

## December 1913 ...

Eye catching displays adorn the shop windows along the High Street in the run up to Christmas of 1913 and Housman's & Relhans, where you can buy your finest clothing, is one of the best. For your Christmas cards why not pop along to Green's the newsagent and if its postcards you want to send to relatives then Horace Sparrow is your man because he makes them from his photographs. The Co-Op and International Store are selling all sorts of gifts and there are some more familiar names such as John Caban the hairdresser and Robert Hyam the baker in the High Street too. Nonetheless there is one man who has outdone them all this year ... Fred Gentle.

Fred Gentle's butcher shop, at 33 High Street, is the best known in the town because his family has run it for 47 years, but Fred is more than just a butcher and can be found on just about every committee in the town including the Council, but above all else his pride and joy is his thriving business. Fred, his wife Mabel and their children live above the shop and Fred also owns a slaughterhouse to keep the shop supplied, and he also has a milking shed from where he supplies local dairies with milk and past the gate, beyond Coulson Lane, are Fred's cows grazing in the field. Now, between you and me some think he is watering down the milk but Fred blames its poor quality on the lack of decent grazing land. Not all his animals are destined for the butcher shop because he often presents his best at agricultural shows and this December he has returned home with a coveted cup for his prized turkeys. Fred hands us a photograph, taken this December, which shows his shop frontage adorned with prize winning turkeys and if you look closely enough you might just see the cup on the table. He certainly is having a joyous Christmas.

Gripped by the Christmas spirit Fred announces a competition to raise money for the Brandon Nursing Association. On the evening of Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> December residents can guess the weight of his most magnificent prize winning bullock and Fred has donated three prizes for the nearest guesses – a duck for third, a pair of chickens for second and a beautiful plump turkey for the winner. At the conclusion of the competition Fred announces £3 has been raised and the weight of the beast revealed to be a whopping 64 stone and 11 pounds! The winner is only half a pound out and the Town Street residents have an advantage here, after all they work on the land, and one of them is announced the winner, Mr James Norton.

Merry Christmas to you all.