



## From the Alps to the Dales

The story of Bettys doesn't begin in Yorkshire but in Switzerland. In 1885, Anna Maria Bützer gave birth to a son, Fritz. Her husband, Johann, was a miller and

5 master baker and they lived in a mill in Lindenbach near Bern.

Tragedy seemed to surround the life of young Fritz. His mother died when he was still a baby and a few years later a fire at the Bützers' mill left Fritz and his older sister Ida orphaned. While Ida was raised by relatives, they had no room for five year- old Fritz. As was the Swiss custom, he returned to the village of the ancestors where he was fostered to a local farmer who pledged to provide food

10 and shelter and send him to school. In practice, Fritz spent much of his childhood working as an unpaid farm labourer.

As soon as he was old enough, Fritz left his foster home. He trained as an assistant baker and then travelled around Switzerland and France learning to be a confectioner and chocolatier. Then, in 1907 he decided to seek his fortune in England. On his arrival in London he realised he'd lost the address of his destination. All he could recall was that the place he was heading for sounded like 'bratwurst' (German for sausage). A helpful local put him on the train to Bradford. On arriving in the Yorkshire city, he found work at a Swiss-owned confectioners, Bonnet & Sons. Not long after he wrote to his sister Ida back in Switzerland saying, "Maybe I will stay a while...."

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He eventually settled in the spa town of Harrogate by which time he'd changed his name to Frederick Belmont and styled himself as a 'Chocolate Specialist'. It was in Harrogate that Frederick's luck started to change. Looking for lodgings, he fell in love and later married his landlady's daughter, Claire Appleton. In July 1919, with the financial support of Claire's family, the first Bettys opened for business.

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**"Opening day was 17th July, 1919, and now came a time of 'either or', 'sink or swim'."**

## 25 1920s

### Bettys Chocolate Boxes

By the time he arrived in England, Frederick Belmont was already a skilled chocolatier. Our archive is full of adverts and brochures showing beautifully made chocolates in equally beautiful packaging. This illustration of 'Lady Betty' dates from 1924 and became the inspiration for our Lady Betty

30 Peppermint Creams chocolate box.

## Royal & Distinguished Patronage

It was not long before Bettys became well known in Yorkshire for its excellent service, elegant surroundings and delicate continental cakes.

During the 1920s Bettys expanded, opening a purpose-built bakery to supply new cafés in Bradford and Leeds. These were thriving cities that had flourished through industry and Frederick opened his Tea Rooms in prime locations to attract shoppers and businessmen.

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Bettys boasted 'royal and distinguished patronage', tempting customers with lavish window displays, live music from violin virtuosos, chic function rooms and catering services much in demand for wedding receptions and private parties.

- 40 But by 1937 Frederick had set his sights on a new goal. During the 19th century York had become the confectionary capital of Britain, as the home of Terry's, Rowntree's and Craven's. Frederick decided to join them, somewhat brazenly opening premises directly opposite the long-established Terry's café in St Helen's Square.

- 45 **“To Harrogate residents and visitors from far afield “Betty’s” is a household word, standing for all that is dainty, comfortable and fashionable in a café”**

Yorkshire Post, 10th Dec 1926



## 1920s

### Bettys Afternoon Tea

- 50 These adverts from the 1920s show that Afternoon Tea is not simply a modern trend. "Good food, good cooking and courteous personal service, are the features for which Bettys have become famous", says one. When you visit we hope you find that little has changed.

### Another dream accomplished

Bettys Bakery opens, 1922

- 55 **The War Years:**

Visitors to [Bettys York](#) today may be surprised to discover that during the second world war it was famous for something other than tea and cake – its bar.

A few years before war broke out, Frederick had managed to secure a liquor licence, opening a cocktail bar on the ground floor and a further bar in the basement. It was to prove a smart move and

60 during the war years the bar – affectionately referred to as ‘The Dive’ – became popular among servicemen, many of them Canadian bomber boys, stationed at the airbases surrounding York.

In 1942 the café was hit by an incendiary bomb but escaped major damage thanks to the quick actions of an off-duty van driver who was acting as a fire watcher that night. More drama followed a year later, when the army tried to requisition Bettys. They reconsidered after Frederick explained  
65 that Bettys was providing 20,000 meals and beverages per week, making a valuable contribution to the war effort. The army quickly withdrew their request.

Throughout the war the cafés remained as busy as ever, despite the food shortages. Frederick found himself stretching rations to feed as many people as possible and creating confections out of salvaged goods that would have gone to waste. Gone were the cream-filled fancies and rich  
70 chocolates that Bettys had become known for. It now had a reputation for being one of the few cafés that was able to stretch their meat and fish rations far enough to provide meals all day.

**“We maintain that we provide an essential public service in York and we sincerely hope that you will not find it necessary to commandeer the establishment”**

Bettys response to a letter from the army asking to requisition Bettys in York, 1943

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Bettys Wedding Cakes

Frederick was known for his ingenuity, and during the second world war - when rationing made it difficult to bake cakes because of the scarcity of ingredients - he found a way to continue to delight. For wedding cakes this meant a beautifully decorated ... cardboard box. Today's cakes, we'd like to  
80 reassure you, are cake to the core.

### 1950s-1970s

#### **An era of experimentation**

In 1952 Frederick died and Victor Wild, his nephew, became Managing Director at just 29 years old. Over the next decade Victor stabilised the business and helped it adapt to the more  
85 experimental mood and changing tastes of the era.

In the 1950s an espresso bar opened on Street Lane in Leeds and in 1960 a continental deli opened next door to [Bettys Harrogate](#). The espresso bar was initially a success, but the staff struggled to cope with the antics of the mods and rockers who frequented it, and it closed. Meanwhile in York, ‘Bettys Bar’ became an Italian restaurant with waiters and chefs specially recruited from Italy.

90 Then, in 1962, an overheard conversation changed the business forever. ....(*bought up some other tea-rooms*).... Bettys was now a business of the town and country, not the city.



The Café Imperial, Harrogate, in 1924. The Taylors Café Imperial occupied the site of present-day Bettys in Harrogate.

## 95 **The Six Bettys**

When he opened his little café in 1919, did Frederick imagine that one day there would be six Bettys dotted throughout his beloved adopted county? Today we have Tea Rooms in Ilkley (pictured here in 1960s) and Northallerton, and two each in Harrogate and York. How many have you visited?



## 100 **Bettys 1960s logo**

In 1965 Bettys loses its apostrophe. The exact reason why is long forgotten

**1980s-today**

## **Bettys Today**

If our founder, Frederick Belmont, walked into Bettys today, what would he think? .....

105 Of course, though Frederick was Swiss, he made his home in Yorkshire. He was a blend of the Dales and the Alps, just as we are. All six of our cafés are in Yorkshire so he could try a taste of the county without leaving its borders – a [Yorkshire Curd Tart](#) in Northallerton, a [Fat Rascal](#) at Stonegate, a cup of [Tea Room Blend](#) in Harrogate.

110 Always a man ahead of his time, he'd be delighted to discover that the mail order service he established in the 1920s is now sending treats to all four corners of the world.

There's no better time to visit Bettys than in our centenary year. Throughout 2019 we'll be introducing delightful new menus in our Tea Rooms, our shops will be brimful of limited edition through a series of special events.



