

# “Nip to the shop for me will you ...”

There was not an alternative to “shop local” in days gone by. You certainly didn’t need to go out of the village to keep the family clothed and fed ... It really was the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker ... Additionally, 1914 records detail a bank - Barclay and Company - two solicitors, a carriage proprietor, a South-West Rail agent and an estate agent.

Before fridges, food was kept fresh in a cool larder or safe - a galvanised gauze box that allowed air to circulate around the contents. However, the time food could be kept fresh was limited, particularly in the summer. But with shops just a short walk away to buy everything you could need, daily shopping was not a problem.

There were bakers, butchers, grocers, greengrocers, a fruit shop, a chemist of sorts. You could buy pasties and paraffin, ironmongery, haberdashery, slabs of Sunlight soap. seven pound lumps of rock salt, fish hooks, a new hat, of course fish ... and chips. There was a coal merchant, a barber, a sweet shop, a music teacher, a tailor, dressmakers, a drapers, cobblers and shoes made to fit ... even shoes that would fit either the left or the right foot! And after all that shopping there was always a choice of pubs ... and records that show that once there was even a brewery!

## Sherratts

The baker’s shop, *GS Sherratt*, was established in 1919 in what is now *The Mote*.

George Sherratt arrived in Port Isaac during the First World War and married Susie Strout and they opened a bakery. In the 1930s the shop moved to the premises at the corner of Fore Street and Temple Bar (formerly owned by Mr Morman), and their bake-house was in what is now the *Bakehouse Flats*. Bread and cakes were baked daily, except on Sundays, and they sliced their bread on their own modern machinery. In addition they also sold confectionery plus some groceries and provisions.

In the mid 1900s, Susie’s splitters (bread rolls) with jam and cream that she made for the *Roscarrock Hill Chapel* and Sunday School anniversaries were legendary. The shop also sold roast potatoes in a bread split - the Cornish equivalent of a chip butty!

After Sherratts, the shop, that was known as *Stanley House*, was purchased by Jack Rowe and in the late 1970s John and Paddy Cunningham took over. Since then many other businesses have operated from the site including *Frisby & Alcock* (milliners), *Orange & Jade Tea Rooms* and *Joan the Wad Gift Shop*. In the early 1990s it was a deli. Keeping up the tradition, the shop is now *Nicki B’s Pasty Emporium*.

One of the oldest buildings in the village, rumour has it that John Wesley preached from the upper windows of *Victoria House* and then escaped through the skylight.

Factually, we know that *Victoria House* was at one time a shop run by Reuben and Louise Brown. However, most of the memories are from the 1930s when it was run by their eldest son, Wilfred James Brown and his wife Grace.

“The shop sold everything from ice-cream to radios and Wilfred was a master at mending anything and everything. In 1937, he bought a Bush wireless specifically to hear the commentary on a fight between Joe Louis and Tommy Farr for the Heavyweight Championship of the World. Apparently Wilfred’s sitting room was full of men who did not have a wireless.”

