

A Street Through Time

A Journey along the Limavady High Street

The beginnings of a High Street

In Northern Ireland the High Street began as a marketplace, a hub of social activity. The earliest buying and selling was carried out at these markets and fairs but by the late 18th Century fixed shops and identifiable shop fronts were evident. These first began with adaptations to existing domestic properties but later a shop front design became important, particularly as a way to indicate a high class.



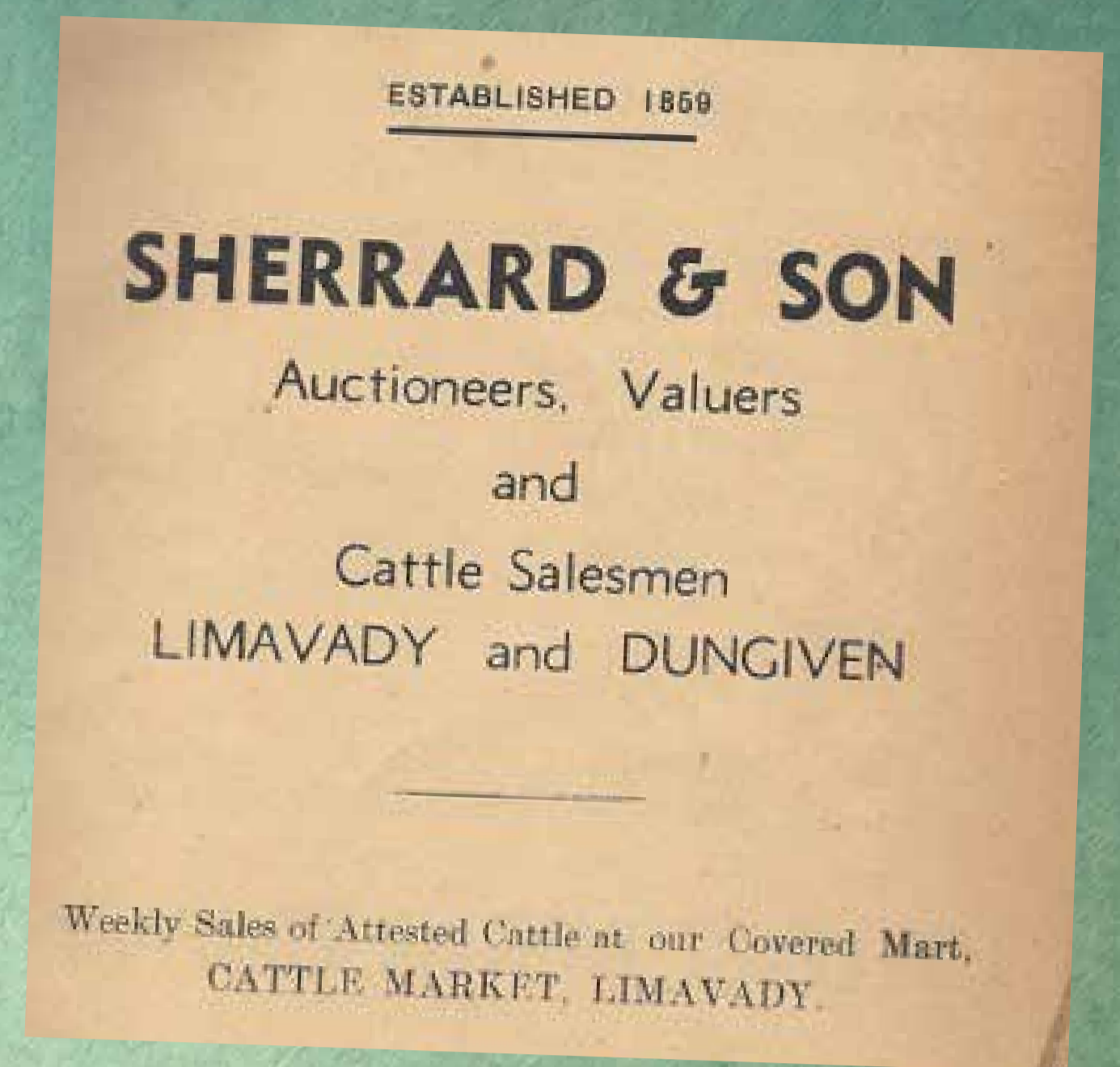
George Broolly Grocery Shop, Catherine Street, Limavady, early 1900's. Brothers Johnny and George Broolly. Courtesy of Jim Broolly.

During the 1930's shop owners began to use the power of advertising and window displays to draw in customers. Goods inside were displayed in glass cabinets and brands we'd recognise today appeared. Tinned foods also began to grow in popularity.

