

Shopping in the Past – Teacher notes

Starter Discussion:

- Where do you go for your food shopping? How do you get there? Where do you put the food?

Today we commonly go to the supermarket in the car and put food in the fridge, freezer or cupboards at home

- Do you think shopping was different in the past? Why/why not?

It would have been very different - cars weren't popular until the 1920s-30s, there were no fridges or freezers, there were limited imports from abroad so there was no food like bananas and no ovens or microwaves, tinned food wasn't common until the 1920s.

The Changing High Street (Slides 2 – 11)

Slides 2 – 3 show the shopping lists of Elizabeth Martin of Vervil in December – January 1763.

- Why might she have bought turkey?

For Christmas dinner.

- What foods can you see?

The Martins were a wealthy family so they had wide ranging diet – some of the items on the list are bread, eggs, butter, duck, cake, coffee, oysters and lobster.

- Is the writing hard to read?
- Why are lists like this rare?

People normally throw their shopping lists away.

Food would have been grown on land at home, or else bought in a local market. There were some small shops, but not like we are used to today.

Slide 4 shows receipts for shopping bought in Cardiff. In the past these receipts were handwritten (because there were no tills) and sometimes had a letterhead which told us what the shop sold. These receipts are for a boot and shoe maker, tailor and a woollen draper in the 1830s.

Slides 5 - 6 show the Wellfield Road trade directories between 1895 – 1964. Look at the Trade Directory for 1895. This is a list of houses (they are normally houses if it is just a name stated). There were very few shops at this time.

- Compare the directory for 1895 with 1910 – what is the difference?

There are now some shops – for example a boot maker, fruiterer and a baker.

- Why do you think this is?

The population of Cardiff is growing and people need to buy goods so many of the houses are being converted into shops.

The Directory for 1924 shows even more shops opening such as a confectioner, milliner, boot maker, newsagent, fishmonger and a poulterer.

- What sort of shops can you find in the 1964 trade directory?

There is now a bank, wines and spirits shop, jeweller, hairdresser, wool shop and a carpet shop.

Slides 7 – 8 show building plans for Wellfield Road for 1913 and 1926 and show how the houses in Wellfield Road were being changed into shops. The farthest left plan on Slide 7 shows what the ground floor looked like originally and the middle plan shows how it will change the front lawn and parlour into a shop area.

Slides 9 – 11 These are photographs of shops on Queen Street and St Mary's Street at the end of nineteenth and early twentieth century.

- What can you see in these photos?

Slide 9 shows a toy shop in Morgan Arcade. There are dolls, push along toys, skipping ropes, teddy bears hung up on the shop front. The shop assistants are dressed in long skirts and white blouses.

Slide 10 shows Peglar's hardware store. There are tin baths and tin buckets hanging up outside. They also sell food items with cheese and butter advertised.

There are lines on this photo because the glass plate negative smashed.

Slide 11 shows an ironmonger selling things like buckets, rolls of wallpaper, garden spades and coal skuttles (buckets). Another photo is of Frank's confectioners which sold cakes and piles of sweets to tempt customers. The butchers has meat hanging up outside! They also had grocery cans piled up and bags of potatoes.

- How different are they from our shops today?

We don't have items hanging outside as often. This was done to advertise products, now we have magazines and TV adverts. Some of us prefer to go to one shop and buy everything, at this time everyone had to get different things from different shops. Shops closed early on Wednesdays and were closed all day on Sunday.

Home delivery (Slides 12 – 15)

Slide 12 This is a baker's delivery book for a family in 1930-31. They could place weekly orders for bread, fancy bread, flour and confectionery.

Slides 13 – 15 These are delivery carts. Dorothy Café had lots of carts to deliver bread and cakes all over Cardiff (slide 14). They started as carts pulled by horses but changed to motorised vans as motor travel became more popular.

- Do we have home delivery today?

We can do internet shopping and get the shopping delivered. Lots of people use this because it is easier and saves time.

- Why do you think people had shopping delivered in the past?

There were no cars or transport to start with. In the Victorian period and even up to the 1950s lots of shops would deliver goods to your house. Bakers, greengrocers, butchers would all deliver to your house. There were also milk carts where you could bring out a jug and ladle milk in, later this became milk men who delivered bottles of milk. The wealthy would have had all groceries and goods delivered to their houses.

Cardiff City Centre (Slides 16 – 22)

Slide 16 is a photograph of St Mary's Street in 1892 showing how busy it was becoming.

Slide 17 is a photograph of the entrance to Cardiff Market Hall in the 1890s. It is still there today. You can see the scaffolding suggesting new shops are being built around it

Slide 18 An advert for porters from 1863 - if you went shopping in the Market you could hire a market porter to carry home your shopping.