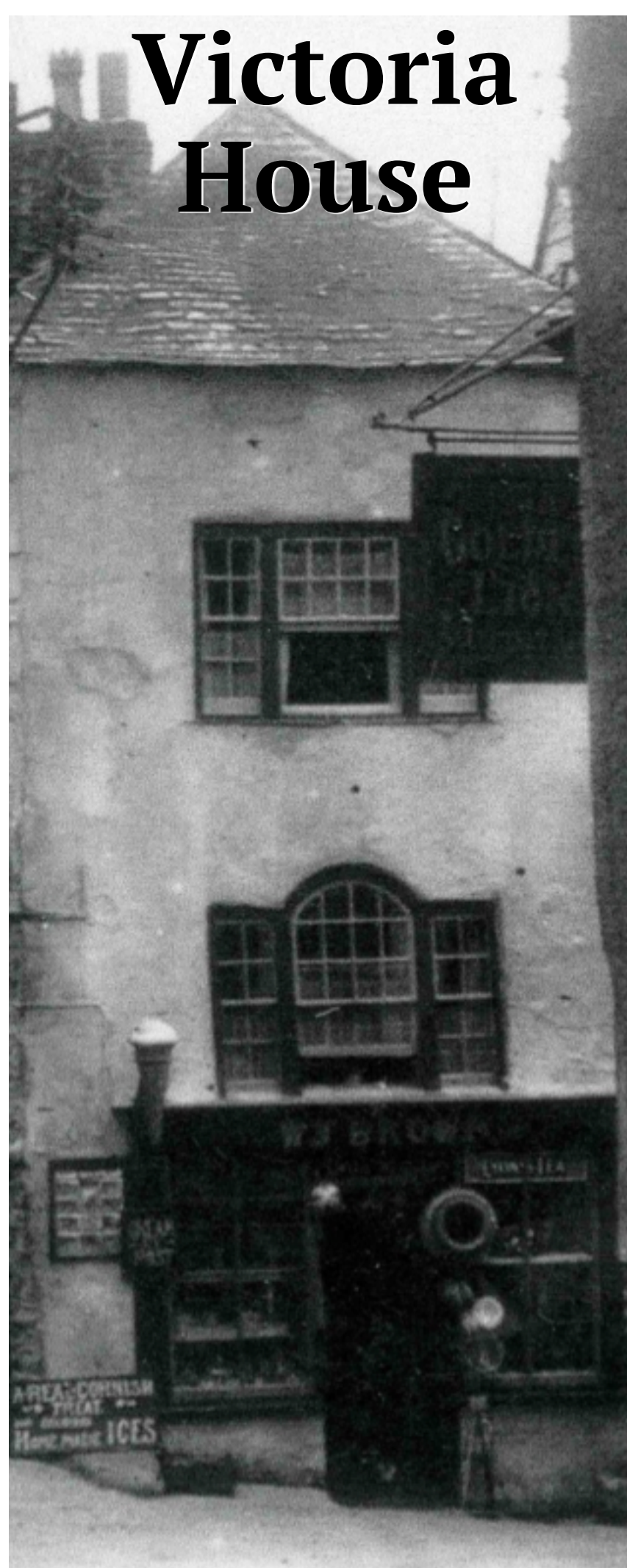
In 1950 Lili and Stanley Cloke ran a grocery and greengrocery business. Over the years it changed hands several times and became a gift shop and a gallery before the building was almost destroyed by a tragic fire in 1997. It was restored to its former glory by Port Isaac builder, John McDonnell.



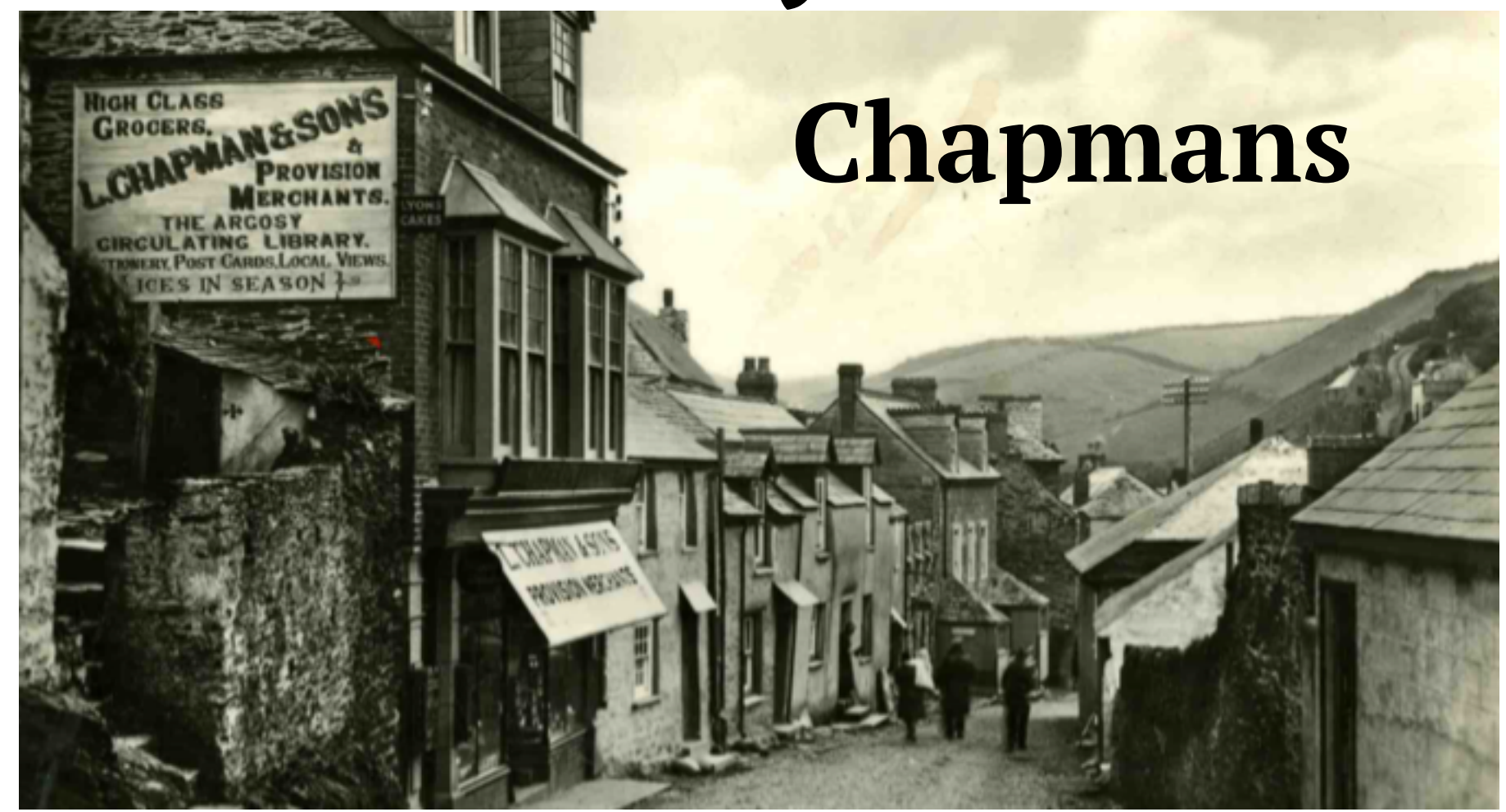
Another small bakery shop, run by Anne and Daddy Steer, was nearly next door in Temple Bar.



