

The Viney Family & Business

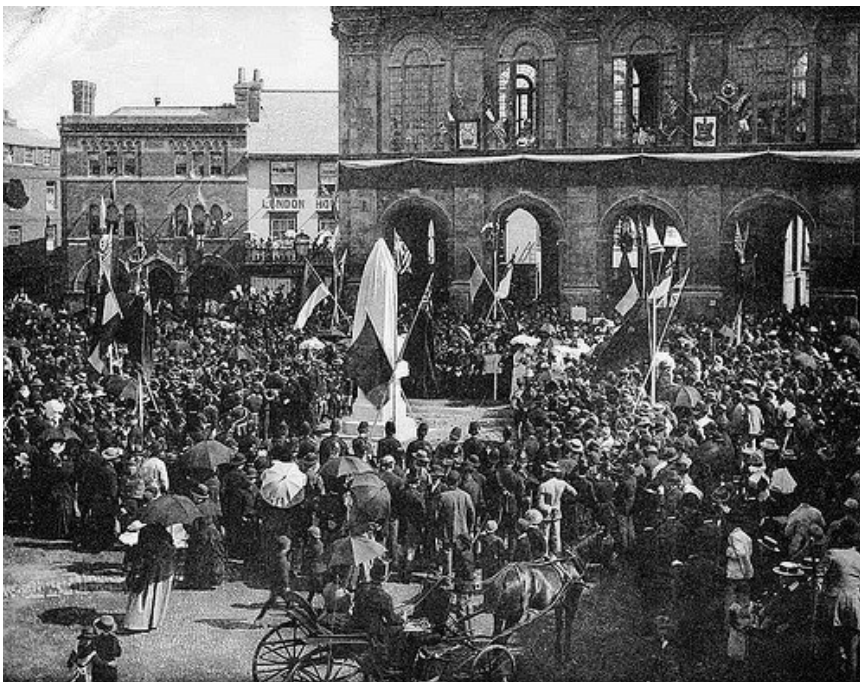
by

Viola Crowe

Thank you for asking me to talk about Viney's. I can't vouch for some of the early bits because they are hearsay, but I have included them because you may find it interesting.

My Grandfather, Frederick Viney and my Grandmother, Lavinia Viney came to Abingdon in the 1870s. They were helped to start a business in the drapery trade by those with whom they had been apprenticed. The drapery trade in those days included "piece goods", goods sold by the yard. I can just remember seeing my great uncle, James Viney, measuring out yards of sheeting – something you wouldn't see or buy today.

Grandpa and Grandma first lived in Lombard Street, and later moved to 2 Market Place where the Coventry Building Society is today. Here they lived over the drapers shop. They had two children, my father, Cyril Viney and his sister, my Aunt Doris.



