

# Major Sources and Acknowledgements

## Major Sources

This is a summary of the book's principal sources; detailed footnotes are available for researchers on the book's website: [www.spedanspartnership.co.uk](http://www.spedanspartnership.co.uk). The Partnership is fortunate in having a substantial and well-kept archive, maintained for over thirty years by Lorna Poole after its original founding by Rosalind Hadden, and continued from 1996 by Poole's successor Judy Faraday and her assistant Linda Moroney. Without the unstinting support of the archivists this book would simply not have been possible.

After 1918 the main sources of information are the annual Gazette volumes, each often containing over 1000 pages, which, from the early 1920s when it settled as a weekly magazine of record, contains all fifty-two Gazettes. Until 2003 they were exceptionally well indexed, so although the amount of information is daunting they can be scanned in less time than you might imagine. Those covering World War II in particular give an intriguing and undoubtedly unique insight into a company's day-to-day response to war. Until 1955, moreover, Spedan's ideas are constantly expressed and explored in its pages. At other times I must say that without the lively anonymous letter column the Gazette volumes can be an unmatched antidote to insomnia. That column, of course, was and still is a good guide to what many ordinary Partners are thinking.

## Chapters 1, 2 and 4

John Lewis's early life has been researched by others, notably Kenneth Hudson in an unpublished document, but recent advances in the availability of the early censuses online have filled in some of the gaps. John Lewis, orphaned at seven in 1843, said hardly anything to his own family about his early life. Notable is the Partnership story, promulgated unwittingly by Spedan himself, that John was brought up by a kindly aunt named Ann Speed, the name reversed to give 'Spedan'. The census records show that the aunt in question was undoubtedly his mother's eldest sister Christian, a conclusion that John's grandson Peter Lewis had reached in his own research. I'm most grateful to him for sharing information about the life of his grandfather's family, and for correcting a number of my errors. Much of the information about John comes from Spedan, largely in his *Partnership For All*, and from the reminiscences of Albert Sherring and Alice Cook published in the Gazette.

## Chapter 3

Daily life in the Victorian and Edwardian department store is vividly depicted in HG Wells' semi-autobiographical *Kipps*. Wells was a lifelong supporter of measures to

improve shopworkers' lives, as was his friend Philip Hoffman, the shop assistants' union organiser on whose autobiography *They Also Serve* I also draw. Hoffman catalogues the grim conditions, particularly in hostels, and the fight to improve them – if not to the extent that Spedan did at Peter Jones. Robert Bichan, another whose reminiscences appeared in the *Gazette*, one who started as Hoffman did in a store in Holborn, describes the process of 'cribbing' for a new job. For the growth of the department store in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and especially the arrival of Gordon Selfridge, a good source is Bill Lancaster's *The Department Store, a Social History*, as is a book published in June 2010, Claire Masset's *Department Stores*. For its Victorian beginnings, read Alison Adburgham's *Shops and Shopping 1800–1914*.

## Chapter 5

The years at Peter Jones during World War I when Spedan was testing out his ideas informally are described from different perspectives by Robert Bichan and by Spedan himself. Bichan's first-hand experiences on the shop floor and behind the scenes show exactly what Spedan was up against in the 'near-derelict' Peter Jones, and how Spedan set about improving the shop and instilling his principles. Bichan is invaluable because he's an articulate fighter for fairness who never becomes a management figure, so maintains that perspective. He begins a tradition of sturdy democrats (especially at Peter Jones) who won't be fobbed off, a necessary corrective to the understandable tendency, in a co-owned business as much as any other, to focus on sales and profit and let the democracy take care of itself.

## Chapters 6 to 8

From this point onwards the *Gazette* comes more into play, particularly in 1918–20 when Spedan explores his ideas and engages with his staff – 'Partners' from 1920 – in a public debate. The most detailed information on the Oxford Street strike comes from the daily newspapers, which were full of it, from Kenneth Hudson's account, and from Philip Hoffman, who dwelt on it at length in his autobiography. One must be wary of bias, of course – in any account – but Hoffman proves himself an open and likeable reporter throughout the book. His reluctant admiration for John Lewis, his intransigent opponent, is telling, as are his later comments commending Wallace Waite for his empathy with grocery workers. Back at Peter Jones, Spedan's employment of women is examined at length in Judy Faraday's MPhil thesis *A Kind of Superior Hobby*, which looks at women managers in the Partnership between 1918 and 1950. To add to Spedan's own reminiscences, Albert Sherring, Stanley Carter and Bernard Miller all wrote at various times in the *Gazette* about the excitement of the 1930s when, as Miller said, 'nothing was too zany to look into and anything was possible'. William Crabtree and his wife Sylvia, a former chief registrar, wrote about the commissioning and building of the new Peter Jones, as did Charles Reilly, his professor at the Liverpool School of Architecture, who rode shotgun on the project, in his *Scaffolding in the Sky*. Andrew Marr's *The Making of Modern Britain* is a racy background to the first forty years of the twentieth century.

## Chapter 9

The prime source for Wallace Waite's early years is his daughter Monica Freeman, interviewed by Lorna Poole when she was archivist. Life in a grocer's between the wars was recalled in the *Gazette* by two Waitrose veterans, Harold Tobias and Harold Tickner, who began in 1923 and 1928 respectively. Tobias was still working part-time in Waitrose in the 1970s, long after formal retirement, and is remembered by more than one branch manager today. Michael Winstanley's *The Shopkeeper's World 1830–1914* has a fascinating section on early grocers (learn why they kept hedgehogs...). Philip Hoffman is the source for 'the doughty Daniel' Waite's active support for grocery wages boards and for improving working conditions in the trade. Stanley Carter's trenchant views on Spedan's decision to buy Waitrose – which he still held despite becoming a reforming MD there – were published in a fascinating *Gazette* article in 1995, when he was in his eighties.

