

## Ton-up for Turners

Turners Garage, at Bury Common, is celebrating its centenary this year. Allan Turner, grandson of the founder and the third generation running the business, tells Murco about its modest beginnings and arrival at this milestone

With motoring still very much in its infancy – in 1920 there were many more bicycles on the road than cars – garages were largely repair shops. The roads were poor, punctures and breakdowns common and filling stations were virtually non-existent.

Fred Turner, who was born in 1890 at Duncton Mill and came from farming stock, attended the Grammar School at Midhurst before heading off to Brighton

to learn about motor engineering. At Moores, who were Ford agents, he got to know all about the Model T, or Tin Lizzie as it was popularly known.

He then set sail to Canada to seek work but the First World War intervened and he joined the Canadian Army and served in France. At the end of the war, he returned to England, married Ethel Bishop from Brighton, and in 1920 the couple moved to Bury with their newborn son, Donald.

Fred's original plan was to set up his garage at Prattens Farm but there was a problem with the well – there was a dead cow in it! So, instead, he purchased Fogdens, a little further along The Street, establishing his workshop in the barn. As well as repairing cars, cycles and stationary engines, he ran a local taxi service.



**Turners today: the garage, which has a small shop, has occupied the site at Bury Common on the A29 since the 1930s**

Petrol in those days was sold in two-gallon cans which were stored in a pit in the garden and were delivered by horse and cart. Later a tank was installed with a petrol pump painted red – often mistaken for a letter box. Any mail found was taken down the road to the real letter box in The Square.

Fred recalled many adventures from those days, such as epic drives in deep snow to meet customers off the train at Fittleworth station. On another occasion, while ferrying a bride to her wedding at Bury church, his car broke down in The Square. He managed to get some lads to push it into Church Lane and coasted down the hill to the church, where he was able to rectify the problem while the ceremony took place. He was then able to drive the happy couple back up the lane.



**Far left: Fred Turner's original garage, opened in 1920 at Fogdens, in The Street, Bury. The single petrol pump, installed later, was painted red and often mistaken for a letterbox**

**Three generations of Turners. Fred (left), son Don (right) and grandson Allan, aged nine, pictured here some time after the business had moved from the centre of the village to the main A29 at Bury Common**



Above: The garage in the 1950s, when it sold Shell, BP, National Benzole and Power petrol. Right: When winters really were winters.



**Grandson Allan Turner, who has run the business since 1975.** with Fred and Ethel moving into the bungalow. In those days, the garage sold Shell, BP, National Benzole and Power petrol, with a diesel pump added later. Eventually, it was just Shell, which continued until 1994 when a change was made to Murco, and the forecourt was improved with a canopy over the pumps.

In the 1930s he bought some land at Bury Common and built the present garage and his house adjacent to the A29 – a popular route from London to the coast. Don followed in his father’s footsteps and attended Midhurst Grammar School, cycling to Fittleworth station to catch a train, with a long walk from the station at Midhurst to the school. A keen sportsman, he won a national cricket prize for batting while at school and was a useful goalkeeper, playing for Bury and later Arundel FC.

On the outbreak of the Second World War he joined the Royal Army Service Corps and trained as a mechanic, leaving Fred to run the garage. He subsequently served with the Royal Artillery with the Eighth Army in Egypt and Italy, returning after the war to Bury to work in the garage with his father.

He married Judy, from Petworth, and Allan was born in 1949 when they moved into the newly-built bungalow behind the garage. Later, father and son swapped houses,

With the introduction of the MoT in 1960, Turners was appointed as a testing station. A new purpose-built test bay was added in 1976 to comply with the latest regulations.

Fred died in 1968 and Don, sadly, died suddenly in 1975. Since then Allan has run the garage with his mother and wife Brenda. After Shoreham Grammar School he attended Chichester College of Further Education to study engineering and motor engineering to gain qualifications while working in the garage learning the practical side from father and grandfather.

Experience was gained working on diverse things such as concrete mixers, tractors, lorries and ambulances in addition to cars and vans. Keen on amateur motor sport, he competed regularly in rallies and classic car trials. Motor oil, so to speak, is in the blood.

In 2016, Turners embarked on a new venture when it purchased a Land-Rover parts business and became Britpart agents.

Now, a hundred years on since its modest beginnings in a barn in the heart of Bury village, the popular garage had to endure a partial shutdown for several weeks for the first time in its history because of the Coronavirus pandemic. However, it is now business as usual for Turners Garage.



Team Turner