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SHEFFIELDS

A Life of Value and Service



Christine Sheffield Polk, 2025



A LIFE OF VALUE AND SERVICE

THE HEART OF THE BUSINESS

I think the lives of businesses should be remembered and celebrated, like the lives of people.

This story of Sheffield's is like a memoir - some detailed events, but many important ones missing, because of the random nature of the memorabilia saved. But it is better to remember and share something, than nothing.

H. F. Sheffield Ltd. (universally known as 'Sheffield's') has been part of Abbots Langley High Street for 78 years. It was founded by my father, Hugh Sheffield in 1947, the year before I was born, with the ideal of providing the highest quality of Value and Service. With his focused energy for creating the best, this character of the business has endured. All subsequent owners and staff have maintained this original ethos and reputation of caring for the customer and each other. As Sue Ward, current owner told me, "You walk in as a customer, employee or owner, and know that it is an O.K. place. New employees want to be part of this energy, this spirit, this soul of the business. They feel very rewarded helping and caring about the customers. They stay." This tangible ethos is what makes some employees start as apprentices and stay until they retire. Or some employees want to continue with the business and become owners. "Value and Service" is not just an advertising slogan.

MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

- 1947. Founded by Hugh Sheffield
- 1955. Beryl Sturgess (Hugh's sister-in-law) joined staff as the bookkeeper and sales assistant.
- 1958. New shop opened
- 1962. New Toy, Sports, and Nursery shop opened
- 1982. Hugh retired
 - Len and Dawn Newell - new owners. They were new to the business.
- 1985. Beryl retired
 - Ian Ward (later an owner) joined staff as an apprentice engineer
- 1989. Jeff Hill (later an owner) joined staff as shop manager
- 1996. Bryan Ellis, Chief Electrician, retired. Electrical contracting department closed
- 1996. Hugh Sheffield died. Freehold sold to Mr. Louis Cohen
- 2000. Len and Dawn Newell retired
 - Jeff Hill - new owner
- 2002. Steve Norris (later an owner) joined staff as Shop Manager
- 2011. Sue Steel (later an owner) joined staff with her administrative experience
- 2013. Jeff Hill retired
 - Ian Ward, Sue Steel, Steve Norris (all previous staff) - new and current owners
- 2022. Sue and Ian married
- 2024. Louis Cohen died leaving the ownership of the freehold to his son.



Hugh Frederick Sheffield was a native of Abbots Langley. He was born at "The Briars," 148 Abbots Road and grew up there. He would later come back to live on the same road with his wife and young family until 1951, when he moved to Kingswood.

Hugh Sheffield was interested in radio since he was a boy. This interest in radio and his experience with amateur short-wave radio enabled him to join the RAF in 1940 as a radio operator. It also became the impetus to start his own business.

Hugh used his and his wife, Eileen's, de-mob money from the Air Force to help buy his first shop in Abbots Langley. His savings were augmented by money he earned from selling his RAF ration of cigarettes. He gave up smoking to do this. He was a determined man.

1947 FIRST SHOP 8 High Street



H. F. Sheffield Ltd. was established 6th June 1947 and later incorporated 7th August 1956. Hugh Sheffield started the shop only 2 years after the 2nd World War ended, when he was 24 years old.

The shop, commonly known as "Sheffields," was at 8 High-street. It sold radios, small appliances, and bicycles at first, with an electrical repair and contracting service. Soon, the shop included televisions, appliances, and records. The Queen's Coronation in 1953 caused a huge boost in television rentals and sales.

H. F. Sheffield Ltd. stayed there for eleven years before Hugh Sheffield built a new shop at 65 High-street, and then another at 67 High-street.

H. F. Sheffield Ltd. is also the oldest continuous retail business in Abbots Langley.

1958 NEW SHOP 65 High Street

From: 'The Langley Times'

BUILT QUICKLY

The new shop - 2,000 sq. ft. of display space, workshop and storage accommodation - was built in only five-and-a-half months. It will serve customers as far away as Watford, Hemel Hempstead and St. Albans. It replaces the older shop further down the High-street.

Mr. Sheffield told 'The Langley Times' that although similar merchandise is being offered in the new shop they are concentrating more than before on records, and a larger showroom will house a number of departments which cover cycles and motor accessories, as well as radio, television and electrical.

A staff of seven - an increase of two - manage the new modern premises, decorated in cream, white and light blue. Flooring tiles are red and yellow.



FAMILY BUSINESS

Hugh Sheffield's family were involved in the business. Beryl Sturgess, the book-keeper and sales assistant, was Hugh Sheffield's sister-in-law and lived with the family in St. Albans from 1959. She joined the business in 1955 and worked there until she retired.

Hugh's four children all helped in the shops at various times. David - the eldest - helped Brian with electrical work. Christine - who wrote this book - worked in the shop, first, as a young girl - dusting, stamping leaflets, and sorting batteries etc., and later as a sales assistant in both this shop and the second new shop during the school holidays.

1958 NEW SHOP OPENING



Me with my mother, Eileen Sheffield, behind; and my aunt, Beryl Sturgess, at the back.

From: Watford Observer

POP SINGER OPENS ABBOTS NEW STORE Police had to control crowd of spectators.

