

Object(s): Milk Trolley

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Delivering Milk in Stowupland

A three-wheel trolley used for delivering dairy products. It was pushed by hand and used in the 1930s in Stowupland by Mr R. Allard. This trolley had a 12-gallon churn for the milk, which sits at the back of the cart (Figure 1), as well as lidded baskets at the front, which held cartons of cream, eggs, and butter. The cart has an oval plate with an inscription of the owner and area delivered to; "R Allard, Stowupland" (Figure 2).

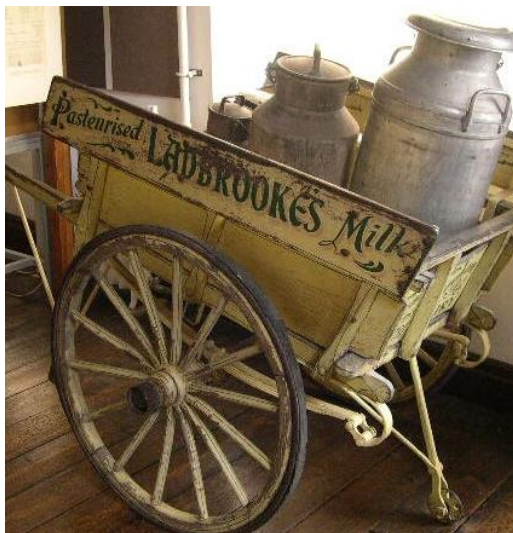


Figure 1: An example of a milk trolley¹



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Figure 2: An example of a milk trolley with an oval plate inscription of the owner and area, it reads: "W. Oakman, Kings Road, Tottenham"²

A history of milk deliveries

Milk and dairy products were delivered to households, in urban and rural areas, alongside the commercialisation of dairy farms³. Handcarts or 'prams', three wheeled carts with a milk churn, were used by milkmen in the 19th and 20th centuries, which delivered fresh produce twice or thrice daily⁴. These deliveries were essential to local areas, as there was no refrigeration to store dairy products

¹ Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell. Milk perambulator (cart) [Internet]. Norfolk Museum Collections. 2007 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <http://norfolkmuseumscollections.org/collections/objects/object-2111255523.html> © Norfolk Museums Service

² Hedgecock, D. Welcome to Memories on a Monday: Milk and Bottle Tops – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive. London: Bruce Castle Museum; 30 March 2020, 5. © Bruce Castle Museum (Haringey Archive and Museum Service)

³ Hedgecock, D. Welcome to Memories on a Monday: Milk and Bottle Tops – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive. London: Bruce Castle Museum; 30 March 2020, 3.

⁴ Phelps, T. The British Milkman. Oxford: Shire Library; 2010, 11.

long-term⁵. This is also why milk was transported in large churns and could only be distributed to customers via their own containers⁶.

Between 1920 and 1939 handcarts were replaced by horse-drawn carts, and churns were gradually replaced with milk bottles⁷. The Museum of East Anglian Life holds some examples of horse-drawn milk carts, used for deliveries in Bury St. Edmunds in the 1920s by a local dairy⁸. There were upgrades to milk bottles in 1935 and 1980, and cardboard tops were changed for aluminium ones during the 1940s⁹. Refrigerators became popular in the 1920s and 1930s, however their installation in the home did not become affordable until the 1950s, and milk deliveries continued using electric milk floats¹⁰. In the 1970s, over 18 million households had milk deliveries, compared to 2014 when only less than 5% of households received milk on their doorsteps¹¹.

The milk trolley in Stowupland

Mr. R Allard began the milk round in Stowupland in 1929, firstly on a bicycle with two milk churns on each handle. He then acquired a milk trolley, which he used during the 1930s, delivering various dairy products from his farm; it was common for early milkmen to be based on a farm or a local dairy shop¹². The farm was located north of Stowupland's centre and can be seen on Ordnance maps from 1905 to 1953¹³.

