

Oxfordshire

DAVID DAY'S BELL STREET CONFECTIONER'S

Emily Climençon's *Guide to Henley-on-Thames* (published 1896) advertised that 'refreshments of various kinds' could be obtained at **No 20 Bell St.** No. 20 is now La Campana restaurant (formerly the Olde Bell and the Duke of Cumberland), but the confectioner's premises appear to have been next door, perhaps where there is now a key-cutting business and dry cleaners. The 1883 *Kelly's Directory* lists **David Day**, confectioner, at Nos 20-22 Bell Street, and he appears there in the 1891 census, with his wife Fanny, three of his children, and a nephew. Ten years earlier the family included seven children, and there was a confectioner's assistant along with two general servants. One son, Charles E Day, had evidently chosen not to go into the family business, as he was listed in 1891 as 'boat builder.'

The Days were the latest in a long line of Bell Street confectioners: as early as the 18th century the Rathbone family were established as confectioners there. The Days apparently took over from the Dimblebee family, who were mentioned in the 1861 census as 'confectioner and pastry cook'. John Dimblebee (aged 35) and his wife Lydia were established there by 1841, and ten years later had a two-year-old son (John H Dimblebee). They shared the premises with a niece working as a shop assistant, and two servants, one of whom was a 'biscuit maker'. By 1861 Lydia (now aged 58) was head of household, presumably following her husband's death, and shared the premises with her 12-year-old son John, a journeyman pastry cook, and a general servant.

The Days were not recorded on Bell Street in 1901, when Alexandra Blomfield, 'pastry cook and confectioner', was recorded next to The Duke of Cumberland (now The Bell), where Robert Dyas now trades.

Two other Bell St bakers advertised in the 1896 *Guide*, Mr Pither, and John Broad. Mr Day's advertisement implies that he ran a catering business and café rather than just a bakery, though as Mrs Day also kept 'a register office for hiring servants' they may have needed to augment their income in the light of competition.

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