

Five generations of hairdressing style

JIM FLOWER is heir to a great hairdressing history. For five generations his family has been in Canterbury trimming tresses.

It began in 1908 when his great-grandfather, Henry Flower, opened a barber shop in Palace Street.

The shop, which is now called France, was a great success with many of the soldiers who were stationed in Canterbury before the Great War. Many would visit daily for a shave.

Not everything ran smoothly though.

"My great-grandfather used to like a drink," said Jim. "Sometimes he would disappear for days on end, so his wife began to learn the business."

Eventually Charity Flower became established as the first female barber in the country, receiving coverage in a national magazine.

The couple had three daughters and two sons. The girls helped to lather up customers in Palace Street while the boys, Ernest and Bertram, set up their own shops in North Lane.

Ernest, known as Ernie, was well-known for his sense of humour.

Jim remembered: "Great-uncle Ernie was quite a character and was very kind-hearted. He loved the river and was always cleaning it.

"Once he made a crocodile and put it in the river to amuse the passers-by."

Bertram's son, also named Bertram, who was Jim's father, served his apprenticeship with Ernest before opening his own barber's in Bridge in 1948.

Jim was just one when the shop opened. He remembers the long hours his father

THE Flower family has been cutting hair in Canterbury for five generations.

The family has two shops in Castle Street - both called Steven James.

As the Flowers set about revamping their ladies' salon, RICHARD RYAN looks at the history of the family.

worked: "Looking at the prices in those days he had to work hard just to make ends meet."

In 1962 Jim left school and began to work with his father. "He never really encouraged or discouraged me from joining the business. But I saw how happy he was doing it.

"I see the job as a hobby. I enjoy meeting people so going to work is like talking to old friends all day."

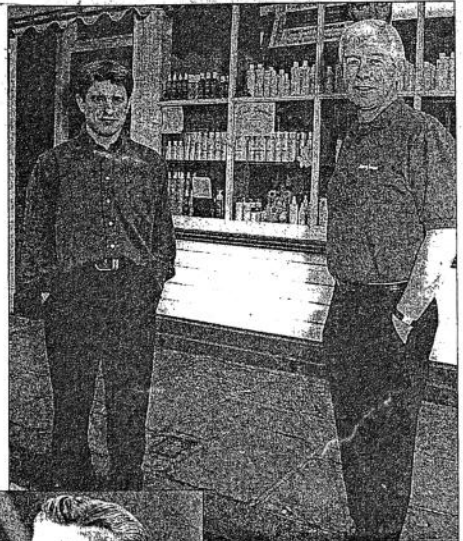
Jim opened his current salon in 1985, naming it Steven James, after his two sons. They, too, are in the business, with James working for Antoniou in Whitstable and Steven managing the Canterbury salon, while his wife Jennie manages the Faversham shop.

There is no doubt that Jim has enjoyed his time in the industry.

"I've been hairdressing now for 36 years, some customers have been clients of mine for 33 years.

"Some of them were babies then, and now their babies are clients of mine, too, so I like to call them my grandclients."

But he does have one wish: "If only I had been given £1 for each haircut the family has done over the years...."



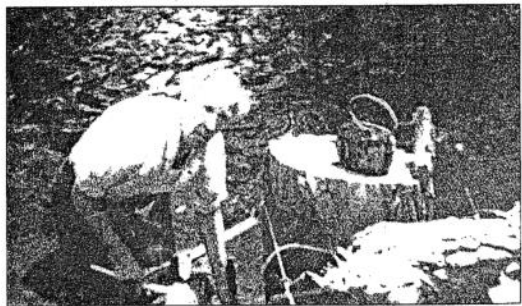
ABOVE: Father and son, Jim, right, and Steven outside one of their Castle Street shops 11/0816E



LEFT: Bertram Flower Jun who opened a barber's shop in Bridge in 1948



BERTRAM FLOWER SEN: He and his brother Ernest opened shops in North Lane



BELOW: Great-uncle Ernie who loved messing about on the river