



1917 100 2017

a.f. years of
blakemore
..... & son ltd





100 Years of A.F. Blakemore & Son



An artist's impression of the first Blakemore store by
Payroll Administrator Lisa Best, who joined the company in 1996.

Introduction



Over the coming pages, our history will be told through the memories of many colleagues past and present; after all it is these people who have made Blakemore's the business that it is today, and it is their efforts that have created our success. These stories make our culture and purpose come alive and enable us to become a truly unique business which cannot be replicated by others. I believe it is this that will ensure our survival for another 100 years.

During the celebrations we tried to do three things: celebrate our heritage, involve as many people as possible, and thirdly look to the future. This publication illustrates this across three distinct sections, with the thread of the people of Blakemore's running throughout.

The one thing that is apparent, is that irrespective of our evolving commercial strategies what really matters is people. The stories of past and present colleagues focus on the community that we, and those before us, have built. For this I feel very proud and privileged to be a part of the Blakemore family and am excited to take our business into the next 100 years.

I hope you enjoy reading about what we got up to and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who not only took part in the celebrations and made the centenary so special, but also all those who over the past 100 years have contributed to the Blakemore story.

Caoire Blakemore
Group Director

1917

2017



I joined the business on the Graduate Scheme in May 2017, at the height of all of the 100 year activity. When I was first given the task of working on the commemorative publication last November, I was surprised; I had only been with the company a

little over five months, how could I know enough about the history of A.F. Blakemore & Son?

However, I was wrong to be apprehensive. Working on the publication gave me the time and opportunity to fully get to know the company. Delving into the archives of A.F. Blakemore's history allowed me to get inspired and flex those creative muscles. I read up on the company's many acquisitions and accomplishments, searched out familiar faces in mottled photographs and pored over the treasured memories of colleagues past and present – I saw my role as capturing the company living and breathing its values.

Working on the publication also gave me the opportunity to collaborate with other colleagues across the business, namely Blakemore Creative Print Graphic Designer Ria Hutton-Davies. I had an idea, but working with Ria helped bring it to life. Without Ria's patience, and the support and creative input of the Corporate Affairs team, there would not be a 100 Years of A.F. Blakemore & Son publication.

Now that my mammoth task is complete, I hope that all who receive a copy of the finished article enjoy taking a trip down memory lane and looking ahead to the next 100 years of A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd.

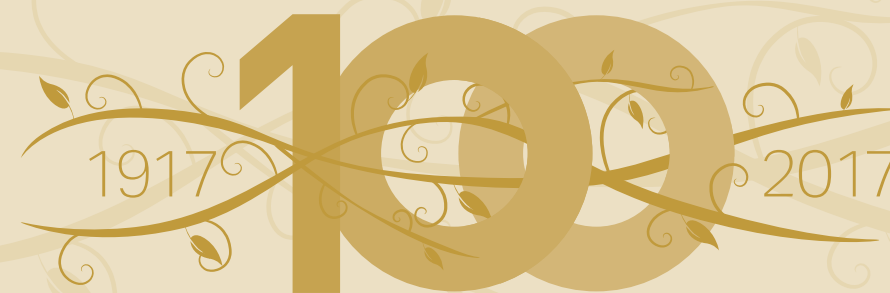
Natalie Watkins
Graduate Communications Officer



Having worked for Blakemore Creative Print for over 10 years, it was a great honour to be selected to design the commemorative publication showcasing the history of A.F. Blakemore & Son.

I have been working closely with Natalie on a daily basis, which has made creating this publication an enjoyable and valuable experience. It has been a pleasure working with Natalie and I've enjoyed every minute of it!

Ria Hutton-Davies
Graphic Designer



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1917-1949

The Early Years

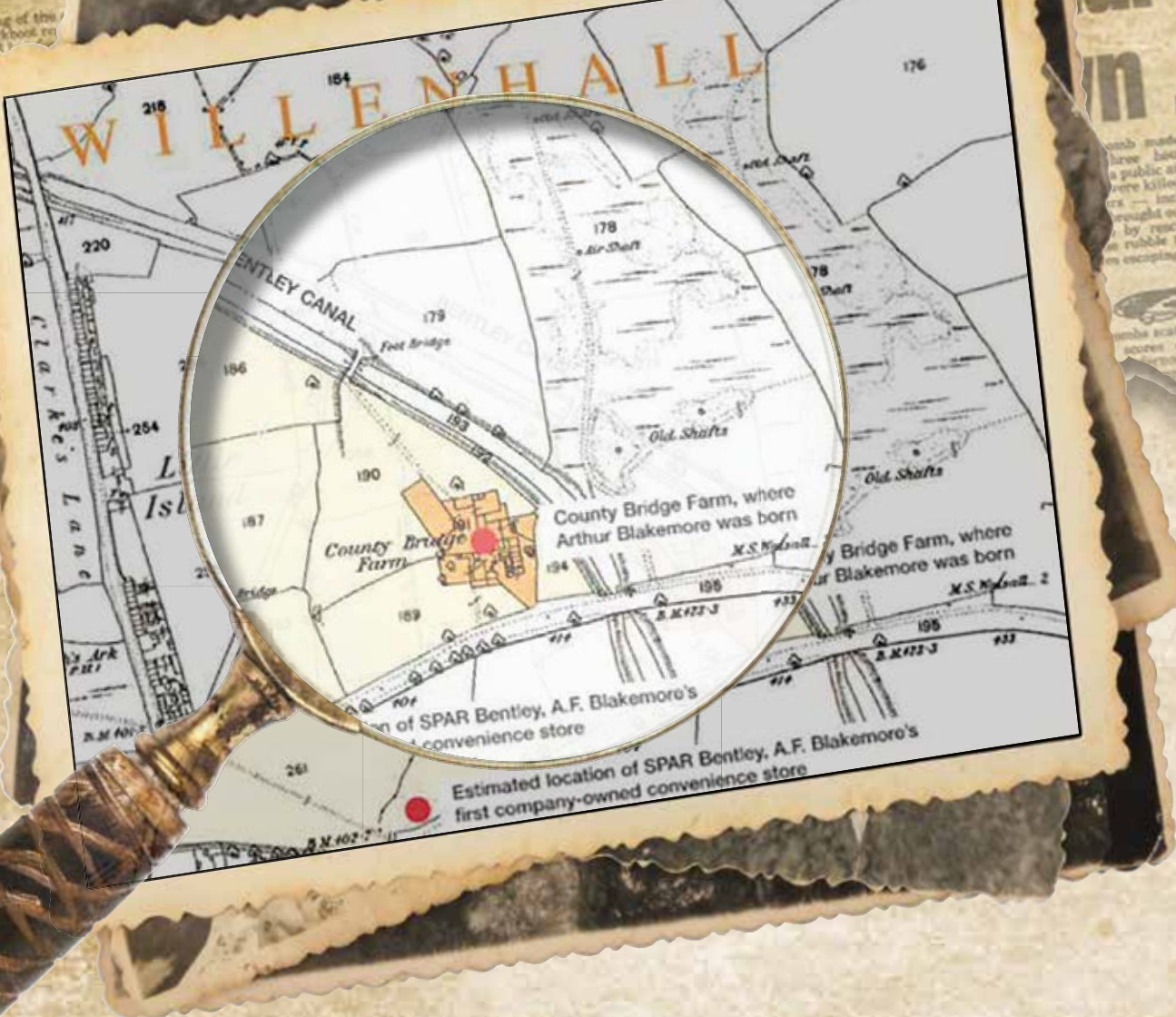
A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd was founded in 1917 when Arthur and Harriet Blakemore opened a counter-service grocery store in Wolverhampton.

During the 1920s and 1930s more shops were acquired and the company's success was aided by the purchase of a motor van, which allowed a wider range of goods to be sold.

In 1934 new wholesale distribution premises were purchased in Williamson Street, Wolverhampton, and the company began to place an increased focus upon its wholesale grocery business.

The company continued to expand despite its premises being bombed during the Second World War.





From Small Beginnings

Arthur Blakemore was born on a farm at County Bridge, Bentley, in 1875; an area which would coincidentally house the company's first company-owned SPAR convenience store more than 100 years later.

Between 1891 and 1902 Arthur undertook a variety of jobs, including warehouse youth, tobacconist traveller and insurance agent, before settling upon a career in counter-service grocery.

Along with his wife Harriet, Arthur opened the company's first store on Merridale Street, Wolverhampton in 1917.



Arthur Blakemore



Harriet Blakemore



His first venture into wholesaling came in 1920 when he started selling paper bags to other retailers in the Wolverhampton area.

With a bicycle as his only mode of transport, Arthur would cycle around Wolverhampton and nearby Willenhall taking orders and delivering the bags from a handcart.

Harriet manned the grocery store while Arthur took on additional responsibilities to provide financial support while the business became established.

These responsibilities included the role of a baker's van man, as well as a cycle agent.

Arthur's son Frank Blakemore joined the company some years later and as part of the company's expansion was given new territory to open up.

This meant cycling to Walsall – a distance of nine miles – and canvassing for customers.

Speaking at the time of the company's 50th anniversary, Frank explained: "The first day after calling on 40-50 shops, orders were obtained for three dozen rubber balls at 3s 3d a dozen, 2,000 bags at 1s 3d per 1,000 and 1,000 bags at 2s 3d per 1,000.

"Not very much perhaps, but it was a start and within six months, 15 customers in the Walsall area were more or less ordering each fortnight."



Frank Blakemore



ODD ODE for A.F. BLAKEMORE & SON, LTD.
by CYRIL FLETCHER.

In 1917, young Arthur Blakemore said, 'My own shop would surely take more.' So in Wolverhampton that year he opened a retail Groceriee. Business folk way back in 1920 made business bloomers all a-plenty. Said Arthur, 'Bloomers always sags I shall concentrate on bags.' Then with motor van and little Frank made lots of journeys to the bank. Indeed they had so many sold bags, the profits turned to many gold bags. So that at Williamson Street in '34 they built themselves a bigger store And in 5 more years by '39 Wholesale groceriee was doing fine. Then in 1942 one night Arthur was given quite a fright As he was taking off his combs Hitler dropped a dozen bombs. Down to the ground the warehouse crashes, To rise like Phoenix from the ashes. And after the war - two stories high A splendid new one greets the eye.



A Bike at Blakemore's
Reading about Blakemore business
brought back happy memories.
I lived near their two little shops.
They had one filled with bicycles
Which were lined out at 3p
per half hour. Kids from all around
came to learn how to ride.
If you weren't early, you had
to wait for a bike to come back.
This was while Mr Blakemore
was building up his paper bag round.
Mrs Blakemore served in the
other shop. It was a poor locality
where they sold everything, so it
was mostly on a tick pay-at-the-
weekend.
I was one of the kids who learned to ride
on a Blakemore's bike. Happy Days.
Mrs Howes - Merridale



In 1929, Arthur purchased a motor van, which meant that a wider range of goods could be sold to the company's ever increasing customer base.

During the 1930s more shops were acquired and in 1934 the company was able to purchase a wholesale distribution premises on Williamson Street, Wolverhampton.

On Frank's return from serving in the R.A.F during World War II, he discovered that the company warehouse had been burnt down by an incendiary bomb.

Frank, however, saw the tragedy as a chance to rebuild the premises with twice the original floor space, adding a second floor and up-to-date equipment, thus creating further opportunities for the business to grow.



Williamson Street, Wolverhampton



Frank Blakemore





1950-1974

The Foundation Stones are Laid

This period witnessed the laying of the foundation stones for the current A.F. Blakemore business.

A.F. Blakemore joined the Family Grocers Alliance in the early 1950s, which became VIVO in 1959.

By 1962 sales had reached the £283,000 mark, and in 1966 the company moved to

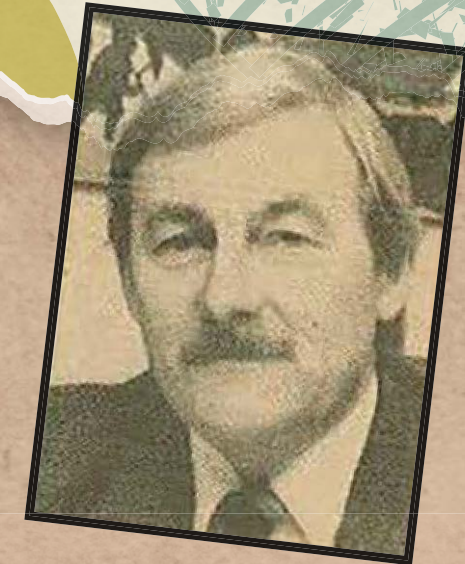
new headquarters. The site at Leamore Lane, Walsall, provided office space, a delivered warehouse and a new cash & carry.

Arthur's son Frank steered A.F. Blakemore during this period and future managing director Peter Blakemore also joined the family business in 1965.





35 Years at the Heart of A.F. Blakemore



Cliff Woodward joined the business in 1962 to support the launch of the company's first cash & carry and retired from the business in 1996 as Group Deputy Managing Director.