Was it really worthwhile? That is what Abbots Langley residents have probably been asking themselves this week about the visit to their village on Saturday of pop singer, Malcolm Vaughan. He had been invited to open Messrs. H. F. Sheffield Ltd's new electronic shop in the High Street at 3 p.m. Before 2 p.m. youngsters began to arrive at the shop seeking the best positions from which to view the popular young artist. Soon more people came, and well before the appointed time were queueing a dozen deep along the pavement on either side of the shop.

Patrolling policemen were finding it difficult to keep a narrow strip of footpath clear for passing pedestrians. Many more spectators lined the opposite pavement.

As the minutes ticked round to three o'clock the tension mounted among the milling throng, waiting anxiously for the guest to arrive. Hundreds of pairs of searching eyes were cast into each large car that made its way along the narrow High-street, but none of them, alas, carried Malcolm Vaughan. Instead, the crowd began to tire of waiting, and had to be content with his records relayed over a loudspeaker system.

MALCOLM VAUGHAN

ARRIVED LATE

Eventually, about twenty minutes late, the idol singer arrived and a welcome cheer rang out from the enthusiastic crowd. He was escorted hurriedly through the throng into the doorway of the shop where he cut the tape hastily and rushed inside.

Taking the microphone from Mr. H. F. Sheffield, Mr. Vaughan declared, "It is a great pleasure to open this shop for you and I hope you have a great deal of success with it."

The singer then retreated from the crowd and made his way towards the record bar. As he did so a floral presentation was made by Mr. Sheffield's nine-years-old daughter, Christine.

When he had taken advantage of the comparative safety of the shop counter, a trickle of autograph hunters were allowed in, the remainder being held back by burly police officers. Exit was by the back door.

Footnote: A precautionary wooden crush-bar, specially erected to safeguard the shops long plate-glass window, proved very useful.

Malcolm Vaughan with fans.
My brother, David Sheffield, at the right.





1947 - 1961 SERVICE BUILDS SUCCESS

This copy of the Langley Times comes to you with the compliments of
Messrs. H. F. Sheffield Ltd., Abbots Langley. May 6, 1961
4-page center fold - THE HOUSE OF SHEFFIELD 1947-1961



The showroom showing the record bar and listening booths

SERVICE KEYNOTE THROUGH THE YEARS

It is a well known fact in any branch of industry or commerce that service builds business. Never has this been more apparent than has been the case with Messrs. H. F. Sheffield Ltd., of Abbots Langley, where, from small beginnings in a modest shop, there has grown the present comprehensive business housed in modern and spacious premises in the High-street.

This service consists, not only of a first-class repair department, but the greatest speed and efficiency in applying the latest, up-to-the-minute techniques, as well as having the right goods, at the right price, the right terms, and a prompt delivery and installation service. Coupled with this is per-purchase advice backed by years of experience.

In these space age days of Astronauts and Cosmonauts and of bouncing messages off the moon, radio and television has become a highly skilled and technical business both in sales and service.

The radio and television department of Messrs. H. F. Sheffield Ltd. is one of the most important branches of the firm and a large range of all the latest types and styles of sets are always available. There is also an ever-increasing demand for transistor portable radios and tape-recorders, of which comprehensive stocks are carried.

TV MAINTENANCE SCHEME

When you buy a television set from H. F. Sheffield Ltd. you will find a "Telesurance" policy included as a packaged deal. For instance, if you buy a 60 gns. model, (£1,913 today) you pay a deposit from which is deducted the part exchange allowance for your old set, and then you pay 36 monthly payments which includes full maintenance and insurance.

After the completion of the hire purchase account Sheffield's will continue to maintain the set indefinitely for a monthly fee. No worries about heavy and unexpected repair expenses. This includes replacement of all valves, tube, component and labor costs. It is well known that television repairs can come at the wrong time if you have no "Telesurance" policy.

By this means many local residents have been able to keep an up-to-date television in their homes all the time with no repeat capital outlay, and for a very modest monthly cost.



MODERN TRENDS NEED MODERN METHODS

Continued from the Langley Times

ELECTRICAL CONTRACT DEPARTMENT

Messrs. Sheffields have also an equally busy Electrical Contracting Department led by Chief Electrician Mr. Bryan E. Ellis, another Abbots Langley resident. He tours the district in a well-equipped maintenance van, stocked with most types of electrical spares, fittings and cables drawn from the Electrical Accessories Department. Work undertaken has included numerous houses and shops, and the control equipment for oil fired and other types of central heating boilers.

This side of the business is also responsible for the installation of all new equipment purchased, as well as the erection of all television aerials.

FOR THE CYCLIST

For those who prefer to spend their leisure out and about, Sheffields have a comprehensive Cycle Department which caters for the young of all ages. A wide range of machines by Raleigh, Phillips and Triumph is always available. In addition hire purchase facilities are available. 2s in the £ being the minimum deposit. A full range of cycle accessories are stocked to meet your every need.

Motor accessories too are a very popular line and a wide range of Holts Automatic Chemical Products, car polishes etc. are on sale at all times.



