



© Russell and Sons Ltd

Shop or trade sign for Russell and Sons c. 1960–1970

## Russell's and Fielder's

**Fielder's was a local business with a fascinating history. It began life as a photography studio, part of a business called J. Russell and Sons. The Wimbledon branch opened in 1884, on the corner of Worple Road.**

James Russell turned his hobby of photography into a job when his furniture-making business nearly went bankrupt. The new photography business was a success. His studios specialised in portraits of high society and were even awarded a Royal Warrant. However, the Russells lost their warrant when they published a photo of the future King George V and his then fiancée before their engagement was announced officially.

James Russell's daughter, Ruth, married one George Fielder. Their sons went on to buy a bookshop and stationers on Wimbledon Hill Road in 1928. The shop sold books, stationery and art supplies until it closed finally in 2022.

## Railway Workers

**Working on the railways could be dangerous. Railway workers were among the first trades to organise support for families left behind when someone died on the job. There was little help from employers.**

A tragic accident took place at Wimbledon Station on a foggy day in February 1881. Signaller William Farmer had finished his shift when a carriage became separated from a train. William left his signal box to help the train staff and was killed by the Exeter Express when it came through at high speed. William left behind a widow and six children. Colleagues raised money to help them.

The fundraising inspired a monthly staff magazine whose profits went to the Widows and Orphans Fund. In 1886 railway workers set up an orphanage in Clapham. They raised about 75% of the costs to run the home through weekly contributions and collections from the public.



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Locomotive and railway workers at Wimbledon station  
c. 1882–1890