

***Minding Their Own Business: Howard Beard investigates some of Stroud's old shops, by Howard Beard (Stroud Local History Society 2020). 128pp, many b/w and col.ill. Paperback, £10.00. ISBN: 9781903599 29 7.***

This book is a delightful addition to the collection written by Howard Beard on the Stroud area. It provides an interesting insight into the old shops of Stroud and has a fascinating selection of illustrations to accompany each one. The level of research and detail provides the reader with a clear picture of the history of the business and its owners.

Howard Beard provides an introduction to the reason for the book, its layout, and describes it as a 'dipping into the lives of our predecessors'. In fact, I found it encouraged the reader to develop a taste to learn more about the area and take the book for a walk along the streets of Stroud.

The layout consists of a series of stories labelled with the trade, e.g. 'Papers and Pens', and the name of the shop. Each story combines local and family history information showing the diversification of business owners and their origins. Interesting side lines developed, including one involving a lock of hair that was enclosed in green paper used by a tea merchant to wrap loose tea.

Howard Beard has included contemporary and historical photographs of the shops, business letterheads and bills. It was interesting to read the contents of the bills and as pointed out by the author, how long they took to be paid!

Throughout the stories, the author recollects interactions that he has had with some of the shop owners including the photographer of his parents' and his own wedding. The book concludes with a series of stories and photographs of the Stroud shops that were connected with the author's family.

This book would be of interest to any reader who has an interest in local history, even if they are not residents of Stroud. It concludes with an index of additional traders' names which can be helpful to local and family historians.

Michelle Rees