During the Second World War, particularly once rationing began, shoppers would queue for hours outside shops if they heard food was available. Shop windows displayed posters about saving food, fuel and goods and inside many shelves were empty. People had to register with most shops to be able to buy goods, making shopkeepers very important within the community.



Hiring fair at Kerr's Corner, Market Street, Limavady. Courtesy of Nelson McGonagle.

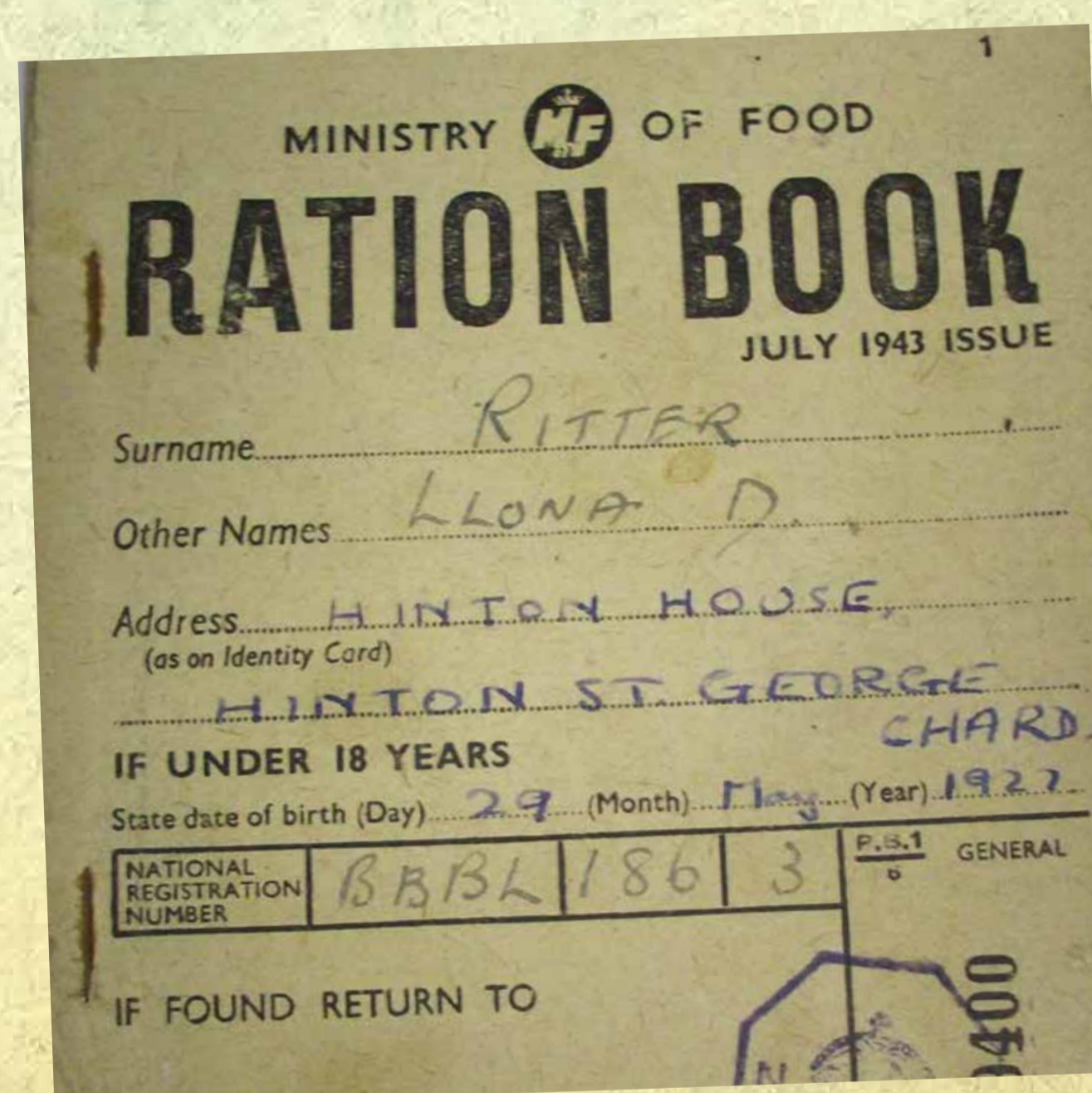


Limavady Fairs: In 1956 fairs were held on the second Monday in February, March, May, June, July, October & November.

