

## WOOTTON VILLAGE POND

The, "Charles William Barker Family" moved from Thornton Abbey Farm to the Village of Wootton.

Wootton Village was like Thornton Curtis Village in that it was in Lincolnshire and was a typical small Anglo Saxon agricultural community that could be found in most shires with its Church of England and local Squires and tenant Farmers in England since the demise of Henry the Eighth.

Wootton Village had a duck pond that was chest deep on a six feet tall bloke standing in the mud on the bottom of the pond and the surface area of the pond was about quarter of an acre across it and it was situated at the end of the road that came from Thornton Curtis.

I can be sure of that because every time I see an exclamation mark it reminds me of the road that suddenly stops with a pond at the end of it.

The road from Thornton Curtis Village formed a "T" junction near the Nag's Head Public House near the Village of Wootton and any traveler on it would turn right to go into Wootton Village proper but turning to the left at the "T" junction led one to Wootton Corner where a small wooded area is opposite Goddard's house and the flat red painted red iron railings that guarded Goddard's house from traffic as the traffic travels round the bend in the road that leads to Grimsby and the Fish Docks.

On a foggy night it had been known for a motorist to hit these red railings that had prevented further damage to the house and its occupants at the corner.

Near the Wood and across the road from Goddard's house, cart and wagon tracks led to a Farm.

In the Village of Wootton on a fine Sunday afternoon in Summer time it was not unusual to see somebody rowing a small boat on the pond while two kids were enjoying the free ride and would be feeding the fish in the pond.

Some fish in the pond were Sticklebacks while others were Golden Bream.

There was of course other life in the pond such as Nutes and Frogs, Dragonflies etc.

I always thought the gold colored fish were a bit big to be classed as Gold Fish and one day as I was passing the pond with one of the local yokels I spotted the flash of gold in the Sun and chortled, "Cor! luke at the size o' yon gowd fish!" and Matey sticks out his chest and bleats, "Thar ain't no ruddy gowd fish, app'n it's a chuffin' bree-am. (Bream)

Passers by on a Sunday out for a stroll would stop in their nature ramble and would peruse the trio in the boat and the smiles and nods of the observers would suggest the conversation was in praise of the thoughtful bloke who was either feeding the fish or had offered his wife some peace and snooze time while he kept the kids occupied in the boat.

Whether the kids didn't like the sandwiches they were eating or they took pity on the fish it would seem they were in their element throwing bits of bread into the water until some seagulls decided they wanted some as well.

It wasn't long before someone had to spoil it for the kids.

The local Council had erected a sign on a post next to the pond that informed anyone who could read that feeding the birds and fish was prohibited.

The next Sunday the sign went missing and the boat was again on the pond and the same bloke was there with his two offspring and they were blithely feeding the fish and having a wonderful time.

Then a Bobby in his blue uniform arrived on his bicycle keep fit machine that was supposed to make him look even more tall and menacing as he dismounts with the grace of a ruptured Emu and advanced with such a menacing stare and slow gait, a bit like an alligator that has just surfaced and is not sure that he is taking on more than he can handle, but decides to bluff it out anyway.

On getting to the water's edge the Cop yells to the bloke in the boat and having got his attention he holds up one hand with a clenched fist but with the index finger pointing at the sky.

With the bloke in the boat now looking at him with an odd look on his face thinking, "Wot does yonder prune in blue want nah?" and the Cop lowers the pointing finger to point to a spot to his immediate front on the shore.

The Cop now stands with legs apart and looks like the huge bronze statue of Rhodes but with hands on hips as if he is waiting for the Queen Mary to dock, and also inviting a swift kick, the results of which would make most cherry pickers drule.

The bloke in the boat on getting to the shore hops out of the boat and addresses the stout arm of the Law.

"What's yer problem owd mate?" queries the vulgar boatman.

"Well! first off owd mate, Ah'm not yer owd mate, but ahyam Police Consterbule Cer, Catkins of the Bae Barton Cer, Cer, Constabulary an' yo is fer, fur, fir, fishin' 'ere illegally!"

"Well owd mate!" Warbled the boating bloke, I ain't fishin' but me kids is doin' wot they ave been doin' fer years an' thar is feedin' the chuffin' fish cum Summer"

"But yer is not allowed tu fer, feed the fu, fer, little beggers cum Summer" drooled the prune in blue.

"Then why dun't yuz pur up a sign tu hinform t' chuffin' public?" grated the bloke now getting angry.

"Ca, Cu, can't yer chuffin rer, er, read yon sign ower theer, an' ther wudn't be so many rer ruddy kids abaht if it weren't fer the chuffin' public" spluttered the now purple faced Cop who's neck veins now resembled two Indian cobras in heat.

"I ain't not seed no sign ower theer!" exclaimed the bloke with the two kids, who by now are getting restless.

"Ah! there is a sign up ower theer!" And the Cop half turned and pointed to where there was a hole in the grass but no sign.

"Well ah'll go 'ome an' darn me 'oley socks! pouted the Policeman, "There wuz a sign theer yer, yisterdi' cos a seed it mesen'!"

Just then a bloke who had been mowing the grass on the village green came wandering out of the lane end and he was leading a horse that had been pulling the reaper, but now it had all the chains jingling and jangling and draped over the saddle on the horses back as it plodded towards the pond where it walked ankle deep into the pond, then lowered it's head and the collar it was wearing slid down it's neck only to be arrested by the horses ears.