Slides 19 – 21 These are photographs of newly established department stores (Seccombes and Howell's) in the 1920s and 30s.

- Can you name a department store in Cardiff today?

Howells, John Lewis, Debenhams, etc.

- What can you see in the photographs?

Most things were in cabinets, the shop assistants would fetch what you wanted. There are chairs for you to sit on while you made your purchases. They also sold a lot of haberdashery and fabric for people to make their own clothes or send them to a tailor or dressmaker. There weren't as many mass produced items at that time.

Slide 22 shows Seccombes in the 1950s.

- What might be happening here?

This is a queue for the January sales – people have always loved finding a bargain!

Slide 23 Howell's Census from 1911 shows that lots of people actually lived over the shop. There were 140 people living there to work in the department store in roles such as salesmen and women, milliners and dressmakers.

Queen Street, St Mary Street and High Street were the main shopping streets developing at the end of the nineteenth century. They are still popular today. As the twentieth century progressed people had more money so they started to shop for leisure as well as for necessity.

Cafes and Treats (Slides 24 – 31)

Slides 24 – 27 These are photographs of the Dorothy Cafe and the Dutch Cafe in High Street and Queen Street. Both opened at the end of the nineteenth century when there was a growth in new cafes and restaurants.

- What can you see in these photographs?

These show the inside of the cafes and bakery, where you could buy cakes and bread to take home or sit in and have tea and cake. You can see the freshly made cakes and bakers covered in flour outside the bakery.

Slide 28 Advertising posters on Queen Street around 1895.

- Can you see what they are advertising?

Grate polish, beds, oatmeal, Roath furnishing company, umbrellas, etc.

Slides 29 – 30 Toblerone adverts from 1924. The packaging hasn't changed.

Slide 31 A list of popular sweets

- Do you recognise any of these sweets? Have you ever tried any of them?

Barley sugar, aniseed balls, bon-bons, marshmallows, macaroons, toffee, rock, etc.

World War II and Rationing (Slides 32 – 36)

- Shopping became difficult in World War II; do you know why?

Cardiff was bombed to stop supplies coming in from abroad so things such as food were limited.

- If there wasn't as much food as usual, what do you think happened?

The Government introduced rationing so that everyone got an equal share.

Slides 32 – 33 These show a ration book. People were only allowed to go to certain shops to collect their food. Once they got their weeks' worth of food, it was marked in the ration book so everyone got the same amount.

Slide 34 This is an extract from the Ninian Park School log book; it mentions gifts from the US. 'The gifts comprised boxes of sweets and games'.

- Why do you think games and sweets would have been such a special gift in the war?

We didn't have many sweets or toys here due to shortages and rationing. Sweets were rationed until 1953, a long time after war had ended in 1945.

- What else could people do to get themselves more food?

Slide 35 This is a leaflet for the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. These show the government's plans to encourage people to grow their own food in their gardens or allotments so there was more to eat.

Slide 36 This is a notice for the 'Wild Fruit Crop' campaign where children were encouraged to pick wild fruit and make jam at school.

- Do you think it was only food that was rationed?

No – other supplies such as paper, soap, clothing, etc were also rationed.

The 1960s (Slides 37 – 45)

Slides 37 – 41 A collection of photographs showing the David Morgan Department Store in the 1960s. Perhaps your parents and grandparents remember David Morgan's.

- What can you see in these photographs?

The toy department with dolls cribs, Christmas crackers (more choice than today), train sets, Christmas window display – what games are being advertised?

Slide 42 These are colour photographs of Howells in 1965 to celebrate its 100th anniversary. It shows the perfumery department.

Slides 43 – 45 These are clothing adverts from the 1960s. There are adverts for school uniforms and children's clothes. The scooter (slide 45) looks similar to ones we have today.

- Does your uniform look like this?
- Do you like the children's clothes that are advertised?

Plenary Ideas:

- Which time would you have preferred to shop in – Victorian times (when there were no typical shops), 1920s, World War II or the 1960s. Why?
- Tell me one thing you have learnt today.
- Tell a partner one new word you have learnt and explain what it means.

Possible activities based on this workshop:

- Find out what these jobs are – Milliner, Cobbler, Draper, Confectioner and Ironmonger. Which would you like to be? Why?
- Draw a bird's eye view map of a shopping street in the 1920s - 30s. What kind of shops would be included?
- Make a display showing how much food you were given for a week's ration. Include some typical meals or recipes (for example Woolton Pie or carrot cookies). Would you have enjoyed these? Would it be enough food for you? What food from today would you miss?
- Design an advert for one of the department stores in Cardiff in the 1960s. What can you buy there? Why should people shop there?