

# BILLINGSGATE GOSSIP

THE LONDON FISH AND POULTRY RETAIL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2003



## Barry Morgan

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Barry Morgan who died in January. Barry was born in Forest Gate, East London. He used to run his own bakery in Manor Park, but for the last thirteen years was employed by the City of London as a chargehand cleaner.

Barry was a shop steward of the G.M.B. Very active, he held many posts for the Union and was the branch President.

For those people who did not know Barry, I would like to record how much he became such a great friend of The London Fish & Poultry Retail Association and The National Federation of Fishmongers. Always ready to help, where nothing was to much trouble,

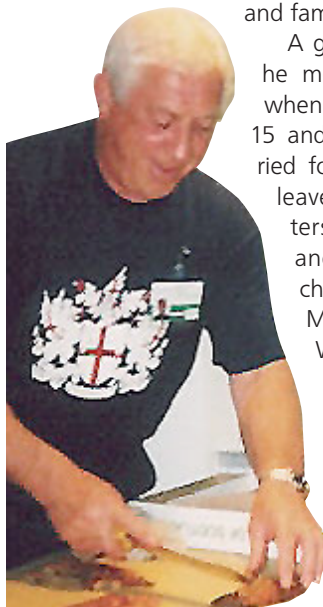
"Barry, could you....." "Leave it to me", it was done!! What ever display or show we did, Barry would always help with all the equipment and would often get involved with clearing the debris at the end of the day.

He had another home in Goa, loved his holidays and lived for his Wife and family.

A great family man, he met his wife Ann when they were both 15 and had been married for 37 years. He leaves two daughters, Jo and Sam and three grandchildren, Sarah, Morgan and Ellis. We have all lost a really great friend.

Charlie Caisey

*Barry lends a hand at the BBC Good Food Show*



## Dinner Dance details

The Chairman's Dinner Dance will again be held at The Lakeside Moathouse Hotel, North Stifford, Essex. The date set for this very popular event in the Billingsgate social diary is 26th October 2003. Further news in the summer edition of The Gossip

## LFPRA Councillor is National Federation's new president

The National Federation of Fishmongers elected their new President in January.

Our congratulations to Gordon Sage of Rochford, Essex. Gordon is a long serving member of The Federation, a member for over 30 years. A past Chairman of The London Fish & Poultry Retail Association, Gordon will probably be better known to most of you as "Hundreds" his family trading name.

The history of trading name goes back to the 1920s. I am informed by Gordon that his uncle Jack was a porter and his badge number was 100. As time

passed, the family, now in business in Essex for over 60 years, became Young Hundreds. To this day the trading name goes on and there is a very good café on Southend seafront, yes, called Hundreds.

Gordon can still be found in the Market, semi-retired, but still looking after the buying.

Another little known story, Gordon has been a great behind the scenes man at the National Federation's Craftsmanship Competition for many years. He was the person who selected each item of fish, poultry or

game for every round, for every competitor and never got it wrong!!

Good luck Gordon and enjoy your new Presidency.



*Gordon Sage  
NFF President*



## Au revoir Libby

Our very best wishes to Libby Woodhatch, who is leaving Billingsgate for pastures new.

We are so pleased for Libby who is leaving London but will still be involved with the fish trade.

It has been a real pleasure to know and work with Libby who's enthusiasm seems to know no bounds. We shall remain truly indebted to her, as she has encouraged many new people to enter the trade, to improve their skills, to enter into the brave new world of I.T. and so many other aspects within the fish trade.

So again Libby, thank you for your unflinching support for The London Fish & Poultry Retail Association and for your work with The Gossip.



*Libby at The East London and Essex Business Awards*

## Greater London Seafish - Group Training Association

### Dear Colleagues

Sadly this is my last Gossip, as I head off to Seafood Scotland at the start of April, after an extremely enjoyable 5 years at Billingsgate.

The School and GTA are being left in excellent hands, with Adam Whittle continuing with my role at the GTA, whilst Lyn Gower, formerly of Direct Seafoods, will be in the hot seat for the School. Both these faces are already well known to many of you, and your support for them would be appreciated.

### Computer Classes

TIME REALLY IS RUNNING OUT! If you want to learn how to use a PC, or brush up your skills then get booked onto a course NOW, as the project that has paid for the computer room and the tutors ends this June. There are plenty of places still available, but unless you act now it will be too late!

