

# THE BUTCHERY

Number eleven Market Place, Barton-upon-Humber in Lincolnshire, U.K. was the Corner Café where I survived as a young lad and I spent many happy hours with other kids in the Summer evenings playing in the Butchery which was a stones throw away.

Fred who was a member of our gang lived with his Mum who was the landlord of the Mucky Duck Pub Our gang were invited to tea in the Mucky Duck kitchen, but only when it was Fred's birthday.

Should Fred's Mum encounter any of us lads on the street, her nose would tilt up she would refer to us with distain as, "The Butchery Cretins".

We would step smartly to one side on encountering Fred's Mum, thus avoiding being trampled to death by the apparition of a Sumo wrestler wearing drag perambulating on billiard table legs that had been known to shatter pavement slabs when she stamped her feet in rage.

With a red gob like a Victorian post box supporting two wheel arches of mascara, and a double row of pearls round her neck the weight of which were giving her a premature dowager's hump she was indeed a force to be reckoned with.

Pavement vibrations via our feet warned us to vanish when she was out of sight but just round the corner.

If Fred wanted advice he would home in on his Dad's hiccups only to find his Dad horizontal on the couch pickled as a newt.

According to Fred's Mum, her Fred had no one else to play with, and was stuck with us "morons"

Our gang was composed of myself Tom, plus John, Alan, Mick, and Fred.

Our favourite haunt was a culvert just off Barton Market Place known as, "The Butchery".

The Butchery was about the size of a tennis court but was surfaced with bitumen was surrounded by houses with a ten yards entrance off the Market Place but at the other end there were two smaller exits

Down one side of it were all the back yards to the shops on George Street and down the other were a couple of small houses between two old barns.

This part of Barton was the oldest part and dated back into history when local folk kept a huge bonfire at the ready on top of Beacon Hill to light and warn the surrounding villagers to arms or hide should Danes or Vikings come raiding up the River Humber.

In the middle of the Butchery an old house sagged that had been fitted with an electric light on one corner of it to light up the butchery at night.

The light was fitted by the local council long ago to reduce incidents of skullduggery and foil the efforts of footpads and vagabonds.

In the bad old days and with no light anyone travelling through the Butchery at night could get waylaid and robbed.

Some were more fortunate than others and only got robbed.

In the 1930's the house was used only in the daytime by some Bookie as a betting shop, in the evenings it was locked.

Baysgarth Park being locked up at night led to courting couples seeking other meeting places to share their views on life or play scrabble in the dark using Brail

Since the afore mentioned light was mounted on the front of the house in the Butchery, the back wall of the old house had no light so the dark side of the house soon became the favourite meeting place for the modern Romeo and Juliet types.

There was only one snag to this scenario.

Anyone in the market place waiting for a bus would see the lights come on at lighting up time, and

waiting for a bus some of these bored travellers would gaze around at the illuminated shop windows to pass the time.

Should one's gaze wander down the Butchery one could see the front of the little house quiet plainly.

But the light did reflect onto the old barn walls and anyone carousing behind the house in the shadows suddenly became obvious as like the players in an old Japanese shadow show.

Normally no one would notice and courting couples who would meet there and tarry awhile.

Emerging from the portals of the Mucky Duck pub in the Market Place, a bloke with a flat cap hiccupped, burped, flatulated loudly, had a quick guilty look round, shook one leg vigorously, then confident he wasn't transporting mushroom fodder or perchance be baking a chapatti on the bus seat on the way home he sauntered confidently over to the bus stop island in the middle of the Market Place.

Having got there safely he then perused the illuminated windows of the now closed shops.

Bored with waiting, he turned up the collar of his topcoat then stuck his hands into it's pockets and his gaze wandered lazily past the Butchery and on to Barklays Bank then zipped back to the Butchery and did another take where they latched onto movement in the shadows behind the old house.

The silhouette of Romeo and Juliet's antics in the dark were so obvious to the bloke waiting for the bus that he became so engrossed, and having now got both eyes focused properly, was enthralled by what he was seeing.

The noise of the heavy Diesel motor in the distance gradually got louder as the double decker bus, lit up like a mobile advertisement for Christmas, careened round the bend at the George Hotel corner and slowed down, then stopped at the island in the middle of the Market Place.

The Driver sat hunched forward with elbows now resting on the steering wheel waiting for the familiar "ding ding" of the bell that informed him that the passenger had got safely on and he could now continue his journey.

Since the driver was an old hand, and having observed only one person on the bus stop who was not on crutches or in a wheel chair, he deduced it was time the ding dinger ding dinged.

Having waited another minute, he turned his head but could see no Conductor.

The Conductor who had been tapping his foot on the back step had called out to the still figure on the bus stop, "Oy,---is yo cummin' or wot?"

Curiosity then got the better of the Conductor and stepping off the bus he went to see if the bloke was all right.

Enchanted by the shadows the hair on the back of the bloke's bald pate suddenly stood up straight and tipped his flat cap over his eyes as the bus Conductor tapped him on the shoulder querying, "Yu awright mate" then followed the man's gaze with his own and it wasn't long before the pupils of his bloodshot eyes were also flitting from side to side like the blade of an electric hedge trimmer.

Then the Driver got fed up of waiting, and being a strict time keeper as far as his job was concerned, got out of the Driver's seat and advancing like an angry gorilla on the two now stood staring into the murky depths of the Butchery.

### ***" Wot the bleed'n' 'ell's the 'old up then?"snarled the irate driver***

"Gawd, ah don't believe it, sum bugg'r's gitt'n' tattooed!" remarked the Conductor in an awed voice, his eyes glued on the distant shadowy moving figures

"Givvower! yu can't bleed'n' tattoo no bleeder in the bleed'n' dark?" snarled the Driver

" 'ee can't see ti tattoo in 't chuffin' dark---can 'ee?" parroted a bus passenger who was the mirror image of a ferret wearing a cloth cap, and had just stepped off the bus followed by the rest of the passengers who by now were juggling for positions on the back step of the bus like lemmings on a cliff top waiting to jump into the sea but landing on the little bus stop island instead now to get the better view.

All was quiet in the Market Place except for the heavy panting of the Diesel engine of the bus as it stood there empty and waiting.

It sounded like the sound track backing up the shadow show in the Butchery.

It soon became obvious to the crowd what was happening and as the penny dropped the shadow show suddenly came to an abrupt end as the crowd cheered like a goal had been scored by Glasgow Rangers against Celtic, and the two shadows suddenly stopped dead still, jumped apart, then fled in panic at high speed down one alley and on into the darkness as if Satan was after them.

The staccato rat a tatting of high heels on the flag stones gradually faded and the Butchery became once more silent and brooding with the yellow light now having a halo of mist round it as the fog began to silently drift in from the North Sea like curtains being closed when the Opera is over.

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