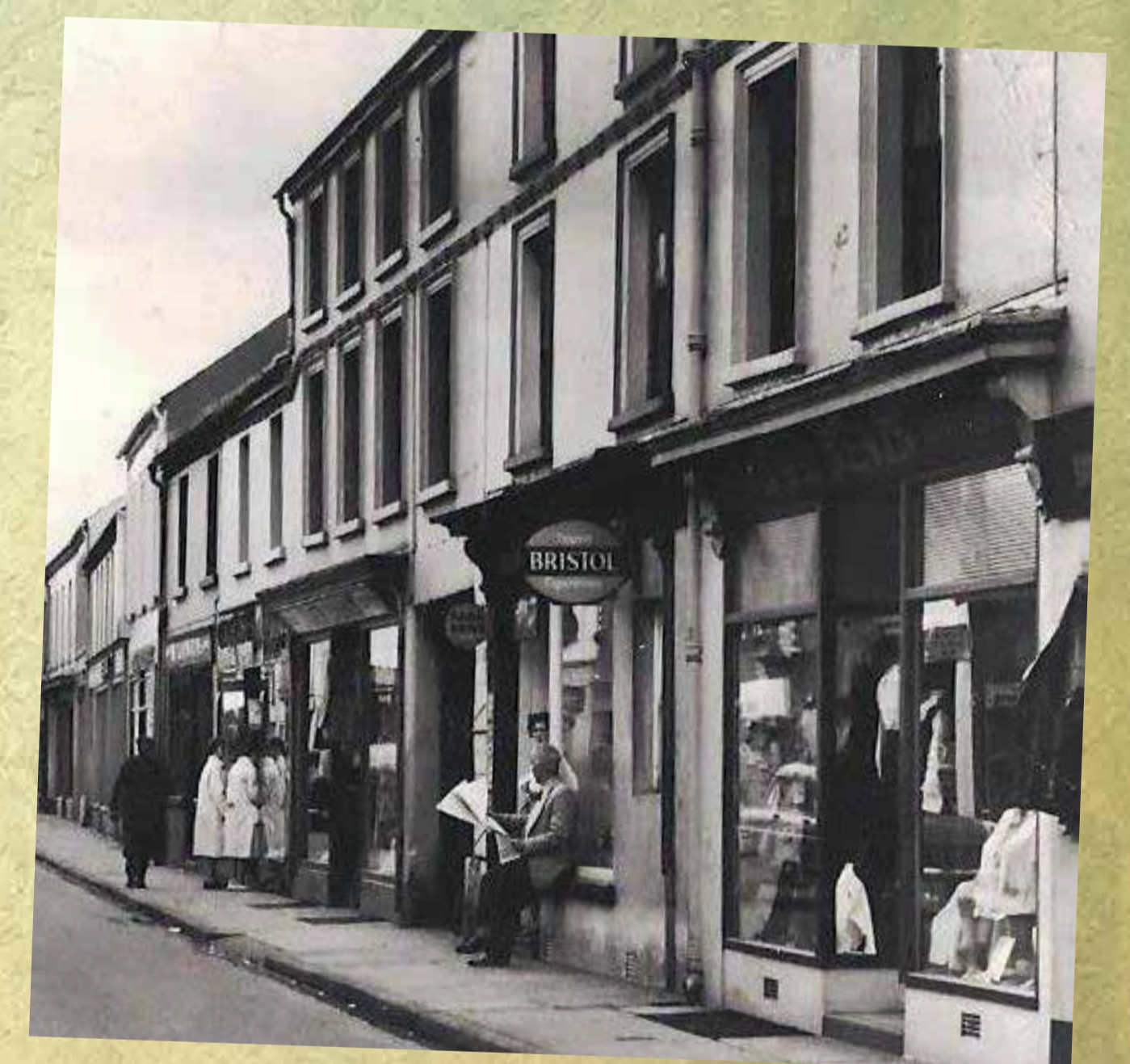
The Victorian era saw the creation of the High Street as we know it today. As more people moved into the cities, fewer were able to grow their own produce and began to rely on shops for food and other goods. Items for sale were often displayed outside the shops and some would have workrooms for making the products on sale.

During the late 18th and early 19th Century shop design was heavily influenced by the size of glass available, resulting in small pane windows but with the invention of plate glass in the 1830's and the lifting of Glass Tax in 1845, larger pane windows became affordable.

By the early 20th Century, shops were high quality with curved glass, bell-shaped entrances with mosaic tiled floors and mahogany windows and doors.



Ministry of Food Ration Book, July 1943.



Classically inspired architectural detailing like pilasters and console bracket signs became widely used for shop front decoration. Market Street, Limavady, mid 1900's.

These shops with their unique shop front designs make a significant contribution to the distinguishing character of our town and represent an important link with the social and cultural history of Limavady, as although the shops have changed ownership and appearance they are still reminders of the Georgian and Victorian buildings that once made up the Limavady High Street, highlighting that shops are worth conserving.