During these 35 years Cliff witnessed the transformation of the company from a small Black Country wholesale business to the country's leading privately owned convenience chain, encompassing specialist divisions across multiple food & drink sectors.

The story of Cliff's involvement with A.F. Blakemore dates back to 1962 when through his local badminton club he became friends with Frank and Mary Blakemore, who had a grocery business in Wolverhampton.

This friendship was to blossom into a part-time book keeping role and ultimately into an offer of a full-time position as a manager of one of the first cash & carry depots in the country.

Cliff's early experiences of life at Blakemore's gave few clues as to the scale of business that A.F. Blakemore would become over future decades.

"I remember our first day where we achieved £29.11 sales in total," he explained.

"One customer came in and requested the price of every item we sold before finally deciding that all he wanted was a pack of Typhoo Tea.

"Eventually we achieved first week sales of £695 and were especially grateful when one customer spent £65 in one go. From that day on we always referred to him as Mr £65."

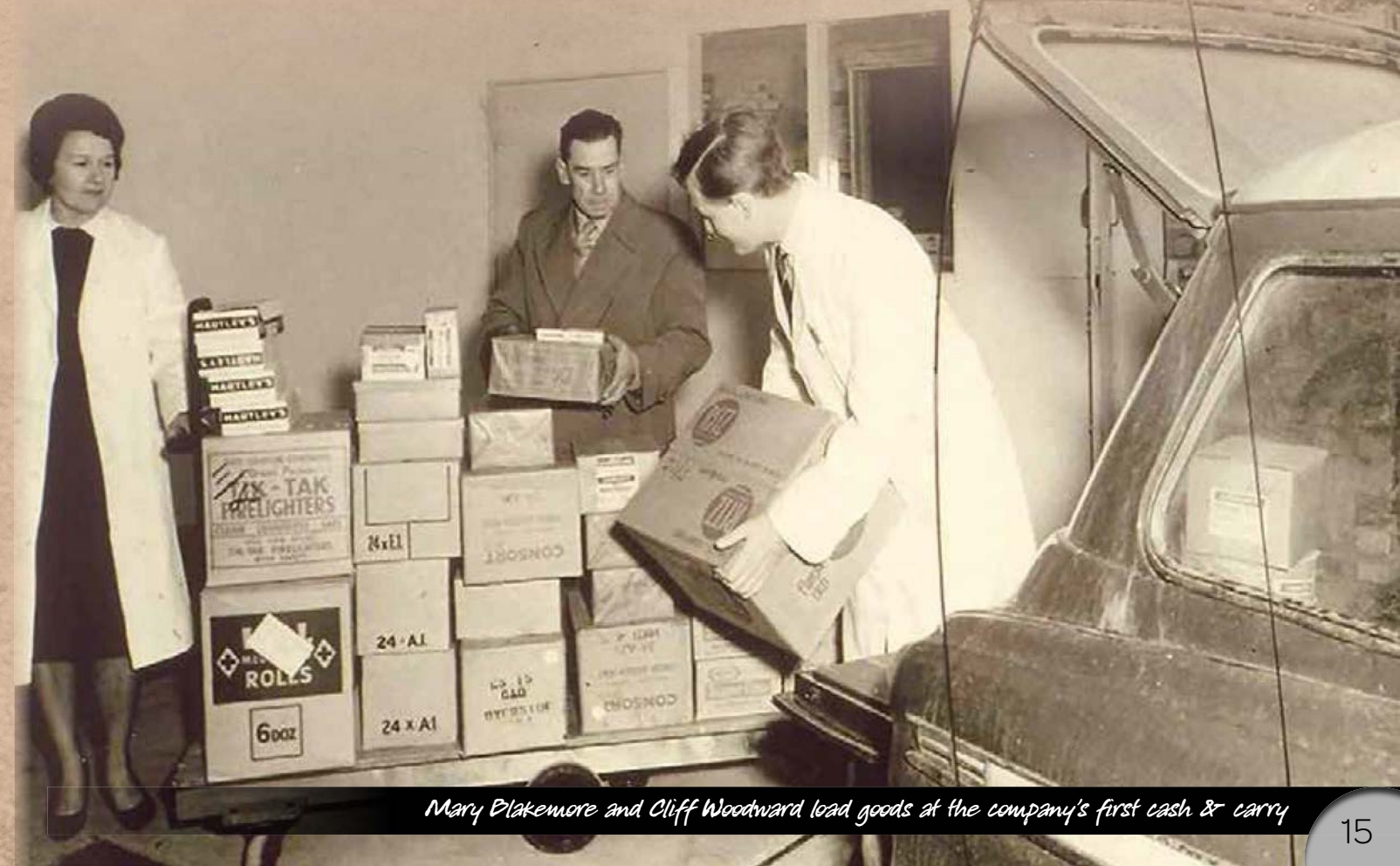
The First Cash & Carry

In 1962, the company opened its first cash & carry at the company's premises in Williamson Street, building on the already growing delivered wholesale business in VIVO.

Arthur's son Frank, who had joined the family business in 1929, had learnt about cash & carry operations whilst on a study tour in Germany in the 60s and endeavoured to bring the format back to the West Midlands.

The resulting cash & carry was one of the first to open in England and was managed by long serving employee Cliff Woodward and would see future managing director Peter Blakemore begin his career helping out at weekends.

Wolverhampton Cash & Carry was to move locations to Great Brickkiln Street and the Wolverhampton Science Park over the next 50 years and would also see fourth generation family members Caoire, Tom and Charlie all begin their first jobs with the company there.



Mary Blakemore and Cliff Woodward load goods at the company's first cash & carry

Sandra Fullwood and her Switchboard from the Ark

Sandra started her employment in July 1968, at Williamson St Wolverhampton, with general clerical duties which included taking telephone calls, typing and paying the suppliers bills.

Sandra remembers her first day at work quite vividly, entering an old tumbled down house with broken tiles on the floor and still complete with it's old bathroom.

In a room upstairs, she was presented with something she first thought was a games room, with a green table, but then she realised this was the office, after noticing a typewriter and a

switchboard that looked like it had come from the Ark, housed in a wooden box, with a big handle on it.

All the same, she says "All 12 staff were very friendly, and there was a proper family atmosphere. At that time Mr Woodward was the General Manager."

In 1970 she moved to Dunstall Hill and then in 1973 to Great Brickkiln Street where she's still working today as Goods In Admin Supervisor..

December 1993

With Cliff as depot manager, Frank as buyer and Mary as cashier, along with Mary and Frank's son Peter assisting at weekends, the depot went from strength to strength. Soon trading had reached £2,000 per week and by 1966 the cash & carry needed more space.

It was decided to move the delivered business, which was called VIVO, to new 20,000 sq ft premises at Leamore Lane in Walsall. As the company's delivered business was still quite small, it was decided to combine this with a new cash & carry all under one roof.

Over the following decade the cash & carry operation continued to grow, with two more cash & carries opening in Bloxwich Lane, Walsall and Great Brickkiln Street, Wolverhampton in 1970 and 71.

The Birth of Walsall Cash & Carry - Rowland Cross, 1971-2011

I arrived at Bloxwich Lane, Walsall, in June 1971 at what was the birth of the cash & carry division of the company. I had been interviewed by Frank and Peter Blakemore, also Les Gibson who had been hired to launch this new venture. My salary, £2,100 per year plus free petrol for travelling to and from home!

I was introduced to my fellow colleagues who had also joined this new adventure, George Patterson, Les Jackson, Fred Preece, Keith Warner to name a few. I well remember being taken to the non-food section of the warehouse by Les Gibson and basically being told, "That's your responsibility, just fill it!" Then the area seemed huge but fill it we did. We opened on 26th July 1971 as a Value Centre Cash & Carry, the opening leaflet did not contain a single product or price! The non-food department had its own entrance and tills, as did the wines and spirits department. We had a jewellery area and a shoe area complete with carpet and mirrors. The ladies' tights section was approximately 15/18 metres long - the leading brand was Jancelle and we carried around 800 boxes covering 20+ colours. Other sections included electrical, fancy goods, hardware, DIY, clothing, gardening, stationery, textiles, paint and lingerie. We advertised as carrying over 4,000 lines in non-foods; truly a 'one stop shop'.

I retired in 2011 and in the forty intervening years saw the company grow from the small local company in 1971 to the nationwide business it is today. In 1971 there were depots at Leamore Lane, Walsall, Williamson Street, Wolverhampton and the new Bloxwich Lane, Walsall. We also had a depot at Dunstall Hill, Wolverhampton. VIVO became SPAR and through acquisition, expanded rapidly. Value Centre became Consort and then Landmark.



1975-1985

Pioneering Partnerships

During the 1970s and 1980s the company began to increasingly reap the benefits of collaboration through the cementing of key trading partnerships.

In 1975 A.F. Blakemore joined SPAR following the organisation's merger with VIVO, and this paved the way for the company to purchase the rights to service Morgan Edwards' large SPAR territory across Wales in 1982.

By this time sales had hit £29m. The company was to grow and expand enormously in the years ahead, after

A.F. Blakemore played a key role in the launch of SPAR's pioneering Eight Till Late concept.

To help support this growth, the company invested in a new head office and distribution centre at the Longacres Industrial Estate in Willenhall, which opened in 1981.

This period also saw A.F. Blakemore join the Landmark Wholesale group following a merger with Consort Cash & Carry and a further expansion into the food service sector.





VIVO Becomes SPAR

The old VIVO group began life in the UK in August 1958, originally under the name of Family Grocer Alliance with stores trading as VIVO.

In 1966, SPAR and VIVO formed a partnership to prevent VIVO from failing due to declining numbers and later merged in 1975.

As a VIVO Wholesaler at the time of the merger, A.F. Blakemore & Son became part of the SPAR National Guild as wholesale supplier for the West Midlands.

The structure of SPAR post-merger was made up of 29 guilds in total and serviced by 17 SPAR wholesalers, with some 4,200 members.



A.F. BLAKEMORE & Son Ltd



In 1981, the company moved its head offices and distribution centre from Leamore Lane, Walsall, to a new premises at Longacres Industrial Estate, Willenhall.

The depot opened in time to coincide with the company's purchase of the Morgan Edwards SPAR franchise in the Mid/North Wales area, which continued the business's growth and expansion.

The site initially consisted of 50,000 sq ft of space, which would later more than double in size to include SPAR distribution, catering, meat and bacon production, and chilled and frozen warehouses.



A.F. Blakemore takes over Morgan Edwards

THE Spar wholesale interests of Morgan Edwards Limited have been acquired by A.F. Blakemore and Son Ltd. for £425,000.

The assets involved in the transaction were one freehold and twenty six leasehold properties for which Morgan Edwards holds the head lease, plus goodwill and for the year to 31 March 1982 the sales of Morgan Edwards to Spar customers in excess of £5 million.

Morgan Edwards parent company, Argyll Foods Limited, stated that the Spar business accounted for under 2 per cent of group turnover and it was judged that there were now few opportunities available for the expansion of this side of Argyll's business.

The staff, warehouse facilities and transport fleet formerly involved in the Spar operation at Shrewsbury will now be largely absorbed in

servicing the distribution to a number of the Price Rite stores recently acquired from BAT and to Argyll's Lo-Cost discount retail operation.

A.F. Blakemore and Son is a family owned business in the West Midlands with three cash and carries at 9/10 Blawith Lane, Walsall, Great Brickkiln Street, Wolverhampton, and Bromley Street, Lye.

£25 million

The combined annual turnover is £25 million and to this will now be added the larger Spar wholesale business of £11 million making a total of £36 million. Deliveries will be made from the new depot at Willenhall, West Midlands,

In a message to retailers in the Mid West Guild sales and development director John Browne said:

"We shall commence supplying the Mid West Guild retailers on 7 June, from our new distribution warehouse in Willenhall, which has been specially designed with this expansion in mind, to offer the best possible service."

"This acquisition will enable Spar to grow from strength to strength in the West Midlands, North and Mid Wales and will be of great benefit to all our retailers."

Investment

"We will be able to put more resources into the development of Spar and generally achieve benefits

of scale, particularly in negotiating with suppliers on promotional activity."

"Our investment in this expansion has amounted to nearly £1 million and represents a considerable commitment on our part to the future of the independent Spar store."

"We shall also be able to offer our new retailers the facilities of Telspar, which is already proving to be extremely beneficial to the 9 Spar retailers who have commenced using the system since January."

"I am very pleased to announce that both Len Taylor and Arnold Stokes who are currently R.O.A.'s for the Mid West Guild will be joining our company shortly and will I feel sure add considerably to the abilities of our sales team."





Toy Fairs at Bloxwich Lane - Diane Terry, 1973-1999

"It all started in 1973 at Bloxwich Lane Cash and Carry. I worked there for 18 years and made many friends who I still see today some 40 years later. I joined the company as a till operator/cashier in the admin department and after a year I was appointed to Admin Manager a position that I held for the next 17 years. I saw many changes in that time. As the Cash and Carry division grew, the company opened two more depots. One in Birmingham, the other one in Lye. I remember our early 'Toy Fairs' which were always held at the beginning of September to show our traders what the Christmas 'lines' for that year were. The till operators always dressed up for the occasion, wore the new store staff book, daisy in French outfit to the delight of the customers. It was always very successful. A late night for the staff but we didn't mind as everyone enjoyed it. We didn't have a very big turnover of staff as a lot of us had worked for the company for many years, so most of your work colleagues were like family."



