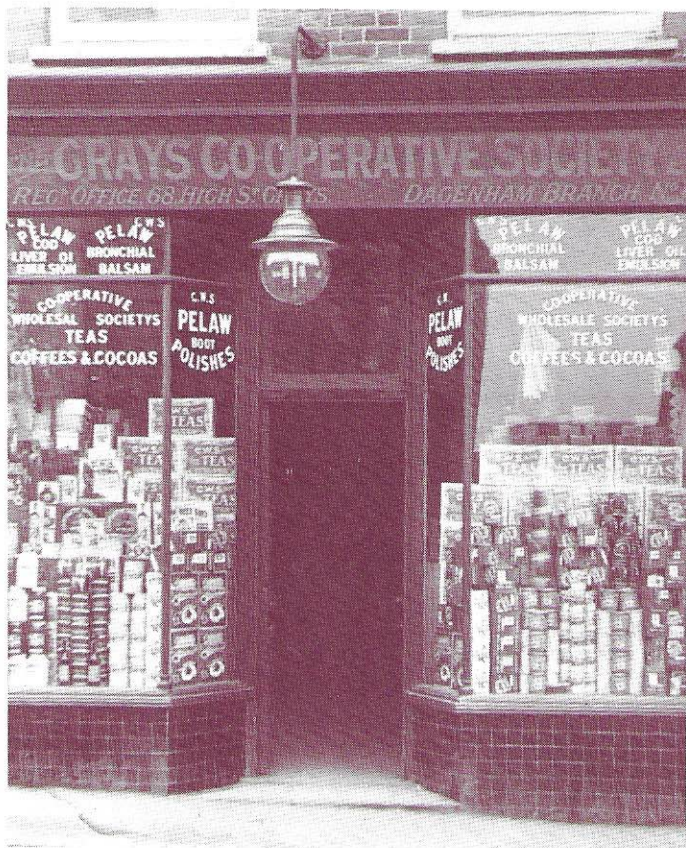


The Co-op shop

The Co-op shop was the Co-op Shop. It was quite a meeting place. When I first came down to live here, thirty years ago, we all used to meet and have a chin-wag outside the Co-op shop.



The shops were of course small — they weren't the big emporiums that there are today and they weren't all that outward going at all.

The Womens Guild, throughout the London Area, I can't speak about the provinces, but they were the mainstay of the Society because they were the shoppers. In those days, if their kids were sick, they had to be sick because they didn't have enough money to pay a doctor's bill. And it was the mothers that went without, because the fathers had to be kept fed. They had to have what was going in case there was a job, so that they would be able to do it. And the children also got it. When I think what we got for three of us in the middle 30's, my daughter was born in 1930, we had 27s 6d per week. You see that was half a crown to keep a child. And no way could you keep a child on half a crown. I had a very good mum in Glasgow and if ever anybody was coming down, she would send me, you know, some beef and some sausage and some black pudding. Things like this. But people did suffer. They went without. We went without. The things that we accept now, and quite rightly as necessities, well they were luxuries in the 1930's. It took a war which is terrible — it took a war to put men and women into employment. It took a war to massacre people and make jobs and put food into the mouths of men, women and children.


You didn't choose your own stuff. You stood at the counter and waited for an assistant to come along and serve you. It might have been longer, but it was certainly more friendly than the shops are now.



All the goods had to be weighed out. They all came in great big sacks and it was service from behind the counter.

I don't think it is true that Co-op prices are high — certainly I didn't find it so when I was a housewife, shopping for a family, although they do say that, don't they? And I'm sure my mother didn't. She wouldn't have bought from there if she'd thought the Co-op was dear. My mother joined the Co-op in 1916 because she thought the Co-op dished out the rations and the supply goods in the fairest possible way. They didn't keep them under the counter and so on. And although she wasn't hard up, she'd been brought up to look at every penny twice and then of course after my father died, which was in about 1932, she was living on practically nothing. She had a pension of 10s a week and what she could make from charring and so on and so she had to look at every penny twice and she wouldn't have gone anywhere where the goods were dearer.

What it used to mean was, this was your shop, you were proud of your shop and any profit that was made you got back in dividend. It was your shop, — you haven't got the same feeling when you go into a Co-op shop now. But I still prefer to shop at the Co-op. I feel more at home in a Co-op store. There's a feeling about it — you feel that its your shop.



Always welcome! The crispness, the light flakes, the creamy flavour—what a glorious finish to any meal.

