

single day.

Gerry O'Gorman, menswear salesman in Todds, now an administrator in the BT store, 32 years of service in total: "For us it was a stressful time. It was manic. Yet it was such a good type of manic. I enjoyed being so busy."

Dermot O'Hehir, formerly menswear manager in Todds, now in dispatch for Brown Thomas, 43 years of service in total: "Oh, the sale was marvellous! People went absolutely crazy for a bargain. Business was fantastic during the sale, astronomical even."

Verette Gabot, manager of Accent Boutique in Todds, now manager of the accessories department, more than 30 years of service: "It was tiring but all worth it. There was no such thing as carrying over stock. Everything went on sale - and I mean everything! It was a good idea because it made preparation for the Todds sale a lot easier."

Val Holmes, 38 years of service in display department in Todds and now BT: "Sales were crazy times but we had so much fun."

Michael O'Connor: "During the fur

sales, women went mental. I remember at one point, when the doors opened they ran up the stairs, to the fur department. There were three women in particular who were persistent to get the best deal. The three frantically pushed and ran until one was in first place. The other two didn't want this and jointly shoved her down the stairs. I actually heard that the injured woman tried to sue Todds.

Verette Gabot: "The sale bins were a huge part of it. I remember during one sale a woman had just come back from America and had nowhere to put her suitcase. She decided to leave it under a sale bin for the day, thinking it would be safe and sound."

"Around lunch time I noticed this case and got a bit worried. So, with my worry, I called the guards. For precaution they rang the bomb squad. They unfortunately obliterated the suitcase. When she came back that evening we had to break the news to her that she no longer had a suitcase."

Dermot O'Hehir: "We had this morning deal called the gam Special. This was only on the first day of the sale.



At your service: Brown Thomas staff members Gerry O'Gorman, Dooradoyle; Dermot O'Hehir, Caherdavin and Michael O'Connor, O'Callaghan Strand Picture: Adrian Butler

Big, expensive items would go on sale at half nothing, but there would only be a few of them. A cooker which was £300 would be down to £50 but there would only be three in stock.

"I was door opener for many years and the fight you would have just so those doors were closed until gam was overwhelming. Customers knew what

they wanted and weren't afraid of a little tiff to get it."

Val Holmes: "A few days before, we would have to prepare. This involved hanging signs all over the store and doing up the sale window. Before the 1990s we started the first of January for the winter sale. The staff called this the 'wait for the big one' because it

was mental. Then during the 1990s the Bank Holiday came in and we began sales on January 2. This just made the queues longer!"

Gerry O'Gorman: "Often it would be so hot on the floor that our general manager, Sean Hanrahan, would come down with cans of 7-up just so we wouldn't faint."

Val Holmes: "The advertisements for the Limerick Leader were a big stress. We had to proof-read all the sale prices and often they would change, so as soon as we thought we had the thing finished products would be marked down even more! I mean, we couldn't let a wrong price go on print. Often, I wouldn't see people from one end of the year to the next but they would always be the first running when those doors open."

"One family had a game plan for the sale - the mother would tell each child which department to go to and what to get first. Because they were young they could jump through all the people and get there first."

Dermot O'Hehir: "As obvious as it is, first in got the best choice in size, colour and so on. In menswear people

looked for Pringle knitwear, Magee suits and Van Heusen shirts. In kitchen department they searched for Le Creuset cookware, Denby china, Mason and Anysley china. The big draws in there at the times of the sales were carpets, furniture and bedding. They had the best bargains."

Verette Gabot: "Back in the day we had no sticker printers so the entire shop had to mark down each price with a big red pen. List after list, you had to double check everything."

Michael O'Connor: "People would queue for days. For one sale, a few had read in the Leader that our washing machines were going to be discounted, so they waited and waited. A man had been the first in line. When nine o'clock came the staff opened the doors. People flooded in, with the man leading, of course. A couple of women behind him were not pleased to see him dashing down to the basement level first. They caught their umbrellas and hit him right at the ankle. It was unbelievable to watch. He was injured - and all over a docked price on a washing machine. People loved a bargain - and still do."

How much? Thrifty shoppers flocked to Todds down the decades



The hairstyles give it away - it was the Seventies in Limerick and these bargain hunters were captured by the Leader checking out the January sales of 1974



Leader photographer Donal MacMonagle took these lovely shots of the Todds summer sale, 1959. The tills were busy that day!



BARGAIN! THE TODDS SUMMER SALE OF 1972



Lambswool Shetland and Botany Knitwear - V neck and crew neck Pullovers by Byford. Prices £4.25 to £4.75. Great cut. NOW ONLY £2.25

Men's Sports Jackets - S.B., Button 3, Marvellous Variety Patterns and Colours. Side vents. All Sizes NOW £8.75

Fancy Wool and Nylon Socks - Great Value. Were 45p NOW 25p

TAILORING OFFER - 10% discount on ALL Men's Suits to measure during sale

Men's Norvie brown calf laced shoes with apron front and eyelet tie. Were £4.99 NOW £3.50

Ladies Norvic - Beige Softee Calf laced or casual style were £5.25 NOW £3.50

Dollyrockies Maxi Cotton Dresses in a variety of Colours: Sizes 10-16. Were £12.50 NOW £3.25

Dresses for the Fuller Figure - Great value and election of Styles and Shades. Sizes 42-50. Were £12.00 and £13.50, NOW £3.65 and £2.50

Stainless Steel Bread Bins, were £6.25 NOW £3.95

Electric irons, were £2.50, NOW £1.50



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ARCHIVE SPECIAL

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'Oh, the sale was marvellous! People went absolutely crazy for a bargain'

Todds staff were in the thick of the action at sale time.

Hannah Wiseman recounts their stories



1985: It's a burst for bargains as the doors open and sales fever strikes!

The Todds sale was an event: it had customers queuing around the corner for the best bargain. To speak this week with Brown Thomas staff members who also served under the Todds name during the days captured in the photographs on these pages was to understand that the people of Limerick have always loved a discount.

Todds knew how to get the people in, said Dermot O'Hehir, a long-time employee who is still at the O'Connell Street department store. "First touch, first get was the concept the customers went by," he recalled. "There would be war over who touched the cooker first, or whatever was on sale."

As customers debated over who had claimed what, Gerry O'Gorman, a menswear salesperson, was busy refilling sale stock on the floor. "The bins are a big thing I remember," he said this week. "When they would empty I would have to walk back to the stock room and re-fill the thing. Making my way to the floor I would have to hold the box over my head so I wouldn't disturb customers. They were so quick, though, that they would jump over me and reach in to grab anything. By the time I found the sale bin I had no stock left and would have to march my down to the stockroom all over again."

Remembering those days of running, pushing and queuing, the staff agreed they were great times.

Michael O'Connor, menswear salesman at Todds and BT, 44 years of service: "The sale? Well that was an event in Todds. It wasn't just about



Picture 1: The advertising in the Leader had done its job and a huge crowd was waiting outside Todds for the December sales of 1985 as staff prepared to open up at 9am on the dot. **Picture 2:** The doors open and straight away



And they're off in the Todds January Sale Handicap of 1980! Showing an impressive turn of foot as the clock strikes nine, the lady on the left leads into the first bend ... but the fiercely determined gent in the overcoat is picking up pace, with his eyes on the prize, and it's anyone's race at this early stage ...

Sales of the century

■ The sign over the doors says Brown Thomas now but for decades the Todds name was legendary in Limerick - especially at sale time. In a new five-part series, we relive those days through the Leader archive and memories of staff members. **Hannah Wiseman** reports

