would say.

An occasional scuffling sound would come from behind the hollow fruit stand and the counters round the store. The resident cats - one to each department - would be waging their age-old battles with the rats and mice that infested the building.

At the time such infestations seemed inevitable. Impervious plastic surfaces, stainless steel, and modern pesticides, had still to be invented. Public concern for hygiene was minimal. Men would spit freely and frequently in the streets, and a multitude of cart-horses would perform their natural functions in the open road. A million open coal fires and kitchen ranges brought dirt and smog raining down on London to a degree quite inconceivable to later generations. The good old days were by no means uniformly good!

Leaving the strong aroma of the pears and apples, we came to the chocolate and sweets counter, - for me the highlight of the morning. Most of the sweets were sold out of the rows of glass jars that lined the shelves, each jar containing about four or five pounds of sweets. The stickier varieties were prodded out by jabbing at them sharply with a metal pick. The slabs of home-made toffee were split up with pincers, sending the splinters flying off in all directions.

At the end of the tour we would return to the sweet counter and we children would be given a small present, - a Fry's Chocolate Cream Bar, value 1d, or a small packet of Murray's Cream Caramels. It weighed on my puritan little conscience that these gifts were made at the expense of other members of the family and were not far short of stealing. Had we chanced to meet one of the uncles on our way home, I would have flushed crimson at the knowledge of the bar of Fry's chocolate in my pocket.

Next came the cake shop, with a most satisfying smell of unwrapped and unsold cherry, saltana, and Madeira cakes, all peacefully staling away over the weekend. Both the windows of the main store were given over to the display of cakes, - the fruit department and the grocery rarely having the privilege of showing their wares to the passing public. A large walk-in glass showcase in the centre of the shop was always dressed with care, the cakes set out neatly on paper doyleys.

Looking at the store from Holloway Road, the right-hand window was filled daily almost solid with bread, buns, and cakes, stacked high on the sloping glass shelves. Behind it was the busiest selling area, with a whole line of girls facing the crowd of customers on the other side of the L-shaped counter.

A hand lift under the window sent up goods from a basement sorting area. Another lift sent down fresh cream cakes and pastries from the third floor confectionery finishing room. On the left side was the main display window, the showpiece of the store and a highlight of the whole shopping parade, especially at Christmas and Easter times.

A massive blind covering both windows had to be pulled down by two men with poles, to keep the sun from spoiling the display. This blind was a constant source of irritation, being too heavy for the cake girls to manipulate. The butchers and provision men next door, who were responsible for pulling down the blind on request from the manageress, sometimes delayed coming to the rescue until many cakes and chocolates had been ruined by the sun. Many a furious row between my father and Uncle Archibald have I witnessed over this unfortunate arrangement.

Behind the display window was the grocery department. Under the solid mahogany counter were many intriguing little pull-out drawers containing peppercorns, nutmegs, cloves, ground ginger, cinnamon, and other strong smelling spices. Everything was weighed at the counter and wrapped in hand-fashioned conical paper bags, - tea, sugar, oatmeal, dried fruits, candied peel, glace cherries, rice, semolina, tapioca, and all.

On the front of the counter was a two-tier bank of biscuit tins, set at an angle and with glass lids to show the contents. All the biscuits were sold loose and inevitably lost their freshness if not quickly sold. Broken biscuits were removed and sold off cheaply in the bread shop, - another bargain for the poor. For all their elaborate wrappings the biscuits of today don't taste half so good as the biscuits of my youth.

From the grocery we would pass through the vegetable department, smelling earthily of potatoes, but with a few unsold flowers adding their own fragrance, and then through a large opening into the next door building (No 374) where the butcher's shop and the provision department were to be found.

Here the marble floor would be strewn with fresh clean sawdust last thing at night, giving it a somewhat false impression of cleanliness and hygiene. There would only be a quick look round, for this was enemy territory. Arch would resent us snooping round here as much as Father would resent Arch snooping round the kitchens, We were therefore careful not to leave tell-tale footsteps in the sawdust.

The well-scrubbed wooden chopping blocks would be worn down into deep hollows. The choppers, steel skewers, and meat hooks, would lie glistening with fat and smelling not unpleasantly. A few

sides of beef and some carcases of lamb, pork, and veal, hung on steel rails fixed to the wall. On the opposite side a few rabbits and chickens hung nakedly facing their fellow victims. The rest would have been taken down through a wooden trapdoor into the underground cold store that had been the wonder of the nineties.

In the provision shop huge round cheeses sat in purdah, under their muslin cloths, - expensively oozing away their richness in hot weather. Any mouse agile enough to climb a wooden counter was at liberty to sample an excellent variety of cheeses, - English, French, Dutch, Swiss, and Italian.

Fine York hams, half cut into, lay on china comports. Large blocks of butter and lard lay on marble slabs, together with the wooden spatulas used for cutting out the butter and shaping it laboriously into ½lb and 1lb lumps. The smell of the provision shop was strong and pleasant.

The door leading to the bakeries and yard is locked. If we mean to visit them we must find another way. Back in the main store we climb the wooden staircase leading to the first floor. We have but barely started on our tour of childhood memories, but the elderly reader is already flagging. Indeed the huge building is for young feet only, if it is to be examined in one visit. Let us turn back, therefore, at the massive locked door sealing off the upper floors, and leave the rest for another day. As our story unfolds we shall see it all in due course, from the vast cellars up to the dizzy view from the rooftop.

So let the monster sleep uneasily in its shuttered darkness, as we slip out into the empty street, banging the wicket gate behind us and fastening the padlocks. Beale's of Holloway won't run away. It has always been there. It always will be.

As a treat for being a good little boy, I was sometimes entrusted to the care of a kindly roundsman, for a short ride round the streets close to our home in Beacon Hill, up off the Camden Road and only half a mile from the business. I would sit up importantly in the small white-painted box van, while the man delivered baskets of assorted foods to our account customers.

I remember the flick of the whip, the clop-clop of hooves, the creaking of the wooden van, and the sudden rumble of ironclad wheels over the cobbled crossings. And I can recall the mixed smell of fresh-baked bread, of leather harness, and indeed of the horse itself, - which always seemed to perform, to my great interest, as soon as I was perched up immediately behind it.

I rarely visited the stables in Walters Mews. For one thing I had heard about the little girl who was kicked to death there by a horse, and I was in no hurry to meet a similar fate.

Besides which the road was always barred by a ferocious dog, of which even my father seemed afraid. Perhaps it recognised us as enemies of Uncle Arch, the lord and master of the stables.

The Athenaeum, at the fork of Parkhurst Road and Camden Road, was better known to me, for we would pass it almost every day. Originally known as 'The Athenaeum Literary and Scientific Institution', it had been built in 1870 to be the centre of social life and culture of the district. From the start, however, it had been largely monopolised by W.Beale and Co. for their catering functions, and in 1893 the lease of the whole building was transferred to Beale's Ltd by Sir Sidney Waterlow, on behalf of the City Corporation.

The Athenaeum saw many changes. During the hunger strike of suffragettes inside Holloway Prison, just across the road, demonstrators chained themselves to the railings as a public protest. Years later those same railings were surrendered by us for scrap-iron in the 2nd World War munitions drive.

A leaflet dated November 1908 advertises a happier occasion, - 'A Grand Concert by the Gramophone at the Athenaeum. The gramophone will reproduce Melba, Patti, Tetrazini, Calve, Caruso, Gus Ellen, Harry Lauder, and the Sullivan Operatic Party. All lovers of good music should hear the new Prima Donna, Tetrazini, her voice is wonderful'. One can only hope that the gramophone, without any amplification, filled the hall, which seated several hundred persons. In the same year our banquet diary records the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company rehearsing at the Athenaeum, for their performances at the Marlborough Theatre in Holloway Road.

In March 1937 Sir Oswald Mosley addressed a meeting of his Blackshirts in the Grand Hall of the Athenaeum. One hundred and fifty policemen were said to have been hidden in the basements, to prevent any possible battle with counter demonstrators.

Seeing the Athenaeum as a child only in daytime, the public rooms appeared bare and uninviting. Sometimes bored children could be seen at their music and dancing lessons, with an upright piano thumping out the time. On Saturdays an awning would be erected outside the Camden Road entrance, and a red carpet would be unrolled across the pavement, to await the carriages of a wedding party. For a fee of five shillings a linkman would open the carriage doors with proper ceremony.

At this time the Athenaeum was still the headquarters of the Outdoor Catering Department, always referred to as the O.D.C. Business had shrunk since the heyday of the nineties, when Grandfather had driven out in his horse-trap to interview clients and 'hard sell' the facilities he had to offer. Either the physical work had been too much for his sons in their approaching middle age, or their salesmanship had been inferior to his.

Nevertheless, up to August 1914, when the War Office requisitioned fifteen of our best horses for the army, one could often see Beale's pantechnicon, with the famous pair of greys, loading

up at the Athenaeum with the equipment needed for a garden party or wedding somewhere in North London. The trustworthy old storekeepers would count every item out and back again, recording even a single salt spoon missing, as a charge against the customer. The cost of a broken wineglass would likewise be added to the bill by the hire department.

The basements were simultaneously enticing and frightening to a six-year-old. Dimly lit at intervals by flickering gas brackets, they were piled high to the ceiling with tables and chairs, china and cutlery, and all the equipment of an outdoor caterer. Hundreds of little coloured glass bucket lamps waited to be hired out at £1 a hundred, each with its nightlight, to adorn an evening garden party. Silver candelabra in wooden boxes, mirrors and electroliers for the decoration of marquees, bunting and flags for patriotic occasions, pianos and music stands, copper kettles and charcoal stoves, stretched away endlessly into the darkness, - some of them possibly unused for years and perhaps never to be used again.

For me there was the excitement of coming across odd treasures, - an old archery target, a croquet set, a cricket bat, a basket of snooker balls, and the like. But at the same time the darkness of the basements frightened me. At one spot in the interior a patch of daylight percolated uncannily through a thick glass pavement light. But it offered no escape should one be trapped in there by accident and be left forgotten, - abandoned to the unknown terrors of the night. In childish nightmares I often lost my way in those dark basements and was beset by spookish presences as I fled deeper and deeper into the black alleyways.

The House of Beale's, throughout the 1914-1918 War, did nothing in particular, and did it reasonably well. At least it did not disgrace itself in any way. The three brothers, together with Charles Cruft and Beesley Ridehalgh, were all too old for military service, and so the Board remained unchanged throughout, The third generation was still at school.

The firm was also lucky in having so many old faithfuls among the managers who were equally immune. As the young butchers, bakers, and roundsmen, progressively disappeared into the mud and carnage of Flanders, the old men set to work that much harder, with the women and the boys, and held the fort at home.

If there was no heroism for the Beales in the trenches, at least there was no profiteering, - rather the reverse. Profits of £4,000 for the year to March 1914 dropped to £1,000 in 1917, before recovering in the last year of the war. The directors' salaries remained the same throughout.

Food rationing, with thousands of tiny coupons to be cut

out of the ration books weekly and be accounted for to the authorities, was a great trial to the management. But at least we retained our share of registered customers. Perhaps the smallness of the rations encouraged customers to register where the quality would be good even if the quantity was minimal.

Rationing did not mean that rations were always available. It is recorded that Beesley Ridehalgh, doubling his secretarial duties with the management of the provision shop, having called out 'no butter, margarine, or lard' to the waiting crowd throughout the day, disrupted his wife's rest fitfully by repeating it loudly in his sleep.

The war started slowly on the domestic front. In the minutes of the A.G.M. held on 19th July 1915 we read -

> ' There was no other business before the meeting or any suggestions, but in a general conversation it was thought that if we were to send out ices at other than a loss, we aught not to send out less than a pint, which should be charged at 3/-, or 4/6 a quart, and in these days of increased cost of all material, labour, and delivery difficulties, this should be within a radius of 1½ to 2 miles, and 5/- per quart beyond for not less than two quarts'.

Ice cream delivered to order after eleven months of war! But things were soon to become tougher, - more so indeed than at any time in World War Two.

The firm never stooped to black-market activities of any kind. Nor did the Beales take advantage of their position personally. There were many who would have ridiculed such a correct conduct at the time. I remember, as a small boy of eight or nine, travelling with my mother by tram to Harringay, where a greengrocer was said to have some potatoes. How proud I was when we found that indeed each customer could have three pounds of them, and that I counted as a customer. And how joyfully we carried back our precious cargo! Who would have believed we were the proprietors of a large food store?

The entries in our banquet diaries, which in the first half of 1914 had included such assorted items as a concert by 'The Bumble Bees Pierrot Troupe', a sale of work on behalf of Women's Suffrage, and the Annual Clay Bird Shooting Championship of the Middlesex Gun Club, dwindled away to their lowest ever number in 1917. Most of the remaining entries were of tea parties and concerts for badly wounded soldiers and sailors. One wonders if the wounded always appreciated the patriotic songs and recitations provided on these occasions.

My brother and I were of an age to be playing with lead soldiers, but no new ones could be obtained. With a pitifully small nucleus of Germans, therefore, the enemy had to be bolstered up with Red Indians and Zulu Warriors. The British soldiers belonged more to the Boer War than to 1914-1918, and rather unwisely still stood erect to fire their rifles. The real war was conducted almost as foolishly.

During air-raids at home the entire household, including a nanny and a little maid, eight in all, slept under the dining-room table. We would sing community songs to the accompaniment of the loud barrage of anti-aircraft guns outside. As soon as the boy scouts sounded the 'all clear' on their bugles, my brother and I would rush out to collect the jagged lumps of shrapnel, still warm to the touch, that had fallen in the street. Brass shell caps were particularly prized, and would be proudly displayed at school next day. Later in the war my mother was persuaded that the pieces of metal might be contaminated with poison gas, and though we could not see the logic of this we nevertheless handled them gingerly from then on.

On one occasion the entire family burst into my attic bedroom and piled on top of me in my bed by the window, to watch the great Zeppelin, caught in the cross rays of the searchlights, brought down in flames at Cuffley. Only one bomb fell in our district, on the Eaglet public house in Hornsey Road. But the shrapnel played havoc with the slate roof tiles everywhere.

As the war dragged on neighbours and friends were losing relatives in France, and wounded soldiers with missing arms and legs could not be hidden from the streets. I began to feel ashamed that our family had not been hurt in any way. Two cousins finally became old enough to put on khaki, but my brother still had two more years to go at school, - much to my mother's relief. My own chances of joining up and winning the V.C. were even less.

My mother and sister rolled up bandages galore, and knitted endless scarves and mittens for the troops. Even so the accusing poster 'What did <u>you</u> do in the Great War, Daddy?' would not be answered with much satisfaction later. Keeping the home fires burning had not much appeal for a boy of ten. But peace came at last, and I remember marching and dancing round the streets of the West End with a tumultuous and deliriously happy crowd, on that never to be forgotten Armistice Night.

The end of the war found the business shabbier than before. The buildings, the furniture, and the machines, were still there, - but that much older and less well cared for. With the short boom that came with peace a thorough overhaul of the whole business was urgently required. But the brothers were aging and worn out after four years of wartime worries. The opportunity was missed.

For the two years following the Armistice it was all too easy. Many were the celebration dinners and dances held at the Assembly Rooms and at the Athenaeum. Money was quandered away as foolishly as ever by the troops returning with their hard-earned war-service gratuities. Sales shot up 32% in 1919 and profits rose to £6,700. The following year proved even better. The business was now debt free and there was £25,000 in cash at the Board's disposal.

At the Annual General Meeting all was happiness and light. From the sidelines even Harry Mote could scarce forbear to cheer.

But the post-war boom evaporated, and the long inter-war depression years began. Sales declined steadily from the £111,000 of 1920 right down to £64,000 in 1933. In the same period a profit of £7,100 was transformed into a loss of £2,800. Something akin to rigor mortis had begun to creep over the business.

How shall we judge the directors of the second and third generations, under whom the business withered almost to its death? Were they guilty of mismanagement or were they just plain unlucky? No doubt the press critics who flayed William the First in 1890 could have made similar mincemeat of his sons and grandsons in their turn. But the critics might well have been wrong again.

The Board could so easily have spent all that £25,000 cash in 1920 to expand the business, and possibly the rewards might have been great. Equally possible, the expanded business might have faced even bigger losses in the depression years, and without those reserves to fall back on might have been bankrupted like so many other companies. Perhaps the brothers played their cards better than the red figures give them credit for.

The cautious directors at least had the courage to purchase the freeholds of the Holloway properties of which they already held the leaseholds. This sensible property deal, achieved at the modest cost of £9,000, was to prove far more profitable than many years of honest trading. Those same freeholds were to be sold for £240,000 in 1969!

Nevertheless the Board was far from guiltless. It was too inward looking for its health. The brothers took little part in local affairs and none in their trade associations. From the day that my father returned from his training in Paris as a young man, I doubt if he ever set foot in any other bakery or kitchen than his own. Contact with his fellow bakers or caterers was non-existent.

William's outside activities were confined to his local church. It was left to Arch, with his horseracing, gambling, and drinking companions, to bring a breath of the outside world into the boardroom. It was not a breath that William and Thomas would appreciate.

Unfortunately for Archibald, the new marble shop front for his meat and provision departments, pressed for by him and grudgingly conceded by the others, failed completely to increase the sales. It was long to be quoted by William as an example of extravagant and wasteful expenditure never to be repeated under any circumstances. Thereafter William and Thomas were fully equal to suppressing any other wild ideas that young Arch might have.

All was quiet and the tide receded gently as the good ship Beale's of Holloway lay at harbour after the war and the boom years of 1919 and 1920. The aging captain and his crew were in no hurry to refurbish and set sail again to face the changing world outside.

In 1922 my brother, Thomas Edward, slipped unobtrusively on board, followed by myself in 1925, and, later in the same year, by our cousin Francis Henderson, William Edward's second son.

Six Beales were now manning the decks and treading on each other's toes. A new era was on its way, but it was 1934 before the ship slipped anchor once again. In the meantime there would be mutiny aboard, and much bloodletting before it sailed into the open seas, under a new and inexperienced captain and a new and inexperienced crew.

Within a few dramatic paragraphs our subject company has suffered incipient rigor mortis, has shrunk almost to a skeleton, and has now transformed itself into a ship riding at anchor, with the tide receding, and with mutiny aboard. Authorship, itself a form of private enterprise, can indulge itself like that only at its peril, lest the reader rightly withdraws his custom. But if any young reader's imagination has become over-stimulated by such metaphorical excesses, the following chapter should prove a sufficient sedative.

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6 Third Generation

William the Second was the father of two sons and one daughter. The elder son, Percy, emigrated to Australia early and was never known to me. I believe he made good as a farmer and raised a flourishing family of Australian Beales. The daughter, Kathleen, did not marry, and like Percy has no part in this tale.

The second son, Francis, went from Highgate School to Edward Moore and Sons to be trained as an accountant. Late in 1922 he was pulled out, I believe none too willingly, to enter the family business. The odds were upon him to succeed his father as Governing Director in due course.

Archibald had no children to compete for the succession. The Mote and Herring children, six in all, were not invited to join the firm, despite the large shareholdings of their mothers.

My brother, christened Thomas Edward but always known as Ted, was born on March 5th 1904. He and I must wait to be introduced more formally to the reader later. Meantime we may note that Ted will run Grandpa close for the honour of being the hero of my story. They had much in common both in character and achievements.

Ted's entry was typical of the unplanned day-to-day running of the business. Early in 1922 William's health began to break down irretrievably. His absences from the business grew longer and more frequent. The legal battles with Harry Mote, the shouting matches with Archibald, and the lack of any sympathy from my father, had turned William into a nervous wreck.

My father, who had no time for invalids, believed that William's illness was 'put on'. Brother Arch was likewise accused of failing to pull his weight. Having visited Smithfield Market early to buy the meat, Arch would open up the premises and leave soon after breakfast, with perhaps a brief visit to the stables and a brief visit to the shop later in the day. This, in the absence of William, left my father in charge from nine o'clock in the morning until seven or eight o'clock at night, when he could finally put the key in the door and trudge wearily home.

There was an old-established rule that the opening and shutting of the shop must always be carried out by a member of the family. It was a solemn ritual, equivalent to the ceremony of the keys at the Tower of London, and could not be left to an employee, though Mr Ridehalgh, as a director, was in due course required to take his share.

In the summer of 1922, with William away sick, and Arch on holiday, my father's hours became intolerable and his patience broke. Without any by-your-leave from the Board, Thomas brought in his elder son to do some of the opening and shutting up. For this purpose Ted was pulled out of the City of London School a week before he was due to take his Matriculation Exam, and without warning was thrown in at the deep end.

As well as opening or shutting up the premises, he was posted as an assistant in the bakery office. Within a year, by virtue of his own strong personality, he was strategically situated at the centre of the business.

My own entry was both unexpected and inglorious, for I had previously had no intention of joining the ever-squabbling family at Beale's of Holloway. But alas, having passed my exams too early for my own good, I had become lazy and purposeless in my last year at school. In consequence, having made no attempt to find other employment, I had the mortification of being pushed, unwanted and reluctant, into the family business after nearly seven weeks of holiday. I try to remember it when inclined to criticise the young students of today for their apparent lack of ambition.

My father had done his best for me, for a Board minute of June 16th 1925 reads as follows -

> ' Mr T.H.B. mentioned that he thought of bringing in his second son to the business and putting him in the kitchen to start with. The proposal did not however meet with real approval, it being thought that a first outside experience would give him a better training and ultimately make for improvements and thus consequently be more beneficial to the business as a whole'.

In fact neither William nor Archibald wanted me to come in at all, not, I believe, because they objected to me personally, but because of the rivalry between the 2nd generation brothers. Thomas and his family could not be allowed to become too powerful in the future. William said plainly that if he had thought he was going to carry it on, he would have brought Francis into the business, - thus indicating that the business should be sold on or before his own retirement. Archibald said simply that he objected to my coming in.

Typically, no definite decision is recorded in the minutes. But my father evidently assumed that he had won the day, and I was left to enjoy my holiday on the assumption that I would start work in September. But both Ted and I had now to be prepared for the sale of the business at some unknown date in the future and make our own plans accordingly.

The threat of my entry forced William to reconsider the future of the firm. Ever since Grandfather's death in 1904, Harry Mote, Emma, Alice, and Arch, had campaigned ceaselessly for the the business to be sold. Their professed reason for this being William's inability to run it properly, it was a difficult suggestion to follow, however much he might have longed to be rid of the

lot of them. Out of defiance, therefore, William had continued to put off the evil day, but had accepted its inevitability.

Ted now showed considerable shrewdness for a young man of his age. He realised that he and I, with only our father's 20% of the shares between us in the future, would never be allowed to run the business on our own. We had to have allies to survive. Ted called on Uncle William at his house in Dalmeny Avenue, a mile away from the business up off the Camden Road, and argued powerfully for Francis to be brought into the business.

Whether Ted and I would hit it off with Francis would have to be left to the future. I myself could not remember ever having spoken to my cousin, and would not have recognised him in the street. But with him in the camp the immediate future at least would be secure. William and Thomas, with their children, had just on 21,000 out of the total 40,000 shares. They could run the show comfortably if they could only work together.

Ted argued long and forcefully. William was a sick and worried man. He longed to pass on the responsibility, though he would never do so to his brothers. If the third generation could work together happily in the future he would be well content. Whatever else young Ted and Jack might be, they were not violent bullies like their Uncle Arch.

And so William was at last persuaded to discuss the possibility with Francis. And Ted argued long and forcefully, and in the end successfully, with Francis in his turn. And Francis, like me apprehensive and reluctant, was brought into the business, perhaps less for his own benefit than for that of his cousins.

The two appointments were approved at a Board meeting on the 8th September. I was to start the following Monday and Francis two weeks later.

> ' Re W.E.B. and T.H.B. sons. The Chairman said that his son Francis was desirous of entering the business and he had been thinking about it for some time, and as he had now much experience with the accountants Edward Moore and Sons, he thought it might be opportune of starting and working his way up after gaining the knowledge and experience of our books, ways and means, and possibly taking control of the office. He would be unable to commence until October, and the remuneration was fixed to be the same as at Edward Moore's viz £4-10-0 per week.
>
> Mr T.H.B. suggested and said that his idea was that his second son Jack should enter into the manufacturing part and start in the kitchen, and after some discussion this was agreed to, the commencing salary to be £1-0-0 per week, and as he had other private income he would be free from N.H.I. and Unemployment Tax or deduction.
>
> Smithfield and Mr Jack Beale. It was also suggested and agreed that as a possible follow on to Mr A.A.Beale

he might attend Smithfield with him with the idea of learning and ultimately helping in the buying as occasion may arise.'

Though christened John I was called Jack up to the time of my marriage, when my wife decreed that I should be known by my proper name. But it was years before the old members of the staff would change Mr Jack to Mr John. Some never got round to it. And the so-called private income I was supposed to be enjoying was the dividend from one thousand shares which had been put in my name, but which had to be handed back to Dad. Living free in my parent's home, however, I could manage without difficulty on £1-0-0 per week.

The directors had much admiration for the catering firm of J.Lyons, who had opened up a branch tea-shop next door to us earlier, much to Grandfather's alarm at the time. At Lyons, we were told, the young family trainees were made to start at the bottom, - cleaning dishes. And so Master Jack was likewise to be put in at the bottom, both in the kitchens and later in the bakeries.

But before the embarrassed ex sixth-former puts on his white coat and apron, and starts clumsily chopping onions in the kitchen, let us look for a moment at the immediate background from which he will set out apprehensively on Monday morning.

No 7 Beacon Hill, seven minutes walk from the business, up off the Camden Road to the left, was the home of Thomas Henderson Beale and his family. Thomas and Fanny had two sons and two daughters. My elder sister, Marjorie, has no part in this story, save as a shareholder at one time holding the balance of power between my brother and myself. It is of importance, however, that her marriage introduced her brothers early into a wider circle of acquaintance. My younger sister, Joan, was born with a defective heart mechanism, and remained an undeveloped 'blue baby' until her death at the age of fifteen.

The four remaining members of the family must now be placed under our microscope. For these Beales of Beacon Hill were eventually to win the battle for control of the business, and became the Beales of Holloway in their own exclusive right. What then were the strengths and weaknesses of the Beacon Hill faction that enabled it, against all expectation, to gain the day?

If my father has appeared hostile and perhaps a little unfair to both his brothers, such behaviour was out of keeping with his real character. He was, in fact, a contented, happy little man, a good husband and father, and without any ambition other than to live and let live amicably among his neighbours. Like myself he was a poor talker but a good listener. Many a long conversation with a customer ended with smiles all round, my father having done

little more than to interject 'Good Gracious' and 'You don't say so' at suitable intervals. I envied Dad his ready smile.

In 1887, at the age of twenty-one, he had been sent to train in the kitchens of the famous Jockey Club in Paris. Later he became a skilled craftsman in the art of cake decoration, winning numerous gold medals at the international bakery exhibitions of the day.

He was immensely energetic and entirely practical in the business, doing every job at the greatest possible speed, and impatient of any delay. The success of his departments came from his ability to lead and drive his staff into an imitation of his own efforts at perpetual motion. At home he was a good amateur watercolourist and a keen photographer.

With the emergence of my mother as an increasingly strong personality, he was content to take second place. He allowed his personal savings and his shares in Beale's to be used dangerously by his sons in the battle for control. Happily he was not let down.

If William the First and my brother contend for the hero's role, my mother must be my heroine. The raising of her family had taken its toll of my mother's health. From the beautiful young woman of earlier photographs she had shrunk into a pain-ridden invalid. I remember the nauseating quantities of neat olive oil she had to swallow, and the vile thick rubber stomach pump with which, according to the medicine of the day, she was advised to relieve her sickness.

But a major operation miraculously changed my mother's life, and she reblossomed physically and mentally thereafter. She added to her scanty education with voracious reading of the Illustrated London News, Popular Science, the Wide World Magazine, and the like. In due course she became a most wise and gracious lady, well able to hold her own with any in the land.

Meanwhile her earlier shyness had rubbed off on to us children and made us uncomfortable in company. Ted soon overcame this handicap, but Madge and I were to remain poor mixers always. I remember the panic that would engulf me as a schoolboy, on sighting an armada of the Aunts and the formidable Mrs Cruft, all in fighting rig, with dresses to the ground, bustles and parasols, long white gloves, and unbelievably large hats, bearing down upon us in the Holloway Road.

I would be too paralysed even to raise my scruffy cap, and would inevitably be scolded later for my bad manners, for not speaking up, for having my stockings flopping over my ankles, and generally looking disreputable. Add to this my suffocation on being pressed to the highly powdered and scented cheeks of the ladies, and it is not surprising that I approached Holloway Road with the greatest reluctance.

As children we had associated mostly with the less well-off cousins of my mother's side. We lived unpretentiously and were no

doubt regarded as hardly making the grade with the other Beales and the Motes. On leaving school Ted was the first to appreciate this inferiority, and he took active steps to remove it.

Under his goading, with the help of our old nurse-cum-cook and two tweeny maids, we began taking formal dinner instead of supper each evening, and on occasion even aspired to wine at table. As a ragamuffin schoolboy I regarded this as snobbery, and was unsympathetic to the new regime.

At the same time Ted realised that we were somewhat lacking in the social graces, and set out to improve his own performance in this respect, greeting acquaintances with a heartiness and enthusiasm not always justified, in my opinion, by the occasion. I, for my part, considered it something of a waste of my extremely valuable time to pass the time of day with all and sundry, merely to confirm the self-evident state of the weather. Beyond the bare minimum of a mumbled 'Good Morning', therefore, I greeted hardly anyone, and remained gauche and unsociable in the process. Here we see an early example of the contrasting characters of my brother and myself.

Missing his exam was perhaps not such a hardship for Ted as it would have been for me. And there was compensation in the far greater ease and success with which he took to business life. Fond of company and full of energy, Ted's duties at Beale's did not preclude active participation in the hectic young world of the twenties. Indeed he reduced himself to a rake at this time with burning the candle at both ends.

He would drive an everchanging succession of attractive young ladies down to the family cottage at Margate each weekend, where my mother would receive them warily. It must be added that in the climate of suburban life in those far-off days the affairs never progressed further than the necking which took place on the return journey before dawn on Monday morning. From the back seat, where, as an innocent young brother, I was supposed to be sleeping, I often noticed the car swerving violently during these manoeuvres.

My mother, a strict nonconformist churchgoer, was far from happy with her elder son's new worldly ways. These included a modest amount of smoking and drinking with his young friends at the newly fashionable cocktail parties of the day. There was therefore a slight estrangement between them, as often happens between mothers and sons, for a few years before he settled down to married life. During this time, though duller, I was perhaps considered the more worthy of her sons, and she and I were allies at a time when Ted was making an honest attempt to work amicably with Francis in the business.

Grandfather treated his sons as boys when they were in fact grown men. They were disposed to carry on the tradition. But

Francis, now in his late twenties and mature in appearance, had the prestige of his accounting experience behind him to overcome this prejudice. Ted, younger both in age and looks, but with three years already in the firm, was also fighting his way out successfully. In contrast, at the age of eighteen, but looking younger, I was a target for boy treatment from the start. I accepted it too easily and for much too long.

On that first Monday morning I accompanied Arch on the early morning tram to Smithfield Market. Smithfield must be described separately later. After breakfast and a short rest at home, I was down again promptly at 8.30 a.m., nervously geared up for unknown duties in the kitchen. I was waylaid, however, at the front door by my uncle, and sent out forthwith as an errand boy on his behalf. I was to carry some exceedingly heavy steel cutting plates from the bacon slicer, to be reground at some obscure address in South London.

Other than to visit Smithfield I was not supposed to work in his departments, and perhaps I should have rebelled. But my uncle was a director, and well known for his violent outbursts of temper. Discretion proved the better part of valour. I took the heavy parcel under my arm and went meekly at his request.

I spent the whole day in a succession of trams, losing my way in parts of London I had never even heard of. Always a bad traveller, the swaying motion of the trams made me violently sick, and to add to my misery on the return journey the sharpened steel plates for the bacon slicer cut through the packaging and started to cut my hands as well. I reached home at last, almost prostrate with physical sickness and mental fury. In the privacy of my bedroom I gave way to secret tears of mortification and self pity at such a ludicrous start to my career.

Whether Arch had seized the opportunity to score over my father, or whether it was just thoughtlessness on his part, I do not know. My father had a blazing row with him over the matter on the following day. It was an unfortunate start for my relationship with my uncle.

On the second day I slipped quickly past the ogre on the ground floor, and made my way up to the large kitchens situated on the third floor, where a busy staff eyed me with much interest. Having solemnly shaken hands with the Chef and the Second Chef, I donned my white coat and apron and was given my first task at the bench.

I was presented with a quantity of huge ox kidneys and livers to cut up into slices. I had not seen such objects before in their entirety. The bloody operation brought about a sharp sense of revulsion, also the clumsy soiling of my clean white apron.

My next task was to chop up an immense pile of onions, much to the delight, no doubt, of all the onlookers. Within seconds my young eyes were weeping copiously, and maybe not all the tears cascading down were caused by onions. It was a customary trick to play on an apprentice, and only added to the inferiority complex that I was rapidly acquiring.

My knowledge of the differential calculus was not going to be of much use to me in these surroundings. Attendance at the greasy wash-up tanks, raking out the coal boilers, and any other dirty jobs available, would soon put paid to any presumptuous ideas a young gentleman fresh from school might have. Moreover the sheer heat of the kitchen alone would exhaust the young gentleman long before even half the day was done. With the busy lunch served and all tidied up, the young gentleman crawled up the Camden Road far more dead than alive, at half the pace he had gone down it in the morning.

But, tempting as it is to dwell upon, and perhaps exaggerate, the toughness of one's early life, the truth is that I soon occupied a privileged position, - as a member of the family. If I received but a paltry £1-0-0 a week, boys of my age in the rank and file worked long and hard for half that amount, without the same prospect of promotion. The staff, numbering one hundred and twenty in 1925, were sharply segregated between managers and the rest. I was closer to the latter in those first years than I would ever be again.

Even so there was a class barrier between us that was almost impossible to climb. From the very start my new white coat and apron, my accent, even the cut of my hair, differentiated me from them. We barely understood each other's language, and I was too shy to persist in making friends. To my regret the barrier remained throughout my career, - an unnecessary bad mark to be entered up against me in the Recording Angel's filing cabinet.

The managers were still mostly Grandfather's old faithfuls, well past their prime, set in their ways, and solidly entrenched. Each had his built-in niche within the organisation and fiercely guarded his long-established rights and privileges. Together they opposed the smallest change in any of the routines laid down in the previous century. Fine old characters that they were, in the eyes of my father and my uncles they were still invaluable. But to the third generation admiration gave way to frustration as their stone-walling tactics defeated all our efforts at modernisation.

Two of them with whom I was particularly concerned were Thomas Beer the Chef and William Spackman the Head Confectioner. The former had been given shares in the company by Grandfather back in 1898. He attended all the A.G.M.s and regularly proposed the re-election of the retiring director. As the doyen of the managers, he was a soft-spoken, courteous, dignified old gentleman, and a skilful chef in the best old English tradition.

Bill Spackman, who eventually chalked up no less than sixty-three years of service to the firm, was father's other right-hand man. He was in charge of all the fancy cake production, and personally decorated all our wedding and birthday cakes with fine craftsmanship. He controlled his staff with firmness and good hygiene, and was forward looking for his age.

Spackman's name appears continually in the banquet diaries, engaged as an expert carver of meat and poultry in the evenings after his other work. His reminiscences were inexhaustible, - of

Queen Victoria's Jubilees, King Edward's Coronation, and other grand events. He remembered boning larks for special dinners, and decorating a Golden Wedding Cake with fifty golden guineas, - necessitating the whole cake having to be put into the safe overnight. In his last few years he became somewhat testy and difficult with his staff, - no wonder after sixty-three years of changing modes and manners.

The Chef and the Second Chef, Mr Cowlin, were generous in teaching me their craft, and free with their trade secrets. I was fortunate to catch a glimpse of the old 'Grande Cuisine', for the Chef, like my father, had been trained in Paris, - I believe under the famous Escoffier. The absurdly lavish cooking, with quite unrestricted use of fresh cream and eggs, and with wines and spirits used liberally for flavouring, all this was soon to disappear and would not be seen at Holloway again.

I served in the kitchens for approximately eighteen months. Within a few years I had forgotten most of what they had been at pains to teach me. But it was not all waste. I would remember enough to be able to talk the language to the staff in later years. My next move would be to the confectionery department under Mr Spackman.

Both Ted and I were living mainly for the hours of recreation, business being something to be endured rather than enjoyed. Our thoughts were on tennis and dancing, and the maximum speed at which we could drive the Ford Tourer down to Margate each weekend.

But the time was coming when we would be pulled up with a jerk. The shadow of the depression loomed ahead. In the year that I joined the firm we failed to cover the dividend for the first time since the company began. Holloway, the boom suburb of 1866, was beginning to decline. The wealthy merchants were on the move again, to the outer suburbs further North and West. The fat, easy years were over. Not seven but fourteen lean years lay ahead.

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7 Deep Depression Centred Over Holloway

Ted had been posted to the bakery office under Mr Hartley the bakery manager. Here was carried out the buying of ingredients for the bakery, and the supervision of the bakery and rounds departments, all under the loose overlordship of William. The main bakery, at the rear of the premises, produced the bread, buns, and fruit cakes. It was quite unconnected with the cake decorating department, administered by my father on the third floor of the corner building.

Though small, dark, and shabby, the bakery office was strategically well situated between the Chairman's office and the General Office. In the latter Mr Honey, the accountant, supervised the invoice clerks and book-keepers, - all perched up on umcomfortable high stools in front of steeply sloping desks similar to those seen in the illustrations to Dickens' novels.

The Chairman's office, containing William's ancient roll-topped desk, was at the front of No 4 Tollington Road. Beesley Ridehalgh was also stationed in the room, and there he entered up the current banquet diary. For the Secretary also administered such banqueting as still remained, - seven or eight functions only per week, spread between Holloway and the Athenaeum.

William's absences through illness grew more prolonged. Important matters for his decision lay piled up on his desk. Some would be dealt with eventually by Ridehalgh. But small routine matters were being waylaid and dealt with by Ted before they reached the Chairman's office. For the duty of shutting up was conferring some prestige and authority upon the young shutter-up, and he was ready to take advantage of it. As the staff passed out through the store each night, with a 'Goodnight Mr Ted' from each, he would be seen as a coming power in the land. He might still be a boy to William, Arch, and Thomas, but to the rest he was the young governor to whom they might have to look for favour in the future.

All journeys, however long, begin with one short step. One morning in April 1923 Ted had taken half a dozen steps with far-reaching effect upon our story. William had been away for weeks. Ridehalgh was overworked and exhausted. Uninvited and without any by-your leave, Ted moved his desk those few steps into the Chairman's office, and began dealing with the more urgent correspondence. He was just nineteen years of age.

Ridehalgh seems to have treated the coup d'etat as a matter to be dealt with by the Chairman personally. William was not informed about it until his return some days later, by which time the cuckoo was well established in the nest. And William, who would certainly have vetoed the move had he been consulted, accepted the fait accompli meekly and possibly with some relief.

Perhaps he welcomed another ally and shield to protect him from the atrocious bally-ragging administered to him regularly by Arch in that same office. Arch might be more circumspect in the presence of his young nephew. If William hoped that he hoped in vain.

Ted was now significantly at the centre of the business, - too much so, perhaps, from the point of view of Cousin Francis, when he arrived two years later. It was never laid down in black and white exactly what was to be the relationship between Ted and Francis. Such vitally important but awkward questions are often left fatally unspoken sine die. At the time it was vaguely understood that they would be equal junior colleagues, and they were later both elected to the Board on the same day.

But the appointment of Francis at a slightly higher salary than Ted was getting must have struck a chill on Ted's ambitions. Even more ominous, on their appointment to the Board, William instructed both of them to read the Articles of Association carefully, in order to appreciate their responsibilities. In those Articles could also be read the power of the Governing Director to appoint his own successor. Such an appointment could not be shared by two equals. There was no doubt in my mind who the future Governing Director would be.

Dalmeny Avenue, however, was not all powerful. A disgruntled Beacon Hill could always change sides and force a sale of the whole business with the aid of the rest of the family. Such unseemly matters were never openly discussed. For the time being all went well between Ted and Francis. They had determined to be friends and allies, and, despite their very different temperaments, they succeeded in this purpose.

Francis was hard put to it, at first, to find his place within the organisation. He would not be welcome either in my father's departments or in Arch's. Ted was esconced in William's office, where Francis might naturally have looked for shelter, and Ted kept his finger also on the bakery office. Nor did the experienced Mr Honey in the General Office need the help of the ex audit clerk from Edward Moore's.

But the Chairman's son could share the shutting up of the premises, could help Ridehalgh with the banquets, and help his father administer the main bakery, via Mr Hartley. In addition Francis took over the maintenance of the aging properties and plant, and the management of the works department. With some difficulty Francis thus slowly carved out his own sphere of influence without treading on too many toes. But six Beales were now managing a declining business that had previously made do with three.

I myself remained well tucked away out of sight and mind of the others. I saw my father briefly in the morning, but had hardly any contact at all with Ted. As for Francis it was not much more than a polite 'Good Morning' should we pass on the stairs, and that was seldom. There was almost a generation gap between us, and it seemed that he too was inclined to treat me as a boy.

I took my lunch with the Chef and Mr Spackman in the kitchen, still in my white coat and apron. The other five Beales lunched in the Grill Room in far grander style, but I had no great desire to join them. At this stage in my career at any rate it would seem that I had something in common with my great-half-uncle Bert, Grandfather's half-brother, who was said to have worked in the bakeries, but who was so self-effacing that I have found only one mention of his name in all the company books and papers.

Three times a week I came out of hiding to become a Smithfield Martyr in accompanying Arch to the market to learn how to buy meat. No one could have been less suitable for this purpose. We caught the earliest tram, leaving Holloway at 3.30 a.m. on the dot.

Always a sound sleeper, the ringing of the alarm clock at 2.45 a.m. was positive torture to me, especially in the winter months. I would dress, shivering, in my unheated attic bedroom, creep down the stairs, and gulp down hot tea from a thermos flask, with a sandwich made for me by my mother overnight. I was too scared to sit down as I did so, lest I should fall asleep immediately at the kitchen table.

Still half in my dreams I would lurch and stumble down Beacon Hill and Camden Road. The dark streets were poorly lit by gas lamps and completely empty save for the occasional suspicious policeman on his beat.

I would arrive first at the bitterly cold, wind-swept corner of Holloway Road and Tollington Road, - for the tram, very properly, stopped right outside our premises. Soon the huge figure of Arch would come looming up across the road from No 10 Loraine Place, where he lived, theoretically alone, in his parent's old home. Like Boswell's Dr Johnson, he had a curious rolling gait, and seemed to sail along at the mercy of the wind. He would arrive puffing and blowing like a grampus, and we would shake hands formally and comment on the weather.

Arch, like his father, cut an impressive figure. He looked after his appearance and was almost dapper for a man of his large size. He wore well-cut and sporty check-cloth suits and overcoats, together with a rakish pork-pie hat. With his florid complexion and carefully trimmed Edwardian moustache, he was in as complete a contrast as could be imagined with his undersized, pasty-faced,

weedy-looking nephew. For, as a result of diphtheria at the age of seven, I was still at this time a noticeably anaemic specimen of the human race.

Waiting in the cold night air for the brightly lit tram to come rumbling up out of the gloom, we would slap our arms across our chests in the manner of the sturdy old tram drivers who faced all weathers standing in their open cabs. Inside the tram, on the hard but not uncomfortable wooden benches, we would slump down and doze with the curiously assorted and silent company, glad of the warmth, if not the smell, provided by the crowded human bodies. There was no other means of transport at that unearthly hour of the morning.

From the tram terminus we passed through some dingy back streets and entered the astonishingly bright arcades of the meat market. Each open-fronted shop was lit by a bank of powerful arc lamps, directed on to the carcases hung up for display. The sudden brightness closed up my sleepy eyes almost completely as we entered from the dark outside.

At Smithfield Arch came into his own and was happy. He would have a chat and a joke with all the salesmen, and was as well-known and popular as any buyer in the market, - in spite of the smallness of the orders he could share out among his friends. The limited size of our butcher's shop and restaurant was a great handicap to the importance of the figure Arch liked to cut in market circles.

He had, however, developed a technique which made the most of his resources. Even if he had nothing much to buy, he would still examine the wares carefully and ask the price. He would then affect a small explosion of disbelief at the absurdity of the salesman's figure, and would turn dramatically to march off to another shop. This performance, perfected over the years, could not be given too often without wearing thin. To save his face, therefore, Arch would often buy far more than he really wanted, - much to the disgust of Mr Greenwood, the head butcher at Holloway, whose storage space was limited.

As we were early at the market, Arch was able to pick out the finest meat available. With a handful of little wooden skewers he would walk down the aisles, leaving a skewer in each carcase that he fancied. Great was his joy, and great the cost, when he was able to select a carcase bearing the rosette it had won at the Great Smithfield Show or at other competitions round the country.

The technique of buying in an open market may come as second nature in the Middle East, but it is comparatively rare in this country. I am grateful to Uncle Arch for having taught me something of it. But I would never have made a meat buyer, if only because of colour blindness. The correct colour assessment of meat is essential to a buyer. But even to my defective eyes the best Scotch beef, the Southdown lamb, and the fine Dutch pork and veal, looked irresistible under the lights, - the veal often being dusted with flour to make it look whiter than it really was.

Arch good-naturedly trailed me round with him, like a pup that had belied its pedigree, and taught me the ropes as best he could. It was embarrassing at times for both of us. Often I had to stand tactfully out of earshot while he exchanged earthy stories with the salesmen.

One fact that would have astonished him, had he known of it, was my inability to distinguish the sex of the sheep hung up for sale. No matter how long I stared at the relevant parts I could not see the difference between the tups and ewes. And I was too shy to ask. Fortunately my ignorance was not exposed.