### Thanks

The successes of both the School and the GTA would not be possible without the tireless efforts of the many who give up their spare time to help with running courses, and the day to day operation of both organisations. Special thanks must go to Chris Leftwich who gives up so much of his time to help us on a daily basis, the LFMA, the Corporation, the Fishmongers' Company and not forgetting Charlie Caisey & Ken Condon who give up their free time for us each week.

Charlie of course deserves an extra special mention for working

against the general tide of apathy, with his unfailing efforts in trying to get the industry training, and encouraging new entrants in to the industry. We all have Charlie to thank for the Gossip which is now enjoyed by a large and varied readership, and so kindly put together for us by Paul Saint.

### Invest in your future

The continual efforts of the few does not give any excuse for the rest of you not to help from time to time - we are working to help improve the industry both now and in the future for YOU, and need as much support as possible to help us achieve this goal. Much of this work focuses on courses for school children, who are your future customers and future employees - surely some of you could spare the odd half hour once a month to talk to children about seafood and your industry?

### Barry Morgan

The School and the GTA were extremely saddened by the loss of Barry Morgan in January, who was always quick to lend a hand whenever we needed help. Our most endearing memory must be of Barry kindly chaperoning the three scantily clad mermaids who arrived to help launch Seafood Week at Billingsgate with Rick Stein. Unselfish to the last, Barry even took it upon himself to organise showers for these young ladies, who all left smelling of Imperial Leather with big smiles on their faces!

Libby Woodhatch - Development Manager

## Encouraging first year for AZ Fishmongers

Our first contact with Mrs Adiba Zahid was when she approached the Greater London Seafish GTA to carry out her Basic Food Hygiene certificate. She successfully completed this through the Seafish Open Learning module.

Established in March 2002, the business is run by Adiba and her husband Zehid Hussain Malik. "We spent the first two months fitting out and converting the premises," explains Adiba. "We had spent a lot of time and effort to find the right spot and wanted to get it right. We had been looking around Peckham and couldn't find a suitable property. Then we looked at Mitcham and we saw a real gap in the market. With help from my hus-

band who is experienced in preparing fish, along with much determination, we are now starting to see the fruits of our hard work."

AZ stock a wide variety of fish and complement this with groceries that their customers like to pick up while buying their fish. The fish selection reflects the very mixed, European, Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities of South London. The big sellers are tilapia, red bream, jack fish, red mullet, salmon and all the snappers. The competition from decent wet fish counters are up in Tooting Market and Brixton. The only local shop that stocks a limited supply is a small Tesco a couple of doors away. The super-market brings shoppers to the

area, but only supplies a small selection of seafood like cod and prawns.

We mostly get our fish from Billingsgate and a supplier in Brixton. Usually, we drive up to Billingsgate every other day and our regular suppliers Jeffrey Cushway, J. P. Exotics, C. T. Holmes and Mick's Eel Supply always look after us very well. While I really don't like the early mornings (we normally get up at about 3 am) as soon as we get in the car I start to get excited about visiting the market again. I look forward to seeing what has come in and becoming part of the typically lively market atmosphere!"

"We successfully cater for many different nationalities," says Adiba. "Our customers

come back because of our quality and customer service. This gives me a real buzz and keeps me enthusiastic about the business. If you would like to speak to Adiba or visit their shop please contact them here:

AZ Fishmongers and Grocers.  
278 London Road, Mitcham,  
Surrey CR4 3NE Tel: 020 8640  
7770





## So what is Food Hygiene ?

A frequently asked question is "What exactly do we mean by food hygiene"? Is it about having clean well laid out premises in which to prepare and sell food, or is it about good working practices.

The answer is it is both of these things. They are intrinsically linked. After all, it is no good having your clean, well laid out premises if your workers are not prepared to wash their hands after using the toilet.

So why all the concern about food hygiene! Basically it is because lack of food hygiene or poor food hygiene are the major contributing factors to the increase in food poisoning incidences that have occurred in this Country during the past 15-20 years. In addition, they are also responsible for the reduction in the quality of food and food products being offered for sale to the consumer which, although may not be responsible for food poisoning, are certainly responsible for huge amounts of food wastage.

