

REPAIR

In mid-century Amersham the cost of buying food and many other products was more expensive as a percentage of income than it is today. Some items might be less readily available, meaning that replacing them took time and effort. This encouraged people to waste little and repair items when they broke.

This is particularly true of clothes, which many local people would have made themselves. Fabric could be bought by the yard from local haberdashers, with Woodcock's on Sycamore Road being a particular favourite. Cottons, buttons and other accessories could be purchased too. If clothes needed repairing many people had the skills to do this themselves. Clothes would also be adjusted as they were passed through the family or when the fabric was needed for a different use.

Although many fabrics would be made of natural materials, from the 1940s plastic-based fabrics became increasingly popular. This was particularly true of Nylon stockings and from the 1950s fabrics containing polyester. Polyester clothing became less popular in the 1970s because many people found it itchy, but it has been refined and is widely used in clothing today.

What can you do today?

- Repair clothes rather than the replace them; Bluebell dry cleaners in Amersham and the Artful Menders in Chesham both offer a repair service
- Buy pre-loved clothes from local charity shops or through initiatives such as Re-Fashion, Loopster or Thrift +
- Swap clothes with friends or through an exchange scheme



Early 20th century haberdashers, on the corner of Whielden Street



Sycamore Road, with Woodcock's on the right, 1970s

Amersham's Shopkeepers: Ruby Woodcock (1902-1994)



Ruby Sibley was born in Amersham in 1902. Her uncle was George Ward, local photographer and owner of a bicycle repair shop. Many of the historic images of Amersham we have in our collection were taken by him. Ruby married John Woodcock from Hampstead in London in 1923. Following the same trade as his father, John was a draper. The couple lived in Amersham old town and later moved to Sycamore Road, Amersham-on-the-Hill. Ruby's shop Woodcock's likely continued the work of her husband, who died in 1949.