Made by the C.W.S. at Crumpsall and Cardiff. Sold by Co-operative Societies only.

CRUMPSALL CREAM
CRACKERS

I was brought up in the Co-op. I buy everything in the Co-op, I was brought up that way — Labour and Co-op. It's in your blood.



In those days it was the stores. And you had the big stores and the little stores. The big stores were 54 Maryland Street which still remains the Headquarters, because the London Co-op grew from the Stratford Great Eastern Railway Works. And there was a little shop on the corner more than a hundred years ago which developed into the great London Co-op Society with its millions of members. And there was the big stores. The departmental stores. On Fridays, after the pay day, if you did shopping you went down there. And when I was a member of the Childrens Circle we had childrens magazines called "Our Circle" and we used to go down on a Friday night between six and eight where the shopping was to sell these at a penny a time for funds. Then there was the little stores, that was in Forest Lane, just round the corner from where we lived, which was just a small corner shop, sold bread

and milk and a few groceries and things of that sort so that as a kid, the errands when you came home from school would more likely be the "little stores" where you had to get another half pound of margarine or whatever it was, whereas the "shop" was always the "big stores".

SHOPPING

When I stay with Aunt Jane
I don't like shopping days.
Through cold or snow or rain
Down different streets and ways,
She hurries me, — oh such a race;
Each shop seems in a different place.

But at my home we know
A different kind of shop
And that is where we go;
We call it the Co-op!
For it sells everything together;
So wet or fine's all the same weather!

And more, — it is so gay;
There is such a lot to see,
On Mummy's shopping day,
I'm never dull, not me!
I think perhaps the Fairies knew
We'd like that shop, and so it grew

By Ethel Talbot

From the Young Folks Page of the CWS Magazine
"The Wheatsheaf" — September 1930.



Everything from the Co-op

I never bought anything outside the Co-op if I could possibly help it. I really was a real Co-operator actually. My family of course used to pull my leg, because, well.... "No she wouldn't have that, 'cos its not out of the Co-op".

The first time I came in contact with the Co-op was way back in 1915. Someone told my mother that they'd got some sugar at the Co-op so I went to line up to get the sugar for mother. When it came to "What's your number?" I was flummoxed, so I says 826 — the number of my house. And I got 2lb of sugar on me house number.

We went to a quarterly meeting once, he was moving a resolution or something or other and I got up to speak about this and my father in law got up and said, "I'm ashamed of my daughter in law" he said, "because she bought.... now what was it I bought, not in the Co-op. He wouldn't hesitate to show me up anywhere on the Co-op.

I used to feel guilty and sometimes I told a white lie and said I'd got it from the Co-op when I didn't, but I always had that feeling that I must get it from the Co-op. All Guildswomen did. And no matter what the weather, you'd go to meetings — to the Guild.

We did all the shopping at the Co-op. And our washing — and that was delivered. It was called for and delivered. The bread was called for and delivered.



Breadroundswoman delivering to 10 Downing Street in 1929, when the first Labour Government was in office.

We used to say in the Society that it looked after you from birth to death. You could buy your baby clothes, all your chemistry when you are preparing to have a baby, you could buy your wedding ring, you could buy your toys for your children. All their clothes, all your own clothing. Then through life there was all your household goods, most of the furniture in this room has come from the Co-op. And when you finally come to die, you can be buried by the Co-op.

I was learning all the time, obviously, and on a rare occasion, I would go up to London to a conference if my husband was on night shift, you know to see to our Ken, that he was home from school and I used to look at all those women on platform — aren't they clever, you know, up at Leman Street, aren't they clever, you know, knowing all about everything and of course they were all campaigning to buy CWS goods. I began to look at myself.... did I buy this at the Co-op, you know, did I buy that at the Co-op.... that sort of thing. — me shoes. Anyway, that was it, so of course that was the start. It sowed the seed and I started to buy everything at the Co-op and then of course, I became 100%.



I've been a good Co-op member. I don't think I've bought much anywhere else. They always used to say they used to take it out of me sometimes and say "Ooh we ain't 100% like you!" But it didn't worry me. We used to buy all our shoe leather and everything. We used to spend all our money in the Co-op.

My mother wouldn't have shopped anywhere but the Co-op. Not for our groceries, not for our shoes, not for our school clothes, or anything. Everything was from the Co-op — it had to be from the Co-op. so in her heart she was a Co-operator.