There was another side to the glamour of the lights of Smithfield. The offal shops situated outside of the market proper were, to say the least, unpleasant. Seeing the porters handle those parts of the insides of bullocks known as 'plucks' was enough to turn my own queasy stomach. And sometimes we would see a butcher picking out live rabbits from a crate, wringing their necks swiftly with a practised hand, and dropping them one by one, squirming on top of each other, into a basket. Fortunately rabbits are silent when they die.

I often had to buy pigs' trotters, in sets of four, from an evil-smelling back-street shop where they were prepared and scalded in great tanks of dirty-looking boiling water. Arch always told me to pick out nice 'chumpy' sets, but as I had no idea what chumpiness in a pig's trotter looked like, I merely passed on the request. They all looked alike to me.

Arch sometimes bought freshly killed meat from the Caledonian Market slaughter-house, which was close to us at Holloway. At this time sheep were still being sent to Caledonian Road Station by train, and thence driven along the streets up to the market square. I was cordially invited on one occasion to see the animals having their throats cut, but I declined the invitation.

One of the hazards of Smithfield was the thunderous approach of two hefty porters carrying a full side of beef at a run down the crowded main aisles. No one could afford to ignore their cry of 'mind your backs', for they could not pull up short once on the run with their enormous loads. On rare occasions when the inside butchers were upset, and felt like airing their grievances publicly, they would bang on their great cleavers with another chopper. This would be taken up by others until the whole market shuddered with the discordant clanging. But mostly the butchers were good-tempered.

The best part of the morning came at about six o'clock, when we would visit one of the market pubs specially licensed to open at such unusual hours. The licence was hardly necessary, for no one would be seen drinking alcohol. We, like all the rest, would be served with hot strong cups of tea and delicious fresh-baked rolls, split open and thickly spread with butter. I can savour them in my imagination even now.

Afterwards we would seek out our friend Mr Alfred Ward, one of the authorised carriers, standing at his accustomed niche in the

wall outside the market and wrapped up in two overcoats to keep out the cold. We would read out our list of purchases, which, together with those of other buyers, his porters would fetch out and load on to lorries for delivery around North London.

Then we would return to Holloway, where Arch would open up the premises, while I went home for breakfast before starting on the remainder of the day's work. Smithfield has been something of a diversion from our proper study, but should this story survive long enough it might provide some insight into the mechanics of an age when men actually ate meat.

Beale's of Holloway was in no fit state to meet the Great Depression. Stranded in the receding tide of local prosperity, divided in its family management, and starved of innovation and re-equipment for many years, - the wonder is that it survived at all. The old luxury store was not in fact destined to survive, and the new Beale's that would eventually emerge would be a tougher, leaner, more plebeian organisation altogether.

Starting our business life in such a testing time was no great disadvantage in the long run for my brother and myself. Many years later, when the goddess Fortune smiled on us at last, we accepted her favours sceptically, and remained with our feet firmly on the ground.

The long and bitter coal strike did not materially affect us, - as bakers we had priority in our supplies. The General Strike of 1926 came nearer home. I drove Arch down to Smithfield on one or two occasions, and together we carried out a few sheep and pigs to load into the car, - right under the noses of the resentful porters. Arch's popularity stood us in good stead, but even so we were lucky to get away unscathed.

With other middle-class young men, Ted and I joined up as special constables at Caledonian Road police station, and were duly issued with arm bands and a truncheon apiece. On one occasion, patrolling the streets nervously on my own, and seeing a large mob overturning a car opposite the Athenaeum, I discreetly continued my patrol in the opposite direction. We were thankful to have the heavy iron shutters to pull down all round the store during such angry demonstrations.

Less perceptible than the strike, the depression itself was slowly suffocating the life out of us. Money grew scarce, bad debts mounted up. The profits, thin enough to start with, died away. Customers could not afford the magnificent Scotch beef that Arch selected for them. The great wasteful cheeses, the York hams, the Colmar grapes, gave way to much cheaper foods. Fierce competition cut into

the profits of our bread and cakes, and the wide-spread delivery of goods to hard-up, late-paying, account customers, became increasingly uneconomic.

Despite all, I can remember only one man being sacked purely on account of bad trade, and even he was re-engaged when we saw that he had no hope of employment elsewhere. But all suffered wage cuts and Christmas bonuses were ended. With declining sales incentive schemes became a mockery. The five senior Beales all shared in the cuts, but the 25/- per week to which I had risen was left intact.

The low wages earned by many of the staff, some of them with unemployed relatives to keep, caused an alarming increase in staff pilferage. A food establishment sees so much good food go to waste each day that the temptation to 'knock off' some of it grows irresistible. This leads on to the pilfering of goods that are plainly not 'waste' at all. With my puritanical middle-class upbringing, I had little sympathy for those offenders that were caught. Thieving was just unforgivable, - no decent person would stoop to such a thing.

One night I stopped a waiter as he left the premises after a banquet, and asked to see inside the parcel he was carrying out. To my astonishment I found that he had purloined an unopened magnum of champagne, a lemonade bottle filled with whiskey, and a whole cold chicken to go with them. The old rascal was duly sacked next day by William, but within weeks he had worked his way back on to the payroll, much to my indignation.

A few more requests to open up the parcels of overalls carried out by staff may have reduced the pilfering but did little to improve my popularity. Eventually I caught out an old hand carrying out a quantity of best York ham and other foods inside his attache case. This time I insisted that the man be dismissed and not be re-instated. I felt strongly that it was a matter of principle and I had my way. But it was too harsh a punishment for the offence at such a time, and I have regretted the decision ever since.

Another hard fact of life for me to swallow was the workers' seemingly easy disregard for truth. I could excuse someone dropping an expensive bottle of essence on the floor, - it was an accident and that was that. But it upset me when each man and boy in a small team denied all knowledge of the incident, regardless of the evidence scattered on the floor. At school one had owned up naturally. One did not lie to save one's skin. But here they seemed to lie so readily and needlessly that I was shocked and disillusioned.

Not that I was any more satisfied with my own conduct in the business. I soon found that I was just as afraid of hard work as any in the kitchen, and had to find frequent excuses for sitting down and entering up unnecessary notes on paper. With the benefit of my superior education I was able to point out the faults and weaknesses of the entire organisation, but was somehow less capable

of knowing how to put them right. My extra-jaundiced view of life at this time may, however, with the reader's permission, be blamed at least partly on the depression. I was not the only member of the family to behave badly as a result of it.

Poor Uncle Arch! What his brothers did to him in the summer of 1927 fell not far short of fratricide. A terrible retribution was exacted for his past sins, whatever they might have been, and the image of the proud, popular, open-handed man-about-town was destroyed for ever.

Thereafter Archibald the Great was but a shadow of his former self. 'Serve him right too!', said Thomas, without an iota of remorse. But in my view the punishment inflicted was unjustified and cruel, a blot on our history that cannot be erased.

The six Beales crowded into Holloway had grown increasingly irritable with each other. One Saturday in April, in a heated argument with Arch, my father claimed - to my horror when I heard of it - that Arch had taught me nothing in the market. This was far from true. When I met him on Monday morning Arch was still simmering with rage. I noted our conversation at the time.

After charging me with base ingratitude, he vented his feelings generally, - 'I'm just about fed up with your father and uncle and their children. Act like a lot of b----- kids. As for your brother Ted, I aught to have slapped his face, the way he spoke to me. And, as I told your father, I don't like you listening to my private business in the market'.

I denied the ingratitude and said I never repeated what I heard in the market, and only listened because it looked silly to stand ten yards away. Arch said 'You can have a look round while I'm talking'. Afterwards he tried to make amends by being friendly and talking loudly to his friends so that I couldn't help hearing everything.

Three weeks later Arch and Thomas were at each other's throats again. This time it ended with Arch saying that he didn't want me to go to market with him, and would send me home if I went to meet him. So ended, humiliatingly for me, my market days with Arch. I felt that my father was more to blame than I was, for I had tried hard to be friendly and useful to my uncle. But whatever the cause of the break I had no contact with him from that day on.

A more important breaking point came two months later at the Board meeting of June 22nd.

' Mr T.H.B. raised a point with regard to transport, saying it was not up-to-date, or equal to emergencies,

which made for a long and acrimonious discussion, ultimately proposing that motors should be used instead of horses in the catering department, and at times for ordinary or special deliveries. The subject got very personal, making for a long and wide talk even to the point of Mr A.A.B. offering to sell his shares first to the Chairman, so that finally the Chairman brought the matter to an end and saying it should stop at that.'

Behind all this was the influence of Master Ted and Master Jack, and their father's T Model Ford touring car. The implication was plain. In the new age of motor transport, Arch and his beloved horses were old-fashioned and behind the times. It was a red rag being offered to an already excited bull.

Next morning Arch stormed into the Chairman's office at his most violent, shouting and swearing in full view of Ted and Ridehalgh. It was the last time that he did so. Now backed by his son and nephew, William would no longer stand such treatment. A council of war was held secretly, - William, Thomas, Ted, Francis, and Ridehalgh being present. Arch was to be thrown out, that was agreed. But how would it be done?

Harry Mote would be more than ready to produce caveats and injunctions on Arch's behalf, if there were any loophole or irregularity in the procedure. In an agony of apprehension the conspirators agreed both the method and the date of Arch's forthcoming execution. The deed would be done at the A.G.M. to be held on the 7th of July. Three lines in the minute book tell the story.

'Election of Director. The Chairman noted that Mr A.A.B. was the retiring director and after some pause there was no nomination and he declared that as he (Arch) was not nominated or elected he was not now a member of the Board.'

'After some pause'! It was a mean, sour, embittered pause. It had all been planned. They knew what was coming, - all except Arch. They had brought in Sir John Pakeman, the company's solicitor, on a pretext, to witness and uphold the legal technicality. Beesley Ridehalgh and Thomas Beer were privy to the plot. They had customarily proposed and seconded the re-election of directors. Ridehalgh and Beer were William's men. They did as they were told and held their tongues.

And there they now were, five hard-faced executioners, and there before them, caught completely unawares, was poor old Uncle Arch, almost bereft of speech, and hardly yet comprehending what had happened. They had been bracing themselves for days for the inevitable, terrible explosion. But the explosion never came, not then nor ever again to my knowledge. The bubble had been burst for good.

I imagine the others found it hard to look Arch in the face. A shouting match would have been easier to bear. Perhaps in order to start an argument that would justify their action, Thomas brought up the subject of transport once again. But Arch would not take the bait. 'Mr A.A.B. then left the room with the query as to what was his procedure'. Alas, there <u>was</u> no procedure for Mr A.A.B., other than through the boardroom door!

Like Bishop Proudie and the Rev. Obadiah Slope, after the expulsion of Mrs Proudie from his lordship's study, the remaining directors went quickly into conference. At a Board meeting held immediately after the A.G.M., with Sir John still in attendance, ' it was resolved to determine the employment of Mr A.A.B. forthwith and to pay him one year's salary as departmental manager, viz £653-6-8 in lieu of notice, and it was thought the separation had better take place at once, rather than to continue to render service while under notice'.

Later in the year the Board agreed to pay a pension of £250-0-0 per annum, this being considered as 'nicely adequate' for the purpose. In fact it was less than 40% of his previous salary. Nicely adequate! At the best of times Arch had never been able to make two ends meet, and was always asking for his salary to be paid before the end of the month.

Did his brothers realise what it would mean for him in the future, - no proud and happy visits to the market, no daily contact with the stables and the thirty horses that were such a large part of his life, no job in fact of any kind to keep him busy? On less than half pay, there would be no free breakfasts, no market expenses to be drawn, and no hampers and champagne for the races at Northaw. Did they realise the humiliation of his position, the best known of all the Beales, - sacked at a moment's notice by his brothers after a lifelong service in his father's business?

I was on holiday throughout the whole sorry business and was deeply shocked to hear about it on my return. Even though he had thrown me over in the end, I had become almost fond of the old bear during our market trips together, and had seen a better side to him than his brothers ever saw. I had no chance to make my peace and express my regrets, for Arch had gone and we were now in rival camps.

I have pictured William and Thomas as hard-faced at his expulsion from the Board. But it was out of character for both of them, and, in their defence, only they would know what they had suffered from Arch's intolerable behaviour for so many years.

To his great credit Arch behaved with much dignity and with remarkably little malice at the treatment he received in 1927 at the age of 59. Forty years later, researching for this history, I learned not only about Arch's unhappy marriage, but also about the dreadful riding accident that split open his head as a young man, and subsequently was the cause of his sporadic fits of temper. It makes it easier for us, at a safe distance, to forgive his tantrums. We did not have to endure them at the time.

Justified or not, Arch's dismissal was loudly condemned by the Motes and Herrings. Emma Mote felt so strongly moved that she picked a public quarrel with my mother over it, in Davies' drapery shop in Holloway Road. Later she wrote a rather charming letter of apology. The ladies were not fighters of the same calibre as the men.

But with what joy must Harry Mote have welcomed Arch as a full ally in the crusade, - now concentrated upon the two remaining families in control. Harry could now count upon 19,608 votes out of the 40,007, - for he defied Thomas ever to use Alice's shares against her legal interest.

Dalmeny and Beacon would have to hang together if they could, for there would be no mercy for them after this. But could they and would they hang together? Would the unwritten pact between Ted and Francis hold firm in the future? Mote was content to watch and wait.

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8 The Uneasy Alliance

With Arch's departure Francis was given the stables to administer. Neither Ted nor I knew one end of a horse from the other. William was persuaded with difficulty to allow the hiring of one motor van for one month 'as an experiment'. Three horses and two vans were sold, in order to demonstrate the extravagance of Arch's previous administration.

In November the opportunity was taken to buy the freeholds of eight more houses in Tollington Road. We now owned the whole block down to Herslet Road, a fine site for development at a time when weekly tenants had no security of tenure and town planning was in its infancy.

Three months later Francis and Ted were appointed to the Board.

> ' Mr T.H.B. said that the time had come when the two sons should become directors. There were many things to be remembered, - absence and illness of the Governing Director, his own projected absence in America, and many other possibilities and contingencies should and would be provided for by this. His second son Jack would come of age in August and he considered he should then be also made a director.
>
> After much discussion it was ultimately agreed that Mr Francis H. Beale and Mr Thomas E. Beale be elected directors with a salary of £50 per annum as fees for that office, and that Mr Jack Beale have a similar increase now, to be considered as his fees when he is made a director. '

It can be seen that in Ridehalgh's minutes the appointment of Mr Jack as a director, upon his coming of age, is implied but not specifically stated. Perhaps Ridehalgh himself did not know if it had been agreed Six months later the minute had been forgotten or William had changed his mind. I did not in fact become a director until 1934, six long years later.

William's nerves did not improve with Arch's going. He remained a sick man, visiting the business barely half a dozen times a year. My father took the chair at Board meetings, but he too was easing off. He was now in his sixties and inclined to spend most of the summer on the bowling green at Cliftonville.

Francis and Ted shared the day-to-day management. Ridehalgh, as William's watchdog, put a dampener on any change that they proposed, especially any change involving capital expenditure. The business suffered from a lack of unifying leadership at a time when it was badly needed.

Ted, as well as Francis, was understudying Ridehalgh in the running of the banqueting department, at that time catering for the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club luncheons, nine Masonic lodges, assorted club and staff dinners and dances, and two or three weddings on a Saturday.

Ballroom dancing was reviving as a cheap and cheerful form of entertainment. Saxophones and drums took over from violins and cellos. Carnival novelties became the rage, - balloons, paper hats, streamers, blow-outs, rattles and hooters, and little paper balls to throw across the room at giggling members of the opposite sex. Ted and I joined enthusiastically in these activities. We attended Susie Boyle's dancing classes at the Athenaeum, and became expert at the Quickstep, the Tango, the Charleston, and the Black Bottom.

In contrast to this night-time gaiety, business was no fun at all. In 1929 the first actual loss in our history was made, and losses continued without a break for twelve successive years. A few management reforms were carried out. Under Ted's prodding half-yearly and then quarterly stock-takings were taken. But such small improvements were negatived in the general decline in sales. A new cake shop in Seven Sisters Road was selling fresh cream cakes in rivalry to ours. Cut price competition in groceries grew more severe. Trade was increasingly 'umpty' as my father would have put it.

The lease of Jones the Jewellers fell in. Unable to relet it at the same rent, the directors of Beale's proposed to take over the corner shop themselves and extend the store and the first floor grill room into it. But the directors got cold feet over this, and the project was abandoned, even though heavy architects' fees had been incurred. An eight year extension to the lease was therefore granted at a reduced rent to the jewellers.

The Athenaeum, starved of maintenance, grew shabby and lost money. William still held the power of veto, and Ted's plea for the opening of branch shops fell on deaf ears. The outside shareholders grew more militant. At the 1930 A.G.M. Emma complained bitterly that the losses were due both to the inexperience of the junior directors and to the incompetence and absence of the seniors. Her criticism was perhaps not wholly without justification.

At the A.G.M. of 1932, with Sir John Pakeman and Mr Harold Moore in attendance to support the Board, a trial of strength was staged. Alice proposed and Emma seconded, with Arch's support, and no doubt at Harry Mote's dictation, an amendment to the accounts. This was to the effect that as the company had lost over £8,000 in the last four years, steps should be taken forthwith to sell the business.

With high words and flushed faces all round, a poll on the amendment was demanded. Thomas was faced for the first time with his responsibility as voting trustee for Alice's 5,000 shares. Was it not to her clear interest that this unprofitable business should be sold? Her share of the proceeds could then be invested for her more safely in gilt-edged securities that would guarantee her an increased income.

But this argument was academic, for Alice's shares could not affect the issue. Dalmeny Avenue and Beacon Hill did not need them in order to win the day, so Thomas decided not to use the trustee vote either for or against the amendment. The amendment was therefore comfortably defeated by 20,149 votes to 13,601. This was the first time that I attended as a shareholder, and with my 1,000 votes I plumped dutifully for the establishment.

During the five years from 1927 onward sales dropped from £83,000 to £67,000, due largely to reduced prices. The number of staff grew simultaneously from 130 to 150, perhaps due to shorter hours and longer holidays. We were still comparatively important shopkeepers at a time when most suburban shops were run by the owner and one or two assistants. Nevertheless our sales departments were too small to bear their heavy overheads. The numbers employed in a typical week in 1932 were as follows, -

Restaurants and Kitchens 25 Banquets 23 Athenaeum 5
Stables and Delivery 24 Porters and General 6 Clerical 15
Cake Shop and Sweets 9 Cake Bakeries 16 Bread Bakery 8
Butcher's Shop 4 Provisions 8 Fruit and Veg 3 Grocery 4
Directors, Secretary, Accountant, and myself 7

After Arch's departure I was not allowed to buy at Smithfield on my own, but had to tag along with Mr Greenwood, still as the trainee. I was angry at not having the chance to show what I could do, even if I was colour-blind and only twenty years of age. Greenwood, fine butcher that he was, had little of Arch's finesse in the art of buying. As for me, I felt that Arch's market friends would see me as the snake in the grass responsible for his betrayal. But business in the market was so bad that they would needs welcome the devil himself if he came as a prospective buyer.

After the market I opened up the store and was nominally in charge from 7 till 9 a.m. This I enjoyed. I gave out the cash floats for the bread and cake shops from the main desk, and received cash from the handful of early customers in the meat, provisions, grocery, and fruit departments. I opened up and sorted the heavy post and took sundry telephone orders for delivery.

At 9 o'clock I enjoyed a first-class breakfast of bacon and egg, fresh fruit, and crusty rolls straight from the oven. There was a selection of newspapers and periodicals to read. This was

easily the best part of the day. After breakfast I was much less important. I was posted to the butcher's shop, to stand foolishly in a white coat, occasionally cut up some meat and my fingers at the same time, and make out the cash slips for customers. All this I detested.

I had no objection to serving anonymous customers on Saturdays in the bustling cake shop. But the atmosphere in the butcher's shop was different. Often I had nothing to do but watch the whispered conversations between customers and staff, and the underhand passing of rewards for special services. The customers were all known by name, and there were several known spies for Arch and the the Motes among them. It had, of course, been for years the centre of Arch's activity, and in the eyes of his friends I was naturally an intruder. I knew very well that I was being watched and felt ill at ease.

During this time I acquired a long held aversion to women in fur coats. To me they epitomised a pretentious middleclass trying to get the better of the tradesman. Fur coats had to be kowtowed to lower than the rest, fur coats were fussier, they expected and received immediate attention. I loathed the lot of them. Years later my wife had a hard battle of it to persuade me to think otherwise.

One fur-coated specimen, with a high-pitched and penetrating voice, phoned every morning with a small order, - two lamb chops was often the sum total of her beneficence. She emphasised the required quality at length, and insisted on delivery at the time of her own choosing. Nothing ever satisfied her, and she would call personally later in the day to make sure we were aware of her dissatisfaction. I think of her when my friends lament the passing of old-world standards of service.

But for good or ill it was getting towards the end of an era. The day of the supermarket and self-service was at hand. My antipathy to the old self-abasement of the tradesman would hasten the transition as far as we were concerned.

While learning more about meat under Greenwood, I was supposed to be simultaneously keeping an eye on the grocery, fruit, and provision departments. With William absent and Arch gone, the managers were now virtually a law unto themselves. I was as welcome as the man with a stopwatch in the factory production line. Green as I was, I could hardly fail to see the economic absurdity of it all. They too must have seen it and wondered anxiously about their jobs.

After a few weeks I had had enough. I was not made to be a salesman, and I could see no future for myself in the store. With my father's consent, in William's absence, I left the store and returned to the comfortable anonymity of the confectionery bakery on the top floor of the same building.

Cake sales remained brisk under my father's bustling management. We watched our competitors carefully to ensure that we remained in the lead for quality and value. On Saturdays I would go

down to the cake shop and serve customers happily during the morning rush and tumble. On sighting Aunts Emma and Alice, Mrs Cruft, and other fur-coated and demanding account customers, however, I would retire to the basement stock-rooms immediately.

Up in the spacious, airy, top-floor confectionery bakery, I joined enthusiastically in the production. There was ample scope for ingenuity and new ideas. I spent a few months in each of the four sections, - the patisserie, the base-making and jam-making room, the finishing room, and in Mr Spackman's holy of holies, where he created the celebration cakes for which we were known far and wide. Later I became adept enough to take his place during his holidays without noticeably upsetting any customers.

In the patisserie all the work was done by hand, - the rolling, cutting out, and notching of the pastry tarts, and the filling of them with the most expensive ingredients obtainable. The fresh-baked maids of honour, with incredibly rich lemon cheese set in the lightest of puff pastry, literally melted in the mouth.

It was a pleasant atmosphere in which to work. The sights, smells, and tastes, were appetising, and like all bakeries it was warm and inviting in the winter. I felt more at home than in my previous apprenticeships. I shook off my lethargy and tried to do everything at the double, in imitation of my father.

Later I moved into the main bakeries, under the supervision of Mr Hartley, himself answerable to William, and now, in an ill-defined way, to Francis as well. It was an area of potential dispute between Francis and myself, but I saw little of him. Hartley, however, remained off-hand and suspicious of me as an intruder from the enemy camp.

The cake and bun bakeries were on the first floor of the main bakery building, at the rear of the premises, and out of my father's orbit altogether. They were lofty, tiled production rooms, capable of producing far more than they were doing at that time. The various cakes, - madeira, fruit, seed, ginger, almond, etc., were of excellent quality, but the final product was far from uniform. There was a good deal of waste from cakes that were badly mixed or burnt, - perhaps because the production was over-complicated. Together with the confectionery bakery we made nearly three hundred varieties of cakes and pastries every week.

Bun production started at 5 a.m. and took up about four hours of the day. I remember the rich, yeasty, Chelsea buns, full of currants, and Bath buns made with eggs, butter, sultanas, and lemon peel, topped with nib sugar. The buns were sold very cheaply, - currant buns at ½d each - but made a good profit for the baker. At this time we made 30,000 Hot-Cross Buns at Easter.

Next I was transferred to the downstairs bread bakery, where all the work was carried out at night. We started at nine o'clock and finished at six or seven o'clock next morning, having had two short breaks for tea and sandwiches. It was an unhealthy and unsocial life. The side-flue ovens periodically sent out waves of

acrid half-burnt coal smoke into the bakery, damaging the bakers' lungs. The work was hard, even with the machinery with which, unlike most master bakers, we were equipped.

If the hours and conditions were unsocial - we had to sleep in the daytime as best we could and forgo many late evening pleasures - the camaraderie of the bakers made up in part. There was a physical satisfaction in the hard work at the bench in their company. Their arm muscles, however, unlike my own jelly-bags, appeared to be made of steel.

The machines in both the bread and cake bakeries were belt driven from pulleys worked by one massive noisy 15 h.p. electric motor. When overworked the leather belts tended to slip, and the bakers, much against our wishes, would apply a handful of sticky malt extract to the surface. This made for perfect adhesion until the malt extract dried. But it also strained the motor and rotted the expensive leather belts away. Its application to the belt, however, caused a loud, rhythmic, slapping noise which the bakers seemed to enjoy.

The bread making machinery, installed by William the First, was built like a battleship to last for ever. The hammer blows of the dough divider could be heard and felt throughout the building. They were disastrous in their 'felling' effect on the dough, which was never able fully to recover strength. With the exception of the excellent Vienna bread and rolls, mixed and baked personally by an Austrian baker called Rhusa, who kept his craft secrets to himself, our bread was generally poor in texture and far from uniformly baked.

Our large bread bakery was consequently much under-used. When contemporaries lament the good old crusty bread of bygone days, I am astonished that our burnt-bottomed misshapen atrocities can be remembered so forgivingly.

The pale-faced, dusty bakers departed, and the yard came alive with the noise and bustle of sorters and roundsmen loading their trolleys with the still warm bread. Another day had started. Save for the Sabbath and Bank Holidays the activities of the beehive that was Beale's never ceased.

With the few months of unhealthy working in the night bakery, my long drawn out apprenticeships were at an end. I had been a boy too long and was eager to become a man. Alas, I was given no responsibility. The managers, each with his own little fortress to defend, defied me to usurp any part of their authority. And each had his 'hot line' of appeal, via Ridehalgh, to the all-powerful but absent Governing Director.

Moreover Ted and Francis were staking out their own claims in the coming division of the empire. It would not all be settled easily. The Grand Alliance would feel the strain.

Grandfather was mocked in the press for being Jack of all trades and master of none. I was far better qualified for the title, and the managers who had taught me for a few months each were well aware of it. Left without any guidance or instruction as to my duties, I began to drift. My brain was untaxed and my enthusiasm unwanted. As with my equally unsettled brother, the outside world claimed more and more of my attention. The losses continued.

With the death of my little invalid sister, my mother was able to take a more active interest in the affairs of our family controlled business. Her conscience had been stirred by the plight of the minority shareholders at the 1930 A.G.M. A week later she wrote a long and strangely formal letter to her elder son, evidently intending it for discussion by the Board.

In it she claimed that we were not justified in carrying on as we were. Arch and the Aunts should have at least the income they would have if the business were sold and they were able to invest their share of the proceeds. We should therefore either sell the business or allow them to take a part in the management and be paid a salary for doing so.

A rough note in Ted's writing indicates that he, perhaps in consultation with Francis, had decided that the suggestions were impractical, and they were taken no further. But from now on Mother would have to be reckoned with, a new force standing midway between the opposition and the establishment.

Meanwhile my own restlessness was slowly coming to the boil. I felt I could express myself better in writing than in speech. In June 1931, therefore, I fired off the first of two highly pretentious written submissions to the Board, - 'Proposals for the Preliminary Rationalisation of Messrs Beale's Ltd, by Mr J.H.Beale'. They showed how the Board could be reconstructed, with William and Thomas remaining as consultative directors only, and how the firm could be put on the road to salvation with my assistance. I proposed that the kitchens, bakeries, and shops, nearly half of the business in fact, should be placed under my control, and generously divided up the rest betwen Ted and Francis.

These submissions being smothered in William's office for several months, my second broadside was even more critical of the Board. Francis, for one, took it very much amiss. I fear that I was insufferably arrogant at the age of twenty-four. But I had the backing of my mother, and through her of my father, and the matter was eventually discussed at length at a Board meeting held on January 7th 1932.

> ' The Directors, Policy, Reorganisation, and Mr Jack Beale. The Chairman introduced Mr Jack's lengthy written queries as to position, duties, and responsibilities, etc., of the Senior

and Junior Directors, as well as his own, involving or suggesting reorganisation and as he also termed it rationalisation of the business now, and looking many years ahead.

This made for much discussion and cross talk, and after a time it was suggested and agreed, - that he, Jack, be allowed to assume control of the kitchens only until we see what he is capable of organising and controlling, and in time we should see the lines on which he was working conjointly with the heads on the kitchen floor and what were the resultant improvements or effect.'

It is plain that no decisions had been made as to the wider issues and the responsibilities of Ted and Francis. But I had gained something. The somewhat grudging concession in fact gave me control not only of the kitchen staff but of the confectionery bakers as well, - though Mr Spackman might have his own views about that. At last I had been given some responsibility and my big talk would be put to the test.

Thomas Beer had just retired, and some other old stagers in the kitchen had left with him. I made some changes in the routine and engaged new staff. After further battles with the Board, modern ice-cream making machinery and new fish fryers were installed, to replace Grandfather's completely worn out equipment. I eliminated some fifty varieties of the decorated cake lines produced each week.

Were the results better or worse than before? I never knew the answer, nor did the Board. The departmental figures, if they were produced at all, were of no consequence in the upheaval of the next two years. But company losses as a whole soon reached a new high, - that at least we know.

The Board's gesture of appeasement to my ambition had no more effect than Mr Chamberlain's to Herr Hitler at the time of Munich. I was still not one of the team. Perhaps they would have been wiser to have taken me into it, for I proved increasingly destructive outside of it. In November 1931 I was officially rebuked for quarrelling with Francis. Beesley Ridehalgh's sympathies were evidently with the Governing Director's son.

' Mr F.H.B. and Mr Jack Beale. Mr F.H.B said this meeting was really and practically at his request in order to bring before the directors certain facts or incidents and remarks that had been said or arisen between Mr Jack and himself, and to have some guidance or ruling from the Board as to the future.

The points which were given at length by Mr Francis touched harvest bread and display, chocolate cakes, making and sale thereof, and the directions to the manageress, Mrs Mayne.

After much talk Mr Jack was called in before the Board, his explanations desired and re-examined, and as later it

was inferred that offence had not meant to be given to Mr Francis, he would withdraw the offending remarks, and be more subservient or respectful to him as a senior, so that they could work harmoniously and amicably in the interests of the business in the future.'

I certainly cannot remember making so humble an apology, but I remember the cause of his complaint, - our quarrel on the stairs leading to the kitchen. Francis had instructed the cake shop manageress to replace some of my chocolate cakes on display in the main window with some of his harvest bread. This was tantamount to lighting up a cigar in a powder magazine. For I claimed the arrangement of the window as being within my field of responsibility.

Arch and my father had stood face to face on those same stairs, shouting and swearing at each other loud enough to be heard half way through the kitchen. Francis and I might argue more discreetly but the same incompatibility was there. Upon such personal antagonisms and storms in a teacup depend the fates of empires. The first visible crack in the alliance had appeared.

The Board wigging emphasised my sense of isolation. I withdrew into my shell and let the world go by. As early as 1927 I had dabbled in the art of chocolate making, and I now built up a small department of four quick-fingered young girls making and dipping chocolates all day long. This was my own creation, and the product, in my opinion, reached a high level of quality. I devoted too much time to it, however, and it must have been quite uneconomic. I had little justification in criticising the Board for the losses of the business as a whole.

The submissions of my mother and myself forced the Board to think seriously about the future, painful though that exercise might be. Thomas, now 66, and Ridehalgh too, were considering retirement. This alarmed William who was just as anxious for the quiet life, if only he could bring himself to hand over the reins. But there lay the problem that they never openly discussed, - to whom were the reins to be handed?

Could Ted and Francis be co-equal? Could two cousins sit in the same chair? And was I, the caustic self-appointed critic, to be appeased further with a directorship, - to side with Ted and outvote Francis? It was plain that Ted, who had already taken over much of William's work, would not be prepared to play second fiddle in the future. If William appointed Francis as his successor, Beacon Hill might well line up with the opposition and bring the whole pack of cards to the ground.

The problem was not squarely faced and reasoned out. It remained unanswered, - a wretched, nagging, secret worry to them all. Did my submissions sow the seed of discord in the Board or did they merely speed up the inevitable split? In either case I should have received the thanks of Harry Mote.

I must try harder not to write an autobiography in the guise of something else. Even my temporary importance as honorary gad-fly to the directors is soon to reach its peak in my story, and will then rapidly decline. I shall then quit the limelight gracefully for a while, and allow my brother to replace me at the centre of the stage.

In September 1932 Ted had married Betty McLaughlin from Enniskillen and had set up home at No 26 Freegrove Road, not far from Beacon Hill. My mother and I became even closer allies. We concluded that a two-headed alliance between Ted and Francis, even if it could be agreed, was unlikely to endure. It would be more sensible to sell up the business and go our separate ways.

But in a last bid for family accord we revised our previous proposals. This time we would ask the senior directors to retire completely, and for my appointment to the Board, in company with my cousins Jack Mote and Willy Herring to represent the outside shareholders. If this bid failed my father would retire, and I would leave and set up in business on my own.

Meanwhile the thought that the business might have to be sold was being secretly discussed by the Board. For the year to March 1933 another loss would be shown. Harold Moore advised that if a sale or merger was being considered an outside director of financial experience should be brought in first to strengthen the Board. Ted and Francis were authorised to sound out business friends over this. Ted had the wider circle of acquaintance, and this was of importance later on.

One suggestion was that a syndicate of business men might buy a controlling interest in the company, and that Francis, Ted, and I would run it for them. But Francis didn't think that all three of us would be required. If Ted was to introduce the syndicate Francis would resign, but if Francis introduced it then Ted and I would have to go. The alliance was obviously splitting at the seams.

At the A.G.M. I split it open a little wider. I was at the peak of my destructiveness. Present at the meeting were the five directors, together with Sir John Pakeman, Mr Harold Moore, and shareholders A.A.Beale, T.Beer, J.H.Beale, Mrs Fanny Beale, and Mrs Alice Herring.

In proposing the adoption of the accounts the Chairman stated that as there was still no sign of improvement in the future the directors had decided to have a valuation made of the company's properties, if this was agreeable to the shareholders. It was presumably the first step towards the selling of the business.

The announcement should have taken the wind out of my sails. But I had prepared my speech and was not going to waste it. I supported the valuation, and then added unnecessary criticism of the Board, blaming it for having brought the Company to its present unhappy state. William and Francis were visibly incensed. My mother added fuel to the fire, saying it was high time for the seniors to give way to newcomers with new ideas.

Arch and Alice said not a word. We had indeed said it all for them. Doubtless they were astonished to find themselves approving the Board's proposal. Harold Moore commented dryly on the unanimity of the family, - 'if only in the matter of a valuation'.

The meeting ended with William and Francis still glowering in my direction. Thomas Beer shook hands all round and departed for good, after over fifty years of service to the company. Arch and Alice made post haste to Queen's Road to acquaint the Demon King with the good news. And I would note gleefully in my diary that I had given the Board a 'good old rousting'. I was just twenty-six years of age, and possibly a shade too big for my boots. But next morning an angry meeting of the Board took place.

> ' Mr F.H.B. then made long and varied comments on what had been said by Mrs Fanny Beale and principally by Mr J.H.Beale, the remarks of the latter not having been consistent with his control or management in the kitchen and confectionery department, and suggested that this control and management should be put in the hands of managers who would get the work and the respect of the staff and be responsible to the Board for carrying out their wishes.
>
> Mr T.H.B. was very much against this and thought that the complaints were exaggerated and much prejudiced.
>
> Mr T.Ed.Beale also supported this and thought Mr J.H.B. had done extremely well under great difficulties, and suggested no further action at this time, but that we consider the accounts ending March - - - - - - etc.'

Francis and I could no longer work together. Stung by my repeated criticism, he was demanding that the management of my departments be taken from me. It was tantamount to demanding my resignation. I was still not a member of the Board and thus unable to defend myself, but my father automatically gave me his support. His son, by some sort of divine right, would always be superior in every way to William's son.

But Ted faced a much more cruel choice, - between his brother who was behaving badly and dangerously rocking the boat, and the cousin with whom he had built up an alliance over a long and difficult period. A break with Francis meant the ruin of his hopes and ambitions for the future of the firm.

The minutes show that Ted came loyally to my defence, and for that I must be forever grateful. Unrecorded in the minutes is the fact that the partnership between Ted and Francis was thereby ended. I regret that my truculence should have been the cause, even though the break was probably inevitable. I met Francis again after some forty years, and found him a tolerant and friendly man. I was evidently much to blame in 1933.

Leopold Farmer and Sons were instructed to value the property and plant. In October they reported the total as being some £65,000 to us in occupation, but only £50,500 in value to a 'willing Buyer'.

A letter from Arch's solicitors arrived as the Board was discussing the valuation. Arch had been offered £2-0-0 per share for his 8,512 shares by a Mr George Cloke of Kingsbury Manor. Would the transfer be accepted by the directors, whose approval was necessary according to the Articles of Association? At £2-0-0 per share Mr Cloke, whoever he was, was valuing the company at £80,000, - a big increase on the valuation of Leopold Farmer.

It was agreed that an Extraordinary General Meeting of shareholders be held on November 30th, and that on this occasion the directors must be united and give a lead. What was not agreed was the direction in which the lead was to be given. The E.G.M. was therefore put off. In February 1934 copies of the valuation were sent to all shareholders, but without comment and still not calling for a meeting.

The good ship Beale's of Holloway was clearly doomed. For, with the breakers plainly visible ahead, the directors were still fighting for possession of the tiller. Rumours were spreading dangerously, - customers and staff were whispering in corners, and trade creditors grew anxious. Beale's was up for sale, was bankrupt, had been taken over by Joe Lyons. It was difficult to provide the necessary reassurance.

At a board meeting on February 6th, in a last attempt to save something from the wreck, Ted put forward proposals for the formation of a new and smaller company. But Harold Moore advised against this and against a new syndicate as well. He gave it as his opinion bluntly that Leopold Farmer should be asked to find a buyer for the whole business as a fair market price.

And this, worn out with argument, the Board finally agreed to do, setting a hopeful £80,000 as their asking price. Leopold Farmer said this was ridiculous, - £60,000 was the most he could hope to get. But this was too big a drop for the Board to stomach. Mr Cloke seemed to have dropped out, but perhaps they could find another Mr Cloke.

Ted managed to produce four separate potential buyers, and Francis found a fifth. There were many secretive inspections of the premises to disturb the staff. The customary excuse that the visitors were insurance inspectors started to wear thin. But there were no firm offers forthcoming and two months later the directors, cap in hand, were back to Leopold Farmer once again.

Alas, Farmer now talked not of £60,000 but of £35,000 to £40,000, - times were bad and it was a buyer's market. There was little fight left in the dispirited Board. 'Get the best you can' they told their agent, but he must act discreetly to avoid the spread of further rumours. This proviso was asking for the impossible. Soon all the world knew that Beale's of Holloway was up for sale.

A client of Leopold Farmer, a Mr Agazarian, now offered £30,000 for the business, equivalent to 15/- a share. When this

was refused Mr Agazarian raised his price to 17/6. No other offer was received. Could Agazarian be pushed up to £1-0-0, and if so would the minority shareholders be prepared to sell?

A meeting of the family was called, but Mote would not allow Emma to attend. Arch and Alice attended but maintained that they could get a far bigger offer elsewhere, given half a chance. They believed that there was trickery afoot, and that they were being offered an artificially low price. The meeting became one of the most unpleasant that I can recall. Leopold Farmer, present as an advisor, said afterwards that he never wanted to attend another family meeting as long as he lived.

Following the meeting Arch was given facilities for some market friends to inspect the company's accounts. He was confident that he could find backers to buy out Dalmeny Avenue and Beacon Hill at £1-0-0 a share. But Arch was no more successful than we had been, and the fortnight passed without an offer.

Mr Agazarian now raised his bid to £1-0-0 per share for all, or alternatively a controlling interest in, the shares of the company. Leopold Farmer, under the impression that this was acceptable to all the shareholders, informed him that he could purchase all the shares at par, and Agazarian agreed to do so. But the directors had given no such firm undertaking, and the minority shareholders had definitely said no. There was further delay while this was being sorted out.

Nevertheless a sale seemed inevitable and my own future had to be considered. I looked around the district on my second-hand motorbicycle, and eventually agreed to buy the lease and goodwill of a sweetstuff shop at No 22 Broadway Parade, Crouch End. My plan was to start up a small cake bakery and chocolate factory at the rear, take on more shops with the ensuing profits, and build up a vast trading empire on my own. The sweetstuff shop itself was bought, but the dreams of empire were cut short by entirely new considerations.

William and Francis were anxious to accept Agazarian's offer and were terrified of any more delay. But Ted fought for and was given one more week to find a better offer. Meanwhile shareholders were told that William and Thomas were preparing to sell their shares at par. Did they wish to do the same? The answer once again was no, despite the danger of being left out in the cold by a stranger who might not be interested in paying dividends.

At this stage no suggestion had ever been made that Beacon Hill might buy control on its own. The possibility had not occurred to us, for my father's total savings were no more than £3,000. And £700 of this had now been lent to me to help me buy my sweetstuff shop!

The Islington Rotary Club now makes a major contribution to our story. My father was a founder member and Ted had for some time supervised the weekly luncheons held at Holloway. Father and son were equally popular among the members, some of whom were wealthy and experienced men of affairs. One such was Thomas Walter Saint, senior partner of H.B.Wedlake, Saint and Co, an old established firm of solicitors in Islington. Tom Saint had a flair for company finance and reconstruction. He responded willingly to Ted's plea for help.

Saint suggested that my father should buy out Dalmeny Avenue at 20/3 per share, 3d more than Mr Agazarian was offering, at a total cost of £13,000. These shares, together with those of himself and his family, 21,299 in all and carrying control, would be pledged as security for a loan of £11,000 by a syndicate of business men to be formed by Mr Saint. The remaining £2,000 was to come out of my father's savings. William, Francis, and Ridehalgh would retire, and I, with two members of the syndicate would be elected to the Board.

Ted seized on this suggestion with enthusiasm and perhaps took its acceptance too much for granted. He persuaded William and Francis to agree July 17th as the date for the transaction to take place. But there is evidence that my mother for one was anxious and in two minds over the matter.

The days slipped by all too quickly. The busy Mr Saint was difficult to pin down. I was on holiday and kept in the picture only through the post by my mother, as far as she could understand what was going on. But although now committed to my own venture I agreed to come in on Saint's scheme, if in fact it matured. Mother and father and sister likewise hesitatingly agreed. But we insisted that every effort should be made to borrow the full £13,000, and that father's lifetime's savings should not be taken.

Contrary to Saint's expectations, however, backers for the £11,000 could not be found. In default he suggested that we should try to borrow £12,000 from our bank, with the shares as security, and £1,000 from another Rotarian, Bob Jelks by name. To our relief both Barclays Bank and Bob Jelks agreed.

This second scheme fell through, one week before the appointed day, when Barclays declared that they must have a substantial backer to guarantee the whole sum in case of our default. Such a backer was impossible to find. Tom Saint confessed that he could not find the cash elsewhere, other than upon extortionate terms. William and Francis now began to smell a rat, and became increasingly alarmed that the deal might not go through.

Three working days before the promised settlement Ted had arranged for one more interview with Barclays. He was armed with an eight-page letter of recommendation from Tom Saint. Through a misunderstanding he waited all day for a phone call that never came. One more nail-biting day was lost.

Next morning Tom Saint put off all other urgent business to come to the rescue of the Beales of Beacon Hill. Somehow he persuaded

the reluctant bank to lend a reduced amount, £10,000, without insisting on an outside guarantor. The same day he organised a syndicate of business men willing to stump up a further £3,000, - albeit on pretty onerous terms, as was to be expected.

The four members of the syndicate, each to find £750, would be Tom Saint himself, Bob Jelks, Managing Director of Jelks Furniture Stores, Harold Norris of Drivers and Norris, Estate Agents, and Leslie Venning of Newton, Bruce, and Venning, Chartered Accountants. All four were members of the Islington Rotary Club, all busy putting into practice their club motto, 'Service above Self'.

In the nick of time an acceptable scheme had been evolved. This time Ted was named as the borrower from the bank and syndicate. On Monday 16th the bank agreed to lend him £10,000 on the security of 21,299 shares, and the syndicate lent £3,000 on the same security, but subject to the bank's prior charge. Father, Mother, Sister, and I joined Ted as joint and several guarantors of the loans. As an afterthought we stipulated that my mother should be elected to the Board to represent my father's interest.

At 3.30 p.m. on Tuesday the old Board met for the last time. All is harmony, the storms are over. Tom Saint has replaced Sir John Pakeman, in accompanying Harold Moore as professional advisors. William courteously proposes and Francis seconds the election of Mr John Henderson Beale and Mrs Fanny Beale as directors and this is agreed. The shares of William, Francis, Ridehalgh, and Thomas Beer are cancelled and reissued as follows, -

To Mr Thomas Edward Beale	7,000	shares
" " John Henderson Beale	5,338	"
" " W.M.Jelks	75	"
" " H.W.Norris	75	"
" " T.W.Saint	75	"
" " Solomon Fink	75	"

An unknown Mr Fink has apparently taken the place of Leslie Venning as the fourth member of the syndicate. A slight shiver of apprehension runs through the Beacon Hill contingent. William and Francis, having lost their qualifying shares, are declared no longer directors. They shake hands cordially and depart, with their cash, for ever, - thankful for their deliverance at long last from that old tyrant, Beale's of Holloway. Beesley Ridehalgh, who had resigned earlier as secretary and director, accompanies them. It is all over.