Memories of Leamore Lane and Christmas Lunch - June Harper, 1978-2017

When I first started at Leamore Lane, the depot delivered to the stores and the cash & carry business operated from there too, perhaps taking approximately £60,000 to £70,000 per week. The logo at the time was VNO and the other RDCs' logo was SPAR. It was decided between all the RDCs to go under one banner and obviously SPAR became the logo.

All processes were manual and we had to enter all deliveries (ARNs) into a 'Day Book' and balance it each day. I remember Mr Frank Blakemore on his daily visits to Leamore Lane (head office) and Walsall and Wolverhampton cash & carry depots. Mr Blakemore would always remark (in his own words) on the cost of "spuds", taking an occasional puff on his pipe.

Mrs Gwendoline Blakemore worked in the General Office (Purchase Ledger now) for quite some time ensuring the department ran efficiently. Each week we were all given a cash bag with three penny pieces (enough for two drinks a day) for the vending machine situated outside the canteen in the warehouse. Christmas lunch was an annual event held in the General Office - Edie the cook always did a remarkable job -, with all directors and office staff participating in the lunch. Stock takes were held when required on Friday evenings and everyone was expected to attend; warehouse staff and office staff. Refreshments were provided and it was a good atmosphere.

"During one of our annual Toy Fairs at Bloxwich Lane we had a visit from Henry Cooper who was a famous boxer at the time. He was doing a promotion for Brut aftershave. His slogan was 'Splash it all over' and featured in the company TV advert."

"I was working in reception at the time and asked him if he would mind spraying it, which he did with a smile. All visitors had to sign in whoever they were!"
- Diane Terry



LANDMARK Consort Largest C&C combine is launched — and Landmark is the name

THE Landmark and Consort cash-and-carry groups this week merged and will, through Consort's association with Spar, attain a combined buying strength of £1.5 billion this year. The C&C interests will account for about £900 million — making them the largest group in this sector. The combination brings together 29 Landmark members with 42 depots turning over a projected £700 million, and 17 Consort wholesalers running 36 units with sales of £200 million. The new organisation will have 78 warehouses and 46 companies. The deal was agreed unanimously in a series of meetings by the separate bodies.

The Consort name will disappear and its members' depots will now carry the Landmark banner. But the Consort own-label programme will continue, as will the generic Our brand. Landmark's Tunbridge Wells central office will probably be disposed of within three months and the whole operation will move to Harrow, where Spar and Consort now operate. The head title of the organisation will be Spar-Landmark but the voluntary group and the cash-and-carry interests will be totally separate as far as marketing and promotions are concerned. The savings and the

advantages will come from negotiations and by pooling services, administration and so on. All the executives have positions in the new structure. John Irish becomes chief executive of all the central companies within the group. Steve Denny is the new managing director of Landmark — a position he previously held with Consort. Mike Hickson, who was the Landmark chief executive, joins the board of the central company as a senior director with specific responsibility for planning and development, which means that he will be looking at the best ways the C&Cs and their customers can exploit growth markets, more balanced inventories and specialisation. He also becomes vice-chairman of the Landmark C&C board. But his main, and immediate function, is to supervise the smooth integration of the two organisations, with a view to gaining maximum efficiency and in the selection of the right in-



John Irish Steve Denny Mike Hickson Roger Millward Peter Blakemore

statement attacking grocery multiples who "have grossly abused their position with suppliers." There was also an intention "to redress the balance."

"If they fail to recognise the enormous dangers of the current position, they could end up being own-label suppliers to multiples and wholesalers," they say. But in a calmer mood, all the parties are agreed that the essential requirement is to work well with manufacturers, particularly in the promotional areas and in the selection of the right in-

ventory for the rapidly changing trade. The team will include Fred McLaughlin (Landmark), who will be joining the central company board and will be involved in joint over-riding negotiations. The key trading executives of the new Landmark will be: Les Bidle (own brands), Clive Lomax (wines and spirits), Clive Lomax and Steve Hayward (catering), Geoff Purdy (confectionery) and Rod Stevens (promotions).

Spar has welcomed the agreement. Ian Hall, the symbol chairman, said: "We are pleased the independent sector will be greatly strengthened by the formation of this new group, and I am delighted that our professional executive team at Harrow is being joined by new colleagues from Tunbridge Wells."

"Under the central direction of John Irish, I am sure that Spar will continue to be the leading UK voluntary group and convenience store operator."

"We shall continue to re-equip our stores under the model store programme and we shall increase still further the number of Spar Eight Till Late stores serving local communities."

"Spar will continue, through its democratic guild structure, to pursue its current policies." □ See Leader, page 3.

Merger will produce buying strength worth £1.5 billion



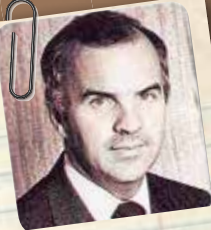
Cancer cash aid

Generous customers and staff at a Wolverhampton cash and carry warehouse have given a £516 boost to cancer sufferers. The cash was collected in giant whisky bottles at Blakemore's Cash and Carry firm in Great Brickkiln Street. Last night it was handed over to officials from the MacMillan Home for Cancer sufferers at Compton Hall — watched by Wolves chairman Derek Dougan, and Molineux director Roger Hipkiss. The cash — collected in just six months — will go towards the care of patients at Compton Hall. Last year, the firm raised £300 towards a minibus for the Wolverhampton, Dudley and District Institute for Blind at Sedgley. Mr Frank Blakemore, owner of the firm, is pictured handing over the cheque at his warehouse, watched by, from left, Derek Dougan, Roger Hipkiss, and Compton Hall treasurer, Mr Norman Dixon.

Something really good in store...

Staff and customers of A. E. Blakemore's cash-and-carry warehouse, Great Brickkiln Street, Wolverhampton, presented toys to Cherry Trees school, Wombourne, and Orley Special school, Yoxford, and Muggleton character Perry Bear, who was at a day fair at the warehouse when the gifts were handed over, gave the youngsters a lot of pleasure.

Working SPAR Eight Till Late - Elwyn Davies, 1983-2011



I joined A.F. Blakemore in August 1983 from J Sainsbury where I was a store manager for 15 years. A.F. Blakemore had just purchased the Morgan Edwards business in Shrewsbury and had recently moved to the Willenhall depot, which provided the opportunity for the business to expand further. I had two interviews with Peter Blakemore and Cliff Woodward and I had a great feeling for the company, which stayed with me for the remaining 28 years.

On my first day I met with Frank Blakemore who was the senior figure of the business at the time and was a truly great character. All the staff and those who remember him today had the utmost respect for Frank and it is difficult to explain the impact that he had but he made sure that although the business may have been small it was run in a totally professional manner.

The company that I left in 2011 was unrecognisable from the company I joined. At the time of my arrival I remember visiting the Redditch store with John Cooper. The manager there didn't believe in late night opening and turned the lights off at 6pm - this was a far cry from the world of convenience retail that we know today. Over the subsequent years the company grew beyond recognition following the introduction of the Eight Till Late concept and the acquisitions of the HM Grice SPAR franchise, Tates and Lo-Cost, which enabled A.F. Blakemore to become the leading independent convenience store operation in the UK.



Elwyn and Peter outside SPAR Bentley shortly after its opening in 1985



1986-1996

The Boom Years

This period saw A.F. Blakemore's sharpest and most ambitious period of expansion, with a series of significant acquisitions driven by the increasing importance of the convenience store sector.

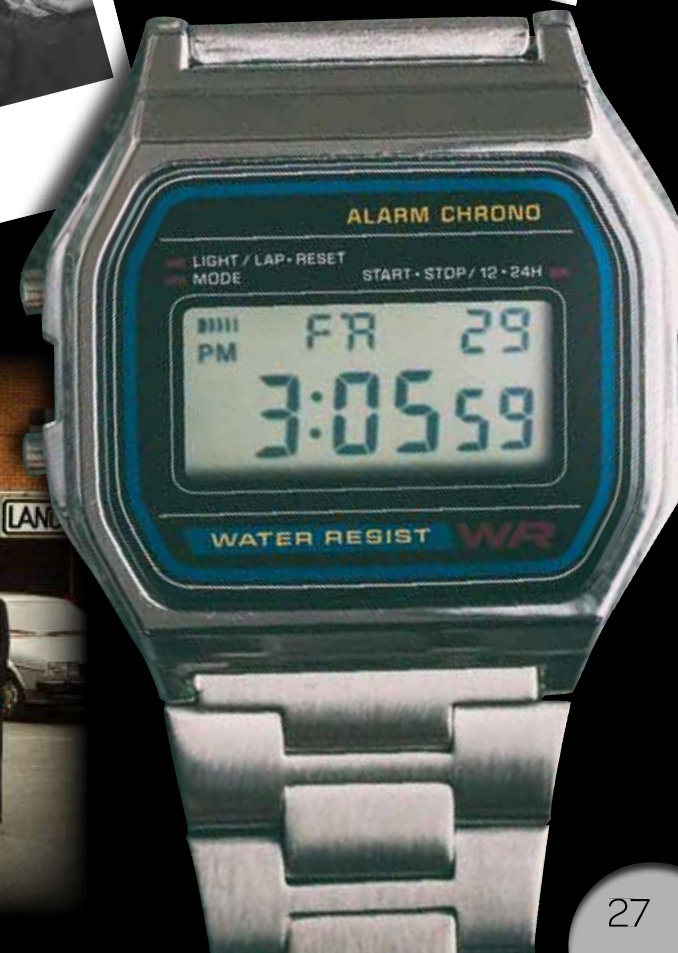
New cash & carry depots in Birmingham, Grimsby and Barnsley were acquired to provide a much greater coverage and more buying power in this sector. The company's Design & Shopfitting and Fresh Foods divisions were also founded.

However, the most important area of growth came within the SPAR business. The company acquired the SPAR territory of HM Grice Ltd, of Grimsby, before purchasing the Watson & Philip SPAR business to become the largest

SPAR wholesaler, serving 640 retailers. This meant that by 1993 overall company sales had hit the £247m mark.

This period of expansion was topped off in 1994 with the purchase of the Tates multiple of 71 retail stores trading as Tates Lateshopper, along with 80 Lo-Cost discount stores.

As the company expanded, it began to place increased emphasis upon developing a strong, consistent culture across the entire organisation with the launch of the Quality First initiative. This helped to ingrain the principles of customer service, honesty & integrity and staff care.



Corner shops group adds 71 stores Blakemore buys Lateshopper chain for £9.5m

Eric Barkas
Deputy City Editor

CORNER shop supremo Peter Blakemore picks up the keys tomorrow for the Lateshopper chain with the pledge that the current management team can continue to run it.

His family company, A.F. Blakemore, yesterday paid £9.5m for the business which has 71 stores, mainly on Humberside and in Yorkshire.

Derek Pretty, Kwik Save finance director, said yesterday that his group had reached the point where it either had to put more resources into Lateshopper or sell it.

"The stores will be doing what they do now, only better," he says.

"The challenge is being able to offer the consumer good, modern, bright, clean shopping facilities on a local neighbourhood basis."

Blakemore, based in Wiltshire, has a pedigree in so-called convenience retailing stretching back to 1917.

It made its name in distributing goods to corner shops and now serves 640 Spar and VG outlets. In addition, it runs eight Landmark cash and carry stores from locations including Grimsby, Mexborough and Barnsley.

The Lateshopper deal is seen as a logical expansion of a store operation side which is expected to account for 500m of the company's anticipated £260m turnover this year.

Blakemore is paying £3.6m for the business and a further £5m in settlement of inter-company loans from Kwik Save.

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Blakemore goes shopping at Argyll

By ANDREW LEACH
City Correspondent

A major acquisition from Safeway supermarket giant Argyll supermarket group has been announced. Argyll's largest convenience store operation, Kwik Save, is to be sold to Peter Blakemore's Lateshopper chain.

Argyll's 200-plus stores, which are spread across Scotland, will be sold to Lateshopper for £12.5m.

The acquisition was part of the sale by Argyll of about half of its small Lo-Cost stores chain as well.

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Business Eating into the local dole queue

The recession has changed the economy - but people still have to eat. And King's supermarket has found a way to become a national force by supplying low-cost food.

King's supermarket, which has 120 stores across the country, is the largest of its kind in the UK. It is the only supermarket chain to have a dedicated low-cost food section.

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Retail Expansion - Collin Ellis, 1994 - 2001

The main thing that struck me about moving to A.F. Blakemore came following my initial meeting with Peter Blakemore. Peter had previously been a family owned business with a strong heritage, however, this had faded with the subsequent acquisitions by Northern Foods and Kwik Save. Peter's family ethos to business matched my early experiences of working for Lateshopper and it was very reassuring for me to once again be working for a company with strong values.

