

Reminiscences on a Business

# Burnett's Butchers

St.Dennis and Indian Queens



by  
**John Pearn**

Information from the 1940's  
over 50 years

## Mr. P. Burnett's Butcher's Business

### St. Dennis

His shop was opposite Trelavour Square and the family house was in Wellington Road on the corner with the yard and garage next to the shop. Above the shop was a flat. The shop had a main room where the meat was sold to customers. A back room had equipment for making sausages, hogs pudding and housed a large walk in Fridge.

My father worked for Mr. Burnett from the age of 16 years. His first two years on leaving school was in the printing business with Mr. Edyvean of St. Columb. He left printing as the ink did not agree with him. I believe he suffered with headaches! At the time Mr. Arthur Greenlade also worked for Mr. Burnett. Father learnt all aspects of the trade from slaughtering, cuts of meat, selling from the shop and rounds in surrounding villages.

### Slaughtering.

In the early days cattle were stunned and bled. There followed the use of a humane killer - a more civilised method of killing! Today butchers receive most meat from abattoirs.

The slaughter house of Mr. Burnett was at the bottom of Trelavour Road, standing in a field and reached by a short lane between the houses on the left side before ascending the hill. Cattle bought at the market such as St. Columb could be grazed in the field before slaughter. Some cattle were taken to Tregoss where Mr. Burnett had a farm. Father sometimes drove cattle from the market to Tregoss via country roads before the days of cattle lorries.

### Equipment.

The main shop had hanging racks on which large pieces of beef, lamb and pork would hang. The butchers block - a heavy wooden table stood in the centre of the room. Here meat could be chopped, sawed, boned and cut to the customers requirements. There would be a variety of tools such as choppers, sharp knives, hacksaws and one steel for sharpening the knives!

A weighing machine would stand on the shelf behind the block. A collection of weights would be used to weigh the meat. Meat was rationed during the war and was limited in weight when purchased. The thick table would be scrubbed with a wire brush at the close of the day. Sawdust was spread on the cement floor to prevent butchers and customers from slipping.

### The Door and a story

I remember the door had two sections. The top part could be kept open while the bottom section kept out any wandering animals fancying a snack. Margaret, as a girl, in St. Dennis school often took her mother's order to the shop on the way to school. This was often given

to my father. Her duty was to collect at dinner time and take home. Margaret in her hurry to get home often forgot the meat. Father, knowing the time they were dismissed for dinner, would be looking out of the top half of the door. "Margaret, you have forgotten your mum's order. I have it here for you!"

### The Butcher's Rounds

Originally it was by horse and wagon, later came the Austin van, then quite a variety of vans. Holiday time I sometimes accompanied my father on his round. St. Dennis village, Egypt, Trevice, Retew, Treviscoe, Little Treviscoe, Nanpean, Gothers, Enniscaven, Carne, Gaverigan, Stamp, Foxhole were all visited in turn as well as Treadern St. Columb.

The highlight for me would be fish and chips at Mr. Golley's take away, Little Treviscoe. There was no place to sit in the shop but the Co-op man and father had a special place in <sup>the</sup> kitchen of the house. Fresh fish and chips with peas served by her daughters. As much as you could eat!

The vans had wooden shelves to hold the meat, sausages, hogs pudding, liver and tripe. A butchers block just inside the back door for the usual method of chopping, sawing, boning and cutting. A hanging machine for weighing. There would be no bowl of water to wash your hands - a mutton cloth to wipe your hands to be taken home and washed. The money collected placed in the leather pouch. Before the days of health and safety, but there didn't appear to be upset tummies!

Mr. Burnett had an Airedale dog known as Tim. There was little traffic on the roads in those days and Tim would meet my father's van at steep Carne where his round ended and then follow the van back to Treavour Square.

### The Business expanded to Indian Queens

Mr. P. Burnett had a Grocer at Indian Queens and he too was a butcher. After the death of Mr. R. Burnett and his sons running the business it was taken over by Mr. Ralph Burnett, son of Mr. Percy Burnett. Ralph was now in charge of the St. Dennis shop and he asked my father, Mr. Fred Pearn, to manage the Indian Queens expansion.

Experience in all aspects of the trade led to him taking on the role. He had help from a youngster. The shop was a room in the family house of Mr. Reg Burnett, while the walk in fridge was in the outside garage. However, by this time meat was obtained mainly from wholesalers. Slaughtering played no part in the life of a family butcher.

I can recall Mr. A. Common, Mr. S. Bullen, Mr. P. Bennet working with the combined businesses. Eventually my father had to give up the trade due to arthritis but he had enjoyed over 40 years working with the St. Dennis butchers. He served many customers from behind the van in all winds and weathers. In latter years he had to contend with traffic following the A 30 through Indian Queens, Fraddon, Blue Anchor.

Competition was keen in St. Dennis there being Mr. Yelland, Mr. Kellow and at Indian Queens Mr. Williams of S. Columb Road. These butchers saw in latter years the growth of super markets, also the change into decimal money. Is the industry any safer today with pre-packaging, Health and Safety Rules? Would the child of a butcher be allowed to travel with his dad during the school holidays?

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Memories of Mr. P. Burnett's  
Butchers Business by John Pearn,  
son of Mr. F. Pearn - a butcher for  
over 40 years.

J. J. Pearn

May 2020.

One of the first vans owned by  
Mr. P. Burnett's Butchers Business  
and driven by Mr. F. Pearn. The van  
standing in Indian Queens, St. Francis  
Rd. Fred in typical butcher's coat  
The van an Austin and registered  
in Cornwall i.e. CV.





Mr. F. Pearn outside the two part door at the Indian Queens shop where he was manager for Mr. Ralph Barnett, son of Mr. Percy Barnett. Their business was centered at Trelavour Square, St. Dennis.

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This shop was in the family house of Mr. Reginald Burnett, a brother to Mr. P. Barnett.

The door is typical of a butcher's shop - a bottom half and a top half. A similar door was in the St. Dennis shop.

Here Fred wears a white butcher's apron over a butcher's coat. Village butchers rarely wore a straw boater as seen by those serving in town

shops. The typical headgear when on a country round would be a cloth cap. Today's working man would have a safety helmet!

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