### *illness*

The major problem with food spoilage and food poisoning is that in the main they are caused by bacteria; microscopic organisms that cannot be seen by the human eye. It is because they cannot be seen that people become lazy in their attitude towards food hygiene. If a waiter in a restaurant were to serve you food with filthy hands you would not be best pleased. Whereas he may not have washed his hands after going to the toilet and you would have no idea until you contracted food poisoning. A lack of food hygiene could have serious consequences for your business. These days customers are demanding higher and higher standards. With so much choice available, people will not compromise their standards and will refuse to shop or eat in premises that are not up to the mark.

Lack of hygiene could also incur the wrath of the local EHO. This could lead to the service of improvement notices, which if not complied with could lead to an appearance in Court and a hefty fine, not to mention the adverse publicity.

Finally, it could also lead to a costly civil action for damages by a disgruntled customer who has been served food that

has caused them some sort of injury or illness.

So how do you ensure that your business meets the required standards! If you are not sure, you could always seek the advice of your local EHO. They are not nearly as bad or as unapproachable as many people would have us believe.

### **However, there are some basic rules to follow :-**

- Train your staff. A basic food hygiene certificate is an absolute must for anyone working in the food industry.
- Always keep your premises clean and tidy. Adopt a "Clean as you go" policy.
- Keep all your refrigeration equipment properly maintained.
- Check the temperatures of all your equipment and food products to ensure they are at the required levels.
- Ensure that you have a proper stock rotation policy.
- Never exceed load lines on your display cabinets.
- Check dates codes and storage conditions for all packaged products.
- Make sure your premises are properly proofed against entry by pests.

If of course your business undertakes any processing i.e. cooking, smoking etc, or is required to be licensed as a Butcher's shop, then you must have a proper HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) system in place. This will require proper documented procedures and records to be kept for all stages of the process.

Should you follow these basic rules your business will certainly be on the right road to meet the required standards for food hygiene. For any specific advice on any problems please feel free to contact the Fish Inspectors Office at Billingsgate Market on 020 7515 4425. Also please remember that the Billingsgate Seafood Training School in conjunction with the Greater London GTA organise a range of courses including open learning basic food hygiene, classroom based basic food hygiene, knife skills, retailing etc. For further information on any of these courses ring the school on 020 7517 3548/9.

## Fish lovers



The Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is a charity set up to find a solution to the problem of overfishing. We work with everyone who has an

interest in the future of seafood supplies to raise awareness of the problem and promote sustainable fishing. Fisheries that meet our environmental standard are rewarded through use of an eco- label on their products (as seen at the top of this page) which is easily recognised by consumers in the supermarkets as the best environmental choice in seafood.

### **The MSC today**

Today the MSC has over 120 labelled products in 10 countries worldwide. (A list of products carrying the MSC label is available on our website at [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org).) Many fishery managers now see the MSC logo as a vital tool in adding value to their products. The challenge for the MSC is to build a global brand, which is sought by industry, endorsed by conservationists, respected by scientists and bought by consumers in order to safeguard the world's most important renewable food source and the 200 million jobs which depend on it for future generations.

### **How you can make a difference**

- Visit our website to discover more about
- Buy MSC labelled products
- Thank retailers who do stock MSC products
- Spread the word about MSC
- If you love fish, look for the fish with the tick.

For enquiries about  
The Greater London Sea Fish  
Group Training Association,  
please contact: Adam Whittle,  
Office 28, Billingsgate Market,  
London E14 5ST.

Tel: 020 7517 3545

Fax: 020 7517 3535

E-mail: [fishgtdn@aol.com](mailto:fishgtdn@aol.com)  
Web: [www.london-seafish.org.uk](http://www.london-seafish.org.uk)

# Tales from the Smokehouse

Smoking fish was once a fairly primitive means of preserving food, mostly heavily cured to give it a long shelf life. Nowadays with refrigeration, changes in taste, health considerations and other preservative methods, a lighter cure is preferred. Mechanical kilns are by far the most economic and practical means of smoking on a large scale, but for me, the traditional method of curing in a traditional smokehouse, which I consider more of an art than a science is well worth preserving.

There is no one correct method of doing many things in the fish "game" but with the declining number of fishmongers, it is easier to get the recipe for Drambuie than it is to get tips or advice on fish curing.

Smokehouses come in many shapes and sizes, but generally the fire should be below ground level (to slow the burning and prevent sparking of the fire from too much air) and the racks should go from just above the fire to 10-12 feet above the fire.

