

The Derby Stores, 26 Derby Street (from 1881)



History: By 1881 Mr Henry William Hunt was trading at from this corner premises as a millwright and general storekeeper until Mr John Glasscock took over in 1886 to trade as the Fly & Hackney cab company as well as obtaining a licence to serve alcohol and traded as the Derby Arms. From 1891-94 Mrs Ann Hyland followed and then from around 1884 Mrs Sarah Lakin took over the licence and added the trades of grocer and tea dealer¹. She is still there in 1913². She would sell a cupful of jam for 1d (penny). By the '20s Mr Challis was in charge, followed by Mrs H. Pocock in the 1950s. Mr & Mrs Callan ran the business from 1973 to January 1987³.

By the mid 1990s or so, the Derby Stores was in the safe hands of the Singhs who have run it with their indefatigable and versatile team. They have transformed this corner shop to become a focal point for Newnham residents in search of traditional and unusual foods, and the Singhs have correspondingly broadened their range of goods. The store is stocked from floor to ceiling with a wide array of delicatessen, wines & spirits, kosha foods, with fresh fruit and vegetables displayed enticingly on the pavement. Neera's own home-made curries have proved very popular. Services provided are: to take in dry cleaning, the post office services taken over from the former owners at No.21 Grantchester Street and banking services. When Mike and Marion Richards retired from running the original post office at 21 Grantchester Street in 2000, the Singhs took over the business from the Derby Stores so as not to let the Newnham community down. With it came a full panoply of stationery, pens, wrapping paper, cards and calendars.

Architecture: The broad appearance of the shop retains the outlines of the old shop. A fixed window has taken the place of the original corner door keeping its diagonal orientation. It provides space for advertisements by locals and tradesmen. A projecting modern post office sign is displayed on both the North and the West aspects and the words 'Post Office' painted white on green on the fascia board. Projecting on the corner itself is a naked corner pole which would have carried the Derby Arms sign. The appearance of the shop might be enhanced by reinstating the use of the pole with a new sign bearing the current name of the shop and removing one of the protruding Post

¹ Spalding's Directory, 1913, p. 117

² *Newnham* by John A. Gray, Cambridge, 1977, p.31

³ *History of St Mark's*, Part 2, 2000

Office signs. The green and white awning over the vegetable stand lends further character to the otherwise rather dull aspect of Newnham Croft Street.

Importance to the Community: The Derby Stores is a key shop in a key location in Newnham. The Derby Stores' broad range of services are available all the hours the shop is open, from about 7am to 7pm, and about 3 pm on Sundays. Thus when the central post office is shut on a Sunday or in the evening, customers can draw money, including foreign currency or send parcels. Without such a comprehensive service, Newnham would be in severe difficulties, especially the elderly, whose shopping staff often help carry. It is a place where shoppers feel at home, gossip with each other and exchange banter with the staff. As with all the other shops in Newnham, staff address shoppers by name, most important to foster the sense of belonging. They will order items where possible and set them aside.

T. Elliott
On behalf of South Newnham Neighbourhood Forum
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(photos by T. Elliott unless otherwise specified)