Soon after joining A.F. Blakemore we went through a period of massive expansion both across our retail estate and within our I.T. infrastructure. At the time of the acquisition Lateshopper had 70 stores and A.F. Blakemore had 35 but the company soon went on to purchase a further 60 Lo-Cost stores. This paved the way for the large company owned SPAR retail estate that A.F. Blakemore operates today.

The Lo-Cost acquisition is the one that really sticks in my mind. We were required to take over all 60 stores over a period of weeks. I remember me and Geoff Hallam, who was stores director at the time, visiting all these stores to assess them prior to the acquisition and the conversion and integration of these stores and staff was an enormous challenge. This was a massive achievement by the Lateshopper retail team and sometimes I look back and think "how did we do that?" Part of me was euphoric about what we were achieving and the other part of me was worried that something might go seriously wrong. For me this is a great example of the great team spirit across A.F. Blakemore and Lateshopper. I admire Peter for having the foresight and sheer audacity to embark upon such a challenge. When I look back I only have good memories of my career at Lateshopper with A.F. Blakemore thanks to the wonderful people I worked with.

C. J. LANG & SON LIMITED

332, CLEPINGTON ROAD, DUNDEE

FAX NO. 0382 832128

TEL. NO. 0382 618771

FAX MESSAGE

FROM: A. HINDOON

TO: ENTER BLAKEMORE, A.F. BLAKEMORE & SON LIMITED

DATE: 5TH JANUARY, 1994

NUMBER OF PAGES INCLUDING THIS ONE: 1

Dear Peter,

Very many congratulations to you and your team on the acquisition of 71 Lateshopper Convenience Stores from Kwik Save.

This is a tremendous opportunity and challenge for you.

What a great start to 1994. Best Wishes and Kindest Regards,

Yours sincerely,

Alex

A. HINDOON

Chief Executive

"When we purchased the 71 Lateshopper stores and the Lateshopper Company in 1994, we only had around 30 stores - this was a huge task. Then later that year we purchased the Lo-Cost stores from Safeway, which meant another 70 odd shops to bring in and change from the old discount supermarkets into convenience stores (in the words of one manager: 'It won't work, who will want to shop in a store on a Sunday?!') These acquisitions brought a lot of challenges but we did it." - Owen Davies



Spar Landmark Limited

Registered Office:
32-40 Hockley Drive
Hemel Hempstead, Herts SG10 2ST
Tel: 0464 551111 (4 lines)
Fax: 0464 551112
Registered in England No. 07462

YOUR REP: JGA1/KF

Mrs. M. Blakemore, & Son Ltd.,
Block F,
Long Acres Industrial Estate,
Rosehill, Willenhall,
West Midlands,
WV1 3ZP

DATE: 24th September 1993

PERSONAL

Dear Mary,

On the one hand I just wanted to write and formally congratulate you on the acquisition of the W & F business in the Midlands and East Anglia.

Perhaps more importantly, I wanted you to know what an absolutely fantastic job Peter has done in making this agreement possible. There is no question that he has taken place without him. His patience and attention to detail are quite incredible and the other wholesalers, whether in the consortium or not, owe him a great debt of gratitude for what he has done and achieved.

Kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

John Kirsh
JOHN KIRSH, C.B.E.
Chairman and Chief Executive

Chairman & Chief Executive: J.D. Kirsh C.B.E. 8 Totham, 22
Directors: M.A. Middlebrook FCB (Chairman), G.S. Cook M.B.E. M.C.I.A.,
R.J. Dutton, M.C.I.A. F.C.I., G. Kelly J.L. Lister M.B.E. M.C.I.A.,
Company Secretary: P. W. Marshall F.C.I.

Blakemore dashes in to buy 71 Kwik Save stores

By MIDGE GILLIES
City Correspondent

A F Blakemore, the private retailer, is buying 71 shops from Kwik Save for £5.5 million in cash.

The Lateshopper convenience stores are concentrated in Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and the East Midlands.

Whether they make up Tates, Kwik Save bought in and which is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the group. The group of 71 made a profit of £1 million on turnover of £57.8 million in the year to the end of August.

Mr Blakemore, a family business started in the 1920s, will supply 640 stores — mainly V.O. and Spar — and expects turnover in 1994 to be more than £260 million. Last September it signed an agreement to supply Spar and V.O. stores previously owned by Watson & Philip.

Managing director Mr Peter Blakemore, who is also chairman of Spar Food Distributors, said the acquisition showed the company's commitment to the convenience store market.

No immediate changes are proposed to the Tates format. "It will be business as usual and we will work with the existing management of Tates to ensure that the Lateshopper stores get the benefit of our expertise as pioneers, with Spar, but," Mr Blakemore said.

Retail director Mr Bryan Davy said the expansion of the major out-of-town supermarket chain meant there was even more need for convenience stores such as Lateshopper. He added that the stores, which open seven days a week, are important for shoppers to "top up" their monthly or weekly supermarket shopping trip.

Mr Davy said Blakemore would consider further acquisitions, but the company would always remain private.



"8 till late" nine years on!

THE "8 till late" shop at Long Lane, Hemel Hempstead, has been open for nine years. The shop was opened in 1984 by John Kirsh and Robert Kent, who also own the Spar Food Distributors. The shop has a turnover of £1.5 million and employs 20 staff. It is a member of the Spar Food Distributors group. The shop has a profit of £100,000 and a turnover of £1.5 million. The shop has a profit of £100,000 and a turnover of £1.5 million.

John Kirsh and Robert Kent are the owners of the shop. They have been successful in the convenience store market. The shop has a profit of £100,000 and a turnover of £1.5 million. The shop has a profit of £100,000 and a turnover of £1.5 million.

"When I joined as store manager in 1987, we sold tins, packets and cigs! Lottery, food service and scanning tills had yet to come. The office didn't have a computer but the staff room had an ash tray. Customers rarely paid by card and no one needed ID. Stock was ordered in a big book and phoned in. Obviously a lot has changed. Things that have remained constant are the family values and the determination to keep the company sustainable by continuously evolving the customer offer and store formats." — Kerry Hunt





Putting Quality First - Gill Conley, 1980 - 2008

I had always worked in very bureaucratic top down managed companies. I joined the business in 1980 and on my first day I was introduced to several directors and managers who made me feel very welcome.

Later in the afternoon Mr Blakemore senior came into the office to ask if we had any new starters as he liked to speak to them when visiting depots. I had a welcome from him too. What a surprise!

The company grew tenfold and became a forerunner in the development of technology over a very short period of time. With such a growth and change it became increasingly difficult to maintain the company's culture and values which had developed within the family owned business.

We initially began to do some work in this area in the late 1990s with the launch of Quality First. This focused upon a headline objective for the whole company and a series of key principles of how we do business.



Colleagues at all levels were encouraged to participate in Quality First and a series of project teams were developed to improve efficiencies and encourage future innovation. In many ways this was an early precursor to the process management and project leadership activity taking place across A.F. Blakemore today.

However, the biggest cultural programme that I was involved in during my time with the company was the launch of the Blakemore Way in 2007. This was a really important initiative to help the business ensure that the core family values that have been integral to the Blakemore success story continue to be embedded to deliver profitable and sustainable growth for the future.



The Blakemore Foundation

The Blakemore Foundation was set up in 1992 to help meet the spontaneous requests for support from local communities that the company received through its stores and depots. The requests would be authorised by the managers and weren't recorded. With these donations becoming more and more frequent, Peter Blakemore and wife Ita McAuley decided to set up a charitable trust so that all donations could be managed centrally, and to ensure that the company could maintain a sustainable process of donating to local charities.



Baby care unit gets funds



Blakemore assistant manager Debbie Dodd and wine store supervisor Maureen Lucas present a cheque for £600 to Clare Price of the neo-natal unit at New Cross Staff at a Wolverhampton cash and carry have donated £600 to the neo-natal unit at New Cross Hospital. Workers at A.F. Blakemore and Son, in Great Brickhill Street, Gravelly, Wolverhampton, organised a raffle for customers and employees and raised £300. Bosses at the store then decided to double the funds and a cheque for £600 was donated to the hospital unit yesterday.

Working at the Heart of The Blakemore Foundation - Kate Senter, 2010 - present

The Blakemore Foundation has significantly grown within my eight years' service, with the annual number of donations growing from 335 donations in 2009/10 to 6,238 donations in 2017/18.

The success of the Blakemore Foundation is credit to our dedicated and kind-hearted staff, who reach out to more and more local good causes year on year. Since joining, the Blakemore Foundation has donated more than 25,000 donations worth more than £2million.

Looking back on the past eight years, the Blakemore Foundation's grant giving process has dramatically modernised. In the past we would only receive donation requests as a hand-written letter from the charities, as opposed to our electronic application forms today. The trust would tend to provide large grants up to £20,000 to a few successful good causes.

In 2009/10, the Blakemore Foundation re-launched its charitable giving with the Blakemore Retail estate, providing much smaller impactful donations. We saw 47 donations awarded to the division that year. In 2017/18, Blakemore Retail was awarded 5,045 donations (80% of all Blakemore Foundation donations awarded).

We have more recently launched the Blakemore Foundation within our independent retailer estate, where we offer match funding, goods support and monetary grants, as well as support for community volunteering projects.

It would be too difficult to pick a most memorable moment. However, the most wholesome memories are those that relate to feedback and gratitude. The enthusiasm and emotion echoed by successful good causes is precious. It really does emphasise the vital work we do to support our local communities.



1997-2009

Sustainable Business Growth

By 1998 overall company sales had reached £446m. As the company continued to grow and expand, even more emphasis was placed upon the creation of a sustainable business.

A purpose-built Foodservice depot was opened in James Bridge, Walsall, in 1999, and this was followed up by the purchase of new cash & carry depots in Bangor and Newport over the next two years.

With the continuing growth of SPAR, an additional warehousing facility was also opened at Axxess 10 in Walsall to support business continuity and ensure security for the future.

A specialist division called Blakemore Logistics was launched to help build upon the growing logistical expertise across the business and better serve the increasing distribution needs of customers. This was complemented by the opening of a new distribution depot at Apex II, Great Bridge.

During this period of growth the company began to place increasing emphasis upon the concept of corporate social responsibility.

In 2007 the company launched its Fine Foods operation, originally known as Heart Distribution, to support local suppliers. Then, in 2008 A.F. Blakemore opened its own recycling centre to enable the company and its customers to reduce the amount of waste that they send to landfill. The company's employee volunteering programme also began to take shape during this period.

All this work culminated in the launch of the company's values statement, the Blakemore Way, which defined the company's purpose to "grow a family business in ways that are profitable and sustainable for the benefit of our staff, customers and community". Following on from this, the Leading the Blakemore Way bespoke leadership development programme was introduced in 2009.





City's food firm in the big league

Business one of nation's 100 largest

By Michael Fox

A food distribution firm in Wolverhampton has been named as one of the 100 biggest private firms in the country, also the 11th largest private company in the Midlands. The findings are revealed in a survey by Oxford-based research company The Sunday Times KPMG Top Track.

The firm was established in 1957. One week, a few years later, Mr Blakemore was discovered by a little shop in the Grazeley area just outside Wolverhampton city centre.

Arthur Blakemore, a generalist of the current managing director, Peter Davies, opened his 300 sq ft shop in 1957. One week, a few years later, Mr Blakemore was discovered by a little shop in the Grazeley area just outside Wolverhampton city centre.



Wholesaling Giant

The Blakemore Foodservice operation was enhanced in time for the new millennium with the division's move to a purpose-built 63,000 sq ft depot in Walsall, which included a freezer large enough to store 600 pallets of food to be delivered to customers across the country by its fleet of 39 multiple temperature lorries.

BLAKEMORE
WHOLESALE

From paper bags to £600m a year

By Simon Penfold

AN ORDER book mistake led to the founding of one of the biggest companies in the West Midlands.

From its base in Willehall, A.F. Blakemore & Son operates a £600 million-a-year business supplying thousands of small grocers and convenience stores nationwide. But it all started at a little shop in the Grazeley area just outside Wolverhampton city centre.

Arthur Blakemore, a generalist of the current managing director, Peter Davies, opened his 300 sq ft shop in 1957. One week, a few years later, Mr Blakemore was discovered by a little shop in the Grazeley area just outside Wolverhampton city centre.

The biggest driver of growth in the past 50 years has been the SPAR business. We realised in the early 1980s that convenience stores - what we call 'top-up' shopping - would be a big area of growth. A lot of the big supermarket chains, particularly Tesco, have started going in this direction in recent years but we are not afraid of competition.

"We've got our distribution right and our retail concept right. We know where we are going and how we are going to get there."

Mr Davies continues: "We also have our SPAR distribution business, delivering to nearly 800 stores nationwide: our Tates business which operates around 100 SPAR stores; our Food Service division at Darlington and our own shop-in-shop business, based at our headquarters in the Long Acre Industrial Estate in Willehall."

The business now employs around 4,500 people, most of them in the Midlands. About 1,500 work at the Willehall headquarters, which includes some 200,000 sq ft of warehouse.

All on their marks at Science Park

A.F. Blakemore's £5 million Cash & Carry, based at Wolverhampton Science Park was officially opened on February 29.

