

## YESTERYEAR SHOPPING IN BROMPTON

Walking around Brompton these days one becomes very aware of how dependent the village is on the motor car and the near-by towns for shopping and the general requisites of modern life. Things were very different when I was a child and the village had about twenty shops, which between them catered for most needs. Let me take you for a walk around the Brompton of the 1940's and we will visit each shop in turn.

We start off near the parish church of St. Thomas, on the corner of Northallerton Road and Church View and visit Miss Lee's drapery shop (now the site of the only shop left in the village and at the time of writing, 1998, a general store come newsagent.) Miss Lee sells ladies' and children's wear and as you enter you will most likely be bombarded with the strains of a Beethoven symphony played on the radio at full blast. Miss Lee is only the height of 'two penn'orth of copper' but she certainly likes her music 'big'. It is here that my mother buys her cotton pinafores and my white ankle socks. There is also a Penny Lending Library.

We walk a little further on - just twenty yards or so - and call in at Milburn's fish and chip shop for a penn'orth of chips with scraps and salt and vinegar. A veritable feast in these days of food rationing. Mrs Milburn serves at the counter while Mr. Milburn stokes the coal fired range and deftly fries and tosses the fish and chips from the sizzling pan to the serving area. We children can hardly reach the top of counter, it is so high.

Round the back of the church, near to the entrance to Wide Yard is Harry Smith's shop. The gleaming brass scales and weights are a fascinating sight, but there is always a funny smell in here. Can it be the fact that Harry sells, amongst a host of other things, paraffin and 'loose' vinegar. Paraffin, at that time, was a necessary commodity - used for cooking stoves and in some cases, for lighting. It wasn't everyone who had taken on board the 'new fangled' electricity and even though most of the houses in the area were wired up, many householders economised by still using paraffin lamps. Electric cookers were still a luxury item, only for the well-off, and many of the cottagers used the paraffin stove or coal-fired side ovens for cooking. Harry also sells sweets, such as liquorice boot-laces and kali (a form of sherbert). Through the back of the shop we catch a glimpse of an old treadle sewing machine. Harry is also a tailor and will do all manner of alterations for a very modest sum. Outside the shop, fixed to the walls, are huge metal signs advertising Robin Starch, Cherry Blossom shoe polish, Rinso and Brasso metal cleaner.

On past the factory gates and the house of Nurse Kitching, the village mid-wife, to Roxborough's shop. If we hadn't already bought our sweets at Harry Smith's we could have got them here. Then past the Manor House and we arrive at Boston's grocery store. Bostons have other shops in Northallerton and daily, a supply of newly-baked bread, teacakes and fancy cakes is brought from their bakery there. It is fascinating to watch the assistants make bags for sugar from sheets of blue paper. Similar bags are fashioned for flour from white paper. The butter and lard arrives in huge blocks and is then weighed into pounds and half-pounds as required. There is no self-service here and one has to patiently wait to be served while the smell of the newly-baked bread aggravates the taste buds. (Editors note: This was the last location of the Post Office before its move to Tim & Fiona Wild's shop and Post Office (formerly Miss Lee's drapery) on the corner of Church View and Northallerton Road).

Just a few yards further on we arrive at another sweet shop, which also sells paraffin and 'loose vinegar' (What did they do with all that acetic acid? Well, don't forget, houses didn't have fridges and freezers in those days and a lot of things were pickled to preserve them). This shop is owned by the Walker family who also run two buses and a coal merchant's business. Old Mrs. Walker looks after the shop, which incidentally is very gloomy inside

with a stone-flagged floor. Her sons, Sid and Rowley, manage and drive the buses and look after the coal business.

The Post Office is next door in premises which are now part of the Crown Inn. This business is run by the Cansfield family and Eric, the son, also has a taxi business which runs mainly between the village and Northallerton station. It is surprising how many people have 'more than one iron in the fire' perhaps due to the fact that one enterprise alone isn't sufficient to make a decent living.