The horse slurped and gulped a couple of gallons from the pond then raised it's head and the collar slid back into place at the bottom of the horses neck and the horse came

back to the bloke on the bank who patted it's neck and they went back up the lane making flatulent noises that suddenly attracted all the flies that had been up till now buzzing over a dead fish floating on the surface of the pond that moved only when a breeze chased ripples across the water as if to nudge the dead fish awake, but without success, then horse and man walked up the lane and they passed out of sight leaving behind a fragrant aroma on the warm breeze, proving that indeed they had been there.

The Pond returned to being like a sheet of glass warming in the still of the warm Summer's day.

Then a Bream suddenly leapt out of the now glassy still water of the pond and glinted gold in the sunlight as it arched up and over then disappeared just a sudden again with hardly a splash into the dark depths leaving ever widening ripples now slowly widening and finally gently lapping on the bank of the pond.

Some reeds near the edge of the pond moved slightly as the ripple in the water sped through them and disappeared from sight.

A black water hen suddenly appeared from a clump of bulrushes in the pond to see what all the fuss was about and after poking about into the reeds and doing a couple of dives under the water and reappearing after a few minutes decided to go back to bed and disappeared through the reeds again.

The sun beat down and the air was still and the Cop took off his helmet and wiped the inside leather headband with a pale blue handkerchief.

The bloke in the boat with the two kids was now tying the boat up to a post on the bank and then ignoring the Cop walked off down the lane with his two children.

The next Saturday evening The Nags Head Pub was about to close for the night when the blokes at the bar who were supping up 'cos they knew any minute now the Landlord of the Pub would be ringing the bell and bellowing "Time Gentlemen Please!"

Outside the purple velvet of the Heavens was alive with tiny twinkling stars and the pale almost full moon was washing over all the house roof tops near the pond making them all look a pale slate gray like the pictures in a kids Fairy tale book.

A wild fox sidled out of the bushes at the far side of the pond and in the dusk of the evening the two small red eyes glanced left and right as the small animal did a slow belly crawl to the pond and lapped up the water then as if alarmed the Fox suddenly sprang back into the bushes and all was still.

The stars twinkled as in the far distance a racing motor engine could be heard and at times the tortured squeal of tires as if someone was being pursued by the Devil himself.

The droning of conversation in the Pub ceased suddenly as the engine noise now got even louder and more persistent.

One bloke near the bar in the Pub suddenly broke the silence and warbled, "Ah just 'ope 'e 'as a toilet roll in 'is dunny wen 'e get's 'ome"

Another voice offered, " At the rate 'e's goin' 'e'll be lucky ter ger 'ome drivin' like a ruddy maniac!"

The noise of the screaming engine was now getting louder as the seconds ticked by and with a roar the yellow sleek sports car suddenly tore past the Pub like a bullet, and suddenly there was the added sound of tires screeching on the hard tarmac road as if suddenly all the wheels had locked up.

Then all the noise except the screaming engine suddenly stopped as if someone had flipped a switch, then there was a loud splash and then the engine noise too was gone.

In the Pub everyone who had been stood like wax models listening to the ménage of noises suddenly sprang into life and made for the door of the Pub and ran over to the pond in time to see the back end of a yellow sports car slowly disappearing under the water of the pond where the steam and smoke from the hot engine was drifting now across the pond's surface.

One overly besotted bloke from the pub had managed to fumble into a pocket of his jacket from where he withdrew a notebook and pencil ready to take down the number of the car but was too late because it was now below water.

The bloke was not going to be beaten by the pond and began to take off his shoes and socks, but one of his mates from the pub spotted what he was up to and chided him.

“Weers tha goin’ at this time o’ t neet wi’ no shoes an’ socks?” he warbled.

“ Ah’m off tu git t’ bluddy number off’n yon car!” answered the bloke now with his trousers rolled up above his knees.

“Why dunt thee wait ‘til termorrer app’n, yu daft sod, cos then it’ll be dayer leet an’ some bugger ull come an’ drag’t bluddy car oot then tha cin tek a chuffin’ pitcher ov it, app’n!”

A huge mass of water that had been displaced by the now sinking car scudded across the surface of the pond reflecting the stars and the moon until it hit the far side of the pond and carried on up the sloping bank to splash into the nearby Churchyard.

The driver of the car suddenly surfaced and gulped air, then, on finding he could stand up he waded to the bank and crawled out on to the grass and gazed at his now muddy shoes.

On looking at the pond that by this time had settled more or less he could see his sports car now under the water surrounded by clouds of muddy water near the wheels. “That theer watter weern’t do me ingin’ a lot o’ good” he growled.

One old bloke from the pub offered, “Thee aught tu thank the good Lord tha’ gor aht in wun piece m’ lad, why is thee in such a big ‘erry tu dee?”

“Well! ah ‘ed this date yu see an’ ah wuz layet so ah put me foot dahn an’ nah me cars knackerd” protested the speed King.

“If’n ah wuz thee owd mate ah wud sit theer on thi’ date an’ keep thi gob shut!” offered the old bloke.

Today a big sign warns all motorists to, “Slow at ‘T’ road ahead”.

And someone added below in chalk, “Tha’s wet enough aw ready, App’n!”

Tom Barker.