The move has already proven a huge success and has set the standards for a new generation of convenience stores in the region.

Chief manager Andy Mitchell said the move from the old site to the new one was a significant step for the company.

Andy said: "An impressive amount of work went into the move but it was all worth it. We are now in a much better position to serve our customers and we are looking forward to the opening of the new site."

The move has also seen the company's fleet of 39 multiple temperature lorries being upgraded to meet the demands of the new site.

Business Update



INTRODUCING HEART DISTRIBUTION

A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd has launched a joint venture with Heart of England (HEFF) to support the distribution of a wide range of quality, regionally sourced, food and drink.

Heart Distribution is a subsidiary of A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd and is dedicated to supporting suppliers who meet strict hygiene and food safety standards.

"By consolidating production and carrying out this function on their behalf, Heart Distribution reduces the number of journeys they make."

HEFF products are set to have an increasingly important part to play in Blakemore's range through our Food Service, Cash & Carry, Retail and Shop operations.

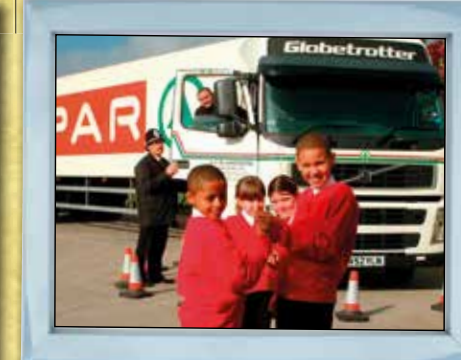
HEFF products are set to have a key part to play in Blakemore's range through our Food Service, Cash & Carry, Retail and Shop operations.



Wholesale Team Spirit - Tony Salisbury, 1979 - 2001

On my first day I spent an hour with Cliff Woodward, who was marketing director then I believe, and based in offices at Walsall Cash & Carry. He outlined the ideas and plans for the company and the vision on how people should work. He detailed how important it was to understand the workings of a family company. I had come from 13 years working corporate with Booker McConnell (the early years of the present Booker). I respected him for that and continue to do so to this day. He made a major contribution to the company over many more years than I.

Turnover-wise the company grew from £15 million to something just less than £600 million. During this time numerous takeovers were undertaken which of course assisted in the growth of the company. I was extremely proud to lead the cash & carry division to be the first multi-site company in our industry to achieve Investors in People. Many people assisted in that not least Gill Conley who worked extremely long and hard towards success. My final year was the best for profitability when the wholesale division made £1,600,000 with Foodservice contributing £250,000 after only two years in the new warehouse at Darlaston, which included all the set up costs.



A Business for the Community

A.F. Blakemore's success has always been built upon a distinct culture focused upon positive and friendly relations with staff, customers and the communities it serves.

However, the dawn of the new millennium and the introduction of the Blakemore Way saw the company further embed this philosophy into its core business operation.

In 2003 A.F. Blakemore joined The Prince of Wales responsible business network Business in the Community that helped enable the company to take a more strategic approach to the way it manages its approach to community engagement and the environment.

In 2009, Peter Blakemore was recognised for his commitment to this work when he was appointed as The Prince of Wales Responsible Business Ambassador for the West Midlands.

The introduction of a large scale community volunteering programme accompanied the expansion of the Blakemore Foundation whilst the business placed increased emphasis upon recycling and the need to measure and report upon its environmental impact.





Birth of the Blakemore Way - Paul Cowley, 2002 - present

As my mum had worked at Blakemore's for a large part of my life, in many ways I grew up with the company and as I reached my teenage years had a variety of holiday jobs across different parts of the company.

However, it wasn't until 2002 that I started my career with the business. Soon afterwards I was privileged enough to be invited to attend a series of A.F. Blakemore Board meetings set aside specifically to define the purpose and values of the company.

Whilst my role was very much in the capacity as note taker, it was an amazing opportunity to be there as The Blakemore Way was being defined and witness at first-hand how serious the Blakemore family and the board took this process.

For me The Blakemore Way is an expression of the company at its best and represents the values that are key to our success.

A few years later I was given another opportunity to be part of a team trained to deliver the Leading the Blakemore Way leadership programme across the company. Again, what struck me about this was the personal commitment of Peter Blakemore in believing in this programme and its importance to the business.

In my mind Leading the Blakemore Way provides us with the tools of how to live the Blakemore Way values and if the company is to remain true to its heritage then it is up to all of us to keep these principles alive.

The Blakemore Way

The Blakemore Way outlines the guiding principles that underpin A.F. Blakemore's approach to business.

the blakemore way

Our Purpose

To grow a family business in ways that are profitable and sustainable for the benefit of our staff, customers and community.

Our Values

- Maximise staff potential and their contribution to the company's success
- Give great service to all our customers and add value to our trade partners
- Make a significant, positive contribution to the community
- Attain excellence in everything we do
- Behave with honesty and integrity in all our relationships

Logistics for the Future

From 2008 onwards A.F. Blakemore has witnessed the most substantial series of investments across its logistics infrastructure since the move to the Longacres Industrial Estate in 1981.

New distribution premises opened at Apex II at Great Bridge, in Sandwell and at Axxess 10, in Bentley, Walsall, that brought greater capacity, agility and business contingency as the company further diversified and expanded its wholesale distribution customer base.

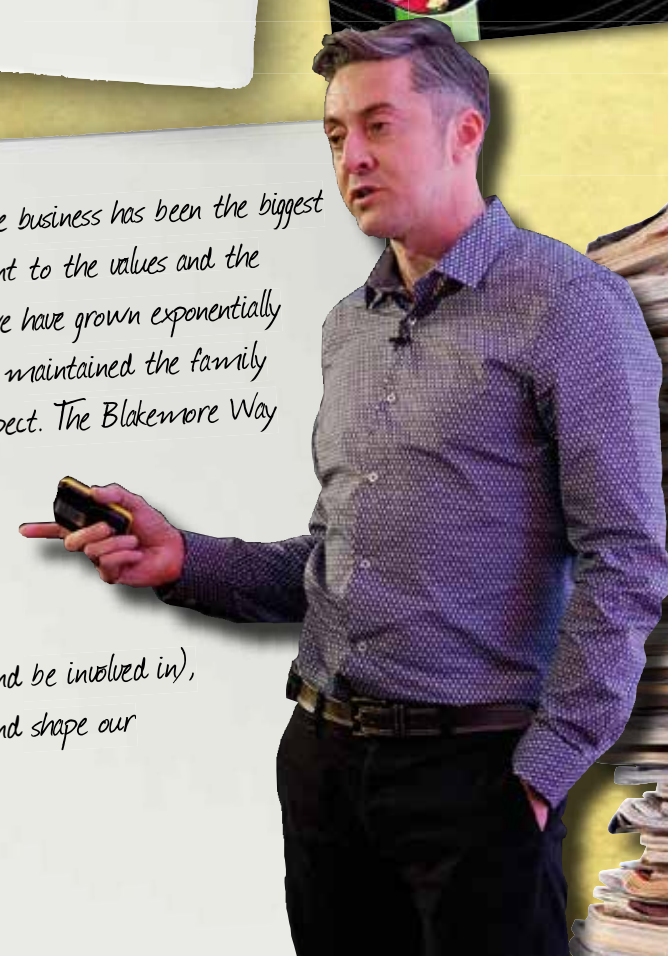
Additional investment also led to the establishment of the company's recycling centre at Longacres to provide facilities for A.F. Blakemore and its customers to recycle paper, cardboard, polyplastics, aluminium, glass and clothes.

Further expansion was soon to follow with the distribution network brought together as part of the newly created Blakemore Logistics division.

Over the past 20 years there has been an increasing desire to continue with this work, which was later articulated in the One Logistics strategy that has focused upon combining and utilising the logistics infrastructure in the most efficient and effective way possible.

"The size and scale of the business has been the biggest transition. It's testament to the values and the people within it that we have grown exponentially over the years but still maintained the family ethos, courtesy and respect. The Blakemore Way and subsequent Leading the Blakemore Way programme, (which I am still privileged to deliver and be involved in), have helped protect and shape our unique culture."

- Dave Hammond





2010 Onwards

A Business for the future

The launch of the Blakemore Way laid solid foundations for the next phase of another period of rapid business growth.

The most significant moment in A.F. Blakemore's history took place in 2011 when the company purchased and began the process of merging its business with fellow SPAR wholesaler, distributor and retailer Capper & Co.

As a result A.F. Blakemore acquired an additional 116 company-owned SPAR stores as well as the supply of a further 316 independently owned sites. Company sales hit £1.1 billion.

In 2014 Peter Blakemore unveiled a 2020 Strategy for A.F. Blakemore at the company's Group Management Meeting with emphasis upon innovation and collaboration.

This activity has placed the company in an even stronger position to succeed in the future, while maintaining its firm commitment to responsible and sustainable business growth.

By 2017, A.F. Blakemore employed more than 8,200 people and served over 1,000 SPAR stores.



Food Service Hits the North!

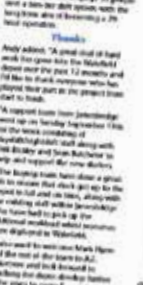
Blakemore Food Service opened the doors to its new 80,000 sq ft distribution depot in September.

The depot, located at Premier Park, Wakefield, has undergone a £2m refurbishment programme, which includes extensive refrigeration space.



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FRESH START FOR FRESH FOODS



Blakemore Fresh Foods opened its new £3.5m depot in August, in anticipation of the continued future growth of the division.



Blakemore Rebrand

Further investment was made to open a new, £3m meat storage and cutting plant for Blakemore Fresh Foods at Hilton Cross, Staffordshire. The new 30,000 sq ft site provided more cold storage, better production facilities, loading bays, pallet wrappers and an improved hygiene system.

Following on from this, the company opened a second Blakemore Foodservice depot in Wakefield, West Yorkshire. This freed up space to allow the Foodservice division to tender for additional midland and southern contracts, opening up the potential for £70m worth of extra business.



NEW COMPANY BRAND LAUNCHED ACROSS A.F. BLAKEMORE

A new set of consistent company logos has been launched across all divisions of A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd. The new logos were officially unveiled at the start of November with the aim of reinforcing a more professional and consistent Blakemore brand.



Blakemore rebrands Heart Distribution

Sara Spary, A.F. Blakemore's Heart Distribution arm is to be rebranded Blakemore Fine Foods in an effort to modernise the brand and build on its rapid growth.



2014 saw a complete rebrand for all company logos as for the first time all divisions came under one consistent branding style, creating a more professional and coherent Blakemore brand.

£1bn turnover in sight

SPAR wholesaler and Landmark Wholesale member A.F. Blakemore & Son believes it could hit the £1 billion sales mark next year after announcing a steep increase in turnover and profit in the 12 months to 30 April.



A MAN WITH IDEAS

Prime Blakemore boss, CAN PARSONS put the way in with a new idea.

English buy 'Top 20' Welsh company Capper's for £35m

ONE of the biggest family-run businesses in Wales has been acquired in a multi-million-pound deal.

As revealed in the Western Mail last month, Pontyclun-based Capper & Co, which runs (under franchise) and supplies 500 Spar convenience stores across Wales and southern England was the subject of a takeover approach from another Spar franchise operation.

The Western Mail learnt yesterday that the acquisition by Midlands-based AF Blakemore of Capper & Co has now been completed.

The value of the deal is believed to be in the region of £35m.

A spokesman for family-run AF Blakemore declined to comment yesterday, while

PONTYCLUN-BASED SPAR CHAIN FRANCHISEE FACED PRESSURES

SIÂN BARRY
Business Editor
siân.barry@walesonline.co.uk

no-one was available from Capper & Co for comment.

Formed in 1917, AF Blakemore currently supplies more than 700 Spar stores across the England and Wales.

It also has a strong 'own stores' division covering more than 200 Spar stores.

The company also operates fresh foods and shopfitting operations.

Moreover, Blakemore Wholesale is the seventh largest company of its kind in the UK market and owns nine depots, including those at Newport and Bangor. The wholesale division contributes around £200m to group turnover.

Capper employs 141 at its headquarters, with 2,259 employed on its Spar distribution and sales network, according to its latest accounts.

Its latest audited accounts with Companies House show that, for the financial year to the end of April 2010, Capper & Co generated a group turnover of

£298.6m, compared to £283.2m a year earlier.

But its pre-tax profit was down from just over \$3m to \$2.14m.

Sales costs were up nearly \$5m to \$230.6m.

Its distribution costs were also up nearly \$1m over the year, while its administrative expenses were steady at \$21.5m.

In its director report the company said the market in which it operates was becoming "increasingly competitive", partly as a result of the presence of large multinationals which "continue to exploit their position".

The report adds: "Ongoing increases in energy and fuel prices, along with continuing increases in the minimum wage, has resulted in pressures on operating margin."

"Further increases in these areas of cost could affect our pre-tax profit expectations."

Last year its highest paid director had a total remuneration of \$211,000. And its total wage bill for its 2,400 staff - including social security and pension costs - was \$32.7m.

Capper & Co was ranked 13th in the Western Mail Top 300 publication, which ranks the biggest companies in Wales on turnover.