At 4 p.m. the new Board met again. Mr Thomas Henderson Beale - the Henderson in our names came from Grandma Beale's surname - tendered his resignation. Mr Thomas Edward Beale was appointed Chairman of the Board, being the only member of the old Board to survive. Mr Solomon Fink was elected a director, in his absence, as representing the syndicate according to the agreement.

Messrs H.B.Wedlake Saint and Co were appointed as the company solicitors, and Messrs Newton, Bruce, and Venning as auditors for the coming year. Finally, transfers in favour of Barclay's Bank Ltd for all the 21,299 shares were authorised to be met in case of default on the loan.

In terms of the long family battle for control, this must be recorded as a great and glorious victory for Beacon Hill, though to be sure it had indeed been a 'damned close run thing'. But there were no celebrations held on the hill that night. What had we taken on, when all was said and done, - a fine old business or a huge, decrepit, and half-starved white elephant?

What was the real price we had to pay, and what horrendous clauses lay in the small print of the agreement with the syndicate? Would the new professional advisors look to the family for their instructions or to the syndicate of which they formed a part? And why had this unknown Mr Fink been pushed in at the last minute, without prior consultation?

Whatever dreams of empire their two sons may have had, surely my father and mother must have tossed awhile uneasily that night.

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9 Mother and Sons

Next morning Beacon Hill rubbed its eyes and could hardly take in its sudden change of fortune. We had almost to pinch ourselves to make sure we were not dreaming. Against all expectations we now had the whole of a large business to shape and manage according to our own ideas.

Fortunately for our morale, we did not appreciate the full burden we had taken on. We believed that new ideas and drive would soon pull the old firm round. The truth was that Beale's was already on the skids. It would need a miracle to pull it round.

The new Board had its weaknesses, but on balance it was stronger than its predecessor. Its main strength lay in the close-knit unity of the Beacon Hill directors. The challenge brought us together, and we stayed together from then on. The atmosphere that had been hostile and suspicious was now bright and friendly. I myself worked more happily than I had ever done before.

The creation of the new Beale's had been Ted's personal achievement. My contribution, regrettably, was nil. I had remained on holiday until the last week-end, only half in the picture and with no great interest in the outcome. I had my own little business waiting for me, and was none too anxious to return to the frustrations of Holloway for the benefit of an unknown syndicate.

Neither had Mother shown much enthusiasm for the deal. A week before the take-over she wrote to me, - 'I can't help feeling it would be comfortable to sell, give you each £1,000 and be finished. It is the injustice to the Mote side that worries me. If Ted had the shares and was Governing Director, they would be under his power as they have been under Will's. Alice says that the business needs a man with a big capital. I am afraid I shall not have the pluck to say this to Ted, he had such a week of it last week, and is so keen on it all. In any case we shall wait to hear what the bank says, and then Dad and I will see Saint'.

My own letter in reply, in absurdly childish handwriting, ends as follows, - 'As regards my being a director, I suppose I had better give it a try for a year or two, and then if it doesn't suit me I could give it up. Went over to Sandwich today on bike for Open Golf Championship. Followed round with Abe Mitchell, very interesting course and play. Please bring a pair of coloured socks down tomorrow.'

Coloured socks, forsooth, on the eve of such a climateric in our history! The reader will think that Ted had two unusually immature and faint-hearted supporters at his side. But responsibility transmogrified my mother and myself, as if by magic, almost overnight.

A mountain of work and reorganisation awaited us. But first we had to assess more soberly the price of victory. The bank loan was far from permanent. Within a year they would press us hard for some repayment. Of more concern were our obligations to the syndicate. Here the terms of the agreement were more severe than Mother and I had appreciated. So swift had been the last minute somersaults that the documents had been presented to us for signature with but a few minutes to study and agree the terms.

The loan was for £3,000 at 5% interest, repayable at three months' notice, all the family again acting as guarantors. Each member of the syndicate received seventy-five free shares. They had the right to appoint three out of a total of five directors, and Bob Jelks was to be appointed Chairman of the Board. For the duration of the loan the syndicate would be in full control.

A separate agreement was to be entered into between Beale's Ltd and Bob Jelks, at his request, within six months. He was to act as an advisor at a salary of £100 per annum, and receive a commission of 10% of the net profits before charging income tax, directors' fees and salaries, bad debts, and depreciation!

The agreement was to be terminated on the death of Mr Jelks or the winding up of the business. If the reorganisation proved successful, 'the agreement shall at the end of five years be renewed for such period and at such remuneration as shall to the parties hereto appear reasonable.' It seemed that for better or for worse we were tied to Bob Jelks indissolubly until death did us part.

We had exchanged the domination of Dalmeny Avenue for the domination of the syndicate. No doubt we had been extremely foolish to pledge our whole future in such a hurry. But God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, and an unexpected turn of events saved us from the consequences of our folly.

Bob Jelks was managing director of one of the largest retail furniture stores in North London. He was nothing loth to become chairman of another substantial local business. His father, however, had not been consulted, and when at last told of the arrangement, objected strongly to 'young Bob' diverting his energies away from his own family business. For the time being, at any rate, Father Jelks laid down a stern veto on any active participation in the scheme by his son. Nevertheless, the agreement had been signed and could be invoked at any time within the next six months.

Another last minute change had resulted in Solomon Fink replacing Leslie Venning as the fourth member of the syndicate. Venning had realised, a little late, that he could not hold shares in a company for which he was to act as auditor. Fink, a retired

Jewish diamond merchant, was in fact the only member actually appointed to the Board.

Like most business men of the day, we were terrified of getting mixed up too closely with the Jews. Once they had got a foot in, it was thought, they would not leave you until they had stripped you of every penny you possessed. Solomon Fink could not have been less like this misconception. A quiet, courteous, white-haired old gentleman, he attended only two meetings during the next six months, - and then only to compliment us gently on our progress.

Harry Mote and his allies now faced the 21,299 shares of a united Beacon Hill. The previous possibility of splitting Thomas away from William had gone. Probably without much conviction, Mote proclaimed that he would spend every penny he possessed to bring the remaining Beales to book. His spies continued to report our every action. 'Young Ted and Jack' were reported to have been seen in Holloway carrying gloves and wearing grey spats on their way to work, and no doubt the aforementioned coloured socks were lurking beneath the spats. What hope had the company, under the administration of two such effete dandies?

No objection had been made by the syndicate to my mother becoming a director, or to Ted becoming Chairman. Indeed the members individually were much too busy with their own affairs to bother about the small stake each had in Beale's.

At first it seemed incongruous to have our hitherto domesticated mother sitting at the table with the sophisticated Messrs Fink and Schreyeck, - the latter having replaced Ridshalgh as Company Secretary back in March. There was much amusement when, having examined an invoice for meat supplied to us, she absent-mindedly signed the cheque in payment as 'Fanny Beef' instead of Fanny Beale.

But Mother soon took over the buying and supervision of the large stocks of linen, overalls, china and glass, cutlery, and cleaning materials, and re-negotiated our insurance policies and laundry contracts. Even more important was her contribution to staff welfare, towards which she brought a badly needed woman's touch.

She was now blessed with a mature, easy friendliness to high and low alike, being without a trace of snobbery. Many of the staff came to regard her as a valued friend, and sought her advice in their personal problems. She brought the benefit of her commonsense to the boardroom, and was sometimes able to put a needed brake on the expenditure of her over-ambitious sons.

Meanwhile Ted and I were beginning the remarkable partnership that continued unbroken between us until my retirement thirty-eight

years later. With three and a half years between us, we had not been particularly close as boys. Neither had we seen much of each other in the business up till then. The take-over brought us together, and the very difference in personality that had perhaps kept us apart, now formed the basis of a well-balanced team.

The qualities that Ted lacked I possessed, and vice versa. He was the extrovert, the talker, and the man of action. I was the introvert, the listener, and the back-room boffin of the two. He got on well with people, I with things, especially with figures. We divided up the empire quickly, and thereafter never interfered in the other's sphere of influence. We had seen the disastrous effects of the quarrels of the second generation. We were determined not to make the same mistake.

I was allotted the bakeries, the bread and cake shops, the meat, fruit, and grocery departments, and the accounts office. Ted took the restaurants, kitchens, and banqueting, the provisions, rounds, and works departments, advertising, and general administration.

Later on, when the food store had been disposed of, the Hotel and Catering Division, and general administration were Ted's responsibility, and the Bakery Division and financial control were mine. It worked well for I can recall no quarrel between us for close on forty years, - surely a remarkable achievement.

The business that we took over in 1934 was, in outward appearance, virtually the same as it had been in Grandfather's time. But it was now old-fashioned and unprofitable, and there were years of neglect to be made good. Though 'business as usual' was proclaimed loudly by the Board, the staff were uneasy about the future.

Within a week the first sign of doubt concerning our credibility came with the resignation of Mr Hartley. Francis had bought a bakery business in Westcliff, and Hartley was off to join him there. Another week and he was gone. I had to wade in and do his job as well. But at least it made it easier for me to make a clean start in the bakery.

At the Annual General Meeting it was reported that Mr T.E.Beale had been appointed Chairman of the Board, but the office of Governing Director would not be filled. A loss had been made, and no dividend would be paid, - for the first time since 1910. Active steps were being taken to reorganise the business, and perhaps the more unprofitable parts would be sold in due course. The outside shareholders were assured that the directors had their interests very much at heart and were determined to treat them fairly.

After three months Mr Schreyeck left us and I took over as Company Secretary, in addition to my other duties. My boyish handwriting appears in the minute books for the next few years. It was quite impossible to look after my sweetstuff shop, and its neglect meant that I lost half of my small investment within a year. There

were now far more important matters claiming my attention. I had only half-heartedly agreed to give the new set-up at Holloway a trial. But once started the thought of leaving never occurred to me again. The taste of real responsibility was too intoxicating.

The new forward-looking Beale's had to be advertised. A neon electric sign outlining the whole front of the building was erected. In the centre we retained the older sign that wrote the the word Beale's endlessly in changing combinations of white and red electric bulbs. The signs dominated Camden Road right up to the Athenaeum, and were our pride and joy up to the time of being snuffed out in the second war.

Ted organised a series of sensational window displays that attracted much attention. He busied himself with catalogues, brochures, posters, and press advertisements written by himself in a light-hearted manner, - all featuring the modern 'with it' Beale's. No spark of humour had ever been seen previously. One illustrated catalogue, running to seventy-two pages, became out of date before all the copies had been disposed of. The goods and services listed inside remained current, but the skirt length of the young flapper depicted on the cover had become unfashionable. We had to stick a label over her knees on every copy in order to conceal the fact.

Entries in the banquet diary had dropped to an average of only seven a week. It was essential to stop the rot and win back the lost customers. The Hall and the Grill Room were redecorated at a cost of £600, which large sum had to be spread over three years in the accounts. For a few weeks Ted kept the ground floor cafe open until 10 p.m., serving suppers advertised widely at 2/- a head, including coffee. They were not a success. Not many could afford to eat out during the depression, even at give-away prices.

A car was purchased second-hand for £50 to help the outdoor catering department. The hire stores were moved to Holloway, enabling the Athenaeum basements to be let. An internal telephone system revolutionised communications within the rabbit warren of the Holloway premises. An old member of the staff remembered Grandfather using a speaking-tube, complete with whistle, to contact staff in the upper floors.

Ted and I differed in our technique for dealing with backsliders among the staff. Ted would have them up on the carpet in his office. He would put on a great show of anger, raise his voice, thump the table resoundingly, and eventually reduce the unhappy culprit to a jelly or to tears.

In contrast I was inclined to nag mildly but continuously at my staff. There was no desk-thumping in my case, but they must have felt that I was never satisfied. I was not over-generous with praise and, unlike Ted, showed little interest in them personally or in their home lives and families. It was hardly inspired management on my part. Of the two of us most staff would have preferred the excitement and drama of Ted's administration to the unruffled tedium of my own.

But whether occasionally carpetted or continuously nagged, no one, in those days before the welfare state had been invented, was cast out because of age. They could stay with us to die in harness if they had to, or wanted to, long after their useful days had passed. Two such were the famous heavyweight old waitresses known as Smith and Libby, who worked in the groundfloor cafe for over fifty years apiece, serving their regular customers ever more slowly as the years went by.

At the other end of the time scale, be it noted, Ted and I thought it prudent not to fraternise with the numerous young girls that worked for us, though some of them would offer us inviting smiles as they left in the evening with the customary 'Goodnight Mr Ted' or 'Goodnight Mr Jack'. Had our father been as cautious we would not have been there.

My days of practical work were over. No longer would I serve the occasional customer in the shop, join in the frantic hot-cross bun making at Easter, or decorate the bride cakes during Spackman's holidays. I had neither my father's artistic craftsmanship nor his physical energy. Bad circulation in my legs encouraged me towards the office chair, and though I made myself visit the bakeries and shops regularly I became more and more of an office administrator from this time on.

My experience of Smithfield came in useful, for I was now buyer for a wide range of commodities. Bargaining for hundreds of sacks of flour, tons of sugar, fats, dried fruits, jams, and the multitude of items needed for a busy bakery, all this was meat and drink to me, but took up too much of my time. As Ted was the born salesman of the team, so I was perhaps in my natural element as the one who did the buying.

It was necessary to resist the blandishments, flattery, and potential bribery, of the endless stream of commercial travellers who haunted the buying office. These trade representatives called on us weekly in astonishing numbers, and had usually enjoyed a gossip session and a small order from Mr Hartley to justify their long wait in the reception office. I preferred to place a three month order with one dealer at a better price, and eliminate a whole host of interviews, invoices, and ledger accounts.

The 'reps' were paid on commission, and their bread and butter depended on getting an order by hook or by crook from the baker. Some were nonplussed by my tactics and decided that I must be holding out for a substantial bribe. Their covert suggestions infuriated me and put paid to any further business. They flattered

and cajoled in good times, but often ended up by browbeating the poor bakers who fell into their debt. And woe betide the bakers who became tied by their debts to buying from one miller.

In a major reorganisation of the bakeries, my father's old confectioners' department was moved from the top floor of the main building and amalgamated into the first floor cake bakery at the rear. The idea was sound in principle and made for easier control, but some of the careful craftsmanship of the decorators was lost in the rough and tumble of the main bakeries. It was never regained. For all my nine years of experience I was not so clever as I thought.

Equally unhelpful was the time I wasted in extracting useless statistics, - the number of cakes and loaves produced, the number of meals served, and the money it all represented. It was merely past history, of little value in planning tomorrow's trade, which for various reasons (including the weather) was never the same as yesterday's. I would analyse in great detail last week's shortages and wastes, while this week's leakages continued unchecked in the bakeries and despatch.

Times have changed since I produced my meaningless statistics at Holloway. Modern office machines and computors can churn out unlimited quantities of paper covered with figures at far greater speed, and waste time and money much more efficiently for today's executives.

But in 1935 we transformed the efficiency of our financial control. We purchased for £19-0-0 a 'Kardex' book which opened out to reveal a number of flaps on either side. Cards were inserted and entered up with the necessary details to show a complete departmental profit and loss account on a monthly basis. This Kardex became our 'Bible' for the next forty years. I seized upon it with enthusiasm, and in due course it helped me to become unofficial financial director on the Board.

After six months as a director Solomon Fink resigned and the agreement with Bob Jelks lapsed. We waited for the hour to strike when we would be really free, and there was immense elation for the family as the clock struck twelve, with no last minute entry of the syndicate in force.

The year to March 1935 showed yet another loss. Cut-throat competition was rife in all departments. We had either to join in or see our business taken away from us by others. We decided that we had to be competitive and if necessary would die on the battlefield still facing the enemy bravely. We cut the price of our real cream ices from 3d and 6d to 2d and 4d. The effect on profits can be imagined. Worse still, the customers refused to believe that the quality had not been lowered. Sales actually dropped.

At the time we put the blame for all our losses once again on the depression, which in all conscience was bad enough. But much of our trouble, as Harry Mote kindly pointed out, was due to

our own deficiencies. This we would not for one moment have admitted in 1935. But we were certainly puzzled and mortified at hearing of other business men, in our opinion no brainier or more hard-working than ourselves, making at least some profit out of smaller businesses.

It was like new wine being put into an old bottle. The young management team at large in the Victorian emporium was not proving to the public's taste. We pleased neither the dwindling numbers of the old account customers nor the new cash customers that would have to take their place.

But regardless of the new management the fact was that our luxury food store was now outmoded and unwanted in hard-up Holloway. It was unlikely that the good old days would return, and it was going to be difficult even to survive. Suddenly, in December, an entirely new situation faced us.

The passing of the dividend weighed heavily on the conscience of the Beacon Hill directors. If only we could buy out the minority shareholders as we had bought out Dalmeny Avenue how happy we would be! But we had already borrowed more than was prudent from the bank and syndicate. One possible solution offered itself. If we could sell half of the assets of the company for cash and return half of the issued capital of the company to the shareholders, we could use our share of the repayment to buy out the rest of the family.

Instead of owning all the shares of a large business we would then own all the shares of one half its size. Our conscience would be eased and we would be free to take greater risks in rebuilding the company to its former size. It did not occur to us that the bank and syndicate would not be happy at their security being thus reduced.

In any case the possibility of breaking up the business and selling part of it at other than a heavy loss had up to now seemed slight. But in December 1935 we were made to realise that there <u>were</u> buyers with ready cash for the sort of property we possessed.

In the midst of world-wide depression, Hollywood was enjoying a fantastic boom. The advent of talking pictures revived the film industry's flagging fortunes and carried them to new undreamed of heights. Escaping from everyday worries into the make-believe world of the movies, the World and his wife queued up weekly and twice weekly at their local cinema.

Cinema magnates suddenly had almost unlimited capital at their disposal. Vast and palatial new cinemas became the order of the day, with 'Mighty Wurlitzer Organs' to be raised and lowered at each performance, and often with a live entertainment thrown

in for good measure. Old small-scale 'flea-pit' cinemas were being swept away, and the search was on for ever bigger sites in thickly populated areas.

Prerequisites for the new type super-cinema were a large freehold site, a busy High Street frontage, emergency exits, and a corner situation if possible to accomodate the queues. Holloway was ripe for at least one cinema of this type. We had not realised that our site was ideal for such a purpose.

Our eyes were now somewhat rudely opened for us. Out of nowhere there descended upon us no less than eight separate agents and middlemen acting for the cinema groups, with tempting proposals to buy all or part of our Holloway premises. All this fitted in admirably with our scheme to sell part of our business and return half of the capital to the shareholders. For four months we neglected our proper business discussing the various proposals.

First came an offer of £35,000 for the site, from an agent acting for Odeon Cinemas, then owned by Oscar Deutch, but later swallowed up by British Gaumont, and later still by Rank's. Having now heard of the huge sums being paid for cinema sites, we replied in lordly fashion that we would want an offer of at least 'six figures' before we could consider the suggestion.

Within a week, in reply to this bluff, Odeon had raised their bid to £45,000, an encouraging jump of £10,000. It was agreed that if a deal took place and the premises were pulled down they would rebuild either No 368 or No 374 as a single shop to be leased by us. We would build a bakery in Walters Mews and supply the new shop, and other branches to be opened later, from it.

I made estimates of current values of the various parts of the business, and for the first time realised that the parts might be worth much more than the whole. Harold Norris, our agent, was told that we would accept £60,000 for the Holloway site if we could lease back the corner shop at a rent of £700 per annum. Odeon agreed the £60,000, but wanted £1,100 rent for the corner.

Ted and I were ready to accept if £100 could be knocked off the rent, but Mother was by no means happy. Other enquiries were coming in, and many schemes for breaking up the site were actively discussed. Prices equivalent to £80,000 for the whole site were soon being bandied about, and the A.B.C. group appeared interested at this figure.

Suddenly came the news that Harold Norris had fixed up the sale of a rival site to ours, on the corner of Holloway Road and Tufnell Park Road, for a giant super-cinema to be called the Holloway Gaumont. And soon after we were shocked to find that the A.B.C. group had been secretly negotiating with Jones Brothers, and had bought the end section of their site, less than one hundred yards from ours.

Agreements had been reached for two new cinemas to be built in Holloway, and the battle moved on to other areas. The assorted

agents and middlemen vanished overnight. Poor Miss Beale's of Holloway, blushing under the spotlights, had been auditioned for the movies and had not been chosen. No such opportunities would come again for many years.

Though the innocents of Beacon Hill had been outwitted, and the large sums bandied about had proved illusory, yet we felt that our time had not been completely wasted. Certainly we came out of the experience more worldly wise than before. We had learned the meaning of the phrase 'subject to contract', and never again would we count any agreement certain until the last signature was dry on the document.

There were other benefits to come. During those hectic four months I acquired the ability to set out on paper and evaluate new projects quickly and concisely. It was put to good use time and again in later years. Also useful was the fact that matters of high finance had been discussed quietly and sensibly by the Board, and that the habit of thinking in thousands rather than hundreds had been established.

The episode was stimulating and exciting while it lasted, and we were not unduly depressed when it all ended in smoke. We now knew the value of the component parts of the Holloway premises, and could proceed with our scheme to hive off part of them for the benefit of the outside shareholders. We were determined to make good, in whatever part of the business that remained, however long and difficult the process.

10 Christmas at Beale's

Beale's had always come into its own and justified its existence at Christmas. To a large extent it lived for Christmas, far more so indeed than was good for its health. Its wares were regarded as expensive, but at Christmastime one could afford the best. Customers queued up to pay their money over the counter then, if not at any other time of the year.

It was exciting and enjoyable for all concerned, even for the staff who worked almost until they dropped, for little if any overtime pay. It was uneconomic because each family stocked up with such an absurd quantity of food and drink that trade was virtually at a standstill for weeks after. We invariably lost in the weeks after Christmas all the profit we had made before.

Moreover, in the frenzied over-trading of the last few days, the profit we should have made was often missing, - and never more so than in December 1935, when the cinema negotiations distracted us from our proper business.

By then the old Dickensian Christmas orgy of food and drink was beginning to abate. In 1939 the second world war put paid to it for good. After that ordeal stomachs were smaller and slimming became fashionable. The mountains of food previously stocked up for Christmas and slowly and painfully consumed long after the event, were sensibly reduced. No doubt we were all the fitter for it.

In the mid-thirties, however, it was still the main event in the Holloway calendar. No sooner was Easter over than the Christmas crackers and novelties had to be ordered from Tom Smith's, Sparagnapane's, and other suppliers, for the Bazaar which was held in the Grand Hall during the week before Christmas.

Next we would visit Messrs Mansell, Hunt, and Catty, and other showrooms, to select small china figures of Father Christmas, snowmen, eskimos on sleighs, miniature houses, churches, and castles, together with holly pickets, robins, coloured paper frills (with tartan patterns for shortbreads and Dundee cakes), silver cake boards, and cardboard boxes in different shapes and sizes for the Christmas cakes.

Fancy picture boxes, ribbons, gold thread, and wrapping papers, were needed for our own chocolates, and in early summer huge orders would be placed for fancy tins of biscuits and shortbreads from Huntley and Palmer, MacFarlane Laing, Peak Frean and others.

For some forgotten reason the cake shop took over the sale of these tins of biscuits in December and distributed them to the roundsmen, - much to the annoyance of the grocers who had the humdrum task of selling loose biscuits during the rest of the year.

In August samples of new season's dried fruits began to arrive by every post from Mincing Lane merchants. After careful inspection for quality, price, and cleanliness, (for stalks and stones were often included free, especially from Persia and Turkey), contracts would be placed for currants, sultanas, raisins, and cut peel for the making of our own mincemeat, Christmas puddings, and fruit cakes. And woe betide us if we forgot to order pudding basins, cloths, and wrappers, in four sizes, at the same time.

Visitors to our basements were surprised at the amount of space occupied by the paper stores. Packed solid to the ceiling could be seen hundreds of thousands of paper bags (millions later) in different sizes, and mountains of collapsible cake cartons in a variety of shapes. There were also lesser quantities of tissue, greaseproof, and brown wrapping paper, paper doyleys and napkins; waiters' check pads with twenty different code numbers, transfer books, roundsmen's books, bakery order sheets, tickets, labels, and string; and triplicate order and invoice books for the department store (in six colours, one for each day of the week), - the list seems endless.

Even for the bakeries alone everything was so ridiculously complicated, - so many shapes and sizes and varieties of goods, so many items to be ordered, received, checked, sorted, stored, requisitioned, transferred, charged, used, and finally sold. Only the cheapness of labour could have made it possible at all, and in the end it could only be marginally profitable at best.

Detailed plans were made early for the Christmas production in the bakeries. Dundee cakes would be baked in the last week of November, followed by Christmas cake bases, then lighter fruit cakes and madeiras. Later would come the butter sponges for the cream gateaux, and swiss rolls which were set on thin oblong silver cake boards and decorated with chocolate fudge, holly pickets, robins, and mottoes, as chocolate 'Yuletide Logs'. These latter were a must in most customers' homes.

By October the chocolate department would be in full swing. A regular order of up to one thousand one-pound boxes of chocolates, given by the directors of Ever-Ready Batteries to their staff, added to the pressure on this small department. But the chocolate trade suffered even more than the rest in the post-Christmas slump. It never recovered until the following February when we would start on the chocolate eggs for Easter.

It was all very small beer, of course, compared with modern large-scale factory production. But no one working at Holloway at Christmas could have thought of it as such, - certainly not the poor storeman man-handling the receipt and storage of some twenty tons of raw materials in a day, with the harassed despatch manager driving

an equally massive outflow of manufactured goods through the same yard in the opposite direction. How badly planned it all was, fifty years ago.

Mechanical aids to the manhandling were minimal. Though the 140 lb bags of flour were pulled up tediously on an old-fashioned chain hoist, they had to be carried to the correct dump on a man's shoulders. And even that was easier than in earlier days when, incredibly, a sack of flour weighing 280 lbs was carried by one man.

As the last days arrived the regular staff, augmented by a host of extras in the shape of housewives, country cousins, city clerks, and students, worked up steadily to the final frenzy of Christmas Eve, when the whole of North London seemed to descend upon us with money in its pocket.

We had always specialised in fresh cream cakes and cream moulds, and the last twenty-four hours were given to the filling and decoration of these, - hoping and praying that the weather would not turn warm and muggy, for the cold stores could not accommodate a quarter of the production. Customers would come from miles around to buy our Strawberry and Vanilla Creams, 'S and Vs' as we called them, made from fresh dairy cream, calves foot jelly, vanilla from the pod, and our own strawberry puree laid down the previous summer.

In the meat department fine white turkeys and geese, many with prize-winning rosettes on their gorgeous breasts, hung on every inch of rail. In an outbuilding at the rear a party of old-timers, half buried in feathers, sat plucking and gutting the poultry, bullied both by the head butcher with his waiting queue of customers and by the despatch manager desperately trying to catch the last van to Tottenham. Another butcher churned out endless strings of pork sausages on a cumbersome hand-turned machine.

The fruit and vegetable department had stocked up well with fancy packs of figs, dates, muscatels and almonds, walnuts, chestnuts, and boxes of tangerines wrapped in silver paper. Yellow and white chrysanthemums and Christmas roses added to the show. Out of sight but of no less importance were the more humble King Edward potatoes and the Brussels sprouts.

The grocers had finished laboriously making up several hundred parcels of groceries for the Mayor to distribute to the poor of Islington, - 750 at 2/2½ per parcel, to be precise, in 1935. They consisted of humdrum packets of rice, prunes, sugar, tea, and the like, mostly weighed up by hand, and supplied practically at cost. Even so I remember that the rice was of less than our usual quality to get down to the required price. It could hardly be described as festive fare.

On display now, for more affluent Islingtonians than the recipients of the Mayor's largesse, were the familiar round boxes of Metz fruits, orange and lemon slices, Chinese figs, candied peel, crystallised ginger, jars of stem ginger, and other dainties.

Down in the basement coffee roasting was taking place, adding its own distinctive aroma to the rest, - though once or twice the roaster must have nodded off awhile, until the smell of burnt coffee beans sent the manager flying down the stairs to wake the culprit up. And from the cellars the normally comatose off-licence department would send out a modest flood of wines and spirits in the last few days, together with gift boxes of large fat cigars that were practically unsaleable at any other time.

The piles of chocolate boxes and the gaily coloured crackers began to disappear from the Bazaar in the Grand Hall. This was a comparatively quiet area that had to be enlivened (questionably) by a three-piece orchestra playing mournfully in a corner.

Down in the store queues for the holiday bread built up early on Christmas Eve, and by ten o'clock the whole ground floor would be packed solid with customers in every department. I myself would be on my feet from morning till night, rushing madly from top to bottom of the six-story building, urging on the trolleys and lift loads of goods from the bakeries and stores. Ted would be equally busy in his own sphere of activity.

To see the despatch at Christmastime you would swear that each of the Beales must be worth a fortune. Baskets, laden with food and drink, were stacked from floor to ceiling. Each customer was allotted one or more baskets, as required, and into these were collected all the items from the various departments.

The task of our faithful despatch manager, Mr Norton, approached nightmare proportions on the night before Christmas Eve. Had he collapsed with fatigue, as well he might, utter chaos would have ensued. Even without that, one despaired that the sorters and roundsmen could ever get it cleared in time.

But somehow, by ten o'clock on Christmas Eve, all but a handful of baskets, where the customer had not been at home to answer the door, had been safely delivered. And in those far-off conscientious days it was a point of honour not to let a customer down. Even the directors would set out on Christmas morning to deliver the last mislaid order, or perhaps to satisfy some late-ordering Scrooge with his turkey.

On the morning after Boxing Day we would return to the cold untidy store in a somewhat sour and jaundiced atmosphere. There would be precious few customers, - save for those on the warpath with real or imaginary complaints.

We would recognise with some bitterness the hard-up housewife with her half-eaten Christmas cake, sheepishly making some excuse to get back some of the money in order to pay the rent. The cake was stale when she bought it, or it tasted 'funny', or a stone in the fruit had broken her husband's tooth and what were we going to do about it? Reluctantly we felt it politic to give her the benefit of the doubt and return some or all of the cash.

Nearly always there would be piled up stocks of unsold goods in at least one section or another. Despite all our careful records and calculations we never got the budget absolutely right. One year it would be the Christmas cakes that had been over-ordered, next year it would be mince pies or sausage rolls.

And if, as did sometimes happen, we sold out of practically everything, and some customers had been disappointed, we blamed ourselves masochistically for not having been bolder. I cannot ever remember us rubbing our hands together and saying how well we had done. Rather it was in the nature of a post-mortem to see where we had gone wrong.

In no year was the post-mortem more severely conducted than in January 1936, when, with the aid of the new Kardex, it was made plain that heavy losses had been made in several departments. Not only had we been distracted by the cinema negotiations, but the old managers had been giving place to new, with unhappy consequences.

Moreover it became painfully obvious that the total money received from the sale of hundreds of turkeys, so far from showing a profit, was well below what we had paid for them. Much pilfering from the outside shed had evidently taken place, and worse still, it was almost certain that junior members of the goods-in staff had been conned into signing for the receipt of some £400 worth of turkeys that had never been received. So much for the exciting rough and tumble of Christmas, and the thought that the Beales were making their fortunes.

Yet with all its economic foolishness, I still look back with pride to the old store as it appeared at Christmas. In my mind's eye I can recall with pleasure the fairytale atmosphere of the decorated windows and counters, piled high with good things ready for the onslaught of happy children and their parents. From the point of view of service to the public, profit and losses set aside, perhaps they were our finest hours. Later on we became more profit conscious and austere. Certainly the glitter faded after 1935.

The December losses punctured the pride and prestige of the new young Board. Beacon Hill was clearly not as clever as it thought, and Uncle Harry's spies would quickly carry the story to the enemy camp. Our only consolation was that this time, with the help of the Kardex, we had spotted the deficiencies quickly and could take steps to prevent their recurrence.

The Kardex was my baby, and I permitted no white-washing of the results, however brutal. It was, I believe, one of my major contributions from now on, to present a clear-eyed up-to-date picture of current happenings, expressed in £ s d for the benefit of the Board.

And the Kardex, in January 1936, was signalling more fundamental problems than the missing Christmas turkeys. The more we studied the figures, the more we became convinced that the department food store, with its account customers and deliveries spread over a wide area, was unlikely ever again to make a profit in the future. As the cinema negotiations finally fizzled out in the spring, we engaged in a major reappraisal of the business.

The year to the end of March showed yet another loss for the company, the eighth loss in succession, even if it was only of some £500. All the excuses in the world would not pacify the minority shareholders, still in possession of 46% of the shares. We declared an unearned dividend of 2% again, depleting the reserves still further. The minority might well say 'thank you for nothing' to this gesture. Their assets, like ours, were dwindling steadily away from year to year.

Failing a deal with the cinema groups, we now recommended the sale of the two shops, Nos 368 and 374, as shops, together with the six furthest houses in Tollington Road. Their value was approximately £24,000. Of this sum £20,000 would be returned to the shareholders, the share capital being written down from £40,000 to £20,000. The remaining £4,000 would be used to consolidate a smaller store into Nos 370 and 372, with the rear restaurant, bakeries, and yard, the stables, and the Athenaeum being left intact. In a statement circulated prior to the A.G.M. the directors claimed to 'feel confident that this scheme will meet with unanimous support'. But the directors were mistaken.

It is now time to record that in January 1936 poor old Uncle Arch had died. As with Grandfather, so with Arch, his will was altered just before his death. His unhappy marriage, it will be recalled, had long since ended in divorce. Thereafter Arch had for some years lived as a well-to-do free-spending unattached young man, and there would doubtless have been no lack of young ladies ready to console him.

Be that as it may, for the last few, hard-up, years of his life, Arch had been going steady with a certain Miss Hilda Spooner. One day before he died, so we were told, an earlier last will and testament had been revoked in favour of a new one leaving his entire estate to her. The value lay largely in his 8,512 shares in Beale's Ltd.

In the earlier will Archibald Alfred had divided up his estate equally among his nephews and nieces, including, to our astonishment, those of Dalmeny Avenue and Beacon Hill. We had assumed that the Mote and Herring children would be his heirs, but, either from lethargy or good-nature, we had not been struck out despite the disgraceful treatment he had received. A guilty lump came into my throat when I heard about it.

In the event neither the Beales who had never expected anything, nor the Motes and Herrings who might well have done, received a penny. Miss Spooner scooped the pool, and, as my cousin Francis

said years later, quite rightly so, for she had looked after him faithfully in his last years.

It was Miss Spooner, therefore, who joined Emma and Alice at the A.G.M. on July 2nd to approve the accounts and consider the proposals put before them. The meeting was not so harmonious as we had expected. The ladies rejected the proposals with a great show of indignation. The directors were incapable of conducting any business, however reduced in size. 'Sell up the business outright, wind up the company, and give us back what is left of our money after your bad management', that was the familiar argument once again.

One month later a letter arrived from Uncle Harry's office, signed by Emma and Miss Spooner, but evidently concocted by the old dragon himself. Once again the directors were threatened with legal action to prevent their proposals from being put into effect. It was in fact the last cannon-ball to be fired from Gray's Inn in over thirty years of warfare.

In anticipation of the shareholders' approval, the Board had proceeded further than was perhaps proper. A letter received from Drivers and Norris, dated the 23rd of June and therefore prior to the A.G.M., states that they had already arranged the sale of the two shops to Messrs Bridgeland for the sum of £19,000. But the offer was subject to contract and had not been sanctioned by the Board. The unexpected opposition of the shareholders left the Board in some perplexity.

We were assured by our advisors that Mote's threats were futile, for the directors had complete power to sell the company's property at their discretion. But the old gentleman's actions in matters concerning the Beales were not always dictated by common sense, and we did not relish the thought of more dirty linen being displayed in public on the washing line.

We decided, uneasily, to proceed on our own responsibility. In the meantime Messrs Bridgeland's offer had fallen through. The two shops, Nos 368 and 374, together with the seven furthest houses in Tollington Road were now publicly advertised for sale in the local press. Unhappily, in the worsening climate of local trade, no reasonable offers could be obtained. The repayment of capital to the shareholders could not therefore take place. The Board pushed through the reconstruction of the store regardless.

The meat and provision departments were moved into the main store, and No 374 shop and basement were leased to Walkers, the dyers and cleaners, for £550 per annum for 21years, with small increases at 7 and 14 year intervals. A complicated passageway had to be devised to connect our main store with the yard and bakery.

Jones the Jewellers continued in No 368, but within a year they had gone into voluntary liquidation. After some delay the shop and basement were let to Mayfair Shoes for 21 years at a fixed rent of £700 per annum. The two shops were therefore rented rather than sold.

The seven three-storied terrace houses in Tollington Road were sold by public auction for a total of £5,225, all of which, to Mote's fury, was spent on the reorganisation. £1,600 was spent in squeezing the store into Nos 370 and 372, £900 on a fine new double shop front, £1,500 on extending the groundfloor restaurant into the old despatch, which was itself moved to the rear yard, £8,00 on covering the yard and extending the bakery, £400 on new cloakrooms, £250 on a new coldroom, and £500 each on two new branch shops.

The price received for the houses seems absurdly low, but correspondingly good value was received for the money expended. The new double shop front installed by Pollards, and personally designed by the very dapper Adrian Haskins himself, was simple but effective, - in marble, granite, and bronze.

So started the most hectic period of reorganisation since the rebuilding in 1889. It was carried out not only in the face of Mote's hostility, but in a climate of worsening trade and a further decline in the prosperity of Holloway Road.

Old Victorian houses were being torn down all around us. Arch's old house disappeared, with the rest of Loraine Place, to give place to large blocks of L.C.C. flats. The new council tenants, when they arrived two or three years later, would not be the sort of customers that Beale's Ltd had looked to in the past. Grandfather's old house opposite the premises, and all its neighbours up to the Nag's Head and beyond, were likewise demolished, together with large areas of property in Parkhurst Road, Tufnell Park Road, and elsewhere.

The depression elsewhere may well have been lifting, but trade in Holloway during 1936, as I noted at the time, was 'simply terrible'. Other shopkeepers were suffering and many old-fashioned family-run businesses disappeared at this time for ever. Ominously, J.Lyons, who had opened their tea-shop next door to us years earlier, now moved to premises nearer the busier Nag's Head. 'To Let' notices appeared frequently along our part of the road.

We decided to follow our old customers who had emigrated further north. I was preparing to sell my much neglected sweetshop in Crouch End, and Ted thought it suitable to become our first branch shop. Lest the opposition should think that Beale's was being used to bail me out of trouble, I sold the lease for only half what I had paid for it eighteen months ago. We installed a new inexpensive shop front and, to my relief, the venture proved successful from the start, - so much so that it inspired us to open a second branch at Southgate a year later.

Many of these transactions were taking place with barely a mention in the minutes, a lapse for which I, as company secretary, am to blame. The directors were falling into the habit of agreeing them without the formality of a board meeting. I did manage to record that the new store, condensed into two-thirds of its previous size, opened in October 1936, and that the first week's trade was 'satisfactory, with small rises in all departments'.

This was not the improvement we might have hoped for from our new shop front and streamlined counters, but at least we would soon be receiving our £550 rent from the old provision shop. More satisfactory was the simultaneous opening of our new branch shop and cafe at Southgate, eight miles north of Holloway, which bade fair to be a winner.

The pace of reorganisation was killing. We worked almost until we dropped. One month later we moved our offices to No 6 Tollington Road, and let off the upper floors of No 368 to Messrs Zetter's Pools. Plans were drawn up to convert the basements of the bakeries and yard for use as an underground garage for electric vehicles, but the cash for this was not available.

Such was the zest for life that running our own business gave us, that we seem to have gone almost berserk in our efforts to rush through the modernisation that had been delayed for so long. Perhaps we were too obsessed with it, at the expense of looking to our bread and butter.

For the Kardex in January and February 1937 set the alarm bells ringing once again. The new mini-store was evidently running at a loss. Worse still, the Bakery Division, so long the mainstay of the business, was threatening to go into the red, - despite the raising of the prices of the ½d buns and 1d tarts. To add to this set-back, Mr Conrad King's music academy and Miss Susie Boyle's dancing ditto both gave up their sub-leases at the Athenaeum, and though their contributions had seemed negligible it never again paid its way.

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11 A Most Complicated Business

The year 1937-8 should surely have seen the directors with their noses firmly to the grindstone. They were more concerned with ridding themselves of the antagonistic minority shareholders. Once again Tom Saint was consulted, and a highly ingenious scheme was devised for buying out the remaining opposition. At the cost of still further neglect of their bread and butter business, Beacon Hill thought the opportunity too good to miss. Much time was spent therefore on the highly complicated legal niceties, - all subject to Harry Mote's eagle-eyed inspection.

It will be remembered that in 1934 Beacon Hill had bought out Dalmeny Avenue and raised its stake in Beale's Ltd from 21% to 52%, - at the expense of burying itself up to its neck in debt. In 1937 we were still in debt for the full amount, and being pressed hard for some repayment. Three years of losses under our control would hardly encourage other lenders. How then could we possibly find anything like the £25,000 that might tempt the minority shareholders to sell their shares to us?

The company itself still possessed freeholds on the security of which a mortgage loan of perhaps £36,000 could be raised. How simple it would be to raise such a loan, pay off our debts to the bank and the syndicate, and buy out the remaining shareholders. Simple indeed, but illegal under the company laws of the time. A company was not allowed to buy its own shares, and could hardly, with decency, provide the money for the directors to do so for their own benefit.

Tom Saint's solution to the problem was submitted for the approval of Counsel and of the Board of Trade, and was approved by both. For it evidently harmed no one and was to the advantage of both sides. In proof of which it was acceptable to Harry Mote, and who could say fairer than that?

Lay readers must not worry unduly if they fail to understand the complicated manoeuvres we engaged upon to achieve our object, for it is beyond my wit to make them crystal clear. The next few pages may therefore be skipped with a clear conscience, and perhaps no great loss will be sustained. Gluttons for punishment may now read on.

A new company to be called Beale's (Properties) Ltd would

be formed with an issued capital of £40,007 in £1 shares. Beale's Ltd would sell the whole of its business - property, plant and equipment, stock, goodwill, and all - in exchange for 100% of Beale's (Properties) Ltd's own shares.

The new company would then mortgage its freehold properties for the maximum loan obtainable, - £36,000 being the approximate amount expected. With this money it would buy all the Beale's Ltd shares owned by the minority group, and enough shares from the Beacon Hill group to enable the latter to repay its own loans from the bank and syndicate.

In plain language if a company could not buy its own shares, why not create a subsidiary to do the job for it? The attractions of the scheme were obvious. The minority group would be bought out at a fair price to their complete satisfaction. Beacon Hill would be freed from personal debt to the bank and syndicate, and would be left in complete control, uninhibited by family dissention. The disadvantages were brushed aside as of little consequence, though they would prove troublesome later on.

With the shareholders' approval, Messrs John D Wood were instructed to value the properties without delay, and to find a mortgagor willing to lend two-thirds of the valuation to the new company when set up. They valued the freeholds at £54,000, and reported that a mortgage of £36,000 was available from the Babcock and Wilcox Staff Pension Fund.

Aunts Emma and Alice, together with Miss Spooner, agreed to accept 26/- per share for their combined 18,608 shares. Indeed it appeared that they regarded the offer as generous. But at the last minute we found that after paying all the professional fees we would be short of some £500 to complete the deal. Ted had to write a humble letter to the shareholders asking them to share half the costs, thus knocking 6¾d per share off the agreed price. With some understandable grumbling the price of 25/5¼ was finally accepted.

As the three ladies leave our pages it should be noted to his credit that Harry Mote's obstinate rearguard action won for his party a considerably higher price per share than had been paid to Dalmeny Avenue three years earlier. It is pleasant to record that a modest friendship was now possible and did in fact develop between the third generation cousins.

As Company Secretary I was engaged in much legal formality in setting up the new company, arranging the mortgage and transfer of properties, licences, insurances, etc. By August 23rd 1937 all the main transactions had been completed. A few days later all the members of the syndicate and also Mrs Cruft had likewise sold their shares. Only an odd parcel of fifty shares belonging to a Mr and Mrs Knight since Grandfather's day now lay outside of Beacon Hill's control.

The share register shows up clearly the dramatic changes that had taken place since 1933.

	1933	1934	1936	1937
Dalmeny Avenue Group				
William E Beale	11,000	-	-	-
Francis H Beale	1,400	-	-	-
Thomas Beer	100	-	-	-
Beesley Ridehalgh	138	-	-	-
Beacon Hill Group				
Thomas H Beale	5,511	5,511	5,511	6,586
Fanny Beale	150	150	150	150
T Edward Beale	1,000	8,000	8,000	2,642
John H Beale	1,000	6,338	6,338	2,138
Marjorie Kenyon	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Queens Road Group				
Archibald A Beale	8,512	8,512	-	-
Emma Mote	5,068	5,068	5,068	-
Alice Herring	21	21	21	-
Alice Herring Trustees	5,007	5,007	5,007	-
Hilda Spooner	-	-	8,512	-
The Syndicate				
W M Jelks	-	75	75	-
H M Norris	-	75	75	-
T W Saint	-	75	75	-
Solomon Fink	-	75	75	-
Others				
Mr/Mrs Charles Cruft	50	50	50	-
Mr/Mrs Knight	50	50	50	50
Beale's Ltd (Subsidiary Company)	-	-	-	27,441
	40,007	40,007	40,007	40,007

There are still 40,007 issued shares in the parent company, but what are they now worth? The properties have been valued at £54,000, but since the £36,000 borrowed on them has not been used to improve the business but solely to buy out Beacon Hill's rivals and reduce Beacon Hill's debts, the residual value of the properties less the mortgage would only be £18,000.

The goodwill of a business losing money, and its largely ancient equipment, must be of very little value, let us say £2,000. It is already geared up to the maximum and can borrow nothing more until the profits start to flow. It is worth approx. £20,000.

Beacon Hill, which had been on the point of accepting £1 per share for its 8,661 shares in 1934, now has 99% of a business worth £20,000. Thus it has apparently more than doubled its money in three years. During the process, however, the business itself has become even more undercapitalised than before. Moreover let us look at the absurd position arising from the interlocking of the two companies.