My mother had a neighbour, and she called the doctor in to her little girl — they gave her a prescription and she came to see if I would go and get it, but she said "Don't go 'till after 2.00 o'clock because the Co-op doesn't open till 2.00". This was the chemist, she didn't want it from..... this is the kind of dedicated Co-operators that there were.

BRISLINGTON BUTTER

In addition to "Friary" Butter, of which the brand is shown above, the C.W.S. has the following choice varieties, blended at Brislington, and consistent in their quality: "Avondale," "Daisymead," "Mayflower," "Devon Shape Rolls," "Special Line," and "Mayville."

Other Productions: "Friary" Lactic Cheese and Cream.



The loyalty to the Co-op in those days was terrific. They had a shoe department that sold very good shoes, Wheatsheaf. The coal was always good. Their meat was good and the bread was delivered..... The prices were comparative and of course the Co-op always delivered your groceries — my mother for years just wrote out a grocery list, and they used to collect that grocery list — the baker would collect the book, take it into the shop and the groceries were all delivered which was a great help you see. You didn't have to pay at the time. You went up and paid your grocery bill when it was convenient at the office. That was one of my duties always to go up and pay the grocery bill.

That's one thing I can say — I practise what I preach. Nobody would see me coming out of Marks & Spencer or any of those other shops — International or whatever.

Mother was of that generation where you were a member and you were loyal and you didn't shop anywhere else for anything.

Mother came into the Co-op via my father. Father was a Shop Steward for the NUR. He insisted that — because this had started with railwaymen — that mother when they got married must join the Co-op, shop at the Co-op.

That was one of the things the Guildswomen practised — that you must buy Co-op goods you see. Although we did of course occasionally buy Cadbury's chocolate or something — step over the line and have a bar of Cadbury's chocolate!

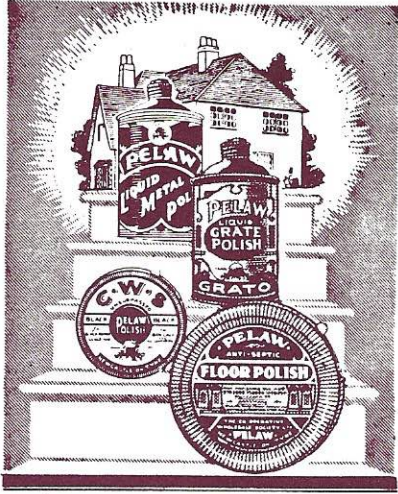
If you'd been steeped in all this, you realised the importance of it. Now if I go to Sainsbury's, I feel like I am an alien going into any other shop. And I'm always thinking in the back of my mind that I really shouldn't. I get a guilty conscience about it.

I was married in 1915 and the first week I was married my husband said to me "Here's £1.00 — I want you to go and join the Co-op." Before that I knew nothing about the Co-op. He said "I want you in future to do all your shopping at the Co-op."

I got married in 1927 — I married a Trade Unionist — a very active trade unionist and he said to me "Well what money we have I'd like you to trade at the Co-op." "As a Trade Unionist, I'd like my money, when you shop to shop in the Co-op". So I thought well that's fair enough.

I've been in the Co-op now for about 60 years. When I was single I got my trousseau out of the Co-op.

There was Pelaw Polish PELAW — that was the boot polish, there was Co-op Lutona cocoa, Redseal and Silverseal margarine, now what was the soap powder? I can't remember what that was. That had a special name. We used to have competitions in the Guilds taking along the labels and cutting out the actual name and people would be guessing, I mean if you saw Co-op adverts in the paper you would take out the actual names, put them on a sheet and people would guess what they were. We've had many a time doing that—you hoped you were helping members to remember which were the biscuits and which were the various Co-op products. There was Desbeau which was the corsetry and the underwear from the Desbeau factory, and what was the name of the shoes? They had a special name for the shoes. Wheatsheaf shoes, that's right, Wheatsheaf shoes. And for every product they really had a different name. Now it's all Co-op isn't it.



