

1972-1982 (1979)

## The Magnolia Centre



Will Carder

The Magnolia Centre was formally opened by TV personality Angela Rippon in 1979. Before the start of re-development, it was called Chapel Street, and it looked like this. Then, as now, one of its main attractions was butcher Porky Down's, which has been serving fine meat to the people of Exmouth since 1900. The shop can just be seen at the very right of the picture.

Immediately beyond it is the Volunteer Inn, occupying the space to the corner of the alleyway. The Volunteer was run by the Carder family. On Christmas Day 1956, Will Carder himself volunteered as one of the crew of the lifeboat *Maria Noble*, which launched to the aid of a Dutch vessel, the *Minerva*. Conditions were so bad that both Will and the Second Coxswain, Jack Phillips, were washed overboard, eventually landing up on the beach. Jack was just alive, and eventually recovered, but Will was dead. He remains, to this day, the only person to have died in the service of Exmouth RNLI. A very brave and selfless man.

The alleyway beyond the inn was once called Margaret Street, and the building on the other side of it was St. Margaret's chapel. The chapel was built some time before 1375, possibly for use by travellers on the ferry to Starcross, a popular way of crossing the very wide estuary of the Exe. It is known that the monks of Sherborne Abbey made good use of it when visiting their estates to the west. By 1724, however, the chapel had gone out of use and was converted to a private house, later used by a tailor. In 1760 its religious past was so far gone that the health of George III was drunk in punch which had been mixed in the old holy-water stoup! By 1806 the property was an incipient Porky Down's, with its own slaughterhouse, followed in due course by a cattle shed and other outbuildings. By the time the site was eventually cleared, only the stoup remained, albeit inserted sideways in an external wall. It went to a newly-built Roman Catholic chapel in Brixington Lane, although that too has since been demolished.