Beale's Ltd owns 100% of the shares of Beale's (Properties) Ltd. Beale's (Properties) Ltd owns 68% of the shares of Beale's Ltd. If B.(P).L. earns and pays a dividend to its parent, then 68% of it must go back to B.(P).L. when the parent pays a dividend in its turn. Dividends would be passing to and fro until the end of time. The situation was farcical and remained so until 1942 when another Tom Saint brainwave clarified the position. Fortunately for my peace of mind no dividends were possible in the intervening years.

In the meantime the position had to be explained repeatedly to rating officials, tax inspectors, auditors, banks, insurance companies, gas, electricity, and water authorities, creditors, senior staff, and others. Furthermore, (and I have not dared to tell the reader earlier of this confusion twice confounded), at the conclusion of the legal proceedings the companies had changed names!

For months after we tried vainly to explain that the new company was really the old company trading under a new name, which for convenience had now been changed back into the old name, and that the old Beale's Ltd was now only a holding company owning the shares in the new Beale's Ltd, and had therefore changed its name to Beale's (Properties) Ltd, which had previously been the name of the new company, - - - - - - - - - etc, etc.

Non-technical readers, therefore, who have found the foregoing incomprehensible, are not the first to do so. And even to those who were unaware that £36,000 had been extracted from the assets of the company, it all sounded somewhat fishy. Small wonder then that the creditors of the new trading company, whatever it chose to call itself, began to press more urgently than in the past for their bills to be settled promptly.

But the directors of a company making losses find it hard to comply with such requests. Even if we managed to do so we had surely put a millstone round our necks that would keep us leaden-footed for a good long time. Such was our delight in our unrestricted ownership, however, that we were not at all downhearted at the prospect.

No dividends were paid for the next twenty years on the shares Beacon Hill had so laboriously acquired. Our independence

was reward enough. My father was now the controlling shareholder for the next five years, though I am quite sure that the dear old gentleman, happily playing bowls down at Cliftonville, was unaware of his importance. His powers were exercised in theory by my mother, who held the balance between Ted and myself, and could have overridden both of us had the need arisen.

By September 1937 the directors were able at long last to get down to their proper business, - though not always with success. New gas-fired ovens costing £750 were ordered by me after extensive enquiries and visits to other bakeries. Though sleek and modern in design they proved far inferior to Grandpa's old coal fired side-flue ovens of 1890 vintage. After a few months of consistently burnt bread the new ovens had to be pulled down and be replaced by the makers, with much inconvenience to ourselves.

But the success of the new shop and restaurant at Southgate proved that we were right to chase our old customers northward. We were encouraged to start up three barrow rounds to deliver bread locally from the new base. There was no difficulty in finding men to push the heavy barrows round the nearby streets, delivering from door to door. Ted had already moved house from Freegrove Road to Chestnut Close in Southgate. The first steps out of Holloway had been taken.

The Kardex continued to demonstrate that our brave new department food store was losing money. The departments were now much too small and too congested. And the wares were too expensive for our new council-tenant customers.

Perhaps we should have foreseen that it was never likely to succeed. We wasted money making two bites at the problem instead of one. But sentiment had entered into the equation, - Beale's had always been a food store under three generations of the family, and there was some humiliation in admitting that the cocky Beacon Hill directors couldn't make it pay.

After two years trading we decided that the store would have to go. The drastic surgery was necessary to save the rest. Had we closed earlier the staff might well have suffered hardship, but the Islington factories were now humming with re-armament orders and labour was at a premium. Some shop assistants transferred to other departments. Arthur Coyne of the grocery department became bakery storekeeper, and Bob Cripps, an experienced butcher, turned cellarman and barman, both men staying many more years with us in their new capacity.

By the end of April 1938 the meat and poultry, the provisions, the grocery, and the fruit and vegetable departments had disappeared. The cake shop was resited, and the groundfloor restaurant was extended right forward to the pavement. The trouble-ridden staff canteen was abolished, and henceforth the staff could lunch in the restaurant if they wished, at reduced prices.

The transformation was completed by the end of May, largely by our own works department and at no great cost. Customers' credit accounts and deliveries from the store were ended, and five more horse rounds eliminated. Daily deliveries of bread and cakes for cash, however, were continued, but on a smaller basis.

All this required some courage, and, but for the Board's preoccupation with shareholders and cinemas, would have been undertaken earlier. The accounts for the year to March 1938 showed up the cost of our previous inattention to our business, - a loss of £1,200, the fourth loss under our control.

We felt that our old friends, Edward Moore and Sons, once again acting as our auditors after the departure of the syndicate, were a little severe on us in tidying up the balance sheet. £800 of professional fees and £500 of unjustified Goodwill were written off. A professional revaluation, however, enabled us to add £5,200 to the value of our plant and equipment, to bolster up a somewhat pathetic looking balance sheet.

Still more economies were needed. The horse rounds had been cut down to four survivors that could be contracted for elsewhere. Two motor vans, two electric vans, and three or four barrows could be kept in the Holloway yard. There was no need for the large stables in Walters Mews, and no need now to replace them with a bakery.

The freeholders of the stables site were pressing us to comply with the terms of the lease, and rebuild the stables forthwith at our own expense. We had neither the cash nor the credit to do so. Ted had to write a letter of apology, - we were not in a position to carry out our contract, and asked permission to vacate without penalty in view of our straightened circumstances. It was one of the generous helpings of humble pie that had to be swallowed at this time. As it happened the premises were in some demand for other purposes at this time, and we were unexpectedly lucky to be let off our commitment without any payment.

At the same time we were trying to get rid of the Athenaeum before we got landed with a heavy bill for dilapidations at the end of our long lease. We were unable to find anyone kind enough to take this second white elephant off our hands.

With the closing of the store the newly installed nearby council tenants had to go to Seven Sisters Road for their provisions. At least we could serve them with our fresh-baked bread on their return journey. Their cash was just as acceptable as the belated payments of our previous account customers. And they were far less demanding than the 'fur-coat brigade'.

The enlarged groundfloor restaurant was proving popular. We now served two hundred lunches daily in it - to shop-keepers, bank clerks, factory managers, and the like - at the low price of one shilling and sixpence per three course lunch. The grill rooms on the first floor continued to serve more expensive meals for a dwindling number of company directors.

The groundfloor restaurant was being used for evening banquets, at a lower price and standard than those normally served upstairs. Something of an upstairs-downstairs mixing of classes consequently occurred when two parties arrived at the same time. Downstairs, at any rate, the evening dress hitherto customary at dinners and dances was becoming the exception rather than the rule.

The company was emerging leaner and fitter after the drastic surgery. The elimination of the store, together with the delivery and credit system, enabled us to concentrate on the departments that remained. The figures at the bottom of the Kardex flaps began to change from red to black.

Council flats were rising all around us. Holloway, as a district, was beginning to come alive again. We stepped in quickly to acquire a small lock-up shop in Tufnell Park Road, where further large-scale development was due to start. Close to the bakeries and at the absurdly low rent of £70 a year, it proved a profitable and trouble-free outlet for many years. The shop-front, installed by a local builder for the modest outlay of £160, was blown out later by a flying bomb which landed in the centre of the new super-cinema just across the road.

We had now used every penny we could lay our hands on, including for the first time overdraft facilities from Barclays Bank. Uncle William would think this the first step taken by the foolish on the way to ruin. Monthly payments to our suppliers were delayed longer than was proper for a self-respecting firm.

Privately, as a family, we were equally hard pressed. I had to sell my own cherished typewriter for £8, to put into the kitty. Our salaries were less than many members of the staff, had they but known it. We finished the year to March 1939 with one more loss, but this time it was only £300. Daylight was beginning to emerge.

With a little luck the House of Beale might have entered a new era of prosperity. But the war clouds were gathering again. It seemed as if we had barely recovered from the first world war. We were in no fit state to survive another.

12 The Chamber of Horrors

Before starting on the events leading up to World War Two, I must deal with the equally ferocious war between the directors of Beale's Ltd and the assorted pests that infested their premises at Holloway, a war which culminated in the years 1936 to 1938.

Future readers will shudder at the horrid revelations in this chapter, and future directors will wish to expurgate it entirely. If it is any consolation, however, I can assure them, from the evidence of staff who had worked elsewhere, that conditions in the most renowned and luxurious establishments in London at the time were no better, and often much worse, than in ours.

My experience of pests at home was only of the occasional mouse caught in a cheese-baited trap, and the house flies that buzzed and settled in every room in summer. Against the latter we had no protection other than a wire-mesh 'swatter', and the ugly sticky fly-papers hanging gruesomely from the gas brackets. These fly-papers would be covered with black bodies on each side before being taken down.

At Holloway I found a greater variety of pests to deal with. The working tables in the kitchens were of seasoned wood, hollowed in places with incessant chopping, but well scrubbed down each day. Under these tables, however, were drawers that were not so healthy. Here the chefs kept all their knives, ladles, skewers, savoy bags, icing tubes, graters, and a hundred other items jumbled together, - some rusty and almost unusable, but kept against some improbable emergency.

Into this untidy heap small pieces of meat and other foods had dropped over the months since the last 'spring-clean'. This food had decomposed and bred maggots, some of which were still on the active list. Others had long since passed over the great divide and left their feathery carcases about in profusion.

The principle of having large deep drawers under food preparation tables was basically wrong. Equally wrong was the habit of placing heavy equipment - hot-plates, steamers, cooking ranges, and the like - close to the wall and immovable for ever, leaving an inch or so between them and the wall which was impossible to clean. This defect became very evident when I volunteered to clean up the ancient main refrigerator in the stillroom.

This monstrosity, dating back to Grandfather's day, was fed daily with a mixture of ice and salt to keep it at a reasonably low temperature. The cork-filled wooden doors, permanently soaked with water, were warped and swollen, but could still be forced shut with the heavy long lever-type handles. Inside, the metal trays were rusted and the painted walls were peeling. It was impossible to clean the inside properly.

Moreover it had been built on site into a corner, and had to stay there for the rest of its long life. A space of two inches separated it from the side and rear walls, and a similar space was carefully left underneath. The wooden roof was largely rotted away, but was strong enough to support a quantity of rusty baking trays and other kitchen junk which might 'come in handy' in the future.

A trickle of water seeped down the walls of this refrigerated chamber of horrors and on to the floor, permeating the food and rubbish accumulated in the two inch high but four foot deep cavity under the base. A somewhat sour smell pervaded the whole.

Inside the three inner compartments bowls of fresh cream, fruit jellies, raw fish and meat, and cooked 'left-overs', shared the shelves with the resident bacteria. Strange as it may seem to later generations, the stomachs of those days were sufficiently sturdy not to be affected. I remember no case of food poisoning ever bothering us.

Having cleaned up the interior as best I could, and having mopped inadequately round the walls and rear with the aid of a small mop tied on to a long pole, I tackled the gap between the base and the tiled floor, - evidently the first time this had been attempted for some years.

I shall never forget the horrific sight that emerged as, with two long poles, I hooked out the slimy debris underneath, all vigorously alive with maggots, woodlice, wriggling eel-like creatures, miniature star-fish, and, believe it or not, little flat objects flapping about for all the world like tiny dabs of plaice.

Even the old chef, who in his day had surely seen everything, expressed surprise at my collection. As for me, with my stomach almost turning over, I worked like a maniac for hours with swabs and neat disinfectant, determined that not one freakish invader should escape. That night I tossed and turned, and started up a dozen times with nightmares, feeling nasty squirmy things crawling over me.

Some good came out of the experience, for I never ceased to lobby the directors until I had won from them a new electric refrigerator at the unheard of cost of £200, - probably the first major piece of equipment purchased in the kitchens for twenty years or more.

In the bread bakery the oven builders of the 1890s had left the huge brick ovens roughly finished at the top, with a large quantity of half bricks and debris hidden behind the white tiled front.

This debris, when one climbed up to inspect it, was covered with several inches of flour dust and coal dust in equal proportions, - accumulated over forty years of work. The blanket of dust was thought to be of great benefit in retaining the heat of the oven, and its removal by a hygiene faddist like me was by no means welcomed by the bakers.

At night keen eyes were needed to spot the almost transparent lizard-shaped little insects that we called 'silver fish', as they darted over the burning hot surface of the ovens, scavenging the freshly toasted and appetising particles of flour tidily away. No one seemed to bother much about them, and I must admit that they never once troubled us in any way. Either they were sensible enough never to fall into the dough tins or if they did they were never spotted by the customers.

Far more troublesome were the black beetles or cockroaches which were never entirely absent from bakeries and restaurants at that time, though they never normally showed themselves by day. One fine day in the Spring there would be an alarm, - a beetle had been observed loitering with intent on the back stairs, or at the bottom of a lift shaft, or in a dozen other favourite picnic spots. Our experience told us that one beetle on the move with spring fever in its blood would mean there would be a hundred or more relatives and friends flexing their muscles similarly in their secret hiding places.

Expert contractors would be called in urgently to nip the invasion in the bud. Working with hand bellows, preferably at night, they would puff choking clouds of fine chemical powders into every crevice they could find. For though Grandfather had built his fortress with concrete floors, and tiled the walls and floors throughout, there were cracks and crevices in plenty where the plumbing and wiring had been renewed.

Within minutes of this treatment a horrid procession of beetles large and small would come crawling out to expire, twitching feebly on their backs, beneath our gaze. Some, in revenge, and as a kind of parthian shot, would drop from the walls into the pots and pans, and put us in a fever of apprehension lest they should turn up later, like the ghost of Banquo, at some future banquet.

This pantomime went on regardless of the fact that we paid expensively for contractors to treat the premises regularly throughout. The fact is that it was impossible to reach the furthest crevices where the eggs of the next generation would be laid. We believed, perhaps unworthily, that the operators were none too anxious anyway to eliminate altogether the source of their future bread and butter.

The entry of mice into food premises was impossible to prevent. I remember, when I was supposed to be learning the grocery trade, descending to the basement stock room, to open up, with hammer and jemmy, a freshly delivered wooden barrel of oatmeal, then sold loose for making porridge. As I undid the inner paper sack a minor

explosion seemed to take place as a nest of young mice sprang out high into the air in all directions, to disperse in safety to the four corners of the store.

Other mice would be delivered with no extra charge in the patched up sacks of potatoes from Covent Garden, and in the equally patched up sacks of flour from the millers. The dumps of flour were piled up, eight bags high, directly on to the wooden floor of the bakery loft. As each dump was used up by the bakers, the mice would collect up their belongings and move into the next.

We always claimed that no foreign matter could pass through the automatic flour sieve that fed the flour down through the cake bakery on the first floor into the huge revolving drum mixer in the the downstairs bread bakery. This was true, but the long flour chute was itself encased in wood and almost impossible to clean. It was a fine breeding ground for flour moths and weevils.

Soon after I joined the firm the numerous cats that had kept down the mice and rats to reasonable proportions were beginning themselves to be considered undesirable in a food store. The iron shutters that had screened their week-end leisure activities in the past were now no longer used, and customers would rightly object to cats sunning themselves in shop windows in close proximity to food. For a while the elimination of the cats made matters worse.

Events quite outside of our control in the late thirties brought down upon us the worst plague in all our history. They must have added a few grey hairs even to my youthful head. Holloway Road was in a turmoil of demolition. Vast areas of Victorian houses were being torn down. Worse still, the roadway itself was being excavated and the deep main sewers, perhaps a hundred years old or more, were being broken up to be replaced.

A horde of sewer rats moved out and invaded the shops on the north-east side of the road, settling themselves into the basements of the traders, none of course more desirable residences than those of Beale's Ltd. The damage to our stocks was considerable. The possible damage to our reputation was appalling. To aggravate matters the worst moments came just as we opened up our new smaller store in 1936 and advertised our restaurant as now open for evening meals.

No one could have done more than we did to combat this menace. We neglected the new store almost totally and fought the enemy below with all the weapons we could lay our hands on. At our request the Islington Council baited the whole area with poison, including the underground channel running under the electric tramway. The death roll was said to be enormous.

Some rats were thoughtless enough to die under the floor boards of the restaurant and grill rooms, leaving an unpleasant and distinctive smell behind them as they decomposed. How does one explain such a smell to a customer, - however strongly disguised with disinfectant scrubbed into the floor?

Worse still were the poisons which drove other rats out into the open in broad daylight, waddling as in a trance through the restaurant and store. This brought me nearly to a nervous breakdown.

The evening restaurant, despite cut prices and a free half bottle of wine per customer, was never a success. Attendance remained obstinately thin and the atmosphere cold and cheerless, with the few customers lost in the large silent restaurant. Even the few customers who patronised us seemed cranky, if not definitely deranged, or alternatively the worse for drink.

Add to this melancholy scene in your imagination, if you can, the sight of a fat old sewer rat, now barely conscious, creeping by fits and starts along the wainscotting, within inches of a lady customer's feet. For me this was the ultimate horror, - like the ordeal of the prisoner in '1984'.

Eventually, within weeks though it seemed like years, we conquered those rats, and conquered them for ever. Meantime they had plundered our fruit and provision departments, and had added to the pressure to close up the store, perhaps a good thing in itself. The evening restaurant ended at the same time, never to be re-opened. There were but half a dozen sites in the London suburbs capable of supporting a lively evening trade at this time, and Holloway was not one of them. And though sometimes urged to try again in the future Ted and I could not bring ourselves to do so, - the memories were much too painful.

Slowly we battled on, gaining a little ground each year. Stainless steel tables and washing tanks became available, likewise plastic materials for storage shelves, and better disinfectants and detergents. Eventually, with the blessing of the local authority, we were able to open our doors as an exhibition of good hygiene and good housekeeping, attended by the Mayor, the Medical Officer of Health, and several hundreds of fellow traders and members of the public. I even had the effrontery to give hygiene lectures to my fellow master bakers.

As I write the main battles have been largely won, - won by such doughty warriors as Marks and Spencer, Sainsbury's, and others. I like to think that we played our part, not unworthily perhaps, in the earlier battles, and prepared the way for victory by our successors.

My readers will be impatient for the promised saga of the Beales in action during World War Two. I must beg leave, however, to retrace our steps for a little longer, in order to complete our picture of tne Holloway premises, - not much changed since I gained my first impressions, but soon to be altered materially by the war.

In an earlier chapter the reader accompanied my father and his little son to Holloway one Sunday morning after church. We cut short our expedition on the stairs leading from the store to the central landing on the first floor. A psychologist might find some meaning in my earlier reluctance to proceed further. But reluctant or not we must now finish the job.

We retreat a step or two as the heavy mahogany door is unlocked and swings back over the staircase. On our right, as we emerge on to the landing, we see a small hand-lift that connects with the kitchen two floors up. As one cage ascends it is counterbalanced, with the judicious use of a foot brake, by the other cage coming down.

At lunch time a good deal of shouting up and down the lift shaft goes on between the waiters and the kitchen staff, not always in the most polite of terms. And with the shutters left carelessly open, the lift has been known to splash soup over a passing customer, from a heavy stockpot landing at some speed at the bottom.

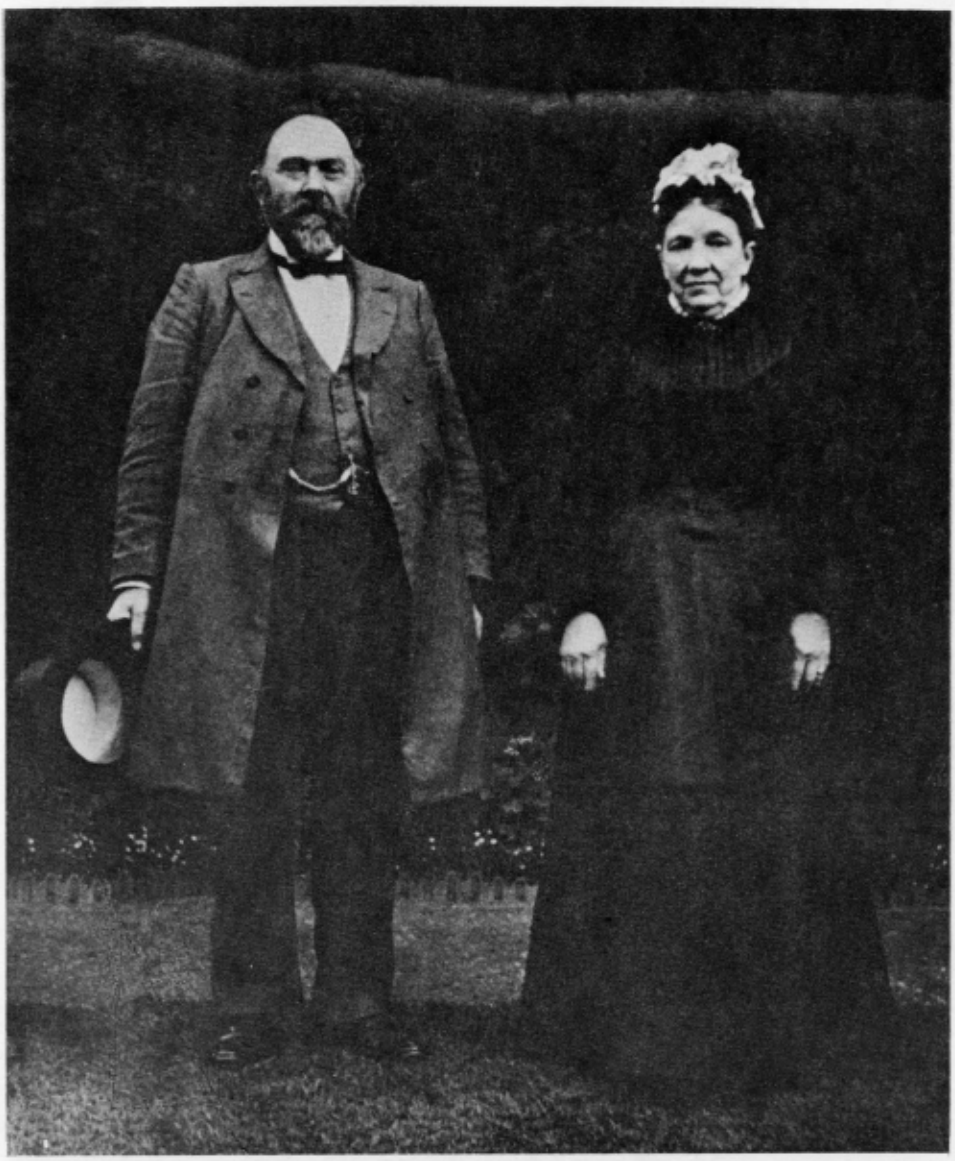
We turn right into the lower Grill Room, 20 X 30 feet in size, at one end of which is an old-fashioned carving table and hot plate. Large polished metal covers hang by chains from the ceiling, to be raised and lowered over the roast joints of meat by means of counterweights and pulleys.

As a young man my father had personally carved the joints in the Grill Room, dressed in a chef's white hat and uniform, even serving his own brothers sitting grandly at table with the customers. I felt angry at his seemingly lowly status in the family hierarchy.

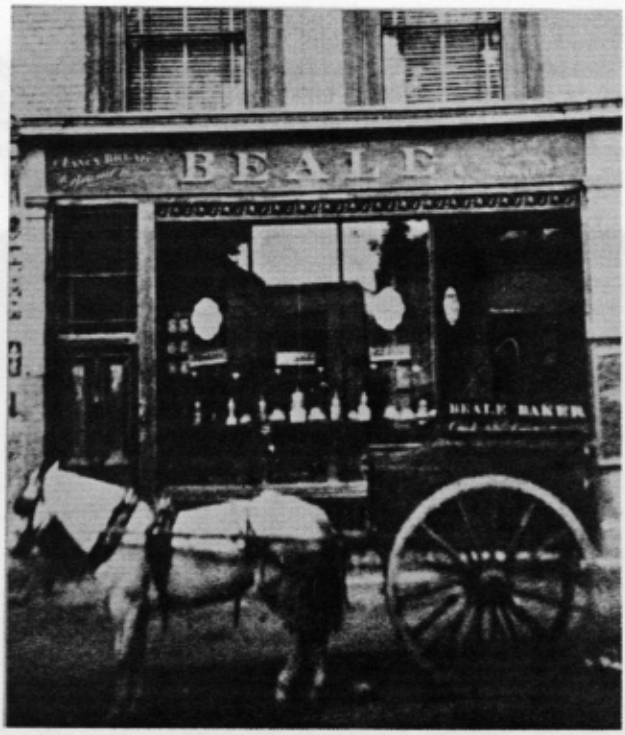
The upper Grill Room, similar in size, leads off up two steps, being situated over the shop of No 374. Both rooms are bright and attractive, embellished with fine cut-glass mirrors and plaster mouldings, and with windows facing right up Camden Road. We are proud of our Grill Rooms.

Opposite the wooden stairs which lead up from the store is a wide stone staircase down to the separate entrance in Holloway Road. The original decorative tiles still line the walls, and a stone plaque commemorates the erection of the building in 1889 by 'William Beale and Co'.

Turning left into the interior we enter the Grand Hall, only 40 X 30 feet in area, but two stories high, panelled in oak, and quite impressive in its way. It is unusual in possessing several tall stained glass windows depicting scenes from Shakespeare's plays.



William and Christina Beale, circa 1900



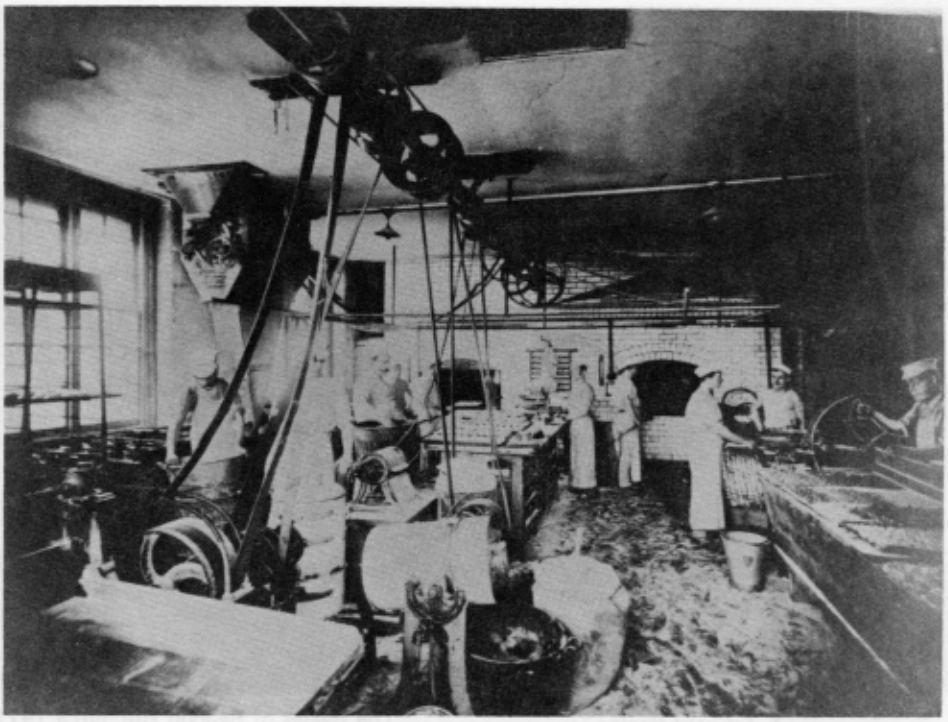
The shop at Highgate Hill, 1861

The Beales, 1890 : L to R. William 1st, Thomas, Archibald, and William 2nd.

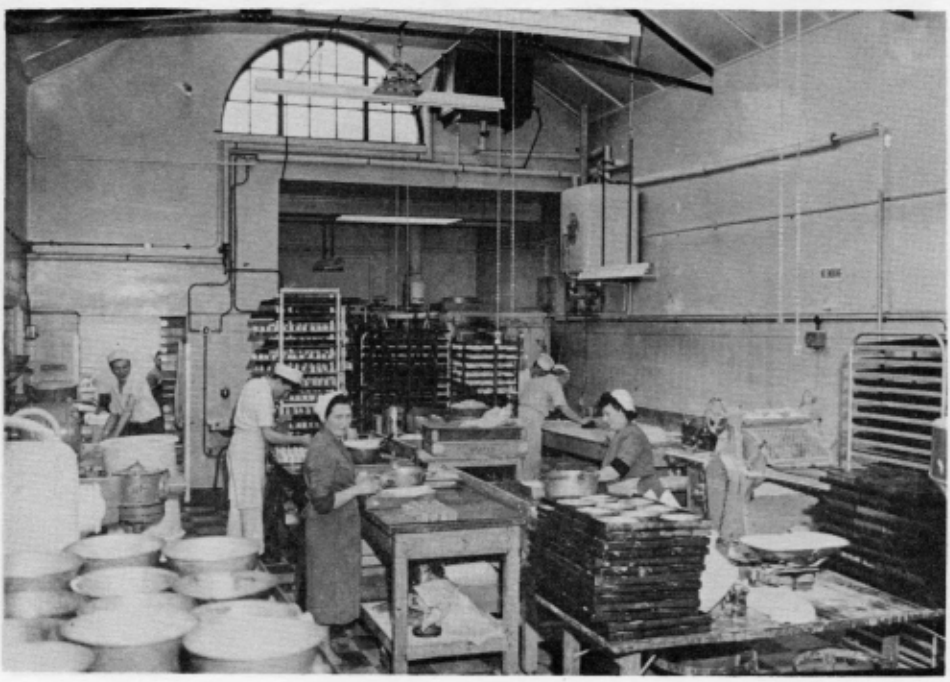
The imposing facade of Beale's of Holloway, 1893

The Nag's Head Crossing 1910

Horse traffic in Holloway Road, circa 1905.
Beale's and Jones Brothers' rival towers seen in the distance



The cake bakery, 1890.



The Barnsbury Bakery, 1963

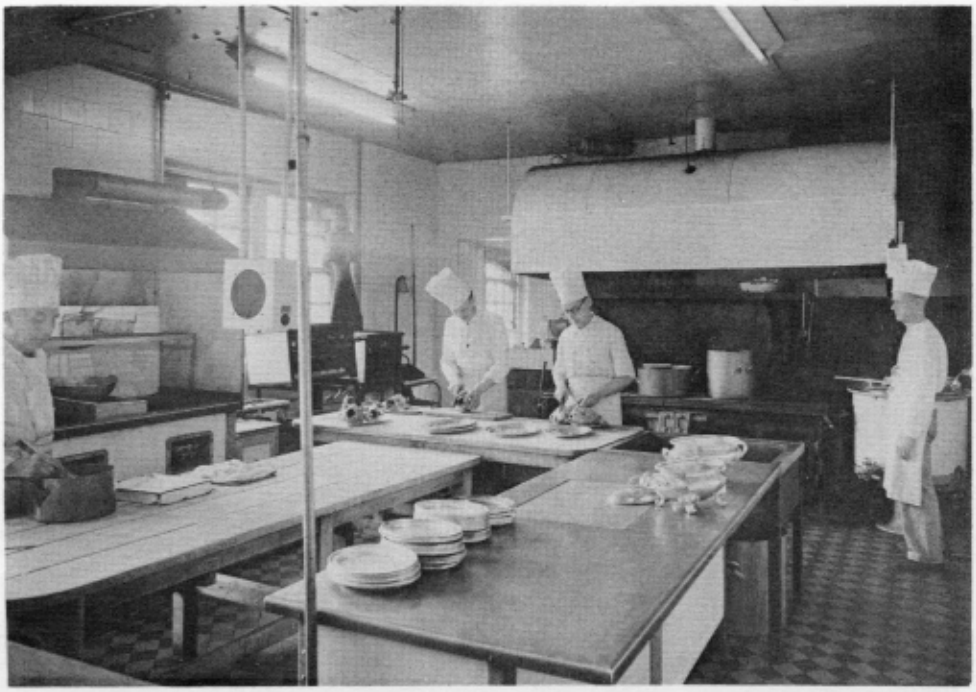
T. Edward Beale,
Islington borough councillor, 1931

The Beales of Beacon Hill, circa 1911.

Valerie and John Beale, September, 1939

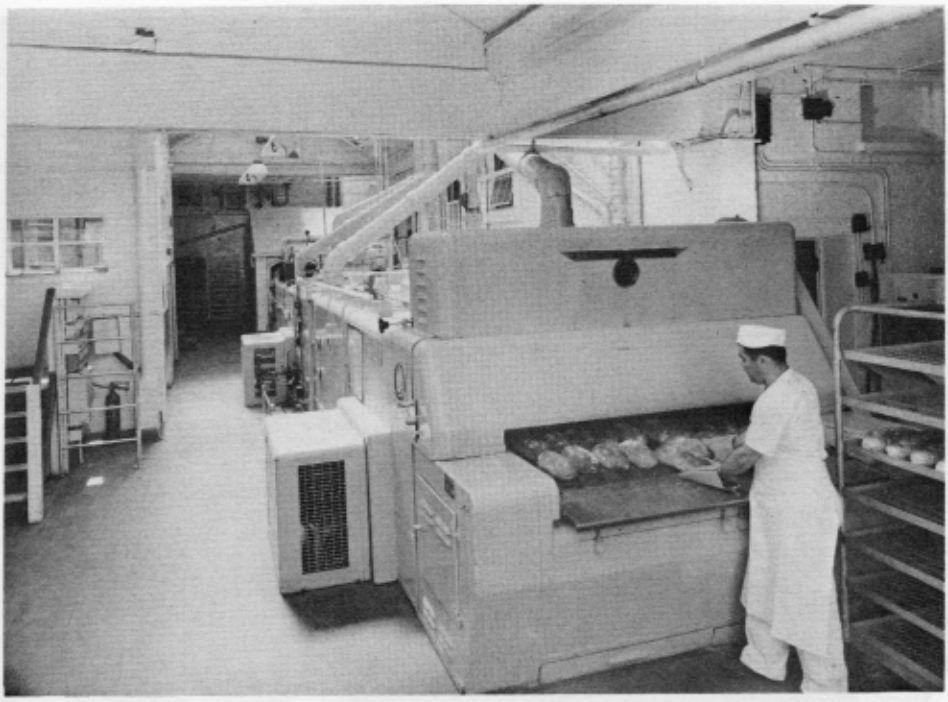
Holloway shop front, 1964

Winston Churchill besieged outside Beale's, 1945



Holloway kitchen, circa 1948.

Rooftop landscape in Holloway, with the Beale chimney standing out prominently.



The "Turbo-radiant" travelling oven, May, 1956.

One of twelve delivery vans, circa 1960

Fortess Road branch, one of twelve shops supplied from Holloway in 1963.

Holloway cake shop, open front and new counters, 1964

Grand Hall, 1964. Note new opening to reception room.

The Lower Grill Room, 1965.

West Lodge Park, Hadley Wood, 1969, prior to building new wing.

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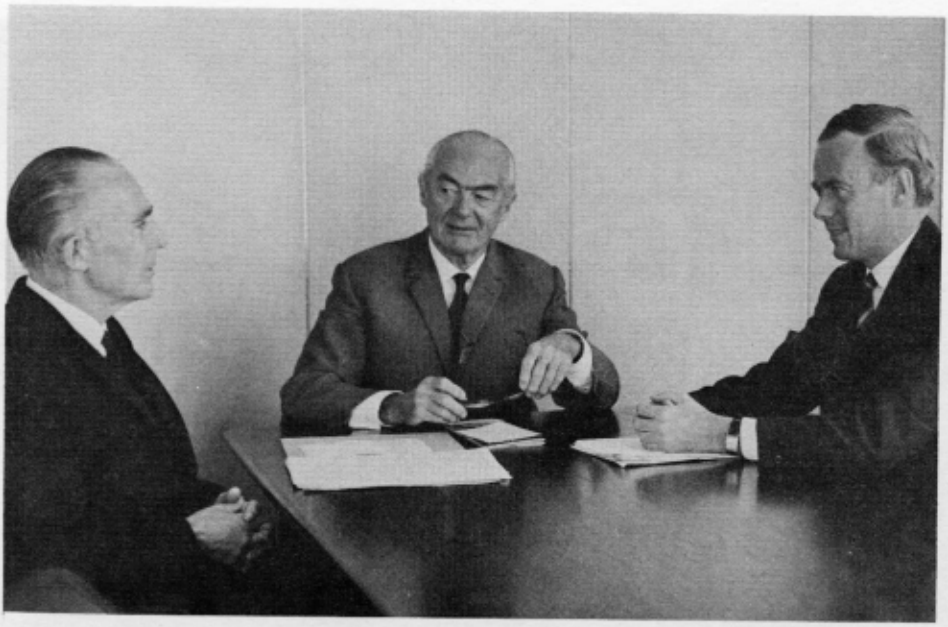
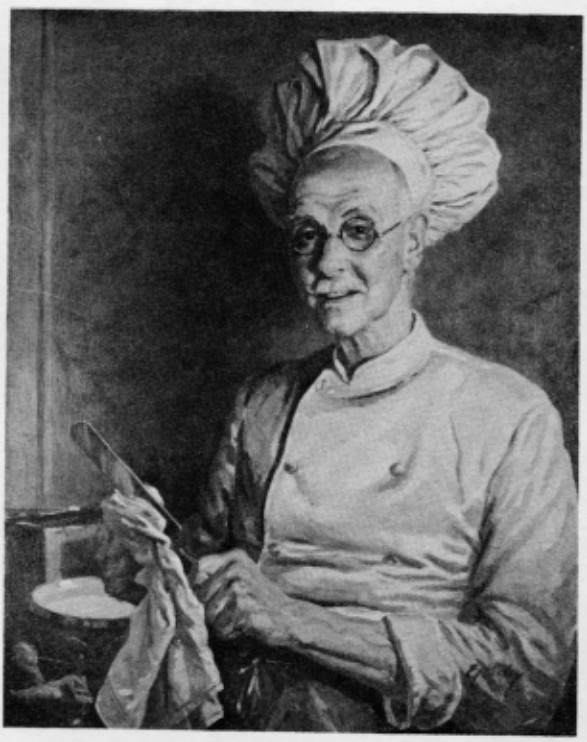
The end of the bakery, 1970.

Sic transit Gloria Holloway, 1970.



The Beales
John Edward Trevor
in new offices at Southgate 1970



William Spackman
Confectioner to Beale's for 63 years
Painting by E.J. Kealey accepted for Royal Academy 1948

The Subscription List will be Opened on Thursday, the 26th June, 1890, and will be closed on Monday, the 30th.

The Vendor guarantees a *minimum* Dividend of 6 per cent. per annum for the first three years upon the Subscriptions to the Share Capital now issued, and will also give as an additional security a Mortgage of valuable Leasehold Premises.

BEALE'S, LIMITED.

Incorporated under the Companies Acts, 1862 to 1886 (whereby the liability of the Shareholders is limited by the amount of their Shares).

Share Capital £75,000 in 75,000 Shares of £1 Each.

15,000 of which will be allotted to the Vendor as fully paid-up in part payment of his Purchase-money.

PAYABLE:—5s. on Application, 5s. on Allotment, and 5s. One Month after Allotment.

The Directors do not at present anticipate the necessity for calling up the balance.

DIRECTORS.

WILLIAM CARDEN, Esq. (Chairman), Lorraine-place, 347, Holloway-road, N. (Managing Director of Messrs. Sutton, Carden and Company, Limited.)
HERBERT STILLWELL SHIPTON, Esq., Elizadale-crescent-road, Crouch-end, N.
ROBERT BERRIDGE, Esq., Assoc. M. Inst., C.E., 15, Highbury-grove, N. (Chairman, Ascot District Gas Company).
*WILLIAM BEALE, Esq., 370, Holloway-road, N.
* Being the Vendor will join the Board after Allotment.

Bankers.—LONDON & SOUTH-WESTERN BANK, LIMITED (Holloway).

Solicitors.—Messrs. BOLTON & MOTE, 11, Gray's-inn-square, W.C.

Auditors.—Messrs. EDWARD MOORE & SON, Chartered Accountants, 2, Crosby-square, E.C.

Assistant Manager & Secretary.—JOHN HUMPHRIES.

Registered Offices.—370, HOLLOWAY-ROAD, N.

ABRIDGED PROSPECTUS.

THIS Company is formed to acquire, and carry on as a going concern, as from 3rd March, 1890, the well-known and old-established business of William Beale—trading as W. Beale & Co.—of 370, 372 and 464, Holloway-road, London, Public Caterer, Restaurateur, Baker, Confectioner, Retail Cake and Biscuit Manufacturer, General Provision Dealer, Licensed Victualler and Electric Light and Power Contractor. The business was established in 1866, and has continued to steadily increase ever since, until it has become, without question, by far the largest and most flourishing one of the kind in North London. Several additions to the buildings and machinery have been made from time to time, until, at length, such became the extent of the business, that it was found necessary to entirely rebuild the premises. This has just been completed at a very large outlay, and it has been deemed a favourable opportunity for the introduction of additional capital for the further and profitable development of the business.

The new building consists of six floors (besides basement), having a frontage of 36 feet, and a depth of 72 feet, in the Holloway-road, and 22 feet frontage in the Tollington-road, and is held under a lease having 80 years to run from 1885. It is brilliantly illuminated throughout by the electric light (supplied by the company's own electric station), and the building comprises, besides the large front shop, with large coffee room attached, spacious dining rooms, grill room, smoking and billiard rooms, all handsomely furnished, and well appointed in every respect. There are kitchens which are capable of supplying dinners of several hundred covers, and which are situated on the upper floor of the building. There is a very spacious basement, which may be converted into a general Provision Market, and which already contains a large patent "Arktos" Cold Room. By means of this Cold Room perishable articles can be kept without deterioration for any length of time, thus enabling the Company to secure a larger profit by purchasing and storing goods therein when the markets are cheap. There is besides (and this forms one of the principal features of the whole building) a large Hall, 41 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 24 feet high, to be used for banquets and other purposes, altogether forming an establishment which supplies a long-felt want in North London.

The premises of the Company are open for inspection by intending Shareholders. Mr. Beale will be pleased personally to show any lady or gentleman over the premises.

The Manufacturing Department, carried on upon premises in the rear, held under a lease having an unexpired term of about forty-four years, has been fitted up with the newest and most improved machinery of every kind, including Patent Steam Ovens and Mechanical Kneaders and Mixers, and the Bakery is equipped with ovens with a capacity of thirty bushels to every baking. The plant include every appliance for the conduct of this large and increasing business.

One of the features of the business is the Electric Light and Power Station in connection with it. This Station, unlike any other in London, has, it may be said, actually run since it was first started—about a year ago—without a single failure, stoppage or hitch of any description. No expense has been spared in the erection of the plant, which is of the most modern and approved construction throughout. Five customers are now being served with Electric Light or Power, and taking into consideration that (1) This is the only Station in the neighbourhood for public supply; (2) As the leases of the business premises between the Tollington-road and the Seven-Sisters-road are now falling in, and the houses are being rebuilt, the occupiers, as shown by experience, are almost certain to take the Electric Light and Power: (3) As shown above, in the case of the water supply, there are exceptional facilities for working cheaply; there is no doubt that this will be a source of considerable profit to the Company. In addition to this, the light will be supplied to the Company's premises at first cost, and its use, as compared with gas, will economize expenses in cleaning and decoration (a considerable item in such an establishment) besides adding additional attraction and comfort to the customers. It is also contemplated to erect further machinery, capable of extending the supply of Electric Light. Leave has been obtained from the Vestry to lay mains for electric current as far as the Seven Sisters-road at present.

On the premises is a well with a fair natural supply of water, which also serves as a condenser or cooler for the water used by the "Arktos" which would otherwise be wasted. An electric pump lifts the water up again into storage tanks in the engine-room, which feeds the boilers. In this way the boilers are supplied with water practically free of cost, thus effecting a considerable saving in water rates.

A full hotel licence has been obtained for the new premises, which will be of the greatest possible value in developing the business.

From the above statements it will be seen that large and profitable results may be confidently expected from the greatly increased capacity of this now extensive and thoroughly well-appointed establishment, more especially in connection with the additional branches of business opened—viz., that given by the full Hotel Licence the General Provision Stores, and the Electric Light and Power.

The Vendor, Mr. W. Beale, will act as Managing Director of the Company for a term of three years: the business being continued in all departments, as heretofore, under his careful and energetic supervision.

The Vendor shows his confidence in the success of the undertaking, by guaranteeing a minimum dividend for the first three years of six per cent. per annum—(after due provision has been made for depreciation and bad and doubtful debts)—and the Directors will reserve a sufficient sum from the purchase price of the business to secure this. It may be mentioned that the Directors have also arranged with Mr. Beale that a small salary only should be paid to him as Managing Director, but that he should further receive remuneration by way of percentage on increased profits being made after 8 per cent. per annum has been earned upon the capital of the Company, after a similar provision has been made aforesaid in respect of depreciation and bad and doubtful debts.

The Vendor, who is also the promoter of the Company, will pay all expenses of the formation of the Company up to the date of allotment, except the percentage and fees payable on registering the Company.

No promotion money has been or will be paid.

Valuations have been made by the following well-known firms—viz., by Messrs. Driver and Perfect, Auctioneers, &c., Holloway, of the Buildings; by Messrs. Sharp and Kent, Engineers and Electricians, Connaught-mansions, Victoria-street, Westminster, of the Electrical Plant; and by Mr. W. B. Hallett, F.S.I., Auctioneer, &c., 11, Queen Victoria-street, E.C., and Holloway, of the Fixtures and Plant.

