

The Hythe 1948 - 1961

My early years were spent at 97 Hythe Hill, a white weather-boarded building incorporating a substantial house and shop, renovated before my parents opened for business in 1947, and situated at the bottom of Hythe Hill. I fondly remember this characteristic building with its double fronted display windows, which Dad used to dress on alternate Monday evenings, and also the huge oak beam running the entire length of the shop. Inside, the rooms were connected by low and narrow wooden doors which were secured by a latch or large knob. Whilst the ground floor was generally even, having been lovingly restored by Mum and Dad, the upstairs floors sloped in all directions.

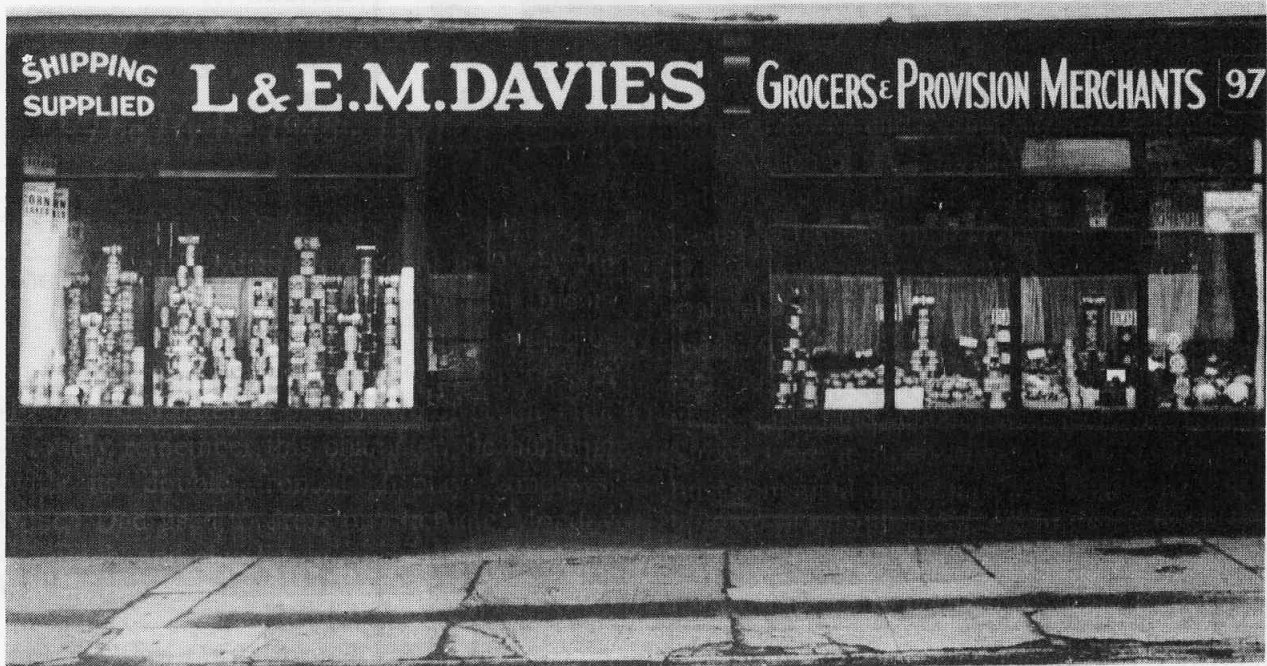
Happily, this listed building still stands although much of its early character has sadly gone. It is very fortunate that this fine old building survived since, during our occupancy, there was a huge blaze at Frank Pertwee & Sons Grain Merchants nearby which, for a while, threatened to engulf us all. The Fire Brigade spared no effort, and soon had the blaze under control, the time of threat then passed, but not before my parents had their entire brood and most cherished belongings collected

together for an early escape from the flames.

Much of the provisions were delivered in bulk, potatoes and vegetables were in sacks, bacon had to be boned and sliced ready for display, whole cheeses had to be skinned and cut manually. Large brass scales and weights were used to weigh greengrocery, smaller scales were used to weigh sweets sold from large glass jars, and chocolates such as Quality Street, were in open tins; large tins with glass lids contained loose biscuits. Bars of chocolates were piled high in straight lines below the cigarette display. Occasionally my brother and I were allowed to help ourselves to a chocolate before returning to school after lunch.

Thursday and Saturday afternoons were early closing days. On Saturday we would often go on a family outing to the coast and on Thursday evenings I would sometimes help Dad prepare and pack orders ready for delivery to customers on Friday evenings.

Some of the regular customers did not live locally, they were the cooks from the boats which came into the Hythe Quay to deliver or collect goods, such as petrol, coal, grain or timber. The Ships Chandlers, Francis and Gilders, who had an office at 93 Hythe Hill, would let my Father know when a boat was expected so that he was prepared for a customer wanting a very large order at short notice. At times the boats would come into the quay, unload their



The Shop at 97 Hythe Hill