



Looman Bawdon's shop. Now will you lock me up?' The sergeant duly obliged, and Alfred was tried and sentenced to seven years in prison. He had two more spells in prison, and died in the Newton Abbot workhouse in 1905.

Looman Bawdon, meanwhile, was doing very well. He enlarged his business, taking on more and more staff and expanding his shop. He retired in 1906 and lived at 4 Abbotsbury Road until his death in 1924. His wife died in 1932, and both were buried at All Saints Church, Highweek.

NEWTON ABBOT STORIES



The Draper and the Thief

**NOTICING
NEWTON ABBOT**

AN EXPLORATION OF THE TOWN'S BUILDINGS, PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Leaflet written by Katy and Michael Bennie from research by Tess Walker

The Changing fortunes of Looman Bawdon and Alfred Niblett

Looman Bawdon was born in Bovey Tracey in 1850 and trained as a draper. In 1877 he set up his own business at 28 Courtenay Street in Newton Abbot, and lived above the shop. He married Emma Bearne in 1878 and they had three daughters. He seemed to be doing well, but by 1882 he had problems; in that year his debts amounted to £3,400, but his assets were only £1,250, so he lost his business. However, he recovered and by 1884 he was back in business at the same address, still living above the shop, and was hiring staff.

The following year, Alfred Niblett came into his life. Alfred was born in 1830 and grew up in Gloucester, where he began his life of crime. At the age of 20 he was caught stealing a saucepan, five towels and a tablecloth, and was imprisoned for three months with hard labour. He spent over 17 years of the next 30 in prison for theft. He seemed to steal anything he could find – walnuts, a brass spoon, rags from a rag-and-bone man, three hammers and a chisel.



In January 1885 he had just come out of prison, where he had spent seven years for stealing a shirt in Torquay. He walked into Newton Abbot police station and asked to be locked up, saying he had no job, no friends and no home, but the sergeant on duty sent him away. An hour later he came back with a bale of calico and said, 'I've just stolen this from