Mr Allard delivered in the morning, after hand-milking his 12 cows. Delivering milk, butter, and eggs to households in the morning, usually before dawn, was popular in urban areas¹⁴. The milk was sold for 2d (a half-groat) a pint, whilst the eggs, cream, and butter were sold for 2/6 (a half crown) per

⁵ The Dairy Alliance. A Brief History of Home Milk Delivery [Internet]. The Dairy Alliance. 3 June 2020 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <https://thedairyalliance.com/blog/a-brief-history-of-home-milk-delivery/>.

⁶ Hedgecock, D. Welcome to Memories on a Monday: Milk and Bottle Tops – sharing our heritage from Bruce Castle Museum & Archive. London: Bruce Castle Museum; 30 March 2020, 3.

⁷ Phelps, T. The British Milkman. Oxford: Shire Library; 2010, 21.

⁸ Reed, J. Serving the Community [Internet]. The Museum of East Anglia Life Blog. 17 April 2020 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <http://eastanglianlife.org.uk/serving-the-community/>.

⁹ Heyden, T. Nostalgia for an old-fashioned milk bottle [Internet]. BBC News Magazine. 26 September 2014 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-29327881>.

¹⁰ Drink Milk in Glass Bottles. The Day the Milkman Went Away: A History of Home Milk Delivery [Internet]. Drink Milk in Glass Bottles Blog. 2017 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <http://www.drinkmilkinglassbottles.com/a-quick-history-home-milk-delivery/>.

¹¹ Ward. A. No Milk Today: The Vanishing World of the Milkman. London: Robinson; 2016.

¹² Phelps, T. The British Milkman. Oxford: Shire Library; 2010, 12.

¹³ NLS Map Collections Team. Digital copy of: Suffolk LVI.NE, OS Six-inch England and Wales, 1842-1952 [Internet]. National Library of Scotland. 1905 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/101577740> and NLS Map Collections Team. Digital copy of: Suffolk LVI.NE, OS Six-inch England and Wales, 1842-1952 [Internet]. National Library of Scotland. 1953 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/101577731>.

¹⁴ Young, W. H. The 1930s. Westport: Greenwood Publishing; 2002, 98.

pound (lb). The milk was priced per pint as it was transported in a churn, and it was common for milk deliveries to include butter and eggs, with some delivering cheese as well¹⁵.

At the end of the 1930s, Mr Allard's milk round was successful, and he expanded into Earl Stonham, 4 to 5 miles south east from Stowupland¹⁶. Mr Allard upgraded his trolley to a cart, with two ponies, delivering in Stowupland in the morning, and Earl Stonham in the afternoon. Eventually, the cart was also replaced by two motor vans until the 1950s when Mr Allard retired from the milk rounds.

Milkmen and gossip

Milkmen were perceived as a family friend, a cheerful chappie, and known as the "eyes and ears of their community"¹⁷. Notes were left in empty bottles and after collecting the money "the milkman would then be invited in for a cup of tea"¹⁸. As a figure of familiarity across a village, a milkman would be at liberty to hear any gossip, and this gossip would likely travel between villages, for example when Mr Allard bought a second milk round in Earl Stonham.

It is imaginable to picture Mr Allard first on his bicycle, then with a hand cart, travelling through Stowupland during a post-war time of depression and unemployment, alongside technological advancements and increased quality of life (free milk was provided in schools after 1934)¹⁹. The gossip of the time would likely be localised to Stowupland, and of the surrounding villages, as well as national gossip about another impending war.

¹⁵ Chavers, P. History of Milk and Egg Home Delivery Service [Internet]. Curious Historian Blog. 2019 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <https://curioushistorian.com/history-of-milk-and-egg-home-delivery-service>.

¹⁶ NLS Map Collections Team. Digital copy of: Suffolk LVI.NE, OS Six-inch England and Wales, 1842-1952 [Internet]. National Library of Scotland. 1928 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <https://maps.nls.uk/view/101577737>.

¹⁷ Ward. A. No Milk Today: The Vanishing World of the Milkman. London: Robinson; 2016.

¹⁸ Heyden, T. Nostalgia for an old-fashioned milk bottle [Internet]. BBC News Magazine. 26 September 2014 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-29327881>.

¹⁹ Bitesize GCSE History. The Depression of the 1930s [Internet]. BBC Bitesize. 2020 [cited 7 September 2020] Available from: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/z34mwxs/revision/1>.