
LOVEDAY'S BAKERY

Making lots of dough!



No. 25 Villiers Road has been the home of Oxhey's very own bakery for around 120 years and for half of that time, since 1935, has been owned and run by three successive generations of the Loveday family. The bakehouse itself is a comparative novelty - a plaque inside tells us that the original bakehouse was burnt down in 1910. At the rebuilding, naturally, new plant was installed and some of it (an oven and some mixers) is still in use to day. They don't make machinery like that now!

The long-haul proprietorship of the Loveday family is a break with tradition. No ownership details have survived from before 1922, but in that year a Mr Frost transferred the lease to Mr Leake (the one, after all, often follows the other) and in the next thirteen years tenancies lasted under three years on average. Five more proprietors were recorded before Alan's grandfather took over in 1935.

For the next 19 years, grandfather Loveday ruled the roost and, a craftsman, literally to his finger tips, as a practising baker must be, won awards all over the country to mark the excellence of his products. Alan's father inherited these trophies in due course, along with other things of at least equivalent value grandfather's recipes (still in use today), handwritten in a school exercise book, and a baker who is still, after at least 40 years, working for Lovedays. He must like the work!

Under Alan's father the dough was prepared each evening and left to prove, prior to baking the following morning. With an eye to the future, he also trained his son to take over in due course.

Happily still with us, although retired, Alan sees him every week and takes him some bread (for eating, we wonder, or to ensure the quality is being maintained). But Alan also, from time to time, takes him some flour and yeast for the 'Old Man' to keep his hand in.

Despite intense competition from the national chain-bakeries, the business still thrives. Alan now employs two bakers. one of them starts dough mixing at 3.00am each morning and by 5.30 both of them are at work making the loaves and morning goods. Alan himself turns in at 7.00am when the ovens are loaded, for the bread to be ready for the 8.00am shop opening time.

So many family bakers have been forced out by competition that Oxhey is a lucky village still to have one - and long may it so remain. And when, in due course, Alan has to hand over control, we must hope it will be to someone as skilled and dedicated as himself. And how nice if it could be another Loveday, it's such an appropriate name for a craftsman who always greets the dawn with so much of his stint already performed.

Oxhey Village Environment Group thanks Alan Loveday
for permission to print this history of his company and premises