

FOX BROTHERS OF NEW BUCKENHAM

Peter Fuller

This story is constructed from the 1913 diary and stock book of an initially unidentified cycle shop. The book came into my possession through helping with the clearance of a garage full of old bicycles.

Effectively a time capsule of one year in the life of a Norfolk village, the shop had recorded details of its stock and customers, but tantalisingly nothing of itself and unfortunately no serial numbers. From the addresses of the customers it clearly served the Attleborough area of Norfolk. Incredibly it only took one text message, one phone call and one evening to reach a local historian who not only named the shop from information provided, but also checked with his brother-in-law who had bought his first machine there.

The shop was Fox Brothers, of New Buckenham and Fornett St Peter, Norfolk, 'Cycle and motor agents & repairers; depot for Stars, New Hudsons, Swifts & Royal Enfields; motor spirit, oil and grease'. Once the shop had been identified it was possible to cross-check many of the names and occupations recorded with an on-line Kelly's Trade Directory for Norfolk, 1912.

So the year is 1913. Stainless steel is cast for the first time in Sheffield, Henry Ford has reduced the time to build a Model T to 1½ hours, and ominously, Vickers introduce the Experimental Fighting Biplane No 1, the first aircraft to have a machine gun mounted on it. Even a village as small as New Buckenham lost sixteen sons to the Great War, the stock book list-

THE "TRADER" HANDBOOK & DIARY

FOR

1913

(PUBLISHED ANNUALLY).

COMPREHENDING A VARIETY OF REFERENCES OF USE
AND INTEREST TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
CYCLE AND MOTOR TRADES.

[For Contents and Index to Advertisements, see end of Book.]

Edited by PERCY PETERS.

Price 7/6.

Issued to Subscribers to The "TRADERS" at a Reduced Price.

PUBLISHED BY
THE CYCLE TRADE PUBLISHING CO., LTD.,
19 & 21 WILSON STREET, LONDON, E.

Printed by HUDSON & SON, London & Birmingham.

Fig. 1 Title page of Fox Brothers' *The "Trader" Handbook and Diary* for 1913.

ing five family names that were to appear a few years later on the New Buckenham Roll of Honour.

The diary entries start in February and with it the need to stock up. The shop bought a dozen new cycles that month, three New Hudsons, one each of Model B, C and G for the Fornett St Peter shop, followed by two Calcotts, an 'all Black', a Road Racer and three Champions for 'OT' (own transfer) for New Buckenham. On the 14th two more OT, one gent's, one lady's, and a pair of gent's New Hudsons, a model A and a model 51. Three of these machines were destined for the hire fleet, and trade must have been quiet in the Fornett St Peter shop as two of the cycles appear to have been recalled and sold in New Buckenham.

The rental year had already begun by then in a quiet way, with five machines hired out in January, all ladies' machines, followed by fourteen in February, again all but one were ladies' cycles. The hire fleet included a variety of machines, including New Hudson, All Black, Calcott, Coventry X, Enfield, Hazlewood, OT, Preference, Royal Enfield, Royal Ruby, Rudge, Singer and Triumph.

The sales pattern was rather the reverse of the rental market, with sales of 36 gent's and twelve ladies' cycles passing through the stock book during the year. Clearly the men of New Buckenham bought their bicycles, while the ladies rented theirs. Perhaps the explanation is in the economics of the time?

For the ladies the most popular cycle was a 24" Coventry X that was hired out 19 times in the year, followed by a lady's Hazlewood which went out twelve times. Assuming the minimum rental was one day, the hire charge appears to have been about 6d to 8d per day, with a week usually costing 2s 6d to 3s 6d. Indeed until the middle of March it was the ladies who provided most of the demand for rental machines, which perhaps suggests neces-

RECORD OF MACHINES BOUGHT AND SOLD.				SOLD.		
Stock Number	Date of Purchase	Description of Machine or Car.	Cost Price	Date of Sale	Name of Customer.	Sale Price
48366	Feb 10	Girls New Hudson Model No B26	4 4 6	26/1/13	Mr John Sheringham Sandwich Road Attleboro	
48518	Feb 10	Lady's New Hudson Model 10 C. 22	4 5 6			
47030	Feb 10	Girls New Hudson Model G. 24	4 17 6	17/1/13	Mr Ronald Brown New Buckenham Attleboro	6 15
48544	Feb 11	Lady's Calcott All Black 26"	4 7 6		John Foster	
47416	Feb 11	Girls Calcott Road Racer 24"	4 3 -			
44926	Feb 11	Girls Champion 24 C. 24			Mr A. Ridd Sandwich Attleboro	
44965	Feb 11	Girls Champion 26 C. 24	3 7 6		John Foster	4 -
44955	Feb 11	Girls Champion 24 C. 24	3 7 6		John Foster	

sity rather than pleasure. Mrs Derisley was the best customer during this period, having hired the Coventry X for two weeks and the Hazlewood for a third. Over the year the gentlemen eventually equalled the rental pattern of the ladies, but not until the end of the summer months.

Easter week was extremely early in 1913, Easter Sunday falling on 23 March, one day later than the earliest possible day. In preparation for this event the shop stocked up again in mid-March, buying two each of Cheylesmores, Swifts and Comets, and a single Royal Ruby. Four of these machines went into the hire fleet,

Fig. 2 Page from the stock book listing sales for February 1913.