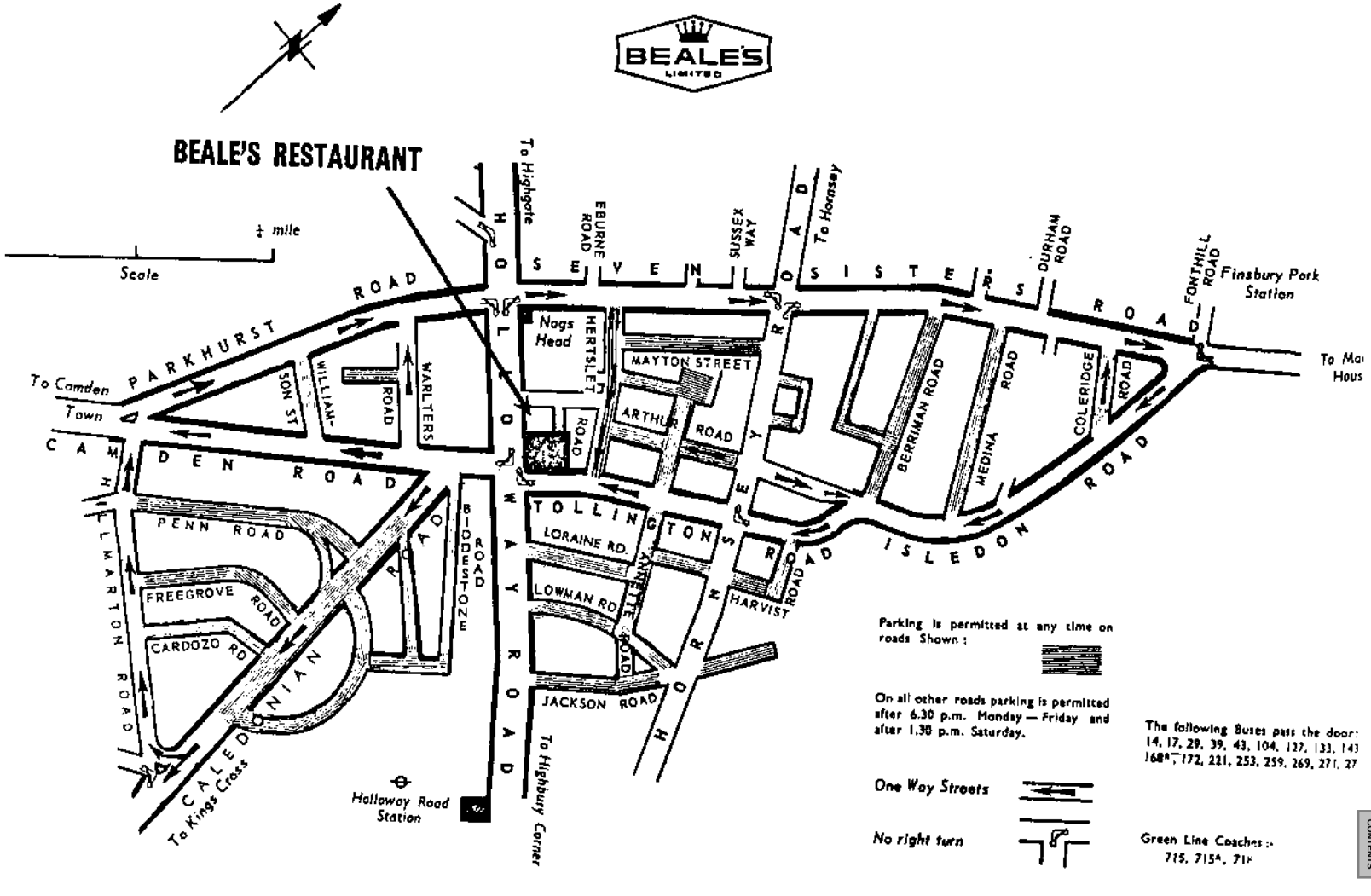
The Vendor will take £15,000 in fully-paid shares as part of the purchase-money.

If the whole amount applied for by the applicant be not allotted, the surplus amount paid on deposit will be appropriated towards the sum due on allotment. Where no allotment is made the deposit will be returned in full.

The above-mentioned valuations, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, and a copy of the Agreement, may be inspected at the Offices of the Solicitors of the Company.

Prospectuses and Forms of Application may be obtained from the Company's Bankers, or at Head Office and all their Branches, Solicitors, or of the Secretary, at the Registered Offices of the Company, No. 370, Holloway-road, N.

Printed and Published by the Proprietor, C. W. PERRYMAN, at the Offices of the FINANCIAL OBSERVER AND MINING HERALD, 3, Queen Victoria Street, London, E.C. June 28, 1890.



H.C. Jm/1967

In daylight the first impression is that of a church, an impression reinforced by an assortment of plaster angels perched up on the walls and ceiling, - presumably to keep watch over the sinners wining and dining down below. An enormous semi-circular mirror on the far wall is soiled on one side, the result of an earlier flood from the sinks of the confectionery bakery on the floor above.

Lit up at night the windows seem to disappear, and then the panelled room, with its musicians gallery and with pieces of old armour hung on the walls, changes from a church into a typical old City Livery hall.

Behind the Hall we find a sizeable reception room, popular for masonic meetings and the like, with cloakrooms and another wide stone staircase down to the canopied entrance in Tollington Road. The suite is referred to as 'The Assembly Rooms', - a term we felt old-fashioned when we took control in 1934.

Returning to the central landing, we climb two more flights of wide stone staircase to the second floor. From here we peep into the musicians' gallery, far too high and remote from the customers for a modern dance band's liking. In front, over the Grill Rooms, are a staff dining room and a billiards room, in the latter of which my father and his cronies spent rather more time than they should after their lunch. Some rather smelly lavatories are also on this floor, high priorities for our 1934 modernisation plans.

Leaving the stale smoke-laden atmosphere of the billiards room, we climb, a little wearily, two further flights, again unlocking a heavy door on the way. On the third floor we meet a new battery of smells. Facing up Camden Road is a confectioners' room. Here, from a warmed drying cupboard, the reader and I are given each a large curly-piped meringue, beautifully crisp outside but with the desired sticky toffee texture at its centre.

An intriguing scent comes from the long black vanilla pods, covered in the dusting sugar which is to absorb their flavour. There is also a pleasant smell from the large bowls of our own boilings of apricot puree, into which the madelines and iced fancies will be dipped tomorrow morning. A row of Savoy bags is hung up on a line to dry, still smelling faintly of sour cream, - evidence of the bakers' failure to sterilise them properly in boiling water.

We pass to the main kitchen where the smell is of stale frying oil and of cabbage water left in the cast-iron steamers. The heavy wooden benches set against the walls evidently discourage too frequent cleaning of the windows. The great ventilation hood over the still warm coal range is black with greasy smoke and constitutes a major fire hazard. Fresh clean sawdust is sprinkled on the tiled floors.

In the wash-up are three large grimy cast-iron washing tanks, with dripping taps which we are unable to turn completely

off. Each drip sounds loudly in the quiet of the kitchen, adding to the steady ticking of a wooden clock bearing the name of our tenants, Jones the Jewellers. An untidy heap of coke lies beside the verticle boiler which supplies steam to the kitchens and right down to the ground floor service in adition, - a masterpiece of unscientific plumbing if there ever was one. The Chef's changing room and the vegetable preparation room are two steps down at the top of the No 374 building. A wooden back staircase leads down to the yard, little used other than for pilfering from the kitchen.

Moving back through the main kitchen we pass through the pastrycook's department. Here a large coal-fired oven is destined to remain active until 1969, thus completing eighty years of service, - in its last year or two in defiance of the clean air regulations. Our passage runs directly between the bakers' working space and their oven, an unhappy an arrangement as could be imagined. Either accidentally or on purpose the bakers' long wooden peel is liable to shoot back suddenly and catch the passer-by sharply in the ribs.

Behind, situated directly over the Grand Hall, is the main confectionery department, spacious and airy, overlooking Tollington Road. How often, over the years, were irate messages sent up to the confectioners to stop the noise of their machines, in order that the President of the Rotary Club could hear himself speak down below! I remember listening to Mr Gordon Selfridge expounding the virtues of private enterprise to a crowded meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, when the familiar grinding noise started up and I had to rush upstairs to get the machine switched off.

Leading off from this area are larders, stores, and the deadly slow passenger and goods lift that descends right to the basement, opening out - to the detriment of its stability - on three sides at different floor levels.

The fourth floor, inside the tower block, and the fifth floor, with its tiny windows, are used for staff rooms. The whole tower smells strongly of the frying carried on in the kitchen below, but at least it is warm and dry. From the extensive flat roof there are magnificent views in all directions, far superior to those from Jones Brothers' roof, as we always pointed out. Holloway Prison, built like a castle, stands out prominently up Camden Road.

In a wooden shed on the roof is an ancient ice-cream making machine, the cream being frozen by a mixture of ice and salt surrounding the containers. The reader and I dip our fingers into the rather hard ice cream, both the strawberry and the vanilla, and pronounce it delicious. Over the years the salt has penetrated the roof and rotted the fabric of the building for two floors down.

On the same roof, fortunately at some distance away, are two deplorable staff lavatories which are best not examined too closely. They are almost inaccessible in heavy rain or snow, and are liable to freeze up in icy weather. In the nineteenth century the requirements of the staff were considered only as an afterthought.

We descend to the basements by way of the goods lift, pulling on a rope to start the motor. The basements are lofty and very spacious, covering most of the site, some 200 X 100 feet in area. In them, divided by brick walls and wooden partitions, are the vast stocks of wines and spirits, beers, cigarettes, groceries, sweets and chocolates, novelties and crackers, cold rooms, paper stores, workshops for the carpenter, the plumber, and the handyman, and much more beside.

In the wine cellar we see an early type aerating machine for making our own soda water and fizzy lemonade. A mask of metal mesh is used by the operator in case a glass bottle should explode. A patent corking machine is used for bottling our own label wines. Long ago a cellarman was found dead drunk on the floor of this same cellar.

Also buried in the basement is another minor chamber of horrors, - a service wash-up without natural light and with the minimum of fresh air, situated under the ground floor restaurant. A hand lift sends down the dirty crockery to be washed up by the galley-slaves toiling down below.

Old china insulators and rotted cables on the ceiling of the basement under the bakeries remind us that this was the famous electricity station that lit up Holloway Road in the gay nineties. Under the houses of Nos 2 and 4 Tollington Road we find the patent high pressure boilers that provide the central heating for the public rooms. Great heaps of coal and coke are available to feed them and to house some of the pests referred to earlier.

Beneath the yard lies another huge basement, even lower than the rest. Being subject to occasional floods up to two feet deep, it is virtually unusable. At one side is the well of spring water advertised as being of great value in Grandfather's prospectus. If it was pure in Grandpa's time, it certainly is not so now. This basement is commonly referred to as the swimming bath.

Flooding takes place perhaps once every other year in the front basements also. After a particularly heavy cloudburst in the district the surface water running down into the 'Hollow Way' is too great for the sewers to contain. Manholes in our basements are forced up by the immense pressure, and within minutes the whole area is inches deep in muddy, evil smelling sewer water, presumably before finding its way to the well of pure water at the rear. Any goods stored carelessly on the floor are ruined, and a vast clean-up operation with disinfectant is needed to make the place usable again.

This large block of property that we have now examined bravely enough, together and in daylight, had to be shut up by one lonely Beale, all by himself at night. Large sums of money had to be locked up in the safes, lights turned off, doors locked and bolted, and all done behind the shutters that shut off the shutter-upper from all contact with the outside world.

As a somewhat timid and imaginative young man, I sometimes found it an eerie, nerve-racking procedure on a winter's night. At some points, as one turned off the lights, it was necessary to grope along in darkness before reaching the next lit area, and one would stumble over unseen obstacles. Cats would scuffle after their prey and sometimes make one jump with an unearthly screech.

One could never be sure that there were no intruders left on the premises, - there were so many back stairs and passages by which to evade the lonely watchman. I was always thankful to bang the door shut on the stairs leading down to the store, and even more thankful to slam the wicket gate in the shutters of the bread shop and apply the final padlock.

Making my way wearily up Camden Road I would sometimes turn only to see a dim light visible from high up in the building. Had I remembered to turn out every light? Was someone even now preparing to ransack the place? There could be no shirking, - the police would pull one out of bed later if they too spotted the light. So back I would have to go to face it all once again, even more jittery than before.

I was looking round the empty bakery one Saturday evening in winter, when I thought I heard footsteps from the loft above. At the time the only access to the loft was by a twelve-foot iron Jacob's ladder, and up this I had to force myself to climb. Bringing my head to just above floor level I called out, none too boldly, 'Is anybody there?'. There was no reply. Was I imagining things? Only one small electric light bulb dimly lit up the vast cave of a loft, the further end of which, nearly forty feet away, disappeared into complete darkness.

The area was divided into three-sided bays against which the flour sacks were piled, so that I could only see down the central aisle at best. Again I called out 'Come on out, I know you're there'. But again there was dead silence.

It required all my courage to climb into the loft and start walking down the dim gangway, peering into the black recesses which could have concealed a dozen men successfully. A dark shadow darted suddenly from one of the alcoves into another further down. My heart beat even faster as I called out yet again 'Who's there?'.

At last a pathetic dusty figure emerged, a semi-mental drudge of a baker's assistant, who had perhaps hoped to spend the week-end in the warmth of the bakery without permission. He may have been more frightened than I had been, but I doubt it very much.

He scuttled off without a word down the coal-hole of the cake bakery ovens, and disappeared. I was not over sorry when the loft was burnt down in the war.

My jitters on shutting up on a dark winter's night were rare, - perhaps only when I was overtired. They were not smoothed away by having to return to an empty cold large house in Beacon Hill. My parents spent much of their time at Margate, and I had to look after the house on my own for long stretches at a time. Children growing up in a modern flat cannot imagine the vague terrors that could grow in the dark corners of an old Victorian mansion.

On occasion, I confess, I have been right round the house looking in cupboards and wardrobes for I know not what, like an old maid looking under the bed for burglars. This quirk of mine was perhaps due to the fact that as children we had hidden in these self-same places, - to jump out with ear-splitting yells on unsuspecting house-maids. How time brings in its revenges! Once, so searching a large walk-in cupboard with a lighted candle, I set fire to the sheet-shrouded clothes hanging on the walls, and gave myself an even bigger fright. But I digress abominably from my proper subject.

Have I been unkind to the tragi-comic ageing white elephant that Beacon Hill had fought so hard to win? Have I not painted in the warts ad nauseum in this last chapter? But I shall make amends. The old monster still has thirty useful years of life to come, and many of the warts will be removed. Miraculously, we shall see it, in due course, not unfit to face the challenge of the post-war world.

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13 Holding the Fort

Capitulation at Munich in 1938 made war almost inevitable, despite Mr Chamberlain's professed optimism. Ted and I sat in the office, gloomily forecasting the end of Beale's, come victory or defeat. In our weak state we were in no position to withstand another world war like the last.

Even if by some miracle the Germans could be beaten once again, then surely Communism would take over our by then devastated and bankrupt country. All this we believed but continued to plan for war and peace alike, for nothing can be certain in this world of ours.

I volunteered as a part-time Air Raid Warden and attended many time-wasting lectures on the horrid poison gases it was thought the Germans would be dropping on us. I also submitted to a perfunctory course in first aid, bandaging up my colleagues with great zeal, though very well aware that I would promptly faint at the first sight of real blood.

Local inhabitants, both old and young, had to be instructed in the wearing of their gas masks. The effect on asthmatic sufferers was painful to observe. In Camden Road I found many of the houses let off in rooms, and even in part rooms, to families of refugees from Central Europe, few of them able to speak or understand English.

Ted was appointed Area Bread Officer for the district, to organise emergency bread supplies for the public, and arrange mutual help between bakers put out of action by the enemy. In addition he was later appointed L.C.C. Agent for Emergency Feeding of the area. With these responsibilities, as a family man, and as chairman of the company, we felt he might well escape an early call-up. But we assumed that as the younger and unmarried brother I would soon be roped into the army once the war broke out.

As holder of a hard-won 'Certificate A', gained in my school O.T.C., I would be fairly sure of a commission in the army. But I would await the call. For those with long memories of the slaughter in the trenches of the first world war there was no idealistic rush to enlist at the beginning of the second.

At the time of Munich I was engaged to be married. The crisis and threat of war brought pressure from my prospective in-laws

to postpone the marriage until 'things had settled down'. They not unreasonably hoped their daughter would thereby have time to think twice about so unsuitable a marriage, but fortunately for me the delay brought no change of heart.

Eventually it was decreed that Valerie Honor Lloyd and I could be married on the 12th day of September 1939. A more fashionable wedding and reception than the scruffy prospective bridegroom justified was duly put in hand, only to be cancelled when mother-in-law-to-be departed for the safety of the Scottish Highlands just before the outbreak of war. But if she thought that the marriage was unthinkable in her absence she was mistaken as we shall see.

Whitehall prepared for war with the issue of increasing quantities of paper. Innumerable forms and stock records had to be filled in ready for later rationing. Beale's of Holloway had been all through the process twenty five years earlier for the Kaiser's benefit. Commercially it was of course unproductive.

Staff not earmarked for the armed forces had to be trained in air raid precautions. Basements had to be strengthened for use as shelters for staff and public. Parts of the loft and basements were requisitioned to hold stocks of flour for the government.

In May 1939 we were required to house and feed a company of Territorials at the Athenaeum. Our own young men were being called up for the duration of the war. The banqueting business, so painstakingly worked up by Ted since 1934, started to disappear, - no surprise to the directors. We knew well what would happen to the luxury departments once the war got going.

Shopkeepers and householders spent hours sticking strips of gummed brown paper criss-cross on their windows, under official persuasion that this would reduce the unpleasant consequences of bomb blast. All of it peeled off long before the bombs started falling in 1940. A sticky latticework material was introduced later, but, with or without it, all our glass disappeared with the first near-by bombs.

Black-out curtaining took up more time and thought than might have been expected. 100% blacking was hard to achieve, for not the smallest glimmer of light could be allowed to escape. Alas, the heavy iron shutters had been thrown out only a short while earlier. What a feeling of security they would have provided during an alert.

Meanwhile the business had to be profitable, war or no war, if it was to survive. And already it could be seen to be just about breaking even, - for the loss of £300 for the year to March 1939 could be accounted for by the cost of strengthening the basements. We felt that we had turned the corner and were home and dry, if only Herr Hitler could be persuaded to be reasonable.

Three modestly successful branches had replaced the loss-making store, and the bakeries could easily supply more outlets. We looked further afield for new branches and in July we were offered a suitable empty shop in Barnet High Street.

Tom Saint warned us of a probable clamp down on increased profits in the event of war. With eleven years of losses behind us we would be unfortunately placed, to say the least. But a small token profit might be allowed on any company registered before the outbreak of war. Saint advised us to set up a new company to acquire the Barnet shop and run it as a separate venture.

Ted and I therefore formed Beale's (Barnet) Ltd with £100 capital in £1 shares, providing £50 each in cash, and hoping to borrow enough personally to acquire the lease and fit up the shop. With the outbreak of war the High Street scheme was dropped, but the new company was in being and became active a year later with another venture.

Two newcomers had joined us earlier in the year, Kenneth Mostyn as under-manager in the bakeries, and Jim Hodges as a catering assistant at Southgate, each starting at the modest wage of £3-10-0 per week. Both had been educated at our own City of London School, and both became directors in due course.

We laid in such modest stocks, - sugar, dried fruits, canned meats, paper bags, bread wrappers, etc., as our resources would allow. Eked out with care they reduced the inevitable losses of the first year of war. The bread wrappers - for our first ever wrapping and slicing machine - made no contribution, rather the reverse. Bread wrapping being banned for the duration of the war, the heavily waxed paper sheets lay for five years pressed down by their own weight, until they solidified into useless blocks as hard as wood.

We had contracted for the Assembly Rooms toilets to be re-surfaced with marble tiling, still hoping that the war would never come. But with the work half finished it was clear that war would come. The Italian workmen dropped their tools and fled the country with less than a week to make their escape. The walls remained unfinished for the duration of the war.

The nation had used the year's respite to prepare as best it could. So had we at Beale's. When the sirens sounded on the 3rd of September we were ready for the fight, however pessimistically we rated our chances of survival.

A radio comedian of the second war usually got a laugh by starting his patter with the catch phrase 'The day war broke out, my wife said to me . . . . . .', for we all had our personal and oft-repeated reminiscences of that historic day. Perhaps my own were sufficiently wrapped up with the affairs of Beale's to justify their inclusion in this chapter.

Sunday September 3rd 1939 was no day of rest for us. Another company of soldiers was billetted at the Athenaeum, and was marching down to Holloway twice a day for its main meals. Few staff were available and so it fell to the directors, unaccustomed as they were to manual work, to set to and help feed the troops. But no great finesse was required to ladle out the stewed steak and potatoes, and the suet pudding and custard, army style, on to the enamel plates of the queuing soldiers.

(Incidentally, history was strangely repeating itself. For on the outbreak of World War One on the 4th of August 1914, on the orders of a Major Hudson of the 7th Middlesex Territorials, Beale's had prepared a cold meat supper for seven hundred men, and steak and kidney pies for forty officers. All this was cancelled at short notice, but Tuesday's cold meat had been made up, with additions, into hot meat stew for nine hundred soldiers for Wednesday's lunch, at a price of 9d per head. One hundred and thirty large loaves were also supplied at 3d each.)

To return to 1939, with her mother and twin sister somewhere in the wilds of Scotland, my fiancee had been entrusted to my mother's safe keeping at Beacon Hill. She was with us at Holloway as we awaited the arrival of the troops.

We broke off, during the morning, to listen on a portable radio to Mr Chamberlain's announcement that the nation was at war. The sirens sounded soon after, but, as we suspected, it was just a false alarm. Now that the war had really come we felt some relief from the pent-up anxieties and humiliations of the year since Munich. At last the British could hold up their heads again.

More practical thoughts returned, and we locked away the silver cutlery and removed the carpets from the staircase. The ornate silver table ornaments and candelabra, dating back to Grandfather's time, were put away carefully in their wooden boxes, but, alas, many of them had disappeared by the time peace was declared.

The troops tramped in noisily, were duly fed, and, I believe, well satisfied. Later the four of us, - Mother, Valerie, Ted, and I, sat down to the same meal ourselves in the deserted ground floor restaurant. As we battled with our suet pudding we gloomily discussed the war situation and the second postponement of our wedding.

The banns had been duly read three times, but the elaborate plans for September 12th were now in ruins. The bride's mother and sister were hundreds of miles away, the best man had been called up, friends and relations were scattered in all directions. As we finished the pudding my mother suggested that Valerie and I should get ourselves married that very afternoon. Why not enjoy a few days together, even a few hours if it should so turn out, before the expected holocaust?

The difficulties seemed insurmountable. Moreover I felt that Valerie had been entrusted to our care, and that it would be unsporting to take advantage of her mother's absence. Had we been able to contact my future mother-in-law for her blessing the answer would certainly have been a dusty one. Fortunately the telephone line to Scotland was completely blocked.

All depended therefore on the consent of Uncle Sidney, Valerie's step-father, still keeping house south of the river at their home at Barnes. Uncle Sidney would not normally dare to cross the wishes of his formidable second wife. But now a phone call found him so convinced of death and destruction for the lot of us at any minute, that, incredibly, he gave us his consent and started out for Holloway forthwith.

Meanwhile my mother had persuaded the Rev. Mr Lee, vicar of St Luke's Church, Holloway, to agree to conduct the wedding that same afternoon, despite the technicality of the banns having been read three times in another church.

And so, within two hours of finishing the suet pudding, Valerie and I were made man and wife, - with Uncle Sidney, my mother and brother, and Jim Hodges, as witnesses and total congregation. We had changed into our going-away clothes while waiting for Uncle Sidney to arrive for the short, simple wedding ceremony. But there was no lovely white bridal gown of satin, no bouquet, no bridesmaids, no best man, no morning coats and toppers, no choir, no organ, no photographer, and no chauffeur-driven limousine.

We walked the short distance home, for surely the most comical wedding reception ever catered for by Beale's of Holloway. Jim Hodges had found half of a veal and ham pie, the remains of someone else's wedding cake, and half a dozen stale iced fancies. Unable to open the bar, Ted had grabbed an opened, and consequently flat, bottle of champagne.

The 'reception' took no more than a few minutes, and by five o'clock we had departed in Ted's second-hand Standard car. We set off happily enough, in mixed sunshine and cloud, promising faithfully to return in three days' time, - for the situation at Holloway threatened to be chaotic.

On Ted's recommendation we headed for the 'Rose and Crown' at Tring. But alas, all England was on the move that day. There was no room at that inn or at any inn on the main road north. In desperation we turned off down a country lane that got narrower and narrower until it petered out completely, just past a dingy looking tiny country pub. We had to plead hard with the surly landlord and his wife before they grudgingly agreed to take us in.

They showed us to a barely furnished attic, candle lit, with a grim looking iron bedstead in it and precious little else. There was no plumbing, but there was a large jug of cold water and a wash basin on an otherwise bare wooden table. The one toilet available was situated in a dilapidated shed some distance from the back door, across the open yard. Our brand new clothes were ludicrously incongruous in such surroundings, and there were no cupboards or even hooks on which to hang them up.

No meal was offered to us, so we returned to the 'Bell' at Aston Clinton for dinner, and from there we finally managed to contact Valerie's mother with the news. But no tears up in Scotland could undo the knot lawfully tied that day in Holloway. The vigilant

reader will note that the mother-in-law who was unreachable before the event, was somehow traceable soon after. I have to thank the telephone operators for the selective service provided on that memorable day.

The searchlights flickered distantly across the fields that night, in the direction of London. The landlord and his handful of customers stood watching them from outside the front door, excitedly discussing London's forthcoming doom. So close were they, and so loud their voices in the still night air, that they seemed almost in the room with us as we went to bed.

Somehow the faintest possible glimmer from our one wretched candle must have penetrated the thick blanket curtain, for suddenly there came loud and angry shouts of 'Put that light out!' from the highly suspicious crowd outside our window. As it happened we were not particularly concerned with signalling to enemy aircraft at the time, but we meekly doused the candle in order to save further demonstrations. So ended our version of 'the day war broke out -'. Unexpectedly I too can add 'my wife said to me ..'.

After three days we returned dutifully to Holloway. Some months earlier, assisted by the Abbey Road Building Society, we had purchased a pleasant new semi-detached house in Southgate for £999 plus £60 for a brick-built garage. All was ready for our occupation. Instead we moved into the first floor of No 6 Tollington Road, where my mother had rigged up a make-shift flat for us while we had been away.

We felt that the Holloway premises needed night and day attendance by a member of the family, to ensure proper fire drill and first aid in the event of bombing. A further reason was that my duties as a part-time Air Raid Warden required me to live in the district.

One day later, in the absence of the expected visits from the Luftwaffe, we took a chance and left to continue our honeymoon for another week at Cliftonville. There we shared the St George's Hotel with one other lonely customer, in a gloomy atmosphere of sandbags and barbed wire.

Then, for the best part of a year, we lived within the Holloway premises both night and day, as two earlier generations of Beales had done in former times. Valerie's lively friendliness to all and sundry now made amends for my own taciturnity, and she provided me with a much needed pair of eyes and ears.

Of the thirteen houses previously owned on our side of Tollington Road the furthest seven had been sold during the depression. No 2 had long ago been rebuilt as part of the Assembly

Rooms, and Nos 8, 10, and 12, were staff houses and changing rooms for the bakers. Nos 4 and 6, strategically placed between the main block and the bakeries and yard, were constantly being adapted for a variety of purposes, - as offices, staff rooms, work rooms, and stores. Modestly respectable in Grandfather's day, the long terrace was looking distinctly shabby in 1939.

Our temporary flat in No 6 was equally unglamorous. There were two rooms on the first floor, and, up under the sloping roof, was an awkward little attic slip room which we made our kitchen. It was reached by a murderously dangerous steep winding staircase down which both of us fell more than once, wrenching our shoulders painfully in the process.

The kitchen contained one cold water tap, a rusty old portable electric oven, almost useless, a gas ring, and a wooden box with a perforated zinc door, which constituted the pantry. There was no hot water and no bath, and the dingy lavatory two flights down was shared with the office staff during the day.

It was difficult to sleep in the dismal back bedroom overlooking the bakery, due to the incessant noise which started up each night at nine o'clock and continued until next day. Unhappily for me this was no regular continuing noise, but a succession of different noises related to the work, all of which I could identify and visualise from our bed, only a dozen yards away.

When moulding time came, for example, the bakers would flap down the measured lumps of dough hard and resoundingly on the wooden trough lids, in order to knock out the excess gas, before moulding the lumps into proper shape. There seemed to be some competition as to who could produce the loudest bang during this evidently pleasurable operation.

Together with the slapping noise of the machine belts, the whine of the mixers, the thump of the dough divider, the shovelling of coal, the trolleying of bread from oven to yard, and the clanking of the chain hoist, the bakers effectively murdered sleep each night save Saturday. On Saturday the dance band in the Grand Hall took up the burden until midnight, when peace would come at last.

Despite all we were not unhappy inside No 6, and I retained some affection for it until it was pulled down. Its drab appearance, however, proved more than my mother-in-law could stomach. Arriving for her first and only visit to her daughter, she was observed by my wife to stop half-way across the road, look shudderingly at the exterior of No 6, and turn tail back to select Barnes without wishing to see more.

My warden's duties for the next few months entailed long hours at night dozing with others in an airless concrete circular pill-box buried several feet underground in the playground of a near-by school. From it we would take turns to patrol the deserted streets, returning to report all clear to H.Q. from the pill-box

telephone. There were no incidents to report. The bombs came in plenty later, but by then I had left the A.R.P. service and was more suitably serving in the Home Guard.

Things were not so bad, that first year, as we had expected. The German submarine menace was slow to develop, and the restrictions on our supplies were not too irksome. Despite the black-out public dances continued successfully at Holloway and the Athenaeum. And if the banquet trade had disappeared the feeding of companies of soldiers at local schools at 3/- per head at least helped to cover some of our expenses.

With pre-war stocks carefully eked out, and with leaner recipes used for the cakes and buns, the bakeries were able to maintain a reasonable output. The restaurants actually benefitted from the many customers who kept their meat ration for the week-end joint, and lunched out during the week.

We were still selling a small assortment of provisions, and a handful of customers registered with us for their rations. This was administratively absurd and was soon discontinued. Perversely, however, we continued the sweets section of the cake shop, laboriously collecting and recording the tiny ration coupons, all for the benefit of selling the equivalent of one two-ounce bar of chocolate per week.per customer.

As time went on our battles with the Ministry of Food over supplies for the bakeries and restaurants became vital to our very existence. To the credit of the many civil servants involved, I must record that, without exception, they were scrupulously correct and above board in all our dealings with them.

By October the bread rounds had been reduced to five, all serviced by old stagers too old to be called up. Horse and van deliveries were ended for ever, save for one lone ranger stationed at the rear of Southgate shop. We hired motor vans for the duration, but were lucky to receive a second electric van of our own in February 1940. Daily deliveries were later discontinued, except to our own shops and wholesale customers, the latter including several local hospitals.

In the kitchens women cooks replaced the chefs. Puddings and pastries previously made in the kitchens were now prepared in bulk in the bakeries. My mother supervised the serving of an increasing number of 3-course lunches on the ground floor daily. My chocolate making department folded up quickly, and the expertise so painstakingly acquired was lost for ever.

However grateful that matters were no worse, the directors had to face another loss for the year to March 1940, this time of £700. It was the fifteenth year running in which the reserves had been reduced. And then, in the year of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, and the Blitz of London, annus mirabilis indeed, Beale's of Holloway made a profit at long last. We felt almost ashamed that it had come at such a time.

The phoney war ended and the real one erupted at a shattering pace. France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, and then Norway, were lost, - almost without a fight it seemed. The British Army scrambled back to England with a few rifles to defend the country. Invasion was now imminent, and the softening up of London by the Luftwaffe began in earnest.

Grim tales of the Nazi occupation of Europe reached us. Sleepless nights were spent wondering just how brave we would be under Gestapo rule. Thank God we never had to face the reality, but many of us went through the mental torment just the same.

Our own baptism of fire came late in September 1940, all our branches suffering from blast, and most windows either blown in or sucked out. But the sickening red glow in the night sky showed that our troubles were as nothing compared with what the East End and the City had to undergo.

Barrage balloons flew everywhere, looking attractive in the September sunshine. Their steel cables were designed to cut down low-flying aircraft, - presumably to bring them down, together with their bombs, on to the houses round about. But the bombers considerately flew high, too high indeed for the A.A. guns which rained down shrapnell on to our fragile slate-tiled roofs. One faulty shell came down and exploded in Tollington Road, demolishing a brick-built public air-raid shelter outside No 10.

A few days later No 12 was reduced to rubble by one of a string of small 50 lb bombs which straddled Tollington and Holloway Roads. Happily none of the bakers were resting in the house at the time. Bill Pile, the little humpbacked foreman, and his men, though badly shaken, carried on at the ovens, and the night's bread production was completed. In November we switched to day work for the bread bakers. They had found it impossible to reach us from any distance in the black-out.

While visiting the old folk up at Beacon Hill, (largely for the benefit of getting a hot bath), my wife and I occasionally got caught by a raid, and had to spend the night uncomfortably in a sunken air-raid shelter in the garden. My father was seventy-four years of age at the time, and, as the ground shook violently from nearby bombs, I was angry that the old gentleman should suffer such outrage at his time of life.

A rota of fire-watchers having been organised at Holloway, Valerie and I were able to move to our new house at Southgate. At the same time I managed to switch out of the A.R.P. service into the 8th Battalion Home Guard, based at Highbury.

Eventually appointed Weapons Training and Bombing Officer, I found myself very much in my element, surprisingly so since I had been scared of noisy fireworks as a boy. I handled far more high explosive than many regulars who served abroad, and not without some hair-raising escapes from some of our amateur soldiers who were apt to throw their grenades vertically rather than at the imagined enemy.

I was delighted to find that I could handle explosives with complete detachment, whereas tougher men would sweat and tremble with anxiety. I knew very well, however, that I would turn to jelly at the sight of a Japanese jungle warrior coming at me with a bayonet.

Truly brave were Mrs Brewer, Miss Moss, and the other good ladies cooking in the top floor kitchens at Holloway, who invariably ignored the air-raid sirens. They continued to send down enormous quantities of soup, described under a variety of names, but all consisting of hot water thickened with potatoes and precious little else. As meat became more scarce the kitchens turned out cottage pie and similar dishes by the ton, made with the minimum of meat or sausage meat, the latter itself well diluted with bread crumbs or other fillers.

At one time we bought several tons of dessicated cabbage packed in 56 lb tins. Something was faulty in the canning for the flavour was abominable, and wartime or not the customers left it on the plate. Three tons of it were still in the basement when war ended, kept for extreme emergency. But London would have been reduced to cannibalism before that cabbage would have been acceptable.

Many small bakeries were put out of action at this time and were never used again. Some of them could not have survived for long even without the blitz. Their owners now came to Ted, as Area Bread Officer, for help. Undamaged bakeries were expected to supply those less fortunate. We ourselves supplied and later took over five such small businesses during the war. This was embarrassing for Ted, who was at great pains not to take advantage of his position, but was sometimes unable to find another baker able to help.

Bomb-blast removed the roof of the Athenaeum and brought the ceilings down. So ended seventy years of service to the social life of Holloway. But the basements remained watertight and were let to Messrs Spillers for the storage of 1,000 sacks of flour, for the sum of 4d per ton per week. We had to be thankful for small mercies.

In April 1941 a serious fire, caused by overfiring the coke ovens in the cake bakery, destroyed the flour loft and put half the cake bakery out of action. It was the first, and last, major fire at Holloway in eighty years of busy cooking and baking and frying, and our insurance company covered the £2,000 of damage. Much inconvenience was suffered until the loft was rebuilt later in the year, with an improved, steel-girdered, and enlarged area.

In supplying other bakeries we became aware of the outrageously large quotas of rationed foods claimed by some black sheep among the bakers at the beginning of the war. They were now reaping an unfair but profitable harvest for their enterprise. Rendered soft and slack, however, by this easy money, few of them survived the tougher days of post-war competition.

Throughout the war I was often shocked to find otherwise

honest, respectable, patriotic citizens prepared to dabble in the black market to secure illegal extra rations, both for profit and for personal advantage, and not at all ashamed to boast about it privately. This I found hard to understand at such a time.

New devices were introduced from time to time by the enemy to add variety to the programme of destruction. An aerial land-mine, floating down silently by parachute after the bombers had departed, destroyed the church opposite the Holloway building, and killed several people in the houses round about.

Grandfather's fortress took the blast with hardly a crack in its strong walls. But the shored-up windows were blown out once again, this time including most of the stained glass windows in the Hall. At such times our ever willing handyman, Charlie Vowels, would patch up the defences with old wooden doors, fire screens, the sides of packing cases, and used linoleum. The fantastic store of semi-rubbish from the basements of Holloway and the Athenaeum came into its own at last.

Vowels' father had been Grandfather's highly respected head cellarman, and Charlie had been born and brought up in one of the Tollington Road houses. In emergency the cry would be 'Send for Charlie'. He alone knew where every fuse-box, turn-cock, gas and electricity meter, and water main, could be found, and he had all the keys necessary to reach them.

To compete in horror with the land-mines came clusters of stick incendiary bombs, known as 'Molotov's Bread Baskets'. These were largely responsible for setting the City of London on fire. We were awoken one dark night at Southgate by one such cascade. One stick was spluttering fiercely on our own doorstep, a hundred others simultaneously blazing all around, several roofs already on fire, neighbours desperately working their pathetic stirrup pumps, and overhead the steady drone of enemy bombers returning to complete their task.

But the British react with cheerfulness and humour to unusual hardships. I remember the emergency field stoves that we built in the open yard at Holloway when the gas and electricity services were put out of action. We used bricks from the rubble of No 12, and surmounted them with old baking sheets. It was like a peacetime barbecue party as we lugged in the steaming cauldrons of stew into the ground floor restaurant on trolleys, laughing and joking at the crudity of it all.

Astonishingly, the public dances, now ended for ever at the Athenaeum, continued regularly at Holloway. Even more surprising, under the circumstances, the authorities increased the permitted

maximum attendance from 150 to 250 persons, though we took no advantage of this for the sake of our peace of mind.

Supplies for the cake bakery were drying up. In pre-war days we had specialised in fresh cream cakes. But the previous use of cream did not qualify for wartime allocations. Had we used inferior 'buttercream' earlier we would have had a better quota of fat and margarine during the war.

Eggs were replaced with doubtful substitutes made from soya flour and baking powder. There was little dried fruit, save for the welcome crates of dates which provided sweetness when made up, with a lean pastry base, into many monotonous tons of heavy looking date slices.

Jim Hodges was in his element during the lean war years. Brought up rigorously in his father's bakery in Kentish Town, he could achieve miracles in the production of appetising meat pies from cheaper cuts of meat than we had ever used before. Such strange items as 'clods and stickings' may have been known to Archibald Alfred in the past, but they were certainly unknown to me.

Economies were enforced upon us by the Government. Printing, packaging, and advertising, were minimal. The slicing of bread was banned, and any form of cake decoration frowned upon. Restaurant meals were of the simplest, - soup, cottage pie, and date pudding, would be a typical menu for the standard 1/6 lunch. As numbers approaching five hundred a day were reached, lunches were served in the Grand Hall as well as in the Grill Rooms and the Ground Floor Restaurant.

With the naturally extravagant Beacon Hill directors forced willy-nilly to economise, modest profits appeared as an unexpected by-product, and an average of £1,000 per year was achieved for the four years to March 1944. After this the devastation caused locally by rocket bombs sent us back into the red.

Meanwhile we could sell all the bread that we could make, likewise the currant buns in which it was not always possible to find the currant. The hitherto unfamiliar spectre of inflation began to make its presence felt. The 1/6 lunches rose in pennies to 1/9 by 1945. Nevertheless sales for the year to March 1945 were still only £83,400 compared with £111,000 back in 1920. Beale's had shrunk a good deal in the wash between the wars.

We had no pre-war profit quota whatever to set against the 100% Excess Profits Tax. This proved no hardship as an alternative assessment based on capital employed allowed us to keep the small profit actually achieved. In other companies, however, the tax encouraged waste in all directions. Why not eat, drink, and be merry, in company with an extra personal assistant? For the Government was in effect meeting the bill.

The Mayfair Shoe Company, our tenants in the No 368 corner shop, had gone bankrupt in 1940, and the shop was left boarded up for the duration. Zetters Pools, tenants of the offices above, also left, though far from being bankrupt. We moved our own offices into the corner building for safety's sake, the walls being much thicker to hide behind during raids.

In 1942 Tom Saint cleared up the inter-company muddle left as a legacy of 1937. With the approval of the Board of Trade, the shares in the parent company owned by the subsidiary were sold to the other shareholders, in proportion to their holdings, at ¼d per share. After this the family owned all the shares of the parent, and the parent owned all the shares of the subsidiary.

A capital loss arose from the sale of these shares at ¼d each. This was because the £36,000 mortgage loan had been used to buy them, rather than to develop the business. The property and plant were now revalued upwards, but even so the balance sheet still showed assets of only £35,000 against an issued capital of £40,000, i.e. a net deficit of £5,000.

All this indicated a net book value of 17/6 per share, seven years after we had bought out the Harry Mote group at 25/5¼ per share, - hardly a bargain, on the face of things, for Beacon Hill. But father's 8,000 shares, valued at 20/3 per share in 1934, had somehow been transformed into 40,000, valued at 17/6 in 1942, and his temporary bank borrowings had been repaid. Things are not always what they seem in the world of finance, and the student must be left to work out just how this paradoxical achievement came about.

The first four branches of Beale's (Barnet) Ltd had been acquired at negligible cost, which proved to be their subsequent worth. The fifth, purchased for £2,600 with the aid of a bank overdraft, was called the Wander Inn, of Ballards Lane, Finchley, comprising a small bakery, a restaurant, and shop. It was profitable from the first. Other opportunities for buying bakers' businesses arose, but were frustrated by the perhaps understandable reluctance of Barclays or Martins to provide the wherewithal.

As a comparatively young man, O.T.C. trained and fit, I often felt I should be serving in the army. In 1943 I stiffened the sinews, summoned up the blood, and called at the recruiting office at Whitehall to offer my valuable services, having previously kissed my wife tearfully goodbye. But the sergeant was more amused than gratified. Could I hope to keep up, at the age of 36 - he made it sound like 66 - with the eighteen year olds taking the assault course at the double? I was of far more use, poor old fellow, bread producing and home-guarding back in Islington, so thanks very much and good-day. I was out on the street within five minutes.

I should have been relieved and even flattered. I was in fact considerable shocked to find myself no longer regarded as a young man. I could outrun a good many of the sloppy regulars to be seen on the streets, I felt sure. I was the more depressed since my wife had had a miscarriage and we were pessimistic as to our chances of having a family at all.

Soon after, however, I learned that I was to be made an M.B.E. (Military) for my work in the Home Guard, and when my wife and mother accompanied me to the palace to receive the award, my wife was sufficiently pregnant again to feel uncomfortable on one of the small hard chairs provided for the audience.

In 1944 the V.1. and V.2. rockets proved more destructive in our area than the earlier raids. No one who heard them would ever forget the horrid sounds made by these obscene contraptions. The loud drone of the low-flying V.1.s, sounding almost immediately overhead, would suddenly cut out with a final splutter as their fuel ran out. This was followed by dead silence for a few seconds as they fell, and then came the deafening explosion that one knew had killed, maimed, or ruined the lives of more innocent men, women, and children.

The sound of the V.2.s seemed even more inhuman. Arriving faster than the speed of sound itself, their explosion was heard a second or two before the distorted sound of their passage through the air. But the traffic in aerial destruction was by now not only in one direction. One evening we watched a thousand British bombers loom up and fill the sky over our homes at Southgate, on their way to Germany. We knew then that victory must come at last.

The war ended in 1945, with fewer celebrations shared between V.E. Day and V.J. Day, than we had seen in November 1918. There was less talk of a land fit for heroes this time. Indeed, with the devastation all around, a faint pessimism followed the initial feeling of relief.

Winston Churchill came to support the local Conservative candidate in the general elction held soon after. He was to address a crowd from the foyer of our Assembly Rooms entrance in Tollington Road. But the crowd of many thousands jammed solidly round the building completely blocked the road and frustrated the programme. The great man was marooned in a sea of cheering Londoners, waving his cigar and giving the famous V sign. But those cheering Winston so heartily failed to vote for him at the polls. When we read that he had been defeated we could hardly believe our eyes.

Paradoxically with the coming of peace the iron hand of the Food Ministry tightened all the more. Britain groaned under food rationing more severely and for longer than her allies and even her enemies overseas. So ended the war for Beale's of Holloway, - left shabby after the first war, and still shabbier after the second. But there was still time to refurbish up and be proud of it again before the end.

14 Landed Gentry

My father and mother had left Beacon Hill for Southgate in 1943 to be near their sons. As the war ended my mother was in ailing health and no longer active in the business. Kenneth Mostyn, back from active service, and Jim Hodges, now bakery manager, were made directors. Ted remained Chairman, and I was made Joint Managing Director with him. Lilian East was appointed Company Secretary and took my mother's place in looking after the women staff.

Profits were restricted by the severe food rationing that lasted long after the war, and by the need to bring the properties and plant back into repair. Profit after tax for the following six years averaged only £2,000 per annum, - little enough to feed our appetite for expansion.

Shortage of capital tempted us on occasion to propose merging our business with other traders similarly placed, - with a view to a flotation on the Stock Exchange. But our poor profit record hardly recommended us to others, especially as we had no intention of playing second fiddle in the orchestra. In point of fact we were *not invited to play even in that humble role, in spite of the spate* of mergers taking place at the time.

We therefore had to borrow on our own, if we were to snap up the tempting fish now within our reach. To this end we managed, with some success, to play off Martins and Barclays Banks against each other, for the pleasure of handling our overdrafts. Eventually the two banks merged and that game could be played no longer.

