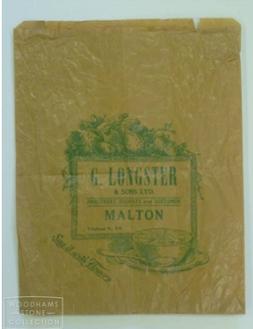


WOODHAMS  
—STONE—  
COLLECTION

Woodhams Stone Collection

Longster and Sons

WOODHAMS  
—STONE—  
COLLECTION



The Woodhams Stone Collection contains many items made and sold by local shops and businesses. There are beer bottles, buttons and clocks to name a few, but some businesses do not produce the kind of goods that survive the years. One of these is the family firm of Longster's, who made their living as gardeners, seedsmen and nurserymen. If their produce is still thriving and growing, chances are it would not fit or thrive in our stores. Luckily, we do have other material such as invoices and receipts and even paper bags and sacks from this very long-lived and successful business.

Longster's was a business that was truly built from the ground up. The founder of the firm was William Longster. He is described in an 1823 trade directory as a gardener, nursery and seedsmen. It is said that he began with four acres of land on the banks of the River Derwent. This land consisted of heavy clay soil and was very difficult to work. Some stories say that often when the ground needed digging the spade had to be dipped into a bucket of water first. It is also claimed that William spread several hundred loads of road sweepings on the land in an effort to improve the condition of the soil. It clearly worked; the business grew and a small shop was opened on Old Maltongate.



By the late 1850s George Longster was in charge of the family firm and he expanded the business by extending the nurseries to include another eleven acres of the Earl Fitzwilliam's land on the Castle Howard Road. A new shop opened on Wheelgate in the 1870s. After George Longster's sudden death at Pickering market, the business was carried on by his sons and became George Longster and Sons.

In 1908 George Longsters & Sons acquired the business of fellow nurserymen and seedsmen, J. Slater & Sons, including their shop and warehouses at the corner of Railway Street and Yorkersgate. This is the shop that remained open until the 1960s and sold fruit and flowers as well as gardening supplies.

The public were also welcome at the Longster's nurseries, especially the Derwent Nursery on the banks of the river. There were walkways and seating and local bands often entertained the crowds on Sunday afternoons with concerts of sacred music.

At the height of their success Longster's were known as suppliers of farm seeds, fruit trees and roses and even suppliers of forest trees. They were landscape gardeners and early promoters of chrysanthemum growing. This once prominent local business may no longer exist, but it has left its mark on the town. Today the shop houses a different business and the nurseries and glass houses have gone. The Castle Howard Road nursery has been built over, but the street names such as Orchard Road, Pippin Road and Russett Road bear witness to the land's earlier use.