RECORD DEPARTMENT

Modern trends call for a modern approach to maintain and expand a live and flourishing business. It is essential to keep abreast of the times. This Messrs. Sheffields have done through the past fourteen years, with a finger on the pulse of an ever-discerning public. New ideas are being constantly introduced to meet the needs of old and young alike.

Some time ago a Record Department was introduced with a modern-up-to-the-minute Record Bar where two assistants, Miss B. R. Stuges and Miss P. M. Hill - both local girls - cater for the latest requirements in Pop, Jazz, and Classical records.

A considerable library of discs is always in stock, and demonstration facilities are available by the very latest acoustics hoods.

1962 TOY, SPORTS, NURSERY SHOP



The 'Toy' shop. More than just toys

Langley Times. Saturday, June 23, 1962

PETER HAIGH OPENS ABBOTS NEW STORE

Further Extension For Well Known Local Firm

Mr. Sheffield built this additional shop next door to his first new shop only four years later. There is a flat above where the manager lives, and parking at the back.

The premises are now among the largest in the village. The showrooms which opened Saturday house a comprehensive display of toys, nursery furniture, sports equipment, cycles and accessories.





OPENING



Continued from the Langley Times

It was only natural that a family man should be asked to perform the official opening of the imposing new showrooms of H. F. Sheffield Ltd at their High-street, Abbots Langley premises, for they are well stocked with prams, nursery furniture and toys.

It was in this capacity that well-known radio and television personality, Peter Haigh, came to the village on Saturday afternoon to open the showrooms. With him was his wife, Jill Adams, who gave birth to their first child recently.

A large crowd, including many children, was waiting to watch the opening. Mr. Haigh could hardly crack a bottle of champagne against the plate glass windows, so instead he cut a tape across the door.

"My wife and I always wanted to go into production," he joked as he saw the large array of prams. Then Mr. Haigh congratulated Mr. Sheffield and wished him every success in his new venture.

Mr. Haigh's next duty was to present £1 (£30 today) gift vouchers to local children whose birthday was that day and who had produced their birth certificates at the shop that morning. And then there was the small army of autograph hunters to deal with. With the ceremony over, business began. Both Mr. and Mrs. Haigh confessed to have a weakness for gadgets, and the manager, Mr. P. B. Little, and his staff demonstrated many of the electrical goods in the shop for them.

Mr. Sheffield is also presenting £5 (£150 today) gift vouchers to all Abbots Langley mothers whose babies were born on Saturday.

1963 SMASH AND GRAB

From the Langley Times and Recorder, August 3, 1963

22 RADIOS STOLEN IN MIDNIGHT RAID

In a lightning smash-and-grab raid thieves got away with 22 transistor radios from a display window at the Abbots Langley High-street premises of H. F. Sheffield Ltd., early on Thursday morning. Other stock was damaged by the three bricks used to smash the plate glass window.

It was 12.25 a.m. when the raiders car drew up outside the shop in the deserted High-street. Asleep in their flat above their shoe shop next-door were Mr. and Mrs. Midgley, who were roused by the sound of breaking glass.

"We have been broken into before, but this was our first smash-and-grab," said Mr. Sheffield, who was fetched from his home to help assess the extent of the raid.

On previous occasions goods worth several hundreds of pounds were stolen when entry was made from the rear.

Staff covering the broken window with plywood.



SMASH AND GRAB 2

From the Langley Times and Recorder August 10, 1963

ANOTHER RAID ON ABBOTS STORE

Smash and Grab Thieves Second Visit in Ten Days

In a dramatic high-speed police chase which followed another smash and grab raid on the Abbots Langley High-street premises of H. F. Sheffield Ltd. early on Sunday morning, youths in a stolen Ford Zephyr hurled half-a-dozen transistor radios through the air in a desperate bid to halt a pursuing police car. As the cars reached the outskirts of North London, the police lost the Zephyr.

It was 4:25 a.m. when four bricks were thrown through the plate glass window of the shop - the second raid in ten days. The crash of glass again woke Mr. Midgley in the flat above his shoe shop next door. "As soon as I heard it, I thought to myself, "That's Sheffield's again. I took the number of the waiting car and called the police in a matter of seconds."

Fourteen transistor radios were stolen from the display window in the raid.

Within a few hours of returning from his holiday, Mr. Hugh Sheffield was fetched from his home to his shop to find a gaping hole in the window, which had been replaced only a few days before. And while cleaning up the mess Mr. Sheffield was cut when a piece of glass cut through his clothing. Several other articles on display were damaged by the four bricks.

"This is an iniquitous sign of the times", said Mr. Sheffield. "A shop like this which is full of high-priced merchandise is always a vulnerable target. But we have got to display our goods if we want to sell them." Added Mr. Sheffield, "Despite these two raids, we still have transistors for sale."



Shop window showing subsequent new protective metal mesh.

1959 COMPETITIONS

Messrs. Sheffield Ltd. has introduced a number of novel publicity schemes over the years.



In 1959 Mr. Sheffield staged an OLDEST VACUUM CLEANER CONTEST which brought in over 200 entries from far and wide. The competition was finally won by Mrs. Oliver with a 1923 vacuum cleaner which belonged to her grandmother.