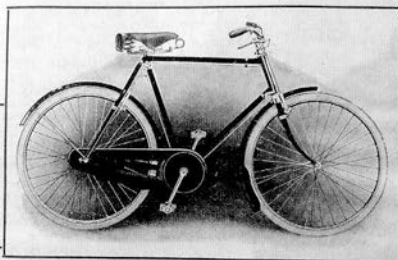
Globe Bicycles

Twenty-Third Year of Popularity.



Each Model
a Marvel
of Value

Patterns to
suit all
Purchasers



The Best
of Everything in
the way of
Equipment
A Guarantee
with every
Globe Bicycle

1913—There is the opportunity for one dealer in each district to make this a year of good business. Let him secure the Agency for the best-built and best-liked of all bicycles—Globe Bicycles—then there will be nothing to worry about. Write for full particulars.

CLARKE, CLULEY & CO., Globe Works, Coventry
THE MANUFACTURERS WHO SUPPLY BONA-FIDE TRADERS ONLY.

Fig. 4 Diary advertisement for bicycles, manufactured by Clarke, Cluley & Co. of Coventry, supplied to bona-fide traders

Bank Holiday week and the Vicar of New Buckenham joining him on a gent's Royal Ruby.

On a couple of occasions we see the maid being sent to hire two machines—usually on a Saturday, and usually 1s each, suggesting a hire for the weekend. The maid at Clowes was sent for two cycles on a couple of occasions, a Triumph being paired first with an Enfield and later with a Singer. The maids at Holt's and at Hall's were also sent for two cycles on single occasions.

Ladies' machines continued to dominate the rental side right through August, Saturdays continuing to be the busy day. Gradually, as we move into September, the balance starts to tip towards the gentlemen—is it fair to assume the harvest was in by then? Saturday 27 September looks like an

organised ride, with Messrs Hewitt, Sadler, Barker, Hunt and Grant hiring Calcott, Royal Ruby, New Hudson, Calcott and Preference, respectively, for the weekend. I wonder where they went on their ride?

October saw the year begin to tail off with 15 rentals leaving the shop, only three of which look like weekly hires. The gentlemen predominated again except for Wednesday 22 October, when four of the ladies appear to have got together for a day out, renting Singer, Hudson, Preference and New Hudson. The ladies provided all but two of the November and December rentals. Mrs Howling and Mrs Robson were hardy and frequent customers as the cycling year came to a close, providing the only two rentals in December, Mrs Howling showing a preference for Preference, Mrs Robson for New Hudson.

Fig. 5 Royal Ruby advertisement from *The Trader* diary. The Ruby Cycle Co Ltd was based in Manchester

recalls going in to the shop to buy something such as a tyre. On asking Mr Fox how much it was, he said "How much have you got?" "Only 2s 6d." came the reply. "That will do!" said Mr Fox. Happy days. The shop was remembered by everyone I have spoken with as a veritable Aladdin's Cave – and this is borne out by Gaze's Auction catalogue listing every item of stock for disposal after the business was wound up in 1960. Fergus Fox had died a short while before.

NEW BUCKENHAM, Norfolk.

AN IMPORTANT DISPERSAL SALE
OF THE COMPLETE STOCK OF

Cycles, Hardware, Tools, Components, etc.

including 1934 Hillman Car, 1935 B.S.A. Motor Cycle
New and Secondhand Bicycles

Large Quantity of Cycle Spares and Components

Garage Equipment including B.E.N. Compressor

New Farm Tools, Hand Tools

Quantity of New Paints, Oils, etc.

Torches, Bulbs, Batteries, Dynamo Lamps, etc.
Shop Fittings.

being the Entire Stock of Messrs. Fox Bros. Stores,
The Green, New Buckenham, which

THOS. W.M. GAZE & SON

Have been instructed to Sell by Auction upon the premises,
by direction of the Executors of the late Mr. F. H. Fox.

On Tuesday, December 20th, 1960

Commencing at 9.30 punctually.

Chartered Auctioneers' Offices: 100 Crown Street, Diss, Norfolk.
(Tel. Diss 2291/2).

PRESSED SHEET STEEL FRAME LUGS.
We make these from sheet steel with a heavy and strong for the use and they are in standard. Complete sets are supplied for Light, Medium and Heavy Duty.

SET OF GENT'S FRAME LUGS.

TOP HEAD LUG. **PITTING HEAD LUG.** **HEAT LUG.**

FRONT FORKS.
Weldless or Braze.
D or OVAL.
TAPER GAUGE OF Plain Gauge for Motor Cycles.
WE UNDERTAKE AND SPECIAL PATENTING TO ORDER.

BRIDGE PIECES AND LOOP STRUTS.
We make these from 1/4" different diameters. 1/4" to 1/2" LUG.

STEERING TUBES.
PLAIN GAUGE OR BUTTED STEERING TUBES.
Turned, Screwed and Slotted, or Turned and Screwed only, or Turned, Screwed and Milled for Lamp Brackets.
To suit B.S.A. Fittings.

WELDLESS STEEL TUBING FOR AEROPLANES.
We supply the leading aeroplanes makers of this country and export from this best standard aeroplanes world using. These apply for our range of special sections, viz. 20 x 30 inches, measured on outside. FREE.

ACCLES & POLLOCK, LIMITED.

Fig. 6 Diary advertisement for the many Accles & Pollock parts available to cycle, motorcycle and aircraft builders in 1913.

Fig. 7 Cover of the auction catalogue for the sale of the entire stock of Messrs. Fox Bros. Stores, held on 20 December 1960.