

The Master Butcher And The Lady from Torquay

Compiled by Andy Owen



Alan Doherty is a very dear friend of mine. We have known each other for years.

Alan is a master butcher, having worked in the trade pretty much all his life. He has two large pitches in Birmingham Meat Market, in the Bull Ring.

When I was living in Solihull, I regularly used to go into Birmingham to see Alan - and to get our meat - which I used to bag, tag and freeze to keep us going for the month.

Alan always had a real-life story or stories to tell. Most of them were hysterically funny. He's a real character.

So, when I launched this website, I insisted he gave me a couple of his stories to share with you.

Here's the first. He relates the story himself.

'Mrs Williams and The Capon' *is the other tale. You'll find it on the list.*

Lovely stuff, from a lovely man.

Enjoy both of the articles...

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One Wednesday morning, I was stood in the shop when a smart middle-aged lady came up to the counter.

She told me, in a very well-spoken voice, that she had come all the way from Torquay to buy a big whole gammon for her daughter's 21st birthday party.

She said: "I've been to every butcher in the market to find one, but no one has one.

Have you got one?

I replied: "Yes, I have one at my other shop. I can have it brought here in a couple of minutes, if you like?"

She clearly was delighted to hear this and said: "Wonderful. Yes, please bring it over".

So, I asked one of my assistants to go to the other shop and bring back a whole gammon.

(This would weigh about 18kgs - it's a huge piece of meat).

Within a few minutes, the assistant returned with the gammon. I then proceeded to weigh it and price it up. I told her it would be £65.00.

Her demeanour changed and she went very quiet.

I looked at her and she was obviously a bit unhappy. Clearly, it was too expensive for her.

So, I then said, "How about I do you a special deal, as you have come so far to get this? I'll do it at cost for you. £50. How does that sound?"

She fidgeted around, looked at the ceiling, then at her watch, but said nothing.

This was getting a bit painful.

So, I said to her "how about this for a solution?"

"I'll cut it in half for you, which will be cheaper". She reluctantly nodded, but it was still very hard work.

I then brought the half gammon to the scales and said - "OK, I'll let you have this for £30. Is that better?"

Zero response. She'd lost the ability to talk. She avoided eye contact, too.

How about £25 then? I'm doing you a hell of a favour with that".

The woman was just standing there. She didn't say a word.

I tried one last time. "I am getting a clear message from your silence, that this is still more than you want to pay, so let me cut it in half again for you".

I did this and said "that's £18, but I'll let you have it for a tenner. And, trust me love, that's the deal of the century".

She ignored me again and started to walk along the counter front, looking at the meat on display. On the corner of the counter in a bowl, there were some gammon slippers (about the size of a small melon).

She picked one up and asked, "how much are these?"

I said "They're a fiver".

She looked at me and said, "You know, I think this will do".

So I wrapped the gammon slipper up and she gave me a fiver.

Before I conclude this story, it's important you have in your mind, the layout of the shop. There are two eight-foot counters divided by a two-foot pillar.

I started to serve another customer and while I was doing that, one of my regular suppliers came in with a delivery.

He was always a jovial character and said "Hello Alan, having a good day?" I immediately replied, " I'm bloody not. I've just had a right nightmare with an arsehole of a woman from Torquay, trying to buy a gammon for her daughter's 21st birthday party".

No sooner had I uttered the words, when the woman reappeared from behind the pillar. She screamed " I've never been so insulted in my life".

She threw the gammon at me and demanded her fiver back.

My customers and the recently-arrived supplier, just watched open-mouthed.

I picked the gammon up off the floor, opened the till and gave her the fiver.

She looked at me, snorted - and stormed off.

