

focus on... Dunmow

Traditional service – traditional shop

by SUE HOOPER

IN 1952, Queen Elizabeth II ascended the throne, The Mousetrap opened in London and John Sweetland put his name over a butcher's shop in Great Dunmow.

The shop had been established by its former owners just after the turn of the century but the building's origins go back much further to the 1600s when it was thought to have been a coaching inn.

The name Sweetland's is still over the door of the shop in Stortford Road, the business now run by John's son, Peter.

Outside and inside it looks very much as it did in his fathers day and the names of the customers, first and second generations, are the same, too. They wouldn't shop anywhere else for their meat.

BANTER

Peter and his staff know most of their customers by their names, even those who come from as far away as Southend, even London.

The staff are naturally chosen for their butchery skills but they must also have a good sense of humour. The banter and jokes are an essential part of the Sweetland's shopping experience.

They love the banter but customers

come for the meat which is guaranteed to be good because Peter knows its source – mostly local. So beef is from Great Leighs, lamb from Little Easton and seasonal game from nearby suppliers.

Of course, kangaroo and ostrich meat aren't local, but Sweetland's famous sausages, made on the premises, are. Some customers like the more exotic varieties such as pork, port and Stilton. However, the most popular are the plain, simple and very tasty pork bangers.

Home-cooked ham off-the-bone is another best seller, as are all the ingredients for a successful barbecue, including 40 different flavours of marinated meat.

During the past five years, Peter has contended with the BSE scare, a new nearby superstore and the recent foot-and-mouth problems which has closed the on-site abattoir, but only temporarily.

As for the superstore, Peter would like to point out that shopping at a specialised butcher's needn't cost more.

Sweetland's has also had to struggle with the new rules and regulations which could change the look of the shop.

Peter wouldn't be happy with any more changes.

"I want to keep this shop as traditional as possible". His customers would agree. "They like Sweetland's just as it is," he added.