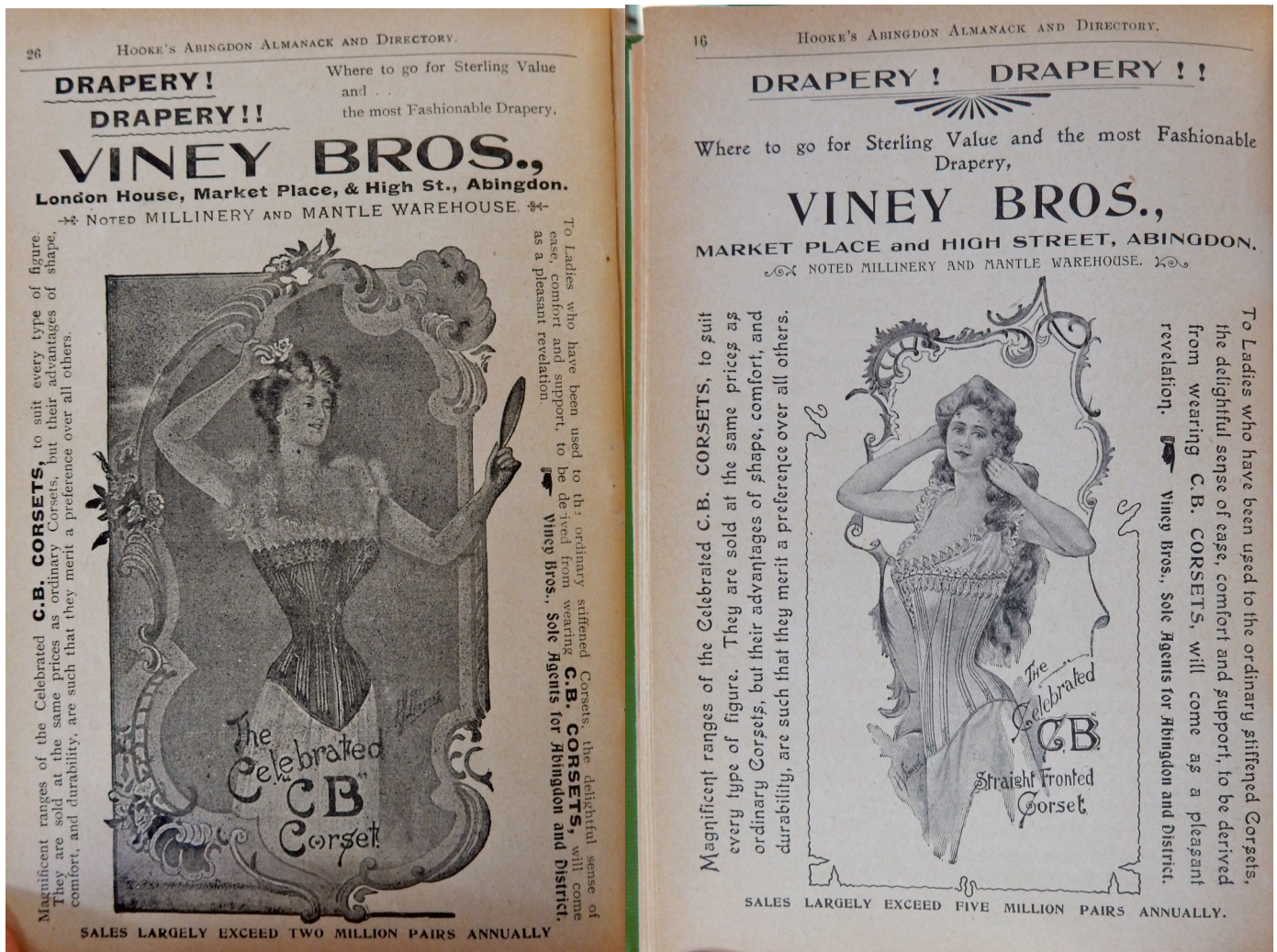
The Jubilee



Doris Wakeham nee Viney

She remembered looking out of the window above the shop, over to the Market Place at the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Jubilee. She later became a trained nurse at great expense to my grandparents as training had to be paid for then.

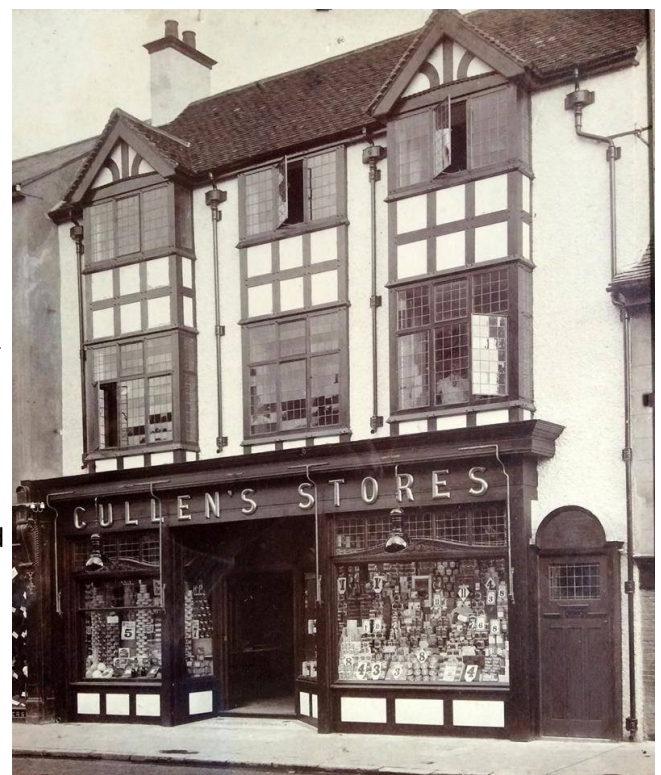
My father was in France at the outbreak of WW1 learning the silk trade. Grandpa and Grandma must have wanted to upgrade their drapery to include something more exotic.



He quickly returned home to join the army. He must have been posted to London because my mother tells the story of how she and her two sisters chatted up a group of soldiers, my father amongst them, and asked for directions. My mother and her sisters knew the way perfectly well, being Londoners, but it was a good excuse! Suffice it to say that mother must have made a big hit with Dad and he with her because they were married in London in 1917 soon after their first meeting.

Finding somewhere to live in Abingdon in those days seemed to be as difficult as it is today. First they rented rooms over Cullens old shop in Stert Street. Later they moved to a little cottage in Tubney with a well for drinking water. I remember my elder sister telling me that there were frogs in it!

However the business must have prospered after WW1 because in 1922 Dad bought three plots of land on the



Oxford Road and built Boundary House where I was born in 1925, with Aunt Doris now fully trained in charge, and she became my God Mother.



Times became difficult in the thirties and at that time Cecil Kimber came to Abingdon to start the MG car company and Boundary House was let to him. It sports a blue plaque to the fact that he lived there, but nothing to say I was born there!

During WWII my father rejoined the Army. He was delighted that his Sam Brown belt still fitted him. He was stationed on the East coast with gun emplacements staffed by girls and was so terribly upset when one of his batteries received a direct hit by one of the V1 rockets.

At the beginning of WWII I joined the Land Army, but when the WRNS reopened for recruits I was able to join them, first as boats crew and later as an MT driver.

Because I had a little knowledge of engines I got a job on a boat which was to go out to the Med. taking people for holidays which had been so restricted during the war. I remember our first and only passengers, a couple with a baby and a mountain of luggage.

Though the skipper used to say that the sea was like glass, it was far from it. I was in the engine room with a bucket beside me being sick. It did me good though because I weighed over 13 stone when I joined the boat and 9 ½ when I left.

Meanwhile Viney's shop at 2 Market Place was demolished and I remember Dad being so delighted in receiving £13,000 for a space. The house my Grandfather and Grandmother owned, 15 Ock Street, was bought from them and turned into a furniture shop. They ran the business from there until the land in the Marcham Road became a Retail Park, and a new furniture shop moved there and is still there.

Strangely enough 15 Ock Street is now Franklin's Solicitors where my daughter is a partner, so when I go in to see her I can see the wide ma-



hogany banister we used to slide down as children.

In 1950 I was to lose the Viney name by marrying. I had always had my eye on Basil Crowe so needless to say I was delighted when he asked me to marry him. The family always said it was an arranged marriage by his mother, my sisters and a friend of the family. I remember my future Mother-in-Law saying "If you're coming into our family you will have to learn to play bridge". Something I do to this day and still really enjoy.

This talk seems more about me rather than Vineys. If you have any questions, I will do my best to answer them.

Viola Crowe