The second competition proved no less popular when competitors were asked to ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF TINS CONTAINED IN A REFRIGERATOR. A portable radio was awarded to the winner.

Then there was the publicity scheme that involved BANK OF ENGLAND NOTES previously distributed throughout the district. Holders of winning notes receive the latest records as their prize.

ENTER OUR

OLDEST CLEANER CONTEST

We are anxious to find the oldest Cleaner in the district. This is the **FIRST PRIZE** — a magnificent **HOOVER DUSTETTE CLEANER**, value £14

CONTEST
OPEN
SEPT. 27th
to
OCT. 6th

Entry is simple and free. Just give us your name and address. We call and collect your old Cleaner (of any make) for judging. We will keep your number. Cleaner while yours is away.

The winner will be announced in the "Langley Times" on October 15th, and the presentation is at 8 p.m. on that day.

SEE OUR WINDOWS FOR MORE DETAILS

NO EXTRA FOR CREDIT!

Our exclusive offer! Special National Hoover Week (Sept. 27th-Oct. 6th) Hoover products can be purchased even on the "Buy Now/Cancel Later" plan. Delivery of products can be postponed until 12 months, with NO INTEREST ADDED! Contact us NOW. Offer terminates after 12th October, with no further Free Loan-see obligations.

Call us for full details or ask us for number Free Loan-see obligations.

HOOVER CLEANERS, POLISHERS, WASHERS

H. F. SHEFFIELD LTD

65 HIGH STREET, ABBOTS LANGLEY
Tel.: KINGS LANGLEY 3184

1962-1964 COMPETITIONS

From: Langley Times and Recorder

1962 WASHING LINE CONTEST

With a steam iron as a prize, in conjunction with the popular trading week, Mr. Reg Aukland, (right) a long-time friend of Mr. Sheffield, and representative of the business in Sandridge, came to hand out the prize. His hobby happened to be collecting Psychological Wartime Leaflets, and the winner of the competition's war-time job was printing Psychological Warfare Leaflets. AMAZING COINCIDENCE!



1963 SPOT THE STRANGER COMPETITION.

This year's competitors had to spot 10 articles carefully placed in the display windows which are not sold in the shop. Mrs. Blinko, one of 50 entrants, won. She spotted nine. Also on display was the prize - an electric train set. As soon as four-year-old Martin saw it he persuaded his mother to enter.

1964 TOY SHOP DISPLAY COMPETITION.

Competitors had to correctly estimate the number of toys on display in the window and write the best slogan. The prize was a toy kangaroo complete with a baby kangaroo in her pouch.



1965 DALEK COMPETITION



Heather Sheffield, Mr. Sheffield's 7 year old daughter

WIN A REAL 46inch TV DALEK FOR YOUR CHILD

There are Daleks in our window and also a Hoover Keymatic. There are a number of links between Daleks, the fully automatic men, and the Hoover Keymatic, the fully automatic washing machine.

Put these six phrases into their order of merit, 1 - 6:

- A. The Daleks have taken over England; the Keymatic takes over washday.
- B. The Daleks - automatic men; the Keymatic - the automatic washing machine.
- C. Daleks, men of the future: the Keymatic, the washing machine of the future, here for you today.
- D. Even if the Daleks make you captive, the Keymatic sets you free - from washday!
- E. Does washday, like a Dalek, make you a slave? The Keymatic sets you free!
- F. Dr. Who and the Daleks are one of BBC's favorite programmes. The Keymatic gives you eight different washing programmes.

Now complete this sentence: "I would like to own a Hoover Keymatic because"

Winner: It would turn Monday into fun day. (Wins a Dalek)

2nd place: Washday blues I'll quickly lose! (Wins a beachball)

3rd place: It makes no longer a washday, but a leisure day. (Wins a beach ball)



**HAPPY
BIRTHDAY** 1968 **21st BIRTHDAY**

From: Langley Times, May 10, 1969

SERVICE AND VALUE FOR 21 YEARS

This is the proud but true claim of Mr. Sheffield and his staff.

1947 to 1968 has brought the reputation of Sheffields to its present high standard. Mr. Sheffield is celebrating his 21st year of business by giving fantastic price reductions on lots of items. These are special 21st birthday presents. Come along, there's one for you.



Mr. Sheffield with Dave Fearnside



Colin Abbas, Senior Service Engineer (right),
Bryan Ellis, Chief Electrician (left)
and Peter French (Service Manager).

ELECTRICAL CONTRACTING

From: Langley Times, May 10, 1969

Another excellent service which Sheffields supply is in the expanding electrical contracting department. The department under Mr. Bryan Ellis, specializes in house rewiring and the installation of storage heaters. Electrical service work is also undertaken on a range of electrical appliances as well as all forms of electrical home repairs and wiring work.

1969 - 1976 HIGH STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

From: Langley Times, May 10, 1969

TECHNICAL TRAINING

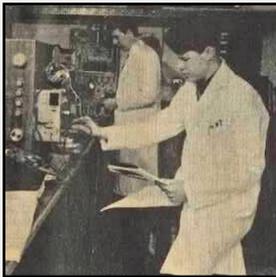
Sheffields have always accepted apprentices for training in radio and television servicing, and the boys become indentured at 16 years or so. They need to be of good education with some "O" levels for preference, and an aptitude for an advanced trade. With day release to attend the Mid Herts College of Further Education, and annual exams, coupled with private study, the successful ones pass out five years later.