It is unclear what impact the acquisition will have on Capper & Co's headquarters and distribution operations.

"However, it is likely that significant savings could be achieved."

Capper buyout makes Blakemore a Spar giant

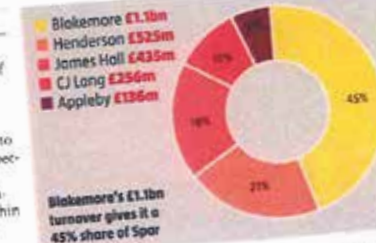
Beth Phillips

AF Blakemore & Son has confirmed the purchase of fellow Spar wholesaler Capper & Co.

The deal, for an undisclosed sum, puts an end to more than a month of speculation and transforms Blakemore into the run-a-way dominant force within Spar with a turnover of more than £1.1bn.

Blakemore posted turnover of \$615m in 2009/10 and Capper posted a turnover of £283m.

Although Capper will trade as a separate division of Blakemore as part of the deal, the capture increases the area Blakemore serves into South Wales, Sussex, Gloucester, Oxfordshire, Kent and South London. It previously served Spar stores in an area covering North Wales to East Anglia.



Blakemore's £1.1bn turnover gives it a 45% share of Spar.

The deal now gives Blakemore a 45% share of Spar among the remaining five Spar wholesalers - more than double that of nearest Spar wholesaler Henderson Group, which delivers to Spar stores in Northern Ireland. It will serve 1,095 of Spar's 2,373 stores.

"This is a great opportunity to bring two long-established, family-owned businesses together and allow us to move forward in the growing UK convenience store sector," said AF Blakemore & Son group MD Peter Blakemore.

"Blakemore and Capper & Co are similar companies that already have a shared history and a common set of values. The two businesses currently operate in

regions adjacent to each other and this will allow for many benefits to be realised, particularly in areas of trading and distribution."

Capper chairman Bill Capper added: "Integration with Blakemore is the right way forward for Capper & Co. It will strengthen Spar in the UK and bring many opportunities and benefits to the business."

Capper and MD Robert Upton will now join the main AF Blakemore board of directors and all Capper's 2,418 staff will join the enlarged business.

Wholesale experts believe the deal could kick-start further consolidation between Spar wholesalers looking to forge a stronger business model. Any mergers between the remaining players would only benefit Spar, a wholesale source told The Grocer.



analysis PETER BLAKEMORE



"I have vivid memories of the day we finally signed the documentation relating to the acquisition of Capper. This was in our solicitors' office and when we entered the room there were tables all the way around the walls, piled high with documents that needed to be signed. I would have been very intimidated if it had not been so much like my own office at Willenhall!" - David Pannell



Firm to top £1bn in move for Spar

Black Country based A F Blakemore & Son has taken over the Welsh Spar wholesaler Capper & Co in a move which will boost the company's turnover to £1.1 billion.

Blakemore's 5,572 employees will merge with the 2,418 employed by Capper & Co to become the largest Spar wholesaler in the UK.

Capper & Co will trade as a separate division of Blakemore, which has its headquarters in Long Acre Industrial Estate, Willenhall.

Managing director Peter Blakemore said: "A F Blakemore and Capper & Co are similar companies that already have a shared history and a common set of values. The two businesses currently operate in regions adjacent to each other and this will allow for many benefits to be realised, particularly in areas of trading and distribution."

He added: "This deal has been the result of a lot of hard work from people across both A F Blakemore and Capper & Co."

Capper Chairman, Bill Capper and managing director Robert Upton have joined the main A F Blakemore board of directors.

The move means the company will now serve 1,069 Spar stores nationwide.

Last summer, A F Blakemore & Son unveiled plans to expand the business and revealed it was on track to hit its first £1 billion turnover within two years.

The Blakemore & Capper Story - Bill Capper, 2011-2015

I worked alongside A.F. Blakemore as another SPAR wholesaler from the integration of SPAR and VIVO in 1975. Before that SPAR and the Value Centres cash and carry businesses had shared central office services and buying power at Harrow so my first introduction to the company had been in that context from the late 1960s. I retired from the board of A.F. Blakemore at the end of 2015.

A.F. Blakemore took over my family's business in March 2011. I then joined the board as a non-executive director and participated fully in board and strategy meetings, and management and SPAR events.

Over the 40 years to 2015 the company expanded dramatically. Peter Blakemore gave a strong statement of his intent to grow the business in 1982 when he took over the SPAR wholesale business of Morgan Edwards, the Shrewsbury-based wholesaler with a SPAR franchise including North Wales. I worked alongside Peter in 1993 when we struck a deal with Watson & Philip for a consortium to take over their SPAR wholesale business with a 'subcontracting' agreement. Another deal I was involved with Peter in was the acquisition of Lo-Cost stores. I also shared in guiding the retail software development for a consortium of SPAR, of which A.F. Blakemore it was an honour to be asked in my nearly five years on the board of A.F. Blakemore was a key member.

to chair two board meetings when Peter was unavailable. One of those occasions was particularly special because Mrs Mary Blakemore was present as a director.

I am very pleased that A. F. Blakemore is continuing into the future as a family business, something I particularly understand with my own background in our family business. I congratulate everyone for achieving the centenary and wish the company well for the future.



When I joined Capper & Co, computerisation was in its infancy and many of the accounting systems were manual and laborious; the general image of our SPAR stores was that of a corner shop; our Human Resources department was one lady who hid away in a shoe-box. Over the last 20 years developments in computerisation have transformed our wholesale and retail operations; we have modernised the format and style of our SPAR stores, developed our fresh business and actively moved into the forecourt sector; our Human Resources department has expanded beyond recognition and now plays a major role in recruitment, business and personal development and company strategy.



2011: Company acquired by A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd

Retail customers: 416 (116 own stores, 300 independents)





2020 Strategy

At the 2015 and 2016 A.F. Blakemore Management Group meetings, Peter Blakemore and the company's leadership team outlined the company's 2020 Strategy.

The 2020 Strategy focused upon generating sustainable, long-term prosperity and stressed the importance of achieving greater profitability that would in turn be re-invested back into the company's infrastructure and its trade partners' businesses.

A series of group and divisional profit improvement plans (PIPs) were integral to this strategy and enabled through leadership development, project leadership, class-leading IT, process improvement and innovation.

Central to this approach was the creation of a One Company approach to business, allowing a cross-fertilisation of ideas, greater economies of scale and the sharing of expertise across the group.



Fresh Stores



During this era, A.F. Blakemore set to further develop its food-to-go offering in stores, laying the foundations for many of the options available in store today.

In 2012, Blakemore Retail launched a new fresh foods strategy to help the business grow and contend with food-to-go competitors.

To complement SPAR's own '...To Go' range, Blakemore Retail began partnering with other leading brands, including Subway in 2011 and Greggs in 2015, to great and continued success.

Also introduced to stores were self-serve Costa Coffee machines and Insomnia Coffee counters, to capitalise on the morning commuter coffee rush.



This era also saw the launch of two flagship forecourt stores for Blakemore Retail at Fairfield and Laceby Lodge in Lincolnshire and the company's expansion into food service forecourts.

In 2015, A.F. Blakemore announced a joint venture with the award-winning SPAR retail and restaurant business Eat17 Ltd, to further develop its in store food service offering.

Eat17 has become renowned in the convenience sector for its entrepreneurial flair, innovation and unrivalled quality produce, creating some of the most innovative and award winning stores in the country today.



Community and Launching the Graduate Scheme

- Liz Blakemore, 2012 - present



Community has been an intrinsic part of A.F. Blakemore for over 20 years, from the establishment of the Blakemore Foundation in 1992, to the various community projects and activities organised over the years, including the five-a-side football competitions for primary school students, to the hundreds of schools, community groups and centres that have been transformed by one of our many teams of volunteers.

For me, my favourite part of my job is getting to see first-hand the difference a team of volunteers can make to these groups, and seeing the enjoyment and benefit that our staff get from completing projects.

As my time with A.F. Blakemore has grown so has my role. In 2014 I was asked to launch a graduate scheme for the business; at first I panicked, but then felt excitement at having the opportunity to aid the business in recruiting young people and support the sustainability of the business as a whole.

I will never forget feeling nervous the night before the first assessment centre and worrying that no one would turn up.

Luckily on the morning as I eagerly waited for the graduates to turn up, there they all were, looking very keen to be embarking on the last part of the recruitment journey with us.

Three years on I still get nervous at every assessment centre, but this is always overcome by the joy of seeing the sheer volume of talent there on the day.

Inspiring young people into the world of work has always been a passion of mine and something I believe companies have a key role in. Some of my proudest moments in work have come from hearing that a graduate is doing well and progressing to becoming a future leader within the business.



Responsible and Sustainable Business Growth

As A.F. Blakemore approached its centenary, the company's commitment to responsible and sustainable business growth remained undiminished.

Between 2007 and 2016 the company was recognised 20 times by Business in the Community at its annual Awards for Excellence for its work in the community, environment, workplace and marketplace.

The company's educational programme was honoured nine times for its commitment to supporting schools whilst the Blakemore Logistics sustainability programme was also recognised for the work undertaken to reduce the environmental impact of both its distribution operation and its customer base.

In 2014 Blakemore Fine Foods was recognised as the national example of excellence at the BITC Responsible Business Awards for the work undertaken to support food and drink producers.





A.F. Blakemore Looks Back on a Year to Remember

Throughout 2017 A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd celebrated 100 years in style with a series of events that showcased everything that is great about the family owned business.

Birthday celebrations took place throughout the 100th year with every facet of the business involved in recognising the huge contribution that the company has made to so many lives.

Birthday parties, community grants, colleague awards and a series of sustainability weeks all played their part in bringing the entire organisation together, with

the Blakemore family, employees, customers, suppliers and community groups integral to the anniversary.

The bulk of the celebrations occurred on September 1st (1/9/17) when more than 300 birthday parties took place across the entire Blakemore estate, which in turn raised more than £88,000 for good causes.

Colleagues were invited to organise events of their choosing to mark the big day with everything from fancy dress, barbecues, baking competitions and even an inter-depot lorry pull bringing staff,

customers, suppliers, friends and family together.

Local good causes across the communities that A.F. Blakemore serves were recognised with £1,917 Heritage Grants funded by the Blakemore Foundation, to further sustain the services they provide.

People have always been at the heart of A.F. Blakemore and some of those that have made the company the business it is today were showcased in a special "100 Faces of A.F. Blakemore" feature on the company website and monthly colleague nominated awards.

The 100th year also gave the company the opportunity to look to the future and recognise the importance of education, equality and the environment in helping build a sustainable business for the next 100 years.

Over the course of three separate sustainability weeks more than 700 colleagues participated in events that demonstrated the importance that these three topics will play in building a business culture for the 21st century.

Here we look back on a year to remember.





Anniversary Charity Birthday Parties

Raise More Than £88,000 for Good Causes

On September 1st, colleagues across England and Wales took part in more than 300 celebratory events at stores and depots across the company's trading area.

Employees across A.F. Blakemore raised more than £88,000 for the NSPCC and other good causes, including local charities such as Compton Care in Wolverhampton and bereavement support charity 2 Wish Upon a Star in South Wales, and national charities such as the Alzheimer's Society, Macmillan Cancer Support and the Make a Wish Foundation, to name but a few.

Colleagues organised fundraisers including fancy-dress days, barbecues, cake sales,

raffles, fair stalls, sports games, sponsored bike rides, karaoke, a company-wide baking competition and even a virtual balloon race. An inter-depot lorry pull competition also took place across the company's distribution centres.

A.F. Blakemore Group Board Director Caoire Blakemore commented: "A.F. Blakemore is a family business with a unique culture and heritage that has been built on a strong set of values.

"Our Charity Birthday Party celebrations were one of the biggest events in the company's 100-year history and a great occasion for colleagues to get together with customers, suppliers, friends and family and have a bit of fun!"



The Great Blakemore Bake Off

Jan Robertson from Blakemore Retail's Bishop's Castle store was crowned the winner of A.F. Blakemore's very first group-wide Bake Off competition.

The competition was open to all staff members across the Blakemore estate as part of the birthday party celebrations and received more than 30 entries.

All submissions were judged by A.F. Blakemore's Centenary Group, who decided Jan's stand-out cake was the obvious winner for its creativeness and detail.

Group Board Director Caoire Blakemore visited SPAR Bishop's Castle to congratulate Jan personally on her extraordinary baking skills and award her a Blakemore Fine Foods hamper and Star Baker's apron.

Jan commented: "My inspiration for the cake design came from a photo I took of an old shop front at the Blists Hill Victorian Town museum – I thought it really charming."

"It took me two days to create the cake as a lot of the icing detail was very intricate. It was really a family affair, since my mother and sister also work at the store."

"It was really lovely to win the competition and celebrate with my family and colleagues."

Store Manager Matt Davies added: "When I saw the email about the Blakemore Bake Off competition, I instantly thought of Jan because I know she likes to be creative."

"When I saw the cake, I was blown away by the size and detail of it! A big congratulations to Jan – she really deserves it!"