The Crown Inn stands on one corner of Shop End and the Three Horse Shoes is on the opposite corner. The latter has a little sliding window just inside the front door where you can take a jug and buy a pint or two of beer to take home without actually going into the pub. This is useful for the women to use as it still isn't acceptable for women to go into public houses. However, my mother does come here to pay my father's subscription to the Oddfellows club, which is a sort of early day sick club.

Going up Cockpit Hill is the Co-operative Wholesale Stores, the CWS as it was then known. This is a proper grocery shop with a bacon slicer, huge blocks of butter, lard and margarine, sacks of sugar and bins of flour standing around on the floor. Here, as at Boston's, the assistants make up the sugar and flour bags and weigh out the commodities before tying up the bags with string which comes from a ball suspended from the ceiling. And, magic as magic, the money is put into a cylindrical container with the bill, all made out by hand, a handle is pulled and then it disappears, 'whoosh' to heavens knows where, before it returns with a 'plop' into a wire basket on the counter with the change all inside. Of course, to a child this is mystical. When the change is handed over the customer also receives a small ticket on which is written your 'divi' number. As a customer of the Co-op one is entitled to share in the profits and this is how your amount is determined. As you can imagine this is a very busy shop and there are several men and women working here, all enveloped in huge white aprons. In addition, there is a delivery boy who is kept busy taking out people's orders on the shop bike which has a large wicker work basket on the front. It can't have been too easy biking up Cockpit Hill or Bullamoor with that fully laden.

On the top of Cockpit Hill, just before the Village Hall, is Mrs. Dennis's sweet shop. It is very handy for me to call in here on my way to school from Water End. One can get quite a lot of sweets for 1d and it is difficult to choose between lambs' tails or gob-stoppers. Perhaps I should have a h'aporth of each.

Going down the hill towards Water End we call in at Eric's Naylor's bakery. Eric is a huge, fat man and I understand his mother started off the business in Northallerton with a shop on the corner of Romanby Road and the High Street while Eric runs the Brompton shop. He is up very early every morning getting the coal-fired ovens hot enough to bake bread and teacakes. He then goes on to make cakes and pastries (his puff-pastry is out of this world) and he also serves in the shop. What a hard life! A large, crusty loaf of bread is four pence-halfpenny and sometimes, we children gather up empty lemonade bottles, take them back to the shop and claim the 1d refund on them. When we have enough saved up we go to Eric's and buy a loaf of lovely, warm bread and then scrump it, tearing it to pieces with our hands and sharing it among us. Well, it was in the days of rationing!

Opposite Eric's bakery is Alan Windress's newsagents shop. Alan is a cripple, possibly as a result of polio. I usually go with my mother on Saturday evenings to pay for our weekly newspapers. I think it costs about a shilling a week for the Daily Express each day and the Darlington and Stockton Times on a Saturday. If I have been very good all week, my mother may buy me a comic, perhaps the Dandy or Beano, or even the Radio Fun or Film Fun. Sometimes I may get a copy of Enid Blyton's Sunny Stories.

The left-hand side of Water End has only one shop - Mrs Kipling's general store. Mrs Kipling's shop has a very strident bell, but even so, you may have to wait for ages before she comes out to serve you as she may be in her large back garden feeding the hens. Like Harry Smith's, this shop also boasts a beautiful set of brass scales. My mother gets her fresh yeast here for baking bread, which she does twice a week, usually Tuesdays and Fridays. It is one of my jobs to look out for the DLC 'yeast man' coming so that we can get the yeast as fresh as possible. If it gets stale and dry it does not rise the bread very well. I like to eat a little of the yeast and it is supposed to be good for you.

Crossing the middle bridge to the other side of Water End, we come to Walker's shop. This is a funny little building with a corrugated iron roof. Walkers is also a general store selling a bit of everything.

