

# Strategies for surviving in a hostile climate:

Major retailers and the decline of the British high street, 1970 – present



In contrast to the rapid growth and increasing prosperity of the British high street during the first sixty years of the twentieth century, the period since the 1970s has been increasingly challenging for established multiple and department store retailers. Environmental threats from new retail formats, plus geographical shifts to edge-of town, out-of-town, and finally digital retailing, have successively eroded the footfall of the British high street. Meanwhile corporate raiders have been eager to buy-up ailing high street chains – sometimes with more of an eye to asset-stripping their property portfolios than making them profitable going concerns.

The Centre for Economic Institutions and Business History (CEIBH), Henley Business School is offering a fully-funded PhD studentship (fees and maintenance) for a project to examine how several leading retailers have adapted to the new recessionary landscape of British high street retailing, including both examples of success and cases that ultimately ended in business failure. The project would partly draw on the University's retail archives, including the corporate archives of Woolworths and W.H. Smith. The successful applicant would start their PhD in October 2022. For further information, please get in touch with Professor Peter Scott at [p.m.scott@reading.ac.uk](mailto:p.m.scott@reading.ac.uk)

CEIBH is also able to offer fully-funded studentships in other areas of business and economic history that match the research interests of its members, see: <https://www.henley.ac.uk/research/research-centres/the-centre-for-international-business-history>