The cake was raffled off in support of the NSPCC and in line with A.F. Blakemore's Charity Birthday Party celebrations.



Blakemore Retail Senior Manager Owen Davies, Blakemore Retail Area Manager Donna Cooper, A.F. Blakemore Group Board Director Caoire Blakemore and Store Manager Matt Davies all congratulated Jan.

Here are some more impressive entries:



Employees Celebrate Centenary Year with Colleague Awards

Every month throughout 2017, the company recognised and celebrated employees who consistently go that extra mile through its Colleague Award Scheme.

Colleagues were nominated by their fellow employees for demonstrating the strong values that the company lives by, no matter how big or small their contribution.

Group HR Director Ian Diment commented: "The awards scheme was set up to celebrate our culture and the company's five core Blakemore Way values.

"These focus on maximising staff potential, giving great customer service, contributing to the community, attaining excellence and behaving with honesty and integrity.

"We have many colleagues across the company who go above and beyond to deliver exceptional service and it is hoped that these awards will help give them the recognition they deserve."

"We have many colleagues across the company who go above and beyond to deliver exceptional service and it is hoped that these awards will help give them the recognition they deserve."



Lauren Butt and George Duffy from Trade Partners, Justine Smith from Foodservice, Sean Thompson and Eddie Gray from Wholesale and Mark Steed from Transport also received Colleague Awards.



12 Good Causes Awarded £1,917 Heritage Grants

A.F. Blakemore marked its centenary in 2017 by launching a 1917 Heritage Grant Scheme to support local good causes across its trading area.

The company accepted applications over spring and summer and in total awarded 12 charities and organisations a grant of £1,917.

Each of the applicants was required to provide information on how the money would be used to sustain the good cause.

The good causes supported ranged from local hospices and community groups to educational programmes.

A.F. Blakemore Community Affairs Officer Kate Senter said: "A.F. Blakemore & Son has a long history of supporting local good causes and the 1917 Heritage Grant Scheme has complemented this perfectly.

"The 1917 Heritage Grant Scheme received more than 400 worthy requests from good causes across the UK"

"The 1917 Heritage Grant Scheme received more than 400 worthy requests from good causes across the UK. "It is hoped that each grant will support the local good cause's sustainability for years to come in recognition of the company's commitment to growing sustainably for the benefit of staff, customers and the community."



Central Youth Theatre, Wolverhampton



St Richard's Hospice, Worcestershire



World of Words, Rhondda Cynon Taf



Rainbows Hospice, Loughborough, Leicestershire



Avoncroft Museum, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire



Llandrindod Wells Football Club, Llandrindod Wells, Powys



Clun & District Memorial Hall, Clun, Shropshire



The Discovery Centre, Treforest, Pontypridd



8th Wyberton Scouts, Wyberton, Lincolnshire



Newtown Rugby Club, Newtown, Powys



Ickle Pickles Partnership, London

Company Hosts Sustainability Weeks

Colleagues from across A.F. Blakemore took part in three sustainability weeks as part of the 100 year activities. The themes of the weeks were Environment, Equality, Inclusion & Diversity and Education.

The purpose of the sustainability weeks was to promote to colleagues the importance of growing a sustainable business for the next 100 years.

During the three weeks, over 700 colleagues took part in a range of activities, including test driving electric cars, completing focused surveys, litter picking in local communities, conducting career days and taking part in a 'Foodie Friday'.

Here is a snapshot of each week.

Environmental Week - June 26th to June 30th

This week showcased a series of initiatives aimed at making a positive impact on the environment and promoting the importance of growing a sustainable business for the next 100 years.



Across England and Wales, an army of more than 300 colleagues spent a week litter picking in their local communities. Later, 10 colleagues from accounts supported Palfrey Park, alongside Walsall Council's Clean and Green team, clearing areas and planting 15 trees to offset the waste collected during the litter picks.



Blakemore Property joined forces with UK Electrical Installations Ltd to improve energy efficiency and reduce the utility bills of a women's refuge in Wolverhampton.

The company showcased electric and hybrid cars at its Willenhall head office for colleagues to view and test drive.

Running alongside all of this activity were daily environmental awareness campaigns promoting waste, recycling, transportation and water usage tips to employees to help reduce the company's impact on the environment.



Equality, Inclusion & Diversity Week – October 16th to October 20th

This week included a series of colleague and community activities to celebrate equality, inclusion and diversity in the workplace.

Colleagues on the company's Graduate Scheme visited Sikh ethos school The Khalsa Academy Wolverhampton to promote graduate opportunities at A.F. Blakemore and across the food and drink industry.



Group HR Director Ian Diment joined colleagues in presenting the company's approach to equality, inclusion and diversity at the Women in Wholesale conference, London.



Colleagues also took part in a Seeing is Believing insight event with the charity Brushstrokes based in Smethwick, which supports thousands of local refugees.

As part of a series of communications throughout the week, staff were invited to feed back their views on how the company can make the workplace more inclusive.



The week ended with a 'Foodie Friday', where all staff were encouraged to bring a dish of their choice to work to share and appreciate with colleagues.



Education Week – November 20th to November 24th

Throughout this week colleagues participated in a series of education-based community activities with the aim of inspiring young people in the world of work.

The Blakemore Trade Partners marketing team, in collaboration with Business in the Community and law firm FBC Manby Bowdler, conducted a careers day at Eastfield Primary School in Willenhall.



At the Black Country Chamber of Commerce sharing best practice event, Corporate Affairs Director Paul Cowley and Community Affairs Officer Liz Blakemore showcased A.F. Blakemore's educational programmes.

Alongside this activity, A.F. Blakemore's education programme, Branching Out, launched two new national programmes aimed at inspiring staff to volunteer as reading buddies and school governors, to benefit local communities.



Blakemore Logistics hosted its annual Road Safety Week at 15 schools in the West Midlands, South Wales and the South East.



The Blakemore Trade Partners sales team hosted a study tour of A.F. Blakemore's head office with students from Essex University.

blakemore retail 1000



YEARS

THE NEXT



A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd would not be the company it is today without the four generations of the Blakemore family who have steered its direction over the past 100 years.

To mark the company's centenary, we invited each family member currently working in the business to identify the things that they believe makes the company so special and to look ahead to the future.

A.F. Blakemore & Son 100-year Q&A

1. What does A.F. Blakemore mean to the Blakemore family?

Peter:

A.F. Blakemore is an integral part of my life. I have been involved in the company since helping in the business whilst I was at school and working full time in the company since the end of my student days.

Charlie:

A.F. Blakemore has always been a source of pride within the family. Knowing that so many people are committed to working towards our company's goals and in turn being able to provide a living for our near 8,000 colleagues means a tremendous amount to me personally.

Liz:

It means everything, it's the life blood of the family and something we are all extremely passionate about. No Sunday dinner or family meal goes by without us talking about work and being told 'no talking shop at the table please'.

Caoire:

A.F. Blakemore is the culmination of our great-grandfather, grandfather and parents' life work. The company represents their visions and aspirations, so it is incredibly personal and integral to us as people. We are extremely privileged to lead the business, but it can be all-consuming at times. There are so many people over the years that have put all their working life into the business and for that we are truly thankful – we wouldn't have got to 100 without all our colleagues over the years. It is our goal to protect the business that has been established over the past century and to continue to positively impact the communities around us.

2. What have been the key ingredients for success over the past 100 years?

Peter:

The key ingredients have been remaining a family business, being prepared to change as markets change and always looking to the long-term future. Yet there are other factors that lie behind our commercial success, such as the definition of our values within the Blakemore Way, being able to live these values through Leading the Blakemore Way and demonstrating our commitment to the communities we serve via the Blakemore Foundation.

Caoire:

For me, another key ingredient to our success has undoubtedly been the passion, drive and commitment from our colleagues over the past 100 years. Whilst Dad has overseen the largest period of growth in the company's history, his industry changing ideas and vision would not have been achieved without the committed colleagues around him. A.F. Blakemore has attracted so many talented, forward-thinking people over the years and it has been the company's ability to listen to and support their diversity of opinion that has been critical to our success.

3. What are the key values of the Blakemore family and how are these reflected in the business?

Tom:

The key family values are very much aligned to the values of the business. We are a close knit family and will always look out for each other, we believe in acting with honesty in everything that we do, not just in business. We are a competitive family and I believe that comes from wanting to achieve the best in everything we do.

Caoire:

To build on what Tom has said about the values being aligned, we have all grown up with the business, whether it be through working here at weekends from a young age, hearing the chatter about it at home or during family holidays at conferences. This blurring of lines between where the family and business start and stop, plus us being involved in the management means we become a reflection of the business and the business becomes a reflection of the family.



4. What is the position of A.F. Blakemore in 2018? What are the business's strengths?

Peter:

The company is well placed to be able to successfully adapt during a period of intense upheaval and change in all the markets we operate in. We have a strong financial position as the company has always re-invested the majority of any profits made back into the business.

Caoire:

Our strength lies in our ongoing commitment to reinvestment and through our long-term approach to business. A.F. Blakemore's financial performance goes in cycles of profitability from year to year, but we have always viewed our success over a long term perspective.

Liz:

I believe that one of our many business strengths is that we are a family business with strong values and commitment to our staff, customers and community. This is often given as a reason of what attracted people to the organisation when we are recruiting.

5. What are the company's future strategic goals? What is the vision for A.F. Blakemore from the Blakemore family?

Peter:

Continue to be a family owned business that is financially secure with the ability to grow and expand to meet the changing needs of its customers. The purpose and values within the Blakemore Way continue to underpin our business and point towards our vision for the future.

Tom:

Our vision continues to be to grow a profitable and sustainable family business. We will continue to adapt to the fluctuating markets that we are in and remain competitive in the ever-changing business environment. This will require a profitable business but also one with the necessary agility and innovative culture to drive the business forward. For this to happen we will continue to invest in our staff as they will remain the key drivers to our success.

Charlie:

To continue to drive growth and innovation in a highly competitive market with the goal of ensuring stable employment and development opportunities for existing and future colleagues. It is our vision to continue to trade and operate in our community for another 100 years under new stewardship, as new generations come into the business. The values of honesty, integrity and maximising staff potential are core to the business and will be passed down and incorporated into any future vision of the company.

Liz:

The goal that I want to set for my role and the family business is to inspire the next generation of future leaders. The young people of today are our future leaders of tomorrow and our job is to inspire them to want to work for us at A.F. Blakemore, whether as an apprentice, graduate or via the traditional recruitment route. Recruiting young people into our business is just the start, we will also look at how we help them develop once they are with us to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Caoire:

To continue to repeat what previous generations have achieved: to be at the forefront of convenience grocery retailing, to continue to innovate in how we provide customer solutions and to develop an exciting consumer offer. Strategically for the future we need to be quicker and braver at spotting trends and delivering new innovations.

6. What role will the next generation of Blakemore play in delivering this vision?

Liz:

I believe that the role of the next generation is to be the guardians of the Blakemore vision and values. We need to ensure that they aren't falling from the business agenda and that they are embedded in everything that we do. For this to happen everyone across the organisation needs to be empowered to lead and support this vision themselves.

Caoire:

We pride ourselves on being a business that happens to have a family at its core and we ensure that the family never gets in the way of business success. To reference an old Native American proverb: "Treat the earth well: it was not given to you by your parents, it was loaned to you by your children." If you were to change the word earth with company and children to future generations of customers, colleagues and communities, then I believe that would sum up our role. We are the custodians of the business.



7. Why do you all like working here?

Peter:

It is very satisfying to work in a family business where the family has control over what it does and the direction and success of the company, rather than a removed set of shareholders having that control.

Tom:

Working for a family business means that I am privileged to be able to work in a role that allows me to make a fundamental difference in the way that the business is run. What really gets me up in the morning is knowing that I am a stakeholder in a family business where a lot of other families are dependent on the business, whether they work for us directly or are a family business supplied by Blakemore. The more successful we are as a business the more successful everyone associated with it will be.

Charlie:

The commitment that I see on a day-to-day basis from our teams working towards common goals along with the strong community focus that we operate with the Blakemore Foundation and community engagement projects throughout the company.

Liz:

There are many reasons why I like working here but the ones that really stick out to me are the team spirit and the family links throughout the business. Speaking of the team I work in, it is great to see how we pull together and support one another through busy periods and input towards each other's work. I wouldn't be able to do my job without this team spirit and this is something that I witness and am inspired by across the company. I also see more and more colleagues' next generation family members joining A.F. Blakemore. For a parent or sibling to encourage their close family to work for A.F. Blakemore illustrates the passion that they themselves must have for the company.

Caoire:

I agree with what all of the others have said. To build on this I also really enjoy working with and creating something with my family. I think that we are all lucky to get to spend so much time together. Dad's always been such a huge support to each of us and career-wise we have all had such incredible opportunities through him. It is so good to be doing something positive with our good luck through the business. I like the feeling that working at Blakemore's has a purpose beyond that of just making money for a machine.

PETER'S 12 STEPS TO SUCCESS

Here Peter Blakemore looks back to the key milestones that he believes have shaped the company's history:

Starting a local shop more than 100 years ago in Merridale Street, Wolverhampton run by my grandmother Harriet.

