

# BARTON IN THE LATE 1940's

Most afternoons we would see the cows go past walking down the street (West Acridge). Cow-keepers (as they used to be called) would today be called small dairy farmers. There used to be one or two of these in the town. These people used to have a farm building or two in the centre of the town and keep about ten or fifteen cows, which they would milk in a morning and at about 9 am take the cows out to fields on the outskirts of the town. One such field was at the top of our street. At about 4.30 pm we would see the cow-keeper go up to the field and let the cows out, these would walk down the street going back to the farm buildings two or three abreast in a longish line, taking up most of the width of the road. They would walk round a parked car if they came across one, but they would not give way to you if you were on your bike coming the other way !! If this happened, you just stopped at the kerbside and let the cows walk past you; they were very placid. The cow-keeper would be at the back of them geeing-up the ones that tended to dawdle. The front cows knew exactly where to go and which streets of the town centre to walk through with walking the route so regularly, plus there was the encouragement of food at the farm buildings when they got there to be milked. You knew if the cows had been taken out or brought back and what streets they had been down as there were cowpats on the road wherever they had been. Some cow-keeper names that spring to mind are Leaning, Rushbrook, Hoodless, and Mrs Greenwood.

After the morning milking and having taken the cows out to graze in the fields, the cow-keepers would then take their milk out round the streets of Barton selling it to householders. I remember Mr Rushbrook bringing our milk. He used to take the milk out in an old large 1930's black car, which had had the rear seat removed. He had two large milk churns full of milk stood in the back of the car where the seat would have been. Mr Rushbrook would go to a house door where the householder would give him a large jug, which he would then take to the churns in his car and fill with a ladle then return it to the householder. This was typical of most of the cow-keepers, all working individually in the mid-1940's. In later years Mr Leaning started Barton's first milk bottling plant in Fleetgate. This was in a purpose built single storey building at the right hand side of what is now the entrance to Eagle House Nursing Home. The building is still there to this day (see photo).

The cow-keepers and one or two outlying farmers then used to take their milk to the building to be bottled and distributed. The one-pint bottles were glass of course (no plastic containers those days) and these had large necks about 1¾ inches (45 mm) across. Each bottle was sealed with a cardboard disk (no silver or gold tops at that time). There was a shorter version of this type of milk bottle, which held one-third of a pint but still had the 1¾-inch wide neck; these were distributed to schools in the area where all children received a bottle of free milk each day. The bottles distributed



to schools, had the same size cardboard disk sealing them but in this case it had a perforated circle in the centre that could be pressed in to put a straw through without having to take the whole disk out. Boys often used to play with these cardboard milk bottle tops in the same way as cigarette cards by leaning one up against a wall and trying to knock it down by flicking others at it. The milk bottling and rounds were eventually taken over by Prescott's who ran them for a while at Fleetgate before expanding and having a large purpose-built factory erected at Barrow -upon-Humber. Prescott's ran the business for many years, expanding and delivering milk to most of North Lincolnshire, before finally selling the business to Express Dairies.

Doctors and the Surgery. If I remember rightly, in the mid to late 1940's we had four doctors in the town; Dr Thomas Kirk, Dr Ethel Kirk, Dr George Gilmour and Dr Percy Birtwhistle. Dr Thomas Kirk and his wife Dr Ethel used to live in a large house at the corner of Marsh Lane and Burgate, with Dr Gilmour living in the house next door just across the top end of Marsh Lane. Dr Birtwhistle used to live in a large house on Priestgate. The lower rooms of Dr Kirk's house were used as the main surgery with the entrance being through a side door in Marsh Lane (near to where the person is



standing in the photo). Dr Gilmour also practiced here. Dr Birtwhistle who was older than the other doctors, had his own surgery in a room at his house in Priestgate. Upon entering Dr Kirk's surgery (no appointment necessary !!) the person would sit down on a long bench in an internal passage, and wait their turn to be called ("next patient"), whereupon they would go into one of the two front rooms which were used as consulting rooms, these had windows which faced onto Burgate. The doctor would then attend to the patient and have a short chat afterwards (no time limit for seeing

each patient in those days). Most of the doctors had morning and evening surgeries and during the daytime between the two, the doctors would be out on their rounds visiting patients who were too ill or could not get down to the surgery. The doctor would visit and attend to the patient and then have a chat with him (or her) afterwards, this sometimes would last up to half an hour; they had time for you. Those were the days. The off-duty daytime doctor would visit patients' during the night on-call. How times have changed. Long passed from this earth, Dr Percy in later years could sometimes be seen looking at or writing patient's notes as he drove his car down the street, I have seen this on several occasions myself. This would be frowned upon today but there wasn't much traffic then.

Dr Thomas Kirk was our family doctor. A tall slim upright fine figure of a man with dark greying hair, a more pleasant man you could not wish to meet, Dr Kirk died not long ago at the wonderful age of 104 years. Once, when I had been off school ill for a couple of weeks or so, Dr Kirk called in during his daily rounds to see how I was getting along, and he said it was about time that I could start to go outside and get acclimatised to the weather. He then said I could go with him on his rounds that

day. That was the kind of person he was. So I climbed into the passenger side of his Armstrong Siddley car and off we went; I waited in the car as he went in to see each patient. Much later he dropped me off back at home when he had finished his round.

In the winter when we had snow, there were the usual slides on footpaths and in playgrounds, and these got very highly polished with frequent use. Just imagine how dangerous that would be considered today with the no-win no-fee culture. There was the building of snowmen of course, and the cutting of blocks of packed snow and building small igloos with them. Snowballing and sledging were popular. We did not have any decent slopes down our street so to go sledging you needed another person to pull or push the thing. I had a small sledge of my own, but also had a larger one on loan for a year or two.

We would regularly see a horse and rullie going down Fleetgate taking loads of cycles from Hopper's cycle works packing shop on Brigg Road to the railway station to go for export. I think there were two rullies that used to do this. Mr Plaskitt used to drive one of these.

An ice-cream man would come up our street, this was usually Mr Havercroft and he would be on a three-wheeled cycle which was like a normal cycle at the back with one wheel but it would have a box with two wheels at the front (the old stop-me-and-buy-one type). In the box would be his ice-cream container surrounded by chemical white ice to keep it cool. He would have a hand-bell, which he would ring to announce his presence, and people would take a basin out to have filled with ice-cream for tea, or buy a sandwich or cornet. Mr Havercroft also had an ice-cream parlour on High Street where you could buy ice-cream to take out or you could sit at benches and tables to eat it. Mrs Havercroft was often serving in there. Havercroft's ice-cream was renowned for being the best in the area, it had a home-made taste to it.

Every autumn we would spend a number of evenings after school gathering rose-hips from wild rose briars, these were most prolific in the hedgerows along Gravel Pit Lane. After gathering, the rose-hips would be bagged and taken to school the next day where they would be put with other bags similarly gathered. After all the collecting had finished, someone would call at the school and take all the Rose-hips away to a factory where they were made into Rose-Hip Syrup and distributed to chemists in the area. Rose-Hip Syrup was a source of vitamins, and could be used like a pick-me-up.

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