

Were You Being Served? Shopping in Grindleford by Alan Jacques

It is hard to believe now, but back in the 1950's, you could do virtually all your shopping in Grindleford, as the village had a choice of shops to cater for it's needs. Besides, there were no supermarkets!

The Stores, which we called the "Top Shop" was where the vets now is and was run by Mrs Plant. It was a general store, but never seemed to be very well stocked. Then, next door but one, was A. F. Hancock & Sons, where the former Country Choice is now, more about this later.

The current Derwent Gallery was Derwent Stores, another general store run by Mr & Mrs Knox. It had a little wooden shed at the side from which they sold fancy goods and souvenirs. It also had outdoor vending machines for cigarettes and chewing gum!

The "Bottom Shop" was at number 3, Main Road. This was a small shop with a café; teas were served in the garden in covered shelters with bench seating and tables, popular with groups of walkers & cyclists. Proprietors here were Mr & Mrs Brackenbury.

The Post Office was run by Arthur Morton, who also sold newspapers, sweets, tobacco & stationery. At number One Red Lion Row was T. W. Mycock's Family Butchers and next door to the Sir William Hotel was Bennett's Café, which sold wonderful ice cream!

If you needed your horse shoeing, there was the Blacksmith's, which is now the Dentists Surgery. Tom Hudson was the Smith and he would also undertake all sorts of jobs such as new irons on your cartwheel or forging a new blade for your plough.

There was also a Cordwdainers (shoemakers) in a hut between the Post Office and the Bottom Shop. Run by Billy Mosley, this was a veritable time-capsule, full of ancient tools and had rich smells of glue and leather. A cast iron pot bellied stove provided all year round heat. In the window display was a stuffed crocodile, which would often frighten the smaller timid children!

My parents, Tom & Elsie Jacques, came to Grindleford in 1933 and ran A. F. Hancock's shop until 1965. I was born there in 1951 and was brought up with my two older brothers in the house behind the counter. The shop was an Aladdin's cave, for it sold all my favourite sweets, pop, crisps & biscuits, and a host of groceries, hardware & comestibles, many of which have long disappeared from modern day shops.

Biscuits were sold loose from large tin boxes which slotted into a glass fronted cabinet, so you could fill your own bag – no pre-packaged wrapping to mess with! Tea, coffee, sugar, butter, lard, spices & flour were also sold loose by weight. Bacon was sliced to order on the fantastic bacon-slicing machine that only Dad was allowed to use. No vacu-packs or freezers in those days!

Fresh bread & confectionery were delivered daily from a bakery at Tideswell and we also had Gunstone's bread for those modern folk wanting it ready sliced. Hartley's Potted Meat was delivered twice a week and regular customers used to wait on the

shop-front for the Potted Meat Van Man, many brought their own bowls to be filled from the large basins that it came in. Other regular deliveries came from the warehouse at Bamford and the wholesale markets in Sheffield. Dad boned out bacon on the premises and boiled gammon joints for sale as sliced ham.

Dad went “travelling” twice a week, which meant that he went around the village visiting the homes of customers to take orders for delivery. Deliveries were made on Wednesday & Saturday mornings when Hancock’s van came from Bamford. We also loaded up Dad’s Jowett car to deliver some of the smaller orders around Padley, Sir William Hill & Leam, earning a bit of pocket money.

We also sold paraffin, hand-pumped from a large tank in the garage; customers would bring their own cans to be filled. Also sold loose was corn for chicken-feed, pig meal and dog food, all kept in large metal containers in the cellar. These all had to be weighed and bagged by hand, and Mother would often call for one of us to,
“Go down the cellar and fetch me a bag of chicken feed for Mr Morton.”

Now, you don’t get that sort of service today at Tesco’s!

Caption for photograph;

“Mrs Elsie Jacques & Margaret Wilson (nee Fletcher) outside A. F. Hancock’s, Grindleford 1949.”