

Bridlington's Oldest Shop

By Paul Williams



The shop front of Marshall and Son of Bridlington in the 1950s

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Paul Williams laments the closing of H Marshall and Son. Sadly just one of many independent and family run shops in Yorkshire that are closing down due to the decline in trade.



Growing up in the 1960s and 70s my mum, dad, sister and I would visit Bridlington every year for our summer holidays. We would spend a week playing on the beach, eating too much ice cream, browsing the souvenir shops and pretending that the man in the kiss-me-quick hat (my dad) wasn't with us.

One of our regular haunts was H Marshall and Son in High Street, our mother insisting every year that "you can't buy shoes like this at home". So it was with some sadness that I learned about the closure of the shop this year. Established in 1895, the business started life as Marshalls Boot Store with proprietor Fred Marshall selling boots and wellingtons to local farmers from a shop which formed part of his living room. In 1945 Fred's nephew Herbert joined the business at a time when rationing was still in force and coupons had to be used when purchasing shoes. Herbert's son David joined him in the family business aged 10, wrapping up the shoes in brown paper parcels, before joining full time on leaving school. When David was 21 the name of the shop was changed to become H Marshall and son. David's wife Dawn was recruited in 2012, making it a real family affair.



Right: Herbert Marshall joined the business in 1945 after serving in World War 2



Above: The shop in the 1940s when it was called Marshall's Shoe Store.

Fred used to wear a tan coat, just like Ronnie Barker in 'Open All Hours', and when he saw people outside he would go and invite them in. My dad was just the same. Mum used to hate it but my dad would say 'if you never get them in, you'll never know if they'll buy anything!' In the early days dad would deliver wellingtons to farmers in Burton Fleming and Hunmanby on a pushbike."

For David's wife Dawn the decision to close ushers in a new era for the business.

Although the business will continue to trade online (the shop will become offices and warehouse space) the decision to 'close' after 123 years was still a difficult one for David. "It is sad because I have memories of my mum and dad here, and I remember sitting under the long counter when I was little. In its day, this was a great shop. I remember staying open until 8 pm on Christmas Eve because it was so busy and then coming in on Christmas morning to clear all the boxes.

*Right: In the 1950s the shop became
H Marshall & Son*



“In 2014 Herbert retired due to ill health and we tried to update the shop, adding new ranges and modernising the place a little which was a decision we made with our hearts rather than our heads really. We will still continue to serve our customers just in a different way.



Left: To commemorate that Marshall and Son had been trading on the site since the 1800s Beamish Museum, made a mock-up of the store from the 1800s.

It is very difficult to compete with the supermarkets now and this is about bringing the business into the 21st century. We have a history and heritage within the town that we are very proud of but the decision to close rests purely on footfall. Customer numbers have declined and if the footfall isn't there you just can't carry on.”

The mantle of the “Oldest Shop in Bridlington” has now passed on to ladies outfitter Ernest Whiteley and Co in Promenade, a mere infant at 114 years old, but for H Marshall and Son the advent of technology means they will continue to serve customers for a long time to come.

Herbert Marshall sadly passed away barely a month after the shop closed its doors for the final time. The family received many messages of condolence which served as a fitting tribute to a popular and well-respected member of the local community.

Right: David Marshall with three lady assistants in happy days for H Marshall and Son.