## draining

Before the smoke goes out of the chimney, the smoke should be baffled to hold the smoke surrounding the fish.

Prior to smoking, the fish needs to be salted. Brine would be used for Haddock, Cod fillet, Mackerel, Herrings for Kippers, Bloaters etc. Dry salting would be used for Salmon, Halibut and Roe etc. Rock salt was the most preferred salt to use, but I have used granular salt successfully. The two sides of salmon with the lugs attached are strung. Traditionally the sides were tied at the lug, but with the advent of farm Salmon, some problems were encountered with gaping of the fillets near the lug, so tying from the tail of the sides is very commonplace now. The sides are sprinkled with salt and left over night. The following morning, the sides are thoroughly washed to remove surface salt and to smooth the flesh. The sides are lightly brushed and left to drain. Draining is very important for all fish after brining or dry salting. Different fish smoke at different temperatures, so they would be placed at different levels in the smoke house and turned, raised or lowered as the SMOKER feels necessary. Salmon which will not be cooked further would be furthest from the fire. The duration of any smoking process depends on many things; the weather, the size of the fish, the quality and dryness of the fuel. Salmon can take up to 48 hours. I personally preferred to use a mixture of oak dust, oak chippings and beech dust.

**COLD** smoking usually requires a temperature of approx 80-90° F.

**HOT** smoking 170-180° F. The fish is "done" when it looks and feels done.

Apart from salmon, halibut etc. cold smoked

needs cooking or marinating. Haddock, cod etc. are hung over double rods after brining. Herring for bloaters are rodded through the gills (the head and guts still in the fish). Herrings for kippers are pushed onto tenterhooks or skewered onto stainless steel rods. Hot smoked fish like mackerel (strung by the tail), trout (skewered through the eyes or hung by the tail), buckling (herring with head and gut removed), sprats (skewered through the gills).

The best roe to smoke is Icelandic cod roe. I personally dry salted it but I know others have brined it. After washing the surplus salt from the roe, it should be dipped into very hot water for approx one minute to shape the roe (swell it). After draining, it would be smoked just below the salmon level, gradually lowering the roe towards the fire, once again this can take up to 48 hours.

Hot smoked fish (Mackerel, Trout, Buckling, Sprats etc.) are smoked much lower towards the fire, if necessary covering the rods a board or sacking, making an oven to finish them. On a very cold damp day I have been known to cheat and finish them in an electric oven.

I was never very successful at smoking eels in a traditional smokehouse because I was unable to get an even temperature throughout the length of the fish, but I had limited success by smoking cold for two days and after tight wrapping in news paper burying in the smoke hole ashes.

Red Herring were gutted with heads on, salted for three days, washed off and smoked for several weeks. I only had a few regular customers for these, but minimum time for smoking these was three weeks, and in later years, good quality large oily Herrings were hard to come by.

## splitters

Smoking Finan Haddocks used to be an art in itself. They originated in Findon a village of Aberdeen. A headless Haddock, split from top to tail and rodded through the lugs. The gutting, sounding, scrubbing and splitting (the splitting knife had a bulbous sharp end) was for many a full time job, very often paid by piece rate. Nowadays, with the unpopularity with bones in fish, Haddock splitters have gone the way of the Dodo and the virgin bride.

This is merely a short article on some ways to smoke fish, and 'The Gossip' welcomes comments and criticisms, but if you have an unused smokehouse on your premises or just like talking fish, perhaps it has given you food for thought.

As a postscript to this article, how many people can recall the names given to the various sizes of Haddock for smoking? We say 6, not including large, medium and small!!!

## Fish could help smokers to live longer

Eating fish can help cut the risk of heart attacks and strokes in smokers scientists said recently. Just one serving a day could be enough to reverse the damage smoking does to the arteries, a study suggests.

Researchers gave 15 smokers doses of taurine, an amino acid found in all fish, not just oily varieties thought to be the most healthy.

### Taurine

The team of scientists measured blood vessel function by applying tourniquets to the forearms of smokers and non-smokers. In non-smokers, the tourniquet stimulated blood vessels in the arm to dilate but smokers' blood vessels were virtually unchanged. However, there was no difference between the two groups when the smokers were given 1.5g of taurine a day.

Despite the findings experts still believe the best therapy for smokers is to stop smoking!

