

IN AND AROUND BARTON-ON-HUMBER

1936

The names in this story are fiction but the places and events are true.

Anyone interested in Town and Village life of the 1930's in Lincolnshire might like to peruse this slice of nostalgia. Barton upon Humber is a town and can be found in the Shire of Lincolnshire, England. Robin Hood and his merry men who favoured Lincoln green in their apparel are said to have frequented this Shire from time to time, and I think some of their offspring are still around today. There are only three exits from Barton on solid ground. If one stood in the market place of Barton with ones back to the river Humber there would be three choices on leaving town. The reason I can be so definite about these exits is, as I grew up I began to realize the need and indeed the importance of finding the quickest escape route possible. I also made it my business to find a place where I could sometimes get lost when it was necessary to do so for my personal safety. P.C. Plod of the Lincolnshire Constabulary was my main antagonist Jubb's Pit, Caister pit, Horkstow pit were some of my retreats.

Caister pit was my favorite but it was the farthest away from Barton by almost a mile. In Caister pit I had a piece of canvas hidden under some bushes where I could shelter if it rained. The canvas was folded over so all I had to do was crawl into it and because it was green canvas it blended with the bush it was under. So I not only was out of harms way but I was warm and dry. The beauty of Caister pit in spring time was something to behold. Butter cups and daisies among the lush green grass and wild sweet nettles with a back drop of blue sky with white fleecy clouds scudding across made a up a picture even the artist Constable would have been tempted to capture on canvas. The other good thing the pit had going for it was its shape If one can imagine a huge bomb crater about three hundred yards across and about thirty feet deep and in the middle of this depression was a small hill.

Once in the pit it became so quiet and peaceful the only thing to be heard on a still day was the humming of the telegraph poles that supported wires that carried messages to and from the town of Barton. Surrounding the pit were ploughed fields where corn and sugar beet were grown. The narrow road that led from Barton to Caister ran close by the pit. Growing in this pit were lots of pretty bushes, but the main thing about the pit was that if someone came in to search for you all you had to do was keep going round and round the small hill. Sometimes if I lost sight of someone looking for me and I kept going I would suddenly find myself looking at the searcher's back.

To leave Barton market place to the left takes one to Barrow, New Holland Goxhill, Immingham, the fish docks, and Grimsby. To the right takes one to Scunthorpe , Doncaster, Sheffield, Manchester, and so on to Liverpool But straight ahead would take one to Brigg, Barnetby, Gainborough, Lincoln, and on to London Since the muddy river Humber flows past on one side, the only way to overcome the watery

obstacle in a dry condition is to catch a train to New Holland from Barton. Having got on at Barton the first stop would be Barrow Haven, a small station where if there were no passengers standing on the platform the train would probably not bother to stop. There was one occasion when this occurred an irate traveler came dashing from the Gents toilet frantically doing up buttons with one hand and waving a newspaper toward the engine with the other while screaming abuse at the guard.

The irate train chaser had on a bowler hat. The combination of his jogging and the stiff head on breeze he was encountering removed it and it booled along the platform until captured by a red painted bucket of sand with Fire in white painted on it. It stood near the wall of the stationmaster's office Red in the face, our hero retrieved his bowler hat and as if to get back at the guard he kicked over the bucket of sand. 'Ere mester, yu can't du that, yer is hinterferin' wi' railway property an' yer cud git nicked' cried the porter who had seen the incident. But matey was so mad he could not care less, 'bollocks' he snarled as he jammed on his bowler hat. 'Huh, charmed a'm sure' said the porter wandering off to toast his lunchtime sandwich by the public waiting room fire. The guard who was leaning out of the now fast moving guards van window with a huge sadistic grin on his face waved ta ta to the now equally fast disappearing would be traveler who by now had secured his ferret hatch Having run out of platform the bloke almost in tears of rage was obliged to stop because of the four foot drop to the lines and watch as the train gathered speed and finally became a dot where the two lines came together in the distance.

Next to Robinsons was Welbournes sweetshop, and in the corner was Corner Café Constitutional club, the Tutills grocer shop. There was an alley then Pop Will's place. Pop Will's was a fireman. One day there was a fire in one of the farmyards just outside of Barton. A haystack was burning furiously and the farmer had pedaled into Barton on his bike to get to Pop Wills house.

'Me bloody stacks afire' he yelled, pummeling the door. Pop Wills opened the door and tried to talk past half a greasy bacon sandwich he was trying to maneuver between the only two teeth he had-one up and one down. Having got the tasty morsel in position his brain gave him the all clear and he chomped down on it. The half of sandwich was punched like a tram ticket but stayed impaled on the top tooth. In desperation Pop got a sooty finger and stuck it in his mouth and rescued the punctured half of sandwich then shouted to some one in the back of the house, 'Bugger it, ah'l ev a cup o' soup' 'What about me stack?' wailed the farmer. Pop put one hand up like a halt sign and sucking his top tooth he reached with the other hand and grabbed the telephone and began to ring round all the other firemen. 'ello Jim, yea it's me, ger on yer bike, we got us a fire up Barra' road, aye yu cin go look, an' if it looks like it's goin' ter go oot chuck some wood on it till we git theer'

They all congregated at the fire station and got everything ready while Pop Wills got on his bike and pedaled furiously down to Dam lane where the horse that pulled the fire engine was kept in a field. But the horse spotted Pop coming and ran to the opposite side of the field. He had played this game before and knew that the hand offering a sugar lump also meant hard work. So it became a battle of wits. First Pop

tried walking toward the horse but it would walk away. Then he tried a quick dash and grab but the horse was too quick and in sprinting away it broke wind and Pop got the lot . 'Gawd ' he gasped, pulling up sharpish like, 'wot the bloody 'ell yu bin eatin?' And a hundred yards away the horse had stopped and was looking at Pop and snickered nodding it's head. Someone came into town from Barrow and said, 'I see you've had a fire then ' Someone else said, 'oh you passed the farm then, is the fire out?' 'Aye, near as dammit'

Then the conversation drifted. 'Somebody aught to go tell Pop not tu bother then' 'Nae bugger 'im, that 'oss'l run some'o that fat off'n 'im. 'E'll move that bloody 'oss a bit nearer tu fire station ap'n. 'Ah reckon it's time we 'ad a proper fire engine' 'we got a proper fire engine' 'wot, an 'oss an' a cart wi' a three foot ladder an a bloody owd ice cream bell. Plus bit o' leaky hose, the bloody 'osses hose pipe is longer an' it all comes oot one 'ole Another voice proposed, 'why tek the cart then, it would be quicker tu just tek the 'oss' .