CHAMPION APPRENTICE

Three years ago, in 1966, the company trained Britain's number one service engineer apprentice, Barry Yates, who represented Great Britain in the International Competition in Holland. He obtained a Bronze Medal. (Picture below)

Such is the standard of employees, and such is the standard of training given, who are instructed and guided by Service Manager Mr. Peter French.



From: The Villager November 2002

DISTRIBUTIVE TRAINING AWARD

In 1976, Sheffields was the only business in the Watford area at the time to receive the Distributive Training Award - a government award for high standards in staff training.

Hugh Sheffield is accepting the award.



The service is extremely well organized and efficient. The staff of engineers and electricians frequently attend manufacturers and technical college courses to keep up with new products and new techniques.





1969 COLOR TELEVISION

THE BIG SWITCH OVER

November 8, 1969 Langley Times

This month is going to be a very difficult one for telly addicts who haven't yet added a colour set to their sitting room furnishings - the BIG SWITCH to color starts on

November 15 when BBC-1 and 2 and ITV start transmitting nearly all peak-time programmes in glorious living colour - nearly 100 hours of colour every week.



Mr. Sheffield with a range of TVs



BUY OR RENT FROM SHEFFIELDS

- * We recommend Dual Standard sets - those receiving on 405 lines for the current black-and-white service as well as 625 lines for color.
- * Generous part-exchange allowance on your old set.
- * Factory trained service engineers, giving immediate service
- * Expert and free installation
- * Get a free trial run.
- * We recommend GEC sets. They have proved themselves virtually as reliable as black-and-white sets over the last twelve months, even though they are three times as complicated. The colors are richer because GEC have used screens that are 30% brighter than last year. And these natural looking colors are kept from wandering off balance by specially stable colour circuits that GEC have come up with. So you won't spend your evening battling with the controls, trying to get things back to normal.
- * Beat the rush. Order now. They will never be cheaper.

2002 REFURBISHMENT

Experience the "NEW"
Audiovisual Studio at

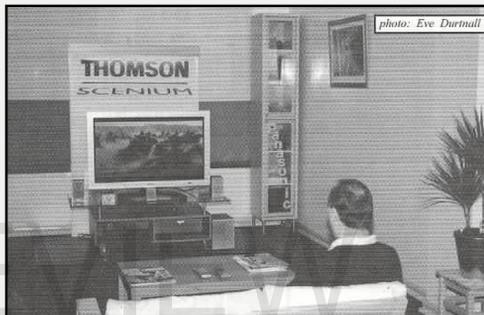
SHEFFIELDS

Est: 1947

Digital / Plasma / Flat Screen TV
& Surround Sound Systems

*Top Brands demonstrated in Comfortable Surroundings
also Original Works by Local Artist on Display*

65 - 67 High Street, Abbots Langley
Tel: 01923 263184



From "The Villager" November 2002

FACELIFT

With the new owner, Jeff Hill, the shop has been given a facelift. This year has seen the complete refurbishment of the first floor stockroom and office which has been transformed into a dedicated demonstration suite - fully furnished and complimented with paintings for sale by local modern artist, Jodi Phillips. Customers can now relax in a living room environment with complimentary coffee, to view and listen to the latest wide screen television, DVDs, surrounded sound systems, LCD and Plasma screens, plus digital broadcasting from suppliers including Panasonic, Thomson/Ferguson, Philips, Samsung, Toshiba and L.G.

COMPETITION

In celebration of the opening of the new demonstration studios, in traditional Sheffields' style, a competition in being held which is open to anyone who can produce an original dated Sheffields receipt! The prizes will go to the three oldest dated receipts.

- 1st prize Microwave
- 2nd prize Kettle and toaster set
- 3rd prize 10 videotapes



Jeff Hill, owner, behind the counter, with Ian Ward on the left, and a representative from Euronics on the right, with a toy Mr. Plug seen in his pocket.

EURONICS

Sheffields is part of the Euronics family. The name prominently displayed on the shop front. (Page 30) Sheffields joined the group in the mid 1990s.

Euronics International was founded in 1990 as an international association of independent electrical retailers. They have the flexibility of separate businesses, but with the buying power and branding involved with having a single entity. Euronics was created to enable independent retailers to remain competitive to changes brought about by globalization.

There is a monthly fee, and agents have to sell goods at stipulated prices. Now there are over 11,000 retailing agents in 37 countries. It is the largest retail group in the world.

Euronics provides 3 deliveries a week to Sheffields from their massive warehouse in Andover, Hampshire.

Notably, in Abbots Langley both Sheffields and Garston Television and Radio are Euronics stores - the closest two Euronics stores anywhere in the world.



Mr. Plug, the Euronics mascot, with (left to right) Pam Downie (shop assistant), Jeff Hill (the owner), Steve Norris (shop assistant who later became an owner), John Hurley (delivery assistant), and Sherrilyn Dyne (shop assistant).