## LFPRA Council members

### Chairman

Ray Sandys - 020 8894 5352

### Vice Chairman

To be elected

### Hon. Treasurer

Ken Condon - 020 8771 6798

### Hon. Secretary

Charlie Caisey - 01708 448667

### Hon. Joint Secretary

Sue Lyons - 01245 400787

Gordon Sage - 01702 549 849

Ted Saunders - 020 8997 5639

Dave Shepperton - 020 8742 7670

Phil Diamond



# thebackpage

## New home for John Koch Ltd

The new building that has been growing by the gates of the Billingsgate has now firmly been turned into a new home for one of Billingsgate's most successful companies. In times of uncertainty, a stable business base (with a new 10 year lease from the Corporation) is just one of the benefits that the new site has given.

"We completed our move at the end of last year," explains Greg White, Koch's Office Admin Manager. "Now we are settled in, we are starting to see the real benefits to the business after the upheaval of moving. The first key benefit of the move is that now all the office is together in one open plan environment. This means that internal communication is so much quicker now and everyone knows what is going on instantly." Koch now has their own cold store with a capacity of



over 1000 pallets maintaining stock levels usually in excess of £2m.

"Our new set up makes the whole process much quicker for customers," says Greg. "Rather than having to wait our turn from the main market cold store, larger customer orders can come directly from our own store. This takes the pressure off the market shop supplies when bigger orders come in. We will soon be starting to serve customers directly from the new premises.

One further development for the business is a focus towards telesales and extending our business day. Our sales team is now proactively contacting customers to check they have received all the goods they need and taking orders for the next day. These can then be prepared waiting for collection the next day.

If you would like to find out more about the new developments at John Koch Ltd, give them a call on 020 7537 2759.

### *Congratulations...*

...to John Koch Ltd on their recent move. Isn't it great to see a business prepared to invest in the future. With so much gloom in the trade this must be good news for all our members. With such a vast range of products, and so much knowledge available from excellent staff, things certainly look good.

## Steve Hatt - obituary

Sadly the industry lost one of its real gentlemen when Steve Hatt of Hatt's of Islington recently passed away in his sleep.

Steve, or Josh as he was known to many of his older friends, was the epitome of an English gentleman. Always elegantly dressed in his bow tie and jacket, invariably with a pipe in his mouth, which I hasten to

add remained unlit when the market hygiene rules became more stringent. He was a favourite with the ladies and would never deign to use bad language when he was in their company. Come to that, it was seldom that he would revert to using bad language in any company. With his eloquent use of the Queen's English he was able to make his point without

### *gentleman*

resorting to the normal language often associated with our industry. There was of course the odd exception when exasperation finally took over, but these were rare.

As well as being a gentleman, he was also a gentle man. He disliked arguments, preferring to walk away rather than become embroiled in a heated exchange. He was a person of great habit. He would have a regular day for paying his bills and it mattered not to him whether he had been invoiced.

Steve's main passion was salmon fishing. For 27 years he fished at the same spot at the same time of year on the River Tay at Balathie. His knowledge of the river was unparalleled. He knew every rock and holding spot and was probably the best bait fisher on that stretch of river. Unfortunately, his

fishing team is no longer, but for 17 years I was privileged to be a member. One fishing expedition to Alaska will remain in my memory forever. Baited by a friendly group of Americans, his rendition of Whiskey and Wild, Wild Women received a standing ovation. His loyalty, judgement, but above all his sense of humour ensured that in his presence it was always the most enjoyable of occasions. He was an outstanding man, husband, father and true friend. I, as I am sure will many other people, shall miss him greatly.

*Peter Bennett.*

## St. Joseph Hospice



We are always glad to help. Above is a picture of Michael Desmond (centre) delivering fish to Chef Manager Chris Lindsay (right) and kitchen porter Pascal Hayibor at the St. Joseph Hospice.

The Fish was donated by Seafish and London Merchants from a display in Billingsgate Market for the launch of National Seafood Week in October 2002.

We hope that you've enjoyed the Spring 2003 edition of The Gossip. If there is any item that you would like us to report or comment on then drop us a line and we'll do our best.

You can reach us at: 'The Gossip',  
67 Albany Road,  
Hornchurch,  
Essex RM12 4AE.

E-mail us at: [gossipnews@macmail.com](mailto:gossipnews@macmail.com)