

# **BARTON'S STORE**

**BY SAM ROSS**

## **Our Daily Bread – A Fright At The Movies – Special Delivery**

Barton's Store was owned by the brothers Fred and Frank Barton. A large establishment, it housed a bakery, butchery, drapery, grocery, news agency and milk-bar. Tobacco, souvenirs and gifts could be purchased at Barton's. If they didn't have it, they could get it for you.

A farm was situated about 4 miles along the Buxton Rd., as was an abattoir. The brothers also had sawmilling interests, and were involved in the town in many other ways

Many people were employed at Barton's Store. Mrs. Vera Barton ran the drapery with Sylvia Beckter and her sister Myrtle Gordon. The butchers were the Georges' - Moylan and Smith and Bill Walker. Mick Ahern was the baker, and the aroma of his freshly baked bread would waft along the street in the morning, making one's stomach growl! Mick had various assistants, sidekicks and apprentices over many, many years to help get the dough rolled, the bread baked and on the shelf for sale on time, six days a week.

The bakery today is the Corner Cupboard, a cafe, and the small court yard alongside is where Lew and Merle Potter's fruit shop once stood. An alley ran a few meters between it and the drapery to the butcher shop at the rear.

Inside the drapery there was a small office and at varying times over the course of a busy day, we may find Clarrie Smith, Percy Barton, Doris Bowman or Geoff Cobb in attendance, Mrs. Vera Barton could be on hand as well.

Mr. Frank Barton and his wife Nellie, (known as Mrs. Frank) ran the news agency and milk-bar side of the business in the era I remember, and they employed many of the locals at different times.

Mr. Fred Barton was more involved in the buying, and perhaps selling, of cattle, sheep and pigs. He was a genuine character who enjoyed a beer and the company of friends, and I think he was probably semi-retired by the early 1950s.

Alongside Barton's with a narrow laneway separating stood the picture theatre. The theatre was owned by Jim and Marge Wallace. Mrs. Wallace would sell tickets at a small booth, and I recall waiting in a queue, many times, to gain admittance. Picture shows were held on Saturday and Wednesday nights each week and were always well patronised. I remember a Saturday afternoon matinee or two that were attended by noisy children, (myself being one) but

these may have been held at school holiday times. Mr. Jim Wallace was the projectionist and chucker out, and he looked about 8 feet high when he strode down the aisle to put troublesome customers straight. (Don't bother to ask me how I know).

There was always a packet of Jaffas to be accidentally tipped out onto the floor, and always a latecomer who would come in after interval and hand Mrs. Wallace some coins, then duck past her baleful glare, to find some distant seat. A generator provided electric power.

Many of the films I got to see were westerns like "Shane" and "High Noon" as this was their era, but I saw others too that were most likely too old for me, "The War of the Worlds" being one, "On the Waterfront" and "The Mad Magician", still come to mind.

Next door to the theatre was Fred and Vera Barton's home, "The Oaks", and beyond that Bantick's Garage, formerly Barton's Garage until 1950 with a couple of hand operated bowsers out in front, it took good care of the motoring fraternity's troubles.

The rear of Barton's Store was an interesting area, a ramp ran up to a small verandah at the rear of the grocery section, which always seemed to be piled high with boxes, containers, and the odd tea chest or two. Vehicles could be driven around a circular driveway to avoid reversing into each other and a small hut, or bungalow stood in the centre. Access was easily made to the bakery, the butcher and Potters fruit and vegetable shop in between them, as well as that ramp up to the grocery.

A customer only had to give the grocer or his clerk (or more likely whoever manned the counter at a given moment) the shopping list and everything was gathered up and packed into boxes or paper lags and placed on the counter, cash was the poor mans' credit card, no plastic in those days. Or the total could be put on the slate for payment at months' end. The Barton Brothers were renowned for credit, a leftover from pioneering days. However, if the customer wished; the goods could be delivered to your door, no charge, service meant everything, and Barton's had a small fleet of delivery vehicles ready to roll.