DIFFERENT PRODUCTS, SAME VALUE AND SERVICE



CUSTOMER RECOMMENDATIONS

From: Nextdoor On-line

Looking for someone to fix/mend my fridge freezer. Freezer part not freezing properly.

C. F.21 Aug 24

Look at Sheffield's Electrical Abbots Langley online. They are friendly and reliable.

Hello guys, Just moved into a new house without any white goods. Maybe someone sells or can advise where to buy a washing machine, fridge, hob cheaper? Thanks in advance.

G. H.3 Aug 24

Sheffield's in Abbots Langley, good prices and quick delivery service. Would highly recommend.

HAPPY CUSTOMER

26th January 2012

Dear Sirs,

I'm just writing to thank you for all your great professional service.

From the helpful sales lady that I spoke to on the phone on Wednesday morning, to the guys that came to do the installation tonight - they were just terrific. The installation men arrived exactly when they said they would to the minute!! They were even kind enough to give me a demonstration of the washing machine. I find it very unusual these days to come across a company that lives up to its promises and what a refreshing change it makes.

I am one customer who will never darken the doors of Currys or Comet again and will be recommending you to everyone I know. Kind regards,



1982, 2000, 2013 NEW OWNERS

RETIREMENTS

Hugh Sheffield retired in 1982 when he was 60 years old. He wanted to buy a yacht suitable to sail across the Atlantic to visit his daughter in America.

He sold the company to Len and Dawn Newell. Len had business experience as the owner of several fish-and-chip shops. He had to rely on the very experienced staff of Sheffields while he learned the new business.

(Jim Sparks, Shop Manager, with Hugh Sheffield - right)

Jeff Hill joined the team as shop manager in 1989 and subsequently became the new owner when Len and Dawn retired in April 2000.



SHEFFIELDS' LEADER HANGS UP HIS BOOTS

From: October 2013 My Abbots News

After 24 years of running Sheffields, first as a manager, then as an owner, Jeff Hill has decided the time is right to call it a day and spend more time at home and traveling with his partner. However, the shop's regulars needn't fear as three staff members currently working there - Ian Ward, Sue Steel, and Steve Norris - are taking over the business.

Jeff said, "I have got to that age and I have had very little time off over the past five years. I am lucky that I have three great members of staff who are happy to take the shop on. I want to do more travelling. I also have a big garden to attend to and need to give it more attention."

He said he will miss running Sheffields, but will still be involved in the community as a parish councillor, and will also help in the shop when cover is needed.

Ian, who has worked at Sheffields since 1985 added, "We have a constant flow of different people coming in and we try our best to help them. The elderly are very reliant on us and really value us."

Steve commented, "There are no hidden extras with us. The price you see is the price you get and we are happy to deliver and install. It is all about the personal service."



2008 MY DAY WITH SHEFFIELDS

From: My Abbots

The latest "My Day With ..." section gave me an opportunity to work in an electrical store, just as I had when I was a teenager. Sheffield's of Abbots High Street, invited me to see how a small, local business competes with larger retailers and the internet.

I was greeted by shop owner, Jeff Hill, who told me that I would be going out to help a couple of his staff deliver a washing machine. I joined staff Ian Ward, 39, and Steve Norris, 43. Ian has been with the shop for 22 years, and is responsible for delivery, installation, standard TV repairs and some selling; while Steve has been with Sheffield's for 3 years and is primarily responsible for selling, but does help Ian with deliveries when needed.

First, I wanted to know what sort of job we were on. Would it take long and was it difficult? Ian told 'My Abbots,' "No job is an easy job. We take as long as we need so the customer is happy." The guys did a good job, and the washing machine was up and running.

Once back at the shop, the sales assistant, Sherry, told 'My Abbots' that what made Sheffield's successful was its willingness to educate people on products that they did not necessarily understand. "We just want to make people comfortable with what they are buying which usually means they will come back."

With technology advancing, it's amazing how much the staff at Sheffield's need to know. Jeff said, "The business has changed a great deal in the seven years I have owned it. It is difficult to compete with the internet and large retailers, but the service and friendly atmosphere keep people coming back. I am not tied to any brand, so if they want it, I can get it. They often come here and say, 'I've been looking for this everywhere.' One incident was when a customer bought a built-in cooker at 1:15 pm and Ian was fitting it by 2:15. Nobody else can do that."

The store owner does admit that the internet is the biggest hindrance on the business, but pointed out that manufacturers need to start playing their part. "Nearly all the independents are relied upon to introduce Joe Public to new technology, such as digital. Manufacturers have to reward us accordingly. We're the ones training people."



Jeff Hill

So on spending time with Sheffield's, it is clear that despite top class service, some are turning their back on local business. The staff at Sheffield's are knowledgeable, friendly and welcoming people. High Street businesses need local people to support them so they can continue their fantastic service. Just remember something on the internet may seem cheap, but once you take delivery and other costs into consideration, it doesn't work out cheaper.

So, Abbots residents, get yourself down to Sheffield's for your electrical goods.

