

Village Echoes

A few months ago the post office moved to the newsagents at the top of the High Street, thus returning once again to the building in which it once spent so many years.

The post office was opened during the mid-nineteenth century by William Stevens who, as he was also Master of Goudhurst National School, ran it from the accommodation which came with the job. On his death in 1858, his son George Monckton Stevens became postmaster and he moved the P.O. to the Stevens family home in West Road. George, who also worked as a solicitor's clerk, was helped by his two sisters, Emily and Matilda. When George died in 1878, the sisters took it over, Matilda Stevens became the postmistress and for the next thirty years or so the sisters and their widowed mother operated the post office from Cliffe Cottage in North Road where they had already been running a stationery business.

It was in about 1881 that the Stevens sisters took on eleven year old Rose Midmer to work in their shop and also to deliver letters and telegrams to the people of Goudhurst. Rose worked for them all her life and, just before Matilda Stevens died at the age of 87 in September 1906, Rose, who had been acting as assistant postmistress for some years, eventually became postmistress in her own right. She did not immediately move premises, but some time after 1911 in search of larger premises she purchased Nye's grocery shop from William Rootes – this is now the newsagents at the top of the High Street. Since Rose's death in 1943 at the age of 72, the post office, has been run by several different proprietors in the same premises and also in various other locations around the village – most recently in the building then known as Bank House (next to West House and now a hairdressers) where it stayed until about 2001 when it moved to Burgess Stores and, as noted above, in early 2011 it returned once again to the newsagents at the top of the High Street.

At the same time as Rose was employed as a letter carrier in the 1880s, the post office in Kilndown was run by Mr. H.M. Browning who also sold boots, shoes, British wines, glass and earthenware and Huntley and Palmers biscuits and no doubt many other items as well. Kilndown Post Office and Stores, to give it its full name, was subsequently run by William Allwork whose family had owned a grocers and drapers shop in West Road, Goudhurst since about 1844.

In 1895, at Curtisden Green, Samuel Kendon obtained permission for a sub-post office on condition that he guaranteed to make good any monetary loss incurred during the first three years of operation. He put John Powell (a cousin) in charge and the Powell family and their successors continued to run the Post Office Stores at Curtisden Green until its final closure in March 1990.

Local History Society