

# Hard times give rise to great business idea

A HUNDRED years ago, a shrewd and enterprising Cambridge woman called Catherine Holland hit on a bright idea for boosting the family budget.

Her first husband died young and she and her only son, Bill Holland, needed to make a living. The inspiration was a product in widespread demand among the many local bakers in the area — yeast.

It was a vital ingredient for the basic food of the day yet it was only used in minute amounts so Mr Holland was able to cycle around the area making his deliveries.

At that time there were some 30 bakers in the city centre alone, quite apart from others scattered further afield and in adjacent villages.

The yeast was supplied in huge sacks and the secret was to keep it fresh, selling it at regular intervals for around the equivalent of 2p to 5p a time, depending on the size of the order.

For a long time the business continued in this fashion from Mrs Holland's home in Sedgwick Street but the pattern changed during the First World War when the company got the sole agency for a major brand of yeast and moved to Mill Road.

Around this time Mr

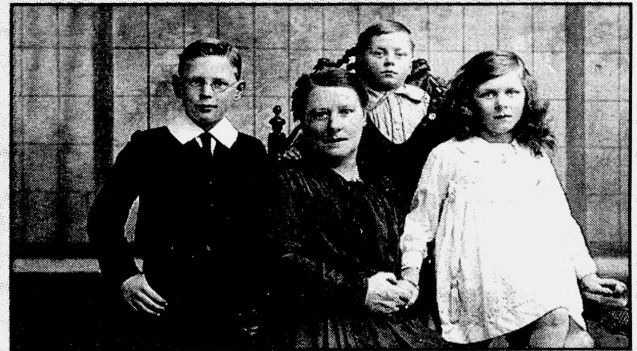
## Vital ingredient brings success for family firm

Holland was joined by his eldest son, Fred, and the firm graduated to using a motor cycle for its deliveries.

It extended its product range to include frozen eggs, fats, sugars, margarines, fondants and dried fruits for cakes and confectionery.

The business prospered until the Second World War, its service having extended to 25 miles around Cambridge with a fleet of vans delivering its products, despite the constraints of petrol and food rationing during the war period and its immediate aftermath.

Turn to page 8.



Family affair . . . company founder Catherine Holland, above, and current day chairman Frank Holland, left. He is also seen in his younger days, above, second from right.



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## Bakery business expands

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Bill Holland's younger son, Frank, then joined the business after working in local government and serving as a fighter pilot and the two brothers carried on after their father's retirement.

The business expanded into a warehouse in Mill Road when Fred Holland decided to go into his own bakery business in London, following his father's death in 1955.

Frank Holland is now chairman of all three firms bearing the Holland name, including the thriving garage concern in Mill Road and F and H Motors in Coldham's Lane.

C Holland and Sons moved to Whitecroft Road, in Meldreth, in 1976 after outgrowing its premises in Cambridge.



**Stocked up . . . above, the firm's Meldreth warehouse is the distribution base for an expanding product range.**

**Wheels of fortune . . . below right, Holland managing director Robert Bakewell, left, with chairman Frank Holland.**

# A changing brand of customer . . .

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C HOLLAND and Sons has come a long way since its horse and cart days 100 years ago.

Today it supplies more than 2,700 products for the catering and bakery trades using a fleet of modern vehicles with freezer, refrigeration and ambient facilities to customers within a 50-mile radius of Cambridge.

Customers 100 years ago were bakers. Now they include not only bakers but hotels, restaurants, colleges, schools, hospitals, fish and chip shops, residential homes and catering outlets.

Frozen goods now feature prominently on the firm's impressive product list for both bakers and caterers and these are stored and distributed from its modernised and efficiently run warehouse at Meldreth.

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Loyalty pays off . . . Holland attributes much of its success over the past 100 years to its loyal workforce. 5327943A

# A golden workforce

C HOLLAND and Sons is now run by the grandson and great grandson of the original founder. Frank Holland is chairman and Robert Bakewell is managing director.

Mr Bakewell, great grandson of Catherine Holland, says that as a family business C Holland and Sons prides itself on offering quality products with a personal flexible service.

"Our customers know that if they need goods urgently we will do everything we can to solve their problems as quickly as possible. This results in great loyalty from customers, some of whom have been ordering from C Holland and Sons since the 1930s," he said.

Loyalty has been shown by staff too. Mr John Cox retired last year as managing director after 45 years of service.

Frank Holland said: "Our loyal staff have been one of the major factors in reaching 100 years of business, especially after the last few years of recession."

Gary Warboys, as general manager, has full responsibility for the efficient everyday running of the business and is ably backed by office supervisor Margaret Plumb and warehouse

## Customer and staff loyalty is the business

foreman Danny Pateman.

Meanwhile sales representatives Roy Page and Paul Leonard maintain the important contact with customers.

Many changes have taken place to the company in the past 100 years, the latest being membership of a central buying group.

Mr Bakewell said: "Our membership of the group has allowed us to obtain more competitive prices for our customers together with a range of catering products under the "Kitchen King" label, while keeping our independence as a family concern."

Summing up, he said: "We have an excellent team at Hollands offering a friendly and efficient service. Our customers require the right goods at the right price, and we aim to fulfil these requirements for the next 100 years."

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