In the summer of 1944, with victory in Europe well in sight, our first plump post-war fish swam into range. By March 1945 it had been swallowed whole, but with disappointingly little nourishment in the way of profit. West Lodge Park, however, had other, and more aesthetic attractions. Within its refined ambience such a vulgar word as profit would be out of place. A quiet residential hotel, set in its own thirty-four acres of gardens and meadows, it was actually within two miles of our homes in Southgate, - and we had never even heard of it!

Ted had seen in the press that a hotel was for sale in nearby Hadley Wood. Might not the Beales who were bakers and caterers become hoteliers as well? The letting of bedrooms was surely not too difficult to learn. Here was the chance of an exciting new adventure.

Valerie and I visited the hotel incognito in order to spy out the land. We drove up the long private drive, flanked by an avenue of lime trees, and with meadows owned by the hotel on either side. Turning left at the top round the pretty lake we crossed over to the main entrance of the hotel. On entering it was all elegance and dignity in the finely proportioned rooms and staircase of this mostly late Georgian mansion, rebuilt on the site of the original West Lodge of the ancient Enfield Chase.

On June 2nd 1676 John Evelyn wrote in his diary, 'I went with my Lord Chamberlaine to see a garden at Enfield Towne; thence to West Lodge in the Chase, residence of the Rt. Hon. Henry Coventry, Secretary of State. It is a very pretty place, the house commodious, the gardens handsome, and our entertainment very free. That which most I admired was that in all the Chase, within 14 miles of London, there is never a house, barne, church, or building. This is a pretty retreat for gentlemen, especially those that are studious and lovers of privacy. We returned in the evening by Hampstead, ... '. John Evelyn's description was still valid in the year 1944.

If we failed to impress the suave reception manager favourably, as we timidly enquired for accommodation, we for our part were more than favourably impressed with what he deigned to show us of the lounges, dining-room, and two of the thirty-five bedrooms with magnificent views. Blushing guiltily at our deceitfulness, we promised to return and take up accommodation in due course. When I did return, a few months later, Ted and I were joint owners of the entire place!

Before leaving we walked round the ornamental gardens and in the orchard, where ripe pears, apples, plums, damsons, and even peaches, hung in profusion. A grass tennis court, a croquet lawn, and a putting green, added to the attractions. In the crystal clear water of the natural lake a thousand golden orfe were to be seen swimming lazily.

Ted now took over the negotiations, in the middle of which he contracted jaundice! My financial estimates proved favourable, and we agreed to make the purchase. Ted and I signed the contract at his home, - with Ted propped up in bed and looking distinctly yellow against the pillows. We took possession of the hotel on March 12th 1945, shortly before the war in Europe ended.

The price for this latter-day Garden of Eden, - lease, goodwill, plant, furniture, and all, was £9,000, an absurdly low figure in our opinion. The basements had been converted into an air-raid shelter, but apart from broken windows from a flying bomb that had fallen in a neighbouring field there was no appreciable damage to the building.

I probably underestimated, in my calculations, the huge cost of maintaining the estate. The fence to Cockfosters Road, for example, was four hundred yards long, as was the drive, and both needed immediate attention. We failed also to perceive the real shabbiness of the worn out furniture and carpets. Nor did we

appreciate the burden of the long-established aristocratic clientele that we were taking on. But despite all these disadvantages it was indeed ridiculously cheap.

We formed a new company, Beale's Hotels Ltd, to buy and run the hotel. Ted and I managed, with the outmost difficulty, to subscribe £2,500 each to the £5,000 capital. We persuaded Martins Bank to lend another £5,000, on our personal guarantees. This left us with less than £1,000, after legal costs, for the working capital of the company. Once again we would be recklessly under-capitalised.

Ted sold his house in Southgate and moved into a large double-fronted house at the rear of the hotel, incongruously called 'The Cottage'. For our new lease included not only the hotel and grounds, but also an assortment of other properties that made us feel that we had bought up an entire village for our £9,000.

In addition to Ted's house there were two large bungalows occupied by guests, another bungalow for staff, the Chef's house, two small gardeners' lodges at the entrance gates, a courtyard of buildings containing the boiler house, laundry, and furniture stores, another courtyard with fifteen garages and workshops, and in the kitchen garden a number of potting sheds, greenhouses, and poultry houses. A meadow was let out for grazing, and an eighteen-acre field let out to a neighbouring farmer for growing wheat. Overnight the Beales of Beacon Hill had become landed gentry!

Thrown in free with the rest was the Old Etonian manager, elegant and languid, plus the close-knit elderly clientele, with assorted titles, all of whom regarded the brash newcomers with considerable hostility. A long drawn out battle for supremacy began, and for some years the entrenched residents had the better of us. We learned painfully that a hotel has to be run from strength, and that was something that Beale's Hotels definitely lacked.

West Lodge Park was surrounded on three sides by Green Belt farm and park land for as far as the eye could see. Set well back also from the Cockfosters Road, and completely hidden by its own fine trees, the hotel was little known even in the immediate neighbourhood. The atmosphere was very much that of a large private country house.

Some twenty-seven permanent guests occupied most of the bedrooms, at inclusive charges averaging £6-0-0 per week. There was little other business and the total sales were under £15,000 per annum.

We made few changes to begin with, save for advertising the hotel for private parties, especially wedding receptions, for which its setting beside the lake and gardens was ideal. Local brides would soon be crying their eyes out if they could not have West Lodge Park for their reception. Fortunately, both for us and for them, Hadley Wood had many wealthy fathers well able to foot the bill.

The hotel added much prestige to our image in North London and was later incorporated into the main company. West Lodge Park has its own fascinating history to be told elsewhere. But as it was eventually to oust Holloway as the flagship of Beale's Ltd, some mention of it must be made in this present history from time to time. But we must now return to Holloway, more conscious than ever of the noisy traffic and the drab surroundings, in such contrast to the enchantments of the Enfield Chase.

The Board was anxious to put Holloway back into good repair, but Government restrictions on expenditure meant that the process had to be spread over several post-war years. If the exterior now seemed old-fashioned, the building was still basically sound. The restaurants, bakeries, and kitchens, all remained spacious and well suited to their purpose. Some forty to fifty further years of useful life seemed not unreasonable to expect.

The three houses, Nos 8, 10, and 12, Tollington Road, were declared total losses by the War Damage Commission. The bricks and rubble were cleared away. We considered the building of additional banqueting rooms, with a hall to seat several hundred persons, on the site of five of the Tollington Road houses. Like William the Second in 1909, we too decided not to proceed, - fortunately, as it turned out, in view of later events.

Instead we were lucky enough to obtain a second-hand steel framework that exactly covered the site of the three blitzed houses and their back yards. It became the basis for a fine new van garage and despatch. We built up our fleet of motor vans until a dozen assorted lorries filled the yard each night.

In July 1946 a world wheat shortage stampeded the Ministry of Food into introducing bread rationing, - something that had been avoided throughout two world wars. Cutting out and counting whole sackfuls of tiny coupons of bread units, B.U.s as they were called, brought the master bakers to a state of mutiny. I admired the courage of the Minister who had to face a mass meeting of hostile bakers to explain the need.

Bread rationing quickly proved a farce, as we had expected, for the authorised ration was far more than the customers could possibly consume. The whole bureaucratic scheme, costly and time consuming, fell down on this elementary mistake. The same rather petty-minded Labour Government also decreed at this time that no banquet could take place for more than one hundred persons at one time, though an unlimited number of such meals could take place separately.

Our wholesale bread sales, to general stores, caterers, and hospitals, rose to 55% of the total. It was not particularly profitable with the small-scale machinery we had in use. Cake production was held back by the shortage of raw materials, until a sudden flood of good quality sweetened fats arrived from Sweden and Denmark. Down came the absurdly high prices we had paid for various vegetable oils imported from the Far East. But butter continued unobtainable for the bakery trade.

Banqueting business expanded to record levels under Ted's guidance. Entries in the diaries rose from the wartime 400 a year to 1,300 in 1948. This was in addition to the parties catered for at the Wander Inn and at West Lodge Park. Our own staff parties were revived after a lapse of many years. We also started holding small 'executive' dinners for senior members of the staff. Some business was generally included with the pleasure.

A busy bakery business in Potters Bar, four miles north of West Lodge Park, was purchased by Beale's (Barnet) Ltd for £20,000 in 1948. It consisted of two freehold shops with flats above, two bakeries, and four rounds. A third shop was opened later in the district, and all proved moderately successful. We were put in something of a fix to pay for them, the available mortgage loans on the property proving less than we had reckoned.

Beale's Ltd, in contrast, during that same year, were lucky to sell the remaining two years' lease of the Athenaeum for £1,600, with no liability for dilapidations falling on our shoulders. Tom Saint discovered an unusual clause in the ancient lease, enabling the holder to hand back the property and disclaim all liability one day before its termination. With this knowledge a purchaser was forthcoming in the person of Sir Donald Wolfit, the Shakespearian actor-manager, who used the high-ceilinged rooms for storing and repainting his scenery.

Another pleasant surprise, this time for Beale's Hotels Ltd, arose from the depths of the lake at West Lodge Park. Readers will remember that the lake had been seen teeming with golden orfe. Normally imported from Japan, these fish were at a premium in post-war Britain. A reputable firm of dealers asked us if they might draw a net across the lake and pay us five shillings a piece for all the golden orfe they could catch.

We gave our consent, and four hundred fish were netted at the first attempt. A cheque for £100 was handed over straight away. Could the dealers come again next week? Certainly they could. Next week's take was just under four hundred again, and the lake seemed to teem with fish exactly as before. This was the easiest money we had ever made.

Alas, the third week's catch was less than fifty, and the fourth week's catch was nil. The orfe had learned their arithmetic and disappeared under the edges of the lake as soon as the dreaded drag-net came into view. Our piscatorial El Dorado could be

exploited no further. But we were £200 in pocket at a time when every penny counted.

We argued successfully with the Tax Inspector later that this was a sale of capital assets, and not a trading profit from regular fish farming, as he suggested. A few months later the fish overbred and the whole lot died almost overnight as a result. We had to buy in new stock from the same dealers that had bought from us earlier! But never again did the lake teem with fish in anything like the same abundance.

In 1948 my mother died. My wife and I sold our comfortable 'semi' with some regret, and moved, together with our four-year old daughter Susan, into the larger house in Friars Walk, to look after my father.

He had already distributed his shares around the family. My mother left her shares equally to Ted and me, with the income to my father during his lifetime. The effective shareholdings in the parent company were therefore at their simplest ever, namely Ted with 19,294, John 17,529, and our sister Marjorie Kenyon 3,184. The balance of power therefore lay with Madge, though she was never called upon to use it.

Holloway Road was beginning to boom once again. Marks and Spencer, Woolworth, Boots the Chemists, and other multiples, were rebuilding and extending their stores. We were well placed between them and Jones Brothers' department store, which the John Lewis Partnership had now taken into its strong hands.

As a result of this activity the value of our Holloway premises were found by John D Wood to have increased from the £54,000 of 1937 to £75,000 in 1949. We were able to borrow an extra £14,000 on mortgage as a result. The £14,000 was immediately spent on the expansion of the business.

The outlook, therefore, at the turn of the half-century seemed generally favourable. The group was striding forward confidently in all departments. Staff employed now numbered over two hundred and fifty. Group sales had risen from £83,000 in 1945 to £177,000 in 1950, at a time when inflation was still inconsiderable.

But the element of profit lagged painfully behind the rest. Group profit for the three years to 1950 had actually dropped to an average of only £800 per annum after tax. Was there something basically wrong with our financial management? Was it conceivable that the Beales of Beacon Hill lacked business common sense? We looked at ourselves carefully and could not believe it possible.

Were we perhaps spending too much time unselfishly in the public service, on other people's business rather than our own? Were we too honest in comparison with our competitors? Were the Beales, to put it bluntly, just a shade too good to be true in such a naughty world, or at least too good to be profitable?

Blushing modestly in anticipation of a favourable reply, I invite my readers to judge for themselves in the light of the evidence now put forward.

Those who take up public work and become addicted to it to the extent of neglecting their proper business, often do so as much for their own enjoyment as for the public benefit. But, like it or not, once started the engagements tend to multiply. Enthusiastic membership of one committee leads naturally to another, and then to sub-committees, executive committees, treasurerships and chairmanships, until a large proportion of both night and day is spent voluntarily in the public service. And many private businesses have been bankrupted thereby.

The Beales of Beacon Hill had been bitten by this insidious bug as far back as the thirties, and the virus had spread steadily over the years. No doubt our profits suffered in the short term as a consequence, though the indirect long term benefits were by no means negligible.

My brother-in-law, Norris Kenyon, had long been a prey to this same disease. Indeed his incessant public work later brought him a knighthood and the leadership of the Conservatives in the Greater London Council. His enthusiasm had stimulated us to dip cautiously into local politics ourselves, in support of the Municipal Reform Party, - an earlier euphemism for the Tories.

Ted served as a youthful Islington Borough Councillor for some years before the war, and I too was pushed forward as a reluctant candidate at a bye-election, to be defeated by some forty votes. But Islington was fast swinging left, and for the next twenty years parliamentary and council seats were held 100% by the Labour Party. We opted out of party controversy and stayed strictly neutral thereafter, though to be sure Ted became a sleeping member of the Carlton Club in his later and more prestigious years.

One important benefit remained from our family encounter with the Conservatives. We had each been put forward for a course of public speaking run by a propagandist organisation called the 'Anti-Socialist and Anti-Communist League', and each of us gained in stature from the ordeal. Henceforth we could hold our own in committee, take the chair, and deliver a fair speech if required. Paradoxically, my mother and I, both by nature left of centre in politics, having been encouraged during the course to consider both sides of the argument, emerged rather more left of centre than before. So much for propaganda!

But the course had made my mother confident enough to propose a motion at the Conservative Party Annual Conference, before we decided as a Board to adopt political neutrality. She went on to found and become President of the North London Soroptimists Club, and worked happily for schools and religious bodies.

Ted rose steadily in popularity and importance, eventually exceeding even Archibald Alfred in the numbers of his friends and colleagues. He served in turn, and always with distinction, as Chairman of the Islington Chamber of Commerce, of the Rotary Club, of the National Association of Caterers of Great Britain, and later of the International Caterers as well. He became Deputy Chairman of the British Travel Association, and Chairman of the important East and Central London Magistrates Bench, with some sixty Justices of the Peace under his guidance. In due course he was awarded the C.B.E. for his public work.

Following the earlier John Beale of 1779, both Ted and I duly served our year as Master of the Worshipful Company of Bakers in the City of London. In more work-a-day roles I served on an assortment of bakery trade committees, especially in connection with education and research, and later, on several London social service organisations.

In 1944, with the help of four Home Guard colleagues, I formed a young people's club in Holloway, which we called the Junior Council Club. Its purpose was to groom its members into becoming useful citizens. Public speaking and committee work were prominent in the training programme. It took some time for me to wear off the stain of having been a Municipal Reform candidate earlier, and to be accepted as a politically impartial chairman.

The members produced their own magazine, were hosts for a radio programme, and on one occasion, organised a public meeting during a parliamentary bye-election, attended by over a thousand electors, with all four candidates debating against each other, and myself in the chair. Some club members graduated later to become borough councillors, and more than a dozen marriages took place between members who had met at the J.C.C.

The club has its place in this history in that it met in the top floor flat of No 6 Tollington Road, adding yet another variation to the uses of that all-purpose dwelling house. Running the club for ten long years took more stuffing out of me than any other work I have undertaken.

All these public activities distracted us from the proper management of our business. Certainly we increased the scale of our trading operations considerably at the same time, but, as we realised later, at nothing like the speed of the young tycoons then single-mindedly carving out their empires. In the 1950s we might be thought to be in a fair sized way of business and growing well. But such was the rate of change that we would soon be small fry indeed to the national and international companies that would dominate the scene.

Looking on the credit side, Ted and I became fairly well known in the catering and baking industries, and this was of some advantage in attracting good staff from the provinces. Moreover close contact with the leaders of both industries kept us well up to date with new developments. It enabled me on two occasions to make a grand tour of the larger bakeries of Great Britain, and be welcomed in them by our rivals. Our public work, therefore, though costly to the firm on balance, was not entirely unremunerative. It certainly added to the pleasure of our business life.

The same considerations of cost and recompense apply to the firm's devotion to the needs of the Tax Inspector, who must have regarded us as models of propriety. Jim Hodges had attended the same Sunday School as ourselves, and that honesty was the best policy had been well drummed into us as children. We were too big ever to be tempted to put our hands into the till in order to cheat the Inland Revenue, as was not unknown among smaller business men at this time, but I believe we would not have succumbed to it in any case.

Nevertheless even for such self-righteous citizens there were some tricky problems of tax liability to be argued out. One of these was to decide whether certain expenditure came properly under the heading of repairs and renewals, or whether some element of it was in the nature of improvement, and therefore not allowable as a charge against profit for tax purposes.

After the war, for example, it was evident that each year found the property and plant in better condition. But who could say if it was better than it had been in Grandpa's day. The trays in the bakery might be more in number, likewise the knives and forks in the restaurant. Yet at the same time the equipment of the old store had certainly been scrapped. Had the total of loose plant been maintained or actually increased in value?

Such matters had to be argued out between our strictly orthodox auditors and the Tax Inspector, but each year it worried my puritan little conscience lest some actual improvement had been smuggled in with the repairs and renewals.

Years later, when we sold the Holloway premises for site value and immediate demolition, I realised that the 'improvements', - new doorways and partitions, tiling of walls, and the like, - to a building reaching the end of its life, were largely illusory after all. Likewise the eventual sale of our loose bakery plant by public auction, far from showing a surplus on book values, showed a loss of several thousand pounds. My earlier qualms were thus shown to have been unnecessary.

The bakery trade had traditionally engaged self-employed men to help in emergency, particularly on Fridays for the week-end bread. During the war these jobbers were able to demand ever increasing rates of pay. And not only were they paid more highly than the regulars, but it was obvious to the latter that many of

the jobbers evaded paying income tax as well. Allowed to earn up to £2 in any one week without deduction of tax by the employer, they worked each night of the week for this sum, but for a succession of employers.

Later on the jobbers became bolder, and would work for one employer only, signing their card John Smith on Monday night, George Brown on Tuesday, and so on throughout the week. Later still, when inflation meant that even one night's work required some tax to be deducted, unscrupulous employers would pay out from the till, without deductions and with no awkward records kept.

The same game was played later by part-time waiters and other catering staff, who also found it convenient to be paid out of the till by the management of otherwise reputable establishments. All this we sternly rejected, to our financial loss and the puzzlement of some of our competitors.

The student reader should reflect, however, that our staff, who were necessarily prepared to be honest with the tax man, were de facto likely to be honest with us also, and be more pleasant characters to work with in the bargain.

Though brought up in fear and trembling of the corrupting effect that wealth and power might have on us, Ted and I were unable to restrain our ambitions, and from 1950 on we began to enjoy a fair measure of each, almost despite ourselves. Our good deeds in public could possibly be seen, therefore, as the result of an uneasy conscience and the need to placate the Goddess Fortune.

As I write do-gooders are scoffed at by the young, and shouldered aside by the new professional social service workers. But with all her faults 'Lady Bountiful' and her soup kitchen pioneered the way toward the Welfare State. At any rate she, and we, meant well. The student must decide whether our good intentions merely paved the way to Hell for us, or guaranteed a quicker first-class ticket up to Paradise.

In the five years from 1950 no dividends were paid, but an average of £2000 per annum was ploughed back into group reserves from the profit after tax. It was little enough in our opinion, from sales that rose from £176,000 to £252,000 in the same period. But the money ploughed back was geared up as usual with short term and long term borrowing, and used for expansion in both the Bakery and Catering Divisions. Each year our auditors begged us to quieten down and consolidate, but we continued to stretch our resources to the limit.

In advancing in several directions at the same time we were bound to take some wrong turnings and enter some blind alleys. But none of the ventures proved disastrous and we consoled ourselves that it was all useful experience. Moreover the Government that was so anxious to share our profits was welcome to its share of the losses likewise.

In 1953 a business friend of Ted's introduced us to the Bursar of Harrow School, and we were appointed official caterers to the School for the next three years. I already knew something of the restaurant there, having often been entertained to high tea - always including a Knickerbocker Glory - after playing Eton Fives for the Old Citizens against the School or the Old Harrovians.

We knew that Messrs Fullers and Messrs Forte had catered in turn for the School and had each resigned from the appointment as being flat and unprofitable. We hoped that as a smaller firm we might be able to give more personal service, and succeed where they had failed. We appointed Kenneth Mostyn to supervise the venture.

The restaurant, well equipped with kitchens, was virtually empty throughout the week, unless some special event took place. It had to justify itself as best it could in the overcrowded week-end rush, and that in term time only. The Tuck Shop, including a large self-service snack bar, came alive three or four times a day, with noisy queuing schoolboys jostling for position and always in a hurry.

At week-ends, with the First Eleven playing Winchester at cricket for example, the restaurant would be packed with two or three hundred wealthy parents and their sons, carefully selecting the Liebfraumilch with their Scotch salmon and their strawberries and cream. But when the rain came down in torrents, as it often seemed to do, the match would be cancelled, and, with all our food prepared, we could sit and whistle for a single customer.

Each year we supplied a buffet for 500 persons following the Eton and Harrow match at Lords, and had the pleasure of serving Winston Churchill and other V.I.P.s on Founder's Day. We were allowed to use the fine kitchens and stores as a base for our outdoor catering in the district. But Harrow-on-the-Hill was out on a limb geographically, and its supervision entailed too many time-wasting journeys.

After small losses in the first two years we started to break even in the third, but there was no scope for development. By agreement we ended our contract after two and a half years of wasted effort. With small hope of finding a fourth caterer to try his luck, the school authorities decided to have a go themselves, but with what success I cannot say.

Meantime the ground floor restaurant at Holloway, with its dying race of elderly waitresses, was having its front section made into a self-service 'Coronet Cafe', - a sacrilege to make William the First and William the Second turn over in their graves. In

order to maintain a modicum of dignity we splashed out some £10,000 on the lighting and decor, and on the high quality booths and wall panelling supplied by Messrs Sage.

The table tops were made of the new 'formica' plastic material then coming into use. Under the transparent surface were printed sketches of idyllic outdoor parties being catered for by W.Beale and Co in the previous century. No customer was ever seen to examine these pictures once he had set down his lunch over them, and no one ever commented upon them. But the decor was widely praised and photographs were reproduced in many trade magazines.

The result was a substantial increase in trade. We gave good value, and over a thousand customers queued up past the food and the cash register each day. Our competitors were bound to feel the draught. One morning, from my office window, I rejoiced to see that after so many years of rivalry Jones Brothers had closed down their restaurant.

Catering at the same time for the bank clerks in the middle and rear ground floor restaurants and for the company directors in the Grill Rooms above, we were trying, perhaps unwisely, to be all things to all men. But we wanted to keep our options open and adjust ourselves to the changing times.

It is perhaps noteworthy that after a couple of days or so sitting cheek by jowl with the proletariat in the crowded booths, the Beales themselves ceased to patronise the self-service cafe. So much for my earlier moralisings!

One corner of the cafe was fitted out as the 'Coronet Shop', for the sale of chocolates, sweets, cigarettes, and novelties. Being no longer chocolate makers ourselves, we bought from the high-class firm of Bendick's of Bond Street, and offered a wide selection from the new chromium and formica counters. The 'Coronet' emblem used in the shop and cafe proved attractive. We used it from then on in our notepaper, packaging, and advertising, and on our vans and shop fronts for many years.

From a catering trade conference in Milan, Ted brought back the idea of a moving window for the Coronet Shop. At a cost of £400 a local engineer constructed the mechanism whereby a series of ten-foot shelves emerged from the basement below and rose slowly out of sight before descending and passing behind the following ascending shelves. The operating cycle took two minutes. Following a visit to Hamburg, also for a trade conference, I imported some dainty china figures. With these and a fine selection of Bendick's chocolates we made an attractive display on the revolving shelves. It drew large crowds of window gazers for several weeks.

Unfortunately the window gazers did not come in to buy, and eventually they didn't even stop to look. Moreover the mechanism developed a slight but incurable vibration sufficient to knock the china figures off the shelves. Worse still, history repeating

itself, the sun would come out unexpectedly and melt the large show of chocolates before the blind could be pulled down. Just as the butchers had been slow in coming to the rescue in Arch's time, so now the despatch men in the yard would sometimes be too busy to obey the urgent call for help. Once they had started to melt the chocolates would turn white and be unsaleable.

And so, after months of trouble, the 'Displayveyor' was finally taken out. All was not lost. In our first excitement we had taken out a provisional patent on the idea, and a passer-by offered to buy the patent from us for £300. It was the company's first patent since Grandfather invented his revolting Triagon bread. The Coronet Shop was never profitable. After a year or so it was scrapped to make room for a further extension of the self-service cafe.

The Outdoor Catering Department waxed and waned illogically as always. The famous pair of 'Greys' pulling the pantechnicon had long since given place to motor lorries, but the hard physical work remained. The profit was as unpredictable as ever.

We were now operating from three bases simultaneously. Holloway and Harrow came under Mostyn's supervision as Catering Manager. But the branch shops had several restaurants attached to them and these came under Hodges' wing. At the Wander Inn at Finchley he had taken over a small amount of O.D.C. work in the immediate vicinity. This he proceeded to expand further afield and was soon stepping on Mostyn's territory. The jealousy already existing between them was further aroused by this bad organisation on our part.

On the day of Queen Elizabeth the Second's Coronation we made more profit than on any other day before or since. We charged the then unheard of price of £6 per head for one party alone of 600 persons in the Haymarket, and catered for three other parties in Oxford Street, besides all our local activities. Thankfully we had turned down the chance of catering for 5,000 members of the public with reserved seats in the Mall, for the rain came down in buckets and the caterers fared badly.

Less profitable was the occasion when Hodges catered for an open air demonstration of appreciation by Woodford conservatives to Winston Churchill for his wartime services. A crowd of ten thousand was expected and vast tents were erected for the caterers. Hodges provided light refreshments in abundance, with queuing barriers, cash register stations, buffet tables, and vast quantities of bottled beers and soft drinks.

This time it was not the usual enemy, rain, that ruined everything. At the last moment the great man was rushed off to America for urgent consultations, and the organisers were left to stage Hamlet in the absence of the Prince of Denmark. Two thousand Tories nobly turned up to listen to his substitute. There was not much joy for Beale's in that!

We catered, with much transport difficulty, for the Antique Dealers' Fair at Chelsea Town Hall, but found the dealers and their customers unexpectedly abstemious in their requirements. Several parties at Lambeth Palace, however, given by the Archbishop of Canterbury to overseas dignitaries, were both highly successful and gratifying to Jim Hodges.

But though the O.D.C. was intended to help business in the slack summer season, it often clashed with home-based catering at week-ends, when the group might already be catering for a dozen or more weddings on a Saturday. In addition, the spasmodic orders for thousands of pastries for the O.D.C. from the bakeries tended to upset the proper flow to our own shops.

With some half-hearted revivals, therefore, the O.D.C. was again reduced to negligible proportions. Only for wealthy oil companies opening new offices regardless of cost, and the like, would we tempted out in future.

Summing up, we must admit that several abortive experiments took place during this period, including Harrow School, the Coronet Shop, and the O.D.C. expansion. Ted and I, incidentally, were at a peak of activity in public affairs at the time, and this may well have saved us from embarking on even more foolish experiments.

15 The Machine Age

The number of small and medium bakery businesses declined steadily as the larger groups swallowed up the smaller fry. Large scale mechanisation was transforming the baker's handcraft into a heavily capitalised factory-based industry.

This sad fate had overtaken the biscuit section earlier. Grandfather had turned out two or three hundredweight of biscuits every week, and had sold them loose over the counter. Biscuits were now in the hands of half a dozen manufacturers. Bread and cakes seemed doomed to undergo the same experience. Add to this the menace of supermarkets looming up from across the Atlantic, and the outlook for small and medium bakeries was bleak indeed.

The directors of Beale's could see the writing on the wall, but the conclusion to be drawn from it was not easy to agree. We were midway between the opposing camps, uncomfortable bed-fellows for our smaller allies and the large groups alike.

As a Past President of the London Master Bakers I was now in line for the presidency of the National Association. But as a member also of the London Wholesale and Multiple Bakers' Alliance I had a foot in the larger bakers' camp, and from many points of view our interests lay more with the latter. As tension rose it was necessary to stand up and be counted on one side or the other. As a leader of the small bakers I thought it right to withdraw from the Alliance, to my personal regret and to the company's loss.

For the company itself such a clear cut decision was not so easy. In the general trade recession of 1953 the Bakery Division had gone into the red. The Division had expanded considerably during the war years and after, but the times were now less favourable. It might be prudent to consolidate, prune down, switch to day work only, and remain comparatively small and beautiful.

But circumstances alter cases and this defeatism was soon thrown overboard. Exciting new and medium sized cake machinery was coming on the market, and we were perhaps just big enough to take advantage of it. We pondered mightily and changed our minds more than once on policy. But with so much at stake we might be forgiven for dithering a while and for making at least one false start. We decided to stabilise the bread at its current level of production, and concentrate our resources on mechanising the cakes for which we

were better known, and which had always been more profitable than the bread. A few thousand pounds were accordingly laid out in the purchase of new cake machinery.

In 1955 the policy was changed again. Revolutionary new bread ovens and machines were introduced in Europe. I visited Eindhoven and other towns in Holland to see them working, and returned home full of enthusiasm. I persuaded the Board to authorise the expenditure of £10,000 on a German travelling oven, and by May 1956 Messrs Baker Perkins had installed one of the first 'Turbo Radiant' ovens to be erected in England.

But what with having to strengthen the floor to take the huge weight, and adding new boilers, steam proving rooms, and other refinements, the £10,000 authorised had grown to £25,000. Moreover the 'Turbo Radiant' oven was quickly seen to justify still more expenditure on the further mechanisation of our bread production. 'Bigger and Better' had replaced 'Small is Beautiful' on the programme, almost without us noticing the change.

Beale's bread had traditionally been of poor quality for sixty years or more. Great-Grandfather had been a brick layer, and many of our loaves were more like his bricks than the crisp and crusty yet light-textured products of our competitors.

The battleship-strong thunderous divider, the huge drum mixer, and the coal-fired ovens, had given way to new equipment, but it was still badly designed and faulty. Moreover the staff were not properly trained for what is in fact a highly skilled operation.

Since the war I had served on the Council of the British Baking Industry's Research Association, which was putting trained thought into our old-fashioned handcraft production. Contact with the experience and brain power of the Council members and the technical staff was stimulating to a high degree.

The R.A. technicians helped us considerably in planning the best layout of our new 35-foot oven in the covered yard beside the bread bakery. A better flow of raw materials through the plant was organised, with the finished article emerging closer to the sorting yard and despatch.

Many prospective buyers were brought to our bakery by the makers to see the new monster at its work, for it was triumphantly successful from the start. We were able to return hospitality to some of the bakers I had visited around the country. We gloried in being pioneers for once in a new field of bakery technology.

were sought. Meantime every inch of space had to be used. The basements under the bakeries and yard had to be dried out, cleaned up, and converted for maximum storage space. From the outer yard a new gravity roller conveyor led down to the stores, and down this rolled our raw materials, tons at a time, straight off the lorries.

A flour elevator replaced the hoist, to take up the hundreds of bags of flour used each week. A new heavy duty goods and passenger lift served all floors from basement to loft. Giant boilers were installed to provide steam and hot water. It was more like a busy factory than the comfortable bakery we had known before.

The hygiene of the Bakery Division was brought up to the best current standard, with expensive tiled surfacing of walls and floors, tray washing machinery, floor scrubbing and polishing machines, more frequent changes of overalls for staff, and repeated lectures on good hygiene practice.

One failure has to be recorded in our hygiene campaign. No matter how we cajoled, and even threatened with the sack, we could not persuade our bakers to wear the white hats that the hygiene experts considered essential. And secretly I had much sympathy for the man sweating at the oven mouth who removed his unwanted paper hat as soon as the foreman was out of sight.

Indeed Ron Valentine himself proved the most stubborn of the lot in resisting the hated hats. And bearing in mind how comical he looked when almost physically forced by Hodges to put on his 'dough-boy's' forage cap, I couldn't really blame him. Later on a kind of paper 'Trilby' hat was introduced which proved more acceptable.

As time went on the business split into two largely self-contained empires. But as the two halves see-sawed up and down alarmingly in profitability we felt the diversification prudent, even though the scope of each division was limited by the existence of the other.

Ted and Mostyn managed the Catering Division. Hodges and I looked after the bakeries, rounds, and shops. Only in the board-room did we jointly discuss policy and authorise major expenditure. If, therefore, I seem to place the spotlight unfairly on the bakers, it is from ignorance of the day-to-day doings of the equally worthy caterers. Eventually we reached the stage when Ted was unknown to many of my staff, and I would be unrecognised in his, sometimes to our embarrassment.

For the next few years, with Ted up to his eyes in public work, the Bakery Division was to make all the running. It increased its share of the business to two thirds of the sales, profits, capital investment, and staff employed. Its development was shared with Jim Hodges in a partnership that I enjoyed with him for nearly thirty years.

There was a flavour of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza in this partnership, for I was lean and lugubrious, and every so often had bouts of unworldly idealism, while Hodges was of ample proportions and remained steadfastly earthbound.

Hodges, like Sancho Panza, possessed an inexhaustible stock of old folk sayings, not always immediately to the point, but often uproariously funny. He was a compulsive talker and a confirmed retailer of gossip. I was the strong silent partner, glued to my desk, analysing and re-analysing past results in endless detail.

Into my office every morning came Jim Hodges, bursting with all the latest news and tittle-tattle of the firm. Most of this was of no consequence at all, but some was of value in keeping me au fait with current happenings 'below stairs'. Half an hour would slip by, not unentertainingly, before his report was finished or I cut short the torrent of news.

Much of my knowledge of events came secondhand in this fashion from Jim Hodges. Unfortunately it was coloured by his own particular prejudices at the time. Current favourites among the staff would be credited with herculean efforts on our behalf, while those fallen from grace would be blamed almost for the weather. So well did I know him, however, that I could discount the colouring to accord pretty well with the actual situation.

When Hodges had personally conducted an outdoor catering job he would report the client as having been delighted and astonished beyond all measure at the excellent service and food provided. If the client had merely been 'very pleased' then I knew that the event must have been a complete disaster. In reporting any function conducted by his rival, Kenneth Mostyn, Hodges' hyperbole would be reversed.

Jim's faults were, however, all on the surface. He was unwaveringly loyal to the family. To his credit it must be recorded that he was an enthusiast, an optimist, and an exceedingly hard worker. He had practically no life outside of Beale's. He went home only to sleep, and would rise at the crack of dawn to get back to work as soon as possible, putting my own lethargy to shame. I tried to persuade myself that perhaps my grey matter worked harder than his by way of contrast, but even that is debatable.

Hodges would use my name quite improperly at times, informing some obscure worker of whose existence I was quite unaware, that Mr John had said how pleased he was that some action had been carried out so well. In truth it was no more than I should have said to the man myself.

In retrospect I see something comic about the way in which we conducted our affairs. Together we would draw up plans for the division. Hodges would send out pages of elaborate instructions, with warnings that all was to be obeyed to the letter. Alas, when an emergency arose, in his anxiety to get the production out, he would often be the first to disobey his own instructions.

One of our headaches was to ensure that underweight bread detected in the shops was sent back to the bakery to be scrapped. On occasion perhaps nearly all of a batch would arrive at a branch shortweight by perhaps a mere sixteenth of an ounce. The manageress would have strict instructions to return the lot, but would be sorely tempted to take a chance with one or two in order not to disappoint her customers.

In the very face of his own written warnings pinned up on the wall, Jim Hodges would sometimes aid and abet such irregularities, provided that I was not likely to appear on the war-path. Inevitably the manageresses were confused. Some naturally assumed that our instructions were meant to be taken with a grain of salt.

If I found out I would admonish my fellow director severely, and he would acknowledge his manifold sins and wickednesses most humbly, with genuine tears coming to his eyes. But one month later he would be up to his old tricks again, unable to bear the thought of waste.

Kenneth Mostyn left us in 1956 to set up in business on his own. Temperamentally he wanted more independence in his department than we were prepared to give, and considered our occasional interference in it as unjustified. But that, after all, is what family control is all about, and I have no doubt that in his own successful business later he kept his finger on its management as tightly as we did on ours. In his place we appointed a keen young accountant to be Catering Manager under Ted's guidance. This gamble proved highly successful, for Tony McCarthy took easily to the new life and became a director in due course.

Two other capable young men had been appointed earlier, David Brookes as Company Secretary in place of Mrs East who had retired, and Tony Fry as Company Accountant. Both were ex-public schoolboys, honest, hard-working, and intelligent. Top management was younger and forward looking as a result.

The Beale brothers were becoming wealthier, - at any rate in their ownership of this now progressive company. Thus they were vulnerable to estate duties should they die, but without the liquid resources needed to pay them. This was dangerous. My answer to the problem was to give more of my own shares away.

I had transferred 2,500 shares to my daughter earlier, and I was reluctant to add more. The reader will remember my aversion to women in fur coats, and I had no desire to see Susan dressed in one. Moreover I believed that wealth often brought more unhappiness than it was worth, - though I had difficulty in persuading Valerie that this could possibly be so. Susan was too young to be bothered either way.

There was also the never-mentioned fact that my shares, should they ever be combined with those of my sister, could at some future time outvote Ted's family, and could be sold as a majority holding with control of the business. This could place an invidious responsibility on Susan in the future.

I therefore announced the gift of enough shares to David Brookes, Tony McCarthy, and on trust to Jim Hodges' three children, to divest my family from any such possibility. There would be no more law suits and family quarrels if I could help it. Perhaps I was suffering from an attack of idealism at the time, but I have never had the slightest occasion to regret it since.

At other times I worried over the extent to which our profits came from the sale of alcohol, - the product of the devil himself according to my mother and my sister. So concerned was I when drunkenness was reported among young people at staff parties and the like, that I thought almost to divest myself of all my shares and give up the business entirely.

Such thoughts were swept under the carpet on consideration of the growing domination of the business by the Bakery Division, with which I could identify without qualm. But paradoxically, with Ted's appointment to the licensing bench, I had to become the licensee at Holloway, and eventually of three other establishments as well.

Few could have lived more plainly than the Beales of Friars Walk. Neither Valerie nor I cared in the least for drink or tobacco, nor were we much interested in food. A poached egg on toast and an apple, followed by a cup of Nescafe, provided all the evening meal that we required. Duty bound to sample the luxurious fare provided for our customers, I shirked the task shamefully.

Bearing in mind also my pronounced lack of sociability, could anyone have been more unsuited to be a licensed caterer? Fortunately for the firm I had nothing to do with the running of the Catering Division.

As one of the big-wigs of the newly formed National Joint Apprenticeship Council, I dutifully encouraged several of our young boys to be apprenticed to me as an allegedly qualified master baker. There was a noticeable lack of enthusiasm to do so, though few bakeries could have offered training in the production of so wide a range of bread and cakes.

The idea of being bound to one master, for four years of their lives, must have appeared as yet another fiendish capitalistic trick to exploit the young and innocent more than was usually possible. Moreover they dreaded going back to 'school' at a technical college for one day a week. But after a certain amount of bullying the indentures were duly signed and entered into.

The fiendish trick seems to have miscarried, for the apprentices proved more troublesome than all the other bakers put together, largely due to my bad management. It was the old story of Joseph being more favoured than his brothers, for the apprentices undoubtedly were spoiled. They were far less likely to be left doing the routine dirty jobs such as the cleaning of trays and the greasing of tins. The other boys, not literate enough to be accepted by the colleges, felt less privileged, and became jealous of the apprentices whose progress was watched and recorded more closely by Hodges and myself.

Nor were the apprentices any more popular with the foremen, who disliked losing their staff to attend day classes just when they were needed most. Moreover the apprenticeship period of four years was too long in my opinion, and the teaching in the colleges too academic. The boys just weren't interested in the molecular structure of the wheat germ, and who can blame them?

The apprentices were interviewed regularly by me, and copious records of their progress made for the benefit of the Council. At the end of it all, within months of finishing his training and leaving to join another baker, I found one of them serving petrol at a local garage. Another was reported to have become a bookmaker's clerk, and a third to have left his father's bakery to become a farmer. Perhaps knowledge of the structure of the wheat germ may have been of use to him on his farm.

The catering colleges at Westminster, Hendon, and later at Southgate, were more practical and less academic, and the length of service shorter. As a result our catering apprentices proved more worthwhile, and stayed with us longer after completing their training.

We were often asked to allow parties of school leavers to see the bakeries in action, and there was usually enough activity going on to create mild interest. There was more appreciation, however, for the tea party, with chocolate eclairs and cream buns, which we provided later. We gave each visitor a booklet on the baking industry as a career, but the response to this effort at recruitment was minimal, - there were easier and more remunerative jobs in plenty elsewhere for them to choose.

In 1955, as an enthusiastic Chairman of the National Board of Bakery Education, I spent much time speaking at regional conferences and opening new bakery schools around the country. I was asked to introduce, at some length, a radio broadcast to schools on the prospects of employment in the baking industry.

This I did, taking down three of our boys and one girl to take part in giving a rather wooden account of the pleasures of being a baker. I was subsequently disgusted to hear my own syrupy patronising voice and the soft-soap description of our business. I received ten guineas for this nauseating performance.

Two years later the B.B.C. Schools Television Unit made a recording in our Holloway bakeries for the 'World at Work' series. An entire day's production was thrown into chaos by the camera crew, the lighting technicians, the script girl, the director and her assistants, and all their massive equipment. The powerful lights added to the heat of the bakery and spoilt the bread, cables were strewn around and tripped over, and the camera men, most unhygienically, stood on the moulding tables to get better shots of the work in progress. I was never more exhausted than at the end of that long day. I have never envied a T.V. producer since.

In my previous radio broadcast I had been named and referred to as a director of a well known North London firm of bakers. There was some advertising value in this. But the T.V. producer banned any possibility of advertising, and my name was kept out of the programme lest it should be associated with the firm of Beale's. To add insult to injury the producer ticked me off sharply in front of my own staff for taking a flashlight photo of the proceedings, - thereby upsetting the T.V. film exposure.

As part of the same programme Hodges' daughter Mary, a competent and photogenic young lady then working for us, was asked to visit the Lime Grove studios and be televised expertly icing a birthday cake. She and I were taken later to see an excellent large screen showing of the whole production.

Bearing in mind the emphasis throughout the script on the importance of hygiene, it was hard indeed when a close-up shot of Mary's hands decorating her cake revealed also a close-up of a huge blow-fly settling down comfortably in the middle of the sugar icing. Such flies were permanent residents in the studios at the time, attracted by the warmth of the intense lighting. This blow-fly largely stole the show later as far as my friends in the trade were concerned

A further disappointment for me came on the day of the broadcast. A large television set was installed specially in the Reception Room at Holloway, and the bakery staff invited to finish work early and watch themselves on T.V. Alas, it was in the early days of television, and local interference rendered the black and white picture almost unrecognisable. The interference came from

the electric motors in the vicinity, and especially from the trolley buses passing the junction points outside the building in Holloway Road.

It was heart-breaking, especially after having seen the perfect large-screen showing at Lime Grove. From the blurred and flickering image it was quite impossible to recognise those taking part, - not even the blow-fly! This was my one and only encounter with television. Though disillusioned, I regarded myself as something of an expert on it from then on.

I was not such an expert as Ted, however, who broadcast frequently on his travels abroad as President of the International Caterers Association. By virtue of his own strong personality Ted was now moving in influential circles far removed from the affairs of Beale's of Holloway. But voluntary service in such exalted spheres, however rewarding, carries with it a load of responsibility and worry on its back.

On one occasion he was due to preside over an important conference at the Pallavicini Palace in Vienna, in the presence of Ministers of State, the Lord Mayor, and the assembled delegates of catering organisations from all over the world. Kept busy in his suite at the famous Sacher Hotel until well after midnight on the eve of the conference, he asked to be woken early by the hotel receptionist, to avoid any chance of oversleeping.

Alas, next morning he was indeed awakened by telephone, not by the receptionist, but by his good friend Julian Salmon, Managing Director of J. Lyons and Co, who shattered his slumbers with the words 'Ted, we're all waiting for you in the conference hall'! Imagine if you can the panic-stricken putting on of clothes, the half completed shave, the desperate search for a taxi, and the headlong rush across the pavement to the entrance doors.

Fortunately the wise and experienced Julian Salmon was there at the entrance to stop any breathless rush up the grand staircase and an outburst of apologies. Instead Ted was persuaded to calm down, get his breath back, ascend the stairs slowly, and enter the conference hall with measured steps and solemn dignity. Evidently he had been detained by urgent and even more important business elsewhere, and was received with applause by the assembled company.

It was not Ted that collapsed under the burden of public duties. In 1955, under a lighter load of responsibilities than he carried without difficulty, I suffered a short nervous breakdown.

Like my father I had always been intolerant of other people's illness and spartan in dealing with my own. Hodges, who worked himself into a migraine frequently on our behalf, received no sympathy from me. Since leaving school I had not had one day's

illness away from work, though I had sometimes stubbornly crawled into the office in no state to be of any use. I disliked discussing illness and was largely ignorant on such matters. What went on in hospitals was a closed book to me. A little humbling of my pride, therefore, would not come amiss.

But despite the suggestions of perforated ulcers and the like, there appeared to be nothing really wrong with me. Within three or four days I was back at work again, disgusted with myself at such an exhibition of weakness, but warned by my doctor to take things more easily in future.

Obediently I resigned from the National Association of Master Bakers, the National Board of Bakery Education, the Joint Apprenticeship Council, the Junior Council Club, the Islington Youth Committee, the Caxton House Settlement Council, and all their many subcommittees. It was no great hardship to me. For the time being I was weary of it all. And perhaps the business would benefit.

