

From 1900 right up until the late 1990s, the shop on the corner, next to the *Golden Lion*, was known as the paper shop. Frank Rowe was born above the shop in 1896. At that time it was the Conservative Reading Room where the *Morning Post* was always delivered daily and often read aloud by one of the local fishermen who could read to many of the others who could not.

Frank Rowe's family moved out when he was a boy and the Donnithorne family took over the premises, opening a shop and selling newspapers. In the early 1920s, the Thomas family took over and then Frank Rowe married and returned "home" to take over the business in the mid 1920s. A tobacconist, newsagent and confectionery shop, it was run for the next fifty years by the Rowe family – Frank and Kate Rowe for twenty-five years and their sons for a further twenty-five years. At the beginning of those fifty years the village was completely different from today. The thousand population lived mainly in the old village and the busiest period for the shop was from October to February/March. There were very few tourists and during the summer months many of the local men were working away on yachts and other seafaring jobs. They would return for the herring fishing season in September and during the next five months takings would be considerably higher. Saturday evening was the busiest time of the week when many local farmers would come, in horse and trap, to do their weekly shopping and the fishermen, being paid on Saturday, would spend their money. The streets and shops were lit by oil lamps and Kate Rowe would be open until 10pm.

The newspapers arrived direct from London to Port Isaac Road Station and were collected by *Prout Bros* bus until 1933 when Frank Rowe bought his own car ...

... The age of the building is unknown, but by the construction it must be older than the *Golden Lion*, which was built in 1715. Some of the walls are pure cob - earth and straw - and some parts contain old ship's timbers. The cellar (where the paraffin was stored) was used, up to the turn of the twentieth century, as a place for barking the fishing nets to preserve them. The nets were fed through a hole in the back wall that is still there, and put into a copper boiler that contained boiled tree bark. The water was supplied from a well in the cellar that is still there. The nets were then fed out through a hole in the front of the building and taken by horse and cart up to the drying racks standing outside the Boathouse Stores (which was the original Lifeboat House).

"When I renovated the cellar in the 1970s, I cleared out the well and restored it and found the wooden channels where the bark water flowed into the retainers for re-use. The remains of the granite fireplace were found to be permeated through to the core with bark from hundreds of years of use." Peter Rowe

The Paper Shop

The age-old grooves in the side of the wall were made by the guiding ropes that were used to haul the lifeboat down from the Lifeboat Station, now the *Boathouse Stores* ...



"Living so close to the harbour, us boys never missed a thing that was washed in on the beach ... One day, a large floating metal object, about six feet high, was deposited on the high water just under our window. It made a grand climbing object for us children until it was reported and inspected and found to be a foreign mine with enough explosives to flatten the bottom of the village!" Peter Rowe

... The shop was sold in 1978. In 1979, Frank Rowe died, aged 83 and Kate, aged 96, died in 1999 – so the paraffin fumes were not detrimental to their health!

Sian and Ed Fletcher went on to run the business and were succeeded by Rita & Henry Strickland, hence the accommodation above now being called "Henrys". When Rita & Henry retired it became a gift shop.

taken from *THE REAL VOICES OF PORT ISAAC*

