

Boots the Chemist by Tony Bowler

Jesse Boot was born in 1850, the son of a farm worker with a gift for making herbal remedies. Jesse was only 10 when his father died, and he left school at 13 to help his mother and sister, Jane, in their little shop in Goose Gate, Nottingham. He trailed many miles of the countryside, barefoot, collecting herbs for steaming on the fireplace. Later in his teens he managed the shop for his mother. By 1877 Jesse Boot had put his name above the shop. "Boots for Value" had arrived. To pep up business Jesse put advertisements in the local paper. These brought large crowds to the shop. Many items on sale then can still be seen today: Beecham's Pills, Woodward's Gripe Water ("Many a Mother's Saviour"), Clarke's Blood Mixture and more.

In 1886 Jesse married Florence Rowe, the daughter of a Jersey stationer, and she added stationery to the business.

Having prospered, Boots moved to larger premises, and into other towns such as Lincoln, Sheffield and Derby. The widening of Bag Lane, Derby – renamed East Street – was delayed owing to Bardill's premises being purchased by Jesse Boot.

In 1912 he built his shop on the corner with St Peter's Street in a pretty Arts and Crafts style to a design by Albert Bromley, who was a nephew of a Derby surveyor. Extensions along East Street were made in 1938 in a matching style. This date appears on the side of the building, as does 1912 on the apex in St Peter's Street. Also on the building can be seen four niched statues of local worthies by Morley Harder. On the East Street frontage is Jedediah Strutt, "The manufacturer of weaving calico cotton cloth". At the corner of the building are William Hutton, Derby's first historian, with his dog and John Lombe, the pioneer of the silk industry. Facing St Peter's Street stands Florence Nightingale, "The Lady of the Lamp".



Boots stood at the junction of East Street and St Peter's Street for 64 years before moving into the Eagle Centre on its completion in 1976. The original building (45 St Peter's Street) is now occupied by Costa Coffee and is grade 2 listed. The Halifax Building Society occupies the 1938 extension (39 East Street) which has a blue plaque to commemorate a meteorologist born at the previous building on the site.

Boots in Chaddesden

In 1933 Boots opened their 1000th shop at Galashiels. A shop was opened at Chaddesden around the same time. It can be seen in this extract from a 1941 trade directory and the photograph below taken in January 2014.

Bennett Edwd. F.B.O.A. optician, 10
Chaddesden la
Bishop Chas. Arth. hairdressr. 54 Wils-
thorpe rd
Boots The Chemists, 507 Nottingham rd.
Derby 55187
Bricknell Harold, farmer, Valley farm.
Market rd Derby 55549



The Nottingham Road shop was closed when Boots moved to Derwent Valley Medical Centre, St Mark's Road. Carpet Time now occupies 507 Nottingham Road.

Boots still have a shop in Chaddesden, on Wyvern Way in the Wyvern Retail Park, but now looking rather isolated since the closure of Toys "R" Us alongside. They also have shops in Derby at Osmaston Road, Allenton; Park Farm Centre, Allestree; and Shardlow Road, Alvaston.



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