**FOUR STEPS TOWARDS
A BRIGHTER HOME**

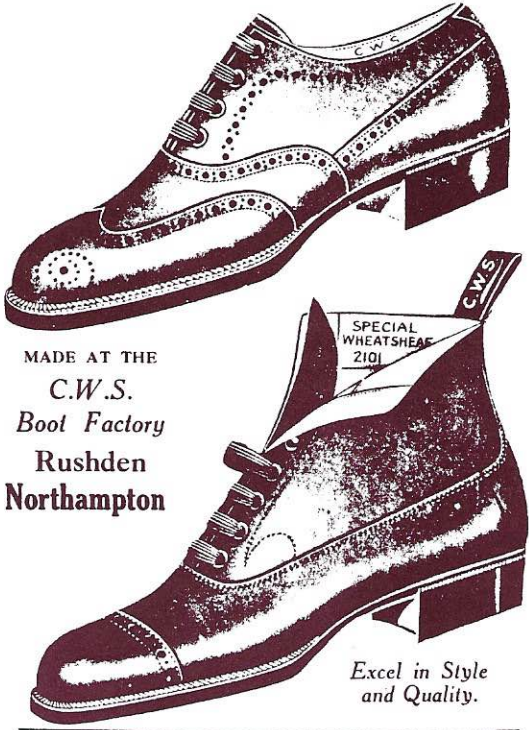
*Made in your own works at Pelaw-on-Tyne, and
sold by Co-operative Societies only.*

**C.W.S.
PELAW POLISHES**

In those days you didn't believe in the Post Office, you had a Co-op bank book. My mother had a number, and when I was old enough to have a share book, I had my own share number. And we never thought of going anywhere else because if we bought anything at the Co-op you knew it was A1, the best you can buy. Their footwear and leatherwear, all your clothes, all my children always had Co-op clothes because you knew you got value for your money. Whatever you paid for you knew that that was going to last.

You would never dream of going anywhere else but the Co-op to do your shopping. I would have died rather than be seen by any of my Guild members coming out of a place like Marks & Spencer, or another butchers. I've still got those sorts of feelings.

**WHEATSHEAF WELTED BOOTS
AND SHOES FOR GENTLEMEN**



MADE AT THE
C.W.S.
Boot Factory
Rushden
Northampton

*Excel in Style
and Quality.*

THEY STRIKE THE EYE

One thing I was always very proud of was the Wheatsheaf Leather. You couldn't beat it — you couldn't beat the Wheatsheaf shoe leather.

When my mother bought me shoes, before she looked at the top she looked at the sole. And if it hadn't got the Wheatsheaf on it, you couldn't have it. You had to have a Wheatsheaf soled shoe. They were the best. You see, the Wheatsheaf was the symbol of the Co-op. When I got to be a teenager and had my own money to buy my own shoes — we sat in the shoe shop and we rowed and I wouldn't have them. We quarrelled over the shoes because they had no Wheatsheaf on them. "But, I'm paying for them". "I don't care" my mother said, "You're having Co-op shoes". So we came out of the shop and I had Wheatsheaf shoes in the end.

**C.W.S. Herrings
in
Tomato**



This is a most Nourishing Dish with a Delicate Flavour that has made "Jennie" popular everywhere.

Ask at the Co-operative Store for the "Jennie" Brand from the C.W.S. Cannery at Yarmouth.

Like "JENNIE" acknowledged the Best!

When I looked there were 70 odd cartons in my cupboard that had Co-op on it. All Co-op products. It was important to a Guildswoman, a real Guildswoman and a Co-operator, that she only bought Co-operatively made goods. I suppose we were forerunners of people who run consumer associations today. And it was true that the quality of co-operatively produced goods was better than most outside companies. We had all our goods — jellies, soaps, all kinds of soaps — I have a piece of soap upstairs called Congress soap a hard block that was CWS soap, to this day.

C.W.S SOAPS

LOW IN PRICE
HIGH IN QUALITY


C.W.S SOAPS



ABSOLUTELY PURE

IRLAM MANCHESTER
DUNSTON, SILVERTOWN

FOR PERFECT GRACE & FREEDOM



**DESBEAU
SPIRAL CORSETS**

MADE BY THE C.W.S. AND SOLD BY CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES ONLY

There was a competition to see how many Co-operative goods you've got in your cupboard and I remember counting them up and they come to 72. You see there's spices — there was butter which was in the dairy section which had come from CWS in New Zealand, there was Co-operative margarine — Silverseal, Redseal. There was SPELL which was CWS detergent that was the first detergent the CWS had. Jellies, sweets of all kinds, flour and it soon built up. What I'm saying is Guildswomen took pride in it — that they only used CWS.

Celebrations to mark the opening of the Grays Co-op Bakery, May Day 1897



