

## The Chemist's, Mrs Jank, 32 Eltisley Avenue (1907)



**History.** This corner has known a series of changing trades since the completion of the South side of Eltisley Avenue in 1907. By 1910, Mr A.E. Mason was trading at No.32 as a fruiterer and florist. A photograph [see below] of the early 1920s shows the word '*British Wines*' written over the door, continuing with '*British Foreign Fruit & Vegetables*' elegantly written in Gothic font, on each side of Mr Mason's name above the shop window.<sup>1</sup> In 1927, a Mr A. Weekes acquired the business subsequently selling it to a Mr Woods in 1932, whose assistant undertook deliveries around Newnham on a motorscooter with a side car. Once local demand was met Woods acquired two vans and extended his deliveries to encompass Cambridge and the villages. In the late 1930s Mr James proprietor of the neighbouring No.31 died, and Woods acquired the premises but continued to run two separate businesses at Nos.31 and 32. He was still supplying The Bridge Hotel at Clayhithe near Waterbeach in 1966. Upon retirement, Woods leased both premises, No.32 continuing as a greengrocery under a Mr E. Denton from 1969 to 1970, and thereafter under Mr W. Cooper (nicknamed as 'Snowy' on account of his shock of white hair or wig). In 1973 No.32 was further split into two units with the right-hand one becoming a clock mender, trading as Timecraft, where Mrs Jank's is now located, Cooper's carrying on in the left-hand corner unit, where the original Mason's had been.

Mrs Jank took ownership of the former clock mender's part of No.32 in 1982 to set up a dispensing chemist's whilst Mr Cooper continued his greengrocery business on the corner. 'Snowy' Cooper ceased trading in 1996 and his part of the premises became residential. The presence of a vegetable shop added to the village atmosphere on this key corner and balanced the butcher's premises diametrically opposite on Grantchester Street. Mrs Jank continues to trade from her premises as a chemist's.



Eltisley Avenue ca. 1920 with Mason's fruiterers in the foreground (Cambridgeshire Collection, Cambridge City Library)

<sup>1</sup> Cambridgeshire Collection B. Elt. K2/18511 & Spalding 1910

**Architecture:** The frontage is unaltered since its early days and is well maintained by Mrs Jank. The conversion of the adjacent former greengrocery to residential use has been fairly sympathetic in that it largely recalls the shop front. But the sash windows have been replaced by partially fixed windows. The two storey store to the left seems to be a subsequent 1930s addition, which mars this very important corner. The photograph referred to above shows evidence of a fence and garden in this position.

**Importance to the Community:** The Chemist's shop has been an indispensable service to Newnham residents for 35 years. The elderly particularly appreciate it as there is a disabled bay outside. Mrs Jank provides ready advice, as well a huge range of health foods, eco-friendly laundry products, toys, sewing kits and so forth. The atmosphere is cosy and inviting. The loss of such a shop would be devastating; it is quintessential that it continues to be supported and not decimated by cuts. Mrs Jank is seriously concerned that the withdrawal of the annual grants from the NHS unless reversed could undermine her business. The government proposal to cut costs by allowing pharmacy technicians on low salaries to issue prescriptions rather than proper pharmacists with their 5-year training would compromise patient safety. Indeed, pharmacists save the NHS money for by advising patients with minor ailments such as colds and cuts, or the need for an antibiotic, instead of their visiting the doctor's needlessly or going to A&E.

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on behalf of South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum  
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(Photos by T. Elliott unless otherwise specified)