Walking south again we come to Polly Christon's fish and chip shop. Polly is very much a 'character' who always wears a sacking apron and a man's flat cap. She also has a fruit and vegetable round and keeps a horse and cart for this purpose - again we have an example of more than one business being carried on by the same person. Polly also keeps hens, ducks and geese and those swimming on the beck are most likely hers. The ganders can be quite fierce in the Spring when they have young goslings and I remember being chased by them more than once. I always try to make a detour to avoid going near them. Polly's establishment overlooks Water End green, where in addition to the geese and ducks on the beck, we see chickens in coops, cattle grazing and sometimes, horses being exercised by Mr. Lancaster or one of his grooms. Mr. Lancaster lives near to Polly at Gordon House and as well as being a farmer he deals in horses, buying them in, breaking them and then selling them on to the army. My father works for Mr. Lancaster and for a time, so did my brother, who tells me how he used to accompany the horses when they were moved around the country by train. Sometimes when a fresh batch had been bought in, they would have to be walked from Northallerton station to the farm in Fullicar Lane, a distance of four miles, not a lot of fun with unbroken horses.

Before we move on I must tell you, that to get her poultry from her back garden to the green, it is necessary for Polly to walk them through the hall-way of her house. You can imagine what a mess they make!

Next to Polly's is Dowson's bread shop. The teacakes here are lovely and have shiny, brown tops. Dowson's also have a shop and bakery in Northallerton and Mr. Dowson is known as 'Teacake Tommy'

Further on is Hoare's grocers and greengrocers. Old Mrs Hoare runs the shop, while Danny and Edgar, two of her sons, do the greengrocers round.

Mrs Hoare has a large family and lived to be over ninety. Alan and Eric Hoare are Edgar sons and they have carried on the greengrocery businesses to this day.

We have already visited Alan Windress' shop on Cockpit Hill, so back to Shop End to call in at 'Sandy' Husthwaites tobacconists shop. Sandy sells beautiful, brown pipes, made from wood which looks like burnished chestnuts. He also has loose tobacco ready rubbed and huge twists of it which is sold by the ounce. In jars he has snuff, which I think is finely ground tobacco which is inhaled through the nostrils. This is weighed out with great precision and put into little paper twists. Sandy also sells the better sweets and not the 'kelter', as my mother calls it, which the other shops in the village sell. (Kelter is a local term for rubbish)

Walking on past the big houses in which the mill-owners live, and then past the Wesleyan chapel, we come to 'Rosy' Slater's butchers shop. 'Rosy' is a man, not a woman as you might think, and gets his name because of his lovely, red face. He fattens cattle on land behind his shop and then slaughters them when they are ready. Down the Pinfold and

near the village 'lock-up' is Spence's drapery shop. Mamma and Pappa Spence, as they are known, are quite old and rather forbidding. Most of their goods are kept wrapped up in brown paper parcels and 'Mamma' looks after the children's and ladies wear while 'Pappa' sees to the gents wear. My mother sometimes brings me here on Saturday evenings for a new pair of white socks to wear to Sunday School the next day or for a piece of material to make me a dress. We then go next door into the barbers shop to get my hair cut. It is really a man's hairdressers and I much prefer to go to Northallerton to a proper ladies shop. I don't like having to sit on the wooden bench here along with the men and boys.

On the corner of The Pinfold is another butcher's shop - Mapplebeck's. Mr. Mapplebeck has a large bicycle with a huge wicker basket on the front and he delivers his orders around the village with this.

We are now back to where we started and you will see that we can get practically all we want in the village, although most people still go to Northallerton on market days by the local bus., probably as much for a social outing as anything. In addition to the shops in the village, we also get numerous 'travellers', for example, the onion seller, the scissor grinder, the lemonade man, the brush seller and the donkey stone man. 'What is donkey stone'? you may ask. Well, it is a sort of sand stone, which is wetted then rubbed on stone door steps and windowsills to give them a decorative edge. We also have the travelling representatives call from stores in Northallerton. Russells, the grocers, send out a man once a fortnight collecting grocery orders which are then delivered later in the week and Claphams, the smart clothing and furnishing store send out their traveller about every three months. He has large suitcases filled with samples of clothing, linen, and nearer to Christmas, items like kid gloves and scarves which will make suitable presents. Here again, you place your order with the man and it is later delivered to your door which is very useful as you see, no-one has a car except for Mr. Wilford who owns one of the linen mills and Mr. Lancaster, the horse dealer and farmer I have mentioned previously. They must be very rich!

I trust you have enjoyed your walk around Brompton with me.

Doreen Newcombe 1998