Ted's health remained good, though a husky throat persuaded him at last to give up smoking. But we were now getting on in years. I remained something of a sick man for a few years and was forced to live even more plainly than before. Two stomach operations eventually cured me of my weakness, and perhaps made me a little more sympathetic to other people's troubles. I could discuss what went on in hospitals with anyone.

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16 Fourth Generation

In August 1956 my father died peacefully at Margate in his ninetieth year. In December 1958 Ted's son, Trevor Howard, entered the business at the age of twenty-four. With the arrival of the fourth generation we can see how the Beales have climbed in the world in the last one hundred years. William the First's brief introduction to the three Rs at the village school at Buntingford has become Trevor's expensive and lengthy education at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge.

We see Trevor, at the start of his business career, elegantly slim and youthful looking. His friendships extend to the wider world of the Diplomatic Corps, the Bar, the Civil Service, the Royal Choral Society, and the Church. How will he fit into the rough and tumble world of Beale's of Holloway?

Accustomed to good living and the services of the hotel staff at West Lodge Park, he is nevertheless by no means spoilt. He has accommodated himself easily to two years' conscription in the Army, and taken a commission in the Army Catering Corps. He has dutifully tucked in a six-month hotel management course in Switzerland to please his father. A snapshot shows him posing unselfconsciously in his white chef's hat and overalls, looking more like a young man at a fancy dress ball than a potential restaurateur.

He is academically very bright, and has won an open major scholarship to Trinity, benefitting his father not one penny, since the parental income failed to pass the necessary means test. Taking honours in Law and Modern Languages, he has subsequently passed his Bar Exams with equal ease to qualify as a Barrister-at-Law. Unquestionably he would make a first-class advocate, - clear thinking, decisive, and articulate.

Like his father, Trevor is sociable and popular. He soon learns the names and family backgrounds of the staff, visits them when they fall sick, and enjoys himself at staff social functions. At the same time he is able to reprimand them sharply for their misdeeds, and expects his requests to be carried out promptly and to the letter. He commands service from the world with the effortless superiority of the upper-class English public schoolboy, - perhaps one of the last to do so in an increasingly egalitarian world.

His judgement will suffer for a while from never having had much contact with the seamy side of life. He is not a figure man. He will never pore over balance sheets with the dedication of his Uncle Jack, - as he continues to call me. The little world of Beale's watches with interest to see how the new young governor shapes up. Its future will depend on his ability.

It was thought best for him to break the ice under me in the Bakery Division. But it cannot have been easy to turn suddenly from his law books to the pettifogging activities of a suburban bakery. Even less practical than me, if that were possible, he could have little feel for the practical niceties of the work involved. But he was certainly prepared to try.

It was soon obvious, however, that it was useless for him to attempt to master the technical know-how of all sides of our complicated business. Trevor's success in the future would have to come from the ability to hire and fire, and control the technicians, accountants, and managers required. It had taken the third generation twenty-five years to pass their finals in the art of making money. Would Trevor take as long to graduate?

His arrival found the business smouldering with suppressed activity, with far more smoke than flame emerging, - if by flame we mean profit from all our efforts. Within a year or so the flames had broken through. Trevor would not claim credit for the fact, any more than I would for the thirteen years of losses following my own arrival on the scene in 1925. It must have been a coincidence, surely, in each case?

Shortly before Trevor joined us we took in another bright young public schoolboy in the person of Anthony Saint, nephew of our old friend and advisor Tom. Anthony was practical, interested more in catering and baking than in the legal profession of his father and uncle. It was hoped that he would prove a foil to Trevor and become a director in due course. Together with Brookes, McCarthy, Fry, and others, we could well be envied by our competitors for having such an excellent young team in training, - ready to take over in a few years time.

For the Bakery Division all was optimism, with the young team bursting with energy and straining at the leash. Fearful of being labelled 'fuddy-duddies', Hodges and I vied with the youngsters in the boldness of our plans. We expanded simultaneously in our own shops, our main agents, and the wholesale trade.

We increased the number of our own shops to twelve, and changed them frequently for busier sites. One shop we bought and

sold at a capital profit of £1,000 within a year, having found the site too quiet. Most of the shops had flats above and disused bakeries at the rear. We kept our solicitors constantly busy with the legal work involved.

Our branches covered a thin wedge of North London from Kings Cross to Potters Bar. Our main agents were more widely spread. We expected our main agents, mostly general stores, to carry a full range of our cakes and bread. To this end we supplied them with window shelves and showcases, as well as with our printed bags and cartons. We insisted on some measure of control by our supervisors. Main agents were generally profitable, but bad debts soured the operation on occasion.

Our larger customers included several hospitals within our area, with bread contracted for at ruinously cut rates. In addition, using our retarding chamber to the full, we supplied morning goods to the eight shops of our friends R.E.Simmons of Hatfield, and to the Wonderloaf Company of Wood Green, for distribution by their roundsmen.

Quite separate were the three or four hundred corner shops and dairies served perhaps twice a week by our Wholesale Department, - if the supply of two dozen cartons of jam tarts to one customer can be described as wholesale business. Here we relied upon freshness and quality to compete with J Lyons and the other national suppliers.

Our packaging, designed for us by Lonsdale Hands, was as attractive as that of any of our rivals. The same motif-a coronet surmounting the word 'Beale's' in a lozenge shaped surround, in dark blue, cream, and silver - was used on our vans and in all advertising at this time.

The earlier electric sign on the Holloway frontage, which wrote and rewrote the word 'Beale's' endlessly in coloured lights, had done so in the script handwriting used as our nameplate since Grandfather's time. In 1957 we replaced it with a powerful new neon sign in severe capital letters, slightly flattened in keeping with the coronet motif.

This neon lettering sat uneasily on the building, between the Victorian head and shoulders and the more trendy lower parts. The shape of the building was becoming noticeably old-fashioned. But we were busy elsewhere and for the time being it would have to serve.

The five years from January 1959 were years of major growth for both sides of the business. At the end of them Beale's of Holloway had reached the all-time peak of its majesty and power. The name was being carried further than at any time since Grandfather's coloured leaflets were sent out with the Strand Magazine in 1902.

Our gaily painted vans were seen everywhere. Friends told of buying our iced fancies from the general shop of some remote village deep in Hertfordshire or Essex. Chance acquaintances met on holiday would ask 'anything to do with Beale's of Holloway?', and then tell how they had attended a wedding or dinner catered for by us. Sometimes they would add how they had waited twenty minutes for the second course, or that the waiter had been rude, under the impression that I would want to know. I never did!

In the busy season we had over five hundred staff on the payroll. How many thousands of other people had contact with us one way or another, - diners and dancers, restaurant customers and self-service queuers, and the daily shop customers, all linked intriguingly with the House of Beale?

All this ministered comfortingly to family pride. But we were now moving from the little pond where we had been the biggest fish into a much larger pond where we would be the smallest. In the Bakery Division we started using big-business jargon quite unsuited to our actual size.

Typical of this blown-up impression of importance was the Bakery Committee which met weekly in the boardroom. I would take the chair at the elaborately staged meetings, attended by Hodges, Trevor, Saint, and Brookes, together with Messrs Symes (Sales Manager), Cox (Despatch Manager), Valentine (Bread Foreman), Kemish (Cake Foreman), and Gladys Seago, who supervised the shops. All would be assembled by Hodges to await my grand arrival, upon which he would rise with old world courtesy and the rest would sheepishly follow suit.

On the wall was a large map of North London, thickly decorated with pins and flags indicating our shops and agents. On the table would be scale plans of the bakeries and yards, with cut-out models of machinery and vans. We discussed rebuilding the Tollington Road houses as an enlarged and fully mechanised cake bakery. If we did nothing else we created an impression of alertness and efficiency.

We went through all the motions. I attended a residential course at Roffey Park on the new 'work simplification' technique for streamlining production. Trevor and Anthony attended technical classes and learned all about the structure of the wheat germ. We spent weeks producing detailed costings of bakery products, each item being charged with its appropriate overheads and wages, and all worked out to three decimal points. I doubt if the costings ever paid for their own considerable cost.

I toured the country once again, visiting large bakeries, prepared a thick volume of notes on my return, and addressed several meetings of London bakers on the latest methods of production. I visited a number of European cities for bakery exhibitions. Trevor became the first 'Exchange Student' to visit America under the auspices of the Bakery Engineers of America. All in all we were the very model of a modern management team.

Bread production grew steadily and profitably. Soon the T.R. oven could not cope with the demand. Another moving-sole oven was installed to relieve the pressure of the morning rush. A new roll machine turned out thousands of rolls and buns every hour, and the two ovens baked them to perfection. No more wholesale customers could be accepted, for the ground floor bakery was working to capacity.

Now it was the cake bakery's turn to spend. Depositors and dough brakes, vacuum whisks, tart machines and fillers, automatic doughnut fryers, and conveyor-belt working tables were installed. Turnover rose impressively, but not the profit we had expected from it. This was no doubt due to teething troubles. Mechanisation had solved the problem of bread profitability, given time it would do the same for cakes.

To gain space at Holloway the cake decorating department was moved to a disused bakery behind our shop in Fortess Road. It was soon too small. We then purchased for £20,000 an existing bakery in Barnsbury Grove, a mile from Holloway, with ancillary preparation rooms and a good sized van yard of its own. Here we set out to develop the wholesale cake department. Certainly we pushed it up to record levels, but with a disproportionate amount of management and capital employed.

The expansion of the business in the 1960s, including that of the Catering Division which we shall examine later, entailed the purchase of large blocks of property, together with machinery, equipment, vans, and stock. It was mostly paid for with other people's money, without us forfeiting in any way the family's control. Fortune was smiling on the Beales of Beacon Hill at last, and for the first time in our long business lives money was not unreasonably hard to find.

We ourselves were adding £10,000 a year to reserves from trading profits. We also made £8,000 capital profit from the purchase and sale of branches, - each transaction incidentally adding to our property-dealing expertise.

Revaluation of our older properties threw up a further £30,000 surplus on the previous figures. With this backing we could borrow another £20,000 on mortgage, buy more freeholds, and raise still further loans on them. Topped up with trading profits it seemed the process could be stretched out to infinity. Seeing us thus prosperous our bankers upped our overdraft facilities as well, Barclays to £65,000 and Martins to £10,000 each on the two smaller companies.

To some extent we were borrowing short and investing long, a well known recipe for disaster. But inflation was increasing and we guessed that while the property that we bought would appreciate, the value of the money borrowed would be less when the time came for it to be repaid.

Our theory proved correct and we gained accordingly. The student should note, however, that many property companies and finance houses were bankrupted by adopting this same policy in the 1970s, when property values slumped by more than a half even in a time of inflation. With the properties themselves unlet, the borrowers were unable to pay the high rates of interest on the short term loans they had incurred. We had been lucky.

It is time to turn our attention back to the Catering Division. As an Islington Borough Councillor in the 1930s, Ted had associated with Sir William Manchester, a director of the Express Dairy Company. An odd offshoot of the Express Group was the banqueting business conducted at Firs Hall in Winchmore Hill, some eight miles north of Holloway.

This was known to us as a rather run-down and not over-busy rival to our own banqueting rooms. Ted had light-heartedly offered to relieve them of their burden, and the Chairman of the Express, Mr Nell, promised to offer us first choice if ever they should want to sell it.

A quarter of a century later, as the only licensed establishment in the Express Group, Firs Hall was found administratively difficult for them to run. In September 1960 we were offered the freehold licensed premises, complete with a large car park, for the sum of £35,000. We were well experienced by now in summing up just such a proposition.

My detailed estimates, based on the worst rather than the best that could be expected, proved highly favourable. After a brief haggle, all on the most gentlemanly basis, our counter offer of £31,000 was accepted, - for the freehold, the goodwill, and a considerable amount of plant. The deal was small beer to the Express, and it suited them to effect the sale quickly and with a minimum of publicity.

Our well-tried borrowing technique went into action once again. Barclays Bank was bludgeoned into supplying the necessary bridging loan, while we scraped around to borrow the last penny on the security of our freehold properties, including Holloway. Our much maligned white elephant in Holloway Road was in fact becoming the chief sponsor of our expanding empire.

There was little surplus with which to put in hand the badly needed improvements. As President of the London Master Bakers I had attended a poorly cooked banquet at Firs Hall soon after the war, when the bare brick walls were still covered with cheap hessian. Not much improvement had taken place since then.

Firs Hall, however, was a freehold licensed property on its own island site, able to seat up to 250 persons at a banquet, and with its own car park adjacent. Moreover the surrounding district was of good class residential character well suited to our traditional business. For the Catering Division Firs Hall was just what the doctor might have ordered.

Under Tony McCarthy's enthusiastic management Firs Hall proved successful from the start. It soon justified the building of new kitchens, cloakrooms, and reception room, and within a few years made enough profit to pay off its own cost entirely.

At Holloway the banqueting department and restaurants were working pretty well to capacity, with up to a dozen wedding parties queuing up on a Saturday to be received in the various reception rooms. Indeed the whole Holloway beehive was buzzing with more activity than in all its history.

The Catering Division was catching up fast with the Bakery Division, and was soon passing it in profit. We searched actively for new hotels and banqueting suites over a wide area. Many and varied were the properties inspected and evaluated by the Board. Something of value was learned from each investigation.

At West Lodge Park, Firs Hall, and another hotel to be bought four years later, we would have three large properties each comparable in size with Holloway itself. Together with Barnsbury Bakery and the branch shops and cafes, they necessitated a larger works department. An experienced manager was engaged to administer the increased staff.

Our growing size brought with it a tendency towards bureaucracy. Clerical staff multiplied. Personal secretaries were two a penny, not only for directors but for managers as well. Office machinery proliferated and turned out vast quantities of paper.

A training officer was appointed, largely paid for by the Government, to look after the younger members of the staff. Long reports of their progress and behaviour were posted off to senior group training officers for forwarding to even more important bureaucrats in some Whitehall department now forgotten.

Elaborate hygiene inspections were carried out by head office personnel, with typed memoranda issued in triplicate concerning every irregularity. A news sheet of company and staff activities was published. Long conferences took place with advertising agents producing coloured brochures, and much ingenuity was exerted in extracting the maximum publicity in the press for all our doings.

Profits rose steadily from £13,000 before tax in 1960 to £30,000 in 1963. Our pomp and circumstance rose proportionately. Company cars became more dignified and more expensive. Our desks grew in size. Our offices were panelled and furnished lavishly by Heal's. After a lifetime of thin rewards Ted and I, or Trevor for us, had finally stumbled on the secret of Aladdin's cave.

The resident proprietor of a hotel is never free from its twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, endless activity. He sits uneasily at his reserved seat in the dining-room, watching for all the things that inevitably go wrong in a public restaurant. He cannot wear comfortable old clothes in his leisure hours like the rest of us. His business is literally on top of him all the time. I would not have changed places with Ted for all the tea in China.

There had been other reasons for allowing West Lodge Park to lie fallow for a while. With our available resources required elsewhere we were loth to spend too freely on a leasehold property with only ten more years to run in 1956.

Unexpectedly, in return for an increase in rent, we secured an extension of our lease, giving us thirty-one years in all to run. Now it was worth while to push ahead. Henceforth peace and quiet would have to take second place. The Garden of Eden was to be shared with the outside world, and the residents must like it or lump it accordingly.

In the early days we could not afford to upset any of the close-knit band of residents, who were well aware of their power and could make us dance unhappily to their tune. There was no drink licence and this limited the demand for accommodation. Not that the residents were tee-totallers, - they dispensed their hospitality in their own suites with drink delivered from the local off-licence. There was no profit for the Beales in that!

The residents were well-heeled members of society, mostly retired, with a fair sprinkling of titles among them. They were accustomed to having their own way and were able to express themselves forcefully in seeing that they got it. My mother and I disapproved of them, and their fur coats, on principle.

Ted understood them better and was not long in gaining their respect. Under his watchful eye the hotel standards were continually improved, in bedroom, lounge, and dining-room alike. New private bathrooms were added one by one, unfortunately reducing the number of bedrooms in the process. As our strength increased we were less inclined to be pushed around by the truculent old permanent residents, who acted much as if they owned the place.

They would bribe our porters to run errands for them, and, in our time, to clean their cars. They discouraged visitors by rudely claiming all the chairs around the log fires in the lounges, loudly grumbling about the draught, closing the windows in the height of summer, and other pleasantries. At Christmas they could scarce unbend to don a paper hat, and the entertainers engaged to put on a show would find the audience cold and unenthusiastic, despite the Beale family roped in unwillingly to provide a claque.

One amusing incident helped to bring matters to a head. A re-arrangement of the tables in the dining-room was put in hand, to the indignation of one determined old lady who had had her

accustomed spot for many years and was not going to see it altered. She personally lugged the table back to its old place, sat down, and defied the world to come and take it from her. It was worthy of the spirit of Dunkirk, but we were not amused.

The Beales were by now ready to do battle with them all. We announced 'regretfully' that it would be necessary to close the hotel completely for an indefinite period in twelve weeks' time. We explained that we had obtained approval for a drink licence, restricted to residents and chance visitors taking a 'substantial meal' in the restaurant. During the closure we would erect a new bar in one of the lounges, create new bathrooms, and install central heating throughout the ground floor.

Furthermore, and here came the real sting, when the hotel reopened no more permanent bookings could be accepted. Lettings in future would be restricted to two weeks only, save for overseas visitors on leave in this country for a month or so.

Despite the diplomatic language it was as insulting as the letter from Dr Johnson to the Earl of Chesterfield. The patronage of the permanents was no longer sought.

There is no fury like that of a woman scorned, but it is closely followed by that of a permanent resident similarly treated. The place was in an uproar. They suspected, rightly, that the size of the alterations had been exaggerated, that the whole thing was an excuse to get them out. They could scarce contain their rage.

It was scandalous treatment after all their loyalty throughout the years. Had they known this was how they would be treated, they would never have paid the extortionate charges we had been only too glad to accept all this time. Had they not thought of Mr Edward as their friend as well as host? Was it not monstrous turning out frail and innocent old people who had thought to end their days in the peace and quiet of West Lodge Park?

But the Beales stood firm, and the furious complaints gave way to pitiful appeals. The alliance crumbled quickly, it was now each one for himself. Could not an exception perhaps be made for Lady X, or ('strictly between ourselves') Commander Y? But no exceptions could be made, and the unhappy exodus from Paradise began.

For twelve long weeks Ted suffered sour reproachful looks across the dining-room. But at last it was all over and we closed our doors thankfully on the appointed day. Thenceforth the new policy was strictly kept.

The cost was extremely heavy, but the gamble proved a great success. The atmosphere changed overnight. It was as if we had opened up thick shutters and suddenly let in the sunlight. Short-stay visitors could now be welcomed and made to feel at home. Sales doubled within two years and went on rising. A profit of £5,600 was recorded for the hotel company for the year to March 1960, and our first dividend in fifteen years was paid.

The closure had been a hard decision for the normally soft hearted Beales to take. Had the residents been poor as well as old we could hardly in decency have turned them out at all. But they were far from poor and it was not hard for them to find accommodation elsewhere, - some of them at Oatlands Park, a similar country house hotel in Weybridge. Thereafter we ourselves were as popular with them as the serpent must have been with Adam and Eve in a similar set of circumstances.

With Firs Hall and West Lodge Park now trading profitably, and with other large propositions being offered for our consideration, we thought again of placing some of our shares on the London Stock Exchange. At least one merchant bank was prepared to back us in the venture. With Grandfather twitching nervously in his mausoleum up in Islington Cemetery, we agreed January 1962 as the best date for the placing.

But Mr Mortleman, Senior Partner of Edward Moore and Sons, advised delay, - for two or three more years of steadily increasing profits. We must not risk making a bad 'bow' to the City, as Grandfather had done. With some regret we accepted that Mortleman's advice was sound, and agreed to postpone the placing for a further year or two of better profits. By a coincidence, in the very month that had been tentatively fixed for the placing I was on my back in hospital.

Almost simultaneously the Stock Exchange became more demanding as to the minimum profits needed to justify a placing, and the new target was set well beyond our reach. Our local pomp and circumstance would not be sufficient to impress the City. We ourselves became less enamoured of the Stock Exchange. We decided it would not make a desirable partner even if it should change its mind. Sour grapes may have had something to do with this decision.

We had been tempted once again by the bright lights of Vanity Fair, and were again made to feel foolish in retrospect. But this time we had kept the negotiations private and there was no press castigation for our presumption.

17 The Turn of the Tide

In May 1962 Trevor married Susan Brierley and set up home in Hampstead. On my return to work in June, he switched for two days a week to the Catering Division. The third generation would not last for ever, and he must make acquaintance with the other half of the business without delay.

The easy life that I looked forward to on my return did not last long. I was soon drawn back into active management. For our modest expansion had not been sufficient to satisfy the ambitious young team of managers we had collected earlier, and it was starting to break up. Saint, Brookes, and Fry left us for better jobs in bigger firms, and it was not easy to replace them.

Moreover in July 1963, seeing me in reasonably good health, Trevor switched to the Catering Division entirely. Hodges and I would have to hold the fort as best we could until Trevor could return in a few years' time to enable us to retire. As it turned out the Bakery Division had in fact just about reached the high-water mark of its majesty and power. By December the tide would be seen to be on the turn.

Cakes had made profits, bread made losses, - that had been traditional at Holloway. With mechanisation all this was reversed. The bread sold itself easily and made large profits. The cakes, now elaborately packaged, had to be thrust down the reluctant public's throat almost by brute force.

With our new machinery we could flood the whole of North London with jam tarts, six to a carton and overwrapped in film. So could a score of other wholesalers. But there was a limit to the jam tarts that North London could consume. The time came when North London could no longer look a jam tart in the face, nor a Swiss roll, nor any other of the limited range of cakes lending themselves to mass production.

Grandfather's attempt to sell cakes by parcel post should have proved conclusively that cold cakes don't sell like hot ones. Why then did we ignore the lesson to be learned from his experience? We ignored it because we believed that the times had changed. Customers could not now be bothered to make another journey to the family baker once they had loaded up their baskets at the supermarket.

It was easier to pick up a carton from the supermarket shelves, even if the cakes inside were often disappointing in quality and freshness.

Moreover the range of lines that could be tackled by machinery was widening out from the jam tart-swiss roll limitation, and from my travels round the country I could see that with all their faults the cake factories were beginning to outgun the smallers bakers.

We too had spent our money on machinery and it now had to justify itself. Our new policy was to combine the quality of the craftsman with the low production cost of the conveyor belt. We would concentrate on a select group of small and medium outlets, and rely on quality and freshness to beat the national suppliers.

To begin with we were not unsuccessful. Up to two hundred trays of assorted tarts (36 to a tray) would be stamped out in the cake bakery, taken down in the goods lift, and put through the T.R. oven in the afternoon, after the bread bakers had departed. Superficially it looked impressive and efficient.

But after cooling there was little time left for de-tinning and packaging, and there were grumbles from the wrapping staff at having to work late. Occasionally the tarts had to be carted up to the cake bakery again and be wrapped the following day, - a little staler than they should have been. Somehow we seemed to lack the technical ability to solve the problems that the new policy involved.

Everything combined to mock our efforts in the cake bakery. The new machinery was not so reliable as the Baker Perkins bread plant had proved itself to be. Depositors, for example, would not be consistent in the amount of batter dropped into the cake tins. Varying sized cakes were the result, some rattling about loosely in their cartons, and others having to be squashed into a space considerably smaller than themselves.

To make matters worse this same machinery was itself a good deal too big for us. That had been the case also with the bread machinery, but there the bakers used it for at least a few hours a day until the demand increased. The cake machines, in some cases, could be used only once a week. Cakes that should have been made daily had to wait for the weekly set-up of the appropriate mechanical monster.

Once a week production meant that the staff were not sufficiently practiced to become experts in using the machinery. And once a week cakes meant cakes that had lost their appetising smell and flavour. As far as our shop customers were concerned we could keep them.

For too long we thought that we were experiencing teething troubles that could be overcome in time. We thought that if

only we could find a few more outlets we would pass the break-even point and really start to forge ahead. But the outlets faded away as fast as new ones could be found. There were too many other suppliers tempting the shopkeeper with special offers every week.

All this took place at the beginning of a whole decade of ferocious competition during which not only our fledgling wholesale department but every wholesale factory in the country was losing money. With hindsight we can see how unlikely it was for us, arriving late on the scene with small resources, to have survived in such a battle, even with far more technical skill than we possessed.

By the end of 1963 we had had enough. We decided to close down the wholesale rounds department and sell the Barnsbury bakery as soon as possible. We had been beaten fairly and squarely by the heavier guns we had foolishly chosen to engage. It was the beginning of a long retreat.

Earlier in 1963 we had reached the peak of our production of both bread and cakes. Every week we had turned out some 50,000 loaves, 80,000 rolls, 60,000 buns, 55,000 tarts, and 36,000 cakes and pastries. A modern factory could probably turn out the lot in less than half a day. Incidentally, the 30,000 Hot Cross Buns we had laboured nightily to mould by hand at Easter in the twenties had grown to well over 100,000, moulded by machinery, in the early sixties.

In contrast to the hard going on the wholesale side, our own twelve shops had managed to increase their trade. We would have done better if we had put all our efforts into them. But new shop fronts had been put in at several branches, and refrigerated counters installed at all of them. We were digging ourselves in for the battle for survival that was looming up.

In our heart of hearts I think we knew that the tide had turned against us. One by one the suppliers of our raw materials were disappearing. In our area only one independant miller was left, and he too was soon to be bought up by a giant miller-baker combine. What chance has the trader who has to buy his raw materials from his competitor?

Large-scale machinery - too large for us - could now equal in technical quality more and more of the products hitherto reserved to the craftsman baker. Technical progress by the Research Association into the anti-staling chemistry of bread and cakes also played into the hands of the large manufacturer.

Paradoxically, medium sized bakers like ourselves were often able to increase their trade, at the expense of their smaller

brethren. But all the time those same medium sized bakers were themselves being swallowed up. Rumours spread constantly. Had we heard that yet another well known contemporary had sold out for some mouth-watering fortune?

The price would be based largely on the number of sacks of flour used by the baker weekly, with the millers competing keenly for the sackage. We were made well aware that our own 200 sacks a week, at something like £300 per sack, would be worth £60,000 for the goodwill alone to any of the greedy miller-baker groups.

With the outlook so uncertain it was sometimes tempting to consider the heresy of hiving off and selling the whole Bakery Division as a separate company, and concentrating on the hotel and catering business only.

Such temptations had to be resisted. It was unthinkable to give up being bakers when in less than five years we would celebrate our bi-centenary in the trade, and in the very year in which I would become Master of the Worshipful Company of Bakers.

Moreover Ted and I were not prepared to lend our names to the new company, as would be required by the purchasers, and act as dummy directors under some brash young area production manager, - the fate of some contemporaries who had sold their birthright.

Ironically, when the time did come later for us to leave the bakery business for ever, the mouth-watering sums were no longer being paid for sackage. The millers could afford to wait for the ripe fruit to fall into their laps for nothing.

Meanwhile the daily rush was proving more than the ageing Jim Hodges and Mr John could stand. Simplification became the order of the day. Our friend Reg Simmons specialised in high-class cakes in high-class shops, with one shop only in each busy market town. Our own set-up was larger but ridiculously complicated. It was less profitable and more troublesome as a consequence.

Closing the wholesale rounds simplified matters considerably. We now planned to sell Barnsbury and bring back the decorating department to Holloway. The ground floor middle and rear restaurants, which were suffering from car parking restrictions, would be closed, and the space taken over by the bakeries.

But other troubles were mounting up at Holloway and the sale of Barnsbury had to be postponed. In 1964 the hitherto complimentary Islington Health Department commented on the congestion and slightly sub-standard hygiene of the bakeries and kitchens. It was becoming difficult for us to keep up with modern standards.

The premises did not lend themselves easily to the improvements that were necessary. Bulk flour deliveries, for example,

were now available, - the flour being blown up by compressed air straight from the lorries into hygienic steel storage silos. This would obviously be much better than sending up individual bags of flour via our elevator, spilling out flour dust in all directions. But silos could not easily be fitted into Holloway, and the giant lorries would block up the entrance to the yard completely.

There were other drawbacks to the working of our old four storied bakery, as against the single story lay-out of the modern factories that were being erected in the outer suburbs. The ever more stringent requirements of the Fire Brigade Inspectors were becoming almost impossible to carry out.

In October the long-threatened one-way traffic scheme for our part of Holloway was put fully into effect. One result was that conditions in the despatch yard became intolerable. The sale of Barnsbury had to be cancelled. Even without the wholesale rounds we would need the Barnsbury yard for the accommodation of our vans and the washing down and cleaning of them.

Almost simultaneously we became aware, though, typically, we were not officially informed, that Barnsbury Bakery was scheduled for compulsory purchase and demolition by Islington Borough Council, as part of a large-scale rehousing scheme. This was the catalyst that really crystallised the whole position.

To transfer the confectionery to the Holloway ground floor was now impossible, for the yard could not accommodate the vans. We considered building a new bakery on a nearby site that was offered to us by the Islington Council. But the cost of this was beyond our means unless and until the Holloway premises themselves were sold.

This possibility was now being discussed at length by the directors. Indeed we realistically gave Holloway no more than ten years of life, and set 1974 as the most likely closing date. But would we build a new bakery in Islington, where most of our shops were concentrated, or in the fresh air of the outer suburbs? Would we specialise in bread and buy in our cakes, or the reverse? What size of bakery did we want and what geographical limits would we set ourselves?

A new factor ended all this speculation. Trevor had come to a momentous personal decision. Bearing in mind the complexity of the two divisions of the business, he suggested that it would be wise to cut out of the bakery side altogether. He, as the only member of the fourth generation in the future, would do better to concentrate on the hotel and banqueting side alone.

With surprisingly little discussion, considering its importance, the proposition was unanimously approved. It was a sad but sensible decision to take under the circumstances, - easier for me, perhaps, in that I had no son to carry on my side of the business. It meant that some sixty per cent of our sales would be eliminated, and our pomp and circumstance much diminished. But having already

presided over the liquidation of the Athenaeum and the Holloway department store, we accepted that this was but one more necessary change of direction in the life of the company.

We agreed that when Barnsbury was taken from us we would close the seven shops furthest from the main bakery. We would keep the five remaining local branches, with a reduced bakery and despatch staff to supply them, until such time as Holloway itself was closed. They would at least help to cover the overheads over the next ten years.

After the first stage Jim Hodges would retire. His son, Anthony, my apprentice in the Bakers Company, would administer the smaller unit, under my guidance, until the final winding up. The experience would be useful to him in the future.

As we shall see, all this took effect far more quickly than we had expected. The Bakery Division's battle for survival never took place after all. Our decisions were taken without regard to the likely outcome of the battle, but I suspect that we might well have been in for a hiding to nothing if it had actually been fought. As it was we could blame the planning authorities for having stabbed us in the back while we were still bravely facing the enemy.

The traffic in the fine wide streets around our Holloway premises had brought prosperity in 1866, but choked the life out of us a century later. Our own pictorial records clearly show the changing scene outside our doors.

The leisurely horse tram gives way to the electric tram. The electric tram gives way to the electric trolley-bus, bringing with it a forest of ugly steel supports and overhanging cables at the junction outside our corner. The General Omnibus Company is replaced by London Transport, and the buses grow in size and speed. Traffic lights sprout at the crossroads, and private motor cars multiply ad infinitum.

Once upon a time our horse vans had stretched right down Tollington Road each morning, with roundsmen loading up with bread from the trolleys which they wheeled out over the pavement. And right up to the 1950s our customers could park their cars freely at lunchtime and at night in Tollington Road and its side streets. We relied heavily on this street parking for our business. But post-war planners had been plotting our destruction.

The first London Plan showed our side of Holloway Road wiped off the map completely and replaced with a park. Other plans

followed and were duly scrapped as the political complexion of the party in power altered. Holloway Road was scheduled as a heavy-traffic throughway from the London docks. In 1951 a major one-way traffic scheme was proposed, but nothing happened and the years passed by. In 1962 we were told that the one-way scheme was to be put into effect. But we had no idea of the severity of the restrictions that would be imposed in gradual stages over the next two years.

At first there was to be no parking for our lunch customers by day. Soon there was no parking for our banquet customers at night. Eventually even the bridal car could not stop to pick up the bride and groom leaving the reception for their honeymoon. Banqueting business, booming at Firs Hall, slumped disastrously at Holloway. Entries in the diaries that had averaged eleven hundred per year in the fifties dropped to five hundred in 1965.

There was one gain from the one-way scheme. All the buses from Finsbury Park and Hornsey Road now flooded down Tollington Road to stop outside Jones Brothers' department store. They brought new business to our bread and cake shop as the crowds flocked past to the big multiple shops between us and the Nag's Head. We could claim that twenty buses now passed our doors.

Save for this one benefit all was gloom for Beale's of Holloway. Pedestrian barriers were erected all around us. Crossing the road became a major operation. When the one-way scheme started four lanes of fast traffic would storm up Tollington Road in line abreast, in an effort to beat the lights. Later, in peak hours, the same stretch would be blocked solid with motionless cars, lorries, and buses, waiting to cross the seven traffic lanes of Holloway Road. So much for scientifically planned progress.

Our vans and those of our suppliers were forced to use the narrow back entrance from the frequently blocked Bovay Place. Even the brewers' drays, surely the last vehicles on earth to be chivvied by the police, were stopped from unloading down the chute to the cellars, from the Tollington Road pavement.

Ted and I lost our cherished private parking bays and had to park afar off as best we could. Islington Borough Council provided no public parking in the whole of Holloway. And to add insult to injury, the one-way traffic now turned its back on us as it swept up Camden Road, - our electric sign seen only in reverse in the car mirror if at all.

All this was known as traffic blight, - man made, but to its victims like an act of God. It struck quite arbitrarily and indiscriminately. There was no reprieve and no compensation for any loss of trade. The liberated traffic brought noise, dirt, and inconvenience in its path, and woe betide any child or old age pensioner not alert or quick enough in crossing when the lights began to change. There was death at the crossroads many times outside our corner. The death of Beale's of Holloway seems less important in that context.

Our second hotel, comprising thirty-five bedrooms, a restaurant, and a fair-sized ballroom, was purchased in 1964. It was situated at Hatfield, in Hertfordshire, and we renamed it Hatfield Lodge. Its purchase moved the centre of gravity of the group still further away from the now awkwardly placed head office at Holloway.

After committing ourselves to its purchase, at an initial cost of £65,000, we were disconcerted to find that the promised two-thirds mortgage loan on the freehold was not forthcoming. Hotels were not regarded as a good risk at the time, and our advisors hinted politely that we had perhaps paid too much for it anyway. The Royal Insurance Company eventually lent us £35,000 on it at 8% interest, but we would have to repay the capital over the next twenty-five years. The repayment of loans was never popular with the Beales of Beacon Hill.

Banquets and weddings at Holloway were now largely for those who could arrive by public transport or walk from their homes to the premises. Firs Hall had taken over the catering for many of our old clubs and business functions.

The daily restaurant business at Holloway sank pitifully low and the Upper Grill Room was closed. The ground floor restaurants were offered to the Bakery Division, to rehouse the cake decorating department when Barnsbury was taken from us. But the space was not needed now that only five shops would have to be supplied.

We were now mentally prepared to leave Holloway for good. For years we had been conscious that the building was getting older, but the cost of rebuilding had always been beyond our means. The site was now quite unsuitable for rebuilding as a bakery and a banqueting centre, even if we had the money. Although we would certainly try to sell it earlier, 1974 seemed the most likely date for selling. The shop and basement of No 374 were sublet until then and purchasers would probably want vacant possession of the whole site for demolition.

Meanwhile Holloway must contribute what it could to the continuing overhead expenses. The bakery must tick over with its five local shops. The self-service cafe must be kept going as long as possible. The inconvenient offices must still be used.

The Board agreed on a re-alignment of responsibilities. Trevor and McCarthy would concentrate on the outlying hotel and catering empire. Ted, Hodges, and I would wind up Holloway and the Bakery Division within a maximum of ten years.

The retreat, already begun with the closing of the rounds, must be conducted in as orderly a fashion as was possible, in two stages, - first the closure of Barnsbury and the seven outer shops, and second the exodus from Holloway altogether. How and when to reveal the news caused us much anxiety. On the bakery side I could announce, publicly, only the first stage of our plans.

With much trepidation I informed a meeting of the Bakery Division staff that the Barnsbury bakery was to be taken from us by the Council for a housing scheme. As Holloway could not then cope with the production, the outlying shops would of necessity be sold. No one seemed particularly surprised or worried. Rumours had evidently spread beforehand, as often happens where deadly secrets are involved.

Fortunately there was very full employment locally at the time. Bakers and van drivers were in much demand, and the shop staff concerned would be gladly taken over by the purchasers. A handful of old stagers could be tucked away into the remaining Catering Division fairly comfortably. I was not aware of any real hardship to any of the staff throughout the closures.

We had already closed down the wholesale rounds, and the more wide awake members of the Holloway bakery staff began to realise that there was no future for them in this declining empire. Some left for jobs with better prospects. It was difficult to replace them. Morale dropped among the remainder. The variety of goods had to be cut to simplify production.

The middle and rear ground floor restaurants were closed and left empty towards the end of 1966. Group profits naturally suffered. We were thankful that we had not gone public, for the City has no time at all for excuses, however justified.

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18 Sic Transit Gloria Holloway

The Compulsory Purchase Order on the Barnsbury bakery, as it turned out, proved to be an unexpected stroke of luck. For we received back in full from the Council the £20,000 we had paid for it, as well as all the money we had spent on its improvement.

Moreover it was a splendid scapegoat to blame for closing down the bakery and the outlying shops. Crocodile tears came easily to our eyes as we protested against the Council's action, and we received undeserved sympathy for our sad plight.

More genuine, however, was our humiliation in trying to sell our considerable flour sackage to the miller-baker groups. None of them had any use for it, - times had changed and sackage no longer commanded a premium. We would have to sell the shops piecemeal, and Holloway later for its site value only, for the bakery as such was valueless.

The first four shops were sold, at a modest profit, on the last day of 1967, to a division of the Allied Bakeries Group. Three more were sold in 1968. Together with Barnsbury they brought in the substantial sum of £97,000. Most of this went necessarily to reduce our debts, but some £35,000 was spent on building a second ballroom at Hatfield Lodge. Ready money always burnt a hole in the pockets of the Beales.

Jim Hodges helped us to dispose of the Barnsbury machinery, and then retired to the Isle of Wight to enjoy a well earned rest, after thirty years of service with us, many of them as a director. The Bakery Division, too small now for such a high-sounding title, ticked over peacefully, and to our surprise profitably, with only five shops and two agents to supply.

Our faithful old despatch manager, Frank Cox, was able to retire in peace, with the respect and affection of us all. The T.R. oven finished its work comfortably by 10 a.m., and the bread wrapping machines stood idle most of the day. For the first time perhaps in eighty years there was no congestion in the yard.

Stocks of raw materials and packaging were lowered, but hundreds of thousands of printed cake cartons for the wholesale trade were never to be used. The range of cakes was still further

reduced, simply for the want of skilled confectioners to make them. Even the iced wedding cakes had to be bought in from another baker. Happily for them, my father and Mr Spackman had not lived to see such sacrilege!

Ron Valentine was now in charge of the reduced bakery production. Always a country baker at heart, he had often fallen foul of the bureaucratic bakery committee, when strict discipline was the order of the day. It was now more like the happy-go-lucky small scale bakeries at Potters Bar from which we had promoted him years earlier.

Planning permission would be required by any purchaser intending to demolish and rebuild the Holloway premises. Permission would be granted more readily to us than to a stranger. We were therefore advised to submit an outline plan for rebuilding the premises ourselves, and then, if successful, sell the site with the benefit of the permission granted.

An unknown official of the Greater London Council verbally confirmed that there was no proposed road development affecting our site in any way. From this we assumed that there would be little difficulty in obtaining planning permission to rebuild. We therefore instructed John D Wood to offer the site, in confidence, for development as a supermarket. In April 1967 an offer of £175,000 for this purpose was received, subject to us getting permission to rebuild.

On submitting outline plans for such a building, however, to the local council, we were informed that a large part of our site would in due course be required for road widening, and that permission to rebuild could only be given for the remainder. The area to be taken from us was a wedge-shaped slice of our corner, widening out to cut off two thirds of our Holloway Road frontage.

This knowledge had not been made available to the public. The Council did not want anyone to worry over something that might never happen. The question of compensation did not arise, for the purchase order might not take effect for ten years or more, depending upon when the necessary finance became available.

The value of our site had dropped disastrously overnight. Who could afford to rebuild with two-thirds of the all-important front missing? How could we ourselves continue to occupy a half-empty run down building? And who else would want to rent these awkward premises for an unknown period of years?

Planning blight had now been added to the traffic blight. We were advised to appeal to the local council and this we did. Our appeal was duly considered and rejected. We were frozen in by the planners, with no prospect of an early thaw.

The ups and downs of the last few years at Holloway would have driven a less phlegmatic family out of its wits. But long and hard experience had made us pretty well impervious to failure and success alike. Moreover we now had safe anchorage elsewhere, regardless of the life and death struggles going on at Holloway.

In January 1968 we decided that we could not remain at Holloway in its run-down condition, - whatever the result of our continued negotiations with the Council. We would sell the site with or without planning permission, and take our medicine bravely if the latter. If there were no reasonable offers at all we would divide up the premises, and let them for shops, offices, and warehouses, as best we could.

We continued to do battle for high stakes with the newly created London Borough of Islington. For us the issue was the fall in value of our site from the £175,000, offered by the supermarket group, down to something under £60,000, according to our valuer, if permission to rebuild was still refused. For the Council a victory for the Beales meant that a major part of their strategic road planning would be jeopardised.

Ted and I attended a meeting at the Town Hall, with Mr Eric Croft, the Town Clerk, and his senior officers. The cordial relations of the past had cooled considerably. For the first time we were shown the revised plans of the Greater London Council for the whole area. We found that the one-way scheme was to be scrapped in favour of something even worse.

It was now proposed that Seven Sisters Road should be made into a traffic-free shopping precinct. Dear old Tollington Road was to become part of a new 'East Cross' principal traffic route, carrying three lanes of fast traffic in each direction, and with a gigantic fly-over or underpass to cross Holloway Road right outside our corner!

All this was unlikely to be implemented for twelve to fifteen years. But our building was the only major obstacle to be swept away when the time came. Acting in the interest of the G.L.C., therefore, the local council refused us permission to rebuild. The blight was far worse than we had realised.

Something of Harry Mote's pugnacity inspired us not to accept the decision meekly. We were advised that we had the right to request that a public enquiry be appointed by the Minister of Local Government and Regional Planning.

We consulted the Hon. David Trustram Eve at his chambers in the Temple, and set out our case. His opinion was that road widening schemes were rarely set aside for the benefit of individual property owners, and that there was less than a 50/50 chance of a successful appeal. He warned us that the expense would be considerable, win or lose alike.

But the stalemate had to be ended at whatever cost. On Eve's advice, therefore, we served a formal Purchase Notice on the Council, requesting them to take our premises forthwith and pay us compensation, - on the ground that their plans had rendered our occupation uneconomical.

Anticipating their inevitable refusal, we reserved Mr Eve's services to put our case at the public enquiry that we would then request. We thus forestalled the Council, who later tried to secure those same services for themselves, Mr Eve being the acknowledged expert on such matters.

Mr Eve completed the well-balanced team of professional advisors that we gathered round us to present our case. Tom Saint provided two able young partners in Ralph Ray and Keith Perryman, both members of his family. Owen and John Ward were our architects, and Edgar Traylen, a senior partner of Edward Moore and Sons, lent weight to our financial submissions.

There was also the strangely assorted pair of experts from John D Wood, the Estate Agents and Surveyors. The diminutive and self-effacing Mr Bywaters had valued our properties for years, and had helped us to get the maximum mortgage loans on them. In startling contrast was the huge gruff-voiced Mr Maunder, who had recently sold several of our shops for us.

Legal and bureaucratic delays were now to hold up the enquiry for a full nine months. We closed the whole of the banqueting department and the Lower Grill Room in March, for they were making no contribution and indeed running at a loss.

We were in a strange kind of limbo. Poor old Holloway was as good as at death's door, but was taking an unconscionable time in passing through it. We were unable to arrange its funeral, much less take advantage of its last will and testament.

To strengthen our case at the enquiry we produced an album of photographs showing the most inconvenient and unhygienic sections of the premises, - as evidence that the whole lot should be rebuilt. After that we had little to do but wait.

As it happened I was serving my year, to December 1968, as Master of the Worshipful Company of Bakers, and still able to do so as a practising baker after all. Ted was also at the peak of his public activities. Trevor was concentrating on the new Beale's that would not be 'of Holloway' much longer.

The bread and cake shop and the Quick Tray Restaurant still made a show of activity as far as the public was concerned. Apart from the now much reduced offices in No 368 the rest of the main building was unused. Holloway had shrunk to a shadow of its former self, and was but a handicap to the remainder of the business.

The days passed slowly as we waited for the date of the enquiry to be fixed. Our case would be that the premises were

inconvenient, unhygienic, and unprofitable in their present state. We did not relish the prospect of displaying our dirty linen quite so publicly, but we were as anxious to quit Holloway now as William and Francis had been in 1934.

When the day of the hearing finally arrived we were ready for the battle. Field Marshal Montgomery could not have prepared for action more thoroughly. If we could not command success at least we would deserve it.

The public enquiry opened on the 29th November 1968 at the Islington Town Hall. It was hardly neutral ground in our opinion. On our side of the large oval table sat Mr Trustram Eve, Mr Perryman, and Mr Maunder, each with an assistant, together with John Ward, Ted, Trevor, and myself. Opposite us were Mr M Fitzgerald, of Counsel, four senior officers of the L.B.I. and the G.L.C., and their assistants.

Between us sat Mr J K Watson, C.B.E., the Inspector who was conducting the enquiry, painstakingly writing his notes throughout the long proceedings. My hand ached in sympathy with his, as the sheets of foolscap filled up hour after hour. It is pleasant to be able to record that bribery and corruption never entered the heads of those taking part. Not every country enjoys such impartial justice.