## Chapters 10 to 12

In this period the *Gazette* is the prime informant, and the only problem is what to leave out. The letter relating events on the night of the Oxford Street fire was an accidental find: I'd never heard of it before and no third-hand description could possibly match its immediacy. There's nobody still alive to talk to today who had been in the building at the time of the fire. But from 1940 onwards personal reminiscences do start to arrive. I had already interviewed Paul Roake at his Somerset home before I twigged that he was the Quaker referred to in the conscientious objector debate of 1940. (Roake was over ninety, although he wasn't the oldest person I interviewed: a woman who at fifteen had travelled from Newcastle to Watford for a job at Trewins, where she lived in the hostel.) On an early visit to Newcastle to interview four retired Bainbridges department managers I was surprised to discover that one of them, Robert Owen, had been a London boy who not only watched the fire in Oxford Street but also subsequently worked at the shop with Edward Lewis in hardware. Trevor Fry, the Partnership buyer (and official photographer), whose *Spectator* article about life as a Bevin Boy had typically attracted Spedan's attention, gave Judy Faraday a long and engaging recorded interview in 2002. Eric Pearce remembered the Korean War crisis, and was eloquent in his admiration of Patrick Mahon and Stanley Carter.

Max Baker's compilation of Spedan's advice on retailing, *Retail Trading*, is of course invaluable, not least because it saved me a sanity-threatening trawl through his 39,396 memoranda in the archive, all painstakingly indexed. Although it only starts from the 1930s, *John Spedan Lewis, 1885–1963*, brings together a range of warts-and-all personal memories of his later years, notably from Bernard Miller, Max Baker and Paul May. Written by Hugh McPherson, it draws on research by Rosalind Hadden, the first archivist and at that point the *Gazette* editor. One of the most sympathetic summaries of Spedan's life appears in Carol Kennedy's *Merchant Princes*, which looks at the development of the Partnership alongside that of the Sainsbury and Cadbury businesses. David Kynaston's exhaustive *Austerity Britain, 1945–51* and *Family Britain*

1951–7 give the background to a tough period for the Partnership. As it recovered, it barely seemed to notice the changes described by Jenny Diski's *The Sixties (Big Ideas)* – (a period during which the former Partners Roy Jenkins, Eddie Shackleton and George Brown were part of the government).

### Chapters 13 to 14

The Partnership archive contains a number of personal files of important retired Partners who are no longer alive. It's a far from complete collection, so it's pot luck who turns up, but they give an excellent feel for Partners' working lives at every level. Fortunately the files of both Wallace Waite and Stanley Carter are there, and they underpin Chapters 13 and 14. Carter's file provided a detailed record of his working life from 1929, when he started as a sixteen-year-old selling assistant in the silk room, to his retirement in 1973 as Waitrose MD. It also gave an insight into how Bernard Miller as Chairman dealt with his occasionally unruly buccaneer, with a shrewd mixture of support and encouragement, the occasional shot across the bows, and the promise of a rich prize if he succeeded. Of Carter the personal recollections came thick and fast, from Stan Withers at Heelas in the 1950s, via John Foster, Derek Saward, Derek Rawlings, Philip Morgan, Peter Falconer, Dudley Cloake and the late, much-lamented Richard March, to the many young Waitrose managers, since retired, to whom he was an inspiration. And one not so young: Bill Anderson, pushing ninety and still working – over seventy years after he started in a grocer's before the war. It was he who converted the first Waitrose shop to self-service in 1951.

### Chapters 15 to 20

The sources for these chapters are almost entirely the Gazette and masses of personal testimony from interviews. Helpful sources are Gazette articles by Bernard Miller and Max Baker. I'm particularly grateful to Brian O'Callaghan for copies of Max Baker's Berlin conference paper of 1957 and his reflections on department store layout and design. They were essentially the same as O'Callaghan's own, which he expounded as we walked the Bluewater selling floor ten years after his retirement. Just as absorbing was a tour of the Oxford Street shop with its former MD Derek Rawlings and Noel Saunders, the current MD, exactly fifty years after Rawlings first arrived there as a merchandise manager under Carter. Steven May reminisced about his father Paul, while Peter Yaghmourian and the glove expert Mabel Hammett were two of many who brought to life the very different world of department store buying that operated between the middle and end of the twentieth century. Mary Cooper filled me in on the resuscitation of Brownsea Castle, augmenting her husband's lively written account. The 1968 academic analysis of the Partnership's system of government by Flanders, Pomeranz and Woodward, *An Experiment in Industrial Democracy*, which seemed to sink without trace, is more useful than its reputation within the Partnership might suggest. Of many books about the period, Andrew Marr takes the century's story on with *A History of Modern Britain*, while the minefield of the 1970s, through which the Partnership carefully

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navigated its way, is recreated in Andy Beckett's *When the Lights Went Out* (which, dear reader, they did). Richard Vinen's *Thatcher's Britain* does the same for the following decade. For an exploration of the effects of the Thatcher transformation, read Will Hutton's *The State We're In*, Robert Peston's recent *Who Runs Britain?* and Wilkinson and Pickett's *The Spirit Level*. Finally, William Davies's booklet for Demos, *Reinventing the Firm*, examines whether a Partnership-style organisation for businesses is possible and how it might be achieved.