Prince Charles tries one of Nicki B’s pasties on a visit to the village in 2017

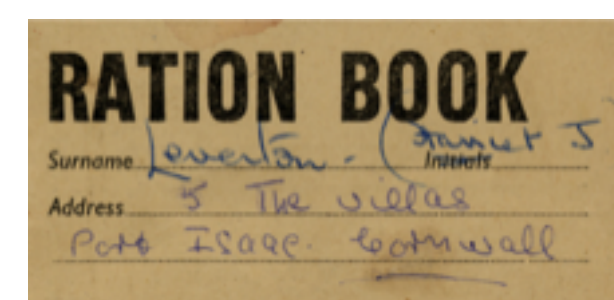


Victoria House



Chapmans

The main grocery shop was on the left hand side of Fore Street, just down from Little Hill. We know that it was owned at one time by *Mitchell and Stephens* and that on the first floor was a milliners ... from the 1930s onwards, the shop was owned by *L Chapman & Sons* ... Bacon arrived at the shop in ‘sides’ and had to be cut up and then sliced, cheese came in huge round blocks that had to be skinned and cut to size. Shop manager was Mr Hillman ... Joan Murray worked in the shop and in the 1940s earned £3 a week



2oz butter. 4oz margarine  
2oz lard. 4oz cheese  
4oz bacon. 8oz sugar. 4oz tea  
2 eggs (unless pregnant when an extra one was allowed)

“We always knew when someone became pregnant in the village because they would have a different coloured ration book and an extra egg per week.”  
Joan Murray (nee Honey)

In the mid 1960s, looking for an escape from life in London, Kathie Carney came to Cornwall in search of a small business. She recalls, “I’d never heard of Port Isaac, nor could I see it on the day I drove in - the village was shrouded in dense sea fog. Armed with estate agents particulars, and helped by a fisherman called Nibs, I found *The Slipway*, then a guest house (£12,000), *Victoria House*, a grocers with some green veg (£11,000) and *Port Isaac Stores*, then a double fronted grocers with marble counters, cheese cutters, butter pats and a bacon slicer (£9,000).

Sitting in the bay window seat in the lounge over *Port Isaac Stores*, I was looking at the books when the sun burned away the fog. There was the harbour, water as still, clear and green as glass. Each brightly coloured boat had a mirror image. It took my breath away. I knew I had found our new home ... I rang my husband and children and told them so. Within two months we were installed.”

“Next on the scene was a Mr Winstanley, a pharmacist who soon went to work for the *Port Isaac Doctor’s Practice*. Enter Ricky Fisher, his wife, mother-in-law, son and daughter. He got rid of the marble counters, the bacon slicer and cheese cutter and turned the shop into a small and efficient self-service that became the *Spar*.”

In recent years it has been converted into two shops.

## the daily pinta

Milk was supplied by a number of smallholders. Percy May and his five brothers and sisters from *Bodannon Farm* delivered milk on their way to school, sometimes only half a pint a day as there was no refrigeration, nor was the milk pasteurised, homogenised, standardised or any other ‘ised’.

Janet Chadband remembers having to do the “milk round” from *Archer Farm* before school. It was measured out of a three gallon can into cans left on doorsteps.

Lillian and George Thomas at *The Dairy* (on the corner of Back Hill and New Road) sold and delivered milk. Lillian lived there until she was over 90 years old.