The dreaded publicity did not arise. True the local press was in evidence on the first morning, but the technical arguments were way over the heads of the young journalists, and they left well before the book of horror photographs was produced. The more lurid details were therefore missing from their reports.

Mr Trustram Eve opened the batting and immediately impressed us with the skill and subtlety of his two-pronged attack. First we sought to compel the L.B.I. to accept our purchase notice, on the ground that their plans deprived us of the beneficial use of our premises. Alternatively, we sought the Minister's approval of our building plans.

Ted was called upon to give evidence of the deterioration at Holloway over the past three years, to the extent that they were no longer profitable. Mr Fitzgerald offered little cross-examination. He accepted our professional competence, - after all we were trading profitably elsewhere. He agreed that we could probably no longer occupy the premises beneficially as bakers and caterers.

Mr Maunder gave evidence of negotiations with various firms, identified by the letters A to K. The Council's refusal to permit

us to rebuild reduced the value of the site, in his professional opinion, from the £175,000 already offered, down to £58,700, if converted for letting in parts, with leases restricted to an unknown period by the Council's plans. Under cross-examination, Mr Maunder admitted that he had not advertised the premises publicly, in order not to embarrass his clients.

At the second day's hearing a curious paradox arose. Mr Fitzgerald seemed at pains to prove that excellent rents could be obtained on the present premises if converted, even if the Beales could not use them profitably. Indeed he drew out Mr White, the Deputy Borough Surveyor, to assess the rents obtainable as being sufficient to justify a value of £250,000 for the site and the present buildings.

This was a splendid argument to prove that the premises need not be rebuilt at all. But it could prove expensive to the Council if the purchase notice was confirmed by the Minister. Some months later we were intrigued to find that the Islington Borough Council had prudently reserved £250,000 in their five-year capital budget, against the possibility of having to buy out Beale's.

We were made to feel guilty on being told that the road casualties in Seven Sisters Road, with its narrow pavements and dense shopping crowds, were twice those of Tollington Road, with the same amount of traffic. Were we trying to hold up an improvement that would save several unnecessary accidents every year?

On the other hand an expert from the G.L.C. gave it as his opinion that the morning traffic along Tollington Road was likely to increase from the present 2,500 vehicles an hour to 5,800 an hour by the year 1990. Even a fully widened road would not be able to cope with anything like that number. The suggested scheme would therefore not be practicable anyway, if his estimates of the traffic increase proved to be correct.

Another G.L.C. representative stated that although the G.L.C. approved the road widening scheme, it would not be prepared to allocate funds now to safeguard the scheme for twelve to fifteen years ahead. Moreover - and here Mr Eve pricked up his ears - the suggested fly-over or underpass would cost many millions of pounds, and therethe cost of compensation on a new building on Beale's corner would not be very material at the time.

He would suggest, however, that if planning permission to rebuild was granted, a wedge-shaped splay widening out to twelve feet only at the front should be excluded. This would provide one extra traffic lane across Holloway Road in the interim years, and most of our Holloway Roadfrontage would be saved.

Mr Eve naturally made the most of this suggestion in his summing up, and at the end of four gruelling long days of argument we were left reasonably optimistic that we might well win the day.

Our legal and professional costs had soared frighteningly with the unexpected length of the enquiry, but success would make it all worth while.

The result was due to reach us not later than the end of January. But the weeks stretched into months and we became increasingly restless. We lobbied our local Member of Parliament to bring pressure to bear, and we even threatened to take law action to force the Ministry to decide the case.

We were asked to be patient a little longer. The case was regarded as being of great importance in setting a precedent for the future. The Minister, the Right Hon. Anthony Greenwood, was said to be personally involved. This we could hardly believe, but so it proved.

As children at Beacon Hill we referred to important decisions in our young lives as 'fate-deciders'. We now awaited a jumbo-sized fate-decider for the future of the business. At last, on May 14th 1969, a thick envelope from the Ministry of Housing and Regional Planning landed in our letter-box. Feverishly we skimmed through the thirty-one carefully composed foolscap pages of the report.

The result was hidden tantalisingly somewhere within the two hundred and fifty seven numbered paragraphs, - one of which alone contained sixteen sub-paragraphs. But towards the end came the Inspector's recommendations to the Minister, -

a) In relation to the planning appeal I recommend that the appeal be dismissed.

b) In relation to the purchase notice I recommend that the purchase be not confirmed.

So that was that. We had lost after all on both grounds.

But that was not that at all, as we read on. A three-page letter was attached to the end of the report. The Minister had reversed his Inspector's decision and allowed our appeal to rebuild, subject only to the twelve-foot splay requested by the G.L.C.

We read and reread it, - not sure that we understood the bureaucratic jargon. But Perryman confirmed that we had indeed won a glorious victory. We were told later that the case became a minor 'cause celebre' in planning circles.

The L.B.I. now washed their hands of the whole scheme and henceforth took no further action on behalf of their ungrateful allies at the G.L.C. When the time came, if it ever did, the G.L.C. would have to pay compensation to the new owners both for the site and for any new building then erected on it. For the Beales the way was now clear for Exodus to begin. Within four months we had left Holloway for good.

With some trepidation we agreed that a public auction was probably the best way to sell, - though a good offer might tempt us to sell privately prior to the appointed day. Mr Maunder was now hopeful that £200,000 could be obtained. We instructed John D Wood to sell the whole site by public auction on July 30th.

Agreeing a reserve price below which we would withdraw from the sale was far from easy. Fees would be incurred, sale or no sale, once the auctioneers had been instructed. And for the first time Maunder and Bywaters were not in unison.

Maunder suggested a reserve of £175,000. Bywaters was less optimistic. July 30th was a bad time for a sale, there was a slump in property values, trade depression, and a rise in interest rates. He recommended £150,000 as our reserve, and advised us to accept this figure if a private offer was made prior to the sale.

Bywaters we had known for years. We thought highly of his judgement. Nevertheless we accepted Maunder's figure. The sale catalogue was printed, posters issued, and advertisements inserted widely in the press. John D Wood reported an encouraging response, there being over one hundred enquiries, eight of which had resulted in an investigation in depth by the prospective purchasers.

Meanwhile arrangements were made for the closing of the last five shops and the Quick Tray Restaurant on Saturday July 26th. The machinery and plant would be sold by auction in September. Most worrying of all, the staff had to be told what was happening and be given notice.

Twenty three waitresses and kitchen staff, thirty-six bakers and van drivers, and forty-one shop assistants, had to be told that they must leave us. Ted notified his staff individually. I held a meeting of the larger numbers of the remaining Bakery Division, and arranged for an official of the Ministry of Labour to be present to answer questions about redundancy.

I made my final speech to the assembled staff. Some of them, old and trusted friends, were almost in tears. How could I be other than ashamed that they were no longer wanted, however loyal, while I would continue elsewhere, well paid and comfortable? But as in 1967 there were no recriminations, and I was received with unexpected sympathy and kindness.

Once again there was full employment in the area. There were no hard cases and the Ministry official had little to explain. Our staff were among the first to benefit from the new Government redundancy scheme. Payment was made 50% from the fund and 50% by the company. Our contribution, together with ex-gratia payments, amounted to over £10,000.

The scheme was designed to alleviate hardship during the weeks that might elapse before new employment was found. In fact

all those who wanted it found employment without a single day's delay. We guessed, from past experience, that one or two of the bakers were liable to squander their redundancy money away all too quickly. In their case the publicans and bookmakers would be the principal beneficiaries of this well meant piece of social legislation.

Trading at Holloway ceased on Saturday 26th July 1969. Sadly we closed our doors, thanked the staff, and said goodbye. Ron Valentine had put the last batch of 'bloomer' loaves through the T.R. oven, had tidied the place up personally, and left for a more senior - but more monotonous - management job with one of the groups.

He told me later that the hours passed slowly, watching the machinery churn out its never-ending, never-varying, tasteless, soulless products. He looked back with regret to the rumbustious, noisy, crowded days at Holloway. But the bakery at Holloway was now as silent as the grave.

By a coincidence we were closing down the Bakery Division simultaneously with the celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of our foundation by John Beale of Oxford Street in 1769. We had made it, and only just made it, as bakers after all.

Not surprisingly, customers were whispering that the Beales were finished. It was very necessary to blow the trumpet loud and clear, - we were forging full steam ahead as before, but now concentrating on the hotel and catering business.

In sober truth we had cut off 60% of our entire turnover, and for a while we would be something less in power and prestige. This was evidenced by the sudden drop in the number of calendars, pocket diaries, ball-point pens, and the like, received from our former bakery suppliers at the end of that same year. We learned that there is no sentiment in business!

The Beales were the last of the old families trading in our part of Holloway. Now there would be the same multiple traders, side by side, as in every other High Street in the country. We felt guilty of deserting the Holloway that had nourished generations of us in the past. It was irrational, for Beale's of Holloway at the end was no more than a self-service cafeteria and baker's shop. Only those local residents old enough to remember us in the days of our true glory would mourn our passing.

On Monday morning the whole great complex of bricks and mortar lay lifeless and empty, save for the directors and a few office staff in the upper floors of No 368, busily winding up Grandfather's empire. Short-sighted customers would push at the unyielding doors before realising that there would be no more cups of tea or coffee for their elevenses, and no buns, no cakes, nor fresh baked bread for sale.

Two days later I took my wife and daughter to witness the drama due to take place at the London Auction Mart in Queen Victoria Street at 3 p.m. precisely. Ted and McCarthy joined us there. Only fifteen potential buyers attended, and to us the room seemed cold and lifeless. But Mr Maunder assured us that large numbers were not essential for a satisfactory sale.

Mr Bailey, the auctioneer, invited Ted to join him on the rostrum, to help answer any questions relating to the premises. He described the property on offer briefly, with facts already known to the more serious members of his audience. A rather foolish question revealed one of the fifteen present to be no more than an idle spectator. How many others, we wondered, might be the same?

Now the game began in earnest. Mr Bailey put on a brisk and confident expression. 'What am I bid for a start, Gentlemen'? Faces remained blank, and there was a lengthy silence. A little encouragement was needed. 'Shall we start at £200,000'? The silence was louder and longer.

'Will someone offer £180,000 for this very fine property'? asked Mr Bailey, generously coming down £20,000 at one go. The silence became almost deafening. It was going to be a flop, we could sense it. Our hearts sagged, thumping painfully, to the region of our stomachs.

The auctioneer looked pained. He could be seen mentally preparing himself to come down another £20,000, and was indeed clearing his throat to do so, when a good-looking dapper young man, seemingly in his twenties, raised one finger. 'Thank you' said Mr Bailey, 'I have £180,000 bid. Come along, Gentlemen, can I say £185,000'?

Ted and I permitted ourselves to exchange a glance. There was no need for words. We were home and dry. We had already beaten the reserve. But not a glimmer of our reaction could have been seen by any of the others. The Beales sat as poker-faced as any in the room.

'£185,000'? asked Mr Bailey once again, and another young man behind me nodded. Mr Bailey settled down more comfortably in his chair and acknowledged the bid briefly, as if £5,000 jumps were only playing at the thing.

'£185,000 I have' said Mr Bailey, and then, without a break, '£190,000, thank you', to a third young man who had raised a pencil. The Beales sat completely rigid in their seats, hearts now accelerating violently upwards and leaving stomachs well behind. And now the first young man tried to shake off the field by calling out 'Two Hundred'. The stage had been reached when the thousands could be left unspoken.

This piece of gamesmanship proved adequate to knock out the third bidder, believed to represent Trollope and Colls, the building

contractors and developers. There was now an ominous pause, but at length the second bidder came back with another £5,000. Ted and I again exchanged a glance that was full of meaning. We were £30,000 over the reserve.

On went the bidding, more quickly now, between the first and second bidders. With every few seconds came another £5,000 bonus for the Beales. To think we had got excited over £200 of fish at West Lodge Park! Now the second bidder jumped by a full £10,000 to £230,000. 'Two hundred and forty' called out Bidder No 1 and it was all over.

The reserve had been beaten by £65,000, and the total was £90,000 more than Mr Bywaters had recommended us to accept if we were offered it privately before the sale. But, to be fair, without the unexpected battle of the giants, Bywaters could so easily have been right. It only takes two to make an auction.

The little crowd started to disperse. Those who had come hoping for a bargain, something a little over £100,000 perhaps, departed muttering 'ridiculous, they must be mad'! The first and second bidders chaffed each other, evidently no strangers. Bidder No 2, from Littlewood's Chain Stores, left the scene with nothing to show for all the time spent by his firm in examining the project. Perhaps he would win the next time that they met.

Bidder No 1, Mr Timothy Sainsbury, from the supermarket firm bearing his name, remained behind to sign the contract. No other buyer could have pleased us more, for Sainsbury's had a first-class reputation for honest trading, and at this time was still a private family concern.

We chatted for a while with Mr Sainsbury, a very pleasant unassuming man. His nonchalance drove home the fact that however rich and powerful we might feel on this most successful day in all our history, it was only small beer as far as Twentieth Century big business was concerned.

The Beale contingent thanked Messrs Bailey and Maunder for their services and left - almost exploding with delight. No doubt the very dangers and disappointments we had endured over the last few years added to the pleasure of our triumph.

That evening, in the dining room of West Lodge Park, the normally abstemious family celebrated with a magnum of champagne. Left-wing readers, nauseated at the thought of this capitalistic orgy, may be heartened to learn that I am allergic to the bubbles of champagne. I subsequently spent the evening coughing and sneezing in a paroxysm akin to hay fever. As I wiped away the tears I wondered if my puritan sub-conscious was putting in its spoke again, lest I became too worldly wise. Not for nothing had I been given the Pilgrim's Progress to read, at a tender and impressionable age.

We had two months left in which to sell the machinery and plant by auction, move our head-quarters to new offices, and tidy up generally before handing over on September 30th. Jim Hodges came back to sort out the equipment into numbered lots. It was a task after his own heart. Not a single oddment that could fetch a few coppers escaped his eagle eye.

After the drama of the London Auction Mart, the sale of the plant was a much more homely affair. It was held in the Grand Hall at Holloway. Family bakers and caterers flocked in from far and wide, in the hope of picking up a bargain. Some of our friends commiserated with us unnecessarily on our having to sell up, - perhaps in the belief that we were bankrupt.

The total realised for the sale, just over £10,000 in all, was disappointing. Even so, from my seat at the back I could hear some of the items fetching far more than they were worth. I felt like crying out to my friends not to be so foolish.

Conversely the heavy machinery was sold ridiculously cheap. Some of it was not sold at all, being too costly to dismantle, remove, and re-erect. The famous Turbo-Radiant oven shared this ignominious fate, but was sold later for the sum of £50. Much to my concern it was only half dismantled on the day we had to hand over to Sainsbury's with vacant possession. But they were tolerant and allowed dismantling to proceed.

Much vigilance was required to prevent pilferage by the shady characters who buy one small lot at auction sales, and then, under cover of the general confusion, depart with far more oddments than they should. With equipment scattered all over the building, total strangers climbing ladders to take down chandeliers, and workmen ripping out machinery, security was by no means easy.

Within two days most of the plant had been removed. And now the directors of this famous catering establishment had to bring in their own sandwiches for lunch. For there were no stoves, no pots and pans, no chefs, no food and drink, and no waiters or waitresses to wait upon them in the stripped out restaurants.

Sorting and moving our books and papers proved to be a major operation. The banquet diaries alone must have weighed half a ton. The contract for our new offices at Southgate had been delayed, and temporary accommodation was made at Firs Hall and West Lodge Park. The whole office had in fact to be moved twice. I feared for the safety of old papers carted round none too daintily by the works department staff.

By late September there was little else for me to do. My Bakery Division was no more. Even the complicated reorganisation of the company structure could not keep me fully occupied. I took to wandering nostalgically round the empty building, conjuring up some affection for it, as well as sadness, now that it was soon to disappear.

Holloway was now haunted with the memories of a lifetime's involvement with it. Here on the stairs Uncle Arch and my father had shouted violent abuse at each other, and Francis and I had argued bitterly in our turn. Here in the kitchen I had chopped my onions, tossed the pancakes, and occasionally burnt the soup.

Down one floor, in what had been the billiards room, I had started making chocolates, and later had selected my young lady assistants, not without regard perhaps to their physical attractions. And there, in the corner of the ground floor middle cafe, Mr Muncey and his three-piece orchestra had played 'Tea for Two' to crowded tables on the Saturday afternoons of a bygone age.

The building had been altered almost out of recognition by the third generation. Now only Ted and I could remember it in its four dimensions, changing slowly throughout the years. The famous weathercock that crowned the tower, and the wrought iron railings from the roof were taken to West Lodge Park. The Shakespearian stained glass windows, replaced after the war, were to be given to the proposed new Globe Theatre in Tufnell Park. No other souvenirs of the building were retained.

The end of September came and the huge bunch of largely useless keys was handed over. Sainsbury's covered the corpse decently in hoardings and reverently left it for six months to lie in peace. Then the demolition men moved into action.

First to be dealt with were the Tollington Road houses, almost ready to fall down of their own accord. The bakery building proved more difficult, with its steel girders and thick concrete floors. Then the rubbishy back of the main building was torn out, exposing the rabbit warren of wooden back stairs, linen stores, staff rooms, and the like. Finally the thick walls and floors of the interior were laboriously drilled away and the outer walls knocked down.

Perhaps morbidly, I was drawn back several times to watch and photograph the sad disintegration. I was present when the men started on the outer shell, standing poised dangerously and dramatically against the skyline. Almost too easily they smashed down Grandfather's lovely red bricks and ornamental tiling, to fall into the basements six floors below.

Always they kept a bonfire going, burning up rotted wood flooring and fine old panelling alike. 'Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust', I muttered gloomily to myself. Buildings live their lives and die, in much the same manner as do men.

In weeks, rather than months, the site was cleared to the basements. The last lorry-load of rubble was driven up the ramp and away. Beale's of Holloway was like a missing wisdom tooth, just a great gaping hole in the ground, at our end of the parade.

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19 Post-History

Buildings prove mortal, but sites remain. More than one hundred years had passed since William the First acquired the lease of Holloway House, formerly known as Ivy House, 'abutting at the rear a field called Sibell'. A new era in the life of the site had begun, and a new family would be its overlords.

Sainsbury's quickly built and opened up their supermarket, with twenty-one cash register check out stations, selling toiletries and hosiery as well as food. Massive clearances of old Islington have since taken place. Huge blocks of council flats now dominate the area, street after street, - not the well balanced community, perhaps, that most sociologists would want to see. The name Beale's of Holloway means nothing to the new inhabitants.

Beale's Ltd, however, is still very much alive. We had been lucky to find a self-contained suite of offices close to Southgate Underground Station. Just large enough and with nothing to spare, they were far more economical than the rambling old set-up at Holloway. The branches were now largely self-contained, and the accounting staff, under Mr Healey, seemed ridiculously small.

With the aid of a young and trendy interior designer, we spent lavishly on the equipment and decor of the offices. We had to impress on visitors that it was no down-and-out firm that they were dealing with. Perhaps we were suffering from an inferiority complex, due to the sharp reduction in our size.

No longer being Beale's of Holloway we had to answer 'Beale's Ltd' on the phone at Southgate, feeling that we had lost a part of our identity. Indeed the family name itself was but little used from this time on, for the branches were very much entities in their own right and title.

We simplified the structure of our group of companies, all the assets and trading being transferred back into the original 1895 company, which reverted to its old title - Beale's Ltd - again. Due to doubled tax liability the gains made at Holloway could not be transferred to the parent company. None could therefore be paid out to the shareholders.

This was no great disappointment to us. Like the noble duke guarding his ancestral stately home, we never really expected to see

the colour of our money. A family business was something of a sacred trust. It was not to be exploited for the benefit of one generation.

Beale's (Barnet) Ltd, however, was our own creation. It had finished trading and was wound up satisfactorily. The sum of £446 was eventually paid out for each of the one hundred £1 shares originally subscribed for by Ted and myself in 1939.

Capital gains tax took its toll, but for the first time in our lives we had money in the bank to play with. But we had never learnt to play with it, other than in the business. At our age travelling round the world in the Q.E.2. was less attractive than sitting quietly at home.

In company with the Quaker business man, John Woolman, who rid himself of all his worldly 'cumber', I have sometimes been scared of acquiring too much wealth. I have skimmed off the surplus, therefore, into two private charitable trusts, the administration of which affords me a good deal of pleasure, sweetened by the knowledge that the Tax Collector cannot get his clutches on the income.

Ted has spent his money in a more imaginative manner, creating an arboretum in the grounds of West Lodge Park. He will not live to see it in its maturity, but finds happiness in seeing to it that his precious seedlings root and flourish. In addition he has built up a collection of Restoration Period portrait paintings by Lely, Kneller, and their contemporaries, including several by Mary Beale, a favourite pupil of Sir Peter Lely, and a distant relative of ours. These pictures now adorn the walls of West Lodge Park, itself the residence and meeting place of many Restoration notables.

During our time at Holloway we had increased the number of staff employed from one hundred to five hundred at the peak. Now we were back to two hundred, but far more compact and strong. The net book value of the business had reached one third of a million pounds. Even allowing for inflation, we had used Beacon Hill's £8,000 capital to good advantage.

After repaying mortgage loans on Holloway, Barnsbury, and the shops, £100,000 was available for expansion elsewhere. This could easily have been a minus figure, but for the Minister's reversal of his inspector's decision, and but for the presence of two wealthy buyers at the auction.

An extension to West Lodge Park's main building seemed to offer the best investment for this money. By offering to build a new wing at our own expense, and by trading in our existing lease for a more expensive one, Ted managed to persuade our landlords to approve a ninety-nine year lease.

We obtained planning permission to build the extension largely because the Government was anxious at the time to promote

the country's tourist trade. It was also ready to lend up to half the cost of all new bedrooms on favourable terms, and make a free grant of £1,000 per room. We could not have timed it better, since all these advantages were soon withdrawn.

We thought it prudent to hold a meeting of all the local amenity societies, and with the help of our architect, John Reid, managed to convince them that all would be in keeping with the existing building and its surrounds.

The cost escalated frighteningly before it was completed. Twenty-eight new bedrooms with private bathrooms, a large new restaurant, conference rooms, kitchens, air-conditioning and central heating, staff accommodation, and new drains and services down to the main road two hundred yards away, all this was to have cost under £250,000, but in fact cost a full £400,000 by the time all was done. The company was borrowing heavily again.

Ted and I aided and abetted Trevor in this extravagance, and agreed to the refinements that added to the cost. We had spent our working lives in old decaying premises. It was some reward to plan a brand new building to our own requirements. All was to be solid and of the best quality. Grandfather would have approved.

Two years later the hotel was awarded four star rating by the A.A. and the R.A.C. motoring organisations. Ted and Trevor share the credit for this achievement. We had regained the high-class reputation of the earlier years.

Trevor is setting his own stamp on the development of the company. West Lodge Park is beginning to be known as a centre of good food and wine and gracious living. A series of concerts held each year transforms the hotel temporarily into a kind of miniature Glyndebourne. Trevor, now Managing Director, is more than capable of running the company successfully, with the aid of Tony McCarthy and Ralph Ray, the latter now acting as Company Secretary.

After retiring at the age of 65 in 1972, I was allowed to keep my cubby-hole of an office to write this story and to sort and safeguard the old books and papers. Ted remains as Chairman, with the particular interest of maintaining and improving the West Lodge Park estate from his home within the grounds.

Ted and I rejoice in having no less than eight grandchildren between us. Ted has four little Beales, - Andrew, Philippa, Christopher, and Nicholas, and I have four little Claytons, namely John, Peter, Sally, and Lucy. They, and perhaps their descendants, may find some amusement in this my story of the family business that provided their forebears with their bread and butter.

I am conscious of having written far too much of the family, and too little of the staff who were the life-blood of the business. I blush that so many worthy members have not even received a mention. But if, of necessity, it is a one-sided account, it may have some value in being plainly so.

Tolstoy, at the end of War and Peace, treats us to some fifty pages of philosophy, something of an anticlimax in my view, and - dare I say it - just a wee bit of a bore. Though no less capable of being tedious, I shall content myself with less.

Freedom of choice and action, according to Tolstoy, is largely an illusion. Even Napoleon was subject to forces outside of his control, and was therefore doomed to act inevitably as he did. If this is so we were as deluded as Napoleon, for within our smaller sphere we seemed to have ample room for manoeuvre in any direction that we chose.

We could expand, contract, or move sideways as we pleased. We could sell dear or cheap, hire and fire our staff to suit ourselves, and modify or change completely the goods we made or the services we offered. As far as any humans could, we made our own decisions, and could only praise or blame ourselves for the result. If this was an illusion, at least it gave us self-reliance and a proper self-respect.

I have used the concept of battle frequently in this book. It was indeed war to the death without mercy in those glorious freebooting days of private enterprise, fortunately not for the owners, but certainly for the businesses they owned. Every year, come boom or slump, hundreds of companies ended the fight in Carey Street.

Nevertheless no blood was shed and remarkably little ill-feeling was aroused. We entered the ring full of eagerness and optimism, but we were quite prepared to be knocked out of it again without compunction by the opposition.

Our incentive was not only the pursuit of wealth and power. Just as strong was the sense of achievement, and the excitement of beating the others to the winning post. It was a game compounded of both skill and chance, with high penalties and high rewards, and we were totally addicted to it. It was in our blood and we failed to understand how others did not want the excitement and the responsibility involved.

But private capitalism, from its very nature, may yet prove to have contained the seeds of its own destruction, - as Karl Marx, for a different set of reasons, told us long ago. In the early days small businesses sprouted naturally and healthily from the grass-roots. The very virtues of the system, however, - self-interest, hard work, initiative, thrift, and the ploughing back of profits, inevitably increased the size of the successful, and under the shadow of these ever mightier trees the new grass-roots found it more and more difficult to flourish.

Simultaneously, private enterprise was being bled white by the cost of well-meant but ruinous social legislation. The entrepreneur had increasingly to play second fiddle to the politician and the bureaucrat. After the middle of the twentieth

century, therefore, opportunities for starting a small business became fewer and had less attraction for the rising generation. Small shops and restaurants, however, continued to flourish, under the care of hard-working immigrants and their families.

The vices and virtues of private enterprise, now extinct in many countries of the world, will be argued out for centuries. Some will say that it was never fair in its rewards as between the bosses and the workers. But is fairness possible under any man-made system, state controlled or otherwise?

Are we now over-obsessed with fairness and equality, to the detriment of variety in our over-protected but less exciting lives? I cannot answer impartially, for I have received far more than my fair share of both the plums and the excitement under the old system during my lifetime.

Beale's of Holloway recedes into the past, an episode in the continuing saga of the family. Four generations minded their business there, and it minded them generously in its turn. At the same time it served the public honestly and well. If I was rude to it earlier and called it an old monster, I apologise. This book is an affectionate tribute to its memory.

Appendices

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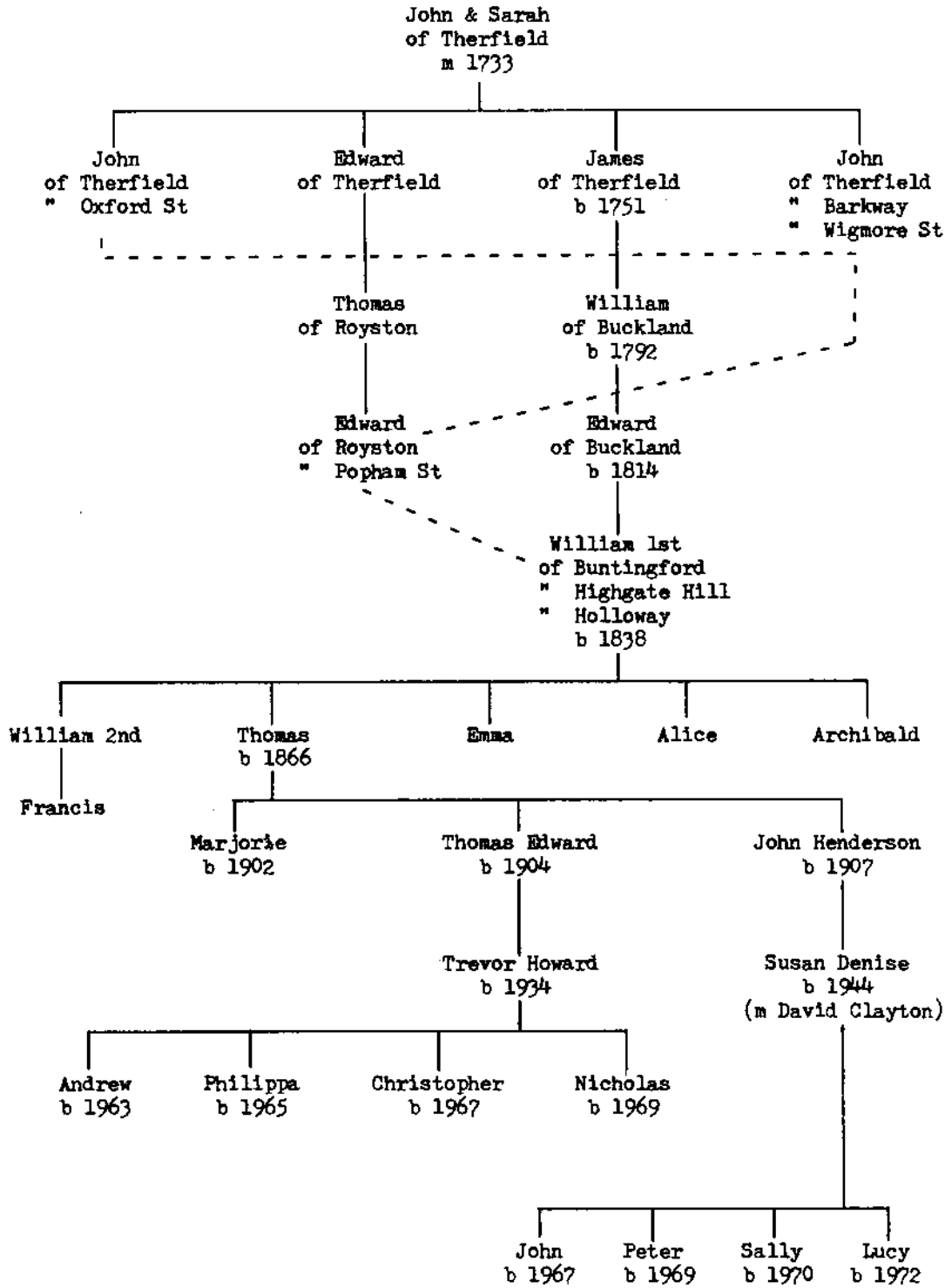
The Beale Family Tree



(Dotted line indicates apprenticeship)

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Grandfather's Testimonial Book

This enormous leather-bound book is embossed on the cover with the date 1866, the year that Grandfather moved from Highgate to Holloway. Gummed to its pages are some fifteen hundred letters of appreciation from customers over the years 1869 to 1937.

Included are letters from every conceivable kind of organisation, - Temperance Societies, Cycling Clubs, Masonic Lodges, Horticultural Societies, Regimental Associations, Mayoral Receptions, Hospital Committees, and City Companies.

Refreshments for funeral parties are acknowledged with black-edged notepaper, the edging up to half an inch wide in Queen Victoria's later years. Letters typed on early typewriter machines appear round about 1903. The first entry reads as follows, -

> This is to certify that Mr Beale, Baker and Caterer, of Highgate Hill, Upper Holloway, and Holloway Road, opposite Camden Road, did serve a Luncheon on the occasion of laying the first stone of St Paul's New Church, Kingsdown Road, Upper Holloway, on June 18th 1869, and gave very great satisfaction to all persons.
>
> (Signed by six members of the Building Committee)

The area covered by the Outdoor Catering Department included most of the suburbs of North London. Cake deliveries by parcel post resulting from the leaflet inserted in the Strand Magazine in 1902 brought letters from further afield.

Easthorpe Rectory, Kelvesdon, Essex
August 1903

> Mrs Mowbray Mason will feel obliged by Messrs Beale's sending her 1 Macaroon Cake 2/-, 1 Tennis Cake 1/8, Total 3/8. She encloses postal order and two stamps for that amount.
>
> Would Beale's care to have their supply boxes back, as Mrs Mason would be very pleased to return them, post paid, two or three at a time, they are nice boxes and must be useful again.
>
> Mrs Mason is very pleased with the cakes and is glad she happened to see the advertisement. If she may say so she thinks it is a pity they do not advertise more, for she knows from experience how sick country people get of the usual run of cakes (even the very best) that are to be had from country confectioners.
>
> Several friends lately have asked Mrs Mason where her cakes have come from and she has given them Beale's name and address.

Curragh Camp, County Kildare, 25/7/04

Dear Sirs,

Please send

2 Orange Cream Gateaux	36 Chocolate Macaroons
2 Violet " "	18 Othello Fingers
2 Shamrock Gateaux	20 Shortbread Rocks
2 Walnut "	28 Raspberry Titbits
1 Chocolate "	18 Coffee Walnut Squares
1 Lemon Cream Gateaux	

I should like to mention that your previous supplies have always given the greatest satisfaction, they being dainty and just the thing for garden parties, race meetings, etc. They are exceedingly well packed and I have never had the slightest cause to complain up to now.

The supply for the Punchestown Races was greatly admired by all present, which was a large party, numbering nearly 200.

Yours faithfully,

H. Bottrill

Officers Mess Caterer,

4th Lancashire Fusiliers.

A letter dated 1917 from a Corporal Newman, serving with the Armed Forces in Salonica, reports that a Beale's fruit cake arrived in perfect condition after six weeks travel, whereas cakes received by 90% of his comrades arrived mouldy.

One of the last entries, in May 1937, was from the Chairman of Potters Bar District Council, giving praise for our catering at the Council's Coronation Dinner.

After the middle of 1937 the Beales of Beacon Hill, newly in the saddle, were too busy to continue pasting in further testimonials.

Extracts from Banquet Diaries 1887 - 1969

1887

A 'Cold Collation' for 40 persons for the sum of £16. Menu as follows, - Fillets of Sole in Aspic, Spiced Beef, Pigeon Pie, Raised Game Pie with Plumage, Roast Fowls, Bechamel Fowls, Ox Tongues, Galantine of Veal, York Ham, Chaudfroid of Partridge, Cotelettes de Volaile a la Creme, Lobster Salad, Plain Salad, Gateaux, Jellies, Creams, Pastries, and Dessert.
Further refreshments were served later. Champagne at 5/6 a bottle.

All-night Ball for Freemasons. Dinner was served at 6 p.m., and Breakfast at 9.30 a.m. 57 staff served 140 guests.

1892

Bohemian Concert for Haberdashers Old Boys Club. 'Large number of ladies, would not allow waiters in for part of time to sell drinks'.

Waiter supplied for Islington Workhouse.

Dinner for 136. 2 dozen clay pipes required. 1 lb Tobacco at 5/4.

1893

Smoking Concert in Hall. 'Very disorderly, fighting on stairs'.

1894

Masonic Meeting and Dinner. Request for 'waiters to wear slippers while getting ready'.

Great Northern Railway Drivers Dinner. 136 at 3/6. 23 gallons ale.

1895

'Old Clo Dances', 'Bachelors Ball'. 'Trilby Dances'.

Private Dance. 'Guests took out lamps from billiards room, also put back clock to deceive us in the time'.

Tea at Finchley. 1250 Children. 140 Teachers. 1300 buns!

Dance for Rifle Brigade at Bunhill Row. 565 at 2/-.

1896

Conversazione at Cripplegate Institute. 770 present.

Musicians for Dance. Cornet, violin, and harp, 16/6 each, to play from 7 p.m. to 4 a.m.

1899

Dance. 5 musicians. 'Cornet must not play too loud'.

Wedding for 200 at Athenaeum. String orchestra to wear evening dress. Detective hired to watch presents.

1901

Magic Lantern Entertainment for Church Lads Brigade.

Hall hired for 'Tableaux Vivants'.

1904

Wedding. Seven carriages and pairs. Coachmen to wear white gloves and fix favours on their whips. Single-horse brougham to take bride and groom to Waterloo Station.

1905

Punch and Judy Show, with Dog Toby. Two shows for 30/-

Waiters report on Garden Party in July. 'Short of sandwiches, jellies melted, otherwise satisfactory'.

1906

Garden Party for 80 at 2/9. 'One ice spoon missing'.

1907

Cinderella Ball for 'Middle Class Defence Organisation'.

1911

Motor Brougham hired for 25/-. (c.f. Pair-horse Carriage 13/6)

1912

Coming of Age Party. 'Delete Claret Cup, add Temperance Trifle'.

Athenaeum Concert in aid of Titanic Relief Fund.

Garden Party for Swedenborg Society. 1,350 coloured glass bucket lamps, Japanese lanterns, acetylene lamps, Royal Artillery Band. 1,082 guests served at 2/-.

Dinner for 31 Dancing Masters at 1/6 per head. (9d per foot)

1913

Concert by Happy Darkies Minstrel Troupe. 'Plenty of washing accommodation required. Own towels. Hot water.'.

1913

Wedding at Crouch Hill. 'Add strawberries and cream at 4d per head'.

1914

Wedding cancelled. 'Bridegroom called to join his regiment'.

Meeting at Athenaeum in aid of Belgian Relief Fund. 'Refugees from Louvain will recount their experience'.

1915

Great Recruiting March. Refreshments for 1,200 men at 10d.

Entertainment for Wounded Soldiers at Canonbury Towers.

1920

Piano Manufacturers Staff Dance. 'Not to be taken again, getting a little disorderly and out of control, so further drinks refused, which was cause for offensiveness and threats'.

Dinner for 23 clergymen. 'Ginger ale and lemonade only'.

1921

Derby Day. A.A.Beale hires a London General Omnibus (Type B) for party of friends to Epsom. Hampers and waiter supplied.

1922

Dinner for Tottenham Master Bakers. 'Booked for 60 persons but 94 turned up. Could not serve satisfactory dinner'.

Shakespearian Lecture at Athenaeum by William Macready.

1924

North Finchley Cricket Club Dinner cancelled due to Tram Strike.

1930

Lunch for Sir William Prescott. 46 guests at 9/6, 13 chauffeurs 3/6.

1935

League of Roses. Prize-giving by Princess Helena Victoria. Red carpet to be laid across pavement.

Dinner Dance. Arthur Askey, entertainer, £1-11-0. 'Pay same night'.

1937

Meeting at Athenaeum. British Union of Fascists. Sir Arthur Mosley.

1938

Women's League of Health and Beauty. Exercises and Tap Dancing.

1940

Bomb damage at Athenaeum. All functions cancelled.

October 14th. 464 lunches served at Holloway, cooked on field kitchen in open yard. Gas supplies cut off.

1943

Warning in diary against letting customers bring in own bride cakes with sugar icing on. Forbidden by law. Beale's bride cakes made with removable white cardboard disc on top to look like icing.

1944

Wedding postponed. 'Army leave cancelled. Invasion of France'.

Heavy damage locally from rocket bombs. Most functions cancelled.

1946

Hornsey Operatic Society Dinner. Band asked to play selections from Vagabond King, Rebel Maid, Bitter Sweet, Rose Marie, and Desert Song.

Wedding for 20. 'No cake, no cars, no music, nothing alcoholic'.

1947

Children's Party cancelled. 'Daughter has measles'.

Many weddings. Eleven in one day.

1949

21st Birthday Party. 'Daughter has inherited £5,000. Waiter to guide proceedings as they do not know the ropes and are anxious'.

Wedding Luncheon. 'Dispute between the two sides of the family, ending in fighting about 10.15 p.m. Policeman called. Not due to drink as little consumed. Bride and groom's families very different types'.

1951

Tzigane Trio plays in ground floor restaurant for Saturday tea trade.

Wedding cancelled. 'Bridegroom did not turn up'.

1955

Dinner Dance for Master Builders Federation. 'Soup spilt on dress of President's wife'.

1955

Carreras Bowling Club Dinner. 'Complained that there were no Carreras cigarettes on sale'.

1960

Protest Meeting by Variety Artists Association against the closing of the Finsbury Park Empire.

1962

Cocktail Party to introduce Mr Trevor Beale to Beale's staff.

1963

Lunch for 'Chaine des Rotisseurs'. (T.E.Beale a member). 35 at 50/-. Menu. Filets des Truits a la Russe, Creme de Volaille Princesse, Filet de Boeuf Marquise, Savarin au Rhum, Petits Fours, Coffee.

Dinner for Home Counties Association of Spiritual Healers. 'Six poached eggs on toast for vegetarians attending'.

1968

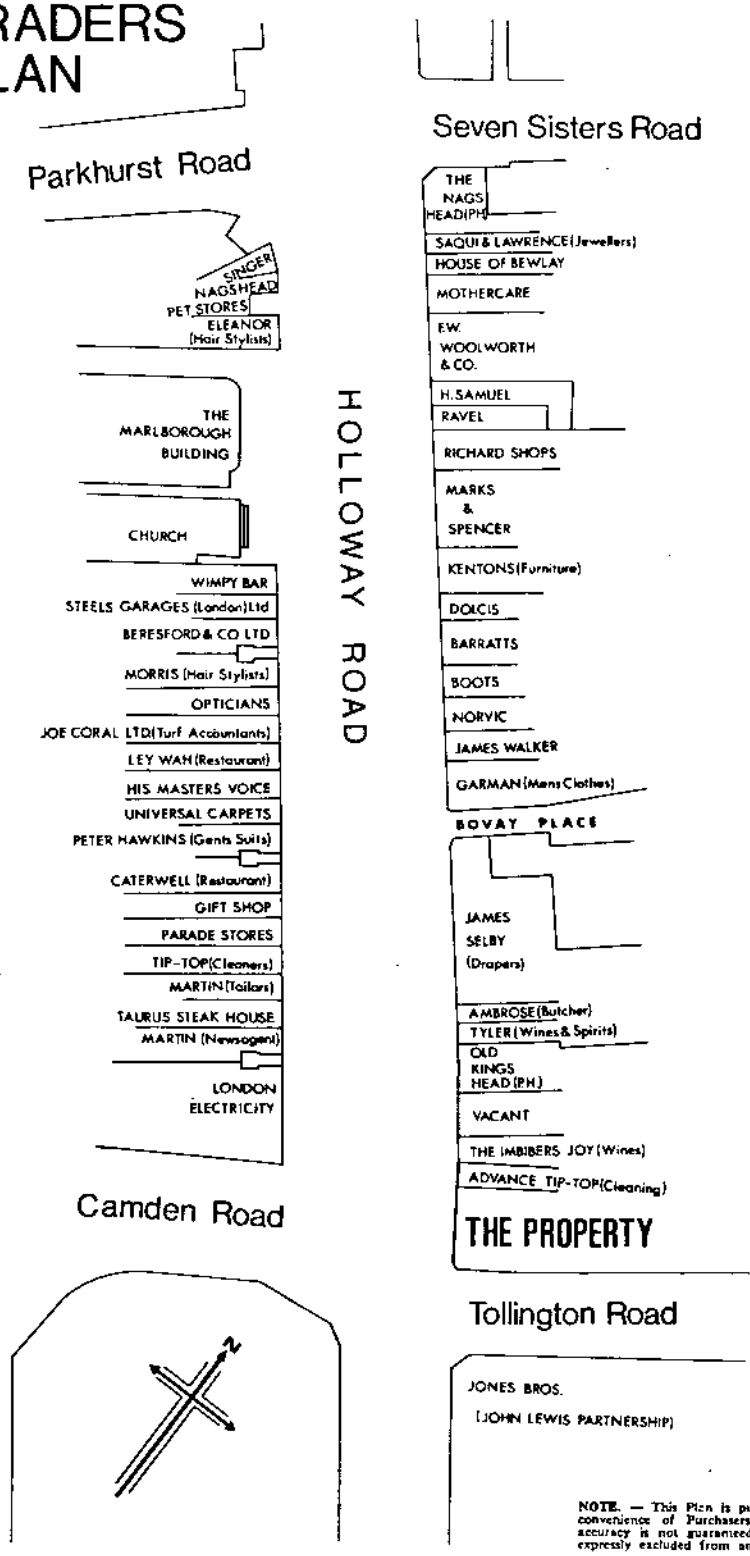
Islington Rotary Ladies Night. 91 at 41/-. Menu. Melon, Turbot Andalouse, Saddle of Lamb, Asparagus, Bouquet of Vegetables, Coffee Parfait, Strawberries, Petits Fours, Coffee.

1969

Dinner given by T.Edward Beale, C.B.E.,J.P., Chairman, to members of the East Central London Magistrates Court. 100 at 30/-. 23 staff to serve.

Saturday March 28th. Last day of Banqueting at Holloway. Six functions catered for, including five weddings. 360 covers served.

TRADERS PLAN



NOTE. — This Plan is published for convenience of Purchasers only. Its accuracy is not guaranteed and it is expressly excluded from any contract.

370, 372 & 374, Holloway Road and 2, 2a, 4, 6 & 8, Tollington Rd. N.
Goods Entrance, Bovey St

London Nov 28th 1904.

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE
No 4745

CONTENTS

To
Messrs Jones Bros
Holloway Rd.N.

Awarded 21 Gold & Silver Medals

Beale's Ltd.

HIGH CLASS

Food Purveyors & Caterers, Cooks & Confectioners.

ASSEMBLY ROOMS AND RESTAURANT.

WINE & SPIRIT MERCHANTS.

TENTS, MARQUEES, AWNINGS.

BRIDE CAKES. A la strata.

Bakery, Grocery, Provisions, Meat, Charcuterie, Poultry, Fruit, Hire. MUSICIANS. ENTERTAINMENTS.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS "DINERUELO, LONDON"
TELEPHONE No 295, NORTH.

Dear Sirs.

re 4 Old Standard Lamps 355/366 Holloway Rd.N.