

Dedham Post Office

The recent closure of the Dedham Post Office is a sad loss to the community and it is to be hoped that a new part-time arrangement at a location in the village may replace the present welcome but temporary mobile van before too long. There have been postal services here since at least since 1838 and over the last 120 years the PO has occupied three different premises in the High Street; so it has always been an important social centre where people come together and news and gossip circulate. For years it was a regular destination because pensions and family allowances were collected there in cash.



The Post Office at Little House, c.1900. Note the delivery trolley outside

A photograph taken c.1900 (above) shows that at that time the Post Office was at Little House but before the start

of WWI it had moved eastwards along the High Street. I first remember it inside E.C. (Teddy) Ray's ironmongery shop with his wife as the Post Mistress. The entire building was destroyed by fire in 1976 and the present Piper House now occupies the site of the former Post Office.



The Post Office pre-WWI in the premises which became part of Ray's ironmongery shop.

After Mrs Ray died in the mid 1950s, Lily Watson, who had been her assistant, took over and in 1955 moved the PO across the street into a house (now the Old Post Office) being vacated by her brother Billy Watson, a one-legged cobbler who tragically had lost his leg as a child when he was run over by a cart in the High Street. In 1955 he and his wife decided to move away for their young son's health; so Lily converted his small shop on the right-hand side of the building into a new Post Office, accessed through an entrance in the side wall where the outline of its door can still be detected.

Lily had been assisted by Mary Hood since 1967 and when she retired in 1969, Mary who had worked at the Manningtree PO took over the Post Office with her husband William Hood, who became the new Sub-Postmaster.



The Post office on the south side of the High Street c.1960. On the opposite side of the road you can see the double bay windows of the previous Post Office in Ray's shop

For half a century their PO was to be a vital and much valued centre of Dedham life. The Hoods ran it as a combined post office and newsagent-cum-stationer's, in due course doubling the size of the shop, so that it ran right across the front of the house and used the present front door as its entrance.

always cheerful, was very popular in the village. Because he was so exceptionally short the other postmen had to deliver for him to properties on his round with letter boxes too high for him to reach!

The Hoods' daughter Valerie Graygoose, who also worked at the post office took over as Sub-Postmistress when her father retired in 1988 and she ran the PO until 2005, when it finally moved out. Then her brother Stuart Hood, with his mother's help, kept the shop open as a newsagent until 2015 and a room at the back of the house continued to be used as the postal sorting office.



Staff outside Dedham Post Office in 1986

A photograph taken in 1986 (above) shows postmen Robert Marven and Claude Bird; Mary Hood; Louis the dog; Sub-Postmaster William Hood and Micky Daughters, England's smallest Postman, with his special buggy. Micky,

In 2005 Jayesh Kotecha opened a new post office inside the Pharmacy, which was continued and modernised by new owners Mandeep and Pardeep Sandhu when they bought the business in 2017. However in June 2019 they reluctantly decided to close it because it was no

longer financially viable under the Post Office's new franchise model, which has led to falling incomes and higher costs. Dedham is among the one in five post offices nationally expected to close in the next year. The nearest postal offices are now in Ardleigh, Lawford and Stratford St Mary.

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The pillar box outside the Pharmacy, 2007



The temporary mobile Post Office, July 2019

Temporary POST OFFICE Facilities

The Post Office van will be parked in the bus stop bay outside The Marlborough Head until further notice

MONDAYS & WEDNESDAYS
1:15 to 4:15 pm