2011 LESS IS MORE



From: April 2011 Abbots Langley Villager

When you are next in the village, you may notice some changes taking place at Sheffield, the Euronics electrical store. Jeff Hill, the business owner, tells us, "Basically we had too much space. In the days when you repaired your T.V. or appliance for as long as you could keep it going, the service department employed four engineers, occupying two workshops. But, nowadays appliances are much more reliable and when they do go wrong they go back to the manufacturer for repair, or its cheaper to replace and recycle them, so we do far fewer repairs.

We'll be refurbishing and rearranging both ground and first floor showrooms to make them more customer friendly. The televisions will be coming back downstairs as a lot of customers buying the larger top-end T.V.s are elderly people spending more time at home and/or needing a bigger set to assist with visual impairment, and often have difficulty climbing the stairs. One of the workshops will become a T.V. sitting room and will be wheelchair accessible. On the other hand, the built-in kitchen displays will be going upstairs as they are in less demand by the elderly, together with the fires and other heating and cooling appliances, some of which can be brought down to show customers if needed. Most importantly, we'll still be selling the same choice of makes and range of appliances, and maintaining the same high standards of service Sheffield has offered for the last 64 years.

The only thing that will be going will be the 'Toy Shop,' but an exciting new child-centered venture with new owners will be taking its place.

Business will carry on as usual during the refurbishments, so please accept our apologies in advance for any untidiness."



2008, 2012 SPECIAL CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

From: Age Matters Spring 2012

→ We supply and rent to Abbeyfield houses and residents, sheltered accommodation and care homes.

→ We'll help you find the most appropriate appliance for your specific needs including:
Ease of operation
Sight and hearing impairments
Mobility limitations
Memory problems.
Helping you retain your independence.

→ TVs with built-in Audio Description
Non-standard size appliances
Table top fridges
Light weight kettles
Touch control lamps
Big button phones and
Remote control
Hearing aid batteries.

→ We give priority to elderly rental customers because we know that we may be the only company they have.
Visit us and you will be offered a seat, a cup of tea, and patient, friendly service from our trained and caring staff.

→ Housebound? No transport?
Lifts sometimes available.
We'll visit you to assess/estimate, help you choose over the phone, or liaise with relatives and carers.



From: Sibleys Orchard Care Home November 2008

The house was pleased to welcome the daughter of one of our residents, who brought along a large selection of items from their shop for the residents to look at whilst enjoying a cup of coffee together. As well as a variety of greetings cards, wrapping paper etc. there was also a range of items which could be suitable for gifts with Christmas in mind.

Thanks to Sheffield's for coming along to the house.

2022 TV STAR IN "THE CLEANER"

From: My Local News Online

THE CLEANER

From October 31st to November 4th 2022 Abbots Langley High Street and Sheffield's (Renamed Parson Campbell) played host to the BBC crews and actors of an episode, 'The Night Shift,' of the dark comedy "The Cleaner." The electrical store, Sheffield's, could be seen strapped in white and blue police tape and numerous extras were spotted dressed in white plastic overalls.

Residents may have also heard a buzzing over the week as filming drones were deployed to record long shots of the town.

Sue Ward said about the filming inside Sheffield's. "The store had to close for a week. There were masses of film people getting the store ready - changing any visible brand names (no inadvertent advertising) to made-up names." Sue decided to keep some of the signs to provide talking points. The crews then had to put everything back into place and clear up the blood of the death scene. Sue said they missed a bit because she found a red smear on a refrigerator afterwards.



Made-up names throughout the store.





LOCAL INVOLVEMENT



Sheffields, throughout the years, was and still is very involved with the life of Abbots Langley village.

For example:



Jeff Hill, shop manager, then owner of Sheffields from 1989 to 2013, was a parish councillor.



Sheffields had a wiring contract with the Abbots Langley Youth Center, and the Abbots Langley Sports Pavilion.



Sheffields joined in the GREAT BRITAN FETE on Saturday 19th, June 1976 by participating in the PARADE with an H. F. Sheffield Float BRITANNIA. Marine Flags and Ensigns decorating a van.



If there was a raffle anywhere Sheffields donated a very generous prize.

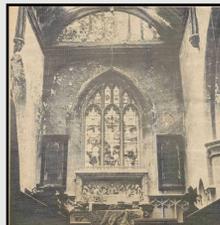


Sheffields always supported local organizations with donations and through advertising in their publications, for example:
Parish Magazines
Abbots Langley Cricket Club
Abbots Langley Gilbert and Sullivan Society



RE-WIRING THE CHURCH

As part of the extensive renovations of St. Lawrence Church, 1969 -1971, after it was partially destroyed by fire, Sheffields did all the re-wiring - a very complicated and extensive undertaking.



The gutted interior of the church after the blaze.
From: Langleys Past and Present, Evening Post-Echo, October 28, 1977

HAPPY BIRTHDAY 75 YEARS

2022 A YEAR TO CELEBRATE



THE TOUGH TEN FOOT RACE

To celebrate their 75th anniversary, Sheffields gave a special donation of £750 to add to their usual sponsorship of the Tough Ten Race - a community event to raise money for local charities.

Also, since 2022 a 'Sheffields Trophy' is given to someone for a special achievement: raising the most money, running the best time etc. There is also a specific 'Tough Ten Window' at Sheffields to promote the race.