01

My grandfather Arthur deciding to sell paper bags to other shopkeepers.

02

My father Frank developing the wholesaling part of the business in the 1930s and 1940s.

03

The warehouse built for the wholesale business being destroyed and resurrected following bombing during the Second World War.

04

Organising independent retailers to trade collectively under a national symbol in the 1950s.

05

My father opening a self-service food warehouse for retailers to collect goods from and our large cash & carry business expanding in the 1960s and 1970s.

06

07

Changing the name of our retailers' symbol to SPAR in 1974 and developing the concept of local convenience stores under the SPAR banner in the 1970s and 1980s.

08

Launching a food service business supplying catering establishments in the 1990s.

09

Continuing to develop the SPAR concept through opening new stores and acquisitions in the 1990s and to date.

10

Bringing the fourth generation of Blakemore family members into the business.

11

Developing The Blakemore Way and introducing Leading the Blakemore Way in 2008.

12

Diversifying our business into food-for-now consumer solutions and speciality fine foods ranges.

SUCCESS

A Business for the Future

With a proud heritage behind it, A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd has its eyes firmly fixed on the future, focused upon building a profitable and sustainable business for the century ahead.

The innovative culture that first saw Arthur Blakemore grasp the opportunity of wholesaling, Frank Blakemore seize the initiative of cash & carry and Peter Blakemore realise the potential of convenience retailing remains at the heart of the company.

A.F. Blakemore continues to lead in convenience retailing with some of the most cutting-edge stores in the country and has established an infrastructure ideally positioned to meet the changing shape of the UK food & drink market.

The SPAR network represents a voluntary trading group of independent businesses, working together and combining their entrepreneurial spirit and local knowledge to create true community stores at the heart of the localities they serve.

This philosophy is central to A.F. Blakemore's commitment to co-investment and using its own money to help and grow its retail partners' businesses.



A great example of this is A.F. Blakemore's proud history of working alongside the Davies family in Wales, which is a fifth-generation business that has been part of SPAR for more than 60 years. The two family companies recently collaborated to re-launch the Davies' flagship store at Pwllheli, in Gwynedd, creating a pioneering SPAR Market store.

This collaborative approach has also seen A.F. Blakemore co-invest in multi award-winning fine food store and restaurant chain Eat17, which has four stores across London and the south-east at Walthamstow, Hackney, Bishop's Stortford and Hammersmith.



Eat17 combines elements of a convenience store with a dining scene that creates a unique shopping experience and includes the finest locally sourced food & drink, eco-friendly refillable food lines and indoor street food markets.



A great example of Blakemore Trade Partners' ability to work alongside a large national chain can be seen at the Roadchef store located at the Strensham South Service Area in Worcestershire. The store, which was fitted out by Blakemore Design & Shopfitting, hosts many exciting concepts in store layout and boasts an exciting range of food-to-go products.



Blakemore Retail has also heavily invested in developing its existing store estate, through relocations and refits to extend in-store food-to-go offerings, which has included modernising own brand dailyDeli as well as nurturing partnerships with big food-to-go chains, to better satisfy shopper missions with new meal ranges and convenience.

While A.F. Blakemore is perfectly placed to serve the growing interest in local community retailing, as consumers shop more frequently for smaller quantities of food for immediate or same day consumption, it also has the infrastructure to serve an expanding customer base across a diverse range of wholesale distribution and specialist food sectors.

This is demonstrated through A.F. Blakemore's commitment to premium and locally sourced food & drink through the Blakemore Fine Foods and Fresh Foods operations along with the company's ability to provide agile and customer-focused supply chain solutions via its Wholesale Distribution, Foodservice and Logistics infrastructure. All this is underpinned by A.F. Blakemore's continued investment across all aspects of its business and multi-million-pound commitment to IT innovation.

A.F. Blakemore has the diversity and scale but also the ability to deliver specialist, bespoke solutions for customers. These factors will allow the company to stand out from the crowd and continue to live its purpose of "building a profitable and sustainable family business for the benefit of its staff, customers and communities" for the next 100 years.

Developing a Workforce *for tomorrow*

A.F. Blakemore's long-standing commitments to maximising the potential of colleagues and positively engaging with local communities will be integral strands to its future strategy.

Since 2003 the company has invested heavily in leadership development through its Leading the Blakemore Way programme with countless colleagues across the business attending courses that focus upon the skills, attitudes and leadership behaviours required to grow a successful business.

The programme has been supplemented in recent years with an emphasis upon project leadership and process management and improvement, equipping colleagues with the tools to deliver A.F. Blakemore's strategic vision.

With an expansive menu of additional developmental courses and the ability to deliver externally accredited Institute of Leaderships & Management (ILM) programmes, A.F. Blakemore continues to invest and grow its future leaders from within.

blakemore
.....branchingout



“The young people of today will be our leaders of tomorrow and it is our job to inspire them to work for our business.”

This philosophy has been extended to the company's well-established community based educational programme, Branching Out, which seeks to inspire, engage and motivate young people via a range of activities such as reading partnerships, workplace insights, employability workshops, career support and work experience. Branching Out aims to prepare young people for their future outside of school.

The company's Community Affairs Officer Liz Blakemore said: “We have spent many years working with schools and are now using Branching Out to bridge the gap between education and employment.

“The young people of today will be our leaders of tomorrow and it is our job to inspire them to work for our business.”

A great example of how A.F. Blakemore looks to recruit and develop young people into the business is through its apprenticeship and graduate programmes.

The company launched its graduate scheme in 2015 to recruit young people onto a comprehensive development programme that includes on-the-job and classroom training.

Apprenticeships are another talent pipeline utilised by the company to help meet skills gaps in high priority areas including distribution drivers, warehousing, IT programmers and finance.

A.F. Blakemore is also using the apprenticeship route to upskill its existing workforce through bespoke leadership programmes.

Liz added: “Our graduate, apprenticeship and Branching Out programmes complement each other as we continue to inspire and grow colleagues wanting to build a career within our diverse business.”





Foundations for the FUTURE

In 2017 A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd restructured its Group Board, as it looked ahead to building the foundations for the next 100 years in business.

As part of the restructure Peter Blakemore stood down from his role as Group Managing Director, a position he had held since 1986, to focus upon steering the strategic direction of the business in the capacity of Group Chairman.

As a result, the highly experienced Geoff Hallam and Jerry Marwood were appointed as Joint Managing Directors for the company. Both Geoff and Jerry are two of the leading minds in the convenience retail sector with many years' service across the A.F. Blakemore and SPAR organisations. While Geoff joined A.F. Blakemore in 1989 and has been an integral part of the company's growth and expansion since then, Jerry joined in 2012 after more than a decade working alongside A.F. Blakemore in the capacity of SPAR UK Managing Director.

Here the two Joint Managing Directors reflect on their time with the company and look ahead to a prosperous future for A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd.



Geoff Hallam:

From the moment that I joined A.F. Blakemore I have always been struck by the company's open management style and willingness to allow people at all levels to have their say and make a difference. Although the company has grown enormously, this approach has remained at the heart of A.F. Blakemore since my early days and this is a far cry from what you would come to expect from a business of our size.

This non-hierarchical approach is led by Peter Blakemore himself and throughout my career I have always felt that I can express my views and that my opinions are valued, even in the early days of my career when talking to people more senior than me. It still strikes me today when I visit stores, depots or offices that colleagues are

regularly willing to pass on their views about how to improve what we do. This culture of speaking up and listening to others remains central to this business and is in many ways what the Blakemore Way is all about.

As a business A.F. Blakemore is never happy in standing still and again this is an approach that has been championed by Peter Blakemore throughout my time here. Peter has always challenged and encouraged his team to innovate and come up with new ideas to drive the business forward and it has been an amazing experience to be able to have that level of freedom at work.

As we look at the business today and how we will shape it for the future there are so many opportunities that lie ahead. We have all the ingredients required to make our business even more successful in the future and our focus will now be upon bringing our divisions closer together so that they can support one another in serving our wide-ranging customer base. How can our Fresh Foods operation support Foodservice? What opportunities does Fine Foods provide to our SPAR estate? How can we share our knowledge and expertise further across the Blakemore Group?

The answer to these questions will once again be seen in the innovative, pioneering approach to business that Blakemore's has always had and will continue to have in the future.

Looking over our recent history, Blakemore has been a leader in so many ways and it is testament to this business that it continues to take the risks required to succeed whilst never forgetting its commitment to achieving long-term prosperity for all.



Jerry Marwood:

My relationship with A.F. Blakemore started nearly 30 years ago when I was interviewed by Peter Blakemore and long-standing SPAR retailer Stan Moore, as part of the selection process for joining SPAR UK as Retail Director. Peter and Stan were Chair and Vice Chair of SPAR Food Distributors and the National Guild respectively and their job was to assess my level of suitability for the role.

I was aiming to join SPAR having worked for Tesco, The Cooperative and more latterly Somerfield, and my immediate impressions of Peter and Stan were of two passionate individuals with unique insights into independent convenience retailing.

These first impressions were proven to be correct and both Stan and Peter became two of my "go to" people during my career with SPAR.

I learnt to understand what retailers wanted from businesses like A.F. Blakemore by listening to how Stan developed his stores with the support of the Blakemore team. I soon realised that the partnership between wholesaler and retailer was not in any sense a traditional supply relationship. This understanding was further enhanced by watching the way Peter ran his own business by supporting his retail partners in running theirs and the way he collaborated with the other RDCs to make SPAR the leading brand that it continues to be today.

When it came to leaving SPAR UK and making my next career move it was a pretty natural decision for me to talk to Peter first. I can honestly say that when he asked me to join Blakemore's it was one of the easiest decisions I've had to make.

One of the most significant lessons I have learnt from working with A.F. Blakemore is to plan for the long term. Every business plan suffers from bumps in the road and we are no different. However, as an organisation we have a fundamental belief in the reasons that we are in business, defined most clearly in the Blakemore Way.

A.F. Blakemore is not just about short-term profit, but long-term sustainability and we fully understand that it is our people that make the difference and enable us to realise our future goals. This attitude gives me confidence that we have a competitive edge versus the traditional players in our market. Combine this with the tangible investments that we are making in technology, model stores and logistics and I believe that we have a huge amount to look forward to.

THE NEXT 100 YEARS

THE WAY FORWARD

As a new century dawns for A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd the company is well placed to face the challenges and opportunities posed by the modern world.

With the fourth generation of the Blakemore family at the helm, the purpose and values that lie at the heart of the organisation remain as relevant as ever and will continue to steer the business of the future.

A.F. Blakemore's 100th year represented another year of change as the company refocused its strategy and committed to further investment across the retail, wholesale distribution and specialist food sectors.

The Blakemore story represents one of continuous evolution driven by an ongoing entrepreneurial spirit and a culture of innovation.

None of this could have been achieved without the tens of thousands of colleagues, who have contributed to this success and made A.F. Blakemore & Son Ltd the place that it is today.



A.F. Blakemore & Son Board of Directors 2018: (L-R) Group HR Director Ian Diment, Group Director Tomas Blakemore, A.F. Blakemore & Son Chairman Peter Blakemore, Group Director Caoire Blakemore, Joint Managing Director Jerry Marwood, Joint Managing Director Geoff Hallam and Group Finance Director Scott Munro-Morris

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

of successful business, working alongside our supplier partners:



We congratulate A.F. Blakemore on their 100 year anniversary, which is a tremendous achievement and deserving of acclaim. The culture and values of the business have a lot to do with this success and longevity, the Blakemore Way typifying how that can additionally benefit the external community and disadvantaged areas. A.F. Blakemore and Barclays have a really close and deep working relationship built over many years and we enjoy the interaction, support we can give and some of the additional projects we have been able to work on jointly over the years in the community, in particular with our graduates and apprentices. We wish the company even more success over the next 100 years!

HARTSHORNE GROUP



The Hartshorne Group are delighted to be supporting A.F. Blakemore & Son and congratulate them in celebrating their first centenary.

100 years in business is indeed a fantastic achievement. The Hartshorne Group have been privileged and proud to support A.F. Blakemore & Son with Volvo trucks and associated services for more than 30 years.

We look forward to continuing that valuable partnership as we enter A.F. Blakemore's second century!



We would like to congratulate A.F. Blakemore on their success story of the last 100 years. It is a pleasure to work with such an established family business and as a family business ourselves we share many values. Wishing everyone at Blakemore a fantastic future and here's to another 100 years.



As a vehicle safety solutions provider, Spillard have been working with A.F. Blakemore for over 10 years, keeping their staff, customers and other road users safe, eliminating the dangers they face due to poor visibility. The relationship has gone from strength to strength with both sides building a strong partnership.



PMI is delighted and proud to partner with A.F. Blakemore & Son as they celebrate and commemorate 100 years in business. From one Midlands-based family business to another, congratulations on this great achievement.



A huge thank you to Midland News Association Ltd for allowing Express & Star and Chronicle archive material to be reproduced in this publication, helping to fully illustrate the history of A.F. Blakemore.





