



Life at Duttons from January 1971 and 1979

Duttons Provisions was located on Bridge Street, opposite the Horseshoe Pub. At this point on the street the pavement is wide, so to look at it across the road from Horseshoes gives the appearance of being part of a parade of local facilities. On the corner of Bridge Street and Cheney Lane was the butchers (now called Patrick Stranges), to the left of that was Midland Bank (now part of Patrick Stranges), then there's a house which at that time was occupied by Miss Farmer, who was the infant school teacher at the Main School in Bampton. To the left of this was Duttons and then, what was then called the Cotswold Grill (which had rooms available to stay in). "The Cotswold Grill" then changed to a pub which eventually became "The Romany" and more recently a restaurant called the "Fleur de Leys", which has once more rooms available.

Duttons was a leasehold property, so although the business was owned by Reg, Ray and Ann Saunders the building itself was leased from Rex and Harold Jenkinson, who were brothers from Black Bourton. Every year an inspector would come out to survey the property, to ensure that the lease agreement was being followed.

In addition to the shop, there was a flat on the first floor where Reg, Ray, Ann and their daughter Anita lived. The early 1970's was in the days before central heating, so the only room that had any heat was the sitting room, which had a 2-bar electric fire that had an arrangement of plastic logs on top with a red bulb and a fan, that went round to give the impression of a log fire. The windows were stone framed, so on many a winter morning you couldn't see out due to a thick layer of ice on the inside of the window. On these mornings Ann would turn the fire on in the sitting room, so that Anita could get dressed in the relative warmth.

Duttons sold a variety of goods including green grocery, sweets (also weighed from jars), ice cream, cut flowers, cakes, wines, spirits, beers, delicatessen, grocery and chemist. The shop was set out in departments. The shop footprint was in an L shape. As you went through the main door and down the steps, on the right-hand side was the green grocery which was run by Ray Saunders (he also held the license to sell alcohol). In front of the steps was where the sweets and cakes were set out and to the left of the stairs was the delicatessen department, which was the responsibility of Reg (Pop)

Saunders, who was the father of Ray. Next to the delicatessen was the grocery department run by Rays wife Ann.

Duttons Ghost

We were advised as soon as we took it over, that Duttons had a ghost.

At Duttons there was plenty of storage rooms at the back of the shop and on the first floor next to the flat. There was a door from one of the bedrooms that connected to the first-floor storage rooms. Going through one storage room to the next, took you to some old wooden stairs that led down to the ground floor storage area at the back of the shop. As these stairs were a bit steep and rickety, the door from the bedroom was locked and access to the shop from the flat, was made via the external yard.

One of the storage rooms on the first floor just next to the stairs was separated by an old wooden door with a latch. The room itself was small with uneven floors and a bit run down. As there wasn't a lot of open space in which to put stock, it was generally left empty. As we hadn't been given a lot of information about the ghost, the family joke was that it must be in this separate store room where the ghost frequented.

As part of the delicatessen, Pop Saunders used to cook his own hams and gammons in the ground floor storage room next to the wooden stairs that went up to the first-floor storage area. As Pop was in the shop all day, it was usual that he would go down to the shop after dinner in the evening, to do any necessary jobs ready for the next day, this would include the cooking of the hams.

On one of these evenings, it was dark and he was down stairs by himself waiting for the hams to finish. As he was waiting, he heard footsteps walking in the rooms above him, getting a little nervous he looked towards the wooden stairs and to his horror he saw an apparition was starting to come down the stairs wearing what looked like a long coat. Not sure what to do, he continued to watch as the apparition continued to descend down the stairs and into the room with him.

Whilst he was trying to decide if he should stay or go, the apparition was now very nearly at the bottom of the stairs, with only their head obscured by the floor above. Deciding that he'd probably left it a little too late to leave, he made the decision to stay put and hopefully solve the mystery of who was Duttons ghost.

The apparition descended the last step to reveal their head and with that Pop was able to determine that Duttons ghost was in fact his daughter in law Ann, who'd decided to come down and see how he was getting on and offer her help. As Ann was in her dressing gown, she'd decided to get to the shop from the flat through the store rooms, rather than go across the yard in the dark.

I'm please to report that this was the one and only time that we experienced any ghostly presence of the Duttons ghost whilst we were there.

Christmas Eve Tradition

As a way to thank our regular customers for their support during the year and to wish them a Happy Christmas, every Christmas Eve various Christmas tipples and nibbles were set up in the office behind the shop, so that customers could be invited back for a Christmas drink as means of a thank you.

The first year Ray noticed that his dad Pop, being the perfect host, was joining all of the customers that he invited back to the office with a drink and as this went on all day, by the close of business Pop was acting rather merry.

Once the shop was closed, even though it was Christmas Eve, all of the usual end of day jobs such as counting the tills still had to be done, so Ray made a start. It was only when he went back into the shop, he realized that Pop too was in the middle of his usual end of day jobs and was horrified to see that Pop was at that very moment, in the middle of cleaning the meat slicing machine.

Now this was in the days before strict health and safety rules and safety guards existed and this particular machine, would take no prisoners and was just as likely to slice a finger as a ham joint. Ray

quickly had to persuade Pop that now probably wasn't the best time for him to clean the meat slicer and it was probably best if he came away and let Ray do it. (Ray's fears about the meat slicer weren't unfounded, as by the time we left Duttons the slicer had managed to detach the top of one of Pop's fingers from his hand. Not I hasten to add though, on a Christmas Eve.)

People who worked in Duttons whilst we were there

Reg Saunders
Ray Saunders
Ann Saunders
Dave Daniels (delivery driver)
Bubbles Allam wife of Pete Allam
Sue Taylor (wife of Dave Taylor)
Betty Schmidt (nee Kew)
Carol Smith (nee Bourne)
Amy Wooloff
Ivy Wright (nee Timms) (office)
Heather Hunt
Sheila Daniels (wife of Bill Daniels)
Dinah Taylor
Margaret Harrington
Stephanie Delnevo (Saturday)
Angela Head (Saturday)
Sharon Taylor (Saturday)
Anita Saunders (Saturday)

Pubs in Bampton

The Elephant & Castle, Bridge Street,
The Horseshoe, Bridge Street,
The Cotswold Grill, Bridge Street (landlord Dave Pasmore)
The George & Dragon, Cheapside
The Jubilee, Market Square
The Talbot, Bridge Street,
The New Inn, High Street (now The Morris Clown)
The Eagle, Church View

Other Businesses in Bampton

Emmies, Bridge Street (Emmie Papworth) Newspapers and Sweets
Butchers, Bridge Street (Vic assisted by Nobby – taken over by Ron and Betty Hickman assisted by Vince Govier)
Midland Bank, Bridge Street,
Arthurs Antiques Bridge Street (Arthur Hill) next to the Horseshoe Pub
Barclays Bank, Market Square (went on to be The Poachers Rest)
Central Garage, Market Square
International, High Street, supermarket (now the Co-op)
Fleur de Leys, corner of High Street and Bushey Row, Hair dressers (now a pottery shop)

Mrs. Ham, High Street, (now Strawberry Cottage) moved next to International where it sold toys and shoes (now Polished Beauty)

Launderette, Market Square, went on to be Temples Hardware and now Bampton coffee shop

Bovingtons Fish Shop, High Street

Hughes, Cheapside, wool shop

Cheltenham & Gloucester Building Society, Market Square, next to the Jubilee pub.

Constables, Market Square, Bakery

Early Closing in Bampton

All shops closed on a Wednesday afternoon and Sundays.