2022 was also the year that the Tough Ten committee awarded Sheffields the 'Community Service Trophy.' (Decided before they even knew of the special donation.) Sheffields proudly displayed the cup in the shop for the year it was theirs.

The Tough Ten website says, "Be part of something brilliant." Sheffields certainly is that. It is what they value - to support their community in any way they can.



MATCHMAKER

Sheffields brought together Sue and Ian Ward, both working in Sheffields. They fell in love and got married. Such is the power of Sheffields, I want to thank Sue and Ian for keeping and sharing so much of Sheffields' history. They exemplify the special caring spirit of Sheffields.

Sue and Ian signing the register.



1947 - 2025 CHANGING TIMES

Richard Simons of the Abbots Langley Local History Society kindly provided the local information.

Over the life of H. F. Sheffield Ltd. there have been significant changes in both Abbots Langley and the world of retailing that have directly affected the business. For instance: the local population has approximately tripled since 1947.

The population was driven up in the early 1950s by major council housing building and private developments. This coincided with the post-war boom in confidence, increased buying power, and the rise of consumerism. In the 1960s new opportunities arose with the selling and renting of televisions and other electrical goods. Sheffieldds took full advantage.

Local employment opportunities for Sheffieldds' customers have changed over the years, but are still abundant. Economic upturns and downturns have affected all retailing.

However, shopping needs and behaviors have also changed. The home-based housewives of 1947, who probably did their shopping in the High Street, now go out to work so are not around in the daytime to keep the shops in business. But, the serious competition started in the early 2000's from internet shopping (boosted by COVID) and also out-of-town shopping centres (London Colney, Brent Cross, etc.) popularized by increased car ownership and limited local High Street parking. Research shows that out-of-town shopping centres can reduce foot traffic in town centres up to 75%!

In addition, the larger supermarkets offer home delivery of groceries, thereby deterring shoppers from visiting the local High Street and being tempted to buy things other than food.

All this has led to a transformation of the High Street. There has been an explosion of food outlets - restaurants, cafes and takeaways, and now many barbers, hairdressers and nail bars, replacing previous retail shops.

Where the original H. F. Sheffield Ltd. started, 8 High-street, is now a pharmacy.



2025 ENDURINGLY ADAPTABLE: ENDURING IDEAL

For the first half of its life, H. F. Sheffield Ltd was a business of expansion and diversification, then it became, step-by-step, more focused on retailing, especially home entertainment and kitchen appliances, adapting to changing customers needs and market forces.

Television rentals have long diminished. At one point Sheffields had over 200 rentals. Now there are only six.

The electrical department ended with the retirement of Chief Electrician, Bryan Ellis with all his experience and expertise.

The repair department is no longer needed because televisions and other products are much more reliable and cheaper.

Retailing is challenging. Prices have come down, along with the profit margins. A television in 1962 cost the equivalent of £1,900; today it costs £250. But the products are often more complicated, with a greater choice, so time with the customer has increased. Sue Ward says that sometimes it can take 30 minutes to an hour with a customer to sell just the right product for them. Moreover, Sue is determined to dispel the assumption that internet shopping is cheaper. It is not.

Sheffields represents all that is still possible in this world of the impersonal internet. It is local, friendly, and with the highest integrity and quality of caring for its customers. This has not changed in a changing world. Products are constantly changing, technology has changed our way of life, but the ideal that Sheffields was born with is still being experienced every day. It is invaluable. It must be remembered and celebrated.

That ideal will live on into the future as customers and the people in Abbots Langley say, "I remember Sheffields, where you knew the sales people, and they spent the time to care about what you wanted, and you could really trust them." Sheffields' reputation will endure.



2025 REMEMBERING AND CELEBRATING

ABBOTS LANGLEY LOCAL HISTORY PROJECT 2025

This project resulted in a presentation of the histories of twelve High Street shops, including H. F. Sheffield Ltd. The project was called, 'Butchers, Bakers and Undertakers.'

The presentation is on YouTube. The piece about Sheffields begins at 38 minutes. Hugh Sheffield is mentioned in glowing terms, particularly his entrepreneurship, according to Richard Simons, who chaired the committee. The narration continues, "He was a great marketeer and self-promoter of his business, and a great innovator, well ahead of his time."

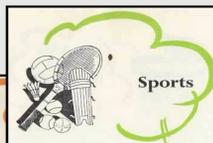
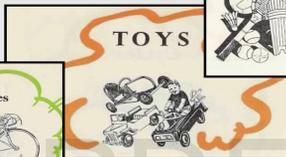
The Abbots Langley Local History Society now has a copy of this book.

In researching and writing this story of Sheffields, I have used the materials that Sue and Ian Ward, the current owners, have saved - many newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements, and promotional pieces, as well as their own experiences. But, this partial account, nevertheless, represents the continuing nature and essence of the business as well as the challenges that traditional High Street retail shops face. It has been a fascinating project, and I am honored to be able to share it.



My sister, Heather Jenkins, and my son, Matthew Polk, with Sue Ward, one of the owners, in 2025. Sue gave me the shop's archives to create this book. Matthew brought them to America where I live.

1964



1969

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TOO GOOD
FOR BABY!**

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