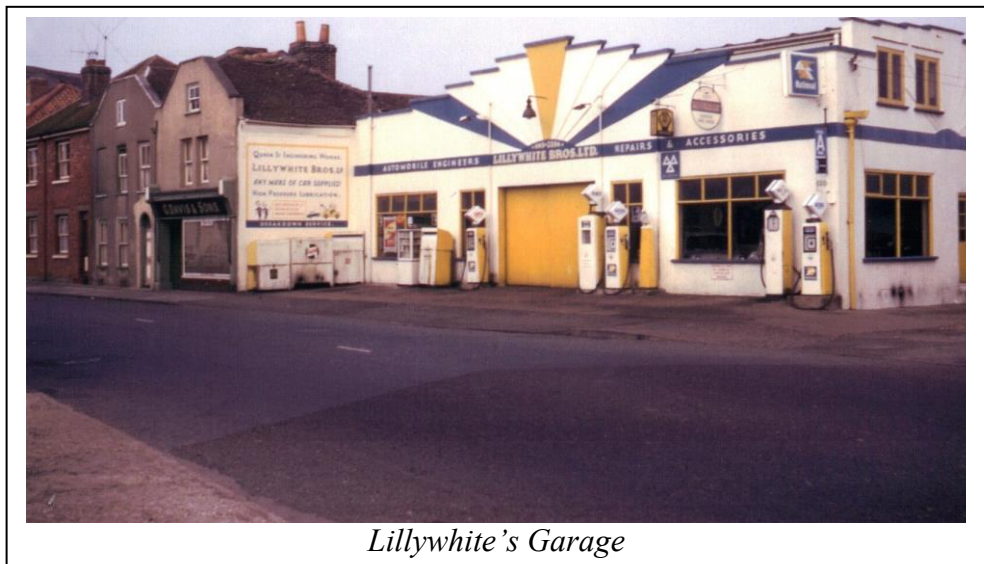


The Emsworth Improvement Scheme of 1963

As we get older most people would agree with the old adage that ‘history repeats itself’, so it was not surprising to learn that in the late 1950s/early 60s the Civic Trust led a drive throughout the country to revitalise town centres and shopping areas. Emsworth duly picked up the challenge to organise and promote the town as an attractive shopping destination. Now, some 50 years later, various groups of local business people are faced with a similar task, still striving to present Emsworth to residents and potential visitors as a place of distinction, its retailers able to offer a diverse range of goods and services just a little bit different from the multinationals to be found on most run-of-the-mill high streets. To do so the town is currently getting visually ‘spruced up’ – the bus stop in The Square has already been renovated and new shops are replacing empty ones. These are further enhanced by monthly markets and a recent ‘special’ such as a British Food Fortnight in which local schools’ and colleges’ catering departments also participated.

Civic pride in the town was clearly evident in 1963 when an organising committee stimulated several brewers to smarten their premises by either repainting or cleaning - The Ship, The Crown, The Black Dog (now Spice Village, an Indian Restaurant) and the Town Brewery - and wherever possible individual retailers were encouraged to do the same. It was clearly an energetic committee, convening under the impressive title of ‘The Emsworth Improvement Scheme 1961-2’ and was supported by the Havant & Waterlooville UDC and the Havant, Emsworth & District Chamber of Commerce. The museum was very fortunate indeed to be able to purchase a scrapbook from Bookends of architectural drawings and correspondence relating to this committee’s efforts. Although these were centred primarily on premises in the High Street and The Square the drawings radiate out briefly into South, West, King and Queen Streets as well, but omitted North Street. The committee’s campaign efforts led to a formal opening in July and a tea in the hospital garden.

During the interim period between 1963 and 2014 we have seen several public houses close down (one hitherto little known about, The Half Way House in New Brighton Road – ref. Roy & Sheila’s report) and banks also,



Lillywhite's Garage

but various estate agents and eating establishments have come into the town. Nevertheless, customer choice and confidence in well-established reputations is still important to both residents and visitors alike and on looking around the locality they may see pennants and flags proclaiming 65 years’ service from Lillywhite’s garage in Queen Street and 90 years’ of business still being done by the fifth-generation of H. H. Treagust’s, a family-owned butchers, in The Square.

One of the most fascinating things about looking at old newspapers is their advertisements and the Archivists Report details how many diverse retailers we had even earlier in 1952-3.

By the time this edition of *The Emsworth Echo* is distributed members and visitors to the museum will have been able to browse around a memory-jogging exhibition in September put on by Treagust's, the butchers – were the prices of meat joints and sausages ever really that cheap? - followed by a display in October of the 1963 Improvement Scheme plans and correspondence. As they mounted the stairs vibrant photographs would have reminded them of the town's recent past and how the buildings and shops' frontages looked then. It is part of the museum's remit to archive and preserve details of such events, not only in written form but by oral history. Mrs Marlene Barton generously gave us time to capture on DVD her reminiscences of her parents' shop, Hutchins, in The Square – according to her mother the best sellers were knickers and slippers. And Mike Lillywhite and some of the 'old boys' who worked there have also kindly agreed to talk about life and times in his Queen Street garage. Unbelievably petrol was once 5p a litre! The museum is always keen to develop its collection of such memories so if you would like to contribute please do contact the editor.

Margaret Rogers