

HARRY LAMBERT'S PAINT KETTLES

By Gordon Head

My parents' shop at 11 Station Road sold everything - sweets, tobacco, toys, Meccano, fishing tackle; well almost everything, and we had a shop girl called Dora Richardson, a local girl with a good sense of humour, and almost anything that happened in the shop was something to get a laugh out of with my mother. All sorts of things went on and I well remember one of these funny happenings. My mother was always one to get up early, and I was a reasonably early riser as well; mother used to open for the customers who worked in Eastbourne and caught the 7 o'clock train - in those days trains ran in front of our shop.

People used to come in quite early, and one morning, when I was in the shop, Harry Lambert of 'Gosden & Lambert' painters, decorators, plumbers etc., who had their premises in Victoria Road, called in. He had parked his bicycle outside against the high kerb, and on that bicycle hanging on the handlebars were two pots of stone coloured paint, two open wire-handled paint kettles, and just about as near full as you could get them to be on the handlebars of a bicycle!



Harry bought whatever it was he wanted and I watched him go out, and the method then to mount his bicycle was on the step at the back wheel, not cock his leg over the saddle as we do today. He got his left foot on the step and propelled himself along a bit and went to get on - and - collapsed! - sat down in the road with the bike on top of him! Believe it or not before my very eyes both the full kettles of paint poured all over his bald head! Gosh what a predicament! We helped him up, mother went and grabbed some towels and we mopped and wiped and managed to stop the flow and get rid of the worst of it.

After that, he looked fairly presentable and was obviously going to need to clean up - but a very economical man was Mr. Lambert, because he got out his brush and laboriously scooped up all the paint which had poured into the road, which fortunately was tarmac and not rough flints. He didn't get all of it of course, but it was surprising how much he did get back into his two paint kettles - and off he went!